

ORAL PERFORMANCE OF ÌRÈGÚN MUSIC IN YAGBALAND, KOGI STATE, NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Performance is one of the major arts in most African countries. Among the Yoruba in Nigeria several genre of oral performance has been researched and documented. These include the ijala, iwi, oriki ekun iyawo, Iyere Ifa, iwure, among others. However, very little attention and studies have been committed to oral performance of Ìrègún chants and songs in Yagbaland. This paper, therefore, focuses on the evaluation of oral performance of Ìrègún chants and songs among Yagba people in Kogi State, located in North central of Nigeria. Primary data were collected through 3 In-depth and 3 Key Informant interviews of leaders and members of Ìrègún musical groups. In addition to 3 Participant Observation and 3 Non-Participant Observation methods from Yagba-West, Yagba-East and Mopamuro Local Government Areas of Kogi State, music recordings, photographs of Ìrègún performances, and 6 chants were purposefully sampled. Secondary data were collected through library, archival and Internet sources. Although closely interwoven, Ìrègún performance is structured into preparation, actual and post-performance activities. While chanting, singing, playing of musical instruments and dancing forms the performance dimensions. Ire-gun music serves as veritable mirror and cultural preserver in Yagba communities.

Keywords: Ire-gun Music; Performance; Yagbaland; Chants and Songs

Introduction

Performance of oral genre varies in Yoruba culture as varied as contexts for performance. In essence, oral performance can only be realized when it is actually performed. Oral performance necessarily developed its own methodology and its artistic approach basically in the mouth of the performer. This paper focuses on the evaluation of performance practice of Ìrègún music. Ìrègún chants and songs is an indigenous music typology of Yagba people in Kogi State, Nigeria. It is a satirical and praise genre, performed by adult men and women with a lead vocalist, and uses imagery to critique social ills and exposes deviant members of the society. Iregun singers satirises boaster who takes unnecessary credit for helps rendered to others. The musician also sings the praise names of philanthropists who helped others and do not take unnecessary credits. In this way, Ìrègún music, through satire and praise, has played very significant roles in the social life of the Yagba communities.

The Concept of Ìrègún

Ìrègún is a concept among Yorùbá ethnic group which means glorying as a result of help rendered to another person and making such effort known to others. According to Yorùbá dictionary, Ìrègún means *sise ògó lóri isé rere tí enìkan se fún enìkejì fún àpere kí enìkan so wí pé kí kibáse torí tẹ̀mi kòlẹ̀ dé ipò tí ó wà ye o.* (That is, irègún means taking glory unnecessarily for help rendered to others. For instance a statement like if not for me he cannot get to that position). In the album of Olátúnjí (2011), he refers to God as *Oba ton sore lai se 'règún.* Likewise in some of the Yorùbá proverbs/adage we have statement like “*Arise ni arikà, arikà ni baba irégú. Ohun tí a bá se ní òní, òrò ìtàn ni bí ó di òlà*”- what you have done is what people will recollect about you). It, therefore, means that irègún word is used in different situations, like rallying, insulting, and mocking others. Also, it is used in remembering past events that takes place in the society. One of my informants rightly explains that irègún is used to remember past event that people have done whether good or bad. Irègún songs, therefore, focuses on insult, rallying and mocking originally. It is also used to remember the activities of individuals in the community, who have made the community proud. Socio-cultural studies that examine cultural practices among the Yagba in Kogi state of Nigeria have been extensively carried out by such scholars as Ijagbemi (1976), Iyekolo (2000, 2009), and Metiboba (1998). These studies have resulted in the documentation of Yagba cultural practices such as traditional belief system, funeral rites, politics and kinship. Also many scholars have researched into different musical typology of Yoruba people among them are Barber (1991), Vidal (2012), Adedeji (1998, 2004), Ajibade (2013) Omojola (2006, 2012)

and Euba (1990) among others. However, in-depth ethnomusicological studies of Yagba musical practices, particularly the performance of Ìrègún chants and songs are still largely unavailable. Apart from sketchy comments by Iyekolo (2000), within which the pictures of the musical instruments used in Yagbaland including the ones used in Ìrègún music and performances were shown, no detailed study has been carried out on the performance of Ìrègún chants and songs.

This paper, therefore, investigates the performance of Ìrègún chants and songs in Yagbaland. The aim of this paper is to analyse chants and songs performances during the different stages of Ìrègún performances deployed for burial, and marriage ceremonies. Other objectives are to examine the uniqueness of the orality in Yagbaland. Yagbaland is in the present-day Kogi State located at the north-central part of Nigeria and situated along longitude 7.30o to 9.34o E and 7o to 8o N. See Map, examples 1, and 2 on Yagbà, Okun-Yorùbá, and Nigeria where Kogi state is situated. This area is most often referred to as the Middle-Belt region of Nigeria inhabited by other ethnic groups like the Ebira, Tiv, Igbomina1, among others (Iyekòlò, 2006). The Yagbà were formally under Kabba Province in northern region with the headquarters in Kaduna. However, following the creation of six states out of the northern region in 1967, it became part of Kwara state with headquarters in Ilorin. Further restructuring of the country in 1991 by the then military Head-of-State, General Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida led to the creation of more states including Kogi State with headquarters in Lokoja. Kogi state has three major ethnic groups –Igala2, Ebira3 and the Yorùbá-Okun people. Kogi State comprises of 21 local government areas. Yagbà ethnic group falls under the Kogi West Senatorial District which incorporates all of Okun land. These include Yagbà-East, Yagbà-West, Mopa-Muro Local Government Areas, Owé and Bùnù in Kàbbà/Bùnù Local Government Area; Ìjùmú and Gbede in Ìjùmú Local Government Area. Yagbà has an area of 3,519 km², and has boundaries with the Nupe and Ìgbóminà in the north, the Èkitì and Ondo in the south and south west, Ìjùmú and Bùnù in the south-east and east.

