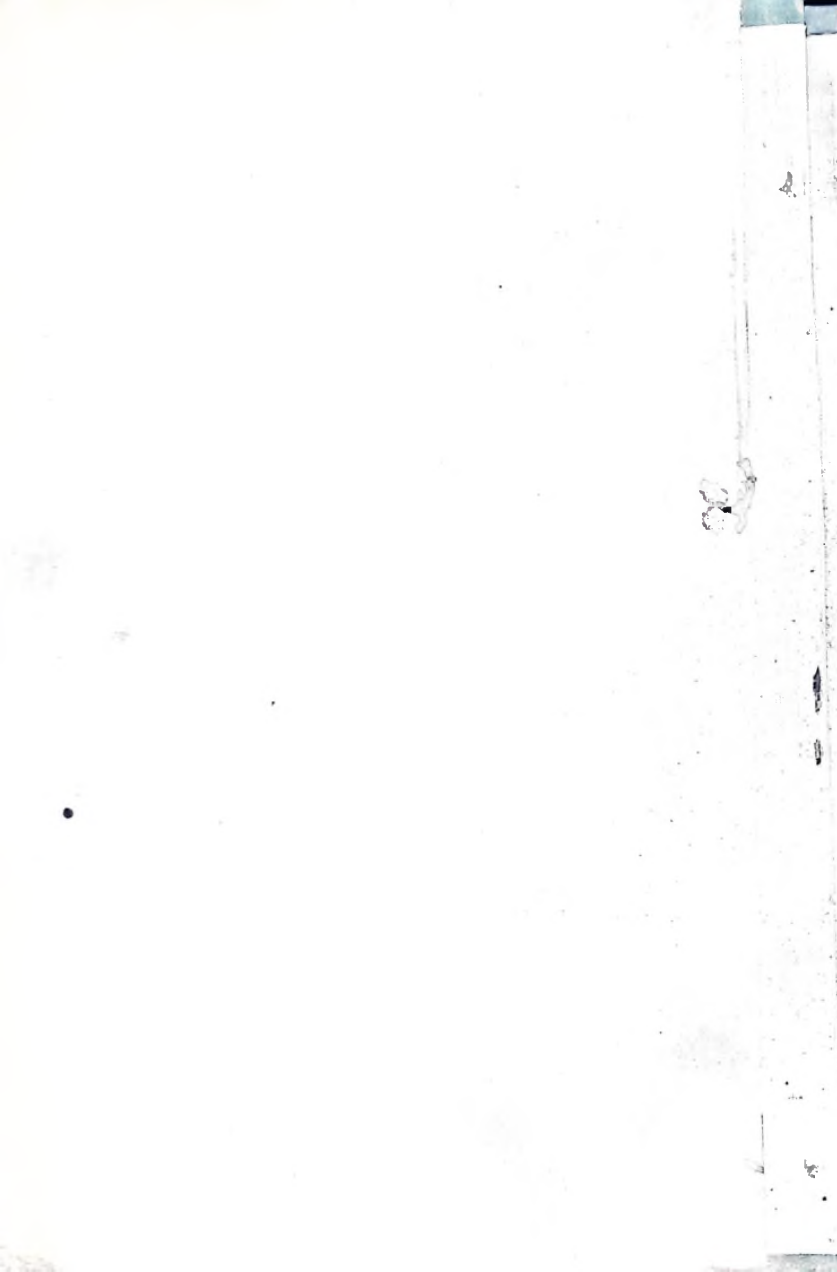


IFE SHRINES
BY
CHIEF M. A. FABUNMI

Pam
NC
BL
580
F13
C-1



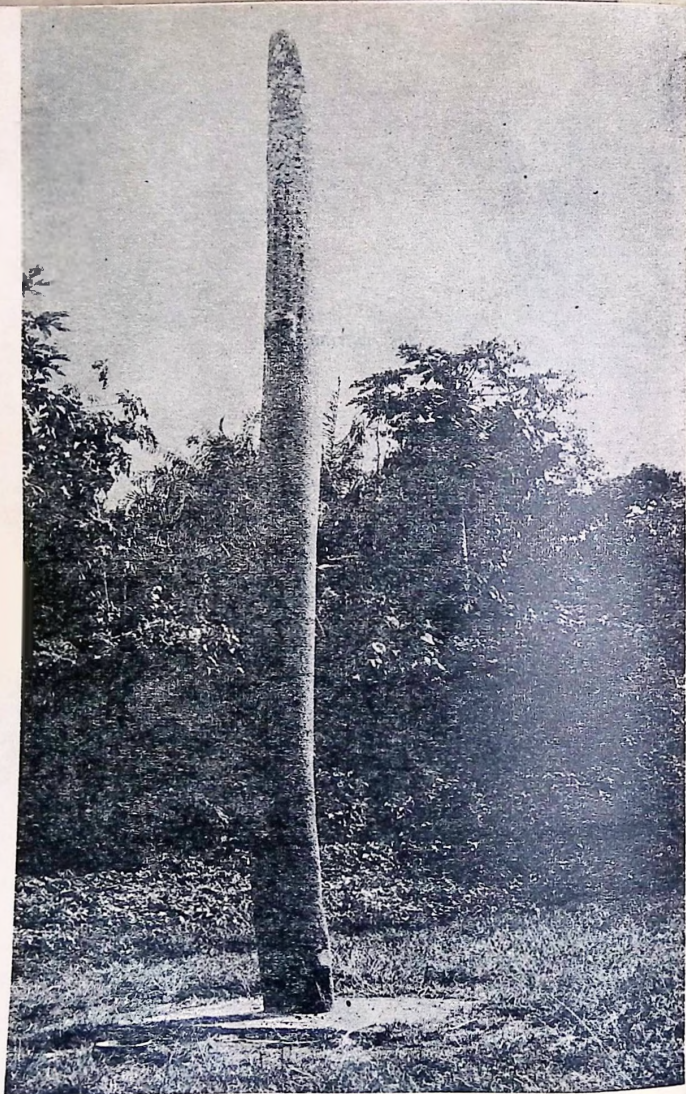
The cover features a vibrant red background. In the foreground, several black, stylized shrines are depicted with white outlines. The most prominent is a tall, slender, vertical structure on the left, filled with a pattern of small white dots. To its right are several shorter, more rounded shrines of varying shapes, including one with a pointed top and another with a teardrop-like base. The overall style is minimalist and graphic.

IFE SHRINES

Chief M. A. Fabunmi

UNIVERSITY OF IFE PRESS

Ifè Shrines



Պա Չրանմյան

IFE SHRINES

CHIEF M. A. FABUNMI, M.O.N., M.B.E., J.P..

Ọdọlé Atọbaṣe of Ife

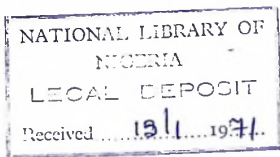
*Honorary Research Associate,
Institute of African Studies
University of Ife*

UNIVERSITY OF IFE PRESS

1969

© University of Ife Press

6...
NE
BL
580
'F 13
c.1



15

PRINTED IN IO ON 12 PT. IMPRINT ROMAN
BY THE CAXTON PRESS (WEST AFRICA) LIMITED, IBADAN

CONTENTS

PREFACE

THE SHRINES

1. ỌRÀMẸ	3
2. OÒDUÀ SHRINE	3
3. OLÓKUN SHRINE	4
4. OMÍTÓTÓ-ỌSÉ SHRINE	5
5. ỌBÀTÁLÁ SHRINE	6
6. YEMÒÓ SHRINE—ÌTA YEMÒÓ	7
7. ỌRẸLÚÉRÉ SHRINE	8
8. ỌLÓFÈFUNRA SHRINE	8
9. ELẸFỌN-ÈREKÒSẸJÚ SHRINE	9
10. OLÚOROGBO SHRINE	9
11. ẸLẸSỤẸ SHRINE	10
12. BÀBÁŞIGIDÌ SHRINE	10
13. ỌBÀLÚFỌN SHRINE	10
14. ỌGÚN SHRINE—ỌKÉ MÒGÚN	11
15. ỌGÚN LÁÀDÌN SHRINE	12
16. ẸŞÙ ỌBASÌN SHRINE	12
17. ỌKÉ-ÌTASẸ HOME OF IFÁ ỌRÚNMÌLÀ	13
18. ỌBAMERÌ AND ỌBÀGÈDÈ SHRINES	14
19. ẸSÌDÁLÈ SHRINE	15
20. ỌRÌŞÀTEKO LÌÙGBÈ AND ỌRÌŞÀ-AKIRÈ SHRINES	15
21. ỌRÀNMÍYÀN AND EÈDÈ SHRINES	15
22. MỌRÈMI SHRINE AND THE ẸSÌNMÌNRÌN STREAM	17

OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST IN IFÈ

23. ÒKÈ-ÌPÀŦ (ÒKÈ-OWU)	21
24. ÒŞUPÁ ÌJÍÓ SITE	21
25. ÒKUN ÌJÍÓ AND ŦSÁÀRÀ	22
26. ÌWINRÌN—IGBÓ IGBŦ	22
27. ŦRUN-ŦBA-ÀDÓ	23
28. LÚWŦ'S PAVEMENTS	23
29. ÒKÈ ÌLÉRÌ: IGBÓ ÌTÁPÁ & IGBÓLÓKÚN	24
30. NINE FAMOUS SPOTS OF PROHIBITION	24
31. IGBÓ KÚBŦLÁŦ; ÌLOFÌ AND IGBÓ ÒDÌ	25
32. MÈSÌ ÀLÚKUNRÌN AND ÌTAJERŦ	25
33. YÈYÈMŦÓÓLÚ AND ÀTÌBÀ	26
34. ŦGBŦN ŦYA	26
35. ÌYÉKÉRÈ	27

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece: Ọpá Ọràmiyàn (Photo by J. R. O. Ojo)

1. *Ọlófẹfura, now in Ifẹ Museum of Antiquities*
2. *Èdènà, gateman of Ọrẹlúéré, now in Ifẹ Museum of Antiquities*
3. *Luwo's Pavement. Luwo was the wife of an Ọ̀ni*
4. *Àpèrè Ifá inside Ifá temple*
5. *Stones at the entrance to Ọrẹlúéré shrine*
6. *Innermost 'chamber' of Ọrẹlúéré shrine, a stone carving used to be under the shelter to which Chief Fabunmi is pointing*
7. *Ọ̀gún shrine at Òkè-Mògún*
8. *Ọ̀gún Láàdín shrine inside the Ọ̀ni's palace*
9. *Terra cotta head from Ọbamèri shrine*
10. *Top of Ọpá Ọrẹrẹ with offerings inside Ifá temple*
11. *Ifá temple at Òkè-itasẹ*
12. *Oòduà shrine*
13. *Forecourt of Oòduà shrine*
14. *Ọbàtálá shrine*
15. *Olúorogbo shrine*

(Photographs by Frank Speed)



PREFACE

This pamphlet is based on the notes which I compiled for the University of Ife Women's Group when they asked me to take them round the shrines and other places of interest in Ile-Ife on 13th of February, 1968, under the leadership of Mrs. E. Oluwasanmi. Her subsequent letter of appreciation and the encouragement of Professor Michael Crowder, Director of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ife, have inspired me to undertake this small book.

Beside briefly telling the stories of some of the numerous shrines in Ife, the following pages also give an account of other places of interest in the Ancient City, which may appeal to all who are interested in the things of old.

Moreover, the booklet is presented as an introduction to the City, expressing on behalf of all her citizens, a welcome to visitors to Ife. For, with the gradual settlement of the University of Ife on its home site, Ile-Ife is rapidly becoming her old self, and, with the progressive achievement of the University's vast programmes of research, planning, development and building, Ife may claim, or soon claim, to be assuming a new self, a new personality in which the heritage of the past will be wedded to the achievements of the present, and which will ever extend to her friends from all over the world a hand of hearty welcome.

But perhaps I should mention here that some of the shrines of the city are under lock and key and visitors are not allowed to go inside unless certain sacrifices are made one or two days previously, both in the interest of the visitors and of the custodians themselves. Therefore, visitors who wish to see the inside of such shrines should be prepared to foot the sacrificial bill.

I am greatly indebted to the following people for help with the preparation of this manuscript and I wish hereby to thank them:

Chief M. O. Fášhògbón, for offering me his intimate knowledge of the indigenous affairs of Ife, ancient and modern;

Mr. I. A. Fáyẹnúwò, a retired Schoolmaster and a qualified Registered Herbalist, for placing his profound knowledge of the history of Ife at my disposal;

Professor Michael Crowder, Director of the Institute of African

Studies, Ife University, for editorial assistance and for his useful comments and advice;

Chief I. O. Delano, for assistance with tone-marking, and Mr. Adédàpò Olújinmi Coker, Registered Architect and Surveyor, who prepared the map which the Department of Geography, University of Ife, kindly drew for publication.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the invaluable help that I have received from my reference to Dr. Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yorubas*, Revd. Bolaji Idowu's *Olódúnarè—God in Yoruba Belief* and Mr. J. A. Ademakinwa's *Ife Cradle of the Yorubas*.

M. A. FABUNMI

THE SHRINES

4



1. ÒRÀMFÈ

Òràmḡè is said to be the highest of the deities worshipped in Ile-Iḡè but there is no particular place set apart as his shrine.

His worship is usually done within a circle drawn with ashes on any piece of bare ground. Kola nuts (obi) and bitter kola (orógbó) are the only articles offered to him by his worshippers who usually lift up their hands and faces to the sky, uttering a quick series of prayers at the same time.

Oral tradition says that in prehistoric times and in the era of the gods and heroes, the gods walked the earth with men, that is the lesser angels incarnated as men, intermarried with human beings, and begat the heroes, giants and super-men who produced the most exquisite pieces of bronze, stone and metal works of art, and built mighty monuments which till today remain mysterious objects of wonder. But when, in course of time, men became corrupt, the gods renounced association with them and ceased to come down to earth. One such god, continues tradition, was Òràmḡè, whose sacred hill, Òkè Òrà (Òràmḡè's Hill), is situated between Ile-Iḡè and Ìtagunmodi on the road to Ileṣà. He is said to have lived there when he was on earth.

Òràmḡè's festival is celebrated annually about eight days after the end of the Òlójó Festival, and Chief Òbalúru is the Oníṣbrò or priest in charge.

2. OÒDUÀ SHRINE

Today, there are three current versions of the traditional history of the reputed Patriarch of the Yoruba race, who is called Oòduà.*

The first and the most popular among the people of Iḡè, is the mythical version that "Oòduà descended from Heaven, charged by Olódùmarè, the Lord of Heaven, to establish the kingdom of the earth. The surface of the earth was covered with water, and a five-fingered fowl was sent by Him from the summit of the heavens with magical sand under the charge of a priest, whose title was Ojùmu. The Ojùmu threw the sand while the fowl spread it all over the earth. By the power and ordinance of Olódùmarè, dry land appeared, and Oòduà, with the reputed sixteen elders and their

* Iḡè dialect for Odùduwà

followers, descended by means of a chain at Mòḡrẹ quarter."

The second is the more recent version that Oòduà migrated to Ile-Ifẹ, either from Mecca, Egypt, or Upper Nubia.

The last, but not the least, of the three theories, is that Oòduà came neither from the East nor from the West, but that he was one of the people who lived before the deluge, and that, after the deluge, he, together with his followers and their families, descended onto dry land by means of chain-ropes from their life-boat, which anchored on Òkè-Òrà (Òràmfẹ's hill) between Ile-Ifẹ and Ìtagunmodi on the Ifẹ-Ileṣà road, from where they came to Mòḡrẹ quarter in Ile-Ifẹ. And this is the reason why Oòduà and all the people who were saved from the deluge were known to the ancient Ifẹ men as *Oòyè* i.e. *Àwọn tí ó yè*—those who were saved.

Finally, until this day, none of the unsophisticated traditional historians of Ifẹ give any credence whatsoever to the second version of Oòduà's history as recounted above. They are still quite firm and unshaken in their belief that Ifẹ is the cradle of the world, and that Oòduà only descended at Ile-Ifẹ. These Elders, in particular Chief Qbádfo, the Onṣòrò or traditional keeper of Oòduà's shrine, persist in saying *Oòduà rẹ ni o*.—Oòduà only descended from above. *Rẹ* in Ifẹ dialect means *Sẹ*—to descend.

