

# **THE HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF ANCIENT IFON OROLU KINGDOM**

**BY**

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**THE OLUFON OF OROLULAND**

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE EARLY BEGINNINGS

The beginning of Ifon must be traced to Ile-ife, the cradle of Yoruba ization and the fountainhead of all rulers who lay claim to authentic royal authority in the southwestern part of Nigeria and even in neighbouring countries of Benin Republic and Togo. This statement is neither a bogus claim nor a concocted story, for there are incontrovertible pieces of evidence to confirm that the origins of Ifon dated to the ancient times.

The progenitors of the Ifon people originally lived in Ile-Ife. they were descendants of Obatala whose homestead was known as Ideta, one of the several aboriginal settlements which made up Ile-Ife before the rise of Oduduwa to prominence. Obatala, who many people call orisha nla, is referred to by one verse of his oriki praise-poems, as Ekuṅ Ifon (the leopard of Ifon). He was one of the sixteen elders that accompanied Oduduwa to the world to perform the act of creation which began with the foundation of Ile-Ife out of primordial water. Other elders included Agboniregun (the founder of Ifa oracle) and Ogun (the founder of iron-smithing) among others.

Of the sixteen elders, Obatala was the most powerful. This was because he was the one that had the sacred symbol of authority (is). In Fact, he was the one originally delegated by Olodumare with the duty of performing the task of creation of the world. He was also the intermediary between Olodumare, the High God and the creator of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth. In particular. Obatala had a powerful gift such that he could commune with Olodumare and anything that he said or forecasted usually came to reality. On account of these. Obatala came to be regarded as the leader or at least primus inter pares of the sixteen aboriginal inhabitants of Yorubaland.

Thus, he acquired the nickname, alabalase asoju Olodumare, ( the one whose wish is a command, the representative of the High God) and the surname Ohatorisa, that is, a king that could be equated with god. The pervasive influence of Obatala in these ancient times is attested to by the fact that up till modern times, he has continued to be highly regarded in different parts of Yorubaland and even in other aces where Yoruba culture is prominent

Obatala was reputed to be the creator of human beings. Part of the great Commission given to him by the Supreme Being, Olodumare, when the elders were Ascending from heaven was the shaping of all parts of the human body. Thus, Obatala was the one responsible for the moulding of the human shape and the fashioning of all parts of the human body such as the head, mouth, eyes, ears, nose etc. It is not surprising to hear people describe Obatala as "Orisanla a duoju da mu aning the great divinity who created the eyes and the nose (i.e. the one that moulded the different parts of the human body). In performing this great task of moulding the human body. Obatala tack diction from nobody. What form he gave to any iindividual was his prerogative and often reflected his mood. At times he moulded some human beings with remarkable beauty and perfection and especially when he was in a bad mood) his moulds came out in ugly shapes The why all human beings with malformations (cripples. hunchbacks, albanese, etc) are devoted to hm and referred to as "eni Orusa"

In addition to the power of moulding. Obatala was endowed with a powers. These include the power to give children to barren women, the power of vengeance the power to neutralise the power of witches the power to protect people from external invasions, the power to plant (for instance yam and command harvey one day e h is these powers possessed by Obatala that made all other elders he-lfe to read him as the most powerful person among them. In actual fact, he was generally accepted as deputy to the Supreme Being. Igbakeji Olodumare In De-le in those ancient times. Obatala was the leader of the community He was the king and had a large compound or palace. Hence he was known Onilenia (the owner of a big house). He was also known as alase the possessor of wthorny) This was because he was the one originally credited by Olodumare with divine authority to rule.

However, at some time, there was serious crisis within the city of Ile A Akinjogbin. Ife Cradle of A Ract. Sunray, 1992) The privileges and prerogatives of royalty enjoyed by the heads of the aboriginal settlements (the sixteen elders were stopped and taken over by Oduduwa During this period, some disrespect was shown to Obatala who in annoyance, went on exile This brought a lot of hardship an the people of Ile-ife as there was famine and pestilence. However, through the intervention of Orunmila, an elder credited with uncommon wisdom. Obatala was appeased and things once again became calm But by then. Oduduwa had entered the scene as the leader of the people who feared the rulership of Obatala even though they respected him From then a distinction was made between the principally realistic role of Obatala and the function of a ruler which became purely secular. This move to separate religion from politics was enshrined in an Ife proverb which clearly portrays the constitutional arrangement at this time. Olufe lo Nilu Oba lamier fun meaning. the ruler of leti Oduduwa) owns the town but the king was the one in possession of white beads e Obatala).

This rose because Obatala used to worship Orisha Nla whose favourite colour was white The Natural and Orisa Nla eventually became synonymous and w e became the favourite colour of identification of the devotees of both in differen towns od cities in Yoruba Land as weil as in other parts of the world such as Brazil. Cuba South America and France In many of these places. Obatala has come to be given Cillerem a For instance, the people of Ejigbo in Osun state call him On Diman or Ons Ogran the people of Ikire call hum Orisa Akire at Orile-Ow he is nown as Oru Oluutin o Ekiti he is called Orisa hapa while alle-lfe people recall the ancien majestic splendour of Obatala by referring to ham as rusalu alase father the great desty always clothed in white).

The firstborn of Obatala was Olokun Olosa who later became Olson He where the Orisanla deity from his father and worshipped it on behalf of all members of the family The Olufon' proprietary of this great deity is confirmed by an e t poem cited by Professor Bolaji Idowu in his book Olodumare God in Yoruba Belief (Longmans 1962 page 153)

Olufon l' o bi mi  
Ng o good m' emu  
LSA-ogiyani l' obi mi  
Ngo gbodo m' oju

Olufon it is who gave me birth  
I must not drink palm wine,  
Orisa-Ogiyan it is who gave me birth  
I must not drink palm- wine

Palm-wine is a taboo to Obatala/Orisanla, while Orisa-Ogiyan is a derivative of Orisanla. The fact that it was Olaosa that inherited the Orisanla deity is also contained in the praise poems of Ile-Ife as recorded by Professor Adeboye Babalola Awon Oriki Ori. Collins, 1967, P.16) thus

Molufón ade awon baba mi  
Orikondo nii-my 'le won I-Eu mi I lo  
E pele Om Oloosa kan Oosa kan

Molufon Ade my forefathers  
Their shaven heads put me off  
Greetings the owners of the great Orisa

In the corpus of Ifa collected by Professor Wande Abimbola (in *Ile-Ife: The Home of Orisa*, Oxford, 1978). Ogunda Meji refers to Ifa as the home of Orisanla and this it is explained is the reason why Orisanla is popularly known as Oru Olufthar is the Olufons deity Olaosa consolidated the powers attributed to his father Obatala, as a result of which he himself acquired the epithet *Aron Erujeje* (the van fesome one). The fact is that, in addition to the deity, Olaosa inherited Obatala's paraphernalia of office all of which were adorned with white beads. The most important of these was *Adele* and (white beaded crown). On account of this Olaosa stepped into the shoes of Obatala and continued to play vital roles in the peaceful ordering of the community, while at Ile-Ife.

Oduduwa himself was succeeded by Obalufon, one of his many children. But this was not until after a prolonged chieftaincy dispute among the remnants of the sixteen original elders and their descendants. Aladikun Olaosa was himself one of the contestants. But following the success of Obalufon, he buried the hatchet and became faithful and loyal to Obalufon. He remained very close to Obalufon and on account of this, the latter reconfirmed Olaosa's rights to wear the crown adorned with white beads (*ade sese efun*), a privilege which was not extended to others. This, in effect,

made Olaosa a co-ruler to the Ooni and brought about envy among the elders, for Obalufon relied heavily on Olaosa in the administration of the town. As the disagreement with the other elders intensified, Olaosa contacted Agboniregun the custodian of the Ifa oracle who was a close associate of his father. The Ifa oracle was consulted and Olaosa was asked to leave Ile-Ife for two major reasons. First

for his safety from the many enemies that he had acquired on account of his firmness in administration and loyalty to Obalufon; second, as he had again been accorded the right to put on a beaded crown, he could not inhabit the same settlement with another crowned ruler i.e. Ooni Obalufon

The Ifa oracle specifically prescribed for Olaosa to migrate in a north western direction until he reached a virgin land where he would find weaver birds (eve eega) and plenty of mushrooms (olu).

Aladikun Olaosa (also now known as Akogun Erujeje) obeyed the advice of Agboniregun and left Ile-Ife with the Orisanla deity and several crowns. After some days walk, he got to a vast virginland on the northern side of a river called Osun Igbo There, he heard the cries of weaver birds On reconnaissance, no settlement or individual was found in the vicinity even though weaver birds were very plenty Further searches revealed that mushrooms were scattered over part of the area These were taken as the signs predicted by the Ifa oracle and a decision was taken to immediately settle in the section covered by mushrooms (ibi ti Olu fon si). The fact that the whole of the area was virginland and that, at the time, the region between Ile Ife and Oyo-Ile was sparsely populated encouraged Olaosa and his followers to settle at this location. What was more, the abundance of birds, mushrooms and brooks was an indication that the fauna and flora of the location could support in large population and meet the aspirations of an ambitious prince with imperial zeal like Olaosa.

Subsequently, the settlement became known as Iron Eega (is the place covered by mushrooms and inhabited by weaver birds) Olaosa himself assumed the title Olu Ifon (in the lord or king of Iron); using as the basis of his authority, the royalty which he had inherited at ile-Ife, the many crowns he brought with him his sole proprietorship of the Yoruba arch-divinity. Orisa Nla and his precedence in settling in the area.

Olufon settlement at this area could be dated to about the twelfth century This suggestion is based on a conservative calculation, working from the well known dates associated with Ife history. The Oduduwa period in Ife history is usually dated to between the eighth century and the tenth century Obalufon Ogbogbodirin during whose reign the Olufon left Ile-Ife, is generally recognised as the second ruler of the On dynasty of which Oduduwa was the first, and the present ruler Olu Sijuwade Olubuse II has been put as the forty-ninth by Professor LA Akinjogbin Obalufon is remembered to have succeeded Oduduwa as Ooni, to have had an unusually long reign as king, and to have been succeeded by another Obalufon, Alaiye who had an encounter with Oranmiyan the founder of the Oyo kingdom. Even assuming that the events that led to the Olufon's migration are to be associated with the latter Obalufon, a period of two centuries after the era of Oduduwa will not be too generous. And it will not be too wide off the mark to put the foundation of Ifon and Oyo-ile at about the same time The twelfth century date for the foundation of Ifon is confirmed by the fact that the Oldon is closely associated in Yoruba traditions with the foundation of Oyo De as the capital city of a kingdom. These latter events are often due to the twelfth century when following a series of escapades. Oranmiyan, the last son of Oduduwa,

who would be a contemporary of Oloso, established the Alaafin dynasty As will be seen later, it was to the nascent kingdom of Ifon that Oranmiyan turned when he had problems in putting his own state on solid foundations (R.CC Law. The Oo Empire, Oxford, 1977 pp 30-37).

In the new settlement, Olaosa, as the Olufon, quickly established the splendour and majesty associated with his progenitor, Obatala. He lived up to his reputation as a fearsome and valiant leader.

The Olufon took with him the Orisanla deity and established it in his new settlement. This is why Orisanla is truly properly worshipped in Ifon-Orolu The common powers attributed to Obatala at Ile Ife were duely replicated in the new settlement, making Orisanla more famous than hitherto. The dedicated patronage of the Olufon and the large clientele he won for the Orisa made it to be popularly known as Orisa Olufon (the Olufon's deity). No wonder the Orisa became known as Ekon fon (the leopard of Ifon), and some Is verses refer to Ifon as the home of Ori Other cognomen indicate the recognition granted the deity.

Eni tí ó mú Olufon la jeḡ  
Kò ní rọ̀ nínú  
Nitori Igbá ori  
Ni baba won fii mu omi  
Opá èhìn ènià  
ni nwon fi sẹ̀sẹ̀ rìn  
Olúfón- Adé  
Eye tii dájà l'órí igi  
Agbigbò  
Mo bá wọ̀n kóbi re bòòsà  
Oòjọ̀ ni wón gbin okà lárè  
Tí óbá dale  
Wọ̀n a máa fi pon ọ̀ti ọ̀kà mu.

The fellow that accuses the Olufon of witchcraft  
is not a liar  
Because human skull  
Is used as drinking cup by their ancestors  
Human back bone  
They use as walking sticks  
Olufon Ade  
The bird that struggles on the tree  
The gist bird I join them to take kolants to the shrine  
Daily they plant guinea-corn in Are In the evening  
They harvest it to brew wine

The entire royal families and the people of Iron and its environs have due respect for the Orisa Plugin (Orisanla). Many have been blessed with children by this orisa. No wonder why people from several parts of Yorubaland came to Ifon in order to worship this Orisa and have their prayers and supplications answered. These people, whose prayers were answered often named their children Igbinwande Adesigbin. Biwale. Akinrinade etc in recognition of the good role played by Orisanla's wife, Igbin.

Several were in the extensive praise poems (ori) of Obatala recorded by Chic Ifayemi Elebuibon, the Awr of Osogbo in his *The Adventures of Obatala Part 2* (Aral Publishing, Lynwood, 1998, pp. 127-147) testify to the strong connection between the legendary Obatala and Iron. For instance: Obatálá o jii re nile Ifon

Oba re tii gbele Ifon  
Ekún ní 'Fón  
Èkéé Ifon o gbodo memu  
Òòṣàlá níbo ni un ó dájà sí  
Ijà ò dojà larè Ifón wá dilé  
Ifón wá dilé yèé ni yeke  
Ako eye idájà l óri igi  
Àgbigbò o ò bá won kórò dé  
Òòṣà ólajà tíí dá Ifón  
Òòṣàlá ni jó mérnì loun my waye  
Òòṣàlá níẹ mójó kan ẹ òsè òun  
Emú jó kan sògún  
Emú jó kan bo jàkúta  
Ojó kan yókù ni emú sawo  
Lóníí ni won nájà okùn ilèkè  
Òla ni won nájà sègi  
Adàbò irèní ni won nájà iyún ní Fón  
Ojó mérin òni, wọn a ná ti sésé efun

'Great king, did you wake up in Ifon? The good king who lives in Ifon Leopard of Ifon Liars of Ifon must not drink palm-wine Oosala where should I site a market Ijao became a market, Ifon then became the home Ifon then became our real home The male bird played on the tree Agbigbo did not follow them to Oosala's shrine Oosala the king who founded Iphone Oosala said take one day to worship him Take one day to worship Ogun Take one day for Jakuta Take one day for Ifa Today is market day for okun beads Tomorrow is for segi beads Third day is for iyun bead in Ifon The fourth day is for white beads'.

It is clear the Olufon at a very early time, succeeded in establishing himself as a great potentiate, famous enough to be recognised in various Yoruba praise-poems such as the Ifa corpus, Ijala and Irewoje. Many of the happenings in the ancient town at the very beginning are today recalled in these important genres of oral poetry One of these is the event that led to the acquisition of the name Orolu, the full rendition of which is oro Ilu (the town's rituals).

It is recalled that one of the early Olufon was a successful farmer and hunter. He had a larger following including several wives and slaves. More often than not, he was away from home either on hunting expedition or on wars of expansion. On one of his trips away from home, his most junior and favorite wife gave birth to a baby Jealous of her. her senior colleagues (ie. co-wives) maltreated her. They informed the young lady that a newly-delivered wife of the Olufon had to observe some rituals for the baby to survive. The said rituals included abstinence from salt and palm oil, going about naked and sleeping on a rough bed made from spear grass rather than on mats. When the Olufon returned, he was displeased with this and decreed that from that day, these rituals must be observed by all members of the Olufon lineage as lineage rituals oro ilu Since then, it has become the custom for the mother of a new child in the Olufon lineage to eat saltless soup without palm oil, sleep on a heap of spear-grass and go about scantily clothed for seven days (if the child is female) and nine days if the child is male

Chief Ifayemi Elebuibon (p 139) recorded this episode thus:

Molepo niléé  
Mo je ila ni funfun  
Mo koyo mo jatee  
Mo leni lee  
Mo sun lee kan  
Mo leni eekan sun bi eni teni  
Obatala arikoriko te omo loro funni  
Ni ile Òòsàlà mo laso nile  
Mo ro Afon rodo

'I have palm oil in the house (Yet) I ate okro in white I bought salt (Yet) I ate (my food) saltless I have a mat in the house (Yet) I slept on grass I slept on grass as if on mat The great king that makes a bed of grass for his children In the house of Orisa Nla I have clothes (Yet) I tie Afon to the river'.

The same event has been recorded by late Oba (Dr.) SO Babayemi, himself a distinguished academic historian thus:

Molufon Ade Orolu  
Omo Kelewa  
Orolu Mo niyo mo jate  
Nijo a bómo sile  
Alepo nilè, jila funfun  
Mo lêni tuntun mo sun leekan  
Mo rin hò ohò rodo baliwe l'Arè  
(Content Analysis of Oriki-Orile, P.141)

'Olufon Ade the Orolu, The son of Kelawe Orolu had salt but ate saltless soup, The day a child was born in our house, I had a new mat but I slept on a spear-grass, I went naked to the brook to bathe at Are'.



The praise-poems quoted above and the surviving rituals, to which all descendants of the Olufon subscribe wherever they are, give a clear indication of a dynamic albeit small community. The fact is that from the early times, successive rulers continued to exploit the flora and fauna in the locality to build a virile society the Orolu a distinctive characteristic which marks them out as one of the principal lineages in Yorubaland.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE GROWTH

From the establishment of Ifon-Orolu about the twelfth century by Olaosa Aladikun surnamed Orolu. Akogun Erujeje the eldest son of Obatala Obatorisa (known as Orisanla), the settlement had witnessed impressive growth in its political institutions and the consolidation of its identity in contradistinction to other sub-ethnic units of the Yoruba To clearly understand this development, it is necessary to trace the evolution of the kingdom itself.

The nucleus of the kingdom has had to shift its location on three occasions, the circumstances of the shift, on each occasion, indicate that successive Olufon remained alive to their responsibility as protectors of the interest of their people, taking adequate cognisance of their needs and aspirations.

The first location was known as Ifon Eega. It was established by Olaosa, the first Upon himself. The name, Ifon Eega, arose as a result of the circumstances of the foundation of the town. It will be recalled that while leaving the-Wife, the society had counselled that the group led by Olaosa should settle in a place with plenty of mushrooms and weaver birds but Olali e cera forsi). It will also be recalled that when such a place was reached the decision to settle down was taken The place amed contrived from this incident became Ifon Eega. The new settlement was constituted into a city state with Olaosa's followers setting up compounds on the basis of afinal relations. But as members of the royal family were predominant on Eega was essentially a royal settlement Although Olaosa assumed the title of Olufon, he was a priest king and the Orisanla deity which he brought with him from Ile ife became known as One Olufon It would appear that he devoted most of his time to the worship of this deity It was he who personally led his people to perform i s to the deity every five days. It is therefore not a surprise that of all the crowns that Place brought along from Ile-Ife, it was the one that adorned with white beads the sese in crown that became his symbol of royalty and authority. This was because the is Olaf became synonymous with orisanla whose favorite colour was white Through the Olufon' piety. the original deity became popular all over Yorubaland and several people adopted it as their guardian deity. It is on record. for instance, that Akinyele who founded Ejigbo became a staunch worshiper of Orania which he made the royal deity in Ejigbo when he ascended the throne. On of this, the Olon gave one of his daughters Efunkemi o Akinje

s wife See Clement Ige and Wale Ojo-Lanre. The Mandate of Fate A Biography of Oba Oro Dyson II (Ibadan 1994) The product of this marriage, a named Ondoye subsequently became Elego and the founder of the Ondoye Ruling House in present day Ejigbo. Similar accounts of the son of the religious influence Orisa Olufon on to different parts of Yoruba and exist.

Meanwhile, the presence of the Orisa Olufon continued to attract groups of migrants who, with the Olufon's permission, set up camps in the vicinity of Ifon Segba. Many of these camps eventually merged with Iron resulting in a rapid growth of the settlement. Thus the first four Olufon who succeeded Olaosa witnessed peaceful and progressive reigns. These were Oyefinhan Onilare kofo, Abiose Sagardighi, Laniyonu Akando and Olugbile Agajiolu. It can be conjectured that each of these made his contributions to the growth and peaceful ordering of the society. The fact that little is now remembered about them beyond their names is a reflection of the well-known observation that peaceful reigns are often not of interest to the chroniclers of oral history.

