

BETWEEN TRADITION AND RECORD:
A SEARCH FOR THE LEGENDARY WOODCARVERS
OF OLD OYO

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Old Oyo and Its Woodcarving Tradition

Old Oyo or Oyo-ile is the name by which the most northern of the Yoruba kingdoms and its capital are referred to. Between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was the wealthiest and the strongest of the Yoruba kingdoms. It was also superior to the others in size and grandeur. At the height of its strength between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the kingdom controlled a large empire whose territory extended from the southern bank of the Niger to the coast as far as Dahomey.¹

There were many but unidentified capitals in the kingdom. Tradition claims that there were about six of them but only Oyo-Igboho and the Old Oyo metropolis have been identified. However, the Old Oyo metropolis, which served as the kingdom's capital from the fifteenth century to c. 1500 and from the seventeenth century to 1836² attained the greatest renown.

Situated in the north-eastern corner of the present Oyo State of Nigeria and in the southern Guinea savannah zone (except Kisi) the Old Oyo metropolis is the most northern of the Yoruba settlements. It lies within the longitudes 4° 26' and 4° 20' east, and latitudes 8° 36' and 9° 03' north.³ While it existed, the inhabitants referred to it as Oyo (or Oyo-Ajaka or Oyo-Oro, Oyo of the ghosts),⁴ the Hausa called it Katunga⁵ but the present term Old Oyo or Oyo-ile is used to differentiate it from the extant Oyo town some 240 kilometers south of it. It was a large, populous⁶ and well organized city of about sixty square kilometers of fenced walls whose vestiges still stand. While in existence, Old Oyo metropolis was an emporium for commerce, a link between the trade of western Sudan and the coast. It also occupied a transitional position between the cultures of the forest and those of the savannah.

Indirect information⁷ and eye-witness accounts⁸ by early European travellers, as well as traditions, indicate that the Old Oyo metropolis was a very rich center for art, especially woodcarving. Even in decline and shortly before its fall, eye-witness accounts indicate that "the posts supporting the verandahs and the doors of the king's and caboceers houses are generally carved in bas relief with figures. . . ."⁹ The accounts claim further that generally "the people . . . are fond of

ornamenting their doors, and the posts which support their verandahs, with carvings; and they have also statues or figures carved on their posts and doors. . . ."10 The principal shrine in the metropolis was also described as the ". . . most fancifully ornamented of any of a similar kind in the interior of Africa." Yet there were ". . . fifty other . . . on a smaller and less magnificent scale than the one above alluded to, and public worship is performed in all of them before sunrise every morning."¹¹ These shrines are said to have been adorned with beautifully carved objects in wood.

The majority of these carvings were either burnt or looted¹² and by 1836, the Old Oyo metropolis was abandoned under military pressure. After its abandonment, traces of its wood carving traditions still survived until at least 1975. In 1913 G. J. Lethem, a government official stationed at Ilorin, removed some carved posts from the ruins of the metropolis.¹³ In 1937, J. D. Clarke claimed to have encountered not less than nineteen of those house posts and he made illustrations of them.¹⁴ Kesy, Watters, and Allison who visited the ruined site of the metropolis in 1947, 1954, and 1957 respectively also saw some house posts.¹⁵ Frank Willett and Robert Soper have excavated five and two house posts respectively from the ruins of Old Oyo metropolis,¹⁶ and have kept the posts at the National Museum, Ile-Ife, and the Museum of the Department of Archaeology, University of Ibadan.

Traditions preserved among the Oyo-Yoruba also recollect the grandiloquent woodcarving tradition at the metropolis. Aganju, the fourth *Alaafin*, the traditional ruler at Old Oyo, is said to have erected several decorated posts in and around the 120 piazzas in his palace. Hence the Yoruba saying:

Oba kan ko yo 'kobi laarin Oyo ri
Oba Aganju lo ko o de 'be
Isola-Opo, o ri 'po ile o ri 'po ode,
*O y'ogofa 'kobi.*¹⁷

No king has ever created piazzas in Oyo
 It was King Aganju that introduced them
 Isola-Opo who erected house posts inside
 and outside the house, He built 120 piazzas.

