

THE PLACE OF TRADITIONAL DRUMMERS IN EGÚNGÚN FESTIVAL IN ÒGBÓMÒSÓ TOWN



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Abstract

Festivals in Africa are an avenue; to showcase the cultural heritage of Blacks. Festivals portray drumming, singing and dancing. Drummers play a vital role in festivals such as praising, eulogizing, and communication; just to mention but a few. People of the culture can interpret all what the drummers are saying with their drums it's either positive or negative. Each Egúngún (Masquerade) has a family drummer (Àyàn) that is attached to them during the time of the festival and not to others. There are different types of drums in Yorùbá -land; especially in Ògbómòsò, Òyó State, such as the Dùndún ensemble, Bàtá ensemble, Kòso ensemble, and Agogo ensemble. However, people appreciate egungun during performances but they don't look at why, where and what geared those actions. The drummers always communicate to the Egúngún through verbal or non-verbal style during performance; that means, when a drummer showcases his talent then "Egúngún" displays. Therefore, this paper focused on the place of drummers during the Egúngún festival in Ògbómòsò. Functionality theory and Participant-observation is adopted.

Keywords: Traditional Drummers, Egúngún, Festival, Ògbómòsò, Functionalism theory

Introduction

According to an early missionary, "Ogbomosho in 1891 was a walled city, the gates of which were closely watched by day and securely closed by night. The town, picturesque and well watered was isolated from the rest of the Yoruba towns. Political relations were maintained with the Ibadans, for the country depended on the security of the warriors of Ogbomosho and Ikirun... The strength of Ogbomosho lay in the wall and moat surrounding the town, and the warriors made full use of it by sitting close and tight.

Ogbomoso came about as a result of a man named Ogunlola. He was a skilled hunter from Ibarapa. His hunting expedition took him to an area now known as Ogbomoso. While there, he met some other hunters who came together, to form a society known as the Egbe Alongo (Alongo Society). The Primary objectives of the society were:

- To defend the town against Sunmoni (slave prowler) raids
- To group together for hunting of wild animals
- For mutual assistance.

Ogunlola was later jailed by the Alafin of Oyo for an alleged crime. During this time Oyo-Ile the then capital was attacked by soldiers from Ibarapa under the leadership of Elemoso, who caused great famine and suffering among the people of Oyo-Ile. Ogunlola unhappy about the situation made a special request from the Alafin of Oyo, stating that he would help kill Elemoso if he was released. Upon his release, Ogunlola was able to kill Elemoso using his bow and arrow after which he beheaded him. The Alafin was so happy with Ogunlola's bravery that he requested him to stay in the capital Oyo-Ile instead of returning to his settlement. Ogunlola refused and returned back to his settlement. Travelers would often times refer to the settlement as "ido eni ti o gb'Elemoso" meaning him who beheaded Elemoso, which was how the present day ogbomoso derived its name.

Egungun Festival in Ogbomoso

Egungun festival is one of the most celebrated events in Ogbomoso, the land of valiant, in Oyo state, Southwest Nigeria. It is mostly observed by the traditional religion faithful and others who have a keen interest in tradition. The origin of this festival can't be traced in order to prevent history from being distorted; several attempts to get the actual year it started resulted in a futile exercise.



Ifagbemi Adeleke (Mayegun Oje of Ogbomoso) During Egungun Festival 2021

This festival holds in every seventh month of the year. All interested Ogbomoso indigenes, both Christian and Muslim faithful from all nooks and crannies, even in diaspora usually grace the ‘one and a half weeks’ celebration with their presence to gather knowledge about the tradition in the town. Peterson (1993) writes that the tradition of entertainment is an important one in many African states. There are various genres of egungun in Ogbomoso, specifically. Mayegun Oje even mentions some of the masquerades; in Ogbomoso, such as Egungun Eleru, Egungun Alago, Egungun Orebe, Egungun Egbe, Egungun Ode, etc. Some of the egunguns that the writer of this piece could vividly recall at the time of penning are Egungun Danafojura (whose mask can absorb fire), Egungun Ajokomogbodo (which sits in the air). Others are Egungun Lenbe, Egungun Oroko, Egungun Awodagbese, Egungun Kongba, Egungun Omo Titun, and Egungun Olukotun(the first to display i.e. trailblazer).

Okelerin, which is their customary place appointed for a meeting and is seen as the center of Ogbomoso North and Ogbomoso South. Annually, joyous is

certainly registered in their faces; some will be unrelenting faced, wanting the dogs of war to let loose; many journalists will be there to cover the event and so many spectators. Spiritual visitation of these ancestors is regarded as an immense blessing from God as various prayer points will be placed in his front while placating the deity, libation is always not exempted in the process. Doing this, brings the absence of stress into the town and many things that will kindle upliftment, progress, and positive things in the town.

