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Special Release

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### Obituary

#### **Professor Emeritus Jacob Festus Adeniyi Ajayi (26 May, 1929- 09 August, 2014)**

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor I. F. Adewole, FAS, announces, with deep regret, the transition of Professor Jacob Festus Adeniyi Ajayi (JFA), a distinguished Professor Emeritus of History and the doyen of the iconic Ibadan School of History. The sad event occurred at the University College Hospital (UCH) in the evening of Saturday, 9 August, 2014.

Professor Emeritus Ajayi was born on 26 May, 1929 at Ikole Ekiti to Ezekiel Adeniji Ajayi, *Akowe* Oba, (the king's private Secretary) and pioneer of Christianity, education and development in Egbe Oba, Ekiti State. He attended St Paul's School, Ikole Ekiti, 1934-39 and from there proceeded to Christ School, Ado-Ekiti. In 1941, he transferred to Igbobi College Yaba, where in addition to being a school prefect, young as he was, he also served as the College Librarian. He completed his studies in the school in December 1946 with a Grade I Cambridge School Certificate. In 1947, J.F. Adeniyi Ajayi was admitted to the Yaba Higher College, which had been founded specifically to offer some rudiments of University education to Nigerians.

At the establishment of the University College, Ibadan (UCI) in 1948, and few months after his nineteenth birthday, Jacob Ajayi joined the elite set of foundation students of the institution to read History, English and Latin. He graduated in 1952 with the Bachelor of Arts (general) in History, Latin, and English. Between 1952 and 1955, Ajayi attended University College, Leicester, where he earned another Bachelor of Arts (firstclass honours) in History. In September 1955, J.F. Adeniyi Ajayi moved to the University of London, where he registered for the Ph.D programme at King's College. He was appointed a Derby Research Scholar of London University, 1955-1957; as well as a Research Fellow at the Institute of Historical Research, London, 1957-1958. He obtained his Ph.D from the University of London in 1958.

Professor Emeritus Ajayi joined the services of the University College, Ibadan as Lecturer Grade II on 12 September, 1958. He immediately teamed up with his teacher and mentor, Prof.

Kenneth Onwuka Dike to help transform the history curriculum. Prof. Emeritus Ajayi was one of the most eminent members of that generation of African historians who revealed and battled the epistemological illogicality of Africans not having a history of their own until the arrival of Europeans. He rose through the ranks to become Professor of History on October 1, 1963. It was under Professor Ajayi that the Department of History, University of Ibadan became the dominant school in the study of History of Nigeria and Africa. With his intellectual engagement in the field, he saved Africa from the ignominy of giving credit to Europe for History and Civilization in Africa. He, therefore, rolled back the deterministic assumptions of European scholarship and the epistemological illogicality and fallacies inherent in European historiography. His 1961 essay titled: 'Colonialism: An Episode in African History' was path-breaking. In that work, Ajayi successfully presented a philosophy of history that countered Europe's pseudo-intellectual position. He later revised his Ph.D thesis for publication in 1965 as "Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite", the first of the publications in his Department, under the Longman History series which later became known as the Ibadan History Series. His *Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century* was also the first major study of professional warfare among the Yorubas. His seminal publications include *Milestones in Nigerian History*, 1962; *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century*, 1964; *Evolution of Political Culture in Nigeria*, 1985, *A Thousand Years of West African History*, 1965; *The Narrative of Samuel Ajayi Crowther*.

Late Prof. Emeritus Ajayi served the University in various capacities. He was the Head of Department from 1966 to 1969 and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts between 1964 and 1966. He served meritoriously as the Assistant Hall Warden and Hall Warden for Sultan Bello Hall from 1959-1962; Hall Master for Nnamdi Azikiwe Hall from 1966-1972, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Academic matters) 1966/67 session and Director of the University Bookshop (1967-1970). Also, as a foremost teacher, numerous students had passed through his tutelage. During his service at Ibadan, he was granted leave of absence from 3 July, 1972 to 30 September, 1978 tenable at the University of Lagos to enable him serve that institution as Vice- Chancellor.

As Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos, he embarked on massive restructuring of the University of Lagos, converting the Schools to Faculties, introducing the open and distance learning programme, and building the impressive University Guest Houses and the Conference Centre. In 1978, after the Ali-Must-Go students' crisis, Professor Ade Ajayi returned to the University of Ibadan to resume his work as teacher and academic, in particular his promotion of African History, supervision of theses and dissertations, and contributing to staff development.

