

The Influence of the Kingship Institution on Olojo Festival in Ile-Ife: A Case Study of the Late Ooni Adesoji Aderemi

by

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Abstract

In this paper an attempt is made to examine the mythic narratives and ritual performances in olojo festival and to discuss the traditional involvement of the Ooni of Ife during the festivals, making reference to the late Ooni Adesoji Adèrèmi. This paper also investigates the implication of local, national and international politics on the traditional festival in Ile-Ife. The importance of the study arrives as a result of the significance of the Ile-Ife amidst the Yoruba towns. More so, festivals have cultural significance that makes some unique turning point in the history of most Yoruba society. Olojo festival serves as the worship of deities and a bridge between the society and the spiritual world. It is also a day to celebrate the re-enactment of time. Olojo festival demands the full participation of the reigning Ooni of Ife. The result of the field investigation revealed that the myth of Olojo festival remains, but several changes have crept into the ritual process and performances during the reign of the late Adesoji Adèrèmi. The changes vary from the ritual time, space, actions and amidst the ritual specialists. It is found out that some factors which influence these changes include religious contestation, ritual modernization, economics and political change not at the neglect of the king's involvement in the local, national and international politics which has given space for questioning the Yoruba kingship institution. Therefore, this paper draws upon the strength of phenomenology and indigenous hermeneutics; it is justified in the words of Olupona "that is the researcher explore paradigms and modes of interpretation that are explicitly embedded in the tradition one is studying. Because these traditions are interpretative, our understanding of them should be taken into consideration how they provide meaning to those who encounter them". The scholar will highlight the interpretative meanings within these traditions and incorporate them into the largest discussion of African experience^[1].

Keywords: Olojo, Festival, Ooni, Ritual, Myth, Politics

Introduction

Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival is one of the annual festivals celebrated in Ile-Ife. Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ as a spectacle provides a good understanding of Yoruba myth, history, belief and the ceremonial significance of Ile-Ife. It is a ritual which captures the religious and socio-cultural core value of the sacred city of Ile-Ife^[2], and its annual celebration renews the people's belief and as well serves as the civil faith of Ife people rooted in belief in the sacredness of kingship institution. The festival is about the hero Ọ̀gún, a personality with enormous wealth and political powers.

The mythic narrative of Ile-Ife as center of Yoruba civilization and universe is considered in the context of a ritual practice of renewal of people's faith. Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival's prime relevance lies in the full participation of the reigning king.

Myth of Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ Festival

Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival evokes the myth of the journey of deities into Yoruba land. Ọ̀gún led the deities and parted way for them to reach their destination. Ọ̀gún as a warrior fought for the people of Ile-Ife and created their cosmogony. Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀' s rituals are the link with ideology of Ife existence, and his cooperative effort with Ọ̀rànmiyàn, the cultural hero of Ife who is also a warrior and a king in a Yoruba community, Oyo.

The shrine of Ọ̀gún at Ọ̀kè-Mògún, in the Centre of Ife, is the place where Ọ̀gún descended into the underworld, and this is where it is worshiped. A respondent claimed that Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ may be synonymous to Ọ̀rànmiyàn, another warrior, and the Ọ̀ṣoni because they are the direct son of Oduduwa^[3]. Although the connection between the three mythic figures (Ọ̀gún , Ọ̀rànmiyàn and Ọ̀ṣoni) is not as straight forward as the respondent says, it provides a template for understanding the complex relations between the three figures firmly rooted in Ife cosmology.

Ọ̀gún is known for his competence in iron technology, which was to create tools for other deities to perform their roles on earth. In this wise, Ọ̀gún is often called 'Osin Imole' (leaders of deities). He creates in the belief of the people the cutlass for farming, the hunting weaponry and the war equipment for battle; his leadership and his warrior-like personality is to be associated with the monarchy and as the being regarded as one of the Ọ̀ṣoni who reigned in Ile-Ife. Ọ̀rànmiyàn, though unlike Ọ̀gún in character, is the Yoruba deity who expanded the kingdom of Ife to the East and as far as Benin kingdom. Ọ̀rànmiyàn founded the ancient Oyo Empire, giving birth to the modern Yoruba civilization. Ọ̀gún, the focus of Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀, is called Ọ̀gún Ereja, (Ọ̀gún of market) meaning through him the kingship is linked to market economy^[4].

Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival began with the third Ọ̀ṣi of Ife known as Ọ̀gún. The exact date of the origins of the festival is yet to be determined but could be dated back to the 11th through the 15th century. The celebration usually takes place in the mid October which means it is celebrated in the ninth or tenth month of the lunar calendar. The four days of Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival start with *Ilàgún*, the animal sacrifice to Ọ̀gún ; *Òkè-Mògún* proper, the king's first visit to Ọ̀gún shrine; and *Òkè-Mògún Keji*, the king's second visit to Ọ̀gún shrine.

The Ọ̀ṣi (king of Ife) appears after several days of seclusion and denial, communing with the ancestors and praying for his people. This is to make him pure and ensure the efficacy for his prayers. The Ọ̀ṣi later appears in the public with *Are* crown (king's Crown), which is believed to be the original crown used by *Oduduwa* to lead a procession of traditional chiefs and priests to perform at the shrine. Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ serves as the biggest festival on cultural calendar of the *Ile-Ife* people. All *Ife* indigenes at home and abroad always come together to worship Ọ̀gún, the progenitor of *Ife* 'Odaye' (*Ife* at the inception). Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival has remained popular in *Ile-Ife* because of its myth and history. It connotes the year specially blessed by *Olódùmarè*. Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival is done every year in *Ile-Ife* for the king to perform his duty and renewal of oath.

Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ Ritual Performances

Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ ritual starts with picking of date done by the calendar keeper, chief *Eredumi* the priest of *Ọ̀rànmiyàn*. The chief priest in charge of the festival ceremony determines the most favorable time for the festival in the month of October. A key informant said that, the exact data for Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀, as opposed to the *Ife* festivals that are determined by the appearance of the new moon, is determined by the position of the sun, indicating that Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival is a solar ceremony. Chief *Eredumi*, an Ọ̀gún priest, announces the actual data of the festival to the public^[5]. Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ comes up every year during the month of October, after *Luwo* festival (a festival done in remembrance of the only female Ọ̀ṣi).

Oral tradition suggested that *luwo's* tenure was marked by monumental achievements, especially in the area of landscape and architecture designs, of *Ife*. *Luwo* made it clear that her foot paths and surrounding environment must be paved with pottery sherd. The priest of *Ọ̀rànmiyàn* fixed the data for the festival through the divination of '*Obi dida*' (throwing of *kolanut*). Once the date is fixed, there is no turning back. It is also confirmed that at the approach of the festival, the Ọ̀ṣi hear the voice of an invisible drum from the spirit and immediately come home from wherever he is at the time, so as to be in seclusion with the spirits for the seven days that precede the festival.

A week before the commencement of Qløjṣ festival, the king begins his own ritual by going into seclusion and performing private prayer. Qløjṣ festival starts with the daily sacred enchantments of Ògún and *Qrànmiyàn* called 'Gbàjúre! Gbàjúre! Gbàjúre!! *ebo re a fin, etutu re da.....*' (May your sacrifices be accepted). Various women from the household of Ògún, especially from Akògún compound, gather in the evening to sing the praises of two war deities *Qrànmiyàn* and Ògún, and remind the people that the festival is approaching. The shrine of Ògún is decorated with palm fronds (*mariwo*) to signify the commencement of the festival, while women from Eredumi compound would, three days to the commencement of the festival, do the spiritual cleansing of the palace^[6].

Ritual Specialists and Ritual Process

Ọṣni of Ifè taking the center stage mediate the relationship between the dead and the living. The Ọṣni of Ife, who appear in the public with *Are*, the special beaded crown and leads procession of tradition chiefs and priests to performs renewal of oath to Ògún and visits some places of historical significance like past Ọṣnis' graves and compounds and Aje shrine. Oṣògún the chief priest of Qløjṣ festival celebration and in this capacity provides the necessary materials need for the ritual performance. He leads the ritual process, with other performing chiefs following him. He dresses in red regalia, which symbolizes power, and appears in the shrine of Ògún with sword of authority. Notable chiefs directly associated with Qløjṣ festival, include Akògún and *Obawara*. They each have specific roles to play during the festival. Chief *Eredumi*, a descendant of Ọṣni *Qrànmiyàn* is not just a great warrior but also the calendar keeper, in charge of data picking for Qløjṣ festival. He is also the priest of *orànmiyàn*. The Akògún of Ife is war-like in character. He is in charge by tradition to remind the king of the commencement of the festival, through an invisible drum known as *Aluja*^[7]. *Qbajio* is in charge of the decoration of Òkè-Mògún shrine during Qløjṣ festival. He answers to the clarion call of Oṣògún during the festival and smashes the head of the dog used for sacrifice.

