Interrogating the Ritual Essence and Performance Aesthetics of Eyo Adamu Orisa

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Abstract
Soyinka's perspective on man and the spatial phenomenon of his being intensifies scholarly consensus on the confluence of theatre and rituals. Apart from the historical fact that the former evolved from the latter, both have sustained a marriage of convenience, complementing each other. Rituals and festivals are siblings and by extension, ritual, festival and theatre/ performance are interwoven. Against the background of this tripartite intercourse, this paper examines the ritual embodiment and the performance cum theatrical aesthetics of Eyo Adamu Orisa. The data for this research is sourced from interviews with selected custodians of Eyo Adamu Orisa and a review of scholarly literature on the subject. The thesis of this paper is driven by the theoretical framework of functionalism. The paper concludes that the Eyo Adamu Orisa is a two-sided phenomenon of spirituality and artistic expression. It is ritualistic on one hand and entertaining on the other. In other words, it provokes pleasant amusement and at the same time facilitates spiritual purification. Therefore, the paper recommends that while being entertained both the participants and audience should neither lose sight of its ritual dimension nor confuse the significance of its ritual with the spectacle of its performance.

1. Introduction

Among the Yoruba of the olden times – as indeed can be said of all African peoples; festivals and ritualistic performances were integral parts of socio-religious as well as political and economic life. In their remarkably holistic understanding of human existence and the cosmos, the custodians of culture in the Yoruba societies of those times were very mindful of the need to maintain an unbroken link between the material and immaterial, the mundane and the ethereal. Consequently, not bedevilled by the complexities of today's modernity, people in those societies were able to lead simple and pleasant lives, being mostly at peace with the cosmos. However, the situation changed radically with the advent of colonisation.

Far from blaming colonialism for Africa's current woes, however, this paper merely observes that the colonial contact apparently irrevocably altered the cosmic balance that the Yoruba society, nay African society generally had sustained from time immemorial. This was because the so-called colonial overlords managed to damage, if not erode the foundations upon which autochthonous African epistemology and ontology had been erected for ages. To secure its own hold on African mind, "colonial logic" had to discredit its precursor with a view to dislodging it.

It is therefore no surprise that in the wake of colonisation, African societies began to accept claims as to the inferiority of their old ways in the face of the new - and better – ways purportedly originated by colonialists who considered themselves as having a duty to "civilise" savages. As a corollary to this, the relevance or value of many age-old African festival and ritual performances began to be queried by not only ordinary folks but also sometimes by culture custodians themselves. Such was the level of devastation that the colonial encounter had occasioned in

the African mind. But the story has not totally been one of gloom and doom. In the face of this systematic denigration of African ritual performances a number of such performances and festivals have survived into the contemporary times. Ironically, it must be admitted that it has sometimes taken inspired culture writers, researchers or practitioners from the West to point out the values in some of these African ritual heritage and performances - for instance, the late Susan Wenger, who made Osun Grove the huge tourist attraction it is today.

In Lagos, the Eyo Adamu Orisa Festival has become an iconic part of the identity of Nigeria's most populous city. Even though the festival does not long predate colonisation, it is worth observing that its sustenance as a significant cultural index in the city of Lagos is a testimony to the continued belief of Lagos culture custodians that the Eyo Adamu Orisa festival is a worthy heritage indeed. In this scheme of things, the Oba of Lagos occupies a prime position, for it is he who holds the ultimate authority regarding for whom and when the festival may be held. To be sure, the Eyo festival is not an annual festival as might be expected. It is best described as an occasional festival that is staged only when certain conditions have been met. The Eyo Adamu Orisa is certainly a rich cultural spectacle, but this should not prevent participants or spectators alike from recognising its spiritual and aesthetic composition

2. Functionalism

In this paper we adopt the theory of Structural functionalism as the driving force of our discourse. Structural formalism which is often referred to simply as functionalism is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose various

constituents work together to promote solidarity and stability. Structural functionalism approaches the society from the perspective of a macro-level orientation which is a broad focus on the social structure that shapes society as a whole in terms of the functions of the various parts of the society viz norms, customs, traditions and institutions (Macionis, 2010).

