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Zangbeto Festival and Ritual Realities: A Study of the Efficacy in the Ritual Performances of Ogun West, Nigeria

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Abstract

Festivities go with their peculiar rituals. Owing to this belief, this study explores the roles of ritual realities in the performance of Zangbeto Festival among the Ogu people of Ogun West, Nigeria. As one of the longest standing traditions in Nigeria, the festival brings communities together annually to honor ancestral spirits and deities. However, little research has comprehensively examined how rituals enhance the festival over the years. Through a qualitative research design, using secondary data sources from academic sources directly documenting Zangbeto rituals and related festivities through observational fieldwork and ethnographic inquiry, this research sought to address that gap. This design was also employed in order to provide context to the study, secondary data collection method was employed in the study. The objectives of the study were to; analyze the role of ritual realities in enhancing the cultural significance of the Zangbeto Festival, to assess the impacts of ritual realities on community engagement and participation during the festival, and to provide historical context to the Zangbeto Festival with coverage to Ogun West for preservation of the tradition. The findings highlighted that

Zangbeto Festival rituals' role in preserving cosmology, reinforcing social hierarchies, and expressing cultural identity is huge. They also foster collective energy and intergenerational learning. The study concluded that, ritual practices are integral to perpetuating the Zangbeto Festival as a locus of social cohesion and heritage transmission across generations. The study therefore, recommends that further long-term, emic research could provide deeper insights into rituals' community functions amid changing contexts.

Keywords: Community, Rituals, Roots, Tradition, Zangbeto Festival

Introduction

The Zangbeto Festival is one of the longest standing cultural traditions among the Ogu people of Ogun West, Nigeria. The festival is celebrated annually around harvest time, it revolves around ritual performances called Zangbeto that feature masked figures representing ancestral spirits (Idowu & Oriola, 2021). Through dance, music, and symbolic costumes, the Zangbeto rituals are believed to allow communicating blessings or warnings from predecessors to help guide communities (Nevins 2021). Over generations, these ritual practices have played a key role in maintaining Ogu cosmological understandings and passing down cultural knowledge between groups. While often discussed together, rituals and cultural festivals are distinct types of cultural events that both rely heavily on symbolic action and prescribed performances (Barrière & Finkel 2022). Rituals can be understood as repetitive actions or motions tied to core spiritual beliefs that traditionally communicated with the sacred realm through practiced costumes, dances, songs or speeches (Joseph & Donkor 2023). Cultural festivals, however, serve broader social functions of bringing communities together, strengthening shared identities, and celebrating traditions through performances, feasts and symbolic community events (Quinn 2020). The Zangbeto Festival Performances thus provide a unique window into how ritual

realities that shape and are shaped by cultural festivals, allowing these communities to perform and express their shared heritage over time (Nevins 2021). Over centuries, these ritual practices became central to an annual multi-day celebration that fosters cultural continuity between generations of the Ogu people.

This research aims to scholarly contribute to the body of existing works about the ongoing importance of ritual in the preservation of cultural festivals among the Ogu people of Ogun West, Nigeria. Considering the fact that the African tradition and culture is slowly being eroded. This study provides a solid overview of the tradition of the Ogu people and in so doing it can be used as a historical material. This study also seeks to examine the role of ritual realities in enhancing the cultural significance of the Zangbeto Festival and also to examine the impact of ritual realities on community engagement and participation during the festival.

Review of Related Literature

Overview of the Zangbeto Festival

Zangbeto is a traditional guardian of the night which are known as 'Night watchman' among the Ogu people Hunsu, (2014). Zangbeto is celebrated annually. It provides an opportunity for adherents to appreciate the gods, pray for the community and offer good wishes for all households in view of bountiful harvest.

