

Issues and Themes in Traditional Festivals as Agents of Social Mobilization: A Look at Egungun and Oro Festivals

Lukman Adegboyega, Abioye Ph.D
Department of Mass Communication
Lead City University
Ibadan, Nigeria.
gboyegaabioye@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper examines the role of traditional festivals as agents of social mobilization with a focus on Egungun and Oro traditional festivals in South West Nigeria. The paper adopts Social Mobilization theory as theoretical framework to illustrate the importance of value change, which can lead to the development of the community. The paper identified the challenges facing traditional festivals in realizing its roles of social mobilization. Egungun festival in South West Nigeria is prone to hijack by the political elites who use them to cause havoc in the society. Some masquerades have turned themselves into political thugs carrying dangerous weapons to victimize members of the society. The paper concludes that, traditional festival if properly harnessed would remain an important agent of social mobilization. In spite of the challenges, the Egungun festival and Oro traditional festivals are important social mobilization platforms in South West Nigeria. The study therefore recommends total overhauling of the festivals to meet the desired goal it intends to achieve where miscreants and hoodlums will not play prominent roles during the festival. Involvement of corporate organizations in financing traditional festivals could bring some sanity and attraction into it, thereby turning it into cultural and tourist attraction.

Keywords: Social mobilization, African Communication System, Community, Traditional Festivals, Community Development

Introduction

Social mobilization is a fundamental component of community development. It allows people to think and understand their situation and to organize and initiate action for their growth and development. Through mobilization, people can organize themselves to initiate and take collective action for the common goal of championing their own plan and strategy for development rather than being imposed from outside (UN Habitat, 2016). "Communities that take charge of their own development will make informed decisions, reach sustainable solutions, and achieve better results faster, while at the same time enhancing their solidarity and capacity to undertake development initiatives" (UN Habitat, 2016).

Social mobilization is practiced in many different ways by development practitioners. It could come in different platforms pursuing different developmental

agenda. In Africa, traditional festivals are important platforms for mobilizing the people. Traditional festivals provide opportunity for the elders to pass on folk and tribal love to younger generations. Traditional festivals of many ethnic group anchor the preservation of unique customs, folktales, costumes, occupations and religious life of the people (Adeoye 1979). Egungun and Oro festivals among the Yoruba speaking tribe of South West Nigeria will be explored and their social mobilization process will be reviewed. The Egungun (Masquerade) festival is a yearly festival observed for several days to appease the spirits of the ancestors. It is believed that during the festival the dead members of the community will come back to make prayers for the living ones.

Ogwu (2013) notes that masquerade play important roles in the traditional African setting, they serve as the link between the living and their dead relatives. It is believed that the dead visits the living from time to time through this medium. It is on this premise that the African traditional society was built upon and thus has helped a lot in safeguarding the society to a large extent. The Egungun and Oro festivals are filled with fanfare, wining and dining with every member of the community coming together to grace the occasion. The Ifa priest has a significant role to play in the appeasement of the dead heroes and presentation of sacrificial objects to the deities. The Oro masquerade is regarded as the law enforcement agent of the community. It is used to check bad behaviors among members of the community. Oro masquerade is used to enforce compliance to the rules and regulations guiding members of the community. During Oro festival bad occurrences thought to have been kept secret are revealed so as to change the behavior and character of those that are involved for better.

There are similarities in the organizational structures of the two festivals (Egungun/Oro) as both of them are meant to mobilize members of the community towards revitalization of their cultural heritage and social norms. The two festivals which are normally anchored by the Ifa priests must have the blessing of the Obas and chiefs in the community before dates are picked for the occasion. Various traditional prayers, sacrifices and incantations are made by the masquerades to appease the dead who will be visiting the livings during the festivals. These festivals are normally regarded as communal celebrations which may involve careful planning, pouring of libations, drumming, dancing, eating and merry making as approved by the customs and the Ifa priests.

In the past, traditional festivals are held in high esteem by every member of the community because of the significant roles they play in social mobilization. In recent times, western education and activities of various religious organizations have diminished the impact of Egungun and Oro festivals in the social and political lives of the Yoruba people. There is clamour in certain quarters that the festivals should be discontinued due to the activities of hoodlums who have hijacked the festivals and turned it into weapon of oppression (www.nigerianbestforum.com, 2013).

The political class is also found guilty of using the masquerades to unleash terror on the society. There are instances where masquerades carry dangerous weapons like guns, cutlasses, and some other life threatening weapons during Egungun festival (Orji,

2012). Ogunbor (2017) reported that the Nigerian Egungun festival degenerated into a bloody clash between Muslims and adherents of the masquerades. In similar direction, African Travel News of May 5, 2017 reported that there was a clash between masquerades followers and Muslims in Oyo state.

