CULTURE AND CUSTOMS OF THE YORÙBÁ



CULTURE AND CUSTOMS OF THE YORÙBÁ

Tóyìn Fálọlá

and

Akíntúndé Akínyẹmí

PAN-AFRICAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

AUSTIN, TEXAS

Copyright © 2017
Tóyìn Fálọlá and Akíntúndé Akínyẹmí
All Rights Reserved

ISBN: 978-1-943533-18-3
LCCN: 2017941788

PAN-AFRICAN UNIVERSITY PRESS
Box 618
8650 Spicewood Springs # 145
Austin, TX 78759
Telephone (512) 689 6067

Africa
P. O. Box 14458
University of Ìbàdàn
Ìbàdàn, Nigeria
234 (0808) 6392371
www.panafricanuniversitypress.com

Printed in the United States of America

Dedication

To four outstanding scholars who have contributed to
the understanding of Yoruba culture:
Wande Abimbola
Adeagbo Akinjogbin
Makanjuola Ilesanmi
Oludare Olajubu



Contents

List of Tables, Figures and Plates xiii

Acknowledgements xvii

Contributors xix

Introduction 1
Tóyìn Fálọlá and *Akíntúndé Akínyẹmí*

Part I: Language, Orature, and Language Use

1. The Language and Its Dialects 31
Akínbíyì Akinlabi and *Harrison Adéníyì*

2. Non-Verbal Communication 47
Clement Adéníyì Àkàngbé

3. Libation, Homage, and the Power of Words 59
Adépéjú Johnson-Bashua

4. "*Ẹ kú*...": Yorùbá Greetings – A Protocol 69
Pamela J. Olúbùnmi Smith

5. Naming, Names, and Praise Names 85
Harrison Adéníyì

6. Idioms, Proverbs, and Dictums 99
Kazeem Adébáyọ̀ Ọmọ́fóyèwá

7. Ribald Language: Insults, Slangs, and Curses 113
Lérè Adéyẹmí

8. Cognomen and Eulogy 125
Moses Mábayọ̀jẹ́

9. Folklore, Oral Traditions, and Oral Literature 139
Adémọ́lá O. Dasylva

10. Songs 159
Saudat Adébísí Ọláyídé Hamzat

Part II: Art and Aesthetics

11. Architecture: Indigenous 171
Báyọ̀ Àmọ̀le and *Stephen Fọlárànmí*

12. Architecture: Transition from Indigenous to Modern 191
Abímbọ́lá O. Aṣojo

13. Art and Crafts 203
Adémọ́lá Azeez

14. Body Adornment and Cosmetics 215
Ayọ̀ọ́lá Ọládùnkẹ́ Àráńsí

15. Charms and Amulets 227
Ṣẹ́gun Ṣóẹ̀tán

16. Circumcision and Facial Marks 237
Adékẹ́mi Agnes Táíwò

17. Performing Arts 249
Ṣọ́lá Adéyẹmí

18. Settlement Pattern 259
Abímbọ́lá O. Aṣojo and *Babátúndé Jaiyéọba*

19. Signs, Symbols, and Symbolism 269
Philip Adédọ̀tun Ògúndèjì

20. Textiles and Dresses 281
Babáṣẹ̀hìndé Adémúlẹ̀yá

21. Fashion 295
Adéọlá Agòkè

Part III: Religion, Festivals, and Belief System

22. Traditional Religious Belief System 309
Ṣẹ́gun Ògúngbèmí

23. Ritual and Sacrifice 325
Ìbígbọ́ládé Adéríbigbé

24. Extra-Mundane Communication: Insights from Festivals and Carnivals 339
Abigail Odozi Ogwezzy-Ndisika and *Babátúndé Adéshínà Faustino*

