PATRIOTIC REFLECTIONS

WHAT HAVE YOU GIVEN BACK TO THE LAND THAT MADE YOU?

Ijesa Heritage, Honestly Told, and the Work Still Ours to Finish

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Chapter 1

Men of Valour Are the Keepers of Our History

"Men of Valour" is not just praise; it is a trust.

Our Progenitor: Owa Obokun Ajibogun

Ijesa People have their progenitor in Owa Obokun Ajibogun, who God used to procure the brine water that restored Oduduwa's eyesight. All **Ijesa** People are also, in one way or another, related to Ogedengbe Agbogungboro, an acclaimed hero of the inter-tribal wars of the Ancient days in Yorubaland. No wonder then that **Ijesa** People are all Men of Valour!

A Proverb That Speaks to Who We Are

It is indeed true when the Yoruba People say in one of their numerous proverbs that:

> Omo Ajanaku kò ni ya aràrá, Omo Erin ba bi, Erin ni yio jo.

That is, "An elephant will never beget a dwarf; an elephant will always beget a calf." **Ijesa** People have traversed the globe like a colossus. There is hardly a place you can go where our people are not found! We are foremost among business men. We are adventurous and industrious. No wonder, our forefathers were the famous "Osomaalo." We are all over the place, plying our trade among all tribes. We

were there in Congo, to supply their needs during their own war. We were also there in Biafra, to meet the needs of the people during the Nigerian Civil war! How many other people can dare this? No wonder, we are descendants of the brave and courageous!

Osomaalo: Pioneers of Ready-Made Dress

As Osomaalo, we introduced to many parts of Nigeria the "Ready Made Dresses", what some people at that time called:

Ijesa gba mi, òde k'aro.

Meaning: "Ijesa, kindly help me; I need an urgent outing dress."

As Osomaalo, we taught our neighbours the culture of "Buy Now and Pay Later," what some people up till today still call:

San die die

This in modern times, is now referred to as hire purchase.

Our forefathers produced the mats called "*Eni Ore*" and "*Eni Ewele*". These mats predated the modern-day rugs. No wonder, our people are known by appellation of:

Ijesa Omo eleni ateeka, Omo eleni ewele.

Our people produce and market the best kola nuts.

No wonder then, that We are given the appellation of:

Ijesa o sun eni ore, Ijesa onile obi..

Our land prospers people, whether indigenes or non-indigenes. We are not only accommodating, but also very caring. No wonder then that people refer to us as:

Ijesa Omo onile e gba'joji.!

Meaning: "Ijesa, very accommodating and liberal."

United Beyond Religion and Politics

We do not allow religious differences to divide us. Why should we allow politics to separate us? We should never rest on our oars, but endeavour to lift up our communities and help our people in whatever way God lays it on our mind to do so. We should persevere and remain steadfast in our prayers, knowing fully well that, with God on our side, we will definitely get to the promised land!

Why Traditional Rulers Matter

Each distinct community in Ijesaland has her own traditional rulers. Each town has an Oba as its paramount ruler and, besides him, a number of Chiefs and other title holders, who together with the Oba make up the Traditional Council of that Community. Each village also has her own traditional head, whose title varies from community to community. These Traditional Rulers are very important in our Communities. Firstly, they are the Traditional Head in their various Communities. Secondly, they are the custodians of the tradition of the people. Thirdly, they help to maintain peace. Fourthly, they represent their Communities at different forums, such as the Council of Chiefs and other similar forums at the

National, State and Local Levels. In recent years, the Traditional Rulers have also become Catalysts of development and the rallying point for the Leaders of their Communities. So important is the Traditional Institution in any Yoruba setting, that Traditional Institutions in Ijesaland deserve a whole text of their own.

Their Roles and Responsibilities

For now, what concerns this book is what our people expect of our traditional rulers, both of each individual ruler and of all the traditional rulers of Ijesaland as a whole. Our people expect them to carry out, to the best of their knowledge, the traditional roles outlined earlier in this chapter. Besides these are a number of others, prominent among which are those outlined below. They must forge unity and cooperation within their domain: between the Oba and his Chiefs, among the Chiefs themselves, among the elites of their communities, within and between all trade groups, and within and between all Clubs and Societies. They must encourage their citizens to come together from time to time, to rub minds on diverse issues that affect their domain. They must have their "Think Tanks", made up of respected members of their communities, who can advise them on all issues of importance.

A Rallying Point for Development

The Traditional Rulers should encourage education in their domain. They should see to it that no child is denied the opportunity of a formal education by their parents, and

support in every way possible the elites who are in Schools, Colleges and University. This, they can do by encouraging their representatives in all tiers of Government to assist the cause of education. The Traditional Rulers should serve as the rallying point on all issues of development, bringing their elites and all opinion groups together to enhance it. Such developments could take various forms. Prominent among them are: Establishment of standard private institutions of learning. Provision of assistance in different forms to existing institutions. Establishment of Community Libraries, Information and Communication Centres and Viewing Centres. Establishment of Small and Medium-Scale Industries, among several others. A living example of this rallying role is Asiwaju Yinka Fasuyi, the first Asiwaju of Ijesaland, installed in 2016. Through the Asiwaju Yinka Fasuyi Foundation and the Ijesa Development Fund, he has mobilised Ijesa sons and daughters both at home and in the Diaspora toward projects including a new palace for the Owa Obokun and bursary and WAEC-fee support for well over a thousand indigent students. His work is a model of what a title-holder's convening power can achieve when turned toward the development of the land. Nor is the work of palace administration carried out by the Owa Obokun alone. His Imperial Majesty, Owa Clement Adesuyi Haastrup, Ajimoko III, has assembled a team of Palace Officials to support the smooth implementation of his development agenda for Ijesaland, among them Lady Modupe (Dupe) Ajayi-Gbadebo, who serves as Chief of Staff to the Owa Obokun. The Owa Obokun himself takes an active,

personal hand in this work: in 2026 his tours have included Segilola Resources' gold mining operations in Odo-Ijesa, where community projects built under the company's Community Development Agreement, among them a community-owned water factory, a rehabilitated road and new classrooms, have created direct jobs for more than eighty indigenes, alongside a company workforce of over two thousand across the South-West, about four in ten of them from Ijesaland communities. It is a reminder that good traditional leadership, like good leadership anywhere, is rarely the work of one person alone. The Traditional Rulers must ensure that our towns and villages get our dues from all tiers of government, using all legitimate means to bring about all-round development. In particular, they should keep our representatives on their toes by keeping in touch with them, praying for them, encouraging them and advising them where they can. They should represent our Communities well at all times.

Your turn. Which of our forefathers' ways are you carrying on? Name one, and act on it this month.

END OF THE FREE SAMPLE

Patriotic Reflections

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