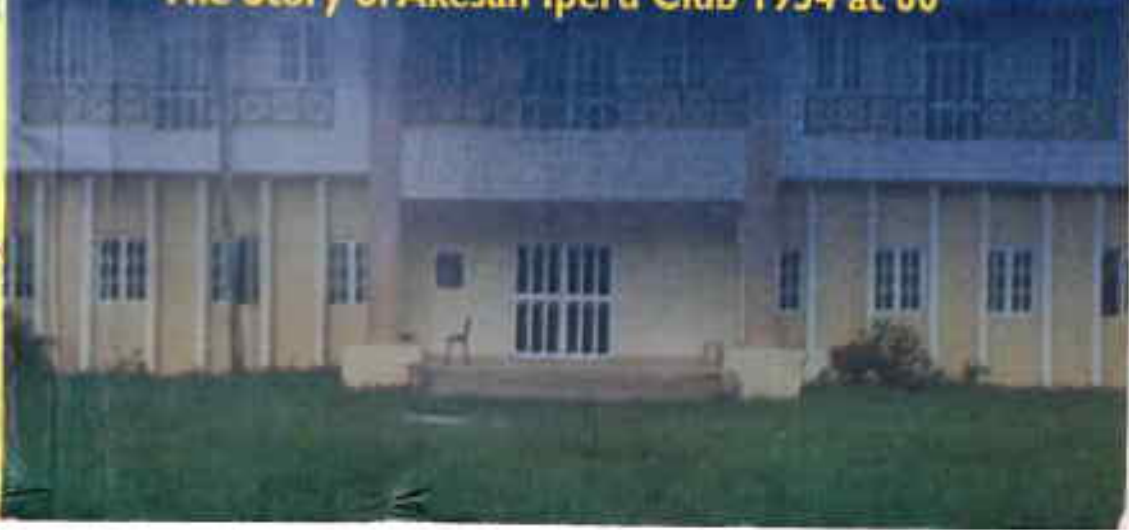




A SENSE OF IDENTITY

The Story of Akesan Iperu Club 1954 at 60



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Dedication

We dedicate this book to:

- Our fathers, the Regents of Iperu Remo in 1970, the Lisa Chief Ogunlaja, the Balogun, Chief M. S. Sanusi, the Oluwo, Chief Adegbodun for allocating the land on which we have built our Club Hall.
- The Founding Fathers, Patron and Matron of the Club for their labour and steadfastness, especially in the early developmental stage.
- And to all Members for keeping the faith!

May the verdict of history be kinder!

Acknowledgement

The Club President, Sir Chief Kessington Olubokola Adebutu, KJW, CON, acknowledges all those who have given valuable time to the growth and development of the Akesan Iperu Club (1954) from inception.

We appreciate the work of the 60th anniversary committee and the various subcommittees in making our Diamond Jubilee a success.

We thank Chief Uyinade Osinowo and his team for writing the Club history.

We salute our Club elders for their labour of love in nurturing our Club to its present heights.

We thank Sir Prof. Adolphus Owolabi Somorin for his insightful foreword to this book.

We commend the Executive Committee and all members of the Club for their cherished cooperation.

We thank Messrs. Diamond Publications Ltd for their valiant effort in bringing out this book at very short notice.

Foreword

It is with mixed feelings that I write this foreword. Of the twelve of us who started Akesan Iperu Club in 1954, seven have joined the Saints Triumphant. We salute them, the Fallen Heroes. Their labour shall not be in vain.

Realising that we were young, ambitious school leavers preparing for our post secondary education, late Sir Olu Awotesu was excited by the double joyful news that late Dapo Soyege's had won a Western Nigeria Government Scholarship and also the opportunity to travel to the United Kingdom to study. He spread the news among his friends and took up the challenge to organise a send off party for Soyege.

It was in the course of organising this party that the idea of a social club manifested. The formal unveiling of the Club in 1954 registered our association among the progressive circles of Iperu town. For a long time, we organised annual social activities, which further endeared us to the community. We never lost sight of our educational ambitions. Indeed Soyege's trip was a pathfinder for many others. Subsequently, more members, who fitted our vision

A SENSE OF IDENTITY:

of a progressive group of professionals and entrepreneurs joined. To date, the membership figure has never exceeded 49. Fourteen have passed on, leaving 35 alive of which 25 are active.

The early years of the Club were challenging. We graduated to meeting at each other's homes, thereby getting to know our families better. We taxed ourselves to realise the dream of having a Club hall that would also be a repository of community history. We taxed ourselves and organised various fundraising activities in Iperu and Lagos. Rising costs led to lack of funds. Morale of members was low and it appeared the project would fail. Our Patron, Chief Joseph Akintoye Oyebanjo invited us to his home, counselling us not to give up, lending his support. The former regents of Iperu, late Chiefs Ladega and Awopeju equally encouraged us.

Gradually, Akesan Iperu Club 1954 grew and our dream of a hall was finally realised. Our dreams of impacting on our community remain unrelenting. Our members are accomplished ambassadors of their homeland, doing the name of Iperu Akesan proud in their exploits at local, state, federal and international levels.

Membership continues to be cultivated along stringent admission criteria. Members' sense of community continues to be developed. Our Club hall is wearing a new look. Thanks to the President, the executive and members. The future of the Club is good. The association is based on long-lasting friendship, equal status of members, and respect for elders.

The Club needs a trust fund and investment which should be managed to ease the burden of administration in future. Well conceived literary policies should also implemented to strengthen the cultural relevance of the Club to the community. Iperu's claim to the Eyo Festival should be emphasised and integrated into the Akesan Iperu Club celebration.

At 60, we can say God has been kind to us.

Long live Nigeria
Long live Iperu Remo
Long live Akesan Iperu Club 1954

Sir Prof. Otunba Adolphus Owolabi Somorin, JP, KJW

Contents

Chapter One	1
Chapter Two	6
Chapter Three	12
Chapter Four	15
Chapter Five	28
Chapter Six	40
References	56
Index	57

CHAPTER ONE

Hometown

Before Iperu Akesan Club came to be in 1954, there was Iperu from where it derives its name. Iperu is a town in South West Nigeria founded in the 13th century by Akesan, an Ile Ife princess and Ajagbe, her husband. Oral history has it that the couple, in response to Ifa oracle's pronouncement, moved southward to establish Iperu where they were assured of attaining great heights from little beginnings and enjoined to honour their creator to enjoy sustainable blessings on their undertakings.

Iperu owes its name to "the nature of the place where the first settler had her abode. As Joshua Awopeju explains in *Outline History of Iperu* (1979), "Akesan was reported to have first settled at a place where there was a palm tree close to the base of which there was a hole. Indeed it looked as if the palm tree got sunk into the ground there. In Youruba it may be described thus: 'ibi ti ope ru' (where the palm tree was sunk)".

The phrase "ibi ti ope ru" was further contracted to "b'ope ru" and operu. Awopeju, declares: "This is the most accepted etymological derivation of the name IPERU. It is also consistent with the accent and tone of pronunciation".

Iperu started out as an agrarian community. Farming was the main occupation followed by hunting. Apart from food crops which served domestic consumption, Iperu farmers also engaged in cash crops production, majorly in cocoa and kola nuts, which exposed them to big business of the era. Basket and rope manufacturing, which are spin offs from cash crop farming, was also embraced.

Iperu's early connections with Ile ife, Oyo and Ijebu Ode (by marriage) attracted some of the earliest waves of migration to people from these areas. The migrants came for a host of reasons. Some were farmers, artisans and traders who came in search of economic opportunities, encouraged in part by the fame of the Akesan market. Some were refugees searching for freedom from oppression in their native lands. Some were victims of the various intra tribal wars that dotted Yorubaland before the advent of colonial rule. Some were mercenaries enlisted to shore up Iperu's army of volunteers to ward off attacks from other areas that later stayed on after completing their assignment on the battlefield. Others were adventurers looking for fun and opportunity who found both in Iperu.