25. Death, Mourning, Burial, and Funeral 355
Mobọ́lájí Oyèbísí Ajíbádé

26. Divinatory Systems 363
Ọmọ́tádé Adégbindin

27. Dreams and Dream Interpretation 379
Steven D. Glazier

28. Masks, Masque, and Masquerades 389
Ọláwọlé Fámúlẹ̀

29. Music and Dance in Culture and Performance 407
Bọ̀dé Ọmọ́jọlà

30. Myths and Mythologies 421
Síkírù Abíọ́nà Yusuff

31. Spirits and Spirit Possession 433
Martin A. Tsang

32. Taboo 445
Ọlátúbọ̀sún Christopher Ọmọ́léwu

Part IV: Economy and Economic System

33. Agriculture and Farming 459
Adébáre Atóyèbí

34. Associations: Cultural, Cooperative, and Religious 473
Hezekiah Olúfẹ́mi Adéọ̀ṣun

35. Cuisines and Food Preparation 481
Olúfadékẹ́mi Adágbádá

36. Drinks: Beverages and Alcohol 495
Dúró Adélékè

37. Economy, Commerce, and Wealth 511
Saudat Adébísí Ọláyídé Hamzat

38. Investment, Debt, and Debt Management 521
Mutiat Títílọpẹ́ Ọládèjọ

39. Hunting, Wildlife Destruction, and Preservation 531
Adémọ́lá Babalọlá

40. Livestock: Domestication and Species 537
Gabriel Ayọ̀ọ́lá

41. Markets, Marketing, and Advertisement 553
Olúwọlé Tẹ́wógboyè Òkéwándé

42. Pawning, Pawnship, and Slavery 567
Tósìn Akínjọbí-Babátúndé

Part V: History, Politics, and Governance

43. History and Historiography 579
Bùkọ́lá Oyèníyì

44. Politics and Government 595
Akin Àlàó

45. Some Aspects of Royalty and Chieftaincy in a Dynamic World 607
Báyọ̀ Ọmọlọlá

46. Societal Stratification 619
Adébùsúyì Isaac Adéníran and *Tolúlọpẹ́ Adétáyọ̀ Fájọbí*

47. Conflicts and Conflict Resolution 629
Àkànmú G. Adébáyọ̀

48. War and Diplomacy 647
Nurudeen Ọlátóyè Árógundádé

Part VI: Family, Health, and Education

49. Disease, Health Management, and Healing 661
Fàtái Adéṣínà Badru

50. Childbirth, Childbearing, and Child Education 669
Tóyìn Ọláìyá

51. Cultural Heritage and Tourism 683
Benjamin Àdìsá Ògúnfọlákàn

52. Archeology and Museums 693
Kọ́lá Adékọ́lá

53. Family, Indigenous Education System, and Discipline 709
Adébọ́lá Bọ́lájókó Dasylva

54. Marriage and Marital Systems 721
Enoch Olújídé Gbádégẹṣin

55. Numbers and Numerals 733
Fọlúkẹ́ Bọ́láńlé Adékẹ́yè

56. Sports, Games, Recreation, and Leisure 745
Layọ̀ Ògúnlọlá

57. Traditional Professions 757
Michael O. Afọláyan

Part VII: Ethics and Social Control

58. Age Grade and Rites of Passage 775
Àánúolúwapọ̀ Fifebo Aláfẹ́

59. Cults, Secret Societies, and Fraternities 787
George Olúṣọlá Ajíbádé

60. Inheritance 797
Abídèmí Olúṣọlá Bọ́lárìnwá and *Martina Morónmúbọ̀ Adéríbigbé*

61. Ethics, Social Control, and Management Structure 805
Fúnmilọ́lá Olúnladé

62. Land: Tenure and Reform 817
Bọ́lá Dáúdà

63. Law and Justice 829
Olúyẹ́misí Bámgbóṣé

64. Sexuality, Sexual Behavior, and Gender Roles 847
Chinyere Ukpokolo and *Adéọlá Lameed*

65. Social Customs and Lifestyle 857
Juliet Otsemaye

66. Security and Protection 865
Àrìnpé G. Adéjùmọ̀

67. From the Cosmos to the Society: Worldview as/and Philosophy 877
Adéshínà Afọ́láyan

Part VIII: Social and Cultural Change

68. Cinema and Films 893
Niyi Coker

69 Media: Exploring Old and New Forms 901
Kọ́léadé Odùtọ́lá

70 Popular Culture 913
Fẹ́mi Adédèjì

71 Religion II: Islam and Christianity 929
Samson Ìjàọlá

72 Science and Technology 941
Kazeem Kẹ́hìndé Sanuth

73 The Diaspora and Globalization Effect 951
Akinloyè Òjó

74 Time Reckoning 963
Adémọ́lá K. Fáyẹmí

75 Writing System and Literature 973
Timothy T. Àjàní

Index 983

List of Tables, Figures, and Plates

Table 1.1: Yorùbá Language Family Tree.

Table 4.1: Trade-specific greeting-*cum*-prayer codes and their appropriate responses.

Figure 12.1: Ọ̀wọ̀ Palace designed based on the Impluvium style architecture with multiple courtyards.

Figure 12.2: Màpó Hall, Ìbàdàn, illustrating classical architectural influences.

Figure 12.3: The Christ Church in Lagos and Holy Cross Cathedral, two landmarks in central Lagos built in 1869 and 1878.

Figure 12.4: University of Ìbàdàn Mosque.

Figure 12.5: University of Ìbàdàn, Trenchard Hall illustrating international style influences.

Figure 12.6: Dominican Church, Ìbàdàn, illustrating indigenous influences in the form, artwork, symbols and furnishings.

Figure 12. 7: Exterior and interior views of Society of African Missions (SMA) Church, Ìbàdàn.

Figure 12.8: Òsásọnà House in Ilé-Ifẹ̀.

Figure 14.1: *Àbàjà olówu* and *Gọ̀nbọ́* facial marks.

Figure 14.2: *Kóló fínfín.*

Figure 14.3: Types of men caps: *fìlà ìkòrí, fìlà onídẹ,* and *fìlà abetí ajá.*

Figure 14.4: Men Hairdo: *orí fífá, afarí apákan* (*ìlàrí ọba*), *àásó olúọ́dẹ, òsù dídá.*

Figure 14.5: Old and modern women hairdo.

Figure 18.1: Indigenous Ibadan with contemporary architecture in the background.
Figure 18.2: Planning pattern and the architecture of the colonial era juxtaposed against traditional influences.
Table 19.1: Some lineages and their emblematic symbols.
Plate 20.1: *Sányán (oníhò)*.
Plate 20.2: *Ẹtù* (folded).
Plate 20.3: *Pẹtùjẹ*.
Plate 20.4: *Àlàárì (onílà)*.
Plate 20.5: *Àdìrẹ (alákẹtẹ̀)*.
Plate 20.6: *Àdìrẹ alábẹ́rẹ́*.
Plate 20.7: *Àdìrẹ (ẹlẹ́kọ)*.
Plate 20.8: *Àdìrẹ* (dyed with imported synthetic dyes).
Plate 20.9: Man in *dàńṣíkí*.
Plate 20.10: A woman in *ìró* and *gèlè* with lace *bùbá*.
Plate 20.11: Woman in *ìró* and *gèlè* with *bùbá* lace.
Plate 20.12: Man in embroidered *agbádá sányán*.
Plate 20.13: Man in enbroidered *agbádá* with white linen *àwọ̀tẹ́lẹ̀*.
Figure 29.1: Drumming for Ifá.
Figure 29.2: Hexatonic Melody: *Láyé Olúgbọ́n*.
Figure 40.1: Goats (*Ewúrẹ́*).
Figure 40.2: Ram and Sheep (*Àgbò* and *Àgùntàn*).
Figure 40.3: Naked-neck Fowl (*Adìyẹ igún*).
Figure 40.4: Frizzled-feathered Fowl (*Adìyẹ ọ̀sa*).
Figure 40.5: Stork (*Àkọ̀*).
Figure 40.6: Peacock (*Ọ̀kín*).
Figure 40.7: Nocturnal Snake (*Ejò mọ́námọ́ná*).
Figure 40.8: Parrot (*Ayékòótọ́*).
Figure 40.9: Crocodile (*Ọ̀ọ̀nì*).
Figure 41.1: A chart showing Yorùbá regular market.
Figure 41.2: A chart showing Yorùbá market flow from producer to the consumer.
Figure 41.3: A chart showing Yorùbá Advertisement types.
Figure 47.1: Typical Bargaining.
Figure 47.2: Ọ̀yọ́ Yorùbá Bargaining.

