



Cultural-Tourism Advocacy Through Eyo (Adamu) Festival And Costume: An Artistic Exploration Of Opambata And Its Linear Inflection

Quadri Oluwasegun. O.

Department of Creative Arts, Faculty of Art
University of Lagos. Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria

Eseagwu Oyenike

Department of Creative Arts, Faculty of Art
University of Lagos. Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract:

There is a saying in African context: “One must come out of one’s house to begin learning.” We are surrounded in life by unlimited range of learning opportunities from formal to informal. Festival among the Lagosians especially the Eyo is well observed with grandeur. This paper is geared up by the need to correct the falsified statement, notion, assertions and grandiose of some foreign researcher as regard religious situations, facts and values in Eyo Adimu festival and its socio-economic significant. It also appraise the symbolic, functional and linear inflection of Opambata in Eyo (Adamu) festival of Lagos Island not overlooking the historical background, socio-cultural and spiritual value of the festival as well as the overall Yoruba cultural development. The research is historical and descriptive in nature. It hinged on oral interview, observation, personal communication, literatures, periodic and books. The oral interview and observation which include the data gathered from the custodian of Eyo, the worshippers, cult members and elders formed the primary data.

Key words: *Opambata, linear inflection, Eyo, Festival and Adamu Orisa.*

1.Introduction

Nigeria offers variety of festivals with sound and rich cultural heritage. The evidences of these festivals are found in all the geo-political zones in the country which serves as veritable instruments of national integration, peaceful co-existence and cultural possibilities. Lagos, specifically Lagos island serve as the home of Eyo masquerade. It is govern by Barrister Babatunde Fashola (SAN) with area • urban 999.6 km² (385.9 sq mi) population 14,000,000 , city 7,937,932 , density 7,941/km² (20,170/sq mi), time zone: wat (utc+1) (utc+1) hdi ▲0.720 (high).



Figure 1: Map of Lagos



Figure 2: Aerial View of Lagos

Eyo festival portrays and exhibits the culture and traditions of the city of Lagos. It is a festival that is anxiously anticipated by Lagosians, visitors-locally and internationally- and diasporic Nigerians. Its splendid and expansive theatrical displays and pageantry highlight and showcase the aboriginal history of the inhabitants 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 or commemoration of the passage of or ascension to the throne of an Oba (King) of Lagos. Equally, the Eyo festival is staged in the memory of a deceased worthy and illustrious individual, such as a White Cap Chief, who has contributed immensely to the progress and development of Lagos. It is deemed as constituting the highest honour that Lagos can make to repay a citizen for eminence and public service. Despite its origins mainly having a ritualistic purpose, there have also been incidents when the Eyo Play has been performed to coincide with the honouring of foreign or state dignitaries.



Figure3: Parade of Drummers

2.Purpose Of The Study

The purpose of this paper is to:

- To critically appraise the symbolic and functional role of Opambata in Eyo (Adamu) Orisa play.
- Study the linear inflection of Opambata in Eyo (Adamu) festival of Lagos Island.
- It also addresses the historical background, socio-cultural and spiritual value of the festival to Yoruba cultural development.
- Explore the norms and ethic that surround the spiritual aspects of Eyo performance.

3.Methodology

The research is historical and descriptive in nature. It hinged on oral interview, observation, personal communication, literatures, periodic and books. The oral interview

and observation which include the data gathered from the custodian of Eyo, the worshippers, cult members and elders formed the primary data.



Figure 4: Eyo Paraphernalia

4.The Place Of Oba Of Lagos In Eyo Adimu Festival

Osanyin (2004) posit that the Oba has the final authority on all rituals, all rites and all cultural displays in Lagos. Everything passes through the Oba. Eyo play is initiated through the permission from the traditionally ruler – Oba - of Lagos, by a person who believes that his departed ancestor deserves to be honoured for his contribution to Lagos. Subsequently, the Oba will, with his staff of office, direct one of his messengers to invite the Akinsiku of Lagos (the head of all the Eyos) to the palace for consultation. It is the Akinsiku who lays out and specifies the Ikaro — the offerings and presents required from the applicant family before the play can be staged. As such, the Oba is the source of authority that is passed to the Akinsiku, who then distributes the gifts to the deity families in Lagos, after which a divination process will be carried out at the Awe Adimu (the sacred sanctuary of the Eyo Orisas) to choose a day that is propitious for the holding of the Eyo festival.

