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# **LAFIA JOURNAL OF THEATRE AND MEDIA ARTS (LAJOTMA)**

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# **LAFIA JOURNAL OF THEATRE AND MEDIA ARTS (LAJOTMA)**

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## **Organisational Structure and Administrative Strategies of Managing the Ilorin Emirate Grand Durbar Festival**

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### **Abstract**

The complexity of culture and its significance to the existence of man signaled the launching of the Nigerian cultural policy in 1988. With the introduction of cultural policy and the establishment of various cultural administrative bodies, there has been low supports from the government in funding cultural festivals. Consequently, funding and organisation of some cultural festivals are left to the communities. The roles played by traditional institutions in the preservation, promotion and funding of cultural festivals cannot be waved aside. For this reason, this paper examines the organisational structure and administrative strategies of the Ilorin emirate grand durbar festival. The paper adopts qualitative research method through interview instruments, and descriptive method. The paper is premised on Edward Freeman's Stakeholder Theory in "Strategic Management: A stakeholder approach" (1983). The paper revealed that partisan politics, insufficient funding, overcrowded arena, and bringing on board corporate organisations, are challenges facing the administration and management of Ilorin durbar. The paper concludes that to attain sustainable social, cultural or economic development, the culture of durbar festival should be sustained through continuous supports from the government, corporate organisations and the stakeholders. Therefore, the paper recommends that the durbar committee should be seen not to be partisan by the people of the emirate. Financial supports from the state government needs upward review and the overcrowded durbar arena can be well controlled if tiered seats are provided for the audience.

**Keywords:** Durbar, Festival, Culture, Management, Strategy.

## **Introduction**

The place of culture in the world today cannot be underrated. Culture has been seen and discussed globally as a complex entity. It is complex because of its heterogeneous nature. "It is the learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols and traditions that are common to a group of people" (Ododo and Binebai, 2014, pp. 135-136). The recent development in technological advancement has turned the world into a global village. Thus, it is, therefore, possible for one culture to spill beyond its border and have contact with other cultures of the world. "Culture is the totality of man's existence. It determines man's behaviour, beliefs and attitudinal patterns and determines how man wants to be related to in the past, present and future" (Yerima, 2010, p.38).

Culture transcends the way of life of an individual to that of the society and the environment where people find themselves. Musa (2014, p. 65) is of the view that "culture is the chord of the society, which binds man and the materials under him together. It is the didactic attraction that celebrates social values, ethnical standard and norms of the people, the profundity of human essence". Culture manifests in people's language, religions, food cuisine, clothes, painting, sculptures, dance, music, storytelling, carving, and festivals, etc. Culture can be likened to a tree with so many branches. It can be located in politics, business etc. Thus, culture exists within the purview of political culture, corporate culture, traditional culture, contemporary culture, trado-contemporary culture and so on. These phenomena established the complexity of culture as a concept.

The complexity of culture and its significance to the existence of man informed the launching of the Nigerian cultural policy in 1988. Despite the introduction of cultural policy for Nigeria and the establishment of various cultural administrative bodies, it can be stated that there has been low support from the same government in funding cultural festivals. Consequently, funding and organisation of some cultural festivals are left to the communities. It can be argued that the roles played by traditional institutions in the preservation, promotion and funding of cultural festivals cannot be waved aside. For this reason, this paper examines the organisational structure and administrative strategies of the traditional

institutions, the festival management committee and the level of involvement of the state government in funding the Ilorin emirate grand durbar festival.

### **Literature Review**

The trend in the development of arts and cultural administration in Nigeria can be linked to the activities of traditional cultural custodians in the pre-colonial period, the influence of the British colonialism and the involvement of the indigenous government in post-independence Nigeria. Before the British expedition in Nigeria, the traditional society was an organised one. In each culture in traditional Nigeria society (pre-colonial period), there existed different cultural manifestations in terms of festival, theatre, ritual, dance, music, sculpture, pottery, weaving, blacksmithing, mode of dress, food, traditional wedding ceremony, painting, politics especially in the area of traditional system of governance, etc. Umukoro (2014, p.221) affirms that:

There existed many kingdoms found in the North and South of the country. These were independent and highly organized politically, socially and culturally... at the helm of affairs were the traditional rulers, Obas or Emirs, who delegated powers to chief under them, and the local chiefs in turn-for convenience sake- assigned different people according to their abilities or talents.

