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THE BENIN-IFE CONTROVERSY

CLASH OF MYTHS OF ORIGINS



Wajeed Obomeghie

THE BENIN-IFE CONTROVERSY

CLASH OF MYTHS OF ORIGINS

is a compendium of essays culled from various newspapers and the internet on the nexus between the Benin and Ife Empires. There are two major schools of thought on the consanguinal relationship between Benin and Ife. While one believes that Ife is a scion of Benin, the other holds a contrary point of view.

This controversy exacerbated in 2004 when the Benin Monarch, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwu (CFR) launched his autobiography titled: *I Remain, Sir, Your Obedient Servant*. At this event, he declared that Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba race, was one Ekaladerhan, a Benin Prince who had once escaped the community's axeman, but later re-appeared in Ife.

This position of the Oba elicited several comments. Some were directly antagonistic, while others accepted it as the true position.

This book therefore provides these various comments in one volume and gives the reader the opportunity of evaluating and re-evaluating these various views, analysis, and comments on the longstanding migrations, and empires relationships in Africa.





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Foreword: Nath Mayo ADEDIRAN
President, International Council of African Museums
(AFRICOM)

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This controversy began when the Benin ruler, Oba Osofe Obaseki, Omoogun, Oron, Akpolokpolo, Oron, launched his book, *Remain, Sir, You are my King*. At this event, he called the British the progenitor of the Benin Empire. One Ekaladerhan, who had once escaped from Benin, but later re-

This position of the book is supported by the comments. Some are antagonistic, while others are in support of the true position of the Benin Empire.

This book therefore provides a platform for various commercial and academic views on the long-standing relationship between the Benin Empire and the British.

National Library of Nigeria

THE
BENIN-IFE
CONTROVERSY

Clash of Myths of Origins

Wajeed Obomeghie

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Front Cover Art Pieces:	BENIN	Bronze Head of a Queen Mother 16th CE. Height 15cm
	IFE	Copper Alloy Head of Olokun 14th CE. Height 34.5cm

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What Contributors Said In This Book

1. "The mistake that modern historians (including Yoruba) made, as I have found from my own studies, is that they confuse Oduduwa with Oranmila, the bringer of Ifa divination".
----- **The Benin-Ife Connection**
Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Oba Erediauwa
Sunday Vanguard May 9, 2004. Page 14.
2. "The Oba of Benin should go and read what his fore-fathers told Portuguese explorers during their visit to Benin on 2nd July 1550 AD about the relationship between Ife and Benin. So, it is too late for Omo N'Oba to rewrite our history".
----- **How Oba Of Benin Goofed**
Ooni of Ife Oba Sijuade
Vanguard Friday May 7, 2004. Page 16.
3. "Benin, for me, is nothing less than an archeologist's paradise. I remain convinced that there are richer veins of heritage beneath the surface of her soil than in most of the major cities of this nation. Again, a small minus, unlike the city of Ile-Ife, Benin may not be the cradle of the black race, or indeed of humanity but, yet again, I invite you to take consolation on the fact that her history is a paradigm of creativity and cultural validation at its most robust, a crucial arc in the very trajectory of civilizations".
----- **Myth and History in the Quest for Identity**
The Nobel Laureate Prof. Wole Soyinka
Midwest Times Number One-hundred and Sixty Page 10
4. "Ganiyu Adams has offered his opinion as an "expert"; soon mechanics, battery chargers, and even fashion designers, with access to the media, may also tell us what they think of the historical relationship between the Yoruba and the Bini. I wouldn't be surprised if a group of prostitutes from Benin city also add their voice to it".
----- **Ooni, Omo N'Oba, And the Politics of Identity**
Reuben Abati
The Guardian, Sunday, May 9, 2004 Page 52

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This book th various comm gives the rea evaluating ar various views, on the longst empires relatio

5. "With respect, I find both permutations amusing. This celestial allusion to heavenly descent is nothing more than an exercise in historical mythology, lacking empirical validity. The idea of emergence from East. Far, middle or near, should be rude to Yoruba esteem. None of these "Easts" add value or substance to their account. If you remove "far" what is left is "East", which we understand locally to mean Ibo land!"

----- **I Remain Sir, Your Obedient Subject**

S. O. Ogbemudia

Sunday Vanguard. June 13, 2004. Page 42

6. "...the first Oba of Lagos came from Benin. He is a Prince of Benin"

----- **HRH Rilwan Akiolu, Oba of Lagos**

The NEWS Magazine, Vol. 22. No. 21, June 7, 2004

7. "This is an advice and a clear warning to all, that we will never accept further, any attack or derogatory words on the personality of the Oba of Benin over the matter. As a matter of fact, the issue, a historical knowledge and enlightenment cannot translate to controversy".

----- **Facts Of History Are Not Settled By Verbal Insult**

Chief Nosakhare Isekhure JP

The Nigerian Observer. Tuesday June 8, 2004 Page 9.

8. "That Oduduwa was the prince, who was sentenced to death in Benin, escaped, wandered and came to found Ife, that history is calculated to annoy Yoruba people".

----- **Oba Of Benin Got It Wrong**

Prof. Jacob Ade-Ajayi

The Punch. Monday, May 10, 2004. Page 56.

9. A private event takes place each year around the month of October. At it, the Palace hosts the Osuan family (Osuan was one of those that came back to Benin from Uhe with oronmiyan). The annual event is called the *Ugie Oduduwa* (Oduduwa's festival). It re-enacts each year, the event of long ago. In that way, the people keep events fresh in the mind.
 ---- **In Defence of the Omo N'Oba**
 Omorodian Uwaifo
The Guardian June 2, 2004 Page 53
10. "The people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa should learn to be dispassionate in matters of history origin, which ought to be allowed to translate to greater affinity between the Edo and Yoruba people".
 ---- **Egbe Omo Oduduwa And Benin Monarchy:
 The Facts Are Clear**
 Edo National Association in the Americas Inc.
The Nigerian Observer. Monday, July 19, 2004. Page 9
11. "From the story I heard from my grandfather and more especially from my father-in-law, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, Oduduwa might not be a mystical personage as claimed by some historians, even though there were many stories on how he migrated to Ife".
 ---- **The Place Of Ile-ife In The Hierarchy Of Yoruba Race**
 Chief Bisi Omidiora
Sunday Punch. June 13, 2004. Page 49.
12. "And when you take a look at the bronze casting at Ife and the bronze casting at Benin, they are derivative from Ile-Ife because the whole act of governance , the whole idea of Oba itself was brought from Ile-Ife"
 ---- **Benin Dynasty is am Offshoot of Ife dynasty**
 Dr. Oyeweso
Sunday Vanguard, May 2, 2004, Page 16

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13. "In fact, some Bini commentators still irreverently refer to the Urhobos, Itsekiris, Ijaws, Uzebu (Ijebus) and some neighbours as favourite ritual meat of ancient Bini gods and goddesses".

----- **Oduduwa And Bini Politics**

Olu Ademulegun

The Guardian, Friday June 25, 2004. Page 53.

14. "The Benin and the Yoruba people are related peoples speaking languages belonging to the Kwa group of languages but we should not confuse the origin of dynasty with the origin of the people".

----- **Ife-Benin Controversy**

Prof. Jide Osuntokun

The Guardian, Tuesday June 22, 2004. Page 75.

15. "My comment would be robust and comprehensive and will even include the real origin of the Binis. That will be the best approach to the issue because the raging controversy is not just between the Ooni and the Oba of Benin but an issue between the entire Yoruba race and the Oba of Benin and all distortions must be corrected."

----- **Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi**

This Day, Sunday May 9, 2004 pages 34 & 35

16. The Binis didn't originate from Egypt, Ife or anywhere else on this terrestrial plane. Oduduwa is not the founder of Benin. Benin, in fact, has been in existence long before the time frame associated with her. The Binis believe Oduduwa is the linguistic corruption of the Benin word Izoduwa or Aidoduwa. According to them..... The Binis and the land they occupy were created by God and sent down from the sky (Odukunmwun). This is why Binis refer to themselves as Ivboto, (children of the land) while their first kings who ruled them, after a period of gerontocracy, were called Ogisos (kings of the sky).

----- **Osemwegie Ebohon**

Olokun Worship In Benin Kingdom (2011)

Dedication

To the memory of my Late Father,
Alhaji Chief ATAIRU DIRISU OBOMEGHIE, JP

is a compendium of various news, the nexus between the Benin and Ife Empires. The thought on the relationship between the two while one believes in Benin, the other view.

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This controversy exacerbated in 2004 when the Benin Monarch, His Royal Majesty Omo N' Oba N' Edo, Uku Akpolo-Kpolo, Oba Erediauwa (CFR) launched his autobiography entitled: **I Remain, Sir, Your Obedient Servant**, at this event, he declared that Oduduwa the progenitor of the Yoruba race, was one Ekaladerhan, a Benin Prince who had once escaped the community's axeman, but later re-appeared in Ife, after wandering in the bush from Benin for a long time.

This position of the Oba of Benin has elicited several comments. Some directly antagonistic, while others have accepted it as the true position.

Benin and Ife Empires have come of age and have been long established in history. They cannot therefore be dismissed easily from whatever perspective any one looks at them. The lingering issue of "which comes first" between Benin and Ife is a matter that can only be properly resolved and dealt with by dispassionate scholars and chroniclers.

However within the context of the various positions canvassed by various authors, the editor has afforded readers the opportunity to make their own decisions.

This book therefore provides these various materials in one volume and gives the reader the opportunity of evaluating and re-evaluating these various interests on the longstanding relationships in Africa. No attempt is made here to take side as the facts as presented speak for themselves.

This book will be an invaluable companion to historians, cultural enthusiast, sociologist, anthropologist, researchers, and indeed, all truth speakers. It will be very handy for all those genuinely interest in the origin, mythology, culture, and traditions of these two great African Empires.

Nath Mayo ADEDIRAN

Former Director of Museums at the National
Commission of Museums and Monuments.

President, International Council of African Museums
(AFRICOM)

Acknowledgments

There could not have been issues resulting to this book without the writing, publishing and subsequent launching of the personal memoirs, **"I REMAIN SIR, YOUR OBEDIENT SERVANT"** by His Royal Majesty Oba Erediauwa (CFR), The Oba of Benin. For his tremendous contributions towards the provision of knowledge for the present and coming generations, I lack sufficient words to express my appreciation. Quickly following is the highly revered and amiable Ooni of Ife, HRM Alaiyeluwa, Oba Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II (CFR, D. Litt, JP).

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E.M.E. Nosa, Salami Ogbeifun, Andrew Bello, Bamah Fransics Uche. Williams S. Omamegbe and Glory Omigie.

I thank my wife, Engr. Mrs. Mariam A. Obomeghie, MNSE for her undying support throughout over a decade years of our marriage, for her love, perseverance and encouragement during this project. I thank her for the courage to cater for our children Dr Majeed and Queen Laillah despite my continuous absence from home, I thank her for being my soft place to fall. You are what succeeding in life is all about.

Ultimately and above all, I give profound appreciation and praise to the Lord of *Alamin* (Mankind, jin and all that exist), the Great Geometrician of The Universe, All-mighty **ALLAH**.

Wajeed Obomeghie
November, 2013

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The Benin-Ife Connection

By
Omo N'Oba Erediauwa

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY VANGUARD, MAY 9, 2004 Page 14

It is during the preparation for his coronation that the future Oba chooses the title or name by which he is to be known at his coronation. How and where this is done began with the arrival from Ile-Ife of Prince Oranmiyan, the son of Oduduwa of Uhe, about 1170 years ago according to modern historians. Briefly, this is the account. Before the advent of Oranmiyan, the “Kings” that ruled the people that came to be known as Edo or Benin were called “Ogiso”.

The title is said (by local tradition) to have been derived and abbreviated from the description, Ogie n' oriso (meaning King in Heaven) and it originated from the “Wisdom” in managing the “affairs of state” especially in settling disputes as demonstrated by the first and second of the earliest rulers, known as “Igodo” and “Ere.”

I must comment here, in passing, that I personally have never accepted the account of our late illustrious historian, Jacob U. Egharevba when he wrote in the very first edition of his now authoritative book *A Short History of Benin*, the following:

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Many, many years ago, Odua (Oduduwa) of Uhe (Ile-Ife) the father and progenitor of the Yoruba kings sent his eldest son Obagodo who took the title of Ogiso with a large retinue all the way from Uhe to found a kingdom in this part of the world.

And in the fourth (and now current) edition of the book, the late author wrote:

Many many years ago, the Binis came all the way from Egypt to found a more secure shelter in this part of the world, after a short stay in the Sudan and at Ile Ife, which the Benin people call Uhe.

The rulers or kings were commonly known as 'Ogiso " before the arrival of Oduduwa and his party at Ife in Yoruba land, about the 12th Century of the Christian era.

It is this fourth edition of the book, which historians in the University of Ibadan assisted to rewrite and was printed by the Ibadan University Press that earned the late illustrious historian the "Doctorate degree" from that university.

It is not the intention here to discredit Jacob U. Egharevba's, account of the historical link between Ife and Benin. It is hard not to point out the errors or contradictions in the extracts quoted. There are contradictions between the first and the fourth edition of the man's book. Apart from the fact that the Edo n 'ekue (Edo Akure-undigenes who are partly Yoruba by birth) blood in the man, manifested itself, the "experts" in the Ibadan University contributed to the contradictions.

Confining ourselves for now to the extracts quoted, it is necessary to point out that it is historically wrong to describe Odua or Oduduwa as the "father and progenitor of the Yoruba kings, "The knowledgeable (and one may add, the honest ones) among Yoruba traditional historians know only too well that the person who came to be known as Odua or Oduduwa has only seven Children with Oranyan (or Oranmiyan) as the last and youngest. It is also a known historical fact that by the time Oduduwa emerged in Ife, "from the east" as modern Yoruba historians usually put it, there were many

Yoruba communities in existence and who had their leaders or "Kings". So Odua or Oduduwa could not have been the father of Yoruba kings.

The mistake that modern historians (including Yoruba historians) made, I have found one from my own studies, is that they confused Oduduwa with Orunmila, the initiator of Ife divination. It was Orunmila who, according to traditional accounts had sixteen children, each of whom he sent to rule over each of the sixteen communities in his own part of the world, among which were Ife and Ado (Benin). Furthermore, Oduduwa could not have been the founder of Yoruba kings because, of his seven children, one became lame, one developed hunchback, and another "turned to a river" leaving four able bodied ones. Every "babalawo" (whom love of money has not tainted!) knows these accounts. Still on the extract quoted above, it is also a known traditional historical fact that it was not his eldest son, but the youngest that Oduduwa sent to the Benin people.

That Oduduwa could not have been the father of Yoruba kings, founder of "Yoruba kings, as Yoruba historians now put it, is also borne out of the fact that the Ife account itself has it that there were five "rulers" in Ife before the advent of Oduduwa and this makes the reference to the "12th Century" in Jacob U. Egharevba's fourth edition relevant.

The digression thus far may seem lengthy but it will be found necessary because of what follows here.

This is a convenient point to return to the issue I began this section with, which is where and how the future Oba of Benin chooses the title name by which he is to be known at his coronation. As stated above, it all began with the arrival of Prince Oranmiyan from Ife. We have stated that the earliest rulers or kings in what is today Edo or Benin were known as "Ogiso."

The first was known as Ogiso Igodo and the last (of the thirty-one or so of them) was Ogiso Owodo an era that ended the first

is a compendium of various news items that serve as the nexus between the Benin and the British Empires. The thought of a close relationship between the two empires. While one can see the Benin, the other view.

This controversy began when the British Majesty, Oba Akpolokpolo, launched his *Remain, Sir*, after this event, he had the progenitor of one Ekaladerhan had once escaped, but later

This position is a comment on the antagonistic relationship between the two empires, as the true position.

This book provides a comprehensive view of the various comments on the long relationship between the two empires.

period of kingship in Benin history. Owodo's tenure was a long account of an unhappy reign but briefly, it was that as a result of some events, which were traced by an oracle to his only child and son, Owodo was advised by the same oracle, so it was said, to have the son executed. Owodo (unaware that he had been tricked about his son) instructed the Oka Odionmwan (public executioner) to perform the act. But the executioner reaching the outskirts of the city, let him off. From there the prince wandered afar settling alone first in Ughoton, where the elders gave him hospitality.

Ogiso Owodo passed away apparently without an heir. In the period of interregnum that followed, powerful community leaders began to strive for the throne. Among the most powerful was one known as Evian. His attempt to usurp the throne was stoutly resisted by the Edion (the elders) of the Benin people. While this was going on, word came in that Ogiso Owodo's son (Ekaladerhan) who was said to have been executed was seen alive in Ughoton. Immediately, the elders sent out emissaries to look for him and invite him to come to take his throne.

When information got to him, he was stricken with fear that they were still after his head. So after consulting with his Ughoton hosts, he fled the village. When the Benin emissaries got to Ughoton and reported their mission, the Ughoton elders told the emissaries that Prince Ekaladerhan had been there but had since left. When asked where to, the people said they did not know but that "he went in that direction." The emissaries followed in "that direction" until they arrived at a village where they announced their mission. Like in the former village the people in this second village also said he was there but had since departed and went in "that direction." And so making enquiry from village to village and following "in that direction" the Benin emissaries emerged in a community they got to know as Uhe.

The local people, on sighting the strangers got frightened and

ran to inform their village head who ordered that the strangers be brought to him. When they appeared before the village head, the Benin emissaries introduced themselves, narrated their mission and whom they were in search of. Prince Ekaladerhan said he was the one they were looking for. To be sure, the emissaries gave him a test by throwing at him some events back in Benin which, to their surprises, their host recollected vividly and even narrated himself. This, indeed, was Ekaladerhan, and they fell on their knees to greet him.

The emissaries from Benin, having satisfied themselves of the man's identity, asked the next obvious questions; how had he become the village head of the people with the name they heard the people call him? Ekaladerhan (or Oduduwa) narrated his experience in Benin language thus: When he emerged from the bush into the village, he was led by the local people to their village head to whom he narrated his plight and how he wandered in the bush to get to the village. In answer to questions to his name, he told the village head Imado d 'uwa (meaning, "I have not missed the road to good fortune") in allusion to the welcome hospitality he had received since he arrived. The village head then asked what the stranger could do and he replied that he was a hunter and a herbalist. (He had acquired both, skill while wandering through the forest).

The village head then handed the stranger to one of the local people to house him. Note that the stranger was led by the local people to their village head, suggesting that the community did have a "head"- "ruler" or "King" at the time Ekaladerhan who became Oduduwa emerged in their midst). It was while here that he demonstrated his knowledge of herbs. A pregnant woman was in labour difficulty and after all kinds of treatment had failed, words reached the stranger (Ekaladerhan or Oduduwa) who immediately offered to help. He was led to the home of the woman, and after

examining her he went back home, prepared some medicine, which he returned to apply to the woman. Soon after, the woman was delivered of her baby, safe and sound. Asked what his fee was, the stranger merely answered that it was God's work, and as such no payment would be demanded. Soon his reputation as a "medicine man" became widely known, and patients were brought to him from within and outside Ife community, all of whom the stranger treated free of charge. This greatly endeared him to all.

The next episode in Ekaladerhan's (Oduduwa's) arrival in Ife must be very interesting to present-day Ife people as it answers the Benin emissaries' question as to how the stranger became the village head. The account is that a revolt broke out against the original settlers and the village head, who were said to be Ugbo Ilaje. They were defeated and they fled to their original home in Ugbo. With the popularity Ekaladerhan (or Oduduwa) had established for himself as a powerful "medicine man" it was no difficulty at all for the victors in the revolt to invite him to assume leadership of the community as their new head, a position he accepted with humility. This is a well known historical fact.

To present-day Ife people, the original settlers whom Ekaladerhan (Oduduwa) met moved away from Ife to a place called Ugbo, - a very ancient Ilaje town in Okitipupa area. Ife elders, especially the traditional title holders, know the rest of the Ugbo episode as it affects Ife and Oduduwa because Ife people today perform a ritual festival that re-enacts the event that caused the original settlers including their village head to flee from Ife and Ekaladerhan (or Oduduwa) to become the head of the community. So that is Ekaladerhan (or Oduduwa) in Ife.

Thus far, we have attempted to ascertain that the person whom the Benin emissaries found in Ife was actually Prince Ekaladerhan, the son of Ogiso Owodo who was banished to be executed but spared by the executioner and wandered into the unknown, from

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Ughoton. The mission to search for him was to bring him ' home to ascend the throne and so end the period of interregnum. The Benin emissaries delivered their message, but Ekaladerhan replied, as the emissaries reported back to the elders at home, that he was happy where he was and, in any case too old to travel but he was prepared to send his youngest son if the Benin people would consent to take good care of him. As a proof of sincerity, the Benin people did submit to and passed Oduduwa's test and so Oranmiyan (or Oranyan in Yoruba) came to Benin as the ruler of the people.

Benin traditional account has it that Oranmiyan could not live in Benin; he spent only "akia" (three lunar months) before he packed and left in anger. The annoyance arose from three factors. First, he did not understand the Benin language. Second, he found his Yoruba custom different from the Benin. Thirdly, and it was this that really did it, he discovered that whenever he and his people from Ife were performing some secret rituals, Benin people, including some elders who had often wondered at the Ife people's secretiveness, used to climb walls to peep at them. Enough was enough and he decided to leave.

On his way, he stopped at the Enogie of Egor to leave his wife Erinmwinde in her parent's care. She was the daughter of the Enogie and was pregnant. As her pregnancy advanced, her father, the Enogie of Egor sent reports to Oduduwa whom the Benin people called Oghene n'Uhe. Oduduwa also sent emissaries to monitor his daughter in law's progress. As the pregnancy advanced, Ogie Egor decided to send his daughter, Erinmwinde, to Erinmwinde's maternal parents in Use, a next door village to Egor, for better "medical" attention and to ensure some degree of privacy for the "King's wife." It was at Use, Erinmwinde (Oranmiyan's wife) put to bed and word was immediately sent to Oghene n'Uhe (Oduduwa) who sent two servants to minister to his daughter in-law and grandchild. They were known as Olo or Olero, a native

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Last Thursday, 29th April 2004, Omonoba, the Oba of Benin goofed during the launching of his book titled "*I remain, Sir, your Obedient Servant*" in this same building where he described Oduduwa, on page 205, as one Ekaladerhan, a Benin Prince who had once escaped the community's axe man, later reappeared weeks after, wandering in the bush from Benin for a very long time.

According to him, the same Ekaladerhan, having become the ruler in weeks, refused to go back to Benin on request, but instead sent Oranmiyan, his son, basically on a "home coming mission" to start the present dynasty in Benin. It will interest the public to know the facts about the Ife Benin relationship which are as follows:

1. The Oba of Benin whose dynasty commenced in 1191 AD was an Ife Prince borrowed to the people of Benin on their request after the rule of the Ogisos' ended in Benin history.
2. It was a request that Ife must help to provide them with a ruler, then Oduduwa the legend, decided to send Prince Oranmiyan who established that dynasty and whose first son in Benin from a Benin woman was Owomika (Eweka) the progenitors of All Benin Obas including Omo n'Oba since 1191 AD.
3. Since Oranmiyan dynasty started in Benin, all the heads of the Obas of Benin on demise were buried in Ife in a sacred place called *Orun-Oba-Ado* up to the year 1900.
4. Records in the archives made it clear that, since 1191AD, the Ooni of Ife had to be informed, and clearance must be given by him on the new Oba of Benin to be installed up to 1916.

5. The official language in the palace of the Oba of Benin till 1934 was Yoruba.
6. The father of the present Oba of Benin was a member of the House of Chiefs in the old Western Nigeria under our late revered father Sir Adesoji Aderemi, my predecessor and the First African governor in the whole African continent. The Oba of Benin should go and read what his fore fathers told the Portuguese explorers during their visit to Benin on 2nd July 1550AD about the relationship between Ife and Benin. So, it is too late for Omonoba to rewrite our history.

The word Oba, which is part of any of Benin Oba's title, shows clearly that they are from the bigger Yoruba dynasty. It is rather too late in the day to rewrite our history, which cannot be backed with any documentary evidence.

I have to thank the Benin first historian, Jacob U. Egharevba for his publications, which contained the correct relationship between Ife and Benin which the Oba of Benin is now condemning.

At this stage, Mama, you are Mama Oodua, covering the entire Yoruba nation both here and in Diaspora, including the Benin Kingdom where Omo N'Oba Erediauwa by the grace of God is the Oba.

Excerpts from the address of Ooni of Ife at the launch of H.I.D Awolowo's biography.

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The Edo Understanding Of Oduduwa

By
Chief Nosakhare Isekhure

SOURCE: THE PUNCH, FRIDAY JUNE 18, 2004 Page 15

In my reaction to the "controversy" over the origin and personality of Prince Ekaladerhan, who the Benin history recognises as the profound ruler in Uhe (Ife), it is for me an undue application of terms to refer to what the Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwa, Oba of Benin, recounted in his book recently presented in Lagos with reference to the status of Izoduwa corrupted as Oduduwa by Yoruba historians as a 'controversy'

What is being referred to, as "*Yoruba origin controversy*" as papers and people have referred to it, is a misnomer. The Oba of Benin did not speak or write about the history of the Yoruba as a people, he only reaffirmed the monarchical relationship between what we call "Uhe" and what the Yoruba call "Ife" vis-à-vis the emergence of the then kingship system thereon. For the purpose of this write up, I seek to address specifically the assertions made by Prof. Ade Ajayi in a recent newspaper interview.

While the Yoruba people have their inalienable right to look to Ife for their origin, the Benin people also exercise the same

inalienable right not to look to Ife for any significant material about their origin because both nationalities have ancestors who had left behind, evidence of their respective origin. Prof. Ajayi quoted the monarch as saying that, a Benin historian, Jacob Egharevba, wrote a book whose fourth edition was edited in Ibadan. It must be emphasized that the Oba never cast aspersions on anyone or group of persons, particularly the Akoko - Edo people. What the Oba said was that, Egharevba was an Edo- Akure person.

Prof. Ajayi said the account of the Oba of Benin, as recorded in the book, is not the correct position of things regarding Oduduwa and that from his point of view, it was a departure from his status to say that Ife monarch was derived from Benin monarch. This position that the Oba was playing politics was a misguided presumption. The term "*politics*" has the highest virtues in human interaction.

Where there is no politics, there is anarchy, and where there is anarchy, there cannot be politics. Only dead people don't engage in politics.

Our position is that, the story told and recounted in Erediauwa's book remains in absolute terms the position of the Benin people worldwide about Benin/Ife connection.

In academics, a superior argument takes precedence over an inferior one. The right to historical accounts fall within the inalienable rights of self expression, freedom to pursue knowledge and exert it to create a more just and enlightened society. The Benin people have no business writing the history of the Yoruba and the Oba of Benin has not done that either. The Yoruba cannot write the history of the Benin people either.

However, there is a link between Ekaladerhan and Ife Kingdom and Ekaladerhan's mission explanation is what the Oba merely recounted in his book, in spite of the fact that several other publications have recounted the same stories over and over again in the past 100 years.

This argument is relevant to the point of admitting that "Oduduwa", according to the Yoruba, is a mythical person.

For the Edo/Benin people, Ekaladerhan, the son of Ogiso Owodo, the last Ogiso in that dynasty, was a real person with pedigree.

It is on record that when any Oba of Benin is visiting the Ooni for the first time, on arrival at the palace, the Ooni slaughters a black cow and a dog in a designated place at the palace where the Oba would pass through into the palace chamber. The current Ooni wrote Erediauwaa seeking his confirmation of some special rites so that he could prepare duely when he was about to receive his staff of office.

In fact, the Oba of Benin, in his response to the Ooni, confirmed the validity of the rites. As a matter of historical records, Ooni Adesoji Aderemi performed the same ritual when Oba Akenzua II visited Ife during his reign.

As a matter of putting the records straight, it must be added that Prince Ekaladerhan was not the first ruler of Ife because he met a group of village with their heads in the area. When he emerged from the bush, he was led to the village head who arranged to provide him with a place to stay among the indigenes. It was Ekaladerhan's wits and special training obtained from his royal background from Benin that made him so outstanding such that after the village head was deposed by the UHE (Ife) people, Ekaladerhan or Oduduwa was chosen to lead the people. Ekaladerhan did not give birth to the pronounced Yoruba race. They had existed as an independent nationality.

This is the true position and according to the Oba of Lagos, "The Oba of Benin cannot lie."

Chief Isekhure, the Chief Priest of Benin, wrote from 9 Sokponba Road, Benin City, Edo State.

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The Benin-Ife Controversy

By
Jide Osuntokun

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN, TUESDAY JUNE 22, 2004, Page 75

Quite a few people have spoken and written on Ife-Benin relations but not many people have spoken with any scientific authority. In the study of history, objectivity is very difficult to attain, more so, when we are dealing with oral history. This is the problem in coming to grips with Ife-Benin relations. Many of the stories are myths, which can only be believed or disbelieved depending on who you are. Creation stories are what they are, they are indeed, stories which cannot be verified because nobody was present at creation.

The Benins have a stories story where their ancestors stayed on the shell of snails when the earth was covered by water and from this shell a bird searched for solid earth until one was found and the canoe-like-shell was paddled to terra firma. These are stories and they are not within the province of historians. What we do know is that, human evolution has been going on for millions of years and that both Yoruba and Edo languages have been spoken for thousands of years, certainly longer than the advent of Oduduwa in Yoruba and Edo land.

The Oduduwa legend refers to the establishment of a new dynasty in Yoruba and Edo land; this does not amount to the origin of the two peoples. Oral history in Ife has it that Oduduwa was not the original leader of his group and that he took over from Obatala when he (Obatala) was drunk. It is also known that there were rulers in Ife and surrounding villages before the coming of Obatala/Oduduwa revolution; many of these previous rulers had their positions ritualised. In other words, there were autochthonous people in Ife and in such places as present day Ijesa land, Ondo and Ekiti states before the advent of Oduduwa and his party.

In the new book of the Oba of Benin on Pg.205, he claims that an expelled Prince of Benin, of the Ogiso period, named Ekaladerhan who, after wandering for months or years in the bush surfaced in Ife and that it was him the Ife people called Oduduwa. It was this same Oduduwa/Ekalerhan who later, after a generation sent his youngest son Oranmiyan to Benin to found the Oduduwa dynasty there. How convenient! How could a man who escaped execution send his son to rule those who wanted him dead in the first instance? What is certain is that the dynasties in Ife and Benin have a common origin.

The myths of the world being created in Benin and Ife are like most creation stories, including that of the Jews. Myths that have no proofs, but only can be believed by those who wish to believe them. The idea of some Eastern origin of these dynasties is not restricted to the Yoruba and Edo, but is common to most West African dynasties, be it those of Yoruba, Hausa, Kanuri and other peoples of these areas.

Bayajidda for example, who came from the East to Daura, killed the snake, Sarki before marrying the Queen of Daura, and fathered the founders of the Hausa Bakwai states (the seven original Hausa Kingdoms). Some ask: what is the meaning of Oduduwa? Oduwa means, the knowledge or mystery of "Odu", of how to behave

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(Iwa). In other words, this eponymous ancestor of the major Yoruba kings provided a paradigm of beliefs, precepts, laws of governance and lifestyle of how to correctly run human affairs. This is the meaning of Oduduwa.

It is well known by students of world civilisation that Ife and Benin were centers of African civilisation before the contact with the outside world. It has been suggested by historians that ancient Ife was established around the 8 century, AD and flourished remarkably around the 12 century AD, when the famous Ife terracotta and bronze heads and other artefacts were produced. The cire-perdue (lost wax process) through which these famous artefacts were produced were only found in ancient Greece and ancient Ife which led some European explorers during the 19th Century to suggest that perhaps, the ancient Ife civilisation was produced by a lost and wandering Caucasian group, a theory which was prevalent at this time called the Hamitic theory of African civilisation.

This period of Ife history is associated with the Oduduwa myth of origin. Oduduwa in some account came from the Middle East and was followed by supporters of a losing battle for the throne to found a New Kingdom in what is now Nigeria. There is of course the other Oduduwa coming from heaven to establish Ife. The last story can be dismissed as some clever persons' imagination. Before Oduduwa came to Ife perhaps, in the 8th century, there were already people in Ife and the Moremi legend (not Ibo) attackers illustrate the fact that these migrants came to establish the new kingdom.

In African history, there is confusion between the origins of people and origin of kingdoms and dynasties. This should not be so. Immigration and emigration are characteristic phenomena not unique to African history, but, to the history of mankind. It is generally known by historians, archaeologists and anthropologists that man evolved in Africa from where he migrated to other parts of

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the world.

Before the founding of the Oduduwa dynasty in Ife, there was definitely an autochthonous people there. This myth of Eastern origin and the so-called Kisra legend is found among several African peoples.

Around the time that ancient Ife was being established, similar traditions of origin associated with the Bayajidda legend accounting for the emergence of the seven Hausa states, such as Kano, Rano, Katsina etc. came into prominence. Some historians, such as the late Professors Ade Obayemi and even A.F.C Ryder have suggested that Ife of antiquity may have existed in several locations, seven of which have been identified, before finally settling in the present location. One thing is clear to most historians, and this is that the manifestation of Ife cultural excellence and ascendancy predated that of Benin by some centuries.

It has even been suggested that the art of bronze casting in Benin diffused from Ife. Sometimes the name of the purveyor of this diffusion is even mentioned. The similarities between the artistic traditions of Ife and Benin are obvious even to a non-expert eye. The difference is that, Ife art is more idealised than that of Benin. These artistic cultural traditions extend also to Igbo-Ukwu and to the Nupe kingdom of Bida and the Igala kingdom at Idah. In other words, there is an artistic unity among the ancient kingdoms of Benin, Igbo-Ukwu, Bida and Ife.

Benin flourished most especially during the 15th and 16th centuries and the Empire of Benin reached its apogee during the reign of such kings as Ozolua and Ewuare in the 16th century. Ife on the other hand, remained for a long time and even up till now, a spiritual headquarter of the Yoruba and the Benin at least, the dynasty in Benin if not the entire Benin people. What is in dispute now is the clash of myths of origin not the relationship among the people enumerated above. There is no doubt that the Yoruba, Edo Nupe and Igala people have a shared and sometimes commo

history and not necessarily common peaceful relations.

The myth associated with Oduduwa is that of a conquering people who took over the rulership of autochthonous people and established representatives of the Oduduwa dynasty in almost all Yoruba areas. These immigrants probably came from the southern Nile area, particularly the kingdom of Kush and particularly from its iron-working center of Meroe, which will locate it in the present day Sudan.

Some Yoruba dynasty such as the one in Ijebu-Ode claim a Waddai ancestry (that is, present day Chad) which is not too far from our postulated origin of Meroe as where Oduduwa came from. To be able to conquer existing population, the immigrants associated with Oduduwa must have had superior technology such as ability to mine and use irons both as weapons of defence and offence.

The most popular myth of Origin on the dynasty in Benin is that it is an offshoot of this Oduduwa dynasty. The then existing Ogiso rulers of Benin collapsed around the 12th century and it was around this time that the Benin people were said to have asked Ife for a Prince to rule over them.

Prof. A.F.C. Ryder has suggested that Edo culture is closer to the Ibo, their neighbours to the East and that their monarchy is more of an extraneous import institution than a local one. The so-called Ogiso were not kings, but oldest men in the community, some form of gerontocrats rather than kings.

Prince Oranmiyan, the youngest of Okanbi's seven children, and a grandson of Oduduwa was sent to Benin but because of a cultural clash, he did not stay long in Benin but not before he had successfully fathered a son through a Benin woman. This son, Eweka I, then became the ruler of Benin when he grew up. Oranmiyan then returned to Ife and proceeded to Oyo (Katunga/Old Oyo) to establish a dynasty around the 12th century. It is interesting that both Oyo and Benin later developed into empires

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with Benin's influence widespread in eastern Yorubaland particularly in Ekiti, Ijesa, Ondo and Akure areas and even in the coastal areas up to Lagos.

Nascent Oyo became as it is generally known, an empire that incorporated the Oyo speaking people, Nupe, and the rest of Yorubaland with the exception of Ijebu which then stretched westward to incorporate the present day Benin Republic (Dahomey), stretching up to Central Togo (Atakpame).

Ports like Port Novo (Ajase), Badagry (Agbadarigi) became export outlets, unfortunately of slaves, sent across the Atlantic by the ruling classes in the Oyo empire.

The relationship between Benin and the Oyo empire and Nupe kingdom was that, they shared boundaries particularly in the North but, the question of primacy between Oyo and Benin for example did not arise because the period of each empire's apogee differed. The climax of Benin was in the 16th century while that of Oyo was in the 18th century. The relationship between Ife and Benin is cultural and not political. Jacob Egarebva, the most famous authoritative Benin historian asserted in his famous book *A short History of Benin* that the dynasty in Benin is an offshoot of the Oduduwa dynasty in Ife. Bradbury who had earlier on worked extensively in this area supports Egharevba on this.

This is what the nationalist historians of Benin are now trying to deny but what is a fact cannot be denied. In the long journey of Oranmiyan to Benin, he made stops and left oral evidence in places like Idanre which is actually called by the people Ife-Oke and in Usen near Benin, evidence strong enough to corroborate the Oduduwa origin of the dynasty in Benin. A detailed study of the place of Usen and Idanre in Benin-Ife relations would further elucidate the historicity of the relationship. Even up till today, the group around the Oba of Benin traditionally greet each other by asking, "how is Ife?"

The court language in the palace of Benin, which is known only to a few votaries, is of Yoruba origin and the title Oba is also of Yoruba origin. Besides, when the Portuguese came to Benin in the 15th century, the reigning Oba of Benin claimed then that there was a distant suzerain located north west of his kingdom in a place called Ife to which he deferred. This does not demonstrate any subjugation; what is demonstrated was a common ancestry or at least common cultural and political relationship, in which the Benin, Yoruba and Itsekiri people are bound by a common monarchical culture.

Finally, the Benin and the Yoruba people are related people, speaking languages belonging to the kwa group of languages, but we should not confuse the origin of dynasty with the origin of the people. The Yoruba and Benin dynasties are descended from Oduduwa. The conglomeration of peoples now known as Yoruba and Edo speaking peoples have always been there even before the advent of Oduduwa.

So there should be no quarrel either between the rulers of Ife or the rulers of Benin or between the Yoruba speaking people and Edo speaking people. Their proximity to one another is a fact of history and geography. But there is no doubt that the dynasty now ruling in Benin, like that of England is of alien origin respectively one coming from Germany, the other from Ile-Ife. There is nothing to be ashamed of to warrant a denial of an historical fact.

Professor Osuntokun, former Nigerian Ambassador to Germany, teaches History at the University of Lagos.

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The Ekalederhan, Oduduwa Historical Controversy

By

Editorial of the Nigerian Observer

SOURCE: THE NIGERIAN OBSERVER, FRIDAY MAY 7, 2004, PAGE 4

Ancient black history and civilization cannot be complete without mentioning the Benin and Oyo empires of old. Indeed, the high level of social, political, economic and organizational development attained by these empires has been a source of pride to the African continent and peoples.

The Oba of Benin and the Ooni of Ife, in a way, represent these two great civilizations and their words on the origin, growth and development of the ancient empires must be taken as authentic and authoritative. Therefore, it becomes a most interesting subject when an historical controversy concerning the ancient Benin and Yoruba empires, such as has just been thrown up by the recent statement of the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwu, takes center stage.

The Benin Monarch, no doubt, has stirred the hornet's nest with his declaration recently, during the launch of his biography on April 29, 2004 titled *I remain, Sir, your obedient servant*, that Oduduwa the progenitor of the Yoruba race, was one Ekaladerhan, a Beni Prince who had once escaped the community's axe-man, but late

re-appeared in Ife, after wandering in the bush from Benin for a long time.

EXPECTEDLY, the comment has drawn swift reaction. The Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II, during the launch of a book, a "Memoir of a Jewel", in Lagos on Monday, said the Oduduwa legend had no connection with the claims of Oba Erediauwa.

DECLARING that the name of Oduduwa should not be corrupted or bastardized in order to create unnecessary history, he stated that "*Oduduwa, the legend, the father of the bigger Yoruba dynasty, has no connection whatsoever with the Ogiso dynasty in Benin history as portrayed by the Oba of Benin because Oduduwa descended directly from heaven, through a chain to where is now known as Ife today in the company of 400 deities*".

OBA Sijuwade said the purported claim by the Oba of Benin that Ekaladerhan, who he said escaped from Benin and later became the ruler of Ife, was a misrepresentation of facts.

As far as the Ooni is concerned, "the Oba of Benin, whose dynasty commenced in 1191AD was an Ife Prince borrowed to the people of Benin at their request after the rule of the Ogisos had ended in Benin history.

"It was a request that Ife must help to provide them with a ruler, then Oduduwa the legend decided to send Prince Oranmiyan who established that dynasty and whose first son in Benin from a Benin woman was Owomika (Eweka), the progenitor of all Benin Obas including Omo N'Oba, since 1191AD", the Ooni said.

THE Ooni also made it clear that "the word 'Oba', which is part of any of Benin Oba's title shows clearly that they are from the bigger Yoruba dynasty. It is rather too late in the day to re-write our history, which cannot be backed with any documentary evidence," the Ooni added.

THE Ooni has made very salient points, which he has equally

buttressed with reference to archival records. It is an incontrovertible fact that the present Oba dynasty traces its roots to Oduduwa and Ife. Historians do not have any problem with that. History has enough records to prove that also. Therefore, the fact that Oduduwa sent his son, Oranmiyan to Benin, based on request and became the father of the present Oba dynasty is not in doubt. No one can rewrite that history.

WHAT has been in contention and still is in contention is how and why that relationship between Benin and Ife came about. That is, why did the Benin people have to go to Ife to ask for a king? Benin was already very civilized by ancient standard and had an established way of doing things, including a very well developed culture and tradition.

WHAT therefore was the compelling reason for going to Oduduwa to ask for a king, knowing the differences in language, customs and tradition? Therefore, if there is any controversy, it is from this point in history and the Benin Monarch has in a way thrown a challenge to historians to set record straight, once and for all. The statement of the Oba concerning Ekaladerhan and Oduduwa is not new. A few history books have recorded similar detail. There is the feeling that the major history textbooks were authored by Yoruba's who had a head start in western education and thus recorded history the way it is at present.

The Benins in their Oral Tradition equally claim that, there is a Prince called Ekaladerhan. He was the only son of the last Ogo Owo. But due to palace intrigues, he was sentenced to be executed. However, the axe-men, who were to carry out the execution, knew the intrigues and therefore, decided not to execute him but advised him to wander away, never to return to Benin so that the secret of the fact that he was not actually executed would never become known.

EKALADERHAN was said to have wandered in the forest for

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quite some time before he stumbled into a settlement. He was said to have uttered the word. "*Ile-fe*" meaning, *I have escaped to safety*, when he got to that community. This was said to have been corrupted to Ile- Ife.

ALSO, because of his princely qualities, having been brought up in the palace as the son of an Ogiso, the people recognized the leadership and other qualities in him, which made them to appoint him their leader.

At that, Ekaladerhan was also said to have uttered the word *Izoduwa*, meaning, *I have taken the path of prosperity*. That word was later corrupted to Oduduwa, which became his name.

However, at the demise of Ogiso Owodo, there was no son to survive him. That became a problem. But those who were asked to execute Ekaladerhan eventually disclosed that Ekaladerhan was not actually executed and they revealed the circumstances under which they carried out their action. Thus, with an Ogiso's son alive, no other person could ascend the throne. That in a nutshell, was the genesis of the interregnum in Benin history. It was therefore, the decision and the resolve of the Benin people to get Ekaladerhan to ascend the throne of his forefathers that led to the delegation that was sent to Ife, where Ekaladerhan had found a new home. We are still referring to the Benin Oral Tradition. There even could be other versions of it.

THE Benin Oral tradition also had it that when the search team got to Ife, they met a king who was satisfied with his new found thriving community. He refused the offer to take up the kingship of Benin Kingdom but offered to send his pet child, called *Omonoyan* in Benin, corrupted to be Oranmiyan. The rest is recorded history. This is the position or account of the Benin people, which the Oba has only further highlighted in his remark during the book launch. The revered royal fathers have set the ball rolling by elevating the issue to a high pedestal for public discourse. It is now left for

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historians to research and come out with possible answers to the historical controversy.

LIKE we said earlier, a new task has been put before Nigerian historians. They should dig deeper into the matter and if they have to rewrite history, so be it. It is a very good academic and research exercise for our historians and for better success, we call on eminent Nigerians to commission a historical research on the present controversy. It won't harm anybody. Instead, it will further expand the frontiers of historical knowledge. That is the way we see it.

AFTER all, was there not a time when the earth was thought to be flat until superior scientific knowledge latter proved that the earth is, in fact, spherical?

Yoruba Origin Controversy Oba Of Benin Is Playing Politics

**By
Ade Ajayi
Anchored by Sina Babasola**

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY VANGUARD, MAY 9, 2004 FRONT PAGE

Renowned historian and retired university administrator, Prof. J. F. Ade Ajayi yesterday in Ibadan dismissed the comments of Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba Erediauwa Uku Akpolokpolo on the origin of Yoruba race, saying, "Omo N'Oba is playing politics".

Prof. Ade Ajayi who spoke exclusively to *Sunday Vanguard* at his Bodija residence explained that, the Oba of Benin's statement was just an attempt to provoke controversy and political speculation.

His words: "I think the Oba of Benin has been saying things like this before. He just wanted to use the opportunity of his book to provoke controversy. He is just playing politics."

"He did not cite any evidence, the Oba is only trying to assert his own opinion. The position of Omo N'Oba is not the correct position of things. He himself knows that. It's the personal opinion of the Oba which is not based on facts."

"It is his own modern politics. His own father used to attend the

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conference of Yoruba Obas regularly during the colonial era. His father did not object to this historical fact that the founder of Benin was an Ife prince”.

“The Oba of Benin is playing politics, if not, where did he get his own information? I do not know what he studied that is not available to the renowned Benin historian, Jacob Egharevba. He should provide us with the sources,” Prof. Ade Ajayi said.

The former Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos said that the reaction of the Ooni of Ife on the issue was more credible, saying “it is more credible to believe the story told by the Ifes themselves than the story of Ife as told by a Benin Oba”.

According to him, Oduduwa represents the coming of monarchical institution and not the coming of Yoruba people. What we need is more research on our tradition and not mere political speculation such as the Oba of Benin is trying to provoke”.

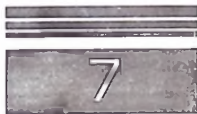
“I believe the story as told by the Ooni of Ife. It is better founded than what the Oba of Benin is trying to tell us and the Oba of Benin has no *locus standi* as it were to tell the story of Oranmiyan and what he is trying to deny is what his own father protected and took his place among Yoruba Obas. It is clear that he is evidently playing politics.

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Myth And History In The Quest For Identity

By
The Nobel Laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka

SOURCE: MIDWEST TIMES, NUMBER ONE-HUNDRED AND SIXTY, PAGE 10

Well, maybe not as lucky as those of us who are undisputed, direct descendants of Oduduwa. Still, one cannot have everything, and I hope you will remain content with being first cousins of the Yoruba. You are still several levels of primordial distinction above those who cannot even lay the remotest claims to any lineage descent from Oduduwa. I shall offer you even more durable consolation: even I, a deep-dyed Ijebu—that is a hybrid scion of the historic cities of the Ijebu and Egba—find myself compelled to concede that Benin, as a place of history, has the edges on either of my two formative cities—Abeokuta and Isara. Benin, for me, is nothing less than an archeologist's paradise. I remain convinced that there are richer veins of heritage beneath the surface of her soil than in most of the major cities of this nation. Again, a small minus, unlike the city of Ile-Ife, Benin may not be the cradle of the black race, or indeed of humanity but, yet again, I invite you to take consolation in the fact that her history is a paradigm of creativity and cultural validation at its most robust, a

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crucial arc in the very trajectory of civilizations. There is still so much to be revealed about this ancient civilization, and it has always been a source of amazement to me that its very warrens, compounds, hills and valleys are not crawling with archeologists both from within and outside the continent.

And that takes us to the third remark, my exhortation, which in turn, will lead us directly to the topic of my address. You have established a University in Benin. You are not unaware of the parlous condition of most of our tertiary institutions at this moment, some of which have been described as not even worth the description of glorified secondary schools. Those of us who have had the experience of teaching in universities in several corners of the world are aware that many of them had small beginnings, and that some of the most prestigious and exclusive today began as private institutions. An educational institution, any educational institution, but especially a tertiary one, occupied with the formation of minds at that crucial age between adolescence and maturity, is a rigorous, unforgiving undertaking. In our own special national context, it is a task of immense responsibility, almost a divine mission. It is a most critical period in the search for selfhood, that period when the evolving personality begins to ask some of the questions that will crop up in today's discourse, in short, in a question of identity, to which no uniform answer is applicable to every individual. It is a search that is at once individual and social. However, more of that in a moment.

For now, to limit myself to specific and subjective interests, I can only urge, in relation to the comments I made earlier regarding your own place of origin, as well as the often unsteady ambition of an institution for an identity or- to use the more common expression, an area of specialization, some notable discipline that will set it apart from others, stamps it with a character of its own. Let me suggest that, apart from the medical focus that is already

bringing in recognition, you could do worse than settle for these humanistic areas that are implicated in the very title of this lecture. The antecedents, the very history and physical environment of Benin literally plead for this. In an independent and serene setting, dedicated to objective scholarship, disputes of history, such as have been invading the media recently, pitting royalty against scholarship, mythologists against historians, pride against prejudice etc, might find objective answer and add to the truthful knowledge of what we are. Of course the opposite might happen. I am quite envisaging your university dons declaring war against the champions of Ile-Ife myth of origin. Even a joint seminar on the subject might end up with source books, monographs and archeological finds being turned into non-intellectual weaponry. That also is perfectly in order, we shall simply summon scholarship arbitration from the Diaspora, maybe from Brazil. In all seriousness however, the opportunity exists for a great archeological research center to emerge from this ancient city. It is certainly one identity worth serious consideration by a new institution.

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Ooni, Omo N' Oba, And The Politics Of Identity

By
Reuben Abati

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN, SUNDAY MAY 9, 2004 PAGE 52

Books are like human beings. They can be either lucky or unlucky; known or unknown. While some books become instantly popular, bringing fame, fortune and perhaps notoriety to their authors, so many other books end up on the shelves, *unsung*, and unread. *Midnight Children* turned Salman Rushdie into a celebrity. Arundnathi Roy wrote one book about "the god of small things" that shook India and she became famous. Odia Ofeimun had been doing quality writing but *The Poet Lied* marked the turning point of his career. D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, Moliere's *Tartuffe*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*; Nietzsche's *The Death of God*; Olusegun Obasanjo's *Not My Will*; Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died*; Ken Saro-Wiwa's *On A Darkling Plain*; and Wale Ademoyega's *Why We Struck*: these are a few examples of books that have benefitted from the controversies generated either by their content or the circumstances of their publication. Perhaps, the most controversial book in the world is the Bible as it lends itself to so many interpretations, as varied as the operative doctrine. Books become

popular oftentimes by accident, and the author is bound to be immensely grateful. In societies where books are read, the reading public immediately buys copies of such books.

The publishers are happy; the author smiles to the bank, and may even win greater recognition. Thus, the secret wish of authors and publishers is that a book in which they have invested time, talent and resources should do well with the public. Desperate publishers even sometimes organize controversies around their publications. They whet the appetite of the public. They simulate relevance and merit. This aspect of the sociology of publishing reinforces the fact that a book is also invariably an economic unit.

But this is not the main point of this piece. What I am seeking to establish is that the biography of the Oba of Benin, Erediauwa II, which was presented to the public the other day would readily fall into the category of a lucky book, on account obviously of the controversy that it has generated. The book is entitled "I remain Sir, Your obedient Servant." In it, the Oba of Benin (Oba gha to kpere), had reopened the old argument about the historical origins of the Yoruba and the Bini people. Re-writing Jacob Egharevba, the Bini historian, the Oba had stated that the founder of the Yoruba race, Oduduwa, was a Bini Prince, Ekhaladeran, who having escaped from the hangman's axe, found his way to Ife. The simple interpretation is that the Yoruba descended from a Bini line. This declaration is made in only a section of the book, but it has turned out to be its main selling point. At the occasion of the public presentation of a book on Mrs. H.I.D Awolowo in Lagos, the Ooni took time out to respond to the Oba of Benin. He argued that Erediauwa II is mistaken and that in fact, the Bini people are Yoruba, through Oranmiyan, an Ile-Ife prince who was sent to Benin to start the royal dynasty after the Ogisos.

Since the Ooni's' response, there have been additional contributions to the controversy by the Oba of Lagos, one Dr. Dele

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Adeoti of the Lagos State University who is described by the New Age newspaper as "a specialist in the history of Yoruba warfare". Adeoti insists, contrary to what the Obas of Benin and Lagos affirmed that "Omo N' Oba is Ooni's subject". Meanwhile, the Alaafin of Oyo has served notice that he too will react to the Oba of Benin soon. He says what is being debated is not an issue between the Ooni and the Oba of Benin "but an issue between the Oba of Benin and the entire Yoruba race". According to the Iku Baba Yeye, "we are going to correct all distortions and erroneous impressions if need be." The matter has become so amusing that even Ganiyu Adams, the OPC leader in an interview with the Comet on May 8, 2004, dared to upbraid the Oba of Benin as he offers his own interpretation of Yoruba history!

I have used the word "amusing" advisedly. I suppose this is one of those arguments without either a head or tail. Ganiyu Adams has offered his opinion as an "expert"; soon mechanics, battery chargers, and even fashion designers, with access to the media, may also tell us what they think of the historical relationship between the Yoruba and the Bini. I wouldn't be surprised if a group of prostitutes from Benin City also add their voice to it. First, we are dealing with historiography steeped in oral tradition and mythology. There are bound to be various and conflicting versions of how the Yoruba or the Benin dynasty came to be in a remote period of antiquity. This is the problem with oral sources of history. Mythology is worse to the extent that it is tied not to reason but faith and belief-systems. We have been told that Oduduwa descended from haven, with a crown in his hand and a chain. Really? Who witnessed this? We are also being told that Ekhaladeran wandered in the bush from Benin to this place and that place, until he got to Ife. And he didn't get killed in the bush? Who established his identity as the same young man who escaped the hangman's axe?

Second, the real issue is one of ethnic identity and nationalism.

The politics of identity is one of the most sensitive aspects of the Nigerian nation-state. Living in a country that has been overtaken by centrifugal forces and the crisis of citizenship, many Nigerians find greater meaning in a return to the roots. They are emotional about their ethnic identity. They are sensitive to the politics of domination and dispossession. Classified as minorities in Nigeria, the Bini are not likely to play such politics or accept attempts to further place them under an imperial and domineering group as the Yoruba is. The nature of ethnic politics is that each group feels compelled to construct history from its own perspective. Nearly every living group prefers the historiography of triumph and superiority. So, in the end, it does not quite matter whether Oduduwa came from heaven or Benin, what is at stake is ethnic pride. Would the Ooni want to be classified a subject of the Oba of Benin? Or would the Oba of Benin accept to be a descendant of the Ooni of Ife? Even if Yoruba was the official language in the palace of the Oba of Benin until 1934, the average Bini man is likely to respond cynically to this.

Third, we are dealing with a controversy in which the parties do not have the same advantages. The Bini can only speak of an empire that ended long ago, of a past glory. The Yoruba by comparison can point to present advantages. This places the Bini in a much weaker position, especially as the truth of history is relative. Fourth, what does it matter? It is true that the Yoruba and the Bini listening to the controversy are likely to show some interest because it is their identity that is being discussed, but for the most part, they are invariably bound to draw amusement from it, rather than feelings of hate and hurt. The people of Benin and Yorubaland are more concerned about practical issues of survival. They may be impressed that they share some historical affinity, but they are more united by the shared agony of survival in a dispossessed society.

They want the same things: jobs, houses, love, progress and a

secure socio-economic environment in which they can realize their dreams. In the face of this, the spectacle of traditional rulers arguing about whether somebody got lost in the bush or descended from heaven is at best a piece of distraction, or if we may be charitable, entertaining folktale. After all, it is not as if the Binis are about to become the slaves of the Yoruba or vice versa; all these stories have no direct bearing on the demarcation of boundaries or the allocation of resources. The average man in Benin City and Ibadan is likely to be more interested in seeing his royal fathers debate issues that are central to his immediate survival. What is his business with someone wandering in the bush or monkeying around with a chain, when he, a Nigerian citizen in 2004 is also lost in the bush of unmet expectations with dangling chains of restraint all around him.

The Oba of Benin has maintained a dignified silence since the controversy started. This is as it should be. A book should be allowed to speak for itself. No author should allow himself to be dragged into the self-denigrating task of either explaining himself or apologizing for what he has written. The word is eternal powerful. Once it is written or uttered, it gives birth to other words and a thousand ideas. It is from the contestation that follows that meaning is produced and human knowledge is deepened. On this score alone, "I Remain Sir, Your obedient Servant" is already a successful publication. It may well end up as the most talked about book of 2004. The only regret is that the present controversy is not translating into massive sales of the book. Elsewhere, the publishers by now would have been popping champagne. There would have been queues at the bookstores of persons demanding copies of the book. Autograph sessions would have been organized for the Omo N'Oba. But alas in Nigeria, the book culture is underdeveloped.

Not many people are reading, Bookstores these days sell only school texts and magazines. Nigerians would rather talk than read

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This is the singular reason why the GSM companies and the Private Telephone Operators (PTOs) are doing so well in the Nigerian market. If there is any other regret, it is how the Oduduwa controversy has upstaged the main content of the Oba's biography. "I Remain Sir, Your Obedient Servant" is a personal narrative, dealing with other narratives. It would have been more interesting to listen to responses to the book itself rather than to a subsidiary narrative, introduced in mere parenthesis.

In the end, the controversy about the origin of the Yoruba and the relationship with Benin has no foreseeable end. The good thing is that it is a "family affair". It won't draw blood or animosity. It may even inspire fresh scholarship and writing, much talk, hot air, and plenty of sophisticated ignorance. But how nice it would have been if all the commentators and "experts" would start first by reading the book. For now, only the Alaafin of Oyo has indicated his intention to read the book before commenting on it. How nice.

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In Defence Of The Omo N'Oba

By
Omorodion Uwaifo

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN JUNE 2, 2004 PAGE 53

"You can't just wake up and say Oduduwa was a Benin Prince". So, said Professor Ade Ajayi in a talk he had with a newspaper (not *The Guardian*). "Omo N' Oba's contention was that Oduduwa could not have been the father of Yoruba kings", his guest said.

"Yes, on what evidence?" the Professor said. He went on. "You don't say something without evidence to back it up... What did the Oba of Benin study? Did he study Johnson? Did he study Egharevba?... Although I say that myths of origin are a matter of belief... some beliefs are more credible than others... And many people will say the story told about Ife in Benin is less likely to be credible than the story told about Ife in Ife."

He went after the monarch. "Now, who is the Oba of Benin to come and tell the Yoruba what they should believe about themselves? I think it is very, very wrong and impertinent to assume that you know more about the Yoruba people than the Yoruba know about themselves. On what basis?... "That is as clear as it can be, but natural for words from a man that taught history.

What the Omo N'Oba had said of the link between Benin and Uhe (Ife) irked the man. But would it have angered him if what he

wanted to hear was what the Omo N' Oba said? How would he know without the research he later advised, that what he wanted to hear was right? Did he think that what the Omo N' Oba knew was different from what he said in his book? And did the Omo N' Oba just wake up to say it?

That cannot be right. To think that, is to fail to know who and what the Edos are. The Professor has no reason to feel baffled. Omo N' Oba did not say that he knew all about the Yorubas more than they knew of themselves. He also had no thoughts of myths when he wrote his story. Like their neighbours, the Yorubas, the people of Benin did not write until the Ebos came. Of course, that was bad for dates in their annals. Before then, the people did two things well. They used art as records of their epochs. If the events shook their world, they had them as symbols in their festivals. And often in their songs and dances. From these, oral records have grown.

A few examples might explain this point. A dull day with no rain in Benin is thought of as *Ekaladerhan's day*. If you live there and you speak the language, it is likely that you would look up at the sky and say *ede Ekaladerhan na khin* (this is *Ekaladerhan's day*). The day was as that day, dull and poignant. The Prince *Ekaladerhan* might have left Benin for Ughoton and then for Uhe (Ife) some nine hundred years ago; his sad leaving has remained fresh in the minds of his people.

A private event takes place each year around the month of October. At it, the Palace hosts the Osuan family (Osuan was one of those that came back to Benin from Uhe with Oronmiyan). The annual event is called the *Ugie Ododuwa* (Ododuwa's festival). It re-enacts each year, the event of long ago. In that way, the people keep events fresh in the mind.

The Edos believe that kings are born. They don't make them. That means that the surviving first son of the King alone has the right to succeed him. That has had the advantage of a single line of kings. And with that has come a lineage that is easy to trace. So,

what the Omo N' Oba spoke of was the oral record of his fathers. The Professor had asked, "What did he study that was not available to Egharevba?" That is his answer. It is the story of his fathers as told by his father and by the Palace. No myths there, at all.

All Edos are proud of their great son, Jacob Egharevba. How glad they are that the Professor has raised him to a historian of his own ilk. If that were so, their man would be the first they know with his level of learning, to be an authority in the written history of his people. Wow! But was he? Or is the Professor the politician? The people of Benin had thought that their son wrote a readable story of Benin. They don't know he even did better than that. Is it not fitting that His Royal Majesty, the Ooni of Ife has also thought of the book as a work worthy of his reference library? Just great!

Yet, must one ask what Egharevba's source of facts were? He knew that his Oduduwa story had much to do with the palace. There is a sense in which it was in fact about the palace. What history would it be then, if he did not even clear his "facts" with it. Did his Ado-Akure link stop his search for these most vital facts? As Ado-Akure, he was a fringe Yoruba. If the Omo N' Oba were a true son of Ife he would be a Yoruba. Why would he then resent being called one any more than Egharevba would want to be called a Yoruba? Why did the Western Region reject Nnamdi Azikiwe as Premier in 1951? Why wouldn't an Onitsha man be the Obi if he could not trace his lineage to Benin? Why couldn't an Itsekiri be the Olu of Warri if he was not a full-blooded Itsekiri or a half Itsekiri and half Benin? Why did many Indians object to Sonia Gandhi as Premier of their country? These are human questions as valid as that raised by the Omo N'Oba in his book.

The Professor said that the story of Ife told in Benin is less likely to be credible than the story told of Ife in Ife. When he asserts that Oranmiyan founded Benin, does he concede that he could be less credible than the Omo N'Oba who said that there was the Ogis

dynasty in Benin before the Eweka dynasty? Should he as an historian “just wake up” and say that? What is his evidence? Or does he not need one because he is an historian?

Omo N'Oba is one of the kings of the Eweka dynasty. Wouldn't he know the history of his throne? It surprises one that the Professor could make as many gaffes in so short an interview. Why did he rush to comment on a matter he knows so little about? He was right when he said... “What we need really is a more intensive and more extensive research so that we can collate all these stories and interpret them in the light of what we know... “Wait a moment. What sit-tight politics is he up to? Has he interpreted the tome written by each of many Yoruba historians that have debunked the story of Ife supremacy? What has he done with the works of JA Atanda and by Ade Obayemi? To name just two.

We must make no mistakes here. Professors like this could put their seals on a “wrong” and it would become “the right”. Omo N'Oba said in his book that Egharevba was Ado-Akure, not Akoko-Edo. It is safe to say that a Benin man or woman ever told the professor that Eko means Oko a farm. A true Benin would have said to him that *eko* means camp and that *Ugbo* means farm.