The success of Iperu as the fulcrum of Remo resistance to intrusions from other Yoruba groups in the 19th century earned it much respect in Remo division of Yorubaland and led to greater migration of people into Iperu. These waves of migrations welded Iperu into a cultural melting pot of artistic, commercial, vocational, religious and social practices. The Eyo masquerade festival, which is staged in honour of great personages in Lagos, has its origins in Iperu from where it was exported to Lagos.

Bounded by Sagamu to the south, Ode Remo to the north, Ilisan to the east and Ogere to the west, Iperu occupies a strategic point in the heart of Remoland, sitting within six kilometres of each of these townships. It is a position that locates Iperu along the trade routes of the coastal city of Lagos, other Yoruba townships of Ijebu Ode, Abeokuta and sprawling Ibadan, Oyo, and further to the north; it also makes it a player in the journey to Nigeria's rich Niger Delta and the south east. This strategic location of Iperu Remo has brought attendant economic and social benefits and contributed to the emergence of the cognomen of the Iperu Akesan indigene as tactful and smart.

Today, it is common saying to hear the people of Iperu Remo hailed in oral poetry as record by Awopeju:

“Child of offspring of Akesan
Scion of Oduduwa
Hailing from Iperu of Akesan and Alagbe
Descendant of Akesan, the Prince of Markets
Anyone who is not tactful or diplomatic
should not befriend an Akesan descendant.

In previous years Iperu was the central town for regular meetings of Obas from Remo. Iperu has also been renowned for its celebrations of traditional and religious anniversary ceremonies, making the cynosure of eyes. Today, Iperu is one of the thirty three towns that constitute Remo Kingdom headed by the Akarigbo, Oba Alayeluwa Michael Adeniyi Sonariwo, Erinjigbo II.

The fortunes of Iperu have been tied largely to larger developments in Yorubaland and the Nigerian state. The coming of Christianity in the mid 19th century to Nigeria via Badagry and Abeokuta in 1843 tested the resilience of indigenous culture. Although the first Iperu Christian was Daddy Joseph Oyegunse, who was baptised in Abeokuta in 1851, Iperu had to wait another 27 years before St. James' Anglican Church was established. It took three more missions by the Rev. James Johnson in 1882, 1890, 1892 before Christianity was finally planted in Iperu. Quite like the experience of the early converts in Abeokuta who were victimised, had their homes sacked in 1867, and exiled to Ebute Meta, Lagos, Iperu Christian converts were victimised in 1881. Homes were burnt, and people forced into exile. The story of a refugee, Daddy Bisuga is instructive. Chased out of town in 1881, he was not allowed to return until 1890 and was part of Rev Johnson's mission in 1892 that finally made a breakthrough with the Ogboni elders of the town, who had resisted the pressures of Christianity. An agent was then posted to Iperu; he later became a catechist and was ordained a priest in 1901 as first vicar of St. James Anglican Church. He was J.S. Adewakun.

The breakthrough of 1892 ushered in more missions from the Methodist, African Church, Roman Catholic, Christ Apostolic, and Salvation Army. With such missions came western education and the establishment of schools as early as 1900. Education received greater fillip when Oba Abraham Olayimika Okupe ascended the throne as Alaperu of Iperu. His 37 year reign (1939-1976) witnessed the emergence of

Iperus as worthy professionals in law, medicine, nursing, commerce, engineering and administration.

The reign of Oba Ogunfowora (1978 - 2001) also built on this legacy. Oba Adeleke Idowu, Basebo V's reign is equally consolidating on this worthy legacy of educational advancement.

CHAPTER TWO

A Club, what club?

The human being is a social animal and has always striven to associate with people of like minds. Whether professional, occupational, religious or social, human beings have always found cause to congregate, share fellowship and network. Prior to the emergence of Akesan Iperu Club 1954, some social clubs had existed in Iperu town. Established between 1940 and 1950, they were

- Iperu Social Club 1940
- Iperu Ladies Social Club (later Iperu Ladies Auxilliary Society) 1945
- Iperu Rosemary Club
- Iperu Golden Stars 1950

Led majorly by Iperu elites who could be found in various key townships in Nigeria such as Lagos and Ibadan, these clubs began to impact on the social life of Iperu, especially during public or educational holidays. Akesan Iperu Club emerged from fortuitous circumstance.

Upon completing his secondary education at the Methodist Boys High School, Lagos in 1951, Emmanuel Dapo Soyege,

an Iperu indigene, had worked as a clerk in Ibadan with the indigenous Western Regional government of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Soyege, like most ambitious young men of his era, had an eye on travelling overseas for further education. Nigeria was experimenting with the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, which created the Western Regional government. That government had free education as one of its cardinal programmes to fast track the training of needed indigenous manpower to take over the running of the country from the colonial masters, who would leave sooner than later. Soyege was one of the lucky 200 recipients of the regional government scholarships for overseas studies.

It was an excited Soyege who travelled to Lagos in 1953 to share the news with Olusanya Awotesu, a longstanding friend who shared his vision of the transformational power of western education. As was the vogue then and in line with the biblical injunction to rejoice with those who are joyful, there was talk of a send-off party for Soyege. Awotesu took it upon himself to coordinate the exercise. He reached out to friends from Remoland who were based in Lagos. He got the buy-in of just nine of them: Michael Sonariwo, Sunday Sontan, Olusola Ogunnaike, Kolawole Sodipo, Bayo Soyege, Owolabi Somorin, Doyin Awosanya, Adebisi Oduku and Kayode Ogunleye. A tenth, Uyinade Osinowo, who was then teaching at Ipara Remo, also gladly contributed. As the details of the party were being concluded, Dapo Soyege suddenly left for London to begin his training. One of the contributors, Owolabi Somorin, indeed, saw off Soyege at the Ikeja Airport. It was then his embarrassing responsibility to inform other contributors that the party honouree had left town before the party.

What was to be done with the money collected? No one had a ready answer. The disappointment was much but no one mentioned refunding the money to the contributors. Innocently enough, two weeks after Soyege's departure, Adebisi Oduekun, one of the contributors, called at the 3, Eletuwase Street, Isale Eko, residence of Olu Awotesu and Michael Sonariwo. In the course of their conversation, Oduekun shared the news of his impending membership of the Iperu Golden Stars, which was established in 1950. It sounded a good idea until Sonariwo then wondered if the money collected for Soyege's send-off party could not be utilised as seed money for the creation of a new club that would build on the existing ties among the would-be members and prepare them better to respond to such occasions as the failed send off party in future.

The idea touched a chord in Oduekun and Awotesu. After chewing on the idea and sharing it with other contributors, a meeting at that Isale Eko residence of Awotesu and Sonariwo resolved that a club should indeed be formed.

Having accepted the idea of a club, what name it should be called became the next concern. Considering that most of them were young school leavers, Awotesu came up with Iperu Young School Elites. It sounded good but it was later changed to Iperu Young Socialists. The newly formed club had its initial meeting on Boxing Day, December 26, 1953 at Awotesu's residence. In 1954, the name was again changed, this time to Akesan Iperu Club tying together the ancestral name of the matriarch and the town.

Later another meeting followed at Uyinade Osinowo's residence under the breadfruit tree at 19, Ayegbami Street, Iperu. The attendance was good. Members had gladly travelled home to discuss how to develop the idea. The Club had become a reality.