Nevertheless, the impression which one gets from the accounts is that different groups of people continued to flock into the area. But as there was a vast area to settle, the resultant population pressure was not seriously felt in the town, at least, not until the reign of the sixth Olufon, Orisa Gbemi Akinsingbin. By that time, the population had expanded so rapidly that the town had become virtually choked up. The topography did not allow for commensurate physical growth and it became imperative to occupy an area which had been carefully avoided earlier because it was water-logged. The new site had the advantage of being an extensive level and that could accommodate the large population. It also had an abundant supply of water and could support agriculture all the year round. Indeed, a large section of the now enlarged settlement was marshy. On account of this the settlement became known as Ifon Ere. This second site became the abode of eleven Olufon.

At Ifon-Ere, the major development which took place appears to have been the consolidation of the worship of the Orisa Olufon. Of the eleven kings who reigned there, nine are remembered to have taken names suggesting that they gave prominence to the deity. It can be conjectured that the stay at Ifon-Ere was peaceful and sleepy as a result of which recollections about the period by traditional chroniclers are rather scanty. But again, from some of the names, it would appear that the peace was not that of the grave-yard. While some of the names like those of the eighth and ninth Olufon, Jejealose and Otolorin will suggest uneventful reigns, those like Onakunsola, Omoribikolasi, Olumoyekun, Aderuwe, Arinola and Osayomi Arapaledoye (eleventh to sixteenth) indicate a dynamic and virile community not only devoted to the pursuit of religion but also committed to the practice of politics and the development of a vibrant economy which generated a substantial amount of wealth with all the attendant social consequences. With regard to these two major events often not connected with the growth of Iron as a polity but vividly remembered in Yoruba traditions are worthy of mention.

The first is the popularity which Ifon must have drawn to itself. The prominence of Iron was such that it drew the attention of the Alaafin who was then having some difficulty in establishing his own kingdom. The fact is that although an illegitimate son of Oduduwa, Oranmiyan was not lucky to have a crown among the things he inherited at the death of Oduduwa. This means that even though he had a successful military career, he could not claim to have the authority to rule since such authority was

symbolised only by the possession of a beaded crown. Faced with such dilemma, the Alaafin sent to the Olufon (who was his cousin and contemporary) for assistance. The latter gave him one of his crowns which subsequently conferred on the Alaafin the right to rule over the people he had conquered. This extant tradition has been recorded in virtually all the genres of Yoruba verbal literature. In ile-Ife, the knowledge of this ancient event is kept in the praise-poems (Adeboye Babalola. Awon Onika Orile. p.18) thus:

Adé, ré o ni ye

Adé nlánlá l'adé oba

Adé Orólú l'àgbà f' Alafin

Orolu, o m' ajàtè yàngiyàngì

His (i.e Olaosa's) crowns were numerous. The king's crowns were very big ones. It was part of the Orolu crown that was taken for the Alaafin Orolu, the children that eat saltless soup indiscriminately.

Even in the Oyo area, this event is still vividly remembered (S. Ojo, hwe Iran Oyo, Ikoyi ali Afijio, 1961) thus:

Ládé Làdè Ládé

Àláàfin ò ládé

Nínú Adé Olúfón Òròlù

L'agbà fún Àláàfin

On the issue of having a crown. The Alaafin had no crown. It was from the crowns of Olufon Orolu that we took (one) for the Alaafin.

The second event has to do with migrations from Ifon Orolu to other parts of Yorubaland. It is known that in various parts of present-day Osun and Oyo states, there are several lineages which answer to the Oriki Omo Olufon Ade and recognise that they are scions of Molufon Ade Orolu. While many of these migrated out in the nineteenth century as will be seen later on, it has to be known that movement of people out of Ifon is an age-long phenomenon dating to the ancient times. Frequent succession disputes, right from the demise of Olaosa Akogun, resulted in unsuccessful contestants going on voluntary exile as was the tradition in Yorubaland. Often, such disgruntled elements took up new identities and tried to sever the links with their original homes. The more distant in the past, the fainter the memory of such incidents. But in some cases, people who migrated out of a settlement retained the memory of the past, and, no matter how faint, could recollect the circumstances under which their forebears migrated out. Such is the case of the people of Ifon Owo in present-day Ondo state. From all indications, it would appear that the lion Owo people migrated out of Ifon -Ere while the process of consolidation was still

going on. Even though the people have now taken on a new identity since they came under the cultural influence of Benin, they have persistently acknowledged that they migrated from an original I fon which, in 1935 they told the colonial Administrator of Owo Division was "between Osogbo and Ogbomosho in the Oyo Province" According to thier accounts, vividly recorded by J.O.H.N. Nevins in the Intelligence Report, the ancestors of the I fon-Owo people moved out following frequent chieftaincy disputes that followed the death of Olaosa Akogun. Oludagba, their progenitor, is remembered to have lost in one of such contests. Feeling cheated, he moved out of I fon-Orolu and took a circuitous route until he got to the present location near Owo. Here, he established a settlement which he named I fon after the original home in Oroluland.

It may never be known how many such settlements were established by migrants from I fon Eega or I fon Ere; for, the two centuries spent in the location witnessed the rose to prominence of various individuals among the royal families who felt that they deserved the opportunity to exercise leadership of the Orolu group. In fact by the beginning of the fifteenth century, there were pockets of disgruntled elements within the town. It would appear that some tension had been building up over the years and the name of the sixteenth Olufon-Orisayomi Arapaledoye indicates a series of intrigues in which some of the chiefs were at least vicariously implicated.

The build-up of tension reached a peak during the reign of the seventeenth Olufon. Akinrefon Abewela. There was a case of disloyalty between him and some of the chiefs. The crisis must have been very serious indeed and it is still remembered in I fon that there were series of wars in which many prominent chiefs and individual lost their lives. For instance, the Aaje who was the chief priest of Orisanla is remembered to have miraculously disappeared by sinking into the ground to avoid being captured in one of such wars. Although the dispute was eventually settled amicably and the recalcitrant elements were made to abandon their hostility to the monarchy, the incidence had generated so much bad blood that the Olufon thought it wise to abandon I fon Ere and move to another location where the people were to remain till the early years of the nineteenth century I fon Ere then became a sanctuary forest called Igbo nla.

The constitution of Igbo nla as a sanctuary is understandable in view of the many constitutional developments which took place while the people were at the site and subsequently It became the ritual bond between the Olufon as leader of the diverse peoples that came, at various times, to inhabit Oroluland and their ancestors This is the reason why it became the royal mausoleum The spirits of past rulers of Orolulund, particularly Olaosa, could be invoked in Igbo nla, and it is only the reigning Olufon and the chief priest of Orisanla that could have direct access to the groove.

The most remarkable growth of I fon was probably recorded at the third site.

This is not surprising, for the people spent about five centuries in that location First on the economy. Oba Akinrefon who established the town gave unprecedented encouragements to the pursuit of agriculture. A variety of food crops were produced to feed the teaming population of the new

settlement. On account of this, the Olufon was given the name Abewela Gberengede (the one whose okro have large leaves).

This was thus a successful, peaceful and prosperous reign which covered the whole half of the fifteenth century. In addition to agriculture, metallurgy was encouraged. It is remembered that by the end of the eighteenth century, there were about 140 blacksmith workshops in the settlement.

Second, remarkable developments took place in the religious cum administrative sphere. By the time the group moved out of Ifon Ere the pantheon of Ifon deities had become so complex that a move was being made towards divesting the Olufon of some of his ritual functions so that he could face the secular affairs of ruling the kingdom more squarely. This move became particularly necessary in the new settlement as people continued to move into the region to take up permanent residency. The first step in this direction was the institution of a cultic meeting which took place regularly in the nights to review the affairs of the state (Iba alale). It was from these nocturnal meetings that the name Baale was contrived and the new settlement became known as Ifon Baale.

It was also consideration along this line that gave rise to the institution of the Aaj chieftaincy title and the subsequent organisation of priests of the various deities into a line, the Ilaasa headed by the Aaje. The Aaje group was one of the first to join the Olufon in Oroluland. Their original home was Iwata near Ogbomoso. Their leader was a member the Iwata royal family, but lost in a contest for the throne. Consequent upon this, he decided on voluntary exile and moved with his sympathizers into Oroluland. They were well received by the Olufon who at Ifon Ere, made their leader. Odogbonikekere, his chief priest.

The recognition that there was strength in diversity and that different groups could contribute to the development of the community accounted for the continuous migrations of people to Ifon Orolu Land and the establishment of several settlements before the nineteenth century. For instance, the Akimo group migrated from Ila where they had lost in a contest for the throne. They had set off for Oyo-Ile but on getting to the Eleesi forest, they encountered the emissaries of the Olufon who, recognising that there were some blacksmiths in the group, persuaded them to settle on his land. Eventually the group established a settlement which they named kuno and which became a major foundry before it was destroyed during the nineteenth century wars.

Each of the over twenty-one quarters that currently make up present day Ifon township has its own history of migrations from elsewhere. This is understandable in view of the fact that the period between the mid-fifteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century in Yorubaland witnessed series of demographic upheavals, as a result of the imperial expansion of the Oyo empire in western Yorubaland the military exploits of Benin in the eastern Yoruba country, and the menace of the Nupe and Bariba on northern Yoruba settlements. The region to the south became a haven for refugees from various directions and Oroluland had more than a fair share, since it was in a region of mixed savanna and forest vegetation.

Several migrant groups established separate settlements. The descendants of the original inhabitants of many of these villages now live in Ifon and have become absorbed into the lineages within the town. Some of them have lost their identities even though a few still retain the memory of their original ancestry. What is certain is that there was considerable movement of people into Oroluland and the area over which the Olufon was king was quite expensive.

For instance, one of the major migrant groups which subsequently became important in the political history of Ifon Orolu Land was the Afin which migrated from Iwo Ate near Ife Odan as a result of an unsuccessful chieftaincy contest. Led by Igbin Ajo, the group arrived Ifon Orolu and was received by the twenty-fourth Olufon Laojo Osatolu. The leader of the group was named Alin, because the Olufon found in him a dependable aide. In fact he was made a district head over a vast territory bounded by the Awon stream on one side and the Kuse and Elentere streams on the other. The group established a settlement which was later abandoned and became known as Ahoro Afin (the ruins of Afin). The integration of the group was concluded when Olufon Laojo took Okusanna, one of the daughters of the Afin as wife.

Three groups, the Odofin, Ejemu and Alasangbe migrated from the old Oyo kingdom. The Isangbe group left Oyo with two important deities Orisha Oko and Sango. These they introduced into Ifon Orolu. They first settled in Ilero in Oke Ogbe from where they eventually moved into town taking the title Alasangbe and adding their two deities to the Ifon pantheon.

In a similar vein, the Odofin and Ejemu groups seem to be contemporaries who left Ikoyi-Ile, possibly at different times, but arrived Ifon Orolu Land at the time of the twenty-fifth Olufon, Oba Oluyeyin, towards the end of the eighteenth century. The history of the Odofin group which is more detailed, remembers that they left their original home because they lost in a chieftaincy contest and in frustration members of the group "simply parked their loads and followed their leader, Majowoogbe". They decided to seek the protection of the Olufon whose hospitality they had heard about while at Ikoyi-Ile. Olufon Oluyeyin allotted them a sizeable farmland adjacent to the one on which the Isangbe people were settled. This land extended from the Oponmolu river to Gbere and Erinle river and was bounded by the Elentere stream. The settlement which they put up was named Gbere Odofin in remembrance of the title of their forefathers in Ikoyi-Ile. When during the nineteenth century, Oba Oluyeyin decided to merge his villages to form a larger and compact settlement that could withstand external invasions, the Odofin village was disbanded and its inhabitants were transplanted to Ilero township with their leader taking the Odofin title.

Thus, even though the nucleus of Ifon Baale was established by a group of people led by the Olufon from Ere, different groups of people later came into the region and were easily integrated into the emergent socio-political framework. This made the Ifon community a very complex one as the duty of integrating together the different waves of migrants, each with its own nuances and peculiarities, was an intricate one. But it also made the society a dynamic one, for different, at times conflicting, interest groups inadvertently emerged. Many of such groups moved out of Ifon Baale to establish separate settlements. Whether such settlements were established on what had come to be regarded as the

Olufon's land or in far away places, the migrants continued to recognize the pre-eminence of the Olufon as their fountainhead.

A case in point is Sepeteri, a town in present Oyo state. The foundation of the town, which is dated to the sixteenth century, was the result of a chieftaincy dispute at Ifon Baale. Ayelekun Olukangbin, a brave hunter and one of the contestants to the vacant throne of Olufon moved out and migrated to the Oke Ogun area where he sought the protection and blessings of the Alaafin of Oyo. These having been given, he established a settlement in a marshy region where he gave prominence to Orisa Olufon and adopted the title Oba-Lufon, to reflect his ancestral origins.

One could legitimately inquire into the ability of the Olufon in maintaining peace and stability in his domain in spite of continuous influx of people into the region and the frequent chieftaincy disputes with the attendant disruptive tendencies. The traditionalist will quickly explain this in terms of the stability guaranteed by the Orisa Olufon. But a more plausible explanation could be found in the ability of successive Olufon to maintain a balance of power among contending interest groups within the kingdom. This, as could be evident from the preceding discussion which emphasize the accommodation of varying, otherwise conflicting, groups and the pursuit of a common goal, was instrumental to the preservation of the Ifon-Orolu community, since the foundation of its nucleus by Olaosa in the twelfth century.

There was also the fact, which may not easily be apparent, that the Olufon maintained friendly relations with his neighbours particularly through the encouragement of diplomatic marriages between his people and their neighbours. The case of Efunkemi, a daughter of the Olufon, given in marriage to Akinjole and whose issue, Ondoye, became an Elejigbo has been mentioned earlier. Similar marriages were conducted during the reign of the twenty-fourth Olufon Laojo. The Time of Ede and the Oluwo of Iwo who were rulers of neighbouring kingdoms were each given in marriage lion women in order to strengthen the bonds of friendship between Ifon and the neighbouring peoples. The Olufon himself gave his daughters out in marriage to enlist the support and cooperation of his chiefs and sustain the friendly relations of his neighbours. A classical example is the giving out by Olufon Laojo of his daughter to the Baale of Iregba with whom he shared boundaries to the north. This particular case is worth relating in details because of its significance for subsequent trend of events in Oroluland.

The Olufon's daughter given to the Baale of Iregba was for long troubled by infantile mortality. Thus, when on an occasion Olufon Laojo was informed that his daughter had put to bed a baby boy, he exclaimed that it was a temporary joy as the baby as usual, would soon be lost (Ayo nu ni). However, through divine intervention, the baby boy survived but the name Ayonu' stuck to him. When he became of age and the stool of Fire Gba became vacant, Ayonu contested but lost. He felt cheated, because, he believed that he was the most qualified candidate on account of his dual royalty, being a prince of Iregba and a grandson of an Olufon. In annoyance, he left Iregba and entered his maternal grandfather's domain. The Olufon recognising in him a militant ambition did not allow him to settle at Ifon Baale but directed three of his chiefs, the Olokanla, the Lewis and the Global to give the young prince parts of their farmlands. The area eventually carved out for him was occupied by hamlets put up by migrants from different places on Ifon Orolu Land. One of these hamlets, was inhabited by a group of Nupe and

Oyo elephant hunters. It was this latter settlement that Ayonu took over as the nucleus of his own settlement which subsequently became known as Ilobu.

On account of these historical facts - that the progenitor of the Olobu was a grand-child of the Olufon and that the land on which Ilobu stands originally formed part of the domain of the Ocean, a new Olobu traditionally pays homage to the Olufon who traditionally has consenting authority over the Olobu title. The validity of this account was clearly demonstrated during the colonial period. For instance, in 1942, the chiefs of Ilobu had wanted to bypass the Olufon in the choice of an Olobu. They wrongly informed the colonial administrators that the Olufon had no role to play in the choice of an Olobu. But the members of the Ilobu royal families refuted the claims of the Ilobu chiefs and told the Divisional Officer for Ibadan that they were ready to accept the Alison's choice of a new Olobu to replace the one who had died two years earlier.

Indeed, there are documented pieces of evidence of the Olufon's intervention in the selection process of the Olobu. The fifth Olobu, Alabiye was selected by the Olufon. The Olufon again selected Aworinde to be the eighth Olobu. But the Ilobu chiefs objected and instead installed one Molara. This brought serious problems and hardships which culminated in Molara's deposition and the acceptance of Aworinde, the Lion's choice.

It is appropriate to refer here to archival documents which indicate the traditional status of Ilobu and the importance or significance of the Olufon in this area.

In December 1941, a committee appointed by the Resident of Oyo Province to look into the chieftaincy dispute in Ilobu had concluded thus:

Both parties (in the disputing ruling families in Ilobu) agreed that their ancestor, Ayon, was a son of Aregba by Olufon's daughter. At the break-up of Egba either by chieftaincy dispute or Fula (i.e. Fulani) war, Ayonu fled and was settled up on a land provided by Olufon, his mother's father. They agreed also that there had been eleven rulers who ruled in succession after the death of the founder of Ilobu.

From much archival records and extant traditions, a credible king-list of our Ilobu foundation to date has been compiled thus:

#### **LIST OF OLORUS SINCE FOUNDATION**

1. Ayonu
2. Aiyedun
3. Olaluwoye
4. Olusilo
5. Olujide
6. Eniyitan
7. Fayemi



8. Aworide
9. Omolara
10. Ajay
11. Olaniyan I
12. Oyelade
13. Araoye
14. Siyanbola
15. Olaniyan II

Pertinent questions may legitimately be kind as to how and why the traditional authority of the Polygon his preeminence among crowned rulers in Yorubaland and his proprietary rights over and in Orland live come to be challenged. The answers to such questions could be found in the revolutionary events of the nineteenth century when might suddenly became right and many aberrations on traditional conventions were perpetrated not only in Ororuland but all over the Yoruba country.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **NINETEENTH CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS**

The experience of the Yoruba people in the nineteenth century, when a series of wars convulsed the country, has generated a wide degree of interests resulting in extensive oral and written literatures. Nevertheless, it is important to clearly visualize the atmosphere in order to get a good grasp of the sequence of events at the time. The history of Ifon Orolu during the period could be divided into three major phase. The first coincided with the reign of Olufon Oluyeyin Keregbe during whose reign Fulani incursions into the area began. The second covered the reign of the twenty-sixth Olufon, Moronfolu Okunoye, while the last phase was dominated by Orisatoyinbo Alesinloye, the twenty-seventh Olufon.

From the second decade of the nineteenth century, the Fulani jihadists based in Ilorin, ravaged the Ilorin and Odo Otin areas. They took away many people into captivity, but a good number fled to the northern part of the Osun river and entered Oroluland. Although many of these migrant groups established their own settlements, as the Fulani braids became increasingly serious, Olufon Oluyeyin advised that the inhabitants of these settlements should come together and form

a common front to give formidable resistance to the invaders. This was based on the principle that collective resistance was better and more reasonable than the individualistic approach to the Fulani menace.

The consensus was that the Olufon could no longer afford the commitment of protecting the scattered settlements and that it was wiser to merge with the main town. It is remembered that under the new arrangement, the Olufon was able to resist the military pressure on I fon-Baale for some thirty years. But as the pressure increased and many people fled for safety, the evacuation of the settlement became imperative. The condition had become so unpredictable that the search for secure frontiers became the primary preoccupation of the Olufon. When the decision was finally taken in about 1830 to build a new settlement in the present location, each lineage and village that accompanied the Olufon constituted itself into a compound named after the original compound or village. The new settlement itself was called I fon-Dile (I fon has become home to everybody).

The Ibadan, in the attempt to check the Fulani menace passed through I fon territory to recruit soldiers. By the 1840s, they had systematically established their political control over the whole of the Osun area. The defence of this region as a whole initially fell on I fon, now relocated. The Olufon came to be looked at by all and sundry as the providential agent in safeguarding the whole kingdom and delivering the area from the scourge of the Fulani. This was in spite of the recognition of the fact that the Ibadan had taken up the challenge of the defence of the whole of Yoruba land. But the difficulties faced by the Olufon in his campaigns must be recognised. Even though the Iron kingdom, at the beginning of the nineteenth century had a number of advantages over neighbouring settlements, the challenges of the century were simply enormous: The raids of the Fulani became increasingly daring the situation was aggravated by mercenaries who embarked on a career of brigandage. Furthermore the I fon were faced not only with the crisis created by the demographic upheaval which resulted from the influx of people into the area but also with the need to maintain their traditional independence vis-a-vis the Ibadan. For just as the Iron kingdom attained its territorial peak, it began to face serious challenges from hostile elements both within its frontiers and from outside. Opportunism, with regard to

territorial gains, became a prominent feature of the relations between the Olufon on the one hand and various guest communities on the other. The immediate result was a change in the balance of power in the region.

