

**AN EVALUATION OF THE DRAMATICAESTHETICS OF *EMIDIN* AND *IGBO*  
FESTIVALS OF OMUOKEEKITI**

**BY**

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**AUGUST, 2015**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES,  
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE (MA)  
IN LITERATURE**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES,  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
AHMADUBELLO UNIVERSITY ZARIA, NIGERIA**

**AUGUST, 2015**

## DECLARATION PAGE

I declare that the work in this thesis entitled *An Evaluation of the Dramatic Aesthetics of Emidin and Igbo Festivals of Omuooke Ekiti* has been carried out by me in the Department of English and Literary Studies. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this thesis was previously presented for another degree or diploma at this or any other institution.

OJO, Olakunle Olusola

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Signature

Date

## CERTIFICATION PAGE

This thesis entitled An Evaluation of the Dramatic Aesthetics of *Emidin* and *Igbo* Festivals of Omuooke Ekiti by Olakunle Olusola OJO meets the regulations governing the award of Master of Arts degree in Literature of the Ahmadu Bello University, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my parents, Mr and Mrs Christopher Ojo (J.P) and to the memory of late Engr. Daramola Isaac Kayode, for who he was.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge God almighty for His grace upon me throughout the period of this study. I appreciate Him for sound health, provision and grace to finish this programme. I am most grateful to my supervisors, Professor Sani Abba Aliyu and Dr. Ezekiel Akuso for their guidance and comments in order to make this work successful. I am also grateful to my other lecturers, Dr. Edward Abah, Dr. KestonOdiwo, Mr Joseph Stephen, Mall. Isah among others, who from time to time encouraged me and drew my attention to critical concerns. I am grateful to DrBukolaOmigbule of the Department of English, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife and Professor GbemisolaAdeoti, Director, Institute of Cultural Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife.

I would also like to thank my parents, Mr and Mrs Christopher Ojo for their support and concern to make this dream a reality. To all my siblings, I appreciate your concern and understanding. To Miss OluwaseunOlayanju, thanks for being there for me always and for your understanding, despite the long distance between us, you remained resolute. Aafa, I thank you for being a wonderful friend. If not for your encouragement and positive motivation, I would not have had the will to continue this study. To you I say thank you.

My class mates, I appreciate you all. My school sister, Mrs Salome Ibrahim, thanks for “always being always”. You are God sent to me. Always a source of blessing to me. (I owe you a lot). To all friends and family who were so keen and concerned about when I will finish this study, I appreciate you all. LekanAjileye, I thank you so much. I was always scared to pick his calls, because he will always ask me “haven’t you finished this your programme?” Thank you for your concern and confidence.

To all those who have helped me during my fieldwork, Chief and Mrs M.S. Akomolehin , Chief JimohOjo, BabatundeOluwaseun (Effisy), OjoAyodeji I thank you all. I am also grateful to the family of Professor and Mrs P. O. Ogunleye. *Maami*, Mrs Maria Adelusi (Eepe fun wao mama), aunty Aina, Mrs Rebecca Giya and my friend and brother, Sola Adelusi, I appreciate you all. John Shaibuand Julius Oneoyekan, thanks so much. I cannot forget Dr. OladipoIdowu (Sekere), thanks for your brotherly advice always, Mr Sunday Ayegbiroju, thanks for your calls and concern. I appreciate you all.

## ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the dramatic aesthetics of *Emidin* and *Igbo* festivals of Omuooke Ekiti in Ekiti State, Nigeria. A festival performs a special role in African societies. The festivals are very important to the socio-economic co-existence of the people. This research identifies and evaluates the dramatic-cum artistic peculiarities that exist in the *Emidin* and *Igbo* festivals of Omuooke people in Ekiti State as an aspect of Yoruba indigenous performance practice. Also, these festivals are undergoing changes and this study reveals the current state of the selected festivals amidst these changes. However, this study attempts to contribute to the development of African oral tradition by adding to the documentation of the field of orature in Nigeria. Aesthetics centre on the different ways of appreciating things, the festivals in this study are aesthetically appealing to the people. These festivals produce pleasure, relief, and entertainment, express the values and beliefs of the people, and promote the culture of the people. Also, the *Emidin* and *Igbo* festivals' performance are full of artistic and dramatic elements. Performative features of space/setting, spectacle, costume, make-up, music, dance and plot characterize these festivals. The methodology employed for this study was fieldwork oriented. It involved participatory observation of the festivals, interviews, documentary analysis, audios, pictures as well as library materials were all used. Chapter one provides the general background to the study. It also examines the research problem, research aim and objectives, justification for the study, the scope and delimitation of the study. Chapter two reviews related literatures and the theoretical framework adopted in the study. Chapter three analyses the form, functions and the dramatic aesthetics of the *Emidin* festival, by looking at the various artistic peculiarities in it. Chapter four deals with the *Igbo* festival. It dwells on the form, functions and aesthetics of the *Igbo* songs. It focuses on the songs and their functions in the community as a means of correcting offenders. Chapter five considers the changing status of the festivals. It looks at both the positive and negative effects of the changes in the festivals. Chapter five is the conclusion of the study.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Preamble

This study evaluates the Omuooke Ekiti festivals as aspect of indigenous performance and their relevance to cultural studies and literature in general. This work is therefore premised on the evaluation of the dramatic aesthetics of the *Emidin* and the *Igbo* festivals in Omuooke Ekiti of Ekiti State. Festivals are considered to be important to the evolution of drama in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Africans are well known in the world for their very rich cultural heritage which is usually manifested in their various forms of artistic performances through festivals and other oral art forms, such as folktales, folklore, chanting, dancing, drumming and so on. Africans are arguably the most culturally heterogeneous people in the world. They possess various forms of socio-cultural and politico-religious world views which in essence are aimed at expressing their identity as a people and their mode of communal existence. It is the contention of this study that no society has thrived without having clearly defined the customs and values that direct and guide individuals in the community. Hence to fully understand the socio-cultural life of a people, an understanding of the cultural and social values of the people is essential. One very important determinant of human behaviour and societal change is the culture of the people.

Wathiongo (1972: 4) describes culture in its broadest sense, as a way of life fashioned by a people in their collective endeavour to live and come to terms with their total environment. It is the sum of their art, their science and all their social institutions, including their system of beliefs and rituals. Culture is acquired through socialization which

is heavily influenced by the value system of a social set up. It is also viewed as a set of all historically created decisions for living, explicit or implicit, rational or irrational and accumulated overtime and transmitted through generation as necessary guide for human behaviour.

Sofola (1973: ix) defines culture as learned pattern of behaviour, idea, beliefs, and the artifacts, shared by a people and socially transmitted by them from one generation to another. Schaefer(2002: 87) is of the opinion that culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects and behaviour. It includes the ideas, value, customs and artifacts of a group of people. In other words, culture is a pattern of human activities and the symbols that give these activities significance. It is what people eat, how they dress, the beliefs they hold and activities they engage in. It is the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organisation thus distinguishing people from their neighbours.

Ajayi (2005:1) argues that, ‘culture is perceived as a way of life or the totality of all human efforts and achievements in the struggle for survival in the midst of unfriendly and militant forces of nature’. Elechuckwu (1994:50) gives a detailed description of culture thus: “is a people’s everything which includes their art and crafts, their commerce and industry, their laws and arts, their medical theories and practices, . . . their folklore and mythology, their proverbs and philosophy...”. A people’s wayof life refers to such characteristics as customs, traditions, ceremonies, rites, rituals, language and style of dressing. These ways of life envelopes, guides, governs and demarcates each society from

another. Cultural practices such as festivals, funerals, traditional theatre, storytelling, initiation, and so on become ceremonial. Some come up annually; daily or periodically. One common thing about these African traditional performances is that they involve the whole community. They contain, engage or release a whole world of information, cosmology, aesthetics, myths and legends, therefore celebrating or enacting them are methods of perpetuating as well as transmitting the culture and traditions of such community.

### **1.2 Background to the Study**

Omuooke Ekiti is a town in Ekiti State that constitutes one of the Ekiti kingdoms of Yoruba land. Efforts to trace the history of a people have almost run into a snag, especially when reliable and written or well defined links are absolutely lacking about the people. According to Olaitan and Oladipo (2002:1), Omuooke Ekiti falls among the pre-literate people of Africa that its history was not committed into writing in any form before the contact with the western world in the eighteenth century. There were no properly documented historical events that would have served as historical reference points. The available written archival records that are available are mainly the works of foreigners, traders and catechist/teachers. They wrote on a more or less part time basis on certain events that concerned their activities. Such accounts can least be figured as perfect, complete and absolute sources of the history of Omuooke Ekiti.

The town presently called Omuooke Ekiti was founded many centuries ago by a strong and powerful legend called Olumoya. The name given to the town by Olumoya was Omuwo, a commercial centre and a linkage town between the Yorubas in the North such as the Yagbas, Ijumus, Kabba (the Owes) the Bunus, Lokoja (kogi), Ilorin, Bida (Nupes) and

the Yorubas in the West such as Ekitis, Ijeshas and the Oyos. According to Olaitan and Oladipo (2002:4), the flow of many streams, ponds and rivers in the area are mainly seasonal and mainly during the rainy season. There are six streams in Omuooke Ekiti which gutter the town. These are *Amote, Amoye, Ayo, Odogbo, Ogbogun* and *Esiko*. *Amoye* and *Esiko* serve as the main sources of drinking water. While other streams served early inhabitants of the town for their domestic purposes like building, bathing, washing and cooking. It is imperative to note that most settlements originated and thrived near rivers or on river confluences and banks.

The community is further arranged into age grades and sets, each promoting peaceful co-existence and contributing in part to the survival of the whole community. Marriages and commercial activities within and outside the immediate environment also contribute to harmony in the town. The town has long been associated with numerous norms, mores and traditional festivals such as *Egbegun, Itomo, Igbo, Emidin*, and *Egungun* festivals. Omuooke Ekiti just like any other Nigerian town has both been affected by continuity and change. Nevertheless, it has preserved its traditional identity, certain inevitable changes occur in the process of development and modernization.

This research therefore, sets out to evaluate the dramatic aesthetics of the *Emidin* (New Yam) festival and the *Igbo* festival in Omuooke Ekiti of Ekiti State. These festivals are among the few festivals that have survived extinction despite the level of modernity and changes in the society.

### **Myth of Origin**

According to Olaitan and Oladipo (2002:4), the origin of Omuooke Ekiti like those of most towns in Ekiti and Yorubaland has been traced to Ile Ife. Most towns in Yoruba land

have no documentary evidence of their own origin, migration and settlement. They all relied on oral sources linking their origin with Ile Ife. This situation is also true of Omuooke Ekiti for it is one of the problems of historical reconstruction. The existence of Omuooke Ekiti has been substantiated by her long periods of artifacts recorded. If a town exist and could not preserve her existence, the existence is worthless and therefore narrates a pathetic story of a town trembling in darkness. Omuooke has been able to preserve her true existence which shows the superiority of her existence over other communities around her.

The oral traditions on origin, migration and settlement of Omuooke Ekiti are precise. The legend about the origin of the town is woven around Olumoya, the son of Odede (Oranyan) who was regarded as the founder of the town. The decision of Olumoya to leave Ile Ife was as a result of the failure of his father and himself to avenge a bad treatment meted on them. Before he left Ile-Ife, he consulted the *ifa* oracle. The consultation predicted that, where he would settle permanently, three signs were to be observed around there. These were: footmarks of elephants, thick forest and a lake.

Olumoya got to the place predicated and saw a lake, he shouted: “*Omi O*”, meaning “Oh water”. From this proclamation, the name of the town “*Omuwo*” emerged. He moved a distance from the lake and erected some houses where he settled with his followers. He called this settlement *Ilemo* after the name of his original home in *Ife- Iremo*. By and large, the name *Ilemo* still exists till date at Omuooke. Olumoya following the prediction of *Ifa* named other location as follows: the lake was named *Odo-Igbo* meaning a lake in the thick forest. The place where he saw the foot marks and trappings of elephants, he named *Erinjo* that is elephant danced here. These identities still exist till date.

To accord his new settlement Kingship identity and the recognition of his power and supremacy over his followers and other neighbouring villages, Olumoya acquired his own deities called *Iparaera*, a place recognized for installation of powerful Kings. This place is still recognized for this special ceremony till date. With this identification, Olumoya therefore became the first king of *Omuwo* and recognized in his own kingdom as the *Olomuwo of Omuwo*. About eleven other Kings succeeded him from generation to generation. With his conquest and those of his children, other villages that joined him still have their ancestral lands as farms till date, which they call ‘*apole*’ meaning initial settlement.

According to Chief Akomolehin (Oral Source), Olumoya was succeeded by one of his children called Ogungbemi. Ogungbemi followed the good work of his father by expanding and re-organizing the kingdom into three administrative districts as follows: *Isalu*, *Otun* and *Osi*. Other kings that followed includes: Asakooko, Adekunmi, Olupinla and Adebayo (the present king). Following a lot of conflict of supremacy between the town (Omuooke) and the neighboring communities under the leadership of Omuwo-odo now known as Omuo, the Omuooke people have to change their name from Omuwo to Omuooke with the supreme head being Olomuooke of Omuooke Ekiti. Omuooke Ekiti at present shares common boundaries with Idofinaye now called Iyamoye, Eriti, Bolorunduro now part of Kota Ekiti, Araromi-oke and Igbagun.

### **Language Spoken**

The inhabitants of Omuooke Ekiti speak a common sub dialect of the Ekiti-Yoruba language and claim a common historical ancestry with other Ekiti people in particular and Yoruba in general. Due to the fact that Omuooke Ekiti shares boundry with Iyamoye, an

Okun land of Kogi State, there is code mixing between the Omuooken dialect and Iyamoye (Okun) dialect. The people of Omuooken cherish their dialect very well which also serves as a form of identity for them.

### **Religious Beliefs**

According to Olaitan and Oladipo, (2002:5), origin of traditional religion in Omuooken can be traced to Olumoya who arrived and settled at Omuwo. He came with his own religion, which is the religion of his own father from Ife. He worshipped them because of his pure belief in them. He worshipped *Ifa*, which to him is the decider of his existence. As he worshipped *ifa* with his people many things were revealed to him as symbols of worship and belief with accompanied rites and rituals. The people of Omuooken worship different types of gods and goddess as they are restricted to them in practice and beliefs. This belief includes the worship of *Tuna, Olomuookenagbon, Orisha, Onigo, Osun, odogbo* and *Aseja*. The gods and goddess are in different shrines (para) found in the town.

With the arrival of other religions such as Christianity and Islam, traditional religion has lost its total hold on the people of the town. Many people in the town converted to either Islam or Christianity and alienated themselves from the rites, rituals and beliefs of the traditional religion. Islam and Christianity did not only come with education but also indoctrinated youths with religious dogma. Therefore, there may be no educated youth that wants to part from the western religious dogma to traditional religion thereby leaving traditional religion in the hand of old illiterates and their non-schooled children. Today, Christianity and Islam remain the dominant religions in Omuooken Ekiti thereby relegating the traditional religion to the background.



## **Life Style**

No society has thrived without having clearly defined mores and values that direct the members of the community. Hence, to fully understand the socio-cultural life of the Omuoke people, an understanding of the cultural and social values of the people have become essential. The way of life of a group of people can be referred to the characteristics as customs, traditions, ceremonies, rites, rituals, language and style of dressing.

In terms of marriage in Omuoke Ekiti, it transcends beyond the confines of the man and the woman involved, but an alliance between two kin groups in which the couple in question are merely linked to. Hobel (1958:68) defines marriage as the complex of social norms that define and control the relations of a mated pair of each other, their offspring, their kinsmen and society at large. In the past, love was not the primary factor in marriage, the main determinant and consideration was bride-price, general family background and welfare of the two parties concerned. A boy and a girl could be committed in marriage by their parents without objection. Today, a girl and a boy could meet and agree to marry before informing the elders in the family. Following the advent of western civilization, marriage ceremony in Omuoke has been constantly reviewed to suit the partners involved.