As evident through one of the few Eyo festivals that were staged since his ascension to the throne, it is certainly to the glory of his distinguished traditional leadership of the

good people of Lagos that the 2009 and 2010 Eyo festivals were well organized and the uniqueness of Adamu Orisa plays.



Figure 5: His Royal Majesty: Oba Rilwan Akiolu (King of Lagos)

5. Concept Of Culture

Williams (1985) called culture a key word, annexing progressive meanings depending on context and usage. Goldbard (2005) posits culture as the sum-total of human creativity and invention: Language, signs and symbols, systems of belief, customs, cloths cooking tools, toys and adornments, everything we build and everything we use to fill it up-are by the way, art”

“Culture” according to Houston (2007) can be defined as arts as well as the intangible shared beliefs, values, and practices of a community. Culture as a complex whole which include belief, arts, morals, laws customs and other capabilities gained by man as a member of a society. This is a learned and shared social heritage transmitted from one generation to the next. Senghor (1977) defines culture as the totality of existence. This concretizes how people live in any society, when relating to their sociological pattern in dressing, eating marriage, religion, festivals and family life to mention a few. There is no society without an inherent socio-cultural system. The attitudes, values, ideas and beliefs of individual are greatly influenced by the culture in which he lives. Culture is the representation of the aggregate of the concepts and value characterizing a community. (Okumade 1983).

Hence culture cannot be separated from the people and people cannot be separated from their culture. From this, it is deduced that people without culture are without existence. Culture can therefore be regarded as a product of ecology which is profoundly influenced by the environment thus encompassing all the materials and non-material expressions of a people.

6. Tourism

Tourism has been described severally by different authors. Quadri (2012) defines Tourism as the act of travelling for the purpose of not only recreation, but also the provision of services for this act. It might occupy local services such as entertainment, accommodation and catering for tourists. Cultural tourism was derived from culture and tourism, this focuses on the generation of economic development and revenue. It is regarded as a new phenomenon, an economic orientation, which fuses with culture and tourism as a twin developmental process. If the relationship between tourism and culture is to be sustained tourism will have to be developed in harmony with community interests. It will have to protect and preserve traditional cultures, fostering sensitivity to and appreciation for cultural practices (Moscardo, 1999; Sofield, 1991). It is therefore essential that indigenous peoples maintain ownership and control over product development and cultural experiences

6.1. Costume

In traditional African society costume serves diverse purposes such as sacred, religious, ceremonial and aesthetic purposes. Costumes are to change the appearance or the identity of the wearer. This can be used in covering the head, face or the whole body. (Oluwa 2007).

Costume are made of varied materials that are attached together to produce a whole or part of the costume. These materials range from fabric, fibre, twigs, leaves and paint. Some costumes are sacred which are essentially used for religious or ritual festival. The ritual costume is restricted to the initiates which according to Amadi (1967) must be within the ethics of worship.

6.2. Festival

Festivals are multi -dimensional. The religious, political, social and artistic are combined into a unique performance. Every festival has a focus around which its activities are

organized but the religious or spiritual element is the binding factor ... Every activity has its source and is sustained by the spiritual world through the gods and ancestors. (Odotei 2002). The multiple roles of festivals are reflected in their duration and the organization of the celebration. Festival, traditional or modern, marks a period when people converge with joy to celebrate or commemorate historical occurrence.