Thesis

The eye-witness accounts did not record anything about the woodcarvers of the Old Oyo metropolis, and until very recently, scholarship on Old Oyo art itself has been omitted and later marginalized.¹⁸ References to its art have been made only cursorily in

the discussion of other peoples' arts or under subjects of cultural interest. None of these works has considered the carvers of the defunct kingdom.

At the time the Old Oyo metropolis was abandoned, its inhabitants are said to have fled southwards to other Yoruba settlements.¹⁹ Those who were artists among them established centers for their arts in the new settlements. A study of these extant Old Oyo-related woodcarvers may shed some light on the woodcarving tradition and the carvers of the Old Oyo metropolis.

This paper attempts to trace the legendary prodigious carvers who produced the carvings at the metropolis from the eighteenth century to the fall of the metropolis, particularly those mentioned in the eye-witness accounts. The paper also looks at traditions concerning woodcarving and the woodcarvers' lineages in Yorubaland, especially in the extant Old Oyo provinces.

Extant Old Oyo-related Woodcarvers

Woodcarving is practiced in many Yoruba towns. However, the centers to which some carvers trace their lineages in Old Oyo metropolis are Ede, Oyo, Iwo, Okeho, Ogbomoso, and Osogbo.

Two lineages, Abogunde (shortened from Ajibogunde) and Olokosun, are the only ones engaged in woodcarving in Ede, a town founded during the reign of Alaafin Kori.²⁰ Of the two, only the Olokosun lineage claims an Old Oyo metropolis origin. The Olokosun lineage, like the majority of the other inhabitants of the town, originated from the Old Oyo metropolis. They claim to have migrated under one Ojo, a warrior and woodcarver who first settled at Iragberi, a town close to Ede,²¹ and this is reflected in their lineage praise-name, *oriki*, the first line of which addresses them as:

*Aagberi oja omo Ayooro*²²

Aagberi oja children of Ayooro.

The lineage is not certain of when their forebears migrated to their present location but a tradition preserved by Sieber claims that they migrated to Ede from Old Oyo metropolis when the carvers were sent for by the first traditional ruler of the town.²³ But woodcarving has almost died in the town. Only one carver from the Olokosun lineage is still working and he now resides in Sekona, and he rarely carves figures but instead makes trays, ladles, slates, and mirror frames on order.

In Oyo town, six woodcarvers' lineages are extant. They are the Abogunde, Ona Ibuke, Arikende, Alaase, Otun-Ibuke, and Gbena-

gbena. Four of these lineages claim Old Oyo metropolis as their origin and the origin for their skill. The other two are their offshoots.

Traditional history of the Abogunde credits their origin to a great warrior in Old Oyo whose wife was said to have delivered a baby on his return from a war. The child was named Abogunde (one who arrives with war) and eventually this became the lineage name.²⁴ The lineage claims to have been engaged in woodcarving as early as the time of Alaafin Abiodun (ca. 1774-1789) and their claim is based on the popular praise-name which goes thus:

*O tori baba emi Lagbayi ara Ojowon
Baba mi rigba'na i r'oyo l'aiye Oba Abiodun
Ogojo Opo n'baba Ajibogunde gbe.*²⁵

It came to the turn of my father Lagbayi,
a native of Ojowon
My father carved art works to Oyo [the metropolis]
during the reign of King Abiodun
It was 160 posts that were carved by the
father of Ajibogunde.

The Abogunde lineage of Oyo came to their present settlement under one Eegungbolu, at the fall of Old Oyo metropolis and they are still accorded the top position among the carvers in the town.²⁶ They used to carve anthropomorphic and zoomorphic objects but were noted for door panels also referred to by their lineage name. But many of their members have now taken to farming. The practice of the art and the recent shift in the profession is illustrated in the following lines in their praise-name.

*Are l'Oje, a o gbe'na mo
Oko ni omo Ajibogune n ro lawada widi omi.*²⁷

Are of Oje, we do not carve any more
The children of Ajibogunde have taken
to farming in the swampy forest.

