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4. Indigenous Ritual Performance in Ile-Ife: A Further Light into the *Edi* Festival

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Abstract

Michael J. Walsh's interesting study on *Edi* provides an insight into one of the most important festivals celebrated at Ile-Ife, southwest Nigeria. Festivals in Yorubaland, most especially in pre-colonial times, were deeply ritualistic and conjure up esoteric posturing that leaves discerning minds with ambivalent explanations or interpretations of peculiar traditional phenomena. Walsh's work, as he confessed, was rudimentary, thus, leaving readers with more grounds to cover on *Edi* festival. Based on fieldwork conducted in Ile-Ife, and drawing primarily on evidence from oral sources, the study digs deeper into the personality of Mòremí, on the one hand, and her role in the founding of the *Edi* festival, on the other hand. It explores the varied processes, practices and procedures carried out in the performance of this all-important event. The study examines reasons *Edi* is celebrated and its importance to the interminable existence or survival of Ile-Ife as the universal homeland of the Yoruba race. Following the foray of monotheistic beliefs and colonial rule in Nigeria *vis-à-vis* Ile-Ife, the festival typically witnessed significant modifications and later new adaptations on some of its ritual practices and performances. This, however, has not diminished the vigour of *Edi*. Though a source of contention in recent times, Mòremí's image offers insight into female royal power and influence and illustrates their categorical position in African societies.

Introduction

Myths and rituals are symbolic statements and actions through which a religion finds expression.¹ Myths express, enhance, and codify belief; safeguard and enforce morality and vouch for the efficiency of ritual. Rituals ensure stability and adaptability for society. Numerous literature on rituals, myths and festivals on different cultures around the world abound.² One such culture is that of the Yoruba in southwest Nigeria. Among the Yoruba, Ile-Ife in present-day Òsun State, southwest Nigeria is believed to be the epicentre of the world and Yoruba veneration of 201 gods,³ most of which are still actively worshipped since there is a festival of some sort celebrated almost every day. The major festivals such as *Odún Edi* for Mòremí, *Odún Itàpá* for Óbàtálá (the white god who created mankind), *Odún Olójó* for Ògún (the god of iron) and *Odún Idio* for Oduduwa, etc., have acquired something of the nature of a public holiday where many of the worshippers, non-worshippers and elite of the town attend.⁴

While a significant number of works on *Edi* provides scant details on the festival, particularly the earliest work by Michael J. Walsh⁵ which dealt somewhat with two steps of the festival and in addition to a summary of the entire process, this study intends to fuse the other steps into each other. This shall be carried out using both descriptive and analytical approaches. We intend to provide newer details and to fill important gaps left in Walsh's work by digging deeper into Mòremí's personality as a revered historical figure⁶ and her links to the founding of *Edi*. This shall be followed by using available oral evidence to explore the various processes carried out in the performance of the festival and identify reasons *Edi* is not only celebrated but why it is regarded as a very important sacred component for Ile-Ife's interminable existence. Lastly, further light shall be shed on some of the changes made on the festival over time and show how Mòremí's heroics invoked by her followers illustrate the people's perpetual appreciation for a female royal power and influence throughout the town.

Mòremí: Personality and the Founding of *Edi*

Mòremí Àjàsorò's position in Yoruba history appears ambivalent, given her historical links or relationship with some notable Yoruba groups.⁷ Mòremí is originally believed to be from Offa in present-day Ilorin, Kwara State, north-central Nigeria, a fact that is yet to be substantiated. It is possible that Mòremí may not have come from what later became Offa, since the date

which the town was said to have been founded was around the 14th century⁸ while the Mòremí episode occurred in Ile-Ife around the time of Obalùfòn Aláyémoré II and Òrànmíyàn which is put around the 12th century.⁹ These were towards the classical period of the entrenchment of the Oduduwa dynasty in Ile-Ife.¹⁰ In another illustration, Offa people are said to celebrate Mòremí for her role in the founding of the town,¹¹ while the celebration includes drumming with all rituals having no resemblance to *Edi* in Ile-Ife.¹² The view that Mòremí came to Ile-Ife after Offa founded by an Oyo prince, is likely to be a recipe for conflict with Ile-Ife and Ûgbò historical timeline of events. In further reference to the Offa connection, Mòremí in Ile-Ife is regarded as Yeye Okerewe and nowhere in her eulogy or even that of *Edi* is Offa mentioned. Information gathered from members of her compound at Okerewe quarters in Ile-Ife further revealed that Mòremí was originally from *Igun*, a small but ancient settlement located in Ìjùgbè, one of the thirteen autochthonous communities preceding Oduduwa's era now absorbed into the larger Yèkééré and Modákéké communities in the eastern part of the present-day Ile-Ife. In any case, it would be interesting to have a robust study on Mòremí's Offa background for a firmer grasp of the divergent relationships among these groups in time past.

Indeed, Mòremí serves as a link between the pre-Oduduwa and Oduduwa phases in Ile-Ife history. For the pre-Oduduwa period, according to Eluyemí, Ile-Ife in 800 A.D. comprised of thirteen autonomous communities namely Ìdó, Ìdèta, Ilóran, Ìlórómú, Ìjùgbè, Ìmòjùbí, Ìráyè, Iwinrìn, Òdín, Òkè-Àwó, Òkè-Ójà, Omológun and Parakin. Each of these communities had its own communal head (Oba) but an overall head also existed.¹³ Some, if not all, of these thirteen hamlets, was occupied by a people popularly called the Ûgbò and, in fact, notable figures of this period were said to have been of Ûgbò stock among whom was Óbàtálá also referred to as Óbàtálá Oseremagbo (Óbàtálá King of Ûgbò).¹⁴

Following the emergence of Oduduwa, these thirteen villages collapsed into one under him. He became the overall king but his reign witnessed incessant breakout of civil strife, cross carpeting, sabotage and an eventual win-lose situation. This period similarly witnessed the emergence of two camps within Ile-Ife – the Oduduwa camp and Óbàtálá camp, consisting of the Ûgbò group.¹⁵ The civil strife between both groups in the event of Oduduwa's emergence reshaped the socio-political arrangement of Ile-Ife in that, a new order was established and the settlement pattern was also

affected. This could be further explained to entail the emigration of Óbátálá to Iranje-Idita Oko in present-day Mokuro area extending to Ile-Ife-Ilesa boundary¹⁶ and some of the Ûgbò group under Obawinrin (head of Ûgbò within Iwinrin settlement) to Ûgbò forest located in present-day Ìsòyà.¹⁷ This emigration precipitated Ûgbò intrusive visits and set the stage for the emergence of Mòremí and the role she would eventually play in Ile-Ife history.

