

EDUCATION LEGACY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A HISTORICAL
STUDY OF SDA PRIMARY SCHOOL IPOTI-EKITI ALUMNI CONTRIBUTIONS TO
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

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Abstract

This study examines the educational influence of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Ipoti and its impact on the local host community's social, cultural, and economic development. Utilizing historical research methods, including primary sources such as church records, school documents, and personal accounts, as well as secondary sources like historical encyclopedias and journal articles, the study reveals that the church's efforts led to the establishment of schools, the training of local leaders, and the promotion of literacy and numeracy. The emphasis on holistic education, encompassing spiritual, academic, and vocational training, led to the emergence of influential community members who substantially shaped and contributed to the town's development. The study concludes that the SDA Church's influence on Ipoti Ekiti has been profound, driving socio-economic growth, shaping the community's values, and fostering a culture of excellence. The study recommends that the church sustain its investment in education through the establishment of higher institutions within the community as an extension to its social compensation commission, thereby enhancing local development and promoting sustainable growth in the wider region. By exploring the intersection of education and community development, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and community leaders seeking to replicate the SDA Church's successful model.

Keywords: Seventh-day Adventist Church. Education. Community Development. Holistic Education. Socio-Economic Growth.

INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a global denomination that is unique for its observance of the Biblical Sabbath (Saturday) while the imminent literal second coming of Jesus Christ forms the crux of its evangelical message¹. Founded in 1863 at Battle Creek, Michigan, in the United States of America, the church has spread to about 200 countries covering all the continents of the world. As an international religious body, the church has constantly carved a niche for itself wherever its presence is established. It has always served its host communities through various ministries/fields such as healthcare, education, as well as charitable activities and development services through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). The church is renowned for its well-organized, efficient and holistic approach to healthcare delivery through the establishment of hospitals, clinics, lifestyle centers and sanitariums.

The emphasis it lays on a wholesome diet has led to improved standards of living and quality of life of the members of its host communities and others who come across its health ministry, including Christians and non-Christians. As a matter of fact, Adventist Health is said to be the largest protestant health care provider in the United States alone. Similarly, the commitment of the church to the protection and care of the environment or the emphasis that it places on respect for nature, and restraints in the use of world resources to avoid the danger of climate change, constitute another issue that enables the church to have a positive impact on any locality wherever it has its presence.

Furthermore, the SDA Church is noted for the premium which it places on education. It is observed that the SDA Church has the second-largest private school system in the world. The church operates almost 7,590 schools, including over 100 tertiary institutions³. For this reason, education remains the most profound field where the church has its greatest impact on

the host communities, including Ipoti Ekiti. There is no gainsaying the fact that Ipoti Ekiti is now a very popular community in Ekiti State. The town can now boast of several educated elites who have served and made significant contributions to the development of the community, Ekiti State, Nigeria, as well as the international community. The import of this essay, therefore, is to recount how instrumental the Seventh-day Adventist faith has been in making a positive impact in its host communities, with a particular focus on Ipoti-Ekiti.

The Coming of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to Ipoti-Ekiti.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was introduced to Nigeria in 1914 through the efforts of Elder David Coldwell Babcock, who travelled to Nigeria in the company of a few other missionaries from the mission field in Sierra Leone. Erunmu, in the present Oyo State, was the first community in Nigeria where they were received and established a church.

In 1915, Elder Babcock moved from Erunmu to Sao, in present-day Kwara State, which became his second missionary base in Nigeria. While in Sao, he received an invitation from some members of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), also known as the Anglican Church, to visit Ipoti-Ekiti. The delegation from Ipoti, led by Pa Oriola - who had earlier met Babcock in Erunmu - extended the invitation. ⁵.

