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Historical Perspectives of Erunmu: Origins, Devastation, Resettlement, and Development of an Owu Town in Yorubaland

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ABSTRACT

The history of Erunmu, an Owu town in present-day Oyo State, Nigeria, has been subject to contested narratives and incomplete documentation. This study provides an authentic account of Erunmu's origins, its devastation during the nineteenth-century Yoruba civil wars, subsequent resettlement, and modern development. To document and analyze the historical perspectives of Erunmu, tracing its foundations from the Owu dynasty, through its destruction in 1825, to its resettlement and contemporary growth in education, religion, economics, and infrastructure. This study adopted the historical tools in line with qualitative cross-sectional survey qualitative historical research design utilizing multiple primary sources. Data collection methods included structured interviews with key informants and community elders, oral traditions from bard singers (arokin), analysis of chieftaincy declarations and court records, and review of published historical texts including Johnson's History of the Yorubas and Seventh-day Adventist church records. Triangulation of sources was employed to validate contested historical claims. The study established that the Erunmu's were of the Owu extraction. It was also revealed that indeed, Erunmu was a vassal Owu town before she was laid siege on and sacked in 1825. Resettlement was led by Oluroko, Adeniyi Ojo and a handful of the people who experienced the devastation along with him and who escaped to different locations during the war. Since resettlement, Erunmu has witnessed significant development, particularly following the introduction of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1914, which catalyzed educational advancement. Recent developments include the Federal Housing Estate and the landmark Inland Dry Port project. This study clarifies previously disputed aspects of Erunmu's history, particularly regarding leadership succession after resettlement. The findings contribute to the broader understanding of Owu history and post-war resettlement patterns in Yorubaland, while documenting the town's transformation into a modern community.

Keywords: Erunmu, Owu Kingdom, Yoruba History, Gbanamu War, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Traditional Leadership

INTRODUCTION

The documentation of local history in Yorubaland remains an essential endeavor for preserving cultural heritage, resolving contested narratives, and providing authentic records for future generations. Erunmu, an Owu town located approximately eighteen kilometers east of Ibadan along the Ibadan-Iwo Road in present-day Oyo State, Nigeria, represents a significant case study in Yoruba historical studies. Despite its importance as one of the earliest sites of Seventh-day Adventist missionary activity in Nigeria and its strategic location as a commercial hub, the town's history has been subject to incomplete documentation and contested interpretations.

The need for an authentic historical account of Erunmu arises from several factors. First, existing published works, while valuable, contain interpretations that contradict oral traditions preserved by community elders and bard singers. Second, the town's significance in both Owu history and Nigerian

Christian history warrants comprehensive documentation. Third, ongoing chieftaincy disputes have highlighted the importance of establishing accurate historical records regarding leadership succession.

This article responds to demands from indigenes and scholars for a definitive account of Erunmu's origins before its devastation by Ibadan warriors in 1825, the circumstances of its resettlement, and its subsequent development. By employing rigorous historical methodology and triangulating multiple sources, this study aims to provide an authoritative reference that addresses contested historical claims while documenting the town's remarkable growth in education, religion, commerce, and infrastructure.

The geographical setting of Erunmu is significant to understanding its historical development. Situated on longitude 4°05' East of the Greenwich Meridian and latitude 7°20' North of the equator, Erunmu occupies a low hill with a small stream flowing across its lower edges. The town lies in a transitional zone between the rainforest and Guinea savannah, receiving between 50 to 60 inches of rainfall annually with temperatures averaging approximately 70°F. This favorable climate, combined with fertile soil, made the area attractive to early Owu settlers seeking agricultural land and has sustained farming as the primary occupation of its inhabitants. By 1914, when early missionary records began, the population was approximately 2,000; presently, it has grown to approximately 22,000 (National Insight News, 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The historical study of Erunmu intersects with broader scholarship on Owu history, the nineteenth-century Yoruba civil wars, and post-war resettlement patterns in Yorubaland. This section reviews existing literature on these themes, identifying gaps and contested narratives that this study addresses.

Owu Origins and the Owu Dynasty

The Owu people trace their origins to Ile-Ife, the spiritual and cultural heartland of the Yoruba nation. According to Ayorinde (1973), the Owu dynasty was founded by Olowu Ajibosin Asunkungbade, whose name meaning "someone who cries to obtain his crown"—reflects the circumstances of his ascension to leadership. The official history of the Owu Kingdom (Owu Kingdom Official History, 2023) documents that following the nineteenth-century Yoruba wars, Owu people dispersed to various locations, with some migrating to Abeokuta in 1834 while others settled in ancestral Owu territories.

Erunmu's connection to the Owu dynasty is established through oral tradition, which identifies Sobikan (also known as Oluwokun), a grandson of Ajibosin from the Amororo ruling house of Orile-Owu, as the founder and first Oluroko (head of farmers) of Erunmu. This genealogical connection places Erunmu within the broader network of Owu settlements that flourished before the devastating wars of the early nineteenth century.

