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Abstract

Purpose: In African setting, festivals come with different essences for its celebrations, and such festivity often involve royalty, priest, women, key, and co-participants that are gender inclusive. The audience that may be partial or fully active in their reactions to the spectacles of the enactment are not left out in most cases. Therefore, the main focus of this study, is to conduct a survey to ascertain the level of interactions and understanding of the various gestural acts as communicated within the enactments of *Àwòrò-Òsẹ̀* festival of Ìlá-Òràngún performances. In addition, the study addresses the notion that festive performances come with certain gestural nuances of importance which may not be comprehensible to the audience, except the initiates within the performance fora. The relevance of understanding typical body gestures, space utilization and other gestural nuances within the festive performances is to demystify that festival poetic or dance events as socio-cultural nuances that come with different connotations, and are thus, conceived differently by people.

Methodology: The methodology engaged is a survey through participatory observation, interviews of women, young dancers, elders and the royal father of the ancient town, an audio-visual recording of the festive performances involving the key actor and the co-participants were done. The entire data collected were drawn from three stages of *Àwòrò-Òsẹ̀* dance performances. The data collected were transcribed, translated and content analysis within the frame of socio-cultural theory analysis were applied. The secondary source of information were through book publications, journals and old magazines in print. Interviews conducted were subjected to content analysis, and due interpretation of reactions to drum percussions, poetic recitation performances and audience applause beyond the physical artistry for understanding of the gestures of the priest at the festival enactments.

Findings: Findings from the analysis informs that ancient or cultural festive celebrations usher in poetic and chant performances, dance movements, songs, and recitations that calls for reactions of the audience.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The artistry of the performers communicates indexes of different role-play which informs those evidences of gestures and reactions, communicating different intents of historical-allusion, happiness, sad feelings, or indication of other sacred or non-sacred warnings in the enactment to the public.

Keywords: *Àwòrò-Òsẹ̀ Festival, Yorùbá Performance Spectacle, Sacred and Non-Sacred Gestural Acts, Historical-Allusion, Dance Gestural Nuances*

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INTRODUCTION

The Africans in general, and the Yorùbá engage in communal celebrations as a mode of socio-historical preservation and collective identity to reinforce their love and remembrance of the past heroes and heroine. In reference, as it concerns this study, we are set to bring to the fore certain socio-cultural and sacred instances of the community of Ìlá-Òràngún, in Òsun State Southwestern Nigeria, where the remembrance of legendary or heroic deeds are brought to the fore yearly, towards refreshing peoples' memories, and for the purpose of knowledge to the new generation, remembrance of the past heroes and heroic deeds, in a relaxed manner.

From the scholarly records of Ogunba (1969), Olupona (2019), Ogundeji (2000), Ogungbile (2002), Ajibade (2003), Fáléyẹ (2005 & 2015), among others, festivals come with different essences for its celebrations, and such celebration often involve royalties, priests, women, key performer, and co-participants that are male and feminine gender inclusive. The audience are not left out in the spectacles of the enactments of such felicitations. However, the audience often involved either at a formal or informal performances may be partial or fully active in their reactions to the spectacles of the enactment, depending on context (Fáléyẹ (2015)). This is to emphasize that socio-culturally, it is expectant that people of different walks form the audience, who are not left out in most cases for their own useful role-play. Also, from the survey conducted for this study, such festive celebrations of the Africans do usher in poetic and chant performances, dance movements, songs, and recitations that calls for reactions of the audience. No doubt, the artistry of the performers are indexes of different role-play(s) which calls for gestures and reactions, communicating different intents of historical-allusion, happiness, anger, sad feelings, or indication of other sacred or non-sacred warnings to the public in the course of the enactment. This study shall begin to interrogate the available gestural nuances within the dance steps, action-filled of the yearly enactments of the chief priest, the royalty Òràngún Ilé-Ìlá called Oba, the dancers, the drummers, and the audience as readily found in the *Àwòrò-Òsẹ* festival of Ìlá-Òràngún.

Other concerns of the paper shall be to clarify the notion that the performance(s) of *Àwòrò-Òsẹ* comes with certain gestural nuances of importance which may not be comprehensible to the audience, except the initiates. Therefore, this study seeks to interact with *Àwòrò-Òsẹ* festival of Ìlá-Òràngún performances, to exemplify such body gestures, space utilization and other gestural texts within the festive performances to demystify that festival poetic or dance events are nuances that come with different connotations and are conceived differently by people.

Theoretical Framework

Socio-Cultural Theory

This study is analyzed through the lens of socio-cultural theory. The theory is a construct that emphasizes learning as the most effective impact that a member of a given society can benefit through another person. The theory however emphasizes interactions. Especially when learning or knowledge involves sharing ideas, the theorist as psychologist – Lev Vygotsky, opines that mentoring is key and will be required for skill acquisition for right development.

The example of teacher to student, and parents to children relationship at learning are exemplified for comprehension of the ideology so shared by the initiator of this theory. In so far, an idea is new to anyone, or one finds her/himself in a given society, as we also observed in the case of some audience who are not initiates of *Àwòrò-Òsẹ* or *Ọbàtálá* divinity, and who by cultural exposure are not familiar with the culture and narratives of the town, or indigenes of the Ìlá-Òràngún, and who seeks to understand the gestural acts in the *Àwòrò-Òsẹ*

movements, there will be the need to interact with people and seek comprehension through asking questions. Also, the issue of relationship with indigene or someone who is familiar with the culture of the people as a guide provided by the initiates or elderly members of society will provide a clearer highlight of what they do not understand, and full comprehension of the situation will surely be explained.

So, the influence of a skilled guide in matters of knowledge is key in this construction. However, such learning or knowledge sharing involves social interaction and collaborative ideas. The theory highlights that learning and development of ideas or worth is a process. The role of teachers (i.e. someone who is more knowledgeable to impact others), and the peer influence as very useful efforts to guiding learners (someone who aspires to learn through others) towards development. The development in question may be towards the theory as it points to basic interaction between a more skilled personality and whose directive or knowledge can assist the less skilled individuals. In essence, the gestural nuances found in the festive events of *Àwòrò-Òsẹ* in *Ìlá-Òràngún* shows that festival serves as a scaffolding mechanism where the initiate(s) otherwise referred to as the knowledgeable in this study, uses bodily gestures which are cultural tools to transmit knowledge to the uninitiated - (learner(s) in this context. Hence, the need to understand a given society depends largely on people within, and the level of interactions or relationship with others.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study are drawn largely from the three stages of *Àwòrò-Òsẹ* dance performances. Interviews conducted through the initiates of the divinity, key participants such as the Priest, *Ọba* (king of the town), ten women who are members of the *Àwòrò-Òsẹ* compound, ten purposively selected youths who belong in the *Èwe-Òsẹ* group and four male drummers were subjected to content analysis. This research was conducted using focused group discussion with the elders and family members in *Àwòrò* compound and the Chief Priest. Also, an eye-witness approach methodology was engaged, with the use of audio-visual recordings of the performances, which were later transcribed and translated into Yorùbá standard texts. As part of the approach to this study, due interpretation of reactions to drum percussions, poetic recitation performances and audience applause beyond the physical artistry for understanding of the gestures, which largely involves the priest during the festive enactments were done. The data analysis hinges on socio-cultural theory.