6.3. The Rite And Structure Of The Ceremony

The Eyo masquerade essentially admits tall people, which is why it is described as Agogoro Eyo (literally meaning the tall Eyo masquerade). In the manner of a spirit being visiting the earth on a purpose, the Eyo masquerade speaks in a ventriloquial voice, suggestive of its otherworldliness; and when greeted, it replies: "Mo yo fun e, moyo fun'ra mi" ("I rejoice for you, and I rejoice for myself). This response connotes the masquerades as rejoicing with the person greeting it for the witnessing of the day, and its own joy at taking the hallowed responsibility of cleansing. Oyefolu T. in Ajetunmobi (2003)

Eyo is not an annual festival like some people might think, but it is scheduled at the discretion of the incumbent Oba. To commence Eyo in Lagos, a family sends a message to the Oba of Lagos, who in turn sends word to the traditional priests. Both parties will ask the family for a date they prefer, so that further consultations and confirmation can be done from Ifa (a god). Before the Eyo date, rituals and sacrifices are done to avert bad luck, tragedy or bloodshed as well as for the safe commuting and procession of guests and Eyo groups respectively. Most of these rituals are done away from the general public, and can only be performed by members of the Adimu conclave.

On the eve of the Eyo, the Orisha Adimu visits the Imokun to commemorate with the family of the dead, followed by Eyo Oniko, and Eyo Ologede. This is done at about 2 am. When they return, feedback is sent to the Oba, who also visits the Imokun in the early hours of the day. After many of the traditional rites have been performed, at about 7 am, all the other smaller Eyo groups' are now permitted to walk the streets. At this time, the five Eyo groups go to the Oba's palace in a procession. Now, Eyo groups can go from place to place visiting and exchanging pleasantries with their friends and loved ones. If any smaller Eyo group meets another superior Eyo, it brings its wooden staff of office (Opanbata) down as a sign of respect and submission.

At this point most people think that marks the end of the Eyo ritual, but about three days after Eyo there's another cult group called "Akalamekunake" who go to the Imokun to

remove the corpse. This rite is prohibited to be seen by the public. Also, two to three months later, the Eyo celebrates the “Adabo” – a gathering to congratulate one another on successfully performing the Eyo rites and festival safely. When this is done, the Oba, his chiefs and the children and relatives of the deceased gather in front of the Oba’s palace to dance. This dance ritual is called “won jo opa.” It is only after this dance that the Eyo festival is considered finally over. Since only one day is open to the public, people believe the Eyo festival occurs only in a single day when in reality it takes about three months for the entire ritual to be conducted.

7.Eyo Masquerade's Regalia

Aderibigbe (1975) the regalia's colour and style symbolizes the purity associated with the sanctity of the illustrious son or daughter that recently passed away. A symbolic corpse of the dead is equally draped in the same pristine white fabric donned by the Eyo masquerade.

7.1.The Agbada (White gown)

The main outfit is the flowing white agbada that covers the whole body, including the hands and feet, and there is a lace-like veil that's draped over the Eyo masquerade's head to conceal its face.

7.2.The Aropale

An important piece of apparel worn with the white agbada is the aropale which is tied around the legs. It is with the trailing aropale that symbolically sweeps the city of Lagos clean of evil and ill luck.

7.3.Eleya Funfun

Eleya Funfun is also called The *Iboju*, (White face veil) an important face veil use by the Eyo to cover face during the parade

Akete (head gear or hat) of varied and distinctive quality.

7.4. The Opambata

The Opambata is the wooden staff of office, which you use to touch other *Opambata* and exchange pleasantries, except for cases where they are used to beat offenders of the Eyo norms and tradition.



Figure 6: EYO MASQUERADE'S REGALIA

7.5.The Masquerade In Eyo Festival And Their Costumes

Without the Eyo masquerade, there is no Eyo festival. But, there's more to choosing a date and watching the elegant and beautiful processions of the various Eyo masquerades through their designated routes; doing their traditional routines and dances. Osanyin (2004) explains that there are broadly three types of Eyo: the Eyo Orisa, the palace group otherwise referred to as Eyo iga and Eyo Fancy. For the sake of this study, The Eyo Orisa shall be discussed extensively.

