

# MANAGEMENT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES OF EKITI PEOPLE IN THE PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD

By

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## *Abstract*

*Just like any other sub-ethnic groups in Nigeria, Ekiti people have various practices that are rooted in their culture before the embracement of western culture. These practices are classified as cultural heritages that have been conserved and transmitted successively through generations. Due to social evolution, the indigenous methods and significances of managing these heritages are going into extinction. Ado and Igede Ekiti were selected as the major study areas in Ekiti State. The objectives of this research are to identify, examine the significances and management of socio-cultural activities of Ekiti people in the pre-colonial period. Ethnographic method was adopted in the research and the instruments of data collection used are in-depth interview, using interview guide, participant observation, surface reconnaissance, photographic documentation and secondary data. Findings show that festivals, marriage, naming, coronation, indigenous technology, traditional games, burial rites and traditional meetings were highly valuable in the lives of the people in the past which the present inhabitants need to manage and promote for posterity.*

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**Key Words: cultural heritages, management, pre-colonial Period, Ado-Ekiti, Igede-Ekiti.**

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## INTRODUCTION

In the pre-colonial period, the cultural practices and materials of Ekiti people, with respect to festivals, mode of dressing, greetings, eating, housing, celebrations, interactions, political system, occupation, and the environment they reside, follow the same pattern as practiced in general Yorubaland as exemplified in this research work. Ado and Igede Ekiti were chosen as towns under study in Ekiti State. These people had valuable different ways to manage these socio-cultural activities before the introduction of western culture and practices. Socio-cultural activities are different ways through which customs and traditions of the people are exhibited and managed in the community using indigenous knowledge and technology. It is in a pitiable state that cultural heritages of the people in Ekiti State are gradually going into extinction because of modernity and modernization, in this case, it is necessary to orientate the present and successive generations to know their cultural authenticity and how to revitalize and preserve them for posterity.

This research, with the use of in-depth interviews, participant observation and photographic documentation identified different socio-cultural activities of the study areas to include among others: festivals, marriage, naming, coronation, indigenous technology, traditional games, burial rites and traditional meetings. The information gathered in the field showed that all activities of the people in the past distinguished them from other communities and were culturally significant. Ado and Igede people

have many festivals that bring them together to worship and appreciate Almighty God and their past warriors. Most of them are celebrated annually. Processes of naming a child, marriage, burial and chieftaincy ceremonies were celebrated in high esteem in the olden days. Meeting is one the ways through which ideas were shared among the people and the avenue to deliberate issues that affect the society. Occupations of the people were determined by physical environment; farming, weaving, animal husbandry, carving, fishing, etc. were various ways through which income was generated. Other socio-cultural activities like traditional games were also discussed in this work. Furthermore, indigenous ways through which people managed these socio-cultural activities were also explained to know the contributions of the ancient people in the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge and technology to the successive generation.

### **Objectives and Method of Research**

This paper therefore seeks to identify the socio-cultural activities of Ekiti people in the pre-colonial period; examine the significances of socio-cultural activities in the lives of the people, explain how these cultural values were managed in the past and examine their tourism potentials. To achieve these objectives, the research methodology adopted is ethnographic method and the sources of data collection were primary and secondary sources. The former consisted the use of in-depth interview and participant observation to get vast information on the subject matter. 18 interviewees were selected because they are culturally endowed and ready to transfer knowledge. The latter involved the use of some well-reviewed published and unpublished materials like books, journals, Internet, etc. to complement the research.

### **Background Information of the Study Areas**

Ado Ekiti with coordinates  $7^{\circ} 37' \text{N}$  and  $5^{\circ} 15' \text{E}$  is the Capital of Ekiti State and the Headquarters of Ado Local Government Areas. The population in 2004 was 446,749. While Igede-Ekiti lies within Latitudes  $7^{\circ} 39'$  and  $7^{\circ} 41'$  North of the Equator and Longitudes  $5^{\circ} 7'$  and  $5^{\circ} 8'$  East of the Greenwich Meridian. It is the Headquarters of Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government Area in Ekiti State. It is bounded in the North by Awo Ekiti, in the south by Ilawe Ekiti, in the East by Iyin Ekiti, and in the West by Aramoko-Ekiti. It covers land area of about 3.8 square kilometres (Oloidi, 2014)

Ado and Igede Ekiti annually enjoy two tropical climatic conditions. The first one is the rainy season, between the months of April and October and the dry season which complementarily introduces what is popularly known as 'harmattan' and covers between the months of November and March. The temperature of the area ranges between  $21^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $28^{\circ}\text{C}$ , with high relative humidity of about 1200mm (Kayode, 2011). The two major air masses are: South West Trade Wind called The Tropical Maritime that marks the beginning of the rainy season and the end of the dry season, and North East Trade Wind called the Tropical Continental marks the end of the rainy season and the commencement of the dry season. The vegetation of Ekiti is basically of two (2) kinds namely: the tropical forest in the southern part, where there are abundant thick forests. The second vegetation zone is the semi-savannah. This occupies the northern peripheries of the State where trees are scanty and the grasses are not as tall like those in the southern part (Oloidi, 2014: 63).

