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ORAL TRADITION AND CONTINUITY: A STUDY OF THE AYAN'S OF THE ELEMONA DYNASTY, OKE-ILA ORANGUN

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Abstract

Drumming has been the primary chord of Kingship that has tied the members of the Elemona household together, as this has been the primary duty as well as mode of survival of the people, however, the continuity of this tradition has faced the threat of extinction in contemporary times. This study intends to trace the historical antecedents of drumming in the Elemona household in Oke-Ila Orangun, Osun State, by investigating its change and continuity in contemporary times. The study employed mixed method design. Eight (8) respondents purposively selected from the male in Elemona household, based on their participation in drumming, and knowledge on the subject. Information was gathered through oral interviews and personal journals acquired from relevant respondents. Data analysis was carried out using, simple percentile and content analysis. Findings revealed that there is a steady decline in the drumming activities as new generations emerge due to factors such as disconnect from heritage and traditions, quest for formal education, and public perception. The study concluded that drumming has been drastically affected by westernization of the society, and recommends that the preservation of the craft should become a collaborative effort between the Elemona household and other stakeholders to ensure its posterity.

Keywords: Continuity, Drumming, Elemona Household, Ayan, Oke-Ila Orangun.

INTRODUCTION

The Talking Drum is one of the oldest musical instruments with its origins in West Africa. It is a musical instrument used by Master Drummers and is prominent among the Yoruba Ethnic group of Western Nigeria (*Gangan*) but can also be found in neighbouring countries like Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal and Benin Republic. This instrument has grown to become an instrument of beauty, and wonder a mean of transmission of oral tradition from generation to generation.

Beating of the talking drum entails the drummer placing the drum between his arms and body, holding the stick implement on the other hand and with the arm grasping the drum, he positions his fingers slightly around the crown of the drum. A gentle squeeze of the tension chords around the drum releases language. This display can only be

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achieved by top durmmers whom have either undergone years of studious dedication to the learning to beat the talking drum or certain families whose lineage can be traced to the earliest Master Drummer of the Old Oyo Empire, 'Ayan Agalu'. People from this lineage are usually identified with the prefix 'Ayan' Meaning 'Drummer' which often precedes their name and are characterized by it (Ajayi, 2021).

The Talking Drum (*Gangan*) has a multiplicity of uses by people in the community. It may serve as a means of communication between tribes; it may also be used to relay long distance messages of coronations, deaths, celebrations or even war. Another general uses of talking drum include entertainment, praise singing, fun, folklore, and leisure. In oral tradition, Talking Drums have mystical connotations and are linked to deities and gods. They may be used for prayers and as a means to bless the community or an individual (Onyeakagbu, 2018)

The vast majority of master drummers are born into drumming families and have their fore-fathers who are Master Drummers. An exceptionally gifted child from outside the house of secrets may be apprenticed to a Master Drummer. He will receive the same technical training as a male born into the drumming family, but it would be difficult, if not impossible, for him to absorb all of the cultural, especially religious, knowledge that would be picked up naturally by the son of a Master Drummer (Ajayi, 2021)

In Oke-Ila Orangun, Osun State, the Elemona household accommodates this lineage of drummers whom have also practiced and sustained the tradition of drumming from time passed up until present day. Unfortunately, present day developments and education has begun to influence the disposition of the custodians of the drum cultures, such that, most of their wards (children), are leaving the cradle of their tradition, alongside their cultural responsibilities, to seek for greener pastures elsewhere.

This development inherently poses threat to the continuity of family traditional values and responsibilities in the Elemona household. This study therefore seeks to investigate the continuity of drum tradition within the Elemona household, with a view to possible changes to encourage posterity.

Objective of Study

The general aim of this study was to examine oral tradition and continuity in the Elemona dynasty of Oke-Ila Orangun. The specific objectives were to:

- (1) Trace the geneology of oral tradition, particularly, drumming, within the Elemona dynasty.
- (2) Examine the elements of oral tradition of drumming within the Elemona dynasty.
- (3) Evaluate the social and economic factors responsible for the continuity of drumming within the Elemona dynasty.
- (4) Highlight the challenges of drum tradition within the Elemona dynasty.