Yagbà is one of the minority groups in Kogi State of Nigeria. There are over seventy-five towns, villages and hamlets. Following the 2006 census, the population of Yagbà people was estimated to be three hundred and thirty-three thousand, two hundred and ten-333,210 (Nigeria LGAs population, internet, 2009). Yagbaland has an undulating contour marked by dotted chains of hills interspersed with small rivers. The climate of Yagbà is tropical, with two seasons: raining and dry seasons. The raining season extends from April to October, while between November and March the weather is dry. During the early part of the dry season, the Harmattan wind from the Sahara sweeps across Yagbaland, resulting in relative low weather temperature.

Oral history reveals that the Yàgbà are Yorùbá and descendants of a renowned Princess from Oyo, who, in her later life, was called Ìyá-àgbà (old woman) from which the word Yàgbà was derived (Iyekòlò, 2000, and 2006). She led a group of immigrants from Old Oyo, and settled at Akata-Ere in the present Yàgbà West Local Government Area of Kogi State, over four hundred years ago. Iyekòlò reports that some Yàgbà people claim they are from Ile-Ife. The Yàgbà from Ilé-Ifè include Yàgbà from Mopa, Ifè-Olúkòtún, Èjùkù and Ìsánlú communities. He confirms the periodic visits of Yàgbà Ifá priests to Ilé-Ifè for consultations.

Simoyan (1991) reports that some of those who settled in Akata-Ere later left to settle at iláì, now in Mopa-Muro LGA. Another group moved to settle in Awoyo in southeastern part of Yàgbà in the present Yàgbà East L.G.A. Métibóba (2006) explains that the expression Yàgbà-Yorùbá is used to refer to a distinct socio-linguistic unit of the Yorùbá cultural group. The term okun³ is a mode of salutation common but not exclusive to the area. Yàgbà therefore, refers to the people and their language and is applied to the geographical area which they occupy. Johnson (1921) notes that the Yàgbà are north-easterly sub-ethnic groups of the Yorùbá; they are distinguished by their long tribal marks on each cheek meeting at an angle of the mouth. Today, just a few elderly people can be seen with marks, as they are no longer in vogue due to modernization. Formerly, Yàgbà villages consisted of a number of units, independent of one another and recognizing no central authority. Ire-gun music is one of the major social-cultural musical heritage of Yagba people and it is been passed from generation to generation among the performers. It is also pertinent to know that iregun chants performers vary their performances base on the functions and ceremonies. During wedding it is not a strange things to see performers singing satirical songs before, during and after the wedding ceremonies. They also sing the praise names of individuals before, during and after performances.

For this paper three communities were selected in from the three Local Government Areas in Yagba land; Isanlu in Yagba-East L.G.A, Egbe in Yagba-West L.G.A and Mopa in Mopa-Muro Local Government Area where the practitioners live. The researcher carried out the research using qualitative in sourcing for data. Which include three Focus Group Discussions. This was done with each performers in each LGA. Also personal interviews were conducted with leaders of the performers in each of the LGAs.

Performance in Africa

Ilesanmi (1998) explains that chants and songs are two of the five major aspects of music, the other aspects being recitation, instrumentation and choreography. In appealing to human emotions, music has preserved the unwritten records of

the non-literate age in forms of festivals, rituals and many other socio-linguistic interactions. Even at the alphabetic age, many records are kept in poetic musical forms whose origins are undoubtedly oral and musical. Omojola (2006) notes that musical performances of traditional music do derive meaning and relevance from their association with non-musical events and that they often attract wide and open participation. Such performances are often led by a group of professionals who possess a systematic knowledge of their music, and whose composition and performances are underlined by culturally defined philosophy, in which various musical elements like rhythm, melody, instrumentation and formal organization are carefully defined and judiciously combined to achieve desired effects. Musical performance in Africa maintains an integral relationship with other aspects of life. A notable feature of this interaction, is the fact that music is often performed in a multi-media context in which dance, elaborate costume, mime, poetry and drama are featured in a total theatre spectacle (Omojola 2006:17). The location of this total theatre spectacle within the context of religious, social and political activities underlines the indigenous perception of music. These musicians who lead the performances and the community who, in addition, provide critical assessment of the performances, take part by dancing, singing and clapping.

