

ISSN 2141-6176

# ILORIN JOURNAL OF LINGUISTICS, LITERATURE & CULTURE



DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS & NIGERIAN LANGUAGES,  
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA

**VOL. 3, 2013**

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**ISSN 2141-6176**

Printed by  
UNILORIN PRESS

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## Cultural Identity of Yorùbá Learners of Arabic as a Second Language

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### Abstract

*Interaction of languages in situations of foreign language learning extends far beyond meanings of structural elements to acculturation and cultural identity reconstruction. Dynamic nature of culture enforces transfer of cultural elements of a language to other languages through its use by second language learners which consequently leads to the reconstruction of their cultural beliefs, values and practices consciously or unconsciously. Learning Arabic as a second language had had similar effects on the culture of its non-native learners who are majorly Muslims who embrace parts of normative Arabic Islamic cultural elements and they might not view Arabic as a foreign language to them. This paper in the light of this effect noticed some degree of reconstruction in cultural identity of learners of Arabic among native speakers of Yoruba in Nigeria. It therefore examined the extent of this cultural reconstruction in the identity of a group of native speakers of Yoruba among students of Arabic as a second language in Kwara state, Nigeria. Their responses to a questionnaire are analysed to find out the significance of each aspect of cultural identity identified and some suggestions to preserve their reformed identity are offered.*

## The Role of Aláàfin's Wives in Palace Management and in Constructing Yorùbá Royal Poetry

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the role of Aláàfin's wives in palace management and Yoruba royal poetry. In an attempt to justify the position of Aláàfin's wives, the study looks critically into *rara* version of the Aláàfin's royal poetry to demonstrate the expressive power of Yoruba women especially in palace administrations. The assumption in different quarters is that royal poetry as well as palace management are carried out by men alone. Our observation is that the formal state production of Yoruba royal poetry is ritually identified with male because of its militaristic overtone. This exclusionary approach does not allow for a complete and accurate viewpoint because *ràrà* royal chants is reserved exclusively for the wives of the Alaafin. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyse palace organization as well as the expected roles of Aláàfin's wives in the politics and administration of Oyo. After a careful examination, a conclusion is drawn that Yoruba royal poetry as a field of expression is not dying out; it's a product of a changing society being recycled from time to time by the Aláàfin's wives for historical facts, thus making them very relevant in the administration of Oyo palace. The paper adopts theory of sociology of literature in general form.

### Introduction

The most formal praises in honour of Yoruba paramount rulers are usually made by royal bards. Royal poetry is one of the most developed and elaborate oral poetic genres in Africa which is directed either publicly or privately to Kings and their Chiefs. Several scholars have devoted their attention to oral literature and to be precise, Royal poetry. Finnegan (1970, p.111) viewed it as one of the genres that belong exclusively to the Kings; he says the poetry seems "to go with a particular ethos, a stress on royal or aristocratic power and an administration for military achievement".

Royal poetry, known as '*Imbongi*' among the Zulus and '*Umúsizi* w' Unwáan in Rwanda, according to Akinyemi (2004, p.4), is also common in different parts of West Africa. The royal bards are expected to recite the praises of previous rulers and compose new ones to commemorate the achievements and qualities as well as ideologies that prevail in the society at the time of the incumbent king. In each of these performances, the ruling monarchs and their ancestors are glorified in praise poems and their deeds are also recorded in effusive and lofty languages.

### Who are the Royal Bards?

Royal bards are those who recite chants to the Kings and chiefs in the palace. There are male and female royal bards and they are attached to various royal Kings or Emirs. For instance, in the Northern parts of Nigeria, the male poets are known as '*Maroka*' while the female are '*Marokiya*'. In Yoruba society, they are known by various appellations such as '*Akigbe-Oba* (those who acclaim kings), '*Arokin-Oba* (chroniclers of the kings' genealogies), '*Akéwì-Oba*' (the king's poets), '*Apohun-Oba*' (the king's bards) or '*Oniràrà-Oba*' (the King's praise singers) (Akinyemi, 2004, p.6). The Yoruba use different musical instruments such as to accompany the chant they recite for the king such as '*Sekere*' (gourd rattles), '*Aro*' (meal chronicle) '*dùndún*' (talking drums). While drums, pipes, horns or wooden gong may be used in Northern Nigeria. It is possible in Yoruba land for the whole praise in honour of paramount rulers to take place on the drum or on horns without the use of human voice in any form.