The foundation members were:

- Emmanuel Olusanya Awotesu
- Emmanuel Oladapo Soyegbe
- Isaac Adeleke Sunday Sontan
- Olusola Ogunnaike
- David Kolawole Sodipo
- David Adebayo Soyegbe
- Adolphus Owolabi Somorin
- Adedoyin Awosanya
- Adebisi Oduekun
- Adekunle Ogunleye
- Uyinade Osinowo
- Olusola Ajayi

The next challenge was how to introduce it to the larger public in Remoland. Members agreed to appoint some eminent Remo sons and daughters as patrons of the club. Chief J. A. K. Oyebanjo and Chief Mrs. Abiola Amusan were named patron and matron respectively. Pa Olubi Sobodu was social adviser. Having secured the approval of these social heavyweights, members fixed Easter Monday, April 19, 1954 as their grand maiden social outing. It was tagged a tea party and a long list of special guests was drawn up. Chief A. O.

Somorin, Mr. J. O. Ogunfowora (later Oba) Omo Oba J. O. Awopeju, Chief J. O. Gisanri, Chief B. M. Balogun, Chief Olatunji Dosunmu, Omo Oba D. A. Ladega (secretary of Remo Local Government), Pa E. O. Gisanri, Chief E. A. Soyombo, Chief Bayo Sosan featured high on the list.

The tea party was so successful that it became the talk of not only Iperu Township, but indeed of Remo Kingdom. These young leavers who were fired by the zeal to improve themselves educationally began to attract more than a nodding interest from discerning quarters. Their goal of education advancement was boosted anytime one member travelled abroad or gained admission into higher institutions in Nigeria. Others saw such developments as challenges to aspire to similar heights.

Encouraged by the maiden outing, the club staged an all night dance at the St. James' School Hall (the present site of the St. James' Anglican Church, Iperu) on Christmas Day of 1955. On the band stand was E. C. Arinze, leader of the trending Highlife Band of his time in Lagos. The publicity was massive. The turnout was impressive. The hall was full, almost bursting at the seam. It was a tug of war controlling the large number of guests who came to see the Lagos wonder being replicated in Iperu. From that day, the club became the only club to have successfully organised a social night dance in Iperu at Christmas time.

In subsequent years, E. C. Arinze's Band alternated annually with Victor Olaiya's All Stars Band to perform at the club's

parties in Lagos. Funding for the club's programmes came from individual contributions of members and their honorary officers.

CHAPTER THREE

The Club's Constitution

At the formation of the Club in 1954, members decided that monthly meetings should be held on the first Sunday of each month by 2pm at the host member's residence. Such meetings had been hosted in Iperu, Lagos, Ibadan etc. For example, Dapo Soyega, Segun Olusola and Olusola Ajayi hosted members in Ibadan. In 1971, Colonel (Dr.) Tunde Ogunmekan hosted members in Agbor. Members had arrived at Agbor at midnight, held their meeting from 1am to 3am before retiring to bed, only to leave for their various stations later in the day. That sense of camaraderie showed the extent of love binding members together as they rallied round each other as occasions demanded.

Annual General Meetings were held on Boxing Day each year when it was the practice for members to come home to Iperu for the Christmas holiday. Venue was usually the Iperu residence of the host or any other convenient place such as a schoolroom. Later when the Akesan Iperu (1954) Hall was built it became the venue of the AGM. The AGM date has since been changed to February because as most members are heads of their own families they have to host their individual families at such end of year ceremonies.

The Club has a written constitution, which explains the basis for coming together. It is a simple document that has been standardised over the years. Its highlights include the following:

Aims and Objectives

- To promote, foster and preserve the long-lasting friendship among members
- To contribute to the social and economic development of Iperuland and its environs;
- To cooperate with any other persons, bodies, associations or clubs with similar objectives and activities;
- To do such other lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of any or all of the above objectives of the Club.

Motto

The Club adopted as its motto, "Charity, Unity and Progress".

Declaration

The Club shall be non-religious and non-political. It is a social association. Without prejudice to the interests of any member belonging to any religious or political organisation of their choice, such activities should not be brought into the Club.

Membership

There shall be two classes of membership, namely:

- i. Club members who are sons of Iperu of paternal or maternal origin
- ii. Honorary members who are individual who merit awards of honour

Election of Officers

The election of officers and members of the Executive Committee shall be once in two years (biennial) at the Club's annual general meeting of the relevant year.

Tenure of Office

Normally, the tenure of office of any elected member shall be for a term of two years and not for more than two terms in the same office.

CHAPTER FOUR

Honouring the Hometown

The overriding reason for bringing members together has been the love of the motherland. Over the years, members have looked for creative ways of sharing fellowship and demonstrating love for the motherland.

Mr. Awotesu (as he then was), for instance, in 1979, during the Club's silver jubilee anniversary, conceived the idea of erecting a statue of Akesan, the progenitor of the Iperus. He received enthusiastic support from many members, especially Chief Kola Sodipo, the Olofin of Iperu Remo.

Concurrently, the Club set up an association of wives to further cement the friendship bond existing among members. Named the Akesan (Iperu) Inner Circle, it has provided added support for the sense of meaning among the Akesan Iperu Club 1954.

Later the Club came up with the idea of a town hall to serve as a meeting place and a cultural outpost. Both Messrs.

Sodipo and Awotesu approached and discussed with project idea with Chief Adegbodun, the Oluwo of Iperu, and later Chief M. S. Sanusi, the Balogun of Iperu, who was also serving as Regent of the town. The two gentlemen with an eye on the future welcomed the idea and offered them the site where the hall now sits. The identified spot turned out to be where Akesan used to sell boiled maize (owowo) to travellers who passed through Iperu, enroute Sagamu, Ikorodu and Ibadan.

The Club then rallied members to contribute the seed money for the construction. It also came up with the idea of a fundraising dance held on December 30, 1977. Mr. Kola Sodipo was the president then, Mr. O. A. Soyegbe, the secretary and Dr. Owolabi Somorin, the social secretary. It was a much-talked about party held at the Mainland Hotel, Ebute Meta on December 30. On the bandstand were Chief Ebenezer Obey and his Inter-reformers Band. Chief Moshood Abiola, chairman of ITT Lagos, who was also a member of the Constituent Assembly set up to draft a constitution for Nigeria's return to civil rule, was the chairman of the occasion. He had a lady chairman in person of Alhaja Sadatu Oremule.

A long list of special guests principally drawn from Remoland was compiled to lend support for the Club Hall project. They were all accomplished professionals and

business people. They included such names as Chief and Mrs. Kessington Adebutu (who was later to join the Club), Chief and Mrs. Ayoku, Chief and Mrs. Oyename of the Remo Carpet fame, Chief and Mrs. Adebayo Sosan, Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Sonariwo (Mr. Sonariwo had suggested the idea of the Club in 1953), Alhaji and Mrs. Babs Animashaun.

Foremost broadcaster, Mr. Segun Olusola and publicist, Mr. Wale Osiyemi were part of the comperes for the evening. They were complimented by the duo of Messrs. Adama Akadiri and Adeyemi Awofeso. They ensured there was no dull moment at the dance.

In an explanatory note on the need for the Club published in the commemorative brochure on the dance, Mr. Soyege gave the *raison d'être* for the hall. "Akesan Hall when completed will provide facilities for a community meeting place, a cultural corner to house the cultural relics of this ancient town, a well equipped bar and lounge and an up-to-date modern dance floor befitting the town with a long social and cultural background".

To reassure guests that the project was no pipe dream, Soyege added, "We are more than doubly sure that we shall succeed in a record time through the solid support and generous donations from all men and women of goodwill".

It took three years after for the foundation stone of the hall to be laid in 1980. It was in April 1980, when the Club held a

three-day celebration to mark its delayed silver jubilee celebration having clocked 25 years in December 1979. Activities included thanksgiving Jumat service at the Central Mosque, Iperu Remo on April 4th, laying of the foundation stone of the hall, and the launching of the book, *Outline History of Iperu* by Prince Olu Awopeju, which had been commissioned by the Club as its contribution to the search for community identity. There was also an interdenominational Christian service at St. James' Church, Iperu Remo and a party at the Patron's residence, "Anu Olu Lodge" on Ibadan Road.

