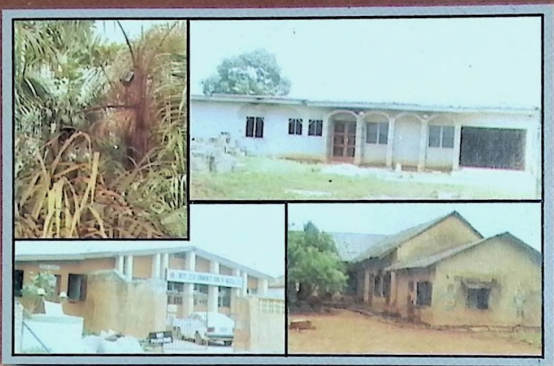


# Iwoye-Ijesa in Time Perspective



Olutayo Oşewa

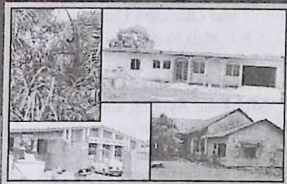
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# Iwoye-Ijesa in Time Perspective



Olutayo Oṣewa

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## Dedication

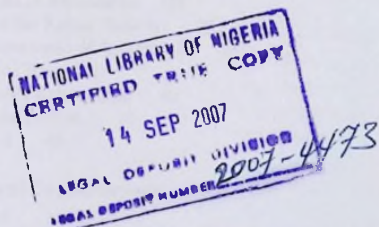
To the memories of my parents  
the late Chief Samuel Ifatunbarin Osewa  
and Madam Felicia Adewumi Osewa;  
Madam (Chief) Christiana Orewola Osewa  
and Prince Michael Adeyeye Adako  
to whom I remain eternally grateful for parental care.  
Also to my cherished friends of blessed memory:  
late Messers Jacob Olasupo Ojo Adeniran,  
Oyerinde Adewoye, Lasunkanmi Adeniyi  
and Olusesan Osayomi.  
It is also to my loving wife,  
Chief (Mrs.) Rachael Adefolahanm Osewa  
and my children – Olumide, Oludare, Niyi, Olusola,  
Mojisola, Ayodeji and Yetunde,  
and my grandchildren who are my inestimable  
and precious eternal comrades-in-life.  
Finally, to all my former students who  
are my worthy ambassadors.

# Iwoye-Ijesa in Time Perspective

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Concept Publications

Published by

**Concept Publications Ltd.**

17, Olorunsogo Street, Shomolu

P. O. Box 2516, Mushin

Lagos, Nigeria.

*e-mail*: deleconcept@yahoo.co.uk

conceptpub@lycos.com

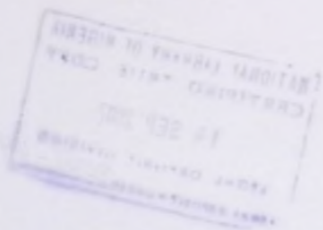
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Phone: 0803 492 8945

ISBN 978 8065 23 6

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Designed, printed and bound in Nigeria by  
Concept Publications (Press Division), Lagos.  
Phone: 0802 309 4010 & 0802 300 9444

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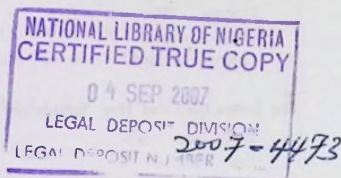
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## Foreword

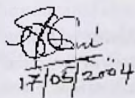
**T**HE writing of the history of Iwoye-Ijesa is a task that has been carried out with historical finesse. There is no doubt that the writing must have encountered some difficulties but the writer has shown that he has a task to perform for humanity.

The work will be a resource material for people who are interested in knowing much about the founding fathers of this ancient town and their contemporaries. The materials have been well arranged and this book is a complete history of the ancient town.

I have no doubt in my mind that it will help straighten some otherwise distorted and reveal hidden facts. It will also encourage others to dig further into their historical past.

This book, *Iwoye-Ijesa in Time Perspective* has clearly shown the close bond of association and friendship between Iwoye-Ijesa and her numerous neighbours. Everyone stands to gain something from this historical work.

It is a book worthy of owning and reading by all and sundry, irrespective of places of origin, and I sincerely recommend it to the general reading public.



**Oba Philip Ogundare Oni (JP)**  
*Abigiasoloko II, (ACIS, ASCA, ACII)*  
*Oniwoye of Iwoye-Ijesa*

## Preface

**I**N writing this book, I am eternally grateful to many people, especially past High Chiefs of Iwoye-Ijesa, who were the custodians of our cherished tradition and culture. I drank deep from their wealth of knowledge. Such great men included Chief Priest Ojo Apasaka, the Obalorisa of Iwoye-Ijesa who died in 1967; High Chief Okundare, the Aro of Iwoye-Ijesa; Chief Gabriel Adeoye Fadayiro, the Ejemu of Iwoye-Ijesa; High Chief Samuel Gbelee, the Odofin of Iwoye-Ijesa; Chief Samuel Ojo Olutayo, the Loja of Itegun in Iwoye-Ijesa; High Chief Emmanuel Ifatunbarin Opemuyi, the Risa of Iwoye-Ijesa; Oba Samuel Adeboye *Ogbedumole II*, the Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa; and, of course, Chief James Olarewaju Onibokun, the Sapaye Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa. May their souls rest in perfect peace.

Among the legends are Chief Gabriel Falade Oginni, the (late) Legbesa of Iwoye-Ijesa, Chief Samuel Adewumi, the Risa Legbewa Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa who is still living, and Chief Michael Olowoyeye, the (late) Aloro Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa. The great role of the Military Governor of the former Western Region of Nigeria, Brigadier (later Major-General) David Medayese Jemibewon (rtd), who is really a patron in bringing / opening up Iwoye-Ijesa to governmental development and modernity is without parallel. We are grateful to them all.

The works of authors like Chief J. E. Egharevba, *The History of Benin*; Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*; J. O. Oni, *History of Ijesaland* and pamphleteers, too numerous to be mentioned for lack of space, are among the various authorities consulted.

This book has been treated thematically for a clearer understanding

of such a work that spanned centuries. Chapter 1, the introduction, gives an insight into the people's background and geographical location of Iwoye-Ijesa. Chapter 2 is on Atakumosa Dynasty, and the highlights of the work of this great administrator, the first Oba of Iwoye-Ijesa who later became the seventh Owa Obokun of Ijesaland. He pooled the conglomerate settlements to form what later became known as Iwoye-Ijesa. The administrative set-up which dated from the period of Atakumosa in the sixteenth century is treated in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 examines traditional religious worship in the town with emphasis on Okun worship.

The relationship between Iwoye-Ijesa and her immediate neighbours is the focus of Chapter 5, while the Yoruba civil wars of the latter part of the nineteenth century has been treated in Chapter 6. This formed a watershed which brought Islam, one of the two most important world religions, to this part of the world. Chapter 7 treats Islam and Christianity and their influences on Iwoye-Ijesa. Influence of Christianity brought western education, the main theme of Chapter 8, through which formal educational institutions were established in the town.

The turn of events was the founding of modern social organisations and societies which were to play important roles in the annals of the town. These led to the founding of societies like the *Egbe Atunluse* (the Iwoye-Ijesa Improvement Union) which later transformed to the Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants Union (I.D.U.), and the Iwoye-Ijesa Progressive Union (IPU) which has been the pioneering society of the educated elite and the 'Think Tank' of the town as it were. Others like the Iwoye-Ijesa Boys and Girls' Club, Iwoye-Ijesa Social Elites (ISE), Iwoye-Ijesa Club '79, the Young Sisters' Club and the Iwoye-Ijesa Christian Ladies League, are highlighted in Chapter 9.

Chapter 10 comments on the social, economic and political strides of Iwoye-Ijesa in the new dispensation. This has necessitated the change in the title of the book which transforms it from a purely historical work to something meant for the consumption of the generality of

people irrespective of disciplines.

Time, the modifier and influencer of things, has changed the topic from the *History of Iwoye-Ijesa* to *Iwoye-Ijesa in Time Perspective*. This has mellowed down the dullness of history and has upgraded it to a contemporary work easily digestible for any person with keen interest in the welfare of his fellow men and his environment.

It is hoped that this will make the work more comprehensive and up to date. And thus it will attract the attention of all and sundry and make everybody have the opportunity of reading it.



**Chief Olu Osewa**  
Risawe of Iwoye-Ijesa  
Edaikhen Okunato Lodge  
Olu Osewa Avenue  
Iwoye-Ijesa

## Acknowledgements

**S**INCE this work commenced casually as a mere academic exercise in 1967, a lot of encouragement has been received from my professional training as a historian, to the stage of being a teacher of teachers in my discipline.

I want to appreciate first, thousands of my students from the secondary school level to Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo and the former Oyo State College of Education (now Osun State College of Education), Ilesa and its former annexes, especially the pioneering history students of the Colleges of Education in Oyo, Ibadan and Iwo, and all the students who, one way or the other shared some lecture hours with me (no matter how short). They inspired me with words of appreciation for the thankless lecture work that transpired over three decades, even as they are now comfortably engaged in their different callings in life.

Many people with whom I have interacted in all spheres in life are among the myriads of associates who helped to formulate and refashion me and my work. Man surely does not live in isolation of others. The moral and academic contributions of Pa. Revd B. F. Adeniji, my history lecturer at Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo (1967-1969) and his fatherly role during my short sojourn as a lecturer under him in the College's History Department (1977-1978) had a great impact on my life.

Also immensely appreciated is Dr. (now Professor) Victor Yoloye, formerly of the University of Lagos (Unilag), and his family, who freely housed me in their quarters for eight out of my nine terms of stay at Unilag (1972 – 1975). I recall, especially the Professor's words of encouragement during the troubled and heady days of my studentship,

to the effect that hope is never lost to a willing mind. It reinforces my belief that all good one can render to a poor student is not lost but becomes part of mother history.

The sleepy period of over a decade when this work was in the doldrums has been part of the bitter experiences of the art. The proddings of my friend, Mr. Oladele Oladunjoye, who safely kept the diskette for over a decade and a half without losing patience with me, further supplied the pep that stimulated my interest in accomplishing the work. His constant reminder on providing appropriate pictorial illustrations and contemporary matters prove valid and valuable. Further still, the unflinching support given to me by Prince Abimbola Onibokun gave me hope that behind every troubled and darkened evening lies the glorious and happy morning. The Venerable Reuben A. Olubanjo Oshewa has proved to be a brother in a billion. He has been a pillar of support, morally and financially just as I was also encouraged by my cousin, Prince D. Tunji Fakoya. They are all part of the wonderful forces behind the actualization of this work.

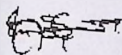
My great regards also to the staff of Concept Publications, Lagos: especially those at the editorial and pre-press departments for their patience and thoroughness in dealing with the raw manuscript till it matured into this elegant product. I am grateful to Evangelist Mrs. F. B. Ojo-Aromokudu for supplying pictures of late High Chief Emmanuel Ifatunbarin Opemuyi, the Risa of Iwoye-Ijesa with other Iwoye-Ijesa High Chiefs at the 1992 Iwoye-Ijesa Day celebration.

My period of tutelage as Chief Risawe of Iwoye-Ijesa the second in the hierarchy of Ihare chiefs, further opened my subconscious mind to the need to finish the abandoned work. No knowledge is lost and, even after retirement from active government service, one still has much to contribute to one's community, one way or the other. The Oniwoye-in-Council encouraged me to use my expertise as an historian and a social animal. This further rekindled in me the urge to complete the work even now that things were getting too expensive for a work like this.

Nature, the master of all living things, has a way of stopping its objects. Many of the people whom I interacted with in the process of gathering materials are now resting peacefully. Their information are materials I carefully treasure in my privileged archive and constantly refer to in my privacy. I owe them all a lot on this work.

To all my friends, students and other well-wishers, this work would further be a source of inspiration. Anybody who has not said 'good night' can still effectively contribute to an on-going debate. We are all partners in progress and I am proud of you all. For all these reasons, everybody must strive to act well his part as long as he is still actively disposed to doing so.

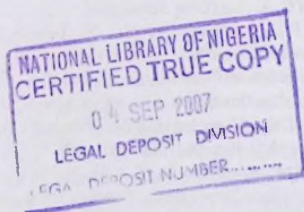
I take full responsibility for all the distilled records, views and /or mistakes in this book, and I do not intend to ascribe any error of omission or commission to any of the people that I have deservedly acknowledged in this book.



**Chief Olu Osewa**

Iwoye-Ijesa

August 2004



## Photo Credits

The author gratefully acknowledges the sources of the photographs and maps provided in this book – the sources are printed italics in brackets. Those on pages 21, 68 (house), 71, 76, 99, 104, 119, 124, 131, 132, 142, 144 (IICB), 147 and 150 are supplied by the author.

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The Ven. R. A. O. Oshewa (*A church programme*)  
Prof. A. G. Onibokun (*Prof. Onibokun*)

# 1

## Introduction

**B**Y the 1963 Nigerian census, Iwoye-Ijesa had an estimated population of 4,860. This made her the thirteenth largest town in what was then known as the Ijesa Northern District Council, later the Obokun Local Government Council, which is now made up of two local government council areas, namely: Obokun and Oriade. Today, Iwoye-Ijesa is one of the towns in the Oriade Local Government Council area of Osun State of Nigeria.

Even though with a relatively small population compared with some other Yoruba towns, Iwoye-Ijesa has a very rich and enviable historical past. This has been depicted in the great services of the worthy citizens and the great local historians who have made this work possible. Where is Iwoye-Ijesa in the first place?

### Location

The town is located some eleven kilometres to the north-east of Ilesa, the capital of Ijesaland. It is less than a half kilometre from Ijebu-Jesa, the headquarters of Oriade Local Government to the south-east direction. Situated on a well-drained plateau, it can be approached from all directions as it is situated on a hill with its peak at the palace area and dips gently in all directions to the surrounding water-filled troughs. From Ijebu-Jesa, one descends a hill into the Okun depression before ascending the hill to reach Iwoye-Jesa. From Esa-Oke to the north-east, one descends sharply into the Eriru valley and crosses an alluvial plain before ascending to Iwoye-Ijesa. To the northern side

on Esa-Odo road lies the Ogburuu river located just at the foot of a steep hill. The Esa-Odo end of the approach is a more gentle slope. This is the exact opposite of the Eriru end. From Ere, to the north-west, the approach is similar to the Eriru side i.e. a sharp descent from the hill then an alluvial plain where the Agboja river passes through before another ascent to the Barebare hill.

The plateau is well-drained and, from every approach to the town, one passes through water-filled depressions before ascending to Iwoye-Ijesa. From Ijebu-Jesa is the Okun depression known as 'Ipara-Okun' or Okun groove; at the Itegun end is the Orokin depression where the Orokin, a source of drinking water to a part of Ijebu-Jesa, is located. Eriru river, which flows from Ijebu-Jesa, is on the Esa-Oke approach. This same Eriru is known as Olikoto on the northern approach from the Iraye forest end where the Iwanus formerly resided. On the Esa Odo end, the same river is known as Ogburuu but it receives its tributary called Osun Oko or Osun Iraye before approaching the main road. It was also joined by the Olobirinla<sup>1</sup> stream before crossing the main road. The Agboja depression lies to the Isimosan end, while the Agboja stream also supplies water to parts of Ijebu-Jesa from where it took its source.

Thick jungles with gigantic trees surround the town and traces of these can still be found today, especially on the Eriru, Esa Odo and Ere approaches of Iwoye-Ijesa. The whole place is well-secured naturally. Man-made security devices: (troughs) known as 'yaara' (trenches) or 'odi' (i.e. defensive walls) can still be found on all ends. On the Ijebu-Jesa side is a double trough. One is located just in front of the St. Matthew's School 'A', Ijebu-Jesa which separates Iwoye-Ijesa from Ijebu-Jesa while an inner trough is at Idofin Street just after the Osunta shrine. The trough at the Eriru end runs into the Ogburuu sector. The latter passes through the back of the St. Thomas' Primary School, Iwoye Ijesa to join the Agboja before finally running into the Oni River.

The continuous trough 'rings-in' the whole town. In the olden days there were gates where gatemen kept watch for possible intruders

On such a gate located at the Iloro Street-end leading to Ere was where the ancient Leogan, the town-crier lived. The gates were often locked at night for the safety of the inmates of the town.

## People

Originally, the people were of the same Ijesa stock of the Yoruba race. They were brought to the same venue through the activities of the powerful Atakumosa, the first Loja<sup>2</sup> of Iwoye-Ijesa. Even the Ila and Itegun who were immigrants from Ila-Orangun and Aramoko-Ekiti respectively are now fully acculturated with their host, the Ijesas, in Iwoye-Ijesa. The Odogo people who could not utilise their own lot moved away to Ijebu-Jesa where they are now settled. They hailed from Ilawe-Ekiti.

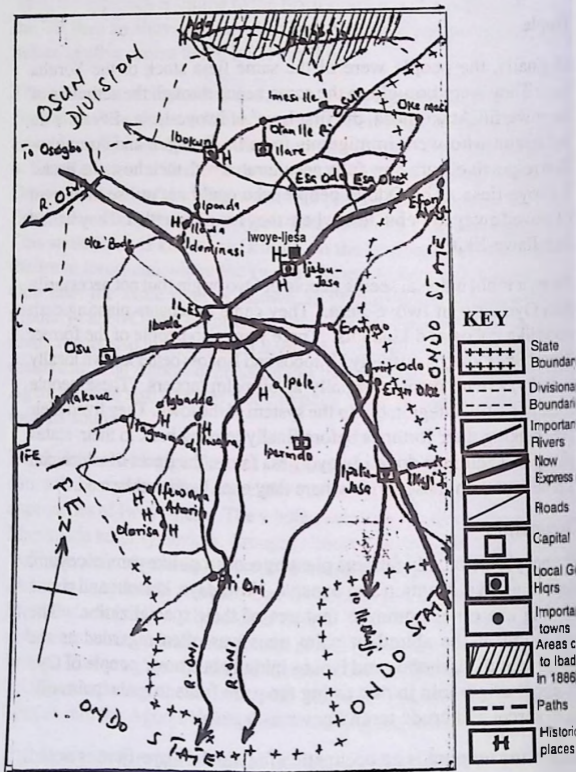
Today, it is not unusual seeing people of Oyo origin (but not necessarily from Oyo city) in Iwoye-Ijesa. They came as tenants planting cash crops like cocoa and kolanuts. There were also people of the former Bendel State origin – usually Urhobos and Isokos (better known locally as *Isobo*) – who came originally as oil-palm tappers. These people never got fully integrated into the system of the town. They lived their lives making their fortunes before finally moving back to their states of origin. Their huts dotted Iwoye-Ijesa farms, the traces of which can still be found on these farms where they once lived and farmed.

## Occupation

The people are mostly farmers planting root crops like yam, cocoyam, maize, cassava, plantain and banana. Nowadays, kolanut and cocoa farming are other common features of their specialization. The harvesting of the abundant palm trees was often regarded as the preserve of the Urhobos and Isokos initially but, now, people of Oyo (Yoruba) origin join in harvesting the palm fruits to make palm oil, palm kernel and crude torch known as '*oguso*'.

**Palm-wine tapping** is an occupation for which Iwoye-Ijesa is noted. Palm-wine is got from raffia palm (*palmyra palm*) whose fruit '*okoro*'

Location of Iwoye-Ijesa in Ijesaland



Source: Adapted from *History of Ijesaland* by J. O. Oni, p. 11

was imported to Iwoje-Ijesa during Atakumosa's period in the sixteenth century. On arrival from Benin, the fruits were dropped at the swamp areas on the Agboja stream along Ere road <sup>4</sup>. Today, 'ogoro', as the whitish raffia palm juice is called, is a drink highly relished by both male and female, and by natives and strangers alike. 'Ogoro Iwoye' is always the 'catchword' for people who want the best in taste. Palm-wine bars in Iwoye-Ijesa are patronised on daily basis by people from far and near. It is now a common feature for palm-wine sellers in Ilesa to advertise with Ogoro Iwoye on their sign posts.

**Farming** takes the people faraway into Iwoye-Ijesa lands outside the township confines. Such farmlands are known as 'oke-oko' i.e. faraway farms as against the ones situated near the town. These are called 'oko odo ule' or 'oko-etile' i.e. the nearby farm. People used to sleep at the 'oke oko' where they built huts with rooms and return at weekends.



Raffia Palm (*Igi Ogoro*)

**Trading** is a gainful occupation of the people. As Ijesas, Iwoye-Ijesa citizens partook in the ancient trading system of the historically-famed 'osomaalo'. This took the traders, usually in textile materials, to faraway towns and cities like Ibadan, Iwo, Iseyin, Oyo, Ikare and even the northern Nigerian towns, plying their trade. Iwoye-Ijesa traders made their marks in Ibadan and Iseyin in Oyo State and at Ikirun in Osun State. Many of them even settled at Ilorin in the present-day Kwara State.

The *osomaalo* trading system had been responsible for bringing enlightenment and economic consciousness and, later, political

awareness, to the town and its people. The people are still to be found today in the major Yoruba-speaking states of Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ogun, Lagos, Ekiti, Kogi and Kwara peacefully transacting their business. They also reach the northern Nigerian towns including Kaduna, Kafanchan, Minna and overseas. Many Nigerian big towns have become their 'operational areas.'

Western education and the introduction of white-collar jobs have changed the job-orientation of the people. The 'movers' of the community today are mostly products of this new dispensation. Educated Iwoye-Ijesa indigenes are now to be found in all areas of endeavour, viz: teaching and government services, even in trading, religious and military services, apart from private professional and business concerns.

### **Politics**

Iwoye-Ijesa has its own stint of politics under the present Nigerian dispensation. Early in the 1950s when partisan politics was introduced, Iwoye-Ijesa politicians readily came into the limelight. The leading citizens were card-carrying members of the NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons), which later changed to the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens. Leading among the Iwoye-Ijesa politicians then were Pa Aaron Adejuwon Oladunjoye, who on the platform of the NCNC became the first elected councillor in Iwoye-Ijesa. Pa Chief Emmanuel Opemuyi who later became the High Chief Risa Iwoye-Ijesa was another strong NCNC member. They all allied with Pa B. O. Orioke, then the NCNC leader in Ijebu-Jesa.

Among the Action Group (AG) supporters was Prince J. Olarewaju Onibokun, a dispenser and the son of the traditional ruler. Though a civil servant, he was in the ruling party (the Action Group).

As time went on, the Action Group garnered enough supporters to displace the NCNC. This was because the party had been warmly embraced by the then Ijesa North section of Ijesa Divisional Council. Men like Pa D. L. Ajayi of Ibokun, Pa J. O. Lawanson from Ere Ijesa, Pa Olamijulo from Imesi-Ile, Pa M. O. Oni from Ijebu-Jesa and the

then *Ogboni* of Ijebu-Jesa, Oba Kuye Arojojoye II were all Action Group members. The pendulum of politics in Iwoye-Ijesa swung to the Action Group side in opposition to what was the case with Ilesa which was predominantly NCNC.

It must be noted that by this time, Ijesa land had become so politically polarized between the NCNC and the AG patron. Ilesa and the rest of present day Atakumosa veered towards the NCNC while the then Ijesa North, made up of the present-day Obokun and Oriade Local Governments, was massively for the governing party, the Action Group.

In the sixties, the AG had displaced the NCNC in the Ijesa North politics and Iwoye-Ijesa became a stronghold of the party. The Action Group crisis of 1962 however threw a wedge into the political wheel in the then Western Region. Although the party still retained its mass followings in Ijesa North, the incarceration of its leaders, especially Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Pa J. O. Lawanson and others in alliance with NCNC or NNDP resulted in the emergence of the United People's Party (UPP) which went into alliance with the NCNC. Iwoye-Ijesa remained a strong Action Group base despite the fact that Chief J. O. Onibokun one of its leading sons, being a government worker, was in alliance with the UPP and the NCNC which later formed the NNDP (the Nigerian National Democratic Party) into which the Akintola-faction of the Action Group and the Fani-Kayode faction of the NCNC had dissolved.

The bitter political rivalries between the two great alliances, the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) and the Nigeria National Alliance (NNA) had its impact on the people of the then Western Region in general and Iwoye-Ijesa in particular. It resulted in unhealthy relations, which ushered in the operation '*weti e*' episode in the region. The operation however did not extend to Iwoye-Ijesa as no house was destroyed nor was anybody molested, though the infamous operation fever was felt by the people.

The resultant military intervention in the Nigerian political scene had its impact on the town and its people. Many Iwoye-Ijesa sons were drafted into the army and partook of the civil war. The political alignment did not change however, when in 1979 a new democratic dispensation emerged. Iwoye-Ijesa, like most of the towns in Ijesa North found herself in the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. One of its sons, Barrister Abiodun Onibokun was a frontliner both in the old AG and the new UPN, He was however based in Ilesa which marred his political ascendancy in Ijesa North.

Since this time, the political pendulum has swung along the same line as the majority of Osun State indigenes. The town was in full support of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) during the Babangida era. Hon. Jon. Onibokun an Iwoye-Ijesa indigene was voted as the Chairman of Oriade Local Government during the zero-party option of that regime before the coming of the present political dispensation featuring the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), among others.

Iwoye also voted solidly for the Alliance for Democracy, which ushered in the Adebisi Akande regime in 1979. The pendulum however swung to the People's Democratic Party in the recently-conducted elections for the second coming of President Olusegun Obasanjo. This saw the election of Governor (Prince) Olagunsoye Oyinlola of Osun State. The PDP councillor in the Oriade Local Government, Hon. Sunday Ategbero was also elected.

## End Notes

1. This was so named because of the muddy nature of the stream which made it rather difficult for married men to escape with their wives, especially during the Oyo invasion. Many of such married men perished in the mud as they were beheaded by their Oyo pursuers, hence the name 'Olobirinkolagunja' or 'Olobirinla.'

2. 'Loja' in Ijesa means the 'owner of the market.' This used to be the title of Owa princes who were sent to rule in the villages surrounding Ilesa. They were the eyes of their father in such areas, hence they owed allegiance first to their royal father on the throne at Ilesa. It soon became synonymous with 'Oba', ruler, for which it was easily interchanged.
3. Bendel State was the former name for the present Edo (Benin) and Delta States of Nigeria.
4. This was the place where the palmyra tree from which the raffia palm is tapped, first grew in Iwoye-Ijesa.

## 2

### Founding of Iwoye-Ijesa

IWOYE-IJESA is an ancient settlement whose founding is as old as Ijesa history. It was one of the primordial Ijesa settlements, and predated the Owa Obokun dynasty which was founded by Owa Obokun Ajibogun who reigned between 1150 and 1255 A.D.

In his movements after leaving Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yorubas, after the great dispersal, Owa Ajibogun left for Igbadae and moved to other places pursuing his brothers before getting to a place where he was attacked and he or one of his followers was wounded. This attack he regarded as a horrible incident. As a result, he called this terrible and bloody incident "*eemo*". He said he saw "*emimo*" or "*eemo*", hence the place was called "Erinmo" i.e. the place where Ajibogun saw "*emimo*", the place where he fought and he or one of his follower got wounded.

On leaving the place, he journeyed to a place where the blood from the wound which was received at Erinmo stopped. That place was called 'Ijeda' because the gushing blood stopped there. Continuing the journey further, they reached another place where blood gushed out from the wound again. He said "*ije*" or "*eje bu.*" (*Ije* or *eje* means blood in Ijesa dialect). That place was called *Ijebu* (Ijebu Jesa). Owa Ajibogun and his entourage moved from the place to nearby settlement then known as "Ile Owuro" i.e. the first or earliest settlement. There, the wound was treated with water drawn from the nearby Oni river. After a short while, the wounded fully recovered his wound got healed. This place he called "*Ibi Awoye*" i.e. the place where he was finally healed. This was corrupted to "*Iwoye*", the name by which this ancient town, "*Ile Owuro*" is now called.

This settlement which later became known as Iwoye had been in existence before Ajibogun's arrival. It was then called Ile Owuro. Today, the term "*Iwoye, Ile Owuro*" is used when referring to any eventful occurrence in the town.

Other successors of Ajibogun on the Owa stool were Owa Owoka Okile (1260-1358 A.D.); Owa Obara (1360-1459); Owa Owari (1466-1520); and Owa Owaluse (1522-1526). Owaluse was succeeded by Owa Atakumosa (1526-1546) and many other Owas from his dynasty.

### **Atakumosa Dynasty**

Before becoming the Owa Obokun, Prince Atakumosa was a reputed hunter and a great medicineman (*babalawo*). He used to cure all sorts of ailments including guinea worm, ring worm etc. He was equally aided by water got from River Oni which was generally believed by Iwoye-Ijesa citizens to contain curative ingredients for all ailments. Atakumosa, a great hunter, came to hunt for wathogs or bush pigs from the jungles surrounding the settlement.

By the time of Atakumosa's arrival, the settlement, 'Ile Owuro', had dwindled in size and number. This was because the settlement had experienced some destruction following a three-year siege by hostile Oyo marauders. Though unconquered, the settlement was a shadow of its old self. People deserted it. The core of the settlement was located at Isimosan quarters where Atakumosa found three huts belonging to Asaba, Loode (the head hunter), and Esemo. Asaba was the oldest and the most powerful. They reared poultry and practised some farming.

This same settlement was the one which the founder of Ijebu-Jesa, Numoogun, a hunter from the present-day Okenisa quarters, the core of Ijebu-Jesa met on one of his usual hunting expeditions. The Asaba, being the oldest, and also the bravest, was their leader. He was known as "*Asaba*" or "*A sa ba a*" that is, "we rushed to him for refuge." This meant that Asaba was the pillar of salvation for the people from external attacks.

Hunter Numoogun, on seeing the flames from the direction of the trio of Asaba, Esemó, and Loode, cut a path along Ere road to the place. On getting there, he marvelled at the seemingly strange well-cut wide path which he came across. He enquired from Asaba "*Ugba si o san?*" Meaning, "when did you clear this place?" Asaba replied: "*Eeesi mo san.*" Literally, "I cleared it just last year." This expression: "*E esi mo san*", had been corrupted to "*Isimosan.*" This is the current name of the oldest street in Iwoye-Ijesa. The road which Atakumosa took to Isimosan is known as "*Ona Owuro*", i.e. the earliest path or road. This is the road linking Idofin Street with Isimosan Street. It is the usual route taken by any newly-installed Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa on entering Iwoye-Ijesa from Ilesa, the seat of the Owa-Obokun.

Atakumosa made important fetishes, '*esi*', at Iwoye<sup>2</sup>. One was near his place of settlement where he planted a tree, '*ayan.*' This is called "*Esi Idi-Ayan.*" This '*esi*' was refashioned with cement concrete in 1929 during the reign of Loja, Oba Ifatureti Asubiojo and became the '*Apataki Idi Ayan.*' It was later removed during the reign of Loja, Oba Adeboye when the road leading to Esa Odo from Iwoye-Ijesa was being expanded and modernised in the mid-1950s.

Another of such '*esi*' is in the Loja's palace. This is the '*Esi Olode*' where chiefs are installed. Another with an iron chain is located in the market square. There is yet another in front of the Risawoye's palace at Odoye. He made another at Isimosan. It now lies in front of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church (the old building).

