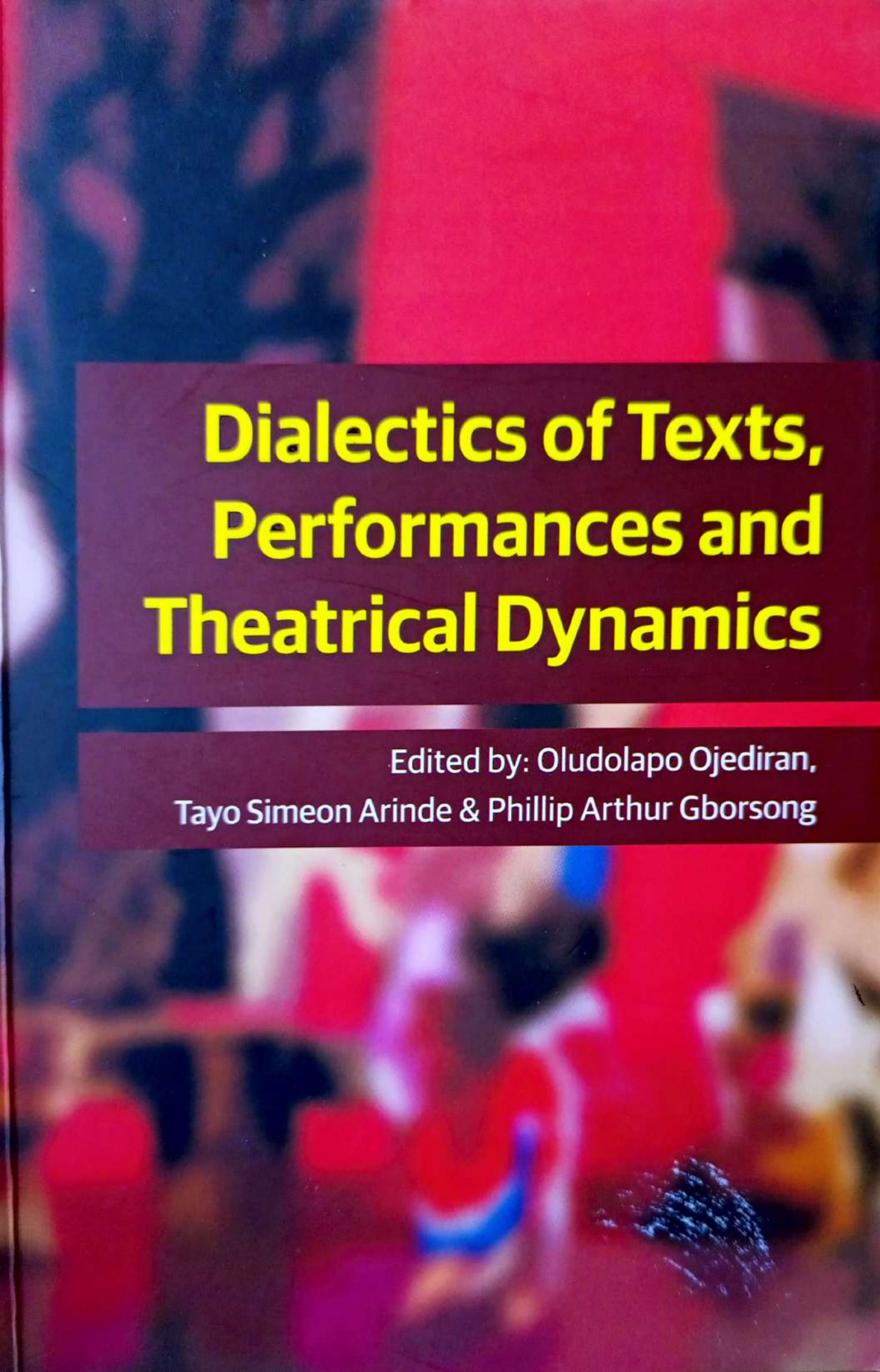


Dialectics of Texts, Performances and Theatrical Dynamics

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE THEATRICAL ELEMENTS, ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF GANI FESTIVAL FOR CO-EXISTENCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Tayo Simeon ARINDE & Gbenga ROTIMI

Abstract

Gani festival has remained one of the most celebrated traditional festivals in Kwara State, Nigeria. It is a festival that synchronises the cultural essence of Bokobarus people of Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State with the global window. Hence, efforts at putting the ceremonial aspect of the festival in proper perspective are enormous but germane. It is illuminating on the process involved that this study examined the organisation and management of theatrical elements that are embedded in the festival for sustainability of socio-cultural, religious, economic and political wellbeing of Bokobarus people of Kaiama Local Government of Kwara State, Nigeria. The study employed descriptive method of research, in which case the organisational structure and management of theatrical elements in Gani festival are subjected to critical analyses. In addition, the study uses the tools of interview and participant observation. These approaches are the sources of the primary data in this study while the secondary data are sourced from books, journals, magazines and internet sources. This study's findings reveal that, in spite the incursion of foreign religions and western education, the Bokobarus people of Kaiama held their cultural heritage in high esteem, which is responsible for the full participation of sons and daughters of the community in the annual celebration of the festival. The study concludes that Gani festival is a socio-religion festival that celebrates the cultural essence and unites Bokobarus

people for sustainable development of individual and the community at large. The study therefore recommends that the state government and corporate organisations should complement the efforts of the Bokobarus people of Kaiama in sustaining the festival for posterity.

