



Research Paper

A Study of Dramatic Elements in the Egbégun Age Grade Festival of the Òmùòòkè-Èkìtì, Southwest, Nigeria.

Taiwo Adekemi Agnes Ph.D.
and

Olaiya Oluwatoyin Mary Ph.D.
Department of Linguistics & Nigerian Languages
Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

The view that culture plays a pivotal role in the life of people and society is indeed unarguable. Egbégun festival, an aspect of Yorùbá culture in the southwest, Nigeria is used to commemorate some unique aspects of lives and mutual co-existence of the people. The dramatic elements of this festival have not received much attention therefore, this article examines the dramatic elements of the Egbégun age grade and socio-cultural festival with a view to broadening scholarship and adding to the aesthetic aspects of African literature. The paper discusses the importance of traditional festival and age –grade. The cultural theory of literature is employed for our analysis of the data. The data for the study were both from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through a multidimensional approach involving participant observation, oral interview and research documentation through the use of audio-visual and video tape recording of the performances. The paper observes that the Egbégun age grade festival qualifies as a ritual drama because it contains various dramatic elements of African literature. The paper concludes that modernisation and globalization have not really impacted negatively on the Yorùbá cultural values and social practices of the Òmùòòkè-Èkìtì as the festival is still celebrated in a grand style up till today thereby contributing more to the development of the town.

KEYWORDS: Egbégun Festival, Dramatic Elements, Age-grade, Cultural theory

Received 10 Jan, 2022; Revised 24 Jan, 2022; Accepted 25 Jan, 2022 © The author(s) 2022.
Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Festivals are indigenous public celebration of towns and villages to commemorate some unique aspects of the peaceful co-existence of people. They serve as a medium of expressing beliefs, values, art and culture. Ogunba (1978: 4) describes traditional festival as an indigenous cultural institution, a form of art nurtured on the African soil over the centuries, which has developed distinctive features and whose technique are sometimes different from the borrowed form of performances now practised by many.

Felix (2006:1), as cited in Fasehun and Adeuga (2018:217), posits that festival period or periods are sacred and time-makers. Things done at such periods are special in that they date back to those periods in history when the community's pattern of religious, socio-cultural institutions and activities were established.

Festivals are a significant part of the cultural heritage and an aspect of life in Yorùbá land. Festivals are “the most important activities for social and religious purposes in the traditional society. In a sense, festivals are days or times or occasions or feasting and celebration involving series of performances, entertainment, merry-making, rites and ceremonies” (Dopamu, 2004:651). Festivals are held once in a year, two years, five years, seven years, nine years, weekly or fortnightly. It actually takes place at a special time which is set aside by the host communities to commemorate historical cultural or religious events to integrate the members of the communities and encourage unity of purpose. Egbégun (warrior group) is a festival that cuts across all the three quarters: isálú, òtún and òsì in Òmùòòkè-Èkìtì. The age grade festival has been celebrated elaborately from time immemorial and it is a form of gerontocratic and administrative set up in the community. Egbégun age grade festival is a festival that every indigene of the town within and outside looks forward to. It is a festival observed to initiate youths from one age grade to another. Like other festivals, it is characterised by the different performances, costume design and audience participation.

Egbégun festival is celebrated in Òmùòòkè- Èkìtì in Èkìtì East local government area of Èkìtì State, Nigeria. Òmùòòkè-Èkìtì is about 86km from Adó-Èkìtì, the state capital and the town is very close to Kabba in Kogí State. Egbégun festival is probably one of the most powerful efforts by the Òmùòòkè Èkìtì people to relive and maintain a significant feature of its socio-cultural heritage. The festival which usually comes up every seven and nine years signifies a Nigerian's people unique efforts at reasserting its basic values and beliefs. This cultural revival among the people of Òmùòòkè of Èkìtì East local government of Èkìtì State is laudable at this particular time when most African nations and Nigerian tribes have been trying to promote their cultural values and adjusting the black man's heritage through such joint activities as the second World festival of arts and culture (FESTAC) which was held in Nigeria in early 1977. (Asogwa et.al, 2012: 243)

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 AGE GRADE SYSTEM

Most developed societies are great by virtue of having great confidence in their culture, promoting and enhancing it as a springboard for progress. Age grade system is an age long socio-cultural institution among communities in Nigeria. It is one of the oldest institutions used in the administration of communities before the advent of the European missionaries. People of the same age-born same year (grade) or within a two or three - year period (group) identify themselves and come together, according to custom, to form an organization because they are of the same age. Democracy becomes the order of the day as issues are raised and decision is taken by the simple majority.