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Scope and Limitation

This research endeavored to capture the history as well as growth and development of drum tradition within the Elemona household from earliest times till 2022. The chosen period was to help in analyzing history as well as trends, changes and continuity within the Elemona household.

Due to the weakenesses associated with the practice of Oral history and its custodians, such as loss of memory and inaccuracy, this research was unable to retrieve certain information as the knowledgeable members of the household had passed on and the present custodians of the tradition had little or no knowledge of the information required or had forgotten certain required vital information that were not documented.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the mixed method design. The population of the study was drawn from the Elemona Household in Oke –Ila Orangun. The study purposively selected 8 respondents tdue to their involvement in the art of drumming, which was basically a masculine preserve with in the Elemona Household. Simple percentages and content analysis were used in analyzing data gathered during this research. Information was gathered primarily through oral interviews and discussions and also the provision of personal journals from relevant respondents.

First Generation

Data Presentation

Ayan's Drumming and Continuity Correlogram Charts

Avanlowo's Second Generation Aina Kekere's

5 Male Children Third Generation 7 Male Children

26 Male Children Fourth Generation 18 Male Children

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Table 1: Simple Distribution Table for the Male Child Drumming or Not Drumming within/outside community

	Male Child	Drumming	(IN)	(OUT)	Not Drumming	(IN)	(OUT)
First Generation	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Second Generation	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
Third Generation	12	7	7	0	5	1	4
Fourth Generation	44	20	12	8	24	5	19

Source: AyanlolaAyanlowo, 2022

Table 2: Simple Proportion and Analysis Table

Generations	Drumming	Not Drumming
First Generation	100%	0%
Second Generation	100%	0%
Third Generation	58.3%	41.6%
Fourth Generation	45.5%	54.5%

Source: AyanlolaAyanlowo, 2022

Interpretation

- Based on the distributional and analysis I and II above, it shows that the number of male children increasing in each generational system, and the percentage of those who involved in drumming activities decreases in and outside the community, while those who are not involved in drumming activities increase.
- The percentage of those who are involved in drumming activities and lived in the community is 27.2% higher to 11.3% of those who are not involved and lived in the community.
- The percentage of those who are involved in drumming activities outside community is 21.0% lower to 43.1% of those who are not involved in drumming activities outside the community.
- In conclusion, these results show that, the percentage of those who are involved in drumming activities has drastically reducing vis- a-vis those who continue to drum as the generations continue to exist, which could be attributed to the drummers (Ayan) seeking quality education outside the community, and thus engage themselves in drumming activities wherever they are.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Geneology of Drumming in Oke-Ila Orangun

The ancestry of the lineage of drummers can be traced far back to the Old Oyo Empire, with their progenitor as 'Ayan Agalu', a skilled and formidable drummer, who used his drumming skills for a number of uses like drumming in the King's court for entertainment, drums were also a means of communication used to send messages of war or otherwise.

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During the period of the political independence of Nigeria, Oyo State housed the present Osun State as part of the territory. In Yoruba ancestry, the Orangun was one of the sons of Oduduwa that migrated from Ile-Ife. With the growing popularity of Ayan Agalu, he also had children who spread into other parts of the South-West. Ila-Yara, was one of the territories controlled by the Orangun and he had children. The Ayan lineage was also ably represented in Ila-Yara, presently known as Ila Orangun. Tussle for kinship in Ila-Yara between brothers, led to the fragmentation of the community of lla-Yara and another community was formed next to the town of lla-Yara. This community was named Oke-Ila Orangun. The fragmentation of the Ila-Yara community into two, also led to fragmentation across other families and households. This development is responsible for the fragmentation of the Avan clan or the Elemona household between Ila Orangun and Oke-Ila Orangun. The members of the Elemona household in Ila Orangun and Oke-lla Orangun still consider themselves as kinsmen till date and activities often bring them together as a household to operate as a family from time to time. As a matter of fact, the appointment of the Elemona is often rotated between kinsmen from both towns. (Interview with AyandijiAina, professor/lecturer)

