



**EFFICACY OF EGUNGUN ELEWE AS EXTRAMUNDANE COMMUNICATION CHANNEL BETWEEN IGBOMINA PEOPLE AND THEIR ANCESTORS IN THE NEW NORMAL**

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**Abstract**

Extramundane communication is one of the traditional communication systems enshrined in the belief systems of various cultural settings of African people. It is an admixture of the peoples' culture, customs, norms, religions and traditions. Extramundane communication manifests in and as cultural celebrations or festivals. One of the popular festivals in parts of Africa, Nigeria and most especially among the Yoruba people of Southern Nigeria is Egungun (masquerade). There are different types of Egungun. One of them is Egungun Elewe. The Igbomina sub-group of the Yoruba race is best known as the custodian of Egungun Elewe. Egungun Elewe as a channel of extramundane communication performs so many functions in the communication psyche of Igbomina people before the breakout of COVID-19 which facilitate traditional connectivity between them and their ancestors. Existing studies seem not to pay attention to this. This study therefore examines the efficacy and relevance of Egungun Elewe as channel of extramundane communication in Igbomina land most especially in the new normal. Historical research method, combined with participant observation and in-depth interviews, was used for this study. Data gathered through primary and secondary sources were deployed in analytical and narrative manners.



Findings show that Egungun Elewe as channel of extramundane communication among the Igbomina people of Yoruba race is as effective and relevant in the new normal as it was in the pre COVID-19 era and that its proper deployment will play greater roles in addressing the series of challenges the people are facing in all aspects of their lives in the new normal.

**Keywords:** Egungun (Masquerades), Egungun Elewe, Extramundane, Communication, Extramundane communication, Igbomina people.

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### **Introduction**

Communication as a phenomenon, human activity, field of study or science is opened to so many definitions. Responding to the question "what is communication," Craig (2017) says "the question is deceptively simple, not because there is no straightforward answer but because there are so many answers, many of which may seem perfectly straightforward in themselves." From the foregoing, it is clear that it may be practically impossible to fully capture the meaning of communication in one definition. Ibagere (2020) agrees with this to a large extent when he posits that the ubiquitous nature of communication is responsible for the plethora of its definitions with scholars giving such definitions from different perspectives based on their experiences. Brinia, Selimi, Dunos and Kondes (2022) who share Ibagere's views describe communication as a form of interaction in which various messages are transmitted or exchanged.

Shaikh (2012) defines communication as the exchange of messages between people for the purpose of common meanings. While the CFI Team (2022), views communication as the art of transferring information to produce greater understanding, Nordquist (2019) says communication is simply "the creation and exchange of meaning." Taking a cue from the foregoing, communication can be seen as the art of sharing and receiving information via a variety of media to an individual or groups of people. According to Amy (2021), communication, which has been in existence since the creation of the world, can be one-to-one or between people, and can be face-to-face or via communication devices. It requires a sender, the person who initiates the communication, to transfer his thoughts or encode a message. This message is sent to the receiver, the person who receives

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the message, and finally must decode or interpret the message for appropriate feedback.

Ibagere(2020) states that Africans have their own communication systems through which they organize their societies. The African traditional communication system refers to the system of communication evolved by Africans. It is indigenous to them and is used in particular ways to satisfy the information, education, entertainment and other communication needs of the people. It entails all the social conventions and practices of the people. Traditional communication cuts across all aspects of rural and urban lives in Africa.

Talking about the classification of communication, Okunna (1999), referenced in Duru (2016), groups it into personal, inter-personal, and mass communication. Ogunniyi (2014) identifies extramundane communication as a form of indigenous communication. Egungun, of which Egungun Elewe is a type, falls under the extra-mundane mode of communication.

### **Statement of the problem**

Egungun occupy a unique place in Yoruba culture. They are seeing as members of the celestial order. That accounts for the reference to them as "Ara Orun Kin-in kin-in" (Akande, 2019). They play lots of roles in the African society, most especially in the ancient days. Because of the cultural, social and religious importance of Egungun, a lot of researches have been carried out on the phenomenon generally and the various types in particular. Egungun Elewe is not left out in that regard. However, this researcher observes that despite the many studies on Egungun and Egungun Elewe to be precise, none had been done on Egungun Elewe as extra-mundane communication in Igbominaland. This study is out to first and foremost fill this gap.