**Figure 2: Map of Ekiti State, showing the locations of Ado and Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government Areas (Igede). Source: Fieldwork, 2014**



representative of peoples, cultures and human activities and events, either in the present or in the past. According to the literatures, many indigenous historical sites have been preserved, documented and are recognized as World Heritage Sites by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) because of their outstanding global recognition and significances (Tucker & Carnegie, 2014). The effort of UNESCO on the conservation of cultural heritages has acquired analytical relevance in tourism management (Conway, 2014, Eva & Pablo, 2018)

At the national level, the establishment of a legal instrument for the protection and preservation of Nigerian cultural property could be formally traced to the colonial period, when the colonial government headed by Sir Bernard Boundillon, as Governor-General (1935-1943) established the Native Authority Ordinance No. 17 of 1943. This Ordinance aimed at prohibiting sales, destruction and export of African Antiquities and works of art. Ten years later, the Antiquities Ordinance No. 17 of 1953 was enacted by Sir John Macpherson; Governor-General (1948-1954), through this, Antiquities Commission came into existence in the year 1953. The then Federal Department of Antiquities was established with museums being established in Esie, Jos, Lagos, Owo and Ife and followed by the institutionalization of Archaeology in the Universities at Ibadan, Nsukka and later Zaria (Okpoko, 2014).

General Yakubu Gowon as a Military Head of State promulgated Decree No. 9 of 1974 to curb the incessant illegal trafficking in Antiquities. In 1979, National Commission for Museums and Monuments was established by Decree No. 77 of 1979. National Cultural Policy was launched by General Ibrahim Babangida on 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1988, this made provision for the preservation of culture, promotion of culture, presentation of culture, establishment of administrative structure and provision of funds for its implementation. Apart from preserving monuments and sites, provision was also made to establish game reserves and natural history museums (Okpoko, 2014, Oloidi, 2014). At present, there are several institutions managing Nigerian cultural resources like National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation, etc. Museum establishment has indelible significances in heritage management, and according to Okpoko (2011), it is seen as a vehicle through which people value and are aware of their cultural identity and make provisions for them to survive in this present day. These efforts indicated that governments have made several processes and procedures for the management, preservation, protection and conservation of cultural resources (including natural) in compliance with regulations. This is to prevent total loss of information from an untold number of archaeological sites, architecture, landscapes and other cultural resources in the society.

Cultural resource management covers all the ceremonies, songs, dances, work implements, religious objects, proverbs, riddles, norms, legend, historic sites, local industries, language, kinship system, architectural patterns, myths, drama, folklores, folktales, mode of greetings, local delicacies, traditional costumes and body ornaments, and some culturally oriented natural resources like hills, mountains, rivers/streams, groves, rocks, animals and climatic conditions and these are urgently needed to be managed and promoted in the various communities (Oloidi, 2014). These objects and activities of cultural values were traditionally managed in the past, because, they were importantly inseparable from the general ways of life of the people in the society. But at present, due to the intervention of western styles and ideologies, some are being destroyed, abandoned or tampered with, that is why they need urgent modern methods to manage and promote them in the country. From the pre-historical period to this post-colonial era, oral tradition is an informal way to manage cultural resources in the society most especially the intangible aspect. It is the verbal method of transferring indigenous knowledge to the next generation (Okpoko, 2014, Onyejebu, 2014, Oloidi, 2014).

Literature has it that, oral tradition is the testimonies of the past which are deliberately transmitted from mouth to mouth and from one generation to the other. Even among the peoples who have written accounts of their sources including the most ancient ones; these records are based on oral

tradition which has been in existence before any form of writing. All written documents that are recognized today about the origin and culture of the people were obtained from oral tradition. For instance, according to Ibeanu (2006) the findings showed that oral traditions were collected in Okigwe and its environs with a view to understanding the meaning and uses of aspects of the material culture, the people's traditions of origin and other related socio-cultural activities. While others like drama, dancing styles, ceremonies, occupations, domestic activities (cooking), mode of dressing, etc. are learnt through active participations and observations in these activities (Oloidi, 2014).

Other non-material aspect of people's culture like proverbs, myth, legends, language, norms, religion, songs, etc. are also managed to the next generations through oral traditions. It may be, most importantly, from parents to the children. While others like drama, dancing styles, ceremonies, occupations, domestic activities (cooking), mode of dressing, etc. are learnt through participations and observations in these activities. In the case of material aspect of culture, most of the objects used in the past were preserved locally by either sun dried, fried or smoked to preserve them against being decayed or attacked by insects. Most of the religious objects were displayed in the shrines or temples where nobody would tamper with them. While those festivals and natural resources that are attached to the customs of the people were monitored by the chiefs or traditional priests (Oloidi, 2014).

### **Presentation of Findings**

According to oral tradition and data from the fieldwork, people of Ekiti were generally blessed with attractive natural resources and hospitable cultural resources when they were very much valuable and honourable to the people than the situation in this contemporary world. According to them cultural activities that people enjoyed most in the past were the festivals, naming, marriage, coronation, burial rites, traditional games, meetings, occupations or indigenous technology, etc as discussed below.

