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LAGELU AND THE FOUNDING MYTH OF EBA ODAN



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Ibadan was founded in the **sixteen (16th) century**, probably during the crisis of Nupe militarist attacks from Niger-Moshi area when Oyo kingdom was forced into exile. Chief Isaac B. Akinyele in **Iwe Itan Ibadan (1911)** said the time of founding Ibadan by Lagelu from Ile-Ife was before the institution of the office of Aare Ona-Kakanfo which was established in **1640A.D** by **Alafin Ajagbo** (and not **Alaafin Sango** who reigned in the 13th century).

In his own contribution, the Alaafin of Oyo Oba Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi III, *I did not, in actuality pre-empt any rude reaction, I did reference that Lagelu, an Ife man, who founded what is Ibadan today, was installed the Jagun of Yorubaland by the Alaafin Sango in recognition of Lagelu's enviable profile in wars as claimed by I.B. Akinyele (1911).*

On his way from Ile-Ife, the advance party first stayed for some days near Erunmu before Lagelu and his men finally chose **Ipara Forest** not far from the present **Akufo**. It was surrounded by **Olorisa-Oko** near Ijaiye-Orile, **Ojoo**, **Owe** all were **Gbagura towns** including **Iddo**. The headquarters of Gbagura Kingdom headed by **Akila** at the time of destruction of the first Ibadan while **Arinakotu** was the king of **Ojoo**, and **Owu town** (Johnson 1921; Chief M.K.O Adebayo 2015)

Dr. Jide Fatokun in the book “**Harbart Macaulay: a Unique Indigene of Ibadan**” published in 2018 wrote as follow” ‘The first two attempts of establishing **Ibadan I (1590/1600)** and second Ibadan, **Ibadan II** between **(1700-1806)**, were both established by Lagelu, Oro-Apata-Maja and so referred to as **Ibadan Lagelu or Lagelu's Ibadan**. **Ibadan Maye**, emerged as a result of **Owu war II** which devastated the second Ibadan between **(1820 and 1824)** by the allied army of Ife, Ijebu, Oyo and friendly Egbas.

THE RECKLESS EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE OF POWER:

According to Professor Akinlawon Mabogunje and Professor J. Omer Cooper in the book “Owu in Yoruba History published in 1971 page 17, “The Alaafins position as representative of Sango was exploited to the full as a means of supporting his authority. *The Sango cult was spread to every town under Oyo influence and organized in a hierarchy centred in the palace of Oyo. The Alaafin’s Ajele were often themselves Sango priests.* This added to their authority at the courts of vassal rulers who were nevertheless divine kings in their own right.

As the eighteenth century entered its second half a whole series of clashes between monarchs and their Basoruns took place. King after king was rejected and forced to poison after a short reign namely: **Alaafin Onisile (1742 - 1750); Alaafin Labisi (1750); Alaafin Awonbioju (1750); Alaafin Agboluaje (1750-1772); and Alaafin Mabogunje (1772 - 1773).** *The internal struggle of the Gaha period had naturally distracted attention from outlying parts of the empire and while central was weakened, the Alaafins representatives acted as petty despots exploiting their position in their own interests.*

i) Destruction of First Ibadan:

According to I.B. Akinyele in Iwe Itan Ibadan (1911); the town was destroyed by the Yoruba army because the secret of Egungun cult was revealed in the market place. This was not the reign of Alaafin Sango in the 3rd century but as a result of the Alaafin’s representatives (the Ilaris and Ajeles) who were themselves Sango priest in the close of the 17th century. Lagelu and his children escaped to Eleiyele hil now at Awotan.

ii) Destruction of Ijaiye (An Egba Town):

Alaafin Abiodun and Aole (1775 – 1796) ordered attacks on the provinces whose leaders they accused insubordination during their princely years according to professor Akinwumi Ogundiran (2020). For example, Alaafin Abiodun Adegbolu (1775-1789) claimed that the son of the potentiate of Ijaiye, and Egba town, insulted him during one of his trading missions there. On ascending the throne, according to Rev. Samuel Johnson (1921), he avenged the alleged insult by ordering the destruction of the prominent trading town.

iii) Military Action Against Apomu

Likewise, Alaafin Aole (1789 - 1796), ordered military action against Apomu, a provincial town of Ile-Ife, in order to avenge his humiliation at the hands the Baale (head) of the town during his princely years as a trader. He also took the misstep of ordering an attack against **Iwere** (Ibarapa area) - now in Iwajowa Local Government, Oke-Ogun Area, reputed to be the maternal town of Alaafin Ajagbo (1600 – 1658).

iv) Lisabi Led Egba Revolution:

In the Egba country the **Alaafin's Ilari** provoked the people to desperation, and a bold leader, Lisabi, came forward to lead a movement of liberation. The Egba under Lisabi of Itoku (Agbein) revolted and **killed about 600 Ilaris of the Alaafin, Amosu of Ikija, in Oke-Ona. Arinokotu** of Ojoo and Akila of Ido joined Lisabi in the revolt, according to Chief M.O. Ogunmola, Otun of Oyo (1997, 2000).