The pre-colonial period experienced a peaceful ambience for the people of Nigeria in terms of cultural orientation and awareness. This is because an organised culture (a way of life of the people) was fully in existence. Uduma and Eme (2015, p.11) corroborate that:

Before colonialism, the geo-political entity now known as Nigeria existed as independent nations. These nations operated its (sic) own system of government and administrative system. As a multi-ethnic and multilingual society, the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Igbo, the Yoruba and the Hausa-Fulani.

However, the coming of the British to Nigeria soil brought about changes in the continuity of the existing cultural beliefs. The British colonised the people by selling new imported ideas, philosophy, religions and education to the people. This experience made the people of Nigeria to see their culture as barbaric, archaic and uncivilized. Hence, "art, culture and tradition are branded as fetish, idolatry and paganistic or Satanic. These myths of denigration were deliberately fashioned and promoted by the agents of colonialism", (Awodiya 2015, p. 50).

By 1914, the Southern and Northern parts of the country were amalgamated into protectorate under the British rule. The coming of the colonialist at this period brought new dimensions in the ways and manners cultural system was administered. There was a partial shift in the administration of culture from the traditional institutions to the colonial masters. The colonial government made its own contributions to the development of Nigerian cultural heritage through the establishment of Nigerian magazine in 1927 as a medium to promote cultural awareness among Nigerians. This was the first established formal organ of information dissemination that existed in the history of cultural administration in Nigeria. Oyesoro (1999, p. 103) attests that "the history of the administration of culture is closely associated with the growth of Nigeria magazine". Thus, "the Nigerian magazine served as a source of promoting the arts and culture of the country" (Umukoro, 2014, p. 224).

Other notable efforts to promote Nigerian cultural heritage can be seen in the subsequent establishment of various bodies which are saddled with the responsibilities of administering and managing Nigerian cultural manifestations. One major landmark achievement in the history of arts and cultural administration which cannot be forgotten is the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77) which was hosted by Nigeria in 1977. The preparation towards the organisation of Festac '77 initiated "the process of having a cultural policy for Nigeria started in 1976, and went through 1982. By 1984, a review of the document was fine-tuned and it was by 1988 that the cultural policy document was finally launched" (Ugolo, 2017, p. 2).

Cultural policy is a policy document that every country must have for effective internal and external cultural administration and management. The implementation of the main tendencies in the content and context of the

cultural policy is imperative for cultural development, cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations. Yerima (2015, p. 126) also attests to this "that no government of any nation can plan or manage the culture of its people without a cultural policy". Oyesoro (1999, p. 28) also submits that "cultural policy defines the aims, tasks and objectives of cultural administration and the strategies for their implementation". The cultural policy for Nigeria, therefore, specified a mandate for government to preserve, propagate, promote and finance the arts. Specifically, the cultural policy for Nigeria specifies areas of coverage in terms of administration and management of Nigerian Cultural heritage. These areas are enumerated below as stated in the *Cultural Policy for Nigeria* (1988, p. 6).

The Cultural Policy shall be expressed in four broad categories of state action, namely:

(a) Preservation of Culture (b) Promotion of Culture (c) Presentation of Culture

(d) The establishment of administrative structure and the provision of funds for its implementation.

However, with the establishment of the various cultural administrative bodies, there has been a bone of contention in certain areas of the policy document. There have been arguments and contention on the functionality in the implementation of the cultural policy document in fostering and promoting Nigerian cultural heritage especially in the area of funding. The *Cultural Policy for Nigeria* states that "the State shall enact appropriate legislations for enforcing the implementation of the sources of funding culture as enumerated in 10.3.1.", (*Cultural Policy for Nigeria*, 1988, p.20). Contrary to the objectives specified in 10.3.1., there has been a dwindling attention by the government in funding of the arts and arts related endeavours especially cultural festivals. The inadequacy in full implementation of the national endowment fund which is clearly stated in the policy made Yerima (2003, p. 117) to also react that "the recommendations of cultural policy of Nigeria, a document published in 1988 is yet to be fully implemented especially as it concerned funding of the arts".