**Festivals:** Taking the words of Chief Sasanyin (Ado), Iya Oniwosiwosi, Mrs. Comfort Ibikunle and Princess Victoria A.D. Oloidi, the African Traditional Religion (ATR) that people believed in the past in Ado and Igede Ekiti brought forth various festivals in honouring and worshipping of a supreme and invisible being who is culturally known as *Olodumare* i.e., Almighty God. Due to His invisibility, strange and attractive natural endowments like the sun, moon, stars, trees, rocks, rivers etc, were turned into lesser gods and goddesses called *Orisa*, to serve as intermediaries between divinity and humanity. These lesser gods included among others; *Ogun*-gods of iron, *Sango* - gods of fire and thunder, *Esu* - gods of creativity, *Ifa*- gods of divination, *Osun* - goddess of fertility and fruitfulness. The worship of these deities known to them as *Orisa*, made their festivals unavoidable in the communities. People celebrated them enthusiastically throughout the whole community, quarters or family, depending on the area they served (2014: pers. comm.). Some of the notable festivals in Ekiti are *Uromo*, *Udi Uroko*, *Egungun*, *Osun*, *Ogun*, *Elemi*, *Ifa/Orunmila* and so on. All the festivals in the State were passed through ages and being managed by the *Oba*, chiefs and traditional priests and priestesses.

During various festivals, people put on their traditional attires; drumming, singing and dancing were inevitably performed round the streets. There were chiefs, traditional priests, herbalists (*Onisegun*) who took the mandate of appeasing these gods in the past with sacrifices for the atonement of atrocities committed and for making requests. These priests, as Chief Kuye and Mrs. Akinola Esther emphasized on, were held in high esteem as servants of God. They were respected, adorned, praised, feared and lived in isolation. Different local food and drinks were prepared to entice the participants, both from within and outside the town (2014: pers. comm.).





**Plate 1: Many carved and sculptured cultural and religious objects Source: Tunji Arts Gallery, Ado Ekiti, Field Survey, 2014**

**Naming Ceremony (Isomoloruko):** This is one of the most unavoidable cultural activities in Ado and Igede Ekiti, both in the past and present, and its importance in the family cannot be overemphasized. It is the belief of the people that any name given to a child will ultimately affect him/her throughout the entire life. This then, accounts for the adage among the Yoruba people which says that *Oruko a maa roni; apeje a si maa roniyan*, meaning that, a person's name directs his action and behaviours. Therefore, they tend to give names that will bring prosperity and goodness to the child throughout his entire life.

According to Alhaji Abdulkareem, Iyafin Tijani and Princess Victoria Oloidi (2014: Personal communication.), it was the custom in the olden days to consult *Ifa* oracle when a child was born, to immediately know whether the child brought in bad luck or good luck into the family and society. If the child came with bad luck, he/she would be killed and thrown into the evil forest instantly without any refusal according to the dictate of the gods, but would be made alive when he/she brought forth good virtues. Pa Adeeko (2014: pers. comm.) added to this that, ancient people consulted *Ifa* oracle to know what would happen to the child in future, especially the type of career that would be fruitful, the nature of the person to marry and some other 'dos and don'ts' assigned to such child according to the destiny of the child.

According to most of the interviewees, Ado and Igede Ekiti practice the same Yoruba custom. Based on this synonymous tradition, naming of any male child was celebrated on the 9<sup>th</sup> day, 7<sup>th</sup> day was set for a girl while 8<sup>th</sup> day was usually set for twins. Traditionally, names were given from different dimensions like *Amutorunwa* or *Abiso* (i.e., name brought from heaven), these include twins, and the name of the first is *Taiwo*, while the second is *Kehinde*. Any child born immediately after the twins either male or female would be called *Idowu*. Then, there is *Alaba* and so on. Other names include *Ajayi* – a baby born face downward, *Dada* - a baby born with curly hair, *Oke* – a baby found in sack, *Ojo* (*Aina* for female) – a baby with an umbilical cord round his neck, *Ige* - a baby who comes out first with legs etc.

Secondly, baby was named in the past after the occupation of the family. According to a Yoruba proverb which states that “*Ile laa wo ka to somoloruko*” i.e., the condition of home determines the child's name. The family that has hunting as a vocation, the children would bear names like *Odebiyi*, *Odeyemi*, *Odetayo*, *Asebiode*, etc. The family known for drumming would bear names like *Ayanyemi*, *Ayangbemi*, *Ayanwale* etc. family of warriors bear the names *Akintunde* (another warrior has arrived), *Akintade*, *Akinyemi*, etc. Thirdly, child could be named after the deity the parents or lineage worship like *Ogun* (*Ogunyemi*, *Ogunmodede*), *Ifa* (*Fayose*, *Olaifa*, *Fayemi*, *Fasola*), *Osun* (*Osunrayi*, *Osunbiyi*) etc. Also, it has been known that any child born on special events like festival is named *Abiodun*, *Abodunde*, *Odunayo*, etc. Children born after the demise of the grandparents are called *Babatunde*, *Babajide* for a male child while female bear *Yetunde*, *Iyabo*, *Yewande* (all means father/mother has

returned). The royal dynasties also have *Ade* in their names either as suffix or prefix e.g., *Aladesuru*, *Aladejuyigbe*, *Adetutu*, *Oriade*, etc. A child born on the road or pathway is named *Abiona*.