Marriage ceremony in Omuoke Ekiti is an occasion that accords each family and their daughters high prestige and respect in the town. A married woman is always very proud and happy with herself. A parent whose daughter is not married feels withdrawn, timid, and shy in the society. The man and his wife are viewed as people who cannot control their daughter, while the daughter is viewed as a person without self-control, respect for family cultures and no recognition of the importance of her parents in the community. In recent times, proper traditional marriage activities are hardly observed. This

is mainly because many young men and women have imbibed western education and culture to the extent that the norms and mores of their community are now obsolete to them.

Nonso (1998: 67) asserts that, funeral ceremony is a social function performed in honour of the dead. Death leads to a period of mourning and grief for those concerned. It is one of those phenomena that man hates. It keeps a whole community or family in a pensive and grieving mood because the deceased person is believed to have gone forever and not to be seen, heard or linked with the living. According to Olaitan and Oladipo (2002:5), there are two major stages in sending the dead to the earth permanently in Omuooke. The first is burying the corpse of the dead in the ground; this is usually called burial rites (Isinku). The second stage is the ceremony that follows after burial; this is called *ariya oku*. It can take place immediately after the burial or deferred till when members of the family of the deceased have enough money to finance the ceremony.

### **Economic Development**

Olaitan and Oladipo, (2002:4) asserts that, the major economic pursuits of the people of Omuooke are agriculture, trade and crafts making. Agriculture involves tilling of the land for growing crops and rearing of some domestic animals for the use of the people with very little to sell. There are two agricultural seasons; wet and dry seasons. The wet season is marked with rainfall and growth of vegetation. The wet season is the period of intensive agricultural activities in the town, while the dry season is marked by heat of the sun, dry wind, dryness of the soil and leaf fall. It is a period where many crops are due for harvesting. The type of crops they farm include yam, cassava, cocoyam, sweet potatoes, coffee, cocoa and different types of fruits. Some vegetables are also planted, such as okro,

melon, pepper, garden egg, bitter leaf, water leaf and different types of vegetable. It has been observed that Omuooke people depend largely on land, because over eighty percent of the population engage in farming and the general notion is that, it is their source of food, water, wealth and protection. They believe that the land is also the abode of their ancestors.

Crafts are common in Omuooke Ekiti. They provide effective occupation for the people. The major crafts are tailoring, weaving and dyeing (mostly for women), blacksmith, carving, pot making, hair tying and barbing, timber work, house building, carpentry and so on. They provide sufficient major and subsidiary occupations for the people. Trade involves the marketing of processed farm products, such as cocoa, beans, fruits, palm oil, palm kernel, garri, yam tubers, and cocoyam, among others. It involves buying and selling of goods and services. Effective centre for trade in Omuooke is the market. Goods exchange may be in form of agricultural products, building materials, drugs, cosmetics, electronics, drinks and beverages, textile, fabrics, cloths and other wears such as shoes, bags, belts, caps and so on. Services offered for exchange with money include driving, barbing, electronics and vehicle repairs, music, photography, tailoring, restaurant services and so on. These exchange of goods and services are very visible in open markets in Omuooke.

### **1.3Statement of the Problem**

Omuooke Ekiti people have a rich culture which is significant to art, but information about them is mostly in oral tradition. In spite of the rich cultural values the Omuooke festivals hold for art and cultural tourism, they have not been studied or subjected to academic analysis and documented to be utilized. Many critics have written on festival as a sub- genre of oral literature in Nigeria. However, many festivals are still undocumented and not studied, including the festivals in Omuooke Ekiti. This has denied

scholars the existing aesthetic repertory embedded in these festivals. This study claims that there is no clear distinction between drama and traditional festivals in Omuooke as it is with most African societies. Whether or not these festivals can be called drama is a question of definition. Drama is a form of literature that demonstrates, expresses and imitates the cultural essence of man and as a veritable act of performance. Some elements of drama are salient to the performance of Omuooke festivals, such as the script, the characters, the stage and the audience. One of the problems this research sets out to resolve is to identify and evaluate the festivals and their artistic peculiarities.

Furthermore, indigenous practices and traditions are undergoing changes as a result of civilization, modernization and interaction between people of different cultures which endangers people's culture. With the advent of modernity, these festivals are being eroded. The custodians and the aged are also dying, yet little or no research has been done to harness from the rich cultural heritage of the people. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is little or no work that has been done to project the Omuooke people's past, thus, enhancing their dignity and identity. The festivals are undergoing some changes and the effects of these changes are viewed to be negative. However, these negative effects are also possible gains to some extent, as this research reveals the current state of the selected festivals. It is on this premise that this study seeks to write to salvage this impending danger that might befall Omuooke people's culture, as the study finds answers to the following questions:

1. What is festival and of what significance and relevance are these festivals to Omuooke's orature and society?
2. What aspects of these festivals are aesthetically pleasing?

3. What leads to the decline train of these festivals?
4. Can research and documentation change the endangered status of the festivals in Omuooke Ekiti?
5. Do the festivals continue to reflect the world view of the people in Omuooke Ekiti?

#### **1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to document, assess and evaluate the dramatic aesthetic of *Emidin* and *Igbo* festivals of Omuooke Ekiti, as manifestations of indigenous creativity.

The objectives of this study tends to:

1. Demonstrate the distinctive artistry and aesthetics of the selected festivals.
2. Contribute to the development of African oral tradition by making available a record and adding to the documentation in the field of Nigerian orature.
3. Describe, analyze and explain the planning, organization and performance of selected festivals from Omuooke Ekiti.
4. Show the extent to which these festivals have shaped and are still shaping the character, identity and lives of the people in the community.

#### **1.5 Justification for the Study**

According to Okoh(2008:114), orature, like the written form of literature is categorized into three broad genres; they are the prose genre which is the spoken form, the poetry genre, also refers to as the sung form and the dramatic genre, which is known as the performance form. Performance is a crucial aspect of oral literature as a whole; it involves masquerades, dance, festivals and rituals. Dundes(1966:121) argues that, there has remained a healthy scholarly interest in the investigation of the aesthetic and other

principles underlying the composition, performance and public appreciation of the oral literary arts in traditional African societies. In fathoming this fundamental, this research is necessary as it tends to study, explore and investigate the traditions (selected festivals) of a people that have not been known to the field of orature in order to diversify our knowledge of Nigerian oral literature (festivals in particular). Also, this study allows us to see the ways and manners of changes that have taken place in the conduct of these festivals. The reason for the changes is an important aspect of this study. The study will popularize and document the art form of the Omuooke people since much has not been written on the oral art form and tradition of the Omuooke people. What is available of this people is a historical documentation, but this study aims to document the selected festivals in this community, so as to preserve as well as to promote them artistically. This study will also stimulate further research on the Omuooke Ekiti cultural values.

### **1.6 Scope and Delimitation**

This study looks at the dramatic and aesthetic dimensions of the selected festivals of Omuooke people of Ekiti State. The choice of the selected festivals is essential because of the dramatic aesthetics as well as the rich cultural values that flourish in the festivals. The selected festivals are, the *Emidin* (New Yam) festival and the *Igbo* festival.

### **1.7 Research Methodology**

Various methods were used to obtain information needed for this study. The methodology for this research is based on watching live performances and recording of the festivals at Omuooke community at the time these festivals are been celebrated. (The *Igbo* festival is celebrated in March every year, while the *Emidin* festival is celebrated in July every year). The performances were recorded with a video recorder and pictures were taken as well.

Library materials, books, journals, articles and unpublished materials were also used for the research. Historical materials that are helpful for this study were sourced from the community. Also, oral interviews with some elders of the community with information on the study have been conducted and recorded on tape.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Review of Literature**

The review of literature is anchored on examining related critical works on festivals. Africans are well known over the world when it comes to festivals. Throughout the whole continent, colourful and vibrant festivals range from musical, religious, cultural and harvest ceremonies. The past of the people and the understanding of the past, assist in the easy comprehension of the present and a projection into their future is one of the major efforts of oral literature. The past of Africans have been kept alive for centuries through indigenous festival performance. Many critics have written on festivals as a sub-genre of oral literature in Nigeria. Ogunba (1967), Kofoworola (1981), Echeruo (1981), Enekwe (1981) and Robbin (1981) have written extensively on traditional festivals. Amankulor, (1981), Clark (1981), Olatunde (1984), and many others contributed immensely in this direction. One fact that stands clear is the controversy surrounding African festivals being called drama by scholars like, Tolstoy (1965), Ogunba (1978), Akuso (1995), Omosule (2009), Ododo (2001) among others. In the first place, African festivals are peculiar to the people. They represent the sociological yearnings of the people as social, moral, historical and religious



deeds. Again, entertainment derived in festivals satisfies basic aesthetic qualities that insinuate them to indigenous folks as everyone looks forward to the performance.

A festival is an event, usually and ordinarily staged by a community, which centers on and celebrates some unique events and aspect of that community. Festivals ensure adequate and consistent cultural revival and allow a people to evaluate the trend of its cultural development and general growth. The identity of a nation most times lie in the culture and festivals; hence it should be properly propagated. Festivals reveal the culture of every society in the world and they are specially performed. It is a means of re-emphasizing and up lifting one's culture to the advantage of recognition and maintenance of balance in the society. In as much as festivals bring people together, it draws some mark of difference between one group of people and the other. This is why it is rightly pronounced that the identity of a nation lies in its culture or festivals. For example, in Omuooke Ekiti there are certain places that non indigenes cannot enter during festivals. There are also certain places that women cannot get to, or certain things they should not see during the festivals.

During festivals, the life of the community is renewed, revived and fortified through certain rituals that take place during that time as well as the entertainment and jubilation that follows. Festive period is a time when people are able to express themselves more; it serves as a means of re – union between old and new friends as well as family members. The characteristic feature of these festivals include a marked desire to associate through dances, musical performances, prayers, incantations and sacrifice to the gods and the spirits of the ancestors. Okwori (1985:8) is of the view that, festivals in most traditional and contemporary societies are often religious, ritualistic and ceremonial. They are conceived

by the society for the purpose of maintaining a relationship between groups in a society. In other words, they evolved as an attempt to domesticate, celebrate and offer thanks to God or gods by individual groups or community.

Festivals cover enormous range of events from harvest to thanksgiving, marriage to widowhood, birth to death, as well as installation of new chiefs. Due to these essentialities of festivals, scholars have described it in various ways. According to Nsofor(1975:6):

Festival is a period set apart by communities or groups of individual, for commemorating important events in the life of community or an individual. These important events may be connected with homage to the God, gods, ancestors or spirits, or they may be concerned with the transition from one season to the other.

The definition by Nsofor above posits that festival is an event that is time and space bound. Although the timing of festivals in traditional or contemporary societies can be determined by the cycle of the season or the events, the time of festivals become the time when individual, families or communities celebrate and attempt to restore any disharmony that may be among them. Nsofor's definition shows that festivals can be religious or ritualistic in nature. Festivals to him are the time to honour God or ancestral spirits either by supplication or thanksgiving. It is worthy to note that in religious festivals, rituals give form to the sacred, communicate doctrine and mould individuals into the community's ways of life. Therefore, festival is an occasion for expressing and reinstating religious values and contacts with God or ancestral spirits. However, the religious functions of festivals have often been exploited for spiritual, social, political, economic and academic ends.

Contrary to Nsofor's view Ogunba's (1978:4) description of festival does not carry a mere time categorization. He describes festival as 'an integral, dynamic part of the culture

of an unalienated African, an occasion to which he responds spontaneously to societal and cultural yearnings (1978:4). Ogunba (1978:5) further posits that:

In traditional Africa the greatest artistic institution is the festival. Contrary to popular understanding, the festival is not just a religious occasion; if it were, it would hardly command more than tiny fraction of the interest it generates among the people.

He stresses further that it is always difficult to determine what a religious occasion is in a traditional African context. According to him festival is the only institution which has the framework which can coordinate virtually all the art forms of a community. Each important festival last for a considerable time, as each have a story or myth to perform and each make use of its own peculiar style in the realization of the story. Thus, in the process the arts of costuming, masking, drumming, chanting, dancing and several others are utilized.

According to Cole (1984:10), ‘festival is a relatively rare climatic event in the life of any community’. Cole further posits that ‘festivals renew the life of a community. They bring together the people as a group thus strengthening their unity and cohesion. While Mbiri in his Introduction to African Religion describes festival as ‘an activity that adds to the grandeur of both personal and communal rites’. Festivals comprise a variety of form from the most spectacular to the most secretive and emotionally charged. Festival performance remains one of the most important aspects of African culture through which the people’s belief system and ways of life are expressed. Ugonna (1981:17) affirms that, throughout man’s history, certain days or time have been set aside to commemorate, ritualize, celebrate or re-enact or anticipate events or seasons- religions, agriculture, socio-cultural – that gives meanings to an individual and his community.

Most schools of thought see festival as an occasion to showcase and propagate community's culture. Festivals to them contain much of the folklore genres that are important to the understanding of the cultural life of the people. Soyinka (1992:241) asserts that the persistent habit of limiting festivals as belonging to a spontaneous in artistic expression of community demands re-examination. Through festival, lives of people in the community are sharpened, invigorated and policed. The people's past is brought to the present through festivals and their contemporary relevance is appraised for communal living. The people's whole life became enveloped, guided, governed and demarcated by festivals and ceremonies. Many of these are founded on religion and on the need to maintain equilibrium between and among the various inhabitants of the people's world, spirits, the ancestors, deities and other forces. Cultural practices (religion and social) such as festivals, funeral, traditional theatre, initiation and so on, became ceremonial.

Festival is a traditional performance that reflects the people's way of life.

Turner(2002:13) asserts that:

A performance is a didactic of flow that is spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one and 'reflexivity'. In which the central meanings, values and goals of a culture are seen in action as they shape and explain behaviour. A performance is declarative of our shared humanity, yet it utters the uniqueness of particular cultures. We will know one another better by entering one another's performance and learning their grammars and vocabularies.

It can therefore be surmised that cultural festivals such as the *Emidin* and *Igbo* festivals are human activities and are oral dramatic performances of the Omuooke people. Ogunba (1978:1) reaffirms this when he says, "in many communities in Africa today, except those already totally overrun by foreign religions, traditional festivals are staged from time to

time”. Most traditional festivals are religious and ritualistic in nature. They were conceived by the society for the purpose of maintaining a relationship between the spiritual and the living world. The Yoruba like many tribes in Nigeria worship their ancestors. This worship is based in the firm belief that the spirit of a human being never dies, that it continues to influence the life of the community from another sphere.

Obiechina (1978:46) describes festival as an ‘event of coming together periodically to express their sense of communion through those things which have given them their feeling of unity, those things which not only defined their unique relatedness, but also distinguishes them from all other people’. The contribution from Obiechina (1978:46) postulates that, festivals are events when people and communities come together to express their cultural being. This to him is because, festivals contain all the intrinsic and extrinsic culture of the people as well as the progress and developmental attitudes and world view. From Obiechina’s (1978:46) view, it can also be deduced that festivals have unique social unifying tools that bring people together. This social unifying tools as postulated by Echeruo(1981: 138), is an attestation of the people’s communal feast which features re-enactment and rededication for every individual in the community. It reinforces common values, shared bonds and common taboos. It re-established links with the past and compels the living to participate in hilarity and comradeship of a communal happening. More so, Doki(2006:70) views festival as what reveals the maximum utilization of social and cultural institutions, artistic creation and the moral and socio-religious ethos of the individual and societal life of the community.

To show the cultural propagation of festivals, Soyinka (1988:190) goes further to emphasize that festivals are the manifestations of the people's cultural environment which however informs their economies and politics. Soyinka (1988:190) crisply emphasizes thus:

Festival evolved and is celebrated within a specific physical environment. It naturally interacts with the environment, is influenced by it, influences that environment in turn and acts together with the environment in the larger and far more complex history of society.

