

The Asagba Family of Okpe Urhobo of Nigeria

By

Prince Joseph O. Asagba

Family

The Asagba family are the group of close relative of the Okpe Royal Family. Their history dated back to Prince Igboze, the founding father of the Royal Family of Okpe. According to oral history, Prince Igboze had a son named Okpe and Prince Okpe had the following four sons, in order of seniority: [1] Orhue; [2] Orhoro, [3] Evwreke and [4] Esezi. The Royal lineage of the Asagba family came from the Orhoro.



Igboze
(b. ca. 1500)



Okpe, Prince
(b. 1664 – d. 1740)



Orhoro, Prince
(b. 1709 – d. 1781)

Prince Orhoro was the son of Prince Okpe of the Kingdom of Okpe. He later became a senior chief during the reign of his brother, H.R.M. Ezezi I, who ruled Okpe Kingdom from 1770 to 1779. Orhoro had a son, Owhere, who became a powerful figure in Okpe history.



Owhere, Chief
(b. 1742 – d. 1805)

Early and political life

Chief Owhere was the son of Prince Orhoro of the royal family of Okpe Kingdom. He was a political leader, a revolutionist, a farmer and a slave owner in Okpe Kingdom. During the Okpe Revolution of 1779 through the 1780s, Owhere reached the height of his political power, becoming a representative and a senior chief from the Orhoro ruling house of Okpe Kingdom. He also served as a senior chief during the reign of his uncle, HRM Ezezi I. With Ezezi extreme brutality of his people, Owhere led a revolution that will lead to the death of King Ezezi I.

Having taken part in the assassination of Ezezi I in 1779, the capital city of Orerokpe was divided among the three ruling houses of Okpe Kingdom. A third of the capital was under the Orhoro ruling house with the leadership of Chief Owhere.

Owhere was able to gain his great prominence because of his ability to retain control of the weaker centralized government in Okpe Kingdom and re-established the

Okpe royal dynasty after the death of Ezezi I. As a representative, he helped pass into law the rights for all Okpes that promised that Okpes shall never again suffer any injustice at the hands of their ruler. He was considered by most Okpes to be a clever man, powerful and brave to lead Okpe in time of political turmoil.



Orholor, Chief
(b. 1786 – d. 1828)

Chief Orholor was the son of Chief Owhere of the royal family of Okpe Kingdom. He was a well-known political leader and a wealthy farmer and slave owner in Okpe Kingdom. Like other Okpe statesmen, he was the landed gentry; he inherited his plantation from his father, and owned slaves during his life time to cultivate his farm and other crops.

Political life

Orholor was appointed as a representative for Arhagba village group and later rose to the height of its political power. Having grown up in a political family, Chief Orholor became a bright politician with great influence. He possessed admirable qualities as a leader and was respected for making good decisions on how the Okpe Kingdom should be ruled.

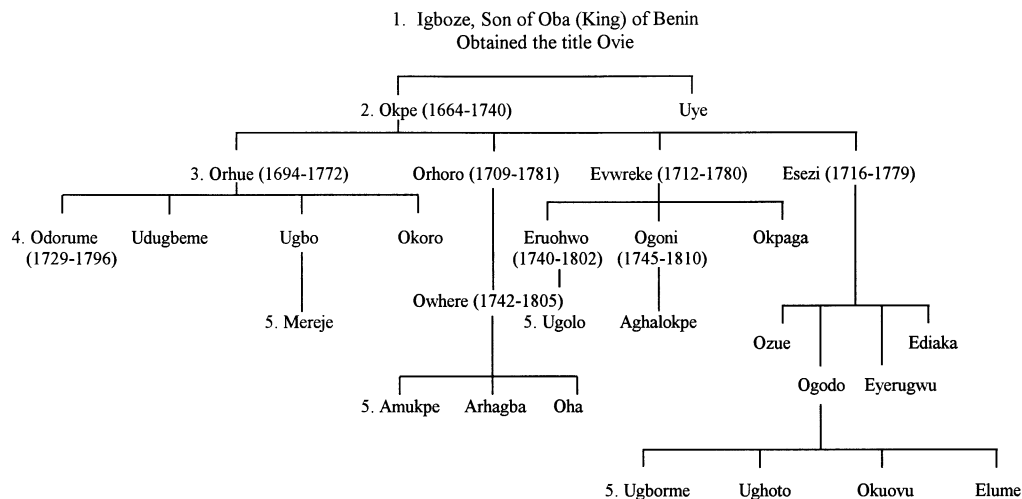
In 1828, his cousin Diemor of the Ewreke ruling house of Okpe Kingdom attempted to rule the kingdom. It was Orholor who spoke out publicly against him and declared that Diemor lacked the leadership skills to rule the kingdom. Orholor was considered by most members of the royal family as a prince with principle and as a representative who stood up for what he believed.

Later Years and Personal life

As a slave owner, one of his slave's Akeh fell in love with his daughter Umerikube. They were passionately in love, but their love affair is forbidden by the royal family tradition. Akeh expresses his love and passion by dating Umerikube, and together their passion heated into desire. When she became pregnant, Akeh's master, Chief Orholor, is furious and ordered both his daughter and Akeh killed.

Akeh was burned alive, while Princess Umerikube was taken by her mother, Orode, to a hiding place in the town of Elume for freedom. A year later, after she had given birth to a baby boy, her mother brought back her daughter and the baby to Arhagba. When the child was showed to Chief Orholor, he immediately loved his grandson and named him Abeke, meaning "it will be hard to give". The young Abeke became part of the Orholor's family. Today, the descendants of the Abeke lived in Okpe Kingdom.