Also, the post Covid-19 era generally seeing as "the new normal" has changed the way most things are done in all spheres of human endeavours. Festivals and celebrations generally are the mostly affected in this regard. This study will therefore look into the relevance of Egungun Elewe as extra-mundane communication channel in Igbominaland in the new normal.

### **Scope of the study**

This study is limited to the Igbóminàs, a sub-ethnic group of the Yoruba people. Igbomina people occupy a large expanse of land of hundreds of square kilometers. The recent estimated population of the people is about two point five million. It is traditionally divided into two

groups of "Igbomina Mosan" and "Igbomina Moye." Each of these two is subdivided into four. The Igbomina Mosan includes but not limited to Ila-Orangun, Oke-Ila Orangun, Ora-Igbomina, Arandun, Omu-Aran, Ajase-Ipo, Igbaja, Isin, Oro, Share, Esie, Omupo, Agbonda, Omido and Idofian. This is divided into "Eku merin"- four divisions. These are Alapamoje, Alaranmoje, Olupomoje and Enisinmoje. On the other hand, Igbomina Moye have towns like Oke-Ode, Oro-Ago, Oko-Ola, Idofin and their surrounding towns, villages or hamlets constituting its own four districts. Due to time constraint, staggered nature of the festivals (as all the communities and districts celebrate Egungun Elewe one after the other) and resources, two of these traditional regions in Igbomina Mosan; Alapamoje and Alaranmoje were picked for this study.

### **Conceptualization of study Egungun (Masquerades)**



Egungun are regarded in Yoruba land as the spirit of the ancestors who come periodically at the appointed time by the community to interact with the living with a view to delivering the messages of the ancestors to their descendants and conveying the messages of the living to the "supposedly dead ancestors" who to the living, going by the belief system of the Yoruba, are not actually dead but just changed abode from the physical world to the spiritual realm.

Adepegba (1984) cited in Kalilu (2016) defines Egungun in the broadest sense as "any Yoruba Masquerade or masked costumed figure." Na'Allah (1996) describes Egungun as "African cultic masquerade in Nigeria." Awolalu (1979) opines that the Yoruba worshipped Egungun as "Ara Orun"- heavenly beings while Akande

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(2019) goes a bit deeper by christening Egungun "Ara Orun Kin-in Kin-in." No wonder, Akubor (2016) asserts that all over Yorubaland, Egungun represent the spirits of ancestors who have descended from heaven/mountains. Akubor explains further that Egungun festival celebrates a period when the dead interact with the living as it is their responsibility to compel the living to uphold the ethical standards of past generations. Ojedokun and Atoi (2020), citing Babayemi (1980) and Looko (2014), say this interaction takes place during annual sacred Egungun festival when the adherents of this traditional religion usually come together "from far and near to celebrate, renew commitment and pay homage to the spirit of the living dead."

There have been diverse opinions as to the origin of Egungun. A famous Yoruba historian, Samuel Johnson (1973) cited by N'Allah (1996) traced the origin of Egungun to the Nupe people of North Central Nigeria. He explains that the interaction between the Nupe and Yoruba people led to the introduction of the cult of Egungun to the Yoruba nation. This had been negated by a number of scholars among who are Nadel (1954) and Na'Allah (1996) who infer in their studies that masquerade worshipers in Nupe land were the "Nupe-ized Yorubas." Olajubu (1980) was more categorical. According to him, Egungun originated from Yoruba nation. As he puts it, the Yoruba owned and spread Egungun cult to other parts of the country and even beyond.

The question at this stage is how did the Yoruba nation originate Egungun? Olajubu (1980) traces the origin of Egungun to Ile-Ife. To him "all awo," that is all secret knowledge, "had a common origin; they were all born at creation of the world at Ile-Ife." Na'Allah (1996) cites two myths as the origin of Egungun festival. The first has to do with two children (one farmer, the other singer/dancer) of the same parent. The singer/dancer's fine clothes attracted many people. He was embarrassed, pulled a seal over his face and clothes over his head. He thus became Egungun. The second myth says Alapini, a Senior Chief in Oyo, had three children; Ojewumi, Ojesanmi and Ojerinlo. These children disobeyed him by eating the "Ihobia", a kind of yam. They became thirsty, went to the stream, one after the other, drank and fell dead. The Ifa, Yoruba god of divination, was consulted and he agreed to reincarnate them. On the seventh day, they were brought back to life but had to veil their faces because they "were terrible to look at." They entered the town in beautiful costumes and thus became Egungun. The second myth might have been responsible for the reverence given to Alapini in the cult of Egungun in Yorubaland.