3. OLÓKUN SHRINE

Olókun, a favourite wife of Oòduà, was the wealthiest woman of her time, but she had no children. It is said that a dispute once arose between her and another wife of Oòduà, called Qsààrà, as to which of them was more important, Qsààrà being a poor woman but blessed with many children. A day was therefore appointed for the two women to stage an exhibition of their belongings on the spacious grounds of Oòduà's palace. And very early in the morning of that day Olókun caused the arena to be decorated with a grand display of the rarest of gems, and jewels, and coral beads of exquisite beauty together with the most costly wearing apparel of all descriptions. Then suddenly from afar was heard a multitude of people singing accompanied by melodious drumming and loud clapping of hands and native leather-fans! And in a few moments there rushed into the palace a huge crowd of people consisting of Qsààrà with her children and children's children with their friends and well-wishers and the usual crowd of inquisitive on-lookers who could not be

controlled or prevented from trampling on the gems, the jewels, the dresses and all the other costly articles put on show by Olókun who, it is related, very quickly took her leave of the unruly crowd and, from that time, "never smiled again".

The chorus of the song on the day is as follows:-

*Olómọ ló l'aiyé o, Ọsààrà mà k'ọmọ dé ò;
Olómọ ló l'aiyé o, Ọsààrà mà k'ọmọ dé ò.*

"The world is hers who is blessed with children;
Ọsààrà is now here with her own."

Every year, during the "Àgbọ̀n" festival of the Ọsààrà, this incident is rehearsed with the song and drumming and clapping of hands and native leather-fans accompanied by the most beautiful and rhythmic traditional dance of Ifẹ̀, the "Àgbọ̀n" dance.

Unfortunately, however, Olókun's shrine, which is situated in Ilàrẹ̀ Ward in the care of Chief Wàasin, is not being properly looked after, and it has been hemmed in on all sides with dwelling houses which do not allow easy access to the shrine. But the yard where she used to carry on her business of making beads and other costly articles is still the vast area of land now called "Igbó Olókun," stretching deep inside along the edge of the Ifẹ̀-Ileṣà Bypass until it touches the fringe of the Ẹ̀sinminrin stream.

4. OMITÓTÓ-ỌSẸ̀ SHRINE

Omitótó-Ọsẹ̀ was the favourite wife of Oòduà who held a very important office in his government with great credit.

Some Ifẹ̀ historians say that she had no issue but she adopted Ọbàlọ̀ràn as a son and brought him from his home in Ilọ̀ràn to her own home at Ilódé where the present Chief Ọbàlọ̀ràn still lives.

As was the custom among the Yorubas, Ẹ̀pàràkùnní, a maid of great beauty, was living with her sister, Omitótó, and serving as her house-maid. But after some time Oòduà fell in love with her and she begat a son for him called Ajibogun, alias Àjàkà-Ọ̀rúnájà, who later became Ọwá Obòkun and the founder of the towns of Ibòkun and Iléṣà.

Omitótó's shrine is next door to the Ondo-Ọyọ̀ Joint Provincial

Teacher Training College on the Ife-Ifewarà Road, and Chief Qbàlqràn is its Onfšòrò.

5. QBÁTÁLÁ SHRINE

Qbátálá is the great Òriṣà called Òriṣànlà at Ile-Ifẹ. It means *Qba tí ó nínlá*, the king that is great: or *Òriṣà tí ó nínlá*, the deity that is great. His shrine at Ile-Ifẹ is situated at a place called "Ìdèta" in Ilódé Ward.

Now, according to Ifẹ tradition, Òriṣànlà or Qbátálá is the elder brother of Oòduà, born of the same father and mother. Both Qbátálá and Oòduà are said to have descended from heaven to Ile-Ifẹ. Qbátálá was charged by Olódùmarè with the duty of creating solid ground on the surface of the existing water by spreading dry earth all over it with the aid of a five-toed fowl. But on the way down to the earth Qbátálá is said to have drunk so much palm wine that he became tipsy and fell asleep while Oòduà took up the assignment and created the earth. Since that time Qbátálá is said to have renounced the drinking of palm wine with a very bitter oath and to have forbidden his worshippers to drink it.

Qbátálá is regarded as the deity next in rank only to Olódùmarè Himself and he is usually styled as "Ìbikèjì Olódùmarè" i.e. the Deputy of Olódùmarè.

Tradition says that Olódùmarè created man as a rough and solid figure, leaving Qbátálá to put the finishing touches by giving him a shape, a face, a mouth, nose, eyes, ears, limbs, and so on. This is why all physical defects are considered either as Qbátálá's mistakes or his intentional acts to punish some wicked, guilty persons. All persons having physical abnormalities or defects are considered dedicated to Qbátálá and they are regarded as people who should not be man-handled and who are sacred to him—people like albinos, lame people, dwarfs, hunchbacks and all others with deformities. They are usually referred to as "Èni Òriṣà", meaning persons belonging to the great Òriṣà and who were especially made by him.

Again, Qbátálá, as his name indicates, is the Yoruba god of purity—*Qba tí ó nì àlà* (the King in white clothing). He represents the highest moral conception attained by the Yorubas. Everything about him is characteristically white. He is always pictured dressed

in white and bedecked with white ornaments. The inside of his temple is invariably whitewashed. His emblems are kept in white containers; his priests, priestesses, and worshippers wear white dresses, white beads and other white ornaments. The water in his shrine should be changed daily with the cleanest, clearest, water drawn very early in the morning from a spring, and the person who draws the water must do so before anyone else has been there to disturb the spring. In the olden days the water-bearer had either to be a virgin of impeccable virtue or a woman who has passed the age of sexual intercourse and was of excellent reputation. All the way to and from the spring, the water-bearer has to keep ringing a bell to show that she is on a sacred errand and must not speak or be spoken to. It is enjoined upon the worshippers of *Òriṣànlá* that they must be upright and true; they must be clean in their hearts and their behaviour must be like the water drawn early in the morning from a spring that has not been previously disturbed.

Sacrifices offered to *Qbátálá* must not be salted and must not be cooked with red palm oil (*epo pupa*) but with shea-butter (*òrì*). His usual sacrificial meal is the snail cooked with shea-butter, and in his worship the white or bitter kola called "*Orógbó*" is used instead of the red kola ("*obi*").

Qbátálá is also the protector of the town gates and he is therefore frequently represented by a horseman with a spear, attended by a serpent, fish, tortoise and leopard. Hence it is said of him *O sùn s'ilé f'òjè tllèkùn; onllé jì, òjé ò jì;* i.e. "While asleep on his bed, he bars the gate-door with a bar of copper; but when the landlord wakes, the copper bar is still asleep." Chief *Qbalálè* is the *Onṣòrò*.

6. IṬA YEMÒÓ—YEMÒÓ SHRINE

Yemòó was the only wife of *Òriṣànlá* who, when asked for the reason of his monogamous state, replied—"A kò lè gbé ààrín òjì ènlà k'èni má ṣì wí. *Òriṣànlá rí on'ìgba aya n'lè k'ò tó f'owó mú Yemòó níkan; a kò lè gbè aiye Olúfè kòrùn k'aya pítípò jẹ kó gún;*" which means: "It is impossible to live among forty wives and avoid slips of the tongue. *Òriṣànlá* sees the possibility of marrying two hundred wives and yet he cleaves to *Yemòó* alone. One who carries the responsibilities of rulership over the civic life of *Ifè* cannot

expect to succeed if at the same time he has to cope with a multiplicity of wives."

The Yèmbó shrine and its immediate vicinity has proved a very fertile spot for antiquities long buried underground. And the Department of Antiquities, having discovered the fact, has marked the place with a shed and acquired the area immediately surrounding it, including a newly-built storey-house. Terra cottas dug up at Ita-Yèmbó are on display in the Ifè Museum. A traditional Ifè potsherd pavement is preserved at Ìta Yèmbó.

7. Q̄R̄ĪLÚÉRÉ SHRINE

Like that of Oòduà, the traditional story of Q̄r̄Īlúéré (commonly abbreviated to "Q̄r̄Ī") also has two versions—one that he was one of the elders (Oòyè) who descended with Oòduà, and the other that he was the head of the aborigines whom Oòduà met, conquered and subdued at Ile-Ifè.