The Nineteenth-Century Yoruba Civil Wars

The Yoruba civil wars of the nineteenth century fundamentally reshaped the political geography of Yorubaland. Johnson's seminal work, *History of the Yorubas* (2022), provides the most comprehensive account of these conflicts, including the wars that led to the destruction of Owu towns. Johnson documents the Gbanamu War (meaning "war of grasping fire"), in which Ibadan and its allies, including Kurumi's Ijaye warriors, defeated the Owu coalition that included warriors from Erunmu, Ikire, Apomu, and Egba land.

The siege and eventual destruction of Erunmu in 1825 is vividly described by Johnson (2022: 284-289), who notes that conditions became so dire that "the price of a frog came to 120 cowries." This account establishes the severity of the siege and the complete devastation that followed, resulting in the death of the Oluroko Aderinkolu and the dispersal of survivors to various locations across Yorubaland.

Post-War Resettlement Patterns

Scholarship on post-war resettlement in Yorubaland reveals diverse patterns. The Owu-in-Council (2023) documents that following the destruction of Owu towns, survivors pursued multiple strategies: some migrated to Abeokuta where they were welcomed by the Egba in 1834, while others returned to or remained in original Owu territories.

The resettlement of Erunmu, however, has been subject to contested narratives. Babalola (2002), in his work on Seventh-day Adventist church history, presents an account attributing the resettlement primarily to Iyiola, whom he describes as returning "as a free man in 1849" after being "taken captive by Egba warriors." Similarly, Quadri's work on the Owu dynasty supports elements of this narrative. However, these accounts contradict oral traditions preserved within Erunmu, which consistently attribute the resettlement to Adeniyi Ojo, described as the eldest surviving son of the last Oluroko Aderinkolu.

Missionary Activity and Educational Development

The introduction of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to Erunmu in 1914 represents a pivotal moment in the town's modern history. Agboola (2001) documents the establishment of the first elementary school with seven pupils by Elder D.C. Babcock, marking the beginning of Western education in the community. Alalade (2008) further examines the factors affecting Adventist church growth in Nigeria, providing context for understanding Erunmu's significance as "the cradle of the Adventist church in Nigeria."

Gaps in Existing Literature

The review of existing literature reveals several gaps that this study addresses. First, there is no comprehensive account integrating Erunmu's pre-war history, its devastation, resettlement, and modern development. Second, contested narratives regarding leadership succession require resolution through rigorous examination of primary sources. Third, the town's development in the post-independence era remains largely undocumented in academic literature.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative historical research design, integrating multiple primary and secondary sources to construct an authentic account of Erunmu's history. The design follows established principles of historical research methodology, emphasizing source triangulation, critical evaluation of evidence, and distinction between primary and secondary accounts.

Data Sources

Primary Sources:

1. **Oral Traditions:** Structured interviews were conducted with key informants including community elders, descendants of historical figures, and custodians of oral tradition. Bard singers (arokin) were engaged to provide traditional narratives passed down through generations.
2. **Official Records:** The Oyo State Chieftaincy Declaration Review Commission records (1976), minutes of Sobikan Ruling House meetings (1972-1977), and local government traditional council records were examined.
3. **Unpublished Manuscripts:** These included Jacob Oyejide Oyerinde's manuscript on the Story of the Oluroko of Erunmu (1972), oral presentation records from the Olubadan's Palace (1977), and Oyerinde B.O.'s manuscript prepared for the Historical Society of Nigeria (2021).
4. **Church Records:** Seventh-day Adventist mission records documenting early missionary activity, school enrollment, and church establishment were consulted.

Secondary Sources:

1. Published historical texts including Johnson's History of the Yorubas (2022 edition)
2. Ayorinde's Owu in Yoruba History (1973)
3. Babalola's On Becoming a Conference (2002)
4. Agboola's Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (2001)
5. Owu Kingdom Official History (2023)

Data Collection Methods

Key Informant Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eleven key informants between 2020 and 2023. Informants were selected based on their knowledge of Erunmu's history, their positions within the community, or their descent from historically significant families. Interviews were conducted in Yoruba and transcribed for analysis.

Document Analysis: Historical documents were subjected to external criticism (authenticity verification) and internal criticism (content reliability assessment) following standard historiographical practice.

Triangulation: Conflicting accounts were identified and subjected to comparative analysis, with greater weight given to accounts supported by multiple independent sources.

Analytical Approach

The study employed thematic historical analysis, organizing evidence chronologically and thematically to construct a coherent narrative. Where sources conflicted, the principle of convergence was applied: accounts supported by multiple independent sources were favored over those relying on single testimonies. The analysis explicitly addressed contested narratives, presenting evidence for competing interpretations and providing reasoned conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants. The study respected the sensitivity of chieftaincy matters while maintaining commitment to historical accuracy. Where living individuals or their recent ancestors are discussed in contested contexts, care was taken to present evidence fairly and to distinguish between established facts and interpretations.

Limitations

The study's reliance on oral traditions, while essential for documenting pre-literate historical periods, introduces challenges related to memory, transmission, and potential bias. Some documentary sources were unavailable or incomplete. The ongoing nature of chieftaincy disputes may influence certain informants' accounts. These limitations were addressed through source triangulation and explicit acknowledgment of uncertainty where evidence is inconclusive.