According to the key informants, after the names have been chosen, the parents and priests pronounced the names to the public. Ancestral spirits were invoked for blessings using cultural materials like native gin, which symbolizes durability and volubility, salt and honey symbolize sweetness and love in life, bitter kola for long life, dried fish for breakthrough and victory, alligator pepper symbolizes fruitfulness, water meaning to be favoured by all, money to be loved by all and riches. All edible items are put into the mouth of this baby one after the other as they pray. People present gifts to the child, while merriments and entertainment follows. This ceremony cannot be excluded from people's cultural activities.

**Marriage Ceremony:** According to Princess A.D. Ololodi, it has been put on notice that, out of the three inevitable occurrences in human life - naming, marriage and death, as people believed in the past, marriage is the celebrant consciously witnessing the only lifespan step. A child did not know anything during his/her naming and burial ceremonies. In view of this, marriage ceremony was so extravagant in both Ado and Igede Ekiti. In the past, as it had been gathered, parents could easily decide to engage their daughter to a well-to-do man like warrior, prince, successful farmer, hunter, expert in handiwork or a son of an intimate friend without her knowledge. Parents were seen as "God on earth". The children feared them more than necessary. The parents also cherished to be in-law to a family that was well respected with virtues in the society. On the other hand, due to status, as Pa Adeeko said, it was so rare and fearful for a commoner to show his love for a princess, the parents of the man could kick against it, believing the move, as a death sentence to the members of the family when the King hears of it (2014: pers. comm.).

As the people may decide, a hardworking man could marry many wives in the past on a condition that he would provide his paternal care satisfactorily, polygamous family was common among the people to have more heirs to hold his lineage and to work on his farmland. Princess A.D. Ololodi pitifully stated that, in the past, love was not emphasized upon, because, a grown-up man may decide to love a mature lady but the parents might have another offer for their son, while in few cases, the most crucial primary attributes were good character, hard work and the will of the gods, financial status was secondary among the virtuous families.

According to the field data, there are four main steps in marriage ceremony after the able man might have met his counterpart. They usually have someone from both parties called *Alarena* who would serve as intermediaries between them, to deliver message and to perform a background check up on the family of the other to avoid marrying someone with some serious physical or psychological disorder such as lunacy, epilepsy, leprosy or extreme albinism. When they satisfied each other, the first stage in the olden days was to consult *Ifa* oracle. If the consultation yields a positive result, then, they proceed to the next stage, but if not, they discontinue the relationship.

The second stage was known to them as *mon-mi-n-mon-o* or *mon-mi ki emimon-oi* i.e., introduction. When both were full-grown enough for marriage, the family of the groom to be would notify the family of the bride to-be about their coming. On their arrival, the two families would introduce to themselves each other, after which, the eldest from the man's family would explain the reason for their visitation i.e., to ask for their daughter's hand in marriage. They usually come with palm wine, kola nuts, bush meat, local gin etc. According to Mrs. Esther Akinola, "if the bride's parents refused to accept the gifts, the groom's family would be sent away gently or forcefully depending on the character of the family. But, in acceptance to this request, the goods were collected. Eventually, the list for *Idana* (i.e., betrothal or engagement) would be sent to the family of the groom-to-be while the feedback would consist the date for the engagement" (2014: pers. comm.). During *Idana*, which is the third stage, bride price and goods would be brought by the groom's family. This consists of goats, palm wine, kolanuts, bitter kola, bush meat, abundance *asooke* and some other latest cloths, tubers of yam, plantain, kitchen materials,

calabash, clayed pots, dried fish etc. *OwoOri* (dowry) must be returned to signify that, they are not selling their daughter. Merriments and other social activities follow immediately to entertain the guests.

The last stage was the marriage proper which is known to the people of Ado and Igede Ekiti as *Obuntun*. This was usually elaborative; it is during this period that many people would be invited to grace the occasion. Different age groups habitually have turn-by-turn cultural performances while the parents pray for the new couple before leaving. Songs of departure called *EkunIyawo* would be sung to see the bride off to her husband home at night. Some chosen ladies or cousins would follow her to render domestic assistance in her new home for some time. It was honourable in Ado and Igede Ekiti just like any other Yoruba Kingdom/settlement in the olden days to meet a new bride in her virginity. It was the pride of the bride's parents for nurturing her well, and valuable gifts would be sent to them. But, if reverse is the case, the bride would be sent back to her parents disgracefully while abusive songs would be raised by the community women to see her off. According to Mrs. Esther Akinola, this action helped in building up morality in the society as an indicator of decency and virtuous life.



**Plate 2: The Groom-to-be and his friends greet the bride's family during engagement**© Oloidi, Akintunde John: Field Survey, 2014

**Chieftaincy/Coronation:** Ado and Igede Ekiti have had traditional political structure to take the affairs of the people to maintain the normative precepts of the community. Traditionally, almost all the families or clan had at least a title to take in the past. Oba is classified as the apex ruler in the society. Onigede of Igede Ekiti, His Royal Highness, Oba James Adelusi Aladesuru II rules Igede Ekiti, while Ewi of Ado Ekiti, His Royal Highness Oba (Dr) Adeyemo Adejugbe Aladesanmi III, JP, CON rules Ado Ekiti. Coronation is the process of installing a title. Nobody in the society can just install himself/herself as chief without the consent of the gods and King, Chiefs and the people.

