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# THE SANGO CELEBRATION IN OYO STATE NIGERIA: A REVIEW

**Folarin John Ajuwon & Prof. Banjo Abiodun**
Tai Solarin University of Education Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State Nigeria

## ABSTRACT

*The Sango Celebration in Oyo, Nigeria is a dynamic and socially critical celebration devoted to Sango, the Yoruba divinity of thunder and lightning. Held every year, the celebration commemorates the bequest of Sango, who is respected as both a chronicled ruler and a capable otherworldly figure. The celebration highlights conventional ceremonies, counting customs, music, move, and disguises, reflecting the wealthy social legacy of the Yoruba individuals. It serves as a key occasion for the community to honor their genealogical conventions, advance social solidarity, and fortify ties inside the locale. The Sango celebration moreover draws in guests, contributing to the social tourism and worldwide acknowledgment of Yoruba legacy. Through its colorful ceremonies, conventional customs, and communal support, the celebration respects Sango, the respected god of thunder and equity.*

**Keywords:** Sango, Celebration, Oyo State, Nigeria

## Introduction

The Sango celebration ceremony in Oyo State, Nigeria, is a vibrant and colourful festival dedicated to Sango, the Yoruba god of thunder, lightning, and fire. This annual event, typically held in August, is a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, showcasing the deep-rooted traditions of the Yoruba people. During the festival, participants engage in various activities, including traditional drumming, dancing, and masquerade displays that evoke the spirit of Sango (Chukwuma, 2024). The ceremony often features a procession of priests and priestesses adorned in elaborate costumes, invoking blessings and protection from the deity (Bruchac, 2014). Ritual sacrifices, including offerings of kola nuts and animals, are made to honour Sango and seek his favour. The Sango festival serves not only as a religious observance but also as a social gathering that unites the community. It attracts visitors from far and wide, promoting cultural exchange and tourism. The event is a testament to the resilience of Yoruba traditions, celebrating identity, spirituality, and the continuity of artistic practices in a modern context (Amadiume, 2021).

The Sango ceremony in Oyo is a dynamic and social celebration that respects the god of thunder and lightning, Sango. This yearly celebration brings together the individuals of Oyo to pay respect to Sango, who is accepted to be a capable and defensive god in Yoruba mythology. Amid the celebration, members lock in in different ceremonies, exhibitions, and ceremonies to illustrate their love for

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Sango and look for his gifts and assurance. The celebration is characterized by colorful parades, conventional music and moving, and ceremonial offerings to Sango (Kwakye-opong, 2014). The Sango celebration ceremony in Oyo isn't as it were a devout occasion but too a time for the community to come together in celebration of their social legacy and conventions. It serves as an update of the significance of honoring and regarding the divinities that play a critical part in their lives.

In general, the Sango celebration ceremony in Oyo may be a cherished and noteworthy occasion that grandstands the wealthy social legacy and convictions of the Yoruba individuals, whereas moreover allowing the community to come together in solidarity and celebration (Yekini-Ajenifuja, 2014). In essence, the Sango celebration is a magnificent expression of Yoruba culture. It embodies the people's reverence for their deities and the importance of community bonds. The festival is a lively reminder of the Yoruba people's rich heritage and enduring spirit.

**Aim and Objectives of Sango Celebration**

1)The festival is a tool of cultural preservation creating a chain of continuity
2)Bringing different people together both Africans and non-African under tourist attractions
3) Most importantly carrying out ritual for the god Sango

**Historical Overview of Sango**

Sango who was the third king of Oyo kingdom a descendant of Oduduwa whose name was Tella and was given birth to by a woman called Toros she is from tapa and became fully Oyo. Sango was given birth to with stone in his hand and private part. He is the physical incarnate of the Sango in the spirit real he grew up and sort for more power he loves food like Amala gbegiri he eaten ewedu known as Ooyo in Oyo kingdom Sango worshippers are not allow to use it in the shrine. He grows and became mighty because of his military strength in the Yoruba Kingdom known for firmness and justice. When asked why do Sango worshippers wear red and plate hair including the men he said because Sango was a very handsome man, tall and clean making hair was part of his fashion then the red cloth was what the spirit demanded as part of fortification. When asked that what is the function of the axe like object in Sango's hand, he said it called Seere which was a name of one of Sango's co-rulers in his days and that was a sign of remembrance (Schütz, 2012). He said sango married Oyaa but with no child because no man of his power rang of that time as a child including Esu, Ogun, Obatala he said Sango did not die but entered into the ground in Koso and that is why is his called Sango Olukoso

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*Figure 1: Statue of Sangodele (head of Sango divot) – credited to (UNESCO)*

**The period of year and activities of Sango festival**

August is known as the spiritual traditional new year of the Yoruba people and Sango the god of lightning and thunder's festival is a ceremony used in opening the new year, the ceremony includes eating and sharing food among Sango worshippers and visitors the food includes palm oil and yam, haadun, Amala and Gbegiri. After which the head of the Sango worshipper and his follower will parade to the king's palace immediately the king noticed the coming of Sangodele and his followers he runs inside because it is forbidden for him to see his ancestors physically, they are attended to by his wife. They display magical ability like calling fire into coal pot carrying it with hand, putting very hot coal directly in the mouth after which he prays and bless the ceremony. The ceremony as gotten international recognition from within and outside the country even international organization unesco. Brazil is another country that has adopted the practice of Sango deity and have taken it seriously over the years.



*Figure 2 credited to research gate publication*

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**Graphical aids in Sango festival focusing on photographic importance**

Sango festival has been an historical even dated back to 16th century has been able to improve and attract international views using technology including video camera, computer and the internet. Below is list of photographic importance to the festival

**1. Vibrant colors and energy of the festival:** Photography can capture the dynamic and lively atmosphere of the Sango festival, with its colorful costumes, elaborate rituals, and energetic dancers (Hu, 2024). Photographers can use their skills to freeze these moments in time and showcase the beauty and vibrancy of the festival.



Figure 3: photo credit to UNESCO

**2. Rituals and traditions:** Photography can document the various rituals and traditions that are a part of the Sango festival, providing a visual record of the cultural practices and beliefs associated with the celebration (Opele & Adepoju, 2017). These images can serve as a valuable resource for future generations to learn about and appreciate the festival.





**3. Preserving the history and heritage:** Photography can help preserve the history and heritage of the Sango festival by capturing important moments and events

during the celebration (Opele, & Tomori, 2024). These photographs can be used to educate people about the significance of the festival and its role in Yoruba culture.

**4. Promoting cultural exchange and understanding:** Photography can be used to share images of the Sango festival with a wider audience, promoting cultural exchange and understanding. By showcasing the beauty and richness of the festival through photographs, photographers can help bring awareness to the traditions and practices of the Yoruba people. Photography has played a crucial role in preserving, promoting, and celebrating the Sango festival, enriching our understanding of this important cultural event.

## Conclusion

Sango festival is a gathering that displays the rich way of life and heritage of the Yoruba people. A time to show gratitude for the blessings of life. The festival is a prove of resilience and strength of the Yoruba culture The Sango Celebration in Oyo stands as a dynamic celebration of the wealthy social legacy and verifiable centrality of the Yoruba individuals. Through its colorful ceremonies, conventional customs, and communal support, the celebration respects Sango, the respected god of thunder and equity. It not as it were strengthening the otherworldly and authentic associations inside the community but too serves as a energetic stage for social expression and solidarity. By grasping both antiquated conventions and modern hones, the Sango Celebration embodies the persevering quality and flexibility of Yoruba social personality.

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