

EXTRA-MUNDANE COMMUNICATION AMONG IJEBU PEOPLE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study explores extra-mundane communication practices among the Ijebu people, a subgroup of the Yoruba ethnic group in southwestern Nigeria. In-depth interview was adopted as method of research, while purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of the sample for the study. The findings of the study reveal that extra mundane communication was part of some traditional practices unique to Ijebu people. The research identified the spirit-human communication involved in festivals like Agemo Ileruwon as well as in the worship of Aleyopatabiogun. The study concludes that extra-mundane communication remains central to the Ijebu cultural identity, with festivals and rituals serving as a bridge between the physical and spiritual world.

Keywords: Ijebu people, extra-mundane communication, rituals, Agemo festival, spiritual practices.

Introduction

Extra-mundane communication refers to all forms of human interactions with spiritual entities--- an act which is deeply rooted in African culture and tradition expressed in religious practices such as divination, ancestor worship, mediums or oracles consultations while maintaining a connection between humans and deities (Saawuan, Aernyi and Chile, (2025) This type of communication is often spearheaded by individuals with special abilities such as diviners, priests and shamans--people whose realities oscillate between the spiritual and physical worlds. Aghogho (2025) has underlined the significance of *Extra-Mundane* communication in the preservation of cultural heritage of African communities, as globalization and modernization continue to erode African cultures and traditions. Extra-mundane communication risks being marginalized or lost if not protected and documented. Protecting and valuing cultural heritage ensures that future generations benefit from the wisdom and knowledge embedded in these practices, fostering respect and appreciation for diversity and promoting a more inclusive and enriched global society. This underscores the importance of documenting extra mundane communication practices of Ijebu people.

The Ijebu people, located in the southwestern region of Nigeria, have a rich cultural history and are known for their distinct customs and traditions (Ayinla, 2011). They are part of the larger Yoruba ethnic groups, but possess unique cultural attributes that set them apart. Historically, the Ijebus were renowned for their sophisticated system of governance, trade, and craftsmanship. In terms of communication, the Ijebu people have various traditional practices, including the use of proverbs, folktales, and songs to convey messages and teach moral lessons to their children. Rituals and ceremonies, which often involve elements of Extra-

Mundane communication, are also significant in Ijebu culture. This highlights how the Ijebu maintained their cultural identity through their unique forms of communication.

Indigenous communication is deeply embedded in the cultural and social context of a community, reflecting its values, beliefs, and practices (Duru, Pepple & Tahir, 2025). Extra-Mundane communication is integral to many indigenous cultures, serving as a means of connecting with the divine, ancestors, and the spiritual realm. The concept of extra-mundane communication is grounded in the understanding that humans are not isolated entities, but rather interconnected beings that exist within a complex web of relationships (Borghi, Mazzuca & Tummolini, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

Extra-mundane communication holds a significant place in the cultural and spiritual life of people of Ijebu-Ode. However, this crucial aspect of their culture has not been extensively studied or documented in academic literature creating a gap in our understanding of the forms, functions, and impacts of extra-mundane communication in Ijebu-Ode. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by providing a detailed and systematic description of the various forms of extra-mundane communication practiced by the Ijebu people.

Research Objective

The objective of the study is to provide a detailed and systematic description of the various forms of extra-mundane communication practiced by the Ijebu people

Research Method

The study adopts in-depth interview which is a qualitative research method to explore the phenomenon of extra-mundane communication among the Ijebu people. This method prioritizes understanding the lived experiences of individuals, making it particularly valuable for exploring cultural practices and social interactions.

Study Population

The study population involves the Ijebu people residing in the Ijebu-Ode area of Ogun State, Nigeria. This region was selected because it is a central location for the Ijebu ethnic group, and it is known for its rich cultural heritage and traditional practices. The population includes chiefs, traditionalists, priests, elders, and other community members who are knowledgeable about extra-mundane communication practices in Ijebu-Ode.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined based on the principle of data saturation, a situation in which data collection continues until no new information is obtained. Interview with five respondents consisting of chiefs, priests, elders and some community members in Ijebu-Ode was conducted to get information about the meaning and significance of extra-mundane communication in the culture, tradition, and activities of Ijebu-Ode people.

Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling technique was used to select participants with specific knowledge and experience related to the research objective. Purposive sampling technique ensures that the study includes individuals who can provide rich, relevant, and diverse data. For this study, key informants with direct experience or knowledge of extra-mundane communication in Ijebu Ode, such as traditional leaders and priests were selected.

Instrument of Data Collection

The primary instruments for data collection are interview guide and field notes.

Research question: What are the types of Extra-mundane communication practices among the Ijebu people?

Agemo Festival: A Sacred Extra-Mundane Practice in Ijebu Land

The *Agemo festival* is the foremost traditional practice in Ijebu land that provides an interface between the spiritual and material worlds Festival. The annual festival, held every July, is a period dedicated entirely to *Agemo*, the revered deity associated with the earth, fertility, and prosperity. The festival serves as a sacred link between the Ijebu people and the spiritual realm, reinforcing their cultural identity and spiritual practices. The *Agemo* rituals begin thirty days before the main event. During these periods, specific materials are gathered to open the shrine in preparation for the festivities. Nine days prior to *Agemo's* appearance, all sixteen *Agemo* families must gather for spiritual cleansing and ritual preparations. One of the most significant aspects of the preparations involves the cutting of two hundred and one sacred leaves which must have been counted at night, while accompanied by sacred songs and drums. This practice is symbolic of the community's readiness to engage with the deity, and the leaves are later used to wash *Agemo*, signifying purification. This ritual highlights the deep spiritual connection between the people and the deity. In addition to the leaves, other materials are essential for the sacrifices, including a male goat, alcohol, snails, yams, kola nuts, and white cloth. These materials are sun-dried after being laid out on the second day, with the belief that rain will not fall, allowing the preparation to proceed undisturbed. By midnight, *Agemo* is dressed in its ceremonial *white regalia*, which symbolizes purity, spiritual power, and the deity's connection to the divine. White, being a sacred colour in Yoruba spiritual divinity represents clarity and cleanliness.

According to Chief Adebayo, an elder in Ijebu land, *Agemo* is a well-known deity in Ijebu; it is a yearly festival that takes place only in July. By Yoruba prescription, the month of July is dedicated as '*Agemo Month*'. It is an idol cherished so much because of its generosity to the people of Ijebu. True worshippers of *Agemo* often get their requests if approached with a sincere heart granted. He also pointed out that, while the festival is embraced by everyone, certain rituals are restricted by gender. Women, for example, are forbidden from witnessing the movement of *Agemo* between villages, a rule that emphasizes the deity's sacredness and the need for strict observance of tradition.

The festival is not just a natural activity done in Ijebu land, but a spiritual practice that serves the purpose of sacrifice and cleansing, reinforcing the community's spiritual beliefs and practices. After using two hundred and one leaves to wash *Agemo*, the festival proceeds with the sacrifice of a cow. The cow's meat is then distributed among the people of Ijebu as part of the communal sharing, symbolizing unity and the blessings bestowed by *Agemo* on the entire community. A striking aspect of the *Agemo* Festival is the involvement of sixteen *Agemo* deities from various villages, each contributing to the festival's spiritual significance. These deities include *Posa of Imosan, Ewujagbori of Imosan, Ija of Imosan, Tami of Odogbolu, Olumoko of Oko, Magado of Aiyepe, Petuaramasa of Isiwo, Bajeluju of Imuku-Atan, Olugbo of Ago Iwoye, Idebi of Isamowo of Ago Iwoye, La saase of Agaguloru of Oru, Mapa of Odonapa-Imushin, Olubamisan of Ago Iwoye, Ogebo of Borno, Olumuku of Muku, and Ediye of Ago Iwoye.*

Each *Agemo* deity plays a distinct role in the festival, reinforcing the unity and spiritual harmony of the Ijebu people. The festival concludes in a series of sacred dances, performed at midnight when *Agemo* is fully dressed in its white regalia, symbolizing the connection between the human and spiritual worlds. These deities, drawn from various villages, come together to celebrate the powerful influence of *Agemo*.

