

**SOCIO CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AGEMO FEDTIVAL AMONG
THE IJEBU ODE PEOPLE OF OGUN STATE UP TO 2000AD**

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

FEBRUARY 2025

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) IN HISTORY**

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY, NIGERIA.

FEBRUARY 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **RAJI OLUWATOPE VICTOR** of the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under my supervision.

Mr. Ekhaton- Obogie Osaisonor Godfrey
Project Supervisor

Dr. Frank Ikponmwosa
Head of Department

DATE _____

DATE _____

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God for His love, my parents Mr and Mrs Raji thank you for your prayer and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude goes to God Almighty who has been merciful, providing for me, comforting me, and protecting me. He has also led me to the successful completion of my research project, and for that I am grateful.

My sincere gratitude also goes out to Mr. Ekhaton, my project supervisor, who acted as my dependable mentor throughout the study's research and writing. God bless you richly sir.

I also want to express my immense gratitude to my lecturers, who has worked hard to improve me as a student and person from the very beginning of my degree program in this university; Prof. Eddy Erhagbe, Prof. E. A. Ifidon, Dr Frank Ikponmwosa, Dr. (Sr.) J. C. Nwaka, Dr Charles Osarumwense, and the Late Dr. Osiki Odion coupled with other outstanding departmental lecturers deserve my gratitude.

I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my parents Mr and Mrs Raji for their love and support all through my stay in the university. To my siblings Miss demi

Raji and Mrs Ruth Osagie God bless you all for your wonderful support all though my days at the university.

And my sincere gratitude goes to my course mates and friends Divine, Faith, Tejiri and also my reading partner Blessing and Karo for their support and for their support and guidance throughout our journey together in the University of Benin, I am eternally grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page - - - - - i
 Certification - - - - - iii
 Dedication - - - - - iv
 Acknowledgment - - - - - v
 Table of content - - - - - vi

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction - - - - - 1
 Aim and objective - - - - - 3
 Statement of the problem of the study - - - - - 3
 Scope of the study- - - - - 4
 Significant of the Study - - - - - 6
 Research Method - - - - - 7
 Endnotes - - - - - 9

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction - - - - - 11

Origin of Ijebu Ode people - - - - -	16
Adminstrative structure of Ijebu-Ode - - - - -	19
Endnotes - - - - -	25
CHAPTER THREE: ORIGIN OF THE AGEMO FESTIVAL	
Introduction - - - - -	27
Agemo festival in Ijebu Aiyepe - - - - -	29
Operational mode of Agemo festival - - - - -	32
Endnotes - - - - -	38
CHAPTER FOUR: CONTRIBUTION OF AGEMO FESTIVAL IN IJEBU ODE	
Introduction - - - - -	39
Modernization of Agemo festival - - - - -	40
Socio-cultural and economic activities of Agemo festival - - - - -	42
Endnotes - - - - -	53
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	
Introduction - - - - -	55
Summary - - - - -	55
Conclusion - - - - -	56
Bibliography - - - - -	58

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The study of festival in the Yoruba societies from the beginning to this present time has encouraged a wide range of interest amidst scholars and writers in recent times. To start with, Ijebuland like in other towns and villages that make up Yorubaland has something to celebrate the form of a festival. Festivals are observed by adherents of the indigenous religion in Ijebuland it is a known fact that African religion gives prominence to hospitality, togetherness and feelings for this are African religious identity¹. This quality however is portrayed in their various social and religious activities such as festivals and rites. These festivals are celebrated to commemorate specific occasions in among the people.

The *Agemo* festival has been with the Ijebu people from time immemorial. It is one of the most prominent festival among the Ijebu. Although, their existed other festivals, *Agemo* festival is one of such, and most glamorous festivals in Ogun state. Since it is in the nature of human beings to celebrate life, African people and other culture celebrate life, events and the life of individual and community. This celebration could include: harvest, initiation ceremony, circumcision. Some are done on family basis while others are observed by the whole community². Similarly, *Agemo* festival is observed by the whole community whereby virtually all families in Ijebu Ode community

and some other foreign visitors participate or observe the festival. Festivals are observed by adherents of traditional religion. They mark social and religious events in the lives of the people and they culminate in series of performance, entertainment, merry making rites and ceremony³. Similarly the concept of Oro as to do with those involved in administering the necessary rituals or rites before the Agemo festival commence. In a sense festivals are most joyful and the most important social and religious activities in West Africa traditional society⁴. Social in the sense that it involves the coming together or gathering of people from various families and even other neighbor communities. Religious in that it as some moral values and significance in the community as it tends to postulate peaceful coexistence and a time were one can reinstate or re-establish restrained relationships with the Supreme Being or spiritual world and members of the community.

Importantly, this study examines the historical origin and impact of the Agemo festival in Ijebuland. The study will also observe the discrepancy of old and in the contemporary time as it's relate with the Agemo festival in Ijebuland community; showing its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the research work revolves round the fact that, though with some constraints, economic activities in Ijebuland were well managed and elaborates during the this festive period, as it served the people well by helping them being united, stable and creating a sort of prosperity among the Ijebuland, which as also made the core idea of the festive very important, which will be examined in this project topic.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the cultural significance of the Agemo festival using the Ijebu people in Yoruba land as a case study, while the specific objectives arising from this study are:

- a) To examine the tradition of origin of the people of Ijebu, the political and socio-cultural activities of Ijebu, particularly as it relates the Agemo festival in pre-colonial times.
- b) To examine the nature and manifestations of the Agemo festival.
- c) To examine the socio-cultural and political impact of Agemo festival on Ijebu people.
- d) To examine the changing roles of Ijebu-Agemo festival since the advent of western influence in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem of the Study:

This research work holds a lot significant challenges and issues that will be addressed on the course of the research in this project work, while other research work has tried to address the Agemo festival in general, but mostly this research work has failed to provide in depth analysis on the social-cultural impact of the festival, mostly on the people of Ijebu-Ode of Ogun who were one of the original people who practiced this festival, leaving a lot problems and questions to be asked and which will be addressed in this research work.

The origin of the Agemo festival will also be one of the problem faced on this research, while this particular issue has been addressed by other research work, the Agemo festival, this work are still shallow in terms of historical analysis, and in terms of relationship with the Ijebu-ode people, as this project is essential toward better understanding the origin of this festival and also of the people of Ijebu-ode of Ogun state. This problem of origin of the Agemo festival and also of the people of Ijebu-ode of Ogun state is essential to address,

Another problem which also be addressed, is the significant of the Agemo festival toward the people of Ijebu-ode, as the festival has been shown to be a vital part of the people culturally life and system, thus this research work is set to provide in depth historical analysis on how the Agemo festival became essential toward the people of Agemo festival, as there must be an historical reason for such festival to hold so much important and significant, mostly as the Agemo festival is such a social event among the people.

While this problem is essential to address, along this research work mostly in this line of research work which is important in preserving cultural heritage such as the Agemo festival, event like this need to be studied and analysis, as festival like the Agemo festival are sometimes overlooked and not properly study, problems like the origin of the Agemo festival are very vital issue that is to address to further acknowledge the important of the festival and while also the origin of the people is also another issue that will be

important to address in this research work. Another essential core aspect of the problem that will be addressed is the Agemo festival impact on the socio-cultural activities on the people of Ijebu-ode of Ogun state. This is one of the essential problems that will be raised in the course of the project research and will also be addressed.