Figure 1: Zangbeto Festival Performance



Source: Monika and Suganthan (2024)

Zangbeto Festival is a multi-day affair that afforded the people of the community the chance to express gratitude for recent seasonal harvests and to petition for prosperity during the next seasons of planting. Traditional events revolved around the nocturnal visitations of the ancestral Zangbeto spirits, who were divinized forebears of the masked dancers. The Zangbeto, an admirable institution in Oguland, is a force for good in keeping social order and harmony (Hernandez 2007). The work of Zangbeto in the communities include blessing homes, ending minor disputes, and maintenance of peace in the near neighborhood especially important when the Zangbeto and his deputy are going about their business at midnight. Seamstresses and iguana-like tailors in the employ of the Zangbeto divinely ordained peace in the night (Monika & Suganthan 2024).

Ritual Realities

Ritual plays a profound role in cultural expression and community solidarity. With deeper exploration, the ritual practices of the Zangbeto Festival offer increased insight into the Ogu people's dynamic relationship between heritage, spirituality and identity. The central rituals involve elaborate masked dances believed to allow the spirits of ancestor possession for sacred performances conveying blessings. Masks like the Zangbeto represent esteemed clan lineages and are invested with protective spiritual energies through purification ceremonies ensuring their dignified mediumship (Quinn 2020). Accoutrements incorporate symbolic colors, fibers and insignias embedding ancestral knowledge and connections to nature in customizable and yet constrained forms.

According to Iltis, (2012), rituals can be considered as a social reality, and this is based on the notion of the idea that rituals generate an intricate network of social links by establishing or reinforcing roles, interactions, and norms in order to contextualize ritual as a social reality, and aside from that rituals reveal the importance of time, including the passages of human life, from gestation, conception, union, and suffering to death. They also help

people understand themselves as members of particular groups invested in particular activities, commitments, and traditions to promote social stability and harmony (Iltis, 2012).

To a great extent, based on the submission of Iltis (2012), ritual can be seen as a form of identification for individuals living in a community and of a particular setting. It is such a strong way of portraying ritual performance which incorporates codified gestures imbued with particular meanings only fully comprehensible to cultural insiders. Subtle nuances in tone, tempo and sequence comprising the "ritual code" transmit Ogu values and identity in a manner tacit yet resonant (Avorgbedor 2022). Repetitive characteristic motifs come to represent lineages, virtues and reminders of communal duties in ways perceptible yet profound.
According to Legare & Nielsen (2020), rituals are based on adaptations to the difficulties of communal life and play important social roles, promoting cultural transmission both within and across generations and offering important insights into the dissemination and persistence of knowledge (Legare & Nielsen, 2020). This stand point build on that Iltis (2012) by describing ritual as a social factor that helps people to navigate their lives. And based on the observation by Politz (2023), the author highlighted that rituals foster social bonds and cultural resilience by mediating disputes, blessing homes and agricultural success (Politz 2023). This indicates that rituals is such an important part of culture and tradition.

Offerings to ancestral and natural presences maintain vital relationship of reciprocity and humility central to Ogu metaphysics. Cola, palm wines, foods and libations discretely nourish both visible and invisible participants as sustenance for the living commingles with placation of immaterial guardians, strict adherence to ritual propriety and precision in conduct maintains harmony between human and divine spheres, as minor errors carried potential spiritual consequences (Knight 2021).

In the end, with the submission of different authors on ritual and its important in tradition and culture. It is clear that ritual is an integral part of tradition and in the process of preserving tradition and culture, it is important to ensure that rituals does not go into extinction.

The Role of Rituals in African Traditional Festivals

The African traditional festival is deeply rooted in rituals and places high value on it. Rituals can take many different forms, such as performing dances, chanting, symbols, performing musical instruments, supernatural recitations, separation and leaving homes, staying in designated places like forests or deserts, imposition of hands, invocation, taking part in festive ceremonies like festivities, offerings, foods, congregational gatherings through procession groups, gatherings, ceremonies, and so forth, and the application of simulated metaphysical powers (Etim, 2019).

As highlighted by Politz (2023), for a long time, performances of rituals have established the vessels of cultural continuity and the expressions of community that festivals in Africa serve. Across the continent, events in what might be called "the festival of life" incorporate highly choreographed practices that share a kind of "homologous-for-all" appearance that, when you are looking from the outside in, gives the appearance of being an expression of "the African festival" (Politz 2023). In short, it is a way to bring futuristic acts into the current time and place, therefore giving man the ability to subjugate space and satisfy his need to manipulate nature for his own benefit.