Samuel (2009) notes that within traditional music performances in Nigeria, social roles held by the community can be represented, reinforced, commented upon and even reversed. The musical arena does serve as a forum for such open expression and commentary. Samuel (2009), on the performance of *dundun* musicians points out that *dundun* drums combines both musical (ensemble leading) role as well as speech surrogate role. Euba (1990) as cited by Samuel (2009), distinguishes three ways by which *iyaaalu* utilizes literary materials in performance. The first is when *iyaaalu dundun* plays solo as an organ of direct speech without musical attributes; the second instance is when it talks in musical context with the secondary instruments performing purely musical role. The third is when the *iyaaalu* imitates the voice- that is, singing a literary text.

Ogli (2010) asserts that chanting assumes a style that is midway between singing and speaking. He notes that in many African royal courts such as that of the *Alaafin* of Oyo and *Atta* of Igala, chants exist and are described as court poetry which is, as an institutionalized art, meant to revere a hero by recreating his achievements in verse. Vidal (1971) defines it as poetry or stylized speech sung to music. Bamgbose (1966), Abimbola (1968), Vidal (1971), Babalolá (1976), Olatunji (1980), Adediji (1992), Adeleke (2008) and Adédùntán (2009) employ the terminology “chanting” to describe the performance of Yoruba oral poetry. They assert that chanting can be described as a musical style rather than a speech style, because chanting

is also singing though within a limited scope. Vidal (1971) explains that Sun in Yoruba, means, to chant. Thus, one hears sun rárà (chant rárà), sun Ìjálá (chant ìjálá), sun ìyèrè (chant ìyèrè) and sun iwi (chant iwi). Others are ekúnìyàwó (bride's lament) ege (an egba chant), Alamo and so forth. Chants can be identified musically by their intonation, narrow melodic range, melodic contours and tonal register.

Vidal (1971) asserts that iwi, ìyèrè-Ifá, Ìjálá and rárà are the four main modes of chants. Iregun performance in Yagba land is mostly led and performed by adults men and women however it is purely non religious music. The ìyèrè-Ifá mode has, characteristically, a trembling voice quality, clear and pure tones, and highly structured sequences. It employs a responsorial style of chanting in which the chorus responds with the word *hen* at the end of every chanted line of the poetry by the leader, who is the soloist. The chanted lines of poetry (about five or six) form a verse, each of which is followed by a refrain chanted by both the soloist and the chorus before another verse is started. The verses are taken from the Ifá liturgy. Iregun uses word *kiki/iki* which means to praise in chanting

Adéléké (2008), Adédùntán (2009) and Vidal (1971) explain that the ìjálá mode is chanted on a variety of pitches, often nasal and ringing. Babalolá (1976) states that ìjálá is a genre of spoken art practised mainly by the Oyo Yoruba people of Western Nigeria. Babalolá (1976) further notes that the origin of ìjálá is traced to ògún the Yoruba god of iron, who embarked on chanting, in accordance with a divination that said he would establish his reputation as an entertainer. Ìjálá like other chants it employs a style, which is midway between singing and speaking. Chants mode of rendition may be characterized as monophonic, which is the use of a voice at a time, as in a solo. Babalola further explains that Ìjálá is a form of poetry because it is an elevated expression of thought feeling in metrical form. It is solo chanting characterized by a song-like effect and approximating melodious singing. To these choruses are provided at appropriate intervals during the course of chanting, usually with accompanying drums or claps. This mode is easily identified by its nasal and intense tone quality, its wide tonal range, and its melodic contours.

The rárà mode according to Vidal (1971) and Adéléké (2009) is characterized by a long drawn-out wailing tone quality. It uses a nasal vocal quality, with the area around the base of the neck for resonance. Usually a solo form of chanting, in some areas it is sometimes terraced--more than one person singing in parallel seconds above or below the principal part. The intonation varies according to area to which the performer belongs, but its wailing and nasal characteristics are still retained.

Barber (1990) notes that *oriki* can be described as attributions or appellations: epi-

thets, elaborated or concise, which are addressed to a subject and which are equivalent to, or alternatives to, names. All entities in existence are said to have their own oriki. Oriki are felt to capture and evoke the essential characteristics of the subject: to have the most profound and intimate access to its inner nature. In utterance, therefore, they evoke the subject's power, arouse it to action, and enhance its aura. They are always in the vocative case, and in utterance the performer always establishes an intense, one-to-one bond with the addressee as long as the utterance lasts. To her Oriki are a labile and disjunctive textual form. Epithets are accumulated over time; they are composed by different people, on different occasions, and with reference to different experiences. Any subject's corpus of oriki is, therefore, composed of a number of autonomous items. Furthermore, oriki are often obscure, their meaning carried in a separate, parallel explanatory tradition transmitted outside them.

Each oriki gestures away from its location within the performed text to a hinterland of meaning outside the text Barber (1990). Barber further notes that not only this, but each oriki may lead to its own hinterland by a different route. Some are literal, some ironical, some are specific historical references and some are generalized comments referring to a timeless or ideal state of affairs. An oriki chant is a shifting, fluctuating combination of fragments, which are linked only tenuously and variably in performance, and which may take on different meanings when differently combined. Oriki are felt not only to encapsulate the essence of the subject, but also to augment its presence in the social and natural world. Towns, lineages, individual people, orisa, egúngún and even animals are enhanced in relation to--sometimes almost at the expense of--other like entities through the performance of their oriki. Iregun oral performance uses oriki. The oriki focuses on the personalities of individuals been praise, his makeup, physical appearance, family history and genealogy in Yagbaland.