Ìlá-Òràngún: Language, Climate and Political Structure

The *Ìgbómìnà* communities spread across three major States in the South-western Nigeria. These are Kwara, *Èkìtì* and *Òṣun*. *Bámgbólá* (2002), *Agboólá* (2009) and *Ọlánrewájú* (2011) have worked extensively on the locations of *Ìgbómìnà* people of the Kwara State. Since this study focuses on the *Ìlá-Òràngún* people, more attention shall be on the *Ìgbómìnà* of the *Òṣun* State. Generally, there exist more towns around *Ìlá-Òràngún* and *Òkè-Ìlá* also referred to as the *Ìgbómìnà* people in *Òsun* State, but we shall focus on the two major towns within the territory of research location, and they are referred to as *Ìgbómìnà* people of the *Òṣun* State.



Figure 1: The Map of Africa, showing Nigeria and the location of *Ìlá-Òràngún* in *Òṣun State*
 Source: *Òṣun State Website (2015)*

The language of *Ìlá-Òràngún* is also known as *Ìgbómìnà*, as their dialect is a variant of the dialect spoken along with many other recognized communities in the *Ìgbómìnà* group found in *Òra-Ìgbómìnà*, *Àrándùn*, *Òmù-Àrán*, *Òró*, *Orò-Àgò*, *Òkè-Onígbín*, *Ìlofà*, *Ìsánlú*, *Ìsin*, *Àgbondá*, *Omido*, *Okò-Ode* *Ìgbó-nlá*, and *Òmùpo* of Kwara State. These communities share boundaries with the towns in *Òṣun*, Kwara and *Èkitì* States. Therefore, this study corroborates the positions of *Bámgbólá (2002)*, *Afólábí (2006)* and that of *Agboolá (2009: 8-9)* that the *Ìgbómìnà* people of Kwara State refer to *Òmù-Àrán* as their headquarters while *Ìlá-Òràngún* is thus regarded as the headquarters of the *Ìgbómìnà*land in *Òṣun State* and generally by history and antecedents of cultural connections, *Ìlá-Òràngún* is central to the appellation of *Ìgbómìnà* people. Emphasis would however be placed on the fact that most of the *Ìgbómìnà* communities in Kwara and *Òṣun States* lay claim to the fact that they had migrated from either *Ìlá-Òràngún*, *Èkitì* and generally from *Ilé-Ifè* as their primary source before their current locations (see *Ògúnfólákàn, 1996: 160*). *Johnson (1921)*, *Akínjogbín (2002)* and *Àjàyí (1987)* and *Fáléyè (2015)*, the researchers state that, while Yorùbá language is the common language spoken by the Yorùbá, the *Ìlá-Òràngún* people have many dialects, one of which is the *Ìgbómìnà* dialect.

Geographically, *Ìlá-Òràngún* and *Òkè-Ìlá* as a community is situated on the 80° latitude north of the Equator and longitude 43° east of the Greenwich. According to the 1963 Census, the town is about 40 square kilometers in area with a population of 61,000. The 2006 census, however estimated the people to be 164,251. Prior to that estimated number, in 1976, *Ìlá-Òràngún* was grouped with the towns and local governments of the *Òyó State*; but due to the creation of new states and various local governments in the early 1991, *Ìlá-Òràngún* is now a major town and ancient city in *Òṣun State*. Consequently, this makes it possible for *Ìlá-Òràngún* to retain its status as one of the ancient Yorùbá towns that has its own Local government (*Ìlá-Òràngún*), since 1965. It should be stressed that *Òkè-Ìlá* Local Government was created in the 90s which afforded her a new local government name, known as *Ìfèdayò*. Although, the two communities have different *Oba* whose title foregrounds that they are of the same dynasty-*Òràngún*, but both still share several cultural, historical myths, rituals, and festivals (see *Mólómó, 1994*); *Fáléyè, (2005)*, and *Afólabi (2006)*. According to the Ministry of Local Governments and Information (1977), *Dàda (1985)*; *Oládoṣù (2010)* and *Olánrewájú (2011)*, *Fáléyè (2015)*, the climate of *Ìlá-Òràngún* shares same features with the climate of other South-

western region of Nigeria; but it enjoys an average rainfall that ranges between forty-five to fifty-five inches annually. Heavy rainfall is experienced by the communities from March to August/September and sometimes spanning through October and November. Although, small variations in the weather may occur, due to a general statute in the global change in weather in recent years.

The vegetation of Ìlá-Òràngún is like that of Savanna, in that it has rain forest where timber is exploited. The soil is particularly rich and most suitable for agriculture. Mostly, cocoa, palm trees, cassava, maize, cashew and colanut are cultivated in Ìgbómìnàland. Palm oil and rubber are grown largely as cash crops. The forests are rich with economic and medicinal plants of tropical varieties as well as timber like *Ìrókò*, Mahogany and other valuable hard wood and trees. This is why most indigenes in the very ancient towns are farmers, palm-wine tappers, while few are also into cloth weaving, hunting, and they enjoy and thrive economically in their choice of business. A little variation is what we gathered about information on farming and ICT compliance of the community and with respect to the youths in recent contemporary age. Most youths are computer literate and aspires to conform with technological advancement and relevance globally, sharpening their knowledge through.

Socio-politically, the communities of Ìlá-Òràngún and Òkè-Ìlá-Òràngún Ìgbómìnà like many other ancient Yorùbá communities in the South-Western Nigeria have well-structured and patterned societies that share communal responsibilities, and such that, the *Ọba Òràngún-Ìlé-Ìlá*, the paramount ruler is positioned at the helm of their affairs as the supreme ruler. The *Òràngún*, however, has other highly placed group of people and individual personalities that work closely with him. These groups of people are called *Ìjòyè* (Chiefs) and *Àwòrò* (Priests) of different groups and gender sensitivity, with reference to their lineage and religion types. The *Ọbaálá* is the administrative regent when the *Òràngún* stool is vacant, while *Ọbaàfà*, *Ọbaálé*, *Ọbaàró*, *Ejemu*, *Èlémọ̀nà*, *Òdòdè*, and *Ọbaásinkin* are a group of high chiefs that works closely with the *Ọba-Òràngún* - on different matters of the community. Equally included in the chieftain group are women like: *Ìyálóde*, *Ìyálọ̀jà*, *Eésàbìnrin* and *Olorì* (the wives of the *Ọba* (king), cultural ambassadors and honorary title holders. These women are also very vital as the political administrative organ of the community because they assigned to handle specific roles. For instance, the most senior of the *Olorì* hold the royal title *Eésàyà* of *Òràngún* and works closely with the royal heritage and people of the town to ensure peaceful co-habitation and guide as a royal mother to all and sundry. The *Èmèsè* groups are male dominated members, and they ensure that no member of the community flouts the orders of the *Ọba* and that of the various categories of Chiefs or Priests.