Within the Elemona household, the *Ayan* clan stems from it. Traditionally, every member of the Elemona household is genetically considered a descendant of *Ayan*, but not all members of the household necessarily participate in the art of drumming, but traditionally, they may be considered a custodian of the drum tradition. Contrary to public perception therefore, not every '*Gangan*' drum beater is a custodian of the tradition by geneology. This is because the art can be learned but the tradition attached to the art of drumming is the exclusive rights of the descendants of the *Ayan* clan. Some of the members of this clan may have the prefix '*Ayan*" attached to their name within the Elemona household. It is worthy to note that although, '*Ayan*' may also surfice within other clans such as the 'Oje' clan. Because of the nature of the tradition, they uphold which often includes some form of drumming. The Elemona households specifically have distinctive drums they beat, and drumming style they possess. Some of the range of drums they beat include *Dundun* (Iya Ilu), *Aguda, Kanran, Gudu-guduOmele/Emele, Gangan, Akungba*. (Interview with AyanlolaAyanlowo, lecturer)

The Elemona household primarily consists of several lineages which this research paper may not be able to adequately account for, however, the scope of this paper will be limited to the Farinuola lineage; which consist primarily of Alayande, Ayantoye, Ayanlowo, Ayantomi, Ayanwale, Aina-Ayantoso, Ayanfunke, Ayankunbi, Ayannihun, Ayanbunmi, Ayanponle, Ayannle. (Interview with AyantomiAyandayo, Farmer)

Oral Tradition and Drumming in Elemona Household

Drums have been known to have a multiplicity of functions which range from entertainment, to communication, and to tradition, which is the major focus of this research. The Elemona household is known to be one of the major custodians of drum tradition within the Oke-Ila Orangun community. There are several activities, festivals, traditions which are the exclusive preserve of the Elemona household.

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Some of the major activities and festivals include, Eka, Isinro, Egungun, among so many other minor and independent celebrations. The activities of the *Ayan* household within the highlighted festivals above play a major role in the success or otherwise of the festival.

EKA: The Eka (meaning recital) is an annual festival of drummers in Ila Orangun and Oke-Ila Orangun. The festival takes place between July/August of every year. The Eka is a festival of blessings for the Elemona household. It is used to pronounce blessings for the drummers during their varying activities in the year. During the Eka festival, traditional consultations are made with the gods on how the year will unfold, homage is paid to *Ayan-Agalu* and the Baale-Onilu (traditional head of drummers) will pronounce blessings, before the King of Oke-Ila pronounces the final blessings. The Eka festival is a celebration that spans for seven days. Eka is an activity that also require the traditional head of the drummers, to commit to memory, and recite on every night during the span of the festival, the past Kings in Oke-Ila Orangun from inception till present day. This is followed by the recital of family panegyrics of every sitting and serving chief during the period of the celebration of the festival.

Furthermore, during the Eka, women are not allowed to attend the festival. The recital (Eka) is also often recited in the darkness; thus, it is an exclusive activity only legitimately born male offspring of the Elemona household. The celebration of the final day, *Aluwole*, is however, conducted in the morning, in broad daylight, where the King (Orangun of Oke-Ila) pronounces the final blessings on the Elemona household and Ayan's in particular and other entertainments follow afterwards in different Elemona household compounds.

The preparation for the final day celebration of the Eka festival is exclusively overseen by the women in the household. The King (Orangun of Oke-Ila) makes provision of the various food items to be used in the celebration. Items include a goat, yam, schnapps, bitter kola, kolanut, alligator pepper, palm wine and so on. Often times, on the top of the menu, is pounded yam with okro and egunsi soup. The portioning of the prepared food is done by order of seniority. A conclusive prayer is made at the end of the entertainment and everyone is dismissed to their homes. (Interview with AyantomiAyandayo, Farmer)

ISINRO: The Isinro festival is a celebration of the whole Oke-Ila Orangun annually. The festival is a prayer festival for all the chiefdoms on the town. Thus, it mostly encompasses the whole town. Every chief is expected to celebrate the festival of Isinro in their household, before the general celebration is carried out at the house of 'Odoode'. This is where the King and all the chiefs are expected to come and dance publicly. The drummers (*Ayan*) are concerned in two-fold during this festival. Firstly, the Elemona is one of the chiefdoms within Oke-Ila Orangun, and thus, he is also expected to celebrate the festival within and with his household. Secondly, the *Ayan* (Drummers) are also saddled with the responsibility of drumming the exclusive drum patterns and dance styles for each chiefdom within the Oke-Ila Orangun community. This requires