The *Agemo* Festival is not only a medium for worship, but also serves as a channel for the Ijebu people to express their communal identity and spiritual devotion. It reflects their deep-rooted belief in the power of the spiritual realm and the need for rituals of sacrifice and cleansing. The festival, much like the deity it honours, is considered eternal. Chief Kasali explained that "*Agemo*" is a chieftaincy title or position that people are installed into. For instance, if a man is installed as an *Agemo*, and he grows old and then dies,

another person from his household will be installed as an *Agemo* in his place. The *Agemo* does not die, he remarked. It is the people who are installed into the position that die or get replaced.

In essence, the *Agemo* Festival represents a deeply spiritual practice that encapsulates the Ijebu people's cultural identity, their reverence for tradition, and their belief in the power of the divine. Through the various rituals, regalia, and sacrifices, the festival serves as a reminder of the community's connection to the spiritual world, maintaining a balance between the past and the present, tradition and modernity.

***Ileruwon* a Sacred River Ritual in Ijebu Tradition**

The second extra-mundane communication practice is The *Ileruwon*. Revered for its deep spiritual meaning and long-standing tradition, the *Ileruwon* festival is one of the most significant extra-mundane practices in Ijebu land. At the heart of this festival is the *Ileruwon* River, believed by the Ijebu people to hold supernatural powers. The river is home to *Oluweri*, a powerful mermaid spirit, who is central to the spiritual well-being of the community. The festival occurs once every seven years and serves as an important occasion for making sacrifices and performing rituals to honour and appease the spirits of the river.

The central ritual of the *Ileruwon* Festival is the offering of a cow to the river. Cow sacrifice is central, symbolizing the community's deep respect and reverence for the river and its spiritual powers. The sacrifice is meant to appease the spirits and ensure that the river remains favourable to the people, keeping them safe from harm and providing them with the blessings they need for a prosperous life. For the Ijebu people, the cow is more than just an offering. It represents a way of maintaining harmony with the unseen forces that govern the river by observing a strict set of rules and practices of the ritual. An important rule is that no one is allowed to approach the river between 12pm and 2pm. Anyone who approaches the river at that time would likely encounter the spirit directly, which is a violation of the spiritual laws governing the river. This rule serves as a constant reminder of the powerful and sacred nature of the *Ileruwon* River and the need for strict observance of its spiritual boundaries.

The spiritual preparation for approaching the river also requires that no one wears footwear. This is not merely a matter of custom, but a symbolic act of purification and respect. By removing their shoes, the people acknowledge the holiness of the ground near the river and demonstrate their humility. In addition, going barefoot is a way of cleansing oneself before entering a sacred space in traditional Ijebu belief.

Another notable aspect of the *Ileruwon* Festival involves the use of moulded pots and calabashes to fetch water from the river. These items are not just practical tools but are considered sacred vessels used in spiritual rituals. The act of drawing water from the river is filled with symbolic meaning, as the water is believed to carry the spiritual essence of the river. According to Chief Oriola, if the pot breaks while someone is fetching water, it is seen as a sign of the *Oluweri* spirit's presence. This breaking of the pot signifies that the river's spiritual energy is particularly strong at that moment, further deepening the sense of mystery and reverence surrounding the river.

One of the most unique and intriguing elements of the *Ileruwon* ritual is the role of hens in the sacrifice process. Unlike other animals that may be sacrificed to the river, the hen is not killed. It is taken to the river as a symbolic offering, where it is meant to be cared for and nurtured. This practice is deeply rooted in the belief that the hen holds special spiritual significance in the community's relationship with the river. In return, the river provides the community with more hens to rear. As the hens lay eggs, their chicks are returned to the river, where the river "decides" which chicks will be kept by the community. This ritual reflects a unique, reciprocal relationship between the people and the river.

The *Ileruwon* Festival is more than just a series of rituals, it represents a deep, ongoing relationship between the Ijebu people and the spiritual forces that they believe govern the natural world. The cow sacrifice, the rules around approaching the river, and the symbolic role of the hens contribute to a complex spiritual

system that emphasizes respect, mutuality, and balance between the human and the supernatural realms. The community's belief in the river's power ensures that the rituals are followed carefully, maintaining the connection between the people and the river's spiritual energies.