The Ona-Ibuke lineage, the most active of the carvers, and known for their professional still, are also said to be of Old Oyo metropolis origin. A tradition even claims that they had at one time helped one *alaafin* at Old Oyo to carve models of warriors which were used to trick the kingdom's enemies to run out of arms. The enemies were said to be white men who thrice engaged the kingdom in battle. The leader of the invaders, upon hearing about the Ona-Ibuke carvers'

trick, advised the *alaafin* never to leave the Ona-Ibuke whenever he moved.²⁸ There is, however, no known case of any war between the kingdom and any white men, and other references to the use of warrior images in Old Oyo history are in respect of the Alakoro metal masks and the story of model archers carved by a Nupe man in the entourage of the Old Oyo royalty in exile at Gbeeguru.²⁹

The One-Ibuke lineage are noted as carvers for the royalty and claim to have carved some of the sculptures in the palace in the present Oyo town. Some of the sculptures in the palace are in their lineage's traditional style. The lineage also used to carve house posts, figures, decorated drums for the *ogboni*, decorated *ifa* divination bowls, door panels, and masks. The objects they now carve are twin statuettes, figures, mortar and pestles, game boards, and masks. Ona-Ibuke, the lineage name, is a chieftaincy title invariably conferred on the head of the lineage.

The Arikende also claim Old Oyo origin for their lineage and art and bear a praise-name that is similar to the Abogunde's. The lineage is said to have descended from Lagbaya or Olagbaya, an Old Oyo carver chieftain. A tradition claims that at Old Oyo there was a dispute between Lagbaya's son, his slave and servant. Having been trained in woodcarving, the slave and the servant paraded themselves as heirs to Lagbaya. But dissenting, Lagbaya's son complained to the *alaafin* who thereupon organized a contest for the three. Only the carvings of Lagbaya's son were judged to be of good quality. While the court was appreciating Lagbaya's son's carvings, one of the *alaafin*'s wives accidentally fragmented it with her leg. However, the broken piece was reworked to a semblance of the *alaafin*'s wife by Lagbaya's son. The son, who was then proclaimed the true heir of Lagbaya, became the forebear of the Arikende lineage.³⁰

The Arikende lineage claims to have emigrated to Oyo under Ogunremi Anigilaje at the collapse of the Old Oyo metropolis. They used to carve all sorts of objects, but now concentrate more on the carving of utensils like mortars and pestles and cult objects, and even then, only on request.³¹

Alaase, the fourth of the carvers' lineages also claim Old Oyo metropolis as the origin for both their lineage and art. The lineage have always specialized in the carving of door panels and it is from this that their name, Alaase (owners of door panel) was coined. The lineage also made baskets and mats in addition to woodcarving.³² However, they have stopped carving.

In their own case, the Otun-Ibuke (carvers of the right of Ibuke) and the Gbenagbena (carvers) are respectively the offshoots of the Ona-Ibuke and the Arikende lineages.³³ These two lineages have also stopped carving.

Five different lineages are engaged in woodcarving in Iwo and its environ. But only two are Old Oyo-related while one is of the present Oyo origin. The first of the lineages, Oya Ajibogunde, claims to have introduced the craft to Iwo. Traditionally history of Oya Ajibogunde indicates that they are of Old Oyo metropolis origin. The lineage was started by a man named Olukoibi who migrated from the Old Oyo metropolis to the town with his wife and children. When he first moved to the town, Olukoibi settled with Oluwo, the traditional ruler of Iwo and was then the carver to the royalty.³⁴ The lineage eventually moved to Oluponna, a village adjacent to Iwo, where they settled in a compound known as Oya Ajibogunde. When Olukoibi, their forebear, migrated to Iwo is not certain, and nothing in their praise-name links them specifically to the metropolis.

The Abogunde lineage of Feesu quarters, which also claims Old Oyo metropolis as the origin for its lineage and skill, claim that they met the Oya Ajibogunde lineage as carvers in Iwo.³⁵ Feesu was originally a different settlement but is now part of Iwo. The Abogunde carve only door panels and non-figural objects and their claim for a metropolis origin is reflected in their praise-name which links them with the metropolis and describes it as their nexus and "heaven."