Considering the importance of traditional festivals in the African societies and the crucial place of *Egungun and Oro* traditional festivals as a social mobilization platform, this paper examines issues and themes of the two festivals in their role in social mobilization. The paper is guided by the following objectives

- To identify the issues in *Egungun and Oro* traditional festivals as agent of social mobilization strategies adopted by Egungun/Oro festivals for social mobilization.
- To identify the Egungun and Oro traditional festivals strategies for social mobilization.
- To identify themes in *Egungun and Oro* traditional festivals as agent of social mobilization.

Conceptual Clarification

Festivals are important aspects of African communication systems. African communication systems can be defined as indigenous communication. According to Ansu-Kyeremeh (1998:2-3), any form of endogenous communication system by virtue of its origin, form and integration into a scientific culture serves as a channel for messages in a way and manner that requires the utilization of values, symbolism, institutions and ethos of the host culture through its unique qualities and attributes. In order to put the paper in proper perspective it is necessary to understand some vital concepts in African communication system. The concepts are as stated below.

Egungun/Oro Festival: These festivals are celebrated yearly with elaborate fun fare, drumming, singing, dancing with major aims of appeasing the deities and ancestral spirits that give good health, bountiful harvests, protection from enemies, victory at wars, breakthrough in business and general well being of the community (Awolalu 1979).

African Traditional Religion: It is the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the African people, and its existence dated back to the creation of African race as its faith is held by the forefathers and it is being practiced today in various forms by large numbers of Africans including those who claimed to be Muslims and the Christians. African traditional religion is based on oral tradition, history, rituals, incantations and fetishism (Ikime 1984).

Communication: This is the process of sharing ideas, information and messages with someone who shares the same field of experience with the source. Communication can be in writing, talking as well as non-verbal such as facial expression, body language, and visual communications, such as photographs, films and videos. Communication is *sine qua nonto* human existence (Goldhaber, 1993).

Community: Community is a group of people who live in the same vicinity with similarities in culture, religion, and social values. At times, they may be members of the same family and share common interest.

Community Development: Community Development is a process designed to create conditions of economic and social transformation for members of the community which may involve their active participation and initiative (Sanda 1992).

Community Mobilization: Community mobilization is a process through which members of a given community are conscientized for a developmental action stimulated by the community itself or a change agent. The community itself can evaluate this action and in most cases, it is geared towards improvement in health, agriculture, hygiene and education levels so as to improve the overall standard of living of the members of the community (Moemeka, 2012).

Culture: Culture can be defined as the people's ways of life that is influenced by the environment and correlate with behavior and values (Nwegbu et.al. 2011).

Deity: A deity is a small god which people refer to for solution to their problems. It is worshipped through incantations and sacrifices offered by the priest on behalf of the worshippers. Deity can evolve from the spirits of the ancestors, god of river, thunder and iron. (Adeniran 1992).

Development: This can be referred to as remarkable change in the quality of life of members of a community. Sanda (1992) defines development as multi-dimensional referring to positive change which affect the majority and which lies in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres of societal life. Development entails change in attitude, better ways of doing things, ability to tolerate one another and knowing that government cannot do everything for us are all part of development (Moemeka 1989).

Development Communication: This refers to the use of principles and practices of communication strategies for developmental purposes. Development communication plays transformational and socialization roles. In the area of transformational role, it addresses the issue of social change in the direction of enhanced quality of life and social justice. Its socialization role refers to the prevention of the established societal values, which are related to development and well being of the society (Moemeka 2012).

Egungun (Masquerade): This refers to the spirit of the reincarnation of the ancestors among the Yoruba's in the South West region of Nigeria. The Egungun is usually dressed with marks and costumes covering every part of the body and it is difficult for people to know the person wearing the masquerade garment. However, it is forbidden for womenfolk to see or catch a glimpse of some specialized masquerades in Yoruba land.

In most cases, it is not everybody that can wear the masquerade garments except those that come from families where they have family masquerade (Adeoye 1979).

Festivals: Festivals are communal celebration which is carefully planned by the traditional institution in the community. It is the Obas (king) and his chiefs that approve traditional festivals, which involves outpouring of libations, rejoicing, winning and dinning, general fun fare, and merry making. In some cases cultural groups, corporate organizations and non-governmental organizations sponsor traditional festivals.

Ifa Diviner: An Ifa diviner is a man or woman who possesses the skill of consulting Ifa Oracle for solving human, spiritual or natural problems. Ifa Oracle tells the diviner or priest what will happen or has happened and causes of problems in society and their spiritual solutions. Ifa Priest normally dresses in white apparel and they are known to live above corruption, lies and manipulations. Ifa Oracle has the power to foretell future events and discover hidden knowledge by supernatural means (Ogwu 2010).

Oba : An Oba in Yoruba speaking region of South West Nigeria is the traditional head of a town, village or city, and he is usually assisted by his Council of Chiefs. Various tiers of government in Nigeria recognize this institution, as they are known as the custodian of traditional culture, norms, values, religions and peaceful co-existence among the people (Oso 2004).