To maintain the cultural activities and status of each family, title taking was taken successively in the past, so that it would not eradicate from the family. *Ifa* was consulted to choose the rightful candidate to take a particular title in the community. This cultural activity, as most of the key informants said, was valuably elaborated since, most of the traditional activities linking to that title would be displayed in their originality to entertain the guests. In their own belief, according to Chief Elemosun and Mr. Seunree, to be a title holder means a call to service because many communal responsibilities would rest on his or her shoulder more than the previous. In support of this, Princess A.D. Oloidi, Chief Oluri and Chief Elemosun stated that the chiefs perform both functional and strategic roles in managing the culture and tradition of the people. They perform sacrifices for the peace, unity and progress of the community. They advise the king and settle disputes. They are highly respected in the society (2014: pers. comm.). In



some cases, during the coronation or eve of the final day, some of the titleholders were seriously flogged to demonstrate their level of humility and perseverance when they are battling with different difficulties as they undergo their customary duties in the community. Leaves are put round their head as the symbol of chieftaincy. Masquerades used to garnish the occasion when such title is attached to it.



**Plate 3: Chief Aro and Gborogi masquerade during coronation**  
© Oloidi, Akintunde John: Field Survey, 2014

**Burial Rites:** According to the interviewees, a rite for the dead was so precious to people in the past, because people of Ado and Igede Ekiti and Yoruba in general, were not infidels of life after death. As explained by Chief Oluri, Chief Sasanyin and Princess A. D. Oloidi, traditionally, burial ceremony varies in nature, because in the past, dead bodies were not buried in the same way. They were buried according to their status, circumstances that surround such death, genealogy, etc. The people of Ado and Igede Ekiti had the same method of burying the dead as it was originated from Ile-Ife. According to Chief Oluri, Princess A.D. Oloidi, Mr. Famusan and IyafinJaratu (2014: pers. comm), it was the ancient custom of the people to bath the dead immediately after he/she died by those who are traditionally concerned. In some cases, a gong would be beaten round that region to inform the people about the incident. He/she would be laid in the room or sitting room, in the case of the commoners and be buried immediately in his/her room or yard if no circumstances were attached to it. Dead body was preserved in the past using local hot gin to embalm it for few days. The local gin would be poured into its nostrils, mouth, ears and to rub its body to avoid being decayed. Special people like the king, chiefs, traditional priests, twins, albinos, pregnant women, baby, hunch back, the person killed by thunder, strange illness, falling from the trees, hunter, lame, etc were buried specially. Special atonement or rituals and sacrifices were performed for the propitiation and cleansing according to the dictates of *Ifa* oracle. In the olden days, some faithful servants would be buried along with their masters, in the hope to serve them in life after death.

Some of the special persons were buried in the evil forest far away from the settlement. In Igede Ekiti, according to Chief Elemosun, Pa Adeeko and Princess A.D. Oloidi, such people were buried at *IgboAgbe* (the present Ekiti Baptist High School). Those with hunch back were put in a big clayed pot and buried with it. The person who fell from the tree would be buried under that tree. The person who drowns and discovered would be buried near that river. The prominent people like the king, chiefs, warriors, hunters, traditional priests, etc were buried alongside with some of their symbols of authority or implements. For instance, hunter could be buried with his gun or hunting regalia. *Ifa* diviner consulted oracle before or after burying any premature dead to know who and what killed the person especially in a polygamous family where hatred dominated the mind of siblings. In this circumstance, dangerous weapons like bunch of broom, knife, gun, stone, cane, axe, and any other harmful objects are put beside the person in the grave after necessary rituals, to revenge his/her death. In the past, the dead were buried without a casket unless there were unavoidable reasons to react otherwise. The dead would only be wrapped with white cloth, but later, plain caskets were made for them by local carpenter as a symbol of respect for the dead. Special burial rites, especially aged person, attracted many invited and uninvited guests due to its colourful elaboration. Dirge would be sung to express the demise of their loved ones,

though some in pretence. After the burial, dancing, singing, eating and drinking follows immediately by the relations who were usually in uniform.

**Traditional Games:** According to Pa Adeeko, Princess A.D. Oloidi, Chief Sasanyin, Chief Kuye and Chief Oluri expatiated on the fact that, people extensively enjoyed many local games as recreational activities to satisfy their leisure time after daily activities. These could be done either in the afternoon, evening or late at night to have cordial relationship with other people in the community (2014: pers. comm.). According to them, these games include *AyoOpon*, *udi/Idi* (wrestling), *aloapamo* (local quiz), *Aloapagbe* (tales with songs), *eresupa* (moonlight play), *arintita*, *bojuboju* (hide and seek), *bere-n-bere*, *mudeesi*, *maweyin*, *ekun-meran*, *egungunmilese* (deceptive game), fishing, *bebesu*, *ninini* (using sharp objects most especially stick of broom to continuously tap someone from the neck down through the spinal cord, when the person laughs, he/she misses out but when endures it to the last round, he/she would be classified as a brave winner. This nurtured the ancient youth on how to endure in difficulties).