### Relationship Between the King and the Royal Bards

In pre-colonial Yoruba society, royal bards are found in the King's palace and they reside permanently in the palace with their patrons. This arrangement of living in the palace was to facilitate a close link between the bards and the palace drummers. According to Johnson (1921, pp. 125-6):

The bards are kept in the royal service and well supported by the King. They had an apartment to themselves where they repeat daily in songs the genealogy of the kings, the principal events of their lives and other notable events in the history of the Yoruba country.

They are well fed by the King and he produces all their daily needs including shelter and clothing so, they took the chants as their means of survival and daily job. Hitherto, the bards relied absolutely on their patrons for sustenance. Many bards are now fully engaged in farming, trading, driving and so on and they only take the artistic performance as a part-time job. In addition to serving the king, some of them are in habit of entertaining guests at public functions, creating 'oriki' for them and praising them in a way that they (guests) may in turn appreciate them with tokens.

Today, royal poets or bards are still attached to the courts of many prominent Yoruba Kings, where they continue to produce well-coded oral art to edify the rulers and this includes the King's wives. However, royal bards are not just concerned with the achievements of their patrons, they also record many unpleasant historical events associated with the reign of each king.

### Theoretical Framework

The theory we want to adopt in this study is sociology of literature. Literature is about society and people living in the society. The name sociology of Literature is a combination of two fields of study: Literature and Sociology.

Scholar such as Barber (1978), Ajayi (1984, 1989), Ogunchina (1992), Ogunremi (1998), Akinyemi (2004), Olatunji (1984), Okediji

(1995), Adeyemi (2006) among others have shown that literature and the society are well inter-related. This is because, literature deals with people and how they co-exist in the society.

Sociology of literature is an attempt to understand the inter-relationship between literature and society. It postulates that a work of art does not exist in isolation and should not be studied as such. This is because a work of art is not independent of its society.

Therefore, poetry, the poet and the society are seen as inextricably bound together such that neither the poet or poetry nor the society can be considered in isolation. To understand one fully, there is need for constant reference to the other two components.

There are many schools of thoughts for sociology of literature. One school believes that if we read a literature of a particular society very well, we can know more about that society which shows that literature or literary works exhibits society. So, they believe that we can see the shadow of the society through the mirror of literature.

Adeyemi (2006, p.31) quoting from Hoggart (1966) established that, literary knowledge is very useful for sociologist. He says: "without the full literary witness, the student of society will be blind to the fullness of a society". This tries to explain that full knowledge about the literature of people is necessary to be able to have a good understanding of the society since society and the work of literature and the writer are three things that cannot be separated.

However, those in the second school of thought believe that we should not focus on the society or the writer but the production of the literary works in terms of buying and selling of the works. Those who listen to that literary art being produced, those who buy it and the experience of the producers. According to one of the disciples of this theory, Wismatt (1970, p.3) "... knowing the biography and state of mind of an artist should not be a pre-condition before his work can be studied ..."

Although this view is equally important in any literary work, it is not enough to critically analyse a work of art hence, this paper would be in support of those in the first school of thought who believe that literature is about people and how they reason in a particular society. As Scott (1962, p.123) rightly puts it that, a work of literature represents the

view of the writer concerning the society. He says:

The sociological critic therefore is interested in understanding the social milieu and the extent to which and manner in which the artist responds to the society in his work.

This endeavour does not seek to re-write the social history of Oyo, rather it is an attempt at assessing the royal bard's reaction to the historical events occurring within their society. Their respective views concerning what is happening in the society remains important because it can help to inform, prove, or disprove the material of written history.