Key words: *Festival Gani Festival, Bokobaru, Theatre Elements, Sustainable Development*

Introduction

There are many festivals in Nigeria, through which different ethnic groups showcase their unique cultural heritage, exploring the media of music, dances, costumes, body adornment and props. The introduction and acceptance of foreign religions and Western education into Nigeria affected Nigerian arts and culture and festivals inclusive. This is so because foreign religions and Western education erroneously regarded Nigerian arts and culture as devilish and primitive. Among the surviving and popular festivals in Nigeria, especially in Kwara State is Gani festival of Bokobarus people of Kaiama in Kaiama Local Government Area of the State. In spite of foreign religion and Western education influence on African arts and culture, many festivals still thrive in Nigeria. Some of them are the Olojo festival of Ile-Ife and Osun Osogbo festivals of the Osogbo people of Osun States in the Southwest. Others are Mkwe and Iriji-Mmanwu Festivals of the Avutu people of Imo State of the Southeast, Nigeria. North-Central also parades Ogani festival of Ankpa people of Kogi State as well as the Argungu fishing festival and Sharo festival of the Northwest and the Bilibili festival of the Margi people of Adamawa State in the Northeast, Nigeria.

In this study, events in the festival with particular attention paid to the organisation, management and theatrical elements deeply seated in the performances that underscore the sustenance of people's subsisting intangible cultural heritage, which includes music, dance, costumes and durbar are accentuated. This becomes

necessary because as popular as Gani festival is in Kwara State, works available on it to the best the knowledge of these researchers dealt more on the popular Takai dance, which is one of the notable theatrical performances in Gani festival. Therefore, the study described the organisation and management of the festival with the aim of understanding what made effective the planning and execution of the festival programmes.

In another direction, the study highlights and describes the theatrical elements in the festival. Thereafter, we describe the cultural heritage and its significant as it is embedded in Gani festival. This enables us to identify the intrinsic value of the festival to Bokobarus people of Kaiama. It is also to make known the didactic essence that Gani festival has played in the lives of the Bokobarus. The festival, apart from providing a well coloured Entertainment Avenue has been a great source of cultural education for the people. The festival has also provided an opportunity to academically appraise how arts and culture can promote religious harmony and peaceful co-existence among people within and in other communities.

Gani festival is one festival that is popular and celebrated among the Kaiama and Gwanara people of Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State, as well as the Borgu people of Benin Republic who are formerly in Nigeria. On the spot assessment of Gani festival in Gwanara and Kaiama revealed some similarities in the socio-cultural impact that the festival has on the two communities. However, our preferred case of study in this paper is the Gani festival of Kaiama, in Kiama Local Government. The scope of this study covers the period when Islamic religion was introduced into Bokobarus, which gave another meaning to how Gani festival is now celebrated.

The study obtains some of its primary data from identification of the theatrical elements in Gani festival, using participant, non-participant observation tools. In this direction, interview was used to draw information from native initiate and participants. The secondary sources of the data used in this work are from books, journals, magazines, newspapers and on line internet sources.

Consequently, the study brings to the fore, through analyses, the structure and the management of theatrical elements embedded in Gani festival to draw its conclusions.

Brief History of Bokobarus People of Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State

History from oral tradition has it that the people of Kaiama are Bokobaru by tribe in the old Borgu Chiefdom (formerly in the old Kwara state). The town was founded in 1750 AD. Kaiama literally means "rest" which alludes to the fact that they migrated from Nikki (now Borgu of Benin Republic) to their present place. The people had settled in several locations before settling for Kaiama. Historically, Mora Bakaru was said to be the man who led them out of Nikki was a business man who had travelled wide. Oral source claimed that before he embarked on his last journey, Bakuru directed his younger brother to take proper care of their father who was the king. As faith would have it, before he returned from the journey, the King had died and the younger brother was crowned the 13th king of the Nikki kingdom.