Be that as it may, for a long time Q̄r̄Īlúéré, as a fore-father in Ile-Ifè, was regarded as the guardian of domestic morality and preserver of sound family traditions. When he was alive, those who broke any taboo in connection with these had to go before him or, after his death, before his image, to make their confession and undergo the prescribed penance.

Standing at the entrance of Q̄r̄Īlúéré's shrine was the hefty stone figure of his gate-man, Èdènà, which is now on display in the Ifè Museum.

The Oníṣòrò is Chief Olópo.

8. Q̄LÓF̄FUNRA SHRINE

Q̄lóf̄funra, whose stone image is now in the Ifè Museum, was a divinity reputed to have the habit of hailing and welcoming visitors even from a distance with laughter and spontaneous joy as one does an old, long-missed, beloved friend. If, however, any visitor responded correspondingly, his facial features would remain permanently fixed in the contortion of mirthless laughter!

Chief Olópo is also in charge of this shrine which is next door to the Q̄r̄Īlúéré shrine on the Ifè-Ifèwàrà road.

9. ÈLÈFÒN-ÈREKÒŞÉJÚ SHRINE

Tradition says that Èlèfòn-Èrekòşéju was one of the greatest warriors of his time and the progenitor of Q̄bawàrà and other chiefs in Ìwàrà, a town in the Ilèşà area, which was founded by his descendants. His homestead on the Ife-Òkèìgbó road is now known as Èrè-Q̄bàlòràn.

"Èlèfòn" is his real name, "Èrekòşéjú" is a cognomen which merely expresses the fact that an image does not wink. His other appellations are "Ojumu-Yàndà; à—bèrè ogun." He was the originator of the Irò festival, and his full-blooded brother, Orò, was the founder of the Orò festival.

Chief Q̄bawàrà is the Oníşòrò.

10. OLÚOROGBO SHRINE

Olúorogbo is one of the divinities in Ife, next in rank to Q̄bàtálá or Òrìşànlá. He is known as the Saviour of the world; one who took the initiative in delivering the world from disasters and catastrophe; the Chief Messenger between the king of earth and the king of Heaven. His charge was to set the world right—*O kù d̄p̄d̄ k̄i aiyé Oluf̄è bajé, ni Olúorogbo bá wá t̄ún aiyé şe*, that is, "When disaster was impending for Ife, Olúorogbo intervened to prevent it." Olúorogbo is also known as "Oníwe Q̄run", that is, "the bookish one who is in heaven"; for, according to oral tradition, he was the originator of books and he knew the art of writing. Samples of his writings are still to be seen on the walls of his shrine. And till today a part of the ritual at his shrine is to scratch the ground in imitation of writing.

Olúorogbo has, however, been seen in a confused light and his identity is not clearly defined. Some say he was the son of M̄rèmi, the great Ife heroine, who offered him as a sacrifice in payment of a vow, while others say that Èl̄à was the son of M̄rèmi who was sacrificed, and that Olúorogbo was the father of Èl̄à! In Ile-Ife however, the festival of Olúorogbo is independent of that of M̄rèmi. Olúorogbo and M̄rèmi have no connection as far as religious worship is concerned. They are worshipped in different manners and at different times. The Oníşòrò in charge of this shrine is Q̄baláşè.

IFE SHRINES

11. ÈLÈSÌJÈ SHRINE

Èlèsìjè was, according to tradition, one of the divinities who descended with Oòduà from the heavens.

He was the Chief Physician and was very learned in the curative power of herbs and leaves, and his herbal remedies for curing ailments, diseases and disorders showed great skill. Nor was his ability to cure confined only to the use of herbs and concoctions called "Àgbo"; he was also able to cure through the use of incantations and charms called "Qfò", "Ohùn" or "Àyájò" together with many other devices of ancient wisdom.

Èlèsìjè maintained an institution similar to the present-day hospital where invalids suffering from leprosy, insanity, epilepsy, convulsions, small-pox, cholera and ulcers were treated.

For this reason, the first Infectious Diseases Hospital in Ile-Ife was built on the grounds of the Èlèsìjè Shrine, but it has recently been removed to a place about 4 miles along the Ife-Ondo Road.

12. BÀBÁŞÌGÌDÌ SHRINE

Bàbášìgìdì is the granite bust of an aged personage wearing a raffia hat. He was a warrior of antiquity, who, instead of dying in the normal way, changed to stone.

In the olden days, several of the great and strong men, according to tradition, did not die in what has now become the normal way, but they changed themselves into stone or walked through a cave into heaven.

Bàbášìgìdì was the "Akápò" or Chief Follower of the Èlèsìjè, and the Onísòrò is Qbawinrìn.

13. QBALÙFỌN SHRINE

Qbàlùfọn was the eldest son of Oòduà who succeeded to the throne at Ile-Ife after his father's death. He was nicknamed *Ò-gbó-gbó-d'irin*—one who became as old as irons that is who grew to a very old age. He was deified after his death and has since then been worshipped as one of the divinities.

The Onísòrò, or priest in charge, is Chief Qbalara. He plays a very important part in the coronation ceremonies of a new Qọni of



1. *Olófufura, now in Ife Museum of Antiquities*



2. *Èdèná, gateman of Orílúéré, now in Ife Museum of Antiquities*

3. *Lurco's Pavement. Lurco was the wife of an Oṣṣi*



4. *Àpèrè Ifá inside Ifá temple*





5. *Stones at the entrance to
Orèliéré shrine*



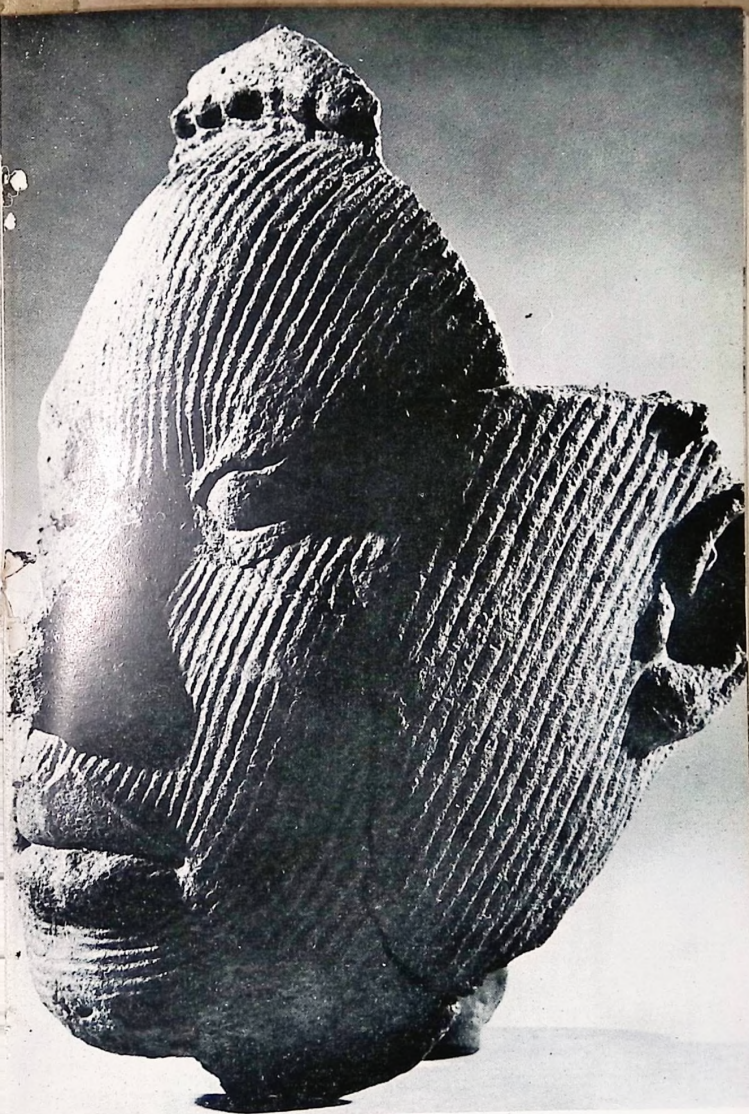
6. *Innermost 'chamber' of Orèliéré shrine, a stone carving used to be under
the shelter to which Chief Fabunmi is pointing*



7. *Ogún shrine at Okè-Mògún*



8. *Ogún Láàdìn shrine inside
the Oṣun's palace*



9. Terra cotta head from Qbanèri shrine



10. *Top of Ọpá Ọrẹ̀rẹ̀ with offerings
inside Ifá temple*



11. *Ifá temple at Ọkè-itase*



12. *Oòduà shrine*

13. *Forecourt of Oòduà shrine*





14. *Obátálá shrine*

15. *Oluorogbo shrine*



Ifè, whose crown, according to traditional custom, must first be placed on Ọbàlúfọ̀n's head before he is adorned with it.

