

The CRAB

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University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State

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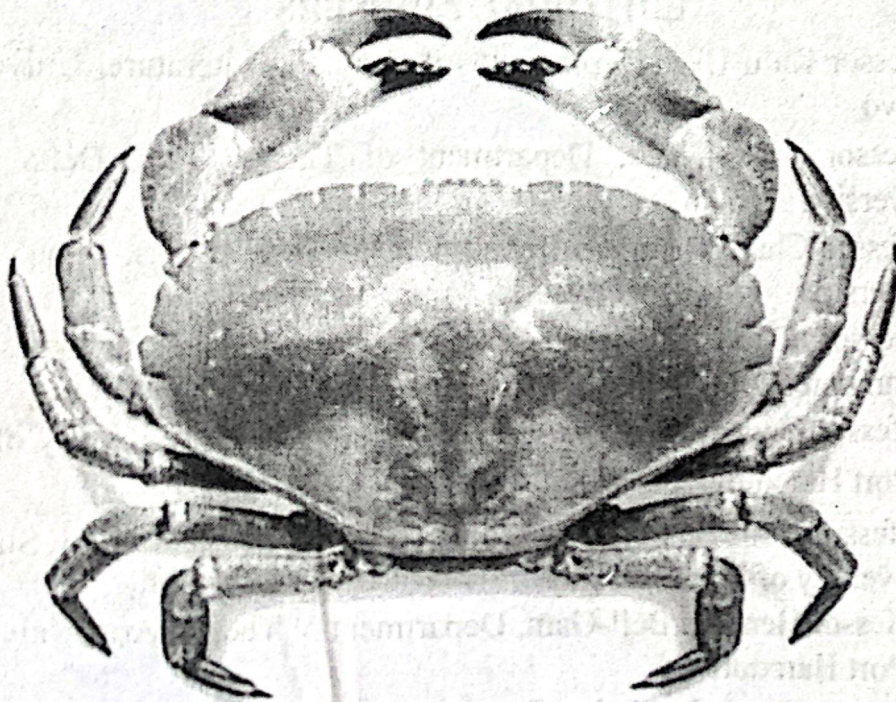


Bunmi Adedunq

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- Quotations which should not be in italics, must be in single line spacing and of the same font size as the main paper;
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Reinstating Extinct Cultural Practices: A Study of Olobonbori Performance

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Abstract

Culture is the holistic way of life of a group of people in a society. Culture is dynamic and peculiar to groups of people who share common interests and identity in, politics, religion, language, food, dance, music, dressing, celebrations and art in general. It is therefore not surprising that African societies place great premium on culture and loathe any act that derogates or contravenes these accepted practices. Cultural practices are not just meant for funfair or mere entertainment; they also perform other fundamental functions which are core to human existence in living or dying. This is the basis for carrying out this research on Olobonbori performed as dance by women, in a rite of passage peculiar to the circumcision lineage in Iseyin town, (a Yoruba speaking community), in Oyo State, Nigeria. Olobonbori would be a yardstick to measure and assess causes for decline and in some cases, total extinction of some cultural practices in African societies. A study of content, context and structural analysis of this performance was carried out based on detailed information gathered through observation, interview sessions and oral testimonies involving personalities who double as custodians of culture in Iseyin town, during the research. The investigation brought to fore reasons and causes for extinction of Olobonbori Performance just like some other cultural practices on the verge of total collapse or death. Finally, recommendations were made as likely solutions at ensuring sustainability, preservation and revitalization and continuity of this age long, dynamic but dying cultural practice was made.

Key Words: Culture, Cultural practices, Performance, Olobonbori, Extinction.

Introduction

Culture is unique in its dynamics to human existence. It provides fundamental texture of a people's life and means by which they articulate or express their thoughts through animate or inanimate objects, activities and actions. African societies are endowed with rich cultural heritage encoded in norms and values of the people, transmitted and conserved from one generation to another. The fusion of culture and heritage may be considered as fundamental aspects underpinning a country's national identity and sovereignty. Cultural heritage includes relics of the past, records, places, buildings, archives and traditions which preserve the pride and honour of a people. (Ajayi, Aiyeteru, Oluwa & Sulaka, 2017). Their view of culture is a

collective name of all the behavior patterns socially acquired and socially transmitted by means of symbols; hence a name for all the distinctive achievements of human groups including not only such terms as language, industry, art, science, law, government, moral and religion but also the material instrument or artifacts in which cultural achievements are embodied.