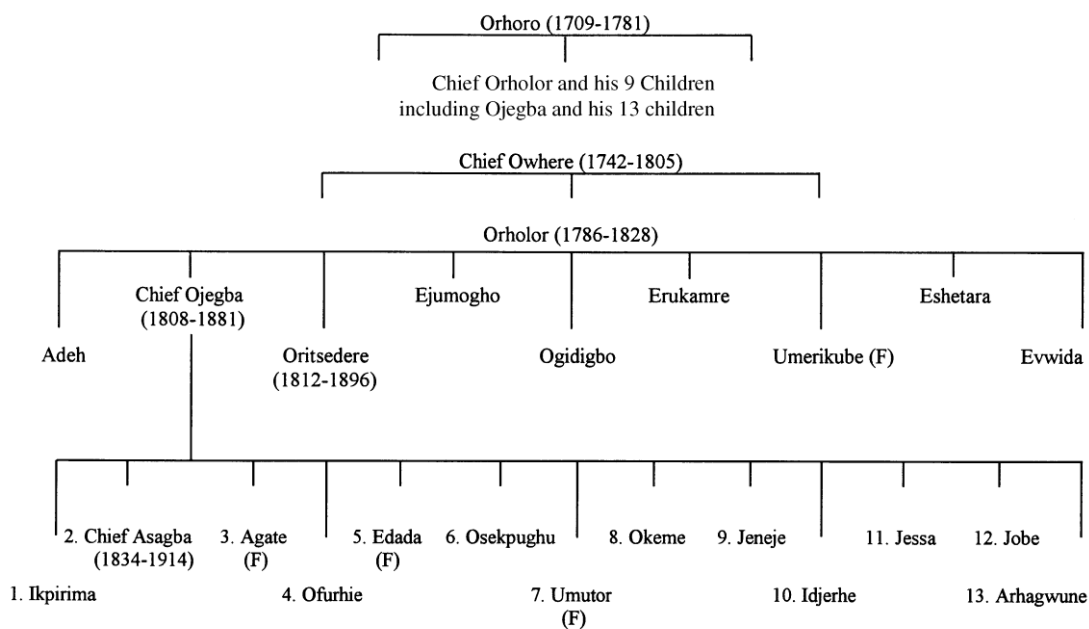
Family trees of members of the Asagba



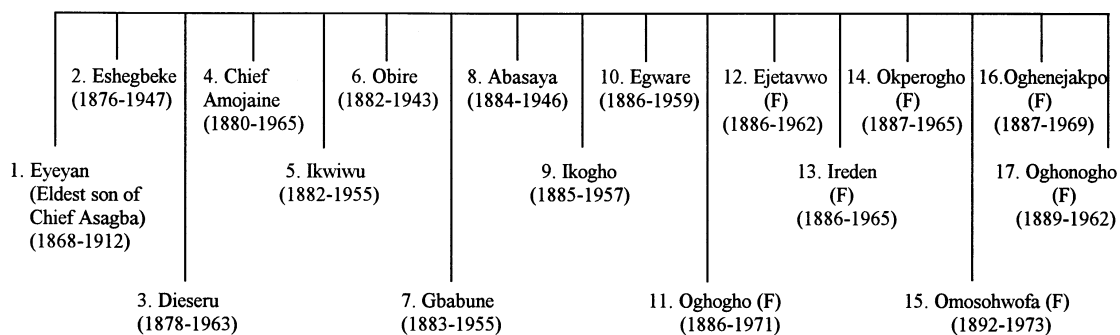
- Key:
1. Igboze was the original ancestor
 2. Okpe and Uye were sons of Igboze; Okpe founded Okpe Kingdom
 3. Orhue, Orhoro, Ewvreke and Ezezi were sons of Okpe, who were the four descent groups of Okpe Kingdom. Ezezi was the first Orodje (King) of Okpe Kingdom and was assassinated in 1779.
 4. Odorume, Owhere, Eruohwo, Ogoni and Okpaga were the most prominent chiefs in Okpe Kingdom in the 1780's through the early 1800's.
 5. The recognized villages in Okpe Kingdom with Orerokpe as capital.

Note: Orerokpe, Capital of Okpe Kingdom

Chief Orholor and his 9 Children
including Ojegba Orholor and his 13 Children



The 13 children of Ojegba
Chief Asagba, Son of Chief Ojegba
(1834-1914)



Chief Asagba and his 17 children.



Oritsedere
(b. 1812 – d. 1896)

Prince Oritsedere was the son of Chief Orholor and brother of Chief Ojegba of the royal family of Okpe Kingdom. He was the supreme commander and warlord of the military force under his brother, Chief Ojegba.

He led Ojegba's army into two battles and successfully fought against the Okpe rebels in 1862 and Olomu sailors in 1870. As a brave combat commander, Oritsedere is remembered in Okpe Kingdom as a prince and warlord who fought against the invasion of Amukpe.



Ojegba, Chief
(b. 1808 – d. 1881)

Chief Ojegba was born in Arhagba and was the son of Chief Orholor of the royal family of Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe. He was also the brother of Prince Oritsedere who later became a warlord and the Supreme Commander of Ojegba's Military forces. He was one of the most powerful and influential leaders and warriors in Okpe history. After the death of his father in 1828, Ojegba decided to move from his father's village of Arhagba to the Virgin Forest, now known as Amukpe, with the intention of founding his own state.

Upon moving to Amukpe, he founded and named Urhiapele, the present territory of Sapele, named Oko-Amukpe by Chief Ojegba. Ojegba, along with his children, brothers, sisters, and their slaves, were the first settlers of the territories. Ojegba took possession of Amukpe, the village that once belonged to him. He began a farm settlement in all of his new territories and established trading with the Itsekiris and became wealthy.

Ojegba war with the Okpe rebels

Many Okpes became jealous of Ojegba's wealth, power, and influence, and threatened to kill him. In 1862, the native Okpes held a meeting at Ugolo, where a decision was made to wage war against Ojegba and to assassinate him. When news of the assassination plot reached him, Ojegba, who had built and organized his warlords into

a powerful militia, assembled his troops against the Okpe rebels. He met with his brother, Prince Oritsedere, who was his head warlord. He made him his supreme commander and asked him to prepare for a full-scale war against the rebels. Ojegba equipped his army and warlords and with firearms and ammunition he had acquired from his cousin, Prince Fregene.

On June 9, 1862, the rebels moved toward the village of Amukpe and they were met in an ambush along the old Amukpe/Warri footpath near the town of Ibada-Elume. Ojegba's troops opened fire on them, killing many and wounding hundreds. More were taken captive to be sold into slavery by Ojegba.