Omo Ajibogunde, otun igbe'gi

.....
Omo a gbe opon reketef'Oba

.....
Omo Kujenra, o ti gb'orun r'Oyo-ile

.....³⁶

The children of Ajibogunde, the
carver chieftain of the right

.....
The children of those who carved
beautiful trays for the king

.....
The children of Kujenra, who has
gone to Old Oyo metropolis through
heaven. . . .

The third lineage, Olosi, who are drummers as well as carvers of drum frames, claim the present Oyo town as the origin of their skill. However, of all the carver lineages in Iwo, only the Oya Ajibogunde and the Olosi still carve figures, though infrequently, and even in the Oya Ajibogunde lineage only one man is left in the business.

In Okeho, where only the Olodo lineage are the woodcarvers, traditions about them and their skill are poorly preserved. All that is recalled is that carving is an inherited profession in the lineage and that Fatokun, their forebear, migrated from Old Oyo metropolis to Igboko, a settlement near Iseyin. Under Omideyi, the lineage eventually moved to Okeho. The lineage's name, Olodo, means owners of mortars, probably because mortars and pestles were their common products. However, they now carve other things. Their origin seems confirmed by the following lines about their praise-name which links them with the metropolis and even describes them as carvers there.

*Ogbegbengbe a gbe marun l'Oyo-ile,
Ni'jo t'Are Oje n'lo s'ona ni 'sokun,
Obe oje, obe baba, l'Are Oje fi s'ona ni 'sokun.*³⁷

The prolific carver who carved five at Old Oyo metropolis
The day Are Oje was going to carve at Isokun,
Knives of lead and brass were the tools with
which Are Oje carved at Isokun.

It is only the Abogunde lineage that is engaged in woodcarving in Ogbomoso and though claiming Borgu as their ultimate origin, the lineage migrated to Ogbomoso from Abogunde. Abogunde, according to their traditional account, was a popular town noted for woodcarving in the Old Oyo kingdom.³⁸ The existing Abogunde settlement is roughly seven kilometers north of Ogbomoso and about a kilometer to the south of its original site, which is said to have been abandoned in the nineteenth century during the Fulani jihad.³⁹

Traditions preserved by the Abogunde lineage in Ogbomoso claim that the Borgarwa were woodcarvers of distinction around Old Oyo metropolis and that it was Baagun who led his people southward to found his own settlement named Akogunde (now called Abogunde). Presently, the Borgarwa are not known to be woodcarvers, but a carved stool seen by the brothers Lander in Kaiama, a Borgarwa town, is evidently of a Yoruba style. The lineage also claims blood relationship with Soun Ogunlola, the first traditional ruler of Ogbomoso, whom they claim was a son of one of their forebears, Batalu. The traditional history of the royalty in Ogbomoso associates the royalty with Borgu⁴⁰ and, coincidentally, the royalty and the Abogunde lineage wear the *baamu*, a facial marking identified to be of Borgu origin.

Now, in three families, located at Baaki, Aguodo and Oja-igbo quarters, the Abogunde were originally a lineage who initially settled at Agbadamu (now Lobanika) compound. Initially the three families carved but it is only one man at Baaki who still carves today. Despite

their Borgu origin, the Abogunde's involvement in the art and their connection with the Old Oyo metropolis are still suggested in their praise-name, the relevant portion of which is quoted below:

.....
Are pagidu s'ogi d'eniyan,
Omo agbegi rubutu se layaba,
Ojo o t'ojo, ojo o t'ojo
Ti won n gbena r'Oyo-ile
Gbogbo won n gbe gi ni gbunduku ni gbunduku
Are Lagbaya bu abaja si'gi leeke otun,
O sa keke igi ni wonran ni wonran.
⁴¹