Scope of the Study

This research work focus mainly on the cultural significant of the Agemo festival to the Ijebu-ode people and also the origin of the Ijebu-ode people of Ogun state , as this scope will cover must of the aspect which will be studied on this research topic. Firstly the geographical scope of which the topic will be covered. This scope will cover the Ijebu-ode people of Ogun state of present day Nigeria, as this research will also cover the geographical landscape of the land in the pre-colonial era, and also this research will also push further into the origin of the people of Ijebu-ode and the nature of the people in the early times, and also the origin of the Agemo festival among the Ijebu –Ode people and also the nature of the festival during the early times in Ijebu-Ode which will include the rituals and rite of the Agemo festival during the early times, examining the early activities of the Agemo festival during this pre-colonial period among the Ijebu-ode people and also further examine the origin of this ritual and rite that were being practiced among the people of Ijebu-Ode during the festive period.

Another part of this study will also help us to critically analysis the Agemo festival mostly it socio-cultural impact towards the people in those times and how it helped

shaped both their social and cultural activities during the early times, this is important to examine and also significant. In understanding the social importance of this festival toward uniting several communities in order to celebrate the festival, and also further down the research will also discuss about the impact of Early western activities on the Agemo festival and the changes which the Agemo underwent during the early colonial period.

This research topic will set to examine the different aspect of the Agemo festival, this scope will also cover the rite and ritual of the festival as it will examine those ritual that are performed during the festival by the priest chief and also the people and also some custom that are forbidden during the Agemo festival and also examine

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research topic is aimed at address the importance of the Agemo festival and also nature of why this festival is been practiced among this people, which help in the further understanding the core value of this festival and why it is so important to the people. Other historical research has been done on the activities of festival among the Ijebu –Ode people, this research has the potential to address the existing gap left out by other historical record, holding much significance in providing a huge contribution into understanding the significance of the Agemo festival mostly in the socio –cultural activities among the people, this work will improve on existing information about the Agemo festival and also focus on new findings on the nature of the festival mostly as the festival is proved vital in both their religious and cultural activities,

and other core topic will also be addressed by in this research work such as the origin of the people of Ijebu-ode and also the changes which the Agemo festival has undergone from its early times and toward the early contact with the Europeans. Through this process or research project relevant issues of the Agemo festival will be addressed, such as the customs and rites which are performed during the festive period and also the changes which the festival has undergone across the years, thus this research work holds much significance in the terms of preservation of the cultural heritage of the Agemo festival

Research Method

In order to achieve a comprehensive and interesting study, a descriptive and analytical method is employed. The method that would be used to carry out this research is the historical method which essentially provides opportunity for the utilization of data collected from primary and secondary sources, but mostly primary resources which includes oral interviews and archival materials conducted due to the fact that there are not much materials on the Ijebu community as it is a small town. Thus notable elders and researchers in the community will be interviewed and the Local Government Council will be visited for archival materials.

The two major primary sources that make of this study are oral tradition and pictorial evidences. Interviews will be carried out with academic and non-academic environments with people who were familiar with Ijebu and also the Agemo festival.

Secondary sources employed for this research include: textbooks, journals, as well as other documented materials these will help to develop supplement the information obtained from the primary source, which will be from both private and public libraries. However, this study will be subjected to an historical analysis of the qualitative method of research.

Endnotes

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2. Ibid., p.34.
3. Ibid., p.36.
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5. Ibid., p.27.
6. I. J. Diyaolu, *Role of Dress in Socio-cultural Events Among the Ijebu Yoruba*, Ibadan Book Builders, 2005, 90.
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18. Iyabode Deborah Akande, *Honour of a War Deity: Obèdú Festival in Òbà -Ilé in Òṣun State, Nigeria*, Ibadan: Spectrum Book, 2009, p.34.
19. Ibid., p.36.
20. Adenuga, Ademolu Oluwaseun, “The Socio-Spiritual Relevance of the Obanta Festival to the Development of Ijebu-Ode and Neighbouring Communities in Nigeria,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol.3, No.2, 2017, p.23.
21. Ibid., p.29.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The various aspect of the have not be fully exhaustively studied by researchers, There are however certain literature that deals on relevant aspect of Ijebuland, history and festival and other socio-political and economic activities. Some of the literatures include:

I. J. Diyaolu, book titled Role of Dress in Socio-cultural Events Among the Ijebu Yoruba, The book was conducted to determine the role, perception, and message communicated by the dressing of the age groups during the Ojude-Oba festival in Ijebu-Ode. Eight age-groups were purposively selected (comprising 4 male and 4 female groups). Ninety (90) age-grade members and 100 observers were randomly selected. The author observed the role played by the dress, 50.00% indicated that it promotes culture, fashion in vogue (37.50%) and competition (12.50%). Also, 37.50% indicated that it communicated status, prestige (25.00%), beauty and aesthetics (37.50%) Ogun State, Nigeria

S.O. Ugochukwu, article titled “An Examination of the Woro Agere Festival among the Ijebu Igbo People of Ogun State in Nigeria,” examined the socio-cultural impact of Woro agere festival in Ijebu Igbo, located in Ogun state of Nigeria. Woro Agere festival is a socio-cultural festival attracting people of all affiliation. Woro agree

festival thus shares similar attribute with Egungun festivals and others in terms of the way they invoke the spirit for the peaceful conduct in the society. The author further conducted oral interviews with traditional rulers and indigenes of Ijebu Igbo. He thus identifies how it helps to expose the values associated with traditional festivals and why it's important to practice it especially the promotion of socio cultural values, norms and customs among the people of Ijebu Igbo.

J.O. Adeyeri, article titled "Socio-Economic Significance of Cultural Festivals in Epe Division of Lagos State: An Overview," posits that throughout the history of mankind, culture has been the fulcrum upon which society rests. Culture provides the social, religious, intellectual and artistic manifestations that characterize a society. This is particularly so in Africa where the relationship between the inhabitants of a society and their culture is comparable to that which exists between the umbilical cord and the foetus. The system of production, exchange, political organization, religious worship and rituals, child-rearing practices, family and kinship ties e.t.c are culturally determined. The author contends that traditional festivals occupy a crucial place in the socio - economic life of Epe people. The author considers the origin and nature of major traditional festivals in Epe Division of Lagos State with a view to determining their impact on the society.

A.M. Bentina, work titled "Socio-Religious Significance of Ikoru and Ekpe Festivals in Akwete Ndoki Community of Abia State, Nigeria," examines the social, political, economic and religious significance of these festivals and the effect of

modernization on them. This was supplemented with the in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Findings showed that Ikoro and Ekpe festivals play a vital role in the social, political, economic and religious sustenance of the community. It was also observed that Christianity has altered most of the ritual practices. Recommendations were made which includes that the date for these yearly festivals be moved from late January to any date from 24th December to 2nd January in order to attract more participants.

