

THE HISTORICAL NEXUS BETWEEN ISLAM, CULTURE AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN *OJUDE-ObA* FESTIVAL IN IJEBU- ODE: AN ASSESSMENT OF OLADITI AND FAHM'S WORKS

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Abstract

The writings of Oladiti and Fahm on the historical convergence of Islam and native Yoruba culture within the Ojude-Oba Festival, an annual festival in Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria, are critically evaluated in this study. Scholarly interpretations of the festival's religious and cultural synthesis continue to differ, despite its evolution from a localised Muslim devotion to a nationally recognised cultural show. In order to comprehend how Islamic identity and Yoruba customs have negotiated co-existence; this assessment contends that Oladiti and Fahm provide complementary but different analytical frameworks. Fahm argues that Islamic customs were indigenised without undermining pre-existing communal structures, highlighting the festival's significance as an example of Yoruba socio-cultural resilience. On the other hand, Oladiti emphasises a historical-sociological viewpoint, using the celebration as an example of interfaith diplomacy in which Ijebu Muslims developed royal patronage by publicly demonstrating their allegiance on 'Eid al-adhā, thereby incorporating Islamic holidays into the chieftaincy system's political structure. Whether the event symbolises the 'Islamisation' of Yoruba kingship rites or the 'Yorubanisation' of Islamic festival traditions is a key conflict found in their works. This study concludes that Oladiti and Fahm together shed light on the Ojude-Oba Festival as a vibrant syncretic third space that is neither wholly Islamic nor wholly pre-Islamic Yoruba. It affirms that cultural performance becomes a means of negotiating political loyalty, religious identity and communal engagement without limit, while Oladiti and Fahm's writings collectively offer a complex historical context for comprehending how religious and cultural pluralism can coexist in modern-day Nigeria without requiring mutual exclusivity.

Keywords: Culture, Historical Nexus, Islam, *Ojude-Oba* Festival, Peaceful Co-existence

Introduction

Culture, according to Marvin (1980:10), is seen as the learned repertory of thoughts and actions exhibited by the members of a social group. Precisely, Otite and Ogionwo (2016:86) evaluated the culture as the complex whole of man's

acquisition of knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, customs and technology, which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation. In lieu of this, Arowolo (2010:1) affirmed in his views that Africans and, indeed, Nigerians are blessed with distinct but interwoven cultures before the implantation of alien cultures upon the populace by the imperialistic Europeans and the itinerant Arabs through the vehicles of colonisation, missionary work and slave trade. These assertions, without mincing words, are synonymous with the cultural values of the *Ijebus*, a sub-ethnic group of Yoruba people of Southern Nigeria (Ogunkoya, 1956:48-58; Oduwobi, 2006:145-160; Oduwobi, 2023:113-117).

Though the *Ijebu* are acknowledged Yoruba who are culturally inclined and speak a distinct Ijebu dialect across Ijebuland of Ogun State and parts of Lagos State (such as the people of Epe and Ikorodu), the introduction and development of Islam in their spiritual, cultural and economic development for over one and a half centuries can never be overemphasised (Abdul, 1964; Abdul, 1967). This is manifested in their way of life, especially with the development of the *Ojude-Oba* festival, an annual religious-cultural display and carnival which has attracted world attention for decades because of its uniqueness. The *Ojude-Oba* festival is an annual multi-coloured and multifarious cultural festival which is celebrated at the frontage of the paramount king of *Ijebu-Ode* on the third day of Muslims' *Eid al-Adhā* festival, known as *Odun Ileya* in Yorubaland. The festival has no fixed day in the Gregorian calendar but is occasionally celebrated during *Dhul-Hijjah*, the twelfth month of the Muslim *Hijri* lunar calendar. This carnival-like festival is being celebrated by all Ijebu sons and daughters, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, among them are arrays of visitors across the world gracing the occasion, and it had developed into one of the most sought-after annual Yoruba cultural events in Nigeria.