Age grade is a means of unity and solidarity. It is the strongest agent of inspiring communal spirit and solidarity of members. It is the most all-embracing social institution in the sense that every person in the community is either a prospective member or already a member of one age group or another no matter where the individual is. There is in age grade a traditional bond of oneness, a sense of communal feeling holding both the living and the departed in an inseparable communion such that alive or dead a person belongs to the age grade in his/her community.

According to Akude (1992), as cited in Akpomuvie (2012), age grade is a very vital organ of social structure especially in our Nigerian communities. He continued further that age grades are characterised by the events that occurred during the period members were born or when each age grade becomes officially recognised in the community in senesce, the names of the various age grades in the different communities are often drawn from the historical events that took place when the age grade was initially formed, age or condition of members and their activities in the area. Akpomuvie (2012) says "an age grade is an organised group of people born within a given period and whose activities are centered on a set of common goals and a set of code which regulate their conduct". Apart from a high degree of personal intimacy and informal conduct, members are bound together by common challenges such as marriages, burial of parents, building of houses and performance of such roles that aim at enhancing the socio-economic life of the people.

Age grade is not peculiar to Òmùòòkè-Èkìtì alone; it cuts across Yorùbá nation, the practice is a social communion that brings children of the same age grade together. It fosters strong social relationship, serves as a bond of unity and as age grade members grow in age and status, they become useful to themselves, their community and the nation at large. Age grade is an important feature of Yorùbá society. It is a form of organising various sets of people for socialisation process and development of the society. (Ọláiyá, 2012:94). The age grade system is a fundamental political instrument and institution of the Òmùòòkè-Èkìtì as the practice makes them acquainted with each other and acknowledges the gap that exists between them because the age grade members are graduated in such a way that one can start as a member of the lowest age grade and ends up in the council of elders if one lives long enough. Those in the lowest age grades due to their strength and agility stand as a formidable fortress for their community and the elders in the senior categories contribute their own quota through wisdom and experience.

Each age grade in Egbégun has defined responsibilities and contributions to the affairs and developments of each quarters and farm. Age grade does not stand for political duties and rights alone; it is a society of companionship, of mutual aid and protection. Also, the group plays an important part in members' lives especially in connection with marriage and funeral ceremonies. It is clear that an age grade performs many functions in the community. It serves as an agency of acculturation for each member; it helps to make him fit by every means, to perform duties demanded of him by the society and prepare him for leadership position. It is responsible solely for community development, projects, social and cultural activities and promoting members and community responsibilities. The modern political arrangement and assimilation of foreign culture have, however, started to de-emphasize the traditional roles of these age grades.

2.2 TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL AS DRAMA

There are three major schools of thought on the discussion of whether festival should be seen as drama. Two schools of thought have divergent views while the third school is on the fence of the two. According to

Ogundeji (2005:214), scholars in the first school of thought posit that African ritual and festival should be regarded as theatre and drama. Among the scholars are Mahood (1966), Finnegan (1970), and de Graft (1976). The African scholars opine that improper organisation of the performers, lack of plot, and the role played are not meant for entertainment and that festival drama failed to produce professional class of actors. The group prefer to see African festival drama performances as containing only dramatic and quasi-dramatic or embryonic drama. Ogundeji (2005) further explains that the second school of thought comprising Adedeji (1969, 1972) and Ogunba (1978) believe that African traditional festival can be taken on their own as a type of drama. The third school of thought represented by Ola Rotimi (1968,1971) according to Ogundeji steer a mid-course by holding the belief that some festival performances should be regarded as drama while others cannot. He reiterated that plot should be one of the major criteria in festival performances.

