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# OONI LUWO GBAGIDA IN YORUBA HISTORY



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### **1.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

Luwo Gbagida, the 18<sup>th</sup> Ooni of Ile-Ife and the only female in the king's list. She was nick-named “Ayare”, **Akosulogbe, Descendant of Otaata, the 15<sup>th</sup> Ooni of Ife**, according to Chief (Dr.) M.A. Fabunmi, the Odole Atobase of Ile-Ife in “Ife: The Genesis of Yoruba Race”, published in 1985. She was married to Chief Obaloran of Ilode and became the mother of **Adekola Telu**, the ancestor of the founder of Iwo called **Olumade Parin**, who founded Iwo in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. She hailed from **Owodo Compound in Okerewe** and was the only female Ooni in Ile-Ife history. Okerwe Quarters produced about six Ooni's Ife namely: **Owodo (13<sup>th</sup> Ooni) Otaata the 15<sup>th</sup> Ooni; Luwo Gbagida (18<sup>th</sup> Ooni) Lajodogun (19<sup>th</sup> Ooni), Lafogun (20<sup>th</sup> Ooni) Lafogido (21<sup>st</sup> Ooni of Ife)**.

According to the LATE Chief Ifasola **Ifamapowa**, the Priest of Okebadan in 2015 said **Lagelu's mother was born into the family of Ooni Luwo Gbagida of Ile-Ife and the first child of Chief Obaloran**. The chief Priest said that **Lagelu** did not come of **Atiki Compound** as claimed by Chief (Dr.) M.A. Fabunmi (1985) but **Lagelu was born at Degelu Compound, Ajampo area of Oke Esoo in Ile-Ife** the same compound with **Obalufe or Orunto the head of Ooni-in-Council** and the King makers of Ile-Ife.

### **2.0 Ooni Luwo Gbagida and the Development of Ile:**

Oval tradition credit Luwo Gbagida, listed on the Ife regnal list as a female King as earlier pointed out, with the draining of many ravines in Ile-Ife and with the paving of the major thoroughfares of the city with potsherds. According to Professor Akinwumi Ogundiran, 2020, the construction of the pavement like most Classical-era material life, was unlikely restricted to the reign of one King. Rather, the building

project most likely took place throughout Classical period, lasting **three hundred years**. Second, the position of **Luwo Gbagida** on the King list put her in the post seventeenth-century period, when the construction of these payments had already ended. But, Prince Adegbola (2009) confirmed she also continued with the paving of the thoroughfares of the City with potash which other Kingdoms copied.

In fact, **Ooni Lajamisan**, the 11<sup>th</sup> on the list of Ile-Ife kings was described as **descendant of Oranmiyan** from **Ilare** and **the architect of Modern Ife history**, according to Chief (Dr.) M.A. Fabunmi (1985). Professor Akinwumi Ogundiran (2020) confirmed that **Lajamisan** was the king of Ile-Ife who managed to secure the full recovery of the ancient city. He was officially named **Oseganderuku**. Lajmisan facilitated the growth of population and urban expansion.

One of the accomplishments was the rebuilding of some of the **outer walls of the city** which had fallen into disrepair. His successors **Ooni Luwo Gbagida**; **Lajodogun** and **Lafogido** who reigned in turn after him, actually completed the **city walls** while **potsherd pavements, naturalistic terracotta and copper alloy** had ceased during the reign of Lajamisan.

### **3.0 Ooni Luwo Gbagida and Ara (Ekiti) Wars**

Never before had a group of attackers ravaged such a vast landscape as the **Nupe Militarists** did in the northern and central Yoruba areas, lasting for at least four generations (ca. 1440-1550). These attacks marked the first regional offensive against the Yoruba Community of practice as a group (Yorubaland). The devastating impacts on the **Oyo, Igbomina, Okun, and Ekiti** areas **created the longest unrest** that the region had ever faced, and they tested the political efficacy of the **ebi fraternity ideology**, according to Professor Akinwumi Ogundiran (2020). However, aftermath of *Nupe incursions, there was change in the dynamics of regional power, created a new road map for regional cooperation; and unleashed the processes for a different kind of political and economic formation in the Yoruba world.*

For many decades, there was **no effective coordinated response** in the Yoruba region to curtail the **Nupe militarists attacks**. The **Okun, Igbomina, and Ekiti** were too fragmented and weak to put up any serious resistance, although they did not give up. **Benin** certainly clashed with the Nupe **Cavalry** on and off in the Ekiti areas between ca. **1440** and **1550** as part of the strategy of protecting its commercial interests. But it was Nupe's military assaults on **Oyo**, and the subsequent evacuation of the latter's capital sometime in the last decade of the fifteenth century, that laid the grandeur for a coordinated effort to put an end to **Nupe's menace**.

The Oyo were not the only Yoruba elements seeking to expel the Nupe militarists from their homeland. Further south in the upper reaches of the rain forest, several Ekiti polities fought the Nupe under the banner of Benin. Ile-Ife is also said to have been engaged in protracted and **costly war at Ara** (in Ekiti country) during the **sixteen century**. This was in alliance with several Ekiti polities against the **Nupe brigand ands** (Professor Akinwumi Ogundiran, 2020).

In his own submission, Professor S. Adebantji Akintoye (2010), *Ife had to go to war in the reign of the female Ooni, Luwo Gbagida, probably in the first half of the fifteenth. Soon after she came to the throne, Ife had to embark on the long drawn war know in history of Ife is the Ara War*, there seems to be no doubt, it was the Ara Kingdom in Ekiti.

However, while the Oyo in exile at **Gbere**, in Ibariba Country (1530-1540), were able to mount resistance against the Nupe militarists many other Yoruba polities and communities in the Moshi-Niger frontier did not survive the **Nupe scourge** and the military manlier that followed. For example; the savanna metropolis of **Owu**, west of River Ogun, was liquidated. The turbulence in the Moshi-Niger area pushed **Owu** south ward into the rainforest, where they rebuilt their polities in the area between Ife and Egba Gbagura territories, known as **Owu-Ipole**, in the sixteenth century.