Another important category is the youth group in the community called the *Èwe*. This division comprises five different categories, with reference to the special events and festivals of the community. They are equally very important in the administrative sphere of the Ìgbómìnà community (see *Ọládèjì*, 1985, *Ajíbóyè*, 1993 & *Fáléyè*, 2015). Each of the groups or individuals as mentioned above is appointed by their family or generally by the community to monitor their shared values and to checkmate the affairs of the community and even that of the *Ọba* and Chiefs, where necessary. The import is that both old and young are all involved in the administration of the Ìlá-Òràngún sovereignty. In this study, the *Èwe* group are very key in the performances of *Àwòrò-Òsé*'s gestures and reactions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Connection of *Àwòrò-Òsẹ* and Other *Ìlá-Òràngún* Festivals

Ìlá-Òràngún *Ìgbómìnà* people have many festivals and other occasions that they celebrate. Some of these celebrations and traditional festivals include *Ifá/Òrúnmilà*, *Òsẹ*, *Eṣù*, *Ajagun-ńlá*, *Ìgbònníbí*, *Àmòtàgesì*, *Ògún (Paròkè)*, *Òṣun*, *Ebòra-Ìlá*, *Àwòrò-Òsẹ*, *Ìsinrò*, *Egúngún*, *Orò*, *Orẹ*, *Lángbòdó*, *Ṣàngó*, *Òsanyìn*, *Ìwà*, *Òràngún-Òrun*, *Sànpònná*, *Òrìṣà-Oko*, *Òkúnrinkunrìn* and others. Some of these festivals have been mentioned in the studies of Pemberton III and Afọláyan (1978), Atóyèbí (1985) Ọládẹ̀jì (1985), Aṣianbí (1986), Àgbòmẹ̀jì (1990), Ajíbóyè (1993), Adébáyò (1996) and analysis explored in detailed in Fálẹ̀yẹ (2005 & 2015).

The celebrations of these festivals as earlier documented by researchers provide some general but vital information on their values and nature. Also, the scholars have established various myths and the hierarchical settings of the community. These celebrations were studied because a cultural investigation of various festivals of the community can reveal the nature of the social interactions and cultural values of a community. For our focus in this study, a peep into the gestural acts relating to the mythical, historical foundation of them, becomes a necessity.

Elaborate and enriching historical background knowledge on the extent of divinity worships and other festive activities of the people of *Ìgbómìnà*land in *Òṣun* State have been provided by some researchers. Typical examples are found in the studies of Pemberton III (1978), Atóyèbí (1985), Àgbòmẹ̀jì (1990), Ajíbóyè (1993), Pemberton III and Afọláyan (1996), Adébáyò (1996), Fálẹ̀yẹ (2005), Afọlábí (2006) and Babalọ́lá, *et al.* (2013). These studies highlight the historical, cultural, and political trends in the community. Most of the documentations on *Ìlá-Òràngún* establish that *Ìlá-Òràngún* was founded by Fág̀bà̀mílà Ajagun-ńlá and that Àpàkíímò, founded Òkè-Ìlá. It was also established that the two were brothers. Research also shows that *Ìgbònníbí* was the one who brought the people of *Ìlá-Òràngún* to their current location (see Afọlábí, (2006) and Babalọ́lá et al. (2014). The two founders of the *Òràngún* communities were from the same Arútú lineage and of the same source, with Àmòtàgesì and Fág̀bà̀mílà Ajagun-ńlá their great ancestor from Odùduwà.

As evident from the title of the head of the community - *Òràngún*, the lists of chieftaincy titles, compounds, and festivals of Òkè-Ìlá and *Ìlá-Òràngún* are accounted for by some historians and researchers. With reference to the fact that though the two towns seem far from each other in miles, but they are closely culturally connected (Adébáyò, (1996); Fálẹ̀yẹ (2005 & 2015) and Afọlábí (2006). The two communities are closely connected to their ancestors religiously, politically, and socio-culturally. To buttress the early scholars' documentations, most of the traditional rituals and festivals of the two communities are still celebrated harmoniously, though with some modificationsⁱ as individuals are also allowed to practice any chosen faith.

Pemberton III's (1978), and Pemberton III and Afọláyan's (1996) documentations enumerate the *Ìlá-Òràngún* *Ìgbònníbí* dynasty and describe the multifarious festivals of *Ìgbómìnà*land. Special attention on the sacred position of the *Ọba*, the process of the king's coronation and his wield of powers in the community are discussed extensively. The publication though makes general references to the sacredness of kings among the Yorùbá people but detailed information on the *Ìlá-Òràngún* five festivals namely *Ògún*, *Òṣun*, *Egúngún*, *Ṣàngó* and *Ìsinrò* which take different forms in the community are carefully enumerated. Pemberton III (1978) expatiates on the fact that the celebration of *Egúngún*/masquerade festivals of the *Ìlá-Òràngún* remains unique and thus traces its origin to *Oyó*. The study emphasizes the distinct nature of the

Egúngún/masquerade festival of the Ìlá-Òràngún-Ìgbómìnà from other ancient towns like *Ọ̀yọ́* and other Yorùbá communities as one of the universal divinities of the Africans.

Òkétóyè (1983) in his records on the pre-colonial situation of the Ìlá-Òràngún, examines the structure of leadership or centrality of events in Ìlá-Òràngún. He identifies the king (*Òràngún*) as the title of the head of the community as well as the head of the three arms of political government: the legislative, executive, and the judiciary. Òkétóyè (1983: 29) asserts, that “The king could be seen as the central figure in all ritual ceremonies performance...”. Till date it remains an indubitable fact, as claimed by Òkétóyè's (1983) that the *Ọ̀ba* (*Òràngún*) still occupies a relevant and central position in the “sacred”, essential traditional ritual ceremonies and major festivals of the community, especially as it concerns *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ́* festival which is the focus in this study. Additionally, Òkétóyè (1983) points out the importance of some priests like the group of *Awo-Onírìn*, members of *Ètù-Ìfẹ́* headed by *Ọ̀bajisùn*, and the *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ́* (Priest), as those often in charge of carrying out some sacred and very important ritualistic roles during the annual or occasional celebrations.