On his return, he met his brother already crowned as the new king of Nikki Kingdom. In demonstrating the traditional respect for the throne and his brother, Mora Bakuru decided to leave Nikki with his followers in about 1600 Century to establish his own kingdom. His first settlement was Bweru where he was the king. He ruled for forty-five years before he passed on in about 1645. Afterwards, his grandson, Yaru Danzinde settled at Kaiama which in Bokobaru language mean a rest place in 1750. There was problem with their landlords but it was solved without war. The area covered now is the present Okuta, Ilesha, Yashikira and Gwanara. Subsequently, Kaiama Local Government Area was created out of the then Borgu Local Government Area. Today, Kaiama is one of the sixteen Local Government Areas in Kwara state.

The Religion and World-view of Bokobaru People

Every individual, group and society has a special medium through which they commune with their creator and this medium is as adopted by different religions. Arinze, (1970, P.8) in defininig religion submits that: "Religion as a belief can be subjectively and objectively regarded. Subjectively, he says: "religion is the consciousness of one's dependence on a transcendent being and the tendency to worship him" while objectively: "religion is the body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being." This notion of religion encapsulates the Bokobarus' conception of religion and beliefs which in spite of the influences of Islam and Western education keep them together.

Shedding light on his people's world-view, the Emir of Kaiama stated that his people worship Supreme Being through their deified ancestors that serve as the intercessor between the purity (God) and the impious (people). However, this belief was almost eroded the traditional bond that binds them together with the advent of Islamic faith into the land of Bokobarus some three hundred years ago. Today, as recorded in 1991 census, 93 percent of Bokobarus are Muslims, while the remaining 7 percent are Christians and traditional religion worshippers.

The Bokobarus speaks Bokobaru language or a dialect called Busa. A common feature of Bokobarus society is the fusion of their traditions with Islamic tradition, which is borne out of efforts to encourage people to accept the new fate. This explains why the age-long tradition of Gani festival was incorporated into Islamic festival of Prophet Mohammed's birth.

Symbolic shaving of royal children heads is purely traditional. This has also been an important aspect of Gani festival. During the celebration of Gani Festival, there is always a stop gap for Muslims to observe their prayers, which is immediately followed by traditional visit to the tomb of the past Emirs to make supplications for the well-being of the people. This attests to the fact that religion and culture can co-exist without snowballing into chaos.

Historical Overview of Gani Festival

Gani Festival remained a well-known age long festival that is identified with the Borgu far back to when the British and the French colonalised the . It is a popularly celebrated festival among the Bokobarus of Kaiama and Batunaus of Baruten land. These geographical areas include: Kaiama, Ilesha, Okuta, Wawa and Yashikira, all in the British Borgu. This same festival is greatly celebrated in Nikki of Republic of Benin; Damagaran in Niger Republic, Bauchi, Borno, and some parts of Sokoto States, all in Nigeria. This is the testimony that the festival spreads across the West African sub-region.

The origin of Gani festival revolves around two oral traditions. The first source is popularly accepted by the Kaiama people. The source claimed that Gani which simply mean "royal recognition" is the initiation of royal children into royal pantheon. The festival provides a platform where recognition is accorded the royal children as heirs apparent of the royal clan. The second source, though not quite popular and accepted like the first one among the indigenes was loosely linked with the advent of Islam. This source traced Gani festival to the birth of Prophet Mohammed on 12th Rabiu Awal (570C E.). History or a myth has it that when Prophet Mohammed was born, there was a mysterious disappearance of some idols from the temples or shrines of the gods. This strange incident was linked to the birth of the Prophet and it angered the people, notably from Kemanji, Wajibe, Kanikoko and Gwaria. Consequently, they registered their displeasure with their king who realising the presence of superior power in the incidence, appealed to his subjects to accept and embrace the new piety, that is, Islam as ordained by God. Therefore, Gani can be regarded as a metaphorical celebration of the nobleness of the above incidents in the life of Kaiama people as evidenced in how important elements of the two oral sources are married together in the festival.

Review of Related Literature

Anthropologically, festival can be described as an act of

showcasing the intrinsic value of cultural heritage of a given people. More elaborately hattours.co (2012) describes it more as:

> An expressive way to celebrate glorious heritage, culture and traditions. They are meant to rejoice special moments and emotions in our lives with our loved ones. They play an important role to add structure to our social lives, and connect us with our families and backgrounds. They give us a distraction from our day to day, exhausting routine of life, and give us some inspiration to remember the important things and moments in life.

It is in this same direction that King (2008, p.8), in elucidating on cultural heritage submits that it is heritage that: "comprises a big, complex, intricate mosaic of things and institutions and values, beliefs and perceptions, customs and traditions, symbols and social structures."

