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The Cradle of a Race

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from the
Beginnings
to 1980

I. A. Akinjogbin

THE CRADLE OF A RACE

SUNRAY PUBLICATIONS LTD

224 Aba Road

P.M.B. 5089

Port Harcourt

BAU

498471

4/10/94

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C. I. P. Data (Cataloguing in Production)

Akinjogbin, I. A et al
A History of Ife
I. Ife, Nigeria - History
I. Title
DT 515.9 966.9

COVER DESIGN:

Visual: - Enock Odoeme

Computer: G.C. Ugwuadu & A.A. Iniunam

ISBN 978 - 2131 - 00 - 8 (Cloth)

ISBN 978 - 2131 - 01 - 6 (Paper)

PRINTED IN NIGERIA

CONTENTS

PAGE

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER

- | | | |
|-----------|---|-----|
| 1 | IFE DIVISION - THE PHYSICAL
ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT
- <i>L. K. Jeje</i> | 1 |
| 2 | SOURCES OF IFE HISTORY
- <i>I. A. Akinjogbin and R. A. Olaniyan</i> | 39 |
| 3 | IFE BEFORE ODUDUWA - <i>I. Olomola</i> | 51 |
| 4 | THE PHENOMENON OF ODUDUWA IN
IFE HISTORY - <i>Ade M. Obayemi</i> | 62 |
| 5 | THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF THE
IFE STATE - <i>Biodun Adediran</i> | 77 |
| 6 | THE GROWTH OF IFE FROM ODUDUWA
TO 1800 - <i>I. A. Akinjogbin</i> | 96 |
| 7 | THE ECONOMY OF IFE FROM
C.A.D. 900 -C.A.D. 1700
- <i>R. Horton</i> | 122 |
| 8 | IFE: THE YEARS OF TRAVAIL
(1793-1893) - <i>I. A. Akinjogbin</i> | 148 |
| 9 | IFE: THE YEARS OF RECOVERY
(1894-1930) - <i>Olufemi Omosin;</i> | 171 |
| 10 | THE ADEREMI ERA (1930-1980)
- <i>O. Akinrinade and I. A. Akinjogbin</i> | 192 |

11	THE OUT-LYING TOWNS OF IFE - <i>I. A. Akinjogbin</i>	217
12	DISPERSALS FROM IFE - <i>I. A. Akinjogbin</i>	242
13	THE MODAKEKE QUESTION IN IFE POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY - <i>A. Olaniyan</i>	266
14	GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF IFE IN PRE-COLONIAL TIMES - <i>Biodun Adediran</i>	287
15	THE RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS OF IFE - <i>A. A. Adediran and S. O. Arifalo</i>	305
16	IFE CLASSICAL ART - <i>Ola Olapade</i>	318
17	ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN ILE-IFE - <i>E. Dada Adelowo</i>	333
Epilogue	THE ERA OF OBA OKUNADE SIJUWADE, OLUBUSE 1980	350
References	REFERENCES	353
Appendix 1	IMPORTANT DATES	367
Index		369

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INTRODUCTION

In a recent exhaustive article,¹ Robin Horton (1979) summarized the various positions taken by scholars, since the beginning of this century, in discussing the place and significance of Ife among the Yoruba kingdoms. Most, if not all, views and their proponents were taken up in turn and critically discussed. His conclusion appears to be that between the 10th and the end of the 16th centuries, Ife was the imperial capital of the Yoruba Kingdoms, that as from the end of the 16th century, it lost the political aspect of its imperial status, first, with the rise of Benin, and second, with the rise of Oyo, but that somehow it continued to keep its place of honour because of the religious sanctity attached to it. Horton suggested Ifa as one of the ingredients of this religious sanctity.

It is important to have a clear idea of what the Yoruba conceived as the position of Ife. With proper understanding of such concepts, we can comprehend the various developments, be they political, economic, social or religious, that occurred among the Yoruba over the centuries. Similarly, we can only correctly measure changes or impacts by understanding the "original" position. This is why the debate on the position of Ife cannot yet be closed.

We can advance the discussion further by quoting nine statements, among many others, made in the second half of the 19th century, precisely between 1851 and 1886, depicting what was accepted as the position of Ife by various Yoruba people or by foreigners who were then intimately acquainted with them.

On the 4th of June, 1851, a few months after he had settled in Ibadan, David Hinderer, the first European Christian Missionary in the town, entered the following statements in his diary:

Eastwards, three days journey right east from here (i.e., Ibadan) is the large and famous town of Ife, and on the way to it several smaller towns. Ife is famous as being the seat of idolatry, all the multiple idols of this part of the country are said to emanate from the town; from there the sun and moon rises (sic.) where they are buried in the ground and all people of this country and even whitemen spring from the town. (C.M.S.:1851)

When Hinderer was writing, Ife, unknown to him, was indeed deserted as a result of the first Ife-Modakeke clash. The situation produced the second statement:

Chief Ogunmola of Ibadan sent messengers from the camp (during the Ijebu-Ere war) to negotiate terms of peace and bring the Ifes home, as it would never do to let the cradle of the race remain perpetually in

desolation and the ancestral gods not worshipped. (Johnson, 1921:232)

The third reference is in relation to Alaafin Adeyemi's ascension:

But no sooner had he (Alaafin Adeyemi) ascended the throne than an evil reign was prognosticated for him.

As usual the divination was sent from the sacred city of Ile-Ife. (Johnson, 1921:402)

All the other six references were made between 1882 and 1886 when negotiations for the Kiriji-Ekitiparapo peace treaty was being made. In 1882 Derin, the Ooni elect at Oke-Igbo, complained to Rev. Johnson that Ibadan did not really want peace but an opportunity to attack Ife. When Johnson confronted the Ibadan authorities, he recorded the Ibadan answer thus:

I was assured by them (Ibadan) that this was a false allegation, that even their descendants dare not carry war into Ife country for the following reasons (a) Because the Ifes were the power from whom they inherit the spirit of war and their war banner was made by them; (b) that the king of Ife is considered superior to their lord. 'The king of the Yorubas', to whom His Majesty of Oyo pays homage, Ife as it is believed being the place where all nations of the earth have sprung from.⁵

In April 1886, Ogunsigun, the Balogun of Ijebu army, said of Ife:

Ile-Ife is regarded by all our nations as the sacred spot from which we originated and the Ooni is respected as the father of all our kings. This was why the Ijebu King felt it is his duty to re-instate the Ifes in the town... It was the king who commissioned me to re-instate the Ifes because it was from Ile-Ife that his father went to settle in Ijebu ... Even the English King can be shown the spot at Ile-Ife from where his ancestors went out.⁶

In the same month, the Ife chiefs said:

The Modakeke people were once our guests. Their native place is called Oke which is far from Ile-Ife. Our fathers considering themselves as the fathers of all tribes thought it their duty to receive the refugees.⁷

In October of 1886, Higgins, one of the commissioners sent by the Lagos government to make peace, recorded:

He (i.e., the Alaafin) wished the Ifes to return to their homes as they were the fathers of all and all people came from Ife and he did not wish the place left desolate but would order their houses to be rebuilt for them and give them all they wanted⁸.

And the Ife tried to use their well-known position to secure a favourable term:

They (i.e., Ife) said they would not come back to Ife while the

*Modakeke remained ... as, if they remained out of their town, the whole world would spoil as they were the priests of the deities who ruled the world*⁹.

Finally, here are Higgin's comments on Ife:

*There are all manner of legends as to the wonders to be seen at Ile-Ife ... The Ifes call themselves the conservators of the world and the oldest of mankind and boast that all crowned personages in the world, including the whiteman's sovereign, went out originally from Ile-Ife and it was curious the deference with which other tribes treat them although they may be at war with them ... and as every one was supposed to be a descendant of the Ifes, they looked upon all strangers who visited their town in the light of pilgrims who came, as they put it, 'to make their house good' that is to pay reverence to departed ancestors*¹⁰.

All these references represent several Yoruba perceptions of the position of Ife, not only among the Yoruba themselves but also in the whole world. As was noted earlier, the opinions were not limited to Ife people, as R.S. Smith erroneously believes (Smith 1969:16), since even the Alaafin Adeyemi echoed the same sentiments in 1886.

Secondly, all the statements were made during a period when Ife was both economically and politically weak (Smith, 1969). Throughout the period, Ife was indeed within the Ibadan empire and in 1886 the city was deserted - it had been so since 1882 and was not reinhabited until 1894. Yet the position assigned to Ife by the Yoruba still remained unchanged. So one can rightly suggest that the position being described must have been attained long before the 19th century and that to the Yoruba, the changing military and economic fortunes of Ife were irrelevant to that exalted position. That further implied that those conditions were not considered as primary factors in the attainment of that position, in the first instance.

Thirdly, all the statements were made not at religious ceremonies nor within religious contexts but within eminently political situations, that is, during wars, during peace negotiations and at installation ceremonies of an *Oba*. Yet the "technical" terms used would not be easily recognizable political ones by most of the modern scholars who have written on the Yoruba. Nor can we really argue that the problem was with the poverty of technical terms in Yoruba, because there were adequate Yoruba words that could have been used, had it been so intended, to convey modern conventional political concept. Words conveying the idea of military power, economic strength, tributary relationship, imperial status and so on were very well known in Yoruba. For Oyo controlled an empire for

over a century and a half before then and its relationship with its dependent territories were well known and clearly defined. What we have here, therefore, must be seen as representing a different concept, a different mould of political (not just religious) relationship and world view.

Perhaps we can draw attention to some of the words and phrases used: "the cradle of the race" "sacred city" "the place where all the nations of the earth have sprung from" "the sacred spot from which we originated" "father of all our kings", "fathers of all tribes" "fathers of all," "conservators of the world," "the oldest of mankind" and so on. Nowhere was the position of Ife described as that of a military conqueror or of an economic capital, which it might well have been but which was not considered by the Yoruba as decisive ingredients in their perception of its position. The decline of its military or economic strength would not affect their perception. Perhaps, then, to understand the position of Ife among the Yorubas, we should see it in its proper, and not in its import socio-political context.

The concept which all the quoted phrases above express in different words and from which the descriptions derive is that of *Orirun*, and embedded in these phrases is the belief that "Ife ni Orirun Yoruba" (Ife is the Orirun of the Yoruba). To properly understand the position of Ife, therefore, we must understand what Orirun meant (and still means) to the Yoruba.

Literally, it can be defined as "the fountain of existence"¹ or "the head of heaven"² or "the beginning of straightness"³, or "the place of destruction"⁴. In other words, it means the prime origin of an animate or even inanimate being to which its essence will also return after death, or the source of being and the final resting place of departed spirits. As the source of one's being, it is a place to which one was free to return whenever one was tired of any other place where one was "sojourning". For this reason, it must be constantly kept in one's subconscious and in a position in which one would like to find it if one ever returned there. As a final resting place after death, it was a place to which one was bound to return. It must, therefore, be kept in a condition fit for the spirits to repose in peacefully. Orirun can thus be seen as both physical and spiritual, temporal and eternal, finite and infinite, *real* and imaginary.

Ife as *Orirun* was the physical, temporal and real place from which all Yoruba and their Obas believed they migrated⁵ (and to which they were entitled to return if need be) and the spiritual eternal place where their souls would ultimately rest. This probably explains why the Edo word *Uhe* means both Ile-Ife and heaven. It also explains why, among the

Yoruba, when an old man dies, he is said to have 'gone to Ife'. And until recently, the Yoruba believed that if you went to Ile-Ife, you were likely to meet a relative who had long died. This concept of Ife as Orirun, the source of existence and the final resting place after death, gave it its apparently unchanging status which conventional political theoreticians find difficult to understand. It largely explains why, after the 16th century, it continued to maintain its place of honour, in spite of the rise of Benin and Oyo empires. And from this concept flow all the other beliefs about Ife: that it was the "father Kingdom" (*ebi* system); that it must not be attacked by any other Yoruba kingdom; that the sun and moon rise from there (*ibi oju ti imo wa* - too literally and thus wrongly translated as lying to the east and that all the other praise names given to it originated from there).

From what has been said about Ife, it should be clear that this is not a conventional imperial capital as we know it today. It is at the same time less and more than one: less in the sense that it did not have a centralized army with which to defend all the territories against both internal chaos or external aggression, nor did it control or regulate the flow of money or trade all over the kingdoms. Although occasional laws applied to all of them, these were in the form of decrees from the gods and the ancestors, not from a deliberative assembly. The tributes that came in were largely for the purposes of making their house good, that is, of appeasing the ancestors and the gods in order to ensure that the place remained habitable, if there was the need for one to come back, and also to ensure a final rest after death. The latter purpose explains that it is more than just an imperial capital, for it is seen as the ultimate home to which one aspired to return after death. This was not, therefore, the kind of capital that could be abandoned or removed by any ruler, as Johnson imagined that Oranyan did (Johnson, 1921:150). To remove it, another Orirun would have to be created and judging by the above-quoted phrases, no other had yet been created by the end of the 19th century. Nor can there be any doubt about which Ife was Orirun of the many supposed Ifes. There can only be one Orirun and whichever one can lay claim to it is the real Ife. Others can only be borrowers of the name. This strong position of Ile-Ife gave it certain privileges and imposed upon it certain responsibilities which must always be borne in mind whenever we are discussing events in Yorubaland involving Ile-Ife, Orirun Yoruba.

In spite of the widespread recognition of the importance of Ife among the Yoruba, a history of Ife that might compare with Johnson's History of the Yoruba (which emphasizes Oyo history) have not emerged. In a

sense, it is probably proper to attempt to write a history of Orirun, but once Johnson's history appeared, there arose the need to have a more complete picture of at least the temporal and physical aspects of Ife. In the 1920's the educated elite of Ife made strenuous efforts to research into the traditions of Ife, especially as they must have felt that its position and monarchy were not correctly portrayed by Johnson. One of the most energetic in the exercise was Prince Adeyemi Ademiluyi, the eldest son of the reigning Ooni, Ademiluyi Ajagun, Ajagunloye-bi-Oyinbo. His death around 1929, followed soon afterwards by that of his father, must have slowed down the work. However, shortly after the Ooni Aderemi ascended the throne in 1930, he resumed the research by asking each ruling house to furnish him with their family histories. In the mid-1930's the Principal of the newly founded Oduduwa College, the Rev. M. S. Cole (later Somade) reportedly engaged himself in compiling a history of Ife. Other up-coming elite of Ife helped to unravel its mystery, most notable among whom was Mr (now Chief) M.A. Fabunmi, the Odole Atunobase of Ife. The first fruit of these efforts to be published was that of Prince J. A. Ademakinwa, whose two-volume work, *Ife, cradle of the yorubas*, appeared in 1958. A patriotic effort, devoted to refuting what he considered Johnson's errors on Ife, it was not comparable to Johnson's work. In 1957, shortly before Ademakinwa's volumes appeared, the Government of the Western Region, under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, established the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme, with Dr. S. O. Biobaku as Director. The scheme was mandated to conduct researches into Yoruba history, and one of its priorities was research into Ife oral traditions.

What became clear over the years, at least to those involved in the exercise, was, first, that we required an awful lot of the traditions to produce an acceptable academic work; secondly, oral sources are much more difficult to collect than lifeless documents. The human archival sources of oral history have a choice of whether to give any information, what type or quality of it to give, how much, when and when not to give it. Getting out information is as much an expertise in diplomacy as in academic proficiency. A researcher may spend months collecting information which in the end he may not find immediately useful. In Ife the problems are a great deal more compounded. Here memories go back, not just to three or four generations but to about a thousand years or more, with historical facts converted into orature and religious ceremonies. There is a more intractable problem, which is the Ife (perhaps Yoruba) concept of what history is. The Ife use history as the lifeblood

of their existence, as the taproot that holds them firmly in place. Therefore it is to be jealously guarded against the prying eyes of the uninitiated Ife and must never be divulged to outsiders; however, this is a contradiction, since the Ife regarded everyone as having a share in the kingdom. There is yet a fourth problem; the history of Ife is so much entwined with the history of most of the Yoruba kingdoms that it may be necessary to know these before a fairly complete outline knowledge of Ife history can be assumed. For many of the events in Ife which are preserved in the traditions of these other kingdoms have sometimes been forgotten by the Ife themselves.

All these problems convinced us that a great deal of piecemeal research must be done over many years, and in many places outside Ife, to aid Ife history. Soon after the Obafemi Awolowo University moved to its permanent site in January 1967, the Institute of African Studies sponsored a multi-disciplinary research project on Yoruba history, with funds provided by the university. Knowledgeable Ifes were encouraged to write down and publish whatever they knew about Ife and Yorubaland. Final year history students were encouraged to take Ife topics for their research essays. The Ooni of Ife, the late Oba Aderemi, rekindled his interest, and by 1971, he was willing to endow a research fellowship purposely for Ife history. Various problems prevented him from carrying out his wish. Meanwhile, all the efforts made over the years continued to accumulate. Other scholars in various disciplines came from all over the world and provided pieces of Ife history. By 1981, it was thought that we had enough material to enable us have a clear idea of the outlines of Ife history and a week-end seminar was arranged, to be held at the Obafemi Awolowo University. It could not hold but some of the papers assigned to the participants are included in the present collection, to which other contributions have been added.

In putting this collection together, the intention was to produce a critical and balanced history of Ife from the earliest (pre-Oduduwa) times to the present. This meant using oral sources critically and entirely in most chapters to produce an objective modern history. There are 17 chapters in all. The first two chapters deal with such general topics as geographical environments and sources of Ife history. On sources, one may briefly remark that contrary to the generally held notion that oral traditions could only go back to a few generations, Ife traditions appear to go back to a thousand years or more. Indeed, the farther back in time the traditions, the more it would appear they are preserved. The nearer ones, on the other hand, tend to be forgotten. What determines what is remem-

bered and preserved is not just the human brain. The importance of the events being recounted and the institutional and religious framework they give rise to tend to play an important role in their preservation.

Chapters 2, 4 and 5 treat the period from the pre-Oduduwa times to the establishment of the Oduduwa dynasty in Ife. The materials here are extremely rich and each of the authors has been able to arrive at the same conclusions, starting from different perspectives and working with different genres of what are essentially the same sources. Chapter 6 treats the long period from about the 11th century to about the end of the 18th century. One feature of this period is that the nearer we get to the 19th century, the poorer our knowledge of the sources becomes. Indeed, there is a long period of about two centuries preceding the 19th century when only the names of the rulers are known. A great deal of effort at collecting traditions must be directed towards filling this gap. Chapter 7 deals with the history of the economic growth of Ife up to 1700, drawing attention to the little known economic factors that may indeed have been the main props in its position among the Yoruba.

The reader will notice that from Chapters 3 to 7, various authors restate similar conclusions without creating boredom and also express different opinions on the same sources without contradictions. These agreements and disagreements have been left alone because they constitute a healthy development for the growth of historical scholarship, using oral traditions.

Chapters 8 to 10 resume the chronological treatment in which the historical developments in Ife in the 19th and 20th centuries are treated, ending with the death of Sir Adesoji Aderemi, the Ooni of Ife, in 1980. In these chapters written sources become more abundant than they were previously.

Chapters 11 to 16 deal with various themes that are germane to the understanding of Ife history. Thus, Chapter 11 treats, in sketchy outlines, the outlying towns of Ife and their historical vicissitudes. Chapter 12 critically examines the dispersals from Ife, a topic that crops up in most of the traditions of the other Yoruba kingdoms. Chapter 13 treats the all-absorbing Modakeke issue which started in the mid - 19th century and remains unresolved. Here a restatement of some of the facts already noted in Chapters 8, 9 and 10 becomes inevitable, but the perspective and the message are different. Chapter 14 treats the traditional government and administration of Ile-Ife, while Chapters 15 and 17 deal with religions, traditional and imported. Chapter 16 deals with Ife art which alone has given Ile-Ife its fame all over the world.

A work such as this, involving many people and continuing over such a long period, must have accumulated a long list of debts of gratitude. Not all of them can be mentioned in this introductory note, particularly as each contributor must have expressed his gratitude in the relevant chapters. The few mentioned here are those who played a general role. The first is the Obafemi Awolowo University which provided the research funds for most of the contributors to the volume, particularly for the Yoruba History Research Project of the Department of History of the university. The university also granted the editor a sabbatical leave in the 1983/84 academic year when a large part of the editing was done. During the leave, the University of Lagos provided a conducive atmosphere for academic work. There are the Ife 'fathers', represented by Chief M. A. Fabunmi, the Odole Atunosade of Ife, and Chief Fasogbon who over the years kept the inexhaustible archives from which our sources have been drawn. Chief Fabunmi particularly made available the files containing his research notes over the past forty years. He has also been publishing many of his researches. When he was Chancellor of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Chief Obafemi Awolowo took keen interest in the history of Ife and took time off to urge that something be done about it. I am grateful for the encouragement. Various colleagues also read different chapters and gave very valuable suggestions. Among them are Dr Segun Osoba, Professor Richard Olaniyan, Professor Olufemi Omosini, all of the Department of History of the Obafemi Awolowo University, and Professor Horton of the University of Port Harcourt. Dr Abiodun Adediran, also of the Department of History at Ife, has been of immense help. Apart from contributing his own chapters and reading others, he has also helped to trace some difficult references. Messrs Olusanya Adeyeye and Ayodele Ogunleye typed the manuscripts. To all of them I am very grateful.

Finally, I acknowledge the thirst for knowledge and the great zeal for progress and improvement shown by late Sir Adesoji Aderemi. He was ready to provide all facilities for the writing of Ife history and would have loved to see this volume in his lifetime. To his great memory this work is dedicated.

Chronologically, this work terminates with the demise of Sir Adesoji Aderemi. However, it has been published during the reign of an equally eminent Ooni, Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II (Hon. LL.D., Ife), Arole Oduduwa, who ascended the Ife throne in 1981. Most of the writings here were completed while he was a few years on the throne, but the energy, grace and pomp which he has already displayed are indicative of the continuation of Ife renaissance which was initiated in 1903 by Olubuse I and sustained by Ooni Ajagun and Ooni Aderemi. It is hoped that future editions of this work will include the achievements of Oba Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II. May he reign long and peacefully.

Prof. I. A. Akinjogbin, Ife,
March, 1986



CHAPTER 1

IFE DIVISION - THE PHYSICAL ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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Ife division lies between latitude 7° N and $7^{\circ} 35'$ N, longitudes $4^{\circ} 20'$ E and $4^{\circ} 45'$ E, covering an area of 1846 km^2 (Fig. 1). Its western boundary joins the course of River Shasha, and its south-eastern boundary River Oni. However, no such natural features mark the boundary to the north-east or to the south. The evolution of these boundaries is discussed by Adejuyigbe (1970).

The population of the division was 376,718 in 1963, of which Ile-Ife town had 130,050 and the other settlements 246,668 (Table 1).

Table 1: Population distribution in Ife Division 1963

	Area		Population 1963		Density per km^2
	km^2	% Total	Number	% Total	
(a) Ile-Ife	15.36	0.9	130,050	34.5	8467
(b) Rural	1615.36	87.5	173,074	45.9	107
(a) & (b)	1630.72	88.4	303,124	80.4	186
IFETEDO	64.00	3.4	29,177	7.8	456
IPETUMODU	99.84	5.4	24,080	6.4	240
EBUNABON-					
MORO	51.20	2.8	20,337	5.4	397

The emphasis in this chapter is not on the human but on the physical elements whose study is of great importance. Firstly, physical elements such as climate, geology, landforms and drainage, soils and vegetation constitute the most significant elements of natural resources everywhere.

Secondly, the interaction between these physical elements initially, to a certain extent, conditioned the pattern of human occupation and still significantly controls the day-to-day pattern, human activities and thus contributes to the making of the history.

Climatic factors include atmospheric temperature, rainfall, humidity and light, each of which influences the physiological processes in the flora and fauna of the area, hence the availability of these resources. Apart from partially determining the spatial variation in the nature of the soil and vegetal cover, they also largely influence land utilization, especially agriculture, both spatially and temporally. In this regard, rainfall is the most important climatic element in the tropics, as it controls the cropping pattern and the phase of agricultural calendar as it concerns bush clearing, planting, weeding, harvesting, the application of fertilizers, fungicide, etc. in Ife area as in other parts of Nigeria.

The rocks of a region constitute very important elements of the topography and the land resources, inasmuch as they essentially influence the nature of the land surface, the soils, the hydrology and the vegetation of such an area. Apart from influencing these elements, the geology is also an indicator of the local mineral wealth.

Landforms and terrain characteristics are usually reflected in slopes. The nature of the slopes determines, to some extent, the nature of the vegetal cover and soil, the type of farming, the farming method and the type of crops to cultivate. Thus, slopes, to a considerable extent, influence the day-to-day activities of rural communities.

Soils are the chief factors in the plant environment and are very important elements of the landscape. As plants depend on them for anchorage and for the supply of nutrients, soil characteristics, with regard to their content of moisture and essential minerals, are reflected in the pattern of rural land occupation. Thus, soils with adequate drainage, water and moisture-retention capacity and with adequate nutrient status have been utilized for the cultivation of tree crops like cocoa, kolanut and citrus in the division, while those considered to be deficient are either left covered by the forest or used for the cultivation of annual crops on sharing or rotational basis.

Vegetation is important because it provides timber, firewood and other valuable products, and is a measure of land quality. As both crops and wild plants are controlled in their growth and development by the same environmental factors, the condition of the vegetation may be an indicator of that potential. However, soil/vegetation associations have not been traced in the tropics, not even in Ife division (Adejuwon and Jeje, 1975).

CLIMATE

Ife area has little or no reliable climatic data because up till 1969, it only had substandard meteorological stations at Mokuro, Modakeke and

Ipetumodu. Data from these stations only relate to rainfall; but even then, these are punctuated by long periods during which no records are taken. Thus, the data can be regarded as completely unreliable. The Obafemi Awolowo University established a standard meteorological station in 1969. Although the data from this source are still too scanty to be representative of the nature of the climate in Ife area, they are nevertheless discussed here along with data from neighbouring stations. Most of the records examined here are derived from neighbouring stations in Ondo, Osogbo, Ilesa and Akure. Data from these stations can be interpolated to be representative of the situation in Ife area, as they are a few kilometres from the divisional boundary. However, Akure, Ilesa and Osogbo stations are deficient in certain respects: none of these stations keep records of sunshine or incidents of radiation; also, none has any record on evaporation and evapotranspiration. For these, one has to use the data available from the Ondo meteorological station.

The climatic parameters examined here include rainfall, temperature, relative humidity, sunshine and radiation, evaporation and evapotranspiration.

RAINFALL

Rainfall in Ife area, as in most of Nigeria, is controlled by the movement of the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ). As in most of southern Nigeria, Ife area experiences two distinct seasons: wet and dry. The ITCZ is a zone separating the humid MT air masses originating over the Atlantic Ocean from the CT air masses originating over the Sahara. This zone moves with the sun. In northern summer when the sun moves north of the equator, reaching the Tropics of Cancer by June 21st, the ITCZ moves away from the coastal area towards the north, ultimately reaching about latitude 19°N. All areas south of this latitude are under south-west moisture-laden winds which bring rainfall to most of the country. However, the beginning of the rainy season varies in all the stations. For 20% of the time during which records are available, rainfall is well established by March, for 60% of the time they are established in April and for another 20% of the time they are established only in May. Thus, the period of the season could vary from March, April or May to November, that is, the rainy season varies between seven and nine months. At the onset of the rains, rainfall is derived from convective cumulonimbus clouds. Rainy days are few, especially in March and April, and on the average of seven and nine days respectively. They are generally less than ten a month during this period. With further northward movement of the sun in May, the whole of southern Nigeria,

including Ife area, comes under the influence of persistent frontal rainfall lasting till August. On reaching its northernmost point, the ITCZ starts to move southwards as from July. At this time and in August, most of southern Nigeria is under a thick cover of stratus clouds not thick enough to yield large amounts of rainfalls, so that in August, it is relatively low (the so-called dry spell). The August break has also been related to the height of the front which at this time is less than 1000m in southern Nigeria, hence it is relatively weak and with little convective energy to generate condensation and precipitation. Rainfall in August (see Table 1) is about half or two thirds of its value in July and about half of that of September. This, in effect, points to a double maxima - one in June, the other in September, the latter consistently higher (Table 2). Rainfall is heaviest east of Ife division and in the south, declining westwards and northwards (Fig.2).

However, the number of rainy days in August is only slightly less than that in June/July and September, which means that August is not dry as such but marked by light, often persistent drizzles concentrated on a few days.

Rainfall is characterized by high variability. November, December, January and February have the lowest rainfall figures, with January as the driest month. June and September are the peak months of the rainy season, although there is considerable variation from year to year.

In the low rainfall months of December, January and February and in some of the high rainfall months, especially September, rainfall is in the form of severe thunderstorms of line squalls derived from convective sources and experienced mainly in the afternoon or at night. As shown by Jeje and Ilesanmi (1970), light showers of 2.5mm - 12.49mm per day occur with the highest frequency in Ife area and account for about 60% of all rainy days, but these only constitute 25% of the total rainfall, while heavy intensity rainfall more than 12.5mm per day accounts for about 40% of all rainy days and for 75% of the total rainfall. These thunderstorms are often associated with high-speed winds up to 50km/hr from a south-westerly direction. Such winds often destroy a lot of property, particularly roofs of buildings.

TEMPERATURE

Unfortunately, data are not available for Ilesa and Osogbo, while the data for Akure are incomplete and cannot be used. However, records for Ondo for ten years (1967-1977) should be applicable to Ife division.

According to Adejuwon and Jeje (1975), the amount of solar energy

received varies a little from place to place within Ife area. Monthly totals are lowest in June and July, with about 300 kg-cal cm.2 per day, rising to over 400 kg-cal cm2 per day in April. The temperature pattern more or less follows this. Temperature is constantly high, as shown in Table 3.

Table 2: Mean monthly rainfall in the various stations (in mm)

Station	No. of Years	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Ondo Met. Station	30	51	33	109	154	178	216	236	142	257	208	76	25	1681
Akure Schl. of Agric.	25	15	38	107	190	168	218	170	94	236	180	56	23	1495
Univ. of Ife, Ile-Ife	11	3	17	113	149	175	165	206	126	161	205	66	7	1392
Ilesa	30	10	27	97	122	166	168	175	86	234	218	70	10	1383
Osogbo	21	7	26	82	109	144	151	134	99	194	192	42	10	1190

Table 3: Mean Max. Min. and Mean T.C Ondo Met. Station (10 years: 1967-77)

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Max.	33	34	33	32	30	29	28	27	28	29	31	32
Min.	21	23	24	23	22	22	21	22	21	22	22	22
Mean	25	27	27	27	26	25	24	23	24	25	26	26

February and March are the hottest months, and the rainy months, especially June to September, are the coolest. Temperature range in any day during the wet season is low at about 9°C, but is higher during the dry season at 9°-12°C. The lowest minimum temperature is recorded at the peak of the harmattan. However, the lowest mean and maximum temperatures are recorded at the peak of the rainy season as a result of the thick cloud cover and the lower amount of solar radiation received on the ground surface.

There is very little fluctuation in the mean temperature, just 4°C, the highest at 27°C from February to April, the lowest at 23°C in August. Temperature should not be an inhibiting factor in crop growth in Ife area because with a high temperature all the year round, there is the possibility of an all-year-round growth period. However, there is limitation of the moisture availability.

Relative humidity is related to the air temperature and rainfall. It is lowest in the dry months and highest in the rainy season. On the whole, relative humidity in Ondo is higher than in Akure for most of the months, meaning that relative humidity decreases in a south-to-north direction, a trend particularly pronounced in December. Judging by all this, it appears that relative humidity may be less in Ife area, as it is north of both Ondo and Akure.

SUNSHINE

August has the least hours of sunshine, as in other parts of southern Nigeria. This, of course, is due to cloud effect. Table 4 also shows the distinct relationship between sunshine and temperature variation. November, December and January, which have the highest figures for sunshine, have the highest diurnal temperature fluctuation.

EVAPORATION AND POTENTIAL EVAPOTRANSPIRATION

Evaporation is the amount of precipitation lost to the atmosphere from bare surfaces through the removal of water vapour from such surfaces, while evapotranspiration is the loss of water by plants through the emission of water vapour via the stomata of their leaves.

Potential Evapotranspiration (PE) is the amount of water transpired in unit time by short green plants completely shading the ground; they are of uniform height and never short of water. It is an important moisture level reference, as it indicates optimum water requirements of crops and is used as a measure of irrigation needs in water-deficit areas. PE depends on the amount of rainfall and the nature of vegetation, especially vegetation density and the albedo of the vegetative cover. Since evaporation concerns only water loss from the ground surface alone, evapotranspiration is a more useful measure for evaluating rainfall effectiveness or crop-water requirement in an area.

The high rate of evaporation and evapotranspiration in Ile-Ife, as indeed in most of south-western Western Nigeria, relates to the high daily temperatures. December, January, February and March, the hottest months, return the highest evaporation figures. This is more or less the same for evapotranspiration, except that April and May also have high returns. The lowest evaporation rate is in July and August when the sky is overcast and the temperature relatively low.

As mentioned earlier, temperature is not a constraint to an all-year-round crop growth season, but moisture is. An examination of the water

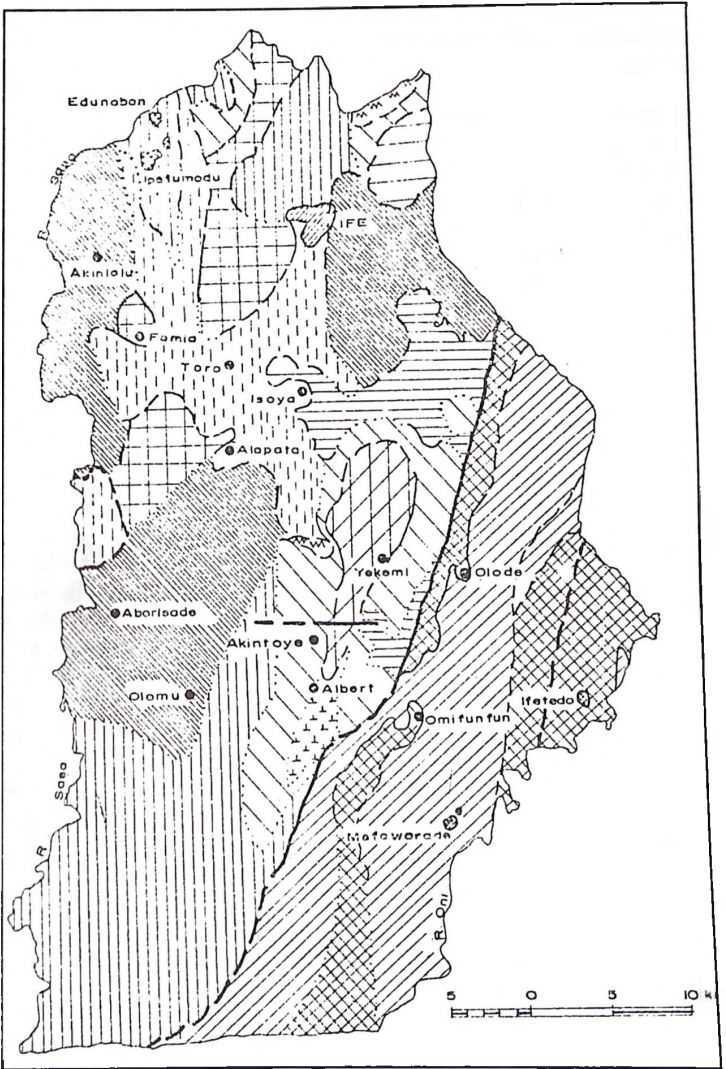
balance for Ondo, which is applicable in Ife area (Table 5), shows that at least during the dry months, especially from November to March, there is water deficit when crops may require irrigation. However, water surplus exceeds water deficit by 322mm, in which case the whole year may be productive if the surplus water can be stored and redistributed in the form of irrigation.

GEOLOGY

Up-to-date knowledge of the geology of Ife area is lacking. The mapping of the rocks by the Geological Survey Department of Nigeria took place between 1946 and 1962 on 1:100,000 base maps. The map produced was published on 1:250,000 in 1965. The scale of the base maps necessarily encouraged generalization in mapping. Further, as the various rocks occur in an extremely complex and intricate pattern, generalization was inevitable. For example, the various migmatites and gneisses are difficult to differentiate in the field, not only because they are deeply weathered but also because of the varying degrees of metamorphism in them. This is also true of the various schists. The monograph which is supposed to accompany the published map is yet to be published.

The Department of Geology of the Obafemi Awolowo University is at present trying to map the area around Ife town in order to correct the generalized map published by the Geological Survey Department. Unfortunately, its own maps are equally as generalized as that of the Nigerian Geological Survey Department. Field experiences have convinced one that the Nigerian Geological Survey map is often correct in the core areas of the rocks mapped, but in most cases the boundaries of the rocks are inaccurate. However, as sheet 60 of the Nigerian Geological Survey Department is the only map covering the whole of Ife area, the description of the rocks below, especially the aerial extent of each rock type, is based on the map, but structural and other details are based on field observations.

The rocks in Ife area constitute part of the Precambrian Basement of Nigeria, which in turn is part of the African crystalline shield. They consist of various gneisses, schists and quartzites into which granitic and basic rock intruded. Outcrops vary from place to place, mainly as a result of their differing resistance to erosion, but outcrops are common on granites and granite-gneisses and are rare on schists. Outcrops vary from massive whalebacks, exfoliated domes, inselbergs to flat or convex rock pavements and corestones. Usually, outcrops are found forming minor falls and rapids along the rivers.



The Geology of Ife Division

For convenience and easy description, the rocks can be divided into three broad classes: the gneiss complex, the granitic rocks and the basic rocks.

THE GNEISS COMPLEX

The gneiss complex covers the largest area in Ife area. These rocks form in an irregular pattern, suggesting a rather complex geological history. They are probably of sedimentary origin, as theorized by Jones and Hookey (1964), and were metamorphosed, faulted and probably folded in a long period of orogeny, as suggested by de Swardt (1953). With later granitic intrusions into the rocks, metasomatic materials were injected, leading to migmatization of some of them (Oyawoye, 1965). The rocks were partially folded, with the axes tending mainly NNW-SSW. Faulting is especially prominent in the quartzites and quartzschists and at the boundary of these rocks with other basement rocks (Fig.3).

Migmatite and banded gneisses occur together in three areas: north-west of Ife as narrow band, continuing into Ede-Osogbo area; they also form around the coarse porphyritic granite centred on Yekemi village south of Ife. Furthermore, they form as a narrow band between quartzitic and granulitic rocks in Faforiji area, occupying an area of about 17 km². The rocks are deeply weathered in most places, but exposures, flat up to convex low pavements, are common. They also outcrop in road cuttings and along stream beds. The composition of the rocks is extremely variable, depending on the degree of the migmatization of the original rocks. The commonest types in the field are the biotite-hornblende gneiss, the banded gneiss and the semi-banded gneiss. Biotite-hornblende gneisses show evidence of intense migmatization, as they display complex and intricate folds and banding. The bands are usually thicker at the axes of the microfolds. The light bands are often composed of quartz and microcline, while the dark ones are composed of hornblende and biotite, both of which may also form as inclusions in each other. The rocks are foliated, with the mineral bands tending parallel in the direction of foliation, which is mainly NW-SE, and NNE-SSW. The dip of foliation is steep, varying between 40° and 80°. Foliation, steep dipping and alternation of dark and light bands make the rocks extremely susceptible to chemical weathering. The ferro-magnesian minerals of the dark bands are readily weathered, leading to the crumbling of the more resistant lighter bands.

Banded gneisses are found along Ife-Ogudu road, exposed as low rock pavements. The rocks lack contorted folding and the bands are

often persistent. The alternating dark and light coloured bands vary in width and are different in composition. The dark bands are composed mainly of biotite while the light ones are composed of quartz and feldspar. It is foliated and steeply dipping, with weathering readily taking place along the planes of foliation.

Granite-gneiss occurs in three areas: as a small body about 8 km² around Famia, it is found as a loop extending south-west to north-west of Ife town, occupying an area approximately 90 km²; it also occurs as a small body along Toro-Idita road, SSW of Ife town. Except in the Toro-Idita area where its boundary with the surrounding pegmatitized schists is poorly defined, its boundary with other local rocks is distinct and well marked by topographical discontinuities. The rock outcrops frequently as elongated hills and inselbergs, especially on the grounds of Obafemi Awolowo University campus. South of Ife town, it is quarried for road surfacing.

The rock, which is light-coloured, is coarse-grained and often poorly banded. It is heavily intruded into by quartz veins and pegmatites along joints, faults and other zones of weakness. The rocks, foliated along NNW-SSW axis, is steeply dipping, with angle of dip about 45° in Toro-Idita area, 10° - 70° in Femia area and 30° - 80° around Ife town. It is composed mainly of quartz, microcline and biotite.

Quartzite and quartz-schists are found east of River Owena in two large parallel bands separated from each other by bands quartzo-felspathic-granulite-gneiss. These rocks constitute parts of the metasediments, tending from the boundary of the basement rocks with the sedimentary rocks in the south to the boundary with sedimentary rocks along the Niger Valley.

In Ife area, the narrowest occurrence trends NNE-SSW, just west of Olode village where it is 1.5km wide and 24 km long. South of Omifunfun village is another occurrence 1.8km wide and about 22 km long. The largest occurrence is found south of Faforiji and around Ifetedo where it covers an area approximately 80 km². The boundary of the rocks in the west is well marked by a fault line; elsewhere the boundary is equally distinct, except in few places south of Omifunfun village where the boundary with the surrounding quartz-felspathic granulite-gneiss is indistinct. Although occurring as impressive ridges and hills, outcrops are infrequent, as the hills and ridges are often covered by flaggy rubble derived from the weathered rocks. However, outcrops are common in road cuttings along the Ife-Ondo road.

The composition of the rocks varies. Where it comprises quartz alone,

it forms massive quartzite; but where the content of mica and chlorite is considerable, it forms quartz-schist. The quartzite bands are usually resistant to weathering, but areas of quartz-schist are often deeply weathered. Both quartzite and quartz-schist are often deeply weathered. Both quartzite and quartz-schist occur in bands of various thicknesses and are so closely interdigitated that they cannot be mapped separately. The rocks display close parallelism of strike and dip, especially in Faforiji-Ifetedo and Omifunfun area. Here the strike of the rocks is N-S and NNE-SSW, with the dip nearly vertical at 75° - 80° . Near Olode the dip is relatively gentle at 30° - 45° , although the strike is NNE-SSW. The rocks are heavily jointed, faulted and intruded into by dark veins, probably as a result of the E-W compression described for them elsewhere by de Swardt (1953). Alternation and interdigitation of bands of quartzite and quartz-schist suggest sedimentary origin, probably from sand stone and arkose.

Table 4: Mean monthly sunshine in hours from Ondo meteorological station

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1972	8.0	6.4	5.7	4.9	3.2	4.9	3.2	2.5	3.2	4.2	6.4	4.4
1973	5.2	4.5	2.4	4.5	4.9	5.2	4.7	3.4	3.7	6.1	7.5	6.4
1974	5.0	5.6	6.4	6.0	5.3	4.9	2.7	3.2	2.9	4.4	7.2	6.8
1975	-	3.9	5.1	6.5	4.9	5.4	2.8	1.4	1.8	4.4	6.2	7.5
1976	6.9	5.3	5.2	3.9	4.5	4.3	2.1	1.4	2.1	2.5	5.9	6.6

Table 5: Simplified Water Balance for Ondo (1971) in mm

	Actual Rainfall	Calculated Evaporation	Rainfall Deficit	Soil Moisture deficit (SMD)	Irrigation Needed	S.M.D. After Irrigation
JAN	3.05	78.74	75.69	75.69	75.69	NIL
FEB	62.99	92.46	29.47	29.47	29.47	NIL
MAR	92.96	118.11	25.15	25.15	25.15	NIL
APR	127.00	114.30	-12.70	NIL	-	NIL
MAY	147.07	110.24	-36.83	NIL	-	NIL
JUN	133.10	91.44	-41.66	NIL	-	NIL
JUL	280.92	86.61	-214.31	NIL	-	NIL
AUG	80.01	86.61	6.60	6.60	-	6.60
SEP	323.09	83.82	-239.27	NIL	-	NIL
OCT	108.97	94.49	-14.49	NIL	-	NIL
NOV	60.45	99.06	38.61	38.61	38.61	NIL
DEC	24.89	86.61	61.72	61.72	61.72	NIL

Quartzo-felspathic-granulite-gneiss occurs in between the quartzite and quartz-schist bands described above. It occurs principally east of Olode village where it is about 5 km wide, extending to the south around Omifunfun where it diverges into bands. The band around Mefoworade is about 10 km wide and the one immediately east of Owena River is about 6 km in width. The rock is variably weathered. Although it forms hills and ridges, outcrops are few and are often in the form of low, flat rock pavements.

The rock, which is fine to medium grained, is flaggy in nature because it comprises alternating irregular bands of quartz and biotite. The biotite bands emphasize the foliation and vary from a few mm to 500mm. Quartz exceeds 70% of the mineral constituents and together with subordinate feldspar form a fine-grained granulitic fabric through which their well aligned biotite plates are evenly distributed. The rock, steeply dipping 60° - 80° in Olode area, with the strike of foliation tending NNW-SSW, is probably formed as a result of acidic hypogene metasomatic material invading the original local rocks.

Schists are found south west of Ife division underlying the western half of the forest reserve occupying an area approximately 450 km². They also occur north of Ife in the basin of River Opa. Compared with other rocks, schists occupy the largest area in Ife division. Its formation south-west of the division merges imperceptibly with the pegmatitized schists to the north and the magmatized gneisses to the east, but its boundary with the quartzo-felspathic granulite-gneiss is well marked by a fault line (Fig.3). The occurrence north of Ife is still poorly delimited. The southern part is thought to be an amphibolite, as shown in the unpublished map compiled by the Department of Geology, Obafemi Awolowo University and field experience confirms this view.

The rocks are deeply weathered into reddish brown clay, with no outcrops seen. However, where partially weathered in road cuttings, the schistose and other textural structures are still visible. The schists, comprised mainly of mica schists, are medium to coarse grained, with sub-parallel orientation of the micaceous minerals. The most important minerals are biotite and muscovite; occurring interleaved and quartz accessory minerals include garnet, staurolite, sillimanite and tourmaline. Quartz veins are very common in the rocks. The schists were probably formed from arkose and other argillaceous rocks.

Schist and epidioritic complex occur as a large body 13 km south-east of Ife, extending from Isoya village to the east throughout Iyanfoworogi, Ajobandele and Ogudu and occupying an area approxi-

mately 64 km². They also occur as small bands between an area of about 13 km². The boundary of the rocks is poorly defined by the surrounding pegmatite, pegmatitized schist and migmatite, but is well marked by a fault separating them from quartzite to the east.

The rocks are variably weathered and have been dissected into hilly, rolling topography, but outcrops as corestones are common, whereas outcrops forming minor rapids and falls are common in river beds. The rocks are dark coloured, fine grained, schistose and foliated, composed of alternating irregular mass of quartz and feldspar occurring as inclusions in bands of ferromagnesian minerals comprised mainly of hornblendes, biotite and pyroxene. The rocks are micro-folded, with several outcrops displaying intricate patterns of folds. The direction of strikes is not clear, but the rocks dip steeply at 50° - 70°.

Pegmatitized schists occur in three areas. The largest occurrence is around Aborisade village where they occupy about 185 km². They are also found north and south of Akinlalu village, covering approximately 75 km². The occurrence, mapped south-east of Ife town on sheet 60 of the Nigerian Geological Survey Department, has been delimited as amphibolite by the Department of Geology of the University, and field experience confirms the latter delimitation. The boundary with the surrounding rocks is uncertain.

As a result of weathering, outcrops are rare, except for minor ones seen near Aborisade. In other areas, large crystals of quartz are commonly seen on the surface. The outcrops near Aborisade are extremely coarse grained, with bands of quartz veins occurring in them. The rocks probably comprise mica schists intercalated with large lenses of feldspar and quartz and were formed as a result of the schists being impregnated with acidic hypogene metasomatic material from a great depth in the crust.

Porphyroblastic gneiss occurs along the Owena River south of Albert village where it covers about 20km². Its boundary with the surrounding rocks is uncertain. The rocks are variably weathered, but outcrops in the form of corestones are common.

The rock, composed of a groundmass of quartz and biotite, has large phenocrysts of feldspar. It is clearly foliated, with the platy phenocrysts tending in the direction of foliation.

THE GRANITIC ROCKS

These rocks occupy a comparatively smaller area than the other rock groups. They appear to have intruded into the local rocks because their oval ground plan shows a discordance with the general trend of the sur-

rounding rocks. The rocks are coarse grained and porphyritic, but they can be subdivided by texture and mineral composition into muscovite-biotite granite (older granite) and coarse porphyritic granite. Pegmatite is included in this group, as the rock covers a large area, occurring as large bodies rather than as narrow intrusions into other rocks.

Muscovite-biotite granite described in Fig. 3 as older granite occurs along Ife-Ilesa road in the form of a massive inselberg, Agbogbo Hill, occupying an area of about 11 km². It is also found as a small intrusion centred on Ori Apata village. The percentage outcrop in this rock is greater than those in other rocks.

The light-coloured rock is medium to coarse grained and is composed of muscovite, biotite, feldspar and quartz. Muscovite varies in relative proportion to biotite, but the latter is always subordinate to muscovite. Biotite, muscovite and quartz form a coarse groundmass, with feldspar forming platy phenocrysts. The parallelism of the phenocrysts suggests foliation. Joints are relatively few in the outcrops seen in the field.

Coarse porphyritic granite occurs as a discrete body about 50 km² along Owena River north and south of Yekemi village. In the south of it, the rock is laterally displaced for a few hundred meters by a fault line running E-W. The boundary of the rocks with the surrounding migmatite is distinct.

The relative closeness of joints in the rock has led to deep chemical weathering, so that outcrops in the form of hills and inselbergs are few. However, rock outcrops in the form of flat pavements and of large core-stones in road cuttings are common. The rock is extremely coarse grained and porphyritic and is composed mainly of biotite, feldspar and quartz, with the latter two forming coarse groundmass in which haphazardly arranged phenocrysts of microcline occur.

Pegmatite occurs west of Idita village where it forms a large body continuing into Odeyinka and Ago Owu districts. It also occurs as a large loop enclosing granite-gneiss south and west of Ife and extending to Toro area. The Department of Geology of the Obafemi Awolowo University mapped the rock as banded-gneiss. Field work shows that banded-gneiss is present along Ife-Toro road, but several bodies of pegmatite of varying dimensions intrude into the banded-gneiss, the boundary between them often clearly defined. The rock which forms gently undulating surfaces is variably weathered into coarse regolith in which quartz fragments predominate. Outcrops in the form of low rock pavements are frequently seen, especially in river beds.

The rock is extremely coarse grained, light coloured, and composed

of quartz, feldspar and some amount of muscovite. It appears to have been formed by metasomatic invasion and that replacement of local rocks, perhaps in the same way as the pegmatites around Olokemeji as described by Jones and Hockey (1964).

BASIC ROCKS

The only known type of basic rock in Ife area is described as epidiorite on sheet 60 of the Nigerian Geological Survey Department and as amphibolite by the Department of Geology, Obafemi Awolowo University. On the published geological sheet, the rock occurs north-east of Ife, extending to Itagunmodi in Ilesa area. On the unpublished map of the Department of Geology of the university, except for a small part of Ife, the rock covers the immediate environment of the area, extending to the east to as far as Mokuro and Itagunmodi. This difference in area coverage on the two maps demonstrates the difficulty of geological mapping where the rocks are deeply weathered and exposures rare. Again, field work shows that this dark dense rock occurs in the form of corestones around Ife town and along Ife-Mokuro road, in the same area mapped by the Department of Geology.

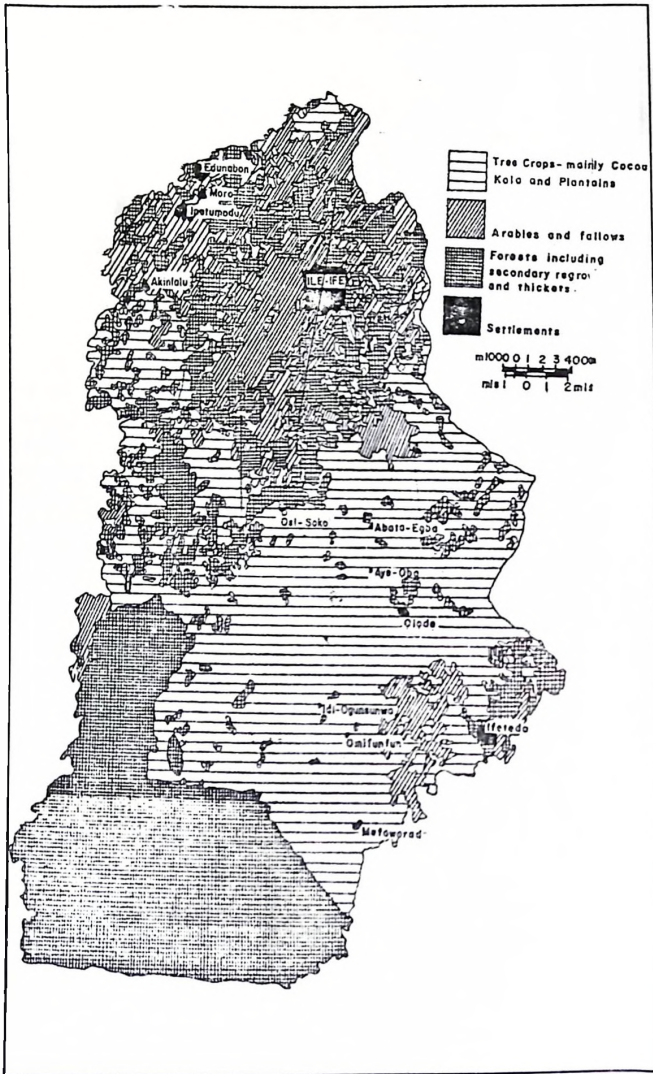
The area underlain by the rock is dissected into rugged, hilly topography, with steep, deep valley slopes. Corestones of various sizes are common on the hill sides, while along the river channels rock outcrops give rise to minor falls and rapids. The rock is variably weathered into reddish, clayey regolith.

The rock, dark coloured and fine grained, is composed of andesine, hornblende, pyroxene, biotite and a very minute amount of quartz orthoclase.

TERRAIN CHARACTERISTICS AND DRAINAGE

Ife division lies between 140m and 335m above sea level. However, several erosional residuals in the form of hills and ridges rise above this general elevation. Ife town itself is at 275m - 290m above sea level (a.s.l.). East of River Owena are several ridges 75m to 275m above the surrounding plains, and west of the river, especially around Ife, are several hills 50m - 150m higher than the lower surfaces. East and north-east of Ife, epidioritic intrusions form impressive hills elevated to more than 330m above the level of the town.

The division is well drained. The principal rivers traversing it include Rivers Shasha, Owena and Oni which take their sources further north. However, these rivers have important tributaries in Ife area, the most



Major landuse/vegetation associations.

important tributaries in Ife area, the most important being Opa I, Aye, Opa II, Oyewere, Erinta Ahanran, Makun, Iponrin, Oyo and Omifunfun (Fig. 4). The larger rivers flow in a N.S. direction which east of Owena is dominantly parallel to the strikes of the local rocks. Here the minor tributaries, whose direction of flow is controlled by the vertical joint systems in the rocks, flow at right angles to the main streams. The drainage patterns are thus somewhat rectangular. Where minor headstreams have eroded headwards to breach the rocks, captures were effected, as evidenced by the south flowing headstream of Ahanran captured by the north-flowing minor tributary of Oni river. West of Owena the drainage pattern is dendritic.

Based on observed morphological characteristics, the division can be broadly divided into two main relief units; 'relief units'; used here in the sense defined by Young (1969), is much the same as the landform region defined by Thomas (1969). Both terms are used interchangeably in this chapter. The relief units comprise the plain and ridge complex to the east and the undulating topography to the west (Fig.5). Analyses of the morphological and drainage basin characteristics of these landform regions are based on the 1:50,000 Nigerian topographical maps and the 1:40,000 airphotos.

PLAIN AND RIDGE COMPLEX

This major relief unit covering about three-eighth of the division is located mainly east of Owena river. The unit, however, is not confined to this area alone, as its characteristic N-S and NNE-SSW trending ridges extend as far north as Osi in Kwara State. In Ekiti and Ijesa districts, these massive ridges are continuous and relatively unbroken, forming pronounced relief at 400-700m above their local surface. However, in Ife area, the ridges are dissected and eroded into low hills and narrow short ridges.

The landform region is drained by Oni and its western bank tributaries, especially Makun and Ahanran, and by the eastern side tributaries of Owena, especially Aye and Omifunfun. Some of the morphometric properties of these rivers are shown in Table 6.

The values of the hypsometric integral of the basins of Makun, Ahanran, Omifunfun and Aye are 37.5%, 28.0%, 38.2% and 22.8% respectively. These indicate a late maturity to old age stage of landscape erosion (Strahler, 1952).

Important landform units and complexes in the relief unit included the hills and ridges and the gently undulating plains described below.

HILL AND RIDGES

These features developed on the NNE-SSW trending quartzites, quartzschists and quartzofelspathic granulite-gneisses cover, about 40% of the relief unit. They can be divided into two groups: the high hills and ridges north of Ayeye-Olode road and the lower hills and ridges south of the road.

The first group comprises four parallel systems of ridges. The two ridges north of Ayeye-Olode are developed on quartzites and granulites. The former, at 60m - 90m above the surrounding plains, is divided into chains of oval hills by the headstreams of Aye. The flat-crested granulitic ridge, at about 130m above the surrounding plains, is dissected at its western side into tabular hills by the headstreams of Ahanran and Aye. Further to the east is the third ridge, also developed on quartzite. Its local relief exceeds 200m and is severely dissected on its southern and western sides by deep, steep-sided tributary valleys of the Oni and Ahanran. The fourth ridge located north-east of Ifetedo, though smaller than the others in areal extent, has a local relief of about 250m. All these ridges are steep-sided, with maximum slope segments ranging between 35° to 60°. On such steep slopes, outcrops of bare rocks are very common. Below the cliff-like slopes are debris slopes consisting of huge boulders immersed in a matrix of gravel and coarse sand. The summits of the hills and ridges are covered by shallow regolith, rock outcrops rather frequent. On the upper hill-side slopes, soils are thin and skeletal, becoming thicker and finer downslope where they consist essentially of hill-wash materials. However, both the thick and skeletal soils on these ridges are heavily covered by cocoa and kolanut farms.

The lower ridges south of Ayeye-Olode-Ifetedo road comprise five parallel N-S and NNE-SSW trending ridges. West of River Owena is a low, dissected, elongated ridge, 45°-75° above the river channel. Immediately east of the river is another one developed on granulite-gneiss. It is dissected into series of oval-shaped hills about 100m above the channel of the river. The third ridge, developed on quartzite, is located between Owena and Makun and is dissected into a chain of low, rounded hills by the tributaries of the former river. East of River Makun are two systems of low ridges developed on granulite-gneiss; these are dissected into low, rounded hills by the tributaries of Makun and Oni.

Slopes around these hills and ridges are generally low, with maximum segments varying between 15° and 25°. All these hills and ridges are generally covered by thick regolith and soil, as road cuttings on some of them show depths of weathering, varying between 3m and 5m. The hills

and ridges are also covered by cocoa farms. In between all these ridges are narrow valleys often developed along the E-W trending vertical joints in the rocks. These first and second order stream valleys are steep-sided, with maximum valley-side slopes varying between 12_ and 45_ and local relief between 45m and 175m. Valley floors are very narrow, often completely filled by stream channels.

THE GENTLY UNDULATING PLAINS

These are found in between the hills and ridges, but are most extensive in the basin of River Ose, a western-side tributary of the Oni. The plain, developed over schist and gneisses, covers about 40 sq. km. The plain at 200-250m a.s.l. is characterized by wide, gently convex interfluves alternating with broad river valleys in which the rivers meander freely.

The larger rivers, except where they cut across rock bands such as the one near Ifetedo, have very extensive valley floors covered by alluvial deposits whose constituent materials vary from coarse pebbles to fine silt. Some of the larger rivers have incised their channels into the alluviated valley bottoms, leaving low alluvial terraces above the river channels. All over these plains, relative relief hardly exceeds 30m. The whole area appears to be deeply weathered, as no rock outcrops can be seen.

UNDULATING TOPOGRAPHY

This relief unit covering about five-eighth of Ife division lies approximately west of River Owena. The terrain slopes from 150m a.s.l. along the Owena to above 330m in the basin of Opa north of Ife town. The terrain is drained by Shasha and its eastern bank tributaries, especially Opa I, Opa II, Oyo, Oyere and Erinta, and by the western tributaries of Owena, especially Iponrin. Some of the morphometric properties of these rivers are shown in Table 7.

An important observation is that all the drainage basins, except Erinta, have nearly identical values of drainage density. The low value obtained in the basin of Erinta is probably ascribable to the fact that its basin is covered by dense rain forest while the basins of the others are covered by degraded secondary forest, cocoa farms and savanna. The value of the hypsometric integral of the basins of Opa I, Opa II, Iponrin, Oyo, Erinta and Oyere are 19.1%, 40.1%, 52.0% 50.8%, 44.0% and 38.1% respectively. While that of Opa I indicates an old age erosion stage, those of others suggest that the landscape is maturely dissected, the streams having attained a steady state in their processes of erosion and transportation, both within their channels and from the contributing

valley-side slopes.

Important landform units in the undulating topography include rocky hills and inselbergs, low tabular hills, broadly concave pediments and river valleys.

ROCKY HILLS AND INSELBERGS

These are found mainly at some distance to Ife town. To the north-west of the town, on the campus of the Obafemi Awolowo University are three inselbergs developed on granite-gneiss. To the south-west are some forest-clad hills developed in the same rock. The hills north-east and south of the town are developed in epidiorite and epidioritic-schists respectively. Older granite gives rise to impressive domical inselbergs, of which the Arowogbade hill is the most prominent along Ife-Ilesa road. These hills and inselbergs are relatively large, occupying between 1.0 sq.km. and 26.0 sq.km. The inselbergs on the campus of the university are 75m-135m above their footslopes, while the hills formed in epidiorite are up to 315m in height. Slopes around the hills south, south-west and north-west of Ife are steep, often exceeding 20°, with one of the inselbergs on the university campus having perpendicular slopes all around it. The hills and inselbergs are covered by partially weathered rock blocks. The hill slopes are also covered by forest, low bushes and park savanna. Annual burning of the vegetal cover has led to the exposure of the parent rocks and the partially weathered rock debris on the hill sides. Hills developed on the older granite and epidiorite to the north-east of Ife, without exceptions, are characterized by near perpendicular slopes. These hills are also divided into massive rock blocks by the intricate networks of vertical and horizontal joints traversing them. This is exemplified most by Arowogbade hill. A remarkable feature of the inselbergs, however, is the absence of scree slopes at their bases. The junction between the inselbergs and the surrounding footslopes is either abrupt or smooth, i.e., there could be a sharp break of slope between the slope of the inselbergs and the surrounding footslopes or the slope of the inselbergs may be covered by regolith persisting across the footslopes to the surface of the inselbergs.

Low convex rocks are common near the inselbergs. These rock outcrops, hardly exceeding 15m above the surface of the footslopes, are often surmounted by corestones.

The hill tops often serve as prayer grounds for some of the *Aladura* Christians in the town.

TABULAR HILLS

These hills do not exhibit rock-outcrops and are comparatively smaller than those formed in unweathered rocks. The hills rise 15m-30m above their surrounding footslopes and are widely distributed all over the landscape. A few exist on the university campus where digging on the summit of one revealed the presence of partially weathered crystalline rocks at a depth of 1.5m. The summits of these hills are flat to gentle convex and are often covered by thick sheets of ferruginised crust, rubbles of ferricrete and slag. The upper convexity often merges in a concavity with the lower, gentler slopes so that the hill-side slopes have convexo-concave profiles.

FOOTSLOPES

These are common at the bases of the different erosional residuals, extending from such hills to adjacent stream lines. In several places, they have been dissected to depths of 3m-5m by run-offs on the hills

Table 6: Morphometric characteristics of some drainage basins in the plain and ridge topography

Rivers	Order	Number of Streams	Basin area (in km^2)	Stream Length (in km)	No 1st Order Stream	X length 1st. Order stream (in km)	X area 1st Order stream (in km^2)	Br	Db	CCM	Fs
Makun	4	82	61.4	96.0	62	0.90	0.56	4.0	1.6	0.64	1.3
Aharan	4	197	75.0	164.8	155	0.66	0.31	5.5	2.2	0.45	2.6
Omifunfun	4	69	23.2	58.0	53	0.66	0.31	3.8	2.5	0.40	3.0
Aye	5	288	153.9	328.0	220	0.83	0.46	4.1	2.1	0.47	1.9

Br = Bifurcation ratio

Db = Drainage density

CCM = Constant of Channel Maintenance

Fs = Stream frequency

Calculations based on 1:50,000 topographical maps

Table 7: Morphometric characteristics of some drainage basins in the undulating topography

Rivers	Order	Number of Streams	Basin area (in km ²)	Stream Length (in km)	No. 1st Order Stream	X length 1st Order stream (in km)	X area 1st order stream (km ²)	Br	Db	CCM	Fs
Opa I	5	366	203.8	425.9	283	0.88	0.44	4.3	2.1	0.48	1.
Opa II	4	238	129.8	279.4	191	0.86	0.46	5.8	2.2	0.45	1.
Oyo	4	69	23.2	58.0	53	0.66	0.31	3.8	2.5	0.40	2.
Oyere	4	167	87.6	165.6	131	0.74	0.38	5.4	1.9	0.53	1.
Erinta	4	57	75.3	89.4	43	0.83	0.46	3.8	1.2	0.83	0.
Iponrin	4	113	49.7	113.4	88	0.82	0.38	4.5	2.3	0.43	2.

Abbreviations as in Table I

Where undissected, the slope is usually concave for most of its length. However, it is convex near the adjacent stream. This convexity may be succeeded downslope by a short rectilinear slope segment which leads to the valley floor. Measurements carried out on the ground of the university show the dominantly concave footslopes 300m to 560m long, inclined at 4₀ to 7₀. Around some inselbergs, the surfaces of the footslopes are intruded into by low convex rocks and corestones. At several points at the base of the inselberg near the academic buildings of the university, weathering depth is seen to exceed 3.5m. The upper section of the weathering profile comprises hill-wash sediment 0.3m to 1m thick. Around the low tabular hills the surfaces of the footslopes are usually veneered by rounded pisoliths derived from the disintegration of the ferruginized crust on the summits of the hills.

VALLEYS

Valleys here are usually "saucer" or "bowl" shaped in cross-section, i.e., they have broad valley floors and short, steep valley slopes. Maximum valley-side slopes range between 5⁰ and 15⁰. However, these often exceed 50₀ where outcrops of fresh rocks of ferruginized crusts occur on the valley-side (Jeje, 1976). The valleys are so wide that they appear to be out of proportion with the little volume of water in the stream channels. The floors of the smaller tributary valleys are wide, to the extent that the streams meander freely a few kilometres downstream of their sources. The valley floors of both the large and the minor streams are covered by alluvial deposits. Along Shasha river, on Ife-Ibadan road,

the alluvial material is composed of unsorted pebbles, coarse sand and clay lenses in a matrix of decayed vegetable matter. Along the smaller streams the alluvium is composed largely of fine-to-medium grained sand. The surface of the alluvial deposit is nearly everywhere covered by dark-clayey soil which has led to widespread cultivation along the rivers.

The rivers are incised into the valley floors, leaving low terraces above the channels. Rejuvenation has also progressed to the heads of several small streams, so that the valley heads are either in the form of deep, narrow trenches or deep amphitheatres. The latter feature is usually associated with outcrops of ferruginized crust 0.3m to 1m thick. Such crusts are believed to have formed where ground water, rich in dissolved iron, seeps to the surface at the heads of the streams (Folster, 1969).

GEOLOGY AND LANDFORM DEVELOPMENT

It should be stated that not much is known about the past pattern of landscape evolution in Ife division. Much of what is contained below, based on evidence from maps and airphotos, is thus an attempt at unravelling what, in fact, might have been a rather complex pattern of landform development.

A casual glance at the geological and topographical maps of Ife division would show very close correspondence between the rocks and the relief. East of Owena river, the N-S trending ridges are developed on quartzites, quartz-schist, quartzo-felspathic granulite-gneisses and epidiorite complex, while the surrounding plains are developed on schists, pegmatitized schists and pegmatites.

Ife division is situated in a humid tropical area, with rainfall consistently above 140mm annually and monthly mean temperature above 28°C. The high precipitation and insolation incidence would normally promote chemical disintegration of the rocks. Because, according to Budel (1959), all places in the low latitudes have experienced little or no change from their present climatic conditions since the tertiary periods, rocks in Ife division as elsewhere in southern Nigeria must have undergone a very prolonged period of chemical weathering. Thus, in order to attempt an explanation of the development of the various relief units, it is pertinent to examine the nature of the different rocks according to how they are affected by chemical weathering.

The schists are composed of muscovites and quartz lenses and migmatites of hornblendes, feldspar, especially orthoclase, and quartz. As a result of past regional metamorphism and due to granitic intrusions into them, these rocks are foliated and micro-fissured. Thus, due to their

composition and structure, they appear weathered at a faster rate than quartzites or even granites. At present, weathering depth in these rocks often exceed 15m, as seen on road outings along Ife-Ondo road.

The granites in Ife area are composed of fine-to-medium grains of quartz, orthoclase, microcline, biotite and a few accessory minerals. These rocks are fractured by vertical and horizontal joints, but the intensity of the fracturing and the spatial distribution of joints in the rocks vary a great deal. Thus, in zones with few joints, the rocks are poorly weathered. Weathering is however, pronounced in sections where joints are so close together as to delimit the rocks into small blocks. In such zones, weathering could be very deep. The epidiorite complexes are composed of hornblende, pyroxene and calc-plagioclase, but due to the presence of very few joints in these rocks, weathering is not pronounced but concentrated within narrow zones along the jointed parts. Quartzites, composed of quartz closely interlocked, is virtually unweatherable, except where quartz-schist intercalate with the quartzitic bands. In such places, the schists are often deeply weathered. In all these resistant rocks, the basal surface of weathering tends to be highly irregular.

The pattern of erosion of the weathered rocks in the past is not known, but it appears to depend on factors like depth of weathering, change of base level-either due to low sea levels at the coast or due to local uplifting- drainage development and the nature of the basal surface of weathering in the various rocks.

Altimetric analyses involving altitudinal frequency and area-height determinations within the basins of Opa I, Opa II, Oyere, Iponrin, Aye, Ahanran, Omifunfun and Makun suggest the presence of two local erosion surfaces at 240m - 270m and at 300m - 330m a.s.l. The latter is especially predominant in the basins of Aye and Opa I where it occurs as wide interfluvial areas. The lower surface occurs as very wide valley floors in both basins. The presence of these surfaces suggests that the division has at least witnessed two cycles of erosion at different periods in the past. The base-level changes that could have triggered off the initiation of such erosional cycles probably relate to the low sea levels at the Guinea coast in the Pleistocene period (Davis, 1964), the effects of which would be felt all over the southern part of West Africa and, of course, Ife division.

The pattern of erosion under each erosional cycle is not quite known. However, Folster (1969) suggested that erosion in south-western Nigeria, which includes Ife division, has been in the nature of pediplanation since the Pleistocene period. Burke et. al. (1966) expressed the same

opinion on the pattern of landscape evolution in Ibadan area. Evidence of gravel deposition and stone lines, often adduced by the authors of pediplanation, are not quite convincing, as such features could result from several other processes (Nye, 1955; Thomas, 1974; and Jeje, 1980). Pending the availability of more incontrovertible evidence, Folster's pediplanation hypothesis on landscape development could be tentatively accepted.

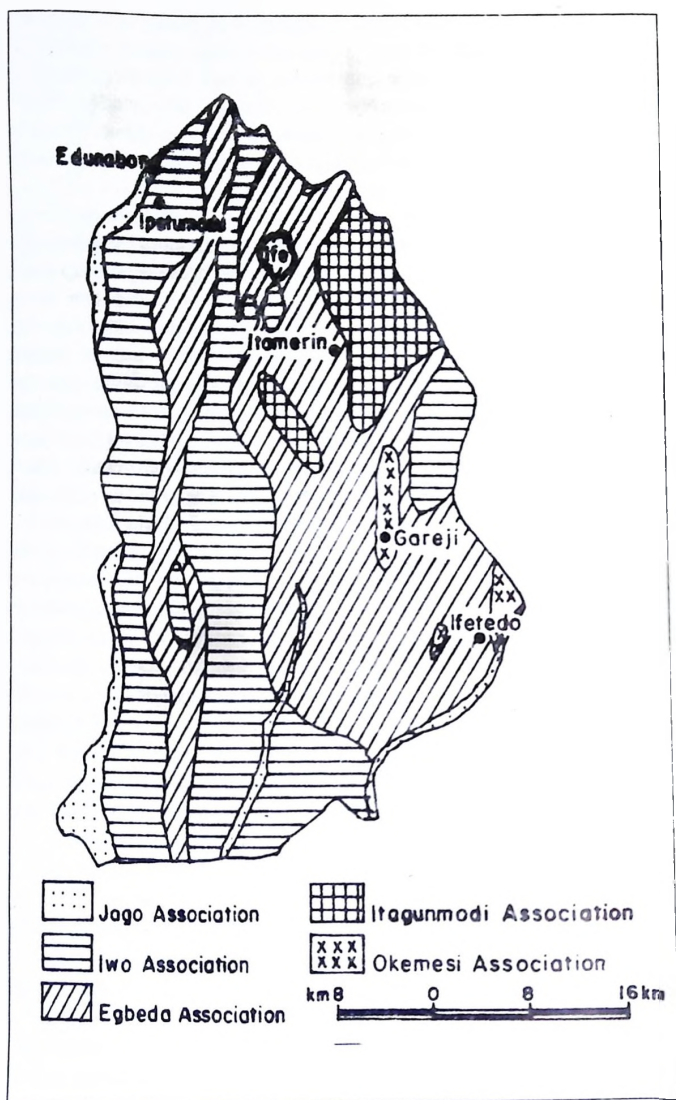
The present pattern of erosion has been observed in the field. Backwearing processes appear to be prominent on slopes around tabular ferruginized crust-capped hills and where such crusts outcrop on valley sides. In several derelict and old cocoa farms, run-offs across the faces of the crustal outcrops have eroded the softer regolith underlying the crusts. In some cases, deep, basal carvings are evident, with the unsupported crusts slumping down to break into blocks strewn all over the lower slope. Such processes can lead to the gradual backwearing of the steep slope segments associated with the crusts. On other vegetated surfaces, erosion appears to be by slope wash and mass movement, especially soil creep and landslide (Jeje, 1979). The latter is especially important on ridge sides wherever slopes exceed 25°. Landslides are frequent on the ridge slopes; the latest, whose erosion scar covers about 20 hectares, occurred on the slope of the ridge located near Ale-Ahanran on Ife-Ondo road on the night of November 18th, 1976. Lineal erosion by streams is rather weak and is only pronounced where streams occupy zones of deep weathering in hard rocks, as exemplified by the deep incision into the epidioritic schists near Mokuro, north-east of Ife.

East of Owena where a large part of the initial basal surfs of weathering has been exposed in the form of hills and ridges, the relief unit appears to be equivalent to Thomas' "dominantly stripped etch surface". The relief unit west of the river, exhibiting little amount of the basal surface of weathering, is equivalent to his "partially stripped etch plain"

SOILS

Soils in Ife area have been studied by Smyth and Montgomery (1962) and by Adejuwon and Jeje (1975). The former classified the soils into four major types according to their suitability for cocoa cultivation (Table 8).

The "good" soils comprise mostly those which belong to the **Itagunmodi Association**, while the "fairly good" types generally belong to the **Iwo** and **Egbede Associations** and the "poor" and "very poor" belong to the **Oke Messi** and **Jogo Associations**.



Soil map of Ife Division (After Synth and Montgomery - 1962)

Table 8: Soil Quality Distribution in Ife Division

Soil Quality	% Ife Area Covered
Good	22.8
Fairly Good	34.8
Poor	27.7
Very Poor	14.7

These soils have been associated with their parent rocks, though there is a clear catena development. The **Itangunmodi Association** has been related to the basic rocks north-west of Ife, while the **Iwo** and **Egbeda Associations** are related to the gneisses and schists which cover most of the division. The **Oke Messi Association** relates to the quartzites and quartz-schists the **Jago** to the alluvial deposits on the river flood plains. Fig. 6 shows the distribution of the soil associations in Ife area.

The **Itangunmodi soil series** constitute the most important member of the **Itangunmodi Association**. These soil series are found between Itamarun and Ogudu in the south where they continue to Itangunmodi in Ilesa area. They occur in association with dioritic rocks devoid of quartz-veins. The soils are exceptionally clayey in texture, brownish red in colour, with little or no closure variation from the surface to depths of up to 10m, although faint mottling in shades of brown to reddish brown may be visible at about 2m. The soils do not contain stone and gravel layers. The generalized profile, described by Smyth and Montgomery (1962), is as follows:

- 0 - 7cm - dark greyish brown to dark brown, loose, very clayey fine sand; weak crumb structure to structureless merging.
- 7cm-25cm - dark reddish brown, very friable, sandy clay; structureless merging.
- 25cm-50cm - dark reddish brown to brownish red, very friable clay, structureless merging.
- 50cm-75cm - brownish red to dark red, very friable, fine sandy clay, structureless merging.
- 75cm+ - similar to previous horizon, +or - few, very small con-

cretions (2mm in diameter). Profile descends almost unchanged to depths exceeding 3m.

These are probably the most valuable agricultural soils in Ife area. The high clay content enables the soils to retain moisture and nutrient, with the high porosity and friability facilitating good drainage and root penetration to great depths. The soils are extensively cultivated to cocoa and kolanuts.

Soils of the Iwo Association formed on coarse grained granites, granitic-gneisses and pegmatites occur extensively in the western half of Ife division. As the parent rocks are relatively resistant to weathering, the soils are rather shallow. The top soil is brownish grey and very sandy, with clear stone lines present at between 30cm and 120cm. The brownish red layer may include fragments of feldspar. Below a depth of about 1.3m, a mottled clay horizon, rich in feldspar and quartz, may occur. This horizon grades into the partially weathered parent rocks.

The most important soil series in this association are those of Iwo, Ibadan, Odeyinka, Balogun, Iregun and Apomu; the first three are sedentary while the others are derived from hill-wash material.

Soils of the Iwo series occupy the middle slopes and are followed downslope by those of Ibadan. The top soils of the Iwo series range from greyish brown to brownish red, from fairly clayey to thoroughly clayey, especially within the upper 50cm containing gravel, stones and hard concretions. The sand fraction is coarse. Below 75cm, the soils range from brown to orange brown, with coarse sandy clay in which are occurrences of concretions and quartz fragments, sometimes occasional, sometimes frequent. There is often fresh rock at depths of less than 3m.

The soils are friable and porous to depths of more than 1.6m, hence well drained and easily penetrated by plant roots. The presence of unweathered minerals like feldspars is an indication of large reserve of nutrients. The soil is suitable for the cultivation of cocoa and food crops.

Soils of the **Ibadan series** are found at lower slopes in association with those of the Iwo series. The top 50cm is usually more sandy than the soils of the Iwo series. They are also of paler and greyer colour, with high increase in stone and gravel content. Generally, the soils are typically brownish grey, coarse, sandy and contain quartz gravel, stones and round concretionary pisoliths. The top 30cm are brownish grey; they range from silty to slightly clayey to clayey coarse sand, with few quartz gravel and stones. Below 30cm the content of quartz-gravel and stones increases, while concretions are both occasional and frequent. At the

depth of about 120 cm, the soils range very clayey coarse sand to coarse sandy clay, with few quartz gravel and stones, few concretions and feldspar fragments. Mottling in the form of orange brown, grey, yellow or white is evident at about the 150cm; quartz and feldspar fragments are few, but there is abundance of decomposing gneissic or granitic fragments. At the depth of about 180cm, the content of feldspar and muscovite increases, and at about 2m, partially decomposed rock fragments are frequently seen. The soils have poor nutrient and water retention capability, hence they are not quite suitable for the cultivation of cocoa and other tree crops, but are widely used for arable farming.

Soils of the **Odeyinka series** are found only in the Shasha Forest Reserve. They are different from those of the **Iwo** and **Ibadan series** in that at depths of between 37cm-50cm, the soils range slightly from reddish brown to slightly orange, very stony and gravelly, with a remarkable "sticky" texture of coarse sandy clay. Above this layer, the soil is pale, very sandy and gravelly, with a few hard concretions.

Soils of the **Balogun, Iregun** and **Apomu series** are derived from colluvial materials, hence found on or at the foot of steep, rocky hills.

The **Balogun series**, formed on coarse colluvium, range from pale greyish brown to dark reddish brown clayey soils containing occasional and frequent fragments of feldspar and granitic rocks, especially down to 25cm. Below this, quartz gravel are common. The profiles are dominated by sand fraction, but the top soil is in the form of silty clayey fine sand. The well-drained soils with high nutrient content are suitable for tree crops.

Soils of the **Iregun series** are developed on fine colluvial material. The top 50cm are very clayey sand, with their colour ranging from greyish brown to reddish brown. Below 50cm the colour range from orange brown to yellowish brown, with the profiles free from concretions. Below 1m the sub-soil is dominated by brightly mottled clay. As the soils dry out and are desiccated in the dry season, they are not quite suitable for cocoa, but kolanuts do thrive well in them.

Soils of the **Apomu series** are also derived from fine colluvial material, but the profiles are very sandy in texture to a depth of about 50cm. The upper soils, however, are free from stones, gravel and concretions. Their colour ranges from dark brownish grey to dark greyish brown at the top to a variety of mottled colour at the depth of 10cm and below. The lower horizon are clayey sand, with variable amount of quartz gravel, stones and/or concretions. The sandy soils have poor moisture and nutrient retention capacity and thus unsuitable for tree crops.

Soils of **Egbeda Association**, formed from fine grained biotite gneisses and schists, are the most extensive, occupying about half of Ife division, especially on the undulating to the rolling terrain on either side of Ife-Ifetedo road, except around Olode. The soils also occur as a narrow N-S band between River Shasha and longitude $4^{\circ} 30' E$.

As the parent rocks are relatively easily weathered, the soils are deep and fine-textured. In most profiles, the upper 50cm are very clayey sand to sandy clay, with the colour varying widely from pale brownish grey to brownish red. A pronounced gravel and concretionary layer is invariably present at depths between 30cm and 120cm. Below 1.3m the soils are composed of structureless mottled clay which may reach a depth of 10m. Mottling is in the form of many colours: red, brown, orange, yellow and white.

Soils of **Egbeda Association** occur mainly on the upper and intermediate slopes, with colluvial soils on the lower slope sites. The most important soil series under this association are the Egbeda, Olorunda, Iregun and Apomu. The last two have already been described.

Soils of the **Egbeda series** occur on level to gently sloping interfluvial surfaces. In the upper 25-50cm, the soils are clayey in texture, from very greyish brown to brown. Below this depth they turn from bright orange brown to brownish red. The profiles exhibit mainly fine sand fractions, but a well-marked gravel-quartz-stone-iron concretion layer is present between 25cm and 50cm. Below 1.3m the sub-soil is brilliantly mottled, slightly compact, fine sandy clay to depths in excess of 3m. This layer, occasionally traversed by quartz veins, almost invariably contains decomposing fragments of schist and gneisses.

These soils are among the most fertile, as they are porous and friable to considerable depths. They are well drained and aerated, with high capacity for moisture and nutrient retention. They are very suitable for the cultivation of cocoa and kola.

Soils of the **Olorunda series** also occupy gentle-to-moderate slopes at intermediate levels in the topography. The top 25cm are brownish grey, loose, humic, clayey fine sand with a weak structure. A few quartz gravel and concretions are present. Below 25cm the soils are still clayey in texture but are pale greyish brown, brown or pale orange brown in colour, and invariably include distinct gravel, quartz stones and iron stone concretion layers. Below 1.3m the sub-soil is brilliantly mottled, as in the **Egbeda series**.

Although of heavy texture, the soils are porous and friable to a considerable depth, and have high moisture and nutrient-retention capability.

They are thus extensively suitable for the cultivation of cocoa and kola.

Soils of the **Okemessi Association** are linked with quartz gneisses, schists and quartzites, particularly around Olode and Ifetedo. The soils vary in texture, but are usually sandy and gravelly. The most important soil series under this association include the **Okemessi Erinoke, Etioni** and **Effon series**.

Soils of the **Okemessi series** occur on steep hill slopes and are very sandy, stony and shallow. A typical profile varies in colour from dark greyish brown at the surface to brown at a depth of about 75cm. The top soil is loose, sandy and structureless, becoming slightly clayey with depth, but with the percentage of quartz gravel and stones increasing. These are especially very frequent at depths of 50-120cm, dominating the profile at depths in excess of 1m. The soils are usually forest covered.

Soils of the **Erinoke series** occur on lower gentler slopes. These range from brown to reddish brown and are more clayey than those of the **Okemessi**. The dark greyish brown top soil is loose, humic, clayey sand and is structureless, changing to very clayey coarse sand at depths of 25cm to 50cm. At depths of 50cm to 75cm, the soil is reddish brown and coarsely textured, with a large quantity of gravel and stones. Generally, the quantity of quartz fragments increases with depth.

Soils of the **Etioni series** occur on the footslopes of the quartz ridges. They generally range from reddish brown to brownish red. The top 7cm ranges from dark greyish brown to dark brownish grey, loose, humic and structureless. Between 7cm to 25cm, the soils become clayey, but coarse sand is still dominant. At depths of 25cm to 75cm, the soils are completely dominated by coarse sand fractions, with clay sub-dominant. These soils are very porous and well drained, and are often suitable for the cultivation of cocoa and arables.

Soils of the **Effon series** are developed on sericite schists and are found on fairly steep slopes. Unlike the other soils, these are fairly clayey in texture and moderately stony to depths of more than 120cm. Below these the soil horizons consist of an agglomeration of pale, yellowish red decaying schist fragments. The top layer ranges from dark brownish grey to greyish brown, loose, humic, clayey, fine sand, and from clay sand to very clayey sand. At about 25cm, quartz gravel and specks of muscovite are few to frequent. Below this layer, the soil is pale, reddish brown, loose to very friable clayey sand and to sandy clay, with occasional to frequent quartz-gravel and with frequent flakes of muscovite and fragments of decaying schist. The porous, friable, well-

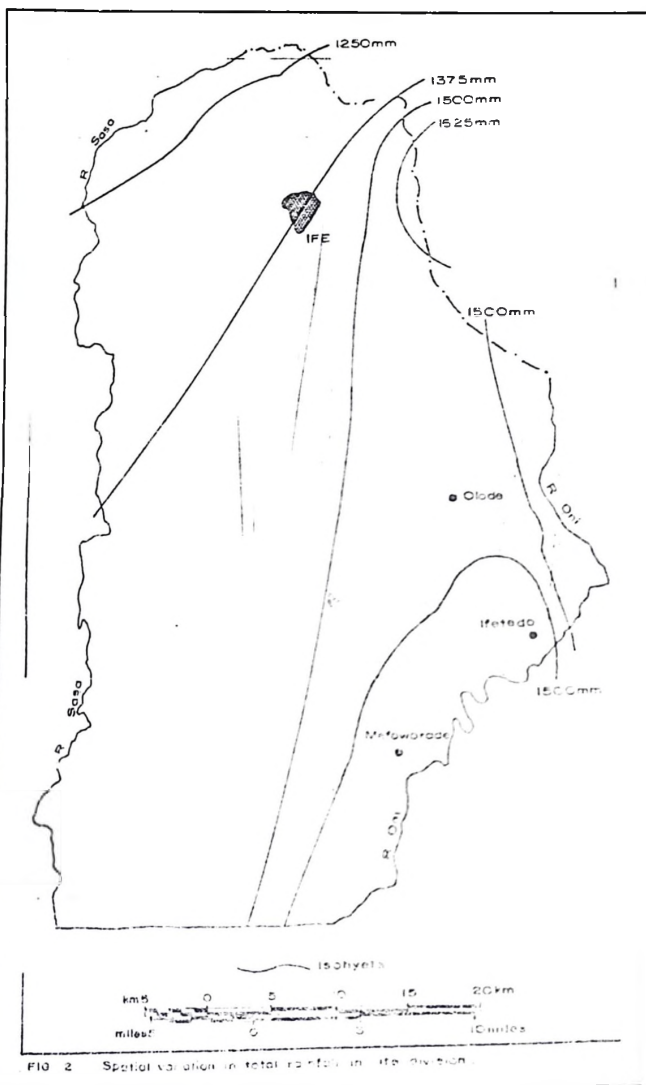


FIG. 2 Spatial variation in total rainfall in Ife division.

Spatial variation in total rainfall in Ife division

drained and moderately deep soils, with fairly clayey texture, are suitable for the cultivation of cocoa, especially in Olode-Mefoworade area.

Soils of the **Jago Association** are developed on flood-plain alluvium. They have variable textures and are generally poorly drained, with the water table fluctuating to depths of 25cm to 120cm from the surface. The most extensive occurrence of these soils is along the Shasha, especially west of Ipetumodu. A typical profile from top to bottom comprises fine sand at the surface which at about 7cm grades into brownish, grey silty fine sand. This continues to depths of 120cm or more. Generally below 75cm, a small proportion of silt and clay is often present, with the soil exhibiting faint grey mottling. The soils are generally infertile.

VEGETATION/LAND USE

The climax vegetation in Ife division is the rain forest which decades of intense agricultural activities have transformed into a kaleidoscopic and dynamic pattern of vegetation/land use associations. These associations were mapped from 1:40,000 serial photographs by Adejuwon and Jeje (1973) who recognized the following associations:

- (i) Kola, plantains and thicket
- (ii) Cocoa, kola, plantains, thicket and food crops
- (iii) Cocoa, kola
- (iv) Rubber plantations
- (v) Savanna and cultivated fields
- (vi) Rotation bush fallow and cultivated field crops
- (vii) Complex vegetation/land use association comprising most of the above
- (viii) Plain savanna
- (ix) Upland savanna
- (x) High forest
- (xi) Lowland relict of high forest
- (xii) Secondary forest and thicket
- (xiii) Settlements

These are compressed into five main vegetation/land use associations in Fig. 7. The percentage coverage of each is not calculated, but cocoa/kola and high rain forest together occupy about 60% of the entire division. The others, especially (i), (ii), (v) and (vi), occur in an intricate pattern around the large settlements while (v) and (viii) are especially prominent in Ipetumodu, Edunabon, Moro and Ashipa areas. According to Smyth and Montgomery (1962), cocoa/kola occupy 27%, forest 28.0% farmland 21.3% and thicket 22.8% of the division respectively. The most

important of the vegetation/land use associations in terms of areal coverage are the high forest, the secondary forest and thicket, bush fallow, cultivated farmland association and the cocoa/kola association (Fig. 7), each of which is briefly described below.

RAIN FOREST

This occurs extensively to the south as the Shasha and Ife Forest Reserves and along the rivers as gallery forest. The width of the latter varies from a few metres along the minor rivers to about 500m along the Oni river. The gallery is often punctuated by small clearings in which cocoa is cultivated. They also occur in inaccessible locations such as hill sides and tops and in areas of broken and rough terrain. The vegetation contains several large trees with a diameter of 1.0-1.5m, some of which reach up to 40m in height. In recent times, several of these have been extracted to the extent that at several places south of Omifunfun and U.A.C. settlement, the forest is degraded. Trees with a diameter of up to 0.5 dominate the forest, but smaller trees and shrubs physiognomically subordinate to the taller trees abound. Climbers are few, so that the forest is easily penetrated. Woody elements are arranged such that their foliage crowns form four layers, the upper three containing trees, the lower one shrub. The forest appears largely evergreen. The more frequent economic trees in well-drained sites include *Ceiba pentandra*, *Chlorophora excelsa*, *Terminalia ivorensis*, *Terminalia superba*, *Bombax pentandra*, *Cola gigantea*, *Khaya grandifolia*, *Triplochiton scleroxylon* and *Piptadenia africana*. These trees support flourishing saw-milling industries. Smaller trees include *Drypetes chevalieri*, *Pycnanthus kombo*, *Anogeissus schimperi*, *Ficus asperifolia*, *Celtis integrifolia*, *Sarcocephalus* spp., *Cola heterophylla* and *Funtumia africana*. *Elaeis guineensis*, is widely scattered in the forest, are very thin and largely unproductive.

Where the valley floor is waterlogged and poorly drained, the trees include *Musanga smithii*, *Myrianthus arborens*, *Mitragyna stipulosa*, *Ficus vallis chondae*, *Uapaca heudelotii*, *Uapaca guineense*, *Macaranga barteri*, *Auogesius leiocarpus*, *Borassus aethiopicum* and giant grasses like bamboo. Cleared patches are not dominated by *Eupatorium odorate*.

SECONDARY FOREST/THICKET ASSOCIATION

These are old, cultivated patches reverting to forest and could reach the climax vegetation described above if left undisturbed. This association is

mainly found along the Ife-Ifetedo and Olode-Omifunfun road and also at the edges of the rain forest belt. In most cases, the association comprises a thick, impenetrable tangle of creeping vines, small tree shrubs, occasional large trees and robust palm trees. The large trees could belong to any of the species described above for well-drained sites. However, the most noticeable trees comprise largely **Chlorophora excelsa**, **Antiaris africana**, **Lecaniodiscus cupanioides**, **Entandrophagma spp.**, **Ficus asperifolia**, **Dialium guineense**, **Eriocoelum kerstingii**, **Spondias monbin**, **Anogeissus schimperi** and **Spathodea campanulata**. Common shrubs include **Solanum aculeatissimum** while some parts are dominated by a rank growth of **Eupatorium odorata**. **Elaeis guineensis** are very common.

RECENT FALLOW/CULTIVATED FARMS ASSOCIATION

These are mostly found on mid-valley slopes and on interfluvial surfaces around Ife and in Ipetumodu-Edunabon-Moro and Mokuro-Itagunmodi areas. They are also found around minor settlements and villages in an area within a radius of 30km from Ile-Ife. Recent fallow still contain cassava, **Vernonia nigritiana** and **Ageratum**. Old fallow are completely dominated by **Eupatorium odorata** which form a dense, impenetrable thicket. However, **Typa elephantum** and **Cylindrica imperata** dominate locally in Ashipa-Ipetumodu area. Cultivated crops include **Discora spp.**, **Hibiscus saboariffa**, **Hibiscus esculentum**, **Lycopersicum esculentum** and **Zea mays**. The latter is cultivated twice a year. Others include **Manihet palmata**, **Colocasia esculentum**, **Centiguorum**, **Xanthosoma sagittifolium** and **Lycopersicum esculentum**. A common characteristic of these farms is their small size, each hardly covering up to 0.2 hectare, and mixed cropping.

COCOA/KOLANUT/PLANTAIN

These are cultivated in small farms, each of which hardly exceeds two hectares, but where several farms are contiguous, as between Osi Soko and Mefoworade, they form large, mappable units. These farms are often located on the better drained sites either on upper valley slopes or on the gently convex interfluvial surfaces. Cocoa trees vary in age from about five to thirty years, but most of them are about twenty years old and are in their prime of production. In most cases, **Cola acuminata** is grown widely scattered in cocoa farms, but in some cases it is cultivated in small groves at the edges of cocoa farms, especially in Olode-Omifunfun

area. Occasionally, one sees **Tetracarpidium conophorium** climbing and entwined on the upper branches of the trees. Plantains initially cultivated to provide shade for cocoa are still abundant in the farms.

CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this chapter to describe the elements of the physical environment, their spatial variations and inter-relationship in Ife division. The elements examined include climate, geology, terrain characteristics, drainage, soils, vegetation and land use. These elements, which constitute very important resource bases in their own right, to a very large extent, play a significant role in the day-to-day activities of most of the people in the division, and thus in the making of the history of the division. For lack of accurate knowledge, the examination of these elements is necessarily over-simplified and generalized: however, it is hoped that on-going researches will throw more light on both their spatio-temporal variation and their inter-relationships.

NOTES

- 1 From the noun *irun* - (existence)
- 2 From the noun *orun* (heaven)
- 3 From the adjective *run* (to be absolutely straight)
- 4 From the verb *run* (to destroy)
- 5 This position is not negated by scientific theories of population migrations from the Niger/Benue confluence, since the concept deals more with social consciousness or cohesion rather than the fact of migration.

CHAPTER 2

SOURCES OF THE HISTORY OF IFE

R.A. Olaniyan and I. A. Akinjogbin

The purpose of this chapter is to review the oral sources, the existing body of written literature and the lively debates going on on the history of Ife and hopefully identify the areas which will require further investigation.

As in all Yorubaland (Biobaku, 1972), by far the most important of our sources of Ife history are orally transmitted. For the very early period covering just before, during and immediately after the establishment of the Oduduwa systems, we are dependent on an extremely rich number of re-enactment ceremonies, commemorated either annually or at irregular intervals when the occasion arises. Among the annual ceremonies are the Obatala, the Oduduwa, the Edi, the Olojo, the Oramfe and the Pokulere festivals, and many more. Among the periodic ones are the installation of the Ooni, of the Obalesun or Obalale, or other important chiefs. There are also the histories of each of the important chieftaincy titles and how they fit into the whole administration.

In collecting these sources, a researcher faces a number of problems. First, because of the religious flavour surrounding these otherwise historical sources, it has been very difficult for the uninitiated to do extensive and in-depth collection. If a scholar offers to be initiated so that he may have access to the ceremonies and is initiated, he becomes inhibited by the secrecy injunctions and the number of taboos which he may have sworn to keep under oath and he is thus prevented from divulging or meaningfully citing the useful information in his possession. The second and equally serious problem is the Yoruba concept of history, which is perhaps still very conservatively held at Ife. The Ife believe that their history, as re-enacted in these ceremonies, constitutes "the tap roots" of their existence. Now, tap roots are not exposed if the tree is to survive. Therefore, they insist that their history must be kept secret from strangers. Even Ife indigenes who wish to know it must either belong to the families connected with the ceremonies and be initiated or be sworn to secrecy. This way of looking at history is a real impediment in the way of our getting to know the most useful of oral sources. Until it is realized that the concept of history, whatever its validity in the distant

past, has been overtaken by events and that Ife's existence and glory will be enhanced, not destroyed. through a wide knowledge of its rich and enviable past, we will continue to be denied a thorough knowledge of this past. Because of these two problems, and others that we will deal with later, there is keen awareness in this work that whatever is written now can in no way be definitive.