Also, the earlier studies of Aşúbíòjò (1984), Alátìşè (2002), Fáléyè (2005) highlight the historical background and past forms of festival events in the Ìlá-Ìgbómìnà kingdom. Furthermore, the reference and clarity of thoughts found in Atóyèbí (1985) in agreement with *Ọ̀lájubù's* (1978) and *Èlèbùù-ìbòṅ's* (1998) notions that the Yorùbá people do not just deify personalities as "gods" or "mere objects of worship" but emphasizes that in the people's bid to find a way of compensating or rewarding the good deeds of heroes and heroines, such personalities were later honored as "Deified beings". The study reveals that some of the deified personalities in most Yorùbá communities can be traced to their myths of creation which are more of instructions from *Ifá* oracle about such personalities. Atóyèbí (1985: 21) cleanly puts forward that:

Dìè nínú àwọn Ọ̀rìşà Ilẹ̀ Yorùbá ni o jẹ pé wọn jẹ èniyàn tẹ̀lẹ̀ kí wọn tó di ọ̀rìşà àkúnlẹ̀bọ. Ó sì ní láti jẹ pé wọn tí ẹ̀ ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ isẹ̀ ribiribi ní igbà ayé wọn, èyí tí ó jẹ pé ọ̀nà kan soşo tí àwọn èniyàn tí wọn soore fún lẹ̀ gbà san oore náà ni pé kí wọn máa bọ wọn ni irántí ohun tí wọn ẹ̀...

Few of the divinities of the Yorùbáland were actually human beings before they became deified. They must have performed extra-ordinarily feats in their lifetime that impressed the folks they assisted, and the only way to reward them or show their appreciation is by worshipping them in remembrance of their laudable deeds...

(Researcher's Translation)

In addition, Pemberton III and Afóláyan's (1996) study also contributed immensely to the documentation of festivals of the research town. Ajíbóyè (1993: 50-62) points out that, apart from being rulers of *Ìgbómìnà* kingdom, because of the very outstanding developments recorded in the tenures of *Ajagun-ńlá* and *Àmọ̀tàgesì* as *Ọ̀ba*, they became deified, and festivals are held to mark their importance in the community. While Fáléyè's (2005) study corroborates the views of researchers, she however re-classified the Ìlá-Ìgbómìnà festivities. She provides a clearer and very analytical documentation of the socio-historical relevance of *Èkà-Kíkà* (an historical, sacred drum-poetry) performatives of the Ìlá-Òràngún people. Additionally, Fáléyè's (2015) study serves as a comprehensive semiotic analysis of the *Ìsínrò* and *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ́* festivals. From the studies of Fáléyè, a semiotic orientation of the two festivals in her work provides the right avenue for the missing gaps in the earlier documentations on festivals of Ìlá-Òràngún; as the researcher gave the right illustrations, correcting the various assumptions and conflicting information of some documentations prior her study.

The symbolic essence and connection between *Ìsinrò* and *Àwòrò-Òsé* festivities which dovetails into each other have been provided in Fáléyẹ's study of (2015), with highlights of semiotic nuances within the performances, activities of the priests, women and men, drummers, chiefs, and the importance of the sacred entities of the festivities. There is a strong connection between the two communities of *Ìlá* and *Òkè-Ìlá-Òràngún* and the justification as to why the two towns celebrate similar festivities and she posits that the festivals are a sign-dominated documents for cultural knowledge. Mólómó's (1994) study identifies various songs within the social context of the festival as he analyses the various songs of the *Èwe-Èsùkú* as basic cultural elements which articulate different issues.

However, in this current research, it is discovered that *Àwòrò-Òsé* festival holds for nine days and not thirteen days as some assumed or claimed. *Àwòrò-Òsé* is also a precursor of the major events that shows direction into the larger *Odún Orò* which ends the entire festival of the community, while the latter comprises of fourteen-day stages and numerous events. It is a possibility that there might have been changes in the celebrative modes of the festivals as the account of Mólómó (1994) indicates. Oládèjì's (1995) study focuses on "*The Èwe Festival in Ìlá-Òràngún Ìgbómìnà: A Historical Analysis*". In the study, she observes the mythical story and historical background of the "young girls" called *Èwe* in the community of *Ìlá-Òràngún Ìgbómìnà*. She expounds on their importance as occupying a very sacred position in the king's administration of the community generally. The researcher discusses that these "Powerful girls" commemorate their festival under the leadership of a woman. The writer also stresses the girls' importance in upholding the yearly tradition in the community. The study stresses that the "young girls" are often donated from the royal or important chiefs' families. Oládèjì (1995) however recommends that as a way of improving the lots of the girls academically apart from the cultural and spiritual knowledge of their environment, there should be an adequate provision for the girls' participation in the community through western education.

Yet again, it is germane to disclose that Oládèjì's (1995) work is merely descriptive in nature. It is devoid of any classification of the festivals and context of discussion in the current study. This study shall reflect in parts, some of the role-plays of the *Èwe-Òsé* as they also have certain prominent gestural acts which are germane to the *Àwòrò* performance during his festivities. As noted in the aforementioned scholars' works, they accentuate that the importance of *Àwòrò-Òsé* festival is meant to honour the *Òrìsà Obátálá* in the community yearly. One of the studies recollects that the Priest of "Lówá festival" was originally in charge of the seasonal "eating of the *Òràngún's* new yam", but another myth has it that a hunter called *Òsé* took over its performance from the former Priest. Although Pemberton III and Afoláyan (1996:135-145) discuss the two mythsⁱⁱ, but they posit that the festivals are separate, hence they refer to "Lówá festival" and *Àwòrò-Òsé* festival separately in their records. The reference to the account of *Àwòrò-Òsé* festival in earlier studies is very important to the current study with respect to the mystical bird and the role-play which dominates most of the gestural acts of *Àwòrò-Òsé* in his dance performances and other sacred outings. In fact, the gestural acts as evidence in the dances of *Àwòrò-Òsé* with a bowl and arrow, as he holds while dancing has bearing with the mystical birds in reference.

While the current researcher is not contending with or supporting issues of supremacy of any of the Priests, this study corroborate scholars' views that there are oral and print evidences, corroborating *Àwòrò-Òsé* festival as an ancient mythico-religious-based important festivalⁱⁱⁱ which the community recognizes (Fáléyẹ, 2015). However, while disagreeing with the position of Pemberton III and Afoláyan (1996) on "Lówá festival", this study maintains that the "Lówá festival" is considered in the account of Fáléyẹ (2015) as a "family celebration" and a unit of

the performances within the entire *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* elaborate festival which ushers in *Ìsìnrò* (the major) festival in the community. This author's position is further supported by the fact that in most of the interviews held with stakeholders of the community, "Lówá festival" is not as prominent as *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* or the *Ìsìnrò* festivals.