The idea of the book was well celebrated by renowned arts lover and culture ambassador, Mr. Segun Sofowote, who noted in his editor's note to the book: "That the Akesan Iperu Club hit on this idea of commemorating its Silver Jubilee, is a reflection of the quality of its membership....It is through the sentimental attachment to Iperu that these men have that the world is now enriched with not only this first-time-ever history of Iperu Town but also a lot more in the form of a history of Ijebu (Remo and all) and an informed treatise on religion from the African point of view".

The Alaperu of Iperu, His Highness Oba Joseph Olutayo Ogunfowora Amororo V, laid the foundation stone. The Club Patron, Chief Oyebanjo was present at the historic celebration. Chief Mrs. Amusan, the only one to serve as Matron, was also there. Again, Moshood Abiola served as

chairman of the occasion. Prominent Remo sons such as Chief M. A. Okupe, Mr. Kehinde Sofola, and Chief Tunde Solade were present. Chief Adebutu, who was yet to join the Club at this point, was also present. Presidents of various social clubs in Iperu were also invited. They included Iperu Social Club, Iperu Golden Stars, Iperu Liberal Circle, Iperu Presidential Club, Iperu Women Auxiliary Society, Akesan Prestige Stars Club, Iperu Unity Club, Iperu Dynamic Sons, The Iperu Progressive, Akesan Highlanders Club, Akesan Friendship Club, Akesan Metropolitan Club, The Optimists Circle, Akesan Popular Club, Akesan Morning Star Circle, Akesan Melodians, Iperu Voice Society, Akesan Social Sisters, The Socialist Club, Akesan Progressive Social Club, The Patriots, Remo Elites Development Association, Akesan Prominent Circle, Akesan Lobitos Club, Akesan Morning Stars and Akesan 77.

It took another ten years after the foundation laying ceremony before the hall was completed and dedicated for use. The Club remains indebted to Engineer Adetoye Soyeye and Engineer Dayo Ogunmekan who dutifully supervised the construction of the hall.

In 2013, the Club decided to refurbish and beautify the hall. That effort was spearheaded by the philanthropist now known as Sir Kessington Adebutu, who is the current Club President. The result is a beautiful hall that remains a pride of members as a testament to communal spirit and development.

Aside from the Club Hall, the Club has been active in community development. Such interventions have sometimes come through the Iperu Development Council, headed for a long time by Rt. Rev Sanusi. One of such efforts was the building of the General Post Office in the late 60s. Determined to improve written communication between Iperu and the outside world, the Council, at the Club's prompting, went on a fundraising campaign. The fundraising effort was so successful that there were excess funds left, which led to the idea that another area of need in Iperu should be addressed.

This encouraged the building of a 100-bed community hospital. To the glory of God the foundation stone for the hospital was laid in August 1971 by the Military Governor of Western State, Colonel Adeyinka Adebayo.

The Club also contributes to the community effort to secure Iperu from the menace of social deviants who may want to reap where they did not sow by spreading terror. It also participates in the annual Iperu Community Akesan Day celebrations to promote communal living, arts and culture.

With an eye on the future, the Club has just commenced an annual talent boosting exercise among secondary school pupils by giving cash prizes to the best graduating senior secondary school students in four model schools, namely, Methodist High School, Anglican Secondary School, Apostolic Grammar School and Ajagbe Secondary School.



AKESAN IPERU CLUB AT 25

L-R: Labi Somorin, Leke Sontan, Olu Awotesu, Toyé Soyegbe,
Patron Chief Oyebanjo, Akarigbo Oba Awolase, Uyi Osinowo, Kola Sodipo,
Segun Oluola, Kunle Ogunleye, Kayode Osu and Pekun Adesina
(squatting front) L-R: Kayode Ogunmekan, Bisi Oduelukun and Bayo Soyegbe.

A SENSE OF IDENTITY:



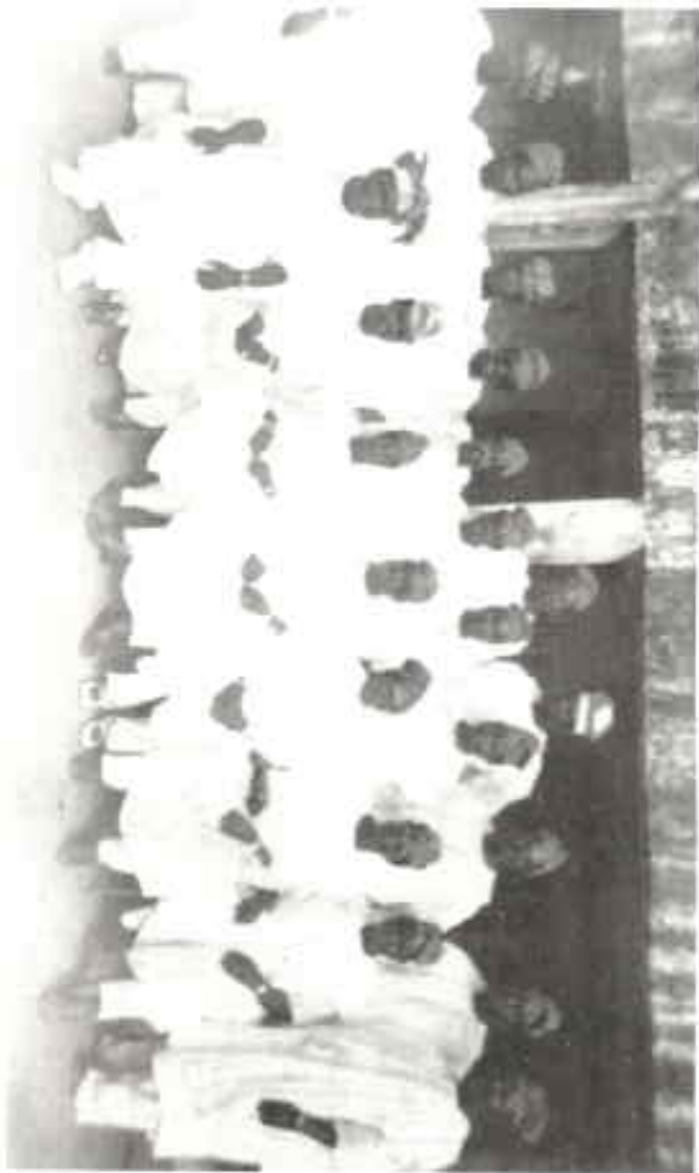
(L-R) Mr. Kayode Ogumekun, Mr. Kunle Ogunleye and Dr. Owolabi Somorin