The Eyo masquerades (Eyo Orisha) are categorized into five various groups, Adimu (Eyo Orisha), Eyo Alaketepupa, Eyo Oniko, Eyo Ologede, and Eyo Agere. Within these different types of masquerades, there exists a hierarchical order. Asides from these hierarchical differences, they also have distinct physical characteristics and functions.



Figure 6: Adimu (Eyo Orisha), Eyo Alaketepupa, Eyo Oniko, Eyo Ologede, and Eyo Agere.

Eyo Adimu Orisha is the highest and most respected among the five Eyo groups. They are also referred to as Adimu Orisha, as they are seen as the closest to the gods.

It has its shrine now at Awe Adimu in the Ologun Agan chieftaincy family compound. Adimu Orisa is reputed to be the most vicious and unforgiving amongst the deities. He bears the common features or characteristics of being able to settle old scores, beat enemies to a retreat or pronounce curses.



Figure 7: Adimu (Eyo Orisha) and its Cap

Eyo Alaketepupa is the second in the order of Eyo groups. They are also called ‘Iyu Oba Olori Eyo Alaketepupa’ which makes them believe they are the first Eyo cult groups in Lagos. People refer to them as Laba – the first. The Alaketepupa usually wears a red hat with white tapings around it.



Figure 8: Eyo Alaketepupa and its Cap

Eyo Oniko is the third in the order and popularly recognized because of the long wooden stick it wields. *Oniko* wears a yellow hat with black tapings around it with the shrine at the Alagbeji chieftaincy family Compound. It’s like the ‘Egungun’ *Oniko* (Raffia masquerade) of Badagry woven and structured in raffia.

Eyo Ologede can be identified by the stilts that make them tall, and their green hat taped with yellow ribbons. It is of banana leaves. In Yoruba religion the banana is the symbolic of peace in about the same manner the palm oil. They are both used as “ero” (solvent). They are both used in “etutu” literarily means appeasement. Ologede is the spirit of the

banana tree which embodies the sweetness, the soothing and the tranquilizing spirit in the banana. The word “Ologede” consists of two stems. “Oni” (the owner of) and “Ogede” (banana) which literally means the owner of banana, the spirit of the god of banana. It is the physical and the metaphysical soothing properties of banana-which qualified Ologede as a god of peace. Olugbani’s family owns Ologede with its shrine at Onigemo compound. As Oniko seeps off the filth and the ills of the passing year, Ologede bestows peace, harmony and prosperity for the coming year.



Figure 9: Eyo Ologede and its cap

Eyo Agere is also called elegba opopo. It can be identified by its purple hat with light purple ribbon tapings. As an Orisa, it has its shrine at agbede along oju olokun street, Lagos. It represents the figure of discipline by the canes it carries



Figure 10: Eyo Agere and its Cap

8.Opambata: Its Origin And Linear Inflection

8.1.The Origin Of Opambata

Opambata origin is traced back to the people of Iperu Remo where it is believed that Ogun was the one who constructed roads for other Orisa. The Orisa thereafter got

envious of Ogun which made him went on voluntary exile. Ogun's assistance was needed while away to clear weedy roads, therefore they went seeking for him with 'gbedu drums' Ogun appeared with his face covered due to his long stayed in the forest which has made him become transformed. The people were afraid to see the masked figure but Ogun encouraged them to rejoice for he was the one. Ogun unveiled himself and followed them. The child he had after returning home was named Eyo.