Merton opined that functionalist theory explains social practice and institutions in terms of the need of the society and of the individual (Merton, 1957). The focal point of structural functionalism is that "societies are ongoing system of linked working parts of subsystems, each making an essential contribution to continuity and order" (McQuiail, 2011: 98). Our position here is that the Eyo Adamu Orisa is an important socio-religious component of Lagos society. Structural functionalism will aptly drive our examination of the ritual essence and performance aesthetics of Eyo Adamu Orisa because the theory is appropriate for the purpose of explanation and it supplies a language for interrogating the religious significance and the theatricality of Eyo Adamu Orisa.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the Eyo Adamu Orisa religious festival is an integral part of the culture of Lagosians and as stipulated by structural functionalism, being a subsystem it must be functionally linked to other parts of the subsystems. This link must engender essential contribution to continuity and order of the whole society. Thus we, in this paper, examine and appraise the Eyo Adamu Orisa festival with a view to accessing it performance aesthetics, ritual essence and utilitarian value to the society of it abode.

2.1. Accounts of Eyo Adamu Orisa Origin

There are different scholarly perspectives on the evolution of the Eyo Adamu Orisa festival. This, in a way is perhaps an indication of the popularity and prestige the festival enjoys, even among the highly urbane Lagosians. This difference in the information concerning the origin of the Eyo Adamu Orisa festival cannot be divorced from that fact that all sources of the accounts of the origins were verbally transmitted. The origin of the Eyo Adamu Orisa play/festival is vague due to lack of the writing culture of documentation at the time it evolved. In the words of Chief I.O. Babajulaye-Jayabi II, the Eletu-Odibo, the traditional minister of Lagos, quoted by Osanyin (2004: 64), "the early history of the Adamu Orisa play, otherwise known as the Eyo festival is rather obscure; however, it is known that it was performed at Okeipa, the vicinity of Ikoyi, Lagos in the 18th century and has since been adopted as the traditional play of Lagos".

According to Osanyin, "Confusion is usually the order of the day when oral tradition and history have to co-exist or work together. The two of them, working together, can hardly resolve a pure historical fact" (2004: 64). Osanyin discusses further, that a part of history has it that Eyo masquerade (always clad in white regalia and in hat, holding a staff) originated from Ipokia local government in Ogun state. Some have it that its historical background is traced to Iperu, a town in the Remo Division of old Ijebu province in the western region, but was adopted by the people of Lagos. The origin of a festival is very crucial to its meaningful study. Without some knowledge of its history, its ritual essence, significance and performance, aesthetics will be confused, elusive or go into extinction.

Of the many sources, perhaps the most popular one is the oral source that connects the root of Eyo Adamu Orisa to one

Olugbani who was also called Olufaderi, a pretty woman who was childless for a long time. She was a native of Ibefun, a village in Ijebu land. Her people got worried about her childlessness and consulted Ifa for divination. Ifa decreed that she should leave Ibefun immediately for Lagos where she would eventually be fruitful and she obeyed. When she got to Lagos, she got married to the king, Oba Ado of Lagos. Oral history had it that Oba Ado reigned from about 1630 and that Olugbani was his principal wife.