14. ỌGÚN SHRINE

Ọgún is one of the principal deities of Yorubaland, who, according to tradition, was the Chief Blacksmith in Heaven and a blood-thirsty hunter who used to come down on earth to hunt.

Fiery and fierce-looking, he led a solitary life on the hill-tops and took great delight in warfare; hence he is still today nicknamed: *Lálerè, Ẹdan Olú-irin; aláṣọ iná; ẹlẹwu ẹjẹ; alágbèdẹ ọrun tí tnl omi ní'lé tí if'ẹjẹ wẹ;* i.e. "Lálerè, lord of all metals; clad in fiery dress soaked in blood; the hunter in heaven who has water at home but prefers to wash with blood."

Ọgún is usually worshipped by hunter, blacksmiths, engineers, mechanics, drivers, artisans, and all people who have to deal with any kind of iron, steel or other metals.

Prior to the advent of Christianity and Islam, oaths were usually taken, and pacts sealed, in the fearful name of this divinity, and breaches thereof were more often than not followed by fatal consequences; hence the common Yoruba saying "*Bi ènià ba ndalẹ kó má dà Ọgún, ọrọ Ọgún l'èèwọ*" that is, if one is in the habit of breaking covenants let it not be one with Ọgún, for this will most likely lead to death.

The second version of tradition about Ọgún is that he was one of the sons of Oòduà who became a renowned hunter and powerful warrior. Once, on his return from a war with Ọwáfọ̀nràn at Àjàshẹ, he kept behind for himself a very beautiful female captive, called Anshunka, when, according to custom, he ought to have given her to his father along with all the booty and all the prisoners of war! But his father somehow got to know of this fact and pressed him to surrender the woman to him. This Ọgún did very reluctantly, saying that he had already had an affair with her. In the course of time, Anshunka gave birth to a peculiar baby boy, who was yellow-complexioned like Oòduà on one side of his body, but black, or dark-skinned, like Ọgún, on the other side! Whereupon both Oòduà and Ọgún are reported each to have exclaimed: "*Ọràn mi yàn!*" which means something like "My case is proved right." And the name stuck fast to the boy who was later to found Ọyọ, and establish the present dynasty of Benin.

During the Ife National Festival of *Olójó*, the *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* of Ife used to go twice, in full regalia, to the shrine of *Ọ̀gún* at *Ọ̀kemògún*, accompanied by the Chiefs and a large concourse of jubilating people, to perform certain secret ceremonies.

Chief *Oṣògún* is the *Oníṣòrò* of the shrine.

15. Ọ̀GÚN LÁÀDÌN SHRINE

We are told that *Ọ̀gún* has several designations derived from the names of the places where he is the prominent divinity, or from personages or functions connected with him, e.g. *Ọ̀gún Alára* (the *Ọ̀gún* being worshipped by the *Alára* of *Ará*); *Ọ̀gún Ikọ̀là* (the *Ọ̀gún* of surgery); *Ọ̀gún Gbènàgbènà* (the *Ọ̀gún* of the artisans); and so on.

Ọ̀gún Láàdìn is thus the *Ọ̀gún* of *Ọ̀gborū*, an *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* of Ife, who was banished to Ife-*Ọ̀dàn* after he had reigned, it is said, for about 120 years; but the supernatural powers of this *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* were so strong that none of his successors lived long until his pardon was obtained and his grandson was, with his consent, placed on the throne.

It is said that this *Ọ̀gún* was one of the mainstays of the magical powers of that monarch. All oaths were taken before it, and a son of the *Ọ̀ba Ọ̀gborū* himself was the *Oníṣòrò* of this shrine and the first blacksmith of the land. And because all false swearings in this shrine were very quickly attended by fatal consequences, the deity became popularly known as "*Ọ̀gún Aládin*" that is the "*Ọ̀gún*" which determined the veracity or falsity of one's character, *àdin* being Ife dialect for "character," e.g. "*Àdin l'ẹ̀wà*" (one's character is his or her beauty).

In course of time, "*Ọ̀gún Aládin*" became contracted to "*Ọ̀gún Láàdìn*" and the *Oníṣòrò* in charge became known as "*Láàdìn*". This title has since ranked high in the hierarchy of the traditional Ife chieftaincies that are recognised both in religious and state affairs.

The shrine is within the walls of the Palace.

16. ÈṢŪ Ọ̀BASÌN SHRINE

Ọ̀basin, one of the sixteen Elders who descended with *Oòduà*, is that divinity who controls locusts and storms, whirlwinds and

tornadoes. His shrine is situated a little further on from that of Orèlúéré on the Ifè-Ifèwàrà road, where lies a small piece of granite called "Èṣù Qbasin" i.e. the devil associated with Qbasin.

Chief Qbaláàyan is the Onṣòrò in charge.

17. ÒKÈ-ÌTASÈ HOME OF IFÁ ÒRÚNMÌLÀ

"Òrúnmilà" is said to be a contraction of "Òrun-ló-mọ-àti-là" (only Heaven knows the means of salvation) or "Òrun-mọ-òdù" (only Heaven can effect deliverance).

Òrúnmilà, alias Ifá, as a divinity, is regarded as the Chief Consultant and Adviser in matters pertaining to all human knowledge. He is the oracle who is universally worshipped in Yorubaland. He is said to be a linguist who understands every language spoken on earth! He is also reputed to be a great doctor.

It is in the various recitals connected with the numerous "Odùs" in Ifá divination that the deepest philosophy and wisdom of the Yoruba are embedded as well as the beauty of their language.*

Now, according to tradition, the history of the origin of Ifá is given in three versions. The first is that Òrúnmilà was one of the mythological Yoruba personages sent down by Olódùmarè to inhabit the earth; that he was a junior relation of Òriṣànlá; that he possessed very intimate knowledge of matters affecting the destiny of man; that he was endowed with supernatural wisdom and foreknowledge coupled with great magical powers of healing sick people, predicting the future and prescribing remedies against coming evils.

The second version is that he was born in Nupe country as a peculiar child who, from his very early childhood, displayed such wonderful and extraordinary powers of divination that they won him very many followers, much to the annoyance of the Moham-

* Sixteen principal odùs were said to have descended with Ifá Òrúnmilà, viz: 1. Òbàrà 2. Òkà 3. Òsè 4. Oyèkú 5. Qwónrin 6. Qsá 7. Irètè 8. Odi 9. Qkànràn 10. Otúrùpòn 11. Qràngún 12. Ogbè 13. Iròsùn 14. Qgúndá 15. Otúrá 16. Iwòrí.

In the process of Ifá divination, the figure formed by recording the results on the divining board is called an "Odù"—a "chief", a "head", a "deity" represented by a palm nut. There are sixteen "Odùs" and behind each of these sixteen "Odùs" are sixteen subordinate "Odùs", thus bringing their number to 256. Behind each of these are 16 "Odùs", bringing the total to 4,096 "Odùs", for each of which there is an appropriate story or couplet when it appears on the divining board.

medans who consequently conspired together and drove him out of the country. He then crossed the River Niger, stopping at several places where he established his cult before moving on. Among the many towns where he established his cult were: Benin, Ọwọ, Ụsi, Adó and Ịjẹ̀sà Obòkun. Finally, Ifá migrated to Ile-Ifẹ, and finding the place ideal for practising his art, resolved to make it his permanent residence. Here he soon became famous, and his performances so impressed the people that they all placed absolute reliance on him and became his ardent admirers and followers. It is said that on his migration to Ile-Ifẹ Oòduà met Ifá there.