The main motive behind these medicinal landmarks (*esi*) was to attract people to his new settlement and to ward off evils. The *apataki* at Idi-Ayan and the Ayan tree which Atakumosa planted led to Iwoye-Ijesa people being called:

*"Omo Alayan ru jeje bi elu*  
*Omo Ayan to ru fun won pete okun n'Iwoye*  
*Omo Alayan to ya pakala mefa*  
*Meta rojo ale, meji rekanse owuro*  
*Okan kekere re ba agba Iwoye pinhun*"<sup>3</sup>

This means:

*"The son of Ayan tree with its evergreen leaves;  
The sprouting of which forewarns the okun festival in Iwoye;  
The Ayan with six branches;  
Three of which pointed to the west; two to the east  
While the smallest branch  
had a pledge with Iwoye elders".*

The *esi* at Isimosan had its own unique role. It was said to have been made with an old man. For some reasons, nobody could pass by it carrying two things at the same time without dropping one for the *esi*. Again, it was forbidden of anyone to hold on to a chewing stick while passing by as the passer-by must drop it. This is why the *esi* is always referred to as "*esi ko f'aileyin lenu ke e beere arunbo,*" meaning, "the toothless *esi* which demands of the stump or remnant of chewing sticks from passers-by". Pounding yam late in the evening at the Isimosan quarters is forbidden. Isimosan people are often referred to as:

*"Omo elesi agbada mo yoko  
Omo elesi o ri sigi poo loru  
Esi ke jogun jule Isimosan lule Oniwoye Oja  
Omo elesi keje kan mu ohun meji boko n'Isimosan  
Ki an mu ohun meji boko esi a gba kan re"*

This literally means:

"Isimosan dweller, the son of the *esi* who collects the farmer's cutlass without ever venturing to go to the farm; the *esi* which forbids the cutting of firewoods late in the night; the *esi* which disallows people from bringing two items at a time from the farm to Isimosan for he has to collect one of such articles; the *esi* which protects Isimosan from the ravages of wars."

Until recently, the taboo was strictly observed that there should be no pounding of yams at night at Isimosan. A common saying for anybody in Odoye who yearned for late night food was, "*Arebipa Odoye ke e*

*reti odo Isimosan*," meaning "the glutton from Odoye quarters who kept his ears to the ground for the sound of mortar and pestle at Isimosan" (usually late in the night).

### *Atakumosa and Leogan*

Leogan Alakarigidi (Alakarigi) was another of the earliest dwellers of what later became known as Iwoye-Ijesa. He lived on the way to Ere where he made his farms at 'Idi Ose Igbao', the foot of the baobab tree. His farmland was situated immediately between the River Agboja and the River Barebare. He specialised in basket-weaving, and was the gatekeeper – '*onibode*' and town crier. He was ordered by Atakumosa to draw a rope from Idi Ayan along Esa-Odo road to mark the extent of the new town. Atakumosa meant big for his settlement, no doubt because of the wonders which he received there. He wanted to repay this in kind.

Leogan took his orders but got drunk around Ita Ila i.e. Ila junction. He therefore slept off. The Ila junction was located around the gate of the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School. It was finally removed when the school was founded in 1976.

On the following day, Atakumosa ordered his servants to trace how far Leogan had pulled the rope. Leogan was, however, discovered fast asleep and snoring. On being woken up, he enquired why his peace was being disturbed when he was not indebted to anybody. The junction near his place of sleep has been named and known as '*Itameje*' or '*Itameje-lesinrin*' till today.

In annoyance, for not fulfilling his orders, Atakumosa cursed Leogan and his generations. Alakarigidi, the Leogan, died without any issue. His successor, Leogan Aragba Abidirere<sup>4</sup> also died childless. Others were later contacted to assume the post of Leogan but they refused just because the former holders of the title did not make it. One of those approached was Ajewole Odu who bluntly refused. Ever since, the title of Leogan has been scrapped in Iwoye-Ijesa and replaced with Leesa

To nick-name anybody as Leogan in the town is now seen so demeaning to that fellow who is seen as a never-do-well person.

### *Contributions of Atakumosa*

The coming of Atakumosa was an important landmark in Iwoye-Ijesa. He made medicinal mounds, 'esi' through which he invited others to his new settlement. Some of the people so invited were the Iwanu. They lived in the Iraye bush off the Olikoto stream under their leader – Enurin. The Iwanus were blacksmiths. They were referred to as:

*“Iwanu omo awanu wa tore  
Omo Aleerokuku - Lugbo Iraye  
Omo ejo kan teere Igbo Iraye a bogbe yanyan”*

Literally meaning:

*Iwanu the free giver  
The son of the blacksmith from Iraye jungle  
The son of a long snake with red scalp.*

When the Iwanus came, they enquired from Atakumosa what he wanted of them and why he had called them. Atakumosa replied: “*Edo finfin ni mo fi pe yin.*” Literally, “I called you with good intentions or open mind”. From then, the title of the leader of the Iwanus was called ‘Odofin’ which was coined from “Odo finfin” or “*Edo finfin.*”<sup>5</sup> Odofin was thus made the second-in-rank to Atakumosa. He remained so until the arrival of Udagba Feyinlako who later became the Risa Iwoye.

The Iwanus settled at what later became *Odooye* and the *Agbede* streets.<sup>6</sup> Signs of their black-smithing are to be found in the big stones that still litter *Odooye* and *Agbede* streets today. The stones were said to have been rolled down from their base at Iraye to their present locations.

Atakumosa also sent High Chief Aro to Efon to bring the Okun effigy to Iwoye. He did this because he wanted to create a unifying object of worship for the new settlement. During Atakumosa's reign, as a result of the medication which he made, other people came to Iwoye-Ijesa to settle. They included the Ilas from Ila Orangun. They were

led by their leader, Orangun Ijofi,<sup>7</sup> they were settled at the Odo Ila quarters of the town.

Another group was the Itegun whose home base was Aramoko but who formerly settled at Ipole-Ila near the Idofins of Esa-Oke. They were settled at the Itegun sector by Atakumosa,<sup>8</sup> They were accommodated by the Risa Iwoye (or Risawoye) who became their landlord. Risa of Iwoye sent them to Obalomo, his aide, to allocate a space to them. Both Iilas and Iteguns arrived the same day. Iilas arrived in the morning while Iteguns came later in the evening. Odogo people arrived the following morning and were housed at the Odo Osun sector of Iloro Street of Isimosan quarters.

Odogos later moved enmasse to the present Odogo in Ijebu-Jesa for reasons best known to them. Odogos were from Ilawe-Ekiti in the present day Ekiti State of Nigeria.

#### *Founding of the Ruling Dynasty*

Atakumosa established a ruling dynasty in Iwoye-Ijesa in the sixteenth century. He was the first Loja of Iwoye. His descendants had been ruling Iwoye-Ijesa since then. The Lojas in Iwoye are often referred to as '*Eketa Omo Owa*', i.e. the third in the line of Owa's descendants or children in the whole of Ijesaland. His seniors in rank are the Awara and the Akinyinwa, while Lilerin, Loja Odo and Lisabe or Lisagbe were the other Agbe owners i.e. Alagbe in descending order.

Today, there are six ruling houses in Iwoye-Ijesa. These are from the same Atakumosa stock. They are:

- (1) Asubiojo
- (2) Alagbara
- (3) Ogbedumole
- (4) Abigiasoloko
- (5) Aribadewu
- (6) Otokobo

All of them belong to the Omo Owa group in Iwoye-Ijesa<sup>9</sup>.



Oba Adedayo Ifaturoti Asubiojo  
Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa, (1897-1933)



Oba David Ariwodola Joseph  
Onibokun, *Alagbara Igba Ogbele II*  
(died 15 March 1952)



Oba Samuel Adeboye *Ogbedumole II*.  
Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa (1952-1990)



Oba Philip Ogundare Oni (J.P.)  
*Abigiasoloko II (ACIS, ASCA, ACII)*  
Oniwoye of Iwoye-Ijesa

Selection to fill the vacant stool is done rotationally among these six ruling houses. From Ogbedumole, the last immediate ruler, it is possible to trace succession rights to Abigiasoloko, Otokobo, Aribadewu, Asubiojo and Alagbara then to Ogbedumole Houses in that order (see Appendix 4 on page 159).

Situation seemed to be favourable to the first four Iwoye-Ijesa Lojas i.e., Atakumosa, his son, Owooro, Atabialaba, and Agabielesin until Adegboyega came. Adegboyega had an Odogo mother for whom eating of corn or any corn-allied foodstuff was forbidden because of their Orin festival which they brought from Ilawe-Ekiti, their original home<sup>10</sup>.

It was said that one day Adegboyega went on a royal visit to the Owa (his father) at Ilesa on the invitation of the Owa. He was accompanied as usual by the Legberun. On getting to the palace, the Owa offered him 'ori' meal or 'eko' and pretended to go to the inner room. True to expectation, the Loja refused and passed it to his Legberun. When the Owa came from the inner room, he met the Legberun and not the Loja eating the 'eko'. He asked why the Loja was not eating 'ori'. Loja replied that it was a forbidden food for his mother's side. The Owa looked surprised because there was no such taboo in his own root. He asked whether Adegboyega was truly his son and the latter replied affirmatively. Legberun had by then finished eating the 'ori.'

The Owa then told the Legberun to return to the palace in three days' time. Before the appointed date, information had reached the Loja that he was about to be deposed and replaced. On the appointed day, the Legberun went to the Owa with his people and was installed as the Loja of Iwoye. He was accompanied back to Iwoye-Ijesa by royal messengers and trumpeters from the Owa's palace. Adegboyega heard news of the approach of the new Loja who was to replace him. As the new Loja and his entourage were approaching Iwoye-Ijesa, Adegboyega fled through the back door to Odogo, his mother's sector. The Legberun who became the Loja was named Loja Otokobo i.e. '*Otokobo ko rijorijo*' meaning, "someone who arrived from the farm

fully attired". He was the grandfather of late chiefs Michael Olowoyeye and David Abu of Iloro sector of Isimosan quarters. Thus, the reign of Adegboyega ended in deposition<sup>11</sup> (see Appendix 5).

Abigiasoloko was the Igodan or Adanri family. The title-holder was so named because he was a great planter of cotton, hence his appellation "*Abigiasoloko riworiwo*" meaning, "the man with plenty of cotton plants on his farm". Hence *Abigiasolokoriworiwo, a bowo owu woroworo legan*" was the full appellation.

Ogbedumole was the Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa during the Kiriji wars in Yorubaland<sup>12</sup>. After him was Borisade, the son of an Oniyinta. Iyinta is a small village on the way to Iwara in the present-day Atakumosa East Local Government Area of Osun State. Borisade fled Iyinta<sup>13</sup> after an incident involving his father, the Oniyinta, and the Ilesa High Chiefs. He later became the Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa. He had a quarrel involving one important chief in the town (Iwoye-Ijesa) who was also from the Owa stock.

The aggrieved chief mounted a chase and had Loja Borisade killed in his palace while sitting in full regalia. The chief hid himself in '*Ile Ailoju*', i.e. the room without any outlet. The erring chief was bundled to Ilesa on the orders of the Owa and thrown into the '*agbe*' the dungeon, as the prison custody before being executed on the orders of the Owa.<sup>14</sup>

Loja Ifatureti, alias Asubiojo i.e. *Asubiojopokunrin* (1884-1933), was a strong military man. He was a colleague of Ogedengbe, the generalissimo of the Ekiti Parapo confederal forces. He was referred to as "*Asiwaju Ogun*" i.e. the leader of the forces or leader on the battlefield. Ogedengbe made him the Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa just as he made Agunsoye the Ogboni or Oba of Ijebu-Jesa, Uruogobi the Ogboni i.e. Oba of Ibokun and Oluwo the Aloko. A ballad to their fame then was:

*"Asaju (Asubiojo) lo rele Iwoye  
o lo j'agba okun  
Oluwo lo s'Uloko (Iloko)  
Uruogobi lo si Ibokun epo"*<sup>15</sup>

meaning:

'Asaju (Asubiojo) went to Iwoye to dance to the 'agba' drum (as the ruler); Oluwo went to Iloko (as the Oba); Uruogobi too became the ruler at Ibokun where palm oil was in abundance.

All these great men were compensated by Ogedengbe who was then the Obanla of Ilesa and their contemporary and comrade-in-arms. There was heavy snowfall which covered the ground for many days, when Lojo Asubiojo died in Iwoye-Ijesa (1931).<sup>16</sup> This was the first time of such heavy snowfall in the town and was regarded as an unusual event. Ogedengbe portrayed him, Asubiojo, as a rare gem in his own right. The snow was said to have remained on the ground for many days before melting.

After the death of Asubiojo, most of his children, except a few, left for Ilesa<sup>17</sup>. This was usual with the children of departed Lojas there. This action angered Iwoye-Ijesa people. They therefore vowed never to accept the imposition of any ruler who was not resident with them and whose children would not stay with them to develop Iwoye-Ijesa on the father's death. This was why it took some time before a new Loja was selected. The Iwoye-Ijesa Iwarafas (Kingmakers) invited Pa Olagunju of Agbede quarters to occupy the stool but he refused. He however directed them to his younger brother – Ariwodola – then living at Ede, and said he was ready to back his candidature to the end<sup>18</sup>. Ariwodola was approached to be the next Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa. He consented and so became Loja Onibokun, alias "Alagbara Igbt Ogbele." He reigned between February 5, 1934 and March 4, 1935 when he joined his ancestors. During his reign, he encouraged the planting of cassava by the farmers in Iwoye-Ijesa and as the first educated Oba he encouraged parents to send their children to school.

Next was Oba Samuel Adeboye, (1952-1990). During his long reign Iwoye-Ijesa witnessed some important changes. The St. Thomas Primary School graduated the first group of school leavers in 1952. Many of the successful school leavers entered the Ijebu-Jesa Grammar

School or the Local Authority Secondary Modern School or the Anglican Secondary Modern both at Ijebu-Jesa. In 1976 the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School was founded. A town hall and postal agency was built in the town. The first maternity centre was built by the Omo Sha-Sha Society. This was the first modern age-grade community development association in the town.

The Oba's era witnessed the electrification of the town in 1984. The foundation of a new palace to replace the old one, which was de-roofed by storm, was laid by him. Immediately the foundation of the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School building was laid in 1976, the Oba's song was "Hallelujah Iwoye-Ijesa goke odo," meaning: Halleluya, Iwoye-Ijesa has crossed the rubicon. Up to that time, the town had not expanded beyond River Ogburuu.

True to the Oba's prophetic prediction a lot of modern buildings have sprouted on that side of the Ogburuu river that can aptly nick-name that part the modern-day Iwoye-Ijesa. This had been linked with the incapability of Chief Leogan, the town-crier whom Atakumosa ordered to pull a rope as far as he could in order to show the future extent of the town. Chief Leogan however got drunk and slept off immediately after Ita-Ila (Ila junction) and was discovered on the morrow but when queried, he sleepily asked to know why his rest was being disturbed. The junction had been named 'Ita-mejelesinrin' or Ita-meje till today.

During his time too, the coming of masquerades to perform their act at Iwoye-Ijesa was stopped for good. He toured round to visit Iwoye-Ijesa citizens at Ibadan, Iseyin, Lagos and Ikare. This solidarity visit must be continued by the Oniwoyes to further cement the tie of togetherness between Iwoye-Ijesa people at home and in the diaspora.

Mention must however be made of Obara. He was a minor who was sent with some court messengers "*emese*" to Iwoye as the Loja. Obara died without any male issue. Another was Loja Aribadewu from the Olusesi family, who was formerly the Loja of Iponda<sup>19</sup>. He contested

the Owa's stool but lost and was therefore compensated with the position of Loja of the much bigger Iwoye-Ijesa. Aribadewu unfortunately did not reach the palace, his official residence, before the 'staff of office' broke – "*opa da*," i.e. his era got terminated as he died prematurely<sup>20</sup>.

After the reign of Oba Adeboye came the incumbent, Oba P. O. Oni (J. P.) as *Abigiasoloko II* who ascended the stool on 25th November 1995. Long may he reign. Development during his reign till date is highlighted in the latter part of this book.

### *Other Achievements of Atakumosa*

Many spectacular things occurred during the reign of Atakumosa. Apart from establishing a ruling dynasty and causing neighbouring people to move to Iwoye-Ijesa, and also establishing some historic medicinal landmarks in the town, he gave the town a sense of direction.

There was a new class order in Iwoye-Ijesa. For instance, according to Chief Samuel A. Adewumi, the present Risa Legbewa Omo Owa he caused the town's land to be parcelled out amongst the various families and people of the town. Every important chief, especially the Iwarafas and some Ihares, had parcels of land which today is referred to as family land or chieftaincy lands. Each title-holder became the direct owner of the land which reverted to the next oldest member of the family on his (i.e. the former's) death to control as a matter of right for being the title-holder.

One thing that must also be mentioned with regards to the parcelling of lands to families is that no land was allocated to any of the On Owas i.e. princes. The only land which rightfully belonged to the town was obtained through another source. It came through the heiress of an Aworokun. She was called Lugbaru or '*Onigba eru*' i.e. owner of some two hundred slaves. She was very wealthy but childless. History has it that she invited the town's people to her house situated outside the town on the way of Esa-Odo for a party but the people turned up very late. She prepared pounded yam and stuck inside it costly beads as take-home gifts for the people. As they arrived late, she s

welcomed them to the party but did not provide any light where they were to feast. As the people were eating, they noticed what they regarded as the unpounded yam inside the pounded yam. These were the costly beads!

They flushed out every bit of the supposed unpounded yam to litter the whole darkened apartment. They later left in disgust without knowing what harm they had done themselves. The loss was however theirs and not Lugbaru's.

When day broke, Lugbaru got up to inspect the place where the people had feasted. She saw all the beads and ordered her slaves to pick them up. She said the people did not need any help<sup>21</sup>. Sensing that her days were drawing very close and being childless and without anybody to inherit her property, she left for the Owa's palace at Ilesa. Getting there, she asked if the Owa needed any land. He answered in affirmation. She therefore directed that her landed property at Iwoye-Ijesa should revert to the Owa on her death. This materialised and the Owa gave the land to his children at Iwoye. This land is now known as '*Oko Omo Owa*' i.e. Owa's children's farm. Part of it had been acquired for the Farm Settlement on the way to Esa-Odo. Beside this, no Omo Owa owned any land in Iwoye-Ijesa.

Nowadays, however, some of them own some land. A good example was the case of the late Loja Alagbara, Oba David Ariwodola Joseph Onibokun, who in 1948 contacted the Iwoye-Ijesa Iwarafas and acquired a part of the land of Chief Leogan, which had earlier on reverted to the community. The land lies to the right hand side on the way to Ere after leaving the Agboja stream. His son, the late Chief James Olarewaju Onibokun, paid the token traditional amount demanded by the Iwarafas for the land after his father died in 1952.

Another is the land given to the Legbewa, the head of the Omo Owas. This land belonged to the head of the court messengers – Lejua. The Lejua title has been scrapped in Iwoye-Ijesa. The land was divided into two and given to the Asolo, head of the Ihare chiefs in Iwoye-

Ijesa; and the other half to Legbewa, head of the Omo Owas.

Atakumosa also introduced the raffia palm seeds, 'okoro' to Iwoye-Ijesa. He brought the seeds from Benin while on his visit to the Oba of Benin. The palmyra seeds were then deposited at Odo Osun between the site of the Olomitutu lake and the Agboja stream from where it was transferred or scattered to other areas by Risa Looyin and Sasore. Chief Sasere or Sasore carried the 'okoro' seeds to Iwoye<sup>22</sup>. This is why it is forbidden in Iwoye-Ijesa for Chief Sasere or Sasore to pour or distribute 'Oguro' wine to people in any public gathering. 'Oguro' is now a source of revenue generation for the people of Iwoye-Ijesa. It is also used for evening and occasional entertainment in the community. No water must be added to it. To Atakumosa, it was 'tukura' i.e. something to dispel evil thoughts and make one happy.

Atakumosa also created the chieftaincy classes, such as those of Iwarafa, Ihare, and Loogun, in that order, as they still exist in the town. The medicated fetish mounds 'esi,' which Atakumosa made, are still important traditional landmarks in Iwoye-Ijesa today. No Oba or chief dares ignore the 'Olode' shrines, either the one in front of the Oba's palace or that in front of the Risa's palace. The Okun worship which he imported from Oke Ahun in Apare, Efon, had played important roles in the defence and safety of the town in the past as narrated, even, by living eyewitnesses. The advent of modern religions – Islam and Christianity, has however been changing the religious orientation of the people. Most of the early traditional families have changed faith with the introduction of Christianity, especially.

There was a semblance of inter-state or inter-kingdom relationship between Ilesa and Iwoye-Ijesa. This is reflected in the position of the Loja of Iwoye. Some of the Owa princes (Olomododos) were made rulers of smaller towns surrounding Ilesa. Being a powerful medicineman, and a prince, Atakumosa, the first Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa, was granted some rights by the Owa. He was given the right to own the local prison, 'agbe', into which offenders and criminals were often thrown<sup>23</sup>. He was also given a kind of royal drum called 'ikarakara.'

This was why the Loja was often referred to as: "*Omo onikarakara, abinu gbedugbedu*" meaning, "the child of the owner of ikarakara drum, the rhythm of which is danced to with the round movement of the tummy." He is also referred to as "*Omo amomo rubo ki yeye re ya karufin, arufin aruda ebo*." This means, "the son of the man who sacrifices a child to the gods only for the mother to offer prayers for the fulfilment of the supplications." This helped to portray the overriding powers of the Owa in the days of yore.

Some things however which the Loja lacked as of right were that he could not wear the crown, neither must he have his palace roofed with '*kanga*', a type of building material reserved only for the crowned head at Ilesa in the olden days.

Any of the Loja's descendants can still aspire to the Owa's stool at Ilesa. This precedent was laid by Atakumosa who later became the seventh Owa of Ijesaland in the sixteenth century. Atakumosa doubled the position by being the Owa Obokun of Ijesa kingdom after being the Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa. The institution of the '*agbe*' rite however has excluded any Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa from aspiring to the post of the Owa Obokun of Ijesaland. Other '*agbe*' owners in Ijesaland are Awara of Iwara, Akinyinwa of Ikinyinwa, Loja of Odo, Lilerin of Ilerin and Lisabe of Isabe.

### The Coming of the Ilas

Ilas migrated from Ila Orangun. They left Ila Orangun under their leader Orangun Ijokun or Ijofi after he had failed in his bid for the Orangun's throne at Ila<sup>24</sup>. They first established at Ipole-Ila on Esa Oke road. Their closest neighbours there were people from the Idofin quarters of Esa Oke. It must be noted that Esa Oke is on the way to Ila Orangun in the present-day Osun State of Nigeria.

They had a joint market at Igbo Oja with the Idofins, the Iteguns and the Odogos. The site of the market, at the junction of the farm settlements, on the Esa Oke, was compulsorily acquired by the

government of the old Western Region when the Farm Settlement was established in the late 1950s.

When it appeared the Ilas were being driven to the verge of extinction by the Idofins through intermarriages and enslavement, there ensued internal wranglings between the Ilas and their Idofin hosts.

The Ilas later departed the site for a new destination. On the way, they were met by High Chief Aro of Iwoye-Ijesa who was then running an errand from Efon for Loja Atakumosa. He led them to Iwoye along with the Iteguns. They met the Iwanu chief, Enurin, at the Orisa junction (Ita Orisa/Umorisa) and he invited them to be his guests.

They were later introduced to Loja Atakumosa. They came in the morning and were housed by the Legbewa Omo Owa while the Iteguns who came in the evening of the same day, were housed by the Risa of Iwoye.<sup>25</sup> who gave them to Chief Obalomo to house.

The Ilas were settled at the Odo Ila end of the present-day Araromi Street under their leader – Orangun Ijokun.<sup>26</sup> Atakumosa gave them the land on which to settle. They had since severed relationship with their home-base, Ila Orangun. Since the death of Ijokun, no Orangun has been installed at Iwoye-Ijesa by the Ilas. This was due to nothing other than the unpreparedness of the concerned people to accede to the title. A good example was Pa. Ezekiel Ayeni alias Apalara who refused to be made the Orangun. He died on 30th June, 2001.

### *Iwoye-Ijesa/Ila Relationship*

Like the ruling dynasty in Iwoye-Ijesa, the Ilas descended from a crowned head, the Orangun of Ila. It is forbidden in the olden days for Ilas to weed the path whenever Iwoyes weeded theirs. The Ilas do not partake in the weeding of the palace square at Iwoye with the Iwoyes. They however cooperated on other communal jobs.

Whenever an Iwoye Loja was installed in the olden days, a sum of five shillings and six pence (5s 6d) or '*ookanla*' was given to the Ilas.

Such was reciprocated by the Ilas to the Iwoyes too. This showed the bond of cordiality between Iwoye-Ijesas and the Ila community. The practice was however discontinued during the reign of Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa, the late Oba David Ariwodola Joseph Onibokun, Alagbara II.

Ilas were later displaced during the ravaging civil wars in Yorubaland by the Oyo forces. Many of them left their original home at Odo Ila to live with the Iwoyes and they never went back after the restoration of peace and order. Such families included the Baasinkin Akinlusi family at Isimosan Street, Iwoye-Ijesa; so also was Bajimo family at Anaye Street very near Idi Ayan. They have been living happily with their hosts.

Ilas, like the Iteguns and their host, Iwoyes, have a Council of State made up of the following:

- (1) Orangun, the Oba (from the Apalara family);
- (2) Obaala of Ila – Leader of the Iwarafas;
- (3) Obaasinkin, or Baasinkin,
- (4) Odofin Ila,
- (5) Saba Ila,
- (6) Aro Ila, and also
- (7) Bajimo Ila<sup>27</sup>, (see Appendix 9).

Ilas had no Risa like Iwoye and Itegun but they too have their own Council of Youths (*Omo Ilu*) under their Loriomo, like the Iwoyes and the Iteguns.

It must be noted however that, unlike the Iwoyes and Iteguns, the Ilas were noted for their deep interest in masquerades (*Egungun* or *Oje*). Masquerades used to come from Ila Orangun and other areas to the Ilas in Iwoye-Ijesa to perform their art without any molestation whatsoever. This was a sign of continuity on the socio-cultural plane with their home-base at Ila Orangun. This has long been discontinued due to the advent of modernity.<sup>28</sup>

The major festival in Ila is known as *Yeela* or *Olubejo* for the eating of

new yam every year. The major traditional worship is *Amuta Gesi* with Chief Obalowa as the chief priest.

### The Coming of the Iteguns

The Iteguns, like the Ilas, arrived Iwoye during the period of Loja Atakumosa. They were from Aramoko Ekiti. Their first port of call was Ipole-Ila very near Esa-Oke. Their primogenitor, Oge, reigned in Ilesa after Atakumosa's departure for Benin. Oge descended from Atakumosa through a princess. He was on the throne of Ilesa when Atakumosa was returning from Benin after about sixty years' absence, which made the people think perhaps he had died on his mission.

On learning of Atakumosa's return from his long sojourn in Benin, Oge hastily left the palace at Ilesa and headed for Aramoko through Anaye Street. Hence, "*Oge nrele Ara o mu iru okun, o mu opa ide, o ni ka so fun ara ile pe on ba Oge lo Ara Isa*" was a common saying. This means, "while hurrying away to Ara, Oge took with him the royal beads and the brass staff, instructing the people to tell his households (*Ijesas*) he was away to Ara Isa."

On arrival at Aramoko, the Alara stool had just become vacant. Oge then became the Alara. This was how Aramoko's crown got linked with the Ilesa dynasty. There was a hot dispute as to Oge's successors to the Alara stool. Oge descendants – Iteguns – were defeated and some of them migrated to Ipole-Ila very close to Esa Oke under an Oge descendant.<sup>29</sup> They were very close to the Ilas and cooperated with the Ilas.

Iteguns prospered at Ipole-Ila and had a common market with their neighbours. The market was called '*Onikowe ana doru*'; meaning, "the Kowe market where marketing extends till nightfall." They were neighbours at Apole Ila where the Ilas stayed. The Ila people had earlier arrived at the Apole Ila settlement before the Iteguns.

Later, the Ilas were involved in a bloody dispute with the Idofin people of Esa Oke. The dispute resulted into war in which the Iteguns assisted

the Ilas. Both of them were defeated and they were forced to migrate from there. Their migration took them to the outskirts of Iwoye-Ijesa. On their way, they were met by High Chief Aro, Atakumosa's messenger who was then returning from Efon. He convinced them to follow him to his master, Atakumosa, and they consented.

Ilas got to Iwoye in the morning while Iteguns arrived in the evening of the same day. While the Ilas were billeted on Chief Legbewa, Omo Owa, the Iteguns were hosted by the Risawoye who passed them on to Obalomo<sup>30</sup>. The two groups were housed at their different quarters i.e. Ilas at Odo Ila in Araromi Street while Iteguns moved to the Itegun quarters near Odo Iwoye.



Oloye Samuel Ojo Olutayo,  
Loja of Itegun (1956-1987)

It must be noted that while the Loja of Itegun waved his animal tail (*irukere*) while greeting the Owa, the Loja of Iwoye must keep his cap in his armpit while greeting the Owa. This was because the Iteguns were descended from the Owa through a female child and as such their Loja had no claim to the Owa stool, whereas the Loja of Iwoye had a right to Owa's throne<sup>31</sup> being a direct descendant of the Owa.

There is a council of state in Itegun under the leadership of the Loja. His Iwarefas included the Risa, Odofin, Ejemu, Saba, Sajiku and Aro, in that order, like the case in Iwoye-Ijesa.

### *Itegun Deities*

The chief deity of the Iteguns is *Lamoye*. This was in commemoration of their ancestor. The deity has the same primacy among the Iteguns as the *Okun* in Iwoye-Ijesa. This was also similar to Odogo's *Orin* to whose memory the 'Opa' festival had been venerated, and to the Ilas who had the *Olubejo*.

Another deity was *Oge*, the ruler who was deified like *Owaluse* in *Ilesa*. He descended from *Owa Atakumosa*. Yet, another deity was *Orisa-Oke* which was similar to *Obalorisa's* worship in *Iwoye-Ijesa*. The *Loja* of *Itegun* sees himself as a tenant to the *Loja* of *Iwoye* in this new settlement and they remained 'isolated' from the *Iwoyes* unlike the *Ilas*.

Today, *Itegun* settlement has shrunk to just a few houses. The reasons for this are not far-fetched. Their males used to take wives mostly from among the *Odogos* in *Ijebu-Jesa*. On the death of the husbands, the wives used to move with their children to their paternal homes (*Odogo* or *Ijebu-Jesa*). Such people are to be found either in *Odogo* or *Odo Ese* in *Ijebu-Jesa* today. A good example is the *Saba* of *Itegun* who is now permanently resident at *Odo Ese* quarters in *Ijebu-Jesa* rather than in *Itegun*. The *Iteguns* who are now found in *Itegun* had very close marital connections with *Iwoye-Ijesa*.

Another reason was that the *Iteguns* decided on walling themselves in, in seclusion, probably for the avoidance of *Iwoye-Ijesas*. The reason behind this was that they constantly nursed the idea of going back to their original home some day and they did not want to be absorbed by the *Iwoyes*.<sup>32</sup> This is unlike the *Ilas* who maintain very close relationships with *Iwoye-Ijesa* even down the ages.

### **Odogo Settlement**

The people of *Odogo* hailed from *Ilawe-Ekiti* in the present-day *Ekiti* State of *Nigeria*. They were formally settled at the *Odo Osun* section of *Isimosan* quarters in *Iwoye-Ijesa*. This was the end of the present-day *Iloro Street* of *Iwoye-Ijesa* before the *Agboja* stream. Their place of settlement coincided with the present site of the new *Cherubim and Seraphim Church Cathedral* on the *Iwoye-Ijesa/Ere* road.<sup>33</sup> *Odogos* refused to have a permanent settlement at their site in *Iwoye-Ijesa*. They later moved out and finally settled very close to the *Odo Ese* quarters in *Ijebu-Jesa*, their present site. *Odogos* deified 'Orin,' their great ancestor. An *Orin* devotee (an *Odogo* indigene) is forbidden from taking corn or maize or eating its by-products.