Benin has not been the same after the British war on it in 1897. Pressures of modernization might have left her to flutter in the wind of change, but the roots of the events that shape her are there still, deep and strong. She does not talk of art; she lives it. She has Igun Eronmwon and Igun Emoton for brass and for iron smithies to show for it. She has Owina Street for woodwork and Iwebo Street for clothing and beads. She has always had a thriving oral culture. They help her raise the pulse that feeds the memory. Her annals might not have had dates, but they have been alive in her people.

Engr. Uwaifo, a retired NEPA staff, lives in Lagos.

Benin/Ife: A Defence Of Orality And Myth

By
Molara Wood

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN, SUNDAY AUGUST 15, 2004, PAGES 62 & 64

In writing his autobiography, the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba Erediauwa II, has set a wonderful example. It is right that those who have led memorable public lives give their account, allowing us to hear from the horse's mouth, so to speak. It stands as testimony in the face of history, helping to illuminate our understanding of the factors that shape the lives of great personalities, and their times.

The Omo N'Oba's book has been especially successful, not so much for appraising his life and reign, that will come later, but in causing us to look again at the histories of the Yoruba and Benin peoples. In the fallout from the publication of the book, *I Remain Sir, Your Obedient Servant*, endless column inches have been filled by individuals offering their views on the matter. The Oni of Ife and the Oba of Lagos have had their say in the debate, which shows no sign of abating.

Consequently, some have questioned the relevance of such debate in today's Nigeria. The average man does not care whether the Benin version is the right position, or the Yoruba world view

the matter, they say. Our monarch's time would be better spent looking for solutions to the myriad of economic and social problems confronting us today. In short, what's it got to do with the price of rice in Oyingbo market? Well, everything.

The past, in the words of James Baldwin, is what makes the present coherent. The past filters into the present, and the issues at stake in the controversy over the Benin/Ife origins go to the very root of who the peoples are. This is the collective memory of races we are talking about here, not what happened last year. We are nothing without a sense of our history. It is the knowledge of our past that gives us the grounding to tackle today's problems head-on, mapping out the way for the desired future. The matter is therefore important, and as the vanguards of our history, traditional rulers must help steer the debate.

Beyond the specifics being argued over however, I am more concerned here with a worrying thread coming out of the debate, namely the apparent willingness of some to dismiss the oral traditions and myths upon which much of the ongoing controversy is premised. These people, speaking from the position afforded by their grounding in Western education, believe any talk of historical origins that are not based on hard, provable facts to be a primitive indulgence, mere hocus-pocus. Prove it or lump it, is their message.

In the same vein, it is suggested by some that the Omo N'Oba's position on the Benin/Ife connection is sacrosanct, by virtue of its being set down in writing. But is it? Does something acquire the status of being regarded as the incontrovertible truth just because it is written down? Does this argument, essentially the view of one man and a school of thought, cancel out the wisdom of ages, both on the Benin and Ife sides? Those who argue this are ascribing too much to the written word, especially in our country where that which presents itself in writing is often outrageously false.

Over and above the issues surrounding the contested origins of Benin and Ife, the current debate could be written and oral

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traditions. The written tradition, of course, is the tradition of the West, which recent history and modernity by accident or design have caused us to embrace. But we, like most non-European cultures, are of the oral tradition, which worked very well for us before the white man came. So, the written word is convenient for the lives we live today and lends itself very easily to verification. But does it render our part in the oral tradition invalid?

The oral tradition represents our folk aesthetic; and the alchemy of the spoken word is as great as it has ever been.

"In the beginning was the word", this eternal line is true even for we whose beginnings are chronicled in no biblical texts or ancient scrolls. Our ancestors, after all, knew "mommo", the power of the word and exercised it. In the days gone by, systems were in place for the cultural archiving of human experience. Even those on long journeys that took years, or from which some never returned, left their stories with the villages and people encountered along the way. These stories they told helped define the characters of their individual groups, mapped our boundaries of feeling, expressing their will to survive. These stories provided the foundation upon which each group has constructed a sense of reality, a way of knowing, and of perceiving themselves in the world. Oral histories are the breaths and footprints of our ancestors, our cultural memory.

Nearly all of the oral histories currently being debated have several versions, raising the question of which to believe. The mutability of oral history is only natural since as it filters down, some things are taken away, others added on, and also because we all tell stories differently. Nevertheless, oral histories retain a measure of truth, which we disregard at our peril. We are Africans people whose memories extend beyond the reaches of any book, so why ask for proof of our earliest histories? What proof do people want? To ask that every stage of our history conform retrospectively to the rigours of the written tradition is to strive f

the impossible and seek to engineer time.

Oral tradition and its co-traveler folklore are, according to Ralph Ellison, the basis of all great literature. He acknowledged their seeming crudeness, but found them profound in that they represent a group's attempt to humanize the world. The written tradition has taken over the world, but some of the greatest writers currently living from Toni Morrison to Salman Rushdie, are constructing their novels in such a way that the oral tradition is reclaimed even on the pages of a book.

Those dismissing the oral histories are contended with by all constipation that can sometimes afflict the highly educated. It is through the oral tradition that our ancestors have expressed our true selves. A rejection of that tradition amounts to a rejection of ourselves, and our past.

The main point of contention in the current debate, that of the origin of Oduduwa, calls us to consider the role of myth. Did Oduduwa descend from heaven with a chain, or was he Ekhaladeran, a fugitive Benin prince who surfaced in Ife, having wondered for years in the bush after escaping the hangman's noose? What does it matter when there is no proof, some have suggested. They ignore the very simple fact that 'myth' and 'proof' are contradictions in terms.

Myths are stories of beginnings, the most population of which, the creation myths, can be found in all cultures of the world. From Japan to India, myths have helped give birth to nations, form societies, and define identities. In seeking to explain the 'how' of things, myth could be termed the earliest form of science; in explaining the 'why' it is akin to religion and philosophy. Myths have been, and still are, a mode of ordering human experience, helping to set out the natural order of things. To disregard the role of myths in the narrative of the nation, any nation, is to display a gaping hole where our imagination should be.

That the myths of Europe were written down long before the pen

was ever taken up in Africa does not alter the fact that they are unprovable. Even the written myths of the West call attention always to their oral origins in that there are many versions of the same exploits, heroes with alternative names. The West, bastion of the written tradition is founded upon orality and myth. All the Western education in the world should not blind us to the myths of the West, which continue to order our existence, now and into the future. One cannot open a Nigerian newspaper today without seeing some problem or another referred to as the 'Hydra'; or an embattled politician described as having an 'albatross' on his neck. What is the hydra, if not the multi-headed snake of the Greek myth? The albatross of course comes from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Coleridge and his fellow poets of English Romanticism were reworking myths that had existed long before. Myths of the Western world, used daily, unthinkingly, now express our African reality. Yet some people will have us commit the cultural suicide of dumping our own myths.

The Hollywood blockbuster of this summer is the sword and sandal epic *Troy*; starring the toga-wearing Brad Pitt a man as beautiful as a woman. Based on *The Illiad* by the Greek poet Homer, the film depicts the ten-year war over Helen of Troy. Would the blind Homer have known whether indeed Helen was the most beautiful woman in the world? In spite of all the archaeological and historical examinations, there is no real proof of the fortified city of Troy, the fabled Trojan horse, or of Helen. And if indeed there was a war, it was definitely not over a woman. Yet the myth is as relevant as ever. When we watch the cinematic exploits of Brad Pitt as Achilles, we are asked to look upon the glory of Troy and to be inspired in our individual lives as to the possibilities of human endeavours. In *Shame*, Salman Rushdie wrote about Pakistan almost as corrupt as Nigeria. Faced with the problem of how to dispose of a modern dictator, the authorial voice intrude:

tell the reader that it would be done by "goblinish means". Do we object to this use of myth in resolving a modern dilemma? The author is unapologetic and challenges the reader: "You try getting rid of a dictator sometime".

We in Nigeria know only too well how difficult it can be to get rid of dictators. Looking at our recent history, we have our hydra, albatross, Achilles tendon, even the gorgon all rolled into one in the stony despot Sani Abacha. What is the story of the death of Abacha, if not modern myth-making? Depending which version you believe, Abacha succumbed like Adam in the Garden or like Disney's *Snow White* to a juicy red apple. Or you could believe that he crowed like a cockerel and was stunned into the hereafter, thanks to the deadly exoticism of prostitutes imported from Asia. You could even believe both. In telling and retelling these theories of Abacha's death, we are engaging in the process of creating myths, constructing meaning, making sense of our world.

Asked in a hundred years to prove how Abacha died, would it be any more provable, or indeed unprovable, than it is now? The Abacha myth is itself an expression of the trauma of his regime, and the terror he struck in our hearts. We had in him our very own Herod, holed up in the impenetrable fortress of Aso Rock; unreachable, unremovable and unkillable. And so in a mythical enactment of the desperate desire of millions to be free of him, he was dispatched by goblinish means.

A man saw a snake. A woman killed it. The Yoruba proverb tells us that what matters is the kernel of truth: the snake was killed. In Sani Abacha's death, we have a relevant modern myth. Unprovable, yes; but perfect and whole.

Roland Barthes talks about myths as semiotic systems. To him, they are not stories, but acts of signification which become vehicles of meaning. Myth transforms meaning into form. Claude Levi Strauss on the other hand, chooses to look at the linguistic model of myths, believing them to uncover the basic structure of the human

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mind. This he argues, governs the way we shape all our institutions and artifacts and forms of knowledge.

In the Benin/Ife debate, I have found the contribution by Hilary Evbayiro to be among the more intriguing. There were many good points in Evbayiro's piece, but its outright rejection of orality and myth is not one of them. Alas, certain arguments in the piece betoken a lack of objectivity, a charge Evbayiro levels at others. Of the various views expressed early on, he holds up the most curious—that of Olu Akiolu of Lagos—as the most reasoned and impartial. How so?

Furthermore, Evbayiro dismisses the Ife myths as "ridiculous" but remains silent on the myths which the Oba of Benin seeks to proffer in their place. Let's face it, if the myths of Ife are preposterous, then so are the myths of Benin. Or is Benin too founded on myth?

Ultimately, Evbayiro asserts that those who with their "sophisticated Western education" are hanging on to myth are the ones "confusing people." He is not alone in arguing the point, hence the reason for this piece. Western education notwithstanding, myths are what they are, and they have their place. In spite of modernity, this is still Africa, and we know what we know.

Even the scribe who strove to record every imaginable nuance of human feeling, Shakespeare, told us in *Hamlet*: "There are more things in heaven and earth... than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Happily, the current debate should lead to a more exacting examination of what sections of the Ife and Benin histories can be assessed from archaeological findings and written records. Till earlier, the oral histories and myths of the two kingdoms come into play to determine which of the opposing versions offers the greater measure of truth the better. But the way to go about it is not to dismiss oral histories simply because they are unprovable or steeped in myth. To deny the myth of a nation's birth is to deny the nation itself.

On Benin-Ife, Ife-Benin Relationship

By
Onigu Otite

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN, WEDNESDAY JUNE 9, 2004 PAGE 59

I remain, Sir, Your Obedient Servant, a recent book written by Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo. Oba Erediuawa of Benin, and presented to the public on April 29, 2004, has revived an old controversy. This controversy deserves objective scholarly attention and not sentimental reactions. A search for an acceptable resolution should involve an examination of the ethnography-historiography of three main socio-political and socio-cultural regions, that is Niger-Benue confluence, Ife and Benin in time perspectives.

No one scholar has a monopoly of knowledge of these three regions or even only one of them. And from my limited recollection, I consider that Professor A.F.R Ryder has produced one of the most penetrating analysis of the relationship involving Benin, Ife and Oyo kingships in his "A Reconsideration of the Ife-Benin Relationship" in *The Journal of African History* (1965). He did not reach a definite conclusion on whether later Benin rulers came from Ife or vice-versa. But Ryder was hopeful that the research problems involved can be resolved "and progress must

depend more upon the archeologist and anthropologist than a historian". Ryder was most probably aware that the question whether the anthropologist is also a historian was resolved in 1962.

Unfortunately, however, owing to market and material value certificates and training in the discipline, fewer students began to opt as from the first half of the 1970s to specialise in its different fields.

Thus, although Ryder's work may have functioned as a precursor for contesting the Ife-Benin relationship, his hope may be constrained by this down-sliding development, unless foreign scholars/researchers sponsored by foreign foundations will come to help. It will depend largely on this chance-event for us to unveil the hidden structures and decode the symbolism in three historic regions referred to earlier, and thus permit us to undertake reconstructions of the socio-political systems, bearing in mind the developmental cycles involved in the rise and fall of states and kingdoms.

It must be pointed out that the Benin-Ife controversy concerns only their royal lineages, their kingly descent groups, rather than their entire societies. In the case of Benin, the structural arrangement was not novel, although the new Royal Actors were alien to Benin culture which absorbed the in-comers, but not without social conflicts and serious oppositions which are re-enacted every year at appropriate rituals. The Benin Ogiso period was already well established in a centralised political structure which 31 Ogiso had ruled from the apex. Ife and Benin could not be classified as plural societies with different sectional traditions or origin and composite histories.

The Benin-Ife relationship is far more complex than merely resolving the claims of Oranmiyan moving to Ife, and returning to Benin. The sentiments and emotions generated by the presence of the Oba of Benin's book should be allowed to pass off, to

serious research from different sources and groups to be conducted towards discovering the historical kernel behind the claims. If the Oba of Benin has no *locus standi* to talk about Oranmiyan and Ife, he surely has *locus standi* to talk about Ekhaladeran and Benin. These are the two components of the controversy. It is sentimental if we should believe the Yoruba version because we are Yoruba or the Benin version because we are Bini. Let us strongly hope that any combined future research efforts and findings of anthropologists, archaeologists and historians will not be politicized. And this calls to serious question the old debate of the 1950s and 1960s about objectivity in history and the social sciences.

Following the lexico-statistical dating evidence, by which the Yoruba and Bini (and other Edo speaking people) were separated about 5,000 years ago, it becomes intriguing to enquire about what period Ekhaladeran's journey-flight took place from Benin to Ife or Oranmiyan's from Ife to Benin. If Ife was in its one-time place in the Niger-Benue confluence, where was Benin at that time? Does it make some sense to assume that owing to hazards posed by hostile animal and human enemies and fearful encounters in the lengths of original virgin forest traversed facing several directions without a compass, the princes who went out of their kingdoms were after all not the ones that eventually survived brutalities to become or attempt to become kings in their host societies? The escorts and protective warriors were usually more strongly built and resistant to ill-health and other anti-social conditions. Did the princes actually survive the rigours of harsh life for years required to accomplish the journeys? There are many imponderables in this regard. Besides, it is not quite clear why it was believed that Benin Kingdom needed to approach Ife for a saviour-prince/king when that Kingdom was not known or famous as a superior military-political power with expertise in-intra-ethnic conflict resolution.

Ryder considered different social and cultural (including art and brass work) variables in his analysis of the comparative antiquity of Ife and Benin, and suggested that it was still a moot point whether the dynasty of the former could have been parent to that of the latter. Notwithstanding the well-known phenomena of telescoping and omission of rulers and regimes, some investigators may want to identify and compare the equivalent or better, of the 31 Bini-Ekpe Ogiso pre-Eweka type of rulers in a centralized Ife Kingdom. If Benin is an older kingdom, it would then appear acceptable that the Oranmian temporary royal migration and Ife intervention in Benin history may well belong to the area of belief system than the domain of history. This viewpoint is at variance with opinion long held as an established fact, not fiction. Yet, with the current evidence available it is difficult to project Oduduwa, an Ife king as a Benin prince. If we remove sentiments or emotions, the above issues deserve a re-examination by both established scholars and respected mentors in Benin-Ife historical studies.

Ryder's re-examination of the Benin-Ife relationship promoted the perspective of Benin. And if his observation in a footnote is correct, it would be curious that S. Johnson's *The History of the Yoruba* (1921). "makes no mention of Oranmian's visit to Benin". However, Bradbury, a social anthropologist, noted that the remainder of a Benin Oba (obviously of the second dynasty) followed a three-year journey of rites in specified sites between Benin and Ife. Was this repeated event meant to reconnect the bodies and spirits of the dead post-Eweka kings (not the whole of Benin kingdom) with the Ife ancestors, if existed, for the stoppage of the practice? Were these events meant to re-enact shared ritual or religious interests?

It is worthwhile considering the cognate nature of these two and more social/kingdom structures and locate their ethno-histories as they emerge from the Niger-Benue confluence. The object of analysis of one corpus of oral tradition against or in the light

Another should not degenerate into a verbal fight. It should be a serious affair. Although what kings or the ruling class project as their history is not necessarily the history of their entire society, yet both Ife and Benin are, like many others, separate and cognate ethno-historical units originating ultimately from the region of the Niger-Benue confluence. If this is the case, the question of seniority between Ife and Benin is irrelevant. However, it is a welcome development in Nigerian ethnography and historiography to find that eminent and erudite respectable traditional rulers participate in debates about aspects of our ethnography. It is just that some Nigerians may find pleasure in being able to challenge an Oba, not in the palace, but on the pages of newspapers.

Our main concern in this contribution is to draw attention to the three main anthropological-historical regions, and broaden our examination of the Benin-Ife socio-political, socio-historical relationship. Other Nigerian socio-cultural groups mainly of Kwa-language origin such as Idoma, Igbo, Ijo, Nupe, Igala, Jukun, etc separated between 3,000 and 6,000 years ago, will benefit from the re-analysis, with possible outstanding contribution to our search for national oneness, if not unity. Herein lies the basis for a plea for Federal Government sponsorship of a combined anthropological-archaeological-historical study of the Niger-Benue confluence, without intimidating expressions of emotions, politics and insults, but with a free flow of contestations of ideas and research findings. This accords with the nature of history which provides for modifications of old statements based on new interpretations derived from new convincing evidence.

Although ethno-history and the knowledge of the connections between our traditional rulers and kingdoms are important, yet some thinkers may argue that what is most relevant in our contemporary situation is how our traditional rulers can help to mobilize the near moral excellence that once characterized the

conduct of economic and social affairs at the indigenous community level, to combat the ravages of corruption now destroying the very fabric of our national co-existence. Even here, new discoveries of broader relationships, cultural resources and traditional rules, rooted ultimately in the Niger-Benue confluence, as in other parts of the country, will, in all probability, help to promote morality and accelerate stable development at the local and national levels.

Oñte, a Professor of Sociology, sent this piece from Warri, Delta State.

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Facts Of History Are Not Settled By Verbal Insults

By

Chief Nosakhare Isekhure JP

SOURCE: THE NIGERIAN OBSERVER, TUESDAY JUNE 8, 2004 PAGE 20

Since a piece of information that has always been well known, documented and orchestrated through legends, oral history and folk tales has now been elevated to the platform of "controversy", my first reaction was to allow those who seek to address the issues to exhaust their own side and understanding of the issue under reference viz: the origin and personality of Prince Ekaladerhan, who the Benin history recognises as the profound ruler in Uhe- (Ife) as our historical accounts positioned it.

It is for me an undue application of terms to refer to what the Omo N' Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwa CFR, Oba of Benin, recounted in his book recently, presented in Lagos with reference to the status of Izoduwa corrupted as Oduduwa by Yoruba historians as a "CONTROVERSY". It is pitiable and most unfortunate that some of the reactions heard and read in some newspapers, since the Omo N' Oba's book launched in Lagos, contained insults, derogatory terms and outright arrogance, perceived directly and also through innuendos.

This is a serious breach of academic tradition, ethics and

excellence. It is a matter of sound logic for people to address issues, statements, and positions raised during a given state of argument or debate, by way of intellectual explanation of the validity or otherwise of the statement or utterance. It is out of permissible intellectual boundary for the personality rather than the issue or issues, to be insulted, derided and consequently humiliated, all in an attempt to state or correct a simple fact of history by those who may claim to have better or at best, more authentic information about the subject matter.

It is a fact of history that, attacks on personality rather than issues and utterances, often inflame passion that triggers anger and subsequently violence, especially when the issue under reference is quite sensitive. It is on record that in partisan politics, such attacks on personalities rather than issues have led to violence, leading to wanton destruction of lives and property all across the world, including Nigeria.

This condition, we do not subscribe to, nor encourage by circumstances of our traditional religious beliefs, political consciousness and the nature of our beings as Edo people. I therefore, use this write-up to advise and also warn all and sundry who may be tempted to react to the issue at stake to do so by addressing the issue rather than the personality, and we will never accommodate any attack, direct or indirect on our Revered Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku, Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwa, by anybody, be he a traditional ruler, historian, a chief, a politician, a clergy man, a corporate person, etc, who may want to use a simple fact of history to fan the ember of hatred and ethnic violence which has nothing essentially to do with academic and intellectual project vis-à-vis the issue under reference.

This is an advice and a clear warning to all that we will never accept further, any attack or derogatory words on the personality of the Oba of Benin over the matter. As a matter of fact, the issue of a

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historical knowledge and enlightenment cannot translate to controversy, if the purpose is to seek and break new grounds over historical dogma and make-belief accounts.

Every historical account, like all other fields of knowledge must draw its premise and conclusions from sound logic. Historical account all over the world have been noted to have an evolutionary trend, when previously held beliefs, opinions and concepts are demolished under the weight of more factual, verifiable and attainable revelations by new frontiers of knowledge's the history of Benin, and those of other ethnic nationalities, including the Yorubas, is not immune to this kind of historical trend.

In any case, what is being referred to, as "**YORUBA ORIGIN CONTROVERSY**" as papers and people have referred to it, is a qualified misnomer. The Oba of Benin did not speak or write about the history of the Yorubas as a people. He only re-affirmed the Monarchical relationship between what we call Uhe and what the Yoruba call Ife vis-a vis the emergence of the Kingship system there on.

For the purposes of this write-up, I seek to address specifically the assertions made by Processor Ade Ajayi in an interview he granted to the **SUNDAY VANGUARD** of May 16th, 2004, printed on page 10-11 of the papers, captioned "**YORUBA ORIGIN CONTROVERSY**"

The newspaper interviewer whose anchor man was never named, asked the Professor questions to which he provided his own variant kind of answers, that seems to provoke very loose and insulting air of academic arrogance. The first question was as follows.

"There is this ongoing controversy sparked off by the different accounts of the Ooni of Ife and the Oba of Yoruba progenitor, Oduduwa, what is your position?" He proceeded to answer as follows:

"The thing is that none of us was present when the world was

created, so we just accept stores of creation and myth of origin as a matter of belief, we cannot as a matter of fact argue because none of us was present.

So, we just believe what the ancestors handed over to us. We can ask questions to why the ancestors took a certain position. But if we are to find out what the Yorubas believe about their origin, I don't think we will go to Benin, we will go to Ife."

The answer as provided above also conversely means that, while the Yoruba people have their inalienable rights to look to Ife for their origin, the Benin people also exercise the same inalienable rights not to look to Ife for any significant material, about their origin because, both nationalities have ancestries, who had left behind, evidence of their respective state or origin. Therefore, our main center of focus could also be a Benin environ.

In the course of providing more answers to the so-called controversy, Professor Ajayi alleged that, the Oba of Benin is saying that a Benin historian, Jacob Egharevba, wrote a book and that the fourth edition of the book was edited in Ibadan. According to him, there is no contradiction between the first and the fourth edition of the book. But, Oba of Benin says, he is dismissing Egharevba because of Akoko-Edo blood in him (Egharevba), which made him favour the Yorubas.

He didn't say that the man is a Yoruba man, but that he has Akoko-Edo blood in him". The Professor went further to say that "I think that Oba of Benin has been saying things like this before. He just wanted to use the opportunity of his book to provoke a controversy and I think he is getting that already. He did not cite any evidence. At least, those who said that Benin tradition agrees with Ife tradition quote Egharevba who was a Benin chief who actually did a lot of research not only on Benin, but on Akure and the surrounding areas".

It must be categorically stated and emphasized, that the Oba of Benin, Oba Erediauwa CFR, never cast aspersions on anyone or

group of persons, particularly the Akoko-Edo people, who are descendants of Benin people as alleged by Professor Ajayi. What the Oba said was that, Jacob Egharevba was an Edo-Akure person.

Also, it must be clearly understood that, here in Benin Kingdom, there is a well established hierarchy of tradition, which has given primacy to historical records, religion, arts, artifacts, law, social interactions, political organizations and government to a point where guilds and institutional devices are created to service these arms.

As a matter of protocol and traditional practices, the Benin Law establishes and recognizes the Oba of Benin as the Sole-Authority of Benin history, tradition, customary practices and convention. He is the repository of information and the authority; therefore, he does not need to consult any other source to get information that concerns the consistent evolution of Benin Monarchical system and all the phases it has passed through since the past 5,000 years.

The author of this write-up, Chief Nosakhare Isekhure, the Isekhure of Benin, occupies the office of the Chief Priest of Benin, while the Oba serves as the Spiritual Head of the Edo people. The author's position as the Isekhure, a descendant of the original members of the Benin Royal Family who left Benin to seek the return of Ekaladerhan from Uhe (Ife) to Benin about some 1,000 years to ascend his father's throne is undisputable.

The Isekhure has been established by the Oba of Benin as the Chief Recorder of Benin history as it affects Benin Royalty and Kingship system. The writer is the 33rd occupant of that position from the period of Oba Ewedo in an unbroken line of succession.

By this fact, our family known as the Ughoron in Ogiso's period, and later changed to Ihogbe during the Obaship dynasty, possesses all the artifacts, historical records, stories, tales, oral records and other ancestral instruments, that ably, and unquestionably established the validity of Ekaladerhan escapade and his eventual elevation to leadership of the people he met at the site known and

called Uhe or Ife.

Apart from the Oba of Benin, the Isekhure of Benin is the sole authority of Benin history. Therefore, for anyone to think that a historian, who fancied to study history like any other subject, should see himself as the authority over a people history, particularly over traditionally established history bearer, is to stretch academic freedom above reasonableness. This is not acceptable in Benin Tradition.

Therefore, Jacob Egharevba, a Benin son and an illustrious historian, author, of *A SHORT HISTORY OF BENIN*, wrote what he understood within the confine of the information available to him, and also the quality of source. A look at the book under reference, *A short history of Benin*", Ibadan University Press 1968 Fourth Edition, the author did not publish any reference or a bibliography of his source of information.

Any book on Benin history, particularly that which concerns the Benin Monarchy in which an ISEKHURE does not make salient contribution as a vital resource channel is a nullity, because, Isekhure is the authority and recorder of the events under reference.

Oduduwa Phenomenon In Yoruba And Benin History

**By
Bode Alake**

SOURCE: SUNDAY OBSERVER, APRIL 10, 2005 PAGE 10

Let me first and foremost correct the erroneous belief in certain quarters that Olodumare-Yoruba name for God-sent Orunmila, said to be another name for Oduduwa down to this earth with a cock and a little gourd containing earth form Yoruba cosmology will tell you that Orunmila and Oduduwa are two different personages in their history. While Orunmila is believed to be the founder of Ifa pedagogy, the foundation stone of Yoruba Philosophy, Oduduwa was said to have descended from heaven to come and replan the earth.

In Yoruba pantheon, Orunmila is known as Agbonimiregun, Oniwayeaiku, Aludundu Orun. He is the Philosophical head of all their 401 divinities and deities and the mouthpiece of all their deities.

The language of Orunmila is Ifa, using the seven instruments of divination to unravel the secrets of the universe for the benefit of mankind. The messages of Ifa are contained in the 16 major Odu Ifa and the 240 combinations often referred to as minor Odu or Omo

Odu, making a total of 256 Odu'Ifa of Ifa corpus used by the initiates of Ifa known as babalawo worldwide in divination and consultation.

Orunmila is a divinity in Yoruba pantheon, Ifa is his word encompassing his messages and revelations, which dates back to the very beginning of creation, and as such they are ageless and verily predates the arrival of Oduduwa into Yoruba history.

The interesting thing about this is that, as the Yorubas have Orunmila with his languages of Ifa in their cosmology, so also the Binis have Orunmila with the Ominigbon with a 16 seed mystically developed communication channel, chained into four sets, consisting of four seeds per set and often used in communication between the spiritual and time mortal. The date and time of Oguega's introduction into Benin Kingdom as an instrument for predicting and for problem solving is lost in obscurity, but it has since retained the similarity of purpose in divination and consultation with Ifa.

This then brings us to the question, who is Oduduwa? What is the place of this personage in Yoruba and in Benin history? There are many claims as to the place of Oduduwa in the two people's history. The phenomenon of Oduduwa appeared in Yoruba history about 900A.D when men were gods. According to Yoruba oral history, he was said to have descended from heaven unto Oke-On in Ile-Ife through a mythical chain.

Modern historians later came up with their contributions by advancing the migration theory. They insisted that Oduduwa and his group had migrated from Egypt through Sudan to Ile-Ife to begin a flourishing civilization with an equally flourishing dynastic revolution. Prof. Biobaku (1995) had suggested 7th /10th century A.D., while Jeffries (1958) estimated that by 11th century A. D Ile-Ife had become a flourishing urban center. If these dates are

carefully examined and accepted, then, we can safely affirm that the phenomenon of Oduduwa came into Yoruba history about the same time the son of the last Ogiso Owodo was said to have vanished from Benin to find refuge in a place called Uhe.

Benin Oral history says that Ekaladerhan, the only son of Ogiso Owodo escaped palace intrigues for his execution and wandered in the tropical forest until he got to a place called Uhe where he was accepted as a ruler after due consultation with Ifa oracle, hence his name "*Izoduwa*" which in Benin means "*I have found prosperity*". It is this name that the Yoruba people corrupted to Oduduwa; they say and this was why Benin people sent an ambassador to Oduduwa the great and wisest ruler of Uhe asking him if he cannot come back to his throne, he should send one of his sons to be their ruler after the interregnum of the republican rule of Evian and his son Irebo nicknamed Ogiamien in 1170- 1200 AD.

Egharevba (1965), Oduduwa was said to have sent Oranmiyan as Yorubas call him or Omonoyan as Binis fondly refer to him to Benin, to establish Obaship rule through his son Eweka 1 in 1200 AD.

While these claims and counter claims were going on, Dr. O. S. B. Omoregie, a Benin historian, writer and educationist, has added another dimension to the controversy. His claim will be of interest to modern research fellows, scholars and historians and it is worthy of serious consideration. Dr. O.S.B. Omoregie in his newsletter volume 2 on the Evolution of Great Benin- Twelve points to note asserts among others that:

- Uhe of Benin was not and could not have been Ile-Ife of Ooni, it is conclusively Uhe of Oduduwa of Ife of Olokunmi tribe as the Yorubas were originally known.
- While Uhe of Benin or Uhe Oduduwa or Ife of Yorubas

belongs to the most ancient days, Ile-Ife of Oo belongs to the middle century. An establishment of Oranmiyan with his host of lieutenants and artisans skilled in carving, weaving, iron making and stone works.

- That the present Ile-Ife was Adimu's village where Oranmiye as he is known in Yoruba history or Omonoyan as he is fondly referred to in Benin history stopped to rest on his way to Oyo Ile not the present Oyo, to find Ajaka dynasty.

The village in which Adimu was left behind to settle became prominent when the people had to accommodate the sacred shrine stone of Oduduwa from Uhe or Ife at a latter date. Adimu had become the ruler of the village, but the latter arrival of Oranfe with the sacred shrine stone led to the establishment of the bearer as the spiritual head with the title Ooni- (non-owner). And sixty years latter the age-old visual arts, a fall out of Nok and Uhe civilization became a feature of fame for the place now known as Ile-Ife. Oranmiyan magical walking stick left behind, later turned into an obelisk, a symbol of his authority and an important landmark in Ile-Ife.

The name Oduduwa is the generic title of the chief priest of Uduwa before the decline of Uhe civilization and migration southwards was Oduduwa Obalufon, who from the heights of Uhe or Ife sent Oranmiyan as he is referred to in Yoruba history or Omonoyan as he is often referred to in Benin history, to Benin to start Obaship rule in 1200 A.D.

Further research and investigation led to the conclusion that, the Ooni of Ile-Ife holds the position of the chief priest, the custodian of the ancient sacred stone brought from the ancient shrine in Uhe or Oduduwa or Ife by Oranfe, one of the many personages in Yoruba

history. The ancient sacred stone was brought from the shrine at Uduwa for safe keeping on Oke-ora during the reign in Uhe of Oduduwa Obalufon, the Oghene N'Uhe or Oghene of Uhe or Oduduwa Oba N' Ife.

Ile-Ife became the spiritual center of Olokumi people who were later to be known as Yoruba from Hausa appellation "*Yariba*" meaning the *people of the south*. At the demise of Oranfe, who was deified with a shrine close to Oke-Ora hill, Lajamisan became the Ooni of Ile-Ife, the founder of the dynasty, which now rules in Ile-Ife, five of his descendants being the founder of the different ruling houses of the dynasty in Ile-Ife today.

The dome shaped beaded crown, known as Are and worn only once a year at Olojo festival by any reigning Ooni, contains the sacred ancient stone brought from Uhe heights by Oranfe and preserved in Oke-Ora. It must be placed on the effigy of Obalufon before any new Ooni wears it. It is the ancient beaded crown and the sacred ancient stone both in the possession of Ooni of Ile-Ife that makes him the king of kings in Yoruba land and this probably explains why Ooni is referred to as *Arole Oduduwa-Igba Keji Orisa*.

The question then arises, where is Uhe or Ife according to Dr. O.S.B. Omoregie. Archeological findings, deductions and historical research points to the area of lands in and around the confluence valleys of rivers Niger and Benue where Nok Culture 2000 B.C. - 500 A.D. took his roots and Uhe civilization 8550 B.C - 600 A.D. south of it also took its roots Archeological findings around this area had been carbonated and dated to 6, 000 B.C. By 850 B.C., while thriving civilization in Uhe land was still part of Nok Culture Complex. It gained momentum from 200 A.D. after Nok Civilisation had begun to decline.

By 600 A.D, Uhe Civilization had reached its peak, the ruler

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was then the great potentate of the interior called Ode-Oduwa or Oduwa the chief priest or the people earthy Oghene who ruled from Uduwa and fondly called "Oduwa Oghene N'Uhe" or Oduwa Oba N'Ife.

Uhe or Ife at that point became the center of the known world or the place from which the new world started to expand as the Kwa Negro race who occupied this area started to migrate into other parts of the geographical entity today known as Nigeria.

The theory of our common center of origin as postulated by Dr. O.S.B. Omoregie in his works needs to be thoroughly studied and assessed by historians, and researchers. The result I believe will provide a more acceptable understanding of the phenomenon of Oduwa in the history of Yoruba and Benin people and the emergence of dynastic rule in both nation states.

The argument has never been on the history or origin on the place of and the role of Oduwa in Yoruba history as it relates to the emergence of dynastic rule and the place and role of Ikaladerhan nicknamed Izoduwa as it relates to the emergence of Eweka rule through dynasty in Benin history.

Yoruba history and Benin history span over a long period of time even before the arrival of the personage or phenomenon known as Oduwa or Izoduwa into their history. Oduwa was said to have arrived at Ile-Ife in the 10th century with his party to become the progenitor of Yoruba race and founding father of their Obas.

Traditional historians claimed that Oduwa descended into the valley below to unite the 13 settlements into where is known as Ile-Ife today. It was claimed that he had (11) children who migrated at different times and to different places in Yoruba land to found Kingdoms. They have had personages and deified figures such as Oranfe, Obalufon and Orunmila; also they had men gods such

Ogun, Soipasan, Sango even before the arrival of Oduduwa into their history.

Benin people too, claimed to have occupied the fertile land of the guinea forest zone many countries ago before the arrival of Oranmiyan, into their history to start Obaship rule through his son Eweka(1) in 1200 A.D. before then, they too have had over 300 years of Odionwere rule in their various villages and settlements of Ubini Nowa and Ubini Nurria. Another 300 years of Ogiso rule beginning from Ogiso Igodo to Ogiso Owodo, during which period Benin emerged as a nation state.

Benin history too is replete with the story of men gods Arhuaruan the giant warrior of Udo, Evian the destroyer of Osagan the monster at Ikpoba and the brave warrior who led Benin army against the invading British expeditionary forces.

With the foregoing, it is obvious that there are pieces of unresolved details about the evolution of dynastic rule in both nation states, more so with the literary sins and misleading consensus of the early writers on the subject.

Therefore, historians, writers and researchers of today must come out with courage and concern to correct the errors of the immediate past, and to reassess our reliance on only Oral history mythology, folklore and fables as the foundations of our history, for these portray the desire of most nations to find a mythical origin for themselves through their kings and ancestors.

In 1930, a Yoruba historian T.O. George had written that the present town of Ile-Ife should not be taken as the older Ife, which lay further in the interior and over sixty years earlier. An American Baptist, J. J Brown had written that the old Ife lay close to the great rivers the Portuguese traders who came into the heartland of the geographical entity we know as Nigeria in the 18th century gave a vivid description of one Prester John as the great potentate of the

interior. Prester John was an adventurer and slave trader who came into heights of Uhe after the collapse of Uhe or Ife civilisation and the removal of the sacred stone from the temple Uduwa to an unknown destination which came up to be Ile-Ife.

Yoruba people refer to this older Ife with nostalgia "*Ife Oodaye Ibiti Ojutinmowa*" "*Ife the land of the most ancient days where the day dawns*" Benin people refer to this ancient settlement as Uhe and up till the early 18th century, they make yearly pilgrimages to worship at the shrine of Oghene N'Uhe.

While the Ooni of Ile-Ife selected from any of the five ruling houses in Ile-Ife, derives his divine essence and legitimacy by being the custodian of the sacred stone from the shrine of Oghene N'Ife and the ancient beaded crown worn by the last Oduduwa N'Ife Oduduwa Obalufon the Benin Oba also a divine King whose ascendancy is strictly by the law of primogeniture and whose essence and legitimacy is by being in possession and the custodian of the sacred and ancient staff of authority known as Ukhure, which was given to their founding father by Erhinwindu, their ancestral deity and the god of Idu people. Ukhure is the symbol of the unity of Benin people, while the Oba is regarded as the divine representative of Osanobuwa Oghene, Benin name for God.

Creation myths, which are common to virtually every culture group the world over has failed to answer convincingly the question "who is Izoduwa or Oduduwa or Ooduwa" Oral history too from both nation states painted more confusing picture of Oduduwa or Ooduwa either as a historical figure or as a mythological figure. There are also numerous and largely unanswered questions as to how Izoduwa, Oduduwa or Ooduwa got written into their history about 10,000 A.D. and to have started dynastic revolution among people with a long historical past.

To be considered too, how early writers and historians from

both nation states used variations and distortions for political purposes and gains. Today, modern writers have the supportive evidence on the older Ife or Uhe to explore and to come up with a more acceptable concept of Izoduwa or Ooduwa.

There is no doubt in my mind that we may have to look further inland for that ancient settlement that is the bedrock of the dynastic history of both nation states around which the phenomenon of Izoduwa, Oduduwa or Ooduwa had emerged as a powerful dynastic influence and a historical attraction to the contemporary Yoruba and Benin minds.

Prof. Ade Ajayi & The Benin-Ife Dynasty Connection

By
Andy Ehanire

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY OBSERVER, SUNDAY MAY 23, 2004 PAGE 3

Since the presentation of the Book "I remain Sir, Your Obedient Servant" by His Royal Majesty the Oba of Benin, it was my genuine anticipation that reputable and credible authorities will lend their wealth of knowledge and experience to this seemingly and obviously interesting angle of the Benin-Ife monarchical connection.

I say obviously because we understand history to concern human affairs which can still be related from as many angles as new insights provide. Secondly, we understand history as dynamic subject to different interpretations with often- new insights to unanswered questions. This is why Prof. Ade Ajayi himself said in his article that nothing is certain in history.

By the very nature of our distant history therefore (derived mainly from oral tradition), we cannot apply the mathematical science of exactitude, but to crisscross the paradigm of probability, correlation and logic. For instance, we hear history records the Yoruba Oduduwa as having descended by chain from heaven. Another version has it that he came all the way from Egypt. Since

there is little or nothing to substantiate or corroborate these claims. It is expected that historians would keep their minds open to new information and possibilities. This is how I believe historians should view both the "established" and other angles (including the Oba of Benin narrative) to the Ife-Benin monarchical connection.

The so-called established historical records have it that the kingdom of Benin sent a request to Ife (a new monarchy) on account of the immediate circumstance of past relationship between the two relatively distant and apparent unrelated communities. There is nothing to show that at the point in history Ife had a singular appeal culturally or politically, to warrant an established kingdom like Benin with a monarchy spanning several centuries before Ododuwa (31 Ogisos (Kings) to proceed to Ife and request for a king (chronology being an important tool in determining credibility of historical records).

Will students of history not seek to know if it was an oracle that was consulted or a star was seen in the west, which led the Benin wise men to Ife? What was so compelling to the extent that in spite of the brief sojourn of Prince Oromiyan in Benin (insufficient to make any meaningful impact) the Benin people would uphold a pregnancy by him as the fountain of a new dynasty! These premises are enough for historians not to go to bed as to the origin of the Benin-Ife dynastic connection (a major historical event), but to leave a big question mark that requires answers or further enquiries.

This is why I was highly disappointed when I read Prof. Ade Ajayi's comments on the Oba of Benin's angle in the *Sunday Vanguard* of 16th May 2004. The distinguished Prof. borrowed the intolerant tone of the Ooni of Ife both of whom equally rebuffed any attempt to "rewrite history" it would appear that there is an attempt to preclude any further contribution that can unravel the unanswered questions concerning the Ife-Benin monarchical connection. "Benin sent to Ife for a king and Ife gave them a king,"

c'est fini!

Now HRM the Oba of Benin in his new autobiography expounded the angle that at that time in history, a Benin Prince Ekaladerhan who was compelled to go into exile and having sojourned in many places ended up in Ife where he was eventually enthroned as king with the name Ododuwa. The narrative went further to state that a monarchical vacuum occurred later in Benin and it was revealed that the son of the erstwhile monarch was alive and this led to a search to find the exiled Prince, which took them all the way to Ife. Having confirmed that Ododuwa was indeed their exiled Prince, they requested of him to come back to take his throne but Ododuwa who was probably too old at this stage preferred to send one of his sons (the youngest) to Benin to be king.

Now, the undiscerning reader might erroneously conclude that the Ekaladerhen narrative is a recent finding of the Oba of Benin, whereas it is common knowledge in Benin oral tradition. What is baffling therefore is that in spite of this popular oral tradition of the Binis about Ekaladerhan, historians have seen no need to throw up these issues sufficiently to limelight until His Royal Majesty, the Oba of Benin did so in his recent autobiography, which is now generating what amounts to an uproar. Was there a conspiracy or a concerted effort to ignore or subdue this common historical belief of the Bini people? Or is the same attitude being displayed by a historian of no less standing as Prof. Ade Ajayi even when this view is coming from one as learned and experienced as the Oba of Benin (the custodian of Bini Tradition).

It doesn't take a historian to view the Oba's Ekaladerhan angle against the background that Benin produced many monarchic dynasties in Southern Nigeria far more than any other kingdom this region: Warri (Delta), Ogba land (Rivers), Lagos (Lagos State), Idah (Kogi), to mention but a few and left wide influences present day Yoruba land and as far away as Dahomey (now Be

Republic) and even Ghana. The circumstances of these far-flung dynastic creations could not have been too different from the Ife-Benin example. In which case, it is more historically probable that Benin gave Ife a king (Ododuwa) and not the other way round.

As pointed out in the early part of this write up, there is nothing to explain why an established kingdom like Benin, which had already recorded a dynasty of 31 kings (Ogisos), would request for a king from Ife a newly created monarchy at that time (Ododuwa being the first Yoruba monarch). What was the connection? This can only remain a historical mystery unless further interpretations or new facts emerge. But as with unwritten distant history, historians must necessarily draw on the paradigm of correlation, probability and logic. The Ekaladerhan story does not disprove that Benin got a king from Ife (a major historical event) but only to add the why(s) and how(s), which Ade Ajayi do not seem to want to hear or understand. This indeed is strange considering Prof Ade Ajayi's intellectual height, which ought to have inclined him to applaud the Oba's work for its merit in provoking further research.

If the Oba of Benin made a little digression in his book to give the Ekaladerhan narrative (which is clearly relevant), Prof. Ade Ajayi cannot under that circumstance expect him to state all his studies and evidence in that small section. So, if indeed Prof. Ade Ajayi wanted to pursue the subject matter, he will keep an open mind and seek further clarifications from the Oba. But he choses to foreclose any further interest in it except to say clearly that the Oba had none to give and that it was pure politics. This is the same learned professor who confessed in his interview that there is little or nothing to prove in our local history (Benin or Yoruba) as they are derived from beliefs "we just accept story of creations and myths of origin as a matter of belief, we cannot as a matter of fact because none of us was present".

Brig. General (Dr) S. O Ogbemudia (two time Governor of

former Midwest Region and Bendel State), in his book *Years of Challenge*, (Heinemann Publishers, Ibadan 1991) also mentioned Ekaladerhan as the source of Benin-Ife dynastic connection though from a different connection, and from a different perspective. It also referred to it as derived from Benin oral tradition and alluded to the resistance of the Benin people to change their dynastic succession. I do not know if this book also drew from works from any quarters, but it has been there for over a decade. Again, I would expect that the respected Prof. Igbafe must have his own position on the Benin-Ife dynastic connection, which I am sure Prof. Ade Ajayi would have been aware of.

The point being made here is that if the Oba had the benefit of Benin oral tradition as already alluded to in Brig. Gen S. O. Ogbemudia's book and of course reviewed other materials, there are, including those written in line with Prof. Ajayi's position on these events, then he had good enough grounds to also make his opinion and interpretations. But Prof. Ajayi expressed doubt in his interview under reference as to the Oba having any references or carrying out any study. We recall that late sage, Chief Awolowo once said that while other politicians were busy junketing, he was at his desk studying. So it would not be surprising that while some others were busy at "owambe" parties, the Oba of Benin was carrying out his studies. His effort went far beyond the Ekaladerhan narrative to cover many other areas including his extensive experience in the Public Service of Nigeria.

If the learned professor has no proof for his position on Yoruba history (in which he clearly took sides with that of the Ooni of Ife), why then does he demand strict Proof from other views and not wait for the answers. He would not even want to hear that perhaps, Ife was a village at that time in history. The view by Dr. Egharevba that the Binis came in from Egypt is something that is at best a mere conjecture. If indeed the Binis came in out of the Yorubas from

Egypt, how come there is little similarity in their language and culture except, those that could have been acquired in relatively recent era.

The eminent professor of African history in the State University of New York, Buffalo, Professor Peter Eke in his lecture titled "Ogisos and Eweka times, a preliminary history of the Edoid complex of cultures", clearly stated that, from all his studies on Benin history, there is nothing whatsoever to suggest that Benin people came from anywhere else other than where they are found today. He posited that the tendency to ascribe migrant status to our indigenous people is a fashion being encouraged by those who do not want to be seen as the only migrants in Nigeria. The view of Dr. Egharevba that the Binis migrated in tow of the Yorubas from Egypt could only have been formed in Ibadan.

There is the view expressed by Professor Ade Ajayi that the place to go to research Yoruba history is Ife and not Benin, but then we hope he won't say Ife is the only place as significant parts of history have been witnessed and recorded by parties who were neither involved, affected or related to such historical events. European explorers and missionaries recorded many aspects of the history of Nigeria in the last few centuries even when the people who were subject to that history left no record of such events.

Another comment by Prof. Ajayi was to remind the Oba of Benin that his predecessor took his place among Yoruba Obas during his time. This is strange because, the mere attendance of traditional rulers council meetings at regional administrative headquarters does not translate to saying for example that, the Shehu of Bornu is a Hausa man, or that the Obong of Calabar is an Igbo man. In the Administration of the old Western Region, the Oba of Benin would of necessity or duty attend Obas meetings in Ibadan, the capital.

In the case of Benin-Ife dynastic connection, two distinct and separate peoples are involved and history must invariably record

the available perspectives of the event. These in turn would be left to the scrutiny and interpretation of not only those who are related to the events, but every independent research and review notwithstanding those whose linkages subject them to emotional reactions. It is only then we can clearly see those who are playing politics with history.

Perhaps, some myopic thinkers perceive Ekaladerhan angle to the Benin- Ife dynastic connection as a cheap avenue by Benin to enhance their status in West African history, but then, the historical and cultural legacies of Benin are clearly unparalleled and already well established. It would appear from some quarters too that the Ekaladerhan angle tantamount to demystifying Ododuwa, for which such ethnic bigots appear to have taken the stance of firm resistance. To those who might be reasoning from such premises, by chain from heaven. If not, the relative obscurity of Ododuwa's origin as against tracing him to one of the foremost forest Empires in Africa does not amount to any sacrilege.

As mentioned in the beginning of this write up, my expectations of contributions from credible authorities on the current issue of the Benin -Ife dynastic connection was high, but from what I have read in the interview granted by Prof. Ade Ajayi under reference, it would seem that my expectations were misplaced. If indeed Ekaladerhan is a direct descendant of Ogiso dynasty as the Oba of Benin narrative reveals, then Prof. Ade Ajayi and others like him should join Benin in celebrating the feat of having one of the longest single dynasties in history; Ogiso dynasty all the way to date.

Andy Ehanire is an Abuja-based Eco-tourism Consultant.

Benin Dynasty Is An Offshoot Of Ife Dynasty

By

Dr. Siyan Oyeweso

Anchored by Dayo Benson & Kingsley Anaroke

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY VANGUARD, SUNDAY MAY 2, 2004 PAGE 16

Dr. Siyan Oyeweso, the head of Department of History, Lagos State University, Ojo, spoke on Sunday Vanguard on the controversy over Yoruba ancestry. He submits that those who argue that Yoruba originated from Benin are revisionists.

Oba of Benin said that the Yoruba ancestry is from Benin but the Ooni of Ife has rebutted this claim. What exactly is the correct account of the Yoruba origin?

I don't want you to see the problem of the origin of Yoruba as a controversy between the Oba of Benin and Ooni of Ife at all. There may be a difference in interpretation at any point in time; I don't believe anybody will claim that the origin of Yoruba people is from Benin. It is an attempt to rewrite entirely the Yoruba history, which is a settled case. I am aware that the Oba of Benin is not a professional historian; he is a custodian of Benin history.

But history is an albatross; it does not allow aberration of any kind.

The origin of Yoruba as far as traditional history of Yoruba people is concerned is a settled matter. When you take a look at the earlier traditional attempt in recording the Yoruba history compiled by Samuel Johnson, even the history of Benin history by Jacob Egharevba, it is settled that the origin of Yoruba people started in Ife, the cradle of Yoruba, the Orisun, the word that cannot be translated, which is believed to be their own Garden of Eden.

The identity of Oduduwa is not so much in doubt. It is agreed by historians of all persuasions that the ancestor of the Yoruba is Oduduwa. If you want to look at who was Oduduwa, where did he migrate from?

According to the Yoruba belief system, Oduduwa was sent from heaven through a chain and landed at Ife. Any attempt by any authority to say that Oduduwa was from Benin is only one version of many versions of traditional authority, that is the migration accounts. No record so far has said that the Yoruba migrated from Benin.

Ever before Ogo dynasty established itself, Oduduwa dynasty has started at Ile-Ife. An attempt on the part of the Oba of Benin to demystify the person of Oduduwa is to re-write the entire belief system of the Yoruba people. Because, in the creation account of Olodumare, God, the Yoruba believe, gave order for the creation of the world to Obatala, the god of creation.

According to the Yoruba cosmology, Obatala at a stage started the work of creation up to a particular point in time that he got drunk on the way. Oduduwa then collected the mantle of authority from him and established what you now call the Yoruba race.

Again, what we know from the Portuguese account from Benin account, and all writers of Yoruba-Benin history ever before the revisionist account on the part of the Oba of Benin was that, the monarchical revolution or tradition started in Ile-Ife and the institution of Oba Alade by Oduduwa. The best of archeology, the best of oral traditional account points to the autochthonous status

Oduduwa as a starting and a milestone in Yoruba history. And whatever the Oba of Benin will have to say today, he will have to go and consult the Portuguese account on even the Benin.

And when you take a look at the bronze casting at Ife and the bronze casting at Benin, they are derivatives from Ile-Ife because the whole act of governance, the whole idea of Oba itself was brought from Ile Ife.

With reference to Lagos, there is a direct lineage between Benin and Lagos, but it was due to an episode. It was only a 17th Century phenomenon. But even the founder of the dynasty in Lagos, Oba Ogunfunminire migrated all the way from Ife. It was at a point in time in the social development of Lagos that the Benin factor came in, but we should not see it as a wrangling between the Oba of Benin and Ooni of Ife. I think there is some misinterpretation which will be resolved in the course of time. Even Oba Akenzua, that is, the ancestor of the present Oba of Benin, when he had to visit Ile Ife in 1936, when the Pelu, the Conference of Traditional rulers was taking place, he had to stay at modakeke because it was forbidden for him to visit Ile Ife.

Until recently, when the Oba of Benin wakes up in the morning he turns his face in the direction of Ife and prays for the Ooni of Ife.

So, the identity of Oduduwa is a settled issue in Yoruba history. Maybe what the Oba of Benin was saying would have to do with the Oranmiyan of the land. Ekaladerhan was never Oba in Benin and was never Oduduwa. It is true there are historical connections between Benin and Ife. Oramiyan himself, one of the sons of Oduduwa is reputed to be the father of the Eweka dynasty, the dynasty through which the incumbent Oba of Benin descends from. Benin itself is a corruption of Ilechim, because Oranmiyan left the place in anger and vowed after he had married an indigenous Benin woman who gave birth to Eweka. So, for the

Benin monarch to claim that the Ogiso dynasty precedes Oduduwa's revolution is an aberration. It has no backing of the best of Yoruba tradition. The Benin tradition as compiled by Jacob Egharevba, published by Oxford University Press, in 1966 or 1967 or thereabout. All these are attempts to give autochthonous status to Benin cultures and belief.

In fact, the dynasty in Benin today is an offshoot of Ife dynasty. And when you take a look at the bronze casting at Ife and the bronze casting at Benin, they are derivatives from Ile Ife because the whole act of governance, the whole idea of Oba itself was brought from Ile Ife. There shouldn't be a controversy at all. The Yoruba people know where they migrated from and the beginning of their history. What we know is that, the significance of Oduduwa in Yoruba history, not only among traditional historians, but also among professional historians is incontrovertible.

Take a look at most early works written on Yoruba history, whether the one by Ojo, or Oladimoye Kayo or the one by Fagbemi or the one by Adesheye, there is a consensus of opinion on the person of Oduduwa. If the Oba of Benin wants to write the history of Yoruba people, it should be a more serious academic exercise, not along an attempt to document his time in public office. If he is not a trained historian, but he is a royal father, and therefore custodian of Benin history. It is not possible to sit in a place and write history, a lot has to be done. If he wants to write about the origin of Yoruba, he cannot go beyond Samuel Johnson, whose work was completed in 1897 and published in 1960's. So, whatever accounts the Oba of Benin wants to give us, let us know the sources. That the Oba of Benin said it does not make it right.

The Ooni of Ife made reference to the Portuguese account of the relationship between Yoruba and Benin and he said that as early as 1934, in the palace of Benin it was Yoruba that was spoken. Would you like to throw more light on this?

As far back as 1903, when colonial Governor MacGregor was trying to resolve the chieftaincy dispute between the Elepe of Epe and the Akarigbo of Remo, the move was referred to the Alaafin of Oyo. He referred to the colonial masters since the matter was beyond him. He said he had an elder brother, the Ooni, whom he said could say authoritatively what the situation was following this. The matter was in 1903, and for the first time in Yoruba history, the Ooni traveled out of the traditional territory to Ibadan.

All the Yoruba Obas, including the Oba of Benin stayed outside the palace, signifying that it was forbidden for them to stay in the palace. They insisted that until he returned, they wouldn't go back to their palaces. In 15th, and 16th Century, Benin was already an established monarchy when the Portuguese got into Benin. But the antiquity of Benin was never and can never be compared to that of Ife, because the best of archeological excavations carried out in Benin have not been able to give us a date which were earlier than archeological excavations at Ife as at today. But in terms of Ogiso dynasty or Oduduwa dynasty, all the dynasties we are talking about, they do not mean strictly speaking, the beginning of the history of the Yoruba people. Ever before the Oduduwa revolution took place, there were some autochthonous elements residing at Ile Ife, having an idea of government, agriculture, settled life, settled civilization, and Oduduwa era was a superior one which one way or the other had outlived the existing population of Ife, particularly the Ugbo, what you call Moremi tradition and all the rest of them. So, the institution of Oduduwa is not of Ogiso. May be professional historians will have to join the fray to give the chronology of what happened.

What about the position of the Oba of Lagos supporting Oba of Benin. What do you say to that?

The Oba of Lagos must have been quoted out of context most sincerely. The origin of Lagos, the origin of Yoruba People, the origin of Benin, those are key elements. Olofin Ogunfunminin, the ancestor of Lagos as compiled by Lucy, migrated from Ile Ife and it is not in doubt. The 1603 episode when Oba Orogbua invaded Lagos, the settlement had existed before this time.

We cannot deny the impact of Benin on Lagos after the Ewele revolution in Owo by Akoko Edo. If you take a look at Owo culture, even some of the Ikale areas you find Benin culture. When you talk about influence, it is because of some Yoruba communities, when you talk about Oduduwa, it is a monarchical revolution and it started earlier and not in Benin.

Does the Benin influence on Lagos account for the adulteration of some names like Odumola, Idungaran, Bajulaye and the corruption of Bajueye?

You don't corrupt history that way. There are certain institutions in Lagos today that are derivatives of Benin.

Heads Of Former Benin Monarch's Were Actually Burried In Ile-Ife

**By
Prince Isede**

SOURCE: SUNDAY VANGUARD, MAY 2, 2004 PAGE 17

The Ooni is very right in saying that, Oduduwa came from heaven. Nobody can doubt it because we have it here in Benin too. The Bini people believe that God usually comes down to decide issues. What actually happened is this. The last Ogiso, who was my great grand father was an autocratic ruler. He could tell the Benin people that nobody will dare contravene his order. The people were not happy with his dictatorship and so they held a meeting and called on the seven Uzamas to remove him. Evian was the brother to Igodomigodo, both of whom were Oliha's sons. After Oliha completed his reign as Ogiso, his first son, Igodomigodo took over and was having only one child by name Ekaladerhan. It happened that the women in Ogiso's house were barren and because they could not bear children, they went to

consult the oracle. The oracle man told them that the first wife called Eson, was the cause of the problem. Eson was able to however persuade the others to tell the Ogiso that the native doctor said that she was raped and Ekaladerhan was the problem and should be killed. He was taken to the bush, but the people who were sent to kill him had a change of mind and set him free in the forest while they returned with their cutlasses, stained with the blood of animals that they slaughtered in the bush.

Ekaladerhan soon became a famous hunter in the forest and one day, the people that the Ogiso sent to kill him decided to go and look for him to find out if he was still alive or dead. While searching for him, they saw Ekaladerhan full of hairs. They wanted to run but he asked them to stop. He spoke to them in the Bini language, pulled off his clothes and showed them a particular mark in his body. They went back to tell his father that he was alive, but his father did not believe. By this time, he had started to understand the language of all the animals. Then secretly, the Ogiso went to the forest to find out whether it is true that this son was still alive. At that time, the palace was not where it is now, it was at the present Third East Circular road.

The remains of Ekaladerhan are at Ughoton. Ekaladerhan's first son was Edaiken. He founded Ughoton and after his death, his first son took over as Edaiken. Any first son of the Oba is an Edaiken. So when the man died, Evian came in as the ruler, Evian is the brother of Igodomigodo who had no other issue that would take over from him. Evian became Ogiso automatically and was very autocratic. The Bini moved against him, toppled him and made Esogban their ruler. They made him a powerful man in office. That is why

Esogban is the head of Benin people and because of the special staff of office which he holds, he is in-charge of witchcraftcy and such skills. After installing him, the Bini people wanted somebody to serve as a ceremonial head and the seven Uzama had to go to Ife to get a ceremonial head. This is because if they had left Esogban as the ruler there would have been a big trouble from Evian who was a former Ogiso and who the Bini did not want again. He had strong diabolical powers and the people preferred a foreigner as rule them to an Ogiso.

This is the reason the Uzamas went to Ife. They went several times before Oduduwa agreed to give them Oranmiyan to come to Benin and when Oranmiyan came to Benin, he was not allowed to enter Benin immediately. They built a hut for him at Egor and when the Enogie of Egor's daughter EGIO Egor, was hawking Ogidi, Oranmiyan called her in and made love to her. Later, Benin people asked the Ogiso to give Oranmiyan a place to stay. The Ogiso offered him a place where strangers normally stay which is the small house you see between the reservoir and Oredo secretariat in Benin City.

That was where Oranmiyan stayed for seven days, and when they took him to Evian, Evian made him to swear that the throne is for Benin people. Oranmiyan did not stay up to three months before he left. He told the Benin people that he was going back to his father at Ife, and that it was only a person who was reared in Benin that could rule the Benin people. No Benin man crowned Oranmiyan. The Ogiso did not crown Oranmiyan. Esogban did not crown Oranmiyan.

Oranmiyan went back to Ife but when he went back, the girl he

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Oranmiyan went back to Ife but when he went back, the girl he

impregnated delivered a child. Esogban ruled for about 56 years. The child that was delivered for Oranmiyan was deaf and dumb but Oranmiyan told them that it was not time for him to talk. When he grew up, the father sent seven marbles to him to play with his mates in a competition. When he got to the last round, it hit the last marble, and he exclaimed, *Owomika*, meaning "I got it" and that was how the Bini translated the word into the name, Eweka I.

So, anybody saying that Ife people came from Bini or that Bini is bigger than Ife is talking nonsense. The Ooni is very right in what he is saying, but for him to say that the Yeye (mother) Oodua, Chief (Mrs.) HID Awolowo, is also the mother of Benin is very wrong because the Bini people are not a captured people.

The Yoruba Of Lagos Society Before 1900

By
Kunle Lawal

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY VANGUARD, MAY 9, 2004 PAGE 18

There is a deep seated controversy over who the earliest settlers in Lagos actually were. The controversy can be narrowed down to two distinct schools of thought. These are the Edo and Yoruba versions of the settlement story.

Many writers have suggested that the Island of Lagos started as an Edo settlement. According to Jacob Egharevba, Lagos was used initially as a military camp by an Edo monarch, Orhogbua who stopped at Lagos to organise military expeditions against some of the towns to its north. Orhogbua was said to have stayed quite unexpectedly long on this expedition and he returned to Benin only when it was rumored that one of his sons was going to be made Oba in his place. He soon returned to Benin from where he sent one of his grandsons, *Eskipa*, to be the head of his war camp, *Eko*, and the first *Eleko* of *Eko*. In what may be rightly regarded as obvious reference to the account by Egharevba, some other sources easily refer to Lagos as being an original settlement of the Edo. Undoubtedly, this version must have been of great antiquity, & much earlier account by some European writers, such as Alar Burns and Armouzy Talbot suggest that, Lagos was a Benin

Settlement. Indeed, some writers talked about some "Benin soldiers occupying Lagos" Talbot was more specific saying that the earliest settlers in Lagos were the remnant of a Benin "invading army which were defeated at Ogulata" during the reign of Oba Orhogbua, (Circa 1550). He concluded that these soldiers, because of their inability to return to Benin decided to settle down in Lagos and develop another settlement.