There is a plethora works such as Adetoun (2003), Olojede (2025) Kukoyi *et al.*, (2018) and newspaper columns published on the origin and cultural development of the Ijebu people and the *Ojude-Oba* festival (for example, *Tribuneonline*, 2018). However, the works of Oladiti Akeem Abiodun (2010:122-133) and Fahm AbdulGafar Olawale (2015:1-11) are two recent research papers which established the nexus between Islam and the cultural celebration of the *Ojude-Oba* festival, highlighting its historical origin and spiritual, cultural, economic and value-based not only to *Ijebus* but also to all Yoruba people of Nigeria. Therefore, this paper examines the historical nexus between Islam and culture as inherent in the *Ojude-Oba* festival. In concise terms, the study analytically discusses the interaction between culture and religion among Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria, traces the advent, practice and development of Islam among the Ijebu people, engages in content analysis of Oladiti and Fahm's published papers and historically traces the nexus between Islam and the *Ojude-Oba* festival. The paper concludes by enunciating the socio-religious significance of *Ojude-Oba* to Muslims and non-Muslims and how *Ojude-Oba* Festival can be utilised as a mechanism for interfaith and cultural dialogue in 21st-century Nigeria.

Culture and Religious Practices among Yoruba People

According to Mudashiru (2017: 128), ‘religion and ethnicity are core aspects of identity formation across the African continent’, while in all facets, the West Africans are not an exemption in exhibiting culture, ethnicity and belief. In this regard, the Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria are highly cultured and gregarious Africans. They have been among Africa’s most culturally enlightened and religiously sophisticated ethnic groups for centuries (Isola, 2010). Genealogically, as postulated by various ethnographers, anthropologists and historians, the Yoruba is linked as descendants to *Lamurudu*, the purported progenitor of *Oduduwa* (Busari, 2024:46; Olojede, 2011:342-356; Agai, 2015:430-432). The group is largely inhabiting the southwestern region of Nigeria and sparsely occupying some areas in Kwara and Kogi States of North-Central Nigeria. The Yoruba are also found in some cities and towns in the West African sub-region such as Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast Republics as well as other enclaves in the Americas and Caribbean such as Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, Brazil and Jamaica, among others (Agai, 2015:428; Busari, 2024:47). In Nigeria, the Yoruba people are predominantly inhabited in the southwestern states of Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti and Lagos. There are sub-ethnic groups among the Yoruba with distinct dialects, which include the people of *Ijebu*, *Oyo*, *Ekiti*, *Egba*, *Igbomina*, *Oke-ogun*, *Awori*, *Ondo*, *Akoko*, *Ikale*, *Ilaje* and so on.

The Yoruba culture and religious belief are interwoven in *Isese* (tradition), which has survived centuries of change with the interruption of various alien Western and Eastern cultures. In Yoruba religious theology, *Olodumare* (the Supreme Being) is the ultimate source of all creations and the regulator of all movements and activities in the universe. This Yoruba Supreme Being is also viewed as remote and could not be directly worshipped; hence, deities (*Orisa*) are chosen as intermediaries. (Bewaji, 1998:1-2; Adetoro, 2022:2).

Therefore, from time immemorial, these *Orisa*, numbering between two hundred and a thousand, invariably constitute pantheons that serve as the foundation of Yoruba religious practice. They include *Orunmila*, *Obatala*, *Sango*, *Osun*, *Ogun*, *Esu*, *Yemoja* and others (Peel, 2008). Furthermore, in belief, Yorubas also believe in the concept of “*Ori*”, which literally means “Head”. This, as venerated by Yorubas, means one’s spiritual consciousness and personal destiny. It is believed that everyone chooses his destiny before birth in the court of *Olodumare*, while success in life depends on proper designation with one’s *Ori* through good character and righteous living as legislated by the Supreme Being (Balogun, 2007; Ademuleya, 2007; Adeyemi, 2020). Also, in Yorubaland, there are various sacred religious practices and rituals such as *Ifa* divination (ref.) as well as festivals and communal worships of gods and goddesses which include the *Olojo* festival, the *Obatala* festival, the *Osun-Osogbo* festival and *Isese* day.