K.C. Ubaku, work titled “The Role of Festivals in Awo-Omamma-Amiri Relations, since 1970,” examines the roles of the Owu, Okorosha, and new yam festivals in the post Nigerian Biafran Civil War relations of Awo-Omamma and Amiri towns. To ensure ample comprehension of the study, the information contained in the paper were provided under different sub-headings and according to their demands. Historical methodology of data gathering was adopted in the study where a wide range of sources, to include primary and secondary sources, were utilized. Finally, the paper concludes that despite the recent Otunne political conundrum, the Owu, Okorosha, and new yam festivals have continued to provide the pedestal for friendliness between the indigenes of the aforementioned towns, through cordial social and cultural relations.

A.O. Fahm, “Ijebu Ode’s Ojude Oba Festival: Cultural and Spiritual Significance,; asserts that Yoruba festivals are numerous and multifarious. For this reason, some are of the view that the Yorubas are deeply spiritual. In addition to the generally celebrated festivals among the Yorubas, each Yoruba tribe has its own festivals. A series of these

festivals called the Ojude Oba festival is celebrated by the Ijebus who are renowned for both their enterprise and affluence. The author examines the cultural and spiritual significance of the Ojude Oba festival. He also analyzes the early beginnings of the festival while providing insights into the epoch of the Ijebus. The festival constitutes a major commercial activity that brings about economic integration and development of the Ijebu community. The author later argues that the Ojude Oba festival should not be seen simply for its entertainment value, but as a manifestation of Yoruba cultural, socio-economic, and spiritual values.

I.D. Akande, books *In Honour of a War Deity: Ọ̀bèdú Festival in Ọ̀bà -Ilé in Ọ̀sun State, Nigeria*, focuses on an account of Ọ̀bèdú, a deity in Yorùbá land that is popular and instrumental to the survival of the Ọ̀bà -Ilé people in Ọ̀sun State, Nigeria. Data for the study was drawn from interviews conducted with eight informants in Ọ̀bà -Ilé which comprised of the king, three chiefs, three Ọ̀bèdú priests, and the palace bard. Apart from the interviews, the town was visited during the annual festival of Ọ̀bèdú and where the performances were recorded. In paying attention to the history and orature of Ọ̀bèdú, it was found out that Ọ̀bè dú who was deified, was also a great herbalist, warrior and Ifá priest during his life time. It was concluded that the survival of Ọ̀bà -Ilé and the progress achieved, could be linked to the observance of the Ọ̀bèdú festival, and that a failure not continue the event would be detrimental to the community.

A.A. Oluwaseun, “The Socio-Spiritual Relevance of the Obanta Festival to the Development of Ijebu-Ode and Neighbouring Communities in Nigeria,” examined the richness of Ijebu culture and belief in the celebration of deities. The author documents one of the popular festivals (Obanta festival) celebrated in Ijebu-Ode; examined the reasons for the celebration of the festival and the socio-spiritual implications of the festival on Ijebu-Ode and neighbouring communities. Durkheim’s functionalism and structuralist theories of Malinowski as well as symbolic interactionism were utilized in explaining the role of festivals in the society. The findings revealed that the celebration of deities and legends is still upheld largely in Ijebu-Ode; several festivals are held to revere the ancestors and deities of Ijebu-Ode but Obanta festival is celebrated for cultural maintenance purposes; and the socio-spiritual implication of the Obanta festival is to appease to the spirit of Obanta not to depart from the life, health and endeavours of the residents and indigenes of Ijebu-Ode. The author concluded that despite the presence and adoption of new forms of religion, certain traditional aspects of Ijebu-Ode culture are still upheld as being socio-spiritually relevant to maintain the continuity of the society and guarantee the physical and social development of Ijebu-Ode and its neighbouring communities. For instance, the existing literature, though talk about festival, they fail to examine the socio-political, economic and cultural impact of the Agemo festival. On the history of Ijebu people, none of the reviewed work or existing literature examines in

detail the general overview of the Ijebu people, therefore this study will fill the gaps in the existing knowledge of ijebu ode people and manifestation of the agemo festival.

Origin of Ijebu-Ode people

The Ijebu people are part of the Yoruba people living in the South–Western part of Nigeria to the coast. They are prominently occupying parts of Ogun and Lagos states of Nigeria. The Ijebuland is bounded on the North by the Ibadan land, on the East by the Ondo land, on the West by the Egba land and in the South by the Lagos Lagoon.¹ Like every other pre-literate people, the history of the Ijebu people is both obscure and uncertain. It is obscure in that until barely two hundred years ago, there was no written history. Even now, people still have to rely on traditions handed down from one generation to another.² It is on this backdrop, this study examines the origin and people of Ijebu and the nature of Agemo festival.

History and Migrations of the Ijebu People

There is a lot of evidence in support of the fact that the Ijebus migrated into Nigeria from Sudan. The most obvious is the Sudanese tribal mark which, though varied, is duplicated all over Yoruba land. In particular, the three vertical marks on both cheeks are the national marks in Ijebu. Moreover, in the border between South Sudan and Ethiopia, the original language which Arabic language has superseded is very similar to Ijebu dialect. Names of people such as Saba, Esiwu, Meleki (corruption of Menelik) and many others are still common in Ijebu and the South of Sudan.³ A kind of flute which was

formerly used during the coronation ceremony of the Awujale is still used in Ethiopia and South of Sudan. In the second place, the passage quoted from 'Ethiopian History' by Hailemariam at the beginning of this essay shows that Negede Orit which entered Ethiopia several centuries before King Solomon and the famous Makida, Queen of Sheba (about 900 B.C.) met the Ijebus on the east Coast of Southern Sudan.⁴

The ancestors of the Ijebus who now inhabit Ijebu-Ode and districts came into Nigeria from the ancient Kingdom of Owodaiye of Ethiopia which came to an end as a result of Arab supremacy in Middle East and the Sudan where Owodaiye was situated. The Kingdom of Owodaiye was bounded in the North by Nubia; in the East by Tigre and the Kingdom of Axum; in the West there was no clear boundary, while along its South-Eastern border, it was bounded by the land of Punt. With these people the Ijebus share their culture and religion.⁵ With the Tigrians and ancient Axumites the Ijebus share their tribal marks which are made up of three vertical marks on the cheeks while with the Egyptians, the Nubians and Puntite people, the Ijebu share many of their funeral rites, the Aremo cult and the Erikiran. The Yorubas in Nubia were the nearest people to the Ijebus in Owo aiye. Even the Ijebus differ from the Yoruba in many respects. For example, while the main Yoruba group practice circumcision on both male and female members of the family, the Ijebus never practice it on the female members; the Yorubas used to bore the lower part of the ear in both male and female while the male never bore in Ijebu.⁶