Qløjṣ festival is a four-day event. The first day, which is normally a Friday is called *Ilàgún* day. The second day, being Saturday is called the first visit to Òkè-Mògún while the third day being Sunday, is the grand finale for merry-making. The last day is Monday which is the second Òkè-Mògún. Early in the morning of *Ilàgún* day, a search party from Oba's place goes out to hunt for two dogs that will be sacrificed. In the pre-colonial days, the search party will have done so at mid-night and the captured dog is tied to the pole and brought to the palace. The manner of the captured dog reflects the personality of Ògún, a violent deity, who claims his human victims violently without warning this being so whether be it in hunting, in war or in accidents on the road. One informant, who is a member of the raid team, explains why the dog was being captured from the street- to indicate the public nature of the festivals. In the pre-colonial era, the sacrificed victim could have been human victims. They would have empowered themselves with some traditional medicine, juju and herbs bathing and be able to perform magic and invocation^[8].

The Oṣògún dressed in red regalia, lead the procession to Òkè-Mògún. He moves to first the Ọṣni palace with his entourage, among whom is a man carrying a leather bag containing some instrument of sacrifices and knives. Some chiefs led by *Lowa*, head of the palace chiefs, was waiting in the palace for the arrival of Oṣògún and when he arrives they hand over a small pot of medicine, as a message from the Ọṣni that the Oṣògún should proceed to Òkè-Mògún and make the sacrifice to Ògún. The Oṣògún then, invokes Ògún and prays for the Ọṣni as follow: “*Kábiyèsí , Aláse, Ekeji Òriṣà* (king, owner of sacred power, second only to God), may you reign long, may you conquer your enemies^[9].”

Next *Oṣògún* calls on *Ọbajio* to come with a club and smash the head of the dog. The dog, a victim, is then tied and the club is held above the head. With one blow, he smashes the head of the dog. The victim dies before it is tied to the Ògún trees for disembowelment. With a sharp knife, the dog’s stomach is cut open so that the bowel and intestines are visible through the gaping hole and the blood flows out over the stones and entrance to the shrine. The king’s emissary offers hen and red palm oil to complete the ritual by Oṣògún. Plenty of oil is poured on the dog and hen, and with the kola nut, prayers are offered for the king, his subject and the entire city.

Findings further revealed that offerings are made to both *Ògún Ode* (Ògún at the exterior) and *Ògún Ile* (Ògún at the interior) who is believed to be keeping vigil on the house and its occupants). For this reason, the expression that “*Ògún Ilé la a kọkọ bọ, ki a lee r’ẹsẹ bọ t’òdẹ*” (we have to propitiate the Ògún inside so as to have the peace of propitiating the Ògún at the entrance of the house) is made. The *Oṣògún* offers dry fish, kola nut and dog. The cutting of the dog was so different from the *Ògún Ilé* inside the main shrine. The second dog is killed, only the blood is shed and the head of the dog is offered as sacrifice to the deity while the rest of the body is taken by people to eat in their various homes.

After the sacrifice, the Oṣògún opens the tip of the two snail shells and pour the snail slime on the hand of the chief because Ògún is known as the hot-tempered deity. The snails’ liquid represent the *ẹrọ* which is antidote to dangerous and hot occurrences^[10].

After the ilàgún, people make merry, dance and sing praise to the deity. The houses of all the chiefs associated with the festival are filled with visitors from far and near who have come to celebrate with them. The next pilgrim to Òkè-Mògún is the next day of ilàgún, the day always witnesses the large crowd of people, Ọṣni of Ilé-Ifè wearing the beaded ‘Are’ Crown to Òkè-Mògún re-enacts the myths of his power. There are some special outstanding groups which always surface during Ọlọjọ festival. Olupona puts them into categories which include Sòókò (they are the male members of the royal family) princes who usually dress in ‘*Agbádá*’, and hat with fringe of thread covering their faces. The dressing of the *Sòókò* as seen by Olupona shows their strong tie to the Ọṣni and their divine right to the throne.

The second group are the medicine men (*eléshinjé*) and women who protect the king during the festival from evil forces that may harm him. The medicine men display the power of their medicine. They guide and ensure that rain does not fall while the *Qløjø* is in process. They publicly displayed their '*àfòse*' (animal horn made of medicine) and they whispered some incantation to stop the rain and the women behind them shout '*Ewe*' (leave).

The third group is the palace servants, referred to as *Lókolóko* in *Qløjø* festival. They serve as traditional police and bodyguard to the *Qøni*; they also controlled the crowd with their whips around and scare people away during the ritual process. Half of their body is paint with white lime (*Efun*) and red camwood (*Osùn*).