The ancestral worship at the root of many festival occasions find expression in dances that are nothing less than primordial. Among the Yoruba people, Egungun (ancestor) dances honor the lineage of revered founders. Those honoured are believed to be present during such communal performances. "Enshrined not in monuments but in the bodies and movements of those who

perform for them (Marchetti-Mercer & Virga, 2023), the words and music that accompany the Egungun serves both as a way to greet those ancestors present as well as a form of entertainment.
Composed and improvised songs link festival to cultural heritage: reformulating ancient oral history, like fables, songs give form to the moral wisdoms that maintain cultural memory. Telling tales through song during ceremonial occasions establish a path for communion, threading together participants in a timeless space where they can negotiate the presence of their ancestors and receive their blessings. Ritual songs, with their emotionally potent and symbolically laden language, provide a way into the shared imaginings that constitute their collective life (Urban 2023).

The Role of Zangbeto Festival in Community Identity

The Zangbeto holds a long established place in the culture of the Ogu people. The traditional Zangbeto customs among the Ogu people illustrate the major contribution that cultural festivals make in establishing solidarity and continuity among populations. Over the course of nine evenings, the festival unites distant villages and burgeoning urban communities in the gentle nighttime sociality of a street party. It is not a festival of image and sound projected from a stage. Adult custodians of the ancient traditions gather the youth in their families around fires and in living rooms for what the elders call “storytelling”. In these “performances” - the way of life that is the Ogu people civilization is shared in all its richness from one generation to the next over the course of many generations, many times. The pathway of the “embodied knowledge” that is the Ogu way of life its “intangible heritages” is fundamentally a pathway that each individual, young or old, must both travel and enact if their community is to exist in the next generation and for many generations thereafter (Turetsky, 2023).

Dances performed in costumes that represent ancestral figures are crucial to the formation of community. The way in which these dances ritualize the mediation of petty disputes and the bestowing

of blessings for the general welfare of all members of the community holds a central place in indigenous systems of non-violence that emphasize the importance of conciliation. Performances of the masked arts link and reinforce cultural identities and roots even amongst the global diaspora of the Ogu people. Masked performances is an invaluable aspect of the performance. For politically altered reasons, performative celebrations have persisted as stable identities for farmers and the people of the small towns around them.

Symbolism and Mythology within Zangbeto Rituals

For the Ogu people of West Africa, the Zangbeto Festival holds deep significance and carries many profound meanings especially for ritual practices and performances. The annual ceremonies for the festival center on figures from the community's shared mythology and are integral to its social cosmology.

At the heart of this ritual tradition are the Zangbeto masks. Local artistes weave these from the fronds of the raffia palm, a tree that grows along the edges of the West African forest. The Zangbeto serves as a symbol of protective spirits that forest inhabitants believed patrolled the edges of the dangerous forest and kept the inhabitants safe from harm. The masks are central to the annual Zangbeto festival (Pressley-Sanon, 2022).

Figure 2: Zangbeto Masks



Source: Pressley-Sanon (2022)

Libations like palm wine poured on the earth, as depicted in Figure 3 below, nourish an ancestral bond that nourishes the community. They go beyond singular acts of worship. They embody and activate what could be considered as figures, as holds by Beattie (2023), of productive bond between communities and ancestors. The articulate silence of a palm-wine offering enacts remembrance of legends endowed with layered meaning and divine gifts (such as those from immortal blacksmiths and potters, and marvelous agriculturists). Those gifts evoke charm and enchantment, magic and mirth that transform and invigorate a community.

