



Smithsonian

National Museum of African Art

John Pemberton III Collection Related to Agemo, EEPA 2015-010

Eden Orelove

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art
Title:	John Pemberton III Collection Related to Agemo
Date:	1982-1986
Identifier:	EEPA.2015-010
Creator:	Pemberton, John, III, 1928-2016 (Photographer)
Extent:	769 Slides (photographs) (color; 35 mm)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection is comprised of 769 35mm color slides, dates from 1982 to 1986 and documents various Agemo festivals, a performing art of the Yoruba religion. More specifically, Pemberton photographed Agemo funeral rites at the Asu Aluwa house in Olosiwonade, Ijebu, various Agemo priests and their stools, the Odun Agemo festival, Chief Sherafusi's Odun Agemo festival in Igbile, and Egungun dancing at the palace in Oru, Ijebu.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated in 2015 by John Pemberton III.

Related Materials

The EEPA also holds a related collection, the John Pemberton Collection, EEPA 2013-015.

The records of Pemberton's work as Associate Director for Collections and Research at the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, are held at the Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 94-027.

Processing Information

Finding aid by Eden Orelove, May 2017. Hannah Storch assisted with preparing metadata. Titles provided by John Pemberton III. Slides digitized in 2017.

Preferred Citation

John Pemberton III Collection Related to Agemo, EEPA 2015-010, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original records requires an appointment. Contact Archives staff for more details.

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Biographical / Historical

Professor, anthropologist, and author John Pemberton III (1928-2016) specialized in the art and rituals of Yoruba in Nigeria. He received a B.A. degree from Princeton University (1948), and a B.D. degree (1952) and a PhD. Degree (1958) from Duke University. His teaching activities included working as Assistant Professor of Religion at Randolph-Macon Woman's College (1954-1958) and Professor of Religion at Amherst College (1958-1998), where he was named the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Humanities (1985-1998) and the Crosby Professor of Religion (1975-1998).

His fieldwork began in 1969, and over the course of his career Pemberton took at least fourteen research trips to Nigeria. There, he was an Associate Fellow at the Institute of African Studies, University Ibadan (1981-1982) and a Visiting Research Associate in Ife, Ile-Ife (1986).

Pemberton's publications include *Yoruba: Sculpture of West Africa* (1982), co-authored with William Fagg; *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought* (1990) and *Yoruba Art and Aesthetics* (1991), both co-authored with Rowland Abiodun and Henry Drewal; and *Insight and Artistry in African Divination* (Smithsonian Institution, 2000), among others.

Pemberton's professional service included serving on the Board of Advisors at the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, and Chair of the Working Group in African Studies in the Humanities at the Social Science Research Council/American Council of Learned Societies. He lectured widely, including at the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum for African Art (now The Africa Center), New York; the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution; Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria; Rietberg Museum, Zurich, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; and Yale University.

Scope and Contents

This collection is comprised of 769 35mm color slides, dates from 1982 to 1986 and documents various Agemo festivals, a performing art of the Yoruba religion. More specifically, Pemberton photographed Agemo funeral rites at the Asu Aluwa house in Olosiwonade, Ijebu, various Agemo priests and their stools, the Odun Agemo festival, Chief Sherafusi's Odun Agemo festival in Igbile, and Egungun dancing at the palace in Oru, Ijebu.

Significant figures depicted include Chief Agbadagbodo, Adie, Chief Obulasmison, Chief Ewujagbori, Chief Sherafusi, Chief Nopa, the Idebi, Aliywal of Ejasha, Chief Posa, Chief Ebi, Chief Alisa and Chief Agbadagobodo. There are also images of Agemo shrines, ceremonial objects, including a brass crown, staff, *iwapo*, and ivory bracelet. The collection also documents the course of the Agemo festival in 1986, including food preparation, ceremonial activities and clothing, musicians, dancing and the Egungun masquerade.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically in five series and further grouped by location:

- Series 1: Agemo Funeral Rites at the Asu Aluwa House, Olosiwonade, Ijebu, June 6, 1982 (82 slides)
- Series 2: Agemo Priests and Their Stools, July 1986 (80 slides)
- Series 3: Odun Agemo, July 7-10, 1986 (311 slides)
- Series 4: Chief Sherafusi's Odun Agemo, Igbile, August 2, 1986 (129 slides)
- Series 5: Egungun Dancing at the Palace, Oru, Ijebu, August 17, 19, 1986 (167 slides)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Agemo (Yoruba deity)
- Agemo Festival
- Egúngún (Cult)
- Ijebu (African people)
- Masquerades
- Yoruba (African people)

Cultures:

- Agemo (Yoruba deity)
- Ijebu (African people)
- Yoruba (African people)

Places:

- Africa
- Nigeria

Container Listing

Series 1: Agemo Funeral Rites at the Asu Aluwa House, Olosiwonade, Ijebu, 1982 June 6

82 Slides (photographs) (Items 1-82; color; 35mm)

Scope and Contents: This series documents Agemo funeral rites at the Asu Aluwa house in Olosiwonade, Ijebu on June 6, 1982.

Item 1	Chief Posa seated with men who had accompanied him from Imoson, including senior members of the Imoson Agemo Society, at a post-burial funeral rite 1 Slides (photographs)
Item 2-4	Chief Posa seated with senior members of the Imoson Agemo Society
Item 5	Drummers and other guests assembled in an enclosed area at the back of house
Item 6-7	Food, provided by family of deceased, being brought to assembled group, served by Alase
Item 8-10	Women, male elders, children, and neighbors gather at front and along side of house
Item 11	Senior women of house gathering beneath an improvised canopy at side of house
Item 12	Man leaving enclosure behind house and moving to those waiting at front
Item 13-14	Group of men surrounding a raffia mat, led by two men shaking a smaller rolled up mat against the base of the vertical mat during the ceremony
Item 15	Man dancing during masquerade
Item 16-18	Women dancing to beat of drums during masquerade
Item 19	Drummer playing in masquerade
Item 20-21	Man holding two horns of iwo ase (medicine), accompanying raffia mat
Item 22-25	Dancer encircled by raffia mat
Item 26	Raffia mat being returned to area behind house
Item 27-29	Chief Rosa, wearing his itagbe, dancing before and then with women of the house
Item 30	The mat, agbe efun, appears three times

Item 31	Musicians retire to rear of house after mat has been removed
Item 32-39	Women of the house toss nira inside the oval circle of the mat
Item 40-45	Agemo leaves enclosure at rear and walks to dancing area
Item 46-47	Mat is placed before veranda and a small mound of dirt is placed on it. The mat is returned to the grave following these rites.
Item 48-57	Attendants flicking apart fibers covering face of dancer, speaking prayers to Agemo
Item 58-63	People praying to Agemo
Item 64-69	People touching their fingers three times to their cheeks and then their foreheads to ground in the act of ijuba
Item 70-71	Agemo standing on the mat, women of the house praying and offering food to him
Item 72-73	Agemo dancing before leaving enclosure
Item 74-75	Guests applauding Agemo before leaving
Item 76-82	Musicians and dancers drinking and resting after the performance

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Series 2: Agemo Priests and their Stools in Ijebu Ode Area, July 1986

80 Slides (photographs) (Items 83-162; color; 35mm)

Scope and Contents: This series primarily depicts Agemo priests and their ceremonial stools in Ijebu Ode in July 1986. Chiefs depicted include Chief Agbadagbodo, Adie, Chief Obulasmison, Chief Ewujagbori, Chief Sherafusi, the Odo Nopa, the Idebi, and Aliywal of Ejesha. The series also includes images of Agemo shrines, the wives of the Agemo Chiefs, a large drum with a decorative motif of mudfish figures, and ceremonial objects including a brass crown, staff, *iwapo*, and ivory bracelet.