They perform some spiritual activities like carrying *Ebo* (sacrifice) from the palace to *Òkè-Mògún* and awaiting the arrival of *Oşògún* and *Qøni*. The drummers also follow them with heavy gong and bell named *Òsírìgì*.

The last groups include the hunters, drivers, and blacksmiths. They all carry their association's banner, showing the symbol of what the association is about. The drivers also carry their own banner, and the '*Egbé Qmø Odùwà*' (OPC: Oduduwa People's Congress) is not left out.

In the afternoon people are in the palace court, awaiting the king's arrival with the *Are* crown. A royal drum, the *òsírìgì*, reverberated in the inner court yard; the crowd immediately stood to welcome the king. Wearing the *Are* crown covering his face, *Qøni* emerges from the inner palace with his entourage. His assistance carried the sword and some ladies, each holding white a pigeon in their hand. Once the crowd gazes on the crown, they greet the *Qøni* and with a barrage of prayer ask for good health and as well curse their enemies, since the '*Arè*' was believed to be powerful^[11].

Qøni flaps the beads of the crown to gaze the face of the crowd. *Qøni* leads the crowd and the chiefs to the shrine and *Qøni* dishes out prayers to the people '*Arè á gbè ó*' (*Arè* will help you). Various chiefs including *Qún Ife*, *Òsì Ife*, *Modèwà*, the palace chief and the priestly *Ìsòrò*, prostrated themselves in front of the *Qøni*, acknowledging his authority as divine ruler. They also represent the ruling class in the community. At the arrival of *Qøni* in the *Ògún* shrine, *Oşògún* then marks the sword with *Efun* representing the consecration and acknowledgment of the *Qøni*'s visit to *Ògún*'s home. The sword is returned to the *Sòókò*, *Qøni* and *Oşògún* struck sword and lock fingers, signifying the authority given to *Qøni* that He will always overcome his enemies, symbolising the ultimate power of the *Qøni* over all mortals in the kingdom and also signifying that the people have to meet under the patronage of *Ògún*.

After the visit to *Òkè-Mògún*, *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* visits *ọ̀ja Ifè*, where the goddess of *Ajé* (goddess of wealth) is situated. *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* controls the spirit of the four walls of *Ifè*, by summoning the spirit that regulate the *Ifè* universe at a T-junction and makes his presence felt by the evil ones who want to negate his prayers. He appeals to the witches for a successful year.

The goddess of *ọ̀ja Ifè 'Ajé'* is important in the gender discourse and the contestation of the public space. When men occupy the ritual and public space, the women occupy the market place^[12]. In the *Yorùbá* culture, the market place is a public centre where deliberations are made. People come in close contact with each other on daily basis and it is an avenue to exchange pleasantries as well as where women gossip. Businesses are conducted in that arena and are mostly dominated by women. In the present dispensation, men are also contesting for space in the market place. Men perform business activity in this arena and there is a space for the men in the administrative arms of the market.

Ọ̀ṣ̀ni returns to the palace and removes the *Arè* on his head till the following year. The third day is always known as a break. The fourth day of *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* is called *Òkè-Mògún keji*. The king also visited the *Ògún* shrine with *orikògbófo cap* (head does not go empty). He repeats all the rituals done the previous visit. The *Oṣògún* leads the *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* in a circle around the *Ògún* shrine, and they strike each other's swords, exchange pleasantries, and pray for the coming year.

In the last phase of the ritual, the *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* visits his patrilineal house at *Ìlàré* quarters. On his way out, he meets with some elders of his own royal lineage to pick the official date for *Edi* festival. *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* then moved round the quarters and royal houses related to him, who awaited his arrival; he stopped at intermediaries to acknowledge the greetings of the people and to accept gifts offered to him. *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* greeted the members of the specific Royal Houses, who had decorated their compounds with the royal insignia: a crown and horsetail flywhisk. They had erected sign post stating the name of their royal household: *Ògbóru Olódò*, *Ògbóru Adejokin*. Although, these houses share the same royal king relationship with the king as a co-member of *Ògbóru* lineage and kinship, they do not represent the direct descendants of the house of *Olúbùse*.

The last destination of the *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* is his family house, *Ògbóru Olódò Olúbùse*. The elder women wearing the same uniform known as *aṣo ebi* (the same traditional cloth) honor the *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* by singing praises of the King and his lineage. *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* festival recognizes the divine powers, that, there are some forces that regulate human affairs and the control of the universe. *Ọ̀ṣ̀ni* recognized some principal deities by paying homage to their various shrines. These agents are progenitors of the world and the kinship institution.