For the period covering immediately after the establishment of the Oduduwa system up to about the end of the 18th century, which may be as long as or longer than 800 years, we are largely dependent for additional information on the kinglist and whatever is remembered of the actions of each king. While various kinglists have been published, not much of their remembered actions have been so treated. However, the first thing that strikes a researcher about the Ife kinglist is that there is no agreement on it. Eluyemi in 1980 published a list which contained 49 names (Eluyemi, 1980:41), including that of the incumbent, Olubuse II, who ascended the throne in 1980. Between 1925 and 1928, a list compiled in the Afin contained 42 names to which was later added the 43rd, that of Aderemi, who ascended the throne in 19301. That makes Olubuse II, the 44th. In the 1940's various lists were compiled by Chief M. A. Fabunmi. One of these contained 49 names and another 48 names². When all these available lists are compared, at least 14 out of the 49 names on Eluyemi's list do not appear at all on Fabunmi's list and 24 from Fabunmi's list do not appear on Eluyemi's list. Such names as Efon, Oseganderuku, Ajilaoorun, Aroganganlagbo, Owodo, Otujabiojo and Agbele, found both in the palace and on Fabunmi's lists, are not on Eluyemi's list.

It can be argued that one reason for this discrepancy may be that an Oba has many names, in addition to his cognomen. Thus, Obalufon Ogbogbodirin was the same as Olomomopeaye and perhaps Osangangan Obamakin. Osinlade bore the cognomen of Otutubiosun and could validly be called by either name. Depending on the preference of different informants, therefore, the same person may be called by any of his names. Where it can be shown that this is the case, reconciliation becomes easy; but in the case of the different lists under consideration, that does not account for all the discrepancies. The late Ooni Aderemi, apparently despairing of reconciling the names, started his own kinglist from Lajamisan and held that those before him were mythical.

Another reason that may account for a list containing more names than others is that some lists may contain such names as Lajua, one of those who were known to be usurpers, or kola, known to have died at

Ilofi³. Others are known to be female Ooni. Where an informant is strictly legalistic such that he excludes from his list usurpers and uncrowned kings and is oriented towards male inheritance, thereby discounting any female Ooni, there is the danger that such names are deliberately left out.

Where there can be established reasonable correspondence between the names on all the lists, there is no complete agreement on the order of precedence. On all the three lists, the sequence of the last ten reigns, including that of Olubuse II, is agreed. On both the palace and Fabunmi's lists, the first five names also correspond in the order of precedence. Only the first two names on Eluyemi's list agree with those of the others in the order of precedence. Between the first five Ooni and the last ten, there is no agreed order of precedence.

Again, it is easy to see how this lack of agreed precedence arose, though that does not detract from the difficulties posed. The Ooni are selected from all the five quarters of Ile-Ife: Ireemo, More, Ilode, Ilare and Okerewa. Each quarter preserves its own list in its own order of precedence and the compiler is then left to put them in some reasonable order of general precedence, using some well-known market names. Another feature of the presentation is that each family, in wanting to make its claim to succession unassailable, apparently a major reason for preserving the list, appears to include any famous descendant of a previous Ooni, even where other parts of the same tradition indicate that such a person, though famous, was not an Ooni. One serious implication of all this, for the analysis of the historical development of Ife, is that it is very difficult for us to have a clear idea of even a relative chronology of life. The problem may also limit the usefulness to Ife history of archaeological finds at Ife.

Hopefully, many of these problems can and will be overcome with time and with reliance on hard and detailed research. Since it will be possible to reconcile names and cognomens, we shall be able to settle the number of actual Oonis of Ife. There used to be, and perhaps there still is, the Ologbo family that performed the ceremony of keeping each Edan for every Ooni. It is hoped that the descendants of this family will be able to give a reasonable and general order of precedence, distinct from the order each quarter now gives. In appendix ID attached to Chapter 6, an attempt is made to give a general order of precedence as far as can be ascertained from available evidence.

Then there is the problem of not being able to remember each reign. The events of the first six reigns and those of the ten Obas who can be

identified as having reigned from the last quarter of the 18th century onwards are well within memory. In between not much has been collected. Palace records contain the events of 16 out of the 43 names on the list⁴. Most of the events recorded in the Fabunmi papers bear striking similarities to those of palace sources. There is some evidence suggestive of the fact that around 1935, Ooni Aderemi asked various families to write down accounts of the different Oonis that had reigned in their families⁵. If they all replied, then perhaps their accounts will be found in the palace archives when they are made available to scholars. We do not have more than one or two such replies in our possession. This is one area to which attention must be quickly turned, for the information will elucidate the growth of Ife during the last 800 odd years.

A peculiar aspect of Ife source history is that it is not limited to Ile-Ife alone but scattered all over Yoruba kingdoms claimed to have been founded by princes who migrated from Ife. In quite a large number of the important kingdoms, the names of the princes and the Oonis on the throne are remembered in the traditions of both Ife and the new kingdoms. More often than not, the circumstances that caused the migration are preserved only in the new kingdom. In the not-so-important kingdoms, only the new ones preserved the name of the reigning Ooni; Ife itself had forgotten it. To that extent, a study of the foundations of all the other Yoruba kingdoms, when they are critically made, will tremendously aid our knowledge of the historical development of Ife up to the end of the 18th century.

Since the beginning of this century, a large number of Nigerians and foreigners have been collecting or analyzing such traditions. Among these traditional historians are J.A. Ademakinwa (1958), an indigene of Ife, who writes with a strong nationalistic flavour on the origin of the Yoruba, the migration theories, the coming of Oduduwa to Ile-Ife, Oduduwa's descent, the 16 elders who came to Ile-Ife with Oduduwa, the origin of the Igbo (the supposedly aboriginal inhabitants of Yorubaland), the legend of Moremi and the defeat of the Igbo by the Ife.

Ulli Beier, a former director of the Institute of African Studies Obafemi Awolowo University, and who for many years devoted himself to knowing and writing about the Yoruba culture, has also written on the local traditions surrounding the Igbo and the invading Yoruba in his article "Before Oduduwa" (Beier, 1956:25-32).

Samuel O. Ojo (1952), the Bada of Saki, likewise attempts to faithfully record oral traditions which he has personally collected, recreating ancient Yoruba history from its mythological beginnings. He treats such

topics as the spread of the Yoruba people, the death of Oduduwa, the Igbo, the aborigines of Yorubaland, the early Yoruba and the reign of Oranmiyan the Great.

A recent pamphlet of Kemi Morgan (Morgannd) develops the theme of the historical migration of the Yoruba people from Egypt to Ife. It is not unlike what we find in pamphlets dealing with this topic.

Another example of an individual who has made an effort to collect local traditions is E.A. Kenyo who in several pamphlets discusses the migration and the settlement of Oduduwa at Ile-Ife⁶.

The most widely known version of the tradition is, of course, Samuel Johnson's in his classic *History of the Yorubas from the earliest time to the beginning of the British Protectorate* (Johnson, 1921). Five years after the publication of Johnson's manuscript, there appeared a four-volume work by Percy A. Talbot entitled *People of Southern Nigeria*. (Talbot, 1969). This was an attempt by the colonial government to provide an outline of the history, ethnology and languages of the peoples of Southern Nigeria. In it Talbot considers the various theories of migrations from Egypt and the settlement at Ile-Ife. Nathaniel A. Fadipe, writing his thesis in the late 1930s, reconsiders both the Johnson and Talbot versions (Fadipe, 1970:33-39).

Among the professional historians who have written on this topic, there is prominently S.O. Biobaku in *Origins of the Yorubas* (1955) and in "Pattern of Yoruba history" (1957) where he discusses the successive waves of migration from the Near East to West Africa. The second such migration he calls the Oduduwa migration. Oduduwa appears to be partly a historical figure and partly a mythological one. It is this latter aspect of Oduduwa that Emmanuel Bolaji Idowu treats fully in his consideration of the legends of Oduduwa at Ile-Ife (Idowu, 1962:818-29).

Over a hundred years ago, Samuel Crowther recorded the story of Ife and how it came to be the historical and religious centre of the Yoruba people in the introduction to his *A Grammar of the Yoruba Language* (Crowther 1852). But even at this time many variations of the Yoruba traditions of origin existed, as was noted by a missionary, Thomas J. Bowen, although all agreed that Ife was the first Yoruba settlement (Bowen, 1968:265-267).

R.C.C. Law has recently attempted to analyze these conflicting versions of oral tradition⁷, demonstrating how variations and distortions are sometimes used for political ends. The fact that such variations are present indicates that much controversy had existed in the past. Most traditions, however, agree on two points: common origin from Ile-Ife and the

descendants of Oduduwa who left Ile-Ife to found the Yoruba kingdoms.

The most useful synthesis of these various and divergent traditions of origin is provided by Robert S. Smith who suggests that the Oduduwa migration might not have been conquest from outside at all but an internal process of state forming by a dominant group or lineage over others, since it is known that the Yoruba have occupied their land for several hundreds of years (Smith, 1959:97-100).

In any event, the patterns that emerge from these varieties of oral traditions regarding the origin of the Yoruba people seem to be clear: the establishment of a Yoruba political authority under the leadership of Oduduwa in Ile-Ife; the existence of pre-Oduduwa group; and the emigration of large groups associated with the children or the grand-children of Oduduwa to establish new kingdoms and royal dynasties. Also, certain variations in detail are recorded from one kingdom or town to the other.

In spite of the similarities and the agreement on the primacy of Ife, the historian on Ife is confronted with certain questions still unresolved, namely: Where did Oduduwa and his followers come from? Who were the aborigines occupying the territory before the arrival of the Yoruba? How was the dispersal of the princes carried out? Responses to these questions are diverse and controversial and some are given in the following chapters of this book; the debate will no doubt continue for a long time, since the nature of the source may not provide any conclusive evidence.

IFE - BENIN

The oral traditions linking Ife and Benin, which are current today and have become generally accepted, are being challenged by new evidence and fresh interpretations. The issue of Ife-Benin succession, it would now appear, is at least open to question. Connah speculates, for example, that there is no bronze-casting technology left in Ife, whereas, it remains a live art in Benin, and that the art which began in Ife about the 11th century was short-lived (Connah, 1969:54-61). Connah's view has been proved to be erroneous, as families of bronze casters are still identifiable in Ile-Ife (Akinjogbin and Ekemode n.d.).

The link between Ife and Benin is based largely on oral tradition and artistic evidence. A Benin historian, J. U. Egharevba⁸, is quite definite in tracing the origin of the Binis back to Ife to where they had migrated from Egypt via the Sudan, arriving in Benin around 600 A.D. The second Benin dynasty began around 1280 A.D. when Oduduwa sent

Oranmiyan to Benin to found a new dynasty. Oranmiyan later left Benin and settled in Oyo where he left a son on the throne as Alaafin. Thus the historical tie is firmly established not only between Ife and Benin but also between Benin and Oyo.

There are, of course, modifications and refutations of this view. For example, O.E. Aimiwa (1971:85-90) maintains that Oduduwa was, in fact, one Prince Ekaladerhan who, exiled from Benin, went to settle in Ile-Ife where he became ruler and is now deified.

The artistic evidence connecting Ife with Benin is postulated by many authors. The traditions hold that the technique of brasscasting in Ife was brought to Benin by an Ife craftsman who had been sent at the request of the Oba of Benin. Recent authors have analyzed the stylistic evidence found in the Ife and Benin corpus of art and concluded that the link is irrefutably established. Willett argues this case unequivocally in his book *Ife in the History of West Africa Sculpture* (1967:153-165). So do Elisofon (1958:60-66), Forman (1960:16-25), and Maquet (1962:174-182).

The recent archaeological excavations in Owo (Eyo, 1972:2-11) revealed art styles which bear stylistic affinity with both Ife and Benin. Ife art survived in Owo until at least the 15th century during which time "classical" Benin art was just beginning. The Owo art thus fills the stylistic gap between the end of Ife's "classical" period (ca. 1160) and the earliest Benin heads, which Fagg gives as about 1500 A.D. (Sieber, 1968.)

These seemingly solid pieces of historical evidence were laid open to question by A.F.C. Ryder in his now well-known article, "A reconsideration of the Ife-Benin relationship"⁹. His thesis is that the oral traditions linking Benin to Ife are all comparatively recent (i.e., since the British punitive expedition to Benin in 1897) and that early writers, Europeans visiting Benin and other parts of West Africa, did not refer to Ife.

There is, of course, the report received in Benin by early Portuguese travellers of a sovereign named "Ogane"¹⁰ or "Hoguanec" (Pereira, 1937) to whom the Oba of Benin sent a messenger on his ascension to the throne. As signs of approval, the Ogane sent a staff, a hat and a pictorial cross, all made of brass. It has generally been assumed that this Ogane referred to the Ooni of Ife but Ryder suggests otherwise. According to Portuguese reports, the Ogane resided twenty moons' journey to the east and Ife (of the modern day) lies to the west of Benin. Ryder believes that one must look to the Nupe and Igala regions of the Nigeria-Benue confluence for answers to these problems. G.R.Grone,

translating some early Portuguese travel documents pertaining to West Africa (Codomosto, 1937:126-127) remarks in a footnote that the Ogane was probably a chief in the Niger Delta. E.C.C. Law also analyses this evidence and explains the difficulties in accepting outright the claim which assumes the Ogane to be the Oni of Ife (Law, 1993:1719).

The pictorial cross referred to above is found on some Benin art works and also in Nupe. However, contrary to former views that there is no occurrence of it in Ife art, effigies of the Ooni in full regalia reveal such a cross.

Some fresh light has been shed on the complex problem by analyses of several Benin bronzes¹¹. The Brass alloy most frequently found in Ife art is quite similar to that found on Benin heads of the middle period of Benin chronology, i.e., mid-17th century, suggesting, therefore, that they were produced in the 17th or 18th centuries and not earlier, as was previously supposed. This presupposes the possibility that Ife and Benin art may have been contemporaneous. Denis Williams has made a technical analysis of the core materials and moulds used in brass casting in Ife, Benin and Modern Yoruba art work (Williams, 1967:27-28) found in the technique used in Ife heads differs from that used by Benin casters. He contends that this difference in practice will strongly indicate separate technical traditions. At least it can no longer be unquestionably accepted that Ife art is anterior to Benin art. As Connah maintains, "We do not yet know what the truth of this matter is "Ignorance thus remains our constant enemy" (Connah, 1969:56).

AN OLDER IFE

Ryder further suggests that the present Ife may possibly be the remnant of an earlier Ife which was perhaps located to the east and found its final settlement where we know it to be today. This raises the tantalizing question of whether or not there really was another Ife; again, opinion was and still is divided. Ademakinwa (Ademakinwa) asserts confidently that there is no earlier Ife than the present one. But Bowen (1968:265) was told by a number of informants that Ife, where men were created, lay several months' journey away (i.e., from central Yorubaland) and some maintained it was located on the sea. Ryder explains how such references to the sea may likely mean the waters of the Niger rather than the Atlantic Ocean. This association of Ife with the sea crops up again in the context of cult worship at Ife, for Olokun, the divinity of the sea, is worshipped at Ife where the ocean was believed to have originated (Lucas, 1970:128-129). In fact, Parrinder reports that Olokun is some-

times referred to as the ancestor of the Ooni of Ife and that the deity's shrine ranks above all others at Ife (Parrinder, 1961:45).

To return to the question of the location of Ife, answers have been sought in the literature of area. Sowande (1964:45:53) argues that the Ife of ancient tradition is not likely to be the present-day Ife. Abimbola (1975:54-55) points out that many references to Ife are made in Ifa literature, but that these are not necessarily to modern Ile-Ife.

One 19th - century commentator stated that the original Ife was situated further to the north, possibly near the Niger. At some period the people of this Ife migrated south to the present city. "The present town of Ile-Ife should not be taken as the original Ile-Ife ... the old Ile-Ife was much farther in the interior" (George 1895:28).

Although attempts have been made to identify an older Ife to the north and east (Willett, 1973) these have not been fruitful; solid evidence is still lacking to make such an identification.

AGE AND ORIGIN OF THE ART OF IFE

The questions surrounding the age and origins of the art of Ife are numerous and largely unanswered. Robert S. Smith raises many of these pertinent questions (George, 1895:26-31) and seeks to summarize the evidence to date in his synthesis on the primacy of Ife.

It has been maintained by some that the Ife art antedated the migration of the Yoruba and belongs to an earlier culture. Milan Kalosu hypothesizes (Kalosu, 1969) that the unknown people of Ife culture were the Ijo (Ijaw), challenging the idea of a classical period in Ife art which has a greater antiquity, he feels, than is generally supposed.

As supportive evidence of this assertion, it is argued that Ife art bears little relation to the tradition of Oduduwa and appears to be little understood by the people of Ife themselves in whose shrine they are kept and worshipped. The artifacts found in archaeological investigations have been from secondary sites which are comparatively recent. William Fagg, however, feels that Ife art is undoubtedly Yoruba in origin, although an ancient form quite unlike 19th - century Yoruba art (Fagg, 1965:32).

That Ife art has its antecedents in the artistic traditions of Nok culture in northern Nigeria has been put forth by several authors¹² and is substantiated by artistic evidence. Stylistic and technical similarities between Ife and Nok art have been demonstrated (Fagg, 1962), although there is still a gap of about one millennium between the Nok culture and the so-called classical period of Ife to be accounted for.

While much mystery still envelopes the origin of Ife art, some of the air has been cleared by dispelling conclusively the early theories of foreign origin (Adam, 1963; Brooks, 1971). The Portuguese in particular received credit for introducing these art forms and techniques into West Africa, but this view was effectively erased a number of years ago (Murray, 1941).

The technique of brass casting and metal working in general was probably introduced from the near East, but it might have been through the diffusion of ideas (Eyo, 1970:28) rather than through the migration of people¹³.

The Ife corpus of art, the brass heads especially, exhibits such a stylistic homogeneity that it was felt to have been produced over a relatively brief period - perhaps one or two generations (Nigerian Museum, 1955:8). Willett, however, maintains that the Ife style remained unchanged for about three centuries (10th to 14th centuries) despite certain individual variations (Willett, 1971:44).

A series of radio-carbon dates from Ita Yemoo site in Ile-Ife and Orun Oba Ado (Willett, 1970) indicate that Ife art was at its height earlier than the 12th to 14th centuries, as oral tradition from Benin suggested, and that the gap between Nok and Ife art traditions may not be as great as earlier supposed.

According to radio-carbon dates (Willett, 1971:137), the present site of Ife would appear to have been occupied by 800 A. D. or maybe much earlier. But whether this occupation date refers to the Yoruba or earlier inhabitants is not known. Jeffreys tried to pinpoint the date of the founding of Ife (i.e., Oduduwa dynasty), weighing evidence from other authors, Johnson's king list of Oyo (Jeffreys, 1958:21) in particular; he arrived in 1050 A.D. Palmer adduced a similar date (1000 A.D.) (Palmer 1928:87) based on Benin oral traditions.

These divergent interpretations and speculations will make the historian's task difficult but on the whole interesting and challenging. The succeeding chapters form part of the effort to meet the challenge and arouse further interest and debate.

NOTES

- 1 Ife Palace Records (PR). This title is given to a big exercise book consulted during the reign of Oba Adesoji Aderemi (1930-80). It contains Ife traditions collected and compiled during the reign of Oba Ademiluyi (1910-30), presumably between 1925 and 1928, by

Prince Adeyemi Ademiluyi. The folios of the book are not consistently numbered, so it is not practicable to refer to page numbers. A few additions were made during the reign of Oba Aderemi.

- 2 Fabunmi Papers. These are a number of loose sheets in a folder kindly handed over to me by Chief M.A. Fabunmi, the Odole Atunobase of Ife. They form part of the oral traditions that he had collected over many years on the history of Ife. In this and many other respects, I am greatly indebted to him for this study.
- 3 Ilofi is the house in which an Oba-elect is kept for about "three moons" (usually between 56 and 70 days) while he is undergoing the rites that will make him an Oba.
- 4 IPR cited above. It is not clear whether this was due to the death of the compiler, Prince Adeyemi Ademiluyi, on 19th October, 1929, or because there was not much more known.
- 5 IPR, enclosures.
- 6 E.A. Kenyo: *Origin and Titles of Yoruba Rulers* (Lagos, n.d.); *Origin of the Progenitor of the Yoruba Race*, (Lagos: Yoruba Historical Research Company, 1951); and *Founder of the Yoruba Nation* (Lagos: Yoruba Historical Research Company, 1959).
- 7 R.C.C. Law: "Heritage of Oduduwa: traditional history and political propaganda among the Yoruba" in *Journal of African History*, 14(2). 1973, 207-222. See also *Law's Traditional History* in *Sources of Yoruba History*, edited by S.O. Biobaku (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 25-40.
- 8 J. U. Egharevba: *Origin of Benin*, 2nd edition (Benin City: the author, 1964); *Short history of Benin*, 4th edition (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1968), 6-7. The link with Benin is further enshrined in the practice which called for the burying of the head of the Oba of Benin upon his death at Ife in a place called "Orun Oba Ade". It is important to note that excavation at the site has produced no human sign.
- 9 A.F.C. Ryder: "A Reconsideration of Ife/Benin relationship" in

- Journal of African History, 6(1), 1965, 25-37. See also Willett's refutation in "New light on the Ife-Benin relationship", African forum, 3(4), 1970, 28-34.
- 10 Joao de Barros, *Da Asia, Dacada I, libro III, cap. iv* (Lisbon, 1552). Excerpted and translated in *Nigerian Perspectives: an historical anthology* by Thomas Hodgkin (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 96-67.
 - 11 O. Werner, "Metallurgische Untersuchungen der Benin Bronzen des Museum fur Volkunde Berlin. I. Beitrag zur Systematik der Benin-Legierungen: Baessler-Archiv, 18(1), 1970, 71-153; Denis Williams, "Art in metal", in *Sources of Yoruba History*, edited by S.O. Biobaku (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 140-175.
 - 12 Ekpo O. Eyo, "Ife so far. Black Orpheus, 2(4), 1970, 27-28; Frank Willett, *Ife in the history of West African Sculpture*, Op. cit., chapter 8, "Ancestors in terracotta", 110-118 and chapter 9, *Origins of the Yoruba and of the art of Ife*, 119-121, 125-126.
 - 13 William B. Fagg, "De l'art des Yoruba", *Presence Africaine*, 10/11, 112-116.

CHAPTER 3

IFE BEFORE ODUDUWA

Isola Olomola

INTRODUCTION

Many amateur and professional academic historians who have engaged themselves in the search for the origin and antecedents of the history and culture of the Yoruba-speaking people have either stopped abruptly at or begun their adventure from the Oduduwa episode, in spite of persistent allusions in the various oral histories of Ife and some other sub-ethnic divisions of the Yoruba to communities of great and unknown antiquity in their areas which had played hosts to the immigrant aristocratic groups associated with Oduduwa. However, recent historical studies have broadened our perspectives about the distant past and these communities. Ulli Beier has pointed out in his article titled "Before Oduduwa" that there is enough evidence, in the various creation stories and stories of wars and conquests associated with Oduduwa, to show that parts of Yorubaland were inhabited before his episode by people who were either conquered, driven out or absorbed by the new dynastic group (Beier, 1956). The issue has been further classified with the claim that parts of Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti and Ijebu, etc., were inhabited by people with some measure of sophisticated political culture before the advent of Oduduwa (Olomola, 1984:3-4). Thus, the common belief that the origin of Ile-Ife and that of the entire Yoruba world, as well as their social and political culture dated from Oduduwa, needs some modification. What can be traced to Oduduwa is the emergence of a new dynasty and to a new political culture. Whether or not his actual name was Oduduwa, a new leader emerged during or after his episode, as the first Oba of Ile-Ife, to rule all of the component communities together as a unit, directly and effectively. The date and manner of his emergence are still subjects of academic debates. All that seems certain is that the episode associated with Oduduwa represents a change of leadership, the grafting of a new political culture on the stock of an existing one and the eventual emergence of a culture florescence which started in Ile-Ife and from there spread in later generations to other parts of Yorubaland.

The purpose of this chapter is to address the crucial issues thus raised in the foregoing paragraph, namely, to examine the available evidence regarding the autochthonous communities in and around Ile-Ife, their antiquity, language, religious and political culture and attempt a recon-

struction of the history and culture of ancient Ife.

ANTIQUITY AND SOURCES

Oral histories of Ife people are informative about their conception of the probable origin of their world and culture, but such histories are dateless and mythical. One of their myths of origin is contained in Ikedu, described by Akinjogbin as "an ancient school for teaching (Ife) history to the initiates" (Akinjogbin, 1980:68). According to this myth, ancient Ife existed from the beginning of the world; it relates how the Supreme Intelligence called Orisanobu Oghene sent his servant named Oko, accompanied by a large retinue, into the world to found a home for the human race. The group initially occupied a small island which they named Ooyelagbo. Then the population increased and the leader, Oko, implored Orisanobu Oghene for more land. He consented, and on his orders the waters receded, dry land expanded and Oko called this place Ile-Ife. There are many creation myths about Ife. Another related how Ore, a lone hunter on earth, pleaded with the Supreme Being similar to 'God Forgotten', in Thomas Hardy's Selected Poems, concerning the condition of the world then full of water.

God then sent Oduduwa at the head of a large group of celestial beings and provisioned them with lumps of earth containing seeds. This group landed on the primeval flood, created and occupied the land. In yet another creation myth, the leader of the group commissioned by God was Obatala, with Oduduwa as one of his lieutenants. The leader (Obatala) drank palm wine along the way and got himself tipsy, whereupon Oduduwa superseded him in the leadership, led the group to and occupied Oke (hill of) Oramfe.

Creation myths are common to virtually every culture group the world over and they constitute an integral part of the local folklore described by Finnegan as "survivals of the past" (Finnegan, 1970:318). These myths provide valuable insight into culture groups' world views and their conception of the evolution and development of their material and non-material culture. But they do not solve the mysteries of historical origins. For instance, the Ikedu myth, which is apparently most archaic and probably most original, tells us nothing about who the people were and how long ago they had occupied the land. Although we are told in the tradition that between 93 and 97 kings of the autochthones ruled before the advent of Oduduwa, we are not told whether or not the people about whom Ikedu is talking were the first and earliest inhabitants of Ife. In the second story, the earth was inhabited by hunters, rep-

resented by Ore, before Oduduwa while in the third story Obatala (and later Oduduwa) encountered a culture group which possessed the knowledge of the cultivation of wine-yielding trees, that is, a community with sedentary civilization. How ancient this civilization was is not known.

Archaeological evidence becomes helpful where creation myths seem to have failed. T. Shaw readily comes to our aid concerning the antiquity of human habitation of parts of the Yoruba rain forest by dating the skeletal remains of a Stone Age man found at Iwo Eleru, a cave near Isarun in Ondo State to around 9,000 B.C. (Shaw, 1969:110-112). Similar archaeological remains of Stone Age culture have been dug up at Asejire in Oyo State. Although we do not know whether or not such a culture perished without a trace, we can presume that the men left heirs and descendants who might have been the distant or actual ancestors of culture groups of which ancient Ife was one; for Paul Ozanne who has done some archaeological work in Ife has suggested that the place was occupied as far back as the 4th century B.C. (Ozanne, 1969:32).

Although T. Shaw claimed that the fossil remains of his Iwo Eleru man show that the Stone Age men were different from the present Yoruba, it cannot be completely ruled out that they could be the distant ancestors of the autochthones of Ife, for example. The difference that Shaw has found might have resulted from hybridization of the autochthonous inhabitants and people from outside the region, notably the northern parts. This contention is supported by the evidence of similarities discovered between Nok and Ife artistic culture on the one hand and by evidence of continual waves of immigrant settlers into Yorubaland from regions north of the River Niger on the other.

Similarly, linguistic studies of Yoruba and related languages have suggested a tenable antiquity greater than the Oduduwa episode for the autochthonous culture group. Armstrong has from his comparative study of Yoruba and Idoma suggested that both languages stemmed from a common language spoken by some common ancestors before a separation took place about 6,000 years ago (Armstrong, 1964:135). What this ancient language was like we do not know. But Akinjogbin has noted that from the little that is known about the ancient people of Ife, their language is very much akin to modern Yoruba or any of its dialects (Akinjogbin, 1980:24). A closer look at the dialects of the Yoruba language is likely to show that those of central (Ife) and eastern (Ijesa and Ekiti) Yoruba are much closer to the proto-Yoruba languages of the ancient ancestors. This claim is supported by Oyelaran in a paper titled

"Linguistic Speculations on Yoruba History" where he asserted, among other things, that Ife, Ijesa and Ekiti represent "the original home of the Yoruba people" (Oyelaran, 1977:18).

Concerning the antiquity of this ancient proto-Yoruba culture group, both Armstrong and Oyelaran have speculated that the process of differentiation in their speech and dialect configurations might have happened about two millennia ago! We know, however, that the changes have not completely obliterated traces of the proto-Yoruba. Some of the archaic words are preserved in Ikedu texts, as the one quoted in 1980 by Akinjogbin shows. Although adepts of Ikedu seem to have died out, there exist survivals of the ancient language among the Ife, Ijesa and Ekiti, especially the last named, among whom Dallimore observed in the 1930's that 'there are numbers of words still being used which do not appear to have any connection with Yoruba' (Dallimore, 1930:60); that is, the standard Yoruba with which he was conversant during the couple of years he had worked in Oyo.

Thus, from the foregoing, we can hazard a guess that human societies existed in Ife several centuries ago. We do not know when and how the ancient societies came to be; we do not know what actual name they called themselves or were called by other people. But they were undoubtedly ancient and had evolved an autochthonous political and artistic culture. Much evidence of their political culture survived the political take-over by the Oduduwa group, and it seems that part of their art culture and religions survived. It was indeed the relics of this rich art culture which enthused the German visitor, Leo Frobenius into describing ancient Ife in glamorous terms, such as the 'far-famed and mysterious Atlantis', referring to a superb human civilization believed to have perished before this cycle of human civilization, and into concluding that ancient Ife was 'a Greek colony of the 13th Century B.C.' (Frobenius 1968:282).

ANCIENT IFE/IGBOMOKUN

Various names have occurred in the oral histories of the Yoruba. Such names refer to the habitat as well as the people of ancient Ife. One is Inamu (Atandare, 1972:1), another is Igbomokun and yet another is Ife Oodaiye. Inamu appears to have been a local (Akure, etc.) rendition or reference to Old Iloromu, one of the component village communities of ancient Ife. Ife Oodaiye is the name commonly mentioned by Ife traditional historians as that of the earliest habitat of their ancestors as they emerged after the primeval flood. However, there is a suggestion that

Ile-Ife may not have been an original name of the habitat, for, according to Ojo, the Baba of Saki, the name Ile-Ife was coined after numerous settlers continued to arrive during, and perhaps after, the episode and military career of Oranmiyan, the fourth Oba after the political take-over of the ancient kingdom (Ojo, 1954:14). We are thus left with Igbobomokun. This name has occurred in many folktales of the eastern Yoruba and among the Ijesa and Ekiti. The dawn is usually reserved for the most solemn assemblies because, as they say, 'The dawn belongs to the king of Igbo.' In Ife tradition also, reference is made to 'Kutukutu, Oba Igbo', that is, 'Early morning, the king of Igbo'. In Ijesa and Ekiti, reference is made to ancient Ife as 'Igbomokun',¹ the ancient central market place in ancient Ife as 'Igbomokun Akira' and, as the aforementioned reference to dawn shows, the people are known as Igbo. Even in Ife tradition, the people are referred to as Igbo, and after the displacement of their dynasty and restrictions against ritual performances in their old capital, the wars of vengeance they fought against the new dynasty and the city are referred to as 'Igbo raids' (Abiri, 1970:3-15). It is here suggested that Igbomokun was probably one of the names of ancient Ife.

Ancient Ife/Igbomokun Kingdom consisted of clusters of contiguous village communities, probably farther away, about 20 kilometres south-east from the core settlement. This contention is supported by evidence of similarly pre-Oduduwa 'kingdom' of Ilemure (now Ibokun) and Ilare 'confederacy' in Ijesaland and Ulesun, now within Ado-Ekiti. Ilemure consisted of juxtaposed villages; Ilare was made up of some seven villages and Ulesun was the 'metropolis' of eight contiguous village communities (Olomola n.d.:49). In the case of ancient Igbomokun, 13 village communities are mentioned in oral history (Fashogbon n.d.), namely, Ido, Iloromu, Ideta Oko, Odun, Iloran, Oke-Oja, Imojubi, Iraye, Ijugbe, Oke-Awo, Iwinrin, Parakin and Omologun. The sites of Ido, reputedly a large community, Oke Awo, Iloran and Parakin are not definitively stated; Iloromu, it was said, lay along a stretch of present-day Ife-Ilesa road while Ideta Oko, described as the largest of the kin villages, lay along the road to present-day Mokuro. Odun lay along the road to Ifewara, near the site of present-day Ooni Grammar School, Oke-Oja, Ijugbe, and Iraye a few kilometres west of present-day Modakeke, with Iraye being the farthest southwestwards and closer to the site of Old Owu. Ilare and Esije were coterminous respectively with present-day Sabo and Eleyele quarters while Iwinrin was coterminous with present-day Koiwo and Oronna quarters. Omologun is coterminous with present-day Obafemi Awolowo University campus while Imojubi lay on the present-day

southern outskirts of Ife along the Ife-Ondo road.

These component communities appeared to have resulted from fissions of some original community which also sprang and grew from an initial primary lineage community. Granted that his supposition was right, that the various villages were offshoots of a core village community, it follows that government at some initial stage was gerontocratic, this socio-political culture being an outgrowth of the duties performed and privileges enjoyed by the common father right from the start. We suppose that such duties and privileges the father of the clan enjoyed became, in a few generations, conventionalized for subsequent heads of the lineages who began to act, and were regarded by kinsmen as representing the common ancestors. Granted that the village resulted from fission, it follows that while the leaders of each village-founding lineage or lineages perpetuated themselves in the exercise of the prerogatives of power and the enjoyment of benefits thereof, the leaders as well as the masses whose ancestors also similarly originated from the 'metropolis' generally regarded the ruler, who was usually selected from the original lineage, as father. He was probably endowed with some supernatural power and in addition referred to in some superlative terms. Again, he was probably endowed with some appellations which sooner or later became conventionalized titles. Such titles often described the ruler as the owner of the metropolis and all its territories. This supposition is supported by what existed in many of the pre-Oduduwa 'kingdoms', such as Adikun near Old Oyo, Oko near Ijebu-Ode, Efene near present-day Owo, Ulesun in Ado-Ekiti, Epe near Ondo and Oba near present-day Akure where the heads of the ancient communities were titled Aladikun, Oloko, Elefene, Elesun, Elepe and Oloba. We do not know the actual titles of the rulers of Igbomokun but titles like Obalale, Obalesun and Obatala have been mentioned. We know, however, that one of the superlative terms in which they were addressed and which became conventionalized as a title was Ajalorun.

It is certain that the various communities constituting Igbomokun had co-existed for many centuries and had, therefore, evolved a monarchical political culture before the advent of Oduduwa. Indeed, we know from evidence obtained about other autochthonous communities that the political culture had reached such a sophisticated level that the kings wore crowns. The Aladikun, Elesun, Oye-Ita and Elefene are said to possess crowns before their kingdoms were conquered and the crowns seized by the dynastic ancestors of the Alafin, Ewi, Owa Obokun, Olowo, etc.; following in the footsteps of their eponymous ancestor, Oduduwa, who is

reported to have seized the crowns of Obatala, ruler of Ideta Oko, and Ompetu, head of Ido.² The rulers of Igbomokun wore crowns, as important symbols, and the paraphernalia of their royalty. The crowns were, therefore, indigenous to Igbomokun. Indeed, the new dynastic group made crowns after the fashion of the autochthones, commissioning craftsmen among their host communities. Admittedly, these ancient crowns were not made of beads but of either twigs (raffia), rags or shells, for the technology seemed to have progressed among the Yoruba from those ancient crowns to those made of cowries and beads. Samples of many of these can still be obtained.

Thus, the common belief that the Oduduwa group introduced the monarchical system and the accompanying insignia of royalty is not true. Indeed, the Oduduwa group conquered all the component communities, effectively centralized power in the new dynasty and probably evolved the palace culture in place of the then existing system whereby the rulers lived in their respective lineage compounds. That was probably the only innovation by the group. Even the original of the Are crowns annually worn by the Ooni of Ife during the Olojo festival, was copied during the reign of Obalufon from the one seized from Obatala. It is hereby suggested that all the new dynastic group introduced was probably beads which had been mentioned as one of the principal and inheritable properties of Oduduwa (Johnson, 1969:6). We presume beaded crowns became one of the standard symbols of royalty and the offshoot dynasties thereafter depended on the ancestral throne in Ile Ife for regular and periodic supply (Olomola 1977:74-82).

The population of ancient Ife/Igbomokun cannot be stated because nothing specific has been preserved on it in oral history and neither archaeological nor linguistic evidence can yield any data remotely connected with the issue. But we presume that Igbomokun was, at the advent of the dynastic group, a primary mini-state. The political culture was such that each of the component village communities had titled leaders who enjoyed some prerogatives of power in return for the duties performed and responsibilities shouldered. We can, therefore, say that this elaborate division of labour and socio-political development are suggestive of some medium-sized population. In addition, the village communities might have absorbed immigrant settlers from some contiguous settlements within or outside of the Yoruba rain forest.

Moreover, the considerable amount of material and non-material culture of the autochthonous inhabitants that survived the political takeover shows beyond any reasonable doubt that the immigrant aristocratic

group associated with Oduduwa was numerically inferior to the host community and was culturally absorbed. The Ife oral tradition which says that some 16 immortals preceded Oduduwa creation³ might be an impressionistic reference to the population of the aboriginal communities vis-a-vis the Oduduwa group. The conquest of the host communities might have resulted from the tendency for aggression and subversion often demonstrated by immigrant groups already toughened by the privations of their wandering vis-a-vis the tendency for decadence generally demonstrated by a sedentary population who have been long used to the abundance of nature. It might have resulted also from their possession and use of iron weapons, as all indications point to the fact that Ogun, apparently the leader of the military arm of the group (Ojo, 1937:8-12), is regarded in Yoruba oral histories as the first man to possess and use iron.

Thus, the fact that the aboriginal communities were conquered is no proof of their incapability of corporate action for the purpose of defence. There is abundant evidence in oral histories of Ife that the component communities actually fought the aggressors and their resistance made what has been commonly represented as an easy walk-over a long-drawn war. After they were vanquished and the conquerors established themselves as the new rulers, many patriots remained irreconcilable; and when infuriated further by restrictions imposed by the new rulers on their movements and incensed by a desire to avenge themselves on the usurpers, they organized a resistance movement which remained a constant thorn in the flesh of the new rulers for at least two generations. From their new centres, these partisans of the old (Obatala) dynasty harassed and attacked the government, kidnapped and killed the citizens and looted the people's properties to their hearts' content until Moremi's episode. This sustained military action and the fact that the new dynasty was eventually forced to reconcile with the old ones preserving many of the old titles and assigning to them important roles in the new political culture,⁴ show that the population of the aboriginal group was large and that the new rulers realized that they should placate their leaders in order to obtain their acquiescence and that of the population in general.

In considering the social culture of ancient Ife/Igbomokun, we have little evidence about the social manners of the people. But through backward projections from what is known about the Yoruba generally and Ife in particular; concerning their predisposition to friendliness and accommodation, we can presume that the aboriginal people were friendly and sociable people. In virtually all of the accounts of receptions accorded

the dynastic group by the aboriginal communities and their rulers in Yorubaland, we have evidence of welcome, accommodation and integration. Ife, then, was completely agrarian and communal in the true sense.

Concerning the religion of the aboriginal population of ancient Ife, we have evidence from available oral histories of their polytheistic culture to disprove the contention that the Oduduwa group introduced the religious culture of the Yoruba (Beier, 1956:25). We do not know what actual name was given to the Supreme Being referred to in Ikedu as 'Orisanobu Oghene'. However, Obatala, head of the component communities at the time of the political take-over, was also head of the priestly order (isoro) of a supreme God called Oramfe, which might be the then current name for what Orisanobu Oghene stood for in the very archaic period.

Several lesser gods, sometimes as many as 200,5 have been mentioned among the pre-Oduduwa people. These include Aje, Kori, Esu, certain celestial beings, such as the god of lightening named Jakuta, and a host of others whose names are lost. There were, of course, lineage deities, some of them presumably deified men and women with physical features such as rivers and rocks. We also presume that since the society was rural and agrarian, the communities must have worshipped heavenly bodies and deified objects associated with weather and harvest. All this cannot be idle assumption because it is known that the river Esinminrin, now an insignificant river and pond near the General Hospital, was a principal goddess to which generations of the inhabitants made sacrifices and to which Moremi, a woman of the new dynasty, swore before her adventures with the Igbo partisan groups.

One of the best evidences of the existence of organized religion and hierophany in ancient Ife is the unknown antiquity of the Ifa divination. From available evidence, the art of divination and the accompanying religious beliefs and practices pre-dated Oduduwa in Yorubaland. Johnson referred to a pre-Oduduwa practitioner of Ifa, named Setilu, who is also described as a member of the Oduduwa group (Johnson, 1969:4); but all oral histories of Ife are agreed on the fact that Agbonniregun, an adept of indigenous divination, was one of the prominent citizens of ancient Ife who played host to the eponymous ancestor's group. Thus, whether or not the name 'Ifa' is derived from the Arabic word al-faal, meaning omen, and *Orunmila* is the Yoruba vocalization of Arabic ar-rami for divination (Obayemi, 1979:11), the two words diffused, as Obayemi supposed through the Yoruba northern neighbours

such as the Nupe, Igala and Kanuri. The point being made here is that an indigenous divination and organized belief, observances and priesthood existed in parts of Yorubaland before the advent of Oduduwa. It is probably because of the great and unknown antiquity of the oracle that it is commonly believed among the Yoruba that Ifa's knowledge embraces 'the whole range of the Yoruba world-view from the earliest times until the present-day' (Abimbola, 1973:46).

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the episode associated with Oduduwa's group marked a significant landmark in the history and political culture of Ife. The change brought about was characterized by the emergence in Ife of a new dynasty, a new constitutional system, a new composite and unique language, religion, government and social norm which, in all probability, replaced a much older one. What eventually emerged as, more or less, a city state was before then a multi-settlement polity, a kingdom with a metropolis called Ile-Ife and a host of subordinate communities. Since the episode of the political take-over, Ile-Ife has become the seat of the ruler, wherein lay his palace and court and the shrines of the principal deities, the centre of a powerful religious cult and culture that transcended the boundaries of Ife/Igbomokun. Initially, after the change of dynasty, the partisans of the new dynasty were allocated the former village communities of the old dynasty to occupy as fiefs. But over the generations, the population of these settlements were reduced to cottages as the bulk of their population moved into the city, and such settlers' quarters crystallized into More, Ilode and Irewo quarters. By this time, the new dynasty had virtually eclipsed the old communities and information about them and their culture progressively passed into mythology.

NOTES

1. See evidence of Oba Solomon Ojopagogo Alara of Ilaramokin in Ondo Chieftaincy Review Commission, Day 2, June 1977, p.7
2. Evidence obtained from I.A. Fayenuwo, 70 24 Gbelenkan Street, Ile-Ife
3. Evidence obtained from I.A. Fayenuwo
4. Anonymous in I.A. Akinjogbin's collections, A Brief History of

Ife, p.6

5. G.O. Epega, *The basis of Yoruba Religion* (Ebute-Metta: Ijamido Printers, about 1910), p.22. See also Father K.Carroll, "Yoruba Masks: Notes on the Masks of the North-east Yoruba country" in *Odu* 3, 1956, p.8.

CHAPTER 4

THE PHENOMENON OF ODUDUWA IN IFE HISTORY

Ade M. Obayemi

This contribution may proceed from some elementary definitions, namely, the meaning, preferably the meanings, of Oduduwa. There are several co-existing but overlapping definitions of the name, personality, concept or phenomenon called Oduduwa (Idowu, 1962; Lucas, 1948). Efforts have been made to give a more or less popular, hopefully acceptable and respectable meaning to the name from folk etymology. I consider, however, a discussion of such to be out of context in this rather limited exercise. Rather than waste space and the time of the reader on this patently sterile etymological exercise, I propose to consider the meanings of Oduduwa under the following overlapping but specific sub-themes:

- (i) genealogical propositions
- (ii) "stratigraphy" of Ile-Ife oral history
- (iii) dynastic preferences
- (iv) modern socio-culture options
- (v) chronological interpretations
- (vi) locational or geo-cultural platitudes

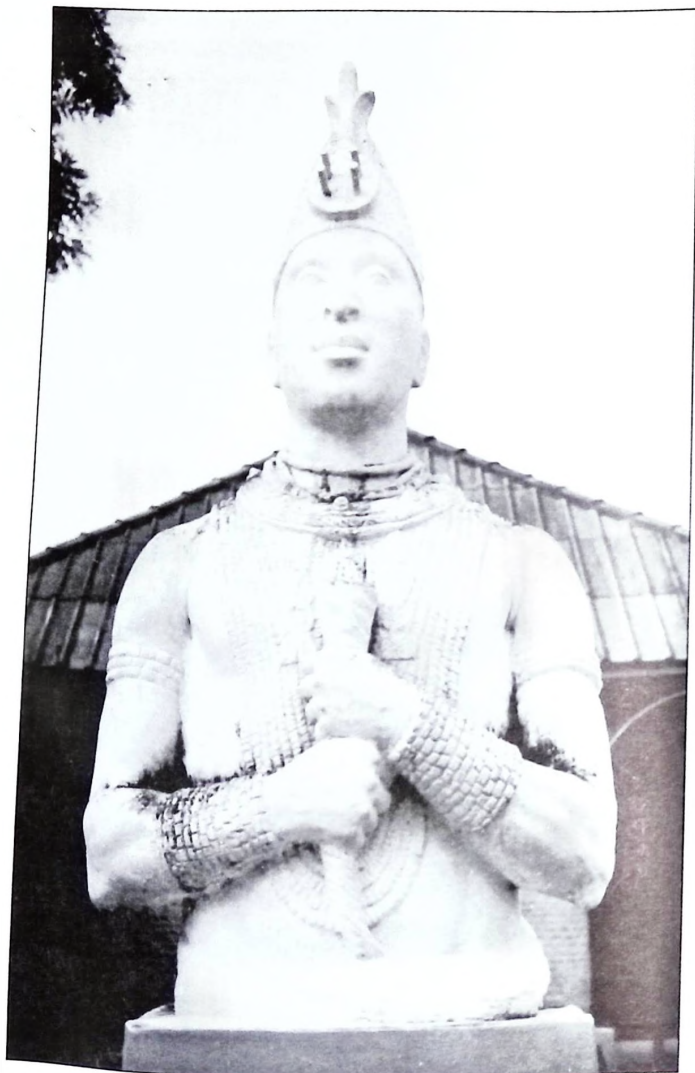
By adopting this apparently simplistic procedure, we should be discussing the issue of who Oduduwa was or whom he would represent, what he could symbolize, when or whence he could have emerged, how the Oduduwa phenomenon could have come into prominence and/or have become a preoccupation for so many, and why he remains and retains such an attraction to the contemporary (Yoruba) mind. The problems are as sociological as they are of historio-graphical interest, and without such elementary re-assessments we run the risk of merely repeating or at best reviewing earlier stereotypes.

GENEALOGICAL PROPOSITIONS

There are many views as to the position of Oduduwa in relation to the other historical or mythistorical male personalities, such as Oranmiyan or Oranyan, Ogun, Obatala or Orisala, Okanbi, Sopasan, etc., and females such as Olokun, Yemoja, Oya and a host of others. I have



"ILE-ODUDUWA" The precise spot where Oduduwa was believed to have descended.



A recent statue of Oduduwa mounted in the Ooni's palace

attempted to tabulate a selection of these different genealogies (in Table 1). In European sociological terms, Oduduwa's position varies vis-a-vis these others as father, grandfather, brother, cousin, uncle, nephew, etc., as a simple inspection of the tables presented reveals.

Rather than argue that the one is superior to the other, I prefer adopting the simple and perhaps the only natural position that there are no independent means of nullifying or confirming any of these to the exclusion of any other. This position may be described and decried as being too sceptical, but taking together these contradictory or conflicting genealogies, it is clear that they all represent some of the results of recent mentafacts and ideofacts based upon a common theme, i.e., the idea of the primacy of Oduduwa, especially in the history of the more populous and conspicuous Yoruba-speaking people.

We may here even ignore the assumption in most earlier written sources that Oduduwa is regarded as a woman and the wife of some identified mythological figure.

In his well-known 1926 publication, Farrow (1926) states that Oduduwa is also called Iya Agbe; that she is the chief goddess and wife of Obatala who fled from Ile-Ife to Ado some 15 miles (25 km) from Badagry. Repeating or elaborating on Farrow, or perhaps using the same sources, Lucas presents an identical picture of Oduduwa (see Table next page).

Oduduwa is one of the most important Yoruba deities. She is the chief female orisa, just as Obatala is the chief male orisa. She is reputed as the progenitor of the Yoruba race... Some depict the deity as a male orisa, and others as a female orisa. The former myths are of a late origin ... The myths depicting the deity as a female orisa are more original in character, and are more widely accepted. There is hardly any doubt that Oduduwa was originally a female deity (Lucas, 1998:93-94).

In another text that says a great deal in the same direction, Parrinder reports an episode in the kingdom of Ketu:

When I quoted to the Alaketu (King of Ketu) the tradition given by Johnson as to Oduduwa being the Yoruba ancestor, he said at once that Oduduwa was the wife of Sho-ipashan ... It has some topical importance because of the modern Yoruba national society which claims Oduduwa as ancestor (Parrinder, 1967:13).

Taken together, therefore, existing genealogical or sex placings of Oduduwa do not and cannot on their own take us far in any attempt to definitively fix his position vis-a-vis other heroes, kings or legendary

figures. Even if they contain some historical truth, they do not permit cross-checking one against another; indeed, whatever credibility they contain and whatever contemporary consensus is held about them, the genealogical position of Oduduwa is compounded by the glaring contradictions about which of the sexes he belonged to. Modern scholarship has attempted to harmonize or explain these contradictions, but results so far do not take us beyond the point that Oduduwa is yet to be identified beyond the mythistorical plane.¹

STRATIGRAPHY OF ILE-IFE ORAL HISTORY

An examination of Ile-Ife oral history centering on Oduduwa takes us back to most of the figures cited in the preceding section. Structurally, the Ile-Ife kinglists seem to identify several successive dynasties or at least definite breaks on the monolithic kinglist which goes back to Oduduwa. I have examined this point in another contribution (Obayemi, 1979) and will here only repeat that Oni Lajamisan is the founder of the dynasty which now rules Ile-Ife, four of his descendants being the founders of different ruling houses of this dynasty. We could recognize in Oranmiyan another break in the dynasties, but between Oranmiyan and Lajamisan are names whose exact relationships one with another are not clear and which include female rulers. Oduduwa is recognized as marking another of the stages. Indeed, between Oduduwa and Oranmiyan, is such a puzzling picture as to who was who that we might even guess that Obalufon represents yet another dynasty, another break in the series of kings' houses of Ife. We could then propose a sequence, based on oral historical data from Ife cast within the dynastic mould, as follows:

Lajamisan dynasty	-	recent
Oranmiyan	"	
Obalufon	"	
Oduduwa	"	
Obatala	-	most ancient

For this discussion, this hypothesis on the breakdown of the Ile-Ife dynastic chronology, has double significance. First, it invites us to consider, or rather to identify, some plausible breaks in the continuity of the dynastic tradition at Ile-Ife. Second, we should understand that each of the stages must have adopted elements of its preceding ones, transforming and editing these to suit its own conditions. The "Oduduwa" tradition would thus be no more than what has filtered through the Obalufon.

Oranmiyan and Lajamisan dynasties. Even within the context of the Lajamisan period, we should remind ourselves of the dislocations, mental and otherwise, that the bloody wars and evacuations of Ile-Ife caused during the 19th century (Akintoye, 1970). It was not really till after these wars that the "traditions" about Oduduwa were recorded. Each stage in this stratigraphy of Ile-Ife dynastic history should, therefore, be understood as a time of change.

DYNASTIC PREFERENCES

Quite related to the table of "genealogical propositions" for Oduduwa - though in a way reflecting the non-internal, i.e., Ile Ife, but the external placing of Oduduwa - are those myths, those theories, those fabrications, those legends that place Oduduwa within the framework of their local histories. If we call these dynastic preferences, it is because such represent only one of several local possibilities. We may in this connection note an observation by a sociologist of the Yoruba, to the effect that myths explain the present rather than the past, adding that:

Some young literate men of the present day who have collected the myths of their towns and attempted to write an objective history have been afraid to publish anything which suggests that their Oba had an origin other than the one claimed in the myths ... (Lloyd:25)

This is one prop for the view that the Oduduwa "legacy" or pre-occupation in many areas is only one of many possibilities. In the case of Oyo, the arguments of Kobin Law should be most instructive: showing, as they do, the historiographical pitfalls to which the indigenous creators or editors of local myths are responding by inserting an Oduduwa phenomenon into their local histories (Law, 1973).

The most prolific writer on this is, of course, Alademomi Kenyo (Kenyo, 1954;1964). In a series of popular works, he has presented the picture of Oduduwa not just being an overall father of the Yoruba-speaking peoples but also goes into details to actually link one and only one Oduduwa with as many kingdoms, towns, villages, etc. as care to conjure him into their histories as father and/or as founder of their dynasties. If Kenyo proves the case far more than anyone also by being the most travelled investigator, we might here note a few of the local assertions about the preference for Oduduwa being the founder of the local dynasties, thus leading us to ask when Oduduwa emerged in the various local histories.

In Benin it is Egharevba, and surely after 1930, that tells us specifically about an Oduduwa connection with Benin. According to him, after

the breakdown of the Ogiso system:

The people indignantly sent an ambassador to the Oni Oduduwa the great and wisest ruler of Ife, asking him to send one of his sons to be their ruler (Egharevba, 1968:5-6).

Before Eghrevba, Dennett had heard that the prince who came was 'one of the six sons of Awyaw (Oyo).' Although the other details of the narrative are identical with those of Egbarevba, and although this prince was specifically said to have returned to Uhe or Ife, Dennett does not give his name (Dennett, 1906). In Ondo, an earlier author was very specific that the dynasty came from Epe.² By the fifties, however, Ife and Oduduwa had displaced this earlier (Adama Kinwa, 1958). Among the north-east Yoruba, principally the Ijumu, Yagba and Oworo, it was not until the fifties that Ile-Ife and Oduduwa became the standard claim for the origins of peoples and of their kingship institutions (Obayemi n.d.).

We can easily multiply these examples and go into details to identify at what time or in what contexts Oduduwa became the most attractive for people to write this personality into their histories. Such should be seen as part of what we consider next, i.e., modern socio-cultural options.

SOME MODERN SOCIO-CULTURE OPTIONS

We must never ignore the basic fact that Pax Britannica, which is another name for the colonial system in Nigeria, brought more Yoruba-speaking groups together under the umbrella of one state structure than has ever been the case throughout history. The old Oyo hegemony and the Ibadan system, to some extent, had undertaken the integration of various Yoruba-speaking sub-groups; but even these had to operate without the participation of the north-eastern, eastern, south and south-eastern groups. The system which the British introduced could be said to have created an atmosphere conducive to the emergence or identification of a central father figure or hero for the entire group. The system of Indirect Rule enhanced the institution of Obaship and this factor, more than any other one, prompted people to search for the "roots" of this institution, against the background of the wearing of eda, the beaded crown of which Ile-ife was once a purveyor. It is thus easy to see how Ife, with its monuments and its Oduduwa, came to the forefront. So deep is this new awareness that even non-Yoruba-speaking groups within the old Western Region came to adopt the Oduduwa option in reckoning their origins. School textbooks, especially in the vernacular,³ the press and radio as well as culture movements of the 19th century popularized the primacy

of Ile-Ife and Oduduwa so much so that deviants could do little but turn to Obatala, Obalufon or Ogun as the sources of their political emblems. Today, the inclusion of Ife and Oduduwa in the histories of many communities is only skin deep, commanding the attention of the few new elite who are directly responsible for this type of response to the quest for origins and legitimacy.

CHRONOLOGY

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that for communities whose insertion of Oduduwa in their histories are demonstrably recent, we cannot seriously seek to establish the dates for Oduduwa from within such contexts as they present. Also from the genealogies reproduced above, it becomes clear that family trees are not helpful in an exercise that seeks a plausible chronological placing of Oduduwa - even if we agree on the historicity of such a personage. But must we neglect the hopelessness of identifying some solid evidence that we can hold on to? Willett, for example, has despaired:

Unfortunately we have no means of dating the period of Oduduwa and Oranmiyan, the days when the gods were men, (Willett, 1967:125)

So far, the views expressed here of the alternative identities and definitions of Oduduwa have been very sceptical, in order to expose the real pitfalls, those directions and avenues that end in blind alleys and along which not a few scholars have been lost. It is not in any way intended to suggest that the search for Oduduwa is a sterile exercise, but we must separate the essence from the shadow if we are to make real progress.

LOCATIONS AND GEO-CULTURAL REALITIES

There is a body of data on Ile-Ife which, in spite of some contradictions, allow us to be more positive in our interpretations of the Oduduwa phenomenon. There is, in fact, an Oduduwa shrine or temple in Ile-Ife today, one which is not only clearly marked but also has a clearly identifiable priest in the office of the Obadio. It is strategically located at Idio, now Enuwa (palace), quite close indeed to the entrance of the palace. The existence of an Oduduwa cult at Ile-Ife, with its priest, ritual and shrine, represents a most incontrovertible line of evidence for us. So is the existence, according to Mackenzie (n.d.), of an apartment within the palace called Ilegbo which is strongly identified with Oduduwa.

Quite related to this physical symbolism of Oduduwa is the role of the shrine, its priest and followers in the cycle of rituals, especially the

enthronement rites of an Oni of Ile-Ife. According to Ademakinwa:

Chief Ejio was the one who escorted Ooda to the city through a circuitous route, which has since that time become the one which every new Oni has to take to his palace on his coronation. That is why it has since that time become that compulsory duty of Chief Ejio to be the usher of every new Ooni on the day of his coronation, when Ejio has to say to the new Ooni thus - "This is the way which my father Orafiye took to meet your father Oodua on his royal entry into this city" (Ademakinwa).

There is still, of course, a possibility that the pronouncement, as it is, does not have to be the same since the beginning of time.

Far more complex to analyse, partly because of the existence of many variables, is the cycle of stories surrounding Oduduwa in Ile-Ife, especially as these involve other Ile-Ife celebrities like Oranfe, Obatala, Obameri, to name a few of the 16 Ooye or Beings who "descended" with Oduduwa. We can accord a great deal of respectability to these stories, in spite of the contradictions they contain and which are, no doubt, the work of the transmitters and analysts for a number of reasons, two of which are more significant: the fact that they are connected with known spots, shrines, sites or monuments in a specific way, and the fact that these beings or their deeds are commemorated in rituals. Shorn of their embellishments and modern manipulations, we may understand these legends as telling a story which can be summarized in the following way: about 1000 A.D. the Ile-Ife area, over a radius of some 20 kilometers or so was occupied by some agricultural folk who already lived in villages. They had attained a certain level of material and cultural sophistication which included the manufacture of clay figurines, the making of pot-sherd pavements, the practice of masquerades by using costumes of raffia and/or grass. In this scheme of things, the Ora Hill (Oke Ora) to the east of Ile-Ife town had become famous as the seat of a major primeval deity called Oranfe. A community had also sprung up around or on this hill. All these settlements in and around the "Ife bowl" appear to have evolved a local political system in which the leaders took titles pre-fixed by the word Oba and perhaps Olu.

Among these chiefs were some whose titles were Obawinrin, Obarena, Obariyun, Obalara, Obameri, Obagede and one Obatala who appeared to be supreme or at least had a higher status as primus inter pares. For these settlements, it appears as if the north-east, the direction of Ora Hill or the Oke Ora settlement in particular, was the major route through which the "Ife bowl" communicated with the outside world. It

was from this direction that a revolutionary, now identified as Oduduwa, came. After initial familiarization with the area from an Oke Ora base, he succeeded in conquering these earlier people whose cultural achievement was already considerably respectable. In this onslaught, he received active help from some of the chiefs, among whom Obameri and Obagede are remembered. The attempts by these revolutionaries culminated in the creation of an urban centre which initially discriminated between the townfolk as Ife and the resisting people as Igbo. After a very long time administrative and ritual measures, the essentials of the technology, the religious and political institutions of the earlier population had to be incorporated in the new order which willy-nilly also saw the creation of new titles, a new political culture and a new system of power and wealth, followed and helped by increasing external contacts.

The position being taken here is to be understood against the background of the "stratigraphy" of Ile-Ife oral history sketched above. I have refrained from saying that Oduduwa was the name or not the name of a male revolutionary. Nor have I suggested that the system has been the same since the initial revolution. To say here that the legends surrounding Oduduwa and the other "Ooye", who are said to have descended with him, represents the kernel of a socio-political revolution,⁴ and is to me a more realistic thing than seeking an identity which has been blurred - if not wholly obliterated - after eight centuries or more and during which there were dynastic changes in which violence was as much a part as it was elsewhere. To talk of Ile-Ife before Oduduwa is to talk of Ile-Ife before the urban tradition: it is the Ile-Ife before the non-dynastic tradition. For the rest of this essay, therefore, I would like to discuss the summary given above about the Ile-Ife area immediately before and during the revolution that transformed it from a multi-village community to a city-state in which the other component settlements acquired a separate status. Ife before Oduduwa can then be discussed as Ife before and after the creation of a new system. For this exercise we can draw upon research in an around Ile Ife and elsewhere in our region.

In a recent publication, Eluyemi (1980) at last specifies some salient details about one phenomenon, long known but perhaps never enumerated, that early Ile-Ife was a collection of 13 settlements. Eluyemi's work, though not a distillation of archaeological data, is most useful for its attempt to link specific settlements with the titles taken by the leadership. These 13 titles - Ompetu, Obaluru, Obalesun or Obalale, Lokore, Obaloran, Obajio, Apata, Obalaaye, Obalajugbe, Fegun, Obawinrin, Obalufe and Obadio-represent a most formidable and most promising

demonstrable link between the surviving political culture of Ile-Ife and its probable prototype, i.e., the pre-dynastic (pre-Ooni) and pre-urban system. These titles, as distinct institutions but not the pristine settlements or sub-politics over which they presided-remain realities in Ile-Ife of the present day. Eluyemi also gives us a map of the original 13 settlements, all located within the "ife bowl" and identified with existing landmarks in the forms of monuments, antiquities and sites.

Eluyemi's advance on previous publications does raise as many questions for the proto-history of Ile-Ife as it does for the geo-cultural-cum-intellectual history of the Yoruba-speaking people in general. It ties in with our views about the "stratigraphy" of Ife oral history - at least on the point that we often do not know when any of the "traditions" of Ile-Ife became traditional. Here, however, systematic archaeological work at Ile-Ife permits us to extend and qualify the substance of such "traditions" that relate to the culture and settlement pattern of early Ile-Ife.

We must now collate the oral history and archaeology of Ile-Ife from different authors and researchers. Ademakinwa's Igbo chiefs and Eluyemi's list of 13 community leaders thus take a major step further in understanding Ile-Ife before the dynastic (Oduduwa) phenomenon. In two recent works titled after Obalara and Woyeasiri by Garlake,⁵ we see that the highlighting of the names does not feature among the reconstructed "13". We can add the following to Garlake's list, though archaeologically defined: Ita Yemoo, Orun Oba Ado and the group of sites investigated by Ekpo Eyo (Eyo, 1974) and Venessa Beeman.⁶

Given the nature of settlements in this sub-region, we should interpret the idea of 13 settlements to mean not 13 compact villages but 13 polities, each made up of clusters of buildings of unequal sizes. Indeed, there is reason to believe that each of these "13" occupied its own land area, but unlike what happened in Benin, no formal partition walls were erected. Some of these houses were so elaborate that they had courtyards paved with sherds of pottery and stones, of which the herring bone or the eni (mat) pattern was most popular. In this respect, we should note two aspects of the presence at Ile-Ife of potsherd and stone pavements. It was the continuation of a similar device, evident at Daima, at the "Yelwa" mound, presumably at Kongon Makeri, perhaps in contemporary contexts, at Oba-Igbomins Ogudu (near Ikeja) in the Edo-speaking area and at Osi-Ekiti (Willett, 1967:103-108). Secondly, one would wonder whether the making of potsherd pavements was not within the competence of every citizen, every household, or whether or not there were social sanctions which made it difficult for the "ordinary citizen" to cre-

ate the potsherd pavements on his compound, just as we know that the wearing of the fezcap, of beads (as neck or wrist adornments), the erection of certain roof-types, etc. were the prerogatives of a few in some societies until the present time.

We should then see the presence or absence of the potsherd pavements in Ile-Ife as one major landmark in the interpretation of the culture history, both from the chronological or evolutionary sense and from the socio-political sense.

Closely related to these points is the issue of the material culture of Ile-Ife of pre-Oduduwa times. Most relevant here are those aspects of the material culture which could be said to indicate innovation or even transformation at about the time when we think the dynastic revolution took place at Ile-Ife. Notable among these is the introduction of the potsherd pavement which on Ekpo's scheme was introduced in the 12th century (Eyo, 1974). We may also attribute the introduction of copper alloys, in the form of brass and bronze, to the period after which the dynastic revolution had taken place. The close relationship of this aspect of Ile-Ife sculptural traditions with Obalufon is indeed suggestive (Willett, 1967:191), and this is yet to be contradicted by archaeologically-derived information. We may speculate, on the basis of existing information, that the manufacture of glass beads at Ile-Ife was one of the innovations that came with the new dynasty. Perhaps the most remarkable - if the most evident-change, as in Ile-Ife, was the construction of the first phase of what Ozanne describes as the "medieval" city walls (Ozanne, 1969). As will be seen later in this book,⁷ the traditions have given us an indication of when this must have been constructed. In all, these manifestations give an idea of the material and cultural aspects of a revolution whose political dimensions are represented by the phenomenon called Oduduwa.

What was the nature of the polity onto which the Oduduwa "system" came to be grafted? Our answers must be understood against the background of the "stratigraphy of Ile-Ife oral history on the one hand and on the other the evidence from other places, notably Ife in Yagbaland and Ife or Ufe in Ijumaland, both polities being in the extreme north-eastern districts of the Yoruba-speaking region. We have earlier noted that in 20th century Ile-Ife, certain titles, by inference, are said to ante-date Oduduwa, if the stories of the resisting Igbo folk and the list of 13 pristine settlements and of their rulers mean what they say. If these constitute the substance of the direct information we have on the earliest arrangements at Ile-Ife, we must hasten to comment that there are basic

ambiguities. If Obatala, Obalara, Obariyan, Woyeasiri and others feature among Igbo "chiefs" or "party," and even if specific portions of land from which remarkable archaeological materials have been excavated are named after some of these (e.g., Iwinrin grove, Obalara's land, Woyeasiri's land), they are not identified on the list of 13 community leaders given by Eluyemi, with the single exception of Obawinrin. While we take it for granted that the centuries and changes brought about by various dynasties must have modified the original picture of these pre-Oduduwa arrangements, evidences from pre-urban Ife (Yagba), now Ife Olugotun and Ufe (Ijumu), are relevant here (Obayemi, 1968).

We do not know when both polities, like others in Ijumu Yagba, Abunu, Igbede, etc. adopted the triadic pattern before the political arrangement into One (Ona), Otun and Ohi (Osi), which is the most common form in these districts. We do know, however, that within these triadic arrangements there are unambiguous survivals of titles and rituals, strongly corroborated by traditions relating to settlements and land ownership, all of which attest to a former age when well, within the respective land areas of Ife and Ufe (as elsewhere in the area), many kings and lords co-existed, each one master of his own home. These leaders were known by the titles of Olu or Oba, each in charge of his own extended lineage. Thus, in Ife (Olukotun) alone there must have been more than 20 of such territorial chiefs and at least 13 in Ufe (Ijumu), dominating land areas of about 150 square km and 70 square km respectively. At one stage, Ife (Olukotun) in Yagba fused under one king titled Ajalorun, later changed to Olukotun (thence Ife-Olukotun), a potentate who, like others in the area, took up his abode on a hill from which he never descended. But the tradition here is not one of a single lineage providing the dynasty, as at Ile-Ife, while the existence of the Ajalorun did not lead to the abolition of the other smaller territorial chiefs. The officers of these latter became incorporated in a new order. This is not the place for any direct comparison of these Ife and Ufe, nor of the connections between the Ajalorun, fascinating as they appear to be. Suffice it to note here that if either Ife or Ufe had undergone the dynastic revolution, such as we think happened at Ile-Ife, the traditions of the relationships between these smaller territorial chiefs would have become more confused than we have for the pre-Oduduwa times in Ile-Ife. We should, however, learn another lesson: that each of these small territorial chiefs presided over his own hierarchy of chiefs, thus leaving us wondering that the traditions about who was who would have been if these had been superseded six or eight centuries ago by a dynastic and/or

urban revolution.

So we see that the earliest type of political organization in Ile-Ife, about which our sources are specific, was one in which there was a number of small territorial chiefs, each with his own hierarchy of chiefs and officials, a cycle of rituals, sets of taboos and prohibitions; each also upheld the rights to the lineage lands. There would, of course, have been a basic material as well as a political culture. The basic pattern of belief, if not the details, would have been the same, as was the case in Ife Olukotun (Yagba), Ufe-Ijumu and elsewhere. However, such a degree of local autonomy could be sustained in the absence of any strong external force, such as was to appear in Ile-Ife around the name of Oduduwa. But must such a force be "external"? The experience of these Ijumu and Yagba cited here would force us to say, yes. The possibility of one or more of the existing groups rising to a dominant position among the rest as well as other factors were made very remote by ritual considerations. It would require someone or a group not hitherto bound by existing protocol and prohibitions to coerce the hitherto independent groups into a new dynastic structure such as is represented by the Oduduwa figure.

Our picture of the pre-dynastic society in the Ile-Ife area against the background of what came to replace it has cultic-cum-intellectual dimensions to it, which, however unclear, must be mentioned or at least proposed for discussion by the better informed. In the cultic affairs of Ile-Ife, we seem to have perhaps the most conservative aspect of the cultural. The original cults appear to have all survived, identified as they still are with the respective lineages that venerate each deity and provide the priesthood. Thus, Obalale or Obalesun, Obajio, Obadio, Obawinrin, etc. leaders of the primeval "13" communities continue to be in charge of specific deities.

Perhaps in a class apart in pre-dynastic times was the deity called Oranfe. We do not today have the accurate picture as it should have been; but perhaps we could create one by citing the example of Ife Olukotun (Yagba). Here Ero (also called Oluwa), although the deity of one of the lineages whose abode and shrine are on a hill, the Oroke Oluwa, functions also as patron deity for the town and is patronized by the Olukotun, the successor of the Ajalorun. Thus, although Oranfe still features as the "owners of Ife" - or even the "owner of the whole earth" - and is incontestably "the highest of the deities" worshipped in Ile-Ife, the priesthood is retained by Obaluru and Oluroye, both of Moore quarters. It is, therefore, most likely that Obatala and Oranfe featured in pre-dynastic Ile-Ife not only as lineage deities but also as deities which

enjoyed the status of *primus inter pares* among the many of pre-dynastic Ile-Ife deities. Did the existing supremacy of Oranfe as a deity provide an "Oduduwa party", the team of revolutionaries that came to Ile-Ife, a mythological basis for legitimizing their conquest? It remains remarkable that the central roles of the two official state festivals (Walshi; Makinde, 1970); (Eluyemi, 1975) and Olojo, which the Ile-Ife people still celebrate as royal festivals, have not really obliterated the mythological position of Oranfe; indeed, the Oranfe festival comes "annually about eight days after the end of the Olojo festival (Fabunmi, 1969:3), but the original status of Oranfe as an ideology to be exploited by a new social order, ushered in by the conquering "Oduduwa party" has not been erased.

To conclude, we believe that the codification of Ile-Ife oral history is not incompatible with the findings of the archaeological. We concede that the apparent standardization of the king-list, of the 16 elders who "descended" with Oduduwa, of the 13 original settlements and chiefs in Ile-Ife, etc. are authentic and substantially valid history. The nature of the first dynastic revolution in Ile-Ife, if not the personality of Oduduwa, is faithfully preserved in the data we have examined. The changes and continuity in Ile-Ife history might be more enigmatic for the times after the first or Oduduwa revolution, but the contexts of early or pre-dynastic Ile-Ife, the Ile-Ife before Oduduwa, remain remarkably clear. That so much of this period survives in myth and in festivals is a tribute to a most remarkable group of people who have made the greatness of Ile-Ife possible.

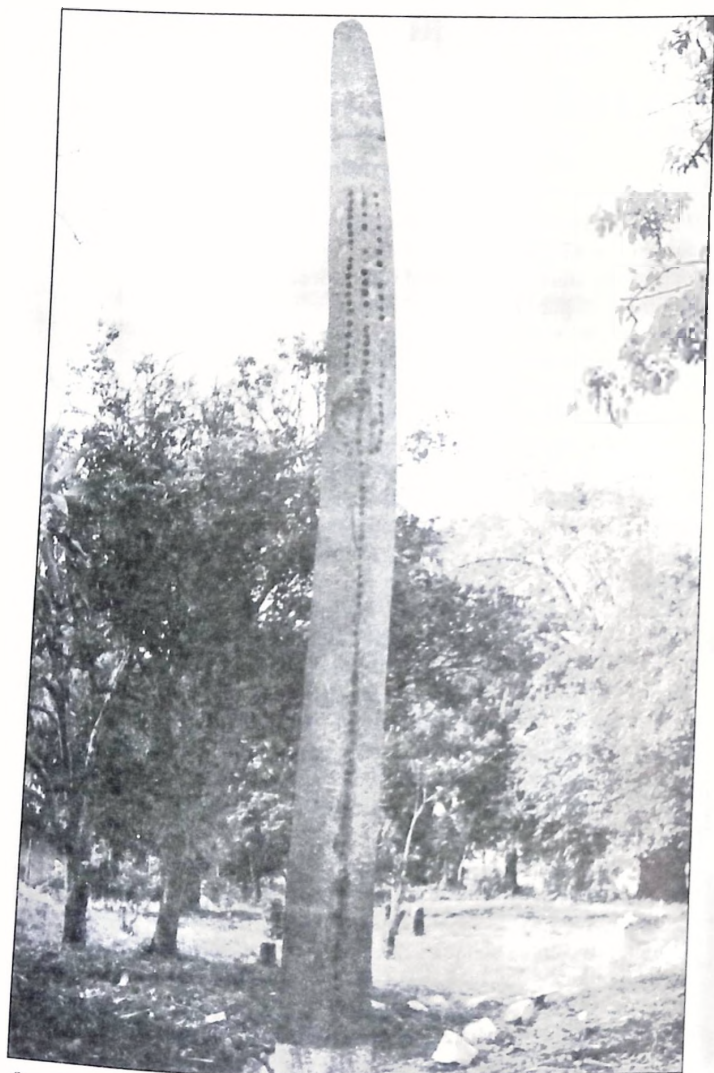
CHAPTER 5

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF THE IFE STATE

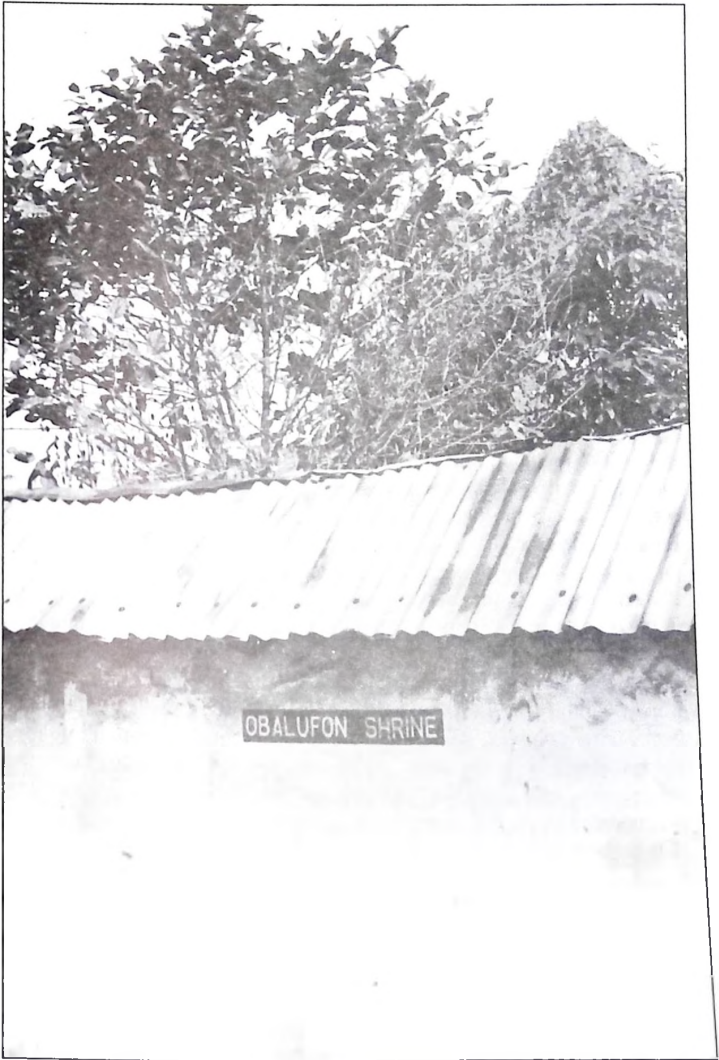
Biodun Adediran

Ife is widely recognized as the oldest dynastic state formed by the Yoruba. Ile-Ife, the capital city, has the reputation of being one of the longest continuously inhabited centres south of the River Niger. Local traditions emphasize that it is a city of great antiquity from where 'the entire world' was created.¹ S. O. Biobaku has suggested that Ife was founded between the 7th and 10th centuries A.D (Biobaku, 1955). M.D. Jeffrey (Jeffrey, 1958:21-23) estimated that the town must have become a flourishing urban centre by the 11th century. In spite of these deductions, scholarly interest in Ife has been directed more towards understanding the basis of the widespread influence of Ife among the Yoruba and neighbouring peoples than towards understanding the socio-political developments within the city itself (Olaniyan and Stanley n.d.). This has largely been due to the fact that the reconstruction of the early beginning of the state is essentially re-assessment of the already well-known oral data which emphasize, the connection between Ife and other Yoruba state.² Fortunately, these accounts can now be reassessed in the light of new ethnographic and oral data on the city itself,³ taking example from six important personages who are believed to have succeeded to the leadership of Ife polity and who, between them, initiated important developments that led to the emergence of an urban settlement around the present-day site of Ile-Ife. These personages were Oranfe, Obatala, Oduduwa, Osangangan Obamakin (Obalufon Ogbodirin?) Obalufon Alaiyemore and Oranmiyan. They are, however, to be regarded as markers or epochs in Ife's development as each of them may in fact refer to generations of rulers rather than to a single ruler.

A number of salient points have to be emphasized at the outset. Firstly, no single, comprehensive account involving all these personages exists either in the oral traditions or in written accounts on Ife. Indeed, the specifics of some of the accounts related cast doubts on the historicity of some of the personages. An example of this relates to the conflicting traditions about Oduduwa (Beier, 1955). However, the traditions of early Ife belong to a historical rather than a proto-historical or mythical period. Even though most of the *dramatis personae* are invested with



Opa Oranmiyan



Obalufon Shrine: Obalufon is acclaimed to be one of the early rulers of Ife who initiated important development leading to the emergence of an urban settlement

supernatural attributes, they possess essentially human qualities: they got married, produced children, practised normal human activities (such as farming), kept friends, settled disputes amicably and, occasionally, resorted to violence (Fabunmi, 1970). None of them possessed grotesque, non-human attributes such as those commonly associated with the mythical figures of many Yoruba folktales.⁴ Finally, as Akinjogbin pointed out (Akinjogbin n.d.), the emergence of Ife as an urban settlement did not result in an entirely new political organization, but in the imposition of a new socio-political order on a pre-existing one.

In spite of various caveats by scholars against the tradition on the early beginnings of Ife (Wescott n.d; Law, 1977), it is nevertheless agreed that for a fairly long time man had been living in the Ife region, as indeed in the other parts of Yorubaland⁵. The earliest so far obtained in the Ife region is C.350 B.C.(Ozanne, 1969:20). Between that time and the end of the first millennium A.D., important developments took place, leading to the emergence of a politically stable and economically viable polity. The prelude to the emergence of this polity was a cluster of supposedly patrilineal settlements. Attempts have been made to identify some of these as pre-Oduduwa. But as will be seen presently, events surrounding the ascendancy of Oduduwa were so violent that it is difficult, considering our present level of knowledge, to identify which of the settlements existed in the pre-Oduduwa period and which were established in the process of the continual realignment accompanying the foundation of the city of Ile-Ife. The 13 settlements already identified are Omologun, Parakin, Iwinrin, Oke-Awo, Ijugbe, Iraye, Imojubi, Oke-Oja, Iloran, Odin, Ideta, Iloromu and Ido. Each of these settlements was, in itself, fairly complex, being made up of different lineages and quarters, for instance, Ijugbe (Ibrahim, 1982), was divided into four major quarters namely, Ipa, Eranyiba, Igbogbe and Ita Asin, each separated from the other by fairly big farms. Each quarter was headed by a priest king (**Elejugbe/Obalejugbe**) and it appeared there was division of labour based strictly on the age-grade system. In the settlement, there was a hierarchy of chiefs. The economic basis of this hierarchy may be found in the names **Eteko** (farmfounder?) or **Orisateko** and **Akosu Fogbe** (producer of yam in the dry season). The priest king was said, among other things, to be in-charge of rain, to have introduced yam seedling into Ife and to have been a palm-wine tapper. But in spite of his fame as a farmer, the **Elejugbe** for long remained impoverished and of little importance in Ife politics until the accidental discovery of Iyun beads on his farm. This suggests strongly that farming was practised on a subsis-

tence level.

Strictly speaking, some of the communities were not made up of single lineages but of two or more component groups. For instance, on the eve of the Oduduwa period, Idet (Ojutalyo, 1981) was made up of three major lineage-sections: Ilale, Ilesun and Ilia headed by the **Obalale**, **Obalesun** and **Obalia** respectively.

The lineage-settlements were bonded in what looked like a formal political alliance or confederacy. Since these were lineage-settlements, each of them was presumably exogamous. Each must, therefore, have included women from neighbouring settlements, thereby creating an interlocking network of social relationships. Furthermore, the physiography of the Ife region encouraged interactions among the inhabitants. The settlements were within a spherical valley surrounded by steep-sided hills (Ozanne, 1969:7-12). Only a few areas within this valley received enough rain to be attractive all the year round. Neighbouring settlements, therefore, shared common parcels of land, especially for cultivation and hunting. The economic links so initiated were strengthened by recognizing some settlements with particular produce or services. Thus, Ijugbe specialized in the production of yam and hydrological services and was logically responsible for ensuring good harvests, hence the Ife saying **Tan ba wa ojo l'aiye gbogbo, kan bi orisa Ijugbe leere**, meaning "In case of rain failure, appease the Ijugbe deity."

While the element of cooperation was the basis for forming a confederacy, the political integration of the communities only went half way. The confederacy was not looked upon as a single indivisible unit; each of the component parts continued to retain its political autonomy. The alliance was thus a very loose one. There was no central chieftaincy system (Ademakinwa, 1958:17). Though leadership was vested in an individual, it was rotated among leaders of the component settlements, as each settlement retained its political autonomy. For instance, it would appear that the first leader of the confederacy was the head of the Oke Ora hamlet, Oranfe (**Ora ti o ni Ife**: the Ora who owns Ile-Ife). His reign is now dated to the time of creation (**Igba iwa se**) and he is remembered to have been succeeded by Obatala, the head of the Idete community.⁵ The confederacy was also elastic enough to accommodate settlements which accepted the idea of mutual cooperation. Membership was, however, voluntary and it was presumed that any settlement could pull out of the alliance when its leader so wished.

Such an alliance did not last long. The inability of the lineage-settlements to outgrow their parochial attitude and form a single, viable com-

munity was a crucial factor that aided the decline and eventual collapse of the confederation. For instance, under Oranfe himself there appeared to have been cracks in the arrangements. There were challenges to Oranfe's leadership, a conspiracy to wrestle the leadership from him. These occasioned a series of skirmishes now only faintly remembered in oral traditions. Eventually, a vote of confidence was passed on Oranfe and a stern warning was given to the rebels.

Ghogbo Elu. o o

Emo s'oni t'Oranfe o

All stranger elements to note

No one is as great as Oranfe

Ora l'omo n'Ife

Elu ghogbo ora lo n'Ife

Ora l'omo n'Ife

Elu ghogbo ora l'oni 'le

Surely Ora owns Ife

All stranger elements, Ora owns Ife

Surely Ora owns the land

All stranger elements, Ora owns the land.

Indeed, for some time Oranfe appeared to be the power behind the throne of Ile-Ife.

If Oranfe was successful in maintaining the alliance, his immediate successors were not. The profile of Obatala or Orisanla, the last leader of the confederacy remembered in the traditions, clearly indicates the gravity of the situation. In one account, he is remembered as a drunkard who, on an occasion, took too much palmwine and slept off. In another, he is referred to as an imperfect sculptor to whom "all persons having physical abnormalities or defects are considered dedicated." Indeed, the impression one gets from the traditions is that for the period of Obatala's "reign", the confederation was characterized by moral decadence, cultural decline and political instability.

This paved the way for the eventual take-over by a party which was then not a member of the alliance. The confederate settlements were located within a valley surrounded by hills on which were other lineage-settlements not within the confederacy. Trade contacts (Eluyemi, 1980:23) and frequent interactions must have given the settlements on the hills an insight into the comparative wealth and economic potentialities of the region occupied by the confederates. It is conjectural, but it may well be true that the availability of parcels of land suitable for culti-

vation and pasture formed a major factor in the influx of people into the area. It was probably on account of this constant emigration into the region that the confederates set aside an area designated as a strangers' quarter. The existence of a this indicates that the settlements which formed the confederacy had interactions with other communities with which they did not have a formal agreement.

Thus, when Oduduwa arrived from his own settlement, which was on one of the hills in the region (Oke Ora?), he was well-received and settled in the area which was then set aside for strangers. Here, he started to set himself up as an independent focus of power and authority, refusing to acknowledge the superiority of the pre-existing heads of settlements.⁶ This led to disputes and occasional skirmishes between the Oduduwa groups and some of their hosts. Within a short time, Oduduwa succeeded in deposing some of them, one of whom was apparently Soipasan, the legendary progenitor of the Ketu sub-group of the Yoruba (Parrinder, 1967; Adediran, 1980).

One of those who challenged Oduduwa effectively was Ore, also remembered as Oreluere. It is related that Ore poisoned one of Oduduwa's daughters in order to bring him down on his knees. Oduduwa having tried unsuccessfully to cure the woman turned to Ore for assistance (Idowu, 1962:23). A variant of the same tradition relates that Oreluere actually shot one of Oduduwa's sons (Willet, 1967:123) (on another occasion?). The confrontation must have been fierce indeed, for stone images of Ore and his associates have holes which traditions maintain were wounds received during these encounters (Murray and Willet, 1958). In these encounters, the Oduduwa group was defeated and Oduduwa had to give homage to Ore by paying "fines of sheep and fowls" and giving him one of his daughters in marriage to seal the agreement.

It is not known what exactly the terms of agreement were, but it would appear that they gave Oduduwa enough free hand to steadily build up his power. The agreement probably allowed Oduduwa to set his settlement as a semi-independent one like those of the pre-existing settlements; furthermore, Oduduwa had equal status with other pre-existing heads of settlements. It would appear also from the Ifa creation legend that Obatala (Orisanla), one of the lineage-heads, was given a mandate to work out a permanent arrangement or accord or, as the account itself puts it, a permanent "existence." But as a result of the "decadence, decline and instability" which, as pointed out above, characterized Obatala's reign, he was superseded by Oduduwa. Then followed a long-

drawn series of battles, aspects of which are still re-enacted during the annual Itapa (revolt?) festival.⁷ The details of the Itapa festival strongly indicate that Obatala became overbearing as a result of the mandate given him. Oduduwa, apparently, exploited this situation to conspire with some disgruntled elements within the confederacy. This ended in a coup d'état against Obatala. The defection of some of the aboriginal groups to Oduduwa's side prolonged the struggle. For instance, Obameri (who became Oduduwa's war general and also led the group which conquered and expelled Obatala) was head of an aboriginal group. The defeated ruler and his surrogates settled at Ideta-Oko beyond the Esinminrin river. Here they made moves to retake the town. Obameri on the other hand, set up a camp at a place now called Odin to police the activities of the Obatala group. Villages sprang up as each looked for an area suitable for defence. In the end there are said to have been about 16 major settlements.⁸ The skirmishes which followed this must have lasted a fairly long time, for an account relates that the wars did not come to an end until after the two hundred and first year (Wyndam, 1947:108). During the riot, the settlements remained outposts of the confederation until the descendants of the original founders moved into Ile-Ife.

One Ojumu was alleged not only to have reconciled the warring parties but also to have brought Obatala back into the fold. This led to the break-up of Ideta-Oko and many of the settlements set up in the course of the civil war. A new constitution was drawn up in which elements of the aboriginal customs were to be woven with the new one. In spite of this, it was obvious that the Oduduwa group had completely taken over as Obatala permanently lost to Oduduwa the *Are*, the symbol of political authority.

One factor that eventually aided the collapse of the Obatala group appears to have been the outbreak of smallpox in their camp. The speckled appearances of the Obatala priests during the Itapa festival suggested that they were smallpox victims; furthermore, on the seventh day of the Itapa festival (Ojutalayo, 1981:81-86), elaborate rituals are held "for preventions against smallpox epidemic." Also, on the eleventh day the major players commemorate both the settlement and re-entry of Obatala into Ile-Ife and the rituals against the smallpox epidemic in the town. It is on this same night that the Ooni visits the shrine to renew his case. Also on this same night, while the trip from Ideta-Ile to Ideta-Oko (in commemoration of the expulsion of Obatala's forces by those of Oduduwa) is being held, there is such "weeping and lamentation" for the loss of the *Are*.

Therefore, the Ojumu peace efforts did not appear to have put an end to the struggle for supremacy. Indeed, a faction of the Obatala group led by Obawinrin argued strongly that the cause for which they had picked up arms should not be compromised. This faction refused to join Obatala to return to their original settlement at Ideta-Ile; rather, they settled at a place which became known as Igbo-Igbo (Igbo forest) from where they latter launched a vendetta on the city.

Meanwhile, Oduduwa settled down and began to organize the pre-existing settlements into a socially and politically cohesive unit. First, he moved from Omologun, a settlement he had apparently occupied on the eve of the long-drawn conflict, to Idio, a fairly hilly region.⁹ He then ordered the other village-heads to vacate their settlements for new sites which he had allocated to them. This resulted in the clustering of the settlements around that of Oduduwa and in the formal emergence of Ile-Ife as a town. A major innovation of this era was apparently the building of a wall to encircle the cluster of settlements. According to Paul Zanne who refers to it as "the medieval wall", it was on the average 4.6 metres high and 1.6 meters thick.

Apart from offering the much needed security against incessant attacks, the walls aided the task of transforming the various settlements into a homogenous whole. A new social structure more elaborate than that of the autonomous settlements of the pre-Oduduwa era emerged. Areas of conflict between the aboriginal groups and the Oduduwa group was considerably reduced through inter-marriages. This led to mutual assimilation, the new enlarged and heterogenous settlement was now looked at as a single unit and not just as a confederation of units. This social development had a corollary in the political sphere.

If one accepts Lucy Mair's contention that the state "in its simplest form entails the recognition that one body of kin have an exclusive claim to provide the ruler from among themselves, (and that) states arise when such privileged groups are able to command the services of followers through whom they can impose their will on the part of the... people" (Mair, 1962:14), one can argue that the transformation of the loose alliance of the pre-Oduduwa era into a permanent feature brought the emergence of the first dynastic state or kingdom in the region. Unlike the pre-Oduduwa organization, leadership was not rotated among the heads of the pre-dynastic groups but was now monopolized by the Oduduwa group which set itself up as the ruling dynasty in the region. To achieve this ascendancy, the Oduduwa group took over the monopoly of a few privileges which were hitherto enjoyed by heads of various lin-

eage-settlements.

First, was the monopoly of symbols of royalty and political authority. The Oduduwa group reserved the exclusive right over the use of the *Are* which, as pointed out earlier, was the symbol of superior authority during the pre-Oduduwa period. Whoever had the *Are* among the lineage-heads was regarded as the leader and had the mandate to act as head of the confederacy. The denial of other lineage-heads of the use of this symbol meant that political leadership in the Ife region would now be permanently exercised by one group.

Secondly, there appeared to have been some economic prop to the ascendancy. This apparently had to do with the monopoly of some craft organizations by the Oduduwa group. The identification of Ogun Ladin (the first blacksmith in Ife accounts), Elesije (the first physician), Agbonniregun (the master diviner), Olokun (the wealthiest trader), and Obagede (plantain tycoon) with Oduduwa suggests a careful and tight control of essential services within the emergent polity.

The second suggestion is particularly tempting, in view of the clean break (in the traditions of Ife arts) between the pre-Oduduwa period and the Oduduwa period.⁹ Many scholars have commented on the arts and crafts of Ife. These comments are based largely on archaeological finds in the city since Leo Frobenius' visit in 1903 (Frobenius, 1914) and on local traditions which record the making of clay, stone, glass beads and bracelets, modelling in plastic clay, casting in metal, carving in wood, ivory and lithic materials. Although some of the sketches have been impressive enough to give valuable glimpses of the craft industries, no concerted effort has yet been made to relate this important aspect of Ife culture to political developments. It has been suggested that craftsmanship in metal and wood dated to the early period of Ife history (Smith, 1967). Sculpture is traditionally associated with Obatala who is regarded as the patron of all sculptors. The earlier Ife sculptures featured mainly stone carvings. Metal casting, on the other hand, is associated with the cult of Ogun which is a royal cult. Many Ife deities such as Obatala, Oluorogbo, Orisa-Ikire and Orisa Ijugbe are represented on stones, while the early Ooni of Ife are represented in brass/bronze. This strongly suggests that bronze casting is associated with the emergence of the Oduduwa dynasty. It was probably an exclusively royal prerogative, since most of the bronze figures are those of members of the royal court and since most of these finds have been made in the vicinity of the palace (Adediran 1976).

Another industry associated with the emergence of the royal dynasty

is the bead industry. Cowries, *owo eyo*, feature prominently in pre-Oduduwa festivals, serving decorative purposes similar to those of beads. The use of cowries rather than *iyun*, *akun*, *segi* of even *sese efun* varieties of beads may indeed confirm the speculation that beads became important only after the Oduduwa revolution. The discovery of red stone and carnelian beads on Obalara land (Gorlake n.d. :139) indicates that the Ife bead industry is of some antiquity but probably post-dating the epoch associated with Oduduwa himself.

Two types of beads were traditionally popular in Ife. These were the blue tubular form locally known as *iyun*, and the red cylindrical type called *segi*. The most prominent Ife deity associated with the bead industry is Olokun, a sea goddess regarded as one of the wives of Oduduwa. Although other deities were associated with production and sale, beads became important primarily for purposes of decoration as part of chieftaincy dresses, particularly in adorning chiefly caps locally called *oro* (mitre hat). Many of the chiefs acquired *oro* and as the quest for beads increased; tubular *irun* and *segi* beads made from glass raw materials became prominent in Ife beads market. There was, however, an attempt to impose a guild system on the production and marketing of beads. No other industry was so sensitively controlled.

But in spite of the careful manoeuvring, the Oduduwa group had to take adequate cognisance of members of the aboriginal groups. Political authority among the lineage groups was based on the possession of parcels of land. But since it had no knowledge of the mysteries of the land, the Oduduwa dynasty could not usurp ritual roles concerned with land or physical features. In actual fact, therefore, the heads of the pre-Oduduwa communities continued to perform spiritual duties over their indigenous cults and to be the de facto owners of their respective parcels of land. Some of them were however incorporated into a central chieftaincy system and assigned specific duties to perform in the running of the affairs of the new polity (Adamakinwa, 1958:27; Parrat, 1969:343). This was a crucial step towards role differentiation, a step which almost certainly took the settlement into an era of unprecedented intellectual, industrial and commercial development. A few of the heads of communities apparently excelled in their duties and have become deified as patrons of various professional occupation.⁹

Oduduwa's settlement at Idio became the nerve centre of social, political and economic activities in the new polity. Thus emerged the concept of the *Aafin* (palace) as the nexus of the administration of a state. The *Aafin* was to become a distinguishing mark of the Oduduwa group and

Oduduwa himself probably assumed the title Olofin (Aderemi, 1980), meaning one who lives in the *Aafin*.

It is not to be assumed that with the ascendancy of Oduduwa, the resistance by the aboriginal groups ceased completely. The traditions emphasize that the first palace (identified as *Aafin owuro*) was very simple in form, as Oduduwa's effort to build an elaborate structure was frustrated by frequent squabbles within the city. It will also be recalled that some of the aboriginal groups set up marauding camps on the outskirts of the new settlement. Within the settlement itself, opposition to the new regime did die out completely. It continued underground with a vigorous attempt to preserve some of the indigenous institutions. A cult known as the *imole* emerged (Idowu, 1962:24 and 28). It was open only to those bound together by ownership of land and included virtually all the aboriginal groups within the city. Initially, this resistance group was weak, but it soon became a force to be reckoned with. At all times, however, effective opposition to the ascendancy of the Oduduwa group came from the disgruntled elements who had set themselves up as marauding groups. Their menace was as a very absorbing one which took many generations to curtail (Adamakinwa, 1969:32-44).