Today, Odogo is physically separated from Itegun in Iwoye by the Orokin trough and it is more closely linked, at least physically, with Odo Ese quarters in Ijebu-Jesa. Most Itegun indigenes are now to be found either in Odogo or at Odo Ese in Ijebu-Jesa.

Today, Iwoye-Ijesa is made up of Iwoye, Ila and Itegun. They all live together happily as members of the same community without any discrimination. This was a sign of good neighbourliness in the systematic development of Ijesa kingdoms before the introduction of European imperialism. Even with the introduction of western system of administration into Yorubaland, there has never been any cause for friction among the various communities. Hardly can one now distinguish the different communities in Iwoye as they are now well integrated through intermarriage and social interactions.

### End Notes

1. Chief Michael Olowoyeye, the Aloro Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa, aged, 80+ years.
2. Information supplied by Chief Samuel Adewumi, the Risa Legbewa Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa, aged 80+ years, 1990.
3. The Ayan tree, together with the 'Apataki' gave way to the new road leading to Esa Odo early in the 1960s.
4. Both Leogan Alakarigidi and Leogan "Aragba-Abidi-rere" were paternal brothers.
5. Information supplied by Chief Joshua Gbelee, the late Odofin of Iwoye-Ijesa, 1970.
6. Both Odo-Iwoye and Agbede streets were founded by the Iwanus, the former Iraye dwellers. (Source: Chief Emmanuel Opemuyi, the late Risa Iwoye, aged c. 120 years).
7. Information supplied by the late Chief Ojo, the Obaala of Ila, (1967). He died on 15th February, 1987.
8. Chief Samuel Olutayo, the late Loja of Itegun, (1967).
9. See Appendix IIIA.
10. Orin is the traditional festival for the Odogos, Olubejo for the Iilas, and Okun for the Iwoye-Ijesas. They are all celebrated to usher in the eating of the new yam in these communities.
11. Chief Michael Olowoyeye (late), Ibid, 1990.

12. Kiriji Wars were fought between 1878 and 1886. Information by Chief Samuel Adewumi, the Risa Legbewa Omo Owa, *ibid* (1990).
13. Iyinta is a small village near Ilesa. It is in the present-day Atakumosa East Local Government Area of Osun State.
14. Chief Samuel Adewumi, the Risa Legbewa Omo Owa, *ibid*.
15. *Op. cit*.
16. *Op. cit*.
17. Those children who remained behind in Iwoye-Ijesa were born of an Iwoye-Ijesa mother to whom their maternal relations gave a piece of land on which to build their own house at Ona Owuro Street in Isimosan Quarters.
18. Chief Samuel Adewumi, *ibid*.
19. Iponda is a small Ijesa village in the present-day Obokun Local Government Area of Osun State.
20. Chief S. Adewumi, *ibid*.
21. This was regarded as the Lugbaru curse or 'egun Lugbaru.' Information by Chief Ezekiel Ateghero, the former Loosi (Leader of the Left) in the Youth Council (Ajo Omo Ilu) in Iwoye-Ijesa, now the Chief Segbua of Ihare chiefs in Iwoye-Ijesa, aged c. 65 years (1989). He is a descendant of the first Aworokun.
22. Sasere or Sasore was an Edo (Benin) chief before he moved to Iwoye-Ijesa with Atakumosa bearing the palmyra seeds.
23. The 'Agbe' was a right given to some of the powerful princes of the Owa who were bold enough in the palace to hold their own in the districts. They became the Loja in their respective villages. These Alagbes were Awara, Akinyinwa, Oniwoye, Lilerin, Loja Odo, Lisabe, all in Ijesaland.
24. Chief Adetona Ayeni Apalara, head of the Ila communities in Iwoye-Ijesa, aged c 85 years (1990). He lived in Ilesa till he died on 20th February, 2001.
25. Chief S. Adewumi, *ibid*.
26. 'Ijokun' is also known as 'Ijofi.'
27. Chief Gabriel Akinlusi, the Baasikin of Ila, in Iwoye-Ijesa, 1969.
28. Masquerades performed in Iwoye-Ijesa until the early 1950s. They came from Ila Orangun and were housed by the Ilas in Iwoye-Ijesa.
29. Chief S. O. Olutayo, *ibid*.
30. Chief S.O. Olutayo, *op. cit*.
31. *Op. cit*.
32. *Op. cit*.
33. Information supplied by Chief M. K. Olowoyeye (late), the Aloro Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa, (March 1990).

# 3

## The Sociopolitical Organisations

The real administrative set-up of Iwoye-Ijesa presumably, dated back to the coming of Prince Atakumosa in the sixteenth century. Before this time, there was no clearly stated administrative organisation as such in the community. What existed in reality were separate scattered dwelling settlements where people of common origin (families) resided. A good example was Isimosan. The Iwanus from Iraye (Igbo Iraye) were a bit different. Their leader was Enurin while Osotun was another recognised title-holder. These two titles are common in the Odofin family.

The cases of the Iilas and Iteguns differed. They were immigrants from other settled areas and their coming to Iwoye-Ijesa could be linked with Atakumosa. Odogo too is part of this post-Atakumosa dispensation.

After Atakumosa had welded together all the indigenous people and the immigrants, he established a dynasty. The founding of the dynasty saw the beginning of a strong sociopolitical organisation in Iwoye-Ijesa. This organisation was in a form natural to a people in the process of actively 'colonizing' a new territory. It is necessary here to highlight the sociopolitical organisations of Iwoye-Ijesa and their impact.

### The Iwarafa

This class of chiefs is the highest title-holding rank in Iwoye-Ijesa. It is made up of six high-ranking chiefs. The leader is the Risa Iwoye

who is next in rank to the Loja. He lives in his own palace at Odo-Iwoye. Some of the chiefs had traditional lands right from the beginning while some have just been granted land by the town's administration. The Iwarafas are the king-makers in Iwoye-Ijesa and they are all Iwoyes (see Appendix 2 on page 157).



At Iwoye-Ijesa Day 1992 Celebration: Sitting front row, from left to right. Late Samuel Olamijulo (Asolo Iwoye), Chief I. A. Oni (Aro of Iwoye), Chief S. A. Adeyeni (Sajiku), Late Chief Ojo Farewo (Saba), Chief Obi Salami (Odofin), Late Chief Emmanuel Opemuyi (Risa Iwoye), Late D. A. Abu (Legbewa), Chief S. A. Adewumi (Risa Legbewa), Late Chief Ayoola (Ejemu Omo Owa), Late Chief Amos Adeniran (Aro Omo Owa). Sitting behind Chief Oni is Chief David Oginni (Asolo Iwoye).

The six high chiefs are Risa Iwoye, Odofin, Ejemu, Saba, Sajiku and Aro. As king-makers, theirs is to ratify one of the candidates presented to them by the Omo Owas (the Royal Princes) as the Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa. The candidate is then forwarded to the Owa-in-Council at Ilesha for final approval. Each of the high chiefs performs some official duties in the effective administration of the kingdom.

*(i) Risa Iwoye*

He is the head of the Iwarafa in Iwoye-Ijesa and the second in rank to the Oba. The first title-holder was from Ikole-Ekiti in the present-day Ekiti State. He left Ikole for Efon-Alaaye. He migrated to Efon hoping to be made the second-in-rank to the Alaaye but, like in the case of Ikole, he was sidetracked. His junior maternal brother was chosen instead.

He therefore left Efon-Alaaye in annoyance,<sup>1</sup> with his retinue of seventy people crossing to Iwoye-Ijesa via the Eriru river valley. Thereafter, he pitched his tent at Imorisa very close to the house of Chief Aro.



Installation of Risa Iwoye, 1981, in front of the Olode Shrine: Standing from left – Chief Okundare (Aro Iwoye); standing behind him Chief Adesoro, the then late Asolo Omo Owa, Chief Ayo Ayoola (Saba of Iwoye), Chief Adeoye Fadairo (Ejemu Iwoye), Chief S. A. Gbalee (Odofin Iwoye), Chief Emmanuel Opemuyi (the new Risa Iwoye) with his son Joshua (now a Pastor) on his left, between Chief Fadairo and Chief Odofin is Chief Oginni the present Asolo of Iwoye-Ijesa. Immediately behind the new Risa is Chief Madam Elahunmi, the then Esemure of Iwoye-Ijesa. .

The presence of such an 'august' visitor was brought to Loja Atakumosa's notice by High Chief Aro who was asked to summon his visitor to the presence of the Loja. His arrival coincided with the weekly meeting of the Oniwoye-in-Council i.e. Ajo ilu. On arrival, he narrated his 'ordeals' to Loja Atakumosa and his chiefs. Atakumosa asked if he would like to stay with him at Iwoye-Ijesa if he was made his second-in-rank. He gladly consented.

Loja Atakumosa then counselled his chiefs, especially High Chief Odofin who, until then, was his second-in-rank, to shift base. Chief Odofin consented. Here, oral traditions did not explain why Chief Odofin consented to losing his position to a visitor. The visitor (Udagba-Feyinlako) then became the Risa Iwoye i.e. the second-in-rank to Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa. At long last, Udagba's ambition had been met at Iwoye-Ijesa. He encouraged his followers to settle in the neighbourhood. The areas that benefited in receiving the immigrants were Ere/Idaado, and Ilare.<sup>2</sup>

Since then, successors to the chieftaincy title of Risa Iwoye had come from Iwoye, Ere/Idaado or Ilare. Such successors were:

- ♦ Lomi Logiile from Ilare;
- ♦ Opamuda, the father of Afunmolegbewa Iyanju from Idaado/Ere;
- ♦ Afunmolegbewa Iyanju, father of Chiefs Omole and Opemuyi; (Afunmolegbewa Iyanju died in 1904)<sup>3</sup>;
- ♦ Ogunniyi (*Amuugbangba bi ekun*) from Itegun;
- ♦ Omole of Odo Osun (late Deinde's father);
- ♦ Daniel Kayode Fasua Osewa, alias D.O.K. (1944 – 1970) and;
- ♦ Chief Emmanuel Fatunbarin Opemuyi (1971 – 1994). The position has been vacant since 1994.

After the demise of Chief Omole, the Risa of Iwoye, Chief Samuel Ifatunbarin Osewa was approached to accede to the stool as the choice of the people but he declined. The offer reverted to the elder brother Daniel Fasuwa, the then Okunato of Iwoye-Ijesa and a close friend of the then Loja Onibokun., Alagbara II.



High Chief Emmanuel I. Opemuyi,  
late Risa of Iwoye-Ijesa

### (ii) *Odofin*

He was formerly the second-in-rank to Loja Atakumosa before the arrival of Udagba from Ikole via Efon, but now occupies the second position in the Iwarata. Odofin was the former leader of the Iwanu settlers on the other side of the Olikoto area in Iraye forest (*Igbo Iraye*). His coming was not unconnected with the medicine which Atakumosa made inviting people to his new settlement.

As *Enurin*, the leader of the *Iwanus* (the blacksmiths), he

The position of High Chief Risa Iwoye is similar to that of Obanla in Ilesa. He acts as the Regent when the Loja's stool becomes vacant. Like the Loja, he too is comfortably housed in a palace built for him by the town's people. He resides at Odo Iwoye quarters while the Loja's palace is at the centre of the town (Oke Oja). The Risa is the custodian of community lands in Iwoye-Ijesa.<sup>4</sup> A new Risa Iwoye must be hosted by the Aro of Iwoye-Ijesa for three months before moving to his palace at Odo-Iwoye. The stay lasts for three months.



High Chief Samuel Ojo Gbelee,  
late Odofin of Iwoye-Ijesa

enquired from Atakumosa what he had to tell them and why he called them. Atakumosa replied that he had called them with a closed or open mind saying "*Odo finfin ni mo fi pe yin.*" The term '*odo finfin*' or '*edo finfin*', had since been corrupted to '*Odofin*' which has become the title ever since.<sup>5</sup>

There are now three houses from which the Odofin title-holder can be chosen. They are:

- (a) Odofin Oke – (Odofin from the upper section located at Iwoye Street); i.e. Odofin Abodo.
- (b) Odofin Odo – (Odofin from the lower section at Agbede Street); this is Odofin Rigigbaran; and
- (c) Odofin Aarin (i.e. Odofin from the middle house. This is the Gbelee family).

The title is held rotationally among the three Odofin family houses, who are all Iwanus. The Iwanus are often referred to as:

*Omo Iwanu wa tore.*

*Omo aleero kuku nigbo Iraye:*

*Omo ejo kan teere Igbo Iraye a bogbe yanyan:*

Meaning,

Iwanu the child of the free giver.

The child of the blacksmith in Iraye forest.

The child of the long snake with bright-red scalp in Iraye forest.

The Odofin chieftaincy title, like the Risa Iwoye title, has traditional rights from origin. The Odofin must play host to a new Loja or Obi Iwoye-Ijesa for three months before the latter moves to his palace.

### (iii) Ejemu

The first title-holder was from Ilesa, and known as '*Ejemu Ori A...*' who resided at the present site of the Ekemode's house very near the Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Isimosan quarters. He was from Lokoosun compound in Ijoka in Ilesa, and a maternal relation of the late Haastrip Ajimoko. He was the favourite son of his father in the palace.

When the Ifa oracle was contacted as to the young man's future, it was said that he should go to where an idol (*orisa*) was worshipped with many lights at night. This was the feature of the *Okun* worship during the '*Igbo ale*' ceremony when locally-made torches '*oguso*' were lit. It was said that he would be blessed there.

After investigation, the Owa sent to the Aworokun to whom he handed Adekanle who stayed with him for some time with his retinue made up of slaves, pawns and relations.<sup>7</sup> Adekanle was comfortably catered for at Iwoye-Ijesa. He later returned to Ilesa and narrated to his father all his experiences at Iwoye-Ijesa. Among other things, he said: '*Mo je, mo mu ni Iwoye.*' Literally, 'I fed and drank to my satisfaction at Iwoye-Ijesa.' From this saying, he was given the title *Ejemu*.<sup>8</sup>

There was a lull however during the civil war period when the *Ejemu* with some of his people were taken captive and sold to Ago Iwoye in the present-day Ogun State. He, his elder and younger brothers were sold into slavery but luckily, were bought by the same man.

After the war, he bought his freedom,<sup>9</sup> but the father and brother stayed back. On getting to Iwoye-Ijesa, he was made the *Loosi*, a position he held for a year-and-a-half. Later, he became the *Looyin* and later the *Saba*. A new *Ejemu* was chosen from the *Faroomo* house also from *Isimosan* quarters.

When the returnee demanded his father's title, *Faroomo* gave him one of his daughters in marriage instead. After *Faroomo*, another man, *Ekemode*, from *Ere* became the *Ejemu*. *Ekemode* was an elephant hunter. After him was *Adurogbofa*. He was later followed by *Ikotun Dada 'Kobe'* who was succeeded by Chief *Adeoye Fadayiro*, who had been in the *Loja's* service since the time of *Loja Asubiojo*.<sup>10</sup> After Chief *Fadayiro's* death, the title reverted to another offspring of *Ekemode* who died recently. The incumbent *Ejemu* is from the root of the famed *Ejemu ori afa*; he is High Chief *Philip Olatunji Onifade*. He was preceded in office by one of his relations, another *Onifade*.

It must be noted, however, that the Ejemu title is restricted to Isimosan quarters of Iwoye-Ijesa. Ejemu chieftaincy title holder is one of the landed chiefs in Iwoye-Ijesa.

#### (iv) *Saba*

This is a unique title among the Iwarafa. There are very few of title-holders known to the present generation. This has been attributed to the longevity with which the holders were always blessed. Like Sajiku title, there is no specific house for the selection of the title-holder.

By far the oldest title-holder known to us from all sources was S. Oderinde.<sup>11</sup> He was the father of Isaiah Oderinde who founded Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Ijebu-Jesa and hailed from Odofin Abodo family of Odoye Quarters.

The next was Olowe Ejalonibu of Odo Ila – in the Araromi Quarters. He was followed by Pa David Ayo Ayoola, from the Akotun Quarters of Ijesa town, who died in 1988. Saba Ayoola was succeeded by Chief Joseph Ojo Farewo alias *Olowokagi* who died on 20th August, 2001. He hailed from the Odofin Abodo family of Odoye Quarters. The title awaits a new holder. The Saba of Iwoye-Ijesa too has a chieftaincy land.

#### (v) *Sajiku*

This is another high chief of the Iwarafa class. He is fifth to the Chief of Ijesa. But unlike the Risa Iwoye, Odofin and other title-holders with specific lineages from where they are chosen, the Sajiku title is not restricted to any quarters or families. One can locate some former Sajiku title-holders in different quarters of the town. Such areas are Odo-Iwagbade and even Idofin streets.

Through oral traditions, it has been possible to trace the list of some of these former title-holders to eight holders. The first known such title-holder was Agunbiade of Agbade Street. He was the father of Pa Joshua Agunbiade. Sajiku Agunbiade was succeeded by Aloapo from the Famiyesin family. From there, the title shifted to

Arebiyo house at Odoye Street. There, Yusuf Aloko or Aluko, Arebiyo's father, became the Sajiku.

The next in the line of succession was Ogundele, father of Late Jimoh at Agbede Street. After him was Sajiku Adeyeri, of Odoye, the father of the incumbent title-holder – Chief Gabriel Adeyeri Daramola He assumed the post 1992 till today.

The title remained at Odoye quarters after Adeyeri's death. It shifted to the Ajewole's house when Elu Ajewole became the next Sajiku. From Odoye, the next port of call for the title-holder was Idofin Street where Amos Oje Falobi became the worthy holder of the title. From Idofin, the title moved back to Adeyeri Daramola's house for the second time.<sup>12</sup>

This only confirms the fact that the Sajiku title is not restricted to a particular area in Iwoye-Ijesa. Like other members of the Iwarafa class with their permanent traditional titled lands, the Sajiku too has a landed farm for the title holders. This is located along the Iwoye-Ijesa/Ere Road.

#### *(vi) Aro*

This is the 'youngest' of all the Iwarafa title-holders. The history of the title-holder is as old as the coming of the Atakumosa dynasty to Iwoye-Ijesa. It was said that Atakumosa told the first holder to "stand by" Chief Odofin who was then the second-in-rank in the administrative set-up of the newly-established administration. This led to the title of the man, 'Aro'<sup>13</sup> who was supposed to 'stand by' Chief Odofin.

The first title-holder had lived in Efon Alaaye where he had sojourned for sometime. He had heard of and seen the worship of the Okun festival which protected the people from external aggression or invasion, and was said to have reported this to Atakumosa who was then in search of a unifying object of worship for his newly-formed settlement – Iwoye-Ijesa.

Chief Aro was therefore ordered by Atakumosa to go to Efon and get a means of bringing the Okun effigy to Iwoye-Ijesa at all costs. Obeying his master's instruction, Chief Aro left for Efon, kept watchful eyes on the Okun worshippers and as he was moving the following day, he secretly packed the object of worship from the Okun shrine in Apare and headed for home. On the way, he met the Ilas and Iteguns whom he counselled to follow him to Iwoye-Ijesa.

He took the object of Okun worship to Iwoye-Ijesa and kept it in his house near the Imorisa at Odoye. Fearing possible reprisals from the Efon people who, surely, would be searching for their object of worship, Chief Aro took the effigy to a forest near Ere. The place is known as Odo Okun-Ere. It was securely kept for some time, after which Chief Aro brought it back to Iwoye-Ijesa.<sup>14</sup> While the Okun effigy was kept in the Aro's house, water was said to have oozed out where it was kept. This terrified the Aro who quickly sent it to his elders.

On his return to Iwoye-Ijesa with the effigy, Chief Aro complained that he still had an older member of the family who could safely take charge of the Okun worship. That man was Sapetu. The title of the fellow who later became the chief custodian of the Okun worship is known as Aworokun. He is a member of the Ihare chieftaincy class in Iwoye-Ijesa.

Chief Aro also had other contributions credited to him in the history of the town. The title-holder was reputed to have formerly welcomed Udagba, with his seventy followers, from Ikole enroute Efon. He reported the coming of the 'august' visitor to his master – Loja Atakumosa – who invited him to his palace and, after communing with his chiefs, especially Chief Odofin, made him (Udagba) the Risa of Iwoye i.e. the second-in-rank to Atakumosa administratively by appealing to the Odofin to move a step backward for the new-comer to be properly fixed. Chief Aro had other important errands which he successfully ran for the well-being of the town. He, it was, who also welcomed the Iteguns to Iwoye.<sup>15</sup>

One important aspect of the role of the Aro is to lodge a new Risa Iwoye in his house for three months before the Risa proceeds to his palace. This was as a result of his having hosted the first holder – Udagba Feyinlako – when the latter arrived with his entourage of seventy people from Efon during the reign of Atakumosa. He has other duties to perform in the Oba's palace. These include praying for any newly-appointed chief in front of the Olode shrine in the palace of the Oba. He prays for them by shaking the gong – 'aja' and breaking the traditional kolanut.

Chief Aro has a chieftaincy land which is strategically located just after the Barebare brook on the way to Ere. A relation of the Sapetu and the Asaba of Isimosan quarters, Chief Aro now lives at the Odoye quarters of the town. The incumbent holder of the title is Chief Isaac Aremu Oni, a retired educationist.

Generally, an important note on the Iwarafa is that some of them are privileged to have official messengers called '*Emese*,' like the Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa. Such privileged Iwarafa members were the Risa Iwoye, Odofin and Ejemu. Their official messengers were sons of deceased office-holders who would be made to serve the Oba till his (Oba's) death.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Iwarafa Omo Owa**

Just as there are Iwarafa chiefs who are kingmakers among the Iwoyes, so also is a duplication of Iwarafa titles among the Omo Owas (the ruling class in Iwoye). The head of the princes, i.e. Omo Owas, is the Legbewa (Omo Owa), who used to be the 'eye' of the Loja. He is supported by the Risa Legbewa, Odofin, Ejemu, Saba, Sajiku, and Aro Omo Owa. (*See Appendix 2 on page 157*).

Each of these Omo Owa title-holders is contemporaneous with Iwoye title-holders. They help in selecting from among the princes candidates to be presented to the Iwoye-Ijesa Iwarafa chiefs. Theirs, as a distinct class like the Ihare Omo Owa, started during the time of Loja Asubiojo in Iwoye-Ijesa.

### Ihare Chiefs

The third class of chiefs is the Ihare, which ranks next to the Iwar. The leader is the Asolo, but their number has never been stated. Initially, there was only one class of Ihare chiefs up till the time of Loja Asubiojo, i.e. during the time of Asolo Oginni Awomewe. Omo Owas pleaded with Loja Asubiojo to have their own Ihare chiefs under their own Asolo. (See Appendix 2 on page 157).

Loja Asubiojo acceded to their plea and a class of Ihare chiefs for Omo Owas under their own Asolo, Chief Korobiowu Faniyan, was created. This was the first sign of the Omo Owas' agitation for recognition since the time of Atakumosa, the first Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa.

The Omo Owas further agitated, and another title of 'Saro' was created for them. Apart from a few titles like the Sapetu, Aworookua, Okunato, Obalorisa, and a few others, the Ihare titles among the Omo Owas, are identical with those of the Iwoyes. There are four divisions of the Ihare titles in Iwoye-Ijesa. They are:

- (a) The Asolo line or '*Ona Asolo*';
- (b) The Risawe line or '*Ona Risawe*';
- (c) The Asaba line or '*Ona Asaba*'; and
- (d) The Enurin line or '*Ona Enurin*'.

### *Ihare Iwoye Titles*

The leader is the Asolo of Iwoye. Others (though not according to seniority) are Risawe, Odole, Saloro, Sapaye, Saro, Adegbuwa, Obalomo, Oba-Odo, Legbero, Oyefin, Ojumu, Arapate, and Enurin. Others still are Loode, Okunato, Sapetu, Legbesa, Esemu, Obalorisa, Araoji, Waroayo, Aloro and Aralopon, etc.

The Ihare Omo Owas have Asolo as the head. Under him are Risawe, Odole, Saloro, Sapaye, Saro, Adegbuwa, Oba Odo, Segbu, Legbero, Oyefin, Araoji, Ojumu, Arapate, Towatugbo, Towarer, Eminiwa, etc.

The meetings of this class of chiefs are often held in the house of the Asolo or the next in rank (Risawe) whenever the Asolo title becomes vacant. Whenever there was going to be any feasting in Iwoye as a result of the death of any chief or important personality, the Ihares were always given their own separate shares (*iba*).

To distinguish the Iwoye titles from the Omo Owas, Iwoye-Ijesa titles are mentioned ordinarily or the appellation 'Iwoye' may be added. For example, Asolo for Asolo Iwoye. On the Omo Owa side, it is usual to add 'Omo,' meaning 'Omo Owa,' to the titles to distinguish them from the Iwoye titles. For example, *Asolo Omo, Odole Omo*, etc. meaning, Asolo Omo Owa, Odole Omo Owa, etc.

### **Loogun Chiefs (*Egbe Loogun*) (See Appendix 2 on page 157).**

These constituted the militia group in the town, and performed the most tasking jobs like combating external aggression, curbing internal uprising and seeing to the offering of sacrifices to the gods of the land. During the war period, the Looguns were very active. They fought the wars and protected lives and properties of citizens, but during peace time, they reverted to their normal-life careers of farming, hunting, blacksmithing etc.

The leader of the group is the Looyin. He is assisted by the Risa Looyin. The Looyin used to carry a sword tucked inside its scabbard by his side in the olden days. This sword was last worn by the late Gabriel Adeoye Fadayiro, when he was the Looyin. The sword can no longer be located.

Apart from fighting wars or combating internal insurrection, the Loogun chiefs had other duties. Each of the Iwarafa chiefs has his own Loogun (war boys). The Looyin is directly responsible to the Risa Iwoye. He is his 'aide-de-camp.' As his closest confidant, he knows most of the secrets of the Risa. In addition, the Looyin and the Asolo (leader of the Ihares) accompany the Risa on missions involving the town elders, i.e. 'Agba Ilu' or the Iwarafas. But when the Iwarafas

are not involved, the Looyin used to accompany the Asolo and High Chief Aro, and they must report back. If the matter in dispute remains unresolved, the Iwarafas would then accompany the officials to the scene. The duties of the Looyin became highlighted, especially when there were inter-town land disputes, rituals or wars. He acted as the 'eye' of the Iwarafas and, of course, the town, and is thus known as 'iko ilu' i.e. the town's chief messenger.

There are two classes of Loogun chiefs, just like the Ihares and Iwarafas. There are those for the Iwoyes and another group for the Omo Owas.

The Looyin leads the Iwoye Looguns. He is also the overall leader of the Loogun chiefs. He is assisted by the Risa Loogun. The Legberun on the other hand, leads the Omo Owa group. His assistant is the Risa Legberun. Other Loogun chiefs on the Iwoye side, apart from the Looyin and the Risa Looyin, include Lejofi, Sasere, Loosare, Risinkin, and his Risa, Lomoofe, Loofosan etc.

It must be noted that the great warriors of this ancient town were products of this very class of chiefs. Such warriors featured Uganra (alias 'Baba ogun'), Omole, Ogunlade (alias Osewa), Onikann, Ogundairo, Ogo and a host of others who are now remembered only in the chimera of our traditional history.

### **Omo-Iwoye/Omo Ilu (The Youths)** *(See Appendix 2)*

The term 'youths' here is a misnomer. It is not uncommon seeing people who are fairly advanced in age among the 'youths.' Generally, this term refers to all male born who have not been promoted to the higher titles of Loogun, Ihare, or Iwarafa ranks. The group does most of the jobs in the town such as keeping the palaces and streets clean, taking charge of the brooks and all the roads linking Iwoye-Ijesa with her neighbours and roofing the palaces of both the Loja and the Risa on occasions warranted in the olden days, and doing other related jobs in the town.

The youths constitute the major or largest organisation in the town.

Females are not included. The leader of the group is the *Olori omo Ilu* or *Loriomo*. He is also known as *Loogun* or Commander of the Youths. In his right, he is a generalissimo.

The *Loriomo* is ably assisted by three other lieutenants – the *Lootun* (leader of the right), the *Loosi* (leader of the left), and the *Leeri* (leader of the ruling houses known as the *Omo Owas*).

- (a) The *Loogun*, apart from leading the youths, is also the head of his own line – the centre. This is made up of all those who claimed descent from the *Risa Iwoyes* and all the *Loriomos* (past and present). This line has other ranks such as *Risa Loogun*, *Loodifi*, *Lorikan*, *Lugbalesun* etc.
- (b) The Right Flank (*Ona Otun*) is led by the *Lootun*. This group is to the right of the centre. The *Lootun* sits to the right of the *Loriomo* in the assembly of youths in the town (*Ajo Omo Ilu*). Some specific families are meant for this group. They include the *Odofin* family (*Abodo*, *Yogunmoru*, *Arigigbarin*), and others on the *Omo Owa* side who are not qualified for the *Loja* title. Like the *Loogun* line, and like other lines, the 'rightist' has its *Risa Lootun*, *Loodifi*, *Lorikan*, *Lugbalesun* etc. Strangers in the town take their places here.
- (c) The Left Flank (*Ona Osi*): This group is to the left of the centre under the leadership of the *Loosi*. It is made up of the youths of the indigenous families of the town, mostly of people from *Isimosan* quarters. Other members are to be found scattered around the town. Its ranks also include *Risa Loosi*, *Loodifi*, *Lorikan*, *Lugbalesun* etc.
- (d) The Eri Flank (*Ona Eri*): This is led by the *Leeri*, and comprises the families of the *Omo Owas*, i.e. the dynastic families or ruling houses comprising all the ruling houses in the town. The *Leeri* is also the *Loriomo Omo Owa*, i.e. head of the youths of the *Owa* descendants in the town. He is the Chief Master of Ceremonies (C.M.C.) of the youths in the town.

- (e) Leesa, who is the fifth title-holder, is the lesser Master of Ceremonies (M.C.).

Each of these five title-holders i.e. Loogun, Lootun, Loosi, Leeri and Leesa must receive the approval of the Iwarafas or the Loja-in-Council, hence they are all referred to as '*Opon marun*' - meaning the five-titled heads in the youths' rank.

Generally speaking, apart from the Loogun or the Loriomo and his able lieutenants such as the Lootun, Loosi, and Leeri, and their line of officers, some general offices exist among the youths in the town. They include the Lorikan, Loodifi, Lugalasun, Lumadiye and the Leesa (the town crier). Each has his specific duties to perform in his line.

The assembly of the youths is often held in the house of the Loogun or Loriomo. It is rotational but stays permanently in a house as long as the Loriomo lived. The Loriomos could however be removed either by promotion to a higher rank or by deposition (in case of any serious misdemeanour on the part of the Loriomo to the town or to constituted authorities), or by death. In the case of death, a special ceremony called '*igbala*' would be performed for the deceased. This is to ceremonially expel the spirit of the departed officer from amongst the group.<sup>18</sup> This '*igbala*' ceremony affects any of the four major leaders i.e. Loriomo, Lootun, Loosi and Leeri.

A common terminology among the Assembly by way of greetings, especially from a member who is just coming into the assembly is to say: '*Loogun Ofe*', a term meant for no other fellow of the group in the town other than the Loriomo of Iwoye-Ijesa. This is to say literally that the newcomer wishes the Loogun and, through him, the assembly, good health, i.e. the body is not heavy but agile. The general reply, either from the Loogun himself or his followers, is: "*O ki o*" meaning: he greets you. "This is to say the Loogun and the assembly in their rights recognised your presence. No other greetings are expected than for the newcomer to take his seat at the appropriate place, i.e. according to his rank.