The first major wave of Sudanese that entered Nigeria was led by Iwase who came to Ife several centuries before the major Sudanese immigrations under Oduduwa and Olu-Iwa. The Iwase group of immigrants came during the reign of Esumare of Ife Erinrin. The next groups of Sudanese immigrants were the Ijebus and the kindred peoples under Olu-Iwa, who entered the country at about the same time as the Yoruba under Oduduwa. There are many reasons to believe that they arrived before the main Yoruba group. The most important reason was stated in a Yoruba tradition that when Oduduwa was alive, he became partially blind and went to consult Agbonniregun, an Ife Priest, with a view to finding out what he must apply to his eyes to regain his sight⁷ Agbonniregun recommended brine and so Oduduwa had to send one of his sons, Obokun, to the sea to bring him sea water. The latter wandered for many years in vain until he came to the King of Ijebu for help. This king sent a messenger to guide him to the sea and on Obokun's return to Ijebu, the King of the Ijebus (Lewu Legusen) gave Obokun medicines for Oduduwa's eyes. And when Oduduwa applied the brine and the medicine, he regained his sight. The above tradition shows that the Ijebus were in Nigeria before the main Yoruba stock because the king of Ijebu referred to was the fifth Awujale. In appreciation of this service, Oduduwa determined to visit the King of Ijebu, but he died about fifteen miles east of Ijebu-Ode. His followers settled down at Idofe, a town which has now become extinct⁸

The Ijebu legend tracing their origin to Waddai must have brought the known rivalry between them and other Yoruba people. If, indeed, Lamurudu and Oduduwa descended from Omu, the younger brother of Olu-Iwa, there is some sense in the claim that the Ijebus are senior to other Yorubas and cannot, therefore, accept the junior position that put them under the Ooni of Ife or Alafin of Oyo. The bulk of Yoruba people regard the Ijebus as peripheral Yoruba while the Ijebus themselves do not hide the fact that the cohesion between them and others who call themselves central Yoruba has been the result of cultural and political interaction over the centuries.⁹ Time itself has taken care of these legends as the various groups of people in Western Nigeria have come to accept a common Nationality as Yoruba, be they Ekiti, Ijesha, Egba, Ondo, Ijebu, etc.. Even among the Ijebus, there are conflicting claims to the source of origin depending on the political intention of those concerned. Irrespective of these claims, the Ijebus are united under the leadership of the Awujale of Ijebuland and this unity is the strength of the people as exhibited by their achievements in the past 48 years of the reign of Oba Sikiru Adetona, Ogbagba II.¹⁰

Administrative Structure of Ijebu Ode

Ijebu-Ode town was divided into two main wards namely; Iwade and Porogun, but Iwade ward divided into two Iwade Oke (also called Ijasi) and Iwade Isale, that is Upper and lower Iwade (North and South). By this division, there are three wards in Ijebu-Ode town and that was why the town was spoken of as Iwade, Porogun and Ijasi till

this day; each ward was divided into "Quarters" known as "ITUNS. What could be described as the town council in those days was the council for the Olorituns known as "Oloritun Medogbon", that is the twenty-five quarters heads.¹¹

In Ijebu-Ode, there were twenty-five quarters and each has its own quarter head called "Oloritun" whom the people respected and was recognized by the Awujale. The people of the Quarter met regularly in his house and dealt with petty matters amongst themselves. There other matters of general public interest were discussed. All these Quarters heads also met to discuss all matters affecting the common interest of the town. Each Oloritun represented the people of his quarter. This organization formed the link between the people and the governing authority. The Awujale and Paramount ruler of the Ijebu land represents the totality of the worthy ancestral heritage of a people that have carved a niche for themselves, not only among the renowned Yoruba people, but also across the length and breadth of the nation.¹² Today, the Ijebu people have ever growing reverence for their monarch, which has become an insignia of an enviable past. Fortified with a very robust political structure, the Ijebu people otherwise known as Omo Obanta voluntarily look unto the royalty with adequate loyalty and allegiance. Inclusive of these systems are the economic structure, social organization, community relation, justice administration, infrastructure development among others. They are the people to be with. The British made Ijebu- Ode the capital among the other ijebu towns in 1892, after the

notorious Anglo-Igebu war (popularly known as the Imagbon War) has robbed the Kingdom of its sovereignty.¹³

There were no political parties as known in modern democracy, and yet the ancient administrative set-up which ruled Ijebu in those days was democratic in principle. There were political groups which had functions each in the administration of town. The administrative pattern in Ijebu-Ode was the same in all other towns under the sovereignty of the Awajale, in some cases with slight variations.¹⁴ The Societies were:

1. The Pampa - the people
2. The Osugbo - the executives
3. The Ilamuren - the high chiefs
4. The Odis - the palace assistants (officials) and servants
5. The Parakoyi - the equivalent of the Chamber of Commerce

1. The Pampa Group

Though the lowest in rank, was the mother and spring board of the other groups. The Pampa was the people to whom we refer as the electorate in modern democracy and from them the others derive their authority. Without the Pampa, the Osugbo and the Ilamuren, even the Oba did not exist. The Pampa was the voice of the common people which must be heeded in the administration of the town.¹⁵ Titles in the Pampa Society were as follows:

1. The Agbon whose area was Iwade Isale

2. The Kakanfo whose area was Porogun

3. The Lapo-Ekun whose area was Iwade Oke (Ijasi)

These three are equals in their respective Wards. There were also two other chiefs of lower rank. These were:

The Jagun for the whole of Ijebu-Ode who was attached to Agbon in Iwade Isale. The Likotun for the whole of Ijebu-Ode who was attached to the Kakanfo Porogun. Other Chiefs lower in rank to the Jagun and Likotun were the Ashipas -- one for each Ward: Iwade Isale, Iwade Oke and Porogun. Their functions were to be the medium of information between the mass of the people - the "Womparis"- and the higher chiefs. Matters of any kind from the outlying districts (the farms attached to particular wards) came through them; but there were however, certain villages which come only through the Olisa and some through the Egbo¹⁶

The Osugbo Cult

This is a Cult - a Fraternity of Chiefs and Elders which was also the Executive Authority of the town. It has also a religious character. Two brass images known as "Edan" was the center of worship in the Osugbo Cult. It was the highest group and Cult and commanded the respect and obedience of all. Women were admitted into it by initiation but such women must have passed bearing age. Titles in Osugbo in order of precedence were: 1) Odele Olurin 2) The Oliwo 3) The Apena 4) The Akonoran They had different functions in the Osugbo, the Apena being the Chief Steward in the Society.

There was an inner circle known as the Iwarefa consisting of only six members as the name implied including the Apena and the Odele Olurin. The Oliwo and the Akonoran were not in the Iwarefa Circle. The Osugbo was the Legal Executive - they enforced the law and executive judgment in capital crimes. They were also members of the 'Owamu - the Kings Court.¹⁷

The Ilamuren Class of Chiefs

The Ilamuren is the class of High Chiefs under the headship of the Olisa. Other chiefs in this class are the Ogeni-Oja, Egbo, Olotufore, Apebi and other Chiefs that may have been initiated into the class having fulfilled all the conditions of initiation and provided 'Eran Ibojeṃ (a feast of ram or goat. The seat of the Ilamurens is ILISA. But when it comes to the (Aafin) Palace of the Awujale, the Ogbeni-Ojatakes precedence over any chief. The "Oja" in the Ogbeni-Oja title is not "market" - (its common meaning) but the PALACE (AAFIN AWUJALE).¹⁸

The Odi Society

This was composed of the Oba's attendants. Their descendants also come into this rank. They were employed as messengers of the Oba. They were first styled "Agunrins" and later became "Odis" by promotion. Another category in this class are the refugees (asaforiji) who sought refuge under the Oba because of one reason or the other from their homes and/or countries. From this Odi rank some were promoted and then they could leave the Oba's Palace and occupy land allotted to them by the Oba on which they lived

with their own family. They farmed in the Oba's land for their living, but were always at the Oba's service whenever he needed them. But the land will never pass to them.¹⁹

The Parakoyi Society

This is a Society which was more of a commercial nature than political. It was the equivalent of the Chamber of Commerce. Members looked into anything pertaining to trades and market disputes. They have Olori Parakoyi (Head) and his Asnipas in running the organization.