From the above, we can deduce that what a literary critic should try to investigate in a work of art is how such work responds to issues affecting the particular society he is talking about in his work.

#### Functions of the King's wives (Ayaba) in Royal Chants

The documentation of royal poetry exclusively chanted by the King's wives (Ayaba) is to demonstrate the expressive power of Yoruba women. It is also to emphasize the valuable nature of royal poetry as a source of data on Yoruba aesthetics, culture, history and political development. These will be made clearer when we analyse vividly the roles of the 'Ayaba' in the politics and administration of Oyo and the position of the Alaáfin's wives.

Although, the powers which the *Ayaba* enjoyed had diminished with changing political scenes, they are still crucial in the hierarchical set up of Oyo palace. Johnson (1921, pp. 53-66) on Oyo, stresses the ritual functions of these 'Ayaba'. He also shows that the consent of the former Alaáfin's wives is vital to the final selection of future Alaáfin. An analysis of the palace organization will show us the expected roles of the wives (*Ayaba*) in the politics and administration of Oyo.

#### Royal Poetry Given by King's Wives (Ayaba) in Oyo

There are two different chants which are royal in Oyo. These are 'Rará', and 'Yùngbà' chants and they are not performed regularly in other social context excerpt in the King's court.

The performance of the royal chants is reserved exclusively for the wives of the incumbent Alaáfin and his predecessors. Although, the chant is confined to the palace of the Alaáfin, it is not uncommon for its chanters to perform occasionally for the King in public like during the coronation of a new Alaáfin, when performing funeral rites, during festivals and so on.

The delivery of 'Yùngbà' is performed to the accompaniment of calabash beating known as 'igbá tii' while 'rará' is just chanted by the wives without beating of the calabash but at the end, the chanter may sing any of the royal songs for the king. The first aesthetic significance of royal chants is in its mode of delivery. The human mind is receptive to the chant because of its auditory, perception pleasantness, and the participants are never bored during its delivery.

Furthermore, the royal chanters use different kinds of figurative languages which make them free to express their opinions on very sensitive issues that may not be too favourable to the Alaáfin. Such issues are discussed by the poets without any fear of censorship or retribution from the King. However, the royal chanters (*Ayaba*) are regarded as the Alaáfin's personal entertainers. Their chants are used to glorify the position of the Alaáfin, to demonstrate the strength and power of the occupant of the position, and to lull others in the society into humility and silence before the King's dominant power. They use their art to further confirm Alaáfin's sacredness. For instance, Alaáfin Adeyemi III is praised as:

*Ikú bàbáyèyè*

*Alase,*

*Ètẹ̀jì òrìsà*

*Ikú tó pa onigbanso Akesan*

*Tó f'Alaáfin serí*

*Ikú tii pa guru wole akin.*

Death the Almighty,

The ruler, commander and wielder of authority,

Next in rank to the gods

Death that killed the calabash mender at Akesan

And made the Alaáfin its witness.

Death that intrudes into the house of a brave person suddenly.

The constant association and identification of the Alááfin's royalty with the "divinities" and "death" in itself is a psychological blackmail couched in verbal intimidation. All these, are in line with the sacredness of the position of the Alááfin made more pronounced by his wives (chanters).

### Contemporary and Traditional Descriptive Analysis of the *Ayaba*' in Palace Organization

The Oba's wives are collectively regarded as Aya-Oba that is, Alááfin's wives. Although, few of them are his real wives, the majority of the women are wives of his predecessors who are retained in the palace to perform ritual, administrative and political functions as well as to teach the incumbent Alááfin's wives how to chant the *Obas oriki*. These experienced women are collectively regarded as "mothers" and each mother acts as religious, administrative and political adviser to her "child". Thus, the *iyá-Oba* (Oba's mother) is the official mother of the Alááfin, *iyá-adodo* is the mother of *Aremo* (King's first son). Each of the eunuchs (*Iwefá*) has his individual symbolic "mother" and collective "mothers" through whom he approaches the Alááfin. Each of the *Ilàrì* also has his individual mother, and he regards the other women in the palace as collective mothers.