Among the traceable Loriomos<sup>19</sup> in Iwoye-Ijesa history, in order of ascendancy, were:

1. Fariogun, the grandfather of Mr. Supo Folowosele;
2. Ikotun Daji Olamijulo – the father of an Asolo, Chief Samuel Olamijulo. He died in 1923;
3. Wobi Adodo, whose son Aasa now resides at Odogo, a quarter in Ijebu-Jesa;
4. Erinfolami, grandson of Yiwonuogungbekan from Araromi Street, Iwoye-Ijesa;
5. J. O. Gbelee, who later became the Odofin;
6. Tijani Olamijulo, father of the former Risa Loogun, the Late Mr. M. Adeyeye Olamijulo (alias Malami);
7. Ayeni Erinfolami (popularly known as 'Ayesiko') from Isimosan. He successfully fought that Looguns be granted the right to wear the traditional chieftancy bead;
8. Obi Falobi who was deposed;
9. Jide Ojo (alias 'Panikin'), who was deposed and later became the last Obalorisa of Iwoye-Ijesa;
10. Obi Falobi, who was restored, and later died in office in July 1989. After this, the Assembly of Youths moved its sittings to the house of the Lootun, Chief Z. Ayo Anjoorin from 1999 till 21st November, 1999, pending the selection of a new Loriomo.
11. Chief Akinola Olomolatan, who became the Loriomo on 25th November, until 22nd March, 1999 after which he was elevated to the Ihare Chief class as Chief Oyefin of Iwoye-Ijesa.
12. Chief Larewaju Babatayo who was installed in 22nd March, 1989 and was deposed on 27th November, 2000.
13. The present holder is Chief Olu Famiyesin. The very day he was made the Lootun on 27th November, 2000, he became the acting Loriomo.

The meeting of the youths takes place every nine days but, whenever the meeting falls on a Sunday, it would be held on the preceding Saturday again like the former one while the next one would fall on the Monday of the following week. This means that no meeting takes place during the succeeding week at all.

The meeting of the youths is celebrated with kegs of palm wine and kolanuts. Traditionally, the Leesa (youths' crier) 'washes the calabash', i.e. he provides palm wine and kolanuts to declare open a new era of palm wine circulation amongst members. This would be followed by the Loriomo, Lootun, Loosi, Leeri and the other ranks until every recognizable male youth takes his turn. This does not exclude youths of the town resident in other towns or even overseas who are requested by their relations to take charge and for whom the youths send their prayers for success and happy return to their home base, Iwoye-Ijesa.

The non-titled youths in any of the four groups are known as the 'Lewuuru' i.e. commoners, age notwithstanding.

### **The Womenfolk (*Obirin Ilu*) (See Appendix 2 on page 157)**

Like their male counterparts, the womenfolk also have their own titles. Unlike the menfolk, however, their titles are neither by inheritance nor are they restricted to any specific title holder. What qualifies a female title-holder for the title is, first and foremost, marriage and birth. A woman can qualify for any of the female titles by either of the two criteria.

Even if she hailed from another town or community, a female can qualify for title in Iwoye-Ijesa if she is married to an indigene of Iwoye-Ijesa. Another basis is that such a fellow must be an Iwoye-Ijesa by birth.

It must however be noted that neither of these two grounds is water-tight on its own. A free-born might not qualify for any title if she is not married to an Iwoye-Ijesa man. The case has never been known of any Iwoye-Ijesa-born woman marrying outside the town and coming back to be made one of these women chiefs in the town. There has also never been the case of any non-indigene being given any of the important titles among the women. Such female titles are the *Esemu* the head of the women folk. Others are *Yeye Risa*, *Yeye 'Dofin*, *Ye 'Jemu*, *Yeye Saba*, *Yeye Sajiku* and *Yeye Ro*. The qualification for such posts is by the merit of the title-holder. These women titles are modelled after the male Iwarafa titles.

## Esemure Title

This is the head of the womenfolk. There is no specific house from which an Esemure could be chosen. However, she must be a woman who is happily married to an Iwoye-Ijesa man, as well as being successful in her calling. That she should be favourably disposed and composed is, without any exaggeration, one of the qualities of an Esemure.

There have been few *Esemures* known in the history of Iwoye-Ijesa. The reason could be found in the fact of the exceptional long life with which the holders of the post had been blessed. None of the oldest living persons in Iwoye-Ijesa today can recollect knowing more than four Esemures in the annals of the town.<sup>20</sup>

1. The oldest *Esemure*, according to oral tradition, is Esemure Agbeunmike. She was popularly referred to as '*Esemure Agba*' i.e. the old Esemure. She was married to Orisabon and became the mother of the Agunbiades at Agbede Street. She died in 1917.<sup>21</sup>
2. Esemure Osunnigbagbe (1917-1956), was the next *Esemure*. She was the mother of late Madam Obi Awe, who was very wealthy and the first woman to build a house of her own in the whole of the district. She lived at Anaye Street, in Iwoye-Ijesa. The house, which she built in 1928, is still a great structure in Iwoye-Ijesa today.
3. Esemure Elahunmike (Elahunmi) became the next *Esemure* after Osunnigbagbe. Her period spanned between 1956 and 1986 (7th October). She was the mother of the late Legbesa, Chief Gabriel Falade Oginni.<sup>22</sup>
4. Esemure Beatrice Olayemi Falobi became the *Esemure* after Elahunmike. Since her death on 18th July, 1997, the post has remained vacant.

The Esemure hosts the council of womenfolk in her house and, in consequence, must be physically resident in the town. In case of any incapacitation on the part of the Esemure, the leadership of the womenfolk devolves on the Yeye Risa.

The officials of the womenfolk attend the '*Ajo Ilu*' (Town Council of

Chiefs) which holds every other Monday in the Town Hall. Decisions reached on any pressing issue affecting the town by the women are communicated to the Oba-in-Council through the Esemure and her chiefs.



Esemure Osunnigbagbe  
(1917-1956)



Built by Esemure Osunnigbagbe in 1928

Their opinions on matters affecting the town are often accorded the seriousness they deserve by the Oba-in-Council. The women are partners in progress with the Oba-in-Council in the day-to-day affairs of the town.



Esemure Elahunmike Oginni  
(1956-1986)

The *Yeyerisase* leads the Omo-Omo womenfolk in the women council. She is the Esemure for the Omo-Omos. Care is always taken not to locate any of the Iwoye-Ijesa women titled chiefs outside the major families. Such titles are the *Yeye Risa*, *Yeye 'Dofin*, *Yeye 'Jero*, *Yeye Saba*, *Yeye Sajiku*, and *Yeye 'Ro*. The Esemure is an exception however.

## End Notes

1. Chief Emmanuel Ifatunbarin Opemuyi, (late), the Risa of Iwoye, aged c 120 years (1980).
2. Chief Samuel Olamijulo, the Asolo of Iwoye-Ijesa aged c 90+ years (1980). He died on 2nd Oct., 1996.
3. Chief E. Opemuyi, *ibid.*
4. *Op. cit.*
5. Chief Samuel Gbelee, the late Odofin of Iwoye-Ijesa (1967).
6. The full name is '*Ori afakan ko se e rin lojo.*' Meaning: walking on a single wooden bridge during the rains is a risky task. Information: Chief Gabriel Adeoye Fadairo, the late Ejemu of Iwoye-Ijesa, 1979.
7. Chief G. A. Fadairo, *op. cit.*
8. *Op. cit.*
9. A slave could 'buy' his freedom.
10. Chief G. A. Fadairo, *ibid.*
11. Information by Chief Emmanuel Opemuyi, the Risa Iwoye, *ibid.*
12. Chief Samuel Daramola Adeyeri, the Sajiku of Iwoye-Ijesa, aged c 80 years (1987).
13. The title holder is a relation of the earliest occupiers of Isimosan Quarters - Asaba - as such, he is related to both the Aworokun and Sapetu families. The title is restricted to only one family in Iwoye-Ijesa.
14. Chief Okundare, the late Aro of Iwoye-Ijesa (1968).
15. Chief Okundare, *op. cit.*
16. This system of making somebody an 'emese' (royal messenger) has long ceased to be enforced in Iwoye-Ijesa.
17. Chief E. Opemuyi (late), the Risa Iwoye and former Asolo of Iwoye-Ijesa, *ibid.*
18. The last 'Igbala' ceremony was performed on the death of Loriomo Chief Obi Falobi in 1989.
19. Chief E. Opemuyi, *ibid.*
20. Chief E. Opemuyi, the Risa Iwoye, *ibid.*
21. Chief E. Opemuyi, *op. cit.*
22. Chief Gabriel Oginni, the Legbesa of Iwoye-Ijesa, aged c. 80 years.

## Traditional Religion

**E**VER before the coming of the two foreign religions (Islam and Christianity), Iwoye-Ijesa people were worshipper of natural phenomena. Such objects as spirits of water, rock and ancestral worship etc., featured prominently. Important among such deities worshipped was *Ogun*, the god of iron, which was mainly worshipped by hunters and blacksmiths. Such blacksmiths were to be found at Agbede Street and Odo Iwoye. They were the Iwanus from Iraye. The stone relics of their worship and occupation are still to be found both at Agbede and Odo-Iwoye quarters of the town. *Ogun* was worshipped with roasted yam, dog, palm oil, fried vegetables and palmwine. Its attire is the palm-frond.

### Okun Worship

This is the major festival in Iwoye-Ijesa. '*Iwoye ibi a ns'okun*, meaning "Iwoye where Okun is worshipped," was a revered saying in the past. Okun worship started at Apare in Oke Ahun in Efon where the effigy was brought or smuggled out by High Chief Aro of Iwoye-Ijesa.<sup>1</sup> History has it that the smuggling was the handiwork of Atakumosa, himself a traditionalist and a strong medicine-man. He wanted an object of worship which would be unifying and central to the people. He sent Chief Aro to Efon to bring the relics of worship on hearing the efficacy of the powers of the Okun. It was said that Efon had never been ravaged by war, hence Aro who had formerly resided at Efon was seen as the most qualified for the job (of bringing the Okun effigy to Iwoye-Ijesa).

In preparation for the establishment of the Okun worship in the town, a piece of land was made ready at the present site of Ipara Okun – i.e. Okun groove in Iwoye where the Okun was conveniently placed.



Okun Groove, Iwoye-Ijesa

Another area was prepared on the way to Ere. This was the once famous Osun lake where there are two lakes – the Osun and the Olomitutu (otherwise known as ‘*Osun Yeyelori*’) where early morning water could be obtained. This is ‘*Omi aifo*.’ That is to say that the devotee should not talk to anyone throughout the duration of fetching the water until it was successfully conveyed home. It is used for multiple purposes, namely as curative and other medicinal needs by devotees. Children brought forth by the spirit of the water are called ‘*Olomitutu*.’



Okun Shrine, Iwoye-Ijesa

They must use only cold water; no warm water for them throughout their lives. The Osun lake is also known as *Osun olomowewe*, i.e. Osun the mother of children.

The original place where the Okun was worshipped at Efon was at Apare in Oke

Ahun, hence the name 'Okun *Apare*.' On getting to Iwoye, fearing that the Efons might be on his trail, Aro communed with elders who advised that the effigy be kept in far away Ere. It was therefore taken to Odo Okun near Ere, and later brought back to Iwoye-Ijesa when there was no longer any fear of the Efons ever coming for its recovery. Water was said to have sprouted in Chief Aro's house where effigy was kept. This alarmed Aro and his household and he quickly took the effigy out of his house at Odo Iwoye.

On returning to Iwoye, Chief Aro, the procurer, refused keeping the effigy. It was therefore given to a more senior member of the family, Asaba, who became the Aworokun, for keeps.

It must be noted that Asaba, Aro and Sapetu were from the same family stock at Efon. To confirm the primacy of Chief Aro as the person who brought the Okun to Iwoye from Efon, there used to be a saying: *Oju ma a ri o, okun Aro ni Iwoye!*<sup>2</sup> meaning, "O my eyes saw wonders at Iwoye where Aro's deity (Okun) is worshipped." This was said whenever there was any surprising incident at Iwoye-Ijesa.

The drum used for the Okun during its annual festival is called 'agba'. Chief Aro was accompanied by a man called Ogori whose duties included drumming the 'agba' and preparing a new one whenever any of them was torn. There are three sets of agba drums at 'Uwa' the place where the relics of worship were housed. One belonged to the Loja, another to the Risa of Iwoye, while the third belonged to the Aworokun, Aro and Sapetu jointly. There are also the *lukorigi* drum iron gongs, beads and horse tails used by the womenfolk when dancing.

The Aworokun is the Okun Chief Priest. The Sapetu, his young brother, is another active participant. Chief *Legbesa*, who is not of the same family with the first two (Aworokun and Aro), runs errands for them. The three of them are members of the Ihare group of chiefs. Both Aworokun and Sapetu have traditional farmlands; so also with the Asaba, the leader of the Isimosan quarters, before he was dispossessed of it by the Sapetu family.

By far the most important officer of the Okun worship is the Aworokun. He can be selected from any of the Aworokun, Sapetu or Aro families in Iwoye-Ijesa. The chief lives very close to the 'Uwa', the house of the Okun, which is located close to the market square. Some former Aworokuns were:

- (a) Uta Okunrin – the man who gave land to Numoogun of Ijebu-Jesa. He was the first in the list of the Aworokuns;
- (b) Oso Owuro<sup>3</sup>;
- (c) Odunrin;
- (d) Obolajosun-fa-Olugba mora;
- (e) Ategbero (*Ategbero bi agogo ide*);
- (f) Agbola;
- (g) Bamidele; and
- (h) Samuel Ojo (the most recent).

Ategbero, Agbola, Bamidele and Samuel Ojo descended from Odunrin.<sup>4</sup> Other Aworokuns who must be mentioned for record purposes were:

- (a) Aworokun Akotere who bore a child called Oritu who died in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) during the colonial era;
- (b) Aworokun '*A mo teni ma mo ti arare*' ('Amoteni' for short);
- (c) Aworokun Aderounwiyin;
- (d) Another Aworokun got lost during the night festival (*Igbo Ale*) for contravening some of the laws of the Okun worship.<sup>5</sup>

An important object for the worship of the Okun is a dog – '*aja okun*' usually donated by the Owa of Ilesa. An Owa (of the Bepo family) went a-hunting in the Okun groove once and shot a deer which galloped back into the forest and finally into the deeps. The hunting Owa pursued it until he got lost. While approaching the jungles, the path would be clear but while approaching the road, it grew dark. He was on the verge of getting lost.

After many fruitless efforts at finding his path, the Ifa oracle was consulted and a dog was prescribed for sacrifice. The dog was beheaded, and, holding the head with its dripping blood, his path became brighter and he was able to trace his way back to the road. Since then, the dog has been donated annually by the Owa during the Okun festival which heralded the eating of the new yam 'egbodo' by the devotees.<sup>6</sup>

The deer was said not to be an ordinary deer but one of the 'goats' being reared by the Okun goddess. This was why the Okun was often referred to as: "*Omo elere o gbe ogbogbo agburin mi, Ogbogbo agburin tugbo okun wode.*" This means, "Okun, the rearer of the python which swallowed the galloping stag or deer. The galloping stag which emerged from the Okun forest (groove)."

The Okun was often venerated thus:

*"Okun Ogbogbo Mudu,  
Alaka-Aye-Osin mole,  
Olugbo dudu abedun lori  
Eleyinkunle a de wure,  
Orisa je nla bi onile yi  
Ogaga lasa okunrin, O faje keru,  
O gbe' mo re so d'aje,  
Eleyinkunle a de wure."*

Literally meaning:

*"Okun Ogbogbo Mudu  
The all-powerful on earth,  
Owner of the dark forest with monkeys atop.  
The one whose backyard you reach and offer good tidings;  
O god, make me as rich as the owner of this house;  
The ever active man with plenty of money on his head;  
One who backs his child to the extent of the child being called  
a witch;*

The one whose backyard you reach and offer good tidings."

Iwoye people are often referred to as:

*"Omo edun ugbo Okun feyeyin rin,  
Ki i ereere igi ma ba a gun omo on loju otun."*

This means, "the child of the Okun groove where its monkey moves in a backward manner so as to prevent chips of trees from piercing its child on the right eye."

A lot of activities surrounded the annual Okun worship. These included the 'Igbo ale' (the night vigil), Ita Okun' (the third day), 'Ije Okun' (the seventh), 'Isan' (the ninth), and the 'Italawa' (the thirteen) days of the festival<sup>7</sup>. These were days of merriment for the devotees from far and near who had gathered for the celebrations.

A reverential saying in Iwoye-Ijesa in connection with the great expedition of Chief Aro in procuring the Okun worship and its great impact on the Efons was: "*Ota yi l'Aaye o pugba oni, o digba to pojidunrun oni ki Ihare Oke Efon to mo.*" This saying depicted the nonchallant attitude of the Efons in not bothering about their losses (the Okun effigy) until the whole thing had gone almost beyond any trace. The Okun prophetess and devotees had played very important roles in the religious life of Iwoye-Ijesa before the advent of either Islam or Christianity.

### **Osunta**

This is an associate worship of the Okun. According to information, Osunta used to be a stocky, short, black man who was later deified. Its symbol is a solid black rock which devotees, especially women, worshipped with palm oil, snails (*igbin*), cowries (later coins), kolanuts and food items like *aadun* (corn flower mixed with palm oil), sugar cane and articles meant for sale on market days.

It was not uncommon seeing people, usually devotees, going to the market supplicating for good sales in the market from the Osunta in

return for which they dropped some of their wares and money (usually copper coins) on their ways back.

Osunta's cognomen (*oriki*) runs thus:

*Agboja a gara igi sedun;*  
*Agboigbo epo, Agbo fori s'oiya;*  
*Alagedegbe ti ntanna ori yeriyeri.*  
*O sa kuku t'orun waye;*  
*Okunrin jebu-jebu ona Ijebu.*

Literarily, this means, "Agboja who throws his club from the side of the tree trunk; the big tin of oil, the ram which hits the trunk with its head; The big man with sprouting fire on his head; He hastens



Osunta Shrine, Iwoye-Ijesa

from heaven to the earth; The short-fat man on Ijebu road. All these were attributes of the Osunta when he was alive. They portray his location on the way to Ijebu-Jesa and his stature as short-fat-man (*okunrin jebu-jebu*).

During any travail or drought, water would be poured on the Osunta to bring down the tension and induce rainfall. It now has a small structure erected on it. While entering Iwoye-Ijesa from Ijebu-Ijesa the Osunta is located on the right hand side before getting to the Ona Owu road junction on the left hand side overlooking the centre of Iwoye-Ijesa. It is now represented by a big black stone where palm oil, cow shells of snails and remains of food stuff usually powdered corn mixed with oil (*aadun*) and kola-nut dropped there by devotees can still be found.

## Orisa Apasaka

This is otherwise known as Orisa Apasaka.<sup>8</sup> Apasaka was the name of the lead worshipper, Ojo Obalorisa who died in 1967. The last Obalorisa, Chief Jide Panikin died in 2004. Originally, the idol was from Ilumoko in Esa Odo, a neighbouring town to Iwoye-Ijesa. It came on the invitation of the Risa Iwoye, and was brought by Ajanaku, the first Obalorisa, who was also a hunter. His successors included Aderibigbe, Ayekeleyin, Ojo Apasaka and Jide Ojo Panikin.

The Orisa celebration is for the eating of the new yam like that of Okun and Olubejo festivals. It is also celebrated on the farm with kolanut, yam and hen. Celebrations used to take thirteen days with landmarks on the first, third, seventh and thirteenth days respectively. Its major drum is 'igbin' and iron gongs (*agogo*). Native kolanut and palmwine are also part of the ingredients of worship.

The capping of the Obalorisa was done by the Iwarafas. Like the specially-capped Aworokun, he is an Ihare chief. The Orisa festival precedes the Lamoye and Olubejo, i.e. Yeela festivals of the Ilas and it comes up usually in July. Its chiefs were Obalorisa, Loriooro, Satoiye, Sagbunrin, Lewere and Risaoro. All these titles have gone into oblivion with the advent of Christianity and modernity.

## Other Worships

Another worship was the *Olubejo* or *Yeela* by the Ilas. It is also for the eating of new yam. Others were *Lamoye* (Itegun) and *Orin* (Odogo). Of all these, only the Okun still remains a shadow of its old self. What remains to be seen as a sign of this old worship is the lake which is now being overfilled with torrents from the built-up higher levels surrounding the Okun groove. There is still also the house where the relics, including the 'agba' drums, 'lukorigi' drums, horse tails, iron gongs and heavy beads were kept. Only the devotees dare enter the 'uwa'. The frontage is bedecked with fresh palm-fronts especially during the festivals.

What one can see these days are women devotees of advanced Christianity and Chief Legbesa, who himself had at one time embraced Christianity, carrying out the necessary Okun rituals. Even the two other Ijesa towns, Osun and Olomitutu – are being fastly encroached upon by built-up areas which now dot their upper areas.

There are *Ifa* worshippers or devotees but they are no longer seen to be found in the community. What remains of these old worships are the names associated with them which, surprisingly, had been taken over by biblical names like Daniel, Joshua, Mary, Hannah, etc. The names of the worshippers can still be traced by their names, for most of them had changed religion and abandoned their original worship. Be that as it may, there are still titles such as Loriawo Ifa and Loriawo Ijesa among the Ihare chiefs today.

### End Notes

1. Chief Okundare, the late Aro of Iwoye-Ijesa (1967).
2. Chief Okundare, *ibid.*
3. The full name is '*Oso Owuro ti nbi olowo ninu.*' Meaning: the early marriage of a young man which annoys an old rich man.
4. Chief Michael Ojo Ategbere, the Loosi Omo Iwoye, aged c. 65 years, (1989).
5. Mrs Fayo Ayceleyin, aged c 58 years (1989).
6. The severed head of the dog would be taken round the town calling on the ruler and chiefs to pay their own dues for the sacrifice by the devotees. The dues in cash and kind were often collected by them.
7. Chief Gabriel Oginni, the Legbesa of Iwoye-Ijesa, *ibid.*
8. Chief Ojo Apasaka, the Obalorisa of Iwoye-Ijesa, who died in 1967, aged over 90 years.

# 5

## Iwoye-Ijesa and Her Neighbours

IWOYE-IJESA has neighbours with whom she has interacted over the years. They include Ijeda, Ere, Esa-Oke, Esa-Odo and, of course, Ijebu-Jesa. The relationships have varied in degree with the neighbouring communities. These relationships had left different tastes in the mouth; but, however sweet or bitter some might have been. Iwoye-Ijesa has learnt to put up with the different tastes, with the result that the theory of 'peaceful coexistence' now reigns supreme among them all. Whatever be the case, the historical aspects of the connections had been stated with clarity in the following write-up.

Down the ages, Iwoye-Ijesa lived in harmony with her neighbours. This affinity and realisation had been amply demonstrated by the clear understanding that existed between Iwoye-Ijesa and the neighbours. The open-handedness of Iwoye-Ijesa has however not been adequately reciprocated by some of her neighbours.

Before the establishment of Ijebu-Jesa, Iwoye-Ijesa's immediate neighbour was Ijeda. The Aworokun of Iwoye-Ijesa and Chief Araakin of Ijeda had a common boundary at a point just around the former Iroko tree at Ijebu-Jesa, which has now given way to the Ijebu-Jesa roundabout overlooking the Ijebu-Jesa/Iwoye-Ijesa/Esa Odo road. Ijeda, whose Chief Araakin owned the area of the Oba's palace, 'Odo Agudu' in Ijebu-Jesa, owned the land up to that point from Ijeda while Iwoye-Ijesa owned it from there towards Iwoye-Ijesa. The Iroko tree was, in fact, part of the Aworokun's garden. Later, the Iroko tree came under the care of the Onijiku, a chief in Ijebu-Jesa, who was a relation of the Aworokun of Iwoye-Ijesa.

did not object to its construction. They took it in good faith. Iwoye-Ijesa/Ere road, which the defunct Directorate of Food, and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) used to grade annually in preparation for tarring has now reverted to an unkempt footpath because of neglect by the state and local governments. The need for all to inculcate a maintenance culture is now more necessary than ever before.

The Iwoye-Ijesa/Esá Odo road found good favour with the government of the old Western Region and the Oyo State Government successor. It has now been tarred. The road was jointly constructed by the Iwoye-Ijesa and Esá Odo communities, and is now a good access road to Otan Ile, Ibokun and Imesi Ile. It also links up with Ilkiran and Elerin in the Kwara State of Nigeria. The road has since been rehabilitated by the Osun State Government with United Nations funding. The activities of the four communities of Iwoye-Ijesa, Odo, Ilare, Otan-Ile come to prominence in this project.

One sorry case, however, is the road that ought to have passed through Iwoye-Ijesa to Esá-Oke and Ekitiland. It should come out at a point near the petrol filling station on the Ijebu-Jesá/Itawure road near Esá Oke junction. This used to be the former road for people travelling to Esá Oke and Ekitiland through Iwoye-Ijesa. During the reign of Owa Obokun Aromolaran I in Ilesa, a road was proposed to pass through Iwoye-Ijesa to Ekitiland. The *Loja*, Oba Ifaturoti Asulade was asked to make the road possible. The information leaked to then Oba of Ijebu-Jesá, Oba Kuye Arojoyoye II. On the advice of some of his people, he thought otherwise.<sup>3</sup> They rallied their people together and re-routed the road through Odo Ese in Ijebu-Jesá. This would enable the road to pass through Ijebu-Jesá alone and thus served to open up the area through which it passed. The role of the above-named Ijebu-Jesá citizens on this road left a bitter taste in the mouth of Iwoye-Ijesa for some time. This ancient road is still unimproved even though the local government has spent thousands of naira on the construction of a bridge<sup>4</sup> across Eriiru River on the Iwoye-Ijesa road of the road.

Both the Oriade and the former Obokun Local Governments had been urged several times, without success though, to help open up this road, to make it beneficial to all and sundry. One day, the government would beam its searchlight on the road and clear the last ruffians on it. The Odogo community will do well to accede to the pleas of Iwoye-Ijesa for the opening up of the road for the benefit of all.

### **Ijebu-Jesa**

This dated to the period of a hunter named Numoogan, the founder of Ijebu-Jesa, who came to meet Asaba at Isimosan in Iwoye-Ijesa.<sup>2</sup> The two towns are, by far, the closest neighbours in the Oriade Local Government Area today. Hardly is there any family in Iwoye-Ijesa without relations in Ijebu-Jesa and vice versa. Religiously, the traditional worshippers of both towns shared much in common. The Okun festival in Iwoye-Ijesa was jointly celebrated with traditional worshippers from Ijebu-Jesa, while Iwoye-Ijesa worshippers also reciprocated the gestures.

Early Christian adherents in Iwoye-Ijesa enjoyed patronages from fellow Christians in Ijebu-Jesa. There were joint religious worships in churches by the early Anglican members before a church was built in Iwoye-Ijesa. Commercially, the three-day market in Ijebu-Jesa received active patronage from Iwoye-Ijesa people, whose market, the Ojioye, used to hold every five days but which has now been changed to every other day to alternate with Ijebu-Jesa market days.

Educationally, there had been active cooperation between Iwoye-Ijesa and Ijebu-Jesa. The St. Thomas' Primary School in Iwoye-Ijesa used to feed the St. Mathew's Senior Primary School in Ijebu-Jesa up till 1952. In January 1953, the St. Thomas' School was raised to the status of a full primary school to educate pupils up to standard six. Apart from this, the Local Authority Secondary Modern School, Ijebu-Jesa (1955 to mid-1960s, when it ceased to function), the Anglican Secondary Modern School and the Ijebu-Jesa Grammar School were equally patronized by Iwoye-Ijesa. The patronage subsisted until the

founding of the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School in 1976. The relations between the two towns however had its ups and downs which present generations are trying to normalise.

One unforgettable incident in the Iwoye-Ijesa/Ijebu-Jesa relations was the claim which Oba Kuye Arojojoye II of Ijebu-Jesa once laid on Iwoye-Ijesa lands at the Okun groove area (Igbo Okun). This land bordered Ijebu-Jesa and extended from the Okun depression to the ancient protective trench surrounding Iwoye-Ijesa. A part of it on the left side of the road, while coming from Ijebu-Jesa, was given to Ijebu-Jesa by the Iwoye-Ijesa community, during the reign of Loja Iwoye Oba Onibokun Alagbara II in 1949 for the building of St. Matthew School 'A,' Ijebu-Jesa.<sup>6</sup> after the payment of a token amount. The trench is before the Onibokun Street which leads from the tarred road to the Atakumosa Road end on the Orokin slope in Ijebu-Jesa. The ancient trench crossed the Iwoye-Ijesa/Ijebu-Jesa road before the Orokin stream.

Oba Kuye Arojojoye's claim was challenged by Iwoye-Ijesa. This led to a protracted legal battle between Iwoye-Ijesa and the Ogboni of Ijebu-Jesa. It ended up in the High Court of Justice, Ilesa, in favour of Iwoye-Ijesa in the early 1960s. This celebrated case brought out the great virtues of the late Chief Adebayo Seesin<sup>7</sup> of Iwoye-Ijesa who fought until justice prevailed in the disputed land case. Since then, the land on the Iwoye side of the trench had been plotted out to the Iwoye-Ijesa community and sold to citizens of both Iwoye-Ijesa and Ijebu-Jesa without any discrimination whatsoever.

### Ere

Ere, a neighbouring but smaller town, had very close relationship with Iwoye-Ijesa for a long time in the past. It was where an Atakumosa child died. The report was made to him in Iwoye saying: '*O re on yin.*' He decreed that that point where the son slumped and died would be known as 'Ere,' hence the name.<sup>8</sup> Apart from this, the land

always very slippery during the rain. The slippery and muddy nature gives it its name.

This Iwoye-Ijesa/Ere relationship has survived the test of time. There had been socio-cultural connections between the two towns. One very important aspect of this relationship was connected with the roofing of the Oba's palace in Iwoye-Ijesa when Ere had to provide some of the roofing materials. This practice was stopped during Loja Asubiojo's reign in Iwoye-Ijesa as a result of the close connections (military and social) between him and Ekemode<sup>9</sup> of Ere. Iwoye-Ijesa's boundary overlooks Ere on the other bank of the Koje stream. Chief Aro of Iwoye-Ijesa hid the Okun effigy at a place called 'Odo Okun-Ere' before finally returning it to Iwoye-Ijesa when the chase by Efon people petered out. At present, the fixing of Okun festival day must first be cleared by Chief Legbesa at Odo Okun, Ere, before announcing the date at Iwoye.

Risa Iwoye, Udagba Feyinlako, was reputed to have settled some of his seventy followers at Idaado in Ere while the others were settled at Ilare from where a candidate could be selected to fill the vacant stool of Risa Iwoye at Iwoye-Ijesa. Risa Iwoye Opamuda created Oke Ere with 360 settlers and sent 200 settlers to Olokuta village, another village under Iwoye-Ijesa.<sup>10</sup> This had led to the saying: "*O fojidunrun oni da Oke Ere, o fugba oni da Olokuta,*" meaning: "He created Upper Ere (Oke Ere) with 360 men; and settled Olokuta with 200 men." This proves, beyond doubt, that the relationship between Ere and Iwoye-Ijesa had long existed and had been very cordial. The only snag is the much-neglected DFRRRI road which should have conveniently linked Iwoye-Ijesa with Ere. Today, Iwoye-Ijesa is the headquarters of Ward 4 in Oriade Local Government of which Ere is an active member.