As a way of making ones cultural heritage colourful and meaningful, people embellish its exhibition during festival celebration, using the media of creative arts such as music, dance, drama and costume. Festivals across Nigeria are for academic purposes classified into social, religious and political types. However, as much as different scholars from different academic fields such as, Ogunba (1978) and Buratai (1999) did try to classify festival, they only dwell more in identifying the similarities and dissimilarities in different categories. This is so because a parallel classification may be a difficult one to do. However, at different period of human developments, festival has been defined differently by scholars. The likes of Gregory (2008) anthropologically described festival when she stated that: "Ancient festivals and feasts were associated with planting and harvest times or with honouring the dead." In another direction, Ogunba (1978, p.13) broadly described festival within the purview of his cultural environment when he states that: "A festival is an indigenous cultural institution, an art form culturally nurtured on the African soil with distinct features, and a framework for coordinating virtually all art forms of the community." In addition to the above, Ogunba emphasised that: Festival "expresses a relish of life and

preference for this life rather than the life to come, and this is expressed in the stories and myths performed which each has a particular dramatic style." We therefore infer that, these scholars' different position unambiguously described what Gani festival represents. That is, the festival exhibits religion belief, folklore, ethics and dramatic arts as the cultural heritage that must be promoted and preserved by the people of Kaiama for posterity.

Festivals according to *hatters.com (2012)* can be classified into three types that are not strictly independent of the others in content and context. The three types are; social festival, religious festival, and political festival. Social festival can be described as festive activities, either formal or informal put together by a group of people, association, community or government. This is usually done to bring people of common or diverse cultures together to celebrate what they have as arts and culture. Sometimes, these festivals may exhibit the traits or elements of either religious or political festival, and in some cases the two are what we see in them, depending on the observers. Importantly, social festivals entertain and educate the audience. Examples are Argungu festival of Argungu people of Kebbi State of Nigeria, and National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) of Nigeria.

Argungu festival is a social festival that is celebrated yearly, usually during the month of February. It is a celebration of people's cultural aesthetics and values, climaxed with a fishing competition that usually attracts prizes for the winners. It is a popular festival that attracts tourists' interest. According to Marcelina and Mathew (1996, p.28) "Argungu festival began in the year 1934, as a mark of the end of the centuries old hostility between the Sokoto Caliphate and the Kebbi Kingdom." Accordingly, National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) is a national festival in Nigeria where people's cultural heritage and tradition are celebrated. Narrating the reason behind the festival, Jah Anikulapo in The Guardian Newspaper of 16th October, 2002, stated that; "The festival began in 1970 as an initiative of young Nigerian culture workers and intelligentsia who, moved by a patriotic zeal, thought that the pains and tensions unleashed on the national psyche by the 30 months (1967-70) civil war could be

assuaged through the balm of artistic expression steeped in the divergent people of the country." From the above information, we can infer that both Argungu and National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) are example of social festival with elements of political festival.

Religious festivals are the festivals put in place by a given people to celebrate a superior power that controls the affairs of man spiritually. This superior power was accurately described by George Frazer (1983, p.65) as "appropriation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the courses of nature and human life." Religious festivals are mostly not distinctively religious but most times display elements of social and political festivals. However, religious activities dominate the event. Examples are the Sango festival among the Ede people of Osun State in the Western part of Nigeria. The festival is in honour of Sango, the god of thunder. The festival takes place every year towards the end of raining season. It spans a period of seven days. It is characterised with ritual worships, musical and dance performances by the worshippers, with the community people and tourists as the spectators.

Political festivals are festivals that celebrate the political prowess, exploits or well-being of a group of people in a given community. These festivals are usually put in place to appraise the political, social and economic prevailing situation in comparison to the past experience in order to make adjustments where necessary and plan for the future. Although, these festivals are predominantly politically inclined, we cannot rule out the elements of social and religious undertones that are prominently visible in uniting the participants as a people with common destiny. A good example that comes to mind is "Durbar" festival in the Northern part of Nigeria.

Umar-Buratai (2002, p.108) described Durbar as a "performance of power in the Northern Nigeria." Therefore, Durbar is the celebration of history, with the re-enactment of the pre-colonial military power of the Northern region of Nigeria before the advent of the colonial masters that later amalgamated the Northern with

the Southern parts of Nigeria in 1914. As political as Durbar is, it is also referred to by Umar-Buratai as a "social organisation of the Emirate society." However, it is said to have religious connotation as well from its origin, which is characterised with ritual cult arts especially the martial arts displays associated with the "bilad al Sudan." In Borno of former Empire, for example, ritual display in Durbar went by twin names "Bata and Tawur" and "Barga and Askar." (Umar-Buratai, 2002, p.109).