Another perspective has it that a king married a woman from Ipokia whose brothers insisted that the masquerade must follow her to her husband's house to clear the way, and cleanse her as part of her marital rites. From then on, the Adamu Orisa's play (the Eyo festival) has been celebrated occasionally on the island of Lagos. A significant viewpoint on the origin of the Eyo Adamu Orisa Play is the account of Chief Adekunle Alli (Oladipupo: 2011) in an interview:

> According to the Ogunmodede Chieftaincy family, it was only the Eyo masquerade that was brought from Ibefun, the Adamu Orisa which is the lead deity, in whose name the play has been subsequently staged, was brought into Lagos from Benin by the Olugbade family"

The implication of the above is that the origin of the Eyo Adamu Orisa is shrouded in clouds of uncertainty owing to the absence of written document. Be that as it may, the Eyo masquerade is the pride of the oba, chiefs and people of Lagos, because of its traditional importance and historical background; it is staged as one of the ceremonies associated with the final funeral obsequies of a decease oba or chief. Until recently, a condition precedent to the performance of the iwuye ceremony of an oba or chief, the play is sometimes staged in memory of prominent citizens of Lagos, in which case the members of the family of the deceased person, who

can afford the expenses of the performance, regard it as a great honour to their honoured relation.

2.2. The Ritual Essence of Eyo Adamu Orisa

Merriam Webster, an online dictionary defines ritual as "a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and performed according to set sequence" (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:ZeroRatedMobileAccess HYPERLINK "https://en.m.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:ZeroRatedMobileAccess&from=Ritual&to=http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ritual" HYPERLINK).

Rituals are categorized succession of conducts that have to do with gesticulations, manners of speaking, and items, done in sacred place, and orchestrated to appeal to supernatural beings or powers to favour the performer. It may be yearly, ushering in a culturally significant period in the life of a community, which may be including but not limited to activities such as cultivating, reaping, transiting from one season to another; or they may be expedient and done because of specific persons or to avert communal chaos.

> Contingent rituals may be further subdivided into life-crisis ceremonies, which are performed at birth, puberty, marriage, death, and so on, to demarcate the passage from one phase to another in the individual's life-cycle, and rituals of affliction, which are performed to placate or exorcise preternatural beings or forces believed to have afflicted villagers with illness, bad luck, gynaecological troubles, severe physical injuries, and the like. Other

> classes of rituals include divinatory rituals; ceremonies performed by political authorities to ensure the health and fertility of human beings, animals, and crops in their territories; initiation into priesthoods devoted to certain deities, into religious associations, or into secret societies; and those accompanying the daily offering of food and libations to deities or ancestral spirits or both. (American Academy of Arts and Sciences: 1973).

Ritual in Africa, as in elsewhere in the world, are interwoven with festivals. Rituals in most cases are the spiritual aspects of festivals. Underscoring the synergy between ritual and festival, Opoku (1976) opines, "Festivals take place at special times set aside by a community in order to commemorate some events of historical, cultural and religious significance, and by performance of certain rituals, such events are re-enacted giving both individual and their community a sense of meaning and cohesiveness" (Lawal, et' al, 2005:652).

Within the context of the foregoing, Eyo Adamu Orisa is a two folds phenomenon; a ritual and festival. The ritual aspects of the Eyo Adamu Orisa underscore its religiosity while the festive side of it underpins its secularity. Ola Rotimi, quoted by Osanyin, captures the religious essence of ritual in succinct terms:

> …the need to maintain consistency of good wish-fulfilment evoked from our forbearers an intense trust in the efficacy of this ritual act. To further formalization of procedure along lines prescribed by credos, taboos, incantations and spells was necessary. The upshot of this then, was religion or cult worship. (Osanyin, 2004: 3)

Having said all these, the Eyo festival being a religious cum socio-economic festival, "which features masquerades representing the

spirit of the dead" (Rotimi, 1981/2014: 95), is done within the orbit of seven days. The religious aspects involve rituals, sacrifices, propitiations and consultations. At dawn, as soon as Adimu emerges from Awe Adimu at Ita Ado he goes directly to Iga Igbesadi, a notable shrine at Abegede merely to pay homage to Ologun Agan his ancestor. This rite is called "Ikose", having left there, he moves on to oju Ologun and then to the shrine of Elegba-opopo for the purpose of appeasing Esu. He then proceeds to Agodo. With the triumphant entry at Agodo, the festival is started in earnest (Lucas: 1948). The masquerades are religiously believed to represent ancestors visiting and clad in *Agbada funfun* (white garment), *Aropale* (a supporting piece of cloth tied round the leg), *Eleya funfun (*white face veil), the *Opambata* (long wooden stick), all of which have spiritual colorations. The masquerades talk in baritone voices making speeches that not only distinguish them but mystify them as spirit beings.