The implication of the above statement show that festivals are environment specific. In their various forms and contents, they serve to meet specific social and cultural needs as prescribed by the environment and customs of the people. Therefore, festivals involve the use of local materials such as food items, animals and livestock to sooth and give thanks to the gods for whatever purpose the festival is meant for.

However, festivals from Obiechina's (1978:46) view are an integral part of the people's culture, since it focuses on man, attitude and other values in both their universal and unique characteristics. Soyinka on his own part posits that festival goes beyond human attitudes to environmental or societal impart on human values and behaviours. His position emphasizes that culture is about people's way of life, likewise environment informs the culture of the people. Therefore, people's lives and behaviours are a function of societal influence and therefore informs how they appropriate their worships, nutrition, habitation, celebration and other cultural items in their society.

Furthermore, some scholars have seen festivals as a communication process that concerns itself with emotional, celebrative and artistic expression in different kinds of modes such as in narrative, pictorial, symbolic or dramatic forms. Cole (1988:194) is one of such scholars, who sees festival as the:

Relatively rare climate event in the lives of any community, bounded by a definite beginning and end and is unified, set apart from the daily life. Its structure is built on core of armature of rituals, a suspension of ordinary time, a transformation of ordinary space and behaviours. . . At festival time, one level of reality gives way to another, a more intense, symbolic and expressive level of reality.

Cole postulates festival to be holistic and more importantly expressive in nature. It implies that festival is an event with symbolic expression of the people's religious, social, political and artistic life. It is worthy of note that in this definition, all cultural items such as space, artifacts, time, signs and so on, are symbolic traditional values, expressions, ideals and beliefs. Therefore, festival is the period of communion, and the people's capacity to enhance and define the very reality of their world. Cole (1988:194) also emphasizes that festival is structured on rituals, he however undermines some exclusion of people in the performance of the rituals, since ritual is more prescribed by religion and tradition of the community. It does have the capacity to exclude some actions which may be arbitrarily chosen by the performers.

However, Obiechina elaborate further to see festival as a material and oral practices distinct to people. He sees it from the perspective of culture that shows the acquired or invented traditions and lifestyle of a society which include their pattern and repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and action. On the other hand, Cole (1988) acknowledges the features of festival identified by Nsofor and Obiechina as ritual and cultural. He thus stresses that festival is the expression of people's believes and values. Cole views festival to contain symbolic contents which express meaning. To him festival is an activity or event that has intentional and unintentional message.

According to Gregory(2009:69), since festivals are the celebration of both religious/ritual and secular, it therefore can be seen as a “communal celebration involving carefully planned programs, outpouring of respect, rejoicing, or high revelry established by custom or sponsored by various cultural groups or organization”. The highlight of this definition establishes two but linkable aspects of festivals: the religious and the secular. This means festivals do not purely focus on the significance of rites and rituals but also on its commemoration of important historical or cultural event or the recreation of cherished folkways which gives meaning to the existence of man and thus communicate thoughts and attitudes.

In a similar vein, Clark (1981:57) considers the various aspects of Nigeria drama. The origin of drama as espoused by Frazer James, he says, is the Egyptian Osiris and the Greek Dionysius. Clark divides Nigerian drama into two categories. They are traditional and modern drama. Within the traditional category, Clark (1981: 58-9) differentiates the religious from the secular. The secular has its roots in religion. The dramatic performances of *Obatala* and *Oshagiyán* that are performed annually at Osogbo and Ejigbo provide indisputable examples of the first sacred kind. Clark’s treatment of the facets of Nigerian drama provides illuminating hints on the evolvement of traditional Nigeria drama from the religious level to the secular perspective.

The two categories of drama employ songs, dance, mime and acrobatic display copiously. Except for the emphasis on the ritual essence of religious drama, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the sacred from the secular. Clark (1981:57) declares that dramatic elements could be found in Nigeria festivals. Imitation, according to him, is vital to such festivals. They are enhanced by speech, music, ritual as well as dance and mime.



Festivals are necessitated by the desire to instill morality, ensure subservience to set rules and enforce decorum. From the submission of Idowu (1973:35), it is clear that the intention of early men was sociological:

The sages of Yoruba have always admitted that there are certain apparatus or aspects of religion which were originally no more than inventions of priest craft either for the purpose of serving political or civil ends for the “good” of the community or to make people behave in the way that would leave the authorities free to run the community according to their own wishes, or inventions merely to provide a priestly hold on the people as well as ensure the priestly means of livelihood.

In fashioning festivals, the interest of the community is supreme just as hegemonic festivals harbor socio-political and historical landmarks of every community. The desire to entrench the control of the monarchy informed festivals that Ogunba (1991:51) refers to as: “Hegemonic, which the rulership employs to project itself before the subjects by demonstrating the awe, grandeur and transcendental immanence of monarchy”. Hegemonic festivals equally relay information on the foundation, historical development and other salient individual contributions.

Like folklore and many other social and religious customs, festivals have a principle of truth surrounded too often by superstition and imitation. Some of the sacred festivals have a cosmological significance. Some were fixed by the spiritual instructions of old to coincide with the cosmic processes in invisible nature and the climatic peculiarities of the seasons correspond to the mental and spiritual tendencies of humanity. Every symbol has its meaning and many festivals and traditional events have their own symbolism.

The significance of festivals lie in the fact that each festival is celebrated because of reasons due to historical legend, an astrological happening, as dictated by the god or

goddess and important events that had taken place in a society as thanksgiving to God/gods. Each festival is attached or involves the worship of a particular god and it is usually characterized by music, dance, feasting, wearing of new or different clothes, and re-union of families, friends and neighbours as well as mutual exchange of gifts.

Festivals these days have gone beyond the ritual/religion and cultural values. Festivals bring people together and engender feelings of joy, unity, harmony and peace. It is a means to keep in touch with our roots and remind us of the traditions and customs that are slowly being forgotten. Festivals such as the *Durbar* festival, *Argungun* festival, *Osun Oshogbo* festival, *Eyo* festival among others promotes tourism potential of their areas, the traditional handicraft, the unity in diversity of the people, and the scenic beauty of their respective states.

Religiously, Ahithophel (1982) writes that it is an occasion for the veneration, propitiation and solicitation of help from the gods and ancestors. During festivals, sacrifices, libation and prayers are offered to the ancestors and the deities to pacify or appease them for all the crimes and mistakes that members of the community might have committed against them. It can also be as a thanksgiving for a particular purpose. These sacrifices thus renew and consolidate the bonds of unity between the living and the deities. It shows that the people depend on the gods and ancestors as being capable of influencing their lives. Festivals encompass social, moral, economic, historical and political importance in the society. The religion and cultural significance have been discussed extensively.

The aesthetic of a given festival is its impact on the attitude, aspiration, motivation, skills and behaviour of the people celebrating it as well as the mode and manner of its celebration. According to Okpewho (1979:54), culture above all other things “...

encompasses the tangible and the intangible as it equally incorporates the totality of the material and the immaterial tools, artwork and the works of art of a people as well as the knowledge accumulated by them...” That is why Ogunba (1971:46), says that African festivals are conceived as the most important cultural institution in traditional African society. “It is the institution that accommodates and utilizes virtually all the major arts of a typical African community- the arts of carving, drumming, chanting, dancing, masking, costuming and many others”.

Ogunba (1971:46) further explained that, though traditional African festivals are religious at base, they too often transcend the merely religious and turn into veritable ritual dramas. If festivals were merely a religious occasion, with a sequence of solemn, weird rites to placate an inscrutable or bloodthirsty supernatural force, it would probably not last ten years and certainly not have the great interest and excitement so noticeable at festival performances. These performances are far more on the aesthetics, the artistic or dramatic quality of the performances.

Contrary to this, the evolutionist theorists accuse traditional performances of lacking a coherent plot and of being strong merely in organizational structures. Finnegan (1970:500) claims that, there are only certain dramatic and quasi-dramatic phenomena in African traditional performances as drama in the Aristotelean sense because there is often the absence of content, plot, represented interaction of different characters. Finnegan submits that, these African traditional performances are far from the modern European drama. Another evolutionist theorist, Echeruo also bases his view on the classical Greek tradition. Therefore, using Aristotelean and foreign notion of drama and performances to

judge an African traditional performance is not acceptable, because African culture and that of the Omuooke people is different from the Greek drama.

However, Chinweizu et al (1980:7) posits that ‘African literature is an autonomous entity separate and apart from all other literatures. It has its own traditional models and norms. Its constituency is separate and radically different from that of European or other literatures’. In as much as it is agreed that African traditional performances (festival inclusive) are also part of literature, it is therefore wrong to use foreign criteria in judging African literature as postulated by Chinweizu. Obiechina also supports Chinweizu’s view that African drama cannot develop like the classical Greek drama, simply because Africa has different history and culture.

Rotimi (1981:7), considers African ritual displays as drama, but argues from a different perspective. In his essay “The Drama in African Ritual Displays”, Rotimi sees imitation as the main yardstick for measuring whether these African rituals displays are drama or not. This can be seen in Omuooke festivals as the youths tend to imitate the actions, dances, songs and displays of the elderly ones as soon as they step into their shoes to perform one function or the other during festivals. To Rotimi, those ritual displays that reveal their style of presentation, enlightenment and entertainment can be said to be drama.

Ogunba (1978:115) also questioned the use of western modes in assessing festival as drama in Africa. According to him:

Traditional Africa before the coming of Europeans did not have theater in the strict western or oriental sense. No one built special structures basically as play houses for dramatic presentations and similar entertainments. But there existed dramatic presentations enacted in space quite unlike the European notions of the stage . . .

He then proceeds to outline the characteristics of festival drama, emphasizing the use of an open village square or market or even compound where people live. Above all, he stresses the communal participatory nature of the performances. The views of Ogunba and that of many other African scholars are helpful in understanding the dramatic aesthetic qualities of Omuooke Ekiti festivals.

It has been pointed out in this study that arts and culture are integral adjuncts of the society, and on such rare occasions, music, dance, poetry, drama, masquerading come together in a single multifaceted to project the arts through festivals at its most aesthetic level. The festival becomes the vehicle of effective projection of the arts. This view is supported by Ogunba (1971:46), where he states that festival is conceived as the most important cultural institution in traditional Africa. It is the institution that accommodates and utilizes virtually all the major arts of a typical African community.

Idegu (1988:3) opines that “artistic talents are utilized to the full during festivals in the form of fine art, mask, embroidery, music, costume, dance and oral communication”. Through festivals, people have access to expressing their inner beliefs. Idegu (1988:3) further explains that, the characteristics of these festivals include a marked desire to associate through dances, musical performances, prayers, incantations and sacrifices with the person of the gods and the spirits of the ancestors. Idegu (1988:4) stresses further that:

Ogani festival involves people into purposeful activities thereby encouraging social reform. It sometimes uses imagination to transform the facets and impressions of life thus, consequently, processing the material used, like songs, dance, satire and acrobatic displays, to mold an enviable image for the people.

Akuso (1995) asserts that, the Ku festivals contain major elements of drama such as songs, dance, impersonation, dialogue and costumes. These dramatic elements can also be

seen as the artistic or aesthetic peculiarities embedded in such festivals. Akuso stresses music as important aspect of the Kenyi culture and a significant part of its rituals. It is a channel for aesthetic creativity, a means of communication, a mechanism for achievement of emotional release for the composer, performer and listener. Akuso (1995:37) posits that:

The kenyi traditional performances and ritual also share a common dramatic experience particularly through group participation. They are often characterized by collective activities which promote group solidarity and the potential for collective thinking and action.

Akuso also said, in Kenyi, there is indeed an awareness of the emotional values of music which is utilized in a practical way to meet the requirements of social life.

Omosule (2009:90) captures the idea of entertainment in indigenous scripts from the desire for entertainment.

Festival songs and the accompanying rhythms from various ensembles identify the foci of performances and point the way to their indigenous relevance as instruments for cultural and social engineering. The composers cannot be located synchronically and neither is recourse to the milieu productive, but festival songs are composed in accordance with the primal essence. Such songs reveal the peak of linguistic utilization of speech repertoire especially as the metaphoric and environmental ingredients show.

The presentation ranges from the colourful to the grotesque. Where no single script or enactment may be found, the movements and relaxation of mores may be considered to be attuned to the spirit of the founding fathers of the community. Omosule explains further that, mime, gesture and widespread display of the incongruous amid uncoordinated presentations during *Ore* festival are no doubt dramatic.

Ododo (2001) in his essay explores the festival's dynamics of artistic theatre elements in a pure festive performance setting, and the functional relevance of the festival to the Ebiraland people. Ododo argues that African festivals performs the same function and evokes

a similar response to what literate drama does in the western tradition. It will be misleading to say that theatrical experience that does not conform to western theatre cannon is no theatre. Ododo (2001:3) stresses that ‘as a popular festival, *Ekuechi* is full of pomp and pageantry, with a dynamic integration of poetry, chants, mimicry, mime, dance, song, music, drumming, mask, make-up, costume and significant cultural symbols’.

Ododo (2001:28) further stress that, sociologically, *Ekuechi* festival serves a wide variety of functions in Ebira land. According to him, the festival mirrors the society, preserve its legends, its lores and ethos, as well as explore its problems and criticize its weaknesses.

Similar to Ododo’s view, is Enessi (2009:28), where he examines the playing aesthetic features in Ekuechi ‘*facekuerade*’ festival of the Ebira people of Kogi State in Nigeria. Enessi (2009:28), examines the dynamics of Ekuechi festival and their artistic qualities as theatrical products, such as, the playing space, the arts of singing, dancing and dramatizing with other *supernumeric* actions. Ademiju (2012: 212), sees the *Ladeoko* festival as “a communal festival and as a paradigm of African choreo-musical performance spiced with drama, a cultural heritage festival with aesthetic and theatrical dimensions”. He further explains that, through this festival, the story of the community is retold with breath of freshness and the presence of the gods and ancestors of the people is manifested in a peculiar chain of events. A complex, earth-heaven, dynamic relationship- designed either to jubilate with man on the completion of another cycle, or to help purify his environment.

Ademiju (2012:215) posits that:

The aesthetic elements in a traditional festival could be in form of the representation or role change. The audience participatory element, while characterization is yet another element. The story and chain of

events which is contained in the plot, music, poetry cum song, while a vital element is spectacle.

The combination of these elements determines the quality of the African festival as performed art.

Scholars of African dramatic theory and oral tradition including Brian Crow, Ruth Finnegan, Karin Barber, and Michael Echeruo have written copiously on this issue of role play, audience and spectacle as being germane to the ritual drama (festival inclusive) of several African societies. Inferring from Crow (1983:3), we can describe drama by identifying the particular kind of relationship that exists between the audience and a play in performance, or by describing, as precisely as possible, what kind of social activity it is and the effects it has on the audience generally. This contention we also subscribe to, of festival, that there are a variety of dramatic entertainments that performs aesthetic functions.

Borev (1981:116) is of the view that, art shapes the moral character of the people and it is a means of enlightenment which is achieved by passing on experience and information and of education which is carried out by communicating experience, habits of thinking and a system of mental attitude, a means of communication and as a movement of humanity towards perfection. This Borev's view of art can also be said of Omuooke festivals. The communal essence of these festivals and the information carried during the festivals are immense, and adding a great treaty to one's knowledge, as it enable people especially the youths to get familiar with historical experience.

Akporobaro (2005:367) says:

Festivals can be seen from a literary perspective as embryonic dramatic forms. They are as it were the formative stage of play acting and dramatization in much the same way as morality plays performed



their roles in medieval Europe and Dionysian rite performed their role in ancient Greece.

Akporobaro later surmise that African festivals and ritual ceremonies provide a rich and varied context for dramatic and aesthetic performance. The concept of drama and theatre in Nigerian and African societies are unique environmentally determined and categorically different from its European counterparts. Songs, dance, movement, mime, mask, poetry and spectacle are the key ingredients of aesthetic in African festivals, as it is in most rural or traditional societies in all parts of the world, Omuooke Ekiti inclusive.