However, the amount of credibility given to traditional festival as a form of dramatic art has remained a subject of academic discourse among scholars. Consequently, there emerged a school of thought that located the origin of Nigerian theatre in indigenous festival that is known for its didactic nature. This school's position could be better understood as we consider Ogunba's (1966, p.65) theory which postulates that: "There are two types of theatre in Nigeria, the first type is indigenous to the country and derives its form from traditional festivals and the second type is foreign and is mainly borrowed from Europe." In the same direction, another scholar Adedeji (1969, p.43) is also of opinion that traditional theatre emerged from three developmental phases when he stated that: "Masque theatre-that is, courtly form of entertainment characterised by song, dance, lavish costume and extraordinary spectacle-Yoruba traditional theatre emerged from three developmental phases, ritual, festival and theatre." Joining other scholars in the debate, Echeruo (1981, p.147) observed that:

> Until the ritual content of festival is forced to yield its story, the dramatic content of festival will remain subsumed in their ritual purity. Therefore, there is need to transform ritual from its dead end into real life experience of secular dramatic tradition. This position was expounded by Enekwe (1981, p.155) when he stated that: "A ritual becomes entertainment once it is outside its original context or when the belief that sustains it has lost its potency." Consequently, this school of thought metamorphosed into what was academically referred to as "evolutionist approaches" which states that "drama evolved from ritual." (Ogunbiyi 1981, p.4).

Therefore, it can be deduced from the different positions of Adedeji, Ogunba, Echeruo Schechner and Enekwe that, the line of distinction between traditional festival and dramatic art in Africa and in Nigeria in particular is very thin. As the debate continues, in his contribution at resolving the arguments and controversies surrounding African theatre forms, Kofoworola (1981, p.164) in the studies of traditional forms of Hausa drama reveals that "dramatic art is better classified by its context". That is, each dramatic event must be taken on its own merit and judged not merely from whether it fulfils the "content criteria."

The above submission of Kofoworola therefore implies that every dramatic arts to some extent is true and total representation of the people's experience, customs and traditions in respective of race and time frame. This position could better be understood as we consider the definition of theatre by Reily and Phillips (1998, p.13) which states that: "The story of theatre is the story of human kind because in its essential form, theatre belongs to one race, age or culture." Therefore, Reily and Phillips' position attest to the universality of theatre as an institution that is as old as man, and liable to a change along with human development phases in the areas of religion, economy, social, political, science and technology. Therefore, theatre can be referred to as the archive of human experiences and development as it is the case with traditional festivals. Therefore, the definition of theatre as enumerated by Reily and Phillips (1998, p.13) shall be our guide in identifying theatrical elements in Gani festival which is the focus of this study. Yet, we must not overlook those critics who in their own right, argued that: "What is usually called traditional drama is not yet drama. It is the huge legacy upon which drama may draw and draw." (Uka 1970, p.75).

However, in realising that this study is an historical excursion of Nigerian theatre development examination of the organisational structure and management of theatrical elements in Gani festival, we will conclude that Gani festival exhibit elements of theatrical performance in tandem with Clark's (1981, p.57) who stated that:

> If drama mean the elegant imitation of some action

> significant to a people; if this means a physical representation or the evocation of one poetic image or a complex of such images, if the vital elements to such representation or evocation, are speech, music, ritual, song, as well as dance and mime, and if as Japanese say of their Nor theatre, the aim is to open the ear of the mind of a spectator in a corporate audience and open his eyes to the beauty of form, then there is plenty of drama in Nigeria.

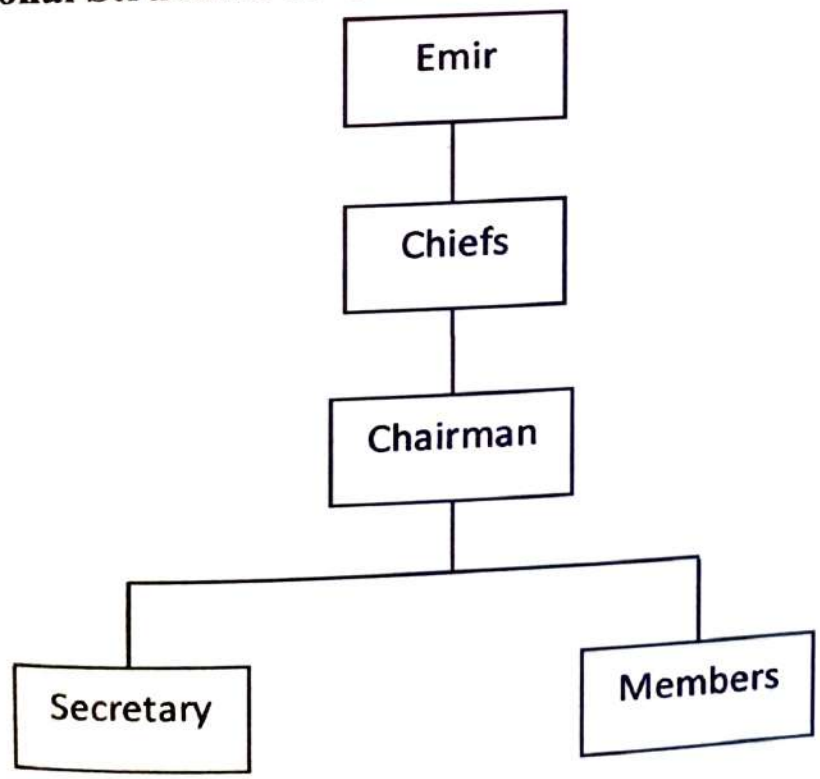
Traditional festival has remained a planned event that show-cases people's arts and culture for the purpose of entertaining and educating the spectators. This is the peoples' customary way of preserving, promoting and projecting cultural heritage that are found in each family and the community as a whole. That is, festival has structures that are managed traditionally from the family units to the community level for the benefits of the people. Alluding to the traditional ways of managing arts and culture, Oyesoro (2000, p.102) states that: "There were specialised lineage of master craftsmen and cultural institutions; there was no need for specialised cultural agencies or policies as we know it today." This in essence indicates that in spite of factors such as education and technology, there are still customary ways to manage people's cultural heritage of which festival is one.

