JJMS ISSN: 2672-4790 Vol. 9(3), September, 2026 Website: https://jjms.com.ng

Yoruba Party Culture (*Owambe*) and its Social Aesthetics within Nigeria's Capitalist Economy

Adebayo Abidemi Olufemi[1], Adegoke-Daniel Ibukunoluwa Esther[2], Amure Victoria[3], Amure Segun Emmanuel[1] & Adeboje Daniella Moyinoluwa[1]

[1]Department of English, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

[2]Leicester City, United Kingdom

[3]Westland University, Iwo, Osun State

Email: femishakespeare@yahoo.com; adebayofemi@run.edu.ng; ibukunoluwaadegokedaniel@gmail.com; victoriaamure@gmail.com; amure16124@run.edu.ng; daniellaadeboje142@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Yoruba *owambe* party culture in southwestern Nigeria, focusing on its social functions, aesthetic expressions, and economic implications within the country's capitalist economy. The study is motivated by the endemic practice nature of and the prominence of the social gathering practice among the people. The research is qualitative and guided by John Dewey's variant of the Progressivist Theory and Parsons-Merton Functionalist Theory as a variant of Social Change Theory. The study maintains that the *owambe* party culture has evolved beyond a gathering for wining and dining. However, the extravagance characterising Yoruba *owambe* is counter-intuitive in Nigeria's declining capitalist economy. Also, the carnival-like nature of this social practice can serve as a tax-generation means for government through making musicians pay tax and requesting international brands to establish regional plants in Lagos. Image and video documentation of critical cultural goings-on at *owambes* need to be documented for both cyber and physical museum displays for tourism. The paper concludes that the Yoruba *owambe* social practice needs to be revisited in the context of modern Nigerian socio-economic realities, and this is best achieved by harnessing the economic potential and regulate its characteristics according to best practices. It was recommended the Nigeria government expedite actions on taxation aspect as such can improve government's efforts towards social growth.

Keywords: Yoruba *owambe*, African culture, Nigerian capitalist economy, party culture, conspicuous consumption

INTRODUCTION

Owambe refers to a recognisable form of celebratory gathering associated with Yoruba social life, particularly in southwestern Nigeria. Such celebrations may involve music, dance, distinctive clothing, shared meals, monetary gifts, and public expressions of solidarity and social recognition, although their organisation and scale vary across communities and occasions. Medeme (2023:3) avers that "But in Nigerian parlance, *owambe* has come to mean a lavish party replete with outlandish outfits, an unending supply of food and drinks and of course, a display of wealth in the form of spraying wads of Naira." The Southwest Nigeria comprises six (6) states, including Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti. These six states constitute the Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria, and the zone is the native habitat of the Yoruba people, though there are Yoruba people in the neighboring states of Kwara and Kogi. *Detty December* has also become a vibrant gathering of party-fun lovers in Lagos.

These two social phenomena in Southwest Nigeria have heuristic potential in the context of cultural identity promotion as well as economic significance, respectively. This is

particularly so within the Nigeria's capitalist economy. It is important to state that a number of circumstances make these social-life practices worth being studied. The first is that they are popularly practiced among the Yoruba, they happen in highest consistency, and the Yoruba people engage in them with frenetic intensity and elaboration. However, in spite of these potential and value, there are so many ills associated with the *owambe*. The situation of potential and ills concerning these socio-cultural practices has necessitated a panoramic exploration of the endemic cultural engagements in Southwest Nigeria. These manifestations of social life among the Yoruba have not received sufficient attention in divergent perspectives. The research concentration on *owambe* so far has not also been contextualised within a capitalist economy like Nigeria's. Such has not equally been on the exploration of the economic potential and cultural identity promotion of these Yoruba epicurean practices as well as the debauched nature of the practice in global economic and cultural frameworks. Accordingly, this study examines the relationship between the social aesthetics of *owambe*, its communal and cultural functions, and the economic pressures and opportunities associated with its practice in contemporary Nigeria.