Battle on the River: the War Between Ojegba and Olomu

Ojegba, who was also a trader, did a profitable trade in slaves with the Itsekiri. In 1870, Ojegba noticed that Olomu of Itsekiri was increasingly trading slaves via the Ethiope River into the Urhoboland interior, thereby reducing the trade of the Okpe people. Ojegba ordered his brother Oritsedere the Supreme Commander and warlord to raid Olomu's slave trading canoes as they fought against the raiders to free his people taken as captives.

The raid sparks tensions between Olomu and Ojegba that led to a war with Olomu's men at the River Ethiope. Ojegba summoned his warlords and troops to be ready for war against Olomu and his sailors. Ojegba's warlords, including his brother Oritsedere, were willing to defend their territory against Olomu's invasion of Amukpe at all costs.

Ojegba's mother Orode, the daughter of Amedjor of Itsekiri asked his sister Eyabrikeke, who was married to a Itsekiri Prince named Omateye, the son of HRM Akengbuwa I the Olu [King] of Itsekiri to supply her son Ojegba with arms and ammunition to fight Olomu and his men. Omateye then asked his son Prince Fregene to grand the request of his cousin.

His cousin Fregene arranged for arms and ammunition for Ojegba and his warlords. As Ojegba prepared for war, a ditch was dug by his slaves, who were also his soldiers, at the present site of Sapele General Hospital by the River Ethiope, to protect the river's entrance to Amukpe and the other side of River Ethiope's bank at Oghara. Ojegba told his brother Oritsedere to take command of Oghara.

On September 20, 1870, Olomu's sailors began their invasion of Ojegba and his people, intending to launch a surprise attack, but instead they faced heavy fighting on both sides of River Ethiope. Ojegba and his warlords defeated Olomu's sailors.

Ojegba and Oritsedere led their courageous army into the war and emerged victorious.

After the war, Ojegba demanded royalties from Chief Olomu on all products and slave dealings along the Benin River section of Okpe to Ethiope River down to Abraka. To meet this demand, Chief Ojegba asked Olomu to send Osaghae [now Sagay], as Ora

native who was one of Olomu's head slaves, to take command of the trading post at River Ethiope to collect the royalty along the River Ethiope section of Okpe. This arrangement worked out well between Ojegba and Olumu.

It was during this period that Chief Ojegba and Sagay established a good relationship to the extent that Ojegba gave Sagay a land at Amukpe to built his home in appreciation of his cooperation as head of the trading post. Today, the Sagay descendants lived at Amukpe and they have become part of the Amukpe community.

Before his death in 1881, Chief Ojegba had many wives and the following thirteen children: [1] Ikirima, [2] Asagba, [3] Agate[f], [4] Ofurhie, [5] Edada, [6] Osakpughu, [7] Umutor[f], [8] Okeme, [9] Jeneje, [10] Idjerhe, [11] Jessa, [12] Jobe and [13] Arhagwune[f].

Ojegba was well known for his bravery. And as a warrior who fought and won two battles against the Okpe rebels in 1862 and Olomu of Itsekiri in 1870. He was considered one of the great hero in Okpe for his courage to free his people taken captives.



Asagba, Chief
b. 1834 - d. 1914

Chief Asagba was the son of Chief Ojegba of the royal family of Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe in the Western Delta of Nigeria. He became a chief and a political leader, a very powerful and influential member of the Anovwa State Council of Okpe Kingdom from 1890 through 1897. Asagba was also a businessman who owned hundred of acres of land of Rubber and Oil palm plantations, he traded more in the

products with the European merchants that makes him acquire wealth. As a businessman and politician, he maintained power because of his ability to trade with both the Europeans and others in the communities.

Political life

Having grown up in a royal political family and appointed to the highest political status of Olotu in the Anovwa State Council, he was known for his hard work and capable skills as a councilor and representative of his village group of Amukpe. In addition to his political leadership at Anovwa State Council, Asagba had led the foundation for a sound political dynasty for his children and descendants, which remained prominent for almost two centuries.

Chief Asagba and the British Colonial Government

When the British Colonial officers came to Okpe kingdom in 1891, the Okpes criticized the British indirect rule they established. For the British to gain the support of the Okpe leaders, British Officer Gallwey and Vice-Consul Major Copland-Crawford paid a visit to the Okpe leaders to discuss their new government. During their visit on October 28, 1891, one of the Okpe leaders they visited was Chief Asagba. They discussed with him, among other things, the British judicial and political government. It was Asagba who helped the British to establish their Native Courts and Councils in Okpe Kingdom.

Because of Chief Asagba's involvement with the British and his enlightenment as to what education could bring to a society, he decided to send his eighth son Abasaya Asagba, and his grandson Joseoh Etietsola Asagba, the son of his eldest son Eyeyan Asagba, to attend the British Intermediate school in 1904.

Upon the completion of their education, Abasaya was appointed as the Assistant District Officer under the British Colonial government and Joseph was appointed and served as Senior Court Clerk at the British Native Court in Warri. In fact, those two were considered among the first educated members of the Asagba clan to receive a privileged Colonial education.

Career and Service

Because Chief Asagba was one of those who occupied positions of authority in his town of Amukpe, in 1892, Chief Asagba was appointed to the Native Court as a Warrant Chief under the British Colonial government until his death in 1914.

According to Ikime, in his book *Niger Delta Rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European presence 1884-1936*, Asagba of Amukpe was among the most prominent men in their respective communities, Pp. 177-8.

He was considered bright, energetic and a great leader making it possible for him to be appointed to the court.

His appointment as a Warrant Chief was also his work with the British, and the British Colonial officers saw him as a prominent man of his community. As a Warrant Chief, his role to the court was to retained magisterial competence so that he could preside over cases or Judicial matters. He was known as one of Urhobo Okpe's most

distinguished political leaders and was highly respected and popular in the whole kingdom.

He was the dominant figure in the community of Amukpe who associated with powerful Okpe figures.

Death and Burial

In 1914, Chief Asagba died at his home of natural causes. He was given a traditional burial and is buried in his bedroom in his house at Amukpe.