The invitation arose from a dispute: the CMS members in Ipoti-Ekiti protested the refusal of the Anglican Church headquarters in Ado-Ekiti to post a Resident Catechist to the 10-year-old Ipoti Anglican Church, despite the community having paid the required 22 pounds to the headquarters. David Babcock, accompanied by Mr. S. Morgue, a Sierra Leonean, honoured the invitation and travelled to Ipoti-Ekiti. That marked the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ipoti Ekiti in 1915. The first set of Ipoti indigenes to worship with Babcock at Ipoti-Ekiti included Pa John Oriola, Pa Olomjobi Daniel, Pa Aina Isaiah Balogun, Pa

Omolewa Daniel, Chief Daniel Ojo, among others, some of whom later became indigenous missionaries.

The Establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School at Ipoti Ekiti

Like many other Christian denominations in Africa, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was committed to training indigenous people to advance the Adventist faith, facilitate evangelisation, inculcate Christian values among converts, shape their worldviews, and nurture them towards spiritual maturity to minimise recidivism

The pioneers of the church always realized that these objectives could not be achieved without the introduction of Western education. Therefore, the introduction of formal education usually forms part of the missionary goals of the church wherever it is established. This inspired Adesegun opine that the establishment of the SDA church in any community (particularly in the past) was always accompanied by the introduction of Western education, even if it was at the elementary level⁸. The case with Ipoti Ekiti was similar to this.

In 1917, the Adventist Religious School was established at Oke Ogba, in Ipoti Ekiti, as the first primary school in the community. Having realised the importance of Western education, many parents were willing to release their children from primary school. The increased enrolment made the first location of the school too small for expansion. Hence, the school was relocated from Oke Ogba to Iwaro, Ipoti Ekiti in 1923⁹. Furthermore, certain circumstances later warranted the change of the name of the school to ‘Seventh-day Adventist Primary School’. Being the first primary school in the community and its environment, the products of the school served as critical instruments of influencing the spread of the Seventh-day Adventist church and the introduction of other SDA schools to the neighbouring communities such as Otun, Igogo, Ikun, Osi, Odo-Owa, Epe, Ikosu, all in Ekiti State and other places outside Ekiti State, like Oke-Ila and Omu Aran in Osun State and Kwara State respectively¹⁰. Apart from the positive impact that the school made on evangelism, the

exposure that the indigenes of the Ipoti community received through the formal education and literacy opportunity offered by the school opened to them new opportunities for intellectual growth, personal development, social mobility and economic empowerment.

The primary school undoubtedly produced the first set of educated people in the community. The indigenes so empowered later became professionals in various fields, liberated the community from various uncivilized beliefs and practices and made their immense contributions, not only to the development of the Ipoti community, but also to Nigeria as a whole. Some products of the school include Pastor Jonathan Oke Olomojobi, Elder Isaac Afolabi Oke, Ade Wellington, J.K. Adewumi, Ezekiel Aleshinloye, Hon. Samuel Adetoson Arogundade, Dr. Daniel Kayode Omole, Madam Joanah Aduke Oyelekan, Chief (Mrs.) Comfort Morenike Ogunsola, Professor Oladipo Omotola Afolayan, Professor Michael Abiola Omolewa, Honorable (Dr) Olayiwola Oke. HRM (Oba) Kolade Oladipupo James Oluwademilade, who is the present Olupoti of Ipoti Kingdom, amongst several others. As a matter of fact, all the royal majesties that ruled Ipoti Ekiti from the middle of the 20th century up until the present moment passed through the Seventh-day Adventist primary school, Ipoti Ekiti at one time or the other. Brief biographies and contributions of some of these people to society are discussed below¹¹.

Late Pastor Jonathan Oke Olomojobi

Late Pastor Jonathan Oke Olomojobi was one of the pioneer pupils of the Adventist Religious School in 1917.¹² After leaving the school, he picked up a job as an evangelist. He later became a pastor who pioneered Adventist missions in many places. His evangelism took him to Sosokia in Moro, Jokoolu, Aluga, Igbeoemu, Kirin and Otun Ekiti, amongst others. At Otun Ekiti, in conjunction with other people, he established the Seventh-day Adventist primary school, a Secondary Modern School and a Grade III Teacher Training College. These schools helped both the Adventist and non-Adventist indigenes of the Otun community obtain

more training and later contributed to the development of Otun Ekiti. Pastor Olomjobi also had the opportunity to act in several administrative capacities, such as the Acting as the Head of the North Nigeria Mission and later the President of the North Nigerian Mission. However, his contributions to the spread of Adventism became prominent during World War 2 (1939-1945), when the church experienced a shortage of foreign missionaries due to the war¹³. After his retirement in 1973, he dedicated his life to mentoring the youths, some of whom he sponsored in school. He dedicated his life to serving the church and the Ipoti community until his demise in 1991.