Ìrègún Chants and Songs Performance Practice

There are three different stages in the performance of ìrègún chants and songs. Maku (an informant) explains that o no meta ki are ìrègún pin ghi; akoko, imura are, are sise loju agbo ati ipari are. The informant in other words notes that there are three sections in ìrègún performance. These include pre-performance, actual performance and post-performance activities. These three sections are explained below.

Pre-Performance Activities among iregun performers

According to Iya Egbe Ìrègún,⁴ pre-performance of ìrègún music starts with the invitation that is, when the group has been giving an invitation, whether for burial, wedding, launching, house warming, child dedication or chieftaincy title. A

meeting is then called among the leaders most especially the Iya Egbe and the Baba Egbe Iregun the invitation and which considers the personality, cost, and terms of agreement and to be sure the group does not have another performance on the same date. When all the factors are well considered the favourable message will be sent to the person inviting the group that the group will come on certain conditions of payment, which ranges between 10 thousand to 50 thousand naira depending on the location, time and distance. Ògúnleye, an ìrègún singer, explains that on the day of performance the group would have been ready at least an hour before the performance, if the place is within the town so that they can have time for spiritual preparations and create awareness. Most of the time the group sings from the house of Iya Egbe Ìrègún to the venue of the ceremony, if the ceremony is within the town, and if it is outside they urge a driver to drop off the group about one hundred meters before the venue so that the group can create awareness. Ìrègún singers in a procession and creating awareness as they mobilise for a performance at a burial and traditional marriage ceremonies.

Actual Performance Activities:

Ìrègún songs and chants are performed principally during certain activities and ceremonial events involving members of Yagba people whether at home or in the Diaspora. At performances, performers sing Ìrègún lines as part of their total involvement in the music. Some ìrègún performers explain that in the process of singing, when they are "moved", they are able to tap into a vast repertory of songs/chants lines which is not always accessible to them outside of the context of the performance. As one of the ìrègún performers explains, "when I am singing, the words come out without my trying to say anything, when I am thinking deeply about the history of Yagba people and what we have passed through". Ìrègún songs and chants are frequently based on texts on a common stock of traditional lines and themes. The performers alter them in ways which reflect their own personalities and which suit the particular situation about which they wish to comment. Ìrègún oral performance is chant-based with interjection of song, each dealing with the total life experience of the people, their proverbs, social and political commentaries, encouragements to participants of Ìrègún music, praise to the present and past members of the family participating; the referencing of common troubles with humour to lighten their burden, and so on. Sometimes a singer slowly weaves his story through this mosaic of different themes. An idea is developed for a while and then dropped until later in the song. Sometimes, different ideas are developed at the same time. The Ìrègún lines are performed as long as the artist remains in the mood and receives new ideas and images from his/her music sensibility. During a performance of Ìrègún song, a rapport is established between the singers

and members of the audience as the singers express their feelings, bringing the audience into the challenge of interpreting their song-texts. Since subtlety is an important element in the art of Ìrègún, performers strive at times to express themselves indirectly and members of the audience must guess at the meaning of their words. It is not uncommon for individuals listening to a performance of Ìrègún music to derive differing meanings from the singers. The explanation for this can be found in examining a number of different factors related to the performance of Ìrègún. They range from the techniques utilized by singers in a deliberate attempt to obscure their meaning to the different contexts in which the performance of Ìrègún is heard. Ìrègún singers frequently express their feelings about personal, social or political issues, through allusions rather than direct statements. An informant reports that this is accomplished by using such forms as traditional Yagba language proverbs (oghe), parables (itan abi alo), and secret language or obscure allusions.

According to an informant, Ìrègún songs and chants are led by a chanter or/and song leader. He /she starts by greeting the people that are seated at the ceremony from the highest person, who could be a king or a chief; and he/she could just chant to praise and thank everybody for coming for the occasion. Ìrègún ensemble, led by a chanter includes the drummers and dancers. Sometimes the chanter is also the lead dancer. In all the performances of ìrègún, the performance procedure is similar and often follows a sequence. The sequence, according to Iyabode, an ìrègún singer, is that chant will come first, followed by the song; the musical instruments; then dance will come last. In any of the performances the first chant and song is generally to greet members of the audience.