Literature Review

It was stated earlier in this study that Yoruba *owambe* party culture is a vibrant social and cultural practice. Its unique features and essences have attracted the attention of social observers and intellectual. Many observations and validations have been made on the Yoruba party culture. For example, Adesina and Elugbaju (2026) are concerned with the naira bactardisation at Yoruba *owambes*. They advocate governmental punitive actions on the naira batardisation in the course of spraying at Yoruba *owambes*. Simarly, Yeku (2021) describes *owambe*, in cinematic context, asserting that this Yoruba practice yields pleasure that is riddled in cultural and social politics and that it is essentially materialistic. In addition to these dimensions on *owambe*, the concern of Ogunyankin (2019) as it concerns this Yoruba societal phenomenon is the counter narrative of low-income women in Ibadan, Nigeria against the *owambe* urbanism as capable of sustaining the future of Africa. Ogunyankin states that this is sustained in an Afropolitan Imagineering project of *owambe* urbanism. She avers further that Afropolitan Imagineering is the production of unaccustomed perception of African continent and Africans themselves as world-class as well as cosmopolitan. Furthermore, Ogunyankin asserts that *Owambe* urbanism is a spatio-temporal and neoliberal engagement which concerns destinations, arrivals including place-making, and all promise a shared happy future for every urban dweller. She maintains that this hope of happiness is countered by low-income Ibadan women who are cognizant of the fact that a shared happy future will not be possible if little effort is expedited intended to address social inequality manifesting in the present time.

This conversation on *owambe* bears link with the culture of the Yoruba and this makes the nature of the Yoruba culture and the people bear relevance in this discourse. To this end, Fabiyi (2023) has identified the concept of intentional humanism as a feature of Yoruba culture. She notes that Intentional Humanism is based the ethical principles of the Yoruba indigenous culture. She, therefore, sees

Intentional Humanism as a viable means of changing the society. It is noted that human feeling, gregariousness, and communalism are inherent in Intentional Humanism and this bears link to the one of the essences of *owambe* as may be highlighted subsequently in this study. From another perspective, Adejumo (2023) is of the view that Yoruba culture is utilitarian; it possesses the capability to change the society in the context of economic and social development. In his opinion, Adejumo reveals that "…the response of the Yorùbá culture to changes could impact positively on growth." (1)

This declaration is of tremendous significance to the anticipated goal of this study which seeks to aver the potential of Yoruba *owambe* as a cultural product capable of developing the society. This position aligns with Aremu et al's (2010) view of culture of the Yoruba in Southwest Nigeria. The view is such that emphasises the relevance of culture including the many Yoruba artistic norms. This is with regards to their much-valued indigenous architecture. Aremu et al further lay emphasis on special references to artistic elements such as figures, symbols, patterns and so on being used to fulfil creative ingenuity of the Yoruba cultural architecture. The significance of culture to the Yoruba palpable I the observations so far is further echoed by Agai (2015) and Akinola (2026) who maintain that the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria are passionate about their culture. This is especially so because the culture is one of the means through which the Yorùbá sustain peace in their communities across the region according to Olayinka (2025) and Adedibu and Oke (2026).

The reviewed literature presents *owambe* as a socially significant practice associated with communal interaction, cultural identity, material display, and urban life. However, the relationship between its aesthetic appeal, communal functions, and economic consequences requires further integrated analysis. They have also noted that the culture of the Yoruba is their priced heritage as particularly noted in Intentional Humanism. These intellectuals have also observed that the modern Yoruba society is an inter-mix of indigenous experiences and Westernism. However, the question of social development is still evasive in Nigeria, consequently rubbing off on the Yoruba society as a region in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This research is designed to be qualitative research. This means that thought advancement is based on rationalism using available evidence. In the same vein, the local knowledge of the authors is instrumental in affirmations of the *owambe* practice. The practical experience of the authors on these social phenomena is an incontrovertible source of affirmation and validation of hypothetical assumptions on *owambe* and *Detty December*. To minimise interpretive bias, personal observations were considered alongside documented materials and relevant scholarly literature. Furthermore, photographs from random *owambe* celebrations have been conceived necessary for the research; they were inserted for authentication and veracity. Additionally, textualisation strategies have also been deemed necessary and so they have been adopted in the study. This is also for authentication and veracity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study has been carried out and is anchored on both the John Dewey's variant of the Progressivist Theory and

the Parsons-Merton Functionalist Theory as a variant of Social Change Theory. These two theories have been considered appropriate for this study as a result of their emphasis on different aspects of the perspectives from which the study has been looked at. John Dewey's variant of the Progressivist Theory emphasises the positive aspects of the *owambe* practice. Such is concerned with the propagation of the Intentional Humanism aspect of these social gatherings as their essences. Conversely, Parsons-Merton Functionalist Theory as a variant of Social Change Theory accounts for the not-so-good aspect of the perceptions and assessments of *owambe*.