In fact, the mythical narrative of *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀*, which informs a stage of *Ìdásu-mẹ̀ta* ritual performance, is what is accountable and analytically acceptable for the enactment of "Lówá's festival". Thus, one may consider that the *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* festival is the real hub which enables the Lówá's festival. As important as the scholars' work is to us, they have not specifically categorized the entire festivals of the community in the right perspectives, and this is what the study of Fáléye, (2015) clarifies. Pemberton III and Afọláyan (1996:136-145) also discuss the myth that is connected with the coming of *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* to the community from *Ìlá-Màgbọ̀n* to *Ìlá-Yàrà*, and subsequently to the current location in the community.

From the account of the current study, it appears that the ruling lineage of Arútú institutionalized the celebration of the *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* festival in the community of *Ìlá* and in *òkè-Ìlá* respectively, following the important role that the latter played in getting rid of some mysterious birds that ravaged the community then (Pemberton III and Afọláyan, 1996), and corroborated by Fáléye's (2015) research.

Past *Àwòrò – Ọ̀sẹ̀* Priests includes:

- (i) Late Chief Ọ̀sẹ̀dùnmóyè - Àkànní (1893- 1968)
- (ii) Chief Sàngótólá Ọ̀sẹ̀níyì (2001 to 2024)

The *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* is seen wearing a sacred cone-shaped crown in context of his dance performances with a bow and arrow in his hands. The picture below showcases this reference.



Figure 2: Shows Ọ̀sẹ̀' s Sacred Cone-shaped Crown

The Origin and *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* Festival

As earlier stated, the important festival of *Ìlá-Ọ̀ràngún* in this study is *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* festival. The term "*Àwòrò*" in the compound name "*Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀*" festival within *Ìlá-Ọ̀ràngún* connotes "Priest" semantically. In the general sense of the Yorùbá expression, while *Ọ̀sẹ̀* is the name of the divinity, who incidentally was a hunter and a name after a divinity in the history of the research ancient town of *Ìlá-Ọ̀ràngún*, the festival is interchangeably called *Ọ̀sẹ̀* festival or *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* festival within the community.

The current research study observes from most oral accounts and other sources of information available to us, that there was no strong claim that the Ìlá-Òràngún Ìgbómìnà people were ever defeated in a war, and that their founder, Fág̀bà̀mílà Ajagun-nlá, was an acclaimed renowned warrior in the 11th century. Yet a hint from the *òrikì* of one of the ruling dynasties to the throne *Ọba Bámìgbóyè Aríyòwónyè* who reigned between (1845-1886) as documented by Adébáyò (1996) and Fáléyè (2005) among others, reveals that the *Ọba Aríyòwónyè*'s tenure witnessed a looming rumour of war that was connected to Àjàyí Ògbóríef̀on's threat in 1885, which made the then *Ọba* to move his subjects out of the community to find succor elsewhere. Nevertheless, history reveals that the Ìlá-Òràngún people has since returned gloriously to their present location^{iv} during the tenure of *Ọba Adéyemí Amésòmóyè* (1886-1909).

Nonetheless, apart from the aforementioned hints, there is no other evidence of threat of war in the history of the Ìlá-Òràngún people. A mystical chain is however identified as one of the very vital marks and antiquities that were left by Fág̀bà̀mílà Ajagun-nlá, as a symbolic effigy of support and assistance for protection to the community against any future threats of war^v. Meanwhile, in the oral accounts and mythology of the people, the basis for the celebration of *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* as a traditional and ancient festival of the Ìlá-Òràngún Ìgbómìnà community is traceable to another uneasy situation caused by the invasion of some mysterious bird(s) which the people encountered very many years back^{vi}. This account is also documented by Pemberton III and Afóláyan (1996). Following the historical *Ọ̀sẹ̀*'s victory in putting an end to the Ìlá-Òràngún peoples' challenge, *Ọ̀sẹ̀* became a hero and was accommodated in the community. This act later eventuated into his subsequent celebration annually, in the community. Additionally, the *Ọ̀sẹ̀* priest occupies the position of propitiating Òràngún's mother's divinity called *Ọ̀bàtálá*. Hence, the *Ọ̀sẹ̀* festival remains very significant and symbolic to the history of the people in several ways.

With respect to the data collected, we cannot categorically specify when exactly the festival began in the community; the only evidence we can lay claim to is that three people have occupied the exalted position of *Ọ̀sẹ̀*' Priest. From the data in our disposal, the late Chief *Ọ̀sédùnmoýè Àkànní* (1893 - 1968), late Chief *Ọ̀sẹ̀wuyí Àkàndé* (1968 - 2001)^{vii}, and the immediate past priests Chief *Sàngótólá Ọ̀sẹ̀níyí* whose tenure is traceable from 2001 to 2024 are the only proof of people that have occupied the seat of the priest in the past and recent ages in the community. One can possibly infer from the pictures the researcher could lay her hands on, that *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* compound and the historic antecedent which institutionalized the festival were in between the tenure rulership of *Kábíyèsí Aríyòwónyè* (1845-1886) and the *Adéyemí Amésòmóyè* (1886-1909) and to the ongoing tenures of *Kábíyèsí AbdulWahab Olúkáyòdé Oyèdòtun, Bíbíre I*, in the history of the ancient town of Ìlá-Òràngún. Fundamentally, the celebration of *Ọ̀sẹ̀* festival has been a part of the community for the stated centuries.

Artistry of the Performers

In most cases, the artistry of a performer, no doubt, are the indexes of different role-play which calls for gestures and reactions, and they certainly communicate different intents. Some of the intents communicates the historical-allusion, happiness, sad feelings, or indication of other sacred or non-sacred warnings to the people. The audience, as evident in the collected pictures, are not left out in the enactment which stands to educate, entertain and connect the young with the past history of the town. Let us examine the key performers in *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* festival.

The Key Performers in *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* Festival

As earlier indicated, the celebration of *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* festivity involves the *Ọ̀ba* - royalty, *Kabíyèsí's Olori*, some Chiefs, and *Àwòrò- Ọ̀sẹ̀* himself, as the chief priest of *Ọ̀sẹ̀* festival (otherwise referred to as *Ọ̀bàtálá* festival).



Figure 3: Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀ with People, Movement and His Tool at Performance

As it could be seen from the above picture, *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* takes a walk from his own compound to the market square, to the palace of the *Kabíyèsí* to make some rituals, and that location forms the main state where he enacts the meeting of the mystical bird, the killing and the joyous celebration that follows after terminating the unwanted but scary birds in the history. While *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* walks, his wife, the women from his compound and the youths - *Èwe-Ọ̀sẹ̀* are also found in his convoy.

In essence, apart from the key performer, other participants at the festivity are the women, who are classified into three categories here. Some of the women include the priest's household members, the priest's wife and the none-active women who serve as audience.