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is premised on the theoretical construct of Edward Freeman's Stakeholder theory as postulated in his book titled "Strategic Management: A stakeholder approach" (1983). Stakeholder theory centres on the need for organisation to uphold moral and ethical standard and recognise stakeholders that are directly or indirectly affected by the activities of the organisation. Stakeholder theory focuses on value maximisation for organisation stakeholders. This theory, according to Bhasin (2020, p. 1) identifies "customers, employees, suppliers, investors and the community" as the stakeholders of an organisation. What the theory emphasises is that an organisation should recognise its stakeholders because it has certain responsibilities towards them such as communicating with employees, customers, shareholders, community, government etc. Therefore, the stakeholder theory is employed in this paper to interrogate the level of inclusiveness of various stakeholders that are involved in the administration, management and cultural performance of the Ilorin emirate grand durbar festival, starting from the traditional custodians, the management committee, the state government, political class, businessmen, community associations and other cultural groups.

Stakeholder theory has been used by Anderson and Getz in their research paper titled "stakeholder management strategies of festivals" (2008) in which 14- live-music festivals in Sweden were used to establish the effectiveness of the stakeholder theory in managing festivals. They concluded that "there is no doubt that festivals have to be adept at stakeholder relationship management, especially with the powerful groups that provide resources". Anderson and Getz (2008, p. 199) further state that sustainability of festivals "will depend upon the political and tangible support of key stakeholders".

### **The Historical Perspectives of Ilorin Emirate Grand Durbar Festival**

The emergence of durbar in Ilorin emirate is as old as the emirate itself. Even though there are diverse opinions as to the beginning of Ilorin durbar, what is certain is that the use of horses by monarchs for ceremonial purposes has been in existence since the beginning of the emirate in Ilorin. Horses are significant instruments used for territorial expansion and for

transportation. Alabi (2018, pp.242-243) while recounting the socio-cultural impacts of military warfare in the historical emergence of Ilorin emirate states that “another lasting legacy of the military in the social life of Ilorin town and the emirate, is the horse-race, known in Ilorin as *Berende*”. Horses are also used by the bureaucrats. The possession of horses in large number can be credited to the monarchs. This is why horses are part and parcel of the emirate administration. Therefore, if Ilorin emirate began with the installation of the first Emir Abdulsalam (1831-1842), it means that durbar in Ilorin emirate began during this period.

At the inception, procession of horses is done sometimes while the Emir is on horse attending Jummat prayer, Eid prayer at the end of fasting period or Eid-l-kabir sallah celebration or when he visits his warlords with his courtiers or during the visit of an august visitor to the palace. This procession of horses is mini or ordinary durbar and this has been in practice since the time Ilorin became an emirate. However, the procession in grand durbar which began in 2018 is large because it is a ceremony that involves mounting of beautifully dressed horses by the Emir, his council, the princes, all title holders and other horse riders that are invited to showcase horse riding skills during the horse race amidst drumming and merry making. The maiden edition of Ilorin grand durbar festival was held in 2018. The second edition held in 2019 and 2020 edition was not held due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. However, as the lockdown was eased towards the end of 2020, the plan for 2021 edition of Ilorin grand durbar began. By 2021, 2022 and 2023 the third, fourth and the fifth editions were organised.

The grand durbar, unlike the mini or ordinary durbar is essentially organised to bring about unity in diverse cultures in Ilorin emirate. The grand durbar is potentially employed as a tool for cultural, social, historical, political and economic integration. It is a celebration in which sons and daughters of the Ilorin emirate “sit together, fraternised together, cross-fertilise ideas, exchange pleasantries, discuss business and grow the culture and business of the emirate by attracting visitors to come and see what we believed in” (Jawondo, personal communication, January, 13, 2022). Ilorin grand durbar festival is put in place for the purpose of integration, progress and unity. Globally, the African culture is gradually being eroded by the

western culture which is being promoted daily through the mainstream media.