Extant literature on early Ile-Ife history, particularly those on Mòremí, have posited that during her era, the area was subjected to foreign raids and attacks by the Ûgbò group who wanted to retain the pre-Oduduwa status quo and refused to be integrated back into the new socio-political order of Ile-Ife as structured by Oduduwa and his supporters. However, facts gleaned from oral and textual sources reveal that after the Ûgbò group led by Obawinrin left Ile-Ife to the forest of Ûgbò near Ìsòyà, they continued to frequent Ile-Ife in order to periodically worship some of their deities such as *Ajé* (goddess of wealth), *Kórí*, *Èsà*, *Èsù-Ojà* and *Pokúlére*. The shrines of these deities were located at a place called *Èjìgbòmékùn* market now known as Ife market¹⁸ which operated during the day and night. In addition to worshipping the deities, the Ûgbò perpetrated robberies and abductions of the market traders, most of whom were women and children, on the pretext that they spied on them, the Ûgbò people.¹⁹ They were able to perpetrate robberies and abductions through their god-like appearance which scared the people of Ile-Ife. These continuous visitations of Ûgbò pilgrims placed Ile-Ife, whose citizens concluded they were under attack, under civil unrest and internal insecurity. Under this terrifying circumstance, Mòremí felt the need to put a stop to the menace. Account suggests that she consulted the river goddess, *Èsinmirin* who shared the secret of how to defeat the Ûgbò with her but in return for a sacrifice of whatever latter requested on her return.²⁰ Another account, however, claimed that Mòremí promised *Èsinmirin* sacrifice of anything she came in contact with on her return home from Ûgbòland if her mission succeeded.²¹

On the next Ûgbò raid, Mòremí made herself readily available to be taken into captivity. Owing to her striking beauty, the Ûgbò ruler took her in as a wife, removing the thoughts of her being enslaved or killed. During Mòremí's stay in Ûgbò, she was able to extract details about the tactics and arrangements made by the Ûgbò in these raids. She found that the Ûgbò invaders were not gods as initially assumed but rather, ordinary human

beings who only clothed in *ekán* (spear grass) and bamboo fibre which could be defeated with flaming torches placed on the dried grass on their body.²²

On gathering this vital information or secret, Mòremí returned to Ile-Ife to break the news to her people, urging attacks on these raiders with flaming torches to defeat them. Eventually, these pilgrims visited Ile-Ife once again but were attacked this time around and as many taken captive.²³ These captives have an existing family group in Ile-Ife today.²⁴ After this victory over the pilgrims, Mòremí was required to offer the sacrifice she pledged to *Èsinmirin* which was her only son whose name in some literature was known as Èlà or Olúorogbo. Whether her son was the first human contact she met on her return from Ûgbò is readily not clear but the fact that *Èsinmirin* River began to overflow its banks, reaching close to Ile-Ife, is likely to support this view.²⁵ As a matter of fact, Mòremí, a comment argued, had tried unsuccessfully to evade the request by offering some other ritual materials but were rejected outright.²⁶ Left with no choice, she finally gave up her son as offering to *Èsinmirin*.²⁷

That Mòremí's son was referred to as Èlà or Olúorogbo appears somewhat interesting, though the actual name is not very clear. Olupona²⁸ and Olajubu²⁹ referred to him as Olúorogbo, meanwhile, during separate interviews with Chief Obalásé of Olúorogbo and Chief Òrisàgbúrín of Olúorogbo in Ile-Ife, this figure was said to be a deity of writing and at the same time a follower of Óbátálá who played decisive roles during the conflict between the Oduduwa and Óbátálá groups.³⁰ Èlà, on the other hand, from accounts provided by some sixteen Ifá priests led by the *Àràbà* (head of Ifá priests in Ile-Ife and all over the world) in Ile-Ife, is regarded as Orunmila's name.³¹ Interestingly, a version mentioned a different name for Mòremí's son as was offered in the compound in Ile-Ife. He was known as *Wóròwòrò Ateete* (or *Ateete*)³² which sources within the family compound claimed Mòremí referred to her son. While there is no precise agreement on what these names mean which would perhaps, have assisted us to possibly link them to certain historical events, important places or powerful figures and other material categories, what is not in doubt is Mòremí's decision to eventually sacrifice her son to *Esinmirin*.³³

Etymologically speaking, the term *Edì* connotes ambivalent meanings. While there are various interpretations of the term, one is worthy of mention here. *Èdì* is used on the occasion of an open crime or offence

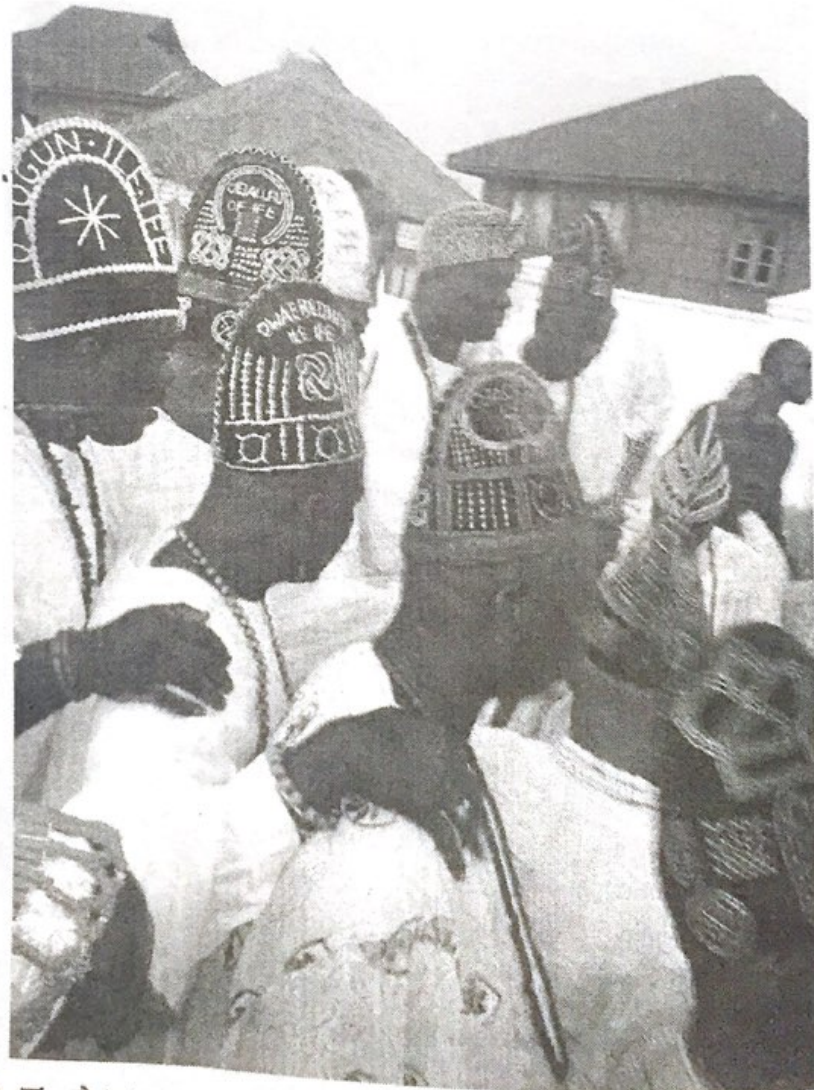
committed by a person who finds it difficult to explain how it occurred. Given that such a person's mind has been locked or held and as a result of the enormity of such crime which is often distressing to the victim, he quickly attributes or blames his actions on the devil who fits the description of a deity called *Èdì*.³⁴ It, therefore, explains why the Yoruba often say *Èdì'n dí* (he has been hypnotised to face peril) to illustrate this occurrence. There are suggestions in some quarters that link the above interpretation of this type of *Èdì* to *Mòremí*. Of course, this may be assumed correctly among the *Ìgbò* where *Mòremí* had married into. The belief that she may have been 'locked' given the 'grievous' crime she committed against the former gives some potency to this assumption. However, *Edì* in this study has no connections whatsoever with the above illustration. First, the term is derived from the word, *ojó rughá ibi edì* (a day for carrying a bundled or tied calabash) and second, it points to a load that is bound illustrated by its Yoruba connotation, *di nkan*. Since part of *Edì* festival is dedicated to a somewhat prodigious display of baggage stoning of perceived offenders where the baggage used are bound for immediate impact, it is assumed the term *Edì* evolved from this performance.

