

# Oriola, John Babajide (1880–1983)

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John Babajide Oriola was one of the Adventist pioneering ministers in Nigeria.

## Early Life

John Babajide Oriola was born around 1880 in Ipoti-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. Oriola was a member of the Anglican Church, like many other people in his community. They did not have a resident Anglican minister. They appealed to the Anglican Church to send them a resident minister. When their request was denied, some of the community members who had heard of the Adventist missionary David C. Babcock sent for him to come and explain the doctrines of his church to them. Babcock shared various biblical teachings, including the Adventist doctrine about the seventh day, Saturday, being the biblical Sabbath, and not Sunday, the first day of the week. Oriola and several other people in Ipoti- Ekiti asked the Anglican Church leaders of the then Ijero-Ekiti diocese about the biblical day of worship. When they could not present biblically sound reasons for keeping Sunday as the day of worship, many of their local church members, including Oriola, accepted the Seventh-day Adventist teachings.<sup>1</sup> John B. Oriola and Aina I. Balogun were among the 78 new converts in Ipoti who studied the Bible with David C. Babcock and were baptized by Pastor R. P. Dauphine in September 1915.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to John B. Oriola, several other people played prominent roles in the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ipoti: Daniel Olomjobi Onigbojansan, who housed D.C. Babcock during his visit to Ipoti in 1915, Daniel Omolewa, who became the first Sabbath School secretary of the Ipoti Adventist church, and Daniel Olarinmoye, Chief Esaya, a prominent son of Ipoti community, who was an interpreter for D.C. Babcock.<sup>3</sup>

John Babajide Oriola had no formal education but learned to read and write from his friends. However, he had some practical training in evangelistic work.

Oriola got married in 1917 to Comfort Ojuolape, who was born in 1893. Their marriage was blessed with six daughters and three sons. At the time of his demise in 1983, John Babajide Oriola had twenty-four grandchildren.<sup>4</sup>

## Ministry

Prior to Babcock's first visit to Ipoti in 1915, Oriola was engaged in the tailoring business. After his baptism, Oriola started his ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria in 1916, when he and his friend A. I. Balogun were employed as evangelists in training and placed under the tutelage of expatriate missionaries<sup>5</sup> Oriola was ordained to pastoral ministry on February 20, 1930. He and A. I. Balogun were the first two ordained Nigerian Adventist ministers. Oriola ministered in Sao (1916-1918), Erunmu (1918-1920), Sao, Ipoti and Erunmu (1920-1938), Ikun Ekiti (1938-1941), and Otun Ekiti (1941-1955). Oriola officially retired from the ministry in 1955, when he relocated and continued to serve at Ipoti, his home community until 1983. In 1966 he published a book, *A Short History of SDA Church in Ipoti Ekiti*. John Oriola rested in the Lord in 1983 at the age of one hundred and three. He was buried in his hometown, Ipoti- Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.<sup>6</sup>

## Legacy

John Oriola was a foundational member of the Ipoti SDA Church in 1915. He was the second Nigerian national to be ordained as an Adventist minister of the Seventh-day Adventist ministry in Nigeria. He will be remembered for pioneering Elemere, Oloru, and Oloje Adventist churches, all in Kwara State, Nigeria.<sup>7</sup>

Today, his house at Ipoti Ekiti is a popular resort center, called Aworokin Compound<sup>8</sup> He spent 78 years in the church as a responsible member, and was supportive of the church leadership and the church mission work, even in retirement.

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### SOURCES

Agboola, David T. *The Seventh-Day Adventists in Yorubaland:1914-1964*. Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1987.

Babalola, David O. *On Becoming a Conference*. Ibadan: OSB Design Limited, 2002.

Babalola, David O. *Sweet Memories of Our Pioneers*. Lagos: Emaphine Reprographics Ltd., 2001.

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### NOTES

1. David T. Agboola, *The Seventh-Day Adventists in Yorubaland:1914-1964* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1987), 4.

2. David O. Babalola, *Sweet Memories of Our Pioneers* (Lagos: Emaphine Reprographics Ltd., 2001), 119.

3. David O. Babalola, *On Becoming a Conference* (Ibadan: OSB Design Limited, 2002), 37-38.

4. Taiwo Oriola Dada, J. B. Oriola's daughter, interview by author, Lagos, July 2021.

5. Babalola, *Sweet Memories*, 119.

6. Taiwo Oriola Dada, J. B. Oriola's daughter, interview by author, Lagos, July 2021.

7. Ibid.

8. Babalola, *On Becoming a Conference*, 63.

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