Oral traditions and documentary evidence from the colonial period (such as European Intelligence Reports) confirm that Osogbo was originally an Ijesa camp and did not become a regular settlement until the middle of the nineteenth century. However, it became a focus of attention from about 1838 when the Ibadan sent in troops to the town against the Fulani. On account of the relative security which it was thus able to offer, Osogbo became a haven for people from different parts of Yorubaland. In about 1840, the Ibadan were able to repulse the Fulani forces. They systematically consolidated their hold on the Osun area and were able to defeat the Ijesa in the Ijebu-Ere war, 1850-1851. The brilliant military campaigns of the Ibadan made several people flock into their camps at Osogbo and Ikirun. During the Kiriji wars, between the Ibadan and the forces of the Ekiti Parapo from about 1878 to 1886, all the settlements in the Osun area were made to contribute to the Ibadan war efforts. The principal Ibadan base was Osogbo which then became the coordinating center and understandably the most prominent town in this area. In actual fact, many settlements were evacuated and transplanted. Ifon-Ile was not evacuated. Even though it received some assistance from Ibadan to beef up its defence, the town relied mainly on its own internal mechanisms to counter the Fulani menace. For instance, a massive town wall was erected to encompass the whole town, known as Odi Iyalode, it was built during the Ijesa Arara war which led to the destruction of Akokin (Okuku) and the establishment of Ikirun as a military fortress.

The wall was an extensive one. It started from the bank of the Erinle river to the bank of the Elenere stream up to the point where the Osogbo - Ogbomoso road interjected the Elenere stream. From that spot, the wall passed through the bank of the Elenere up to the Awesin river along Aroo and Ojoo road. There were three entrances in the wall namely the Alara gate, the Olokanla gate and the Afin gate. The seriousness attached to this project was borne out by the fact that the Olufon

himself personally serve the construction of the walls. The spot where the Olufon usually during the period of construction became known as the Odi Ivalode shrine.

Various Ifon individuals distinguished themselves as warriors during the nineteenth century. For instance, an Iron man settled in Ogbomoso, shortly after its foundation and made such valuable contributions to the development of the town that he was made the first Areago. He was the one who led the Ogbomoso contingent to assist Osogbo when the town was besieged by the Fulanis before Ibadan came into military prominence. Ifon warriors participated creditably in the Jalumi war. During the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo war that followed (1878-93) Ifon troops were also part of the Ibadan forces encamped at Kiriji. These collective contributions to the war efforts in nineteenth century Yorubaland were in addition to valuable contributions made by individuals such as the Areago mentioned earlier and the twenty-seventh Olufon. Oba Orisatoyinbo, who is remembered to have reorganised Ifon forces to meet the challenges of the time. He is even said to have introduced mounted troops on account of which he acquired the name "Alesinloye".

Nevertheless, a major problem that continued to face Ifon Orolu was the Ibadan's drive for territorial acquisition. For much of the nineteenth century. Ifon opposed this imperial ambition. But the Ibadan were able to make Osogbo and Ikirun their tributary towns and used them as bases from where they halted the advance of the Fulani troops

As the threat of Fulani menace diminished, there appeared to have been a revival of the traditional relations between Ifon and Ilobu, but these were immediately transposed into a different context with the rise of separatist tendencies in Ilobu. The fact is that, the Ibadan saw the instigation of intra-community hostility as a means of curtailing the pre-eminence of the Olufon and a guarantee of a permanent Ibadan presence in this region. This was seen as particularly crucial for the establishment of a strong Ibadan imperial framework. Thus, the Ibadan began to foment unrest by encouraging discontent in the outlying settlements and getting such discontented elements in the region as a whole to band together in a conspiracy that would lead to the disintegration of the Ifon Orolu kingdom.

But this conspiracy was frustrated by the continuous influx of refugees who recognised and accepted the Olufon as the focus of authority in the area in spite of the presence of the Ibadan. Often, the migrants first came into contact with some farmer or hunter, but eventually were led to the Olufon. This is because the Yoruba hold to the philosophy that a stranger cannot enter a territory without the knowledge of the land-lord (Ajóji ko lè wò lú kó nilè mǎ mò). A few examples of these will suffice.

The Gbobamu people came during the nineteenth century. They had migrated from their original homes around Ilorin as a result of the Fulani raids. Although they were aware of the anti-Ifon intrigues at the time of their arrival, it was the on that they approached for land to settle and farm. In fact the leader of the amu group married the daughter of Afin Aserifa, one of the prominent chiefs of the Olufon. Consequently, part of the Afin family land was granted to Gbobamu. Thus, traditionally, it is the Afin that leads the Baale of Gbobamu to pay homage to the Olufon when required. But given the difficult circumstances of the time and in order to assure them of the Olufon's hospitality, the Gbobamu people were allowed to retain their original title.

Indeed, it is paradoxical that despite the confusion of the period, Ifon witnessed a rapid growth. The open-handed generosity of the Olufon, the abundance of land for cultivation and the proverbial hospitality of the Ifon people accounted for this. The spirit of tolerance and accommodation exhibited by the townspeople resulted in several migrants settling down and living amicably with others in the town.

The phenomenon of refugees retaining their separate identities in the host communities was a common one in nineteenth century Yorubaland. The examples of the Owu and Ijaye in Abeokuta are well known. In Ifon, when small groups of migrants arrived, they were incorporated into the existing lineages and often became fully integrated thereby losing their identities. But when the migrant group was large, they were allowed to settle as separate but component sections of the town. In such cases, the settlers were allowed to retain their original place names (which they often gave to their new compounds), their chieftaincy titles, totem as well as their rituals.

In spite of this, there was a remarkable amount of integration and Ifon Orolu, by the end of the century was a synthesis of migrants from various places. One of the factors that accounted for this was that the town was actually compact and intense interactions took place among the people particularly on the farms, in the markets and during social functions. These were reinforced by conjugal relations as intermarriages took place such that, by the second half of the nineteenth century there existed a complex web of social relations which had virtually obliterated the differences among the component groups making all inhabitants to accept the identity of Omo Olufon (children of the Olufon).

In this wise, the history of the Sobalaju family is worth relating in toto. As related in the family traditions, the group left On when their leader, Fabidolu, lost in a contest for the throne. They passed through Ede before getting to Ifon where they discovered that an earlier wave of migrants had settled and married into some of the important noble lineages. They therefore took the decision to settle permanently in the town. Their decision was confirmed when the reigning (twenty-fifth) Olufon, Oba Oluyeyin, gave out Oyepade, one of his daughters, in marriage to Fabidolu. On account of this, a later Olufon, Oba Salawu Oyelade (the thirty-first) was to institute the Sobalaju chieftaincy title for the group.

Though most of the migrant groups constituted distinct quarters of the town; with each having its own chiefs who were essentially elderly men responsible for its administration, the practice of the Olufon instituting chic fancy titles for the leaders of the migrant groups was able constitutional experimentation which censored the integration of all sections of the town. The outcome was an enlarged council of chiefs in which all men of the quarter councils' were members. Also of significance is the fact that some of the titles instituted at this time were military titles reflecting the preoccupation with security. For instance, when a group of people from Iwo led by one Abiri Orilogun arrived Ifon their importance in augmenting the fighting forces of the town was quickly recognized by the Olufon. Thus, not only was the group well received and encouraged to take up permanent residency like others before them, Abini Orilogun was installed a chief taking the suggestive title Aleja (the who can fight) which later became corrupted to Arena.

In a similar vein, valiant individuals had their martial qualities and contributions recognized and adequately rewarded with deserving chieftaincy titles. One such individual was Loobu, the progenitor of the Jagun chieftaincy family. Loobu was a notable hunter and warrior. Although he had set himself up in the Ifon satellite town of Ie, he eventually moved into the township and joined the Ifon forces against the Fulani marauders. His heroic record attracted the attention of the twenty-ninth Olufon Oba Osadare who consequently made him the war captain with the title of Iaguna.

It was during the time of the nineteenth-century wars that the Erin people came to Orolu. They had also migrated originally from Ie-Ife and had established a fairly extensive kingdom in the Ibolu district of the old Oyo empire. But the progressive onslaught of the Fulani which led to the capture of Olofin in 1887, the fall of their capital city, Erin-Ile, and the dispersal of its large population. Many of these Erin people fled to Orolu led by Oyagbodun Ayoka, a prince of the Elerin royal family. On arrival, they were received by the Ifon people and granted parts of the Ifon farmland to settle on. By 1890, there had emerged the nucleus of our settlement with its own identity taking after the original Erin. Although following the evacuation of the Ilorin forces from the Olofin war camp in 1893, many of the people went back to their original home, a substantial number that found the present area hospitable and relatively secure. They came to inhabit the present Ilowa which they named Erin Tedo after the original home. From the establishment to the present day, there have been so many Elerins thus:

#### List of Elerins Since Foundation

1. Oyagbodun Ayoka
2. Laojo
3. Abegunde
4. Adewuyi
5. Adeosun
6. Yusuf Omoloye (incumbent).

The fact that the Elerin was a prince, whose progenitor was himself a king entitled to a beaded crown, and that the last wave of migrants led by an Erin prince was fairly large, made the Olufon to allow the Erin group to settle down on Ifon farmland adjacent to Ifon rather than within the town. The Olufon also allowed them to set up their own administration. However, in recognition of their tenancy on Ifon land, they could not, traditionally, cultivate permanent crops such as palm trees, kola nut or cocoa, and whenever they had to come to the palace it must be through one of the Olufon's principal chiefs, usually the Ifon.

It has to be accepted that within Ifon Orolu itself, the wars of the nineteenth century brought a lot of hardships which created tension. This was particularly so as a result of the steady decrease in the provision of food. It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that wars cause massive destructions and have devastating effects on the food-producing capacity of the affected area. The wars of the nineteenth century in Yorubaland badly affected Ifon as they caused serious food crises. The instability of the state

structure, posed a great threat to farming as the production capacity of the people was destroyed and fighting, brigandage and man-stealing became the most productive pre occupations. Incessant attacks on villages by the Fulani, the Ibadan and the countless refugees roaming the countryside, destroyed harvests and production inputs. For fear of further attacks, people abandoned regular work on the farms, areas were left uncultivated and those already cultivated were neglected for most of the century. The Baptist missionary, W H. Clarke, in fact, remarked in 1857 that the region of Oroluland was little cultivated. Consequently, food became scarce and it is not difficult to conjecture a situation in which many faced mal nutrition and hunger. The displacement of people from their homes forced people to live in refugee camps where it was difficult to plan for the future. More importantly, the sudden and drastic increase in population in a few areas like Ifon township which were considered relatively safe, put some strain on the economic system and the political process of social engineering. This high population density recorded in Iphone unavoidably led to excessive strain.

It is therefore not a surprise that there was a prolonged chieftaincy wrangling in Ifon during the nineteenth century. At the center of the crisis were princes of the Olufon royal family who believed that they had the perfect solution to the problems of the time. The Olufon on the throne for most of the period when the crisis was most serious, was the twenty-sixth since the inception of the dynasty and the second ruler in Ifon-Ile. His name was Moronfolu Okunoye and he reigned from about 1825 to about 1848. As a result of the intensity of the dispute, many people migrated out of Ifon Orolu to settle elsewhere. Thus in Iragbiji, Eko-Ende, Iresi, Ikirun, Ogbomoso, Ajagunlase, Akinlalu, Ogburo, Iaro and Ejioku (Kwara State) there could be identified groups of people who left Ifon at this time. Several others fled to neighbouring towns. This claim is incontrovertible for, apart from narrative accounts, migrant groups from Ifon Orolu continue to bear the cognomen (*oriki*) *Omo Olufon ade Orolu Mokelawe* and to subscribe to the rites of the mother of a new baby abstaining from eating oil and salt and taking the insipid preparation such as soup known as *obe* ate for seven or nine days after delivery.

The history of the foundation of the town gives some vision of the events at the time. The ruling family in Ifon is indisputably a scion of the Olufon dynasty the town itself is known to have been established on and that originally formed part of the Ifon Kingdom. On account of these, the people of Ifon are closely related to Ifon. The founder of the town Kuaru, was an Ifon prince. He contested the throne but lost. As was customary in such circumstances, he had to migrate out of the town. But he was reluctant to take that option and had to be chased out. When eventually he established a settlement, it was named Iye, a term derived from the hot pursuit of Kuaru and his sympathizers by their Ifon kinsmen. The intensity of the dispute which led to Kuaru's exile was such that Iye swore to sever the administrative links with Ifon. The continuous bitter rivalry between the two made Iye transfer its allegiance to Osogbo during the colonial period as a result of which it is currently in the Olorunda Local Government Area. The emigration of different groups from Ifon must have significantly depleted the population of the town. The twenty-seventh Olufon, Oba Orisa Toyin Akintoye had to entice many of his people back from the neighbouring settlements to augment the population of the town. Among these people are the families of Ajibike Lanipekun, Akimo, Alata, Olumofe, Jagun and Agberi. When the Iorin destroyed Bobu in 1860, many of the people who had earlier taken refuge in the town fled back to Ifon where the Olufon had built up a

large force for the defence of the town and where, as seen earlier, there was a massive protective wall, Odi Iyalode.

It goes without saying that several Iphone settlements were destroyed or abandoned in the course of the chaotic events of the nineteenth century. This was to create the problem of delimiting the territorial extent of the old Ifon Orolu kingdom. This issue was to become particularly tasking in the later years of the colonial period when it generated inter-community disputes between Ifon and some of her

neighbour. **spirits** **APTER FOUR**

## **TERRITORIAL EXTENT**

When the first Olufon arrived in the area north of the Osun river, the land was virgin forest: it was only occupied by weaver birds (eye eega) with mushrooms olu in a swampy section which subsequently became the nucleus of the Olufon settlement. The Intelligence Report compiled in 1936 by I.F.W. Schorfield, the Assistant District Officer of the Osogbo District of the Ibadan Division, gives credence to this by referring to Ifon as "the original settlement" in the area. The simple interpretation of this is that the Olufon is the original landlord in this area.

The domain of the Olufon has always been recognized to be a vast one. The boundaries were well-recognized and used to be respected. They were with the Oloba of Oba-Ile and Oba-Oke (Olorunda Local Government Area). The Timi of Ede, the Oludo of Ido and the Aresa in Surulere Local Government Area of Oyo state. Although this vast area belonged primarily to the Olufon, it was parceled out to his major chiefs as farmlands. For instance, the Eleesi, Afin, Asada, Ooye, Ejemu, Olokanla, Arenja, Asalu, Odofin, and Osolo families had large parcels of fertile land on which they farmed. There were also parcels of land under the control of some District Heads.

Out of the vast area which formed Around, the Olufon at different times carved out areas and gave to different groups of settlers. It was in this spirit that the Olufon directed two of his chiefs, Khaleesi and the Olokanla to provide farmland for his grandson Olanru Ayonu who had fled from his original home in Iregba having lost in a chieftaincy contest. This generosity, as sated earlier, eventually led to the establishment of a settlement known as Ilobu with Ayonu as the first ruler. Similarly, when a group of refugees known as Gbobamu arrived from Ilorin area, a section of the Afin farmland was given to them to cultivate. During the reign of Olufon Orisatoyinbo Alesinloye the Erin people were also received and settled on the instruction of the Olufon who directed Afin Aserifa to effect the allocation of part of his farmland to the Erin who were subsequently quartered at Idi Ose which subsequently became the nucleus of Erin town.

The demographic upheaval which accompanied the nineteenth century wars led to the migrations of different groups of people who were subsequently given the permission to establish their settlements and given farmlands to cultivate. In the end, one could easily enumerate over three hundred towns and villages under the Olufon, Several of these were destroyed as a result of the wars of the nineteenth century. Many were also abandoned when the present town was being built as their inhabitants were



transplanted to augment the population of the mother-town, Ifon-Ile, in order to ensure greater protection.

According to the National Listing of Communities compiled by the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1990, there were 254 towns and village-communities in the old Irepodun Local Government Area before the creation of the Orolu Local Government. These settlements were grouped into three autonomous communities on the basis of their historical, social, cultural and economic association. The communities are Erin, Ifon and Ilobu. Of these, the Ifon community is listed as being constituted by Ifon and 224 other villages. This gives a large proportion of the land area in both Orolu and Irepodun Local Government Areas to the Olufon. The 1991 population census of Nigeria recorded a population of 62,815 for Ifon alone, making it the largest single town in the whole area. The 244 settlements of Ifon identified by DFRRI are:

AAJE	ABAJA	ABEBI MOLUFON
ABEPE	ADEWOYE	ADEYEMO SARILA
AFONJA	AGANNA	AAGBERI
AGO FULANI	AJIBIKE ADENIKE	AJIBODU
AJIBODU-TEMIDIRE	AJIBOLA	AKALA
AKALA ELEPO	AKANDE KUTI	AKANDE OJ
AKE TEMPE	AKIMO I	AKIMO II
AKI NSARUN	AKINTOLA	AKINWADE OTU
AKINWUMI	ALABAKAN	ALABIDUN
ALAGBAKA I	ALAGBAKA II	ALAGBAKA III
ALAKINDE AJIBODUN	ALAPATA	ALASANGBE
ALATE	ALATA ELEPO	ALATA KAJOLA
ALAYIKO	ALHAJI OGUNJOBI	ALHAJI TIJANI II
APATA	APATA DADE	ABATA
APETE	APENA	ARAROMI
ARAROMI II	AREMU	ARENJA I
ARENJA II	ARENJA III	ARINWALA
ARONUN	AROYE	ASADE
ASALU	ASANI	ASHIPA
AWESIN I	AWESIN II	BABA ISALE

FALEKE	FALEYE	FAMUYIWA
FENWA	GAA ALLI	GBADAMOSI AJAY I
GBANGBADE	GBENA I	GBENA II
GBERE ODOFIN	GBOGBO	GBOGBO ELEPO
IDI SANGO	IDIOKO MOLUFON	IDIROKO OLUWA
IDIYA	IDIROKO	IFON
IGBO IMI ESIN	IGBOKITI	IMODU
IKIMO	ILASIO	ILE EJI
IMOJERE	IPOMU	ISANGBE
ISEKI ONIPANU	JAGUN	JAGUN ELESIN
JAGUNDE	JOEL	JOSIAH
TOYINBO	TUDENGBE	WALE TITUN
KOLADE BARAN	KOLEBE	KOMINU
KUTI	KUTI KAJOLA	LAAROPO IDIROKO
LAAWIN AJE I	LAAWIN AJE II	LADEJI
LADIPO OWODE	KAOYA	LOFINTOLA
LOFINTOLA EKUTU	MALEKE	MATHEW
MOTA	MOLUFON	ODO-OSUN
ODODO	ODOFIN	OFEBOLO
OGAGA	OGUNKEYE MOLUFON	OGUNSOLA AJIBOLA
OGUNTUNDE	OJAMOLAPA	OJU OJA
OJEMOLAPA IDIROKO	OKO AMOLA	OKO ABIARE
OKO OJUTI	OJU OJA	OJEYEMI
OKINSINDE	OLADEJI ONSOKUN	OLANIYAN
OLODO	OLOBEDE	OLOGBEDE MOLUFON
OLOOLA ORIOKE	OLOOSO	OLOOSO OKITI
OLORISAOKO	OLORO	OLOYA
EKUTU ONI	ELEESI	ELEMU
ELEGUDU	ELEJA	ELESERE
ELERU	ENGO	FADESERE

In a related development, the State Government has requested for 80 hectares of land for the establishment of cattle ranches in Irepodun Local Government Area. We hope your Highness will donate land for this purpose too. Grateful for your usual and anticipated cooperation.

Your Obedient Servant,

Lekan Yusuf,  
for: Chairman,  
Irepodun Local Government.

This unique position is not a recent development but has historical and traditional bases. In 1917, when approached by the colonial government to intercede in a matter of land dispute in the area, the *Alaafin of Oyo*, *Oba Onikepe Siyanbola Ladigbolu* had pronounced that "... the real owner of the land is the *Oluofin* ... (and as *Oluofin* is the owner of the land, he ought to have a bigger portion of the land than the *Olobu*".