The celebration of Ilorin grand durbar has noble advantages which include the tendency to arouse the interest of the youth because of the interplay of forces such as the involvement of horses through play way methods and the use of aesthetics; adornment of horses and the riders. The economic integration which is set to be achieved as a desired objective is ensured through the development of local economy.

Ilorin grand durbar also contributes to national economy because horses are sourced from different locations in the north. These horses are paid for including the riders, horse trainers and transporters who conveyed the horses to Ilorin for the grand durbar festival. So, its organisation and celebration is not localised as it involves people from within and outside the Ilorin emirate. It is also important to state that the Ilorin grand durbar provides an opportunity for the Emir and his council to state emirate policy clearly and to implement some policies open and clear. This opportunity has closed up the gap which was created by the political divides.

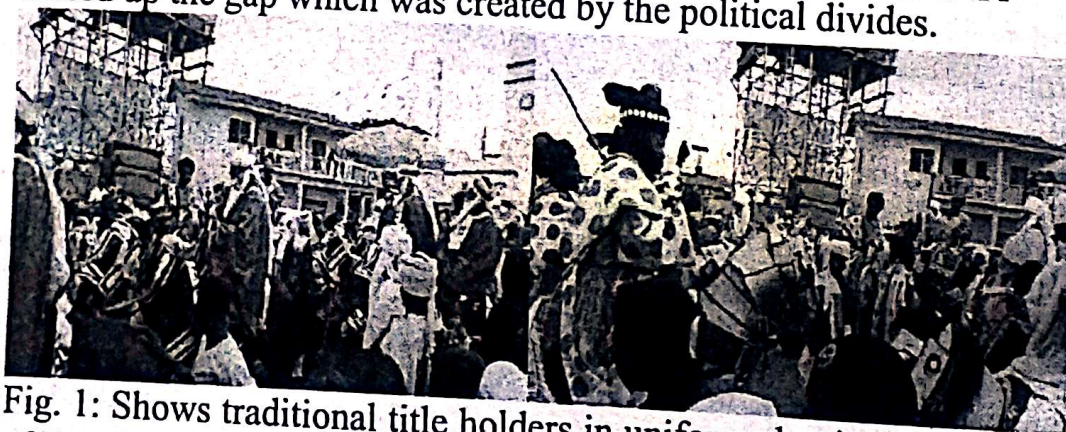


Fig. 1: Shows traditional title holders in uniformed attire during 2021 edition of Ilorin grand durbar festival. Picture taken by the researcher.

### **Preparation and Organisation of the Ilorin Emirate Grand Durbar Festival**

Ilorin Emirate grand durbar festival is an annual event that involves display of beautifully dressed horses which showcases royalty and the cultural prowess of the emirate. The festival being a part and parcel of the culture and tradition of the Ilorin emirate is celebrated on the second day of Eid-il-Kabir (*Ileya*) festival. The grand durbar festival takes place in a day

but it takes four to five months to prepare for the celebration. However, pre-durbar activities include; football match, exhibitions, road show for horses and show of force for the security agents in the state. The preparation, therefore, involves pre-durbar, durbar proper and post-durbar activities. The preparation and organisation of the grand durbar involves putting a committee in place to take care of certain exigencies for the successful celebration. Part of the preparation involves travelling to different places to solicit for supports and to also invite people to the festival. The local organising committee travels to inform people, to invite and to do business with people as regards the festival. After obtaining horses from different places, the committee schedules a training session for those who want to participate to be specially trained about horse riding for the durbar festival, at least for two weeks. This is done to avoid casualties.

The horses, too, are trained for the occasion because no one can be sure of the initial conditions that they have been exposed to. Some horses are taking round the town (road show) during the pre-durbar day sensitisation after which prayers will be offered for a successful durbar celebration. Furthermore, in the planning stage, consideration for the venue and venue preparation is also done. The Ilorin Emirate grand durbar festival takes place in front of the Emir's palace. The venue is a plain ground. Therefore, arrangement for the placement of guests, musicians and the Ijo Olomoba dance performers is of paramount to avoid obstructions and create free movement for horse riders. Basically, the organisation of the Ilorin grand durbar involves three main events within the larger context of the festival. The first is the horse procession. The second is the entertainment from different musicians from the nook and crannies of the town and the third is the performances from cultural groups in which Ijo Olomoba group from the Emir's palace included.