The Eyo is just one of the principal "actors" of the Eyo Adamu Orisa play. Other prominent deities who are not readily seen by the public include: Adamu Orisa, Orisa Ogunran, Orisa Elegba Opopo. According to Oyefolu (Ajetunmobi: 2003). The greetings offered by Eyo Adamu Orisa; "Mo yo fun e, Mo yo fun 'ra mi" (I felicitate with you, I felicitate with myself), connotes the masquerade is happy that the hearer of the greeting is alive to witness and to take part in the event and happy that he himself is undertaking the reverred duty of purifying the land. By implication, the Eyo Adamu Orisa is a ritual believed by the people to have propitious events and a channel through which the people can mollify their gods.

The Eyo Festival is the prerogative of the ruling king to programme.

> To commence Eyo festival in Lagos, a family sends a message to the oba who in turn sends words to the traditional priests. Both parties will ask the family for a date they prefer, so that further consultation and confirmation 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. (Quadri & Eseagwu, 2013: 741)

They discuss further that on the eve of Eyo Adamu Orisa Festival, the Orisa Adimu visits the Imokun to sympathise with the relatives of the deceased, followed by Eyo Oniko, and Eyo Ologede. They do this around 2:00 AM and when they are done, they send words to the king who in turn visits the Imokun early in the morning. It is only after the many traditional rites have been performed, that other Eyo groups are allowed to form a procession. It is at this point that the festive parts of the occasion begin.

Contrary to the erroneous perception that the Eyo Adamu Orisa festival is a one day event, it actually lasts for about seven days and other adjoining rituals lasting three months. Three days after the public show of Eyo, another cult group called "Akalamekunake" would go to the Imokun to remove the make-believe corpse. This rite is exclusive only to the initiates and as such, kept away from the public view. In about two to three months later, the Eyo celebrates the "Adabo", where they gather to cheer one another on fruitfully conducting the Eyo rites and festival safely. Thereafter, the Oba, his chiefs, the children and relatives of the deceased will gather in front of the Oba's palace to do the dance

"won jo opa" dance. This dance officially signals the end of the Eyo festival.

Ritualistically, it is the exclusive duty of Eyo Adimu to pull down the Agodo. It is a symbolic act of finality. Adimu, anxious, tired, and worn, hurries to deliver his burden at Agodo, an action that is spiritually symbolic. His veiled entourage knock down Agodo with their Opambata, they heatedly pull down the Agodo structure from within, summoning their last strength, and they accomplish the last task. At their own peril, Eyo and spectators alike scramble for the shreds of raffia, with the possibility of the Opambata staff poking many eyes. The raffia is believed to be a potent medicinal ingredient; the ragged pieces of germ-infested raffia misfortune to fortune (Quadiri & Eseaque: 2013). The demolition of Agodo is symbolic. It represents, to the people, the demolition of the societal ills, vices and shortcomings of the preceding years. Thereafter the demolition of the Agodo, Adimu and his team go back to Awe Adimu amidst loud cheers from the audience-participants. This moment ushers in a brief period of sobriety as the people do not know when next the Eyo festival will take place.