This arrangement is meant to serve both religious and political functions. The political functions could best be understood through an examination of the religious functions of the *Ayaba*. The experienced ones among the women are made the chief priestesses of the principal *Òrìsà* as *Ògún*, *Èsù*, *Sango*, *Mole* and so on. There is no doubt, that most of these palace women have varied experiences as many of them have lived through the reigns of two or more Alááfin.

The *Ayaba* are called by the *Òrìsà* each serves and their compound are called by the name of the *òrìsà*. For instance, *iyá ilé orí* is the head of the compound of *Ògún*. As the heads of these compounds, these women organize the activities of the women under them and their word is law. They are even more feared in the palace than the Alááfin. Their anger could hamper the social, spiritual and political life of the

palace. They have firm control over the junior wives and the children in the palace. The Alááfin usually seeks for their co-operation through regular feasting, abundant hot drinks and gifts. The Alááfin may rebuke any one of them in public but at the dead of night, he would go and appease her, at times with presents and promises.

Most of the tensions in the palace are removed by the daily feasting, dancing, drinking especially recitation of Alááfin's *oriki* by the *Ayaba*. Both the palace women, *Ayaba* and the inmates of the palace enjoy these daily feasting so much that nothing could make them wish to miss them. It would appear that the Alááfin has no problem in the palace so long as he allows these women and abundance of drinks.

### Religious Functions of the *Ayaba*

The importance of the *Ayaba* is best seen in the cult of the hero-deity to which they are attached on individual basis. The *iyá-Naso*, *iyá monari*, and *iyá-dàáfin-iku* are responsible for the worship of Sango on behalf of the Alááfin. *iyá ilé orí* is the priestess in charge of the King's inner head or destiny. She kept the symbol of the King's *Orí* in her apartment and worships it on behalf of the Alááfin. Today, all the *Ayaba* join the *iyá-Ilé-Orí* on the last Thursday of the month to perform this ritual.

'*iyá-Ilé-mole*' is responsible for the maintenance of the King's *Ifá* and other divination paraphernalia. While '*iyá-Ilé-Òdùdunwà*' is the priestess of the hero-deity *Òdùdunwà*, '*iyá-ode*' is charged with the worship of *Ògún*. *iyá-Òrìsà-nlá* is for *Obatala*, the god of creation. One may conclude that, because of the involvement of the Alááfin himself in the worship of these deities, his palace is regarded as the religious headquarters on matters relating to religion, and on each of these occasions afore-mentioned, the *Ayaba* must recite Alááfin's *oriki* to eulogize and praise him as well as his ancestors.

### Economic Functions of the *Ayaba*

These palace *Ayaba* also control the economy and the social life of Oyo in a peculiar way. One of them is *iyá-ilé eye* (the mother in the compounds of the birds). This woman is the chief priestess of *Èsù* and she has '*Òsì-efá*' as her official 'son' and two palace *ilàrì* (*eni-oja okunrin*

and *eni-oja obinrin*) who assist her in the organization of the *Akesan* market. In the market are appointed the *aroja* who is the market attendant. They make arrangement for the housing of distant traders, fix prices and settle disputes in the market, and collect market fees in cash and in kind.

The '*Ìyá-Ilé* eye' and the other palace women are in charge of '*Èsù-ojà*' (The *Èsù* in the market). The ritual performed in the shrine of this principal *Èsù* in the market is to convince the community that the Alááfin and his wives are so concerned with their economic and spiritual well-being. She is also expected to control the market women and to see to the reduction of tensions and disputes that are associated with women.

### Administrative Functions

Administratively, the case of '*Iyalagbon*' or '*Iya-Oba*', *Are-orite*' and '*Iya-ile agbo*' perform administrative function in the palace of Oyo. Since the Alááfin is not supposed to have a living biological mother, even if he has, the mother would be asked to go and "rest" as soon as his son is proclaimed the Alááfin. The oldest of the women known as '*Ìyálágbón*' would be the '*ìyá-oba*' (the King's mother) as soon as the Alááfin is installed. She is also known as '*Iyalagbon*' as she is expected to participate actively in the celebration of *Orun* festival with the Alááfin.