Chief Asagba's House

Personal life

Before his death, Chief Asagba had the following children: [1] Eyeyan, [2] Eshogbeke, [3] Dieseru, [4] Amojaine, [5] Ikwiwu, [6] Obire, [7] Gbabune, [8] Abasaya, [9] Ikogho, [10] Egware, [11] Oghogho [f], [12] Ejetavwo[f], [13] Ireden[f], [14] Okperogho[f], [15] Omosohwofa[f], [16] Oghenejakpo[f] and [17] Oghonogho[f]

Members of the royal family of Asagba had been known to be the brightest and most capable political leaders in Okpe history, and they are some of the most admired members of the Okpe royal family, which had achieved a prominence in Okpe political life. They remain influential figures in Okpe Kingdom.



Asagba, Eyeyan
b. 1868 - d. 1912

Prince Eyeyan Asagba was the eldest son of Chief Asagba of the royal family of Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe. Born at Amukpe into a royal family and, as eldest son of a political leader, Eyeyan was very much involved in Okpe traditional politics.

During the 1890s, he often attended the Anovwa Council of Okpe with his father. By so doing, his father was trying to familiarize him by laying the foundation for and preparing him for political leadership.

While attending the Anovwa Council with his father, he became associated with the circle of intellectuals and political thinkers. During the 1890s he was also trained as a skilled military leader by his great-uncle, the supreme commander of Ojegba's warlord, Oritsedere. As a brave military leader, Eyeyan fought in several intertribal wars. In 1912, Eyeyan was involved in an intertribal war and was killed.



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Asagba, Eshegbeke
b. 1876 - d. 1947

Prince Eshegbeke Asagba was the second son of Chief Asagba of the royal family of Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe. Having been born into a royal family, Eshegbeke became a councilor and representative of the Amukpe village group with the political position of age-grade leader (1912-1947).

As a political leader, Eshegbeke was involved in the external development and economic activities of the people of Amukpe.



Asagba, Dieseru
b. 1878 – d. 1963

The Okpe political leader Dieseru Asagba was the third son of Chief Asagba of the royal family of Urhobo Okpe Kingdom . Having been born into a prominent family with a dominant social and political force in Okpe history, Dieseru was selected as a councilor and became a representative of the Amukpe village group (1912-1960).

As a representative of his people, Dieseru oversaw the economic development, and, as a councillor, worked with the elders in the Council and Court in the collection of taxes, while holding the political position of age-grade leader.

He also served as Okpako (Head) of the Asagba family from 1947-1963. During this period, Dieseru became a popular and influential member of the Asagba clan, the Ominikes of Okpe Kingdom.



Asagba, Chief Amojaine
b. 1880 - d. 1965

Chief Amojaine Asagba was the fourth son of Chief Asagba of the royal family of Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe. In 1887, his mother Emariojake, a native of Oghara left Amukpe for Oghara on a visit and drowned when the canoe she was in capsized on Ethiope River. His mother's death was traumatic to the young Amojaine and a tragedy for the Asagba family.

Meanwhile, Amojaine became close to his father who taught him responsibility and honor. As a young man, he was extensively engaged in local politics as a community organizer. His political career began with his father's strong involvement in politics and was shaped by his father's influence.

Political life

Following the death of his father Chief Asagba in 1914, court membership was conferred on Amojaine who, because of Anovwa's death, never received the politicized age-grade leadership position of Ototu. He was among the first set of political leader of Ekakuro [Chief] of Udugun Okpe Council, the Supreme Council of the Okpe Kingdom. Amojaine was a very powerful and influential member of the Udugun Okpe Council (1945-1965), under the reign of HRM Esezi II.

Having grown up in a royal political family, he was appointed as a councilor and representative of Amukpe village group (1912-1960). During the British Colonial rule of Okpe Kingdom, the British appointed him Warrant Chief (1912-1960) to the Native

Court. As a Warrant Chief, he had the magisterial, or judgeship, power to preside over cases. From 1958-1965, Amojaine served as a trustee for the Okpe Communal Land Trust and as head of the Asagba family (1963-1965), the Ominikes of Okpe Kingdom.

In 1945, when the British Colonial officers refused to recognize the selection of Esezi II as the king of Okpe Kingdom, it was Chief Amojaine and Chief Ayomanor who led the petition to the British Colonial government in the recognition of the Okpe King. As a Senior Ekakuro under the reign of HRM Esezi II, Amojaine helped in promoting a democratic government into the Okpe Traditional Council. The democratic and constitutional government gave basic political power to the chiefs in council and encouraged collaboration among the political ruling houses.

Amojaine was among the leading Chiefs who established the Western Urhobo Native Authority [former known as Western Urhobo District Council]. He was a member of the union.

Death and Funeral

Chief Amojaine Asagba died on January 15, 1965 at his home in Amukpe. During his burial at Amukpe, many came to pay their last respects. Among the prominent Nigerians who attended his burial ceremony are the HRM Esezi II, Ekotie-Eboh, the former Nigeria Minister of Treasury and delegations of Okpe Chiefs and Urhobo Chiefs.



Asagba, Ikwiwu
b. 1882 - d. 1955

Prince Ikwiwu Asagba, was the fifth son of Chief Asagba, born into the political royal family of Asagba in Okpe Kingdom. Appointed as councilor, he became a representative of the Amukpe village group (1912-1955) with the position of age-grade leader. As a political leader, he devoted himself almost entirely to improving the economy of his people.

In the 1940s, Ikwiwu's brother, Chief Amojaine, who was the Okpe Ekakuro, often sent Ikwiwu to attend Court and Council meetings as representative at Orerokpe, the capital of Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe. As a representative who attended the state Court and Council, Ikwiwu played a key role in the state legislative and judicial affairs of the kingdom. During this period, he developed friendships with prominent Okpe government representatives (chiefs) that made him one of the most influential men of the twentieth century.



Asagba, Gbabune
b. 1883 - d. 1955

Prince Gbabune Asagba, the seventh son of Chief Asagba, was born into the royal family of Asagba clan of the Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe. Having grown up in a royal political family, Gbabune was appointed as councilor and became a representative of the Amukpe village group. As a representative of his people, he represented his village group in the Court and Council in the capital city of Orerokpe.

While at the Court and Council, he worked on the state legislative and judicial affairs of the Okpe Kingdom (1912-1955). As a councilor with the political position of age-grade leader, he was known for helping create a local market union for economic development, and for that he became a popular and influential political figure in Okpe history.