Meanwhile, the effects of the political instability of this early period began to tell on the economy which was then essentially made up of subsistence farming, hunting, craft industry and inter-community trade over short distances. Apart from farming which was a fairly general occupation, the other occupations were specialized and restricted to small groups of individuals. Each individual was, as such, dependent on his neighbours for goods and services which he could not provide for himself. The urbanaization process which began with Oduduwa required an expansion of these economic activities, but under the insecurity of the time, the people apparently saw no wisdom in encouraging agricultural and industrial pursuits. Thus, farming appeared to have been neglected while emphasis was laid on rituals, with new deities and cults emerging to deal with various problems.

What brought this economic problem to the fore was a prolonged drought which resulted in famine. As common under such circumstances, there was malnutrition and an outbreak of epidemic. An Ife priest divined that the settlement was overcrowded and prescribed emigration as the only solution. Consequently, groups of individuals began to leave Ile-Ife to set themselves up elsewhere. This apparently led to the series of dynastic migrations for which Ife eventually became popular. The first major wave of migration was orderly. A meeting was sum-

moned at a place which still bears the name of Ita-Ijero (place of deliberation). There a decision was taken as to which direction each party should go and how future contacts were to be made with Ile-Ife. Each party was led by a member of the Oduduwa group.

In the city itself, successive attempts were made to consolidate the position of the dynastic group vis-a-vis that of the pre-Oduduwa groups. The Rev. Samuel Johnson recorded a tradition which suggests that the throne of Ile-Ife was seized by the aboriginal groups. According to him (Johnson, 1921:10-12), Oranmiyan succeeded Oduduwa but being an adventurous fellow, he soon went out on a military expedition, leaving the palace in charge of a trusted servant who at birth had been "dedicated to the perpetual service of the gods, especially, the god Obatala" Eventually this trusted servant established himself on the throne and displaced the direct descendants of Oduduwa from leadership.

Ife accounts about this period emphasize an internal crisis which thwarted all attempts at political integration of the component groups within the polity. The crisis was part of a well-organized plot by the aboriginal groups within the city to overthrow the Oduduwa regime, using the *imole* cult. Eventually, the plot succeeded.¹⁰ However, having fully accepted the ideas represented by Oduduwa, the aboriginal groups adopted and deified him as an ancestral cult-object under the priesthood of Obadio, apparently his host at his Idio settlement.

That there was a change in the succession to the throne is acknowledged in the Ife accounts that Oduduwa was succeeded by an "Ife elder" named in various accounts as Osangangan Obamakin, Ogun or Obalufon Ogbogbodirin (Eluyemi, 1980:41). All these personages are identifiable with the pre-Oduduwa groups rather than with the dynasty initiated by Oduduwa. Ogun is generally identified as a contemporary of Oduduwa himself. The attribute of a "pathfinder" contained in his *oriki* in fact suggests that in relation to other personages in early Ife history, his epoch was the earliest. Osangangan Obamakin and Obalufon Ogbogbodirin are the same persons, generally acknowledged as an "early ooni" and father of the more popular Obalufon Alaiyemore.¹¹ The name Osangangan Obamakin, which is poetic characterization of his reign, is in fact identified as a major epoch in the pre-Oduduwa period.¹²

Being himself a member of the *imole*, Osangangan Obamakin apparently recognized its importance as a state apparatus. Consequently, all powerful groups in the town were brought together in the *imole* cult which was reorganized into an effective governmental organ (Idowu, 1962:28). In addition, to prevent any conspiracy against constituted

authority, he initiated a periodic meeting, the idea of which has survived as the sixteen-day Isoro meeting.¹³ This, it appeared, enabled Obamakin to have a very long tenure culminating in his deposition and the installation of his kinsman, Obalufon Alaiyemore.

Information on Obalufon is more substantial. He is generally identified as a direct descendant of Osangangan Obamakin, as an *Omo Ora* (descendant of Oranfe), and as a close associate of heads of pre-Oduduwa communities such as Eteko, Olorogbo, and Akire (Ibrahim, 1982:1-6) Furthermore, the rituals and worship of Obalufon in Ile-Ife and in other places where he is identified as Orisa Olufon (Molufon ade) are identical with those of Obatala and other pre-Oduduwa deities. Thus, the bits available now on Obalufon indicate that the immediate successors of Oduduwa to the throne of Ife were offsprings of the pre-Oduduwa groups. The fact that the Ooni was left out of all early lists of children of Oduduwa¹⁴ is itself a strong support for this suggestion. This would also explain the widespread tradition that Oranmiyan (a descendant of Oduduwa) in spite of a successful career outside the Ife region, had to return to Ile-Ife to settle an old score by deposing Obalufon. But Oranmiyan is believed to have had a very short reign before his death in Ile-Ife. The Ife accounts emphasize that Alaiyemore was recalled from exile and thenceforth peace returned to the polity. This may indeed indicate that a compromise was reached, between the Oduduwa group and the Obalufon groups, that the kingship should be rotated between them. On the other hand, there are indications from the Olojo festival which commemorates the reconciliation, that attempts were made to integrate the two into one dynasty (Eluyemi, 1975). This is also implied in a cross-section of the traditions which trace the descent of all Ooni to Oranmiyan identified as "a child of two fathers, Ogun (aboriginal) and Oduduwa"

Some records indicate that after his re-installation, Obalufon was given a crown by Oranfe, and that he was the first ruler of Ile-Ife to use a crown as a symbol of authority. Indeed, in another context, Obalufon is identified exclusively with crowns (Babalola, 1966:18). When taken in conjunction with the accounts that the Ife confederacy belonged to Ora (Ora l'oni `fe) and that Oduduwa never had a palace but reigned as king in his private quarters at Idio, the purport of this account appears to be that political leadership had been formally handed to Obalufon Alaiyemore who was thus the first effective king of Ile-Ife. Aspects of the installation rituals of the Ooni¹⁵ buttress this suggestion. All ceremonies relating to the Coronation are dominated by priests and priest-

esses connected with Oranfe or Obalufon. The Ooni-elect visits Oke-Ora where a crown is made for him by the Ompetu of Ido. His coronation takes place near the shrine of Obatala who was one of Oranfe's immediate successors. Finally, before the crown is placed on the new Ooni's head, it must first be placed on an effigy of Obalufon. It is only then that the Ooni is considered fully consecrated, then he goes straight into the palace.

All considered, the Ooniship does not appear to have pre-dated the Obalufon period. The folk-etymology of the title associates it with the ownership of two things, the land and the palace¹⁶ neither of which members of the Oduduwa group possessed by right, but both of which members of the Obalufon group had. In fact, Obalufon is acknowledged as the initiator of the Ooni title which he assumed instead of the Olofin title initiated by Oduduwa.

Meanwhile, the Igbo faction of the aboriginal group, looking on those in the city who had succumbed to the ideas perpetrated by the Oduduwa groups as traitors, continued their raids over the settlement. Disguised in raffia clothes and looking weird, they used to attack Ile-Ife causing confusion in the markets and often making people run away. The Igbo problem must have been a particularly tasking and baffling one for it claimed many lives. One account relates that Oranfe, the Ife High god, gave Obalufon two hundred slaves and men to help him against the Igbo, but that only one of the lot survived. After a number of successful raids, one of Obalufon's wives called Moremi,¹⁷ a woman of uncommon beauty and manly ability, allowed herself to be captured by the Igbo. She was taken to the Igbo camp where she became the consort of their chief. Her beauty and sense of humour soon endeared her to the Igbo nobility and she soon became a favourite in the court. This gave her an access to the secrets of the Igbo forces. She later absconded to Ile-Ife, divulged the secret that the Igbo were not spirits but human beings disguised in raffia clothes. She also advised on how to combat them. During the encounter which followed, the Igbo were confronted with flaming torches, overpowered and their leading chiefs, including Obawinrin himself, captured. The Igbo settlement was completely destroyed and the recalcitrant elements were brought back into the fold to contribute to the building of the new settlement.

Disruptive as the Igbo raids were, they accounted for crucial developments in the institutions of Ile-Ife. As a result of the raids, internal cohesion increased and an elaborate palace was built (Adeniran, 1976). The inconveniences involved in moving the royal court everytime there was

an Igbo raid forced the people to consider the advisability of locating the palace on a site which would be secure, and, at the same time, administratively convenient. The new palace, only a stone's throw from the former one, was an imposing structure, made up of series of inter-connected buildings in which lived members of the royal family. As an added security device, a wall was built round the palace. One remarkable feature of the physical organization of the new palace was the virtual seclusion of the ruler from the general public, a move that enhanced his prestige.

More important was the administrative re-organization which followed the victory of Obalufon over the Igbo. The details of this re-organization are not completely known, but the outcome is clear. A new chieftaincy system, which adequately reflected the organization of the new settlement was initiated. The town was divided administratively into sections under loyal lineage-heads who became civil chiefs or *ihare* responsible to the Ooni. Adequately learning from the suffering brought about by the drought, famine and unrests of the preceding years, they also created another chieftaincy line, the *isoro*, specifically for all those concerned with the propitiation of the many gods that had emerged and any new ones they might have.

Lastly, the Ooni surrounded himself with many royal servants called Omode Owa (princely youths). This latter group became an integral part of the palace system and an independent focus of power to balance the influence of the *ihare* and the *isoro*.

This remarkable political development was possible because of the mastery of local economic conditions, such as the development of the manufacturing technology. One of the items was the development of brass-casting which is generally associated with Obalufon and which became a major item of commercial export. Furthermore, there seemed to have been a tighter royal control over the manufacture and sale of beads (Ibrahim, 1982) as can be inferred from the saying '*Orunto Obalufon l'oni 'lu, Oba l'oni sese efun*' implying that while the civil chiefs could run the administration of the town, it was only the king who had control over *sese efun beads* (the source of wealth). As beads of various types manufactured in Ife became important articles of trade in the region, the Ooni became wealthy and influential and a great patron of the arts.

Nevertheless, the atmosphere within Ile-Ife during this period was not entirely tension-free. Traditions allude to continual, sometimes violent differences among the different segments of the ruling dynasty and even between holders of the Ooniship and the other chieftaincy institutions

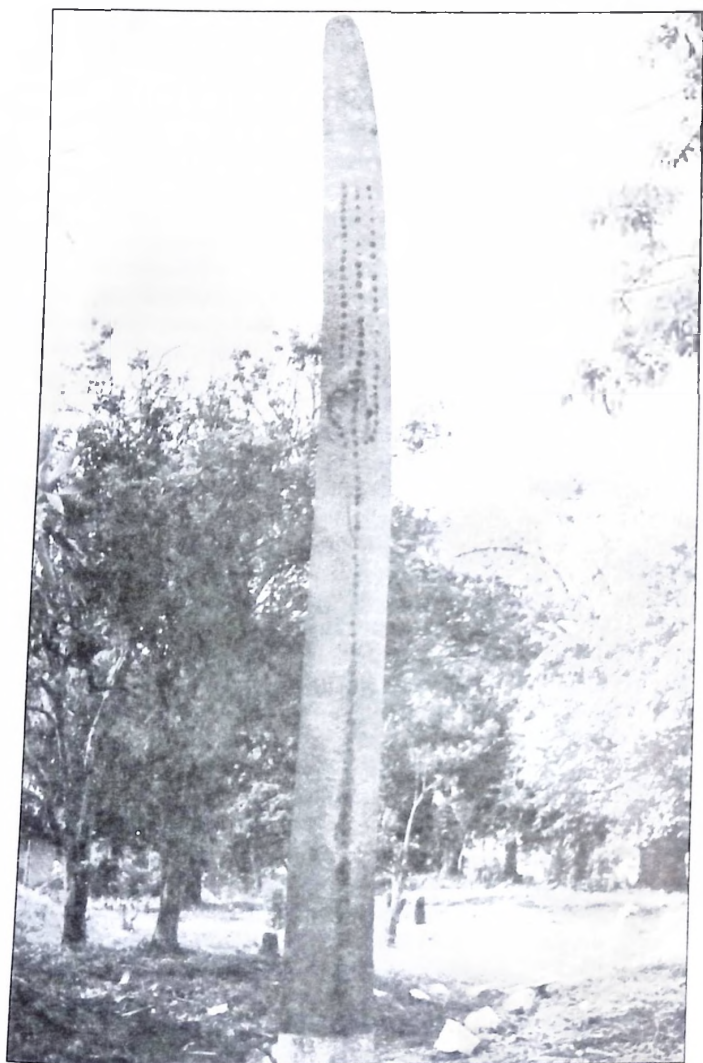
CHAPTER 5

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF THE IFE STATE

Biodun Adediran

Ife is widely recognized as the oldest dynastic state formed by the Yoruba. Ile-Ife, the capital city, has the reputation of being one of the longest continuously inhabited centres south of the River Niger. Local traditions emphasize that it is a city of great antiquity from where 'the entire world' was created.¹ S. O. Biobaku has suggested that Ife was founded between the 7th and 10th centuries A.D (Biobaku, 1955). M.D. Jeffrey (Jeffrey, 1958:21-23) estimated that the town must have become a flourishing urban centre by the 11th century. In spite of these deductions, scholarly interest in Ife has been directed more towards understanding the basis of the widespread influence of Ife among the Yoruba and neighbouring peoples than towards understanding the socio-political developments within the city itself (Olaniyan and Stanley n.d.). This has largely been due to the fact that the reconstruction of the early beginning of the state is essentially re-assessment of the already well-known oral data which emphasize, the connection between Ife and other Yoruba state.² Fortunately, these accounts can now be reassessed in the light of new ethnographic and oral data on the city itself,³ taking example from six important personages who are believed to have succeeded to the leadership of Ife polity and who, between them, initiated important developments that led to the emergence of an urban settlement around the present-day site of Ile-Ife. These personages were Oranfe, Obatala, Oduduwa, Osangangan Obamakin (Obalufon Ogbodirin?) Obalufon Alaiyemore and Oranmiyan. They are, however, to be regarded as markers or epochs in Ife's development as each of them may in fact refer to generations of rulers rather than to a single ruler.

A number of salient points have to be emphasized at the outset. Firstly, no single, comprehensive account involving all these personages exists either in the oral traditions or in written accounts on Ife. Indeed, the specifics of some of the accounts related cast doubts on the historicity of some of the personages. An example of this relates to the conflicting traditions about Oduduwa (Beier, 1955). However, the traditions of early Ife belong to a historical rather than a proto-historical or mythical period. Even though most of the *dramatis personae* are invested with

*Opa Oranmiyan*



Obalufon Shrine: Obalufon is acclaimed to be one of the early rulers of Ife who initiated important development leading to the emergence of an urban settlement

supernatural attributes, they possess essentially human qualities: they got married, produced children, practised normal human activities (such as farming), kept friends, settled disputes amicably and, occasionally, resorted to violence (Fabunmi, 1970). None of them possessed grotesque, non-human attributes such as those commonly associated with the mythical figures of many Yoruba folktales.⁴ Finally, as Akinjogbin pointed out (Akinjogbin n.d.), the emergence of Ife as an urban settlement did not result in an entirely new political organization, but in the imposition of a new socio-political order on a pre-existing one.

In spite of various caveats by scholars against the tradition on the early beginnings of Ife (Wescott n.d; Law, 1977), it is nevertheless agreed that for a fairly long time man had been living in the Ife region, as indeed in the other parts of Yorubaland⁵. The earliest so far obtained in the Ife region is C.350 B.C.(Ozanne, 1969:20). Between that time and the end of the first millennium A.D., important developments took place, leading to the emergence of a politically stable and economically viable polity. The prelude to the emergence of this polity was a cluster of supposedly patrilineal settlements. Attempts have been made to identify some of these as pre-Oduduwa. But as will be seen presently, events surrounding the ascendancy of Oduduwa were so violent that it is difficult, considering our present level of knowledge, to identify which of the settlements existed in the pre-Oduduwa period and which were established in the process of the continual realignment accompanying the foundation of the city of Ile-Ife. The 13 settlements already identified are Omologun, Parakin, Iwinrin, Oke-Awo, Ijugbe, Iraye, Imojubi, Oke-Oja, Iloran, Odin, Ideta, Iloromu and Ido. Each of these settlements was, in itself, fairly complex, being made up of different lineages and quarters, for instance, Ijugbe (Ibrahim, 1982), was divided into four major quarters namely, Ipa, Eranyiba, Igbogbe and Ita Asin, each separated from the other by fairly big farms. Each quarter was headed by a priest king (**Elejugbe/Obalejugbe**) and it appeared there was division of labour based strictly on the age-grade system. In the settlement, there was a hierarchy of chiefs. The economic basis of this hierarchy may be found in the names **Eteko** (farmfounder?) or **Orisateko** and **Akosu Fogbe** (producer of yam in the dry season). The priest king was said, among other things, to be in-charge of rain, to have introduced yam seedling into Ife and to have been a palm-wine tapper. But in spite of his fame as a farmer, the **Elejugbe** for long remained impoverished and of little importance in Ife politics until the accidental discovery of Iyun beads on his farm. This suggests strongly that farming was practised on a subsis-

tence level.

Strictly speaking, some of the communities were not made up of single lineages but of two or more component groups. For instance, on the eve of the Oduduwa period, Idet (Ojutalyo, 1981) was made up of three major lineage-sections: Ilale, Ilesun and Ilia headed by the **Obalale**, **Obalesun** and **Obalia** respectively.

The lineage-settlements were bonded in what looked like a formal political alliance or confederacy. Since these were lineage-settlements, each of them was presumably exogamous. Each must, therefore, have included women from neighbouring settlements, thereby creating an interlocking network of social relationships. Furthermore, the physiography of the Ife region encouraged interactions among the inhabitants. The settlements were within a spherical valley surrounded by steep-sided hills (Ozanne, 1969:7-12). Only a few areas within this valley received enough rain to be attractive all the year round. Neighbouring settlements, therefore, shared common parcels of land, especially for cultivation and hunting. The economic links so initiated were strengthened by recognizing some settlements with particular produce or services. Thus, Ijugbe specialized in the production of yam and hydrological services and was logically responsible for ensuring good harvests, hence the Ife saying **Tan ba wa ojo I'aiye gbogbo, kan bi orisa Ijugbe leere**, meaning "In case of rain failure, appease the Ijugbe deity."

While the element of cooperation was the basis for forming a confederacy, the political integration of the communities only went half way. The confederacy was not looked upon as a single indivisible unit; each of the component parts continued to retain its political autonomy. The alliance was thus a very loose one. There was no central chieftaincy system (Ademakinwa, 1958:17). Though leadership was vested in an individual, it was rotated among leaders of the component settlements, as each settlement retained its political autonomy. For instance, it would appear that the first leader of the confederacy was the head of the Oke Ora hamlet, Oranfe (**Ora ti o ni Ife**: the Ora who owns Ile-Ife). His reign is now dated to the time of creation (**Igba iwa se**) and he is remembered to have been succeeded by Obatala, the head of the Idete community.⁵ The confederacy was also elastic enough to accommodate settlements which accepted the idea of mutual cooperation. Membership was, however, voluntary and it was presumed that any settlement could pull out of the alliance when its leader so wished.

Such an alliance did not last long. The inability of the lineage-settlements to outgrow their parochial attitude and form a single, viable com-

munity was a crucial factor that aided the decline and eventual collapse of the confederation. For instance, under Oranfe himself there appeared to have been cracks in the arrangements. There were challenges to Oranfe's leadership, a conspiracy to wrestle the leadership from him. These occasioned a series of skirmishes now only faintly remembered in oral traditions. Eventually, a vote of confidence was passed on Oranfe and a stern warning was given to the rebels.

Ghogbo Elu. o o

Emo s'oni t'Oranfe o

All stranger elements to note

No one is as great as Oranfe

Ora l'omo n'Ife

Elu ghogbo ora lo n'Ife

Ora l'omo n'Ife

Elu ghogbo ora l'oni 'le

Surely Ora owns Ife

All stranger elements, Ora owns Ife

Surely Ora owns the land

All stranger elements, Ora owns the land.

Indeed, for some time Oranfe appeared to be the power behind the throne of Ile-Ife.

If Oranfe was successful in maintaining the alliance, his immediate successors were not. The profile of Obatala or Orisanla, the last leader of the confederacy remembered in the traditions, clearly indicates the gravity of the situation. In one account, he is remembered as a drunkard who, on an occasion, took too much palmwine and slept off. In another, he is referred to as an imperfect sculptor to whom "all persons having physical abnormalities or defects are considered dedicated." Indeed, the impression one gets from the traditions is that for the period of Obatala's "reign", the confederation was characterized by moral decadence, cultural decline and political instability.

This paved the way for the eventual take-over by a party which was then not a member of the alliance. The confederate settlements were located within a valley surrounded by hills on which were other lineage-settlements not within the confederacy. Trade contacts (Eluyemi, 1980:23) and frequent interactions must have given the settlements on the hills an insight into the comparative wealth and economic potentialities of the region occupied by the confederates. It is conjectural, but it may well be true that the availability of parcels of land suitable for culti-

vation and pasture formed a major factor in the influx of people into the area. It was probably on account of this constant emigration into the region that the confederates set aside an area designated as a strangers' quarter. The existence of a this indicates that the settlements which formed the confederacy had interactions with other communities with which they did not have a formal agreement.

Thus, when Oduduwa arrived from his own settlement, which was on one of the hills in the region (Oke Ora?), he was well-received and settled in the area which was then set aside for strangers. Here, he started to set himself up as an independent focus of power and authority, refusing to acknowledge the superiority of the pre-existing heads of settlements.⁶ This led to disputes and occasional skirmishes between the Oduduwa groups and some of their hosts. Within a short time, Oduduwa succeeded in deposing some of them, one of whom was apparently Soipasan, the legendary progenitor of the Ketu sub-group of the Yoruba (Parrinder, 1967; Adediran, 1980).

One of those who challenged Oduduwa effectively was Ore, also remembered as Oreluere. It is related that Ore poisoned one of Oduduwa's daughters in order to bring him down on his knees. Oduduwa having tried unsuccessfully to cure the woman turned to Ore for assistance (Idowu, 1962:23). A variant of the same tradition relates that Oreluere actually shot one of Oduduwa's sons (Willett, 1967:123) (on another occasion?). The confrontation must have been fierce indeed, for stone images of Ore and his associates have holes which traditions maintain were wounds received during these encounters (Murray and Willet, 1958). In these encounters, the Oduduwa group was defeated and Oduduwa had to give homage to Ore by paying "fines of sheep and fowls" and giving him one of his daughters in marriage to seal the agreement.

It is not known what exactly the terms of agreement were, but it would appear that they gave Oduduwa enough free hand to steadily build up his power. The agreement probably allowed Oduduwa to set his settlement as a semi-independent one like those of the pre-existing settlements; furthermore, Oduduwa had equal status with other pre-existing heads of settlements. It would appear also from the Ifa creation legend that Obatala (Orisanla), one of the lineage-heads, was given a mandate to work out a permanent arrangement or accord or, as the account itself puts it, a permanent "existence." But as a result of the "decadence, decline and instability" which, as pointed out above, characterized Obatala's reign, he was superseded by Oduduwa. Then followed a long-

drawn series of battles, aspects of which are still re-enacted during the annual Itapa (revolt?) festival.⁷ The details of the Itapa festival strongly indicate that Obatala became overbearing as a result of the mandate given him. Oduduwa, apparently, exploited this situation to conspire with some disgruntled elements within the confederacy. This ended in a coup d'état against Obatala. The defection of some of the aboriginal groups to Oduduwa's side prolonged the struggle. For instance, Obameri (who became Oduduwa's war general and also led the group which conquered and expelled Obatala) was head of an aboriginal group. The defeated ruler and his surrogates settled at Ideta-Oko beyond the Esinminrin river. Here they made moves to retake the town. Obameri on the other hand, set up a camp at a place now called Odin to police the activities of the Obatala group. Villages sprang up as each looked for an area suitable for defence. In the end there are said to have been about 16 major settlements.⁸ The skirmishes which followed this must have lasted a fairly long time, for an account relates that the wars did not come to an end until after the two hundred and first year (Wyndam, 1947:108). During the riot, the settlements remained outposts of the confederation until the descendants of the original founders moved into Ile-Ife.

One Ojumu was alleged not only to have reconciled the warring parties but also to have brought Obatala back into the fold. This led to the break-up of Ideta-Oko and many of the settlements set up in the course of the civil war. A new constitution was drawn up in which elements of the aboriginal customs were to be woven with the new one. In spite of this, it was obvious that the Oduduwa group had completely taken over as Obatala permanently lost to Oduduwa the *Are*, the symbol of political authority.

One factor that eventually aided the collapse of the Obatala group appears to have been the outbreak of smallpox in their camp. The speckled appearances of the Obatala priests during the Itapa festival suggested that they were smallpox victims; furthermore, on the seventh day of the Itapa festival (Ojutalayo, 1981:81-86), elaborate rituals are held "for preventions against smallpox epidemic." Also, on the eleventh day the major players commemorate both the settlement and re-entry of Obatala into Ile-Ife and the rituals against the smallpox epidemic in the town. It is on this same night that the Ooni visits the shrine to renew his case. Also on this same night, while the trip from Ideta-Ile to Ideta-Oko (in commemoration of the expulsion of Obatala's forces by those of Oduduwa) is being held, there is such "weeping and lamentation" for the loss of the *Are*.

Therefore, the Ojumu peace efforts did not appear to have put an end to the struggle for supremacy. Indeed, a faction of the Obatala group led by Obawinrin argued strongly that the cause for which they had picked up arms should not be compromised. This faction refused to join Obatala to return to their original settlement at Ideta-Ife; rather, they settled at a place which became known as Igbo-Igbo (Igbo forest) from where they later launched a vendetta on the city.

Meanwhile, Oduduwa settled down and began to organize the pre-existing settlements into a socially and politically cohesive unit. First, he moved from Omologun, a settlement he had apparently occupied on the eve of the long-drawn conflict, to Idio, a fairly hilly region.⁹ He then ordered the other village-heads to vacate their settlements for new sites which he had allocated to them. This resulted in the clustering of the settlements around that of Oduduwa and in the formal emergence of Ile-Ife as a town. A major innovation of this era was apparently the building of a wall to encircle the cluster of settlements. According to Paul Zanne who refers to it as "the medieval wall", it was on the average 4.6 metres high and 1.6 meters thick.

Apart from offering the much needed security against incessant attacks, the walls aided the task of transforming the various settlements into a homogenous whole. A new social structure more elaborate than that of the autonomous settlements of the pre-Oduduwa era emerged. Areas of conflict between the aboriginal groups and the Oduduwa group was considerably reduced through inter-marriages. This led to mutual assimilation, the new enlarged and heterogenous settlement was now looked at as a single unit and not just as a confederation of units. This social development had a corollary in the political sphere.

If one accepts Lucy Mair's contention that the state "in its simplest form entails the recognition that one body of kin have an exclusive claim to provide the ruler from among themselves, (and that) states arise when such privileged groups are able to command the services of followers through whom they can impose their will on the part of the... people" (Mair, 1962:14), one can argue that the transformation of the loose alliance of the pre-Oduduwa era into a permanent feature brought the emergence of the first dynastic state or kingdom in the region. Unlike the pre-Oduduwa organization, leadership was not rotated among the heads of the pre-dynastic groups but was now monopolized by the Oduduwa group which set itself up as the ruling dynasty in the region. To achieve this ascendancy, the Oduduwa group took over the monopoly of a few privileges which were hitherto enjoyed by heads of various lin-

eage-settlements.

First, was the monopoly of symbols of royalty and political authority. The Oduduwa group reserved the exclusive right over the use of the *Are* which, as pointed out earlier, was *the symbol of superior authority during the pre-Oduduwa period*. Whoever had the *Are* among the lineage-heads was regarded as the leader and had the mandate to act as head of the confederacy. The denial of other lineage-heads of the use of this symbol meant that political leadership in the Ife region would now be permanently exercised by one group.

Secondly, there appeared to have been some economic prop to the ascendancy. This apparently had to do with the monopoly of some craft organizations by the Oduduwa group. The identification of Ogun Ladin (the first blacksmith in Ife accounts), Elesije (the first physician), Agbonniregun (the master diviner), Olokun (the wealthiest trader), and Obagede (plantain tycoon) with Oduduwa suggests a careful and tight control of essential services within the emergent polity.

The second suggestion is particularly tempting, in view of the clean break (in the traditions of Ife arts) between the pre-Oduduwa period and the Oduduwa period.⁹ Many scholars have commented on the arts and crafts of Ife. These comments are based largely on archaeological finds in the city since Leo Frobenius' visit in 1903 (Frobenius, 1914) and on local traditions which record the making of clay, stone, glass beads and bracelets, modelling in plastic clay, casting in metal, carving in wood, ivory and lithic materials. Although some of the sketches have been impressive enough to give valuable glimpses of the craft industries, no concerted effort has yet been made to relate this important aspect of Ife culture to political developments. It has been suggested that craftsmanship in metal and wood dated to the early period of Ife history (Smith, 1967). Sculpture is traditionally associated with Obatala who is regarded as the patron of all sculptors. The earlier Ife sculptures featured mainly stone carvings. Metal casting, on the other hand, is associated with the cult of Ogun which is a royal cult. Many Ife deities such as Obatala, Oluorogbo, Orisa-Ikire and Orisa Ijugbe are represented on stones, while the early Ooni of Ife are represented in brass/bronze. This strongly suggests that bronze casting is associated with the emergence of the Oduduwa dynasty. It was probably an exclusively royal prerogative, since most of the bronze figures are those of members of the royal court and since most of these finds have been made in the vicinity of the palace (Adediran 1976).

Another industry associated with the emergence of the royal dynasty

is the bead industry. Cowries, *owo eyo*, feature prominently in pre-Oduduwa festivals, serving decorative purposes similar to those of beads. The use of cowries rather than *iyun*, *akun*, *segi* or even *sese efun* varieties of beads may indeed confirm the speculation that beads became important only after the Oduduwa revolution. The discovery of red stone and carnelian beads on Obalara land (Gorlake n.d. :139) indicates that the Ife bead industry is of some antiquity but probably post-dating the epoch associated with Oduduwa himself.

Two types of beads were traditionally popular in Ife. These were the blue tubular form locally known as *iyun*, and the red cylindrical type called *segi*. The most prominent Ife deity associated with the bead industry is Olokun, a sea goddess regarded as one of the wives of Oduduwa. Although other deities were associated with production and sale, beads became important primarily for purposes of decoration as part of chieftaincy dresses, particularly in adorning chiefly caps locally called *oro* (mitre hat). Many of the chiefs acquired *oro* and as the quest for beads increased; tubular *irun* and *segi* beads made from glass raw materials became prominent in Ife beads market. There was, however, an attempt to impose a guild system on the production and marketing of beads. No other industry was so sensitively controlled.

But in spite of the careful manoeuvring, the Oduduwa group had to take adequate cognisance of members of the aboriginal groups. Political authority among the lineage groups was based on the possession of parcels of land. But since it had no knowledge of the mysteries of the land, the Oduduwa dynasty could not usurp ritual roles concerned with land or physical features. In actual fact, therefore, the heads of the pre-Oduduwa communities continued to perform spiritual duties over their indigenous cults and to be the de facto owners of their respective parcels of land. Some of them were however incorporated into a central chieftaincy system and assigned specific duties to perform in the running of the affairs of the new polity (Adamakinwa, 1958:27; Parrat, 1969:343). This was a crucial step towards role differentiation, a step which almost certainly took the settlement into an era of unprecedented intellectual, industrial and commercial development. A few of the heads of communities apparently excelled in their duties and have become deified as patrons of various professional occupation.⁹

Oduduwa's settlement at Idio became the nerve centre of social, political and economic activities in the new polity. Thus emerged the concept of the *Aafin* (palace) as the nexus of the administration of a state. The *Aafin* was to become a distinguishing mark of the Oduduwa group and

Oduduwa himself probably assumed the title Olofin (Aderemi, 1980), meaning one who lives in the *Aafin*.

It is not to be assumed that with the ascendancy of Oduduwa, the resistance by the aboriginal groups ceased completely. The traditions emphasize that the first palace (identified as *Aafin owuro*) was very simple in form, as Oduduwa's effort to build an elaborate structure was frustrated by frequent squabbles within the city. It will also be recalled that some of the aboriginal groups set up marauding camps on the outskirts of the new settlement. Within the settlement itself, opposition to the new regime did die out completely. It continued underground with a vigorous attempt to preserve some of the indigenous institutions. A cult known as the *imole* emerged (Idowu, 1962:24 and 28). It was open only to those bound together by ownership of land and included virtually all the aboriginal groups within the city. Initially, this resistance group was weak, but it soon became a force to be reckoned with. At all times, however, effective opposition to the ascendancy of the Oduduwa group came from the disgruntled elements who had set themselves up as marauding groups. Their menace was as a very absorbing one which took many generations to curtail (Adamakinwa, 1969:32-44).

Meanwhile, the effects of the political instability of this early period began to tell on the economy which was then essentially made up of subsistence farming, hunting, craft industry and inter-community trade over short distances. Apart from farming which was a fairly general occupation, the other occupations were specialized and restricted to small groups of individuals. Each individual was, as such, dependent on his neighbours for goods and services which he could not provide for himself. The urbanization process which began with Oduduwa required an expansion of these economic activities, but under the insecurity of the time, the people apparently saw no wisdom in encouraging agricultural and industrial pursuits. Thus, farming appeared to have been neglected while emphasis was laid on rituals, with new deities and cults emerging to deal with various problems.

What brought this economic problem to the fore was a prolonged drought which resulted in famine. As common under such circumstances, there was malnutrition and an outbreak of epidemic. An Ife priest divined that the settlement was overcrowded and prescribed emigration as the only solution. Consequently, groups of individuals began to leave Ile-Ife to set themselves up elsewhere. This apparently led to the series of dynastic migrations for which Ife eventually became popular. The first major wave of migration was orderly. A meeting was sum-

moned at a place which still bears the name of Ita-Ijero (place of deliberation). There a decision was taken as to which direction each party should go and how future contacts were to be made with Ile-Ife. Each party was led by a member of the Oduduwa group.

In the city itself, successive attempts were made to consolidate the position of the dynastic group vis-a-vis that of the pre-Oduduwa groups. The Rev. Samuel Johnson recorded a tradition which suggests that the throne of Ile-Ife was seized by the aboriginal groups. According to him (Johnson, 1921:10-12), Oranmiyan succeeded Oduduwa but being an adventurous fellow, he soon went out on a military expedition, leaving the palace in charge of a trusted servant who at birth had been "dedicated to the perpetual service of the gods, especially, the god Obatala" Eventually this trusted servant established himself on the throne and displaced the direct descendants of Oduduwa from leadership.

Ife accounts about this period emphasize an internal crisis which thwarted all attempts at political integration of the component groups within the polity. The crisis was part of a well-organized plot by the aboriginal groups within the city to overthrow the Oduduwa regime, using the *imole* cult. Eventually, the plot succeeded.¹⁰ However, having fully accepted the ideas represented by Oduduwa, the aboriginal groups adopted and deified him as an ancestral cult-object under the priesthood of Obadio, apparently his host at his Idio settlement.

That there was a change in the succession to the throne is acknowledged in the Ife accounts that Oduduwa was succeeded by an "Ife elder" named in various accounts as Osangangan Obamakin, Ogun or Obalufon Ogbogbodirin (Eluyemi, 1980:41). All these personages are identifiable with the pre-Oduduwa groups rather than with the dynasty initiated by Oduduwa. Ogun is generally identified as a contemporary of Oduduwa himself. The attribute of a "pathfinder" contained in his *oriki* in fact suggests that in relation to other personages in early Ife history, his epoch was the earliest. Osangangan Obamakin and Obalufon Ogbogbodirin are the same persons, generally acknowledged as an "early ooni" and father of the more popular Obalufon Alaiyemore.¹¹ The name Osangangan Obamakin, which is poetic characterization of his reign, is in fact identified as a major epoch in the pre-Oduduwa period.¹²

Being himself a member of the *imole*, Osangangan Obamakin apparently recognized its importance as a state apparatus. Consequently, all powerful groups in the town were brought together in the *imole* cult which was reorganized into an effective governmental organ (Idowu, 1962:28). In addition, to prevent any conspiracy against constituted

authority, he initiated a periodic meeting, the idea of which has survived as the sixteen-day Isoro meeting.¹³ This, it appeared, enabled Obamakin to have a very long tenure culminating in his deposition and the installation of his kinsman, Obalufon Alaiyemore.

Information on Obalufon is more substantial. He is generally identified as a direct descendant of Osangangan Obamakin, as an *Omo Ora* (descendant of Oranfe), and as a close associate of heads of pre-Oduduwa communities such as Eteko, Olorogbo, and Akire (Ibrahim, 1982:1-6) Furthermore, the rituals and worship of Obalufon in Ile-Ife and in other places where he is identified as Orisa Olufon (Molufon ade) are identical with those of Obatala and other pre-Oduduwa deities. Thus, the bits available now on Obalufon indicate that the immediate successors of Oduduwa to the throne of Ife were offsprings of the pre-Oduduwa groups. The fact that the Ooni was left out of all early lists of children of Oduduwa¹⁴ is itself a strong support for this suggestion. This would also explain the widespread tradition that Oranmiyan (a descendant of Oduduwa) in spite of a successful career outside the Ife region, had to return to Ile-Ife to settle an old score by deposing Obalufon. But Oranmiyan is believed to have had a very short reign before his death in Ile-Ife. The Ife accounts emphasize that Alaiyemore was recalled from exile and thenceforth peace returned to the polity. This may indeed indicate that a compromise was reached, between the Oduduwa group and the Obalufon groups, that the kingship should be rotated between them. On the other hand, there are indications from the Olojo festival which commemorates the reconciliation, that attempts were made to integrate the two into one dynasty (Eluyemi, 1975). This is also implied in a cross-section of the traditions which trace the descent of all Ooni to Oranmiyan identified as "a child of two fathers, Ogun (aboriginal) and Oduduwa"

Some records indicate that after his re-installation, Obalufon was given a crown by Oranfe, and that he was the first ruler of Ile-Ife to use a crown as a symbol of authority. Indeed, in another context, Obalufon is identified exclusively with crowns (Babalola, 1966:18). When taken in conjunction with the accounts that the Ife confederacy belonged to Ora (Ora l'oni 'fe) and that Oduduwa never had a palace but reigned as king in his private quarters at Idio, the purport of this account appears to be that political leadership had been formally handed to Obalufon Alaiyemore who was thus the first effective king of Ile-Ife. Aspects of the installation rituals of the Ooni¹⁵ buttress this suggestion. All ceremonies relating to the Coronation are dominated by priests and priest-

esses connected with Oranfe or Obalufon. The Ooni-elect visits Oke-Ora where a crown is made for him by the Ompetu of Ido. His coronation takes place near the shrine of Obatala who was one of Oranfe's immediate successors. Finally, before the crown is placed on the new Ooni's head, it must first be placed on an effigy of Obalufon. It is only then that the Ooni is considered fully consecrated, then he goes straight into the palace.

All considered, the Ooniship does not appear to have pre-dated the Obalufon period. The folk-etymology of the title associates it with the ownership of two things, the land and the palace¹⁶ neither of which members of the Oduduwa group possessed by right, but both of which members of the Obalufon group had. In fact, Obalufon is acknowledged as the initiator of the Ooni title which he assumed instead of the Olofin title initiated by Oduduwa.

Meanwhile, the Igbo faction of the aboriginal group, looking on those in the city who had succumbed to the ideas perpetrated by the Oduduwa groups as traitors, continued their raids over the settlement. Disguised in raffia clothes and looking weird, they used to attack Ile-Ife causing confusion in the markets and often making people run away. The Igbo problem must have been a particularly tasking and baffling one for it claimed many lives. One account relates that Oranfe, the Ife High god, gave Obalufon two hundred slaves and men to help him against the Igbo, but that only one of the lot survived. After a number of successful raids, one of Obalufon's wives called Moremi,¹⁷ a woman of uncommon beauty and manly ability, allowed herself to be captured by the Igbo. She was taken to the Igbo camp where she became the consort of their chief. Her beauty and sense of humour soon endeared her to the Igbo nobility and she soon became a favourite in the court. This gave her an access to the secrets of the Igbo forces. She later absconded to Ile-Ife, divulged the secret that the Igbo were not spirits but human beings disguised in raffia clothes. She also advised on how to combat them. During the encounter which followed, the Igbo were confronted with flaming torches, overpowered and their leading chiefs, including Obawinrin himself, captured. The Igbo settlement was completely destroyed and the recalcitrant elements were brought back into the fold to contribute to the building of the new settlement.

Disruptive as the Igbo raids were, they accounted for crucial developments in the institutions of Ile-Ife. As a result of the raids, internal cohesion increased and an elaborate palace was built (Adeniran, 1976). The inconveniences involved in moving the royal court everytime there was

an Igbo raid forced the people to consider the advisability of locating the palace on a site which would be secure, and, at the same time, administratively convenient. The new palace, only a stone's throw from the former one, was an imposing structure, made up of series of inter-connected buildings in which lived members of the royal family. As an added security device, a wall was built round the palace. One remarkable feature of the physical organization of the new palace was the virtual seclusion of the ruler from the general public, a move that enhanced his prestige.

More important was the administrative re-organization which followed the victory of Obalufon over the Igbo. The details of this re-organization are not completely known, but the outcome is clear. A new chieftaincy system, which adequately reflected the organization of the new settlement was initiated. The town was divided administratively into sections under loyal lineage-heads who became civil chiefs or *ihare* responsible to the Ooni. Adequately learning from the suffering brought about by the drought, famine and unrests of the preceding years, they also created another chieftaincy line, the *isoro*, specifically for all those concerned with the propitiation of the many gods that had emerged and any new ones they might have.

Lastly, the Ooni surrounded himself with many royal servants called Omode Owa (princely youths). This latter group became an integral part of the palace system and an independent focus of power to balance the influence of the *ihare* and the *isoro*.

This remarkable political development was possible because of the mastery of local economic conditions, such as the development of the manufacturing technology. One of the items was the development of brass-casting which is generally associated with Obalufon and which became a major item of commercial export. Furthermore, there seemed to have been a tighter royal control over the manufacture and sale of beads (Ibrahim, 1982) as can be inferred from the saying '*Orunto Obalufon l'oni 'lu, Oba l'oni sese efun*' implying that while the civil chiefs could run the administration of the town, it was only the king who had control over *sese efun* beads (the source of wealth). As beads of various types manufactured in Ife became important articles of trade in the region, the Ooni became wealthy and influential and a great patron of the arts.

Nevertheless, the atmosphere within Ile-Ife during this period was not entirely tension-free. Traditions allude to continual, sometimes violent differences among the different segments of the ruling dynasty and even between holders of the Ooniship and the other chieftaincy institutions

within the polity. One such chieftaincy institution is that of the Obalufe whose initiation appears to correspond with a temporary decline in the prominence of the Ooni. The Obalufe is alternately referred to as Olufe, Orunto or Ooni Ode, titles which all suggest that in the 19th century he was more powerful than a civil chief. Apart from general acknowledgement in the traditions that the first Obalufe was an elder brother to Oduduwa}, the Obalufe possessed many attributes of royalty which closely identify him with the royal dynasty. For instance, like the Ooni, he celebrates his own Olojo festival in honour of Ogun.¹⁸ Indeed, according to an account, the title was derived from a segment of the royal family. It is claimed that there were three sons of an early Ooni desirous of becoming king. Two of them eventually went out of the town in search of brighter fortunes elsewhere. The third prince stayed back, anticipating that he would automatically succeed the incumbent Ooni. However, when a vacancy occurred, the aspirant prince was by-passed and a much more junior prince was enthroned. Consequently, he moved out of the palace and declared himself Ooni Ita (the Ooni outside the palace). It was only careful manoeuvring by Ife elders which ensured that the disgruntled candidate was placated and incorporated into the existing hierarchy of chiefs where he displaced the Obajio as the foremost civil chief.¹⁹

This type of political manoeuvring, and attempts to accommodate conflicting interest groups soon became characteristic of Ife politics giving rise to the popular saying, "Omode gbon agba gbon Fafi da 'le Ife" This means that the Ife polity emerged as a stable community only through the wisdom of all interest groups.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 For a cross-section of views on Ife, See Smith, R.S., *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* (Methuen, 1969) especially Ch.2, also Robin Horton, "Ancient Ife: A Reassessment" *JHSN*, ix:4, 1979 pp.69-150 and A. Obayemi, "Ancient Ile-Ife: Another Cultural Historical Reinterpretation" *JHSN*, ix, 4, 1979 pp. 151-186.
- 2 See Hallet, R. (ed), *The Niger Journals of Richard and John Landers* (Routhledge, London, 1965), pp.88-89;
- H. Clapperton, *Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa, 1822-24.*
- J. O. Lucas, *The Religion of the Yoruba* (C.M.S., Lagos, 1958) pp.

14-30

- 3 Especially from the Proceeding so the Chieftaincy Review Commissions since 1976, the death and installation rituals of the Ooni in 1980, the Modakeke Palaver and the on-going Ooni-Alaafin tussle.
- 4 CF their attributes with those of the dramatis personae in some of the tales recorded in S.A. Babalola or even in the quasi-historical novels of D.O. Fagunwa.
- 5 Oral traditions collected from Chief Yekini Obaluru (Late). More quarters, Ile-Ife, 27/9/74.
- 6 Ademakinwa op. cit. p. 14; also oral interviews in Ife at various times between 1974 and 1961.
- 7 For details of this, see S. Steven "Orisa Nla Festival" Nigeria. 90, 1960, pp. 184-199 The writer witnessed aspects of this festival at various times between 1975 and 1980.
- 8 Oral interviews: Chief T. Alowooja, the Obalufe, 49, Irewo Road, Ile-Ife 18/12/71; Chief Ali Awoyera, the Lowa Ijaruwa of Ife (Late); and Chief Yekini Obaluru (Late).
- 9 A. Obayemi, "The Yoruba and Edo-speaking people before 600" in J.F. Ajayi, and M. Crowder (eds.) History of West Africa I. Longman 1977, 213-214.
- 10 S.A. Babalola, The Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala Oxford 1966, p. 26; Traces of this tradition appear in the accounts collected from Chief Yekini Obaluru (late and Chief I.A. Feyenuwo (70+), 41 Gbelenka Street, Ile-Ife 24/12/77.
- 11 Oral traditions collected at various times in Ile-Ife.
- 12 Oral traditions: Chief A. Awosogbon, The Araba of Ife 8/11/77; also Chief A. Asiru, priest of Obatala, 62 Ajamapo Street, Ile-Ife 30/12/77 identify three major pre-Oduduwa epocs: Kutukutu Oba Igbo (early period) Osangangan Obamakina (middle period)

- Okunkunduruduru Orisa (Late period).
- 13 Oral interview: Chief Yekini Obaluru (Late)
 - 14 Only Ife accounts compiled from 1930, realizing the implication of this omission, include the name of Obalufon on the list; even then it is categorized as separate from others. See National Archives Ibadan, file. Oyo Prof. 1/203, "Aderemi Ooni of Ife to D.O. Ife".
 - 15 See Mackenzie, "Report on the Native Organization of Ife." Intelligence Report on Ife Division available in Ife University Library. Aspects of these coronation ceremonies were watched by this writer in 1980.
 - 16 The title is devised from a longer cognomen. Onilegbeji Oral traditions collected from various sources at Ile-Ife.
 - 17 Ademakinwa, op. cit. pp. 36-45; also, M. O. Abiri, *Moremi: An epic of feminine Heroism*, Ibadan, 1970 and M.J. Walsh, "The Edi festival at Ile-Ife", *African Affairs*, 47, 1948 pp. 231-238.
 - 18 See O. Eluyemi, *Olojo Festival*, op. cit. Oral interview: Chief T. Alwooja et.al, 7/8/83.
 - 19 Oral interviews: Chief I. A. Fayenuwo. See also Ayinde, D. *O.Awon Oruko Oye Abalaiye Ni Ile-Ife*, Ife. 1968., p. 10.

CHAPTER 6

THE GROWTH OF IFE FROM ODUDUWA TO 1800

I. A. Akinjogbin

This chapter represents the first attempt to rigorously discuss the internal development of Ife between Oduduwa's time and the beginning of the 19th century. Because a great deal of dependence is placed on the Ife king list, an attempt will be made to sort out who was king and in what order.

It is probably generally agreed that Oduduwa took over the government of Ife after a protracted civil war had been waged against the former rulers.¹ After his victory, he made certain fundamental changes in the governance of Ife, such as fusing all the 13 groups of villages into one composite town, apportioning duties to some of the earlier rulers and depriving them of some former rights. It would appear that, as a result of his power and personality, a period of calm and growth attended the rest of his reign during which some of his sons and generals went round the surrounding areas to take over authority from existing kingdoms or to found new ones. However, after the death of Oduduwa the picture of peace and order appears to have received a jolt. First, it was not quite clear whether succession was to be from father to son, or whether brothers were also entitled or whether any competent elder, approved by the king makers and sometimes by *Ifa* could become the Ooni. During the first few reigns after the death of Oduduwa until the reign of Lajamisan, all the three experiments would appear to have been tried. To compound the problems, the pre-Oduduwa ruling group did not meekly give up their claims to power.

Between the death of Oduduwa and Lajamisan, there were probably at least five Ooni.² The most commonly agreed are Obalufon Ogbogbodirin, also known as Olomomopeaye and Osangangan Obamakin. He was briefly followed by Obalufon Ejigimogun, who is also known as Obalufon Onigbomore and later Alayemore. He was generally considered the son of Ogbogbodirin though in one tradition, at least he was called the son of Obalokun.³ He was supplanted by Oranmiyan, but later came back after Oranmiyan's demise.⁴ They are all considered "sons" of Oduduwa but there are indications that Obalufon Ogbogbodirin and his "sons," Obalufon Alayemore represented a brief return of the pre-Oduduwa dynasty to the throne. Then followed Olofin

Aworokolokin whose relationship with the Oduduwa or pre-Oduduwa line has not been quite clearly determined. He may or may not have been the same person called Aiyetise by Eluyemi and referred to by him as father of Lajamisan.⁵ Whether they were two separate individuals or the same person, the relationship with Oduduwa appears very tenuous, as will be clear when we come to talk about Lajamisan who finally appeared to have resolved the succession issue.

One reason why the succession issue was not firmly settled was probably because the political conditions in Ile-Ife became volatile after Oduduwa's death. Apparently, the conquered elements appear to have scrambled among themselves to inherit the mantle of Oduduwa. According to tradition, Obalufon Ogbogbodirin had a long and peaceful reign. Towards the end of his reign, he provoked Orisateko, who is said to be a son of Oranfe, and a civil war ensued. As both Orisateko and Obalufon Ogbogbodirin (alias Osangangan Obamakini) belonged to pre-Oduduwa groups, it is obvious that there was no united force against Oduduwa group. Orisateko's army was obviously the stronger, as demonstrated by three pitched battles remembered in the traditions. In the first one, Obalufon's forces simply ran back to report that Orisateko's army was too strong. The second one, led by Obaloran, did not appear to have fared better. The third one, commanded by Obalufon himself, was disastrous, for he was beheaded by one of Orisateko's warriors called Ogodo Sokoro.⁶ Although Obalufon's "son", known as Obalufon Ejijimogun or Ejigimogun, was immediately appointed to succeed his father, he was not quite capable of stemming the tide.

It was left to Oranmiyan, one of the youngest surviving sons of Oduduwa, to subjugate the pre-Oduduwa rulers all over again. According to the traditions, he achieved his objective by subterfuge. Knowing how strong Orisateko's army was, he decided to weaken them first before fighting them. Near Orisateko's area was a lake called Otubu from where drinking water was got. Oranmiyan procured plenty of palm wine said to be two hundred *agbe*,⁷ and secretly poured them into this pond. The colour which normally used to be bluish green turned whitish.⁸ The apparent miracle attracted every one including Orisateko himself and they drank liberally from the water, unwittingly getting drunk. Before they recovered from their inebriated state, Oranmiyan attacked and conquered them. This story may be no more than a standardized version of how the Oduduwa people overcame the pre-Oduduwa group for, it bears a striking resemblance to how Oduduwa was supposed to have conquered Obatala.

However, it indicates that Oranmiyan stemmed the Orisateko uprising by siding with the weaker group of the disunited pre-Oduduwa groups. He then drove Obalufon Ejigimogun into exile at Ilara⁹ and became the Ooni. Traditions on Oranmiyan are plentiful and sometimes detailed,¹⁰ but they have not been systematically collected and objectively studied. We cannot go into them here. Ife traditions implied that this event occurred after Oranmiyan had already gone to Benin and Oyo, where he left his sons to rule. The traditions further imply that after this, peace again returned to Ife for there is no account of any other civil war recorded during his reign. Another incident remembered during his reign was his remodelling of the *Aafin* by which he changed the main entrance—the geru—to where it is now. After his death Obalufon Ejigimogun was brought back to the throne. He is remembered to have had a long and peaceful reign, attributed to his strict observance of the laws and traditions of Ife. This is put in the saying “*nipa esisun mimo in Obalufon Onighomore Ejigimogun fi j’ogbo j’ato*”¹¹. Again, he is associated with the ceremony whereby before a new Ooni is crowned the crown must first be put on the head of Obalufon Ejigimogun’s effigy.

Perhaps the saying quoted above and this surviving ceremony give additional clue to the political settlement that occurred during Obalufon Ejigimogun’s reign. What were the *esisun* (laws) that Ejigimogun kept strictly? Why was he called Obalufe Onighomore on whose effigy the Ooni’s crown must first be fitted? We would want to suggest that the *esisun* were those agreements entered into between the Oduduwa and the Obatala’s groups after the Oduduwa take-over, re-emphasized after the Orisateko’s war, an agreement that probably made for power sharing between the conquered and the conqueror. It is also probable that the crown was fitted first on his effigy to emphasize the fact that the Ooni had responsibility to Ile-Ife, as distinct from his other responsibilities to all his other cousins, descendants of Oduduwa, who had migrated to found or conquer their own kingdoms. Seen in this light, we can say that the reigns of Ejigimogun marked a definite constitutional settlement in the growth of the Ooniship in Ile-ife.

It is not clear how long this stability lasted. Aworokolokin, who succeeded Ejigimogun, was not remembered as having done anything spectacular. His relationship with the Oduduwa line in fact was not mentioned in any other traditions so far known. The claim by some traditions that he was a son of Oduduwa, being a brother to Obalufon Ogbogbodirin, appears to be improbable given the length of years ascribed to the reigns of Ooni before him.¹² That the stability did not

last long is evident in the only tradition remembered about him. It is said that Aworokolokin was returning to the *Aafin* after one annual Ogun festival. On reaching the *Mesi Alukunrin* (where criminals were executed), he turned back to look in vain for his wife, Moyun, who, it was later discovered, had been abducted by some prominent chiefs. In his search for his wife, the king was said to have run out through the More gate, dropped his crown with the gatekeeper and was never seen again.¹³

This story should not be taken literally but should be seen as a way of saying that Aworokolokin, who may not have descended from Oduduwa, probably died by some foul means in the hands of his courtiers, after his wife had been abducted. His corpse was buried at, or was carried out through, the same gate.

That this is probably indicated by a subsequent event in which one Lajua, who was the *Yegbata* (head of the *Emese*, Ooni's private messengers), declared himself the Ooni and donned the crown without approval by anybody.¹⁴ How long he remained as Ooni is not indicated, but he is also said to have turned into a stone like all the other previous Ooni, and his effigy is still in the *Aafin*. Some traditions relate that the usurper, Lajua, was succeeded by another Ooni called Ladere, Ajimuda Efonpanitapanitore, whose reign was very short¹⁵ and whose relationship to the Oduduwa line is equally hazy.

Perhaps this picture of instability should not be overdrawn, for it would appear that Ife enjoyed long periods of stability under some Ooni who were said to have reigned for long periods. Even if we cannot accept the traditional account that Ejigimogun reigned for 240 years or that Oranmiyan reigned in Ife for 70 years, the indications appear to be that some of these early kings had long reigns. However, it would appear that for quite a long while either the Oduduwa group did not settle the succession issue satisfactorily among themselves, thus giving rise to disputed successions, or that the descendants of the group from whom Oduduwa seized power refused to acquiesce to a total loss of power. In either case, instability ensued after the demise of each of the early Ooni. It was probably this periodic instability that encouraged Lajamisan to seize the throne of Ife.

The reign of Lajamisan settled the succession issue. Since then, all the Ooni, except perhaps one,¹⁶ are generally agreed to have descended from him as successions to the throne had continued to alternate between the descendant of his three sons, Lafogido and Lajodoogun (or Ladojoogun) and Otujabiojo. It is therefore necessary to dwell a little bit on this background. The ancestry of Lajamisan and his relationship to

the Oduduwa line is by no means agreed. In Eluyemi's Ife king list, the seventh Ooni, called Aiyetise is simply described as "Father of Lajamisan" and Lajamisan, the eighth in the list, is described as "son of Aiyetise"¹⁷ No other king list mentions Aiyetise as an Ooni, and the fact that these two names are, so to say, self-contained, is a reason to look at closer.

Ife palace records compiled, between 1925 and 1927, do not mention his ancestry but simply relate that Lajamisan was the most powerful individual in Ife in his days and that before his coronation, he "was like next in rank to the Ooni"¹⁸ (*O wa gegebi igbakeji Oba ni ilu*). The traditions collected by Fabunmi, probably in the mid 1940's, agree with this. The question is, what was the basis of Lajamisan's power? A very rare tradition relates that Lajamisan was a farmer who became exceedingly wealthy as a result of the discovery, on his farm, of the material for making beads.¹⁹ If this is true, we may then ascribe his power to his wealth.

Other traditions collected by Ooni Aderemi, probably in the mid-1930's, link Lajamisan with the Odududwa dynasty. According to one such tradition, Lajamisan was an offspring of an intermarriage in the Ooni's family then "domiciled in the palace at that time"²⁰ His mother according to the account, was a descendant of Obalufon Ogbogbodirin, and his father a descendant of Oranmiyan. Neither the name of his father nor that of his mother is remembered in this tradition. This is amazingly hazy, considering that he was reputed to have reigned for a very long time, and his dynasty has lasted since then.

This haziness may be due to a deliberate caution, as will be shown by another piece of evidence. Every year in Ile-Ife there is a festival called the *Odo Oranfe*, held around May. Its devotees say that the festival commemorates Oranfe, "father of Lajamisan, one of the past kings of Ife." The Obaluru, who is the traditional head of Iloromu, one of the 13 pre-Oduduwa settlements, is the chief priest.²¹ Here, in a re-enactment ceremony, Lajamisan is specifically called "son" meaning descendant of Oranfe, a representative of the pre-Oduduwa group. One, therefore, wonders whether this is the clue to all the secrecy and uncertainty about the ancestry of Lajamisan. Could it be that Lajamisan's ascendancy indeed represented a seizure of power from the Oduduwa group by a representative of the former power holders who had been previously deprived? Lajamisan's putsch would have been easy because he was already a rich and powerful man recognized generally by all Ife citizens. His position would also have been strengthened if, as Ooni Aderemi's traditions suggest, he was also related to the Oduduwa and the pre-

Oduduwa dynasties. Traditions record that just as prominent chiefs sent their children to the palace to be emese (court messengers), thereby getting administrative training, so did the Oonis send their children to be trained in the homes of various chiefs in town. It is probable that in this process, Lajamisan became a product of the two groups and united them himself.

Palace sources and the Fabunmi papers contain the name of another Ooni, said to be a successor to Lajamisan, who is indeed more obscure than Lajamisan. His real name is not mentioned but he is generally remembered by his nickname - *Oseganderuku*,²² (i.e., one who turns a virgin forest to a desert). Tradition does not remember his parentage or any of his descendants. Judging by his nickname, he appears to have been a successful farmer, a description that would fit Lajamisan. That *Oseganderuku* is probably the cognomen of Lajamisan is shown by the evidence that he was buried. It is said that *Oseganderuku* was the first Ooni to die like a normal human being and to be buried at Odi-Igbo, the traditional royal cemetery. All the other kings before him, including even Lajua who was a usurper, were said to have turned to stone, or just disappeared.²³ At Odi-Igbo,²⁴ the grave of the first Ooni to be buried there is identified as that of Lajamisan.²⁵ The strong presumption must, therefore, be that the two names belong to one and the same person.

The next "mile post" Ooni was Ogboru. Between Lajamisan and Ogboru, Ooni Aderemi recorded three other kings,²⁶ while Fabunmi,²⁷ Ife palace records²⁸ and Eluyemi²⁹ record seven each.

A close analysis will show that all the lists will need to be amended. All three agree on only two of the names: Ladejoogun, also called Lajodoogun, and Lafogido. Ife palace records indicate that *Oseganderuku* reigned immediately after Lajamisan, but as we have seen above Lajamisan and *Oseganderuku* were probably the same person. The same source mentions Merogijan-Owodo,³⁰ This name is very similar to another Ooni called Ogijan, also called Okukuyeye Ilode. In all the extant lists, Merogijan and Ogijan do not appear together. Where one appears, the other does not. The strong presumption must therefore be that the names refer to one single Oba. If that is so, then his reign came after that of Ogboru as all traditions agree that Ogijan was one of his descendants. A palace source also mentions Agbele as coming before Ogboru.³¹ This man was also called Olojo Agbele, the founder of Ifewara. The traditions about him are contradictory as the names came to be applied to two different persons, Olojo and Agbele instead of one.

An analysis of the traditions would indicate that Olojo Agbele made

two unsuccessful bids to the throne of the Ooni. On the first occasion, when he lost, he went and founded Ifewara. It was from there that his supporters at Ife sent for him after the death of his rival. This is an indication of the respect they had for him. Although he was already assured and he came from Ifewara with large numbers of people including artisans, he was again cheated out of the throne. For the traditions relate that as he got to the town gates, he heard the shout of *Baba yi o*, an indication that another man had been crowned.³² What followed is not quite clear. One tradition insists that he came to Ife all the same and settled with his people. Another said he returned to Ifewara where he died but his corpse was brought to Ife. Gbegbaaje, another name in the palace list, definitely belongs to the 19th century. Of the seven names mentioned in the palace sources, we are therefore left with four authenticated Ooni between Lajamisan and Ogboru, the others having reigned after Ogboru, or not being Oba at all. They are Ladejoogun (Lajodogun) Otujabiojo and Gbegbaaje.

When we turn to Eluyemi's list, we also have problems with the names he recorded, six of which appear completely different from palace and Fabunmi lists. He lists Odidirogbesin after Lafogido. This Oba is also called Odidimode in other sources.³³ He is known to be a very famous son of Ogboru, but was never an Ooni. He, therefore, cannot be placed before Ogboru, or even listed as Ooni. Similarly, the next Ooni on his list is Ekun who is known in other sources as Ekun Ayiwoye.³⁴ He is known to be the Ooni just before Luwo, the female Ooni who reigned after Ogboru. Ajimuda is probably the same Ooni as the one called Efon Ajimuda, Efonpanitapanitore.³⁵ He appears, it is generally agreed, to have reigned before Lajamisan. Another name on Eluyemi's list, Gboo-Nijio, who hailed from Agbedegbede ruling house may well be post-Ogboru since the Agbedegbede ruling house started after Ogboru, as we shall see later. We are left with two more names in Eluyemi's list, about whom absolutely nothing beyond their names is yet known. They are Okunlajosin and Adegbalu. There is a strong temptation to equate these with the last two names on the palace list for while Eluyemi's are real names, palace list's are *Oriki*. But we must wait for more evidence. We are thus left with only one more name, Osinkola, contained on Ooni Aderemi's list. However, as will be seen later, Osinkola also came after Ogboru.

When all the lists are considered together with supporting evidences, there would seem to be about four (probably six) Ooni between Lajamisan and Ogboru. The fairly well-established ones were

Ladojoogun (Lajodoogun) Lafogido, Otujabiojo and Merogijan Owodo. The others on whom we need more evidence are Okunlajosin and Adegbalu.

The events so far recorded for these reigns are pretty scanty. Lajodogun constructed a strong pillar for the *Geru*, below which he was said to have buried a live elephant. He was the first Ooni to be buried inside the *Aafin*. The only thing remembered of Lafogido is that he was buried at *Odi ile*, otherwise called Lafogido. The *Ogido* festival commemorates him till today. Nothing beyond his name is known about Otujabiojo who was the last of the direct sons of Lajamisan to reign - the other two being Lajodoogun and Lafogido.

After the death of Otujabiojo, three of Lajodoogun's children, Ogboru, Olojo Agbele and Merogijan Owodo contested for the throne. Each had a powerful sponsor among the chiefs. In the event Owodo, the youngest, won the contest and ascended the throne, whereupon his two elder brothers, left the town- Ogboru for Ife-Odan and Olojo Agbele for Iwara (later Ifewara).³⁶ Owodo's reign, according to traditions, was short. On his demise, the supporters of Olojo Agbele sent for him at Ifewara but before he arrived, another person, perhaps a usurper, called Okunmodi was again installed.³⁷ Olojo Agbele was probably never an Ooni, though he was a beloved prince and a lot more is remembered about him than about Owodo. Many of his descendants later reigned. Okumodi died within a few days and was probably succeeded by Ogboru, who was sent for from Ife-Odan.

Ogboru is reputed to have had a very long reign. He was finally deposed by subterfuge because he was said to have committed murder by sacrificing one of his messengers, the Erebeso, to the god Oluorogbo. Apparently, human sacrifice was at that time not practised at Ife, or if it was, certain classes of people were not supposed to be used as victims. After his deposition, he went back to Ife-Odan where he died. For a while after his deposition there was no Ooni, for each one selected died within a few days. Certain traditions say there were seven such short reigns,³⁸ but all the names have not been preserved. The short reigns ended when the Ife chiefs sent Ogboru's daughter, Desite Moropo Gbogboewa, to Ife-Odan to beg him to come back to the throne. Moropo took along her son, Laroka (also spelt Laruka), whom she had for Agbedegbede, Ogboru's former elephant hunter. Both Moropo and Laroka did not gain Ogboru's ears until a long time had elapsed, and when they finally did, Ogboru refused to return to Ife. Instead, he told Laroka that propitiation must be performed inside the *Aafin* before

another Ooni could reign there peacefully.³⁹ The propitiation having been done, Ife chiefs decided that Laroka himself should become Ooni, either as a mark of gratitude or as a precautionary measure, in case the palace was not completely cleansed. The reign of Laroka, descendant of Ogboru through his mother, Moropo, marked the beginning of the Agbedegbede line.

From that time until the reign of Osinlade Otutubiosun, Ife king list becomes more confusing. Altogether there were probably 19 Oonis, maybe more, during this period.⁴⁰ There are traditions that relate that Moropo, Ogboru's daughter and mother of Laroka, reigned as an Ooni. If that is true, then she was the first female Ooni to reign in Ife. There is, however, a very strong probability that it was her son, Laroka, that reigned, not herself. The influence which she exerted may have led to future generations concluding that she probably reigned.

However, it would appear that the Ooni who succeeded Laroka was a woman called Luwo Gbagida.⁴¹ She was descended from Merogijan Owodo, one of Lajamisan's children. Traditions remember her as an extremely cruel monarch who sent a large number of people to death in a ravine and was only prevented from so murdering her personal servants. She is also remembered as the Ooni who ordered the streets of Ile-Ife to be paved with potsherds,⁴² an action that was regarded as part and parcel of her cruelty. Despite her alleged cruelty, she probably discouraged idleness, for she is remembered to have given melon to her palm wine tappers to shed the husks off while they were waiting on top of the palm tree for the sap to fill the gourd.

It is said that as a result of her cruelty, the Ife resolved never again to have a female Ooni. If that is true then the traditions that relate that Debooye another female, became the Ooni after Giesi, must be critically viewed. The traditions are by no means agreed. Some relate that Debooye was Giesi's daughter who started deputizing for her father when the latter was too old to perform the annual Okemogun festival.⁴³ She then reigned after her father's death. Others relate that she was Giesi's younger sister who performed the duties of carrying the crown and the sword to the annual Okemogun ceremony when Giesi was too old and infirm to do so, and that she was never an Ooni. Yet a third tradition relates that she reigned, not immediately after Giesi, but after Osinlade Otutubiosun. Whether Debooye reigned or not must therefore remain an open question until we have more information.

For the next 16 Ooni,⁴⁴ until we get to the reign of Osinlade Otutubiosun (generally called Otutu), we have no information. From all

accounts, three Ooni namely Otutu, Ojigidiri Lambua (called Lambua) and Akinmoyero Odunlebiojo (called Odunle) would appear to have reigned between the 1770's and the late 1820's when this chapter comes to an end. The events of these reigns will be discussed when we come to discuss Ife's relationship with all the other Yoruba kingdoms up to 1800.

We shall now consider briefly Ife's internal growth during the period up to the end of the eighteenth century. First, we shall consider Ife's constitutional development. From all that has been said, it would appear that the outlines of the constitutional development, if not its actual contents, are clear. After Oduduwa, powerful citizens who were either Oduduwa's children or his followers or erstwhile opponents successfully vied for the throne. During the period, Ife citizens managed to define responsibilities of the Ooni to Ife as distinct from his responsibilities to all his other cousins whose ancestors had migrated from Ife during Oduduwa's reign. This is probably the greatest significance of the reign of Obalufe Obalufon Ejigimogun Onigbomore (Alayemore). After him, the Ooni's crown must first be put on his stone image before it is put on any new Ooni. The unsystematic succession eventually created weakness until Lajamisan seized the throne. Initially, Lajamisan's greatest asset was that he was a powerful man, generally recognized to be the next in influence to the Ooni, (ie before he ascended the throne) probably because he was rich. He may also have descended from both pre-Oduduwa and Oduduwa ruling families. Since then, the succession would appear to have remained within his descendants who were Ladejoogun (or Lajodogun) Lafogido and Owodó. After Lajamisan, the Ife also experimented with both male and female succession. There might have been up to three female Ooni, viz Moropo Gbogboewa, Luwo and Debooye, but only one, Luwo, is so far well-authenticated. In the end, the experiment would appear to have been abandoned.

One reason for abandoning the experiment was Ife's desire for humane government and the general struggle by the Chiefs and people of Ife against any tendency on the part of the Ooni to become oppressive and dictatorial. Ogboru was deposed for allegedly committing murder. Luwo succeeded in creating a distaste for any other female Ooni because she was said to be extremely cruel. This battle for freedom would appear to be a long and continuous one as there are stories of many more Ooni who were deposed for one act of cruelty or another. There is a reluctance on the part of the informants to name these Ooni and their offences for fear of the repercussion on their family claim to succession.

Another constitutional issue which would appear to have been

entrenched during this period was the practice whereby all the descendants of Lajamisan distributed themselves into all the five principal quarters of Ife-Ihode, Okerewe, Iremo, Ilare and Moore. How this started will be treated when we come to consider the growth of Ife town. Here, we will only note that every part of Ife had a stake in the institution of the Ooniship. This both strengthened and controlled the institution.

When we come to consider the physical expansion of Ile-Ife during the period under consideration, traditions so far collected on each Ooni are very scanty, and in the case of a large number of them, nothing beyond their *Oriki*, not even their real names, are remembered. However, as is generally known in Yoruba culture, *oriki* are encapsulated records of a man's actions, or of his general characteristics. General inferences may, therefore, be made from such *oriki* on each Ooni's action.

It is generally suggested that before Oduduwa's conquest of Ife, there were 13 groups of villages making up the city. Part of the change brought about by Oduduwa was the bringing together of all these villages into one compact town around the *Aafin*. How large the composite town was is difficult to say, but a good guess would be that they were all parts of what is now called Okerewe, Ilare and Iremo quarters of Ife. The repeated practice whereby princes and brave citizens migrated from Ife with large followings probably prevented the two from growing very large quickly. The swampy nature of the town, observed even as late as 1910 when Frobenius visited Ife,⁴⁵ would also be an inhibiting factor to very rapid growth. Arising out of the unsettled conditions in which Ooni Aworokolokin violently disappeared, it would appear that a section of the town was deserted and it reverted to bushland. The traditions also say that Erin, Igbonda, Osunsun and Abere who seduced Moyun, Olofin Aworokolokin's wife, were severally punished and they eventually turned into trees.⁴⁶ Also under Luwo, the population would appear to have shrunk noticeably. Traditions relate that during this reign, the Ife people went to Ara war.⁴⁷ Where this was, what the cause and consequences of the war were, are not clear. What is remembered is that before the soldiers returned, a large number of their relations had been killed on the orders of Luwo, to the extent that the slaves brought from this war virtually became the only inhabitants of the soldiers' family compounds.⁴⁸

The first prince who appears from the traditions to have expanded the town was Olojo Agbele. As we said earlier, he probably never became the Ooni, even though he contested twice. During his second contest,

which occurred after he had founded Ifewara, he brought large numbers of people with him from Ifewara. There were said to have been 1,400 quarterheads, 240 sub-quarter heads and 140 blacksmiths. When their wives and children are added, these would amount to quite a substantial number of people. Ilare, where he first settled was too choking, so he moved to Igbodo, hitherto sparsely populated. Merogijan Owodo is also remembered by the traditions to have left Okerewe to found Ita Ogi in Ireemo. Debooye left More because of lack of space, for Aiyegbaju in Ilode. Luwo is generally remembered for ordering all the streets to be paved with potsherd, thus probably improving the general sanitation.

An important incident in the development of Ife is the establishment of the various shrines. Here again only the significant ones that survived till recently are remembered. The practice immediately after Oduduwa would appear to be to deify all Ooni. Thus Oduduwa, the two Obalufon, Oranmiyan, Aworokolokin, and even the usurper Lajua, were all said to have turned into stone, and they therefore became objects of worship. Some of them such as Oduduwa, Obalufon and Oranmiyan had special groves and special priests assigned to them. They were remembered at specific periods during the year. This has helped tremendously to keep alive their memories. Precisely, those for whom no festivals are held are those whose actions have been almost completely forgotten.

Another development in the growth of Ife town is the establishment of the royal museum, the *Odi-Igbo* and the *Odi Ile*. The former was established after the death of Lajamisan Oseganderuku, who became the first Oba to be physically buried, since the others were reputed to have either turned into stone or to have entered the ground. Lajodogun was the first to be buried inside the *Aafin* and Lafogido was the first to be buried at *Odi Ile* also called Lafogido.

The growth of the economy can only be judged by some of the material remains and a few incidental comments made about certain Oonis. Agriculture was basic and appears to have been successfully pursued since accounts of famine during any reign, from Oduduwa to Akinmoyero in the 1820's, are rare. The kinds of crops planted are not entirely known, but they must have included all the food crops known to the people. The comment by Frobenius early in this century, that the Ife were not noted for farming,⁴⁹ which may have been true at the time of writing, should probably not be taken as a valid statement for all time. After all Lajamisan Oseganderuku's name suggests that he was a successful farmer who became rich and later became the Ooni.

Knowledge of iron has been said to be one of the probable cause of

the success of the Oduduwa group over the Obatala group. It is therefore to be expected that the successors of Oduduwa would continue with their manufacturing of iron and iron implements. That the manufacture of iron was the basis of economic development is evident from the establishment of the shrine of *Ogun Ladin* within the precincts of *Aafin*. *Ogun Ladin* is said in Ife traditions to be the first blacksmith on the earth. There also exists in Ife the known sites of *oko ota* (iron stone sites). Along with the manufacture of iron and iron implements was the manufacture of bronze and bead objects. That this was very highly developed is shown, not only by the knowledge of the lost wax technique which these ancient Ife people practised, but also by the technical excellence of their surviving objects.⁵⁰

The existence of successful industrial output raises the issue of trade. It has been suggested that some of the materials used for manufacturing the art work were not available in the vicinity of Ife and must have been imported. From where they were imported, who the importers were, how large, at times, what were the means of transporting them are issues that a future detailed economic study of Ife would reveal. However, it is probably safe to conclude that long distance trading was one of the consequences of the migrations from Ife, as people from the off-spring kingdoms would keep going backwards and forwards to and from Ife.

In chapter seven below, Robin Horton argues powerfully that such long distance trade towards the northern savanna almost certainly developed around the time of the rise of Ife and contributed to its early strength.⁵¹ The same advantage was however not derived from the other long distance trade across the Atlantic which developed at a much later date.

Indeed, the trans-atlantic slave trade which constituted the greatest international trade for about four centuries, from about the mid-15th century to almost the end of the 19th century, would appear to have been referred to in the traditions only from about 1770 onwards. Even then it was to show the opposition of the authorities to it, as will be clear when we come to talk about Ife's external relations. Inside Ife itself, the mere suspicion that an Ooni was secretly selling human beings led to his deposition.⁵² For contrary to what one commonly sees in history books that slave trade was common everywhere in Africa, there is no evidence that Ife people traded in slaves with their neighbours during this period. Even if they had wanted to, hardly anyone would have consented to buying Ife slaves, for the Yoruba believed that Ife was synonymous with heaven and that all their dead relations went thither after death. Every Ife

citizen was, therefore, held sacred by outsiders, though not necessarily by Ife people themselves. Because of the geographical position of Ife, cut off as it were, from direct external contact, either from the sea or from across the desert, and surrounded entirely by other Yoruba speaking peoples who discouraged foreigners prying into what was regarded as their collective secret, Ife was not quickly affected by the economic revolution brought about by the European slave trade. However, from about the last quarter of the 18th century onwards, Ife, as well as the rest of Yorubaland, became increasingly drawn into the disruptive consequences of the slave trade.

That story properly belongs to the history of Ife's relations with the other Yoruba and Yoruba-related kingdoms. One of the great themes in Ife history is the apparently unending series of migrations from Ife to the other Yoruba kingdoms. It is this, more than any other single historical theme, that constituted and still constitutes the importance of Ife in Yoruba history. The most important event after the Oduduwa conquest of Ife and his re-organization of the administration, was the migration of a large number of his children and other followers to all the other kingdoms of *Ubinì Oghene* (i.e. the land of Oghene). They conquered some formerly existing kingdoms, established new ones and organized all of them after Oduduwa's model at Ife. Traditions about this process are many and are found every where in Yorubaland. It would appear that the earliest migration was organized and orderly, as the migrants were said to have been commissioned in batches by Oduduwa and later to have met at Ita Ijero, where they agreed on a number of issues, particularly those about their future relationship with Ife and their future contact with one another. In spite of the neatness and near uniformity of the traditional accounts, it is improbable that the migration, even of the first batch took place simultaneously. It is more probable that various post - Oduduwa Yoruba kingdoms were founded at different times, some before Oduduwa's death, but many more after his death. We will only become surer when detailed researches have been completed on the foundation of the kingdoms. Certainly, the impressions which the traditions give that the foundation of the post-Oduduwa kingdoms was peaceful, have in a number of studies been shown to be a simplification of what must have been a very complex military affair.⁵³ Twenty five kingdoms are said to have resulted from the earliest migrations including those in modern Ghana and Benin Republic.⁵⁴

The migrations from Ife did not stop after Oduduwa's death, although the volume may have drastically reduced. Tradition relates that

Ejigimogun, who was driven away from the throne by Oranmiyan, went to Ilara, and it was from there he came back to rule after Oranmiyan's death. As we noted before, it is not clear where this Ilara was or, indeed, whether it was Ilara (in Ife) or Ilara (which would be in Ekiti). The presumption is that he went to the latter.⁵⁵ It is probable that when he finally returned to Ife, he left behind some people who continued to maintain their relationship with Ife, steady streams of migration (from Ife) by post-Oduduwa Ife may have been responsible for some of the other later kingdoms claiming to have migrated from Ife.⁵⁶ As time passed, kingdoms that derived from those of primary migrations came to claim primary direct migrations themselves.

Oranmiyan's exploits in Benin and Oyo, which laid the foundation of the relationship between the three kingdoms (Ife, Benin and Oyo) probably typifies the nature of the Oduduwa migration. In spite of the large volumes of traditions on Oranmiyan, the outlines of his biography are not yet clear. It would however appear that he was a military leader who led armies of conquest to Benin and later to Oyo Ile and, who succeeded in founding a dynasty in each of the two places.⁵⁷ He is himself said to have finally reigned and died in Ife. The internal constitutional confusion inside Ife, after Oranmiyan, may or may not have aided migration, but we have no conclusive information.

Nevertheless, after Lajamisan had settled, the city of Ife had excess population. During or soon after the reign of Otujabiojo, a grandson of Lajamisan, Ogboru, then a prince, led some followers to Ife-Odan. He returned from there to reign at Ife and, when he was deposed, he went back and died at Ife-Odan.⁵⁸ At about the same time, Olojo Agbele, Ogboru's brother went to found Ifewara. He was also invited from Ifewara to ascend the throne, though it would appear that he did not succeed in the end.⁵⁹ If the number of people who were said to have accompanied him when he returned from Ifewara on his bid for the throne is anything to go by, then he must have taken away a large number of people in the first instance.

The practice also became common for people from various quarters in Ile-Ife to band together and found or conquer new kingdoms in which they would replicate Oduduwa traditions. We are not likely to know the number of such kingdoms but traditions from certain towns in Egbado claim they migrated from Ilode quarters, just as the Remo section of Ijebu say they came from Irewo quarters in Ife. Migration was obviously a continuous process, for traditions relate that during the reign of Osinlade Otutubiosun, Apimo, later called Apomu was founded,

Gbongan became populated and Ikire was constituted into a small village by the installation of Kuje also known as Kujenbola, as the ruler.⁶⁰ All these events can be fairly confidently dated to the decade 1770 to 1780.

The nature of the relationship between Ife and these towns founded from Ife is one that modern political language has rendered difficult to explain. For to understand it, we must completely divest our minds of modern concepts of state, the nature of power and authority, imperial formations, and so on. Certainly, what emerged was not an empire as we would now understand it. For even if there were wars of conquest in the new places of abode of the migrants, the wars were in the nature of separate adventures by each group rather than that co-ordinated by an imperial war general.

What held the new territories to Ife arose from the prevailing religious-philosophical world-view. The two concepts that mostly explained the position of Ife were, first, that of *Orirun* and, second, that of the ebi. In Yoruba, *Orirun* is the source of life and the ultimate repository of the departed spirit. It is therefore a place that must be constantly tended and preserved if one's source of life and the final resting place after death was not to be polluted. Ife was accepted as the *Orirun* Yoruba and every Yoruba person had for it awe and respect. Indeed, until recently there were elderly people who still believed that if they came to Ile-Ife, they would meet their dead ancestors.⁶¹ The second concept, that of ebi arose out of the historical circumstances of the post-Oduduwa migration. Because those who left accepted to be brothers and because they had left their father, Oduduwa, at home, Ife came to be seen as the seat of the father, and all the other kingdoms as the abode of the children. In the period immediately following Oduduwa's death, there are indirect references to some of these migrating "children" coming back to Ife to put certain "family" things right before going back to their territories.⁶² Over time, the person occupying the throne of Oduduwa came to be regarded as "father" and the successors of the original migrating princes as "sons", thus giving Ile-Ife the status of a headquarters. Even where direct descent from Oduduwa of a successor came to be questioned,⁶³ the "father - son" concept appears to have been retained for a remarkably long time. The rights and obligations of each of the component kingdoms were known to the rulers and they centred around mutual provision of sacrificial materials for the repose of the spirit of the ancestors, and the common performance of burial and post-burial rites.

There are references to a few wars fought by Ife soldiers in the period

before the end of the eighteenth century, but no details are yet known. There is a reference in the traditions to a war fought by Otata, an Ooni who reigned after Ogboru.⁶⁴ What the war was about, where it was fought and its consequences are still obscure. Indeed, it is not known whether it was only a civil war, which is not improbable, given the confusion that followed the deposition of Ogboru. Equally obscure was the Ara war said to have been fought during the reign of Luwo. Where Ara was and what the causes of the war were are not yet clear. Tradition only relates, as has already been pointed out, that while the warriors were away, Luwo virtually depopulated the town by killing off all the old men, women and those too weak to go to war. Captives brought from the war later re-populated the town. Laroka, probably Luwo's predecessor, who had built a wall round the town, may have been afraid of the danger that Luwo tackled, and Giesi who reigned after Luwo, strengthened the defence by creating a thick forest belt of *Ire* trees between the town wall and the city.⁶⁵ How soon the danger abated is not known for there was no reference made to war during the reigns of Debooye, another female Ooni, and Sojuolu, both of whom probably came immediately after Giesi.⁶⁶ Since no tradition has yet been collected about the next fifteen Ooni, it is not known what the political developments were during that period.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, we find Ife again becoming intimately involved in the stirring events that formed the prelude to the nineteenth century history of Yorubaland. Then Osinlade Otutubisoun (also called Otutu) was on the throne. His reign would appear to have spanned that of Alafin Majeogbe and the beginning of Abiodun's. Ife tradition recounts that it was Otutu together with Majeogbe and the Awujale of Ijebu-Ode that established the Apomu market to settle a rift started by Majeogbe who had been illegally trading in human beings. Each of the three kings planted a tree and ostensibly named the place Apimo, meaning, "We decide together"⁶⁷ Ife traditions indicate that Majeogbe died before the issues were finally resolved. Indeed, the issues raised during those years were not settled for another one hundred years. Nor can we go into the details here except to note that by the end of the eighteenth century, history appears to have gone full circle. The whole system which gave Ile-Ife its immunity from external attack was seriously called into question. Alafin Awole unsuccessfully attempted an invasion of Ife territory⁶⁸ Olowu Akinjobi actually invaded and got within ten miles of Ile-Ife before he stopped⁶⁹ Ife, which had for centuries, perhaps, since Lajamisan's reign, become a

demilitarized Holy City, had no answer and its attempt at hurriedly collecting an army together ended in disaster. In the end, what finally preserved Ile-Ife was its accepted position as Yoruba. That story belongs to the nineteenth century and will be treated in another chapter.

APPENDIX 1A

PALACE LIST

The names of the successors of Oduduwa on the stool of Ife.

1	Oduduwa (founder)	25	Giesi
2	Obalufon	26	Aroganganlagbo
3	Obalufon 2	27	Aribiwofo
4	Oranmiyan Akinorun	28	Arirereokinwe
5	Obalufon (Recalled) 2nd reign	29	Sojuolu Ogbonoogbonde
6	Aworokolokin	30	Olojo-Agbele
7	Efon/Aiyeoke/Efon jojo	31	Agbedegbede
8	Ekun Ajimuda	32	Jifadesire
9	Lajamisan	33	Ajilaorun
10	Oseganderuku	34	Otutu bi Osun
11	Otuja bi Ojo	35	Ojigidiri
12	Oye	36	Akinmorero
13	Laroka	37	Gbanlare
14	Owodo	38	Gbegbaje
15	Otata	39	Wunmonije
16	Luwo - Gbagida (Female Oon)	40	Degunle Abewela
17	Ladejogun	41	Degbin Kunbusu 1849-78
18	Otunku	42	Oraigba Ojaja 1878-80
19	Okuku	43	Derin Ologbenla-elect
20	Lafogido	44	Adelekan Olubuse 1894-1910
21	Dejinle	45	Kola (elect) 1910 (2 months)
22	Kapeleke	46	Ademiluyi 1910-1930
23	Osinkola	47	Aderemi 1930-1980
24	Ogboru		

APPENDIX 1B

1	Odua	26	Lapeleke
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2	Ogbogbodirin	27	Giesi
3	Alaiyemore	28	Arirereokinwe
4	Oranmiyan	29	Sojuolu-Ogbonsegbonde
5	Aworokolokin	30	Latise
6	Efonpanitapanitore	31	Aribiwofo
7	Lajamisan	32	Dejinle
8	Oseganderuku	33	Jifadesire
9	Ladejogun	34	Debooye
10	Lafogido	35	Ajilaorun
11	Otujabiojo	36	Ojigidiri
12	Gbegbaje	37	Lugbade
13	Agbele	38	Gbanlare
14	Ogboru	39	Akinmoyero Odunle
15	Oye	40	Wunmonije
16	Otata	41	Degunle Abewela
17	Merogijan Owode	42	Degbin-Kumbusu
18	Ekin	43	Oraigba-Ojaja
19	Luwo	44	Derin-Ologbenla (Oni-Elect)
20	Laroka	45	Delekan-Olubuse
21	Osinlade-Otutubiosun	46	Kola (Oni-Elect)
22	Osinkola	47	Ademiluyi Agunloyebioyinbo
23	Okinkin	48	Sir Adesoji Aderemi
24	Okuku		(K.B.E..C.M.G.)
25	Aroganganlagbo		

APPENDIX 1C

Ife King List - According to Eluyemi

1	Oduduwa	26	Osinkola
2	Osangangan Obamakin	27	Omogbogbo
3	Ogun	28	Ajila
4	Oranmiyan	29	Adejinle
5	Obalufon	30	Olojo
6	Oranmiyan	31	Okiti
7	Aiyetise	32	Lugbade
8	Lajamisan	33	Aribiwofo
9	Lajodogun	34	Osinlade
10	Lafogido	35	Adagba
11	Odidirogbesin	36	Ojigidiri (Lambua)

12	Ekun	37	Akinmoyero (1770-1800)
13	Ajimuda-Efon	38	Gbanlare (1800-1823)
14	Gboo-Nijio	39	Wunmonije (1835-1839)
15	Okunlajosin	40	Adegunle Abewela (1839-1849)
16	Adegbalu	41	Degbinsokun (1844-1873)
17	Ogboru	42	Orayigba (1878-1880)
18	Giesi	43	Derin Ologbenla (1880-1894)
19	Luwo	44	Adelekan (Olubuse I) 1894-1910
20	Lumobi	45	Adekola (1910-1910)
21	Agedegbede	46	Ademiluyi (Ajagun 1910-1930)
22	Ojee-Lokunbirin	47	Adesoji Aderemi (1930-1980)
23	Lagunja	48	Sijuwade (Olubuse II) 1980)
24	Larunka		
25	Ademilu		

APPENDIX 1D

Ife King List as Reconstructed by the Present Author

(a) Kings with extant tradition arranged in probable order of succession.

- 1 Oduduwa
- 2 Obalufon Ogbogboinrin/Olomomopeaye/Osangangan Obamakin
- 3 Obalufon Ejijimogun (or Ejigimogun) Obalufe Onigbomore (or Alayemore) deposed by
- 4 Oranmiyan
- 5 Obalufon Ejijimogun's return
- 6 Olofin Aworokolokin
- 7 Lajua (usurper)
- 8 Ladere Ajimuda, Efonpanita panitore, Efon jeun firu J'ara.
- 9 Ilajamisan/Oseganderuku
- 10 Ladejogun (also called Lajodogun)
- 11 Lafogido
- 12 Otujabiojo Okunlajosin
- 13 Merogijan Owodo
- 14 Ogboru
- 15 Oye) May be the same person
- 16 Otata)
- 17 Lamoro, Ogijan, Okukuyeu Ilode

- 18 Ekun Ayiwoye
 - 19 Laruka (or Laroka) son of Desite Moropo Gbogbo-ewa, daughter of Ogboru.
 - 20 Luwo (female)
 - 21 Giesi
- (b) Kings about whom no tradition has yet been collected; their order of succession is uncertain.
- 22 Adejinle
 - 23 Lapeleki
 - 24 Osinkola
 - 25 Aroganganlogbo/Aribiwozo
 - 26 Arirereokinwe
 - 27 Jifadesire
 - 28 Ajilaoorun
 - 29 Latisè
 - 30 Lughade
 - 31 Okinkin
 - 32 Otunku
 - 33 Ademilu
 - 34 Agbedegbede
- (c) Kings from late 18th century arranged in order of succession
- 35 Osinlade Otutubiosun (Late 1770's)
 - 36 Ojigidiri Lambua
 - 37 Akinmoyero Odunlebiojo
 - 38 Gbanlare
 - 39 Gbegbaaje
 - 40 Wunmonije (Wunmonijepagun)
 - 41 Adegunle Abewela (d. 1849)
 - 42 Degbin Kumbusu 1850-1877
 - 43 Orayigba Ojaja (also called Ayikiti) (1878)
 - 44 Derin Ologbenla 1878-1893 (not crowned)
 - 45 Adelekan Olubuse 1893-1910
 - 46 Kola (1910 died at Ilofi)
 - 47 Ademiluyi Ajagun Agunloyebioyinbo 1910-1930
 - 48 Adesoji Aderemi 1930-1980
 - 49 Sijuwade Olubuse II 1980-

NOTES

- 1 Many Ife traditions about Oduduwa and Moremi are quite explicit on this issue. *O. Eluyemi, Oba Adesoji Aderemi: 50 years in the History of Ife*, 1980 p. 21 mentions the thirteen villages before Oduduwa; I.A. Akinjogbin, "Yorubaland before Oduduwa" Department of History Seminar, Univ.of Ife, 1981.
- 2 See Appendix 1D, and compare it with Appendix 1A, 1B and 1C.
- 3 Fabunmi Papers.
- 4 IPR. Fabunmi Papers; Ogun who was listed by Eluyemi as an Ooni after Obalufon Ogbogbodirin, was probably never an Ooni, but ended as the most renowned of Oduduwa's generals.
- 5 *O. Eluyemi, Oba Adesoji Aderemi*, p.41.
- 6 Ife Palace Records. This should probably be seen as an attempt by the pre-Oduduwa rulers (the sons of Oranfe) to make a bid for power after Oduduwa's death.
- 7 IPR: An *Agbe* could be anything between four and six gallons. (16-24 litres).
- 8 The Ife saying *Itubu Ijugbe f' oju jo aro ko jeki Obun re aso* (The pond Otubu at Ijugbe resembles a dye concoction but would not allow a piece of cloth to be dyed in it) recalls the normal colour of the lake. See also IPR.
- 9 Exactly where this place was is not certain. If the name is pronounced Ilara, then it was within Ile-Ife situated between what is now Irewo and Obalufon Road, after the PWD yard. If it is pronounced Ilara, then it was in Ekiti. This latter version would appear to be accepted by the Ilara in Ekiti who trace their connection with Ife to this reign.
- 10 The Oyo traditions have been collected by S. O. Babayemi but not the Ife ones. See S.O. Babayemi, "The Myths of Oranmiyan" M.A. Thesis, Univ. of Birmingham

- 11 Ife Palace Records: Fabunmi Papers.
- 12 Oranmiyan was said in the traditions to have stayed in Oyo for 120 years during which Obalufon Ogbogbodirin continued to reign in Ife. Ejigimogun is said to have stayed in Ilara for 130 years, during which Oranmiyan reigned in Ife after returning from Oyo. Ejigimogun is said to have reigned for 240 years) so between them these three were said to cover 490 yrs!
- 13 IPR
- 14 IPR
- 15 IFR
- 16 All the oral sources in Ife are agreed on this, including IPR, Fabunmi Papers. The intelligence report compiled by the late Sir Adesoji Aderemi, the Ooni of Ife 1930-1980. The only one exception, Oseganderuku, was probably Lajamisan's *Oriki*.
- 17 O. Eluyemi, *Oba Adesoji Aderemi*, p.4.
- 18 IPR
- 19 L. Frobenius: *The Voice of Africa* Vol. 1, London and New York: B. Block, 1968 p. 285.
- 20 Oba Adesoji Aderemi: "Short History of Ife" (Manuscript) 1932
- 21 R. O. Oladipo "Chieftaincy system in Ile-Ife" B.A. (Hons)Essay, Ife, 1981 p. 37.
- 22 See Appendix 1A & 1B
- 23 All Ife Oral sources, including IPR, Fabunmi Papers, are agreed on this.
- 24 *Odi-Igbo* is the father of the two royal burial grounds. It is situated near Ilode quarters, behind the present St. John's Grammar School. The second is called *Odi-Ile*, or *Lafogido*.

- 25 M. A. Fabunmi: Ife Shrines.
- 26 Oba A. Aderemi, "A Short History of Ife" (Manuscript)
- 27 Fabunmi Papers
- 28 IPR
- 29 O. Eluyemi, *Oba Adesoji Aderemi* p. 41
- 30 IPR
- 31 IPR. See also APPENDIX. 1B
- 32 IPR
- 33 Fabunmi Papers
- 34 Fabunmi Papers
- 35 Fabunmi Papers
- 36 IPR and Fabunmi Papers
- 37 IPR
- 38 IPR
- 39 Fabunmi Papers IPR
- 40 For their names, see Appendix 1D
- 41 Fabunmi Papers IPR
- 42 IPR, Fabunmi Papers. See also F. Willet, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*: London: Thames & Hundson 1967 p. 104.
- 43 IPR, Fabunmi Papers
- 44 See Appendix 1D

- 45 L. Frobenius, *Voice of Africa*. Vol. 1, p. 268.
- 46 IPR
- 47 IPR
- 48 IPR; This is said to be the origin of the Yoruba greeting "Ara ile re nko? (How are the Ara people in your compound) Now the greeting is understood to mean "how fare your relations?"
- 49 Frobenius, *Voice of Africa* Vol. 1, p.59
- 50 F. Willet, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, Thames & Hudson, 1967, pp. 51, 56, 101.
- 51 R. Horton, "Ancient Ife: A Reassessment" JHSN 9 vol. 9 No. 4, June 1979, pp. 69-150.
- 52 The deposition and death of Ooni Akinmoyero Odunle, was said to have been caused by his dealing secretary in slaves. This is enshrined in the song. *Akinmoyero oran ti o da, ko l'elebe* (Akinmoyero, no one can plead for your crime).
- 53 H. U. Beier, "Before oduduwa" in *Odu: Journal of Yoruba and Related Studies* No. 3 n.d. p. 25; Olomola: "The Eastern Yoruba Country before Oduduwa, a Reassessment" in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Yoruba Civilization* vol. 1, 1976 pp. 34-37; I.A.Akinjogbin, "Yorubaland before Oduduwa" in Seminar Papers Dept. of History, Univ. of Ife, 1981, pp. 89-121.
- 54 IPR
- 55 Oral traditions in Ilara (Ekiti) date the foundation of the town to Obalufon who came from Ife.
- 56 One feature of oral traditions about the foundation of Yoruba kingdoms is that most of them claim to have migrated directly from Ife.
- 57 Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*, pp. 10-11, J.U. Egharevba, *A short History of Benin*.
- 58 O. Eluyemi, *Oba Adesoji Aderemi* p. 15; IPR; Fabunmi Papers.

- 59 IPR; Fabunmi Papers.
- 60 IPR: Traditions collected in Ikiri by the author in 1959 confirmed that Kujembola was the first Akire.
- 61 In 1959, when the present author was collecting oral traditions in Ila Orangun, an old woman being interviewed was awestruck when I declared that I had come from Ife that day. It sounded to her as if someone had come from heaven.
- 62 J. B. Abiola, *Iwe Itan Ilesa* (n.d.) pp. 23-24
- 63 I. A. Akinjogbin and E.A.Ayandele "Yorubaland up to 1800" *Groundwork of Nigeria History* (ed. o. Ikime) pp. 131-133.
- 64 IPR
- 65 There is the saying in Ife that *Laroka mo odi, Giesi fi ire gba a lese* (Laroka built that defensive wall, Giesi strengthened the base with Ire trees.)
- 66 IPR: See Appendix 1D
- 67 IPR
- 68 S. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, pp. 188-189; I.A. Akinjobin, *Dahomey and its Neighbours* C.U.P. 1967 pp. 176-177.
- 69 S. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas* pp. 206-207.