Historical Background: The Origins of Ancient Erunmu

Erunmu is fundamentally an Owu town, established by descendants of the Owu dynasty who migrated from Orile-Owu in the late eighteenth century. Understanding the town's origins requires tracing its genealogical and cultural connections to the broader Owu heritage.

Genealogical Foundations

The early settlers of Erunmu were descendants of Olowu Ajibosin Asunkungbade, the acclaimed founder of the Owu dynasty who originated from Ile-Ife. Oral tradition, confirmed by Ayorinde (1973) and the Owu Kingdom Official History (2023), establishes that Sobikan, one of Ajibosin's grandchildren, led a group from Orile-Owu across the Osun River seeking new territory for settlement and farming.

Sobikan, also known as Oluwokun, was from the Amororo ruling house, one of six lineages descended from the children of Olowu Ajibosin Asunkungbade. He became the first Oluroko of Erunmu. The title "Oluroko," meaning "head of farmers and farmlands," reflects the agricultural focus of the early settlement and later evolved into the primary leadership designation for Erunmu's rulers.

The Three Settlements of Erunmu

The establishment of Erunmu involved three successive locations, each associated with specific circumstances that prompted relocation.

First Settlement (Erunmu Ekute): The initial settlers established themselves at a location called Alamure, not far from the present town site. According to oral tradition, they were drawn to this location by a river that, while malodorous, proved potable—"o nrun sugbon o se mu" (it smells but it is drinkable). This characteristic gave the settlement its name: Erunmu, derived from the Yoruba description of the water's properties. However, the settlers were eventually compelled to relocate when the settlement was invaded by giant rats that exhumed and consumed the buried umbilical cords of newborn children, causing infant deaths.

Second Settlement (Erunmu Arin): The displaced community moved to a second location nearer to the present site. However, this settlement was also abandoned following a tragic incident during an Egungun (masquerade) festival, when a falling tree killed the performing masquerade and spectators. The community interpreted this event as a bad omen, prompting a second relocation.

Third Settlement (Present Location): The third and permanent location was selected for its favorable geography, including proximity to the rivers Ahoyaya (in the Amode area) and Dagbo, fertile agricultural land, and defensive advantages. At this location, Erunmu flourished, benefiting from the community's welcoming disposition toward immigrants and its connections with neighboring Owu towns including Apomu, Ikire, Ipetumodu, and Iwo.

RISE AND FALL OF ANCIENT ERUNMU

Growth and Prosperity

At its third and permanent location, Erunmu experienced remarkable growth. The town's prosperity was built upon several foundations. Agriculture flourished in the fertile soil, with farmers producing yams, cassava, maize, and beans for domestic consumption, as well as cash crops including cocoa, kola nuts, oranges, and oil palm. The marshy gardens (akuro) within the town yielded various vegetables. Trade with neighboring towns and villages expanded, and the population grew substantially.

Erunmu's success led to its evolution from a farming settlement into a significant walled town. The community developed strong military capabilities to defend against external threats during the period of civil unrest in Yorubaland. The town's strategic importance grew to the point where it became a chief vassal town to the Owus, particularly to Orile-Owu.

Prelude to War

The factors that led to Erunmu's destruction were multiple and interconnected. First, the town harbored Maye, an Owu warrior and warlord of considerable reputation. Second, and more significantly, Erunmu provided refuge to Oba Akinjobi, the Olowu of Orile-Owu, who escaped to the town following the defeat of his forces by Ibadan warriors during the Gbanamu War. This accommodation of Ibadan's defeated enemy provoked the displeasure of Ibadan's warlords.

Third, emboldened by its military strength and confidence in its formidable walls, Erunmu took aggressive actions against Ibadan, ravaging farmlands, causing food shortages, and cutting supplies to the emerging power. Fourth, Erunmu raised an army comprising warriors from multiple Owu-aligned towns including Ikire, Apomu, Ipetumodu, and Egba land to challenge the Ibadan warlords.

The Siege and Destruction (1825)

The military confrontation culminated in the Gbanamu War, named for its intensity ("war of grasping fire"). Ibadan and its allies, notably including Kurumi and his Ijaye warriors, emerged victorious. Following their victory, the Ibadan-led coalition laid siege to Erunmu.

Johnson (2022: 284-289) provides the most detailed account of the siege, describing the extreme hardship endured by the inhabitants. The siege was so prolonged and devastating that the price of a frog reached 120 cowries an indication of the severe food shortage within the walls. The siege ended with Erunmu's complete destruction in 1825.

The consequences were severe. The reigning Oluroko, Aderinkolu, was slain along with the king of Idomapa who was his guest. Oba Akinjobi of Orile-Owu, whose presence in Erunmu had contributed to the conflict, was led to the Osun River where, according to Yoruba oral tradition, his slave was secretly mandated to execute him since it was taboo for any of the warlords to directly execute an Oyo traditional ruler captured in war.