Unlike a handful of festivals which are exclusive to specific traditional agencies and kingship institutions in most parts of Yorubaland,³⁵ *Edì* remains an inclusive event which comes on the heel of the *Olójó* festival. It was originally slated for three months as requested by *Mòremí* herself but was reduced to fourteen days and later to seven days.³⁶ The *Edì* comes with several activities, especially in relation to its re-enactment of what occurred during the invasion of Ile-Ife by the *Ìgbò* invaders. Included similarly are activities to provide entertainment for partakers at the festival and also rituals for religious purposes which the study shall look into afterwards. As indicated earlier, *Mòremí* holds a historical connection to Ile-Ife and her people and, therefore, puts this study on a trail of the significance of her brave achievement to the people which is intensely reflected in the festival.

In the event of *Mòremí's* loss, the people of Ile-Ife promised at all time to serve as sons and daughters to her. This, according to oral accounts, denotes how important the festival is to Ile-Ife. The *Edì* festival is an annual seven-day festival which encompasses the re-enactment of *Mòremí's* heroic exploits. Aside from the fact that the festival demonstrates the processes by which the *Ìgbò* were defeated, it also involves several incorporated activities which shall be discussed subsequently.

Procedures, Practices and Processes

Edi takes place annually between the end of October and the beginning of November after the celebration of the *Olójó* festival dedicated to Ògún. The date for *Edi* is picked seven days after this festival closes, after which the former holds twenty-one days thereafter.³⁷ The materials used for selecting this date are handed to the *Àràbà*, whose consultation with Ifá reveals the date suitable for the *Edi* festival. The *Àràbà* accepts one of the dates in the materials spread secretly before Chiefs Óbàlóràn of Ìlódè (one of the eight *Àgbà-ifè* chiefs) and Obawinrin to choose from. If Chief Óbàlóràn's date is accepted, *Edi* would, hence, commence on the Ile-Ife market day, but if it accepts Obawinrin's date, *Edi* commences on Aiyégbajú market day.³⁸



Picture 1: The *Ìsòrò* paying a visit to the Yèkéré Compound at Òkèrèwè with the Ooni

Source: Fieldwork by the authors in Ile-Ife in 2016

On the day before the agreed date for the commencement of the festival, there is what is known as *Ferekete Edì d'ola* (*Edì* is tomorrow). On this day, the *Emesè* (the Ooni's traditional guards) move around the town to inform residents about the beginning of the celebrations and to also remind them of the prohibition against drumming for the next six days. This is performed through a song rendition³⁹ often heard during the day. Following this, every *Baale* (compound head) is required to provide a log of wood referred to as *igi ita* which is split into smaller pieces and set on fire during the vigil which heralds the first day of the festival.⁴⁰ The performance of this day known as *Òfòrà̀n*⁴¹ is led very early in the day by Chief *Óbàlóràn* with the rendition:

Yo! Yo!

Iku Yo!

Arun Yo!

Agbeleoeri, Yo!

Awiyoko, Yo!

Awiyodo, Yo!

Eni wipe ki n ma se temi, Yo!

Away, Away!

Away, Death!

Away, Illness!

Whoever stays at home to think badly of someone, Away!

Whoever wishes evil for others on the way to the farm, Away!

Away! The one who does evil on to others on the way to the stream, Away!

*Away! He who says I shouldn't have success!*⁴²

As this chant is concluded, the log of wood earlier mentioned is set on fire. By this time, the burning wood is thrown to the ground in front of the compound while members of each family compound flashing torches on the streets quickly assemble at the crossroad. This activity is a reminder of the torches used against the *Ùgbò* in the past.⁴³ What often occurs from very early in the morning to nightfall is not clear. It is, however, believed that between the morning performance of *Óbàlóràn* and the setting on fire of the log of wood, people return home or wait till the next event. Nonetheless, a lot of drinking, prayers and breaking of kola nut usually takes place in

between. This brings the day into the mock wrestling performance which holds in front of the Ooni's palace who also watches. In time past, the Ooni made rare public appearances but the wrestling event was an opportunity for the people to have a glimpse of the king.⁴⁴ The two combatants engaged in the wrestling event incidentally are Chiefs Obalaayan and Obalúfè.⁴⁵ The latter represents the Ile-Ife people (who in this case is the royal figure people see and not the Ooni) while the former whom Obalúfè wrestles represents the district the Ûgbò family. As it appears, the victory of the contest goes to the Obalúfè which is highly significant for the festival since it represents Ile-Ife's triumph over the Ûgbò.

The second day constitutes a procession from the grove of Mòremí to the palace led by elders accompanied by songs and the sound of hand fans. The activity for the day is known as *Ijó omo l'are re*, meaning "the dance/procession for the wanderer child who was lost but has now been found". This day was specifically dedicated to the son of Mòremí whom she sacrificed to the river Èsinmirin.⁴⁶ The *Omo l'are re* consists of four long poles prepared as flaming torches with palm oil residue wrapped in matting called *fafa*. These are the torches that are used for the next day's public fire ceremony. It was carried corpse-like on the head of one of the *Emesès*, preceded by another holding a drawn sword. Behind walks the *Yegbata*⁴⁷ who is the head of the junior *Emesè*, followed by the people in general who chant epithets descriptive of Mòremí's son: *Ìha arà Ife mípè omo `o re `arè kó la' ma' bó n'le' ní'torí Òlómbe*, meaning: "The grateful people for the sake of Olombe (i.e. Mòremí) are noising abroad the comeliness of the sacrificed child, beautiful, plump and full of the gaiety of youth."⁴⁸

This activity is followed by *ere lulu* (*lulu* race) after the *Omo l'are re* has been left at the palace. This is an event whereby all participating indigenes of Ile-Ife, particularly youths, gather themselves to express their resentments towards suspected thieves and criminals living within the community. During this process, the residences of these 'suspected' criminals are surrounded and similarly bombarded by people who express their displeasures through a display of mild violence. This is done by attacking the former with stones and also by throwing refuse into the suspects' houses. It is said that the heaps of refuse and stones thrown into these houses are usually overwhelming that it would take stringent efforts to move them and get the house back in order.⁴⁹ Another account states that excited bands of young men were often seen rushing about the streets armed with sticks,

stones and wastes of all kinds with the intention to unleash 'vengeance' on the houses of those convicted of stealing since the last *Edì* festival. The violence perpetrated during these attacks varies somewhat based not only on the offence committed but also according to the past records of the culprit. The attackers are usually content to heap the rubbish they carry upon the house.⁵⁰

On the third day of the *Edì*, young girls known as *Elúro* are carried across the town by their companions. Incidentally, the people of Ile-Ife claim this does not form part of the traditional feast but rather a goodwill contribution to the general festivities by the non-Ife Yoruba who occupy a large area of the town. These newcomers to Ile-Ife, it was believed, were wont to join in the celebration of *Edì*. The *Elúro* wear the usual Yoruba attire (fibre woven war attire) but with extra marks of adornment. Around their necks and at their back and front are worn two large strings of beads, while twined around their waists are several similar strings of beads. They also carry horsetails in their hands. Their faces are usually well powdered while antimony or dye is used to make lines over the eyes and on their cheeks. These companions, each carrying an *Elúro* seated on the up-stretched arms of one of the bands, sing and dance across the town, collecting money at the same time. These songs are rendered to make a jest of the male sex organs. For this, they are either answered in similar language or threatened to be flogged by the male. Vulgar songs of this kind are common throughout the feast. Other *Elúro* songs are to encourage patrons to hand them money or presents and significantly to censure the miserly.⁵¹

Following this is what is called *Ina'san* (afternoon fire), which is one of the major activities of the *Edì* festival. During this ceremony, people gather at the front of the palace with the *Emesè* to await the presence of the Ooni, who comes out as a sign of approval for the ceremony. On this day, huge logs of wood are set ablaze after which they are carried by at least four *Emesès*⁵² who, having acknowledged the Ooni's presence, make their way amidst the spectators and proceed to the dumping grove. Just outside the palace, the fire carriers meet with the *Olúyarè*, the terrifying *Ûgbò* masquerade which once scared the Ile-Ife people. When they appear, the performing *Olúyarè* quickly takes cover and then hides. Only when the procession disappears do they return to the palace to continue their performance. This illustrates a re-enactment symbolizing the obedience of the *Ûgbòs* and the unity between the two groups. In the meantime, on the way to the dumping grove, the

procession stops at shrines of various deities such as Ògún, Aje, and at Òrànmiyàn and the war chief's residence. At each stop, some of the chiefs and performers pronounce dirge-like words. At some point on the way, before reaching the grove, women and strangers are ordered to leave. The fire carriers later hand the lighted torches on to the other performers who would have been waiting at the spot for them. Having concluded the performances at that moment, a return is made to the palace by taking another route. On the journey, a song is usually rendered:

A se e fun o

A mo le sinrisa

Kebo mo da

A se e fun o

Oni ni kebo mo da a bebo lo

A se fun o

A mo le sinrinsa k'ebo mo da.