CHAPTER 7

THE ECONOMY OF IFE C. A. D. 900 - C. A. D. 1700

Robin Horton

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I shall try to trace the economic life of Ife through two crucial phases of the city's history: the first, the phase of its rise as a powerful centralized state and; the second the phase of its military and political decline.

Two types of source material - archaeological data and oral- traditions are of particular importance in relation to this task. As regards the former, we have material both from Ife itself and from neighbouring sites such as Owo and Benin. This material is quite sparse owing to the exigent standards of the archaeologists themselves. However, given the close association between material artefacts and economic life, the little of it we have is probably more informative on economics than it is on other aspects of social life, such as politics, religion and art.² As regards oral traditions, they are of course in far freer supply than archaeological data. Although what they have to tell us about economic life is minuscule in comparison with what they have to tell us about government and politics, the little we get from them on this aspect of life may well be much more valuable than the huge quantities of purported information we get from them on the political aspect. If our general knowledge of factors influencing oral tradition is anything to go by, centuries of political infighting and outfighting may well have twisted and distorted much of what has been passed down regarding the governmental and the political, whilst leaving what has been passed down on economics comparatively untouched. In both cases, then, what we lack as regards quantity may be compensated for by reliability.

A third type of source material, written documentation, is, as far as we know, quite absent for Ife itself during this period of its history. From about 1500 onward, however, written reports, albeit fragmentary, became available for such neighbouring states as Benin, Oyo and Ijebu-Ode.³ Although there are very few references in them to Ife, what they tell us about developments in the economics of these neighbouring states helps us to have a better understanding of what archaeology and oral tradition tell us about economic change in Ife itself.

The optimistic tone of what I have just said about sources notwithstanding, I must remind the reader that, in relation to the magnitude and importance of the task at hand, the materials currently available are really very scanty. In the circumstance, any attempt to write a detailed account of economic change in Ife on the period chosen must inevitably result in a high proportion of speculative hypothesis to established fact. Nonetheless, given the present state of research into the Ife past, I am in favour of an approach which errs on the side of speculative boldness rather than on that of empiricist caution. I strongly believe that the relevant archaeological and oral narrative materials discovered so far are nothing if compared with those that await a determined quest. I also believe that the best way to stimulate and sustain such a quest is by means of narrative hypotheses which, although they are consistent with the available data, out run them at many points and provide a plethora of testable predictions about future findings in the spheres of both archaeology and oral narrative. It is such an hypothesis that I try to provide in the body of this chapter.

In what follows, I shall suggest that the economy went through two phases in the period under review: a phase of growth and diversification, lasting from c.A.D. 900 - c.A.D. 1500, followed by a phase of decline from c. 1500 onward. As the reader will notice, the time span of these two phases coincides with those that had been postulated for the rise and decline of Ife as a powerful centralized state and a glittering cultural centre. I shall also go on to suggest that it was growth and decline on the economic plane that produced growth and decline on the political and cultural planes. Some scholars may well turn up their noses at the strong smell of techno-economic determinism that escapes at this point - particularly since Ife has generally been thought of more as a spiritual centre than as a commercial entrepot. However, I shall not apologize for the smell! In the past, too much of what had been said or written about the city had completely neglected the economic aspect. Hence overemphasis in the opposite direction is healthy. In any case, in a composite volume such as this, other authors will certainly restore any imbalance by arguing for other kinds of determinism. In the end, the reader can take his pick or strike his own balance.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION: c.A.D.900 - c.A.D.1500

In dealing with the first of our two phases, it seems useful to think in terms of three main sectors of the economy: the agricultural, the com-

mercial and the manufacturing. Of these three sectors, the agricultural was probably the first to develop and it undoubtedly remained important throughout the period under review.

As Ozanne pointed out some years ago in a short but thought-provoking report on a preliminary archaeological survey of the city, certain characteristics of the immediate geographical environment of early Ife were highly conducive to agriculture (Ozanne, 1969). Lying in a high bowl surrounded by hills, but also forming a water-shed for several rivers that flowed out through gaps, Ife lands were once better protected than most from the erosion that threatens when forest cover is stripped off and at the same time reasonably well drained. Again, out of the rainy season, these lands benefitted from the moisture of fogs and clouds which condensed on the hills and drained into the bowl. Yet again, the lands got first benefit from the nutrient substances washed down from the hills as the result of the weathering process. Such characteristics would have given the Ife environs a more-than-average potential for agricultural productivity. That this considerable potential was actualized at an early date is clear from both narrative and cultural data.⁴

One piece of evidence pointing in this direction is the tradition referring to Orisateko, one of the more important of the indigenous heroes whom Oduduwa had to subdue before he could secure his authority over Ife. Orisateko literally means "Orisa that established farming" and tradition relates that it was this Orisa who brought yam from heaven for planting on earth. It maintains that he first brought *ewura* yams (*Dioscorea alata*). However, when people complained that these yams were too soft and did not fill their stomachs, he went back to heaven and this time returned with *ako isu* (*Dioscorea cyenensis* and *D. rotundata*).⁵ Since claims to have pioneered that early domestication of yams are by no means confined to Ife, we shall do well to be cautious in accepting this tradition at its face value.⁶ Nonetheless, the attribution of these exploits to one of the indigenous heroes suggests that yam farming was already well established by the time of the founding of the Oduduwa dynasty.

Another piece of evidence suggestive of early agricultural prowess is to be found in the title of Obagede (King of Plantains). Although tradition does not claim that the original holder of this title was the pioneer of plantain cultivation, the title does imply that he was noted for his unrivalled skill in the cultivation of this crop. The fact that a man could be given such a title indicates the importance attached by the community to plantain cultivation. And once again, both the tradition of the title's ori-

gin and the morphology of the word itself suggest a pre-Oduduwa origin.

Other important crop plants whose cultivation would appear to date back to very early times include *Obi abata* (*cola acuminata*), *orogbo*, (*Garcinia kola*), *ope* (*Elaeis guineensis*), (*Igi ogoro Raphia vinifera*). The two kola fruits, *abata* and *orogbo*, are essential elements in such time-honoured ritual and ceremonial occasions as the worship and consultation of the various Orisa, the naming of new-born babies and the burial of the dead. The *ope* (oil-palm) nut plays an essential part in the rituals of Ifa divination. Given the probable antiquity of these institutions in Ife culture, the role played in them by the above-mentioned fruits would seem to indicate a similar antiquity for the latter's use by the people of Ife.

More evidence of the antiquity of palm-produce exploitation comes from the various stories of the role played by palm wine in Oduduwa's subjugation of the Ife indigenes. Thus, there is the tradition, recounted earlier, of how Oduduwa got the better of Obatala, leader of the indigenes, by seizing the paraphernalia of authority (*apo ase*) from him whilst he was asleep after getting drunk on palm-wine.⁷ Again, there is the tradition of how Oranmiyan, although outnumbered by the indigenes, bested them by pouring vast quantities of palm-wine into the Otubu Lake, and setting upon them after they had drunk of the waters and fallen into a stupor.

There is much, both in oral narrative and in cultural evidence, to suggest that even after the establishment of the Oduduwa dynasty, the rulers of Ife continued to pay a great deal of attention to agriculture. Thus, there is the continuation of the ancient, pre-Oduduwa cult of Orisateko, and there are the New Yam Festivals of *Egbodo Ooni* and *Egbodo Erio*, both held in May of each year. Again, there are the traditions which recount the agricultural prowess of some early members of the dynasty. Notable in this context is Lajamisan, who is usually placed in the seventh, eighth or ninth position in the Oduduwa king list, and from whom all subsequent Ooni are agreed to have descended. Lajamisan's *oriki* (praise-name) is Oseganderuku, literally, "He reduces a thick jungle to an open space" It seems reasonable to suppose that this *oriki* refers to his excellence and success as a farmer. The traditions, moreover, seem to hint that it was partly his success in this sphere that enabled him to win the Ooni's crown.⁸

The early development of agriculture in Ife would have had two important consequences. First, it would have facilitated the growth of a large population. Second, it would have yielded a surplus for the mainte-

nance of a large cadre of non-agricultural personnel.

Turning to the importance of the commercial sector of the economy during the A.D. 900-1500 phase, I take as my starting point a seminal note published some years ago by Thurstan Shaw (1973). Shaw draws attention to the fact that, almost due south of the eastward bend in the Niger below Bussa (referred to hereafter as "the Bend", there is a marked northward bulge in the forest. And the site of Ife lies in the middle of this bulge. The implication of this is two fold. First, for long-distance traders coming down from the north and interested in extracting the products of the forest, a route due south from the Bend, terminating in or near Ife, would have represented the shortest overland path for the accomplishment of their purposes. (The configuration of river and forest margin is such that the traders could not have found a shorter overland route unless they had gone a hundred miles further downstream. And had they done that, they would no longer have entered the middle of the main block of forest to the west of the Niger Delta). Second, for forest entrepreneurs interested in a collecting point for the characteristic products of their zone, and one which would facilitate the onward dispatch of these products to the northern savannas, Ife, in its position at the apex of the forest, would have been an ideal site.

To supplement Shaw's suggestion, let me add that a route, more or less due south from the bend, passing through or near Ife, would also have been the shortest overland route from the Bend to the sea-board. (Here again, the configuration of river and coast is such that traders would have had to travel about one hundred and fifty miles further downstream before the overland route got any shorter, and about two hundred miles further downstream before reaching the sea-board by the river route.)

As a further supplement to Shaw, let me remind the reader of what was said earlier about the probable early agricultural prowess of Ife; for any centre aspiring to commercial importance needs a locally generated food surplus to maintain the entrepreneurially active component of its population.

In short, by virtue, both of its position in the region and of its local agricultural resources, Ife was an excellent site for a major commercial centre.

As in the case of agriculture, however, we cannot be contented with arguments as to the city's potential. We also need evidence that this potential was actualized. I think there are four small but significant clues which suggest that it was so actualized.

The first of these clues, appropriately enough, comes from the corpus of Ifa divination poetry. In one of the few poems that allude to the more mundane occupations of the eponymous dynastic founder, we find him described as a trader whose wealth was derived from the export of kola nuts, and who brought numerous horses into Yorubaland in return.⁹ Though it would almost certainly be a mistake to take this poem literally, it does give us a strong hint as to what the main economic prop of the early Ife state may have been: i.e. a long-distance commerce in which forest products were taken northward and savanna products brought south.

The second clue comes from the oral traditions of Ipetumodu, a small town lying to the immediate north-west of Ife itself. One of the more widely accepted traditions of the town's origin suggests that it was founded by Akalako, one of Oduduwa's followers, who was sent to the place by his leader, to guard *Igbodo Nla* ("The Greater Gate" which opened to the north, and to collect tolls from traders entering and leaving Ife through it. A dissenting version says that Akalako was a hunter who originally hailed from the more northerly town of Iwere, but later settled at a site just outside Ife, on the route frequented by traders passing between Ife and Iwo. These traders usually slept in front of his shelter when they arrived at this spot in the night. Eventually, Akalako married one of them, who was a daughter of the Ooni of Ife.¹⁰ Although the two versions differ over the origins of Akalako, both seem to concur that his settlement was sited on an important trade-route linking Ife and the north.

A third clue comes from oral traditions regarding the foundation of the Oyo town of Ede. One such tradition, recorded at Oyo by Johnson, tells us that Ede was founded in the reign of an early Alaafin in order to protect an important north-south trade route. According to the tradition, Oyo traders took goods down to the market at Apomu, where they met Ijebu traders who had brought other goods up from the south.¹¹ This tradition receives support from another very similar one recorded by a local historian of Ede (Olunlade, 1961:9-10). It is particularly important to us, since Apomu lay in Ife territory, and was perhaps the principal Ife market.

A fourth clue comes from the siting and early commercial importance of Ijebu-Ode, which was already flourishing at the time of the first Portuguese visits.¹² If we think in terms of a lagoon trade alone, there seems no reason why a town at this particular site should have attained such remarkable prosperity. However, if we suppose that Ijebu-Ode

stood on a T-junction at which the central trade-route alluded to by the traditions just recounted met an east-west lagoon, then its early prosperity becomes instantly comprehensible.

Separately, none of these four clues is compelling. Together, however, they are powerfully suggestive of an early central trade route running from the Niger Bend in the North to the Ijebu water-side in the south, through Ife territory.

Having established the likely existence of such a route, we may now turn to the question of its wider connections.

At its southern end, as I have just proposed, the central trade route would have joined an east-west lagoon route. There is now little doubt about the early existence and importance of this latter. As Fage has pointed out, a good deal of the initial European trade between the "Benin" watersides and the Gold Coast was in all probability the continuation of a prior indigenous trade (Fage, 1962). Again, as Alagoa has shown, a large and circumstantial body of Ijo oral tradition points to the importance of early trade between these same watersides and the Niger Delta (Alagoa, 1970; 1922:25-55). The historicity of this body of tradition is confirmed by the existence of some striking cultural links. Thus, several Ijebu towns still treasure the institution of Ekine, the eastern Delta water-spirit masquerading society, singing its songs to this day in a language which appears to be a degenerate form of Ijo.¹³

At its northern end, our central route would have connected up with one or more routes leading to the high savannas. Here, a number of clues point to the probable early importance of a route running north-westward up the Niger into Songhai country. Thus there is the intriguing reference in the *Tarikh al-Fattach* to trade in Kola nuts between Borgu and Timbuctu.¹⁴ There is the fact that the Dendi long-distance traders associated with the Borgu states were Songhai-speakers.¹⁵ And there are cultural affinities such as that between the north-west Yoruba cult of Sango and the Songhai cult of Dongo (Rouch 1960, 11 and 150). None of these clues, it is true, serves to establish unambiguously that this route was flourishing as far back as the 10th century A.D., - i.e., the time of the rise of Ife. However, we do know that the ancient Songhai commercial capital of Gao was flourishing by the 9th century, both as a terminus of the trans-saharan trade and as a centre of riverine trade (Levtzion, 1976:135-137). So it seems likely that traders would have been active along the route in question by this time or shortly afterward. As regards the better documented and better-known route linking the Bend with Gonja to the west and Hausaland and Borno to the north-east, the bal-

ance of the evidence seems to indicate that it was not developed until after the rise of Ife.¹⁶

In assessing the importance of our postulated central trade route, we have to visualize it, not just as a route linking the Yoruba seaboard and forest with the Yoruba savanna, but as a bridge between two much larger trading networks (Figure One).

So much for our route and its wider connections. What about the goods that might have passed along it? Two such items have already appeared in our discussion: the kola nut and the horse.

As I said earlier, even if we do not take the Ife poem about Olofin and his kola tree literally, there is no reason to doubt its broad historicity. Indeed, a recent re-appraisal of the character of the kola nut trade in the eastern Guinea area would seem to have added to its plausibility. For long, the received opinion regarding the kola trade in this area was (a) that the principal route started in Kumasi to the west, and ran through via the Bend to Hausaland and Borno in the north-east; and (b) that one of the items which travelled the route was the *Cola nitida* nut found until recently only in the western block of the Guinea Forest. According to this received view, the peoples of the eastern forest block were, by implication, excluded from the trade. Recently, however, Agiri has pointed to evidence that the nut produced in the eastern forest block, *Cola acuminata* (Yoruba *abata*), also formed the basis of an important trade with the savannas. Although most of the evidence available at present consists of 19th century reports of Yoruba traders selling the *acuminata* nut at markets on the Niger for onward dispatch to the north, there seems no reason to doubt the antiquity of this trade (Agiri 1975).

What of the horse mentioned in the Ifa poem? Here, received opinion remains discouraging; for it associates the importation of horses into the area south of the Bend with the formation of the Oyo cavalry in the 16th century, and treats such importation as a development confined, in any case, to the savanna. However, there are now a number of indications that received opinion may be mistaken in this matter as well. Thus, the presence of a horse's head amongst the motifs of the Igbo-Ukwu brasses suggests that the horse may have been familiar to some peoples of the eastern Guinea Forest as early as the 10th century A.D. (Shaw, 1970). Again, it should be remembered that the Bini royal court made use of the horse as a prestige symbol and, perhaps, as an instrument of communication from early times, and oral tradition as recounted by Egharevba credits its introduction to Oranmiyan, the Ife prince who is supposed to have founded the present Benin royal dynasty (Egharevba, 1960:7).

In assessing the significance of these clues, we should remember two things. First, that stables in the centre of a large urban settlement could well have provided a tsetse-free environment. Second, that even if we grant the probability of a high mortality rate from tsetse-induced trypanosomiasis, and a consequently high rate of replacement, the horse could still have been sufficiently useful in the early kingdoms of our region to have made its importation desirable. True, the terrain would have ruled out its use as a military weapon. However, given wide and well-kept paths, it could have been a valuable instrument of communication for the managers of a far-flung administration.¹⁷

In our quest for further items likely to have been involved in the north-south trade, we should keep in mind the clues furnished by the oral tradition, of an early central trade route, and by the fact of early Ijebu prosperity. Both suggest that the northward flow of goods involved items drawn from the seaboard as well as from the forest. An item that comes to mind as a likely candidate in this context is sea salt. Although he does not specifically mention the Yoruba watersides in this regard, the 15th century chronicler, Pereira makes several allusions to salt prepared on this part of the West African coast and exported to the hinterland (Pereira, 1937). More specific reference to the Yoruba coast comes from the 17th century writer, Dapper, who talks of large canoes of salt being brought through the lagoons from Jojo (near present-day Porto Novo) to Ulkami (the Yoruba coast) (Dapper, 1970). Since the communities of the Yoruba coast themselves produced salt,¹⁸ we must assume, either that those who paddled these loads were committing the West African equivalent of carrying coal to Newcastle, or that the loads were welcome because they were destined for re-export to the interior. The latter assumption seems the more plausible.

Another item that comes to mind is smoked fish. It is mentioned by Johnson as an important item of commerce between the coast and the hinterland (Johnson, 1921:227).

In adding salt and smoked fish to our list of items probably or possibly involved in the early north-south trade, I am, of course, making a sizeable backward extrapolation, for the relevant evidence is drawn from a period several centuries later than that of the rise of Ife. However, given that the items in question relate to demands which must have been in existence for centuries, the extrapolation seems a reasonable one.

So far, we have concerned ourselves with evidence pointing to the early importance of Ife as an entrepot through which a variety of goods moved north and south. We must now turn to the considerable body of

evidence that points to the city's early importance as a manufacturing centre. Three types of work merit special mention in this context: brass-work, bead-work and iron-work. I shall not linger over Ife brass-work, for its style and content have been described in a monograph and dozens of papers (Willett, 1967). Rather, I shall touch briefly on its origins and possible commercial significance. Although we have yet to find evidence of brass-casting operations in early Ife, the perfect stylistic continuity between the brass-work and the ubiquitous terracotta, the fact that no directly comparable works of earlier date have been found elsewhere, and the fact that finds in the city vastly outnumber comparable finds elsewhere, together make it virtually certain that this corpus of work is the product of Ife craftsmen. As regards the Ife-style works found outside the city, their small numbers suggest the absence of large-scale export of worked brass. Rather, it seems likely that they were made to fulfil ritual purposes in the outposts of the Ife empire (Shaw, 1973).

Any consideration of the Ife brass-working industry must, of course, raise the question of the origin of the raw material used. Up till today, we have no knowledge of copper-ore sources anywhere in this region of the West African forest. Given the established antiquity of this industry, moreover, we cannot invoke the Atlantic Trade as the source of its raw materials. On the other hand, we do have a reference to the early export of saharan copper into the savanna north of our region.¹⁹ Hence it seems legitimate to suggest that the raw materials for the Ife copper and brass casting tradition came to the city from the north, along one or other of the routes discussed earlier.

Let us turn now to bead-work. "Classical" Ife was the home of a flourishing industry for the manufacture of blue, dichroic glass beads, known locally today as *segi*.²⁰ From their representation on "classical" terracotta and brass-work, it seems clear that large quantities of these beads were put to use locally, in making the regalia of high office. Equally, however, it seems clear that large quantities of the beads were exported. Beads having physical and chemical characteristics identical with those found at Ife have been discovered at a wide range of sites in the West African sahara, savanna and forest.²¹ And beads answering to the same broad commonsense description are frequently mentioned in the reports of early foreign traders and visitors to the West African coast. Given the description of the treasured "akon" or "aggrey" beads in the early coastal literature, and given too, the indications in this literature that they were fed into coastal commerce by the traders of Jaboo (Ijebu), it seems likely that they were none other than the *segi* manufactured by

the craftsmen of Ife.²²

Once again, we must raise the question of the origin of the raw material used. If we are to believe the experts, the Ife industry involved the re-smelting of already made glass rather than the actual manufacturing of raw glass. Further, the chemical composition of the mixture, with its potassium/silicate base, suggests a Mediaeval European origin for such glass (Davison, Giauque and Clark, 1971). Since the Atlantic Trade was not yet in being in Mediaeval times, we can rule it out as a source of the relevant raw material. Hence if the theory of Mediaeval European origin is correct, we can only presume that supplies came across the Sahara and down from the savanna, along the route discussed earlier. The experts notwithstanding, I believe there is a residual possibility that the raw glass is of local origin. In a centre like Ife, where accumulations of potassium rich wood ash and of silica would have been common, and where, because of high-temperature firing operations, mixtures of the two could from time to time have suffered exposure to great heat, it seems likely that craftsmen engaged in other pursuits would occasionally have provoked the formation of potassium glasses. Observation of the conditions of such unwitting production could well have led to deliberate manufacture. Further consideration of this possibility would involve systematic examination of local ashes and minerals, with a view to finding out whether they included any substances in which the trace elements characteristic of Ife glass were present in the requisite amount.²³ Were the results of such an examination to prove positive, we should have to give strong consideration to the possibility of indigenous manufacture of the raw glass.

If my argument for the importance of bead-making as a major export industry is correct, it provides us with an explanation of the hitherto mysterious association between beads, the sea-goddess Olokun and the Ife kingship. For if beads manufactured in the city were a major item of seaboard trade, if the latter was one of the principal sources of Ife wealth, and if this wealth was the foundation of Ife political power, then the association would indeed have been a compelling one. As symbols of the wealth upon which the power of the kingdom rested, beads would have been ideal components of royal regalia. As the underpinner of the trade whence much of Ife wealth came, Olokun, goddess of the sea and of beads, would have seemed a natural guarantor of royal power.²⁴

Let us turn finally to iron-working. Previous interpretations of the rise of early Ife have scarcely stopped to consider the possibility that the city was a centre for major iron-smelting and iron-smithing operations. Yet

we have had indications to this effect for some time; and important fresh indications have emerged during the last few years.

One long-known fact to which no one has so far given due weight is the presence in the Ooni's palace of a pear-shaped hundredweight of wrought iron which serves as the shrine of Ogunladi, Blacksmith of Oduduwa (Willett, 1967:101; Biobaku, 1873:118 and 122). Surely we have here a strong indication of a polity that regarded iron-working as central to its well-being. Recently, Garlake's excavations at Obalara's Land and at Woye Asiri unearthed iron slag and tuyeres - both unambiguous indications of smelting operations. They also unearthed a multitude of iron nails, a large batch of which lay in a pattern suggesting that they had been used in the construction of a timber building frame, and some elaborate iron staffs reminiscent of the *osun* and *opa rere* staffs used in the cults of Ifa, Ogun and Osanyin down to the present day (Garlake, 1974;1977). Here, it would seem, we have indications not only of an iron-working industry but of an industry which turned out relatively large quantities of iron and fed them to sophisticated craftsmen.²⁵

As regards raw materials, Ozanne gave us an important clue in the survey cited earlier, in which he reported ancient, abandoned ironstone quarries on both the north-west and south-east outskirts of the city. Ozanne, alas, left Nigeria before he could follow up his hunches on iron-working at Ife. Nonetheless, his remarks have left us much to chew on; for they suggest that early Ife may have had a more-than-average endowment of raw material upon which to base its iron-working industry (Ozanne, 1969:29;38).

A sophisticated iron-working industry self-sufficient in raw materials would have been of first-rate importance both economically and militarily. It would have been a ready source of tools with which to increase the efficiency and volume of agricultural production, and would thus have facilitated the creation of those surpluses necessary for the maintenance of craftsmen, traders and governmental personnel. In a region where iron was both scarce and highly prized, both raw iron and finished products would have been important to the city's export trade. And finally, ready availability of iron for the production of machete blades and arrow-heads would have given the city a military edge over less well-endowed neighbours, thus paving the way for expansion.

The assumption that Ife enjoyed some kind of pre-eminence in the production and working of iron, and that this pre-eminence helped pave the way for its early military prowess and political expansion, serves to account for another apparently ancient feature of the city's religious life;

the prominence of the cult of Ogun. In some parts of Yorubaland (e.g., Ire), Ogun is thought of simply as the god of war. At Ife, however, he has long been regarded as the co-father of Oranmiyan, the royal ancestor most closely associated with Ife imperial expansion. In the practical religious life of Ife, Ogun has a special association with kingship. Indeed, his cult is considered by many to be the most important of all the royal cults and his annual festival (Olojo) the only occasion in which the Ooni appears publicly in full royal regalia (Eluyemi, 1975). On our assumption, the triple association of Ogun with iron, war, and imperial expansion, and his paramount position as an object of state cult, becomes intelligible.²⁶

All things considered, it looks as if the city of Ife, between c.A.D. 900 and c.A.D. 1500, was a centre of quite exceptional importance in the economic life of the region. Amongst other things, it seems to have been a rich agricultural centre, a key entrepot in a north-south trading network linking sahara and savanna with forest and seaboard; and an important industrial centre, at least two of whose products were exported far and wide along the routes for which it served as entrepot.

It is in terms of this economic pre-eminence, I suggest, that we can most readily understand the rise of Ife as a regional military, political and cultural centre. Control of the revenue derived from commerce would, as in so many other parts of west Africa, have made possible the transformation of a community headship into a powerful centralizing kingship.²⁷ Again, the commanding economic position of the city as a whole would have enabled its rulers to start building up power in the surrounding region. As a flourishing commercial centre and a small but vigorous state set in a region still largely subsistence-oriented and devoid of comparably centralized polities, Ife would quickly have come to exert a magnetic pull on the population of the surrounding areas.²⁸ Artists and craftsmen would have been drawn in from hundreds of miles around, thus further increasing the richness and diversity of early Ife art and industry. And the general pull on adventurous people of all kinds would have made for a massive increase in able-bodied and enterprising manpower. Such manpower alone, properly organized, would have made expansion into the surrounding region quite easy. The city's pre-eminence in iron-production would further have facilitated such expansion by adding superiority of weapons to that of manpower.

Rulers, however, seldom engage in policies of imperial expansion for their own sake. And we need to ask why the rulers of early Ife should have embarked on such policies. Once again, economic considerations

were probably to the fore. A negative consideration is suggested by the Ife oral tradition which links dispersal of the princes to congestion and consequent famine in the metropolis (Akinjogbin 1976). The magnetic pull of the city may well have produced a population inconveniently large in relation to local food resources; and the sending out of princes with large bodies of followers to establish provincial capitals would have been one way of solving this problem. A more positive consideration would have been the desirability of extending control of the principal trade routes radiating out from the city. In formulating their expansion policies, indeed, the rulers of early Ife probably included amongst their targets all those neighbouring centres which they regarded as vital to their commercial interests. Prominent amongst such centres would have been those along the route to the Bend (e.g. the future site of Oyo); those which served as subsidiary collecting points for products of the forest (e.g. the future sites of Ketu, Ilesha, Ondo, Owo and Benin); and finally those which were important in relation to the seaboard trade (e.g. the future site of Ijebu-Ode).

In concluding this section, I should like to suggest that there was an element of fragility in the military, political and cultural grandeur of "classical" Ife. If I am right in thinking that a particular configuration of economic circumstances provided the foundation, both for the initial development of centralized government in Ife, and for the kingdom's subsequent imperial expansion, then it also follows that any change in this configuration would have been likely to bring the whole magnificent edifice tumbling down. In the next section, I shall suggest that there was eventually such a change, and that it did indeed bring much of the edifice tumbling.

ECONOMIC DECLINE: c.A.D. 1500 - c. A. D. 1700

There are many indications that during the period between the end of the 15th century and the end of the 17th, Ife experienced a dramatic decline in her fortunes. Such oral traditions as can be construed as referring to these and later centuries make no further reference to Ife as a conquering or colonizing power. This is true of traditions emanating from Ife itself as it is of traditions emanating from other communities in the region. In the light of the most recent dating exercises, archaeologists suggest that the great or "classical" period of Ife art and material culture drew to an end between A.D. 1450 and A.D 1600.²⁹ In the light of excavations and observations which indicate "classical" settlement levels spreading well beyond the oldest known city walls, they also suggest that, over the same

period, there may have been a drastic decline in the city's population and size.³⁰ Finally, later European chroniclers make no further mention of the awe-inspiring "Ogane" who had so fascinated the early Portuguese visitor d'Aveiro.³¹ By the 17th century, indeed, it seems fairly clear that the Ife kingdom, whatever its "spiritual" or "atherly" status, was one of the smaller political units in the region, notable neither for great wealth nor for military might.

Earlier scholars, noting this decline, tended to explain it in terms of the rise of Oyo as an independent power.³² More recent critics, however, have established conclusively that Oyo was only one of several successors to the political might of Ife. Furthermore, they have accumulated evidence that, of these successors, it was Benin rather than Oyo that first attained the status of major power in the region.³³ Hence it is the rise of Benin rather than of Oyo that must take first place in any attempt to make sense of this phase of Ife history.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the founders of the Eweka Dynasty of Benin, like those of several other sets of Ife dynasties in the region, were, in the first instance, provincial heads within a larger Ife empire. As elsewhere, however, it seems likely that the office of headship gradually became hereditary in the line of the founder, and that there was a corresponding growth of political autonomy. What is beyond doubt is that, by the time of the Portuguese appearance on the coast at the end of 15th century, Benin was already a prosperous and powerful state in its own right. Ewuare, father of the reigning Oba Ozolua, had remoulded the political system of the capital in accordance with a new highly personal design, and had launched a campaign of vigorous expansion beyond the original Edo heartland. Ozolua himself had taken up the campaign where his father had left it, and was continuing it with enthusiasm and success. Despite his continued acknowledgement of the paramountcy of the Ooni of Ife, he was clearly no mere provincial governor, but a powerful and to all intents and purposes independent monarch (Bradburly, 1967; Ryder, 1969).

What lay behind this growth of independent imperial power at Benin? As in the case of Ife, it seems plausible to suggest that the key factor was economic.

Although our information on the economic base of early Benin kingship is slight, we can make an educated guess at its essentials. In the first place, the earliest European visitors noted a heavy involvement of the monarchy in long-distance trade with the interior; and it seems reasonable to suppose that the involvement was not new at the time these visi-

tors happened to remark on it.³⁴ As to what routes this trade followed, we can perhaps hazard a suggestion based on what we know of the directions of the early Bini expansion. One such direction was east and north-east toward the Niger. Indeed, there was heavy fighting on the Niger front at the time of the first Portuguese visits. This suggests a strong interest in control of the massive north-south riverine trade.³⁵ Another direction was north-west, into Yoruba country. And this suggests a route from the Bini forest to the Bend.³⁶ As to the mainstay of the trade, it seems likely that this was similar to that suggested for Ife: an exchange of the products of seaboard and forest for the products of the savannas.³⁷ If these surmises are correct, early growth of independent power at Benin followed from the opening up by the city's entrepreneurs and rulers of at least two trade routes to the north: routes which by-passed Ife.

Information on one of these routes becomes much more definite for the 17th century. Thanks to a corpus of tradition collected recently at Ilesha, we know that, by the beginning of the century if not earlier, there was a major trade route linking Benin with Oyo and points north. Ilesha itself seems to have owed its rise to prosperity partly to the fact that it came to be regarded as convenient entrepot at which traders bringing up seaboard and forest products from Benin could meet their counterparts bringing savanna products down from Oyo.³⁸

By this time, moreover, some new and vital commodities had entered the trade. To the indigenous products of the seaboard there had been added a considerable range of items imported through the newly-opened Atlantic commerce. Of these, some were luxury goods that merely added a little to an already luxuriant inventory of chiefly and royal status symbols. Two items, however, were of much more profound significance. The first of these was the brass manilla, introduced by the Portuguese at the beginning of the 16th century. The second was iron. This was initially imported by the English, who brought in considerable quantities of manufactured iron goods during the latter part of the 16th century. Much larger quantities were subsequently imported by the Dutch, who introduced the standard iron bar early in the 17th century. The manilla became important, not only as a unit of currency supplementing the cowry, but also as a cheap, abundant source of metal for the already well-developed brass-working industry. The iron bar, too, became a unit of currency, and a cheap, abundant source of metal for the iron-working industry.³⁹ Of the two items, iron was unquestionably the more important, for it fed an industry that was the main source both of domestic and

agricultural tools and of weaponry.

Down the same routes from the north came a variety of products peculiar to the savannas, plus ivory and slaves. A considerable proportion of these goods was retained in the Benin Kingdom itself. Nonetheless, fair numbers of ivory tusks and slaves, together with large amounts of locally-produced camwood and pepper, were passed on to the European traders at the Benin seaports of Ugoton and Arogbu (Ryder, 1969:24-98).

A further development of Benin commercial and political hegemony occurred with the late 16th century conquest of Mahin and Lagos. This secured Benin control of the lagoon trade and of the trade which had now developed with Portuguese merchants at the mouth of the Lagos inlet (Smith, 1969:92-94; Ryder, 1969: 14-15, 72-73). One may well ask how Benin managed to get in ahead of Ijebu in this area. In the present state of our knowledge, we cannot say for sure. However, we do know that the 16th century Benin empire included numerous Ijo and Itsekiri villages; and these villages could have been a source of highly skilled naval units to which the land-based Ijebu military machine had no answer.

So much for the development of Benin as a major commercial and military power in the region. At Oyo, a similar process of development got under way about a century later.

Occupying a key site on the route from the Bend to Ife, Oyo was probably one of the earliest-founded provincial capitals in the Ife empire. Unlike Benin, however, it suffered in its infancy from the attentions of several powerful and militarily well-organized neighbours, notable amongst them the Nupe and Bariba Kingdoms. And around 1500, when Benin was already at the peak of its commercial and political power, Oyo was sacked by a Nupe army (Law, 1977:57-39). As to what happened next, the oral traditions, which are our only source of information, are divided. Some talk of the Oyo royal family taking refuge in Bariba country, and emerging decades later to establish Oyo as an enduringly powerful state. Others talk of a new, Bariba dynasty as taking the lead in this re-establishment (Law, 1977:39-42).

Doubtful as we remain about the "who" in all this, we seem to be on firmer ground when it comes to the "how." The traditions are agreed that the key to the re-establishment of Oyo was its rulers' decision to build up a sizeable and well-organized cavalry force. In this, of course, the rulers were taking inspiration from their enemies; for it was cavalry that had given Nupe their military superiority over earlier Oyo (Law,

1977:43-44).

Whatever the status of the rulers of Oyo before these events, they were clearly independent monarchs after them. Nor is it hard to see why. In the first place, with the acquisition of a powerful cavalry force, Oyo military might now compared favourably not only with that of Nupe and Bariba, but also with that of Ife. Secondly, with the development of the Oyo-Benin trade route, Oyo gained an access to Atlantic seaboard and forest products, independent of Ife.

Momentous as they were, these developments were only the beginning of Oyo commercial and political power. For during the early part of the 17th century, the entrepreneurs and rulers of the new state succeeded in opening up a more westerly trade route linking Oyo with such coastal ports as Allada and Whydah. They followed up this commercial initiative with a series of wars and colonizations aimed at ensuring that the greater part of the route came under Oyo's control. Like the earlier established Oyo-Benin route, the new westerly route facilitated the import, not only of traditional seaboard and forest products, but also of the new Atlantic supplies of copper, brass and iron. These imports were paid for largely by the export of slaves (Law, 1977:217-225,240).

If we are right in supposing that the position of Ife - astride an ancient trade route linking sahara and savanna with forest and seaboard - was the key to its early prosperity and power, then the developments I have just outlined make its post-fifteenth-century decline readily comprehensible. In the first place, the emergence of the new trade routes would have taken away from the old central route its unique importance in the area. Secondly, since it was through these new routes that vital new supplies of cheap, trans-Atlantic copper, brass and iron reached the hinterland, the powers that controlled them would have had first access to such supplies. Ife was apparently unready or unable to establish its own Atlantic connection: perhaps because Benin took early control of the coastline along which it could have developed such a connection; perhaps also because this stretch of coastline was not blessed with the kind of inlets that afforded safe anchorage to the Atlantic vessels. Hence, where it had once been the supplier of copper, brass and iron to the region, it was now much poorer in these items than the new states. These changes, clearly, would have done as much to drain the economic, military and political vitality of Ife as they did to build up the vitality of Benin and Oyo. (For a diagrammatic representation of changes in the trade routes, see Figure Two.)

In these circumstances, the magnetic pull on the people and talents of

the region, which we have attributed to early Ife, would now have been exerted by Benin and Oyo. If warriors, merchants, craftsmen and artists had once converged on Ife from hundreds of miles around, they would now have deserted it for the new centres. It is in these terms, I suggest, that we can explain both the post-fifteenth-century depopulation of the city and the concomitant decline or disappearance of its richest artistic and craft traditions.

Spurred by the examples of Benin and Oyo, and encouraged by the dwindling power of Ife, rulers of other lesser provinces would have lost no time in establishing the independence of their own domains. Ketu, Ijebu, Ondo, Owo, and Ilesha were probably all effectively independent by the end of the sixteenth century. These defections would further have drained both the vitality and the population of the ancient metropolis.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have first tried to follow up the numerous clues which point to the remarkable strength and diversity of the Ife economy through the period stretching roughly from A.D. 900 to A.D. 1500. I have then followed up the equally abundant clues which seem to show that this phase of economic strength and diversity was followed by a phase in which changes in the patterns of regional and inter-regional trade led to the economic decline of the city. I have suggested that it is in terms of these economic factors that we can best understand the rise and decline of ancient Ife as the capital of a powerful centralized state and the centre of a rich artistic culture.=

An earlier generation of scholars often wrote about the coastal and forest zones of West Africa in such a way as to suggest that the decisive impulse toward the growth of large centralized states in these zones came from the economic changes consequent on the development of the Atlantic Trade. Whilst this view is almost certainly applicable to some region,⁴⁰ the picture that has emerged from this chapter shows clearly that it is not applicable to the region we are dealing with in this book. Here, it is true, some states such as Oyo seemed to have grown and developed as a result of their participation in the Atlantic Trade. However, others such as Benin had clearly attained their developmental peak on the basis of the economic set-up prevailing before the start of the Trade, and simply made use of the new opportunities it offered to maintain the status quo. As for Ife itself, the "father" of them all, not only had it attained its developmental peak long before the start of the Trade, the growth of its daughter states decisively weakened the eco-

conomic foundation of its political and cultural achievements and was largely responsible for its decline.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 We are grateful to the Editor of the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* for allowing us to reproduce, with a few additions and omissions, pp.101-120 of Robin Horton's article "Ancient Ife: a Re-Assessment" which was published in Vol. 9, No. 4 of the Journal. These pages, in their amended form, make up the greater part of the present chapter, (Editor).
- 2 Since much of what has been written on ancient Ife concerns its sculptural arts, this remark may surprise the reader. The point, however, is that, speculate as we may, we have few means of discovering what the huge corpus of objects we call "the Art of Ife" actually signified either to its producers or to its users.
- 3 For the early written sources on Benin and Oyo, see Ryder, A.F.C. *Benin and the Europeans*, London 1969; Law, R.C. *The Oyo Empire*, Oxford 1977.
- 4 For the material that follows on agriculture in early Ife, I am indebted to Ade Akinjogbin.
- 5 Ife Palace Records, the Afin, Ife. See also chapter 13 below.
- 6 For example, such claims are made for the ancestors of several Igbo speaking communities.
- 7 See Chapter 6 above.
- 8 See Chapter 6 above.
- 9 For this poem, see, Abimbola, W. *Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa*, Niamey 1975, pp. 341-361. Although Abimbola admits that we have as yet no developed methodology for distinguishing the archaic from the recent in the Ifa corpus, he believes this poem to be ancient.

- 10 For these traditions, see, Olaoba-Efuntayo, A.O. "Ipetumodu in the Pre-Colonial Period" B.A. (History) Research Essay, Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt, 1981, pp. 4-9, 58-59.
- 11 Johnson, S. *The History of the Yorubas*, Lagos 1921, p.156. Robin Law (personal communication) doubts the historical value of this narrative, on the grounds that oral tradition recently collected at Apomu suggests an 18th-century date for the foundation of the town and its market. There are, I think, two counters to this objection. First, given the chaotic conditions which prevailed in the Ife markets during the nineteenth century, it is quite on the cards that the continuity of transmission of oral tradition was broken at this time, with the result that earlier recollections of the remoter past disappeared from the testimony. Second, even if the reference to Apomu were an anachronism, it would in no way follow that the rest of the narrative was anachronistic.
- 12 For our earliest written reference to Ijebu, see, Pereira, D. *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, trans. and ed. D. Kimble, London 1937, p. 124. Pereira is thought to have written the original c. 1506.
- 13 For this information, I am indebted to a personal communication from Oyin Ogunba.
- 14 Kati, M. *Tarikh El-Fattach*, trans. and ed. Houdas, O. and Delafosse, M., from 6th. century original Paris 1913, pp. 67-68. The translators note that "Borgu" was used by Arabic writers of the time to refer to the whole area between and including Gonja and Bariba country. Nonetheless, if "Borgu" was used within the area to refer to its easternmost part (as seems to have been the case), the question still arises as to why writers in Songhai should have picked this name for the whole area. The obvious explanation is that the products of the whole area came to them via its easternmost part and thence up the Niger.
- 15 Personal communication from Michael Crowder.
- 16 *The Kano Chronicle* (trans. and ed. Palmer, H., in *Sudanese Memoirs* Vol. III, Lagos 1928) associates the beginning of the kola trade with the south with the 15th century reign of Queen Amina of

Zaria.

- 17 I am indebted to Wande Abimbola for this point.
- 18 Speaking around 1840, the freed Ijebu slave, Osifekunde, talked of salt as one of the commodities produced and exported by his people. See: Lloyd, P. "Osifekunde of Ijebu" in Curtin, P. (ed.) *Africa Remembered*, Madison 1968.
- 19 For this, see, Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa*, ed. and trans. Gibb, H., from an original written around 1354, London 1929, p. 356. Denis Williams claims that an ingot mould of the type described by Ibn Battuta was excavated at an Ife site in 1966; but unfortunately he does not elaborate. See: Williams, D. "Art in Metal" in Biobaku, S. O. (ed.) *Sources of Yoruba History*, Oxford 1973, p. 159.
- 20 For the bead industry in "classical" Ife, see: Willett, F. 1967; "New Light on the Ife-Benin Relationship", *African Forum*, Vol. 3, No. 4/Vol. 4, No. 1, 1970; "Ife: the Art of an Ancient Nigerian Aristocracy" in Frazer, D. and Cola, H. (eds.), *African Art and Leadership*, Madison 1971.
- 21 On the distribution and composition of blue, dichroic beads in West Africa, see: Davison, G., Giauque, R. and Clark, J. "Two Chemical Groups of Dichroic Glass Beads from West Africa" *Man*, N.S., Vol. 6, No. 4, Dec. 1971.
- 22 For reviews of early references to "aggrey" and "akori" beads, see Fage, J. 1962; "More about Aggrey and Akori Beads" in *Le Sol, la Parole et L' Ecrit, Melanges en Hommage a Raymond Mauny*, Paris 1981. See also: Mauny, R. Akori Beads, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 1, No.3, 1958, Kalous, M. "Contribution to the Problem of Akori Beads" *Journal of African History*, Vol 7, No.1, 1866. For references to the Benin waterside as an area from which large numbers of "akori" beads (locally known as coris) were fed into the coastal trade, see Ryder, A. *Benin and the Europeans*, London 1969, pp. 37, 55-56, 60, 62, 64, 67, 85, 88. Ryder makes it clear that some of this supply originated, not from Benin itself, but from Ijebu traders visiting the Benin waterside. For an

- early reference to the Ijebu trade in "akori" see Dapper, O., pp. 304-307.
- 23 Perhaps the University of Ife geologists can help us here.
- 24 There would seem to be an interesting parallel between the place of beads in the socio-political life of "classical" Ife and that of gold in early Akan. Like Ife beads, Akan gold was a main source of royal revenue and featured in royal regalia as a symbol of wealth.
- 25 Denis Williams, *Icon and Image*. London 1974, pp. 93-96) suggests that the elaborate staffs so characteristic of Yoruba iron work could only have been made from the imported iron bar. He therefore dates them from about 1650, when this item was first brought to the coast in large quantities. Garlake's finds, however, invalidate this dating; for the remains of staffs at this Obalara's Land site are clearly pre-1500.
- 26 Denis Williams, 1974, pp. 85-86, has suggested that it was only between 1530 and 1650, when massive importation of iron made the metal "socially and militarily significant", that Ogun became god of iron as well as god of war in Yorubaland. If what I have said is correct, however, iron had become socially and militarily significant in Ife several centuries earlier. It, therefore, seems plausible to credit Ogun with a correspondingly longer reign as the god of iron and war in Yorubaland generally and Ife in particular.
- 27 For the first systematic exposure of the correlation between control of key sites on long-distance trade-routes and growth of centralized state institutions in pre-colonial West Africa, see, Stevenson, R. *Population and Political Systems in Tropical Africa*. New York, 1968. (Ironically, Stevenson sets out to demonstrate the quite different correlation between population density and political centralization and fails.) For a more recent and highly influential argument in support of the correlation, see Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. "Recherches sur un Mode de Production Africaine" *Pensee*, No. 144, 1969. For a criticism of Coquery-Vidrovitch, see, Terray, E. "Long-Distance Trade and the Formation of the State". *Economy and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 3, August 1974. For a reconciliation of the views of pro- and anti-trade theorists, see, Law, R. "Slaves, Trade

and Taxes: the Material Basis of Political Power in Pre-Colonial West Africa," *Research in Economic Anthropology*, Vol. 1, 1978.

- 28 For the "magnet theory" of early Yoruba urban development, I am indebted to Ade Obayemi. His theory is based on oral traditions which suggest the great diversity of lineage origins in several typical Yoruba state capitals. Although he has not so far looked at traditions of lineage origin in Ife itself, I think the odds are that inspection would disclose a similar situation. As the first major commercial and political centre in Yorubaland, Ife would have been the first of these magnets. For an exposition of the theory, see Obayemi, A. "The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples to 1600" in Ajayi, J. and Crowder, M. (eds.) 1976.
- 29 On the early decline of "classical" Ife sculpture, see Willett, 1967, pp. 150-152. For more exact dates for the "classical" period, see: Garlake, 1974 and 1977.
- 30 As evidence, they point to "classical" sites such as Ita Yemoo, Obalara's Land, Woye Asiri and others, all of which lie partly or wholly beyond the oldest known set of town walls, which is thought to have been in use in the 16th and 17th centuries. On this, see, Willett, op. cit., 1967, p. 103; 1970, pp. 320-321; Smith, R., *Kingdoms of the Yoruba*, London, 1969, pp. 22-23; Garlake, 1977.
- 31 See: Pereira, 1937, De Barros, J. *Da Asia*, Dec. I, Liv iii, cap. 3, Lisbon 1551.
- 32 Ajayi, J. "Introduction" and "The Ijaye War" in Ajayi, J. and Smith, R. (eds.), *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1964; Ajayi, J., "The Aftermath of the Fall of Old Oyo" in Ajayi, J. and Crowder, M. (eds.), *History of West Africa*, Vol. II, London, 1974 (see esp. pp. 129-136); Mabogunje, A. and Omer-Cooper, J. *Owu in Yoruba History*, Ibadan 1971 (esp. Chapters 1 and 2).
- 33 On this, see, Akinjogbin, A. "The Prelude to the Yoruba Civil Wars of the Nineteenth Century", *Odu, N.S.*, Vol 2, No. 2, 1965; "The Oyo Empire in the Eighteenth Century: a Re-Assessment" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1966; *Dahomey and Its Neighbours*, Cambridge 1967; "Ife, the Home of a New

- University", *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 92, 1967. See also Smith, R., 1967., chapter 3; Atanda, J. *The New Oyo Empire*, Ibadan 1973, Chapter 1; Law, R. 1977, chapters 6 and 7. For a chronology of the early political development of Benin, see: Bradbury, R. "The Kingdom of Benin" in Forde, D and Kaberry, P. (eds.), *West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1967; Ryder, A. 1969, Chapter 1. For a corresponding chronology of Oyo, see, Law, 1977, Chapter 3.
- 34 Ryder cites a number of indications that the earliest European visitors found the Oba and other officials already involved in a flourishing interior trade in which coastal commodities were apparently unimportant, and that the Bini rulers continued to be preoccupied with this trade, sometimes to the neglect of the newer Atlantic commerce. On this, see Ryder, 1969, pp. 28, 33, 41, 43, 65, 73, 225.
- 35 Egharevba (1960, pp. 11-29) talks of campaigns toward the Niger in the reigns of Ewuare and Esigie, culminating in a war with Idah in the reign of Esigie.
- 36 Egharevba (1960, pp. 13-16) talks of extensive campaigns into Yorubaland in the reign of Ewuare.
- 37 Sadly, Bradbury died without having published anything on the possible or probable economic base of the early Benin Kingdom. Perhaps he felt the whole matter was too uncertain, and being cautious in these matters, he did not wish to publish speculations. For what it is worth, I, did, in fact question him on this matter in the course of a conversation in the late fifties, and I well remember him saying he thought kola might be the key. But he did not elaborate; and he died before I could raise the matter a second time round.
- 38 On this, see Peel, J.D.Y, "The Ijesha kingdom: c. 1500-1996", unpublished paper given to a seminar at the Department of Anthropology, University College, London, 1976. See especially p.4 where he states that two of the most important Ijesha chiefs, Ogboni and Odole, were charged with the responsibility of taking care of Bini and Oyo traders respectively.
- 39 For details of the early Atlantic commerce and its goods, see

Ryder. 1969, pp. 24-98. On the demand for imported iron, see also Williams in Biobaku, S. O. (ed.), pp. 148-152; Smith, R., "Yoruba Warfare and Weapons" in Biobaku, S. O. (ed.), pp. 232-234.

- 40 For application of this view to the Eastern Niger Delta, see Horton, R., "From Fishing Village to City State" in Douglas, M. and Kaberry, P. (eds.), *Man in Africa*, London, 1969. Subsequent criticisms notwithstanding, I still believe the thesis holds good for the coastal states of Kalabari and Bonny.

CHAPTER 8

IFE: THE YEARS OF TRAVAIL, 1793-1893

I. A. Akinjogbin

The 19th century period of Ife history can be said to have started around 1793, when Alafin Awole ordered that Apomu, an Ife market town should be sacked (Johnson, 1975:188-189; Akinjogbin, 1967:176) and ended in 1893, when after about twelve years of evacuation of Ile-Ife, the Ife finally agreed to return to re-occupy the ancient metropolis¹. During this period seven Ooni and one regent reigned. They were Ojigidiri Lambua, Akinmoyero Odunlebiojo (usually called Odunle), Gbanlare, Gbegbaaja, Wunmonije, Adegunle Abeweila, Degbin Kumbusu, Orayigba Ojaja (also called Ayikiti) and Derin Ologbenla, the regent.²

Of these nine, probably three - Lambua, about whom nothing beyond the name is yet known, Lodunle, and Kumbusu reigned for more than 10 years each. Lambua probably reigned from the early 1780's and died soon after 1796, perhaps around 1800. Odunle succeeded him and died between 1830 and 1833, certainly after the Oyo elements had taken control of Ibadan,³ and Kumbusu reigned from about 1850 to 1877. Five others had very short reigns. Between 1830 and 1849, when Abeweila died, that is within a period of 19 years, four Ooni, Gbanlare, Gbegbaaja, Wunmonije and Abeweila reigned. Abeweila's demise was followed by the desertion of Ife between 1849 and 1854, indeed up to 1858, as the town was not rebuilt until 1859.⁴ Ayikiti who was crowned in April 1878, died soon after his coronation.⁵ Derin Ologbenla, the regent from 1878 to 1893 refused to be installed although he was generally accepted as Ooni-elect between 1878 and 1893 when he died.⁶ In 1882, Ife, as will be seen below, was again forcibly evacuated and was not re-inhabited until 1894. Although it may be argued that the total number of years of long reigns is more than the short ones, the issues raised during the short ones created such great instability as was not easily solved by the end of the century.

The picture of internal instability is further re-inforced by the manner in which most of the Ooni were suspected to have met their end. Odunle⁷ (in spite of his leadership qualities), Gbanlare, Gbegbaaje, Wunmonije, Abeweila, and Ayikiti, appeared to have died by violent or foul means. Indeed, before ascending the throne, Abeweila is reported to

have made the Ife to swear to him that they would not find a pretext to murder him as they had done to his predecessors in office. Still, he met an unnatural end.⁸ What the causes of disagreement were between the various Ooni and their Ife subjects are not entirely clear but the consequence was instability and internal weakness. Thus in the hundred years between 1793 and 1893 most Ooni of Ife had fairly short reigns and met with violent ends. During the same period, Ife was twice evacuated for fairly long periods. This may well have led Akintoye to describe the 19th century as "Ife's sad century" (Akintoye, 1970).

What greatly aggravated the internal problems in Ife was the general decay and collapse of previously existing beliefs and institutions all over Yorubaland. The old constitutional arrangements which bound the Yoruba kingdoms together and made for stability became increasingly questioned and undermined by those who should guard them.⁹ In the process, the Oyo Empire which had throughout the 18th century provided a stable political umbrella for all Yorubaland, collapsed at the centre creating chaos throughout the empire and beyond. The situation led to what may be described as an unpremeditated and rudderless revolution. It was within these three contexts, internal weakness, collapse of Yoruba institutions and the collapse of the Oyo empire, that the history of Ife was played out in the 19th century.

For Ife, the century opened auspiciously enough. The order by Alafin Awole that Apomu should be sacked was aborted by the reluctance of the Oyo army to set out and by the Bala of Apomu, who was the ostensible excuse for the intended invasion, offering to commit suicide so that the pride of the two big *obas*, the Alafin and the Ooni, could be assuaged (Akinjogbin, 1967). The Ife authorities may have seen the chaos that engulfed Oyo soon after that event as a vindication of their right and a due punishment by the gods on Oyo for going against the traditional taboo that no Yoruba kingdom may invade Ife. They probably expected that to be sufficient deterrent to any other Yoruba kingdom that might have been contemplating the impiety of trespassing against the kingdom of Ife.

Their confidence was, however, soon shattered. For in the second decade of the 19th century, probably between 1810 and 1815,¹⁰ the army of the Owu, the Yoruba kingdom lying immediately west of Ife, struck and invaded deep into the kingdom of Ife, going as near as within ten miles of Ile-Ife itself (Johnson, 1975:206-207; Akinjogbin, 1965). Indeed, between the Owu army and the ancient city only the town of Ipetumodu remained. The specific issues of dispute between Ife and the

Owu authorities are not clear. What seems clear is that in spite of the way the Oyo/Ife dispute ended in the 1790's, the Olowu Amororo and his immediate advisers did not appear to believe any longer in the sanctity of Ife territory. Moreover, with the collapse of central authority in Oyo, provincial rulers began to set themselves up as local authorities, and to fight little wars to create kingdoms over which they could impose some peace. Thus, Adegun, the ruler of Ikoyi started reducing the areas around him into his own kingdom (Johnson, 1975:210). Toyeye, the ruler of Ogbomoso was doing a similar thing in his own surrounding territory. Indeed, the situation got so bad that a group of young adventurers, who called themselves *Ogo Were* (Young Glories) organized intending to create a territory for themselves in what is now Osun area; no one is clear as to their political philosophy or goal. Mercifully, they were forcibly disbanded by the *Are* Toyeye of Ogbomoso who feared that they could constitute themselves into a permanent predatory group.¹¹ This chaotic situation must have led the Owu authorities to decide on extending their own territory. Yet, why they chose to do so towards the territory of Ife (given its traditional position) and not towards the Egba territories situated northwards, or southwards towards the Ijebu territory, remains a puzzle. Their action turned out to be a big political disaster.

Ife's reaction was prompt. In confidence, it collected an army, members of which were advised to arm themselves with hardly anything more than large bundles of *agba* ropes to tie Owu captives.¹² So great was their confidence of easy victory. However, on the actual battle field, things were far from easy for the Ife army, which itself was a hurriedly put together group, since Ife had no strong standing army. The Owu army overpowered the Ife army which badly decimated and disgraced, could not return home. The Oluwo, in whose territory they took refuge, must have felt embarrassed and so he advised that they settle at a place called Adunbeye, near Iwo. Johnson says that they remained in this place for about five years before another incident involving Owu and Ijebu occurred.¹⁷ It must be presumed that during these five years Owu was controlling the Ife territory it had earlier invaded. It must be presumed also that tension would be high, not only in Ife but throughout all Yoruba kingdoms to which Ife must have reported the incident and who may have felt appalled by the desecration thus committed.

This existing tension would have accounted partly for the next internecine war. Around 1821, a quarrel flared up between Owu and Ijebu traders at Apomu market. The incident which was a disagreement between Owu and Ijebu traders over the price of a few cowries worth of

alligator pepper was minor enough. But it must have taken place against the background of existing tension in which Owu's pretension to leadership in the locality was being resented by the others. The Owu trader was said to have killed the Ijebu trader, leading to a general fight between Ijebu and Owu traders in the market.¹²

The Ife authorities now saw their chance. They made an alliance with Ijebu and, together, under Okunade, the *Maye* of Ife, attacked the Kingdom of Owu. Their ranks were swollen with freebooting Oyo refugees who had been rendered homeless by the insecurity arising from the collapse of the Oyo Empire. For five years, the Owu put up a stout defence within their besieged capital and only surrendered after they had been starved out. Around 1825, the capital of the kingdom, Owu Ipole, was deserted by its inhabitants and put to the sword and fire by the allied army. The other Owu settlements, such as Ogbere and Erunmu must have collapsed soon afterwards. A curse was put on the capital that it must never again be inhabited.¹² Once again Ife's cause appeared to have been vindicated.

Invigorated by this success, the allied army, again under *Maye's* and *Labosinde's* leadership fell against the Egba neighbours of Owu, and, one after another, destroyed the Egba towns within a short time. Ibadan, an Egba town which escaped being burnt down, became the allied army's headquarters (Johnson, 1875:223-224; Biobaku, 1957: 13-14). The Egba towns are said to have been invaded because they were suspected to have helped the Owu by sending provisions to it during the siege. The Egba, on the other hand, thought they were being neutral. Biobaku has suggested that moslem influence prevented the Egba from joining in the search for peace. However, a much more fundamental reason was that law and order had completely broken down, and, might dictated right. For whatever reason, Owu and Egba kingdoms were destroyed under a combined army headed by *Maye*, an Ife general. When they settled in Ibadan around 1826, *Maye* became the military ruler of Ibadan (Johnson, 1975; Bioboku, 1957). That meant that Ife's territory which a decade before appeared in danger of diminishing had now extended over the whole of Owu and part of Egba kingdoms. The situation was however shortlived for by 1828-29, *Maye* was expelled from Ibadan and the settlement taken over by the Oyo group (Johnson, 1975:238-240), with consequences for Ife that will later be discussed.

The expulsion of *Maye* did not immediately dampen the confidence of the Ife, who now had crop of seasoned and militarily experienced leaders they had not possessed for a long time. In the mid 1830's, during

the reign of Wunmonije, the Ife army, aided by Oyo refugees freshly settled in Ife territory, were able to drive away Ilesa kidnappers from Ife farms.¹³ The unfriendly stalemate between Ife and Ilesa must have remained for about two decades afterwards, for when David Hinderer went from Ilesa to Ife on 30th August, 1858, he found that Itagunmodi was the boundary town where the two neighbours met for trade and beyond which none was allowed to cross to each other's territory.¹⁴

The last great military victory of the Ife army in the 19th century was over the Ondo. Around the last years of Wunmonije or the early years of Abeweila either in the late 1830's or early 1840's a quarrel arose between the supporters and opponents of Arilekolasi, the Osemawe of Ondo who had just died. The quarrel developed into a civil war. The supporters of Arilekolasi withdrew to Oke-Igbo and with the aid of the Ife army defeated the Ondo forces.¹⁵ As a result of this defeat, the city of Ondo was evacuated and was not re-inhabited until 1872.¹⁵ The Ife elements rapidly took over Oke-Igbo which thus became part of Ife territory. Thus, it would appear that by the end of the 1830's, Ife, on balance, was not losing. It was indeed gaining more territories: for, although Ibadan had been lost, the land up to Apomu was not definitely taken over by Ibadan and Ife had gained Oke-Igbo and its surrounding lands from Ondo.

By the early 1840's however, external problems which were connected with Pan-Yoruba political developments, and which had been rearing their heads internally in Ife changed what was a hopeful situation to a sad one. The first of these problems was the refugee issue. From about 1796 when the Empire suddenly collapsed at the centre, and the outlying provinces became unsafe, Oyo refugees started to flee in all directions, and quite a sizeable number came to Ife. The earliest arrivals may have been those who were related to others who had earlier been married to Ife citizens.¹⁶ As the Islamic movements intensified in northern Oyo, more refugees poured into Ife areas. At first they settled in Ipetumodu,¹⁷ and became so many that they threatened to outnumber the original inhabitants. At that point, the reigning Apetumodu, probably Folasade Ajiga, appealed to the Ooni Akinmoyero Odunlabiojo, to take them over and he gladly did. The co-operation between the Ife and Oyo forces which led to the victory at Owu in 1825 and to the checkmating of Ijesha marauders further encouraged the Ife to invite more Oyo refugees. According to Akintoye, "the Ife chiefs who vied with one another in inviting these refugees to come and settle in their quarters" gave some of them land for farming and employed others on their own farms

(Akintoye, 1970).

Soon, however, the amicable relationship turned sour and by about 1835, the Oyo elements in Ife had begun to suffer persecution in fact, some of them were sold into slavery. The cause of the change in the relationship was the expulsion of Okunade, the *Maye*, from his position as leader of Ibadan, his execution, and the take-over of Ibadan by the erstwhile Oyo allies of Ife.¹⁸ In direct reaction to these events, the Ife at home stopped being hospitable to their Oyo guests, visiting the sins of their kinsmen in Ibadan on those at Ife. As an old *Modakeke* chief, who was an eyewitness to it all, explained in 1886:

They (i.e. the Ife) were kind to us in all Ife towns and villages till the outbreak at Ibadan, when Chief Maye an Ife, was expelled from the town. It was then we began to suffer all sorts of indignities from the Ifes at home... The Oni we met who befriended us at first was Odunle. This disaffection was towards the latter part of his reign.¹⁸

This accounts for the political problems between Ife and *Modakeke*. It was to cost Ife dearly for the rest of the nineteenth century and beyond.

The loss in territory occasioned by *Maye's* expulsion was made more acute by Fulani-led Ilorin incursions into Yoruba country from around 1831 onwards. Around 1835, when Ife-Oyo antagonism was starting, all the surrounding Ife settlements of Ikire, Iwata, Gbongan, Ipetumodu and other *Origbo* towns were evacuated as a result of rumours of a Fulani-led invasion from Ilorin, and the bulk of their population settled in Ile-Ife.¹⁹ The resultant pressure on the diminished resources of Ife was bound to intensify the resentment Ife citizens harboured against all refugees. With Ilorin pressing in from one side, Ibadan not too friendly on the other side, and with the *Ijesa* kidnapping and foraging in Ife farms, Ife must have felt inconveniently hemmed in, and might have blamed reigning the *Ooni* for their misfortune. This may have been partly responsible for the short reigns of *Gbanlare*, *Gbegbaaja* and *Wunmonije*, the three successors to *Odunle* on the Ife throne.

Abeweila, who ascended the throne around 1839 must therefore have been hard put to find a solution that would relieve Ife of the pressures on her economic resources as well as lessen social tension which had grown steadily worse since the early 1830's between the Ife and all their refugee guests. This was probably why he decided around 1847 to send back refugees from Ipetumodu, Gbongan, and Ikire areas to their deserted towns,¹⁹ particularly as the Fulani menace had been checked by the Ibadan forces at *Oshogbo* as far back as 1840. In that same year, 1847, *Abeweila* created a separate settlement in Ife called *Modakeke* for the

Oyo refugees who had no home to return to.¹⁹ It was expected that this move would satisfy the Ife and make Abeweila's reign peaceful. No one foresaw the economic and political problems that would result from this.

Although the Ife were now relieved from the pressure of overpopulation, they were hardly improved economically or politically. No sooner had Ikire been resettled than it went fully into Ibadan sphere of influence.²⁰ Thus, the total land area of the Ife kingdom further diminished. And the immediate effect of the founding of Modakeke was to deprive the Ife of their previous services and authority over the Modakeke people without physically removing them from Ife farms. Thus, Ife appeared to have lost both politically and economically. It was probably this sense of loss from Abeweila's well-intentioned moves that further incensed the Ife against him. They accused him of deliberately setting up Modakeke to spite Ife, and of secretly arming Modakeke against Ife. To buttress their accusation, they recalled the fact that his mother was of Oyo extraction.²¹

To be sure, Abeweila's relationship with his Ife subjects had been marked by mutual suspicion from the beginning. Before he ascended the throne, he had made them swear that they would not find an excuse to murder him as they had done his immediate predecessors in office. The Ife had kept the promise for a while. However, Abeweila was not deceived by the apparent calm and did not let down his guard but kept collecting arms. When the Ife rose against him on the pretext that he was desecrating ancient customs by seeking to substitute cows for human victims in annual sacrifices, he easily put down the insurrection, apparently without the help of the Oyo elements. The Ife promised to take revenge at the earliest convenient opportunity. This led Abeweila to draw closer to the Oyo elements who undoubtedly would have benefitted from his move and, whose help he then requested for the future.²¹ He started recruiting them into palace services, and it was believed that he encouraged their leaders in Modakeke to strengthen themselves against the eventuality of his death.

Around 1849, being unable to overpower him, the Ife poisoned Abeweila and denied him a royal burial. They also thought they could easily overpower the nascent Oyo town of Modakeke and fell upon it. However, under Wingbolu, the Modakeke gave a good account of themselves and drove the Ife back, capturing twelve thousand and seventy (12,070) of them. However, out of the reverence every Yorubaman had for Ife, and also because of the deep gratitude they felt towards Ife for harbouring them, the Modakeke found it inconceivable to hold any Ife a

captive. They therefore released all their Ife captives unconditionally. The Ife were not assuaged by this generous move. Instead, one chief Ogunmakin got reinforcement from Oke-Igbo about a month after the release, and again invaded Modakeke. The battle, this time, was fierce and the Modakeke gave no quarters. The Ife were defeated, those caught among them sold and the town burnt.²⁹ Ile-Ife was evacuated and the principal chiefs moved to Isoya. They were to remain there effectively until 1858.²²

During these years, the power of Ibadan grew steadily and its political influence became respected all over Yorubaland (Awe, 1964; Ajayi and Smith, 1964). In 1851, Balogun Ibikunle, one of the foremost architects of Ibadan's greatness, became leader of Ibadan. Hinderer described him and all his ruling colleagues as young men.²³ However, their age notwithstanding, they appear to have had a vision of and a policy for Yorubaland. Their ultimate ambition was to ensure the security of Yorubaland from external aggression and create peace among the Yoruba-speaking kingdoms. That meant that Ibadan itself must be strong, both militarily and politically.

In pursuit of the first policy they steadily pushed back the Fulani menace in Yorubaland, taking under their wings threatened or liberated Yoruba towns as they went along between 1850 and 1854 when Ile-Ife was evacuated, the Ibadan must have extended their authority further into what was formerly Ife territory. There can be no doubt that Modakeke would make approaches to Ibadan for protection, or at least would not be averse to being under Ibadan's sphere of authority. Gbongan and Ipetumodu which were just being resettled could hardly have any choice and their being taken over would be justified by the Ibadan policy of protecting them against external aggression.

To realise the second objective of creating peace within Yorubaland, the Ibadan made efforts to settle quarrels peacefully between warring Yoruba Kingdoms, that is, whenever Ibadan was not involved. In pursuance of this, between June and September, 1951, the Ibadan authorities sent peace missions to the Egba and Ijebu Kingdoms which had declared war against each other, urging them to settle their differences peacefully.²³ Similarly, Ibadan started sending peace missions to Ife and Modakeke from about September, 1853, if not earlier, seeking to persuade both parties to live at peace. Their move was favourably received, for Hinderer reported from Ibadan on 19th September 1853 that:

Messengers who have been here some months ago to beg the chiefs to help the two parties there to a speedy reconciliation and to fetch

*the exiled party home, seem to be here again for the same purpose.*²⁴

Finally, in 1854 the quarrel was settled, with Ibikunle arguing that "It would never do to let the cradle of the race remain perpetually in desolation and the ancestral gods not worshipped;"²⁵ and the Ife authority seeking and, apparently, receiving a guarantee that they would be allowed to remain in their homes in peace. They promised that if their request was granted they would let bygones be bygones.

In spite of this, the movement back to Ife was slow. By the 30th of August 1858, when Hinderer saw Ife for the first time, his party saw "nothing but ruins, broken mud walls, old pots, etc. etc." Hinderer noted he heard that Kumbusu, the Ooni, had returned to Ife, but that up to that time:

*neither party (i.e. Ife and Modakeke) trusted the other so the town of Ife remained deserted until lately. Some who had fled to the villages or lived in Modakeke with relations and friends came back to begin building their houses.*²⁶

However, a year later, in August 1859 when Hinderer went again to Ife, he found that "much of the town of Ife has been rebuilt since last year and the king has taken possession of the Afin - Palace - and has his staff of elders and officers round him again in the good old style."²⁷

For this opportunity to re-occupy their homes, the Ife paid a heavy political price. They lost their independence to Ibadan to which they were responsible for the next thirty years. Ibadan authorities posted an *Ajele* each to Ile-Ife, Modakeke, Ipetumodu, Gbongan and Edunabon. They had already left one in Ikire by 1847. From 1854 to 1882, Ife authorities were obliged to pay tributes to Ibadan and contribute contingents into the Ibadan army during any major war. The Ife contingent probably missed taking part in the Ijaiye war of 1860-62, but a number of their adventurous sons may have willingly elected to join the Ibadan army.

However, an Ife contingent joined the Ibadan army in mid 1877 to invade the Egba kingdom, and enable the Ibadan force their way to this coast. Similarly, in 1878 the Ife contingent was part of the Ibadan army that suppressed the Ekiti revolt. When in 1878 the Ekitiparapo was consolidated, Ife contingents were part of the Ibadan army at Igbajo (Akintoye, 1970; Johnson, 1975:475).

Although the Ifes may have secretly resented the turn of events that changed them within thirty years from being the rulers of Ibadan and leaders of Yorubaland to Ibadan's vassals, it was not a total loss. For one

thing, there was peace in Ile-Ife and ordinary folks were able to pursue their daily chores under the Ibadan-imposed peace. Kumbusu, the Ooni for instance, reigned from 1850 to 1877 and died peacefully, a feat the four previous Ooni who reigned from about 1830 to 1849 did not achieve. However, the fact that Ife had totally lost political independence was brought home to them after Kumbusu's death. The Ibadan authorities sent one Ayikiti, an Ife prince in the Ibadan army, to be made the next Ooni. The Ibadan authorities said they did so under great pressure, knowing fully well that Ife would resent it (Johnson, 1975:475). The Ife king-makers did keenly resent it, but they could not openly protest to Ibadan. Ayikiti reigned for less than a year and was suspected to have been poisoned to death.

The Ife then chose Derin Ologbenla as the next Ooni. Derin appeared well-qualified for the times and the challenges that Ife faced. He was a military leader who had participated in various local wars around Ilesa and who had been holding the Oke-Igbo town against threats from the Ondo, particularly from 1872, when Ondo was resettled. Moreover, he appeared a very rich man, certainly richer than any other Ife man.²⁸ The Ife may have hoped that since he was a military man he was likely to understand the military language of Ibadan and be more acceptable to them. However, for reasons which are not yet clear, Derin was not crowned immediately. He himself said at first that he did not want to be crowned during national wars (and the Egba-Ibadan war started in 1877, while the Ekitiparapo war started in 1878). He gave another reason in 1881 as will be discussed below. The truth may be that Derin could not entrust himself to the Ibadan authorities particularly considering the circumstances in which Ayikiti died. He might even have been scared of the Ife themselves, preferring to stay in the safety of Oke-Igbo which he knew. For whatever reason, Derin remained an uncrowned Ooni, a regent from 1878 to 1893 when he died.

The whole of the period, 1877-1893, witnessed the Ekitiparapo war. The war itself has been treated by various scholars, notably Awe and Akintoye (Akintoye, 1971; Awe, 1964). The point to highlight here is how Ife's fortune was again affected by the events of those years which were, as usual, essentially external to her. Akintoye was probably correct when he suggested that although the Ife contingent joined the Ibadan army against the Ekitiparapo, the Ife at home identified with the Ekitiparapo who were fighting a liberation war against the Ibadan (Akintoye, 1970). On the other hand, the Modakeke people were whole heartedly in the Ibadan army. Thus was laid the basis of another dis-

agreement between Ife and Modakeke.

However, as long as the Ibadan army was on the ascendancy and appeared able to win the war, Ife authorities, and their fire-eating young men, had to tread very warily. By 1881, when it appeared that a stalemate had developed, the Ife became bolder in showing their resentment against Ibadan. The source of strength of the Ekitiparapo army was the new repeater rifles which Ibadan did not possess and which they procured through their "Sons" resident in Lagos (Johnson, 1975). The only route through which Ibadan could reach Lagos to procure the rifles was by what was called the "eastern route" which passed through Ife, Oke-Igbo, Ondo, Ikale, and Ilaja to Lagos,²⁸ since neither the Egba nor the Ijebu (until the opening of the market at Oru) would allow the Ibadan a route to Lagos through their territories. Thus, the position of Ife became crucial to the outcome of the war, a situation that was realized by all the belligerents, including even Ilorin. This further emboldened Ife (Johnson, 1975, 458-459). When the Ibadan military authorities asked to pass through Ife to attack Ilesa in the rear, in order to break the stalemate, Ife authorities bluntly refused.²⁹

Each side started to woo Ife. In 1881, the Ibadan authorities invited Derin, with presents of money and slaves, to come and occupy the throne of Ife, thus hoping to bind him to their interests. Derin refused giving the condition that Ibadan should cede to him all the Ife territories from Ipetumodu to Apomu then under Ibadan.³⁰ This was an impossible demand. To show his real mood, Derin sent arms to some of the towns notably Ikire and Gbongan, urging them to rise against Ibadan. Those towns refused the instigation and turned over the arms to Ibadan authorities.³¹ Meanwhile, the Ife at home were impeding Ibadan traders from getting to Lagos through the Ondo-Ikala route (Johnson, 1975). The Ekitiparapo were quite aware of the mood at Ife and they encouraged Ife to break with Ibadan. They promised that they would cede Osu to Ife, if Ife would declare for the Ekitiparapo (Akintoye, 1970). This promise and the prospect that Ibadan might lose the war having been effectively checkmated, encouraged Ife to decide to throw off the Ibadan yoke and join the Ekitiparapo forces.

Ibadan was undoubtedly aware of all the moods and moves of Ife but continued to attempt a resolution of the impasse by peaceful negotiation with only a minimum show of force. On one such occasion in 1882, when the Ibadan authorities decided to frighten the Ife leaders at home so that they could be more amenable to Ibadan's wishes, the Obalaye, an important Ife chief, lost his life.³² Ife immediately rose up in arms and a

message was dispatched to the Ife contingent in the Ibadan army to change allegiances and join the Ekitiparapo forces. Led by Oga, the Balogun, Bambe, the Seriki, Isoje, the Otun, and Apete, the Osi, the Ife army moved in a body from the Ibadan camp to the Ekitiparapo side.³³

Ibadan's reaction to this serious danger was to encourage the Modakeke to join in containing the threat. The Modakeke needed very little prompting because they were aware that the defeat of Ibadan would lead to their own doom. In December 1882, the Ife-Modakeke war erupted and, again, Ife was defeated and the town deserted.³³ This time the destruction was total. Higgins, the leader of the peace commission sent to Ife by the Lagos administration, described the unwholesome sight on 3rd October 1886 in the following words:

On our north was the site of Ile-Ife, the lines of the demolished walls which had once extended from Modakeke to where Arimoro had made his camp being still traceable, although so completely had the town been razed to the ground that it was scarcely possible to discover the traces of a single house in the bush and grass which has overgrown the place.⁴⁴

The Ekitiparapo realizing how crucial the position of Ife was to their military fortune and, particularly, to their defence at the rear, sent Fabunmi, the Deputy Commander-General of the Ekitiparapo forces, with a strong contingent to join in the defence of Ife and dislodge Modakeke (Johnson, 1975:477). The desecration of Ife finally induced the Ijebu army to join the war on the Ekitiparapo side,³⁵ but its orders were specific and limited: it was to reinstate Ile-Ife. In the words of Balogun Ogunsigun:

Ile-Ife is regarded by all our nation as the sacred spot from which we originated and the Ooni is respected as the father of all the kings. This was why "the Ijebu King felt it his duty to re-instate the Ifes in the town ... It was the king (i.e. Awujale) who commissioned me to re-instate the Ifes because it was from Ile-Ife that his father went to settle in Ijebu country.⁴⁵

Several pitched battles were fiercely fought between the Ife allies and the Ibadan/Modakeke coalition in which Modakeke was nearly but not entirely broken. Ife remained deserted until 1894.

From then till 1893, when this chapter ends, the pre-occupation of the Ife was how to get the Modakeke removed from their doorstep. During the protracted peace negotiation that ended the Ekitiparapo war, the only condition that Ife unanimously and consistently insisted upon for the restoration of peace in Yorubaland was:

*We need not say that our guests, the Modakekes, have become too mighty for us. They have rewarded us evil for good. They have thrice dispersed us and destroyed our town. We can no more live together with them.*³⁶

To this statement the Ooni-elect Derin added an ammendment that those Modakeke who preferred to remain in Ife "remove with us to Ile-Ife and reside among us as they did originally. The Modakekes are our relatives, we want them to amalgamate with us and no more live as a separate people."³⁷

So when the peace treaty was signed on 4th June 1886, clause 5 stipulated that the town of Modakeke shall:

be reconstructed on the land lying between the Osun and the Oba rivers to the north of its present situation, and such of the people of Modakeke as desire to live under the rule of the Bale and Balogun of Ibadan shall withdraw from the present town to the land mentioned ... and such of the people as desire to live with the Ifes shall be permitted to do so but shall not remain in the present town of Modakeke, which shall remain the territory and under the rule of the king and chiefs of Ife, who may deal with the same as they may think expedient (Johnson, 1979).

The amazing thing about the Ife demand is that it was limited to Ile-Ife alone and did not mention anything about its former territories from Apomu to Ipetumodu which Derin had been demanding since 1881. While the other participants in the war were demanding that Ibadan should restore their former territories, and, even the Osemawe of Ondo who did not participate in the war wrote the Governor of Lagos asking that Ife be persuaded to vacate Oke-Igbo which he claimed belonged to Ondo.³⁸ Ife only wanted Modakeke disbanded. Indeed, on one occasion Derin, the Ooni elect, was ready to give up Oke-Igbo if the Ife were resettled in their town.³⁹

Ife's attitude can be explained by a number of factors. First, with the rapid decline in their population ⁴⁰ they had been reduced to such dire straits that they must have decided to sort themselves out first before thinking about the plights of the other towns. Second since Ikire and Gbongan turned over to Ibadan the arms supplied them for insurrection by Derin, the Ife may have rightly concluded that their loyalty to Ibadan was greater. Thirdly at the time of negotiation for the treaty clauses, Ife had joined the Ekitiparapo army while the contingents of its former outlying towns were in the Ibadan camp. It was therefore not easy for Ife authorities to hold meaningful consultations with them for a common

front or even convince the peace commissioners that the towns belonged to Ife. In September 1886, before the treaty was ratified, there was an argument between the Ibadan and the Ife authorities about the status of Ipetumodu, Edunabon and More. Ife claimed they were Ife; Ibadan claimed they were Oyo. The peace Commissioners stopped the argument as inconsequential.⁴¹ It took another twenty years after 1886 for the Origbo towns to be conceded to Ife. And in 1907 river Isasa was made the boundary between Ibadan and Ife.

So the 1886 treaty was signed with clause five. The next problem was how to implement the clause which demanded the removal of Modakeke and its resettlement on a new site. While the peace negotiations were proceeding, there were enough indications that only the Ekitiparapo allies of Ife were unanimous and insistent on the evacuation of Modakeke. Others had misgivings as to the humanity, practicality or even justice of it. When the Ibadan authorities were told of the Ife conditionality, they said all they required was that the Modakeke should not be driven into the bush.⁴² This is a way of asking for human considerations for the Modakeke. The Alafin, on his part, objected to the condition arguing that future generations would desecrate his memory by maintaining that Modakeke was founded during the reign of his father but was disbanded during his own reign.⁴³ The Awujale, Oba Aboki, preferred that Ife and Modakeke should be reconciled instead of breaking up Modakeke.⁴⁴

The Modakeke themselves demurred when it came to ratifying the treaty on 23rd September, 1886. Their leaders ran away from the scene of signature. They had to be fetched from where they had hidden themselves and were bullied into signing the treaty (Johnson, 54).

In spite of all these misgivings, the treaty was ratified on 23rd September, 1886. So great was the desire for peace that everyone thought that minor doubts and misgivings at the last moment should not be allowed to spoil what had taken months and many parties to put together. Moreover, there was a genuine desire by all Yoruba leaders that Ile-Ife must not be left desolate. They felt that the condition insisted upon by Ife was not too stringent to be accommodated. Indeed, both the Oluwo and the Timi of Ede as well as the Ibadan authorities thought they had enough clout to persuade, indeed command, the Modakeke to move⁴⁵. The Timi said he would ask those of them from Ede to come back home and they would obey⁴⁵. The Oluwo said they could all come and live in his town⁴⁵. No one thought that the Modakeke would in the end prove adamant.

However, when it came to actual implementation, insoluble problems arose and, not without reason. Objectively, the towns of Ipetumodu, Edunabon and Moro to which the Modakeke were asked to move immediately were too small to accommodate conveniently the estimated 60,000 Modakeke population. Ipetumodu, the largest of the towns, had an estimated population of 2,000⁴⁶. The two others were much smaller. The new site between Iwo and Ibadan which was allocated to them was a thick forest which would not provide any shelter or food. Even moving all of them to Ife, as Derin suggested at a point, would be inconvenient as the total population of Ife was estimated at 35,000 people scattered over Oke-Igbo, Ita Ijamo and Isoya.⁴⁶ Ife itself being as yet deserted. Then someone raised the problem of the old, the sick, the infirm and the children, should they be required to move immediately. There was therefore a genuine fear of starvation and death should they be forced to move immediately. In spite of feverish diplomatic moves made between September and November 1886 to force the Modakeke out of their town, they refused to budge, using different arguments for their refusal on different occasions. On 28th November, 1886, they gave the following five major reasons (some of which deserve to be quoted in full) why they refused to move. Said they:

Truly our fathers were not natives of this place, but we are born in this place and the mothers of most of us are Ifes. Hundreds of Ifes are our wives today and hundreds of our daughters were also given in marriage to the Ifes and they are with them to this present day. We have become one people with them by intermarriage so that it is very difficult for us to separate....

We have often had civil wars and although we always have the advantage yet we always give up the captives voluntarily.

Their third reason, as they alleged, was that they were being secretly encouraged by the Ife to stay even though they were openly demanding their evacuation. Their fourth reason was that they feared "inevitable destruction if we be allowed to know the constitution of our country". Their fifth reason was that Modakeke was the "land of our fore-fathers" which they had bought from them (Ife) paid for and propitiated with a vast sum of money before it was inhabited and if they (Ife) demand more, we are ready to pay" To ask them to move they said "is as good as if our town is destroyed"⁴⁷

Finally, the Modakeke declared that they would rather die on the graves of their fathers than quit the place.⁴⁸ Ife's answer was short and clear. They said they would not come back to Ile-Ife as long as the

Modakeke remained "but that they would build a wall around their camp" and live there and, in time, the crowned heads would see that they were determined not to return to their town and would have to remove the Modakeke as if they remained in their town, the whole world spoil as they were the priests of the deities who ruled the world.⁴⁹ The patience of the peace commissioners was exhausted by the beginning of December 1886 and they departed, leaving the Ife and the Modakeke to sort themselves out.⁵⁰ By January 1887, the Ekitiparapo allies of Ife and the Ibadan allies of Modakeke also got tired of trying to make peace between the two parties and left.⁵⁰ Modakeke stayed put and Ile-Ife remained uninhabited until 1894.

Economic development in Ife in the 19th century followed very closely the pattern of the political events. Statistics is not available and there is not as much documentation of economic activities as there is of the political. Yet it is quite clear that economic activities can only prosper in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility, the two conditions that Ife did not continuously enjoy for much of the century. The political events of the period between 1810 and 1825, when the Kingdom was invaded by and had to fight two wars against Owu were hardly conducive to economic growth, whether in agriculture, industry or trade. Between 1825 and 1835, there probably was a brief period of agricultural expansion, helped in part by the existing peaceful atmosphere and the influx of the Oyo refugees who were employed on the Ife farms. It was probably during this period that Abeweila earned his praise name as a successful okro farmer. Industrial pursuit probably continued then but trade must have suffered some setback with the Ijesa infesting the trade routes.

The advantages from refugee influx passed its optimum around 1835 when the bulk of the population from Ikire to Ipetumodu moved into Ife. The strife-torn reign of Abeweila which ended in the evacuation of Ife from 1849 to 1858 definitely caused a setback in economic development. Hinderer, who met Ooni Kumbusu in 1858 remarked:

I met him in a very humble abode close by the ruins of the palace, a shed about 20 feet long by 8 feet wide. He is a middle-aged short and stout man. His conversation was very brief perhaps, more affected than real on account of the misfortunes under which he came to his honour as king of Ife.⁵¹

The period of the Ibadan pax, 1854-1878, may have witnessed some economic recovery. Indeed, it says much for the pax and for the resilience of the Ife that when Hinderer visited Ife again in 1859, life was back to normal and the Ooni was well-settled in the palace, sur-

rounded by his chiefs "in the good old style"⁵² During this period, Oke-Igbo, where Derin was settled, vigorously pursued agriculture and was growing into a major Ife settlement.⁵³ Trade also appears to have been on the increase for, on 10th March 1872, Ife representatives were among a delegation that met Glover, the Governor of Lagos, over the opening of a route that would link Lagos with the eastern Yoruba country. Other members of the delegation came from Ibadan, Ondo, Ojo and Mahin.⁵⁴ At the negotiation, Derin, then Baale of Oke-Igbo, offered to clear all obstacles to the free navigation of River Oni so that traders from Lagos could trade freely both with Oke-Igbo and Ondo.⁵⁵ Derin continued to pursue this pet idea for the next ten years, for when Hewett visited him again on 6th December, 1880, Derin discussed the issue of navigation on the River Oni.⁵⁶

The presents the Ife sent to Glover may have represented what they hoped to export, and these included ivory, mats, and kolanuts.⁵⁷ Among the economic trees that grew wild in the area and which the peace commissioners noticed in 1887 as exportable commodities were rubber vine, indigo plant, gum tree and silk worm from which silk thread was made.⁵⁸

Derin himself told Hewett in December 1880 that he had ivory, cotton, palm kernels and palm oil, among others, for export.⁵⁹ Economic activities were, however, retarded by the outbreak of the Kiriji war. The evacuation of Ife between 1882 and 1893 certainly reduced Ife to its economic nadir. In 1886 when Rev. Philips passed through the Ife settlements of Isoya, Ita Ijamo and on Ife camp, he noticed that although farming was still being practised, productivity was almost nil and the people were in no position to buy any European import. They remarked: "altogether it was a wretched place and we were thankful to quit it."⁶⁰ When Philips was about to depart, the Ife authorities tried to find some suitable present for the governor as a token of their gratitude. When they failed to find something handsome each of them were (sic!) making up small parcels of kola nuts. Your excellency will be astonished to see the indigent state to which the Ife chiefs (Derin excepted) are reduced".⁶¹ This dismal picture was somewhat relieved by the affluence of Oke-Igbo. Rev. Philips described Derin, the Ooni-elect, as "a very old man" and "very rich", and his fellow commissioners described the Oke-Igbo to Ondo road as follows:

The road by which we had travelled during the day lay through farms and I was surprised to see the extent of land under cultivation. It is a curious fact that while the Oke-Igbo people go in

*so extensively for farming the Ode Ondo people do very little in that way and are almost entirely dependant on Oke-Igbo for their supplies of corn, yams etc.*⁶²

Trade and manufacture, however, hardly had such relieving features. Indeed, bronze casting got such a death knock during the century that it has not yet recovered till now.

Thus, the 19th century in Ife history was a period of travail. After what looked like a promising beginning in the first three decades of the century, Ife sank into what must have been its lowest depression since the 11th century. In a period of forty years, all the outlying towns were lost to Ibadan, the ancient city was twice deserted, its independence ended by Ibadan and, its economy almost completely ruined by the unstable political climate.

It is a great tribute to the doggedness of the people and the deep-seated respect which all the Yoruba speaking peoples accord to Ife that within the next century it regained its traditional status and resuscitated its economy.

NOTES

- 1 S. A. Akintoye, "Ife's Sad century" in *Nigeria Magazine* no 104, March/May 1970 p.38; CSO1/1/14: Carter to Ripon, Aug. 30 1894.
- 2 See Appendix 1D in chapter 6 above.
- 3 Statement of the Modakeke, May 1886: *Parliamentary Papers:Accounts and Paper* 12 Vol. LX 4940 of Feb. 1887.
- 4 C.M.S: CA2/03/: Account of Hinderer's Journey to the Interior 2 Aug. 1858 to 4th Sept. 1858 and 23rd Aug. 1858 to 11th Sept. 1859.
- 5 *Government Gazette*. Lagos Feb. 1903, S. Johnson, *The History*, p.422.
- 6 Throughout the period of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo war, Balogun Derin of Oke-Igbo was Ooni-elect and acknowledged Ife leader.
- 7 There is an uncommon Ife song which indicates how the Ife ended Odunle's reign. It goes "Akinmoyero, oran t'o se ko l" elebe (Akinmoyero, your offence is unpardonable)."

- 8 "Statement of the Modakeke" in *Parliamentary Papers: Accounts and Papers* 12 Vol. LX4940 of Feb. 1887.
- 9 For example. Oyo ordered an invasion against the Ife market town of Apomu, and Owu actually invaded Ife territory against traditional norms. See Johnson, *History*, pp. 188-180: pp.206-207; I.A. Akinjogbin "The Prelude to the Yoruba Civil Wars" in *Odu: Univ. of Ife Journal of African Studies* Vol. 1 No.2 1965.
- 10 Various dates have been proffered to this First Owu Wars; S.O. Biobaku, *The Egba and their Neighbours* (OUP, 1957) p.13 gave 1821, but discusses two wars. R.S. Smith. *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* (Methuen & Co. 1968) p. 151 gives 1813, but on what evidence is not clear.
- 11 S. Johnson, *History*, p.197. Johnson interpreted *Ogo Wewas* "The jackals"
- 12 S. Johnson, *History*, pp 206-210. S.O. Biobaku *The Egba and their Neighbours*, p.3; A. Mabogunje J. Omer-Cooper, *The Owu kingdom*; R.S. Smith, *The Yoruba Kingdoms* p.151.
- 13 "Statement of the Modakeke" in *Parliamentary Papers:Accounts and Papers* 12 Vol. LX4940 of Feb. 1887.
- 14 C.M.S. CAz/031. Account of Hinderer's journey to the interior Aug 2-Sept. 4 1858.
- 15 PRO CO147/24 Report of Goldsworthy's Expedition. 1872: S.A. Akintoye, "Ife's Sad century" Goldsworthy said the Ife/Ondo war occurred in 1829, but Akintoye puts it at 1845.
- 16 It ought to be pointed out that there were Oyo-speaking residents in Ife before the massive influx. Labosinde, one of the Ife army leaders that settled in Ibadan after the Owu and Egba wars had an Oyo mother who could not have been a refugee. There were many examples like that.
- 17 "Statement of the Modakeke" made in May 1886 in *Parliamentary Papers: Accounts and Papers* Feb. 1887, Oral traditions still extant

- in Ipetumodu relate how the reigning Apetumodu consulted Ifa about the refugees and was told that these were "alejo ti igba ile lowo onile" (Strangers that will take possession of the house). Statement made by Ife chiefs on 27th April 1886, and by Derin on 28th April 1886: *Accounts and Papers* Feb. 1887.
- 18 "Statement of the Modakeke in May 1886" in *Accounts and Papers* Feb. 1887; S. Johnson, *History* p.230.
 - 19 S. Johnson, *History* p. 230; see also ch. 12 "The outlying towns of Ife" below. Statement made by Ife chiefs on 27th April 1886 in *Accounts and Papers* Feb. 1887.
 - 20 See chapter 12, "The outlying towns of Ife" below.
 21. S. Johnson, *History* pp 230-232; "Statement of the Modakeke" in *Accounts & Papers* Feb. 1887.
 - 22 C.M.S. CA2/031: Account of Hinderer's Journey to the Interior Aug 2 - Sept. 4 1858.
 - 23 C. M. S. CA2/049: David Hinderer, "Account of Journey to Ibadan" 1851.
 - 24 C. M. S. CA2/049: David Hinderer, "Condition of Yoruba country" 19th Sept. 1853.
 - 25 S. Johnson, *History* p. 232; "Statement of Modakeke" May 1886 in *Accounts and Papers* Feb. 1887. In both sources, Chief Ogunmola was credited with effecting reconciliation. They should probably go to Chief Ibikunle, who was then Balogun and leader of Ibadan. Negotiations had of course been going on since about July 1853.
 - 26 C. M. S. CA2/049: David Heinderer, "Journey to the interior" 2nd Aug. 1858 to 4th Sept. 1858. Hinderer reached Ife on 30th August , visited Isoya 31st August where he told the people he came to lead them back to Ife. They politely declined, giving the excuse that they were celebrating their New Year. He left Ife on 1st September, 1858.
 - 27 C. M. S. CA2/049: David Hinderer, "Second Journey to the interi-

or" 23rd Aug. 1858 to 11th Sept 1859. He stayed in Ife from 25th to 29th Aug. 1859.

- 28 All the peace commissioners who met Derin in 1886/1887 commented that he was rich. *Accounts and Papers* Feb., 1887.
- 28 The attempt by Ibadan to open the "Eastern Route" started in 1871. See PRO CO147/23. Early in 1872, Glover sent Mr. Goldsworthy through the route and the latter reported in April 1872 that he had opened the route. PRO/CO147/24; S.A. Akintoye "The Ondo Road East wards of Lagos 1895" in *Journal of African History* 10, IV 1969, pp.581-598.
- 29 S.A. Akintoye, "Ife's Sad Century" "Statement by the Ife chiefs on 27 April 1886" in *Accounts and Papers*, Feb. 1887.
- 30 "Statement of the Modakeke", An Ibadan Chief, Toki, who was in the Modakeke camp said he was the person sent by the Are to beg Derin to come to the throne in Ife.
- 31 See chapter 12 below.
- 32 "Statement of the Modakeke" Toki's statement in *Accounts and Papers*; S. Johnson; *History* pp 476-477; Obalajaye is an Ife and not a Modakeke chief as Johnson says. It was therefore the Modakeke ring leaders that were not punished.
- 33 S. Johnson, *History* p. 477; "Statement of the Ife chiefs" 27th April 1886 in *Accounts and Papers* Feb. 1887.
- 34 "Report of the Peace Commissioners Part II" in *Accounts and Papers* Vol. X 4940 Feb. 1887.
- 35 S. Johnson, *History* p. 477; Ogunsigun Seriki of Ijebu army to Governor of Lagos 26th April 1886, published in *Accounts and Papers* 4940 of Feb. 1887.
- 36 "Statement of the Chiefs" 27th April 1886 in *Accounts and Papers*.
- 37 "Statement of Derin, the Ooni-elect" 28th April 1886 in *Accounts*

and Papers.

38. "Osemawe of Ondo to Gov. of Lagos" 13th May 1886 in *Accounts and Papers* Feb. 1887.
- 39 "Rev. Charles Philips. Report on his second mission" in *Accounts & Papers* 4940 of Feb. 1887.
- 40 Oral traditions extant in Ife area still relate how, at a point, even the Modakeke got scared of the population decline in Ife and started wishing they would increase. One of them named his dog 'k'Ife O de" - (may the Ife increase).
- 41 "Aftermath of the war" 21st Sept. 1886 in *Accounts and Papers* Feb. 1887.
- 42 "Report of Higgins and Smith," peace commissioners, to the interior" Entry for 13th & 14th Sept. 1886 in *Accounts and Papers*, Feb. 1887.
- 43 "Aftermath of the war" 31st Oct. 1886 in *Accounts and Papers*.
- 44 "Aftermath of the war" 28th Nov. 1886 in *Accounts and Papers*.
- 45 "Report of the Peace Commissioners" in *Accounts and Papers*, Feb. 1887.
- 46 During the journey by Rev. Charles Philips and Samuel Johnson to negotiate peace between the contending parties, they took detailed notes on every town, village and settlement through which they passed. Philips who covered Ekitiparapo section passed through 34 settlements; Johnson passed through 35. The population they recorded are, of course, estimates.
- 47 S. Johnson "Report on his visit to Ikirun" 7th Nov. 1886 in *Accounts and Papers*, Feb. 1887.
- 48 C. Philips "Report on the events after the signing of the treaty", 9th October 1886 in *Accounts and Papers*, Feb. 1887.
- 49 "Statement of the Ife to the Peace Commissioners" on 1st Nov. 1886 in *Accounts and Papers*, Feb. 1887.