In culture, the Yoruba are also unique in dressing, food, architectural design, occupations, marriage, naming ceremonies and drums, among others (Aladesami, 2019:148-149). However, the advent of Islam and Christianity, respectively, has

partially retarded the growth of Yoruba religious practices and culture. This, according to Peel, raises questions about the future of Yoruba culture and indigenous religious practice which, through syncretism and accommodation of alien religious practices and cultures, has endangered Yoruba heritage with no measure (Peel, 2008). Therefore, as Peel (2016) affirmed, the effects of Islam and Christianity on Yoruba religious practices and culture can never be underestimated, as could be seen in Yoruba cultural diffusion and religious practices for centuries.

Content Analysis of Oladiti and Fahm's Works

There are existing studies on Ijebuland, its people, culture, economy and the advent of Islam among them for decades (see Abdul, 1967; Ayandele, 1992, Osiyale, 2018). Also, myriads of works are on the *Ojude-Oba* festival and its evolution to date (see Adetoun, 2003; Akande, 2022: 36-49). Therefore, these works are not isolated literary works about Ijebu people and the *Ojude-Oba* festival, but our interest lies in their uniqueness and affirmation of the nexus of Islam with the festival and as one of the most cited, read and open-access articles in the last one and a half decades.

Akeem Abiodun Oladiti's work titled "*A Historical Analysis of Ojude-Oba Festival in Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria*" is a chapter in a book published in a compendium (*Facts, Fiction, and African Creative Imagination*) edited by Toyin Falola and Fallou Ngom and was published in 2010 by *Routledge*, an imprint of *Taylor and Francis Group* of the United Kingdom. The 12-page work is the 7th paper under Part II of the collection, which extensively discusses the origin of the *Ojude-Oba* festival (pp.122-123), the ethnogenesis of the Ijebu-Ode people within the Yoruba lineage, the introduction of Islam among them (pp.123-125) and the socio-significance of the *Ojude-Oba* festival (pp.126-128). It also chronicled the status and the developmental changes of the festival under the colonial and post-colonial periods (pp. 128-131). The paper is an exploratory *cum* historiographical literary adventure about the *Ojude-Oba* festival, which exposed the significance of the occasion to the world.

Pic 1: (*Ojude-Oba* Arena)



Source: <https://guardian.ng/life/culture-lifestyle/in-pictures-yoruba-culture-shines-at-ojude-oba-2025-festival/>

On the other hand, the paper of Fahm AbdulGafar Olawale titled “*Ijebu-Ode’s Ojude-Oba Festival: Cultural and Spiritual Significance*” is a journal article published in 2015 by *Sage Open*, an outlet of Sage Publication Company Incorporation, a renowned academic publisher and open access publication outfit based in New York City in the USA. The 11-page work, which is colourfully embellished with 19 self-explanatory pictorial figures depicting various aspects of the *Ojude-Oba* festival, is an artistic literary beauty written by a scholar who specialises in Islamic cultural history. It enunciates the ethnogenesis and anthropology of the Yoruba and the Ijebu Kingdom within Ogun and Lagos States, Nigeria (pp. 1-3), and the emergence of Islam in Ijebuland, which comprises Ijebu-Ode, Ijebu-Igbo and other Ijebu settlements (pp. 3-4). It also chronicled the background of the *Ojude-Oba* festival (p. 3) and the festival itself based on its glitz and colours as one of the highest-ranked cultural festivals in Nigeria (pp. 3-5), where the author explored the festival's artistic beauty (p. 5), dressing (pp. 5-6), music and musical instruments (pp. 6-7), family emblems and banners depicting various lineages (p. 7), the decorated stallion horses (pp. 7-8) and the mock war which is displayed to eulogise the bravery of the Ijebu at war with the sound of dane guns and various kinds of hunters’ guns to the amusement of all spectators (p. 8). In a spectacular fashion, the author reeled out the spiritual significance of the festival from Islamic perspectives because of its annexation with the celebration of *Odun Ileya*, a festival globally celebrated by Muslims in the 11th month of the Islamic lunar calendar (p. 9).