We did it for her

We cannot worship a deity

And sacrifice is not accepted

We did it for her

Who says the sacrifice should not be accepted will disappear with the sacrifice.

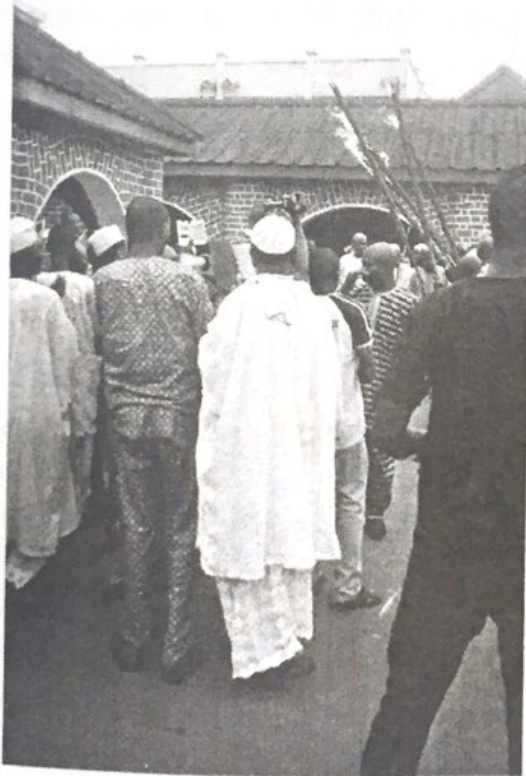
We did it for her

We ought not to worship an Orisa and the ritual is not accepted⁵³

Another account states that during this particular *Ina'san* ceremony, large crowds gather within the palace walls; still greater crowds throng the marketplace outside, all waiting noisily for the appearance of the healing firebrands. Meanwhile, a fire is prepared inside a little house in the palace grounds. Logs of wood that kindles easily are placed on the ground. Over these, some incantations are pronounced by the priests and instantaneously, as the people believe, without the use of any other medium, burst into flames. From this fire, the four torches, as we have already seen in *Omo l'are re* procession, were lighted. Two awaiting *Emesès* with their backs to the fire under pain of death from the gods and without looking, receive two burning torches each. As this is shown to an excited crowd, a rattling cry close to a howl is uttered.

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On the occasion of the fires being lighted by the leader of every compound, the people with hands circling about their heads offer prayers to cast away all their misfortunes and evils. As the torchbearers approach the Ooni who is seated waiting, they all sing in chorus: *L'ewe l'egbo, ba mi k'Ooni, Oba o se'ka ina Oba tan yaran yaran*, meaning "The head of the junior *Emesè*, greet the king for me."⁵⁴ The women also request for a special favour of *Mòremí* saying, *Mòremí la fun mi l'ariyo k'aye mi da*, meaning, "Mòremí shall give me a goat so I may enjoy life."⁵⁵ What this simply means here, however, is that *Mòremí* is implored to grant them the fruit of the womb – a wish generally dear to all Yoruba women.



Picture 2:
Ina'san ceremony kicks
off at the Ooni's palace
Source: Fieldwork by the
authors in Ile-Ife in 2016



Picture 3:
Ina'san torchbearers during
the *Ina'san* ceremony
Source: Fieldwork by the
authors in Ile-Ife in 2016

The torchbearers, with a sacrificial goat or according to some sources an antelope⁵⁶ in line, followed by a clapping, singing multitude, greeted with

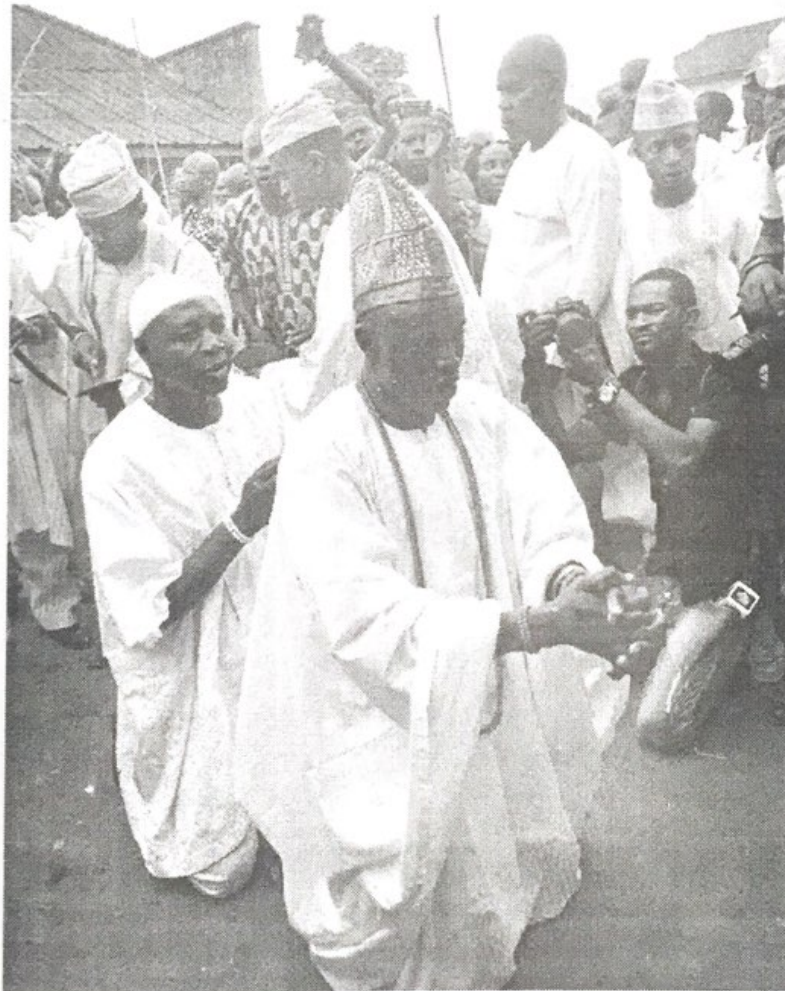
the rendition: *gb'arun lo, gb'ekulo* (take sickness/disease away, carry death away) by the crowds that throng the route, make their way to the bush alone, save for a few attendants. The votive animal is then slaughtered and consumed before their return in the dead of night. One symbolic incident is interesting to mention here. Among those to arrive at the palace are the two chief worshippers, Olúyarè and Obawinrìn. During the *Edi*, both are dressed in the same *ekán* grass which in time past had terrified the people of Ile-Ife. They do not enter the palace during the *Ina'san* ceremony but hide in a small house in the marketplace. As the torchbearers en route for the bush approach this spot, they make a mock attack with their lighted brands on Obawinrìn. He then hurriedly retreats, thus, perpetuating symbolically the submission of the Ûgbòs whom Obawinrìn represents. The chiefs, all of whom at this time would have been sitting outside the palace walls, step in to take part in a very impressive ceremony of homage. The Ooni, surrounded by attendants, sits on his royal chair placed on the steps of the council hall. On his right and left are seated the town and palace chiefs, respectively.