The other sets of people at the performance include the *Kabíyèsí's Olori*, the key *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ̀* festive singers, who are largely youths called the *Èwe-Ọ̀sẹ̀*. It is essential to note that the *Èwe* are in different categories in *Ilá-Òràngún* and they have been further classified in *Fáléyẹ's* (2005 & 2025) works. The co-participants that are gender inclusive, the drummers are male dominated, while the *Ọ̀sẹ̀'s* guards are also male dominated, as well as the audience in general, cut across all categories of people- the young, old, male and female in the community. The pictures below enumerates more.



Figure 4 & 5: Pictures Showing the Calm Nature of the Semi/Passive Audience at Àwòrò-Òsé Sacred Dance Performance



Figure 6: Drummers in Action during Àwòrò-Òsé's Performance in Ìlá-Òràngún

Some of the major co-performers during *Àwòrò-Òsé's* dance are the drummers. The singers and the drummers are the group who provide rhythm, rhyme and melody to what *Àwòrò-Òsé* gesticulates to. The actions in *fig. 6* explains more.

***Àwòrò-Òsé* and Gestural Nuances**

It is not a new order that performance(s) come with certain gestural nuances. This position is a truism in that, for the purpose of enhancing communication intended by the performer, and to clarify intentions or insinuations on oral narratives or any misgiven, gestures are essential tool that readily comes to play for comprehensions of oral or written accounts. Especially when one is enabled to see physical or life performance as we experienced in the case of the festival performances in discussion.

Àwòrò-Òsé festival of Ìlá-Òràngún performances are broadly classified into two in this sense: the sacred and the none-sacred but deritualised category. The two categories have different stages of body and facial gestural acts, space utilization and other gestural nuances within the festive period. As we rightly observed in the account of *Àwòrò-Òsé* festive dances, gestural acts such as involving his facial expression have some sacred context that are subjected to interpretation. Part of the body and at some instances, the priest engage the entirety of his hands and the properties in his hands to communicate several meaningful acts, which are

complements to whatever oral or written stories in the history of the town and their festivities. The hand properties, or the totality of the performer's paraphernalia of office – the white garment, the cone-shaped crown of *Àwòrò-Òsé* and the hand tool- a sacred bow and arrow are all of importance, to the gestural acts in his performances. All these are also engaged to communicate emotions in some instances.

There are instances that the socio-historical narratives connected to the killing of a mystical bird by the historical *Àwòrò-Òsé* were displayed in the gestures of the performing priest. The mystical bird was reported to have been visiting the town in the ancient period and echoing what sounded threatful to the earrings of the Oba and the entire community of *Ìlá-Òràngún*. In the gestural action of the *Àwòrò-Òsé*, the approach of the then *Òsé* – a legend whose role-play whoever the incumbent *Àwòrò-Òsé* enacts during the festive events, are performed in the dances, actions, and other carriage. As part of the reports in our data was that the *Àwòrò-Òsé* eventually through his tact and endowed power, killed by the bird. In essence, the gestural nuance evident in the *Àwòrò-Òsé's* dances and actions are historical allusions to how their forefathers *Òsé* of the history tactically, with his bows and arrows ended the live of the mystical birds. These are referenced in the manner with which the priest holds his hand tools, paraphernalia of office he holds and other drums which he solely dance to his rhythm in context.

The Audience, *Èwe-Òsé's* Reactions at *Àwòrò-Òsé's* Gestural Acts



Figure 7 & 8: Show the *Èwe-Òsé* Girls in Action during *Àwòrò-Òsé* at the Open-performance

The audience are often of different categories in the performance of *Àwòrò-Òsé*. Some are best classified as partial or fully active as a result of their reactions to the spectacles of the enactment. Among the audience who cheers the dance step(s) performances of *Àwòrò-Òsé* are classified active and passive audiences for the gestures that they also showcases at certain instances of the movement involving *Àwòrò-Òsé*. Some of their reactions are in verbal text while others are though body gestures. Let us familiarize ourselves with some voiced cheering.

Yorùbá

Bàbá oooo

Òòsà dájì

Ikú àképè

Èmi è mò rí o ooo

English

Father oooo,

Òòsà dájì,

A beaconing death

I have not seen you o.

While some co-participants and semi-active audience(s) are found chanting or reciting certain parts of the popular *oríkì* of the *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ́* thus:

Yorùbá (Ìlá dialect)	English Translation
Òrìṣàdájì Eepà! E é è mò ón rẹ̀lẹ̀dàá ẹ̀ni o... Èmi è mò rí ọ ọ! Eèpà Òrìṣàdájì!	Salutations to Òrìṣàdájì 1. You are forbidden to see your creator I have not sighted you o o! Salutations to Òrìṣàdájì
Ò dámọ gbóó-gbòò-gbóó Ò dámọ lápá òsì sọ̀nù Eépa Òrìṣà! Òrìṣà Eèpà!	He who breaks the child into pieces 5. He broke away the child's left hand Salutations to the divine one! To the divine one, Eèpà!

At the mention of *Bàbá oooo ...* the *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ́* is seen as the father, the saviour of all at that point in time. *Ò̀dàsà dájì* – the *oríkì* here, is a code of recognition specifically for the priest of Obàtálá, which the *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ́* stands for in that context. While the nomenclature - *Ikú àképè* – addresses the Priest as a death, readily beckoned to, for required assistance of the people for rescue, the assuring sentence thus:

Èmi è mò rí o ooo - meaning I have seen you o! It is a mark of respect for divinity, whose site is considered terrifying and considered not physically seen.

As for the texts in lines 5 & 6 - *Ò dámọ gbóó-gbòò-gbóó* – (He who breaks the child into pieces), this is an assertive statement which communicates to the listeners that the Priest is capable to breaking the hands of a defaulter and non-conformist of the society.

Ò dámọ lápá òsì sọ̀nù – this line of *oríkì* is an historical allusion to an incident which had happened in the course of a past Obàtálá celebration, which resulted in chaos for the deviant and a defaulter of the society.

In a way, the *oríkì* of the Priests and all connected to him during its festival are full of information about the past and what power is wielded round the key actor of the performance.

In a survey that this researcher conducted, the information duly gathered, and as also experienced during the data collection for this study, that *Àwòrò-Ọ̀sẹ́* festive celebration ushers in poetic and chant performances, dance movements, songs, and recitations of the *Ọ̀sẹ́* divinity which also propels various reactions of the *Àwòrò* (priest) *Ọ̀sẹ́* - reincarnate, and the audience.



Figure 8: Ìlù Òòṣà or Ìgbìn Òòṣà ensemble at Ọṣé's Gestural Acts in Ìlá-Ọ̀ràngún

The above picture in fig 8. is evident of intervals of *Àwòrò-Ọṣé's* communication with facial and hand expressions, which also informs a total halt to their activities.