Nevertheless, it was the '*Ìyákere* who held the highest rank and wielded the greatest power in the palace of the Alááfin. It was her prerogative and responsibility to crown the new Alááfin at the *Koso* shrine of *Sango* during the coronation ceremonies. The royal messengers were also usually created in her apartment where she maintained the '*sigidi*' (statue of day) being the mark of each messenger.

'*Are orite*' is a young woman, one of the younger wives who serves as the King's personal attendant. She ensures that the King's meals are properly prepared and that his bed was well-made. She cannot retire to her apartment until she confirmed the Alááfin had gone to bed.

The last in the category of *Ayaba* who performs administrative duties for the Alááfin is the '*Iya-ilé-agbo*'. She is also like a personal assistant to the Alááfin. She maintained the Alááfin's herbal medicines by ensuring that the King's *àgúnmu* (locally prepared herbal powered

medicines and *agbo* (infusions) are in good condition, fit and ready for use all the time).

### Social Functions of the *Ayaba*

Socially, an exceptional case is that of the holder of the '*iyamole*' that takes care of the '*Bàrà*' (royal mausoleum). She does not live in the palace like other women but at the *Bàrà* where she worships the spirits of the departed kings by calling out their masque *egúngún* in a room within her apartment. The Alááfin, who must kneel for her in greetings, addresses her as '*Bàbá*' (Father).

Another important role she takes socially is that, it is in her own apartment at the '*Bàrà*' that the new wives are taught the art of *oriki* of the previous and incumbent king.

A network of control, the best that could be observed in music, dancing, style of dressing and other social phenomena can be seen in the palace of Alááfin. People come from far and near to visit the palace because, it is there that the best in Oyo can be seen. Little wonder, why they receive so much public applaud and money from the people and the Alááfin whenever they recite the *oriki* of the Alááfin in public functions.

It will, therefore, be realized that although the palace women are kept in their own world within the palace walls, they influence the society in matters relating to economy, social, administration and politics in Oyo.

### Characteristic Features of Yoruba Royal Poetry

Yoruba royal poetry has its own characteristics that make differentiate it from other verbal arts. According to Akinyemi (2004, p.14), the features are: citation of names, predominant use of kinship terminology, references to epithets, historical allusions and references to lineage *oriki*.

Olatunji (1984, pp.87-107) categorised the features of *oriki* in general into five parts namely: (a) High incidence of nominalisations (b) preponderance of kinship terms (c) multiple reference to the subject, (d) multiplicity of oblique references to historical and/or mythological events and (e) fluidity of structure and content. Here, we are going to examine the predominant features of Alááfin *oriki* as contained in the

*oriki* of the incumbent Alaafin and his predecessors.

### Multiple References to the Subject of the *Oriki*

Citation of names of Kings is common to Yoruba royal poetry. This is the device whereby the king is referred to by different kinds of names. It saves Yoruba *Oriki* from monotony and helps to explore all the names, the connections and the achievements or attributes of the king in the over-riding desire to characterize him. An example in Alaafin's, *oriki* is:

Layiwola Àtandá omo Adeyemi

'Poju omo Atibà

'Poju omo Amori

Layiwola bàbá yèyè

a-tó-bàa-tí perí

omo pòó omo Lawon

O dùn l'áwo

O dùn nimule

Àtandá ti mo gbekele

Ó ní yawo kú

Nnkan ò ní s'Alayeluwa

Omo Adeyemi

Pelenge bii Fúlání

Baba Baátúndé.

Adeyemi (2010, p.115)

Layiwola Atanda son of Adeyemi

'Poju child of Atibà

Polu child of Amori

Layiwola the almighty

One who is worthy of his praises

Offspring of pópó, child of Lawon

You are reliable

You are good as confident

Àtandá that I rely on

Will not die prematurely

Nothing will happen to His royal Highness

Child of Adeyemi

Slim like the Fúlání

Father of Baátúndé.