Item 83	Chief Agbadagbodo with stool carriers on road to Agbala Ishasa
Item 84-85	Chief Agbadagbodo portrait photos outside his house in Ishasa
Item 86	Chief's grandfather, the Awokoya 1906-1964, photograph on Chief's stool.
Item 87-88	Chief Agbadagbodo's stool
Item 89-91	Adie, one of the two Agemo chiefs caring for central shrine in Agbala Imoshon
Item 92-93	Adie Agemo and stool
Item 94	Paint and brushes used in decorating Agemo stools.
Item 95-96	Unidentified Agemo stools
Item 97	Chief Obulamison with his stool, Ago Iwoye
Item 98-100	Chief Obulasmison's stool
Item 101	Stool of Chief Ewujagbori, one of two chiefs charged with performing sacrifices at the central shrine in Agbala Imoshon
Item 102	Chief Ewujogbori's compound
Item 103-114	Wives of Chief Ewujogbori fashioning his hair in style worn by woman; required of Adir chiefs
Item 115-116	Chief Ewujogbori's stool
Item 117	Chief Sherafusi, the Olowo of Igbile
Item 118	Chief Sherafusi's Agemo stool
Item 119	Unidentified Agemo chief holding his iwapo, sign of office
Item 120	Stool of unidentified Agemo chief

Item 121-125	Odo Nopa with staff, iwapo, and ivory bracelet
Item 126-128	Odo Nopa with staff and wearing itagbe
Item 129-130	Stool of the Idebi
Item 131	Unidentified Agemo priest
Item 132-137	Stool of the Aliywal of Ejesha
Item 138-151	Unidentified Agemo shrine
Item 152	Inner shrine marked by mariwo over entry
Item 153-154	Chief Serefusi of Igbile
Item 155	Unidentified woman and child
Item 156-159	Wearing brass crown
Item 160-162	Large drums with decorative motifs of mudfish figures

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Series 3: Odun Agemo Festival, Ijebu Imosan, 1986 July 6-10

311 Slides (photographs) (Items 163-473; color; 35mm)

Scope and Contents: This series depicts the Odun Agemo Festival held in Ijebu Imosan in 1986 on July 6 (subseries 1), July 7 (subseries 2) and July 10 (subseries 3). The course of the festival, including food preparation, ceremonial activities and clothing, musicians, dancing and the Egungun masquerade are documented. Individuals photographed include Chief Posa and family, Chief Alisa, Chief Sherafusi, Chief Ebi, Chief Nopa, and Chief Agbadagobodo.

Arrangement: This series is arranged chronologically in three subseries:

- 3.1. Ijebu Imosan, items 163-282, 1986 July 6
- 3.2. Ijebu Imosan, items 263-360, 1986 July 7
- 3.3. Ijebu Imosan, items 361-473, 1986 July 10

Subseries 3.1: Ijebu Imosan, 1986 July 6

Item 163-262

Item 163-165	Greeting Chief Posa
Item 166-167	Settling dispute among junior wives
Item 168-171	Chief Posa praying at curtained door of Agemo shrine
Item 172-176	Sacrifices to Agemo identified with Chief Posa's head, ori inu
Item 177-182	Sacrifice of goat
Item 183-202	Blood and skin of goat smeared on shrine curtain at door and on Chief Posa's head
Item 203-206	Chief Posa's prepared head
Item 207	Chief Posa's daughters
Item 208-210	Women standing in cooking shed
Item 211	Sacrificed goat in entry hall of house at shrine for Chief Posa's father
Item 212	Chief Posa
Item 213-214	Chief Posa's junior wife
Item 215	Chief Posa's junior wife and child
Item 216-218	Men standing in cooking shed
Item 219	Smearing sacrificial blood on 'wounde' tree limbs

Item 220-222	Male children feasting on goat meat
Item 223-226	People continuing to smear sacrificial blood on 'wounded' tree limbs
Item 227-228	Girls and women eating
Item 229-231	Arrival of Chief Alisa
Item 232-234	Arrival of a few Egungun, dressed as ibeji (twins)
Item 235-238	Preparing food; Branches cut from courtyard trees
Item 239-244	Men gathered outside to eat with Chief Alisa
Item 245-260	Egungun in courtyard
Item 261-262	Announcement by Alagogo that Alagemo is about to come out and all women must leave the area

Subseries 3.2: Ijebu Imosan, 1986 July 7-9

Item 263-360

Item 263-266	Chief Posa at camp in Agbala Imosan with his eru, container with Alagemo headdress next to him
Item 267-278	Chief Sherafusi and other chiefs visiting Chief Posa
Item 279-280	Gift of T-shirt to Chief Posa celebrating Agemo Iyowoyowo
Item 281	Chief Posa's drums
Item 282-286	Agemo chief greeting Chief Posa
Item 287-289	Chief Nopa
Item 290	Chief Nopa's horn of power
Item 291-292	Men in crowded dance area
Item 293-294	Chief Sherafusi
Item 295	Sacrificial cow for evening rite of all Alagemo chiefs at central shrine in forest
Item 296-299	Chief Ebi and supporters with Chief's chair and bowl carrier on road to Agbala Imosan