### **Èsa Egure (Èsa Odo)**

This is the town located to the northern part of Iwoye-Ijesa. Religiously, Orisa Apasaka which is worshipped in Iwoye-Ijesa was

brought from Ilumoko in Esa Odo.<sup>11</sup> Culturally, the people of the two towns are friendly. Iwoye's land extended to as far as a stream overlooking Esa Odo. The stream is called 'Alagbonringbon' or 'Lagbonringbon.' Iwoye-Ijesa housed many Esa-Odo sons and daughters schooling at Ijebu-Jesa in the 1950s. These former pupils are today the 'movers and shakers' of their communities and societies. The construction of the Iwoye-Ijesa/Esa Odo road was the joint responsibility of the great fathers of the present generations of youths of the two towns, who have good cause to be eternally grateful to their progenitors. Esa Odo, like Iwoye-Ijesa is a member of the four communities which struggled for the rehabilitation of the Ijebu-Jesa Otan Ile road by the Osun State government. It has since formed an important asset linking the four communities of Iwoye-Ijesa, Esa Odo, Ilare and Otan-Ile with Ibokun and Imesi-Ile in the Obokun Local Government, Ikirun, and Ilorin in Kwara State.

### **Esa Oke**

This town lies to the north-east of Iwoye-Ijesa. From its direction came the Ilas, Iteguns and Odogos. Idofin people of Esa Oke have been hosts to and close neighbours of these immigrants who later found solace in Iwoye-Ijesa during the time of Loja Atakumosa. The relationship between the two people had been cordial historically and culturally. Before the establishment of the Farm Settlement which was named after Esa Oke, citizens of the two towns shared common farmland boundary where the Idofin people of Esa Oke and the people of Iwoye-Ijesa (Ilas, Iteguns and Iwoyes) peacefully farmed even to today. Part of the land had been acquired for the misnamed Esa-Oke Farm Settlement. Iwoye-Ijesa owns almost eighty percent of the entire land of the Farm Settlement.

### **Ijeda**

The relationship between Iwoye-Ijesa and Ijeda had been punctuated with the establishment and expansion of Ijebu-Jesa at the expense of both Iwoye-Ijesa and Ijeda. It must be said, however, that apart from some cooperation among the traditional worshippers, there had been

some administrative cooperation between the two towns. Each of them is under a Loja, an 'Omododo', who was the son or descendant of the Owa of Ilesa. Each Loja's administration had been superimposed on earlier settlement(s) as the oral traditions of the two communities amply showed.

Today, all these communities believe in peaceful coexistence with their neighbours. Apart from Esa Oke and Esa Odo, which are now under Obokun Local Government, Iwoye-Ijesa is under the same local government (Oriade) with Ere, Ijebu-Jesa and Ijeda, and they all co-exist peacefully. Iwoye-Ijesa believes in the theory of 'healthy rivalry' with her neighbours and that has been the case right from its founding.

### End Notes

1. Chief Micheal Olowoyeye, the son of the late Sule Akeju, the Aloro Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa (1986).
2. Chief Gabriel Oginni, the late Legbesa of Iwoye-Ijesa, aged c 75 years (1990).
3. Chief G. Oginni, *op. cit.*
4. The brid-was constructed during the Second Republic (1979-1983).
5. Chief M. Olowoyeye, *ibid.*
6. Chief J. O. Onibokun, the Sapaye Omo Owa (1975). He died in 1984 at the age of 63 years.
7. This illustrious son of Iwoye-Ijesa had a street named after him post-humously by Iwoye-Ijesa community.
8. Chief S. Adewumi, Risa Legbewa Omo Owa, aged over 100 years.
9. S. A. Adewumi *op. cit.*
10. Chief E. Opemuyi, the Risa Iwoye, *ibid.*
11. Chief Ojo Apasaka, the late Obalorisa of Iwoye-Ijesa who died in 1967, *ibid.*

# 6

## Impact of the Yoruba Civil Wars on Iwoye-Ijesa

**T**HAT Iwoye-Ijesa is now smaller than its traditional defence fortress (*odi ilu*) had been due to the ravages of the nineteenth century civil wars in Yorubaland. The Oyo/Iba forces, under their leader, Ibikunle, pitched their forces with Iwoye-Ijesa's Oyo clients who were then based at the Osun Oko area, just outside the town, on Esa-Egure road. The siege lasted nine years and culminated in the 1851 Ijebu-Ere war.<sup>1</sup> The Oyo clients of Iwoye-Ijesa harboured their kinsmen who later dealt mortal blows on the peace-loving Iwoye-Ijesa people.

The people of the town did not just leave themselves to fate. Some of the citizens actually displayed their military prowess, especially the services of the Ekiti-Parapo confederal generalissimo, Orisaray Ogedengbe of Atorin near Ilesa. The exploits of the now-recalled heroes are here stated. The effect of the Oyo invasion of Iwoye-Ijesa has also been delved into.

### Impact of Kiriji Wars

The Yoruba civil wars of the nineteenth century, especially the Kiriji wars (November 1879 to June 1886) left an indelible impression on Iwoye-Ijesa like it did on the other affected Ijesa and Ekiti settlements. This war to end all wars featured the confederal forces of the Ekiti-Parapo forces of Ijesa and Ekiti aided by their allies – the Ijebu-Egbas and Ilorins fighting to liberate themselves from the imperial

yoke of the Ibadan forces. The confederal force was formerly led by Prince Fabunmi of Imesi-Igbo Odo (Oke-Mesi). He later willingly surrendered his leadership to Ogedengbe of Ilesa who had been recalled for this crucial 'national service' from the Akoko sector where he had gone on military expeditions. One of the reasons for Fabunmi's surrender of the leadership to Ogedengbe was because Ogedengbe was a more tested commander who had seen services in various parts of Yorubaland, whereas Fabunmi was younger and could still learn from this war veteran.

Ogedengbe had his own war-boys known as the '*Ipayes*' whose duty it was to be at the master's beck and call. These Ipaye war-boys were to be found in every town in Ijesaland. Iwoye-Ijesa, as an Ijesa settlement, played her own role in this 'war of all wars.' The town is strategically located on a plateau very close to the Ogburru river on the way to Imesi-Ile, the scene of the final battle. After it is Esa-Egure (Esa Odo) on the way to Otan and Imesi-Ile.

Iwoye was referred to as 'Iwaye' in Samuel Johnson's book, *The History of the Yorubas*. According to him, "Balogun Ibikunle positioned himself at Iwaye (Iwoye) and placed the Otun (Ogunmola) at the Erinmo road while the Seriki (Ajayi Jegede) with all the Badas were positioned at Efon Alaaye road".<sup>2</sup> That showed the strategic position of Iwoye-Ijesa to the invading Ibadan forces.

This war brought out clearly the exploits of warriors from Iwoye-Ijesa. They had become closely associated with Ogedengbe either as his colleagues or as members of his 'Ipaye' war-machine. The position of the town had been complicated by the presence of Oyo elements at the other bank of Ogburru's tributary called Osun Oko or Osun Iraye. The Oyos became ready collaborators of the Ibadan/Oyo forces who laid siege to the town for nine years.<sup>3</sup> This culminated in the 1851 Oyo invasion of Iwoye-Ijesa in the Ijebu-Ere war.<sup>4</sup> Wells were dug on the banks of the river to supplement their sources of ready water supply. Traces of such wells are still to be found on the banks of Osun-Oko today.

### Notable Iwoye-Ijesa Warriors

By far one of the most outstanding Iwoye-Ijesa warriors who took an active part in this great war was the great Arimoro. He was one of the colleagues of Orisarayibi Ogedengbe who hailed from Atorin in the present day Atakumosa East Local Government Area of Osun State. Arimoro hailed from Itegun, one of the quarters in Iwoye-Ijesa. The present Risa Legbewa Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa, Chief Samuel Adewumi, claimed that he was maternally related to Arimoro.<sup>5</sup> The exploits of this great warrior had been graciously accorded its unique place in the history of Ijesas<sup>6</sup> and of the Yorubas.

Another participant worthy of note was Ifaturoti, who later became Loja Asubiojo of Iwoye-Ijesa. He was popularly known as '*Asaa, Ogun*', i.e. war leader.<sup>7</sup> He fought alongside Ogedengbe. His great exploits during the wars coupled with his faithful association with Ogedengbe earned him the title of Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa from Ogedengbe. This should not be strange when one realises that Ogedengbe, as the Obanla of Ilesa by then, had become a kingmaker in his own right. He was the 'maker' of many Obas in Ijesaland. These included even the Owa Obokun of Ijesaland. He also single handedly installed Agunsoye as the Oba (Ogboni) of Ijebu-Jesa. Asubiojo too became the Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa in 1884. It was said that the uniqueness of its appellation '*Asubiojo p'okunrin*' became actualised on his death in 1931 when there was a heavy snowfall in Iwoye-Ijesa. This was an unusual occurrence! The snow covered the ground for many days. Asubiojo was buried after 90 days.<sup>8</sup>

Another warrior was Loogun Omole Agunbiade, alias '*Amuugbangbi ekun, ese (Ologbo) o peere leyin.*' He died in the battle fighting in front of the great Ogedengbe. His great exploit was rewarded adequately by Ogedengbe when he (Ogedengbe) gave one of his daughters as wife to one of his (Agunbiade's) younger brothers. The woman was the mother of Mr. Olaosebikan Agunbiade, a retired headmaster.<sup>9</sup>

Mention must also be made of Uganran of Isimosan quarters. He was popularly known as "*Ugaran baba ogun*" or "*Uganran baba Ekiti*".

This meant: "Uganran, the lord of battles or the terror of Ekitis. He was a great 'Ipaye' who, after the wars, specialised in terrorising neighbours. Uganran wreaked great havoc on the Ekitis whom he sold into slavery at will.

Adurogbofa was another warrior. He too was from the Isimosan quarters, and was popularly called 'Adurogbofa bi ogiri.' This was because he was never ruffled by the enemies' arrows as he used to stay unruffled like the wall. Another warrior also from Isimosan was Ogunlade, popularly known as 'Osewa lojo ija,' meaning, "the one who was always ready to display his military valour when there was war. This showed his fearlessness. He too, like Adurogbofa and Uganran, was a member of Ogedengbe's Ipaye. He saw active service in Akokoland. The popular saying: "*Ipaye rin o jinna ki olomo to kege pe omo on sonu,*" meaning: "The Ipayes would have gone far before the mother of the victim (usually a minor to be sold into slavery) dared to shout or cry for his/her missing ward or child." This portrayed the devastating exploits and ravages of those Ipayes at that time. They formed the core of the Ijesa war machine under their leader Ogedengbe.

Others in the long list of Iwoye-Ijesa warriors who took part in that great war included Ogundairo of Isimosan. He was the Loode or Oluode i.e. the head-hunter. Amure of Araromi Street and Onikanni alias "*Onikanni a bi ikanni gbaa bi agbo*" of Isimosan were also included. Others were Ogo of Itegun and Yiwonuogungbekan from Araromi Street and a host of others whom lack of documentation and the death of the great local historians, whose memories were never recorded, had condemned to historical oblivion. But they all did well to make Iwoye-Ijesa great during those turbulent years of Yoruba history.

The 1851 Ibadan/Oyo siege on Iwoye-Ijesa<sup>10</sup> left its great impact on the town through vast desolation while the indiscriminate sale of its citizens into slavery also left its deep scars on the war-hungered Oyos. The exploits climaxed with the great night war '*ogun oru*', in which

the Oyos. Ibadan forces, used the pass-words "*eni, eni*", meaning "one" to which insiders should reply "*aji, aji*" (two, two) which qualify them for easy recognition and safety from the sword and firepowers of their fellow Oyos were used. The unsuspecting Iwoye-Ijesa citizens, unaware of the password or its reply, easily fell victims of Oyo brutality, resulting in outright killing or enslavement.<sup>11</sup>

This led most people to shift base to and move very close to Iwoye-Ijesa. They settled at a place later known as 'Ita Iwoye', i.e. Iwoye-Ijesa junction, at Ijebu-Ijesa. Many of these people settled there permanently. They included the Fademi and Orioke Obatala families and many others. The majority, however, under the great pull of their ancestral base, returned home after some time. The homecoming was not effected until after a plot by some Ijebu-Ijesa people, whose attempt to do their Iwoye-Ijesa neighbours in, through enslavement, was uncovered.

The secret leaked to an Iwoye-Ijesa woman married to an Ijebu-Ijesa man. She divulged it to her people. Uganran, the war leader there, gave orders to his people to have their devastated homes rebuilt in record time. This was done with despatch and the people, who were ready to return, moved back before the thought of the Ijebu-Ijesa schemers materialised.

The invading Ibadan/Oyo forces did not leave Iwoye-Ijesa unscathed. On entering the town, they felt thirsty and, rather than going back to the Ogburru river for water, they moved down to the Okun (the sacred lake) to drink. Having had their fill, most of the warriors who drank the water fell dead and their corpses later littered the market square around the present house of Chief Gabriel Falade Oginni, in the heart of the town.<sup>12</sup>

The Oyo invasion led to the dispersal of people from Iwoye-Ijesa either through enslavement or migration motivated by the spirit of adventure. The presence of other Iwoye settlements, especially those near Epe and in Yewa (formerly Egbado), and Ago-Iwoye in Ogun State

what must still be looked into by historians to really complete the long history surrounding the name of the town, 'Iwoye'.

As for the Iwoye near Ede, the author discovered that the town has no relations with Iwoye-Ijesa. They are pro-Oyo and it is a relatively recent settlement. Their main traditional worship is 'Oosaaje' represented by an iron worshipped with snails. The shrine is often placed in front of the house wherever their descendants are to be found. Here, they have close connections with Ifon, Ara and Ejigbo which were said to have migrated from the Iwoye near Awo. The people also worshipped Sango, the Yoruba god of thunder. Their dispersal was however due to a chieftaincy dispute and they are often referred to as: *Omo oju lo pon la meje joye,* meaning: We were hard-pressed on enthroning a mere relation when there was no direct heir to the throne."

## End Notes

1. Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, p. 311.
2. Ibid.
3. Chief Gabriel Falade Oginni (late), the Legbesa of Iwoye-Ijesa, 1990.
4. Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, *ibid.*
5. Chief S. Adewumi, the Risa Legbewa Omo Owa, 1990.
6. See Prince S. A. Atayero, *A Short History of the Ijesas, Vol 1.*
7. Chief S. A. Adewumi, *ibid.*
8. *Op. cit.*
9. *Op. cit.*
10. The Ibadan-Oyo invasion was the end-result of the nine year old siege laid against Iwoye-Ijesa by the Ibadan-Oyo forces. This ended in the night war, 'ogun oru' and the unforgettable *Olobirikolagunja* or *Olobirinla* swamp episode.
11. Chief M. Olowoyeye (late), the Aloro Omo Owa, aged c. 80+ years (1987).
12. Chief Gabriel Falade Oginni, the Legbesa of Iwoye, 1990.
13. Information by the traditional ruler of Iwoye near Ede.

# 7

## The Coming of Islam and Christianity: A New Era

**T**HE introduction of foreign religions – Islam and Christianity – could be regarded as the 'dawn of a new era' in Iwoye-Ijesa. This is to say that the old order (traditional belief), has steadily yielding place to the new (monotheism i.e. Islam and Christianity).

The introduction of modern facilities like the belief in a universal God, either of the Islamic or Christian philosophies changed people's orientation towards the more universally accepted religious norms. In the wake of these, especially in the case of Christianity, came western education and mode of dressing. Other attempts at civilizing models soon followed.

These modern trends, which came later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, must not be lumped with the people's ancient religious orientation. This has necessitated the splitting of the religious beliefs of the people into 'ancient' or 'traditional' and 'modern' the more universally-accepted religious norms in the present modern societies.

This topic has been divided into Islamic and Christian eras. The division is not, strictly speaking, water-tight, but has only been based on periods of introduction of the two different monotheistic beliefs in Iwoye-Ijesa. While Islam arrived earlier only to take a quick look, Christianity was a latecomer, but it is today the dominant religion in the town.

## Islam in Iwoye-Ijesa

Islam, one of the two world-famed religions, has at one time or the other, in the annals of Iwoye-Ijesa had its firm root in the town. It had flourished to the extent of having its own group of adherents and place of worship.<sup>1</sup> Even today, traces of the once active Islamic religion can still be found either in some family names or on burial grounds in the compounds of the former devotees.

Two distinct features contributed to the emergence and rise of Islam and the Muslim community in Iwoye-Ijesa. These were the Kiriji wars and the Oyo/Ibadan invasion of Iwoye-Ijesa while the other was the influence of indigenes who moved out and got converted to Islam.

While a clear distinction cannot be drawn between these two different sources, it can be safely said that, before the invasion of Iwoye-Ijesa by the Oyo/Ibadan forces in 1851, there was no trace of Islam in Iwoye-Ijesa. What predominated was traditional worship.

Many of the Oyo invaders were muslims and, as they ravaged the forest belt of Yorubaland from the savannah region in the north, they went with the *Holy Quran* and Islamic worship. It must be remembered that the Oyos settled very close to Iwoye-Ijesa at the 'Osun Oko' or 'Osun Iraye' area on the Esa Odo end of Ogburuu river before mounting the hill to Iwoye-Ijesa. Their nine years' stay represented a period of subtle influence on the traditional Iwoye-Ijesa citizens by the Oyo Muslims resident there. These Oyo settlers later collaborated with the Ibadan forces to invade Iwoye-Ijesa. Their long stay of nine years at close contact left its imprint on the people's religion, as many of the people got converted to the new religion.

With the dispersal of Iwoye-Ijesa citizens after the siege, many of them became captives while some moved out of their own volition and got associated with the new religion which, by then, was the order of the day. Many of these captives and adventurers who got converted to Islam later returned home to introduce and practise their new religion.

With the growing of the muslim community to a sizeable number in Iwoye-Ijesa, a site was acquired for the building of a mosque. This site was opposite the palace, on the left hand side across the road while going to Ere-Ijesa from the centre of the town. The mosque was situated by the side of the present site of Pa Onigede's house.

Even though a census of the indigenous muslim community in Iwoye-Ijesa could not be taken, a close look at the underlisted names and their locations would show that almost every street or quarter in Iwoye-Ijesa had its own muslim adherents in the past. These are:

- (a) Olamijulo's grandfather was a great trader who got converted to Islam. He was often referred to as "*Agba onisowo ti nlo me baranje to ni baba on lo mefa o fa okan ya;*" literally meaning "the reputed trader who carelessly used two costly dresses and after enquiry, said his father used six of such and tore one in the end."<sup>2</sup> The Olamijulo family is a big family in Anaye Street today. One of the children of the great man was the late Tijani Olamijulo. He was a nominal muslim till his death.
- (b) At Araromi Street were to be found the families of Chief Sajiki Fajaye, whose father was also a great muslim. He too died recently and was a nominal muslim. Another family of note there was the Ogunlade family from where hailed the late Chief Ajimati and Prophet Samuel Ogunlade, a prominent leader of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Iwoye-Ijesa today.
- (c) There were also in the Ogundele's family, among the Odofo Gbelee's family, Jimoh and Yesufu Ogundele who were practising muslims till their death. Within that household also was Ajayi Togeda, the father of Aloko Arebiyo. They all lived at Odooye (Odo Iwoye) Street.
- (d) On the Isimosan Street are to be found Akeju Sule Olowoye and El-Sadiq Iyun. The former was the father of late Chief Micho Olowoyeye and late Chief (Most Senior Apostle) David Ab former Legbewa of Iwoye-Ijesa. El-Sadiq was the father of Edebiyi. They lived at the Iloro area of Isimosan Street.

- (e) Again, at Araromi Street was the late Chief Imam Oginni in Chief Aro's compound. He was the father of Chief Ezekiel Ojo Oginni.
- (f) The last, but not the least on the list, was Alegbeleye at Agbede Street. He was the father of the late Abel Alegbeleye, and the Chief Imam (*Lemamu*) during his lifetime. Many other names stood out clearly. They included Yusuf Aloko, of Odoye Street, and the father of Jimoh Fadayiro of Isimosan Street. All of these people were practising muslims in Iwoye-Ijesa in their lifetime.

The above helped to show that, at a time in the past, Iwoye-Ijesa had some prominent Islamic adherents. The change in the trend could be traced to the death of the former early adherents. There was also the 'evaporation' of sources of religious encouragement for their offsprings. This was due to the drying up of external sources of ingress of Muslim adherents. There was therefore no source to fertilise the indigenous believers.

Today, a new mosque has just been erected at Idi-Ayan in the centre of the town. It must, however, be said for record purposes that there has never been any religious clash, especially between the christians and muslims, in Iwoye-Ijesa.

## **Christianity in Iwoye-Ijesa**

### **The Anglican Church**

The history of the christian religion in Iwoye-Ijesa, like in other parts of Ijesaland and most of Yorubaland, is traceable to two major events. These are: the cessation of inter-tribal hostilities in Yorubaland in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the abolition of slave trade, and the coming home of the ex-slaves as 'returnees'. The abolition of slave trade in the British areas of West Africa led to the introduction of the 'legitimate' trade. Yorubaland then was yet to witness peace due to the ravaging civil wars. The people of Iwoye-Ijesa actively partook in the Kiriji wars. The wars featured some of their ablest warriors like Uganran, Omole, Arimoro, Ogo, Amure, Onikanni, Adurogbofa, Osewa. and many others.

With the restoration of peace in Yorubaland, many captives who had been shipped off the coast of Nigeria started returning to their native homes. These 'returnees' had embraced Christianity in their countries of sojourn. Their mission, apart from settling peacefully at home, included establishing their newly-acquired faith among their people. The 'returnees' included Daddy John Thomas, who returned from Sierra Leone by 1896.<sup>3</sup> He had traced his roots back to Iwoye-Ijesa, and gathered round himself other 'returnees' like Samuel Bayewu, James Olusesi, Benjamin Adeola, Joseph Adeosun and Peter Fajenku. These people formed the core of the early christian community in Iwoye-Ijesa.

Another batch of 'returnees' came at a later date. They included Job Sadare, alias 'Oluwe' i.e. the one who carried plenty of books to the church, and Jacob Oladunjoye a carpenter and father of Aaron Adejumo. Oladunjoye, among others. It was to this latter group of returnees that the actual founding of the christian religion in Iwoye-Ijesa could be ascribed. They formed a fellowship of christians with their meeting place in Jacob Oladunjoye's house. He later became the first male leader (*Baba Egbe*) of the fellowship. This was the core of what later became the St. Thomas' Anglican Church in Iwoye-Ijesa.

The christian (Anglican) community in Iwoye-Ijesa got moral and spiritual boost in 1907 when a catechist paid them regular visits. He was Emmanuel Oke, then based at Ijebu-Jesa, who persuaded them to have closer associations with their fellows at Ijebu-Jesa. The meeting place of members of the two congregations was Oke's house at Ijebu-Jesa. They however built a small hall for services at home (Iwoye-Ijesa). Among the first female members of the congregation were: Madams Abigail Dayo, Mary (the first *Iya Egbe* i.e. female leader), and Mrs Leah Oni Famuko, the wife of the second *Baba Egbe*. The first baptism was performed on Christmas Day, 1908, when some people were baptised by the Reverend (later Bishop) R. S. Oyebo, then based at Ilesa. Those baptised included James Ola, Josiah Ibitayo (who later became a catechist), Emmanuel Sayande<sup>4</sup> and David Oke. Later that year, the foundation of a bigger church to replace the old

one was laid by Catechist E. J. Oke. The specifications had been approved by the Reverend (later Bishop) R. S. Oyebode. This was during the reign of Oba Ifaturoti Asubiojo who donated the piece of land on which the church was built.

Mr. Jacob Fatiregun worked as the first teacher in the school as well as the 'agent' for the church between 1912 and 1913 before leaving for the famous Mackay Hall in Osogbo for training. He was followed by J. O. Ibitayo, a returnee from the Gold Coast (Ghana), on 15th January, 1914. Ibitayo also combined both the church and school services. The first consignment of the Yoruba alphabet books (*A B D Olope*) totalling 40 copies, was bought for the church. The monthly salary paid the worker then was seven shillings and six pence (7s. 6d). (We must not look at it from the present-day currency face-value. One farthing then could feed a young man).



St. Thomas' Anglican Church (old church building at foreground, right)

In 1916, after Mr. J. O. Ibitayo had left for the famous Mackay Hall in Osogbo, to become the first qualified catechist, Mr. Jeremiah Dada,

a native of Orin-Ekiti<sup>5</sup> assumed duty. He too had been trained at Mackay Hall, Osogbo. Dada worked creditably well for the uplift of christianity in Iwoye-Ijesa. Apart from being a devout Christian, he was an enthusiastic teacher. This gem of a worker however took ill and died in 1918. He was buried in the church cemetery, thus becoming the second person whose corpse was buried there. The first was the man called "*Gongo bi ori oke Umo*"<sup>6</sup> i.e. "As tall as Imo hill – a name used to describe his great height. He was Madam Oredola's father.

Other workers (catechist) in the church included Joshua Adebayo Mogbonjubola, S. A. Aderibigbe, S. O. Kayode, D. W. Ibitayo, Ajibola and G. B. Akinbisodun, who hailed from Ile-Oluji in the present day Ondo State of Nigeria. Akinbisodun's period could be described as the 'golden period' of early christianity in Iwoye-Ijesa. This was because he did a lot to improve the lot of Christians in the town. During his period, the second church building was dedicated in 1929.<sup>8</sup>

Other catechists were S. A. Lanipekun, J. A. Omotoso, Pa Fatire S. Olu Ojo, Z. A. Adenuga, S. A. Oyekanmi (1964-74), and Yerokun (1974-75). The Reverend J. O. Oyejola (1975-79) was the first ordained minister. He was followed by the Reverend Subuloye (1979-83). Others included the Reverend N. O. Owoyemi (1983-87);<sup>9</sup> the Reverend (now Ven.) Z. A. Oloju (25th August 1990); the Reverend S. O. B. Abe (late), and the Rev. (now Ven.) O. Oloye, and the present Vicar-in-charge of St. Thomas' Anglican Church, Iwoye-Ijesa, Rev. L. O. Kupolati.

The post of male leader of the church – *Baba Egbe Ijo* – had been successfully held first by Pa Jacob Oladunjoye who died on Sunday 17th January, 1925; and was followed by Daniel Famuko who died on 8th August, 1936.<sup>10</sup> Others included Thomas Alo Adanri (died 17th January, 1969); Ezekiel Fadayiro (died 24th April, 1988), and the present title-holder, Chief G. A. Awe, who was installed in 1988. Pa Jacob Oladunjoye was the grandfather of The Right Rev. Dr. James Adeniran Oladunjoye, the Bishop of Owo Diocese (Anglican Communion) in Ondo State.

There had also been three women leaders – *Iya Egbe Ijo* – since the introduction of christianity. The first was Madam Mary Aina Aluko who died in 1944,<sup>11</sup> and Madam Margaret Gbelee who died in 1991. Evangelist Mrs. F. B. Ojo-Aromokudu, the current *Iya Ijo* of the church was installed on 19th August, 2000.

Successive baptismal services like those of Christmas Day 1908, and October 1929, (on the arrival of Akinbisodun at Iwoye-Ijesa), and 22nd December 1930, when some thirty-six members were baptised, are of note in the annals of the church. Baptismal services had since been pursued with vigour. Confirmation services had also been conducted at the St. Thomas' Church while the right to solemnize marriages was granted in 1978. The first marriage to be solemnized was that between Mr. and Mrs Tunde Awotipe.

It must, however, be noted that the name St. Thomas, which the Anglican Church in Iwoye-Ijesa bears, was in commemoration of the pioneering work of Daddy John Thomas, one of the earliest returnees whose children are now resident at Omoleye Street of Mainland Lagos, in Lagos State.

The coming of the early returnees saw the introduction of Christianity in Iwoye-Ijesa. This led to the founding of the St. Thomas' Anglican Church in Iwoye-Ijesa. The nascent church faced its first internal problems in 1929 with the coming of the Aladura sect spearheaded by Prophet Moses Orimolade, founder of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church in 1929.<sup>12</sup> Later, Pastor Joseph Babalola of Ijo Olokuta (i.e. Olokuta Church), founded The Apostolic Church at Oke Ooye, Ilesa in the 1930s.

The activities of these two important religious figures gave birth to the founding of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, otherwise known as The Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim Organisation and the Apostolic Church of Nigeria respectively.



Rt. Rev. Dr. J. Adedayo Oladunjoye  
Anglican Bishop of Owo since 2001



Late Pa Daniel Adeola, founder of  
The Apostolic Church. Died 10/67



Chief G. Adekanmi Awe  
Baba Ijo (Anglican) since 1988



Mrs. F. Bamidele Ojo-Aromokudu  
Iya Ijo (Anglican) since 2000

### The Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S or K&S)

Initially, all christians in Iwoye-Ijesa belonged to the Anglican Church. In 1929, Prophet Moses Orimolade Tunolase founded the Cherubim and Seraphim Church. He was a native of Ikare in the present-day Ondo State of Nigeria. The church came to Oke-Eso in Ilesa and, by 1929,<sup>13</sup> many converts were made.

The Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) Aladura Church was introduced to Iwoye-Ijesa by Joshua Adeniyi, one of the sons of the then Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa – Oba Ifaturoti Asubiojo. Services were first conducted in the palace. At the initial stage in 1931, the C&S was regarded as a society within the Anglican Church and many members of the Anglican Church embraced it. They included Chief Daniel Kayode Osewa (D.O.K.), who later became the Risa of Iwoye-Ijesa, his younger brother, Chief Samuel Fatunbarin Osewa,



High Chief Daniel Kayode Fasua Osewa, Risa Iwoye-Ijesa & leader of C & S, Iwoye-Ijesa. Died 1970.

later the Okunato, and Pa Joseph Ladokun, the next leader of the movement after the departure of Joshua Adeniyi for Ilesa, following the death of his father, Oba Ifaturoti Asubiojo in 1931.

Other converts were Abraham B. Oloja, Gabriel Anjoorin alias *Agbadagbudu Adura*,<sup>14</sup> Most Senior Apostle David Abu, Michael Adegbola, Gabriel Akinlusi (Ojuko), and Olowookere alias *Jebe Amudii*. The latter two converts embraced it on the first Sunday of its introduction to Iwoye-Ijesa.<sup>15</sup> Women converts included Ruth, the wife of Oginni Jadekooro (Adako's elder brother) from Agbede Street, and the mother of Jonathan (who later moved to Esa Odo). He was

(1931-1938).<sup>21</sup> He was followed by Chief Samuel Fatunbarin Osewa (1939-1967). The next holder of the title was Mr. Samuel Adepoju Ifaturoti who died in 1991. Mr. Sunday Faniyan is the present *Bailew* of the church.

The first child to be born into the C & S fold in Iwoye-Ijesa was Apostle Timothy Ayo Osewa. He was the first male issue of the second *Bailew*, Chief Samuel Fatunbarin Osewa.

The initial unhealthy rivalry between the C & S and members of the Anglican congregation was as a result of the fear then being entertained by the Anglican members over what would become of the young church, if the threatening schism was not effectively curbed. Another factor was that, among members of the C & S movement then, were the cream of the Anglican Church in the town. Such a dust was not raised when the Apostolic members later had their own breakaway experience early in the 1940s under the leadership of Daniel Adcola.