Even the land on which the Irepodun Local Government Secretariat stands was donated by the *Eleesi* family of Ifon. The Secretary of the old Irepodun Local Government in a letter Ref. No. ILG/489/vol.1/3 of 8th June, 1998 to Chief Salami Oyelakin the *Eleesi* of Ifon stated in part:

#### LETTER OF APPRECIATION

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 22nd May 1988 on the issue of the land donated to the Local Government free of compensation by the *Eleesi* Family of Ifon-Osun for the building of its Secretariat, and to express the Local Government's appreciation for this kind gesture.

I am to add that this Local Government looks forward to your maximum co-operation on any future request for release of land for other government projects.

There is, of course, no doubt that the three major settlements in this area are Ifon, Erin and Ilobu. The development in each of these towns has resulted in rapid expansion with the built-up areas of the three becoming contiguous. The people of Ifon have always been generous in giving out land either on lease or sale to indigenes of Erin and Ilobu to put up their buildings. For instance, it was the families of the *Eleesi*, *Lakan* and *Afin* that granted land to all those who have houses in the former homestead of the *Afin* (now *Ahoro Afin*), ruins of *Afin*, Dogo area, Apiponororo, Ifesi Titun, etc.

It is, therefore, not a surprise that disputes over the boundaries between Ifon and the other settlements have arisen. In particular, the issue of what should constitute the boundary between Ifon and Ilobu has been a vexed and unresolved problem for quite some time. This deserves some attention, here.

During the colonial period, government had taken keen interest in the problem and made investigation to get details of the historical circumstances under which each community came to settle in the area. In 1918, the District Officer, Ibadan, after inquiries and a thorough analysis of the submissions of both Ifon and Ilobu elders informed the Resident of Oyo Province that the boundary between Ifon and Ilobu should be the Oponmolu stream. Annoyed at the Ilobu's persistence of claiming to have rights over parcels of land traditionally not their own, the Senior Resident, Oyo Province, in a strongly worded memorandum insisted that:

The boundary between them (i.e. Ifon and Ilobu) shall be the old wall and the Ilobu-Oba road to the Opomolu, and that Oslo's land belongs to Ifon.

The issue really had never been the traditional proprietary of land but on the extent of the area allocated to Ilobu by the Olufon. In 1924, the colonial government fixed a boundary. This was done by the Senior Resident of Oyo Province, Captain William Ross who conducted intensive investigations, ascertained the boundary and gave the decisive ruling that:

Osolo's farm belongs to the Olufon, and it should be within his boundary. The boundary (between Ifon and Ilobu) is the old wall to the point where it cuts the Ilobu-Oba Road and from there the Ilobu-Oba Road to the point where it intersects the river Opamololu, which river shall be the boundary to its confluence with the river Erinle.

This demarcation which came to be recognised as "The Ross Boundary" was satisfactory to all parties and in 1945, the Olufon of Ifon engaged the services of one Mr. Gilbert, a Licensed Surveyor, to clearly demarcate the boundary with pillars. For about thirty years, there was no dispute over the boundary thus demarcated, indicating an acceptance by all parties concerned.

However, in 1953, the Ilobu people instituted Suit No. 4/53 at the Ikirun Native Court. This court gave judgement based on a boundary that was significantly different from the Ross Boundary.

The Olufon appealed against this judgement to the Osun Divisional Appeal Court in Suit No.S. 21/55. The appeal was allowed but a different boundary was established. The Olobu appealed to the District Officer's Court in Suit No. 9/1955. The court dismissed the appeal of the Olobu and amended the judgement of the Osun Divisional Court of Appeal to read that the Boundary should be according to the

Ross Boundary established in 1924. Again, the Olobu appealed to the Resident's Court of Appeal in Appeal No. 9/1959. This again dismissed the Olobu's appeal. The Court found that the Olobu had accepted the Ross Boundary and held that the Ross Boundary, having been accepted by both parties since 1924, was the only acceptable boundary between Ifon and Ilobu. The judgement of D.M. Elliot, Ag. Resident, Ibadan Province on Monday 22nd August, 1955 reads in part:

The Ross Boundary has remained unchallenged for over thirty years, and has been accepted by both sides until recently. The plaintiff (i.e. the Olobu) has brought a highly speculative action in the hope of obtaining additional land. He has little or no idea of any other boundary.

Truth, the saying goes, is constant. It is therefore not surprising that when the Olobu appealed again to the Court of the Governor in Appeal No.787, the Governor's Court also dismissed the appeal, holding that the Ross Boundary having stood the test of time was the only acceptable boundary. The Court therefore held that the boundary should be in accordance with Plan No.1 W.C.9 made on 20th August 1956. 'Up to the point where it crosses the Opamolu stream to its confluence with the Erinle River'

Sir John Rankine, Governor of the Western Region further stressed that "It is clearly impossible on the evidence to fix a complete new boundary that would represent a fair compromise..." The Governor's remark that in this task, (i.e. Governor) have had the advantage of administrative record, inspection notes and Survey Reference Plan", is germane. It clearly shows that the consistent determination of the case in favour of the Olufon was based on well founded facts of history and traditions, not on speculation or wishful thinking.

However, the Governor misinterpreted what the Ross Boundary is. This informed the decision of the people of Ifon to apply the High Court for Certiorari to quash the decisions of the Governor and of the Subordinate Court on the ground of lack of jurisdiction. The High Court granted the application.

With the quashing of the judgement of the Governor's Court, the parties were back to square one. The Government then set up an inquiry (the Enahoro inquiry) under the Inter Boundary Settlement Ordinance. Mr. E.O. Enahoro, the Inquiry Officer, made certain recommendations for the interpretation of the Ross Boundary. Unfortunately, these were not based on a correct interpretation of the Ross Boundary. The case eventually got to the Supreme Court which, in Suit No. S.C. 31/1967, allowed the appeal of the Ifon people and made an order declaring that the judgement on 18th November, 1960 under the Inter-Tribal Boundaries Law is illegal, unconstitutional and contrary to natural justice. Thus by the judgement of the Supreme Court, the interpretation of the Enahoro inquiry as to what constitutes the Ross Boundary was set aside.

In 1968 the boundary dispute was referred to the Boundary Settlement Commissioner in Suit No. BSC/12/68. A survey plan of the land in dispute was prepared by the Surveyor-General of Oyo state. The plan is a composite plan showing the boundary claimed by Ifon and the boundary claimed by Ilobu. The claims of the Ifon include the town of Ilobu which, as we have seen the people of Ifon granted to Ilobu. How much of this the Ifon will concede to Ilobu has to be based on history.

However, pending the resolution of the case by the Boundary Settlement Commissioner, the Ifon people instituted Suit No. HOY/20/70 against the Ilobu people. It is noteworthy that the Ilobu people did not counter-claim against the Ifon people in the said case, but instituted Suit No. HOS/MISC 2/84 against the Ifon community and the Boundary Settlement Commissioner to prohibit the Boundary Commission from ascertaining the boundary between Ifon and Ilobu. The case went up to the Supreme Court which held that since Suit No. HOY/20/70 was for declaration of title, there was no cause to prohibit the Boundary Settlement Commissioner from hearing the case.

The first point of reference in this protracted case is the Ross Boundary. There is no dispute that the Ross Boundary is the boundary between Ifon and Ilobu. As we have seen it was accepted for thirty years by all concerned. The only dispute is as to the correct interpretation of what the Ross Boundary is. Archival documents dating to 1924 clearly delineate the Ross Boundary as

the old wall to the point where it cuts the Ilobu-Oba road and from there the Ilobu-Oba road to the point where it intersects the River Opamolu, which River shall be the boundary to its confluence with River Erinle.

The wall called the old wall by Captain Ross is otherwise called in Ifon Odi Iyalode (the Iyalode wall). It was put in place during the nineteenth century by the Ikon people for defensive purposes. In essence therefore, the Ross Boundary starts from the wall called Odi Iyalode and proceeds forward to the point where it meets the footpath from Ilobu to Oba and proceeds to the point where it meets the Opamolu Stream which marks the boundary to a point where the stream joins the Erinle river

For the avoidance of doubt, the features of the Ross Boundary are:

1. The Osolo's farm
2. The Iyalode (old) wall
3. The Ilobu-Oba road
4. The Opamolu Stream
5. The river Erinle.

The other major dispute on land in Oroluland has been with the Aresa of Iresa in present Oyo state. It has never been in doubt that the Oregon boundary was traditionally with the Aresa. In fact, before the nineteenth century, the domain of the Olufon was known to be bounded on the east by the Olore, on the south by Timi, on the north by the Oloba and on the west by the Aresa. The dispute with the Aresa has been on whether the Ewi or the Ogbe stream should be the natural boundary between Ifon and Iresa. The Ifon claim is the Ogbe stream. This, Mr. D.A. Murphy, Acting Resident, Ibadan Province noted in December 1954 had strong historical basis. In fact this had influenced the earlier decision of the Ede

Native Court in Suit No. 6/53 to conclude on 17th August 1953 that the land "from Odo-Ogbe to the Ewi River belonged to the Olufon". This conclusion was upheld on 29th September 1953 by the Oshun Divisional Appeal Court.

Though the colonial government subsequently took an administrative decision, making the Ewi stream the boundary, it was clearly recognised as based on political expediency and was condemned by all in the Oshun Division as being "wrong and treacherous". The decision was based on the fact that some migrants from Ogbomoso (under which Iresa was) had farms on the territory. But even then, the Assistant District Officer, Osogbo had much earlier in two separate memoranda on 27th May 1933 informed the Resident Oyo Province that the Alaafin had ruled that the "Ogbe river is a good boundary" between the Olufon and the Aresa and that:

All the farmland of the family of Tade Alajo of Ifon lies on the Iresa side of the boundary (i.e. Ewi river)... at a meeting, the Aresa agreed to give Tade Alajo all the farmland and palm tree he requires.

This concession by Tunwagun, the Aresa, was because he was aware of the facts of the case in spite of the intrigues of some mischief makers in his domain.

The fact is that the precedence of the Olufon in this area has always been recognised by all his neighbours. It has to be pointed out that up till the early phase of the colonial period, Ifon-Orolu was traditionally accepted as the principal settlement in the region. F.W. Schorfield, the Assistant District Officer, was unequivocal when he stated in 1936 that "Ifon is the original settlement... (and) the Olufon and his council are recognized as superior..." to all other settlements in the area.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MONARCHY

The regal claims of the Olufon have always been incontrovertible. In Yoruba history and traditions, these claims are well-established and well-recognised. They are rights which have been derived from three factors. First, the Olufon's claims are based on the ancestral connection with Ile-Ife, which, as we have seen in the earlier chapters, was the town where his progenitors originally lived and from where they migrated to the present location.

Second, as we have also seen, the progenitor of the Olufon received the Orisanla deity and the crowns of Obatala which were made of white beads. This fact is particularly significant because white bead is a widely recognised diadem in Yorubaland in ancient times. According to Professor Adeboye Babalola, while the Olufon was still in Ile-Ife, the principle had been established that Olufe niil 'apon, Oba l'oni sese efun'. That is, while Chiefs could use red beads, only kings were entitled to use the white variety of beads sese efun. (Awon oriki orile p. 16). Hence the Olufon is widely referred to as 'Alade sese efun' (the one that wears white beaded crowns). This is a confirmation of his royalty since the very beginning of Yoruba dynastic civilisation.

Third, is the fact that the Olufon's rights to wear beaded crowns were reconfirmed by Obalufon during the latter's reign as Ooni of Ife in succession to

Oduduwa.

It is a fact, universally acknowledged in Yorubaland, that the Olufon is from the Orolu family. Extant traditions recall that the Orolu crown, which many identify as Obatala's crown, was one of the most ancient in Yorubaland dating to the very beginning of Yoruba civilization. It is also vividly recalled that initially the Alaafin of Oyo originally had no crown. This should not be surprising as one is aware of the account recorded by the Reverend Samuel Johnson in his book *The History of the Yorubas* (C.M.S. Lagos, 1922) to the effect that the first Alaafin was badly treated and that his heritage from Oduduwa's estate was very pitiable. When Oyo was established, therefore, even though the Alaafin had regal rights, being a direct descendant of Oduduwa, he had no crown of his own. It was in fact one of the crowns of the Olufon -Orolu that was given to the Alaafin. In fact in the evolution of the Oyo monarchical system, the Alaafin benefited immensely from the concept of divine kingship already established in Ifon-Orolu. The common saying in the Oyo area which recalls this incident graphically, is worth repeating here:

Lade Lade Lade

Alaafin o Lade

Ninu Ade Olufon Orolu

L'agba fun Alaafin

(On the issue of having a crown The Alaafin had no crown, It was from the crowns of Olufon Orolu, That we took (one) for the Alaafin)



Versions of this tradition were recorded as early as the 1950s and definitely are not recent fabrications (S. Ojo Bada, *The Origins of the Yoruba*). Indeed, just as the rights of the Olufon to beaded crowns have not been in doubt, so has the antiquity of the claims been always recognised. Sir Adesoji Aderemi, the Ooni of Ife from 1930-1980 himself a well-educated Oba, a reliable custodian of Yoruba traditions and a reputable historian in his own rights, was in his days generally recognised and respected as the authority on matters pertaining to the wearing of beaded crowns in Yorubaland. Frequently, he was being called upon to adjudicate in disputes involving claims and counter-claims on the issue of wearing beaded crowns. In 1947, in a memorandum to the Senior District Officer of Ife /Ilesa Division, dated 13th November, he affirmed that

It was a truth that the Olufon of Ifon was granted Sese efun crown i.e crown of white beads by the Ooni of Ife, Obalufon Alaiyemore. The crown was bestowed to him in recognition of the services which he rendered him when he was in exile. Olufon being one of his many cousins . I recognise the Olufon of Ifon near Osogbo as the one wearing that crown.

The Olufon is always chosen from the two ruling houses of Orisafi and Laojo. The two ruling houses are comprised of five families-Oluwatoyinbo, Moronfolu, Oluyeyin, Odunolu and Olumoyero. The ruling houses were constituted at Ifon-Baale in the eighteenth century by the twenty-third and twenty-fourth Olufon respectively (See Genealogical Tree of Olufon).

The Olufon was not just the ruler of Ifon town, he was king over a large expanse of land that could be identified as Oroluland. He was also spiritual leader to all that bear the Oriki (praise-poem) Molufon ade Orolu where ever they are. More importantly, the Olufon traditionally had pervasive political influence in the old Osogbo

District of the colonial period.

In 1936, I.F.W. Schorfield, Assistant District Officer, Osogbo, after exhaustive investigations, recorded that:

the only Oba crowned head (in the Osogbo District ), is the Olufon of Ifon... Ilobu and Erin recognise him as senior. Osogbo admit the truth of this contention.

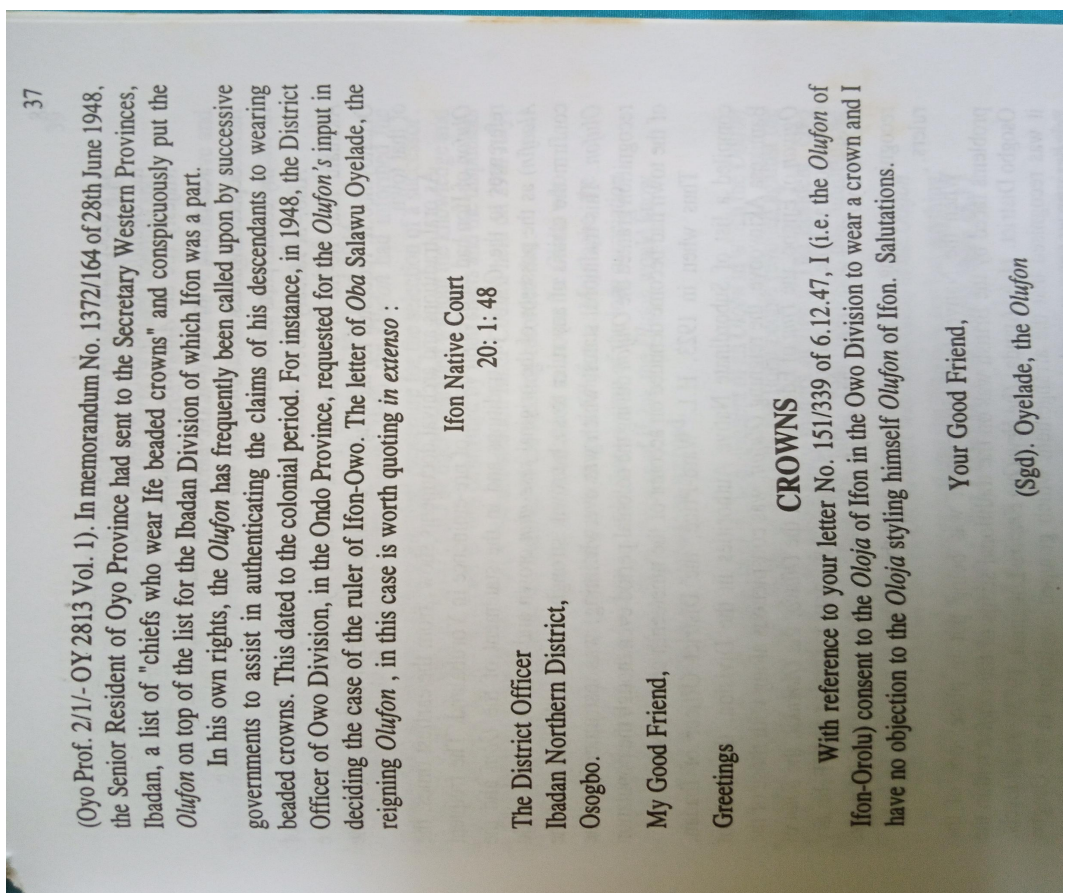
At a meeting on Monday 29th July 1940, the Ibadan Native Administration Inner Council observed that in a matter of dispute on the appointment of Olobu of Ilobu, the Olufon "ought to be regarded as the one whose opinion must be respected"

The Olufon's rights on these issues had credible traditional backings from no less a personality than the highly respected Ooni Adesoji Aderemi who in November 1947 had advised the colonial government on the request of the Oloja of Ifon-Owo thus:

The decision in this case (i.e the request of the Oloja of Ifon Owo to wear a beaded crown) ..... could be easily reached if the District Officer, Owo, would take the trouble to find out from the Olufon of Ifon in Osogbo District.

As recently as 11th October, 1999, the people of Sepeteri, in present day Oyo state, requesting for assistance on the desire to wear a beaded crown wrote a letter to the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Olayiwola Lamidi Adeyemi III, and stated emphatically:

As a  
descend  
ant of  
Olufon



of Ifon-Ife in Osun state of Nigeria. I (i.e the Obalufon of Sepeteri) would be very delighted if your Royal Majesty (ie the Alaafin) could please use your good institution to accord me with relevant recognition so that I, the Obalufon of Sepeteri, will also be traditionally entitled to wear a beaded crown like my counterparts elsewhere.

Also, in January 2000, members of the Idowu Odeyemi Labale family of Akinlalu near Ile-Ife in a passionate plea to his Royal Highness. Oba ilufoye Orisatoyinbo I, requested for the Olufon's confirmation of their right to the throne of that town.

As oral traditions and archival documents show, from the earliest times, the Olufon of Ifon had enjoyed a position of pre-eminence in Yorubaland The frequent references to the Olufon (in traditions and in the statement of the Oni and the Alaafin) as the possessor of the original sese efun crown and as the one who could confirm the claims of any ruler to such crown, strongly confirm the status of the Olufon This traditional status, which was overwhelming, was instrumental to the recognition granted the Olufon during the colonial period even though the population of the town had become denuded on account of the nineteenth century wars.

Thus when in 1923, HL Ward-Price, the District Officer of Ibadan, compiled a list of Subordinate Native Authorities in the Division, the name of Bamikesa Akinyooye, the reigning Olufon, was conspicuous along with those of the Ogiyan of Ejigbo, the Timi of Ede, the Akirun, the Oluwo, the Olokuku, the Soun of Ogbomoso and the Ataoja among others (memo No. 260/223/22 of 12th February 1923 in Oyo Prof 1 file 1392) The simple interpretation of this is that the Olufon was recognized as being at least, of equal status with these other rulers.