The Nexus of Islam and Culture in *Ojude-Oba* Festival

Islam, one of the prominent monotheistic religions of the world (Celene, 2022:1-51), was introduced to Yorubaland centuries before the advent of Christianity and had unprecedented impacts on the socio-religious life of the people (Amidu, 1995:427-450). This is known historically through a popular maxim among the Yoruba which reads, “*Aye labafa, Aye labamale, Osan gangan nigbagbo woledé – Ifa is primordial, Islam is primaeval and Christianity crept in the noon of culture*” (Gbadamosi, 1978:37; Tijani, 2018:8-9). Gbadamosi (2001:115) opined that the introduction of Islam into Yorubaland was unannounced and unplanned, while its introduction was peaceful, personal and leisurely. Therefore, among the foremost converts to Islam from the Yoruba traditional religion are the Ijebu people who are residents in various Ijebu enclaves in both Ogun and Lagos States, such as *Ijebu-Ode, Ijebu-Igbo, Ijebu-Ife, Epe, Ijebu-Mushin, Ijebu-Ayepe, Ikorodu, Ijebu-Awa, Ago-Iwoye, Odogbolu* and other prominent Ijebu settlements.

In his own report, Fahm believed that Islam came to Ijebuland around 1879 during the reign of *Awujale Afidipote* (d. 1885) through a slave servant from Ilorin who was known as Ali, or through Epe, which had had earlier contact with Islam, or through a trader from *Gbogunja* in *Isale Iwade* named Ali Akayinode, who came in contact with some Muslims from Ilorin during his numerous travels outside Ijebu-Ode (Fahm, 2015:2-3). Also, Oladiti subscribed to the reports of Gbadamosi, who posited that Islam was spread to Ijebu-Ode in the early nineteenth century

(circa 1879) during the latter part of the reign of *Awujale* Ademuyewo Fidipote (1852-1885) through the activities of Hausa kolanut traders and some itinerant Muslim preachers from Hausa-Fulani land (Oladiti, 2010:124). Today, a large number of Ijebus profess and practise the Islamic faith because the religion, since its incursion into Ijebuland, has played numerous important roles in its economic, peaceful coexistence, cultural and religious development.

For over fourteen centuries, the imprint of Islam and its culture are always felt wherever the religion is embraced (Bassam, 2001:1-271). According to Opeloye (2011:2), the attitude of Islam is that of accommodation and rejection in principles, where it accommodates local cultures that are compatible with Islamic tenets and rejects other indigenous cultures which undermine its belief system. In all facets, the impacts of Islam on Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria can never be overemphasised culturally, legally, educationally and linguistically because the religion has antecedents of indoctrinating its adherents (Busari, 2024: 46-58). This was the case of the *Ojude-Oba* festival, which has become a household festival among the people of Ijebuland with an indelible Islamic trademark in its annual celebration.

According to Oladiti (p. 3), the festival began when Balogun Kuku, one of the leading personalities in the community, accepted Islam. In appreciation, he gathered his friends, families, and well-wishers on the third day of *Odun Ileya* to pay homage to the paramount king of Ijebuland for giving them the opportunity to practise their religion peacefully without intimidation. In another account, Oladiti also reported that the festival was said to have started when *Imām* Tunwatoba, the then Chief *Imām* of Ijebu-Ode, led his friends and family members to pay homage to his friend, who was also the *Awujale* of Ijebuland, Oba Fidipote, during *Odun Ileya* as a form of gratitude to the king for being instrumental to the freedom enjoyed by the Muslims in the community to practise their faith in a peaceful atmosphere.

Pic 2 (*Presence of Muslim Scholar
inIslamic Regalia*)



Source:

<https://medium.com/@showlatefilmsproduction/ojude-oba-nigerias-dazzling-festival-of-royal-homage-and-unity-837856b73261>

In Fahm's chronicles (p. 3), the origin of the *Ojude Oba* festival is linked to two Muslim personalities of Ijebu descent. Firstly, it was reported that Balogun Kuku of Ijebu Ode, a popular Muslim personality among the Ijebus after accepting Islam, gathered his friends and family to pay homage to the then *Awujale*, the paramount king of Ijebu-Ode, as a sign of appreciation for given them freedom to practise Islam. Also, in other narration as reported by Fahm (p. 3), it was believed that the festival was at the instance of *Imām* Tunwatoba, the then Chief *Imām* of Ijebu Ode, who gathered family, Muslim faithful and friends to pay homage to *Awujale* Fidiote during *Odun Ileya*, showing their appreciation to him for being instrumental to the freedom the Muslims enjoyed in his domain to practise their religion.