Echeruo (1994:139) correctly observes that “African festival drama espouses the principal of expressionism as the vehicle for their ‘dianoia’. Omuooke festivals are not exempted. As an expressionist performance event, it thrives significantly on icons, codes and unspoken conventions. Indigenous festivals have been misunderstood by some scholars. No doubt, the aesthetic constituents in traditional festivals fulfill the requirements of drama. According to Tolstoy (1965:301), Yoruba indigenous festivals for example, are an artistic performance and fulfill what constitutes art especially when certain scenic, gestures, verbal and communicative machinery are deployed.

Also, Babalakin (2011:24) reveals that:

The Osun Osogbo festival is held by the people of Osogbo to renew the relationship between the town and the osun goddess. The festival serves the purpose of promoting and understanding cultural history in contemporary times and serves as educational needs for students.

Therefore, the social relevance and spiritual essence of festivals in Nigeria revolves round the people’s perception of their immediate universe, and their efforts to continue blending this relationship. Examining the *Alkadioka* cultural festival in Kogi State, Nigeria, Ezenne (2005:41) says, “the aim being first and foremost to purify and cleanse the people for the

occasion. It was a kind of thanksgiving, honour and glory to their ancestors for protection and kindness shown them all through the ending season”.

In support of Ezenne, Philip’s (2010:74) submission on the *Rindre* dramatic performance of Nasarawa State in Nigeria says:

The *Rindre* initiated dance, music, songs, mime, drama and other spectacular performance through which they communicated with their ancestors and expressed their feelings about natural phenomena like death, famine, e.t.c. they also celebrate their victory and success at the harvest. . .

Ogunkoya (2011:43) asserts that most traditional festivals are religious and ritualistic in nature. They were conceived by the society for the purpose of maintaining a relationship between the spiritual and the living world. They evolve in the society to express a relationship between man and society. Alagoa (1968:11) put his findings on the *Ju* festival in Delta State thus, ‘the *Ju* festival is performed at the death of a chief among the Apoi Iju of Okitipupa Division in the western states in River State Nigeria. The *Ju* festival is a public display of a typical *ijo* masquerade, *iguberiberi*-complete with *ijo* songs, drums and dance’. They evolve in an attempt to celebrate life generally. The celebration is done through ritual performances, prayers, thanksgiving, libation, music, dance and feasting. Its significance like most festivals is religious, social, economic and cultural to the community.

Adetayo (1963:17) investigates further that:

*Olosunta* festival is a festival in commemoration of the gods of Ikere – a god of fertility, powerful and mighty, who keeps evil away from the towns’ people, all of whom fear, adore and worship him. The festival is a graphic dramatization of the high light of his life at Ikere.

In the same vein, Ogunba(1978:14) describes the *Osu* festival in Owu Ijebu of Ogun State as a festival of the king (Olowu) and some of his chiefs, notably *Agbon*,

*Kankanfo* and *Asipa*. The festival goes on for about three days and is a celebration of battle, victory and triumph. The festival is a full demonstration of the tactics of military encounter through dance steps and the *Asipa* is the personification of the army. *Olua* festival in Osi Ekiti of Ekiti State is another festival that takes place twice a year, usually February and August, and is essentially a purification festival.

Similarly, Beier(1955:238) aptly posits that:

The Oba's festival revolves around the whole of Ondo coming to pay homage to the king . . . They show their loyalty every year when they prepare the ceremony for their principal orisa for the benefit of the whole town . . . On this day, the chiefs and the people pay homage, while he in turn prays for his people and bless the town.

The spirits of the kings and the ancestors are believed to possess a superior human power through which the supernatural could be reached. Beire's idea of visiting the ancestors and paying homage to the king shares the same affinity with *Emidin* festival in Omuooke Ekiti. These festivals also reflect the cultural and social life of the community in general.

Modum (1978:46) upholds this position by saying that:

The social and moral life in societies should be seen to be organized around festive manifestation which fulfils the function of social and moral control as well as provide entertainment and diversion. These ceremonies are therefore important as indicators of group interest and values and various aspects of social life.

Modum's position shows that festivals are events that provide opportunities for values and the moral lives of the people to be made known. The emphasis on these values is to show how important they are to the peaceful and cordial relationship of the people.

Azeez (1983:73) explains that *Adamu orisa* festival also known as the *Eyo* festival in Lagos is multidimensional in its performative functionality as it is an eternal transition ritual laced with satire and entertainment. It is characterized by the spectacular dance steps,

songs and drums. The *Eyo* festival is a colourful festival that expresses and exhibits the culture and traditions of the city of Lagos. It is widely anticipated and attended by Lagos indigenes and also by visitors both from across Nigeria and internationally. Its splendid and expansive theatrical displays and pageantry highlights and showcases the aboriginal history of the citizens of Lagos, and through a picturesque array of regalia and costumes, forms parades on the island of Lagos. This is largely regarded as a day of joyous splendour and gaiety. The festival has evolved over three centuries, and is usually held to celebrate the life and times of, or in commemoration of the passage of or ascension to the throne of an Oba (King) of Lagos.

Okesola (1967: 298-300) provides an insight into the festival of *Agbo* in Agbowa, Ogun State, Nigeria and the fact that the performance cuts across all Ijebu towns but with slight modification. Drummers and singers entertain and are decorated with spectacular costumes. The masquerades dance to the music of “*Ulale*”, “*Kederi*” and “*Adon*”. “*Agbo*” is a purification cum- fertility ritual through which problems are resolved. Again, exemplary behaviours are rewarded even when foibles are sanctioned through songs.

Amankulor (1981: 123-127) treats the *Ekpe* festival among Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria. And this shows the indigenous African festivals like their Greek counterparts have characters whose main concern is the re-enactment of some conflicts whose archetypal parallels could be found in the primordial era. Amid songs rendered by the chorus, arena staging is characteristically African. The performance takes place with particular input from the audience.

Omosule (2009:89) also focus on the duality of the audience as pseudo – performers as he states that:

The audience is involved in a duality of functions as pseudo-performers in view of their membership of the milieu and as audience because of their non-mastery of performative nuances that may include both ritual and artistry. Within performance are such goals like the entrenchment of sociological values. The vehicles for such realisations are the verbal and body gestures that are co-referentially meaningful but achieved through aesthetic formula for registration in the audience's psychical framework.

The dance movements are meant to enhance the advancement of the plot. The costumes, make-up and props tend to show that these festivals in Africa are dramatic. The same argument holds for Omuooke festivals in its various stages. On the whole, it is clear that Nigeria and Africa at large has a rich cultural heritage that provides an occasion where sons and daughters of the community come together to socialize, share ideal, celebrate and form a common identity.

## **2.2The Concept of Aesthetics**

Encyclopedia Britanica (1973: 187) traces the root meaning of the word aesthetic to the Greek word "aiesthesis" which means "a sense of perception". Aesthetics is defined as a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the understanding of beauty and how it manifests itself in art and nature. In modern society, it is referred to as a branch of behavioural science that deals with the investigation of the phenomena of the arts and their relationship with the human behaviour.

The concept of Aesthetics was introduced into the philosophical lexicon during the eighteenth century, the term is used to designate, among other things a kind of object, a kind of judgment, a kind of attitude, a kind of experience and a kind of value. Aesthetics may be defined narrowly as the theory of beauty, or more broadly as that together with the philosophy of art. The traditional interest in beauty itself broadened in the eighteenth

century, to include the sublime, and since about 1950, the number of pure aesthetic concepts discussed in literature has expanded.

By far, the most influential of the early theorists of aesthetics was Immanuel Kant, who emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century. Kant's theory of beauty (aesthetics) had four aspects; its freedom from concepts, its objectivity, the disinterest of the spectator, and its obligatoriness (Encyclopedia, 1973:188). By concepts, Kant meant 'end' or 'purpose', that is what the cognitive powers of human understanding and imagination judge applies to an object, such as with "it is a pebble", to take an instance. But when no definite concept is involved, as with the scattered pebbles on a beach, the cognitive powers are held to be in free play, and it is when this play is harmonious that there is the experience of pure beauty.

There is also objectivity and universality in the judgment then, according to Kant, since the cognitive powers are common to all who can judge that the individual objects are pebbles. These powers function alike whether they come to such a definite judgment or are left suspended in free play, as when appreciating the pattern along the shoreline. This was not the basis on which the apprehension of pure beauty was obligatory. According to Kant, that derived from the selflessness of such an apprehension what was called in the eighteenth century its "disinterest". This arises because pure beauty does not gratify us sensuously, nor does it induce any desire to possess the object. It pleases, but in a distinctive intellectual way. Pure beauty, in other words, simply holds our mind's attention. There is no further concern than contemplating the object itself. Piercing the object in such a case is an end in itself, it is not meant for further end, and it is enjoyed for its own sake alone. It is because morality requires we rise above ourselves that such an exercise in selfless attention becomes obligatory. Judgments of pure beauty, being selfless, initiate one into the moral

point of view. “Beauty is a symbol of morality and the enjoyment of nature is the mark of a good soul”. These are the key sayings of Kant (Crawford, 1974:145).

Bell’s (1913) artistic formalism offers a position that theoretically consolidates aesthetics. The claim under consideration by Bell is that, a work’s value is a function of its beauty and beauty is to be found in the formal qualities and arrangement of such work. Nothing more is required to judge the value of a work. It is the sum total of the essential and the analytical perception of object and phenomenon to constituents. Aesthetics focus on the striking power of phenomenon and the impact or force of that phenomenon on the individual. Impression of object phenomenon and language is very important in literature. Human experience determines aesthetics perception. The writer’s usage of image and words must bear the audience experience.

Amenuke, etal (1991:67), define aesthetics as the study of the science or theory of beauty. According to them, the study deals with all the qualities and values that relate to beauty in the arts and other phenomena. These include vision, movement, hearing, taste, smell, touch and emotions. In summation, they posit that aesthetics deals with individual’s senses of perception which inspires creativity and reaction to beautiful things.

Gyekye (1986:45) states that, aesthetics is characterized by delight, interest and enjoyment experienced by human beings in response to objects, events and scenes. The author goes further to explain that aesthetic and values refers to those features of objects, events and scenes that are considered worthy of sustained appreciation, attention and interest. He says the concept of beauty is central to the aesthetic experience and evaluation and is generally associated with works of art such as sculptures, musical compositions, as well as artistic expressions and traditional festivals.

Wilson (1971:22) describes aesthetic experience as an active open confrontation with artistic as well as natural phenomena. During this process the individual performs visual analysis, make value judgment of the many qualities and aspects presents in the phenomena. He goes on to say that individual's own feelings are transformed towards the situation or object so that judgment can be made on the desirable or otherwise of the object or situation. According to him, this experience involves perception, visual analysis, evaluation and judgment. In broader sense, aesthetic does not only deal with observation and understanding of art, but also nature and that part of it that can be called beautiful.

Jessup and Rader (1976:67), describes aesthetic experience as one that makes individuals appreciate feelings, tones and qualities of given objects and phenomena which in turn gives satisfaction when apprehended. They argued that aesthetics involves a harmonious and uninhibited play of individual's mental faculties, heightened awareness and clarity of vision. That in such an experience, there is the design or form that is enjoyed for its own sake. They further stated that aesthetic experience is richer than ordinary experience because it gives the individual the opportunity to see life in its totality where the individual is required to make choices based on existing values.

Warren and Andrew writes that the aesthetic value of a given art piece is frequently based on the functional or symbolic aspects of the work. Every decoration must have meaningful properties which suit the purpose of the piece, even if the purpose is strictly aesthetic. In literature form and content should intimately correspond with one another to elicit aesthetic pleasure. Citing from Warren and Andrew whose collaborative research finds out that traditional festival designed for joyful occasions have bright colours and straight lines and



those associated with war or mourning have dark or intense colours and curved crossed or broken lines. Aesthetic pleasure is thus spiritual and visual, intellectual and sensuous.

Balogun (1988:51) in his work states that, in trying to define African aesthetics it might be profitable to take stock of the ideals of the societies. According to him:

Any work of literature, however, much a creation of pure imagination, ultimately derives its material from the realities of the writer's past, present or envisaged future society. In the second place, the society reveals its biases by the way it reacts either approvingly or disapprovingly of the characters and materials contained in a work of literature. So in either case, a work of literature is a good mirror of the society. Among the things faithfully reflected in this mirror is the general taste of the society. And to know a peoples' taste is to know the aesthetics of such a people. . .

Aesthetics is a distilled summation of the ideological, political, economical, social and religious philosophies which define a people. The aesthetic value of a performance is derived from the level of audience involvement as a reflection of the amount of enjoyment generated by the performance. For instance, to aesthetically appreciate and value a musical performance, it must arouse the involvement of the audience, because in the traditional society music is a participatory communal activity, and everybody takes part in it. Beauty is the significance and the value of an idea. Beauty (Aesthetics) can be seen in the moral lesson taught by an event, occasion, festival, activity and performance.

According to Goldman (2006, 339–341), aesthetic experience aims first at understanding and appreciation, at taking in the aesthetic properties of the object. The object itself is valuable for providing experience that could only be an experience of that object. Part of the value of aesthetic experience lies in experiencing the object in the right way, in a way true to its non-aesthetic properties, so that the aim of understanding and appreciation is fulfilled.

As literates, it is pertinent that one remain principally concerned with the aesthetic effects of art. But one must bear in mind the fact that in the critical appreciation of oral literature, cultural or socio-psychological antecedents are inextricably interwoven with the realization of these aesthetic qualities. These communal festivals are seen as an archetype of African performances mulled with drama, cultural events with aesthetic and theatrical components.

Aesthetics, according to Ademiju (2012:212) focuses on new ways of seeing or perceiving the world and examines what makes something beautiful, sublime, funny, cute, entertaining, pretentious and humorous. The *Emidin* and *Igbo* festivals are seen in the same vein that scholars of aesthetics have contended that objects are aesthetically valuable if they possess a special aesthetic property or exhibit a special aesthetic form. Also, if they have the capacity to convey meaning or to teach general truth and morals, then, they have the capacity to produce pleasure in those who experience or appreciate them. Aesthetics is also valuable if it has the capacity to convey values or belief central to the cultures or traditions of the people. Therefore, *Emidin* and *Igbo* festivals are seen as cultural heritage with aesthetic dimensions, as they bring about social or political change, to produce certain emotions valued by the people of the community.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework.**

Theories are significant because they are relevant to formalize descriptions and explanations of data relating to the facts gathered in a research. Scholarly studies have moved from a more general interest to a specific one in the academics. Following the advancement of various scholars, they become increasingly aware of the danger in making general statements about human nature and human culture. The quest for knowledge by

different scholars has influenced the emergence of many dominant theories in oral literature. The quest has been to identify the origins and characteristics of human culture, and the numerous stages followed by this culture to reach this modern level of culture. Theories such as the evolutionists, the diffusionists, functionalists and the formalists will be discussed in this research.

According to Ibrahim and Akande (2000:19), theories of oral literature do not concentrate on the origins of a society alone, or examine the societal limits only, but also look at the developmental stages of such societies. Hence, there appears to be a more functional analysis of culture, with emphasis on the stabilization and maintenance of the current order of things, in the past and present times. Chinwenzu et al (1980:5) are perhaps right, therefore, to have concluded that:

Africa oral literature is important to the enterprise of decolorizing African literature for the important reason that it is an incontestable reservoir of the values, sensibilities, aesthetics and achievements of traditional African thought and imagination, outside the 'plastic arts'. It serves as the ultimate foundation guidepost and point of departure for liberating African literature. It is the only root from which modern African literature must draw substances.

The evolutionists are a group of scholars that set for themselves the task of answering questions about the origins of human culture. The concept of evolution is rooted in the idea that all biological species have over a long period been undergoing various changes until they reached the form that we find them today. The pioneer in this study was an English man, Charles Darwin. His arguments and principles had a great influence on students of culture. Leading figures of this theory include George Frazer, Michael Echeruo, Ruth Finnegan, Max Muller, Jacob and Wilhem Grimm. The evolutionists believe that, there is human race and one human mind spread across the face of the earth.