Culture is a holistic way of life of a people sharing same interests spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and materially. Hence, individuals belonging to a group of culture are unified and identified with certain traits that distinguish them from others. "Such cultural identities are seen as typologies of cultural behaviour being the appropriate and inappropriate ways of meeting basic needs and solving life's essential dilemmas" (Arinpe, 2017). It would therefore not be a fallacy to say that culture transcends all spheres of human existence. Hence, it is difficult to disentangle man and society from culture. In actual fact, man is an indispensable and constant element in culture (Ojo- Ade, 1989). This is why the evolution of culture cannot be achieved without man. In a world made up of so many ethical diversities, culture, is the only fluid that lubricates and constantly keep societies mobile. In a nutshell, "culture encompasses the tangible and intangible aspects of the people's way of life" (Babawale; 2007). Citing Camelleri, Arinpe (2017), conforms by stating that culture is the "sum total of the material and immaterial tools,

community; younger generations may not also be totally exonerated for lack of interest, contempt and misconceptions. With the passing away of older generations, younger generations adapt to a more globalized and modern world, abandon ancient traditions and the know-how necessary to maintain them. Subsequently, cultural indigenous knowledge of wealth and skills often vanish from the collective memory of a people while their only trace is left in anthologies and history books (Ariape, 2017).

These are some of the underlying factors that prompted this research on Olobonbori, a cultural practice in Iscayin town where it is domiciled but on its way to extinction. Iscayin town, apart from her prowess in agriculture especially cash crops like cashew, is popular in South West of Nigeria for cloth weaving and production textiles and traditional Yoruba fabric known as, *Aso Oke*. The town also has a strong and rich cultural background in observation of festivals, rites and traditional worship of deities, like Ogun, Sango, *Orisanla*, *Ifa*, *Esu* and others. Hence, Olobonbori is one out of the many cultural practices that Iscayin town engages in and like many others in this category, as dwindled in relevance and performance in recent times. The wave of modernity and civilisation has almost eroded its functionality within the community and little is being done to revive it. Coupled with this, is the scarcity of information which is now fragmented and almost inconsistent. Due to scarcity of information from books, journals, articles and other archival records, major information during interview sessions with elders in *Oloola* family and the community as they were the most reliable and dependable sources available; mostly when the request for a sponsored performance was made by researchers but turned down by the *Oloola* family on the grounds of non-availability of women, especially younger ones, to take part as the elderly ones were aged, weak and feeble to go through the energetic dances and activities involved.

Extinction of Cultural Practices

Most cultural practices in Africa are gradually going into extinction. Reasons for this are not farfetched. Extinction is linked to various factors combating and militating against culture as a dynamic human institution.

art works and knowledge accumulated by a people". This problem informed the summation of culture by UNESCO (2002) in Ishola (2010) as a "set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and creative features of a society or a social group, encompassing, in addition to a and literature, lifestyle, ways of living together, value system, tradition and belief".

Some cultural practices embedded in culture, that are gradually eroded Africa are inherent in religious and spiritual practices, arts and expressions, food and nutrition, governance, leadership, power authority, building and construction, medical practices, child practices, cultural institutions, design and a host of others. Alabi (1994) made a distinction between positive and negative cultural practices that affect women and children's health. Some positive ones identified as adequate care for new mothers for a period of forty days after childbirth prolonged breastfeeding and respect for elders, while those with negative effects include, early marriage, bathing in boiling water after delivery female circumcision, purging of infants and many others which is termed as 'harmful health practices'. It is however not the intention of this study to dwell on positivity or negativity of cultural practices, but necessary to call attention to this aspect which could be an area of further investigation by other researchers. Suffice to say that these cultural practices are extensions of the makeup and constituents of a people through which they find expressions for their continued existence and so many other cultures. They are therefore a distinct form of identity which is peculiar with its many inherent attributes, in terms of form contents and functionalities in the lives of the society concerned.