When the Native Authority system was being put in place, one of the problems faced by the British was on the traditional status of the Olufon within the Osogbo District (JA Atanda, The New Oyo Empire Longman, 1973). At all levels, it was recognised that the arrangement which grouped Oroluland in the Osogbo District was incongruous and that it was anomalous to put the Olufon as subordinate to any other ruler within the District. IFW Schofield (AD O) observed, for instance, that:

The Ibadan Native Authority is recognised by all in the District and the Ataoja and Council by all except the Ifon, Ilobu, Erin group.

He stated further:

The Olufon is anxious to be regarded directly subordinate to Ibadan, and Ilobu and Erin recognise him as senior...

He concluded that a neater arrangement would be for the cognate settlements in Oroluland (Ifon, Ilobu and Erin) to be constituted into a distinct administrative unit directly responsible to Ibadan. And that:

The Native Authority should be: The Olufon of Ifon. He will be advised by the Olobu and the Elerin (with their councils and his own) in matters affecting all three towns.

This reinforcement of the traditional status quo ante was instructive and influenced the conduct of the affairs of the Osogbo District throughout the colonial period. Thus more often than not, the Olufon was called upon to adjudicate in disputes that required the stamp of traditional authority within the District.

A clear example of this was the dispute among the chiefs and Omooba (princes) of Ilobu over the choice of an Olobu between 1940 and 1944. When the Olobu died on 29th March, 1940, the Olufon had informed the District Officer, Osogbo of the traditional procedure for the selection of a successor.

He had pointed out that no Olobu could be duly installed without the knowledge and consent of the Olufon. This position was confirmed by Ilobu chiefs and the disputants at the meeting of the Ibadan Native Administration Inner Council held on 29th July, 1940. Relevant portions of the minutes of the meeting recorded that:

it has become the custom for the Ilobu chiefs to choose the Olobu who after his installation would pay homage to Olufon... Mojolagbe, the leader of the opposition.... said that in view of the long association between Ilobu and the "Royal" house of Ilobu, the Olufon would know well what persons are eligible to succeed.

This protracted dispute over the appointment of an Olobu in which the Olufon was inextricably involved, was the reason why the Ilobu people revolted against the intervention of the Olufon in the chieftaincy matters of Ilobu. The Resident, Oyo Province, in a memorandum dated 3rd June, 1943 observed this unfortunate development and recorded that:

The Ilobu chiefs said that an Olobu elect was never taken to the Olufon for his approval and they suggested that the Olufon never had anything to do with the appointment. But I think they are wrong there and I told them so. (Emphasis mine).

Successive governments after the colonial period, also have recognised the traditional pre-eminence of the Olufon who by virtue of his historical antecedents has always been rated high in the order of precedence of traditional rulers in Western Nigeria. The 1957 Chiefs Law of the Western Region which was gazetted on 22nd January 1959 (W.R.L.N. 22 of 1959) recognised the Olufon as the front-line traditional ruler in the Osogbo District Council. When the Irepodun District Council was created in 1960, the traditional pre-eminent position of the Olufon among his peers was preserved. (See W.R.L.N. 62 of 1962). By the Local Government Edict of 1976, the President of the Irepodun Local Government was the Olufon of Ilobu (OYSLIN 23 of 1977); while the Council of Obas and Chiefs (Amendment) Law of 1977 (OY S. Edict No 5 of 1977) made the Olufon of Ilobu a permanent member of the Oyo State Council of Obas representing the Irepodun Local Government. Under the Appointment of Chieftaincy Committee Law of 1978, the Olufon was appointed the Chairman of the Irepodun Traditional Council which presently comprises of Orolu and the new Irepodun Local Governments.

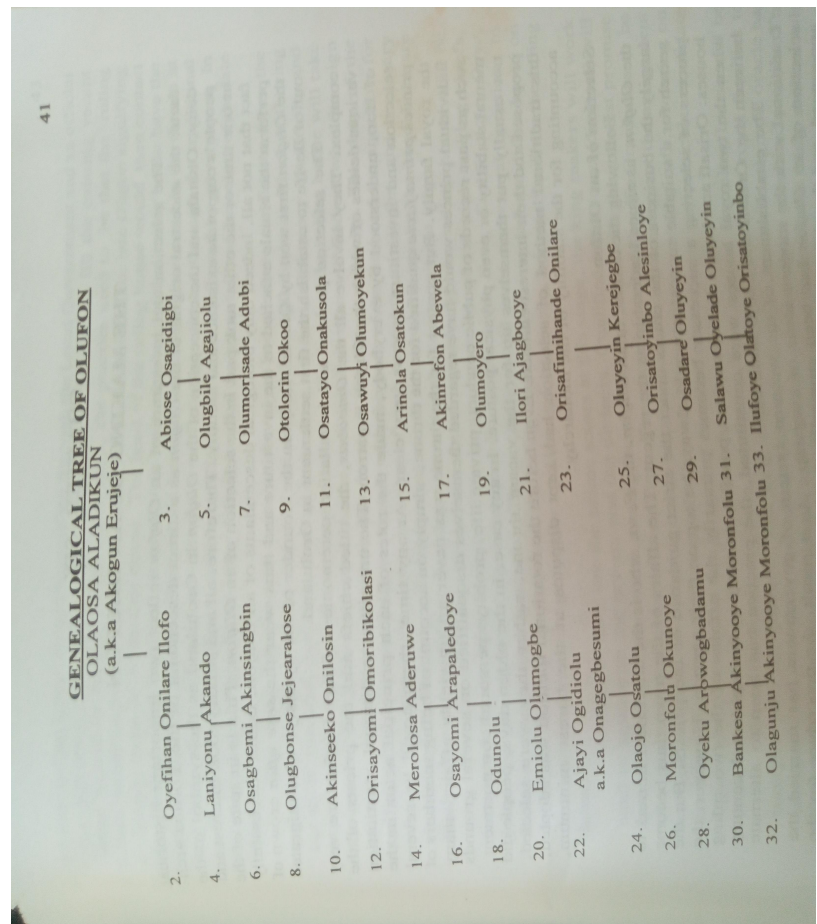
Indeed, when ever a proper re-appraisal of the position of traditional rulers in Yoruba Land is done, due cognisance has to be given to the Olufon as one of the earliest rulers to receive a beaded crown from Ile-Ife. Ilobu-Orolu is one of the longest continuously inhabited settlements in Yoruba Land; and its ruler, the Olufon is traditionally accepted as being in possession of one of the oldest beaded crowns, the ade

sese efun. The relative political stability of the kingdom, since its foundation in the twelfth century, has ensured that the right to wear the sese efun crown has remained within the royal families descended from Olaosa Aladikun, the founder of the dynasty.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE MAKING OF AN OLUFON

The selection and investiture of an Olufon reflect two important historical facts: the ancestral origins of the Olufon as a direct descendant of the Yoruba arch deity, Obatala and the conception of the Olufon in Oroluland as the symbol of the people's corporate existence and identity. Therefore, all and sundry took interest and at one time or the other took part in the selection of an Olufon. This is in spite of the fact that not all, indeed only biological descendants of an Olufon, could successfully perform



the rituals attached to the investiture and thus wear the sese efun crown of the Olufon first won by Olaosa Aladikun the founder of the dynasty, who migrated out of Ile-Ife to establish the first settlement in Oroluland.

The selection process and installation ceremonies of the Olufon are very complex. They involve all the Omo Obas, the titled chiefs and the priests of the various deities of which the Olufon is patron. The unwritten traditional constitution of Ifon, understood by everybody, made the roles of each principal actor in the selection and investiture process very clear. At any time, there could be several princes prima facie qualified for the throne, simply on account of being members of the royal family. But contest for the throne was never an unwieldy affair. Many individual princes would have regarded themselves disqualified on several grounds such as past records of public conduct, private life, probity, personal comportment, mental stability or even physical posture. In any case, in the olden days, people did not usually put themselves up for the vacant throne, rather they were selected, proposed and their interest enlisted. Even before the rotational method was adopted this traditional method of selection had kept disputes at the barest minimum, accounting for the stability of the monarchy.

### **Selection of an Olufon**

Following the demise of an Olufon, the Eesa, who is the chief next in rank to the Olufon, assumes leadership as the regent. The affairs of the town thus become largely the business of the chiefs under the strict guidance of the priests. But the search for a suitable successor would always be top on their agenda. However, the process of selecting a successor becomes primarily the affairs of the two ruling houses: Orisafi and Laojo. For some time, possibly as early as the eighteenth century when the two royal houses were constituted, the practice has been to alternate between the Orisafi and Laojo families.

The establishment of the western system of government has married the traditional with the modern ideas of kingship. As a result the procedure for the selection of an Olufon has been streamlined. Once the demise of an Olufon is announced, and the chiefs have assumed duty as the administrators of the kingdom, the next ruling house would be notified through the Local Government and an official letter directing that ruling house to suggest a candidate to fill the existing vacant throne would be issued. In the olden days, the practice used to be that the ruling house would be presented with the horse tail and bracelet of the late Olufon signifying a vacancy to be filled by that house. The head of the ruling house would then contact the affected royal families. Only eligible male members of that ruling house have the right to seek the throne. There could be many candidates interested in the throne at any given time, but only one person would emerge selected through the traditional methods. In modern times, such a candidate has to be confirmed by government. In the olden days he would be immediately handed the horse tail and bracelets of the late Olufon.

The selection process starts at the royal house where candidates from the component families will be screened and subjected to eligibility tests which will bring out their essential qualities, such as endurance, wisdom, diplomacy, generosity and experience. As part of this screening exercise, the head of the ruling house will take the names of eligible contestants to the traditionalists who will find out what the reign of each prospective candidate has in stock for the community. The duty of the

traditionalists is essentially consult with the gods of the land and the ancestors for advice. The gods will give a preview of each candidate as Olufon, and necessary rituals and divinations will be carried out to know which among the candidates are likely to be acceptable to the kingmakers and the community at large.

The list of those candidates found suitable by the ruling house will be forwarded to the king makers. This group, made up of six high-ranking chiefs, joined by the leader of the women folk, include the Eesa, Eleesi, Aaje, Ooye, Ikolaba, Ejemu and Iyalode. These chiefs would meet on several occasions to deliberate on the proposals from the ruling house and review each candidate based on their personal knowledge, public opinion and, of course, information from the ruling house.

Although, they are the prime actors at this stage, the king makers will work hand in hand with the priests and the diviners. Qualified babalawo (diviners) will be consulted to know which among the presented princes holds the greatest promise of a peaceful and progressive reign. The consultation of the Ifa Oracle has to be carried out in seven different towns outside Of. Those to carry out the assignment are carefully selected trusted officials who have to take a strong oath, swearing on Ogun (god of iron) and Sango (god of thunder) not to favour any particular candidate or in any way betray the trust put in them by the king makers.

When the forecast of the oracles has been known, the ruling house will be brought into the picture. The king makers will liaise with the royal families to intimate them with their findings and in particular indicate whose reign the oracle has forecasted as the most beneficial to the community among the presented princes. The royal families will reconcile their interests with those of the king makers who represent the non-royal families of the community. Once the two parties are convinced, the traditional selection process is assumed to have been completed and arrangements begin to be put in place for necessary programmes for the investiture of the Olufon elect.

In modern times, the traditional exercise of selection having been completed, the king makers will inform the Local Government of the date for the final selection.

This has to be done in the presence of Government officials, such as the Secretary to the Local Government, a representative of the State Government and a representative of the State Commissioner of Police. All the candidates will be presented to the audience after which they will leave the arena. Then a voting exercise, involving all the king makers, will take place. The result of this will be recorded by all the government agents present. The Local Government will later forward the result to the state government for approval. After the state government must have given approval to the election, an approval letter will be endorsed to the successful candidate while preparations will commence for his installation.

## **Installation**

The traditional investiture of an Olufon covers about three months and could be divided into three stages: the night installation, the investiture at the Orisa Nla shrine and the seclusion at the Ilofi. In modern times, a fourth stage, the presentation of staff of office, by government officials concludes the process.

Once the selection of an Olufon- elect is confirmed, he ceases to be an ordinary citizen. His family house becomes the focus of people's attention and a beehive of activities, as arrangements are made to prepare the community for a new reign with hopes and aspirations. Series of rituals of appeasement to the gods and the ancestors of the land are carried out in order to ensure that the Olufon elect has a peaceful reign. Those who had problems, hardships or faced some calamities during the past reigns will expect a new lease of life with the new reign. As such, everybody eagerly expects the installation of the new royal father.

The first stage of the installation takes place at night. The Olufon elect vacates his house and spends the night elsewhere. Many priests are involved in the traditional ceremonies at this stage, and the Olufon elect, not yet an initiate, follows strictly their directives. After the initial rituals, the Olufon elect will be made to trek about three kilometers to the palace. Several rituals will be performed along the way by those escorting him. At the palace, the installation proper takes place in a secret place where the past Olufon have been installed. With these nocturnal rituals, the leadership of the Olufon as head of the chiefs and community has been confirmed. But for the subsequent five or nine days, series of rituals go on to ensure that the new Olufon is properly tuned with the gods of the land as well as with his ancestors.

The second stage of the installation rituals takes place on the fifth or ninth day. It is actually the high mark of the ceremonies for, it is then the Olufon- elect is invested with the power and authority of the Olufon as established by the progenitor of the Iron people. This time, the new Oba will enter the Orisanla shrine for further traditional rites. The chief priest of Orisanla, the Aaje, presides at this ceremony. He is assisted by a host of high ranking priests such as the Oluwa, Alto, Gbogbo Ajibodu and Aawa. Only the Olufon elect can enter the Orisanla shrine with the Aaje, who is the chief that installs the Olufon.

One of the principal rituals at the Orisa nla shrine involves the personal prediction of the new reign by the new Olufon in the shrine, five covered porcelain plates will be placed before him. In ancient times, white calabashes were used. Each of these will contain one of these items- honey, salt, alligator pepper, white kolanut and pepper. The Oba is required to pick two items which are believed to symbolise his future reign. Whatever is found in the plates picked by the new Oba will be sent outside the shrine to show the audience what the new Olufon has in stock for the people. This will be greeted with a loud applause and shouts of "Kabiyesi". If, in particular, the omen is a good one, many people will be dancing and jubilating as they escort the chief, priests and Olufon home, for he cannot occupy the palace yet, at least not until he completes the third stage of the installation rituals.

The third stage of the installation ceremonies is the traditional Ilofi (seclusion). The Oba, after the investiture at the shrine of Orisanla, will return to his family house and stay there for about three



months. During this period, he receives some training in the art of statecraft. He is also educated about the affairs of Ife. The history of each lineage is related to him in details such that he becomes very knowledgeable about the history and traditions of Dromoland. Thus many chiefs and priests are involved in the ceremonies at this stage. On various occasions, the new Olufon will receive traditional greetings from the chiefs.

After the completion of the Ilofi rituals, the new Olufon will apply to the State Government for his instrument of office. This is a modern innovation. The government will approve a date for the presentation of the staff of office which is often done in the palace or at any other place that may be suitable within the town.

### **The King makers' List**

1. The Eesa - Head of Ilu Chiefs
2. The Eleesi - Head of Ijoye chiefs
3. The Aaje - Head of Ilaasa Chiefs
4. The Ooye High Chief
5. The Ikolaba High Chief
6. The Ejemu - High Chief
7. The Iyalode - Head of Women

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM**

The constitutional head of the government of Ife-Oloru has always been the Olufon. He is recognised as a direct descendant of Olaosa Akogun Erujeje who, in ancient times, had received a crown of white beads (sese efun crowns) from Ile-Ife. His principal cognomen is Molufon Ade. As the divine ruler, the Olufon was the chief custodian of both the religious traditions and the rights of the people. He had an extensive palace system and depended on a number of chiefs who in actual fact were the administrators of the town and the kingdom at large.

Traditionally, there were six types of chieftaincy titles in Ife Oloru Land. In modern times, a seventh category made up of honorary chiefs could be added.

The first type are the High Chiefs  
The second type are the lesser traditional chiefs  
The third type are the quarter chiefs  
The fourth type are the female chiefs  
The fifth type are the district heads  
The sixth type are the village heads  
The seventh type are the honorary chiefs.

The Eesa is the traditional head of all the chiefs in Oroluland. As the prime minister of the ancient kingdom, he is traditionally next in rank to the Olufon and acts as regent during an interregnum.

The High Chiefs are representatives of the major component groups resident in the town. As embodiments of non-royal interests, they represented an important prop on which the traditional administration revolved. It is their duty to converge in the palace regularly (nowadays weekly) to rub mind with the Olufon on the progress and development of Oroluland in general and the town in particular.

The traditional chieftaincy structure organized these High Chiefs into three groups thus:

#### **ILU**

Eesa  
Ikolaba  
Ejemu  
Iyalode  
Jagun  
Ashipa  
Basoru  
Sobaloju  
Otun Iyalode  
Eketa Iyalode  
Bara Olufon  
Akogun Olufon

#### **IJOYE**

Eleesi  
Ooye  
Arenja  
Asalu  
Afin  
Ashade

Akimo  
Olupomu  
Osolo  
Aro  
Odofin  
Babakekere

#### **ILA ASA (PRIEST)**

Aaje  
Oluwin  
Alata  
Ajibodu  
Gbogbo  
Aawa  
Iya Ilese Olufon  
Iya Olorisa  
Atona Orisa  
Iyalosun  
Iya Sango  
Iya Aiye

The functions of these chiefs are essentially civil. While the duties of the Ilu and joye chiefs are administrative, those of the Ilosa chiefs are spiritual. The Ilosa are ritual priests, they are responsible for fixing dates for festivals, arranging sacrifices for rituals and giving divine touch to deliberations.

From this large number of chiefs, was constituted the Iwarefa, the Olufon's inner cabinet which was made up of the Eesa, Ikolaba, Ejemu, Ooye, Eleesi and Aaje. In later times, these were joined by the iyalode who represented the interest of women in the palace.

It is to be noted that all the Iwarefa titles of Ifon are civil and non-military titles. This is an indication that the establishment of the council predated the nineteenth century war time period. Furthermore, two of the chiefs, the Aaje and the Eleesi are priests of Orisanla and Obalufon - the guardian spirits of the town. In recognition of this, the two chiefs, like the Olufon, do not prostrate for anybody in salutation as men do but, if necessary, recline on an elbow in a woman's fashion of greeting (yaa). A clear inference to be drawn from this is that religion and politics remained closely linked in Ifon for a very long time.

The government of Ifon in pre-colonial times was essentially the primary duties of the High chiefs who formed the principal advisers of the Olufon on all matters. Even though the Olufon had the overall control over the affairs of Ifon, the in and out of these chiefs was very crucial.

These high-ranking chiefs were followed by a large number of lesser chiefs who constitute a second group of chiefs. In effect, each High Chief has a number of assistants and officials who took the titles Otun, Bara, Jagun, Balogun etc as prefixes to their leaders' titles. In the past, this category was elastic, as the Olufon could institute titles to ease the burden of administration in any sector. This corps of lesser chiefs were essentially to execute duties delegated to the High chiefs by the Olufon or the Iwarefa. In addition, they protected the interests and security of the High Chiefs in the community. But the fact that they have been invested with chiefly authorities also put them in the royal pool of state officials that could be depended upon for routine duties especially outside the kingdom or elsewhere in Oroluland.

The third group of chiefs is composed by heads of component lineages, compounds and quarters of Ifon township. These run the basic affairs of the town and formed the basic units of administration. The significance of this category will be realised when it is known that Ifon, like other traditional Yoruba settlements, was made up of localised descent groups. The omooba, as the royal patrilineage, formed the most important descent group : but other descent groups existed and constituted their own administration.

Descent was traced in the male line and rights to chieftaincy titles were hereditary, often passing through the male line. An individual lived in his father's house and enjoyed the privileges and rights which his father had. The basic corporate group in Ifon was therefore the patrilineage, members of which traced their descent from the original founder and laid claims to parcels of lands which were originally allotted to their progenitors. Each lineage therefore had its own compound, the internal running of which were the prerogatives of the elders and titled members. However, inter-compound disputes, or problems of serious magnitude were taken to the High Chiefs from the various quarters to be deliberated upon by the council of chiefs

The female chiefs constituted another group of Ifon chiefs. Even though the society was patrilineal, adequate recognition was given to the women-folk. The most prominent female chief has always been the iyalode who is one of the seven king makers that traditionally approve the selection of an Olufon. As in other Yoruba communities, the primary duty of the Iyalode was to protect the interests of women in the palace and to ensure that their contributions were taken into consideration before any major decision was taken. In this wise, the Iyalode with the Iyaloja (head of market women) used to play vital roles in the monitoring of the development of commercial activities and in getting suitable economic concessions for the women folk. The development of markets in Ifon, and the progress of the mercantile economy, for which Oroluland was known, owed a lot to the enterprising activities of the women and the ability of their chiefs to obtain good bargains in a markedly patrilineal society.