Figure 47.3: The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode.
Figure 52.1: Entrance to the house of Imagesin, Èsìẹ́.
Figure 52.2: Entrance to the National Museum, Ilé-Ifẹ̀.
Figure 52.3: Ìta Yemòó Pottery Museum, Ilé-Ifẹ̀.
Figure 52.4: Potsherd Pavement at Ìta Yemòó, Ilé-Ifẹ̀.
Figure 52.5: Signpost of the Badagry Heritage Museum.
Figure 52.6: Blocks of Buildings of Badagry Heritage Museum.
Figure 52.7: Heavy machines on the historic places of Badagry.
Figure 52.8: Front Desk of the Teaching and Research Museum.
Figure 52.9: The Skeletal Remains from Ìwó-Elerú.
Table 69.1: Number of Postings to *Tìwantìwa*, a Yorùbá-language Yahoo Discussion Group.
Table 69.2: Number of Postings to *Yorùbá World*, a Yorùbá Culture Yahoo Discussion Group.
Plate 70.1: Lagos Youth carnival.
Plate 70.2: Àńkóò from Ìjẹ̀bú-Òde.
Plate 70.3: *Yahooze* Dance.
Plate 70.4: *Azonto* Dance.
Plate 70.5: *Galala* Dance.
Plate 70.6: *Skẹlẹwú* Dance.
Plate 70.7: National Football team, the Green Eagles dancing *Àlanta*.
Plate 70.8: OPC of Gàní Adam's Faction.
Plate 70.9: *Aluta* Demonstration.
Plate 70.10: A Yoruba Girl Hairdo.
Plate 70.11: *Okada* Motorcycle Riders.
Plate 70.12: *Pàrágà* Stuff.

Acknowledgments

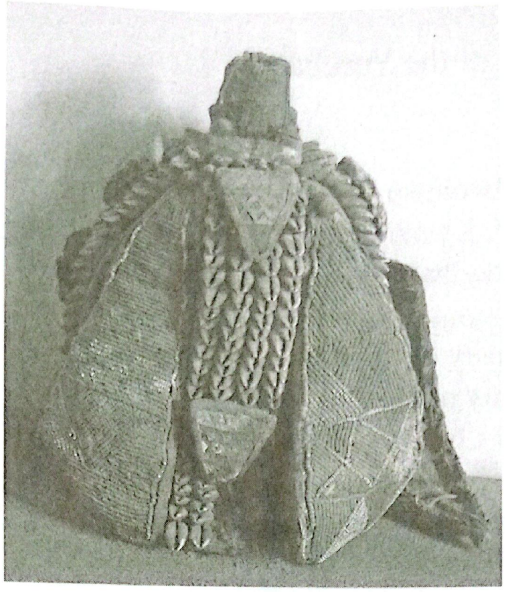
A work of this magnitude could not have been successfully completed without the assistance of many other people. We would like to thank those colleagues who aided us and those friends who guided us while the project lasted. We are grateful to Dr. Adéshínà Afọ́láyan who served as the link between us, the editors, and many of the contributors based in Nigeria; Professor Ọláwọ́lé Fámúlẹ̀ and Dr. Stephen Fọ́láràmí who supplied many of the images in the book; Dr. Kazeem Oyetunde Ẹ̀kẹ́olú who provided illustrations in some of the chapters; and Dr. Stephen Fọ́láràmí and Emmanuel Oyèwọ́lé Oyèníyì who designed the book cover.

We would also like to thank our contributors for their patience in the course of editing the volume, and for putting up with our numerous requests regarding editorial matters. It has been two years since the first request for contributions was sent out. Between then and now the contributors have done so much difficult and taxing work, often at inconvenient times in their own schedules. The contributors, drawn from three continents – Africa, Europe, and North America – have all made this project a huge success.

The book publisher, Pan-African University Press, deserves our gratitude for the interest in the project. Specifically, we would like to thank production staff and others at the publisher's headquaters, especially Dawid Kahts our typesetter and indexer, Tim Colton, the production manager, and others who worked behind the scenes and invisible to us as editors. We are also grateful to Bryan Cooper Owens and Jessica Shenette for copy-editing the original manuscript submitted by contributors.

Last but not the least, we would like to thank our employers, the University of Texas at Austin and University of Florida in Gainesville for approving this book project as part of our research assignment.

Tóyìn Fálọ́lá and Akíntúndé Akínyẹ́mí



Contributors

Olúfadékẹ́mi Adágbádá, Ọlábísí Ọnàbánjọ University (Àgọ́ Ìwòyè, Nigeria)
Adébáre Atóyèbí, University of Ìlọrin (Nigeria)
Àkànmú Adébáyọ̀, Kennesaw State University
Fẹ́mi Adédèjì, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Ọmọ́tádé Adégbindin, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Àrìnpé Adéjùmọ̀, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Bọ́láńlé Adékẹ́yè, University of Ìlọrin (Nigeria)
Kọ́lá Adékọ́lá, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Dúró Adélékè, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Babáṣẹ̀hìndé A. Adémúlẹ̀yá, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Adébùsúyì Isaac Adéníran, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Harrison Adéníyì, Lagos State University (Nigeria)
Olúfẹ́mi Adéọ̀ṣun, University of Ìlọrin (Nigeria)
Ìbígbọ́ládé S. Adéríbigbé, University of Georgia, Athens
Martina Morónmúbọ̀ Adéríbigbé, Federal College of Education (Òsíẹ̀lẹ̀- Abẹ́òkúta, Nigeria)
Lére Adéyẹmí, University of Ìlọrin (Nigeria)
Ṣọ́lá Adéyẹmí, University of Greenwich (London, UK)
Adéshínà Afọ́láyan, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Michael Ọládèjọ Afọ́láyan, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Springfield
Adéọ́lá Agòkè, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Timothy T. Àjàní, Fayetteville State University
George Olúṣọ́lá Ajíbádé, Ọbáfémi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Mobọ́lájí Oyèbísí Ajíbádé, Adéyẹmí College of Education (Ondó, Nigeria)
Clement Adéníyì Àkàngbé, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Tósìn Akínjọbí-Babátúndé, Elizade University (Ìlárá-Mọ̀kín, Nigeria)
Akínbíyì Akinlabí, Rutgers University
Akíntúndé Akínyẹmí, University of Florida, Gainesville
Àánúolúwapọ̀ Fifebo Aláfẹ́, Adékúnlé Ajásin University (Àkùngbá-Àkókó, Nigeria)
Akin Àlàó, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)