The children of Oluroko and many other inhabitants fled to various parts of Yorubaland. As documented by the Owu-in-Council (2023) and Ayorinde (1973), some Erunmu and other Owu people eventually migrated to Abeokuta in 1834, while others settled in various Owu communities in their original territories.

Resettlement and Governance

The Decision to Resettle

Following the war that devastated Erunmu in 1825, survivors dispersed to multiple locations including Abeokuta, Ikire, Apomu, Ikoyi, Iwo, and surrounding towns and villages. However, the memory of ancient Erunmu's glory persisted among those who had witnessed it, and the desire to restore the town eventually crystallized into action. The initiative to resettle Erunmu was led by Adeniyi Ojo, the most elderly surviving son of the last Oluroko Aderinkolu. Motivated by the Yoruba proverb "ti esin ba da ni, a a tun gun ni" (if you are thrown from horseback, you remount), Adeniyi Ojo convened other survivors to deliberate on restoration.

The prominent individuals involved in the resettlement decision included Adeniyi Ojo (the convener), Mogbolayo, Lambua, Ekeolu, Adeomi, and Aderombi. Following custom, they consulted the Ifa oracle, which directed them to perform a ritual (gbe ebo) at the site. Upon confirmation of the ritual's acceptance (ebo fin ebo da), Adeniyi Ojo led the group to Iba Oluyole, then the Baale and ruler of Ibadan, to seek permission to resettle Erunmu that is, to "gba ahoro" (cleanse the relic).

Iba Oluyole granted their request, and the resettlement commenced. Others from the original community began joining from various locations. Among those who joined was Adefakan, a residual inhabitant who had remained near the original site and was invited to join the restored community.

Leadership after Resettlement

After resettlement, Adeniyi Ojo naturally assumed leadership as the acknowledged eldest son of the last Oluroko. Community elders regularly met in his compound to deliberate on matters concerning the town's growth and to address community issues.

During one such meeting, Adeniyi Ojo inquired about the whereabouts of his younger brother, Iyiola. It was discovered that Iyiola was residing at Odunko, a nearby village in the Egbeda area where he had taken refuge during the war. Adeniyi Ojo traveled to Odunko to persuade Iyiola to return home, assuring him that conditions were now favorable. Subsequently, Iyiola made regular visits to Erunmu, becoming known to the other elders.

When Adeniyi Ojo died at an advanced age, his brother Iyiola, the last surviving son of Aderinkolu, was invited to return permanently to bury his brother and assume leadership of the community. After the burial, Iyiola inherited the young wife of Adeniyi Ojo along with his other properties, in accordance with custom, and became the leader of the community.

Leadership Succession in Modern Erunmu

The death of both surviving sons of Aderinkolu (Adeniyi Ojo and subsequently Iyiola) created a succession challenge that resulted in a prolonged interregnum. Understanding this period requires clarification of the consanguineous relationships established through the traditional practice of wife inheritance.¹

Following the custom of the time, Ifa divination was consulted to identify the next leader after Iyiola's death. Kehinde, the only male child of Adeniyi Ojo, was nominated. However, during preparations for his installation, Kehinde died, and his ambition remained unfulfilled. His siblings were female and therefore ineligible under the prevailing succession customs. His sons Oyelami, Oyerinde, and Oyedeji—were deemed too young for leadership. Similarly, Iyiola's male children Oyetoro Oyelese, Oyebola, and Oyebami—were also not of sufficient age.

According to oral accounts rendered by Oyelami and Oyedeji, who lived long enough to remember these events, the town's elders assumed custodial governance pending the maturation of the children from both sides. This arrangement resulted in approximately twenty-five years without an installed leader. In 1897, Iba Oluyole, then ruler of Ibadan, summoned the custodial elders to present the male children of both Kehinde and Iyiola for consideration. Oyetoro Oyelese was adjudged the most mature and was pronounced and installed as Baale of Erunmu. He reigned for fifty-eight years (1897-1953).

During Oyetoro Oyelese's reign, several landmark developments occurred. He embraced Christianity and facilitated the introduction of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when missionaries led by Pastor David Babcock arrived in 1914, becoming one of the first converts. Today, Erunmu is recognized as the cradle of the Adventist church in Nigeria. He also distributed chieftaincy titles among various families

to foster unity. Subsequent succession followed a pattern of alternation and contestation between the Adeniyi Ojo and Iyiola lines of the Sobikan ruling house:

- Following Oyetoro Oyelese's death in 1953, Israel Oyerinde (Adeniyi Ojo line) and Akinboye (Iyiola line) contested the stool from 1954 to 1957 (as documented by Dr. John Oyedokun Oyelese in testimony to the Oyo State Chieftaincy Declaration Review Commission, December 22, 1976). Akinboye was installed in 1957.
- After Akinboye's death in 1972, Oyejide Oyerinde (Adeniyi Ojo line) contested against Raimi Oyebanji (Iyiola line). Raimi was installed in 1977.
- In 2005, Oyejide Oyerinde (Adeniyi Ojo line) again contested against Joseph Oyelese (Iyiola line). Neither was selected; instead, an individual whose heritage was not covered by the 1976 Oyo State Chieftaincy Declaration was installed.
- In 2017, Alhaji Tijani Oyelese was enthroned without consultation with the Adeniyi Ojo side.