Figure 3: Ritual libations



Source: Beattie (2023)

The Zangbeto rituals contain many other prominent symbols. For example, the wraps worn by women during the performances are made of indigo, a pigment that is dyed bright blue. This colour, according to Prof. Meg McLagan, has a potent resonance with the transformative maternal powers associated with shapes and substances that are not what they seem, which are part of the women's craft of indigo dyeing. The pigment's presumptive blue colour is also sacred and protective (McLagan 2020). Moreover, for performances of these divinatory rituals of authority, the Mami Wata priestesses wear fish costumes. The good humour of these priestesses and the colourful absurdity of their iconography resonates with the humorous double engenders of the ribald songs

performed in honor of these divinatory visions (Alvarez & Zamora, 2021).

The Influence of Spiritual Beliefs on Zangbeto Rituals

At the core of the Zangbeto Festival Performance, which has been celebrated for generations by the communities of the Ogu people, lies the cosmology that gives it spiritual meaning. The ceremonies that make up this annual event pay respect to the ancestral Zangbeto spirits that these communities believe have been set in place by the High God to ensure the safety of their villages and the well-being of their crops (Urban, 2023).

At the heart of the spirituality of the Ogu people is the concept that all the natural and human phenomena around them contain divine essences. These essences are intimately connected to the richness and wellbeing of the Ogu people. This closely knit divinity humanity relationship lies at the core of all interactions with the multitude of essences that populate the rich spiritual landscape of their everyday lives (Beattie, 2023). Richly adorned dances and songs during their festival times serve to invoke the Zangbeto people, presences under the direct command of the divine, who watches over the well-ordered human world. These performances are reminders of the well-established omnipresent vigilance of the Zangbeto.

Ceremonies keep the vital balance between the human and spirit worlds essential to rural well-being at least according to the beliefs held by the Ogu poeple. These spiritual ceremonies ensure that the Zangbeto (who is believed to maintain the cosmic balances that ensure the village's well-being) is properly thanked. The Zangbeto is folklore's version of a spiritual policeman.

Ritual Objects and their Symbolic Meanings in Zangbeto Ceremonies

According to the cosmological beliefs of the Ogu people, specialized ritual objects play an essential role in the Zangbeto Festival that goes far beyond mere decoration or tool-making. The most iconic of these objects, of course, is the mask as shown in figure 4 below. Oral histories abound in the Ogu community about the masks' mystical and secret-making possibilities, but one thing that comes across unambiguously is that the making of a mask is done with intentions that are right and proper, and with care and concentration that borders on trance. (Turetsky, 2023, P. 33)

Figure 4: Raffia Masks



Source: Turetsky (2023)

It is pertinent to explain some routines in Zangbeto Festival. Palm wine libations poured during songs, as shown in Figure 6, this serves dual symbolic functions. Chanted over the local brew, libations activate ancestral essence intermediating blessings since primordial times. Simultaneously, wine nourishes the spiritual bond between living-ancestors renewed annually according to origin narratives (Ephirim-Donkor 2021).

Figure 5: Palm wine libations poured during songs



Source: Ephirim-Donkor (2021)

Figure 6: Necklaces of circular shell pendants



Source: Mensah (2023)

Sacred drums and rattles, as shown in figure 8, produce rhythms believed calling ancestral spirits to inhabit ceremonies and bless people. Symbolically, they represent the heartbeat keeping communities alive through imbued ancestral life-force, according to indigenous understandings (Quinn 2022).

Figure 7: Sacred drums and Rattles



Source: Quinn (2022)

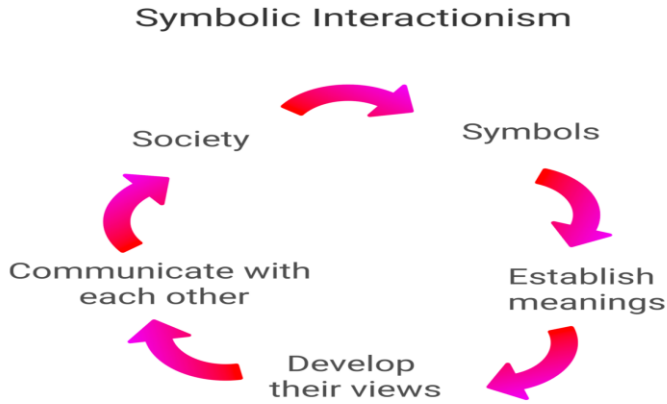
Continued crafting and ceremonial deployment of such emblematic items infuses traditions with renewed meaning and connection to the ancestral realm central to Ogu cosmology in a modern world.