The evolutionist does not see anything special in African traditional performance and culture. They believe two societies who are at the same stage of cultural development share the same or similar folklore, folktales, rituals, festivals and so on. Darwin published his origin of species and maintained that species evolve through stages, from the less refined to the more civilized. According to Okpewho (1992:165), Darwin's view had a great impact on scholars of his time working in the area of human culture (and of course literature). In their efforts to trace the origins of human civilizations and ideas- very much as Darwin researched, the origins of biological species- these cultural historians set about trying to find out what were the earliest form of various aspects of human achievement. They believe human beings all over the world thought alike and the tales reflected the same stage of cultural development in both societies. As Finnegan (1970:35) asserts that:

The belief in the concept of unilinear and parallel stages of social and cultural evolution through which all societies must pass; a concentration on the origins of any institution as being of the first importance; and finally, the implicit and evaluative assumption that the direction of evolution was upwards- a progress from the crude communal stage of primitive life towards the civilized and differentiated culture of contemporary Europe.

These evolutionists concentrate on the idea of origins and evolution. They are concerned with which type of literature or culture came first in the pre-history of man. These scholars examined various texts of tales, songs, riddles, proverbs and other forms of oral literature as well as the people who performed them as part of a general process of studying the societies. Echeruo (1981: 146) in his essay "The Dramatic Limits of Igbo Rituals" argued that Igbo traditional performances cannot be approved as a drama in the real sense of the word. He believes that the dramatic content is buried in the ritual purity of the festival. The shortcomings of this approach to oral literature were that, oral literary collections that they

influenced were conducted with assorted misconceptions concerning the collected materials. Such misconception includes that, the materials were survivals of the earlier stages of human development. This attitude was wrong, because they failed to understand that there is a fresh input or creative effort of the performer into the existence of the materials. Also, the evolutionists believe that the originality of a culture/festival is a communal consciousness and group authorship; it was handed down word for word from generation to generation. This makes the evolutionist approach to oral literature have negative attitude towards the creativity of a composer or a performer of an art form.

Contrary to the view of the evolutionists are the diffusionists. According to Okpewho, (1992:175) this approach to oral literature is concerned basically with establishing the travel routes of materials from one point to another. Prominent scholar of this approach was Antti Aarne who reduced all the available folktales of the world into a manageable index. This theory is interested in the history of culture and has had some influence on the study of African oral literature. The diffusionists oppose the evolutionist's ideas; this is supported by Okpewho's view as he succinctly put that:

Contrary to the evolutionists who believe that cultures are identical, though independent stages of development would show striking similarities, the diffusionists. . . held that cultural similarities could be the result of historical contact and geographical contiguity between people. Though diffusionists welcomed the efforts of comparative mythologist like Frazer. . . and engaged in some comparatism themselves, they employed the result of such scholarship in the opposite direction of establishing – to borrow Malinowski's sneer – that culture can be contracted only by contagion and that man is merely an imitative monkey (myth 15).

The diffusionists believe that two societies who share the same or similar pattern of culture, tale, and folklores may have had some contact with one another which caused the

borrowing of certain cultural ideas by one of them from the other. They believe in grouping people and societies based on the kind of similarities they share in language, culture, belief system and other aspects of human existence.

Diffusionist scholars occupy themselves with studying the distribution of story units within the various culture areas of Africa with the view of examining the origin of these stories. They show total disregard for literary qualities of the folktales and cultural studies. They examine various versions of a story and delineate the diffusionist between one version of the tale with another but by only concentrate on the similarities. The stylistic or aesthetic difference between the tales does not matter to the diffusionists. The weakness of this approach is that its leading scholars excluded other genres of oral literature in their method. However, the emphasis on the mere journey of a tale disregards more important issues concerning oral literature. Performance, for instance, is overlooked, as well as the role that context and audience play in the life of a tale at any place and time.

Functionalism, as a school of thought emerged in the early twentieth century. Bronislaw Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown had the greatest influence on the development of functionalism from their posts in Great Britain. According to Goldschmidt (1996:510), functionalism was a reaction to the excesses of the evolutionary and diffusionist theories of the nineteenth century and the historicism of the early twentieth century. Jarvie (1973:127) argues that, functionalist analyses examines the social significance of phenomena, that is, the function they serve a particular society in maintaining the whole. Various components of man's social existence are assessed in order to reveal how they promote well-being of society. To Macdonald and Pettit (1981), the approach is sociological in nature, it insisted on the utilitarian benefits of oral literary

materials. "It views society as an integrated whole, the part of which survive and flourish insofar as they serve to maintain the whole". The functionalist school implies that verbal art comprises of all aspect of knowledge of traditional society, and in order to ensure continuity, this knowledge is transmitted from the oldest members of the society to their younger ones. A predominant view of the functional theory is that festivals are meaningful only when related to the mode of living of the people from whose society they originate.

As a new paradigm, functionalism was presented as a reaction against what was believed to be outdated ideologies. Lesser (1935) and Langness (1987) agreed that, it was an attempt to move away from the evolutionism and diffusionism that dominated American and British anthropology at the turn of the century. Young (1991:445) says, there was a shift in focus from the speculatively historical or diachronic study of customs and cultural traits as "survivals" to the historical, synchronic study of social "institutions" within bounded, functioning societies. Functionalists believed the reality of events was to be found in their manifestations in the present. Hence, Lesser (1935:55-56) argues that, if events were to be understood it was their contemporary functioning that should be observed and recorded.

This school concerns itself with where, who, and what. The functionalists are interested in where performances take place and who performs what. The functionalist theory, unlike the other theories, take into consideration changes and cause of changes in the society. The interest of the functionalists focus on the specific details of life such as language and other things that make one society different from others. The functionalists study every society in its own right, and to record as much of the various aspects of the people's culture as possible. The functionalists approach observes that if an aspect of social

life does not contribute to the society's survival or if it does not serve some identifiably useful functions that promote the values among members of the society, it will not be passed on from one generation to the other.

In explaining this theory, Okpewho (1983) has stated the focus of these theorists thus:

What is function? Malinowski defines the function of anthropological facts as the part which they play within the integral system of culture and the manner in which they are related to each other within the system. Radcliffe Brown, his contemporary, has it that, the function of any recurrent activity is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity. What this means is that everything a society does (e.g. storytelling, marriage, festival) has a practical use for its citizens and a specific place within the fabric of social norms. Such a fabric- the sum total of needs individually and collectively is called functional unity of the society. Functionalism is therefore a theory which examines the peculiar network of needs in every society and the way in which this network ensures the contentment and survival of the social system. (Myth 12).

The emphasis of functionalism on oral literary approach is on the function of any art form in the society. The functionalists have often been faulted for their preoccupation with functions to the neglect of artistic and aesthetic matters.

Formalism is a literary approach that analyses, interprets or evaluates the inherent features of a text. Formalism rose to prominence in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Lawal (2009:32) this school of thought in literature flourished up to the 1920s in Russia and later the proponents of this school of thought like Shklovsky, Jakobson and V. Propp fled to Europe due to Marxist persecution. The main concern of the formalist is the form of literature, which they see to be more important than the content. Form refers to the shape, features and style of a literary work. It refers to the artistic value, the creative ability of the



writer to tell a story. The ability of the creative writer to use language and other devices in conveying the message or shaping and reshaping the story.

For the formalists, the proper province of criticism is the literariness of a text. The critic is not concerned with the content of a work of literature as such. He is concerned with the literary devices employed in the work and concerned with the technical devices which differentiate literary language from ordinary utterance. To the formalist, language should be employed with special features to represent a particular meaning and express a particular message. It must be removed from everyday use. For them, the use of figures of speech is very important.

Blamires (1991:358), describes the process of defamiliarisation in a formalist theory as a perception automatized by daily habituation. Whenever an object or act is described in such a way that our habitual notion of it is transformed, the process of defamiliarisation is at work. It therefore concerns a particular relationship between reader and text that causes the removal of the literary object from the context in which it is normally observed. Schycholovsky's notion of defamiliarisation by means of literary artifice is closely associated with the conditions for aesthetic perception.

According to Grabe (1986:17), the significance of a work of art depends critically on the perceptual endowments of those who observe it. In his words, literature may be conceived prosaically but experienced poetically. The definition and evaluation of a work of art will depend in such a case on the judgment of the reader. For the formalists, the content which connotes experiences is not as important as the form. Formalists claim that experience is available to all individuals, that everybody has a story to tell, a story that comprises his experiences. What makes a story is the ability of an individual to convey that

story in an artistic form, in a language that is not ordinary, in a style that is unique, different and would grasp the attention of the audience. Therefore what matters is the creative talent and not the storyline. Unity is another important aspect of formalism. According to Dobie (2009), he says, if a work has unity, all its aspects fit together in a significant way to create a whole. When an image or figure of speech is extended throughout a work, unity is created.

Jakobson (1921:11) argues that, the subject of literary scholarship is not literature in its totality, but literariness. That is, that which makes of a given work a work of literature. The literary scholar ought to be concerned solely with the inquiry into the distinguishing features of the literary materials. Erlich (1965:35) describes form as the outward garb of the content or in a work of imaginative literature as a purely external embellishment with which one could dispense without any appreciable damage to communication.

This approach to oral literature focused on the folktale/story and was committed to breaking into pieces to observe how it was fixed together. Okpewho (1992) shed valuable light on this school in his comments comparing it with diffusionism, whose scholars were also concerned with breaking a tale to pieces.

According to Okpewho (1992:175):

These two approaches (diffusionism and formalism) to the study of oral narratives are devoted primarily to breaking down the tale to discover the constituent units from which it has been formed. But the aim of the diffusionists was both too ambitious and too diffuse. The tale was picked to pieces to isolate the motifs it used, to determine the tale type to which it belonged, to trace progressively so as to discover its original home, and finally to construct the possible original version of the tale. Formalists felt that all this was a waste of effort because it led to needless hairsplitting

controversy. It is far more important, they argued, to observe how the units of a tale are arranged progressively to make up the tale than to hunt for motifs and types and then to speculate about origins and originals.

Festivals' meaning depends on its form and symbolic interplay. And according to Anozie (1981:34), "language precedes experience or reality" and both are involved in communications. The explication of a text (festival) may transcend "the immediate form of language into its essence". It is significant that the essence of festival consists of the milieu and the original correlative. Having seen the relevance and the applicability of these theories on oral literature, it is on this note that the functionalist and the formalist theory will be used to postulate the art and aesthetics of the selected festivals of Omuooke Ekiti.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **FORM, FUNCTIONS AND THE DRAMATIC AESTHETICS OF *FEMIDIN* FESTIVAL**

#### **3.1 Historical Background and Mode of Celebration**



*Emidin* (New Yam) festival is a festival that singularly brings the people of Omuooke Ekiti together. This is an annual festival of great cultural and artistic significance. It is celebrated to mark the arrival of new yam in the month of July. The origin of this festival is far rooted in the people's past. The aim of this festival is to celebrate a successful farm year. It is celebrated in honour of the goddess of the earth who is believed to have made the soil fertile and therefore made yams big and plenty.

The *Emidin* festival lasts for a period of three to seven days. By tradition all the old yams should be eaten by those who still have any at home, as it is believed that the new yam must not meet the old ones at home. When the new yam festival is approaching, there are certain natural signs that will guide the king and his council on what to do. Some of these signs include: greenness of the forest and yam vines, activities of farmers in bringing in dry maize cobs, arrival of some migrating birds, growth of seasonal plants, intermittent drizzling of rain, among other things. When most of these things are occurring, the king and his council fix a date for the *Emidin* festival and the town crier informs the people of the town of the date.

On the first day of the festival, the leader of the war chiefs (Agbana) marks the beginning of the festival by shooting the canon gun. Thereafter, the group of army chiefs known as *Ologun* led by the war chiefs proceeds to *ugbo petepete* to receive special message from the goddess of the land and an advice on what should be done to prevent famine, diseases and epidemics in the coming year. Nobody must see them going or returning from the *ugbo petepete* until they enter the market in a single file raising up cutlass. The war chiefs through their leader (Agbana) delivers the message they brought from the goddess, to the king first who gives him the mandate to deliver the message to the

people of the community at the market square. After the *Ologuns* now dressed properly, walk round the market picking different items of goods from the traders. This is called *Ologun wo oja*, while the action is called *Ologun re ja* . After this, the war chiefs (Ologuns) later assemble at their leader's house (Agbana) for feasting to mark the end of the first day.



*The war chiefs (Ologuns) entering the market in a single file with cutlass raised up.*



*The war chiefs walking round the market picking different items of goods (Oloogun re ja)*

The second day marks the day the king celebrates the *Emidin* festival. Also, the new yam should not be seen in the market for sale or in public places until after the festival. This ceremony is called *Oba i lagun*, meaning that the king has opened the door. As a tradition, the king must eat the new yam before anybody in the town. On this second day, the king's

servants go to his farm early in the morning to harvest yams. The King's yam will be brought in a single file into the community by young ladies (Spinsters), led by the palace orderly who guides the ladies by holding canes and swords in order to ensure traditional security of the ladies, on their way to and from the king's farm. Both the ladies and the palace orderlies, usually dressed in white cloth. Only the king will eat the new yam after performing the necessary rites and rituals at the palace.



*The spinsters bringing the king's yam from his farm, led by a palace security*



*The spinsters in a single file carrying the King's yam and welcomed by a group of women singing*

The youths, both male and female converge at the market square with a fresh sparkling palm leave tied round a tree with dangling keg of wine. These youths assembles with drums and a few small yams at the feet of a tree where they pray with kola nut and oil requesting that the town should not experience famine, drought or death of youths during farming season. A prince or a delegated member by the king's palace takes a cutlass to cut the dangling keg of palm wine to signify the end of famine for that year.

The youths now start beating their drum and starts singing as follows:

**Omuooke Version**

Song: *A le yon lo*

Chorus: *Iyon a be se jan te iyon.* .

**English Version**

Song: We are pursuing famine away

Chorus: Famine, one legged famine. .

Meaning that we pursued famine out of the town. They now run after famine (invisible) and drive it outside the town through any of the major roads of the town.

In the afternoon, the king, his wives (Oloris) and other interested members of the town will visit the ancestral palace for rituals and prayers, amidst songs and dance and will later dance/walk round the town. This is one of the rare occasions where the king dances round the town. During this time, the *oloris* and some of the women chiefs identify some matured ladies in the town and put on their heads a local comb called *ikoti* from the palace, which symbolizes the king's interest in the lady. This is one of the ways by which the king acquired many wives for himself and his sons in the past.



*The king praying inside the ancestral palace*



*The king during the procession round the town*

The ceremony continues in the evening at the front of the king's palace. The palace chiefs, age grades and women groups meet at the palace to entertain the king through songs

and dance for the final ceremony for the second day. The ceremony is opened to spectators from the town and visitors from neighbouring towns and villages as each chief performs the dance step of his forefathers. This performance warrants that each chief should be followed to the stage by his own people to lend him support as he performs his own performance with his traditional staff of office, song and dance steps. Individual chief has his own distinctive traditional staff of office, song and dance steps. (Some of the songs will be at the appendix according to the various chiefs). After everybody has finished dancing, the king usually dances last to mark the end of the celebration for the second day, while drinking and eating continues. The king's dance marks the climax of the event.



*Oba Valentine Adebayo Otitoju (The Olomuooke of Omuooke Ekiti) seated with his wives*



*Chiefs dancing with their traditional staff of office*

The third day witnesses the new yam festival for every eligible member of the community. Farmers go to their farms very early to harvest their yams and also tap fresh palm wine for celebration. Some traditional farmers honour their farm tools that day, such as hoes, cutlasses, knives and so on, with kola nut, pounded yam, fish and palm wine. This ritual is called *iboko*, meaning, praising the tools for doing a good job for the season. On this day, people take yam to their loved ones as a gift, also to their deities as thanksgiving. This day is declared a voluntary holiday for the farmers and children are warned not to go to the farm that day. The belief is that, the security gods and goddess have left the farm for the town to join in the celebration. It is a day when everybody in the town is well fed with new yams for the first time in the year. It also marks the end of feeding on poorly stored and dehydrated food stuffs for surviving the famine.