Men and women played *Ayoopon* under trees with their counterparts starting from the afternoon till late in the evening. Spectators were present to cheer them up and to make caricature of the losers. It served as an avenue to proverbially advice those who are wayward. There was no time for games in the morning due to daily activities but in the afternoon, children played different games at a meeting point. They preferred running helter-skelter to please themselves and attractively build different objects with sand, clay, sticks, stones, wood, seeds, etc, out of these; their future careers were unknowingly exhibited as Yoruba sages usually say that '*ibi ere l'omodeti n yan ipin*', that is, the children choose their destiny as they play. They also cherished to perform dancing competition during cultural events.



**Plate 4: Structure of Ayo Opon**

© Oloidi, Akintunde John: Field Survey, 2014

At night, in the olden days, Princess A. D. Oloidi who has obsession in telling the present researcher different stories, tales and history from the late 1980s till date explained that, children used to gather after supper in front of the house (usual venue) where the elderly ones would be entertaining them with different tales. Children were also taught the stories of the ancestors (heroes and heroines) and what happened in the past both in the community and its environs. The animate objects used as characters in most of the stories include lions, cock, hen, tortoise, pigeon, elephants, dogs, man, spiders, rats, lizard, goat, pig, snake, etc while inanimate objects include stone, hills, water, sun, moon, stars, pots etc. After each tale, there would be a period for questions and answers to test the level of their understanding.

Due to local games as Chief Oluri put it that, people learn most parts of the cultural practices and activities from the elderly men and women in the community. Local games taught people how to help, sympathize, love, be courageous, to be hardworking, etc; though, some of the tales made them to be frightened, cried and felt abstemiously, yet, they learnt from them.



**Plate 5: Seeds use for playing Ayo Arin (Arin game)**

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**Meeting:** The people of Ado and Igede Ekiti classified various meetings as part of their traditional activities, because, most of the deliberations in the past were centred on the custom of the community. Town criers were sent to notify the entire people or those concerned. It may be usual or emergency. Men, women and youth have separate meeting venues unless there was a joint or general meeting that concerned everybody. According to Chief Elemosun and Chief Sasanyin, issues of how to clear the streets, riversides, markets, palace, roads, shrine and the way to solve communal problems were usually discussed in their gathering.

**Occupation:** From the ancient days according to the data acquired, the people of Ado and Igede Ekiti have had many indigenous knowledge and technologies to fashion out various economic activities to produce goods and services to meet their domestic needs. The two towns under study share the same economic activities in accordance with Yoruba tradition. They traded their goods through trade-by-barter or with pieces of cowries. In the past, traders from Igede Ekiti trekked to Ado Ekiti on narrow roads for goods transaction and vice-versa. The most crucial and interesting aspect of the people is that, occupation was traditionally acquired through apprenticeship – an act through which the younger ones are signed out to learn a particular work from a professional and these activities included music, farming, fishing, trading, oil- processing, weaving, plaiting, traditional medicine, archery, hunting, herbalism, carving etc. Just as Princess A. D. Oloidi learnt domestic works and trading from her parents and sewing under Mrs. Brullet, an English woman in Ibadan, and thus became a professional sewing mistress in Osogbo and Igede Ekiti between 1935 and 1960.

According to Chief Oluri (2014: pers. comm.), “parents believed that education without indigenous knowledge and technology was not usually appreciated but valueless to the community”. These daily activities were embarked upon to secure a flourishing lifespan for the coming generations and to promote cultural or local methods of doing things in the society. In the olden days, parents were also in the first position to nurture their siblings in whatever work they practiced starting from errands, because family pedigree known to them as *Oriki* (appraisal words) were embedded in the family's occupation which was one of the determinant factors in naming their children.

According to Pa. Adeeko and Princess Victoria A. D. Oloidi who emphasized on the importance of indulging in one or more handiwork in the past, for instance, when a man is mature enough to get married or to succeed the chieftaincy title entitle to him in the society, without high-quality job, it would not be accomplished. Also, just as the custom of the Yoruba people demands, a man must build his own residential house before he can be qualified to hold any title in the community.

Domestication of animals was traditionally well pronounced in the past in these two towns. They reared

animals like goats, fowls, sheep, dogs, parrots, tortoise, peacock, pigs, ducks, cow and bulls (for the wealthy). Only fowls were reared by men in the farm. These animals were popularly possible to rear in these communities because of the availability of resources to meet their daily rations accurately. Occasionally, to raise funds for the family to solve financial deficiency, some of these animals were sold as a source of revenue in the market or to the meat sellers. In addition, one of the remunerations for rearing animals in these communities is to slaughter, cook and eat them at will or during festive period to truncate family expenses.

### **Discussion: The Management of Cultural Heritages in the Pre-colonial Period**

According to the data gathered from the various interviews, it is obvious that, the people of Ado and Igede Ekiti had some distinctive methods of managing their unlimited cultural and natural resources in the past. These methods included among others oral tradition, cultural participation and apprenticeship, to ensure that the valuable cultural resources and heritage are kept intact and to be originally transmitted to the next generations for posterity purposes. The cultural aspects being managed include those archaeological and ethnographic resources in the society.

According to most of the key informants interviewed, oral tradition is the main method of impacting and transmitting knowledge in the past. Oral tradition is an informal way to manage cultural resources in the society most especially the intangible aspect like proverbs, myth, legends, language, norms, religion, songs, etc. It is the verbal method of transferring indigenous knowledge to the next generation. In the case of material aspect of culture, most of the objects used in the past were preserved locally by either sun dried, fried or smoked to preserve them against being decayed or attacked by insects. Most of the religious objects were displayed in the shrines or temples where nobody would tamper with them. While those festivals and natural resources that are attached to the customs of the people were monitored by the chiefs or traditional priests.