Following Alhaji Tijani Oyelese's death, the two sides held meetings to select a consensus candidate but could not reach agreement. The matter was referred to the Egbeda Local Government traditional council, which decided in favor of the Adeniyi Ojo side. The case was subsequently referred to the Olubadan in Council, where His Imperial Majesty, Late Oba Saliu Adetunji Aje Ogungunniso, resolved the matter in favor of the Adeniyi Ojo side, noting past injustices.

Oyesola Akanji Oyerinde was formally installed by the Olubadan as Baale of Erunmu on May 24, 2021. The installation included traditional rites including the Akoko ceremony and other customary practices associated with prominent Yoruba rulers.

Footnote:

¹ The consanguineous relationships between the two lines require explanation. When Adeniyi Ojo died, his brother Iyiola inherited Ajayi, Adeniyi Ojo's junior wife who was still of childbearing age. Ajayi bore three children to Iyiola: Oyebamiji, Oyetunji, and Oyeteju. Later, when Iyiola died, Kehinde (the only male child of Adeniyi Ojo) inherited Eyinosun, Iyiola's younger wife, who bore three children to Kehinde: Oyedeji, Oyedele, and Aroyehun. This cross-inheritance demonstrated the close relationship between both sides—as the Yoruba saying goes, "Ti ogun ba je lo, ogbon a je bo" (what goes around comes around).

Socio-Economic Development

Commerce and Trade

The primary economic lifeline of Erunmu is the "Station Market," named for its proximity to the railway station. This market, operating on a five-day cycle, serves communities throughout present-day Oyo State. Fresh agricultural products, fabrics, provisions, farming implements, and kitchen materials are traded. There is also a cocoa grading station serving local farmers, and historically, the railway station facilitated the transport of cash crops to northern Nigeria and other regions.

Agriculture

True to its origins the title "Oluroko" means head of farmers agriculture remains central to Erunmu's economy. Residents cultivate cash crops including cocoa, kola nuts, palm produce, oranges, and cashew. Arable farming includes yams, cassava, maize, and vegetables. Animal husbandry encompasses cattle rearing, goat keeping, poultry, and pig farming.

Vocational Activities

Beyond agriculture and trade, residents engage in various vocations including masonry, carpentry, weaving, and tie-and-dye textile production. Professional associations such as the Union of Tailors, Carpenters Association, and Market Women Association provide organizational frameworks for these activities.

Security and Governance Infrastructure

Erunmu now hosts the headquarters of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) for Ajorosun LCDA. The Nigeria Police Force and the Oyo State Amotekun security outfit maintain presence in the town, facilitating economic activities.

Religion and Cultural Practices

Traditional Religion

Before the introduction of Islam and Christianity, Erunmu's religious life centered on traditional Yoruba practices including:

- **Anlugbua:** Annual celebration honoring Owu warriors, reflecting the town's Owu heritage
- **Osun:** Worship of the river goddess
- **Sango:** Worship of the god of thunder
- **Ogun:** Worship of the god of iron
- **Egungun Festival:** Celebrations commemorating ancestors
- **Aluku:** Celebrations specific to the Ekeolu family (Oosa family)
- **Oro:** Traditional worship practices
- **Ifa:** Divination practices

Islam

Islam spread to Ibadan around 1829, and Erunmu, being under Ibadan's influence, received the religion around the same period. Today, numerous mosques serve the Muslim community, including the Central Mosque and Masjid Almoharfa Mosque (Mosalasi Sheu) in the Balogun area.

Christianity

The introduction of Christianity to Erunmu represents a pivotal historical moment. The Seventh-day Adventist Church became the first Christian denomination to enter Erunmu on March 7, 1914. The church gradually converted members from both Muslim and traditional religious backgrounds. Today, Erunmu is recognized as the birthplace of the Adventist church in Nigeria, and the denomination has spread throughout the country from this origin point. Subsequent Christian denominations established in Erunmu include Christ Apostolic Church, Catholic Church, Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Winners Chapel, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Celestial Church of Christ, and various Pentecostal churches.

Educational and Health Development

Educational Development

The presence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church catalyzed Western education in Erunmu. Elder D.C. Babcock established the first elementary school in 1914 with seven pupils (Agboola, 2001). This institution became the Seventh-day Adventist Central School in 1928. Initially, pupils could only complete Standard Four in Erunmu before transferring to Seventh-day Adventist Primary School at Oke-Bola, Ibadan, for Standards Five and Six. In 1945, the school was upgraded to a full six-year institution, with the first class of Standard Six graduates completing their education in December 1946.

The Western Nigeria free education program led to the establishment of additional schools: Ibadan District Council Primary School and St. John's Primary School near the railway station. In 1955, the Seventh-day Adventist Church established the first Secondary Modern School, providing vocational training in carpentry, home economics, and agriculture while preparing students for higher education. In 1972, following a visit by Dr. Omololu Olunloyo (Commissioner for Education), the secondary modern school was converted to Idi-Ito High School, named after a landmark tree where travelers traditionally gathered to await transportation. The school continues to produce graduates who excel in various fields. The town now hosts several private educational institutions, including an Islamic school and a college of education.