Elder Isaac Afolabi Oke

Riding on the heels of the advantage of the fact that his father was one of the earliest converts to the Adventist faith at Ipoti Ekiti, the young Isaac Afolabi Oke was Opportune to have an elementary education at the Adventist Religious school, where he had infant 1 to standard 4 before moving to Ibadan, where he completed Standard 5 and 6 in 1943.¹⁴. Thereafter, he attended the Teacher's College, Ihie for his Grades 3 and 2. He also obtained an Associate Diploma in Education from the University of Ibadan in June 1968.

Elder Isaac Afolabi Oke had a teaching career that spanned 44 years, during which he served as the pioneer teacher at Adventist Primary School at Ayetoro Ekiti, Ikun Ekiti, Omuo Ekiti, and Rore in Kwara State, among others. His foray into politics enabled him to be elected as a Councilor representing his community in 1958 under the auspices of the Action Group (AG). His short tenure as a councilor witnessed the attraction of some developmental projects to his community, such as opening up rural and farmland roads, which were critical developmental projects at that time. Elder Isaac later returned to his beloved teaching profession, where he served until he retired in 1984. Upon retirement, he continued to render his invaluable services to his community as he served as the Deputy Chairman of Ipoti

Community Development Council-; a body formed by the indigenes of Ipoti-Ekiti to coordinate the development activities within the town. It was during his tenure that a community Bank and a branch of Access Bank were established in the town. Elder Isaac Afolabi Oke also served as an Elder of the Seventh-day Adventist church, and he served the church meritoriously in various capacities.

Hon. Samuel Adetoso Arogundade

Hon Samuel Adetoso Arogundade began his elementary education at the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School, Ipoti-Ekiti in 1944. He attended the Adventist Teachers' Training College, Ihie, where he obtained the Grade II Teachers' Certificate. He subsequently proceeded to the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife, where he earned a Diploma in Education.

Following several years in the teaching profession, during which he served in various institutions - including Seventh-day Adventist Primary Schools at Oke Bola, Ibadan, Otun-Ekiti, Ayetoro-Ekiti, and Ipoti-Ekiti - he voluntarily retired in August 1985. In 1999, he entered active politics, serving as Councillor representing Ipoti Ward A under the Alliance for Democracy. He also served concurrently as Assistant Secretary of the Ipoti Community Development Council.

Dr. Daniel Kayode Omole

Dr. Daniel Kayode Omole was a pupil of the Seventh-day Adventist School, Ipoti - Ekiti, between 1941 and 1945 for his infant 1 to Standard 4. He later proceeded to the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School, Oke Bola, Ibadan to complete his primary education. Dr Omole thereafter attended several other institutions in Nigeria where he obtained teacher training certificates, after which he served as a teacher in many Adventist schools at Ikun Ekiti, Erunmu and Ihie. He later moved to the United States of America, where he obtained numerous

certificates and Degrees, including Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) and a master's in public Health¹⁶. Upon his return to Nigeria, he served as a Dental Surgeon in several hospitals, including Adeoyo Hospital in Ibadan and the State Specialist Hospital in Akure, where he was later seconded to the Ondo State Ministry of Health. At the Ministry of Health, he rose to the position of the Chief Director of Hospital Services¹⁷. He also served as a consultant to the School of Health Technology, Akure, on Dental Auxiliary Training Matters. Dr. Kayode Omole used this position to facilitate the admission of many Ipoti Ekiti indigenes to the school. In addition, he used his closeness to the government to assist several indigenes of Ipoti Ekiti to gain employment in government Ministries and Parastatals in Ondo State. Dr. Omole was fond of encouraging all the people he assisted to give back to their home community. He was also one of the people who facilitated the location of a tertiary institution (the School of Health Technology) at Ijero-Ekiti, a neighbouring community to Ipoti Ekiti. After his retirement in 1999, Dr. Kayode Omole settled down at Ipoti-Ekiti as a community leader and an active member of the church. He became the Chairman of the Ipoti Community Development Council (Home Front). He used this position to influence the transformation of the Ipoti community to an enviable position.