.....
 Are who turned wood into human figure
 The children of those who carved wood
 beautifully like the king's wife
 When they were carving wood to Old Oyo metropolis
 All of them carved without details and ornamentation
 But Are Lagbaya carved *abaja* markings on the
 right cheek of the wood and
 Engraved *keke* marking delicately

There are three centers for woodcarving in Osogbo. Woodcarving in two of the centers is a recent phenomenon. But the art has been practiced for many generations at the third center at Gbena lineage compound. Osogbo was said to have been founded by the Ijesa⁴² although the Gbena lineage claims to have migrated with their art to Osogbo from the Old Oyo metropolis when it collapsed. They claim to have initially settled with the traditional ruler of Osogbo and were the carvers for the royalty. They have now stopped carving. However, their praise-name, which is almost the same with that of the Abogunde lineage of Iwo, describes them as prolific woodcarvers. They even claim blood relationship with the Abogunde carvers at Iwo and Ogbomosa.⁴³

The eye-witness accounts do not mention the styles of the sculptures at the Old Oyo metropolis. Styles of the extant carvings from its ruins also cannot be deciphered, as they had been weather beaten or damaged before they were retrieved into the museums. But eye-witness accounts and the visual evidence indicate their themes and the fact that they were executed in bas or low relief. This does not rule out the possible existence of wood sculptures in other techniques at the

metropolis. However, the Old Oyo-related woodcarvers have worked in their lineages' traditional styles and since their arrival at their present locations, they seem to have invariably carved in the round technique. The available evidence is therefore not enough to credit any of them with the production of any of the sculptures mentioned in the eye-witness accounts.

A Possibility from Traditions

The praise-name common to the Ajibogunde lineages, part of which was cited earlier, mentions the exploits and carvings of a particular carver at Old Oyo metropolis. The relevant portion of this praise-name is quoted below:

Eni agbena a r'Oyo l'aiye Oba Abiodun 55

.....
O tori baba emi Lagbayi ara Ojowon

Baba mi ngbe'na i r'Oyo l'aiye Oba Abiodun.

Ogojo opo n'baba Ajibogunde gbe

O ni nwon o s'Ogorun re l'ayaba 65

aadorin ne Osi-efa.

E wa yooku l'on ni o maa gba'le Sango

ni oroosun.⁴⁴

We were asked to carve art works to Old Oyo metropolis
during the reign of King Abiodun. 55

.....
It came to the turn of my father Lagbayi,
a native of Ojowon.

My father was carving art works to Old Oyo metropolis
during the reign of King Abiodun

160 posts were carved by the father (elder)
of the Ajibogunde lineage

100 of them were said to be carved as the 65
wives of the king.

Seventy of them as the chief slaves (Oso-efa,
eunuch of the left),

The remaining ten were depicted to clean
Sango's surrounding every five days (jakuta,
the day of his worship).

As observed earlier, the breakdown of the number of posts carved is more than the total number said to have been carved.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, lines 65-67 are specific about the themes, which were female figures,

figures of the chief slaves and cleaners. The praise-name also suggests that these sculptures were for the royalty and likely used on the palace and a Sango shrine. These sculptures appear to be the ones seen in 1824 by Clapperton, who reported that among the motifs represented on some of the house posts were:

. . . men taking slaves,
and sometimes a man
on horse back leading slaves.⁴⁶

The men taking slaves and the one on horseback could be taken for the chief slaves in lines 66 of the praise-name cited immediately above, while the images of the cleaners in Sango's shrine as in line 67 of the praise-name are related to the kneeling figures that Richard Lander noted on the principal shrine at the metropolis.