Asagba, Abasaya

b. 1884 - d. 1946

Prince, Abasaya Asagba was the eighth son of Chief Asagba of the royal family of Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe. Born into a royal family with noble status in Okpe Kingdom, he was considered one of the most respectable members of the Asagba clan.

Early life, education and career

In 1892, his father, Chief Asagba (1834-1914), was appointed as a Warrant Chief under the British Colonial government. During his tenure as a Warrant Chief, the British Colonial government had opened a British school in Okpeland in 1904. Because of Chief Asagba's involvement with the British and his enlightenment as to what education could bring to society, he decided to send his son Abasaya to attend the British intermediate school.

Upon completion of his education from the intermediate school, the British Colonial officers considered his education to be superior, and he was appointed as an Assistant District Officer in charge of the British Native Courts and Councils (1908-1946) by British administrators R. B. Kerr and E. H. Fellows.

During his position as Assistant District Officer, Abasaya had achieved high status in the civil services as part of his British education and was classed as progressive and modernist among his people. His role as a District Officer was to make confidential reports regarding the Native Courts and Councils and to keep a watchful eye on the potential troublemakers who were attacking colonialism and British indirect rule. Also during his role as an Assistant District Officer, Abasaya was a member of the Urhobo Progressive Union in 1939 and the Okpe Union (1930-1946).



Asagba, Joseph Etietsola
b. 1890 – d. 1923

Prince Joseph Etietsola Asagba was born at Amukpe and was the son of Prince Eyeyan Asagba and the grandson of Chief Asagba. He was born to the royal family of Asagba.

Early life, education and career

He was considered one of the most educated members of the Asagba clan. When the British intermediate school was established in Sapele in 1904, Joseph's grandfather, Chief Asagba (b. 1834 – d. 1914), who was a warrant chief under the British Colonial government, sent him to attend the school.

Upon the completion of his education, the British Colonial officers considered his education superior and appointed him to the court as Senior Court Clerk at the Native Court in Warri, from 1908 until his death in 1923.

During his position as a Senior Court Clerk, Joseph achieved a high status in the Civil Services in the British Colonial government and was classed as progressive and as one of the early educated Okpe natives. His role as a Senior Court Clerk was to keep records of the court's decisions and supervise the court messengers, preparing the lists of all the cases that came up for hearing, summoning the people who were to attend court hearings, and maintaining order in the court and making arrests.

Personal life

He was married to Princess Alberta Aduviere Omarin [b. 1900 – d. 1968] the daughter of Chief Omarin of the Evwreke Ruling House of Okpe Kingdom and they had a son Vann Etietsola Asagba.

Death and Funeral

In May of 1923, Joseph Etietsola Asagba fell ill and died at home at age 33. He was given a traditional burial and he is buried in his bedroom at his home in Amukpe.



Statue of Chief Ayomanor

Political life

Chief Ayomanor was a member of the royal family of the Orhoro ruling house of Okpe Kingdom, and, because of the long interregnum in Okpe Kingship, he was elected President of the Udogun Okpe Council in the 1940s. He was considered one of the most powerful and influential members of the Udogun Okpe Council.

In 1945, when H.R.M. Esezi II was selected as the King of the Okpe people, the British Colonial government refused to give him any recognition. In 1948, the Okpe people took the initiatives to rectify their king's status by advising the President of the

Udogun Council, Chief Ayomanor, to vacate his position for the new king. He accepted the traditional political superiority of the king, and, in a letter to the British Senior District Officer in 1949, he declared that he “resigned the presidency of Okpe Clan voluntarily for the new Orodje-elect and I consequently became the Vice-President”. In response to his letter, the Colonial government declared that the Okpes were free to regard and treat their king as their leader.



Asagba, Tajinere
b. 1922 – d. 1996

Prince [Barrister] Tajinere Asagba, the son of Chief Amojaine Asagba and grandson of Chief Asagba, was born to the royal family of Asagba of the Orhoro ruling clan of Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe in the Western Delta of Nigeria.

Education and career

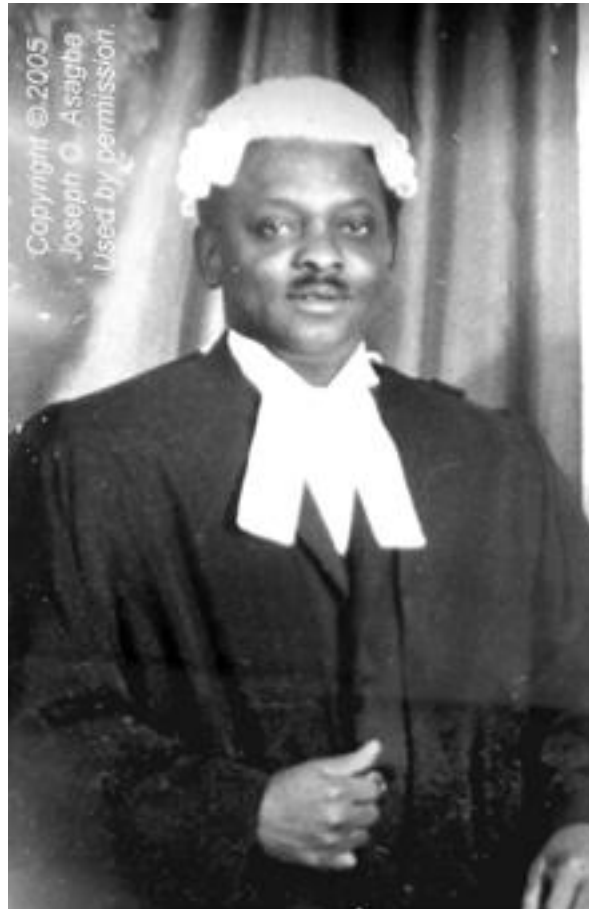
After completing grammar school and working as a police officer in Ibadan for a few years, Tajinere was sent to Great Britain by his father to study law. On the successful completion of his LL.B. law degree in the early 1960s from the University of London School of Law, Tajinere became one of the first lawyers in the Asagba family. He was called to the bar and practiced as an advocate in the Superior Courts of Law.

Later he established a private practice and became a corporate lawyer in Sapele upon returning from the United Kingdom.