The third version is that Ifá was born at Ọkè Ịgẹ̀tí, at Ile-Ifẹ, and had his residence at Ọkè Ọlọbọ now known as Ọkè Ịtasẹ in Ifẹ. It is said that he was so poor that he had to beg for his living. But one night, while he was sleeping, he dreamt that he was endowed with great powers of divination and prophecy and that he had a bracelet tied round his wrist to prevent him on awaking from forgetting the things taught to him. Indeed, when he awoke he remembered everything and practised his art with wonderful results that led to his becoming a great man with a large number of followers and admirers. He was made a Chief styled 'Olú Awo' or 'Olórí Awo', that is, the Head of the 'Awos'—the meaning of 'Awo' being something that is very secret and only known to a few initiates.

Ifá initiated several of his followers into the mystery of his art and he was deified after his death, since which time his cult has become the chief oracle for consultation in the whole of the Yoruba country.

Chief Àràbà is the Head of the Ifá priests.

18. ỌBAMERÌ AND ỌBÀGÈDÈ SHRINES

Ọbamerì was one of the sixteen elders who descended with Oòduà. He was the War General who rose up in arms against Ọbàtálá during a quarrel in which the latter drove Oòduà out of the palace.

Ọbamerì, who is also called Alápá-Ahàrèmadà, has his Shrine just beyond the Èsinmìrin stream on the Mòkùrò road and his chief worshipper is Lókòrẹ, the Oníşòrò who is responsible for all people who hang themselves and to whom certain fees are payable by the families of the deceased before the dead bodies are buried. In addition, nearly all the belongings and properties of the deceased are confiscated by the Lókòrẹ!

Ọ̀bàgèdè, according to tradition, was Ọ̀bameri's Head Messenger although he, too, was one of the "Oòyè" or elders who descended with Oòduà. His shrine is near that of Ọ̀bameri but the Onṣòrò is Chief Abòrẹ.

19. ÈSÌDÁLÈ SHRINE

Èsìdálè was also one of the divinities who descended with Oòduà from Heaven. He was in charge of land and all matters affecting it, hence the Onṣòrò in charge of his shrine, called Chief Àpatà, customarily takes care of all people who die as a result of knocking their heads on the ground, falling from palmtrees, or cutting their bowels open for the intestines to fall on the ground.* He also buries all women who die during pregnancy.

Besides receiving certain fees from the family of the deceased before the corpse is buried, the Àpatà also confiscates nearly all the properties and belongings of the deceased.

20. ÒRÌŞÀTÈKO ÌJÙGBÈ ALIAS Ọ̀BARIŞÈ SHRINE AND ÒRÌŞÀ-AKIRÈ SHRINE

These two divinities, said to be very closely attached to Òrìşànlá or Ọ̀bàtálá, were great warriors, endowed with supernatural powers over the elements.

Their rituals and taboos are practically identical, but their orders of priesthood and their cult objects are separate.

The Religious Chiefs concerned with the two deities are Ọ̀balè-jùgbè, in charge of Òrìşàtèko, and Ọ̀bakirè, in charge of Òrìşà-Akirè.

While the sole shrine of Òrìşàtèko is situated at Ìjùgbè, there are two shrines for Òrìşà-Akirè—one at Ìlárẹ̀, and the other one at Arùbídi, which was introduced from Ifẹ̀wàrà.

21. Ọ̀RÀNMÍYÀN AND EÉDÈ SHRINES

Ọ̀rànmiyàn was the youngest of Oòduà's sons but he eventually became the most powerful among them and the most renowned

* This was a dramatic form of suicide used by Yoruba people in the past.

throughout the length and breadth of Yorubaland. He grew up to become a huge giant and a man of great physical powers and prowess. He first became renowned as a mighty hunter and later as a great universal conqueror who waged many successful wars and conquered many tribes and territories, right up to Benin, Warri and across the River Niger on one side and, on the other side, as far as Dahomey, Togo, and Ashanti.

Two interesting points about *Òrànmiyàn* are:-

- (1) that he was a man of two colours—white or yellow-complexioned on one side of his body; black or dark-skinned on the other. This fact is depicted and publicly demonstrated by the “*Èmèşş*” or Messengers of the *Q̄ṣ̄ni* every year during the celebrations of the *Q̄l̄j̄j̄* Festival in Ile-Ifè.
- (2) that he was the only *Q̄ṣ̄ni* who had the distinguished honour of approving the crowning of two of his sons, namely, Eweka as the *Q̄ba* of Benin, and *Àjàkà* as the *Alafin* of *Oyò*.

Oral tradition says that during one of the many occasions of his long absence from Ifè on war expeditions, his elder brother, *Q̄bà-lùf̄ṣ̄n* *Ògbógbòdirin*, the *Q̄ṣ̄ni* of Ifè, died. But as nobody could trace *Òrànmiyàn*'s whereabouts, the Ifè people crowned *Q̄bà-lùf̄ṣ̄n* *Aláyem̄or̄e* as the *Q̄ṣ̄ni* in succession to his father, *Q̄bà-lùf̄ṣ̄n* *Ògbógbòdirin*.

After some time, however, some of the friends and admirers of *Òrànmiyàn* decided to call on him according to the formula that he, *Òrànmiyàn*, had previously given them to summon him to their immediate aid if and when they were attacked by enemies. Some of them, therefore, cried out very loudly: “*Gbàjurè, Òrànmiyàn. Èlèmpè Ìwágún, Akin-nlé, Akin-logun, ogún mádè o.*” (Oh, *Òrànmiyàn*, a war is now on!)

Immediately the veteran warrior emerged on his charger, boiling with rage, and, with his mighty sword, killed the supposed enemies, right and left, as he entered into the town. He had already destroyed many of his people before an old woman cried to him from afar saying:- “*Gbàjurè, Òrànmiyàn, Èlèmpè Ìwágún, Akin-nlé, Akin-logun.* You are destroying your own children.” He stopped immediately and, stooping, realised the havoc that he had wrought. And, with untold grief, he sheathed his sword and planted his shield “*Asà*” in the ground at a place in *Ìrém̄o*, thenceforward called “*Ìta Alàsà*”. He resolved never to return to Ifè, but, at *M̄òpá*, he was intercepted by a large concourse of people who, after having

succeeded in earnestly entreating him to give them an audience, explained, to his satisfaction, why they invoked him the way they did.

He then planted his warrior staff on that very spot and began to lead the jubilant procession towards the palace as they danced and sang, thus:- "*Yè-é a wi, Ọ̀rànmiyàn gbọ̀ ò, Akin ọ̀run;*" that is "To our petition Ọ̀rànmiyàn, valiant hero of heaven, has listened and agreed."

Before the procession reached the palace, the reigning Ọ̀ṣi, Ọ̀bálùfọ̀n Aláyémọ̀rẹ had decamped to take refuge at Ilárá in Èkiti land. Ọ̀rànmiyàn accordingly ascended the throne and reigned as the Ọ̀ṣi of Ifè until his death, when Ọ̀bálùfọ̀n Aláyémọ̀rẹ came back from exile to re-ascend the throne.

The Oniṣòrò in charge of Ọ̀rànmiyàn shrine is called "Eredù-mí."

Tradition says Eédè was the Head Warrior of Ọ̀rànmiyàn. His shrine is just next door to that of his master. Chief Akọgun is the Oniṣòrò.

22. MỌ̀RÈMI SHRINE AND THE ÈSINMÌNRÌN STREAM

Mọ̀rèmi was a woman of very great beauty, probably wife of Ọ̀rànmiyàn, who was later inherited by Aláyémọ̀rẹ when he succeeded to the throne after Ọ̀rànmiyàn's death. She was a great patriot, who, at the risk of her own life, saved the Ifè people from the destructive hands of an antagonistic tribe called "Ìgbòs" who annually raided Ilé-Ifè in disguise and to whom the people and their properties were an easy prey.

Mọ̀rèmi consulted the Ifá Oracle about Ifè's plight and was duly inspired to make a vow to the deity of the Èsinmìnrin Stream that if she was successful, she would sacrifice whatever would first come out from her house to meet her on her return.