Item 300-301	Women singing for Chief Ola Osilaja, the Ibedi of Ayo Iwoye
Item 302	Escorting Alagemo
Item 303-304	People shouting
Item 305-311	Alagemo circling dance area with escorts and performing Aito
Item 312-316	Continuous movement of Alagemo between forest camps and dance area
Item 317	Arrival of Posa Alagemo in dance area to perform Aito and greet Idebi
Item 318-324	Alagemo moving between forest camps and dance area
Item 325-334	Escorting Posa Alagemo to Aito
Item 335	Posa Alagemo waiting before proceeding to Idebi
Item 336	Opening a space in fibres preparing Posa to get Idebi
Item 337-342	Persons in surrounding area
Item 343-346	Posa Alagemo returns to forest camp
Item 347-354	Other Alagemo performing in dance area
Item 355-356	Entry to huts and inner shrine
Item 357-360	Main road outside Agbala Imosan; beer sellers

Subseries 3.3: Ijebu Ode, 1986 July 10

Item 361-473

Item 361-363	Chief Ebi, J.O. Abraham waiting for the Alagemo in Tami's courtyard
Item 364-369	Arrival of Chief Agbadagbodo with eru and stool
Item 370-373	Agbadagbodo at house of Tami in Ishasa
Item 374-379	Alagemo Posa publically taking Tami's place, Tami's courtyard
Item 380-382	Posa's followers cheering Alagemo Posa
Item 383-397	Alagemo Posa and Tami moving around the courtyard
Item 398-399	Alagemo Posa and Tami received by Idebi and Agbadagbodo

Item 400	Palace servants
Item 401-410	Senior Palace servant, Ogbeni Odi, and palace drummers leading procession of chiefs and townspeople from Ijasha to Apebi (veranda of ancient palace)
Item 411	Governmor Bisi Onabanjo of Ogun State substituting for Awujale in procession
Item 412-414	Palace drummers
Item 415-418	Drummers leading procession to veranda
Item 419-421	Procession greeting Alagemo Chiefs by senior Olori Oni
Item 422-445	Procession moving from veranda to gate of Ishasa
Item 446-449	Crowd returning to Agbala Ishasa
Item 450-465	Alagemo dancing according to rank among chiefs
Item 466-467	Idebi and chiefs
Item 468-470	Alagemo Posa/Tami meet Idebi (for Awujale), gesturing hands and exchanging greetings
Item 471-472	Unidentified men sitting inside
Item 473	Agemo traditional chiefs

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Series 4: Chief Sherafusi's Odun Agemo, Igbile, 1986 August 2

129 Items (Items 474-602)

Scope and Contents: This series documents Chief Sherafusi's Odun Agemo festival in Igbile on August 2, 1986. Chief Sherafusi and his family, shrine and stool are depicted, as is the course of the festival, including the Alagemo and the Alagemo mat, ancestor Olorisha, and celebrants masquerading.

Item 474	Chief Sherafusi's home in Igbile
Item 475-476	Women preparing food
Item 477	Chief Sherafusi with grandchildren
Item 478-479	Chief Sherafusi's portraits
Item 480	Chief Sherafusi's Agemo stool
Item 481	Shrine for Agemo
Item 482-483	Sherafusi's family
Item 484	Greeting guests
Item 485	Family and Chief
Item 486-487	Friends arriving
Item 488-489	Procession to Agbala Igbile
Item 490-491	Returning with Agemo mat
Item 492-493	Returning along road to compound
Item 494-499	Halting traffic
Item 500	Man with hat inverted on his head as salutation to Agemo
Item 501-507	People halting traffic or forcing diversion
Item 508-511	Singing and cheering Agemo
Item 512	People halting traffic and requesting money
Item 513-537	Looking down road to Agbala, waiting for Agemo
Item 538-540	Waiting for Alagemo mat