Tajinere was a member of the Nigeria Bar Association, the Law World Association, and the British Bar Association of Lincoln Inn. In 1974, Barrister Tajinere was appointed and served as State Solicitor and as Chief Law Officer and Solicitor for the State of Delta until his death in 1996. He also served as Chairman of the Amukpe Town Council of Okpe Kingdom from 1975-1980. As Chairman, he oversaw the legal issues, economic development, education, and social welfare for the people of Amukpe.

Death and funeral

In 1996, Barrister Tajinere Asagba died at age 74. As a member of the community of legal professionals, many lawyers, Judges and Magistrates at Sapele and around the Delta State come to his burial to pay their last respect. He is buried in side his house at Amukpe.



Asagba, Francis Gbabune
b. 1924 – d. 1994

Prince (Barrister) Francis Gbabune Asagba was the son of Prince Gbabune Asagba and the grandson of Chief Asagba, born to the royal family of Asagba.

Education and career

Upon completion of grammar school and working as a public school teacher for some years, Francis proceeded to the United Kingdom to study law. He successfully completed his LL.B. law degree in 1961 at Holborn College of Law, a part of London University. He became the first lawyer in the Asagba family. He was called to the bar and practiced as an advocate in the Superior Courts of Law. Upon returning to Nigeria, he established a private practice.

Francis was a member of the Nigeria Bar Association and the London Bar Association of Middle Temple. In 1976, he was appointed by the state government of Bendel to serve as Chairman of the Rent Tribunal Court at Sapele, a position equal to that of a chief magistrate. In his position as Chairman of the Rent Tribunal Court, he had the magisterial or judgship power to preside over cases between landlords and tenants, investigated housing situations, and instigated remedial measures for solving rent problems in his jurisdiction.

He was secretary to the Sapele Okpe Communal Land Trust, where he undertook issues of land leases for the Sapele township, and also served as a member of the Okpe Land Representative Committee.

Death and funeral

In 1994, Barrister Francis Gbabune Asagba died at the age 70. As a member of the community of legal professional, many lawyers, Judges and Chief Magistrates at Sapele and around the Delta State attended his burial to pay their last respect. He is buried in side his house at Amukpe.



Asagba, Koyima G.
b. 1920 – d. 1974

Prince Koyima G. Asagba was the son of Prince Gbabune Asagba and the grandson of Chief Asagba of the royal family of Asagba of the Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe. Koyima was born into a royal family known for their political figures in Okpe Kingdom.

Political life

Following the footsteps of his father, grand father, Chief Asagba, he entered into politics. As a young man, he became a member of the Nigerian national political party, the Action Group, in the 1960s, and during this period, Koyima became a prominent and respected businessman.

On February 3rd, 1964, he ran for the office of Representative for the Federal House of Assembly as an Action Group candidate, but lost the election to Barrister J. A. Orhorho a candidate for the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons [N.C.N.C] .

In spite of his defeat, Koyima was still considered a great Nigerian politician with the passion to help seek the social and economic development for all Urhobos. He is known as an icon of modern Okpe Urhobo liberalism and a member of the Okpe royal

family. By him running for the representative for the Federal House of Assembly, that gave him a public image and recognition in the national political persona.

In 1966, when the King of Okpe Kingdom, HRM Ezezi II, died, Koyima became a candidate to become the next King of Okpe Kingdom, but his candidacy was rejected by the Udugun Okpe Council because his mother was a native Itsekiri. During the rejection of his candidacy, his cousin, Prince Vann Etietsola Asagba (b. 1923 – d. 1997) who father and mother are Okpe natives was asked to be a nominee for the kingship. But because of a split vote in the Asagba family, Vann declined his nomination, allowing HRM Orhoro I to be appointed in 1972 as King of Okpe Kingdom.



Asagba, Vann Etietsola
(b. 1923 – d. 1997)

Prince Vann Etietsola Asagba was the son of Prince Joseph Etietsola Asagba, grandson of Prince Eyeyan Asagba, and the great-grandson of Chief Asagba, born to the royal family of Asagba of the Orhoro ruling clan of Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe. His mother was Princess Alberta Aduviere Omarin (b. 1900 – d. 1968), daughter of Chief Omarin of the royal family of the Ewreke ruling house and of the Ogoni family of Okpe Kingdom. He was a member of both the Orhoro and Ewreke Ruling Houses of Okpe Kingdom.

Early life, education and career

Vann grew up at Sapele and had his early education at the Government school in Warri. He later attended the Ilesha Grammar School in Ilesha, and graduated in 1945. In 1948, he went to the School of Accounting in Ghana, West Africa. Upon completion

of his education, he joined the AT&P (African Timber and Plywood Company) at Sapele as a trainee accountant.

He left AT&P in 1952 for Lagos, where he worked with a private Chartered Accounting firm for many years. With the creation of the Midwest State in the 1960s, he came back home where he joined the Midwest Rubber Development Agency in Benin – City as a Senior Accountant. He later rose to the position of Chief Accountant, a position he held until he retired in 1984.

Upon the death of HRM Ezezi II in 1966, Vann was nominated by the Asagba family to be the Okpe King following the rejection of his cousin, Prince Koyima Asagba candidacy for the throne by Udogun Okpe Council.

Religious Faith

Central to Vann's life and personal attitude to life and its purpose was his Christianity, which he inherited from his mother and from his church the Methodist Church of Sapele. Throughout his life, Vann made to his faith, how it informed every area of his life and how it gave him strength that he was born a month after the death of his father.

He was a devout Christian. He believed in the redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was baptized at the Methodist Church of Sapele and was a member for years until his death in 1997.

During the height of the Nigeria-Biafra war when the Ibos were being killed by the Nigerian soldiers in Benin-City, a courageous Nigerian, VANN ASAGBA, with his Christian faith risks his life to save his Ibo Biafran friend OSAJIA from Nigerian death squads. He initiates a dangerous journey to smuggle Osajia past Nigerian checkpoints and death squads to the safety of a refugee camp in Benin-City, while Nigerian soldiers storm his home hunting for them both.