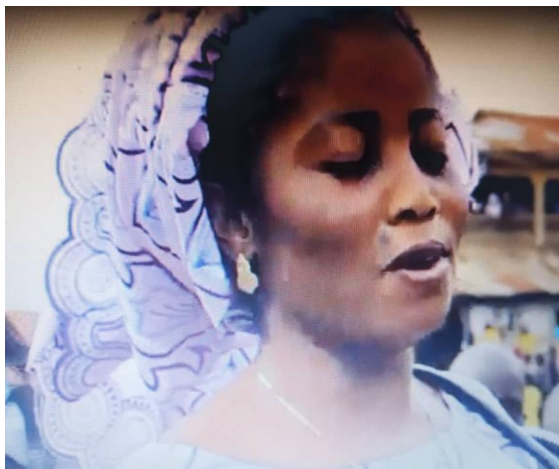
Egungun and their Roles in Ogbomoso

A. Olukotun: Olukotun is a traditional masquerade that must come out first before others. It is the masquerade that appeals to the gods for blessing and peace in the town during and after their festival. It was confirmed during an interview with “Bose Aremu Adegun the leader of Sango women in Ogbomoso. Also “Ifagbemi Adeleke (The Mayegun Oje of Ogbomoso) was interviewed and confirmed it. He said they are Spirit from Heaven to bless people.

B.



Olukotun masquerade during Egungun Festival 2021



Bose Aremu Adegun (Iya Sango of Ogbomoso) during the egungun festival, 2021.

C. Alenimasin: This is another masquerade that is tagged to Ife called Alenimasin Oodua Baba Agba. Ifasola Orisatalabi affirmed that it's from Isale Afon in Ogbomoso. It was established by Akegbeyale Adedokun and brought to Ogbomoso by Babatunde Ayangbekun from "Iragberi" in Osun State. This masquerade is known as Priest which blesses women with children and is a problem solver.



Alenimasin during the Egungun festival 2021

D. Layewu: This masquerade belongs to the hunters and always renders eulogy using the hunter's style with entertainment. It was inherited by Oyedele Aremu from the Ogaala family Okeelerin in Ogbomoso North. Ijala was shorting to Ija nla (Unstoppable fight). Any day that Layewu comes out it will return in seven (7) days. During the interview, Olori Oje said, that it's a masquerade that will go to market and buy the materials needed for its next festival.



Layewu masquerade performing during Egungun Festival 2021

E. Danafojura Kwara: This masquerade always comes to Ogbomoso to perform for Akalaafa in the Akala family, the house of our former Oyo State Governor (Mr. Bayo Akala). It's always known for prayer and shouting of cold when parading the town. When shouting for cold, it uses fire as water in bathing.



Danafojura Kwara masquerade during Egungun Festival, 2021

F. Ajomogbodo Masquerade: This masquerade is mainly for entertainment. It's known as "SPACE-SITTING MASQUERADE" because he always sits in the space without touching the ground. However, it also blesses people by praying for them.



Ajomogbodo masquerade during egungun festival, 2021.

Functionalism theory

Functionalism posits that society is more than the sum of its parts; rather, each aspect of it works for the stability of the whole. Durkheim envisioned society as an organism since each component plays a necessary role but can't function alone. When one part experiences a crisis, others must adapt to fill the void in some way.

Emile Durkheim propounded this theory in 1893 and opined that "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own. It can be termed the collective or creative consciousness." *The Division of Labour* (1893).

In functionalist theory, the different parts of society are primarily composed of social institutions, each designed to fill different needs. Family, government, economy, media, education, and religion are important to understanding this theory and the core institutions that define sociology. According to functionalism, an institution only exists because it serves a vital role in the functioning of society. If it no longer serves a role, an institution will die away. When new needs evolve or emerge, new institutions will be created to meet them.

Therefore, this paper will use this theory to identify the place of drummers in the Egungun festival in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, through the division of labour in work.

Place of drummers during egungun festival

The drummers are known as "AYAN" meaning the family that was named after drumming. During the Egungun festival in Ogbomoso, the Ayan always goes along with two types of drum ensemble that is Dundun and Bata Ensembles. It is believed in Africa that with drumming there is life, even when someone dies. Therefore, the Ayan always welcomes the Dead spirits with drumming and sees them off. The Ayan family in Ogbomoso are Ile-Onisemo and Ile-Alubata in Ogbomoso. The drummers are the custodians of history in Ogbomoso because they have knowledge about all families in the town. They play prominent roles during the Egungun Festival for instance, dictating the pace, communication, educative, and eulogizing, just to mention a few.

Informative role: The drummers play informative role during the Egungun Festival in Ogbomoso. It's the duty of drummers to display their talents early in the morning, by informing the audience that a masquerade is coming out and when ready to perform. Nketia (1975) confirmed that when a chief dies in Sukumaland, Tanzania, some stages in the funeral celebration are marked by music designed for various dramatic functions, and all those who hear the sound of the drum understand that the chief is dead. He stressed further that, in the court of the king of Ashanti, there were talking drums used in conveying his (the deceased king's) messages to the people.