Many of the people leave to follow the torchbearers, and then flock to the palace grounds but are pushed back to form a large circle where the Ooni's musicians with clappers are. The chiefs approach the Ooni in groups, kneeling half-bowed with fingers clasped together, crying out in a long-drawn wailing tone. Their fingertips are made to touch the ground, each time pointing the index finger towards their heads. Finally, they make full prostration on the ground. Walsh notes that at this stage after the chief is the arrival of the Ìyálóde who comes forward to pay obeisance before the Ooni by lying first on her left and later on her right sides.⁵⁷ Walsh's mention of the Ìyálóde here may have been confused with possibly the Èrí (a priestess who performs a ritual ending the *Edi* festival), given that the Ìyálóde institution was no longer in existence in Ile-Ife from the reign of Ooni Adesoji Aderemi I (1930-1980).⁵⁸ Chief Óbàdíó of *Oodua* shrine comes next followed by Olúyarè and Obawinrìn. Based on the nature of their heavy grass suits which restrains them from prostrating, both merely bow and simultaneously jiggle the small bells (which emit a dull sound) placed around the waistline of the grass suit. Once this is done, the floor is open for dancing before the Ooni. The Óbàdíó dances first, and then Obawinrìn and Olúyarè separately both of whom are joined by attendants. The town chiefs come next and lastly, two of the palace chiefs who are in particular linked with the festival. All the dancers start by prostrating after which they dance

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around a circle and then move towards the area where the Ooni is seated to kneel and observe another prostration. The Ooni joins in the merriment by dancing or feigning to do so. This last ritual puts an end to the ceremony.⁵⁹

The last ceremony for the *Edì* week is known as *ijó igbárubi*, *ijó tele ngbédi* (the day calabash carries evil, the day the priest carries bound luggage). The main anchor of this day's ceremony is known as *Tele* who is known for carrying the "spiritual load".⁶⁰ *Tele* is regarded as a title Ile-Ife indigenes do not take up. Aside from the fact that the *Tele* title is often held by any person from elsewhere apart from Ile-Ife, it is also believed that it attracts the person.⁶¹ Also, the capturing or acquisition of the candidate for the *Tele* title is carried out by the Ògúngbe house which is in charge of the acquisition of *Tele*, unlike the Yèkéré house which sees to the running of the 7-day ceremony and the gathering of *Tele* load.



Picture 4: The Yèkéré praying for the Ooni
Source: Fieldwork by the authors in Ile-Ife in 2016

The household is headed by Chief Owa Yèkéré of Ile-Ife which is currently led by one Chief Aiyetigbo.⁶² The ceremony begins from the palace of the Ooni where the mysterious load to be carried by the *Tele* is packaged by the *Emesè*. This load is said to be packed into a local pot common for storing water.⁶³ On this day, people gather at the palace and around the vicinity to witness, as well as participate in this important occasion. When the *Tele* emerges from the palace together with Yèkéré, he pays homage to the Ooni and then exits the palace compound with the 'burden' carried on his head.⁶⁴ The *Tele* is accompanied by many who render a song whose meaning appears to be an instruction to carry all forms of human misfortunes away.⁶⁵ This observance continues until the *Tele* reaches the dumping grove where spectators and followers have to return. He (*Tele*), who is accompanied by the *Emesè* with a black goat, enters into this grove for the closing part of the ritual, as well as the festival. On his way, no one is expected to pound yam and on return from the grove, households are forbidden to cook. Flouting of this rule implies that such household would supply *Tele's* meals for the whole period till another household is apprehended.⁶⁶



Picture 5: *Tele* carrying the traditional load
Source: Fieldwork by the authors in Ile-Ife in 2016

Importantly, on this day the Èrí chief accompanies the *Tele* during the procession to the grove. On the return of the procession from the grove, the Èrí chief who is given one of the limbs of the black goat taken to, and slaughtered at the grove, would wash her head with the goat's limbs and rainwater gathered or collected from the previous year. This is done in the very early hours of the morning before daybreak. Why this is so is not certain, however, anyone who sees the Èrí at this hour is believed would not live long to witness the next *Edì* festival.⁶⁷ This day's observance ends with drum beats at the palace where the Ooni, and his chiefs, dance one after the other.⁶⁸ This is witnessed, following the return of all participants to the palace where the Ooni offers prayers for all and the town in general after which participants look forward to the following year for another festival.



Picture 6: Chief Èrí with a horse tail in her hand and beads around her neck
Source: Fieldwork by the authors in Ile-Ife in 2016

***Edi* Festival in the Throes of Change and Modernity**

As is generally known, the emergence of colonial rule brought attendant consequences upon several aspects of indigenous traditional and cultural practices. Similarly, the penetration of monotheistic beliefs in Ile-Ife led in particular to a number of modifications to the Yoruba belief systems and ritual performances. By 1899, for instance, Christianity began to make minor inroads into Ile-Ife.⁶⁹ Despite the incursion of these 'outside' religions into Ile-Ife, the people of the town as at 1909 preferred to sustain its previous state of slumber which entailed playing the traditional spiritual role only and being isolated from the larger politics across Yorubaland.⁷⁰ The process of modernization for Ile-Ife can be placed at 1909 when the Ooni Adelekán Òlúbùsè I (1894-1910) left Ile-Ife in order to settle a crown rift between two kings in Lagos. This occurrence was regarded as a taboo with consequences at the time which also saw Yoruba kings performing rituals and vacating their palace till the Ooni returned home.⁷¹ This event can arguably be regarded as the period during which Ile-Ife began to open up to the modern realities of the 20th century.

The religion and modernization developments that began in Ile-Ife in the early 20th century triggered a wind of change that blew across the town. In order to meet up with the changing times as demanded by the British colonialist's implementation of Sole Native Authority system in Yorubaland, the reigning Ooni of the period, Ademiluyi Ajagun (1910-1930) saw to the re-organisation of the socio-political structure of the town. This made the Ooni a very powerful figure no longer under the whims of the Òtún (right) and Òsì (left) Ife chiefs who had hitherto administered the affairs of Ile-Ife through him.⁷² This development relegated the Ìsòrò (priest-kings) and the power they held over the spiritual and cultural sphere of Ile-Ife – which Chief Yèkéré, Chief Èrí and Elúro of *Edi* festival were a part of – to the background. The effect of the presence of Islam, Christianity and modernization that came with western education was probably most felt during the reign of Ooni Adesoji Aderemi I who solely restructured the ruling houses in Ile-Ife noticeable today.⁷³ He halted the *Pokúlere* festival⁷⁴ and prevented the reversal of re-organisation of the Ife political system as put in place by Ooni Ademiluyi.⁷⁵

With the slow but progressive changes in the socio-cultural and socio-political order in Ile-Ife through the 19th and 20th centuries, *Edi* festival, like a number of other cultural activities in Ile-Ife, probably came under the modification and neglect in the 21st century when religion and modernization increasingly created a break from the past. Olupona captured in his work the magnitude of the effect of foreign religions and modernization in Ile-Ife.⁷⁶ The analysis of the interviews contained in the work depicted Ooni Sijuade Òlúbùsè II (1980-2015) and his queen as converts to Christianity who vigorously pursued a policy of evangelism and proselytizing that began with the palace chiefs and *Ihare'fe* chiefs who gathered at the palace to sing praises and worship.⁷⁷ In the same vein, state apparatus was also used to pursue the spread of Christianity such that a church was built on the palace grounds presumed to be the hub of Yoruba holy grounds. This development that began with the apex body in Ile-Ife, no doubt, had significant effects.