Chant 1

E okun o loke lodo Igho mum' moran de be ekun pepe, Oniyan biwo gho sian am' sebo buru, Mo wa ghin loke lodo gbogbo gha pata

Mo wa'n li kwara li gbogbo Nigeria,

lomode lagba lobinrin Lokunrin,

Mo wa ghin loke lodo gbogbo ghin pata,

Ekun ri rin eku rabo e o kun o, Ayeye olurobe dalugbo, omo alapo isojo ghere ghere, Omo letija, omo li sele e okun o,

Mo wa'n, Eku ri rin eku rabo E ku farada,

Jesu ase gho sian ghun gbogbo gha pata,

A ke moin lule tele loju araiye, Aseye Kalakan ise poin, Ori aje ghun sian a senilegbe, ti gha je gbo seti, Tigha dunmoni, adun megbe li gbo gbo aye,

T'oba oba noin akalesoke tan gha dope, Mgbo ikuborije, kibarare senle, Oba kabiyesi,

obatorise oba teran enu saka Ati oran Tile mokan je, Amoko aje mudamuda oka

pasa, Oro ken le oroko lalade, Oba saki, oba

'sanlu kuratijo, Mo rio l'alafia e ro kun o, Irohin etafojuba esono gbon tan, Oba

arinurode o, modepe lowo jesu oba olola, I gho gbem re, agbem bo, agbem sokesodo,

onimodele, Afara bale ejem ranti, Mgbo kabiyesi isawele ...aga/dara

Mo wa ghin loke lodo e okun o,

Akande olinuoro o kun o,

Alafia kose, eja dupe lowo jesu oba olola,

Baba furaide egbegbere ijoko ijotile, Iranni

sitoko, pasu baba mgbo omo olori ode, Ode

gho gba samsam, ode gho pa tutu, pa

bigbe,

Omom olose ya kankanran, egbeni sesese,

Song 1

solo Igha mori segbe regun ape ade o

Chorus Igha mori segbe regun ape ade o

Solo Igha mori samuludun ape ade o

Chorus Igha mori segbe regun ape ade o

I greet you all my people, I say I greet you when one is looking at what is good people will is wicked, I greet you all My people from kwara, Kogi, all over Nigeria

Women, men young and old

I greet you all

Ayeye you re the true son of your father son of the real father you are

I'm greeting you all, you have really endured to be,

here, Jesus will bless all of us as we are here

we will not fall in the present of enemy

may destiny prospers us

so that life will be pleasant for us

so that friends can rejoice with us

even kings will see the goodness and they

too will be happy, I greet you my king,

Ikuborije the Agbana of Isanlu land

the great leader, whose father is a great leader

I hail you, my king,

I greet you my king long time, hope you

are living in good health

I thank Jesus the king that knows all things

He that protected me when I was going

will bring me back safely.

I am greeting all of you once again

I greet you

Akande the son of the gods I greet you,

Hope you are fine

Friday's father the blessed one how are you

The son of the chief hunter how is home,

I can remember that your father kill big

animals, in the rain and also during dry

season is a specialist in hunting

We are Ìrègún singers and we have come

We are Ìrègún singers and we have come

We are the merry makers and we have

come

We are Ìrègún singers and we have come

E OKUN O



E o kun o lo-ke lo-do i gho mun' bo-ran de be e kun pe-pe, e-ni-yan'be wo gho

6
si ghan am'se bo bu-ru, mo wa ghin lo-ke lo-do gbo gbo ghin pa-ta, mo wa ghin li

11
16
Kwa-ra li Ni-ge-ri-a lo-mo-de la-gba lo bi-rin lo kun-rin mo wa ghin lo-ke lo-do gbo-gbo ghin pa-ta

22
e-ku ri rin e-ku-ra-bo e o-kun o A-ye-ye o-lu ro be da lu gbo o-mo a-la-po i-so jo ghe-re ghe-re o-mo le-ti-ja

24
o-mo li se le e o-kun o, mo wa'n e ku ri rin e ku ra bo, e ku 'fa ra da Je-su

27
a-se gho si'han ghun gbo gbo gha pa ta, a ke moin lu le te-le lo ju a-rai-ye, a se ye k'a-la-kan i se poin, o ri

30
a-je ghun si'an a ye ni le gbe ti gha je gbo se ti, ti gha dun mo ni a dun me gbe li gbo gbo ai-ye to-ba o-

33
ba nain a-ka-le soka tan gha d'o-pe, m'gbo I-ku-bo-ri-je ki ba ra re sen-le o-ba ka-bi-ye-si o-

36
ba to ri se o-ba te ran e-nu sa-ka, a-ti o-ra ti le mo kan je a gha do a mo ko a-je mu da mu da o

39
ka pa-sa, o ro ke nle o ro ke la la deo-ba sa-ki o-ba'San-lu ku ra ti jo, mo rio fa la ti a e ro kun

42
o, i ro hin e ta fo ju ba e so no gbon tan, o-ba a-ri nu ro de mo de pe lo-wo Je-su o-ba o

45
lo la, i gho gbe'm re, a gbe'm bo, a gbe'm so ke so do o ni mo de le, e fa ra ba le e je'm ran

ti, m'gbo ka-bi-ye-si i su we le a ga ra mo wa ghin lo ke lo do e o kun o, A-kan-de o li nu o-ro

Igha mori 'segbe 'regun

i gha mo ri se-gbe 're - gun a -pe a - de o, i gha mo ri se-gbe 're - gun a - pe a - de o,

9
i gha mo ri sa-mu-lu - dun a - pe a - de o i gha mo ri se-gbe 're - gun a - pe a - de o.