Oro : Oro is another form of masquerade in the South West Nigeria. It is a traditional deity used for the cleansing of the society and it is forbidden for womenfolk to see or have any contact with Oro Masquerade because it is a deity of secrecy among the Yoruba's (Osiewele 2007).

Religion : Religion is a collection of belief and cultural systems and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and sometimes to moral values. The practice of religion may include rituals, incantations, libations, festivals, dance, art and music (Awolalu, 1979).

Sacrifice: This refers to the practice of offering hens, goats, dogs, fruits, and plants to a deity as appeasement to seek supernatural assistance from the goddess (Ogwu 2010).

Social Mobilization: It is referred to as pooling together of potential human resources for the purpose of development (Moemeka 2012).

Supreme Being: The Yorubas in South West Nigeria refer to God as Supreme Being to whom all deities report. He has the highest authority to answer or reject prayers.

Talking Drum: This refers to a type of drum having two faces to be used by the drummer to talk to the audience and for adding color to music. It is also used to praise or condemn individuals in the society (Ojebode 2006).

Traditional Communication: This is a form of indigenous communication system which has been interpreted into the people's culture, values and attributes (Wilson 1998). Traditional communication makes use of this media for dissemination of information. Ndolo (2006) refers to traditional media as credible, indigenous and acceptable channels of communication utilized by rural dwellers for various societal functions.

Traditional Folk Music: This is referred to as music transmitted by words of mouth and it evolves by process of oral transmission or performed by custom over a long period of time.

Dominant African Cultural Values: According to Ndolo (2006), the following come closer to the core value and boundaries of African culture.

1. The role of the Supreme God/Allah and lesser gods in the daily lives of the Africans.
2. The African concept of time and its influence on him/her.
3. The African concept of work and its relationship to how he/she perceives his/her own relationship to nature.
4. An extended family system that encompasses many degrees of life beyond the nuclear family.
5. Reverence for ancestors.
6. Strong sense of communication as opposed to individualism.
7. Loyalty to chieftainships assumed to be possessed of spiritual temporal power.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Social mobilization theory

Social mobilization theory is an interdisciplinary study within the social sciences that generally seeks to explain why social mobilization occurs, the forms under which it manifests, as well as potential social, cultural, and political consequences. It was propounded by K.W. Deutsch in 1953. Deutsch (1953) contends that communication plays a major role in molding divergent peoples into a modern nation-state; conversely, groups disunite because of a communicative rupture. Communication reinforces other factors which also create national consciousness (such as race, culture, geography, fear of common enemies). Deutsch comments that communication only influences a particular segment of the population: the mobilized citizenry. According to Deutsch, social mobilization is the name given to an overall process of change which happens to substantial parts of the population in countries which are moving from traditional to modern ways of life.

The workings of this process are described by Deutsch (1961) as "major clusters old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded and broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior. Citizens engaged in this process are the mobilized population and become the nucleus for a modern nation-state. It is something that happens to large numbers of people in areas which undergo modernization, i.e., where advanced, non-traditional practices in culture, technology and economic life are introduced and accepted on a considerable scale.

This paper examines how traditional festivals can be used as agents of social mobilization in a positive way with specific focus on the Egungun and Oro festivals in southwest Nigeria. These festivals as pointed out can be used to disseminate information to the people while entertaining them at once. Its necessary to note that the modernization of the society is not an excuse for traditional activities and ways of life to go into extinction. Those in charge of age long traditional African festivals can restructure them and other tradition related activities in a way that it will achieve the needed purpose without affecting the peaceful fabric of the average Nigerian society.

Literature Review

Egungun is otherwise known as masked ancestors of the Yorubas which assures the people that dead are among the living. Amongst the Yorubas, this annual ceremony in honour of the dead serves as a means of assuring their ancestors a place among the living. In family situations, a family elder known either formally or informally as *Alagba* presides over ancestral rites.

The Egungun is one of the pillars of the Yoruba tradition and it is one of the festivals that unite Yoruba people from different communities. Most people regardless of their religious affiliation participate in the festival for exciting atmosphere, comprising the songs, dancing and the colorful costumes of the ancestors (<https://jujufilms.tv1/.../yorubaland-egungun>).

Egungun speaks in strange voices, people especially children believe Egungun comes from "Heaven" purposely for the festival. During Egungun festival public service announcements are made by the government for people to plan their routes because of traffic jam it may cause. The festival is celebrated between the months of November and April when there are no rains, with the belief that the ancestors should not suffer in the rain. The Egungun masquerade is dressed in colorful regalia with a whip which is used to flog anyone in the way of the spirits. The festival is believed to help foster unity in the community and it is also economically beneficial (www.facts.ng/culture).