When the Ìgbòs next raided Ifè, Mọ̀rèmi gave herself up to be captured by them and was taken to Ìgbò land, from where she escaped back to Ifè, after having learnt the secrets of the Ìgbòs' strength and how to conquer them.

The Ìgbòs thus having been vanquished, it remained for Mọ̀rèmi to fulfil her vow. She offered lambs, rams, goats, bullocks, etc. but the god did not accept them. The Èsinmìnrin Stream now overflowed its banks without any downpour of rains and the volume of

the flood continued to increase day after day, rapidly advancing towards the city. The Ifá Oracle was again consulted and it was revealed that Mòrèmi must sacrifice her only son Èlà. Mòrèmi now remembered the actual wording of her vow and the fact that her son, Èlà, was the first person to meet and embrace her on her return from the land of the Ìgbòs. She then summoned up courage to sacrifice her only son to the Èsinminrin Stream in order to save Ifẹ and its people from perishing in the flood. Èsinminrin receded immediately.

But as Èlà's corpse could not be found afterwards, the people believed that he had ascended to Heaven. All the people then went into deep mourning and solemnly vowed to become substitutes for Mòrèmi's sons and daughters. She is still styled in Ifẹ as "Yèyè Aiyé-gbogbo"—Mother of all. And Mòrèmi's memory has since that time been perpetuated by the annual celebration of a National Festival called "Edi" during the seven days of which is re-enacted the whole drama of the Ìgbò raids, their defeat and destruction, as well as the immolation of Èlà.

The Oníṣòrò in charge of this shrine is called Yékéré.

OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST



23. ÒKÈ-ÌPÀḶ NOW KNOWN AS ÒKÈ-ÒWU

This is the hill on which, tradition says, Oòduà and his followers took refuge when a sudden and fatal epidemic of small-pox occurred in Ifè. Qbátálá ran to Òkè-Ìṣokùn, and Qrúnmilà to Òkétasç. After some time, however, it is said, Qrúnmilà succeeded in stopping the epidemic through the power of his magical charms. The people then returned to their places of residence and many of them became Qrúnmilà's students from that time.

Today, nearly all the Government offices and rest houses are built on this hill.

24. ÒṢUPÁ ÌJÍÓ SITE

This was the site of the "Moon" of Ìjító (Ìjító being the name of the part of the town of Ifè).

The elders say that this "Moon" was a large diamond which has been carried away by one of the early European explorers in 1893 or thereabouts. Dr. Bọlaji Idowu records:

"There the 'Moon' lay in the shape of a flat slab of stone. The visitor took a small piece of stone and rubbed hard on its surface. As he rubbed, he was sure, within a short time, to observe the movements of certain shadows: these were shades of people who had departed from this earth, among whom he was sure to recognise someone! He must not be startled or frightened, however, or his life would be in great danger. The 'moon-rubbing' might not be undertaken by anyone at all during the appearance of the moon in the sky as it was then unconditionally dangerous to do so."

In the same connection, the respected and renowned Ifè historian, Mr. J. A. Ademakinwa wrote:

"The whites were the first people to use shoes and boots. They also were the first people to show us the great value of the precious stone called Diamond. A tremendous importance was attached to this stone by the ancient Ifès, because the following two things were for hundreds of years prominently seen in the part of the city where it is related that the white people lived when they were at Ile-Ifè: (a) half a pair of stone shoes, and (b) the Ìjító Moon, which more enlightened people call a bold piece of Diamond today. Both these things were very near the Òkun, or Ocean of Ìjító. The Diamond had since about 1893 been found missing; but the half a pair of shoes

was seen there up to the year 1922, and it is still believed to be in the city today."

25. ÒKUN ÌJÍÓ—THE "SEA" AT ÌJÍÓ AND ỌSÀÀRÀ—THE "ỌSÀ" OR "LAGOON" AT MỌỌRÈ

These are two little lakes regarded in Ifè as the miniatures of the sea and the lagoon respectively.

According to tradition, these two stagnant pools are the remnants of the vast expanse of water that once covered the whole land but which dried up as a result of the spreading of earth by the celebrated five-toed fowl.

Both are situated in Mọọrè Ward but are now nearly dried up owing to lack of care.

The traditional chief in charge of the "Òkun" is Ejió who, according to ancient custom, is expected to drink no other water than that from the "Òkun."

Ọlọsààrà is the "Abọrẹ"* in charge of the Ọsààrà.

In one of his history books, our respected elder, Mr. J. A. Ademakinwa, records that "on account of a certain misunderstanding over some eggs, the white people, who chiefly fed on eggs, left Ile-Ifè by way of Ìjío in Mọọrè and went away in the direction of Òkun or the Ocean of Ile-Ifè, now a very small pool at Ìjío.

The Ọsààrà, or the Lagoon of Ile-Ifè, was not very far from this Òkun. The site of Ọsààrà is very near the Christ Apostolic Church, Ile-Ifè, on the way to Ilésà to-day."

26. ÌWINRÌN—IGBÓ ÌGBÒ

Ìwinrìn, or Igbó Ìgbò, is said to be the original homestead of the Ìgbò people, one of the primitive tribes whom some traditional historians allege Oòduà met at Ile-Ifè and subjugated, but who subsequently became a great menace to the Ifè people until they were eventually destroyed through the sagacity, valour and intrepidity of Mọrèmi.

As usual with our unwritten traditional stories, there is another version which traces the origin of the Ìgbòs to the time of the quarrel between Oòduà and Ọbátálá, when the latter drove Oòduà

* equivalent of Oníṣòrò

from the Palace, and Qbameri, the War General, rose up in arms against Qbatalá, conquered him and drove him far into the forest. However, when, at last, the quarrel was settled and Qbatalá returned to the city, his followers and their descendants did not, as they had become very much accustomed to the life in the forest where they had permanently settled.

These "wild" men called themselves "Ìgbòs" because of their intention of behaving like a hawk-like wild bird which is called "Ìgbò" and is well-known among all the birds of the forest for its prowess and aggressive nature. Other birds would invariably disperse immediately an Ìgbò bird approached them. Hence the Yoruba saying "Ìgbò wò inú fíyè kí fíyè tóká", which means that as soon as an Ìgbò bird comes into any assembly of birds they must disperse. The name "Ìgbò" was therefore an indication of the war-like intentions of these denizens of the forest with regard to the inhabitants of the city.

27. QRUN—QBA—ÀDÓ

Qrun-Qba-Àdó, which means the Heaven of the King of Benin, (Àdó) is now a spot marked by the Department of Antiquities as being of archaeological importance. It is near the Local Authority Prison Yard in the Ìlārè quarter of the City of Ifè and is said to be the original homestead of the king of the Edos or Benin people before they migrated from here to Benin, in the same way as the people of Ìjèbú-Rémọ migrated from the Ìrémọ quarter, those of Odè-Rémọ from Ìlódè, and the people of Ìlqrà from Olódò Compound in the Ìlārè quarter, and so on.

The above-mentioned spot is still marked by two pieces of granite (one supposed to be male and the other female) which are said to cover up the two bottomless wells that the ancients regarded and preserved as the shortest road to the other world.

28. LÚWÓ'S PAVEMENTS

Lúwó was a female Qḡni of Ifè and a very strict disciplinarian who made the people work very hard and punished laziness severely. In her time, Ifè city was very considerably improved and made clean. Streets and open spaces, particularly around the shrines and important buildings, were marvellously and solidly paved with

little broken pieces of earthen pots, patches of which can still be seen all over the City today, although many hundreds of years old.

Lúwò was married to one Chief Qbàlqràn of Ìlódè and begat one Adékọla Tèlù, the man who founded Ìwò town.

29. ÒKÈ ÌLÉRÍ: IGBÓ ÌTÁPÁ: AND IGBÓLÓKÚN

According to tradition, Ifẹ was a Christian town over 500 years ago when the early Roman Catholic Fathers came to Ile-Ifẹ from Benin and built a magnificent church at a place called Òkè Ìlérí in Ifẹ. The then Qọni of Ifẹ was baptised as Thomas John Qọni. But after the death of that Qọni, the Ifẹ people renounced Christianity, saying that the religion did not help them in their divination. Many of the early Christians were slain and others fled the town and the church was destroyed. Paganism once more reigned supreme and the people took a solemn vow at Òkè Ìlérí never to embrace Christianity again.