We shall align with the second school of thought, that is Adedeji and Ogunba's which states that the criteria for determining drama could not be same all over the world since drama is a cultural phenomenon as rightly noted by Ogundeji (2005). He emphasizes that African traditional festival is symbolic drama and not just religious occasion. Therefore, the foreign yardstick of assessing what a drama is cannot work for African festival drama. Ogundeji (2005:214) reiterates that traditional festival should be seen as drama and theatre because features of theatrical arts like dance, music, poetry, role-playing, acrobatics display, costumes, make-up, mask, spectacle, etc are embedded in festival performances, and, therefore, practically inseparable. Our conclusion, therefore, is that Egbégun festival should be regarded as drama as we shall be examining different dramatic elements in it.

III. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The study employs qualitative methodological approach for data analysis and elicitation. Three major approaches to qualitative data analysis: interpretative, social anthropological and collaborative social research approaches are identified by Miles and Huberman (1994). Interpretative approach allows researcher to treat social action and human activities as text. In other words, human actions can be seen as a collection of symbols expressing layers of meaning. The approach focus on content analysis which is ultimately what is adopted for the analysis of data in this paper. This means photograph, videotape or an item that can be made into text are amenable to content analysis. In analyzing the various dramatic elements materials in the festival, the cultural theory is employed.

3.1 CULTURAL THEORY

Yoruba people convey their cultural beliefs, norms and values through their culture. Therefore, culture is defined as the way of life of some sets of people. Isola (2010) reiterates the fact that the culture of a society conveys the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they can learn, share and transfer to generation yet unborn. Cultural theory seeks to define the heuristic concept of culture in operational and or scientific terms. Cultural theorists explain the nature of culture and its implications for social life. Olujinmi and Alaga (2018:37) observe that three ideas are very important to the debate in the field of cultural theory and they are based on the thematic continuity of the theory. The first is the context of culture which can reflect as belief, codes, narratives, ideologies, pathologies, values, discourses and common sense among others. The second, is the social implications, these implications reveal how culture influences social life. The role of culture in the provision of stability, solidarity and opportunity or in sustaining conflicts is emphasized. The third is the action, agency and self which reflect the connection between culture and the individual, and how culture shapes human actions. The adoption of this theory is in line with the first and second importance of culture as reflected in our earlier submission. The festival is the way of life of the people and also has social implications on the people and the community at large.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 AN OVERVIEW OF EGBÉGUN: A SOCIO- CULTURAL AGE GRADE FESTIVAL.

Egbégun festival is a cultural heritage that unites the youth and every people of the town together. It affords a useful training for responsible citizenship in youths and adult in the towns; it trains the youths in combat readiness to defend the town in case of any outside aggression or attack. The festival admits different age grades: the iyòyò which is the least age grade will graduate to òwóyìn; the middle age grade and òwóyìn graduates to àndaré which is the strongest age grade in the Egbégun army. The àndare group after Egbegun celebration will graduate to another group which will be given a name decided by the leader of the group. We shall discuss the organisation of the age group and their functions one-by-one.

3.1.1 THE ÌYÒYÒ

The stage to become the real Egbégun starts from when a male child is between twelve and fifteen years old¹. This group is referred to as 'iyòyò and its main duty is to help in the community development of the town in its own little way. Members are also expected to serve their parents devotedly till their ripe time for initiation.

3.1.2 THE ÒWÓYÌN

The next group is between twenty-one and twenty- three years. This group comprises the youth that help in the development of the town and they are called òwóyin. They are always about one hundred and fifty in numbers. They develop out of iyòyò and participate in the development of the community. They help in the maintenance of community infrastructures especially in the cleaning of the market and streams. They clear bushes in public places and decorate them for occasion. They are concerned with the security of the town in their small way by serving in the vigilance group.² They perform all these assignments until they mature to join the real egbégun group, that is, the àndaré.

3.1.3 THE ÀNDÁRÉ

The Àndaré is the real Egbégun group. Members are the Egbégun and they are thirty years and above. Within these three groups are differences of nine years. The real meaning of Egbégun is (warrior group) which simply mean people or group of people that go to war.