#### *Uniqueness of Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Iwoye-Ijesa.*

The Iwoye-Ijesa chapter of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church was the first offspring of the Oke-Eso 'parent' body in Ilesa. Its history dated back to 1931 during the time of the then *Loja* of Iwoye, Oluwole Ifaturoti Asubiojo. It was the first branch to be successfully established in the whole of Ijesaland after abortive attempts had been made at Ijebu-Jesa and Esa Oke.<sup>22</sup>

The initial local tribulations which the movement suffered in the hands of fellow christians in Iwoye-Ijesa emanated from the fear of possible extinction of the young christian body in Iwoye-Ijesa then. One can however see that this is not uncommon, realising that self-preservation is always the first law of nature. Allowing for an easier factionalisation of the body by any member of the fold would have probably signalled the death of the nascent christian church in the town, which the christians never wanted to entertain at all. The Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C & S) had even witnessed similar breakaways from its fold

since then. The cases of the founding of the Twelve Disciples' Church (later known as the Church of Christ) and later the Beatitudes, and of recent the C&S Miracle Centre readily comes to mind.

Unlike the Anglican, the C & S does not use orthodox prayers. Prayers in the Cherubim and Seraphim Church were as directed by the Holy Spirit of God to the members of the congregation. The Anglican Church rarely used such prayers (*adura atokanwa*) as only the officiating minister leads and directs the prayer which could be read simultaneously by members of the congregation from the prayer book. This practice has however changed as the Anglicans now offer such prayers and have even incorporated drumming and clapping and such like in their worship.

The uniqueness of the C & S mode of worship could also be seen from the use of the candles and incense during worship. This is similar to what obtains in the Catholic Church and now in the Celestial Church of Christ (C. C. C.), which now has its branch in the town.

Other things for which followers of the C&S were known was that pews and benches were initially not in use. Mats were spread on the floor and worshippers had to go on their knees while praying. This was apart from the strict adherence to the injunction of the removal of shoes before a worshipper enters the place of worship. This is not so in either the Anglican or the Apostolic Church. The Celestial Church followers however do not wear shoes whenever they are in their religious white garment called the '*sutana*.'

The C & S now has an officiating minister. The former minister was the Most Special Apostle Prophet Joel O. Olagunju. He later left to found the C & S Miracle Centre Church. Others before him were Prophets John Haastrup Olayinka, J. A. Ajayi Opawoye and Apostle Prophet Segun Ajayi. Apostle Prophet Olagunju is now the Minister-in-Charge of the C & S Church Cathedral in Iwoye-Ijesa.

### The Apostolic Church (TAC)

When in 1930 Pastor Joseph Babalola of Ilofa in the present-day Kwara State of Nigeria, started his apostolic mission at Oke-Ooye in Ilesa, little did people realise that he had begun a religious revolution like that of Martin Luther in history not only in Ilesa but in Ijesaland, the entire Nigeria and beyond. People thought at that time that he was bedevilled until a prophet of the Cherubim and Seraphim movement at Oke-Eso, Ilesa, confirmed that he was indeed possessed of the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup> He performed wonders with ordinary water stored inside bottles and other containers. People flocked to what had been known as the Olokuta Church from all over Ijesaland and beyond. The citizens of Iwoye-Ijesa were not left out in this rush for "God's blessing."

Daniel Adeola, a staunch member of the Anglican Church in Iwoye-Ijesa became one of the early converts in the town after making his own 'pilgrimage' to Oke-Ooye in Ilesa. He was said to have been sick before being taken to Joseph Babalola's assembly where he recovered and got converted. He returned home and started preaching the new faith.

It must be remembered that this same Daniel Adeola was one of the detractors of Daniel Kayode Osewa (D.O.K.) and his fellows when they introduced the Cherubim & Seraphim Church to Iwoye-Ijesa in 1931. Daniel Adeola, like D.O.K. before him, had his own followers and contemporaries in the new religious calling. They included Pa Samuel Adewumi (*Amudu*), Aloko Omo Esu in the Olusesi family, Daniel Bada in Odofin Oke's house (i.e. Dada's family), among the males. Female members included Madam Mary Falobi (D.O.K.'s elder sister) who became the first *Iya Egbe*. Others were Isaiah Oderinde's mother in Odofin's house at Odoye Street and Madam Abigail Oye Ijiremi alias *Iya Alakara* in Ijiremi's house at Isimosan etc.<sup>25</sup>

Other prominent early converts were Abraham Otumo in Agunpopo's house of Odoye quarters, Madam Mary Adekunbi, alias *Iya Onikanga* in Aro's house, and Mrs Awe Oloruntikun from Esa Odo who then

lived in Ogunmakinde's house at Araromi Street. There were also Madam Oniya of Araromi Street and Mr. Adedewe in Odofin Oke's house.<sup>26</sup>

The Apostolic Church took off at Odo Iwoye Street, very close to Pa Daniel Adeola's house. The present church, on the same old site, took off in 1952, exactly three years before the institution of Free Primary Education in old Western Region. Unlike the Cherubim and Seraphim, members were not specially attired. The Apostolic Church had salaried workers like the Anglican Church.

Among these workers were Kuponiyi from Ilesa, Oluwadare, Oyeleye, Ajewole, Adetula, Ayeni and Olatunji (who left in May 1990).<sup>27</sup> while Pastor E. O. Ajayi, his successor, was succeeded by Pastor M. O. Olujobi and later by Pastor Afolabi who has just been transferred and replaced in 2004 by Pastor Fayemi.

The Apostolic Church in Iwoye-Ijesa maintained very close relationship with the parent body at Oke-Ooye in Ilesa. Pastors were often posted to the church from the headquarters at Oke Ooye. Following the reorganisations within the parent church, the Iwoye-Ijesa Church was merged with Igbogi parish. At a later reorganisation, it was affiliated to the Oke-Eso parish and later the Ijebu-Jesa parish. Today, it is a District on its own right.

#### *Inter-relationships Within Churches in Iwoye-Ijesa*

Most of the earliest members of The Apostolic Church (T.A.C.) were formerly members of the Anglican Church in Iwoye-Ijesa. Pa Daniel Adeola even joined forces with Akinbisodun and other Anglican followers to oppose Daniel Kayode Osewa and his C & S members when the latter started their new faith in 1931. They feared the untimely death of the Christian Church which was then at its infancy.

While not disputing the primacy of the Anglican Church in Iwoye-Ijesa, The Apostolic Church however contested the 'seniority' of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church. This was based on the fact that

when the C & S was first introduced, it was not called a church but a society or movement within the Anglican Church. It must however be recollected that following the persecution of its members, especially by members of the Anglican Church, C & S members started their own congregation outside the Anglican fold ever before the coming of The Apostolic Church.

The C & S movement in Iwoye-Ijesa became an affiliate of the parent body at Oke-Eso in Ilesa. That the members initially worked under the umbrella of the Anglican Church could be understood once it is realised that christians were then still few in Iwoye-Ijesa to wish to be factionalised into unviable groups.

Before the firm take-off of The Apostolic Church in Iwoye-Ijesa, the Cherubim and Seraphim members had had their separate place of worship from the Anglicans, with their unique mode of dressing at worship and a different pattern of worship, using candles, drums, incenses and clapping. The C & S, whether as a movement or church, came into being right from the time of Loja of Iwoye, Oba Ifaturobi Asubiojo, as far back as 1931.<sup>28</sup> Like christians all over, C & S members also pray to the same God, use the same Holy Bible, sing christian songs, recognise the cross and profess their belief in Jesus Christ. History, however, is an impartial arbiter when it comes to the issue of primacy among the various denominations.

### **The Church of Christ (formerly The Twelve Disciples)**

This is an offshoot of the original Twelve Disciples of Pastor Joseph Babalola. The leader was Pastor Daniel Oladele Omole Okparah. According to him, the history of the church dated back to 1939 when it was founded by the followers of Pastor Joseph Babalola as a rival to The Apostolic Church (T.A.C.).<sup>29</sup>

Its initial leaders were Pa Odesanmi of Ilesa and Pa Peter Olatunji of Foko area in Ibadan. Peter Olatunji later founded the Gospel Apostolic Church. Other leaders were P. B. K. Saola of Ibokun, J. A. Agunsoye of

Ijebu-Jesa, Isaac Ajibolugbalasoro (Ilesa), David Oje, and Moses of Orogba, Ilesa. Mr. Peter of Imo, Ilesa, and Elder Awe of Ilesa, all of whom played important roles in the founding of the church. Also worthy of mention were D. F. Akinwumi (Ife), and John Oye, alias "*O ti seese*" (meaning, it has become possible), the Loro of Ilesa.

The Twelve Disciples Church is located at the Araromi quarters of Iwoye-Ijesa. The church has now changed its name to Church of Christ, Iwoye-Ijesa under a new management. Pastor Daniel Oladele Omole Okparah died on 8th February, 1996.

### **The Christ Apostolic Church (C. A. C.)**

The establishment of this church in Iwoye-Ijesa is traceable to two eras in history. The first era was when it was introduced Pa Daniel Olatope, who later became the *Sajiku Omo Owa*. A woman founder was Madam Ajayi Anjoorin, mother of the late Gabriel Anjoorin, alias '*Agbadagbudu Adura*.' Pa Olatope soon backpedalled when his chances of becoming the *Sajiku Omo Owa* were being blocked. Later, Madam Leah Ajayi Anjoorin joined the Ijebu-Jesa sector of the C.A.C.<sup>30</sup> known as *Ijo Bebi*, or *Ijo Begimobi* so named because they destroyed some kolanut trees to build their Church on the way to Ere.

The second coming of the C.A.C. to Iwoye-Ijesa was in 1972. It was introduced by Mr. Gabriel Olowookere and his elder brother, Samuel Amure.<sup>31</sup> They worked hand-in-hand with Pastor Adefila of the Ijebu-Jesa C.A.C. In an attempt to build a church of their own, a parcel of land was bought from the Obanla of Ila, Chief Ojo who died on 15th February, 1987; but the sale got botched. Not daunting, another attempt was made, but this time, with the Iwoye-Ijesa Land Trustees. A two-plot piece of land was later acquired on the Olikoto side for £50. The first service was held in the church on 17th December, 1972, while the building of a modern church was started in 1984.

The church was formerly affiliated to the Ilesa headquarters but the association was later transferred to Ijebu-Jesa when the Ijebu-Jesa District was created. The officers of the church since its inception

were Pastor Agbedu from Ondo State. He was followed later by another Pastor from Efon, now in Ekiti State. The third was Pastor Agboola from Ilesa; who served for five years. The fourth was Pastor E. A. Komolafe, who died after spending just over a year with the church. He was followed by Pastor E. O. Adebayo who served from August, 1991 to November, 1996. The next minister was Pastor E. O. Adeleke (from 2nd November, 1996). He has since been transferred and replaced with Pastor J.O.Oladunjoye who was again replaced by Pastor Falodun on 15th January, 2004.

## Other Churches

### *The Beatitudes*

The leader was Prophetess Deborah Ade Adetunji (late), who was formerly a member of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, but parted ways with the church in October 1988 after a protracted disagreement.<sup>33</sup> The Beatitude Church was located at the Isimosar quarters, and the church is an affiliate of the Beatitudes Church in Lagos.

### *The New Born Church (N.E.B.A.C.) (Ijo Ono Titun)*

It was founded by Primate Arowosegbe. The church is located at Itegun, with its headquarters in Mainland, Lagos. Followers are drawn from Ijebu-Jesa and Iwoye-Ijesa.

*The Celestial Church of Christ (C.C.C.):* The church surfaced in 1989 and has its own followership of flocks and a shepherd. Located along Oba Adeboye Street in Iwoye-Ijesa, it is an arm of the Celestial Church of Christ (C.C.C.) worldwide with headquarters at Imeko in the Ogun State of Nigeria. Snr. Evangelist I. O. Iyanda was the first shepherd. He was followed by Evangelist C. A. Adeyeye who was transferred in March, 2004.

*The Unity Apostolic Church (Ijo Isokan Aposteli):* This church is located very close to the palace in the market square. Some of its

founding fathers had gone to the great beyond. The remaining worshippers are now under a new supervisor from Ijebu-Jesa.

**The Emmanuel African Church:** This has its building located at the end of Oba Adeboye Street. The leader of the Church is Mr. Matthew Onibokun whose father was an active member of the African Church in Ijebu-Jesa, though he was from Iwoye-Ijesa.

**The C & S Miracle Centre:** It was founded by Prophet J. O Olagunju who was formerly a church minister in the C & S Church Cathedral, Iwoye-Ijesa.

**The Redeemed Christian Church of God:** This is by far the most recent of all the christian churches to be introduced to Iwoye-Ijesa. A site for the building of its Church is located close to the Primary Health Centre in Iwoye-Ijesa.

## End Notes

1. There was also a praying ground 'yidi' located just before the gate of the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School. The Mosque itself was located at the market square in the town.
2. Chief Samuel Olamijulo, the Asolo of Iwoye-Ijesa. He died on 2nd October, 1996
3. Reverend N. O. Owopetu, *A short history of how Christianity came to Iwoye-Ijesa*, (Unpublished paper).
4. In full, the name is 'Orisayande.' Meaning, the god has come marching by.
5. Some elders referred to him as Jeremiah Dada from Ifaki-Ekiti, but information received said he was from Orin-Ekiti, near Ifaki-Ekiti.
6. 'Umo' is the Ijesa word for Imo hill which is the highest topographical area in Ilesa. The first British Resident Officer lived here before moving to Osogbo.
7. Information by Chief Gabriel Folade Oginni, the Legbesa of Iwoye-Ijesa.
8. Chief Legbesa, Op. cit.
9. Reverend N. O. Owopetu, *ibid*.
10. Source: Mr. I. K. Famuko, his son, aged c 60 years.
11. Chief E. Opemuyi, the former Balogun of St. Thomas' Church, Iwoye-Ijesa.
12. Special Apostle, Chief D. A. Abu, C&S Church, Iwoye-Ijesa, aged c 70 years (1989), a former Legbewa omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa.
13. Special Apostle, Chief D. A. Abu, Op. cit.

14. An appellation derived from his prolific prayers.
15. Special Apostle, Chief D. A. Abu. Op. cit.
16. Koro's grave is in front of Eso Omoyele's compound in Agbede street, Iwoye-Ijesa.
17. Source Chief G. Oginni, Legbesa of Iwoye-Ijesa, *ibid.*
18. Source: Special Apostle D. A. Abu. *ibid.*
19. Special Apostle D. A. Abu, Op. cit.
20. Op. cit.
21. Op. cit.
22. Op. cit.
23. Op. cit.
24. Source: Mrs Fayomi Ayeleyin, aged c 58 years.
25. Source: Chief Theophilus Adesoro, the former Arapate Omo Owa, aged c 60 years, 1991. He later became the Asolo Omo Owa and now the Legbesa Omo Owa (1996 April).
26. Op. cit.
27. Op. cit.
28. The C&S Church celebrated its 60th anniversary with a week-long programme of activities between 30th September and 6th October, 1991, at Iwoye-Ijesa.
29. Source: Pastor Oladele Omole Okparah, aged c 67 years at Iwoye-Ijesa, 1991.
30. Mr. G. Olowookere Ogidiolu, aged c 62 years.
31. Op. cit.
32. Op. cit.
33. Prophetess (Mrs) Deborah Adenipekun Adetunji, aged c 55 years (1990).

# 8

## Western Education

**W**ITH the cessation of hostilities in Yorubaland following the intervention of the British close to the end of the nineteenth century, christian missionaries started establishing churches in Yorubaland. This singular action later led to the introduction of western education, especially by the christian missionaries. The early missionaries were missionaries-cum-teachers. Their sole aim was to raise helpers for the missionary work to help propagate the Word of God. This singular action greatly revolutionised the social outlook of Iwoye-Ijesa people. The people's attires changed and their names became christianised. The Anglican Mission soon started formal schools and used the church as the place of worship and for schooling before a separate building was provided for a school. The first school in Iwoye-Ijesa, the St. Thomas' Primary School, was a junior primary school. Pupils had to continue their senior primary education at the St. Matthew's School, Ijebu-Jesa up to 1952. Later in the fifties, The Apostolic Church School was established.

Secondary education in Iwoye-Ijesa did not materialise until 1976, during the military era when the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School took off. This was after the community had provided a 63.14-acre surveyed piece of land along Esa Odo road and an amount of forty thousand naira (N40,000.00) for the government.

### The Early Days

As earlier mentioned, the history of western education and the subsequent establishment of schools in Iwoye-Ijesa are closely linked

with the history of christianity in the town. The introduction of forty copies of Yoruba alphabet books (*A B D Olope*) bought for pupils by the church formed the 'springboard' for the early pupils in the town. The objective was initially to train hands to assist the church workers, especially the catechists, in getting layreaders and other helping hands in the church. The ultimate out-come, however, was the emergence of people destined to find their ways into 'white-collar' jobs in government establishments and in private business houses in the future.

The early church officers (the catechists) formed the core of the early teachers. In fact, they were catechists-cum-teachers, and performed the dual roles of attending to the spiritual needs of the flock on Sunday and attending to their academic needs during the week days, especially from Monday to Friday. No formal school was built and, for this reason, schooling took place in the Anglican church building. Up to 1929, the first group of pupils was taught in the house of Pa Emmanuel Opemuyi who later became the *Balogun* of the Anglican Church.<sup>2</sup> He later became the *Risa* of Iwoye-Ijesa (the second in rank to the Oba of Iwoye and later the Regent). He died in 1994 at over 110 years of age.

The introduction of western education also helped, in no small way, the high rate of conversion to christianity. The acquisition of western education led to a systematic reduction in the number of traditional religionists. Once educated, the new 'elite' did not go back to the ancient traditional religions any longer. A new vogue in the pattern of living of the people then was the acquisition of foreign, usually biblical names, especially such names as were linked with eleven of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ who formed the pivot of the early church. Such names were Simon, Peter, John, Philip, Thomas etc. Others which readily came to be acquired by the early converts were Jacob, David, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Emmanuel etc. These were names to be found either in the Old or the New Testaments. The pattern of prefixing these names to their traditional names became the order of the day. Hence, it became a common thing to find names like Thomas Ajo, Samuel Fatunbarin, Nathaniel Dada, for the males; or Mary Aina, Christianah Orewola, Felicia Adewumi, etc. for females.

Usually, such newly-acquired biblical names became common-place names which easily relegated the traditional Yoruba names of the bearers to an insignificant background. Rather than the people being called by their Yoruba names like Ifatunbarin, Ifamuboni, Ogunsanmi, Famiyesin, Ajayi, Dada, Oke, etc., names like Samuel (*Saamu*), Daniel (*Daani*), Jeremiah (*Jeri*), John (*Joonu*), Gabriel (*Gebureli*), Michael (*Maikeli*), etc., became common ones by which the menfolk were readily associated with. The women got names like Christianah (*Krisiana*), Felicia (*Fili*), Cecilia (*Sisi*), Lydia (*Ledia*), Mary (*Meriani*), Dorcas (*Dokaasi*) etc.

This trend still persists today, decades after Nigeria attained her independence. These biblical names are yet to be indigenised as done in the eastern countries of the world.

Western education was also boosted by the christian workers who worked and lived with the people. Such educational 'light houses' to the people were Pa Jacob Fatiregun, the erstwhile catechist known to most of the middle-aged people of Iwoye-Ijesa; Jeremiah Dada from Orin-Ekiti, (The Rev. now Bishop) R. S. Oyebode, and, of course, G. B. Akinbisodun, among others through whose tireless activities many people got a stint of western education in the town.

Local church officials also helped the course of western education. The son of the leader of the church (*Baba Egbe*) readily became a member of the choir in church services, the traditional background notwithstanding. The new trend in the mode of dressing, which was copied from the slave masters of old and the early christians, featuring shirts and western trousers, quickly replaced the traditional 'agbada' and 'gbariye', especially among young men. Church officials even adopted the use of shirt, coat and tie in conducting services on Sundays.

As for the females, gowns and scarfs replaced the traditional wrapper and head-gear, especially among the girls. The elderly female, however, did not change much in their style. They only adapted to

using the smarter two-piece wrapper (*ikeji*) with or without 'buba' rather than the three-piece wrapper (*iketa*). The more smarter scarf replaced the heavy head-gear. Wearing hats by the females, especially to the church on Sundays, became an innovation and was seen as a sign of the newly-acquired western culture and sign of the religiousness of the attirees.

The coming of the Mackay School graduates from Osogbo helped, in no small way, in propagating the new religious and educational trends. Products of that famed school, such as Jeremiah Dada, J. O. Ibitayo and Jacob Fatiregun, among others, pioneered western education in the town. Almost invariably, they combined church work with their teaching duties at school. The coming of G. B. Akinbisodun, derisively known as 'Tisa Kekere' (the smallish teacher) to his detractors, further boosted the new religious dispensation. He gained many converts to the christian fold and his name is still very much remembered by the older people in Iwoye-Ijesa today.

#### (a) Primary Schools

##### *St. Thomas' Primary School*

This is the older of the two primary schools in Iwoye-Ijesa. It was established in the 1930s, and followed quickly on the heels of the christian religion which had trained catechists to man the young church.

St. Thomas' School, which has trained many of the early kindergartens, who later went through their primary school days, is now the proud producer of 'shakers and movers' of their communities. Most of the early 'teachers' were 'graduates' of the famous Yoruba learners' booklet *A B. D. Olope*. They were taught by these great catechists like the Ibitayos, the Akinbisoduns, the Fatireguns, etc, and later returned home to put their brothers and sisters through, having graduated in the art of reading the Yoruba Bible.

Primary school education started in the church building until a separate school building was put up later. Pa Emmanuel Ifatunbarin Opemuyi, who later became the Balogun of St. Thomas's Church, was one of

the local 'teachers'. He, like his colleagues, provided the initial take-off in the form of space or accommodation and writing facilities for the primary school in his house in 1929 before a school building was provided in 1930. The school only offered education up to Standard Two (Std. II) till 1952. It was a junior primary school which fed the St. Matthew's Senior Primary School in Ijebu-Jesa with pupils.

From 1953, however, pupils who 'graduated' from the Standard II class in Iwoye continued their schooling at the St. Thomas; Senior Primary School Iwoye-Ijesa for the first time. Schooling was shifted from the old primary school (which has just been demolished) near the old church to a new and bigger school building on the Esa Odo road just before the Ogburru river. The school became operational in 1952. With the introduction of Free Primary Education in the then Western Region of Nigeria in 1955, the pattern changed from the 'standard' system to the 'primary' model. Pupils who had successfully completed Standard III got promoted to Primary IV, while those who finished the Primary VI education either got admitted to the newly-created Local Authority Secondary Modern School, Ijebu-Jesa, or the Ijebu-Jesa Grammar School.



St. Thomas' Primary School, Iwoye-Ijesa

Among the various headmasters who worked in the St. Thomas Primary School, mention could be made of Mr. Ayo Faseeru, who taught there in the 1940s; Mr. J. O. Jegede (1948/9); Pa. M. O. C... who later became the Aro of Ijebu-Jesa (1949-1954); Mr. D. O. Fas... (1954-1958); and Mr. J. O. Bolorunduro (1959-1960). From the year of Nigeria's independence (1960), the headmasters included Pa. J. Ojumu (late) (1960-1961); Mr. D. A. Adebomi (December, 1961-1963); Mr. S. O. Oyadiji (1964); Mr. J. A. Adeyinka (19th September-1964-1965); and Mr. L. A. Alake (5th October, 1965-24th January 1966). The last at the turn of the '60s was Mr. M. A. Ojuola (January 1967-December, 1970).

In the seventies, the headmasters were Mr. J. O. Olanihun (1971-1973); Mrs. R. O. Fasina (13th November, 1973-18th September, 1974); Mr. E. B. Oluyemi (7th October, 1974-10th January, 1975); Mrs. E. A. Lawanson (13th January, 1975-8th October, 1975); and Mrs. R. C. Fasina (14th October, 1975-31st October, 1978). Others were Mrs. M. T. Atobatele (13th November 1978-10th April 1980); Mrs. F. A. Dawodu (16th August, 1980-17th September, 1981); and Mr. S. A. Adegbola (19th October, 1981-18th October, 1982). Mr. J. A. Famulus took charge from 29th October, 1982 to 11th September, 1984; while Mrs. E. I. Bolaji took over on 14th September, 1984 to 1st December 1989. Mr. G. A. Akinfenwa took over from 12th January, 1990,<sup>3</sup> while Mrs F. T. Awe assumed duty in October, 1995.

This school is now the major feeder of the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School, and has continued to enjoy government patronage in terms of regular supply of teachers and teaching materials, and the granting of government subventions or grants. New buildings had been erected in the wake of later developments in education in the old Oyo State in particular now Oyo and Osun States, and Nigeria in general, especially with the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) by the Federal Government in 1972.

### *The Apostolic Church Primary School*

This school became operational in 1955 with the introduction of th

Free Primary Education scheme in the then Western Region of Nigeria. Its first intake of pupils numbered 48. Owing to some technical hitches, it was closed down after some years.

The school however reopened in 1975 with Mr. Deji Gegeleso as the headmaster. Since then, the school has been waxing stronger. Its headmasters/headmistresses included Mrs. R. T. Olarewaju (1970); Mr. I. O. Olukiran (1980); Mr. J. K. Ale (1980); Mrs. Stella Fatiregun (1981); Mr. M. A. Ogundiran (1982); and Mrs. A. A. Balogun (1983); while Mrs. R. M. Akinwumi took over on 6th September, 1985. Others were Mr. S. B. Ojo, (1990–October, 1995) and Mr. G. A. Samakinde (October 1995 to date).

Many problems faced this young school. They included financial incapacitation, deroofing of the buildings by storm, and apathy of some christians, especially members of other denominations, who refused to send their children to the Apostolic Church School. There are also no storage facilities for the school's property. Others are: inadequacy of the running grant, lack of essential facilities like teachers' tables and desks and exercise books for the pupils.

Although, the state government gave assistance, this was not enough. Public-spirited people therefore, need to fully come to the school's financial and material aid in this trying period of its existence. The old Oyo State Government has, since 1992, provided additional modern classrooms for the school, through the then Primary School's Management Board. The Osun State Government is also doing its best to raise the moral tone and academic standard of the school.

## **(b) Secondary Education**

### ***The Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School (I.I.G.S.)***

Even though western education quickly followed the introduction of christianity in the town, the establishment of a secondary school in the town took decades to materialise. Meanwhile, students from Iwoye-Ijesa attended the Ilesa Grammar School. One of its earliest students was the late Chief James Olarewaju Onibokun, the *Sapaye*

*Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa.*

Initially, there was no urgent need for a secondary school in the town as there was only one primary school, the St. Thomas' Primary School which started in the 1930s. The highest class there up till 1952 was Standard II, hence it was then known as a junior primary school. Those who 'graduated' from the school continued their primary education at the St. Matthew's School, Ijebu-Jesa. From 1953, the primary school in Iwoye-Ijesa was raised to the senior primary level. Pupils then read up to Standard IV (in 1955), when the Government of the then Western Region changed to the primary education system.

Provision was also made for modern school education from 1955 when the Government of the then Western Region of Nigeria introduced the Free Primary Education scheme throughout the region; this comprised later Oyo (now Oyo and Osun states), Ogun, Ondo (now Ondo and Ekiti States), Mid-West State (now Edo and Delta States) and some parts of Lagos State. Primary school leavers in Iwoye-Ijesa patronised the Local Authority (L.A.) Secondary Modern School, Ijebu-Jesa (1955-1960). In 1959, the Anglican Modern School was established in Ijebu-Jesa. This also absorbed students from Iwoye-Ijesa and from towns like Esa Oke, Esa Odo, Iloko, Ijeda, Ere and even Ido Ajinare in the present-day Ekiti State.

In 1955, the Ijebu-Jesa Grammar School was founded. Many Iwoye-Ijesa sons found their way there. They included Professor A. G. Onibokun, Mr. J. Olubiyi Ibitayo, Chief Olutayo Osewa, and Pastor J. Olaniyi Opemuyi, to mention just a few. Before the Ijebu-Jesa Grammar School, the Divisional Teachers' Training College (DTTC), Ilesa, had played host to people like Chief T. A. Ige, Chief A. Babatayo, Chief Soji Onibokun, Mr. Biodun Awe, Mr. Deji Onibokun (now late) and many other worthy citizens of the town. The Apostolic Teachers' Training College (ATTC), Ilesa, also trained many of the people who were later to play important roles in the development of the town.

All these and other well-meaning indigenes of Iwoye-Ijesa like Chief G. A. Awe, Chief (Mrs) F. B. Ojo-Aromokudu, Mrs Alice Onibokun (late), Mrs Adunni Jemibewon, Arc (Chief) J. Akin Agunbiade (late), Mr. Oladele Oladunjoye, Mrs Ebun Akin-Agunbiade, Mr. Dele Ayoola, Chief Ayo Adanri and many other worthy sons and daughters of the town who trained in other secondary institutions in Nigeria and, especially those in the former Western Region, played important roles in the academic upliftment of the people of Iwoye-Ijesa in later years.

From the late 1960s, it dawned on the patriotic indigenes of Iwoye-Ijesa to start dreaming of establishing a secondary school in the town. What first crossed their minds was the electrification of the town. Ijebu-Jesa, Iwoye-Ijesa's closest neighbour, had just achieved this progressive feat. The "mother of unions", in Iwoye-Ijesa, the Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants' Union (IDU), started raising fund for the electrification project.

As providence would have it, Brigadier (later Major General) David Medayese Jemibewon (rtd.), the then Military Governor of Oyo State, came for the commissioning of the electrification project at Ijebu-Jesa. What struck him and the Oyo State Government most then was that Iwoye-Ijesa, the closest neighbour of Ijebu-Jesa, would still be in total darkness while Ijebu-Jesa would enjoy electricity. His government turned its good eye on the community by taking over the electrification project. A firm of engineering consultants, the Energo Project/HEPLAC was commissioned for the work. This did not materialise until ten years<sup>5</sup> after Ijebu-Jesa had been enjoying this modern facility. Thanks to the 'never-say-fail' spirits of the members of the Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants Union (IDU) under its President, Prince M. O.



Major Gen. David M. Jemibewon (rtd.).

Ifaturoti and his executives who contributed in cash and kind to the success of the project.

As soon as the government announced the take-over of the electrification project of Iwoye-Ijesa, the people turned their attention toward funding the establishment of a secondary school. Their dream materialised when in August, 1976, the then Oyo State Government acceded to their request for the establishment of a secondary school in Iwoye-Ijesa after providing N40,000.00 (forty thousand Naira) and surveyed sixty-three (63.14) acre piece of land for the project. The land was donated to the community by the Odofin Rigigbarin, Abodo and Aromokudu families. The secondary school, formerly proposed as a comprehensive high school was changed to a normal secondary grammar school by the government.

The school finally took off on Friday, 17th September, 1976 under the principalship of Mr. (later Reverend Canon) N. B. Ajakaye. Other principals who held the fort were: The Reverend S. O. Agun, Mr. Oluwafemi, Mr. Bayo Okunmuyide, Mr. M. T. Ogunkeyede, and Mr. O. O. Famoriyele who was succeeded by Mrs. E. O. Oti and now



Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School

Mr. O. O. Oyeyemi. At the take-off of the school, three classrooms of the St. Thomas' Anglican Primary School were made use of. Mrs. (later Chief) Abigail Adehunmi Dada (Faseru) let out her nearby building for the administrative use of the school for just N120 (one hundred and twenty Naira) per annum. Architect (Chief) J. Akin-Agunbiade, now deceased, also released his house for the use of the school, free of charge.

Things were not all that rosy for the young school. Stiff opposition, which led to a protracted four-year legal battle, was mounted by a member of the Falobi family who contested the compulsory acquisition of the land by the community for the school. The dissenting voice, the late Mr. Samuel Ogundare Falobi (an educationist), was however stiffly opposed by other members of his family like Chief Amos Falobi (late), the then *Sajiku of Iwoye-Ijesa*; Chief Obi Falobi (the late *Loriomo*), and the late Chief Ojo Farewo (the *Saba*). The case which was decided in favour of the Iwoye-Ijesa community made the school to stay on its present site.