Theoretical Framework

Symbolic Interactionism

Central to understanding the interplay between ritual practices and cultural festivals is symbolic interactionism as the theoretical lens for the study. It was introduced by Herbert Blumer in the late 1930s, this socio-philosophical perspective centers on symbols, and the meanings assigned to them through social processes, as fundamental to group realities (Sterchele, 2020).

Figure 8: Symbolic Interactionism Theory



Source: Stromberg (2021)

For symbolic interactionist, reality arises not from objective stimuli alone but through an interpretive process whereby individuals negotiate meaning based on shared understanding with others (Brittan, 2020). Language both verbal and non-verbal serves as the primary medium through which communities agree upon common designations for phenomena in their world. Identities, behaviors and perceptions all emerge from this active, cooperative process of subjective definition.

Ritual practices exemplify the construction of realities through symbolic means. Highly stylized, repetitive behaviors circulated in cultural performances reinforce particular understandings among participants over time (Stromberg, 2021) Regular participation helps enshrine traditional wisdoms as taken-for-granted components of a culture shaped inter-subjectively through socialization rather than objectively. Festivals likewise crystallize negotiated meanings built up generationally through shared experiences of rituals, songs and symbolic practices that constitute collective identity (Richards, 2021).

Previous Works on Rituals and Festivals

Scholars have long recognized the profound cultural roles of ritual practices and communal celebrations. Formative works shed light while opening doors for finer grained analyses. In 2020, Von Scheve cast a spotlight on the importance of rituals. He described them as mechanisms that positively charge social structures, imparting solidarity through a kind of collective synchrony. Arising from the time immemorial, anthropological tradition of group life studies, his work on rituals emphasized their functionality. Rituals make things work; they help societies be societies. His effervescent interpretation of ritual holds promise for educational purposes.

In 2021, Magiman and Nordin turned their attention to the rituals' functions of communication. They contend that through these performances, moral, cosmological, and social messages are conveyed. In fact, they see rituals as making available a potent mix of messages that are expressed when performers act out what they are enacting. The versatile nature of rituals, then, is not only about the content of the messages transmitted but also about the appearance and form what is sometimes called the theater of religion that is crucial to the performances in reaching desired ends.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design using secondary data sources to explore the efficacy of ritual practices in shaping the Zangbeto Festival Performance as a cultural expression. The qualitative approaches facilitate contextualized, nuanced understandings of complex sociocultural phenomena (Kelly, 2023). While primary research involving direct observation offers first hand insights, the secondary analysis of existing qualitative literature generates meaningful findings through exploration of themes, experiences and meanings constructed by prior studies. This design aligns with symbolic interactionism's emphases on social construction and interpretation of realities through emergent, negotiated meanings (Cabanas, 2020).

The flexible nature of qualitative inquiry also allows following leads uncovered throughout the research process. An iterative, reflexive approach aims to comprehensively address the research questions within available data sources while accounting for limitations.

Data Sources

Data derives primarily from academic sources directly documenting Zangbeto rituals and related festivities through observational fieldwork and ethnographic inquiry. Sources include peer-reviewed journals across disciplines like anthropology, African Studies and folklore.

Additionally, grey literature from conference papers and theses/dissertations provide on-the-ground student research insights. Government and NGO reports contain histories, photographs and descriptions of traditions from external viewpoints. Online databases were also utilised.

Data Analysis

Constant comparison then identifies patterns between sources, noting corroborating perspectives as well as divergences requiring further exploration. Memos question initial assumptions to refine interpretations. As additional contextual layers emerge, earlier sources undergo re-coding incorporating new understandings through an iterative process (Pentland & Wyner, 2020). This process culminates in a synthesis of findings from all sources. Comparative analysis then contextualizes the Zangbeto traditions' cultural functions by contrasting with other African festival case studies.

