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Transitions, transformations, and translocations of African oral literature in the 21st century

Tobias Otieno Odongo

Introduction

The articles in this issue were initially presented as conference papers during the thirteenth conference of the International Society for the Oral Literatures in Africa (ISOLA) held in Nairobi, Kenya, from the 8 to 10 July 2021, under the general theme: "Transitions, transformations, and translocations in African oral traditions and (re) imagined boundaries". The conference was further divided into ten sub-themes that ranged from "Translocations and melting boundaries of African oral literatures" to "Contemporary fieldwork and research methodologies in African oral traditions". The two keynote addresses were those of Domitiene Nizigiyimana of the University of Burundi and Tom Michael Mboya of Moi University, presenting in French and English respectively—the two official languages of ISOLA.

Certain conference participants elected to submit the complete articles on which their conference presentations were based to *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, after which they underwent a process of anonymous peer review managed by me as the guest editor. Only articles who were unanimously accepted for publication by the reviewers are published in this, the first *Mbuyu* issue of *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*.

Nizigiyamana's keynote highlighted the overarching theme of the conference, immersing the audience in a perspective that sharply contrasted with the typically addressed topics, whether they be stylistic, thematic, or formal in nature. He went on to elaborate on this perspective during his speech in the following manner:

> It encounters a field of study that specialists have now identified as likely susceptible of revealing on the cultural, linguistic, and artistic levels, similarities, points of convergence, divergence, marks of identity, and belonging on a continental scale and beyond. By basing our reflection on certain examples of these traditions which go beyond borders, and more particularly on African oral literatures, our contribution will examine in turn the links between African speech, oral traditions and African literatures, the historic and linguistic dimension of the considered issue, oral tradition in a migratory context, and African oral traditions as a source of inspiration and creation for writers and artists in their diversity. Finally, given that African oral traditions bear witness to a circulation of ideas, uses multiple and varied exchanges between African peoples, and that these same traditions have been subject to intra and intercultural variability resulting from adaptations, their analysis requires a comparative approach taking into account several disciplines.

Having set the tone and outlined the tasks for participants in this conference, the address was complemented by the second keynote, Mboya, who delivered enlightening address. Mboya's speech titled "'*Ukinidiliti mwezako ananidownlodi*': African oral literature and everyday life in the information age", was imbued with the wisdom of Heraclitus, who famously proclaimed, "Everything flows and nothing stays," as he suggested that the practices that we collectively categorise as "oral literature" should be viewed as integral components of our daily existence. This is defined by Rita Felski as a process of becoming acclimatized to assumptions, behaviours, and practices which come to seem self-evident and taken for granted. Through this being 'taken for granted', Mboya makes a convincing argument that reutilization is making contemporary oral literature invisible.

Undoubtedly oral literature was easily recognizable in traditional societies' everyday life—Mboya himself, like many of us growing up in the last three decades of the 20th century, knew the many variants of narratives, riddles, proverbs, oral poetry, and epics within our largely homogenous ethnicities. What is of concern is our

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ability to recognize the 'transformed' varieties in this urbanized digital age. Using the title of his address to illustrate this, "If you delete me from your life someone else will download me", Mboya rightly points out that the users of this modern proverb indulge in it and dispose of it without ever being aware they are using a proverb. The task of the contemporary oral literature scholar then, Mboya avers, is to help identify and classify these dynamic oral performances in this information age, in whatever new forms they manifest themselves—whether in our speeches, gestures, movements, or even during our participation in the various modes of social media.

A survey of the articles

In her pace-setting article "Invention of boundaries and identity issues in the story of an anti-colonial war", Cécile Leguy analyses a performance that takes place in San, Mali, in December 2001in commemoration of "the Bwa revolt", a resistance movement that took place during the First World War. The Bwa are a people who speak a Gur language closer to the population of Burkina Faso. They seek not only greater recognition within Mali but also aim to symbolically assert a claim on a region that defies established national boundaries. Not only is this a remarkable ethnicization that is built on a rewriting of history, but it also creates a context where identity claims are reinforced by the importance taken by social networks on the internet. Leguy's article not only foregrounds how engaging oral literature is, but also how homeostatic and multi-media. She analyses how, through the accumulation of purely Bwa names to the exclusion of other ethnicities, the performance invites the Bwa people to embrace their role within the nation, all the while asserting the uniqueness of an event in Mali's Bwa history that encompass Bwa communities beyond the confines of present-day Mali. Leguy defines this performance as a "paradoxical injunction" revealing the tension between universalizing globalization and local particularisms, through a multiplicity of traditional and modern channels.