Foundation Laying Stone of Akesan Hall April 6th 1980 by the Regents of Iperu

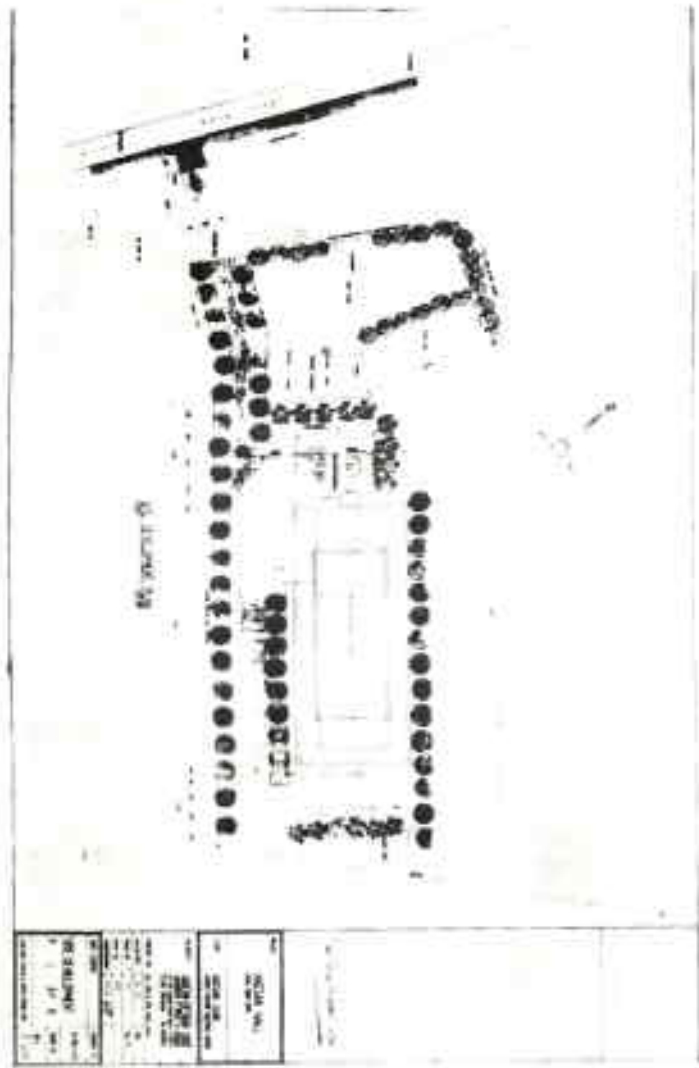


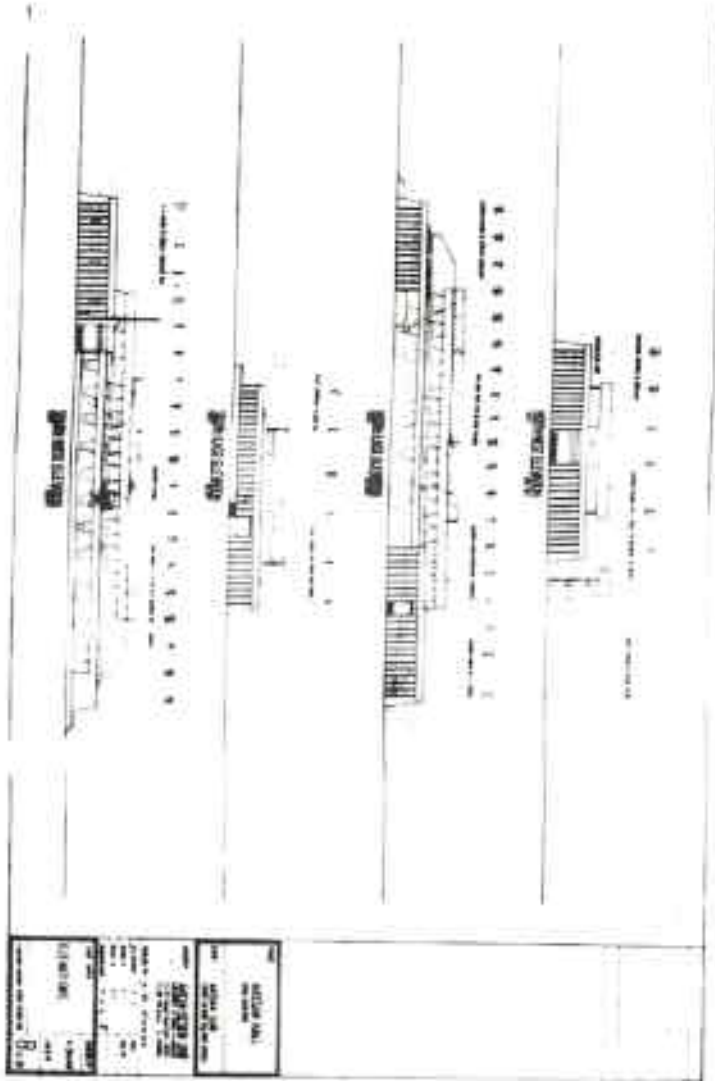
Football Match with the wives in 1980





Akesan Iperu Club Members at 25: April 6, 1980





Architect's Elevation Drawing

Architect's Elevation Drawing, Original Akesan Hall, 1979

CHAPTER FIVE

The Club Members

To date, the Club's membership has never exceeded 49. It is a clear indication that it is not an all-comers affair. Rather, emphasis is on quality of training, carriage and commitment to the development of Iperu. The full list of members to date is as follows:

Membership Directory

- AIC/001 Awotesu, Emmanuel Olusanya
- 002 Soyege, Emmanuel Oladapo
- 003 Sontan, Isaac Adeleke
- 004 Ogunnaike, Olusola
- 005 Sodipo, David Kolawole
- 006 Soyege, David Adebayo
- 007 Somorin, Adolphus Owolabi
- 008 Awosanya, Adedoyin
- 009 Oduekun, Adebisi
- 010 Ogunleye, Adekunle
- 011 Osinowo, Uyinade Motomori
- 012 Ajayi, Olusola
- 013 Abiodun, Emmanuel Adesanya
- 014 Soyebo, Emmanuel Oladapo
- 015 Adebutu, Timothy Adegboyeha

- 016 Osilaja, David Oyebanjo
- 017 Soyegbe, Adetoye
- 018 Gisanrin, Olu
- 019 Olusola, Olusegun
- 020 Osu, Kayode
- 021 Adesina, Olanipekun
- 022 Aina, Femi
- 023 Adebutu, Kessington Adebukonla
- 024 Shittu, Moibi
- 025 Ogunmekan, Dayo
- 026 Ogunmekan, Tunde
- 027 Ogunmekan, Kayode
- 028 Opeodu, Adekunle
- 029 Solana, Ayo
- 030 Sodipo, Olakunle
- 031 Opeodu, Adeniyi
- 032 Sobamowo, Babatunde
- 033 Osilaja, Oyekunle
- 034 Abiodun, Dapo
- 035 Bakare, Solomon
- 036 Olusola, Olujimi
- 037 Sosan, Jide
- 038 Buraimo, Tutu
- 039 Adesalu, Oladipupo
- 040 Folarin, Solomon
- 041 Soyebode, Babajide
- 042 Oreofe, Olugbenga
- 043 Gisanrin, Gbolahan
- 044 Odutuga, Femi

- 045 Sosan, Dele
 046 Oyefule, Adebisi
 047 Oyebanjo, Olugbolahan
 048 Akeem, Abdul
 049 Bakare, Akin

Honorary Patron

Chief Joseph A. K. Oyebanjo

Executive Members

- President – Sir Chief Kessington O. Adebutu
 Vice President – Mr. Tutu Buraimoh
 General Secretary – Mr. Jide Sosan
 Assistant Secretary – Mr. Jimi Olusola
 Treasurer – Mr. Ayo Solano
 Financial Secretary – Mr. Abdul Akeem
 Ex Officio – Chief T. A. Awosanya
 Ex Officio – Mr. Gbenga Ore-ofe

Presidents' Roll of Honour

Membership No	Names	Years	Status
009	Bisi Oduelukun	1954	Deceased
009	Bisi Oduelukun	1973	Deceased
019	Segun Olanola	1974	Deceased
005	Kola Sodipo	1975-1977	
001	Olu Awotesu	1979-1980	Deceased
009	Bisi Oduelukun	1981-1982	Deceased
005	Kola Sodipo	1983-199	
010	Ogunleye, Adekunle	1995	Deceased
008	Adedoyin Awosanya	2000-2002	
023	Kessington Adebutu	2008	

List of Deceased Members

No	Names	Office Held	Year of Transition	AIC No.
1.	Osu, Kayode	Secretary, 1980-1981	1982	020
2.	Soyege, Adetoye	Secretary, 1973	1987	019
3.	Ogunleye, Adekunle	President	1995	010
4.	Oduelukun, Adehisi	President, 1954, 1981-82 Secretary, 1973	1996	009
5.	Sontan, Adeleke	Member	1998	003
6.	Ogunnake, Olusola	Member	1999	004
7.	Ogunmekan, Tunde	Member	2001	026
8.	Soyege, David Adebayo	Member	2004	006
9.	Aina, Femi	Member	2004	022
10.	Soyege, Oladapo	President	2004	002
11.	Adesina, Olanipekun	Treasurer	2006	021
12.	Awotesu, Olusanya	President, 1979-82	2011	001
13.	Olusola, Olasegun	President, 1974	2012	019
14.	Oduruga, Femi	Acting Secretary, Anniversary Committee	2013	044