The Ancient Town Council

What could be described as the Town Council in those days was the Council for Olorituns known as "Oloritun Medogbon" that is the twenty-five Quarter Heads in Ijebu-Ode. For example, there were twenty-five Quarters and each had its own Quarter Head called "Oloritun" whom the people respected and was recognized by the Awujale. The people of the Quarter met regularly in his house and dealt with petty matters among themselves. There, other matters of general public interest were discussed. All these Quarter Heads also met to discuss all matters affecting the common interest of the town. Each Oloritun represented the people of his Quarter: This organization formed the link between the people and the governing authority.²⁰ Therefore, this study will fill in the gaps in the existing knowledge of Ijebu people and the manifestations of the Agemo festival.

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CHAPTER THREE

ORIGIN OF AGEMO FESTIVAL

Introduction

The origin of the Agemo festival in Ijebu Ode, is one whose event shapes the very existence of the foundation of the society, The Agemo festival originates from the Yoruba mythology surrounding the deity "Agemo," believed to be the son of Obatala. The Agemo festival, a significant cultural event in ijebu ode, embodies the rich historical and spiritual heritage of the people, celebrated annually, this festival doesn't only marks the onset of the farming season but also serves as a vital platform for community cohesion and reinforcement of traditional values, the origin can be traced to the early times of Ijebu Ode. Agemo is considered one of the earliest deities in ijebu ode, the agemo is a rallying factor among the communities that make up ijebu ode.

According to fact and fiction the Orisa Agemo used to be worshipped in a town called Wadai, in Egypt several thousands of years ago. According to fact and fiction, Bilikisu Sugbo, who later became Queen of Sheba after her marriage to the biblical King Solomon, had travelled to Jerusalem and saw the Agemo priests and developed a likeness towards them such that when she was returning to Ijebu, she pleaded with the Agemo priests to follow her back to Ijebu because of the need to perform some rites the Agemos reportedly to Queen Bilikisu that she should leave and that they Would join her later.¹

However, Bilikisu on her return journey to Ijebu, encountered Islam and became a Muslim. As a result of this development when the Agemo cultists arrived Oke-Eri, near Ijebu Ode, Bilikisu refused to receive them because of her new religion. She advised them to move on to Ijebu Ode where she assured them that the Awujale, would receive them and take care of them. Earlier on their way to Oke-Eri, they passed through Ijebu Mushin and upon being told that women must not see their regalia, the then Oloko of Ijebu Mushin, became afraid of them and quickly dispatched them out of the town. The Awujale, having heard that they were sent by Bilikisu Sugbo, settled them in town. At that time, the Olojas (Agemo priests) were using human beings for sacrifice.² So, when the people started complaining about the use of human beings for sacrifice, the Awujale had no choice than to ask them to leave the town. They there after moved to various locations on the outskirts from Agemos come from to Ijebu Ode to partake in the annual Agemo festival. Fact made it clear that, the Agemos moved into sixteen towns which are now known to be sixteen in number. Most of these Agemos are also King in their various domains and their names were derived from Egyptian language and they include the Head of the Agemo of Ijebuland.

1. Tani (from) Odoogbolu
2. Olumoro Olori (traditional ruler) Imoro
3. Serefusi (from) Igbile
4. Poosa (from) Imosan

5. Olumoko (from) Okun Owa
6. Alofee (fom) Ijesa Ijebu
7. Omugbo Okenugbo
8. Ija Oloko Ogun Olori (from) Imosan
9. Magodo (from) Aiyeye
10. Labamosan (from) Ago Iwoye
11. Petu (from) ISowo
12. Ogegbo (from) Ibonwon
13. Idebi (from) Ago Iwoye
14. Lasen Ajaga loru oru
15. Nopa (from) Imushin
16. Olujagbori (from) Imosan³

Olujagbori is known as the High Priest of Agemo, traditionally the priests do not dance but handle rituals. The celebration of Agemo stretch across Ijebu land, covering Ijebu Ode, and other divisional headquarters comprising Ijebu Aiyeye, Remo, Igbo Sagamu, Ejirin, Ikorodu down to Epe, Iperu, Ishara, Ago Iwoye and so on.

Agemo Festival In Ijebu Aiyeye

Although the festival of Agemo is observe in other part of Ijebu land. The uniqueness is attached to each part where the Agemos are representing. Ijebu Aiyeye is a developing town between Odogbolu and Ikenne and has an estimated population 35,000

people. Aiyepe people venerate the worship of Agemo and consider its worship as part of their lives. They see Agemo has “Orisa Abiamo” (deity of fertility) who is directly involved in the origin of their land. The reason behind this belief is traceable to the history which claims that Agemo settled somewhere called Isaye (old Ilakan) in Ijebu Aiyepe, after they have been accepted carrying out their ritual practices.⁴

However, the Agemo are referred as Magodo, and the chief priest is called Oloja Magodo, traditionally sacrifice and rituals are carried out by the priest towards the month of Agemo (July), this is the period when the Agemo have to travel from their settlement to Imosan for their annual celebration. Fact stated that, the first Oloja Magodo lost their belonging to a river, during their journey to Imosan for their annual celebration, which made them locate another road, on their arrival at Imosan, the belonging was found there, the people of Imosan refused to return it, this brought about completion between the Oloja Magodo and the people of Imosan, which was later said the Agemo have to compete in dancing and the best dancer go with the belonging.⁵ The story ended in the favor of Oloja Magodo which means the uniqueness of Oloja Magodo is practically this energetic and congenital dance with his easthetic movement. Fact also stated that, even since then the Oloja Magodo are always placed in the last role of the annual performance because of his beautiful and catchy entertainment. The celebration of Agemo festival is always in the month of August after the annual celebration at Imosan. In Aiyepe Agemo festival last for seven days and normally comes up during the first market day, first week

of August. Before Agemo festival commences the Oloja Magodo and the Oba's meet to deliberate on the day that will be fixed for Orisa Agemo to come out and which must be communicate with the people of Aiyepe, especially women, because women are forbidden to see the procession of the Agemo, and the clarification is been sang in one of their songs.⁶

Lee maa woo
Le si maa woran
Ara ilu le si wa wese
Lee maa wo.
Ye epa
Lee maa wo
Oke eee!!!
Obirin ma wo ooo!!!
We wo fere
Wo ku fere
Iku aiye eee
Ojiji firifiri

Translation:

Agemo is on his way,
So give the right way to Orisa,
The spirit that can commune with the dead,
Women, don't look at it,
A surreptitious glance by any woman is instant death,
You must not wear cap when an Alagemo is around,
Among others.⁷

On the last day, which is the last day of the seven day festival the Oloja Magodo would dance with Agemo in his regalia. The dance between Oloja Magodo and Agemo is usually attended with showers of rain and the dance is not complete or considered a

success without the rain. This incidence gave rise to the popular saying in Ijebuland that “ojo to ba pa Oloja, (onire) gbogbo Agemo lo ma pa”.