Alaafin Adeyemi III is referred to in several ways. Among his personal names and praise names are: Olayiwola, Àtandá, Adepoju, Durojaye etc. which points to royalty in Yoruba society. He is linked to his father and predecessor in the first to third lines and finally, to his first son Babátúndé.

We can realize from the above that, a substantial part of Yoruba royal poetry also consists of names of past holders of every particular Kinship title. As a result of this, Yoruba traditional royal bards have been referred to as the "chronicler of the King's genealogy" reminding the incumbent King of histories and great deeds of his predecessors so that he may uphold tradition.

### Predominant Use of Kinship Terminology

Another feature of royal poetry is the preponderant use of kinship terminologies that line the subject to his relations and forebears. This feature gives the royal poets the opportunity to expose some of the qualities of greatness and achievements of the kings. The most common kinship terms usually used in royal poetry are '*omo*' (child of or offspring of), '*baba*' (father of), and '*oko*' (husband of) as shown in this example:

a-gbo-sá-sá-má sàá

Baba Babátúndé

Àtandá baba kúdí

Ikú bàbá yèyè

Alase

Èkejì òrìsà

Òrìsà baba Àkèé

Òòsà oko Tunrayo

Oko Ojuolape

Baba Latifatu

Àtandá omo Pópó

Oba l'omo Adeyemi

Akinyemi (2004, p.241)

He-who-hears- "run! Run!" but-refuses-to-run  
 Father of Babátundé  
 Àtandá, Father of Kúdí  
 Àtandá, child of the gods  
 Death, the almighty  
 The ruler, commander and wielder of Authority  
 Next in rank to the gods  
 The gods, father of Akee  
 The god, husband of Tunrayo  
 Husband of Ojuolape  
 Father of Latifatu  
 Atandá, Offspring of Pópó  
 Child of Adeyemi is the King.

In this example, to establish the greatness of Alááfin, he is associated with his children Babatunde (line 2), Kudi (line 3), Akee (line 8) and Latifatu (line 110). He is also acclaimed as the husband of his wives. Tunrayo (line 9) and Ojuolape (line 10). Omo cannot always be taken to mean "child of, occasionally, it serves as a term to link the subject with his ancestors and forebears, that is why it is translated sometimes as "offspring of". For instance, in line 12, Alááfin is linked to his forebears Pópó as the "offspring of Pópó". Therefore, kinship terms that link the king to his forebears in Yoruba royal poetry are meant to confirm the right of the person concerned to the throne and also to challenge him to achieve the greatness of his forebears. These (kinship terms) that connect the king to his wives and children, who are considered to be marks of his greatness in the society, are meant to confirm the right of the incumbent's children to the throne.

### References to the King's Epithets

Epithets of Kings are presented in figurative terms in royal poetry. These terms may emphasize the emotional make-up of the kings or underscore their greatness. For instance, the allegation that Alááfin *Lawani Agogo-Ija* intentionally cripple a young man by smashing his ankles and knees with a heavy blacksmith's hammer, later became a reference point in his praise name:

Alagbede òkè Akesan

Kí iroko, kí irádá  
 Òun naa ló fele  
 R'olaniran bí agogo  
 A-mú-bí-eyá Dagbandaya  
 A-dá-má s'òjo

Ajayi (1989, p.11)

The blacksmith at the upper of Akesan  
 That forges neither hoes nor cutlasses  
 It was him who gently  
 Forgoes Olaniran like a gong  
 One-who-is-as-sharp-as-the-eya  
 Knife Dagbandaya

One-who-does-not-behave-cravenly-in-times-of-crises  
 Yoruba royal bards is dominated by *oriki* of the kings in separate unit but which had been accumulated over periods of time referring to their qualities, events associated with them, their character, which are highly specific. Lets look at this example:

Èmi nikan ò lè sùn  
 Ilé ní tí m'òbínrin e lowo  
 Gbádéjókòò lo áájì  
 Ó mú Aláájà lo  
 Alabi okoo Aláájà lo  
 He who cannot sleep alone,  
 Will better take his wife along with him  
 (where never he goes)  
 Gbádéjókòò went on holy pilgrimage (to Mecca)  
 He took along with him his wife

Alabi, husband of Alhaja

In this example, the poet acclaim the Alááfin Adeyemi II for his lust for women. References to incidents like these ones are not meant to discredit the kings, rather they are used to confirm their power of authority, boost their image and enhance their position.