Specifically, between 2000 and 2015,⁷⁸ *Edi* festival suffered a major setback that almost erased its importance as a national festival of the people of Ile-Ife. The religious changes and new development in the palace began to take a gradual effect when it was reported that the Ooni instructed *Ìsòrò* chiefs to make their respective festival a family affair.⁷⁹ The implication of this was that the few festivals that required the presence of the Ooni such as *Edi*⁸⁰ were no longer feasible on the grand scale they were known for. Given the important roles the Ooni played in this festival which had ceased at the time, the attendant effect was that the activities and events of the festival became distorted. The wrestling match, for instance, between Obalúfè and Obawinrìn, the former representing the group acceding to Oduduwa's leadership and the latter representing the dissident *Ûgbò* group of Iwinrin, which was to be fought in the presence of the Ooni and the general populace at the front of the palace was excised. The aggressive proselytization of the Ooni and his chiefs and coupled with modernization put an end to this wrestling event.

In the ancient constitution of Ile-Ife from time immemorial, the political structure was designed in such a way that every level of the town is represented in decision making.⁸¹ The eight palace chiefs led by the *Lowa* are grouped into three—*Ògúngun*, *Omirin*, and *Ìlósìn*—with each group playing an intermediary role between every Chief in charge of certain festivals and the Ooni.⁸² It is through these palace Chiefs that the Ooni

provides finances and material items needed for every festival of importance such as the *Edi*. The conversion of the Ooni to Christianity broke this age-long tradition of financial and material concessions given to the family in charge of the *Edi*. As a result, the festival became starved of funds and leading to a drastic whittling down of its relevance.⁸³ Incidentally, it became a family compound affair where relatives in the Yèkéré compound of Mòremí and their friends gather to hold a small feast of commemoration as opposed to a large-scale festival with several activities.⁸⁴

The withdrawal of the support and participation of the Ooni and his chiefs during this festival did not only lead to the contraction of the activities of the festival but also the redundancy of the roles played by the chiefs associated with Mòremí. For instance, Chief Yèkéré who is the leading figure in all activities concerned with Mòremí had his roles limited to compound feasts.⁸⁵ Consequently, the absence of the Ooni and material support led to the redundancy of *Tele's* role which is usually pegged to the climax of the festival.⁸⁶ Among other things, the *Tele* no longer carried the *Edi* on the day of *tele n'gbedi*, an activity that pulled immense crowd from the people who not only took the chance to say prayers but to see the Ooni. In fact, it was stated that the Ooni wanted the *Tele* chieftaincy scrapped completely because it was perceived as 'barbaric'.⁸⁷ As at the time this fieldwork was conducted, the position of Chief Èrí of Mòremí was vacant including that of the Èrí priestess. The vacancy and non-recognition of Mòremí related chieftaincy positions translated into the absence of personalities to play key roles in the festival and an eventual shrink in the festival's importance and magnitude.

Perhaps, the lack of support from the Ooni also aided in discouraging some of the chieftaincies in spite of efforts among members of the family compound to keep the memory of Mòremí alive. For example, fixing a date for this festival which usually holds between the end of October and the beginning of November often degenerated into a disagreement caused by the lack of interest among the chieftaincies towards the festival. Furthermore, the ritual lighting of *Ògúnna*⁸⁸ which often was the practice on *Òfòrán* day was stopped.⁸⁹ The popular *Ina'san* day which includes the lighting of logs from the palace to Mòremí's grove and as one of the major activities of the festival, as well as its historical arm, was also extricated. In a similar fashion was the withdrawal of the aspect dealing with *Tele* chieftaincy title and the Igbárubi ritual practice.⁹⁰ This is in spite of the fact

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that it is the last and major formality of the festival which allows the participation of virtually all people of Ile-Ife. It has been suggested that part of the chief reasons for the removal of this *Tele* ceremony was because of its infringement on human rights through its promotion of slavery.⁹¹ Whether this is truly the case remain uncertain. Apart from the obliteration of a handful of activities of this festival, the abolition of important figures such as the Èrí chief, the Yegbata, the Olúyarè, among others, reduced significantly the ritual importance of *Edì*.⁹²

Immediately following the installation of the present Ooni Adeyeye Enitan Ògúnwusi Ojaja II in 2015, a form of cultural rebirth of virtually all festivals in Ile-Ife began. Hence, all festivals and other traditional events not in the realm of festivity earlier abandoned for over a decade were encouraged by the Ooni to be revived. As a result, *Edì* which had faced significant modifications and at other times desertion witnessed some resurgence.



Picture 7: Beauty pageant and *Ina'san* activities merged. Note the statue of Mòremí at the background

Source: Fieldwork by the authors in Ile-Ife in 2016

In spite of the resurgence, however, not all the performances were carried out. The mock wrestling which may have been as a result of the Obalúfè's demise and possibly the unpopularity of the new one, was not included as part of the festival. Also, the *igi ita* where the *Baale* took fire to their farm compounds and which heralds the first day of the festival was also excluded. Similarly, the part involving songs mocking the sexual organs of the men and women were cut off. In addition, the law banning cooking during the *Tele* performance has been disregarded today. Incidentally, in its effort to give wider appeal to the festival, new adaptations were introduced as part of the proceedings. In line with the revival of the festival, the Amuru (Amu irukere Moremi) office which is exclusive to Moremi Compound and recently renamed Moremi was revived.⁹³ As noted earlier, the physical presence of the Ooni at the *Edi* was not commonplace but this was not only felt in the recent festival but he was actively involved in virtually all the ritual proceedings. Also, a cultural beauty pageant was incorporated into the festival in line with the Ooni's "global re-enactment of the Yoruba culture" among other modern inclusions to entrench the legacy of Mòremí's sacrifice.⁹⁴

Conclusion

A narration is told of how the Ile-Ife people failed to keep their promise to memorialise Mòremí and as a consequence, were inflicted with sudden death and plagues.⁹⁵ In the process, a covenant was made to hold *Edi* yearly. This translates to categorical meanings that are associated with the expressions of female royal power and influence and memorialisation of heroism and anguish. As it were, Mòremí was not of royalty originally but soon initiated into that exclusive traditional agency by virtue of her heroic act, automatically granting her royal power and the will to express such beyond the ambit of time and space. Her new status and power placed her in the position of a revered conciliator whose solution, in spite of the future implication on her, intended to simply secure an enduring stability for Ile-Ife.⁹⁶ What this, therefore, suggests is that a stable, peaceful and long-lasting Ile-Ife remains an essential catalyst for the sustenance of the

memorialisation of Mòremí's valour. Consequently, throughout Ile-Ife history, no female power has had such reverence as Mòremí. Not even the first and only female Ooni, Luwo Gbagida, holds such nationalist verve among the Ife people. This remarkably tells of a deep connection between *Edì* itself, its gatekeepers (family compound, the Ooni and other traditional agencies in Ile-Ife) and all inhabitants (citizens) of Ile-Ife and the collective anguish each one must express at the loss of an Ile-Ife son (Olúorogbo) for the world.⁹⁷ Indeed, Mòremí's sacrifice entrusted once again a very strong leadership in Ile-Ife with a firm support of the original inhabitants. *Edì*, therefore, is an avenue to "apprehend and celebrate one's own history...culture, together with the values it enriches."⁹⁸

As was discovered during the authors' fieldwork at Ile-Ife, *Edì* festival, both in its pure and original state in time past and in its modernised forms today could unequivocally be regarded simply as a ritual performance⁹⁹ for the Ooni and his chiefs rather than a drama or entertainment as it is assumed elsewhere. Though the authors stated that parts of the festival have witnessed significant changes in accordance with modernity, that there is a deep consciousness among Ile-Ife people to ensure adherence to the promise made by their forebears to Mòremí suggests a receptive appeal for continuity.