Omo Olubu, Eyo's mother, when she was about to die turned into a stream and told Eyo to turned to a bamboo which was able to float on the stream. This was carried through the forest for miles. When he got to Eko, the bamboo stopped and she became a human being. Eyo as from then anytime she wanted to cross a river would look for a dried coconut palm frond which she would sit upon as it floats to transport her across the stream. This was the genesis of OPAMBATA. Oluwa (2007)

8.2.Linear Inflection And The Role Of Opambata

'Opambata' (staff), plays a significant role in the performance of Adimu Orisa play. It is a wooden pole produced from palm frond usually believed to have been season with potent medicine. It is the link between the spirit and the man. It transmits divine sanction for good wish-fulfillment Osanyin. (2004)

Eyo paraphernalia is not complete without Opambata. It serves dual functions-as tool of blessing and chastisement. When an Eyo approaches a person wielding their Opa, it is not uncommon to see people excitedly run helter-skelter, skeptical of been blessed or chastised. To be blessed is to be tapped with the staff indicating his approval, but to be chastised is to be lightly spanked once (or twice), and if the masquerade is an overzealous Eyo, the light spank may turn out a painful smack.

Opambata is preferably used in its dried state to give a purely aesthetic appeal with artistic linear motifs. It doubled as a rosary as well as lethal weapon of considerable magical capacities with mystical powers.

The Opambata is an aspect of the Eyo festival that portrays the uniqueness of the Adimu Orisa play and the impact of the Opambata is observed as follow.

- Symbol of Authority: Opambata to the Adimu deity is used as image of power.

- Is the transmitter of define sanction: the linear accounts do represent the dictions, norms and ideals in Adamu Orisa play
- It distinguishes the Eyo groups: The Opambata usually wear the materials and colour of its deity, which invariably tells the identity of the group.
- It is an artistic element designed with some incised motifs
- It distinguishes the Eyo groups
- It is the object of prayer or an act of blessing: Opambata is the object used in the act of prayer. The traditional ikapa Eyo is full of prayer.

The Opambata: This long staff popularly called the Opa is the most significant of the masquerades regalia. It is a staff of authority carried by each and every Eyo and is the most feared piece of item by onlookers and spectators.



Figure 11: Opambata inscribers using blade



Figure 12: Inscribed Opambata With different permutations

There are as many as 15,000 different permutations on the staffs, with different connotations of success, escape from danger, well being, and protection from evil, etc. So during the procession, if an Eyo masquerade taps an observer with his staff, the prayers or blessings etched on it will be transferred to the person being tapped. And

contrary to what some people believe, there are absolutely no curses etched on the Eyo Opambata.

8.3.Taboos in (Eyo) Adamu Orisa Festival

The taboos surrounding Adamu Orisa play is applicable to Eyo festival as well as the Spectator.

8.3.1.The Don'ts Of Eyo

The following are the observable rules which any participant in Eyo parade must bear in mind. These include:

- No Eyo masquerade is permitted to cross the Lagos lagoon that surrounds the island.
- Eyo must not open his face in the public.
- No Eyo must wear shoe, in the robe.
- Eyo must not smoke cigarette.
- Eyo must not expose his body for people to see.
- Eyo must not drink or eat while in procession.
- Opambata must not fall off Eyo's hand.
- In addition, photographs of the *Orisha Adimu*, *Ologede* and *Oniko* are strictly prohibited. Photos of the *Ikolaba* and other smaller Eyo groups are, however, permitted.

9.The Don'ts Of Audience/Spectator

For the public observers of the festival, certain taboos that shouldn't be broken include the wearing of headscarves, shoes, glasses, smoking and using an umbrella. Also, women are prohibited from braiding their hair in the traditional "*suku*" upswift style, unless the ends of the braids are loosened. This is because the *Eyo Ologede* also has the same hairstyle. Women should not be clad in Eyo robe

9.1.Relevance of Eyo festival to economic development

In contemporary Lagos, the relevance and investment on the festival has increasingly attracted more tourists. The festival has been noted to boost the Lagos State economy through the activities of textile traders, food vendors, and tourists. Eyo Adamu festival

has provided job opportunities to all and sundry has reflected in the numbers of craft men who specialized in designing the Opambata. This has been another source of livelihood and inspiration more especially to the local community.