Management of Gani Festival

A lot of efforts are usually put in place in organising and managing a festival of this magnitude. Suitable period, mobilization of participants, government permission, security provision and finance are the few requirements out of many issues that must be taken care of. These responsibilities are shared among the people in conformity with the dictates of the peoples' customs, traditions and laws of the community concern. All these took place in planning and execution of Gani festival. To do the planning a committee that comprises a Chairman and twelve other members, including a Secretary were constituted by the Emir. To organise the festival. Communal /government management pattern was adopted for Gani festival. Communal/ Government Management

Pattern can be described as indigenous management style that only involves the usage of the community's human and material resources that are available within the locality to organise and manage a festival with assistance in the area of security and infrastructure maintenance from the State and Local Government. The management pattern adopted for Gani festival afforded the organizers of the festival to keep some aspect open while other aspect is strictly the concern of the initiates. This becomes necessary because of heterogeneity nature of Bokobarus society, especially in the area of religion beliefs. That is, each religion sect operates separately from non-member of the sect. This is so designed by customs and traditional norms guiding Bokobarus activities. Therefore, the management style adopted for Gani festival can be referred to as open and close management style. The frontage of the Emir"s palace is the performance arena that measures 1865. 96 Square Meters.

Organisational Structure of Gani Festival



The Emir and his chiefs constitute the organising committee. An appointed Chairman heads the planning committee of not less than eleven members. . One of the members is the Secretary who reports back to the chiefs.

Spectacle in Gani Festival

Spectacle, which is the visual aspects of the performances that manifest in: performance arena, costumes and make-up. The performance arena for Gani festival is the frontage of Emir's palace. The sitting arrangement for the invited guests and spectators is carefully situated in a semi-circle form to create space spectacle in the middle for the performers. Most spectators are standing in rows to see the performances. As it is a common feature in festivals, spectators in Gani festival are participatory one; they surge from all directions in different colourful costumes to the arena to take roles in the performances without any Artistic Director. Additionally, Gani parades different traditional costumes that add colours to the festival. The horses for durbar are clad in different costumes and body adornments and the riders are in flowing regalia and turban that exhibit social classes. The King and his Queens, Princesses, Princes, the new initiates and title holders are differently costumed to depict their different social status. Women are with different traditional body adornments that befit them and the class they belong. Therefore, costumes in Gani festival without any ambiguity, tell the story of classes and grandeur with celebration of colours.

Gani festival is two weeks of different events out of which the last two nights are specially set aside for activities that are regarded as sacrosanct. On the first of the nights, the Emir and his Queen (Kiyenzide) spend the night at the frontage of the palace with their subjects. This night is a night of performances of music and dance by different age-groups, reverencing Prophet Mohammed, ancestors, Emir, royal families and the valiant men and women of Bokobarus clan. The night always fall on the 11th day of Rabiul-Awawal, the birth month of Prophet Mohammed. The Emir exercises his discretional power as bestowed on him by tradition, to determine when the second night would come up. This is so to afford an interval between the first night and the second night to give room for other events of the festival, especially the Durbar performance which is very important in this festival. That is, the Durbar comes up between the two nights.

Durbar

Durbar in Gani festival is strictly men affairs. Buratai (2002) underscores its importance when he describes Durbar as "a performance of power in the Northern region." Durbar in Gani festival is celebration of history, with the re-enactment of great events in the life of Kaiama people, especially, the military prowess and crusades. Gani festival parades horses that are elegantly costumed and rode by men that are very versatile in horse racing. The horse racers are clad in traditional costumes and body adornments that reveal their social, economical and political status in Kaiama community. The horse racers entertained the spectators with their performances; exhibiting their skills as they were accompanied with pulsating drumming and trumpeting from the royal bard and other traditional musical ensembles. Happily, people showered the performers with praises and gifts. It is a common practice to halt the Durbar in the afternoon to visit the mausoleum where the past Emirs of the town were buried for reverencing and supplications. At the same place, the people have the afternoon Muslim prayers and thereafter return to the performance arena to continue the Durbar which comes to a close as the time for 4 o clock prayers nears.