Scope of the Study

Ogu people are largely domiciled in two local government areas of Ogun West, Nigeria. These local government are Yewa South and Ipokia local governments. They are largely concentrated in Isagbo and Ihunbo. Isagbo and Ihunbo are the communities under the two local government areas under study.

Result and Findings

This aspect focuses on the discussion of the objectives of the study which includes the role of ritual realities in enhancing the cultural significance of the Zangbeto Festival and the impact of ritual realities on community engagement and participation during the festival. This aspect ends with a deep thematic search on the efficacy of ritual realities in the performance of Zangbeto festival

Objective One: The Role of Ritual Realities in Enhancing the Cultural Significance of the Zangbeto Festival

Preservation of Traditional Cosmology

The ritual realities of the Zangbeto Festival are of great importance in the reproduction of the traditional world view of the Ogu people. This cosmology therefore comprises of a number of related beliefs that link the physical world and the spiritual world. Adande

(2018, p. 29) notes that the Zangbeto masquerades are spirits of the ancestors and night protectors and therefore it depicts the reality of the two worlds. The drumming and dancing that is performed in connection with Zangbeto serve as intermediaries between the two worlds, and enable the people to communicate with spirits and restore harmony in the world. Koussey (2020) has discussed complex invocation rituals in which the priests invite the spirits of the ancestors to possess the Zangbeto masks.

Reinforcement of Social Hierarchy and Authority

Performing the Zangbeto Festival in details, it can be ascertained that the ritual realities are instrumental in maintaining social status and authoritative system in the Ogu communities. As much as Bassett (2020) points out, secrecy of some of the rituals especially those pertaining to selection and training of the Zangbeto performers helps in the perpetuation of a system of spiritual and political power. The Zangbeto hierarchal structure is not just a symbolic representation but it has the role to play in the functioning of the community. Akinwumi (2017) notes that Zangbeto leaders are usually involved in the political authority structure as consultative council of the traditional leaders or as the police force as observed in some of the rural societies.

Cultural Identity Formation and Expression

The Zangbeto Festival's ritual realities are essential in constructing and performing Ogu cultural identity. Oluwole (2019), however, opines that the costumes, the dancing, and the chanting traditionally associated with Zangbeto plays are potent symbols of Ogu. The author goes further to point out that "the visual and auditory spectacle of Zangbeto is not entertainment, but Ogu cultural distinctiveness in action" (Oluwole, 2019). The language employed in the rituals of Zangbeto is also instrumental in shaping the identity of the performers. Adande (2018) notes that most of the chants and invocations are done in the old dialects of the Ogu

language, thus retaining words that are hardly used in the present day.

Objective Two: The Impact of Ritual Realities on Community Engagement and Participation during the Festival

Fostering Collective Effervescence

The ritual realities of the Zangbeto Festival evoke a spirit of sociability and produce the feeling of effervescence, which was defined by Émile Durkheim as a state of increased excitement characteristic of the collective rituals. Mensah (2021) states that the drumming, dancing, and chanting that are characteristic of Zangbeto performance raises the group's emotional charge. A number of scenes depicted by the author qualify as creating the notion of a group enthusiasm where the participants and spectators are engrossed in a culture of togetherness and the people are not individuals but a mass.

The spatial organization of the rituals also plays its part in this process of creating the collective effervescence. Koutonin (2022) opines that majority of Zangbeto dances are done in circles whereby the viewer's form a ring around the dancers. This spatial organization assists in the removal of the gulf between the performer and the audience, thus offering a far more engaging and interactive experience.

Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

The Zangbeto Festival is a great way of passing down knowledge from one generation to another through the various activities that are performed in the festival hence promoting the community participation across the age groups. Akinwumi (2017) stresses that the preparation and performance of the Zangbeto rituals include a set of activities that could be relevant only to the person who has received certain knowledge from the older people. This knowledge involves a whole lot of things which include fashioning of masks and costumes, executing certain dance steps, chanting of

invocations, and even the interpretation of the symbolic significance of certain objects used in the rituals.