Social Mobilization

Social mobilization has been described as the pooling together of potential resources for the purpose of development (Moemeka, 2012). Socialization leads to development. Some of the indices for development include the following:

- Education (schools – nursery, primary, secondary, tertiary, professional)
- Training (becoming tradesmen and women)
- Health (excellent hospitals, health centers, dispensaries, etc.)
- Employment opportunities (including manufacturing)

- Respect for law and order. Courts that are independent and can deliver fair/true judgments.
 - Responsible government that is close to and cares for the people
 - Modern infrastructure – light, water, good roads and so on.
 - Agriculture – modern agricultural practices leading to abundant and inexpensive food.
 - Protection of territorial integrity so that citizens can live in peace in their country.
- Hindrances to development include
- Illiteracy – this may be the most set back to development.
 - Poverty – this is also as devastating as illiteracy and many times may actually operate together.
 - Government policies that may be inimical to development.
 - Uneven or unequal development of various groups in the society.

Oso (2004) noted that social mobilization entails:

“The commitment of people to certain collective goals and objectives, and to value and behavior patterns conducive to the timely attainment of those goals and objectives. As a corollary, it entails also minimizing the commitment of people of such goals, objectives, values and adopted by society”

This assertion sees social mobilization as an act of getting people to participate, support and or partake in a particular course of action. Thus mobilization efforts is successful when majority of the people for whom action is intended participate in the action after due mobilization.

Babalola (2004) posits that the essence of mobilization is to put together the talents in a particular community for developmental programme. To Babalola op cit, it is the human resource of a nation not its material resources that determine the nature, direction and speed of its socio-economic development.

At the centre of social mobilization is the development of man, as man is the agent, the target and the beneficiary of social mobilization. Development comes in through the creative energy of man. Therefore, mobilization should be concerned with the provision of those conditions which will facilitate the realization of man’s creative potentials.

Development however does not start with provision of infrastructure nor goods and services but start with people through conscientization, orientation, organization and appreciation of cultural values, norms and acceptable ways of living. Development that focuses on things at the expense of human resources is no development because a society can be poor amidst opulent material resources. Proper orientation, organization, mobilization of human resources engenders sustainable development.

Traditional Festival as Tools for Social Mobilization

Gregory (2008) remarks that traditional festivals have many uses and values beyond the public enjoyment orchestrated in societal celebrations. Gregory (op. cit) notes that in the pre-historic societies, festivals are known to have provided an opportunity for the elders to pass on folk knowledge and the meaning of tribal love to younger

generations. The festivals of many ethnic groups are credited with the presentation of unique customs, folktales, costumes and culinary skills.

It is part of the customs and tradition of the Yoruba people to celebrate Egungun or other festival yearly for merriment, prayers and social interactions. Festivals are regarded as communal celebrations involving carefully planned programmes, power of libations, sacrifices, incantations, prayers, rejoicing, established by custom and usually sponsored by the traditional institutions of the community.

Depending on the central purpose of a festival, the celebration may be solemn or joyful. In Yoruba speaking South West Nigeria, traditional festivals are observed to serve the need of the various communities to honour their dead heroes. It may also be in the form of offering sacrifices to the deities to thank the god for bumper harvest, Egungun / Oro festivals are celebrated to honour the founders of communities in Yoruba land that have become deities.

Thus, the Yoruba people see festivals as agent of social mobilization. That explains why Oloyede (2004) remarks that mobilization is the act of organizing somebody ready for service or action and that mobilization denotes that act of getting people ready to participate that is, to support and or partake in a particular course of action. Mobilizing people at the community or grassroots level is always a very difficult task particularly when one proposes to use strategies or tactics used in the city where the elites reside. The level of illiteracy and poverty is high in some part of the South West, Nigeria that explain why festivals, the use of traditional rulers and chiefs, age-grade societies, local churches, market days and other African communication channels are used for passing information to the people in the community.

Method

The paper relied on observation over time the problems associated with Egungun and Oro festivals in south west Nigeria systematic review to gather relevant data.

Results

Issues in Egungun and Oro Festivals as Agents of Social Mobilization

Some issues in Egungun and Oro festival are presented and discussed below. They are:

Legal issues: Sometimes the Egungun and Oro clashes with spectators. In fact, sometimes, it leads to bloodshed and death. This raises some legal questions: can the masquerade be arrested? Since, it is an ancestral spirit, how can this be handled? This is a legal issue that does not have readymade solution. Daily Champion (Lagos) published a news story titled: "Nigeria: Court jails masquerades. An Osogbo magistrate court has ordered that nine masquerades be remanded in Ilesa Prison in Osun state. Www.nigerianeye.com published a story on April 3, 2017 titled "Enugu police threaten to arrest masquerades. The police Public Relations officer was reported to have given the warning. News Express also published a story on August 23, 2015 in which two masquerades were arrested over robbery. The two masquerades were accused of beating

up a man on motorcycle and stealing fifty seven thousand naira from the man (www.newsexpressngr.com).