The chant above is a general greeting to people, male and female, and Agbana of Isanlu Oba Ikuborije. After the chanting, the *irègún* chanter, who is also the song leader, introduces the song which is chorused by the back-up singers, dancers and drummers, as the case may be. The chant above expresses respect for elders in the community and also at an occasion in the indigenous Yagba society. E okun is a plural way of greeting two persons or more; it also connotes reference for elderly persons in Yagba communities. Also the expression e okun pe, pe, is generally used for elderly man that is not less than sixty years old. pe is similar to saying “I am greeting you, grandfather” or to someone who is not less in age than the speaker’s age. The words *l’omode*, *‘lagba*, *‘lokurin*, *‘lobirin* are ways of specifying different age groups and sex/ Individuals were recognised in the song like Friday’s Father, Akande and their praise names chanted. The homage is usually followed by the introduction of the group members and their leader through special songs/chants as for example in a wedding ceremony.

Death and After life in Iregun Chant and Song

This category consists of songs dealing with the themes of death and the after-life. These songs enable individuals to express sorrow over the difficulties in their lives, as well as to express anxiety about, and apprehension over, such universal problems as the confrontation of death. The second chant and song is a song eulogizing an *irègún* matron who is being buried.

Chant 2

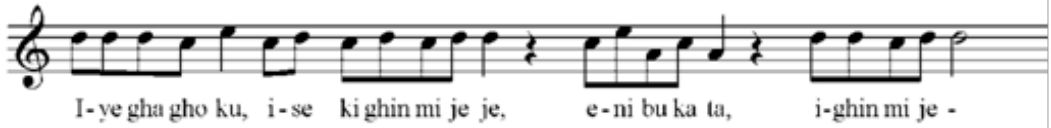
iye ha ho’ku ise ki hin mi jeje,
eni bukata ihin mi jeje
iye ilodo jesu tehin mi jeje

Song 2

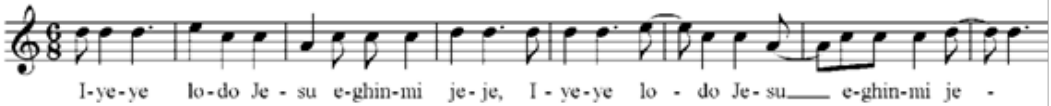
solo: iyeye ilodo jesu tehin mi jeje
chorus: iyeye ilodo jesu tehin mi jeje
solo: iyeye ilodo jesu tehin mi jeje
chorus: iyeye ilodo jesu tehin mi jeje

Our mother that is been buried today
she is just resting fully, she does not worry
of Jesus with everlasting rest over issues of life
again, she is at the feet
Our mother is at the feet of Jesus resting
Our mother is at the feet of Jesus resting
Our mother is at the feet of Jesus resting

IYE GHA GHU KU MO



IYEYE ILODO JESU



The chant and song above inform us about the death of one ìrègún lover and fan. The chanter remarks in the chant and song that the mother who is dead is peacefully resting; that in the present state, the deceased does not have any anxiety. This is an example of issues that tell us about life in the beyond and also deals with metaphysical reality.

The Singers Needs

This category consists of songs about the needs of the chanters/ singers. At times, singers refer directly to their own troubles as illustrated in such chant and song as Ibanke aisan me sem'. At other times, the images within Ìrègún portraying troubles are cryptic, having meaning only in the context in which they are sung, or having meaning only to the singer. Feelings about needs may also be expressed through humor. See an example in the chant and song three.

Chant 3

E pe banke kom' oniganran ijoni
 Banke oni ganran ganran ijo ni
 Aisan me sem' lowo, O ba mo se banke li gbogbo, Le
 yagba lero tan, Ibanke nikan soso koro tan,
 Alalum' se we gbo banke we mo gbo hin dunm'
 Ebi hin pam' linu eta run gbe, me ,

Song 3

Solo: Gha mu kere somi kom'arun gbe
 chorus: Gha mu kere somi kom'arungbe
 Solo: Gha mu kere somi kom'arungbe
 chorus: Gha mu kere somi kom'arungbe
 Solo: Gha mu kere somi kom'arungbe
 chorus: Gha mu kere somi kom'arungbe

Help me call Banke, who resemble
 the mother so perfectly

Banke, I want you to know that I am
 ill,
 and it is only you that can heal me

my drummer, hope you are listening to
 Banke, do you know the sickness?
 The hunger that facing is not as much as the thirst

come and use cup to fetch water to quench my
 thirst

come and use cup to fetch water to quench my
 thirst

come and use cup to fetch water to quench my
 thirst

IBANKE

E pe 'Ban-ke kom'ran o-ni gan-ran gan - ran o joni, - Ban-ke, o ni gan-ran gan-ran jo
 4 ni a - i-san me sem'lo wo___ o ba mo se Ban-ke li le Ya-gba le ro tan I-ban-ke ni kan so
 7 so ko ran tan - a-la lum'se we gbo - Ban-ke we gbo ghin dun m'unm wi e-gbo e-bighi pam' li nu e
 10 ta run gbe - wa mu ke-re so mi ko m' a-run- gbe.

Gha Mu Kere

solo chorus
 Gha mu ke-re so mi ko m' a-run gbe___ Gha mu ke-re so mi ko m' a run gbe.