Although the Lagos or Yoruba version acknowledges the relevance of a Benin factor in its history, there is a fundamental disagreement on how this came about. Unlike the Edo version, the Yoruba claims that, Benin control over Lagos was achieved through conquest and not just an easy settlement. The most popular account of the earliest settlement of the Lagos Island is the one derived from Lois's History of Lagos, which now appears to be the official version in Lagos circles. According to J.B.O. Lois, the earliest settlement of Lagos were Yorubas who migrated from Ile-Ife under one Ogunfunminire, a prince of the Ife ruling House who led a migration to *Isheri*, a town situated about twenty kilometers north of Lagos. It was from this initial settlement at *Isheri*, on the Ogun river that, series of migrations took place to such places as Ota, Ado (Odo), *Irenpa*, *Ojo*, *Ogudu*, *Ojodu*, *Agboyi*, *Iro*, etc- all odd *Awori* speaking towns. With *Isheri* acting as a dispersal center, a southward movement from this point took the migrants to Yaba from where they moved further down to Ebute Metta and from where they subsequently moved to Ile *Olofin* (Modern Iddo Island). It was from *Olofin* that, one Aromire led a migration across the Lagoon to the present Lagos Island. The movement led by Aromire to the Lagos Island was said to have been encouraged by its attraction as a possible farmstead and fishing settlement. The account further states that, the mother settlement of Lagos at Ile *Olofin* soon became a melting pot of cultures as nearly peoples from various areas started settling in the area and its immediate vicinity. Such people included the Ijebu and the Egbado as well as other *Awori* speaking peoples of the adjoining territories. It was

with this type of background that the significant event concerning one wealthy female personality, Ama, who had a quarrel with the landowners in the area, took place. The account claimed that, this woman felt cheated and, as a result of her inability to secure justice in Ile Olofin, appealed to the Oba of Benin for redress that subsequently attacked and conquered Lagos after a protracted struggle. The Oba of Benin then stationed one of his war chiefs, Aseru (Tseru) in Lagos as a military commander. Aseru undertook many military expeditions to the towns situated north of Lagos and was killed in one of such operations in the 'marshes of Isheri. One Yoruba personality, Asipa was said to have led the party that took Aseru's body to Benin for burial in accordance with Benin tradition. This act of returning Aseru's body to Benin was rewarded by the Oba of Benin who made Ashipa the first Eleko of Eko or Oloirogun, i.e. the head of or military commander of his troops in Lagos. At his death, Asipa was succeeded by Ado, his son, who was in turn succeeded by Gabaro and Akinsemoyin (in that order).

But it is this Asipa (Eskipa) that, the Edo version claims was sent by Orhoghua to be the Eleko of Eko after his return to Benin. The account states that he was succeeded by his own son Edo (Ado) who was in turn succeeded by his son, Guobaro (Gabaro). The two accounts can not be right at the same time.

Available evidence seems to be pointed to the fact that, the control of Lagos by the Benin was achieved by military conquest and the fact that the earliest settlers were not the Edos. The reasons for this position are not far to seek.

Excerpts from an Article by Dr. Kunle Lawal published in a book titled: Culture and Society in Yoruba land.

Dr. Lawal, an historian and formerly of the Lagos State University, Ojo, was one time, Commissioner for Education, Lagos State.

Oba Of Benin Got It All Wrong

By
Prof. Ade Ajayi

SOURCE: THE PUNCH, MONDAY MAY 10, 2004, PAGE 56

EMMANUEL OBE was a guest of Prof. Jacob Ade-Ajayi at the weekend. The eminent historian took exception to claims by the Oba of Benin, Omonoba Erediauwa, that the Yoruba originated from Benin. Excerpts:

What is the correct account of the origin of the Yoruba people and their Benin neighbours?

Everywhere, stories of creation and myths of origin are matters of belief, not of facts, because none of us could have been present when it happened. So, we receive from ancestors' stories and we either believe or do not believe. But we evaluate belief on the basis of credibility whether it is credible or not credible. And we base credibility upon authority. Can this one know what he is talking about? Or can he not? Is this one likely to be prejudiced or not? Now, on matters of history of the Benin people, I would rather follow the Oba of Benin than the Oba of Ife. But on the matter of

origin of the Yoruba people, I would rather follow the Oba of Ibadan than the Oba of Benin. I think that the Oba of Benin is deliberately trying to provoke controversy. He has been touting this idea for some-opinion. But I am not going to follow his ideas, unless he can show the basis of his authority.

There are people who I would rather follow on the basis of their authority than themselves. And the most important source that we have for Benin history is (Jacob) Egharevba who is regarded as an established authority. But the Oba says that he rejects Egharevba's book, because there is some Akoko Edo blood in the man. And therefore he was likely to favour the Yoruba. That is his own problem. But we believe that Egharevba had tried to study the subject. And he had written the story of history of Benin, the *Short History of Benin*, which went into four editions. And he (the Oba of Benin) is saying that the fourth edition was produced in Ibadan, edited in Ibadan, and therefore he rejects it. And he says it is not identical with what he saw in the first edition.

The man (Egharevba) was entitled to revise his book. But what the man said in the first edition is not very different from the fourth edition. But the Oba can for whatever reason he likes reject Egharevba. From the colonial times when people like to go into history, the person that we follow most in the history of the Yoruba is Samuel Johnson who was an educated Yoruba person of Oyo descent, who was able to study traditional history from the chiefs of Oyo. And we have his own version. There are historians like Akinjogbin who have tried to look into as many sources as available, as many traditional sources as possible and many have things that will tell us that we have reached the end of the story. But the Oba of Benin has no basis at all. He is writing a book about his experience as a civil servant. And suddenly, he drags this issue of Benin/Yoruba relationship into it, deliberately, just to provoke controversy. The story is not relevant to his experience and what

was happening at his coronation. He just dragged this story in, just for the sake of publicity. And he is merely playing politics with it. His own father, Oba Akenzua, regularly met with Yoruba rulers because he accepted that there is a relationship between them. The Yoruba tradition says that the same person who founded the monarchy in Oyo founded the monarchy in Benin, and returned to Ife, and the obelisk, Opa Oranyan, was his walking stick.

So, he was not an ordinary man. He was not a common man, if you like. Now you have to accept that or not. It is a matter of belief. Now the Oba is saying that the Yoruba are confusing Orunmila with Oduduwa. One could almost say that it seems not enough for him to tell the history of Benin for which he may have been coached during his coronation but wanted to deliberately try to create trouble for political reasons. The father did not complain about meeting with the Yoruba Obas because of common descent. Now, again, we need to make a distinction between the history of the Yoruba people and the oldest skeleton that we have found. I think it is about 1,900 years old skeleton at Eleru, not far from Akure where they dug the skeleton. The people who study languages tell us that Yoruba, side by side with Edo and side by side with Igbo have been spoken for at least 4,000 years. And the monarchy we are talking about either in Ife or Benin for various reasons will date back to the 12th century AD. So what we are saying is that, the Yoruba people have existed before then. Somebody has done an article entitled: Before Oduduwa. So, for the Oba to say that, there were five rulers before Oduduwa in Ife and therefore it was not Oduduwa who founded the monarchy is irrelevant because we are saying that Ife people existed. Yoruba people existed and this prince came from somewhere, and it was he and his children, who founded the monarchy in different parts of Yoruba land. And if it is accepted that the founder of Oyo, which is the next most powerful kingdom after Ife was from Ife and the different Yoruba rulers knew that if they

wanted to be able to wear a beaded crown, they have to trace origin to Ife, and so you have several stories, so it's difficult to sort out...

Initially, people said that, Oduduwa had seven sons. I don't know how many grandchildren. But it was his sons and grandchildren who went about to found the kingdoms in different parts of Yorubaland. It's not as if he woke up one day and said: "I go there, you go there". This must have been something that was happening may be over a period of 2000 years or so. But anyone in Yorubaland that wants to wear a beaded crown has to trace origin to Ife. Now if the Oba of Benin is rejecting this for his personal reasons, one would understand. But he would be acting contrary to the traditions that we know by which his own fathers used to meet with them at Oyo, at Ibadan regularly, what was called *Pejupeju*. So, really, I don't have any contribution rather than to say that, the Oba of Benin is entitled to his own opinion. He is entitled to express views to boost his own position. Nobody says that they are Yoruba people but that the monarchy in Benin descended from Ile Ife. If you then say that this prince that was once condemned to be executed, and he ran away and wandered about, and came to Benin and Ife people accepted him as Oduduwa, and then claimed that he is the founder of the monarchy among the Yoruba people and that if there went back to Ife it's a more complicated story which may affect the personality of the Oba of Benin more. But it seems less credible than the other story that at the end of the Ogoja line of rulers in Benin, they were looking for a king and borrowed kingship. Because kingship was always different when you have centralized communities like the Igbo. They might feel attracted to monarchy when they saw monarchies in other places, and for that reason, there have been so many attempts initiated like the case of the Emirs in the North; who created their own monarchy systems. So, it is possible that the same thing happened in Benin, that

copied. But, it is unlikely that monarchy among the Yoruba will be copied from Edo monarchy. And in any case, if we are looking to understand the tradition (of the Yoruba people), it is better to go and ask them at Ife than go and ask them in Benin. From the reaction, you can see that people don't take this kind of stories light. And the Oba of Benin must have anticipated what kind of controversy he wants to generate. I notice that when this was said at the launching of the book, people clapped for him, as if the previous story (of an Ife prince founding the Benin monarchy) subordinated Benin to Yoruba. Whereas the idea is to establish link, to say where the creation of kingship derived. It did not arise when the Oba (Akenzua) was meeting with the Alake, the Awujale and so on, it did not diminish his future. Now, if Erediauwa thinks it is diminishing and therefore wants to reject that story, he is not entitled to trying to push an incredible story on the Yoruba by saying that they don't know that they are confusing Oduduwa with Orunmila and so on.

Is there any evidence of surviving traditional interaction between the Yoruba and the Edo?

If you go to Owo, you will see Owo as it were, midway. And Dr (Moses) Ekpo has studied the art of Owo, linking it up with Ife and Benin as if it's a kind of intermediated stage of development. And one still sees the link between Lagos and Benin Iga, Idugaaraan, and so on around the palace of Eleko. It is clear that Benin had a kind of influence that reached to Lagos. But this does not mean that Yoruba people derived from Benin. There is this thing, though as I said, it's a matter of belief. But we study language, we study linkage and so on. A man is not free just to make up any story. I mean you can make up any story and say this is what I want you to believe. But people are entitled to say, you are entitled to your opinion but we don't find the basis on which you are putting out

these stories and therefore, we don't accept. In any case, if I'm looking for an authority on Yoruba history, I won't go to the Oba of Benin because you know he has his own political views to set. The mean stories that people accepted, all the authorities on Benin history, Bradley and so on accepted Egharevba as the most complete listing of the Obas of Benin, the wars and so on. And you're like Samuel Johnson's history of the Yoruba. And you can't just wake up one day and say that you reject it. He has reversed quite a few of the things his father used to do. He's more traditional than his father. His father was more open to ideas than himself, which is right. You have to guard traditions these days, otherwise you would get too many problems. That is alright, but you don't need to provoke other people, or tell them what they ought to believe, and so on. It just makes your own story lacking in credibility.

From your narration, the relationship between Benin and the Yoruba had more to do with the establishment of the monarchies, and the Yoruba who came from where. What are the origins of the Edo and the Yoruba?

Some people used to say that the Yoruba migrated from the Middle East. The Igbo of Onitsha also claim that. The Arochuku Igbo also say that. There are quite a few others too. But you cannot have a whole people like... in fact, some of the Igbo people say that they are the lost tribe of Israel. Well, you know people look for their origin from certain favoured areas because of Christianity and the Bible. The Middle East seems to be a dispersal point. That is the point at which Christianity started, Islam, Judaism, and so on. So what Yoruba historians are now saying is that, when the Yoruba came from the East it does not need to be 4,000 miles away. The East could be just from the Niger/Benue confluence where linguists believe that the Yoruba that is spoken in that area is the oldest dialect from which then evolved the Akoko dialect.

Ondo, Ijebus, Egba, Oyo people who study dialects are the best guide. And that, therefore, proto-Yoruba is that similar to the Yoruba that is spoken in Kogi State. Again, maybe we have not done enough research, but we have done far more than the Oba of Benin knows about.

Where do the Edos come from?

Again, we know what historians have written. Egharevba has written. There is a written authority we follow. There is Bradley who is an anthropologist. Then there are some others who study Edo language in relation to Edoid languages that are in existence like Urhobo, Isoko and others. And studying the kingship, and from studying the fracas to see how they could have evolved. It is from such studies that people assumed that the origin of the Benin People and the Yoruba, the languages must have been spoken side by side for at least 4,000 years in order to explain the similarity and the separations. But this is not a matter for speculation. You don't just throw up ideas, you have to find some explanation and some basis of authority for what you believe. And like I said earlier on, another problem is that the Oba rejected Egharevba.

So, the relationship and arguments have more to do with the founding of the monarchies in Ife and Benin, and little to do with where either of them originated from?

That Oduduwa was the prince who was sentenced to death in Benin, escaped, wandered and came to found Ife, that story is calculated to annoy Yoruba people. What the Yoruba people say is that, the ruling dynasty in Benin, the Ogiso, had a problem; and it sometime came to a point, either because, there is no male heir... and if you pick another male line, there will be disputes. So, you say you consult the oracle and you go and look for a king from somewhere else. You might come across a hunter, well fed,

handsome person, and you say this is the one that the oracles predicted that we should make Oba. And you can make him an Oba. That kind of thing is more credible than to say that some prince that had been roaming around, they discovered him and they said 'You are the one we have been waiting for, come and be our Oba'. And then you say it's a small village. In Yoruba belief, Ife is the place where the urban culture of the Yoruba originated. It's a major urban area with 401 gods. And a place powerful enough to assert authority over most of Yoruba land. And where a prince goes and founds the monarchy in Edo, then goes to Oyo, founds the monarchy there, comes back and walks with obelisk as his walking stick. That is the kind of image that the Yoruba like to believe. Now you reject that for Benin and you want the Yoruba to accept your rejection of that and then you say that it is a Benin prince who was due for execution and managed to escape and then they came looking for him to come and accept the kingship. It's a very unlikely story to my mind.

Were the kingships established through conquest?

Nobody would want to say that their own kingship was established by conquest. But in many of the kingdoms when they want to install a new Oba, they would simulate a conflict. Like Ifeju, the original king emerges victorious and is crowned. So when they want to cover up the conquest, it is shown through a story that such a thing might have taken place. So, the summary of it is that, nobody was present when these things happened. We're dealing with myths, but there is a limit to how far you can speculate.

It's A Challenge To Historians

By

Associate Prof. Hakeem Haruna, UNILAG

Anchored by John Nwokocho

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY VANGUARD, MAY 2, 2004 PAGE 17

**What is the true position of the origin of the
Benin People in Southern Nigeria?**

Well, I'm a little bit afraid to speak to the media on this issue because, only yesterday Wednesday May 5 a reporter spoke with me. But I was not quite happy the way he presented my position. I did not say that Omo N'Oba's claim was not based on facts. I said it is a new input. It is an addition to existing hypotheses and theories.

As a matter of fact, professional historians always hesitate to get engaged or get involved in sophistry, the type that is currently arising from the position taken by the Oba of Benin and the response by the Ooni of Ife. It is sophistry because, it is all about the politics of history, politics that is not rooted in serious scholarship. We professional historians prefer to tackle issues concerning

origins and indeed, other aspects of history of a people from the point of view of research, scientific analysis on the subject and to circulate the information through publications, like books and journals; we hardly discuss the issues in the media.

However, the position advanced by the Oba of Benin, the claim of Benin origin of the Ife dynasty under Oduduwa is a new perspective. It is a new dimension to existing theories and hypotheses on the origin of the Oduduwa dynasty in Ife. It also offers a new insight into the origin of the Oranmiyan dynasty known as the Eweka dynasty. It's a new dimension because, that position never existed before now. At least, not as publicized or documented in books as the Omo N' Oba has recently done.

It's a new dimension because, existing theories on the subject points to Oduduwa's Ife as the place of migration or derivation of the Oranmiyan who was sent to Benin by Oduduwa by request of Benin people for political intervention resolving the political crisis in Benin. That has been the general position.

The evidence of this are contained in the works of many scholars including Jacob Egharevba a celebrated historian in Benin. The position by the Oba of Benin, to me, poses a challenge to all professional historians interested in subject of origins and migration of our people to go into the field and do further research on the subject along the position articulated by the Oba of Benin to see whether there exists similar evidence in Benin and Ile Ife that will corroborate what the Oba has said as well as find out if there is any evidence that controverts the new position or that which may dismiss the subsisting theory of Ife Origin of the Benin dynasty and then assert and propagate the new position on the subject by the Oba of Benin.

Until such a research is done, it may be difficult for any historian to take a position on the subject.

J. F. Ade Ajayi On Omo N' Oba's Book

By
Daniel E. Inneh

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY OBSERVER MAY 30, 2004 PAGE 4

I have always loved to read Professor Ade Ajayi's book, more so, as many of my Pprofessors of history passed through him at Ibadan. He is a renowned historian and this writer respects, that fact.

Now, Professor J. F. Ade Ajayi has retired from active teaching. He makes himself available for other national uses including services at the Royal court at Ile Ife where the Ooni presides. He now manages history at Ife royal court as a high chief. According to the Sunday Vanguard of May 9th 2004, other publications which followed the renowned Professor's comments on the Omo N' Oba's book *I remain, Sir, your obedient servant*, have continued to gain attention. Professor J. F. Ade Ajayi accused the Omo N' Oba of playing politics or provoking controversy on his comments on Oduduwa origin and Benin Connection. The Professor's dismissal of Omo N' Oba's comment in this aspect in his book knew no caution or restraint. Professor Ajayi came out point blank to support the Ooni's objection to the Omo N' Oba's position on the subject.

Professor Ajayi got emotionally involved and raised several

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Professor Ajayi got emotionally involved and raised several

questions. He wanted to know where the Omo N' Oba got his information on the Oduduwa story. He said that, Oba has no bra standi as it were, to tell the story of Oranmiyan. He spoke with an air of finality that the Omo N' Oba was trying to deny what his father "protected" when he took his place among Yoruba Obas.

Professor Ake Ajayi must have certainly disappointed many people in his hasty and emotional comment on this subject. The writer will add nothing to the story told by the Omo N' Oba as there is no one else who represents Benin oral tradition. If Professor Ajayi knew about the story for the first time that Oranmiyan was a Benin Prince, it only shows that the learned professor spent too many years in the library researching on European activities in Africa with little or no time to look into the verbal testimonies concerning Africa past. The story as told by Omo N' Oba is not new and even a renowned Professor serving as a court historian elsewhere would be helpless in planting new ideas in the minds of Benin people. The renowned Professor wants the Omo N' Oba to present to him his facts. Which facts? When Egharevba wrote and had his book moderated from Benin, the views were acceptable to him as fact of history only because he found elements there that promoted his idea of Yoruba historiography of triumph and Empire growth.

Jacob U. Egharevba was not a Benin first historian, as expressed by His Majesty, the Ooni of Ife. Professor Ajayi ought to have corrected that assertion. Way back to the Oyo period, Benin had recorders of Benin significant events. These were done in at first and during the second historical period, different Obas, particularly Oyo and Esigie enhanced the services of the guild system to strengthen this requirement. The guilds of brass casters at Iya Eronmwon and wood carvers at Igbesanmwan found the claim that J. U. Egharevba was the first Benin historian laughable. This side of the palace has always had official chroniclers. As far as Professor Ajayi was concerned, the Ooni of Ife was right and more credible.

In Ooni's view "Oduduwa the legend, the father of the bigger Yoruba dynasty has no connection whatsoever with Ogiso dynasty in Benin history as portrayed by the Oba of Benin, because Oduduwa descended directly from heaven through a chain to where is known as Ife in company of four hundred deities". To Professor Ade Ajayi, this is a verifiable fact of history, and he comes strong in the *Sunday Vanguard* of May 9th 2004 to say "the reaction of the Ooni of Ife on the issue was more credible to believe". Ade Ajayi, the Ife Chief, prefers mythology-belief system and faith of Ife people to verifiable facts of history. What does not support history of triumph and superiority of Yoruba people to him is not a fact of history. I am sure Chief J. F. Ade Ajayi will no doubt consider it a fact of history and not politics when the Ooni said to Mrs. H. I. D. Awolowo "Mama, you are Mama Oduduwa covering the entire Yoruba nation both here and in diaspora, including the Benin Kingdom where the Omo N' Oba Erotiwa by the grace of God is the Oba".

Clearly, the mission here is to advocate Yoruba superiority and it is done with insulting arrogance. Chief Ade Ajayi should not use the fact of history that Sir Adesoji Adeniji, Ooni of Ife was president of the House of Chiefs in the Old Western Nigeria to support Yoruba Oduduwa story that he sent to Benin, a Prince, to establish a dynasty there. Does this simple politically motivated arrangement buttress historical fact? Is this the kind of fact you require to ascertain historical assertion? When Professor Ajayi said that Ooni's story on Oduduwa was more credible to him, what exactly did he mean?

When the problem of who should head the Traditional Rulers Council in Oyo came up some years ago, many, including this writer had expected the renowned historian, Professor Ade Ajayi to use history to analyze facts between the Alafin and Ooni. History would then have been put to the advantage of our national service

for our general benefit as Nigerians. Ajayi's voice was never heard; the hard facts were too difficult for him to pronounce. Who should speak for Yoruba people, the head of Oyo kingdom, the Alafin or the Ooni? The Alafin of Oyo was NCNC and the Ooni, Action Group and so, it was convenient to pervert history and use the services of Professors of history serving as court historians to justify it. By knowledge, fame and age, one would expect in every circumstance that Professor J. F Ade Ajayi, the Ife high chief to apply himself more objectively in all national questions than he manifested in his comment on the Omo N' Oba's book. *'I Remain, Sir, Your Obedient Servant'*.

DANIEL E. INNEH a retired Permanent Secretary writes from Benin.

Oduduwa: Saving History From Ethnic Propaganda

By
Chukwu Eke

SOURCE: THE VANGUARD, THURSDAY JUNE 3, 2004 PAGE 43

The word 'Yoruba' metamorphosed from a derogatory phrase the Igbos had used for the Oyo people.

I do not know why the Yorubas are so unsettled by the recent claim made by the Oba of Benin to the effect that Oduduwa was a felon expelled from Benin kingdom. The story is not new. The Binis have known and told it before now. I know because I heard it two years ago from a Bini friend of mine. My friendship with the Benin prince has been oiled by my interest in the history of his people. On that day, I had asked him if, as the Yorubas claim, Eweka, the first Oba of Bini after the dethronement of Ogiso, was indeed a grandson of Oduduwa. The story he told me varied a little from the Oba's. In that conceit typical of the Binis, he chuckled sardonically before telling me that Oduduwa escaped from Bini prison and went to found the Ife dynasty. Is it possible that the Yorubas have not heard this Bini version of Oduduwa story before now?

Or is it a case of being rattled because the almighty Oba of Benin has lent his voice to it, raising it high to the bookshelves from

mere mumbling of village folks. Even if the story is revisionist, they claim, is it so difficult to swallow a little dose of their own pl of historical propaganda from the Bini? On the face of it, one can easily pitch one's tent with the Bini in this Odaduwa saga as O Abiodun of Lagos. Besides, having lesser of the Yoruba sin of making spurious historical claims, the Bini have at least identified Odaduwa with a real name, *Ekalakutan*, while the Yorub Odaduwa remains a mythical entity without a real name except the descriptive words used for him by the autochthonous Ibo to invade and colonise. But the Bini version also fails to achieve a clear historical perspective on the man and how he became the overlord over the natives of the Southwest.

As a Yoruba version, it is exclusionist. It then follows that to know, not just the true Odaduwa, but the ethno-cultural circumstances of Southwest before him, we must set aside the contending stories of the Bini and the Yorubas and go to rethink oral traditions and books written without any tribe in mind.

It is clear that the Odaduwa children have deliberately revised and falsified the history of Southwest Nigeria for the sole aim of covering the Ibo root of Southwest Nigeria and for the sole aim of covering the Ibo root of most Southwesterners, thereby denying Nigeria the long-sought-for unity.

What indeed is the fact about Odaduwa? To answer this question, we need to acquaint ourselves with the political development in Southwest Nigeria at about AD 1100. According to Yoruba oral tradition, the aboriginal inhabitants of Southwest were Ibo. One morning, when the dews were still heavy on the land because the sun had not ascended their sky, they woke up to discover that their land had been invaded by a foreign army. The fight that ensued was fierce. The Ibos were brave, but the invaders had more sophisticated weapons of war. The Oyo and Ife men

which, it seem, did not have dense population of the Ibo, were the first to fall to the enemy army.

Here in Ife, to be exact, they established their headquarters, installed their leader as king just as the Fulani use the natives against their own, in other parts.

Ibo capitulated.

In the Ekiti area, where the Ibo were large, coherent and strong, the invaders were given a good sum of money. They were held back for a long time by the Ibo warriors who masked themselves with raffia, 'until they too capitulated, not to the superior fire power of the invaders, but to the bottom power of a certain Moremi, who was to the "Yoruba" what Deborah was to the Philistines. Odoakawa was the leader of the invaders having conquered the native Ibo of Southwest, he appointed his lieutenants as Obas in all the towns and became the overlord of the Southwest. And the defeat and capture of the Ibo in Southwest Nigeria was celebrated by the Yoruba at the annual Eid festival (The kingdom of the Yoruba, Robert, Smith, 3rd edition, University of Wisconsin Press).

Writing under the heading, 'The Igbo origin of Egba Yoruba,' Isiah Al-Suliman, an African-American researcher, had this to say: "Southwest Nigeria marks the location of the present day Ibo tribe. However, initially the Ibo were the rulers of the entire South including Southwest, which is currently classified as Yoruba territory. The Yoruba first entered the Southwest part of Nigeria as invaders and colonisers of the original Ibo inhabitants".

On the spread of the Igbos, Dr. Fadipe N. A wrote in his book, 'The Sociology of The Yoruba' thus: "it is tolerably certain that, the Ekiti people, the greater bulk of Ijesa people and to some extent, Ondo belong to this older culture group. It is possible that the group comprised much larger number of tribes than those just specified which is to be regarded as minimum denotation term for the early wave of immigrants..." What is the meaning of Odoakawa? As I

said earlier, the name Oduduwa or Odua for short is 'an Ibo phrase Odudu wa or Odu wa, all meaning 'their leader.' In Ibo of Delta, Abia and the Wawa area of Enugu and Ebonyi States.

The defeated Ibo of Southwest Nigeria could have, by identifying the leader of their tormentors, say among themselves: 'Nkaa bu onye odudu wa or 'Nkaa bu Odu wa' (That is their leader).

Anybody whose mind has not been foreclosed by ethnic bias must see this meaning more tenable than 'knowledge of how to behave', which some Yoruba meta-historians postulated, as the meaning of Oduduwa.

The next question to consider is whether the Ibos colonised by Oduduwa and his people in the Southwest were of the same stock as the Ibos of Southeast and Southsouth. I was asked this question by the writer, Akin Adesokan, who is now living in The United States of America. He traced his ancestry to the autochthon Ibos of Southwest, but asked me if I thought his Ibo ancestors were of the same ethno-cultural make up as my own Igbo of southeast. My answer was "Yes," because, in the first place, in the absence of written records, going back to the childhood of the world when the Ibos emerged as a culture, scholars have been persuaded to trace linguistic relationships as providing by far the most dependable evidence of historical connection... Thus, wrote the erudite Professor of history and of Ibadan, Professor A. E. Afigbo, I am convinced that I have been able to provide such linguistic connection between the Ibos of Southwest and the Ibos of Southeast and South South.

Igbo and Yoruba language

But, if the Yorubas think otherwise, I will still refer them to their friend, the poet and philosopher, Odia Ofeimum. In a thought-provoking article, he wrote recently, he said among other things about 'the borrowed words' (the words brought in by Oduduwa). Unless, they think that the poet lied.

In addition, the Ibominas who are among the southwest towns that retain their Ibo name have another name- Omu Ara. They say it is in honour of their founder, a woman named Omu. Omu in Igbo means 'one who gives birth' and by implication 'woman'. In Ekiti State, there is still a town that celebrates New Yam Festival like their brothers in Southeast. These are beside the fact that the Ibos and the Yorubas belong to the same language group — Kwa.

Even the word "Yoruba" metamorphosed from a derogatory phrase, which the Ibos had used for the Oyo people. Before Oduduwa and his Obas put the whole Southwest to rout, the Oyos, who thought they were enjoying Oduduwa's civilisation, would call the Ibos bush people. The Ibos, to pay them back their insult, would call them Oyo Oru Oba' (Oyo, slaves of the Oba). That is how the name Yoruba came about.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Oduduwa children have deliberately revised and falsified the history of Southwest Nigeria for the sole aim of covering the Ibo root of Southwest Nigeria and for the sole aim of covering the Ibo root of most Southwesterners, thereby denying Nigeria the long-sought-for unity. What unity could we not achieve if the Oduduwa people had not denied a larger population of Southwest people the knowledge of their blood affinity with the Ibos of the Southeast. Would we not be having a real handshake across the Niger? But truth is like smoke which nobody buries and celebrates victory for a long time. It must surely show itself indomitable.

It is on this understanding that, I think the *The Comet* Newspapers deserve our pity for the editorial they wrote on Monday, May 11, 2004. That editorial epitomised how lowly a people could go to falsify and revise history without recourse to any oral or written evidence.

The writer must be one of the die-hard Yoruba Ibo-phobist whose education had not purged them of the fear of the Ibo.

Besides, the glaring Ibo-phobia, the editorial was empty. For instance, while it compared up all the ancient city-states under the sun and even those in Mars, and claimed Yoruba affinity with them, it never mentioned any Ibo connection.

Mr. Eke writes from Lagos

The Place Of Ile-Ife In The Hierarchy Of Yoruba Race

By
Bisi Omidiora

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY PUNCH, JUNE 13, 2004, PAGE 49

The place where it all began", reminds me of the Yoruba mystical version of how in the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. We were told in the book of Genesis that "the earth was without form. The earth was void and covered with darkness and waters". In this book, *Flashes of Ideas and Reflections*, our most respected late Molabi Adio Moses continues the Ife mythology by writing: "Olodumare, which is the Yoruba name for God Almighty said to Oduduwa his son, and progenitor of Yoruba race; I have created the earth. I have also created water under the heaven. When you go down there, that is, to the earth, on the water, sprinkle the sand in this shell, and rest this white cock on the mould thus formed; and the sand poured and poured, and the white cock scattered and spread the sand to all places round the world... and the earth grew far and wide

"The place where the cock began the great work of spreading the sand and thus making the earth, was then called "IFE" i.e. IFE EXPANSIVE, from "where it all began". This mythology, which is

strongly believed among the sons and daughters of Ife and many Yoruba, was confirmed by Chief (Dr.) M.A. Feabunmi in his book titled: **Ife, the genesis of Yoruba race**. Professor Biobaku, also in this book, **Sources of Yoruba History**, also confirmed the story of the mystical descent of Olodumare, the supreme God of Yoruba who sent him down from heaven on a chain to create the earth. Where there was previously water and the spot where Oduduwa first landed was Ile - Ife, the spot where God created man, white and black. From there, all the races of the world sprang up.

Recounting the writing of contemporary historians on the long existence of Ile- Ife as a city, Prince Ladigbolu, in his biography of Oba Oyebade Lipede, The Alake of Abeokuta, quoted Herodotus (484 424B.C.) Father of History, as writing that "according to history, there were five ancient cities in Africa between 3000 and 1000 BC of which; one was, Ile Ife".

It is also an historical fact as published in government gazette, that as far back as 1904, Ile Ife was a province that had her boundary with the colony of Lagos. The Are (crown), which the Ooni of Ife wore once a year at Olojo Festival, is acknowledged to be the oldest crown in Yorubaland.

The author was born and bred at Ile-Ife. From the story I heard from my grandfathers and more especially from my father-in-law Sir Adesoji Aderemi, Oduduwa might not be a mystical personage as claimed by some historians, even though there were many stories on how he migrated to Ife. One mystical version said he descended from heaven by means of a chain. Another described him as the biblical Noah who survived the flood and landed at Ife land by means of chain ropes from their lifeboat which anchored Oke-Ora on the Ife-Ilesha road, Ile-Ife, with other 40 deities who survived the flood. One thing I remember vividly from my histo

book over 60 years ago was that, Oduduwa was a human being who migrated to Ife from the east..., became the first crowned king of the city and in the works of Rev Samuel Johnson, the great Yoruba historian, was the grandfather and great grand father of renowned kings and princes, who ruled and made history in Yoruba land, - thus confirming Ile-Ife as the home of the highest throne in Yoruba land the home of the throne of Oduduwa. So, logically, whoever occupies or sits on that throne automatically becomes the most pre-eminent and the first among equals of all the Yoruba Obas.

“The history of Yoruba land has contributed in no small measure to the making of Nigeria as the greatest Nation in Africa”

My father in-law, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, if he were alive to day, would certainly disagree vehemently as Oba Okunade Sijuwade rightly did, with the statements that were made in the press sometime ago that Ijebu Ife had long existed before the founding of Ile-Ife or that the cradle of Ife derived its roots from Benin or Wadai.

From the records in our possession at Ile Ife, these statements are far from the truth. I do not claim to be an historian, although, I was privileged to have a first class history teacher at Oduduwa College, who enabled me to earn a Grade A in History in my Overseas Cambridge School Certificate, 50 years ago. But as a chartered accountant whose stock in trade is logic, truth, fairness and accuracy, certain facts exist, which have not been disputed by the various writers on the history of Ile-Ife in respect of which, I stand to be challenged or convinced otherwise.

1. That Ile Ife is the cradle of Yoruba race and most of the Yoruba towns and crown heads traced their origin from Oduduwa and the ancient city of Ile-Ife. The history of Yoruba land had contributed in no small measure to the making of Nigeria as the greatest Nation in Africa'
2. That before Oduduwa's death and burial at Ile-Ife, he blessed and crowed many of his children and dispatched them to different parts of Yoruba land, where they established their settlements and became crowned kings.

According to Dr. Toso Eluyemi, in his book, Oba Adesoji Aderemi, many of the towns founded by these princes still carry the prefix Ife. Some people, he said, claimed that these towns existed long before the founding of Ile Ife. This is not correct, he said. He asserted; "For the avoidance of doubt, it should be stated that these towns were founded by the Ife people who were either princes hunters or warriors from Ile Ife. Some of these towns were:

- a. Ife Ijebu., but popularly called Ijebu Ife (in Ogun State)
- b. Ife Odan now in Oyo State
- c. Ife Olukotun (now in Kwara State)
- d. Ifewara (Osun State)
- e. Ifetedo (Osun State)

It is an incontrovertible fact, as some historians have admitted that Oduduwa lived to a very old age at Ile-Ife, married many wives and produced several children. He reigned, died and was buried at Ile-Ife where his sacred grave is deified and worshipped till today.

Recently, I was discussing with a respected traditional ruler who asked me what I thought about the mystical version that

Oduduwa did not, in fact, die, but like the biblical Ejjah, climbed to heaven by a chain. My answer was that, even if that mythical theory is true, I could say with some certainty that the spot where Oduduwa must have climbed to heaven was Ile-Ife and no where else.

The place of Ile-Ife in the hierarchy of Yoruba race was clearly evidenced by the life and death of Oranmiyan, a grandson of Oduduwa, and the first Ooni of Ife.

It is a well established fact that Oranmiyan, the grandson of Oduduwa, described by Rev. Samuel Johnson as "a man of great physical power and mighty conqueror, " founded Oyo, and installed his son, Ajaka, as the first Alafin of Oyo.

Records in our possession at Ile Ife also showed that, Oranmiyan went further to become the first Oba of Benin, and installed his son Eweka (Owomika in Ife dialect) from a Benin wife, on his throne.

Thus, as Professor Ade Ajayi said, "giving the Benin the long line of Kings from the Oranmiyan Dynasty", before returning to Ife- Ife to occupy the throne of his father, Oduduwa, until his death at Ile-Ife.

There could not have been a more credible evidence of the pre-eminence and paramountcy of the throne of Arole Oduduwa and the sacredness of the city of Ife Ife as the cradle of Yoruba race than the fact that the ancient town is the burial ground of Oranmiyan and the resting place of the legendary Oduduwa. This historical fact alone ought to be the most effective factor that should unite and bind the Yorubas together as one nation and one unit. All of them should be proud to make the claim of Ife as their origin and home of their ancestors.

Ile-Ife had always been lucky to have great and influential monarchs, who, because they were literates and Internationally

exposed, have been compelled to blend tradition with modernity, which made our neighbours to say with envy "Oba ni Ife ni, won kon enis" (The pride of life is only in their Oba and not in the people). This saying had never been truer because from Oduduwa to Oba Sijuwade, great warriors, outstanding leaders, educationists and professionals of integrity and uprightness, have come out of Ife, who may not have the privilege of amazing fabulous wealth, but are very contented and proud of their origin.

During the life of Oduduwa and long after his death, tradition had it that princes and war chiefs, led by Baloguns from Ile-Ife left the city to establish new towns and settlements where they became kings and Baales.

According to history and as confirmed by Dr. M.A. Fabunmi, the late Odole of Ife, Ibadan was founded by Lagelu, the Balogun of Ife, who hailed from Ile Atiki in Ilare compound of Ile-Ife. History recorded that Lagelu's fame spread far and wide within Yoruba land, with the result that he was honoured with the title of Balogun of Yoruba land by Sango, who became Alafin of Oyo.

My view on the place of Ile-Ife in the hierarchy of Yoruba race in addition to a thorough examination and analysis as an accountant, the books of great Yoruba historians, Rev. Samuel Johnson, Prof. Biobaku, Chief Dr. M.A. Fabunmi, Prince Ladigbolu, Prof. Ade Ajayi and Dr. Toso Eluyemi, is also anchored on the evidence of the privileged information obtained from my close relationship of some 50 years with the Royal Court of Ife by virtue of my 45 years of marriage to the daughter of the late Ooni of Ife, Sir Adesoji Aderemi and my association with Kabiyesi, Alaiyeluwa Oba Okunade Sijuwade, as the Balogun of Ife. I consider my view as an authentic history of Ife-Ife, which cannot be faulted and like an auditor's certificate, which gives "a true and fair

view of the position of Ile-Ife as the cradle of Yoruba race”

The Yorubas have been singularly blessed with a rich culture, an history that had endured and existed long before 3000-1000BC, and which despite devastating inter-tribal wars had stood the test of time.

The history of Yoruba land has contributed in no small measure to the making of Nigeria as the greatest Nation in Africa. If our traditional rulers in the past had, to our pride, been able to keep sacred, respected and unpublished this great history of the Yoruba nation, which history was taught to us in our primary school days in the 1940s, what legacy, judging by the controversy and distortions that are happening around us today, are we likely to leave behind for our incoming generation?

Chief Omidiora is the Balogun. of Ife. The above are excerpts from his auto biography, titled; The Birth of a Dream.

Re: Omo N'oba Vs Ooni On Oduduwa's Origin

By
David I. Okuarobo

SOURCE: THE NIGERIAN OBSERVER FRIDAY JUNE 4, 2004 PAGE 19

Recent Newspaper publications on the origin of Oduduwa have been quite exciting and surprising, with some noted scholars demonstrating ignorance of the Benin's origin of Oduduwa.

Historical authors (Interviewees), like Associate Professor Hakeem Haruna, Dr. Dele Adeoti, and Professor J. F Ade Ajayi (in the New Age of 6th (Page 1), 7th (Page 1) and 10th (Page 3), May 2004 and PUNCH of 10th May, 2004. Page 56 should know that the claim by Omo N'Oba on the origin of Oduduwa (the founder of Ife and Yorubas) was neither a "new input" nor "new angle to history" nor "mere hypothesis".

The claim by the Omo N'Oba has been published in the past in many history books, Federal Government of Nigeria posters as well as in Bini oral history, and folklores: Binis (or Obas) institutionalized traditional festivals on the departure of and search for Oduduwa from Benin, the visitations of Benin Chiefs led by the Oliha of Benin to Oduduwa at Ife, Oranmiyan's representation of Oduduwa to Benin, the birth of Eweka 1 of Benin, and t

coronation of Eweka 1 and all subsequent Benin Obas including the present Omo N'Oba N'Edo, long may he reign. The claim by the Omo N'Oba can be found in the following books and in posters viz:

1. The story of Nigeria by Michael Crowder (Faver and Faver, London-Boston), Chapter 3, Page 7 States:
... that Oduduwa was an eastern prince driven out of his Kingdom. After long wandering, he conquered the local inhabitants of Ife, where he settled.
2. People & Empire of West Africa: West Africa in History (1000-1800) by C.T. Stride, Caroline Ifeka (with advice from Prof. J. F Ade Ajayi), Page 308 states that:
"...Owodo also suffered from the fact that although he had many wives, he only had one son. Eventually, an oracle pronounced that the son should be executed so that the other wives would be able to conceive. Instead, Owodo arranged for the son to be banished..."
Note: Ogiso Owodo was the father of Oduduwa (the son in the text).
3. Federal Government of Nigeria posters of some traditional legends exhibited in the High Commission in London and by extension other embassies round the world. The poster of Oduduwa has the following inscription: "... *The Yoruba believe he (Oduduwa is the father of the Yoruba and progenitor of all Yoruba Obas and the Oba of Benin., The Binis believe that he (Oduduwa) is a Benin prince called EKALADERHAN who was banished by his father, the Ogiso of Benin. His name, the Binis claim is derived from 'Iduduwa' a Bini word meaning fortune path...*"
4. Some Facts About Great Benin (1979) and the Benin Monarchs and their period of reign - A publication of Oba's Palace.

5. Many short story books in Bini languages primary/secondary school pupils/students.
6. Say more on Ife-Benin Dynasty, Sunday Times, Oct 20, 1991, page 10.
7. 'Ile-Ife' by Kokunre Agbontaen, WEEKEND OBSERVER, Saturday July 4, 1991, page 10.
8. Ile-Ife A rejoinder, WEEKEND OBSERVER, Saturday September 19, 1992, page 10
9. A film on Ogiso Owodo (the father of Oduduwa) titled *The Trials of Ogiso Owodo* and Reviewed in NIGERIAN OBSERVER, Thursday, April 22, 1993.
10. The Making of a Dynasty, Edo National (Monthly Periodical), December 2003, page 8.
11. Event Magazine, 23 March 2004, page 8.

The Scholars should have known that:

- i. The Ooni of Ife was not one of the sons of Oduduwa (proved in 1991...Newswatch, March 25, 1991 and p31; National Concord, Wed., March 1991 and other dailies)
- ii. In the history of Yoruba (or Oyo) Empire, Ooni of Ife was Chief Priest to the Alafin of Oyo (the King of Yoruba). The Colonial Government, too, recognised Alafin as the King of Yoruba. Therefore, the sitting position (in 1937 Conference at Lagos) would not have made Ooni of Ife to be superior to neither the Oba nor Alafin.

A large part of the old Benin Empire was part of the Western Region created by the colonial government. The House of Representatives (The Comet, May 4, 2004, page 3) of Western Region in the 1960s was for the promotion of Ife and Ooni of Ife as the Ooni of Ife backbone and patron of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa and founding of the Action Group Party and its governance in the Western Region even to the extent of sending the Alafin (the King of Yoruba Empire into exile. Akenzua II, the Oba of Benin res

attendance to the House of Chiefs and intensified demands for MID-WEST Region.

Note that Oranmiyan became the Oba of Ife after the passing away of his father (Oba Oduduwa), Omo N'Oba and Binis have a festival for the celebration of the spirits of all past Obas of Benin including Eweka I. They do not celebrate Oduduwa and Oranmiyan spirits because, they were not Obas of Benin, but princes of Benin. They are however honorably remembered with attendant promises made to them.

It is really difficult to understand scientifically and mystically how in the 12th century, during the peak periods of the Roman Catholic Empire of Europe, and after Prophet Mohammed, Jesus Christ (the beloved Son of God), Roman Empire, Babylonia Empire, Egyptian Pharaohs, Kush Empire, etc. that a person could fall down or climb down a chain with 400 deities from heaven. Was it the Heaven of God or imaginary heaven?

J. F. Ade Ajayi and Ade Obayemi were not that very convinced of the origin of Oduduwa from Heaven by their conclusion in their book, *History of West Africa* (1976 vol. 1 page 213) as quoted below:

"...the Ile-Ife accounts had also tried to establish an outside origin for Oduduwa. Some accounts say that Oduduwa came from the east, but as far as the concrete evidence goes, this is unlikely to be further field than Ora hill to the north-east of Ile Ife city. AS TO HOW HE GOT TO ORA HILL, THE BEST WE CAN OFFER IN THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR KNOWLEDGE IS TO STAY WITH ONE VERSION OF THE TRADITION THAT THEY CAME FROM ORUN (HEAVEN)"

Anyway, only a truly and beloved son can know his father, grandfather, and ancestors better than any other person. A father can only reveal the totality of his mystical history/ existence to his true

and beloved son(s) more than to a servant, no matter how be-
that servant may be to his master unless, may be, the mystic
had no child and the servant becomes more or less an adopted
Oduduwa certainly shrouded himself in mysteries against
who did not know his origin.

History is not a fiction in records of facts and events of the
including yesterdays. History is a universal subject and not a
bias. Some historians like to leave vacuum in their st-
Oduduwa (the founder of Ife and the Yoruba race) could not
climbed down with 400 deities from Heaven in the 12th Cen-
Egharevba must have been a hypothetical historian by publis-
that-

- i. The origin of Binis was from Egypt.
- ii. Ooni of Ife was a son of Oduduwa; and
- iii. Other hypothetical fallacies.

From Dr. Adeoti's claim, historians should also reveal how
Benin Palace and the Binis in 1934, could change their 800 y
old language (Yoruba) to another language without any sembl
with the pre- 1934 language. How is this possible? A mystery to
Omo N'Oba is the principal person to know the origin of Odud
because, from the time of Eweka 1, the event of the journey to
from Oduduwa/Oranmiyan became part of the coronation rite
festivals) of any Oba of Benin and it is from that rite that
N'Oba chooses his title. Historians should have known tha
they can be exonerated because the coronation of an Oba of
may not be experienced throughout the life time or
scholarship of the Historians.

Fallacies Of The Oduduwa Controversy

By
Victor Oshisada

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN, THURSDAY JUNE 17, 2004. PAGE 57

The controversies over Yoruba's origin are so intriguing that they cannot abate so easily. First, I crave the indulgence of my readers to restate the background to the controversies for the purpose of establishing some fallacies which call for correction. The controversies can be said to be tripartite as espoused by the troika of Oba of Benin, Ooni of Ife and Oba of Lagos.

Stirring the hornet's nest was the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba Erediauwa, who claimed that the Yoruba migrated from Benin where a prince once escaped the community's axe-man to re-appear later at Ile-Ife having wandered in the bush from Benin for a long time. Revealing further, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Erediauwa, added that the said Prince Ekaladerhan, having become the ruler in Ife refused to return to Benin on request, but instead sent Oranmiyan his son to start the present dynasty in Benin.

Permit me to go further in stating the background. **Ooni of Ife**, Oba Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II disputed the claim by the Oba of Benin. The Ife monarch stated that the Oba of Benin whose

dynasty began in the last decade of the 12th Century was an prince "lent to the people of Benin" on their request after the rule of the Ogisos ended in Benin. Oba Okunade further revealed that "Oduduwa descended directly from heaven through a chain of deities where is today known as Ife in the company of four hundred deities". Both monarchs, however, concur in their narratives that Prince Oranmiyan was the son sent by Oduduwa (that is 'Ekaladerhan') and whose son, Eweka born of a Benin woman became the progenitor of all Benin Obas.

On his part, Oba Rilwan Akiolu of Lagos missed the point when he said that Oba of Benin was more credible and authoritative in his historical narrative. The Lagos Oba premised his argument on the basis of integrity of the Benin monarch to lend support to the latter. Is Oba Akiolu making us to understand that the Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade lacks integrity to authenticate his version of the narratives? Undoubtedly, Oba Akiolu's input to the controversies is tenuous and sentimental for reasons best known to him.

Now I proceed to my analysis so as to form a conclusion. Most readers will undoubtedly appreciate that the historical versions from both monarchs are pregnant with disparate pieces of apocryphal tales. The facts must be sifted from fiction, dispelling myths and set the records straight. It is difficult to believe the Ooni of Benin that someone could on his own traverse the aforementioned distance from Benin to Ile-Ife, more than 1, 020 kilometers (hundred and thirty seven and a half miles) apart, on foot in the days of yore. Was it possible?

How could he survive the ordeals both nights and days though with the aid of charms? If this feat was possible, definitely Prince Oranmiyan's (that is Eweka) dynasty was not as early as 1191 A.D. It could be sometime later created. Again, if the Prince Ekaladerhan, was truly a criminal who escaped from the axe-man, what qualified his son Oranmiyan for the throne?

Benin? Why should a criminal be rewarded by placing the son on Benin throne? So, I find it difficult to believe the Omo N'Oba Erediauwa's version.

Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade, also falls victim of apocryphal fallacies. How can someone 'descend from heaven directly through a chain' to Ile-Ife in company of four hundred deities? Which chain, for Almighty's sake? I am inclined, nevertheless, to believe Oba Okunade's version in toto, because he is able to support his claims with the facts of dates, which are open to contradictions wherever possible. However, the piece on 'descent from heaven by chain' remains utterly questionable being the fly in the ointment of his narratives. If a historian is able to state facts with dates, the degree of conviction is higher than mere apocryphal narration.

Sentiments apart, Oba Okunade further lent credence to his narratives by his references to the first Benin historian Jacob U. Egharevba. Like legal practitioners who know their onions, the citation of precedents enhances the credibility of legal submissions before the judge in the court to ensure justice and equity. So it is with Oba Okunade' citations of dates that since 1191 A.D to 1916, the Ooni of Ife had to be informed to give clearance on the enthronement of any Benin Oba, that Yoruba was the official language in the palace of the Oba of Benin till 1934, and that since the Oranmiyan dynasty started in Benin, all heads of demised Benin monarchs were buried in Ile-Ife up to the year, 1900. These are vital anecdotes and dates to note.

History is a teacher of life. If it is truly so, therefore, our monarchs who are the custodians of our culture and history are, indeed the teachers of history. They cannot afford to lead us astray. They must be well grounded in their knowledge of history. Since the emergence of the Oduduwa historical controversies, many Nigerians have panned out at the two monarchs for being interested

in trivialities. Critics maintain that the main problems of Nigeria are welfare measures for the impoverished. I heard it being argued that what we need are food, shelter and clothing's, and controversies over Oduduwa's origin.

But true knowledge of our history is equally essential to political, economic and social development, because, consonance with the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo's postulate "Today is the mother of tomorrow. If today is wrong, tomorrow cannot be certainly right". It is therefore essential to understand historical past in order to know what to avoid or embrace in preparation for our future endeavours. These explain why Nigerians must be interested in historical controversies, as we do not live on bread and butter alone, though it is basic to our subsistence.

African history is replete with fallacies. This is because our writers rely preponderantly upon European sources in their research efforts. Again, our African traditional sources are dependent upon oral tradition of folklores, preserved by memory which tend to fail.

Similarly, some of our African history authors are economical with truths and facts, apparently because of racial envy in their hearts. For instance, one Nigerian Ph. D holder on Nigerian history wrote that Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther was born in Sierra Leone, and was taken into slavery in Oyo, in Nigeria. That is bunkum! The truth is the other way round.

The fact is skewed to satisfy the writer who felt that the credit for the Yoruba people of the South Western Nigeria places superiority upon them, and not on the writer's race. Rather than credit the Yorubas for producing the first African Bishop to the Yoruba race as far back as the 19th century, the Ph.D. holder, in his jaundiced thesis, published in a book form, thought it was more expedient to credit

achievement to Sierra Leone. The very instant that I read that fallacious paragraph, I lost confidence in the erudition of the author.

It is possible for other readers to imbibe that fallacy as the gospel truth, which may in the future, generate irreconcilable controversies. Therefore, the discrepancies in the submissions of the Benin and Ife monarchs may not entirely be their faults, but rather, the fault of their respective sources of information.

Oshisada, a veteran journalist lives in Ikorodu, Lagos State.

Royal Ramblings: The Ife/benin Controversy

By
Usi Osemwowa

SOURCE: SUNDAY VANGUARD, JUNE 13, 2004 PAGE 43

In the last Sunday edition of your paper, you published different opinions about the raging controversy between the Ooni of Ife and the Oba of Benin on the origin of Oduduwa which of course is now between the Binis and the Yoruba.

For centuries, Yorubas have always claimed that the Bin originated from the Yorubas or from Ife. They have always used Benin as a beautiful bride to elevate their cultural and civilized past because of the peak of publicity Benin has attained in its culture and civilized past. This could not have been so if Benin is known to the world.

The kite has been flown to the "world", by two brothers "Oba Benin and Ooni of Ife" and it will appear that the world will recognize Benin because of the prominent position Benin and Ife had attained in African history.

I do not know who actually goofed, though, every individual has his own opinion. The Oba of Benin has written his own book stating how Oduduwa is of Bini origin. The best thing is for the Ooni of Ife to also write a book to chronicle the origin, reign

successors of the legendary Oduduwa and to tell us how the name, Oduduwa, came about. Facts are needed in history and it is not sufficient to sit down and pride oneself with false claims. Let him then set the records straight. Prof. Ade-Ajayi, a Professor of History, Dr. Oyeweso and Funso Afolayan support the position of Ooni of Ife in his argument that Oduduwa is the progenitor of the Yoruba race. They agreed that he descended from heavens with a chain and was the direct father of Oronmiyan. They also agreed that Oronmiyan was direct son of Oduduwa who founded Bini race and Oyo civilization. The Ooni claimed as most Yoruba claims, particularly by Dr. Oyeweso, that the heads of Obas of Benin were sent to Ile-Ife for burial up to 1916. That the heads of the Obas of Benin were sent to Ile-Ife up to 1916 is not in dispute. The unresolved question by the Binis to the Yorubas is: who is Oduduwa?

The position of the Bini's, like the Oba who happily was supported by Oba of Lagos, is that the monarchy, traditional institutions in Yoruba land, originated from Benin through Ekaladerhan, who became known as Oduduwa which of course has even no slightest meaning in Yoruba language. Ekaladerhan having thus missed becoming a king in Benin as an excommunicated heir-apparent to Benin throne in 1170 AD and seeing himself crowned king of Ife, exclaimed in his privacy, but heard by the Yoruba at Ife who throng to pay him homage, that, he did not miss the crown he was destined to wear (meaning IMADODUWA IDODOWA). This is what was adulterated to Oduduwa by the Yorubas who were listening to him. This column will not be enough to narrate the whole story. I am also using this medium to challenge all Yorubas on earth for a live radio and TV debate in the NTA to unravel the true "owners" of Oduduwa.

However, it is pertinent to ask the Yorubas to answer the

following questions:

1. Who was Obatala?
2. Was Oduduwa in fact the progenitor of the Yoruba race. Assuming he is, based on their history as recorded in the Benin Museum which I have visited, why again is the Benin Museum recording that Obatala was the eldest brother of Oduduwa and when he became drunk of palm wine, he lost his seniority to Oduduwa? It is recorded in the Benin Museum and not Benin Museum.
3. At about when did Yoruba history start or at about when did the Yorubas arrive to their part of the world. At about 1150AD? Does this make historical sense as far as Yoruba history is concerned?
4. Could Yoruba history have started at about 1191AD when Oduduwa descended from heaven as claimed by Ooni of Ife?
5. If Oduduwa is the immediate father of Oranmiyan, it means that Yoruba history started in about 1150AD, the possible date of birth of Oduduwa.
6. Who then were the traditional rulers of the Yorubas up to about 1150AD assuming that Yoruba history started at about 700AD according to some Yoruba historians and writers?
7. Is it believable that Oduduwa descended from the heavens at about 1150AD. Should history record that the Yorubas are about 850 years in West Africa?

Professor J.F. Ade-Ajayi in the *Growth of Africa civilization history of West Africa 1000 1800AD* said: "It was from Ile-Ife, cradle of Yoruba race, that the Binis had their long line of kings, Oronmiyan Dynasty". This is referring to Oronmiyan of 1191/ son of Oduduwa born possibly at about 1150AD. Is Ajayi there saying that this first contact between the Binis and Oronmiyan can be used to conclude that the Binis originated from the Yorubas? He

any evidence of Bini and Yoruba contact before 1170AD. Is he by this saying that the Binis are about 813 years old in this part of the world?.

On the other hand, is the version of Ooni of Ife, Prof Ajayi, and Dr. Oyeweso is wrong based on other Yoruba writers that the Yoruba race migrated to this part of the world, to Ile-Ife at about the 6th Century, led by Oduduwa up to 1150AD? Is he saying that none of the Yoruba towns or villages were founded before 1150AD? Let Prof. Ade-Ajayi produce any book on Yoruba history which mentioned anything about traditional institution before 1170AD. It is recorded in Yoruba history that the Binis requested for a ruler from Ife. This means there were people in Benin before the arrival of Oronmiyan. Who were the Yorubas ruling Benin if Benin was not living independently from the Yorubas?.

If Prof. Ade-Ajayi and the Ooni of Ife found solace in Egharevba's book, then this is what R. Bradbury, a research fellow of International Institute and later, a member of the Benin History project and Research fellow of the University College, Ibadan from 1956 - 66 said in his foreword to Dr. Egharevba's short History of Benin 3rd Edition, that some of Chief Egharevba's work will no doubt have to be modified in the light of later ethnographic, historical and Archaeological research".

Is this the book the Yorubas are relying on? J. Egharevba said on page 3 of the book that "It is said that 31 Ogisos reigned in Benin but very few of their names are known and they are very hard to trace out. Therefore, it is wise to make some research into it because some people doubted the existence of the first period of Benin empire. This is partly because many mythical and frightful tales have been attached to the people connected with the Ogisos, whereas infact, these people were human beings, ruled by their Ogisos in the way we have been ruled by our Obas from Oronmiyan onwards in the second period of the Benin Empire". Is Prof. Ade-

Ajayi still saying Benin had no king before Oronmiyan came?

Generally, facts available to support the fact that Yorubas are Bini origin will contain volumes of books, but the controversy on hand is the origin of monarchical institutions. If the Yorubas claim that Oduduwa is not a Bini, let them tell the world who Oduduwa was and let them show the world the chain with which Oduduwa descended from heaven and that will be recorded as a wonder of the world.

That Oronmiyan came to Benin is not in dispute, but what the Binis are saying is that the first traditional ruler in Yoruba land Ekaladerhan otherwise known as Oduduwa (Imadoduwa or Izoduwa). Let the Yorubas contradict this by historical evidence.

I am aware that there have been controversies over superiority among the Oba in Yoruba land. Binis cannot talk of superiority of the Obas because we know our history and are documented in the palace. Rev. S. John in his book *History of the Yorubas*, published in 1922 said "Alafin, not Ooni, is the supreme head of all kings and princes in Yoruba nation as he is the direct lineal descendant and successor of the reputed founder, (Oduduwa) of Yoruba race." Who succeeded this first Oduduwa and the chronology of the successors till date and when was the first Oduduwa on throne?

In the *Daily Times* of September 17, 1989 at Page 7 titled "Oyo Obas Palaver," the writer said: "The problem in Oyo State Council of Obas between two traditional titans over precedence has been going on for close to a decade. In the centre of this stage is Ooni of Ife and the Alaafin (of Oyo)."

In *Oyo Empire, in the 18th Century, A reassessment, The Journal of Historic Society of Nigeria* in its issue of December 1966 "Under Ebi System of Government, "Ife" as father of Yoruba family of states, was constitutionally superior to Oyo despite military preeminence of the latter king." Does this not contradict Johnson's facts on the same Yoruba history?

In an article in the *National Concord* of Tuesday, April 19,

titled "The Ooni and Alaafin" imbroglio," the writer said: "The feud raging between the Ooni could perhaps lead to the eventual discovery and revelation of the whole truth about the historical origin of the ODUDUWA dynasty and the progenitor of the Yoruba race. Many versions of the historical background of the Yoruba race have been told in the past by different historians, but, if for the purpose of putting the record straight, and proving the superiority, correctness and authenticity of their positions, the Ooni and the Alaafin should go deep into the archives and reveal all the salient facts. "A.A.B. Aderibigbe said in his book, *A Thousand Years of West African History* at p199 that 'The origin of the Yorubas, like the earliest history of non-literate people, is still a bickering ground for the erudites. Many speculations and scholarly theories abound, but no definite knowledge has yet emerged.'" This is a Yoruba writer!

The early Yoruba writers rushed to put lies on papers to impress the early Europeans who came to this part of the world in order to show that their culture is the best. This is having a negative effect on their distorted history. Otherwise, how can it be said that Oduduwa came to Ife at about the 5th Century AD and the same Oduduwa was the direct father of Oronmiyan who founded Oyo and Benin according to Yoruba history at about the 13th Century when in fact Benin have had 38 Ogisos up to 1170AD ending the reign of Owodo, father of Oduduwa (Ekaladerhan) and when my village Utekon, had been founded. If their Oduduwa lived at about 13th Century, then Yoruba race is less than 800 years.

This gap in Yoruba history has to be bridged by letting the world know the Obas that succeeded their first Oba Oduduwa from 5th or 6th Century. The fact that they had early access to education while denying the Binis of it in the West and having business opportunities because Lagos, also founded by the Binis, was the federal capital, does not mean that their history is the best or the

colonial masters of the Bini people. The fact that America is the most powerful nation on earth does not mean that it was not founded by British explorers or colonized by Britain.

It is unbelievable that Oduduwa of 7th Century according to Yoruba historians could be the immediate father of Oronmiyan of 1191AD. Is the gap not too wide?

The Monarch's Vituperation

By
Adeyemi Dosunmu

SOURCE: SATURDAY TRIBUNE, SATURDAY 26 JUNE 2004 PAGE 35.

I am constrained to comment on the vituperation of the Oba of Lagos, Alayeluwa Oba Rilwan Akiolu I in an interview he granted The News in its June 7 edition. Oba Akiolu literally threw caution to the winds, and in a manner belying his royal status, he attacked two important personalities in Yorubaland the Ooni of Ife and Otunba Adekunle Ojora in addition to those who challenged his appointment as Oba in the law court.

As a Lagosian and a prince, the Oba is my father and deserves every respect from me. I am, however, disheartened by his utterances.

The Oba dabbled into the history of the Yorubas, threw his full weight behind the controversial views expressed by the Oba of Benin in his autobiography and railed at, even cursing, those who contested the Obaship with him and those who took the matter to court. Oba Akiolu has just spent one year on the throne and he is already speaking as if the institution of Obaship in Lagos is his exclusive patrimony. I disagree with him. My prayer is that, ancient wisdom which every Prince must imbibe, that no king lives

forever- the throne will always triumph over the occupant.

The Oba recalled a favour he did a brother prince by lobbying for him to be a Commissioner during Marwa's tenure and another Prince, Sami Adebisi, whose mother, the Oba alleges to be a Togolese. These two gentlemen are not qualified to be kings on account of these and according to the Oba, the gods of the palace will never allow them to be.

Affinity in the entire Yorubaland, including Lagos is patriarchal i.e. descent is traced through the father. I don't know of any place in the world where a child is denied kingship rights on account of where the mother comes from when the paternity is not in dispute. The Oba's notion that somebody's mother is Togolese, and is disqualified from being crowned on account of this can only be a figment of his own imagination.

Sentiments apart, traditional institutions have suffered a decline in modern times, and it pains me exceedingly as a prince to witness the depth to which the monarchical institution has sunk. Obas in the beginning were themselves the sovereign. They answer to no one but the gods. They were not appointees of governors and cannot be removed by any authority. The gods who will make the choice through the Ifa oracle appointed Obas. Kingmakers merely coordinate the process. But today, their power is considerably whittled down or non-existent. Obas are deposed at will by political authorities and they go about their normal business. Before now, if an Oba is deposed, the myth of his divine appointment has been shattered and he would have no choice but to commit suicide.