Horse riders at Gani Festival

Photo credit: Researchers



Performers at the 2013 Gani Festival Durbar

Photo credit: Researchers

Theatrical elements in Gani Festival

Music

Music in Gani festival is a metaphor for historical, religious, sociological and political repository of Bokobaru people. It treads the line of thought of Blacking (1973, P.60) who posits that: "Music is a product of the behaviour of human groups whether formal or informal." In content and context, Gani music is an embodiment of songs and chants. The totality of the music is didactic; it embodies Bokobarus arts, culture and it helps in highlighting the intrinsic value of the festival to the people. One of the chants in the festival is produced below:

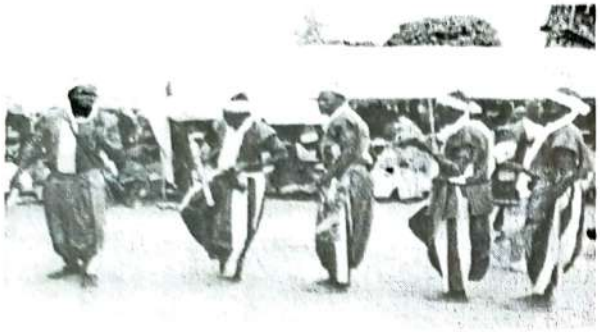
Chant	**Translation**
Wa shun Ngben ne no	We are here today
Wa kwen kpen ken gban	We have come before you God and ancestors
Wa konken kbu ghan	Give us peace individually
Wa faadi gbo Luda waagba da sii	Give us tranquility collectively
Luda waa te keke wei Luda	Bless us all with good
daa da no pita afia	health Bless the land with all goods of nature
Atoi waa ne no fee Luda wa granting *gben isi no gba*	We thank you for our requests

The translation of the chant above was done by an indigene, Umar, O. However, he cautioned that the interpretation may not have captured the whole essence of the imagery, symbolism and metaphors that evoke catharsis because it is in the local vernacular.

The musical performance in Gani festival is a participatory one. That is, spectators sing along with the performers and rhythmically clap their hands to accompany musical instruments being played by the ensemble as they dance. The musicians are predominantly male with a group of old women that plays membranophone musical instrument called "katibuen." The three prominent musical instruments in Gani festival are: Membranophones (katibuen) and string (goge and guitar). These instruments are accompanied with body percussion through foot stamping, hand clapping and body slapping.

Dance

Dance in Gani festival depends on music as the two are interdependent to be functional. The dance forms in Gani are improvised and in most cases, music dictates dance movements. Dancers are men and elegant slim ladies. The popular Takai dancers are the performers to behold with their forward-backward and turn-around movements. Also, mirror girls with big mirrors in their hands danced to the beats from drummers. The mirrors symbolize "truth" which is regarded by the people to be the major unifying factor in the community. As a side attraction, princesses' indifferent colourful costumes and body adornment and make-ups engage in "guitar music" dance. This is exclusively meant for princesses. In a ring form, Princesses begin dance competition. The competitors' creativities are show-cased as they dance and the impressive ones are hailed by the crowd who honour them with gifts as the music and dances tempo move from diminuendo of quiet slow rhythm to crescendo of fast rhythm that delight the spectators. The acts are done! The curtain is drawn!! The judges picked the winners and they are honoured by the King.





*Takai dancers at Gani festival 2013*Mirror girls at Gani festival 2013

Photo credit: The Researchers Photo credit: The Researchers

Initiation Day

Registration of royal children began two days before the second night. This is followed by presentation of gifts by parents of the children to the Queen to initiate them and obtain their wishes to have "royal head shave" for their children. The head shave is regarded as a symbol of transition from the state of ordinary citizen to a royal citizen. Bokobaru people vehemently denied the insinuation by these researchers that the head shave has ritual connotation hidden from non-initiates or strangers. The shaving is done during the day time at the Emirs palace with Queen mother (Kiyenzide) as the supervisor. The shaving is done by traditional shavers amidst fun-fare, graced with songs, drumming and trumpeting from royal bard and other performers. Immediately after the head shave, royal names are given to the initiates who are officially presented and introduced to the Emir who happily received them with royal blessings.