Press Conference at Iperu, April 26, 2014

L-R: Mr. Tunu Buraimo, Oba Omosanya Akinyemi, Alh. Tawo Alimi, (Guest Lecturer),
Sir Kensington Adesunju (President Akesan Iperu Club), Barr. B. Oshaji (Guest Lecturer),
Sir Prof. Adolphus Sarwatiri (Chairman Anniversary Committee) and Mr. Kunle Opedu



Oba Onosanya & President with members of the 60th Anniversary Committee

L-R: Chief Isaac Osinowo, Oba Onosanya Akinyemi, Sir Keatington Adebun (President)
Sir Prof Adolphus Somerin, (Chairman Anniversary Comm.) and Chief Kola Sodipo



President & Oba Omosanya Akinyemi with members of the Inner Circle of Akesan Iperu Club
L-R: Lady Iyabo Aworenu, Mrs. F. Adesina, Oba Omosanya, Sir Kensington Adedibu, (President),
Chief Mrs. B. Abiodun, Lady Janet Somorin, Sir Prof. A. Somorin and Mrs. Adedibu Jr.



Vice President giving an address at the press conference



L-R: President Sir Kensington Adebun (Chairman Anniversary Committee),
Sir Prof. Somorin and Oba Omosanya Akinyemi

A SENSE OF IDENTITY:



Barr. Babatunde Oribita, LL.B, B.L., LL.M, (Guest Lecturer)



L-R: Chief Mrs. B. Abiodun (President, Inner Circle Akesan Iperu Club)



Akesan Iperu Club Hall, Sagamu-Iperu Road, Iperu



Oba Adeleke Idowu, Basebo V, Alaperu of Iperu
Current Grand Patron of Akesan Iperu Club



Mr. Bisi Oduakan
Former Director, Ministry of Information
First President of Akesan Iperu Club 1954



Mr. Bayo Soyegbe Alias "Gulu" "Soro" and
Mr. Bisi Oduakan, First President of Akesan Iperu Club 1954

CHAPTER SIX

The Future Beckons

By Babatundé Oshilaja Esq.

It is noteworthy and unique that the AKESAN (IPERU) CLUB 1954 has worn the garment and apparel of longevity and immortality. The same ingenuity that led to its formation has informed the foundation members into admitting today, younger ones, many of whom were not even born when the club was formed sixty years ago. It is expected that apart from flying the flag, these younger members would contribute their quota and dutifully hand over the baton to the next succeeding generation.

For historical purposes, events surrounding an important club of this type should be preserved in archives for posterity. Imagine how exciting and inspiring it would have been to view on video, events that led to the formation of the club sixty years ago. The documentary, VOICES FROM IPERU, has now become part of the archival permanent and historical records of AKESAN (IPERU) CLUB 1954.

The prognostications in metaphysics concerning the future of Iperu as recorded and summarized in the work of Prince Awopeju in *inter alia*:

1. Iperu was destined to develop into a gigantic commercial township from a very humble and apparently insignificant embryonic state.
2. Iperu was destined to vanquish and overcome and outlive any enemy who dare assail or threaten to invade it.
3. The monarch of Iperu (Alaperu) will be greater and more prosperous than that of Epe (Elepe).
4. Monarch of Iperu and her spouse will become crowned heads.
5. The market founded at Iperu will become very famous and be always full and well patronized.

The past, and to some extent the present has been sufficiently chronicled in the work of Prince Awopeju. Suffice it to say that Iperu like most Yoruba towns, and indeed all African communities owe the record of their ancient history and origin to oral tradition and narrations. That of Iperu is not in any way different. Today the only documented authority on the history of the founding of Iperu is that of Prince Awopeju, which can largely be classified in historiography as oral history.

It is established that Iperu is an aggregation of movement of people from diverse places and backgrounds due to intertribal wars, trade and very many other reasons in the past that made people in the past and event today to move from one location to another.

According to Prince Awopeju, there are several versions of the origin of Iperu. A version traced its origin with justifications and reasons to either Oyo, Ile-Ife or Ijebu-Ode. It is however incontrovertible that out of the thirty three towns that make up Remo, Iperu is today only second to Sagamu, utilizing all indices of development.

In the olden days, Iperu offered:

Strategic location offering protection because it was;

- (a) A gateway to Egbaland and very close to Ibadan.

In the past, Iperu has benefitted from its strategic location: its proximity to Ibadan and its being the gateway to Egbaland. This location ensured that Iperu was never overrun at war, either from Ibadan or from Egba. It is entirely plausible to submit that those powerhouses recognized the importance of Iperu to their "national security" goals, given that each one would run to Iperu's defence if the other attacked Iperu. In 1836, the Egbas tok Ogere and set out for Iperu but were repelled by a

combination of Iperu gallantry and Ibadan reinforcement. In 1862, the Ibadan lay siege to Iperu in the Kutuje War. A combination of Iperu and Egba forces defeated the Ibadan expedition in 1864.

It was also strategic location offering close relationship with Lagos.

Iperu's closeness to Lagos also fostered a close relationship between these geographical entities. Today, the Eyo Festival is synonymous with Lagos. One account has the Eyo – associated with Oluwari, a water deity – belonging to Iperu people who gave it to Lagos people as dowry because of Lagos' proximity to gigantic waters. Another account traced the source of the Eyo to Ibefun, a town near Ijebu Ode from where it was brought to Iperu. One Oba of Lagos then requested the Eyo of the Iperu people, in order that he might stage it for his mother's burial. The Eyo was brought from Iperu to Lagos through a man called Akinsiku. And at the end of ceremonies, the adept Lagos Eyo masquerade would usually attribute the source of the Eyo to Iperu in this manner: Eyo nlo s'Iperu

Iperu is still aspiring to the monumental mercantile city prophesized. In year 2014, it is far from a hamlet, and as we will see, it might well be on the way to being a city of monumental significance, but for far more than mercantilism.

A SENSE OF IDENTITY:

A number of reasons were put forward for the growth and expansion of Iperu Town: the town's connections with Oyo, Ile-Ife and Ijebu-ode; Ifa-commanded migrations; artisans and traders on the lookout for new frontiers; asylum seekers; adventure and thrill seekers; and the allure of the Akesan market.

Recently in a relative sense, Iperu has made some giant strides in relation to towns in Remo. For instance the network of roads, such as Lagos/Ibadan, Benin/Ore/Sagamu Expressways has redefined quite a number of development quotients in the affairs of Iperu.

However, there is the need for a conscious effort on the part of the sons and daughters of Iperu to look into the deplorable situation of infrastructure of the ancient city. The current effort being put in place by a few must be complemented massively by a drive that would make the younger sons and daughters of Iperu to look back from Lagos or wherever they may be sojourning to rebuild their ancestral collapsing family properties.

The current situation at the General Hospital Iperu is extremely deplorable. Basic health care delivery within the facility has collapsed. It needs an immediate intervention of well meaning members of this Club.

While the narrative of the past was centred principally on protection from belligerence in furtherance of "national

security” goals of much bigger states – and exchange, as seen in the relationship with Lagos, the narrative of the present is one of positioning.

Iperu still retains its natural strategic location. It is still the beneficial destination to a rapidly exploding Lagos, developing Ibadan and Abeokuta, and the emerging industrial hub of Ore in Ondo State.

Most of the positioning is fortuitous, a matter of geography, not anything any son or daughter – eminent or not – of Iperu did. However, the people of Iperu definitely do have a part to play in the future – the outcome of this geographical positioning.