The Celebration Of Qlojor Festival Under Adesoji Adèrèmi

This part starts by giving a brief history of Oba *Adèsoji Adèrèmi* and the practices of the Qlojor festival under their regimes, highlighting his early life, education, and ascension to the throne. It also investigates the influence of his personalities on the celebration of Qlojor festival in the wider scope of the political arena and in the spiritual governance of the society.

Titus Martins *Adèsoji Tadenikawo Adèrèmi* 1 was born on November 15, 1889 into a royal family of *Àkúí* compound in Ilé-Ifè. His early life revolved around his mother *Adèkúnbi* who hailed from *ìpetumodu*, because his father *Gbadebo* died in 1897 when he was eight. *Adèsoji Adèrèmi's* history would not be complete without reference to his maternal side in *ìpetumodu*. When Prince *Adèrèmi* was Ten years old he was trained as a *Babalawo* (Ifa priest)^[13]. The early life of prince *Adèrèmi* changed towards Western Education in 1899 with the advent of the European missionary who brought Christianity and western education to Ilé-Ifè. *Adèrèmi* started his primary education at St. Philip *Ìyékéré*, Ilé-Ifè in 1901^[14]. *Adèrèmi* was a bright student during his time; he was offered a teaching job after his education at the same school for three years. During this time, He wanted to be sent to St Andrew's College *Òyó*, but his mother wouldn't agree on the conditions of living far from her^[15].

He then left teaching and worked with the Nigerian Railway Service in 1909, where he had a distinguished career. While at the railway service, he started as a staff of the Engineering department before being transferred to the Traffic department where he served as a clerk. He also worked for many European firms and merchandise. He furthermore served as produce agent for John Holt Limited as well as other companies like the African Trading Company, in various locations of Nigeria. He traded in kola nut, cotton, cocoa and palm-kernel in Ilé-Ifè and neighboring towns. He expanded his business into other spheres, especially principally in the transport trade^[16].

Prince *Adèrèmi's* growing wealth and popularity made *Ọṣni Oba Ademiluyi* the, reigning king, suspicious and jealous of *Adèrèmi*. *Adèrèmi* used his leisure time to tell stories about the town and offered people kolanut and beer. He was a modern man of the world and had interest in Yorùbá history and Ifè society as a whole^[17]. *Adèrèmi* was highly influential among Yorùbá businessmen. This might have given him an upper hand to the throne of the *Ọṣni* after the death of *Ademiluyi*. The death of *Ademiluyi Ajagún* on June 24, 1930, created a leadership vacuum in the ancient city of Ilé-Ifè, which was later filled by the newly crowned *Adèrèmi*. He was installed in September, 1930. He was chosen over the lesser educated rivals, Prince *Adewoyin* from *Lafogido* ruling house and Prince *Adedire* from *Giesi* house. As *Ọṣni*, he was instrumental to the establishment of *Oduduwa College* in Ilé-Ifè and later the establishment of two feeder primary schools. In 1947, *Adèrèmi* was also a member of the Nigerian Legislative Council^[18].

The first eighteen years of King *Adèrèmi* in Ilé-Ifè witnessed tremendous socio-economic progress in the ancient city of Ilé-Ifè, in an atmosphere of relative internal peace and cooperation with the colonial authorities. He was named a first-class Oba because of his considerable influence in politics under the British colonial indirect rule. He used his power to reject premier of the region, *Samuel Ladoke Akintola*, sensing the premier did not have the support of the majority members of the House of Assembly.

The influence of King *Adèsojì Adèrèmi* might have given him such an edge in politics as to make the British council install him as the Chairman of Council of Obas and the Governor of Western region. *Adèrèmi* was known to be a very good custodian of culture and religious traditions and one who had great interest in the kingdom of Ile- Ifè, even in times of internal rivalry and dispute. He was able to hold the society together and still participated greatly in the religious traditions. *Adèrèmi* adhered to the tradition of the royal rituals even in the face of divergent views, western culture and changes in the face of the religious activities. The changing face in the religious activities witnessed the introduction of foreign religions and Western culture.

Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival allows the king to perform his royal rituals and his spiritual duty to the society. The continuity of the festival was important to the king, not minding its changing face.

The next part of this work shows the participation of Ọ̀ṣ̀ni *Adèsojì Adèrèmi* in Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival. How was Oba *Adèrèmi* able to hold his office as both the political and religious leader of the region? How was his participation in the ritual performance of the festival? What was the influence of his political position on the traditions of Ilé-Ifè Kingdom?