The singer here is calling a daughter of the dead woman, called Banke and eulogizing her that she resembles her mother. The chanter says that he is presently sick and that it is only Banke that can bring the healing. He says that though he is hungry, the thirst is not up to the pain he is experiencing at the moment; that she should use kere-cup to bring water for him to quench the thirst. However, in actual sense, he is telling Banke to bring wine for him to drink.

Social and Political Commentary

This category consists of chants and songs offering social and political commentaries. Ìrègún chants and song of this type are similar to those reported in other cultures, which, through admonition and ridicule, seek to modify the behaviour of those individuals who have strayed too far from the respected norms of the society. Chant and song four are examples.

Chant 4

we ri ho lijo gbede loin, bitonran ijoba noin
 I gho moye ijoba nse, era gbe pona kobe
 Ara gbe kobò mirin libo janjan
 Igho ye o gba megadi hi, ijoba egba megadi so
 igho bamoye ogba megadi hi, ke gba megadi
 so, oba ko ofisi hile ako pepa hofisi ara so
 oba ran mirin he wuni ara gba megadi hibe
 hun ra so, oniha noin emo ho ye aso, arun koje
 so

Song4

solo : ononi un toju arun re arun jeso

chorus : ononi un toju arun re arun jeso

solo : ononi un toju arun re arun jeso

chorus : ononi un toju arun re arun jeso

Don't you see my dancers, like our government
 what they suppose to do they will not do, the
 things that they should not do that is what
 they do. For instance if they suppose to con-
 struct a road, at a place they will not construct
 it, if they need, to put a security at a place they
 will not do it, they can put a paper in one office
 and, take heavy security on ordinary paper
 instead of securing lives,
 my people what we should secure is
 our mouth, secure your mouth its worth
 securing,

keep your mouth my people it's worth keeping
 keep your mouth my people it's worth keeping

Ijoba Gha

We ri gho li-jo gbe de lo, bi ton ran i - jo-ba noin, I gho mo-ye i-jo-ba nse, e-ra gbe po-na ko be,
 6 A-ra gbe ko bi mi rin li bo jan jan, I gho ye o gba me ga di hi, I-jo-ba eun gba me ga di so, I gho ba mo ye oun
 11 gba me-ga-di ghi ke gba me - ga-di so, o ba ko o-fi-si ghi le a ko pe - pa gho fi-si a ra so, o ba ra im
 16 mi rin hi mo wuni a ra gba me-ga-di ghi be ghun ra so, o ni gha noin e mo gho ye a so, a-run je so.

Arun Jeso

A run je - so o no ni to - ju a run re a - run je so.

The song starts with a chant and the chanter is explaining to the audience that the corrupt leaders in government, (both indigenous and democratically elected), find ways of impoverishing the community they govern through unconstitutional awards of contracts such as roads. Line two of the chant says for instance, I gho moye ijoba nse, era gbe pona kobe. That is where they are supposed to construct a good road, they will not construct it, therefore, showing a lack of focus, sensitivity to the need of the populace, and corruption because either divert the money to their own private pockets or construct bad roads that will need repair few months later. The song also talks about the fact that good governance entails good security of people, goods and the community in general. However, the government that is not governing well will rather employ the “megadi” types of security officers. And, instead of securing human lives, the government keeps them securing and protecting empty ofisi-office. This depicts the extent of bad governance. The singer, however, cautions, the audience that, though the government is not really responsible until they prove themselves innocent of the allegation levelled against them by the ìrègún singers on good governance, they have a duty to make security a priority and that starts with arun jeso; that is, secure or protect your mouth from tale bearing, lying and keeping quiet where necessary, so that their life and future can be protected.

Historical References

As in the poetry of historical songs found in other African cultures, Ìrègún chants and songs provide brief allusions to significant incident rather than a detailed narration of events (Nketia, 1974:197). Chants and songs in this category include references to the personal past of individuals, to incidents which have broader significance for members of the lineage of the singer, and to important events concerning Yagba people as a whole. An example is in Chant and Song 5 below:

<p>Chant 5 momo pansaga se teletele latijo alu nla se wegbo momo pansaga se teletele latijo we mo ghe ti jem se pansaga m'wi egbo mo rom se bi ato hi ha mo soun ko</p> <p>Song 5 solo: imògún ese batohi pamo were chorus: imògún ese batohi pamo were solo: imògún ese batohi pamo were solo: imògún ese batohi pamo kia chorus: imògún ese batohi pamo were</p>	<p>I like chasing women in my early life my drummer are you hearing me I like chasing women in my early life do you know why I stop that habit, I will tell you today, I may be thinking that I got STD, from the lady and may not and it may be charm</p> <p>charm kill faster than STD that is why I stop charm kill faster than STD that is why I stop charm kill faster than STD that is why I stop charm kill faster than STD that is why I stop</p>
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Mo Mo Pansaga Se Latijo

Mo mo pan-sa-ga se te le te le la-ti-jo, a-lun la n' se we gbo? mo mo pan-sa-ga se te le te le la-ti-jo

6
we mo ghe ti jem' se pan-sa - ga m' wi_ e-gbo mo rom' se bi a-to - ghi gha mo so-un ko.

Imogun

I-mo-gun e se 'ba to ghi i pa-mo we-re I-mo-gun e se 'ba to ghi i pa-mo we-re.