Furthermore, Agemo, Agbo and Ekine are the three masquered among the ijebu people in Yoruba, according to the physical interview conducted, by the researcher. The Agemo is regarded by them as the ultimate source of all things. The variegated colours of the masquered's raffia custom is related to the representation of the chameleon, which forms the central motif of the carved headpiece, an indispensable part of the costume. Because the chameleon can assume any colour it wishes, its representation on the Agemo masquered's headpiece is an indication that the deity, can assume any temper, negative or positive. The priest sees the annual ceremonies as an occasion for the display of medicinal(magical) prowess. Each priest is preceded by a man carrying the priest's luggage of charms, incidentally the chameleon is an important ingredient in the preparation of medicine and one of the motifs on the iron staff of Osanyin, a deity associated with medicine⁸.

Operational Mode of the Agemo Festival

The annual Agemo festival usually takes place between July and August every year in Ijebu Ode. According to the Oloja Magodo, Chief Tunwase of Aiyeye land, the festival is usually preceded by “Ireku” which marks the opening of the gate for the Agemos to come into Imosan. The ceremony is usually held one month before the commencement of the festival which is majorly a public affair. “Ireku” is performed by

the Oloja Agemos with sacrifices and on the second day, they would pass a message to the Awujale about its success.⁹

After this comes “Idojo” through which the number of days the festival would last is determined, whether it is going to be seven or nine days, in any particular year, after consultation with Ifa oracle. After this, the Agemos return to their various domains to prepare for the big festival. However, their coming to Ijebu Ode is usually preceded by a seven day “Oro” festival, which is performed by members of the “Oro” cult to ward off evil spirits and other negative things from Ijebuland. On the seventh day of the “Oro” festival, the traditional “Gbedu” drum would be beaten by the Obaruwa family, the only family traditionally empowered to do so. The beating of the “Gbedu” signals that the Agemos can enter Ijebu Ode to commence the festival.

The coming of the Agemos into Imosan through Ijebu Ode is called “Iworo”. No woman is allowed to look at the Agemo when it is coming into Ijebu Ode or going out of the ancient town at the end of its annual festival.¹⁰ The journey of an Agemo from his town of abode to his arrival into Ijebu Ode and departure from the ancient town after all rites must have been concluded, is always preceded with the traditional shout of “eke eee!!! Obirin mai wo ooo!!! We wo fere, wo’ku fere!!! Iku aiye eee, ojiji firi firi”. The meaning of all this is that the Agemo is on his way, so give the right of way to Orisa, the spirit that can commune with the dead; women, don’t look at it (in reference to his load of paraphernalia and charms); a surreptitious glance by any woman is instant death; a glance

from any hidden place is instant death; you must not wear cap when an Alagemo is around”, among others.

This movement of an Agemo from his town to Ijebu Ode is called “Ilo”. One remarkable feature of the journey of an Agemo to Ijebu Ode is the traditional harvesting of corn. The practice is that every year, the youth of Ijebuland would go out to welcome the Agemos along the different routes they usually take into the town. Any farmer that planted corn and failed to wait for the Agemo by his farm with kegs of palm wine, his corns would be harvested by the youths. But where a farmer waited with palm wine, the Agemo would pray for such a farmer. The annual celebration of Agemo festival is for seven days, depending on the directive of the oracle. All the Agemo would move from their respective town, through Ijebu Ode to Imosan, where they would stay for a number of days and during which they would perform all traditional rites at designated “Oju Osi”.¹¹ It is the responsibility of the Awujale, on behalf of the people of Ijebuland, to fund these sacrifices.

On the third day of their stay in Imosan, the Agemos perform their traditional dance and is witnessed by the women and male folks alike. The Agemos spend the remaining four days in Ijebu-Ode to fulfill all other traditional rites at a place in the town called “Agbala”. It is during their stay in Ijebu-Ode that those who need assistance from them or prayers would visit them.

On the fourth day, which is the last day of the seven day festival, the Awujale of Ijebuland would dance with Tami, the Onire of Odogbolu and the leader of Agemos in his regalia at Ojofa, near Itoro town hall, Ijebu-Ode. The dance between Tami and Onire is usually attended with showers of rain and the dance is not complete or considered a success without the rain. This incidence gave rise to the popular saying in Ijebuland that “*ojo to ba pa Onire, gbogbo Agemo lo ma pa*”. This is so because while Tami and the Awujale are performing the traditional dance, other Agemo are also performing the traditional dance at Agbala. As a result, they are also showered by the rain.¹² Awujale is blessed by Tami Onire during the traditional dance, likewise the people of Ijebuland. After the dance with Awujale, Tami would go back to join his colleagues who have been taking turns to dance at Agbala. Like the males, women are permitted to watch the dance but must leave Agbala much earlier before the last of the Agemo performs his traditional dance.

The music and also the musical instrument is also an important part of the agemo festival, as the final day of the festival some of this instrument serves as both aesthetic and also spiritual as the agemo perform his traditional dance, there are various drums used such as.

Agree, Aran/ipse, Igbin, Bata, Dundun also there is sekere(a netted bottle gourd that rattles) which also used in a wide range of traditional Yoruba praise and songs¹³

This instrument plays a vital role in the last day of the festival, as this dance by the Agemo are more of peace offering to toward the agemo deity, the dances are instrumental toward the fulfillment of the spiritual aspect of the agemo festival, this last dance in the festival, also allow the whole people to witness the activities of the agemo, because usually many schools and social function are shut during the days of the festival. According to a newspaper report, the agemo festival was known to put ijebu ode on hold for 7 days, due to the traditional law, that woman is allowed to see the masquerade, this bring an halt toward social activities in order to avoid calamity, thus many of the social institution, such as university, schools and other social activities are put on hold, in order to prevent the women seeing the masquered face during their walks.