Adèrèmi's Influences on Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ Festival

Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ ritual performance under *Adèsojì Adèrèmi* for the first 10 years of *Adèsojì's* reign was filled with royal and spiritual involvement. *Adèsojì Adèrèmi* performed his royal rites immediately after his ascension to the throne in 1930. The *ilagun* (vigil), which marked the beginning of the festival, was done in the midnight and on the next day, he performed his first visit to *Òkè-Mògún* and offered prayers to the gods of the land on behalf of himself and the city. He wore the Are crown to the shrine of *Ògún* called *Òkè-Mògún* and carried out all necessary activities in the shrine. He later moved to the centre of the town and sat on the chair where all the chiefs paid homage to him. Furthermore, He visited the *Òrìṣà Ajé* shrine (the goddess of wealth) at *Ọ̀jà Ifè* (Ifè main market) and offered prayer on behalf of the community, to improve the socio-economic indicator of the society as the strong pillar which the society stands for^[19].

In the course of this research, none of my respondents gave me an instance where Adèrèmi did not pay homage to Òkè-Mògún shrine with the Are crown. Even on the eve of his death, he still performed his spiritual duties to the society. The festival witnessed changes overtime in space and time, due to the king's personality and western exposure. The field work showed that, the date of the festival was constant during the reign of *Adèsojì Adèrèmi*. The ilàgún was still in the midnight until 1936 when William Bascom studied Ọlọjọ festival during his stay in Africa. This period witnessed a change in the ritual time. However, King *Adèrèmi* in the mid of his reign, changed the time of ilàgún from midnight to late afternoon, a respondent said the change in time came as a result of the erroneous belief of people that human beings were the sacrificial objects. *Adèrèmi* sought to correct this assumption by changing the time from midnight to afternoon when people could observe the ritual rites and objects themselves.

Also, in 1960, when the partisan party politics was introduced, serious diverse opinions and version emerged among the people of Ifè. Consequently, the night vigil (ilàgún) became an excuse for lawlessness and vengeance. *Adèrèmi* therefore decreed that the time of the *ilàgún* should be shifted from night to late afternoon^[20]. In addition to this, *Adèrèmi* saw himself in a long-drawn battle with the Ifè Divisional and District Councils over the allocation of forest reserves in Ifè to *Aderawo* Timber Trading Company, a company in which the Oba had interest. This crisis really threatened the position of *Adèsojì Adèrèmi* as the king. By and large, the position of *Adèrèmi* in the national and local politics was also a threat to his religious participation.

In addition, there arose a coalition government which brought about division among the political leaders in the region and 'Operation Wet e' (operation burn it down - political activities done by party activists to oppose *Akintola's* administration) which brought tension among the indigenous leadership across the region. *Adèrèmi* thought the situation was under control but resorted to the ban of *Adèsojì Adèrèmi* so as not to cross paths with NNDP. Any traditional ruler caught in the act was sent on exile. This gave traditional rulers no power in politics because they presumably had influence in corruption and election malpractices. The election of 1965 was massively rigged with the help of traditional rulers of which the Ọṣoni of Ifè was part^[21].

As a king who was involved in the entire political crises, there was a need for security check, and coming out in the night for the Ọlọjọ ritual rite, Ilàgún, amidst this problem was not safe. Consequently, it was very clear that the security of King Adèrèmi during this period cannot be guaranteed, basically due to his involvement in national and local politics. The implication of this development was that, the position of the king could be questioned, regardless of who he was since he had paraded their office as an ordinary citizen. Involvement in politics had made many kings equal with the politicians in the political arena, notwithstanding their kingship status.

Apart from the observed changes in the ritual time, there were some other noticeable changes among the ritual specialists. *Qbajio* who acted as assistant to the *Oṣògún* of Ifè, acted as the club man in charge of the sacrificial dog at *Òkè-Mògún*. From the report given by Bascom in 1938, the *qbajio* designated a boy to act for him as a club man because of his Christian religion. Bascom also reported on another club man who was reluctant to carry out his own responsibilities too because of his religion. The chief wanted to maintain a dual position, as a chief and also a Christian, a phenomenon which Mbiti described as religious concubinage. The religious structure in Ilé-Ifè had changed from a single structure to a multi religious society, with the advent of the European missionaries who brought Christianity along with their western culture, and the society has created a space to accommodate people from different cultural backgrounds.