The Oba himself has become a god. He cannot be a king and be something else later, impossible. But these are changing times. All the glamour, pomp and pageantry, dignity, majesty and glory associated with kings have departed our modern day monarchs. This pains one immeasurably as a prince. At any rate, every prince from the ruling house is entitled to be king and all have a right to legal redress if they feel that due process was not followed in the

successors of the legendary Oduduwa and to tell us how the name, Oduduwa, came about. Facts are needed in history and it is not sufficient to sit down and pride oneself with false claims. Let him then set the records straight. Prof. Ade-Ajayi, a Professor of History, Dr. Oyeweso and Funso Afolayan support the position of Ooni of Ife in his argument that Oduduwa is the progenitor of the Yoruba race. They agreed that he descended from heavens with a chain and was the direct father of Oronmiyan. They also agreed that Oronmiyan was direct son of Oduduwa who founded Bini race and Oyo civilization. The Ooni claimed as most Yoruba claims, particularly by Dr. Oyeweso, that the heads of Obas of Benin were sent to Ile-Ife for burial up to 1916. That the heads of the Obas of Benin were sent to Ile-Ife up to 1916 is not in dispute. The unresolved question by the Binis to the Yorubas is: who is Oduduwa?

The position of the Bini's, like the Oba who happily was supported by Oba of Lagos, is that the monarchy, traditional institutions in Yoruba land, originated from Benin through Ekaladerhan, who became known as Oduduwa which of course has even no slightest meaning in Yoruba language. Ekaladerhan having thus missed becoming a king in Benin as an excommunicated heir-apparent to Benin throne in 1170 AD and seeing himself crowned king of Ife, exclaimed in his privacy, but heard by the Yoruba at Ife who throng to pay him homage, that, he did not miss the crown he was destined to wear (meaning IMADODUWA IDODOWA). This is what was adulterated to Oduduwa by the Yorubas who were listening to him. This column will not be enough to narrate the whole story. I am also using this medium to challenge all Yorubas on earth for a live radio and TV debate in the NTA to unravel the true "owners" of Oduduwa.

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The Oba himself has become a god. He cannot be a king and be something else later, impossible. But these are changing times. All the glamour, pomp and pageantry, dignity, majesty and glory associated with kings have departed our modern day monarchs. This pains one immeasurably as a prince. At any rate, every prince from the ruling house is entitled to be king and all have a right to legal redress if they feel that due process was not followed in the

selection process. It is the rule of law and the ground on which modern rules are established. I believe the Oba owes the prince who took him to court some secret gratitude because what the court has done by validating his selection was to affirm that "due process was" followed thereby clearing any doubt of imposition that might have lingered in the minds of the people.

The Oba was wrong, however, by criticizing the Ooni of Ife, who, being the *Arole Oodua* is the grand patriarch of the whole Yoruba. What is the hatred the Oba of Lagos has for the Ooni, to the extent of insulting him, abusing him and calling him a liar. The Oba even threw decorum to the winds and did the most unthinkable of an Oba by spilling in the open what allegedly transpired between him and the Ooni in private, all in an effort to denigrate the renowned monarch.

Kabieyesi goofed also by unduly attacking Otunba Adekunle Ojora. What many people regrettably do not know is that, Ojora is a man of many parts with a sprawling business empire scattered all over the world. It may not only be beneath his dignity to settle into the drab rituals of kings, he is just too decent and sophisticated for that lifestyle.

Ironically, Otunba Ojora was never interested in being king. He was a most unwilling horse who was trying to fulfill the desires of the late Oba Adeyinka Oyekan who recommended him as his successor on July 3, 1989 to the Lagos king makers, the Idejo Chiefs, the ruling houses and the Lagos State Government.

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Oba Akiolu's revisionism on Otunba Ojora's princely pedigree will not hold any water because he was merely sowing sour grape. Before the Oba's curious 'historiography', there was no iota of

doubt and controversy on Ojora's pedigree. Interestingly, Ojora's father was Olori Omoba of Lagos. He was installed in 1985 in an unforgettable ceremony performed by the Late Oba Oyekan. I can still remember vividly how beautiful the ceremony was as it drew dignitaries from all over Nigeria and beyond. Oba Akiolu, then a prince, was present at the ceremony.

That Otunba Ojora has maintained a dignified silence in spite of unprovoked attacks on him by the Oba should not be mistaken for cowardice, I, personally am disturbed by the belligerent posture of Oba Akiolu all the time. Wisdom dictates that, he should be making peace with other princes. The monarchy is already deep in the mud; Oba Akiolu should not degrade it further with his unroyal utterances.

Prince Adeyemi Dosunmu lives in Lagos Island.

The Benin-Ife Connection: The Missing Link

By
Prince Edun Akenzua

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY VANGUARD, MAY 23 2004 PAGE 42

Nigerian newspapers have been awash with commentaries on the Benin-Ife connection since the public presentation of Omo N' Oba Erediauwa's Memoirs on April 29, The high and the low, historians, the professional and the pseudo, even cranks, have had a field day, taking sides with either the Oba's position or the Ooni's.

Among the early commentators was the Oba of Lagos. A newspaper report said: "The Oba of Lagos, Rilwanu Aremu Akiolu I yesterday joined the ongoing controversy between Oba Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II and his Benin counterpart, Omo N'Oba Erediauwa, weighing in on the side of the Benin Monarch that Oduduwa, the founder of Yoruba race was an escapee Prince Ekaladerhan from Benin kingdom".

The Ooni of Ife felt he was at the receiving end of the Omo N'Oba's statement and took up the gauntlet. He was described by a newspaper, to be 'visibly angry' at the Omo N'Oba. He was reported to say: "Thursday 29th April, Omo N'Oba, the Oba of Benin goofed during the launching of his book..." the Ooni came down hard on

the Oba, saying the Oba made a deliberate attempt to re-write the Yoruba history. He said: "it is just right to allow the entire world know that the name Oduduwa, the founder of our dynasty can never be corrupted or bastardized by any living being in an attempt to create for himself, an unnecessary distortion of historical fact."

For good measure, the Ooni added: Oduduwa their legend, the father of the bigger Yoruba dynasty has no connection whatsoever with Ogiso dynasty in Benin history as portrayed by the Oba of Benin because Oduduwa descended directly from heaven through a chain to where is now known as Ife today in company of 400 deities.

Even though the Ooni, in anger, used an unelegant word, goofed, to describe an action taken by his royal brother, I believe he was earnest and that he made his remarks in good faith. Indeed the Ooni and the Omo N'Oba are both right in their postulations and they were honest too! They both told the same story, but, each from his point of knowledge. It is like two men standing on the same street, one at the beginning of the street, the other at the middle, both facing the same direction and walking to the end of the street. The man who started at the middle will be able to describe only what he saw on the way, but what the man who started at the beginning will describe will include what the man at the middle did not see. That Ooni and indeed, the people of Ife tell the story from the time of their contact with Oduduwa. The Omo N'Oba and the Benin also from their time of contact.

One of those who commented was Prof. Hakeem Haruna of the University of Lagos. His opinion was among the most objective and scholarly so far. We shall come back to him later.

One Dr. Siyan Oyeweso of the Lagos State University also commented. He reported the Omo N'Oba as saying that the Yoruba ascent story was from Benin. He accused the Oba, whom he said was not "a professional historian, "of making an "attempt to re-write the Yoruba history" which, according to the historian, "is a settled case" Writing passionately, he said: "I do not believe

anybody will claim that the origin of Yoruba people is from Benin. The origin of the Yoruba people started in Ife, the cradle of Yoruba, the Orisu, the word that cannot be translated, which is believed to be their own Garden of Eden. The identity of Oduduwa is not so much in doubt. It is agreed by historians of all persuasions that the ancestor of the Yoruba is Oduduwa. According to the Yoruba belief system, Oduduwa was sent from heaven through a chain and landed in Ife”.

The fact that Oduduwa lived is history; that he descended from heaven- mystically on a chain, is mythology. Most countries or civilizations have their mythology. But, professional historians as Dr. Oyeweso acknowledged, know the difference between mythology and history. As Head of History Department of Lagos State University, Dr. Oyeweso, is a professional historian.

I have read the Omo N'Oba's book. I did not find where the Omo N'Oba said the Yoruba people originated from Benin, nor where any stated assertion or theory on the origin of the Yoruba was assaulted, but, many of the commentators, especially of Yoruba extraction took that line; it only shows how readily one can lose focus and deviate from one's course.

Oyeweso referred to a dispute between the Elepe of Epe and the Akarigbo of Remo in 1903; he said the colonial Governor MacGregor referred the matter to the Alafin of Oyo who, according to Oyeweso sent the matter back to the colonial authority, with word that he (the Alafin) had an elder brother, the Ooni of Ife who could authoritatively say what the situation was. The matter, apparently, was referred to the Ooni who, incidentally, had traveled out of Ife.

Oyeweso wrote: “-It was in 1903 that, for the first time in Yoruba history, the Ooni traveled out of the traditional territory to Ibadan. All the Yoruba Obas, including the Oba of Benin stayed outside the Palace, signifying that it was forbidden for them to stay in the Palace. They insisted that until he returned, they wouldn't go

back to their palaces" Dr. Oyeweso had introduced this point obviously to illustrate the paramountcy of the Ooni of Ife over the Alafin of Oyo and all the Yoruba Obas, including the Oba of Benin".

It is not the intention of this writer to dabble into the hierarchy of Yoruba Obas who, I believe, know their positions in their own history. But attention must be drawn to a false statement contained in that account. He said "all the Yoruba Obas including the Oba of Benin" were present at the Ife parley in 1903. The Oba of Benin was NOT there. The Oba of Benin in 1903 was Omo N'Oba Ovonramwen.

He was in Calabar from 1897 to 1914. Reference to the Alafin of Oyo in that context brings to mind the Benin oral tradition account of the connection between the Alafin and the Oba of Benin. The account has it that when Oranmiyan left Benin, he returned to Ife, But he met that his father had passed on. The house or estate was being looked after by an old man, a priest. Oranmiyan's followers wanted to eject the old man, but Oranmiyan prevailed on them to leave him alone as he was too old and had no where else to go. Oranmiyan and his followers then moved further north and settled in a place, which became known as Oyo. As they left, some of his followers pointed at the old priest who they perceived as a sit-tighter who did not want to vacate the palace for the rightful owner and told him, derisively: "Eefile, Ooni Afin" and, pointing at their master, they said: Alafin re".

Since Oranmiyan fathered Owomika (Eweka I) the founder of the so-called Second Dynasty of Benin monarchy and went ahead to found Oyo, it follows that the Oba of Benin and the Alafin of Oyo are blood relations and only related fondly to Ife as the place where their progenitor had settled and Oranmiyan was born. It is instructive that you have Benin kingdom and Empire, Oyo kingdom and empire, but not Ife kingdom or empire.

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when the sage, Obafemi Awolowo used his name as the clarion call to galvanize the Yoruba into a group, Egbe Omo Oduduwa, which metamorphosed into Action Group to challenge NCNC and perceived Ibo domination.

The Internationally respected historian and academic, Prof Ade Ajayi in commentary also fell into the same trap and became victim of Yoruba ethnic chauvinism. He wondered what the Omo N'Oba studied to give him the competence to say what he said. Rather than ask for the Omo N'Oba's source of information, he dismissed him outright, because, according to him, the Oba had no evidence to back it up.

He took up the Omo N'Oba on his assessment of the celebrated historian, the late Jacob U. Egharevba. Hear him: I think what the Oba is trying to say is that a Bini historian, Jacob Egharevah (sic) wrote a book and he says that the fourth edition of the book was edited in Ibadan. So there is no contradiction between the first and the fourth editions of the book. But Oba of Benin says he is dismissing Egharevah (sic) because of Akoko-Edo blood in him, Egharevba (sic) made him favour the Yorubas. He didn't say the man is a Yoruba man, but that he had Akoko-Edo in him.

Akoko-Edo people are no longer under Edo state. I think the Oba of Benin has been saying things like this before. He just wanted to use the opportunity of this book to provoke a controversy and I think he is getting that already. He did not cite any evidence. At least those who said Benin tradition agrees with Ife tradition quote Egharevah (sic) who was a Benin Chief, who actually did a lot of research not only on Benin, but, on Akure and surrounding areas of Urhobo and Itsekiri. He even wrote a book entitled a Short History of Benin. And any day, I will rather follow the book than follow what an Oba who is not an expert in the field and whose only interest in the matter is to be able to assert his own opinion... The Omo N'Oba never said Egharevba was from Akoko-Edo. On page

205 and 206 of his book where Egharevba was mentioned, the Omo n'Oba wrote:

"I must comment here in passive, that I personally have never accepted the account of our late illustrious historian, Jacob U. Egharevba when he wrote in the very first edition of his now authoritative book. A Short History of Benin, the following:

"Many, many years ago, Oduo (Oduduwa) of Uhe (Ile-Ife) the father and progenitor of the Yoruba kings sent his eldest son Obagodo- who took the title of Ogiso- with a large retinue all the way from Uhe to found a kingdom in this part of the world"

And in the fourth (and now current) edition of the book, the late author wrote:

"Many, many years ago, the Binis came all the way from Egypt to found a more secure shelter in this part of the world, after a short stay in the Sudan and Ile-Ife, which the Benin people called Uhe. The rulers or kings were commonly known as 'Ogiso' before the arrival of Oduduwa and his party at Ife in Yoruba land, about the 12 century of the Christian era.

'It is the fourth edition of the book, which historians in the University of Ibadan assisted to rewrite and was printed by the Ibadan University Press, that earned the late illustrious historian the 'doctorate' from that University.

The Omo n' Oba said it was not his intention to discredit the late illustrious historical (and traditional chief) but since that write-up would bring in the historical link between Ife and Benin, "it is impossible not to bring out errors or contradictions in the extract quoted.

He said there were contradictions between the first edition and the fourth editions of the man's book. He added: "Apart from the fact that the Edo n'Ekue (Edo Akure partly-Benin-partly Yoruba birth blood in the man) manifested itself, the experts in Ibadan University contributed to the contradiction".

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That Ajayi repeatedly quoted the Omo n' Oba as referri

Akoko-Edo as Egharevba's birth-place suggests that he probably did not read the book before he joined the melee.

On the Omo n' Oba's contention that Oduduwa could not have been the father of Yoruba kings, he said: 'yes, on what evidence? You don't say something without evidence to back it up. The Yoruba say Oduduwa came from the far East, others say he descended from heaven like Johnson wrote. What did the Oba of Benin study? Did he study Egharevba? Did he study historians of if, who had written about Ife., the cradle of Yoruba and so on?'

But neither the Ooni nor the Yoruba presented evidence of Oduduwa's descent from heaven or coming from the far East.

In this matter, those of us who are not academics may enjoy the indulgence of selecting who to believe or follow. To the academic, the scholar, it goes beyond an article of faith or mere whimsical belief. But Ajayi allowed himself to be dragged down by tribal chauvinism into an abyss, an abode for nonacademic. But, like a flash in the pan, and true to his brilliant, scholarly reputation, he also said: "There is no certainty in history, you go by probability". Yet, he and others had spoken with finality on the issue.

It should also be said, for the purpose of putting the issue straight, that Omo n' Oba Akenzua II, the father of Omo n'Oba Erediauwa did not attend meetings of Yoruba Obas, but of Obas in the old colonial Western Provinces, where the withdrawing colonial authorities had lumped Benin. Those meetings later became meetings of the Western House of Chiefs. It was a political arrangement and since Benin was part of Western Region, Oba and the people of Benin had to participate in the political process of the time.

Since the debate had become free-for-all, one Michael Isede who claimed to be grand son of the last Ogiso of Benin also wrote. If Isede was a descendant of Ogiso, he would therefore be a member of the Royal family. He would know that the last of the Ogisos, by

the name of Owodo, died circa 960 AD and that Owodo's only child was Ekaladerhan. No grandchild to any of the Ogisos is alive today. The least that one may say about the piece he wrote is that it was full of disorderly logic, half truths and facts on their heads. He wrote like someone with many half information and disinformation running riot in his head and who was eager to disgorge them and relieve the tempest. If Isede is a member of the Royal Family, he should do himself a favour and properly trace his ancestry.

Now let us get back to Professor Hakeem Haruna. He wrote: "The position by the Oba of Benin to me poses a challenge to all professional historians interested in subject of origins and migration of our people, go into the field and do further research on the subject along the subject articulated by the Oba of Benin to see whether there exist similar evidence in Benin and Ile-Ife that will corroborate what the Oba has said as well find out if there are evidences that controvert the new position, or that which may dismiss the subsisting theory of If-Origin of the Benin dynasty and then assert and propagate the new position on the subject by the Oba of Benin. Until such a research is done, it may be difficult for any historian to take a position on the subject'.

Prof Ajayi said a similar thing although with tongue in cheek. And on May 9, the widely read columnist of the Sunday vanguard Kola Animasaun, wrote:

The keeper of the soul of the Yoruba nation, Ooni, the Oluyay said his ancestors descended from heaven. Not many of us believe that tale. No one descends from heaven but angels and you cannot see them. Is he (the Ooni) in the proper position to authenticate Yoruba history? I do not think so. Only the sons of Oduduwa are competent so to do. Foremost among them being the Alafin of Oyo. Until he does that, I would keep my fingers crossed'.

The Yoruba Elders Council seemed to take a cue from Haruna. It mandated Prof. Ajayi to set up a Committee to carry out more research into the origin of the Yoruba. By giving that mandate t

Ajayi, members of the Council have behaved, true to their name, as elders, and demonstrated their wisdom.

They realize that even in science you do not speak with finality. Room is always left for new discoveries, new finds. After all, there was a time when even scientists regarded the atom as the smallest particle of matter. But years later, they split it. So it is with history. What is held as gospel today will be modified or altered in the face of new archeological finds.

To assist Prof Ajayi's Committee. I reproduce hereunder the preface of this writer's yet-to-be published book entitled **EKALADERHAN**. It could provide food for thought for those who wish to approach the issue in a scholarly manner.

"About one thousand years ago, the people of Igodomigodo were embroiled in a political war brought about by the loss of their king, they reasoned that the first step towards normality was the restoration of kingship. They decided to have another king. Indeed, monarchism was the only system of government they had know. It was the quintessence of their life.

They sent a delegation to Uhe and requested the people of that country to give them a king. A request for help or favour from one nation to another is a frequent occurrence in present day diplomacy. But in the days of yore, when there was no intercourse between nations, such a straight-forward and apparently friendly gesture was inconceivable. In the particular case of Igodomigodo and Uhe, questions are raised to which no objective or rational answers have been adduced. For instance, why did the people of Igodomigodo choose Uhe, instead of another country, which is perhaps nearer, to go and request for a king? The more one ponders over that question, the more intriguing it seems.

In the tenth century when the event took place, Uhe had no record of a ruler, let alone a famous one, from whom neighboring countries could make such a request. But there is evidence in both Igodomigodo and Uhe that the request was made. That simple fact

has become the origin of a puzzle and, perhaps, of the oldest problem in inter-state relations in the African history.

The question is not about whether or not the relationship between the two African countries existed; its existence has been proved beyond a doubt by anthropological and folkloric evidence. Songs and rituals are performed in both countries today which eulogize the link with nostalgia, relish and pride. The question is how is it possible for a country to seek succour from another about whose existence it does not know?. Igodomigodo is present-day Benin; Uhe, Ile-Ife or simply, Ife.

No wonder, the Ooni of Ife., while receiving the Oba of Benin who paid him a state visit at Ife on November 11, 1982, described the Oba's visit as a "short home coming". The Ooni spoke with the pride of a father receiving a son who had made good abroad.

He said: "We welcome Your Royal Highness most heartily back to Ile-ife, the cradle of our common culture, the origin of your dynasty and ours..... Today is really a very good day for us in Ife and its environs because since you left in 891 AD; we have come to know that your dynasty has performed wonderfully well.

As we have mentioned briefly during our historic visit to your domain not too long ago, we said that we were there to part you from the back for a job well done... Your present visit, we regard as short home-coming where you will have an opportunity to commune with those deities you left behind... Now, my son and brother, long may you reign.'

The address made a clear and unequivocal allusion to the root of the controversy: the suggestion that the people of Benin or, at least, the Royal family, owe their origin to Ile-Ife.

In the prelude of his response to Ooni of Ife's welcome address the Oba of Benin tacitly rebutted the submission. The Oba said: 'The Ooni of Ife calls the Oba of Benin his son and the Oba of Benin calls the Ooni of Ife his son, they are both right.'

The Oba did not elaborate. But in the womb of that innocuous assertion is the foetus of a story which had never been told in full both Benin and Uhe, the story is told with varying details. But

the variants have one constant theme: Benin did go to Ife to request for a king. Now, as if to further compound the issue, the Oba of Benin says the Ooni of Ife may call him his son and he may call the Ooni his own son and that both of them would be right. How can two persons call each other "son" and they both be right? An answer to this question may also answer other questions and give scholars an insight into the full story.

In writing the story, I did not set out deliberately to seek that answer. I simply attempted to narrate an event which formed the base of several stories we were told as youngsters in Benin City. Although, I did not go searching for the answer to the intriguing question, the book seems to provide it.

The events narrated in this story significantly changed the way of life of the people of Benin and had a stupendous impact on their history.

The hypothesis postulated in Ekaladerhan will rattle many an established thesis or legend. Assessors and curators who have hung on to some primordial beliefs may find that those beliefs are challenged. I make no apologies. I believe that the time has come when chroniclers must tell stories about Africa dispassionately if African history is to survive the hard and harsh scrutiny of modern researchers and assessors.

Ekaladerhan is not the first time the Benin - Ife connection has been discussed. But it may be the first time it has been discussed, as narrated in this book, in a manner, removed from the realm of mythology, esoterics and magic. If Ekaladerhan has helped in placing this event into focus, it shall have contributed its bit to man's knowledge and understanding of his world'.

Professor Ajayi committee, I hope will attempt to answer the questions above dispassionately, devoid of emotion, dogmatism and mythology.

Prince Akenzua, the Ogieobazuwa of Obazuwa lives in Benin City.

Ife As Foremost Among Africa's 5 Ancient Cities

By

Odessa Commentary File
E-mail: tademak@yahoo.com

SOURCE: SATURDAY TRIBUNE, 5 JUNE 2004 PAGE 36

Last week in a newspaper publication, a pan Yoruba socio-cultural group, Egbe Omo Oduduwa took side with the Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade in his explanation of history over the controversy surrounding the origin of legendary Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba race. In part of his reaction to the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba Erediauwa's distortion of history about Oduduwa's origin, the Ooni said: "Oduduwa, the legend and father of bigger Yoruba dynasty has no connection whatsoever with Ogiso dynasty in Benin history as portrayed by the Oba of Benin. The spiritual head of the Yorubas, at home and in the diaspora, further counseled that: "it is just right to allow the entire world know that the name Oduduwa, the founder of Yoruba dynasty, can never be corrupted or bastardized by any living being in the attempt to create for himself an unnecessary distortion of historical fact. The Ooni further asserted that "Oduduwa, the legend, descended from heaven through a chain to where is now known as Ife today, in company of 400 deities", apparently debunking the

misrepresentation of facts of people who claimed that that Oduduwa was a fleeing Prince from the East.

In lending credence in Ooni's position, prominent historians and scholars came out in support of his statement and gave affirmation to the historical fact that Oduduwa has no connection with Ogiso dynasty in Benin. Such scholars include Eminent Professor, Ade Ajayi, Dr. Siyan Oyeweso, Prof. Hakeem Haruna and particularly, the grandson of the last Ogiso of Benin kingdom, Prince Michael Isede who challenged the Benin monarch for having to wait these long years to talk Prince Isede having read his kinsman's version of the historical fact, he acknowledged it as in tandem with Ooni's hailed reaction.

In Egbe Omo Oduduwa's reaction, which gave implicit support to the Ooni, the group, through its General Secretary, Engr. Oluyemi Falade, said: "The Oduduwa monarchy in Ile-Ife expanded to Benin and Oyo royalties through the reign of Oranmiyan, one of Oduduwa's sons, in both places, Ife symbolises the meeting point of both the spiritual and physical history of Yoruba people and the Oduduwa monarchical dynasty which extended to Benin and other places in West Africa and the diaspora".

The group also affirmed its conviction that "Ife is the Source of creation from where the Benin dynasty has its roots and whose people represent a highly respected monarchical point in the pantheon of deities that are divinely ordained to Ife since the earliest of mystery times. It is therefore not a coincidence in recent history that revered heads of past Benin Obas were brought to Ife to join their ancestors at their spiritual shrine that still exists till today at Ife, the Source.

The socio-cultural group therefore commended the Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade, and some eminent scholars, historians, one of whom is a Benin Prince, for putting the records right. It however advised the Benin Oba and other Obas to always seek

clarifications on sensitive issues like this and handle them with all sense of caution and not to re-write history or put historical fact upside down. ODESSA has found out in the course of investigation that not only the heads of these Benin monarchs were buried in Ife but the burial was inclusive of other parts of their bodies, at a location in Ife called Orun Oba Ado. Also, in the course of my investigation and research. I came across a publication in the archives, which went deeper into the mystical emergence of Oduduwa at Ile Ife. It was from a book authored by the well respected, late Afolabi Adio Moses, entitled "Flashes of ideas and reflections".

Talking about Ife mythology, the author said. "Olodumare, which is the Yoruba name for God Almighty, said to Oduduwa, his son and progenitor of Yoruba race that "I have created the earth, I have also created waters under the heavens. When you go down there, i.e. to the earth, on the waters, sprinkle the sand in this shell and rest the white cock on the mould thus formed. And the sand poured and poured and the white cock scattered and spread the sand to all places round the world, and the earth grew far and wide. The place where the cock began the great work of spreading the sand and thus making the earth, was then called "IFE" i.e. from "where it all began". This mythology, which is strongly believed among the sons and daughters of Ife, was confirmed by Chief (Dr.) M. A. Fabunmi in his book entitled "Ife, the Genesis of Yoruba race".

In my further investigation, I found out that Prof. Biobaku, in his book "Sources of Yoruba history" also confirmed the story of the mystical descent of Oduduwa and that Oduduwa was the son of Olodumare, the supreme God of the Yoruba who sent him down from heaven on a chain to create earth where there was precious waters and the spot where Oduduwa first landed was Ile-Ife. All these parallel mythology on Oduduwa, my investigation further gathered, assumedly, pointed to Ile Ife as the spot where God

created man, white and black, and from where all the races of the world sprang up.

To recount the writings of a contemporary historian on the long existence of Ile Ife as a city, Prince Ladigbolu in his biography of Oba Oyeade Lipede, the Alake of Abeokuta, quoted Herodotus, (the father of history (484-424 B. C), as writing that "according to history, there were five ancient cities in Africa between 3000 and 1000 B.C of which one was Ile-Ife".

It is also an historical fact as published in Government gazette that as far back as 1904, Ile-Ife was a province that had her boundary with the colony of Lagos. The Are (Crown), which the Ooni of Ife wore once a year at Olojo Festival, is acknowledged to be the oldest crown in Yoruba land.

All these go to show and prove the supremacy of the Ooni among Yoruba Obas and that of Benin- a fact that makes his spiritual and fatherly role primus-inter-pares among the Obas and absolutely incontestable.

In furtherance of my investigation, I made for Ile Ife in the attempt to seek words from the Ooni. That mission failed, as I was unable to see him. A palace attendant who was kind enough to listen to the reason for my visit asked what my mission was. I told him that I wanted to see for myself the location where the heads of Benin Obas were buried in Ife. I also told him I had wanted to ask from the Kabieyesi what his reaction was to the uncomplimentary media statements both made by the Oba of Lagos and the Awujale of Ijebu Ode, over the raging controversy. He obliged to the first question and made arrangement for my visit to the location.

In response to the second mission on Ooni's probable reaction to the statement of the two Obas, the man said that even if I saw the Ooni, he would not have obliged me with an answer. He took me to the curator of the Palace Temple where I was bluntly told that: "The Oracle has spoken. When the Ooni speaks, the Oracle has spoken. And the oracle doesn't speak much. He has spoken during the book

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launch of Yeye Odua. Let all tongues be wagging thereafter because it will take another year for the oracle to speak again. But an outsider close to the Palace had earlier voluntarily debunked the two Obas' statements as premised on wishful thinking and barefaced falsehood. He specifically said that Oba of Lagos could not have had the audacity to tell the Ooni those words in his (Ooni's) Palace at a time he was still a commoner in Police uniform. "Nobody goes to an Oba's palace, more so the well revered Ooni's Palace and make such stupid statements unchallenged." Not in the least someone who regularly visited the Palace to seek favours. What were his missions there in the first place? This particular brazen lie by the Oba lends credence to the fact that all the other statements made against the Ooni were equally false. They were at best, the fabricated imaginations of a person running a verbal diarrhoea" he added.

Oduduwa And Yoruba Appropriation

By
Osaren Omoregie

SOURCE: THE NIGERIAN OBSERVER, TUESDAY JULY 6, 2004 PAGE 11

In his article, *Oduduwa and Bini politics* published in The Guardian of June 25, 2004. Olu Ademulegun used horrible invectives as if the intent was to stir up a battlefield for an inter-ethnic literary action. He was speaking as a member of Egbe-Omo-Oduduwa, which means, a member of the family of Oduduwa.

I would have ignored it all for it's uncouth language and puerile exuberance, except that seven points came out clearly in it, which would require immediate correction in the interest of posterity.

First, Oduduwa is not the name of a person and it is not a dynasty. It is the name of a title. It did not originate from Meroe as Professor Jide Osuntokun claimed (New Age 22-06-04). It originated from Uhe where at the peak of Uduwa, the house of God, seat of the Oghene (Ogane as the Portuguese called it), the Oduduwa ruled over the plateau territory of Uheland, which stretched across the Nupe-Igala area of the Niger- Benue confluence expanse, more

lately referred to as Central Nigeria. The name Oduduwa did not come from anywhere else except where the word Oduduwa (contracted to Odu'a and meaning 'the way to Uduwa') was used in the Oghene of then John Afonso D' Aveiro's records published by Barros and lately popularized by A.F.C Ryder in his Ife- Benin studies. The details to this effect are well set out. We cannot hijack what belongs to Uhe to cover up the historical deficiencies of Ife.

Second, no one will be attracted to any agenda to hijack Ife history because there is nothing to envy there. Oyo is the place of prominence, which gave the Yoruba the fame it can claim in history. The monarchy of Oyo was founded by Prince Oranmiyan in 1170 Century AD. Oranmiyan was born at Errua, a town on the Uhunmwode route (the eastern route) to Uhe, and was named Omonoyan. He followed his father, Ekaladerhan and his mother Isere to Uhe in 1133 A.D. He grew up there as Oranmiyan. His father Ekaladerhan had abdicated the throne of Benin, following the way Ogiso Owodo, his father, had treated him. At Uhe, Ekaladerhan became a member of the theocratic council under Oduduwa Obaloke, the reigning Oghene of Uhe. After the death of Obaloke, Obalufon became the next Oduduwa and was on the throne till he died in 1198AD.

It was Oduduwa Obalufon who allowed Prince Oranmiyan to be sent to Benin in 1170AD. Ekaladerhan died in 1168AD. Obalufon sent Oranmiyan to Oyo in 1185AD to set up the monarchy whose name became the root of the name adopted for the entire stretch of Yoruba land. According to Professor Ade Obayemi, Ife did not have any identity, which could be envied. It was through the achievements of Oyo that a name was offered for Yoruba people. Ife had nothing to offer.

"In the face of new discovery of obvious affinities, a people w

never before had an overall name for themselves adopted the name Yoruba and selected one of the most glorious phases of Ile-Ife cultural history, the Oduduwa Oranmiyan period for purposes of group identity. (JHSN VOL 9/4 June 1979 P. 183) so said Obayemi.

Only Uhe had everything to offer. It was the common center from which Benin people emerged' as Idu people, and from which Yoruba people emerged also as Olukumi people (See Ajayi and Smith 1964, P. 2.)

Third, Benin monarchy was founded in 900 AD and was ruled by 31 Ogisos before the Oba era started. Ife monarchy was not known until its official Declaration was made in 1800AD by Oba Akengbuda after Eresoyen made public (1750) the new place to which the Staff and Stone Shrine of Oghene was secretly taken soon after 1550AD.

This secret relocation of the Uhe shrine was done to avoid profanations of Odumuomu (Atlantic Slave Trade), which were spreading uncontrolled across the Bight of Benin. It was this relocation of the Oghene's Shrine that gave Ife a title as a spiritual center, otherwise it would have remained as the village of Adimu (Iguadima) all through its years of existence. Ife emerged as a product of Odumuomu. Oyo expanded as an empire and made a treaty (the Treaty of Otun) with Benin in 1578AD. Ife (or the new Uhe) was still hiding the Shrine of Oghene. The local people of Iguadimu refused to recognize the leader as Oduduwa the Oghene. They preferred to call him Ooni (Non-owner) as a guarantee that he had not come to take over their land from them in the name of spiritual protection.

"Ekaledherhan and Oranmiyan had nothing to do with Ife. They had much to do with Uhe. Ekaladerhan did not reign as Oduduwa in

Uhe as (he died 1168). But Oranmiyan reigned 1199 1202AD. Oduduwa. As a matter of fact, Benin had nothing to do with though there was much it did for it to salvage it from profanations of Odomuomu, when Benin was the imperial over all of the Bight of Benin, Guinea, Rainforest Zone of African.

Fourth, some time in recent times there arose a battle for supremacy between the Alafin of Oyo and the Ooni of Ife. Ife made the claim that it did not historically have, and it tended to step on Oyo's toes. Relief came when the State of Osun was created out of it in 1976. Those of us in the Clifford Eweka Centre for Ubiniology knew the roots of the quarrel. Many of the nearby people put too much politics ahead of them at the expense of the useful history behind all.

Fifth, Ife had nothing to do with Yoruba and Benin being cousins. It was Uhe that played all the parts. It was there Idu the progenitor of Edo people emerged 550AD, to establish the theocratic monarchy in Uhe and became the first Oduduwa, the Oghene. It was then his younger brother, Olukumi, the progenitor for the Yoruba people succeeded him 599AD and became the second Oduduwa Oghene. Between 550AD and 1550AD (when Odomuomu began) a total of 200 monarchs ruled as Oduduwa in Uhe. The last known one, Oduduwa Obasanyo, was on the throne during the Portuguese era and during the time the last royal pilgrimage from Benin made by Oba Ewuare in 1450AD. Just as Ogo is not a dynasty, Oba is not a dynasty, so is Oduduwa not a dynasty. They are titles. Our children should no longer be confused about nomenclature.

Sixth, on the British colonial conquest of the kingdoms that make up the bulk of what is now known as Nigeria, it was not only

that was affected by the new development. Benin, was most pronounced because it controlled the whole of the Bight of Benin. Ife was insignificant. It would have been strategically unwise for the invaders to turn attention on the minor when the major was healthily around. The blood of Ovonramwen became the source of deliverance for all, including Ife. It is unwise for any person not to appreciate what was achieved through Benin.

Seventh, the aspersions on Omo N'Oba Erediauwa are clearly uncalled for. It is out of ignorance that such a thing should come out of any person in our time. Erediauwa is the 69th monarch of Benin. He is the 4th of the kings who have enjoyed the benefits of the primogeniture law in Benin. Since the days of Ogiso Oriagba (1050 - 70AD), the heritage of the monarchy has been unbroken. No one can come out to say that he has no royal blood in him. He claims an ancestry that left behind a name of integrity in the stability and monarchy that ruled with imperial creativity in arts, crafts, commerce, industry and policies. He speaks with the pride of a divinity and ensures that, at every stage, his word is law. The tradition in Uhe was rotational, not by primogeniture. The pattern of the rotational succession continued in Olukumi and which by midstream adoption became Yoruba land. It was only in Benin that progress was made beyond that of the Uhe monarchical succession by introducing the primogeniture system which has become a heritage through 47 reigns so far on the throne. While the Yoruba nations became fragmentary because of uncoordinated political assertions around Ife and even Oyo, the Benin polity is maintained intact under the Benin Monarch. This was part of the secrets of Benin military virility for 1000 years (900 1900AD) prior to the colonial conquest of Nigeria. Since the creation of the Midwest, Benin has begun to evolve new strategies of brotherly care over all its brothers of the Edo speaking bloc. There should be

no envy about this, it is God- given. The Benin monarch is o blessed by his people with the longevity and prosperity praye 'Oba gha to, O, kpere. 'Nobody ever says *How is life?*

I have tried to use only a 7 point explanation to cast light on the that though Uduwa in Uhe was sacked by Odomuomu, the spirit Oduduwa, founded by the Progenitor of Edo people, should no misappropriated. It is in the effort to show the indestructibility that spirit, registered as Erinmwidu, that the Oba of Be maintains a festival known as Oduduwa Festival every year. I only in Benin that the prerogative resides for such a festivity.

Omorieg is the President of International Society for the Promotion Ubiniology (ISPU)

Egbe Omo Oduduwa And Benin Monarchy: The Facts Are Clear

Advertory, Signed By:

Benson Uwumarogie (ENA Secretary General)
Felix Iyoha (ENA Chairman)

SOURCE: THE NIGERIAN OBSERVER, MONDAY JULY 19, 2004 PAGE 9

Our attention has been drawn to the public notice of the people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Lagos State) regarding their reaction to the memoir of Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwa, the Oba of Benin. Though they have the right to comment as they deem fit on consequential matter of history, they certainly do not have the right to tell Edo people their history. For this reason, we have no recourse, but to denounce in the strongest possible terms the nature, tone and content of the public statement.

We understand Egbe Omo Oduduwa people are proud of their Oduduwa heritage, but they should understand, as a matter of simple reciprocity, that we are also proud of our heritage and luxurious history that spanned from the first Ogiso to the present time of Oba Erediauwa, the reigning Oba of Benin, We also understand that this group of the Yorubas and those who have reacted negatively are merely trying to protect and preserve what

they have accepted and tendered as the origin of the Yoruba race. However, it is necessary to point out that the preservation of our heritage and history should, and must be done within the realm of factuality and reasonableness. Not to do so is to be overly and unreasonably ethnocentric. As our response and vehement condemnation of the public statement of the people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Lagos State) in this sensitive matter, we submit that:

- Edo people are the descendants of the great Benin Kingdom, and the Oba of Benin is the spiritual, cultural, and paramount ruler of the Edo people. He is the *"primus inter pares"* (the first among equals). He is the Oba by "divine right and laws of primogeniture" granted and sanctioned by God Almighty.
- In Edo land, the Oba must first be a "Prince" and he must be apparent, during which period he is cultured and schooled in the proper mien that befits a royalty. The Oba of Benin is a first-class Oba and carries himself with a humbleness of mind and humanity of self. Unlike many political Obas, the Oba of Benin exudes grace and a dignified aura of majesty.
- The language employed by the people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa in their public statement directed at the Oba of Benin is uncouth and unacceptable. These people need to caution themselves in the use of unpleasant language when addressing the Oba of Benin. In light of the above, we want to make it clear that only those who prefer to pawn reason for absurdity and facts for myth and fiction with the claim that "Oduduwa is from the source of light descended from the sky on chains at Ife, are the ones who are "confused or genuinely ignorant" about their own origin

- The claim by some Yorubas that the heads of our departed Obas were taken to Ife for burial is as facetious and senseless as the claim of a deity who dropped from the sky and turned human. Archeological excavations have failed to validate such claim and arrant falsehood. Since the people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa and those sympathetic with their selfish cause cannot proffer proof and practical details to support their claim, they need to desist from making denigrating and provocative remarks in reference to the Oba of Benin and Edo people.
- The people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa lack true conversance of the Edo culture, tradition, and history. For the record, the Oba of Benin is the provenance and custodian of Edo history and culture and does not need any clarification from anyone within the Yoruba traditional establishment in matters of Edo culture, tradition, or history. What is more, the Oba of Benin is not Yoruba and does not follow any of the Yoruba's "established traditional channels for seeking clarification" or resolving cultural issues and kindred matters. Even if such channels exist, they exist for only the Yoruba people. Those of Egbe Omo Oduduwa and all others should be aware of this fact.
- We recognize the historical link between the Benin royal family and the legendary Oduduwa, The link exists because of the divine fate that befell Ekaladerhan, the fugitive Edo Prince who was to be put to death, but spared by his executioners, and then wandered around and ended up at a place called Uhe, which is known today as Ife in the Yoruba land.

- Aside from the brief history of Ekaladerhan which the Oba of Benin presents in his memoir, there is no where in the book in which he states or suggests, expressly or indirectly that the Yoruba race originated from Benin, in sharp contrast to the inaccurate interpretation ascribed to it by most Yorubas and the Yoruba controlled press or media. The Oba of Benin uses the book to correct the deliberate omission in the history of Edo people, which was hitherto manipulated and written by the tendentious historians and scholars among the Yorubas. Time has finally caught up with the great falsehood of history because, no matter how old, truth neither rusts nor rots.
- Edo people are not interested in who originated from whom or who is culturally superior to whom. We are concerned with the correct presentations of our history. We will continue to re-write it to make right all the errors and deliberate omissions that were masterminded by Yoruba historians. We are not concerned with or interested in rewriting the history of the Yoruba people. The Yorubas are free to believe whatever they want about the origin of their own race. For this reason, the statement of the people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa that *"it is too late now to re-write history"* is nothing but an attempt to avoid the truth in this historical matter.
- Some of the notable Yoruba traditional rulers, including the Oba of Lagos, Rilwan Aremu Akiolu I and Olugbo (Ugbo), Oba Mafimisebi, hold claims and positions which are clearly at odds with those of the Ooni of Ife that are rooted in fable and mythology. Although, the Ooni of Ife has reacted in an unsettled manner unbecomingly

royal father, he is yet to render meaningful response to The revelation of the Oba of Benin. Therefore, the commendations showered on him by his people can only be characterized as ingratiating and misplaced.

● The people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa should learn to be dispassionate in matters of historical origin, which ought to be allowed to translate to greater affinity between the Edo and Yoruba people. They need, as a matter of necessity and knowledge of history, to first of all acquaint themselves properly in this matter, respond to the varied claims and positions of some of the Yoruba notable traditional rulers, and then come out to contribute meaningfully. It is not enough to mount the stage and blow hot air.

● We do not condone and will not tolerate any attempt by individuals or groups to drag Edo into their foolishness. Egbe Omo Oduduwa and its people can continue to agitate for separate country for the Yoruba people.

● However, they need to understand in clear terms that Edo people will not have anything to do with such an unwholesome, self-absorbed intrigue or goal. The world, especially the international community, should be reminded and aware that Edo was an independent sovereign nation before the British amalgamation of the different ethnic nationalities to form Nigeria. While we stand resolved and prepared to prosecute any eventualities, we also want to make it abundantly clear to the people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa that Edo is not Yoruba and will never be part of the Oduduwa country or republic. In utter repudiation of their plan as it affects Edo people, we condemn with vehemence and disdain

the map of the purported Oduduwa country in their website at: www.geocities.com/yorubacountry.

It is preposterous that people at this day and age still prefer to embrace myth rather than fact, fiction, rather than reasoning. The book of the Oba of Benin has brought to fore the reality of the earthbound origin of Oduduwa, as opposed to the mythical story that has been told for years. The people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa and those misguided about historical facts must endeavor to look elsewhere now, but not too far, for the true identity of Oduduwa. The story of the descent on Chains from the sky is too awry and no longer tenable for the purpose of knowledge and true history. In the light of the ensuing developments therefore, we of the Edo National Association in the Americas (ENA) hereby caution the people of Egbe Omo Oduduwa and all other persons or groups to entertain restraint and desist from activities that will further aggravate the situation or cause disaffection between Edo and Yoruba people.

Oba ghato o'kpere! Ise.

I Remain Sir, Your Obedient Subject

By
S. O. Ogbemudia

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY VANGUARD, JUNE 13, 2004 PAGES 42 & 43

Three very remarkable events took place in the month of May 2004, whilst I was away in Europe. They are still of intense topicality and immense controversy. The first was the launching by His Royal Majesty, Omo N'oba N'edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Erediauwa, Oba of Benin, of his autobiography titled: *I Remain Sir, Your Obedient Servant*. The Second was the declaration of a state of emergency in Plateau State by Mr. President, His Excellency Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, via a proclamation, which suspended from office the State Governor, Deputy Governor and House of Assembly, followed by the appointment of General M. C. Alli as the Administrator. The third is the resurgence of the vexed issue of Sovereign National Conference, about which a lot of hot air had been blown.

I heard of and read about these events and their aftermaths with keen interest. Upon my return to Nigeria, I met a number of requests for press interviews and comments from the news media, some of who had managed to get through to me on telephone,

overseas. I had refused to speak then, not having full knowledge and information. Now, rather than call up these press houses one after the other, I considered it better to reduce my reaction to writing an article of this nature, let me deal with them in the reverse order.

In previous writings and interviews, I had argued that you cannot have two sovereign heads in one country.

Suffice it to say, in the meantime, that it will pay more dividends for Plateau people in particular and Nigerians in general to support Gen. M.C. Alli, the Administrator of the State, for him to quickly restore law and order; peace, security and stability as the enabling environment and basis for the re-instatement of democratic rule in the state. And this can be achieved even before the initial six months period of suspension. I know Gen Alli well, and I believe that he has no other mandate, ambition or interest than the one stated above, which with necessary support, he can handle with necessary dispatch.

Now to the first issue, namely: Omo N'Oba's book. Let me quickly apologise to His Royal Maesty. Omo N'Oba publicly, as I have done privately, for my inability to be present at the book launch, which I was told was a huge success.

The controversy arising from the book, which I have speedily read, is obviously deriving from the historical account of "*the Benin-Ife connection*" contained in chapter 36 of the book. Essentially, what Omo N'Oba said was that whilst it is true that Prince "Oranmiyan came from Uhe (Ife) to rule Benin, his father Oduduwa was indeed Prince Ekaladerhan, son of Ogiso Owodo of Benin. He gave an account of how Ekaladerhan became Oghene Dake Uhe (Oduduwa). I shall return to these later.

Meanwhile, a barrage of reactions followed largely from eminent Yorubas. Apart from the Oba of Lagos, His Royal Majesty Oba Rilwan Akiolu, and a few others who supported Omo N'Oba's account, the torrents of reactions charged at the Oba, refuting, castigating and reversing what he said.

The Ooni of Ife, His Royal Majesty, Oba Sijuade Olubuse, led the pack, but besides his inelegant and uncharitable language, he didn't materially counter or traverse Omo N' Oba's claim. But he had opened a floodgate. Their anger is that the author was effectively upturning an age-long (but wrong) Yoruba claim that Ife is the cradle of Yoruba civilization Oduduwa, the progenitor of Yorubas (or Yoruba Obas) and that Benin (of the Benin throne) was founded by a Yoruba Prince. This last claim, which Omo N' Oba went at length to correct, was okay with the Yorubas so long as it flowed from Ife to Benin. But once the Oba wrote that it is the reverse order, from Benin to Ife, hell was let loose. Why? Whichever way it goes, I thought that it reinforces the close affinities between the two peoples. But that is by the way.

Eminent historian, Prof. Ade Ajayi, picked up the gauntlet. He charged, barked but his effluxions did not add much to what Ooni said. His position was that Oduduwa either dropped directly from heaven with some (accompanying) 400 deities to become the progenitor of Yoruba, or he (Oduduwa) came from somewhere in the far East.

With respect, I find both permutations amusing. This celestial allusion to heavenly descent is nothing more than an exercise in historical mythology, lacking empirical validity. The idea of emergence from the East; far, middle or near should be rude to Yoruba esteem. None of these "east's" add value or substance to their account. If you remove "far: what is left is "east" which we understand locally to mean Ibo land! There is no ethnological similarity with the middle or far East, which are further separated by dissimilarities in physiognomy and pigmentation. Yet, I guess it will be of good idea for them to pursue and establish a valid linkage with the cradle of civilization' wherever that may be"

I admire the account given by Mr. C.O. Ugowe (THE GUARDIAN: May 23rd 2004, page 13) who had earlier written a

book: "*Benin in World History*", published in 1997. His version of the Benin-Ife connection agrees with what Omo N' Oba has written. He gave many examples where princes moved from their places of abode to assume thrones in their places of origin, arguing, correctly, that such movement would not make them descendants of where they just left. In support of the view that Prince Ekaladerhan and Oduduwa was one and same person, he cited the example of how the present Oba of Benin was originally Prince Solomon Eweka, later Prince Solomon Akenzua and finally Omo N' Oba Erediauwu.

I had personally dealt with this issue of Benin-Ife relationship in my book: *Years of challenge*, published in 1991. What I said then also essentially tallies with and are materially validated by Omo N' Oba's account.

I wrote that the Benin people were headed earlier by Odionwere and later Ogie (Ogiso). The first Ogiso was Igodo after whom the kingdom was named Igodomigodo. In all, there were 31 Ogisos, the last being Owodo who was banished. His eldest son Ekaladerhan N' Omonoyan was not immediately available to succeed his father. Evian assumed control but, when he attempted to hand over to his son, Ogiamwen, the Uzama chiefs opposed and instead, appealed to Oghene of Uhe (Ooni of Ife) to assist them obtain a king. This has been explained that the elders were only appealing for the return of the rightful heir, Ekaladerhan n' Omonoyan (distorted as Oranmiyan) to return to become their Oba. Oranmiyan, who came with some members of Yoruba nobility, could not stay long and he left his son who became Eweka I.

Omo N' Oba wrote that the person whom the Benin emissaries found in Ife was actually Prince Ekaladerhan, the son of Ogie Owodo who was banished to be executed, but spared by the executioner and wandered into the unknown, from Ughoton. The mission to search for him was to bring him home to ascend the throne and so end, the period of interregnum. The Benin emissaries

reported back to the elders at home that he was happy where he was, and in any case, too old to travel but he was prepared to send his youngest son if the Benin people would submit to a test that they would take good care of him.

There are a plethora of cases and history books are replete with accounts of how Benin Princes founded and ruled many kingdoms which have become great places in modern times. Prince Ekaladerhan's emergence in Ife is neither new, exclusive nor surprising.

Note that Omo N'Oba did not say that the Benin Prince, Ekaladerhan (Oduduwa) founded Ife or the Yoruba race. Many Yoruba 'nations' have different accounts of their ancestry. He restricted himself (even where logic and facts provided several other dimensions) to the "Benin-Ife connection, and gave what is a reasonable, intelligible and incidentally, empirically supportable account. Let our historians, archeologists, social researchers and chroniclers of our past be courageous, objective and impersonal in conveying their findings. That way, we can factually reflect on our past, correct the present and guide the future. I congratulate Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku-Akpolokpolo; Erediauwa, Oba of Benin for his book which is a priceless gift and an invaluable contribution to the building of our great nation. For this reason. I say to him proudly, just as he pledged his 'obedience' to an unknown Nigerian in 1952, that "*I remain, sir, your loyal subject*".

Ogbemudia, two time Governor of defunct MidWest and Bendel States, is a chieftain of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

The Benin/Ife Connection: Limitation Of Mythology

By
Benin Dynamic Movement (BDM)

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY VANGUARD, JUNE 20, 2004 PAGE 42

Since the launching of the book: *I Remain Sir, Your Obedient Servant* written by Omo N'Oba N'edo Uku Akpolokpolo reactions have poured in from several quarters. The reactions mainly have to do with the Omo N' Oba's claim that the founder of the Yoruba dynasty, Oduduwa, was one Ekaladerhan, Benin Prince, who had once escaped the community's axe-man, but later reappeared in Ile-Ife after wandering in the bush from Benin for a very long time.

According to the book, "the same Ekaladerhan, having become the ruler in Ife refused to go back to Benin on request, but instead sent Oramiyan (Omonoyan), his son, basically on a home-coming mission to start the present dynasty in Benin".

The Ooni of Ife has particularly been vociferous in his rejection and condemnation of the Omo N'Oba's assertion. Some of the reputable Yoruba personalities have followed the Ooni's footsteps. Unfortunately, however, their approaches are completely devoid of facts and logic. They have relied on myths to try to explain reality. Otherwise, how can the Ooni claim that it was too late for the B.

monarch to rewrite history and that Oduduwa simply dropped from Heaven to start Ife dynasty. In the Ooni's imagination, once anything is written, it cannot be challenged. By that, therefore, there is no need for research because by his claim, nobody should challenge anything that is already documented.

But every human being knows that the society grows by challenging the so-called established authorities. The whole essence of research is to push further backwards the boundaries of existing knowledge. Research simply means searching what has already been searched before. One therefore expects the Ooni's reaction to be more matured and academic, rather than resorting to myths and colonial hegemony and favoritism to explain such a fundamental issue.

Happily though, many broad-minded Yoruba personalities have seen the authenticity in the Omo N'Oba's claim and have seen the hollowness in the Ooni's story of Yoruba origin.

It is therefore our duty to examine the Ooni's (Yoruba's) claim vis-à-vis that of the Omo N'Oba's as well as other well-meaning contributors.

First, the Ooni's claim that Oduduwa simply descended from heaven using a chain is as bizarre as it is ridiculous. That is a fairy tale, which even the infant, would not accept or believe. Is the Ooni equating Oduduwa with God or angels? As far as available evidences show, only angels have been claimed to descend from heaven. Even then, they do so at the invisible spiritual realm. Even Jesus Christ did not descend from heaven.

This is why one finds the submission of Kunle Sowunmi very interesting. He asserted that the statement credited to the Oba of Benin, that the "Yoruba race originated from Benin kingdom was very rich in details and calls for re-examination by historians of high repute from all the Nigerian Universities and recognized institutions and not from uneducated and biased sources, chambers or shrines of some Obas or traditional rulers as presently being

envisaged or contemplated'. One only needs to add that to be able to push further backwards the boundaries of existing knowledge about the Yoruba and Benin kingdoms, foreigners may need to join. We need those who would seek knowledge for the sake of it and not those who would seek to manipulate knowledge to justify a selfish interest.

Otherwise, how can the so-called celebrated historian Professor Ade Ajayi (who of course is a colonial creation) condemn and dismiss the Oba of Benin's position with a wave of the hand and declare the issue closed? No academic worth his salt does that. A true scholar ought to have been excited at such a development as it would afford him an opportunity for further research that would enable him to push further backwards the boundaries of existing knowledge in the area.

Have Ade Ajayi and his likes sat down to examine the issue? One doubts. It is not enough to say the Binis asked for a ruler from Ife. One should be able to establish the relationship that existed between Benin and Ife that prompted the Binis to ask for a ruler from there. One needs to remind the Ooni that the Benin kingdom was one of the few empires in the whole of Africa, which was not conquered before the Benin expedition.

What then was the special relationship that existed between Benin and Ife that encouraged the proud and all-conquering Benin empire to make such a request?

The Ooni should have found out, too, why Oduduwa did not hesitate to send his last son, Oranmiyan, to an unknown terrain and unfamiliar people if there were no other fundamental reasons which gave Oduduwa the confidence to take the risk. The Ooni should have taken pains to find out why Oduduwa proclaimed that his last son, Oranmiyan, should be king at Ife after his death and why the Ooni eventually assumed rulership of Ife.

If the Ooni has forgotten, one needs to remind him that when Oduduwa died, Oranmiyan was invited to succeed him. He

however, turned down the offer because he had built an economically viable empire at Oyo. He, however, ordered that he must be buried in Ife. That being the situation, the son of the slave woman who was spared being used as sacrifice to the gods partly because she was pregnant was nominated to succeed Oduduwa. The child from the woman was dedicated to the gods and acted as a servant to assist Oduduwa in his day to day ritual and herbal practice. The child was named Ooni meaning 'this one is spared'. This is why the Alafin of Oyo will never accept the Ooni of Ife as a king or a superior in any Yoruba gathering of Obas. The Ooni's professed superiority was a colonial creation and has no basis in history. The British ignorantly assumed that a king of Ife, the cradle of Yoruba, must be superior to other Obas. There were similar cases in other areas. The Ooni may need to find out the reason for the unending conflict between the Alake and the Osile in Abeokuta till date. One needs to add that one does not counter an argument by emotions, sentiments or intimidation. To be able to counter the Oba of Benin's position, the Ooni must provide convincing proof. The Uku Akpolokpolo's position about Oduduwa is history. The Ooni's claim about Oduduwa dropping from the sky belongs to Myth. The Oba of Benin has not even said that the Yoruba people originated from Benin. All that he had said is that Oduduwa was the Benin Prince, Ekaladerhan, who is an attempt to avoid execution wandered far away until he found a settlement which he called "Ilefe" meaning I have successfully escaped and he then changed his name to Imadoduwa meaning "I have not missed the road to prosperity". Imadoduwa's new home, "Ilefe", was in the heart of Yoruba land and his immense magic powers endeared him to his Yoruba community which included some Uzebu warriors (corrupted in Yoruba to Ijebu) who had followed him into exile from Igodomigodo and were treating him like a god.

Oduduwa And Bini Politics

By
Olu Ademulegun

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN, FRIDAY, JUNE 25, 2004 PAGE 53

Professor Ade Ajayi was right when he said that the Oba of Bini was playing politics with regard to the Oduduwa issue. The current campaign of calumny by the Bini monarchy and its elite against Oduduwa and Yoruba people is deeply motivated by imperial politics, dose of envy and irrepressible ego. It is part of an agenda to hijack the enviable fame of Yoruba dynasty and superimpose it on the subdued ego of the Bini people who have lost the glory of their once powerful Bini empire to the greater might of the British colonial masters.

It will be recalled that since the defeat and exiling to Calabar of the Benin monarch, Oba Ovaramwen N'Ogbaisi in 1899, following the massacre of a visiting British, Bini has continued to diminish in size and stature in the comity of the once great empire, with its world-class bronze works, is gone and most of its masterpieces are carted away to foreign lands. The situation has become sorely saddened in recent times by the obscene image being given to the Bini people in the length and breadth of foreign countries particularly in Europe, North Africa and America. They have

become Africa's proof of *sex is a Nigger*, a queer belief held and propagated by Naiwu Osahon, a Bini writer of the book with that title.

As the proud and concerned citizens among the Bini watch painfully and helplessly as these things happen, a few ingenious but disoriented leaders among them must have thought of some old ploys often employed by failing empires. They re-invent history to inspire their demoralised subjects

In preparing for a new resuscitated era, the Bini in 1997, marked 100 years anniversary of its conquest during which time some far reaching resolutions must have been made, scripts of which are now being layed out systematically. *The Guardian on Sunday* of February 9, 1997 reported the top-ranking Prince. Akenzua as lamenting the traumatic situation of his people in these words

"Benin has been sliding backwards for the past 100 years ... The centenary is designed to partly draw attention to this fact that since that time, the kingdom which was already in the hub of an empire has been diddling down the slope since 1807.... we are still in trauma and what we are doing now is to rouse the people and say to them don't brood over the past, look forward with confidence towards the future".

The amicable prince truly captured the genuine angst and desperation of a people in historical distress. Within the present Bini itself, Oba Erediauwa seems to have embarked on desperate measure aimed at subduing any Enogie (traditional dukedom ruler), chief or political stalwart that tries to challenge him or aspire to any pre-eminence that threatens his supreme authority in the domain. He does not even tolerate any other traditional ruler sharing the title of Oba with him in his domain.

These tendencies have naturally resulted in serious internal dissent and crisis. According to a report in *This Day Newspaper* of

May 9 1999, such crisis "led to the administrator suspending the Oba from membership of the State Security Council and Chairmanship of the State Chieftaincy Council". It took a lot of pressure and open defiance to get the Oba to concede some lot of honour to his Enigies

Oba Erediauwa still wants to rule over Bini in the manner of his ancestors when a king was god and the subjects were vassals. In fact, some Bini commentators still irreverently refer to the Urhobos, Itsekiri, Ijaws, Uzebu (Ijebus) and some other neighbours as favourite ritual meat of ancient Bini gods and goddesses. A Benin chief was anonymously quoted as saying that Oba Erediauwa "kept stressing that he inherited the Benin nation as personal property". If the chief was quoted right, then the Oba's undisguised ego, even if divine, is bound to create complex problems in the political landscape of today's republican Nigeria.

Edo people like their Yoruba cousins are highly cultured, well educated and their traditions is solid. There is nothing wrong if the Bini want to restore their own past glory. They need to and all Africans and well-wishers will do well to support them. But the Bini must not do things at the expense of the honour and pride of others. Their Yoruba cousins built an enviable culture of excellence and accommodation over many centuries of unbroken Oduduwa dynasty, and they have attracted the attention and admiration of blacks in the Diaspora and people of all races in the world.

Any attempt to poach on their much-cherished and well-preserved ancestry and culture can only be counter productive. The present penchant of some members of the Bini ruling class and elite for engineering aggravation, dissent and distrust among the royalties and people of other communities in pursuit of a revisionist political agenda, will only illuminate the image of a place once labeled the *Ina do anger, ille-ibinu (ibini)* by Oranmiyan, the lineage ancestor of the present Oba of Benin.

● *Ademulegun is a member of Egbe Omo Oduduwa, Lagos*

Ife-Benin Oduduwa Claims: Artefacts Time Measurement To The Rescue

By
Laoye Sanda

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY VANGUARD, JUNE 27, 2004 PAGE 38

Before we attempt discussing the personality of Oduduwa the application of the latest time measurement techniques such as the physicist carbon-14 Dating, the Chemist Argon Testing and others of all important anthropological and archeological sites and cultural artefacts, such as, palace objects, utensils, royal apparels, burial chambers, religious shrines and implements, more rigorous etymological studies of the Edo and Yoruba languages is highly advisable so as to prove which of the two kingdoms predated the other, and also which kingdom dominated the other.

One may suggest that such a renewed effort should be jointly sponsored by the Institute of African Studies at Benin and Ibadan, the Odu'a Group of Companies and other philanthropists not merely for academic interests, but, also for reasons of racial dignity and the promotion of peace, unity, friendship, and progress since this debate has witnessed excessive use of invectives from both sides.

Oduduwa Probable Personality

The ancestor of all Yoruba has been much earlier canvassed by some other Yoruba historians and elites. Another equally renowned ancestral personage, Lamurudu, usually mentioned, was said to have been expelled from the East (Modern Mecca) for idol worshiping. We agree with those who have contended that many myths have been woven around their personality as Oduduwa was said to have descended from heaven.

We humbly invite all Edos and Yorubas to read this rather long but very interesting quotation from Basil Davidson's book and decide whether there could be the slightest ancestral and cultural connections with ancient Nubian (Noba) Meroe civilization of the present day Sudanese Republic.

Davidson wrote, "It was Ethiopian king, Ezana, at all events who completed the downfall of Meroe. After centuries of trading intercourse between Nubian Meroe (present day Sudan Republic) where Ijebus, Yorubas claim to have migrated and Ethiopia, the two had grown far apart. During the early part of the 4th century BC, if not before, new people came filtering into the settled lands of Kush".

A famous inscription of King Ezana calls them the Noba and the Red Noba. They were in any case the last of all those many peoples who had moved out of the dry land of the Sahara West and found the comfort of the Nile valley to their taste. These Noba or Nubians seem to have settled down along side the urban Kushites without much trouble, although the records here are entirely lacking. But with Ethiopia, they were repeatedly at war. Ezana's inscription tells self-righteously how he was provoked by the Noba, time and again, until he decided to make an end of their presumption.

Gathering his armies, King Ezana marched down the Attsara, the ancient road to Meroe, the capital, and defeated the Noba'...Page 54

Again, on page 56, Davidson submitted 'it would be valuable to

know how far these advanced 500 B.C. Iron Age civilizations of Kush/Meroe, Nubian and that of Ethiopian Azam are linked with other African people to their East and south. Little can as yet be said about this.

"The Nubian or (Noba) Meroites certainly traded far West ward, and possibly it was in this way that the Chad-Niger people first learnt the technology of making sculptures in metal by the lost wax (cirea perdue) process- which involves the coating of a clay model with wax. Being thus melted is lost".