YorubaRenaissance (2021) adds another dimension to the evolution of Egungun. It states that:



There was this particular woman whose husband had died in the thick forest where they both lived with their children. After the death and burial of the husband, the wife and children had to relocate to another settlement. Afterwards, life got horrific and horrible with the woman and her children. They sought the advice of elders who in turn directed that they should consult with the oracle to show them the way out. The oracle after consultation directed that they should go back to the grave of their deceased father in the thick forest and bring his remains home. When they eventually got to their father's grave, they dug up the grave and found his bone remains which is referred to as "eegun or egungun" –bones- in Yoruba language. The oracle further directed that the "eegun or egungun" should be totally exhumed and wrapped in colourful clothes and be brought back to their new home with big fanfare. That dead man bones called Egungun are also referred to as masquerade while the dead man "ara orun kinkin" is also worshipped in accordance to the directive of the oracle till date.

Relying on oral tradition, Adebowale (2020) traces the origin of Egungun to "Eesa Ogbin Ologbojo, the eponymous ancestor of Yoruba carvers who was the first masked performer in the court of the Alafin of Oyo." Both Alapini and Ologbojo occupy strategic positions in the cult of Egungun. While Ologbojo is regarded as 'Baba Egungun' (father of Egungun) Alapini is widely known as the Chief Priest.

Egungun is also believed to be part of ORISAS (Gods and Goddesses) in Yorubaland where ancestral worship is of paramount importance. Egungun is generally seen to stand for the spirit of the ancestors. That belief accounts for the awe attached to Egungun all over Yoruba land. Adedayo (2022) captures this effectively when he asserts that:

It is a truism that in traditional Africa that if a child is decked in a masquerade costume, the moment this happens, that child transmutes his age into becoming an ancestor. At that stage, any impudent elder he flogs, he flogs without consequences, even if it was the costumier who wore the costume on him. Any attempt to hit back at the masquerade while he adorns the AGO (masquerade costume) will boomerang and amounts to whipping your forefathers. This is not without consequences.



This account for an idiomatic expression in Yoruba language:

*Eni ba fi oju ana woku  
Ebor a bo laso.*

Whoever envisions the dead as if they were living  
Such a person will be stripped naked (mesmerized) by a super human  
(Akande 2019).

Egungun is an all men cult. Except in very rare cases the womenfolk is fenced away from the cult of Egungun. In fact, there is a saying in Yoruba parlance that goes thus:

*B'obinrin m'awo, ko gbodo wi.  
B'obinrin m'awo ko gbodo so.*

If a woman has knowledge of the cult of Egungun she should keep mum. Perchance a woman gains insight of Egungun cult, she must not tell anyone.

Costumes play key role in Egungun festivals. The costumes are known either as "ago, eku or aso." These are always colourful dresses. That is reflected in a witty saying in Yoruba language which goes thus "Oniruuru laso Egungun" – Egungun dresses are in various colours, shapes and sizes. There are as many types of Egungun as there are the costumes. Adebowale (2020) admits this when he explains that "the physical performance of any Egungun is propelled by the spirits of the ancestors of that particular Egungun. This makes the performer and the 'Eku' (the costumes of the Egungun one." The Yoruba renaissance list some important Egungun to include Oloolu, Alapansanpa, both of Ibadan, Alamudu and Aladoko in Akure, Egemurege in Ado Ekiti, Omormo in Akokoland, Gbegbe in Iragbiji and Elewe of the Igbomina Yoruba sub-ethnic group, which is common in the towns of Oke-Ila Orangun, Ila Orangun, and Arandun.

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**Egungun Elewe**



Egungun Elewe is a unique brand of masquerade among the people under study. According to the African Masking society, Egungun Elewe of the Igbomina-Yoruba wears "simple cloth costumes" which "allow for a dance of acrobatic skill, and light raffia Igo masks of the neighbouring Edo people." This according to the society "enables them to lift their costumes above their heads in a dance of whirling turns." Unlike other masquerades in Igbominaland which are forbidden from exposing any of their body parts, Egungun Elewe are allowed to expose their legs below the knees and their hands shortly below the elbows. The adjective "Elewe" which marks this type of Egungun out from others is derived from ornamental metal beads, "Ewe", the Egungun Elewe wear on their ankles and wrists which make unique danceable sounds as they walk or dance to the traditional rhythms of "bata", "dundun" or a combination of both.