Item 541-542	Alagemo appearing at entrance to Agbala
Item 543-550	Alagemo Sherafusi proceeding along road to chief's house
Item 551	Olorisha awaiting Alagemo
Item 552-554	Olorisha kneeling before Alagemo and presenting gifts
Item 555-556	Alagemo responding to Olorisha
Item 557-568	Alagemo dancing among people in the courtyard
Item 569-571	Olorisha kneeling before Alagemo and presenting gifts
Item 572-575	Alagemo moving around the courtyard as individuals and groups sing and dance
Item 576	Crowd of celebrants
Item 577	Alagemo saluting Olorisha
Item 578-586	Upper portion of masquerade
Item 587-599	Crowd beginning to disperse; Alagemo leaving
Item 600-601	Chief Sherafusi's stool
Item 602	Man and child

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Series 5: Egungun Dancing at the Palace, Oru, Ijebu, 1986 August 17-August 19

167 Items (Items 603-769)

Scope and Contents: This series is comprised of two sub-series that depict Egungun dancing in the palace courtyard in Oru, Ijebu. The first sub-series depicts a rehearsal on August 17, 1986 of the Egungun Society of Dancers, led by bata drummers and evaluated by senior members of the Society. The second sub-series depicts the performance of the Egungun Society of Dancers on August 19, 1986 before the Oba, chiefs, lineage elders, and distinguished visitors. There is also one image of Henry and Margaret Drewal photographing the event.

Subseries 5.1: Rehearsal in the Palace Courtyard of the Society of Dancers, Led by Bata Drummers and Evaluated by Senior Members of the Society, 1986 August 17

Item 603-606	Arrival of dancers, some wearing costumes
Item 607-615	Male dancers in costumes composed of many layers of cloth of diverse patterns and colors that completely cover their legs and body. The sequence of dancers begins with very young boys showing that they know the appropriate steps and how to use the costume.
Item 616	Bata drummer
Item 617-638	Dancer quickly reversing the outer layers of cloth, thereby transforming the image of the ancestor
Item 639-647	Elaborate and costly cloth, believed to express the ancestors' identity
Item 648	Drummers and elders of the Society
Item 649-652	Egungun dancers whirling, displaying the multiple and colorful layers of cloths, stirring the air so that the audience feels the presence of the ancestor
Item 653	Bata drummer and shadows

Subseries 5.2: Performance of Egungun Society of Dancers at the Palace before the Oba, Chiefs, Lineage Elders, and Distinguished Visitors, 1986 August 19

Item 654-661	Dancers of all types and ages gather in costume and sit on benches around the courtyard waiting to take their turn to perform
Item 662	Egungun during a comic masquerade, wearing a woman's dress and made up to have a purple face with yellow nose
Item 663	Chief greeting maskers
Item 664-665	Egungun masquerade arrives with a smoking pot balanced on head

Item 666	Drummer salutes Oba and chiefs
Item 667-673	Oba and chiefs greet one another
Item 674	Guests
Item 692-695	Adult dancers dancing according to age; after a brief dance some will lead members of their lineage groups from the palace to their respective compounds for feasting
Item 675	Bata drummer
Item 676-681	Senior Egungun dancers sitting around edge of courtyard, watching dancing and entertainment
Item 682-691	Drummers drumming for each dancer, the youngest dancers are often without costume in order to show that they know the appropriate dance steps
Item 702-715	Senior masquerades dancing in courtyard to entertain guests and educate each other
Item 696-701	Senior members of the Society providing criticism and instruction to younger dancers
Item 716-718	The Egungun mocking the dancing of women, entertaining the crowd
Item 719-736	Masqueraders parading about, displaying the beauty and richness of their costumes
Item 769	The Oba of Oru
Item 768	Henry and Margaret Drewal photographing event in Oru
Item 767	People in crowd wearing hats and beads, which express their identities
Item 764-766	Woman chief and devotee of Orisha Shango wearing red and white beads and elaborate gele (head tie). Beads and gele express who she is and her status in society.
Item 759-763	Oba offering prayers, gifts of nira (money) and words of gratitude to Egungun dancers
Item 752-758	Egungun greeting chiefs and visiting dignitaries
Item 737-745	Egungun with smoking pot performing before the Oba and chiefs

Item 746-751

Woman stepping from crowd to demonstrate how a woman should dance; a response to the mockery of one of the Egungun

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