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specialized training and experiences which is the exclusive reserve of the *Ayan's* within the Elemona household. (Interview with AyantomiAyandayo, farmer)

EGUNGUN: The Egungun festival is a celebration of masquerades within Oke-Ila Orangun community. There are different households that have their different Egungun which they worship. Some of the households that possess Egungun (masquerades) include Elemona, Balogun, Oba-Ile, Alapinni, amongst many others. The *Ayan* (drummers) are important and instrumental to the success or otherwise of the Egungun festival. This is because, each Egungun has a peculiar drumming and dancing steps and experienced drummers (Ayan) who have mastered these specialized skills of drumming are usually invited to drum for them during their celebration. (*Interview with Abiola Ayanfunmilayo, Trader*)

Conclusively, the role of the *Ayan* of the Elemona household in the preservation of oral tradition cannot be overemphasized. This is because of the specialized skills of drumming which they have acquired and mastered for each traditional festival or celebration which enables the continuity of the traditions in Oke-Ila Orangun community. The mastery of drum styles as well as recitals and panegyrics of past kings and households serve as a historical repository for the Oke-Ila Orangun community.

Social and Economic Factors Responsible for the Continuity of Drumming within the Elemona Household

The sustenance of drumming within the Elemona household has been attributed to two major factors which are of social and economic dimensions. These factors cultivated socio-cultural relationships, inter-communal friendships and economic prosperity within the Elemona household in times past.

Social Factors: In the Elemona household, drumming is perceived to be innate to every descendant of the household. Thus, from the age of 5 (five) years, it is expected that a male child, should be able to follow his father on drumming outings and invitations. The *Ayan*, within the Elemona household have enjoyed popularity and fame over the years, within and outside the Oke-Ila Orangun community, because of their drumming skills and mastery of tradition. On numerous occasions in times past, drummers in the Elemona household have received and honoured invitations from neighbouring and faraway towns, however, most often are towns within the Oke-Ila Orangun environs which include Ora-Igbomina, Omu-Aran, Osan-Ekiti, Ipoti-Ekiti, Otun-Ekiti, Irore, Offa, Aiyedun-Ekiti, Ikoro-Ekiti, Iludun-Ekiti, among others. On fewer occasions, drummers in the Elemona household have been invited to far-away communities on special or personal invitations in towns like Ilesha, Ilorin, Lagos, Oro, among others.

In more frequent instances, where *Ayan*s (from the Elemona household) are often invited on a recurrent basis to neighbouring towns to perform, this is done because of the traditional dexterity of the drummers as well as the peculiar drumming skills of the *Ayan*. For instance, in Omu-Aran, during the annual Egungun festival, the *Ayan* are

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invited for a period of 10-14 consecutive days to drum throughout the duration of the celebration of the festival.

This choice is not far-fetched because of the peculiar drum style and dance which the festival requires and which skills the *Ayan*s from the Elemona household possess. Other celebrations which hold annually and require the drum skills of the *Ayans* include Muslim celebrations, Otun Day, Funerals, Weddings, deity celebrations among others. These frequent outings often fetch the drummers a semblance of popularity with the environment and this elevates their status within and outside the Oke-Ila Orangun community. This popularity often provided springboard for young drummers to aspire to become.

Economic Factors: Drumming generally within the Oke-Ila community has from inception, presented as a literature means of livelihood and this has also been the narrative within the Elemona household. The 'Ayan' through their social interactions within and outside Oke-Ila, have been able to carve a nitch of economic sustainability for themselves and for generation to come. Discussed below are the mechanics of income generation of the Ayans within the Elemona household.