Egungun Elewe performances are more of entertainment in nature than anything else. Unlike other types of masquerades, Egungun Elewe neither carries whips or other threatening objects but rather well decorated hand fans. Those representing royal families or ruling houses in the community even use paraphernalia of office of the King like scepter, royal sandals and beads. They are by far the friendliest of Egungun in Igbominaland. Hence, the uncommon love of people of all ages for them. Those wearing the costumes are professionals to the core. In fact, there are families who take this as traditional occupation which they hand over from one generation to other.



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**Igbomina people of Yorubaland.**

All clans in Yoruba land trace their sources to Ile-Ife with Oduduwa as their progenitor. That of Igbomina people is not different. Olalekan (2015) in 'Proudly Nigeria' says Igbomina is one of the major clans of Yoruba people. Historically, the name "Igbomina" or "Igbonna" is coined from "Ogbo mi mo na" or "Ogbo mo na" which means "My Ogbo -sword- tells directions". According to the myth, 'Ogbo' is a traditional cutlass with a magical power that can tell directions: a power similar to the kind of which the pilots and sailors use today (compass) in determining their route (Ola-Lawal, 2017). Oral tradition says it was handed over by Oduduwa (the ancient Yoruba ancestor) to his son, Fagbamila Ajagunnla, Orangun Ile-Ila (the founder of Igbominaland). Just like every other son of the Progenitor, Fagbamila was also sent out of Ile-Ife in search of a new threshold. Igbominaland was the result of his epic voyage.

Ola-Lawal (2017) says Igbomina or Igbonna is a distinct dialectal unit of the Yoruba race. The term does not only refer to the people but also the dialect of the Yoruba language they speak and the land they occupy. Speaking about the traditional occupation of the people of Igbomina, Omohinmin (2017) explains that they are "hunters, renowned agriculturalists, proficient wood carvers and leather artists." They were also popular in clothe weaving in the olden days. Today, they stand out among many Yoruba sub-groups in trading and merchandize. Although they all speak Igbomina dialect, the slight differences noticeable from one community to the other might have been responsible for their classification into "Igbomina Mosan" and "Igbomina Moye."

Presently the Igbomina people have their ancestral location in three local government areas of Kwara state which are Irepodun, Ifelodun and Isin as well as two council areas of Osun state- Ifedayo and Ila. They occupy the Northern part of the Yoruba geographic map. The Igbomina land is bounded on the North-West by Ilorin; on the South by the Ijesa, on the South-East by the Ekiti, on the East by the Yagba, and on the North by the non-Yoruba Nupe region, south of the Niger River. Igbominaland is bounded by minor neighbouring communities of Ibolu: Offa, Oyan and Okuku in the West. Geographically, Igbominaland lies between longitude 40E and 60E and Latitude 80N and 90N.

Igbomina people are very rich culturally. Their culture, tradition and religion are to a large extent well interwoven. Apart from cultural festivals peculiar to certain towns in the sub-group such as Isinro in Ila Orangun and Oke-Ila Orangun, Obalufon festival in Ora-Igbomina and Agbonda among others, a number of festivals cut across the



length and breadth of the entire Igbomina land. Such festivals include new yam, Ogun, Sango and Egungun festivals to mention but just a few. Egungun Elewe occupies a central place in Egungun festival in Igbominaland.

### **Extramundane**

Extramundane is from the Late Latin word EXTRAMANDANUS: beyond the world. Wiktionary traces the etymology of extramundane to two words: EXTRA+MUNDANE with two explanations:

1. Beyond mundane, beyond ordinary; and
2. Extra-terrestrial; occurring or originating outside of the earth.

According to Dictionary.com, "Extra-mundane" means "beyond our world or the material universe". The dictionary identifies words related to extra-mundane as "extrasensory, metaphysical, mystic, otherworldly, paranormal, super physical, transcendental, unearthly." In what it terms Best Four Definitions of Extramundane, YourDictionary lists the following as the definitions:

Occurring or existing outside of the physical world or universe;  
Outside the physical world; not of this world;  
Beyond mundane, beyond ordinary; and  
Occurring or originating outside of the earth.