Health Development

Elder D.C. Babcock initiated public health efforts by constructing wells, including the famous "Babcock's Well" at the teacher's compound, which helped eradicate guinea worm and other waterborne diseases. Pastor J.A. Dare subsequently established the first basic health clinic (dispensary) at the 1932 church premises.

Private healthcare facilities developed from the 1960s, including Adelakin Health Clinic, Tokotaya Maternity Centre, and the currently operating Omolabake Clinic and Maternity Centre. A Primary Health Care Centre was established by the Egbeda Local Government along Kasumu Road, later replaced by a federal government intervention facility. In March 2023, the Oyo State government equipped and

upgraded healthcare centers across 33 LGAs, including the Erunmu maternity center located near the station market.

Infrastructure Development

Transportation

Erunmu is linked to Ibadan and Iwo via a Trunk "A" road and to Lalupon and Egbeda via a Grade "C" road. A 6.45-kilometer road connects through Olodo to Kasumu-Ajia junction and Egbeda. The town has a railway station that historically facilitated the transport of goods.

Public Facilities

The town hosts a Magistrate and Customary Court, a small hall for social activities, a standard post office, and enjoys electricity and pipe-borne water supply. A large Seventh-day Adventist church campus is located along Kasumu Road.

Major Development Projects

Two landmark developments position Erunmu for significant future growth:

Federal Housing Estate: Currently under construction, this project aims to ease housing pressures in and around the town.

Inland Dry Port: This landmark federal government project, when completed, will:

- Provide quick access to port facilities from inland transport networks
- Ease challenges faced by importers and exporters
- Facilitate cargo delivery to the hinterland
- Decongest Lagos ports at Apapa and Tin Can Island

The dry port is expected to transform Erunmu into an important logistics hub, stimulating economic activities, infrastructure development, and employment opportunities.

Discussion

Clarification of Contested Historical Narratives

This study addresses several contested aspects of Erunmu's history where published accounts contradict oral traditions. The central dispute concerns leadership after resettlement. Babalola (2002) and Quadri both present narratives that attribute the resettlement of Erunmu primarily to Iyiola, claiming he returned "as a free man in 1849" after being "taken captive by Egba warriors." However, this account contains several problematic elements.

First, Johnson (2022) clearly establishes that the Egba were allies of the Owus in the wars culminating in the Gbanamu War against Ibadan. It is therefore implausible that Iyiola would have been captured by his father's allies.

Second, the claim that Iyiola "resettled Erunmu and was installed as ruler in 1849" raises logical difficulties: if he was alone, over whom would he rule? The oral traditions consistently describe a group effort at resettlement, led by Adeniyi Ojo and including Mogbolayo, Lambua, Ekeolu, Adeomi, Aderombi, and later Adefakan.

Third, oral traditions preserved within Erunmu consistently identify Iyiola as having escaped to Odunko village near Egbeda, from where his elder brother Adeniyi Ojo later fetched him to join the resettled community.

Fourth, no oral tradition or bard singer's account supports the claim that Iyiola was ever formally installed as ruler of Erunmu. He became community leader only after his brother Adeniyi Ojo's death, inheriting leadership along with his brother's young wife according to custom.

The apparent errors in published accounts may stem from reliance on single informants or limited engagement with primary sources. This study's triangulation of multiple oral sources, chieftaincy

records, and documentary evidence supports the conclusion that Adeniyi Ojo was the primary leader of resettlement and first acknowledged leader of the new town.

The Interregnum Explained

Babalola (2002) attributes the twenty-five-year interregnum to the fact that "Oyetoro Oyelese was too young to succeed his father." This explanation is incomplete. The interregnum occurred not because one child was too young, but because the designated successor (Kehinde) died before installation, and all eligible children from both sides—including Oyelami, Oyerinde, and Oyedeji from Kehinde's side, and Oyelese, Oyebamiji, and Oyebola from Iyiola's side—were simultaneously too young. This collective youth, rather than any individual's age, necessitated custodial governance by elders.

Erunmu in Broader Yoruba History

Erunmu's history illuminates broader patterns in Yoruba history. The town's rise and fall during the nineteenth-century civil wars exemplifies the destructive impact of these conflicts on Owu communities. The resettlement process demonstrates the resilience of displaced communities and the role of kinship networks in reconstruction. The introduction of Christianity and Western education through the Seventh-day Adventist Church represents a pattern replicated across southern Nigeria, where missionary activity catalyzed social transformation.