| Artistic and Cultural Performances in Ilorin Emirate Grand Durbar Festival                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Durbar Procession                                                                                                                                                            |
| Emir's Musical Band                                                                                                                                                          |
| Musicians: Fuji musicians, <i>Dadakuada</i> musicians, <i>Balu</i> musicians, <i>Waka</i> musicians, <i>Senwele</i> musicians, <i>Apala</i> musicians and Hip pop musicians. |
| <i>Ijo Olomooba</i> Performance                                                                                                                                              |
| Fulani maiden dance                                                                                                                                                          |
| Hunter's dance                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>Benbe</i> drummers                                                                                                                                                        |

Table 1 shows different performances in Ilorin Emirate Grand Durbar Festival

The procession, being the main event, takes the Emir, his chiefs and the people to move round the city of Ilorin. The durbar procession "commences at the palace of the Emir and it would go through some major streets of Ilorin...back to the palace" (Alapansanpa, 2021, p.24). The Emir's procession moves round the town from the palace through Surulere to Taiwo road, Emir's road and back to the palace where horse race takes place. After the arrival and paying homage by the traditional title holders, the Emir's procession leaves the palace to the durbar arena. The Emir's procession comprises of the Emir, Balogun Gambari, Magaji Aare, Balogun Fulani, Balogun Ajikobi, Balogun Alanamu, Magaji Ngeri, Baba Isale, Galadima Ngeri, Sarikin Gambari, Sarikin Gobir, Magaji Nda, followed by honorary title holders such as the Makama of Ilorin, Iyan Ngeri of Ilorin, Talban of Ilorin, Zanna of Ilorin, Wali of Ilorin, Dan Madami of Ilorin, the chairman of the Ilorin Emirate grand durbar management committee, Chiroma of Ilorin (Head of Princes) and others follow suit. The tour of some parts of the Emirate makes the Emir close to his people because there is an opportunity to exchange gift and to see new physical development within the city. The Emir also sees certain areas of the city that need the attention of the

government which he can discuss with the governor of the state during *Bareke*.

### **Administrative Structure of the Ilorin Emirate Grand Durbar Festival**

The administrative system of Ilorin Emirate differs from the Emirate system of Northern Nigeria. There are factors that defined the Emirate system in operation in Ilorin. These factors include among others; the multicultural and multi-lingua nature of Ilorin being the gateway city between the North and the South-western Nigeria. The influx of different ethnic groups at the earlier stage of the city made possible the incorporation of these ethnic groups in the administration of the Emirate, especially those of the Northern extractions such as the Kanuri, the Hausas, the Fulani, the Malians and the Yoruba of the Western extraction. In the administration of the Emirate, the representatives of different quarters; Balogun Gambari, Balogun Fulani, Balogun Ajikobi, Balogun Alanamu, Magaji Aare, Magajin Gari and Imam Fulani are the Ilorin Emirate Kingmakers and they are strong members of the Ilorin Emirate Council.

In addition, the Emirate council includes other traditional title holders such as Galadiman Gari, Baba Isale, District heads of Iponrin, Oloru, Ejidongari, Malete, Afon, Owode, Paye, Onire, Akanbi, Lanwa, Egbejila/Wara/Osin and the chairmen of the five Local Government Authorities (Ilorin West, Ilorin South, Ilorin East, Asa and Moro) that fall within the Emirate are included in its administration (Jimba, 2008, p.16). The composition of Ilorin Emirate traditional council is illustrated in the diagram below:

## Executive Administrative Structure of Ilorin Grand Durbar Festival (Ilorin Emirate Traditional Council)

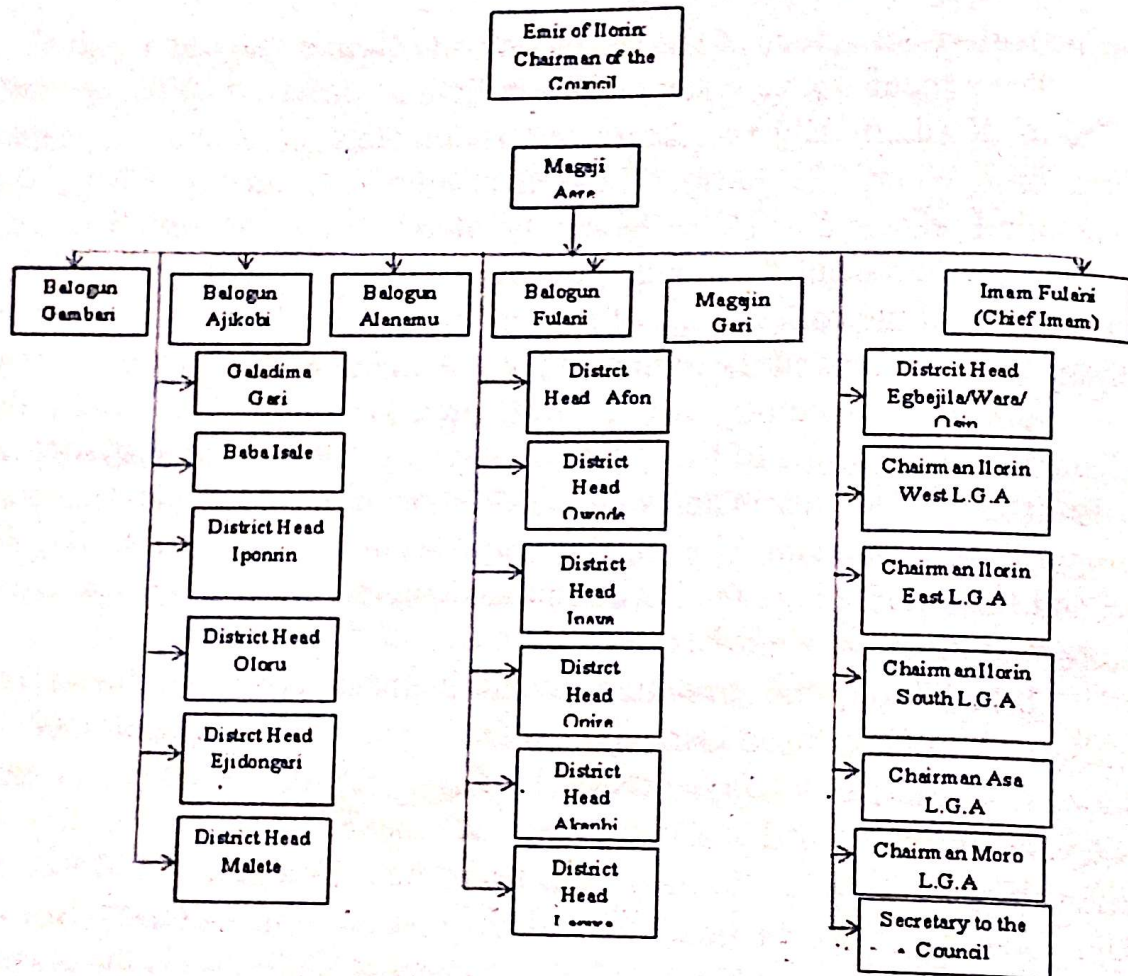


Table 2 shows the administrative structure of Ilorin Emirate Traditional Council. Table designed by the researcher.

### Administrative Strategies of Ilorin Emirate Traditional Council in the Administration of Ilorin Emirate Grand Durbar Festival

The administration of the Ilorin Emirate grand durbar festival has the Emir at the helm of its affairs. The Emir as the chairman of the Ilorin Emirate council and also as the chairman of Kwara State council of traditional rulers plays a significant role in informing and mobilising all the Baloguns, the Daudus, the Magajis and other title holders to mobilise their people to participate in the durbar celebration. All the Baloguns are expected to come