Báyọ̀ Àmọ̀le, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Ayọ̀ọ́lá Ọládùnkẹ́ Àráńsí, Kwara State University (Màlété, Nigeria)
Nurudeen Ọlátóyè Àmùdá-Arógundádé, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Abímbọ́lá Aṣòjò, University of Minnesota
Gabriel Ayọ̀ọ́lá, University of Georgia, Athens
Adémọ́lá Azeez, Federal College of Education (Lagos, Nigeria)
Adémọ́lá Babalọ́lá, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Fàtái Adéṣínà Badru, University of Lagos (Nigeria)
Olúyẹ́misí Bámgbóṣé, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Abídèmí Bọ́lárìnwá, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Niyi Coker, Jr., University of Missouri, Saint Louis
Adébọ́lá Bọ́lájókó Dasylva, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Adémọ́lá Dasylva, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Bọ́lá Dáúdà, Early Years' Education Foundation (Ìbàdàn, Nigeria)
Tolúlọpẹ́ Adétáyọ̀ Fájọbí, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Tóyìn Fálọlá, University of Texas at Austin
Adémọ́lá Kazeem Fáyẹmí, Lagos State University (Nigeria)
Babátúndé Adéshínà Faustino, University of Lagos (Nigeria)
Ọláwọlé Fámulẹ̀, University of Wisconsin – Superior
Stephen Fọlárànmí, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Enoch Olújídé Gbádégẹṣin, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Stephen D. Glazier, Yale University
Saudat Adébísí Ọláyídé Hamzat, University of Ìlọrin (Nigeria)
Samson O. Ìjàọlá, Samuel Adégbéyèga University (Ogwa, Nigeria)
Babatúndé Jaiyéọba, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Adépéjú Johnson-Bashua, Lagos State University (Nigeria)
Adéọlá Lameed, University of Lagos (Nigeria)
Moses Mábayọ̀jẹ́, Rutgers University
Kọ́léadé Odùtọ́lá, University of Florida, Gainesville
Philip Adédọ̀tun Ògúndèjì, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Benjamin Àdìsá Ògúnfọlákàn, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)
Ṣẹ́gun Ògúngbèmí, Adékúnlé Ajásin University (Àkùngbá-Àkókó, Nigeria)
Layọ̀ Ògúnlọla, University of Ìlọrin (Nigeria)
Abigail Odozi Ogwezzy-Ndisika, University of Lagos (Nigeria)
Akinloyè Òjó, University of Georgia, Athens
Olúwọlé Tẹ́wógboyè Òkéwándé, University of Ìlọrin (Nigeria)
Mutiat Títílọpẹ́ Ọládèjọ, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Olúwatóyìn M. Ọláìyá, Èkìtì State University (Adó-Èkìtì, Nigeria)
Ọmọ́léwu Ọlátúbọ̀sún, University of Ìlọrin (Nigeria)
Fúnmilọ́lá Olúnládé, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Kazeem A. Ọmọ́fóyèwá, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Bọ̀dé Ọmọ́jọlà, Mount Holyoke College/Five Colleges
Báyọ̀ Ọmọlọ́lá, Community College of Baltimore

Juliet Otsemaye, University of Lagos (Nigeria)
Bùkọ́lá Oyèníyì, Missouri State University, Springfield
Kazeem Kẹ́hìndé Sanuth, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Pamela J. Olúbùnmi Smith, University of Nebraska at Omaha
Ṣẹ́gun Ṣóètán, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Adékẹ́mi Agnes Táíwò, Èkìtì State University (Adó-Èkìtì, Nigeria)
Martin A. Tsang, Florida International University
Chinyere Ukpokolo, University of Ìbàdàn (Nigeria)
Síkírù Abíọ́nà Yusuff, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University (Ilé-Ifẹ̀, Nigeria)



Chapter 10

Songs

Saudat Adébísí Ọláyídé Hamzat

Introduction

A person's culture shapes his or her notion of art, aesthetics, poetry, song, and beauty. His culture molds his values upon which he bases his response to artistic object. Hence, the idea of the Yorùbá about song is different from any other culture. This chapter discusses the concept of song in traditional and modern contemporary Yorùbá society. The objectives of the chapter are to define and situate songs within the context of Yorùbá culture and orature; highlight the characteristic features and categories of songs; and identify the relationship that exists between songs and other arts of performance as well as their functions. The investigations were carried out by means of observation of performances, interviews with the local singers, and scholars in Music and Yorùbá Studies. The appraisal of songs in Yorùbá society depends heavily upon a cultural frame of reference that calls for a short analysis of the people.

The Yorùbá, one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, has a rich cultural history. Yorùbá cities such as Ifẹ̀ and Benin, among others, had been standing at their present sites for at least five hundred years before the European and Portuguese explorers "discovered" Yorùbá cities and kingdoms in the fifteenth century. Archeological evidence indicates that they are artistically advanced. Yorùbá society remained non-literate until the middle of the nineteenth century; they captured records of events orally. As in all human societies, they passed on knowledge, wisdom, and manners from one generation to the next generation by word of mouth. Their indigenous

practices existed before colonialism, Christianity, and Islam. In the pre-colonial or preliterate period, the Yorùbá communicated and passed on knowledge orally in forms of prose, poetry, and drama, which form the genres in Yorùbá oral tradition. This was when indigenous Yorùbá culture could be said to be at its purest form.