The opening ceremony of the school was conducted by the Rev. Oyejola of the St. Thomas' Anglican Church, Iwoye-Ijesa, with the Loja, Oba Samuel Adeboye *Ogbedumole II* of Iwoye-Ijesa, his chiefs and Ministry of Education officials, in attendance. The first set of teachers included Mr. B. F. Aremu (the vice principal), Mr. F. O. Ojuade (the senior tutor) and Mr. T. I. Okanlawon (tutor).<sup>6</sup>

On 12th November, 1976, the then Commissioner for Education for Oyo State, Dr. (later Professor) Mrs. Bolanle Awe, formally announced the State Government's approval of the school as 'Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School' and not Iwoye-Ijesa Comprehensive High School as proposed. At the first meeting of the Parents/Teachers' Association (PTA) held on 20th November, 1976, Chief J. O. Onibokun (late) was unanimously elected the first chairman. Other members were Mr. F. O. Ojuade, (secretary), Mr. M. A. Oginni (vice chairman) and Mrs Olumoya (treasurer).<sup>7</sup>

Its first Board of Governors comprised Dr. (later Professor) A. C. Onibokun (chairman), while Architect (Chief) Akin Agunbiade (late), Mrs. Yomi Obakin, Mr. M. A. Oladimeji and Chief Dele Faseeru were members. These people represented various interests in the school. The Divisional Education Officer, Mr. E. A. Adeyemo, represented the Ministry of Education.

The foundation of the first block of building at the school's permanent site was laid on 16th May, 1977, by the traditional ruler of Iwoye, Obi Samuel Adeboye *Ogbedumole II*, with the Divisional Education Officer (DEO), Mr. E. A. Adeyemo; the Risa of Iwoye, Chief Emmanuel Opemuyi, and High Chief Odofin Gbelee assisting. The school moved to its permanent site on 26th October, 1977, and presented its first candidates numbering seventy-three boys and girls for the General Certificate in Education in 1981.<sup>8</sup>

The second Board of Governors of the School met on 17th August, 1982, under the chairmanship of Mr. I. A. Babatayo with Mr. Olutayo Osewa, Mr. M. A. Awotunsin, Mrs. Alice A. Onibokun, Mr. E. B. Ategbero and Mr. V. A. Fatiregun, as members. Others were Mr. E. T. Faseun, Mr. Femi Dada and the Local Inspector of Education (L.I.E.), all representing various interests<sup>9</sup> as contained in the regulations that set up the institution.

On 1st May, 1983, a 26-seater Toyota Civilian bus was donated to the school by members of the Parents/Teachers' Association (PTA) while the Oyo State Commissioner for Education, Honourable J. M. Akinfenwa, received it on behalf of the government. The school has provided secondary education for both indigenes and non-indigenes alike. It has also contributed, in no small way, to the academic and economic upliftment of the town.

The Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School (I.I.G.S.) has been receiving patronage from well-meaning sons and daughters of the town since its inception. Such individual benefactors include Architect (Chief) J. Akin-Agunbiade, the *Obasogo of Ife* (now late); Professor A. G.

Onibokun; Chief (Mrs) F. B. Ojo-Aromokudu; Engineer (Ven.) R. A. O. Osewa; Prince D. T. Fakoya; Elder P. O. Oni (now His Highness, the Oba of Iwoye-Ijesa, Abigiasoloko II); Chief (Mrs) A. O. Osineye and Mr. Thompson Onibokun among the various public-spirited and well-meaning citizens of the town.

The 'mother of all societies' in Iwoye-Ijesa, the Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants' Union (IDU), then under the leadership of Prince M. O. Ifaturoti, alias 'Alhaji', the son of the late Loja, Oba Ifaturoti Asubiojo and his 'never-say-fail' executive members, also helped to nurture the secondary school to its present status. Needless mentioning the unquantifiable role of the "father of all educated societies" in the town – the Iwoye-Ijesa Progressive Union (IPU), with branches in Lagos, Ibadan, United Kingdom (London) and at home. The IPU is the foster-father of the educational and social advancement in the community, while the IDU did not fail in its duties to lend its 'motherly' support to making the good dreams not only a reality but a huge success.

Some charitable individuals have contributed their quotas to the development of sporting, moral, social and academic upliftment of the school. This had been done through donations in cash and kind, organising career talks and paying occasional visits to the school. Special mention must be made of late Architect (Chief) J. Akin-Agunbiade, who donated a tennis court to the school, while clubs, apart from the IDU and the IPU, the Boys and Girls Rising Club, the Young Academicals, later known as the Iwoye-Ijesa Social Elites (ISE), Iwoye-Ijesa Klub '79, and the Altruist Club, stand out in their modest contributions to the academic upliftment of the school. Much still needs to be done for the school by individuals and clubs in general. It is however hoped that the students will make good use of the valuable services being provided by the government and the community.

End Notes

1. The Reverend M. O. Owopetu, *A short history of how Christianity came to Iwoye Ijesa*, (unpublished).
2. Chief Emmanuel Fatunbarin. Opemuyi, the Risa Iwoye and former Balogun of St. Thomas' Church, Iwoye-Ijesa. 1980.
3. *Log Book*. St. Thomas' School, Iwoye-Ijesa.
4. *Log Book*. Apostolic Primary School, Iwoye-Ijesa. with the permission of the Headmistress, Mrs. R. M. Akinwumi.
5. Iwoye-Ijesa electrification project was commissioned in 1984.
6. *Log Book*, Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School.
7. *Op. cit.*
8. *Op. cit.*
9. *Op. cit.*



# 9

## Modern Social Organisations

THE introduction of Western education helped the people to know how to read and write. This has enabled the people to pilot their affairs with greater ease. Societies with well-kept records of their social and financial activities had surfaced in Iwoye-Ijesa.

The first on the list was the *Egbe Atunluse* i.e. the Iwoye-Ijesa Improvement or Development Union. Their records were meticulously kept even though majority of the members could neither read nor write, even in their mother-tongue. That was the pioneer society in Iwoye-Ijesa.

With the advent of well-educated sons and daughters of the community, new societies like the Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants' Union (I.D.U.) surfaced and took over from the 'Egbe Atunluse. These societies were the Iwoye-Ijesa Progressive Union (I.P.U.), which is the pioneer elite union, the Iwoye-Ijesa Social Elites (I.S.E.), formerly known as Young Academicals, the Vantage Club, Iwoye-Ijesa Klub '79, the Mighty Pioneers Club, the Altruist Club, and a host of others. Each club has helped the community in no small way with their contributions, that to mention them here won't be a disservice to them.

### **Egbe Atunluse (Iwoye-Ijesa Improvement or Development Union)**

There had been trying occasions in the history of Iwoye-Ijesa when things seemed to be moving very badly or unevenly. During such occasions, public-spirited citizens of the town had risen to the

challenges of the times. The Great Depressions of the 1930s and the outbreak of World War II in 1939 acted as great demoralising factors to the people. The spirit of the people was at a very low ebb. From the blues came rays of hope, especially from one of the patriotic citizens of the town who had just returned from 'abroad.'

Pa Gabriel Famuboni Oni Fakoya, at that time, by far the most enlightened citizen of the town, came back home. He was a returnee from Fernando Po Island (Equatorial Guinea). He rallied his friends round and instilled patriotic spirit in them. They formed a society comprising highly dependable males in the town. The society was



Chief Gabriel Famuboni Oni Fakoya, late *Ejemu Omo Owa*, founder & 1st President, *Egbe Atunluse*

known as the *Egbe Atunluse* i.e. Iwoye-Ijesa Improvement or Development Union.<sup>1</sup>

After frequent deliberations with men of like minds, the new society was officially launched on Saturday, 3rd August, 1939. Its founding however dated back to 25th June, 1939. There were twenty-two men as members. These were: G. O. Wole; Adelusi Saloro, *Odole* of Itegun; Adegbaka Akeju David *Risawe*, Daniel Olatope, Jeremiah E. Ijiremi, Ezekiel Ojuola, Michael Faniyan 'Abemu' (a blacksmith), and Josaiiah Awotunsin. Others were Elijah Fayemiwo; Joshua Famurewa, who later became the *Loode* (head hunter), Abraham Ayowole; Joseph Akinlusi;

Akinyemi Joshua Gbelee, and Amos Oje Falobi. Others still were David Ayo; Daniel Fasua Kayode Osewa; the *Okunato*, Samuel Fatunbarin Osewa; M. O. Fayanju, J. O. Ibitayo and, last, but by far not the least, Famuboni Oni Fakoya. He became the Chairman of

President with Abraham Ayowole as the Secretary. The number increased over the years.

Members held regular monthly meetings, usually on the last Saturday of the month. They were very faithful to the appointed date. Each member contributed an amount of two shillings and six pence (2s.6d) annually. This was later raised to five shillings (5s.) annually.

Their objective centred on rousing the patriotic spirit of the people, especially the menfolk, in order to boost the 'one of the town. Members acted true to their objective and got those who had grown lukewarm in spirit resuscitated. They had a constitution and their meetings were held regularly in the house of their Chairman, Chief Famuboni Oni Fakoya where records of their regular meetings were well-kept. The account was also meticulously kept by the Secretary, Pa Abraham Ayowole.



Chief Samuel Ifatunbarin Osewa, one of the founding fathers of Egbe Atunluse

In order to help keep the spirit of the founding fathers aloft, one of their decisions was that, in case of any of their members answering the eternal call, the eldest surviving son of the deceased should succeed his father in the society. This was so in 1967 when, on the death of Chief Samuel Fatunbarin Osewa, the Okunato of Iwoye-Ijesa, one of the founding fathers, his eldest son, Mr. Ayo Osewa, replaced him. The same happened when Pa. Ezekiel Ojuola Okunmuyide died and his eldest son, Mr. M. A. Ojuola, was co-opted into it. There was no sharing of the assets at all. Some children however declined joining the society on the death of their fathers. Such were however few to warrant any serious mention. Invitations were sent to men of like minds who had

not joined the society to do so. A good example was Chief Emmanuel Ifatunbarin Opemuyi, a businessman, who later became the President of the society on the death of Chief Famuboni Oni Fakoya, the *Ejere Omo Owa*, in 1952.<sup>2</sup>



**Egbe Atunluse, 1967**— Sitting front row (*l-r*): Chief Okundare (Aro of Iwoye-Ijesa); Chief Awe (Risa of Itegun); Chief Amos Falobi (Loogun Oje, Sajiku of Iwoye-Ijesa); Chief David Ayoola (Saba of Iwoye-Ijesa); High Chief Emmanuel Opemuyi (later Risa of Iwoye-Ijesa); Chief Samuel Gbelee (Odofin of Iwoye-Ijesa); Chief Samuel Olutayo (Loja of Itegun); Chief Gabriel Akinlusi (Baasinkin of Ila); Chief Gabriel Oginni (Legbesa of Iwoye-Ijesa); Mr. Ojo Ikotun alias Fabeyeri; Mr. Nathaniel Dadaji; Mr. Gabriel Olanipekun. *Standing middle row (l-r)*: Pa M.A. Abe; (alias Awolumate); Pa Michael Adeyemi; Mr Bamidele Ige, Mr. Gabriel Osewa; Chief Awe Osewa (Okunato of Iwoye-Ijesa); Mr. Samuel Olamijulo (Segbu of Iwoye-Ijesa); Chief Ayeni Okoro (Loofasan of Iwoye); Mr. M. A. Ojuda (Secretary); *Standing back row (l-r)*: Mr. M. A. Olamijulo (Asst. Secretary), Mr. Bolarin Asaolu; Chief Samuel Ajimoti (later Legbewa of Iwoye); Mr. Bolade Olatope; Chief Samson Adediji (Odofin of Ila); Chief David Abu; Mr. Cornelius Reuben Agunpopo; Mr Sunday Faniyan and Mr. O. Fayanju.

## Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants' Union

As time went on, educated citizens of the town were either invited to join or were coopted on the ticket of their fathers. The society was eventually taken over by the educated folk and the name changed to Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants' Union (I.D.U.). From the period of the 'take-over' and the change in name, emphasis shifted to the indigenes of the town who were resident outside the town in places like Ibadan, Lagos, Sapele, Iseyin, and even Ilesa, for the development of the town. This was because most of the founding fathers had become old or had died and the younger generations had their places of work outside the town. Rather than having monthly meetings, they changed to having meeting yearly.

The physical and infrastructural development of the town had since devolved on the Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants' Union (I.D.U.). Amongst the developments undertaken by the Union was the establishment of the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School (IIGS) in 1976. The society also facilitated the town's electrification by the state government (1974-1984). The continued maintenance of the secondary school has been carried out by the Union in collaboration with other societies in the town and other well-meaning and public-spirited individuals. An ultra-modern palace for the Oba has also been built by the society. It is now at an advanced stage of completion. The society was also responsible for the repairs of the old palace and the building of the former Town Hall. The plan to build a new Town Hall is in the offing and would take off once the palace project has been successfully accomplished.

One of the former presidents of the IDU was the Late Chief Ade Abu, the



Prince M. O. Ifaturoti, former President of I. D. U.

*Adegbuwa of Iwoye-Ijesa*, Prince M. O. Ifaturoti took over from him, followed by Deaconess Janet Falobi and later Mr. E. B. Ategero. Some of the former secretaries of the IDU included the Reverend (Engineer) R. A. O. Oshewa, Mr. I. A. Babatayo, and Mr. Olutayo Osewa. He was followed by Mr. Bolarinwa Ajewole, Mr. (now Rev.) Akin Gbelee, and currently Prince Banji Olusesi.

The IDU has become the 'umbrella' for the town and its citizens as the tone of development and the day-to-day activities in the town had hinged on the Union. Its branches are in Lagos, Ibadan, Oyo, Iseyin and, until recently, Ikare in Ondo State, apart from the Home Branch. Each branch has its officers while the main officers were elected at the annual conference of the Union usually held in Iwoye-Ijesa.

The Union embarked on the celebration of the Iwoye-Ijesa Day, which usually comes up on the first Saturday in September. The first of such celebrations was in 1990 while the second was held on 7th September, 1991. The fifth Iwoye-Ijesa Day celebration was held on 23rd December, 1995. The 1994 celebration was skipped owing to unavoidable circumstances.

Another gigantic project undertaken by the Union was the establishment of a community bank in Iwoye-Ijesa to help facilitate the economic development of the town and its citizens. The bank became operational on 1st July, 1995 after it was commissioned by the then military Governor of the State, Commander J. U. Udofia on 23rd December, 1995 as part of activities on the 5th Iwoye-Ijesa Day. The bank has been cooperating in the economic upliftment of the town and has also benefited people from the neighbourhood. The board of directors is led by Prince David Tunji Fakoya, with High Chief I. A. Babatayo as the bank manager. Other members are Chief T. A. Ige, Deaconess Janet Falobi, Dr. Duro Oni, Chief G. A. Awe and Prince Abimbola Onibokun.

The early societies in the town can be linked with the religious organisations, especially christianity. In the churches, there are societies catering for the

interests of their members – males, females, youths, and the aged. These used to be separate organisations with little or no age-linkage. Even when the *Egbe Atunluse* was launched in 1939, it was still a separatist association in the town. It catered only for the interest of the menfolk. This might not be unconnected with the general trend in our communities where the general welfare of the societies centred, first and foremost, around the menfolk. The womenfolk are often regarded as passive participants who must only be seen but not heard. Another reason was that the womenfolk are not always available for such general activities.

Christians are not to be blamed for this. Even muslims do segregate in the mosque. That the people came together, especially during the early part of World War II to organise the *Egbe Atunluse* was still a credit on their part. This was more so when one realises that the continued survival of any group had been dependent mostly on the menfolk.

The *Egbe Atunluse*, throughout its period of existence (about three decades), never attracted a single woman, no matter how highly placed, to its fold. Even now, the Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants' Union (IDU) is still mainly an all-men affair. Young women are still absent from the fold. Only old women, especially those who are home-based or those who are traditionally titled, play some nominal roles there now. Our educated women are not resident at home and many of them are married to non-natives who are not resident in Iwoye-Ijesa. The only exception was Deaconess Janet Falobi the immediate past president of the I. D. U. With the coming of Western education, the trend has however shifted. Societies are getting mixed these days, and aggregation is no longer practised on the basis of age or gender.

### **Iwoye-Ijesa Progressive Union (IPU)**

This is the society of the educated elite. Initially it was made up of teachers<sup>3</sup> who gathered around, especially during the December holidays, to enliven the town's social life. It was founded in 1949, and the pioneers were Pa Timothy Adanri, Mr. Samuel O. Falobi, Mr. M. A. Adako (all late); Mr. E. B. Ategero, Mr. M. A. Ojuola, and a few others.

Later, new blood was injected to include younger people like Mr. Idowu Onibokun, Pastor Awotunsin (late), Mr. Sunday Erinfolami (late), Chief T. A. Ige, Mr. and Chief (Mrs.) S. B. Ojo-Aromokudu, Mr. Goke Adubi (late) and Mrs Alice A. Onibokun (late). Others included late Architect (Chief) Akin-Agunbiade, Professor Poju Onibokun, Chief I. A. Babatayo, Venerable (Engineer) R. A. O. Oshewa, and many others. Young men who in the last 20 years or so participated in re-invigorating the Union and keeping its banner aloft include Mr. Oladele Oladunjoye (who was once the secretary and later the chairman of Lagos branch, the only active and vibrant branch of the Union); Mr. Oluwole Oginni, the current branch chairman, Messrs Dapo Ige, Olufemi Ige, Kayode Gbelee and a host of others.

One of the main objectives of the I.P.U. is the educational upliftment of the town. Today, this lofty aim is still on its priority list. The Union is the foster-father of the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School. The lofty idea was sold to the Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants' Union (IDU), the parent of all unions in the town, and it was readily embraced. The Union has also done a lot about individual and collective contributions to the growth of the grammar school and the well-being of its students in terms of physical development and the award of scholarships and bursaries to deserving students.<sup>4</sup>

The town's electrification project which has since been successfully commissioned and the building of a modern palace and other progressive projects are traceable to the I.P.U. It is now a mixed society made up of educated ladies and gentlemen whose interest, as parents, centred around the continued improvement of the lots of the underprivileged in the community and the upliftment of the town in all its ramifications.

## **Other Older Societies**

### **Iwoye-Ijesa Boys and Girls Club**

This is a group comprising patriotic boys and girls (largely teenagers) with vision for the bright future of Iwoye-Ijesa. This club, founded about 1958, had the immediate objective of making the town socially

active and lively, especially when those who go to school are back home on holidays. The long-term objective was to create some durable social service structure in the town.

These objectives were largely achieved when the boys and girls organised literary and debating activities, drama, dance and varieties of entertainment, especially during Christmas holidays whereby all Iwoye-Ijesa was entertained and people from Ijebu-Jesa, Ijeda, Iloko, Ere and Esa Odo came to share fun. The town hall was always a beehive of activities with the presence of the boys and girls in town. And the Loja of Iwoye and his family were always on hand to share the joy of their togetherness.

Young as they were, the active and energetic boys and girls initiated and actually provided, with the approval and support of the reigning Loja of Iwoye, Oba S. A. Adeboye *Ogbedumole II*, the first postal agency and library within the fence perimeter of the Oba's Palace. Just behind the palace they constructed a playing field otherwise known as 'Iwoye-Ijesa Stadium,' the land space which has yielded place to modern development is now occupied by the Primary Health Centre and the Youth Empowerment Centre (YEC) which was commissioned early this year. The YEC building was the brain-child of Professor A. G. Onibokun and his AGOF Foundation.

Some founding members of the Club are the late Mr. Adeyeye Olamijulo (alias Malami), late Mrs Olusola Abe (nee Awe), Mr. Tayo Ayo Ayowole, Pastor Joshua Opemuyi, Mr. Oladele Oladunjoye (who was the General Secretary), Chief (now Rev.) Akin Gbelee, and a host of others.

### **The Iwoye-Ijesa Social Elites (I.S.E.)**

This is made up of people like Mr. (now Chief) I. A. Babatayo, the first president, Mr. Tunji Olowookere, the secretary, and other colleagues like Mr. (now Chief) Ayo Adanri, Mr. (now Pastor) Biyi Gbelee, and Mr. Tayo Ayo Ayowole etc. The society was formerly known as the Young Academicals.

The main objective of the society is the social upliftment of the community. As they advanced in age, their attention has become diversified. The academic upliftment of the sons and daughters of the town is now top on their priorities. Vocational counselling lectures for the students and organised competitive essays were annual features in which the society engaged itself, to give the students of the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School both academic and moral boosts.

Many of their members are now worthy citizens of the community and their contributions are unquantifiable. Some of their founding members were Messrs Hezekiah Olasebikan Obisesan and Deji Onibokun, both of blessed memories. The progressive fort of the society now rests squarely on 'Elitemates' like Messrs Akin Gbelee, G. A. Olamijulo, Biodun Awe, Oladele Oladunjoye, Olaoluwa Okunmuyide, Akin Abu and Tope Falore; Rot. E. B. Ayoola and Chief Olutayo Osewa; Mrs V. T. Fajaiyeyo, Mrs. E. O. Abiona and Mrs. L. T. Adekola, among others. Tayo Awotunsin (of *Champion* newspapers who was killed in Liberia during that country's civil war) and late Gabriel Famurewa were former members, though nominal.

### **The Young Sisters' Club**

This is an all-female society founded mainly to boost the morale of their members. Their officers include Mrs. Fola Oni (president), Chief Mrs. Sola Abe (vice president), now late, and Chief Mrs Fola Osewa (secretary). They had been pulling their weight to be a beacon to other female organisations in the town. Other worthy members of the society include Mrs. Adunni Babatayo, Mrs. R. Bade Oladunjoye, Alhaja Mrs Bose Olamitoye, Mrs Francisca Oshewa, Mrs F. Arinola Fakolujo, Mrs. Folowosele, etc. The matron of the society is Chief Mrs. Egun Agunbiade.

### **Iwoye-Ijesa Christian Ladies' League**

This is more of a religious than a socio-cultural association which is restricted only to some cadres of women. The initial membership was mostly Lagos-based and, almost invariably, members of the same christian denomination. Their aim is to uplift their church and

fellowship. Among the members are Chief Mrs F. B. Ojo-Aromokudu and Mrs. C. O. Awe. Others are Chief Mrs. Ebun Agunbiade, Mrs. V. T. Fajaiyeyo, Mrs. R. Agbeke Ige, Mrs. Francisca Oshewa, Mrs Janet Onibokun, Mrs. L. T. Adekola, Mrs. Arin Fakolujo and Mrs. R. Bade Oladunjoye; Mrs Bimbo Ige, Mrs. G. Olanrewaju Oladunjoye, Mrs. Tunde Folowosele, to name but a few.

### **Iwoye-Ijesa Klub '79**

On 19th May, 1979, Iwoye-Ijesa Klub '79 came to lime light thorough the efforts of a "committee of friends", namely: Messrs Akinyele Okundare and Babatope Fakoya; others were Ishola Fayanju and the late Ademola Ige. Some of the others who later joined and continued to be active members were Messrs Sayo Ogunlade, Bayo Ola, Suji Ogunlade, Femi Ade Onifade, Akin Abu, Tope Awe and Dele Awe. Leader P. O. Oni (now HRH Oba P. O. Oni), Mrs. Grace Adanri and Mr. Oladele Oladunjoye were elected as the club's founding patron, matron and adviser, respectively.

Till late 1990s these crop of young men were fully mobilized in contributing to the general welfare of the town, for example early 1982 they presented a 24-inch "television set to the Oba of Iwoye-Ijesa as part of their contribution towards providing a befitting reception hall within the Oba's palace. They had earlier donated in 1980, a giant trophy to the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School for a yearly soccer competition. They also erected some street names in Iwoye-Ijesa and metal sign-boards welcoming visitors to Iwoye-Ijesa.

### **The Altruist Club**

This is a radical club made up of youngsters, both male and female, indigenes and non-indigenes. who have passed through the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School. Membership of the society is restricted to those who have gained admission into higher institutions of learning in the country. Members are found in Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Universities all over Nigeria, or are now engaged in various professions. Their aims include the academic upliftment

of the students of the Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School.

### **Iwoye-Ijesa Social Club**

Founded in 1985, its officers include Hon. Iyiola Babayemi (president), Mr. Sanya Olanipekun (vice president), Gbenga Erinfolami (secretary), Gbenga Onibokun (financial secretary), Adeniyi Adegbite (treasurer), and Kehinde Ogidiolu (social director), The patron is Chief Fabelurin while Chief Poju Adegbite is the adviser.

Among the other clubs and societies that are now struggling to give the town 'a space' under the sun are the Atakumosa Club, the Vantage Club, the Mighty Pioneers Club, the Easter Board Members (male), the Easter Board Members (female), and *Egbe Omoyeni*, made up mostly of Ibadan-based businesswomen who are indigenes of Iwoye-Ijesa. These and other clubs and societies, too numerous to mention, are some of the modern organisations thriving to uplift the stature of Iwoye-Ijesa today.

### **End Notes**

1. Source: Records of the Association which are now in the custody of Mr. M. A. Ojuola, son of one of the founding fathers of the Union.
2. Information: Chief Emmanuel. Opemuyi, aged c.120 years.
3. The teaching profession was the first white-collar job to which the educated elite were exposed. This was the contribution of Pa S. O. Ofinran, an indigene and former District Supervisor of Schools (D.S.) in Osogbo.
4. Since 1976 when the school was founded, scholarships and bursaries have been disbursed to students of the school by the IPU and other well-meaning individuals. Such philanthropists included the late Architect (Chief) J. Akin-Agunbiade who set this ball of progress rolling.

## Concluding Remarks

**E**VEN though this part is meant to be the conclusion of this piece of work, yet the conclusion is still inconclusive. The work is bound to grow since other facts are yet to be unearthed, while some of those mentioned are bound to be elaborated upon. No doubt, corroborative or challenging views could arise to what has been written. The 'ball' has however been set rolling and it will snowball into an all-embracing piece of historical work on this subject. The growth can still not yet be measured, *moreso*, as some skipped ideas, especially with regards to the present position of the town, would still find their ways into the work if found relevant.

Some ideas must however be mentioned for record purposes and for posterity. The size of the town, Iwoye-Ijesa, is very little when compared with its history. The history has given it its unique position in this area. It is on record that the town has some 'firsts' to its credit. This is not an attempt to embellish history; rather, it is to elucidate facts. Some of its citizens are still to be remembered for their worthy roles to their fatherland. Such people included Esemure Osunnigbagbe who, as a very wealthy woman during her days, was the first woman to build a house of her own, with galvanised iron roofing. She also engaged in money-lending. This resulted in her having many creditors working for her as '*iwofa*' during her lifetime. Her house, which was built in 1929 is still an enviable edifice in Iwoye-Ijesa till today.

Iwoye-Ijesa also had the first professional carpenter and the first bricklayer in the town and its environs. Jacob Oladunjoye of Araromi

Street was the first carpenter to whom many of today's experts' fathers in the trade owed much. Incidentally, his son Pa Aaron Adejuwon Oladunjoye alias "Alujonu Kafinta" was a former president of the Carpenters' Union from 1954 till the late 1970s when old age made him to surrender the mantle of leadership. The first bricklayer was Pa Sanni Olatope of Idi-Ayan Street.



**Guild of Carpenters:** *Sitting left-right*, Pa Matthew Fagbemi; Pa Adegbola alias Erikitolu, Pa Aaron Adejuwon Oladunjoye alias Alujonu Kafinta (President), Chief S. A. Adewunmi, Chief Samson Awe Osewa and Chief Gold alias Goolu, *Standing middle row L-R*, Chief Bolade Olatope, Chief Gabriel Osewa, Mr. Yinka Asaola (Secretary), Pa Amure, Mr. Alake and Pa Ayeni Okoro. *Back row L-R*: Mr. Pele Aduji, Mr. Ayo (alias Jaleolule), Mr. Adeleke Ojuola, Mr. Famiyesin alias Somirin, and Mr. Ige.

The streets of Iwoye-Ijesa can still be quantified according to their founding. Isimosan Street took the prime of place historically. This was followed by Odooye and Odo Ila. Agbede Street was a contemporary of Odooye. It was the site of the Iwanus, the great blacksmiths. Anaye Street, meant as a short cut between the market square (Oke Oja) and Odo Ila, is now a street on its own. What however remains is for the town to receive better governmental patronage. She has an expansive land area which can easily accommodate many agro-

based projects without infringing on the lands of her neighbours. The compulsory land acquisition for the Farm Settlement by the old Western Region Government in the 1950s constituted a great setback to the farmers who farmed on the land. They were forced to quit their rich agricultural lands for other areas, especially on the other side of the Iwoye-Ijesa/Esá Odo road. The insult added to their suffering was the naming of settlement after Esá-Oke and not Iwoye-Ijesa to which it rightly belonged. This anomaly must be corrected.

The patronage which the governments of the old Western Region, the old Oyo State and now Osun State, extended to her are however sources of gratification to the government by the people.

Iwoye-Ijesa is blessed with natural resources such as a luxuriant evergreen forest with its numerous economic trees and natural palm trees from which palm oil is got, and palmyra palm from which palmwine (*oguro*) is tapped. Prominent economic ventures, especially those centred on the agricultural and natural resources of the town, need to be modernised and put into more profitable use. These resources await the establishment of agro-allied industries to help stabilise the population and curb the constant rural-urban drift by young school leavers. This will also help in encouraging the local entrepreneurs and provide jobs for the jobless.

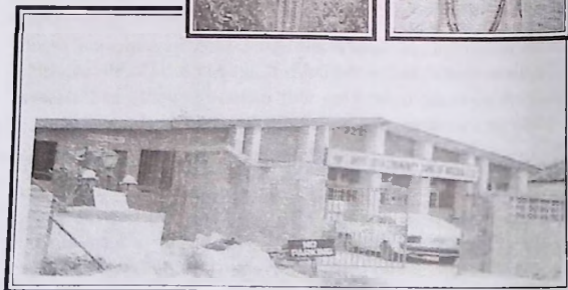
The establishment of small-scale agro-centred industries will benefit from the abundant forest and land resources that are locally available. Such small-scale industries will include saw-mill and cassava-processing industries to supplement the ones now in use.

The swamp areas along the river courses provide abundant raphia palm from which palmwine is got. There is need for the establishment of palm-wine processing industries, not only for the proper preservation of wine but also for the production of local gin as is done in the Niger Delta areas of Nigeria. *Ogoro Iwoye* needs a new toga in this modern time of her history. Apart from this, the swamps can also be gainfully utilised, especially for the regular production of

swamp-rice and sugarcane to complement the food resources of the people. The numerous rivers can be dammed to provide fish ponds for the production of fishes for the much-needed fish protein. Such areas can also be gainfully developed for market gardening for the production of vegetables all-year-round.

In a bid to reawaken the populace to the need to regenerate the economic base of the town, the Iwoye-Ijesa Descendants' Union, in 1989 mandated the Iwoye-Ijesa Progressive Union to raise a crop of patriots to constitute a committee for the town's economic development. This committee, which convened its inau-gural meeting at the Lagos (TinCan Is-land) residence of Arc. (Chief) J. Akin Agunbiade, now late, initiated an economic agenda. The committee,

which elected Prof. A. G. Onibokun as chairman and Mr. Oladele Oladunjoye as secretary, had the following members: Chief G. A. Awe, Chief T. A. Ige,



The Iwoye-Ijesa Community Bank. *Inset above:* Prince D. Tunji Fakoya (Chairman) and Chief I. A. Babatayo (Manager).

Prince D. T. Fakoya, Engr. (later Ven.) R. Olu Oshewa and late Arc. Chief J. Akin Agunbiade (the convener).