Madam Joanah Aduke Oyelekan (1925-2007)

Jonah Aduke Oyelekan was enrolled at the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School, Ipoti-Ekiti, in 1933. After leaving the school, she, like others, proceeded to the Seventh-day Adventist primary school, Oke Bola, Ibadan, to complete her elementary school education. She returned to Ipoti Ekiti and served as the first female teacher at the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School at Ipoti Ekiti. Her service as the first female teacher in the school and particularly her way of dressing like a British female tutor, was a great impetus to many girls in the community to get enrolled in the primary school. After her marriage, Madam Aduke

Oyelakin travelled, in company with her husband, to the United Kingdom, where she got a Diploma Certificate in Home Economics and Dress Making from the Ready College of Technology, United Kingdom. On their return to Nigeria in 1959, she established a Dress Making Institute known as Two Sisters Sewing Institute and Pattern Making in Ile-Ife and Lagos, through which many people were employed.

Chief (Mrs.) Comfort Morenike Ogunsola

Chief Comfort Morenike Ogunsola was born on the 19th of April 1935 at Odofin Owa compound, Ipoti-Ekiti, to Pa and Madam Samuel Akindele Akinola. She attended the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School, Ipoti- Ekiti, for her early education, and for her Standard Six Certificate in 1953. On completion, she proceeded to the Seventh-day Adventist School, Otun-Ekiti, for both her Grade Three and Two Certificates respectively. Young Ogunsola started her teaching career at the Seventh-Day Adventist School, Ipoti-Ekiti, where her teaching career spanned over twenty-five years. Professor M.A Oladipupo of Ahmadu Bello University of Zaria, gave a glowing tribute in appreciation of her contribution to laying the solid foundation for all the pupils that passed through her during the centenary celebrations of the Seventh- day Adventist school, Ipoti Ekiti, on March 29th – 2nd April 2024. Meanwhile, she also contributed to the development of the community by participating in the women’s programme and was one of the women who worked towards the establishment of a modern hospital at Isokun in Ipoti-Ekiti.¹⁷ In recognition of her service to the community, she was awarded an honorary chieftaincy title as the *Atuase* of Ipoti, by HRM (Oba) Elijah Oladele Ayeni, the Olupoti of Ipoti (1988-2013)

HRM (Oba) Kolade Oladipupo James Oluwademilade 1, the Olupoti of Ipoti Kingdom

As a little boy, Oba Oladipo Oluwademilade had his elementary education at the Seventh-day Adventist primary school in Ipoti, Ekiti. He later obtained his West African

Examination Certificate at Ipoti Ekiti High School. Thereafter, He bagged a Higher National Diploma Certificate in Quantity Surveying and a master's degree in Quantity Surveying and Cost Engineering. He worked for many years with the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing as well as the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs before he was crowned as a paramount ruler of Ipoti Ekiti in 2013. Since his ascension to the throne, he has used his vast work experience to transform the community by attracting several developmental projects to the community. These include the location of Nigerian Army Barracks in the town, the establishment of Divisional Police Station, the construction of Multipurpose Hall within the Olupoti Palace square, the construction of the Isokun/Eyigbo link roads, the construction lockup shops and stores in the community, the extension of Sabo market and the inauguration of a programme tagged "Ale Erebe"¹⁸. This is a cultural fiesta which has been serving as a tourist attraction to Ipoti Ekiti youth, both at home and abroad and the neighbouring communities. The cultural programme has not only made the Ipoti community more popular but, it has also enhanced the economic capability of the town and engendered further development there.