At the end of the dance in the evening, all the Agemos would move to their various quarters within the town to pass the night. Before the dawn of the next day, they would leave the town and travel back to their domain. It is only on conclusion of the annual Agemo festival in Ijebu Ode that the individual Agemo would then celebrate in his domain.¹⁴

It should be noted here that the festival also involves other theatrical elements like dance, drumming imitation and symbolic representation of life of Agemo. Agemo festival became a performance for tourist attraction. This is so because the performance of Agemo festival, specifically in Ijebu involves people from other religious belief. With

people going from both far and near to witness the festivals, and with the festival being from place to place, theatre began to emerge out of these religious festivals.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CONTRIBUTIONS OF AGEMO FESTIVAL IN IJEBU ODE

Introduction

A festival is an event ordinarily celebrated by a community and centering on some characteristic aspect of that community and its religion or cultures, often marked as a local or national holiday, mela, or eid.¹ Festivals are often linked to celebration of farming seasons, religious and mystical occurrences and national identity of the people with a view to celebrate or commemorate the communal goals, the expression of divine providence and memorials for the dead. During the events, the people are organized to provide entertainment that is of particular interest to the local community in ancient times before the advent of modern entertainments. The events of the celebration also dwell on cultural/ethnic issues that invigorate the ideas of commitment through the knowledge of the traditions among the people towards integrating them into the community life.² This is often achieved through the roles played by the elders in sharing stories and experience of the past among the various families to promote their sense of unity. Invariably a festival celebration gives the people, the desired opportunity to share a sense of belonging in forms of social, ethnic or religious oneness and identity in order to sustain their group cohesiveness.³

Agemo Festival it is known as a traditional festival that takes place in Ijebu once in a year or a couple of years to either honour their deceased sons of iconic status who must have contributed immensely to the progress and development of his people, as a final burial rites of a prominent chief or to celebrate the coronation of their Obas.⁴ It is said to be a cultural heritage of the indigenes of *Isale-Eko* in Lagos Island.

Modernization of Agemo Festival

The beauty of the homage of Chiefs to pledge their loyalties to the Agere during the Agemo celebration makes the event significant in matters of traditional political governance to ensure that Chiefs remain committed to the authority and legitimacy of the Agere stool. This is a major aspect of the Ado-Agere tradition that cannot be eroded. The beauty of the peoples dress and the show off of regalia of the Agemo-Agere (when he use to rises three times to change his royal regalia robes and crowns in the past) and today, when he remains seated in his regalia of royalty turns the monarchy into a Miniature Exhibition for the people to see.⁶

Figure I



Photo Showing the Unveiling of the Ijebu Masquerade and the traditional Rulers: Ijebu Council Secretariat, retrieved on 12/10/2024.

Figure II



Photo: Agemo Festival Traditional Display, vanguard news paper retrieved on 8/14/ 2017)

The Socio-Cultural and Economic Activities of Agemo Festival:

The Agemo Festival goes beyond singing and dancing. Infact there are multiple socio-economic benefit to the festival. In this view, the festival, apart from engendering social cohesion and family re-union, it also leads to increase economic activities. The traditional markets that were frequented on a five-day basis are plied on a daily basis due

to high demands, thereby increasing the turnover of the traders:⁷ Mister Kola Adewule during the oral interview when asked on the cultural significant of the festival, mister kola on the importance of the Agemo festival in the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Ijebu ode people. Festival like the Agemo which has stand the test of time, it has helped to preserve that cultural identity to, as through this festival we are able to preserve some of our forefather practice, many people don't even know who Agemo is and how relevant the Agemo was toward the establishment of Ijebu ode and so thorough this festival, the origin of our people and our heritage is being preserved".⁸

Though the introduction of western religion and social lifestyle, which brought about severe loss of cultural identity among different people even in Ijebu ode, the Agemo festival serves as a event to bring that cultural awareness among the people, through this ceremony the cultural heritage of the Ijebu people are preserved.⁹

Economic Value: The economic value of the Agemo festival is enormous ranging from the total impact of tourism potential it has to the small and medium scale businesses and the entrepreneurship opportunities it provides. The economic value of Agemo festival surpasses just the dollars tourist spends in the community, though tourism contributes to sales, income, and job and tax revenues. The tourist spend money on variety of things in the community ranging from lodging, food, attraction and other services, thus creating a direct effect on the business in the form of income that pays wages and taxes.¹⁰

The small scale entrepreneurs benefit immensely from the Agemo festival, as marketers of various fabrics and hats that have been designed for Agemo group which increase greatly, the marketers of soft drinks and eateries also make dramatic sales increase. Apart from cloth sellers at Ijebu Ode market whose sales increased, the fashion designers also benefited as a result of large turnout of people, while the transporters was not be left out.¹¹ High Patronage Furthermore, hotels and other service industries also witness high patronage. In fact, most of the hotels inflate their cost of accommodation, food, drinks as well as other hotel related services, with this sacrifices done before the commencement of the festival, it is also expected that peace and tranquility will reign in the city, according to chief Bankole, maternal and child , mortality drastically drops¹²

Figure III



Photo: Commercial Activities at the 2021 Agemo Festival in Ijebu Town(retrieved from the internet)

Creation of Job Opportunities: The festival also creates job opportunities for indigenes and non-indigenes alike. Those involved in handicrafts like carving, tailoring, costuming of the Agemo as well as producers of consumable goods like bottle water and other fast foods employ fresh hands to enable them meet the high demands of their good and services. Those involved in craftsmanship like mat-weaving, basketry, raffia, wood carvings also record high turnover due to increase in the demands for their products. At times, some employ labours in order to increase production.¹³ There is also a corresponding increase in growth in terms of productive capacity of the local economy. This increase in total output of goods and services produced during the festival manifests in increased Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capital income of traders as well as

employees. There is an astronomical increase in prices of goods and services as evident in the law of the demand and supply. When demand is high, the tendencies of the prices going up cannot be disputed. A bottle of water, for instance, which ordinarily sells for ₦50, goes for ₦70 to ₦100 during the festival.¹⁴ Traffic grid-lock, for instance becomes common place. This gives transporters the opportunity to increase the fare noting that they burn more fuel while trapped in the traffic. Hoteliers, owners of restaurants, bars and other recreational facilities also benefits from the atmosphere created by the festival. Some of them especially the bars run 24-hour service.¹⁵

Figure IV



Photo Showing Trader selling Provision at 2024 Agemo Festival in Ijebu (photograph taken by researcher,27/12/2024

Attract People of Diverse Background: Agemo festival is a popular Yoruba culture. Therefore, during the festival, people of diverse background throng the town in order to witness the carnival-like cultural festival. On the Igbagan Night and after, participants and spectators crowd the streets of Lagos as they dance to the rhythms of bata drums and cheer up the masquerades going to the square (Okede) to dance.¹⁶

Venerate the Ancestors: It is on borne in mind that Agemo is an important part of not only the Ijebu community, but Yorubaland in general. Therefore, the Agemo Festival does not only facilitate social cohesion and economic development, but also serve as an opportunity to venerate the ancestors, re-enact history as well as cultural heritage. It was gathered from Bada Ode of Oruba, Chief. Fatai Akinbote, a praise singer and presenter, that the people of Ota kingdom cherished the Agemo festival so much that they guard the rules of the festival jealousy. One of such rules is the prohibition of fighting during the festival.¹⁷

Figure V



Photo: the spiritual traditional dance of the Agemo Masquerade(retrived from punch newspaper,12/102/2024

Serve as Reunion: It should be noted here that Ijebu indigenes, both home and abroad, come together to not only pray for the ancient city and to deliberate on how to move the town forward, but also to participate and witness the festival. This in a way will create an enabling environment for socio-political and economic development of the city. It is also important to note that the festival provides the opportunities for indigenes, far and near, to meet their mates and probably marry each other. In most cases, such marriages last longer because when dispute arose between the couples, it is always easier to settle

dispute¹⁸ ,Through oral interview conducted on chief Otakun Adebayo, he explained the socio-cultural significant of the agemo festival in ijebu ode

“The agemo festival in terms of socio cultural significant, has been relevant in the unification of the different communities across ijebu ode, it a time of merry and celebration so event like this are very relevant in terms of unities the people of ijebu ode and in cultural sense, the festival isn’t only celebrated in ijebu, but spread across the different Yoruba land and through this medium we have this sense of cultural identity and togetherness, must times I meet some of my old friends across the other communities”¹⁹

Through this interview, it is further understood that the agemo festival from centuries has maintained a huge impact in the socio-cultural lifestyle of the people of Ijebu ode, chief otakun also further expressed his joy in seeing most of his friends who return home after years abroad in order to attend the festival, this cement the agemo festival as a crowd puller among the sons and daughters of ijebu ode. The roots of the Agemo Festival date back to the era of Obanta, the third paramount ruler of Ijebuland. He instituted this annual gathering to address and mitigate discord among his people, fostering unity and a shared sense of purpose. This tradition has been faithfully upheld over the centuries, evolving yet retaining its core essence of community and spiritual cohesion.