Drum outings are mostly premised upon invitations by celebrants of occasions and remuneration is paid to the *BaaleOnilu*(Chief of drummers)before the drummers embark on the outings. This remuneration may be a generalized fee called *Owóĺpèlù*. This fee goes to the *BaaleOnilu's* personal purse. Upon payment of this fee, the drummers are mobilized to attend events. However, it is popular practice that the *Ayan*s be sprayed cash at the venue of event. This does not have a specific amount but can vary depending on the financial capability of the celebrant and guests in attendance. The number of drummers mobilized to drum at events may vary depending on the number of events being celebrated concurrently. For instance, during the Isinro festival, several groups of drummers are mobilized to drum at the different houses of the chiefs and this event is usually celebrated concurrently with each other.

During the outing, one person appointed to lead other members of the group to the outing. This appointment is usually based on the level of experience of the individual. At the venue of event, a cash collector is appointed by the leader of the group. The person is responsible for collecting, collecting and accounting for all physical cash sprayed for the drummers at the event. At the end of the outing, after all monies have been counted and accounted for, the total money is divided mostly into three (3) equal portions. One portion is returned to the *BaaleOnilu* to be saved into general purse of the *Onilu*. This will be shared at a later date to all participating members of the drum party for the event. This general purse also occasionally serves as an emergency fund for active members who may be in dire need of financial assistance at any point in time.

The remaining two portions of the money is shared at the *BaaleOnilu's* compound for those who participated in that particular outing. It is worthy to note that this money is

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shared on the day of the outing. It is referred to as "OwoOogun" meaning 'labour allowance'. The sharing ratio is based on seniority within that drum party.

Summarily, drumming was a lucrative means of livelihood which was capable of catering for both young and old within the Elemona household and it was a strong channel of motivation for drummers in times past, however, most recently, this economic/financial arrangement has dwindled tremendously, and this has affected the sustainability and continuity of the drum tradition within the Elemona household.

Challenges Affecting the Continuity of Drum Tradition within the Elemona Household

The continuity of the tradition of drumming within the Elemona household, in most recent times, has been threatened by extinction. This is due to a multiplicity of challenges that have arisen overtime, some of which include:

(a) Wrong Public Perception: With the turn of the 21st century, there has been drastic turn in the perception of the personality of drummers both within Oke-lla Orangun and outside the community. Most recently, the perception that drummers are the glorified beggars or never-do-wells because of their inability to access formal education has drastically stripped off the prestige associated with being a drummer (*Ayan*) from the profession. Even, young people within the Oke-lla Orangun who are members of the Elemona household as at the time of conducting this research, and who still engage actively in drumming are grossly limited. From research conducted, below are the list of Ayans that are still engaging in drumming.

Table 4: Families and their members still involved in drumming

IdileAyanlowo	IdileAyantomi	IdileAyantola	IdileAina	Idile Adeleke
Ayanlowo Samuel AyanlowoAyodokun Ayanlowo Damilola	AyantomiAyndayo AynatomiAyantosin AyantomiAyanyinka	AyantolaEbo AyantolaAyantunde Ayantunde Emmanuel	Aina Adeniyi Aina Taye Aina Femi	Adeleke Bukunmi Adeleke Pelumi Adeleke Sina

Source: AyanlolaAyanlowo, lecturer

(b) Pursuit of Formal Education: The pursuit of quality formal education has also posed a major challenge to the continuity of drum culture within Oke-Ila Orangun community generally, and the Elemona household particularly. Although, there exist a number of elementary and secondary schools within Oke-Ila Orangun, the quest for an affordable educational institution which can compete favourably with other schools across the country, and world over has been a major challenge until recently, with the establishment of the Abolarin College

This narrative has also affected the migration pattern of young male children within the Elemona household whom have had no other option but to migrate away from the Oke-lla Orangun community in pursuit of secondary/higher institution education. Presently, Oke-lla Orangun does not have any higher institution fully functional within the Oke-lla

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Orangun community and the closest higher institutions can be located in Ila Orangun, which are the Osun State College of Education and the University of Uyo, Distance-Learning Center, which only floats Educational Foundations programs.