"It would be no surprise to find that West Africa, sojourned in Nubian Kush, or Nubian Kushites in West Africa, and further excavation in the cities of Kush as well as the decipherment-simplification of an hitherto unknown written language of Nubian Meroltic inscriptions, alphabets and inscriptions may one day make it possible to begin to write this closed chapter in trans- African relations. P.50 contains Meroltic writings.

These two quotations raised a lot of questions:

- (a) Could the Yoruba claim of migration from the East be actually a reflection of poor geographical knowledge of those past times which can now be termed that their East was from present day Sudan which is the Old Nubian, otherwise called Noba.
- (b) Definitely, it is great thanks to Kabiyesi, the Awujale of Ijebu Ode and his 1984 coronation Anniversary ceremony council whose well-annotated publication convinced me that the Ijebus actually migrated from Wadai province of present day Sudan.
- (c) But then, the major part of the Yoruba must also have migrated from Sudan since Ijebu dialect and culture and the Awujale's regalia are not much different from other Yoruba people.

- (d) Then could Oduduwa have been one of the Nubian (Noba) war captains who migrated after the Ethiopian King Ezana's destruction of Nubian (Noba) civilization in Davidson's account?
- (e) What etymological fact (that is, Science of origin and history of words) lies in the name of the Nubian (Noba) race and the Yoruba kingly title OBA and yet His Royal Majesty title: Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku, Akpolokpolo?
- (f) If it was true that the Benin Prince Izoduwa (Oduduwa) prevailed over the Ife people, became their king and invested his eight children as the paramount kings of the provincial centres of Yorubaland, Alafin of Oyo, Alake of Egba, Onipopo of Popo, Onisade of Sabe both in present day Republic of Benin, Owa of Ilesa, Orangun Ile Ila and others, why is it that the faintest Benin ancestral and cultural heritages are not found either in the eight (8) Obas ceremonial dressings, palace objects, palace historians and poets singers accounts or could there have been a joint agreement to obliterate such backgrounds?

For instance, it is known that the Edo powerful armies achieved control of some adjoining Yoruba lands of Owo for a period of time and some of the influence may be seen until today in His Highness Olowo of Owo Agogo Annual Festival regalia which is very like that worn by His Highness. The Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo Erediauwa.

Further, still is the revered name Oduduwa more of Edo or, Yoruba derivation?

A divination terminology that the world knows is typically a Yoruba creation.

Ifa divination is said to be based on sixteen (16) ODU, that is themes or chapters, or leading principles of ideas. The word IWA

means a particular behaviour, or, conduct of a person. The name Oduduwa could therefore be taken to mean a positive Role Model of Best Behavior.

It is therefore very difficult to accept Naiwu Osahon's submission in the Daily Independent of Friday May 14 that the Prince Ekaladerhan new name (Izoduwa) might have been changed into Oduduwa because he must have been made the Head of the Ifa cult. But Ifa worshippers will insist that the Official title of their leader is not by name Oduduwa.

Naiwu Osahon, however, remains one of the foremost Pan African activists whose 'Black is Beautiful' slogan fuelled the anti apartheid and anti-imperialist struggle of the 60's, 70's 80's and 90's. Again Naiwu Osahon's claim in the same publication that the Ijebus are descendant of the Edo (Uzebus) who accompanied Prince Ekaladerhan out of Igodomigodo to Uhe (Ife) would have to await the findings of the proposed joint Historian Commission to the relevant parts of Wadai province in present day republic of Sudan to upset His Royal Highness Kabiyesi Awujale of Ijebu land contention that Sudan is the Ijebu people's ancestral home.

The 1984 Awujaje Anniversary Ceremonial Brochure given to this writer courtesy of Honorable Dr. Bankole Okuwa is replete with linguistic, ethnological, remain body scarification (facial marks) in support of Kabiyesi Awujale's contentions.

In the Newsweek Magazine of May 2004, Oba Awujale had also asserted that there have been several waves of migration of Ijebu people from Sudan with minor stops in different places. Any reader of ancient history who is conversant with migrations of peoples under pressure of wars, environmental crises, adventurous spirit, and, other social crises could assert that the Ijebus are not of Oduduwa descendants. But could the Pre-Oduduwa Yoruba and Edo's have also migrated from the Egyptian - Ethiopian - Sudanese axis given the fact that Basil Davidson had argued that it was probably after the 500 BC discovering of Iron smelting techniques

that the dense forest of West Africa became penetrable which facilitated production of agricultural surplus on the basis of which more complex socio political formation of a slave, or feudal ruling class could be built as in other parts of the world. Archaeological and anthropological evidences support such a view. Professor Ade Ajayi, referred to exhumed skeleton near Akure which has been dated to be about 1,600 years old (Daily Independent May 14, 2004). However, such people must have been of the more primitive communal stock and of lower culture and civilization.

Two other vital archaeological artefacts which facilitate the Nubian (Noba) Meroe ancestral linkages of some Yoruba people relate to the existence of the Opa Oranyi staff wrongly called Obelisk at Ile Ife. Such stone caved staff according to Davidson (p.53) abound in ancient Ethiopian (Axim) civilization which was less civilized than that of Nubia (Noba), Meroe. Was the civil Engineering technology and builders of technology from Ile Ife from the North? This puzzle is yet to be solved.

Secondly, as mentioned in the late Yoruba Sage, Pa Adewale Thompson's book on Yoruba culture, the sacred "Holy Book" known as "Edidi" kept at Ile Ife bore strange beings in Jewish character. Such claim lends itself to the same Eastern labeled direction of Yoruba people when actually page 50 of Davidson's book contain a page of Nubia (Noba) Meroltic in origin.

Thirdly, the late respected historian and former Director of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, submitted that the first, or, original Ile Ife must be somewhere in ancient Nubia (Noba).

The membership of the proposed Historical Commission must include all the Africanists who have joined in this debate, such as versatile Professor Ade Ajayi, Naiwu Osahon, Professor Jide Osuntokun, Dr. Adeoti of History Department, University of Lagos, Nnamdi Okosieme, Jackson Akpasubi, Dr. Samuel Ogbemudia whose Sunday Sun June 13, 2004 contribution is very

significant and others who have relevant information.

Definitely, our revered High Chief Nosakhare Isekhure, the high priest of Benin's contribution in Sunday Vanguard of June 5 is very important and we humbly beg that he must accept to be a member, and even serve as the chairman. The joint Historical Commission of Benin/Ife people, which must be strongly supported by our Royal Highness who has been involved in this very hot historical debate. Their Royal Highnesses should accept it in the part in the spirit of African brotherhood, peaceful coexistence and pursuit of racial unity, friendship and progress.

Comrade Laoye Sanda is Associate Member, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. He now teaches in the Department of Public Administration, The Polytechnic, Ibadan.

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Edo Origin Of Ile-Ife Monarchy

By

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SOURCE: www.edo_nation.net

I have reproduced below Chapter 3 from "The History of the Ancient Benin Kingdom and Empire" written by Chief D. N. Oronsaye (published 1995; printed by Jeromelaiho). The author discusses "Prince Elaladerhan of Benin who became Imadoduwa (Oduduwa) Obalufon, the Ooni of Ile-Ife: The Edo origin of Ile-Ife monarchy".

A subject that has remained contentious in our history is the nature of relations between the present Benin dynasty and the Ile-Ife Monarchy as well as the events and processes that led to these relations. The earliest writing on the subject Samuel Johnson's History of the Yorubas (Lagos, C.M.S. Bookshop, 1898), traced the present dynasty to a grandson of Oduduwa, a fugitive fleeing religious persecution in Mecca. The work did not show the events that led to this baffling acceptance of Oduduwa's grandson "foreigner" as the Oba of Benin, over and above the indigenes Ogiamien. But his admission in the work that some of the narrative events in the book are legendary give enough grounds to doubt the authenticity. Chief Jacob Egharevba's *A Short History of Benin*,

the other hand is conspicuously silent on Prince Ekaladerhan's migration to Ile-Ife and the events that happened thereafter. This terrible omission by Egharevba (the cause of my slight quarrel with him in 1945) helped in no small way to lend credence to the earlier distortions which foreign writers had earlier introduced into Benin history. It is this distortion that this chapter sets out to correct by tracing and relating the events and stories of personalities that led to these developments in the history of Benin and Ile-Ife. In order to have a better appreciation of these developments, it is necessary to start from the political crisis in Igodomigodo also known as Ile (Home) which was the capital of the migrants from Sudan scattered over the present west African and central African sub regions.

Ogiso Owodo and the Political Crisis in Igodomigodo (Ile)
Ogiso Owodo who became the last Ogiso of Igodomigodo ascended the throne about 1068, following the death of Ogiso Arigho, his father. Owodo had some physical defects which affected his personality and behavior. He was a hermaphrodite with fully developed male and female organs, which gave him conflicting emotions. (There are other known cases in history and their behaviors brought crisis and disaster to their people. Examples are Emperor Nero of Rome and King Henry VIII of England (1491 - 1547). Even before his installation he was known to have an erratic character. He had murdered his mother and because of this known problem, his father Ogiso Arigho covered it up. He had a secret wife Imade who bore his only son Ekaladerhan, and did not take her into his harem until he was persuaded to do so. He had a strong passion for his late father's senior wife Esagho and fell under her influence. Esagho was known to be a huge woman and believed to be a witch who practiced lesbianism. In addition to Esagho, he married ten of his father's wives, murdered two and sent the rest packing from the

palace. He also married many other women into his harem. Owodo also committed a lot of political blunders because of his erratic ways. From the beginning of his reign, he failed to cultivate the required loyalty and support of the Edion Uzama led by the Oliha. He bypassed and overruled them in the performance of the many ritual ceremonies connected with his installation. This made some of these ceremonies incomplete. A glaring example was his neglect and refusal to consult the Iso Temple. The Oliha and Edion Uzama's various attempts at bringing Owodo into line were met with rebuff and physical assault. In one of his fits, he is reported to have spat on the Oliha's face, though he apologized later. The biggest problem of Owodo was the failure of his numerous wives to bear children for him. This caused a lot of quarrels between the wives and Owodo, before he was persuaded to consult the oracle. Owodo sent Esagho and three men to consult on his behalf. After consultation, the Obiro instructed that Esagho should be executed. But Esagho bribed the three men to report that Owodo's only child Ekaladerhan was the cause of the problem and he should be executed. But Ekaladerhan was a powerful mystic who was destined for greater things and could not be so easily killed. This was known to Esagho and she secretly advised Owodo to banish Ekaladerhan and his mother instead. Moreso, Ekaladerhan was known to have a lot of strong allies who could destabilise Owodo's administration. Prince Ekaladerhan and his mother were taken into the forest and banished about 1084 A.D. But the Edion Uzama led by the Oliha did not leave matters entirely in the hands of Ogiso Owodo, as they were doing other things to safeguard the throne for Ekaladerhan. For so many years, the wives of Ogiso Owodo remained barren. He sent another

team to the Obiro about 1087. This team found out that Esagho was the cause and should be executed, while the Ogiso should consult the Obiro. Owodo ordered the execution of Esagho which was done, but he failed to consult Obiro as was instructed. Due to this failure to consult the Obiro, Owodo could not be instructed on how to atone for the abominable adulterous acts of lesbianism, coupled with sapphism, which the executed Esagho had practiced with her co-wives. Since the wives of Owodo did not perform the atonement at the Iso temple with a bearded she-goat and other items to the spirit of Owodo's father, they remained barren. This greatly distressed Owodo, especially after he realised that he has been misled into banishing his only child. He then sent soldiers to capture and bring back Ekaladerhan from Ughoton. But the soldiers did not return. These developments further worsened Owodo's condition as he was always having abnormal fits. He started executing people, especially women at random. In one of his fits in about 1091, he executed a pregnant woman, an abominable act known as Kirikuvua. This led to the people rebelling against Ogiso Owodo. They invaded his palace, drove him out and banished him from Ile - the capital of Igodomigodo. He fled to the village of Ihinmwirin with only three of his old wives and nobody knew where he died in misery as a farmer.

THE ROLE OF OLIHA AND EVIAN IN THE CONDUCT OF THE AFFAIRS OF IGODOMIGODO DURING OWODO'S MISRULE.

The Oliha as the head of the Edion Uzama Council, had the responsibility of ensuring the wellbeing of the kingdom through his control of the various religious activities especially the Iso Temple.

The Oliha title holder tried to live up to his responsibilities during the misrule of Ogiso Owodo. Having failed in their attempt to bring Ogiso Owodo under control, the Oliha and other members of the Edion Uzama tried to find a solution to the crisis. They were aware of the problems in the Ogiso's palace and the banishment of Prince Ekaladerhan. They could neither help Prince Ekaladerhan nor bring him into their plans for the resolution of the problems because of his tender age. The Oliha, other members of the Edion Uzama and the Ohen Iso then sent their relations and supporters to join and help Prince Ekaladerhan in Ughoton. They consulted the oracle of Isc temple and used their mystic powers to invoke Belial to send one herbivore beast or Osogan which was put at their service. The Osogan was capable of eating up mighty trees and cleared space in the thick forest. The Osogan was directed into the forest in a North-Westerly direction where he cleared a large area which was to be known as Ile-Ife about 1075. The beast then started moving from place to place to capture and transport people to settle in Ile-Ife. One place the beast visited regularly was a market in Ile called Agbayo-Aigbare (meaning we go together, but we don't return together) so named because of the activities of Osogan. This market, which was mainly used by women, was the place where the Osogan selected and seized people for transportation to Ile-Ife. The Osogan was capable of carrying as much as twenty people in its open mouth at a time. The Oliha and the Edion Uzama selected some people and sent to the market for transportation by the beast to Ile-Ife. The people carried away by the beast were not killed as earlier believed. If they were being killed, people would have stopped attending the market. But the market held regularly in spite of the Osogan's activities. Soon craftsmen and physicians joined in the strange kind of migration to Ile-Ife. These people carried by the Osogan increased in population and formed a populous and a commercial town known as Ile-Ife. It soon started attracting people

from other places who went there to trade. This was how Ile-Ife came into existence in about 1075 A.D., though it had no king yet. Ogiso Owodo paid no attention to the dwindling population of its headquarters. He was too busy with his personal problems. But the problem of disappearance of people from the market as a result of the activities of Osogan, started to disturb other notable personalities who were not party to Oliha's plans. This problem led to the emergence of community leaders in Ile, who were concerned about finding a solution to this problem. These leaders had no access to Ogiwo Owodo. They decided to find solutions to the problem on their own. One such community leader who emerged during this period was Evian. Before this crisis he was already an important personality in Ile. His family came from Mede and were renowned diviners. Evian himself had acquired this trade from his forebears and had the five powers of a Magi. Through this power he was able to know of the activities of the Oliha. But since he was not consulted by Owodo and the Oliha, he joined the other community leaders in solving the problem. Later, he was driven by his personal ambition of wanting to become king. He therefore invoked his power for control of malevolent spirits after which he went to the market of Agbayo-Aigbare to await the coming of Osogan. When the Osogan arrived, he waved his magical wand across the face and the Osogan fled the market into the Iso forest. This defeat of the Osogan was hailed by the people of Ile and it helped to enlarge the stature of Evian. This finally established him as a foremost community leader who was consulted regularly in the administration of Ile and other parts of Igodomigodo kingdom. Oliha and the Edion Uzama members on the other hand continued with the control of Osogan and its activities. The Osogan soon started to operate from the Iso temple in the Ugbeku bush. It was also directed to Ughoton to carry away the troops sent by Owodo to capture his heir Prince Ekaladerhan. In addition they continued to monitor the activities

and movement of Prince Ekaladerhan in preparation for his installation after the exit of Owodo.

THE STORY OF PRINCE EKALADERHAN WHO BECAME IMADODUWA OBALUFON, THE FIRST OONI OF ILE-IFE.

After the establishment of Ile-Ife in 1075 A.D., the town started to attract migrants who came to practice their trade as well as settle in the place. It became populous and specialised trades and services began to develop. Also because of its increasing population the administration of the town started to become problematic. But the town was destined and foreseen by mystics for higher things as the abode of a great king, whose descendants would establish dynasties in many places. One of such mystics was the Babalawo Osamienmwinaisetinru known as Setinru who had transformed the Edo Iha divination system into Ifa during his sojourn in Ado-Ekiti. He had received mystic messages that a prince would soon establish his kingdom with his followers in Ile-Ife. About 1080 A.D., Setinru shifted his divination business to Ile-Ife. He became a foremost Babalawo whose presence attracted a lot of people to Ile-Ife who came to consult him and to learn the divination system. Thus Ile-Ife became a spiritual centre as well. Setinru was to play an important role in the installation of Prince Ekaladerhan as the first Ooni of Ile-Ife. Prince Ekaladerhan, as already indicated, was the only child of Ogiso Owodo. He was born about 1070 A.D. by Imade, the second wife of Ogiso Owodo. Because he was a mystic destined for great things, the attempts by Queen Esagho to use witchcraft to terminate the pregnancy failed. He grew up a tall, handsome and obedient prince in Ogiso's palace. He had a large circle of friends who were the core of his allies in exile. He developed interest in religious practices in the kingdom. The mystical aura surrounding his person was well known. Due to the intrigues of Queen Esagho he was taken to the forest and banished along with Imade, his mother.

Ekaladerhan was joined by his friends and moved further near the sea where they build a new town called Ughoton. Due to the distance from Iso temple in Ugbeku, he decided to built a temple for worship in Ughoton. Since life in Ughoton revolved around the sea, he used water and sea creatures as symbols, while retaining virtually all the ritual practices of Zoroastrianism associated with Iso temple. This new temple was known as Olokun temple and thus was the origin of Olokun worship which was to spread far and wide. He appointed a priest for the temple who followed him to Ile-Ife, but later returned to Ughoton where his descendants continued as custodians of the temple. (Two of his descendants Chief D.O. Omuemu and Dr. A.O. Izevbogie have provided evidence for this and it is shown in Appendix). The obstruction and capture of his father's soldiers by the Osogan made him realise that he was a fugitive wanted in Ile. This made him abandon Ughoton for the forest, moving in a north westerly direction along with allies, supporters and subjects. In the course of this escape, he changed his name to Imadoduwa (a reaffirmation of his destiny which means "I did not buy my way to prosperity") to conceal his fugitive identity. Driven on by some mystical forces, they arrived in Ile-Ife which was in dire need of a king to rule over the town. The people of Ile-Ife assembled at the house of Setinru, the supreme Babalawo to find a solution to this problem. It was at this time that (Prince Ekaladerhan) Imadoduwa and his followers entered the town. The people recognised him as the awaited king and started pointing at his direction. While some of the people were pointing him out and describing him in Yoruba language, Babalawo Setinru was asking them in Edo language whether they were referring to Ooni? Which in Edo language was a question meaning "this one?" The people now replied Ooni in unison after him. They proclaimed him king with the title Ooni and renamed Oba Olufon Imadoduwa, the Ooni of Ile-Ife. Since that time in about 1090 A.D. all the rulers of Ile-Ife adopted the title of

Ooni of Ile-Ife. All the elders and leaders of the people of Ile-Ife accepted him as king, and paid homage to him by kneeling and bowing to him as a mark of respect. The coronation took place immediately after. The name Obalufon was given by the Ifa-Olodumare through the supreme Babalawo Setinru who became Babalawo to Imadoduwa Obalufon the first Ooni of Ile-Ife. After his coronation, he established a large pantheon at the side of his house. There he housed the various deities he had known and worshipped in Ile, the headquarters of Igodomigodo. Amongst them were the Iso temple, Olokun (or water) temple, Ogun temple, and so on. In addition, he established a large garden continuing every known plant. He also kept a large forest behind the garden which was home to both benevolent and malevolent spirits as well as animals associated with these temples like swallows, locusts and so on. He was surrounded in his palace by many practising diviners, physicians and medicine men. He married his first and other wives in Ile-Ife. They had many children for him. At the time of his mother Imade's death about 1140 A.D., he was already blessed with twenty seven sons and seventeen daughters from five of his wives. In accordance with the tradition of his forebears in Igodomigodo, he started to send out the sons to various parts of Yoruba land like Ekiti, Ijebu, Ijesa, Egba, Ondo and so on. They were installed as Oba (king) over these people. The eldest son Aigbovo whose pet name was Omonoyan (given by his grandmother Imade) was designated as the successor to the Ooni. But certain developments and circumstances in Ile (Igodomigodo) made his father Imadoduwa Obalufon the Ooni of Ile-Ife to send Aigbovo to Ile as king. The developments and events are the issues we shall discuss in the next section.

SUCCESSION CRISIS AND THE FOUNDING OF THE PRESENT EWEKA DYNASTY IN BENIN I have gone to this length to show and establish the origins of Ile-Ife, its Monarchy and the Ooni title and her connections with Benin. This is to provide

a basis for understanding Benin's later request for an Ife Prince to rule over her. This Benin request for a seeming "foreigner" to rule over her, has continued to baffle a lot of people, who have never been able to understand and appreciate such a development. But this problem is not unconnected with the manner the issue had previously been presented by earlier writers. For instance, the late Chief (Dr) J.U. Egharevba in treating the subject in *A short history of Benin* wrote: "It was some years after Evian's victory over Osogan that Owodo was banished for misrule by the angry people, who then appointed Evian as administrator of the government of the country because of his past services to the people. When Evian was stricken by old age, he nominated his eldest son, Ogiemwen as his successor, but the people refused him. They said he was not the Ogiso and they could not accept his son as his successor, because as he himself knew, it had been arranged to set up a republican form of government. This he was now selfishly trying to alter. While this was still in dispute 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, for things were getting from bad to worse and the people saw that there was need for a capable ruler.

This passage quoted above did not show that Ekaladerhan went to Ile-Ife and became Imadoduwa who became the Ooni of Ife. There is no doubt that Chief (Dr) Egharevba knew everything about Ekaladerhan's departure to Ile-Ife, but, became silent on it. This seemingly deliberate omission obviously created some of the aforementioned difficulties in understanding the Benin-Ile-Ife connection. Having shown and established the connections between Benin and Ile-Ife, it is now necessary to narrate the events that led to the request for a king from Ile-Ife and the founding of the present dynasty in Benin. The seeming complacency of Oliha and Edion Uzama during Owodo's misrule seem to have worked against them after the banishment of Owodo. None of them was called upon to rule over the people. Rather the people of Ile chose one of their

community leaders Evian. He was appointed as an administrator about 1091. Evian's rule was peaceful, but he had his own ambition to perpetuate his family in office. In short, he wanted to establish his own dynasty. When he became old, his administration started to weaken and problems started to develop. The people then started agitating for a new ruler. During this period, too, the Oliha during Owodo's misrule died and he was succeeded by his younger son. Evian took advantage of his situation to nominate his eldest son Ogiemwen and proceeded to enthrone him. The people of Ile led by the young Oliha did not accept this arrangement. Moreover, they were aware that Ekaladerhan the rightful heir was still alive and ruling in Ile-Ife. The Oliha and the other four members of the Edion Uzama decided to go to Ekaladerhan Imadoduwa the Ooni of Ife to beg him to return to Ile to assume his throne in 1153. The Ooni received them, but he was not happy with them. After the preliminary quarrels, the Ooni told them that he was not prepared to return to Ile for two reasons namely that his new kingdom Ile-Ife was too big to be abandoned and that he had become too old to embark on such a journey. In addition he was still bitter and had not forgotten about the way the former Oliha had neglected and abandoned him. But due to the persistent pleading of the delegation, the Ooni agreed to help them on the condition that they underwent some tests. They agreed. He gave them some lice to take home and return with them back to Ile-Ife after three years. Three years later about 1150, the Oliha and his team returned to Ile-Ife with the lice. The Ooni was happy with them for having been able to take care of insects as small as lice. He then concluded that since they have been able to take care of lice, they would be able to take care of his son. The Ooni called his eldest son Prince Aigbovo (alias Omonoyan who had been appointed as successor to the Ooni) to follow them to Ile to establish an administration. Prince Aigbovo Omonoyan obeyed his father's instructions and left Ile-Ife with some allies among whom was the Oloton who was made the sixth member of

the Edion Uzama about 1100 A.D. He stayed in a palace built for him at Usama and became friendly with Erinmwinde the beautiful daughter of the Enogie of Egor. She soon became pregnant. But he did not seem to be receiving full cooperation from the people of Ile after two years of staying in Usama. It was because of this that he started calling the town Ile-Ibinu. He abdicated about 1163 A.D. and left some of his allies to look after his son. He instructed the people to enthrone his son as the next Oba, before he left for Ile-Ife. From there Omonoyan proceeded to Oyo where he had another son Oranyan who later became the Alafin of Oyo. Omonoyan returned to Ile-Ife about 1167 and succeeded his father as the second Ooni of Ile-Ife. The instructions he left behind that his child from Erinmwinde should be enthroned as the king of Oba of Benin was adhered to. This child was male and was crowned Oba Eweka I. He founded the present dynasty. What happened was not really the founding of a new dynasty as such. It was rather the reestablishment of the dynastic line started by the Theban Prince Ogiso Igodo.

Re-Yoruba Origin Controversy: Prof. Ade-Ajayi's View Is Politicised, Ethnicised And Ahistorical

**By
Ewaen Edoghimioya**

SOURCE: www.edo_nation.net

The interview granted your paper by the Emeritus Prof J.F. Ade-Ajayi of the University of Ibadan on the Yoruba origin controversy and his views are most disappointing and most unbecoming of an emeritus professor of his calibre. To say the least, it lacked the objectivity, professionalism and decorum which you expected him to bring to the issue. He allowed his ethnic bias and accompanying anger to take the better part of him and it could be seen that he only just managed to restrain himself from resorting to insults and abuse. But the harsh tone of his language were suggestive enough of his disrespect for the Omo n' Oba n'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwa who is his elder and a royal father. As a leading light of African history and culture, I started to wonder what kind of African history he was teaching his students and the kind of example he is giving to us younger historians who are expected to look up to him.

A reading of the interview shows that Prof Ajayi had either not

read the portion of the book dealing with the origin of the Oduduwa published in Nigerian dailies or he was too disoriented by the content as to be able to articulate his comments or replies to the questions posed by the interviewer. Otherwise, he would not have resorted to falsifying the Omo n' Obas statements as contained in the book. The first and major falsehood he fabricated is his claim that Omo n' Oba wrote that Egharevba ".has Akoko Edo blood in him". There is no where in the book where Omo n' Oba made such a statement. What Omo n' Oba wrote was ".Apart from the fact that Edo n Ekue(Edo-Akure partly Benin and partly Yoruba by birth) blood in the man"(Egharevba) manifested itself.".So one does not know how Prof Ade Ajayi got his Akoko Edo which he used to replace Edo-Akure. He went further to ask "Akoko Edo people are no longer under Edo state"? This latter question based on his fabrications was obviously aimed at ridiculing the Omo n' Oba as one who does not know the ethnic belonging or categorization of the Akoko Edo.

Another outright falsehood is Ade-Ajayi's statement that ".there is no doubt that Oranmiyan founded Oyo and he also founded Benin". To state that Oranmiyan founded Benin is a mistake which I am sure an elementary school pupil who studied social studies in Nigeria will not make. For an emeritus professor of African history to make such public gaffe, without retracting it after it was printed is to say the least, disappointing. Prof Ade-Ajayi's statement is the big lie of Nigerian history in the twenty first century.

The most terrible blunder of Prof Ade-Ajayi was the statement that "The Oba of Benin has no locus standi, as it were to tell the story of Oranmiyan." If the Omo n' Oba, who is a direct descendant of Oranmiyan has no locus standi to tell the story of his forebear, I wonder who has the local standi? Is it Prof Ade Ajayi,(though a historian) whom I am sure cannot even trace the relationship between his native sub-Ekiti groups relations with Oduduwa.? If

anybody has the locus standi anywhere in the world, it is the direct descendants of Oranmiyan of which the Omo n' Oba is the foremost.

At the professional level, Prof Ade -Ajayi only exposed his ethnic bias and politiking rather than engaging in historical analysis. The major areas of his comments in which he abused professionalism are his use and source of historical evidence, and definition of a professional historian. The major plank of Ade-Ajayi's comments is the claim that "His (Omo n'Oba's) father used to attend and meet at the conference of Yoruba Obas regularly during the colonial rule.His own father did not object to this." This evidence of Oba Akenzua II attendance of such meetings is one issue which many a Yoruba historians have struggled over the years to force down as "fact" or evidence of history) and they cite the seating arrangement in the meetings of Yoruba Obas (attended by Omo n' Oba n'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Akenzua II 1933-1978) in which the Ooni sat at the head of the table . This development has been falsified and projected as evidence of Oba of Benin's subordination to the Ooni of Ife. Though Ade-Ajayi stated that these meetings were taking place under colonial rule, he deliberately refused to state the context and circumstances in which these meetings took place. This silence on the context and circumstances misleads the public into thinking that the meetings were traditional and customary, and creates the impression that a relationship of superiority and /or affinity had always existed between the Oba of Benin and the Yoruba Obas and even within the ranks of Yoruba Obas. Professionally, Ade Ajayi should have told us why and how these meetings came into being, the purpose and interest which they served.

Until Oba Akenzua II, no Oba of Benin attended any conference or meeting of Yoruba Obas. Such kind of pan Yoruba Obas meeting never existed in history as a pan Yoruba consciousness and state

never existed. These meetings were not started until the late 1930s. Attempts by some Yoruba Obas in present day Ondo and Ekiti states to pay customary tributes to Omo n'Oba, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Eweka II after the dynastic restoration in 1914 were stopped by the British and prohibited. This shows that the British were not interested in such interactions. But in the late 1930's certain administrative changes were implemented by the British which divided Southern Nigeria into Western and Eastern provinces. The British colonial administration initiated and instituted these meetings of Sole Native Authorities (wrongly called conference of Yoruba Obas) in the western provinces to discuss and solve common problems of the provinces. Oba Akenzua II as the only Sole Native Authority in Benin Province under the directive of the colonial government was always "invited" by the government and was bound to attend. The meetings were held under the auspices of the British and it was the administrative mechanism for foisting regionalism and formed the basis of the latter western region house of chiefs which Oba Akenzua II also attended by virtue of his status as a first class ruler. While the House of chiefs lasted, the Egbe Omo Oduduwa and Action group government foisted Yoruba leadership on the house. Late Obafemi Awolowo went as far as trying to control the traditional rulers and forcing them to toe his party line. He did not hesitate to subtly threaten or "advise" Oba Akenzua II on 8th March 1955 to desist from party politics, and Oba Akenzua reminded him of the partisanship role of the Ooni and the Alake. What happened to traditional rulers in western region who did not toe Awolowo's party line is well documented. When Midwest was created, the Omo n' Oba stopped attending the meetings. That Oba Akenzua II attended these meetings had nothing to do with any history or traditional affinity as Ade Ajayi will want the public to believe. It was sheer colonial administrative politics and later day Action

Group influenced ethnic politics.

Another major and faulty plank of Ade-Ajayi's comment had to do with evidence. He haraunged that "He (Omo n' Oba) did not cite any evidence". But did not ask a similar question in the case of Egharevba and went ahead to uphold Egharevbas work as some gospel. If I may ask what is the difference between the sources of Omo n'Oba and Egharevba and are both not based on Oral traditions? Egharevba selected the oral traditions which he presented as history and Omo n'Oba did same. Why the double standard and what makes Egharevba traditions acceptable? Is it because the "traditions" he cited are supportive of Oyo Yoruba biased history of Samuel Johnson? Omo n'Oba even went as far as showing the Akure-Yoruba influence on Egharevba in order to prove the bias and context of Egharevba history and this is application of historical method. Permit me to further buttress the context and sources of Yoruba biases and influences on Egharevbas work. Apart from the Akure ancestry, Egharevba had part of his early education in Yorubaland, He was a benefactor of Bishop James Johnson(a Yoruba). He was Anglican (CMS) and worked with Revd Payne who introduced him to the CMS Press controlled by the Yoruba intelligentsia. Its first editor was C.J. Smart, a Yoruba letter writer resident in Benin City, and was also influenced by Ajisafe another Yoruba author with whom he consulted with for his publications.

To claim that Egharevba was right to continuously revise his books was another gaffe .Ade-Ajayi did not explain the kind of revision and their basis expected of a professional. The revisions were not based on credible evidence and were largely introduction of materials that suited his fancy, pet theories and his mentors. All these are evident in his works. He was continuously challenged for his biases. Even in his later life, Egharevba stated that and I quote' ..Oduduwa was not a Yoruba man. Oduduwa found the yorubas

already living in Ife when he arrived"(Text of interview 3rd May 1975). I am sure that if Ade-Ajayi (and the Yorubas whose cause he is championing) were aware of this, he and (they) will start having a second thought on calling him for evidence to support their case.

Permit me to ask, what qualifies Egharevba as a better historian on Benin Kingship history than the Omo n' Oba? Is it because Egharevba was the first to write or less educated or less interested a politician than Omo n'Oba? Egharevba selected the tradition that suited his fancy and published it to the exclusion of other traditions. That he was the first to write neither makes his work nor the traditions he selected gospel. Egharevba was no less a politician too and his political leaning was the (CMS/Yoruba initiated Reformed Ogboni Fraternity influenced) and Benin Tax Payers Association which was allied to the Action Group. Other traditions have always existed and Egharevba attention was drawn to them and were used to challenge him too. If these traditions were not published then, it does not mean that they must be silenced for the sake of the Yorubas. Let all the traditions be published for critical examination and enrichment of our history. Ade-Ajayi cannot just wake up and dismiss one tradition and try to force his favoured version down our throat. What he has done is no history, but politics and an ethnicised one.

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Yoruba And Benin Kingdom: Ile-ife The Final Resting Place Of The History

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SOURCE: www.gamjl.com

The first edition of this article was titled "Yoruba and Benin Kingdom, The Missing Gap of History" following the Statement credited to Oba Ereluwa Omonoba Polopolo(sic), that the Yoruba race originated from Benin Kingdom, was very rich in details and calls for re-examination by historians of high repute from all the Nigerian Universities and recognized institutions not from uneducated and bias sources or chambers or shrines of some Obas or traditional rulers as presently being envisaged or contemplated. The statement from Ooni of Ife disputing the facts of Oba of Benin was not strong enough or capable of influencing any academic exercise. The statement from the two kings and the follow up from Oba of Lagos and host countries had generated lots of discussion worldwide, but some questions still remain unanswered. This has given this writer the opportunity to further ask questions hopefully it will lead to getting

the solution about the source of the Yoruba and Edo with the publication of this second edition now titled "Ife Ife the final Resting place of History".

I was often fascinated by the different versions of uncoordinated folk stories we were told about the origin of the Yoruba. As a very young Yoruba man from Abeokuta, I was told Oduduwa was the first man created by God just like the Bible said Adam and Eve were the first to be created by God. The Bible says Cain the only surviving child of Adam and Eve went to another city called Nod to marry his wife. The question is who created the wife's, the wife parent or the family of the in-law, if any. Just like I asked in my innocent mind as a student in the primary school then who created Oduduwa and how did Oduduwa marry his wife? Where did the parent of the wife of Oduduwa come from? My Teacher never told me the answer. We were even told Oduduwa was the son of one Lamurudu from Far East most likely Saudi Arabia and that some of Yoruba cousin can be found in Uganda. Infact they call the Yorubas in Uganda Akarabas, which is true. Most of these uncoordinated conflicting stories were very difficult to prove or be binding on history for any academic minds.

The Genesis of the Yorubas

Oduduwa had sixteen children we were told and the eldest was Orangun of Ila and the Egbas in Abeokuta were descendants of the female child of Oduduwa named Alaketu. None ever disputed the fact that Oranmiyan the last born of Oduduwa also ruled the Benin Kingdom. Why did Benin or Edos allowe the last child of Oduduwa to be made a king over them or his descendants through Eweka I, if there was no blue blood connection? Oba of Benin gave a detail account of fact of history that are very difficult to dispute. The Yoruba share so many things in common with the Edo's in names and culture, which must be part of the reason why it is very difficult

to dispute the version of Omo noba polo polo Oba of Benin.

Again, in the Bible, Adam and Eve who were believed to be the first human creation by God never told how Cain is the only surviving child in the Garden of Eden, where God created them, just like Oduduwa never revealed the place and real evidence how he was created by God. The idea of a rain and dove as the method of earth creation sounds more like magic than real. Archeologically, the Yoruba race is not more than 2000 years meaning other tribes existed before Oduduwa appearance. None availability of any other serious fact to negate this lend credibility to Oba Benin's version in which he the Oba of Benin himself has not proven positively where the Edos also came from. Did the Edo's also come from heaven? Or emerged from the Igbos that often regarded themselves as the lost tribe of Israel? Why is it necessary to bury the head of any late Oba of Benin at Ile Ife or why is it compulsory to receive the blessing of Ooni before a King or Oba is crowned in Benin. All these are missing gaps of facts and history, which academic institutions must trash.

Aside from the above both versions of History from Oba of Benin and Yoruba agreed that Oranmiyan the last son of Oduduwa returned to Ife from Benin after he installed his son, Eweka the first as Oba of Benin when he became frustrated with the strange land. He met his father Oduduwa who was very advanced in age and blind. Moreover, all properties had been shared and distributed among his fifteen brothers and sisters. Alternatively, seven brothers according to Oba of Benin, Oduduwa was at a dilemma on what to do because he assumed Benin Kingdom would be enough inheritance for Oranmiyan.

Both versions of history agreed that the name Benin meant "the land of the annoyed" because Oranmiyan left the place in annoyance. Could it be said that Benin had another name before Oranmiyan went there? What was the name? Does it have anything

to do with the destruction of the Edo Empire or can we say Oranmiyan actually founded the Benin Kingdom, which must be the reason why he changed the name of the city to Benin? Oba of Benin's comment on the Edo's checking the secrets of Oranmiyan which led to his abdication of the throne for his son is not convincing enough taking into consideration the attitude of Oranmiyan who was believed to be ruthless. One would have thought he would have handled the issue in a different method.

The Returns of Oranmiyan

Oduduwa found an easy way out to appease the disgruntled son, Oranmiyan. He gave him his staff as a symbol to present to his brothers and sisters to be able to collect ten percent of revenue derived from yearly harvest through out Yoruba Land. With this, Oranmiyan was able to collect over 150 percent of all the returns throughout the uncoordinated kingdom. Oduduwa also grudgingly agreed to allow his last son Oranmiyan to be king at Ile Ife after his death. The reason for this was unknown as this was against the customs and traditions of giving priority to a first child or son who was Ila of Irangun.

On the other hand, could it be said that Orangun was too afraid to challenge his junior brother or was Oranmiyan indeed the senior? Or could the version of history that actually claimed Okanbi as the only son of Oduduwa be right and that Oranmiyan was indeed the same person as Okanbi? This is a fact of history the present Orangun of Ila should clarify. His silence amounts to selling his birthright to his junior brother if he was indeed the first-born and why did all the other 14 brothers and sisters fail to do something? Some even say Oranmiyan was not a direct son, but a son of Okanbi. Some even argued that Okanbi was the same person as Oranmiyan, but as Okanbi literarily meant an only child, if that should be the case, it will amount to a conclusion that Oduduwa had only one child while his only child Okanbi gave birth to the 16

children that became the pillar of Yoruba race. This is another area the historians must explore.

Oduduwa was primarily a skillful priest and voodoo person who the Oba of Benin argued picked up the powers in the forest. Who were his teachers? Was it by demons or gods? Or by the power of abracadabra. Who verified how Oduduwa acquired his powers? None. How did Oba of Benin come to this conclusion? It is often said rituals and sacrifices are everyday issue, at Ife except for one day and that is never made public probably the only day Oduduwa took vacation. Oba of Benin must explain the reason why the Heads of all previous Oba of Benin were buried in a cave at the shrine of Oduduwa at IFE.

Origin of Ooni Title

We have read and heard stories that in one of the ritual ceremonies when nobody was allowed to be outside, an unidentified foreign woman with no means of tracing her background was captured and was to be used as sacrifice for the gods. She was later spared because she was found to be pregnant. Besides, it was against custom at that time to use a pregnant woman for sacrifice. The child from the woman was dedicated to the gods and acted in an assistant capacity to the ageing Oduduwa in his day-to-day ritual and voodoo job. The child was named Ooni: meaning "This is a Spared One". This cannot be totally disputed because the Yoruba's often named children after events surrounding their births. Nobody apart from this simple understanding of Ooni has given any other interpretation of the title. This writer did not create this meaning. Every Yoruba man or woman grew up with this assumption. It may not necessarily be the reason.

After the death of Oduduwa, his son, Oranmiyan was invited to take over the job of his father, which was primarily ritual and voodoo, as well as being the traditional ruler of Ile Ife. Oranmiyan refused because he had succeeded in building an economicall

viable place at Oyo Ile with administratively sound method of government around the Oyomesi council in chief and it would be very degrading to leave and move to Ile Ife to be involved in ritual daily sacrifice exercises. In the light of that assumption, Oranmiyan gave conditions that he must be buried at Ife to symbolize his right to Ife throne. Ooni the Assistant to Oduduwa in the day-to-day ritual sacrifice exercise continued with Odua's job while he continued with supervision from Oyo Ile. It was that condition Ooni the son of the slave woman that was captured and dedicated to the gods who was assisting Oduduwa continued the work of Oduduwa at Ife. This is the reason why Alaafin of Oyo will never accept Ooni of Ife as a king or a superior in any Yoruba gathering of Obas. The creation of Osun State out of Oyo State was the major event that separated the two kings in one of the sittings of Obas in the old Oyo State. The Chairmanship issue was almost a national problem that was exploited by the political leaders of both the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and National Party of Nigeria (NPN) at that time.

Ooni assumed superiority was a British creation because the King of England assumed a king at Ife, the assumed cradle of Yoruba must be superior to all Obas just like the British did in Abeokuta by imposing Alake superiority over other Obas at Abeokuta. In case of Egbas, Sorunke who led the Egbas from Ibadan to the present Abeokuta was from Oke Ona, where Oba Tejuoso is the King today. This is the reason why there was conflict between the late Alake of Abeokuta and Osile of Oke Ona. In fact both the Akes and Oke Onas met Owu in the southwest area of the city. Power and control in Abeokuta was not evenly distributed among the five kings. The British creation has led to communal disagreement among the city's five kings. Including the Ibaras and Gbaguras which is the side of late Moshood Abiola. Although the late Alake of Egbaland was very tactical in the way he cautiously

curtailed other Egba Obas to accepting his leadership, that can not be said of Ooni who does one thing better by allying himself with the government at the center in and out of the state all the time, a strategy Alaafin must have to adopt.

IFE The Final Resting Place of Oranmiyan

Why was Oranmiyan buried at Ife not at Oyo Ile or Oyo Igboho? What is the meaning for Opa Oranyan symbol at Ife today? Except to confirm his right to the throne or seat of Oduduwa. If Ooni was not a true son or direct descendant of the sixteen children of Odua or a relation of Okanbi, how did he get his title so recognized that it became the symbol of Yoruba center of unity and not Alaafin the much feared Iku Babayeye? Some historians will argue that Ooni was just his name that became his title. If Ooni was a direct son of Oduduwa, how come he could not be traced to the 16 children of Oduduwa? Did the first Ooni pay tribute to Alaafin or Oranmiyan like all other Yoruba Obas and Baales (village Heads) at that time or was he exempted from taxes or levies? If not, Why? Those emerging empires that refused to pay were destroyed or sold away as slaves. The practice to sell any opposition as slaves stopped after the Oyo Empire was destroyed. It is rather difficult to accept the Ooni's version as against the Omonoba Polo polo. But then Oba of Benin's version was not full proof. Has any Oba of Benin from history been a member of governing council at Ife? If yes. Why? And why must Oba of Benin's head be buried at Ife if Ile Ife is not the source for the two tribes? Oba of Benin must be courageous to explain this fact of history.

Oranmiyan's Role In Yoruba History

Oranmiyan from history was a belligerent person. A war hero, where his brothers and sister failed to give the yearly ten percent duty as agreed with the staff of Oduduwa, he used force. He later appointed his representatives in each of the kingdoms of Yoruba to

monitor the returns. The creation of Oyo Empire led to the end of the kingdom Oduduwa created, which was not properly coordinated. There was no proper channel of control during Oduas reign. Oyo Empire gave the Yoruba race the much respect and proper foundation in the south of Sahara. The new empire grew with amazing rapidity throughout West Africa and was like the Ghana or Shonghai Empire of the medieval history in the south of Sahara.

One of the strategies of the Oyo Empire was engagement in slavery. It was a tactical way to weaken opposition among the Yoruba's and those captured. Oranmiyan and his descendants were absolute in control and management. Infact, the word Kabiyesi that was later adopted by subsequent Alaafin from the time of Sango oko Oya in Oyo meant absolutism. The king could never be wrong. Such was the fear and power of Alafin throughout Yoruba land.

Oranmiyan's administration was the best in Africa and could be likened to the British system of Administration during the colonial government. The Empire expanded up to the present Benin republic. Those who escaped the control of Alaafin are the Yoruba's living in Benin Republic, which was formerly Dahomey. On the East side there was no historical record of any interference between the father and the son, the rulers in Benin Kingdom. The reason for this was not known but it will amount to fighting yourself if Oranmiyan had to wage war of control over Benin. Oba of Benin Omonoba Polopolo did not explain the reason for the prolonged truce between Benin and Oyo Empire. Spiritual contact was established with each Benin King's head beings buried at Ife and spiritual approval from Ife before any Oba is crowned at Benin. Why is this so, if Benin was the source? How come the source goes to Ife for approval of final rest of the head of Benin Obas? Ile Ife in actual fact demonstrated its superiority by having the head of Oranmiyan himself.

At least there was no record of history of any transaction

between father and son commercially or any known tribal or communal war between Yoruba and Benin Kingdom while Benin Kingdom continued to progress and Oyo Empire continued to expand to the west coast. In Lagos, there could not be a clash. It was a place of reunion for Edos and Yoruba. It was said that Eko, which is Lagos, in our local dialect, is a Benin word. Why did Oranmiyan and his descendants fail to expand towards the East of the empire, which would have been a clash with Edos? Was it a mutual agreement or respect or tactical error or oversight in the expansionism of Yoruba Empire?

The fall of Oyo Empire

Oyo Empire later suffered from over expansion while some local heroes started to emerge to challenge the authority of the Oyo kingdom or that of the Alafin of Oyo. Among them was the Lisabi Agboagbo Akala who liberated the Egbas from Oyo Empire to create a fearless Egba Kingdom. Lisabi was never a king. In fact he was murdered by the Alake of Egbaland because of his popularity after he used his Aaro o method to form a rallying point thus effectively destroying the myth surrounding the Alafin control in Egbaland. The Egba emerged as a new power block in the south west. And a major control route of the slave market at Badagry. Women like Madam Tinubu from Owu Abeokuta moved to Lagos, known as Eko to further consolidate the gains of the slave market route.

Egbas as a kingdom with its own capital at Abeokuta in the present Ogun State with a conglomeration of five kings with its own National Anthem "Lori Oke ati Pele" was merged with Nigeria by the British Empire after 1914. In addition, Lagelu emerged from Ibadan, Ogendegbe Agbogunboro from Ijeshaland and Shoun of Ogbomosho and Ilorin through the deserting Chief of Army Staff, of Oyo, who was killed by Alimi a Fulani. Thus ended of Oyo Empire. The new empires moved toward western civilization with sophisticated weapons while Oyo remained old fashioned and did

not modernize its weapons. The attack from the Sokoto Caliphate from the North finally nailed the coffin of the Oyo Empire. The collapse of the Oyo Empire led to the Yoruba Wars, which was never concluded until the British finally took over Nigeria in 1914 with the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria by Lord Lugard. The present Oyo town is a shadow of Old Oyo town, which is still visible, at Oyo Igboho. Oyo town in the present Oyo State is just a new creation to symbolize the memory of the Old.

The Egbas and Ijebus took over the control of southwest towards the Atlantic because of the lucrative slave trade and closeness to the white man. The emergence of western civilization further weakened the Old Oyo empire. The empire collapsed and the remnants of it can still be found at the old site. The irony of it all is that the Alafin of Oyo, in the present Oyo town, continues to live in the memory of his ancestors glory, of the Old Oyo empire. Alafin has never made spiritual contact with old Oyo town nor made any effort to salvage the relics of history, which should be used as a fundamental tourist place in Yoruba history.

Ife The Final Resting Place of History

Ooni who is not a direct son or descendants of Oduduwa may not necessarily be considered viable in this discussion. Alafin of Oyo who is a descendant of the acceptable link between Yoruba and Edo must examine its place in history and that of his senior brother Orangun of Ife, the first son who had disappeared into history because he never challenged Oranmiyan. The abdication of the throne is a loss of right for Oranmiyan to his son in Benin, but if the son (Eweka) and his descendants according to history continue to respect tradition and be buried at Ife or receive blessing before being crowned, then we can conclude that Ife is superior to Benin and Edo's must have in fact originated from Ife?

The question is this. Can a son be greater than his father? Or can a river be greater than its source? No. Otherwise it will dry. The source of Yoruba from Benin appeared to be very authentic as

presented by Oba Eredua rather than Saudi Arabia or Lamurudu, which cannot be traced in Saudi Arabian history. The fact of history of allegiance of Oba of Benin to Ile Ife the cradle of Yoruba race before being crowned and after death is an indication that Ife is the source of both the Yorubas and Edo but the Yorubas and historians must come up with a very scientific and foolproof history to support this argument. This is an area the Ooni and other Yoruba writers have not defended. The argument of Professor Ajayi was not detailed or courageous enough. The Professor wrote as if he was afraid to offend both the Yoruba and the Edos as against the fact, which would have helped the issue unless the Professor has no answer to the problem.

Conclusion.

Alternatively, can we write off the Alafin of Oyo from this discussion because his descendant failed to head the throne at Ile Ife when Oranmiyan was called? Some will say since he was buried at Ife to symbolize his rights to the throne or why did all his brothers fail to challenge his right to the Ife throne if he indeed was the last born? Maybe that part of history was right that Oranmiyan was the first born not the last as mentioned by Oba of Benin. There are so many unanswered questions of history. The answer is not if we will offend ourselves or change the place of Edos or Yoruba in history, but who we are and where we were coming from. It is often said that it is a taboo to bury a king in exile. Ile Ife, from all indications and by having the heads of all the late kings of Benin and that of Oranmiyan himself buried at Ile Ife, to this writer, is the source of Edos and Yorubas and this fact must not be distorted with sentiments.

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The Controversy Surrounding Benin Vs Yoruba Origin: Reuben Abati's Analysis Of Slur And Cynicism

By
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SOURCE: www.edo_nation.net

The book of Omo N' Oba N' Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwa II, the Oba of Benin, has stirred an unending controversy between the Benin and Yoruba people. As a matter of fact, I have been following the ongoing discourse, in the cyber world, I should add, but have been unable to participate by way of retort or rejoinder due to the time factor in human nature. One thing about the book is that the presentation of the Oba of Benin is so compelling that it has pricked some of the traditional rulers, historians, writers, and others to come to the stage to add their voices or make their views known about the subject. Among them are the Ooni of Ife, the Oba of Lagos, Dr. Dele Adeoti, Prof. Ajayi, even Ganiyu Adams, and many others.

Reuben Abati, one of the contemporary voices in the field of journalism and penmanship in Nigeria, has also lent his voice to the

group of contributors on this matter of profound historical consequences. Although Reuben Abati struggled to present himself as an impartial analyst of the subject and the ensuing polemics, it was undeniably lucid that his sardonic remarks had betrayed or given way to his pent-up resentment for the Edo or Benin people. His contribution was titled, "Ooni, Omo N'Oba, And The Politics Of Identity", published in the Guardian of May 9, 2004.

I have read Reuben Abati's works before, and I usually relish perusing his write-ups, but this particular one was a bit different. The reason for that no one but Reuben Abati himself can tell. Maybe, I say maybe, he allowed his prejudice to gain control and assume center stage. As contentious as the matter of the origin of the Benin and Yoruba people is and considering the stature or position of the key participants in our society, one has to be a bit wary to eschew any reckless and ungratuitous remarks like the ones the Ooni of Ife and the other highly placed individuals have made. This is not a matter in which one has to lose self-control or allow jaundice to take over. This is a very serious matter.

Even though it does not have a string of economic impact attached, it does have strong historical consequences and the way we see ourselves. Just like every one of them who has responded, I think I should say reacted, save for the Oba of Lagos, Reuben Abati could not free himself from the temptation of seizing the opportunity to drivel rough "stuffs" at the Edo or Benin people. He made a very costly remark, which was intended to denigrate the Benin people and certain professions. In this particular article, Reuben Abati made an unwholesome comment that was mischievously reminiscent of the spew, not too long ago, of one Mr. Oladokun, alias Omo Oba, in some of the Nigerian ethnic discussion groups on the Internet. Pretending to be downplaying Ganiyu Adams' opinion in this matter, Reuben Abati employed the opportunity to have a "swipe" at the Edo or Benin people and wrote,

"I wouldn't be surprised if a group of prostitutes from Benin City also add their voice to it."

Since I read the piece, I have ruminated over what could have precipitated the occasion for Reuben Abati, a touted journalist of his calibre, to inject a remark with the sole intention to brutalize the psyche of the Edo or Benin people for no obvious reason. Hitherto, I have viewed, as do many other Nigerians including the group of prostitutes from Benin City, Reuben Abati and his work as the epitome and semblance of probity, objectivity, and forthrightness. In this particular matter, he took side, though with a sly. Injecting the Benin prostitutes into his analysis of the matter did not elevate or aid his argument in anywise. Instead, it betrayed his overall intention and besmirched the impartial reputation for which he used to be known and respected. In short, Reuben Abati's throwing the prostitution matter into this one spells how we, Nigerians, no matter how highly placed and because of incurable jaundice, can and would always ethnicize issues.

This is a matter about the historical nexus between the Yoruba and Benin people. The matter has nothing to do with the Benin City prostitutes and neither the prostitutes nor the trade they ply are part of the ongoing controversy. What was the reason for bringing the prostitutes into the picture? Why not a group of lawyers from Benin City? Why not a group of doctors from Benin City? Why not a group of engineers from Benin City? Why not a group of Professors from Benin City? Why not a group of journalists and writers from Benin City? Why not a group of nurses and teachers from Benin City? Was he trying to tell Nigerians and the world that Benin City is good for producing only prostitutes? Was he trying to insinuate that Edo or Benin women are all prostitutes?

As much as he has written on various subjects, and abundantly I should add for credit to him, one would have expected him to have a better understanding of the intricate and variegated nature of the

problems involved in international prostitution as it concerns Nigerian and Edo or Benin women. He should have known that the prostitution matter is a national calamity, not an ethnic thing. The matter of contention is the historical connection between the Yoruba and the Edo or Benin people. Where is the prostitution thing coming from in the picture other than a devious and hidden design to spite and cast aspersion on the Edo or Benin people? No matter how one may try to overlook Reuben Abati's gaffe and perhaps extend a hand of forgiveness, undeservedly as it is, one thing was very clear about his overall intention for the disappointing and condemnable introduction of the Benin City prostitutes into the matter. It was very palpable, just as the reason behind his introducing prostitution into the discussion was quite scrutable, that his sole motive was to slur or defame the entire Edo or Benin people, with a pretentious analysis of the contentious historical matter. It is very unfortunate as it is sourly disappointing that this kind of abhorrent remark came from a highly placed journalist, a man whose work and take on issues most Nigerians, including the prostitutes, have come to love and respect. It is a pity.

Another careless remark in Reuben Abati's analysis of the supposed controversy is the reference to people in certain trades in which he wrote, "soon mechanics, battery chargers, and even fashion designers, with access to the media, may also tell us what they think of the historical relationship between the Yoruba and the Bini." Whether the foregoing quote was a pointed design to put down Mr. Ganiyu Adams or undermine his opinion in the matter is of no contest here. Of silly importance and revulsion was his attempt to ridicule the Edo or Benin people and undermine certain professions. Please allow me to point out, at this juncture and without any measure of rudeness, that those people in our society, to whom he thus referred and most deprecatingly, are also human beings endowed like the doctors, lawyers, Professors, or journalists

with the same human qualities and abilities to reason, think, and sift out truth from bits of available information. One must be reminded too that the people in those trades he thus referred are also human beings endowed with the same right and freedom to seek and determine what is true.

This is the problem with us in the Nigerian society today. We tend to over exaggerate our self-importance and worth, with a tendency to looking down on every other person not in our profession. What is wrong with battery chargers and the rest having access to the media? Is the media supposed to be an exclusive playground for the privileged few? Should all and sundry not be afforded equal access to express their views publicly? That the people did not undertake formal education, the western kind of education, must and should not divest them of the right to contribute in a matter of historical significance if it concerns them. The fact that some people were fortunate enough to have acquired the western type of education does not confer on them the exclusive right to seek and tell what should be the truth in historical matters. After all, the ancient Egyptians who built the pyramid, a feat that continues to be the marvel of the world, did not acquire any known formal or western kind of education. The ancient Egyptians who built the pyramid were ordinary people with skills, courage, and imagination, driven by resolve for survival in this planet earth. The ancient Egyptians who built the pyramid were ordinary people like the mechanics, battery chargers, and fashion designers, the people in the trades Reuben Abati tried to denigrate and dismiss offensively.

Even at that, our so-called educated elites and those who style themselves "historians" are the ones actually confusing the people. With their sophisticated western education or scholarship they are still hanging on to the idea that a man descended from the sky on chains around 1120 A.D at Ile-Ife. They are the ones encouraging

the falsehood, rather than taking steps to correct the mistakes that were made in the past about the origin of the Yoruba people. I refuse to accept that the Yoruba people were not in existence until after 1120 A.D or so when Oduduwa was supposedly lowered from the sky on chains at Ile-Ife. How ridiculous can that be? In fact, to think thus is to be completely insensate.

Reuben Abati wrote, "Re-writing Jacob Eghareva, the Bini historian, the Oba had stated that the founder of the Yoruba race, Oduduwa, was a Bini Prince, Ekhaladeran, who having escaped from the hangman's axe, found his way to Ife. The simple interpretation is that the Yoruba descended from a Bini line." First, let it be clear that the Oba of Benin did not re-write Jacob Egharevba. The Oba of Benin only corrected some of the obvious flaws and deliberate omissions in Egharevba's accounts of the origin of the Benin royal family and the Edo or Benin relationship to the Yoruba people. I have read the part or session of the book that evoked the reactions (courtesy of and thanks to Vanguard's good work). There is nowhere in that session of the book in which the Oba of Benin put it, whether conspicuously or adumbratively, that the Yoruba originated or "descended from a Bini line." Looking at his wrong but "simple interpretation" of the content of that particular portion of the book that deals with Oduduwa and Ekaladeran, one may be compelled to posit that Reuben Abati fell into the pit of misunderstanding, just like those who have rushed to react, to render such an overly sprawled and suspicious interpretation.

The ongoing controversy is not about who is superior to whom or who originated from whom. The facts proffered by the Oba of Benin concerning the true identity of Oduduwa, the alleged founder of the Yoruba race, is to find the truth about our historical connection, which ought to bring us more closer together. Unfortunately, this is not the way some of our Yoruba people, led by

the Ooni of Ife, are seeing the provided historical information. From what I have read in that particular portion of the book concerning the true identity of Oduduwa, there is no hint of any kind for one to conclude that the Edo or Benin people are superior to the Yoruba people or vice versa. Some of the Yoruba people, especially the educated and highly placed, are the ones saying so by mere fact of faulty deduction. The Oba of Benin only presented that Oduduwa, whom the Yoruba people claimed descended from the sky on chains, was actually a Benin fugitive prince, Ekalederan. Sans doubt, the presentation of the Oba of Benin apropos the origin of Oduduwa is too compelling to be ignored. Those arguing against it are only doing so for the sake of pride and for the preservation of the long held belief.

The Benin-Ife Historical Link

By

A. E. Aghimien and F. Edoginwerie

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN, SUNDAY JULY 18, 2004 PAGE 51

The origin of the Benin and Yoruba empires of old have come to the fore and they have been subject of intense debate at least since the launching of the book, *I Remain Sir, Your Obedient Servant*, written by our revered Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo. No doubt the origins of the two empires are obscure being deeply buried in legend and mythology and it is not easy to say what amount of history or the amount of embellished history they contain.

In truth, these traditions, which on the surface try to account for the origin of these empires, are perhaps little more than ideological chatters, traditions, cultures, etc, of the people. This general position notwithstanding, it is worthy of note that the Benin through their well renowned Arts and Craft recorded their history and event in addition to the account of the guild of oral recorders. The most contentious of this debate for now, however, is the Benin/Ife historical connection.

Many historians and social anthropologists especially the Yoruba historians have been greatly impressed by the tradition that the Yoruba Kingdom fathered the second Benin empire. According

to Prof. A.B. Aderibigbe, "obviously there is an attempt in this story to gloss over what in fact was an alien imposition". Along the same line, Prof. Michael Crowder said that this tradition could be "a convenient legend to disguise what in fact was a conquest by the Oduduwa party"

Here, however, the following points are worthy of note. First, the Ife-Benin connection has been vigorously questioned by Prof. A.F.C. Ryder. He had pointed out that this tradition, which seeks to connect Benin with Ife, is suspect. He argues that throughout four centuries of contact between Benin and various European nations, in particular Portugal, there was no hint or reference to this relationship between the two empires. The tradition was not mentioned or recorded by any writer until after the British occupation of Benin in 1897. He also pointed out that the city of Ife is believed to be younger than Benin and therefore could not have fathered the second Benin Empire.

Second, according to Prof. Ryder, by 1485 Benin was an impressive and large city. Judging by the evidence of European visitors, it was perhaps the largest and most impressive city, which the Portuguese saw, along the west coast of Africa. Recent archaeological evidence would seem to indicate that Ife was built probably not before the first decade of the 16th century while the capital of Old Oyo, Yatenga, was built much later. This would seem to show that the complex political system of the Yoruba from which the Benin Kingdom is believed to have descended must have originated much later than the Benin Kingdom.

Third, much of the evidence, which is believed to corroborate the claims made in the traditions, comes from ethnohistory, that is, historical speculations based on assumed logical sequence of development in the political system. This is most unreliable.

By the 15th century, the Benin Kingdom had achieved the height of its greatness. It remained the most powerful and the largest Kingdom in the forest region of West Africa until about the end of

the first half of the 17th century. During these two centuries of its ascendancy, Benin Empire stretched as far west as Lagos, Badagry and Whyidah (Dahomey). On the north west it stretched as far as Ekiti, Akure and Owo. Towards the north, it stretched to Ishan country and the southern position of Ika Ibo and as far as the River Niger.

Prof. Biobaku has suggested that the eastern fringe of what is now Yorubaland was in pre-Yoruba days thinly inhabited by the ancestors of the modern Benin people, a people whom he called the Efa. And if recent archaeological evidence would seem to indicate that Ife was built not before the first decade of the 16th century thereby making it to be younger than Benin, then the Oranmiyan tradition has been misconstrued and the Benin's version (The Oba of Benin's version), not Egharevba version, becomes more tenable.

According to this version, the boy disinherited through the conspiracy of the barren wives of Oba Owodo (The last of the Ogiso dynasty) was called Ekaladerhan. The emissaries sent by the leading personalities in Benin after the failure of Evian to establish his dynasty was to help locate this disinherited boy (Ekaladerhan) to come and occupy the throne which rightly belonged to him. Before he was located, however, he had settled at Ife (Uhe) on the eastern fringe of the Yoruba Kingdom and he was now called Oduduwa, which was corrupted from Imadoduwa (meaning I have not missed the destined road to greatness).