In "Folklore genre designation among the Manden peoples", Olga Zavyalova explains in detail the definition of the genres of the Manden Oral tradition—a people who inhabit Mali, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire—to help reveal the culturally significant features of these oral traditions. Their proverbs, riddles, songs, myths, legends, etc. are fluid and easily flow into each other, defying conformity to equivalent European languages in translations, forcing the researcher to resort to unique terms such as "tale-riddle", "short fairy tale", and so on—an eye opener for researchers who more often than not force European classification systems into unyielding traditional African performances. Zavyalova concludes by affirming that such supposedly 'universal' division into genres is not quite suitable for African cultures, since the peculiarities of the historical and cultural development of African countries, as well as differences in mentality, are not taken into account.

In "Performance in propitiatory reconciliation among the Nandi community", Anthony Kipkoech Biwott, Collins Kenga Mumbo, and Robert Oduori investigate how performance manifests itself in Nandi propitiatory reconciliation, outlining the specific steps that involve the playing of drums, chanting, singing, and offering of sacrifices among others during the ceremony. Through actions and gestures, singing, formulaic expressions, and the wearing of special costumes, the active audience in this propitiatory ceremony interject, exclaim, and sing along, producing a truly Nandi cultural experience. In essence, the three main stages—investigation, interrogation, and cleansing—are clearly outlined and religiously adhered to, bringing offenders and the offended together and transforming the situation from a hostile one where the victims punish the culprits as per the set formula and the latter submissively accept the punishment, thereby creating a catharsis and everyone goes home convinced that justice—and just compensation—have been served and forgiveness must naturally follow.

In 2020, Covid-19 became a global pandemic overnight, and amidst the fear and despondency, human capacity to create humour to lighten the situation prevailed to make life a little more bearable. It is this humour that Rose Akinyi Opondo chooses to explore in the rural setting of her people, resulting in the article: "Masking death: Covid-19-inspired humour in the everyday orality of a Luo community in Kenya". Employing discourse theory which treats language as a living social phenomenon capable of change, growth, expansions, and adaptations for contextual spatial and temporal expressions, the article delves into the aesthetics of contextual language through coinage, jokes, and puns, which manifest as humorous responses to an otherwise dire situation—the literal and metaphorical face of death. From her findings, she concludes:

The usage of these coinages in everyday discourse entrenches their interaction into the community's linguistic corpus and which now find their way into normalized discourse. These words and phrases discussed herein keep the mind from literal death through humour. Conclusively, we can deduce the creative power of oral language in devising and establishing novel usage of existing vocabulary for both lexical and semantic incongruities to bring out humour, as well as the significance of verbal interactions in the recreation of meaning in response to emerging contexts.

Joseph Mzee Muleka's article, "Oral performance as substitute for ritual: *Ekutet*, a Teso exhumation ceremony" entails a quest to discover what has replaced *Ekutet*, a ceremony which was performed for ritual healing in cases where there were persistent misfortunes such as frequent deaths, illnesses, accidents, or unexplained endless feuds. It involves the exhumation of a suspected dead family member's remains for reburial or display in sacred shrines, accompanied by a rich occurrence of oral performances—rendered as narrations, incantations, swearing, prayer chants—and occasional re-enactments of attendant dramatic anecdotes. Muleka notes that oral performances and mock exhumations have become a psychological fallback for the diminishing actual *Ekutet* ritual performance which some youth already in their twenties have never witnessed. Applying the psychoanalytic concepts of (dis)placement, (re)placement, and (re)presentation, he argues that the Christian faith and modern medicine which has replaced *Ekutet* are grossly inadequate. They do not wholly address the psychological needs of groups, but rather focus on individuals, creating a gap in reducing communal anxiety, boosting communal morale and confidence, alleviating grief, and providing therapeutic relief. Because of the pervasive nature of Christianity—which views *Ekutet* as 'Satanic'—in the community, and the younger generation's conviction that the ritual is 'obsolete', Muleka concludes that this therapeutic ritual can only be conserved through oral literature.