Thus, youths whom are not interested in educational foundations programs are compelled to seek greener pastures farther from home. This has caused a major decrease in the number of young ones available to sustain the drum culture and tradition within the Elemona household in Oke-Ila Orangun. (AyanwoleAyanlowo, teacher)

- (c) Westernization of the African Culture: The Westernization of the African culture is a phenomenon that the African continent has begun to struggle with since the colonial period and with the turn of each century, this phenomenon worsens and it has led to cultural dilution and cultural shock. The Elemona household is not immune to this phenomenon. Through observation, it has been noted that a considerable number of children born and trained outside of Oke-lla Orangun community, who are direct descendants of the Elemona household, have scanty or no knowledge of their heritage as drummers and/or are not trained in the art of beating the Gangan (talking drum). This is attributed to a number of factors which include, failure of parents to inculcate the passion for drumming in the children, failure of the parents in practicing the art of drumming themselves, even though, they are far from home (Oke-Ila Orangun). Furthermore, the failure to educate the children on the prestige associated with being a custodian of the drum tradition does not inspire the interest of the children. Thus, there is a sharp break in the transmission of this oral tradition from one generation to the other which invariably threatens the continuity of the tradition. (AyandijiAina, 54, Professor/lecturer)
- (d) Financial Disunity: Most recently, the norm, which has been to have a common purse/account which is managed by the BaaleOnilu, has come under scrutiny and has been besieged with mistrust. The practice has been abandoned in recent times and drummers only cater for themselves and their immediate family members with proceeds realized from their outings. This has further dampened the motivation of both young and old in engaging in drumming.

The Way Forward

- (1) There is need to re-address the perception of the image which the public view the Ayans with. This can be done through in-depth research and enlightenment of their specialized and very vital role as custodians of oral tradition as well as seasoned entertainers. This will lead to the path towards reconstruction of he projected image of the drummers (Ayans). Furthermore, this remodeling of image will help to add value to the drum profession and make it attractive for the younger generation to engage in.
- (2) Formal Education is a necessity in this present day and age because it helps a great deal in the survival of an individual as a person and as a member of society.

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However, oral tradition, especially the drum culture must not be sacrificed on the platter of formal education. Both formal education and drum culture can interact interchangeably/*pari-pasu*. This can be made possible with the establishment of more schools and especially higher institutions.

These institutions may be a combination of both formal and non-formal forms of education. This will help afford students the ability to combine vocational activities with academic pursuit and this will ensure the posterity of cultural activities and responsibilities.

(3) There must be an awakening to the consciousness of the erosion of a cultural heritage by individuals who are charged to preserve the culture. Thus, parents and guardians alike are to consciously educate their wards on their historical affinity and also endeavor to train them in the art of beating the talking drum even though, they are in diaspora. This will ensure the continuity of the tradition and preserve its integrity from one generation to another. It will also help to awaken the spirit of patriotism in the children born and raised outside of Oke-Ila Orangun.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, drumming is one of the oldest and traditionally known forms of preserving oral traditions of various communities, including Oke-Ila Orangun. The continuity of the drum tradition within the community should not be taken with levity as this will have tremendous consequences on the posterity of the history of the Oke-Ila Orangun community in general and the preservation of the drum culture within the Elemona household in particular. All stakeholders responsible for the preservation of this culture must sensitized on the importance of this duty, so as to ensure the continuity of Drumming within the Elemona household.

References/bibliography

Interviews

S/N	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	PLACE OF ORIGIN	INTERVIEW DATE
1	Ayanlowo, Ayanlola	40-50yrs	Lecturer	Oke-Ila Orangun	April/May 2022
2	Ayanwole, Ayanlowo	50-60yrs	Teacher/farmer	Oke-Ila Orangun	April, 2022
3	Abiola, Ayanfunmilayo	40-50yrs	Trader	Oke-Ila Orangun	April, 2022
4	Aina, Ayanleye	50-60yrs	Civil servant	Oke-Ila Orangun	April, 2022
5	Aina, Ayandiji	50-60yrs	Professor/lecturer	Oke-Ila Orangun	April, 2022
6	Ayantomi, Ayandayo	50-60yrs	Farmer	Oke-Ila Orangun	May, 2022
7	Abiola, Abidemi	50-60yrs	Civil Servant	Oke-Ila Orangun	May, 2022
8	Adekola, Ayanbimpe	60-70yrs	Trader	Oke-Ila Orangun	May, 2022