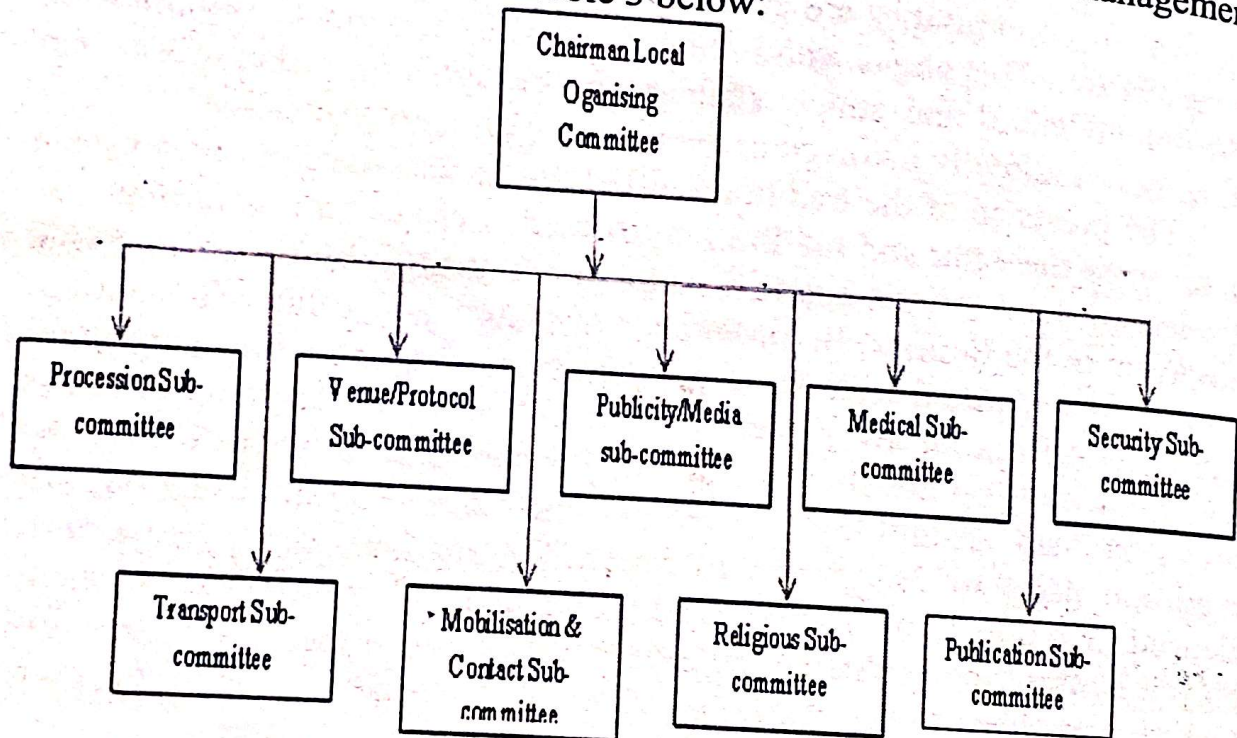
with their families and they are to do their procession before the Emir one by one. Parts of the strategies employed by the traditional council is that the Emir uses his wisdom, his affluence, his exposure as the father of the Emirate to pool academics, politicians, business people and philanthropists to support and grace the durbar occasion because he sees these sets of people as the stakeholders that need to be carried along for sustainability of the durbar festival. The Emir contacts those he knows and the durbar management committee follows up. The Emir oversees the administration and management of the festival from the planning stage to execution. He is briefed by the durbar management committee on different steps they are taking at each stage of the preparation till the end of the festival. Likewise, the traditional title holders and the honorary title holders who are also stakeholders have the responsibility of making sure their families and the people of their communities are aware of the durbar and therefore, take part in its celebration. This aligns with Freeman's submission that an organisation should uphold moral and ethical standard by recognising stakeholders that are directly or indirectly involved in the activities of an organisation.

The presence of the traditional title holders and their families says a lot in assuring the Emir and the Emirate of their loyalty and commitment as the leaders of their various quarters and communities to be part of positive development in the Emirate. In furtherance of assuring a casualty free durbar, the Emir is also charged with the responsibility of inspecting horses brought for the festival from far away northern states. Another strategic approach is that the Emir leads by example by showing his commitment to the festival by involving in fund raising. In 2022 edition, the Emir committed the sum of five million naira to the project as take-off grant and at the same time influenced fund donation through his networks. One other prominent strategy employed by the Emir is seizing the opportunity of the occasion to name and announce new honorary traditional title holders in respective of their political and socio-cultural affiliations.