Furthermore, it has become imperative to uphold and ensure the continuous existence of cultural practices to prevent erosion or extinction of the rich cultural heritage. Cultural extinction occurs when an entire community or cultural group loses its core cultural practices; knowledge, resources and ability to continue them. This is irrespective of the fact that such a people may still retain their formal ethnic identity while the older generations directly involved in these practices could be blamed for shrouding them in secrecy and lack of transparency to co-

While some fragments can still be salvaged, others have totally gone into oblivion and may not be easily resurrected. Extinction occurs when an ethnic or cultural group loses its core cultural practices or the knowledge, resources and ability to continue them. In this regard, it is pertinent to recognize the efforts of individuals, organisations, institutions and government of Nigeria in ensuring the survival, preservation and transmission of cultural practices in upholding and building national identity. IFRA- Nigeria, a public research institute under French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is domiciled in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan and has been operating since 1990 as a front liner in promoting collaborative researches in Social Sciences and Humanities that include African languages, history, arts and culture. This body, has put together programmes such as seminars, symposia, workshops, talks and conferences (national and international) in the academia for students, scholars and researchers. Among the Yoruba ethnic group of Western Nigeria, there are also undeniable efforts by the 51st Ooni of Ife, His Imperial Majesty, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, Ojaja II, a traditional ruler of the Yoruba kingdom of Ile-Ife, since he ascended the throne in 2015. He has personally and jointly, sponsored, supported and encouraged researches and conferences for sustainability and posterity of culture and cultural practices, across borders. One of such is the 'Post-Olojo Colloquium Workshop on Arts, Culture Entertainment and Tourism in the Age of Globalization and Uncertainty', recently held at the Institute of Cultural Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, on November, 27, 2019.

This renewed interest and sponsorship of culture have transcended the shores of Nigeria by transforming some of these practices into 'cultural tourism'. Cultural tourism simply means, "movements of persons to specific cultural attractions, such as heritage sites, artistic and cultural manifestation, arts and drama outside their normal place of residence" (Arinpe, 2017). The essence of this movement could be education, business or recreation, to come in contact with places and activities that authenticate past and present histories of a people. A good example is the Osun Oshogbo Sacred Groove, (Yoruba goddess of fertility) in Osun State, Nigeria, which hosts many attendees thereby increasing

participation in the yearly ritual. Also, the now popular Argungu fishing and cultural festival in Kebbi State, in the North-Western part of Nigeria, has been transformed into an internationally acclaimed one that attracts tourists to the country on yearly basis. This has a long way in promoting cultural identity as seen in values, attitudes towards life, death, birth, family, religion, nature and so on. These cultural practices are manifestations of aspects of traditional cultural practices like religion, festivals, arts, governance, rites, rituals, dance, occupation and a host of others. There is therefore no better time than now, to create a distinctive outlook for cultural practices in Africa in the face of globalisation.

A Brief on Iseyin Town

Olobonbori performance is domiciled in Iseyin, a town in Oyo State, Western Nigeria. Chief Sikiru Adeniji, the current head of Koso community where Ogunsile family is situated, who gave oral details of the origin of Iseyin town ascertained that the town was founded by Prince Ogbolu after his many sojourns in other places in the quest for peace and lasting security. It was this city in the North-West of Oyo town, that finally provided good vegetation and security from invaders in times of war. He confirmed that, Ogbolu was a valiant and brave man who defended the integrity of Iseyin till death. So, Ogbolu became the first king as a result of his administrative prowess, charisma and friendly disposition. After his demise, one of his generals, Ebedi, who was supposed to succeed him had not returned from his search for magical power in Dahomey. In his place, Ebedi's son was chosen as king. Incidentally, on the day of installation, the older Ebedi returned but refused to enter the town so as to avoid paying homage to his son as custom demands. He remained at the outskirts of the town and there used his magical powers to transform himself alongside three of his slaves into four hills. The hills are known and referred to till date as *Ebedi*, *Oluofi*, *Eyinjue* and *Atamafon*. Accordingly, this incident marked the beginning of the worship of Ebedi hill in Iseyin, where sacrifices are offered to appease the gods for communal needs. Hence, the appellation of referring to Iseyin indigenes as "*Iseyin oro, omo Ebedi moko*", (Iseyin indigenes are true descendants of Ebedi).