Contemporary Relevance

The resolution of chieftaincy disputes through appeal to documented history highlights the ongoing relevance of historical research. The 1976 Oyo State Chieftaincy Declaration and its application to Erunmu demonstrates how historical evidence influences contemporary governance. The recent resolution in favor of the Adeniyi Ojo line acknowledges past injustices and seeks to restore appropriate succession patterns.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive account of Erunmu's history from its origins as an Owu settlement in the late eighteenth century through its destruction in 1825, resettlement, and development into a modern community. Several key findings emerge. First, Erunmu was founded by Owu descendants of Olowu Ajibosin Asunkungbade, establishing genealogical connections that remain significant to community identity. Second, the resettlement of Erunmu was led by Adeniyi Ojo, the eldest surviving son of the last Oluroko Aderinkolu, contrary to some published accounts attributing this role to Iyiola. This clarification has implications for understanding legitimate succession within the Sobikan ruling house. Third, the prolonged interregnum following the deaths of Adeniyi Ojo and Iyiola resulted from the collective youth of all eligible successors, not from any individual's age. Fourth, Erunmu's development was significantly shaped by the introduction of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1914, which catalyzed Western education and health initiatives. Fifth, contemporary development projects including the Federal Housing Estate and Inland Dry Port position Erunmu for continued growth and transformation.

This study contributes to the documentation of local history in Yorubaland, resolves contested narratives through rigorous methodology, and provides an authentic reference for community members, scholars, and policymakers. Future research might examine Erunmu's diaspora communities, the social impact of the forthcoming dry port, and comparative studies with other resettled Owu towns.

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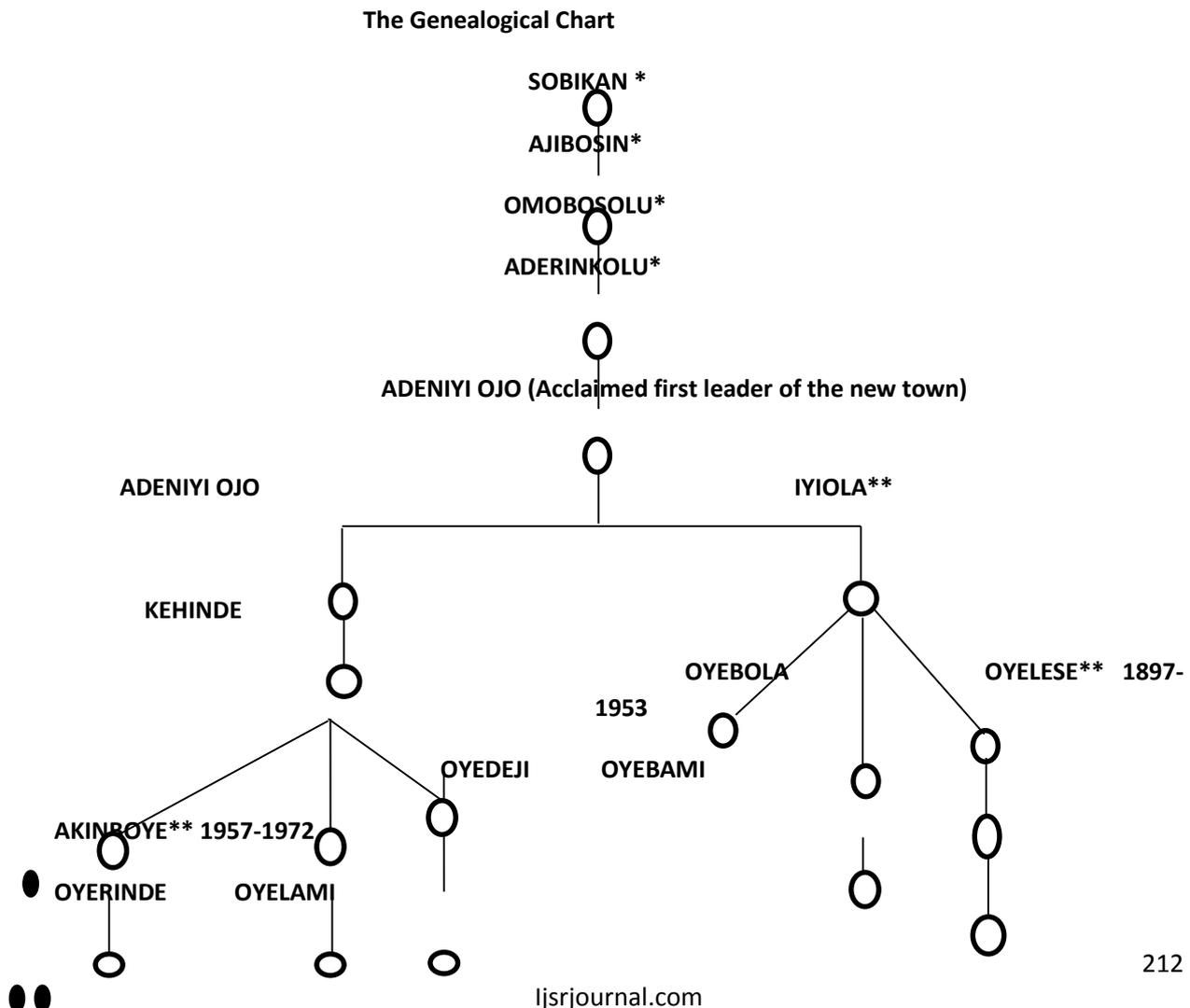
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APPENDIX A: GENEALOGICAL CHART OF THE SOBIKAN RULING HOUSE

Figure 1: Genealogical Chart of the Sobikan Ruling House, Erunmu
(Pre-War and Post-War Leadership)

GENERATION 1-4: PRE-WAR RULERS (Marked with *)

SOBIKAN RULING HOUSE, ERUNMU GENEALOGY BEFORE AND AFTER THE WAR



*king/Bale up to the time Erunmu was sacked in 1825

**Acclaimed leader/Bale after the death of Adeniyi Ojo following the resettlement

● Contested between 1953 and 1957

● ● Contested twice between 1972 and 1977 and between 2005 and 2010

*Note that only male descendants were listed in this genealogy map as was the practice and is still been practiced in certain Owu towns and quarters up till today

NOTE: Only male descendants are listed, following traditional Owu reckoning practices.