The revolt against the alien religion was hatched at Igbó Ìtápá (the place of revolt) in Ìlódè Ward on which spot the pagans immediately established the temple of Òrişánlá, the foremost of the divinities, and there it stands till today. From Igbó Ìtápá the people went in a procession to Igbólókún where they burnt and buried all the available Christian literature in the town. Finally, they went to Òkè Ìlérí, demolished the church and took a solemn vow to renounce Christianity for ever. "Òkè Ìlérí", translated into English, means "The Hill of Promise," or "The Hill of the Vow."

30. NINE FAMOUS SPOTS OF PROHIBITION

In the olden days there were nine important spots in the city where passers-by were forbidden either to look back or to cross paths. Although this taboo has died a natural death since about 50 years ago, the spots are as follows:-

- | | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| (1) Èrínkò | — | Opposite the Ifẹ Museum |
| (2) Ìta-Ìdíó | — | Opposite Òkè Ìlérí |
| (3) Ìta-Qbàlúfọn | — | Near the Alasà House in Ìrẹmọ Ward |
| (4) Imọpá | — | The site of the Qrànmiyàn Staff |
| (5) Èrànyibà | — | Opposite the Òkétasẹ, Home of Qrúnmilà |
| (6) Igbó-Qràmfẹ | — | Almost opposite the Co-operative Stores at Qjà-Ifẹ |

- (7) Igbó-Òràmfẹ — Another point in the same vicinity, near St. Paul's Anglican Church, Aiyégbajú
- (8) Ìta-Alaṣẹ or Ìta Olúòrogbo — At the front of the Olúòrogbo shrine
- (9) One point at Igbó-Ìdfo near the Oòduà Shrine.

31. IGBÓ KÚBQLÁJÉ; ÌLOFI; AND IGBÓ ÒDI

These are historic places of interest in connection with the ceremonies dealing with the crowning, induction and burial of an Oṣoni of Ifẹ.

While Igbó Kùbqlájé, a spot at Ìdeta in the Ìlódè quarter, is the site where a new Oṣoni is crowned, Ìlofi is the place where the Oṣoni-elect must, according to tradition, spend a period of probation before he proceeds to take up permanent residence in the Palace. Atóbátélé House, at present occupied by Barclays Bank, now stands on this site.

As regards Igbó Òdi, this was the royal cemetery where the majority of past Oṣonis were buried, although some others were buried in their royal compounds, while the remains of the last two, Aláiyélúwá Oba Olúbùṣe and Oba Adémilúyì, were interred in the precincts of the Palace where their graves can be seen under the canopy of the Palace Hall. The Roman Catholic Mission buildings at Òkè Atan in Ìlódè are now adjacent to the Igbó Òdi.

32. MÈSÌ ÀLÚKUNRÍN AND ÌTAJERÒ

Mèsi Àlúkunnrín and Ìtajerò are two famous spots of great age and significance in Ilẹ-Ifẹ.

The former is the spot where criminals and others condemned to death were beheaded in the olden days. It is now surrounded by the enclosure at the entrance to the Divisional Council offices at Ènuwá in front of the Palace.

As regards Ìtajerò, tradition relates that when Oòduà became very old and infirm, he considered it wise to reform the government of his kingdom in order to perpetuate the Kingship in his family as well as to build up an "Empire". He therefore crowned his children, giving a beaded staff to each, and sent them out in various directions into Yorùbaland with orders that they should always pay filial obedience to their eldest brother, Qbálúfòn, whom he first crowned

as his successor. The place where these children met to confer with, and say farewell to each other before departure, was called "Ìta-àjòrò" (the place of conference), which was later contracted to "Ìtajerò."

33. YÈYÈMÒÓLÚ AND ÀTÌBÀ

According to tradition, Yèyémòólú and Àtìbà were two of the wives of Oòduà. The former was the most senior of all, who, according to custom, had the responsibility of scrupulously supervising the food and drinks to be taken by their husband. Hence, at the end of her days, Yèyémòólú was said to have been metamorphosed into a well inside the Palace—a well to which, to date, any newly-crowned Ọ̀ṣ̀ni of Ifẹ̀ is customarily "wedded" before he takes up residence in the Palace. The Ọ̀ṣ̀ni is also expected to drink only from this well and from no other.

Tradition says that once upon a time, an Ifẹ̀ warrior, on his way to Èṣ̀ṣ̀n, took with him a jar of water from the Yèyémòólú well, but at a certain place the jar fell down and the water inside gushed out only to become a river which has since then been known as the Ọ̀ṣ̀ni River" now contracted to Ọ̀ni river.

The small piece of granite right in front of the entrance to the Ifẹ̀ Museum, is said to be the metamorphosis of Àtìbà, after whom the surrounding area has since been called "Àtìbà". Tradition says she had no children.

34. Ọ̀GBỌ̀N Ọ̀YA (FORMERLY IGBÓ Ọ̀YA)

This is the quarter where the shrine of the deity Ọ̀ya is situated, but, owing to the influence of Christianity which the people in the area ardently embraced in 1899 when that religion was reintroduced into Ifẹ̀ city, the shrine has fallen into disuse.

Nevertheless, the names of the people in this area, indicating their former devotion to the worship of Ọ̀ya, still remain an eloquent testimony; e.g.:-

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Omíṣ̀oore (Omí-ṣ̀e-oore) | — | Water (of Ọ̀ya) has conferred a blessing. |
| Ọ̀yáyòmbò (Ọ̀yá-yò-mí-bò) | — | Ọ̀ya has helped me return home safely. |
| Ọ̀yáwòle (Ọ̀yá-wò-ilé) | — | Ọ̀ya has entered the house. |

- Qyáşopé (Qyá-şe-ópé) — Qya has reciprocated with thanks.
- Qyáwándé (Qyá-wá-mi-dé) — Qya is here on the look-out for me.
- Qyáyemí — Qya befits me.
- Olá-Qya — This is Qya's influence, etc. etc.

Both the Qya pool and shrine are now situated in the back yard of the writer's house at Ọgbón-Qya.

Now, according to oral tradition, Qya was the most beloved wife of Şangó, who, on the latter's death, transformed herself into a river thenceforward called 'Odò-Qya' (Qya River), now known as the River Niger. Some historians, however, say that while Şangó hanged himself at Kòso, Qya, his favourite wife, disappeared into the bosom of the earth in the town of Irá: *Qya woplè ni 'le Irá, Ọrişà-Okò woplè n'Iràwò* (Qya vanished into the bowels of the earth in the town of Irá, and Ọrişà-Okò, in the town of Iràwò).

In his *Olódúmarè, God in Yoruba Belief*, Dr. Bọlaji Idowu gave the following interesting account of Qya:-

"Şangó evidently has 'a helpmeet for him' in his wife, the goddess Qya. She is described as a fierce, bearded Amazon who is absolutely indispensable to her husband in every way. It is said that without Qya, there is nothing that Şangó can accomplish. Qya is "*Obinrin t'ò t'ori ogun da'runḡbḡn si*"—the woman who grows a beard on account of war; '*Ẹfufùlèlè ti 'da 'gi l'òkè*'—the rushing wind that tears down trees from the top; '*A-şu-'jò ma rò*'—one who causes a heavy, dark cloud but brings no rain. Her face is so terrible that none dare behold it, her wrath so devastating that it must be absolutely avoided.

Nevertheless, she is tall, comely, and can be graceful. In fact, there were sixteen rival goddesses who were competing to have Şangó for a husband: Qya won the husband from them all through her charm of personality, her grace and elegance of movement—'*Ọrişà mę-'n-di-l'-ogun ni mbę l'òdò Şangó ni 'bi k' a yan, l'Qya fi gb'òkò l'şwò wḡn.*'"

35. IYÉKÉRÉ

Iyékéré is the quarter that can best be described as the "cradle" of present-day Christianity in Ifè.

A part of Ọkèrèwè Ward, it borders on Modakéké, and there

was built the first Anglican Church (25' x 15') in 1899 when Christianity was re-introduced into Ife city for the third time.

And from this humble building, which was also used as a school, have sprung up the many primary and secondary schools and colleges, together with a University of which Ife is today very proud.