In an exclusive interview with, Mr. Lateef Ogundeji, *Oloola* family head, he gave an elaborate account of the source, performance and essence of Olobonbori. According to him, Olobonbori is a rite of passage through dance performance in Iseyin held for illustrious, upright members of the *Oloola* family (circumcision lineage). As a custodian of culture, he claimed that the origin of Olobonbori has been traced to his ancestor, a man named, Ogunsile Isola Agbe, a trader, warrior and renowned expert at circumcision. He traveled vastly within and outside the borders of Nigeria and in all these places practiced his calling of circumcision. Some of these places include Ile-Ife, Oyo, Oshogbo and Benin Republic. He fathered children in all of these settlements and his children also took up circumcision and were experts at it. This explains why *Oloolas* are spread

Mr. Muraina Oloaletan, who is a son and member of *Oloola* family in Ogunstile compound, also doubles as the spokesman, explains the word, 'Olobonbori' to mean, 'covering of sacred parts'. The meaning however, is ironical to the content of performance given the fact that performance is done nude. The performance begins almost immediately, after a family member, especially an elderly one dies. The representative of the deceased's children will first inform the head of the family before the information is spread to all other members of the family. The corpse will then be prepared for burial and while this is going on the drummers are contacted. During burial, all family members including drummers will follow the corpse to the grave, its last home. Then rites of passage in form of ritual sacrifices and ancestral invocations will be performed before the corpse is covered with sand. Right at the burial ground, the children of the deceased will start removing their clothes raising obscene songs. Immediately, other members of the family will join them by stripping naked while chorusing the song. The lead drummer too will take cue and supply the expected musical accompaniment to the songs. This marks the commencement of Olobonbori performance. They will perform briefly at the burial ground and then march to town in a procession.

Mr. Olaoetan, sheds more light on the performance of Olobonbori especially the songs, dance and movements. Songs are led by the lead dancer or sometimes by the lead drummer while others chorus. As they

proceed, occasionally, they will stop, create space and put up a brief performance. This performance, according to him, include sexually provocative dance, gestures and movements, singing of obscene songs and display of mock sexual harassment are major features of the performance. Meanwhile, as the dancers perform, their bodies must be consistently kept wet with water. He described how *Atamu* an object that looks like a hand fan with a long handle (a prop made with elephant skin or lead) is dropped into the water and used to spray water on the bodies of performers. They keep moving from place to place still stopping occasionally to perform at various locations within the town. As they move along the community, as soon as other members of *Oloola* family hears the music, they will join thereby increasing the number of performers. It should be mentioned that despite the nature of their performances in the nude, audience still love, admire and even offer them gifts. Before they finally retire for the day, they will go to the shrine of Ogun (god of iron) and *Orisanla* (god of creation) where sacrifices will be offered to the gods. After this, they will gather at the deceased's compound, to do another brief performance and finally round off for the day. Eating and drinking follows immediately while the gifts received during the performance will be shared among them.

Analysis of Olobonbori Performance

Olobonbori performance is complex in nature. However, details will be given as they relate to form, style, structure and content as well as relevance and contributions to the society. Olobonbori is a processional dance performance involving the management of dancers round the town while making stoppages at important locations. The procession displays a great deal of mime, performance, gestures and demonstrations of symbolic action by performers (*Oloolas*). This feature makes it improvisational in nature with no specifically marked out performance space. Performers only stop to perform according to the spontaneous dictates of their mood, creativity and presence of the audience. The performance time may also last as long as it is engaging thereby removing the idea of duration or a fixed period. The family head, Mr Ogundeji further emphasises, that the personality of the deceased to a large extent determines the duration of performance which could last

from morning to night on daily basis, from one to seven (or more) days, if the dead *Oloola* is important, popular and well respected in the community. In other words, the performance may continue for as long as the situation demands depending on availability of resources and the caliber and status of the deceased.

Communal activity

He further gave a striking feature of Olobonbori performance as a cord that it binds the community as one. Singers, dancers, musicians and audience gather to partake in the event. It also gives room for audience participation through response, signs of approval or commendation. However, no member of the audience is permitted to jeer at the nudity or touch the performers (*Oloolas*). The audience can influence the duration of performance through their level of excitement and disposition to the dead. On the other hand, performers create suspense, surprise and excitement in a familiar, natural and authentic manner.