APPENDIX B: TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

Year	Event
Late 18th Century	Founding of Erunmu by Sobikan and Owu settlers
1825	Destruction of Erunmu following the Gbanamu War
c. 1830s-1840s	Resettlement of Erunmu led by Adeniyi Ojo
1834	Some Erunmu people migrate to Abeokuta
c. 1861-1862	Death of Iyiola; beginning of interregnum
1897	Installation of Oyetoro Oyelese as Baale
1914	Arrival of Seventh-day Adventist missionaries; first school established
1928	SDA Central School established
1932	Third SDA church building constructed
1945	School upgraded to full six-year primary
1946	First Standard Six graduates
1953	Death of Oyetoro Oyelese
1955	Establishment of Secondary Modern School
1957	Installation of Akinboye as Baale
1972	Death of Akinboye; Idi-Ito High School established
1976	Oyo State Chieftaincy Declaration

Year	Event
1977	Installation of Raimi Oyebanji as Baale
1982	Post office established
1988	Railway station renamed to Erunmu Railway Station
2021	Installation of Oyesola Akanji Oyerinde as Baale
2023	Healthcare center upgraded by Oyo State government
Ongoing	Federal Housing Estate and Inland Dry Port development

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Alh. Olaoye Oyerinde was born in 1948 at Erunmu. His primary and secondary education were completed in the town before proceeding to Efon Alaiye teachers Training college for his grade 2 teaching certificate. Following a brilliant performance, it was not difficult for him to gain an admission into the prestigious University of Ibadan for a combined honours bachelor's degree in History and Geography. After graduation, he was employed by the Oyo State government where he served in varying capacities as classroom teacher, vice-principal, and principal in first class schools in the state. Beyond this, he equally served as the Oyo State chapter ANCORPS president for upwards of ten years. He finally retired at the level of a Director in the state ministry education, served meritoriously for 35years. He is a writer, mentor to many young men and happily married to a beautiful wife, a marriage that is blessed with children and many grand children.

Prof. Oyeseun O Oyerinde. Born in Erunmu, Egbeda Local Government of Oyo State six decades ago, Professor. Oyerinde, Olufemi Oyeseun had his primary school education in a number of schools including the Seventh-Day Adventist Primary Schools in Ile-Ife, Erunmu and Oke-Bola, Ibadan. He attended the Adventist Grammar School, Ede and Anglican Grammar School, Ile-Oluji for his West African School Certificate and Higher School Certificate respectively. He obtained his B.Sc. Honours and the Masters and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Ife Ile- Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University with specialization in Health Education and Promotion. He is a versatile and prolific writer with one single authored book, one co-authored book and contributed chapters to sixteen books many articles in reputable International and national journals. As a mark of his recognition in his academic area, he has served as resource person to the UNICEF Abuja and Federal Ministry of Education on School Health in Nigeria. He was also a member of the delegate to discuss and review the UNESCO Charter on Professionalism in Physical and Health Education in Nigeria. This author has served in various management capacities during his career and is deeply involved in the initiation and execution of University and community Projects and programme review. He has mentored a number of Ph.D., Master and undergraduate Students. His recognition has earned him external examiner status in Nigerian Universities and editor to Academic Journals. Major Service to community includes Pioneer Board Member to the Kwara Conference Polytechnic, Osi, and Director, Strategic Planning to the Kwara Conference. He is by the grace of God an elder of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church World Wide. He is married to his heart throb, Nee Adebola Amosun, He is blessed with male and Female children and grand children. He has a strong desire for accountability, justice, fair-play and integrity.

Elder Caleb Oyejola Oyerinde was born in September 1956 at Oyun Ekiti to Pa Jacob Oyejide Oyerinde of Erunmu. He had his elementary school education at SDA school Erunmu and Government L.A. school in Owo, Ondo State. He capped this up with a secondary school education at Adventist Grammar School Ede and a sub degree, Nursing training at S.D.A. Nursing School, IL-Ife, He obtained his first degree in History in University of Ife OAU and a Master degree at the University of Ibadan. He soon after secured an appointment in Seventh-day Adventist Church world wide and a Justice of Peace (JP) in Oyo State. Elder Oyeola is a member of many professional bodies including but not limited to the Institute of Nigerian Institute of Management and the Nigerian Universities Professional Association. He is happily Married to Deaconess Monilade Oyerinde and blessed with four children and grand children.