Nature of Yorùbá Orature and Songs

Prose narratives (*ìtàn*) are rendered in speech mode, the general mode of communication with which all the speakers are familiar. According to Fálọlá (2012), the Yorùbá represent their experiences in myths. The Yorùbá narrate their experience in mythical tales (*ìtàn ìwáṣẹ̀*), legendary tales (*ìtàn akọni*), historical accounts of migration (*ìtàn orírun/ ìtàn gidi*), and folktales (*ìtàn àlọ́*). These are done in prose form. The Yorùbá also celebrate birth, growth, and death in different ritual and festival performances, which are regarded as drama (*eré oníṣe*).

The third genre, poetry (*ewì*), is a concentrated form of imaginative creation that exploits certain word patterns and rhythmic structure to create meanings that may have social, political, or cultural implication. Poetry (*ewì*) falls under three categories: the recitation, or speech mode; the chant mode; and the song mode. According to Ilésanmí (2004: 47-49), in speech mode, adhering to the strictly tonal modulation of the language, the tone can only be high, mid, or low. However, it is possible that one can speak in a relatively high or low pitch but the relationship of the high, mid, and low tones must be maintained in the pitch of the speech mode.

The chant mode differs from the speech mode by the introduction of heightened pitch and the freedom or liberty to prolong any vowel to any length according to the idiosyncrasies of the chanting artist. Any vowel may be shortened or prolonged; the heightening of the pitch of the artist is not compelled on him but purely of his or her own free choice. However, some chanting genres may be regulated by the artist who created the piece. This, of course, is still flexible; no rigid rule binds performance.

The third group, the song mode, has its own peculiarities. It borrows from the chant mode. It relies only on the tonal property of the speech mode or extends its tone and vowel as in chant mode, but in addition it cannot just prolong the vowel indefinitely without following a regular beat of a type. The faithfulness to the regular beat gives it the song property. Euba (1975: 476-477) draws a border line between speech and songs, while Ilésanmí (2004: 47-49) explains the relationship between the chant and song mode. What one can deduce from this analysis is that the Yorùbá traditionally distinguish between *ewì* (poetry) and *orin* (song). Song has regular lyrics, in Euba's view. He describes any poetry with heightened speech as "speech-song."

One can further distinguish between songs and chants in Yorùbá through their idea about performance. Their lives revolve around performance, which was carried out orally at various occasions. The performers are *òṣèré*, and they are made up of drummers (*onílù*), dancers (*onijó*) and singers (*olórin*). The group incorporates both chanters and singers. If the Yorùbá use the same word "singers" (*olórin*) to describe oral performers, they do not differentiate chants from chanters as the Western culture will do. The art of performance, or playing *ṣíṣe eré*, is from the cradle to the grave. To perform is to play. When the child is born, the birth is greeted in one form of oratory or

the other. The rituals and the blessings, the naming ceremony and the expression of joy from various quarters flourish in oratory genres. The child hears without understanding the lullaby otherwise known as *orin arẹmọ / arẹmọtẹ́* and *aghọ́mọjọ́*. Examples are:

Gba wórówóró,
Gba wórówóró,
Bàbá rẹ lọ mú ún bọ̀ lát'Èkó.
Gbawórówóró,
Màmá rẹ ń gbadùn níyàrá.
Gba wórówóró,
Máṣe jẹ́ kára àdúgbò ó gbọ́. (Ọládàpọ̀ 2008: 46)
(Take toy,
Take toy,
Your father brought it from Lagos.
Take toy,
Your mother is enjoying in the room.
Take toy,
Don't let the neighbors hear.)

Children come together to share games and common interest. They sing and dance, run, and tell tales of animals and birds. Their riddles, jokes, tongue twisters, and other children's oral genres are all composed for them or by them to meet their educational training. Tongue twisters like the one below teach children language dexterity as well as counting or numerical system.

Ká múgbá lámù ká e lámù- ó dení.
Ká múgbá lámù ká e lámù- ó dejì....
Ká múgbá lámù ká e lámù- ó dẹ̀wá. (personal collection of author in 2015).
(Taking a calabash from pot and putting it on the pot- is the count of one.
Taking a calabash from pot and putting it on the pot - is the count of two....
Taking a calabash from pot and putting it on the pot - is the count of ten.).

Children learn to count up to ten with this song. As they grow up, they learn the arts of oratory from their parents, mates and seniors in different age groups. They ask questions on various things that bother their imagination. Children are believed to belong to a spiritual group called "Kórì cult" *ẹgbé èwe*, and they have songs. Example of such a song follows:

Kórì o *éé Arómiyọ̀* (2ce)
Fún mi lọmọ kan n gbé ṣeré (2ce)
Kórì o *ẹyẹ igbó*
Kórì o *ẹyẹ ọdàn*
Kórì lábàta elépo ló lòrí
Kórì lábàta elépo ló lòwú
Kórì lábàta abímọ má *ṣàbíkú* (Ọládàpọ̀ 2008: 36)
(Kórì! The one who sees water and gets happy
Bless me with a child to cuddle with
Kórì! The bird of the forest
Kórì! The bird of thick forest
Kórì of the swamp—he who owns palm oil owns she abutter
Kórì of the swamp—he who owns palm oil owns the cotton
Kórì of the swamp—that procreates and experience no mortality.) (My translation)

The traditional Yorùbá child experiences life as a Yorùbá through these narratives (folktales, myth, and legend), drama (festivals and rituals), and poetry (recitation, chant and song model). While some songs are acquired informally, others require formal training.