In addition, the Eyo Adamu orisa ritual drama has religious relevance of cleansing the community. It is believed to cleanse and purify the community. The *Aropale*, an apparel worn with the white agbada and tied in such a way that it appears to be sweeping the street as the Eyo team parade, is actually a symbolic sweeping away of the evil, calamities and dangers that may befall the society. The Eyo Adamu Orisa play, by being staged after the demise of a king or persons of noble birth offers a spiritual consolation to the immediate family of the diseased and the community at large since the diseased must have been a person of communal importance. Death marks the close of a person's sojourn

on earth and in Yoruba land the death of a king is a communal loss. The presence of the Eyo Adamu Orisa ritual festival is a celebration of the life of the departed and offers consolation to the community thereby cushioning the effect of the loss.

Another significant part of the festival that amplifies its ritual essence is the portion where the Eyo team kneels and its leader prays for the community, decreeing and declaring the eradication of problems and the manifestation of better times for all and sundry. Osanyin (2004) captures the ritual propitiation chant called Ikupa:

Eyi aiku
Eyi airun
Mo fe ku nu
Mo fe arun nu
Aseeri o di'waju
Eyi agbo
Eyi a to
Eyi afamo ti pepere ni ti Olokun
A mo I owo
A mo I'owo
A mo lese
A mo lese
A mo timotimo
A mole
A mo lepalepa
Timotimo leti mori
Timotimo leti i mori
Timotimo lalamo mamo
oju ko ma segi orere
afomo alagemo ko ma sa buta

omu ko ma si lo l'aya obinrin dugbedugbe
roro agbo ko ma ko agbo lese
oko ni ti igun
ile ni ti epa
lesi ma ba Lukerese du 'le baba re
nimesi ikole ni mo de raye.

MEANING

This is for life eternal
This is for good everlasting health
I ward off death
Failure is thrown overboard
You will grow old
You will bloom into ripe old age
You will emerge clean
For purity belongs to Olokun
Your hands will be clean
Your legs will be clean
Will be clean and chaste
Pure and crystalline
Neatly the ears stick to the head
Neatly the potter moulds the clay
May your eyes not fall victim to pointed
Stick from the front
May the colours of the chameleon not fade
May the breast heavy as they are not drop off the chest of our women
May the ram not stumble on its mane
The vulture's abode is the bush
The groundnut's abode is the earth,

> Who dares compete with *Lukerese* for the possession of his father's house
> *Nimesi Ikole ni mo de raye*. (49-51)

The ikupa chant itself is ritualistic. Its method and mannerism are choreographed. "With his Opambata, he slightly and repeatedly touches the stretched right palm of the head of the family and shakes his left hand in the manner of the cult. Adimu recites the ancient benediction verse" (Osanyin, 2004: 49).
Osanyin explains further:

> The keystone of this prayer is cleanliness, in other words, cleaning. Its model is divine purity and perfection. As God, the greatest artist, moulds man in perfection, the ears sticking neatly and proportionately to the head-so shall even the potter mould his clay without getting his hand soiled. The breasts, even though they heave and rock cannot drop from the chests of woman. This means that the blessing will stick permanently and assuredly to the person being blessed - that the welfare of the blessed shall enjoy eternal harmony. (51)

The ritual essence of the Eyo Adamu Orisa festival cannot be over emphasised. Added to the forgoing, to underscore the ritual essence of the ritual play, is the performance of the imoku ceremony. According to Osanyin (2004):

> The significant imoku ceremony i.e. that of having a 'chat' with the dead- is depicted in the following saying:
> Mo fe ku nu
> Mo fe arun nu

Mo f' ejo nu
Ma sun a sun-gbe
Ma sun adun-nu
Oja omo re e ma di kan
B' oju wo eyin
K'o toju awon omo re
Aitan I'elegbe r'eyin
Omo eni nii s'eyin de ni

MEANING
I blow death away
I blow disease away
I blow litigation away
Don't sleep the sleep the sleep of oblivion
Don't sleep the sleep of evanescence
Yours babes' swaddling clothes will not diminish to one;
Turn your eyes back to watch
And take care of your children
Unending should he support from behind
Our children are the survivors left to perpetuate our memory. (53)

The Eyo masquerades, as hinted earlier, are regarded as spirit beings and voices of the ancestral world. The Opambata plays a significant role in the concretisation of the synergy between the Eyo masquerades and the spirit world of deities and gods. This is succinctly put by Osanyin in the following:

> *Opanbata* is the medium of *Adamu Orisa*'s spiritual transmissions and the contact of its divine energy. An Eyo masquerade must carry *Opambata* for that is the link

between the spirit and the people. The masquerade chants through *Opambata*. The masquerade is supposed to place the *Opambata* gently on the shoulder or on the palms of the person being blessed while he chants the blessing.