On receipt of the emissaries from Benin, he sent his son Oranmiyan, as he was too old to return to Benin. Oranmiyan and his party took up residence at Uzama and from there they sought to rule Benin. But Oranmiyan, having been born and brought up outside Benin tradition, found it difficult to rule the kingdom and therefore met with so much opposition to his rule that he decided to withdraw from Benin. Fortunately before he withdrew, he had put a daughter of a Benin chief in a family way and the offspring was

called Eweka who thus became the first king of the Eweka dynasty which rules in Benin till date.

From the above historical facts provided by seasoned indigenous and foreign historians, corroborated by archaeological evidence, it is incontrovertible that Oduduwa (Imadoduwa) is the same Benin prince (Ekaladerhan) who left Benin and finally settled on the eastern fringe of Yoruba Kingdom where his sudden appearance was a fulfillment of a divine prediction of Ifa that God (Olodumare) would send them a king to settle the existing rift over succession. It is not surprising therefore that the Yoruba generally believed that Oduduwa came from God and descended from the sky. As a people, we believe that anybody has a right to document his/her history. However, in reacting to such account of history, we do not believe that people should descend so low as to employ unrefined approach bothering on threat as recently adopted by one Chief Adeboyega, the so-called Arole Aare Latosa of Yoruba land. (Much as the Benins would not want to join issues with him, we would however advise him to immediately apologise not only to our highly revered Oba of Benin, but also to the entire people of Benin Kingdom for the embarrassing so called 17-day ultimatum.

Contrary to Chief Adeboyega's reaction, we feel strongly that the Oba of Benin being a repository of Benin history expressed his views from the point of knowledge. The book "*I remain Sir, Your Obedient Servant*" written by the Oba of Benin is an academic display of historical facts which can be a veritable source of reference. In conclusion, we feel that enough is enough of the controversy on the Benin, Ife connection. It is hoped that the above account has put the Benin, Ife relationship in its proper perspective.

Aghimien and Edogiwawerie are President and Secretary of Edo Club, Benin City, respectively.

The Controversy Is A Case Study For Historians

By
Jackson Akpasubi

SOURCE: DAILY INDEPENDENT FRIDAY MAY 14, 2004 PAGE A9

Bimbo Kensington, a reporter met with journalist and publisher, Jackson Akpasubi who says academics should dig further to shed more light on the debate.

What is your understanding of the Edo dynasty?

What I know is not different from the history we all learnt at school. Most of the historical accounts and documented stories of Ife and Benin kingdoms that have been told were written by Yoruba Scholars and so it might not be wrong to say that they had written it to suit their tribe. For the Benin people on the other hand, the Oba's claim that the dynasty started with a son that was excommunicated from the kingdom is not totally untrue as history has it that most of the other dynasties around the Benin axis were established by one excommunicated prince or the other. The Benin kingdom is as old as any other African kingdom. The Edo people were warmongers and were quite aggressive by nature. There was also a lot of internal wrangling amongst the Ogiso dynasty that ruled the kingdom at the

time. The prevalent administrative problem in Benin made them go to Ife to ask for administrative assistance, where one of Oduduwa's princes in person of Oranmiyan was said to have followed them back to Benin. On getting there, he married a Benin princess who gave birth to Eweka. Oranmiyan however, found out that the Edo people were ungovernable, and so he went back to Ife. It was his heir, Eweka, that now started the ruling dynasty we have in Benin Kingdom till date.

Why do you think the Oba of Benin has chosen this particular time to attack an entrenched tradition?

The Oba is not given to much talk. I want to believe that being an intellectual himself, he must have heard or seen something before writing what he did. Mind you, the Oba did not set out to correct history. What he has said contradicts what modern history says about the Benin dynasty, which even the Edo people have come to believe. So it would be difficult for the Oba to convince the nation including his people to believe otherwise. There is no doubt that there is a close tie between the two dynasties. If you look at both arguments, there is definitely a middle line.

Some observers said the agitation started with the crusade for Midwest state. Do you think so?

It is a strong possibility, because the Midwest felt they didn't like the way they were being treated by the Yoruba people in the old western region and so they agitated for their own state to be treated as a separate entity. But to say that is the reason the Oba said so isn't true. History is dynamic and not static. New evidences come up all over the world about the past of certain races and tribes. Eyebrows will surely be raised if something contrary to be general belief comes up but if substantiated, would give new light and perspective

of the popular belief. Even anthropologists have discovered several remains to substantiate the biblical account of the Middle east. I want to believe that the Oba has new evidences to show the nation about the progenitor of both empires.

What is your reaction to the controversy?

The way it is, it would only remain a mere controversy that will ridicule traditional beliefs if new facts are not compared with the old ones. What I think historian should do is to go to the Oba of Benin and ask for concrete evidences to back up his claims. For the History of Nigeria to remain intact, the Oba owes the Nigerian people particularly his subjects in Benin to give or surrender substantive proofs for comparison with existing facts. What the Oni of Ife is saying is not too far from the people's belief. If the Omo N' Oba has an new evidence, he should bring it to the country's Historical council.

If the controversy were allow to rage on, how would it adorn the course of Nigeria unity?

If it is not well controlled and quickly nipped it in the bud, it can escalate to a tribal conflict among the Yoruba and the Edo people that had hitherto lived peacefully.

Attempting To Rewrite History

By

Dr. Dele Adeoti

Source: Daily Independent Friday May 14, 2004 Pages A9 & A10

At the launch of his book, *I Remain Sir, Your Obedient Servant* recently in Lagos, the Benin monarch Omo N'Oba N'edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Erediauwa stirred the hornet's nest when he stated bluntly that Oduduwa, the first reported king of the Yorubas was actually a prince of Benin Kingdom who escaped execution. The Ooni of Ife wasted no time in refuting Erediauwa's claim. The Benin monarch's comments have continued to stir up fierce debate among scholars. In this interview with our reporter Nnamdi Okosieme, Dr. Dele Adeoti, a historian and senior lecturer with the Department of History and International Studies, Lagos State University says the Oba of Benin missed the mark. Excerpts:

During the official launching of his autobiography in Lagos recently, the Benin monarch, Omo N' Oba N'edo Uku AKpolokpolo, Erediauwa, caused a stir when he alleged that Oduduwa widely held to be the first Yoruba king was actually a prince of Benin who narrowly escaped execution and founded Ile-Ife.

I do not agree with the position of the Oba of Benin because, what he is saying is unhistorical. It is a distortion of history. It is an attempt at historical revisionism. I don't know why the respected Oba is attempting to tell the Yorubas where they come from. If you look at his book, it catalogues his achievements in the civil service, but at a point, he decided to go into the origin of the monarchy in Benin. I think the two don't go together, but then, he is entitled to his opinion. But one thing we know about history is that, facts are sacred and opinion is free. We deal with facts and not with fiction. I think the Benin historians of today are dealing with mythology and mythology is about fabrication, it is not history. Let us look at the history of Benin before the arrival of Oranyan(sic). The Obas that ruled Benin were called the Ogisos. Benin itself was called Igodomigodo and the first Ogiso was one Ogodo and the last ruler was Ogiso Owodo. He was banished from Benin on account of his misrule and cruelty and the heir apparent to the throne, one Ekaladeran, was exiled to a place called Ughoton, a sea port where we are told by that renowned Benin historian, Jacob Egharevba that he died. So, when the man who should have succeeded his father died, the Binis set up a republican system of government headed by one Evian, a commoner and he reigned for sometime in Benin. In his old age, he decided to nominate his son as successor, but the people were not in agreement with him and so they reacted against the move. At this stage we are told, according to the received tradition, the Binis dispatched an embassy to Ife asking the Ooni to send one of his sons to Benin as things were getting from bad to worse. Oranyan(sic) was sent to Benin by the Ooni of Ife and on getting to Benin, he stayed for only a few years, describing the place as a land of vexation, Ile-Ibinu he called it. The word was later corrupted to Benin, by the Europeans when they could not pronounce it properly. He stated that only a child born, trained and

educated in the acts and mysteries of the land could rule over the land. We are also told that, when Oranyan(sic) got to Benin and discovered that the land is a land of vexation and he found it difficult to rule. He got married to one woman called Erimwinde who bore him a son called Owomika, later corrupted to Eweka. It was Eweka who became the first post-Ogiso Oba of Benin and Oranyan(sic) returned to Ile-Ife. He did not return directly to Ife. He sojourned at a few places one of them being at Oba-Ile close to Akure. Akure was not in existence then. Before returning to Ife to reign as Ooni, we are told, he founded the kingdom of Oyo. This is what we know. This is the received tradition, but the Benin historians have a different story. They have distorted history. They said the same Ekaladeran who we are told died at Ughoton did not die there. That he wandered into the forest and later found himself in Ife where he was accepted and treated as a prince and he became so prosperous and rich and the people of Benin got to hear of his fame through one Mr. Tortoise. The Binis because they were having problems invited him to come back home and take over the throne of his father.

What was the time span from the time Oranyan(sic) went to Benin and the time he returned to Ife to reign as Ooni of Ife. What period in history are we talking about?

We cannot give precise dates since we are relying on oral tradition. And you know that is one of the problems of oral tradition, this problem of chronology. We cannot give precise dates, all we are told is that Oranyan(sic) did not stay long in Benin. Even when his son Eweka became king, he stayed at Usama as he was not allowed into the city by the Ogiamwen faction. It was his great grand son Owodo who summoned up courage and defeated the Ogiamwen faction before entering Benin City. That scene is still being re-enacted today. Whenever the Oba of Benin is crowned or ascends

the throne of his fathers there is always a wrestling match between the descendant of Ogiamen and the Oba. Of course, the Oba always wins.

Whatever version may be true, one thing emerges and it is that, a relationship of some sort must have existed between Ife and Benin. What was it like and when did the interaction begin?

I do not know of any relationship really between the two at the time. All I know from my studies is that, the free invitation by the Benin notable to the Ooni of Ife to send his son to assume the throne of Benin may in fact be a military conquest. There is an account which gives a clue to this assumption and this comes from the descendants of Ogiamwen, the ruler who was overthrown by Oranyan. Ogiamwen of Benin is the title of the article which appeared in the Spear magazine of October 1967 pages 13-15. It was written by Chief Emokpae. According to Emokpae's account before Ogiamwen could entrench his rule properly in Benin, an invading force of Oranyan from Ile-Ife was knocking on his gates. A long and bloody battle ensued between both forces. Oranyan(sic) kept his troops on the outskirts of the present Benin City where he had a son, Eweka by a Bini woman. He stayed there for a number of years, getting old and unable to penetrate Benin township and he left for Ile-Ife, leaving his son, Eweka to continue the fight.

According to Emokpae, the Ogiamwen family was making a claim to a land title in Benin and when Oranyan(sic) came and he was not allowed into the city because of the problem with Ogiamwen, certain agreements were reached before he gained access. So, like I said, the whole story may have been as a result of military conquest. Since we deal with the long ago of history, there is often the tendency to destroy what happened in the past and make it look like a gentleman's agreement. I can't really say what manner of relationship existed between Ife and Benin, but, we all know Ife

was great and the monarchy there was widely known widely up to Benin. And since Benin was a monarchy, they may have found it comfortable. They may have found that instead of making use of a commoner (Evian) was a commoner) to opt for a monarchical system, instead of the republic system that existed during the period of interregnum. There are examples especially in Europe where people asked other people to send their people to rule over them. To return to the relationship between Ife and Benin, one D.A. Ewere, a Bini historian, a Bini man, wrote his long essay on the importance of the monarchy in pre-colonial Benin at the University of Ibadan in 1976. The then Oba of Benin (Oba Akenzua II), was among his informers. The Oba gave him an account of the origin of his dynasty and it tallied with the received tradition which we all know and which the Ooni is canvassing, but which the Oba of Benin rejects. The first person to document Ife-Benin relations was P.A. Talbot in his book "The Peoples of Southern Nigeria." The book which appeared in four volumes and was published in London in 1926, page 153 of volume one, is especially instructive. The second person was Egharevba in "A Short History of Benin" which appeared in 1934. The book was published by the Ibadan University Press. The book first appeared in Edo. The English version came in 1938. The account became so widely accepted as to acquire the characteristics of a tradition itself and it is a synthesis, an analysis of several traditions by many informers man of whom were old people knowledgeable in Benin history. If you look at the list of people he interviewed, it comprised the Ihogbe-the worshippers and recorders of the traditional obas; then, there was one Ogbelaka, the royal bard; there was Igun Eromwon-the royal brass smith, there was Ohensa(sic) Apkpakpava, one of the descendants of the Benin native fathers of the 15th and 16th centuries. You also have the Iyase, the Esama and so on. More importantly you had his Royal Highness, Oba Eweka. You also have evidences

of Benin allegiance to Ife as early as the 15th century. There are sources: A.E.C. Rider in his work. A reconsideration of Ife-Benin Relationship quoted J. De Barros. The title of the book is 'Da Asia'. Rider's work appeared in Journal of African History, volume 6, No. 1 1965 pages 26-27. There are so many more.

A while ago, you said facts are sacred and myths are mere fabrications. The Ooni said Oduduwa whom he states is the first king of the Yorubas descended from heaven in the company of about 400 hundred deities. In his account, Egharevba said the Yorubas came from the East. Does this not contradict the Ooni and how do we reconcile these two accounts?

I want us to get the matter straight. We are not concerned with the origin of the Yorubas. The bone of contention is the origin of the monarchy. Even if we are talking about the origin of the Yorubas, it is shrouded in myths and legends. If you look at Samuel Johnson's *A History of the Yorubas*, he also alluded to the Eastern connection. It is not only the Yorubas that claim the Eastern origin. Even if we look at it critically, the east referred to may not necessarily mean the Middle East. Johnson was probably referring to the east of Ife and if you look at the history of the Nigerian people, the Igbos, the Edos, the Idomas, the Igallas and so on, the east they refer to may not be the Middel East. The only evidence we have here comes from the linguists because they have done a lot in that area. They have been able to prove that all the people I mentioned now may have originated from the Niger-Benue confluence about 600 years ago. It was from there, these tribes dispersed to found other communities. The linguists have observed similarities in the languages of these tribes. From this, we have been able to see that these tribes have the same origin.

Why would the Oba of Benin at this stage in his reign

challenge what has come to be accepted as the official version of history?

Well, we don't know. It is hard to imagine what gain a distortion of the Ife origin would confer on the Benin dynasty. If we assume that it was done to boost the prestige of the Benin monarchy, we must allow that this could only have been so because Ife was already great and famous. But this concept has been completely rejected by the Benin historians and by what the Oba of Benin has said. And it is unrealistic that the Benin monarchy would have continued to hold on to a distorted version of its history even during the colonial era when it agreed to a history which placed it in a sort of sub-ordinate position to another traditional ruler. So, I do not know what the sources of the Oba of Benin and other Benin historians are. But the Benin-Ife relationship has been established and documented long ago, more than a century now. This is the first time an Oba of Benin would come out to challenged it. I think the Oba is alluding to the history as written by S. B. Omoregie, D.U. Edebiri, Edun Akenzua and Air Iyare because they are the ones who started touting this idea in the seventies. Apart from those individuals, I don't know who else. We have R.E. Bradbury. We have A.F.C. Rider, we have Jacob Egharevba and we have other Bini historians, one of them Edegbe who also wrote on the history of the Binis. The Bini revisionist historians disagree with all these people. I think the Oba is relying solely on what the younger elements in Benin are writing today. I think the Oba of Benin is relying on the submission of those four (revisionist) authors. But we have Jacob Eghareva, a full blooded Bini man. He may have been born in Yoruba land but his mother was not even living in Yoruba land. She only went to visit her sister in Idanre when she gave birth to him, but that does not mean that he has Yoruba blood flowing in his veins. If you look at his "A Short History of Benin"

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and you look at his background, he descend from Iyase Ohenmwende during the reign of Osemwende one of the most outstanding personages in Benin history and his mother, the daughter of Okunzua descended from the Ezomos, a hereditary commander of the Oba of Benin's armies. And he had this very important title of Obakhavbaye of Benin and again he was so important to the Binis, even to the Oba of Benin. He founded the Benin museum in collaboration with Oba Akenzua II and K.C. Murray and he was the first curator and director of Antiquities. He was an established authority on Benin history and he published books to prove that he was an authority. He published *A Short History of Benin* as far back as 1934 and he wrote *Benin Law and Customs* which was published in 1946 and some other books. Since its appearance in 1934 "*A Short History of Benin*" has become a classic known and relied upon by scholars all over the world. So the man's research was so thorough and nobody except the Oba of Benin and the other revisionists have faulted his scholarship. And Egharevba to me had one advantage over those who are now trying to rewrite the history of the Binis. He collected his materials over 70 years ago in the 1930s from well selected informants who had grown to maturity before 1897. As a result, the memories which these people retained of part of traditions had not had much time to be overlaid and distorted by the pressing interests and the new problems of the modern age. I think the Oba of Benin and those rewriting Benin history are doing so probably because they do want to be seen to be subordinate to the Yoruba people. But I think Benin is great. Accepting the fact of history does not and will not diminish the status of the Oba and the Bini people. I respect Bini people a lot because they respect tradition. I schooled in the Old Midwest and am very sure most Benin Elders would not agree with what the Oba is coming up with right now because the relationship with Ife goes back a long way. So, to come back to your question, apart from the

issue of prestige, I do not see any reason why the Oba would be doing this.

Anyway what is happening in Benin today is not new. It has been happening, elsewhere around the world. I guess that's what patriotism and nationalism are about. It will certainly continue to happen. It is even happening in Yoruba land. Some Yoruba people do not even see themselves as descendants of Oduduwa. For instance, at a point, the Oba of the Ijebus came out to say that the Ijebu people came from Wadai, in present day Eastern Sudan. I think the whole thing has been personalized. I think it all has to do with the politics of today. You may not like the face of the Ooni or the politics he plays, but the institution which he personifies has to be respected by every Yoruba man no matter the position he finds himself. Whether that Yoruba man be a commoner or an Oba, he must not destroy history.

Does this controversy not call into question the use of oral tradition as veritable vehicle for transmitting history?

There is nothing wrong with oral history. Nothing is wrong with the oral tradition. If carefully analyzed and interpreted it makes a good source of history inspite of all the misgivings one might have about it. People may embellish or telescope accounts to gain one thing or the other, but despite these disadvantages, oral traditions when carefully collected, interpreted and analyzed can be relied upon to give fairly accurate picture of what transpired in the past.

Ekaladerhan Set Up Ile-Ife

By
Naiwu Osahon

SOURCE: DAILY INDEPENDENT. FRIDAY, MAY 14, 2004 PAGE A10

Historical accounts are vague as to when and if the Bini (Edo), migrated from the Nile valley. What is not in doubt is that the earliest rulers of Benin were called Ogisos.

Thirty-one Ogisos in all ruled the kingdom of Benin between 900-1200 AD, which is the earliest period so far accounted for in Benin history.

The Bini monarchy demonstrates strong affinity with ancient Egyptian gods and Pharaohs.

The Bini version is that in the beginning there was no land only water everywhere. In the middle of the water stood a tree on top of which lived (Owonwon), the toucan. Osanobua (The Creator) decided to populate the world. The Creator sent three sons, each with a choice of a peculiar gift.

One of the three sons chose to have wealth and the next chose magical skills. As the youngest was about to make his choice known, Owonwon cried out to him to settle for a snail shell. This he did.

Osanobua then came down on a chain, from the sky, to demarcate the earth and allocate responsibilities. Osanobua

appointed the youngest son as ruler of the earth. The son called the earth (Agbon) and promptly set up his headquarters at Igodomigo.

The oldest son was given control of the waters by Osanobua. The other son was allowed freedom to use his magical powers to balance out the negative and positive forces of nature.

The youngest son, the ruler of the earth represents innocence and so is susceptible to the powers of the other deities.

The Ogisos (meaning rulers of the sky) because of their direct lineage to the youngest son of Osanobua (God) from the sky, were of course, accorded divine qualities by the Bini. Because the kings (Ogisos) of Bini are considered divine, they are worshiped by their subjects who speak to them always with great reverence, at a distance and on bended knees.

The first Ogiso king was called Ogiso Igodo and his kingdom Igodomigodo was at Ugbekun. Ogiso Igodo's successor, Ogiso Ere transferred the capital from Ugbekun to Uhudumwun.

Ogiso Ere was succeeded by Ogiso Orire. The fourth dynasty on the death of Orire introduced the system of gerontocracy, until the death of the twenty-second Ogiso when the primogeniture system was restored. The twenty-third Ogiso extended the primogeniture rule to all his frontline chiefs known collectively as the Editon (Elders).

The last of the Ogiso kings was called Owodo. He reigned in the 12th century AD and has only one child (a male) despite having many wives. In attempt to unravel the cause of his wives barrenness, he sent his first wife Esagho and three male messengers to consult an oracle. The oracle named Esagho as the cause. To avoid the wrath and punishment of the king, Esagho threatened to lie to the king that the male messengers had carnal relationship with her (an act carrying death penalty), if they revealed the oracle's declaration. The messengers, in connivance with Esagho told the king that the oracle fingered his only son, Ekhaladerhan as the cause of his wives bareness and that Prince

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Ekhaladerhan had to be killed to reverse the situation.

The king, angered by the development but reluctant to take the life of his only child, banished Ekhaladerhan and his mother to a place called Ughoton on the outskirts of Igodomigodo kingdom. Three years after the banishment, Owodo's wives were still barren, so he sent another set of messengers to the oracle. It was then that the truth about Esagho's treachery was revealed. Esagho was executed as punishment and still the king's wives remained barren. However, Ogiso Owodo, was not a very popular king and his execution of a pregnant woman for some misdemeanor, proved to be one offence too many for his subjects. Frontline chiefs banished Owodo from this throne. Owodo took refuge at a place called Uhinwinrin, where he died miserably a few years later.

The death of Ogiso Owodo created leadership vacuum for the first time in Igodomigodo's history. It was during this period of confusion that the elders, known as Edionisen, including Chiefs Edohen, Ero and led by Oliha mounted a search for their banished Prince Ekaladerhan.

In the meantime, Ekaladerhan had set up a settlement he called 'Ilefe, (meaning successful escape) and had changed his name to Izoduwa, (meaning I have chosen the path of prosperity).

Izoduwa's new home, 'Ilefe' was in the heart of Yoruba land and because of his immense magic powers, he soon endeared himself to his Yoruba community which included some Uzebu persons (corrupted in Yoruba to Ijebu) who had followed him into exile from Igodomigodo, and were treating him as a god. The Yoruba corrupted his name Izoduwa to 'Oduduwa' and his camp, 'Ilefe' to 'Ile-Ife.

Oduduwa became the spiritual leader of the Ifa divinity. The Yoruba (who call The Creator, Olodumare), saw Oduduwa as a direct descendant, which he claimed as a result of his God-son lineage, although his banishment link with the God-sons (Ogisos) was kept a secret from the Yoruba. In fact, the Yoruba believed he

was a deity from the sky as he claimed and accorded him great reverence as their leading ancestor.

Oduduwa subsequently had eight children who later dispersed to found and rule other Yoruba communities.

Oduduwa's first son was by a Yoruba woman called Onabi. The son was called 'Omonoyan, (meaning precious child in Bini) which the Yoruba corrupted to "Oranmiyan."

When the Edionisien of Igodomigodo finally traced Ekaladerhan (Oduduwa) down to (Ilefe) Ile-Ife, they could not persuade Oduduwa to return to his father's throne in Igodomigodo. The Edionisen, out of frustration for not being able to persuade Izoduwa to return home to his throne, installed Evian, the hero as a temporary administrator, to oversee the affairs of Igodomigodo.

Evian was a popular administrator. He ruled until a very old age and before his death, nominated his oldest son, Irebor to succeed him. Most of the people of Igodomigodo and senior chiefs would not like this. They rejected Irebor on the ground that his father Evian was not an Ogiso and, therefore, lacked divine authority to bequeath kingship (Ogieship) to his heir.

Leadership vacuum was again created in Igodomigodo and after a period of uncertainty, the Edionisen decided to once again reach out to their son, Izoduwa, who had by then acquired the Yoruba title of 'Ooni'. After much pleading by the Edionisen, for the Ooni to allow his first son to ascend to the throne of Igodomigodo, the Ooni decided to put the people of Igodomigodo to a test. He gave the Edionisen some lice and instructed them to bring them back in three years to get their answer.

Chief Oliha kept the lice in the hair of one of their slaves and after three years returned the lice to Izoduwa who was surprised at the level of preservation and development of the lice. Izoduwa (Oduduwa) concluded that if the Edionisen could so adequately take care of the lice, his son was likely to be in good hands.

In the meantime, Irebor was warning the people of

Igodomigodo against what he called (Ogie a mien, Aimmein Oba, meaning "it is an Ogie that rules Igodomigodo and not an Oba," a protest against the intrusion of the Ife Prince. The word Ogiame then became the nickname of Irebor.

Ogiamien Irebor prevented Prince Oranmiyan from entering the heart of Igodomigodo kingdom. The people of Igodomigodo built a palace for Prince Oranmiyan at Usama. Prince Oranmiyan, unable to bear the challenges for very long, renounced his office and called Igodomigodo land, Ile Ibinu (meaning a land of annoyance and vexation). He declared that only a child of the soil, educated in the culture and traditions of Igodomigodo could rule the kingdom.

Prince Oranmiyan, on his way home to Ife, stopped briefly at Egor, where he pregnated Princess Erimwinde, the daughter of the Enogie of Ego. Princess Erimwide's casual encounter with Prince Oranmiyan resulted in the birth of a baby boy who couldn't talk in his early years but loved playing the game of marble.

When Oranmiyan, who had in the meantime established his Alafin dynasty in Oyo was informed about his son's predicament, he sent the child's mother seven marbles. While playing with the marbles and other children one of his throws hit the target and in the excitement screamed: Owomika, (meaning I hit the target). This is how his title of Oba Eweka was derived and he ruled over Usama renamed Ile-Ibinu outside Igodomigodo. In the meantime Ogiamien Irebor who ruled Igodomigodo had been succeeded by Ogiamen Ubi by the time of Oba Eweka's reign in Ile-Ibinu.

Oba Eweka's reign was not particularly eventful. He was succeeded by Oba Ewuahen, Oba Ehenmihen and the Ewedo. Oba Eweka changed the name of Ile-Ibinu, which the Portuguese corrupted to Benin or Bini. The Benin kingdom extended in the West to Lagos where the Binis set up a military camp of occupation which they called Eko, in the North-East to Ekiti, Owo, Ondo, most of present Delta state and all of the North-west up to the River Niger.

The kings of Benin from the reign of Ewuare the great until

17th century AD were Ezoti, followed by Olua, Ozolua, Esigie, Orhogbua, Ehengbuda, Ohuan, Ahenzae, Akenzae, Akengboi, Akenkpaye, Akengbedo, Ore-Oghene, Ewuakpe and Ozuere.

The current king of this great African kingdom and one of the most vibrant, colourful and enlightened in the history of the world, is Oba Erediauwa, Uku Akpolo Kpolo, the Omo N'Oba N'Edo.

Oduduwa Ancestry Omo N'oba Is Ooni's Subject - Scholar

By

Sola Balogin & Tunde Abatan

SOURCE: THE NEW AGE, FRIDAY MAY 7, 2004 PAGES 1 & 4

As the controversy over Oduduwa ancestry sparked off by Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuade and Omo N'Oba Erediauwa of Benin continues, a university don, Dr. Dele Adeoti of the Lagos State Univeresity has said that written and oral evidences abound to show that Benin monarchy was derived from Yoruba ancestry.

He told NewAge in an exclusive interview on Thursday that claim by the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba Erediauwa in his recent book is not valid in history.

Dr. Adeoti's position was in response to the ongoing controversy which stemmed from the Benin monarch last week in his book that the Oduduwa dynasty was started by a former Benin Prince. In response to the claim, Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuade said that the claim was untrue and a distortion of history.

He said further that accounts and books written by famous Benin historians and official spokesperson like Jacob Eghareva from 1937 and 1938 shows and portrays clearly that the Benin kingdom is a subject of the Ooni.

Besides, Adeoti who is a specialist in the history of Yoruba

warfare said that the first of such evidence is the fact that up till 1934, the official language in the palace of Benin was Yoruba.

He said, what we are told by Jacob Eghareva in the official history of Benin which he wrote and published in 1959 was that Oranmiyan is different from Ekalederhan which the monarch said came from Benin to settle in Ife.

Besides, he said that the Oba of Benin was regarded as a subject of the Ooni and normally sits on the right hand side of the Ooni while the Alafin sits on the left side at any traditional function.

He said Eghareva said this because they all agreed that the Benin monarch and the Alaafin and Ooni were all descendants of the same parents.

Another historical fact and record to show that Ife is in the account of the Lander Brothers, a team of explorers who came to Benin in the 1850s during the period of expeditions.

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Benin/Ife/Yoruba Relations

By

C.O. Ugowe

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN, SUNDAY MAY 23, 2004 PAGE 13

My understanding of, or position of the Edo/Ife/Yoruba relations is concisely stated at pages 3 and 4 of my publication entitled "Benin in World History" first released in 1997. Copies of the publication were made available to the public through some bookshops, gift shops, and book stands in Lagos Benin and Abuja. My position remains firmly as I stated them, in 1997, and I feel particularly happy and vindicated that my views therein are in full accord with Omo N' Oba's declaration of Benin history on the subject, in his recent Autobiography entitled "I Remain, Sir, Your Obedient Servant".

Some commentators, including Professors of History in the Southwest Zone have granted interviews accusing the Benin monarch of looking for and courting cheap popularity and playing politics. Unless they have been wrongly reported or misquoted, their comments smack of intolerance and illiberalism, particularly as they emanated from members of the Ivory Tower and their History Departments that are supposed to be centres of excellence for the Liberal Arts and the Humane Disciplines in the Universities. The Benin monarch was writing his autobiography

and where else should he be telling his readers and the public who his ancestors were and who they were not? I take my stand with His Royal Highness, The Oba of Lagos, who has maintained that Omo N'Oba is in the right. Every person, however highly or lowly placed, has a right to tell the public in his autobiography, who his ancestors were and who they were not, and he or she is to be believed until the contrary is conclusively established. That is my understanding of the contribution made by the Oba of Lagos, Oba Rilwan Akiolu, during his response to a question put to him on the matter. That response was objective, principled and dignified, the type that the ongoing controversy calls for. I say "Kabiyesi" to the Oba of Lagos, Long may you reign.

Already made available to the public by the mass media are the statements from his autobiography where the Benin monarch declared his ancestry from Oranmiyan through Ekaladerhan and direct to the Ogiso dynasty. Also made available by the media to the general public is the statement made by the Ooni of Ife debunking Oba of Benin's declaration of the ancestry of Benin Kings, insisting that Benin is one of the Kingdoms founded by Oduduwa who descended from heaven to Ile-Ife with four hundred deities.

Thus whilst the Benin monarch's declaration of his ancestry is earth-based and historical, the reaction by the Ooni of Ife has raised the matter to a higher level of the mythical and the celestial. At that level of the mythical and the celestial at which the Ife monarch and the protagonists of his point of view are conducting their response to Omo N'Oba, it seems that no progress can be made on this controversial issue unless and until that celestial father figure is demystified and humanized and his earthly identity is revealed and established.

In his Lugard lectures on the origin of the Yorubas, 1955, Dr. Saburi Biobaku identified the Oduduwa of History, not as the one who descended from heaven, but as a fugitive Prince who arrived

Ile-Ife by the 11th century from the East, and was made king and called Oduduwa by the people of Ife. But Biobaku did not go further than that and he left undisturbed the prevailing theory that Mecca was the homeland of Oduduwa. It is most likely to be within what is now that Nigerian geographical area, not outside Nigeria and most certainly not as far away as Mecca. Studies and research in areas such as these grey areas of our national history are what our professional historians in the Universities, the Emeritus and the non-yet Emeritus Professors, should be doing for the country, and for the promotion of unity based on authentic facts and credible historiography. Had these been done before now, this long-standing simmering controversy should have been rested and resolved long ago.

The news that the Alafin of Oyo is considering making known his views on the issues raised in the controversy is most welcome. Like the Benin monarch, the Alafin is historically acknowledged to be a direct descendant of the same Prince Oranmiyan. What the Alafin of Oyo has to say about who his ancestors were and who they were not would shed considerable light on this matter, particularly as the name Yoruba was until the last century or two, the clan name of the Oyo people until the Missionaries at Abeokunta and the Colonial Administrator extended that name Yoruba to cover all the clans and people of Southwest Nigeria, who like the Oyos greet with "Eku", for example "Eku abo, Eku aro, Eku Joko, Eku-Ijebu meta" etc.

Thus was the designation Yoruba extended to the other clans namely, Egba, Ijebu, Ekiti, Lagosians (Eko), Akure, Ijesha and northern Nigerian peoples who greet with Eku, etc. All these people and their Obas are stakeholders in this ongoing controversy. Their statement on the founding of their kingdom and who their ancestors were, would shed considerable light on the ongoing debate in which it is claimed that their kingdoms were founded by Oduduwa, who

descended from heaven to Ile-Ife with four hundred deities.

Apart from the main controversy, there are side issues that demand historical attention. First is a lingering impression that because Prince Oranmiyan came from Ife to Benin, he was an Ife Prince. That impression is refuted and is not borne out by many examples of which we are witnesses even in very recent times. We shall begin with the case of one "Chief Eleyinmi" of the Village Headmaster fame in a Television play, who was here in Lagos making his round of jokes in his television role. Very few knew he was a Prince until suddenly one day we learnt that his people from a town in Ijebu Remo had called on him to return home to become Oba of his town.

Today, "Chief Eleyinmi," probably born in Lagos, but who certainly spent a good part of his life in Lagos is Oba in his home town. The questions are: does that fact of coming from Lagos to ascend the throne of his ancestors in his homeland make him a Lagos Prince? The answer is an emphatic No. Also, did he have to be sent home by the Oba of Lagos, the answer too is No. He needed only to have been sent off by his family and town-folks resident in Lagos.

The above case study of "Chief Eleyinmis' home-coming from Lagos to his hometown in Ijebu Remo, is replicated in many other example of princes who in recent times returned home from Lagos to their homelands to ascend the thrones of their ancestors. They include "Councillor Balogun" also of the Village Headmaster cast who is now an Oba in his hometown. Others include Oba Adesanoye of Ondo, Late Alhaji Umaru Sanda Ndayako, Etsu Nupe, etc. The list is endless. The present Alafin of Oyo too returned home from Lagos to ascend the throne of his ancestors. All these aforementioned Royal fathers came from Lagos to their home-towns to ascend the thrones of their ancestors. They are not regarded as Lagos Princes. The case of Prince Oranmiyan cannot be

the exception, unknown to and strange to the experience of Nigerian people and in fact to the history of mankind in general; in which we are being told that a Prince with no pre-existing blood relationship, was approached and begged by the Benin King-makers to come and rule over the Benin Kingdom.

Thus, in the light of all the foregoing, historiography in Nigeria must consider in earnest the Benin antecedents of Oduduwa of History through the Oranmiyan-Ekaladerhan-Ogiso connection; and that Ekaladerhan and Oduduwa could be names of one and the same person at two different periods of his life history, firstly as Ekaladerhan in Benin and later as Oduduwa in Ife. For example the present Benin monarch, in the years before his father's ascension to the Benin throne in 1933 was known as Prince Solomon Eweka, thereafter he became Prince Solomon Akenzua and after his own coronation in 1979 he is now known as Omo N'Oba Erediauwu, Oba of Benin, three different names at different periods of a lifetime and he is one and the same person.

Another issue that has been imported into the ongoing controversy is the membership of the Western House of Chiefs by Oba Akenzua II of Benin, father of the present monarch of Benin. On this issue, it is necessary to state clearly, if only for the information of our youths and future generatias, that Oba Akenzua II did not become a member of the Western House of Chiefs because he was a son of Oduduwa, but solely because of his exalted position in the Western Region of which his kingdom was a part at that period in Nigeria's history.

All historical records and evidence on Oba Akenzua's reign, that spanned both the colonial period and the post-Independence era until his transition in 1979, severally and collectively establish that throughout his long reign he resisted all overtures and pressures to

make him a Yoruba or a member of Egbe Omo Oduduwa to the extent that he personally founded and led the Benin-Delta People Party to agitate for a separate region for the non-Yoruba speaking peoples of the Western Region, a cause that was achieved by the creation of the Midwest Region by plebiscite during his life time. The statement of Omo N'Oba Erediauwa in his autobiography is in step with and in full agreement with the position that his illustrious father had maintained and defended consistently, namely, that the Benin Kingdom is neither Yoruba nor is it a kingdom founded by Oduduwa. It is therefore difficult to see the point being made or scored by bringing Oba Akenzua II of blessed memory into the on-going controversy.

In addition, one of the factors militating against objectivity in the on-going controversy is ethnicism and a feeling among some in the Southwest Zone that as the majority Ethnic Group west of the River Niger, going by contemporary ethno-geopolitics, they should have been and must be the Alpha and Omega all the time, in the past, in the present and in the future. But history is a matter of facts and not of illusions of present grandeur. Were it not so, how can one explain the historical reality that great and powerful United States of America of today was a colony of Britain, instead of the other way round.

In the same vein, how can one explain the fact, taking into account the profound presence of Christianity in Europe and in Rome that Jesus Christ was not a European or an Italian, and that as a matter of historical fact he was a Jew born in far away Palestine in a stable in Bethlehem? These are the ways of historical phenomena. They are facts not fancies, not illusions of what they should be, but

what they are in fact and reality.

It is on this note that I wish to draw the curtain on my contribution to the dialogue, at the present stage of the controversy. The dialogue should continue and proceed without rancour or bitterness until the issues raised by Omo N'Oba and the Ooni of Ife are duly rested on facts, objectivity and disciplined reflections in the interest of the evolution of a credible historiography in our dear country, Nigeria and in Africa in general.

Ugowe is the author of Benin in World History (1997)

The Benin Ife Wager: Tale Of Two Traditions

By

Monday Philips Ekpe

SOURCE: THIS DAY, SUNDAY MAY 9, 2004 PAGES 34 & 35

What the Oba of Benin, Omonoba Erediauwa did two weeks ago was to launch his autobiography, *I Remain Sir, Your Obedient Servant*. What the Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuade read into the exercise was an attempt to diminish the status of a foremost legend and first occupier of his throne, Oduduwa. **Monday Philips Ekpe** writes on the controversy that is beginning to gather momentum.

A tale of two cities. A tale of two traditions. A tale of two ethnic groups. And, now, a tale of two kings. Benin City, Ile-Ife, Yoruba and Edo are set to assume a renewed significance in the days ahead. The two priests of this enchanting, all-embracing dance of history, Omo N' Oba N' Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Erediauwa and Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuade ascended the thrones of their forefathers about the same time.

Both kings may not be enemies but they can hardly be called friends. But when the Oba of Benin, Erediauwa wrote in his autobiography, *I Remain, Sir, Your Obedient Servant* what he felt

strongly was the truth about Oduduwa, the great progenitor of the Yoruba Kingship. The Ooni of Ife who sits on Oduduwa's throne at the moment equally felt that it was time to give it to his Benin counterpart.

In his review of the book, Professor Andrew Onokerhoraye, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin puts his assessment thus: "On the whole, the style of the book is excellent and the presentation very good. One is never bored reading this 326-page book as the author tasks the intellect of the reader by posing questions some of which he answers, while others he leaves for the readers to find the answers.

"Well said. But chapter 36 has already begun to raise questions whose answers may ruffle the erstwhile confident feathers of popular knowledge. For the simple reason that the sensibility of tradition could elicit several deep emotions, the style of the book may even become inconsequential as more and more people join issues with him on its content.

As the Benin Oba puts it, "The knowledgeable (and one may add, the honest ones) among Yoruba traditional historians know only too well that the person who came to be known as Odua or Oduduwa had only seven children with Oranyan (or Oranmiyan) as the last and youngest. It is a known historical fact that by the time Oduduwa emerged in Ife, 'from the east' as modern Yoruba historians usually put it, there were many Yoruba communities in existence and who had their leaders or 'kings'. So Odua or Oduduwa could not have been the father of Yoruba kings". Could the number one custodian of Benin tradition have gotten it wrong? Last week the Oba of Lagos, Oba Rilwan Akiolu I, threw his weight behind Oba Eradiuwa because of what he called the Benin monarch's integrity. Books like this are often written to set the record straight to express reservations about long-held views and to raise points that would throw light on existing issues.

In this case, however, to let the matter lie low would probab

have taken away a portion of the mystique of the Ooni of Ife or the integrity of the Yoruba version of history. Oba Sijuade seized the opportunity presented by the launching of the biography of Yeye Oodua, Chief (Dr.) H.I.D. Awolowo, the week after Oba Erediauwa's to "set the record straight".

According to him, "Oduduwa the legend, the father of the Ogiso dynasty in Benin history as portayed by the Oba of Benin, descended directly from heaven through a chain to where is now known as Ife today in company of four hundred deities.

"Last Thursday 29th April, 2004, Omonoba Erediauwa, Oba of Benin goofed during the launching of his book titled, *I Remain, Sir, Your Obedient Servant* in this same building where he described Oduduwa on page 205 as one Ekalederhan, a Benin prince who had once escaped the community's axe man, later reappeared in Ife after wandering in the bush from Benin for a very long time.

"According to him, the same Ekalederhan, having become the ruler in Ife refused to go back to Benin on request but instead sent Oranmiyan his son basically on 'home coming mission' to start the present dynasty in Benin. It will interest the public to know the facts about the Ife-Benin relationship which are as follows:

"The Oba of Benin whose dynasty commenced in 1191 AD was an Ife Prince borrowed to the people of Benin on their request after the rule of the Ogisos had ended in Benin history. It was a request that Ife must help to provide them with a ruler, when Oduduwa the legend decided to send Prince Oranmiyan who established that dynasty and whose first son in Benin from a Benin woman was Owomika (Eweka) the progenitor of all Benin Obas including Omonoba since 1191 AD.

"Since Oranmiyan Dynasty started in Benin, all the heads of the Obas of Benin on demise were buried in Ife in a sacred place called "Orun-Oba-Ado" up to the year 1900. Records in the archives made it clear that since 1191AD, the Ooni of Ife had to be informed and clearance must be given by him on the New Oba of Benin to be

installed up to 1916.

“The Official language in the Palace of Oba of Benin till 1934 was Yoruba. The father of the present Oba of Benin was a member of the House of Chiefs in the Old Western Nigerian under our late revered father, Sir, Adesoji Aderemi, my predecessor and the first African governor on the whole African continent.

“The Oba of Benin should go and read what his fore-fathers told the Portuguese explorers during their visit to Benin on 2nd July, 1550AD about the relationship between Ife and Benin. So, it is too late for Omonoba to rewrite our history. The word, 'Oba' which is part of any Benin Oba's title, shows clearly that they are from the bigger Yoruba Dynasty. It is rather too late in the day to rewrite our history which cannot be backed with any documentary evidence.

“I have to thank the Benin first historian, Jacob U. Egharevba for his publications which contained the correct account of the relationship between Ife and Benin which the Oba of Benin is now condemning”.

It's indeed a season of sentiments. A season when men eagerly strive to defend what they hold dear. Even when they may not be totally sure of the authenticity of the source or narration, they must put up fierce arguments to give life to their convictions and viewpoints. Page 205 of the book in contention does not carry the name Ekaledherhan and although the chapter talks about him and his sojourn at Uhe (Ife) for safety, he could not be said to have been painted in a bad light. But the Ooni's irk is not even that. He would want to see Omonoba and the rest of those who hold his views drop the idea that the Ekalederan he wrote about was not the same as Oduduwa who was loved by his people and who liberated them from the fear and onslaught of their enemies.

That this is a touchy issue is not in doubt. Even as the Oba of Lagos made haste to pitch his tent with a “stranger,” the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi, whose relationship with the Ooni is, at best, that of tolerance, made it clear that he would not comment on

what he had not read, but hinted that he would gladly join the controversy train at the appropriate time. Hear him: "I have read the comment of the Ooni of Ife, but I have not read the book and the area that affected the Yoruba ancestry. My comment would be robust and comprehensive and will even include the real origin of the Binis. That will be the best approach to the issue because the raging controversy is not just between the Ooni and the Oba of Benin but an issue between the entire Yoruba race and the Oba of Benin and all distortions must be corrected." Interpretation, Nigerians have not heard anything yet.

Back to the Ooni's response. He admonished the Benin strongman to desist from attempting to rewrite history "which cannot be backed with any documentary evidence." The truth is that much of what we have as history today especially in this part of the world is a direct product of oral tradition. This is a practice in which the dissemination or transmission of information is handed down from one generation to the other through verbal exchanges. At certain points, they are then put down in the form of books or articles. Like most other kinds of human activities and interactions, influences that may not be altogether wholesome could dilute the sanctity of truth and pollute or joggle facts in favour of feelings, prejudices, ego or ethnic chauvinism. History is replete with stories of kings who pursued their agenda or those of their communities to the detriment of others. And even when they failed to meet the aspirations set by themselves, they could set in motion a narration that would portray them as heroes.

So, what is held strongly today, in the twenty-first century AD, may be the outcome of a deliberate effort to misinform way back. And since the motivation or catalyst for the stories that have gained currency today may not be easy to ascertain, any attempt to cling to them and use them as vehicles of psychological dominance could lead the society back to the less civilized times when all it took to be

considered subhuman was to speak another language.

Should everybody then take oral tradition with a pinch of salt? Dr. O.A. Akinyeye, Associate Professor of History, University of Lagos and Chairman, Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU (Unilag branch), does not think oral tradition should be jettisoned. As he puts it, "when you want to talk of reliability, even the written form has its own limitations. Even now, when events are recorded, you notice that they are coloured here and there to suit some purposes. What do we then do? Refuse to believe anything? No matter their shortcomings, we must rely on them somehow. With the memory aiding devices put in place, the incidence of flagrant errors is checked. Don't forget that song and chants play critical roles in traditional information dissemination. In some societies, there are taboos that compel them to be faithful. That is why the claims made by the Obas should not be brushed aside.

"Even when there is the possibility of human memory failure, by the time you listen to three, four or five versions, you should be able to see where the truth lies. When it comes to dating, for instance reference is made to the natural phenomena like faming, draught or epidemics that occurred within any given period."

In the ancient Buganda Kingdom in Uganda for instance, stories are broken down into small compartments for easy remembrance. Four classes of people are saddled with the responsibility of recording and transmitting traditional history. The first group is concerned with the names of all the kings who had ruled the empire. The second one remembers the names of Queen mothers. The third keeps the important events that happen in each reign while the last category is expected to be the custodian of the wise sayings panegyric in each reign. In the Old Oyo Empire, the *Asunrara* and *Arokin* relay oral tradition. In Mali, the Griots do it and in Idanre, the wives of kings, the *oloris*, ensure that information is kept alive and handed down to the next generation.

On the current face-off, Adeleye thinks that caution should be

the watchword of the kings. "There is no need for rancour," he said. "The Ooni and the Oba of Benin both made reference to Egharevba, a respected historian. What he wrote favoured the Ooni's stand, but one may not take that as being perfect. What the present situation calls for is to do more work on it. As a professional, the matter is not in taking sides, but seeing to it that the challenge is faced with fact, devoid of emotions. In fairness to the Oba of Benin, most of the written accounts so far are from Yoruba sources. As I said earlier, let's approach this with maturity". The history teacher is from Idanre, the birth place of Egharevba.

Victor Osaro Edo holds a Ph.D in Cultural and Political history and teaches at the University of Ibadan. His doctoral thesis, "The Benin Monarchy, A Study in Institutional Adaptation to Change," is a rich treatise in some aspects of the evolution of the Kingship of Edo people which at the moment is under scrutiny and heightened public interest. As a Bini man and someone who has spent virtually all his life in Yoruba land, he is uncomfortable with what might snowball into a national crises unless it is handled well by the *dramatis personae*.

His words: "Some people are of the opinion that Egharevba might have been greatly influenced by the fact that he was born and actually spent a sizable part of his life in Yorubaland. But I don't think this thing should be raised to the level of issue. We must realize that there were times in history when various societies needed one sort of help or the other from other societies. There are different accounts about what happened.

"Let the Obas not create problems. Let them leave the matter to modern historians. This is not the time to go back to our past and dig up things that would not unite us or move us forward. Tell me, what do we stand to gain? Ego? Origin was well flogged by earlier historians. As versed as I am in Yoruba culture and language, if I were to go into politics here, I may not win because of the

dominance of sentiments like the ones that are being thrown up by the Royal fathers.

“Let us concentrate on healing the wounds rather than opening them. I think it's time for nation building and integration. Both Obas are closer to their graves and should not create problems for those behind. Historians have debunked the idea of Hamitic Hypothesis which holds that whatever good came out of Africa came from either Egypt or the Middle East. All of us originated from the Niger/Congo area. Both Edo and Yoruba belong to the Kwa group of languages and the earlier they simply see themselves as brothers, the better. I plead with the other Oba not to take side.”

One could never rule out the mythical from the traditional African life. Prince Edun Egharese Akenzua, the Enogie of Obazuwa-Iko and brother of Omonoba once wrote about the aspect of Benin Kingdom that had to do with myth.

According to him, “when *Osanobuwa* finished creation, He decided to send his sons to live on earth. Before they departed, he asked each one to take along a talent or gift. Among the talents were wealth, knowledge, wisdom and an old snail shell. One of the sons chose wealth, another knowledge and another wisdom. When the youngest was to choose, only the old snail shell and a couple of nondescript items were left. As he wondered which to take, a hornbill emerged and whispered to him to choose the dirty old snail shell.

“What would he do with an old snail shell? But he obeyed the hornbill and told *Osanobuwa* he wanted the shell. They set forth on their journey, each in his boat. They arrived at their destination and found it was water. The boats could not berth. The hornbill appeared again and told him to pour the shell's content into the water. As he did so, the water solidified: land emerged and rolled forth into the distance. He anchored his boat and stepped onto “Terra Firma”. *Osanobuwa* was impressed by the intention which made his youngest son choose the shell. God named the land Edo

and made him king over it." Whoever believes this story would wholeheartedly believe the Oduduwa narrative about coming down from heaven, something still valued in many quarters. Benin and Ile-Ife, therefore, could be said to be lands where legends grow from and are trust onto the consciousness of the outer world. The pride often exhibited by people from the two traditional strongholds is traceable to their past which is characterized by the interplay of the ethereal, the surreal and the real.

Architect Haris Aibangbe Igiehon, an authority in Benin history, is in total agreement with his Oba. He threw more light on the controversy: "We need to ask ourselves, what does Oduduwa mean in Yoruba? The name should tell you that the man was Edo. We have an established oral traditional that is recognized all over the world and nobody should think of changing history because of population. What the Oba of Benin has put in his book should be taken as the truth. Historians who did not know that may have to update their knowledge."

The Oba of Benin and Ooni of Ife may not have to travel the path of rancour, a principle buttressed by Prince Edun Akenzua in an article he wrote sometime ago, "Oral Tradition of Benin Kingship." He recalled an encounter between the Oba Sijuade and Omonoba early into their reigns as kings:

"However, the view that the first king of Benin came from Ile-Ife, has raised an interesting, albeit controversial question about the Benin-Ife connection and the origin of the Benin Royal family itself. Since Egharevba, some historians hold the view that the Benin Royal family has its origin in Ife and that the Ooni of Ife is the father of the Oba of Benin. Some have even said that the entire people of Benin come from Ife.

"The controversy is not whether or not the relationship did exist. There are anthropological and folkloric evidence that prove the existence beyond a doubt. Songs and rituals are still performed today in both Benin and Ife which eulogies the origins. In Benin, the

story is told with nostalgia; in Ife, with euphoria and pride and belief that the Ooni of Ife is the father of the Oba of Benin.

"That belief was, no doubt, on the Ooni's mind when he hosted the Oba of Benin who paid him an official visit on November 11, 1982. The Ooni, speaking with the pride of a father receiving a son who made good abroad, described the Oba's visit as a 'short home-coming'. He said, *inter alia*: 'We welcome Your Royal Highness most heartily back to Ile-Ife, the cradle of our common culture. The origin of your dynasty and ours... Today is really a very good day for us in Ife and its environs because since you left in 891AD, we have come to know that your dynasty has performed wonderfully well. As we have mentioned briefly during our historic visit to your domain not too long ago, we said that we were there to pat you on the back for a job well done.

Your present visit we regard it as a short home-coming where you will have an opportunity to commune with those deities you left behind. Now, my son and brother long may you reign.

That address made a clear, unequivocal allusion to the suggestion that Benin, or at least, the Royal Family, owes its origin to Ife. But in his reply, the Oba of Benin actually rejected that submission. In the prelude to his main speech, he said. 'If the Ooni of Ife calls the Oba of Benin his son and the Oba of Benin calls the Ooni his son they are both right.' The question now is: Who really is the father?

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The Benin-Ife Ancestral Ructions

By
Vincent Obia

Source: Daily Independent Friday, May 14, 2004 Page A8 & A9

On April 29 it looked as though the Yoruba and Bini ethnic groups were moving towards a family reunion after the age long proclamation of family affinity between the two cousins dispersed on different zones of Nigeria's geopolitical configuration. The Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo Erediwa, launched his memoirs, *I Remain Sir, Your Obedient Servant*, in Lagos before a capacity crowd of Yoruba and Benin intelligentsia, among other notables from across the country.

The guest list was like a roll call of Nigerian heroes: two former Heads of state, General Yakubu Gowon and Alhaji Shehu Shagari; four serving governors, Senator Bola Tinubu of Lagos State, Chief James Ibori of Delta State, Chief Lucky Igbinedion of Edo State, and Alhaji Ibrahim Idris of Kogi State; elder statesman, Chief Anthony Enahoro; John Obakpor, retired Group Captain, Ike Nwachukwu, retired Major General, Chief Tayo Akpata, Chief Gabriel Igbinedion, etc. The occasion appeared to pave the way for discovery of new and higher grounds of brotherhood. But in stead of striking a note of filial solidity, the Benin Oba's book launch turned out to open the floodgates of controversy in the relationship

between Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba race, in the South West geopolitical zone, and Benin, land of the Bini people of Edo State, South South zone.

The controversy began in the days immediately after the book launch, which took place at Shell Hall, MUSON Centre, Lagos. What seemed to have feature only as an aside in far away Chapter 36 of the Benin monarch's 326 page treatise became a vile smell that assailed the nostrils of the Yoruba Chief ruler, the Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade.

The Chapter in contention states "the knowledge able (and one may add, the honest ones) among Yoruba traditional historians knows only too well that the person who came to be known as Odua or Oduduwa had only seven children with Oranyan (or Oranmiyan) as the last and youngest. It is a known historical fact that by the time Oduduwa emerged in Ife, from the east, as modern Yoruba historians usually put it, there were many Yoruba communities in existence and who led their leaders or kings. So Odua or Oududuwa could not have been the father of Yoruba Kings". Oba Erediauwa's argument here is that an escapee Benin Prince, Ekaladerhan, went to Ife to establish the Ife dynasty. Refusing to return to Benin, Oba Erediauwa maintains in his book, Ekalderhan instead sent his son Oranmiyan on a "homecoming mission" to establish the Benin dynasty.

But the Ooni cried foul, saying that the Benin Oba's account of their shared ancestry was a travesty of history. Ooni used the occasion of the launch of the wife of the Yoruba sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Chief Hannah Idowu Didiolu's biography to put his counter argument in the public domain.

"Last Thursday, 29th April, 2004, Omonoba Erediauwa, Oba of Benin, goofed during the launching of his book entitled, *I Remain, sir, Your Obedient Servant*, in this same building where he described Oduduwa.... as one Ekaledherhan, a Benin prince, who had once escaped the community's axe man, later reappeared in Ife

after wandering in the bush from Benin for a very long time, "Ooni said. "It will interest the public to know the facts, about the Ife Benin relationship, which are as follows:

"The Oba of Benin whose dynasty commenced in 1191 AD, was an Ife prince borrowed to the people of Benin on request after the rule of the Ogisos had ended in Benin history. It was a request that Ife must help to provide them with a ruler, then Oduduwa, the legend, decided to send prince Oranmiyan who established the dynasty and whose first son in Benin from a Benin woman was Owomika (Eweka), the progenitor of all Benin Obas including Omonoba since 1191AD.

"Since Oranmiyan Dynasty started in Benin, all the heads of the Obas of Benin on demise were buried in Ife in a sacred place called 'Orun-Oba-Ado', up to the year 1900. Records in the archives made it clear that since 1191 AD, the Ooni of Ife had to be informed, and clearance must be given by him on the new Oba of Benin to be installed up to 1916.

"The Official language in the palace of Oba of Benin till 1934 was Yoruba. The father of the present Oba of Benin was a member of the House of Chiefs in the old Western Nigeria under our late revered father, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, my predecessor, and the first African Governor on the whole African continent.

"The Oba of Benin should go and read what his forefathers told Portuguese explorers during their visit to Benin on 2nd July, 1550AD about the relationship between Ife and Benin. So, it is too late for Omonoba to rewrite our history. The word, Oba, which is part of any Benin Oba's title shows clearly that they are from the bigger Yoruba dynasty. It is rather too late in the day to rewrite our history.

The Ooni also leaned on the often reiterated mythology, which says. "Oduduwa the legend, the father of the Bigger Yoruba dynasty has no connection whatsoever with Ogiso dynasty in Benin history as portrayed by the Oba of Benin, because Oduduwa descended

Tradition In The Dock

By

Nnamdi Okosieme

SOURCE: DAILY INDEPENDENT. FRIDAY MAY 14, 2004 PAGE A8

The bombshell by the Benin monarch, Omo N' Oba N' Edo Uku Akpolokpolo Erediauwa that the revered Yoruba king Oduduwa was not the first Yoruba King and that Oranyan, the Yoruba king from Ife who was sent to Benin by the Ooni of Ife was actually the son of a Benin Prince who escaped execution have raised(sic) anew the question of the reliability of the oral tradition as a vehicle for transmitting history.

This has become evident in the fierce disagreement between two powerful monarchs who represent to all intents and purposes the past, present and future of their people. The words of both rulers who are steeped heavily in tradition carry much weight. This is why the present disagreement between them over the origin of the Benin monarchy has generated more than a passing interest.

The Oba of Benin whose statement has contradicted long held views insists on the veracity of his sources although he has yet to make public what and who those sources are. Exhibiting supreme confidence in his sources he dares to challenge the revered Bini historian Jacob Egharevba whose seminal work on Benin history,

"A short History of Benin" has been relied upon extensively by historians the world over. Faulting Egharevba's position on the origin of the Benin monarchy, the Omo N' Oba said:

"It is not the intention here to discredit Jacob U. Egharevba, an illustrious historian and (traditional chief), but since this write-up will bring in the historical link between Ife and Benin, it is impossible not to point out errors and contradictions between the first and fourth editions of the man's book. Apart from the fact that the Edo n'ekue (Edo and Akure, partly Benin and partly Yoruba by birth) blood in the man manifested itself... It is necessary to point out that it is historically wrong to describe Odua or Oduduwa as the "father and progenitor of Yoruba kings".

While the public waits for the Omo N' Oba to divulge the source of his new history, observers wonder whether the issue would have arisen at all had there been a large corpus of written history on the Binis and Yoruba. Apart from Samuel Johnson's, *A history of the Yorubas from the Earliest times to the Beginning of the British protectorate*, Jacob Egharevba's *A short history of Benin*, P.A. Talbot's *The People of Southern Nigeria*, A.F.C. Rider's *A reconsideration of Ife-Benin Relationship*, J. De Barros's *Da Asia and a few others* only a few other works detail either the history of the Binis and Yorubas or specifically the Ife-Benin relationship.

Reconstruction of the past of the two tribes even by the few historians that have documented them relied solely on the human memory with its associated short comings. For instance, when Egharevba was working on the history of the Benin, his major sources were the Benin monarch, Oba Eweka, the Ihogbe, worshippers and recorders of the traditional Obas, Ogbelaka, the royal bard, the Igun Eronmwon the royal brass smiths, the Iyase and the Esama, palace chiefs among others. It is possible that somewhere along the line, myths may have assumed the status of fact, thereby raising serious questions as to the validity of the

information.

This heavy reliance on the oral tradition made has remained a serious draw back and made it possible for the English historian Hugh Trevor Roper who held that Africa had no history to remark in 1961 that perhaps in future there will be some Africa history to teach. But at present there is none, there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness and darkness is not the subject of history. While Trevor Roper may have missed the mark it is incontrovertible that had there been a sufficient body of written African history, the arrogance exhibited by scholars like Trevor Roper, Hegel and Conrad when writing about Africa would not have arisen.

The shortcoming of the tradition notwithstanding. Dr. Dele Adeoti, a senior lecturer at the Lagos State University Department of History and International Studies says it is still a useful guide. Said Adeoti. "There is nothing wrong with oral history. Nothing is wrong with the oral tradition. If carefully analyzed and interpreted, it makes a good source of history in spite of all the misgivings one might have about it. People may embellish or telescope accounts to gain one thing or the other but despite these disadvantages oral traditions when carefully collected interpreted and analyzed can be relied upon to give a fair accurate picture of what transpired in the past".

Adeoti's position is supported by Dr. D.O. Akinyeye an Associate Professor of history, University of Lagos. He opined that it is not only the oral tradition that is problematic Even the written form has its limitations he says but" with the memory aiding devices in place, the incidence of grand errors are checked. In some societies, there are taboos that compel oral story tellers to be faithful.

Ife Of Ooni Is Not The Same As Uhe Of Oduduwa

SOURCE: An editorial of
Institute of Studies and Preservation of Ubiniology (ISPU) Newsletter

THE EMERGENCE OF Ile-Ife as a place of socio-cultural significance in the Guinea Rainforest Zone of West Africa has been much researched into and should no longer be a subject of controversy. Any outburst around it would show that there still remains some aspects of misinformation which would require further clarification for a fuller elimination of misconceptions. Our aim in this presentation is to simplify the subject through a 12-point expose. It will help to inform people that no one can play politics with the Ife history anymore. We may add that when Omo N'Oba Erediauwa wrote, he was putting forth a step of courage around which to query those among us who have done much work in Benin studies for the bewildering silence on the issue of Ile Ife which seems to have prevailed over time. Even when the Ooni of Ife raised a universal eyebrow in the assertion that Ile-Ife was divinely packaged for delivery from the sky God, it may historically be seen as a way of expressing the roots of the reverence of its people. Assertions of this nature have been used to sustain the Royalness of the Ife position through generations of Yoruba.

The era of Omo N'Oba Erediauwa is from all aspects of historical assessment already designated as the 'Learned Age' of Benin history. There are five reasons for this conclusion. First, it is the first time the monarch on the Benin throne is blessed with the level of academic attainment which the age of Oyibo (since 1900 AD) has designed for any person with western education. Second, it is the first time the monarch on the Benin throne has the highest record of public service in Nigeria prior to the time of his coronation. Third, it is the first time the people of Benin would enjoy the liberty of examining the hidden skeletons about their history with the aim of bringing increased revelation knowledge into it so that posterity can be well served in the effort to find out itself. Fourth, it is the first time those who have in the past enjoyed the opportunity of seeing the empire of Benin crunched under them for histocultural manipulation will begin to feel jittery about the effort of the Binis to find out the truth about themselves. Fifth, it is the first time the sons and daughters of Great Benin are to be marked seriously against continuing to be agents of the dark age, especially when effort is being made to utilize the benefits of the learned age.

The editorial in this edition of the ISPU Newsletter is not an accusation on any writer on Benin history, language and culture, the study of which is now collectively known as Ubiniology. Rather, it is a warning that any writer on aspects of the study should endeavour to avoid drifting into anachronisms.

Anachronism is the failure of a writer to put his work into a time perspective that links up properly with the wider events of world history, knowing fully well that history is both a unity and a continuity. For example, Benin history is not an island in itself. It is part of a wide tide of world history. It is the responsibility of the writers in the learned age to know the fundamental facts within and between, about the history of Benin before rushing into writing.