In the evening of the third day, the youths assemble at the market square for wrestling contest called *idi*. The wrestling contest forms an essential aspect of the festival. The wrestling contest lasts for the remaining period of the festival at every evening. For the wrestling, youths are chosen from different clans or districts to face each other in the contest. The wrestling generally involves all the youths, especially the males that belong to the age grades, while the females and others serve as spectators and chorus. In the past, history has it that wrestling contest is staged to prepare the youths for self-defense during war. But today, since the era of war has gone in our societies, wrestling is used as a means of entertainment or amusement. In Omuooke, the new yam wrestling contest is very entertaining and lively as there is an effective blend of music, songs and dance.

Such songs include:

**Omuooke Version**

1. Song: *A me I roko idi*

Chorus: *Yeye o mo somi Gbona o*

**English Version**

Song: We are going for wrestling

Chorus: Mummy get hot water ready

**Omuooke Version**

2. Song: *O me i gbodo i pon mi*

Chorus: *Janjalakun janjalakun ja*

**English Version**

Song: We don't fetch water with a mortal

Chorus: the chorus is just a rhythm.

The wrestling contest ends the new yam festival. The new yam festival is really a time for reflection, thanksgiving, festivity and the re-union of people. New yam festival provides a heritage of dances, feasting, renewal of kinship alliances, as well as marks the end of one agricultural season with a harvest to express gratitude and thanksgiving to the society, gods, friends and relations.

### **3.2 Form, Functions and the Dramatic Aesthetics of *Emidin* Festival.**

The *Emidin* festival serves as a thanksgiving ceremony to the gods and goddess of the community for a successful and bountiful yam season. Festivals are socio- religious in nature. To isolate them from religious or ritual may cause a misunderstanding in the concept of indigenous festivals. However, festivals are special times set aside by a community in order to commemorate some significant historical, cultural, social and religious occasions. In the midst of all these celebrations are artistic peculiarities as well as its significance.

Kemevor (2004, 97-98) posits that:

If we ignore the impact of art upon culture, we cut out one of the central means of transmitting, organizing and learning culture. If we leave the understanding of culture out of art, we get only culture-centric, limited and biased and often receive erroneous message from it.

Kemevor's (1971:47) is of the view that, those who struggle to have a deep knowledge about their cultural heritage are likely to maintain a lifestyle worthy of the identity of the ethnic group they belong to. This is supported by Ogunba (1972) when he says, 'the young man or woman in Lagos or Ibadan who goes back home for the festivals, does so, not because he believes so much in the rituals and the religious belief of the festival like his fore fathers, but because the festival has an artistic interest for him'.

Chain of events characterize the *Emidin* festival of Omuooke people from the first to the last day of the festival. There is plot development and sequence of events and activities in this festival. The form and structure of these events add to the aesthetic peculiarities of the festival. Starting from the first day of the festival when the *Ologuns* (War Chiefs) go to *ugbopetepete* to bring a message from the gods and goddess of the land, to their entering the market in a single file and their handpicking of goods from the market. The second day witnesses the spinsters who go to the king's farm and return in a single file, the king's procession around the town, the dance at the king's palace, the wrestling contest among others. These events follow each other chronologically from the first to the last day of the festival. This events or plot are linear in nature; the rigidity of plot is dissolved.

Songs are essential part of African festivals through which message is communicated. The subject matter of these songs centre on events and concerns of the members of the community. These songs deal with everyday life or with the traditions, belief and customs of the society. Steven (2002:67) states that, song and dance can be found almost inseparable from artistic and emotional expression. Songs during the *Emidin* festival in Omuooke Ekiti are rendered mostly by women and other age groups and usually accompanied with drumming provided by the hitting of the skin, rattles and gongs. Okpewho (1975:58) in discussing the cultural significance of song, observes that song has meant all kinds of things to all manner of people at different stages of their cultural history. Songs rendered during this festival are very rich in entertaining and instructional. As people are in happy and festive mood, the song is uniquely used to provoke a particular performer especially when it is creatively sang. It is an essential part of this festival, because every palace chief has his own distinctive song and dance step. Most of the songs for the chiefs talk about their traditional functions as a chief as well as make reference to their forefathers and

ancestors. Even the king is not left out, as he takes the last dance of the event on the second day of the festival. His dexterous dance steps succeed in cementing his hold on his subjects.



*Chiefs dancing at the front of the King's palace*

According to Gyekye (1986:68), dance performance is evaluated by reference to the authentic qualities of body movements and styles and to the significance of movements. Dance during festivals involves a variety of movements of the body and other gestures. However, aesthetic is not concerned with all kinds of dancing; only theatrical dancing is designed to provide the observer with an aesthetic experience. Harper (1976:148-163), is of the opinion that, the first step in studying dance in traditional society is to identify the function it performs. Dance is a technical and important aspect of festival. Through dance, performers adapt their bodies intelligently to the rhythm of the musical pattern. Dancing during the *Emidin* festival in Omuooke serves both a utilitarian and aesthetic purpose. Dance is not just a recreational activities in Omuooke Ekiti but serves a fundamental phenomenon. Ogbonna(1991:45) posits that, dance as an aspect of human communication is more logical,

technical and efficient when members of the chorus reduce their chants, songs and other verbal expressions or almost all their dialogue to mime...

On the second day of the festival, in the evening, the chiefs dance one after the other for the king at the front of his palace to the admirable sight of the king, the chief's family members as well as the entire community present serve as spectators. Most of the movements in this dance are significantly relevant and capable of generating codes and signs which are understood between the performer and the people of the community. The mimetic and dramatic import is also felt during the dance performance. The dance and movements are meant to enhance the advancement of the plot of the festival.

Imitation and dramatisation constitute an important aspect of this study. According to Richard (1974: 64), 'it is by impersonation and identification that man in all history, has related himself to others'. Man is always imitating one another. There is indeed a great deal of impersonation or imitation in *Emidin* festival. While the chiefs are dancing, the art of imitation and dramatization is in place, as the chief's son (s) is expected to learn the dance steps by imitating his father. This is because, it is believed that one day, the son will be in the position of his father as a chief when the father dies; and he is expected to know the dance steps. Generally, songs, drumming and dance in this festival add luster, colour and a touch of reality in a manner that is typical of indigenous performance. They are used for entertainment, artistic embellishment and are interpolated into the plots and themes of the festival. If members of the Omuooke community did not find such aesthetic qualities in the festival, it would have faded out and they would have devised an alternative for entertainment over the years. However, the people look forward with nostalgia to the festive season when

they hope to sing, dance, relax, enjoy and meet friends and family members who have been away for long.

Panegyric is another artistic aspect of this festival that is creatively rendered by the people of Omuooke. According to Akporobaro(2005:49), panegyric is a public speech or written composition devoted to the prolonged, effusive praise of some person, group of people or public body. It is a form of praise poetry which is deliberately created and performed to extol the heroic or noble qualities of chiefs, kings or a noble person in the society. The king and the chiefs are constantly praised through the use of panegyric in order to make them happy. The panegyrics are creatively exhibited in artistic and rhetorical expression. The audience participatory element is employed during the panegyric and songs. The audience participation in the performance is one of the unique differences between western drama and African performance. One of the famous king's panegyric goes thus:

#### **Omuooke Version**

*Ka wo ka wo*

*Ka-a-a wo-oo*

*Oluaye ekeji orisa*

*Igi rabata lokun*

*Okun araba ribi*

*Alaye gberegede bi ilaaa*

*Omo okin baloye...*

#### **English Version**

let's hail him

let's hail him

second in command to the gods

a big tree in the sea

a tumultuous sea  
very successful man like okro  
the son of okin baloye...

In saying the king's panegyric, call and response technique is used. A person calls the first two lines, while every other person responds by saying the remaining part of the panegyric. The above panegyric of the king is highly characterized by the use of simile and metaphorical expressions. For instance, the metaphorical depiction of the king as 'a big tree in the sea' and 'a tumultuous sea' suggest his power, heavy weight and fearsome among his people. He is also described to be as successful as an okro. Also, all the palace chiefs have their own different panegyrics that is being said to praise them while they dance. However, the language used during this festival is not an everyday language. It is only during this festival that some words are used in the community. Such words include; *poke, moriwo mi ti ku*, among others. It will be totally out of place to use this words outside the *Emidin* festive period.

Costume is another important aspect of this festival. It is a symbol which facilitates aesthetic beauty and communicate as well as interpret mood of the people. The beautiful colours of the costumes give aesthetic appeal to the spectators and make the festive occasion more gaily. Everybody in the community look different on the day of the festival. But the king, his wives, the palace women and the chiefs use special costumes to delineate them from other members of the community. The king adorns himself with costly wears, and traditional beads with an attendant weight symbolic of the uneasy tasks lying on him. Apart from pure aesthetic values, they serve as distinct means of identity for these set of people.

Okesola (1967:297) succinctly puts that, costumes during festivals arouse fascination from the audience. The king is dressed in an expensive traditional *aso oke* sowed in *agbada*

with a lot of beads on his neck and hands with his crown. This distinguishes him from other chiefs who also use beads. The spinsters that carry the king's yam from his farm also dress in white, together with other palace orderlies. This differentiates them from other members of the community and also symbolizes the freshness of the yam. They also wear beads on the hands and neck, to show their connection and relationship with the royal house. However, most of the spinsters used for this purpose are from the royal family. Their make-up, prop and costumes tend to show that this festival is dramatic. Different groups and age groups wear *aso ebi* (Group Uniform). This is a cloth worn by members of a particular group or by people collectively rather than one that is chosen by an individual, solely for aesthetic and identification reasons.

Some festivals have unique venues as their stage. In oral literature, the importance of setting/space cannot be jettisoned. In oral literary criticism, the setting is usually discussed as part of the context of performance. Context is seen as an indispensable aspect of oral performance. Bronislaw Malinowski submitted thus: "text of course is extremely important, but without the context, it remains lifeless" (qtd. In Okpewho, 1990:143). Malinowski is of the conviction that to understand the oral literature of any group, it is better to understand their culture, their environment and their worldview. He states further that:

The performance. . . has to be placed in its time-setting-the hours of the day and the season with the background of the sprouting gardens awaiting future work . . . we must also bear in mind the sociological context... the sociable function and the cultural role... All these elements are equally relevant, all must be studied as well as the text. The (oral literary) materials live in native life and not on paper, and when a scholar jots them down without being able to evoke the atmosphere in which they flourish, he has given us but a mutilated bit of reality. (qtd. In Okpewho, 1990: 144).



That is the fact about the place of setting (context) in oral literary studies. The general setting of the *Emidin* festival is in Omuooke Ekiti, while the specific setting of the festival is at the front of the king's palace where most of the performance takes place. In front of the king's palace, in an open air is encircled by spectators. It is usually characterized by drumming, singing, yelling and dancing. The atmosphere is always joyful as the people watch the performers in ecstasy. Also the *Atiba* market square is another setting of the festival where the wrestling contest takes place. The time setting of the *Emidin* festival is very appropriate. It is celebrated in the month of July when the new yam is expected to have been matured for human consumption. The season is also a raining season when most of the farm crops will be ready and ripe for consumption. There are lots of foods and fruits during this period for people's consumption. All these make the festive season more gaily and enjoyable for the people of the community, as enough food items are in stock for entertainment. The festival provides very dramatic and theatrical forms, belief and social experiences in a highly colourful, entertaining and spectacular shows.

*Emidin* festival serves multi-functional purpose including, social, economic, political, religious and cultural motifs. The social importance of *Emidin* festival is that, it is a unifying festival that brings everybody together in the community, including the indigenes and non-indigenes. During this festival, the non-indigenes participate by attending the festival as well as presenting gifts to the king for the celebration.



*An Ibo man dancing at the festival*

Also, this festival affords the people the opportunity to mingle with one another and enhance family and tribal re-union. Some members of the community who resides outside the community or state, return to the town to partake in the celebration. During this period, the community is populated with a lot of people. This festival is an occasion for people to entertain themselves and merry with one another.

The *Emidin* festival has brought the old and the young alike on one stage, and help in preserving age old dance and drama forms. The old gets a chance to perform, while the young look and learn about their culture through seeing and experiencing. During the *Emidin* festival, the younger ones learn from the elders the various traditional rights, songs and dance steps. Apart from preserving the cultural heritage to the admiration of the general public, it also exposes the unique customs of the people. The moral implication of festivals can be seen in the sense that, there are occasions when long standing family quarrels, groups, friends and individual misunderstandings are settled. People bury their differences during this festival, in order to enjoy good interpersonal relationship with one another.

The political relevance of this festival deserves to be observed. During this time, the people of the community renew their loyalty to the chiefs by paying homage to them. The chiefs, elders as well as the people of the community also pay homage to the king and renew their loyalty and support to the king. Lately, government, agencies, political parties and politicians use the occasion to stylishly deliver their manifestos and ask for the support of the people, because they see the festival as a very important avenue to gain the attention of the people. Most of them even sponsor or donate publicly for the festival.



*Some District/Street Heads Paying Homage and Solidarity to the King*

The economy of the community increases tremendously during festivals. It attracts foreign exchange for the community since a lot of people flock to the community during the festival, thereby making the patronage on goods and services to increase enormously. The historical significance of festivals highlight on the past history of the people, focusing back to certain important historical events. It thus affords the youth the opportunity to learn more about the history of the community by recollecting the noble past of their ancestors and to express gratitude to the Supreme Being for the contribution that the festival has made towards their existence as a people. The religious importance is viewed in terms of the

devotees and traditionalists coming together to appease and thank the goddess of the land for a successful farm year. The festival provides the opportunity for them to renew the bonds between them.

*Emidin* festival remains one of the most important aspects of the Omuooke culture through which the people's belief system and ways of life are expressed. It is considered to be the roots of all other festivals celebrated by Omuooke Ekiti. It is a festival that signifies fertility. Hence, it involves everyone in the community. This festival has proven to be an integrating factor in Omuooke community till date.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### FORM, FUNCTIONS AND AESTHETICS OF *IGBO* FESTIVAL SONGS

#### 4.1 Historical Background and Mode of Celebration

*Igbois* an aspect of the *Itomo* festival that comes up by March annually in Omuooke Ekiti. It is meant to correct the anti-social behaviours of members of the town through explosive satirical and lyrical songs. The month of March begins with expectation of rainfall for cultivation and planting. January to March are dry periods which are usually used for major festivals, in Omuooke, but care is taken to ensure that there are gaps, between festivals and planting. Therefore, the responsibility of developing the festival calendar is in the hand of the king and palace chiefs. The date for the *Itomofestival* is fixed and the town crier informs the people of the town about the date which must be three native weeks to the date announced, to enable people of the community prepare for the festival. The town crier tells people about the don'ts during the festival and the penalty for offenders. When a day is fixed for the festival, no atrocity or fight is allowed in the town. If such occurs, a penalty of sheep is imposed on the offenders, such sheep is offered as sacrifice to *Itomo*.

When it is seven days to *Itomo*celebration, *Igbo*procession is brought out. *Igbo* is highly dominated and performed by the youths. It is meant to correct the immoral and anti-social behaviour of any erring member of the town through explosive satirical witty songs, lyrical music and dancing. This is done humiliate and satirize the offenderfearlessly, irrespective of the person involved in the town except the king. Some of the anti-social behaviour*Igbo*stands to correct includes stealing in any form, witchcraft, prostituting or adultery, rape, over exhibition of powers to oppress others, sedition, rituals with human beings, using human being to amass wealth (*eda*) and other behaviours that are unsatisfactory to the norm and mores of the town. The forms, function and aesthetics of some of these songs will be analyzed in this study.