- 50 S. Johnson, *History*, pp. 552-560 tells the details of the abortive negotiation with Modakeke.
- 51 CA2/031, "Account of Hinderer's journey to the interior" 2nd Aug. - 4th Sept., 1858.
52. CA2/031 "Account of Hinderer's second journey to the interior", 23rd Aug. 11th Sept. 1858.
- 53 CO147/24 "Hethersett's report on Goldsworthy's Expedition", 29th Aug. 1872.
54. CO147/23 "Glover to Hennessy" 21st March 1872.
- 55 CO147/24 "Report of Goldsworthy's Expedition" Aug. 1872.
- 56 FO84/1593 "Report of Hewett's mission to Ondo" Dec. 1880.
57. CO147/23 "Glover to Hennessy" 21st March 1872.
- 58 "Report of the Peace commissioners" in *Accounts and Papers*, Feb. 1887.
- 59 FO84/1593 "Report of Hewett's Mission to Ondo". Dec. 1880.
60. "Report of the Peace commissioners" in *Accounts and Papers*, Feb. 1887.
- 61 Philips. Report of his second mission in *Accounts and Paper*, Feb. 1887.
- 62 "Report of the Peace Commissioners" in *Accounts and Papers*, Feb. 1887.

CHAPTER 9

IFE: THE YEARS OF RECOVERY, 1893-1930

Olufemi Omosini

This chapter will examine the history of Ife from the commencement of British colonial administration in 1893 (Aderibigbe, 1959) to about 1930. The period was, without doubt, a period of recovery in many significant respects. But it was also a time of diverse political, economic and social innovations. The analysis in this chapter, therefore, focuses not only on the return of peace under the British aegis but also on the economic and social foundations of Ife society and the impact of new challenges on the people during this high watermark of colonial rule. Apart from the fact of British presence, the period was dominated by two prominent rulers, Oba Adelekan Olubuse I (1894-1910) and Oba Ademiluyi Ajagun (1910-1930) who made significant contributions to the internal history of Ife. Significantly enough, Oba Aderin Ologbenla, who had been on the throne since 1878 and partaken of the turbulence that characterized the history of Yorubaland in the nineteenth century, did not live long to witness the changes introduced by the British presence. He died in 1894 before he could grasp the full implications of Ife's loss of political sovereignty.

RETURN OF PEACE

Any visitor to Ife in 1893 would have had practically nothing to write home about. The town was still completely deserted as it had been since 1882. The buildings were in ruins. Most of the people were still in hiding in Isoya and other neighbouring villages. And though the war between Ibadan and Ilorin had been brought to an end with the disbandment of Ikirun and Offa war camps in 1893, (Johnson, 1975:628; Akintoye, 211) peace still eluded Ife. Her fighting forces were still waging desultory campaigns against Modakeke and Ibadan occupation forces.

It was not until 1894 when the British colonial authorities in Lagos intervened once again and concluded a peace arrangement that made it possible for Ife people to return finally to their homes. Even so, when Governor Carter passed through the town in 1894, he described what he saw there as a "very melancholy spectacle"¹ Partridges, he observed,

could be shot "among the ruins of the houses" The Ooni who had just returned to Ife since his coronation in 1882 cut a melancholy spectacle. His palace was still in ruins and the ancestral art works of which he was custodian had practically disappeared, having been looted or burnt during the inferno of 1882. The art piece given as a present to Carter had only been hastily dug up from the ruins of one of the shrines. Such was the picture of decadence that confronted visitors to the ancient city.

Yet, slowly but surely, confidence gradually returned to the city. The houses were rebuilt and re-occupied by their rightful owners. The breakthrough in the restoration of Ife could be said to have been made in the first few years of the 20th century when the Ife seized the opportunity of the British presence to strengthen their authority. Ooni Adelekan Olubuse I visited Lagos as guest of Governor Macgregor in 1903 during which he made powerful impressions on the Governor and people of Lagos. Macgregor in turn made some generous contributions to enable the Ooni rebuild his palace. By 1905, a new two-storey palace had been completed. So much rebuilding had taken place that when Leo Frobenius visited Ife in 1910, he described the palace in almost poetic terms:

It was like an enchanted Castle. It was so large and noble in design, so superbly pure despite its broken lines... (Frobenius, 1968 rep:77).

The New Ooni that Frobenius met exuded more confidence than his predecessors. He was "clad in a gorgeous robe of bright green silk, a magnificent tiara on his brow and shaded by a huge silken canopy."

The impressive appearance of the palace and the confidence exhibited by the new Ooni and his chiefs in 1910 were a clear evidence of the return of peace to Ife after a long, harrowing period of political turbulence. The house and compounds which had earlier been burnt down were now rebuilt. New innovations in the economic, social and political fields were in evidence. What was more, Ife's bitter enemies, the Modakeke's, who had sent Ife on two forced exiles were themselves forced to disperse in 1909. For many Ife people, this event was the crowning glory of their recent recovery.

Undoubtedly, the British presence had contributed substantially to the general prevalence of peace and the atmosphere of recovery in Ife. The early British officers took prompt measures not only to disband the warring factions but also to stamp out any incidence of military engagement. Captain Bower's summary treatment of the Alafin, Ogedemgbe and some Ibadan Chiefs, among others, indicated the new order of things (Atanda, 1973).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the British presence was not motivated by altruistic considerations. Their intervention in the politics of Yorubaland and of Nigeria as a whole were motivated by purely selfish considerations resulting in the total loss of political sovereignty by the people. Thus, Ife soon found herself in a position of political subjection to British political agents. But her adaptability to the new political situation brought some rich dividends that her rulers did not lose sight of. Among other things, British presence enabled Ife to recoup her strength after almost a century of warfare. More importantly, her rulers appreciated early enough the necessity to court the friendship of the British as a means of outwitting their communal rivals.

THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SET-UP

Ife, which became a district of Oyo Province during the period under study was (and is) bounded in the east, west, north and south respectively by Ijesa, Ibadan, Oshun and Ondo. Compared to other districts in the Province, Ife was small in size. According to Elgee, its total area at the turn of the century was no more than 400 square miles with a population of about 48,016 (Elgee, 1913:36). The major towns and villages were Ife, Modakeke, (Ifetedo), Edunabon, Ipetumodu, Moro, Yakoyo, Ashipa, (Olode), Aye, Akinlalu, Oshi and Famia (Taiwo, 1966:1). Ife District was certainly not as large as other districts of the province, her dreams of political expansion having been effectively shattered by the events of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Ife's spiritual and cultural hegemony in Yorubaland remained undisputed throughout this period (Ojo, 1966:124).

Recognition by the British authorities of the limited political and territorial influence of Ife in Yorubaland was reflected in the administrative arrangements evolved for Oyo Province (Atanda, 1973). Ife did not become the headquarters of the newly constituted Province. Rather, it was grouped along with Ilesha District and Ila District as a distinct Division under the overall control of the Alafin of Oyo. The two other Divisions of Oyo Province, namely Ibadan and Oyo, were each bigger than Ife Division and eminently more important politically. Nevertheless, Ife was administratively influential, being the headquarters of Ife District and Division.

Under the indirect rule policy pursued by the British administrators, the Ooni became the paramount ruler of the District through whom they supervised the administration of the District. Only one District Officer was based in Ife to control the affairs of the entire Division. And in an

attempt to strengthen the power of the Ooni, the Native Administration Court was introduced in Ife in 1912. The Ooni became the head of this court. And in 1961 he became the Sole Native Authority. There can be no doubt that under the "Lugardian" system of administration that was in vogue till around 1950, the authority of the Ooni vis-a-vis his chiefs and traditional advisers was artificially enhanced (Akinjogbin, 1973).

He became for all practical purposes a despot through whom the British administrative officers, especially the District Officer based in Ife, and the more powerful Resident based in Oyo, controlled the District. But the Ooni was made totally subservient to the Alafin of Oyo, especially during the period from 1914 to 1932 when Captain W.A. Ross was Resident of Oyo Province. He believed the whole province should be governed under the authority of the Alafin with whom he had very intimate connections of personal friendship (Atanda, 108-19). Other towns like Ibadan, Ife, Ila, Ogbomosho and Ilesa were deliberately made subservient to the Alafin whom Ross saw as "the civil Head of the Yoruba tribe" (Atanda, 131-133).

Thus, during the tenure of Captain W. Ross, the political hegemony of Alafin of Oyo was firmly established over other traditional rulers of Oyo Province. It was only after the exit of Captain Ross in 1932 that another British Resident, Ward-Price, tried to reverse the earlier policy in favour of the Ooni's hegemony over and above the other rulers of Yorubaland (Atanda, 258). Ward-Price lost no time in cutting down Oyo to size. Largely because of the antipathy between him and the Alafin, he gave virtual autonomy to Ibadan and started building up the political hegemony of Ile-Ife and that of its rulers, the Ooni (Atanda, 1973).

In the meantime, the official backing given to the Ooni as paramount ruler of Ife District contributed greatly to the arbitrary enhancement of this authority during this period.²² Many of the chiefs and people of Ife soon found to their chagrin that they could no longer control or check the excesses of their oba as in pre-colonial days. Thus, the Ooni remained politically and administratively impregnable in the eyes of the people. Yet it was also an undisputed fact that the Ooni himself was no longer master and absolute sovereign of his own domain. The presence of the District Officers and of the Resident at Ibadan ensured that certain political issues were transferred from the Ooni's authority to the British Officers. What was more, whenever the Ooni departed from Official lines, he was told in no unmistakable terms who the boss was. Thus, when Ooni Olubuse was trying to persecute the Christians in 1900, he was warned to behave or face the wrath of the government (Ayandele,

1966:155). Similarly, when in 1913 Ooni Ademiluyi expressed opposition to the idea of direct taxation, he was given a stern warning that he might lose his throne (Atanda, 181). Thus, the Ooni was, for all practical purposes, a useful tool in the hands of the British officers while at the same time he appeared as an uncontrollable despot in the eyes of his people. This was the great paradox of the indirect rule at the local level.

OONI ADELEKAN'S VISIT TO LAGOS

The cultural importance of Ife as the cradle of Yoruba civilization was recognized early enough by the British colonial authorities. It was largely because of this recognition that the Ooni of Ife was invited to Lagos in 1903 by Governor William Macgregor who stated that the Ooni was the "titular spiritual head of all the Yorubas"². Governor Macgregor believed firmly in the policy of preserving indigenous institutions as a means of ensuring political and social stability. He had established the Central Native Council in Lagos purely as an instrument of communication between the government and the traditional rulers of Yorubaland. It was, however, not until 1903 that he succeeded in persuading Ooni Adelekan to come personally to Lagos, ostensibly to make a pronouncement as to whether or not the Elepe of Epe had a right to wear a beaded crown.²

The visit of the Ooni to Lagos was a major political event being the first time that an Ooni had to travel out of his kingdom. The Ooni travelled through Ibadan from where he took the train to Lagos.² The visit was, therefore, totally unprecedented (Elgee, 1913:20). According to oral traditions, many Yoruba Obas had to vacate their palaces until the Ooni's return to Ife.³

It is often believed that MacGregor's invitation to the Ooni was the result of the former's concern for the traditional institutions of the Elepe to wear a crown. But one should also remember that the Governor himself had made deliberate attempts to break down what he termed the traditional prejudices of the people of Yorubaland. In an attempt to introduce modernism, he had invited the Baale of Ibadan to Lagos in 1901 in a "move towards breaking down the local habit of ruling chief never leaving his town" (Elgee, 14). MacGregor's invitation to Ooni Olubuse was, therefore, a calculated attempt to introduce some form of modernism aimed at promoting British influence and ideas.

While the Governor in Lagos had his own motives, the Ooni also had his own calculations in undertaking the journey to Lagos. The Ooni was clearly concerned to secure the help of the Lagos government in his

domestic troubles with Modakeke and Ibadan. According to Johnson, Ooni Adelekan was still extremely bitter about the humiliations Ife had suffered at the hands of Modakeke and Ibadan.

Thus, his purpose in collaborating with the Lagos governor was to secure the support of the British administration in bringing about the implementation of the 1886 treaty relating to the disbandment of Modakeke. This was the major reason for what Johnson has termed the Ooni's "unusual course of visiting Lagos in person" (Johnson, 647).

THE MODAKEKE CRISIS 1893-1910

Not surprisingly, the unfriendly relations between the Ooni and the Lagos government yielded handsome profits to the former. The Ooni, at the Native Council meeting where he had to back members so they could not see his face, pronounced against the Elepe's right to wear a beaded crown. In return for fulfilling this "official" duty, the Ooni was given a warm reception in the Governor's residence.⁴ The Governor also gave him some money to rebuild his dilapidated palace and an annual stipend of 200.⁴

Finally, there was some definite commitment on the part of the governor to assist the Ooni not only in recovering some of Ife's land lost to Ibadan, but also in ensuring the implementation of the peace treaty clause calling for the disbandment of Modakeke.⁴

Back at home, the Ooni became more confident and communicated frequently with the Resident at Ibadan, Captain Fuller, to whom the Modakeke dispute was officially referred in 1904 (Taiwo, 1960:21). Fuller, in turn, referred the matter to Governor MacGregor in Lagos. And in keeping with his 1903 promise to the Ooni,⁵ MacGregor promptly set up an Arbitration Committee headed by J. B. Ross, the Acting Attorney-General. The Ross Committee in its report ruled that the Modakekes must regard the Ooni as their lord and owner of the land on which they were settled. They were also ordered to give half of their farm yields to the Ife landowners (Taiwo, 21). Those recommendations which were ratified by the Lagos government signified a great victory for Ife but did not mollify the radical party and the Ooni who wanted the total breakup of Modakeke.

Oba Olubuse continued to exert pressure on the British officials to ensure the implementation of the 1886 Treaty Clause. In 1907, a Boundary Commission set up by the Government finally recommended that Modakeke be broken up and that its inhabitants move to the Ibadan side of the boundary (Bascom, 1969:16). It was, however, not until 1909

that Modakeke which had been a thorn in the flesh of Ife was finally broken up and her citizens dispersed to Owu/Ipole, Edunabon, Ede and Odeomu (Johnson, 647). This event could be said to have marked a major triumph for the militant group within Ife that wanted the dispersal of their communal rivals. There is no doubt that Adelekan himself was at the head of this group. He was quoted as saying about the Modakeke that "They drove us twice from our home and we must see that they are driven permanently from there" (Johnson, 648).

The dispersal of Modakeke in 1909, therefore, constituted major political and psychological satisfaction to Adelekan and the militant party in Ife. It could be said to have marked the crowning achievement of the radical, anti-Modakeke elements. For many of them, the break-up of Modakeke was, perhaps, the most striking evidence of Ife's recovery from the harrowing experiences of the preceding century. The Ooni had, as it were, succeeded in stooping to the British in order to conquer his internal "enemies" and communal rivals. Even though the Ooni and his party won the day on the Modakeke issue, the British authorities failed to help him recover all the territories Ife lost to Ibadan in the last century. Apart from a few farms recovered from Ibadan, Ife lost her sovereignty over the towns of Gbongan, Odeomu and tonkere (Taiwo, 22). In the boundary settlement of 1907, these three towns were placed under Ibadan although they were transferred in 1953 to the newly-created Osun Division. Adelekan died in 1910 in the flush of victory as if, in the words of Johnson, he had been raised up "for the purpose of breaking up Modakeke (Johnson, 648). He was, therefore, not around to reap the fiery repercussions of the vengeance exercise. As we shall see, the Modakeke issue continued to destabilize Ife politics for the rest of this period.

MODAKEKE ISSUE IN IFE POLITICS, 1910 -1930

Even though the Ife had scored a major victory with the breaking up of Modakeke in 1909, the Modakeke issue remained far from closed. In fact, it continued to bedevil the internal politics of Ife throughout the reign of Ooni Ademiluyi. The Modakeke issue became a veritable time-bomb that threatened the peace and stability of the District, not only during this period, but also right up to the present.

No sooner had the Modakeke moved out of Ife to Odeomu and other villages than they started experiencing problems of land scarcity. This land problem, as well as other social adjustment difficulties, made their leaders start to think of returning to their old home in Ife where, among

other things, land would be easily available. From around 1912, therefore, they started making overtures to Ooni Ademiluyi to allow them to return to Ife. Ife people were, however, sharply divided over the issue (Oyediran, 1974:66). Whereas the Ooni and some of his chiefs favoured the return of the Modakeke, others led by Balogun Ojuade fearing a repeat performance of the old rivalry, were extremely hostile to the idea. The murder of Balogun Ojuade in August, 1913, by people believed to be Modakeke further increased the political tension within Ife. Among other things, there arose a well-orchestrated agitation calling for the removal of Ademiluyi who was regarded in some quarters as a collaborator with the Modakeke and other "enemies" of Ife. Processions and rallies were held in 1914 especially by women calling for the removal of the Ooni. The situation became so tense that Ademiluyi had to appeal to the District Commissioner:

There are some bad trumpets blown which are not to be blown except in the time of war or when the king is no more wanted ... I wish you to please help me either by writing to me and Council publicly or send one messenger here to come and stop all this, or any other way that you can take to help me in stopping this unbearable acting.⁶

Ultimately, only the unequivocal support of the British colonial administrators saved the Ooni from disgrace and probable removal. He was backed to the hilt by the colonial rulers who even made him the Sole Native Authority of Ife in 1916. But the unfortunate murder of Balogun Ojuade over the Modakeke issue had the practical effect of delaying the return of the Modakeke to Ife. Although Ademiluyi was in favour of their return he had to turn immediate attention to the rather strong opposition to his regime. Thus between 1914 and 1922, he used all his political authority to persecute his enemies and weaken those opposed to Modakeke's return.

Ademiluyi's wish was finally rewarded in 1922 when the Modakeke were allowed to return to Ife under the condition that "the new Modakeke quarter is to be known as the Modakeke quarter of Ife, and is not to be regarded as a separate town".⁷

Why then did Ooni Ademiluyi reverse the earlier policy of his predecessor? Was he genuinely concerned to bring a lasting solution to an old inter-communal feud? Or was he motivated by considerations of self-interest? It would appear that Ademiluyi's heart was genuinely touched by the appeals of the Modakeke whose plight in their new homes was far from enviable. He also probably genuinely believed in the policy of rec-

conciliation with them once they had accepted Ife's supremacy and ownership of the land. But motives of self-interest could not be ruled out of Ademiluyi's actions. With the Lugardian system of administration being pursued at the time, it became vital for any reigning oba to increase the population of his subjects in order to enhance his political and economic power base. Thus if the Modakeke were allowed to return to Ife, the population of the Ooni's subjects would automatically increase and so would his revenue in form of salaries, and income from land rents, farm products and court cases. This explained why he was so concerned to crush all opposition within Ife, and to ensure the return of the Modakeke in 1922. And from 1922 onward, it was the turn of the Modakekes to start rebuilding their houses and getting entrenched in economic enterprises.

Throughout the remaining years of his reign, Ademiluyi ensured that Ife and Modakeke people lived in peace and amity. While the latter were busy rebuilding their homes, Ife could afford to extend her hands of friendship. In cases of dispute between Modakeke farmers and Ife landowners, the Ooni went out of his way to favour the former. And in 1928 Oba Ademiluyi recommended that the Baale of Modakeke be given an active role in local government administration of Ife District. The Baale and the Osa were subsequently paid salaries of 72 and 24 respectively for services rendered to the Native Administration. The Baale was also made a judge of the N.A.Court. All these gestures went a long way in restoring mutual confidence between the two erstwhile warring communities. It was not until the time of Oba Adesoji Aderemi that serious rivalry erupted once again over Ishakole and the question of a separate mosque for Modakeke.

From the above, it becomes obvious that the period under review witnessed some vicissitudes in Ife's fortunes vis-a-vis the Modakeke issue. At the beginning of the period, Ife was sulky and still smarting from the humiliation of defeat in the hands of Modakeke and her Ibadan ally. But with the return of peace and the gradual build-up of confidence, Ife was soon able to secure the friendship of the British authorities, especially the Resident at Ibadan and the Governor in Lagos. With this strong support behind Ife, Modakeke was finally broken up in 1909. But barely three years after this vengeance exercise, the return of Modakeke had become a live issue bedeviling the internal politics of Ife. The party favouring Modakeke's return ultimately won the day. Having used the Modakeke issue to weaken his enemies, Oba Ademiluyi found it politically expedient after 1922 to show magnanimity to Modakeke and

involve her leaders in the Native Administration structure over which he himself presided. Perhaps never before, nor since, had relations between the two communities been so free of serious acrimony. It was the era of Ife's full recovery from the humiliations of the 19th century. But paradoxically enough, this era also became the seedling time for the modernization of the ineradicable conflict.⁸

DISAFFECTION AGAINST OONI'S DESPOTISM

One of the most interesting side-effects of the British policy of indirect rule in the former Western Nigeria was the arbitrary increase in the power and status of the obas on whom the British officers depended to carry out their rule. The general tendency throughout the period was for the British officers to continue to strengthen the position of the obas against the people thereby turning them into petty despots (Crowder and Ikime, 1970; Nicolson, 1969:68). In Ife this tendency became clearly pronounced during the reign of Ooni Ademiluyi. This trend towards arbitrary increase in the authority and power of the oba provoked considerable disaffection among the chiefs and people of Ife.

Under the pre-colonial administrative order, the chiefs, especially the *Ihare*, *Modewa* and *Isoro*, had clearly defined functions to perform in the government of Ife (Oyediran, 1973:373). These chiefs, together with the other traditional institutions such as the *Geru* court, the *Mole* and *Ifa* priests, had well-defined roles to play in the general administration of Ife kingdom. They acted as constitutional checks on the Ooni and ensured that he did not exceed the bounds prescribed by tradition. These bodies in pre-colonial times proved to be effective checks against dictatorial tendencies in the Ooni.⁹ Any attempt on his part to subvert the constitutional and social order was usually met with the advice that he should "go to sleep" (Bascom, 1969).

But this carefully arranged system of checks and balances was greatly upset during this period. With the introduction of the Sole Native Authority system in 1916, the Ooni became, to all intents and purposes, a despot who could ride roughshod over the wishes of his chiefs and traditional advisers. The chronological sequence of this development is not without significance. When Ademiluyi first came to the throne in 1910, he was considered a weak king. Frobenius expressed the view that he was only a pawn at the hands of his chiefs and court clerks (Frobenius, 1968:77-78,279). The colonial administrators themselves shared this view. During the 1913-1914 agitation for the Ooni's removal, the Resident at Ibadan stated categorically that "the present Ooni is weak ...

Control over villages has grown very weak and the town is unorganized" (Oyediran, 1973:376). Yet by the 1920s, the authority of the oba had grown beyond acceptability. He had become such a despot that he could afford to ignore advice from his chiefs. In fact, by the time he died in 1930, he had become so unpopular that some Ife citizens felt concerned to put up what they described as the people's "Magna Carta" against arbitrary use of power by any future oba (376).

How then did this dramatic transformation from a weak to an autocratic oba take place? As rightly pointed out by Oyediran, the deliberate support of the British for Oba Ademiluyi was the crucial factor in this trend towards autocracy (377). With the rather uncritical commitment of the British to the policy of indirect rule, British officials had no choice but to build up the Ooni as the pivot of local administration in Ife. The Ooni was made the president of the Native Administration Court introduced in 1912. This position gave him power to appoint judges to preside over court sessions. As we shall see below, the Ooni did not only arbitrate in all land cases, but also influenced the decisions of the courts in other civil cases like divorce (Atanda, 178ff). More importantly, the British invested in the Ooni the Sole Native Authority of the District in 1916. This arrangement completely upset the old relationship between the Ooni and his people. He no longer needed their counsel and advice to carry out his functions. The support of the British officials was all that mattered to sustain him even against the expressed wishes of the people. And this support the British were ready to give in ample generosity as long as the Oba toed official lines.

When people demonstrated in 1914 for the removal of the Ooni, the District Officer made it abundantly clear that such a proposition was useless. He declared his uncompromising support for the Oba as follows:

My idea is to back up the Ooni. I made that idea clear to everyone concerned at Ife...

I think a full inquiry would be necessary and perhaps some troops to finally impress the people with the uselessness of their unwarrantable proposition (178ff).

The move to remove the Oba soon fizzled out, but because of the crisis a decision was taken in 1914 that the District Commissioner should henceforth be stationed at Osogbo so as to closely supervise events at Ife and thereby lend the greatest official support to the Ooni. And with the creation of the Sole Native Authority System in 1916, it soon became clear to all that the Ooni was now in an impregnable position and that the wishes of the people no longer counted in the performance of his

duties. He was paid a handsome salary of £1,400 (2,800) per annum (p.146) which made him economically independent of his subject.

With the arbitrary increase in the status of the Oba, there was considerable disaffection among the chiefs and the traditional ruling elite who found themselves totally powerless in the face of the strong support that the British authorities gave to Oba Ademiluyi. The arbitrary use of power by the Oba became more evident after the agitation for his removal had died down and he had become the Sole Native Authority of the District. Details of this misuse of power are not crucial here, but suffice it to cite a few examples that the people found irksome.

First, the Ooni had succeeded in turning his chiefs into mere sycophants and dependents. As the Sole Native Authority, he had the ultimate power to recommend the appointment, suspension and dismissal of chiefs. Ademiluyi used this power to favour his friends and victimize those he did not like. For instance, in 1920 he recommended the suspension of Chief Omisore, the Lowa, largely because of personal antipathy towards Omisore. Even though the Resident was aware that Omisore was a competent chief, he upheld the Ooni's recommendation (Oyediran, 378). Thus, the chiefs were no longer in a position, either individually or collectively, to bring pressure on the Ooni and therefore check his political excesses.

Second, Ademiluyi often interfered in the decisions of the courts to favour his friends and persecute his opponents (Atanda, 182-3). He realized that he had the ultimate power to recommend the appointment of judges consequently, most of those appointed invariably were only too grateful to do his bidding. Cases coming up in the courts were usually reviewed in the palace to know the Ooni's wish. In 1926, he reversed the court decision on the Aderemi - Salami land dispute deliberately to deprive the former of a piece of land which was originally to have been divided between the two litigants (Oyediran, 378-9). When some of the chiefs protested, the District Officer did not contradict the Ooni's position. He merely commented matter-of-factly that:

The Ooni undoubtedly does interfere a great deal with the judges and in cases in which he is interested he invariably instructs the judges as to what judgement they are to give The Ooni's line appears to be that though he does not sit as President of the court, yet he is entitled to direct the decision of the court (p.379).

This open interference in the procedures of the court produced a lot of disaffection not only in Ife town but also in neighbouring towns like Ipetumodu and Apomu where the *emeses* also tried to assert the Ooni's

influence (Atanda, 182).

Third, the Oba was accused of open partiality and favouritism in his administration of the District. He was alleged to be in the habit of exempting members of his household and other favourites from paying taxes (Oyedean, 378).

Finally, Oba Ademiluyi's personal life was called to question by many of his subjects. He was accused of arbitrarily seducing other people's wives - a charge that was to be expected in a situation of increased power, status and prestige. It is also not clear whether this alleged "womanizing" proclivity was in any way connected with the many incidence of divorce at this time. But there can be no doubt that both in his official policies and in matters pertaining to his private life, the Ooni had become quite unpopular. Before his death in 1930, he had become, in the eyes of the people, a veritable tyrant (Bascom, 16).

It is obvious that all the above instances of arbitrary rule had been made possible largely because of the superimposition of the Lugardian system of indirect rule whereby a single individual was constituted as the Sole Native Authority of the District. Hence, an erstwhile weak individual suddenly assumed autocratic trappings. All the traditional institutions acting as checks and balances had been totally swept aside to favour the emergence of a *de facto* despot. However, people's resentment against the despotic tendencies of the Ooni was more subterranean than overt. They seemed to have resigned themselves to British power and influence. After the disturbances of 1914, there were no major political events throughout the remaining years of Ademiluyi's rule. The 1920's was therefore a decade of relative peace and stability which underlined the recovery which had become evident since the turn of the century. The environment favoured the spread of economic, social and educational innovations that sooner or later were to affect the lives of the people profoundly.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

In spite of the political grievances arising from the greatly distorted position of the Ooni, the period witnessed stupendous growth in economic, social and educational fields. With the formal establishment of British authority in 1893, European influences were to make momentous, and it may be added, revolutionary impacts on the lives of the people.

In the economic field, the period witnessed some diversification of activities. The most important traditional economic enterprise, agriculture, was seriously affected by the official emphasis on cash crop pro-

duction for export to Europe. At the beginning of the period, British officials placed great emphasis on the cultivation of export crops like cotton, coffee and cocoa.

At every available opportunity, the governor and his officials impressed it upon the rulers of Ife the necessity to take up the cultivation of such export crops.¹⁰ The British also ensured that they sent out economic survey missions to arouse the interest of the people in these economic ventures. The people of Ife were themselves anxious to take advantage of the new economic opportunities made available with the return of peace. Not only did they carry on with exporting palm-oil and kernels, they also attempted the commercial cultivation of crops like cotton, coffee and cocoa.¹¹

Cocoa ultimately became the major export crop of Ife District. It was first introduced around 1900 by Christian missionary agents from Ijebu province. During the latter part of Adelekan's reign, one Rev. M.I. Akinyemi brought large quantities of cocoa seeds which were planted by enthusiastic farmers. People took advantage of the post-war European demand to expand their production. The industry attracted wage labourers from far and wide and helped to swell the population of the surrounding farming villages (Berry, 1975).

More significantly, cocoa cultivation affected the pattern of landholding. Originally, migrant farmers who were given land by Ife landowners were only asked to pay a token fee known as *Ishakole*. This payment, usually in the form of farm produce, was to ensure that the land given out was not regarded as a freehold of the tenant. But with the commercialization of cocoa and the wealth derived from it, Ife landowners started to levy higher rents and to demand as much as 10% of all the cocoa produced on a given piece of land. This made the Modakeke farmers bitter, (Oyediran, 1974:68-73) and undoubtedly contributed to the resumption of intercommunal feud during the reign of Ooni Aderemi. By this time, some European, Lebanese and indigenous firms had opened licensed-buying agencies in the town.

Another significant economic activity which originated during the period was the commercial production of kola, an enterprise that subsequently attracted a sizeable population of Hausa settlers who are still to be found in the *Sabongari* quarter of Ife. *Kola nitida*, known locally as *gbanja*, became the basis of this new trade. It is to be distinguished from the *kola acuminata* which had been in existence for centuries and was produced purely for domestic consumption. But *kola nitida*, which was also introduced into Ife by missionaries in the second decade of the 20th

century,¹² was intended for commercial export to the northern parts of Nigeria. The task of preparing the nuts for export soon fell on the Hausas who came to settle in large numbers in Ife from the 1940's onwards and have since provided an invaluable reservoir of unskilled labour.

Thus, cocoa and kola nitida which were introduced into Ife during this period became the most important export crops of the district. Other crops like cotton and coffee continued to be cultivated but without the spectacular results of cocoa and kola. Cotton continued to be produced for domestic consumption while coffee did not feature prominently as a major export. Nevertheless, the fact remained that the agricultural base of Ife's economy had become greatly widened and farm products considerably diversified. One must emphasize that the production of food crops like yams, maize, vegetables, etc continued to be carried out along with the cultivation of export crops. During the period, Ife had no difficulty in feeding her growing population.

TRADE AND COMMERCE

In trade and commerce, this period also witnessed several significant changes. Before 1894, Ife's external trade had been dominated by the export of palm produce. Her traders, originally organized into guilds known as Ipanpa, had carried their produce to coastal towns like Lagos and Ijebu from where they brought back European merchandise like cotton goods, metalware and luxury items. Traders from other towns like Lagos, Ijebu, Ibadan, and Ondo also visited Ife markets for trade purposes. But these trading activities had been interrupted by the events of the previous quarter century.

With the return of peace in 1894, these trading activities were promptly resumed. The increasing demand for tropical raw materials and improvements in communication greatly facilitated the development of commerce during the period. The extension of the railway to Ibadan in 1900 and to Osogbo in 1903, boosted commercial activities. Even though Ife was not connected to Ibadan by a motorable road until 1918, traders continued to use the old commercial highway. Frobenius noted in 1910 that the roads around Ife were very busy:

We found ourselves on one of the busiest thoroughfares in the thickly - populated province of Yoruba and met with not hundreds of wayfares only, but caravans by the hundred ... (Frobenius, 76).

Between 1911 and 1912, some European trading firms were given permission by the Ooni to open stores in Ife to sell imported goods and purchase palm oil, cocoa and cotton directly from the people. Thus

began the process of displacing the traditional guild of *Ipanpa* and the *Parakoyi* who used to control the export trade from Ife (Bascom, 27). By the 1920's more European firms like G.C. Gaiser and U.A.C. had set up stores in Ife. A few indigenous entrepreneurs like Aderemi also opened trading stores to collaborate with the European firms.

The use of metal coins introduced in 1907 also facilitated commercial activities. Metal coins soon replaced the old but cumbersome cowries. In 1918, paper currency was also introduced in Ife following war time metal shortage in Europe (Bascom, 27). By the 1920's all these metal and paper currencies had gained wide acceptability as media of exchange.

Crafts specialization, a distinct feature of Ife's indigenous economy, was seriously affected by the importation of cheap European goods, especially cotton, pottery and metal tools. Indigenous crafts like weaving, dyeing, iron-working, brass-casting, bead-working, pottery, wood-carving and calabash-carving continued to thrive but many of them suffered considerable decline due to the competition from cheaper European goods. Nevertheless, the colonial environment also provided new economic opportunities and encouraged the rise of new professionals like carpenters, bricklayers, tailors, bicycle repairers, mechanics, shop-keepers and letter writers (Bascom, 24).

CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN EDUCATION

One of the most significant factors contributing to the spread of new ideas and western ways of life was the Christian religion which became firmly established in Ife during this period. Even though unsuccessful attempts had been made by Hinderer and John Thomas to introduce Christianity in Ife in 1859, it was not until 1900 that the religion secured a firm footing (Taiwo, 3-4). In 1900, a piece of land was given to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) at Iyekere where a church was built in 1901. Mr. E. A. Kayode, the Catechist and school teacher, also supervised the building of the first primary school, St. Philips, which was formally opened in 1901.

After initial opposition from Ooni Adelekan and from followers of the traditional religion, the C.M.S. started to vigorously propagate the Christian religion and to promote western education. In addition to the work of evangelization, literacy was actively promoted by the mission. Some promising students from the mission school were encouraged to proceed to higher institutions of learning, especially St. Andrew's College, Oyo, to be trained as teachers and clergymen. The practical

value of literacy became more and more obvious to the Ooni as he interacted with the British officers. And since he could neither read nor write English, he had to depend on those who had western education. There was therefore a great need for interpreters, secretaries and letter-writers who were proficient in writing and speaking English.

An event occurred in 1903 which greatly underlined the significance of literacy in contemporary life. In that year, Ife lost her jurisdiction over Gbongan, Odeomu and Tonkere because the letter by which the Resident summoned Ooni Adelekan to a meeting to determine the Ife-Ibadan boundary question was not read to the Ooni (Taiwo, 22), Rev. Kayode, then the only literate person around, was at that time carefully avoiding palace intrigues over the Modakeke question. The loss of these three towns to Ibadan greatly pained the Ooni and spurred him and his chiefs to actively support the literacy campaign in Ife District. Both Adelekan and Ademiluyi, subsequently became personally interested in promoting the cause of christianity and western education. Ademiluyi who had joined the C.M.S. since 1904 moved the first church from Iyekere to Aiyetoro near his family house. Other churches were also built at Irewo, Ilare, Aiyegbaju, Modakeke, Ipetumodu and Edunabon during his reign (Taiwo, 22).

Other Christian denominations also joined the C.M.S. in promoting christianity and western education in Ife. The African Church made its appearance in Ife in 1904, followed in 1912 by the Baptists and the Roman Catholics in 1917. The Seventh Day Adventist Mission came later in 1939 and was given ample land on which it built a hospital in 1940 (Taiwo: 23, f.n.1.).

Many of the pupils trained in these christian schools later found their way to institutions of higher learning. Others simply went to seek employment in government services or private commercial enterprises. From the ranks of these educated elite arose the nucleus of patriotic societies and town improvement unions which later campaigned for the welfare and development of Ife within the wider Nigerian context. For instance, the Ife Improvement Union emerged at this time and became the vanguard of social enlightenment programmes in Ife (Eluyemi, 1980:47). Its members soon acquired proficiency in drafting petitions and memoranda to the colonial authorities calling for social and welfare amenities. More importantly, its members took positive steps to establish the first secondary school in Ife in 1932 when Oduduwa College was opened by Ooni Aderemi.

Islam also made significant though less dramatic inroads in Ife at this

period. Judging from the number of people attending the jumat prayers in Ife's central mosque, it appeared that Islam did not fare badly during the period. In fact, by the 1930s, Islam had secured so many adherents in Modakeke that a separate mosque was built there. Moslems in Modakeke actually used this membership expansion as an excuse to agitate for a mosque independent of Ife. Traditional religion continued to thrive side by side with the two imported religions.

WELFARE AMENITIES

With the emergence of the educated elite and the gradual spread of western-type enlightenment, the demand for modern amenities became forcefully articulated in the latter part of the period. Most Ife sons and daughters resident in Lagos, Abeokute, Ijebu and Ibadan wanted modern amenities, such as roads and pipe-borne water, which were already being enjoyed in these other towns, extended to their own home.

Motorable roads became a priority. And contrary to official statements, all the Ife roads were built through communal efforts. Following the introduction of the first bicycle in 1904, modern road became necessary. Pressure from the British officials who naturally wanted the hammock confined to the museum, also helped in galvanizing the people to construct roads through the use of unpaid communal labour. It was during the reign of Ademiluyi that the first township road was constructed from Enuwa to More. This road was later extended to Ilesa. Other township roads constructed during the period included those of Ilare and Okerewe to Ilode. Apart from the Ife-Ilesa road, the Ede road was also completed at this time. The Ife-Ibadan road which had been started from the Ibadan end since 1906 was finally completed just in time for the visit of Governor Hugh Clifford in 1919.

With the availability of roads, vehicular transportation became important. The use of bicycles, which was a novelty in 1904, soon became a common sight. Lorries and cars also made their appearance at this time. The first car to be owned by an Ife indigence was bought, appropriately enough, by Ooni Ademiluyi in 1920. By 1928, three of these expensive luxuries were found in Ife - the other two owned by the Ooni's son, Prince Adeyemi and a well-to-do merchant and future Ooni, Adesoji Aderemi. Some lorries had also been purchased by enterprising people for commercial transportation.

One side-effect of the transportation revolution was that it became easier for people to travel out of their domain to other towns. This, naturally, had an impact on social habits. For instance, when it was observed

that in the major towns like Lagos and Ibadan, iron sheets had replaced thatch for roofing buildings, Ife followed that example. From then, those who were able to afford the expense, started to roof their houses with iron sheets. This was a major insurance against fires in the town. Storey buildings were built at this time following the Ooni's example in 1905 and the adoption by people in other towns of similar architectural styles. In spite of all these building innovations, the skyline of Ife was still conspicuously modest. Thatch-roofed homes were still predominant during the period. Even the "modern" houses juxtaposed, uneasily with old, crawling family compounds and innumerable shrines.¹³

The demand for the provision of pipe-borne water was only partially met. The Mokuro Water Dam project which was embarked upon in the late 1920's was completed only in 1935. An electricity supply project was not commissioned until 1935.

Lastly, mention must be made of the prominence enjoyed by Ife in the cultural history of Nigeria and of Africa as a whole. Ife city has become famous nationally and internationally for her numerous bronze heads, terracotta and wood carving which at one time or the other decorated several world museums. It is significant for us to note that world attention was first drawn to these artistic treasures during this period. It was when Frobenius visited Ife in 1910 that he collected and published his findings on these artistic marvels from what he called "Lost Atlantis" (Frobenius, Ch. XV). Thus the artistic collections that ultimately placed Ife on the world map were unearthed at the time. The period is therefore culturally and aesthetically important.

CONCLUSION

From our analysis above, it is evident that the theme of recovery is, in many significant respects, an appropriate one for the history of Ife during this period. Militarily, Ife had recovered from the harrowing experiences of the nineteenth century. Her fighting forces were finally disbanded while the generality of the people returned to their homes and started to reap the benefits of peace. Politically, Ife was now able to reach some form of accommodation with her communal rival, Modakeke. After the vengeance exercise of 1909, when the Modakekes were in turn forced to taste the bitter pill of leaving their homes, it soon became obvious that the ties binding the two communities could no longer be totally loosened. Hence, the issue of Modakeke's return loomed large in the politics of Ife between 1910 and 1922. When the Modakeke finally returned in 1922, Ife rulers went out of their way to hold out the olive branch. This

was the culminating point of Ife's recent political and psychological recovery.

Apart from this recovery, one must also emphasize that this period was one of momentous innovations in the political, economic and social fields. Ife now had to reckon with and take advantage of the British political presence. Even though the Ooni was no longer the final arbiter in political and administrative matters, the people found to their discomfort that his political authority had been artificially inflated to the point of despotism. Nevertheless, they took advantage of the new economic challenges, the introduction of christianity and of western education to improve their lot and agitate for modern amenities such as motorable roads, pipe-borne water, electricity and better dwelling houses.

Finally, the emergence of an educated elite that valued literacy and enlightenment, significantly affected the political fortunes of Ife. By the end of the period under review the people had started to clamour for a western-educated and an enlightened oba to direct the political destiny of the city.

NOTES

- (1) Carer to Ripon 30 August, 1894. C.S.O. 1/1/14; quoted in Akintoye, "Ife's Sad Century", p.38.
- (2) Government Gazette, 21 Feb., 1903, p. 153.
- (3) Government Gazette, 28 Feb., 1903, p. 165.
- (4) For details of the Ooni's reception, see *Government Gazette*, 28 Feb., 1903, pp. 170 -171.
- (5) See MacGregor's promise of 26 Feb., 1903 to Ooni Adelekan, *Government Gazette*, 28 Feb. 1903, p.170.
- (6) Ademiluyi to D.C. Jan., 1914, Oyo Prof. 1. File 133, N.A.I. cited in Oyediran, "The Position of the Ooni in the Changing Political System of Ile-Ife". *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* VI, 4, 1973, P. 376.
- (7) Memo from Resident, Oyo, to D.C., Ife, 10 March 1923, cited in Oyediran, "Modakeke in Ife", *Odu.*, 10, 1974, pp. 67 - 77.

- (8) Apart from the tensions during Aderemi's reign, a very serious clash broke out in April 1981 shortly after Oba Olubuse II ascended the throne.
- (9) Oyediran 1973:374; in Frobenius' view, the high chiefs were the "Actual rulers of the city and state". Frobenius, op. cit., p. 281.
- (10) *See Government Gazette notices on economic matters especially 27 July, 1899, pp. 285-7; 21 April, 1901, pp. 265-6; 14 Dec. 1901, pp. 684-7; and others. (National Archives, Ibadan).*
- (11) Oral Interview, Pastor E.T. Latunde, C. 70, 8 March 1981; Chief Ojudale, c. 80, Wasewa Compound, Ife 9 March, 1981.
- (12) Oral Interview, Pastor E.T. Latunde & Chief Ojudale.
- (13) Oral Interview, Pastor Latunde & Chief Ojudale.

CHAPTER 10

THE ADEREMI ERA, 1930-1980

Olusola Akinrinade and I. A. Akinjogbin

The period Sir Adesoji Aderemi reigned as the Ooni of Ife (1930-1980) raised the ancient city to a height it had not attained since the fourth decade of the 19th century. Oba Aderemi, who succeeded Oba Ademiluyi was one of the most colourful personalities of his time. The first literate ruler of Ife, he achieved the rare distinction of being the first African governor in the British Empire and Commonwealth.

PRINCE ADESOJI ADEREMI, 1889-1930

When Prince Adesoji Aderemi was born on November 15th 1889, into the Akui Royal Family of Ile-Ife, the town was still an abandoned site and was not to be re-inhabited until 1893.¹ His father, Osundeyi Gbadebo, died in 1897 when the young Prince Adesoji was only eight years old. Consequently, the burden of his early education was left in the hands of his mother Adekunbi Itiola who hailed from Ipetumodu. By the age of ten, young Aderemi had been apprenticed to an *Ifa* priest to be trained as a *Babalawo*.² The arrival of the missionaries in 1899 and the subsequent opening of a primary school, St. Phillip's School, Yekere, in 1901 paved the way for a change in the direction of his education. He became attracted to the small christian band at Ile-Ife because he liked their long, white robes which distinguished them from the traditional worshippers.³ He joined the christian band with the approval of his mother and after conversion was given the opportunity for western education.

He must have been a bright student for, when he finished at St. Phillips in 1906, he was employed to teach in the same school for three years. During the period, the missionaries wanted to send him to St. Andrew's College, Oyo, but his mother would only agree on the condition that she would also be provided with a room at the college where she could continue to pursue her trade in kolanuts and keep an eye on her son. As the conditions could not be met, Aderemi missed the chance of that education.⁴ In 1909, he left teaching for the Government Railways, where he had a varied and distinguished career until 1921. Starting from the Engineering Department, he transferred to the Traffic Department in 1910 where he had an excellent record of service as a

Telegraph Clerk.⁵ He was soon bored with the drudgery of telegraphy and so he applied to be trained as an Instructor in the Telegraph Section, even though it would mean a decrease in his salary from £30 to £24 per annum. On completion of the training, he served in many stations in the western area from November 3, 1910 to 1915. Between 1915 and 1919, he served as Chief Signaller and Traffic Instructor in the Eastern Area, with base in Port Harcourt. During this period, he opened the first Telegraph School there. Between 1919 and 1921 he served as Station Master in many towns in the western area including Ibadan, Iwo and Offa.⁶

Prince Adesoji left the services of the Nigerian Railway for good in 1921. For nine years, between 1921 and 1930, he worked for many European firms in produce and merchandise. He started as a Produce Clerk for John Holt Limited, one of the major trading concerns. Later, he became a Produce Agent for John Holt as well as for other companies like the African Trading Company (from which the United African Company, U.A.C., later developed), G.L. Gaiser and MacIver. By 1924, he had already become a "factor", purchasing palm-kernel, cotton and cocoa from Ife and neighbouring towns and earning generous commissions. Consequently, he extended his business into other concerns, principally, the motor transport industry. During this period, he also went into farming, an occupation he maintained for the rest of his life. When he came to the throne in 1930, he was very much in the transport business and was one of the wealthy African traders in what was then the Oyo Province.⁷ In Ile-Ife, he was a proud owner of one of the only three motor cars in town, the other two belonging to the Ooni Ademiluyi and Prince Adeyemi Ademiluyi, the Ooni's eldest son.

During the years before 1930, he must have developed an interest in public affairs in Yorubaland, and particularly in Ife. He was already mature and a school teacher when the Ife/Ibadan boundary was made in 1907, and he must have shared in the disappointment that Ife lost a number of towns to Ibadan. He probably had just joined the railways or was about to when Modakeke was broken up and its population dispersed. He remembered quite clearly the events that led to the murder of Balogun Ojuade over the Modakeke issue, and must have been well aware of moves to bring the Modakeke back. Moreover, his experience gained both in the railways and all over Southern Nigeria, must have increased his zeal for the improvement of Ile-Ife. In 1919, he and a number of elites formed the Ife Progressive Union which was officially launched on 16th December, with him as the first secretary. Living in



The Ooni of Ife, Sir Adesoji Aderemi (1930 - 1980), wearing a traditional beaded crown with a crest over the forehead and a long fringe of beads hiding his face. He is taking part in the Olojo festival in honour of Ogun, the god of iron and patron of hunters, one of the two occasions each year when, in the old days, the Ooni used to appear in public.

Ife-Ife from 1921 onwards gave him the opportunity to be active in the organisation. Consequently, he became very popular. He was also an active and popular member of an Ibadan-based Pan-Yoruba cultural organisation called the *Egbe Agha o tan* (There are still Elders). His activities in these various organisations helped in preparing him for his ultimate duty on succession to the throne of Ife.

His growing wealth and popularity was not lost on the reigning Ooni, Oba Ademiluyi, who became suspicious and somewhat jealous of him. Nor did Prince Adesoji's flamboyant personality sooth tempers, as an incident in 1928 demonstrates. Riding through the streets of Ife in a car similar to that of the Ooni, he was hailed *Baba yi o* (Hail, the King), a greeting reserved for the Ooni alone, and he must have enjoyed it. He was, however, promptly dragged before the Native Court, accused of disrespect to the office of the Ooni, found guilty and punished.⁸

The death of Ooni Ademiluyi Ajugun in 1930 created a vacancy on the throne of Ife. The struggle for succession started immediately the rites, rituals and ceremonies that accompanied the death of the Oba were completed. Among the front runners were Prince Adesoji Aderemi, from the Osinkola branch of the Akui ruling house, Prince Adedire from the Giesi ruling house and Prince Adewoyin from the Lafogido ruling house. Of the three major contestants Prince Adesoji was the only literate person. Behind his candidature were strong members of his family including Chief Sooko Agbaje Adebowale and Chief Lowa Omisore.

Despite the argument that the Akui compound should yield to the claims of another compound because Adekola, the Ooni-elect who died at Ilofi in 1910 before he could complete the rites of succession, was, like Aderemi, from Akui compound, Prince Adesoji had the support of the majority of the king-makers. These latter, indeed, argued that because Akui compound had spent so much money in vain in 1910, they should be compensated on this occasion. Prince Adesoji Aderemi was, therefore, elected the Ooni. His appointment was approved by the Governor on August 23, 1930 and he was formally installed the Ooni on September 2, 1930. The new Oba Adesoji Aderemi assumed the title *Atobatele* (*Atobatele-K`oye-to-de*, meaning, he ranks with the king even before the conferment of the title).⁹

OBA ADEREMI, 1930-1948

In 1930 when Oba Aderemi ascended the throne, Ife could be described as backward. The appearance of the town itself was filthy with dunghills everywhere. Social and medical facilities were lacking; educa-

tional facilities; were paltry as there was no single secondary school in the town to serve the needs of elementary school leavers. Oba Aderemi was aware of these problems, and with the co-operation of Native Administration Officers and his chiefs, set about tackling them. In this respect, he utilized his experiences in both the public service and business life. The first 18 years of his reign witnessed socio-economic progress in Ife in an atmosphere of relative internal peace and co-operation with the colonial authorities. Before his accession, there was already in existence an Education Committee headed by Ooni Ademiluyi, but this committee could not realize its objectives. Oba Aderemi realized the futility of waiting for this committee to implement its programmes and, therefore, personally championed the founding of Oduduwa College in January 1932.¹⁰ This secondary school remained the king's pet project until he passed away. Other educational institutions followed, including the Murumba Teachers Training College established in 1943 by the Catholic Community.¹¹

Oba Aderemi also initiated the improvement of sanitary conditions in the town. He got rid of the dunghills quietly and in a fascinating way too. When he had decided which area to clear, he would wake up as early as 5.00 a.m. and sit down in the area. The early morning workers in the area, finding the Ooni sitting down, were obliged, in shock, to pay obeisance. He would then ask all of them to clear the heap. By going from one area to another, unannounced, he gave the town a cleaner appearance.¹² Already in 1930, under Oba Ademiluyi, the Mokuro waterworks had been commissioned and that gave the people of Ife the facility of pipe-borne water. Health condition in Ife improved with the opening of the Seventh Day Adventist Mission Hospital in 1944.¹³ This hospital was later supplemented by the opening of the Local Government antenatal clinic. Oba Aderemi also initiated the introduction of the registration of vital statistics and the construction of good road network within Ife. One of such roads, the New Road (now called Aderemi Road), was due to his initiative.¹⁴

As a prince, the Oba had lived for a considerable time in the Eastern Provinces. When he became Oba, he continued to travel round the country. Prior to the inauguration of the Chiefs' Conference in 1937, he travelled to many places outside his domain, thus further weakening the old custom already broken by Olubuse in 1883 that an Oba of his status should not leave his *Aafin*. In the process, he made a number of highly useful contacts with the Emirs of the Northern Provinces.¹⁵ These contacts projected the image of Ife town. Oba Aderemi made remarkable

achievements in the first few years of his reign and these earned him a glowing tribute in the Annual Report of the Senior Resident for Oyo Province, G. H. Findley, as early as 1936. He received the King George V Jubilee medal in 1935 and the King's Medal for African Chiefs in Silver gilt in 1936. In 1937, he was awarded a first class coronation medal for chiefs and bagged the C.M.G. in January 1943.

He had attracted enough recognition to be appointed to serve on many public committees including the Ibadan Government College Advisory Council, Cocoa Marketing Advisory Committee, Ibadan, and Cocoa Board, Lagos. He was also a Director of the Nigerian Produce Marketing Company Limited, as well as a member of the Western House of Assembly and of the Nigerian Legislative Council. Oba Aderemi crowned these successes with a trip to the United Kingdom in 1946. According to the Acting Resident of Ife Division in a letter to the Secretary of the Western Province on June 18, 1947 when preparations for the trip were being made, the purpose of the visit was to enable the Ooni obtain a personal view of English life in any facet possible and to study the Local Government System. Since he was also recently appointed member of the Cocoa Marketing Board and served in its Advisory Committee, he was to study marketing and manufacturing in the United Kingdom. The trip was financed partly by the Ife Native Administration, the Cocoa Marketing Board and the British Council. Ile-Ife started to attract favourable recognition from the colonial authorities. This progress was sustained without any serious problem in the first fifteen years of his reign. However, in 1947, crisis erupted within the Ooni's domain.

INTERNAL CRISES, 1947-1970

The years of peace and progress were followed by those of crises which started in 1947, just before the Ooni proceeded to England, and lasted until 1970. There were three main problems namely, the Ife/Modakeke crisis, the dispute with the *Egbe Omo Ibile* and the Ife Forest Reserve dispute.

In 1947, the recurrent Ife/Modakeke issue resurfaced, this time because the Modakeke community refused to pay their Ife landlords the land rent known as *Isakole* or *Ifo*. In November 1946, the Lagos branch of Modakeke Progressive Union had petitioned Ooni Aderemi about the excessive sums being demanded from Modakeke farmers by Ife landlords. The Ooni agreed to discuss the matter with his chiefs and asked the union to send two representatives to the meeting. But the union did

not give any reply to the Ooni's request and so the matter was not investigated.¹⁶ This was followed by a letter dated 5th April, 1947 from the *Baale* and chiefs of Modakeke to Oba Aderemi denouncing the payment of *Isakole* to the land-owning compound heads of Ife. In the letter, they traced the history of their community up to the time Ooni Ademiluyi recalled them after they had been scattered in 1909. They claimed that there was no oral or written evidence to show that they agreed to pay the *Isakole* but only promised to give annual tributes to the Ooni in form of farm produce. They were, therefore, surprised when years later, Ife landlords demanded *Isakole* on their cocoa. When the demand was first made, they continued, they were not strong enough to resist and therefore had to pay. Their prayer in the letter was that Ooni Aderemi should stop what they regarded as exploitation.

Oba Aderemi replied the letter on 25th June, 1947 that he had inquired fully into the grievances but saw no ground for him to interfere in what he considered private matters since 'it usually takes two to make such an agreement and the Oba was never a party to it'.¹⁷ He then refuted the claim that Oba Ademiluyi called the Modakekes back and said there was nothing illegal in a tenant paying rents to his landlord. He felt the Modakeke tenant was the guilty party since 'he has the right to own land and refuses to exercise that right'. After despatching the letter, Oba Aderemi took pains to enlighten the Resident, to whom the Modakekes had also lodged their complaints, saying that 'the Modakekes are attempting an impossibility because the system is as old as the hills'.¹⁸ Thenceforth, the Modakeke saw Oba Aderemi as a partial arbiter in the dispute as he had already passed judgement against them. Besides, the Oba himself had tenants from whom he collected the land rent, so he too was seen as an exploiter. On the other hand, he was also not entirely trusted by the Ife landlords who felt that his Oyo connections were too strong for him to embark on a pro-Ife policy in the dispute - his mother was from Ipetumodu, but more importantly, his second and favourite wife was from Modakeke. The landlords, therefore, felt the Oba would not support them against the Modakeke and consequently wrote him a letter of warning in October 1947 advising him to desist from interfering in the dispute as it was a private matter between them and the Modakeke tenants. The Oba was thus in an impossible position.

Clashes ensued between both parties at frequent intervals, and when all entreaties failed, Oba Aderemi requested government intervention in November, 1947. The government's reply did not help the matter either, as it claimed the dispute was a private matter that could be settled in the

courts of law. The Oba eventually brought the two sides together but nothing concrete was achieved. He offered the Modakeke the option of a new farmland which would be rent-free, an offer politely rejected by the Modakeke spokesman who remarked that, that would entail more problems. The only way to agree to the suggestion would be to allow for a gradual movement from Ife farms, something which the Ife landlords could not entertain: for the Ife it was either continued payment of *Isakole* or immediate evacuation.

The efforts of Ooni Aderemi to prevent the issue from reaching the courts were finally aborted when it got to the Native Authority Court at Ife on January 30, 1948. Even before the case was heard, the Modakeke were pessimistic about its outcome. Their fear was simple - the Ife constituted both the accuser and the jury, as most of the judges were themselves landlords, receiving *Isakole*. It would, therefore, be surprising if they ruled in favour of Modakeke. Indeed, they could hardly be expected to be fair. The Modakeke expressed their fears to the Resident and pressed for the case to be tried outside Ife, but this was not granted as the Resident explained that they could always appeal if they were not satisfied with the verdict. Not too surprisingly, the court ruled that a contractual relationship existed between the Ife landlords (plaintiffs) and the Modakeke tenants (defendants), and therefore ordered the continuation of the payment of *Isakole*. The Modakeke were dissatisfied and appealed to the Supreme Court which, reducing the amount to be paid, upheld the judgement of the lower court on 13th October, 1948, but reduced the amount to be paid. Still dissatisfied with the ruling, the Modakeke took the case to the West African Court of Appeal.

A split was already becoming noticeable between the Modakeke community and their *Baale* and chiefs. The *Baale* and those in his camp labelled some vocal individuals the ringleaders of the various riots. They even wrote a letter to the Resident of Oyo Province on 17th January, 1948, dissociating themselves from the dispute and exposed the fraudulent activities of some Modakeke agitators. At the same time the Ife community blamed Oba Aderemi for their predicament. They felt that the Modakeke could have yielded had it not been for the support and encouragement received from him (the Oba). They also accused him of co-operating with the *Baale* of Modakeke by allowing the *Baale* to sit in Council with him.

On March 27, 1949, the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* intervened in the crisis on the invitation of Oba Aderemi. The *Egbe* proposed that the dispute could be solved through (1) the immediate removal of the Urhobos

(referred to as 'Isobos') and the Ilas from the farms; and (2) that the new deliberations on *Isakole* payment be based on the number of cocoa trees.¹⁹ These proposals were followed by an order forbidding entry into Modakeke farms. Hardly had the *Egbe* left when hostility resumed. There were riots in Modakeke on May 18, 1949, and in reporting the incident to the Resident, the *Baale* in his letter of May 25, 1949, urged the arrest of some 'ringleaders'. As a result of what some Modakeke refer to as a 'treacherous attitude' of their *Baale* and chiefs, the people decided to be more conciliatory in their approach. They agreed to meet with the Ifes on September 29, 1948. The two parties met and decided to abide by the proposals of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*. Unfortunately, these were not followed to the letter and riots soon broke out again.

At this stage, the Modakeke saw the futility of continuous struggle, especially as the West African Court of Appeal had ruled against them. The internal division and the weariness that came with the long tussle made the people resolve to reconcile and were in fact ready to go to the new farmland promised earlier by Oba Aderemi. But they were shocked to hear from the Ooni that the Native Authority had acquired the land. This was followed by a series of meetings between the Modakeke and the Minister of Land from 1954 in an attempt to find alternative land. Nothing concrete came out of the meetings. Naturally, the Modakeke felt sad about the whole situation and, rather unfairly, blamed Oba Aderemi for their unfortunate situation. The Ife also felt that they need not have gone through all the trouble if Ooni Aderemi had not been on the side of the Modakeke. In the face of these allegations, Oba Aderemi chose to bear the accusations of both sides with tolerance and tact. He felt that the two parties to the dispute were his subjects and saw no reason to favour one against the other. He decided to keep mute on the subject because any statement issued would be interpreted (or, more appropriately, misinterpreted) by both parties to suit their moods.²⁰

The subsequent restoration of peace and mutual trust between both sides after the *Isakole* crisis was the direct result of Ooni Aderemi's tolerance and conciliatory attitude which unfortunately, was not sufficiently appreciated by the two warring sides at the time. But the Oba realized more than any of the contending parties, that meaningful progress could only be achieved in an atmosphere of peace and mutual understanding.

If the *Isakole* issue merely placed Oba Aderemi in an impossible position, the crisis with the *Egbe Ibile Ife* almost caused him his crown. The formation of this society was a reaction to the new position of power and influence enjoyed by the Ooni under the Native Authority

System. It was felt that the Ooni's authority was far in excess of his pre-colonial status, and that he was misusing this new position. The society started its agitation by complaining about the generally deplorable condition of things in Ile-Ife, ranging from inadequate educational facilities, the uncompetitive nature of appointments to the Native Authority, inadequate supply of pipe-borne water, the unwholesome condition of Ife township roads, to the need for such health facilities as public toilets.²¹ Even though the organization had always attacked the sole Native Authority system and indirectly attacked the Oba through certain scathing remarks²² and other insinuations, they had tried as much as possible not to mention his name directly. But in 1948, while the Ooni was in the United Kingdom, they started directly attacking some of his actions. Under the leadership of their Secretary-General, Mr. Adetunji Aderotimi Layade, they queried the rationale behind the *Erinkoja Oba* Fund which had been set up by the Oba for the purpose of making money available for the reconstruction of Palace walls. The complaint of the *Egbe Omo Ibile Ife* was that the contribution had been going on for twelve years whereas the palace walls were completed three years after the contribution started. They therefore sought to know the rationale behind continued contribution to the fund, how the money was being spent and requested that contribution should stop.²³

On 12th December, 1948, the society wrote to the Oba and his council pointing out the various abuses within the Ife Native Authority system and suggested ways of correcting them. The oba replied by asking them to direct their request to the District Officer. He claimed the demands were beyond his powers to grant. The *Egbe* still called for a meeting with the Oba and his chiefs on January 6, 1949. At the meeting the *Egbe* repeated their objections to the *Erinkoja Oba* fund. The general view among the Oba and his chiefs was that the *Egbe* were insolent, while the *Egbe* saw the Oba as using his education and the sole Native Authority System to cheat the people. An agreement could not be reached between the two parties. Thenceforth the *Egbe* seized every opportunity to attack Oba Aderemi, as they had done during the Ife/Modakeke crisis as well as when the Oba visited Britain. It issued a release titled 'A Note of Warning' on January 7, 1949, and another one titled 'Warning' both signed by Adetunji Aderotimi, condemning the Oba for attending various constitutional conferences. They wrote:

We do not want the Oba and chiefs to go outside the town till our matter is settled. He is the Oba to Ifes and not to the whitemen. If the whiteman wishes to see him, he could come to Ife.

Events now moved quickly towards a climax. The *Egbe's* attack on Oba Aderemi became more direct, leading to disturbances in the town in late January and early February 1949.²⁴ These developments prompted Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in the Legislative Council to ask the Secretary of the Western Provinces for a clarification of issues.²⁵ The Native Authority promptly clamped down on all forms of public meetings, rallies and demonstrations. The ban was ignored by the *Egbe* which went ahead to organize another riot on March 2, 1949. The same day, the Ooni placed another ban on all public meetings. This was again ignored by the *Egbe* the next day, in a very insolent letter from the society's Secretary-General to the District Officer in charge of Ife Division and copied to the Ooni on March 3, 1949.²⁶ About twenty members of the *Egbe*, comprising principally the executive members, were rounded up and clamped into detention on the orders of Oba Aderemi.²⁷ The arrests triggered off a mass demonstration against the Oba on March 5, 1949. The demonstration which started around 8 p.m. in front of the palace lasted the whole night with the demonstrators calling on Oba Aderemi to abdicate. At this stage the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* sought to intervene and a peace meeting was held on March 8, 1949. The grievances of the *Egbe* were restated and the Oba expressed his willingness to effect constitutional reforms (Oyediran, 1973:377) In spite of the promise, eight of the leaders of the *Egbe* were later tried at the Native Court presided over by Oba Aderemi. They were found guilty and sentenced to terms of imprisonment without option of fine.²⁸

With their leaders in prison, the fire was soon taken out of the activities of the *Egbe*. However, three years later in 1952 the Local Government Reforms undertaken by the Western Regional Government, swept off the Native Authority System. The powers of the traditional rulers, including those of the Ooni, were considerably reduced and local councils were inaugurated. The Ife Native Authority was replaced by five new councils - Ife Divisional, Ife District, Ifetedo, Ipetumodu, and Edunabon/Moro local Government Councils. The new councils were dominated by elected representatives, who were not exactly accountable to the Oba.

The disputes with the *Egbe Omo Ibile Ife* had hardly abated when the smoke of yet another crisis, which more seriously threatened the position of Oba Aderemi appeared. That was the crisis of the Ife Forest Reserve and the Aderawo Timber Trading Company. The crisis which started in 1955 resulted in a long-drawn tussle between Oba Aderemi and certain power conscious elements in the newly constituted Ife Divisional and

District Councils. In 1941 the Ife Native Authority Forest Reserve Order had created a forest reserve for Ife. There were six forest areas, F1-F6, five of which were under the U.A.C. The sixth was allocated to the Aderawo Timber Trading Company, jointly owned by Oba Aderemi and one Mr Awosiyan, a retired forest guard. This company was licensed by the Ife Native Authority (presided over by Oba Aderemi) and authorized to fell timbers and make roads within the sixth reserve. The grant which was known only to the inner members of the Council was made public barely four weeks after the Native Authority System was reformed and replaced with the Ife District Council. At one of its meetings, Johnson Adeniji moved a unanimously passed motion to request the Regional Government to vest in Ife District Council all land or any interest belonging ... to Ife Native Authority.²⁹ The intention was to have the control of the reserve transferred from the Divisional Council presided over by Oba Aderemi to the District Council under Remi Fani-Kayode. It would also have deprived other councils within Ife division of shares in the proceeds of the forest resources. The Regional Government did not act on the matter, but the battle line had been drawn. The issue came up again, this time at a meeting of the Divisional Council when D.A. Ademiluyi moved that the lease agreement in respect of the Forest Reserve at present in the hands of Aderawo Timber Trading Company be opened for exploitation to members of Ife community.³⁰

Oba Aderemi spoke plainly on the matter. He disclosed his interest in the forest reserve business and appealed to the council to reconsider the matter. He pointed out that Ife had six forest reserves, five of which were in the hands of the U.A.C. and over which nobody was raising eyebrows. He deposed that only a feeling of hatred could have inspired such a motion while no mention was made of the U.A.C., a foreign company. Fani-Kayode, however, pointed out that the motion was in line with the expressed wish of the people of Ife. He then suggested that an emergency meeting of the Council to be presided over by someone other than Oba Aderemi, be summoned. It was hoped that a final decision on the matter would be taken. When the meeting was held on 28th December, 1956, Councillor J.A. Odelana presided but no reasonable conclusion was reached. All efforts to reach an agreement failed and the matter dragged on until the end of 1959 when the agitators led by Fani-Kayode decided to settle the matter in court.

By then, it was not only the interest of Oba Aderemi that was at stake but also that of the Action Group Party. As will be seen later, prior to 1959 the Oba had been actively involved in National politics as a sup-

porter of the Action Group (A.G.). The general elections to the Federal Parliament were close and it would not serve the best political interests of the party to allow the Oba to be dragged to court by an A.G. controlled council. The party, therefore, appealed to the 'youths' to drop the matter until the elections were over, but they would not yield. To forestall the action of the youths, two steps were taken, the first before and the second after the elections. Oba Aderemi took the first step when he sponsored an independent candidate, Michael Omisade, to contest against Fani-Kayode who had already been nominated by the party. In the elections that followed, Fani-Kayode lost in all wards of Ife except Modakeke. The second step was taken by the Action Group shortly after the election. All Ife Local Council were dissolved and replaced by Caretaker Committees. The Ife District Management Board was headed by one Dr. Omitowoju who had sympathies for the Oba, while the Ife Divisional Council Caretaker Committee was headed by S.O. Olagbaju, a son-in-law of Oba Aderemi.³¹

These steps only served to inflame passions further. The 'youths' were now led by Mr. Oloyede who, after winning a seat in the elections on the platform of the Action Group, switched over to the N.C.N.C. The forest reserve crisis turned into an electoral campaign issue in the regional elections that followed in 1960 and the N.C.N.C. won three out of the four Ife seats in the Western House of Assembly. However, the Action Group still had the overall majority in the House. Later in the year, Oba Aderemi was taken to court over Forest Reserve by seven members of the Ife community, led by Adedire Ogunleye.

The issue was whether the reserve was indeed held in trust for the community by the Oba. The case was dismissed by the High Court on the ground that Adedire Ogunleye had no *locus standi*. The appeal at the Supreme Court went in favour of Adedire as the Court ruled that the deed of concession granted Aderawo Timber Trading Company be set aside, and that the company should pay to the treasury of the Divisional Council within ninety days all profits earned from the concession from January 6, 1954 to the date of judgement, i.e. January 28, 1963. The court further ruled that Oba Aderemi should pay the total cost for the case.³²

The appeal to the Privy Council in London went in favour of Oba Aderemi, but by the time the Privy Council delivered its judgement, the political situation in the region had changed. The crisis that engulfed the Action Group had finally led to the replacement of that party's administration in the Western Region by a coalition of the United Peoples' Party

of S.L. Akintola and the N.C.N.C. under Remi Fani-Kayode. Back in power Fani Kayode was determined to forestall the decision of the Privy Council. His first action was to dissolve the Ife Divisional Caretaker Committee, and replace it with a new one headed by G. A. Adeleke Ademiluyi and included four traditional chiefs - Obalufe, Obaloran, Akogun and the *Baale* of Modakeke. It was the first time since 1930 that Oba Aderemi was excluded from the council governing Ife. On August 1, 1964, four days after the Privy Council's judgement was delivered, an emergency meeting of the new Council was held. There, a motion calling for the removal of Oba Aderemi was unanimously passed. The Council also requested the Regional Government to stop his salary and allowances from that day.³³

With this turn of events, and the intervention of the Regional Premier and other Yoruba Obas, Oba Aderemi decided to surrender the forest reserve. By a deed dated August 11, 1964 he not only submitted the reserve but paid in addition a sum of £13,000 to the Treasury of the Council.³⁴ To further show his feeling of goodwill, he conferred on Remi Fani-Kayode who had all along led the opposition against him, the title *Balogun* of Ife. The Divisional Council continued to collect revenue from the forest reserve until the military take-over in January, 1966. After the coup, the forest reserve reverted to Oba Aderemi and he withdrew his £13,000 from the Treasury. This was made possible by the suspension of all political activities, which virtually left all local government affairs in the hands of traditional rulers. Oba Aderemi then went ahead to raise the issue of costs awarded against the seven people (who had initially taken him to court) by the Privy Council.³⁵ On 15th November, 1966 a 'writ of FIFA' was issued against these people and their houses were sold by public auction. One of them eventually paid the sum of £1,999.3s.7d as costs due to Aderawo Timber Trading Company. The issue of the forest reserve remained virtually dead from then until 1968. In that year the military government set up a commission of enquiry into boundary disputes in the Western State. When the commission sat in Ife, its principal concern was with the forest reserve. By this time, a society known as Ife Divisional People's Action Committee had been formed. This committee made so much noise about the Aderawo Forest Reserve that it became a touchy and emotional issue. Once again, and finally this time, Oba Aderemi was forced to surrender the Forest reserve and the deed of surrender was finally signed on September 19, 1970. Since then, the reserve has virtually remained unexploited. Oba Aderemi had once more survived the crisis. One of the

casualties of this whole episode was the Aderemi Scholarship programme for indigent Ife sons and daughters in Nigerian Universities. Apparently, the money for the programme came out of the profits of the Aderawo Timber company, and a few students had enjoyed the privileges in the mid sixties, before it dried up after 1970.

OBA ADEREMI AND NATIONAL POLITICS, 1948-1862

Oba Aderemi's career in National Politics followed very closely the pattern of his career in domestic politics, with an early meteoric rise in fame and popularity, followed by a period of problem and crisis which he managed to survive. The first time Oba Aderemi participated in national politics was in 1937 when he was actively involved in organizing the Western Region's Conference of chiefs. His stand then was that traditional rulers should not just be mere onlookers in the then on-going nationalist struggle.³⁶ He reiterated the same view in 1947 when he was appointed a member of the Legislative Council where he at once made it clear that Obas should not for the sake of tradition and dignity refuse to participate in the administration of the country.³⁷ In the same year, 1947, he accepted appointment as a member of the Cocoa Marketing Board. He was initially reluctant because as a cocoa merchant he thought the appointment might clash with his personal interests, but he soon discovered that this was not so.³⁸ While on the board, he worked with other members to secure fair prices for the farmers and to get fair treatment from the powerful middlemen.

In 1948 the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, a pan-Yoruba cultural organisation was launched. The formal inauguration of the *Egbe* took place at Ile-Ife on June 5. In this excise, the Oba took an active part.³⁹ Among those present at the occasion were Sir Adeyemo Alakija, the President of the Organization, Obafemi Awolowo, the Secretary and Sir Kofu Abayomi, the Treasurer. Thereafter, the Oba continued to support the *Egbe* both morally and financially. He also worked for the solidarity of the Yoruba through the *Egbe*. For example, he was head of the peace mission to Ijebu-Remo when the people were calling for the removal of the *Akarigbo* (the Oba of the town). The peace mission, which was jointly sponsored by the Executive Council of the *Egbe* and representatives of Yoruba Obas met on 17th, 18th and 19th December, 1948 and succeeded in abating tempers in the town.⁴⁰

The second significant event in his career in 1948 was his visit to the United Kingdom (mentioned earlier) when he was nominated by the Nigerian Legislative Council as one of the country's representatives to

the London Conference on Economic Development of British Dependencies in Africa. Accompanied by his secretary, M.A.Fabunmi, he arrived Liverpool in July 1948⁴¹ and was accorded a grand reception by the British government and the London branch of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*.⁴² He returned from London in October 1948 in time for him to participate in the review of the Richard's Constitution initiated by Sir John Macpherson. At the Regional level he argued for the creation of the House of Chiefs while pleading for a plurality of power in which traditional authority could be effectively reconciled with the basic levels of democracy.⁴³ The Oba, along with other nationalists, attacked the policy of regionalization as he felt it would hinder the birth of a true federation.

In the Legislative Council, where he also aired his views, Oba Aderemi stoutly defended the position of the West by opposing a fifty percent representation for the North at the Central legislature under the proposed constitution.⁴⁴ However, the recommendation of the select committee gave fifty per cent representation to the North because of its large population (Odumosu, 1963:65). Another issue that generated controversy in the review and which engaged the attention of the Ooni was that of revenue allocation. He warned that the West would not accept an allocation based on the principle of equal progress. His recommendation was that it should be based on a "meaningful principle of public finance that could help to forge a true national loyalty."⁴⁵ The issue of boundary adjustment also became topical as the Western Regional Government supported the demand of the people of Offa and Igbomina, who are of Yoruba stock in the Ilorin province of the Northern Region, to join the Western Region. The house, reacting to petitions received from the concerned people, set up a select committee to investigate the demand. On the basis of the committee's report, the House recommended that Igbomina be separated from the Northern Region and united with Ila in the south. In 1950, the House further passed a resolution that the settlement of this boundary dispute "was an essential condition of any satisfactory constitution for Nigeria" (Afolayan, 1984:116-120). Even for the people affected, especially the Igbomina, it was a very popular demand, as they saw it as a movement for freedom from Fulani domination. There were similar movements and calls in the Eastern Region as the Igbo in Benin and Warri Provinces of the Western Region also clamoured to join the East (Odumosu, 1963:62). In view of these calls, Oba Aderemi urged the government to readjust internal boundaries but his emphasis was mainly between the Western and Northern Regions.

While addressing national issues, Oba Aderemi did not forget the

welfare of Ile-Ife during the period of his stewardship in the Legislative Council. In August 1947, he filed a motion calling on the Director of Public Works to tar the Ife-Ondo road. The motion was rejected on the grounds that the number of vehicles plying the road was not enough to justify such an expenditure. The following day he spoke on the contract for the construction of Ife Museum and the need to build an asylum for mad men roaming the streets.

The Macpherson Constitution came into operation in 1951. It was thus possible for Oba Aderemi to participate actively in national affairs. The House of Chiefs was established in both the West and the North and Oba Aderemi became a member and Chairman of the Western House of Chiefs. At the federal level, the new constitution required each region to send four Ministers to the Central Legislature, three of whom should be from the House of Assembly with portfolios, and one from House of Chiefs without portfolio. The Action Group, which was in power in the West, chose Messers Bode Thomas, S. L. Akintola and Arthur Prest from the House of Assembly and Oba Aderemi from the House of Chiefs. Oba Aderemi thus became a Minister without portfolio in 1952 but did not remain there for long because of the constitutional crisis at the centre in 1953. The Federal Ministers belonged to various political parties and were under pressure to toe their various party lines on issues. This made it impossible for the Federal Cabinet to act together as there were divergences of opinion between the regions. A semblance of unity was however maintained in the Central Legislature until the fateful 'self government in 1956' motion by Anthony Enahoro in May 1953.⁴⁶ This motion which was supported by Oba Aderemi raised a lot of dust in the House, as Northern Ministers wanted the phrase 'in 1956' replaced with 'as soon as practicable'.⁴⁷ When the House could not agree on this and a motion for adjournment was moved, Oba Aderemi, along with the other three Action Group Ministers, walked out of the House. Shortly after, he tendered his resignation as a Minister-without-portfolio. When asked why he resigned, he had this to say:

At a cabinet meeting we discussed the motion which Chief Anthony Enahoro intended to move in the House and which he did. I resigned because the British Government did not want any Minister to participate in the debate on Independence for Nigeria. As I thought I had a contribution to make in the debate, I had to resign my appointment as a Minister so as to be able to speak on the motion.⁴⁸

Fresh nominations to fill the vacancies created were requested for. The Western House of Chiefs and the Action Group resolved to send only the names of the ex-Ministers.⁴⁹ But the Oba was unwilling to serve again.

Not long after, constitutional conferences were held in London and Lagos to decide the future of the country. Oba Aderemi was actively involved in these conferences sponsored by the Action Group government in the West. He was to act as an Adviser. The conferences, ones again, provided him with the opportunity to mix and exchange ideas with representatives of the other regions, not minding party affiliations and policies.⁵⁰ A focal point of discussion was the controversial 'self-government in 1956' motion and it was agreed that those regions which desired self-government in 1956 could have it. The conference also decided that Oba Aderemi and the other three Action Group Ministers could rejoin the Central Executive (Odumosu, 1963:98). The conference also decided that each Regional House of Chiefs should have a President to be elected among its members (p.98). In the West, Oba Aderemi was unanimously chosen as the President, a post he held from 1954 to July 1960 when he became Governor of the Western Region.

His appointment as Governor was perhaps the highest point of his political career. But he was relieved of the appointment after spending only one year and ten months in office. This came as a result of the crisis in the Action Group ultimately forcing the Federal Government to declare a 'state of emergency' in the region.

At the beginning of the Action Group crisis, Oba Aderemi tried to play the role of a mediator as he felt his position, both as Ooni and as Governor, demanded impartiality. Thus, on May 10, 1962, he held a meeting with the warring sides to settle the dispute (Odumosu 1936:227). At the meeting he told both Chiefs Awolowo and Akintola that a crisis at that stage was not only inimical to the cause of the party which had taken them a long time to build up, but would also make them a laughing stock of rival parties. Unfortunately, neither side was ready to compromise. Having tried unsuccessfully to resolve the dispute, the Oba invited the party machinery to intercede. A Peace Committee under Chief F.R.A. Williams was set up and charged with looking into the issues and finding ways of reconciling the two leaders. The Peace Committee drafted an agreement which was submitted to a joint-meeting of the Mid -west and West Executive of the party on May 19, 1962 (Mackintosh, 1966:446).

At the meeting, Chief Awolowo made it clear that he regarded the draft agreement as inadequate and went ahead to prefer twenty-four

charges against the Regional Premier, Chief S. L. Akintola.⁵¹ He went further to pronounced judgement that Chief Akintola had been relieved of his posts as Premier of the West and Deputy Leader of the Party. After this, the events turned into a full-blown crisis of such a magnitude that was not expected or foreseen by the leaders of the Action Group. Oba Aderemi, as Governor, was fully involved in the whole crisis. On 20th May, 1962, the day after Chief Awolowo's accusation and judgement, Ooni Aderemi received a letter from Chief Akintola requesting him to use his power as Governor to dissolve the House of Assembly (Odumosu: 1963:227). Chief Akintola also wrote to the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Prince Adeleke Adedoyin, to summon a meeting of the House to test his (Akintola's) popularity. Oba Aderemi rejected the request for the dissolution of the House on the ground that elections had only been held in August 1960, and dissolving the House would involve another election with attendant costs (Mackintosh:447) He argued further that since the Premier had asked for a meeting of the House, it would be most unreasonable to dissolve the same House before it met. (Odumosu: 1963:278).

Oba Aderemi received another letter from the Action Group headquarters on May 21, 1962, urging him to use the power vested in him as Governor to remove Chief Akintola from Office as Regional Premier.⁵² Again, he refused to bow to this request. Instead, he urged the Action Group Executives to wait for a vote of the House after which, if Chief Akintola lost, he would be dismissed. He appealed to them not to press for a decision until the House met. In the meantime, he received a letter purportedly written by a majority of the members of the House of Assembly. He wrote to the Speaker of the House to confirm whether the signatories to the letter were members of the house, and if they represented the majority. On the same day, but before the Speaker could reply, Oba Aderemi received yet another letter from the Federal Executive Council of the Action Group party urging him to remove Chief Akintola from office with immediate effect. Oba Aderemi later that day, got a reply from the Speaker affirming that the signatories were not only members of the House but constituted the majority. On the basis of this letter, and of what must have been tremendous pressure on him, the Oba issued a statement, part of which reads:

... whereas it appears to me that S.L. Akintola no longer commands the support of the majority of the House of Assembly ... I do hereby remove the said S.L. Akintola from his office as Premier of the Western Region with effect from this date [May 21, 1962].

He then proceeded to appoint the Parliamentary Leader of the House, Alhaji D.S. Adegbenro, as the Premier. The new Premier was sworn-in that same night. It would appear that the Oba was really hard-pressed to decide. Naturally Chief S. L. Akintola felt the Oba was on the side of the other faction. With the statement relieving Chief Akintola of his post, Oba Aderemi and the Action Group Executive felt the matter was over. They were wrong. Chief Akintola took two steps to redeem his position. First, he sued Oba Aderemi and the newly appointed Premier to court. At the same time he wrote a letter through the Prime Minister of the Federation, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, to the Queen of England, urging her to revoke Oba Aderemi's appointment as Governor. While he was waiting for a reply to this letter, the House decided to meet on the 25th of May to test the popularity of the new Premier, but its proceedings were disrupted on two occasions by supporters of Chief Akintola.

The new premier wrote to the Prime Minister asking for police protection at the next meeting of the House. The Prime Minister replied that he would not object to the use of policemen around the premises of the House, but that any decision reached at such a session would not be acceptable. The Prime Minister also deposed that since the two factions had both written to him, the Federal Parliament would meet on May 29, 1962 to look into the issue. When the Federal Parliament eventually met, it merely passed a resolution that a state of emergency existed in the West. The Federal government went ahead to set up a new administration to replace the troubled one. The Governor, the new Premier, and the Regional Ministers were all relieved of their posts. For all practical purposes it was the end of Oba Aderemi's active participation in the partisan politics of Nigeria's first republic.

OBA ADEREMI'S LAST YEARS

Apart from the crisis surrounding the forest reserve issue which, as we have already seen, finally abated in 1970, the period following his removal as Governor was quiet for Oba Adesoji Aderemi.

However, he did not relent in pursuing and promoting the interests and image of Ife town, his domain. He was Chairman of the Western State Council of Obas and Chiefs, and later Chairman of Oyo State Council of Chiefs when more states were created in 1976. In that position, he was frequently consulted on many issues concerning traditional rulers and chieftaincy affairs in general, and those affecting the general welfare of Oyo state (Eluyemi, 1980). When he effectively retired into his palace due to age, he remained a centre of attention. Many important

personalities paid him courtesy visits each time they were in Ife. Some of these visitors included former Senegalese President, Leopold Sedar Senghor and former West German Chancellor, Willy Brandt. Earlier on in 1967, in recognition of his contribution to the development of customary laws he was then conferred with an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D.) by the University of Ife now Obafemi Awolowo University - a University that was established during his brief tenure as Governor, and located in Ife partly through his influence. In the last few years before he passed away, Oba Aderemi concentrated his efforts on the development of the art and culture of Ile-Ife. The shrines were renovated and rebuilt, where necessary, with financial assistance from the community and the state government. By 1979 he had completed an impressive building within the premises of the palace which he donated to the people of Ife as part of the activities marking his ninetieth birthday. He finally passed to the great beyond on July 2, 1980.

CONCLUSION

The period Oba Adesoji Aderemi spent on the Ife throne marked the bridge between the ancient and the modern. Before his accession to the throne, Ife traditional importance as the *oririn* of the Yoruba people was gradually fizzling out, especially with the advent of colonial rule. Oba Aderemi worked energetically to put the town on the right pedestal and to elevate it to a higher plane. The efforts of Oba Aderemi paid off, and today, Ife stands as a major town in Nigeria. The social life of the people has improved considerably, and this is especially well-demonstrated in the field of education. Educational facilities which were paltry at the time of his accession have reached an impressive height and the Obafemi Awolowo University of Ife, situated in the town, has put the town on the world educational map. It is no surprise that many people have spoken glowingly about the man who represented 'the Aderemi era' in Ife history. Oba Adesoji Tadeniawo Aderemi himself. As far back as 1948, it has been said about him:

The Ooni, as is well-known, has a strong character. He is loyal to the Government, but is by no means a "Yes Man" His honesty and integrity are of the highest order. He is full of common sense and most just in his dealings with his chiefs and people. He is respected by his brother Obas, and .. has become quite a national figure. He is hardworking, courteous to all and sundry, and possesses a considerable sense of humour.⁵²

No doubt Oba Adesoji Aderemi was a successful ruler by all standards; an Oba who reigned and ruled. Despite the various domestic crises which marked the early years of his reign, one of which even protracted until 1970, the Oba still recorded outstanding successes. It has been advanced by academics like Professors. I. A. Akinjogbin and Oyeleye Oyediran that the Oba's success was attributable to three major factors(Eluyemi; 1980:79) The first was his wealth of administrative experience, both before his accession to the throne and his long reign; secondly his network of marriage within Ife. The Oba not only married from many quarters of Ife but also gave out the hands of his daughters in marriage to people from various quarters of Ife. This helped to consolidate his local political alliances and traditional loyalty. Finally, we must acknowledge the role of his connections at the national level. His involvement in national politics served to boost his position at home and the image of his town outside. The successful combination of these factors enabled him to excel as a prosperous business man, a statesman and most importantly, a well-loved and respected Oba of his people.

NOTES

- 1 This chapter derives in part from the contributions of G.E. Osho (Miss) "Oba Adesoji Tadeniawo Aderemi, Ooni of Ife, 1930-1962". B.A. Degree Long Essay, History Department, University of Ife, June 1980.
- 2 *Daily Times*, (Lagos), January 29, 1951
- 3 File 113, Palace Records, *Aafin*, Ile-Ife
- 4 Aderemi Personal interview recorded by I.A. Akinjogbin
- 5 Oyo Prof. 2/3 File G.57, National Archives, Ibadan (NAI)
- 6 See also *Sunday Times* November 16, 1969
- 7 Oyo Profiles 2/3 File C.57, *National Archives*, Ibadan (NAI)
- 8 This incident is recorded in E.O. Eluyemi, *Oba Adesoji Aderemi: Fifty Years in the History of Ile-Ife* (Ile-Ife 1980, pp. 49-50

- 9 Interview with various people in Ife town (July, 1984), including Akin Adetunmbi, 31, Civil Servant, History Department, University of Ife (19th July, 1984), among others
- 10 *Daily Times*, January 28, 1951
- 11 File 132, Palace Records, *Aafin*, Ile-Ife
- 12 Personal information to Prof. I. A. Akinjogbin by the Late Oba Aderemi
- 13 Oyo Prof. 2/3 File C.57, NAI
- 14 File 132, Palace Records, *Aafin*, Ile-Ife
- 15 Oyo Prof. 2/3 File C.57 NAI
- 16 Oyo Prof. 2/3 File 1926 Vol. II, NAI.
- 17 File 186, Vol. II Palace Records, *Aafin* II-Ife
- 18 Ife Div. 1/1 File 113, NAI
- 19 Ife Div. 1/1, File 1138, NAI
- 20 Interview, Late Ooni Aderemi (90), 11th February, 1980
- 21 Ife Div. 1/1 File 1930, NAI
- 22 Most of the letters of the *Egbe* either addressed directly to Ooni Aderemi himself or to colonial officials were to say the least downright rude, and an open abuse to the office of the *Ooni*. The letters, and there were many of them, can be found in, Ife Div. 1/1 File 1930 ('*Egbe Omo Ibile Ife*'), NAI.
- 23 Ife Div. 1/1, File 1930, NAI
- 24 *West African Pilot*, February 2, 1949
- 25 Legislative Council Questions 285 to 289: See Ife Div 1/1, File

- 1930, NAI pp. 58-59 and 67-68
- 26 Ife Vic. 1/1, File 1930
- 27 *Daily Service*, March 7, 1949
- 28 Ife Div. 1/1, File 1930
- 29 Oyo Prof. 2/2 File 1514/1 Vol. II, NAI
- 30 Oyo Prof. */2 File 1514 Vol. VII, NAI
- 31 Oyo Prof. 2/2 File 1514/2
- 32 *All Nigeria Law Reports*, 1958, p.49
- 33 Minutes of the Ife Divisional Caretaker Committee, Emergency Meeting, 1st August, 1964
- 34 *Daily Times*, April 17, 1969
- 35 *Daily Times*, April 9, 1969
- 36 Oyo Prof. 2/2, File 1946 Vol. III, NAI, See also Oyo Prof. 2/3, File C. 57, NAI
- 37 *Legislative Council Debates*, (First Session), August 28 1947
- 38 *Sunday Times*, November 23, 1969, p.9
- 39 *Daily Service*, June 8, 194840 This was typewritten from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa File.
- 41 Oyo Prof. 2/3 C. 57/118, NAI
- 42 *West Africa*, July 17, 1948, p. 719
- 43 *Review of the Richard's Constitution: Regional Recommendation*

(Lagos, Government Printers, 1949.)

- 44 *Legislative Council Debates*, Vol. II, April 3, 1959
- 45 Report of the Commission on Revenue Allocation, Lagos
- 46 *Daily Times*, May 26, 1953
- 47 *House of Representatives Debates*, March 31, 1953, p. 985
- 48 Interview, Late Oba Aderemi, February 4, 1980
- 49 *Western House of Chiefs Debates*, 1953
- 50 *Daily Times*, June 3, 1953
- 51 *Morning Post*, May 20, 1962
- 52 The various correspondences are quoted in the Hansard, Federal House of Representatives, Vol. 2194-2196, May 1962
- 53 Oyo Prof. 2/2 File C. 57, *op.cit.*
- 54 See O. Eluyemi, *op. cit.*, p.79

CHAPTER 11

THE OUTLYING TOWNS OF IFE

I. A. Akinjogbin

Although there was, at the end of the 18th century, a land area that could be accurately described as the Kingdom of Ife, Ife probably never really developed a sense of exclusive territorial possession that should be defended by all its citizens against all comers, in the sense that the Ijesa, the Oyo and most other Yoruba Kingdoms, could be said to have developed. This can be easily explained by two factors. The first was its geographical position. The Kingdom of Ife was completely surrounded by some other Yoruba Kingdoms all of which appeared to have agreed to keep it inviolate as the "father-state".¹ Consequently, Ile-Ife did not need an army to defend itself against any of its neighbours. Nor were there, for many centuries, any external danger of invasion from a non-Yoruba Kingdom that could warrant a re-think in Ife which then concentrated on its economic, religious and artistic pursuits. Secondly, it would appear that Ife, as *Orirun* Yoruba,² saw itself as belonging to the whole of Yorubaland just as the whole of Yorubaland, belonged to it. This would explain why, for many centuries, Ife citizens migrated to places within the Yoruba cultural continuum, founding new kingdoms or imposing themselves as rulers on already established ones.³ It would also explain why some other Yoruba groups, who felt insecure or dissatisfied with the prevailing socio-political conditions in their territories, came to Ife to seek new homes and were accommodated.⁴ It would largely explain further why, in many directions, the boundaries of the Kingdom of Ife were not strictly delimited until modern times (Adejuyigbe, 33-38).

So when the "conventional" arrangements (or *entente*) broke down towards the end of the 18th century and the old "father-kingdom" increasingly came under physical attacks by the erstwhile "sons" under new economic forces, Ife was caught completely unprepared (Johnson, 1973, 207).

Inhabitants of its outlying towns, unable to mount any effective defence, simply fled in all directions, most of them moving to Ile-Ife. From around 1854, Ife's own independent existence was lost to Ibadan until 1886 when, as a result of the treaty ending the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo war, its independence was restored (Johnson, 528). The erstwhile outlying towns of Ife were, however, not returned to her. It took another 21

years for some of these towns to return to Ife.⁵ During these periods some of the pre-18th century outlying towns of Ife were completely destroyed and their inhabitants transplanted somewhere else.⁶ Some survived after changing sites and political associations.⁷ Others stuck to Ife through thick and thin, while new areas were founded out of the ruins of the 19th century internecine wars.

This chapter will trace, in sketchy outlines consistent with the materials so far available, the historical developments of some of the more significant towns within the Ife Kingdom, from their known beginnings to the fourth decade of the 20th century. Where the materials are available, an attempt will be made to highlight the economic and socio-political developments within and between these towns and Ile-Ife.

At about 1770, when Osininlade Otutubiosun was still on the throne of Ife, the Kingdom of Ife was bounded on the south by that of Ijebu, on the south-east by the Ondo Kingdom, on the West by Owu, on the north-east by the Ijesa Kingdom; on the north by the Oyo and Egba Kingdoms. The Osun river, in its winding course, formed the western and northern boundaries (i.e., with Owu, Oyo and Egba Kingdoms). The south-eastern boundary with Ondo would appear to be marked by the River Oni, though, as we shall see, Ife tried to claim territories beyond that river in the 19th century. The boundaries with Ijesa and Ijebu were less precise, a situation that did not appear to cause any friction until the 19th and 20th centuries. While cases of boundary dispute between Ife and Ijesa have been frequent (Adejiuyigbe, 23-38), boundary disputes between Ife and Ijebu have been rare.

Within this territory, settlements existed in two geographical locations. There were those lying west and north-west of Ife, towards Owu and Oyo, and there were those lying roughly east of Ife towards Ilesa and Benin. In the west and north-west the towns and villages that are remembered to have existed or are still existing can be grouped into two large complexes. There was the Ikire complex comprising Ikire-Ile, Apomu, Iwala and a few others whose names may have been forgotten because they were destroyed in the 19th century or earlier (Johnson 1973, 207; Odekunle 1972). Then there was the Origbo complex on both sides of the Isasa river, usually referred to as **Origbo mejeje** (the seven Origbo towns) but which, in fact, numbered around 20.⁸ They included Ipetumodu, the headquarters, Moro, Imulekere, Baakun, Isope, Ikulende, Ilaje, Iwaro, Samolofa, Afunnimogbo (Afunwonmogbo), Egbe, Oogi, Olupinni, Tenla, Lasole, Akiribiti and Regoborogbo. Most of these towns were disbanded early in the 19th century; and are now farm settle-

ments. Their traditions have, therefore, been lost. In between these two complexes was situated Gbonganile, very close to the Origbo settlements. In the 19th and 20th centuries, these were joined by such newly founded towns as Edunabon, Yakoyo, Asipa and Akinlalu.

Two things should be noted about the location of these towns and villages. First, as has been pointed out, they were all situated west and north-west of Ife, suggesting the direction of a trade route and, therefore, contact with the more economically developed parts of Yorubaland. Secondly, they were all located very close to the banks of rivers Osun and Isasa, indicating that the sites were chosen more for the consideration of agriculture than for defence. Lying roughly east of the Ife Kingdom were Ifewara and Itagunmodi. Again, these settlements were situated in the direction of Benin and, therefore, of trade contact with the east. There might have been a few others whose names we do not know. The south and south-east, towards Ijebu and Ondo Kingdoms, were largely farm and hunting forests until the third and fourth decades of this century when Ifetedo was founded and various farmsteads became sizeable township communities.

Of all the towns and villages lying west and north-west of Ife, Ipetumodu was incontestably the oldest settlement. Oral traditions,⁹ both in Ipetumodu and Ile-Ife, seem to agree that both towns were founded during the same period. *ni ijo ti a da ile ni a da oko*, (i.e., the town and the farm were founded the same day). That would put the foundation to about the 10th century A.D. There is a consensus that the first post-Oduduwa ruler at Ipetumodu was Akalako, one of Oduduwa's aides. The town was probably occupied early by Oduduwa's men because there was already a settlement there called Omu-Odu,¹⁰ which was probably contemporaneous with the 13th settlements brought to Ile-Ife by Oduduwa. What followed after this occupation is hazy. The indications are that the earlier settlers were overpowered and their ruler reduced to a ritual priest called *Aaje*, the priest of *Orisa-nla*, called Orisa-aje in Ipetumodu. It is still said that the *Aaje* was a king (*oba ni Aaje*), and that is why he and the reigning Apetumodu must never meet in person after he must have performed the sanctification ceremonies of an Apetumodu elect. It is also reasonable to speculate that Akalako's followers must have participated in all the exciting early events that followed the Oduduwa take-over of power. This early relationship would appear to have been sealed by two pacts, one of which was that should there be any disagreement between the two towns, their leaders would retire to a hill overlooking the *Aafin* Palace at Ife and there settle whatever it was after performing

the necessary sacrifice, the specifics of which should still be known to those concerned. The second would appear to aim at protecting the interest of Ipetumodu, which was the smaller of the two settlements. By it Ipetumodu was provided with certain ritual objects which any Ife indigene was forbidden to see.¹¹ The point is that if Ife army threatened, all Ipetumodu needed to do was to threaten to expose these objects to their view and they would disperse.