As the two authors agreed (Oladiti, 2010:125-126; Fahm, 2015:3), the visitations of the Muslim community to the then *Awujale* and the prayers offered for the monarch to enjoy a long life, good health, and the progress and prosperity of Ijebuland institutionalised the commemoration of *Ojude-Oba*, which has grown in leaps and bounds to assume the status of a flagship Islamo-cultural festival among the Ijebus and Yorubas of Southwest Nigeria. Glaringly, from the inception till today, the celebration of the *Ojude-Oba* festival, despite its transformation in decades, has not been devoid of Islamic heritage. The Muslims' celebration of *Odun Ileya* is unabatedly important to the festival, and the status quo would remain till eternity.

Socio-Religious Significances of *Ojude-Oba* to Muslims and non-Muslims

Although it is evidently observed that the *Ojude-Oba* festival has been blown out of Islamic tenets as people are seen celebrating it with various un-Islamic acts such as exposure of nudity, promiscuous mixing of both genders, lavish spending, playing of blaring music of different genres, drinking of alcoholic drinks and so on, the facts remain that it has an affinity to the Yoruba Muslim celebration of *Odun Ileya*. The festival, in the view of Fahm, has traditional, cultural, religious, social, and military significance (p. 3) and also showcases some of the unique features of the Ijebu community especially in their high taste for colourful community, and expensive apparels, costumes and foods (p. 1). In the view of Oladiti (pp. 127-128), *Ojude-Oba* festival spectacularly showcases the popularity of Islam among the *Ijebus*; highlights the importance of continuity between the Ijebu community as a whole and Islam as a religion, merrymaking adventures and the display of artistic and cultural prowess of the Ijebus; breaks down barriers between the poor and the rich during the festival; and enhances traders to make fabulous sales of their products and commodities during the period.

Today, the festival, which is now officially held in a mini-stadium at the frontage of *Awujale* Palace with colourful fanfare and procession, attracts several multimillion-naira sponsorship deals while the whole town is colourfully decorated to commemorate the festival. It has also become an event on the calendar of the Ogun State Government which is attended by the sitting state governor,

government functionaries, visitors from other states in Nigeria and beyond, traditional rulers, business moguls, political gladiators and other dignitaries.

***Ojude-Oba* Festival as a Nexus of Culture, Interfaith and Socialisation in the 21st Century**

The *Ojude-Oba* festival in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, is an enduring counter-narrative in Nigeria, a country often marked by ethno-political divisions and religious tensions (Iyamba & Olanrewaju, 2025: 76-93; Salawu, 2010: 345-353; Ukiwo, 2003: 115–138). Though the *Ojude-Oba* festival began as a localised Muslim thanksgiving rite, the festival's metamorphosis provides important insights into how indigenous organisations can promote social cohesion, resolve religious conflicts, and introduce Nigerian culture to the world in the twenty-first century.

It is noteworthy to mention that the diplomatic engagement between religious minority Muslims accepting conventional authority in return for protection created a model for interfaith harmony that would turn out to be surprisingly resilient for over a century. (Oladiti, 2010; Fahm, 2015). At first, the celebration was only for Muslims, because of the animosity for British colonial forces and their faith after the 1892 *Imagbon* War, where Christians were persecuted (Oduwobi & Adedina, 2025:119-122), and they seized going to *Ojude-Oba* until *Oba* Ademolu Fesogbade's reign in 1925, nearly half a century after the Muslim community started attending. The festival changed from being a sectarian commemoration to a truly inclusive celebration as a result of the progressive acceptance of other faiths.

Furthermore, in the application of religious pluralism, *Ojude-Oba* operationalises interfaith discourse through shared cultural performance, which sets it apart from abstract pleas for religious tolerance. Sociologically, the festival has evolved to include people of all religious backgrounds, with traditional worshippers and Christians now joining Muslims in honouring the *Awujale*. The festival's time, which is set to the Islamic calendar, does not exclude non-Muslims; rather, it establishes a common temporal framework that allows many religious communities to express shared identities. This inclusivity is not just symbolic but structural (Olojede, 2025).