All these have been intended for the maximisation of the potential of the social practices as cultural endowments within the Yoruba society as an African society, and rectify grey areas. This aligns with the core goal of this study whose objective is to explore the capabilities of *owambe* as a tool for socio-economic buoyancy the Yoruba society. Such an exploration is expected to be attained through the externalisation of the cultural endowments of *owambe*. To this end, the study is well-guided for achieving its core goal. In essence, Dewey's Progressivism's applicability to this research consists in its emphasis on advancement which aligns with the concept of social growth which this research conceives *owambe* to be capable of. In the same vein, Parsons-Merton Functionalist Theory as a variant of Social Change Theory is relevant to the study because of its goal of extracting value from an object as this connects to the value that this study attaches to *owambe* in addition to being a mere gathering of fun lovers.

Characteristics of Yoruba *Owambe*

Yoruba *owambe* exhibits a number of peculiar characteristics which make them unique and deserving of critical attention. It needs to be stated that some of the characteristics of the Yoruba *owambe* may overlap with the characteristics of the party cultures of the other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Emphasis is, indeed, on the features as they are found in the Yoruba *owambe*, and not comparatively. Accordingly, the *owambe* is characterised by *the aso ebi* concept. This is shown in colour monogram in this *owambe* image:



It is also characterised by expensive dressing in modern native attire. Most women wear revealing clothes in the form of short and tight dressing, cut to reveal cleavages, the back, or thighs. Lawal et al (2022) describe dressing at Yoruba *owambe* as expensive and rich in designs.

Furthermore, there is solidarity seating and dancing in front of the life band as the band sings in praise of the celebrant. The celebrant must be given financial donations, usually according to the

economic capabilities of the giving well-wishers. Food of different types are prepared and available. A renowned live band stand is a condition as illustrated in this *owambe* image.



Additionally, the presence of gorgeous women is usually a condition, indeed, expected to be many more than men. New naira notes are sprayed on the live band, the celebrant, as well as deserving well-wishers. There is equally a required unwritten competition rule among the sprayers of the naira notes as the spraying competition performs its purpose.

The *Good and the Not-so-Good* Yoruba *Owambe* Practices

There is a critical need for categorising the Yoruba people's way of organising *owambe*. Generally speaking, some of the ways (the characteristics) are good and progressive while some others can be said to be not-so-good, and so regressive. This categorisation is important because the goal of this study is to appraise the Yoruba culture as an African culture in order to open an avenue for African culture to serve as a source of social and development means through which Africa can be relevant in the comity of nations. This is especially because Africa is yet to develop her own indigenous science and technology in the magnitude and sophistication that makes such scientific and technological innovations adopted and competitive at the global level (Adam, 2016; Ekanem and Okolisah, 2018). In fact, Ekanem and Okolisah opine that "for over five decades, African countries have been passive onlookers of technological change that characterised the 20th and 21stcentury's world."

To this end, African culture such as Yoruba culture is consequently being scrutinised in many ramifications to achieve this goal. To this end, *owambe* represents African culture being scrutinized for global attention. The good practices can be sold to international community but the not-so-good ones need to be detoxified. To this end, it is safe and incontrovertible to state that cultural aesthetics which *owambe* yields incomparable. A typical Yoruba *owambe* is a mark of glamour, glitz, and extravagance. This is to the extent of making the *owambes* a symbol for global tourism attention. When such is considered along the communal nature of the people's supports for the celebrant, one is motivated to assert that Yoruba

owambe is a gathering of fellowship and autochthonous understanding.

However, each of the characteristics of *owambe* has the toxic dimension. It should be averred that in the cotemporary time, the good intention of the *owambe* characteristics has been manipulated and corrupted. This is such that continued practice of the *owambe* characteristic is injurious to the people and society. To begin with, the Aso Ebi phenomenon has been diverted from achieving its original of unifying the people attending. However, the celebrant often commercialized the *Aso Ebi* practice. This has always reflected in celebrant's deliberate hiking the vendor's price of the commodity, for gains. *Owambe* has been condemned for this as Lawal et al (2022) see such as a manifestation of the political and economic urbanisation in the Yoruba (African) scenario. Organisers have always made financial gains from the practice. Therefore, the celebrant is more concerned about the gains to be made than the wearing of the common fabric on the occasion. This is financial exploitation and unfair, and it distresses the well-wishers in a weak capitalist economy like that of Nigeria. This is worsened by the fact that well-wishers are still expected to spray money on the *owambe* convener in front of the live band that sings the praise of the convener of the *owambe*. The spraying is also a commodifying bastardisation of the Nigerian currency, the Naira. The spraying often results in the naira notes forming the ground surface on which the convener walks as a sign of pride and financial attainment. Though the government of Nigeria frowns at this (Ogunrinola, 2021; Akhaine, 2025). Government's displeasure can also be seen in the Medene's (2023) report that 31-year-old Simi Gold was arrested by government agencies for spraying and stepping on naira notes. Despite this punitive action, yet the practice sustains.