Iperu is situated within an axis in the South West of Nigeria where population and economic statistics are on the rise. The following are worthy of being noted:

- a) Prince Joshua Olufunmiwa Awopeju attributed the progress made by Iperu people in part to Lagos, which he says 'has always been a place looked upon as an ideal city of Wisdom and Civilization.' For all of Lagos' "Wisdom and Civilization", it is currently experiencing a population boom that is even predicted to intensify in the coming years. This state of things therefore means that ways have to be found

to contain this explosion, or at least expand the scope of the explosion so that the ripples are felt far and wide, instead of being limited to the epicenter. Therefore, it is instructive to note that settlements are gradually creeping up the Lagos-Sagamu Expressway as space within Lagos itself continues to shrink.

- b) Efforts are on-going by South Western States to “inter-connectively” develop the region. The Ogun and Lagos States, being the most proximate spatially are the best examples of the interconnectivity. Quite a number of workers in Lagos State have their abode and residency in Ogun State. In reaction to this development, Ogun State Government has commenced a number of infrastructure developments and upgrade around these corridors. For instance, the Ogun State Government has just commenced the construction of a thirty two (32) Kilometre super highway express from the popular Berger Bus Stop in Lagos to Ota, linking various communities of both states. The new road when completed will attract new populations of businesses, of residents and of course further contribute to the outward push of populations towards the outskirts of Lagos.
- c) Abeokuta and Ijebu Ode, arguably more “urban” than Iperu, are also seeing infrastructure upgrades to

prepare them for increases in population and economic development. In Oyo State, the government has undertaken a redevelopment of Ibadan in a bid to raise standards of living and attract investment. And the investors have started arriving in their droves.

- d) Ore, in Ondo State, is being positioned as a massive industrial city.

To reiterate, geography has ensured that Iperu is located in a prime position within all of these movements.

THE FUTURE

Population growth is not a strictly urban affair, especially not when a semi-urban area is placed as Iperu is. Nigeria's population is projected to grow at exponential rates till it becomes one of the largest in the not-too-distant future. There are two implications here:

One: Very soon, Iperu and much of Ogun State will be a staging base to Lagos and other centres of huge economic activity like Ore and Ibadan. The distance between Iperu and these places is about one hour by road. An article by Debo Onifade in the *Punch* of December 4, 2013, pointed out such a relationship between the State of New Jersey and the State of New York in the United States.

'As we begin to fix inter-state transport infrastructure, the state must get involved in massive housing projects with private investors. When inter-state transport improves and more people are attracted to reside in the state, there will be a greater need for different types of accommodation and a favourable government policy on housing and real estate development will enhance this. New Jersey deliberately encouraged massive housing infrastructure in order to persuade people to reside in the State.'

Of course, this is already happening in the places nearer Lagos.

Two: Much farther into the future, Iperu itself will become an urban centre properly so-called, where mercantilism as well as other more complex forms of economic activity will abound, going some way at least to fulfill prognostication of the Ifa oracle in Prince Awopeju's treatise.

Lessons have to be learnt from today's big urban centres. However, Lagos is only just trying to extricate itself from the poor planning that plagued it and resulted in untold difficulties. Crucially, it is not too late to begin to plan for this projected future so that these difficulties, of infrastructure, of earmarked space for development, are mitigated and not allowed to cause untold hardship in terms of displacement of persons.

All over the world, as socio-economic pressures begin to impact populations, schisms in coexistence begin to appear usually leading to indigene-migrant problems. These problems have caused all manner of crises, including war. Ultimately, Iperu will wear a cosmopolitan look. We must remind ourselves and remind generations to come, by our utterances and actions, that our first condition is "human", all other considerations – of race, of class, of station – are secondary. We must also remind ourselves that "aborigine" means "the earliest known inhabitants of a place". This implies that our ancestors did not grow like trees out of the ground; they were once migrants who were lucky to find virgin territory, something increasingly difficult because of population growth. This knowledge must guide our interactions with "aliens" as Iperu gradually becomes a cosmopolitan population.

The AKESAN (IPERU) CLUB 1954 must reach out and fetch its binoculars to see what is now in the future. Just like we have seen infrastructure development redefining the development of Iperu, the community must continue to respond to vagaries of such in years to come. It behooves AKESAN (IPERU) CLUB 1954 in its usual patriotic intellectual tradition as the *avante garde* of development in this community to be pro-active in the next phase of Iperu development.

In this regard, the Club as usual should serve as an agent of development, 'town planners', procurers of amenities through their connections and influence, thereby dictating the pace and orderliness in infrastructure development of future Iperu.

THE MEGA CITY OF LAGOS/OGUN STATES

Before the advent of the Mega city nomenclature, I have been a keen observer and amazed at the overwhelming encroachment of the border areas of Ogun State by the ever burgeoning sprawling overlap spill over of Lagos residents. I always refer to these fast growing and developing areas as (LAGUN STATE)—a coinage out of LAGOS and OGUN States. Until recently, most of these areas lack proper governance, control and planning.

Iperu by virtue of its location is gradually falling into this category and also becoming part of the Ultimate Mega City (LAGUN STATE) which has taken off.

WORLD BANK FORECASTS COMMENCEMENT OF INCURSION OF LAGOS INTO OGUN STATE

According to the World Bank records, Lagos, Nigeria's lagoon city and the world's fastest growing megacity is a burgeoning global urban agglomeration which attained megacity status in 1995 when its population soared to over 10 million people, per UN-Habitat. From its global city ranking of 31st in 1985, the population exploded to 13.4

million in 2000 to become the world's sixth megacity and Africa's foremost urban centre and hub of national, regional and global socio economic and political activities. Even though located on poor soil and overwhelmed by its growth, Lagos Gross National Product (GNP) is three times more than any West African country.

Lagos continued to grow and by 1997 the Metropolis had a population of 11.85 million. Lagos Metropolis is presently estimated to have a population of 18 million persons out of Nigeria's national estimated 157 million. By the year 2015, the population of Lagos Metropolis is projected to be at 24.5 million becoming the third largest city in the world. Mumbai (formerly Bombay) will be second largest at 26.5 million and Tokyo will be the most populous city with 28.7 million inhabitants.

Traditionally, Lagos and Ogun States have long been in close association in terms of movement and exchange of indigenes and commerce. The current trend is a bit different. Non- indigenes of both states that travel to seek fortune in Lagos State ultimately find themselves in Ogun State due mainly because they find life too expensive in Lagos State.

On the occasion of the celebration of his 600 days in office, Governor Babatunde Fashola of Lagos State admitted this reality. He stated that Lagos alone accounts for over 65% of Nigeria's GDP and over 70% of national industrial

investments. Spatially, the Lagos Megacity region, covering 154, 540 hectares (2000) that is approximately 17 of the State's 20 Local Government area, impinges on four Local Government areas of neighbouring Ogun State. These according to him are Ado-Odo-Ota, Ifo, Obafemi-Owode and Sagamu. He went further that the Megacity, which has an average population density of 20,000/sq.km against the national average of 1,308 (2005) serves as the springboard for innovation and development throughout Nigeria and West Africa.

Also in the report of the Presidential Committee on Redevelopment of Lagos Mega City Region 2006, the report noted that the Lagos Mega City Region has grown beyond metropolitan Lagos. It is the continuous built up area of Lagos from the Atlantic Coast spreading Eastward, Westward and Northward beyond the boundaries of Lagos into Ogun State. The Lagos State portion of the Mega City by 2000 A.D was estimated to be 130,700 hectares in the area with planned urban uses accounting for 63, 100 hectares (i.e. 48% of the total) and non-urban land uses accounting for 67, 500 hectares or 52% of the total. This portion incorporates 17 of Lagos State's 20.