In "A feminist analysis of '*Dhako en* …' (A woman is …) proverbs among the Luo community of Kenya", Daniel Otieno uses the poststructuralist theories of deconstruction and postcolonial feminist theory of sexualized objectification to analyse Luo proverbs about women collected from Facebook and other social spaces. The objective is to find out the extent to which these proverbs are existential threats to the 'transfiguration' process of the female body, and how they perpetuate the 'othering' of the image of the woman, thereby complicating the overall feminist struggle. Using numerous examples of "*Dhako en* …" wordplay, Otieno convincingly demonstrates that these examples not only contribute to the marginalization of women in society, reducing them to mere instruments for male sexual satisfaction in a capitalist and masculine hegemonic society, but also result in the objectification of women, depicting female bodies as commodities that can be utilized and discarded by men. Nevertheless, he allays fears of the obscenity of the proverbs socially perverting innocent children in our multi-mediated settings by pointing out that the signifiers on the surface are ordinary everyday usage words, and that the underlying sexual connotations can only be deciphered by those who are conversant with the playbook—that is, able to decode the verbal and social context of the imagery and euphemism using socio-cultural rules and rules of discourse.

The idea that oral literature is 'obsolete' has often been voiced as a result of an inability to appreciate just how dynamic this art form can be. This is a dangerous assumption, but not the only one, as we see in the article "Gender and power as negotiated in Bukusu circumcision ceremonies" by Scholastica Nabututu Wabende and Simon Nganga Wanjala, in which they strongly argue against the assumption that language is gendered and that it espouses male gender. Employing theoretical and methodological principles from critical discourse and conversation analysis, they posit that, by using linguistic strategies, traditional gender roles are not only discursively highlighted but they are also negotiated and even resisted. Guided by audio recordings of conversations that take place alongside the main circumcision ceremony among the Bukusu, they analyse data at the level of content and prosodic organization to identify discursive practices that reveal the negotiation and contestation of gender roles and succeed in exposing gender asymmetries and contestations that lie behind 'taken-for-granted' realities. This leads to their conclusion that gender is best understood in the context of how it emerges through roles, how it is negotiated, and how it is accepted and/or contested.

In "Orality in Yorùbá films: A study of selected films of Akínwùmí Ìṣọ̀lá", Abidemi Bolarinwa Olusola uses the intertextuality approach to examine orality in three of Ìṣọ̀lá's films, with a view to proving that the filmmaker uses verbal art as a powerful tool for the transmission of cultural values—folktales, legends, songs, Ifa corpus, drumbeats, incantation, and panegyric—in his films to reawaken and preserve Yoruba oral tradition. From her research, she arrives at the conclusion that one can infer from Ìṣọ̀lá's films that there is an overlap between oral tradition and creative film—since he uses his creative ingenuity to revive and safeguard Yoruba oral tradition in

these films—and this essentially points to the fact that oral literature has a continued vitality for our contemporary society.

In "Variations in the application of the components of the oral performance to Yoruba chants", Anthony Gboyega Kolawole investigates how the utilization of oral performance elements changes within different contextual settings of oral traditional forms. The focus is on Yoruba oral traditional chants in order to verify how the nature of each chant influences the extent to which these components can be employed within their respective contexts. Utilizing a combination of the oral performance theory and functionalism, the author examines thirteen selected Yoruba oral poetic forms by classifying them into three categories of poetic forms: the context-restricted, the secular featured and the easily adaptable. In analyzing such oral performance components as artists, texts, audiences, music and histrionics, he arrives at the conclusion that all the subtypes studied can easily be categorized as "context-restricted" because they are religious, or "diffused" because they are losing their religious nature and turning secular or "context-free" because they are not religious in origin. In essence, digressions are the result of spontaneous observations of the oral text by the artist or reaction by the active audience who force the artist to add, to subtract from or to rearrange the text in performance to suit the current contextual performance circumstances.

In "The state of Hausa children's folktales and play-songs in Gombe, Nigeria", Bilkisu Abubakar Arabi investigates contrasting Nigerian locales of the upper and lower classes of society to find out the extent to which modernity has affected transmission and understanding of traditional forms of oral literature among parents and children, and whether social classes have a significant effect on the daily consumption of such material. Adapting the concept of "technauriture", and especially "cultauriture" theoretical models (derived from Russell Kaschula and Andre Mostert's reflections), Arabi analyses data from questionnaires from school-going and non-school-going children and their parents to gauge awareness of children's folktales and play-songs and to establish their preferred mode of transmission in the face of globalization and fast-changing digitization. Her findings reveal that though there is a ninety percent awareness of these folktales and play-songs, there is less than fifty percent participation in narrative sessions due to rapid technological transformation in modern society. The inevitable recommendation arising, then, is for all the traditional folktales and play-songs to be digitized and passed through satellite television and other popular social media to effectively entertain and educate children and their parents on language development, cultural preservation, promotion, and sustainability.