The Àndaré group members are those that graduated from Òwóyin to become Egbégun. It is during the Egbégun festival that members who graduate from òwóyin group are initiated into the àndaré. As custom demands, the enrollees into the group are made to gather at a designated place as stated by Chief Agbàná, the field marshal of the community. They are dressed in war-like attires with their faces painted with charcoal and ashes so as to look fearful, carrying cutlasses, arms and ammunition. They dance round the whole town chanting war songs to show their readiness for the initiation into the àndaré group. Parents are filled with joy. The àndaré group members believe they are celebrating unity and love. The àndaré age group chooses leaders amongst members and these High chiefs are later introduced to the king. After the introduction, they begin their community services. The àndaré group members that graduated in the year 2019 are expected to build and complete a four-bedroom bungalow, a fence and civil defence office which must all be delivered to the king and the community before their graduation.³ They meet on days dictated by tradition of the town which is usually every five days of the market day within the month of August and December and meetings usually come up in the night.

At the end of the seventh or ninth year of this training, the àndaré trainees are ready for graduation into the Egbéméta⁴ which is followed by a graduation ceremony that is called Egbégun festival. Friends and family from Nigeria and Overseas are always present in Òmùòòkè to catch a glimpse of the eventful festival and ceremony.

3.1.4 THE ÀNDÁRÉ GRADUATION RITE

The graduation rite of the *andare* group usually comes up after nine or seven years of military training⁵. A date is fixed for the ceremony after the leader of the age group has consulted the king and the Ifá oracle. The date must be fixed early enough to give participants about six months to prepare for the festival. Immediately the date is fixed, the king owes it as a duty to send a messenger who will be announcing the date every two weeks until nine days to the festival when the tone of the announcement will change with a warning to desist from violence before, during and after the festival. Anyone who fails to heed the warning is given serious punishment.

¹Oral interview with Mr Biodun Adeyanju, 67 years; a retired journalist and the Aṭepalòwò of Omuooke ekiti. He has also graduated from the Andare group. Interview held on 23rd October, 2015. It is also corroborated by Mr Shem Ogunjobi, 48 years, a commercial driver and current member of Andare age grade. Interview held on 23 June, 2018.

² Oral interview with Mr Shem Ogunjobi, a serving member of the àndaré group who is preparing for egbégun festival coming up in 2019. Interview held on 23rd June, 2018.

³ Mr Shem Ogunjobi, a serving member of the andare group who is preparing for egbégun festival coming up in 2019.

⁴ Oral interview with Olómùòòkè of Òmùòòkè, HRH Òtítójù Valentine Adébáyò J.P who is the 12th royal king of Òmùòòkè made the assertion during the course of interview on June 23rd, 2018.

⁵ Oba Òtítójù informs that the year of military training varies from one group to another. A group may spend seven years while another one may spend nine years. It depends on their age grade.

Egbégun, the warriors are the military might of Òmùòòkè. Thus, the ascendancy of the group is usually marked with special traditional religious rites, ceremony, and festivities. The baton of Egbégun is changed every nine years as earlier said. That is, an age group would remain in the class for nine full years and leave the place for the next set except in unusual circumstances when there is a particular problem affecting the whole quarter or if the Egbégun has proved to be indolent or irresponsible, the nine -year period is usually extended. Another unusual case is to reduce the period to seven years. This, according to tradition, can happen if a particular Egbégun had performed exceptionally well in the execution of its functions. The functions of the Egbégun include the following among others:

erection of public structures e.g market, town hall, etc.
making and mending of street roads, farms streams and bridges.
dredging of local water supply.
burial of the dead
defence of Òmùòòkè territorial integrity
protection of life and property

According to Fádípè, (2012:253) the function of age group was almost exclusively political. Service on public works of various kinds was assigned by the political authorities with apportioned duties to various group by their official designation after which it became the task of the leaders to arrange the details among the rank and file. This is the same of Egbégun festival as members are assigned special duties which must be carried out. The qualities that count for leadership are tact, patience, impartiality, persuasiveness, good judgment, sociability and open-handedness. (Fádípè, 2012:307). This is what Egbégun age group festival stands for as it inculcates moral values such as perseverance, temperance, thrift, reliability, uprightness, self-control, thoroughness, respect for parents and elders, submission or obedience to constituted authority, chastity etc into the life of members which are all iwà òmólúàbí (good character) that the Yorùbá stands for.