The first known use of extramundane was in 1965.

### **Extramundane communication**

Aziken and Emeni (2010) state that there are various forms of traditional or indigenous communication in different parts of Nigeria. While Odunola and Segun (2009) list six types of indigenous forms of communication to include instrumental communication; demonstrative communication; iconographic communication; extramundane communication; visual communication; and institutional communication, Wilson (1987) identifies eleven of such in Nigeria's old Calabar province. They are idiophones, membramophones, aero phones, symbology, signals, signs, objectifies, colour schemes, music, extramundane communication and symbolic displays. As it is in Nigeria's old Calabar Province, so it is in most parts of Nigeria. This is so especially in Igbominaland.

Extramundane mode of communication is defined by Wilson (1990) as communication taking place between the living and the dead, or between the living and extra-terrestrial. Akpabio (2003) goes further to say that:



This (extramundane communication) is the mode of communication between the living and the dead, the supernatural or Supreme Being. This communication pattern is expressed through incantations, spiritual chants, ritual, prayers, sacrifice, invocation, séance, hysterics or libation.

In his simplistic form, extramundane communication is communication between the living and the dead. It is esoteric in nature. As stated by Wilson (1990), extramundane communication, like all other forms of traditional communication systems, is a mixture of social, religious, cultural and traditional conventions and practices which have become sharpened and blended into veritable communication modes and systems. Quoting several sources, Aremu and Fadipe (2022) identify the various forms of extramundane communication to include but not limited to incantation, spiritual chants, rituals, prayers, sacrifices, invocations, trances, hysterics or libations.

Extramundane communication is enshrined in the belief system of various cultural settings in Africa. As a multi-dimensional communication system, it manifests in cultural celebrations such as festivals, consecration of marriages, naming and house warming. Egungun Elewe is observed as a festival.

The focus of this study is "Efficacy of Egungun Elewe as extramundane communication channel between Igbomina people and their ancestors in the new normal."

### **Methodology**

As a result of the nature of this paper, the historical method of research, also known as documentary research method was largely used. Oral interviews and personal observations were also adopted to confirm the documentary materials.

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**Efficacy of Egungun Elewe as extramundane communication in Igbominaland.**



Egungun Elewes' rendition of ancestral panegyrics establishes esoteric Communication links between the dead and their descendant in a highly entertaining way to the admiration of all. In doing this, the Egungun Elewe will start from the ancestral root of the people and trace it down the lineages to the existing generations dwelling on their exploits, bravery, nobility, contributions to societal growth and development as well as their mistakes and consequences of same. This is to keep the living in touch not just with their ancestral history but also to highlight positive and negative landmarks in the family and race with a view to acquainting them with what they must do and what they must avoid to achieve success in their earthly endeavours.

Amidst melodious tunes churned out from either Bata or Dundun drums accompanied by instructive songs resulting in "the Masquerades embarking on dance of whirling turns while lifting their costumes above their heads," the living are reminded of the dos and don'ts of their lineages. In case anyone had since the last celebrations done what they should not do, what was done in the past by someone in the lineages who committed similar offence or offences before the sin was forgiven, purification done, sanctification attained and forgiveness achieved will be reeled out by the Egungun Elewe for such a person to do as a way out. Most times sacrifices are prescribed by the weird ones. The sacrifices often involved killing of fowls or goats at the designated areas in the shrines of the Masquerades popularly known in Igbomina dialect as KAA EEGUN, the family compound or specific areas of the town, in case of communal challenges.



This is akin to the practice among the Israelites of old where sacrifices of different animals were made for various reasons on daily, weekly, monthly and even yearly basis. After all, as it is said in the New Testament, precisely Hebrew 9:22 that "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." The sacrificial objects are cooked and joyously consumed by all with pounded yam and local drinks of Palm-wine for which Igbomina people are known for. The same goes for people with various challenges like sickness, barrenness, cases of stillbirth within the family or even in cases of communal challenges like drought and famine. The solutions offered by the Masquerades are known to be working out. This always strengthens the belief of the people in the effectiveness and efficiency of such esoteric communication strategy.