## Organisational Structure and Administrative Strategies...

### Administrative Strategies of the Ilorin Emirate Grand Durbar Management Committee

The staging of the Ilorin grand durbar festival is the sole responsibilities of the durbar management committee. For this reason, Ilorin Emirate traditional council considered various areas that require effective management in selecting who becomes a member of the durbar management committee. This is because durbar involves procession and therefore, needs orderliness. Members of the various committees were brought in to "ensure that the Emirate hierarchy does not mix up" (Jawondo, personal communication, January, 13, 2022). Members of the committee were drawn from professional relevance and commitment to the cause of the Emirate is also considered in their selection. The Ilorin Emirate durbar management committee is divided into nine sub-committees for effective management of the durbar event as shown in table 3 below:



One of the important responsibilities of the durbar management committee is fund raising. Raising fund for the festival takes three strategic ways. Funds are raised through individual donor in which the Emir happens to be the first to donate fund followed by the well-meaning Ilorin such as Saraki and the Alimi's family, other prominent family in Ilorin and friends of the emirate. The second way of raising fund is through agencies and corporate organisations that are located within Ilorin and outside of Kwara state. The committee reach out to companies like Kam wire industry, Ghalib Chamber, Bovas Petroleum, Tuyil pharmaceutical industry etc. The other corporate organisations outside Ilorin are just coming up in terms of financial supports. The funding from these organisations is minimal compared to their status in the Nigeria economy. MTN and Glo have also shown interest in the culture of durbar in Ilorin but at minimal level.

The third way of fund raising activity of the Ilorin grand durbar committee is through government supports. The festival has received the attention of the state government and funds have been committed to it by the Kwara State Government since the beginning of the festival in 2018. "The government has been supportive. The government has now gotten approval from the House of Assembly that Ten Million Naira is always there for us annually for the durbar festival" (Jawondo, January, 13, 2022, persona communication). Furthermore, the durbar management committee makes use of horses as a strategy for the management of the durbar arena. Horses are used as active participants in the celebration of Ilorin grand durbar festival because they are trained for different purposes which include disarming people, controlling the crowd, clearing the road and attacking if the need arises.

### **Findings**

This study revealed that:

- i. Partisan politics is a great challenge to the administration of Ilorin emirate grand durbar festival. The Ilorin people think that the durbar committee pallies with the government in power over and above others. This affected the perception of people on fundraising and the level of mobilisation for the festival.

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- ii. Insufficient finance is also an impediment to the effective management of the festival. Ilorin emirate grand durbar festival gulps over 100 million.
- iii. The durbar arena is always overcrowded despite the use of horses as a control strategy.
- iv. The durbar management committee and subcommittees are well constituted having taken into consideration the professional relevance and connection of the members.
- v. The level of corporate sponsorship of the Ilorin grand durbar festival is low. There is a challenge in getting full support from corporate organisations.

### **Conclusion**

This paper concludes that to attain peaceful co-existence, sustaining religious harmony and promoting economic activities in Nigeria, the culture of durbar festival should be sustained through continuous supports from the government, corporate organisations and the stakeholders. The notion of unity in diversity as the case in Nigeria makes the Ilorin emirate grand durbar unique and relevant to the socio-economic and cultural landscape of the Ilorin emirate. It has been revealed through this paper that the importance of stakeholders in the sustainability and continuous existence of cultural festivals in Nigeria cannot be underrated. Therefore, the paper recommends that the durbar committee should be seen not to be partisan by the people of the emirate because durbar festival is not a political organisation where party interest is the central concern of its members. Financial supports from the state government needs upward review to enable the management committee cater for other expenses which the stakeholders' funding cannot accommodate. The overcrowded durbar arena can be well controlled if a tiered audience seats that are specially designated for the audience are provided. The involvement of corporate organisations should be encouraged by letting them realise the benefits their companies will derive if they participate in funding durbar festival.

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#### **Interview**

- Oral interview with Prof. I. A. Jawondo, the secretary Ilorin grand durbar local organising committee 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2022.
- Oral interview with Mallam Salman Muhammed tour guide, Emir's palace, Ilorin. 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2022.