During his distinguished academic career, Prof. Ajayi's service was not limited to the University of Ibadan. He became the first African to serve as a member of the Council on the United Nations University in Tokyo, Japan, from 1974 to 1980 (Chairman for two years from 1976 to 1977); and, the first African Chairman of the International African Institute, (1975-1987) a position once occupied by Lord Fredrick Lugard when it was established in 1926. He also served as Vice-Chairman of the Association of African Universities, 1972-1976; the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, 1978; and the National University of Lesotho in Southern Africa, 1977-1983. He was Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti from 1984 to 1988. Jacob Ade Ajayi was appointed to the UNESCO Scientific Committee for Drafting the UNESCO General History of Africa, and was appointed Editor of Volume VI of the UNESCO General History of Africa series.

Also, he had several distinguished fellowships and awards including Fellow of the Ghana Historical Society, and of the Nigerian Academy of Letters. He was named the Corresponding Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of Britain (1979); Foundation Fellow of the Historical Society of Nigeria (1980); Nigerian National Order of Merit, (October, 1986); the 25th Anniversary Gold Medal, University of Lagos (1987); Ondo State Roll of Honour, (1989); the Distinguished Africanist Award, 1993; Fellowship of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London (1994); the UNESCO Avicenna Silver Medal for Outstanding Contribution to the General History of Africa (1964-1999).

He was conferred with the titles of Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON) and Officer of the Federal Republic (OFR), in 2000; and Most distinguished Alumnus Awards (MDA), University of Ibadan, 2001. In the year 2010, Prof. Emeritus Ade-Ajayi was named by the Federal Government of Nigeria as one of the fifty individuals whose contributions are acknowledged by the nation. He was also decorated with the traditional title of *Babapitan of Ikole-Ekiti*, Master-Chronicler of Ikole (January 1983) and three months after, the *Onikoyi of Ife*, Ancient Warrior of Ife (April 1983).

At the age of 60, he retired officially from the University of Ibadan with effect from October 1, 1989. In 1990, he was appointed as Emeritus Professor History in the Faculty of Arts.

Professor Emeritus Ajayi mentored several generations of historians who are today leading lights in the field of History. No wonder, Professor J.D.Y. Peel, eminent scholar, sociologist and Africanist, described him as "The Moses of Nigerian Historiography." Professor Ajayi helped to raise the tone and tenor of university governance, professional career development,

programme development and institutional/workplace practices. These and others go to a large extent to inscribe the attributes of Professor Emeritus Ajayi as an institution builder.

In retirement, late Prof. Emeritus Ajayi was noted for his selfless service and positive contributions to the development of the University, in general and Department of History, in particular. He donated his free time in teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses and presenting seminar papers. He also continued to supervise doctoral students in the Department. The personal library of Prof. Emeritus J. F. Ade.Ajayi became part of the JADEAS Trust Library. It became a very important resource base for staff, students and visitors to the Department. In 2007, the Jadeas Trust Library was officially designated as a Resource Centre for the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan.

On 17 November, 2012 the Degree of Doctor of Letters (D.Litt.), *honoris causa* was conferred on Prof. Emeritus Ajayi by the University of Ibadan in recognition of his distinct contributions to scholarship and global understanding. In March 2014, Prof. Emeritus Ajayi was also presented with the Nigeria's Centenary Award by the Federal Government in commemoration of the 100 years of the founding of Nigeria.

He is survived by Chief Mrs. Christie Ade-Ajayi, five children and many grandchildren.

May his gentle soul rest in peace. Amen.

#### **FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS AS ANNOUNCED BY THE FAMILY:**

##### **Monday, 15 September, 2014 (University of Lagos):**

10.00am – Special Senate Session of Tributes at the Main Auditorium, University of Lagos, to be followed by International Tributes from around the world.

##### **Monday, 15 September, 2014 (University of Ibadan):**

4.30pm – Special Faculty of Arts Board Session

5.00pm – Evening of Tributes at the Faculty of Arts Quadrangle

##### **Tuesday, 16 September, 2014:**

5.00pm – Service of Songs at the John Paul Centre, University of Ibadan

##### **Wednesday, 17 September, 2014:**

8.30 – 10.30 – Lying-in-State at Trenchard Hall, University of Ibadan

11.00am – Commendation Service at Chapel of the Resurrection, University of Ibadan

##### **Thursday, 18 September, 2014:**

8.00am – Leave Ibadan for Ado-Ekiti

12-2.00pm – Ekiti State Government Reception

4.00pm – Civic Reception by the Elekole-in-Council, Ikole Ekiti

6.00pm – Christian Wake Keep at St. Paul’s Church Hall, Ikole Ekiti

**Friday, 19 September, 2014**

11.00am Church Service at St. Paul’s Anglican Church, Ikole Ekiti, followed by interment  
Reception at Irepodun Nursery and Primary School, Ikole Ekiti

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