Comprehending the Gestural Nuances in *Àwòrò-Ọṣé* Festival Performances

In the dance movement of *Àwòrò-Ọṣé*, the steps often reveals the patience in his calculative dance movements, as an historical allusion to how the original *Ọṣé* in the history being enacted was able to move, and towards terminating the life of the mysterious bird. This gesture in dance steps can only be understood by an onlooker if the narrative of the historical *Ọṣé* had been told, prior to seeing the performance. However, one who is inquisitive may find out the import of such dance steps, hand movements and reactions to the rhythm played by the drummers during *Ọṣé's* movement. This is one of the findings that I, as a researcher also engaged my informants to explore, while also using the sociological approach interpretation *Ọṣé* to the context of performance.

Instances of happiness and excitement are also spotted in the gestural acts of the performers, especially when at a time the rhythm of the drummers for the dance steps of *Ọṣé* changed and the facial expression clearly shows that the priest in action, had terminated the bird in the air, and reflections of joy could be seen all over the priests, and the singers. A multi-gestural act are noticeable at this point. First, is the facial expression on the *Ọṣé*, which conventionally requires no doubt that he has victoriously won the battle which he tactfully aimed at when his bow and arrow was pointing at every when in the dance arena.

On the second note, the bow and arrow in his hands were suspended to his sides, as against the period when he held the arrows up. The gesture at such an indication of a searching period for the mysterious bird to game or battle. On the third note, the tempo of the drum rhythm increased to clearly declare the dancer as a winner in the battle between the bird and the priest, who eventually dances faster, while his body and facial expressions indexicates a point of joy and victory. In a subjective manner, the audience could assume the same point of view to our conventional and sociological interpretation; and the gestures could also be misinterpreted to be ordinary fun, or a sacred entity as some of the audience we engaged in felt.

Historically, the allusion in reference to the need for the continuation of the festive performance is the victorious ending of the priest at terminating the life of the bird, bringing joy to the community of *Ìlá-Ọ̀ràngún*; whose *Ọba* and the entirety of the town that were perpetually kept

in agony. The agony was as a result of the mysterious bird's killing the community people in twenties and thirties daily as found in the text below, thus:

Yorùbá

Lónùí, màá pogún,

Lóla, màá pògbòn, pògbòn...

English translation

Today, I shall kill in twenties,

Tomorrow, I shall kill in thirties, in thirties...

In essence, the socio-cultural effects of the joy of all as found in the gestural act in the increase in the tempo of the dance steps, the changed rhythm from the drummers, and the joyous expression in the facial and body movement of the co-performers, and the claps and voice shouts of the active and passive audience(s), are all gestural act of happiness for all on the victory ascertained on the bird who will never in the thoughts of the community, not return to threat with such sad signatures in its songs as cited above. Then, the gestural action, is a point of climax, fantastic spectacle of the performance in one of the Àwòrò-Òsé's festive performances.

In the claim that in most traditional festivals, as it is also considered in this study, that most gestures of the key actor or performer, and the members of enactment group may sometime not be comprehensible to the larger audience, except for the initiates or people within society. One can express same of the Ìlá-Ọ̀ràngún festival too. We are made to say a categorical yes. This is so, because our findings from some of the audience who were keenly watching the open dance of Àwòrò-Òsé saw the performance as a fun-catching event, while some took the gestural acts from the drummers, the women, and the Priest as nothing than expression of normal reaction to festive events. At the same time, some elders in the community, whose experience culturally could comprehend the scenario and whose understanding of the history of Ọ̀sé role-play in the narrative of the town and establishment of the festival took a different perspective to the meanings brought to the fore in the dance performances of Ọ̀sé.

The departure in a state of none-clarity of some instances of the gestural actions and clarity of the intensions of the facial and dances steps experienced in the Ọ̀sé's gestures are made openly comprehensible to all when there came a louder voice notes and songs aired out to the admiration of the key dancer at the festive fora. So, our findings buttresses the thoughts that there are instances of gestural nuances, which requires a third-party and knowledgeable member of society to properly assist in the interpretation of some movements and other gestures.

Within the context of the three stages of dance enactments of Àwòrò-Òsé festive acts, study, as the data in our disposal informs, a wide range of movements are evident in the Àwòrò-Òsé festival which fall in the category of what performance gestural acts are. To most elders and even youths who are indigenes of the same town, it is simply an assumptious ideology that most of what Àwòrò-Òsé does within the movements involving his dance steps are comprehensible beyond entertainment. We got to know that only the Ọ̀ba, some elderly chiefs within the royalty caucus, the initiates of the Àwòrò-Òsé worshippers, and co-performers perfectly understand the gestural nuances, and the dance steps, while it is sometimes scary to youths to ordinarily stern at the face of the priest during his dance(s) step(s). This is so because, Àwòrò-Òsé wears a look that portrays the sacred entity that his nomenclature carries during his festive period. In particular, when he dances at the open space of the palace, one side of his eye and the total face are adorned with white ornament which is a signature of the sacred mission in context with his dances, movement, and his hand properties. In effects, seeing the Àwòrò-Òsé in the open with his facial indications, it may be with a touch of mixed feelings for people

who are not of the community, and bold enough to search through his facial gestures for interpretation at his performances. To some audience and passers-by, it is an ordinary dance step creating fun to cheer the audience. However, our findings informs that the various gestures communicate beyond such assumption's tendencies.

Space Utilization and Other Gestural Nuances

Àwòrò-Òsé as the key performer dances round the open arena of the palace, with the king seated, the Olorì and other wives of the Kábíyèsí to see the Òsé's historical dance steps. In the same manner, the Òsé's people and the drummers are given a space almost opposite in a far distance to the seat of Oba, as they set their tools. While the Òsé dances to and from the seat of the Kábíyèsì, and to the other side of the drummers, holding his arrow and bow, Àwòrò moves in a sig-zag manner to and from the points he initially sits, and towards every direction in the air, on the floor, and on the ground. Conventionally, his movement communicates a search for something that is missing, and he gestures that he is searching for it in the air, on the land and virtually everywhere.

The socio-cultural construct of the Àwòrò and Oba's seating position prior his first homage movement before he engages in a search dance step is simply a respect for the royalty. As Àwòrò-Òsé is important at the performance arena, so is the royalty. However, the Àwòrò-Òsé gestures to the public as he courtesies to the Oba, while having his cone-shaped crown on his head, and the Oba is still the head of all.