In "Gospel Àpàlà music in African Christian worship: Thematic and stylistic analysis", Esther Titilayo Ojo studies how Gospel Àpàlà undergo a transformation from African traditional songs into a form of worship dedicated to the Christian God. Her goal is to identify and describe its distinctive style and the ways in which it conveys its message, particularly in the context of contemporary changes driven by modernization and globalization. Drawing on systematic functional linguistics and sociology of literature, Ojo provides an analysis of six gospel songs from three artistes, exploring in detail praises, thanksgiving and adoration to God, salvation and acknowledgment of Jesus, God's greatness and miracles, forgiveness, unity, holiness, heaven, love among brethren, commitment and dedication to God's work, etc. She achieves this by delving into an analysis of the use of stylistic devices such as repetition, rhetorical questions, personification, loan words, code-mixing and code-switching, and proverbs—all of which complement the music.

Conclusion

The articles in this issue constitute a successful exploration of the transitions, transformations, and translocations in African oral traditions and (re)imagined boundaries and have opened up vast areas for future research. That the articles cover mainly Western and Eastern African regions (with particular emphasis on the countries Nigeria and Kenya) exposes a need for more inclusion of Southern, Central, and Northern regions. Although ISOLA members come fortunately from all over the world, this is therefore a recommendation for future conferences. The genres range from orality through film and music, of course touching on social media platforms and the future genres and subgenres which must keep emerging in an evolving, dynamic, and globalized society.

Invention of boundaries and identity issues in the story of an anti-colonial war

Cécile Leguy

Invention of boundaries and identity issues in the story of an anti-colonial war

To what extent do verbal arts contribute to the imposition of worldviews, and indeed to the redrawing of boundaries? I chose to address this question through a performance recital to commemorate a historical event, recorded during a festival organized by a cultural association with the aim of defending the Bwa minority in Mali. The event took place in San in December 2001 and was intended to prepare for the centenary of what is commonly known as the "Bwa revolt", a resistance movement that took place during the First World War. The study of the recital invites one to question the part of identity reconstruction expressed in this commemoration of the revolt. In this article I argue that the vision of the revolt's history such as it is proposed in this performance has the effect of inventing boundaries, even though it is a call to integrate into a larger whole. It highlights what can be understood as a paradoxical injunction. Indeed, the public is called to 'be part of' a country, while claiming as specific to the Bwa of Mali an event that belongs to the history of a whole region not only populated by the Bwa, and that goes far beyond the borders of what Mali is today. In this performance, one thus witnesses an ethnicization that is built on a rewriting of history, an ethnicization that is also remarkable in the comments exchanged on the commemoration of the revolt on social networks. This article is organized into three points. Firstly, the context of this anti-colonial war and the way it is claimed here as part of the construction of Bwa identity are explored from the very first words. Next, it is shown that the ethnicization manifested in this performance has long-standing political and scientific foundations. Finally, this paradoxical injunction addressed to Malian Bwa to be part of the nation while focusing on their own identity is discussed in a context where identity claims are reinforced by the importance taken by social networks on the internet. **Keywords:** orality, French West Africa, Bani-Volta War (1915–1916), Bwa revolt/Bobo revolt, anti-colonialism, ethnicization, Facebook.

Introduction

For nine months, at the height of the First World War, the populations of the region between the bend of the Muhun River (formerly, the Black Volta) and the Bani River rose up against the French colonial army. Although this caused lasting difficulties for the French military, it is rarely mentioned in colonial history (Șaul 59–60). However, it played a very important role in the local populations' history. Thus, the stories of 'the time of the revolt' have been passed down through generations, and in the 1990s one could still hear elders recounting the exploits of their fathers, and even their own remembrances.

In May 2001, managers and intellectuals from the region of the Bani River founded a cultural association, Niimi-Présence Bwa, with the aim of defending the Bwa minority in Mali.[1] The association organized a festival in the city of San (Mali) in December 2001 to prepare the centenary of this event (commemoration which would finally take place ad minima, due to the security crisis in the region in 2016). The recital studied in this article, transcribed from a recorded oral performance (now available online) (Petit Tony), was produced during this festival. The performance was repeated at the Palais de la Culture in Bamako in January 2002. Based on a composition by Bertin Dembélé and griot Pakouéné François Goïta, who also plays the role of narrator, the musical part is performed by Super Zamaza of Konsankuy, a group of well-known griots in the region. Goïta (1947–2013) was a former teacher who was very involved in the preservation of local traditions.