The chanter tells of his personal story using his own story as a philanderer and this is used to pass a message to those that still have the habit of womanizing that HIV is in town. HIV/AIDS is one of the life-threatening diseases that people must be aware of.

Commentary on Events Taking Place at the Time of the Performance

This category of chants and songs includes statements that offer commentary on the events which are taking place right at the time of the performance, including the participation of those people involved in the musical event. See an example in Chant 6 and Song 6.

<p>Chant 6 alu nla emo bam se kilo h'Egere Egere o ,egere egere, Oni noin emo bam se kilo h'Egere</p> <p>Song 6 solo: oba mu'jo gbo'ya oloya me'un gbin chorus: oba mujo gbayaoloya me'un gbin solo: oba mu'jo gbo'ya oloya me'un gbin chorus: oba mujo gbayaoloya me'un gbin</p>	<p>My chief drummer help me warn Egere, Egere, Egere Egere everybody help me warn Egere</p> <p>if in the process of dancing you snatch another man's wife, I will not talk if in the process of dancing you snatch another man's wife, I will not talk</p>
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E BAM' SE KILO GH'EGERE

A lu-lu la o, e mo bam' se ki lo ghe' - ge re, E-ge-re, E-ge-re, E-ge-re___ o ni nain

6
e mo bam' se ki lo ghe' ge-re

The image shows a musical score for the song 'E BAM' SE KILO GH'EGERE'. It consists of two staves of music in a 4/4 time signature. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a simple, rhythmic style. Below the first staff, the lyrics are: 'A lu-lu la o, e mo bam' se ki lo ghe' - ge re, E-ge-re, E-ge-re, E-ge-re___ o ni nain'. The second staff starts with a '6' above it, indicating a measure rest for six measures. The lyrics for this section are: 'e mo bam' se ki lo ghe' ge-re'.

O ba Mu 'Jo Gh'oya

solo chorus
O ba mu jo gbo'yao lo ya me un ghin. o ba mu jo gbo'yao lo ya me un ghin.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'O ba Mu 'Jo Gh'oya'. It consists of a single staff of music in a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in a simple, rhythmic style. Below the staff, the lyrics are: 'O ba mu jo gbo'yao lo ya me un ghin. o ba mu jo gbo'yao lo ya me un ghin.'. The first part of the melody is labeled 'solo' and the second part is labeled 'chorus'.

The chant starts by calling the chief dancer who is a male, named Egere. Egere is actually dancing with another female dancer at the moment. The chanter using satire asks that members of the *irègún* group should please warn Egere; that he should not through dance take another man's wife, since the woman is already married. The chanter concludes that if Egere succeeds in taken another man's wife after the warning, he will not defend him when he is facing the trials of taking another man's wife. The song teaches us to live in peace and not take what does not belong to us. Do not still people's money, wife, and landed property.

Post Performance Practices

Post-performance activities include the assessment by the performers themselves of their own performance; eating their food, sharing of the money that they got at the performance which is done according to leadership role and position. The leader who is the song leader will have greater share than the rest and then some part of the money will be kept with *Iyá Egbé* as the treasurer for future use. After the sharing, they plan and make preparation for future performance.

Conclusion

The paper has examined the performance of Ìrègún chants and songs as employed during wedding and burial ceremonies in Yagbaland, which are sectionalized into three parts; the pre-performance, actual performance and post performance procedures. Ìrègún performance is one of the sources of entertainment for Yagba people in Nigeria. As discussed in this paper it is an oral performance though with musical accompaniment. Ìrègún chants and songs performances present a wealth of knowledge and stimulate learning experiences among its audience. The performances explicates the needs of the performer and the audience, give some historical issues and eulogises when needed.

End Notes:

1. Nupe Imperialism (*Ògún Ibon abi tapa*) means Nupe war: *ibon* or *tapa* are the names given to Nupe people who enslaved Yagba people in the 19th century before the British colonial masters arrived in Yagbaland.
2. Ibadan imperialism (*ògún Ibadan*) Ibadan people are Yoruba people of southwestern state. They also imperialized Yagba land during the 19th century.
3. *Àgbàṅà* of Isanlu is the title of the paramount ruler of Isanlu in Yagba land,
- 4, *Iya Egbe Ìrègún*- this is the administrative position of *ìrègún* musical group. she serves as the PRO, and Accountant to the group.

People interviewed

Chief Makanjuola O – chief drummer *ìrègún* musical group Mopa-Muro LGA. Yagba Land.

Chief Mrs Funke Aduta – chief singer/ chanter and Dancer *Ìrègún* Musical group in Egbe, Yagba-West LGA.

Chief Wemimo *Ògún*niyi – a singer and chanter *ìrègún* group in Yagba-West LGA.

Mr. Maku Sunday- Chief singer *Ìrègún* Musical Group Mopa-Muro LGA.

Mrs. Olu- Tete – she is a dancer and a singer of *Ìrègún* Musical group from Isanlu, Yagba-East LGA.

Chief Mrs. Grace - *Iya-Egbe Ìrègún* and a chief dancer from Mopa-Muro LGA.

Chief Kayode O. the Otun Oba of Ejiba land

Iletògún (2009) cultural festivals in Yagba-West

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