Communication

Olobonbori dance performance is a means of non-verbal communication, expressing deeper meanings in a compact and rapid manner without speech. Elements of non-verbal communication, such as gestures, signs, movement and gesticulations are employed by externalising concepts through bodily expressions, in a metaphoric and symbolic manner. All the modes of expressions are coded in meanings that complement one another. Hence, the mode, mood and emotions accompanying the performance can only be fully understood through the perception of the totality of above mentioned elements.

Songs

By virtue of his position as family head, Mr Ogundeji, highlights the importance of songs in Olobonbori performance. According to him songs are mainly satiric in nature and serve as a vehicle for social control and teaching of morals. Emphasis is laid on good moral conduct and conformity to social, cultural and belief in norms of the *Oloola* family and Iseyin at large. This encourages peaceful co-existence, harmony, unity, cohesion, solidarity and stability in the society. The songs are

vehicles for growth, development, sustenance, and meaningful existence of the society. They are also fully loaded with elements of preservation and transmission of cultural heritage of *Oloola* family. The songs are led by the head singers and backed up by the lead drummer. Some of the songs re-iterate the essence and rationale of performance, while others ridicule genital organs. In other instances, songs are composed in praise of dead members of *Oloola* family and also to chide and caution licentious lifestyles in the society as a check on the people. Some examples of songs were sung by Mr Ogundeji and a few old women present during the interview and translated by the researchers within the context of their meanings.

Songs	Translation
E ma bawa wi o	do not castigate us
Oro ile wa lanse	we are upholding our tradition

Meaning: The song is a deliberate attempt to explain the essence of the performance as being the family tradition.

Bi o si Olaogun, oko a ya o	But for Olaogun, the penis would burst
Obo a baje, oko a ya	The vagina would waste, the penis would burst.

Meaning: The above song is in honour of Olaogun, one of the seven children of Ogun. Olaogun was said to be a brave, caring and accommodating person. Hence. The song was composed to highlight his contributions to the *Oloola* family.

Ko ma le dele wa	They cannot come to our house
Isowo oni seyi n soun	Those with immoral acts
Ko ma se dele wa	Do not come to our house

Meaning: This song is an indication that members of *Oloola* family uphold chastity and fidelity. In actual fact, chastity is a treasured trait and adultery is a taboo in the *Oloola* family. Offenders will be punished and

such an act leads to the birth of a child, then that child would die and the woman severely punished.

N o fi tebi mi se	I will take care of my family
Bowo baku kobo lapo mi	I will spend my last kobo
N o fi tebi mi se	To take care of my family

Meaning: This song emphasises a high level of responsibility, commitment, bonding and dedication of *Oloola* family to the upkeep and wellbeing of their family. The song is also an advice to the audience to follow in their footsteps.

E ma fabere bo ra	Desist from the use of needles
Omo dara lehin obinrin	A child is a beauty on a woman's back
E ma fabere bora	Desist from the use of needles

Meaning: This song simply emphasises the beauty of marriage, procreation and raising a family. People are advised to desist from the use of injections for family planning. The more children that are given birth to, the more relevant the *Oloolas* will remain in their practice of circumcision socially and economically.

Summarily, songs in Olobonbori performance reflect the social, moral, religious and philosophical views of *Oloola* family. Dundun (Talking Drum) ensemble which is associated with *Obatala* (god of creation) and *Ogun* (god of iron) is the key musical instrument in Olobonbori performance. The choice of Dundun Drum by the *Oloolas* could possibly have been informed by their religious inclination as worshippers of *Ogun*. Before the commencement of performance, all family members worship at the family shrine to acknowledge their deities (*Ogun, Orisa Oko and Osa Oke*). The lead drummer at times doubles as the lead singer or dictates the song, pace and tempo. In such instances, the lead singer only re-echo the songs as raised by the Dundun drummer.

Spirituality

The spokesman for *Oloola* family, Mr Olaoletan emphasises elements of spirituality are core and very central to *Olobonbori* performance. As a rite of passage, the performance employs enactment for intensity. To start with, the act of stripping naked is ordinary as no man or woman in his or her right senses would go naked in a performance. This is not the case in this instance, where any member of *Oloola* that hears the music, comes running to join the procession like other performers. In his explanation, there is a transportation from the physical to spiritual realm where performers are momentarily possessed in an ecstasy that enables them do impossible things in normal situations. He further affirms that, as a member of *Oloola* family, an individual is bound to be possessed once the music is played or when in contact with the procession just like a momentary "madness". A member of the audience dares to jeer, touch or ridicule the *Oloola* during or after this act, rather life continues as usual as if nothing happened. The sacredness of the performance is captured in the hallowed and revered moments in the life of the performers.