What this boiled down to is that the relationship between Ipetumodu and Ile-Ife was very cordial during the period immediately following the Oduduwa ascendancy. Tradition has it that all the princes that went westwards and northwards, including the Alaketu, the Alake, the Olowu, the Alaafin and the Orangun during the period of the first dispersal, came together first at Ipetumodu and separated from there to found new kingdoms. Before they went their different ways, all of them, including Akalako, met at a place still called *Pinhun Assewela* where they agreed on future contacts, after which they were escorted to Itamarun from where each went his own way.¹² As a result of this early agreement, each of these princes is still expected to come first to Ipetumodu whenever they have ritual or traditional engagements at Ife, and from there be led to Ife.¹³

The growth of Ipetumodu after these early beginnings has not been thoroughly researched. What seemed probable was that the town remained small and agricultural for centuries. Even such smaller settlements as Isope, Kulende and Iwaro, which were less than two kilometres away were left to lead their own existence, but under the authority of the Apetumodu. Obviously then there were no fears of external aggression as they were covered by the immunity granted to Ife.

How many Apetumodu reigned in the Akalako dynasty is not really known. Surviving traditions indicate that they were up to 24. Of these, only nine names are remembered,¹⁴ and even those not in any order. Nor is anything remembered of the actions of these nine. The circumstances leading to the end of this dynasty are probably completely forgotten and subsequent events have been badly telescoped. According to current traditions, the Akalako dynasty was succeeded by the Fagbemokun dynasty. When this tradition is critically analyzed, it would appear that in fact the Akalako dynasty was succeeded by the Kiaje dynasty which in turn was still later succeeded by the Fagbemokun dynasty which is now the ruling dynasty. The confusion would seem to arise through a modern deliberate but awkward attempt to bring back the Kiaje dynasty and merge it with one of the two dynasties created out of

the Fagbemokun dynasty.¹⁵

The Kiaje rulers who ended the Akalako dynasty are said in the traditions, to have come from Sabe,¹⁶ one of the Oduduwa kingdoms now in the Republic of Benin. What forced their migration back to Ife area may not have been unconnected with the rise of the Bariba (Borgu) in that region.¹⁷ If that were so, that would put this movement to about the early 16th century. Their leaders are remembered to have stayed for a while at Ijeru (now in Ogbomoso) before finally coming "home" to Ife Kingdom where they settled at Ipetumodu. Why and how they were able to take over remain obscure. But their successful take-over might have affected the dialect of the inhabitants, since their dialect appears to be different from that of Ife. Oba Olugusi, who is now usually numbered with Fagbemokun, was probably the first Kiaje ruler. His successors will still have to be sorted out from among the current list of twenty-two Fagbemokun rulers.

The Kiaje dynasty was ended by the Fagbemokun dynasty, if the above interpretation is accepted, and this was one of the results of the backward migration from the Oyo area. From their *Oriki* these rulers came from Iwere and Onko areas of northern Oyo.¹⁸ They probably came late in the 17th century, but more likely early in the 18th century, when military adventurism in Oyo was flourishing. How many of them reigned before the end of the eighteenth century, we do not yet know. However, one of them, Aribile, appears to have applied himself seriously to the expansion of the town of Ipetumodu and to the task of uniting the various settlements as a whole.¹⁹ He is usually referred to as Olorigbo Aribile and appears to be the first to be so addressed.

From the 19th century onwards, we are slightly better informed. The first famous Apetumodu of that century is certainly Folasade Ajiga. He was reigning in the 1820's and 1830's during the period of the Owu and Egba wars. Ipetumodu would appear to be a fairly sizeable town and was probably recognised as leader of the towns lying west of Ife [Biobaku, 1957; Johnson, 1973:230,247-248]. All the surrounding towns and villages took refuge in Ipetumodu and before it could form an army, the rumours of muslim jihad from Ilorin, reaching as close as Osogbo, proved too much a scare for the town authorities.²⁰ Pessimistic of any military help from Ife, Ipetumodu and its refugees moved out. The rulers, Ajiga and his chiefs, went to Ile-Ife while the rest of the citizens scattered to various places including Rogborogbo and Akiribiti.²¹ This event occurred around 1835. For the next twelve years or so they remained at Ile-Ife, and their other places of refuge. As we shall see, it

was reconstituted around 1848 and by 1854 passed into Ibadan's political orbit. It did not come back into the administrative unit of Ife until 1907.

At around the same time, the people of *Ikire* and its surrounding towns also moved to Ile-Ife, for pretty much the same reasons.²² *Ikire* was a much younger settlement than *Ipetumodu*. The kingship succession list, containing 18 reigns, has remained consistent²³ and the few external references made to it tend to confirm what the internal oral traditions relate. The first known leader of the settlement was *Akinoro*,²⁴ a name now being changed to *Akinrere* to make it more acceptable to modern semantics. He was probably living about the third decade of the 18th century, say in the 1720s, for the third leader of the settlement named *Kujembola* or *Kujenlayo*, was known to be living in the 1770s.²⁵ According to *Ife* palace traditions, he was referred to as the *Ooni Otutubiosun's* chief representative at the *Osun* river crossing around 1770 when a quarrel was settled between *Ooni Otutu*, *Obajanrin Majeogbe*, the *Alafin of Oyo* and *Gbelegbuwa I. Awujajle of Ijebu-Ode* at a place they called *Apimo*, now called *Apomu*.

Ikire traditions seem to corroborate this role ascribed to *Kuje* (as he was usually called). His *Oriki* refers to him as *Olomi tutu ese oke*, the owner of the cool waters by the hillside. *Ikire* traditions also remember him as the man who actually reduced *Ikire* to a regular township,²⁶ even though *Akinoro* (*Akinrere*) and *Laberinjo* had been the community leaders before him. The next ruler, *Ladekan* was the first to be granted an *ade oje* (a white metal crown) as distinct from *ade ileke* (the beaded crown) (*Odekunle, 1972:7*)

The attempt being made by modern linguistics to derive the name *Ikire* from *Akinrere* must be taken with a pinch of salt, indeed as a deliberate invention. *Orisa Akire* is one of the *Yoruba* pantheons belonging to the *Obatala* category. The original name *Akinoro*, would seem to refer to the man's skill in hunting games (the brave man with the poisoned arrow). The town's name would, therefore, seem to come from the principal *Orisa* which the earlier inhabitants brought from *Ife*. The numerous references to "Moosa or Morisa" (the bush where the *Orisa Ikire* was kept) in the *oriki* of the various *Obas* would seem to confirm this connection between the name and the *Orisa*.²⁷

However, *Ladekan*, the first crowned *Oba*, continued to build *Ikire*. He is remembered to have made attempts to increase the population of the settlement. His praise name is *Opepe sa omo osu jo. Ojanjan sa omo oku so idi* (*Opepe* who gathers together all relatives, who gathers

orphans round himself). He was succeeded by three Obas, Lambe, Oyeniyi (who died of small pox within sixty days), and Onisigbin, during whose reign Ikire and the surrounding towns also moved to Ife, as a result of severe internal division over succession issue and threats of external aggression from muslim jihadists at Ilorin. Indeed, as a result of severe internal disagreement, a number of Ikire citizens moved to Ibadan instead of going to Ife. One of them was Ajobo who briefly became Balogun of Ibadan between 1870 and 1871 (Johnson,383). When the Ikire refugees in Ife went back home around 1847, they went into Ibadan sphere of influence and have not since then returned to Ife kingdom.

The foundation of *Gbongan* can be seen in two phases. According to Babayemi,²⁸ the first Gbongan, now a farm site called Gbongan Ile, was founded probably by some Ife and Ipetumodu elements sometimes in the second half of the 18th century. How far into the second half is uncertain, for Ife traditions recall that during the reign of Otutubiosun, what is now Gbongan was the farmland of one Dekalu, an Ife.²⁹ If Gbongan Ile was already existing, it must have been a fairly small farm village (Ojo 1971:vii). However, towards the end of the 18th century and in the early years of the 19th century, elements from northern Oyo came to join the Gbongan Ile population. These were the Olupe and the Oluoje,³⁰ who must have been part of the confusion and uncertainties that followed the death of Awole in 1796, and the subsequent period of interregnum in Oyo. Again, following the defeat of Owu, some refugees from the defeated kingdom also joined the settlement. This would be between 1826 and 1830. During this period also, elements from Ile-Igbo (now called Ile Ogbo) came to settle in Gbongan. By 1835, it appears that Gbongan Ile, like all the surrounding towns of Origbo and Ikire also moved to Ife to be safe from the feared muslim invasion. Gbongan traditions relate that while in Ife, Gbongan Ile elements stayed with the Obaloran family (Ojo,2-3).

The second phase of the foundation of Gbongan, which is the present town, dates from about 1847 when, as we shall see, Abeweila sent out the refugees in Ife to their towns, and the Gbongan Ile elements came to the present site. These two phases have been mixed up in the traditions collected by Mr. E. A. Ojo, in his degree essay presented to the University of Ibadan in 1971.³¹ The traditions collected by Ojo speak of the foundation of Gbongan by the Oluoje and Olupe groups of migrants from northern Oyo who travelled through Ogbomoso, Ejigbo and Ede. Prior to the arrival of those migrants, continues the tradition, the site of the present Gbongan was a thick forest. Those traditions also relate that

the Olupe group went on and settled at Ife and was part of the original founders of Modakeke. This oral tradition can be understood as an attempt to forge an organic unity between the Modakeke elements, who as we shall see, arrived in 1909 and the earlier elements who now inhabit the town. Thus the 1835 flight to Ife is seen as a deliberate movement of the Olupe group to join in the founding of Modakeke. It is instructive that both the Olupe and the Oluoje groups in Gbongan do not claim to have any connection with Modakeke, and the Modakeke traditions of its foundation, which is fairly well documented, do not talk of the Olupe group. Nor could it have been that the site of the present Gbongan was a thick bush, as there were former settlements. Indeed, a fair number of Origbo towns and villages were very close to the present site of Gbongan.

It would, however, appear clear that the constitution of Gbongan into a regular town with all the administrative and religious trappings started only around 1847-1850. A powerful indication in this respect is the Gbongan king list, which up till now only numbers eight, five of them since the beginning of this century. Ojo was probably right when he summarized that until the first decade of this century, the population of Gbongan was scanty. In spite of that however, political and administrative positions were shared and have since been retained among the various *ebi* that returned from Ife. One significant factor that should be noted is that when Gbongan was being constituted into a regular town, Ibadan had become the political boss in Yorubaland, to which even Ife was responsible. The rulers of Gbongan from its inception therefore owed direct loyalty to Ibadan overlords. It will be reasonable to suppose that Gbongan soldiers participated on the Ibadan side during the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo war that lasted from 1874 to 1886, though the part played by Gbongan soldiers awaits research.

The next major event in the history of Gbongan occurred in 1907 when Isasa river was made the boundary between Ibadan and Ife territories. This effectively left Gbongan within Ibadan sphere of influence as it also cut Ikire off from Ife authority. Then in 1909, a large number of Modakeke elements settled in Gbongan following the break up of Modakeke town by the British Administration on the insistence of Ife authorities. With that influx, the population of Gbongan increased substantially and the town itself was further distanced emotionally from Ife influence.

A town that is generally agreed to be of ancient foundation is Moro, one of the Origbo settlements. However, both its recorded oral traditions

and its king list would hardly support this belief. Its agreed founder, Lawobu, is said to be an Ife descendant of Ojigidiri Lambua, from Akui compound, whose descendants now reside in Ade compound at Moro (Akinrinade,18). He is said to have been joined by Oyo elements from the town of Ifon near Osogbo who now provide the Baale (Head of the town). Up to date, there have been nine Baale in Moro. Seven of whom appear to have reigned in this century (p.52) leaving only two, Inufinsa and Alabiosu who could hardly have been around earlier than the second half of the 19th century. Ojigidiri Lambua reigned between Osinlade Otutubiosun and Akinmoyero Odunlebiojo ³². This limits the period to between the 1770s and early 1780s. Lawobu was probably, a second or even a third generation descendant and the regular settlement of Moro probably a part of the general population movement that characterized the closing years of the 18th century and the first half of the nineteenth century. If Moro was an ancient town, then it was probably a farming settlement for a long time and did not become a regular town until the second half of the 19th century when the Ifon elements came. Alternatively, if it became a regular town before then, then the earlier traditions and the former rulers, have either been suppressed or forgotten, and Lawobu then becomes a compressed personality which may have incorporated in himself very many names now forgotten. In its present form, Moro could hardly have been founded earlier than 1850. By that time, Ibadan had become the imperial ruler of Origbo.

The other towns lying north and north-west of Ife are all completely products of the 19th century events in Yorubaland. The first of them we will treat here is Edunabon sagreed to be occupying part of the land that originally belonged to Moro. However, some of its traditions of origin are currently being projected backwards to create an impression of its being an old settlement. One such tradition is that which claims its foundation to be from the time of Oduduwa. This is to be discounted as "having been coined out of modern political needs" Its king list, eleven in number, is indeed an insurmountable impediment to such a claim. A second tradition which is slightly older and more credible, claims that its founder was Salu, a hunter from Ife and a friend of Lawobu who settled first at Moro. The tradition relates that after a short stay with Lawobu, Salu moved to the present site of Edunabon where he was joined by groups from northern Oyo towns of Oje or Aha near Shaki, who had to flee their original home because they had contravened an *ewo egungun*. An interesting bit of this tradition is that one of these new immigrants "married a daughter of Salu and gave birth to Akinjole who later became

head of the settlement after his grandfather" (Akinrinade, 22).

A careful analysis of the tradition will suggest that rather than an Ife, the man Salu was more likely to have been the leader of the immigrant group Aha which founded Edunabon. For it would have been unusual first, that only Salu and his wife came to Moro and they alone moved to Edunabon. Secondly if he was from Ife, it would have been equally unusual that his family had no land of its own in an area where land was not in short supply, and that he was obliged to settle on someone else's land within Ife area. And we will have to assume that Salu had no male children and no brothers before his daughter's child could inherit to his title. All things considered, the date of the foundation of Edunabon must be roughly around the same time as or slightly later than that of Moro i.e. second half of the 19th century. There is indeed a strong suspicion that Moro, Edunabon, and as we shall later see, Yakoyo were constituted as regular towns at about the same time as, or soon after Abewela sent the refugees from Ipetumodu and Ikire back to their respective towns and founded a regular town for the Oyo at Modakeke all in a bid to decongest Ife. Other elements, including Tapa and Bariba might have used the occasion to settle on what was formally Lawobu's farmland.

The inhabitants of Yakoyo were remnants of the earlier Origbo settlement of Afunnimogbo now called Afunwonmogbo to suit modern tastes. According to Akinrinade who has collected the oral sources (23-26), Afunnimogbo was founded around 1830 by refugees from Egba towns, who after they had deserted their original homestead as a result of the aftermath of the Owu wars, went to live in Iwara compound in Ife. Within 10 years they again left and settled between Moro and Ipetunmodu. Orunlamokun, the original Egba leader, who had taken them to Iwara compound and back to Afunnimogbo was the same person who led them to Yakoyo and assumed the leadership of the settlement. According to the traditions, Yakoyo was founded soon after the first Modakeke-Ife war. This dates the constitution of the town to about 1850 or soon after. While the date of the foundation of Yakoyo appears reasonable, considering the fact that there have been only 15 Baale (head chief) up to date, the story of the foundation of Afunnimogbo would appear to be considerably older. The way in which Orunlamokun, a supposed Egba, forgot the name of his own original Egba compound and adopted Iwara, the place of his refuge, needs a little explanation. One suspects an ingenious device of wanting to be both Ife and Egba at the same time, which may be a telescoping of a larger period of history than modern traditions can remember, particularly as the group had been

moving from place to place. This would seem to be suggested by a tradition that relates that the foundation of Afunnimogbo dates back to the same period as that of Ifewara.³³ It would therefore be part of the movement that sent Agbele Olojo to found Ifewara which we shall soon relate. But Afunnimogbo could not have been earlier than the return of Agbele Olojo when he made a second but unsuccessful bid for the throne of Ife, after which he could have founded the Iwara compound. Elements from there then went to found their homes in what was then Origbo, and originally called their settlement Iwara which later become popularly known as Afunimogbo.

It was to this existing settlement that some Egba refugee elements led by Orunlamokun and Isehin refugees came after the destruction of the old Egba kingdom between 1825 and 1828. Although the Isehin elements now appear to have been forgotten in popular oral traditions,³⁴ they are still mentioned during the annual Oro festivals. Soon after, however, both the hosts and the refugees first moved to Ipetumodu and then Ife under threats of external invasion. Since the Afunnimogbo elements continued to remember and maintain their Iwara connections, it was natural that they and their Egba hosts would seek refuge in Iwara compound as long as their lost children were coming home. Around the time of Abewela's reconstitution, they would all have moved to their present site, with Orunlamokun, an Egba, and his followers constituting the leadership group, and making the Oro cult their most important festival. The connection with Iwara and the association with Ipetumodu in the old Origbo settlements would thus become explicable.³⁵

There remain three other small towns which will be treated at this point for the sake of convenience, even though they were founded in the first three decades of this century. The first is *Asipa* the foundation of which must be dated to post - 1903, possibly around 1907. Recent as the foundation is, the tradition, usually narrated by the Baale families, only serves to indicate the political rivalries in the small town. According to Akinrinade who has recently collected the traditions of Asipa, the Baale Akinfabi family claiming Modakeke origin say they were the original founders (Akinrinade, 35-6). An earlier tradition, collected in 1958 relates that the earliest elements were from Sukuru, who fleeing from Ilorin muslim raids took refuge first in Ipetumodu, and later with Ipetumodu in Ife.³⁶ When Ipetumodu was resettled around 1847, these people were given lands to farm on within parcels of land owned by princely families in Ipetumodu. It is unlikely that the place became a regular village much before 1907 when Iwara, the nearby Origbo village

was abandoned and some of its elements settled at Asipa as well as at Ipetumodu. When Modakeke was disbanded in 1909, some of the people could have settled with their relations and friends in Asipa. Around the same time, members of the Balogun family in Ipetumodu also moved to Asipa permanently, though, without severing their connections with their chieftaincy title at Ipetumodu.

Looking, therefore, at the traditions and giving the untidy development some order, Asipa would seem to have been founded by both original Origbo elements and elements from Iregberi, Sukuru and other Oyo towns, fleeing from the confusion that engulfed the Oyo empire in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Those elements settled in Ipetumodu first for refuge and later moved to Ife when Ipetumodu itself moved, in the 1830s. Some of them moved back with Ipetumodu in the late 1840s and early 1850s and were given farmland which had a Baale (father of the farmland). At the beginning of this century, with the settlement getting larger with influx of more refugees from Modakeke, the farmstead was reconstituted into a regular small town.

The most recent settlement in the west and north-west complex is *Akinlalu* which was founded within the last sixty years. What now passes for its tradition of origin is in fact an explanation of the present chieftaincy distribution in the town (Akinrinade, 37-40). Before 1822, the place was a farmstead belonging to the Apelaiye family of Ipetumodu. When the Ooni Ademiluyi agreed that the Modakeke elements should come back to Ife, in order that he might have more tax-payers which would give him a greater political recognition with the colonial administrators, he did not want them in their old settlement in Ife. He proposed instead that they should settle at Akinlalu. This provoked a protest from Ipetumodu.³⁷ The Apetumodu Adeyemi Maborukoje and his chiefs argued that Ipetumodu tended to be the loser each time Ife and Modakeke quarrelled or made up their quarrel. They recalled the 1909 incident of the foundation of Odeomu which was sited on Ipetumodu farmland with the consent of Ife authorities who made the boundary with Ibadan. Although Ipetumodu was promised a compensation of land around Oyere, the promise was not fulfilled. Now Ife wanted to place Modakeke again on the remaining Ipetumodu farmland. The people of Ipetumodu decided to let the Ooni Ademiluyi know that if the Ife authorities went ahead, they would sever their connections with Ife. This protest was called *Ote wi ghangba* (they say it's plainly rebellion). Ooni Ademiluyi was not going to hear of diminution in his territory just when he was seeking means of increasing its population, and he had the ears of

the colonial authorities. He therefore got the delegated leader of the protest, Balogun Osiloyejoye arrested and imprisoned and the protest collapsed. But the purpose had been achieved and the Modakeke were not resettled at Akinlalu. In any case, it was doubtful whether the Modakeke would not have preferred their original homes which they abandoned less than fifteen years before and it was doubtful that those who agreed to return moved.

In spite of that, individual Modakeke elements from various families, went settling everywhere and a number of them stayed with the Apelaye family on their farmland. Other elements also came from Edunabon, Yakoyo, Moro and Ede. When around 1924 Akinlalu was being constituted into a regular settlement, a leader of the Ipetumodu family was chosen as Baale, in recognition of the original ownership of the land. The title of Otun Baale was given to the Yakoyo elements, the titles of Oosa and Balogun were allocated to the Modakeke elements. Later a second branch for the Baaleship was created and allocated to Edunabon elements (Akinrinade, 37-40).

In the eastern part of Ife, perhaps the oldest Ife settlement is Ifewara, whose beginning was probably contemporaneous with Iwara settlement's that finally became Yakoyo. Not much is known yet about the history of this settlement beyond the tradition that it was founded by an Ife prince variously said to be Agbele Olojo, one of the sons of Otujabiojo and a brother of Ogboru, or by Ogboru himself. This might put the date of the foundation to late 14th or early 15th century. Like Ogboru, Olojo had contested for succession after the death of their father, Otujabiojo and had failed. Whereupon he left Ife to found Ifewara, just as Ogboru left for Ife Odan. Unlike Ogboru, however, when he made a second attempt, he failed while Ogboru succeeded. In his second bid, he was said to have brought so many people back from Ifewara that if the place was not completely emptied of people, the town must have contained quite a sizeable population. Agbele Olojo probably never went back to Ifewara for he is remembered as having settled his followers at Ilare, Igboodo and Iwara quarters in Ile-Ife.³⁸ It is conceivable that quite a number of his followers would have returned to Ifewara after the failure of the mission of their leader. Others went to a place called Afunnimogbo as we have already seen. The subsequent growth of Ifewara and how the town eventually became an Ijesa town is yet to be studied by historians.

The latest town to be constituted within the Ife kingdom was *Ifetedo* founded around 1832. It grew out of the claims and counterclaims for

the ownership of Oke-Igbo by the Ife and Ondo. Oke-Igbo had been a farm settlement belonging to Ondo. In the mid-1830s or early 1840, Ife elements, under Derin Ologbenla occupied the places as allies of rebellious Ondo citizens, supporters of Oba Arilekolasi, the Osemawe of Ondo, who had fallen foul of, and had therefore been rejected by his subjects.³⁹ In the ensuing civil war, the Oke-Igbo elements majority of whom were now Ife, were victorious causing Ondo town to be abandoned. It was not resettled until about 1872.⁴⁰ In the interval, Derin had become an acknowledged ruler of Oke-Igbo, and even when in 1879 he was elected the Ooni of Ife (Johnson, 458,476), he remained in Oke-Igbo, first waiting for the end of the Kiriji/Ekiti parapo war before being installed, and then for the return of Ife who in 1882 had been driven out of their town by the Modakeke (p.477). Eventually he died at Oke-Igbo and his descendants have remained rulers of the town. It was on these events that the Ife based their claim to the ownership of Oke-Igbo. However, the Ondo opposed this claim. The contest went on until about 1932, when the colonial government awarded Oke-Igbo to Ondo by naming the river Oni the boundary between Ife and Ondo. Most of the pro-Ife elements in Oke-Igbo, therefore, moved westward across the river Oni, within the area allocated to Ife and founded a new settlement which they appropriately named Ifetado (the Ife founded this settlement).

All the towns within the ancient Kingdom of Ife can be organized into two chronological periods - those that were founded before the close of the 18th century and those that were founded after 1850. The years between 1800 and 1850 witnessed profound changes within the Ife Kingdom as a result of equally profound changes taking place all over Yorubaland. As should already be clear, these were the years when large numbers of Oyo refugees converged in Ile-Ife. According to Johnson, these refugees first settled around Ipetumodu but by 1835, Ipetumodu and its guests moved into Ile-Ife. In addition refugees from Ikire and its surrounding towns also came, as did refugees from northern Oyo towns who were probably much larger in number than all the refugees from within the Kingdom of Ife itself. One little interesting reality that is often completely overlooked in petty quarrels of the towns and villages is that, after 1850 their populations including probably a large chunk of Ile-Ife itself are made up of similar consanguinity from the same Oyo areas of Yoruba country. A study of the Orile (lineage ascriptive praise names) of the various lineages in all the towns will reveal that the Ikoyi, the Oje, the Opo, the Oburo of Iresa, the Ifon, the Ofa and other orile are all pre-

sent in each of the towns.

The strains that this large influx of people would have exacted on the economic resources of Ife and its resulting social stresses must have been enormous. There would have been genuine problems and continuous debates about what to do with this excess population, whom the Ife felt duty bound to protect because they were Yoruba. The problem must have been confronted in its mild form under Ooni Akinmoyero Odunlebiojo and Ooni Gbanlare who probably only just managed to control it. Under Ooni Gbegbaaje and Wunmonije it was assuming intractable proportions. Under Abewela it got out of hand and may have been partly responsible for the feud between him and his subjects.

Each of the Ooni appeared to have made efforts to solve the problem in his own way. Under Wunmonije there was an attempt to use the spirit of the age and join in military adventurism, using some of these excess population (Johnson,230). Thus a number of Ife war leaders emerged at this time, including Okunade Maye, Balogun Sigbunsin, Okansa, Ayikiti and others, who joined in the destruction of the Owu and Egbe kingdoms and were parts of the foundation of Ibadan. Others, such as Derin Ologbenla, Kugbaigbe and Sowo also started a military expansionist war towards Ilesa and finally occupied Oke-Igbo.

However, the expulsion and subsequent execution of Balogun Maye at Ibadan, and the growing power of Ibadan under Oyo elements both caused dissension among the now heterogenous inhabitants of Ife and dampened military expansionism⁴¹. Abewela therefore tried to solve the problem by decongesting Ife. In about 1847 he sent all the inhabitants of Ife towns back to their old settlements. Ikire went back and took under its wings all its nearby small villages. Ipetumodu went back also harbouring all or most of the small villages.⁴² For the Oyo elements who had nowhere to go, he created a town outside the walls of Ile-Ife. But as had been seen in Chapter 6, this last move turned out to be the birth of a real dilemma that has still not been resolved.

Soon after this event, around 1848 Abewela died. Civil war followed his death in which the Modakeke elements overpowered Ife and sent the inhabitants packing. By the time Ile-Ife was resettled in about 1854 with the help of Balogun Ibikunle of Ibadan, all the towns within Ife kingdom and Ile-Ife itself had become subordinate towns to Ibadan.

This then is the appropriate place to probe the nature of the relationship between Ile-Ife and its outlying towns. A number of factors now make this reconstruction difficult, though not absolutely impossible. The first is the complete disappearance of a substantial number of the towns

and villages and the incorporation of their population in various other towns.⁴⁴ When such an event occurs, the oral traditions of the disbanded settlements are forgotten or at least suppressed and new ones, designed to integrate them into their new surroundings, cultivated. The second factor is the discontinuity in the mutual relationship caused by Ibadan imperial expansion as a result of which both Ife and its outlying towns dealt individually with Ibadan. The third was the drastic change in the dialect composition of the inhabitants of the outlying towns as a result of massive immigration of Oyo speaking elements into the area. Consequently, the dialect has since remained predominantly Oyo rather than Ife. The fourth is that the advent of European imperialism, with its sharp distinction between the ruler and the ruled, and the introduction of the Sole Native Authority system as an instrument of the Lugardian system of indirect rule⁴⁵ in which the Oba of the capital town was invested with enormous political powers over the outlying towns, have changed the general conception of the relationship between the capital town of a Yoruba kingdom and its outlying towns. Imperialism brought with it the concept of master and servant in which the servant existed mainly to be exploited by the master. When the Sole Native Authority system was introduced, every dweller in the capital town, not just the Oba, saw himself or herself as an imperial master over every dweller of the outlying towns - other objective facts such as family ties, common farmland and so on notwithstanding.

Such a feeling between Ile-Ife and the outlying towns was accentuated by two factors: the general acknowledgement of Ile-Ife as the *Orirun* Yoruba and the loss of large farmland to Ibadan during the boundary making exercises. This farmland largely belonged to the outlying towns, the inhabitants of which then had to seek farmland in the remaining parts of Ife kingdom which strictly speaking, belonged to Ile-Ife. In the new economic system introduced by the colonial authorities, the outlying towns were partly reduced to tenants on Ile-Ife land, thereby re-enforcing the notion of master-servant relationship.⁴⁶ Before the 19th century, there would appear to be so much abundant farming and hunting land relative to the population that every family (*ebi*) had enough to prevent landlord-tenant relationship.

If the relationship was not that of master and servant, neither was it an imperial organization with an integrated military system. As was noticed earlier, Ile-Ife did not appear to have developed a military tradition until the second decade of the 19th century, and by 1849, such military initiative it might have had, had been ended first by Modakeke and later by

Ibadan. The kind of relationship which developed between the ancient Oyo Empire and its imperial territory, or between Ibadan and its imperial territory, whereby citizens of the outlying towns sent contingents to the army of the capital, did not seem to have developed in Ife, even during the short period of its military exploits.

Having stated what the relationship was not, it is more difficult to put one's finger on what it was. However, if it was neither economic subjugation nor military integration, it would then be social, religious and political. There was undoubtedly, economic co-operation as distinct from economic subjugation. If we may go by the example of other parts of the country such as the south and east of Yorubaland, where social changes in the 19th century were less traumatic, it will be reasonable to assume that the dialect in all the towns within Ife kingdom was the Ife dialect of Yoruba, just as Ijesa, Ijebu and Ondo, to name a few, were the dialects in their various domains. It was also probable that different families moved in and out of Ile-Ife from these outlying towns. Indeed in spite of the changes in the 19th century, there are still families in some of the towns who maintain strong links with their relations in Ile-Ife. The example of the Iwara in Yakoyo are in multiples in Ipetumodu, Moro, Edunabon as well as Ikire, Ifewara, Ifetedo and even Oke-Igbo. A common social convention was that marriages were celebrated once a year throughout the kingdom immediately after the Orungbe festival. A third element of relationship which is directly discernable out of the foregoing is that there are common religious ceremonies, both at individual family levels and also at a general territorial level. We are unlikely to know the number of family ceremonies but three or four annual religious festivals appear to have been observed together by all the towns in Ife kingdom. These were the annual Ifa festival, the annual Ofungbe festival and the annual Edi festival.⁴⁷ All the territory might have also celebrated the Obatala festival together. Ife and Edi are so well known that they need no elaboration. Orungbe is one of the festivals celebrated privately by the Ooni around June every year. During these festivals, presents were exchanged. The Ooni's messengers in informing the subordinate rulers, sent them various presents which were specific and known to both sides. In turn, these rulers in acknowledging his message, sent back specific presents. Very much the same things happened at family levels. Because these ceremonies were many and celebrated at different periods of the year, there was presumably constant going back and forth between the towns within the Kingdom. With the influx of the Oyo elements, other predominantly Oyo religious festivals developed. They include Eegun,

Sango and, to some extent, Oya. Although these constituted links between the outlying towns, they tend to weaken attachment to Ile-Ife where such festivals were either unknown or regarded as unimportant.

In the area of economic co-operation, various towns would also appear to have specific functions. Indeed a close observation of the location of these towns would reveal that a great concentration of them lay west of Ife, towards Owu and Apomu market and may well suggest the direction of trade. The most important information which Ife palace sources recall about Ikire was that its ruler in the 1770s was in charge of the Odun river crossing, and the chief collector of tolls at Apomu markets.⁴⁸ Ipetumodu stood at a strategic point. Anyone going to or coming from Ife for any business whatsoever, had to pass through it and possibly rest there before proceeding. In addition, all Obas in the western section who had important national functions to perform at Ile-Ife were obliged to come first to Ipetumodu and from there be led to Ife.⁴⁹ In this connection, it is instructive to recall that when the Oyo elements of future Modakeke first took refuge in Ife territory, it was at Ipetumodu they settled before they moved to Ife. There might have been economic and industrial specializations. For instance, there are traditions that household pots were not made in Ife but brought in from the Origbo towns, and that certain grains, such as beans were also grown outside Ife and brought in to be sold. Thus one can imagine a constant flow of men, ideas and goods between Ife and its outlying towns, and between Ife and other western Yoruba Kingdoms passing through these towns. The strongest political and emotional link within the kingdom was loyalty to the Ooni, who was the acknowledged "father" and who owned all land and was a representative of the gods on earth.

To modern researchers, the above enunciated relationships were nebulous and weak. For those times, however, they formed the binding realities of Ife, particularly as Ife's leading place in Yorubaland was grounded largely on religious, social and political issues. However, between 1830 and 1850, these ties were first weakened and were finally ended. By 1847, when the towns were being resettled, Ikire went permanently under the protective wings of Ibadan, thanks to the influence of such Ikire sons as Ajobo, who had become important in the military hierarchy of Ibadan (Johnson, 323,366,383-384). Gbongan, which was founded around the same time, was from the start under Ibadan protection as we have seen, and between 1849 and 1854 when Ife itself was deserted, Ipetumodu and all the Origbo settlements came under Ibadan protection. After 1854, Ile-Ife itself became a satellite town of Ibadan, as did

Modakeke which forthwith became a thorn in Ife's flesh. Henceforth whenever Ibadan went to war, contingents from all the erstwhile Ife towns went with it, though it would appear that Ife contingents went reluctantly. In 1877 when Ibadan wanted to display its overlordship over Ife by sending Ayikiti, a high ranking military man of Ife origin as the Ooni of Ife, Ife demurred and although they could not refuse, the man died while going through initiation ceremonies (p.475).

In the following year (1878), the Kiriji war started with Ife hosts in Ibadan army. By 1882, when it appeared that the Ekitiparapo forces were going to be successful in their bid to overthrow the Ibadan yoke, Ife led by Balogun Derin, who since 1878 had been elected Ooni, saw it as an opportunity to free themselves from the Ibadan clutches and defected to the Ekitiparapo side (Johnson,475; Ajayi and Akintoye:291). At the same time, Balogun Derin sent messages to all the erstwhile Ife towns to do the same, distributing arms to them to attack Ibadan. Those to whom Derin sent arms were the civil authorities at home, not their war leaders in the Ibadan camp. The arms were therefore turned over to Aare Latosa, the Ibadan leader (Johnson, 475-477). Ibadan replied by encouraging Modakeke to attack Ife once again with the result that Ife was again overpowered and its population scattered. It was not resettled until 1893, after Ife had got a promise in the 1886 treaty that Modakeke would be broken up and resettled between Oba and Osun rivers.

When Adelekan Olubuse ascended the throne in 1894, Ife like all the other allies in the Ekitiparapo army was independent of Ibadan but without any territory as all its outlying towns were under Ibadan.⁵⁰ The situation remained unchanged until 1903, when Olubuse was invited to Lagos to settle a question of whether the Elepe in Ijebu-Remo had the right to wear a crown. After he had pronounced against the Elepe, he sought a private interview with the Governor during which he complained of not having any territory. His plea was supported by the emissary which the Apetumodu had sent to accompany him. The Governor was sympathetic to his plight and promised to grant him more territory. His salary and perquisites were also increased.⁵¹ In 1907, the western boundary of Ife kingdom was fixed at River Isasa leaving the Origbo towns with Ile-Ife, but cutting them off from their farms which remained under Ibadan. In 1909, the long sought disbandment of Modakeke took place⁵² and they simply moved beyond river Isasa and settled along its course, almost encircling Ife, but remaining under Ibadan authority. With their movement, the population within the new kingdom was drastically reduced. Therefore, when taxation was introduced around 1918 and the

Obas were promised that their salaries would be proportionate to the total amount of tax collected in their domains, the Ooni needed more people to be able to generate more revenue. Negotiations which had been discontinued in 1912 were then revived to encourage the Modakeke to come back again, this time to settle on a portion of Ipetumodu land by river Opa, now called Akinlalu. As we have seen, the people of Ipetumodu protested, and Modakeke elements who were eager to return went to their deserted homes.

By that time completely new situations had arisen. The old euphoria of Ife belonging to all Yoruba, just as all Yoruba belonged to Ife had been changed first by Ibadan militarism and then by European imperialism. Ife has since been struggling to retain a toehold in Yorubaland as most of its immediate outlying towns had been appropriated by Ibadan. Thus hemmed in, Ife could hardly be expected to continue its generous acceptance of "strangers" on its reduced territory. Since its surviving outlying towns have become largely Oyo speaking, there is a tendency on the Ife side to view them as threats, and on the side of outlying towns to view Ife with suspicion as imperialists. Neither Ife, nor the outlying towns view one another as complementary units within the same administration. New economic and political forces continue to fuel this tension, thus resulting in Ife not having developed a corporate feeling of togetherness.

NOTES

- 1 For a discussion of Ebe concept, see I.A. Akinjogbin: *Dahomey and its Neighbours 1708-1818* (O.U.P.), 1967, pp. 14-17. I.A. Akinjogbin and E.A. Ayandele: "Yorubaland up to 1880" in O. Ikime (Ed.), *Ground Work of Nigerian History* (Heinneman), 1880, pp. 131-133; I.A. Akinjogbin: "The Ebi System Reconsidered", University of Ife, Department of History Seminar, 10th January, 1979; one or two British scholars who do not understand the Yoruba language, and whose first acquaintance with Yoruba history is through the classic work of O. Johnson: *History of the Yorubas* were sceptical, indeed hostile, to this concept. See, for example, R.S. Smith, *Kingdom of Yorubaland* (Methuen) 1969; R.C.C. Law: "Review of Dahomey and its Neighbours" *JAH*, 1969, p. 346 and "The Heritage of Oduduwa: Traditional History and Political Propaganda" in *JAH* xiv ii, 1973; in spite of the fact that the validity of the concept is being gradually accepted by scholars. See R.

Horton, "Ancient Ife": A Re-assessment in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria (JHSN)*, Vol.9, No.4, 1979, pp. 68-150

- 2 Orirun is either *ori orun* lit, the place of heaven or *ori irun* lit the place of first existence. Both mean the same thing and connote a place from which one came and to which one's spirit after death will ultimately rest with one's ancestors. To such a place your truth and loyalty must be unquestioned and unquestionable. The word "run" here connotes three meanings to the Yorubaman at the same time (1) to be absolutely straight (2) to start existence (3) to destroy. It is at the same time both physical and spiritual.
- 3 Oral traditions about the foundation of all Yoruba kingdoms are replete with stories of princes going from Ife to found new kingdoms.
- 4 Before the 19th century there were groups from Sabe, Iwere, Efon Alaye who came to Ife Kingdom after one discontent or the other in their former homes. In the 19th century, it would appear that the first place the Oyo refugees thought of was the Ife kingdom. see S. Johnson: *History of the Yoruba* (C.S.C. Lagos) 1973, p.230
- 5 See below
- 6 As in the case of the Origbo towns - see below
- 7 As Ikire - see below
- 8 G.A. Bamgboje, *Ipetumodu in the nineteenth century*, B. A.(Hons). Essay, University of Ibadan, 1971, p. 3 lists about 26 names. Some of these were, however, post- 1850 as we shall see later in the chapter.
- 9 The oral traditions of Ipetumodu have been collected by quite a few individuals. Mr. J.L. Adeniran of Oduduwa Road, Ile-Ife (about 80 years) has spent a large part of a life time collecting the traditions. Between 1958 and 1960, the present writer also collected some of these traditions. Among the recent collectors were G. A. Bamgboje (cited above); O. T. Akinrinade: *An analysis of the*

- legends of Origins of Origbo towns*. B. A. (Hons.) History Essay, University of Ife, June 1981; Iyabo Akinjogbin (Mrs.): *The Coronation Ceremony of the Apetumodu* (1978).
- 10 This taboo is still observed to prevent the accidental meeting of the *aafe* and the Apetumodu which were by tradition forbidden to come from the same family compound.
 - 11 This taboo is still believed to be in force.
 - 12 Group interview at the palace of Ipetumodu Jan. 1958; *The coronation ceremony of Apetumodu*, 14th April, 1979.
 - 13 This tradition is still observed during the coronation of the Alafin of Oyo; others seem to have discontinued it but in a personal communication, the Orangun of Ila, Oba Ayeni told me that Ipetumodu is regarded as an ancient town by Yoruba Obas.
 - 14 These are Moyero, Iseyemi, Adegunle, Akintolu, Atafagboye, Adeitan, Olugboye (Ahela-oko), Atosadi loju ogun; Obahan: G.A. Bamgboje: *Ipetumodu ...* (47) mentioned, eight, leaving out Adegunle. The main source of this information is Pa. J. L. Adeniran of Oduduwa College Road.
 - 15 This occurred during the chieftaincy declaration exercises around 1958. When the government of the then western Region of Nigeria wanted to reduce succession of Obas to some order. The good intentions of government was everywhere messed up because of local political interests, and the general state of unawareness of the people. The local leaders of the ruling party decided there would be two dynasties and they went ahead and fixed the houses in the two, at the same time creating succession rules completely at variance with traditional practices.
 - 16 A. T. Akinrinade: *An Analysis of the legends*
 - 17 A. A. Adediran: *The Emergence of Western Yoruba Kingdoms*. A study in the process of state formation, Ph.D. thesis (University of Ife) 1980, p. 123; Asiwaju A. I. and Igue O. J.: *A History of Sabe: An Ancient Yoruba Kingdom* (manuscript).
 - 18 This is still often recited in the oriki of the Aribile family.

- 19 Part of his **Oriki** states: “**Omo eesun roro ti mbe l’oke oja, O fere di igboro na**” (the tall high grass beyond the market will soon become part of the town). This is a reference to his activity in expanding the town.
- 20 S. O. Johnson, *History*, p.230, says the Ilorin Army actually over-ran Ipetumodu and all the other surrounding Ife towns. They must have withdrawn soon after.
- 21 Ipetumodu popular traditions do not admit ever vacating the town, though knowledgeable elders discreetly admit it. One popular oriki of Ipetumodu is *Ilu Asala* (A town of refuge).
- 22 S. O. Johnson: *History* p. 230, A. Y. Odekunle: *Ikire in the nineteenth century*, B. A. (Hons) Essay, University of Ibadan 1972, p. 25.; Odekunle stresses internal dissension over succession as a major cause for Ikire movement to Ife but that could only be an additional reason.
- 23 Group interview (by the author) at Akire’s palace in March 1958. The Oriki of all the Obas were recited by the king’s wives and the Iya Sango.
- 24 That was the name mentioned to me in 1958: A. Y. Odekunle *Ikire* ... has Akinrere, and a secondary school in Ikire has now been named Akinrere Grammar School.
- 25 He was mentioned in Ife Palace Records in connection with events at Apomu.
- 26 Part of his Oriki is **Baba mi l’omu erin de Ikire** (My father brought elephant into Ikire) The point here is that a hunter was by law enjoined to report his killing of an elephant to the Oba of a town. That such a report was first made under Kuje signified that Ikire became a town, A. Y. Odekunle: *Ikire*, ... p.4
- 27 For example. **Kuje ma re borisa Baba mi ma re Moosa.** (Kuje went to Borisa, My father went to Moosa).
- 28 S. O. Babayemi: Personal communication

- 29 Ife palace records, Ile-Ife.
- 30 The eight are Olufi, Fagbola, Olujide, Soko, Oloyede, (died 1926), Asabi, Oyeniyi (died 1948) and Jacob Adeoye.
- 31 Such titles as Moluberin, Moringbere etc. appear to be princely titles within outlying Ife towns of Ipetumodu and Ikire.
- 32 See I. A. Akinjogbin, Chapter 5 above.
- 33 Information from Pa. J. L. Adeniran, Jan., 1858
- 34 Personal communication with Mr. T.A. Oyesakin (Department of African Languages and Literatures, University of Lagos) in May, 1984.
- 35 Akinrinade recalls that up till now, certain parts of the animal killed during the Oro festival are sent to Iwara in Ife. In the same way certain parts are still sent to the Apetumodu, an indication of the connection.
- 36 Pa. J. L. Adeniran: Jan., 1958
- 37 This is current history and is generally known by most knowledgeable Ipetumodu people aged above fifty years.
- 38 See I. A. Akinjogbin, Chapter 5 above.
- 39 J.F.A. Ajayi and S.A. Akintoye: "Yorubaland in the 19th century" O. Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Heinneman Educational Books), 1980, p. 285; T.A. Olowaye, *Oke-Igbo in Ondo and Ife Power* Politics B. A. Hons. Essay, University of Ibadan, 1970. pp. 4-15 narrates both the Ife and the Ondo versions of the story.
- 40 PRO: C0147/24: Report of Goldsworthy's Expedition 1872
- 41 J. F. A. Ajayi and S. A. Akintoye; in *Groundwork* (O. Ikime (ed.),

p.285

- 42 Abeweila installed Orisatola as the Akire and installed Okoro Giesi as the Apetumodu and sent both back to their respective towns. A. Y. Odekunle: *Ikire* pp. 37-38; group interview at the Apetumodu's palace January 1958
- 43 S. Johnson: *History*, p. 232; J.F.A. Ajayi and S.A. Akintoye in *Groundwork*, p. 285
- 44 Of the over 20 original Origbo settlements, only two Ipetumodu and Moro, now remain within Origbo.
- 45 Many of the historical works in the Ibadan History series have been devoted to indirect rule in Nigeria.
- 46 This is really the greatest source of friction between Ile-Ife and its outlying towns at present.
- 47 Group interview, Apetumodu's palace, January 1958. The dates of these festivals were fixed in Ife and announced through appropriate messengers to the outlying towns.
- 48 Ife Palace records
- 49 Only Oyo still observes this during the coronation of a new Alafin.
- 50 In 1882, Derin, the Ooni elect had demanded these territories in vain as a condition for coming to be crowned at Ife, see S. Johnson: *History*, p. 476
- 51 *The Nigeria Gazette*, Lagos; 18 February 1903; Editor, *Journal of Royal Africa Society*, London, 2 (1902-3). pp312-315 (No. 8, April 1903, pp. 313-314)
- 52 See R. A Olaniyan, Chapter 6 above.

CHAPTER 12

DISPERSALS FROM IFE

I. A. Akinjogbin

Among the most fascinating, and perhaps the most popular themes of Ife history are the various stories of migration from Ife by the "children" of Oduduwa to found kingdoms for themselves during and after the reign of their father. In the central Yoruba nation, the majority of the historical traditions about the foundation of the kingdoms start from the dispersals from Ife. There are traditions, both in Ife and other Yoruba kingdoms, that the founders, or sometimes whole populations, of particular towns migrated from Ife.¹ Samuel Johnson notes that the great rulers of the Yoruba Kingdoms migrated from Ife, although when he gives the details, he gives the impression that most of them departed from Oyo (Johnson, 15-25). In 1903, the Alafin Ladigbolu said that it was a great honour to have one's ancestor from Ife.² In 1954, Alademomi Kenyo, perhaps the most indefatigable collector of Yoruba traditions so far, listed 156 rulers who claimed to be wearing crowns but only 148 of these could be said to be legitimately wearing the crowns (1959). In effect, he was saying that 148 rulers in Yorubaland were in 1954 legitimately wearing crowns said to have been conferred on them by Ife. The consciousness of having originally emigrated from Ife is one of the themes that give Yorubaland its essential political and cultural unity and distinctness. Given this general agreement and the continuing popularity and relevance of the theme, it ought to be a straightforward narrative epic, with the historian, or his sources, tracing which group went from where in Ife, during which reign and to what destination, detailing various acts of bravery performed by intrepid leaders in the face of odds, and battles won against apparently invincible hordes. The only remaining problem for the modern historian to worry about should, therefore, have been fixing absolute dates and finding out the reasons for and the consequences of each migration.

In reality, however, it is not that easy or straightforward. No one now really knows how many rulers directly left from Ife, and when, to found new kingdoms or impose themselves on already existing ones. Nor are we now sure how many left from towns that had been previously settled by earlier Ife migrants, and who in the course of history stretched their migration backwards to Ife. It is unlikely that we shall ever know, even after a great deal more oral sources than we have now have been collect-

ed and analyzed. This is not to be wondered at, since we are dealing with a period that may be as long as one thousand years of active migrations in all directions during which all kinds of political permutations may have taken place and new political and economic realities may have rendered the remembrance of earlier histories no longer useful or may have led to the creation of new relationships and new traditions. Secondly, the system whereby the ruler of a kingdom claimed descent from Oduduwa and migration from Ife became susceptible to formalization. The great benefit of claiming descent from Oduduwa or migration from Ife is the possession of the *ade ileke* (beaded crown with fringes). Whereas some Oduduwa princes originally undoubtedly migrated from Ife with the beaded crowns, others during a later period simply "purchased" the right to wear the *ode ileke* after they had settled in their kingdoms.³ Once the purchase had been effected "with full national ceremonies", the wearer and his descendants forever could legitimately claim descent from Oduduwa from whom they derived their crown. From that point, they could invent a migration story from Ife. Such stories, however, can be easily detected. Once "Oduduwa" in this context is understood to mean a descendant of Oduduwa sitting on the Ife throne at the time of the bestowal of the crown, a great deal of the confusion is cleared. Ife authorities themselves encouraged this practice of purchase or at least did not discourage it, since it had several advantages for them. First, it was a source of revenue for members of the Ife ruling class who participated in the ceremonies. Secondly, it was a good psychological boost for Ife citizens, for it meant wider recognition of the primacy of Ife among all the other Yoruba kingdoms. Finally, it emphasized the unity of Yorubaland under the Oduduwa dispensation. However, the net result for the historian is that his analysis of the migration stories is not made any easier.

With all these caveats, what one says about dispersals from Ife in our present state of knowledge should be seen as a first serious attempt to analyze, not just state, the migration stories with all the imperfections usually associated with such attempts. From all the sources now available, which are mainly oral, and with some help from linguistics and archaeology, there would appear to be four categories of migration from Ife, each one associated with a distinct period. The first category are the pre-Oduduwa migrations; the second are the protest migrations that resulted from the Oduduwa take-over of authority at Ife the third are the migrations that were associated with the "children" and followers of Oduduwa which led to the emergence of the big Yoruba kingdoms.

These became the most popular and dwarfed all the others. The fourth are what one might call private entrepreneurial post-Oduduwa migrations by brave and ambitious hunters from various families in Ife going out to try their luck. When such enterprises had succeeded, they reported it at Ife for recognition. Since we are dealing with Ife emigration, we will not emphasize what has been called secondary migrations from towns already settled in by Ife migrants, even though many of these later claimed direct migration from Ife in order to boost their prestige.

THE PRE-ODUDUWA MIGRATIONS

It is now generally agreed that there were people in Yorubaland long before Oduduwa became the ruler of Ife.⁴ More than that, linguistic studies show that the total land area occupied by proto-Yoruba speakers was much wider than has been conceded. Yoruba is grouped among the Kwa family of languages of West Africa. In the late fifties and early sixties, Armstrong, on the basis of lexicostatistics, suggested that the Igbo, Idoma and Yoruba languages sprang from the same stem and started diverging from one another about four thousand years ago (Armstrong, 1961). Recently, Akinkugbe has shown the close relationship between Yoruba, Igala, Itsekiri and Ife/Ana in Togo (Akinkugbe, 1978). When it has been conceded that glottochronology or lexicostatistics still has a number of basic assumptions that must be refined, as has been pointed out by Adetugbo (1973), these studies tend to confirm that what may now be called the Yoruba cultural continuum existed before the 10th or 11th century A.D., when Oduduwa's period might have started. In this continuum, probably spreading from around Accra in Ghana to the eastern boundaries of Igboland in Nigeria and going northwards up to the Niger-Benue confluence, there was a degree of mutual cultural coherence that enhanced mobility (Akinjogbin, 1975:19,33). This was the period when the highest political organization could be shown in the ability of the villages to trace their origin from the ancestor, which Obayemi has called the "ministate" (Obayemi, 1976). It can be argued that small scale migration started from many centres and were multi-directional during this period. Ife would be only one of such among possible centres. The existence of such others should, therefore, not be seen as nullifying the claims of pre-Oduduwa migration from Ile-Ife, even though we may never know the scale or the extent.

That there were such emigration from Ife is exemplified by a number of studies. In his study of Western Yorubaland, Adediran has shown that some of the kingdoms that claim migration from Ife could only be seen

as pre-Oduduwa (Adediran, 1984). This is because while they acknowledge Ife ancestry, they do not acknowledge Oduduwa whom, in fact, they consider a female. In the case of Ketu, their acknowledged leader, Soipasan is represented as the husband of Oduduwa. In Ife Soipasan is remembered in the tradition as a pre-Oduduwa ruler who was noted for his cruelty and was therefore banished. West of Ketu, in the Ife/Ana or Ife/Togo area, there is also an acknowledgement of having migrated from Ife, but there is no recollection of Oduduwa. Their pattern of settlement, showing an absence of centralized monarchical system associated with the Oduduwa political formation, tends to confirm that If they had indeed migrated from Ife, then they must be pre-Oduduwa. That Ife continues to remember emigrations from Ife to these western extremities is seen in the mentioning of Obarada or Oba Dada, Onipopo and Oninana as Oduduwa princes that went westwards toward the present Republics of Benin, Togo and Ghana.

Adediran has also drawn attention to the probability of a pre-Oduduwa migration to Oyo from Ife. In both Oyo and Ife extant traditions, there is the acknowledgement of an earlier migration from Ife resulting in settlement in Oyo before the arrival of Oranyan. The founder was simply called Oloyo or Oloyomukoro in the Ife traditions.⁵ Oyo traditions, as recorded by Johnson, do not recognize this earlier founder, as they talk of Oranyan only.

However, certain Ife traditions refer to the founder of Oyo as a son of Oduduwa; and to Oranyan as having settled first with "his brother" when he got to Oyo. The story of how Oranyan took over from "his brother" is not quite clear and the confusion is exemplified in Ife and Oyo claiming Oranyan burial place.⁶ Adediran identifies this earlier founder with Sango, who might have been driven out by the Oduduwa group. However, before this identification can be accepted, comprehensive studies of Sango will have to be done, as other studies link Sango rites with Nupe.

For the moment, it is sufficient to agree that there was a pre-Oranyan migration from Ife to Oyo. Since Oranyan is accepted as the first Oduduwa prince in Oyo, it means that there was, therefore an, acknowledgement of a pre-Oduduwa migration to Oyo.

In Ijebu Ode area, traditions recorded by Olusola reveal that 13 of 25 quarters in Ijebu-Ode existed before the Oduduwa migrants came. Two of the 13, Imepe and Isado, have traditions of migration from Ife before the arrival of Obanta (the leader of the Oduduwa group). Other traditions claim they migrated from such places as Ijamo (around Ondo) and

Kabba areas (Akinjogbin, 1980).

In the Ikedu tradition, one of the pre-Oduduwa kings of Ife, known as Emeaha, is remembered to have organized migrations from Ife. He is said to have been blessed with many sons, among whom were powerful personalities. In order to have a peaceful succession, he ordered the most powerful of them to emigrate, going at least ten days journey from Ife.⁷ No one now remembers where any of these princes settled but it may well be that some of the purported migrations from Ife, which cannot, on other evidences, be seen to be post-Oduduwa, had their origins in such migrations.

What the available evidences, scanty as they are, tend to suggest is that before Oduduwa, Ife had developed a tradition of sending its citizens out to found new abodes within the Yoruba cultural continuum. As we pointed out earlier, other dispersal centres may also have been doing similar things at the same time. In particular, Epe, near Ondo, may have been one of such important dispersal centres. We have already noted certain quarters in Ijebu-Ode whose inhabitants claimed that their ancestors migrated from Ijamo, of which Epe was a part. Certain traditions of Ago-Iwoye and Awa (Epega, 1934) also in Ijebu-Ode area point to migrations from Ijamo. The traditions of Akure also talk of two pre-Oduduwa founders of the town, Ourokutu and Omolaju, both of whom migrated from Epe to Akure.⁸ Finally, certain traditions and current re-enactment ceremonies in Ondo also speak of the founders of the town coming from Epe.⁹ Pre-Oduduwa Oyo may also be one such dispersal area as the migration from Oyo to Igala, which is acknowledged generally but not linked with Oduduwa, may be explicable within this context of pre-Oduduwa multi-centred migrations (Boston, 1968). For how long the process continued we do not know, but if the Ikedu tradition is anything to go by, it would seem to have been going on for two or three thousand years before the Oduduwa migrations, a conclusion that does not violently conflict with linguistic evidence.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves what would have been the causes of such migrations. Serious population pressure can be ruled out, for there is no evidence yet that the area was overpopulated three or four thousand years ago. Nor could it have been as a result of adverse changes in weather conditions such as occurred in the sahara desert area which rendered previous habitats no longer habitable. The causes could, therefore, have been social, religious and/or political, such as the desire to escape justice, annoyance as a result of deprivation of certain rights presumed to be rightly theirs, the desire to propagate religious beliefs, economic pur-

suit, or sometimes the simple spirit of adventure.

The effects of those pre-Oduduwa migrations did not appear to have led to any profound changes in social or political formations. Perhaps technical skills in iron manufacture and plastic arts may have been transmitted and religious beliefs extended, but the village type of political organizations and the lineage basis of social identity remained largely unaffected.

THE PROTEST MIGRATIONS

The period of Oduduwa take-over, which is now agreed to be between the 10th and 11th centuries A.D., brought many profound changes. Those associated with the take-over from Ife assumed a greater volume of authority than it previously was. This led to different social and political formations from what was previously existing. Because of its volume, prestige and permanence, other previously existing emigration centres and their stories of migration became dwarfed and Ife assumed the status of the sole centre of the dispersal of the Yoruba. As we have already pointed out, two types of migration connected with Oduduwa should be distinguished. There were the protest migrations triggered off by the Oduduwa take-over and those associated with the expansion of the authority of Oduduwa over parts of the Yoruba cultural continuum. Because of the prestige that came to be attached to the *ode-ileke* (beaded crowns) bestowed on the descendants of Oduduwa, which many rulers later desired, it has become difficult to distinguish between the two types of dispersal. However the more re-enactment ceremonies are collected, the more it should be possible to sort out.

The Oduduwa take-over of Ife was a prolonged military affair characterised by frequent changes of allegiances between the contending parties. The previous power holders associated with Obatala did not let go easily. Nor did they let go gracefully when their leaving became inevitable. The group of supporters of Obatala who withdrew to Igbo, Igbo, and from there continued the resistance, were forced back to Ife town after a disastrous defeat resulting from their military tactics being revealed by Moremi.¹⁰ It is probable that other groups who could not stand the thought of being defeated, dispossessed and then re-integrated moved far away to start their own polities elsewhere. How many these may be we do not yet know.

However, the late Oba Napoleon Mafimisebi III, the Olugbo of Ugbo in the Okitipupa area of Ondo State, claimed in an interview in 1959 that his ancestors left Ile-Ife in annoyance as a result of the Oduduwa take-

over, and he gave a vivid description of how a meeting between an Olugbo and an Ooni since then was conducted.¹¹ This claim has not been confirmed through a study of other sources, particularly the re-enactment ceremonies.

Another town which appears from its traditions to have migrated from Ife, in protest against the take-over by Oduduwa, is Idanre. Whereas the current kinglist would appear to graft the dynasty to the Oduduwa line (Akinyeye, 1983), the *Uden* festival, an annual re-enactment ceremony of the foundation and early formation of the Idanre kingdom, would tend to suggest that the founder of the present dynasty at Idanre fled from Ife during the confusion that immediately followed the Oduduwa take-over (Johnson 1-12). He is represented in the festivals as having left Ife secretly, taking along with him many of the palace treasures, including crowns. He and his party went far away from Ife and settled in an almost inaccessible, easily defensible, mountain top. They named the settlement Ufeke, i.e., Ife on top of the mountain. For some time, the Owa (title of ruler) of Ufeke attempted to create the settlement as an alternative centre of influence to Ile-Ife and to rally all the disaffected elements by bringing them together annually for a ceremony. The attempt petered out after only a few years. Given the geography of Idanre with its granite rocks rising perpendicularly, it is doubtful whether the settlement could have expanded on the site. The *Uden* festival itself suggested that the reason for the failure of Ufeke's attempt was the growing autocracy and arrogance of the Owa of Ufeke, who ordered one of the visiting princes to be executed on the allegation that the visiting prince stole a rat! Perhaps a more powerful reason for the collapse of Ufeke's attempt was the increasing political stability and strength of Oduduwa's authority, particularly after the collapse of the resistance organized from Igbo Igbo and Ideta Oke. Oduduwa's followers, now more confident, would appear to have taken over control of all the strategic roads around Ile-Ife.

As was earlier remarked, we do not know how many such kingdoms left in protest. It is, however, unlikely that only Ugbo and Idanre were involved. As research progresses, the picture will be clearer.

THE DISPERSAL OF THE ODUDUWA CHILDREN

The largest and the most popular dispersals from Ife and the ones that have survived most in popular traditions were those led by the Oduduwa princes. The first problem to be tackled is who and how many were princes? In the tradition recorded in his book, Johnson frequently writes about "Oduduwa and his sons" but he mentions only one son whom he

identifies as "Okanbi", commonly called "Idekoseroake" According to Johnson, this Okanbi had seven children, the first two, females, and the remaining five, males. The sons of these two females, i.e., Oduduwa's great grandchildren, founded the kingdoms of Owu and Ketu, which lay west of Ife. The remaining five sons, i.e., Oduduwa's grandchildren, founded the kingdoms of Ila, Benin, Sabe, Popo and Oyo. Of these five, Sabe and Popo lay west of Ife, Benin eastwards, Oyo northwards and Ila north eastwards. When the differences in the ages of the grandchildren and of the great grandchildren are considered, a reasonable inference is that the five kingdoms were founded before Owu and Ketu. What happened to Oduduwa's other children and grandchildren, or indeed who they were, is not mentioned by Johnson, who himself appears to be acutely aware that he had not mentioned the ancestry of the rulers of many of the other Yoruba kingdoms. Therefore, in his chapter titled "Origin of the Tribes," he tried to supply the needed information. In doing so, however, he implied that all the other kingdoms derived from Oyo in one way or another. Thus, he said that the Egba were really Oyo living outside the metropolis, the Ijebu were partly Owu but their ruler, the Awujale, was an Ilari from Oyo; the Owa, ruler of Ijesa, was a junior member of the Oyo ruling house; the ruler of Ondo, Osemawe, was a prince from Oyo who was born a twin and had to be sent far away to prevent him being ritually killed, as twins were wont to be in those days (Johnson,23-25).

That the other Yoruba sub-groups did not completely agree with Johnson's version is shown by the Ijesa tradition of the dispersal of the Oduduwa children from Ife, which he recorded.¹² According to this tradition, ten oba (kings) are mentioned as being sons of Oduduwa (not grandsons or great grandsons) who founded kingdoms. They were the Oba of Ado Benin, the Alafin of Oyo, the Osemawe of Ondo, the Alara of Ara, the Ajero of Ijero, the Alaaye of Efon, the Owore (Oore) of Otun, the Orangan of Ila, the Aregbajo of Igbajo and the Owa Ajaka of Ilesa. It should be noted that Benin, Oyo and Ila featured in the earlier traditions. But apart from Igbajo which lay to the north of Ife, all the other six lay east of Ife. When we note the different directions to which the Oyo and Ijesa traditions as recorded by Johnson respectively refer, perhaps it will be true to say that they complement rather than contradict one another. Oyo traditions relate to the areas well known to Oyo historians and areas in which the Oyo influence was dominant, while the Ijesa traditions relate to the area familiar to Ijesa historians. The names common to the two traditions could be regarded as prominent kingdoms

known all over Yorubaland. If we then combine the two lists, we will have 14 kingdoms founded by Oduduwa children, grand children and great grandchildren. That is not to say, however, that the problems posed by the two versions are thus resolved. Whereas the Ijesa traditions speak of the founders of these kingdoms being direct "sons" of Oduduwa, the Oyo traditions talk of them as either grandsons or great grandsons. The two sets of traditions, when viewed together, give an impression of different periods of foundation.

The Ife traditions in a way combine these two traditions and add their own complications. In Ife, there are three main official lists of the dispersal of Oduduwa children. The first list was given by Ooni Adelekan Olubuse in March 1903¹³ when he was invited to Lagos to settle a dispute between the Akarigbo of Ijebu Remo and the Elepe of Epe near Ikorodu on the latter's right to wear a crown. That list has 25 names of rulers, including that of Ife, who were accepted sons of Oduduwa. The second list was compiled around 1927 as part of a general collection of Ife traditions undertaken during the reign of Ademiluyi Ajagun (1910-30). That list comprises 16 names.¹⁴ The third was compiled during the reign of Sir Adesoji Aderemi (1930-80), precisely in 1931, apparently as an answer to questions from the District Officer at Ife as to who had authority to wear the *ade ileke* in Yorubaland. In a letter dated 9th October, 1931, written to the District Officer, Oba Aderemi listed 26 direct sons of Oduduwa who, he asserted, were personally installed by Oduduwa himself during three separate ceremonies performed within days of one another and commissioned to found kingdoms. The implication is that their descendants up to the present have retained the original rights to wear the *ode ileke*. The 26 were:

- 1 Obalufon Ogbogbodirin - eldest surviving son of Oduduwa, who was designated to succeed Oduduwa.
- 2 The Oba of Ado (Benin)
- 3 The Orangun of Ila
- 4 The Alaketu of Ketu
- 5 The Oloyo (not Oranmiyan);
- 6 The Obarada "who was driven to found latterly the kingdom of Dahomey"
- 7 Oninana "who founded his kingdom in what is known as Gold Coast (Ghana) today"
- 8 Onipopo of Popo
- 9 Owore of Otun
- 10 Alara of Ara

- 11 Ajero of Ijero
- 12 Ewi of Ado-Ekiti
- 13 Awujale of Ijebu
- 14 Akarigbo of Remo
- 15 Oshemowe - "who was called in from Ondo to be crowned"
- 16 Olowu of Owu "sons of the first daughter of Odua"
- 17 Deji Ajaponda (sic) of Akure,
- 18 Elekole of Ikole
- 19 Olosi of Osi
- 20 Alaaye of Ipole Aaye "but whose descendants recently founded Efon"
- 21 Olowo Arere of Owo
- 22 Olojudo of Ido "appears an offshoot"
- 23 Owo Olobo "who founded Obo Kingdom destroyed by Fulani"
- 24 Owa Aringbajo
- 25 Owa Otan
- 26 Owa Obokun of Ilesa

When the Aderemi list is examined, and compared with the other lists, a number of interesting features emerge. First, it contains all the names (but one) mentioned in both versions recorded by Johnson. The conspicuous omission is the name of Sabe.¹⁵ Johnson gives prominence to it and recent Ife traditions do mention it. Sabe traditions also confirm that the Amusu, predecessors of the present ruling Babagidai dynasty, migrated originally from Ife. However, as Adediran pointed out,¹⁶ the name of Sabe has consistently been left out from the lists of kingdoms founded by the children of Oduduwa since 1953. It was left out in the list collected at Ketu in that year, in the Olubuse list of 1903 and in the Ademiluyi list of 1927. The excuse cannot be because it was outside Nigeria, since Ketu, Popo, Arada and Nana, which were equally outside, were consistently included. Sabe may, therefore, belong to the pre-Oduduwa or the protest migration discussed above.¹⁷

Another conspicuous omission is that of the Egba kingdom. The omission is general in virtually all the early lists, although local historians from the 1930's onwards and those of Egba descent from a slightly earlier period started including the Alake as one of the original 16 sons of Oduduwa.¹⁸ The farthest that the early lists went was to link the Alake of Egba as the younger brother of the Alaketu. Certain versions of Egba traditions of origin also suggest this link. It is also historically documented that virtually the whole of Egba kingdom was directly ruled by the Alafin of Oyo until towards the end of the 18th century (Johnson,

8). The probability, therefore, is that the Alake was a descendant of one of the "sons" of Oduduwa (probably Alaketu) whose kingdom assumed great importance in the 19th century.

There are also some surprising inclusions. These are Obadada (also called Obarada), Onipopo and Oninana. These names occurred in both the Ademiluyi and Aderemi lists and current Ife traditions still insist on including them. The Aderemi list describes Obarada as the one 'who was driven to found latterly the Kingdom of Dahomey.' It described the Oninana as the one 'who founded his kingdom in what is known as Gold Coast today.' Apparently the author does not see the need to explain Onipopo's location which he probably assumes is well known. Johnson mentions the Onipopo as one of the sons of Oduduwa and so did S.O. Ojo the Bada of Shaki (Ojo n.d.). Epega, writing in the 1930's, indeed included the history of Ajase (Epega, n.d.) which, he said, was founded by Obadada, among those of Yoruba towns founded by Oduduwa children. At the time that these lists were being compiled, the colonial boundaries between the French, the Germans and the British territories had been drawn. Perhaps it is pertinent to recall that the official name of the kings of Dahomey was Dada, which in Fon means "father" Also, what is now called Allada, the capital of the old coastal kingdom of that name, was written in the earliest documents as Arada from which words like "Arda" "Ardra" and "Adves"¹⁹ later grew in different European languages. Parts of the oral traditions of the foundation of the kingdom also refer to Yoruba hunters as founders (Oguntuyi n.d., Ashara, 1951). When Ife traditions, therefore, remember Obarada or Obadada, there may be some solid historical basis for it.

The question, however, remains as to whether these kingdoms belonged to the same period as those of the other Oduduwa kingdoms, since none of their kings has ever been known to possess the *ade ileke*. A number of propositions are possible. The first is that these western and essentially coastal kingdoms were pre-Oduduwa, before the *ade ileke* became popular among the rulers, but that the Ife community kept their memory active. Secondly, they were contemporaneous with the other Oduduwa kingdoms but were not as successful in the total take-over of power as the others. Thirdly, they became assimilated into the culture of their environment. Generally, Ife continued to remain conscious of its relationship with the people which it called Popo, Arada and Nana, even though their locations were vague. Archaeological and linguistic researches in these areas may reveal the degree of cultural affinity with the Yoruba.

A further analysis of the Aderemi list will reveal some interesting geographical spread. Whereas the Olubuse list (1903) and the Ademiluyi list (1927), as well as most other oral sources, speak of one main dispersal, with all the princes gathering at Ita Ijero where they held consultations before dispersing, the Aderemi list speaks of three installations. Without wasting time to debate which is more accurate, since we have no means of doing that, it is interesting to see the direction of migration. The first installation was said to be that of Obalufon Ogbogbodirin, the eldest surviving son of Oduduwa, designated to succeed Oduduwa. In the second installation, seven princes were consecrated and sent out. Of these seven, one (Oba Ado, i.e., Benin) went eastwards; two, the Oloyo and the Orangun, went northwards and four, the Alaketu, Obarada, Oninana and Onipopo, went westwards. The third installation consisted of 18 rulers. Of these, one, Owu went westwards; two, Aringbojo and Owa Otan, went northwards; three, Awujale, Osemawe and Akarigbo, went southwards; eleven, consisting of all the kingdoms in Ekiti and Owo areas, went eastwards. The last one, the Owa of Ilesa, settled very near Ile-Ife itself.

It is not certain that this three-phase installation can form any basis for chronology, for it is not known whether they were all carried out on the same day, or at a few days' interval or at long intervals. Other evidences would tend to suggest that the installation must have happened within a few days of one another. There was, for instance, the tradition that all the departing princes met at Ijero, which the Aderemi list did not contradict, that those of them travelling to the west and north, i.e., the Alafin of Oyo, the Orangun of Ila, the Olowu and the Alaketu journeyed together to Ipetumodu where they parted at a place still identified as Itamarun. Those of them travelling eastwards, to the Ekiti and Benin kingdoms, also did for part of the way. We cannot use the list to establish a hierarchy among the Yoruba obas since the chronological order of departure cannot be established. Traditions seem generally to agree that Owa Obokun was not the youngest prince, although he was crowned last. Indeed, in some versions it is said that all the others had shared their father's property and departed before he arrived from the seaside where he had gone to fetch sea water to cure Oduduwa's eye ailment.²⁰ It is generally agreed that Oranmiyan was the youngest. However, as time went on Oranmiyan became strong and he established a dynasty each in Ife, Benin and Oyo.

Except the Onipopo, Obarada and Oninana, about whom not much is known, none of the Obas listed in any of the sources disputed his descent

from Oduduwa. If anything, many more not remembered at Ife have been claiming to be "sons" of Oduduwa, or at least to have migrated from Ife. Oba Aderemi writing to the District Officer of Ife on 9th October, 1931, said. "There are today in Ondo, Ijebu and Abeokuta Provinces crown heads who from the accounts existing in Ife were not crowned by Odua but one thing is certain, no crown head in Yorubaland belongs to another but Odua's stock. A great many of the minor crown heads especially in Ijebu and Ondo Provinces are only off-shoots of one or the other of the original kings of Yoruba in either male or female line"²¹

It would, however, appear that during the period of migration associated with Oduduwa, important personalities other than the "sons" of Oduduwa went out to found their own kingdoms. An example was the occupation of Ipetumodu by one of Oduduwa's generals in the early part of the Oduduwa struggle to seize power at Ife.²² Another probably less well known example is the foundation of what the Aderemi traditions call the "seven states between Iraye and Original Owu kingdom" by the sons of Ogun, Obameri and Esidale, three well known Oduduwa generals.²³ The names of these seven states are not mentioned but Ire would seem to be one of them, and the original area of occupation was around the present Ikire, not too far from the kingdom of Owu. One reason why their names are not easily remembered is that they were quickly absorbed by the Owu kingdom. The rump of the Ire group, then, went into Ekiti area where they continued to worship Ogun.²⁴ There may well be other kingdoms still surviving, which owed their foundation to one or the other of Oduduwa's followers. Even though their rulers would have their specific royal paraphernalia, they would not originally be entitled to wear the *ade ileke*, since they were not direct descendants of Oduduwa. Because of the prestige of *ade ileke*, such kingdoms may not be easy to identify now, since they would want to claim, or they indeed have acquired their *ade ileke* on the basis of their direct descent from Oduduwa, but certain aspects of their re-enactment ceremonies, when collected, may shed light on the issue.

THE POST ODUDUWA AND PRIVATE ENTREPRENEURIAL MIGRATIONS

Dispersals from Ife did not stop with the settlement of the Oduduwa children in their various new kingdoms. For many centuries after the death of Oduduwa, his successors or descendants continued to migrate for one reason or the other. One of the earliest recorded in the Ife tradi-

tions was the exit of Ooni Obalufon Onigbomore (later called Alaiyemore). Obalufon Alaiyemore had succeeded his father, Obalufon Ogbobodirin, but was driven out by Oranmiyan, his uncle, who had been away on military expedition when Ogbobodirin died. Alaiyemore then went to live around Ide Osun, now between Ede and Osogbo, followed by a large number of people. He later migrated to the Ekiti country where he stayed at Ilara and from where he went back to Ife to succeed Oranmiyan. Many of his fellow refugees remained in their places of refuge and their descendants continued to be the rulers of Ifon, Erin and Ilara.²⁶

Another famous post-Oduduwa migration from Ife was that of Agbele Olojo, already referred to in Chapter 6. Olojo came back to Ife where he finally died, but his migration led to the first foundation of Ifewara. Yet another famous migration from Ife was that of Ooni Ogboru who was the 13th Ooni after Oduduwa. As already referred to, his exile led to the foundation of Ife-Odan, now in the Ogbomosho Local Government area of Oyo State.

If all these could still be described as dispersals from Ife by the descendants of Oduduwa, another category of post-Oduduwa migration consists mainly of private enterprises. Brave hunters, or sometimes not so brave but hit by some misfortune or the other, went out far away from Ife to start a new life. Quite a number of such adventurers must have been lost to history in the process. However, where they succeeded they had kept a memory of their migration from Ife and the area of the town from which they set out. To the credit of their tradition, they did not claim to be sons or grandsons of Oduduwa by direct descent, though some of them claimed relationship through the maternal side. Examples of this kind of dispersal are the Egbadeo towns. According to certain Ife traditions, the people of Ilashe migrated from Ilare ward of Ife, while those of Ilaro, Isheri, Ijanna, Iboro, and Oke-Odan migrated from the Ido family in More ward. Their leaders "were mostly hunters". Some of them are said in the traditions to have gone through Ketu and others through Oyo. Later, in the 17th and 18th centuries, all of them were incorporated in the Oyo Empire. Another example are the people of Ijebu Remo who claim in their traditions that they migrated from Irewo quarters in Ife.

As was earlier pointed out, about 147 towns in Yorubaland claim to be direct descendants of Oduduwa, on the basis of which their rulers claim to wear the crown. Of these claims the Ooni Aderemi said:

The revolution consequent on the slave trade altered the earliest

*geography of Yorubaland and most of the tribes in many parts of Yoruba country had got mixed up. The result was that any tribe, numerically the largest in place of course naturally became dominant. Therefore, definite history of small towns and villages in places very remote from Ife can only be related by the inhabitants of those towns.*²⁷

A number of issues still remain to be discussed in connection with the migration from Ife. When, for instance, did all these migrations occur? Why did they occur and what were their general consequences? The problem of dates in oral sources is, as is well known, immense. Various local historians of the kingdoms founded by Ife princes have attempted to solve it by assigning dates for their foundation. Egharevba, a Benin historian, concluded that Oranyan came to Benin in 1170 A.D. by assigning an average of 20 years to every reign (Egharevba, 1960). Bada of Saki, on the other hand, writing on the history of Oyo, said Oranyan died in 892 A.D. Benin and Oyo monarchies were founded by the same Oranyan, one of the princes that gathered at Ita Ijero for the dispersal. Now traditions, both in Oyo and Benin, are agreed that Oranyan went to Oyo after leaving Benin. He could, therefore, not have died in Oyo three centuries before reaching Benin. Asara writing on Owo, whose founder called Ojugbelu is accepted in the traditions as having been present at Ita Ijero,²⁸ said the first Olowo reigned around 1019 A.D. (Smith:103-106). On the other hand, Fr Oguntuyi said the first Ewi, who ought to be a contemporary of the first Olowo, died around 1444. Such discrepancies illustrate the problems of dating in oral history. For one thing, all these authors did not use a uniform system of calculation to arrive at their dates.

Smith rightly says that one way by which a reasonable idea of time can be gained in Yoruba history is through the use of the kinglists of the various Oduduwa-derived monarchies. He then compared the kinglists of Ketu, Benin and Oyo (but not Ife) and came to the conclusion "that the major kingdoms of the Yoruba and also of the second dynasty of Benin were founded around the beginning of the fourteenth century." He buttressed this conclusion with Bradbury's conclusion on the foundation of Benin. However, this date will appear to be a little late, even from the meagre evidence available. Smith arrived at this date through something he called "an average of averages", which is an extremely vague notion. One suspects that here he departed from his evidence to, so to say, work to an answer. More than that, the basis on which Smith seems to prefer a low regnal average of Oyo to a higher one for Ketu and Benin is not

clear. Obviously, there are problems in the use of regnal years and we may never be able to get more than a general idea. However, if we study the pattern of the length of reigns in each of the major kingdoms in our region and are ready to accept the results provided by the rigorous examination of our sources, we are likely to have a more reliable and generally acceptable time frame.

If we do that for Ketu, Benin and Ife, the results become interesting. For Ketu, Smith has two averages: 21.5 years and 18.5 years, giving a general average of about 20 years per reign (Smith, 103-104). This will place the foundation of Ketu at the beginning of the 11th century A.D. For Benin the average regnal years produced from the study of Benin kinglist is 24.7 years and this will put the foundation of the Oranmiyan dynasty at about 1050 A.D. In Ife, the average regnal years from Otutubiosun around 1770 to the end of Aderemi in 1980 is 19 years, and this will give a date of 1030 A.D. as the beginning of the Oduduwa dynasty. All these give an amazing correspondence. But how do we explain the extremely short and untypical regnal years of 11.8 years for Oyo, producing an early 15th century date for the establishment of the Oranmiyan dynasty? From other historical events known in Oyo (for example, the period of exile at Igboho), this date looks improbable. That the regnal years are short is inherently probable because evidences in other Yoruba areas show that turbulent periods produce short reigns and peaceful ones longer reigns. The history of Oyo has a great deal of evidence to show that it experienced long periods of turbulence. Perhaps the answer lies in the clue proffered by Smith that the list of Alafin that we now have is not complete, and that about 23 names have been suppressed largely because they were not buried at the *hara* (royal mausoleum) (Smith, 31), which is nearer (but not too comfortably) the dates produced for Ketu, Benin and Ife.

That the regnal years of the Yoruba obas need not be conceived as bound to be short can be seen in the examples to two other established monarchies in the West African region - those of Dahomey and Asante. In the case of Dahomey, the average of regnal years from the accession of Agaja in 1708 to the death of Gezo in 1859 is 30 years. This is a very high average, but the dates and the kinglist are well authenticated and it is a testimony to the internal stability and strength of the monarchy. In Asante, from the reign of Osei Tutu in 1690 to the death of Osei Bonsu in 1824, the average regnal years is $22\frac{1}{2}$ years.

The few dates so far produced from archaeological excavations in Ife would not appear to conflict violently with those produced by the calcu-

lations above. C14 dating from a number of sites in Ife have produced five dates, ranging from the 6th to the 25th centuries A.D.²⁹ Perhaps the dates produced from Ita Yemoo is useful here, in the sense that the potsherd pavement below which the charcoal was excavated is usually associated with a known female Ooni called Luwo Gbagida. The site here yielded 11th and 12th centuries. Luwo herself is usually listed as either the 19th or the 21st Ooni in the Oduduwa line. Altogether, therefore, it would seem that the Oduduwa dynasty was established in Ife three or four centuries earlier than Smith suggested, i.e., around the late 10th or early 11th century.

The reasons for the migration are easier to deduce. The pre-Oduduwa dispersals may have been caused by the desire to take advantage of economic opportunities in various places, or by adventurous and war-like disposition. In one case, when the reigning Oghene was said to have sent his children away to found kingdoms for themselves, there would appear to be a clear indication of imperial expansion. From the period of Oduduwa onwards, the motives would appear to be obvious from the traditions. The first reason would be the unwillingness by some of the earlier ruling elite to submit to the new power group. They preferred to move out and found independent kingdoms that would submit. This spirit of defiance may indeed have formed the first reason for the outward movement of Oduduwa's sons and supporters. Once Oduduwa got the control of Ife, it would seem logical for him and his supporters to ensure that those who migrated in protest did not constitute themselves into external threats. Therefore, they would have to make sure the nearest of them were completely subjugated, that the trade route to the farther ones were completely controlled by Ife and, finally, that they be taken over completely. Success generates its own momentum. Once those were taken over, the temptation to go farther and farther afield would be strong. Only an equal counterforce would check the tendency. The story of Oduduwa's children being commissioned to found their own kingdoms may be seen in this light. Ife had been taken over internally and it was necessary to prevent external threat. Who was best to lead the war against external threat than the Oduduwa children and his proven war leaders? That the foundations of the new kingdoms was anything but peaceful is exemplified by the various traditions of the kingdoms founded. The "foundation" of the Ijesa kingdom was achieved after a prolonged and sometimes bitter series of battles.²⁹ Those of Ado-Ekiti (Oguntuyi n.d.), of Benin, of Akure,³⁰ of Ijebu-Ode (Egharevba, 1960) and many others give adequate indication that wars of conquest preceded

the foundation of each kingdom. The exigencies of the need to create harmony and let bygones be bygones gave rise to the oral traditions that tend to suggest that the Oduduwa children took over each kingdom peacefully or indeed founded some kingdoms afresh.

Another cause suggested by the Ife version for the dispersal from Ife was a prolonged drought which was worsened by an already existing overpopulation. The resultant famine became unbearable and one *babal-awo* (Ifa priest), Agrilogbon of Oke Itaase, counselled emigration. The consequent dispersals must have occurred long after those of the Oduduwa children, and must have followed a long period of peace and prosperity only during which there could have been an appreciable growth in population. The leaders of the various groups would be intrepid hunters drawn from various quarters in Ife. They might or might not be princes of the Oduduwa line.

Horton has suggested that one powerful reason for the dispersal might be the desire to take advantage of the north-south trade (Horton, 1979) linking the east-west lagoon. While it might be historically demonstrable that wherever the Oduduwa dynasty settled was the most economically viable location in each kingdom, taking into account the frequent changes in the sites of each capital before a permanent settlement, the evidence that the kingdoms were specifically sited to capture an already existing north-south trade remains at the moment in the realm of speculation. The Atlantic trade had not yet come into prominence at the foundation of the kingdoms, and the ends of the lagoon trade east and west are yet to be identified. From the evidences now available, an equally valid case can be made that the foundation of these kingdoms created the economic prosperity of Ife rather than that Ife princes went to capture the already existing economic prosperity in the various localities.

. Finally, what were the consequences of the dispersals? The first major consequence was a dramatic change in the political organization of Yorubaland. Whereas the pre-Oduduwa migrations had not changed the essentially village-oriented political organization, the Oduduwa migrations would appear to have led to the formation of large urban centres which became the capitals of sizeable kingdoms. In Ile-Ife all the 13 groups of villages were collected together to form one large town (Eluyemi, 1980). Oduduwa chose a central location and there built an *aafin* (palace), which became the administrative, religious and economic centre (Adediran, 1976). All the far-flung villages that could not be brought together were made to look up to the new town where Oduduwa resided. Oduduwa assigned religious duties to all the former ruling elite

and made them dependent on and responsible to himself.³¹ This Ife experiment would seem to have been repeated wherever the Oduduwa sons succeeded. In Ilesa³² and Akure,³³ the existing small villages were forcibly brought together into towns, under the authority of sons of Oduduwa who built palaces for themselves and were served by religious priests who probably included members of the previous ruling class. This change from village to urban culture and from mini-state to mega-state was revolutionary and it is noteworthy that in the extreme east and west of Yorubaland where the "sons" of Oduduwa did not have a firm hold, the village type of political organization remained until comparatively recently.³⁴

The second consequence which was a direct effect of the first is that the dispersals gave the Yoruba a sense of political and cultural unity. All the kingdoms were similarly organized along the pattern of Ife. Even the new towns were similarly built with the *aafin* in the centre, a large market place in front of it from where radiated all roads out of the town. Immediately surrounding both the *aafin* and the market were the houses of the most important ruling families. Everyone of the migrants and later their subjects looked to Ife as their *orirun* which in Yoruba meant the place where one came from and to which one would return after death. From this notion arose the notion of Ife being regarded as heaven - a sacred place. Accordingly, everyone gave the highest respect to Ife in all things. Both the temporal authority, in the form of the *ade ileke* (beaded crown) and the spiritual authority, in the form of the consecrated objects of worship, emanated from Ife. Oduduwa and Oranyan were propitiated by all the kingdoms whenever the need arose. The seat of Ife, which was ubiquitous in all Yorubaland and beyond, was at Ife. No major religious or political occasion occurred in any of the kingdoms ruled by the descendants of Oduduwa without reference to Ife, just as Ife referred to all of them whenever there was the need so to do. Any person or enterprise that could claim to have originated from Ife earned immediate respect and acceptance. Until the revolutionary wars of the 19th century, anyone who could successfully claim to be an Ife was virtually immune to normal legal constraints and free from all molestations wherever he moved in Yorubaland.³⁵

The fact that the princes who founded the various kingdoms regarded themselves as "sons" of the same father increased this sense of cultural and political unity. Even when they occasionally argued about seniority, they still regarded one another as "brothers" or "cousins" and collectively looked towards the ruler of Ife as the one who sat on the throne of

their ancestor - Oduduwa. This primacy of Ife and the accepted relationship between all the rulers gave Yorubaland its own distinct political mould which has been referred to as the Ebi system (Akinjogbin, 1978:1-25). This political organization increased cultural unity. The movement of peoples and ideas was completely uninhibited within the area occupied by the "sons" of Oduduwa. Religious objects, new inventions and the professions were freely transported from one area to another. The Ife literary corpus is replete with stories of famous *babalawo* going from one part of Yorubaland to another and remaining away from home for months before returning.³⁶ Woodcarvers also have the tradition of being peripatetic professionals almost to the point of regarding the whole of Yorubaland as home, for they settled wherever they pleased and had wives in places where they had worked for a while, even when they did not finally settle there (Ojo, 1983). The *egungun alarinjo* (the masquerades whose main duty was to entertain), the Sango and Oyo worshippers all went over Yorubaland entertaining and converting people to their cult.³⁷ These factors must have been largely responsible for the observable general homogeneity of the Yoruba culture in their expansive homeland situated, as it were, in the forest region with difficult communication links. It must also have been responsible for the spontaneous feeling of common identity which the Yoruba had wherever they were transported during the period of the transatlantic slave-trade - whether it was in Brazil, Cuba or Freetown. In the face of such evidence, the theory that the Yoruba did not possess a consciousness of a common identity before they met in bondage in Freetown (Law, 1976:106-109) cannot be sustained. Nor can the fact that Yorubamen interacted actively in peace and war with their non-Yoruba neighbours, such as the Nupe and the Bariba, be legitimately employed to divide the Yoruba into "two or more groups". That the Yoruba did not have a single name for themselves (if that were true) would speak more for their type of political organization than for a lack of feeling of common identity.

Thirdly, the political organization resulting from the dispersals increased economic growth. It has been suggested that one of the reasons for the success of the Oduduwa group was the knowledge of the use of iron.³⁸ If that is true, the Oduduwa revolution would have introduced a greater measure of efficiency into agriculture through the use of iron implements. With a common language and a feeling of belonging to the same big family, economic activities could be carried on over a wide area. The institution of periodic market, which was common all over Yorubaland (Akinjogbin, 1980) and the existence of stringent laws to

protect trading activities in these markets³⁹ would have given a fillip to the economic activities. Ife itself benefitted greatly. The dispersed princes and their descendants occasionally visited Ife. Each time a ruler died and a new one was to be installed, each time Oduduwa, the great ancestor, was to be worshipped, each time an Orisa was to be consecrated into a new shrine, a message was sent to Ife. Each message was accompanied with very rich presents. When one considers the number of places such messages could come from, then the volume of wealth derivable by Ife can be imagined. When it is recalled that an Ife man had unrestricted movements, advantages derivable from long-distance trade would increase the prosperity of Ife, at least until other circumstances led to the imperial growth of Oyo and Benin.

NOTES

- 1 Ife Palace traditions talk of Princes, accompanied by their supporters, migrating from Ife: Samuel Johnson wrote as if whole populations of Owu, Ijebu and Ijesa migrated from Ife.
- 2 Nigeria Government Gazette, Lagos, 28th March 1903.
- 3 Government Gazette, Lagos 28th February 1903. The last ruler that paid for his crown to the Oni of Ife was the Akarigbo of Sagamu said Olubuse I.
- 4 S. Johnson:History, P. 15; H. Ulli Beier "Before Oduduwa" in *ODU: Journal of Yoruba and Related Studies* (ed. S. O. Biobaku, H. U. Beier and L. Levi), No. 3 n.d., p. 25, G.O. Olomola: "Eastern Yoruba Country before Oduduwa" in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Yoruba Civilization* (ed. I.A. Akinjogbin and G.O. Ekemode), Vol. 1, 1976, pp.34-73.I. A. Akinjogbin: "Yorubaland before Oduduwa" in *University of Ife History Seminar Series, 1980/81*, I.B. Odukoya: "Ancient Empire of the West Coast - Kingdom of Oghene" (an unpublished collection of the Ikedu tradition).
- 5 A. Adediran: *Ife Western-Yoruba dynastic links ...: Ife Palace Traditions* (a manuscript compiled between 1924 and 1927).
- 6 Johnson, says that Oranyan removed the seat of government from Ife to Oyo but Ife traditions disagree, saying he reigned and died at

- Ife. At Ife there is a stone obelisk, still standing, which is claimed to be the burial place of Oranyan. See Johnson on: *The History of the Yoruba*.
- 7 I. B. Odukoya: "Ancient Empire of the West Coast Kingdom ..."
 - 8 A. Adeloje: "The Development to the Monarchy in Akure". M.A. Thesis, University of Ife, Ile-Ife.
 - 9 Ondo traditions speak of the founder of Ondo, called Pupupu, as migrating from Epe. Up to the present, whenever an Osemawe is to be installed he must go to Epe to perform certain traditional rites.
 - 10 Ife traditions are quite clear and consistent about the long-drawn-out military nature of the Oduduwa take-over. See chapter 6 above.
 - 11 Personal interview with the author at Ibadan, 1959. He said the Ologbo must turn his back to the Ooni and wriggle his waist.
 - 12 Current Idanre kinglist, collected by the author in January, 1958
 - 13 Government Gazette, Lagos, 28th February, 1903.
 - 14 Ife Palace Traditions, compiled between 1924 and 1927.
 - 15 N. A. I. Oyo Prof I. File 203: Aderemi, Oni of Ife to District Ife, the Afin Ife, 9th October, 1931.
 - 16 A. A. Adediran: "The Emergence of Western Yoruba Kingdoms: A Study in the process of State formation among the Yoruba". Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ife, June 1980, p. 109. Perhaps the only exception was the mentioning of Sabe by J.O. George in his book *Historical Notes on the Yoruba Country and its Tribes* (Lagos), 1985.
 - 17 Around 1695, J.O. George in his *Historical Notes* included it. So did A.K. Ajisafe in *The History of Abeokuta* (Suffolk), 1924. Aladesanmi Kenyo and Chief Samuel Ojo, the Baba of Saki, writing from the 1930's onwards included it.
 - 18 S. O. Biobaku: *The Egba and their Neighbours* (O. U. P), Oxford 1957, Ch. 1; I.A. Akinjogbin: "Chronology of Yoruba History": in *ODU: University of Ife Journal of African Studies*, vol. 2, No.2, pp.

81-86.

- 19 Oral Traditions collected at Ipetumodu. January 1958.
- 20 Ife Traditions typescript, compiled during the reign of Sir Adesoji Aderemi and included in Fabunmi Papers. Iwe Itan Ilesa.
- 21 Aderemi, Ooni of Ife to District Officer, Ife (NNA, Ibadan) Oyo Prof I. File 203, 9th October, 1903.
22. Oral Tradition on the foundation of Ipetumodu is emphatic that the town was founded on the day as Oduduwa founded Ife: This could reasonably be interpreted that Oduduwa forces occupied Ipetumodu early in the period of Oduduwa's bid to take-over power in Ife.
- 23 Ife Traditions in Fabunmi Papers.
- 24 In the course of history, quite a number of them have acquired Ade by paying various sums of money and performing the necessary ceremonies.
- 25 Ife Palace Traditions in Fabunmi Papers.
- 26 Ife Palace Traditions in Fabunmi Papers.
- 27 Ife Palace Traditions in Fabunmi Papers.
- 28 Aderemi, Ooni of Ife to District Officer Ife 9th Oct. 1931, (NNA Ibadan) Oyo Prof I, File 203
- 29 J.D.E. Abiola, J.A. Babafemi and O.S. Ataiyero: Iwe Itan Ilesa
- 30 A. Adelaye: "The Development of the Monarch in Akure". M.Phil. Thesis, University of Ife, Ile-Ife
- 31 A. Adediran: "The Ife Palace Organisation". Anon: A History of Ife in manuscript.
- 32 J. D. Abiola, J. A. Babafemi and O. S. Ataiyero: Iwe Itan Ilesa.

- 33 A. Adeloje: "The Development of the Monarchy ..."
- 34 A. Obayemi, "Yoruba speaking Peoples ..." in *History of West Africa* (ed. J. Ajayi and M. Crowder), Vol. 1
- 35 There was the tradition that an Ife man could not be used as a sacrificial victim (*A kii fi omo ore bo ore*). During the first Ife-Modakeke war in 1849, the Modakeke were terribly embarrassed to have captured thousands of Ife. As they could not sell them into slavery because of the halo surrounding Ife, they had to release all of them,
- 36 Wande Abimbola: *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa (Apa kinni ati Apa keji)* Collins 1968 and 1969. Contains various stories of long-distance travels of Orunmila and other famous babalawo.
- 37 Until recently this is the common form of entertainment in the market squares of most Yoruba towns and villages. The writer saw many of these in the 1940's. Oyakanye, a Sango worshipper, was the last famous known entertainer who went round Yorubaland.
- 38 Among the shrines within the palace of the Ooni is the Ogun Ladin reputed to be the blacksmith to Oduduwa.
- 39 In old Yoruba kingdoms setting a market on fire was a capital offence punishable by death.

CHAPTER 13

THE MODAKEKE QUESTION IN IFE POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY

R. A. Olaniyan

Our concern in this chapter is to analyze the implications of the recurring inter-communal conflicts between Ife and Modakeke, particularly its politics and diplomacy. Our analysis begins with a conceptual frame of reference. It is significant to point out that modernization has in no way destroyed communal identity, sentiments and expressions. Indeed, as Robert Nelson and Howard Wople (1970) contend, it "reinforces communal conflict and creates the conditions for the formation of entirely new communal groups"(1113).

Communalism is defined here as political assertiveness by groups. This phenomenon is characterized by the members sharing a common culture, identity and outlook on many issues affecting the group.¹ The members represent all the possible demographic divisions of this group in the larger society; finally, members are differentiated by status, wealth and power, as in the wider society in which they live. These make communal groups socio-economically heterogenous. Furthermore, communal hopes, aspirations and conflict are expressed in terms that call for separation, or an identity distinguishable from the wider society (Nelson and Wolpe: 1112-1113). This, in essence, is tantamount to an expression of communal separatist sentiment, or demand for communal particularism, a society - within a society proclaiming its difference.

In the case of Modakeke, the inhabitants have experienced a high rate of social mobilization. There have been traditional avenues through which they have been able to express their consciousness of oneness. The impact of social mobilization has caused a change not only in traditional perception of societal problems but also generated a re-orientation of aspirations and expectations consequent upon social and political modernization and increasing urbanization. But these changes do not blur their communal vision of issues; indeed, they intensify the citizens' responsiveness to communal appeals.

In addition to examining this subject from this conceptual frame of reference, and this is our second approach, we will need to, as it is necessary in a question of this nature, answer three significant questions

which are of vital interest to the historian. What happened? Why did it happen? What predictive value did it have?

Considering the time of the founding of Modakeke, we are struck by the revolutionary situation prevailing in the Yoruba country following the collapse of the Oyo Empire which hitherto had sustained its own kind of peace in its area of jurisdiction. The fleeing refugees from the northern parts streaming into the Ife domain were a restless, dynamic population, victims of an imperial disintegration, seeking secure environments within which to pursue their daily concerns. But they were, after the initial adjustment in their new home, to confront a more settled, stable, conservative community encrusted in tradition.