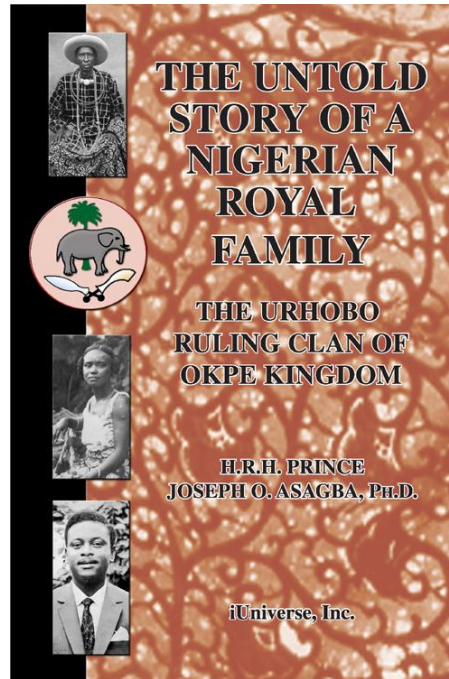
Death and funeral

Following his retirement from the Midwest Rubber Development Agency, Vann resided in Sapele with his family until he died at the age 74 on February 24, 1997 at his home. He is survived by his wife, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, several cousins, family members, most of them residents of Sapele and Amukpe. His funeral was held at The Methodist Church of Sapele. Following his funeral service, he was interred at his compound at the Asagba compound at Amukpe.

Personal Life

In 1945, he married Sabinah Anajoke Fere [b. 1922 -]. She is the daughter of Chief Mukoro Fere of Urhobo Kingdom of Udu. Together, they were blessed with children. She is a retired school teacher. His widow Sabinah and family continued to live at Sapele after his death.

She is officially made the Mother of The Church at The Methodist Church at Sapele. Her role is to nurture the women in the church, providing counseling and guidance to the spiritual needs of the people of the church. Their eldest son Dr. Joseph Obukowho Asagba is the author of the book *The Untold Story of a Nigerian Royal Family: The Urhobo Ruling Clan of Okpe Kingdom*, published in 2005. The book traces the origins and history of the Okpe people.



The book has been praised as a fascinating history of a remarkable royal family by Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr, Chairman of the Department of African and African American Studies at Harvard University. Professor Constance Hilliard of the History Department at The University of North Texas in her praise for the book stated “This book represents the most comprehensive, impressive and thoughtful analysis of the subject ever written. No one with a genuine interest in African history can afford to over look this work”. And the book has received many other reviews.

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Anovwa
[b. 1800c]

Known as Papa Anovwa, he ruled Okpe Kingdom from 1890-1897. He was born into a royal family of the Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe in the Western Delta of Nigeria. He was a political leader who, after several years of the Okpe people not having a ruler or leader, he was chosen from his village of Egbo to rule the kingdom. But he was never a King.

He assumed the quasi-political title of Okpako-Okpe, meaning the oldest man of Okpe. Anovwa was considered the oldest man in Okpe Kingdom at the time. Anovwa created a council headed by him in which the council was named after.

He moved the capital of Okpe from Orerokpe to the royal village of Odjiedi, from where he ruled with the assistance of political leaders from several village groups and made them representatives with the title of Olotu.



Chief Omarin
(b. 1824 – d. 1906)

Family and personal life

Chief Omarin was the son of Prince Etajeme, a descendant of the Ogoni and Ewreke Ruling Houses of the Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe in the Western Delta of Nigeria. He was born into a royal family of the Etajeme of Aghalokpe. Omarin was one of the Okpe's leading chiefs and a farmer.

He had two wives; one of his wives, Etcheojaye, was seized by Chief Ojegba when he sent her to pay homage to him for hunting. Ojegba gave her to his brother, Oritsedere. When Omarin waited for his wife to return and could not find her, he proceeded to Chief Ojegba's home at Amukpe and asked if he had seen her. His visit to Ojegba brought about Ojegba's title, "Tikokotigho Minimo," meaning in the Okpe dialect, "Both the messenger and the parcel have been seized (or confiscated)." After constant pleading, Ojegba told his brother to release his wife.

When the British came to establish their Colonial government in Okpe Kingdom, a British deputy commissioner and vice-consul, Major MacDonald met with Chief Omarin in Sapele on November 14, 1891, to discuss the construction of the constabulary post, customs office, consular court, treasury office, and a prison and police barracks. As a leading political leader, it was Omarin who gave the British his land so the prison and police barracks could be built at Sapele.

Chief Omarin was the father of Alberta Aduviere Omarin and the grandfather to Prince Vann Etietsola Asagba.



Omarin, Alberta Aduviere
(b. 1900 – d. 1968)

Family and personal life

Princess, Alberta Aduviere Omarin was the daughter of Chief Omarin of the Royal family of Etajeme, a descendant of the Ogoni family of the Ewvreke Ruling House of the Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe in the Western Delta of Nigeria. She was married to Prince Joseph Etietsola Asagba [b. 1890 – d. 1923] together, they had a son Prince Vann Etietsola Asagba.

Later years and faith

When the missionaries came to Urhoboland in the late 1800s, they converted many Africans who were pagans to Christianity. In 1947, the missionaries built The

Methodist church at Sapele. Princess Alberta was one of the Okpe Christians who played an active role in getting the Methodist church built at Sapele that year. Because of her role in establishing the church, Alberta became one of the founders of the church and a major figure as a spokeswoman for the church. In 1948, she was credited with organizing the Methodist Women Association and became leader of the religious meeting group. By organizing the Methodist Women Association at the church, she helped the church grow in membership.

Religious Faith

Princess Alberta Aduviere Omarin was a Christian whose religious views developed through the missionaries activities at Sapele in the early 1940s. She was baptized at the Methodist Church of Sapele and was a member from 1947 until her death in 1968. She believed that faith gave her a path to be cleansed of sin and have eternal life.

Death and funeral

On November 29, 1968, she died after a brief illness at the age of 68. As a member of the Okpe royal family and the daughter of a former Okpe leading Chief, she was given a traditional burial. As a devout Christian, her funeral was held at the Methodist Church of Sapele. Following the Church funeral service, she was interred at her bedroom in her house at Sapele.



Ojegba, Avwenaroro Onotor
(b. 1872 – d. 1977)

Princess Royal Avwenaroro Onotor Ojegba was born to Umutor, the daughter of Chief Ojegba of the royal family of Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe in the Western Delta of Nigeria. Avwenororo grew up in the royal village of Amukpe in a large household open to many political leaders who were interested in politics.