Government's Duties and the New Notes Administration in Nigerian Banks

One of the ills of *owambe* is spraying of the naira notes. The spraying achieves its essence when the notes fall on the party ground/floor and guests do step on them. This is considered a mark of the affluence and civil importance of the *owambe* convener. Though government has taken steps to forbid this practice, the process acquiring the new naira notes should be investigated and monitored. It has been noted that it is only new naira notes that the heavy weight in society, the elite spray at *owambe*. How they procure this is still a mystery to the hoipoloi in the Nigerian society. It is curious that new notes are rarely available for withdrawal at ATMs or across counters in the banking hall. Yet, a random person sells the notes under the bridges in Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta and other cities in Southwest Nigeria. How do the bank notes get to the streets? The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) who dispenses the notes does not deal with individuals; it dispenses the notes to commercial banks. In fact, Medeme (2023:3) further narrates that "With its new money vouchers, guests at weddings, burial ceremonies or any such socio-cultural events can buy the amount they intend to 'spray' the celebrants and transfer the cash equivalent to the agent's account." This scenario validly suggests that there is a huge new bank notes racketeering within Nigerian commercial banks. Government needs to eliminate such a racketeering. Making money out of official commodity which all citizens should have access to because the administrators have access to the commodity can be seen as abuse of

office. Government's intervention that can lead to the elimination of the practice is evidence of good governance in the defence of the everyday Nigerian. This charge definitely is going to be a herculean task because the practice is systemically endemic, and involves many commercial banks.

A Clarion Call to Authorities on Benefit Derivation from *Owambe*

Yoruba *owambe* is a dominant social practice in Southwest Nigeria, and it has vast social impacts. Though there are reverse consequences to it, yet it cannot be eradicated; it can only be modified. As a result of its sustenance, there are however, some benefits which the Nigerian government can attract in order to attain social growth. First of all, since the consumption of *owambe* materials is vast, persistent, and lucrative, government may request the manufacturers of the imported materials for *owambe* to establish their production outpost in Lagos or Ogun. This will eliminate currency exchange rate between the naira and the dollar as the international trade currency. This will make cost lower, provide employment, and generate tax income for government. The consciousness of the exclusivity of the imported items which the Yoruba boast of as tools of social empowerment will still be sustained since the companies that manufacture such commodities as Italian leather shoes, Swiss watches, American and British Attic cars as well as Turkish lace materials, are in charge of production process in the country. In addition to this, musicians' incomes through singing live at *owambes* need to be taxed. This is a source of income to government. The number of musicians that perform in the Yoruba region of Nigeria regularly over weekends, including during the week days, is huge. Tremendous incomes can be generated through this avenue. This is a valid means of income generation as they musicians fall within the non-corporate or non-institutional taxation who are not always covered by the tax net, yet all taxable citizens must pay taxes for government to generate revenue for every day governance as Nichelatti and Hiilamo (2024).

In the same vein, government needs to incorporate the cultural aesthetics potential of *owambe* in its culture-preservation agenda as a government's policy. By this, the appropriate organ of the United Nations, specifically, UNESCO, should be involved in the externalisation of Yoruba, indeed, Nigerian, culture. Government may need to take photographs and videos of *owambe*, capturing the gorgeous and expensive gaits as well as videos of the glitz and glamour of the events. These will serve as data which can be displayed at museums for memory and nostalgia. Additionally, the new-note racketeering needs decisive actions. Citizens are being punished unduly in the present situation; one, they do not have access to new notes which they deserve as citizens, and, two, many people in the financial/banking sector of the Nigerian economy are making undue incomes from a sabotaged naira note dispensation systems. Government should put a stop to this for the reason of improvement in economic conditions and civil equity.

CONCLUSION

Yoruba owambe constitutes a significant cultural practice through which social relationships, aesthetic expression, public recognition, and commercial activity intersect in southwestern Nigeria. Traditional institutions, families, community leaders, religious

organisations, cultural practitioners, and relevant government agencies can contribute to promoting financially responsible and culturally sensitive owambe celebrations. Their efforts should preserve the practice's communal and aesthetic value while addressing avoidable financial pressure and other demonstrable concerns. Culturally sensitive adaptation can help ensure that owambe remains meaningful to participating communities while responding to changing social and economic conditions. International promotion should communicate the cultural significance of the practice rather than make external acceptance the primary criterion for its legitimacy. The government could explore incentives for domestic and foreign investment in textile manufacturing, fashion, garment production, and related creative industries. Such policies should be informed by market feasibility, local production capacity, employment potential, and the long-term sustainability of the investment. Unequal access to newly issued banknotes, if established by systematic evidence, may raise broader questions about economic inequality, institutional accountability, and the distribution of public resources. Any interpretation of these patterns through a postcolonial framework should be explicitly defined and supported by relevant scholarship.