Props and Symbols

A further insight given by Mr. Olaoletan identifies prominent props used during the performance of *Olobonbori*, to be, *Atanu Ila* and water. A vivid description reveals that *Atanu* is made from elephant skin to look like a hand fan. This object is used to spray or splash water on performers while dancing. Most importantly, he stated that, *Atanu Ila* is an essential item that every *Oloola* child must have as part of identification. It is dipped in water severally to make the bodies of dancers wet. This act has a deeper meaning than just preventing dehydration. A major function of the performance is to make the performer bold and overcome shame, shyness that may inhibit total participation. Also, it is used to ward off any evil in form of spiritual attack and unforeseen circumstances that could actually be curative. This therefore posits *Atanu Ila*, as a symbol of identity in the *Oloola* family, used for both physical and spiritual purposes. On the other hand, wet bodies of performers wash away evil targeted at them. It connotes purification in readiness for the interaction with the ancestors and gods and the physical audience.

Nudity and Obscenity

Information deduced from Chief Adeniji implies that, the female reproductive organ is a mystery, if it is exposed, negative or evil spirits will flee. To support the above assertion, he further explains that, in Yoruba land, an autocratic king could be dethroned by naked women in a protest march to his palace and he will have no choice but to abdicate. In essence, *Olobonbori* performance fulfils a psychological function of relief and release of emotions just as stated by Aristotle in his argument for the validity of drama. It creates opportunities, avenues and freedom to express, expose and talk about sexual organs without caution, inhibition or restriction. Parts of the body like *Oko*, (Penis) *Obo* (Vagina) *Omu* (breast) and *Idi* (buttocks) are talked about freely to release accumulated sexual emotions with excitement in a festive mood. Therefore, the expression of obscenity during *Olobonbori* performance accomplishes a constructive social demand. Moreover, sex organs and sexual acts are referred to in the panegyrics of *Oloolas*. For example,

B'obinrin o nirun lobo, aa ni do	We do not have sex with a woman without pubic hair
T'omu t'omu l'aanfe obinrin nile wa	We marry women with full breast in our family

Ordinarily, some parts of the body are expected to be covered. This explains why the term 'private parts' are used to refer to them. African culture however has created rare occasions to expose these private organs of the body to full public glare in a licentious display of nudity and obscenity in words and actions. Guyson, (2016) vividly paints several pictures of nudity as symbolic forms of collective protests in his journalistic reports. According to him. In 2012, Ugandan women were involved in 'naked protest' sparked up by Dr Stella Nyazi, in defiance of injustice and unfairness meted against her by being locked out of her office at the Institute of Social Research, Makerere University. This was no new development in the continent as 'naked protests' dates back to pre-colonial era when this display was a powerful tool to disgrace and embarrass abusive men, into behaving properly. Guyson further accounts that they later became part of the struggle for independence as seen in the

case of Wangari Maathai and other women in Kenya, during a pro-democracy struggle in 1999. He reported same of Leymah Gbowee in protest during Liberia civil war, when women threatened nudity because warring factions could not reach an agreement. Even right home in Nigeria, there was the case of Niger Delta women protesting nakedly against the actions of oil companies. These protests are not always to bring a curse on the offender(s) but to also communicate a sense of failure to the menfolk in these societies for failing in their responsibilities to the women. In the case in Olobonbori performance, nudity and obscenity are employed in fulfilling certain societal obligations and are widely accepted, unquestionable and devoid of sanctions especially during ritual and religious ceremonies. Broadly speaking, Olobonbori performance is an avenue for purgation of repressed emotions, catharsis and therapeutic purposes. In this performance, reference to sex occurs very often especially orally and in body movements. Olaoetan re-affirms that nudity and obscenity expressed during these performances are meant for spiritual cleansing and a neutralizer of negativity in the society.