Egungun Elewe outing also offers people the rare opportunity of tendering various requests before the celestial beings for onward conveyance to their dead parents or ancestors for help. This is similar to what is known in Christendom as prayer requests. Such requests are often accompanied with pouring of libations of Palm-wine and kola nut at the toes of the Masquerades. People making the requests do make vows that should such requests be granted before the next outing of Egungun Elewe, they will do this or that as shows of gratitude. True to the words of some, such vows are known to be redeemed. Expectedly, the redemption of the pledges often heightens the celebrations and offer hope that if last year's requests were granted, those just tendering theirs should be hopeful that the ancestors will do that which will make them happy.

As the highly spiritual but entertaining festival progresses the living sprays money on Egungun Elewe with the hope that whatever they so spend is meant for their fore parents whom they strongly believe this brand of masquerade represent. Hospitality is the hallmark of the Igbomina sub section of the Yoruba race. In line with that Omoluabi ethos, the living will provide sumptuous entertainment of foods and drinks for the Elewe Masquerades believing that they are entertaining their visiting ancestors.

Most family disputes are normally settled in this atmosphere of conviviality where all parties believe that with the Egungun Elewe in attendance, their ancestors are deeply involved in such amicable resolutions. This often ensures better understanding and peace in various families, compounds and communities.

The last day of the outing, which is the grand finale, is always full of ecstasy as it is dedicated for special prayers by Egungun Elewe for the people. This is known as IWURE. Nobody, who truly believes in the



Egungun Elewe annual celebrations, will ever want to miss such a gathering.



If the perception of Communication as a two way process, wherein interchange of message connects the sender and receiver towards an agreed direction, then Egungun Elewe as an extramundane Communication in Igbominaland qualifies as one in all ramifications and at all fronts. It has all the elements of communication which are sender, message, encoding, medium, receiver, decoding and feedback. The people who receive the Egungun Elewe during the festivals who have messages in terms of appreciations or requests are mostly the sender who encode either of these and present them before Egungun Elewe for onward transmission to their ancestors. The medium of exchange is oral either in form of spoken words or songs accompanied by drums. Symbols are occasionally involved at the level of propitiation and sacrifices. The channel is the Egungun Elewe themselves. The receivers are the ancestors who decode the message and give feedbacks to their living off springs in terms of granting their requests or telling them what to do in case such requests are turned down. As some studies have shown that a sender can in turn become a receiver and a receiver can also become the sender in the Communication process, there are always roles reversals at the feedback level of this form of communication. At this point the ancestors become the senders of feedbacks to the requests of their



off springs. All other elements of Communication remain and serve their full purposes in the Communication chain.

The communicative appropriateness and effectiveness of Egungun Elewe as an extra-mundane Communication have never been in doubt. This mode of communication is particularly appropriate and suitable as it meets all the intended social, cultural and religious purposes. Also, if "effective communication is the process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data so that the message is received and understood with clarity and purpose," and that "when we communicate effectively, both the sender and receiver feel satisfied," (Coursera 2022), then the effectiveness of Egungun Elewe as extramundane communication in Igbominaland is certainly not in doubt. The communicative appropriateness and effectiveness of Egungun Elewe as extramundane communication have kept the practice in existence till today.

### **Egungun Elewe in the new normal**

As a result of COVID-19 pandemic, the annual Egungun Elewe festival could not hold as usual in 2020 in the areas of study as the people in general and Egungun devotees in particular had to obey government's directive banning large gathering of people most especially at social and cultural events as well as worship places in order to curb the spread of the pandemic. Interviews conducted revealed that what was done that year was the appeasement of Egungun deity by appropriate priests at family, compound and communal levels with IWURE, traditional prayers, to the ancestors to heal their land and the world at large from the pandemic. By the following year, 2021, the festival was observed, although not with full fanfare always associated with it in terms of large communal gatherings where Egungun Elewe of various compounds always converge to compete for honours in the areas of poetic recitations, songs and dances. This takes place annually at a large traditional centre. Such a place, known as OJAAWI- market of traditional poetic recitation, is located in the heart of the town in Ora-Igbomina. Similar situation is observable elsewhere in the area of study. All over Igbominaland in 2021, the celebration was restricted to each "Agbo lle"- compound level. That notwithstanding, all the rites were fully carried out. There has been a marked improvement in 2022 in the communities under study compared to the 2021 edition of the festival.