According to Myron (2008), the gathering consists of workshops on African drumming, recreation, and most importantly, the performance of traditional African (mostly but not exclusively) Yoruba rituals such as the "Tribute to the Ancestors," Orisa chants/shouts, the burning bowl performance, and other daily meditational Yoruba worship practices. The performance of such rituals is a form of affirmation for the men. What Cumming calls 'the illusion' of either the self and/or depth, is precisely the so-called 'magic' of an excellent performance: the power and communicative quality of a performance is the result of our experiencing this self when attending a performance. They will start singing the praises of the masquerade for instance: Olukotun masquerade praise:

E eeee gun ara orun kin kin kin,
 Gbogbo omo E je mi ni o
 Egun mbe nile ara Orun
 Kin kin kin
 Ti gbogbo omo eleegun ba fe se eegun
 Gbogbo won a maa lo si igbale
 Won a si lo ko eegun wale
 Akeloniku om oni gbaa aso.

Also they will sing this song:
 Won se bi yoo run, ise se o le run/2x
 Atewo la ba 'la a o me to ko o
 Won se bi o run, I se se o le run



Meaning: People are thinking that egungun festival cannot be celebrated again/2x

It is as old as human being, so it must continue.

A. Dictating the pace: The drummers are saddled with this responsibility to dictate the pace at which the masquerade must dance. During pre-performance the masquerade must dance slowly in order to pray for members and when to have performance proper. That time they will be reminding the masquerade that its father will always take it easy when coming out and during rigorous performance.

Pre-performance rhythm:

iwo





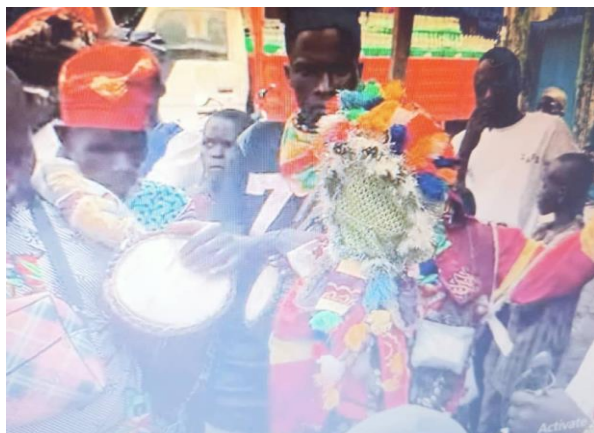
Masquerade and drummer during the performance, 2021

B. Communicative role: Merriam (1964) draws a line of difference between the uses and functions of music. He argued that though the two terms have been used interchangeably in discourses, they do not mean exactly the same thing. He went further to explain that “when we speak of the uses of music, we are referring to the way in which music is employed in human society, to the habitual practice or customary exercise of music, either as a thing in self or in conjunction with other activities. Vidal (2012) stressed that ‘the use of music at the festival announcement and signaling illustrates the way in non-technological societies solve the problem of communication. The drummers always use music to communicate to the masquerade and the members basically when there is a problem or tell a family of its arrival. In another way, the drummers may start telling other masquerade that a great one is coming to avoid troubles.

Oke



C. Exhibition of power: The drummers always want the masquerades to exhibit their power so that others will be able to accord them respect. When they see that another masquerade is coming and after information



Layewu exhibiting its power during the festival 2021.

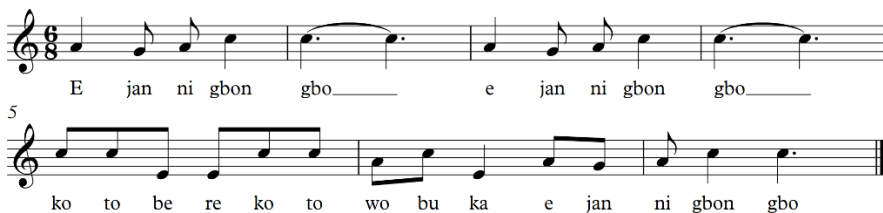
D. Warning role: Hunsu (2011) supported this point that ‘oral art or oral literature refers to literary texts produced orally in performances before a live audience for its entertainment and education, and for religious and political purposes, including praise of eminent members of the society and behavior control of others. The drummers always warn the masquerade if they are going beyond their boundaries. For instance, they prove that they are all in all, but after that, they push the masquerade till it will regret its life by hailing. During the interview Ayankanmi gave example:

E.

OKE ELERIN



GBONGBO



Conclusion

Yoruba is very rich with traditional culture, for example, Egungun in Ogbomoso, Oyo State are paramount to us as Nigerians. To preserve this culture precautions should be taken such as the government should start a program that will preserve our traditional festivals, and inclusion in the curriculum from Pre-Primary to Post-Primary. The radio and Television stations also should contribute their own cottar. Lastly, the drummers should also train their wards on how to drum and avoid the issue of modernization into their brain. Also use their drums to make peace not troubles.

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