The fact that the Ifon kingdom was made up of several settlements made necessary the fifth class of chiefs. These were district heads. Settlements in the area were grouped together under prominent chiefs who usually resided in the capital city. It was the duty of these chiefs to protect the interests of their subjects in the settlements assigned to them. It was also their function to defend all the lands in their territory and report to the council of chiefs any matter that was above them. Such reports were frequently passed to the Olufon, who, as the owner of all the land in the kingdom, had the final say on such matters. Also, the district heads were responsible for monitoring the collection of taxes and

tributes in their domain. It was also through them that heads of the villages approached the council of chiefs or the Olufon. A prominent district head in ancient times was the Afin whose progenitor, Igbin Ajo from Iwo Ate (near Ife-Odan) was made the district head of the area presently known as Erin-Osun and the Gbobamu family land. In fact it is on record that the first Elerin, Oba Oyagbodun, and the Baale of Gbobamu used to follow the Afin to pay homage to the Olufon every Ose Olufon day.

The sixth category of personnel vital to the peaceful ordering of the Ifon society in the ancient times were the village heads. These used to see to the settlement of minor disputes within the villages or between villages. As influx of people was common in those days, it was the duty of the village heads to inform the district heads about incoming strangers. The latter would, in turn, inform the High Chiefs who would then take the matter up at the traditional council of chiefs.

The last group of chiefs recently given prominence, is composed by individuals found worthy of honour. It has to be stressed however, that the institution of chieftaincy titles to honour individuals is not a recent development in Oroluland. Traditionally, the Olufon, once invested with the powers and authority of Obatala, had the right to honour identified individuals, who had made remarkable contributions to the upliftment of the Orolu society, with chieftaincy titles. In the past however, most of the individuals who benefitted from this disposition were local indigenes. But in keeping with the dictates of modernization, it has become necessary for the Olufon to cast his net wide to recognise and acknowledge contributions of individuals to the development of human society in general whether or not such individuals are local indigenes. This new policy has two major significance that should be highlighted here.

First, it indicates the continuity in the traditions of Ifon; for the people's open handed generosity and propensity to accommodate strangers is proverbial. The experience of the nineteenth century when various migrants from Ilorin, Erin, Ofa, Iwo, Iregba, Ijesa etc. came to settle on Ifon land and were easily accommodated is a good example. Secondly, the new dispensation has begun to attract some attention to Ifon, its people and the economic potentials of the region. The list of Honorary Chiefs of Ifon-Orolu

## HONORARY CHIEFS OF IFON-OROLULAND

(Not listed in order of seniority)

S/NO	NAME	LIST OF TITLES
1.	Chief M.A. Oyewo	Asiwaju
2.	Chief D. Olabode Afolabi	Agbaakin
3.	Chief (Mrs) Rachel Bola Adenuga	Yeye Oba
4.	Chief (Mrs) Tayo Abdul Kareem Adisa	Otun Iyalaje
5.	Chief (Mrs) Betty Leo Ajiborisa	Balogun Iyalaje
6.	Chief J. Abidoye Akinlade	Bobaselu
7.	Chief E. Bamidele Oyedeji	Otun Asiwaju
8.	Chief J.O. Adeagbo	Mayegun
9.	Chief J.O. Olayiwola Afolabi	Babalaje
10.	Chief Adeboye Adejumo (SAN)	Bamofin
11.	Chief E. O. Taiwo	Majeobaje
12.	Chief Bayo Oyegebemi	Akogun Mayegun
13.	Chief Haruna Elewi	Otun Babalaje
14.	Chief Toye Ogunyemi	Odole Atobase
15.	Chief Hammed Arowolo	Gbobaniyi
16.	Chief A.O. Ogundele	Gbobarnu
17.	Chief Adeleke Olaniyan	Otun Majeobaje
18.	Chief R.A. Olujide	Bobasogo
19.	Chief (Major) T.L.O. Laoye	Otun Mayegun
20.	Chief A.O. Ojo	Balogun Tayese
21.	Chief (Mrs) I.O. Ojo	Yeye Balogun Tayese
22.	Chief Dapo Durodola	Bobagbimo
23.	Chief Yakubu Akanji	Bobameto
24.	Chief Kola Oyedeji	Bada

Land to date is worth reproducing:

Every

25.	Chief Sikiru Ayinde (a.k.a. Barrister)	Apesinola
26.	Chief Adisa Osi Efa	Akogun Seriki
27.	Chief Bola Odebiyi	Asipa Atunluse
28.	Chief Adeniji Ogunsanya	Bobaseye
29.	Chief Akinwale Taiwo	Fiwagboye
30.	Chief (Mrs) Olayonu Aremu	Iyaloja
31.	Chief (Mrs) S. Bose Akinlade	Yeye Bobaselu
32.	Chief (Mrs) Monike Afolabi	Yeye Sobalaje
33.	Chief (Mrs) I.O. Oyedeji	Yeyemoso
34.	Chief (Mrs) E.O. Adigun	Otun Yeye Abiye
35.	Chief (Mrs) Sola Ogunyemi	Yeye Bobagbimo
36.	Chief (Mrs) Adeola Okanlawon	Yeye Obasogo
37.	Chief (Mrs) S. O. Oluyide	Otun Yeye Sobalaje
38.	Chief (Mrs) P.A. Ogundele	Yeye Gbobamu
39.	Chief (Mrs) Dupe Taiwo	Fiwagboye

chief,

traditional or honorary, regards himself as a chief of the Olufon and remains loyal to him throughout his life time. The councils constituted at various levels- compound, village, quarter, district and town/ state are competent to settle civil disputes among members. Disputes that could not be settled at one level were transferred to the next level with the Olufon- in council at the apex. At various levels, the councils had power to give out punishments commensurate with offences committed which, in some cases, could be as serious as sending people on exile. They could also order the execution of communal works such as road construction building or repair of shops, palaces etc. construction of markets or the general raising of funds for public projects.

The Olufon has always been recognized, far and wide, as a principal potentiate in this region. This informed the uneasy relationship between the Olufon, on the one hand, and the Ibadan on the other during the nineteenth century as well as during the colonial period. In the nineteenth century, Ibadan established its over lordship over a large part of Yorubaland. In fact, an Ibadan Ajele (political agent) was stationed in Ifo and remained there till about 1894 when, following the establishment of British rule, he was withdrawn. But during this dark period, the traditional system of administration of Ifo was not tampered with. In fact successive Alaafin of Oyo during the century insisted that the Olufon being a crowned ruler could not be subjected to a Baale as the Olubadan then was, and must be left to conduct the affairs of his kingdom in accordance with traditions.

It is well known in historical literature that during the colonial period, the administrative machinery put in place by the British was not acceptable to the people of Ifo, Ilobu and Erin. This is because it was found to be an aberration on traditional conventions. The creation of a District in which the Olufon would be subjected to the Ataoja, who was then a Baale, was found repulsive, not only in Ifo but all over Yorubaland. The attempt was strongly resisted throughout the period Neighbouring people like the Ilobu and Erin while acknowledging the pre-eminence of the Olufon, rejected the idea of the "Ataoja and Council" even though the Olufon was always placed next to the Ataoja on the list of precedence

In actual fact, throughout the ancient and up till the colonial period, the Olufon was the only crowned ruler in the District. This was what led to the establishment of a Native Court (Grade D) at Ilobu for the three settlements of Erin, Ifo and Ilobu. The Olufon was the president of the court till 1934 when separate courts (also 'Grade D') were established at Erin and Ifo The membership of the Ifo Court was the Olufon, the Eesa, the Aaje, the Ooye and the Eleesi.

The colonial Intelligence Reports severally described the Olufon as of the same status as the Elejigbo (Ogiyan) of Ejigbo Throughout the colonial period, therefore, Ifo ran its affairs without interference from Osogbo or Ibadan. The traditional council of chiefs under the Olufon continued to function and to administer the town, often reporting directly to the Divisional officer in Ibadan and thus by passing the Osogbo District Council. For instance, it was the Ibadan Court that had appellate jurisdiction over cases decided by the Olufon, and serious cases were taken directly to Ibadan. The Osogbo Council, in fact, conceded that it could not have a supervisory role over the Olufon and his council of chiefs. In recognition of this fact, I.F.W. Schorfield (Assistant District Officer) in an Intelligence Report dated 28th May, 1936 recommended that Ifo should be constituted into a separate Native Authority parallel to that of Osogbo. In his words:

For Ifo, Ilobu and Erin, the Native Authority should be: Olufon of Ifo. He will be advised by the Olobu and Elerin (with their councils and his own) in matters affecting all three towns.

This was to correct the anomaly in which the Olufon (a crowned ruler) was to be subordinate to the Ataoja.



It has to be pointed out that successive Olufon have always run an open administration. This It's made conflict resolution easy Furthermore, the principle of meritocracy-recognising individual merit, has become proverbial in Ifon-Orolu.

strengthening the traditional spirit of accommodation. It was this that informed the award of honorary chieftaincy titles by Oba Ilufoye Orisatoyinbo II to worthy individuals as listed above. It is also this that accounts for the increasing role which non-traditional groups have been playing in the affairs of Ifon-Orolu since 1941 when the Ifon Descendants Union was formed to articulate the demands of the people of Oroluland and integrate them into the politics of Western Nigeria The Ifon Descendants Union was to later metamorphose into the Ifon Progressive Union (IPU) which has been with the Olufon, a partner in progress in the physical development of the town and the provision of social amenities to the people.

The IPU is the umbrella organisation for all indigenes of Ifon-Orolu. It is non-political and non-religious, cutting across all interests and segments of the community The Union has a virile central executive and formidable branches in different parts of Nigeria particularly in:

1. Ado Ekiti
2. Bida
3. Darija
4. Ede
5. Ikirun
6. Ile-Ife
7. Ile-Oluji
8. Ilorin
9. Ibadan
10. Ilesa
11. Kaduna
12. Kano
13. Lagos
14. Maiduguri
15. Minna
16. Ogbomoso
17. Oke-Igbo
18. Ondo
19. Osogbo
20. Ore
21. Olode
22. Orisumbare
23. Port Harcourt
24. Sagamu
25. Sokoto

## 26. Zaria

The Objectives of the IPU are to:

1. serve as a forum, for all adult indigenes of Ifon-Oroluland, for the discussion of the development of Oroluland in all its ramifications i.e. to constantly deliberate on the economic, social, cultural and educational affairs of Oroluland.
2. protect the interests of all indigenes of Ifon-Oroluland by giving required assistance to those in need;
3. promote and maintain cooperation, love and unity among all sons and daughters of Ifon-Oroluland;
4. encourage mutual understanding and cordial relationship between Ifon and her neighbours.
5. collaborate positively with the neighbouring towns and villages in promoting economic development, and maintaining peace and happiness at all times.
6. encourage and launch an Endowment Fund as security for community self help projects in Ifon-Oroluland.

In addition to the IPU, various other clubs and associations exist in Ifon Orolu. For instance, at the last count in 1999, there were about sixty-seven associations which were essentially trade-guilds. These associations cater for the welfare of their members. They also establish codes of conduct to guarantee standard of production and fair market prices.

There are also social clubs which seek to group like-minded people together. At the apex, of these clubs, there is the Federation of clubs with which all social clubs in the town are expected to register in order to coordinate individual activity towards the development of the town. The underlisted social clubs are some of the currently registered member clubs in the Federation:

1. Cedar Club
2. Charity Club
3. Club 009
4. Club 20
5. Dynamic Club
6. First Landers
7. Golden Brother Club
8. IPU Sisters
9. Iwajowa Society
10. Morning Star
11. New Era Club
12. Oredogbe Union Society

13. Orolu Konibaje Club
14. Orolu Patriotic Youths
  
15. Orolu Youth Prestige Circle
16. Premier Club
17. Prestige Club
18. Prestige Sisters
19. Progressive Club
20. Progressive Sisters
21. Social Club
22. Social Elites
23. Social Elites Ladies
24. Super Brothers.
25. Unique Club
26. Youth Prestige Circle

With the IPU, the social clubs and trade organisations, the awareness of th people of Oroluland has been raised to a high level in all spheres. This has also ma it possible to foster unity, maintain peace and encourage progress not only in Ifon-Osun but all over Oroluland.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **THE ECONOMY**

Nature has been kind to Ifon. The area of Oroluland presents a variety of geographical features which has made the economy of the area a very virile one. Iron is situated in an area on the fringe of the savanna. It is therefore sparsely forested with abundant wood. It is also well watered by the Erinle river and several streams such as Mono, Alaterre. Elentere, Elegudu, Adara, Awon, Ikuse, Owala. Oponmolu and Aporiki, among others. The Baptist Missionary, W.H. Clarke who passed through the area in November 1857 described the general appearance of the country as "a continual interchange of high grass, brush wood and forest timber (W.H. Clarke, Travels and Explorations in Yorubland, 1854-1858 pp. 108-10). The palm tree is known to be generally abundant in Oroluland. In addition, the land supports a number of food crops such as sweet potato, yam, cassava, corn, maize and cash crops like cocoa and kolanut. The oriki orile of Olufon recorded by Oba (Dr) Solomon Babayemi, the late Olufi of Gbongan (Content Analysis of Oriki Orile pp 141-150) make allusions to a number of items which we must now accept

as being important produce of the Iron people from time immemorial. These include okro, palm oil, mats, cooked yam flour, com pap. calabash and wine.

The impression one gets from all accounts, is that of a buoyant agrarian Economy made possible by the large expanse of land with which the people are blessed. The Ifon are therefore basically farmers who engage in shifting cultivation and bush-burning. This was until modern times when they are poised to take advantage of westernization and embrace mechanised farming. The persistence of the traditional farming methods (particularly the continuous use of the hoe and the cutlass) has been due to the fact that mechanised farming is capital intensive and will require heavy investments by government and public-spirited individuals.

Even though the traditional practice of agriculture is now outdated, there is no doubt that the people of Iron make a success of their enterprise in this regard Their reputation as industrious farmers is widespread. They spend most of their time on the farms and establish several farmsteads which, subsequently, have become Ifon villages. Many of them spend most of their time on their farms or in the farmsteads and only come to the town in times of the celebrations of important festivals and rituals. The principal chiefs and ritual priests who, as of necessity, had to live in the town, also have farms on which they employ labourers. Such absentee landlords visit their farms occasionally and receive regular accounts of the proceeds from representatives who they often post to the farms.

The Ifon farmer cultivates the variety of crops that would be required by his family. He also produces enough to satisfy his immediate needs. He is on the farm almost all the year round, cultivating, tending and harvesting one crop or the other In fact, there was no hunger season, food shortage is prevented by the fact that there is a variety of crops suited for seasonal changes.

The Ifon farmers also engage in simple forms of animal husbandry. They keep such animals like goat, sheep, pigs, domestic fowls. etc. Such domestic animals are usually kept on the family compounds and tendered by women and children. The men often take time off their farming engagements to hunt. This usually involves the setting of traps and occasionally the organization of corporate or group hunting involving several men.

The favourable soil condition and other factors makes the palm tree, as mentioned earlier, one of the major cash crops cultivated in Oroluland. There is no doubt that the abundant presence of palm tree has made the production of palm oil an important occupation for the people. On many farms, palm oil and palm kernel are processed traditionally largely by women who collect the palm fruits, cook and press them to produce the oil and extract the kernel. The largest of the traditional mills are now remembered to have been located in Oriki, Ilese Ijebu-Oba, Engoand Asalu Ekor. These appeared to have been the major palm oil producing centers in the Oroluland, perhaps because they were under the direct control of the Olufon himself.

The Oroki mill has been modernised through the installation of a modern palm oil mill made possible by the selfless effort of the incumbent Olufon, Oba Ilufoye Olatoye Orisatoyinbo II, and the support of the women folk. The mill was commissioned by the wife of the first Military Administrator of Osun State, Chief (Mrs) Betty Ajiborisa, who later became the Balogun Iyalaje of Ifon- Oroluland.

Craftsmanship is also very important in Oroluland. The working of beads was very prominent. The Olufon has always been associated with the white variety of beads, sese fun. But in addition, other types of beads were also worked. For instance, blue coral beads, Segi must have been plentiful in Ifon, for the Oriki, Praise poem of the Molufon Ade remembers that (segi beads) were even used by down-trodden, filthy people. There are indications of other ornamentals known by the Ifon people. These include brasses bangles, copper anklets and lead leggings. Even though it is the white brass leggings that the priests and priestesses of Olufon wear, these other ornamentals appear to have been commonly used by the populace.

Black smiting is practiced by men who establish workshops where they produce bangles, leggings, chairs, hoes, cutlass, arrowheads, sliding bolts and various household utensils. There are also traditional carpenters who produce beds stools, chairs, mortars, pestles etc. Even though on a smaller scale, pottery, cloth weaving, dyeing and mat-weaving are carried on by the women -folk.

The level of farming activities and craftsmanship since the pre-colonial times went far beyond the subsistence level. Not all that was produced in Oroluland was consumed locally. There were surpluses which had to be disposed of. This phenomenon led to the development of a market economy for which the Iron people were again well-reputed.

There are three types of markets. There are the day markets where household items, food stuff etc. are sold mainly by women and children residents in the town. There are also the evening markets such as Jamodo market close to the Olufon palace and the Janta junction market for Kolanut sellers. The latter is near one of the ancient gates to the town from Igbo or Ogbomoso. The most important market, however, is the Obada market which was established by Olufon Moronfolu. It is patronised by people from all walks of life, selling and buying. The market survey conducted by the old Oyo state government confirms that the Obada market of Ifon-Orolu is the market where the largest quantity of gari (cassava grains) is brought for sale in the whole of the state.

There are also many markets in some of the districts that traditionally constitute Around. The important ones, still in existence, include, Idiroko Adeyemo, Okiti, Alesinloye, and Owode Olufon. These markets were and still are) patronized by people from the township and villages to prepare them for the Obada Olufon and Obaniowa markets which usually hold in three days interval.

The main Ifon market is operated on a four-day periodic basis. The major articles of transaction are agricultural products brought from the various farms in the kingdom as well as from adjoining places, like Ede, Ejigbo, Ogbomoso Iregba, Oba Ile, Oba Oke, Ikirun, Ila, Ife and so on. In addition, various non-agricultural products produced in the many local industries were also brought in for sale. This made Ifon a major distribution center for the area. In fact, the Obada market became a major point of interactions between the inhabitants of Ifon and settlements in the vicinity. It was, in effect, a rallying point for all indigenes of Oroluland.

# CHAPTER NINE

## THE RELIGIOUS PICTURE

### TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

Because of its antiquity, traditional religion is very prominent in Ifon. There are many deities introduced by different groups from their original homes. The list of some of the major deities goes like this:

1. Orisa Olufon (Orisa Nla)
2. Ebo Ori Oba
3. Egungun
4. Ogun
5. Oro
6. Ije'su (Yam festival)
7. Odun Ade
8. Sango
9. Owala/ Erinle and Eleyele Hill Festival
10. Osun
11. Orisa Oko.

These deities have generated a number of traditional festivals which individually and collectively are celebrated to ensure the progress and peaceful ordering of the society.

#### **1. Orisanla Festival**

This is the major national festival in Ifon-Orolu. It is popularly known as Orisa Olufon since it was introduced by the first Olufon from Ile-Ife. The festival is celebrated once in three years. It is observed by the Olufon as the chief celebrant. All the traditional chiefs, particularly the Ilaasa, as well as princes and princesses also participate. The festival represents the rite of allegiance by the people to the Olufon. The shrine of Orisanla called Boosa is directly opposite the palace secretariat. covers about one and half acres of land. The term 'Boosa' means, the place where It Orisa Nla is worshipped It is a major landmark in the town, but it is open only to a reigning Olufon and the custodians of orisaanla i.e. the ritual priests. Thus even during the orisanla festival non-indigenes cannot join the entourage to the Boosa shrine. In fact, while the Olufon can enter the place where sacrifices are offered at any time, it is forbidden for any one who is not a biological member of an Olufon royal family to do so. This is why a non-descendant of

the Olufon is not deemed fit to ascend the throne since he will not be able to enter the orisanla shrine at Boosa, or the Igbo nla sanctuary.