The cyclical nature of the festival is also symbolic of the larger cycle of life and the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds. By giving to the river sacrifices, the people ensure that the river, in turn, provides for them. This cycle of giving and receiving is at the heart of the *Ileruwon* Festival, reinforcing the belief that the river is a source of both life and spiritual power. The nurturing of hens and the return of their chicks to the river symbolize the ongoing relationship between the people and the natural world, ensuring that this sacred bond continues for future generations.

The *Ileruwon* Festival is a deeply spiritual practice that reflects the Ijebu people's belief in the power of nature and the supernatural. Through careful observance of the river's rules, the people of Ijebu ensure that the *Ileruwon* River remains a source of spiritual strength and guidance, reinforcing their faith in the unseen powers that shape their world. This festival, with its rich symbolism and profound meaning, continues to play an important role in the spiritual life of the Ijebu people, serving as a reminder of the enduring relationship between the human and spiritual realms.

***Aleyopatabiogan*: Deity in Ijebu Land**

The *Aleyopatabiogan* deity, widely known as *Aleyo*, is a prominent spiritual figure in the traditional practices of Ijebu land. Regarded as one of the most powerful deities, *Aleyo* is deeply connected to rainmaking, a valued role that directly influences the agricultural and environmental prosperity of the Ijebu people. This deity is believed to control rainfall, with the community performing specific rituals and sacrifices to invoke rain during times of need. The sudden downpour that often follows these rituals is seen as a sign of *Aleyo's* presence and approval, reinforcing the belief that the deity wields control over the natural elements.

Aleyo's significance is further elevated by its close association with the *Osubo* society an ancient and secretive order that holds authority over the governance and spiritual welfare of the Ijebu people. The *Osubo* society, responsible for maintaining social and spiritual balance, draws upon the power of *Aleyo* in many of its rituals. One of the key symbols of this relationship is the sacred staff, which *Osubo* members derive from the *Aleyo* deity. This staff is not merely a physical object but a powerful spiritual symbol, deeply rooted in the earth and extending upward, representing a connection between the ground and the heavens. It signifies the *Osubo's* spiritual authority, linking their governance with the divine powers that sustain the community's harmony and well-being.

The worship of *Aleyo* is highly ritualistic and steeped in tradition, taking place in a sacred location known only to its devoted followers. While these rituals are carried out by those dedicated to the deity, other members of the community are allowed to observe from a distance. The exclusivity of the worship highlights the reverence with which *Aleyo* is regarded and the careful preservation of its traditions. The rituals themselves are rich in symbolism and deeply tied to the natural elements, reflecting the Ijebu people's understanding of the interconnectedness between nature and the spiritual world. Sacrificial offerings are a central part of the rituals honouring *Aleyo*, with each item carefully chosen for its symbolic meaning. One of the primary offerings is an *old rugged goat*, which symbolizes endurance and strength: key attributes of the deity's powerful nature. The goat is seen as a reflection of the resilience needed to appease the spiritual forces and ensure their continued favour and protection over the community. Another important offering is a river tortoise, specifically the *aquatic tortoise* rather than the terrestrial one. The choice of the river tortoise is significant because it is associated with the *water element*, which is symbolic of life, fertility, and the flow of spiritual energy. The aquatic tortoise represents the link between the deity and the water, emphasizing the belief that water is a vital channel for communicating with the spiritual realm, particularly when seeking the blessing of rain. Aquatic and terrestrial tortoises and their use in spiritual practices

illustrate the sophistication of Ijebu spirituality. The aquatic tortoise's role in the ritual emphasizes the importance of aligning natural elements with spiritual forces, to ensure that the right balance is achieved to secure Aleyo's blessings.

Aleyo's worship is also closely linked to specific sacred landmarks in Ijebu land, further reinforcing the connection between the natural and spiritual worlds. That landmark is the Elephant Walking Trace in *Oke Agbole*, a path believed to have been created by elephants in ancient times. This trace is well-regarded by the Ijebu people and is preserved for traditional use, particularly in ceremonies related to *Aleyo's* worship. The path, considered sacred, symbolizes the deep respect the Ijebu people have for nature and the spiritual forces that dwell within it. The preservation of this path for sacred purposes serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness between the natural world and spiritual practices, emphasizing the Ijebu people's belief that the land itself holds spiritual power.