#### **4.2 Form, Functions and Aestheticsof *Igbo*Songs**

In art, form and function are considered as distinct aspects of a work of art. The term form refers to the work's style, techniques and media used, and how the elements are implemented. Function on the other hand refers to a works' essence or what is being depicted. Form has always been part of literary works. In poetry, form enables the poet to remember his piece while reciting the poem. Traditionally, no poem or song was composed without the incorporation of form. Form in poetry and song can be understood as the physical structure in terms of length of the lines, their rhythms, their system of rhymes and repetition. It is an accepted fact that both form and function are of competing importance in literature. The matter and manner of a performance do not actually have a sealed division between them but there is room to regard either of them on its own.

King (1981:121) describes function as a concentration of expression so that the maximum content can be contained within its brief span. He says form and content must

now be related not with the intention of supplying answer but only to suggest that the answers are to be found in the song. It is the combination of form and content or more properly the expression of content in form that defines function.

Shahn (1980:70) posits that:

... form is not just the intention of content, it is the embodiment of content. Form is based, first upon a supposition, a theme. Form is, second, a marshalling of materials, the inert matter in which the theme is to be cast. Form is, third, a setting of boundaries, of limits, the whole extent of idea, but no more, an outer shape of idea. Form is, next, the relating of inner shapes to outer limits. The initial establishing of harmonies . . . form is thus a discipline, an ordering, according to the needs of content.

Shahn's postulation shows that form is not just an ordinary literary element or style that is not essential to the elucidation of a literary work.

The *Igbo* songs have a very large semantic coverage including proverbs, parables, allegories as well as different figures of speech. Most of the *Igbo* songs are not governed by a regular rhyme pattern and do not have regular length, there is no established order or regular meter. Instead the singers use refrain and repetition. Different singers employ different methods of signal forms peculiar to them. The essential metrical requirement is that the singer keeps in rhythm with the various instrumental accompaniments, this time, not necessarily drum. Some singers employ a lot of repetition of previous lines. These are in many cases not intended to bore the audience or an indication of nothing new to say, but to gather momentum to bring a better idea in the next line or stanza. The repetition may also be to lay more emphasis on a point or to authenticate a claim.

Singers, lyricists, dancers and drummers are given an opportunity to hone their creativity during this festival. No perpetual and definite song is schedule for the *Igbo*.

Songs are composed based on the person involve or the magnitude of what that person have done. This brings about creativity, as different and new songs are composed every year. Talented song composers are given a chance to make their voices heard during the *Igbo* festival in Omuooke. Also, this festival gives the youths the opportunity to meet, mingle and interact with one another. It is noted that most people get their life partners during festival celebration. *Igbo* songs have great functional importance to the people of Omuooke. It serves as a guidance of behaviour, beliefs and stands to correct some anti-social behaviours in the community through satirical songs. This act as a moral check, thus making the people to behave well in the society.

A song for someone who steals go thus:

#### **Omuooke Version**

*Olole ka le oo*  
*Olole ka le oo*  
*Ile re a me ire*  
*Ku wo wa n a de a oo*  
*Onisu ka le oo*  
*Onisu ka le oo*  
*Womo gbesu leno*  
*A me i bo oo*

#### **English Version**

thief good evening oo  
thief good evening oo  
we are coming to your house  
prepare to receive us  
yam stealer good evening oo  
yam stealer good evening oo  
prepare yam  
we are coming



Those things he or she has done or stolen will be included in the song to identify the person, though not by direct name as they move towards the offender's house. The song above is for the main aim of correcting the thief by publicly singing an abusive song to humiliate him, in order to serve as deterrent for others. This is not only a shame to the offender but for he/her entire family at large.

The aesthetic qualities of these songs lie in their free flowing artistic contents and vibrant philosophical and metaphorical dimensions. Each song is capable of provoking multiple interpretations that will be remembered often times long after performance. Therefore, in the bid to ensure that many of these songs are understood, at least contextually, songs are repeated several times during the performance. If "repetition embodies creativity" as opined by Drewal (1992:187), then the monotonous nature of these songs could be considered as a creative and aesthetic design. The songs are constantly repeated for the purpose of emphasis and to ensure that the offender gets the message well.

Furthermore, diction is one of the defining characteristics of a literary work be it oral or written. In poetry, poet do their best to use the right words. It is out of word usage that most literary features and figures of speech emerge. In *Igbo* songs, archaic dictions are often used, manipulated registers, borrowed words and newly created words are used where necessary. These forms are employed in the songs but the name of the offender will not be mentioned directly. Among the figurative expressions used in *Igbo* songs are parallelism, simile, metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, euphemism, irony, repetition, pun, among others.

The use of proverb is another device found in *Igbo* songs, mostly to describe things, people and their qualities. Proverbs form a part of African test for wisdom, knowledge and understanding of cultural values. Achebe submits that "among the ibos the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten". Kolawole

(1999:8) describes proverb as a significant rhetoric force in various modes of communication and they are universal occurrences, so much that there is no speech or language in which they are not found. Corroborating this, Wolfgang (2004:1) says, proverbs fulfill the human need to summarise experiences and observations into nuggets of wisdom that provide readymade comment in personal relationships and social affairs. This is also true of the Omuooke people as well. The ability to communicate in proverbs is a proof of maturity and skill.

Moral behaviour is an important issue in Omuooke and other Yoruba communities. An approved moral behaviour is monitored and considered as an aesthetic value. During this festival, songs are composed to condemn the unruly behaviour of youths. Thus, the need for young girls to keep their virginity and chastity till marriage is also encouraged, by condemning defaulters. Married men and women are not left out in combating morals and discipline in the community. Married people are expected to be faithful to their partners, only on the condition that the man wants to take a second wife. A married man or woman found having an affair with another married person will be condemned through satirical songs, using the person's private parts in an offensive manner to identify him or her. Such song goes thus:

#### **Omuooke Version**

1. *Olomusu lode*  
*Olomusu lode*  
*Iworiwo lomi se fashion*  
*Olomusu lode*  
*Iworiwo lomi se fashion oo ee*

#### **English Version**

half naked person  
half naked person  
nudity is her fashion  
half naked person  
using nudity as her fashion

### **Omuooke Version**

2. *Oloko meta ode yakola*  
*Oloko meta ode yakola*  
*Ereke mo di pon meji oo ee*

### **English Version**

three husband woman has come for sex again  
three husband woman has come for sex again  
see has your cheeks has fallen like a coin

### **Omuooke Version**

3. *Abara kutekute*  
*Abowa ta bi esuru*  
*Bo se n gboge*  
*lo n gbe madamu oo ee*

### **English Version**

weak bodied man  
so skiny body and hands  
has he flirts with single ladies  
so he flirts with married women

The first song here describes a lady who is a prostitute and likes dressing half naked to entice men. The word *omusu* is an archaic word that is used to represent the buttocks of the lady. The song satirizes her nudity all in the name of fashion, by exposing her body. The second song satirizes a woman who has married three different husbands, yet still fornicates around the community. The word *yakola* is a coined and manipulated word used to illustrate sex. While the third song also condemn an act of fornication in the community.

Imagery, simply put is a word that create mental picture for a reader or an audience. This device is very useful in literature, because of its ability to evoke the right atmosphere

and sense of reality. Imagery is used in most of the *igbosongs* to present and describe a particular offender so that listeners can have a mental picture of who the offender is and the offence he has committed. Some of the songs go thus:

### **Omuooke Version**

1. *A da n rura*  
*A da n rura*  
*Boda mo da goro mobi oo ee*

### **English Version**

we are mixing things  
we are mixing things  
brother has mixed two types of kolanut together

### **Omuooke Version**

2. *Ise ni mo mi se*  
*kin torowo*  
*Ise ni mo mi se*  
*kin torowo*  
*Alawe mo gbowo alaji oo ee*

### **English Version**

I work hard  
before I have money  
I work hard  
before I have money  
Mr man has stolen Alhaji's money

### **Omuooke Version**

3. *Eni teran funmi*  
*Ola teran funmi*  
*Mi i padabo kin ya sanwo re*  
*Ele re, Ele re*  
*Alapata ta omi eran si*

### **English Version**

today sell meat for me  
tomorrow sell meat for me  
I will come back and pay  
your private part, your private part  
a butcher has ejaculated into it

The first song describes someone who has stolen a basket of kolanut, the second song describes someone that has stolen an Alhaji's money, while the third song satirizes a woman who fornicates with a beef seller because of meat. In employing the use of imagery, a particular woman (a witch, who tries to kill her son with the use of blade spiritually) who is lame was described and satirized thus:

### **Omuooke Version**

*Oni biledi, oni biledi*  
*Olowo riro, olowo riro*  
*Elese riro, Elese riro*

### **English Version**

blade user, blade user  
lame in the hand, lame in the hand  
lame in the leg, lame in the leg

Any member of the community who listens to the song will definitely have a mental picture of who the song is referring to. These songs are satirical with the capacity to enforce social control

A deliberate use of exaggeration and overstatement is referred to as hyperbole. Statements that are hyperbolic are usually creatively extravagant in meaning. The singers make use of hyperbole to exaggerate and make fun of an offender. For instance, if a person

steals five tubers of yam from another man's farm, exaggeration may be employed to depict the incident as if the thief has stolen a whole barn of yam.

Pun is a play on different senses of words, it is also a manipulation of words that sound similar but have different meanings. Pun is sometimes seen as playful and therefore less artistically serious. It is often employed in most *Igbo* songs as an aesthetic strategic figure that is suitable for artistic uniqueness.

One of the functions of the songs on the people is the teaching of morals. The songs educate the members of the community especially the youths against bad behaviour. Being a traditional performance, the songs enhance their verbal skills, enrich their vocabulary and enlarge the intelligence of the people about the events and culture of their own society. The importance of the *Igbo* motivates the people to continue to preserve the form of this performance.

The instructional role the songs play make them a useful mechanism for social commentary and for maintaining cultural stability. The songs are used to inculcate the customs and ethical standards in the young and adults, to reward them with praise when they conform, to punish them with ridicule when they deviate from the community's way of life. The *Igbo* encourages the maintenance of order, obedience, peace and decorum in the community.

The *Igbo* performance teaches the virtue of fairness, honesty and equality in the community. Any member of the community who has done anything wrong against the lay down laws of the land will be punished and ridiculed with the *Igbo* songs, irrespective of the person's status. It is clear here that these songs reflect the cultural values and ideals of the people, thereby encouraging morality and sanity among them. The function of the songs become significant, such that it is considered as a communal form of correction when the laws of the land are thwarted.

The festival is made up of songs rendered by young people with the drumming provided by the hitting of the skin, iron, bell and other beatable materials that can produce a sound. The youthful voices punctuates the rendition so beautifully in spite of the male dominance at the *Igbo*. Okpewho, (1975: 58), highlighting the cultural significance of music, observes that “music has meant all kinds of things to all manner of people at different stages of their cultural history”. The songs rouse the people of the community into their cultural milieu to keep the culture and tradition of the community intact. It also informs and warns others not to indulge in any unruly activity that can dent their image and that of their family in the society. The songs are more inviting and satirical in content. Traditionally, they are meant to condemn and correct offenders.

The songs constitutes a dominant avenue of dramatic expression and promote creativity. When the performance is on, while the people are singing, one or two people will be at the front to dramatize and imitate the offender carrying out such offensive act he or she is being condemned for. This is to lampoon the offender the more as well as to add to the meaning of the song. It is therefore, often integrated with the *Igbo* performance to set the mood for the actions or to provide an outlet for expressing the feelings it generates. Throughout the *Igbo* period, the right atmosphere is stimulated for expressive movements thus heightening the dramatic action and promoting creativity, as there is no specific composer for the songs. Every talented individual sings based on his or her creative capability, taking into cognizance the thematic preoccupation of the *Igbo*. The overall aesthetic function of the festival is in the integration of the various elements of music, dance, song, rhythm and spectacle with all the shade of performing art, to stimulate the celebration.

Merriam (1964:54) states that music seems to be an aid in inducing moods of tranquility, nostalgia, sentiment, group rapport, religious feeling, party solidarity and

patriotism. This can also be said of the *Igbo* songs. These songs are forms of communication. The treatment is inspired by stylistic considerations that characterize them. The central theme of the songs range from matters of common interest and general concern to the members of the community. As discussed earlier on, a number of them pass social comments, criticisms as well as satirizes. The dominant significance and functions of these songs lies in the emotional rendition of the lines. The tonal modulation is so artful that it often causes the people to shoulder the love for order, obedience and peace, dramatized through the content and form of the songs.

Without mincing words, it should be noted that these songs have harmonious structures, these structures and functions evoking in their own unique way, the aesthetic criteria or principles of art forms. Beyond this fact, it should be noted that form in traditional African songs is not simply the external shape of content, but, the meaning that content suggests. Thus, with regard to *Igbo* festival in Omuooke Ekiti, one might say that form is content, form is meaning, and this meaning is functional in relation to the participants with whom form is bound in cultural activities.



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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE CHANGING STATUS OF THE FESTIVALS.**

Oral performances and tradition form important parts of literature in Africa. To a great extent, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century characterized by modern technologies (audio and digital recording inclusive), the bulk of African oral literature is still unrecorded. According to Ngugi (2003), the importance of oral literature is that, through its agencies, African languages in their most aesthetic forms have been kept alive. However, participation in oral performances have gradually declined in recent years. Most indigenous performances have often been misunderstood and relegated to the level of rituals. This, however, misjudge indigenous performances that constitute art, especially in this modern era. The changing status of these festivals are majorly characterized by the coming of Islam and Christian religions, western education, and civilization/modernity, among others.

According to Sofola (1973: 12), the early Christian missionaries to Nigeria came through the coasts, such as Badagry in Lagos state and Abeokuta in Ogun state. With the

penetration of the Christian evangelists into the southern part of Nigeria, came evangelizing and the subsequent introduction of western culture and values, first, to the Christian converts and then to a larger population. According to Sofola (1973:13), the white missionaries deliberately imposed the western culture upon the traditional cultures. They condemned African customs and traditions. Traditional worshippers are seen and named heathens and backward people, thereby relegating African religion and traditional performances to the background.

Sofola (1973: 35) further states that, the northerners had received Islam as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the Nupes, the immediate northern neighbours of the Yorubas who were traders came in contact with those northern Muslim brethren at about 17<sup>th</sup> century or even earlier. Before 1840, Islam had been established in many places in Yoruba land. The arrival of Christianity and Islam, contribute to the gradual decline in the participation of traditional religion and performances in Omuooke Ekiti. Many people in the town converted to Islam or Christianity and alienate themselves from the traditional rites, rituals, beliefs and performances. The converts also prevented members of his or her family from identifying with the traditional religion and performances.

According to Olaitan and Oladipo (2002:14), like every other community, Islam and Christianity came into Omuooke Ekiti with education, and indoctrinated youths with religion dogma through education. Therefore, there may not be any educated youth that wants to part from the religion dogma to traditional religion, thereby living traditional religion in the hand of old illiterates and their non-schooled children. At present, it is very difficult to get youth doing most of the traditional performances, rather they prefer to be an

audience. If this situation is allowed to continue till the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all knowledge about traditional beliefs, customs and traditions of the town may be lost.

The establishment of western schools affect the active participation of the indigenous performances. In Omuooke Ekiti, the Christians established the St. Silas Anglican Primary School, while the Muslims established the Ansa-Udeen Primary School in the town. The encroachment of this education made many people to see festivals and other indigenous traditions as a thing of the past and an outdated activities. The rate at which the elites travel abroad for studies, mostly in the United Kingdom and the United States of America keep increasing in thousands every year. These foreign educated members of the elite are undoubtedly carriers of new ways, new culture and new ideas, which make them hate and criticize African cultural practices more.

Migration is another factor which affects the traditional arts and performances tremendously in Omuooke. This is as a result of technological advancement and a search for better living conditions. Most people leave the villages to the cities for reasons like school, jobs and businesses. This make the people, most especially the youths to forget about their oral traditions and the subsequent decline in these traditional performances. Some talented and active performers of most of these indigenous activities also leave the village to the cities in order to seek for greener pasture that can make them a better man in the society, as most of the oral arts cannot give them what they want.