Ethics/moral issues: the Oro sometimes exposes the evil deeds of people. There are instances where the expositions lead to violent reactions by the people. This situation brings up an ethical and moral issue. It raises the question: just how far can the Oro go?

Development issues: it may be difficult at times for everyone to agree with what constitutes development. For example, development in China, is it the same as development in Mali? Using Egungun and Oro as agents of mobilization for development, whose model of development are we adopting.

Knowing their boundaries: the Egungun and Oro participants sometimes do not know their boundaries. They do not know that a modern world has emerged and some actions that the society may have accepted in the past may not be condoned now.

Vendetta: people to settle scores with their enemies have used the Egungun or Oro masquerades. This raises moral, ethical and other issues. If truly the masquerades are from the ancestors, will they behave in this way?

Dearth of those wearing the mask: as people who wear the mask become older and the younger ones become more educated, there is a dearth of those who would step into their shoes. This raises an issue and the question: will Egungun and Oro festival disappear with time?

Globalization and culture mutation: the world is moving towards becoming a global village. This means that in this era of globalization, there will be a mutation of cultures. This will certainly affect the Egungun and the Oro as we know them now. This is an issue that those responsible for the propagation of culture must take note of.

Display of Magical powers: there are cases of pandemonium when masquerades clash with police leading to display of magical and fetish objects and extorting money from motorists as it happened in Uyo, capital of Akwa Ibom state on April 29, 2012. This led to the death of a masquerade (www.nigerianeye.com). Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada in Nigeria inquired about Oro festival including the role of Oro priest and whether or not he or she is masked; whether there are any penalties invoked against those who observe the priest performing his rituals (In mid July 1999, a clash between Yorubas and Hausas (available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3df4be794.html>, accessed 5th June 2017) was reported to have been sparked off by Yoruba killing an Hausa woman who was outside her home at night during the Oro festival (Post Express, 22nd July 2017). AFP reported that at least 66 people were killed. A curfew was imposed in Sagamu by the state government. A few days later, the clashes spread to Kano, apparently in

retaliation. Post Express reports that no fewer than 40 people died (28th July 1999). In the 1960s in a court in Sakete, Benin Republic, a case of two groups of Oro worshippers who quarreled violently even at gun point. The judge asked them this question: “Mo se bi eyinni e ngbeigba Oro; ki lo wa de ti e ko mo ede Oro? (It is shameful that you worshippers of Oro do not understand the language or the message of Oro (11th August 1999) (www.refworld.org).

Under the present situation where Egungun and Oro festivals are not being properly utilized to mobilize members of the community. This paper recognizes the need to restructure the whole Egungun and Oro festival process. In line with the new restructuring process, there is need to totally disconnect Egungun and Oro Festivals from traditional African religion where there are norms for magical display, fetishism, incantation, rituals, thuggery and hooliganism among others. Under the new restructuring arrangement, the Egungun and Oro festival will not be attached to any religion, traditional, Islamic or Christian religion. The Egungun and Oro festival will now be used for entertainment, cultural display, dances, etc. there is going to be total eradication of family masquerade where the Ifa priest and elders in the family will lay hold on the operation of the Egungun festival. The new restructuring exercise will make it possible for Egungun to come and entertain at social functions; Musicians, artistes, cultural groups and any interested members of the public could have masquerades as means of entertainment and money making venture.

This new arrangement will not allow the use of masquerade to unleash terror in the society. The new restructuring exercise will make it more attractive as a means of social mobilization because every member of the society will see it as our cultural restructuring exercise and thus it could be used as a potent aspect of social mobilization and tourism activities. It will even provide jobs for youths and elders that are talented in folk music, drummers and the masquerade dancing group.

Under the new arrangement, masquerade dancers could entertain at any social event either in the church, mosque or public places. In the process of entertainment, development messages can be passed to people under a relaxed atmosphere. During town hall meetings, Masquerade can be used to entertain members of the rural community and during such occasions, develop messages that can be passed to the people.

Egungun and Oro traditional Festivals Strategies for Social Mobilization

According to Oso (2004), “strategies” is referred to as a well planned series of actions set out for achieving an aim or set of objective, and for effective grassroots mobilization to be achieved he highlighted the following points.

1. Identifying the real people to be mobilized. This involves not just knowing their names and addresses but their histories, locations within the social structure, power and hierarchical structure, economic and social base.
2. Understanding of goals and objective of these people and groups and their methods of operations. This will help in approaching them at all times.