This committee, whose mandate was to explore all available avenues for the economic restructuring and development of the community, among others, played the noble role that led to the establishment of the Iwoye-Ijesa Community Bank (IICB) which was licensed and finally commissioned in 1995. This bank has been providing the much-needed funds for the economic upliftment of the peoples, especially the small-scale farmers and petty traders who now patronise the bank on a regularly.

The priceless activities and efforts of the late Arc. Chief J. Akin Agunbiade, the *Obasogo of Ile-Ife*, Prof. Adepoju G. Onibokun, Venerable (Engineer) Reuben A. O. Oshewa, Prince D. Tunji Fakoya and a host of other intellectuals, professionals and businessmen and women who put their heads together for this gigantic economic edifice is unequalled. The bank is even operating in a building purposely built for it. The community owes much to the vivacious and tireless efforts of Arc. (Chief) J. Akinagunbiade (late) and his company, the Niger Consultants that provided the architectural designs of the bank and town hall building free of charge. May he continue to rest in perfect peace in the Lord. Amen.

Future generations can still look back and say a big 'thank you' to these planners for their foresight and planning. It is now left for the generality of the citizens in the town, both at home and 'abroad', to make a wise and judicious use of the opportunities that have been provided to pull themselves up by the bootstraps from the ancient economic squalor and general apathy that had bedevilled the town over the years. This will also help to arrest the yearly rural-urban drift warranted by the lack of job opportunities at home for school leavers.

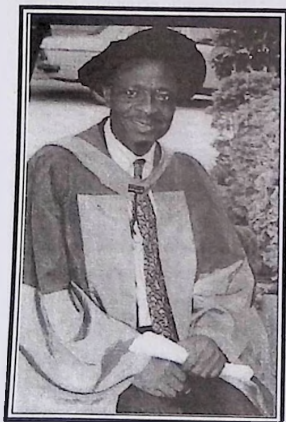
The resources of the soil are yet to be tapped and put into economic use for the people. The assistance of the government in this respect cannot be under-estimated or quantified for proper take-off. Even



Arc. (Chief) J. Akin Agunbiade  
*Obosogo of Ile-Ife*



The Ven. Reuben Adeboye  
Olubanjo Oshewa

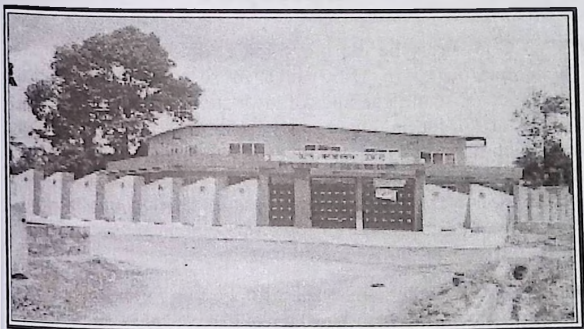


Prof. Adepoju Gabriel Onibokun,  
AGOF Chairman & *Balogun* of St  
Thomas' Anglican Church

the ancient and primitive mode of farming is yet to be modernised to the benefit of the local farmers. The government and other well-meaning people must complement the efforts of the people in this regard.

Surely, the sleepy ancient town of Iwoye-Ijesa must be awakened from its age-old slumber. The Christian revival services held between 27th and 31st January, 1997, have contributed in no small measure to the socio-economic and religious awakening of the people in preparation for the arduous task ahead in this twenty-first century of our Lord.

A new era has dawned on the socio-economic life of the town with the donation of an ultra modern Youth Empowerment Centre (YEC). This magnificent edifice was built by the Adepoju Gabriel Onibokun Foundation (AGOF) and donated to the community. The official commissioning was performed by Her Excellency Erelu Olusola Obada, the Deputy Governor of Osun State on 4th of October, 2003.



Youth Empowerment Centre

The first petrol station has just been opened at the Ijebu-Jesa approach to Iwoye-Ijesa under the auspices of Evangelist Gbadura Obanla, and his company, the director of Gbadura and Sons Nigeria Ltd.

What remains now is government patronage at converting our surrounding forest to an industrial or academic 'factory' to help stem the perennial rural-urban drift which has been the bane of Iwoye-Ijesa over the years.

## Epilogue

**T**O God surely be the glory for a job, which was started unconsciously in 1967 as a mere academic exercise to practicalise the teachings of my history lecturers at the Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo in the then Western Region of Nigeria and which has finally snowballed into this piece. The exercise has changed in form several times from a purely historical work to encompass contemporary issues like the socio-economic development of the town. This is to make the topic very comprehensive and readable for all, rather than being a mere historical document.

Our leaders and fathers must learn to open up to the young ones for posterity's sake. Many of those who would have volunteered information kept mute and refused to open up. Many of such people have now joined their ancestors buried with their 'wealth of information.'

We however thank those who willingly opened up; we are proud of them today for making this work a reality, at last. The secretive attitude posed by some of our elders would simply block information on the historical past of largely illiterate communities like ours, thereby making the writing of the history as arduous task. Much thanks go to our great ancestors, both male and female, who though unlettered, volunteered to help us know about events that happened even before our generations were born. This is due mainly to their wealth of knowledge of history or their having collected relevant and useful information from elders, which they now disseminate, to us for posterity's sake. Such information has been cross-checked through

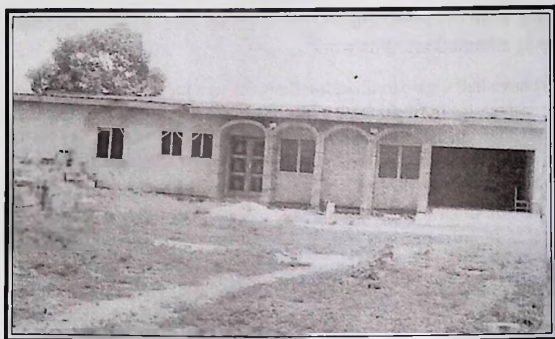
other sources or through other writing and were corroborated before being admitted into this work.

We have had cause to abandon the work as a mere academic exercise or an exercise in futility due to the dearth of information or distractions and other human factors; but the historical spirit kept urging one to revisit the 'abandoned work.' Some had expected the completed work within a limited time but the constraints of writing history of this nature do not allow for such undue haste in completing the work. The pieces of information gathered had to be verified over the years, especially with the promptings of some good friends through whose efforts the 'abandoned' work had to be revisited over and over again.

The final stage of crossing the 't's and dotting the 'i's has led to the altering of some of the chapters resulting in the complete change, of course, from an otherwise purely historical work to include economic changes that had taken place in recent years. This has led to the change in title from *History of Iwoye-Ijesa* to *Iwoye-Ijesa in Time Perspective*.

The installation of Oba Philip Ogundare Oni (J. P.) *Abigiasoloko II* as the Oniwoye of Iwoye-Ijesa on 25th November, 1995 in succession to Oba Samuel Adeboye who joined his ancestors on 1st February, 1990 has become an important landmark in the history of the town. His wealth of experience as a chartered insurer who retired from the services of the United Nigeria Insurance Company (UNIC) to become the Oba of the town is of vital importance. As a former Councillor in the Obokun Local Government, now Obokun and Oriade Local Governments, he donated his councillorship remunerations to the maternity centre in Iwoye-Ijesa. Since becoming the Oba, the town has continuously witnessed progressive changes in the real sense of it.

The modern palace, which foundation was laid during the reign of Oba Samuel Adeboye, *Ogbedumole II*, has been roofed and plastered. There is now a functioning Primary Health Centre. This was through the joint effort of the town, the Oriade Local Government and the United Nations Development Project (UNDP). It was the first of its



The Oba's Palace under construction

kind in the Oriade Local Government Area. Our thanks however go to the former Sole Administrator of Oriade Local Government, late Chief Israel Olufemi Olajide Adeleke (24th July, 1998 - 30th March, 1999), who was installed as the *Ariwajoye of Iwoye-Ijesa* by the Oniwoye. We still show our appreciation for a job well done. He later became the Permanent Secretary in the Administration of Col. T.O.A.



Primary Health Centre

Bamigboye (rtd). He died on active service on 17th September, 2003. May his memory remain blessed forever. Amen.

The administrative system in the town has been revitalized through the injection of highly educated citizens into the chieftaincy hierarchy. The Iwarafa, i.e the kingmakers and other chieftaincy classes in the town have been imbued with this class of educated elite. The record of the proceedings in the bi-monthly meetings of the chiefs (*Ajo Ilu*) is now well documented as an important source of information on the town.

Education in the town is receiving a boost. More students of the town are now in tertiary institutions all over the country and abroad.

The town is a member of the Iloko-Oriade Initiative, which comprises Iloko-Ijesa, Ijebu-Jesa, Iwoye-Ijesa, Ijeda, Iwaraja, Oke Ana and Erinmo. These are the seven contiguous towns in Zone One of the Oriade Local Government Area. The town is also a member of the four communities of Iwoye-Ijesa, Esa-Odo, Ilare and Otan-Ile (the last three towns being located in Obokun Local Government Area of Osun State). The four communities championed the rehabilitation of the seventeen-kilometre Ijebu-Jesa / Otan-Ile road in Obokun Local Government by the Osun State Government. The road links Oriade Local Government Area directly with the road linking Osun State with the northern part of Nigeria.

The committee of the four communities is also seeing to the regular supply of electricity to the area by the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA). It also ensures regular supply of water to the towns from the Esa Odo Dam in Obokun Local Government Area. Through the activities of this committee under the chairmanship of Pa Elder (Chief) E. O. Fatimilehin, the Asiwaju of Ilare, the four communities now see themselves as a unit for their socio-economic and cultural linkage and their economic well-being. The communities now form a beacon of hope and progress to other towns in Yorubaland in general, no matter the political administrative units (local governments) they may belong to. The Youth Empowerment Centre (YEC) donated by

Professor A. G. Onibokun and his AGOF is now the cynosure of eyes in the area.

The Iwoye-Ijesa Community Bank (IICB) has become an economic lifewire to the people. Its tentacles spread to the neighbouring towns. One needs to thank God for making it an economic reality. The bank has been providing economic support for the town due to the activities of its Board of Directors headed by Prince D. T. Fakoya and under the able management of Chief I. A. Babatayo and his team of dedicated staff.

What remains is for the town to be given adequate patronage by the Oriade Local Government and the Osun State Government. The Federal Government as the father of all governments in the country, the United Nations, and UNICEF especially, can still play important roles in the economic liberation of the town, so as to provide ample opportunities for development. One must however appeal to the town's people to willingly open up the town for development, as their vast lands would not develop on their own. It would do the town no good if the few land-owners sit tightly and menacingly on their lands.

The construction of a petrol station on the thick jungle that welcomes someone from Ijebu-Jesa to Iwoye-Ijesa is a right step in the right direction. This is due in part to the activities of H. R. H. Oba P. O. Oni (J. P.), *Abigiasoloko II*, the Oniwoye of Iwoye-Ijesa with the full cooperation of his subjects at home, with Messers Gbadura Obanla and Sons (Nigeria) Limited, being one of the most prominent.

A lot more about the religious beliefs of the people remains to be researched into, at least for the sake of the younger generation who may think the two oriental religions i.e. Islam and Christianity alone form the religions of our people. Our people are highly religious traditionally and this aspect would be adequately taken care of in another publication.

We are however proud of the activities of our past heroes, both male and female, in maintaining and managing their affairs in the past: morally, socially, culturally and economically.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Important Dates in Iwoye-Ijesa's History

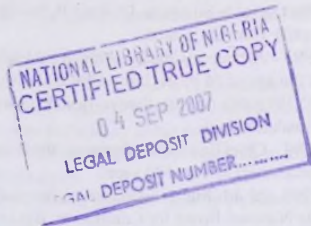
1. 16th century – Atakumosa, as the first Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa, pooled the settlements together and established a ruling dynasty. He later became the seventh Owa Obokun of Ijesaland (1526-1646).  
(b) Palmyra seeds (*okorogbigbo*) introduced to Iwoye-Ijesa from Benin by Atakumosa. It was carried there by Chief Sasere (Sasore).
2. 1851– Ijebu-Ere War. Siege on Iwoye-Ijesa by Balogun Ibikunle and his Ibadan forces. Dispersal of Iwoye-Ijesa people and settlement at Ita-Iwoye near Ijebu-Jesa.
3. 1877 – Kiriji Wars started. Iwoye-Ijesa warriors participated in it.
4. 1884 – Ifaturoti Asubiojo installed Loja Iwoye-Ijesa by Ogedengbe, the then Obanla of Ilesa.
5. 1886 – Peace Treaty to end the Kiriji Wars. Peace restored to Yorubaland.
6. 1896 – Daddy John Thomas arrived Iwoye-Ijesa. The first batch of 'returnees' to Iwoye-Ijesa later organised the first christian brotherhood in the town.
7. 1906 – Anglican christian worshippers firmly established in Iwoye-Ijesa.
8. 1910 – Ogedengbe, the generalissimo of Ekiti-Parapo Alliance died in Ilesa.
9. 1912 – Primary education introduced to Iwoye-Ijesa.
10. 1926 – The motorable road from Ilesa to Iwoye-Ijesa constructed. The first motor vehicle visited Iwoye-Ijesa.
11. 1929–Esi Apataki Atakumosa reconstructed at Idi-Ayan in Iwoye-Ijesa.
12. 1931 – Cherubim and Seraphim Church Society introduced to Iwoye-Ijesa from Oke-Eso, Ilesa during the reign of Loja, Oba Ifaturoti Asubiojo.

13. 1933, 11th April – Loja Asubiojo died and most of his children moved down to Ilesa.
14. 1934 – Oba David Ariwodola Joseph Onibokun installed Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa as Alagbara II.
15. 1937 – The first Cherubim and Seraphim Church built in Iwoye-Ijesa.
16. 1939 (a) World War II started. Nigeria joined the Allies.  
(b) *Egbe Atunluse* (Iwoye-Ijesa Improvement Union) formed.
17. 1942 (a) Owa Obokun Aromolaran died (1920-1942) in Ilesa.  
(b) Owa Obokun Hastrup Fidipote installed as Ajimoko II (1942-1956).
18. 1945 – World War II ended.
19. 1947/48 – Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa, Oba David Ariwodola Joseph Onibokun Alagbara II, reported to the Owa-in-council at Ilesa by the Town Youths.
20. 1949 – Iwoye-Ijesa Progressive Union founded.
21. 1952 (a) The new St. Thomas' Primary School 'A' became operational in Iwoye-Ijesa.  
(b) Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa, Oba D. A. Onibokun died (14th March 1952).  
(c) Prince Samuel Adeboye installed Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa as Ogbedumole II (7th November, 1952).  
(d) A new Apostolic Church building started in Iwoye-Ijesa.
22. 1953 – St. Thomas' Primary School, Iwoye-Ijesa raised to a senior primary status.
23. 1955 (a) Free Primary Education introduced in the Western Region of Nigeria.  
(b) The Apostolic Church School took off in Iwoye-Ijesa.
24. 1957 – Owa Obokun Adelupo Ogunmokun installed at Ilesa (1957-1963).
25. 1960 – Nigeria's independence (1st October).
26. 1966 – The first Military Coup in Nigeria (15th January).
27. 1971 (a) Architect J. Akin-Agunbiade launched the Folasade Ilujooro Scholarship Programme in memory of his mother.  
(b) Chief Emmanuel Ifatunbrin Opemuyi installed as the Risa of Iwoye-Ijesa (18th November).
28. 1972 – Maternity Centre started in Iwoye-Ijesa by the Omo Shasha Movement.
29. 1974 – Electricity project started in Iwoye-Ijesa (December) during the regime of Brigadier (later Major General) David Medayese

Jemibewon as Governor of Western Region of Nigeria.

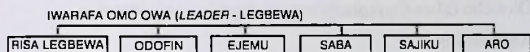
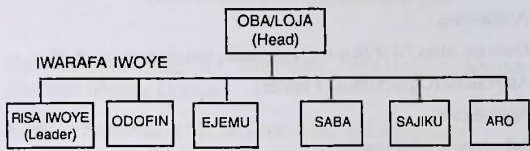
30. 1976 – Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School founded (17th September).
31. 1980 – Ogunpa flood disaster in Ibadan (31st August). Many Iwoye-Ijesa traders in Ibadan were affected.
32. 1981 – Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School released its first set of students.
33. 1982 (a) Bridge constructed across the Eriru river on the proposed Iwoye-Ijesa - Esa Oke road.  
(b) Postal agency opened in Iwoye-Ijesa.
34. 1983 – A 26-seater Toyota Civilian bus presented to Iwoye-Ijesa Grammar School by the Parents/Teachers' Association (PTA) on 1st May.
35. 1984, 21 Dec. – Iwoye-Ijesa electricity project commissioned by Lt. Col. Oladayo Popoola Military Governor of Oyo State.
36. 1985 – Chief James Olarewaju Onibokun the *Sapaye Omo Owa* of Iwoye-Ijesa died at the age of 64 years (7th January).
37. 1988 – The first organised Christmas Carol and the visit of Father Christmas to Iwoye-Ijesa – The Venerable Adebola Ademowo presided. This was his last official engagement before being made the Anglican Bishop of Ilesa Diocese. He came on the ticket of the Iwoye-Ijesa Social Elite (I.S.E.)
38. 1990 (a) Foundation of a new ultra-modern palace in Iwoye-Ijesa laid by Oba Samuel Adeboye *Ogbedumole II*.  
(b) Oba Samuel Adeboye, the *Loja* of Iwoye-Ijesa joined his ancestors (1952-1st February 1990).  
(c) The first Iwoye-Ijesa Day Celebration (1st September, 1990).
39. 1991 – Architect J. Akin-Agunbiade made Chief *Obasogo of Ife* by Oba Okunade Sijuwade, Olubuse II, the Oluaye, the Ooni of Ife (13th April) from the source.
40. 1993 – Architect (Chief) J. Akin-Agunbiade died on 22nd November, at the age of 56 years; buried 4th December, 1993.  
(b) 1993, 6th August – Iwoye-Ijesa Primary Health Centre foundation laid.
41. 1994 – Chief Emmanuel Opemuyi, the *Risa* of Iwoye-Ijesa, died (24th December) at over 120 years.
42. 1995 (a) 4th May: Inspection of Iwoye-Ijesa Community Bank by the National Board for Community Banks.  
(b) 1st July: Iwoye-Ijesa Community Bank became operational.

- (c) 18th August: Provisional Licence given to the Iwoye-Ijesa Community Bank.
  - (d) 25th November: Installation of Prince Philip Ogundare Oni as Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa by the Owa Obokun-in-Council as *Abigiasoloko II*.
  - (e) 27th November: Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa, Oba Philip Ogundare Oni, *Abigiasoloko II* left Ilesa for Iwoye-Ijesa after observing the three-day traditional rites.
- 43. 1996 – Prince John Onibokun elected the Chairman, Oriade Local Government.
  - 54. Thursday, 21st Jan, 1999 – Iwoye-Ijesa Primary Health Centre commissioned by His Excellency Col. T.O.A. Bamigboye, fss, mss, psc + during the chairmanship of Mr. Israel Olufemi Adeleke (JP) of Oriade L.G.
  - 55. 2000 – The Rt. Rev. Dr. James Adedayo Oladunjoye as the Lord Bishop of Owo Diocese (Anglican Communion). He was consecrated Bishop on Sunday 26th March, at Abuja, and Enthroned on Thursday, 30th March, 2000 at the Cathedral of St Adrews, Owo
  - 56. 14th May, 2002 – Collation, Institution and Induction of Rev. Canon R. A. Olubanjo Oshewa as an Archdeacon of the Diocese of Lagos West and the Vicar of Ikeja Archdeaconry as well as the Vicar of Bola Memorial Anglican Church, Ikeja.
  - 57. 2003 – Youth Empowerment Centre commissioned by Deputy, Governor, Her Excellency, Erelu Olusola Obada on behalf of the Governor, His Excellency Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola on 4th October..

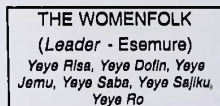
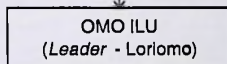
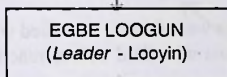
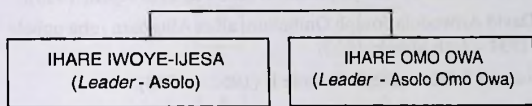


## Appendix 2

### Administrative Structures of Iwoye-Ijesa



#### IHARE CHIEFS



### Appendix 3

## List of Past Lojas of Iwoye-Ijesa

1. Atakumosa.
  2. Owooro, alias "*Ase la a mo, egigunde, umokun peyinda.*"
  3. Atabialaba (Ogbedumole's father).
  4. Agabielesin.
  5. Adegboyega (deposed).
  6. Otokobo (alias Otokobo korijorijo).
  7. Abigiasoloko I.
  8. Ogbedumole.
  9. Borisade.
  10. Ifaturoti, alias Asubiojo-pokunrin (1884 to 11th April, 1933).
  11. David Ariwodola Joseph Onibokun, alias Alagbara igba ogbele (1934 – 14th March, 1952).
  12. Samuel Adeboye, Ogbedumole II (1952 – 1990).
  13. Oba Philip Ogundare Oni, Abigiasoloko II (25th November, 1995 –
- NB:** Other former Lojas in Iwoye-Ijesa were Obara, who died without any male issue; and Aribadewu who died before reaching the palace in Iwoye-Ijesa.

## Appendix 4

### Ruling Houses

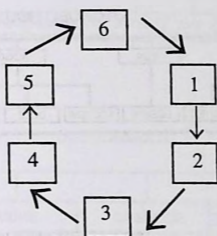
#### – Descendants of Atakumosa

Ogbedumole, Alagbara, Asubiojo, Abigiasoloko, Aribadewu, Otokobo (Ruling Houses).

**Right of Succession:** Rotational in the following order:

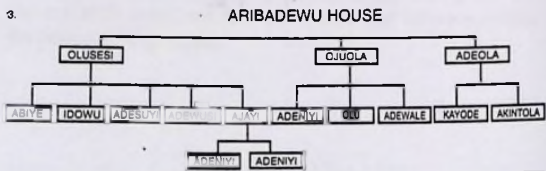
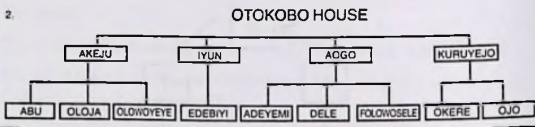
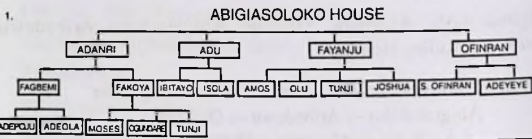
Abigiasoloko → Aribadewu → Otokobo

→ Asubiojo → Alagbara → Ogbedumole →

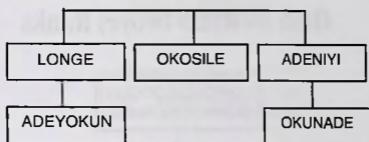


## Appendix 5

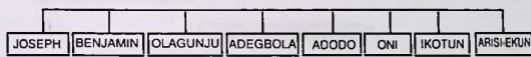
### Royal Houses' Families in Iwoye-Ijesa



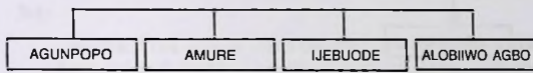
## 4. ASUBIOJO POKUNRIN HOUSE



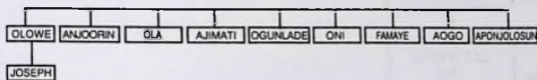
## 5. ALAGBARA IGBA OGBELE HOUSE



## 6. OGBEDUMOLE

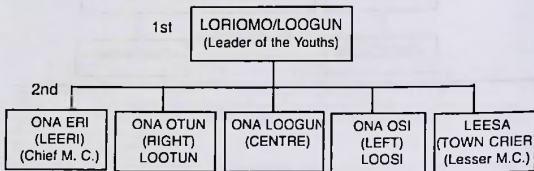


## 7. LEGBEWA OMO OWA



## Appendix 6

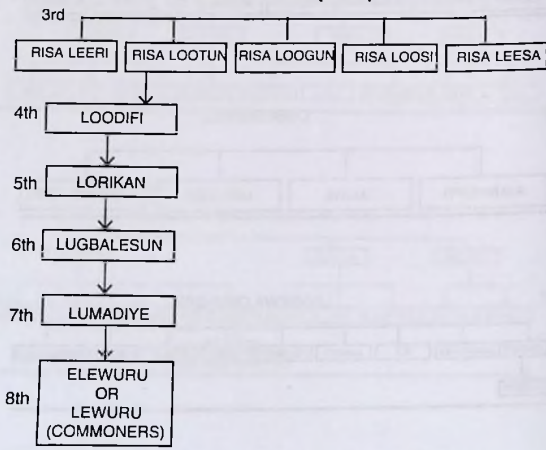
### Omo Ilu (Omo Iwoye) Ranks



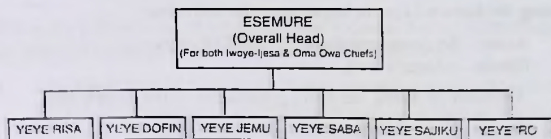
These were the 5 Leaders (Opon Marun)

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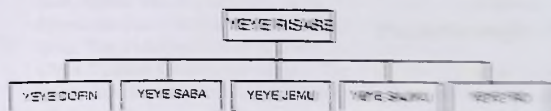
#### ASSISTANTS (RISA)



## Appendix 7 Womenfolk



### OMO OWA LINE



#### NB:

The Omo Owa women chiefs operate under the Esemure of Iwoye-Ijesa, but their leader, Yeye Risase holds her council with her Omo Owa colleagues. They come under the Esemure of Iwoye-Ijesa.

## Appendix 8

### Past Lojas of Itegun

Among the known Lojas in Itegun were the following:

1. Aarin – the great-grandfather of Chief Olutayo.
2. Ojiuke – (Aarin's son).
3. A brother of Ayara, the Abu's grandfather on the mother side.
4. Paami – Kujeyi's father.
5. Aguntasoolo.
6. Interregnum.
7. Chief Samuel Ojo Olutayo, (2nd August, 1956 –14th December, 1987).
8. Ogunniyi Ojiuke II

## Appendix 9

### Oral References

Below are a list of some of the people who volunteered some information on the history of Iwoye-Ijesa and the part played by each contributor.

1. Late Chief Samuel Ifatunbarin Osewa, my father died in May 1967. He was the foundation of my worth today, His contributions on Benin history and the administrative structures of Iwoye-Ijesa is inestimable.
2. Pa Chief Ojo Apasaka died in 1967. He was my maternal uncle who first volunteered information on the religious, traditional and modern history of Iwoye-Ijesa. He was the Obalorisa of Iwoye-Ijesa.
3. Chief Gabriel Adeoye Fadayiro, died 14th April, 1988. The Ejemu of Iwoye-Ijesa whom I interviewed on 31st October, 1981. Source of Ejemu chieftancy title, also aspects of administrative system of Iwoye-Ijesa; The traditional Esi at Isimosan and Okun Festival.
4. Chief Michael Olowoyeye Akeju – The Aloro Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa. Information on Ekiti relations with Ijesa and the dynastic administration in Iwoye-Ijesa.
5. Chief Mrs. Fayoye Ayeleyin – The Yeye Sajiku of Iwoye-Ijesa, age c. 75yrs. Aspects on Okun Festival and the institution of the Aworokuns.
6. Chief Adepoju Ayeni alias Apalara interviewed on 15-11-1990. He died on 20 Feb, 2001, aged 98yrs: Aspect of Iwoye-Ijesa / Ila / Itegun relationships. Also the Ijebu-Ere war of 1851.
7. Chief Emmanuel Ifatunbarin Opemuyi, former Balogun Ijo of St. Thomas' Church, Iwoye-Ijesa, the immediate past Risa Iwoye in chieftancy institutions in Iwoye-Ijesa, He died in 1994 at over 120 years.
8. Chief Samuel Adewumi, the present Risa Legbewa Omo Owa, aged over 120yrs on dynastic institutions of Iwoye-Ijesa on Arimoro history.
9. Chief Elijah Ayo Okundare (alias Ajanusin Baba Iwoye), the late Aro of Iwoye-Ijesa – On Okun worship in Iwoye-Ijesa.
10. Chief Samuel Ojo Gbelee – Late Odofin of Iwoye-Ijesa Information on Iwanu history and administrative set-up of Iwoye-Ijesa; Interviewed in 1975 then aged c. 75yrs.
11. Chief Samuel Ojo Olutayo – the Late Loja of Itegun in Iwoye-Ijesa,

- (died 14/12/87). Aspects of Itegun history and the Ila/Itegun/Iwoye-Ijesa relation. Also on christianity in Iwoye-Ijesa. Installed as Loja of Itegun on 21st August, 1956, interviewed in 1969.
12. Chief Okunlae, the late chief priestess of Okun and Omolaju Okun – on Okun worship in Iwoye-Ijesa.
  13. Oba Samuel Adeboye, Ogedumole II, Loja of Iwoye-Ijesa (7th Oct. 1952 – 1st Feb. 1990) died 1st Feb. 1990 – administrative structure and history of Iwoye-Ijesa. Interviewed 1970.
  14. Chief Gabriel Falade Oginni, the Legbesa of Iwoye-Ijesa. Aspects of religion in Iwoye-Ijesa, traditional and modern administrative structures of Iwoye-Ijesa, Western education in Iwoye-Ijesa; died, aged over 80yrs.
  15. Chief Samuel Morakinyo Olamijulo, alias '*Delegeto*' (Daily Gaitor), the Asolo (head of the Ihares) of Iwoye-Ijesa. On aspects of Risa Iwoye Chieftaincy title and the traditional administration of Iwoye-Ijesa. He died on 2nd October, 1997 aged over 90 years.
  16. Chief Obaala David Ojo, died 5th February, 1978: Aspects of Ila, Itegun/Iwoye-Ijesa history.
  17. Chief Gabriel Akinlusi, alias 'Ojuko,' Baasikin Ila, Iwoye-Ijesa: Aspects of Ila, Itegun/Iwoye-Ijesa history.
  18. Chief James Olarewaju Onibokun, the late Sapaye Omo Owa of Iwoye-Ijesa; son of Oba David Ariwodola Joseph Onibokun, the *Alagbara-igba-ogbele* (1934- 1952). He died in 1985 aged over 64yrs: Aspects of dynastic rule in Atakumosa institution in Iwoye-Ijesa.
  19. Chief Madam Ogunfolahan Omilasinnu, the Yeyelori of Iwoye-Ijesa, aged over 90yrs: Aspects on Okun worship and Iwoye-Ijesa/Itegun relations.

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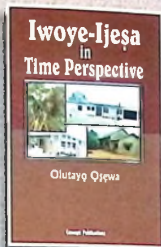
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## Iwoye-Ijesa

**In Time Perspective** is an attempt at documenting the ancient and contemporary history of Iwoye-Ijesa and her relationship with neighbouring settlements that comprise the present Oriade Local Government Area of Osun State. The author uses his rich historical training and thorough grasp of research method to capture the essence of culture, religion and education in the life of a people who have evolved over time.



The work which will be a resource material for people who are interested in knowing much about the founding fathers of this ancient town, is a compelling read for history scholars and students, and especially all those interested in Yoruba history.

**Olutayo Osewa, J.P.**, Chief Risawe of Iwoye-Ijesa, has had over thirty years of meritorious service in teaching and in the public service in various parts of Nigeria. Before his teaching career from which he retired in 1999 as a senior lecturer at the Osun State College of Education, Ilesa, he had worked in the old Bendel State Civil Service and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) Headquarters in

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HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

ISBN 978-8065-23-6



**Concept Publications**