### Multiplicity of Historical Events

In Yoruba royal poetry, references are made to historical and mythological events. In the following excerpt, a royal poet gives some

salient historical information on the occasion of Oba Lámídi Adeyemi III the incumbent Alááfin of Oyo to the throne:

Layiwola, Oba lomo Lawoyin  
 Won kowe ikoko  
 Won kowe ibábá  
 Káfèsi, afobaje  
 Ni ò gboro o won  
 Àbátá-se-keke-gbale  
 Won difá dífá.  
 Owo won lu  
 Won jataare títí  
 Eeke gbogbo won dàpò  
 Òògùn kan ò r'Àtandá mo  
 Oba lomo Adeyemi

Akinyemi (2004, p.237)

Layiwola, child of Lawoyin is the king  
 They wrote several protest letters  
 They wrote several petitions  
 Your royal majesty, the kingmakers  
 Refused to listen to them  
 Swamp-that-takes-over-the-whole-place-in-style  
 They consulted Ifá on several occasions  
 Till they had hole on their hands  
 They ate several alligator pepper  
 To the extent that their cheeks got slackened  
 Atandá cannot be afflicted by any charm  
 Child of Adeyemi is the King.

The decision of members of the Council of Oyo kingmakers to stand by the nomination of Alááfin Adeyemi III in spite of protests, petitions, and legal suits instituted against his appointment by the opposition accounted for this portion of royal poetry in honour of the Alááfin in retrospect. Another example here is:

Dàámú – Dàábò  
 Ó dàámú àlèjò,  
 Ó dàámú onílé

Àtandá ogun tí dàámú afúnjää-má pon'mo.  
 Adeyemi (2004, p.118)

The famed confuser  
 You confused the stranger  
 You confused the owner of the house  
 Àtandá ògùn, who confused those who  
 tie the long scarf but carry no babies  
 (policeman with their cummerbunds).

Oba Adeyemi is called the confuser. This is an allusion to the struggles that preceded his installation. By his appearance on the scene, he confused and defeated important aspirant, prince Bello Sàndà Adeyemi who was also a policeman.

Obamselu (1966, p.48) observes that, these references have been seen as obscure parochialism which never allows the poetry to emerge into universal human experience. This may be so, seeing that the Yoruba royal poetry deals with a particular subject in a particular social and historical context.

### References to Lineage *Oriki*

References to *oriki-orile* of Yoruba kings in pre-modern royal poetry are often very brief and short. The royal bards lay more emphasis on the personal *oriki* of the kings at the expense of their *oriki orile* so as to project the image of the personality who occupies the kingship position but in contemporary royal bards, lineage *oriki (oriki orile)* is heavily rely on.

The incorporation of *oriki orile* of a Yoruba paramount ruler into his praises is meant to affirm the right of that particular ruler to the position which he held through his descent, from those predecessors whose great deeds were praised. Karin Barber (1991, p.166) explains that *oriki orile* tells each individual where he or she belongs in the community. They establish individual on the social map, and give him or her a background without which he or she would scarcely exist as a social being. In the following excerpt, excerpt, specific references are made to the lineage *oriki* of the Alááfin:

Eso Ikòyí  
 Eyin le ti mú Ikòyí rode

Ká jí, ká máa díra ogun  
 Yánbiólú, ará Eso sùnde  
 Yánbiólú, ará Eso èé délé pé  
 Oníkòyí ò sinmi ogun  
 Àkànbí ní 'dúó dè mí!"  
 Omo ogún apó  
 Àkànbí ní 'dúó dè mí~'  
 Omo eru ofa  
 Dóó dè mí, omo àádorin Eso  
 Omo olugbon-on Sáakin  
 Oseeee Ìkòyí! Àkànbí  
 Origun merin lee sígun nílée yin  
 Ereerin ni mo mo  
 Alápó a gba wájú nílé Ìkòyí  
 Olofa a gbààrin  
 Aláàrin a gbàbon  
 Alákátànpò ní somo ikeyin ògún  
 Omo agbon tí éé ríkú sá ...