There are professional performers who are usually trained for a period of time. People put a lot of efforts to their oral professions in the vocal and instrumental artistry. As the voice is trained, the brain stores a lot of information, the hands are exercised, shyness is removed, indigenous devices are invented in order to put up a good performance, rehearsals are meticulously carried out, and sleepless nights are expended on the organization of thought before several repertories were learned by rote. They develop perfection through constant practice. These genres are properties of the community; no one person can claim authorship of them.The creator can hear new melodies in dreams and in spiritual experiences, especially worshippers under possession of the deities. Hence, the people believe that a creator is possessed by gods, spirits, or deities. No creative artist will deny the extra sensory experience which has informed his or her performances.

The three modes of recitation, chant, and song can come together in a repertoire, but they are often rendered separately. However, there is fluidity in song in Yorùbá culture; recitation could be concluded with songs. Also, chants could have some recitative exhortation. For example, the *ifá* priest can sing *ìyèrẹ̀ ifá* as concluding part of *ifá* divinatory poetry. A new bride chanting *ẹkún ìyàwó* can end it in songs. Folktale song (*orin àlọ́ àpagbè*) is used in between prose narrative. All categories of poetry recited, chanted, or sung are poetry (*ewi*) because they are structurally arranged. In other words, all songs are poetry. However, not all poetry is song.

Euba (1975) and Adẹ́ọlá (1997) agree that songs are described by their functions. The singing is described by a function to which it is associated. This means we have songs that are associated with religious, ritual, or spiritual worship or festivals (*orin ẹ̀sìn*). They are strictly used in the worship of the deities. Some of the songs are restricted to specific locations. Àrùngbè song is used by Orò worshipers in Ẹ̀gbáland, *orin òkèbàdàn* is peculiar to Ìbàdàn, and *orin agẹ́mọ* is localized in Ìjẹ̀bú Rẹ́mo. *Dadakuàdà* is associated with Ìlọrin, *wákà*, *àpàlà* are common to Ìbàdàn. Songs used to pacify twins in Ìbàdàn cannot be used to pacify ordinary child. The worshipers of ògún are all over Yorùbá land; hence the hunters' song or chant *(ìjálá orin ọdẹ)* cut across Yorùbá land. *Ìrèmọ̀jé* is used in the initiation of passage rights of a dead hunter.

Specific songs accompany specific occasions. Some songs are associated with social ceremonies like marriage, naming, house warming, birthday, and graduation ceremonies. Songs meant for some occasion cannot be used for other occasions. For example, marriage songs like orin obitun (obitun song) cannot be used at funeral rites, orin arò (dirge) will be used. An example of marriage song is:

Kogókogó mo gbágogo lójúde
Wọ́n lÁdùkẹ́ ròfì kan
Kogókogó mo gbágogo lójúde
Wọ́n l'Ádùkẹ́ ròfì kan
Aaṣọ òfì tó rà yí o ọmọ ni e e gbé jó́ (personal collection of author in 2015).
(Sounding of bell, I heard the sound of a bell

They said Àdùkẹ́ bought a traditional *òfí* attire
Sounding of bell, I heard the sound of a bell
They said Àdùkẹ́ bought a traditional *òfí* attire
This attire you bought, you will use it in caring for your baby)

Ilésanmí (2004: 7), quoting Beier (1986: 9), argues that tones of performance are one of the prudent and valid means of distinguishing the genres traditionally. The verbs used to describe the acts of reciting or chanting, as exemplified by Ilésanmí (2004: 77), can be used to distinguish between genres. Hence, genres can be sung (*kọ orin àrùngbè/ obitun*), chanted (*ké iwì egúngún*), cried (*sun ẹkúnìyàwó/ìyèrè/ìjálá/alámọ̀*), unraveled (*já àlọ́/ já àrọ̀*), praised (*ki oríkì*), broken open (*pa òwe/ àlọ́*), initiated (*dá ègè/ẹjọ́*), called (*pe ọfọ,/ṣàngó/òkú/ẹṣà*) and effected (*wú ìre*). Traditional songs and chants are mainly accomplished with some musical instrumentation such as ideophones, chordophones, membranophones, and airophones. Wherever instrumentations are used, choreography takes the floor.

Songs serve functional purpose. Entertainment (*ìdárayá*) comes first among the goals of performance. However, the use of song for therapeutic, psychological, and emotional wellbeing is exemplified in lullaby, a kind of poem or song used to soothe children to sleep. Adults also listen to music to fall asleep. It can calm disturbed nerves and it is been used to cure psychological problem. It is effective for the emotional wellbeing between lovers. The use of songs in fanning the ember of discord is also rampant. It can incite groups and individuals against each other.

Songs are used to celebrate wars and death. *Orin aro* (dirge) is for death:

À ń wa aa a ò ri
Àwa ò sùnàwa ò wo o
Àwa ò jẹun látọjọ́ méje
Kò sẹ́ni ó mọ bi baba wa rè o (Owólabí 1977: 132)
(We are searching, we cannot find him
We are not sleeping
We are not resting on our oars
We are not eating for three days
Nobody knows where our father has gone)

Orin Ògún (war songs), like this example, boosts fighters' morale:

Òní á gbóná janjanjan
Ọla á korò jogbo bí oró o
Ẹ wí fálejò kó lọ
Yée Yée Yée (Owólabí 1977: 98)
(Today will be so hot
Tomorrow will be bitter
Warn strangers to leave
Like cry of pain
The battle that the king of Ọ̀yọ́ is waging will be brutal)

Finally, songs can be used during community labor (orin amúṣẹ́yá) to boost the spirit of workers:

Ẹ ṣe wéré, ẹ dìde
Ẹ ṣe ṣàṣà, ẹ dìde

Ẹ ṣewàrà ẹ dìde
Òní lọjọ́ àáró pẹ́ (Owólabí 1 977: 51)
(Be quick, and get up
Be fast, and get up
Today is the schedule for Àáró communal work)

Vituperative songs are abusive songs frequently used among rivals and opponents. Such songs are used for virulent attack in satirical manner. It can be used to comment on social and political issues generally. Vituperative songs may be used as *orin ibawi* (desciplinary song). Such songs are used to chastise vices in the society. Singers express their indignation at the false respectability of burglars or political parties. An example of a political song follows:

Pááwà àà...
Ọlọ́wọ́ oró
Ẹ má fọwọ́ òsì gbọ́mọ mi
Pááwà, ọlọ́wọ́ oró (personal collection of author in 2015).
(Power...
Owner of the poisonous "hand"
Don't carry my children with your luckless "hand"
Power, owner of the poisonous "hand")

This song was one of the many songs used to attack the political party in power in the Nigerian political scene at various times for being too powerful. The party was the Nigerian National Democratic Party in the former Western Nigeria during the political turmoil that engulfed the country between 1963 and 1965. The party slogan was Power! Power! and the hand its symbol (Ọlátúnjí 1987: 17). The same slogan was adopted by the Peoples Democratic Party of Nigeria that ruled the country between 1998 and 2014 when All Progressive Congress took over power. Political songs can also be used to praise leaders, to gather support and to incite people against the opponents. In co-wife songs (*orin olórogún/orin olóbìnrin ilé*), rivals insult, admonish or warn one another. An example of songs that shows rivalry among co-wives is

Bíyale rọfọ ma sẹja (2ce)
Kò le dá mi ní gbèsè
Bìyálé rọ̀fọ̀ ma sẹja ò
Kò le dá mi ní gbèsè- korí ó pẹ́ (personal collection of author in 2015).
(If my senior wife prepares vegetable soup I will prepare fish (2ce)
If my senior wife prepares vegetable soup I will prepare fish
She cannot make me incur debt-apply the sense)

Songs are also used to attack any member of the society whose behavior fall short of the standard norm. Some songs are associated with age group, like the *kórì* songs that are for children cult group.

Nature of Yorùbá Songs in the Contemporary Period

Due to the influence of acculturation, education, and new faiths, traditional music has been modernized with modern musical instruments like guitar, piano, saxophone, and xylophone. Music has become an umbrella term for all sounds that are made pleasing

to the ears. They are categorized into vocal music and instrumental music. Songs belong to the vocal category. They are in the form of short poems or verse poetry and utilize a text that is poetical in nature (Euba, 1975:478). So, song is a form of music that uses words. It can be done in chorus or solo. However, there are some songs that are whistled, hooted, drummed, or hummed. Since they are not vocal, only those who understand the media of expression use them. For example, only those who understand the language of the drum can decipher it.

Yorùbá music imbibes new practices from foreign cultures as a result of their contact with other cultures. The modern artists adopt and adapt the traditional songs in their performance and in written literature. Such songs are accompanied with modern musical instruments. Folktale songs are used by contemporary musicians. For example, Fẹlá Aníkúlápó Kúti in his "afro beat", adopted the folktale song *ìyá, ìyá taakùn wálẹ̀, àlùjannkíjan*[4] (mother, mother drop the rope, *àlùjannkíjan*). Children educational poetry is used by Dáúdà Àkànmú (also known as *epo àkàrà*) in his *àwúrèbe* song:

Èní bí èní, ìyẹn lomọdé ń kawó
Èjì bí èjì, ìyẹn làgbà á tayò
Ẹ̀ta bí ẹ̀ta, ẹ jẹ́ ká tara wa lọ́rẹ
Ẹ̀rin bí ẹ̀rin, ẹní rínni là á rín
Àrún bí àrún, kọ́ba má sẹ wá lárungún
Ẹ̀fà bí ẹ̀fà, ẹ jẹ́ ká farawa mọ́ra
Èje bí èje, olúgbón ṣorò ó kìje
Ẹ̀jọ bí ẹ̀jọ, ẹní bíni là á jọ
Ẹ̀sán bí ẹ̀sán, ọba jálẹ́ ó san wá
Ẹ̀wá bí ẹ̀wá, kọ́ba má wàhálà wa
One by one, that is how children calculate money
Two by two, that is how elders calculate game of *ayò*
Three by three, let offerings be exchanged amongst us
Four by four, we exchange smiles with whomever smiles at one
Five by five, may God not make us wastrels
Six by six, let us unite among ourselves
Seven by seven, *olùgbọ́n* ritual ends on the seventh day
Eight by eight, one resembles his or her parents
Nine by nine, Lord, let our old age benefit us
Ten by ten, may God not burden us

Ìjálá is used for advertisement on NTA Ìlọrin (Ìlọrin network of Nigerian Television Authority), the largest television network in Africa as shown below:

This is a Nàìjẹ́ríá tẹlifísàn ọtọ́ritì
Tí ń bẹ nígbooro ìlú Ìlọrin
It is my considered opinion láti máa lọ́gun rẹ̀ káàkiri
Wọ́n ń gbọ́ wa ní 'bàdàn, wọ́n ń gbọ́ wa l'Ékòó
Wọ́n ń gbọ́ wa ní gbogbo àgbáyé
Ẹ wa plówó ọjà lọ́dọ̀ tí wa.
(This is Nigerian Television Authority
That is situated in Ìlọrin city
It is my considered opinion to advertise it
They listen to us all over the world
Come and advertise your product in our station.)

Yẹmí Ẹlébùìbọn adapts traditional songs in divinatory poetry *ìyẹ̀rẹ̀ ifá* in an exposition on examination malpractices:
Àṣírí ikooko ò yẹ ko tọwọ́ ajá tu
Hẹn ẹn
Àsírí ìdànwò ò gbọdọ̀ tẹnu olùkọ́ jáde
Hẹn ẹn
Ma fàṣírí ìdánwò han olùfẹ́
Hẹn ẹn
Ma fàṣírí ìdánwò han ọmọ rẹ
A kì mọ̀ mọ̀ i ṣeeru ẹ ko má hunni (2ce)
A kì mọ̀ mọ̀ i ṣeeru ẹ̀ ko má hunni ò
A kì mọ̀ mọ̀ i ṣeeru ẹ̀ ko má hunni[7]
(The secret of tiger should not be let out by the dog
Hẹn ẹ̀n (affirmation)
Examination secret should not be leaked by the teacher
Hẹn ẹ̀n (affirmation)
Do not leak examination secret to your lover
Do not leak examination secret to your children
One does not indulge in such a thing without repercussions
One does not indulge in such a thing without repercussions
One does not indulge in such a thing without repercussions)