3. Identification and recognition of the local authority structure as embodied in the traditional institution of the Obas and Baales in many of our towns and villages.
4. Reaching out to the elites' social clubs and age grades that are abroad and come home occasionally to celebrate festivals. If properly mobilized, they could be veritable instruments in the development process at the grassroots level.
5. Identification of special days of many towns and communities whereby people are expected to come together, celebrate their achievements, launch development programmes, raise funds etc. Such special days provide a good opportunity for development agents to interact with different groups, be able to influence their programmes and agenda.
6. Identification of traditional festival days whereby youth, women and the old come home to celebrate such festivals e.g. Egungun festival.
7. Attitude of social mobilization agents also matters. They are not to be arrogant towards the people or thought them all to be illiterates.
8. Every effort at social mobilization must involve a well-articulated communication strategy. Effective success-oriented efforts at social mobilization must incorporate the modalities for the proper dissemination and exchange of ideas and the ideals for development.

Market Square Meeting

Virtually all villages in Nigeria have market where members of the community do their shopping. People visit the village market from within and outside the village and this gives an opportunity for interaction whereby information are disseminated and received with immediate feedback in some cases (Akpabio 2003). Egungun masquerade can be used to entertain members of the community during market square meetings.

Village Viewing Centre

Onabajo (2002) defines village viewing centre as a controlled theatre for impacting knowledge as well as a rallying point for people in the rural areas to be adequately informed about government programmes and aspiration. It is a place where public service information, like poverty alleviation programme, civic responsibility, agricultural and health information can be disseminated to people. Village viewing centre can also be used as a social platform where Egungun and Oro masquerades can come to entertain people through dancing and other acceptable means of social entertainment.

Folklore/Drama/Music

This is used to express the tradition and culture of the people, and they constitute age long practice among the people as the villagers believe in the messages learnt from it. Oziwele (2007) argue that it can be used to condemn some traditional practices like female genital mutilation, child abuse, women trafficking and it is believed that the messages learnt from it can go a long way in reaching the people at the grass root levels (Wilson, 1998). Folklore and music are essential features of oratory entertainment by the

elderly people who take charge of the Egungun and Oro masquerade during their outings. Age long tradition of the people are thus expressed to entertain the masquerade followers.

House to House Visitation

This involves social visit among the grass root people for various social reasons and it could provide a platform for the exchange of ideas, so also burning issues affecting the community could be discussed. Through house to house visitation interpersonal communication is enhanced with immediate feedback. Notable members of the community are visited in their respective houses by the masquerades to exchange pleasantries with them.

Village or Town Crier

This is the process whereby the town crier goes around the village on the instruction of the traditional ruler to disseminate information to residents in the neighborhood with his metal or wooden gong. This concept of information dissemination gives room for interpersonal communication where immediate feedback is of essence (Onabajo 2002). The services of town criers are needed to inform members of the public when and where the Egungun/Oro will be at a particular time. Town criers are used to warn the women folks about the danger of coming in contact with the Oro/Egungun masquerade.

Motorized Campaign

This involves using a motor vehicle affixed with microphone to move around the community using the loudspeaker of the microphone to pass information to the people. Information on immunization, birth control, hygiene and civic responsibilities are usually passed across to the people using motorized campaign strategies (Agbo et al 2010). Because of the distance and different places the Egungun will visit, at times, they go on motor arcade so as to reduce the stress of walking.

Local Church/Mosques

Places of worship are veritable and effective forum for exchange of ideas and information while the role of religious leaders cannot be over emphasized in dissemination of information that is development based. Governments at all level including the Non Governmental Organization engage the services of religious leaders to preach peace and harmony in the community (Agbo et al 2010). Masquerades and their followers cut across Islamic and Christian religions. Religious leaders can use the opportunity of religious services to preach violence free festivals among the youths who may wish to participate in Egungun festival in their respective communities.

Issues in Egungun Festival

A lot of sociopolitical issues are coming to fore which have implication for future realization of the objectives which traditional festivals are meant to serve among the

Yorubas. If these threats are not quickly mitigated the value of African traditional festivals may continue to fade away which may lead to total abandonment of this important culture of the people. The issues are:

- a. Hijacking of traditional festival (Egungun/Oro) by hoodlums thereby turning the festival into a weapon of oppression, terror, looting and social disorder (Ogunbor, 2017).

There are instances where masquerades carry firearms and some of their followers lost their lives in gunshots while some are maimed or wounded making the public to call for total disbandment of Egungun festivals by the government.

- b. In similar vein there is lack of proper orientation among the younger generation of what traditional festival is all about. The concepts of using traditional festival to make prayers have gone among the youth. Their own understanding of it is synonymous with thuggery, looting, and agent of political oppression, where there is no respect for traditional institution (African Travel News, May 5, 2017). Some unemployed youths take to begging for alms under the guise of carrying masquerades.

- c. Problem of continuity is a major challenge among families having masquerade. There are complaints that when the older people carrying the masquerade dies, the younger members of the family are always reluctant to step into their shoes. This is not unconnected with various religious beliefs which have negative coloration for African traditional religions. In addition to this, the influence of western education has relegated to the background the practice of African traditional religions. People see traditional religion as being fetish, crude and anti social.