The Worship of *Osanyin*: A Sacred Tradition in Ijebu Land

Osanyin, a powerful deity in Ijebu land, is closely associated with herbal medicine, healing, and wisdom. The worship of *Osanyin* takes place at a sacred spot, which holds great spiritual significance. This location is so respected that even masquerades central to many Ijebu religious practices are forbidden from displaying or performing near it. This restriction highlights the deep respect and reverence the Ijebu people have for *Osanyin* deity. *Osanyin's* worship site is a place of immense spiritual importance that requires undisturbed devotion. Mr. Adelaja emphasized the sacredness of the spot, stating, "*Osanyin's* spot is so sacred, masquerade worshipers cannot take their display or public practice to her spot." This underlines the belief that deities like *Osanyin* must be honoured in peace, in areas specifically designated for spiritual communication. Located near a river, the worship site is known for its spiritual energy, which is deeply connected to *Osanyin's* power over herbal medicine and the natural world.

This sacredness is not unique to *Osanyin* alone, as every deity in Ijebu land has its own designated space for worship. According to Adelaja, "Each deity, whether great or small, has a designated sacred spot where worshipers go to pay homage, make offerings, and communicate with the spiritual realm." These areas are carefully maintained, ensuring that spiritual connections are respected and preserved, with strict customs governing how and when worship is conducted.

The *Osanyin* River, located near the worship site, is believed to have healing properties, reflecting the deity's deep connection to nature and medicinal plants. This powerful energy draws not only *Osanyin's* followers but also other worshipers who come to seek divine blessings. Offerings are made at the sacred site, and the rituals performed there reflect the belief that *Osanyin's* powers can provide both spiritual and physical healing. The river's medicinal qualities further highlight the relationship between nature and spirituality in Ijebu culture.

The structured nature of Ijebu worship is a key feature of the community's spiritual life. Each deity has its own specific rules regarding where and how it should be honoured. Sacred spots, like the one dedicated to *Osanyin*, are carefully guarded, and rituals are performed according to long-standing traditions. "The sanctity of these spots is maintained by strict rules that govern who may enter or conduct rituals within these areas," Adelaja noted. This shows the deep respect the Ijebu people have for the deities and the spaces they inhabit, ensuring that these places remain undisturbed for spiritual communication. The worship of *Osanyin* exemplifies the deep respect Ijebu people hold for their deities and the sacred spaces dedicated to them. These traditions help maintain the balance between the physical and spiritual worlds, ensuring that the spiritual heritage of the community remains intact. By following these practices, the Ijebu people continue to honour their deities, seeking guidance and healing from powerful forces like *Osanyin*.

In summary, extra-mundane communication in Ijebu culture is closely linked to their worship of various deities. Practices like the *Agemo* festival for spiritual cleansing, *Ileruwon River* rituals to honour the river

deity *Oluweri*, The *Aleyo deity* for rainmaking, and *Osanyin*, the deity of herbal medicine, further reflect the Ijebu people's respect for nature and spirituality. These rituals ensure harmony between the physical and spiritual worlds.

Conclusion

Responses gathered from the Ijebu people highlight the continued cultural and spiritual significance of extra-mundane communication practices in contemporary Ijebu society. These traditions remain robust and influential, deeply embedded in both the spiritual worldview and cultural identity of the Ijebu people. From the sacred festivals honouring *Agemo* to the respect given to the deities by all members of the community, these practices continue to define the spiritual life of the Ijebu people, ensuring that their cultural heritage remains a vital part of modern-day life. As respondents unanimously affirmed, these practices are not only honoured but are actively celebrated, bridging the past with the present and ensuring the preservation of Ijebu spiritual traditions for generations to come.

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LIST OF PRIMARY SOURCES

S/N	NAMES	TITLE	AGE
1	Chief Waheeb Saludeen Adebayo	Posa-Baale of Imosan, The Paramount ruler of Imosan	68 years
2	Chief Olatunde Kasali	The Alase of Agemo deity	74 years
3	Chief Oriola	The Laagba of Oke-Eri	77 years
4	Priestess Adebomi Osunbunmi	Priestess	70 years
5	Mr Awogbemi Omosola	An elder in Oke-Eri community, Ijebu-Ode	80 years