Assessing the Gradual Extinction of Olobonbori Performance

Cultural extinction has taken centre stage through surreptitious imposition of other cultures on African soil in many guises. This has led to loss of history, traditions, customs, language, norms and values. Chief Adeniji affirms that Olobonbori has no doubt had its own share of setbacks as a result of cultural extinction. He apportions part of the blame to himself, that although he has not cancelled Olobonbori performance, neither has he made efforts to develop this age long tradition given his position and status. This explains the drastic decline in performance of this rite even at the demise of an *Oloola*. The implication is that this practice is gradually going into extinction, "...with increasingly extensive analysis of the sequences and trajectories of human cultural change around the world" (Walker, 2015). Discussions on erosion or extinction of cultural practices have become recurrent in researches and academia for some time now. Apparently there is a re-awakening to revive cultures that have become endangered as a result of new cultures, urbanisation, religious beliefs, technological advancements, migration and so on. The tilt towards cultural restoration is necessitated by factors such as loss of

history, identity, values, traditions and norms, which are major characteristics of a group of people. There are currently great and conscious efforts at fostering and creating cultural awareness for posterity and leagues to be inherited by future generations.

In the course of this research, a lot of discoveries were made which explains the present state of Olobonbori and threats to its continued existence. The following paragraphs will examine reasons for the gradual extinction of Olobonbori performance in Iseyin because "...cultures change with increasingly extensive analyses of the sequences and trajectories of human cultural change around the world" (Walker, 2015). For the purpose of this study, all of these inhibitions that pose a challenge to Olobonbori have been encapsulated into one whole entity in the word, 'Modernisation'. Walker, (20015) state that modernisation is a concept used by the Western world for mental erosion of cultural identity in the society through urbanisation, technology, industrialisation and education, all in the guise of transforming and developing the individuals to meet with demands of civilization. This, according to him, is in spite of arguments in support of Modernisation which is meant to improve crude ways of doing things, update knowledge, get rid of some problems of traditional lifestyle, but now pose as an obstacle in maintaining classical ways of life.

Effects of modernisation is multiple and rippling on Olobonbori rite of passage. Chief among them is the total embrace of Western Education. Majority of the general populace are now well-read, informed and enlightened on the hazardous health implications of some aspects of circumcision. There is a massive campaign against female circumcision now referred to as "Female Genital Mutilation" (FGM) or "Cutting" such as inscriptions of facial or bodily tribal marks within and outside the shores of Nigeria. Female Genital Mutilation is defined by Sunby, Essien and Johasen (2013) as

a harmful practice that affects women... this harmful practices associated with health risks... OB/GYN professionals face problems when delivering babies of women who have undergone FGM, yet others have to

provide different types of care to alleviate the problem especially the obstetric consequences and their management.

The consciousness and awareness of this harmful medical practice have resulted in total abandonment of this aspect of circumcision, which is now regarded as archaic and barbaric. This has also affected the inscription of tribal marks (which used to be an honourable act) on faces and parts of the body in times past. Now, anyone caught in such acts may likely end up being prosecuted and probably face the full wrath of the laws of the land by paying a fine of up to Two Hundred Thousand Naira or jail term of up to Four years. This is as provided in Section 6 of the VAPP Act for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). (Ugwu, 2018).

Subsequently, the practice of circumcision except for male genital organs, has become a thing of the past. In fact, male circumcision has left the confines of customs or traditions into the public, especially the into the sphere of Modern Medicine. Medical practitioners such as doctors and nurses now carry out male circumcision in hospitals in a more hygienic and technologically advanced equipment and environment. Therefore, the services of *Oloolas* are scarcely needed. They have been stripped of the sacredness of their practice as most parents hardly patronise them with their babies. Apart from the long time standing history of their forefathers, new *Oloolas* are now less relevant in Iseyin community.

Following closely is urbanisation which is an outcome of technological developments and advancements. This, Mr. Ogundeji alluded to, the migration of indigenes of most rural areas including Iseyin, to urban areas where better opportunities for livelihood and improved living conditions abound. An outfall of this is that new generations of *Oloola* family are born outside Iseyin town and are distanced from the practice of circumcision or involvement in the performance of rite of passage. Some do not even want to be identified with these practices which to them are now outdated.