10. Conclusion And Recommendation

This paper has, in a very clear language, attempted to examine Cultural-tourism advocacy through Eyo (Adamu) festival and costume from an artistic exploration of Opambata and its linear inflection point of view. The findings from this study reveals that the costume of the Eyo which includes the flowing gown and the headgear, which are artistically design does not only had beauty to its appearance but whole lots of respect. The costume and paraphernalia is completed by the staff, Opambata which the Eyo wields. The instrument is in itself an embodiment of history, ritual and esoteric wisdom for the signs engraved on it which can only be understood by the wielder itself, and thus adds a very good angle of ritual to the yet, entertaining performance. Photographs of the Orisha Adimu, Ologede and Oniko are strictly prohibited. Photos of the Ikolaba and other smaller Eyo groups are, however, permitted.

From the forgoing, it is expedient to recommend that, though Eyo festival is identified with the people of Lagos, more still needs to be done to make it a process of acculturation in relation to the impartation of the desired values in the citizens.

There is a need to do a thorough documentation of the proceedings and the ritual attached to Eyo Adamu play without necessarily letting out the secrets as most of the custodians of this festival are grip with phobia. To salvage the depreciation of our culture and tradition, there is a need to propagate it. The potentials of the Eyo festival as a great crowd puller and celebration of peoples contribution to societal development and social life is not in doubt.

Collaboration with stakeholders, enthusiastic sponsor's artists, cultural institutions, NGOs, banks, research institute, corporate organization and a conscious effort of the multinationals can be allowed to get involve in its promotion with the hope that the festival will eventually wear an international look.

11.Reference

1. Aderibigbe A.B. 1975 "Early History of Lagos to about 1850" in Lagos the Development of an African city.Nigeria:Longman. Festival.
2. Ajetunmobi R.(2001) A Critical Appraisal of Eyo Festival,(A master Degree project).
3. Butt-Thompson F. W.(2005). West African secret societies : their organisations, officials and teaching. Whitefish: Kessinger Publ.. ISBN 978-0-7661-57361.
4. Eyo Festival Lagos website (2011) "EYO: Its purpose and role in the history of Lagos".Retrieved 24 November.
5. Fashinro H.A.B (2004): Political and Cultural perspectives of Lagos, Academy Press Plc, Lagos
6. Goldbard.A (2005) The story Revolution: How telling our stories transform the world.On the community art network: www.communityarts.net.
7. Houston, P. 2007. "Creating a Whole New World: Placing Arts and Education in the Center of the Flat Earth." Pp. 3–7 in Thinking Creatively and Competing Globally: The Role of the Arts in Building the 21st Century American Workforce. National Arts Policy Roundtable. Washington, D.C.:Americans for the Arts.
8. Lucas J.O 1943 The Cult of the Adamu Orisa' The Nigerian Field
9. Odotei Irene (2002) FESTIVALS IN GHANA: CONTINUITY, TRANSFORMATION AND POLITICISATION OF TRADITION Source: Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series,No. 6 pp. 17-34 Published by: Historical Society of GhanaStable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41406666>
10. Osanyin.B (2004) Adamu Orisha Play of Lagos: A Study in Ritual Drama, Deocraft communications, Lagos.
11. Oluwa M.O (2007) The Effect of Opambata and its Linear Accent on the Uniqueness of Eyo (Festival) Robe. An unpublished B.A Degree Dissertation.
12. Oyefolu T. in Ajetunmobi (2003) "Cultural Festival in Lagos. The Evolution and development of Lagos, A-Triad Associate Publishers and Printers,Lagos.
13. Nigeria Entertainment News (2011)."Eyo Festival 2011: Orisha Adamu Eyo Masquerades on Lagos Island". November 23, 2011. Retrieved 23 November.
14. Senghor quoted from Ajetunmobi (2003) The Evolution and Development of Lagos, A-Triad Associates Publishers and printers, Lagos.