3.2 DRAMATIC ELEMENTS IN EGBÉGUN FESTIVAL

3.2.1 PROCESSION

The dramatic peculiarities of African drama start with procession. There is usually a procession in most African/Yorùbá drama. It is one of the characteristic features of African festival in general and Yoruba festival in particular. In such processional performance, members of the audience moves about a particular route in the community, going from place to place.

On the eve of the festival, all members of the *àndaré* due for graduation would gather at a particular T-junction where Kọta, Ìyámoyè and Ìgbagun meet putting on their fortified dresses. They will also have their torch light with them and use it to make bon fire singing and dancing round the fire. The song goes does:

Àndaré sòro í se	Andare is difficult to do
Mo yọ lúyà	I am freed from suffering
Sere kè é	Thank you

The people of Òmùòòkè and all the invitees from outside the community are present and this avail people the opportunity of knowing the members of the *àndaré* whom they did not know are members in the last seven or nine years. This outing marks the end of the night training as it signals their graduation rite.

In the following morning, the *àndaré* dressed in white apparel, including their underwear and a white cap and whatever they choose as their symbol⁶ gather together at *ìdí ìròkò*, a place near one of the town's shrines called Olómùòòkèàgbòn. A new leader will be chosen to lead them as they move in procession in a single file without looking back to *Ìtòmò* house. They usually move bare-footed and the last person in the group is followed by the leader of the eldest group of Egbéméta.⁷ It is a taboo for a non- indigene of the town to enter *Ìtòmò* house where the king and chiefs perform the initiation rite for the *àndaré*. Thereafter, the *àndaré* are now requested to move to the market square where they would complete their initiation into the Egbéméta. A new leader is installed while the one chosen at Olómùòòkèàgbòn shrine to lead them is demoted to Ojua⁸. New leaders called Àta are appointed from the three quarters and they lead their quarter's age grade. The Ata will lead the group to the market square while Ojua will come last. It is at the market square that the *àndaré* group

⁶ Oba Òtítóju informs that the the symbol of the *àndaré* age grade group depends on whatever they choose like the Bible, Quran, cutlass or any species of animal during an oral interview on 23rd June 2018.

⁷ Egbéméta comprises the different groups to which the *Àndaré* group will be graduating to after every seven or nine years. They are (i) *kèmògà* (ii) *kèlòkò*(iii) *kèmèyò* (iv) *kèjídò* (v) *kèwàyin* . They are given these special names to differentiate each group. Oba Otitoju confirms that the name given the last andare graduate in the year 2013 is Oribèran. Oral interview with the Olomuoke, Oba Otitoju on 23rd June,2018.

⁸ Ojua is someone who shares for people in the group. He is a messenger.

would be given a new name and the group will move to their new leader's house to celebrate while celebration goes on in each of their houses. All these initiation rites and celebration last for seven days and that ends the celebration of Egbégun festival. Then, the *òwóyìn* group moves to the *àndàré* group and the people are ranked according to the time they joined the group.



EGBÉGUN PROCESSION

3.2.2 STAGE OR PLACE OF PERFORMANCE

The arena of performance in the traditional festival is the place called *ojú agbo* where the performer and the audience could see themselves face-to-face. There are two types of places of performance: open place of performance and secret or secluded place of performance (Ogundeji 2004). The secluded place of performance is known to only members of the cult and there is no spectator while the open place is for everyone. The open place consists of the market, particular route, river banks and source of mythical importance to the performance. Such special locations are regarded as *ibi tí ilẹ̀ tí tẹ́jú*. The secluded place of performance can be the sacred groove, the cult house, the shrine or even in an open place where the performance will be during the night (Ogundeji, 2004). In the case of *Egbégun* festival, it is only the members of the age group who meet in the midnight that know the place. The meeting is called '*Àjọ òru*' because they always meet in the night. When going for the meeting, they go with a torch light rod in which different kinds of medicinal herbal leaves would be put together inside the rod. Thereafter, the torch would be lit with a hidden incantation. It is a taboo for a woman to touch or pluck the leaf, even a woman must not be around the place where the leaves are being put together. The meeting serves as a military training for the *àndàré* group and it takes place at different locations. Members are given a secret name which is different from the names they bear in public and this serves as a means of identification for them during war. It is only the military members of the *àndàré* group that know the names. While going for the midnight meeting, it is compulsory for members to reinforce themselves to the training ground.