For example, the age of using IFE OF YORUBA PEOPLE to confuse the Uhe of Benin People is past. That was the gimmick used in the time when the Empire of Benin was in the colonial age and was crunched into subordinate dimensions under an administrative rulership from Ibadan. The age of failing to see the Niger-Benue Confluence area (now country Nigeria) as the common centre of history for Edo people (to name a few) is past. This was the diversion which Benin people had to pass through in their being appended to the Yoruba as the root of their evolution. Those are some of the between defects from which our own writers must realise themselves.

There are also a number of the hidden defects. For example when a person declares sharply that Igodo founded the Benin monarchy in years BC (Before Christ) and he is not able to define the events of proto-history preceding that stage; he needs to be advised not to fall foul of anachronism. Furthermore; it is known that after Iyase Amaze died in the hands of Oba Ohen (1384 AD) no king of Benin including Oba Ewuare appointed an Iyase until the time of Oba Orhobbua when he brought Eze of Issele-Uku (Obodoiken) to Benin in 1560 AD and appointed him Iyase. For a person to write and put Iyase as a chief under Ewuare; would be an anachronism.

With the 12 points stated below, the historical accounts concerning the emergence of Ile Ife are spelt out so that every thing can be seen in clearer perspectives.

1. Ife Of Ooni Is Not The Same As Uhe Of Oduduwa

Clarifications on this statement began with the records of the Portuguese of the 15th century AD which pointed to the Seat of Oduduwa, the Benin people's Potentate of the Interior, as lying Northeast of Benin City, through the popular Uhunmwode route. The Seat was located at Uduwa, the sacred Pilgrimage home on the

plateau of Uheland, near the Great River, Ohinmwi (Niger). In 1895, J.O. George, a Yoruba historian, wrote a book on this subject and titled it Historical Notes on the Yoruba Country and its Tribes. In this book, he warned that the town of Ile-Ife as seen in the present place should not be taken as the older Ife, which lay much farther in the interior and which among Benin people had gone by the name Uhe. In 1857, T. J. Bowen in his book Adventures and Missionary Labour (p. 265) had written that the old Ife was different from the current Ife, and that the old Ife lay close to the 'Great Water' as the River Niger was called. In 1934, Jacob Egharevba in his book, A Short History of Benin wrote that the Binins, in coming to Beninland, made a short stay in Ile-Ife which the Benin people call Uhe. A.F.C Ryder's works show that Ile-Ife of Ooni is completely different from Uhe of Oghene (Ogane) where Oduduwa was the ruler. This infact is where the Binins refer to in their history, and which Egharevba using Uhe interchangeably with Ife without bothering about how historians would sift it out for use.

2. Oduduwa Is Not A Personal Name, It Is The Title Of The Theocratic Monarch Of Uhe, Seated At Uduwa

Uduwa (meaning 'Heart of Life') was the name given to the Seat of the House of Oghene at the eastern peak of the Uhe plateau which stretched from present day Etsakoland to the lips of the River Niger in Kogiland, (Egharevba, Omoregie, Cole, E.A. Kenyo). Oduduwa derived its name from Ode-Uduwa (Way to Uduwa) which was the prerogative of the Uhe monarch who was the Vicar of Oghene (Giver God) in Uheland and the Benin people's potentate of the interior. It is said that between the founding of the Seat of Oduduwa in 550AD by Idu the first Oghene N'Uhe, and the beginning of the threats of Odomuomu (Atlantic Slave Trade) in

1550AD when the people had to stop all pilgrimage visits to the place, a total of 200 rulers (Oduduwa Uri) sat on the Seat of Oduduwa in Uhe. The first was Idu the progenitor of Edo people and the root of the worship of Erinmwidu, (the spirit of Idu), among his descendants. The second Oduduwa was Olukumi, the progenitor of Yoruba people. During the time of Ikaladerhan's flight of Uhe, Oduduwa Obaloke was the ruler. During the time of Oliha Ighide's Lice Test and Oranmiyan's coming to Benin it was Oduduwa Obalufon (Egharevba, Omoregie). During the time of Ewuare's famous pilgrimage to Uhe in 1450AD, it was Oduduwa Obasanyo (Egharevba, Omoregie) that was on the Seat of Oghene. During this time, Ife as a name for historical use, had not come into existence.

3 Ife Of Ooni Did Not Enter The Benin Story Until About 1800AD, Some 900 Years After The Monarchy Of Benin Was Founded, And Some 600 Years After The Era Of Ikaladerhan.

This point is very important. It helps to save our writers from plunging into anachronism. If Ikaladerhan lived 600 years earlier than the emergence of the Ife of Ooni, then certainly the work of Omo N'Oba Erediauwa would have nothing to do with the Ife of Ooni, but with the Uhe of Oduduwa. Incidentally, partly because in the environment within which Egharevba wrote, he often liked to use Ife and Uhe interchangeably and partly because, linguistically, both Owa-Uhe and Ile-Ife mean the same thing, there is the tendency for any ready to confuse them. Historians have strongly warned against giving room to this confusion.

4 Oyo Is The Centre Of Monarchical Development In Yorubaland. It Is Not Ife Of Ooni

In about 1185 AD after Oranmiyan had successfully managed a home-breed strategy through a son of Beninland, for the termination of the Great Interregnum during the era of Oruru, he was sent to Oyo by Oduduwa Obalufon who was the reigning monarch of Uhe. This was in response to the pleas of the Oyo traders and pilgrims who often came to Uhe and who noted the achievement of Oranmiyan in stabilizing the monarchy of Benin. They also wanted him to do a similar thing for them in Oyoland. During this period, nothing was known of Ife of Ooni.

5 There Was A Pre-Ife Period In Yorubaland In Which Ife Did Not Feature

This period may be contemporaneous with Oyo. Oyo took the lead by being the first monarchical center in the land occupied by the descendants of Olokumi, later known as Yorubaland. From 1185AD after the historical contact with Oranmiyan, the pre-Ife community became known as Iguadimu (Adimu's Village) (Egharevba, Omoregie, Atanda). Jacob F. Ade Ajayi in his book, which was co-authored with Robert Smith, and titled Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century (p.2), draws attention to the fact that Yoruba people were not originally Called Yoruba but were generally known as Olukumi people. This was what the Benin People knew them to be, and it was because Benin people knew the Yoruba in connection with Olukumi, who was younger brother of Oduduwa Idu, the progenitor of Edo people. Olukumi was the second person to reign as Oduduwa in Uheland. When the descendants of Olukumi began to spread out of Uheland in the 7th Century AD, they lived in contiguous locations to Idu people in

their expanding habitable territory and would not want to run into conflict with them. The descendants of Idu had preceded them in occupying the New Earth of Post-Iso Norho era (Cole, English, Omoregie, Wiedner).

Between the 7th Century and the 18th Century AD, what came to be known as Ifeland was a cluster of differently named villages. They were skilled in crafts and works of art which developed as a foundation heritage for them as they came from Uheland. It was not until about 1185 AD when Oranmiyan passed that village cluster on his way to Oyo (on the Oduduwa's mission) to establish the Oyo monarchy that changes began to emerge in the fortunes of the land which later became known as Ile-Ife. Oranmiyan stopped a while in the village. When he was continuing with his journey, he left an aide or a lieutenant, by name Adimu who settled there and organised a unification of the villages so that the place became known as *Iguadimu* (Adimu's Vilage) (Egharevba, Omoregie, Atanda). The walking stick believably turned into a stone obelisk known as Okpo Oranmiyan which can still be found in Ile-Ife did not feature as a unit of any historical significance in Yorubaland. It's emergence as Owa-uhe (meaning Ile-Ife in Yoruba) came into history as an accident of Odumuomu (the Atlantic Slave Trade) which ravaged the Bight of Benin in the years 1550-1750AD.

6 Ikaladerhan Had Nothing To Do With Ife Of Ooni, But Much With Uhe Of Oduduwa

Ikaladerhan (not Ekaladerhan) is the name. Ikaladerhan means Ike-aladerhan, which is it is from the girth that wood is valued for purchase'. Ikaladerhan did not flee to Ife of Ooni. He fled to Uhe of Oduduwa and abdicated his rights to the throne of Bcnin after his father, Owodo (the last of the 31 Ogisos of Benin), had been

deposed and ostracized by the Great Nobles for committing the crime of Kirikuvua (killing a pregnant woman). Whether he used the words Izoduwa and Ilefe would be immaterial, and infact a misconstruction which historians would not want to accept as a relevant piece of history.

Ikaladerhan fled to Uhe from his mother's home at Errua, and with him, his wife, Isere, and newly-born boy, Omonoyan whose name later changed to Oranmiyan. This was three years later after the deposition of Owodo in 1130AD. Ikaladerhan had suffered a death dealing pronouncement under his father, but was favoured by the executioners. He was advised not to head towards the mother's home (Errua), but to move in the opposite direction, so that in case of a Royal search, he would not be easily picked up. He then went to Ughoton where he settled as Enogie by convention and got married to the daughter of the Odionwere. Her name was Okunhonwa but he preferred to call her Isere (meaning I have survived till today). He left Ughoton for Errua after his mother, Ometo, died and had to be buried in her hometown.

It is clear that when Ikaladerhan left Errua in Beninland for Uhe, he was no more in fear of death or his being urged back to return home to rule in succession to his father. He had rejected it. Because by his father's pronouncement of a death sentence on him, he considered himself dead to the throne. He took the Uhumwode route to Uhe, following the Tradersguards who went to and from Uhe, Ide, Idoma, Ozigono and Bida in regular market and pilgrimage trips during that time.

7. Ikaladerhan did not reign as Oduduwa of Uhe, Oranmiyan reigned as Oduduwa

Ikalderhan was forced out of his father's home in Benin, (and

into the death that never was) into the cook of his day in 1127AD. His father, Ogiso Owodo, was forced out of his throne in the heat of a day in 1130AD after which he died in 1133AD. Ikaladerhan fled on his way to Uhe in the rains of 1133AD to avoid the pressure on Ogiso. He argued that since the death-pronouncement was not lifted by his father, he was as good as dead to the Benin throne. Then the Great Interregnum followed which gave room to Evian (1130-70AD) and Ogiamie (1170-1199AD) to lead the Benin nation, Okaevbo.

Ikaladerhan fled to Uhe using the 'Uhunmwode route' which since the 7th Century AD, traders and pilgrims, from Iduland, had regularly taken. The Oduduwa ruled from the centre of his theocratic council into which he absorbed for life, any of the erstwhile 'Emigrants' who sought to return to settle and be protected. It would have been possible for Ikaladerhan to reign as Oduduwa, but he died (1168) some 30 years before the reigning monarch himself died. Oranmiyan's departure to Benin was thus delayed by Obalufon for the burial of his father, Ikaladerhan. Oranmiyan did not stay long in Benin, ostensibly because he did not find the political situation created by Ogiamie conducive for his coronation, but realistically, it was because he was eager to go back to Uhe to perform the rituals for succeeding his father as a member of the theocratic council with the possibility of being qualified to rule as Oduduwa.

Oranmiyan's chances were further extended by Oduduwa Obalufon when in 1185AD he was sent to Oyo to establish a monarchy for them and rule as the first king. The call for this elevation had been made by Oyo people themselves who came to Uhe as pilgrims and traders, after interactions with peoples of the post-Iso-Norho New Earth. Oranmiyan's departure to Oyo in the

12th Century AD was thus the beginning of a new life for the people of the community in which Ile-ife emerged and became officially known in the 18th Century AD as the spiritual Centre of Yorubaland.

Oranmiyan did not spend the rest of his life in Oyo. As he had done in Benin, he left behind a son whom he raised into position as the first Alafin of Oyo. He returned to Uhe as soon as information reached him that Oduduwa Obalufon had died (1198AD). When he arrived in Uhe in 1199AD, he entered the theocratic council in awesome glory and was installed Oduduwa, the Oghene of Uhe. He died three years later, during which he spent a good time seeing that the two monarchies, Benin and Oyo, which he had set up had started to operate as he desired. (Egharevba, Omoregie, Allison).

8. Ife of Ooni is a Product of the forces of Odomuomu

The forces of Odomuomu began about 1550AD soon after the death of Oba Esigie Odomuomu is the Edo word for the Atlantic Slave Trade. By this time the effects of the Papal Bull (1494) by which the world was divided between Portugal for the African World and beyond, and Spain for the Western world, had begun to show in the demand for the use of slaves in the plantations of the western world. Slave dealers anchored their ships on the coasts of the Bight of Benin and employed slave marauders with handsome gifts to scout the interior for the slaves with which they filled their ships. Odomuomu was not an open war. It was seen by the people as the demon of secret human capture which Europeans generated and which could not be stopped at local level. As the marauders became rich by it, the chieftains joined in the hoarding of slaves for them so that they themselves could be rich also.

As sacred centres were being profaned in the process, the hallowed Stone of the House of God at Uduwa in Uhe was secretly

taken out to an unknown centre. Uhe ceased to exist as the place where the reigning Oduduwa could be seen and where the pilgrimage tradition dating back to the 7th Century AD could continue to hold. It ceased to exist as the centre of the theocratic council with which the known socio-cultural world had been held together.

The Binis As A People

By

Osemwegie Ebohon

SOURCE: OLOKUN WORSHIP IN BENIN KINGDOM. PAGES 1-29

AN OVERVIEW: The word "*Binis*" is the plural of '*Bini*', which was linguistically corrupted by the British colonialists, that ruled over Nigeria and granted her independence on October 1, 1960, again renamed it '*Benin*' for selfish and ethnocentric reasons. Today, the word '*Benin*' has gained currency in popular discourse both at home and abroad. Nevertheless, the proud traditional Benin indigenes holds the name "*Benin*" dear to their hearts because it is not only their ancestral name, it gives a socio-cultural resonance to their identity as a people with a rich, historical past. In this book, the words '*Bini*' and '*Benin*' will therefore be used interchangeably for literally reasons without devaluing the socio-cultural essence.

On the political map of Nigeria, the Binis were grouped into the old Benin-Delta province with other ethnic nationalities. In 1963, they became part of the area known as Mid-West Region carved out of Western Region by the government of Prime

Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. When 12 states were created in 1967, by the then Nigeria's military Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975), the Binis found themselves in the Mid-West State.

Once again, the political map of Nigeria was redrawn in 1976 by another military head of state, General Murtala Mohammed (1975-1976) following the creation of 19 states and the Binis were further grouped into Bendel state. Following the creation of states by the Nigeria's military President General Ibrahim Babangida, (1985-1993), the Binis became part of Edo State and has remained so. One point stood to her advantage even though 36 new states were created by yet another military leader General Sani Abacha (1994-1998) in 1996, the socio-political map of Edo State was not altered. What is more, during the several political restructuring of Nigeria from 1963 1996, the geographical location of the Binis had never changed. They have been occupying the land given to them by God (Osanobua) from time immemorial. Governments come and go with clockwork regularity but the Binis and their Obas always remain to welcome them. It is not surprising therefore in popular pidgin parlance that it is said "*Oba no dey go transfer*".

Nigeria, as a whole, has 774 Local Government Councils of which eighteen are in Edo State. This are:-

<u>Local Government</u>	<u>Capital</u>
1. <i>Akoko-Edo</i>	<i>Igarra</i>
2. <i>Egor</i>	<i>Uselu</i>
3. <i>Esan Central</i>	<i>Irrua</i>
4. <i>Esan North-East</i>	<i>Uromi</i>
5. <i>Esan South-East</i>	<i>Ubiaja</i>

6.	<i>Esan West</i>	<i>Ekpoma</i>
7.	<i>Etsako Central</i>	<i>Fugar</i>
8.	<i>Etsako East</i>	<i>Agenebode</i>
9.	<i>Etsako West</i>	<i>Auchi</i>
10.	<i>Igueben</i>	<i>Igueben</i>
11.	<i>Ikpoba-Okha</i>	<i>Idogbo</i>
12.	<i>Oredo</i>	<i>Benin City</i>
13.	<i>Orhionmwon</i>	<i>Abudu</i>
14.	<i>Ovia North-East</i>	<i>Okada</i>
15.	<i>Ovia South-West</i>	<i>Iguobazuwa</i>
16.	<i>Owan East</i>	<i>Afuze</i>
17.	<i>Owan West</i>	<i>Sabongidda-Ora</i>
18.	<i>Uhunmwode</i>	<i>Ehor</i>

These Local Government Councils are distributed for political and electoral reasons into Edo North, Edo Central and Edo South. The Binis occupy Edo South in the state, which comprise these seven (7) Local Government Councils viz:

1. *Egor,*
2. *Ikpoba-Okha,*
3. *Oredo,*
4. *Orhionmwon,*
5. *Ovia North-East,*
6. *Ovia South-West, and;*
7. *Uhunmwode.*

Although the Binis can be found in all parts of the world, their ancestral home is in Edo South.

On the other hand, there are six (6) local government councils in Edo North, namely:

1. *Etsako Central*
2. *Etsako East*
3. *Etsako West*

4. *Akoko-Edo*
5. *Owan East, and;*
6. *Owan west*

The Etsako, (pronounced 'Ivbio sakon), Owan and Akoko-Edo people live in this part of Edo State.

Edo Central inhabited by the Ishans, has five (5) local government councils namely:

1. Esan Central,
2. Esan North-East,
3. Esan South West,
4. Igueben, and;
5. Esan West.

About 80% of all ethnic groups in Edo State are descendants of the Binis and they trace their ancestral roots to them in one way or another. Originally, the Binis referred to themselves as the **Igodomigodos**- a name adopted from Ogiso Igodo, their first ruler said to have descended from the sky in celebration and deification of his peaceful reign. This name stuck during the reign of the 31 Ogisos as well as those of **Evian** and **Ogiamien** two administrators who ruled Benin during a period of interregnum following the banishment of Owodo, the last Ogiso for ordering the killing of a pregnant woman. Chief (Dr.) Jacob U. Egharevba in his book titled:

ASHORT HISTORY OF BENIN (1968) states:

"For some years after the banishment of Owodo, the last Ogiso, there was an interregnum and the following leaders of the people Evian and his son Ogiamen administered the government successively. At that time the country was known as Igodomigodo".

Prince Oranmiyan or Omonoyan, the eldest son of a Benin Prince, Ekaladerhan living in a settlement named Ehe-Ilefe

(*corrupted to read Ile-Ife*) as its ruler, later inadvertently gave Benin land another name. He had arrived Benin in 1170 as king from Ehe-Ilefe, following a passionate appeal by the elders in the land to replace Prince Ekaladerhan, his father. As a king, who spoke only Yoruba and was oblivious of the value systems of Benin, he couldn't meet the expectations of the Benin people. Out of frustration, he abdicated the throne with a critical remark in Yoruba "**Ile Ibinu**" which translated mean "This is a land of vexation". This statement by Prince Oranmiyan set the stage for the land of Benin to be referred to as "Ile-Ibinu" while its people became the "**Ibinus**".

Oba Ewuare (1440-1473), renamed the Benin people as Edos. The name was got from the head slave of one Benin Chief, Ogiefa Nomuekpo who saved him from being arrested and punished by the chiefs for his unauthorised visits to Benin City from his abode in exile. Chief (Dr.) Jacob U. Egharevba explains further the circumstances.

"Prior to his ascension, Ewuare used to visit the City (Benin City) secretly from his place of exile. The elders got to know and tried to arrest him. On one occasion he heard that the elders knew of his arrival and therefore ran towards evening to the house of Ogiefa for protection. The Ogiefa Nomuekpo hid him in a dried-up well, in his yard, covering the top with Olikhoroho leaves and then went to tell the Ogiamien and others so that they might arrest and punish him. Before his return his head slave named Edo let down a ladder into the well and advised Ewuare to escape. Without delay, Ewuare escaped with his sword and spear into the bush between Okhorho and Uselu roads."

The young Ewuare was said to have been impressed by the great

assistance Edo, the head slave, of Chief Ogiefa Nomuekpo gave him. To immortalise the slave, he adopted his name Edo for use in re-naming the people of Benin. Edo in Benin, Ike Idu, means original land/land of Ovbioto (Children of the land).

Edo civilisation is said to be over 6,000 years old and Benin City has remained the cradle of the Benin people, Edo land as well as the headquarters of the Benin Empire and later Kingdom. Benin City has also doubled as the political/administrative headquarters of Mid-West Region (1963 1967), Mid-West State (1967 1976), Bendel State (1976 1991) and Edo State since 1991.

Ten gates historically lead into Benin City. They are:-

1. *Akpakpava (Ikpoba) Road*
2. *Irhuae (Ogba) Road*
3. *Imose (Sapele) Road*
4. *Okhorho Road*
5. *Ughoton Road*
6. *Udo Road*
7. *Ugbo Road*
8. *Uhunmwum Idunmwun Road*
9. *Uselu (Oyesunu) Road*
10. *Utantan (Esokponba) Road*

Benin City is, today, the headquarters of Edo kingdom which has, as its King, *His Royal Majesty, Uku Akpolokpolo, Omo N' Oba N' Edo Oba Erediauwa*. He is the 38th Oba of the Kingdom. Initially, the first Kings of Benin the Ogisos ruled from their palaces in Ugbekun which is about five kilometers on Esokponba Road and Uhunmwun-Idunmwun. During the reign of Prince Oranmiyan (Omonoyan), his palace was at Usama along Siloko (Isiuloko) Road in Benin City. Subsequently, the palace was located in selected locations that suited the desires of the Kings. The present site within Airport Road, Oguanogbe,

Ekpenede and Ezoti area of Benin City was chosen and has since remained the permanent abode of the Obas as well as one of the major tourist attractions of Nigeria.

The Binis are considered a microcosm not only of Nigeria but the world. It is no wonder that Edo State where they live is called the **Heartbeat State**. Benin City has remained the headquarters of several Obas of Benin who built a vast empire through successful war campaigns. Chief (Dr.) Jacob U. Egharevba captured this fact in his book **A SHORT HISTORY OF BENIN (1968)** thus:

"The Bini Empire extended to Otum (the boundary between Oyo and Benin) in the North, the sea in the South, Asaba in the East and Eko (Lagos) in the West. It included the Ekas (Ikas), Ishans, Kukurukus, Ekitis, Owas, usekiris, Urhobos, Ijaws and Ondos. The Obas also had considerable power in the Ibo Country on both sides of the River Niger (Ohinmwim) and at Bonny Most of the Obas declared war against some country or town about three years after their succession if any (of his vassals) refused to accept sacred chalk or pay the necessary tribute The Iyase (Premier) was the commander-in-chief the Ezomo came next then, the Ologbosere and Imaran followed by Edogun, Ezomurogho, Agboghidi of Ugo and the Ogie Ebue. The Ohen-Okhuahe was the native doctor. If the lesser generals could not conquer any town or country, the Iyase will be sent. He would not be allowed to return to Benin City but would remain in one of the Benin towns as ruler. No other Iyase would be appointed until after his death".

Following these facts, one finds Benin's influence in the nooks and crannies of the whole world. For instance, Benin words are found in Portuguese vocabulary-an experience which devolved from the social interaction between the Binis and the Portuguese

after the visit of John Alfonso D'Alvaro, a Portuguese explorer, in 1485, In the West African sub-region, the influence of Benin is even greater. Among the Ashantis of Ghana, the traditional wrapper is worn the Benin way: one edge of the wrapper is wound round the upper torso while the other is thrown over the shoulder and neck. President Mathieu kereku acknowledged Dahomean cultural links with Edo people when he visited Benin City. The West African sub-region is replete with burial customs, which show a remarkable resemblance with those of the Binis whose territorial dominance in the days of yore ensured a captive assimilation or colonialisation of other peoples into their ways of life. Such cultural transfer was helped by the fact that some Benin soldiers who refused to return home after war campaigns, settled in conquered territories until they passed on leaving behind lineages of descendants. Benin influence in the West African sub-region is made manifest by the fact that a certain geographical piece of Nigeria's southern territory is named the Bright of Benin.

The Binis are unique. Geographically, their land is blessed with the red soil (Ulakpa) that is indigenous to them. China's red soil only shares close resemblance to that of the Binis but not exactly of the same texture and colour. Hence houses built with Ulakpa last for centuries. They are more durable than concrete building. It is also a very important material for the Akpa-Core for the lost wax bronze/brass casting. Benin City, headquarters of the Binis, boasts of having the longest man-made earth-works or more moats on earth.

There are three main circular moats surrounding Benin City. The first one nearest to the city boundary was dug by Oba Oguola (1280 - 1295) while the other two moats were dug by Oba

Ewuare (1440 1473). About 20 other moats were also dug by Benin communities around their villages following orders from their royal monarch to erect defensive earthwork around themselves. In all, there are about 23 moats in Benin Kingdom. The first moat by Oba Oguola was to ward off invaders into the city while Oba Ewuare's two moats were dug mainly to prevent the mass exodus of Binis from the city protesting his harsh laws. Following the death of his two sons Kuoboyuwa and Zuware on the same day from mutual poisoning, he had decreed, after declaring three years of mourning in the Kingdom thus;

1. *That the Binis should shave their heads, rub wood-ash on their bodies and should not take their bath for three days*
2. *That they should not eat their staple food Ema (pounded yam) for three years.*
3. *That they should not have carnal knowledge of their wives to ensure that no body in the kingdom during this period.*

The Binis considered the decree overbearing and those who couldn't accommodate it were fleeing the Kingdom in droves. Oba Ewuare expected his two moats to stop such subjects from escaping to other lands. When this failed, he asked that those who managed to escape be repatriated. He also decreed that the entire Binis be tattooed for easy recognition in foreign lands. This was the origin of the Bini tribal marks IWU. The other 20 moats built by Benin communities around their abode were to keep away invaders.

Usually, rams were deployed as sentinels besides the 10 gates that serve as gate ways through the moats to warn of the presence of invaders before they could cross them. The Binis exploited the native intelligence of the rams which made them withdraw from their positions and retreat enmasse towards the centre of Benin City at the sight strange faces clustering along the moat.

All the moats were dug by either war captives or people serving punishment for offences committed against the laws of the Kingdom. There were no earth movers at the time.

So simple traditional implements like the wooden shovel (Ovbevbe); carved sticks with pointed tips; and the bones of large animals were used. Of course, these implements were complemented with the bare hands of the diggers.

Until August 1973, the world believed that the China Wall was the longest man made earthwork around. However extensive researches by British anthropologist P.J. Darling and other anthropologists from Nigeria proved that the wall in Benin City is the longest. In fact, it is twice the length of the China Wall. No doubt, the Benin earth-works have suffered neglect, defacement and environmental pollution; but their unique tourist value can never be surpassed by any other earth work on this earth.

The Binis are ruled by a monarchy that is over 1000 years old around which revolves an efficient and effective administrative organisation already put in place as at the 15th century when Europeans first visited Benin City. Records show that it was in celebration of this fact that Benin City, the headquarters of the monarchy was described as a "City".

Oral and historical traditions claim that about 70 kings had ruled over the Binis beginning from the Ogisos, their first set of dynastic kings in the 10th century, followed by an inter-regnum under the sole administratorship of Evian and Ogiamien. Thereafter, the son of Izoduwa (pronounced Aidoduwa and corrupted by the Yorubas to oduduwa). Oranmiyan ruled Benin before the Obaship system was introduced in the kingdom beginning with Oba Eweka I (1200-1235)

There are four days in the traditional Benin week. They are *Eken, Ori, Okuo and Aho*. Eken is a day for rest, no one goes to farm, the predominant occupation of the Binis. Okuo day is for performing rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices; while Ori and Aho days are for other pastimes: hunting, lumbering, brass

The Binis didn't originate from Egypt, Ife or anywhere else on this terrestrial plane. Oduduwa is not the founder of Benin. Benin, infact, has been in existence long before time frame associated with her. The Binis believe Oduduwa is the linguistic corruption of the Benin word Izoduwa or Aidoduwa. According to them, Owodo the last Ogiso, was unhappy that he had only one son Ekaladerhan. So, he sent his eldest wife Esagho and some elders to an oraculist for consultation. The oraculist told them his eldest wife was responsible for his travails and that unless she was put to death, he would never get relief from his problems. However, they lied to the King that the oracle called for the execution of Ekaladerhan, his only son before he would have more male children.

Following the report, the King ordered his execution. His executioners were appointed. They led him to the bush to keep his appointment with death. However, he was set free. As soon as he got his freedom, Ekaladerhan, a handsome young man started wandering in the bush. Then he arrived at Ughoton (Gwatto). He stayed there for a while before continuing his wandering for fear of being arrested and killed by the King or his agents at Ughoton. After a long while, he arrived at a human settlement of primitive people who had never seen other peoples and who always thought they were the sole inhabitants of the earth. They were surprised to see Ekaladerhan with his high level of sophistication in their midst; so they treated him with awe and reverence. Infact, they believed he was a forest god sent to rule them. Consequently, he was crowned their king. Ekaladerhan called the human settlement Uhe (corrupted to Ife). However, because he was overwhelmed at his unexpected rise in fortune to the status of a King, he exclaimed in his Benin language, on one occasion: "Izoduwa or Imadeoduwa/Aideoduwa" ("I have not

missed the path to prosperity.”)

It was this Benin word, which can be substituted with another Benin word “Aidoduwa” that was corrupted to Oduduwa as Ekaderhan's new name that is now being touted both as the father of the Yorubas and the founder of Benin. Certainly, this is unacceptable.

God (Osanobua) was instrumental in creating land on earth on which the Binis settled as its first inhabitants after descending from their heavenly abode. The Binis were followed later by other people of the world. It is to capture the reality of this mythical creation story that the Binis say: Oba Yan Oto Ya Se Evbo Ebo. Translated, it means the Oba Owns the Land Up to the European Country.

ACCOUNTS OF THE BENIN ORIGIN

There are different Benin oral traditions on their origin. However, only four of them will be treated.

Account One

That the Binis and the land they occupy were created by God and sent down from the sky (*Odukhunmwun*). This is why Binis refer to themselves as Ivbioto, (children of the land) while their first Kings who ruled them, after a period of gerontocracy, were called Ogisos (*Kings of the sky*). The Binis believe that their Kings were sent down along with them from the sky during their Transplanetary movement from the sky to the earth. This account is given ample treatment in the book **EDO CULTURE** by Ogie Evbinma.

Account Two

Olokun, a beloved Son of God, is said to be the ancestor of the Binis. He and the Binis, were all living in the spirit world (*Erinmwini*) when, God (*Osanobua*) decided to send them down

to the earth (Agbon) once filled with water. So, he gave Olokun a snail shell (Ughughon-Egile) packed full of sand. Following divine instructions, Olokun gave the shell to Turcan (Owonwon), a mythical bird, for use in creating a landmass from the water-logged earth. The Turcan, according to this account, flew with the snail shell from Erinmwin (Spirit World) to the top of a very tall tree. From there, he poured out the sand in the snail shell into water and some Ikhinmwin (New Boulder tree) and solid land mass appeared.

Having done this, the bird reported to Olokun who, on his part, informed God (Osanobua) about what had transpired. God was impressed. However, he ordered Olokun and the Binis to investigate the Turcan's report, with emphasis on whether the landmass was solid enough for human and animal habitation. After some deliberations among Olokun, the Binis and other spiritual world beings the decision to send the chameleon (Erokhi) to carry out the investigation, was taken.

The chameleon, thereafter, descended from spirit world and because he was out to test the solidity of the landmass, he moved slowly with utmost caution on it. To its amazement, the landmass was hard and solid and a report was thus made to God (*Osanobua*), Olokun, the Binis and other spiritual world beings. Following its report and God's (*Osanobua's*) approval, Olokun led the Binis and some spiritual world beings from the spirit world and settled on the land, they called Idu.

Account Three

Almighty God (*Osanobua*) founded Benin. The account stated that, once upon a time, God had seven children living with him in the spirit world (*Erinmwin*) whom He sent down to inhabit the earth. Some of them took along from the spirit world money, herbal magical skills and other material inheritance. But the youngest among them following the advice of a Turcan (*Owonwon*), a mythical bird, came with only a snail filled with sand.

On their way, the seven children discovered that the earth was all covered with water. Once more, the Turcan advised the youngest child to pour the sand in the shell on the water. The child did. Immediately, some land appeared. He thereafter inhabited the land and called it Idu. Later, his other brothers joined him on the land with part of their inheritance from the spirit world.

The white man (*European*) turned up last after all the land had been shared out, but he desired land for habitation on earth. He therefore, pleaded with the youngest child to give him the snail shell so he could try to create some land with some of the sand still left inside it.

The youngest child obliged him. On getting the snail shell from him and washing it in the water, some land appeared. However, he noticed that the body of water surrounding and within his landmass was salty due to the fact that there was salt on the posterior end of the shell which spilled into the water. From this source, the salt spread to other big bodies of water, according for why seawater is salty.

Account Four

A frustrated poor man once left his country to seek the golden fleece in other unknown lands. During his journey, he wandered into the bush where he met an old, sickly, hungry and impoverished woman. Out of sympathy, the man prepared a fire for her to keep herself warm. He also attended to her other needs. In appreciation of his kindness, she gave him as parting gift, a branch of *glyphaea lateriflora* (*Uwenrhien-Ota*) advising him to use it to strike the ground whenever he so desired.

The man did as instructed after another round of wandering in the bush. In a split second, a big town filled with people appeared. The people were pleased to have him in their midst. They glorified him, quickly built a big house for him, and thereafter installed him as their king. The man was said to have called the people "the Idus".

REACTION TO THESE ACCOUNTS

One shares Prince Eweka's view, no doubt, but it must also be stated that this writer believes that the Nok culture is totally of Edo origin. There is no disputing this. If our archaeologists, historians and cultural anthropologists carry out their investigation on the Nok civilisation with a scientific, unbiased mind, they will reach this conclusion.

What one learns from these oral traditions on the origin of Benin is that the Binis believe they are not descendants of any other tribes or peoples. They also believe that the land they inhabit was given to them by God.

Late Prince Ena Eweka in his book

THE BENIN MONARCHY earlier quoted, remarks:

"Which ever way one looks at the origin of the Edo people both historically or mythically, one comes to the conclusion that a lot of research still needs to be carried out on it. The Edos themselves believe that they were the original people of their land even though it cannot be ruled out that other people might have migrated to join them here. Modern archaeological findings show that the oldest human skull was found in Africa. Here in Nigeria, the Nok civilisation has thrown new light on the actual age of African civilisation. Who knows if the Nok civilisation itself is not a spillover of the early Edo people especially as the regions occupied by both the Edo and the Nok are within the same land mass".

Despite the raging controversy among academics over the question of Benin origin, the Binis have nevertheless continued to occupy the front stage of world attention since the British punitive expedition of 1897. In that year, British troops invaded Benin City in retaliation for the killing of some British soldiers over questions of rights of passage into the city when the royal monarch, Oba Ovonramwen Nogbaisi (1888-1914) customarily, was not supposed to receive any visitors.

The Binis have also been getting world attention, because they

are a people with a rich ancient past put at over 6000 years old while the royal dynasty is said to have a history of 1000 years behind it. Invariably, the whole world, in modern times, consider the Binis, their present monarch, norms, values, traditions as well as artifacts, as an enduring mirror of their great past. This world's interest in the Binis is heightened by the fact that their Kingdom is a few of those which live comfortably in the present while still wearing the aura and mystique of her past even though the kingdom has passed through the hot furnace of colonialism as well as civilian and military rules from 18th century to May 1999.

It is coping well in the dispensation without much hiccups because its present monarch, **HIS ROYAL MAJESTY OMO N'OBA N'EDO, UKU-AKPOLOKPOLO OBA EREDIAUWA** is a well-educated man who has in his kitty, a Cambridge University Law degree, experience as a Federal and state bureaucrat and is versed in Benin history and culture. His reign has witnessed the resuscitation of many abandoned shrines and traditional practices all over Benin Kingdom. He ensures that although the Binis live in a modern era, they don't forget their rich, cultural heritage. Infact, he remains the visible cultural as well as historical bridge between the present and past in the great Benin Kingdom which, today, stands tall in proud majesty like an anthill on the Savannah.

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Epilogue

By
Wajeed Obomeghle

The exercise of compiling these essays into a book would be vacuous if as scholars and intrepid writers we are unable to take a position on this work. Why we are not trying to act as umpires, we have a responsibility if for nothing else, for the sake of scholarship to decipher the issues raised without trying to re-invent the wheel.

Benin and Ife Empires have come of age and have been long established in history. They can not therefore be dismissed easily from whatever perspective any one looks at them. The lingering issue of "Which comes first" between Benin and Ife is a matter that can only be properly resolved in depth with by dispassionate scholars and chroniclers. However, within the context of the various positions canvassed, we have attempted to synthesize the contributions and allow you the readers to make the final decision. This is not for fear of being labeled. Instead, it is to create an objective temple for the "Warship" of these two great empires.

As a summary to this great intellectual saga in the confines of traditional history and hegemony of two sacred institutions, it is of modest importance to note that perfection is non-existent in mortals. Therefore, no human-being no matter how intellectually endowed and benevolent to the cause of justice and equity can

claim absolute fairness in reviewing a fact or passing an opinion that might answer to satisfy or probably bring out a monolithic focus to a controversy that had hitherto created a 'divide' between two opposite ends. I also think that the nature of the 'divide' will determine whether there can be an agreement or not. When a 'divide' is such that a people's integrity and the sanctity of their immemorial tradition will appear to diminish, even of the most insignificant proportion by submitting to a seeming fact of truth that swings in favour of another, there can be no agreement, except if the players allow the deductive reasoning of 'Truth' based on available premises, which Plato has concluded long ago to be the "abode and reigning palaces of the wise". 'Truth', is omniscience and universal hence it is the rallying point of human growth and survival and since: "No human being is constituted to know the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, even the best of men must be content with fragment, with partial glimpse, never the full". We should then be gratified by the extent to which we can see based on our individual emotional perspectives and also be prepared to give way to the superiority of opinions. That is the onus in the all pervading quest for intellectual growth. Though men may have a limitless ability to disagree, to change, to push, to aspire and to attempt to change the inevitable to suit the aims of their generational, emotional perception, the immortality of reasoning is only a quality associated with the Almighty God who in His cosmic consciousness, is all-knowing and all-wise. Therefore, no matter how altruistic and original our perception of an issue bordering on the sanctity of history might be, the dawn of 'Truth' even though opposite our belief, albeit surreptitiously, convokes a moral responsibility on us as mortals to change our perception. Since veracity is the heart of morality, there is a duty on us to attempt a projection of the indubitable 'Truth' that shall douse all suspicious and blasphemies. Notwithstanding the fact that Rene Descartes has

philosophized that: "Truth is relative according to the individual experiences and observations in life and that the idea of finding the 'Truth' is illusory"; and because of the admixed contrivances of modern historical knowledge and the susceptibility of the historically ignorant minds which may perverse the reasoning of men, all hands must be on deck to guide and direct the reasoning of our people and re-invigorate their focus towards arriving at the indubitable facts of history.

Viewed from whatever perspective and considering the submissions of all contributors, including the Ooni and Oba of Benin, Ekaladerhan who later became known as Oduduwa (according to Benin version) and Oduduwa (according to the Yorubas version) founded the Oranmiyan dynasty in Benin and the Oduduwa dynasty in Ile-Ife.

It is also agreed that Oduduwa migrated from somewhere, or whether descended from the heavens as claimed by the Ooni of Ife, or migrated from Egypt or the East as claimed by some historians or the exiled Prince from Benin as Ekaladerhan who later became Oduduwa as claimed by the Binis. Both sides equally agree that Oranmiyan is the son of Oduduwa whom he sent to Benin to establish the Oranmiyan dynasty, on request, by the Binin's.

They also agree that Oranmiyan left Benin in anger because he couldn't understand the customs of the people, their way of life and their language and before he left, christened it, Ile-Ibinu (The land of vexation).

They also agree that Oranmiyan later founded the Oyo dynasty, as he was the first Alaafin of Oyo. There is disagreement on whether Oduduwa descended from the sky as claimed by the Ooni or Ife or migrated from the East as claimed by the historians or whether he was the lost Prince of the Benin kingdom who escaped the hangman's noose as claimed by the Oba of Benin.

The contributors disagreed on the question of hegemony. The Ooni of Ife claimed that the Oba of Benin pays obeisance to the Ife

dynasty and that all kings of Benin kingdom were buried at Ife till 1934 when because of the problem of deportation Oba Ovieramwen was not buried at Ife. All other kings subsequently were buried in Benin.

It is imperative to consider in brief analysis, the requirements of a sound historical fact. Conventionally, a fact of history can either be ascertained through oral traditions, written records and archeological discoveries. Besides, other subsidiary variables exist to support the admissibility of a historical fact as proved or disproved. These facts range from the pragmatic outlook of a fact and it's accepted. "Thus a historical fact that tend to undermine the basic principles of sound logic in contemplation of existing and acceptable Truth is not only unfounded, but intrigues the faculty of the wise".

From a mythical approach, Oba Sijuwade, the Ooni of Ife had posited that Oduduwa the Supreme being, descended from heaven through a cabin, alongside a cockerel and 401 deities to the present Ile-Ife where he established the Ife dynasty and the Yorubas race. He claimed further that when the Benin kingdom was in need of a ruler, a request was made to him and in response, Oduduwa sent his son Oranmiyan to rule over Benin and left after given birth to Eweka who founded the Benin dynasty. Other historians mostly of Benin and Yoruba origin agree with him in this regard. In my consideration, the generally accepted norm among theologians, and religious bigots is that God is Supreme Being who in His Infinite Grace administers over the earth is accepted by Christians, Muslims and all other monotheist religious adherents. Then, it becomes out of reason for any other claim outside this monotheist view to be accepted when such a claim establishes another might of creation, origin and existence. Thus, the claim that Oduduwa descended from sky with 401 deities is not only superfluous, but is in conflict with the already established belief contained in the

Bible, the Quran and all other religious books of history, which virtually control majority of the thinking of men including majority of the proponents of the Oduduwa mythology. The concept of claim-to-absolute-being of Oduduwa also further conflict, the rule of precedence which had established these other authorities long before the 12th century AD that Oduduwa is said to have descended from the sky. Moreover, the concept of migration from heaven is not acceptable to logical reasoning and is scientifically unprovable. It rebuffs pure knowledge and creates doubts in the idea of procreation as the basis for human growth. This claim is further punctured based on the circumstances surrounding the life and times of Oduduwa even from the facts submitted by the Ooni and his proponents. If Oduduwa was God, who descended from the heavens with 401 deities and immediately had eight children which he sent to administer different provinces in Yoruba kingdom, when did he had the eight children or where did they come from? Did he descend with them also from the heaven? if so, why did the Ooni not say so in his account? Another aspect to it is the claim that Oduduwa is the founder of the Yoruba race! Is the Ooni and others proposing that the Yoruba race was established in the 12th century, when Oduduwa did the said descending from the heaven? If the answer to this is in the negative, at what time did he descend from heaven, that he have eight children including Oranmiyan who were sent in the 12th century to govern the Yoruba race. And if the Yoruba race started from Oduduwa, what tribes did he rule over in Ife and his children in the other parts. If he had the children immediately after he descended, the children couldn't have automatically grown up to be men to become rulers over others. If the claim is true that Oduduwa is the founder of the Yoruba race, then the Benin's cannot request for a king from a kingdom that just started in the 12th century when they had long been in existence. How come nothing was even said of the mother of eight sons that fathered the Yoruba nation? At

least mention was made of Erinwinde the mother of Eweka the founder of the Benin dynasty. More critical is the question whether, Oduduwa as claimed is the founder of the Yoruba race alone or the entire human race? Many theories of creation abound everywhere, both in African beliefs, Christianity and Islam all have established sacrosanct views concerning the origin of man. These and many others are soul-searching questions for the proponents of Oduduwa's claim as the founder of Yoruba and the entire human race.

Some historians have argued that Oduduwa migrated from the East and settled at the present Ife to establish the Ife dynasty. This theory unlike the mythical theory proposed by the Ooni, which had existed for ages, does not support the claim that the Oduduwa is the founder of the Yoruba nation. Even Professor Ade Ajayi lends his support to this eastern theory of migration. Some other historians even specify Egypt as the point of migration. While this view can be criticized from the point of view that if Oduduwa migrated from the East or Egypt, why no trace of Eastern culture and tradition in the Yoruba culture and tradition in the Yorubas cultural beliefs and traditional values. Most especially when at that time the East was completely under the control of Islamic religion. There would have at least been traces of Islamic religion then in the Yoruba kingdom. Why we are not completely condemning this theory, we wish to draw a reflection between what ought to be if facts are as believed or what ought not to be if facts are disbelieved. It therefore behooves historians to make more researches and bring forth more convincing proofs within the ambits of proofs of historical facts, via oral tradition and archeological developments; to show that the Yorubas actually migrated from East.

Another theory of migration is the Benin origin concept of the personality of Oduduwa which the Oba had dropped, in his book-launch that incited the controversy. He posits that Ekaladerhan was

a Benin prince who was sentenced to death; but did not die because the Odiowan (public executioner) instructed to execute him left him off. Ekaladerhan wandered away and first settled in Ughoton from where he wandered much further until he came to Uhe(Ife), which was already inhabited by people. According to the Oba, he rendered magical assistance to the people of Ife and in return, they made him king. When his father the Ogiso-owodo died, there was an interregnum since no heir was immediately available to take over. The public executioner revealed that they had not actually killed Ekaladerhan and that he might still be alive. Subsequently, a search party went out in search for him. According to the Oba, this party after series of search later arrived at Uhe(Ife) where they met Ekaladerhan, then called Oduduwa. After several tests to confirm his identity, they invited him home to take over the throne of the Benin kingdom. But Ekaladerhan or Oduduwa was already comfortable as king in Ife and could not abandon the known for the unknown. He therefore sent his son Oranmiyan to Benin.

The position of the Oba of Benin is another historical approach to the origin and personality of Oduduwa or Ekaladerhan as against Ooni's mythical approach. The greatest poser to this concept is why is it relatively unpopular? Why is it restricted only to oral traditions within the Benin-Akure? Notwithstanding, the concept seems more acceptable of the three because of its exactitude and firmness to certain practical facts. For instance, the Oba continued, when Oranmiyan got to Benin, he found that he could not speak their language or understand their culture hence he left hurriedly but not after he had impregnated Eriwinde the daughter of the Enogie of Egor in Benin kingdom. According to him, Eriwinde later gave birth to Owomika(Eweka) who now established the present dynasty in Benin Kingdom.

The proponents against *the* claim have argued that, if Oduduwa was actually Ekaladerhan, why would he send his son to a people

What had declared his execution? What guarantee would he have been given that his son is safe in the hands of those who planned to murder him? On this, Ooni of Ife was clear; - *that Oranmiyan had no trace of Benin origin since Oduduwa was not a Benin man*. To further prove that Oranmiyan was an Ife prince, Ooni argued that all the succeeding Oba's after Oranmiyan were buried in Ife and not Benin and if it were true that Oduduwa was from Benin, why no trace of Benin culture in Ife as against the reverse- 'Yoruba language which was the official language in Benin till 1934'. But the Benin people argued that if Ekaladerhan or Oduduwa was not a Benin man, what historical link does the Benin have with Ife that would make them request for a ruler. More especially when in those days men lived by valour and conquest. Kingdoms would aspire to annex others, because it was a sign of might and supremacy. It becomes obnoxious that the proud Benin kingdom would succumb to a foreign rule outside their own blood. If there was a vacuum as a result of the death of Owode and no heir to take over from him, what would simply have been done was for another Benin man preferably direct brother to Owode to take over and not an outside prince. The argument goes further that the theory of Oranmiyan's ancestor belonging to Ife does not exist in Benin *and* that if it was so, no matter how suppressed, there would have been traces of the story of Ekaladerhan. They argued further that Jacob Egharevba may have been influenced by his partly Benin and partly Yoruba origin to have arrived at the conclusion he posited concerning Benin-Ife empires where he lent support to the Ooni's position.

That Jacob Egharevba's book is "only a short history of Benin" goes to show the inadequacy and lack of indepth knowledge of the research, which according to the Benin proponents can't be relied on. But since written records are the strongest means of actual historical proofs, besides the shortcomings already identified with the Ooni's position, one cannot completely denounce Egharevba.

The Yorubas argued that the reason that may have made the Benin send to Oduduwa to borrow them a ruler was the larger claim that the Benin's came from Ife. They asked further on why the Ekaladerhan story is not known to historians, nor is it even written in popular history books and only circulated among the Benin's alone. But Dr. Samuel Ogbemudia who had however said no said that the story is popular and widespread just like the Ife claim is widely known among the Yorubas.

It is my understanding that the culture and origin of the Benins belong to the people of Benin while that of the Yoruba's belongs to the Yoruba people and not to the Oba of Benin or the Ooni of Ife. These cultures created and recognized the stool of both kingdoms. The cultures established the occupants of those stools as the custodians of their histories and traditions. It is no duty of the culture of the Yoruba to authenticate the history of Benin and does the Benin owe a responsibility to approve what the Yoruba's should believe. Each custom relying on the known sources of historical knowledge can aspire to the highest limits of intellectual acquisition to determine its origin, scope and orientation. It is left to the determine its origin, scope and orientation. It is left to the independent observers to determine from the available premises, which facts can be relied on. The obvious is that a people reserve the right to decide their destiny on proving facts of history. When belief becomes common knowledge among people and is predominantly not contradicted by those supposed custodians of that belief thereby succeeding from generation to generation, such a belief has thus passed the test of oral tradition, which is the most ubiquitous source of historical knowledge. All other sources of history rely on oral tradition to survive. Whatever is written down is inspiration from oral tradition. If Jacob Egharevba contradicts the general belief of the Benin people on the personality and identity of Ekaladerhan, then he is wrong, because it is the voice of the people that is

supreme. Moreover, he is not a custodian of Benin history.

Whatever I have done here is not conclusive proof against the vast array of opinions swinging for or against the theory of emergence of Oduduwa either from Benin or Ife kingdom. As humans, we may appreciate issues from influence of favoritism and emotions in relation to concept of origin of tribes closest to our originality. These and very many other variables are the respectable yardsticks upon which I have attempted, very considerably, to base my references. I wish all God's guidance in accepting the facts as I have here-in represented.

Appendix I

A Brief Profile of The Oba of Benin

His Royal Majesty,

Omo N' Oba N'Edo,

Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwa(CFR)

Prince Solomon Igbinoghodua Aisiokuoba Akenzua, B. A. was born on June 22, 1923, the eldest of Prince G.E.B. Eweka. He was ten years old, when his father, Prince G.E.B. Eweka became Oba Akenzua II, in 1933. Amongst the schools he attended were Government Primary School Benin City (1929-1938), Edo College Benin City (1939-41), Government College Ibadan(1941-45),

Yaba Higher College, (now Yaba College of Technology), Lagos (1945-47) and King's College, University of Cambridge, England (1948-51), where he obtained a B.A. (Law) degree. He started out as an Assistant Administrative Officer, Nigerian Public Services (1952-54), then Administrative Secretary, Eastern Region Public Services, Enugu (1954), Acting Permanent Secretary in various Ministries, Eastern Region (1954-65), and became a Deputy Permanent Secretary, Federal Civil Service in (1965-68). He was appointed Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Health (1968-74), and in 1975 was the Commissioner for Finance, Bendel State. (Now Oba of Benin) was at various times, Prince Akenzua the Chairman of Tate and Lyle Sugar Company Limited and Gulf Oil Company (Now Chevron), Chairman, Board of Directors University of Lagos Teaching Hospital, Chairman, Board of Government University College Teaching Hospital Ibadan, Chairman, Board of Management, National Electric Power

Authority (NEPA) and Chancellor, University of Ibadan.

The Oba of Benin, or Omo N'Oba, is the oba or king of the Edo people or Benin Kingdom. Oba Erediauwa, the reigning Oba of Benin is a leader with a charming personality and background. Oba Erediauwa is the mature fruit of the seed his grandfather, Eweka II, planted and properly nurtured by his father Akenzua II. He as an Oba, is groomed and well-equipped, for Nigeria of the 80s and beyond! but steeped in the culture, norms and traditions of the old Benin Kingdom. The six-footer Oba was born in 1923, and he graduated with a B.A. (Tripos) in Law at Kings College, Cambridge, England. Prior to his ascension to the throne, he served in several top Federal (national) public service positions in different parts of Nigeria such as Lagos, Enugu, and Ahoada.

During the Nigerian civil war, the Oba in his capacity as Permanent Secretary (Political) participated in the 'Aburi' talks which was aimed at resolving the crisis. While he was a Crown Prince and Edaiken, he had gained administrative experience by working in the local government service, Oba Erediauwa, after the most qualitative education in England's prestigious Cambridge University as a historian, lawyer and administrator, worked and rose to the very top of both the Regional and Federal Civil Service. He knew, worked with, and advised all the Military heads of state, as well as the potential leaders that would eventually emerge with civilian government.

Oba Erediauwa was crowned on March 23, 1979, as the 38th Oba of Benin. Oba Erediauwa, like his father Oba Akenzua II, and his grandfather Oba Eweka II, ascended the throne of the Benin Kingdom in the throes of impending and profound political changes and re-orientation in Nigeria.

Oba Erediauwa's era has witnessed tremendous intellectual,

cultural, social, and economic growth. Dynamism is one of his chief asset because he has succeeded in maintaining and improving the role of the Edo monarchy in the face of massive modernization onslaughts from varied sources. His mother Iyoba ne ovbi Erua is alive and dwells in her palace at Lower Uselu. As a crowned prince, he was, Prince Solomon Aisiokhuoba Igbinoghodua Akenzua, but was crowned as Oba Erediauwa. It was as part of the rites of ascendancy to the revered Benin throne that he got the title "Erediauwa," interpreted to symbolically mean "one who has come to put the house or society in order."

The Omo N'Oba is seen as a quintessential icon of royalty and splendour. During the over 30 years of his charismatic reign, the Benin kingdom has remained unified, peaceful and has witnessed expansion. This is attributed to his large and stately personality and the handling of issues before him with a rarity of wisdom.

He modernized the palace courtyard and created many Enigie to help administer various parts of the kingdom. He remains one of the most respected African monarch. As author, his educational background helped bring to light the correct history of the Edo people and the ancient Benin Empire, one of Africa oldest kingdoms.

Courtesy: (i.) A Benin Coronation, Oba Erediauwa By Tam Fiofori

(ii) www.kingdomsofnigeria.com/kings/

(iii) The Nigerian Observer, March 23rd, 1979

Appendix II

A Brief Profile of The Ooni of Ife

His Royal Majesty,

ALAIYELUWA,

Oba Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II(CFR, D. Litt, JP).
Ooni of Ife.

Alayeluwa Oba Okunade Sijuwade was born on the 1st of January, 1930 to a great royal family in the Ogboru house, Ilare, Ile-Ife. The last Ooni of Ife that the Ogboru ruling house presented (before the incumbent) reigned in Ife for many years as **Sijuwade Adelekan Olubuse I**. He was the first Ooni to venture out of his domain. At the invitation of the colonial Governor he visited Lagos in 1903 to give his ruling on whether the Oba Elepe of Epe was entitled to wear a crown which was earlier refused by Oba Akarigbo of Remo. Oba Adelekan was the father of the late "Omo-Oba" **Adereti Sijuwade, the father of Oba Sijuwade Olubuse II**- the present Ooni of Ife. His mother was the late **Yeyelori, Emilia Ifasesin Sijuwade**.

Prince Okunade Sijuwade as he was then called, started his elementary education at Igbein school, Abeokuta, an institution owned by the CMS mission. He lived with his other brother under the care of their father's good friend Chief G. A. Adedayo and his family. Chief Adedayo was the secretary to the Egba council, under the Asoju Oba. After his elementary school education he proceeded to Abeokuta Grammar school, under the well-known educationist, The Rev. I. O. Ransome Kuti who was the principal of the school.

Early in life, Prince Okunade Sijuwade was conscious of his royal birth, and his carriage, even in school, was of one who was

destined to wear the crown.

Once, at Abeokuta Grammar school, the Reverend Ransome Kuti wanted to flog the young Sijuwade for some misdemeanour. As the principal raised his whip, the young prince dared the famous disciplinarian to hit a 'king'.

This did not of course stop Reverend Kuti from meting out what he considered appropriate punishment to the erring young man who was nonetheless satisfied that he has made his point. He left Abeokuta Grammar school after five years and got transferred to Oduduwa college in Ile-Ife to complete his studies under the Reverend S. A. Adeyefa. On his first day at school, mistaken for one of the new teachers and in no hurry to correct the impression, young Sijuwade took over the class in which he was supposed to be a student. In spite of his royal posturing and youthful pranks, Prince Sijuwade is remembered by many of his classmates as a particularly diligent student and quite mature for his age. Because of his relative access to money the prince was able to acquire many good things of life, especially clothes. He was a trend setter in school. He was one of the few students in Oduduwa college, who were familiar with the life in Lagos at that time, which today is the centre of the good life in Nigeria.

On leaving Oduduwa College, the young prince joined his father's business for about three years after which the elder Sijuwade, convinced that his son had acquired sufficient on-the-job training, decided he should proceed for a course of study overseas. Before he left however, the young man on his own volition decided he needed to have journalistic training.

He joined *The Nigerian Tribune* where he spent two years, first as a reporter and later as a sales executive. Thereafter, he proceeded to the United Kingdom in the early fifties to undertake a course of training in **Business Management**.

s training was essentially in Northampton and with the Leventis group in Manchester in 1957. He also participated in **advanced business management training programmes** with companies in *Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Scotland, West Germany and Israel*. Armed with the immense experience he acquired in these places he returned to Nigeria a few years later to a lunch a career in business.

Prince Sijuwade's business career was marked by more than average fortune. Endowed with an agile mind, highly motivated and possessed of an iron-will, courage and prodigious industry, the prince was certainly destined for success. And so he drove himself to extreme limits that would seriously test all but the most dogged. Early in his career, he decided he could do with no more than four hours sleep and that distance would prevent him from accomplishing his goals. Even today, with the enormous demand on his time in several places, some of them several miles apart he maintains a travelling schedule that even the most peripatetic would consider punitive.

Shortly after Prince Sijuwade returned to Nigeria, he was appointed the Sales Manager of Leventis Motors in Western Nigeria with its headquarters in Ibadan. By 1960, with Nigerian Independence, he became an adviser to the Leventis Group

In 1963, the government of Western Nigeria, now getting increasingly involved in a lot of industrial activities in the country approached the Leventis Group to release the Prince for five years to help in the re-organisation of some of their companies. The request was reluctantly granted after months of hard negotiation by the then Chairman of the Leventis Group, Chief A. G. Leventis who considered the young Prince Sijuwade, an asset to their organization. The Leventis Group made the Western Nigeria Government promise to let the Prince return to his organization at the end of assignment.

investment but a contribution to the development of the University and his home town.

It was the same thinking that inspired his decision to build a first class motel for V.I.P. visitors to Ife, the Motel Royal. This also turned to be a far-sighted decision because at his coronation a few years later, when the town played host to thousands of guests, the accommodation problem was not nearly as chaotic as it might have been.

Urbane, relaxed and self confident, Prince Sijuwade had a wealth of experience from which to draw and was at home in boardrooms both in Nigeria and in leading capitals all over the world. He had a large international circle of friends, contacts and business associates. Through them, he learnt to be dispassionate, well informed and judicious, precisely the qualities required of a traditional ruler in a pluralistic society like ours.

As a businessman, Prince Sijuwade maintained a diverse social, political, ethnic and ideological group of friends in Nigeria and abroad. He genuinely enjoys playing host and is equally at home in small groups as in large gatherings. He enjoys traveling and has visited most countries of the world.

He relaxes by swimming, horse-riding, playing table-tennis and having intellectual discussions with small groups.

The career of Oba Sijuwade can be divided conveniently into two parts: the first was as a dashing young Prince and the other began in 1980, when he ascended the throne of the "Holy City of the Yoruba" to borrow Leo Frobenius' apt description of Ife.

These two segments of life are not separate or apart. Indeed one fertilized the other. His training and experience as a Prince serves him today well in the great task of reigning in a society that is being increasingly modernized while at the same time, he maintains the prime position of Arole Oduduwa, the Keeper of the seal of Yoruba.

Since he ascended the throne, Oba Sjuwade has been a worthy ambassador-at-large for Nigeria and a symbol of pride for the Yoruba.

But the life of great men is not immune from the vagaries of mortal existence. There have been various experiences in the life of Oba Sjuwade that have been trying. Although he has borne them with great courage they have no doubt made an indelible mark in his life.

A major force in the life of Oba Sjuwade was the beloved Yeyeluwa of Ife, Olori Oyetunde Sjuwade- a remarkable woman, always cheerful and hospitable. She for many years of blissful relationship, provided a stable and enviable matrimonial haven. Thus when she answered the celestial call in August 1986 it was a major blow.

His Imperial Majesty bore that adversity with dignity and composure in keeping with agelong Yoruba tradition that the Oba never mourns. He was in fact the one who consoled and pacified mourners.

Appendix III

A Brief profile of The Oba Of Lagos

HRH Oba Rilwan Babatunde Osuolale Aremu Akiolu I

Also Known as Eleko of Eko. Born and reared in Isale-Eko, the haven of Lagos indigenes, Rili, as he is popularly called in his younger days, is a philanthropist. Unknown to many, he is a benevolent father-figure to several indigent Isale-Eko students by helping them to realize their educational ambitions. This stems from his deep-rooted belief that Isale-Eko indigenes, like others from other parts of the metropolis, must endeavour to acquire higher education to give them leverage to take their rightful positions in the scheme of things both at the State and Federal levels. In various addresses, he also advised that they should take a cue from him, that in spite of his busy schedule as a senior police officer, he still spared sometime to read Law, was called to the Nigerian Bar and partly practised Law in Lagos before his ascension to the throne.

Oba Akiolu's first anniversary on-the-throne gift to his immediate constituency, Isale-Eko, is the establishment of the Lagos Royal House Continuing Education Centre at Ita-Ono, a stone-throw from his palace. The centre, which is funded personally by the monarch, runs remedial courses for students in the neighbourhood.

In further pursuit of higher education for students of Isale-Eko extraction, he has also pledged an annual donation to the coffers of an association which operates a scholarship scheme for indigent Isale-Eko students. The body is headed by a retired judge, Justice Ishola Oluwa.

The Oba's assistance programmes to those seeking employment opportunities encouragement of skills acquisition through vocational training with a view to making such trainees self-employed are still on course. More than 300 peoples have so far benefited from such magnanimity.

Also uppermost in the Oba's mind is the provision of a Modern town hall for Lagos to be sited at Enu-Owa, a cultural and spiritual centre on the Island. A committee of eminent Lagosians is being set up to handle the project. So also is another committee on the expansion and further beautification of the existing Iga Idunganran, the official palace and residence of Oba of Lagos. This is thus a clarion call to all rich Lagosians and other philanthropists to contribute generously towards these worthy causes. May his reign continue to be peaceful, prosperous and long.

One significant event to mark his first anniversary is the creation of two new honorary chieftaincy titles which the Oba conferred on two prominent citizens of Lagos.

One of the recipients, Chief Theophilous Owolabi Shobowale-Benson, Baba Oba of Lagos, is a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), He has been deeply involved in the politics of Lagos since his re-turn to Nigeria to practise Law, in 1947.

Now in his late eighties, TOS Benson, as he is popularly called, was a Councillor for many years in the defunct Lagos own Council, the predecessor of the present Lagos Island Local Government. Also he was a member of the defunct Western House of Assembly in Ibadan and the House of Representatives, Lagos. At independence in 1960, he was Nigeria's first Federal Minister of Information.