Modernity has contributed extensively to the life pattern of Omuooke people. Individuals are now adopting new ways of life in order to fit into the new pattern of living. Basically, there is nothing new about cultures changing, running into other. Culture means cultivation, and changes and renewal are inherent parts of that. Though globalization and

modernity has a huge effect on our cultural practices. Norberg (2003:11) is of the view that:

If we try to freeze certain cultural patterns in time and highlights them as distinctively American or Thai or French or Swedish or Brazilian or Nigerian, they cease to be culture. They cease to be a living part of us and instead become museum relics and folklore.

The essential western definition of culture identifies a cultural transformation that is generated by the clash of culture. The process of modernization for instance allows two different cultures to either co-exist or create a dynamic or transformation to a new and third type of culture, one to be absorbed by the other. If the new incoming culture dominates the local culture, there will be a conflict between the two cultures. This is what the western culture has done to African cultural practices, whereby only a few struggle to survive. However, the dynamic state of culture simply indicates a coexistence of two different cultures. This coexistence does not translate either identity in this case. It is an acculturation of identity which Omuooke people and Africans at large should strongly resist.

The effects modernism has on traditional practices in Nigeria are significant and ever increasing. Though some of these changes have reduced the traditional potency of most of the indigenous practices. The many forms of modernity as noted by scholars all over the world, are hidden in economies, technology, culture, social, politics and environment. In the area of economy and commerce, business minded individuals, companies and organisations see the festival period as a good time to market their products, in that, a lot of people from different places will grace the occasion.

Modern technologies and electronic gadgets have tremendous impact on the festivals in Omuooke town. According to Giwa (2002:44)

Introduction of sophisticated machines such as television, video, radio, cd, camera e.t.c made people prefer to spend their leisure time watching these gadgets rather than listening or watching the live performance.

Watching the performance live as it happens add to its aesthetic because the audience in some cases are deeply involved and augment the performance by joining the singing or dancing of the performer. This keeps the performance very lively and indeed interesting. Finnegan (1970) is of the view that audience participation in a performance insinuates itself through questions, exclamations, laughter and comments from the audience. This features of the audience actively participating in oral performance has gradually declined in recent years. People can watch some performances from the comfort of their rooms through live transmission of the performances by the media crew.

Ihekweazu (1985: Introduction) is of the view that:

The same technology which relegates traditional culture into the background is trying to reactivate it artificially for purely decorative purposes. Traditions that are dying in the villages are perpetuated on the television screen.

Also, some urban settlers who normally travel to the village to watch and participate in the indigenous performance no longer do so, because they can get the video coverage of such performance and watch in the comfort of their homes. With this, the face to face aspect of performance is lost. Thus, the mood, the feeling and their infections are non-existent.

With the advancement in technology and communication infrastructures, the world enters into a new dawn, an integrated world of states melting into nations and nations into modern or global community. These advancements also affect everything about culture, such as languages, foods, behaviours, clothes, lifestyles, artistic works and so on. The *Emidinand Igbo* festivals are not spared from the modern onslaught. Modernity has no doubt

influenced and affected these performances. This is corroborated by Ihekweazu (1985:290)

thus:

No living culture is ever static. Collectively, human beings struggle to master their physical environment and in the process create a social one. A change in the physical environment, or more accurately, a change in the nature of their struggle will alter their institutions and hence their mode of life and thought. Their new mode of life and thought may in turn affect their institutions and general environment.

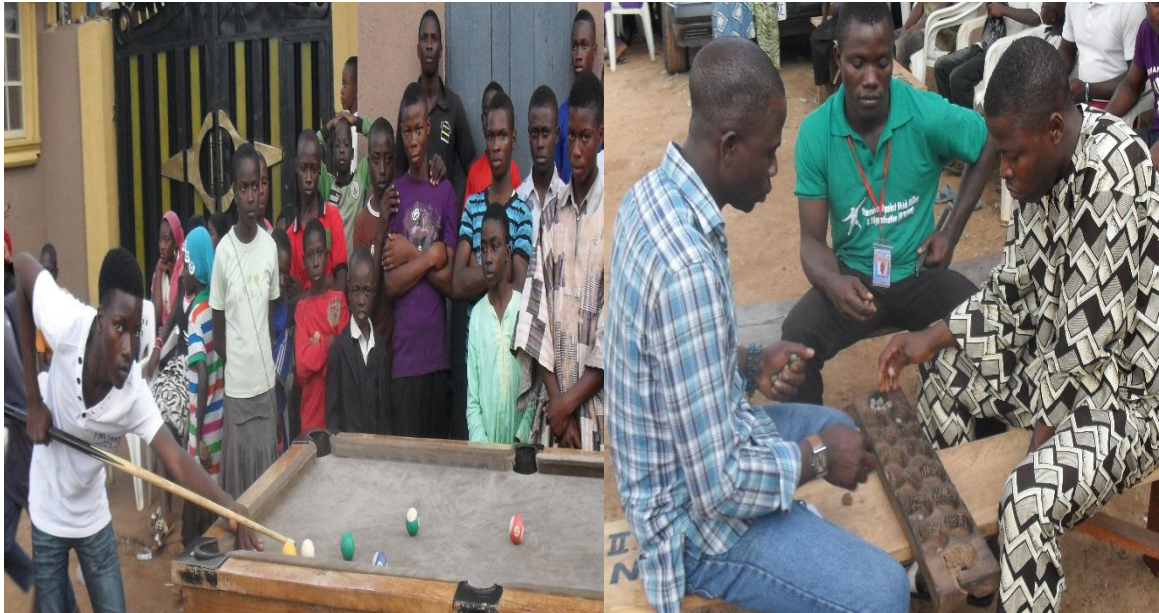
The influence of western civilization, education, technology and religion has a very large effect on the *Emidin* festival, while these factors affect the *Itomo* festival most(negatively), as the participants reduce yearly. Only the *Igbo* aspect of the festival is fairly in practice till date.

The youths and the student union association under the name The Federation of Omuooke Ajire Students (FOAST) are not left out during the *Emidin* festival. Among the changes are the student union's activities and involvement in the celebration. The involvement of this association makes the *Emidin* festival more colourful and interesting. On the second day of the *Emidin* festival, being the day the king celebrates and eats the new yam, as the chiefs dance for the king one after the other in their different unique songs and dance steps in front of the king's palace, the youths and student union also hold their own activities at other parts of the palace.

Different activities and competitions take place, such as games, football competition on the field opposite the king's palace, dancing competition among other activities. Even the masquerades are not left out. Though the *Emidin* festival period is not the rightful time for masquerade festival. But they come out on this special day also to honour the king and to



also pass a message that the ancestors of the land are also around to participate in the felicity.



*People playing games organized by the student union at the other side of the King's palace*



*Masquerades dancing during the festival*

Politicians also seize this medium to sell their selves and look for the people's support, because they know that they will get a huge population of people to meet and address during the festival. Most of them even sponsor the festival and settles every expenses made by the king in council. During the *Emidin* festival held in 2013, the incumbent governor of Ekiti State, Dr Kayode Fayemi used that medium to officially make his intention known to Omuooke people that he is running for second term as the governor of the state.



Some group of party supporters welcoming the Governor of Ekiti State during the *Emidin* festival



*Hon. Yemi Adaramodu, representing the Governor during the festival*

Strinati (1995:225) is of the opinion that:

Particular products become popular because they have designer labels which evoke an attractive lifestyle, rather than because they are useful. Society develops a designer ideology. Surface qualities assume more importance than anything deeper.

Strinati (1995:225) says that in popular surface and style, what things look like, playfulness and jokes are said to predominate at the expense of content, substance and meaning. As a result, qualities like artistic merit integrity, seriousness, authenticity, realism, intellectual depth and strong narratives tend to be undermined. In the midst of this performance and celebration, a lot of messages are passed to the people.

On the third day of the festival, which happens to be when the whole people of the community eat the new yam, an invited musician plays in front of the king's palace, while invited dignitaries spray the naira. Different clothes and attires are worn by the people on this day, ranging from customized polo shirt, to other traditional attires. This aspect is one

of the changes found in the *Emidin* festival, because they are not originally part of the festival activities and rites.



*A Musician Performing*

Due to the mammoth crowd that grace the *Emidin* festival, security measures are put in place in order to maintain law and order of the nation. Men of the Nigerian Police and The Civil Defense Corps are on ground. Also men of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) are not left out, in order to ensure the easy passage of vehicles on the road.



*Mammoth crowd during the Emidin festival*



*Some security personnel at the Emidin festival*

Lanre (2013) reiterates Governor Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti State's vision for cultural revival, as he called on Nigerians both home and in diaspora to embark on cultural rejuvenation of those values which accentuate reasonable behavioural patterns and lubricate orderliness and brotherliness. Governor Fayemi, who made this appeal while addressing the people of Usi Ekiti during the celebration of the Usi day Festival, lamented the phenomenal

erosion of indigenous culture and value systems by contemporary vogues. Governor Fayemi (Quoted in Lanre 2013: 28) succinctly put:

I am not particularly happy at the sequential erosion of our primordial values, culture, norms, mores and elimination by sheer complacency of those indigenous social mappings which were the instruments of peace, stability, good order and sane society in those days.

Governor Fayemi pointed out that in those days, the society was trusted on the platform of cultural activities which moderated behaviours, horned social order, lubricated the chord of brotherhood and revived communal spirit with the sole belief that whatever touched one was of concern to others. He lamented that unfortunately, we are passing through a period whereby we have allowed social miscegenation through technological and information high order, vogue, inter-racial and cross cultural networking and adaptation photocopying and cultural indoctrination to sweep away those precious values necessary to reinforce and sustain our sense of collective responsibility in our community. Governor Fayemi (Quoted in Lanre 2013:28) declares that:

His government will continue to support and facilitate with communities in this form because of the belief that it is a right step and a conscious move to rejuvenate and revive the cultural values and norms which emphasis on those things that bind us together rather than those things that fan the embers of discord.

The *Emidin* festival is one of the very few popular local festivals that is not yet eroded by foreign religions (Islam and Christianity). It is during this festival that we see Muslims, Christians and Traditionalists coming together as one for a traditional rite. While the *Igbo* festival has suffered a lot of setbacks from Islam and Christianity, probably due to the numerous rituals involved before the festival commences.

The participation and performance of the *Igbo* festival dwindles yearly, because the people have become more used to western culture. Those who do not participate in the indigenous performances are viewed as the civilized, whereas those who participate in them are considered as the uncivilized, uncouth, pagan, heathen, non-believers, local people, unchristian and souls who need deliverance. For instance, a young lady who is schooled and an undergraduate at the University will not want to be seen participating in the *Itomo* festival specifically meant and dominated by the ladies. While some educated youth also, do not want to partake in the *Igbo* anymore. Increased power of knowledge and information as a result of colonialism modernism and its value have brought the festivals great changes in outlook.

Most of the people in the modern world rely mostly on the modern life style and tradition rather than their indigenous and past traditions. In order to prevent these oral traditions from being totally lost, it is necessary and important for the people most especially the literate or educated elites to encourage the indigenous arts and its continuity in the society. This is because if oral traditions are lost we are also lost because our oral traditions are part of us.

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

## **CONCLUSION**



This study evaluates the dramatic aesthetics of the *Emidin* and *Igbo* festivals in Omuooke Ekiti. It is another effort in situating African festivals as constituting aesthetic peculiarities, largely in drama and performance. This study confirms the connectedness of all African festivals. It brings to the fore, the associated nature of drama such as songs, mime, dance, spectacular displays, costumes, beautiful setting and acrobatic displays. Apart from being a documentation of another traditional festival, this study is an addition to oral literary scholarship. This study elaborates on the function and significance of the festivals to the people of Omuooke. The significance of the festivals are known to be a necessary aspect of art and culture. Though it is accepted that the heritage of art and culture must be preserved and protected, studied and utilized for artistic and academic purposes. No one can, therefore, deny that festivals are dramatic performance that are meaningful and peculiar to their indigenous environments and geared towards basic social, moral and aesthetic specifications.

The work is therefore, presented to answer some fundamental questions raised in the problem of this research. These questions have guided the research tremendously as the analysis is predicated. It is observed that Omuooke festivals have the same features with other Nigerian festivals and can also be called drama. This study also reveals and presents how the arrival of Christianity, Islam, colonialism, modern education and westernization have altered the original form of these festivals. However, it cannot be totally denied that education and modernization has also helped these festivals, among other things. The simple truth is that, one cannot distance self from the ongoing global development and modernization in the society.

This study observed that while modernity is one of the greatest threat to Omuooke festivals, it is also its rescuer and promoter. This is so because people unavoidably embrace modernization and civilization, by the use of all the powerfully rich and technologically advanced gadgets and materials they use in documenting and saving our oral and traditional performances. This study is therefore an attempt at contributing to the development of African oral tradition. This work will encourage further research in this field by any interested researcher. The study therefore assert that, measures should be taken in order for our indigenous practices not to be totally consumed by the negative effects of this modern phenomenon. This is necessitated in that, while we integrate and melt into the modern complexities, our cultural practices and performances will retain its originality above all odds.

It is pertinent to conclude that this study has confirmed that there are artistic peculiarities in the *Emidin* and *Igbo* festivals. The celebration of the festival is necessary to Omuooke people because it educates the people about their cultural heritage. Festivals, among other indigenous performances is the most significant, it is by and large artistic and aesthetically pleasing.

The culture of a people is their identity as it affords them due recognition. It is their underlying distinguishing factor from other people and cultures. In fact all societies across the globe have various and divergent cultures which they cherish and practice. For a society to operate functionally and effectively, it must ensure and maintain strict and constant adherence to the various components of their culture. The gradual erosion of African culture and way of life can be said to be one of the reasons why moral decadence is so rampant in the society today.

However, this study has maintained a stance that not all Nigerian festivals have faded out in the face of modernity. It will also not be correct to totally accept that civilization and industrialization will lead to the demise of orature in Nigeria. But this research has shown that if orature generally does not completely get lost with the challenge of modernism, its forms change into new ones and thus, the original forms become absorbed into the new ones. The original forms may be more aesthetically satisfying than the new forms. Sometimes, certain oral literary genres die away without even transforming into anything new. In Omuooke Ekiti for example, the *Igbo* festival has virtually become totally defunct. The population of the performer reduces yearly because, youths of this time have become so civilized and educated that they can no longer afford to come out and sing to satirize an offender, among other things.

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## **Elders Interviewed**

Chief M. S. Akomolehin. The Aanda of Omuooken Ekiti, 73 Years Old. 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2013.

Chief Jimoh Ojo. The Olufa of Omuooken Ekiti, 57 Years old. 27<sup>th</sup> July, 2013.

Mrs G. Akomolehin. Former Itomo Festival Participant. 67 Years Old. 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2013.

Mr Babatunde Oluwaseun. Active Participant of Igbo Performance. 35 Years Old. 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2013.

## **APPENDIX**

### Interview Questions

1. What do these festivals mean to the people of Omuooke Ekiti. Is it spiritual, ceremonial, historical (hence, did it in any way deal with the origin of the people?)
2. Do the festivals serve any political or economic purpose?
3. What role do the festivals play in the society?
4. How relevant are these festivals in the past compared to the present time?
5. What is (are) the impression (s) of the people of Omuooke concerning the festivals?
6. Should the festivals be encouraged in the face of modernity? If yes, why?
7. Do people come from other communities to watch these festivals?
8. Will you agree with the notion that, the yearly inflow of people for these festivals is not due to a mere yearning for entertainment, fun and tourism?
9. What aspects of these festivals are appealing to the people? i. e what are the aesthetics features of the festivals?
10. Is there any change in the conduct and performance of these festivals in the way it was performed in the past compared to the present?
11. To what extent will you say that foreign religions and modernity have affected the attendance and participation of these festivals?
12. In what way(s) is the television affecting (positively and negatively) the reliability and relevance of the festivals?

13. How do you think these festivals can be protected from extinction and being submerged by western cultures?

14. What is your advice to the young generation on the festivals?