Directly opposite the entrance is an immense figure of a giant bearing a lion on its head. . . . About twenty-six or twenty-seven figures in bas relief are placed on each of the huts, but all in a kneeling posture, with their faces turned towards the larger figure to which they are apparently paying their devotions. . . .⁴⁷

The shrine mentioned by Richard Lander was undoubtedly that of Sango, the principal deity of the Oyo-Yoruba, and to which allusions are made in the Ajibogunde lineage praise-name. It is fairly certain that the sculptures on the palace and the main shrine mentioned in the eye-witness accounts were carved by Lagbayi during the reign of Alaaafin Abiodun in the late eighteenth century. The two posts now in the museum of the Department of Archaeology, University of Ibadan, appear to be part of the sculptures. Some of the less damaged of the friezes on one of the posts show motifs of antelopes and snakes which run into the animals' hind legs as if biting them. The posts are undoubtedly some of the ones on the palace which Clapperton describes as having "figures . . . but principally of the boa snake with a hog or antelope in his mouth. . . ." ⁴⁸ The two posts have been excavated from the south side entrance to the palace,⁴⁹ one of the two places where Lagbayi's sculptures are said to have been used. No date, however, has been archaeologically associated with these posts.

It is fairly certain that the sculptures on the palace and the principal shrine mentioned in the eye-witness accounts were carved by Lagbayi. The exact year when they were carved is not known but they appear to have been produced between 1774 and 1789, during the reign of Alaaafin Abiodun, as traditions have implied.

Lagbaya, according to the different versions of the praise-name, is linked with the people of Oje, who are traditionally famous woodcarvers. Agbomati, a woodcarver in the service of the Old Oyo royalty, and who carved the wooden archers at Gbeguru when the royalty was there in exile, was said to have been rewarded and installed as the *Oloje*, ruler of the Oje people.⁵⁰ The Oje people now live at Oje-Owode (formerly Aha), some kilometers south of Saki. Some of them are also extant in some other Yoruba towns, such as Igbeti. The Oloje is said to have had three sons, Ose, Okoye, and Ajibogunde that the Ajibogunde lineage praise-name recalls.

.....
Omo meta n'baba won bi.
Ose l'egbon, Okoye l'aburo.
Ajibogunde l'omokehin won le-nje-le-nje.
⁵¹

Three children were born by their father
 Ose was the eldest, Okoye was the elder
 Ajibogunde was the very last born of the three.

Ajibogunde eventually became the woodcarver chieftain of Old Oyo kingdom.

Ajibogunde l'otun igbegi,
Osi ni baba awon isona.

Ajibogunde is the chief of woodcarvers
 Osi is the father of all leatherworkers

goes a Yoruba saying.

Traditions indicate that Lagbaya belonged to the Ajibogunde lineage and that he was the undisputed master carver of the late eighteenth century Old Oyo kingdom. Traditions and the praise-naming of the people of Ogbin, an Old Oyo kingdom settlement whose people now live scattered all over Yorubaland, alluded to Lagbaya's skill and how Alaaḥin Abiodun declared him the undisputed master woodcarver of the time. These various traditions unequivocally link Lagabayi and the Ajibogunde lineage with Ojowon, an Old Oyo settlement near Saki. Ojowon is described as their home, from where the wood carvings were done and transported to the Old Oyo metropolis.

Conclusion

It seems that the Ajibogunde carvers were most likely not resident at the Old Oyo metropolis, at least not up until the time of Lagbayi in the late eighteenth century. Also the extant Ajibogunde lineages do not appear to belong originally to a lineage. The majority of them claim Old Oyo metropolis origin or are related to it by settlement (as in the case of those in Ogbomos). But they, at least in parts, bear the same praise-name with many non-Ajibogunde carvers in Oyo-related towns. Such praise-names invariably link them with Lagbayi and the Ajibogunde lineage. Their association with Lagbayi seems to be because of the prodigy and fame of the carver chieftain. Some of these lineages appear to have taken or were given the name Ajibogunde because of their involvement with woodcarving. To date, the Ajibogunde lineages are synonymous in Yorubaland with woodcarving to the extent that carved door panels are referred to by the name "*ilekun Abogunde*" ("Abogunde's door").

The foregoing discussion also indicates that woodcarving in the Old Oyo metropolis was not limited to artists resident in it but extended to its provinces. For prestigious carvings, especially for the royalty, the best talents were sought in a competitive manner from any part of the kingdom. A portion of the Ajibogunde praise-poem cited earlier in respect of the lineage at the present Oyo town indicates that works of several carvers were rejected by Alaaḥin Abiodun before those of Lagbayi were accepted as the best and most suitable for the intended purposes.