The study has been able to critically interrogate one of Ile-Ife's important festivals. *Edì* festival is essential to Ile-Ife life and fittingly underscores the link between the past and continuity with the present. As Mòremí continues to spur debates in wider circles, her primal position in Ile-Ife not only remains secured but most importantly assured. The study examined the figure of Mòremí and the role played in the founding of *Edì* festival. It also mentioned the processes involved in the seven-day festival and some of the ritual practices and performances held in honour of this important event. As the study notes, given the lack of interest of the palace institution towards *Edì* and other important festivals, *Edì* initially struggled for relevance within the compound level but was later abandoned altogether for several years. The revival of the festival in 2016 ensured that the core ritual elements of *Edì* were carried out while others outlined above were seen to be inconsequential to the *Edì* agency. The inconsequential rituals were, however, replaced with a pageant which has seen two editions (in 2016 and 2017) and procession to Mòremí's statue, a cult heroine who previously had no figurine to her name. The resurgence of the festival has no doubt given

hope to the fact that the people of Ile-Ife could once again express the nationalistic dynamism which *Edi* seeks to provide.

Notes

Lowell Edmunds (ed.), *Approaches to Greek Myth*, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2014, p. 101.

² Malinowski Bronislaw, *Magic, Science and Religion and other Essays*, CT: Martino Publishing, 2015.

³ Jacob K. Olupona, *City of 201 Gods: Ile Ife in Time, Space and the Imagination*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 2011.

⁴ Frank Willett, Ife and Its Archaeology, *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1960.

⁵ Michael J. Walsh, The Êdi Festival at Ile Ife, *African Affairs*, Vol. 47, No. 189, 1948, pp. 231-238.

⁶ J. Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*, Essex: Longman, 1979, p. 151.

⁷ See, for instance, Kayode Alfred, As Ooni, Olugbo Feud over Moremi, *The Nation*, 10 December, 2016.

⁸ James Bukoye Olafimihan, *Iwe Itan Offa*, Ibadan, 1978.

⁹ Akinwumi Ogundiran, "Chronology, Material Culture and Pathways to the Cultural History of Yoruba-Edo Region, 500 B.C.-A.D.1800," in Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings (eds.), *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed*, New York: The University of Rochester Press, 2003, pp. 46-59.

¹⁰ J. 'Sina Ojuade, The Issue of "Oduduwa" in Yoruba Genesis: The Myths and Realities, *Transafrican Journal of History*, Vol. 21, 1992, pp. 139-158.

¹¹ Danmole H.O., "Religious Encounter in Southwestern Nigeria: The Domestication of Islam among the Yoruba," in Jacob K. Olupona and Terry Rey (eds.), *Orisa Devotion as World Religion: The Globalisation of Yoruba Religious Culture*, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008, p. 208.

¹² Walsh, The Êdi Festival at Ile Ife, p. 232.

¹³ Omotoso Eluyemi, *This is Ile Ife*, Ife: Adesanmi Print Works, 1986.

¹⁴ Interview with Awosemo Egbewole at Olorisa Compound, Igbo Itapa, Ile-Ife. 20 August, 2015. Awosemo Egbewole, like most senior Ife citizens, is very much in tune with the details of the activities of Moremi and such

festivals as Olojo, given that they are national events (and heroines as in the case of Moremi) that do not require the closed participation of any segment in Ile-Ife. What this means is that unlike Lokore and Idio, on the one hand, and Olorisa, Ilase, Olúorogbo, Ijugbe, Owu Ilare and Akire Compounds, on the other hand, who are barred from Obatala and Oduuwa festivals, respectively, very few festivals are national and participatory, giving virtually every citizen a grasp of what it entails.

¹⁵ Interview with Rabiú Ganiyu, 30 Ibukunolu Street, off Fajuyi Road, Ile-Ife. 20 August, 2015.

¹⁶ Interview with Omisakin Femi, Ajagbusi section, Orunto Compound, Ile-Ife. 8 June, 2017.

¹⁷ M.O. Fasogbon, *The Ancient Constitutional History of Ile-Ife Ooyelagbo*, Ile-Ife: Unity Comm. Printers, 1985, p. 19.

¹⁸ Fasogbon, *The Ancient Constitutional History*, p. 19.

¹⁹ Interview with Hassan Lanre, Atiba Compound, Okerewe Quarters. Ile-Ife, 11 October, 2017.

²⁰ Interview with Oba Samuel Omisakin, Obalufe of Ife, Obalufe Palace, Orunto Family Compound, Iremo, Ile-Ife. 15 September, 2010.

²¹ P.S.O. Aremu, Yemi Ijisakin and Shehinde Ademuleya, The Significance of "Igbarubi-edi" in Edi festival in Ile-Ife: A Spiritual Concession, *Journal Research in Peace, Gender and Development*, Vol. 3, No. 7, 2013, p. 127.

²² Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, Lagos: CMS Bookshop, 1921, pp. 147-148.

²³ Fasogbon, *The Ancient Constitutional History*, p. 20.

²⁴ Interview with Oba Samuel Omisakin, Iremo, Ile-Ife. 15 September, 2010.

²⁵ Fasogbon, *The Ancient Constitutional History*

²⁶ Joel A. Adedeji, *Moremi, A Yoruba Opera by Duro Ladipo*, a translation with notes and glossary (mimeograph), Ibadan: Institute of African Studies, 1972, p. v.

²⁷ Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, p. 148.

²⁸ Olupona, *City of 201 Gods* and Oyeronke Olajubu, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2003.

²⁹ Olajubu, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*, p. 29.

³⁰ Interviews with Chief Obalase of Olúorogbo and Chief Lokeegan of Orisagburin Olúorogbo, Olúorogbo Temple, Ilode, Ile-Ife, 8 July, 2018. Also, E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, London: Longmans,

1962, p. 206.

³¹ Interviews with Chief Dada, the Kinrindin Awo Idita, Idita, Mokuro, Ile-Ife and Chief Ifayemi, the Loodiagba Awo Ooni, Ifa Temple, Oke Itase, Ilare, Ile-Ife, 8 July, 2018

³² Interview with Chief Gbemileke, the Yekere of Ile-Ife, Eredunmi, Off Okerewe Road, Ile-Ife, 5 May, 2018.

³³ The decision of the authors to interrogate these names (Ela or Oluorugbo) is taken from the position of difference in the appropriation of names of historical figures among Yoruba groups for reasons that are often propitious or veiled. For a similar position, see footnote 5 in Cristina Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power in the Yoruba Play of Transformation*, Amsterdam: Rodopi BV., pp. 156-157, 2009.

³⁴ John Wyndham, *Myths of Ife*, London: Erskine MacDonald Ltd, 1921. p. 62.

³⁵ See, for instance, Raheem Oluwafunminiyi and Ajisola Omojeje, *Reflections on Ori Aiye (Peak of the Earth), a Holy Well among the Ondo in Southeastern Yorubaland, Nigeria*. Paper Presented at a Two-Day Workshop on "Sacred Springs and Holy Wells," Waterford, Ireland, 26-27 June, 2017.

³⁶ Walsh, *The Èdi Festival at Ile Ife*, pp. 231-232.

³⁷ Interview with Oba Samuel Omisakin, Iremo, Ile-Ife. 15 September, 2010.

³⁸ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*. The Ile-Ife and Aiyégbajú markets come up every five days.

³⁹ Interview with Oba Samuel Omisakin, Obalufe of Ife, Iremo, Ile-Ife. 15 September, 2010.