Even though Àwòrò-Òsé courtesies to the Oba Òràngún without prostrating to him, the echoes of – "Eèpà Orişàdájì" ... by people is a gestural act that the Àwòrò-Òsé is also identified with and recognized as an Oba Òrişà at such point in time. As Àwòrò signals back to the sitting Oba Òràngún who at that point is although not wearing his main crown but an *Ori-kò-gbófo* cap with a horsetail in his hands too, and as Òràngún. The scenarios is such that Àwòrò-Òsé wears his own cone-shaped crown with a horsetail in his hands and demonstrates his obedience to the king. The gestural act at this point is a total movement from one location to another. His gestures also involves his body, the hands, and the use of his hand property – the horsetail raised up in form to Òràngún gestures respect and salutation to the king, and to the entire community present before the search mission. Conventionally, this is an indication of respect, as someone who got the approval of the superior Oba to go on a mission for the search of the mystical bird.

After the courtesies and gestural greetings, Àwòrò-Òsé begins his dance and search mission which involves his movement carriage, from the edge of the performance stage to the edge of Oba and to where his drummers and Àwòrò family member people clusters. There are various songs within the celebration of Àwòrò-Òsé festival which also informs some gestural act and voice confirmation or assertions to what the Àwòrò-Òsé enacts through his body, facial and movement in dance steps. See below some songs with their denotations:

The women singers and chanters sing thus:

Yorùbá	English
Leads (Lílé): <i>Èbọ fín</i>	the ritual is accepted
<i>Èbọ dà, iyówá wí, Òrişà gbà,</i>	Our sacrifice is accepted,
<i>tÀwòrò dayò.</i>	The one said by all, and sundry is taken That of the divinity has come to pass. That of Àwòrò's is victorious.

Call: Our sacrifice is accepted,
Offers are accepted, the king's wishes are considered
by the divinity,
That of the Àwòrò is a joyous ending.

Ègbè: *Ebọ fín,*
Ebọ dà, iyówá wí, Òrìṣà gbà, (Repeated Songs)
tÀwòrò dayọ.

Response: Our sacrifice is accepted,
Offers are accepted, the king's wishes are considered
by the divinity, That of the Àwòrò is a joyous ending.

Lílé: *Orò fín, oro fẹ,*

Ègbè: *tÀwòrò dayọ.*

Lílé: *Oro fín, oro fẹ,*

Ègbè: *tÀwòrò dayọ.*

Refrain:

Call: The celebration offer is accepted,

Response: That of the Priest is a joyous ending.

Call: The celebration offer is accepted,

Response: That of the Priest is a joyous ending.

(Call) - Lílé: *Ọsé oo ẹru réé,*
ọḍẹ relé ipèkun.

Call: *Ọsé oo,* this is fear!
The hunter has gone to the sacred enclave.

(Response) Ègbè: *Ọsé oo, ewú déé,*
Eru reee, ọḍẹ relé ipèkun.

Response: *Ọsé oo,* fear has emerged!
Fear indeed, the hunter has gone to the sacred enclave.

As this particular song is being rendered by the women, the male drummer changes the rhythm of the music percussion, and the Àwòrò himself moves backwardly, gesturing into the lyrics of the chants and songs in rendition.

Lílé: *Èyèyèyìn ló n rìn o ò, Èyèyèyìn*

Ègbè: *Èyèyèyìn ló n rìn o ò, Èyèyèyìn.*

Call: With his back he walks, he walks with his back

Response: With his back he walks, he walks with his back

As this song is rendered by the women, accompanied with drum, *Àwòrò-Ọsẹ* enacts some gestures which speaks volume of the intentions in the lyrics of the songs.

Lílẹ: *Àgbéyún, àgbébò, eríwo agbònrín è yójà,*

Ègbè: *Àgbéyún, àgbébò, eríwo agbònrín è yójà.*

Call: To and from, the head of antelope
forbids going to the market

Response: Taking to and from, the head of
antelope forbids going to the market.

The last song as rendered above serves as a warning to all listeners and viewers that *Àwòrò-Ọsẹ* and indigens of the community are not such elements to be the killed and taken to the market for sales.

Conclusion

In general, this study observes that gestures are special tools of communication embedded in the actions of artists, performers, and others in such category. Gestures serves additional information which may go at the same time with songs, drumming, and dances steps, just as it is evident in *Àwòrò-Ọsẹ*'s enactment during his festival. Gestures also serve as vital compliments to be main actions in performances. This is evident as seen in the case of the studied festival in *Ìlá-Òràngún, Ìgbómìnà* Southwestern Nigeria. On a final note, the study shows that gestures are part and parcel of humanity. Especially the Yorùbá, and Africans in general, are found of gesticulating out their thoughts as an affirmation of their feelings or whatever they verbally express sometimes. Even when they engage voice to communicate feelings, and aspirations, or any deep thoughts, they hardly remove the body, facial and other tools in totality of what they express from their reaction. However, the interpretation of such gesticulations could be subjective depending on the perspective of the personality, or location of the interpreter. Conventionally too, the study shows that meanings could be deduced from a given cultural setting and through interrelationship of the people within a community during a performance within a festivity as evidence from the analysis as engaged in this study. The findings of the study shows that *Àwòrò-Ọsẹ* festival of *Ìlá-Òràngún* performances, solidifies the notion of an exemplary of body gestures, space utilization and other gestural nuances which are not for just performance for its sake; but, often as an element often found within Yorùbá cultural festive events, and containing salient information through the use of poetic or dance steps loaded with h socio-cultural meanings. The study buttresses the notion that communication within such found gestures are mostly conceived differently by the initiates and non-members of the performances in society. The study concludes that festive activities are signs-dominated as element of information carrier for both the audience and spectators of festive activities in general.

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ⁱ Our reference here is the evidence of some modifications that has been introduced to the context of the *Àwòrò-Òsé* festival.

ⁱⁱ The references here speaks to the myths connected to *Àwòrò-Òsé* as a hero hunter who saved the community from a mysterious bird that was accounted for almost ruining the community in one of the oral accounts. The second myth is the fact that *Lówá* is the main farmer who plants the yam but when it is harvesting time, he is metaphorically de-robed of the position to claim ownership.

ⁱⁱⁱ See sample of the community's timetable of their important festival connected to the *Òràngún* as discussed in this study is attached in the appendixes.

^{iv} The current location of the citizens of Ilá-Òràngún is the fifth location known as Ilá Ajagun-ńlá and Ìgbonnìbí. It is documented that the name appertains to the leader who took them there. Scholars like Pemberton III and Afóláyan (1996) and Adébáyò (1996) have shown that they lived in four different places before this final and current location.

^v See Fáléyẹ (2005) for more information on this mystical chain.

^{vi} The exact year in the history of the people is not known.

^{vii} The information gathered about the two late chiefs did not provide exact years of their tenures while occupying the seat of Àwòrò-Òsẹ priest, we were only able to extract their age until demise. The sources of this information are from a one-on-one interview with Chief Şàngótólá Ọsẹníyì, the immediate Priest, and documentation in one of the yearly printed calendars of the festival of Àwòrò-Òsẹ (2010 & 2024).