The fact that most Zangbeto rituals are done in the open offers a chance in imparting knowledge to the larger community. Dossou (2019) notes that spectators who are elders sit and watch then comment on the performances while guiding the younger generations on the meaning of various rituals areas.

The Zangbeto festival also has a function of passing knowledge in histories and traditions through the oral word. Koussey (2020) opines that most of the Zangbeto usual dances involve aspects of storytelling whereby real or imaginary incidents or even messages are passed through dancing, acting and spoken words. Nevertheless, this kind of learning from the older generation to the younger entails a two-way interaction.

Community Cohesion through Shared Responsibility

The cultural benefits of the Zangbeto Festival include the fact that the reality of the ritual requires communal participation in the performance of tasks that are expected of various members of the society, hence the general mobilization of the people in the organization of the festival. In his article titled: 'The art of preparation and celebration: Understanding the cultural value of the Dagara funerals and festivals', Koutonin (2022) notes that every aspect of the organization of the festival is assigned to various groups or families in the society. For the author, it can be stated that, "From costume making to food preparation, from security arrangements to the construction of ritual spaces, every family is involved in the process of making the Zangbeto Festival" (Koutonin, 2022, p. 53).

This system of shared responsibility performs several functions for increasing the solidarity of the community. Bassett (2020) notes that each group is supposed to play their part and ensure that the

festival is a success hence the element of coordination. The distribution of tasks tends to be gendered and pro longs cultural roles and practices even if it also offers the chance of public reward. Mensah (2021) gives an example of how some of the prestigious tasks are exclusively demarcated to particular lineages or social strata based on the past performance and as a way of encouraging more participation. Also, the social processes of preparing a festival imply opportunities for conflict solving and people's social relations improvement. Oluwole (2019) has pointed to examples of how long standing family or individual feuds were put aside in the name of preparing for the celebration of the festival.

Discussion of Findings

The study shows that the ritual realities are central in the process of enriching the cultural value of the Zangbeto Festival Performances. The ritual realities of the festival help to maintain the traditional cosmology and thus can be seen as the way of strengthening the connection with the past for the representatives of the community. Also, they consolidate power relations and patriarchal and authoritarian values, thus participating in the maintenance of the community's order. The ritual realities also have a function of creating and defining cultural identity in given societies and offering a way of cultural confrontation or compromise in the process of modernization.

The research also shows that the essence and role of the Zangbeto Festival Performance in the construction of ritual realities are significantly effective in the enhancement of community participation. The realities of the festival in the case of rituals therefore promote the spirit of togetherness that generates social attachment thereby promoting social cohesiveness. Besides, they help in passing down knowledge from one generation to another while also helping in passing down cultural knowledge to the next generation while also helping in educating the public.

While this study was limited to secondary data analysis, the exploration of the scholarly works explored however indicates that ritual traditions play enduring roles culturally, socially and spiritually for the Ogus. However for further research and exploration, more research directly observing rituals could offer deeper understandings of lived realities and meanings constructed.

Conclusion

This study has navigated through the cultural role of rituals in shaping the Zangbeto Festival among the Ogu people of Ogun West, Nigeria. By examining various secondary sources on ritual practices such as dances, costumes, and their meanings to the communities, several key findings emerged. Rituals in Zangbeto Festival have been found as ways of preservations of traditional beliefs by invoking ancestral spirits and linking people to past generations. They also reinforce social hierarchies and cultural identities by establishing symbolic order and collective belonging through masks, songs, and shared heritage.

Zangbeto Festival rituals foster participation and cohesion. They generate excitement and effervescence that unite people in performances. Important knowledge is transferred from elders to youth through embodied actions and oral traditions imbued in its dances. The responsibilities are divided among the people so that its preparation involves collaboration that strengthens social bonds. Even as contexts change, Zangbeto Festival rituals continue serving as vessels of continuity and connection to spiritual and ancestral realms significant to Ogu cosmologies

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