Ogun State portion of the Region during the same period was estimated at 22, 840 hectares comprising 15, 640 hectares for non-urban uses such as agriculture, conservation/preservation, forest and water supply reserves,

recreation, tourism and regional parks while urban uses in Ogun State portion accounted for 7, 200 hectares. By 2000, the planned area coverage of the Mega City region, both the Lagos and the Ogun State portions was thus 153, 540 hectares.

In response to this development, the AKESAN (IPERU) CLUB 1954 should be in the vanguard by quickly tasking its faculty and commence a future planned Iperu. Otherwise tardiness on their part would enable strangers and outsiders, money bags who are akin and indeed equivalent of ancient conquerors and invaders to overrun Iperu in no distant future.

The response of the Club should come by way of two important approaches:

They should identify, collate and encourage identified prominent and successful Iperu citizens to be involved in a massive urban renewal of the present Iperu. It is worthy of note that some notable persons have commenced this development.

They should develop an agenda to conceptualise an ultimate new future Iperu.

The second approach would require the AKESAN (IPERU) CLUB 1954 to create a green belt for future Iperu. This is

A SENSE OF IDENTITY:

essential as our own contribution to the continuum of Iperu just as our forefathers did while they toiled and fought battles to protect and preserve our present abode and prevented it from being overrun and scattered by enemies in those days of inter-tribal/town wars.

This assignment must commence in earnest because these developers from Lagos have arrived at the gates of Iperu. They are already active at all the border communities of Ogun State with their war chest and deep pockets.

The green belt being advocated must accommodate a wide range and space of development not only for habitation but also for mechanized agriculture. Such vast agricultural land would be available to Iperu youths who desire to go into agriculture. To reduce employment and also prevent crime within this community, AKESAN CLUB must chart and pave the way for massive employment for teeming Iperu youths in agriculture.

AKESAN (IPERU) CLUB 1954 should be able to set the tone, determine and shape on Iperu soil, quality of living and working environment, facilitate economic development, promoting health safety convenience and general welfare of the community by guiding and controlling development and the use of land. This should be based on principle of sustainable development which seeks

to bring about an organized, efficient and desirable environment for the members of the community to live and work in.

In conclusion, Iperu because of its natural location and the gift of successful sons and daughters in all callings must prepare a net to harvest and absorb these developments to the benefit of our community.

Excerpts from the lecture delivered at the 60th anniversary of the Akesan Iperu Club 1954.

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INDEX

A

- Abeokuta-3, 4
Abiola Moshood-17, 18
Adebayo, Adeyinka Colonel-
20
Adebutu, Kessington
Olubukola Sir Chief-v, 17, 20,
29
Adegbodu Chief-iv
Adewakun, J. S.-5
African Church-5
Ajagbe Secondary School-20
Ajayi, Olusola-9, 12
Akarigbo-4
Akesan-3, 4
Akesan Friendship Club-19
Akesan Hall-17
Akesan Iperu Club at 25- 21
Akesan Iperu Club Member
at 25- 25
Akesan market-2
Akesan Melodians-19
Akesan Metropolitan Club-19
Akesan Morning Star Circle-
19
Akesan Popular Club-19
Akesan Progressive Social
Club-19
Akesan Social Sisters-19
Akinksiku-43
Alaperu of Iperu-19
All Stars' Band-11
Amusan, Abiola, Chief-10
Anglican Secondary School-
20
Anu Olu Lodge-18
Apostolic Grammar School-
20
Architect's Elevation
Drawing, Akesan Hall-27
Arinze, E. C.-11
Awopeju, Joshua-1, 18, 40, 45
Awosanya, Doyin-7, 9
Awotesu, Olu-vi, 7, 9, 16

B

- Badagru-4
Basket and rope
manufacturing-2
Boxing Day, 1953

A SENSE OF IDENTITY:

Buraimoh, Tutu-30

C

Central Mosque-18
Chairman ITT Lagos-16
Christ Apostolic-5
Christmas Day 1955-11
Club's motto-13

D

Daddy Bisuga-4
Diamond Jubilee-v

E

Egbaland-42
Election of Officers-14
Eletuwase Street-8
Eyo masquerade-3

F

Fashola, Babatunde-52

G

General Post Office-20

I

Ibadan-3, 7, 12, 42, 43
Ijebu Ode-2, 3, 42
Ile Ife-2, 42
Inter-reformers Band-16
Iperu Community Akesan

Day Celebrations-20
Iperu Development Council-
20

Iperu Dynamic Sons-19
Iperu farmers-2
Iperu Golden Stars-6
Iperu Ladies Auxiliary
Society-6
Iperu Liberal Circle-19
Iperu Presidential Club-19
Iperu Remo-3, 18
Iperu Rosemary Club-6
Iperu Social Club 1940-6
Iperu Unity Club-19
Iperu Women Auxiliary
Society-19

J

Johnson, James Rev.-4

L

Lagos-43
Lagos Eyo Masquerade-43
Lagos GNP-51

M

Macpherson Constituion-7
Methodist-5
Methodist Boys' High School,
Lagos-7
Methodist High School-20

N

Niger Delta-3

O

Oba of Lagos-43

Obey, Ebenezer Chief-16

Ode Remo-3

Oduekun, Adebisi-7

Ogunlaja Chief-iv

Ogunleye, Kayode-7

Ogunmekan, Dayo Engineer-
20, 29

Ogunmekun, Kayode-29

Ogunmekun, Tunde-29

Ogunmekan, Tunde Colonel
(Dr.)-12, 29

Ogunnaike, Olusola-7, 9

Ogun State-45

Okupe, Abraham Olayimika

Oba-5

Okupe, M.A. -19

Olusola, Jimi-30

Olusola, Segun-12, 17,29

Oluweri-43

Onifade, Debo-47

Opeodu, Adekunle-29

Opeodu, Adeniyi-29

Ore in Ondo State-45

Osinowo, Uyinade-v, 7, 9, 28

Outline History of Iperu-1

Oyebanjo, Joseph Akintoye
Chief-vii, 10, 30

Oyegunse, Joseph Dady-4
Oyo-2, 3

P

Presidential Committee on
Redevelopment of Lagos
Mega City Report 2006 -52

R

Roman Catholic-5

Remo Elites Development
Association-19

S

Sanusi, Rt. Rev-20

Sagamu-3

Salvation Army-5

Sanusi, M. S. Chief-iv

Silver Jubilee-18

Sodipo, Kola-7, 15, 16, 28

Sodipo, Olakunle-13

Sofowote, Segun-18

Somorin, Adolpus Owolabi
Prof-viii

Somorin, Owolabi-7

Sonariwo, Michael Adeniyi

Oba -7

A SENSE OF IDENTITY:

- Sonariwo, Michael Adeniyi -
4, 17
The Socialist Club-19
- Sontan, Sunday-7
Soyege, Adetoye-20
Soyege, Bayo-7, 9
Soyege, Dapo-vi, 7, 12
V
Voices from Iperu-40
- State of New Jersey-47
State of New York-47
St. James' Anglican Church-4
W
Western Nigeria Government
Scholarship-vi
Western Regional
Government-7
- T**
The Patriots-19
The Punch-47
Y
Yorubaland-2

ABOUT AKESAN IPERU CLUB 1954

The Akesan Iperu Club 1954 is the product of communal love of 12 childhood friends with burning ambition for the future.

It was established in fortuitous circumstance to lend support to achievement and serve as an incentive to others. All were young secondary school leavers from Iperu Town united in their ambition to better their lot by pursuing higher education.

It took the planning of a send off party for one of them in 1953 to stimulate the need for a social club where they could network and contribute to the development of the hometown.

From the innocent beginnings in 1954, the Club at its peak barely reached the half century membership mark but remains a testament to communal love, ambition and industry. From their ranks have emerged professionals who have made their marks nationally and globally in the professions and commerce.

This is an account of their origins and contributions to the development of a sense of identity, occasioned by the Club's 60th anniversary.

SOCIAL HISTORY



DIAMOND PUBLICATIONS