Extracts From G.K. Dosunmu - June 11, 2004

Appendix IV

List of Benin Monarchs

No.	Title	Family
1.	Eweka 1	About 1200 - 1235AD 33 years
2.	Uwakhuanhen	About 1235 - 1243 AD 8 years
3.	Ehenmihen	About 1243 - 1255AD 12 years
4.	Ewedo	About 1255 - 1280AD 25 years
5.	Oguola	About 1280 - 1295AD 15 years
6.	Edoni	About 1295 - 1299AD 4 years
7.	Udagbedo	About 1299 - 1345AD 46 years
8.	Ohen	About 1334 - 1370AD 32 years
9.	Egbeka	About 1370 - 1400AD 30 years
10.	Orobiru	About 1400 - 1430AD 30 years
11.	Uwaifiokun	About 1430 - 1440AD 10 years
12.	Ewuare The Great	About 1440 - 1473AD 8 years
13.	Ezoti	(Reigned for 14 yays)
14.	Olua	About 1473 - 1480AD 7 years
15.	Ozolua	About 1481 - 1504AD 23 years
16.	Esigie	About 1504 - 1550AD 46 years
17.	Orhogbua	About 1550 - 1578AD 28 years
18.	Ehengbuda	About 1578 - 1606AD 28 years
19.	Ohuan	About 1606 - 1641AD 35 years
20.	Ahenzae	About 1641 - 1661AD 24 years
21.	Akenzae	About 1661 - 1669AD 8 years
22.	Akengboi	About 1669 - 1675AD 6 years
23.	Ahenkpaye	About 1675 - 1684AD 9 years
24.	Akengbedo	About 1684 - 1689AD 5 years
25.	Oroghe	About 1689 - 1700AD 11 years
26.	Ewuakpe	About 1700 - 1712AD 12 years
27.	Ozuere	About 1712 - 1713AD 1 year

28.	Akenzua I	About 1713 - 1735AD 22 years
29.	Eresoyen	About 1735 - 1750AD 15 years
30.	Akengbuda	About 1750 - 1804AD 54 years
31.	Obanosa	About 1804 - 1816AD 12 years
32.	Oghebo	About 1816 - 1816AD (Reigned for 8 months)
33.	Osemwede	About 1816 - 1848AD 32 years
34.	Adolo	About 1848 - 1888AD 40 years
35.	Ovonramwen N' Ogbaisi	About 1888 - 1914AD 26 years
36.	Eweka II	About 1914 - 1933AD 19 years
37.	Akenzua II	About 1933 - 1978AD 45 years
38.	Erediauwa	23 rd Mar. 1979AD to Present

Courtesy: Benin Cultural Heritage, Benin City.

Appendix V

List of Ife Monarchs

No.	Title	Family
1.	Oduduwa	First Ooni and founder of Yoruba race
2.	Osangangan Obamakin	Son of Oduduwa
3.	Ogun	Eldest Son of Oduduwa
4.	Obalufon Ogbogbodinn	Son of Obalufon Ogbogbodinn
5.	Obalufon Alayemore	Son of Obalufon Ogbogbodinn
6.	Oranmiyan	Youngest son of Oduduwa
7.	Aiyetise	Son of Oduduwa & father of Lajamisan
8.	Lajamisan	Son of Aiyetise
9.	Lajodogun	Son of Lajamisan
10.	Lafogido	Son of Lajamisan
11.	Odidimode-Rogbese	Descendant of Lajodogun
12.	Awaorokolokin	Son of Lajamisan
13.	Ekun	Son of Lajamisan
14.	Ajimuda	Descendant of Lajodogun
15.	Gboo-Nijio	Descendant of Lajodogun
16.	Okanlajosin	Descendant of Lajodogun
17.	Adegbalu	Descendant of Lajodogun
18.	Osinkola	Descendant of Lajodogun
19.	Ogbaru	Descendant of Lajodogun
20.	Giasi	Descendant of Lajodogun
21.	Luwo(Female)	Descendant of Lajodogun
22.	Lumobi	Descendant of Lajodogun
23.	Agbedegbede	Descendant of Lajodogun
24.	Ojee-Lokunbinnin	Descendant of Lajodogun
25.	Lagunja	Descendant of Lajodogun

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------------|
| 26. | Larunka | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 27. | Ademiluyi | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 28. | Omogbogbo | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 29. | Ama-Oorun | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 30. | Adejile | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 31. | Olojo | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 32. | Okiti | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 33. | Lugbade | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 34. | Aribiwoso | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 35. | Osinlade | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 36. | Adagba | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 37. | Ojigidiri | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 38. | Akinmoyero(1770-1800) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 39. | Gbanlare (1800-1823) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 40. | Gbegbaaje(1823-1835) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 41. | Wunmanije(1835-1839) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 42. | Adegunle Abewela (1839-1849) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 43. | Degbinsokun(1849-1878) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 44. | Orayigba(1878-1880) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 45. | Derin Ologbenla (1880-1894) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 46. | Adelekan (Olubuse) (1894-1910) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 47. | Adekola (1910-1910) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 48. | Ademiluyi (Ajagun) (1910-1930) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 49. | Adesoji Aderemi (1930-1980) | Descendant of Lajodogun |
| 50. | Okunade Sijuade (Olubuse II)(1980-tilldate) | Descendant of Lajodogun |

Courtesy: (i) National Museum, Ile-Ife Archives

(ii) www.theooni.org/pastoonis

Appendix VI

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By **Omo N'Oba Erediauwa**
2. *A Short History Of Benin,* By **Jacob U. Egharevba**
3. *Memoir Of A Jewel,* By **Chief (Mrs) H.I.D. Awolowo**
4. *Essay on Older Ife,* By **T.O. George, 1930**
5. *Years Of Challenge,* (Heinemann Publisher, Ibadan
1991); By **S.O. Ogbemudia**
6. *A Preliminary History Of The Edoid Complex Of
Cultures';* By **Prof. Peter Ekeh, State University of
New York**
7. *A History of the Yorubas,* By **Samuel Johnson,** Written in
1897, published in 1960.
8. *History of Lagos;* By **J.B.O. Lois**
9. *Culture and Society in Yoruba land;* By **Kunle Lawal**
10. *The kingdom of Yoruba;* By **Robert Smith, 3rd
edition, University of Wiscosin Press.**
11. *The Igbo Origin of Egba Yoruba;*
By **Ishaq Al-Suleiman**
12. *The Sociology of the Yoruba;* By **Dr. Fadipe N.A.**
13. *Flashes of Ideas and Reflections;*
By **Molabi Adio Moses**
14. *Ife the Genesis of Yoruba Race;*
By **Chief(Dr) M.A. Feabunmi**
15. *Sources of Yoruba History;* By **Prof. Biobaku**
16. *Biography of Oba Oyebade Lipede, The Alake of
Abeokuta;* By **Prince Ladigbolu**

17. *Biography: Oba Adesoji Aderemi;*
By Dr. Toso Eluyemi
18. *The Birth of a Dreãm;* **By Chief Bisi Omidiora**
19. *The Story of Nigeria Micheal Crowder;*
(Favour and Favour, London Boston)
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21. *Some facts About Great Benin (1979) and the Benin Monarchs and their period of reign;*
A Publication of Oba's Palace.
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December 2003, Page 8.
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Newswatch Magazine March 25, 1991. Page 31.
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By J.F. Ade Ajayi and Ade Obayemi
29. *The Growth of Africa Civilization. A history of West African 1000-1800AD,* **By Prof. J.F. Ade-Ajayi**
30. *History of the Yorubas,* **By Rev. S. John,** published in 1922
31. *The Oyo Obas Palaver",* **By Daily Times,** Sept 17, 1989 Page 7
32. *Oyo Empire, In The 18th Century A Reassessment,*
The Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria,
Dec. 1966

33. *"The Ooni and Alafin Imbroglia"*,
By **National Concord** Tuesday, April 19, 1991
34. *A thousand years of West African History*,
By **A.A.B. Aderibigbe**
35. *Ekaladerhan (Unpublished by June 2004)*,
By **Edun Akenzua**
36. *Ife-Benin Studies*, By **John Afonso D' Aveiro**
37. *Benin in World History*, By **C.O. Ugowe**,
Published in 1997
38. *Benin: The Traumatic Situation*, by **Prince Edun Akenzua**,
The Guardian on Sunday February 9, 1997
39. *This Day Newspaper*, May 9, 1999
40. *The Ancient Nubian(Noba) Meroe Civilization*;
By **Basil Davidson**
41. *The 1984 Awujaje Anniversary Ceremonial Brochure*
42. *The Yoruba Culture*; By **Pa Adewale Thompson**
43. *The History of the Ancient Benin Kingdom and Empire*,
By **Chief D.N. Oronsaye**
(published 1995, printed by Jeromelaiho)
44. *Succession Crisis And The Founding of The Present
Eweka Dynasty in Benin*, By **Nowanmagbe A. Omoigui.**
45. *History Notes on the Yoruba Country and its Tribes*;
By **J.O. George** (1895)
46. *Adventures of Missionary Labour*,
By **T.J. Bowen**(1857)
47. *Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century*;
By **J. F. Ade Ajayi & Robert Smith**
48. *Benin in world History* (1997) by **C. O. Ugowe**
49. *The Benin Monarchy, A study in Institutional Adaptation to
charge by : Victor Osaro Edo, Ph.D.*
(*A Doctoral Thesis at the University of Ibadan*)

Appendix VII

Suggested Books For Further Reading

1. Clapperton, H: *Journal of Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa.*
2. Hinderer, Anna: *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country*
3. Lauder, R & J: *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger, London, 1932.*
4. Akinjogbin, I.A. (ed.) *War and Peace in Yorubaland.*
5. Akintoye, S.A., *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland*
6. Atanda, J.A. *An introduction to Yoruba History*
7. Biobaku, S.O., *The Egba & Their Neighbours*
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14. Llyod, P.C., *The Political Development of Yoruba Kingdoms in the 18th & 19th Centuries.*
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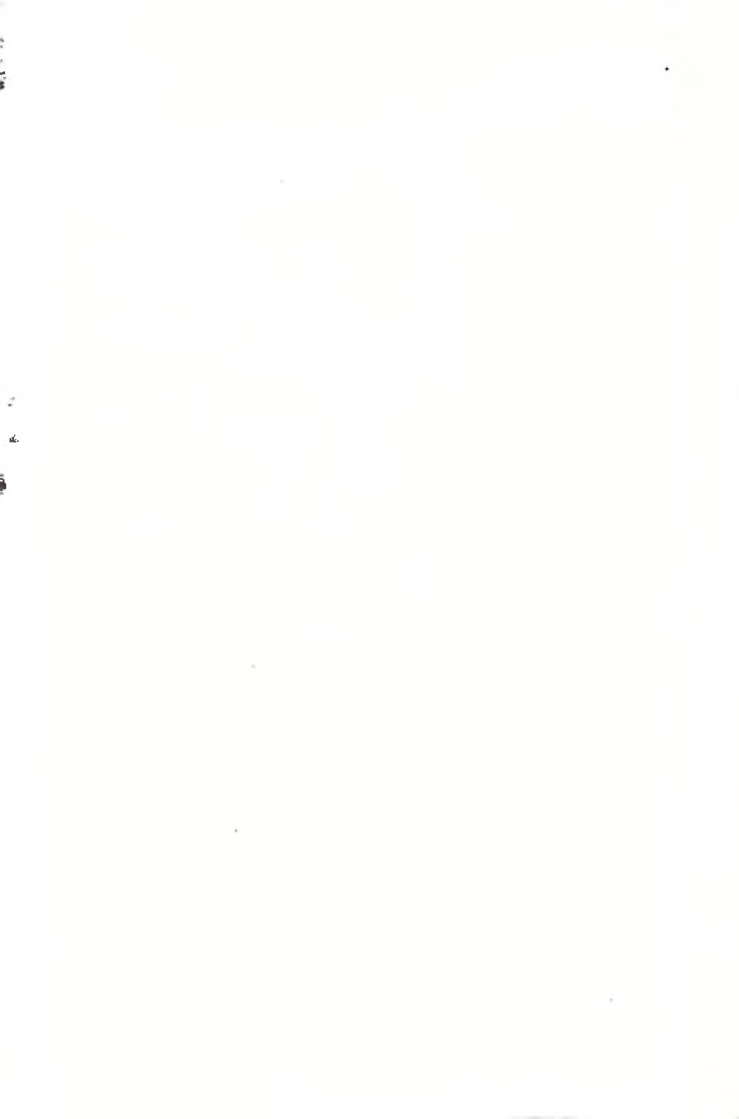
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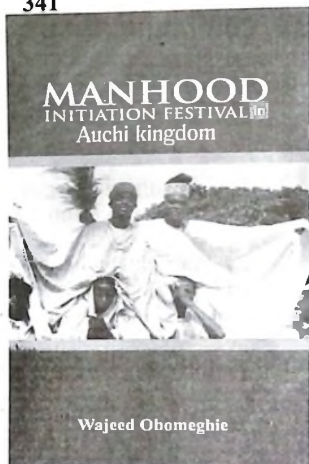
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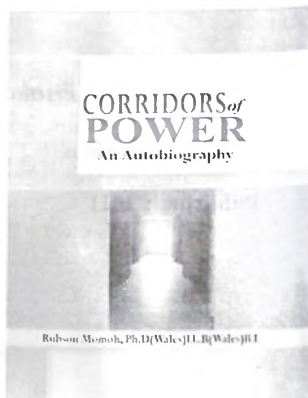
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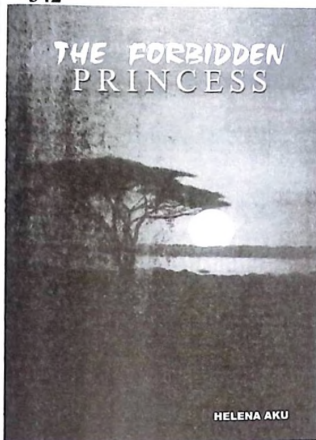
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Unleash Your Inspiration

An Anthology Of Highly Motivational Mythologies & Poems

Wajeed Obomeghie

Unleash your Inspiration

By: Wajeed Obomeghie

Published: 2011

Analysis of Electric Circuits

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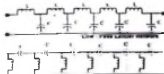
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RICH G. AKUSU

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Rich G. Akusu

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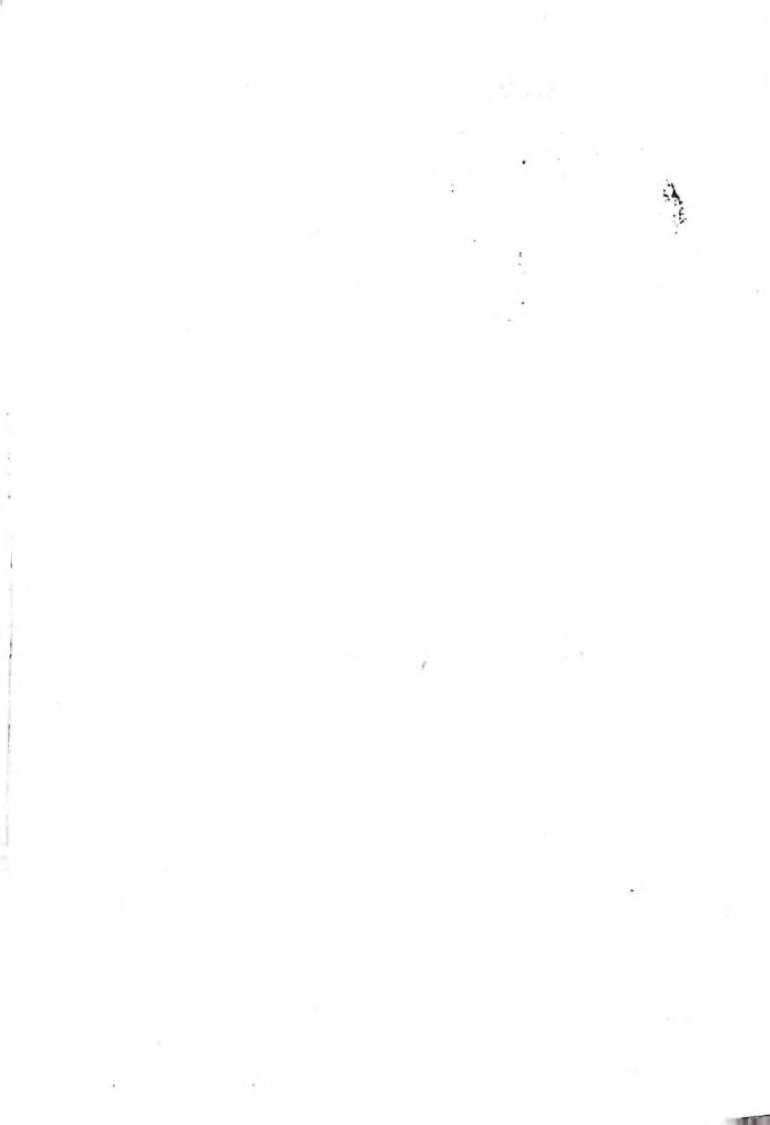
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A confirmed bibliophile, voracious reader, prolific writer and high socio-networker. He loves cycling, plays tennis and squash.

What Contributors Said In This Book

"The mistake that modern historians (including Yoruba) made, as I have found from my own studies, is that they confuse Oduduwa with Oranmila, the bringer of Ifa divination".

--- Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Oba Erediauwa

"The Oba of Benin should go and read what his fore-fathers told Portuguese explorers during their visit to Benin on 2nd July 1550 AD about the relationship between Ife and Benin. So it is too late for Omo N'Oba to rewrite our history".

---Ooni of Ife, Oba Sijuwade

"Benin, for me, is nothing less than an archeologist's paradise. I remain convinced that there are richer veins of heritage beneath the surface of her soil than in most of the major cities of this nation. Again a small minus, unlike the city of Ile-Ife, Benin may not be the cradle of the black race, or indeed of humanity but, yet again, I invite you to take consolation in the fact that her history is a paradigm of creativity and cultural validation at its most robust, a crucial arc in the very trajectory of civilizations".

---The Nobel Laureat Prof. Wole Soyinka

Ganiyu Adams has offered his opinion as an "expert"; soon mechanics, battery chargers, and even fashion designers, with access to the media, may also tell us what they think of the historical relationship between the Yoruba and the Bini. I wouldn't be surprised if a group of prostitutes from Benin city also add their voice to it.

--- Dr. Reuben Abati

"This is an advice and a clear warning to all, that we will never accept further, any attack or derogatory words on the personality of the Oba of Benin over the matter. As a matter of fact, the issue a historical knowledge and enlightenment cannot translate to controversy".

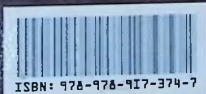
--- Chief Nosakhare Isekhure JP

"...the first Oba of Lagos came from Benin. He is a Prince of Benin"

--- HRH Rilwan Akiolu, Oba of Lagos

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CHAPTER I

Origins

THE origin of the people we now call Yoruba who inhabit the greater part of Western Nigeria is still obscure. Many learned theories have been advanced and they in part corroborate indigenous traditions.

It is safe [says Herman-Hodge¹] at any rate to say that whatever of the various suppositions and deductions is true of the Yoruba is equally true of the Busawa, that they both probably came from Arabia (having migrated perhaps from North Africa) and that religious troubles were responsible for their flight across Africa. Perhaps they belong to the same immigration as that which flowed into Kano in the tenth century, the result of troubles in North Africa.

This cautious statement links the Yoruba with kindred peoples of the Sudan and is indicative of the general migration southwards which diffused the culture of Moslem North Africa among the peoples to the south.

The Yoruba probably came into the territory which is now Nigeria in the region of Nupe, whence they crossed the Niger and went southwards in search of a suitable settlement. They chose Ile-Ife where, according to tradition, they encountered no opposition from the aborigines. They

made Ile-Ife their capital, developed a certain culture² there and became adepts in the making of pottery and iron-work. Ogun, the god of iron and war, was one of the earliest in the pantheon.³

Ile-Ife was later idealized; it became their Holy City and the revered cradle of their civilization. They probably remained under a single leadership at Ile-Ife until they had consolidated their power sufficiently to undertake the conquest of their neighbours. The general drive was towards the south, although a counter-migration back to the north resulted in the foundation of Old Oyo. When the Yoruba fanned out from Ile-Ife, they left principalities in their wake as they

¹ H. R. Herman-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, pp. 116-17.

² The artistic side of the culture is reflected in the famous terra-cottas and bronze heads which have been found at Ile-Ife.

³ P. Amaury Talbot, *People of Southern Nigeria*, i, 20.

drove towards the sea. This region was probably then occupied by the Fon or Egun people who were either absorbed or expelled as the Yoruba in various waves, and in different directions, penetrated the tropical forest. Some of those who fled before the Yoruba eventually regrouped at Tado, whence they began a counter-migration which finally led to the rise of Dahomey. Yoruba kingdoms were, however, established in the Fon country at Sabe, Ketu, and other places. The most important Yoruba kingdom and one which, in varying degrees, exercised an imperial suzerainty over the rest was the Oyo kingdom, whose people were the Yoruba eponymous.

The Rev. Samuel Johnson,¹ the historian of the Yoruba, described an empire that, at the height of its power in the eighteenth century, stretched from the land to the west of the Niger to the frontiers of the Ga of the Gold Coast. Within this empire were subjected the Popo and the Dahomi. At its capital, Old Oyo or Katunga, the *Alafin* (King) established an elaborate and semi-oriental court of priests, officials, and eunuchs. The *Esho* (a praetorian guard) constituted the flower of his armies. In the metropolis, the *Oyomesi* (the nobility) shared supreme power with the king, and in the provinces, into which the towns which formed the core of the empire had been grouped for administrative purposes, dependent kings ruled under the protection of the Alafin. *Ilari* or intendents were sent to the remoter parts of the empire to supervise the local administrations of the *Bale* or headmen or lesser kings and to collect tribute for the Alafin. Moreover, powerful kingdoms such as Abomey² paid tribute to the Alafin in order to safeguard their frontiers. When Commander Clapperton³ visited Old Oyo in 1825 the empire was already in decline; yet he journeyed for one month and sixteen days from Badagry on the coast to Old Oyo through a country whose chiefs owed allegiance to the Alafin of Oyo.

The Yoruba dotted the tropical forest belt with towns and hamlets. A bold hunter usually led the way and when a suitable site was struck, he founded a town. He might go back to Ile-Ife for the symbol of authority, which was a beaded crown. Such a forest of towns in clearings, each with its *Oba* or king, was the Egba Forest, Igbo Egba. Its boundary is traditional and modern attempts to define it more

¹ S. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, pp. 15-16.

² The kingdom of Abomey (Dahomey) began to pay tribute to Oyo c. 1747 in the reign of the Dahomian King Tegbesun.

³ Commander Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa*, chap. 1.

external foe. The return to the *status quo* after Lishabi's death meant a return to town rivalries and jealousies, and the ineffectiveness of the old federal authority, which was neither clearly defined nor able to assert itself. The Egba had had a taste of fighting and, although they did not relish it, they were not loath to resort to it in defence of the rights of their towns. We must assume that many inter-town affrays followed the removal of Lishabi's strong hand. Four have been recorded and they were known as 'civil wars'. The first (*Ija Ogedepagbo*) concerned Itoku and Igbein towns and seems to have started with an attempt to run a salt blockade which Igbein had imposed or to violate its monopoly. When both parties to the dispute threatened to involve all the other Egba Alake towns in a general war, the case was referred to Ake, where the blockade runner or smuggler (*Ogedepagbo* of Itoku) was condemned to death and executed by the *Oro*.

The second outbreak of 'civil war' arose from a chieftaincy dispute in Ilugun in the Egba Oke-Ona province. Some Egba Alake towns tried to intervene but their overtures were rejected; they thereupon aided one of the parties to the dispute to expel his arrogant rival. We shall ignore the fourth 'civil war' because no one knew its cause. The third (*Ija Agbaje*), however, is very important because outside intervention was sought. Seven Egba Alake towns (Itoko, Erunwon, Ijeun, Itoku, Oba, Itesi, and Itori) formed a court at a central place, Kosofe market, and their combined *Parakoyi* dealt out such impartial justice there that the Alake's court, i.e. *Ile Ogboni Ake*, was completely ignored. When this rival federal court began to withhold the portion of its court fees which it formerly sent to the Alake Okikilu, he decided to suppress it. He invited Agbaje, a notable warrior of Ijanna¹ (Jena) in the Egbado country, who brought a large army into the Egba Forest to do so. The Egba raised a larger force and besieged the Alake at Ake; he fled to Kemta and sought reconciliation after Agbaje had been defeated at Itori. Okikilu died either by accident or design; he was the last Alake in the Egba Forest.

The 'civil wars' emphasized the weakness of the Egba federal constitution. The Alake was probably universally acknowledged as the supreme judicial authority, but there was no binding obligation to resort to his court and powerful individuals could ignore it altogether. There was the will to act collectively in settling inter-town disputes (as in the Ilugun civil war, when Egba Alake towns tried to

¹ Ijanna was an Oyo royalist stronghold.

intervene in an Oke-Ona dispute); but it did not bear fruit in a recognizable federal machinery. When some towns established a central *Parakoyi* court, their success tempted them towards separatism. When Alake Okikilu failed in his efforts to deal with the seceding towns, his office fell into abeyance. The other provincial *Obas* probably lost their influence at about the same time. A period of unfettered autonomy for the towns ensued. Their lack of cohesion and their mutual jealousies proved fatal to their existence as towns at the time of the upheaval which soon became general in the Yoruba country.

The Oyo empire was constantly harassed on its frontiers. It was obliged to adopt a kind of 'palatinate' system in order to meet this danger. The *Are-Ona-Kakanfo*, or imperial commander-in-chief, was usually appointed from a town in the area where hostile frontier pressure was greatest and it was his duty to defeat the enemy or perish in the attempt. The earliest Are faced the south-west whence the Dahomi came; those in the nineteenth century faced the north-east, the direction of the Fulani menace. Afonja of Ilorin, a descendant of the Oyo ruling house, was the Are at the beginning of the century. The story of how Afonja invited the Fulani to Ilorin in order to carve out for himself a separate principality and was finally hoist with his own petard when the Fulani took over Ilorin is well known.¹ The relevant point here is that by that action the Moslem Fulani and their Hausa forces obtained a lodgement in the Yoruba country which was fraught with grave consequences for the Yoruba.

There is little evidence to show that the Yoruba, including the Egba, felt the full impact of the transatlantic slave trade until the Niger slave-markets were closed to them by the establishment of the Fulani power at Ilorin. Previously, the Yoruba had been merchants and brokers who bought slaves supplied by the Hausa in the interior² and sold them to the Europeans at Porto Novo (Ajashé) on the Slave Coast.³ Lagos traders also bought slaves at Porto Novo, though they had a secondary source of supply in the Ijebu towns on the banks of the Lagos Lagoon.⁴ When the Niger-Oyo-Porto Novo route was disturbed by the Fulani action at Ilorin, Lagos traders naturally endeavoured to step up the supply of slaves from the Ijebu sources

¹ See S. J. Hogben, *The Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria* (1930), pp. 151-6.

² The exchange probably took place at Rabbah.

³ Captain John Adams, *Sketches taken during Ten Voyages to Africa, 1786-1800*, p. 80.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

understanding with the Dahomi which secured their western flank and so enabled them to concentrate on the northern menace from the direction of Ibadan. Their policy henceforth must have been to keep open their trade route to the coast and preserve their supremacy in the Egbado country. The key positions in this policy were Lagos, Badagry, and Otta: the Egba watched events in those places with keen interest.

During the short peace which followed the Owiwi War, the Egba considered their organizations. It was comparatively easy to deal with the *Ologun* or war chiefs; for they had developed an *esprit de corps* while fighting together in the defence of the town. They re-organized themselves under Shodeke as Balogun. Apati of Kemta was promoted to the office of Seriki vice Degeshi of Ijeun, who had died. Then Lumloye of Ilugun was appointed *Otun* or commander of the right wing, and Agbo of Gbagura the *Osi* or commander of the left wing of the Egba forces. The new high command was thus made representative of all the Egba¹ and so truly federal. Nevertheless, the old township *Ologun* remained; for several war chiefs had no federal titles. They took township *Ologun* titles and waited for vacancies in the federal high command. The all-Egba *Ologun* met at Shodeke's house and later the *Ile Ologun* Egba was erected nearby for their meetings.

The more interesting development constitutionally was the new civil authority. Shodeke had seen clearly that a civil constitution must be established as soon as the emergency which had given prominence to the *Ologun* was over. Dr. Irving² said of him:

of liberal ideas and acute foresight, he saw plainly that the war once ended such a people could not be governed by military law alone.

Losi, a descendant of an Alake in the Egba Forest, was chosen to be the head of the new civil authority, which was an attempt to organize an all-Egba *Ogboni*. A Grand Lodge (*Ile Ogboni* Egba) was built at Itoku and its officers were drawn from various townships: Losi of Ake was the Oluwo; Jege of Ijeun, the Apena; Lufoko of Igbore, the Lisa; other office-holders included Osho, the *Aruke* of Kemta, Luwoye of Itoku, Oshoko, Agboran of Itoko, and Adila of Erunwon. All these townships are in the Egba Alake section of Abeokuta,

¹ At this stage, the Owu were reckoned in military matters with the Gbagura. An Owu leader became the *Ekerin* after the Meko War in 1868.

² E. C. Irving, *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, iv (1853), pp. 125-37.

which shows that the civil authority did not include representatives of the other three sections. The idea of a federal *Ogboni* organization was new in the 1830's and it is probable that a start was being made in the Egba Alake section with a view to extending the organization to cover the others later. The experiment proved to be short-lived. Losi himself led the way; he founded an *Ogboni* house for Ake township and the other leaders followed his example in their own quarters, although it was hoped that the grand all-Egba *Ogboni* would not be disrupted. Each quarter thus had its own civil authorities, but they were all overshadowed by the *Ologun*.

Shodeke was the supreme ruler, though his primacy was once challenged. Deliyi, the Balogun of Ijemo, claimed precedence over Shodeke because he was the chief of the Ijemo, traditional owners of the site of Abeokuta, and he regarded Shodeke merely as the leader of the immigrants. Both sides prepared for a civil war, which was averted only by the tact of Tejuoso, the *Ifa* priest, who awarded the honours to Shodeke but fined him for risking the safety of the new settlement under his leadership in civil strife.¹ This incident emphasizes the importance of the township *Ologun*. An *Ologun* chief commanded a force which he raised himself from among his kinsmen and townfolk and which was swollen by his household or domestic slaves. The loyalty of such a force was his; he could dispose of the force as he chose in private forays or in the service of the Egba. In theory, all able-bodied males were liable for war service, but enlistments were in the forces of the great *Ologun* of one's township. Each had its Balogun, Otun, Osi, &c., and its own contingents. Although there was a federal *Ologun* hierarchy the choice of the commander-in-chief for any given expedition was arbitrary. The *Ifa* oracle chose the bearer of the *Opagun* (war staff) and all had to serve under him irrespective of personal rank.

In 1834 Abeokuta was again infested by robbers led by Dado, a chief of Igan in Egbado, and by Ibadan marauders. Between them they raided and laid waste the north-western farm-lands. A system of night and day watch having proved inadequate, Shodeke sent Agana, a chief of Igbein, with a sufficient force to capture or kill Dado. Agana pursued Dado into the Egbado country, sacked many towns there and returned to Abeokuta with many slaves² and to the relief of the Egba.

¹ The spot on which the two 'armies' camped was declared defiled and later made a market called *Shapon*.

² Persons captured in campaigns were termed 'slaves' to be ransomed by their

Abeokuta. He was accompanied by two Sierra Leonians, Andrew Wilhem and John M'Cormack, who acted as interpreters. They arrived at Abeokuta on 4 January 1843, a few days after Freeman had returned to Badagry. Shodeke and his people accorded Townsend a festive welcome and their wonder knew no bounds at seeing their first pure white man.¹ This visit was only exploratory, however, and Townsend soon returned to Badagry and Sierra Leone *en route* for England and ordination; he left Andrew Wilhem at Abeokuta to prepare the ground for the permanent mission.

When Townsend arrived at Badagry in 1844 on his return from England he found the route to Abeokuta blocked by renewed activities in the Egba camp outside Ado. The Dahomi had attempted to relieve Ado on the grounds that Ado was tributary to Porto Novo (Ajashe), a friendly power. Ghezo, their king, led the relieving force in person but he underestimated the enemy. The Egba, led by Ayikundu, the Balogun of Igbein, gave battle at Imojulu and drove the Dahomi back. Ghezo, who narrowly escaped capture, abandoned his 'umbrella, war charms and stool' in flight. The Egba took these trophies to Abeokuta and the Dahomi often gave their determination to regain them as the reason for their later and persistent efforts to destroy Abeokuta. After driving back the Dahomi the Egba continued their siege of Ado and harassed the enemy a little more actively. So Townsend and his party judged it unwise to proceed to Abeokuta without obtaining a safe-conduct from the authorities there. While negotiating for this, Townsend set up a mission at Badagry.

Shodeke died in 1845 and the constitutional issues raised after his death protracted Townsend's negotiations with the Egba. Shodeke was clearly a leader of the highest calibre. He was both brave and tactful. Amenable to new ideas, he welcomed the advent of Christianity and European influence. He applied the necessary restraint upon the *Ologun* without which they would have endangered the new settlement by dissipating their energies in slave-raiding. Shodeke's paramountcy had, however, lacked traditional sanction; it had depended upon his personality.

Apati, the Seriki, expected to succeed to the vacant office of Balogun of the Egba because he had been next in rank and power to Shodeke. However, Ayikundu, the Balogun of Igbein, was chosen instead in conformity with the traditional practice whereby the

¹ T. B. Freeman was a mulatto.

Igbein people supplied the supreme commander of the Egba armies. This practice dated from Lishabi's time; but since the dispersal from the Egba Forest, township affiliations had been ignored in the choice of federal *Ologun*. Shodeke of Iporo had held the office which normally belonged to Igbein and his right to supremacy had been challenged only by Deliyi, an Ijemo chief.¹ In the more settled state of affairs in 1845, the Igbein people were not prepared to surrender their traditional privilege to a Kemta chief. Moreover, Apati was a chief of servile origin.² He, however, so vigorously asserted his right to succeed Shodeke that the people relented and Ayikundu offered to stand down in his favour. A better compromise was eventually devised: Igbein kept the title to which it was traditionally entitled and Apati imported a higher rank which satisfied his pride. He purchased the Oyo imperial title of *Bashorun* from Oluyole, its holder at Ibadan; the fact that Oluyole granted it was a further recognition of the Egba as an emergent power. At about the same time, Anoba of Ago-Ika in Gbagura purchased a similar title, *Are-Ona-Kakanfo*, from Kurunmi, its holder at Ijaiye. Both titles were personal to their holders and were in their gift; their introduction into the Egba state was a concession to over-mightiness, and the innovation encouraged extra-constitutional actions on the part of powerful *Ologun* whose pretensions were not recognized within the framework of the Egba traditional constitution.

Neither Apati nor Ayikundu was able to succeed to Shodeke's prestige and commanding position among the Egba. The civil authorities regained some influence. So Townsend had to negotiate his safe conduct with the leaders of the *Ologun* and of the *Ogboni*. He, therefore, wrote from Badagry to Apati, the Bashorun, and Okukenu, the *Sagbua* of Ake, who was recognized as the head of the Egba *Ogboni*. In addition, Townsend wrote to Ogubonna, the Balogun of Ikija, an influential and well-disposed *Ologun*.

Events at Lagos in 1845 split the Egba leaders into two opposing sides and so further delayed the admission of Townsend and his mission. Akitoye, the King, had recalled all exiles including his ambitious nephew, Kosoko, when he ascended the throne in 1841. Kosoko had lived in Porto Novo and Whydah where he became acquainted with Portuguese slave dealers. So when, in 1845, Akitoye

¹ See p. 22 *supra*.

² Apati's real name was believed to be Hunpati; his father was an Egun slave and his mother of Oyo descent.

King, or the real powers behind the apparent despot, to give up the slave trade. A first step would be a close blockade of Whydah. Then Ghezo should be warned not to attack Abeokuta, lest his coasts be blockaded; and the present ruler of Lagos should be coerced. Both actions in Dahomey and at Lagos were complementary and the immediate objective was the deliverance of Abeokuta from the Dahomian menace:

Lagos is another point; if the legitimate king could be seen and communicated with so as to make a treaty with him, for the suppression of the foreign slave trade and place him at Lagos his former seat of government, it would release Abeokuta from the jeopardy that they are continually in the fear of the King of Dahomey.¹

Forbes also reported to Commander Fenshaw, recommending concrete help to the Egba.

The Foreign Office endorsed Beecroft's views and actions. He was asked to transmit a letter to the King of Dahomey, warning him not to attack Abeokuta and the Admiralty was requested to endeavour to suppress the slave trade at Lagos and other ports between there and Quittah. Commander Fenshaw, after a conference with Beecroft, also warned the King of Dahomey in strong language and promised aid to the Egba if they required it. Beecroft warned the missionaries in Badagry of their danger.

The friends of the slave trade were, however, busy fomenting trouble at Abeokuta in 1850. Another persecution flared up against the Christian converts and the missionaries. It began in the Igbore township and the missionaries believed that it was organized by Akigbogun, 'the Pharaoh of Igbore', who was in league with Kosoko, then King of Lagos. The persecution was, however, spasmodic and ineffective. Its point of interest lay in that it illustrated the absence of a central executive authority at Abeokuta. Of this Townsend said

The government here is exceedingly weak; it is just as if all the German principalities and little kingdoms were brought together in one town each bringing their separate institutions and governments and acting but seldom in unison; therefore we have the strange sight of an active persecution in one part of the town which in another there is not even an attempt at such.²

A strong man was, however, coming to the fore in 1850. Apati, the

¹ F.O. 84/816, Beecroft to Palmerston, 22 July 1850.

² Townsend to Capt. Trotter (communicated to Palmerston), 10 Dec. 1850.

Bashorun, had died in 1849 and so the way was clear for Shomoye, a princely *Ologun*, to take up the mantle of Shodeke, which properly belonged to him. He was formally invested with the title of Bashorun on 1 March 1851.

Beecroft stopped at Badagry on his way to Abeokuta in January 1851. He found Akitoye, the ex-King of Lagos, there and noted that he had some following led by Mewu, an ex-chief of Porto Novo. Before Beecroft left for Abeokuta he addressed the chiefs of Badagry and urged them to protect Akitoye against the machinations of his nephew, Kosoko. Accompanied by Dr. Van Cooten of the Church Missionary Society, Beecroft left Badagry on 7 January 1851 and was enthusiastically received at Awoyade, nine miles from Abeokuta, on 10 January by missionaries and others, who escorted him to the town.

Beecroft was Townsend's guest at Abeokuta for twelve days and the missionaries were fully associated with all his activities there. He was surprised at the mass of houses and estimated the population at about 300,000. He was welcomed by the Sierra Leone immigrants and he took the opportunity to chide them for sinking into the morass of indigenous customs instead of setting loftier examples to their fellow countrymen. At a private meeting with Okukenu, the Sagbua, he learnt that Kosoko was the dreaded enemy whose agents corrupted the *Ologun* and at whose instigation the King of Dahomey unleashed the dogs of war upon his neighbours.

A public 'palaver' confirmed the same view. All the chiefs assembled in front of the Sagbua's house: about twenty *Ologun* and their followers sat to Beecroft's right; to his left sat the *Ogboni* and *Parakoyi* (described as 'commercial community'); and around stood spectators, including Sierra Leone immigrants. Beecroft (in full uniform, temperature 95°F.) was introduced to the assembly by Townsend. He denounced the slave trade and extolled the benefits of legitimate commerce. He spoke of his visit to Dahomey and of Kosoko's intrigues against the missionaries. The Egba spokesmen welcomed Beecroft to Abeokuta and said that they were encircled by Kosoko, the Ijebu, and the Dahomi. They were grateful to him for his visit to Dahomey.

Beecroft was wise enough to supplement the 'palaver' by individual personal contact with the leading *Ologun* of Abeokuta. Of five Egba Alake chiefs visited, three (including Shomoye and Shokenu) received Beecroft well; the others (Akigbogun of Igbore and Osho

approved Campbell's expulsion of Mewu from Badagry. Campbell explained that he believed that the King of Porto Novo, Alajogun, genuinely wanted Badagry as his palm-oil port and that Mewu had been warned in November 1853 by Rear-Admiral Bruce to keep the provisions of the anti-slave-trade treaty or be removed. Moreover, Campbell claimed that by his action he had dissolved the hostile coalition of Dahomey, Porto Novo, and Kosoko against Abeokuta and prevented a general relapse into slave-raiding.

The rift between missionary and consul touched the fundamentals of policy. The Consul (as well as the traders) favoured the diffusion of British influence throughout the area and was inclined to take trade necessities as his guide. The missionaries, on the other hand, would have no truck with notorious slaving chiefs and tended to look upon Abeokuta as the centre from which civilizing influences should radiate. Campbell exaggerated the missionary policy and was particularly galled that their political *aide*, Dr. Irving, R.N., was of the same mind as the missionaries and sought to win the support of the Navy for them. Campbell accused the missionaries of regarding the Egba alone as worthy of British support and claiming that the Egba ought to dominate all other peoples, especially those on the coast. To counteract this, Campbell visited Porto Novo in 1854, and at the King's suggestion concluded treaties with the chiefs of Ado and Oke-Odan, two towns on the slave route between Porto Novo and Badagry; and also with the chief of Agido, 'a rather large town some 10 miles from Badagry'. On his recommendation, William McKoskry, a trader, was appointed an unpaid Vice-Consul for Porto Novo and Badagry, two more centres of British influence.

Campbell's reports in 1854 gave evidence of preparations to revive the slave trade at Lagos; slave traders were returning to the island and landing tobacco, the chief article of exchange. Madam Tinubu dominated the scene and Campbell alleged that she acted as a 'middleman' between the slave dealers and the Egba vendors using the Oke-Odan route. She also dominated the weak-minded Dosunmu to Campbell's discomfiture; for he had always found it easier to deal with African despots than to manage a puppet king. Though Campbell represented the Egba as slave traders at heart, he was fair-minded enough to admit that Townsend was against the renegade chiefs and their activities. The perennial difficulty at Abeokuta was the absence of a strong central authority; in its place there was in 1854 a plethora of chiefs and authorities.

Townsend laboured to convert the Egba 'extraordinary republic'¹ into a kingdom by resuscitating the defunct title of the Alake and using it as a stabilizing influence. The Egba yielded to his friendly pressure and decided to imitate the English people by crowning a King whom they would serve.² The missionaries favoured the election of a strong King who could control the activities of the *Ologun* and lend executive support to the missionary programme of agricultural regeneration of the region. Their candidate was Ogubonna, but after he had planted the traditional shade trees which now stand before the *Afin* at Ake, Abeokuta, in anticipation of success, the Egba recalled the incident in which he had denied his Egba nationality and rejected him. The truth, however, was that the *Ologun* preferred to have a weak ruler and so defeated Townsend's real aim of ensuring their subordination. The Egba chose the Losi of Ake, but he died before general agreement could be reached. Okukenu, the Sagbua, was finally elected. All that happened in 1854, therefore, was that the Sagbua was transformed into the Alake without an appreciable increase in his authority.

Missionary prestige still stood high at Abeokuta and missionaries and Consul continued to co-operate, though uneasily. Shortly afterwards the drive for cotton cultivation helped them to sink their personal differences in Lagos and, for a time, strengthened their co-operation at Abeokuta.

¹ 'Abeokuta has four presidents. Each town has a Warafa or civil council of six, and on an average twenty Ogboni or magistrates. It has also according to its size, one, two, or three baloguns or military chiefs. Hence there are in office taking the towns at 140—840 principal rulers or a "House of Lords", 2,800 secondary civil chiefs or "House of Commons", 140 principal military chiefs and 280 secondary ones; and I hold this to be the most extraordinary republic in the world'—a remark of Forbes quoted in *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, vi (Oct. 1853), p. 237.

² F.O. 84/976, Campbell to Clarendon, 9 Oct. 1856.

Campbell had no doubts whatsoever as to the probable effect of the scheme around Lagos. He interpreted the reported brisk trade in slaves in Whydah as the evidence of Brazilians endeavouring to anticipate increased demand for slaves in Bahia where the French scheme had been publicized. He saw in the Aibo War of 1857, which he had previously approved, the influence of the scheme upon the restless Egba *Ologun*, led by Shomoye, the Bashorun. Actually, the Aibo had kidnapped Egba traders and the Egba campaign was a punitive one; but in order to mobilize a sufficient force they had been obliged to issue a 'draconic' proclamation forbidding trade and decreeing instant death to anyone violating its terms. When a French ship belonging to the house of Regis at Whydah was boarded by H.M.S. *Firefly* and found to be carrying 1,200 slaves disguised as 'free emigrants', Campbell reported this concrete evidence of the effect of the scheme to the Foreign Office. In the House of Lords debate on the scheme, which took place in 1857, Lord Clarendon drew extensively from Campbell's dispatches in his denunciation of French mistaken policy. As a result, the Squadron on the West Coast was reinforced and the Government considered measures for coercing the King of Dahomey including a naval occupation of Whydah. Following diplomatic action at the French Court, France agreed to abandon the Free Emigration Scheme in a year after 1 July 1861. The French recognized Campbell's relentless opposition to the scheme by raking up a past scandal against him but the Foreign Office set the accusation down to malice.

The revival of predatory raids adversely affected the cotton output at Abeokuta. Whereas the Egba had exported 15,000 tons of palm oil in 1856 (valued at £65,000 in England) they could bring to sale in Lagos less than half that quantity of oil in 1857. Moreover, the *Parakoyi*, encouraged by some Egba 'Saro' middlemen, had set mobs to plunder Signor Scala's trading establishment at Abeokuta, and Scala was a cotton enthusiast like Campbell. As usual, Campbell interpreted all these happenings in terms of the revival of the slave trade.

In 1858, however, there were hopes of extending commerce as far as Ilorin, an emporium for the exchange of local products for European goods, and the recent arrival in Lagos of Lieutenant Glover, R.N., indicated that Rabbah might prove an ideal commercial centre on the Niger. So there must be no retreat from commercial pursuits at Abeokuta. Campbell, accompanied by Lieutenant Glover,

went to Abeokuta and concluded a new treaty for the protection of commerce and all kinds of merchants with the authorities, including the *Parakoyi*. Furthermore, the chiefs agreed to admit to Abeokuta only merchants recommended by the Consul. Campbell imagined that he had broken a trade monopoly enjoyed by the *Parakoyi*, but Acting Consul Lodder had to visit Abeokuta again before the end of 1858 in order to secure the proper opening of trade by persuading the Egba authorities to remove an obscure *Oro* interdiction of trading by women, the real retail traders.

While on furlough in England in 1858 Campbell did his best to enlist the support of the cotton interests for cotton cultivation and mechanized industry around Abeokuta. On his return he was confronted with the usual problems connected with the revival of the slave trade. Kosoko was threatening to land in Lagos; the Ijebu had interdicted the palm-oil trade to Lagos, preferring the slave trade; the Dahomi again threatened Abeokuta with invasion, although Campbell suspected that the Egba were in collusion with the Ijebu over the interdiction of the palm-oil trade. Campbell first went to Porto Novo, accompanied by Lieutenant Glover, and compelled the King to rescind his monopoly of the oil trade which had only resulted in no oil being produced by his people. Campbell knew well that he succeeded only because Porto Novo was on the coast and so within reach of British gunboats. But the Ijebu stoppage of trade was really the more serious and Campbell died before he could deal with it.

Lieutenant Lodder, who again became Acting Consul, sought to continue the policy of Campbell, a truly conscientious Consul. Lodder realized that the Ijebu were inaccessible to gunboat diplomacy but thought that diverting all trade through Abeokuta might bring the Ijebu to relent. He therefore dealt very tactfully with the question of the robberies which had been committed upon Dr. Baikie's messengers at Abeokuta *en route* for Rabbah: he blamed the Egba authorities for failure to protect travellers but at the same time agreed that Baikie and Glover had made enemies for themselves in Lagos by recruiting labourers among domestic slaves and thereby invited the retaliation of their owners on the journey. The Egba agreed to find and punish the robbers and for the future the Alake promised full protection for any convoy preceded by a well-known emigrant, bearing a consular staff and another staff from the Alake. Friendly relationship was restored between the Egba and Lagos.

that Lagos was only the first step in an ever-increasing acquisition of territory once that step was allowed.

Freeman, influenced by McKoskry, came to the conclusion that the Egba constituted the real obstacle to peace and that they were being encouraged in their arrogance, in spite of defeat at Ijaye, by the Anglican missionaries amongst them. The Ibadan, on the contrary, were eager for peace and a road to the coast. The remedy lay in coercing the Egba by a blockade. With this analysis of the situation, Lagos-Egba relations deteriorated.

In July 1862 the Egba declined to receive Vice-Consul Taylor, alleging that the proposal to station a Vice-Consul there had been sprung upon them. Freeman protested and accused the missionaries of failing to use their influence to disabuse the minds of the Egba of the fear grounded upon the example of Lagos that a Consul (an *Ajele*) was only the herald for a Governor. The Alake, however, unwisely declined Freeman's offer of a visit to Abeokuta, judging the time to be inappropriate. When owing to interior wars, Commander Glover was stopped at Ikorodu on his way to Ibadan, Freeman used a gunboat to obtain a passage for him and so increased rather than allayed Egba fears. Moreover, the Egba were not only unable to make restitution for the Niger load robberies, but fresh robberies, estimated at about £2,000, had been committed in their territory. Then after the fall of Ijaye the Egba had transferred the war to Makun in the Ijebu Remo country ostensibly to punish Makun, at the Awujale's behest, for supplying arms illegally to the Ibadan during the Ijaye War. Freeman summoned all British subjects to leave Abeokuta, an order the missionaries were bound to disobey, as a first step towards the coercion of the Egba. In his view, Kosoko and Alajogun or Sogi of Porto Novo, both of whom had tasted of British might, were the only two reliable chiefs on the coast.

The Anglican missionaries opposed coercion and argued that it was better to conciliate and earn the confidence of the chiefs than to take extraordinary measures which they could not understand. Freeman resented missionary interference, but with their powerful connexions in England, the Colonial Office could not ignore their views.

Clearly the Anglican missionaries were endeavouring to maintain Abeokuta as their enclave and a Vice-Consul at Abeokuta might lead to clashes and their eventual relegation to the background as at Lagos. For the same reason they had opposed the agreement made

between the Egba authorities and Robert Campbell and Delany¹ for resettling at Abeokuta a colony of negroes from Canada who would enjoy corporate rights that were tantamount to creating an *imperium in imperio*. The Alake was obliged to repudiate the agreement, and the younger Crowther, who had sponsored the scheme locally, was expelled from Abeokuta.

The Colonial Office was against coercion for another reason. It realized the danger of throwing the overwhelming British power into the balance in support of one set of indigenous people against another without the clear guidance of an adequate knowledge of the situation. It therefore welcomed Consul Burton's analysis² of the interior war from a person of his calibre. Unfortunately, Burton analysed the situation in terms of trade monopoly familiar to him in Brass and Bonny. He was wrong in that the Egba and the Ijebu were themselves producers of oil and cotton and the cause of the war lay deeper than Burton's brilliant but superficial insight could fathom.

Much as Burton's views inclined the Colonial Office to favour coercion, the thorny problem of domestic slavery, which could not be condoned in a British possession, offered an effective check to Freeman's propensities for annexing more territories to Lagos. Meanwhile, the Colonial Office gave Commodore Wilmot an opportunity to try his hand at the policy of conciliation.

Freeman objected to Commodore Wilmot's mission unless it was regarded as a prelude to the coercion of Dahomey. Having endeavoured in vain to obtain reparations for the robberies from the Egba, he instituted a blockade in March 1863. The Egba had been willing to pay from dues collected from merchants but the merchants suffered fresh robberies upon their goods in transit from Lagos and refused to pay dues. Freeman intended to continue the blockade until the Egba paid reparations for the robberies and compensated Mr. McKoskry for the attack upon his premises at Abeokuta in retaliation for his work in Lagos in connexion with the manumission of Egba fugitive slaves. Freeman also stipulated that the Egba must raise their siege of Makun.

Although Freeman obtained the co-operation of the French, who had declared Porto Novo a French protectorate, in order to make his blockade of Abeokuta effective, economic consideration added to

¹ The treaty was published *in extenso* in R. Campbell, *A Pilgrimage to my Motherland* (1860).

² C.O. 147/2, Burton to Newcastle, 20 Nov. 1861.

with a demand for the removal of the constables, against whom the 'war boys' were itching to go into action. Glover exploded against G. W. Johnson. He denounced Johnson as a treasonable British subject whose life was forfeit because he was inciting people to wage war against Her Majesty's territory; he accused him of surreptitiously obtaining the Bashorun's staff which usually accompanied his letters and of carrying on correspondence of whose import the Bashorun must be totally unaware. Accordingly, Glover declared that he would no longer receive any letter from that 'traitor' in Lagos. He stated categorically that the constables would not be removed as they had been stationed in the districts at the request of the inhabitants in order to prevent petty hostilities and kidnapping. If the Egba wished to negotiate for the delimitation of boundaries, Glover proposed that the territory to the north of Otta should be regarded as neutral ground between the two governments.

On 2 October 1867 Glover demanded explanations from the Egba authorities for the murder of several messengers, headed by a British subject, from Massaba, Emir of Nupe, on passing through the Egba territory. Thoroughly alarmed, Glover moved troops into the Ebute Metta barracks and armed frontier peoples in order to anticipate a possible Egba invasion. The excitement at Abeokuta, however, found an outlet not in a futile endeavour to invade Lagos but in an unfortunate 'outbreak' (the *Ifole*) against the missionaries, the merchants, and the converts in the town.

The Egba authorities admitted that they had ordered the closing of the churches and chapels in retaliation for the placing of constables upon Egba territory but disclaimed any knowledge of the looting of churches and missionary houses, traders' stores, and converts' houses which occurred on Sunday, 13 October 1867. Townsend was away at the time. The missionaries found a protector in Ogudipe, an *Ologun* of Ikija, who in the tradition of his deceased master, Ogubonna, refused to join in the persecution of the Christians. Nevertheless, Ake church was partially destroyed and looted. The white merchants' premises at Aro (except those of Messrs. Banner Brothers) were destroyed and traders and converts were pillaged and some wounded, although no loss of life resulted.

The Egba authorities professed efforts to restore order and return some of the loot to its owners. In the meantime, refugees began to pour into Lagos. European missionaries and African converts arrived in such numbers that Glover was obliged to settle the Egba refugees

at Ebute Metta upon the mainland in the quarter now known as 'Ago-Egba', the Egba camp. Some of the earliest arrivals in Lagos founded the 'Palm Church' at Aroloya, on the site where they placed their first palm booths.

The expulsion of the missionaries, the *Ifole*, marked the end of an epoch at Abeokuta. Henceforth missionary influence in politics was out of the question. The true cause of the event itself is obscure. The E.U.B.M. blamed it upon the 'war boys', who, finding no outlet for their energy in forays, let it loose upon the kinsmen of the Administrator of Lagos, who had placed constables upon Egba territory and prevented the 'war boys' from finding employment in trading ventures. The Anglican missionaries alleged a combination of other factors. The Egba rulers in 1867 were inferior in calibre to those who had admitted the missionaries in 1843; there were the machinations of the Moslems and the renegade Egba 'Saro', who had formed the E.U.B.M.; there was also the incitement of the Awujale of Ijebu Ode, the arch-conservative and an enemy of British influence. Above all, they found Glover's policy responsible for the outbreak; for the Egba that policy had meant the *débâcle* at Ikorodu and flirtations with the King of Dahomey, who had crucified Christian converts captured at Ishaga, and with the Ibadan, who had held Roper, a missionary, to ransom after the fall of Ijaye. Glover himself clung to the fanciful idea that the Awujale of Ijebu Ode had incited the Egba to expel the missionaries and the merchants as part of a grand design to eradicate British influence and revive the slave trade. Glover claimed that the Ibadan had refused to join or had asked the Egba to start as they brought in the British. He had indeed warned the missionaries of their peril; but the cause might well have sprung from his own policy rather than from an imaginary and wholly impracticable reactionary plan.

With other evidence¹ of an interfering policy, the Colonial Office review of the 'outbreak' incident was unsympathetic towards Glover. The incident was deplored but Glover's action in stationing constables near Otta was declared to be an encroachment in accordance with a design to extend Lagos territory; so was the suggestion of the district north of Otta as neutral ground. The Awujale's plot was considered to be far-fetched; and the incident followed too closely upon Glover's actions on the Egba frontiers to rule them out as its immediate cause. The Colonial Office also disapproved of Glover's

¹ Making quasi-annexation demands upon the King of Porto Novo and secretly negotiating with the King of Dahomey for the cession of Kotonu beach.

Glover's policy. The eastern route could be maintained only by using force against the Ijebu as it undermined their position as the middlemen for produce of the interior on its way to the coast. Yet Glover had tried for years to obtain the route; he extended Lagos territory to Ode on the Lagoon for the purpose and he exploited the traditional differences between the Egba and the Ibadan to the point when the Egba and the Ijebu suspected a plot between Lagos and Ibadan which was aimed at their destruction. In retaliation, they attempted to organize a league against Lagos and closed the roads. Glover's policy comprised hostility to the Egba on the one hand and the desire to grab Porto Novo on the other. By constant report of imminent hostilities in the neighbourhood of the colony of Lagos and of 'civil war' within, Glover was preparing Her Majesty's Government for any eventuality: possibly the annexation of territory with a view to safeguarding the new route! Large gifts had been made in order to achieve Glover's object of playing the role of a Clive in order to establish an African empire, where the official policy of non-interference was the right one.

Fowler's policy of appeasement,¹ however, did not produce the desired results. The vexed questions of fugitive domestic slaves and delimitation of boundaries were not easy to resolve. When the Egba did not open their roads as was rumoured and trade was still in the doldrums at Lagos, with prices rising and alarm and despondency spreading, Fowler recommended a 'quiet blockade', a return to a show of force without abandoning the steady, firm, and friendly policy.

By the time the new Administrator, Berkeley, arrived in Lagos, it was clear that unless the Egba opened their routes, the merchants would advocate coercion in order to restore trade, which was their sole interest. The Colonial Office instructed² him to resort to an economic blockade if the Egba and the Ijebu remained obdurate; but the merchants must be fully consulted. Indeed, the merchants were the real gainers from Glover's departure, though Pope-Hennessy gave evidence of his belief in associating Africans with policy-making by recommending the inclusion of Captain J. P. L. Davies, an African, in the Lagos Colonial Council.

Lord Kimberley, the Colonial Secretary, concluded that both

¹ Constables were removed from Ijebu territory and Dosunmu was associated in Lagos with the task of dealing with fugitive slaves.

² C.O. 147/24, Kimberley to Pope-Hennessy, 28 Dec. 1872.

Glover and Pope-Hennessy were wrong: the one in supposing that a man who had been nine years on the coast could pursue his own policy regardless of instructions; the other for thinking that one who had been only a few weeks on the coast could reverse a policy long pursued instead of moderating it as was required. Clear directives were therefore given to the new authorities at Lagos and Freetown:¹ Lagos must be held, if necessary by force; within Lagos and its immediate vicinity British law as regards slavery must prevail. The other territories associated with Lagos should be 'protectorates' in order to avoid the slave question and their boundaries delimited. Although Porto Novo would not be annexed, there was no question of quitting Lagos.

There was much polemic writing over Pope-Hennessy's repudiation of Glover. Undoubtedly Glover admired the Ibadan for their prowess and recognized their potentialities as agriculturists, but he ignored the fact that their well-cultivated farms were the result of domestic slave labour. He never condemned any Ibadan 'slave-raiding', whilst every Egba battle was associated in his mind with slave dealing. He was very impressed by the *Ajele* system whereby the Ibadan kept their dependent territories subservient, whereas D. J. May during his journey through the Yoruba country in 1858 had found those territories groaning under the oppression of the Ibadan Ajeles.

Commander Glover had attempted to govern Lagos as he would rule his ship. He treated every disagreement as mutiny: three official members of his Council were in turn arraigned before the Council on charges which amounted to disagreeing with the Administrator. With the colonial steamer, the *Eyo Honesty*, and the Hausa armed police at his disposal, Glover attempted a personal rule at Lagos; his interpreter and Inspector of Police, Isaac Willoughby, was his real lieutenant. In a town swarming with informers and rumour-mongers, it was easy for Glover to maintain an atmosphere of perpetual crisis and alarm as a cover for his unauthorized forward policy, calculated to advance the interests of Lagos; for without interior trade Lagos would be valueless. Glover in fact engaged in power politics in order to ensure the hegemony of Lagos. To this end he put pressure to bear upon the Egba and the Ijebu without actually contriving their ruin.

Hennessy's policy of appeasement could not remove the real causes of disagreement between Lagos, the Egba and the Ijebu. The fugitive

¹ R. W. Keate was appointed Governor of the West African Settlements in 1873.

APPENDIX D

Lagos Revenue and Expenditure

(Source: C.O. Lists)

(a)

	Revenue	Expenditure
	£	£
1862 (half-year)	7,130	6,510
1863	16,708	15,837
1864	21,335	22,805
1865	24,081	24,095
1866	23,823	23,602
1867	30,195	30,195
1868	33,896	33,711
1869	40,622	39,431
1870	42,875	42,379
1871	45,612	45,611
1872	41,346	41,346
1873	52,240 ¹	52,255

Public Debt in 1873, £20,263.

(b) *Lagos local military expenditure:*

	£	s.	d.	% of total expenditure ²
1866	989	0	0	4.2
1867	2,483	9	9	8.2
1868	1,178	3	10½	3.5
1869	5,163	18	6½	10.3
1870	6,908	13	2	16.3
1871	7,017	4	6	16.4

From 1872 the Imperial Government took over the local military expenditure except nominal charges (see *Lagos Blue Books*).

¹ Exclusive of Parliamentary vote that year, Grants in aid of £2,000 per annum were made by Parliament until 1846, and again of £1,000 in 1865. But the picture of a balanced budget until 1873 does not reveal Glover's 'advance' economic practice which often meant an empty treasury and a 'raid' on the Colonial military chest at Lagos. When Glover departed prominent Lagos merchants advanced money to the Government to fill the empty coffers temporarily. Besides heavy expenditure on necessary public works, Glover's policy of arming the inhabitants of the Egba borders as well as a large Hausa constabulary was a drain on the colonial treasury, as shown by the figures in (b) and (c).

² Percentages calculated by author.

(c) Sums actually spent in arming the inhabitants of the Egba frontier (see Lagos Blue Books):

	£	s.	d.
1866	nil		
1867	28	15	0
1868	484	1	2
1869	Not specified		
1870	Not specified		
1871	140	9	11
1872	nil		

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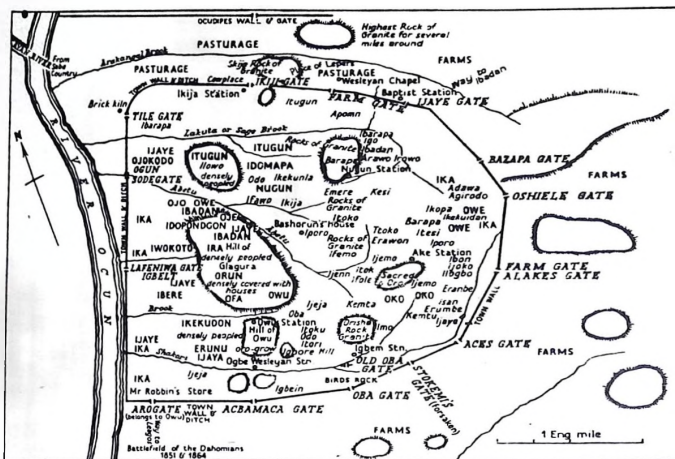
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3. A SKETCH MAP OF ABEOKUTA taken from Colonial Office Confidential Prints Africa (C.O. 806), No. 141, 1879. Shows clearly the layout of the old Egba townships



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