Emeritus Professor Michael Abiola Omolewa

Emeritus Professor Abiola Omolewa began his educational career at the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School, Ipoti-Ekiti in 1947 before proceeding to Ile-Ife, Ibadan and Ado Ekiti to complete his primary and post-primary education¹⁹. He later attended the University of Ibadan, University of Dakar, University of London. and the University of British Columbia, where he obtained his bachelor's degrees, postgraduate degrees and many professional certificates. While lecturing at the University of Ibadan, he became the first Professor of Adult Education in Nigeria. At the University of Ibadan, Professor Omolewa recorded several notable achievements that contributed to putting the University on a global map. He used the various positions he occupied in the University to assist many indigenes of Ipoti Ekiti to secure admission and employment.

In 2000, he was appointed as the Nigerian Ambassador and Permanent delegate to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) where he represented Nigeria for a period of 9 years. Between 2003 and 2005, he served as the President of the 32nd General Conference of the UNESCO²⁰. The appointment allowed him to serve the entire globe. He was one of the 5 UNESCO scholars to draft the working paper for the United Nations Literacy Decade. Upon his return to Nigeria from Paris, he joined Babcock University, where he continues to use his wealth of experience to train and mentor both undergraduate and postgraduate students up until the time of conducting this research.

Professor Oladipo, Mark Omotola Afolayan,

Professor M.A Oladipo is also an alumnus of the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School, Ipoti-Ekiti. After his secondary education at the Adventist Grammar School, Ede, he proceeded to the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where he obtained a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry. He also travelled to the United Kingdom, where he obtained a Master's and a PhD degree. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry in London. He also belongs to the International American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Nigerian Mining and Geosciences Society, through which he served humanity²¹.

At the home front, Professor Oladipo is a very committed community man. Presently, he serves as the Chairman of the Ipoti National Development Council. His tenure has witnessed many developments, such as provisions of boreholes at some places in the town, significant progress made towards the completion of the community Civic Centre, which has been under construction for many years, the organization of a special neighbourhood security watch, and the naming of important streets after notable indigenes of the community.

Honourable Oke Enoch Olayiwola

He holds a doctorate in History and International Studies. He completed his primary education at the Seventh-Day Adventist Primary School, Ipoti, after which he proceeded to Ipoti High School, Ipoti and Oyemekun Grammar School, Akure, in 1989 for his ordinary and Advanced Level certificates, respectively. He complemented this with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History at the then Ondo State University, Ado Ekiti in 1994, a master's in history and strategic studies at the University of Lagos, 2019 and a doctoral degree in History and International Studies at Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State.

He worked briefly before venturing into politics in 2007, and via election became a member of the Ekiti State House of Assembly (2007-2011) as the representative of Ijero constituency.²² He was the Leader of the House and sponsored many bills that positively impacted the people, and the community at large. Amongst his achievements while in office were the construction of modern police stations at Ipoti-Ekiti and Iloro-Ekiti. He built a modern library at Ijero Ekiti, blocks of classrooms at Ipoti Comprehensive Secondary School and at the Seventh-Day Adventist School, both in Ipoti-Ekiti. In addition, he used his position to attract government presence in the community, which led to the construction of roads linking Ipoti- Oke-Ila, laid with asphalt and the township roads.

Conclusion.

This study has proven that the enlightenment which the Ipoti-Ekiti community is proud of today is largely attributed to the influence of the Seventh-day Adventist primary school, which was established in the community in the second decade of the 20th century. Being the first educational outfit in the town, the primary school was instrumental in bringing the community out of obscurity into the limelight, as it gave the indigenes of the community the opportunity of having early access to elementary education that made their later achievements

possible. Consequently, the community has produced notable individuals who occupied prominent positions and used their landmark achievements to transform the town. Thus, the rapid development of Ipoti Ekiti both economically and physically cannot be discussed without the pivotal role the Seventh-day Adventist church educational initiatives played.

EndNotes

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