However, there were some extreme cases where the club men thought they would be punished with their new faith for adhering to the voice of the gods, which they saw as ‘idol’ worship. Even then, they still participated in the ritual by giving their support to the king because of their oath of office, regardless of the new faith they professed. *Ọṣni Adèrèmi* visited the *Ògún* shrine with *Arè crown* and *Lókolóko* on his visit. The *Ọṣni Adèrèmi* was the first *Oba* to take his first daughter, *Tejumade Adèrèmi*, to *Òkè-Mògún* shrine and He also took his foreign friends to the *Ọlọjọ* shrine with some colonial police to providing security. This however, was against the ritual of the festival, which did not approve participation of women in the ritual rite during the festival. Research work revealed that *Tejumade Adèrèmi*, married to *Alakija*, was said not to give birth. Until the eve of *Tejumade Alakija’s* death, she was survived by only one daughter, Mrs *Toyin Akomolafe*, who was not famous to the public as expected, considering the status of her mother. A respondent, who elected to be anonymous, made it clear that *Toyin* was an adopted daughter of *Alakija*. A check through the brochure of *Tejumade Alakija’s* burial service showed that no kids were mentioned to have survived her.

The barrenness of *Tejumade Alakija* was attached to the fact that, she broke the taboos of the festival which do not allow women’s participation during the ritual rites in the shrine. In fairness to her, however, her barrenness might not have been as a result of the breaking of taboos, because there are lots of women in the society who have never entered the shrine of *Ògún* and are unable to bear children. *Seun Arasanmi*, one of my respondents, made it clear that during *Adèrèmi’s* reign, deities are the pride of the king. As one of the first class *Obas* in Yorùbá land, *Adèrèmi* wanted to show his influence as the spiritual head of Ilé-Ifè, king of all Yoruba kings ^[22]. *Biodun Adediran* (1991) believed that the political influence of *Adèrèmi* among Yorùbá people induced the white men to confer on him the position of Chairman of Council of *Obas*, a position which no Yorùbá king has since occupied till this present decade.

The implication of this was that, the white men used that avenue to elope with some of the relics in the kingdom to Europe, some of which were said to have spiritual backing and could have been help in the progress of European society. Adèrèmi's praise name is in fact *Oba ajibóyìnbó sèlèrí* (the king who goes into agreement with the white men). *Adèrèmi* believed the king had rulership over all the religions in his territory and must be in support of the performances of all religions, including Ọlọjọ festival, and such could bring together the gathering of people of different religious faiths. *Aworele*, my informant, told me that Ọlọjọ festival does not allow differences in religion as both Christian converts and Muslims are allowed to participate. Olupona acknowledged that the study done by Bascom on Ọlọjọ in 1937 under *Adèrèmi*, witnessed the presence of some Muslim Imams and Christians as well as representatives of kings who had dispersed from Ifè kingdom, like *Orangun Ile-Ila* to establish their own kingdoms.

Adèrèmi's desire was to turn the festival into a national festival, and get all Yorùbá kings to be present, the foreigners and Ifè indigenes at home and abroad, and any visitor. Indeed, as Mr Amos, another informant said he used to come from the village with his family to watch the festival. *Adèrèmi* put an end to gender superiority in the festival by opening up the space to both male and female participants. But in the midst of all the changes done, the ritual space still remains, although time, role performance, and gender participation were affected.

Ọlọjọ festival in the early reign of *Oba Adèrèmi* was a secret event which was done in the midnight and involved only the priests and the strong members of the host families involved in the ritual process. However, the face of Ọlọjọ festival changed after 10 years of *Adèrèmi's* reign and this was confirmed by some of my informants and writers like Bascom. Ọṣni *Adèrèmi* tried to make the festival a national event, by opening space even to all other Ifè settlements, like the *Origbo* towns, and other neighboring towns like *Ifètedo* and *Oke-Igbo*. One of my respondents, Mrs Rachael, revealed that after she got married to an Ifè man, her relatives in *Ifètedo* usually come once in a year to celebrate with them the Ọlọjọ festival.

In the midst of the civil war in Ifè (*Ifè/Modákéké* crisis), and several other political crises, which normally resulted in the abandonment of many rituals and sacrifices, Ọlọjọ festival was still massively celebrated. There is no doubt that the reign of *Adèrèmi* was successful with some outstanding achievements. Despite the national and local crisis which occurred during his period, he regarded Ọlọjọ festival as the core of his kingship authority. The high chiefs, *Isòrò* and lesser chiefs all participated and renewed their oath of office to him.