REFERENCES

Adam, Gamel. Nasser. 2016. Tackling Africa's Scientific and Technological Underdevelopment: the role of the humanities. *Legon Journal of the Humanities*, 27(1), 21-47 DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ljh.v27i1.2

Adedibu, Babatunde. and Oke, Olusegun Peter. 2026. An ethical response to matchmaking and dating in the Yoruba traditional society and the digital world. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences*, 7(4), 1069-1082 https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2026748

Adejumo, Arinpe G. 2023. Yoruba Culture in a Changing World. *Yoruba Studies Review*, 8(1) https://journals.flvc.org/ysr/article/view/134083

Adesina, Abiodun Oluwakemi and Elugbaju, Ayowole S. 2026. We must Spray: Nigerian *Owambe* parties and the Redesigning of the Naira. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2026.2637714

Agai, Jock Mathew. 2017. Rethinking Yoruba Culture in the Light of Yoruba Origin, *Journal for Semitics* 24(2), 427–450

Akhaine, Saxone. 2025. Spraying, hawking, mutilation of Naira notes Remain Prohibited-CBN Governor. *The Guardian*, 18 September, 2025

Akinola, Olayinka John. 2026. Influence of Culture on the Practice of Christianity among Yoruba in Nigeria and Its Implications for Christian Missions, *The Asbury Theological Journal*, 81(1), 81-97 https://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/vol81/iss1/6

Aremu, Paxton Sholademi Olabisi; Ajiboye, Oladiipo Joseph; and Abiodun, Babatunde. 2010. Art and culture as a viable currency in Yoruba traditional architecture. *The Sustainable World*, 142, 737-744

Ekanem, Samuel Asuquo. and Okolisah, Chinyere Precious. 2018. The Gap between Scientific and Technological Development in Africa: An Essencist Rediscovery Framework. *Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Philosophy*, 10(1,) 79-94

Fabiyi, Olufunmilayo Omolola. 2023. Harnessing the Yoruba and Tradition of Intentional Humanism in Combating Insecurity in Nigeria. *Ochendo: An African Journal of Innovative Research*, 4(1), 1-14 DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.29127.37285

Lawal, Musediq Olufemi; Aliu, Nkechi Latifat; Irhue, Kennetyh; Akinriade, Olawale Olufemi; and Ajayi, Oluwagbemiga. Oluwaseun. 2022. Urban realities and politics of Owanbe in Nigeria, *Acta Politica Polonica*. (53), 59–73

Medene, Ovwe. 2023. Naira Scarcity: Event Planners Print Notes for Owambe Spraying. *Premium Times*, 19 February, 2023. Available at https://www.premiumtimesng.com/entertainment/naija-fashion/582919-naira-scarcity-event-planners-print-notes-for-owambe-spraying.html?tztc=1 Retrieved 30 August, 2026

Nichelatti, Enrico and Hiilamo, Heikki. 2024. The Effect of Citizens' Perception of Governance on Tax Compliance: A Cross-Country Analysis Study for 32 Sub-Saharan African Countries. *European Journal of Development Research*, **36**, 1198–1226, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-024- 00631-2

Ogunrinola, Ifeoluwa. 2021. Spraying Money in Nigeria: Waste or Reallocation. *Business Day*, July 19, 2026

Ogunyankin, Grace Adeniyi. 2019. The City of Our Dream': *Owambe* Urbanism and Low-income Women's Resistance in Ibadan, Nigeria. *International Journal of Urban Regional Research*, 43: 423-441. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12732

Olayinka, Akintayo Sunday. 2025. Culture (Yorùbá) as a Means of De-Escalating Conflict and Maintaining Peace. *Authorea* https://doi.org/10.22541/au.161360719.93879332/v3 available at https://www.authorea.com/doi/full/10.22541/au.161360719.93879332/v3

Yékú, James. 2021. In Praise of Ostentation: Social Class in Lagos and the Aesthetics of Nollywood's Ówàḿbè Genres. *African Studies*, *80*(3–4), 434–450. https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2021.2000366