The influence of new and foreign religions like Christianity and Islam is also a key factor that has diminished the popularity of Olobonbori. These religions have tagged many cultural practices as evil, demonic and devilish to their converts, adherents and followers who originally practiced traditional religion where this rite is domiciled. A good instance is that of Mr. Muraina Olaoetan, who is still involved in circumcision as a profession but has disengaged from Olobonbori rites. This is largely due to his involvement in Islamic religion, where he has been made the *Dadani*, (interpreter to the Imam) of Koso Central Mosque. It is therefore not surprising that members of *Oloola* family have abandoned this family heritage and tradition because of the various religious connotations and interpretations ascribed to the practice from foreign religions.

Another high wave influence that has led to the degeneration of Olobonbori is the advent of social media and its unchecked freedom in the 21st Century which may lead to the abuse of sacredness of nudity and obscenity. New generations of *Oloola* family are aware of the adverse effects of their involvement in the rite of passage when transmitted on social media outlets like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and a host of others. For instance, if images of their naked bodies are posted and viewed on line, it could affect their social status and standing in the larger societies. In other words, it has become a shameful act to parade nakedly in full public glare in the name of a cultural practice in fulfilment of a rite of passage for a departed member of the family. So in order to avoid jeering or being shame faced, abstinence from Olobonbori has become the order of the day.

Recommendations

Having identified the militating factors against Olobonbori performance, it is imperative to suggest and advance new approaches to this cultural practice to salvage its relics and prevent its total collapse and extinction. This can be achieved by a total overhauling and re-packaging of this performance, tilting it towards artistic perspectives. There could be inclusion of other forms of performances from within and outside Iseyin as side attractions. It could become an annual or bi-annual performance

thrown open to other arts and not shrouded in secrecy and imposed restrictions. By so doing, it would also serve entertainment purposes to a larger audience.

As a follow up, there might also be the need to change or amend some aspects of performance of Olobonbori performance without necessarily affecting its essence and motives. A major aspect for restructuring here is that of nudity which is a major factor that is disenchanting to new generations of *Oloola* descendants. In place of this, a special costume could be designed to conceal private parts of the women who would still like to participate in the performance. Apart from encouraging full and active involvement of younger generation women, it would also add to the aesthetics of the performance.

Another area to be worked upon is a conscious effort by *Oloola*'s family and Iseyin indigenes to make this cultural practice, tourists attraction. The leadership of Iseyin as well as the people of Iseyin home and abroad should use their goodwill, positions of authority, social status and financial resources to enlarge the coast of Olobonbori rite of passage. In the same vein, massive publicity drive should be embarked upon to inform and enlighten the wider and larger populace of the importance of this performance. This act will certainly boost the economy of Iseyin and create new opportunities for trade and transactions. For instance, there could be branding of items made from *aso oke*, which Iseyin is originally and popularly known for. Such branded items could be face caps, T-shirts, exercise books, wristbands by corporate sponsorship could be provided as promotional items by national and international companies and organisations in fulfilment of their social responsibilities.

Conclusion

Cultural Practices are ingrained in the culture of a people. As part of human entity, it is almost inseparable from the totality of humans underlining beliefs and values as they relate on daily basis. It is however necessary in the wake of modernisation and globalisation to restructure and repackage some of these sociocultural practices to make them acceptable and popular. Taboos and prohibitions hinged on religious

beliefs, rigid traditions, moral judgement and activities shrouded in secrecy are major obstacles that need to be overcome. A paradigm shift is important to gear up the interest of younger generations especially, youths, who through their vibrancy can introduce new dimensions to the content and presentation while retaining the essence of these cultural practices.

A reorganisation to re-birth Olobonbori performance will be a right step in the right direction in re-ordering societal norms, values and virtues. It will enhance the culture of integrity, cooperation, peaceful co-existence, honesty and tolerance, which are major requirements of long lasting human relationships. Most importantly, older generations who are custodians of this cultural practice need to devise means of transferring knowledge of Olobonbori to new generations for continuity by recording and preserving them through many available modern media. Upholding and preserving Olobonbori performance will promote a sacred and well-structured display of morality for sexual sanctity. It will extol and revere marriage and family institutions, uphold morality, discourage infidelity, prostitution and other related vices ravaging societies. Above all, it will continue to fulfil its ultimate purpose as a rite of passage to properly bid farewell to departed souls and establish a finality to their existence here on earth as they transit to the world beyond.

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