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EGUNGUN FESTIVAL

Egungun, (*egúngún* with Yorùbá language tone marks) in the broadest sense is any [Yoruba](#) masquerade or masked, costumed figure.^[1] More specifically, it is a Yoruba masquerade for [ancestor reverence](#), or the ancestors themselves as a collective force. *Eégún* is the reduced form (abbreviation through assimilation) of the word *egúngún* and has the same meaning. [Rowlands,

E.C. (1973-01-01). "Yoruba (Teach Yourself Books", chapter 7, page 39] There is a misconception that Egun or Eegun (*eégún* with Yorùbá tone marks) is the singular form, or that it represents the ancestors while *egúngún* is the masquerade or the plural form. This misconception is common in the Americas by Orisa devotees that do not speak [Yorùbá](#) language as a vernacular.

ROLE OF THE FAMILY

In the [Yoruba](#) religion, the annual ceremonies in honor of the dead serve as a means of assuring their ancestors a place among the living. They believe the ancestors have the responsibility to compel the living to uphold the ethical standards of the past generations of their clan, town or family. The Egungun are celebrated in festivals, known as **Odun Egungun**, and in family ritual through the masquerade custom.

In family situations, a family elder known either formally or informally as "Alagba" presides over ancestral rites. He may or may not be initiated into the local

Egungun society. In matters that deal with whole communities, Egungun priests and initiates who are trained in ancestral communication, ancestral elevation and funerary rites are assigned to invoke and bring out the ancestors. They wear elaborate costumes as masquerades. Through drumming and dance, the Egungun robed performers are believed to become possessed by the spirits of the ancestors, as manifested as a single entity. The Egungun spiritually cleans the community; through the dramatic acting and miming of the robed priests, they demonstrate both ethical and amoral behavior that have occurred since their last visit. In this way, they expose the strengths and weaknesses of the community to encourage

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behavior more befitting of their descendants. When this performance is completed, the performers as Egungun give messages, warnings and blessings to the assembled spectators.

Important Egungun include the Oloolu and Alapansanpa, both of Ibadanland. Elewe of the [Ìgbómìnà](#) Yoruba [clan](#), which is common in the towns of [Òkè-Ìlá Òràngún](#), Ìlá Òràngún, and Arandun, is also of particular prominence.

In [Brazil](#), the main cult of the Egungun is found on the island of [Itaparica](#), in the State of [Bahia](#). Houses of worship dedicated to the Egungun also exist in other states.