It is also evident that at least the court at Old Oyo metropolis also made use of non-Yoruba skills from neighboring Nupeland and Borgu, with whom Old Oyo shared cultural contacts. Apart from the tradition of the Abogunde lineage of Ogbomoso, who claim to be Borgu by descent and have been carvers around the Old Oyo metropolis, traditions cited earlier concerning the Nupe carver in the entourage of the Old Oyo court in the sixteenth century corroborate this.

NOTES

¹R. Norris, *Memoirs of the Reign of Bossa Ahadee, King of Dahomey* (London: Frank Case and Co., Ltd., 1789), p. 11; Hugh Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition Into the Interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin Soccotto* (London: John Murray, 1829), p. 174; Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas* (Lagos: C. S. S. Bookshops, 1921), p. 74; I. A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and Its Neighbours, 1708-1818* (London: Cambridge

University Press, 1967), p. 36; Robert Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969), pp. 46-55.

²R. C. C. Law "The Oyo Kingdom and Its Northern Neighbours," *Kano Studies*, n. s. 1. 1., 1973, 28; *The Oyo Empire c. 1600-c.1835* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 56.

³Frank Willett, "Investigations at Old Oyo, 1956-1957: An Interim Report," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 2, 1, 1960, p. 61; B. Agbaje Williams, "A Contribution to the Archaeology of Old Oyo," Ph. D. thesis, University of Ibadan, 1983, p. 4.

⁴For the story of why Old Oyo metropolis is also known as Oyo-Oro, Oyo of the ghosts, see S. Johnson, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 164-165; J. A. Adedeji, "The Origin of the Yoruba Masque Theatre: The Use of Ifa Divination Corpus as Historical Evidence," *African Notes*, 6, 1, 1970, pp. 80-82.

⁵I. A. Akinjogbin, "The Oyo Empire in the Eighteenth Century—A Reassessment," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 3, 3, December 1985, p. 450.

⁶Based on pottery and the residential features of compound courtyards, Agbaje Williams has estimated the population to be between 64,098 and 153,593. See B. Agbaje Williams, *Op. Cit.* p. 116.

⁷R. Norris, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 124-25; John Adams, *Remarks on the Country Extending from Cape of Palmas to the River Congo* (London, 1823), p. 94.

⁸Hugh Clapperton, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 45, 48, 53-56; Richard Lander, *Records of Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol. 1* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), pp. 195, 199, 211; Robin Hallet (ed.), *The Niger Journal of Richard and John Lander* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 68-69, 84.

⁹Hugh Clapperton, *Op. Cit.*, p. 58.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹¹Richard Lander, *Op. Cit.*, p. 199.

¹²S. Johnson, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 54, 170, 258-9; U. H. M. A. Obayend, "Antiquities in Kwara, North-Central and North Western States of Nigeria," *African Notes*, Special Number, April 1972, p. 71.

¹³R. Soper, "Carved Posts at Old Oyo," *Nigerian Field*, 43, Part 1, March 1978, pp. 17-18.

¹⁴J. D. Clarke, "Carved Posts at Old Oyo," *Nigeria*, 15, 1938a, pp. 248-49; "A Visit to Old Oyo," *Nigerian Field*, 7, 1938b, pp. 139-43.

¹⁵W. J. Kesy, "Notes on the Vegetation of Old Oyo," *Farm and Forest*, 8, 1947, 36-47; R. G. Watters, "A Visit to Old Oyo," *Nigeria*, 44, 1954, pp. 346-49; Frank Willett, *African Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), p. 106.

¹⁶Frank Willett, *Op. Cit.*, 1960, p. 69; Robert Soper, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 12-20.

¹⁷Samuel Ojo, *Iwe Itan Oyo, Ikoyi ati Afijio* (Saki: Bamgbade Press, n. d.), p. 34.

¹⁸It is only recently that an indepth research on Old Oyo arts was done by the present writer for a Ph. D. thesis which has just been submitted to the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, August 1991.

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