Akinyemi (2004, p.43)

The war captains of Ìkòyí  
 You have summoned the children of Ìkòyí  
 Let us arm ourselves for battle when  
 we make up  
 Yánbiólú the war captain who sleeps outside  
 Yánbiólú the war captain who does  
 not come home in complete form  
 The ruler of Ìkòyí who is never tired of wars  
 Àkànbí says 'wait for me!"  
 Offspring of twenty quivers  
 Àkànbí says 'wait for me!"  
 Offspring of a load of arrows  
 Wait for me, offspring of seventy war captains  
 Offspring of *Olugbon in Saakin*  
 Àkànbí is a true descendant of Ìkòyí  
 You normally wage war at hour corners in your family

And, I know the four  
 The giver, carrier is usually in front in Ìkòyí  
 The arrow carrier takes the middle position  
 The bow carrier is usually the last person  
 Offspring of the 'basket' that  
 does not run away from death ...

We can see from this excerpt that lineage *oriki* is one of the principal means by which groups of people who regard themselves as kin recognise each other and asserts their unity.

### Oyo Alaáfin's Society

The Yoruba nation exhibits a highly developed aristocratic system of governance based on a set of traditional hierarchical structure that holds the king as the nation's head.

By the 17th century, the old Oyo empire, under the sovereignty of the Alaáfin was the largest and most powerful political unit in Yoruba land. The empire developed a political organization that entrenched the authority of the Alaáfin in all the entire towns and villages under his sovereignty. With the fall of the empire in 1835 and the political developments that followed, the extent of authority and power of the Alaáfin reduced considerably. However, royal bards have held an important place in reconstructing the history of Oyo because they have been documenting the regime changes in the oral productions that they create in honour of each succeeding Alaáfin.

### Conclusion

This work had critically analysed the role of women; the king's wives in the administration of Oyo palace. In this study, we have revealed that the king's wives perform religious, political, social, etc. functions in the palace and the society at large. They adopt materials for royal poetry from their respective "mothers" in the palace for entertaining their husband and public at social gatherings. As a result of this development, the royal poetry has developed from its confinement as royal music to a form of social music used in entertaining the nobles aside from the king.

Yoruba royal poetry as a field of expression is not dying out; it's a

product of a changing society and its being recycled from time to time by the royal bards and the *Ayaba*, for historical facts. Although, one needs to be very cautious in assessing the value of the poetry for historical facts, because they are not primarily historical records, but poems with historical allusions. So, one must keep in mind the poetry's psychological function and aesthetic qualities that may occasionally distort the facts being described.

To those outside the culture and those who have lost contact with their cultural and literary roots, much of the references mentioned would be lost without an accompanying commentary. The so-called obscurity in the *oriki* does not, as Obumelu (1966) thinks, arise from the syntax or lexical items in *oriki*, it arises from the oblique references; and in spite of this obscurity, the royal praise has its greatness among the Yoruba who assess it by its total meaning.

We cannot use foreign conventions to determine the greatness of our literature nor can one talk of universal criteria. An awareness of the sociological and cultural background of a people is necessary for a deep appreciation of their literature. Whoever wishes to experience the literature of other people, therefore, has to make that mental effort, and not less is expected when the *oriki* of Alááfin is concerned.

It is observed that greater percentage of the composition of the royal poetry in the contemporary period when compared to the production of the pre-colonial bards usually made up of chronological listing of the names of the past kings.

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