This multicultural spirit is reflected in the festival's programming. Muslims, Christians, and followers of traditional religions move in unison during the *regberegbe* (age-grade groupings) procession (Diyaolu *et al.*, 2023: 3-4). Their coordinated *aso-ebi* (family outfits) signify solidarity rather than division. Members of several religions participate in horsey performances by the Balogun families (traditional warrior lineages), whose military regalia and horseback-riding prowess allude to a pre-colonial past that cuts across religious divides (Oladiti, 2010; Fahm, 2015).

Pics. 3 and 4 (*Aso-ebi Display and Regberegbe Procession at Ojude-Oba Festival*)



Source: <https://orire.com/article/ojude-oba-festival-and-the-preservation-of-the-ijebu-yoruba-identity>

The *Awujale* institution, led by the reigning Oba, is positioned as “custodian of culture, not custodian of religion” in the Yoruba monarchical tradition. This distinction allows the throne to act as a neutral ground where religious distinctions are bracketed in favour of common cultural identity. The *Awujale*, who is revered by Muslims, Christians, and traditionalists alike, serves as an example of leadership that upholds a shared political and cultural citizenship while respecting religious plurality. Nigeria today, where religious and political identities have dangerously merged, can learn from this example. Traditional institutions can serve as “*mediation spaces*” that defuse religious rivalry, as seen by the *Awujale's* ability to bless Muslim and Christian organisations with equal solemnity.

Pic 5. (*The Late Awujale, Oba Sikiru Adetona at the Ojude-Oba Festival*)



Source: <https://punchng.com/awujale-absent-at-2025-ojude-oba-festival/>

The most prominent interfaith conversations during the event take place through embodied cultural activities rather than formal speaking. Attendees of all faiths rejoice when cultural performers, horse riders and different groups enter the arena.

The same aesthetic overshadows religious differences when Christian and Muslim ladies synchronise their *gele* (headwraps) and *iro* and *buba* (traditional wrappers and shirts). The celebration defies Nigeria's prevailing tales of religious incompatibility by performing a syncretism in which the *Ifa* oracle is consulted alongside Islamic prayers and Christian blessings.

In the same vein, the fervent adoption of *Ojude-Oba* by Nigerian youth has been one of the biggest changes in the festival's history in the twenty-first century. The event has evolved into a testing ground for what cultural analysts refer to as "cultural intelligence": the capacity to comprehend, adapt, and innovate within one's cultural context, which contradicts the stories of cultural abandonment among younger generations. A generation that is not scared to modify tradition for a worldwide audience is reflected in the elaborate headwraps, well-planned *regberegbe* parades, and viral social media events.

The festival has evolved from a local event into a global content moment thanks to high-definition photography and videography which are vividly rendered on all social media platforms. Images of youths sporting sunglasses and tattoos, riding an adorned horse, went viral on *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *X* (formerly *Twitter*), bringing *Ojude-Oba* to millions of people worldwide. Diaspora kids who might not have otherwise been able to attend the festival can now do so thanks to its digital amplification.

Pcs. 6 and 7 (*Youths Displaying Cultural Artistry at the Ojude-Oba Festival as Captured on Social Media Platforms in 2025*)



Source: <https://medium.com/@showlatefilmsproduction/ojude-oba-nigerias-dazzling-festival-of-royal-homage-and-unity-837856b73261>

Furthermore, *Ojude Oba*'s interfaith and cultural conversations are more than just symbolic; they have real economic benefits that encourage societal togetherness even more. The festival could then be referred to the event as a "virtuous circle" where social cooperation is reinforced by economic gain. The festival has grown to be a major factor in local trade and tourism. Attendees fly in from within and outside Nigeria such as Lagos, Abuja, London, and even Toronto; and hotels in Ijebu-Ode and surrounding towns are booked up weeks in advance. Demand for small enterprises like jewellers, shoemakers, food vendors, fashion designers, and transporters spikes dramatically (Kukoyi, 2018; Ogunbukola, 2024:1-11; Agbabiaka, 2023:598-616).