It is compulsory for the people of the town to stay at home as from 9pm to 5am because they must not see the *Àndàré* group. The group members dressed in white robes, having torch light (*òpá*), cup, palm wine and the lighter for the torch go to a secluded place in the outskirts of the town to pray and deliberate on the progress of the town. They send one of their mates on errand in the night during the course of the meeting so as to make him bold and have the spirit of perseverance. The meeting is between two to two and half hours. The traditional route stage does not have a particular stage form because it is a processional performance right from the T-junction of the town.

The open place of performance for Egbégun festival is when the *àndaré* dressed in white apparel, including their underwear and match it with a white cap and whatever they choose as their symbol⁹ gather together at *idí irókò*, a place near one of the town's shrine called *Olómùòkèàgbòn*, the T-junction and the market square where the final rites of initiation are done for the *àndaré* group.

3.2.3 COSTUME AND MAKE-UP

Costume is a garment and accessories worn in a stage by an actor. It is also defined as clothes that are worn on stage for the personification of assigned roles in dramatic production (Ode, 2000). These garments are called costumes because once on stage they cease to act as personal belongings. They are now part and parcel of the entire performance and therefore, contribute to interpretation and understanding of the play in performance.

The costume of the Olómùòkè of Òmùòkè is his *agbádá*, *dànsíkí* and *sòkòtò* made of *àlààrì* type of *aso òkè* with a beaded crown to match. He also put on rich coral bead necklaces to add to his colour and gleam it with fine shoes. The new set of youth preparing for initiation into *àndaré* group, as earlier mentioned, are dressed in war-like dress with their faces painted with charcoal or ashes so as to look dreadful, carrying cutlasses, arms and ammunition in their hands. The *àndaré* members who are clad in their white apparel to show worthiness for the elderly stage move round the whole town. Their white costumes signify cleanliness and holiness without blemish which can tarnish their image and that of the community.



⁹ Oba Òtítójú informs that the symbol of the *àndaré* age grade group depends on whatever they choose like the Bible, Quran, cutlass or any species of animal during an oral interview on 23rd June 2018.



SHEM ÒGÚNJQBÍ – OUR INFORMANT

3.2.4 SONGS

As we have discussed earlier, song is part of the dramatic elements of Yoruba traditional festival. Egbegun festival songs are purely entertainment songs. The youths sing different songs to honour the king, members of the *àndàré* group and the new set of youths who are getting ready for Egbégun initiation rites. All the festival songs are accompanied by musical instruments.

On the eve of the festival, i.e the day they bring *Egbégun* from the forest (*mú egbégun toko bo*), all what they did at the night meeting and the instrument used will be brought together with the (torchlight) *opa* and they perform mystical signs and wonders while dancing. Members will be singing and dancing while calling each other the special name given to them as the member s sings thus:

Call: *Orí mi móyìn gbò*

Res: *Ègè ko*

Call: *Me kayo líyà*

Res: Séréké, mo yò liyà sere
Call: Àndaré sòro şişe
Res: Olele ègè ko
Call: Kó tó gòpè, kí o tó gèmu
Res: Olele ègè ko
Call: Kó tó nìkàn sá à jíròjírò
Res: Olele ègè ko

3.2.5 DRAMATIS PERSONAE/SPECTATORS

Characters and performers in Egbégún festival cut across the three quarters of the town where Egbégún members emanate from. The King, Chiefs and spectators are part of the dramatic personae. The people of the town are spectators who are restricted from seeing any member of Egbégún whenever they are going for their night meeting. The spectators are usually gathered by the side of the road during the Egbégún festival to watch their procession from *Igbó itànmò*. No matter what the spectators say; the Egbégún must not respond until they are declared free by the king at the open place of performance.

3.2.6 DIALOGUE

The primary element of drama is dialogue and it is restricted or limited wherever it occurs. The absence of the restriction of dialogue is bridged through the use of music including chants, songs, instrumentation and dance. There is usually a limit to what the response will be and that is why it is called a restricted dialogue. The dialogue normally happens when the members are together in *Igbó Itànmò*. The members of Egbégún must not speak with anyone while on procession to the market square. There is communication between the performers and the audience at celebration arena of the festival and this is enhanced through the use of music, chants, songs, drumming and dancing as revealed in Egbégún festival.