Later years and political life

As a royal family member, she was a senior member of the Female Age Organization in Okpe Kingdom. Prior to 1957, the Okpe Council only allowed males to participate as members of the Council. In 1957, Onotor criticized the political leaders and challenged their dominance in the political arena by campaigning for women rights to participate in the all-male Council of Elders. Prior to Onotor's campaign for Okpe women's rights, throughout Okpe history, women had not participated in local politics due to structures of authority.

Men saw politics as positions of power for men only, but all that changed when she brought along other royal members such as Princesses Oghogho, Oghenejakpo, and Oghonogho, the daughters of Chief Asagba (b. 1834 – d. 1914) and granddaughters of

Chief Ojegba (b. 1808 – d. 1881), to campaign with her for women’s rights. After much campaigning, members of the Okpe Council agreed to accept female participation in their all-male Council of Elders.

Onotor empowered the women’s role in politics, fought for gender equality. She has become an icon in the history of modern Okpe Urhobo liberalism. She became engaged in the struggle to win gender and political rights for women. Her efforts paved the way for women to be members of the council.

She wanted her action of fighting for women as evidence of women’s equality to men and it will be better if women were involved in the political sphere.

She is one of the untold 20th century’s feminist and influential Okpe woman, Onotor help smash through barriers of gender and class to be heard in a male dominated society of Nigeria. She is considered the first lady of gender equality and the mother of freedom movement in Okpe Urhobo Kingdom.



Princess Oghogho Asagba
(b. 1886 – d. 1971)



Princess Oghenejako Asagba
(b. 1886 – d. 1971)



Princess Oghonogho Asagba
(b. 1889 – d. 1962)



Princess Charlotte Onoriode Asagba Obanya

Princess Charlotte Asagba Obanya [born. August 21, 1940] at Sapele to the late Prince Takpor Asagba and Mrs. Lydia Asagba of Okpe Kingdom is a Nigerian educator. She is the granddaughter of Prince Eyeyan Asagba[b. 1868 – d. 1912] and the great-granddaughter of Chief Asagba [b. 1834 – d. 1914].

Early life and Education

Following the completion of her primary education at Sapele and Lagos, in 1956, Charlotte enrolled at Anglican Girl's Grammar School in Abeokuta. She later transferred to Methodist Girl's High School in Yaba – Lagos and earned her West African School Certificate in November 1961. That year [1961] Charlotte emerged as overall national winner of the Israeli government essay competition that rewarded her with a two-month 'academic queen' tour of Israel as well as a post-school certificate scholarship.

With the scholarship award, she enrolled for higher school certificate course in Ibadan Grammar School. At the school, she was elected Senior Girl Prefect, having displayed excellent leadership qualities in her second and final year. She passed the Higher School Certificate [HSC] – all three principal papers and the subsidiary General Paper in November 1963.

Later years and education

After nine months of teaching at St. Timothy's College at Yaba-Lagos, Charlotte was admitted to the Nigeria premier University – the University of Ibadan in October 1964, from where she earned a Bachelor of Education [B.Ed. Hons] degree in June 1967, majoring in English with French as subsidiary teaching subject.

She was the first female in the Asagba family to earn a University degree. By so doing, she makes history and she inspired so many members of her family to seek higher education as a way to a better life.

At the University of Ibadan, she was a member of the student representative council during the 1965-66 academic years. She was a member of the executive council of Queen Elizabeth Hall and in her final year at the University [1966-67], she served as Chairperson of Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Career

Her post-graduate teaching career spanned two active decades [1967-1987], during which she taught English language and Literature at all levels, in addition, she promoted sports, drama and other leadership/citizenship development programming among students. It was a period during which Charlotte contributed to nurturing the younger generation in the following schools:

- Rev.Kuti Memorial Grammar School in Abeokuta from 1967-68 academic years.
- During the 1969-71, she taught English Literature and General paper at the Higher School Certificate level and English language/Literature at the lower levels.
- She taught at Methodist High School in Lagos from 1971-72 academic years.
- During the 1972-1975 academic years, she taught at the United Missionary College, a teacher training college, in which she taught Principles and Practice of Education [PPE], in addition to English language and literature.
- In the 1975-1977 years, she became the Vice - Principal at Idi-Ito High School in Ibadan.
- From 1977 -1979 academic years, she was the Vice – Principal at Adelagun Grammar School.
- In the 1980 – 1985 academic years, she was the Pioneer Principal at Ijokodo High School in Ibadan and during the 1985 – 1987, Charlotte was appointed as the Principal at Sango High School in Ibadan.

During this period, Charlotte was known and widely acknowledged as a creative teacher, who transformed the lives of students and who exerted positive professional influence on her peers. As Vice-Principal and later Principal, she won the hearts of students, parents and teachers as an astute manager, a veritable bridge builder and a mentor par excellence.

International service

In July of 1987, Charlotte took an early retirement and moved with her family first to Switzerland from 1987 through 1988 and then to Senegal, West Africa from 1988 through 1999. She devoted these international years to perfecting her French language

skills – earning the Diplome d’Etudes Francaises of Universite’ Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar in 1990.

She was also actively engaged in professional, civil society and humanitarian activities – serving as Secretary of an International Women Research Group and engaged in Consultancy services with agencies of the United Nations from 1989 to 1992. From 1994 through 1996, she was the President of the International Women Society of Dakar. She was above everything else the source of tremendous support to her husband Professor [Dr] Obanya in his highly demanding international career, along with sound parenting for the younger members of the family.

Personal life and family

In January of 1968, Charlotte married Dr. Pai Obanya, Emeritus Professor of Education and Director of the Institute of Education at University of Ibadan. Her husband Dr. Obanya was also the former foundation Dean of Education at Lagos State University and a retired Assistant Director – General of UNESCO. Together, they are blessed with well – established children and grand children.

Since returning to Nigeria in December of 1999 with her family, she continue her mentoring of younger members of Society and proving support for all types of humanitarian causes. She is well known for her generosity and contribution to the development of her extended family, in-laws is unrivalled and to anyone who crosses her path.

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