By its very definition a revolutionary situation calls for social and political adjustments and when such a situation persists, more adjustments of differences or limited concessions can only buy time or temporarily assuage specific grievances; ultimately, the system itself may be called into question. The legitimacy of the existing order or, at least, the restraint with which such an order operates may be eroded. In any event, the system cannot be altered without a fight. Ife, acknowledged as the ancestral home of the Yoruba, has a long history and tradition and the Ife people have an identity as a distinct sub-group which makes total accommodation and integration of people from another distinct sub-group difficult. The "melting pot" theory would be alien to such a situation.

But there was also another dimension to this revolution: the external influence of Ibadan which became the most powerful state in Yorubaland by the middle of the nineteenth century. Modakeke's political link with Ibadan became a source of strength and inspiration for the Oyo immigrants in Ife, but a mortal threat to the ancient kingdom. It is against this background of the interplay of communalism within a revolutionary climate that the Modakeke question could be rightly viewed and appreciated.

There is no intention to isolate these questions for treatment, but they will be in the back of our minds as we wade through the history and diplomacy of a century and a half of communal compartmentalization of Ife, the "holy city" of the Yoruba, to use Leo Frobenius' apt description (1968, 287-291). This long view of history is essential to give us the necessary background and throw a much needed light on this contemporary issue. It must be stressed that our quest is for meaning, for understanding, not judgement. It is only to be hoped that whatever insight we may gain from this study may form the basis of a creative resolution of

this inter-communal conflict.

Following the collapse of the Oyo Empire towards the end of the 18th century and subsequent muslim invasion of the northern fringes of the Yoruba country in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, an influx of refugees fled southwards looking for secure abodes and dependable means of subsistence. Many of these refugees from Old Oyo settled in towns and villages on the outskirts of Ile-Ife, tremendously swelling the populations of such communities like Ipetumodu, Moro, Yakoyo, Edunabon and others. With time and, as a result of further disruptive civil strife, many moved into Ile-Ife itself living in the different wards of the ancient city. The Ooni Akinmoyero, Odunlebiojo and the Ife people received the Oyo refugees with open arms.² They were given land for farming and many worked as labourers on Ife farms.³

This auspicious beginning in peaceful co-existence soon changed to one of disaffection between the host and the immigrant population. By about 1835, relations had deteriorated to the extent, as reported by Johnson, that the Oyo group began to suffer persecution, degradation and ill treatment, and many were used as slaves. The change in relationship came about with the expulsion in about 1830 of Maye, (Ozanne:40), the illustrious Ife generalissimo, who had been the ruler of Ibadan. "They were kind to us in all the Ife towns and villages till the outbreak at Ibadan, when Chief Maye, an Ife, was expelled from the town. It was then we began to suffer all sorts of indignities from the Ifes at home ... The Ooni we met and who befriended us at first was Odunle. The disaffection was towards the later part of his reign."⁴

By all accounts, acknowledged as the primus among the leading warrior chiefs in Ibadan, Chief Maye Okunade was habitually imperious, irascible and a veritable terror. He was especially oppressive in his treatment of the Oyo refugees in Ibadan. His characteristic rashness turned a seemingly inconsequential dispute by two neighbours over a "piece of ground used in common as a dunghill" into a conflict which led to his expulsion from Ibadan and, ultimately, his execution by a "common soldier" following the defeat of the Ife and their allies by the Ibadan in the fierce Gbanamu War (Johnson, 238-242).

Several consequences followed. With the indomitable Ife leader gone, a feeling of insecurity forced many Ife citizens of Ibadan to emigrate. Ife citizens had become unpopular in Ibadan. Similarly, the Oyo elements in Ife gradually became less welcome. After all, it was the Oyo elements like them who displaced the Ife in Ibadan. The disaffection that set in poisoned virtually all aspect of the relations between the Ife and the Oyo

refugees in their midst. The farmers were the worst affected: many lost their right to farm on Ife land; also there were instances where some refugees suffered as slaves or were subjected to inhuman treatment.⁵

Before the evolving conflict started to boil over, during the reign of Ooni Adegunle Abeweila, there were three different Ooni beginning from about 1833. Gbanlare was friendly towards the refugees; Gbegbaaje "revived the animosity" against them, and "some were sold as slaves"; then, Wunmonije, who was kind to the refugees and employed the services of the Oyo elements to check Ijesa incursions into Ife territory, reigned for only a short period".⁶ Adegunle Abeweila ascended the throne in 1839 and became well disposed to the refugees. Perhaps it was only natural that the new Oba should show concern for their plight: his mother was an Oyo. He became unpopular with the Ife to the extent that rumours of assassination filled the air. When the Ife chiefs revolted against the Ooni, the refugees supported Abeweila whose recompense for their loyalty immensely improved their lot: palace officers were selected among the trusted refugees; the leader of the Oyo group was recognised with the title, "Ogunsuwa", that is, one whose fortune has been enhanced by the god of war; and most significantly, the refugees were granted a separate settlement outside the walls of the town. The new settlement was named Modakeke.⁷

The objective of the Ooni's policy was to use the fact of physical separation as a way of reducing the chances of further conflicts. Laudable as the intention appeared, the geographical separation of the two groups did not lead to permanent peaceful co-existence. What followed was an intensification of the communal conflict. Relations between the Ife and the Ooni on the one hand, and the Ife and the Modakeke on the other hand, were so strained that war ensued following the death of Ooni Abeweila in 1849.

The Modakeke had the upper hand in the bloody encounter but refrained from making slaves of the over twelve thousand Ife captives in order not to jeopardize the possibility of reconciliation later. However, barely a month after this battle, the Ife made a quick come-back but were again defeated by the Modakeke. Indeed, the Modakeke sacked the town and carried many of its citizens into captivity. In an oral account in 1886, the Ife chiefs stated:

Our king Abeweila, who thus befriended the Modakekes, having died, his slaves removed to dwell with the Modakeke people. Before the king died, some differences had existed between him and us. After his death the slaves, having determined to take up their master's cause, made a

*league with the Modakeke people ... and made war upon us. The result was that they destroyed Ife-Ife and expelled us from the town.*⁸

With the Ibadan aiding the Modakeke, the defeat was disastrous for the host community; the Ife escaped to Isoya and other near villages and remained there until 1854.⁹ It was the peace initiative mounted by Ibikunle, the Balogun Ibadan which reconciled the two groups and restored the Ife to their town in 1854. But it took some time before the deserted city, with streets overgrown with weeds, could be rehabilitated. There was no section of the city that did not experience the terrible impact of the war. Even as late as 1858, many houses and town walls still needed rebuilding and the palace was a mere shadow of its former self. By 1875 however, an eye witness reported that there was considerable improvement on the deplorable situation he saw in 1858. Many houses had been rebuilt and the palace, with befitting courtyards, had been erected.¹⁰

The political legacy of the Ife-Modakeke war was the reduction of Ife and Modakeke to the status of vassals of Ibadan - a position that called for payment of annual tributes and contribution of fighting force whenever Ibadan needed them. For almost three decades, Ibadan placed an *Ajele* (resident official) in Ife, Modakeke, Ikire, Apomu, Gbongan and Ipetumodu, to maintain political surveillance and ensure the collection of the tributes.¹¹

The truce was to last until the Yoruba country was engulfed in the Kiriji war beginning from 1878. Initially, Ife and Modakeke fought on the side of Ibadan against the Ekitiparapo in 1878, and again, in the protracted campaign of 1879. But the Ife's participation on Ibadan's side was not with any great sense of commitment. Two important reasons could be adduced for this: first, the position of a vassal to Ibadan was greatly resented; and second, the Ibadan overlordship, imperial high-handedness and the rapacity of her *ajele* had earned her the hatred of the subject states within the empire. It is important to realize that Ibadan had become a military colossus and a real terror with imperial control over the Ijesa, Akoko, Ekiti, Osun and the Igbomina. All these groups, except the Osun, joined the Ekitiparapo against Ibadan.

The effect of all this on Ife-Modakeke relations was that while they were employing all kinds of tactics to impede the movement of Ibadan traders who were passing through Ife, Ondo, Ikale, and Ilaje territories to Lagos, to buy arms and other necessities for the Ibadan forces, the Modakeke were helping the Ibadan traders to pass through this new route to Lagos without molestation. In spite of this unfriendly acts

against Ibadan, Ife remained with Ibadan until 1881.¹² In March of that year, Ibadan military strategy indicated that a surprise attack on the Ijesa village of Osu on the road between Ile-Ife and Ilesa would cause a major distraction to the Ekitiparapo. The ultimate objective was the blockade of Ilesa and the area occupied by the Ekitiparapo allies. Not only did the Ife refuse the Ibadan passage through their territory to make the contact with the Ijesa, but they also leaked the plan to the enemies. It thus became an open secret by 1882 that Ife had sympathies for the Ekitiparapo. Ibadan therefore decided to take perhaps the only option left to her, that is, the use of force. To this end, Ibadan dispatched a small detachment from Igbajo to frighten the Ife and make scape-goats of their defiant leaders. Unfortunately, an important Ife leader lost his life in the melee that ensued. Thereupon, Ife rose in open revolt.

Ibadan's response to this challenge is very relevant to our story for, in addition to reinforcements from Igbajo, the Modakeke were called upon to join the Ibadan to crush the rebellion. The upshot of this new encounter was that Ife was again sacked and its people had to flee to Isoya.¹³ This marked the parting of ways between the Ife chiefs in the Ibadan camp at Igbajo and the Ibadan war machine. The Ife chose to join forces with the Ekitiparapo. Allied troops led by Chief Fabunmi were soon despatched at the request of the Ife to join the Ife against the Modakeke. Ibadan had to come to the aid of Modakeke; indeed, the imperial defence became crucial especially because the war seemed to have turned to a concerted challenge against Ibadan, not only by the formidable forces of the Ekitiparapo but also by a detachment of Ijebu forces (led by Seriki Ogunsigun) who pitched their tent with the Ife and the allies.¹⁴ The war which was a phase of the wars going on contemporaneously in the Yoruba country, dragged on without any decisive victory. In 1886, thanks to the initiative of patriotic Yoruba and one subsequent intervention by the British government in the Lagos Colony, the Ekitiparapo, Ibadan, Ijebu, Ife, Modakeke and others involved in the wars, signed a treaty of peace and friendship ending the Kiriji war; the only exception was Ilorin which continued the war against Ibadan.

In 1886, what the Ife leaders wanted was that the Modakeke "seek their habitation elsewhere" and the Ife be restored to their town.

We need not say that our guests, the Modakeke people have become too mighty for us. They have rewarded us evil for good. They have thrice dispersed us and destroyed our town. We can no more live together with them. We only want the (British) Governor to ask them to remove from our land and seek their habitation elsewhere

... Those of them who love us and desire to remain with us, should leave their present abode and take their residence among us at Ile-Ife, so that we might become one people. We wish to be reinstated in the town Ile-Ife, which is the cradle of the human race.

The most important provision of the peace treaty which was addressed to the solution of the Modakeke question was therefore the evacuation clause.

In order to preserve peace, the town of Modakeke shall be reconstructed on the land lying between the Osun and the Oba rivers to the north of its present situation and such of the people of Modakeke as desire and such of the people of Bale and Balogun of Ibadan shall withdraw from the present town to the land mentioned, at such times and in such manner as the Governor, his envoy or messenger shall direct after conference with the governments of the parties principally concerned and such of the people as desire to live with the Ifes shall be permitted to do, but shall not remain in the present town of Modakeke which shall remain in the territory and under the rule of the King and Chief of Ife, who may deal with the same as they may think expedient.¹⁵

For the Modakeke, evacuation was a bitter pill. This they refused to swallow, and since the Ife could not reoccupy Ile-Ife, a stalemate was created. From the end of September and all through October 1886, the envoys of the Lagos government tried all they could to reconcile Ife and Modakeke but became disenchanted with protracted and intractable conflict and left early November. Soon after, the allies of Ife and the Ibadan, the chief supporters of Modakeke, became disillusioned and departed. This development did not bring the state of hostilities to an end as the Ife demand that Modakeke be broken up could not be realized and the Modakeke remained uncompromising.¹⁶ Even the Ife concession that the Modakeke could live among the Ife if the former would abandon their separate physical identity did not yield any positive result. This could be explained as one of the legacies of hostility and distrust that had poisoned their relations for decades. Perhaps, if the Modakeke had suffered defeat at the hands of the Ife even if only once, they might have been a little more conciliatory. In other words, the Modakeke enjoyed a position of strength in the negotiations and, hence, could hardly be persuaded to accept abandoning their separate existence and destroy their town.

Although the Ife had stopped all hostilities, they remained in their camp, with the result that Ile-Ife remained unoccupied and in ruins.

With the termination of the Ibadan-Ilorin war in 1893, all wars in the Yoruba country came to an end. By August of the following year, however, once again, with the intervention of the Lagos administration, an accord was reached between Ife and Modakeke and Ile-Ife began to return to the "cradle". The process of reconstruction and rehabilitation became one of the major pre-occupations for quite sometime.

Perhaps, predictably, the other pre-occupation would be the implementation of the fifth clause, the evacuation provision, of the peace of 1886. In the end, diplomacy, that is, the adjustment of differences through negotiation won. The Ibadan council decided on June 11, 1908 to provide a new settlement and the site now known as Odeomu, north of the Osun River, on Ipetumodu land was agreed upon.¹⁷ For the Ife this was the answer to a long prayer, and Ooni Olubuse I insisted on total evacuation of the Modakeke. This, as it is reported to have happened, was impossible to effect as many Modakeke stayed behind. In any event, what is incontrovertible is that the evacuation caused the breaking up in 1909 of the Modakeke community in Ife. The Ooni died the following year and was succeeded by Ooni Ademiluyi.

Ooni Ademiluyi's reign opened with some Modakeke negotiating their return to Ile-Ife. The request divided the Ife because the Ooni favoured their return. However, Balogun Ojuade was unyielding in his determination not to allow the return of the Modakeke for fear that it might reopen old hostilities between them and the Ife. Perhaps with royal prompting, the Ife council of chiefs approved the return in 1913; only a few nights after the decision in August, the Balogun who refused to endorse the decision was murdered and the Modakeke were promptly suspected as being responsible.¹⁸ The ensuing political crisis between those who supported the Balogun and the Ooni's supporters caused the delay for a decade of the return of the Modakeke.

From then on, the return of the Modakeke became perhaps the most controversial issue in Ife politics. The Ife chiefs did not want them back and communicated their feelings on May 27, 1915 to the District Officer. No doubt, this feeling was reflected in the District Officer's memorandum to the Secretary of the Southern Provinces which declared: "I can most emphatically say that their return to Ife should not for a moment be entertained".¹⁹ He feared that their removal from their settlement might provoke the Ibadan into fresh hostilities.

The Modakeke, however, had a friend in the Ooni. His friendly disposition towards them between the death of the Balgoun and 1922 was undisguised. It would appear that Ooni Ademiluyi's pro-Modakeke sen-

timents were found expedient since he could use the Modakeke issue as a political weapon against his opponents. The royal position was further strengthened by the introduction of indirect rule which greatly enhanced the power and prestige of the natural ruler.

The year 1922 proved auspicious for the wishes of the Ooni and the Modakeke, for the latter's return to Ife received official blessing. There was, however, an important condition: "the new Modakeke quarter is to be known as the Modakeke of Ife, and is not to be regarded as a separate town".²⁰ The Modakeke accepted this condition. They had hoped, and for good reason, on the favour and support of Ooni Ademiluyi and felt that they would not be unduly disadvantaged.²¹

The return of the Modakeke did not, alas, usher in an 'era of good feeling' between the two communities. From 1922 to the present, four episodes will be discussed in order to show that the historical relationship between Ife and Modakeke has not always been without moments of conflict and tension. The four episodes are: the conflict over the selection of an Imam by the Modakeke in 1934; the Isakole dispute of 1946-1947; the demand for a separate Local Government Council beginning from the 1950's; and the 1981 disturbances. Ooni Aderemi succeeded Ooni Ademiluyi in 1930 and the first major conflict between Ife and Modakeke came into the open in 1934. It was the controversy over the selection of an Imam by Modakeke Muslims. The Modakeke had complained that they had their own imam before their evacuation from Ife in 1909, but when they returned in 1922 they decided to join the Ife for the Friday jumat because they were few in number. As their numbers continued to increase and the Muslim population grew larger, they established their own central mosque and appointed their Imam. Yet the Ife still insisted on the supremacy of the Imam of Ife; the subordinate position of the Modakeke Imam was thus, contrary to the Koran, being advanced. This point was not lost on Ooni Aderemi who reminded the petitioners that the Friday worship by the Muslims is usually done at the central mosque led by the Chief Imam, and that "the Modakeke were allowed to return home on the understanding that their township shall be a quarter of Ile-Ife." He rejected the contention of the Modakeke Muslims that Ife-Modakeke relationship was similar to the Oyo-Awe relationship, where Friday prayers were said separately by different Imams.²² The Ooni's view on this matter has merit especially because of the geographical proximity in the case of Ife-Modakeke and the differences in the pattern of settlement of Modakeke and Awe.

Any hope of pushing the case further to achieve what we consider

might be the real intention of the Modakeke Muslims was dashed by the District Officer's view on what was ostensibly a religious issue. He said:

Recently there have been signs that there is a desire (by the Modakeke) to conduct their own affairs and the Baale and chiefs have asked that they be given a native court of their own, saying that it is only in this way that they can attract those of their people who still inhabit farm villages to come and resettle at Modakeke. I doubt this argument and so do the Ooni and Chiefs.

The District Officer further observed that when Baale Modakeke was tipped for representation on the council as well as the Ife native court, he refused saying that "he would not be satisfied with that." The District Officer remained firm in his resolve not to entertain the political subterfuge which the petition represented. Realizing that the District Officer would not yield, the Modakeke Muslims agreed to accept the Ife Imam as the Chief Imam and the Ife Central Mosque as Chief Mosque.

The dispute over the payment, of *isakole*, another issue in the uneasy historical relationship between Ife and Modakeke, dates back to the boom in the price of cocoa, the main economic farm produce in Western Nigeria, in the immediate post-World War II era. *Isakole* is the traditional leasehold payment which, in the precolonial days, was usually made in farm products as an accepted indication that the land was not a freehold property of the tenant. It was in no way construed as an indication of the amount of revenue derived by the tenant on the property the landlord leased to him. With the cocoa boom however, Ife landlords began demanding ten percent of the proceeds derived from the Ife lands cultivated by the Modakeke. This turn of events changed the traditional perception of tenancy and landlordship. The Modakeke tenants were from now on expected to pay annually what was virtually a 'legal debt'. They resented this relationship. It is very important to note that the majority of landlords were Ife chiefs.

The demand for cash payments as *isakole* prompted the Modakeke community to send two separate protest letters to the Ooni. The Lagos branch of the Modakeke Progressive Union in November 1946 complained that the Ife landlords were making exorbitant demand from the Modakeke tenant farmers. The Ooni promised to look into the matter and asked the Union to send two representatives to the meeting he planned to hold with his chiefs. Since the Union failed to follow up, nothing seemed to have come out of this petition. Then the following April, the Baale and chiefs of Modakeke complained about the unjust demands by the Ife landlords. They contended that when the Modakeke

returned to Ife in the 1920's, they agreed to pay the Ooni regular tributes in the form of farm produce. They pointed out that the people of Origbo who were, like themselves, Oyo-speaking elements were not paying any *isakole* to the Ife landlords.

In his reply, Ooni Aderemi pointed out that the payment of *isakole* was a private understanding between the tenant and the landlord and the payment of tributes in kind to Ooni Ademiluyi had nothing to do with it since the Ooni could not have received *isakole* on any land he himself might have given out. Ooni Aderemi added that the offer of virgin lands made to the Modakeke had always been rejected. While recognizing the right of every Modakeke to own land if they could legitimately claim one in the bush but "whosoever chooses to farm in another man's land must pay the inevitable fee" Ooni's position was unmistakably clear²³. The public reaction of the Modakeke was an open meeting in the Baale's residence in September 1947. The following resolution which emanated from the public gathering put the Modakeke views on *isakole* in forceful perspective:

That in view of the history of our ancestors who settled in Ife several years ago on land which was freely and unconditionally allotted to them by the Ooni and people of Ife.

That in view of that fact that *isakole* was a development of later origin, unconnected with the relation between Modakeke and Ife, whereby the former paid tribute in farm produce to the Ooni.

That in view of the fact that we pay our tribute and cocoa taxes and other legitimate taxes to the Ife Native Administration. In consequence of the foregoing we are resolved firmly from henceforth to refuse to pay *isakole* to anyone and to resist by all constitutional or fair means any attempt to impose an arbitrary and illegal taxation on us by giving new meaning to *isakole*.²⁴

It is idle to deny that political interest was paramount at every turn of the Ife-Modakeke communal competition and conflict. The *isakole* issue, though economic on the surface, had great political possibilities; economic independence is, to be sure, of cardinal significance to political good health of any community. It is therefore not surprising that the Baale of Modakeke with the approbation of his people decided to boycott the Olojo festival in which he, as custom demanded, should participate. Added to this political protest was the Baale's use of a bugler to escort him in public - a traditional practice to which he was not entitled by rank as a head of a quarter and not a separate town. Furthermore, the religious issue was revived when the Modakeke Imam established a sep-

arate mosque.

The Lagos politicians and the press were blamed for these developments; they were accused of fanning the embers of discontent. The colonial administration took a legalistic view of the matter saying that it was all a private affair between landlord and tenant. The courts, they pointed out, were there to adjudicate on such matters if people could not settle their differences on *isakole* amicably. They also directed people to use the services of the Ooni in cases of excessive charges on *isakole*.

The Ooni made a tactical move to undermine the communal solidarity of the Modakeke. In October 1947, he asked the District Officer to make the Baale a member of the Appeal Court whose membership at that time consisted of the Ooni and the two most senior Ife Chiefs - Obalufe and Lowa. The Baale was the president of Modakeke Native Court, and there was no prior consultation with him whether he would accept such an offer. The Ooni thought it was unnecessary since he knew that "the separatist's idea is in the air".

Indeed it was, and was articulated at a public meeting on November 30, 1947, at which the Modakeke passed two resolutions. They called for a commission of inquiry into the *isakole* dispute; they asked the Baale to dissociate himself from membership of the Appeal Court. The two issues seem to have been interrelated as it is here presented in the resolution:

Whereas the Baale of Modakeke is the head chief and accredited representative of the Modakeke people whose interest, welfare, happiness and future well-being he must seek, it is resolved that his appointment as a member of the Ife Appeal Court be suspended until such time as the isakole issue shall have been settled between the Ife and the Modakeke as his attendance at the court may jeopardize the interest of his people whose confidence in his sincerity may be shaken.'

That this was the collective and popular view is demonstrated by the fact that the Baale and his chiefs wrote to the Ooni expressing their endorsement of the resolutions, although this was considered ill-advised and was later withdrawn. In spite of this, the Baale pleaded in a letter to the District Officer dated December 12, 1947, to be excused from membership of the Ife Appeal Court claiming old age. The Ooni could not accept the Baale's excuse. He declared:

The Baale of Modakeke must serve on the Appeal Court ... if the Baale refuses entirely to serve ... then he must cease to serve also in the lower court but carry on merely as the Baale. The Balogun,

the present president of Modakeke Court will then be asked to come to the Appeal Court... The idea that Modakeke is a separate town should not be tolerated... The present agitators... took the advantage of the weakness of the present Baale to start the trouble.

The ploy did not work and the Baale had to accept a place on the Appeal Court. The court battles over *isakole* in the final analysis, including the Supreme Court decision, favoured the Ife landlords. But the Modakeke remained uncompromising over the issue and nothing seemed to be able to deter them from the course of total rejection of payment of *isakole*. The District Officer was quick to appreciate this, that the Modakeke were not ready to pay *isakole* "no matter what any court ruled, and that the final outcome of the test case would not materially alter the main issue, which in the eyes of the people has become tribal and not individual, whatever the Government may say".²⁵ The resident also accurately assessed the mood and intensity of feeling when he counselled the District Officer saying that "any action to dispossess the Modakeke is bound to fail, whatever the justification in Ife eyes; in fact the only hope of a peaceful and lasting solution for both sides is for each to give a little and reach a settlement."²⁶

Even the attempt to involve the Egbe Omo Oduduwa in the search for a solution to this dispute failed to yield any positive results. The Egbe had helped to work out an agreement based on two options from which the Modakeke were asked to choose. The options were:

- (a) accept payment of a low rate of *isakole* with the option of taking up freehold land made available by the Native Authority.
- (b) to sell their crops in the farm and houses in the town to the Ife after these have been valued by independent appraisers; and to move out of Ife land.

The Modakeke accepted the first option but refused to sign the understanding unless the Ooni agreed to be a party to it. His refusal sealed the fate of yet another attempt to settle the *isakole* dispute.

If that approach did not produce the desired objective, the promotion of the Baale and the prospect of Modakeke leaders being given chieftaincy titles would appear to have had some effect. The Baale and some of his chiefs soon dissociated themselves from the anti-*isakole* agitation, blamed "some idlers in the town" for fomenting trouble and called on government to bring the ring leaders to book. One prominent example of those identified as ring leaders was the president of Modakeke Native Court, a member of the Ife Council, the Otun Balogun Modakeke, Chief Awotobi. He was charged by the police for conspiring with some other

people to commit felony, and was therefore suspended from his official duties. After his acquittal and discharge, his lawyer, H.O. Davies, successfully fought for his reinstatement.

Therefore, his adversaries variously accused him of being one of the chief architects of the anti-*isakole* movement; that he gave open expression to the view that Modakeke and Ife were separate towns by giving a separate reception for the British parliamentary Rev. Sorensen and other visitors on January 15, 1949, and boycotting the official one given by the Ooni and his chiefs; that he disrespected the authority of the Native Authority and the Baale whose role he arrogated to himself. When the Resident was informed about these accusations, the Otun Balogun was suspended from his council and court posts.²⁷

The *isakole* agitation was only an aspect of the Modakeke communal political struggle for autonomy from the Ife. The payment of *isakole* continued and there was no major upheaval until the promulgation in 1978 of the Land Use Decree (now Land Use Act). The Modakeke claimed freedom from the payment of the obnoxious obligation of tenancy as a result of the declaration that all land belonged to the government. The interpretation of the Ife, expectedly conservative, that nothing had changed, exacerbated the tension and turned the old matter into a contemporary political issue. It was to contribute to the explosive environment that finally erupted into the communal disturbances of April 1981.²⁸

The ultimate objective of the separatist sentiments has always been the creation of a separate local government for Modakeke. The Modakeke, led by the Modakeke Progressive Union, fought for separation from Ife in the Local Government re-organization of the early fifties. Modakeke lost and hence was retained as a quarter in Ife.²⁹ The Action Group, by 1952, had been established in Ife, thanks to the efforts of Ooni Aderemi and some Ife leaders, most of whom had participated in the *isakole* disputes. It was therefore natural that the Action Group would remain suspect among the Modakeke and that the opposition party, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) would receive warm embrace. After the local council election of 1955, Modakeke joined to form an organization known as Morifila (an acronym for Modakeke, Origbo, Ifetedo and Ila) made up of the non-Ife who populated the district. They were successful in their objective - which was to control Ife politics (Oyediran, 74-75).

The issue of a separate Local Government has always been central to Ife-Modakeke relations and was certainly prominent among the concerns

in the civil disturbances of 1981. It was both a cause and a suggested solution at the same time. The political parties exploited the issue, the local propaganda fed on it, oral and written evidence at the inquiry into the disturbances harped on it. When a separate Local Government was not created for them, the Modakeke felt profoundly betrayed and cheated. The Ife opposed the creation of a separate Local Government for Modakeke with determined vehemence, fearing loss of their land; they would rather have the Modakeke evacuated. Other issues that have become part of the history of the relations between the two communities also became important.³⁰

Now that we have examined the Modakeke question in Ife politics and diplomacy in its historical perspective, we must now proceed to ask the vital question: What is to be done? In other words, what predictive value have the insights that we have gained? What conclusions can we draw on the bases of those insights to be able to point the way to future relations between the two communities?

In order to come to grips with these questions, we must make certain assumptions which will serve as premises for our predictions and conclusions. Our conclusions can be credible and acceptable only if our assumptions or premises are credible and acceptable. In any event, our modest objective is to contribute to the pool of positive suggestions for an amicable and permanent solution to this protracted communal conflict.

We must first concede the fact that Modakeke is a community with a distinct sub-ethnic identity, self-consciousness and patterns of solidarity based upon shared historical experiences. But Modakeke cannot be viewed as a separate town; nor can the term quarter do justice to the size and population of Modakeke vis-a-vis the rest of the city of Ife. It is therefore more appropriate to consider it "a large section of Ile-Ife", to use the words of the Commission.³¹ If we grant that Modakeke is a part of Ife, it would then follow that the people of that section of Ile-Ife have justifiable claim to Ile-Ife and cannot any more be "strangers" as their home is "where they presently occupy".³² The Ife and the Modakeke have become like half-brothers with legitimate claim to their father's inheritance. The Ooni is the father to the two communities and he is so recognized by all.³³

In order to create an atmosphere of peace, harmony and justice in the domain in which the Ooni is the sole authority, there is urgent need to eliminate the feeling by the people in one section that they are second class citizens. It would appear that separate identities have over the years

promoted unequal access to wealth, status and power. It is necessary to effect institutional changes or restructuring which would enhance communal relations, engender new communal perceptions of equality and togetherness, and remove obstacles on the way to the realization of new communal aspirations. It would be correct to say that it was the blocking of communal yearnings and aspirations which intensified group frustration and radicalized the Modakeke political responses (Nelson and Wolpe, 1117).

Two important suggestions have been made about institutional modernization. The first is the creation of a "Consultative Committee" made up of Ife and Modakeke leaders.³⁴ This arrangement would afford the community leaders the opportunity to engage in peaceful and friendly dialogue, identify areas of potential danger and work for the amelioration of communal differences and tensions. The intention of the Ooni, Oba Okunade Sijuade, Olubuse II, who made the suggestion, apparently, was to establish a form for communal communication in the cautious belief that maintaining a channel of communication was one of the sure ways of defusing a potential crisis. This inter-communal body has the promise and the potential of introducing a much needed innovation into the resolution of the conflict.

The second suggestion is the creation of a separate local administration for Modakeke area. This would make it necessary to break the present Oranmiyan Central Local Government Council into two to form Oranmiyan Central I and Oranmiyan Central II.³⁵ The justification for this suggestion according to the Ibidapo-Oba Commission of Inquiry is

... a careful analysis of the situation in the area and the need to create a new political environment through which the long yearnings and prayers of the Modakekes are heard and the fears of the Ifes are allayed. (It is contended that) this conclusion, would serve as a palliative for cooling the heat of bitterness, by the basic and fundamental factors of justice, fairplay and permanent peace.

It is the commission's view that since the creation of local government councils is not a once-and-for-all exercise, but a continuous one, this suggestion should be given a fresh and sympathetic consideration by the Oyo State Government. Furthermore, the commission was much encouraged by the fact that no constitutional or legal hurdle stood in the way of the implementation of this suggestion. Indeed, it insisted that "exceptional circumstances" existed in the Oranmiyan Central Local Government area to justify the creation of a separate local government council for Modakeke area, "so that it becomes necessary to grant a sep-

aration as distinct from a divorce." What is essential for the creation of the desired healthy environment is for the Ife and the Modakeke to recognize that the separation does not constitute "a parting of ways but an opportunity for both communities to develop *pari passu*", as two peas in a pod.³⁶ It would seem that this political modernization in form of local autonomy may greatly reduce communal antagonism regarding wealth, status and power and end the spiral of rising aspirations and frustrations in a culturally plural domain.

NOTES

1. This characteristic is put more succinctly as "complementarity of communication" by Karl Deutch in his seminar work, *Nationalism and Socioa Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts institute of Technology Press, 1953), p. 71
2. C.4957, *Correspondence respecting the war between the native tribes in the interior and the negotiations for peace conducted by the government of Lagos... presented to both Houses of Parliament ... February 1887, London. 1887.* (Hereafter referred to as *Correspondence*), pp.72-74, 90-92; Paul Ozanne, "A new archaeological survey, of Ife," *Odu, a Journal of West African Studies No. 1, n.s., April 1969, p. 40*; R.S. Smith, *the Kingdoms of the Yoruba* (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 142, 151; Samuel Johnson, *the History of the Yorubas* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1921), p. 230.
3. CMS, CA2/049. Rev. David Hinderer's Journal of Missionary Journey, August - September 1858 contains relevant oral tradition on this aspect.
4. *Correspondence*, p. 90f
5. It is indeed reported that the refugees became the favourite victims whenever human sacrifices were needed. See CMS, CA2/049, Hinderer's Journal, Aug. -Sept., 1958
6. Both Gbegbaaje and Wunmonije were murdered for one reason or the other by Ife. See Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, pp. 230-232; *Correspondence*, pp. 90-92
7. Johnson suggests that the settlement got its name from the "cry of a

nest of storks on a large tree near the site". Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, pp. 230-233; also *Correspondence*, pp. 90-92; Lagos Times, cited in *ibid.*, p. 14. Perhaps, a more literal meaning suggested by Afolabi Ojo, "I settle here quietly", makes more sense for the fact that it express a mind of being wary of turmoil. C.J.A. Ojo, "Some aspects of the historical and cultural geography of Ife", in S. A Agboola (ed.), *The Ife Region* (Geography Department, University of Ife), p. 17.

8. *Correspondence*, pp. 72-73; See p. 90-92 for Modakeke oral evidence; Nelson and Wolpe, "Modernisation and the politics of communalism," p.1119, for the role of geographical separation of communal groups in a conflict. See also S.A. Akintoye, "Ife's sad century," *Nigeria Magazine* No. 104, March/May 1970, p.36
9. *The Lagos Times*, cited in *Correspondence*, p. 14
10. CMS, CA2/049, Hinderer's Journal of a Missionary Journey August- September, 1958; CMS, CA2/049, Hinderer's Report of his visit to the interior in 1875.
11. Akintoye, "Ife's sad century," p. 36. The Ajele System was part of Ibadan imperial bureaucracy.
12. CMS, 03A2/02, Johnson's Journal Extracts for half-year ending June 1881; G3A2/03, Phillip's Journal Extracts for half-year ending June 1882. See also S.A. Akintoye *Revolution and power politics in Yorubaland 1840-1893* (London: Longman, 1971), pp. 122-124.
13. *Correspondence*, pp. 70-73.
14. Ogunsigun to His Excellency the Governor of Lagos, April 26, *Correspondence*, pp. 70-71' see also pp. 74-75.
15. Johnson, *the History of the Yorubas*, p. 529; see pp. 527-532 for the full text of the treaty of peace.
16. Johnson to Evans, January 23, 1887, C.5114, *Further Correspondence respecting war*; Johnson, *the History of the*

- Yourbas, pp. 552-560. Actually, it was a situation of non-peace no-war.
17. Oyo Prof. 3., File 1929 Vol. I. (National Archives, Ibadan); G. Latunji (Asipa Ode Omu), *Bilingual history of the settlement of the old inhabitants of Modakeke town in Ode Omu Ile-Ife*: Ore Ofe Press, 1959
 18. "Unrest at Ife," *Times of Nigeria*, March 13, 1914, pp. 3, 6.
 19. Oyo Prof. 3. File 1929, Vol. I.
 20. Memorandum from the Senior Resident, Oyo, to D. O., Ife March 10, 1923; See also Ife Div. 1/2 File 459; Oyo Prof. 3. Vols. II and III, File No. 1029. The dispersal and the reintegration of the Modakeke into Ife township are discussed in G.O. Kilanko, "Modakeke settlements in and around Ife Division". Unpublished original essay, Dept. of Geography, University of Ife, 1969, esp. pp. 1-18.
 21. This trust was apparently not misplaced. Upon the Ooni's recommendation in 1928, the Baale and Osa Modakeke were put on annual salaries of £36. (72.00) and £12 (24) respectively for their contribution to the native administration. The Baale also became a judge of the native court on another salary of 36.
 22. Oyo Prof. 3., File Oy./2499; also Ife Div. 1/1-3/9 Ife and Modakeke Muslims, 1934-1954, File No. 1751.
 23. Oyo Prof. 2. Files 1929, Vols. II and III., See also the press clippings on isakole dispute, 1947, File No. 1929/1. The reference to Origbo is not "irrelevant" as Ooni Aderemi claimed but simply incorrect. The truth is that in 1907 when the British fixed the boundary between Ife and Ibadan, Ife lost a considerable amount of its traditional territory north of River Shasha where Oyo refugees, owing loyalty to Ibadan, had settled. See O. Adejuyigbe, "local boundary disputes in Western Nigeria: the example of Edunabon enclave on the Ife-Ede boundary", *Odu*, n.s. 2, October 1969, pp. 78.101.
 24. Oyo Prof. 3, File 1929, Vols. II and III.

24. Ife Div. 1/2 File No.459. When the endorsement was withdrawn, the Baale still supported the resolution dealing with his membership of the Appeal Court. Others recommended for membership of the court included Obajio, Jaran and E.J. Ajayi.
25. See also Ife Div.1/1-3/9. File No. 113B
26. Memo. Resident to District Officer, December 23, 1948
27. Memo., Resident Oyo province to District Officer Ife/Ijesa, May 2, 1951, Ife Div. 1/2, File no. 433, Vol. I
28. *Report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances in Orangniyan Central Local Government Area of Oyo State* (Hon. Justice Kayode Ibidapo-Obe Chairman), (Ibadan: Government Printer, 1981).p. 9. See also *Views of the Government of Oyo State*. Document 1/1981.
29. It is interesting to note that Lawyer Obafemi Awolowo, who was the attorney for the Ife in the Isakole Court cases, had become the leader of government and minister of local government in the first Action Group administration in the Western Region. There is no evidence to conclude that his decision to leave Modakeke as a ward in Ife was in any way influenced by his earlier professional duties.
30. *Reports of Judicial Commission* contains the history and politics of the 1981 disturbances. We think it unnecessary to go into the details of a communal tragedy whose emotions are still fresh. We will need more time to gain better insights. We will only consider a few suggested solutions.
31. The government of Oyo State accepts this description. See *Views of the Government of Oyo State* on this report, Oyo State Official Document No.1 of 1981, p.4. Of course, the Modakeke people see themselves as constituting a separate community from Ile-Ife. This sentiment is forcefully argued in F. O. Adedoyin, *Ilu ni Modakeke ki ise adugbo Oghon* (Ile-Ife: New Moon Press, 1957). No doubt, this same feeling prompted the Modakeke leaders to embark upon building a "Town Hall", and the "Palace". It would be correct to say that these were meant as concrete symbols of a larger political

expectation of a distinct municipal identity.

32. *Report of the Judicial Commission*, p. 36
33. The incumbent Ooni, Oba Okunade Sijuade, Olubuse II, sees himself as the father of all in his domain; and the Baale of Modakeke acknowledges the fact that the Ooni is "the overall traditional authority." *Report of the Judicial Commission*, pp. 13 and 57.
34. *Report of the Judicial Commission*, pp. 14, 37.
35. *Oranmiyan Central I* would consist of: Iremo, Iiare, More, Ita Elewa, Obagbile, Gbuede, Mukoro, Ita Marun Ilala, and Elekoto; *Oranmiyan Central II*: Modakeke, Ilode, Okerewe, Aba Oro, Abata Egba, Aye-Coker, Aye Obafemi, Erefe, Ladin, Iyanfoworogi, Yekemi and Wanikin. *Ibid.* p. 39
36. The relevant legal bases are Section 7(2) of the 1979 Constitution and Section 11 of the Local Government Law of 1976, *Ibid.* The Modakeke community was said by the Baale of Modakeke to accept the Ooni as the over-all traditional authority. *Ibid.* p. 57

CHAPTER 14

GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF IFE IN PRE-COLONIAL TIMES

“Biodun Adediran

In spite of the tradition of its being the oldest of the Yoruba kingdoms which emerged from the process of states formation initiated by Oduduwa, the government and administration of Ife kingdom in pre-colonial times is not clear. The major problem responsible for this is the paucity of material evidence for the reconstruction of the structures and mechanics of government in pre-colonial times. The Ife kingdom was not a particularly large state. It was just of moderate size which, according to William Bascom, was only about 112 kilometres long and 64 kilometres wide on the eve of the 19th century Yoruba wars (Bascom, 1968:29). Thus, unlike Oyo of the Alaafin or even Ibadan founded only in the 19th century, Ife had no elaborate system of provincial administration. The bulk of information, both oral and ethnographic, that has survived are on the city of Ile-Ife itself. Most of the settlements that were within the Ife kingdom were destroyed in the 19th century (Johnson, 1921:207; Akintoye, 1970:34-39) and the few that survived have undergone drastic changes taking after Oyo or Ijesa forms of administration.¹

This chapter is therefore essentially a reconstruction of the administration of the capital city, Ile-Ife itself. One justification for this is the fact that the town was the basic political unit on which the governments of all Yoruba states were based; evidence from other Yoruba states has shown that a clear grasp of the government of the metropolis is enough for an understanding of the administrative machinery of the whole state. The administration of the capital town was in fact a microcosm of that of the state. The capital city was always the focus of attention of all individuals. It was the hub of the political and economic activities of all the citizens of the state as well as the seat of the Oba (King) who resided in a secluded Aafin (Palace) which was the nerve centre of administration.

Like most Yoruba, the Ife conceived of their ruler, the Ooni as a divine monarch. He was regarded as a direct descendant of Oduduwa, the putative founder of the town and initiator of divine kingship in Yorubaland. Indeed, it is believed that the Ooni's crown, Ade Are, is the oldest symbol of kingly authority in Yorubaland. Once he puts on the

Are crown and entered the *Ilegbo*, his private chambers within the palace, the Ooni became sacred and was expected to be in continuous deliberation with three principal Ife deities - Oduduwa, Obatala and Oranfe - in order to rule well. Mackenzie's description was apt: "the Ooni was the symbol of unity, holding a divine office and authority, the head through and by which the body politic can live and act, the nation's representative and the vice-regent of the gods".² The 15th century picture of the Ooni painted by the Portuguese traders on the coast of Benin (Barrow, 1973:78) shows that he had for long been held in great awe not only by his subjects, but also by neighbouring peoples.

Theoretically, the Ooni possessed attributes which could easily mislead the unwary observer to conclude that he was despotic. He was the source of all authority in the land; he exercised the power of life and death over his subjects as well as the prerogative of mercy. These conceptions are expressed in two of his attributes: *Alase Ekeji Orisa* (supreme deity) and *Adimula* (one held for safety.) Furthermore, the Ooni "owned" all parcels of land; it is in fact claimed that the title Ooni derived from this fact. (Adediran 1976:3).

In reality however, the Ooni did not execute all these powers. He did not administer all justice; neither did he perform administrative functions or ritual sacrifices. These functions were delegated to a number of officials in an elaborate administrative system which culminated at the palace.

One feature of the administration of Ife was the emphasis laid on consultation at all levels hence the popular Yoruba saying, *Omode gbon, agba gbon Iafi da ile Ife*. Literally translated, this means that Ife as a regular settlement was founded by the collective wisdom of all its inhabitants. Properly understood however, this was an expression of the nature of the pre-colonial administration, a stress on the fact that only collective wisdom from all sections of the town could ensure good administration. The administrative organization was hierarchical in nature. The main components being the Ooni and three sets of chiefs: the *Iharefe* representing the commoners' interest, the *Modewa* representing princely interests and the *Isoro* representing religious interest. This ensured that all members of the community took part in the decision-making process.

The physical structure of the town made this very easy. Like all Yoruba towns, Ile-Ife was (and still is) made up of localized patrilineage called *Idile*. The *Idile* itself was an agglomeration of families with very strong kinship ties. To all intents and purposes the *Idile* was the basic social unit. Although made up of many families, it was a cohesive unit.

with members tracing descent from a common ancestor, having common deities, observing common taboos, farming on common or contiguous parcels of land and answering to the same descriptive names, *Oriki Orile*. Members lived in contiguous houses called *Agbo Ile* (compound or agglomeration of houses). As such, the *Idile* and not the family was the basis of the claims of an individual within the community. It was also the lowest level in the administrative organisation of the town. Here, emphasis was on experience acquired by age. The oldest male individual succeeded to leadership and was regarded as the 'father', *baale*, of all the others within the *Agbo ile*. The *baale* was responsible for the day to day affairs of the *idile* and saw to the general welfare of the *Agbo ile*. Minor disputes were settled by the *baale* and heads of other families. But the court at this level was informal; it charged no fees, its main concern being to maintain peace and kinship solidarity. The number of component *idile* grew as population increased. For instance, the incorporation of non-Ife elements at various times entailed the setting up of new *Agbo ile* by new *Idile*. A popular Ife saying suggests that initially Ile-Ife was made up of only six lineages. These were at a later time in the early history of the town joined by seven others who till today are identified from the others by the name *Elu*.³ It is not unlikely that in Ife the major *Idile* up to the end of the 18th century were only thirteen or sixteen. Certainly, not all the *Idile* in Ile-Ife at the end of the Ekitiparapo wars in 1893 were there at the turn of the 19th century. It is common knowledge that Ile-Ife was one of the old Yoruba towns that received substantial refugees from northern and central Yorubaland from C.1830 (Ajayi, 1974:145-152). The fact that *Modakeke* was set up about 1849 by Ooni Adegunle Abeweila to accommodate the bulk of these citizens has often made it difficult to realize that some migrant lineages continued to live within the ancient city and, unlike those at *Modakeke*, became absorbed into Ife customs. But in spite of these, there are still in Ile-Ife many *Idile* which pay *Ifo* (a kind of annual rent) to the original Ife lineages or landlords.⁴

It is necessary to understand the above point well, because the nature of the administration of the town at a time depended substantially on the number and ethnic homogeneity of the component *Idile*. The various *Idile* were grouped together into *adugbo* (wards). Unlike the *Idile*, the basis of association here was not kinship but geographical contiguity. Kinship feelings were therefore faint and members were free to contract marriages with each other provided they were not from the same *Idile*. Just as the number of *Idile* was not fixed, the number of *adugbo* was not fixed. As population increased and new *Idile* emerged pushing farther

the frontiers of the town, there were needs to have more *adugbo*. Even though the details of this physical growth are not yet fully worked out, the bare outline is clear. A cross section of Ife traditions suggests that originally, there were three wards: Irewo, Moore and Ilode. Later, possibly following the advent of the Elu, three others, Ilare, Okerewe and Itakogun were added. By the time Abeweila settled the Oyo at Modakeke, there were already seven large wards. Iraye having been created a few years earlier.

The administration of each *adugbo* was carried on by a head assisted by the various baale. The head who was a chief of the highest rank known as the Iharefe was responsible for the general welfare of the ward within which he was in effect a kingline. He held a court regularly with various Baale to adjudicate in matters involving member of different *Idile*. In these hearings, the objective was to reach a decision acceptable to all parties, failing which the issue would be transferred to a higher court. Usually, the ward head belonged to the first or oldest lineage within the ward and stood to members of the ward in the same way as the Baale stood to members of the *Idile*. Although the appointment of an Iharefe had to be approved by the Ooni, he had no direct say in the choice, that right being the exclusive preserve of the lineage from which the chief came. However, the Ooni could delay the installation of a candidate he was not in favour of and could thus ultimately influence a choice. But as the titles were hereditary within specific lineages, there was a limit within which the Ooni could exercise this privilege.

To facilitate the administration of the *adugbo*, it was divided into smaller units called *Ogbon* with heads directly responsible to the ward head. However, this was purely an internal arrangement within each ward. The headship of the *Ogbon* was an informal title bestowed on a baale and held at the behest of the ward head. Like the baale, the quarter head featured only at the lower level of the administrative machinery. At the higher (town or kingdom) level, only the ward head featured, holding brief, so to say, for the various Baale.

Apart from the ward heads, two other sets of chiefs were recognized in the administration of Ife. These were the *Isoro* and the *Modewa*. The *Isoro* were very vital in the whole governmental organization. These were the chiefs in charge of religious affairs and responsible for the ritual sacrifices and festivals for which Ife is well-known. Although their status was adversely affected by the imposition of the Native Administration by the British, up till the second decade of the 20th century, they still featured prominently (Frobenius, 1913:280). How impor-

tant they were would be realized when it is remembered that in traditional Yoruba politics, spiritual and secular affairs were inter-twined. No major political or economic decision was taken without adequate consultation with the Isoro. At a conservative estimate, they probably numbered about 201, since each deity had its own chief. An Isoro was usually also a baale and thus was part and parcel of the secular administrative set up. Sixteen of the numerous Isoro chiefs formed a 'supreme Council' which met every sixteenth day at Ilere, a special chamber reserved for them within the palace. Some of the Isoro chiefs were heads of pre-Oduduwa Communities which merged to form Ile-Ife; and it is not unlikely that Oduduwa and his immediate successors were merely priest-kings with the Isoro running the affairs. (Fabunmi 1969:10; Makinde 1970:22).

But as soon as the Oduduwa dynasty found its feet and became stable, the government became gradually secular. Although the Isoro continued to meet within the precincts of the palace and were often consulted, the Ooni depended increasingly on secular rather than Isoro chiefs.

This trend towards secularization was started by Obalufon, the third ruler of the Oduduwa dynasty who is remembered as the first Ooni to engage the services of non-Isoro chiefs. According to Ife legends, Obalufon became tired of the excesses of the Isoro and decided on a separation of duties. Consequently, he curtailed them to the administrative duties of their respective lineages, though he still looked to them for ritual guidance. It was in this way that the spiritual arm of government was separated from the secular, and the Isoro Chiefs were confined to strictly ritual affairs. In secular affairs, the Ooni depended essentially on a council of state which met at the *Geru* (frontage of the palace)⁵ every fourth day (*Ijo oja Ife*) to deliberate on state affairs, review government activities and formulate new policies.

What the nature of the Geru council was at its inception is difficult to say. The little known about it indicates a long story of constitutional adaptations according to the dictates of the time. Definitely, it continued to acquire more constitutional powers as the town expanded and as the kingdom itself grew. As early as the 10th century A.D., the Geru had become a check on the Ooni. Traditions recall how Luwoo Gbagida, a female Ooni considered harsh and unpopular, was deposed and her son, Adekola Tela, apparently an aspirant to the throne, banished from Ile-Ife (Fabunmi, 1969:23-24). This power to depose an unpopular Ooni was constantly exercised in the course of history when the need arose. For example, such Ooni as Ogboru, Akinmoyero, and Abeweila whose reign

became unpopular for one reason or the other, met with violent ends under circumstances which confirm that members of the Geru Council were not entirely blameless.

The functions of the Geru were however not limited to checking the Ooni. In the first instance, it was itself an advisory body and its activities were complementary to those of the Ooni. It also constituted a judicial court higher than those of the wardheads and to which cases from the ward courts were transferred. Although the Isoro were not members, the other two sets of chiefs, the Iharefe and the Modewa sat on this council.

The Iharefe or Agbafé were the civil chiefs through whom the Ooni ruled the town. As stated above, they were in direct control of the component wards of the town. If the tradition that only those that use *Oro* caps were chiefs is anything to go by, one could suggest that only the Iharefes were originally regarded as Chiefs.⁶ Indeed until very recently the Modewa were regarded as mere servants of the Ooni.

Apparently, the Iharefe were originally three in number: the Obalufe of Irewo, Obajio of Moore and the Obaloran of Hode. These are regarded in traditions as Ife "proper" and as the most senior chiefs to whom all the other Iharefe were only assistants.⁷ These three, as pointed out earlier were heads of autochthonous Ife Communities incorporated into the administrative set up that emerged shortly after the completion of the Oduduwa 'revolution'. As new wards were created from time to time, the need arose to expand the council by creating new Iharefe titles. By the end of the 18th Century, there were already seven Iharefe chiefs. The Waasin and Akogun titles which were originally military titles⁸ had been upgraded to the status of ward-heads following the creation of Iare and Ikogun wards.

At an early period, definitely as early as about the 17th century, the Ooni had felt the need to create some titles which were not tied to the various wards. Two of these, the *Jagunosi* and *Ejesi* titles survived the protest of the ward heads and became established as titles which the Ooni could give out as rewards to loyal Ife citizens. On the surface, this was a normal affair, but when viewed within the increasing constitutional power of the Iharefe chiefs, the innovation seems like a careful attempt to have some influence on the Iharefe Council. Later in the 19th century, four other titles were incorporated into the Iharefe. The first, the Obalaye, the head of Iraye, was created C.1810. The three others, the Loodi, Segbusin and Lukosi were purely military titles bestowed on any man with demonstrable ability to lead in time of troubles. Their incorporation into the Iharefe was on an *ad hoc* basis as it was only necessitated

by the increasing involvement of the Ife Kingdom in the Yoruba civil wars. Indeed with the incorporation of the Obalaye as an Iharefe there was an attempt to freeze the number of members of the body (Ademakinwa 1958:56).

The leader of the Iharefe, the Obalufe, was the most prominent chief in the town, and in present day terminology would be called a Prime Minister. As the title Obalufe (King of Ife town) suggests, he was regarded as the champion of the common man in the palace. He was in fact referred to as *Ooni Ita* (the Ooni outside the palace or more appropriately, the people's Ooni). In actual sense, while the Ooni in the palace held religious sway as patron of all the deities in the town, the Obalufe, was more privileged as a rallying point of intrigues within the town. In the absence of an Ooni, the Obalufe became the *de facto* ruler of Ife. Most importantly, the Obalufe was in charge of the guardian spirit of the Ooni. He was and still is *Orunto*, a title which suggests that he performed heavenly mysteries on behalf of the Ooni. The first important ritual an Ooni-elect performs is a visit to the Obalufe's Courtyard for rituals at *Agbala Orun* (heaven's court-yard) where he is initiated into some cults and where he takes the oath of office. Annually, during the Oloju festival, the Obalufe joins the Ooni to perform rituals to Ogun, the god of iron and a royal deity of the Ooni.

As the prime minister, the Obalufe held regular meetings with other members of the Iharefe in between and before the Geru meetings. It would appear also that he presided over and had the right to summon all other chiefs and the Ooni to meetings of the *Imole*, an extra-judicial body in which the Ooni himself was an ordinary member.

Apart from the Obalufe and the war chiefs, the specific functions of the other Iharefe is not certain. But outlines of the duties of a few of them could be made. The Obaloran, like the Ooni had the prerogative of mercy. His compound provided a refuge for all state criminals no matter the gravity of their offence. Once the Obaloran asked a culprit to be set free, the request could not be refused. The Akogun was primarily a war chief. In times of peace, he represented the military chiefs on the council; while at war time he represented the chiefs at the war front. In this, he was aided by three other Iharefe chiefs, the Jagunosin, Waasin and Ejesi as well as the Loodi, Seegbusin and Lukosi. Although militarily, Ife was not a strong state, when the occasion arose there emerged a crop of semi-professional soldiers under the general supervision of the Akogun. The head of the fighting force was the Balogun followed by a host of junior chieftains: Seriki, Asipa, Asinkin, Gbonka and Bada. The

Obalaaye was the head of all strangers in the town. It is claimed that if an Obalaaye lived long enough to witness the reign of three Ooni, he automatically became the next one. This privilege derived from the fact that he was originally a crowned Oba claiming descent from an early Ooni. Bascom refers to him as the highest ranking provincial chief of Ife (Bascom, 29). His own 'kingdom' of Iraye, about twelve kilometres south west of Ile-Ife, broke up as a result of some internal disputes and hostilities with the Owu kingdom just before the out break of the Owu war C.1810. He sought refuge with the reigning Ooni (apparently Akinmoyero) who settled him and his people at the outskirts of the town and later incorporated him into the Iharefe.⁹ Once on the council, however, he was an ordinary member taking his cue from the senior Iharefe, especially the Obalufe.

Whatever the specific functions of Iharefe chiefs and whatever collective duties they had to perform, they never met the Ooni. Their access to the Aafin was limited to the *Enu Geru* (frontage) where they held their meetings. Transactions between them and the Ooni were through the palace chiefs called Modewa, under the *Lowa Ijaruwa*.

Unlike the town chiefs, the Modewa had free access to all sections of the palace including the Ooni's private chambers. Even nowadays when practically all the chiefs (including the Iharefe) have access to the Ooni's quarters, only the Modewa chiefs are assigned specific duties within the palace. For this purpose they were grouped into three, each group assigned to a specific chamber:¹⁰ the *Lowa Ijaruwa*, the *Arode* and the *Lowatee* to the *Ogungun* chamber; the *Jaaran Isanire* and *Erebese* to the *Ominrin* chamber; and the *Aguro* and *Laadin* to the *Ilosoin* chamber.

It is often said that the Modewa chiefs are of servile origin and that their public functions were acquired only as a result of their association with the Ooni. Bascom recorded a tradition which traces their origin outside Ife. Akinjogbin seems to accept this when he suggests that the Modewa of the *Ominrin* chamber were originally people brought from other Yoruba kingdoms to obtain symbols of authority from Ile-Ife. But Chief M.O. Fasogbon vehemently insists that their importance within the administrative set up did not ante-date 1913 when as a result of the assassination of Balogun Ojuade, an Ife General, "the ancient system of smooth and peaceful administration was abolished, all the war chiefs, women chiefs, and Ogboni chiefs" functions were also abolished¹¹ (sic). Evidence at our disposal suggests otherwise. The name Modewa (princely youth) itself is the first pointer to the fact that they were not of servile origin but originally belonged to the royal lineage. Secondly, there is an

Ife tradition which records that the first Laadin was a descendant of Ooni Ogboru (Fabunmi:12) who reigned sometime in the 18th century. There is also evidence from Leo Frebenius who recorded during his visit to the palace in 1910 that the first Lowa Ijaruwa, Agure, Arode and Jaaran all belonged to Ife royal families (Frobenius, 279-280).

Summing it all up, one could suggest that the Modewa are descendants of the defunct royal lineages who lived at the Geru before they were expelled by Ooni Lajoodogun (Adediran:7). It is conceivable however that association with the royal court could be a factor that aided their establishment as an independent focus of power. Indeed, they enjoyed many privileges on account of this association. For example, apart from being exempted from taxation, they shared out of the royal income. The 'divine conception' of the whole administrative set-up could have been another factor. It was believed that the association of the Modewa chiefs with the sacred chambers invested them with certain supernatural powers that qualified them to communicate with and advise the Ooni. Apparently, this was why a Modewa chief could enter the Ilebo chamber only via his own chamber; and while they assembled in the presence of the Ooni they arranged themselves into three groups corresponding with their respective chambers. What this suggests is that the Ooni could undertake nothing without consulting with the Modewa. Leo Frebenius aptly sums up their significance within the administrative set up when he observed that "they habitually go to the palace everyday to be the first to greet the Ooni and talk everything over; and since they are in common agreement, he is always informed of his "advisers" will. Their humility at his audience in no way alters that they are the actual rulers of the city and state. (Frobenius: 280).

As a body, the significance of the Modewa chiefs comes out clearly in their traditional functions as link between the town and the court. They formed half of the deliberative council where they represented the interest of the royal court. They were responsible for conveying the decision of the council to the Ooni and that of the Ooni to the Council. More importantly, they were the Ooni's advisers and representatives in all affairs. When the Iharefe's decision ran counter to the interest of the Ooni, it was the duty of the Modewa to counsel moderation, iron out the differences and, if necessary, consult with the sixteen Ifa priests. It is claimed that in actual sense, what was announced as the Ooni's decision was the Modewa's. As the Ooni was compelled by custom to keep within the precincts of the palace, he had no way of checking on popular opinion or pace of development in the town. This was done by the

Modewa and other junior palace chiefs. In short, while the Ooni reigned, it was the Modewa, especially the Lewa, who ruled.

In the economic sphere, the Modewa acted as the Ooni's linksmen between the various guilds and the outlying districts of the kingdom. In this latter regard, the Modewa chiefs were responsible for collecting the Ooni's income and their leader, the Lowa Ijaruwa, played the role of the Chancellor of Exchequer.

The chiefs of each chamber specialized in certain administrative functions. Thus, in judicial affairs, the chiefs of the Ogugun chamber exercised more power than the other chiefs. Like the other Modewa, they were members of the Geru court of which the Iharefe were also members. In addition to this, the Ogugun chiefs had a special court called the *ferun* which met regularly within the precincts of their chamber. It was an intermediate court between the Geru and a general tribunal called *Oke-Agbala*.¹² The Ferun court could decide any matter in which the Ooni had an interest before necessary reference was made to the general council. Matters decided by the Geru court could be reviewed at the Ferun before reference was made to the Ooni. In fact, judicial reference to the Ooni from any of the other courts meant judgement by the Modewa Ogugun.

In present day terminology, the Ilosin Chamber (also called *Odi Keji* chamber) could be called a ministry of foreign affairs. The chiefs of the chamber called *Ara Ode Odi Keji* (People from the adjacent yard) were concerned mainly with relations between Ile-Ife and other Yoruba kingdoms. The Ominrin chiefs were mainly concerned with the investiture ceremonies of an Ooni. However, the functions of these chiefs overlapped; evidence at our disposal suggests that many changes have taken place in the specific functions and relative positions of these chiefs. For example, the Arode and Lowatee were also called Lowa (head of royal courtyards) which suggests that originally there were three Lowa though at present only the Ijaruwa is referred to as Lowa and is regarded as the foremost palace official.

In religious affairs, the Modewa were also the liaison between the Isoro chiefs, the various cults and the royal court. Each national festival¹³ provided an occasion for festivities in the palace. Even though the Modewa performed no ritual, their involvement in religious activities ensured that sacrificial materials (often rare and expensive) could be procured at very short notice. Most, if not all, of the essential materials used by the Isoro were provided by the court. For instance, during the Orungbe festival of Oduduwa the chiefs of the Ogugun chamber used

to provide Obadio, the chief priest of Oduduwa, with necessary materials; Oduduwa, being their patron deity. Likewise, during the Itapa festival of Orisanle and the festival of Obalufon, the Ominrin chiefs provided the Obalale and Obalara respectively with sacrificial materials. The Ilosin chiefs performed the same obligation for the Obaluru during the Oramfe festival. Consequently each Isoro chief looked upon a Modewa as his spokesman in the palace. It was in this regard that the Ooni himself was looked upon as the chief patron of all the religious cults.

While the Modewa chiefs formed part of the policy-making body, the actual execution of state duties depended on a junior cadre of palace officials called *Emese omo ese* (literally, boys that sit at the foot). They were male royal servants recruited from Modewa lineages, as well as from families of previous holders of Jagunosin and Ejesi titles. At the death of a Modewa chief, one of his sons was dedicated to the service of the Ooni to replace him. They performed police and intelligence services. They were used by the Modewa chiefs to muster grass-root support for royal policies and if necessary to cause a division within the rank of the Iharefe. On initiation, an emese was allocated to his father's chamber and he served there until he took a Modewa title. Thus, like the Modewa, there were three groups of emese; Ogungun, Ominrin and Ilosin.

From their sitting arrangement at the Ode Emese (their courtyard within the palace), it would appear that the emese were divided into grades. At least there were fourteen Emese title holders. The first four title holders (often referred to as the junior Modewa chiefs) formed a 'Council' responsible for the efficient running of the administrative machinery of the royal court.

The *Yegbata* as the head of the Emese was directly responsible for the successful execution of any policy laid down by the Modewa chiefs. The *Risa Mese* ranked next and was allotted with the adjudication in simple cases among the emese. The *Osin Lato* was directly responsible for the *Iko* (State messengers). While these three title holders exist today only in name, the fourth title-holder, the *Sarun* still performs his traditional function as Aide-de-camp to the Ooni. Like his counterparts in other Yoruba kingdoms, the Sarun, being the closest confidant of the Ooni would commit suicide on the latter's death. But since the turn of the 20th century, he has been spared this ordeal and allowed to abdicate giving the successive Ooni opportunity to choose his own Sarun.

The next six title holders were appendages of the Modewa chiefs and were responsible for the execution of secular functions. They are the

Ekeje and the *Koja Odun* (three each). They were state envoys that conveyed messages to the outlying districts of the kingdom as well as to other Yoruba kingdoms. More often than not, they represented the Modewa in the various guilds' meetings within the town.

The last four title holders were responsible for the religious functions or the Modewa. It was their duty to procure from markets or farms necessary materials for rituals. In addition, each of them has specific duties at the Ilegbe chamber. Though the duty of the Lorikan is not now clear, the Loogba Lesun looked after the Ilegbo chamber. The Lewelegbo was the Ooni's chamberlain and, with the Lewere, was directly responsible for mobilizing the untitled emese for necessary domestic duties.

After the title of emese was a large number of non-title emese, subdivided into three grades. First, were the *Loodeke* who were men of age or means who had not yet taken any title but had exempted themselves from domestic services by performing certain ceremonies. Contrary to what Bascom says (Bascom, 34) a non-Modewa Ife man would not become a Loodoko. The Ooni might however honour a non-emese with an Idoko title but the recipient must belong to a Modewa lineage.¹⁴ The Loodoko were often called upon to perform some of the duties of the titled emese especially those that required tact and experience. Below the Loodoko were the *Ewe emese* who performed mostly domestic duties within the palace. Some of them stayed at the town gates to collect tolls and levies. A sub-division of the Ewe emese, the *Modegbele* (literally, children who stay at the house) formed the third category of non-titled emese. These were infants up to the age of seven who performed domestic services for the *Olori* (queen) who resided in a secluded part of the Aafin called *Odo Are*.

Though the emese performed no royal service, the more difficult tasks were performed by the *Ogungbe*. This was a para-military corps of young men between the ages of twenty-one and forty-one. Unlike the emese, the Ogungbe could not enter the inner palace. They procured some materials required for sacrifice especially during the Oduduwa and Orisanla festivals. They were the state executioners and dealt with civil intrigues. Though royal dependants, called *Asasin* could be conscripted in times of trouble to swell its rank, the normal mode of recruitment was similar to that of the emese. Each Iharefe and Modewa chief was required to dedicate his eldest son to the Ogungbe corps. The corps was divided into two, the Ife, and Modewa, each under its own leader. The Ife section of the Ogungbe was concerned with civil disturbances within the town and the outlying settlements. The Modewa section under the

Egbedi was concerned with the security of the Aafin and, in effect, formed a corps of royal guards.

Generally, the role of women in the administrative organization of Ife was not prominent. Ife traditions attribute this to the high handedness of Ooni Luwoo who forced the Ife to adopt clean habits and worked them so hard that in the end they rebelled against her and swore never to have a female Ooni again. However, two female chiefs, the *Yaye Ojumu* and *Yeye Loja* were generally in charge of women affairs; the former as the head of women and the latter in charge of the market. The Ooni could also benefit substantially from the wealth of experience of the *Yeye Olori* (head of the queens, who as the oldest living woman in the palace was usually older than the Ooni himself ¹⁵ and, as such, was resource-pool of traditions. The *Yeye Olori* was directly responsible for the affairs of all women in the palace. However, none of the women formed part of any deliberative or advisory body either at the lower (quarter and ward) levels or at the higher level in the palace. Indeed, unlike in some Yoruba kingdoms where women played prominent roles in the administration, in Ife they were of very little significance, a fact which accounted for the palace officials being all male.

For sometime, a controversy has been on as regards the relative importance of the different components of the organization so far described (Oyediran, 1973:373-374). Some, especially the Ife local historians, believe that the *Iharefe* were the most powerful set of chiefs, being the representatives of the people and having all the lineages directly under their control. The *Obalufe*, they point out, was so well-placed that he could easily tilt the balance against the Ooni and the *Modewa*. Others suggest that the *Isoro*, since they were concerned with rituals, had much power in "reserve" and could easily foment trouble by simply threatening to withhold their services. A third group however argued that as long as the Ooni was on good terms with the *Modewa*, he had no problem with either the *Iharefe* or *Isoro*.

The little evidence at our disposal does not indicate that the balance of power among the component groups of the government was that delicate. The Ooni towered high within the system even though his position was precarious. Much of the powers lay with the chiefs and the success of an Ooni depended on his personal ability. While an astute ruler could effectively maintain his supremacy by skilfully balancing the interests of the *Modewa* with those of the *Iharefe*, a weak Ooni could easily become a victim of the ambitions of powerful individuals within either set of chiefs.

As primogeniture was an exception rather than the rule, succession to the throne was by election of a candidate from a royal family with acceptable claims of descent from Oduduwa. Although initially, selection was done by members of the royal family, the candidature of an Ooni had to meet with the approval of the Iharefe and Modewa. Oyeleye Oyediran rightly points out that as there was no rigidly fixed procedure for succession, the chiefs were in a position "to choose a candidate congenial to their idea and interest." Many stringent requirements were imposed. Apart from a good physical appearance and good character, the candidate had to be generous, humble and willing to listen to advice.

Frobenius recorded interestingly during his visit to the Aafin that the Ooni "looks into the eyes of the aged spokesmen when anything is proposed, listens to his whispered wishes now and again, emphasizes the kindness and goodness of the patriarchal prelaey present and has a holy terror of his management displeasing the powerful sentinels of the mumule (*Imole*), and their accelerating his end by violent means". (Frobenius, 279). Nevertheless, the Ooni was not a puppet as initiatives were not always taken by the chiefs. The Geru council was a highly deliberative body; a knotty issue might recur until a compromise was reached between the royal court and the Iharefe. Above all, there was an independent body to which issues on which unanimity could not be reached were referred. This was the *Imole* whose decisions were binding on all.

The *Imole* was the *Ife Ogboni*. It met every sixteen days in Ile-*Imole* in the Irewo ward and performed rituals in the worship of the earth. It was a body that ensured that the balance of power between the Ooni and his chiefs was always maintained. The Ooni, the Iharefe, Modewa and Isoro were members. Powerful and influential individuals within the community were granted membership ostensibly as a mark of honour, but apparently to keep an eye over their activities.

As stated earlier, the kingdom was of moderate size and there were no spoils of war which could create disputes among the chiefs. Although Ife traditions sometimes claim that its political sovereignty extended farther west, as far as Iwo and Ejigbo,¹⁶ this is refuted in these two places which merely acknowledge that their ruling dynasties derived from Ile-Ife. Indeed outside the town of Ile-Ife itself, it would appear that there were only a few other settlements of appreciable sizes: the Origbe chiefdoms, the autonomous 'City state' of Iraye and the market towns of Apomu, Ita marun and Isoya.

Bascom however insists that there was a form of provincial adminis-

tration (Bascom, 29-30). According to him, the kingdom was divided into five provinces: South West, under the Obalaaye of Iraye; North East under the Onpetu of Ido; North West under the Owa feegun of Oke Awo; and, West Central under the Obalejugbe of Ijugbe. These rulers, Bascom claims, collected tributes from the heads of settlements within their territory and divided with the Ooni. Until an intensive investigation is done to ascertain the extent of the Ife kingdom, it will be difficult to get a clear grasp of the nature of Ife's rule over its outlying settlements. For instance, local traditions refer to Iraye as an autonomous state about 12 kilometres south east of Ife. Although the other 'provincial chiefs' - the Obaware, Onpetu, Owa feegun and Obalejugbe - were descendants of pre-Oduduwa groups, they were not incorporated into the secular organization but into the ritual group (Isoro). It would appear that the Ooni depended essentially on his palace chiefs to maintain his interests on the outlying settlements (Bascom, 34). The existing outlying towns claim that until the colonial period they were not attached to any Ife chief or provincial ruler, and that their rulers had direct access to the Ooni Aafin. This is not unlikely for most of these towns were founded by Ife princes who until the 19th century had direct responsibility to their respective family compounds rather than to the central administration (Akinrinade, 1981).

The headship of each of these settlements belongs to particular lineages, and succession to them was an affair between those lineages and the local chiefs. Reference was then made to Ile-Ife to seek the approval of the Ooni, but this was a mere formality, more often than not, the local choice was confirmed. For internal affairs, the settlement was run by the local rulers and allegiance to the Ooni appears to have been voluntary rather than obligatory. There was definitely no representative of the Ooni resident in any of these settlements. This was due to the fact that till the 19th century the Ife kingdom was ethnically homogeneous and virtually all the outlying settlements were regarded as geographical extensions of some compounds in Ile-Ife. Indeed, Ife festivals organized in these settlements were controlled from Ile-Ife with local priests travelling to Ife annually to receive instructions as to the conduct for each season.

Whatever the nature of Ife's hold on these outlying settlements, a few assumptions could be made. Firstly, Ile-Ife was the focus of all individuals who had no separate identity to outsiders. Secondly, the outlying settlements, even when founded by members of the royal lineages did not have sovereign status and took a cue from Ile-Ife, especially on foreign policy. A local ruler (whatever his status) could not go to war except on

the instructions of Ife authorities. Thirdly, substantial revenues accrued to Ile-Ife through tributes during their local harvest as well as during important festivals such as *Edi* and *Olojo*. The basic elements in the tribute paid by the provincial towns were farm products, livestock, game and local manufactures. The amount required does not appear to have been fixed, even though no occasion is remembered when a ruler sent in items considered insufficient. Fourthly, in judicial matters, the local rulers were subordinate to Ife royal court. In this, the jurisdiction of the local courts appears to have been equal to that of the courts of the ward heads at Ile-Ife. While minor cases could be disposed of locally, important matters especially those involving a local ruler and his chiefs or neighbouring local rulers, were referred to the Ooni. Although each of the settlements had its own Imole, its decisions were like that of Ile-Ife, not final, and rights of appeal to the Geru court were granted to local litigants. The local rulers could also not order an execution as all cases involving capital punishment were transferred to the Ooni's court. Fifthly, the administration of a local settlement was a replica of that existing at Ile-Ife at the time of its foundation. This remained so until the 19th century, when, as a result of the influx of Oyo refugees, most of the settlements adopted *Ihole* titles. The only difference before then was that a local ruler could not have a crown, bear the title *Oba*, live in an *Aafin*, have the *Modewa* line of chiefs or keep an *Emese*.

Although there was no formal document in which the functions of the Ooni and each of his chiefs was defined, each individual that featured in the organization knew what his duties and privileges were and the limits outside which his actions were *ultra-vires* and therefore abominable. Thus while the constitutional arrangement described above was not written down, its smooth operation was assured by convention and precedents.

NOTES

- 1 In essence there was and is still no major difference between the political organization of one Yoruba kingdom or the other. But slight variations existed, and it is possible on the broad outline to identify different political forms. Thus Nathaniel Fadipe classified Yoruba political organizations into four types: Ife, Ijebu, Egba and Oyo. See Fadipe N.A., *The Sociology of the Yoruba* (Edited with an Introduction by F.O. Okediji and O.O. Okediji) Ibadan University Press, 1970, page 199.

- 2 Mackenzie, J. "Report on the Native organization of Ife District".
- 3 Eluyemi, O., *Oba Adesoji Aderemi: 50 years in the History of Ile-Ife* (Ogunbiyi Printing Works, Ife 1980) page 39. The saying of *Ife mefa Elu meja*. The original six Ife lineages were Obalufe, Obajio, Obalesun, Ompatu, Obawara, Obalaaye Obalejugbe Feegun.
- 4 This is to be distinguished from the *isakole* paid by non-Ife people.
- 5 A description of the physical organization of the Ife palace is in Adediran A.A. 'A Descriptive Analysis' op. cit. pp. 8-12.
- 6 Only the Iharefe use the *oro* caps as part of their official regalia.
- 7 Fasogbon, M. A. "A short constitutional History of Ancient City of Ile-Ife Ooye Lagbo" (Ms.) pp. 9..11. Also, discussions with the Ife traditional historian at various times between 1976 and 1980.
- 8 Interview with Ife chiefs in September, 1974.
- 9 Mackenzie, "J.A. 'Report on the Native Organization'; also oral interview with Ife chief September, 1974.
- 10 For the locations of these chambers see "Adediran, A. A. 'A Descriptive Analysis' *Op. cit.* p. 11.
- 11 Bascom, W.R. "Secret societies", Religious Cult groups and kinship units among the West African Yoruba. A study in social organization' (Ph.D. Northwestern University, 1935) pp. 26-27 Akinjogbin I.A., Personal Communications (1974) Fasogbon, M.O., "A short constitutional history", p.11.
12. The Ooni presided over this tribunal which met only in cases involving capital punishment.
13. See some of these in Parrett, J.K. 'An approach to Ife Festivals' *Nigeria Magazine* No.100, April 1969. pp.340 -348.
- 14 Oral interviews Chief Ala Awoyera (late) the *Lowa Ijaruwa* 24 September, 1974 and Chief Tiamiyu Alowooja, the *Obalufe* 2

September, 1974.

- 15 An Ooni inherits the wives of his predecessors and the most senior of these women becomes the *Yeye Olori*.
- 16 Mackenzie, J.A., "Report on the Native Administration of Ife". Johnson, S. *The History* p. 207.

CHAPTER 15

THE RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS OF IFE

A. A. Adediran and S.O. Arifalo

Religious festivals play an important role in a people's culture. Indeed, it could be argued that all peoples engage in one form of religious festival or the other. Even the so-called universal religions - Islam and Christianity - have important festivals which members celebrate with piety. The fundamental reason for celebrating religious festivals is psychological, and has something to do with the fear of the unknown. As Radcliffe-Brown aptly puts it, 'Men have hoped that by the proper performance of religious actions or observances, they would obtain some specific benefit' (Radcliffe-Brown, 1971:153). Since the upsurge of anthropological studies at the middle of the 19th century, there have been various essays on the religious festivals of various African peoples. One point which all scholars appear to stress is that in spite of the influence of the West on the culture of African peoples, traces of traditional religions are still visible and, in some places, these religions are as strong as (if not stronger than) Islam and Christianity.

One of the societies in which traditional religions have refused to die out is Yorubaland. Writing in 1910, the German anthropologist and explorer, Leo Frobenius, pointed out that the Yoruba society still 'manifestly exists beneath the spell of ... ancient forms of life in spite of some external socio-religious pressure' (Frobenius:144). This is particularly so in Ile-Ife, the "holy city" of the Yoruba where religious festivals have become part and parcel of existence. Indeed, a few years before Frobenius set out from Germany, he had heard reports that the people of Ile-Ife 'had raised a good many of the treasures of antiquity to the dignity of the Gods they still revered, still obeyed, and to whom they largely offered sacrifice' (Frobenius:84). As it was in 1910, so it is today. The people of Ife are still, in the words of Chief M.A. Fabunmi, 'strongly addicted to the observance of their ancient festivals and the worship of the gods and goddesses connected with them' (Fabunmi, 1969:403). According to the same source, an attempt sometime in the 15th century to introduce christianity into Ile-Ife was successful for a short while.

The then Ooni of Ife was baptized as Thomas John Ooni. But after the death of that Ooni the Ife people renounced Christianity, saying that the religion did not help them in their divination. Many of the early

christians were slain and others fled the town and the church was destroyed — and the people took a solemn vow at Oke Ileri never to embrace christianity again (Fabunmi, 1970a:24; 1970b:7).

Traditionally the oldest of the Yoruba cities, Ile-Ife is famous for its religious festivals. It is believed that there are 201 or 401 deities in the city and that one form of ritual ceremony or the other takes place everyday. It is noteworthy that "Lagegu", the indigene of Ife interviewed in 1854 at Freetown by the German Missionary Whilem Koelle had no other remark about his home country other than that it was a place replete with numerous deities to which frequent sacrifices were made (Koelle, 1854:5). Indeed, many of the world-famed Ife bronze heads and terra-cotta sculptures are venerated shrine objects representing some of these deities.

But not all the deities that exist in Ife are of widespread importance within the community; some are only minor family deities and their festivals are principally family affairs. However, those deities that are of major importance and whose followership involves a cross-section of the community cannot easily be counted on the finger-tip; and there are many occasions when the whole town goes festive in honour of the major deities. Although the festivals in this latter group are also the concern of certain lineages who act as hosts, other lineages and the royal court are brought in to participate because the festivals are believed to be held for the benefit of the community at large. Though only two festivals - *Olojo* and *Edi* - are regarded as general festivals, many of the "private" festivals have assumed public significance even though participation by members of the public is limited. Thus the number of festivals that could be regarded as of major importance to the body politic are so many that they cannot be dealt with effectively in a single discussion of this nature. Therefore, while this contribution emphasizes the general or common features of the festivals, it draws most of its examples from three representative festivals: *Iapa*, *Olojo* and *Edi*.

The Ife calendar is a lunar one; the year beginning sometimes in March with the *Aghon* festival and ending in February with the *Pokulere*. Dates of the festivals are determined by the Isoro (priestly) chiefs after adequate consultations with the Ifa priests. Though there is a known order as to which festival follows the other on the unwritten calendar, oracular consultations still have to be made to determine the actual dates each festival will commence. In order of celebration, the festival calendar looks like this:

IFE FESTIVAL CALENDAR

	FESTIVAL	TIME	CHIEF PRIEST/ CELEBRANT
1	Agbon	March	Olosaara
2	Obalufon	March	Obalara
3	Orisateko (Ijugbe)	March/April	Obalejuge
4	Okun Walode	April	Walode
5	Egbodo Ooni	May	The Ooni
6	Egbodo Erio	May	Araba
7	Ogido	May	Sooko
8	Efon	May	Obawara
9	Ile Mole	May/November	Oluwo
10	Ekun	June	Oluwo
11	Ode Omo Ooni	June	Sooko (princes)
12	Orungbe	June	Lowa Ijaruwa
13	Olokun	June	Obajio
14	Erinmi	June	Ejesi
15	Ore	June	Olopo
16	Luwoo	July	Obaloran
17	Esindale	July	Apata
18	Omitoto-Ose	July	Obaloran
19	Esu Obasin	August	Obalaayan
20	Agemo	August	Waasin
21	Obameri	Sept/October	Lokore
22	Oke Agboniregun	October	Araba
23	Olojo	October	Osogun
24	Oramfe	November	Obaluru
25	Edi	November	Yekere
26	Esa	November	Sooko
27	Oodua	December	Obadio
28	Iro feegun	December	Owa Feegun
29	Iro Isanire	December	Isanire
30	Iro Obawara	December	Obawara
31	Orisa Ikire	Dec./Jan.	Obakire
32	Iro Ompetu	January	Ompetu
33	Iro Obalaaye	January	Obalaaye
34	Iro Ooni	January	Modewa
35	Ita	January	Obalesun/Obalal

36	Iase	February	Obalase
37	Ija	?	Timi
38	Pokulere	February	Obariyun

** Compiled with the assistance of Omotoso Eluyemi*

All the festivals have their origins in historical events which contributed to the development of Ile-Ife. As Oyin Ogunba once pointed out, festivals are adequate means of building up a wealth of knowledge about the past of a Yoruba community and of reconstructing any aspect of that history (Ogunba, 1973:87-110). Ife festivals can be grouped into three in accordance with their historical significance. In the first group are the festivals which concern the ancient (pre-Oduduwa) times. These are usually celebrated by the descendants of the 13, or so, pre-Oduduwa lineage groups. As narrated in a preceding chapter of this book, Ife emerged from an agglomeration of autochthonous semi-autonomous settlements. Each of these settlements had its own customs which, in spite of the revolutionary nature of the Oduduwa take-over, it attempted to preserve. Thus festivals in this category are mostly survivals of the pre-Oduduwa lineage cults. They are all characterized by the solemnity of the occasion and the fear which they instil into other members of the community who do not belong to the cults. Participation in these festivals is strictly limited and they are performed in secrecy.

Pokulere, the last festival in the calendar which Parrat rightly describes as the "Igebo festival proper" (Parrat, 1969:348) is particularly infamous for the fear it instils in the people, for it is believed that any one who attempts to spy on the celebrants will meet with instant death. Even other festivals in this group such as *Ore*, *Ijugbe* and *Ile Mole* which are of subtler nature than Pokulere are still dreaded for the misfortune which they could cause an intruder. The sombre nature in which festivals are performed points to the nostalgia which these autochthonous groups feel for the pre-Oduduwa era and a reflection of the loss of an earlier glory. Thus, for the community at large, these festivals provide a gloomy atmosphere rather than a joyous one.

The second group of festivals are re-enactments of some events which preceded the emergence of Ile-Ife as an urban settlement. These festivals involve both the autochthonous groups and the Oduduwa group. Generally, they commemorate the steady but rigorous take over of the autochthonous lineage-settlements, the initiation of a central governmental system and the evolution of a homogenous group in Ile-Ife. Of partic-

ular importance here are the two "national" festivals and the *Itapa* (Obatala) festival. Unlike the festivals in the first category, festivals in the group provide immeasurable pleasure for a cross-section of the community.

In the last group are most Ife festivals. This is because all the festivals initiated after the Oduduwa take-over are under this broad category which can be sub-divided into four. First are those festivals like Ekun, Efon, Ogiyan, Obalufon and Oluwo which commemorate the reigns of some past Ooni and document their major achievements. Next are the festivals ostensibly held for the personal entertainment of participants but with some historical materials in them. Such are the Ooni's private festivals like Orungbe, Egbodo Ooni, and about a dozen others usually held within the precinct of the palace often with the Ooni himself presiding (Adediran, 1976:8-9). In this same sub-group are festivals such as Iro and Ode Omo Ooni not centred on specific individuals but commemorating important constitutional developments.

In another sub-class is a legion of festivals traditionally said to concern wives of Oduduwa but which may in fact be commemorative of the significant economic and political events shortly after the Oduduwa take-over. These include *Agbon*, *Olokun*, *Walode* and *Ose*. The *Agbon* festival, for instance, commemorates a quarrel between *Olokun*, a wealthy but childless queen, and *Osaara* who was an impoverished woman but blessed with many children. *Olokun*, on one occasion, was said to have displayed her wealth to demonstrate her importance in the community and spite her poor rival. In the conflict that ensued, *Osaara* overwhelmed *Olokun* by her many children and gained the sympathy of the populace. Thus every year, during the *Agbon* festival, this incident is rehearsed with a drumming and clapping of hands and local leather fans accompanied by a beautiful and rhythmic dance.

The chief celebrants of all the festivals are the Isoro chiefs. The royal court is brought in for the provision of materials needed for sacrifice. These are at times so rare and expensive that only the Ooni with the force and authority at his disposal can traditionally provide them. The administrative organization of the palace facilitates the participation of the royal court in the various festivals. Each Isoro chief has a patron among the Modewa chiefs. It is the duty of this patron to see to the interest of his ward in the palace and to organize on his behalf the provision of funds and materials for particular festivals. It is also the patron who will brief the Ooni about preparations being made for a festival and about the needs of the celebrants. Thus, for example, the Lowa Ijaruwa,

The Making of an Oni: Olobuse II performing rituals before the Oduduwa shrine during his enthronement ceremony in 1980.



Arode and Lowatee are patrons of the *Obadio* (Chief priest of Oduduwa). During the Oduduwa festival, they mobilize the emese of the Ogungun chamber (Adediran, 14-15) for necessary assistance to the celebrants and procure necessary sacrificial materials. During the Itapa and the Obalufon festivals, the *Jaran* and chiefs of the Ominrin chamber act as the patrons of the Obalesun and Obalara respectively; while the Aguro leads the members of the Ilosin chamber to assist the Obaluru during the annual festival of Oramfe. Apart from giving necessary assistance to the respective Isoro chiefs for the successful holding of a festival, it is the responsibility of each patron to feast and entertain inmates of the palace during a festival.

Like most religious festivals, the Ife festivals are centred on deified individuals. They are as such very historical in context. Festivals like Oramfe, Oduduwa, Obatala, Ogun, Olokun, Ija, etc., are named after specific personages whose lifetime they commemorate. Others like Edi, Itapa, and Olojo which are not named after specific personages are woven around the activities of some heroes such as Obatala and Obameri in Itapa and heroines such as Moremi in Edi. Each festival is thus a re-enactment of an aspect of Ife history. The Itapa festival is held in commemoration of the series of activities perpetrated by the Obatala group to reject the installation of the Oduduwa group. During the festival which lasts about ten days, various epochs such as the legendary descent from the sky by Obatala and other "Ife elders"; the regime of Obatala in the pre-Oduduwa era; the struggle for supremacy with the Oduduwa group, etc., are re-enacted in such a way that they provide a telescopic dramatic presentation of early Ife history.

Writing as early as 1958, I. A. Akinjogbin, pointed out the significance of religious festivals in historical reconstruction, and it is worth quoting him at length:

Enactment is a kind of stage acting of the events of history. But it is not fiction brought to life by mere imagination. An enactment ceremony has an actual historical beginning in the real occurrence of an important event within the period of the history of the particular people enacting it —. The source, therefore, grows not by imaginary additions, but by additions which are themselves enactment of things that happened after the original enactment had come into being —. In many enactment ceremonies, religion is not the central theme, it is history (Akinjogbin, 1958:172).

Most of the festivals, listed above are political enactments, in which history and not religion is the central theme. Each festival takes place in

stages, each of which is symbolic of something that happened in the past. The various stages can be grouped into three parts. The preparatory part entails consultation among the Isoro chiefs with the Ifa oracle as to when and how the festival should take place. It also entails the gathering of sacrificial materials, the decoration of the shrines and the political indoctrination of members of the public as to the historical significance of the forthcoming festival. At this stage, only those directly concerned with the ceremonies are involved. These include the palace officials of the appropriate chamber and the lineage which is to host the festival.

The second part begins with festivities of mass participation, attractive for the beautiful lyrical compositions rendered, and the theatrical performances accompanying the ceremony. This, indeed, is the festival proper spanning the whole period devoted to the ceremony. Songs with historical messages are rendered. Various types of musical instruments varying from ordinary sticks or clappers to metal gongs, bells and large drums such as *ighin* and *bembe* are used. Dramatic presentations and songs help to drive home the significance of the festival and its preservation. Conscious of the fact that a cross-section of the community is in attendance, any aspect of the events with underlying disruptive tendencies is suppressed while those aspects that help to cement social cohesion and promote political harmony are emphasized.

The third and most important part of any festival is the ritual sacrifice. This is often integrated into the second part. But while festivities go on in the day, the sacrifices are reserved for the nights. Sacrifice in any festival is more important than the singing, dancing, drumming and feasting. Only a small number of people, usually the priests, are involved in this aspect. Though members of the lineage hosting a festival and officials of the appropriate chamber in the palace may witness some of the night proceedings, only the priests and those initiated into the mysteries of the specific deity to be worshipped are allowed into the shrine where the rituals take place. Within the shrine, it is not known exactly what transpires among the priests and the deities. It is believed, however, that the priest prays for the benevolence of the deity on the community. The prayers, which follow a fixed order, are already committed to memory by the priests and are recited in strict Ife dialect with some gesticulations. The recitation and gesticulations must be performed correctly if the sacrifices and prayers are not to lose their efficacy. An example of such prayers is that recorded during the Itapa festival (Ojutalaya, 1981). Before any event, the priests kneel at the entrance of the inner-most chamber of the shrine and touch the floor three times with their heads

then recite:

<i>Eruwaadaji (3ce)</i>	Orisa be merciful (3ce)
<i>Mo wa Oko</i>	I greet the husband
<i>Mo wa Aya</i>	I greet the wife
<i>Mowa fun Yemoo Iwoniba</i>	I greet Yemoo, Mother of all
<i>Owo Para, ese Para</i>	May my hand not offend, neither my foot
<i>Asingbo, Asinto</i>	May I serve you long
<i>Ki nmayun, ki nmawa</i>	Protect my going and coming
<i>Ki ese mi Ma si</i>	May my feet never cease coming
<i>Ayunwaa sin</i>	May I come always to worship
<i>A bo pe Isoro</i>	May the priests serve you long
<i>Ki oba gbo, ki oba to</i>	May the king live long and long.

The secrecy in which the rituals are performed is ensured by a number of factors. One of this is the fact that they take place in the night. Another is the belief in the sacrosanctity of the shrines and the feeling that evil will descend on a non-initiate who ventures near. The most important factor would however appear to be the way the shrines in Ife are built. A shrine, traditionally, is surrounded by a thick bush or situated in a grove marked by *Peregum* (*Dracoena Fragrans*) or *Akoko* trees (*Newbouldisa leavis*). The shrine itself is often a building with inter-connected chambers and courtyards. One of these is the "holy of holies", housing the objects representing the deity. Usually, this object is buried in a spot known only to the priests. For the purpose of the festival, it will be dug up and reburied after rituals.

Various suggestions have been made about the significance of sacrifices (Idowu, 1963: 119ff). One of these is that they are offered for propitiation. This is tied with the belief that man is an imperfect being and that, at one stage or the other, during a year he could have offended the deity unconsciously. If such offence is not atoned for, calamity results; while on the other hand appropriate sacrifices help to remove guilt from the community. It is also believed that sacrifices performed at required times help to ensure the continuous benevolence of the deities. What this adds up to is that to neglect a sacrifice, no matter how minor, could cause a disaster.

Materials offered for sacrifice vary from the four-lobed kola nuts, to chicken, dogs, goat, ox, ram, or even - it is claimed - human beings. Some deities require special colours, such as white for Obatala and most pre-Oduduwa deities. Often, these materials are in multiples with 7, 9, 11, 16, 21, 41, 201 and 401 being popular figures. For, instance the main

sacrifice during the Obatala festival involves a goat, sixteen snails, sixteen roasted rats, sixteen dried fish and sixteen kola nuts. This is in addition to various other materials offered for sacrifice at various stages of the festival. The way the sacrifice is offered depends on the material and on the dictates of the deity. Generally, drinks are poured as libation, kolanut lobes are thrown on the ground for consultation, while blood of animals which are either beheaded or strangled, is sprinkled on the altar.

During the sacrifice the wishes of the deity are sought and known. This is done by an interpretation of the position of the lobes of the kolanut used in sacrifice. The interpretation is simply determined by any of the five possible positions of the lobes when thrown on the ground in front of the deity. If all the lobes have their flat sides down, the response is negative and the deity has to be appeased; if all the four have their flat sides open, the response is positive; if three turn up or down something has gone wrong somewhere and more questioning must follow; if two turn up and two down, this is very good, and is interpreted that the deity accepts the sacrifice brought.

While on the religious side, the festivals serve as constant renewal of the community's allegiance to the respective deities, on the secular side, they serve to cement the social, economic and political ties among the people. Each festival sees the cooperation of various sectors of the community. Indeed, part of the ceremonies performed during the general festivals of Olojo and Edi is the renewal of oath of allegiance to constituted authority by the chiefs who in their own rights are forces to be reckoned with in traditional politics. The Olojo and Edi festivals provide good examples of the many aspects woven together in characteristic Ife festivals.

The status of Olojo and Edi as national festivals is understandable in view of the constitutional events that gave rise to them. In fact, the local people look forward to these festivals as christians expect the christmas or muslims the greater beiram. Little wonder then that these two are major festivals in all Ife settlements, especially in the Origbo towns and even the relatively recent Ife settlements of Ifetedo and Oke-Igbo. Indeed, local traditions have it that on the two occasions in the 19th century when Ife was deserted as a result of the civil wars and many rituals were abandoned, both Ooni Adegbin Kumbusu (1850 - 77) and Derin Ologbenla at Oke-Igbo caused the Olojo and Edi festivals to be celebrated.

The Olojo centres around Ogun, the Yoruba god of War who, according to legend, introduced the use of iron into Yorubaland. The festival is

regarded as one of the most ancient Ife festivals, allegedly dating to the time of Oduduwa himself. It is also the only festival in which virtually everybody participates. Its significance is demonstrated by the appearance of the Ooni in full regalia. Indeed, the Olojo was one of the very few occasions on which the Ooni traditionally appeared in public. All the Isoro, Ihare and Modewa chiefs have roles to play during Olojo. The Ooni himself is regarded as the chief celebrant. The four days the festival lasts are packed full of activities. The major features of the festival are the offering of sacrifices at two major shrines. One is the Ogun shrine on Mogun hill adjacent to the palace; the other is the *Igbo Odi*, the royal mausoleum at the outskirts of the town. There is drumming, dancing, singing, magical displays and feasting throughout the period of the festival.

Because of the importance of the Olojo, the Lowa Ijaruwa (the foremost palace chief) himself personally supervises the collection of ritual materials and delivers them to *Osogun*, the priest in charge of the ceremonies.

The festival starts on a day called the *Ilagan* day. It is a day of vigil and all the ceremonies take place in the night. The Ooni and a host of his chiefs pour libation to Ogun and pray for peace and progress in Ile-Ife. The Ooni and the Isoro chiefs then perform a ritual dance round the shrine seven times, singing special songs mixed with prayers and incantations.

The next day, referred to as the first *Oke Mogun* day, sees the Ooni in his official regalia. Towards the evening, he leads a procession of his chiefs and towns people to the Oke Mogun passing through specific routes. At the shrine, the Ooni performs a ritual dance with the Osogun, at the end of which they perform a ritual of sword-crossing, apparently an oath of comradeship. Thereafter, the Osogun performs with chalk and camwood the traditional "marking" of swords of all the chiefs present. This is a renewal of the chiefs' allegiance to constituted authority represented by the Ooni. Next, the Ooni and the Osogun descend to another shrine called *Ogun Ereja* for another set of rituals. From the Ogun Ereja shrine, the Ooni leads the procession to *Oja fe* (central market), a stone throw from Oke-Mogun. Here, with another Isoro chief, the *Eredumi*, some ceremonies are performed at the end of which the Ooni hands over a ram to the Eredumi for rituals to the past Ooni at Igbo Odi.

The third day is declared a "national" holiday with feasting being the major pre-occupation of the people. The Ooni himself is kept busy with various entertainments by the emese in the minor courtyards located in

the palace.

The next day, called the second Oke-Mogun day, sees a repetition of the events of the first Oke-Mogun day. In addition however, the Ooni visits *Oke Itase* to pay homage to Orunmila, the initiator of Ifa. The end of the Olojo is signified by the meeting at the Ilere chamber in the palace of two principal Isoro chiefs, the Obaluru and the Obawinrin, to initiate the process for deciding the day of the second national festival -Edi.

Edi is celebrated in seven days, beginning about the 17th day after Olojo. It is in commemoration of the activities of Moremi, the woman who saved the people of Ife from the depredations of the Igbo, the non-conformist elements among the pre-Oduduwa groups. Like the Olojo, this sees mass participation with the farms deserted and market business at a very low ebb. Traditionally, no business is supposed to be transacted during the Edi festival. However, unlike the Olojo, drumming is forbidden. Two accounts recorded by Rev. M. J. Walsh (1948:232) attempt to explain this. One is that while the festival commemorates a victory for the Ife people, it also reminds them of the sacrifice of Moremi's only child. Thus, the occasion is regarded as both joyful and sad. Consequently the festivities are limited. The other account has it that drumming is forbidden because the Igbo usually timed their attacks during feasting, and before they could be over-powered, the people had to prohibit drumming and feasting for sometime.