All interviewees have made it known that, those who managed cultural and natural resources (especially those ones with cultural functions) in the past, had the knowledge of the past, and were passionately enthused to preserve and transmit them to the next generations through informal education. These people or group of people included the king, chiefs, traditional priests or herbalists, cultural groups, families and individuals. According to Chief Sasanyin, Princess A.D. Olodi, Chief Rawa and the contributions from the group discussions (2018: pers. comm), *Oba*.e., king, is seen as the determinant for the management of cultural resources, tangible and intangible. He has the final pronouncement concerning the customs of the people. In the past, *Oba* cherished his traditions and could render or take his life while protecting and defending his community from invaders. He managed cultural resources by frequently participating and encouraging his inhabitants and settlers to embrace the culture of the people. He monitored how each family or quarters celebrate their cultural activities and awarded the active ones with gifts or titles.

In Ado and Igede Ekiti, to have proper management of cultural resources and heritages in the past, many Chiefs were assigned to various families or clans and quarters to primarily preserve their indigenous knowledge and technologies both within the kinship and the community. They were highly involved in training their people on the traditions of the various families and the society at large. When a chief was installed, he or she would automatically be in-charge of the festival(s) and other ceremonies and resources consigned to him/her according to the undertaking signed while taking the oath of allegiance during coronation. He/she would also be given some guidelines to rejuvenate those cultural activities that had gone extinct in his/her territory to manage them for posterity.

They (Chiefs) helped to promote cultural resources by directly and indirectly transmitting them to the next generation through oral tradition and the involvement of the youth in some of their communal tasks as future custodians. According to the data acquired in the field, it has been revealed that the generality of the Chiefs intentionally initiated the young ones into the cultural activities to deeply grow-up with



them and to assimilate the traditions of the community before the elderly ones join their ancestors. This helped the ancient inhabitants or fore-fathers to divulge some of their traditional values and secrets to the next generation. According to Chief Elemosun, in his view that “most of the cultural materials and non-materials would not have been inherited or known, but, due to the process of succeeding a King or Chiefs in the society, the valuable tangible ones are usually preserved in the palace of the King, mini-palaces of the Chiefs, shrines, groves and on the altars in various homes where they would not be tampered with”. They indirectly served as museums in the past in their various locations.

To avoid the festivals to be discarded, the forefathers devotedly fixed and maintained the periods or seasons that each festival would be celebrated annually in the community. The Chiefs were in charge and the organizers of these festivals with the consent of the king, to ensure that each event served as an avenue to exhibit the tradition of the people and for the upcoming ones to be inculcated on how and why such festival is celebrated. For instance, in Igede Ekiti, Oba, Chief Oloro, Chief Olulogbo, Chief Oloye, Chief Oloro and Chief Odofinoversee *Ogun* festivals, Eyelosun manages *Osun* festival etc. In Ado Ekiti, Chief Sasere manages *Ade* festival, Ewi of Ado Ekiti and some other Chiefs monitor *Otu* festival.

In the primitive era, parents taught their children what they were needed to know: the way to cook, greet, dress and speak local language and proverbs, how to prepare and celebrate festivals and to know the 'dos and don'ts' of the community. Some were taught how to heal, make incantations, atonements and sacrifices, so that, valuable cultural practices are successively transmitted and managed. To promote the custom of the people, children were also named after their family names. It is also obvious that, some traders helped to sell, buy and preserve cultural materials in the past. They were mostly women. They are called *Oniwosiwosi*. They made these materials available for the purposes of domestic use, rituals, sacrifices and concoction. Some also purchase these earth wares as souvenirs.



Plate 6: Preserved cultural materials

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In the aspect of natural resources, rivers, hills, forest etc that are rooted in cultural activities were massively managed by the Chiefs involved and different age grades usually fixed a date to clear the surroundings and decorate them when festivals were approaching. Scary nature of some of these places and taboos attached to them highly preserved them, most especially sacred groves. River Osun is managed by the King, Eyelosun and Chief Oisinkin, Aoro Elemi manages River Elemi, Chief Sasere monitors River Omisanjana, Chief Bafonoversees Age Hills, Chief Baisaya monitors River Ogbese, and River Ureje culturally called *OmiAyanyan* is managed by the king, Chiefs and Ekiti State Water Corporation (at present) etc.

The findings have shown that several socio-cultural activities of Ekiti people in the pre-colonial period were managed by the *Oba*, chiefs and various families using indigenous



knowledge which the present inhabitants should revisit and embrace for continuity. At that period, people valued their cultural heritage resources like festivals, marriage, shrines, traditional games, coronation, burial, naming and indigenous technology and ready to protect them. These were the efforts of the progenitors of Yoruba race in structuring the social, political, economic, legal, religious, psychological and environmental activities of the people in the society before westernization. This indicates that the works of the ancient people should not be discarded because they are the pacesetters for other development. They exhibited their traditions through performances at functions, body ornaments, language, festivals, oral tradition, architectures and the likes, which modern ways of life should not diminish rather to add impetus to their promotion and attraction.