Orin agbọ́mọjó is used for advertisement of Obron 6, a common mixture for pregnant women in the late seventies on Radio O-Y-O now Broadcasting Corporation of Ọ̀yọ́ State BCOS by the poet:

Ọmọdé yìí tóó gbabúro
Ìyá ẹ̀ tó pa láyo
Ọbrọnsíìsì ni ó yanjú ẹ̀
Ọbrọnsíìsì ni ó fi gbéra sọ
(This child is due to take a junior one
It is due time the mother is cowed down
Obron 6 will settle theissue.
Ọmọdé yìí yóó da bírà
Omọ mi yóó da bírà
Òun náà yóo re Lọ́ndọ̀nù
Bó bá tiwá re Lọ́ndọ̀nù
Òun náà yóò di Kún-ìn (Ọládàpọ̀ 2008: 32)
(This child will perform wonders
My child will perform wonders
She will also go London
Once she has gone to London
She will become the queen)

Ṣẹnwẹlẹ and *wákà* are kinds of songs associated with women in Ìlọrin and are being adapted by Christian gospel singers as Ṣẹnwẹlẹ Jésù in songs like:

Mó lé jó lórí agolo (2ce)
Bí jésù gbà mí láyè
Mò lee jó, molée jó lori agolò o
Bí jésù gbà mí láyè- kori o pé
(I can dance on the tin (2ce)
If Jesus permits me

I can dance, I can dance on the tin on the tin
If Jesus permits me)

Old tunes like *wéré*, *àpàlà*, *wórọ̀*, *dadakúàdà*, and *ṣẹnwẹlẹ* are taking new forms. The late Haruna Ìṣọ̀la's *àpàlá* has been modernized by his son, Músíliù Ìṣọ̀la. According to Músíliù Ìṣọ̀la, *Ọpọ́n àpàlà ti sún fáínálì*, ó *ti kúrò ní tàtijọ́* (level of *àpàlà* has finally moved, it has changed from the old time). Yorùbá Proverbs are being popularized by young artists like Ajífọlájìn Àdìgún also known as 9ice, who raps in Yorùbá: *Ajíṣebí Ọ̀ọ́ là á rí, Ọ̀ọ́ ò ṣe bí baba ẹnìkan*[10] (we can only see those who imitate Ọ̀ọ́, Ọ̀ọ́ does not imitate anybody's father). It is a case of old wine in new bottles.

In all periods, events and situations, the Yorùbás have hears for good songs, they consider the context, style, language use and melody of the songs. Hence, the characteristics of a singer include melodious voice. Any performer whose voice is sweet is *olóhùn oyin* or *olóhun iyọ̀*, that is, honey voiced or salt voiced. On the contrary, the singer is *olóhùn kọ̀ǹkọ̀* (toad voiced) if his voice is croaking. He or she must have knowledge of historical narrative and be current with happenings in the society. He or she must be sensitive to the needs of his or her audiences and educate them on virtues that must be imbibed and vices that should be discouraged. The success of singers today depends on how effectively the artist makes use of the living heritage of the past to cast a lasting place for himself or herself in the present.

Conclusions and Suggestions

This chapter has analyzed Yorùbá songs within the context of Yorùbá creative or artistic culture. It has highlighted the traditional oral genres, especially poetry as it concerns song. It reveals that Yorùbá songs as an aspect of Yorùbá oral poetry is meant to be sung in performance at a given social, religious, political, or informal occasions. It reveals that Singing is musical, whether accompanied by sound instrument or not. Though singing connotes celebration and entertainment, it is also used to vent ones anger in form of vituperative songs. It is used to lament sorrow and loss of life in form of dirge. It is also used to express several other emotions. It is poetical, and it has texts.

Our suggestions are that there must be a way of training academic artists and modern exponents who could perform the dual role of analyzing and perpetuating inherited artistry. We need to blend the past with the present. The performing artists of our present age have a lot to borrow from our traditional past in order to preserve our African identity. We need to elevate oratory beyond the elementary level to the tertiary and even to the pinnacle of academic excellence: The modern dramatic artists that are trained in the Universities should be trained as entrepreneurs so that when they graduate they have something to do as singers and song writers.

References

Adéọlá, Táyé. "Aesthetics in Yorùbá Music: A Case Study of the People of Ìgbòho," in Bòdé Ọmọ́jọlá (ed.), *Music and Social Dynamics in Nigeria.* Department of Performing Arts, University of Ìlọrin, 1997.

Euba, Akin. "The Interrelationship of Music and Poetry," in W. Abímbọ́lá (ed.), *Yorùbá oral Tradition Poetry Songs and Dance.* Ifẹ̀ African Language and Literature Series No.1. University of Ifẹ̀, 1975.

Fálọlá, Tóyìn (ed.). "Atlantic Yorùbá and the Expanding Frontiers of Yorùbá Culture and Politics," in *TheAfrican Diaspora: Slavery, Modernity, and Globalization.* 118-162. University of Rochester Press, 2013.

Ilesanmi, Thomas. *Yorùbá Orature andLiterature: a Cultural Analysis.* Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2004.

Owólabí, Olú. *Lísàbi Agbòǹgbò-Àkàlà.* Ibàdàn: Oxford University press, 1977.

Ọládàpọ̀, Ọlatúnbọ̀sún. *Orin Arẹmọ́ẹ́ Àti Agbọ́mọjó.* Ìbàdàn OgungbolaVentures Ltd., 2008.

Ọlátúnjí, Olátúndé. Beyond the spoken word: an African language literature experience. Inaugural Lecture. University of Ìbàdàn, Ìbàdàn, 1987.



The Onḍó's female traditional singers. In "ỌǸDÓ PEOPLE: FOREST AGRICULTURALIST YORÙBÁ COCOA FARMERS AND ARTISTS," *TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE.* Wednesday, September 3, 2014. http://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2014/09/ondo-people-forest-agriculturalist.html.