Themes in Egungun and Oro festivals as agents of social mobilization

A few themes can readily be identified such as conflict. There appears to be a lot of conflict in Egungun and Oro as agents of socialization. Such conflicts include

Communication – Egungun and Oro engage in extramundane communication. That is communication between the living and the dead. This type of communication can be bottom up – when human beings speak to the Egungun. It could be top down – when the Egungun brings information from the deities or ancestors and it could be horizontal when the Egunguns discuss within themselves.

Peace/Assurance – Masquerades can engender peace among the people and assurance because people believe they are under the protection of ancestors.

Social Control– because people are afraid that the masquerade and Oro can expose them, this can lead to conformity by the people leading to societal control.

Extramundane Communication – there is a feeling of safety among the people because they believe the line(s) of communication between them and their ancestors are open though masquerades and Oro.

Development

Egungun festival attracts many people from all walks of life. It is believed that this large influx of people can lead to development of that society because those coming for the ceremony from all over the world can enhance progress of the village or city.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be observed that Egungun and Oro traditional festivals indeed can be used for social mobilization and indeed for development of many societies because of the following reasons:

- Education: Egungun and Oro as agents of mobilization can be used to educate their communities. This education could be in the areas of right conduct, ethical and moral behaviour of the citizens and more.
- Entertainment: entertainment is a function that is embedded in the activities of Egungun and Oro. This can be used to pass down development communication.
- Conflict between traditional and modern ways of life. Social mobilization leads to progress and development. Development implies a departure from well known traditional ways or blending of the old ways with modern ways. This certainly will lead to conflict.
- Theme of conflict of conservatives and liberals. There are those who want the status quo to remain, who want the life they know to continue. Others want and need change. There is therefore conflict between the two groups of people.
- Modern versus traditional religion. Many Nigerians are not quite sure whether to fully embrace the ‘foreign’ religions of Christianity and Islam and jettison the traditional religion or reject the ‘foreign’ religions and accept the traditional religion. This has led to a situation where there is a blend of traditional religion and Islam/Christianity. This is another conflict situation.
- Theme of tourism and culture. The government may be in a dilemma as to whether the Egungun or Oro festivals should be cultural as they are or be tweaked to make them more attractive to visitors and thus promote tourism, a great foreign exchange earner. This could be another source of conflict.
- Egungun and Oro festivals can lead to improved social mobilization and indeed societal development if the government steps in to overhaul the system by enacting laws that will create an enabling environment.

The study concludes that the traditional institution like the Obas and Chiefs should be involved in maintaining peace and tranquility during festive periods with age grades well involved in the planning processes.

Recommendations

Egungun and Oro festivals can act as effective agents of social mobilization and development. However, there is a need to overhaul the system to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency. To this end, the following recommendations are made if we are to continue with the old order:

- Government should enact laws guiding the Egungun and Oro festivals so that the organizers will understand the legal implications of their actions.
- Egungun and Oro festivals can be a rallying point for people to cross match and cross-fertilize ideas for social mobilization and development.
- There should be improved security arrangements during the festivals to secure lives and property and to protect foreigners who will be in attendance during the festivals.
- There should be orientation programmes for those participating in the wearing of the Egungun and Oro masquerades and the spectators so that everyone will know their boundaries to prevent clashes between them.
- Conflict management and resolution. Since conflict is inevitable in circumstances like this, a committee should be set up by the government to look into and settle conflicts that may arise between Egungun, Oro and the people.
- Government should enact policies that will engender peace among different ethnic groups living in the same area. This is because Egungun and Oro cannot perform their social mobilization roles in crisis.
- Other aspects, mode and channels of African communication systems should be included in the social mobilization process.
- In addition, government should also improve on the infrastructure on ground. For example, pavilions stadia can be used for these festivals. This measure will not only make the festivals safer, it would make them more attractive.
- Those using the Egungun and Oro masquerades for vendetta should be discouraged from doing so because it is a complete negation of the role of the Egungun and Oro in social mobilization. No Egungun or Oro masquerade should be allowed to carry weapons.
- The more fetish aspects of Egungun and Oro should be removed. This is because sometimes, unhealthy rivalry and competition among Egungun and Oro cult groups can lead to exchange of curses and other unwholesome practices, which may frighten spectators. In addition, other channels of African communication systems should also be used to ensure a more effective social mobilization.
- Government and traditional authorities can come together and determine how far the masquerade or Oro can go in the issue of invasion of privacy. Government should then enact laws that will protect individuals from undue invasion or their privacy.
- In the area of development, the relevant authorities should spell out the areas of development where the Egungun and the Oro can be used most effectively.