⁴⁰ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*, p. 163.

⁴¹ This is referred to as "the bringing of bad news about the coming of the Igbo (Ugbo)". See Bolanle Awe (ed.), *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*, Lagos: Sankore/Bookcraft, 1992, p. 6.

⁴² Cited in M.A. Fabunmi, *Ife: The Genesis of the Yoruba Race*, Lagos: John West, 1985, p. 206.

⁴³ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*

⁴⁴ While the Ooni should generally make rare appearances and should only be seen during *Edi* or *Olojo* festivals, he is often not the person in attendance. This, therefore, explains why *Obalufe* is the *Ooni Ode* (king of all occasions) who everyone sees and meets with. *Edi* festival is one of those days people see the king (Ooni Ode) yet they could hardly tell who the king was even when he walks on the street like a commoner.

⁴⁵ Interview with Oba Samuel Omisakin, Obalufe of Ife, Iremo, Ile-Ife. 15 September, 2010.

⁴⁶ Interview with Oba Samuel Omisakin, Obalufe of Ife, Iremo, Ile-Ife. 15 September, 2010.

⁴⁷ The Yegbata should not be confused with the position of the *Sarun* within the *Emese* circle. While the former is the head of the junior *Emese*, the latter is not necessarily an *Emese* since anyone could be picked into the position. This means a non-*Emese* could be picked as *Sarun* and by virtue of this selection become inducted into *Emese*-ship.

⁴⁸ Interview with Oba Samuel Omisakin, Obalufe of Ife, Iremo, Ile-Ife. 15 September, 2010.

⁴⁹ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*

⁵⁰ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*

⁵¹ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*

⁵² Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*

⁵³ A.O. Adedipe, *Odun Edi ni Ile-Ife*. Quoted from Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*, pp. 170-171/

⁵⁴ Ayowole Elugbaju, *The Cultural Significance of Edi Festival in Ile-Ife*, Unpublished B.A Long Essay, Osun State University, 2011.

⁵⁵ Walsh, *The Êdi Festival at Ile Ife*, p. 235.

⁵⁶ Interview with Efunlade Ifakola, Okerewe Quarters, Ile-Ife, 5 June, 2018. Efunlade who is a member of the Planning Committee of the *Edi* festival posited that an antelope is also offered as a sacrifice during the festival.

⁵⁷ Walsh, *The Êdi Festival at Ile Ife*, p. 236.

⁵⁸ See Fasogbon, *The Ancient Constitutional History*, p. 44. Ooni Ademiluyi had abolished the women chieftaincies and made his sister the *Iyalode* which was unheard of and to peoples' dismay. Since his reign was unpopular, his death in 1930 signalled monumental changes in the administrative setup of the palace by his successor.

⁵⁹ Interview with Oba Samuel Omisakin, Obalufe of Ife, Iremo, Ile-Ife. 15 September, 2010. See also, Walsh, *The Êdi Festival at Ile Ife*, p. 236.

⁶⁰ Zulu Sofola, "Edi: The Carrier as a Saviour among the Ife," in Ade Adegbola (ed.), *Traditional Religion in West Africa*, Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1983, p. 143.

⁶¹ Interview with Omidirepo Fanihunre Babatunde, Iranje Ile Palace, Olorisa Compound, Igbo Itapa, Ile-Ife. 14 May, 2013.

⁶² Interview with Omekun Olawale, Yekere Family Compound, Yekere Street, Ile-Ife. 18 September, 2010.

- ⁶³ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*
- ⁶⁴ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*, p. 172.
- ⁶⁵ Interview with Omekun Olawale, Yekere Street, Ile-Ife. 18 September, 2010.
- ⁶⁶ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*
- ⁶⁷ Walsh, The Êdi Festival at Ile Ife, p. 238.
- ⁶⁸ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*, p. 173.
- ⁶⁹ Adelowo E. Dada, "Islam and Christianity in Ile-Ife," in Adeagbo I. Akinjogbin (ed.), *The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980*, Port Harcourt: Sunray Publications, 1992, p. 337.
- ⁷⁰ Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa: Being an Account of the Travels of the German Inner African Exploration Expedition in the years 1910-1912*, London: Hutchinson, 1913, p. 290.
- ⁷¹ Robert S. Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yoruba*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 13.
- ⁷² See Fasogbon, *The Ancient Constitutional History*
- ⁷³ Oyeleye Oyediran, The Position of the Ooni in the Changing Political System of Ile-Ife, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1973, p. 385.
- ⁷⁴ Interview with Prince Toyese Adeniji, Grants Office, FUNAAB, Abeokuta. 5 June, 2018
- ⁷⁵ Chief Fasogbon, the Lodooko Adimula of Ile-Ife stated in his book that he pursued a reversal but he met an opposition in the Ooni Aderemi. See, Fasogbon, *The Ancient Constitutional History*.
- ⁷⁶ Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*
- ⁷⁷ See, Anglican Primate Akinola Extols Ooni's Virtues, *Vanguard*, 2 January, 2010.
- ⁷⁸ The attachment to Christian evangelism by the Ooni and his wife was at its peak during this period until the Ooni's demise in 2015. See Sam Eyoboka, Foursquare Ousts Badejo, *Vanguard*, 13 November, 2009; Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*.
- ⁷⁹ Interview with Omekun Olawale, Yekere Street, Ile-Ife. 18 September, 2010.
- ⁸⁰ There are numerous festivals in Ile-Ife but the Ooni only participates in a few for their historical and spiritual importance to the state and people. For instance, *Itapa*, for the founding of Ile-Ife and *Idio*, for the Ooni's ancestry.
- ⁸¹ Fasogbon, *The Ancient Constitutional History*

⁸² Fasogbon, *The Ancient Constitutional History*

⁸³ The authors noticed this during the 2010 and 2015 editions of the festival which was totally abandoned.

⁸⁴ Interview with Omekun Olawale, Yekere Street, Ile-Ife. 18 September, 2010.

⁸⁵ Interview with Omekun Olawale, Yekere Street, Ile-Ife. 18 September, 2010.

⁸⁶ Interview with Omekun Olawale, Yekere Street, Ile-Ife. 18 September, 2010.

⁸⁷ Interview with an Emese within the palace courtyard in Ile-Ife. 18 September, 2010.

⁸⁸ The *Ogunna* is the lit torches that starts at the fire made at the palace.

⁸⁹ Interview with Akinwande O. Ifayemi, Yeye Iwara, Oke Ogbo Area, Ifewara Road, Ile-Ife. 28 September, 2010.

⁹⁰ Interview with Oba Samuel Omisakin, Iremo, Ile-Ife. 15 September, 2010.

⁹¹ Interview with Omidirepo Fanihunre Babatunde, Igbo Itapa, Ile-Ife. 14 May, 2013.

⁹² Interview with Omekun Olawale, Yekere Street, Ile-Ife. 18 September, 2010.

⁹³ The Amuru was actually an office set aside for females to stand in as *Mòremí* in the past.

⁹⁴ Chris Onuoha, Story of Queen Moremi re-enacts at QMA Pageant holds, *Vanguard*, 29 October, 2017.

⁹⁵ Awe, *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*, p. 7.

⁹⁶ Suzanne Preston Blier, Kings, Crowns, and Rights of Succession: Obalufon Arts at Ife and Other Yoruba Centres, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 67, No. 3, 1985, p. 389.

⁹⁷ Wyndham, *Myths of Ife*, p. 59.

⁹⁸ Boscolo, *Odun Discourses: Strategies, and Power*, p. 173.

⁹⁹ Morufu Bukola Omigbule, Rethinking African Indigenous Ritual Festivals, Interrogating the Concept of African Ritual Drama, *African Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 17, Issue 3, 2017.