In many settlements, it is observed that westernization has brought negative effects on the culture of the people, according to Eze-Uzomaka and Oloidi (2017) in their research in southwestern part of Nigeria, the findings showed that festivals, modes of traditional marriage, local games, traditional foods, modes of dressings, language, shrines, traditional religion, and many others have either been adversely tampered with, burnt or abandoned because of modernization and Christianity. This should be addressed. Modernization should not be seen as a process that would devalue or abrogate cultural activities in Ekiti State, but to be used to manage and upgrade people's cultural endowments in the face of social and environmental evolution. This would help to appreciate cultural heritages in the community. Modern equipment and system should be encouraged to reproduce cultural objects and revitalize heritage sites and activities in the State so that their authenticity would remain intact for posterity. The present inhabitants must cherish their cultural heritages, tangible and intangible, just like the ancient people if tradition must sustain.

## **Conclusion**

Cultural heritage are the movable or immovable objects, sites, structures, groups of structures, and natural features and landscapes that have archaeological, paleontological, historical, architectural, religious, aesthetic, or other cultural significance (World Bank, 2006). The role cultural practices and knowledge plays in the transferring and preservation of cultural heritage from one generation to the other cannot be over emphasized. Due to the flexibility of the medium of exchange of cultural heritage and the embracement of western culture, it stands the risk of being lost or forgotten (Ola & Adegbore, 2015). In this case, this research was carried out to revitalize the ancient methods of managing socio-cultural activities in Ekiti State.

The findings of this research in Ado and Igede Ekiti have proven that prior to the embracement of westernization and the coming of colonialism in Nigeria, there were many attractive and valuable socio-cultural activities in Ekiti State. According to the selected key informants, the traditional activities of the people included festivals, naming, marriage, coronation, burial, meetings, traditional games, indigenous technologies and so on. All these were performed among Ekiti people in the pre-colonial period with the directives from the

gods through traditional priests. Festivals were celebrated to worship and appreciate God through lesser gods of the land. The festivals, which included *Osun, Ogun, Ifa, Sango, Iromo, Udi Uroko* and many more, served as avenues to strengthen the relationship between the *Oba*, chiefs and the people in the community. People displayed colourful cultural activities in dances, songs, dressing, drumming, food, etc., as the elders made sacrifices to the deities.

Naming of a child in the pre-colonial period was determined by the background of the family, the lineage occupation, family deity and the circumstances that surrounded such birth. In the aspect of choosing a life partner, parents had the highest contribution from stage one to the last in determining the family to be married from. Coronation was an act of transferring chieftaincy titles to the chosen candidate to take hold of higher traditional duty in the society. *Oba* and chiefs were installed to manage the tradition of the people. Burial rite was a part of unavoidable customary function among the people to give a befitting burial for their deceased loved ones. Games and meeting were also parts of cultural activities that brought people together in the past, all these cultural activities are transferred from one generation to the other through oral tradition.

In Ekiti State, there are various ways in which objects and activities of cultural values are traditionally preserved and managed, most especially with the help of the King, Chiefs and the custodians. Parents transferred their indigenous knowledge and technology to the children or apprentices through learning and socialization, but this process has been discouraged because of modernization and western education. To rescue these cultural endowments to maintain their authenticity in this modern period, the families, Kings, chiefs, governments at all levels, individuals, cultural enthusiasts and the likes must help to manage and preserve these tourism potentials to avoid going into extinction. Cultural studies, formal and informal education, should be taken seriously for the traditions of the people to survive in the face of westernization.

Lastly, culturally oriented museums in Nigeria are established for the purposes of collecting, preserving, educating, and exhibiting the cultural or natural heritage of the country for information and enjoyment of the public and at the same time safeguarding the cultural heritage from theft, illegal exportation and religious fanatics, and destruction by environmental factors (Oyinloye, 2015; Oyinloye, 2018). The establishment of museums in Ekiti State would be helpful to achieve the above functions.

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**TABLE OF INFORMANTS**

Names of Respondents	Town	Sex	Age (in years)	Occupation
Princess Victoria A.D. Oloidi	Igede	F	111	Retired trader and tailor
Chief Sasanyin	Ado	M	80+	Divination/farming
Chief Eledosun	Igede	M	About 80	Retired soldier & farming
Chief Oluri	Igede	M	60	Civil servant & farming
Iya Oniwosiwosi	Ado	F	80+	Trading of Cultural artifacts
IyafinJaratu Tijani	Ado	F	About 70	Trading cultural materials
Chief Rawa	Ado	M	About 80	Palace Chief/attendance
Alhaji Abdulkareem	Igede	M	90+	Retired farmer & Trader
Chief KuyeBayejoko	Ado	M	50+	Farming/Tailoring
Chief Ayodele Akomolafe	Ado	M	50+	Musician & farming
Chief Musili Lawal-Iyalaje	Ado	F	50+	Trading
Mr. Anthony Famusan	Igede	M	60+	Palm wine tapping&farming
Mrs. Comfort Ibikunle	Igede	F	80+	Trading
Mrs. Esther Akinola	Igede	F	80+	Trading
Mr. Seunree	Igede	M	80+	Farming
Dr. Emmanuel Ayokunle	Ado	M	60+	Civil servant
Pa Adeeko	Igede	M	90+	Retired farmer