Serve as National Festival: Festivals like Agemo is not just a Yoruba festival but a national festival. Festivals Agemo has gotten that pedestal because they were given due attention by Government and corporate bodies. Also it has become a national festival because both the Local and State Government earmarking certain amount for marketing, advertising and publicity of the festival. The festival has also provided the aura for corporate organizations to invest in the festival.²⁰

Agemo festivals emphasize the belief in the continuity of the society and that each divinity has an annual festival associated with him or her. The traditional rulers have special ritual to perform during each festival as observed in Agemo festival by the Oba of Lagos. It should be reiterated that the life of a community is renewed through the festivals and that Agemo festival bring the people together as a group, positing that religion and social values are repeated and renewed through communal festival. Therefore, rituals and festivals are religious ways of implementing the values and beliefs in the society and it is the means through which people give thanks for the past year and seek protection in the year to come.²¹ Agemo festivals preserve tradition, culture and religion. They give full and eloquent expression to religious sentiment and belief and also strengthen the social bond that binds the member of the community, thus encouraging group solidarity. Agemo Festival builds the relationship between people and through it, religion becomes a dynamic, living faith which continues to be relevant to the people and

to all aspect of their life, despite the influence of Islam, Christianity and Western culture.²²

In another perspective, the significance of Agemo festivals lie in the fact that they illustrate among other things, historical event, coming of age, harvesting of crops and appeasement to various gods for protection.²⁵ Agemo Festival cultivates the nature and the celebration of history, which are re-current rituals (Religious drama). Through Agemo festival the people remember their past leaders and ask for their help and protection. Agemo festivals are used to purify the whole state, so that the people can enter the New Year with confidence and hope.²³

It should be noted here that festival is one of the major features of African societies. It is the worship of the Supreme Being through various deities. “Worship is an imperative urge in man”. This worship is expressed through different medium among which is festival. Religious tourism is a form of economic and social empowerment and from all indications; it has helped in boosting the economy of the people of Ijebu and has also helped in repositioning the Yoruba cultural heritage to certain extent. From the above, consistent investment in Agemo festival, has make it to emerge as one of the major contributors to the nation’s gross domestic product (GDP), as the tourism potential of the festival is inexhaustible. Agemo festival and other traditional festivals can boost the financial strength of the nation, if the right steps are taken in the right direction, as exhibited by the local government of Ijebu land.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the social and cultural impact of the Agemo Festival in Ijebu Ode, a community where tradition and cultural heritage form the backbone of identity and social cohesion. The Agemo Festival, which has its roots in the rich cultural history of the Ijebu people, is a vital component of their communal life, preserving the values, norms, and practices that have been passed down through generations.

From the background of the study to the detailed exploration of the festival's origins, it is evident that the Agemo Festival is not just a celebration but also a powerful expression of Ijebu cultural identity. The festival serves as a focal point for community cohesion, spiritual rejuvenation, and the transmission of Ijebu traditions to younger generations. The festival fosters unity, as it brings together people from various backgrounds, both locally and internationally, reinforcing the bonds of kinship and the shared responsibility for preserving cultural heritage.

Summary

One of the key findings of this research is the festival's significant contribution to social solidarity in Ijebu Ode. Through the festival, there is a collective reinforcement of communal values such as respect for elders, the importance of heritage, and the

intergenerational transmission of knowledge, a period of peace is ensured during this process of celebration.

The social impact of the Agemo Festival extends beyond just the participants; it also influences the broader community by providing a platform for the promotion of local businesses, the development of the local economy, and the enhancement of tourism. In terms of cultural impact, the Agemo Festival remains a strong instrument of cultural preservation. The festival helps safeguard the unique cultural practices of the Ijebu people, particularly through rituals, dances, and traditional attire that are showcased during the event. By highlighting Ijebu's indigenous customs, the festival not only ensures their survival but also adapts them to the modern-day context, demonstrating how traditional practices can thrive alongside contemporary lifestyles.

The research has also shed light on the significant role the Agemo Festival plays in the preservation of Ijebu folklore and religious beliefs. The festival encapsulates the spiritual dimension of Ijebu culture, providing an opportunity for spiritual renewal, reflection, and collective worship. It offers a space where Ijebu people reconnect with their ancestral spirits, reinforcing a sense of belonging and cultural pride.

However, this study also identifies challenges that may affect the future sustainability of the Agemo Festival. The gradual influence of globalization, urbanization, and changing societal values pose potential threats to the continuity of some festival practices. It is important for the community and cultural custodians to ensure that efforts

are made to adapt the festival to modern sensibilities while still maintaining its traditional essence. In conclusion, the Agemo Festival stands as a testament to the enduring strength of Ijebu cultural identity. Its social and cultural impacts cannot be overstated, as it plays a central role in the community's cohesion, cultural preservation, and spiritual life. The festival continues to serve as a vibrant expression of the Ijebu people's history, values, and traditions, while also offering a platform for future generations to engage with their cultural heritage. Moving forward, there is a need for ongoing efforts to ensure that the festival evolves in a way that respects its roots, celebrates its achievements, and adapts to the challenges of modern life.

Conclusion

This study has contributed to the growing body of knowledge on the cultural and social dynamics of African festivals and their impact on community life, particularly in the context of Ijebu Ode. It is hoped that the findings of this research will inspire further studies on the Agemo Festival and similar cultural events, ensuring that they continue to be relevant in an increasingly globalized world. Therefore, as this study shows, the significant importance of the Agemo festival toward the people of Ijebu ode, from its cultural significance to even its economic advantage it has provided the people of Ijebu ode. This study which was largely carried out by both primary and secondary materials, this work hopefully, will bring more academic enquiry into more significant cultural activities in Ijebu ode.

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Felix Adesoye	66yrs	Civil servant	Ijebu ode	27/12/2024
Funmi Odunsaya	46yrs	Business manger	Ijebu ode	28/12/2024
Kola Adewule	50yrs	Business owner	Ijebu ode	28/12/2024
Otakun Adebayo	80yrs	Retired police officer	Ijebu ode	27/12/2024
Seyu oduwole	82yrs	Retired officer	Ijebu ode	27/12/2024

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