IV. CONCLUSION

On the whole, age grade socio-cultural festivals are a convenient way of organising the people for performance of their duties as citizens. In spite of Western education, modernity, technological advancement and the intimidating presence of western religion, Egbégún age grade socio-cultural festival is still in vogue. Òmùòkè indigenes, home and abroad, attach much importance to it because it goes a long way in showcasing the rich Yorùbá culture and traditional values. It also serves as a means of integrating the indigenes of the town together. We also discovered that Egbégún festival contains some dramatic elements as specified by Ogundeji (2004); therefore, it can be said to be dramatic in nature. The festival is standing as a clarion call on the people to throw off the yoke of cultural inferiority and resuscitate the spirit of self-confidence and self-pride which alone can enable them take full control of their development process and prepare them for leadership position as western religion has made many communities to forget their socio-cultural heritage.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Asogwa, B.C & Umeh, J.C (2012). "The Sociological and Cultural Significance of the Argungu International Fishing Festival in Nigeria". *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2,11: 243-49.
- [2]. Adedeji, J.A. (1969) *The Alarinjo Theatre: The Study of Yoruba Theatrical Art From Its Earliest Beginnings to the Present Times*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Ibadan.
- [3]. Adedeji, J.A. (1972) "Folklore and Yoruba Drama: Obatala as a Case Study" *African Folklore*. Dorson, R.M. (ed). New York: Double Day. 321-339.
- [4]. Dopamu, A. (2004) "Traditional Festivals". *Understanding Yoruba Life and Culture*. Eritrea: African World Press.
- [5]. De-Graft, J.C. (1976). "Roots in African Theatre" *African Literature Today*. 8:1-25.
- [6]. Fádipè, N.A. (2012) *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan: University Press.
- [7]. Finnegan, R. (1970). *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.
- [8]. Fasheun, M.A. & Adeuga, F. F. (2018). "A Comparative Study of the Dramatic Elements in Selected Traditional Festival in Ondo Kingdom". In *Trends in African Oral Literature, Creative Writings and Contemporary Society*" *Article in Honour of Adeola Abeke Faleye*, Salawu A.S. & Rabiú O.I. (eds) University Press, Ibadan, 216-252.
- [9]. Isola, A. (2010). *Making Culture Memorable: Essays on Language, Culture and Development*. Ibadan: Hope Publications.
- [10]. Jegede, G.G. (2008) "The Religious Values of Egbégún (Warrior Group) Initiation Rites in Òmùò- Èkitì of Southwestern Nigeria". An Unpublished Manuscript.
- [11]. Mahood, M. (1966). "Drama in Newborn States". *Presence Africaine*. 21: (60), 23-29.
- [12]. Ode, R.O. (2000). "Professionalism versus Commercialization: An Appraisal of Costumes in Home Video Films". *Makurdi Journal of AAS*, 1, 102--107.
- [13]. Ogunba, O. (1978). *Traditional Festival Drama*. *Theatre in Africa*. Ogunba, O. and Irele, A.(eds). Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press. 4-7.

- [14]. Ògúndèjì, P.A. (1988). "A Semiotic Study of Duro Ladipo's Mythico- Historical Plays" Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- [15]. Ogundeji, P.A. (2005). "Functions and Forms of Traditional Theatre Practice in Nigeria". African Culture and Civilisation. S. Ademola Ajayi (ed). Ibadan: Atlantis Books 212-214.
- [16]. Oláiyá, O.M. (2012) 'Oríkì of Ìdó Àní: A Study in the Sociology of Literature' Doctoral Dissertation, Ekiti State University, Ado-ekiti.Nigeria.
- [17]. Olujinmi, I.B. & Alaga, I.B. (2018). "Concepts of Yoruba Proverbs in National Peace and Stability". In *Trends in African Oral Literature, Creative Writings and Contemporary Society* Article in Honour of Adeola Abeke Faleye, Salawu A.S. & Rabiú O.I. (eds) University Press, Ibadan, 35-47.