2.4. Performance Aesthetics of Eyo Adamu Orisa

The last day of the Eyo Adamu Orisa festival is the seventh day and the grand finale. The event is "staged" at a well decorated public place arranged in a theatre-in-the-round space. A typical example of such a place is the Tafawa Balewa Square (T.B.S). There, the fun-filled social part of the festival takes place. This concluding episode of the Adamu Orisa play is totally devoid of religious undertone or connotations. A procession of the Eyo Iga, Eyo Agere, Eyo Ologede, Eyo oniko, Eyo okolaba and finally Eyo Adimu appear in order of seniority creating a grandiloquent spectacle to round off the show.

The audience is usually constituted by two categories of people, the immediate relatives of the deceased (in case of a king), the royal crowd and the community. Either categories seat or stand opposite each other with an empty space in the middle where the masquerades perform. Unlike on a proscenium stage where the actors' orientation is to the audience, the orientation of the players in Eyo Adamu Orisa play is towards one another. A simple explanation for this is that since they are playing in the round, no matter where the masquerades face, they are facing and backing the audience at the same time.

The Adamu Orisa play follows a simple linear plot of what could be described as a one-act, two-scene episode. The first scene takes place at Imoku (a palace of the departed Oba, the house of a dead chief or an eye-catching position elegantly highlighted and earmarked for the use, should the deceased be a high-flying

Lagosian). A figurative dead body (set prop) is placed at the Imokun. The Eyo masquerades are totally covered and costumed in elegant white garments. A white wrapper is advertently tied to trail behind them. The Eyo team wear different and unique hats to distinguish the various groups. The Eyo Adamu Orisa's costume and make up consist of the Agbada funfun, (white garment), the Aropale (long white wrapper) and the Eleya funfun (white veil).

The palace groups are made up of of Eyo-Iga, Akintoye, Eletu Odibo, Kosoko, Onilegbale, Eletu-wase, Olorogun, Aromire, Oloto, Olugbon, Obanikoro, Onisewo, etc. (Osanyin: 2004). The agogo dance is very exciting and the masquerades give it their best. The gbedu royal drums also form part of the musical ensemble. The major hand props used in the performance are the Opambata which at a point in the performance are used to create scintillating sound and used to enhance the beauty of their choreographed dance. The Opambata is, when the situation demands, used to punish members of the audience who violate the established Eyo rules.

The monologue is rendered as a chant and is operatic in nature and is delivered by the lead cast. The audience, who also form part of the orchestra, sings the Eyo song which is usually coordinated from someone in the Eyo music ensemble. The community plays the audience and often responds to the Eyo chant with thunderous and excited interjections of *Ase.* The movements are improvisational, self derived and at the discretion of the Adimu, the lead cast. Should he spot an important personality in the audience who is not directly a member of the deceased's family, he can choose to recognise him or her by touching him or her with the Opambata and praying for him or her. The focal points of the performance are dance and chant and it bears a similitude to Ola Rotimi's concept of the "total theatre". The performance is an

orchestration of dance, music, pantomimic dramatisation and audience participation.