In the same vein, corporate sponsorship is one aspect of the economic impact that goes beyond direct sales. For example, *Globacom*, popularly known as "Glo", one of the foremost telecom providers in Nigeria, has been the festival's primary sponsor for 20 years running, positioning it as a marketing platform and funding its infrastructure and prize packages (*Tribune*, 2025; *Punch*, 2025). This corporate engagement shows how business interests can coincide with heritage protection and is an example of a public-private partnership in cultural preservation. The corporate dedication to *Ojude-Oba* has shown that Glo's sponsorship is an unusual repositioning of the event to satisfy changing societal, economic, and global demands rather than only being about brand leverage, cultural revitalisation, and the restoration of tradition in a static form. (Diyaolu *et al.*, 2023:12-13). Internationally, through cultural diplomacy, *Ojude-Oba* has evolved from a local gem to a global phenomenon in the twenty-first century with impacts on the host community. Global tourism boards, documentary filmmakers, fashion magazines, travel influencers, and heritage tourists have all expressed interest in the festival. *Ojude Oba* is quietly becoming Nigeria's most exportable cultural product, where travel packages are sold out months in advance, and foreign missions now work with Nigeria's tourism board to promote the festival internationally (Kukoyi *et al.*, 2017:1-9).

However, notwithstanding its achievements, the *Ojude Oba* Festival has serious obstacles that jeopardise its potential as a template for interfaith communication. These include infrastructure deficiencies. The dilapidated roads in Ogun State leading to Ijebu-Ode are still pothole-filled, causing traffic nightmares and general misery for travellers despite the festival's yearly inflow of visitors. Also, overcrowding issues have arisen due to the festival's increasing popularity. The location was so crowded during the 2025 edition that some people passed out from the heat and crowding. First responders raced to revive those who were impacted, primarily children and the elderly, while frustrated, thousands of people were left trapped outside after being unable to enter the main arena. In lieu of this, security agencies, including the Nigerian Police, military personnel, Civil Defence, and private task forces, had their hands full managing the crowd, which was infiltrated by street urchins and unruly elements to breach the security checks and wreak havoc on innocent participants. (Diyaolu *et al.*, 2023:13).

Although the event has effectively demonstrated interfaith harmony locally, it is unclear if this approach can be expanded to resolve national disputes in Nigeria, a country with genuine and occasionally violent religious strife. The relative success of the celebration could be influenced by particular Ijebu circumstances, such as a robust traditional monarchy, a history of economic success and religious tolerance that is difficult to duplicate elsewhere. In 21st-century Nigeria, the Ijebu traditional institutions present themselves as cultural stewards rather than supporters of any one religion, acting as powerful mediators of religious plurality. The fact that Muslims, Christians, and traditionalists all honour the *Awujale* shows how

indigenous authority structures can reduce religious rivalry. From the foregoing, *Ojude-Oba* serves as proof that peaceful cohabitation is achievable in Nigeria, despite the country's ongoing struggles with religious and ethnic divisions. This is achieved by creating shared cultural spaces where differences can be bracketed in favour of shared identity rather than by eradicating religious differences. The festival's transformation from a local tribute to a worldwide spectacle in the twenty-first century shows that, with the right support, cultural discourse can become a powerful force for both international recognition and national integration.

Conclusion

This paper assessed the published articles of Oladiti Akeem and Fahm AbdulGafar on the historiography, religious and socio-economic significance of the *Ojude-Oba* festival. It was made clear that there is an irrefutable nexus between Islam and the institutionalisation of the festival, which has continued to be a meeting point of Islamic faith and culture and the culture of the Ijebu people for almost two centuries. The peaceful atmosphere in which the festival is celebrated among the Ijebus – Muslims, non-Muslims and traditional religious practitioners – as reported in the reviewed papers and other works is a testimony of unalloyed peaceful co-existence and social development that had existed among the *Ijebus*, which has made them foremost religious and economic entrepreneurs in Nigeria and beyond. This paper then called on the Yorubas and Nigerians at large to emulate the *Ijebus* in their display of faith, cultural festivals and entrepreneurship in a multi-religious society.

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