The festival is signaled off with the Olufon performing rites in the mid-night of the first day with one white cow and two she goats at the Boosa and at the home

of the past Obas Since the Olufon is the chic celebrant of the orisanla festival, it follows that the festival is only observed when there is an Oba on the throne. During an interregnum, the festival cannot be observed; usually this portends some unpleasant events for the community. No wonder, whenever an Olufon is deceased, serious attempts are made to fill the vacancy before the subsequent orisanla festival.

## **2. Ose Orisa Olufon**

The Original deity is so important that it is worshiped weekly to ensure that the Olufon has a regular communion with this arch-deity. The worship takes place every five days which is known as Ose Orisa Olufon because the deity is the Olufon's royal deity. The worship session is attended by all the traditional chiefs of Ifon as well as all the elders from the two royal families. It is the responsibility of the reigning Olufon to host all the participants and to entertain them with food, kolanut and drinks. Drumming, on an Ose Orisa Olufon day, starts as early as 5. O'clock in the morning when the spirits of past rulers of the town are invoked.

On these days, the Olufon worships orisa nla with snail, yam, kolanuts and at times with a she-goat. This is a day of blessing. Many people come to the palace to receive the blessings of the Olufon and his ancestors.

## **3. Ebo Ori Oba (The King's Head Ritual)**

This usually comes up in early January of every year. It is basically a ritual to assess the performance of the reigning Olufon and to divine what his head has instock for him and the community during the coming year

The celebration will involve the participation of the wives of all Olufon(present and deceased). This is because the reigning Oba is the constitutional husband of all queens. Wives of Mobas (Princes) as well as princesses of the land participate in the festival. Apart from the complex rituals which will be performed, the reigning Olufon gives praises and thanks to the creator and his ancestors for guidance and protection of members of the royal family. He will also use the occasion to appeal to his ancestors for continued support, protection, blessings, progress and peace. It is the responsibility of the Olufon during the Ebo Ori festival to entertain people lavishly with food and drinks

Even though basically a festival of the royal family, the festivities extend to the townspeople who take the occasion as the appropriate time to initiate new projects and consummate marriages. The reigning Oba could also use the occasion to take new wives if he so desired.

## **4. Egungun Festival**

This is a very important festival in Ifon. It is a manifestation of the belief in life after death: for the egungun masquerades are believed to be ancestral spirits which have come to visit their living kinsmen and confer them with heavenly benevolence of all kinds. The festival is an annual event but loses for only seven days. There were several masquardes belonging to distinct families. Among the important ones were: Lobanka, Kanmololu, Pajepologun, Aboroori. Pa lake, Susuu, Obadimeji, Fajegbeko, Roroagbo, Madurowomi, Ferebickun, Dada, Wejec and Oro Omo Sango. Many of these masquerades could be very fearsome in terms of their dressings which exhibit ancient items such as charms, amulets, masks, parts of different animals, etc. Some of them were used during the war time either as morale booster for Iphone soldiers or to scare away enemies.

The Olufon, as the patron of the egungun cult, is involved in the festival. All the masquerades must call at the palace, one after the other, to offer prayers for the royal family and the town. Only one of the masquerades the Lobanika has the right to enter the inner chambers of the palace the others can only entertain in the outer court yards. On the eighth day of the festival the Eesa will host the masquerades in his compound where they will offer special prayers. While the festival lasts, the Olufon makes adequate provisions for the masquerades in terms of drinks, fowls, kola nuts, cash and other items.

## **5. Sango Festival**

This popular festival was introduced from Oyo-Ile where Sango was one of the ancient Alaafin. The deity is worshiped by the Ago and Alasangbe families, even though for the festival, the Olufon has to make some monetary contributions towards the procurement of sacrificial materials which are very costly. These materials consist of, among others, ram, cooked beans, cooked corn, palm wine, kola nuts and bitter kola: Sango is represented by a handy wooden human image with plated hair called Ose and smooth pebbles popularly known as edun Ara. Because Sango is the Yoruba god of thunder it is commonly believed that thunder storm is the manifestation of the deity's annoyance. Thus, the deity is frequently worshiped by the devotees to appease it. During the festival. prayers are lavishly said and predictions made. There is also a lot of dancing during which some of the devotees fall into trance

## **6. Owala/Erinle and Oke Eleiyele Festival**

This is one of the original festivals of Ifon. It is celebrated in appreciation of the support of the Owala/Erinle river in the agricultural pursuits of the people. It is also important because there were occasions when attacks on Ifon villages were frustrated as a result of the rivers overflowing their banks. In fact, there are traditions of enemies being swept away by the two rivers.

The chief participant is the Olufon who, as the personification of the state), leads his priests in the festival The main sacrifice consists of a very big ram presented to the goddess of the river at the Owala shrine. After the Owala rituals, the Olufon will climb the Eleyele Isangbe hill to commune with the gods and the ancestors of the land. As usual, the Olufon has to entertain people both at the shrine and at home. The Eleyele hill was a major war camp for fon people.



## **7. Ije'su (Yam) Festival**

As an agricultural community, the annual yam festival, which is celebrated in August of every year, is very important in Ifon. It is an event celebrated with all the farmers throughout Oroluland because it signals the beginning of the harvesting season. Thus, all the district heads and village heads participate and there is plenty of food, especially pounded yam, for people to eat. It is also an occasion for farmers from different parts of Oroluland to make presents of agricultural produce to the Olufon.

## **8. Odun Ade (Crown Festival)**

This is a very important festival for the reigning Olufon and the royal families. In essence, it is the annual rededication of the Olufon headgears. All traditional chiefs and Bile are to celebrate with the king, as it gives them a unique opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to him and to express their good wishes for his reign. The ceremony involves a ritual display of all the ancient crowns of past Olufon. Sacrifices will be made to them: the main one with two she-goats, kola nuts and (in modern times) bottles of gin. The night of the first day, Ifa priests will be entertained with food and drinks during which they will put up performances with prayers and deserved praises of the Olufon. The second day, all women married into the royal families will dance round the town with the newly sanctified crowns. They will be dressed in white clothes only just as the Omo Obas (princes and princesses). Those not wives members of the royal families are forbidden from carrying any of the crowns. The reigning Olufon will dance round the town last, wearing the ancestral Sese-Efun crown, which was brought from Ie-Ife and was first worn by Olaosa Akogun, the founder of the dynasty.

## **9. Oro Festival**

This traditional festival is observed by the Oro family. Women are not allowed to witness, not less talk of participating in the festival. It is therefore strictly an affair of the male members of the Oro family. The rituals cover seven days, on the last of which all participants gather at the palace for final rites which are unknown to non-initiates, no matter how highly placed.

The Olufon will provide the celebrants with one she-goat, bottles of alcoholic drinks, plenty of akara (bean cake) balls eko corns meal) in large quantity and a handsome cash gift.

## **10. Ogun Festival**

All over Yorubaland, the Ogun festival is very important because Ogun is the Yoruba god of iron and the patron-saint of all those that work with iron implements or are in any way associated with the use or working of iron. Hunters, soldiers, blacksmiths, carvers, farmers, etc worship Ogun. This makes the festival one that cuts across all lineages and professions even though, in Ifon, the most prominent

clientele are drawn from the corps of hunters under the Oluode. It is thus in the house of the chief hunter (Oluode) that all the worshipers will gather and that main ceremony will be performed. This usually involves the killing of dogs and the purification of iron implements such as cutlasses, guns, etc, with the blood. The Olufon will play hosts to the celebrants and present them with various gifts such as kola nuts, goat, drinks, gun powder and a handsome cash gift. There are four major places where Ogun is worshiped in Iphone, hence the people talk of Ogun Oluode Olufon. Ogun, Eleesi, Ogun Alata and Ogun Arenja. The Olufon is expected to visit the first three of these shrines once a year for rituals: while the fourth he visits only occasionally or when there is need to do so.

## **THE INTRODUCTION OF ISLAM**

Perhaps because of the strength of traditional religious practices. Islam did not feature prominently in Ifon-Orolu until the last years of the nineteenth century. Itinerant Muslim preachers could have visited the area from the last quarter of the eighteenth century when refugee pressure on Ifon became persistently intense, but these did not record significant success in terms of winning converts among the local indigenes. Many of the refugees who came to settle in Ireland were people displaced from their original homes in northern Yorubaland by Muslim zealots. Understandably, they were lukewarm towards the religion and, on the contrary, seemed to be more enthusiastic towards the traditional religion which gave them succor in times of troubles. It could also be as claimed in current traditions, that many of the Jihadists roaming the country side for most of the nineteenth century were religious charlatans who failed to meet the spiritual aspirations of the people. What is certain is that it was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, during the reign of the twenty-seventh Olufon, Orisatoyinbo Alesinloye, that Islam began to take root in Ifon-Orolu.

The introduction of the religion is usually credited to one Lawani Adeyemi of Arcadia compound. He was a well-traveled man who specialized in the long distance trade to Ilorin and environs. It was during his business trips that he got converted to Islam which he embraced with an uncommon evangelistic zeal. Thus at Ifon, he managed to put together a community of believers made up essentially of his business associates. Prominent among these were, Sarumi of Ajibola compound, Salami Akogun of Odugbure compound, Bello of Kelebe compound and Abdul Salami Adesina of Opatunbi compound. These were convinced Muslims who had preached Islam on their business trips and were now determined to establish it in Ifon as the centre from which it would radiate to all Oroluland.

The first sign of their success was the building of the first mosque. This was conceived to be more than just a place of worship. It was also designed to be a center of learning. Consequently, Islamic preachers and scholars were invited to Ifon, given warm reception and comfortably accommodated. It was through the efforts of these Islamic preachers that many people accepted Islam as a religion in Ifon. Of particular significance was one Alfa Raji from Ede. He brought the teaching and learning of the Quran to Ifon and, through his concerted efforts, converted many people to the Islamic faith.

By the end of the century, the Muslim community was large and strong enough to have a chief man. That honour was given to Lawani Adeyemi who was succeeded by Abdul Salami Adesina. There have been other Chief Imams: Sunmonu Lawani, Tijani Abolode and Alhaji Abubakar Salam Adesina, the incumbent.

## **THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY**

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Baptist Missionary, W.H. Clarke visited and preached in parts of Oroluland. This could be regarded as the first contact the people of Ifon had with Christianity. Nevertheless, there was not much to say about the religion in the area until the last quarter of the century. Olufon Alessio's reign probably witnessed the visit of another Whiteman. His other name, Orisatoyinbo, tends to suggest that this latter contact had a more lasting impression on the local populace for, thereafter, the people of Iron equated their gods with the whiteman. It is probably not a mere coincidence that the beginning of Christianity in Ifon-Orolu is locally dated to this period.

Local traditions in Iron remember that it was one Emmanuel Abere, an Ife man who used to frequent Oroluland to buy palm kernel, that introduced Christianity into the town. Abere is known to have first settled in a compound identified as Kaa. Ooya. This he converted into a camp for Christian evangelism. Because of his business concern, many people were attracted to his camp, making it easy for him to win converts. Among the early ones were prominent local individuals like Joseph Atanda Oyewo, Daniel Taiwo. Jacob Afolabi, Daniel Oke, Isaiah Oyebiyi and Samuel Bada. With this corps of energetic and dedicated converts, the steady progress of Christianity in Iron in its early years was assured.

But the first significant success was probably not recorded until 1916 when the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) of the Anglican Church was firmly established with the building of the Saint John's Church in the town. Thereafter, students of the Saint Andrew's College, Oyo, came to give a helping hand by supervising the Sunday school programme and assisting during the Sunday service. Among these students were Messers Sanyaolu, S. Dokun and Gabriel Ogunleye. The latter became the first catechist of the church in 1919.

Other Christian denominations quickly followed the Anglicans to register their visible presence in Ifon. Thus, in 1926, Elder Jacob Adebiyi established the Baptist Church. This was followed by the Christ Apostolic Church introduced by Elder Abraham Ogundele. In 1934, the Roman Catholic Mission also established its church in Ifon. Since then, various other Christian groups particularly Pentecostal Churches have been established.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **ORIKI ORILE OF OLUFON**

The Yoruba praise-poem, known as oriki orile, has been rightly described as the store house of knowledge from where a clear picture of the past of a pre-literate community could be reconstructed. Even though there are often different versions of an oriki, due to differing experiences and expertise of chanters, the core and essentials of an oriki orile are always the same. Thus while there may be variants of the praise poem of the Olufon, the internal consistency of the events captured in the oriki has been confirmed over time. The oriki orile presented here was compiled by Dr. Solomon Babayemi (later Olufi of Gbongan) by the 1960s and published under the auspices of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. (Content Analysis of Oriki Orile, pp. 141-150)

## **OLÚFÓN**

Molúfón Adé Òròlú

Omo Kelawe Oròlú mo no mo jàté

Nijó a bímo sílé

A lépo nílé, jílá ni funfun Mo lẹnh tuntun, mo sùn lẹ èkan

Mo rinohohò r'odò balúwẹ LArè Bí èniyán mú won lá'jé kò puró

Bi won kò rigbà ori

Won kò lee bu egun Olúfón mu Bí wọn cò rí che eniya

Won kò rokà lAre

Koo-n-gún eniyàn ni won Fi í soogùn ro eko

Are-n-já omo a pakú yàkú

Molúfon Ade oniwo mojo mojo

E ni segi nileke òbùn? Òtòtò eyi ni ileke òbùn?

N ni telegbàá kò ká mi lórùn yi

Omo ako eye ti í dajá lórí igi

Wòmù womù mo le bá won jógbin

Owo Otún-unmi ye ide

N kò gbodò lo ide

Esee mi si ye bàbà

N kò sù gbodò lo bàbà

Àtotún àtòsì Ni ñ ó'mú bọje fólúfón

Omo àgbá otí Kik de Mole

Keregbe emu kò gbodò lọ Bòsà

Bòsà tí a gbóba re lá'jò la wà yí

N kò tíi rí eni tí òò mú mi de lfe Oòni Omo Oba a-tewó-gbeji

Omo a-tẹwó-gboye ti Bòsà bọ

Yeejin ló ni Are, Oba ló níle Ifón

Ó dí ní èèkìn -ínni

Mo ní ñ ó ree de òdò Oba Makin, Tí ó gbe ile Irá

Igba abuke ile Irá ló dá mi padà se'yin

Ó tún di elekeji

Mo ñ ó'ree de òdò Oba Makin  
Tí n gbe ile Irá  
Igba aràrá òrìṣá tún dámì padà se'yin  
Mo bi wón mo ní nítorí kynni?  
Wón ní aso tí n be lórùn mi  
Kò fi ojú rí Oba ni. Mo bá padà sínú ile  
Mo ree mewù funfun Àti sòkòtò funfun  
Àti filà funfun  
Mò tún wá de ààrin won  
Wón ní òná ti sí síle wàyí  
Kí ñ ree fojú róba, Tààràtá ni ñ ó'lọ ree dó'dò Oba  
Olúfón Ade omo aládee sese ẹfun  
Nígbà tí mo dó'dò Oba Makin  
Tí n gbele Irá  
Ohun tí mo bá láraa re  
Funfun ni gbogboo won Tù tí mo bá lora-un  
Funfun báláí nì  
Olúfón Ade Orólú, omoo Kelawe  
Bí ẹ fúnmi ní egbefà  
E bá fi apópó obì mefa sí i  
Olufón Ade omo a-gbó-tán  
Fewu se kele.

Molúfon Adé the Orolú  
The son of Kélawe  
Orólú who had salt but ate saltless soup.  
The day a child was born in our house.  
We had palm oil at home but ate our okro soup without oil.  
I had a new mat but I slept on a spear-grass.  
I went naked to the brook to bathe at Aré  
If one takes them to be witches, one is not wrong.  
If there was no skull,  
They could not drink Olúfón's spiritual wine.  
If there was no human blood.  
They could not prepare cooked yam-four at Aré  
It is the human femur that is used  
As a wooden stick to stir a hot pap  
Are-n-já the offspring of one who would kill and make propitiation to the deceased  
Molúfón Adé, one with a frightful suspicion in his look.  
Do you say traditional blue coral beads are for the filthy?  
What! Are these the beads for the filthy?  
Whereas a string of beads costing 2,000 cowries does not go round my neck even once.

Son of "The bird that causes dispute among the other birds in the trees  
I can dance to the beating of the drum of the gods.  
Brass-bangles are good enough for my right wrist.  
I must never use brass.  
Copper anklets are good for my ankles.  
I must never use copper.  
My right and left legs,  
I will adorn with leggings of lead for Olúfón  
Son of the one called "Barrels of palm wine must never be offered to the Earth-spirit.  
Kegs of palm wine must never be carried to the deity's grove.  
Now we are in the grove into which we carried the corpse of the kings.  
I've found no one to lead me to Ife of the Oôni.  
The princes who collect the dew drops in the palms of their hands.  
Son of the chief installed at the grove  
Yeejin owns Àré  
The king is the owner of Ifón town It was the first time  
I planned the visit to Oba Makin.  
Who lived in the town of Ira.  
But 200 hunch-backs in Ira's town sent me back  
The second time, I decided to visit Oba Makin

Who lived in the town of Irá  
200 dwarfs sent me back  
I asked why?  
They said the costume I put on  
Would not see the king house.  
Then I went back to my house  
I put on my white costume  
White trousers.  
And a white cap.  
I went to them again.  
Then they said that the way was open,  
I could go and see the king Straight to the king would I go.  
Olúfón Adé, the son of the king who had a crown of white coral beads  
When I got to Oba Makin Living in the town of Irá  
The robes I saw on him Were white.  
The gown he wore  
Was immaculate white.  
Olúfón Adé, Orolú the son of Kelawe  
If you give me 1,200 cowries

You should add six pods of kolanuts  
Olúfón Adé who after becoming very aged  
Strung his grey hair into beads.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### LIST OF HISTORICAL EVENTS IN IFON-OROLU

Modern Ifon could be said to have begun with Oba Oyeku Odu Olu Arowogbadamu whose reign covered the first decade of the twentieth century. The contact with western civilisation during the preceding reign of Oba Orisatoyinbo Aleshinloye has made it possible to have a proper chronological sequence of developments in the town during the century and assign dates to each of the six rulers thus:

Oba Oyeku Odu Olu Arowogbadamu 1901-1910

Oba Osadare 1910-1912

Oba Bankesa Akinyooye I 1912-1914

Oba Salawu Oyelade 1945-1969

Oba Olagunju Akinyooye II 1971-1985

Oba Ilufoye Olajire Olatoye Orisatoyinbo II 1990

Before the reign of Olufon Arowogbadamu however, dates assigned to events could only be approximate. Never the less, it should be emphasised that the chronological sequence of the events, since the foundation of Ifon-Orolu by Olaosa in the twelfth century as stated here, is valid. This compilation has been based, not only on the highly consistent internal oral accounts of Ifon-Orolu, but also on the correlation of local accounts with accounts of neighbouring settlements and with well-known events in different parts of Yorubaland,

EVENTS	DATE
Foundation of Ifon-Eega by Olaosa, a.k.a. Akogun Erujeje Adugbo who migrated from Ile-Ife.	12th Century
Ilofo became the 2nd Olufon	12th Century
Osa gidigidi became the 3rd Olufon	12th Century
Akando, the 4th Olufon	13th Century

EVENTS	DATE
Igbo Agajiolu, the 5th Olufon	13th Century
Foundation of Iron-Ore by Oosagbemi the 6th Olufon	13th Century
Olumorin became the 7th Olufon	13th Century
Jejeara, became the 8th Olufon	13th Century
Okoo, became the 9th Olufon	13th Century
Onilosin became the 10th Olufon	13th Century
Naakun became the 11th Olufon	13th Century
Moribikolasi, became the 12th Olufon	14th Century
Oluyemokun, the 13th Olufon	14th Century
Morelasa, the 14th Olufon	14th Century
Arinola, the 15th Olufon	14th Century
Arapaledoye, became the 16th Olufon	14th Century
Foundation of Ifon-Baale by Ambewela, the 17th Olufon	ca. 1398
Odunolu, became the 18th Olufon	1450
Olumoyero, became the 19th Olufon	1488
Emiolu, became the 20th Olufon	1524