3. Summary and Conclusion

Summarily, the Eyo Adamu Orisa traditional festival, in spite of its controversial origin, is the most popular traditional, socio-religious ritual play in Lagos. Its date of performance is solely the prerogative of the king who holds consultations with stakeholders. The Eyo play is a community play and though at the initial stage was a part of burial right for dead kings, later was staged to honour prominent Lagosians who may be celebrating chieftaincy titles. The ritual part of the festival is kept away from the public and takes long to be done. The secular and festive part of the play is a couple of hours' affair, witnessed and participated in by all and sundry. It has even become a tourist attraction.

Though a religious festival, the Eyo Adamu Orisa play is also a socio-economic event whose economic value, particularly to Lagosians and generally to Nigeria is enormous. The festival is a huge State affair and gives Lagosians matchless joy and an uncompromising sense of oneness and communal strength. Lagosians, home and in diaspora respond to Eyo Adamu Orisa festival impulsively. The play has become and inseparable part of Lagos life and a sacrosanct component of Lagos cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the Eyo Adamu Orisa is a socio-cultural and religious rituals play and should be seen and reacted to in like manner. It is important to understand and situate the cultural festival in the right perspective. The Eyo Adamu Orisa play is a twofold phenomenon; a ritual and a fanfare. The society and the entertainment industry should be aware of the elements of the festival and be faithful to the sacredness of its ritual without pretending that the fanfare aspect of it, is itself a ritual. This

demarcation is important so as to put to rest the controversies that trail the staging of the secular aspect of the festival for entertainment purposes.

It has become a practice, that when a fraction of the secular aspect of the Eyo Adamu Orisa play is to be staged as a portion of a play, practitioners or custodians of ritual aspects of the Eyo Adamu orisa festival make a lot of unnecessary insinuations as to the implication of performing the little bit without observing some rituals. When attempting to stage the Eyo dance, which in view of the foregoing is evidently a secular part of the Adami Orisa festival, some community people, the bulk of who are illiterates and sadly, a fraction of who are elites, threaten that heaven would fall if the Eyo dance is performed without first observing some rituals. In some occasions they go violent and prevent the dance to be staged.

In the course of this research, it was discovered that three major reasons are responsible for the hullaballoo against staging the Eyo dance in a play without performing some rituals. Firstly is the dreaded disease of illiteracy. Some of this people unfortunately cannot read or write and so "innocently" fight a wrong battle. They only rely on what they had been told by other illiterates who advertently falsify the facts in order to appear relevant. These set of self acclaimed culture warriors blindly defend falsehood. A fresh instance of this was the confrontation faced by the director of the 2017 LASU convocation play where the Eyo dance was to be staged to enhance the spirit of Lagos being dramatised.

The second reason is ignorance, and those who are victims of this ignorance are elites. They rely on hearsay and do not avail themselves of existing literature on the subject matter. They look pitiable when vehemently defending what is not. The third reason is greed. Those culpable are opportunistic and grab every chance to

make money by fomenting trouble are not genuinely interested in the sacredness of the ritual aspect of the Eyo Adamu Orisa festival but only want gratifications from secular entertainers and play producers under the pretence that they would help do the needful and so that the play can be staged without repercussions.

The fact, as hinted earlier in this paper, is that when ritual leaves the inviolability of its religious habitation and heads for the stage, it ceases to be a religious rite but its representation without sacred coloration and has become pure entertainment. Besides, to make it a ritual, it will have to be performed by initiates and not actors. What is more, the Eyo dance is in its entirety a secular and spectacular component of the Adamu Orisa festival and should be seen as such. Asking for special ritual to be performed before staging Eyo dance in a secular play is like demanding permission and prayers from the Pope to stage the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ for Easter. It is that laughable!

Finally, we submit that the Eyo Adamu Orisa is a two-sided phenomenon of spirituality and artistic expression. It is ritualistic on one hand and entertaining on the other hand. It provokes pleasant amusement and at the same time facilitates spiritual purification. Therefore, this paper recommends that while being entertained by the Eyo Adamu Orisa play, both the participants and audience should not lose sight of its ritual dimension and should not confuse the ritual essence with its performance aesthetics.

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