The venue of the second night is the frontage of the Queen mother (Kiyenzide) palace. Emir is absent at this session but he is dully represented by his chiefs who assist the queen through the night activities. The night is of great festivities climaxed by royal trumpeting and drumming to entertain the teeming crowd that

actively participated in dancing and singing. The popular Takai dancers are spectacle to behold as people wine and dine. The climax of the events is the recognition of all royal elders present. Drummers, Trumpeters and the Royal Bard sing their praises as they step forward to join the Queen mother and the Emir's representatives. The occasion signals the end of the festival. Basking in the euphoria of the success of the festival the call for subhi (Muslim Morning Prayer) which essentially is a prayer of thanksgiving marks the end of the festival for the year.

Significance of Gani Festival to Bokobaru People

The importance of festival transcend beyond entertainment and fun-fare, reasons for which so many people participates in festival. Studies have discovered that festival served more as tool for promoting religious tolerance, political and economic wellbeing of the people as well accentuate the socio-cultural fraternity of people within and outside a given community. This we have been able to underscore in the celebration of Gani Festival of the Bokobaru people of Kaiama. The study identified some of the benefits to include; Religion, socio-political and economic as particularised below.

Religion

From primordial, the significance of Gani festival to Bokobaru people is that which is tailored along the religious tenet of the Kaiama people. Today, the most important aspect of Gani festival is in commemoration and celebration of the birth of Prophet Mohammed (SAW). To confirm this, the festival is statutorily schedule to hold around his birthday period of Prophet Mohammed (SAW). The two programmes go without one disturbing the other. When it is time for Muslim prayers, allowance would be given and thereafter return to the festival activities.

Cultural

In spite of the strong influence of Islam, the occasion of the

festival celebration still serves as a platform for promotion of culture. In line with the Position of Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952) cited in Yerima (2015, p.23) on what culture is, describe culture as that which: "comprised of traditional ideas, related values and is the product of actions." This came into manifest when one finds in some of the cultural actions in the celebration of the festival amongst which is the Homage that the town's people paid to the royal clan as a sign of cultural respect and loyalty to the throne. In African traditional culture, the royal throne is respected, treated with sacredness and seen as a medium through which supplication to the supreme-being is communicated to and unhindered response are received. Spiritually, the process is seen as the moment of renewal, which they symbolically carry out when they all visit the burial site of their past Kings for supplication.

Socio-Political

The essence of socio-political benefit is in the relationship which is described by Yerima (2015, p.22) as: "psychological and yet soothing enough that it does not pass through a process of pain." Irrespective of political affiliations, the festival also provides the opportunity for sons and daughters at home and in Diasporas to reunite and plan for the development of their communities. The occasion provides enabling environment for Bokobarus, especially the elders to appraise and take decision on the social, political matters that have in the past inhibit the meaningful development of the community. Confirming this, the General Secretary, Busuneno Association (Kaiama Indigenous Association), assertively revealed that, they meet to discuss ways and means to develop their communities during the festive period. Apart from this, the festival affords the Bokobarus the opportunity to invite their neighbouring communities to witness the festival. This also gives the people the opportunity to appraise the relationship with their neighbours.

Economic

The period of the festival witnesses boost in commercial activities. Transportation business increases as a result of people's movements from all over Nigeria into Kaiama. Tourist activities enjoy patronage while the local markets pay robust homage to visitors who came to buy consumable goods and other items from the market. Government's presence at the festival also created an opportunity for the community to showcase their economic and political strength to attract and sustain government attention towards a meaningful development for the community sustainability.

Conclusion

So far we have brought to bear the importance of festival in the promotion of culture, religious harmony and as conduit for peaceful co-existence among African people as epitomised in Gani Festival of the Bokobaru people of Kaiama in Kaima Local Government of Kwara State. The study has also underscored the significant of theatrical elements as embellishment of attraction in festival activities.

Our findings reveal that, in spite the incursion of foreign religions and western education, the Bokobarus people of Kaiama held their cultural heritage in high esteem, which is responsible for the full participation of sons and daughters of the community in the annual celebration of the festival. Also, we discovered that aside the social, economic and political gains, which were the beehive of the activities of the festival, promotes peaceful co-existence among the Bokobarus people of Kaiama.

The study concludes that Gani festival is an epitome of socio-religious programme where its events did not only provide avenue for celebration but provide boulevard for showcasing traditional and cultural heritage of Bokobaru people. Giving credence to this, in his remarks, the Emir of Kaiama, the custodian of Bokobarus'

cultural heritage asserted that, Gani festival is a cultural celebration that is beyond ordinary because some aspects of it is spiritual. Yes, it is. Although, some members of community members regard the festival as a gathering of fetish people that must not be encouraged. We therefore recommend that, the social groups in Kaiama should embark on enlightenment programme on the need to promote their cultural heritage for posterity. Tourism is a viable revenue generation that could improve the community's economic wellbeing. Gani Festival should be a benchmark for encouraging the globalisation of festival for sustainable development. In this direction, State Government should assist the local government and partner with other stakeholders with a view to creating enabling environment for a better attraction of tourists to the festival annually.

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