Jagbo, became the 21st Olufon after a long interregnum. 1635

Nage, became the 22nd Olufon. 1680

Orisafi, became the 23rd Olufon. 1693

Laojo, became the 24th Olufon. 1748

Oluyeyin, became the 25th Olufon at a tender age. 1780



Foundation of Ifon Ile now known as Ifon Osun. 1830

Moronfolu, became the 26th Olufon. 1834

An Ifon indigene, the Area of Ogbomoso led a detachment of troops to assist Osogbo that was besieged by the Ilorins. 1835

Orisatoyinbo I, became the 27th Olufon. 1845

First Olobu was installed 1850

The Ilorin destroyed Ilobu. 1860

Ifon warriors participated in the Jalumi War. 1878

Ifon warriors participated in the Kiriji war. 1879-1885

Orisatoyinbo I rode a horse, first of its kind in Ifon area. 1887

Erin people settled where they are by the Olufon of Ifon through one of his High Chiefs the Afin of Ifon. 1890

Islam introduced in Ifon, muslims began to build an area mosque 1901

Lawani Adeyemi was turbanned as the first Chief Imam of Ifon by Oba Orisatoyinbo I. 1901

Oyeku Arowogbamu reigned as the 28th Olufon. 1901-1910

Orisadare reigned as the 29th Olufon 1910-1912

The railway line was extended to Osogbo; Ifon people joined the labour force for the project. 1910

Bankesa Akinyooye I, reigned as the 30th Olufon 1912-1941

The First World War began. 1914

Olufon made President of the Native court for Ifon, Erin and Ilobu. 1914

The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) established St. John's Church. 1916

The Ilobu people requested for additional land from the Olufon their grand father and their landlord. 1917

Alaafin Ladigbolu ruled that the Olufon is the traditional landlord. 1917

Obada Market established by Oba Bankesa. 1921

Captain Ross, the Senior Resident, sent the District Officer at Osogbo to Oba Bankesa on the request of Olobu of Ilobu for more land from the Olufon. 1924

Captain Ross fixed the boundary between Ifon and Ilobu. 1924

Oyewo of Eleesi compound first rode a bicycle in Ifon town. 1925

Christ Apostolic Church established in Ifon by Mr. Ajigbotoluwa, first site was near the present Boosa. 1926

Prince Olatoye started the charter of vehicle from Osogbo to other parts of the country to ease the problem of transportation being encountered by the people of the area. 1927

Mr. Manasseh A. Oyewo went to England for scout jamboree. 1929

Ifon-Erin-Ede road (now known as Council Road) was constructed on the order of Olufon Bankesa Akinyooye I. 1932

Oba Bankessa Akinyoye I promoted Olaniyan to the status of Baale Ilobu after the death of Ajayi. 1933

Separate 'Grade D' court established for Ifon as Erin. 1934

Oba Bankesa Akinyoye I, the Olufon of Ifon installed Oyelade in succession to Olaniyan as Baale Ilobu. 1935

District Officer, Mr. I.W.F. Schofield interviewed Oba Bankesa I, for the Intelligence Report. 1935

The first Primary School, St. John's Anglican Primary School, was established in Ifon. 1936

Jubilee was celebrated. 1936

Jacob Afolabi bought a motor lorry (INTERNATIONAL), first ever in Ifon-Orolu. 1937

Conflict arose between Ilobu chiefs and Olufon Bankesa over the candidatures of Salako and Siyanbola to succeed Baale Oyelade as the Olobu of Ilobu. 1940

The first storey building was built by Alawiye (one room up, one room down), hence the saying "Bo ti ga lo mo, pete Alawiye, yara kan oke, yara kan ile". 1940

The outbreak of Hitler war i.e. the 2nd World War. 1941

Egbe Ibile (Ifon Descendants Union) was inaugurated. 1944

Olufon finally consented to the installation of Sanusi Araoye as the 13th Olobu of Ilobu. 1944

Soldiers drove through Ifon township. 1944

Alhaji Lawal Arikewu went to Mecca for the Holy Pilgrimage, first ever in Ifon and environs. 1945

End of Hilter war, i.s. the 2nd World War. 1945

Salawu Oyelade became the 31st 1945

Olufon Ifon-Ilobu boundary demarcated by a licensed surveyor. 1945

Ooni Adesoji Aderemi confirmed that the ancestor of the Olufon Orolu left Ile-Ife with the Ade sese efun. 1947

The first dispensary for Ifon, Ilobu and Erin sited at Ifon-Osun commissioned. 1947

Hausa settlement (Sabo) at Janta area | burnt down on the order of Oba Salawu Oyelade because of their criminal act. 1949

Prince Yesufu Olatoye, Chief Bello 1950 Aremu and Laniyan Sekere created a motor-park for Ifon, Ilobu and Erin. 1950

Baptist Day Primary School established in Ifon-Osun. 1954

Baale Sanusi Araoye, Olobu of Ilobu, sued Oba Salawu Oyelade the 31st Olufon of Ifon over boundary dispute (after 30 years of final settlement by Captain Ross) because the request by the people of Ilobu for additional land was rejected. 1955

D.M. Elliot, Ag Resident, Ibadan Province, gave a ruling confirming the Ross Boundary between Ifon and Ilobu. 1955

The Nigerian Rediffusion introduced wooden-box radio in Iphone. The first subscribers were Olufon Oyelade, Alhaji Lawal Arikewu, Chief Yessuff Oladipo, Mr Joseph Afolabi, Prince Yusuff Olatoye, Pa Isaiah Ojo, Pa Aluko, Solomon Odetokun, and Bello Aremu. 1955

Ilesa-Osogbo-Ifon-Ogbomoso road was tarred and commissioned. 1955

The founding year of Ansar-Ud-Deen Primary School, Ifon-Osun. 1955

Free Primary Education introduced in Ifon 1955

Prince Ilufoye Olatoye entered the Primary School. 1955

The founding year of C.A.C. Primary School Ifon-Osun. 1956

Postal Agency at Obada Market built and commissioned. 1956

Outbreak of influenza (Ayokele) at Ifon (and other places). 1957

Dr. Fasakin (of Asade Compound) returned from Britain. 1958

Mr. Babatunde Adeniran of Ifon was elected as the first honorable member of the Western Regional House of Assembly. 1959

Chief Obafemi Awolowo came to Ifon for political campaign with a helicopter. 1959

Irepodun Local Government Council established with the Olufon of Ifon as the life President. 1960

Rev. Joseph Afolabi Adeagbo from Orisatoyinbo compound became the first Ifon indigene to be ordained as a Reverend in the Anglican Communion. 1963

Census (head-count) exercise in Ifon (and other places). 1963

Pipe-born water commissioned for Ifon-Osun. 1964

Professor M.S. Olayinka (of Basorun Compound) returned from New Zealand as the first Iphone indigenous to obtain a Ph.D. degree. 1965

Ifon-Osun Progressive Union built the first fish pond in the Local Government Area at Fagbon, Ifon Osun. 1968

James Olagunju Akinyooye, J.P. became the 32nd Olufon of Ifon. 197

Ifon/Erin Community High School founded. 1974

Electricity Corporation of Nigeria (now NEPA) commissioned light at Ifon-Osun. 1974

Oba James Olagunju Akinyooye II, donated land for Irepodun Local Government Council Secretariat Complex through Chief Eleesi who was compensated by the State Government. 1978

Orolu Community High School established. 1980

Ifon/Erin Primary Health Clinic commissioned. 1982

Governor Bola Ige toured part of Ifon-Osun District for recognition. 1983

The Ooni of Ife Oba Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II visited Ifon for the first time. 1985

His Excellency the Military Governor of Oyo State Col. Adetunji Idowu Olurin toured Ifon-Osun district for recognition. 1986

Primary Health Clinic at Okiti was commissioned. 1989

Ilufoye Olatoye Orisatoyinbo became the 33rd Olufon of Ifon-Orolu land. 1/5/90

Oba Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II, Ooni of Ife, visited Ifon during the coronation anniversary of Ilufoye Orisatoyinbo II Olufon. 7/7/90

Building and commissioning of Better Life for Women Programme School, Ifon. 1991

Building and installation of palm oil quarters processing industry at Oroki and commissioned by Chief Mrs. Betty Ajiborisa. 1991

Olokanla of Okanla was installed by Oba I.O. Orisatoyinbo II. 1991

National population census conducted (217 EA's and 33 SA's demarcated for Iphone and its eniron). 1991

Orolu Day Festival introduced by Oba Ilufoye Olatoye Orisatoyinbo II on 1st May 1991 to mark his installation day. 1991

Upgrading of Orolu Community High School to Senior Secondary School. 1992

Garri processing factory established at Idiroko model village. 1993

Establishment of the Nursing & Primary School Annex of Albert Memorial International School at Ifon. 1993

Rain storm damage. March 1993

Chief Bola Ige's visit to Ifon-Orolu May 1993

Governor Adetunji Adeleke state visit to Ifon May 1993

Establishment of A.U.D. Primary School Annex at Ekoru village, Ifon. 1994

Establishment of Jaleyemi Hospital Annex at Ifon. 1994

E.B. Oyedeji appointed Chairman Caretaker Committee for Irepodun Local Government Area with Chief M.A. Akano. 1994

2nd tier 1993/94 NYSC members on endurance trek to Ifon. June 1994

Some Ifon indigenes and important personalities from abroad were conferred with honorary chieftaincy titles to mark the fifth coronation anniversary of Oba Ilufoye Olatoye Orisatoyinbo II. 1995

Case on chieftaincy dispute against the Olufon was dismissed by Justice Olowofoyeku 1996

Supreme Court case SC 45/1990 between Ifon and Ilobu was decided in favour of Ifon. 1996

Orolu local government created. 4/12/1996

W.A. Ayinde appointed as Sole Administrator, Orolu Local Administrator, Orolu Local Government. 1997

Boundary Committee was set up and Oba Ilufoye Olatoye Orisatoyinbo II defended Ifon land to logical conclusions. 1997

Inspection of Ifon and Ilobu land by the members of the Boundary Committee. 1997

Hon.J.A. Okunlola was elected the first Executive Chairman of Orolu local government. 1997

Total blackout experienced for a period of 2 years in Ifon and Ilobu. 1997

G.M. Oyinlola appointed as Sole Administrator for Orolu Local Government. 1998

Commissioning of Eleesi Primary Health Clinic. 1998

Chief Judge of Osun State Hon. Justice Adedotun Sijuwade visited Ifon to inaugurate the Magistrate Court. 1998

Laying of foundation of New Orolu Local Government Secretariat by Col. T.A. Bamigboye. 1999

Obalufon of Sepeteri Oba Abdul Kareem Oyesiji Akanmu and chiefs pilgrimage to Ifon Orolu, their ancestral home. 23/10/1999

Hon. P.O. Larinde from Orolu Local Government elected member of house of Representatives for Osogbo Zone. 1999

Alhaji R.A. Oyedele became the second Executive Chairman of Orolu Local Government. 1999

Rehabilitation of Osogbo-Ilobu-Ifon Ogbomoso Road began. 1999

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **THE CREATION OF OROLU LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The most spectacular achievement in Oroluland in modern times was the creation of the Orolu Local Government with headquarters in Ifon-Osun. This was on the 4 of December, 1996. The new Local Government was carved out of the amorphous Irepodun Local Government which had been in existence since 1976. The excision of Orolu Local Government from the old Irepodun Local Government was sequel to about twenty-four years of struggles for liberation embarked upon by the people of Iron and the villages under her:

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since the colonial times, the people of Ifon had been yearning for an administrative arrangement which would recognise their historical antecedent in this recalled area. It will be recalled that throughout the pre-colonial period, even in the dark days of Ibadan imperialism, Ifon remained independent and the Olufon was highly regarded and respected as a crowned ruler and as the traditional landlord in this area. As pointed out in chapter Five, during the colonial period Ifon was granted an autonomous status within

the Ibadan Division. The observations of the then colonial Official in charge of Osogbo District, Mr. I. F.W. Schorfield are worth repeating here:

The Ibadan Native Authority is recognised by all in the (Osogbo) District and the Ataoja and council by all except the Ifon, Ilobu, Erin groups... (for which) The Native Authority should be: the Olufon of Ifon....

However, subsequent political manipulations which accompanied the emergence of the Irepodun Local Government in 1976 saw the marginalisation of Ifon.

### **MARGINALISATION STEPS**

The move for the creation of the Orolu Local Government was given impetus because of the suppression of the aspirations of the Iron people by the Irepodun Local Government. Some of the perceived injustice meted out to Ifon people while they were under the old Irepodun Local Government were in the area of allocation of electoral wards. Out of the twelve electoral wards in the old Irepodun District Council, Ilobu had seven wards, Ifon had three wards while Erin had two wards. This was in spite of the fact that Ifon is bigger, in terms of land area and population, than both Ilobu and Erin put together. As if that was not enough, in 1976, when the Irepodun Local Government was created, Ilobu was allocated eight wards out of the fifteen electoral wards then demarcated. Ifon was given only four wards, while Erin was given three wards. With the benefit of hindsight, one can reasonably infer that this marginalisation, among numerous factors, was a blessing in disguise. Perhaps, if the three communities had been equally treated, the political awareness of the present Ifon Orolu people would not have been strong enough to lead to the independence of Ifon and the creation of an autonomous Local Government which in actual fact, is just a reconfirmation of the traditional status of Ifon Orolu as an independent ancient kingdom

### **THE AGITATION FOR INDEPENDENCE**

Taking the above argument into cognisance, one would realise that there is truth in the Yoruba adage which says: "One who thinks he is the only wise is actually the president of the fools". The blows constantly dealt on Ifon made them to wake up from their slumber. As early as 1976, if you had asked a layman on the streets of Ifon what was the lasting remedy to this ugly situation, he would have told you that it was complete autonomy for Iphone and her environs.

Consequently prayers were constantly held in Churches and Mosques all over Oroluland. These were supplemented with traditional prayers asking for a liberator. In answer to the requests, the Biblical Moses was sent in the person of the able dynamic, intelligent and influential King- His Royal Highness, Oba Ilufoye Olatoye Orisatoyibo II. He gathered his lieutenants and ran up and down, day and night in all weather for a new Local Government to meet the aspirations of his people. Meetings upon meetings were convened at the Olufon's palace where people gave their views and expressed their opinions.

### **THE BIRTH OF A NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

God listened to heard the groaning of and fulfilled His promise to the people of Ifon. Thus, on that fateful day- Wednesday 4 December, 1996, at about nine O'clock in the evening, a nation-wide broadcast announced the creation of new Local Government Areas by the Federal Military Government. The people of Ifon, home and abroad, like their counterparts in other parts of country sat anxiously expecting theirs to be one of the new Local Governments. Spontaneously, people burst into broad laughter that nearly rent the air on hearing "Orolu Local Government with it headquarters at Ifon-Osun" being pronounced by the then Head of State, Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria. General Sani Abacha. People enthusiastically gathered up, even though it was in the night took to the streets in thousands jubilating. singing and dancing. Crippled people begged their physically-fit friends to carry them along to the Olufon's palace. But for the Kabiyesi prior warning, people would have drunk excessively and injured themselves because of happiness.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

Praises must be said to the ALMIGHTY God who listened to and rescued Finland from the yoke of oppression. We should also appreciate the efforts of Ilobu for pressurising the Ifon people to the extent that the latter all came together to speak with one voice asking for freedom The Ifon Progressive Union must not be forgotten to be commended. The Union really tried Many people have expressed the view that the present Olufon must be given kudos a hundred times: Both verbally and in writing they have expressed the views that Oba Ilufoye Olatoyinbo Orisatoyinbo is a God-sent ruler, energetic, tireless, unselfish and progressive. These comments are appreciated Bur eminent personalities and community leaders, both now dead and alive, should not be left out in the praises for their relentless efforts to bring Finland to the limelight. The totality of Ifon Community deserves praises as well for their moral and financial support that culminated in the spectacular achievement which we should see as the beginning of many successes for Ifon-Orolu.

## **EMINENT PERSONALITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF IFON OROLU AND**

The history of Ifon Orolu Local Government will not be complete without mentioning the significant role played by some prominent Nigerians. Without mincing words, the activities of General I.B. Babangida, a one time president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in upholding the seniority of Ifon is worth mentioning. The then Governor of the old Oyo State. Major-General Abdulkareem Adisa, also deserves to be specifically mentioned. It was he who put right the wrong in the then Oyo State Council of Obas and Chiefs when a tenant was about to claim to be landlord. Apart from giving full recognition to the traditional institution in the old Oyo State Governor Adisa's wife contributed to the development of Ifon Orolu Kingdom. It was in recognition of the noble role played by both the husband and wife that Oba Olatoye Orisatoyinbo gave the honorary title of Otun iyalaje of Ifon Oroluland to Chief (Mrs.) Omotayo Abdulkareem Adisa.



It is indeed just impossible to state in details all the activities of the military big-wigs in the development of Oroluland. But the part played by General Abdul Salam Abubakar, another able Head of State, cannot be over emphasised and should be mentioned. He made sure that justice prevailed. Also, with the support of Major General Leo Segun Ajiborisa, the first Administrator of Osun State, things were eventually put right. When he was exercising his administrative job in Osun State, General Ajiborisa performed so marvelously well that he cannot be forgotten by the entire people of the state; the record he set in this state is yet to be broken. Taking into consideration his achievements and the interest his wife had shown in the development of Ifon Orolu, the Olufon was suggested to by the chiefs and the good people of Orolu Local Government to award an honorary chieftaincy title to Mrs Betty Ajiborisa as the Balogun iyalaje of Ifon Oroluland.

If we recognise the part played by these Military Administrators, recognition should also be accorded to some civilian rulers and other personalities who acted well their parts in developing Ifon Oroluland. First the Committee set up by the Federal Military Government for this sensitive assignment should be credited. The Mbanefo State and Local Government Committee deserves a pat on the back for a job well done. Among the rulers, Oluaye and Ooni of Ife. Oba Okunade Sijuwade deserves a special mention. He is very generous, accommodating and indefatigable. These are worthy qualities which people say are also embedded in the present Olufon of Ifon Orolu. This testifies to a popular saying among the Yoruba that: "Birds of the same feather flock together" At this juncture, one should not overlook the contributions of non-Yoruba rulers who have shown keen interests in the affairs of Oroluland. One needs to discuss the contributions of some Emirs especially, the Emir of Minna, Alhaji (Doctor) Faruk and the Emir of Zazzau who shared with us their friendly support and who, with their valuable words of advice, made the Orolu Local Government to come into existence

The history of the creation of the Orlu Local Government will not be a complete one if the contributions of some notable local individuals of Ifon Orolu kingdom are not mentioned. Notable among these people are: late Chief Emmanuel Bamidele Oyedeji and late Kunle Adigun. These, at one time or the other rendered invaluable contributions both morally and financially towards the creation of the new Local Government. Recognition should also be given to some notable indigenes that contributed in no small measures to make the dream come to reality. These include, Chief J.A. Afolabi Ogo Oluwa: Hon. Paul Larinde, Member of the Federal House of Representatives: Chief J.A. Akinlade, Retired Director. Central Bank of Nigeria: Chief Dapo Durodola: Chief Buraimoh Akangbe: Chief Adejumo: Chief Humani: Chief Lasisi Aralamo; Chief Hammed Arowolo: Deacon P.O. Oyegoke: Mr. S.O. Abioye: Chief Raimi Adebisi: Chief Yakubu Akanji: Elder P.A. Akintayo: Chief David Olabode Afolabi (Agbaakin of Ifon); the first Executive Chairman of Orolu Local Government, Hon. Micheal Yemi Olarinde; Hon Remi Alabi, Mr Tairu Ogundeji Ologbon; Christian and Muslim Societies of Ifon; all the Trade Unions and others too numerous to mention.

The efforts of all the traditional Chiefs, and Baales of various districts, members of the Olufon Royal Families as well as the Kabiyesi wives are also commendable.

## **ADMONITION**

By and large, the entire people of Ifon Orolu must come closely together the more irrespective of social status, political affiliation and religious differences. This is necessary in order to develop the new born-Orolu Local Government. Ifon is unique, and that uniqueness must be maintained. While we continue in the traditional spirit of accommodating stranger elements, our political awareness should remain as strong as ever. In spite of our quest for peace and good neighbourliness, we should remain resolute in the defence of our rights. Our properties, movable and fixed, should not be allowed to be appropriated by those to whom things did not belong. With one voice, we must continue to hammer it to the ears of the government that the infrastructure on Ireland belong to nobody else but the Ifon people. May God continue to assist us