He was a good politician, elder statesman, true traditional king, who loved tradition and cultural heritage. His death in 1980 brought another Ọṣni into office, but his impact cannot be easily forgotten in the history of Yorùbá and national politics. He used his status as a king to take active responsibility in the Ọriṣà cult and took proper care of the entire groove in the ancient town during his reign.

In conclusion, *Adèrèmi* was very influential and was able to command the respect of other Yorùbá Obas. This has reflected in Qlòjò festival, when various Yorùbá Obas usually visit the Qṛni to honor and celebrate with him during Qlòjò festival. Apart from serving as a unifying event, it also serves as its only sacred identity among the people of Ilé-Ifè. The ancient *Are* crown which serves as the sacred identity and which at the gaze moves the people to respect the Oba's sacred role and receive his sacred blessing must be witnessed every year. The continuity of the ritual performance of Qlòjò festival depends on the active participation of the Qṛni in the royal ritual; if the Qṛni refuses to perform his kingship function, the sacredness in the festival disappears and the festival turns into a mere tourist attraction, for the ritual activities are gradually changing.

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Adereti Layi	M	70	Obawara of Ifè	Oke-ogbo, Ilé-Ifè	20/04/2013
Akinyemi Dapo	M	43	Choco Milo Mask of Ifè	Ilode, Ilé-Ifè	19/05/2013
Akinyemi Gbenga	M	68	Alagbaa of Ifè	Ilode, Ilé-Ifè	19/05/2013
Akinyemi Matthew	M	75	Late Eredùmí of Ifè	Iraye, Ilé-Ifè	22/03/2013
Akinyemi Olaoye.	M	72	Oṣògún of Ifè	Ilode, Ilé-Ifè	23/04/2013

Arasanmi Seun	M	40	Emese	Ọ̀ṣini's palace, Ilé-Ifè	21/03/2013
Bambi Rachael	F	65	Obinrin-ile Oṣògún	Moore, Ilé- Ifè	19/03/2013
Dada Oladotun	M	56	Isoro Obalesun	Ajamopo, Ilé- Ifè	20/05/2013
Faloba Farounbi	M	63	Obadio of Ifè	Ọ̀ṣini's palace, Ilé-Ifè	11/04/2013
Johnson Owòyómi.	M	72	Akògún of Ifè	Ita-Akògún, Ilé-Ifè	13/03/2013
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Notes:

- ¹ J. Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*, p.1
- ² J.K Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*, p.11
- ³ Interview With Chief Gbenga Akinyemi, Alagba of Ife, Aged 65, May 2013
- ⁴ J.K Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*, p.114
- ⁵ Interview with Chief Eredumi of Ife, Aged 70 March, 2013
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Interview with chief Johnson Owoyomi, Akògún of Ife, Aged 70 October, 2013.
- ⁸ Interview with Amos Bambi, Pastor, Aged 91 October, 2013
- ⁹ Interview with Chief Johnson Owoyomi, the Akògún of Ifè, Aged 80 October, 2013
- ¹⁰ J.K. Olupona, *City Of 201 Gods*, p.123
- ¹¹ Interview with Gbenga Ojeyinke, One of the Ritual Specialist at Olojor, Aged 52 May, 2013
- ¹² Ibid. p.133
- ¹³ A. G. A. Ladigbolu., *Oba Adèsojì Adèrèmi: The First African Governor in the British Empire and Commonwealth* (Lagos: Golden Crown Nigeria Limited, 1998) p. 128
- ¹⁴ Olusola Akinrinade and I.A. Akinjogbin, “The Adèrèmi Era, 1930-1980” in I.A. Akinjogbin (ed.), *The Cradle of a Race: Ifè from Beginning to 1980* (Port Harcourt: Sunray Publication, 1992) p.192
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p.193
- ¹⁷ U. Beier, “The Hunter Thinks the Monkey is not Wise: The Monkey is Wise, but He has his own Logic” in *A Selection of Essays By Wole Ôgúndele* (Bayreuth University, 2001) p.42

¹⁸ A. I. Asiwaju, ‘‘Political Motivation and Oral Historical Traditions in Africa: The Case of Yoruba Crowns, 1900-1960’’ in *Journal of the International African Institute* ,Vol. 46, 2, 1976

¹⁹ Interview with Adereti, Head of drummers in Ilé-Ifè , Aged 63 April, 2013

²⁰ Olupona. *City of 201 Gods*, p.123

²¹ M. J. Balogún *The Route to Power in Nigeria: A Dynamic Engagement Option for Current and Aspiring Leaders* (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd, 2011) p.90

²² Interview with Seun Arasanmi, Emese Oṣoni, Aged 31 March, 2013