Findings indicated that the people of Alapamoje and Alaranmoje axis of Igbomina Mosan still attach greater value to Egungun Elewe annual celebration as a form of extramundane communication which must not be toyed with for the peace, orderliness and unity of their communities. The people are of the opinion that if adherents of other



religions, most especially Christianity and Islam, are performing their religious obligations and life has been returning to normalcy in all spheres of life, nothing should stop them from performing what they perceived as social, cultural and religious obligations which connect them with their ancestors.

The roles and significance of Egungun such as educating, informing and entertaining the people; serving arbitration purposes at family, compound and community levels; checkmating social delinquency and promoting morality; preservation of historical and cultural heritages; spiritual interventions against evils and for peaceful co-existence, development and growth; proffering solutions to individual, group, family and communal problems; promoting the spirits of admittance of wrong doing and taking responsibilities for such, confession, restitution, atonement for sins, forgiveness, good neighbourliness, appreciation and active participation in communal activities; as well as in maintaining the age long link of the living with the dead (ancestors) through sacrifices are still relevant in the promotion of social cohesion, peaceful co-existence and cultural preservations of the people.

Personal observation in 2021 and 2022 revealed that through their songs, Egungun Elewe serve as educators on the dangers in COVID-19 and how people can guard against being infected. They would start in poetic way by speaking on the nature of the pandemic before going into appropriate warning songs. Below are examples of such:

*E hale han enilu mi.*

Please come home my drummers – meaning apply a break to drumming.

*Se e ti gbo nipa COVID-19 bi, ajakale arun yun pa kukuru, pa gipun, tomode tagba?*

Have you heard of COVID-19, the pandemic that kills not minding the height or age?

*Arun ye molowo yato si talika, ye d'Oba mo yato si joye, ke mo Gomina, ke m'Are*

It does not distinguish the rich from the poor, kings from chiefs; it does not know Governor or president.

*Ajakale arun COVID-19 lo niba orere, iko abaadi, mimi tupetupe, efori atona ofun didun*

The symptoms of COVID-19 are fever or chills, shortness of breath, headache and sore throat.





*Ke mo ba a lgbade arun hi, e toju ayika yin, e lo bomu, e sora wun pejopo ye lese nle ,e wuwo yin ni gbogbo igba, e lo sanita, ke han gbabere ajehara*

To avoid contacting COVID-19, maintain clean environment, use face mask, keep physical distance, wash your hands regularly, use sanitizers and get vaccinated.

This will then be followed by songs with appropriate drumbeats such as:

*A a ni ribi nile yi o dokeere, tefetefe o dokeere*  
Evil will not befall us here, we will only be hearing of it from long distances

*COVID-19 e ni mu ha nile hi o dokeere, tefetefe o dokeere*  
We will not contact COVID-19 here, we will only be hearing of its havoc from afar off

*A a ni rogun COVID-19 nile yi o dokeere, tefetefe o dokeere*  
COVID-19 pandemic will not be our lots here, we will only be hearing of how it is ravaging others from afar off.

*E wuwo yin o, e wuwo yin o,*  
Please wash your hand, please wash your hand

*Ke mo ba a rogun COVID, e wuwo yin o*  
To avoid the war of COVID, please wash your hands.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

With the importance attached to Egungun Elewe in Igbominaland, it is unlikely that the people will jettison it for whatever reasons in the new normal. If the advent and spread of Christianity and Islam have not been able to put paid to the Egungun festival in general and Egungun Elewe to be specific, it is doubtful if the new normal will bring about any major alteration in this age long traditional festival.

In fact, the devotees of Egungun Elewe had a song they were rendering heartily when they were being poached and converted into Christianity which says:



Awa o soro ile wa o, awa o soro ile wa o, Igbagbo kope ka wa ma soro, awa o soro ile wa o.

We will celebrate our family traditional festivals (2x), Christianity does not forbid us from celebrating our family traditional festival. We will certainly celebrate our family traditional festival.

That song has slightly been modified to:

Awa o soro ile wa o, awa o soro ile wa o,  
COVID-19 kope ka wa ma soro. Awa o soro ile wa o.  
We will celebrate our traditional family festival (2X),  
COVID-19 doesn't say we should not celebrate our  
family traditional festival, we will certainly celebrate  
our traditional family festival.

Sequel to the foregoing, this study recommends greater education for the people involved in this annual celebration and the community at large on the need for strict adherence to COVID-19 protocols before, during and after the event. This will bring about celebrations with decorum and responsibility which will be a win-win situation for all the stakeholders.

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