- People should be educated on the dangers of using masquerades or the Oro for vendetta. This is because the violence that may ensue if this trend is not checked may cause very serious damage to our social institutions.
- The dearth of those wearing the masquerade or Oro masks can be checked if young people are properly educated on the importance of keeping this cultural practice alive. In addition, the fetish elements of the masquerade and Oro should be removed so that youths who have embraced the religions of Christianity and Islam can find the wearing of the masquerade and Oro festivals attractive.
- If there is enough enlightenment and young people embrace the concept of the masquerade and Oro, then these cultural institutions will be able to withstand globalization and cultural mutation.

Since the old order has not yielded the desired result, there should be a total reform of Egungun/Oro masquerade festival where it will only be used as means of entertainment and could be embraced by all other religions. There should be total detachment of masquerade from spiritual activities. Under this arrangement, social organizations can have masquerades that they can use for entertainment or any other social purposes. The role of the Ifa priest or Alagba should be discountenanced. Furthermore, the process of the old order should be visited in such a way that there will be sanity in Egungun masquerade festival celebration.

Development is an ongoing life process. It is continuous and unending. Egungun and Oro can contribute their own quota effectively in the process of social mobilization and community development if their activities are well coordinated. For Egungun/Oro festivals not to go into extinction, the study recommends that there should be proper re-orientation of people so that they can understand the concept of Egungun festival and by extension African communication system. The belief that the traditional festival is fetish should be erased, while government at all levels should accord necessary recognition to African traditional festivals either by restructuring its processes to fit into modern tourist attraction which could serve as promoting our cultural values and traditional to the western world.

Notable Corporate organizations can also be involved in sponsoring traditional festivals where government will ensure orderliness and peaceful mobilization of the people. There is need for government legislation against using masquerade as agent of political oppression or social disorder while emphasizing religious harmony among citizenry where no religion can claim supremacy over the other.

References

- Adeoye C.L. (1979). *Asaatiise Yoruba*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press
- Agbo, B., Ojobo, I. and Ezinma C. (2010). *Issues in development communication*. Enugu: John Jacob's Classic Publishers Ltd.
- Akinjobi, I.A. and Ayandele, E.A. (1984). Yoruba land up to 1800. In Ikime O. (ed). *Ground work of Nigeria History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria Ltd
- Akpabio E. (2003). *African communication system: An introductory text*. Lagos: B. Print Publications
- Awolalu, J.O. (1979). *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. Essex: Longman Group Limited.
- Deutsch, K. W. (1953). *Nationalism and social communication*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Deutsch, K. W. (1961). Social mobilization and political development. *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 55, No. 3 493-514
- Goldhaber, G. (1993). *Organizational communication* (6th ed). Madison: Brown and Benchmark
- Gregory, R.W. (2008). *Festivals and feasts*. Microsoft (R) Student 2008 (DVD). Redmond, W.A: Microsoft 2007.
- Higgins, JPT and Green, S. (2008). *Cochrane handbook for systematic reviews of interventions*. Hoboken (Wiley Cochrane Series).
- Moemeka, A.A. (2012). *Development communication in action: building, understanding and creating participation*. New York: University Press of America
- Nwegbu, M.U., Eze, C.C. and Asogwu, B.E. (2011). Globalization of cultural heritage: Issues, impacts and inevitable challenges for Nigeria. In *Library, Philosophy and Practice*. <http://unilib.uni.edu/tpp/> accessed on 14/5/2015.
- Ogunbor, B. (2017). *Nigerian Egungun Festival degenerate into bloody clash between Muslims and adherents*. Retrieved 20 May 2017 from www.nigeriacircle.com/news/Nigeria-egungun-festiva-degenerate-into-bloody-clash-between-muslims-adherents/
- Ogwu, P.S. (2010, 30 November). *Igalamasquerade*. The Nigerian Tribune.
- Oloyede, B. (2004). *Communication Channels as a Means of Achieving Effective Grassroots Mobilization*. Being a paper presented at the 3-Day Workshop on Effective Communication and Public Relations at the Local Government Level in Abeokuta.
- Oso, L. (2004). *Effective Mobilization and Communication Strategies at the Grassroots Level*. Being a Paper Presented at a 3-Day Workshop on Effective Communication and Public Relations at the Local Government Level in Abeokuta.
- Oziwele, P.E. (2007). The relevance of traditional communication in the face of modernity in Soola E. (Ed) *Ebenezer Soola Conference on Communication*

- Proceedings*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2007). Pp. 305-307.
- Sanda, A.O. (1992). *Sociology of development*. Ibadan: Fact Finders International
- UN Habitat (2016). *Social mobilization*. Retrieved from www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/docs/publications/pdf/peoples_process/ChapterII-Social_Mobilization.pdf
- Wilson, D. (1998). A taxonomy of traditional media in Africa. In Kwasi. A. (ed). *Perspectives of Indigenous communication in Africa*. University