The first day of the Edi is known as the *Oforan* or *Ogunna* and is packed full of activities. A bonfire is prepared in the palace while the Ooni engages in a mock battle with one of the chiefs. The bonfire is replicated in various parts of the town and the youths engage in mock battles, singing and performing acrobatic displays. The second day is the *Omolarere* day. The Omolarere consists of four long poles prepared as *Oguso* or torches wrapped in matting. It is carried corpse-like into the palace where it will be deposited. After that, the youths go round the town to expose evil-doers in the community, especially thieves. Women also go about singing specially composed songs directed at specific individuals whose wrong-doings they are convinced of. The third Edi day is the *Inasan* or public fire-lighting day. A fire is prepared in the palace and the Omolarere torches are lighted to be taken out of the town by some emese. On their route they will encounter representatives of the Igbo whom they engage in a mock battle and force into submission. This is followed by a symbolic submission of all the chiefs to the Ooni by performing the traditional *Woori* salutation to the Ooni (Eluyemi, 1980:65-67,68-72). The *Obadio*, (priest of Oduduwa), then leads the *Oluyare* and

Obawinrin (the defeated representatives of the Igbo) to the palace where a final act of submission is made.

“Dancing before the king now commences. Obadio ... is first, then Obawinrin and Oluyare, separately, accompanied by attendants, next all the Town chiefs and finally, two of the palace chiefs ... The dancers first prostrate, then turning by the left, dance round the inside of the circle back to where the king is seated, where they again kneel and prostrate. Last of all the king dances ...” (Walsh, 1948:236).

The last day sees the climax of the events. The main event of the day is the banishment of *Tele*, a human scapegoat from the town with all present praying that his banishment may see the disappearance of all their misfortunes. Thus virtually everybody makes it a point of duty to attend this grand-finale. As Parrat rightly points out, the exile of *Tele* from Ile-Ife symbolizes the banishment of evil from the town. For the months that follow, the local populace remain convinced that their good luck is ensured and that the benevolence of the gods is assured. (Parrat 1969:340)

There is, of course, no major difference between the Ife festivals and the religious festivals of other people. Essentially, the Ife festivals fulfil the main purpose of religious festivals, namely, the outward show of the celebrants' faith. Even the two “universal” religions of islam and christianity introduced or “re-introduced” into Ile-Ife with vigour in the second half of the 19th century did not affect this faith seriously. This was in spite of the fact that for a total of about twenty years during the century, Ile-Ife was deserted on account of civil disturbances. While it is true that islam and christianity got many converts among the local indigenes, it was not at the expense of the traditional religions; for most Christians and Muslims are also strict adherents of the traditional cults and join the non-converts to celebrate the various festivals.

CHAPTER 16

IFE CLASSICAL ART

Ola Olapade

Religion and art objects cannot be separated in the Yoruba social context. Art objects were indispensable because they were believed to serve as abodes for the spirits being worshipped. Therefore, they were not looked at as mere art for art sake or as just aesthetic objects. They were not art objects if they did not perform specific religious or ritual functions. Thus, among the Ife, artifacts were religious objects because no deity was worshipped without his image fashioned out as a statue by artists. Moreover, they were also historical objects because they served personal memory.

The artifacts of Ife, discovered through excavation in 1910 by the German ethnographer, Leo Frobenius (1968) brought Ife art to world limelight and accounted for the fame of both the city and the Yoruba race. Nitecki (1971) reported that Ife art, especially the terracotta and bronze heads, was outstanding. These two however were not the only medium used by Ife artists. They also worked in wood, stone and other minerals.

ARTIFACTS AND SITES

There are more terracotta figures in Ife art than bronze figures, probably because of the cheapness and abundance of clay in the Ife locality and its easy workability. Terracotta and bronze figures have been excavated from various quarters, shrines and groves at Ife. The quarters where these artifacts were dug out include burial sites, where artifacts in terracotta and bronze were said to have been intentionally buried in honour of dead Oonis, heroes and heroines. Secondly, some of the artifacts were buried for safety or for security purposes during wars. Thirdly, some of the artifacts could also have been covered up when walls of houses fell on them.

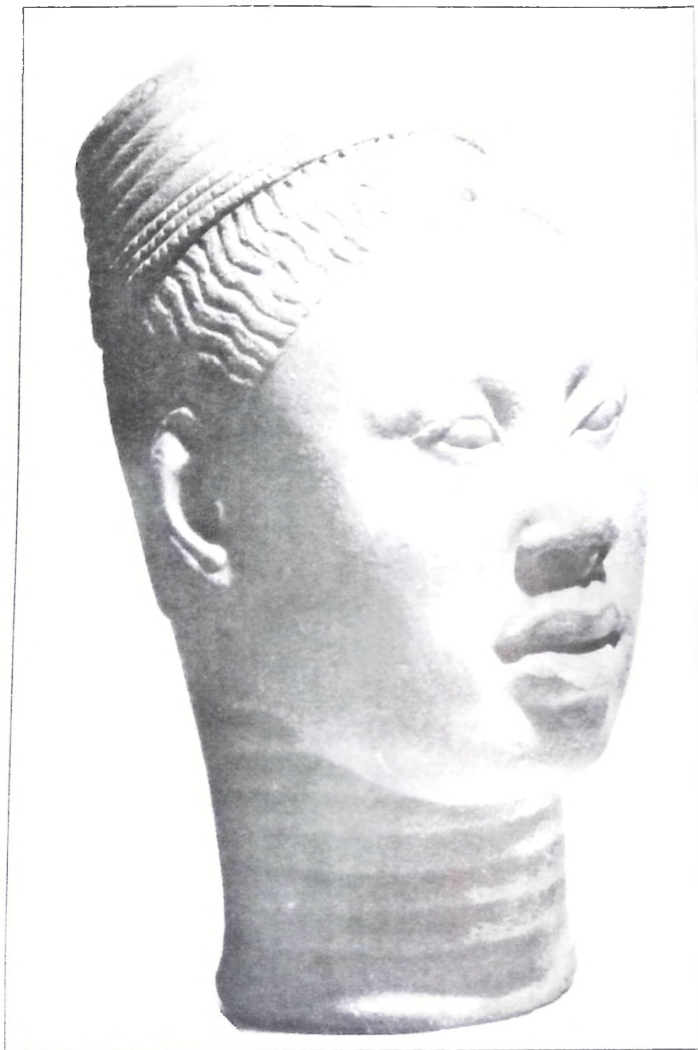
Notable excavators and archaeologists of these artifacts include Leo Frobenius, (1968) William Bascom, (1938) William Fagg, (1967) Frank Willet, (1967) Omotoso Eluyemi, (1974) Ekpo Eyo, (1970) and many others. Excavation sites are the following:

1. **OLOKUN GROVE (1910)**

In this grove, terracotta heads with relief striation wearing neck beads were dug out by Frobenius. Glass crucibles and beads of var-



A full bronze figure of an Ooni and his queen interlocking legs and arms. It was dug out at Ita Yemoo in 1957.



A well preserved terracota head representing the usurper, Ooni Lajuwa.

ious colours and sizes were also dug out (Willet, 1959).

2. **WUNMONIJE COMPOUND**

From this site, in 1938, impressive terracotta and bronze heads were unearthed. The majority of them were in life sizes. The famous Obalufon mask in naturalistic style, a smooth, shining and unstriated figure, was dug out. Obalufon was believed to have introduced the art of bronze casting into Ife. Another crowned head was unearthed wearing full royal regalia. One of the heads dug out was carved having on human hair. The artifacts are not likely to have been the works of the same artist, because of differences in shape - of eyes, mouths and ears. All the figures are naturalistic without being imitational. Some of the figures have striations, assumed to be decorations since no Ife sons or daughters were known to have ever had such facial marks. While some of the bronze sculptors produced smooth figures, others showed their identities in the striations. Another bronze head dug out of this compound is the bust of Ooni Lafogido, the great grandfather of Ooni Wunmonije.

3. **THE ITA YEMOO SITE**

At this site, in 1957, a number of remarkable terracotta figures were excavated. The full figure of an Ooni and his queen interlocking legs and arms was dug out. This figure was similar to the one found at Wunmonije compound, where a crowned bronze was dug out. From this same site, in 1958, a terracotta head of Ooni Lajuwa, wearing a woven hat was found. It is an unstriated, smooth and handsome figure. Terracotta stools and bronze figures were found. One head, believed to be that of a king's attendant in unstriated form, was unearthed. Figures from this site are likely to be ritual figures (Akeredolu, 1958).

4. **ODO OGBE STREET (1969)**

Here, a terracotta head was excavated, with ritual pots and human and animal terracotta heads (Willet 1967)

5. **OBALARA SITE (1971)**

Terracotta sculptures, ceramic vessels were discovered.

6. **EGBEJODA (1970) AND 7. ISOYA 1972**

These were sites where Eluyemi dug out interesting terracotta fig-

ures and ritual pots.

8. **OKE ESO (1974)**
Here terracotta figures of human heads having facial marks were dug out. Beads of various colours were also dug out of this site.
9. **OBAMERI SHRINE**
Unstriated terracotta heads and ritual pots were found.
10. **ORE GROVE**
Houses *Idena* figure carved from granite stone.
11. **OSANGANGAN OBAMAKIN GROVE**
This produced bronze and terracotta heads with hair style in naturalistic forms. There were other unusual figures in this grove.
12. **IWINRIN GROVE**
The terracotta figures dug out of this grove are in high naturalistic form, with exceptional ideation. Majority of the figures here were in life sizes and striated. Here also a figure representing a Queen's head was found. The grove produced more terracotta figures than other sites.
13. **OLOKUN WALODE**
This produced similar artifacts as found in Olokun grove. This establishes some sort of connection.
14. Other excavation sites where terracotta figures were dug out are **Obaluru**, **Akarabata** area, **Otutu** compound, area around Saint Stephen's Church, **Modakeke**, **Ogbon Oya**, **Lagere** Area (Seventh Day Adventist Church Area), **Mokuro** stream, **Kubolaje** shrine at the centre of Ife produced monstrous terracotta heads.

The Ife National Museum now houses a collection of most of the excavated terracotta and bronze figures. Other artifacts are also preserved in the Museum. The Obalufon mask is kept in the Ooni's palace.

ORIGIN AND DATE OF IFE ARTIFACTS

The origin of Ife artistic culture remains a subject of keen academic debate. Ife artifacts were produced when the creators could not record

information about them. Oral traditions which could have helped, have not been exhaustively collected - if they exist. Interested scholars on Ife artifacts have therefore relied on scientific methods of dating and they have located flourishing period of the Ife art at between the 8th and 16th centuries (Adam, 1963). The antecedent of the arts remains a probability.

Not much was known of Ife art by outsiders until the 1910's when Leo Frobenius visited Ife and reported his findings. The excellence of the workmanship as exemplified in the beauty of the objects he found led him to propose "Atlantis theory" in which he suggested that Ife was the long formed Atlantis (Frobenius, 1968). Other scholars have suggested that Ife art derived from Nok art (Shaw, 1964). They drew their conclusion from the stylistic similarity in Ife and Nok arts particularly the similarity between animal figures and the heavy legs and limbs in both forms. They argued that since Nok is directly situated to the north of Ife, possibility of contact and affinity were real. Other scholars have doubted the African origins of Ife art because of its naturalistic and realistic style. Its uniqueness and classical nature, the scholars argue suggest external origin. The excellent and classical skills displayed in the terracotta and bronze heads compared very favourably with the Greek style (Fagg, 1951). Fagg, in his own assumption on the origin of Ife arts, particularly the bronze heads, suggested that the technique of bronze casting at Ife must have been brought by some immigrants from the East. He emphasized the resemblance between Ife bronze heads and those produced by the Greeks (Fagg, 1951). Some have even disingenuously suggested that the early Portuguese must have introduced the art to Ife (Abiodun, 1975).

While one cannot say that Ife was completely cut off from the outside world in antiquity, some of the claims of external origin can be summarily dismissed. For most of the period between the 8th and 16th centuries, when Ife art was flourishing, European traders were not in West Africa. Indeed, the art declined when European traders came to West Africa. Although there are similarities between Ife and Greek art objects, no proofs of Greek presence in Ife have emerged. Indeed, some Ife myths suggest that Ife may have influenced Greek art, rather than the other way round. Large discoveries in recent years of various terracotta figures would tend to dispel any doubt about the local origins of the art. Any external influences are likely to be immediately local, though Ife artists soon established their own unique and incomparable style.

NATURALISM IN IFE BRONZE ARTS

A picture is realistic or naturalistic to the extent that it is a successful representation of the original object, leading the observer to suppose that the created object or picture has the characteristic of what it represents. In naturalism, there is very little gap between the representation and the original object. A naturalistic picture may deceive the viewer into taking it for real. In one word, a naturalistic image has some identity with the copy. Its representation at times, may not depend on imitation but upon correct accuracy of information or proportion. It is on this correct information and proportion and not on the imitation of the represented object that Ife naturalistic arts are assessed. The statues have uniqueness of parts in execution. They are expressive and communicative yet sophisticated. They look quite normal and healthy.

In African art, Ife art is said to be the most naturalistic. Few of the terracotta and the bronze heads excavated can be said to be naive in character. Similarity in the style of the excavated terracotta heads suggests that they are products of the same period, if not the same artists. The arts tagged as primitive by Western Art critics are far less naturalistic and realistic than Ife arts. Primitive arts produce powerful emotional effects which are a mixture of voluptuousness and terror. These strange features are absent from Ife art. There are some Ife wood works which produce such emotional reactions, but were meant for mystical purposes.

Ife naturalistic art, as opposed to the primitive style assumed by European art critics, remains a subject of active debate. Abiodun Rowland maintains that African style of art is not completely primitive when one views its naturalism. In Yoruba sculptural pieces, the Ife bronze heads which display excellent mastery of the art occupy a unique position, while other sculptural and wood works may be grouped together in another class. The remarkable skills displayed in bronze heads must keep observers and critics wondering about the level of technical expertise of Ife naturalistic art. Cook (1963) has shown that there exist a lot of similarities between Ife bronze heads and Roman portraits. He concludes that Ife bronze portraiture can solidly stand the criteria for evaluating Roman art.

Some of the bronze heads like the Obalufon mask, have smooth polished surface, while others have vertical lines (striations). The striations are interpreted by some writers to be facial marks, but as there is no known Yoruba facial marks like these, they are more likely to be decorations.

While some Ife traditional artists produce very naturalistic portrai-



Bronze figure of an Ooni, found at Ita Yemoo in 1957. This is the only undamaged standing figure we have from Ife.



Seated bronze figure from Nupe village, undoubtedly of Ife manufacture. Despite the damage, it is clearly the finest work of Ife bronze-casting so far discovered

tures, particularly the heads, standing figures have abnormal legs. A naturalistic head on top of formal bodies evokes great admiration for the artist's skills. While the head is surely naturalistically executed, the body is portrayed in less proportional form. The reason for this portrayal might be the importance the Yoruba placed on the *ORI* (head). Consequently, more time and skills are displayed in the making of the head form.

Ife art represents the classical period of West African art, characterized by its sound anatomical knowledge displayed in its portraiture. Ife naturalism is described by Trowel (1970) as highly intellectualized, as opposed to being an emotional or a felt expression characteristic of primitive arts.

Majority of Ife classical bronze arts were used by the Ife royalty. They depict kings' heads, court attendants and sacrificial victims. Others were for cult purposes.

TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS IN BRONZE CASTING

The ancient Ife iron workers had their local furnace for smelting and casting. There were pits where iron and copper ores were dug up around Ile-Ife. The people could also have procured these metals from other places as they travelled. Isundunrin, about eighty kilometres west of Ile-Ife, a centre of iron ore could be one of the sources of supply for artists. The terracotta heads which were similar in style to the bronze probably served as possible casts for the bronze works.

On how the Ife bronze casters learnt the art, Shinnie (1967) suggested that the Merotic Kingdom in the Nile Valley had a much earlier metallurgical activity than the Ife in metal casting. It has been suggested that metal working technique of *CIRE PERDU* or lost wax must have come from Meroe Sudan. There is however no evidence to substantiate this suggestion.

THE CIRE PERDU OR THE LOST WAX

The Cire Perdu or the lost wax method of bronze casting at Ife is simply this: Firstly, the model of the figure to be cast was prepared in clay. When this was fairly dry, beeswax was prepared and used to cover the entire clay model in a thin layer that decided the thickness of the bronze. While the whole model was covered with wax, another clay layer was placed on top to cover the layer of wax. Iron pegs were driven through from outside to the core model to prevent it from shaking. Iron wire was



Two stone figures, left, from the Ore Grove, Ife, sometimes known as Idena (the gate keeper), right, found at Eshure in Ekiti, closely related to those of Ife, it is believed to be a man who turned to a stone when shot in a war.

then used to bind the whole mould together. It was left to dry properly before it was baked or fired. The firing melted the wax which was then poured out from the opening left on top of the model. Bronze was melted in a crucible and carefully poured through the uncovered top to fill the space created by the wax in between the core model and the external clay layer. Melted bronze had to be carefully poured into the cast, for it not to be empty. Enough bronze liquid were prepared to fill the cast to the brim. When the pouring was completed and after solidification, the pegs and external and internal clay moulds were removed. What was left was a thin layer of hollow bronze figure.

The bronze used in casting was a mixture of copper and other metal combinations. Where these minerals came from is still unknown, but since Yoruba land is rich in mineral resources, they were likely to be locally mined. The Nok area which produced tin and other minerals could also be a possible source of the minerals.

OTHER ART WORKS

Other than works in bronze and terracotta, there existed works in wood, stone and glass-beads.

WOOD WORKS

The Yoruba are probably the most prolific wood carvers in West Africa and wood carving has contributed to the greatness of Ife art. Lying in a thickly forested area, Ife had an abundance of raw materials to use.

As noted earlier, the religious beliefs of Ife encouraged the creating of artifacts which were mostly carved in wood. Although the Yoruba people believe in the Almighty God, whom they call *OLORUN*, they worship him through many *Imales* or *Orisa*.

The materials needed to worship each of these orisa, called for the production of artifacts by the Yoruba traditional wood carvers. The artifacts associated with religious worship constituted the bulk of traditional Yoruba wood works. Other than images of Orisa carved by the wood carvers, there were also masks for masquerades, and instruments used by *Ogboni* and *Imule* societies.

STONE CARVING

Ife stone carving served the same historical and religious purposes as the bronze works and terracotta. The age of Ife stone statues is unknown, although some archaeologists have suggested that they existed before the metal and terracotta heads.

According to Yoruba belief and myths, several great men who once lived on earth did not die but turned into stone figures. Examples are Oduduwa, Ore, Ogun, et cetera. Their stone effigies are now in Ife.

The remarkable stone art of Ife, which is probably of much greater antiquity than has been supposed, is part of a large cultural complex found everywhere in Yorubaland.

The skill in stone work gradually transferred to iron, and eventually got lost by the time brass-casting gained ground. The stone sculpture of Ife existed in a variety of forms; the monoliths of Oranyan staff, human and animal forms and ritual stools. Johnson has this to say about the Oranyan staff:

An obelisk termed *Opa Oranyan* (Oranyan's staff) erected on the spot he was supposed to have been buried is shown at Ile-Ife to this day. This would seem to confirm the view that he died and was buried at Ife... This obelisk is about 10 or 12 feet in height and about four feet square in width at its base; it tapers to a point, and has upon one face of it, several spike nails driven into it, and some carvings as of ancient character. The nails are arranged First, there are in a straight line from the bottom upwards at intervals of about two inches in midline; and next at about a distance of four inches on either side of this, and from the same level on top, two parallel lines of 31 nails each running downwards and curving below to meet those of the midline. Then in the space between these three rows of parallel lines, and about the level where they converge, is found the most conspicuous of the carvings. What is conjectured as most probable in these arrangements is that the 61 nails in midline represent the number of years Oranyan lived, and that the 31 each on either side indicates that he was 31 when he began to reign ... (Johnson, 1969:140).

Johnson noted that about four feet was broken off from the top of this obelisk during a storm in 1884. The obelisk has since twice fallen down and unartistically re-erected. Today it has been re-erected and forms part of the tourist attraction at Ife.

Even though the Oranyan staff is the most striking, there are other stone monoliths at Ife. At the grove of Obameri, there is a monolith of one foot six inches in height, flat and thin. There is the staff of Oluseri (*Opa Oluseri*) which is round and rectangular in form. The *Ada Eledisi* (Eledisi sword) is five foot high with a curved upper part. All the monoliths are associated with the cult of Ogun, the reputed father of Oranyan.

Other stone carvings are human, animal, fish, reptile and bird figures. At the Ore grove, there are two stone human figures; the bigger one is

called Idena, the gate keeper while the small nameless one may be his servant. There is a stone fish at Ore grove similar to the one at the Ogun Ladin shrine inside the Ooni's palace. Other stone carvings include stone stools carved out of quartz.

The Ore grove where some stone figures were kept commemorated a hunter called Ore, who was said to have lived in Ife all alone before Oduduwa.

Apart from Ife, Esie is another important centre where stone carving flourished in Yourbaland. There are reasons to suggest that the two centres had contact with each other. For example, the Esie stone figures are similar to the Idena stone figure of Ife. This may suggest that one was derived from the other or that both are contemporaneous.

GLASS-BEAD WORKS OF IFE

The excavation at Ita Yemoo (1957/58) according to Willet yielded pieces of segi beads. In 1972, similar segi beads were dug up at Isoya. They have also been dug up from Olokun grove. Pieces of segi beads are also found in every nook and corner of Ife. All these suggest two things: one that Ife was a manufacturing centre of the segi beads and, secondly, that the manufacture is of some antiquity.

The beads excavated at Ife were of translucent bluish green and tubular. The ceremonial regalia of the Oba of Benin prominently featured such beads which originally came from Ife. They antedate and are different from the coral beads presently found and used in Benin.

CONTEMPORARY ART ACTIVITIES AT IFE

Modern day Ife people do not engage in serious art works as their forefathers did. There are three major reasons which may account for this.

First is the take-over of the nation's administration by the British colonial masters; second, the introduction and acceptance of christianity and islam which abhorred the use of art forms as representations of gods, and third, the advent of science and technology. Only a negligible population at Ife can currently be said to be traditional religious believers. The traditional artist who occupied a very significant position in the society in the past because of his role in producing images of worship is no longer reckoned with. Majority of such traditional artists abandoned the art to become cocoa farmers. Artifacts and mystical objects which were kept as sacred have since become objects for exhibition in our local and foreign museums. Families famous for bronze figures now produce utensils like kitchen spoons, cooking pots, et cetera. There are black-

smiths in the town who only produce agricultural equipment. Bend production continues on a small scale. The remaining few wood carvers produce mortars and pestles.

There are however other craftsmen like male and female weavers and women dyers. It may not be correct to say that Ife traditional art culture is dead, but it has suffered deadly blows from foreign religions, political and economic factors. The Ife are becoming more and more decorative in their art and efforts are being placed on preserving what is left of the old works of art for foreign tourists and future Nigerian generations.

CHAPTER 17

ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN ILE-IFE

E. Dada Adelowo

ISLAM IN ILE-IFE: BEGINNINGS AND EXPANSION

The decline of Yoruba religion as a formal entity in Ile-Ife was very rapid during the last generation. It was estimated that it lost about 40% of its followers during the last half century, and that at present it has only about 40% of the total population. It can be said therefore, that Yoruba religion in Ile-Ife is dying out. This is due largely to the introduction of two foreign religions - Islam and Christianity.

The advent of Islam in Yorubaland can be traced to Northern Nigeria - Hausa-Fulani land in particular (Adelowo, 1978:30; Clarke, 1982:166-172). The religion reached Oyo and northern Yoruba towns long before it reached Ile-Ife. There appeared to have been infiltration of some elements of Islamic culture and traditions into Ile-Ife before the formal introduction of the religion, but not much of these survived by the 19th century. The popular opinion is that Islam reached Ile-Ife during the first half of the 19th century.¹ Indeed prior to the Modakeke-Ife war of 1882, an Iforin indigene named Danielu - a traditional healer who incorporated muslim prayers, incantations and medical knowledge had built a reputation for healing especially barren women. Loyalty to his customers (along with good profits) led him to travel through farms during the Ife exile. Danielu's healing activities and magical acts enhanced his reputation among the Ife people. Although he won few converts to Islam, he was held in high esteem among the people in general.

During the Ife-Modakeke wars of 1882, an Ife boy from the Adeosun family was captured and sold into slavery in Lagos. There the young Adeosun took lessons in Arabic and adopted the Muslim name Kassem (Yoruba: Kasumu).³ He eventually became rich through the selling of guns from Lagos and the purchase of rubber from the hinterland. After the return of the Ife from exile at Oke-Igbo in 1893, Kaseem's mother urged him to return to Ile-Ife.⁴

He returned and met Danielu, then an aged, man, trying to establish Islam in the town. Danielu, Kaseem and the sprinkling of Muslims then observed the Muslim ritual prayers (as-salat) together in a mosque at Modakeke where Islam was already established. That Islam was already

established in Modakeke might be because there were already muslims among the people before they migrated from the northern Yoruba country and eventually settled in Ile-Ife. It was not until the early part of the present century that the religion took root in the town. The first recognized mosque was built at Itakogun, Ile-Ife in 1903⁵ during the reign of Ooni Adelekan Olubuse I who died in 1909. Although there were a number of Ife people who had embraced Islam during the exile, Kaseem Adeosun was the only returnee who was versed in Arabic, the official language of Islam. He later became the Naibi, the Deputy Chief Imam.⁶ He succeeded Danielu as the Chief Imam in 1922.

The earliest Muslim community in Ile-Ife and Modakeke was organized in a simple structure with the Giwa at the head. He served as both the president and the secretary of the community which was being run like an association. Meetings of the association were normally held in his house as the need arose. The objectives and the aspirations of the association were fundamentally uniform: to establish a contact point and co-operation among muslims in Ile-Ife and Modakeke, to foster mutual co-existence and to expand the sphere of Islam through conversion. In pursuance of their aims and aspirations they participated fully and actively in whatever social activities any of their members was involved. These included funerals, marking the end of a course,⁷ marriage and other ceremonies⁸ and the enthronement of titled muslim officers such as Parakoyi, Otun Imole, Osi Imole, Balogun Imole and Mogaji.⁹ Members would turn out in multitude on the occasions of muslim festivals. Colourful events like these helped in converting members of the society who still adhered to the Yoruba religion.

For instance, to win converts from among the followers of the traditional religion, Kaseem Adeosun as Naibi and later Chief Imam of Ile-Ife was fond of organizing colourful celebrations, serving palm-wine and assorted foods. He would then seize the opportunity to preach Islam and teach Muslim styles of praying and doctrines and link Islam to the progressive Lagosian trend. Only after he had won his converts (each of whom declared his faith individually) would he tell his followers that drinks that intoxicate and the worship of 'idols' were forbidden (*haram*).

By 1928 Chief Imam Kaseem convinced Ooni Ademiluyi Ajagun that all the other Yoruba towns like Oyo, Saki, Iseyin, Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode had central mosques in front of the Oba's court and that it would not be proper for Ile-Ife to be an exception. The Ooni allowed the Muslim community to build a mosque in front of the shrine of Oduduwa situated at Enuwa and adjacent to the palace. The Modakeke people had their own

mosque before they were compelled to evacuate the city in March 29, 1909. When they returned to the city in 1923 during the reign of Ooni Ademiluyi, they joined their Muslim associates in Ile-Ife to observe the Friday congregational prayer at Enuwa.

The age-old rift between the Ife and the Modakeke was soon to alienate the Modakeke who felt unsafe having to visit Enuwa for the Friday congregational prayer. They therefore proceeded to build a separate Central Mosque at Itamerin and set up their own compound (*ratibi*).

In 1949, a squabble for the Chief Imamate began in Ile-Ife. Ever since Danielu the Ilorin herbal doctor who brought Islam to Ile-Ife, the Chief Imams in Ile-Ife, Kaseem Adeosun (1922-34) and Raji Imam (1934-49), his two immediate successors were Ife people. Upon the death of Raji Imam, two men, Yusuf Adeosun (the son of Kaseem) and Oseni Odukuro claimed the rights to the Imamate. Oseni had been Naibi to Raji as Raji had been to Kaseem and as Kaseem had been to Danielu. He claimed, therefore, that a precedent that the Naibi succeeds the Imam had been established. This was rejected by Adeosun's supporters who argued that their candidate had a better knowledge of the Quaran Majeed and was more acceptable to the Muslim community. Oseni instituted a suit against Adeosun, but the judge in the Benin Judicial Division dismissed Oseni's plea on the ground that he did not demonstrate that he became the Chief Imam in accordance with Islamic Law and practice, i.e. he must be elected by a gathering of the whole community. The Ooni of Ife, Oba Adesoji Aderemi, brought a temporary settlement then by getting both parties to agree to lead prayers on alternating Fridays. This was not a permanent solution but a temporary arrangement which succeeded in forestalling violence.

When Oseni died in 1958, his Naibi, Asani Bello, claimed the Chief Imamate. That year, the Asani group sued Adeosun, and in a separate action two years later, Adeosun's group sued Asani's. The decision at the Ile-Ife Magistrate's Court was in favour of Adeosun. The Asani Bello group appealed against this judgement. The case dragged on for years, eventually reaching the Supreme Court of Nigeria where a decision overturning that of the Ife court was given. Justice Ayoola Coker of the Supreme Court ruled that neither group had got the "vote" either unanimously or the majority of the whole community.¹⁰

At this time, the Asani group was gaining strength. Their candidate, unlike Oseni, was well-versed in the Quaran and had a strong following in Ile-Ife based on his exemplary character. His group, therefore, attempted an election July 1, 1966 without consulting Adeosun's group.

But on the following Friday, when Asani tried to lead prayers (it was Adeosun's week) based on his election the previous week, Adeosun and his sons stormed the Central Mosque, and broke the microphone. The police marched in and put the Central Mosque under lock and key, a situation which lasted until 1977. Asani then took Adeosun to court (in 1967) to restrain him from acting as the Chief Imam. The case went before Mr. Justice E. O. Fakayode in the High Court of Justice, Osogbo Judicial Division. Here, Adeosun claimed that in 1965 the Balogun of the mosque convened a meeting of leaders of the sectional mosques and twenty out of twenty-nine voted in his favour. The Balogun then turbaned him.¹¹ He also claimed that Asani was not fit to be the Chief Imam as he had a crooked finger (the Imam, by Islamic tradition should be physically normal) and had been arrested in 1949 in a public demonstration demanding for social amenities in Ile-Ife. Asani, however, claimed that he fulfilled the requirements demanded by Justice Coker, and won in a proper election.

Justice Fakayode, although unimpressed with either argument, made an essay at settling the dispute. He went to Ile-Ife on June 23, 1967. It was an irony that while the country was going through a civil war, muslims in Ile-Ife were mobilizing for an imamate election. *Sonnel trucks* blared and both rallied their forces. The judge ordered all muslims to go to their sectional mosques and stationed police to ensure that there would be no movement among muslims that day. The Judge then conducted a survey of twenty-five sectional mosques. He discovered that sixteen supported Asani, while only eight supported Adeosun, and one was divided. Based on that finding, he opined, "I have no doubt in my mind at all that Asani Bello is a popular candidate. Therefore, I hereby order that (he) be appointed Chief Imam". The Adeosun group appealed this decision at the Ibadan Court of Appeal, and the judge there overruled Justice Fakayode. The issue was never settled in the courts.

With the Central Mosque under lock and key, the two factions went to separate sectional mosques every Friday. When Asani Bello died in 1971, he was succeeded by Y.A. Balogun. In 1977, a group of conciliators suspecting that Adeosun was soon to die due to his old age, arranged a settlement. Adeosun would become the Chief Imam and Balogun his Naibi, with the promise that Balogun would succeed Adeosun. Adeosun's health allowed him to be the undisputed Chief Imam for only a short time, and he was, indeed, succeeded by Balogun. The Muslim community, envisaging another subtle battle eliminated the office of Naibi. It has not developed a clear procedure for succession. Most elder

are of the opinion that the most qualified man will follow but only hope that history will not repeat itself. The moral qualities of the leader rather than the mode of his selection remain uppermost in their minds.

In spite of the debilitating thirty-year squabble for the Chief Imamate and a bitter court case over embezzlement of mosque funds, the muslim community of Ife is today strong and visible. Within Ife township itself, there are twenty-nine sectional mosques including those of the Ahmadiyya along Irewo-Ilare Street, a vibrant society of Alhajis and an active Ansarudeen society. The various muslim associations, including the Young Muslim Brothers Association (YOUMBAS), in the town are doing their best to unite the heterogenous muslim communities. Also in this regard the role of muslim ceremonies such as *al'id adha* (Ileya), *Hunn naure al'id fitr* and *maulud al-nabi* (Ojo ibi Anabi) cannot be over-emphasized.

CHRISTIANITY IN ILE-IFE BEGINNING AND EXPANSION:

THE EMERGENCE OF ESTABLISHED CHURCHES

Although Chief M. A. Fabunmi, the Odole Atobase of Ile-Ife, talks about the impact of christianity in Ile-Ife in the 16th century,¹² it was not until the end of the 19th century that the religion became firmly established. An attempt made in 1858 by David Hinderer of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) in Ibadan did not survive for lack of evangelists.

In 1898 a small coterie of christian converts, led by John Adelaja, an Ijebu man,¹³ who came to Ife for rubber business and Daniel Amodu Lawani Ologbenla, an Ife man¹⁴ who had attended C.M.S. school in Lagos, formed a small prayer group in Ile-Ife. By 1899, they sent delegates to Rev. Charles Phillips (later Bishop Phillips) in Ondo, asking for C.M.S. support. It is to be noted that Phillips was in Ile-Ife in 1886 (along with Rev. Samuel Johnson) acting as an emissary of the British governor attempting a settlement of the Kiriji war.¹⁵ Phillips sent one Mr. E.A. Kayode¹⁶ to Ile-Ife to act as a school master and a catechist. Mr. Kayode arrived in Ile-Ife on May 23, 1899, during the reign of Ooni Adelekan Olubuse, to nurture the nascent christian community in Ile-Ife.

Though he was eventually converted to christianity, Ooni of Ife, Adelekan Olubuse, was not prepared to give the small christian community a piece of land for a church building in central Ife.¹⁷ So in order not to disobey the instructions of Bishop Phillips, he did not accept the proposal to build the church in either Itasin or Iraye, all in Modakeke quar-

ter. Eventually, they secured a piece of land at Iyekere, a spot between central Ife and Modakeke, and built a small church and a school. On October 22, 1900, the christian communities in Ile-Ife and Modakeke laid the foundation of the new and first church building at Iyekere. On October 11, 1901, one Rev. R. S. Oyeboode (later Bishop) came to the church as a visiting Vicar to represent Bishop Charles Phillips who was supposed to conduct the service but was away to Lagos. It was on January 26, 1902 that Bishop Charles Phillips had the opportunity of coming to the church for the first confirmation service. Those confirmed that day included the following: Samuel Adeyefa, Jacob Akinbo, David Fondeyi, Joseph Olopade, Comfort Ote, Janet Majekogbe and Marian Dada.

Between 1900 and 1904, there arose a serious conflict between the Ife and the Modakeke. By 1909, the Ife as said earlier, compelled the Modakeke to evacuate the town,¹⁸ and in the wake of the conflict, Rev. E. A. Kayode returned to serve in Ondo. By this time, the church was already divided.

With the death of Ooni Olubuse, and the accession of Ooni Ademiluyi in 1910, prospects were better for the C.M.S. Although the new Ooni was never baptized, he gave the C.M.S land in four areas in Ile-Ife. He sent his children to the C.M.S. school and attended the annual New Year's service. He insisted that the first C.M.S. church should be built in his quarter at Ayetoro¹⁹ in Ile-Ife . The other quarters soon developed land for the same purpose. There was one in Irewo²⁰ and in 1923 another was built at Aiyegbaju.²¹

In 1925, some christians left St. Phillip's Church, Ayetoro and established another church at Ilare. The church is known at present as St. John's Church, Ilare. Among those who started the church were: Samuel Elujoba, Daniel Awola, James Elugbuyi, David Adewole, C. B. Awofesobi, Joseph Awofesobi, Emmanuel Ojo and Mary Aderemi to mention a few. Rev. S.A. Adeyefa the then Principal, Oduduwa College and Rev. T.A. Adedapo were to serve as the officiating ministers in charge of the church in later years.

When the Modakeke returned to their present site, they sought land and by the end of 1923 built their own church at Itasin.²² One Mr. Oyekan was the first catechist of the church and in 1925 one Rev. J.S. Adejumo, the new vicar in charge of St. Phillip's Church, Ayetoro became the caretaker of the church at Itasin.

The C.M.S., with five thriving branches in the early 1920s, was on the threshold of growth. Fortunately for the C.M.S. in 1925, a charismat-

ic figure, Rev. J.S. Adejumo, was assigned to the Ayetoro Church. His influence was felt throughout the town. Although he hailed from Ibadan, he had served in Ile-Ife before at the C.M.S. School situated at Iyekere. One of his wives was an Ife woman and his compound was one of the liveliest in the town. His wives were known to the Ife people and his children (one of who married Ooni Adesoji Aderemi) were ubiquitous in Ile-Ife. Moreover, he was an accomplished traditional healer and his clinics were well-known far and wide. The great irony of christian expansion in Ile-Ife, then, was that it benefitted from Adejumo's polygamous practice and traditional healing, both of which were scorned by the C.M.S. authorities. Adejumo never rose to the status of a bishop but he did more for the Anglican church in Ile-Ife than any one else.

THE BAPTIST CHURCH

Next was the Baptist Church. The beginning of the Baptist Church in Ile-Ife was associated with one Daniel Adenrele Obasa. It was in 1912²³ that this man, a native of Ilare in Ile-Ife, brought this church from Ibadan where he worked and resided. The first Baptist congregation in Ile-Ife was at the house of one Afolabi Ogunkomi. His house was consequently used as the first centre of activities. The Baptist community later erected a small tent at the present site of its vicarage. The first teacher and pastor of the church was one Mr. Oke, an Ijebu man. He worked in the church between 1912 and 1915. He was succeeded by an Ijesa man, Mr. Agbeniyi, who was himself succeeded in 1919 by one Mr. James Tola.

The first set of pupils in the church included the following: Johnson Yera Awoyemi, the late Chief Jagunosin of Ife, late Robert Mayowa Fayemi and late Paul Adegoke. The first set of converts were baptized by Rev. D.A. Laniyi. Other pastors that officiated in the church included Mr. Okunoye who worked for two years, Mr. Lewis from Lagos (1923-1924), Mr. Oyediran and Rev. C. A. Jemiriye. Rev. C. A. Jamiriye officiated in the church till 1938 and was later succeeded by Pastor S. A. Odunlade, a member of the church. Odunlade functioned as a pastor as well as a teacher. Pastor Odunlade worked in the Baptist Church in Ile-Ife and supervised the Modakeke branch for a considerable length of time. He retired in 1955 and was succeeded by Rev. Akinwumi who worked for only five years.

A devoted member of the Baptist Church in Ile-Ife, Samuel Eyitayo (Chairman) successfully established another branch of the church in Ile-Ife on January 29, 1961. This was called Ebenezer Baptist Church at Eleyele, near the present Ife Girls High School. One Pastor A. A.

Adeyemo was the first vicar in charge of the church.

The Baptist church has branches in Ipetumodu, Edunabon Oke-Awo, Erefe, Aba Oba, Egbejoda, Aye-Oba, Aba Nata, Idiogun Sanmi and Agbonbiti.

The Baptist church at Ilare in Ile-Ife served as the parent church for the Baptist Church at Modakeke. When the Modakeke returned from the exile in 1923, Baptist Christians among them attended the Baptist Church at Ilare for service. However, Chief Fapohunda, the Otun Modakeke, who had left Ode-Omu for Modakeke, established a Baptist Church on January 6 1933 in the house of one Onihagba in Ogunsuwa market, Modakeke. The first preacher was Jones Oyeniran, the son of Baale Akinsanya, who ruled until March 29, 1909 when the Modakeke were forced to go on exile.

In 1925 a small tent erected for the purpose of worship, was situated at Eesinkin, the site of the present First Baptist Church, Modakeke. In 1927, the tent was replaced by a bigger building covered with iron sheet. This was in use until 1949 when a bigger church and vicarage were built.

Those that officiated in the Baptist Church Modakeke included the following: Samuel Odunlade, who was by then a student at the Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomosho; Deacon S. T. Coker who operated in the church from 1924 up to the time Deacon Stanley of Gbuede quarter in Ilare²⁴ succeeded him. When Mr. S. A. Odunlade completed his course at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosho, he was appointed by the Modakeke Baptist Church as the officiating minister. He functioned in this capacity until 1934 when Pastor E. O. Omifisayo succeeded him. Other pastors that worked in the church were: Pastor Omopariola, Pastor I. O. Adeyemo, Deacon Z. O. Ojo and Rev. J. O. Oladoja.²⁵

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic Ministry was formally introduced into Ile-Ife in 1918, with the first converts worshipping in the house of Johnson Layade in Orunto compound, Iremo, Ile-Ife. The Catholic Church at Ile-Ife later contacted their mission in Osogbo for a Pastor to officiate in the church. Rev. Father Louis Friess was then sent and he, together with ten members of the church, went to Ooni Ajagun Ademiluyi to make a request for a piece of land for the construction of a church building.

For some time there was no resident minister in the Catholic Church as there was no church building. Services were conducted in the houses of Mr. Layade and Mr. Awoyelu, respectively for quite some time.

However, one Mr. Popoola was later sent by the Catholic Church at Osogbo to be the resident minister.

In 1919, the Catholic Church was able to secure a plot of land (200 sq ft.) at Ilare quarter of Ile-Ife (the present site of the school called S.S. Peter and Paul). On September 13, 1919 a small tent was erected on the plot for the purpose of church service and learning. With the erection of this tent, the Catholic Church authority decided to send one Rev. Father L. Brugger to Ile-Ife once in three months to conduct services.

In 1921, the tent was pulled down. A mud house was built on the spot. It was in this house that the first baptism took place for three children on February 12, 1922, and for 14 elders of the church in July 1922. The first confirmation service was conducted by Bishop Terrien on October 9, 1922. A bigger church building was erected on the same spot in 1924, and from here the church spread to Modakeke and Ipetumodu where on February 9, 1925 Rev. Father J. Imohls baptized, for the first time, some children. On February 14, 1930, Bishop O'Rourke paid the church a courtesy visit.

The Catholic Church in Modakeke started to erect its own building in 1931. This was completed in 1935.

The Catholic Church in Ile-Ife established some schools. Among these were Murumba College in 1943 and later, St. Bernard Primary School, Eleyele where we now have the Catholic Technical College (CATECO)²⁴, which was established recently.

In 1952, the Catholic Church in Ile-Ife built a school at Ilode area of the city. This is the present St. John's Primary School adjacent to the present St. John's Grammar School.²⁵ Establishment of educational institutions by christian missions continued in Ile-Ife and its environs until 1955. In 1957, the foundation of the Catholic Church at Lagere was laid. On January 27, 1961, the Catholic Church Authority in Ile-Ife established a girls' school along Ondo road. It was called "Our Lady's High School". The first Principal of the school was one Miss Stewart. She was later joined by four Reverend Sisters on October 9, 1984. On July 3, 1961, a welfare centre was built at Ipetumodu by the Church. The Catholic Church continues to expand even today in Ile-Ife and its environs.

THE SALVATION ARMY CHURCH

The beginning of this church in Ile-Ife²⁶ was credited to one Colone. Souther and Lieutenant Hamilton. The church started in Ile-Ife in 1924 and the first set of converts met in the house of Prince Emmanuel

Adeyemi Ademiluyi in Ita-Otutu compound for the first service. The first Salvation Army Church was built at Ajamapo in 1925. It was rebuilt on the spot in 1946. The church has been expanding ever since. Today it has branches in Modakeke, Osoogun and Eedu. It has schools in Ajamapo, Modakeke, Oke-Atan and Osoogun.

THE METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist Church,²⁷ began its operation in Ile-Ife on Sunday, June 10, 1951. Precisely, it started at 10.00 a.m. in one Ansar Udeen School in Ile-Ife where a group of men and women met to discuss the possibility of establishing the Methodist Church in Ile-Ife. Some of those included in the plan were: Elder S.A.Q. Macaulay, Mr. E. J. Ajayi, Mr. E.G. Ojehomon, Mr. A. O. Edun, Mr. F. J. Odubanjo, Mr. J. O. Soda, Mr. J. O. Awoseyi, Mr. J. O. Olajolo, Mr. J. O. Solaja and Mr. John Basola, to mention a few.

On June 13, 1951 the people concerned wrote to Rev. Nathaniel O. Salako, the Superintendent of the Methodist Church in Ilesa circuit, to intimate him of their intention to establish a branch of the Methodist Church in Ile-Ife. The Superintendent wrote back on June 13, 1951. He promised that he would relay their plan to the authorities in Lagos and find time to pay the nascent church a visit.

On Sunday, August 5, 1951 at 10.30 a.m. the Methodist Church in Ile-Ife conducted a service to consecrate the new church building in a town hall in Eranyiba. The officiating minister of the day was Rev. S. A. Adeyefa, then Principal of Oduduwa College, and the preacher was Rev. S. A. Q. Macaulay.

Rev. M. O. Salako fulfilled his promise on Tuesday, August 28, 1951 by visiting the church. He held a meeting with members in the Magistrate Court Hall at Lagere at 5.30. p.m. that day. Rev. E. B. O. Adesina from Osu also paid a courtesy visit to the church on September 2, 1951.

The first harvest service of the church was conducted on November 4, 1951. The preacher that day was one Rev. D.O. Togun of the Baptist Church in Ibadan.

The church gained the approval of the Methodist authorities in Lagos on January 21, 1952 and started sending catechists to the church to manage its affairs. The first catechist of the church, Mr. D.O. Ajayi, arrived in Ile-Ife on March 3, 1952.

Efforts to establish schools yielded results in January 1954 when the government approved a "Junior Primary School": for the church. The

school still exists.

THE EMERGENCE OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES IN ILE-IFE

St. Peter's African Church, Itakogun was an offshoot of the Anglican Church at Iyekere. The church began as a result of the conflict between the Ife and the Modakeke. Records have it that St. Peter's Church, Itakogun came into being in September 1904. Initially, the schismatic group who left the Iyekere church for Itakogun did not establish an African Independent Church until the then catechist of Iyekere, Mr. E. A. Kayode branded them as rebels and refused to visit them.

Those who started the church were: Mr. Laniyan Obalaye, Mr. John Fabunmi, Mr. Jacob Opansi (Baba Ijo Itakogun), Mr. Emmanuel Ige, Mr. Daniel Memadelo, Mr. John Eluyere Osopa, Mr. Emmanuel Ogunfidodo and a host of others.

Today the church has branches in Modakeke, Ifetedo, Gareji Olode, Odobule, Bowaje, Owena, Araromi Oke-Ofo, Aba Iyalode, Akeju and Kajola Onikanga.

Some of the schools established by the church are as follows: St. Peter's School, Okeeso, Ife; St. Peter's School, Bowaje, Owena, Ife; St. Matthew's School, Modakeke; St. Michael's School Odebule, Ife; St. Michael's School, Ifetedo; Coker Memorial School Ereferefe, Ife; St. Peter's Secondary Modern School, Omiokun, Ife and a host of others.

Some of those who officiated in the church were as follows: Mr. Ajayi Ige (Teacher/Catechist), Mr. Lewis (Catechist), Rev. N. T. Williams, Rev. Idini, Rev. E. A. Koku, Rev. Oluwanifise (Catechist), Rev. Kalejaye and Rev. D. O. Adekunle who worked in the church from 1957 to 1959. Others were Rev. Naiwo (1960-1961) and Rev. M. A. Jawolusi, who assumed duty in the church in 1962. The members of the African Church are a force to be reckoned with today in Ile-Ife and its environs.

Another African Independent Church in Ile-Ife is the Church of Ethiopia, Ijo Adulawo.²⁸ It was established on October 1, 1919, with headquarters at Okejan, in More area of Ile-Ife.

The church combines a multiplicity of features taken from various christian denominations. For example, service is conducted on Sunday like any other established or Aladura church. Some members of the church are prophets who see visions; some of them are well-versed in the preparation of the traditional medicine and magic. In the church, 'Amen' (*Amin*) is not used as a formula to conclude prayers. Rather they

say 'Ase' - May it be sanctioned. Another important feature is the sounding of bell (*agogo ibile*) comparable to the one used by the Votaries of Orisanla and Sango.

The head of the church is usually the pastor. The church has branches in Ido Osun, Ekiti and a host of other places in Yorubaland. One pastor T. A. Folakan is in charge of the Adulawo Church in Okejan. He is assisted by Pastor G. A. O. Oladoye. The superintendent of the Adulawo Church in Ile-Ife and its environs is one Pastor J. O. Omisakin. Though the church has come to stay in Ile-Ife, it has been eclipsed by the Aladura Churches so much so that hardly do the people in Ile-Ife recognize its existence.

THE ALADURA CHURCHES IN ILE-IFE

Here, two of the Aladura Churches - Apostolic Church and Christ Apostolic Church - which were considerably old and very important with regard to the history of the Aladura churches in Ile-Ife - would be discussed. Others in this category such as the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, the Celestial Church of Christ and the Atundaolu group of Aladura churches are relatively recent and still growing.

The beginnings of the Christ Apostolic Church in Ile-Ife is credited to one Mrs. Marian Oni, a native of Ile-Ife and an evangelist in the Faith Tabernacle Church in Lagos. Mrs. Marian Oni spent some years in Lagos. In 1930, she left Lagos for Ile-Ife to settle down. Evangelist Marian Oni, attracted by the miracles performed by Prophet Babalola in Ilesa, took some people including one Mr. Josiah Ademakinwa, to Ilesa to witness the wonderful work of God done through the prophet. Mr. Josiah Ademakinwa, a member of the C.M.S. decided to leave the church for that of Evangelist Marian Oni which, in fact, was the prophet's church.

In 1931, Mr. Ademakinwa and his wife proceeded to Lagos to attend the Faith Tabernacle Church Seminary. When they returned from Lagos, they joined Evangelist Marian Oni's group and were worshipping in the house of one Adagba in Igbedo compound. Earlier in 1930 Mr. James Oyebadejo and Mr. E. Latunde, both of who were of Ife origin, had joined the Faith Tabernacle Church at Alafara in Ibadan. Shortly after this, Mr. James Oyebadejo returned to Ile-Ife and joined Evangelist Marian Oni's group. During this time the group worshipped in the open space in front of the house of Wasewa in Igbedo area of Ile-Ife.

The foundation members of the C.A.C. in Ile-Ife were: Evangelist Marian Oni, Elder Josiah Ademakinwa, Elder J. T. Oyebadejo, Elder

Samuel Afolabi, Elder John Olasoji, Mr. Daniel Folorunso, Mrs. Morenikeji, Mrs. Victoria Ademakinwa and Mrs. Elizabeth Eluyeju. The foundation of the new and magnificent church building was laid by Pastor E. T. Latunde in 1960.

In 1932, Mama Oni (the Evangelist) was able to secure a plot of land at Arubidi. At this time Mama Oni, Mr. Ademakinwa and some other members of the church contacted the then Ooni, Oba Adesoji Aderemi, seeking his consent to build a church on the plot of land at Arubidi. Immediately they gained the Ooni's approval, they erected a tent which was turned to a church building with corrugated iron sheets in 1933; and the church continued to expand. A letter was written to the authority in Ibadan to send a pastor to take care of the expanding church. Thus Pastor Latunde (of blessed memory) was sent as the first pastor of the church.

In 1936, the church made another move to get a new plot of land at Igbo Olose in More because of the water problem in Arubidi. The foundation of the church at More was laid in 1937. A dedication service was conducted to open the church in April, 1939.

Many evangelists worked in the church at More. Among them were Elder J. A. Ademakinwa, Pastor E. T. Latunde, Pastor Dairo, Pastor E. P. Muyiwa, Pastor E.A. Ajibade, Pastor Adaramoye, Pastor J. O. Aseweje, Pastor J. A. Afolabi, Pastor Adeyinka, Pastor J. O. Owoyomi and a host of others.

Today the C.A.C. has branches all over Ile-Ife and its environs. Among these are the ones situated at Ojoyin, Modakeke, Iloro-Arubidi, Oke-Igbala, Arubidi, Temidire-Arubidi, Iiare, Ilode, Akarabate, Edunabon, Ipetumodu, Moro, Yakoyo, Asipa, Akinlalu, Tonkere-Ayetoro, Ita Elewa, Tonkere-Oja Ifetedo, Gareji-Olode, Owena-Ladin, Itamarun, Ejio, Omifunfun Mefoworade, Alapata, Obaluru and a host of others.

The church has both primary and secondary schools all over Ile-Ife and its environs. It continues to gain adherents from the members of the established churches, the muslims and the followers of traditional religion. As a matter of fact, there is now in Ile-Ife, as in other parts of Yorubaland, a keen competition between the Aladura group and other religious groups to win the souls of the people.

Today, christianity remains strong in Ile-Ife with christians outnumbering muslims by six to five,²⁹ and despite the proliferation of the Aladura churches, the Anglican Church continues to maintain a solid followership in Ile-Ife and its environs.

NOTES

1. Oral interview with the following Ife muslims on February 28, 1984: Alhaji Yusuf Jagun, the present Chief Imam of Ile-Ife, Alhaji Yusuf, the Deputy Chief Imam of Ile-Ife, Alhaji Aderoju of Mosalasi Iya Suna, Ajamapo Street, Ile-Ife.
2. See for instance, D.D. Laitin. "Christianity and Islam in Ile-Ife: A Political Analysis". A seminar paper presented at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, May, 1980 *passim*.
3. Kaseem Adeosun had connections with Modakeke and Ile-Ife. His father hailed from Amudaoba compound, Modakeke, while his mother hailed from Ile-Ife. Interviews with the following Muslims in Modakeke: Alufa Omonije Salami of Ile Osu, Modakeke. He is the present Chief Imam (aged 95 years), Alhaji Salami Opatola, Itasin Modakeke, Seriki Musulumi (aged 70 years), Saliu Ajanasi, Oke Eso compound, Modakeke (aged 70 years), Iya aalin Awawu, Iya Suna, Ajagba Egbo compound Modakeke (aged 60 years), Alufa Balgogun Imole, Alapata Compound, Modakeke (aged 65 years), Alufa Abibu, Anidu compound, Modakeke - present Deputy Chief Imam (aged 65 years). Interviews held on February 28, 1984.
4. Interviews with Chief M. A. Fabunmi, Odole Atobase, Ile-Ife May 1982, and Prince A. Adeagbo of Ilare quarter, Ile-Ife, June 1982.
5. See D.D. Laitin, 1980 p. 25
6. Interview with the Chief Imam of Modakeke, Chief Imam of Ile-Ife, Alhaji Yusuf Jagun, the Deputy Chief Imam of Ife, Alhaji Yusuf and Alhaji Aderoju of Mosolasi Iya Suna, Ajampo Street, Ile-Ife on February 28, 1984.
7. This is known as *walimat* (Yoruba: *wolimo*) in Arabic. For further details see J. S. Irimingham, *Islam in West Africa*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972, pp. 172-3.
8. For more information about the Islamic form of marriage see A.R.I. Doi, *The Cardinal Principles of Islam*, Islamic Publication Bureau, Lagos, 1977, pp. 180-186, E.D. Adelowo, "Islamic

Marriage System and the Extent of its Adoption by Yoruba Muslims of Nigeria", in *Orita*, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies, XIX/1, June 1982, pp. 16-33.

- 9 Parakoyi was the political leader of the muslims. This title was borrowed from Oyo islamic history. The title Parakoyi, like the divinity called Sango, originated from Old Oyo. The Parakoyi was usually very close to the ruling Ooni. It was his duty to represent muslim interest in the court. He was eventually relegated to the background by the Chief Imam, the religious leader of the muslim community. Otun Imole was another officer close to the ruling Ooni. It was his duty to see that the Ooni was in good health and to report each day, to the Parakoyi. He was assisted in the discharge of his duty by the Osi Imole. It was the responsibility of the Balogun Imole to see to the well-being of the Muslim community. Thus the Balogun Imole should be brave and strong. He should have military prowess in order to be able to defend the interest of the muslims. Mogagi Imole was the general messenger of the muslim community. He could be sent on any errand by the Chief Imam. He would act on behalf of the Chief Imam during marriage, naming and graduation ceremonies. For the people interviewed and date see notes above.
- 10 The ceremonies in this regard are *Odun Ileya - 'al 'id al-kabir* and *Odun Itunu Aawe - 'al 'id - al-fitr* and *Odun Ojo ibi Anabi - Maulud al-Nabi*.
11. The Yoruba expression for this is: *O wee ni lawani, Lawani*, (English turban) is part of the islamic culture of the use of Lenna among Hausa muslims of Nigeria.
12. Interview with Chief M. A. Fabunmi, May 1982. A great deal of what follows is from M. A. Fabunmi, *Esin Kristi ... passim*
13. Interview with Chief M. A. Fabunmi, June 1982. See also M. A. Fabunmi, *Esin Kristi ..* p. 10.
14. See M. A. Fabunmi, *Esin Kristi*, p. 11
15. See S. Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, Lowe and Brydone,

- Morfolk, 1973, pp. 230-1, 525, 646-8. See also E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914*. Longman, London 1966, pp. 38, 40.
16. Interview with Chief M. A. Fabunmi, June, 1982. See also M. A. Fabunmi, *Esin Kristi ...* p.11
 17. In this connection, Ooni Adelekan Olubuse declared: *Oramfe ko ni je ki nwon see sibe ni Ile-Ife* 'Oramfe (one of the divinities in Ile-Ife, the ancient city of the Yoruba) would not allow it to build there in Ile-Ife.
 18. Interview with Pa. J. O. Akinware (aged 75 years) and Pa. E. O. Amusan (aged 70 years) of Oke Amola, Modakeke, May-June, 1982.
 19. This is the site of the present St. Phillips Church, Ayetoro, the seat of the Archdeaconry in Ile-Ife and its environs. Interview with Chief M. A. Fabunmi, June 1982. Pa. A. E. Fatunwase, a retired headmaster of a school in Ile-Ife, May-June, 1982. See also M. A. Fabunmi, *Esin Kristi ...* op. cit. p. 21.
 20. This was the church of late Ooni of Ife, Sir Adesoji Aderemi. It is known as St. Peter's Church, Iremo. Interview with Chief M. A. Fabunmi, the vicar in charge of the church, Rev. J. O. Adu, May - June, 1982. See also M. A. Fabunmi, *Esin Kristi...* p.27.
 21. This is the site of the present St. Paul's Church Ayegbaju. Interview with Prince Tayo Sijuwade, the Principal, Ife Teachers' College and a member of the church Chief M. A. Fabunmi, May-June 1982. See also M. A. Fabunmi, *Esin Kristi...* p.31
 22. This is the present St. Stephen's Church, Modakeke. Interview with a one-time vicar of the church (but now the Bishop of Ijebu Remo Diocese), Rev. Canon S. O. Ogundana, May, 1980; M. A. Fabunmi, May-June, 1982. See also M. A. Fabunmi, *Esin Kristi...* p. 35.
 23. Interview with Rev. J. O. Oladoja, the pastor-in-charge of the church, Chief M. A. Fabunmi, May-June, 1982. See also M. A. Fabunmi, *Esin Kristi...* p.42

24. Interview with Mr. J. O. Adeleke, the Principal, Catholic Technical College, Ile-Ife, Chief Omoworare, a devoted member of the Catholic Church, Mr. C. O. Oyesomo, a retired school teacher and a member of the Catholic Church, Chief M. A. Fabunmi, and Mr. Okure, of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ife, May-June, 1982. June-July, 1984. See also M. A. Fabunmi, *Erin Kristi...* p. 49.
25. Interview with Mr. Adeniran, the Principal, St. John's Grammar School, Ile-Ife, Mr. Adejobi Akinlade, a teacher in St. John's Grammar School, and Chief M. A. Fabunmi, June-July, 1984. See also M. A. Fabunmi, *Erin Kristi...* p. 49
26. Interview with Major J. C. K. Akinrotimi, the present minister-in-charge of the church, June-July, 1984. -
27. Interview with the former vicar-in-charge of the church, Rev. Aluko, May-June, 1982. See also M. A. Fabunmi, *Erin Kristi...* p. 62
28. Interview with Pastor T. A. Folakan, Pastor-in-charge of Adulawo Church, Okejan, Ile-Ife, Pastor J. O. Omisakin, the superintendent of Adulawo Churches in Ile-Ife and its environs. June-July, 1984.
29. See *Report on the Survey of Religious Organizations in Oyo State*, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Statistics Division, Ibadan, 1977. See also J. O. Y. Peel "Religious Change in Yorubaland" in *Africa*, 37, London 3 July, 1967.

EPILOGUE

THE ERA OF OBA OKUNADE SIJUWADE, OLUBUSE II 1980 -

As we pointed out in the introduction, the terminal date for this work is 1980, when Olubuse II ascended the ancient throne of Ife. As the work was completed soon after, it was felt that the new reign should be allowed to settle down and show its policy thrusts before an objective assessment of it could be attempted. If the work had been published earlier, as we had expected, we would have been totally justified in that decision. However, it is 12 years now since Olubuse II ascended the throne, and although we still cannot have access to all the documents and files of these years, we can justifiably talk of emerging trends in this reign and hope that future access to the documents will do greater justice to its achievements.

Oba Okunade Sijuwade ascended the throne of Ife in November, 1980. He was already a mature man of upwards of 50 years, a wealthy international businessman who was equally at home as he is in Nigeria, in Moscow, Rome, New York and Tokyo. Indeed he had a very large branch office in London from where he co-ordinated his international trade.

At home, he has a very wide circle of friends comprising royalty, businessmen, academics and politicians. His circle of friends cut across the political divide, and to all of his friends he was popularly referred to as "Prince". When he made a bid for the Ife crown, there were only symbolic competitors, and it was generally accepted that he would be the next Ooni. So generous was he to all and sundry that he could not but have only friends.

His coronation in November, 1980 was a spectacle Ife will remember for a long time. The Queen of England, Queen Elizabeth II, sent a congratulatory message. Kings and Princes all over Nigeria were present. The Emir of Kano sent his horsemen. State Governors and national leaders were also there. Ife women in their thousands sang and danced round the town. Friends in Modakeke slaughtered cows to entertain guests who came for the coronation. So great was the joy that "Prince" had become the Ooni and so high were the hopes for a buoyant new future for Ife.

Ife is accepted as the "cradle" of the Yoruba, and to be on its throne

was to earn the respect and allegiance of all Yoruba. With the Prince Okunade's calibre on the throne, it was thought that he had the best of Yoruba talents for the upliftment of his people in the service of Nigeria.

History, however, hardly ever moves in such a linear progression and the Yoruba, indeed, the whole of Nigeria, were soon woken up by the hard facts of history that could not be lost in the euphoria, for (see chapter 13) the Modakeke question soon cropped up. Both Ife and Modakeke decided to test each other's will to survive. First, there were altercations which led to offensive newspaper publications and then to localized violence. Such violence subsided and gave way to an uneasy calm, each community suspicious of the other. There are newspaper reports pointing to the fact that steps are now being taken to restore peace between the two communities.

Then there was the Ooni - Alaafin rivalry over who was going to be the Chairman of the Oyo State Council of Obas. The Alaafin wanted a rotatory chairmanship while the Ooni wanted a permanent one. This issue, again, led to a newspaper war between the proponents of both ideas. Newspapers sensationalized the issue, obviously as a marketing strategy and the people whom the Yoruba call *arije ni modaru* (those who profit from confusion) dug their heels in, thus making rational discussions and settlement impossible. The case went to court but got stuck there! Obviously it was not a case to be settled in court: it was a confusion created by the colonial powers because of their little knowledge of Yoruba history. The Military Governor, unable to settle the issue, dissolved the Council and, when reconstituted, made himself Chairman. The case was in abeyance when Oyo State was split into two - Oyo and Osun. The Alaafin is now in Oyo State and the Ooni in Osun State.

These two issues - the Ife-Modakeke imbroglio and the Ooni-Alaafin rivalry, - delayed both the hope of a rapid economic revival for Ife and the expectation of a united Yoruba people ready to make available their expertise to the service of Nigeria.

If the hopes and expectations earlier raised by the ascendancy of Olubuse II were delayed, they were not dashed. He has continued to build up the image of Ife, in a manner befitting the reputation of the old eternal city, and this he has done in several ways.

Firstly, he has maintained his friendship with leaders of political thought and Heads of State across the political device. He is also known to be very close to the family of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo but at the same time friendly with Alhaji Shehu Shagari. He maintains a very cordial relationship with General Ibrahim Babangida, the Nigerian Head

of State, and also with General Gowon. Similarly, he maintains a close friendship with royalties all over Nigeria: he is often seen in the company of Obi Ofala, the Obi of Onitsha, and with Alhaji Ado Bayero, the Emir of Kano.

Indeed during the brief tenure of General Buhari as Head of State, the Emir of Kano and the Ooni of Ife travelled together to Jerusalem, and this incurred the displeasure of Government. But that did not mar their friendship.

Secondly, the Ooni has made Ife chieftaincy titles available to all language groups in Nigeria and indeed to the whole world. Among Ife chieftaincy title holders are not only Yoruba but also Igbo, Hausa, Nupe, Tiv, Ijaw, Igbira and many others. At least one white American State Governor has been conferred with an Ife chieftaincy title and he was physically present at the installation ceremony.

Thirdly, Olubuse II has continued to travel round the world, particularly to the African diaspora where he is now seen as a symbol of African royalty, and perhaps as an *Orisa*. The story is told that he once landed somewhere in the West Indies where there had been no rain for some time. Soon after his arrival, he kissed the ground and before night-fall it rained heavily. The Ooni of Ife had brought rain!. All of these and his unabated generosity to causes he believes in have shot Ile-Ife into the limelight which it could not attain in the last one hundred years.

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APPENDIX 1

IMPORTANT DATES

13th Century BC	1849	1904
4th Century BC	1850	1905
8th Century	1850 - 1877	1906
10th Century	1851	1907
1000 AD	1852	1909
11th Century	1853	1910
14th Century	1854	1910 - 1930
15th Century	1854 - 1878	1911
1450 AD	1858	1912
16th Century	1859	1913
1500	1860 - 62	1914
1530 - 1650	1870	1915
17th Century	1872	1916
1600 AD	1877	1918
1625	1878	1919
18th Century	1880	1920
1761	1881	1921
1770	1882	1922
1780	1883	1923
1790	1886	1924
1793	1887	1925
1796	1889	1926
19th Century	1893	1928
1800	1893 - 1910	1930
1810	1893 - 1930	1931
1815	1894	1932
1820	1894 - 1910	1932 January
1825	1895	1933
1826	1897	1934
1830	1898	1935
1832	1899	1936
1833	20th Century	1937
1835	1900	1938
1840	1901	1939
1847	1902	1940
1848	1903	1941

1943	1966
1946	1967
1947	1968
April, 5	1969
June, 25	1970
October	1971
1948	1972
January, 6	1973
January, 17	1974
January, 30	1975
July	1976
September, 29	1977
December, 19	1978
1949	1979
January, 7	1980
March, 5	July, 2
March, 27	
May, 25	
December, 12	
1950	
1951	
1952	
1953	
1954	
January, 6	
1955	
1956	
1957	
1958	
1959	
1960	
August	
1961	
1962	
May, 20	
May, 21	
May, 29	
1963	
1964	
1965	

INDEX

A

- Aafin 45, 87, 98, 103, 106, 108
126, 212, 260
- Palace 40, 48, 56
- Aare 235
- Aba 53, 287
- Iyalode 344
- Oba 40, 211
- Nata 129
- Abayomi, Kofo (sir) 206
- Abeokuta 255, 264
- Abeweila 148, 152, 154
- Abimbola, Wande 140, 143
- Abiodun, Rowland 325, 352
- Abiri 55, 95, 352
- Aboriginal groups 84, 85, 87
- Aborisade Village 14
- Abunu 74
- Accra in Ghana 245
- Action Group 203, 208, 209,
210, 280
- Government 43, 56, 58
- Minister 200, 208
- Executive 202, 209, 211
- Acquiescence 58
- Adagba 115, 345
- Adam 46, 48, 68, 86
- Adaramoye 346
- Adc 60
- are 57
- ileke 222, 244, 248
- Adebowale, A (Chief) 195
- Adedapo, T.A 339
- Adedoyin, Adeleke 210
- Adegbalu 102, 115
- Adegbenro, D.S (Alhaji) 211
- Adegoke, Paul 340
- Adejuwon 5
- Adejuyigbe 1, 217
- Adekola, Tela 115, 195, 292
- Adekunle 344
- Adelekan, Olubuse 113, 116, 171
- Adelowo 334, 347, 355
- Ademakinwa 42, 46, 70, 72, 81
- Ademiluyi 48, 113, 117, 171
- Adeleke 205, 210, 350
- Aderemi, Adesoji 48
-Scholarship Programme 206
- Aderawo Timber Trading Com-
pany 202, 203, 206
- Aderibigbe 171, 355
- Aderotimi, Adetunji 201
- Adesina E. B. O 343
- Adetugbo 245
- Adewole, David 339
- Adeyefa, S.A 339, 343
- Adeyemo, A. A 206, 341
- Adeyinka 346
- Adikun 56
- Adimula 289
- Ado 55, 56, 72
-Ekiti 19, 51, 55
- Adugbo 287, 290, 291
- Adulawo 344
- Adunbeye 150, 345, 350
- Afunnimogbo 218, 226, 229
- Afolabi J.A 346
- Afolabi, Ogunkomi 340
- Afolayan 207
- Agaja 258
- Agbala Orun 294
- Agbedegbede 102, 104, 113
- Agbele 40, 101, 103
- Agbeniyi 340
- Agbo 290
- ile 103, 120, 167

- Agbogbo 15
 Agbonbiti 341
 Agbonniregun 59, 86
 Ago - Iwoye 247
 Ago owu 15
 Agure 296
 Aharan 19, 23
 Aimiuwa 45
 Aiyegbaju 107, 187, 339
 Aiyetise 97, 114
 Ajagun, Ademiluyi (oba) 115, 117, 171
 Ajaloron 56, 74
 Aje 59
 Ajele 156, 271, 284
 Ajilete 256
 Ajobo 223, 234
 Akalako 127, 219, 221
 Akan (gold) 144
 Akarabata 323
 Akarigbo 206, 251, 252
 Akeju 344
 Akinmoyero, Odunlabiejo 105, 107
 Akintola, S.L 205, 208, 210
 Akinyemi, M.L (Rev) 184
 Akoko 271, 314
 Akure 3, 5, 54
 Alaaye of Efon 250, 252
 Alabiosu 225
 Alademomi, Kenyo 67, 243, 362
 Aladikun 56, 58
 Alafin 56, 112, 148
 Alaiyemore, Obalufon 77, 89, 256
 Alaketu 65, 220, 250
 Alase, Ekeji Orisa 289
 Ale - Ahanran 27
 Allada 139, 253
 Apata 15, 71, 308
 Apelaye 229
 Apete 259
 Apomu 30, 32, 110
 Ara 106, 112, 120
 - war 58, 84, 96
 Arabic 59, 142, 334
 Arada 252, 253
 Araromi 344
 Ardra 253
 Are 57, 84, 86
 Aribile 221, 239
 Aringbojo 254
 Arode 295, 296, 297
 Arogbo 138
 Arowogbade 22
 Arts 86, 92, 141
- B**
- Baakun 218
 Baale 164, 175, 179
 Babagidai 252
 Babalawo 192, 260, 262
 Babalola 90, 94, 345
 Babayemi 118, 223, 240
 Bada 42, 253, 257
 Badagry 65
 Bale 160, 273
 Balewa, Abubakar (Alhaji) 221
 Balogun, Y.A 337
 Balogun 155, 159, 231
 - Ibadan 155
 - Ibikunle 155
 - Ogunsigun 157
 - Sigbunsin 231
 Bambe 159
 Bloody wars 67
 Borgu 128, 142, 21
 Borno 128, 129
 Boundary 1, 3, 10
 - adjustment 177, 207

- commission 60, 159, 176
 Bowaje 344
 Bowen 43, 46, 359
 Bradbury 146, 257
 Brandt, Willy 212
 Brass 45, 46, 48
 Brazil 262
 British 43, 45, 68
 - administration 39, 87, 92
 - aegis 171
 - colonial administration 171
 - authorities 108, 149, 150
 - council 201, 203, 205
 - influences 2, 5, 77
 - officers 74, 156, 172
 - political presence 190
 Bronze 50, 326
 Brugger, L. 342

C

Chieftaincy system 81, 87, 92
 Chlorite 12
 Christian Religion 186
 CIRE PERDU 328
 Civil wars 145, 162, 166
 Coker, S.T (Deacon) 341
 Communalism 267, 268, 284
 Constitution 84, 162, 207
 Conquerors 58
 Coronation 70, 90, 91
 Coup d'état 84
 Crowther 43, 358, 363
 Cuba 262
 Cults 75, 87, 88

D

Dada, Marian 246, 253, 334
 Dahomey 121, 147, 236
 Daniel, F 346
 Davies, H.O 280

DE SWARDT 10, 12
 Derin, Balogun 165, 235
 District Commissioner 178, 181

E

Edan 41
 Ede 10, 127, 161
 Ede - Osogbo 10
 Edo heartland 136
 Edunabon Oke-Awo 341
 Eesinkin 341
 Efene 56
 Effen 33
 Egba 150, 151, 155
 Egbe 195, 197, 199
 Egbede 27
 Egbejoda 322, 341, 360
 Egharevba J.U 49, 67, 68
 Egungun 225, 262
 Egypt 43, 44, 367
 Ejesi 293, 294, 298
 Ejigbo 223, 301
 Ejio, Chief 70
 Ekiti 19, 51, 53
 Ekiti Parapo 230
 Ekine 128
 Ekpo 50
 Ekpo Eyo 50, 72, 319
 Ekun Ayiwoye 102, 116
 Elefene 56
 Elepe 56, 175, 234
 Elesije 86
 Elesun 56
 Elu 82, 290, 291, 304
 Elujoba, Samuel 339
 Eluyemi 40, 41, 71

 Eluyere, John Osopa 344
 Emmanuel, Ojo 339
 Emese 99, 101, 298

- Emigration 44, 83, 88
 Enahoro, Anthony 208
 England 197, 211, 351
 - Queen 142, 211, 299
 Eni 72
 Enu geru 295
 Enuwa 69, 188, 335
 Epe 56, 68, 175
 Eponymous Ancestor 56, 59
 Erebase 103, 295
 Erefe 287, 341
 Erin 106, 239
 Erinta Ahanran 19
 Erinoke 33
 Ero 75
 Erosion 8, 19, 21
 Erunmu 151
 Esidale 255
 Esie 332
 Esigie 146
 Esinminrin 59, 84
 Esu 59, 308
 Ethiopia 344
 Etioni 33
 Europe 84, 86
 European 65, 109, 128
 - art 44, 45, 46
 - traders 126, 127, 133
 - chroniclers 136
 - imperialism 232, 236
 Evolutionary 73
 Ewedo 146
 Ewi 56, 252, 257
 Ewuare 136, 146
 Exile 90, 98, 256
 Eytayo, Samuel 340
- F**
- Fabunmi, M.A (Chief) 40
 Fadipe N.A 43
 Fakayode 337
 Falls 8, 14, 16
 Fani - Kayode 205
 Fapohunda 341
 Fault line 11, 13, 15
 Fauna 2
 Fayemi, Mayowa, Robert 340
 Federal Executive Council Par-
 liament 210
 Fegun 71, 76
 Festival 57
 - Edi 39, 95, 233
 - Eegun 233
 - Itapa 84, 298
 - Obalufon 40, 57, 66
 - Obatala 39, 52, 53
 - Ofungbe 233
 - Olojo 39, 57, 76
 - Oramfe 39, 52, 59
 - Orisanla 82, 83, 299
 - Orungbe 233, 297
 - Oya 62, 234, 323
 Friess, Louis 341
 Frobenius, Leo 54
 Fuller 176
- G**
- Gao 128
 Garnet 13
 Gbadebo, Osundeyi 192
 Gbagida, Lewo 104
 Gbanamu War 269
 Gbanlare 113
 Gbegbaaje 102
 Gboo - Nyio 102
 Gbongan 111
 Gbonka 294
 German 54, 212, 306
 Geology 1, 2, 8
 George V (King) 197

Gezo 258
 Ghana 109, 245
 Giesi 104, 112, 114
 Glass beads 73, 86, 131
 Glottochronology 245
 God 52, 59, 89
 Gold Coast 128, 251, 253
 Gonja 128, 142
 Governor of Lagos 160
 Greek Colony 54
 Guinea 26, 129, 359
 - coast 26, 126, 128
 - forest 31, 33, 36

H

Hardy, Thomas 52
 Hausa 186, 333, 347
 Hewett 164, 170
 Higgins 159, 169
 Hinderer, David 152, 155
 History 10, 38, 39
 - historians 42, 43, 51
 - historicity 69
 - historio - graphical 62
 House 49, 102, 159
 of chiefs 74, 80, 93
 of assembly 197, 204, 208
 Hybridization 53
 Hypothesis 27, 66, 123
 Howard, Wopic 266

I

Ibadan 30, 49, 68, 95
 Ibidapo - Oba 281, 285
 Ibikunle 155, 156, 167, 231
 Ibokun 55
 Ibole 302
 Iboro 255
 Idekoseroake 249
 Iidena 322

Ideology 76
 Ideta - Oko 55, 57, 84
 Idini 343
 Idio 69, 85, 87
 Ife 1, 39, 44
 - ancient 42, 47, 52
 - landowners 176, 179, 184
 - politics 72, 80, 93
 - history 52, 60
 - kingdom 136
 - economy 140
 - citizen 109
 - royal family 92
 - festival 307
 - artifacts 322
 - peace treaty 160
 - chiefs 103
 - economic development 108
 - kinglist 40, 66, 248
 - national museum 322
 - settlements 153, 164
 - native authority system
 180, 181, 200
 - Modakeke war 159, 265
 Ifetedo 1, 11, 12
 Ifewara 55, 101, 103
 Ifon 225, 230, 255
 Igala 45, 60, 244
 Igbajo 156, 249, 271
 Igbede 74
 Igbo 42, 43, 55
 Igbomina 207, 270
 Igbomokun 54, 56, 57
 Igbonda 106
 Igbo Olose 345
 Ihare 92, 180, 315
 Iharefe 288, 290, 292
 Ijamo 162, 164
 Ijaruwa 94, 294, 295
 Ijebu 51, 56, 110

- Ijebu-Ode 56, 112, 127
 Ijebu - Remo 206, 235
 Ijesa 19, 51, 53
 Ijo 47, 128, 138
 - Adulawo 343
 Ijugbe 55, 80, 86
 Ijumu 68, 74, 75
 - Yagba 68
 Ikale 158, 270
 Ikedu 52, 54, 59
 Ikedu Myth 52
 Ikeja 72, 364
 Ikire 86, 111, 153, 218
 Ikire - Ile 218
 Ikirun 169, 171
 Iko 297
 Ikulende 218
 Ila 121, 173
 Ilara 98, 110, 117
 Ilare 41, 55, 106
 Ilegbo 69, 295, 298
 Ile - Ife 1, 7, 37, 41, 43, 47
 Ilemure 55
 Ilesa 3, 5, 16
 Ilesanmi 5
 Ilode 41, 60, 101
 Iloran 55, 80
 Ilorin 153, 158, 171
 Iloro - Arubidi 345
 Imam 274, 275, 276
 Imamate 335, 336, 337
 Imepe 245
 Imojubi 55, 80
 Imole 88, 89, 293
 Imule 329
 Imulekere 218
 Inamu 54
 Indirect rule 68, 173, 175
 Inufinsa 225
 Ipetumodu 3, 35, 37
 Iponrin 19, 21, 24
 Iraye 55, 80, 254, 290
 Iregberi 228
 Iregun 30, 32
 Iremo 41, 60, 94
 Iron weapons 58
 Isado 245
 Isakole 197, 198
 Isarun 53
 Iseyin 334
 Islam 187, 188, 305
 Isoje 159
 Isope 218
 Isoro 59, 90, 92
 Isoya 13, 155, 162
 Itagunmodi 16, 27, 29
 Ita-Ijero 89
 Itakogun 290, 334, 343
 Itamarun 29, 220, 253
 Ita Ogi 107
 Itapa 84, 297, 306
 Ita yemoo 48, 72, 145
 Itiola, Adekunbi 192
 Itsekiri 138, 244, 355
 Iwala 218
 Iwara 103, 226, 227
 Iwaro 218, 220, 227
 Iwata 153
 Iwere 127, 221, 237
 Iwo 27, 29, 30, 53
 Iwo Eleru 53
 Iya agbe 65
 Iyekere 186
- J**
 Jaaran, Isanire 294
 Jacob, Akinba 338
 Jacob, Opansi 343
 Jagunosin 292, 297, 338
 James, Oyebadejo 344

James, Tola 338
 Janet, Matekogbe 338
 Jemiriye, C.A 339
 John, Adelaja 337
 Johnson, Samuel Rev. 243, 120
 Joseph, Awofesobi 338
 Joseph, Olapade 338
 Josiah, Ademakinwa 344

K

Kalabari 147
 Kalosu 47, 361
 Kanuri 60
 Kayode, E A (Rev) 186, 187
 Kenyo, Ademoni 67, 242, 361
 Ketu 65, 83, 135
 Kiaje 220, 221
 Kiriji 164, 217
 - Ekiti 230
 - War 164
 Kobin Law 67
 Koiwo 55
 Koran 274
 Kori 59
 Kulende 220
 Kumasi 129
 Kumbusu 114, 116, 148
 Kutukutu 55, 94
 KWA Family 244

L

Labosinde 151, 166
 Ladejoogun (Lajo dogun) 101
 Ladekan 222
 Ladere 99, 115
 Ladigbolu 242
 Lafogido 99, 101, 102
 Lagere 322
 Lagos 49, 93, 138, 142
 - Government 175, 176, 272

 - Governor 176
 Lajua 40, 99, 101
 Lambe 223
 Laroka (Laruka) 103, 104, 112
 Laudable 269
 Lawobu 225, 226
 Layade, Adetunji Aderotimi 201
 Lebanese 184
 Lewa 296
 Lewere 298
 Lloyd 67, 143
 Local Government System 197
 Lodunle 148
 Loodi 292, 293
 Loodoko 298
 Lorikan 298

M

Macaulay, S.A.Q 342
 Macgregor, William (Governor)
 175
 Mackenzie 69, 95, 288
 Mackintosh 209, 210, 362
 Macpherson, constitution 208
 Majeogbe 112, 222
 Map 8, 13, 16
 Material culture 52, 57, 73
 Maye, Chief 153
 Memadelc, Daniel 343
 Merotic Kingdom 327
 Metal casting 86, 327
 Migration 42, 43, 44
 Millennia 54
 Military 55, 58, 89, 109, 122
 Modakeke 177, 266
 Modewa 183, 296, 298, 300
 - chiefs 294
 Mokuro 2, 16, 27
 Monarchy 136, 257, 263
 Monolithic Kinglist 66

Montgomery 27, 29, 35, 28
 Morgan, Kemi 43, 362
 Moro 1, 35, 162
 Moropo 103, 116
 Moslems 188
 Moyun 99, 106
 Murumba 196, 341
 Museums 189, 332

N

Native authority 174, 178, 180
 Natural Resources (See) Geo-
 logic, Climate, vegetation and
 soil 1
 Niger Benue 38
 Nok Art 47, 323
 Nupe 45, 46, 60

O

Oba 40, 45, 48
 Oba Adesoji Aderemi 48, 117
 Oba Arilekolasi 230
 Oba of Benin 45
 Obafemi Awolowo (Chief) 351
 Obafemi Awolowo University 3,
 8, 11, 16
 Obagede 70, 71, 86
 Oba Igbo 55, 94
 Obajio 71, 75, 93
 Obalabe 39, 56, 70, 75
 Obalaaye 71, 168, 294
 Obalajugbe 71
 Obalara 70, 72, 74
 Obalesun 39, 56, 71
 Obalufe 71, 93, 98
 Obalufe Obalufon Ejijemegun
 Onigbomore (Alayemore)
 106
 Obalufon 40, 57, 66
 Obalufon Festival 311

Obalufon Mask 321
 Obameri 70, 71, 84
 Obameri Shrine 322
 Oba Napoleon Mafimsebi 247
 Obanta 245
 Oba Okunade Sijuade 281
 Oba Ozolua 136
 Obarena 70
 Obariyan 74
 Obas 41, 149, 175
 Obasa, Daniel Adenrele 339
 Obaship 68
 Obatala 39, 52, 57
 Obawinrin 70, 71, 74
 Obayemi 59, 66, 68
 Oburo of Iresa 230
 Ode Ileke 243
 Odekunle 218
 Ode Omu 284
 Odeyinka 15
 Odidirogbesin 102
 Odi - Igbo 101
 Odi Ile 103
 Odin 55
 Odo Arc 298
 Odole Atobase 337
 Odo Ogbese 231
 Odo Oranfe 100
 Odua 113
 Odubanjo 342
 Oduduwa 44, 48, 51
 Odun 55
 Odunlade, Samuel 339
 Odunle 106
 Ofa 230
 Offa 171
 Oga 159
 Ogane (Hogane) 45
 Ogbere 151
 Ogbomoso 150

- Ogbon 285, 290
 Ogbon Oya 322
 Ogboru 101
 Oghene 52
 Ogiso 68
 Ogun 58
 Ogun Ladin 56
 Ogungbe 298
 Ogunleye, Adedire 204
 Oguntuyi 252
 Ohi 74
 Oje 222
 Ojigidiri Lambua 106
 Ojo, Samuel O 42
 Ojo, Z.O. 340
 Ojuade, Balogun 178
 Ojugbelu 256
 Ojumu 84
 Okansa 231
 Oke 27
 Oke Agbala 296
 Oke Awo 301
 Oke atan 55
 Oke Eso 322
 Oke Igbala 345
 Oke Igbo 152
 Oke Ileri 306
 Oke Messi 29
 Oke Odan 255
 Oke Ora 70
 Okerewe 106
 Okitipupa 247
 Oko 52
 Okunade 151
 Okunmodi 103
 Okunoye 339
 Olagbaju, S.O 204
 Olajolo, J.O 342
 Oloba 56
 Olode 11
 Olode Gareeji 343
 Olode Village 11
 Olofin Aworokolokin 97
 Ologbenla 114
 - Oba Aderin 171
 Ologbo 41
 Olojo Agbele 101
 Olojo Festival 90, 93, 95
 Olokemeji 16
 Oloko 56
 Olokun 46
 Olomola Ishola 51
 Olorigbo Aribile 221
 Olorunda 32
 Olowu 220
 Olowu Akinjobi 112
 Oloyede 204, 240
 Oloyomukoro 245
 Olu 70, 74
 Olubuse, Oba Adelekun 40, 113,
 115, 116
 Olugbo 247
 Oluoje 223
 Oluorogbo 86, 103
 Olupe 223, 224
 Oluwa 75
 Oluwo 150
 Omifunfun Mefoworade 345
 Omisade, Michael 204
 Omisakin, J.O 344
 Omisore, Chief 182
 Ominrin 294
 Omode Owa 92
 Omologun 55
 Omopariola 340
 Omosimi, Olufemi 171
 Omotosho, Eluyemi 95
 Omu-Odu 219
 Ona 74
 Ona of Ufeke 248

- Ondo 2, 5, 7, 12
 Ondo State 53, 247
 Onihagba 340
 Onikanga, Kajola 343
 Oni 16, 19, 20
 Onisigbin 223
 Onipopo 243
 Onko 221
 Onpetu 301
 Ooni 39, 41, 46
 Ooni Ademiluyi 175
 " Adegunle 269
 " Ajagun Ademiluyi 340
 " Adelekan Olubuse 171, 172, 235
 " Akinmoyero 105
 " Adesoji Aderemi 339
 " Lafogido 321
 " Wunmonije 321
 " Ogboru 225, 295
 " Akinmoyero Odunlebiojo 105, 116, 148, 225, 231
 " Lajoodogun 295
 " Awerokolokin 97, 98, 99, 106, 107, 113, 114, 115
 " Luwoo 291, 299, 307
 Opa I 19, 21, 24, 26
 " II 19, 21, 24, 26
 " Oranyan 330
 " Oluseri 330
 Ope 125
 Opo 230
 Ora hill 70
 Oral Histories 51, 52, 54, 58, 59
 Oral traditions 42, 44, 45, 48, 49, 77, 82, 94, 95, 120, 121, 122, 127, 135, 138, 145, 166, 169, 175, 219, 222, 224, 227, 232, 237, 252, 259, 264, 323
 Orafioye 68, 70
 Oranfe 70, 75, 76, 77, 81, 82, 90, 91, 97, 100, 117, 288
 Orangun of Ife 238, 250, 253
 Oranmiyan 43, 45, 55, 62, 66, 67, 69, 77, 89, 90, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 107, 110, 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, 125, 129, 134, 248, 253, 255, 257, 281, 286
 Oranyan 62, 245, 256, 260, 262, 263, 330
 Ore 52, 53, 83, 265, 284, 307, 308, 322, 327, 328, 330, 331, 362
 Oreluere 83
 Origbe 300
 Origbo 153, 161, 218, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 234, 235, 237, 238, 241, 276, 279, 284, 314, 356
 " Mejeje 218
 Oriki 89, 102, 106, 118, 125, 221, 222, 238, 239, 289
 Oriki Orile 289
 Orile 230, 289
 Orirun 111, 212, 217, 232, 237, 260
 Orirun yoruba 111, 217, 232
 Orisa 65, 81, 86, 90, 94, 95, 125, 219, 222, 262, 288, 307, 313, 329, 352, 361, 363
 Orisala 62
 Orisa Ijugbe 81, 86, 361
 Orisanobu Oghene 52, 59
 Orisateko 80, 97, 98, 124, 125, 307
 Oro 87, 227, 240, 286, 292, 303
 Oronna 55
 Orthoclase 16, 25, 26
 Oru 158
 Orungbe Festival 233, 296

Orogbo 125
 Orun Oba Ado 48, 72
 Orunto 92, 93, 293, 340
 Osaara 309
 Osangangan 40, 77, 89, 90, 94,
 96, 97, 114, 115, 322
 Oseganderuku 40, 101, 107, 113,
 114, 115, 118, 125
 Osei Bonsu 257
 Osei Tutu 257
 Oseni 335
 Oseni Odukuro 335
 Oshi 173
 Osi 19, 37, 72, 74, 159, 251,
 334, 337
 Osi Soko 37
 Osiloyejoye 229
 Osinlade 40, 104, 110, 112, 114,
 116, 225
 Osogbo 3, 5, 6, 181, 185, 221,
 225, 255, 336, 340, 341
 Osoogun 342
 Osu 158, 222, 271, 342, 346
 Osun 113, 133, 150, 160, 177,
 218, 219, 222, 235, 255, 270,
 272, 273, 344, 351
 Otun 74, 159, 229
 " Baale 229
 " Balogun 278, 279
 " Modakeke 340
 Ourokutu 246
 Owa Ariugbajo 251
 Owa Obokun of Ilesha 56, 251,
 253
 Owa Otan 251, 253
 Owa Feegun 301, 307
 Owena 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19,
 21, 25, 343
 Owena Ladin 345
 Owo 45, 56, 87, 122, 135

Owodo 40, 101, 103, 104, 105,
 107, 113, 115
 Owore 149, 150
 Oworo 68
 Owoyomi 345
 Oya 62, 234, 322
 Oyebode 338
 Oyediran, Oyeleye 213, 300,
 364
 Oyekan 338
 Oyelaran 53, 54, 364
 Oyeniran 340
 Oyeniyi 223, 240
 Oyere 21, 24, 26, 228
 Oyin, Ogunba 142, 308
 Oyo 19, 21, 24, 45, 48, 53, 56,
 67, 68, 95, 98, 110, 117, 118,
 122, 127, 128
 Ozanne, P 53, 282, 364

P

Pan-Yoruba 152, 195, 206
 Parakin 55, 80
 Paraphernalia 57, 125, 254
 Patrons of Obadio 311
 Phillips, Charles 337, 338
 Pinhun Asewela 220
 Political autonomy 81, 136
 Political culture 51, 54, 56, 58,
 60, 71, 72, 75
 Political power 132, 138, 139,
 145
 Political system 70, 136, 190
 Portuguese 45, 46, 48, 127, 136,
 137, 138, 288, 323
 Portuguese merchants 138
 Priest 69, 80, 88, 94, 100, 192,
 219, 259, 291, 297, 307, 311,
 312, 315, 316
 Prime Minister 211, 293

Primitive Art 353
 Provincial governor 136
 Public works 208
 Pycanthus Kombo
 Pyroxene 14, 16, 26

Q

Quaran 335

R

Radio 48, 68
 Railway 185, 193
 Reforms 202
 Reigns 41, 96, 98, 99, 103, 105,
 112, 146, 148, 149, 153, 222,
 257
 Religious festival 305
 Revolution 71, 73, 74, 75, 76,
 87, 109, 149, 188, 255, 261,
 267, 283
 Risa mese 297
 Ritual 55, 69, 71, 75, 87, 125,
 131, 219, 220, 290, 291, 293
 Robert, Nelson 266
 Ross, J.B 176
 Ross, Captain W.A 174
 Royal Museuleum 107
 Royalty Symbol 86
 Ryder, A.F.C 45, 49, 141, 365

S

Sabe 221, 237, 238, 249, 251,
 263
 Sabo 55
 Saki, Baba 42, 55, 256, 263
 Salako 342
 Salu 225, 226
 Sango 128, 234, 239, 245, 261,
 265, 344, 347
 Schist 8, 10, 11, 12, 12, 13, 14,

20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29, 32
 Scholar 39, 42, 66, 67
 Sculptor 82
 Sculptural ARTS 141
 Sculpture 141
 Sedentary 30, 53, 58
 Segbusin 292
 Segi 87, 131, 331
 Senghor, Leopold Sedar 212
 Seriki 159, 168
 Setilu 59
 Seventh Day Adventist 187, 322
 - Mission Hospital 196
 Shaki 225, 252
 Shasha River 24
 Shaw 53, 126, 129, 131, 322
 Sho-Ipashan 65
 Shrine 47, 69, 75, 84, 91, 108
 Sillimanite 13
 Slope 20, 22, 24, 27, 32
 Smallpox epidemic 84
 Smith, Robert, S 44, 47
 Smoked fish 130
 Smith 44, 47, 86, 93, 138, 145,
 146, 147, 155
 Smyth 27, 29, 35
 Socio - culture 62, 68
 - political 56, 57, 71, 73, 77
 Sociological 62, 65
 Soil 2, 20, 25, 27
 Soipasan 83, 245
 Solaja, J.O 342
 Solar energy 5
 Songhai 128, 142
 Sowande 47, 365
 Sowo 231
 Stone age 53

T

Taboos 39, 75, 289

Talbot 43, 365
 Tapa 226
 Tariqh - al - faltach 128, 142
 Temidire - Ambidi 345
 Terracotta 50, 131, 189, 318,
 321, 322, 324, 327, 329, 366
 Terrien 341
 Thomas, John 186
 Thomas, Messer Bode 208, 305
 Thurstan Shaw 126, 358
 Timi of Ede 161
 Togo 244, 245
 Togun D.O 342
 Toro - Idita 11, 15
 Tourmaline 13
 Traditional Religion 186, 188,
 334
 Trade - route 127, 128, 130,
 137, 139, 219, 258
 Transportation 21, 188
 Tress 36

U

Uden 248, 356
 Ufeke 248
 Ufe - Ijumu 73, 74, 75
 Ugbo 247, 248
 Uhe 68
 Ulesun 55, 56
 Ulkami 130
 United Kingdom 197, 201, 206
 Universal religion 305
 Urhobos 199

V

Vanguished 58
 Vegetation 1, 2, 7, 35, 36, 78
 Votaries of Orisanla 344

W

Waasin 292, 293, 307
 Walsh, Rev. M. J 76, 95, 316
 Wars 51, 55, 67, 84, 111, 139,
 145, 150, 157, 162, 163, 166,
 218, 221, 226, 258
 Wasewa 191, 344
 Welfare Amenities 187, 188
 Whydah 139
 William, Bascom 287, 318
 William, Fagg 47, 50, 318, 359
 Willet, Frank 119, 120, 318
 Woyeasiri 72, 74
 Wunmonije 113, 114, 115, 116,
 148, 152, 153, 231, 269, 282,
 322

Y

Yagba 68, 74, 75
 Yakoyo 173, 219, 226, 229, 233,
 268, 345
 Yaye 299
 Yegbata 99, 297
 Yekemi 10, 15, 286
 Yekere 192, 307
 Yelwa 72
 Yemoo 48, 72, 145, 258, 313,
 322, 332
 Yeye 299, 304
 Yoruba 39, 120, 137, 153, 167,
 230, 258, 261, 330
 - Civilization 120, 175
 - Country 120, 137, 153,
 167, 230
 - Culture 42, 54, 106, 261
 - Folktales 80
 - Forest 53, 57
 - Kingdom 42, 109, 120
 - Land 330
 - Language 43, 53, 236, 244

- Obas 175, 205, 238, 258
- Orirun 111
- Politics 291
- Religion 61
- Ruler 49
- Speaking people 65, 67, 68,
72, 109, 145
- Traders 129
- Water sides 130
- World 51, 60

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The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1930 is the first major attempt to use the rich and varied traditions of Ife, its archaeology and written sources to produce a modern, objective and critical history of the ancient kingdom. It is an attempt to produce a history devoid of fables and acceptable to modern scholars.

Among the main findings in the work is that Oduduwa started a period of socio-political revolution in Ile-Ife and that the system has continued with various modifications till today; that prior to Oduduwa's period, the Ile-Ife region was already inhabited by people who had developed a fairly advanced socio-political system, some aspects of which were taken over by Oduduwa; that the process of the take-over was fairly prolonged and involved a series of military engagements; and that as a result of the successful establishment of the Oduduwa system in Ile-Ife, his children and followers went all over the Yoruba region and beyond to replicate the system, a process that may have given rise to Ife being regarded as the cradle of the Yoruba race.

The work also covers the fortunes of Ife in the 19th and 20th centuries, thus giving a background to an understanding of today's events in Yorubaland and, indeed Nigeria.