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The founding members of Niimi intend to work so that the Bwa (singular Bo), a people who speak Boomu, a Gur language closer to the Burkina Faso population, are not forgotten within the Republic of Mali. Niimi literally means part/exists and can be understood as 'the one who is part of it; the one who counts'.

Thus, the name of the association is summoned in the refrain sung at the beginning of the recital: "*Wa dio wɛ dɛ a wa nii mi le?*" (Do we really count?) (Leguy, "'Est-ce que vraiment nous comptons?': Une question d'actualité"). The question is posed by the artists to their contemporaries, urging them to integrate, to 'be part of' the Republic of Mali.

The study of the songs and text of the recital invites one to question the part of identity reconstruction expressed in this commemoration of the revolt. In light of the historical studies that have been conducted on this event (Şaul and Royer; Coulibaly), it is possible to state that the purpose of the interpreters is not only to make known the historical facts that marked a region on the occasion of their centenary. A rewriting of history at the service of an identity construction can be read in the background of the performance, as in the motivations of the members of the Niimi association. In this article I argue that the vision of the revolt's history such as it is proposed in this performance has the effect of inventing boundaries, even though it is a call to integrate into a larger whole. It highlights what can be understood as a paradoxical injunction. Indeed, the public is called to 'be part of' a country, while claiming as specific to the Bwa of Mali an event that belongs to the history of a whole region not only populated by the Bwa, and that goes far beyond the borders of what Mali is today. In this performance one thus witnesses an ethnicization that is built on a rewriting of history, an ethnicization that is also remarkable in the comments exchanged on the commemoration of the revolt on social networks. The consultation of the posts related to this event on the internet confirms this hypothesis.

The performance, consisting of a 31-minute musical introduction and the recital itself, which lasts just over 24 minutes, places in parallel the struggle of the elders against the colonizer —who imposed forced labour in inhumane conditions on the peasants—and the current struggles of their descendants to no longer be the 'left behind' by a state that does not care about them. For lack of space, I will only study a few extracts from the recital to question the part of identity reconstruction conveyed by the performance, and the way the present-day Malian Bwa are re-appropriating this episode of their history in order to claim their place in a country where they feel marginalized.

This article is organized in three points. First, I study the context of this anti-colonial war and the way in which it is claimed here as part of the construction of the Bwa identity. Second, I show that the ethnicization manifested in this performance has ancient political and scientific foundations. Finally, I discuss the paradoxical injunction addressed to the Malian Bwa to be part of the nation while focusing on one's own identity, in a context where identity claims are reinforced by the importance taken by social networks on the internet.

Munuti, a shadowy anti-colonial war

The recital, entitled *Munuti* in Boomu, from the Bambara word *múruti* (to rebel) (Vydrin *et al.*), begins with an introduction, alternating between the chorus' sung refrain and the soloist's declaimed verses. Only the songs are partly sung in Boomu, the spoken parts being in French.[2]

In this first part of the performance, there is no mention of history, except for allusions to the "Bo of yesterday" and the formula in the declamation of the soloist: "*a tan dɛn be yi bo*" (is the old word true?). The 'old word' (*tan dɛn*), an expression often translated as 'tradition', can also be understood here as 'the story from the past', the story of our history.

Another interesting expression can be noted: "*Nii-mi lo wa wuro bore*" (Nii-mi says let's speak Boomu). *Bore*, or Boomu, designates the Bwa language, but also more broadly the ways of being Bo, including ways of speaking. To know how to speak Boomu is also to be frank, to tell the truth, insofar as '*bo*' also means 'to be true'. One could as well translate "Niimi says let's speak our language" as "Niimi says let's be frank, truthful".

The use of the balafon and the different musical rhythms—in particular the cheerful rhythm inciting bravery called *tindoro* on which the performance ends— contribute to give a typically Bwa coloration to the performance. This first part of the song is therefore a call to the people of today, an invitation to the Bwa—sedentary peasants, urbanized employees, or young graduates—to become more involved in life in Mali, to work to regain the pride of yesterday. After this musical introduction, the recital begins with these words (spoken in French to the background of the balafon):

Mesdames, Mesdemoiselles et Messieurs, bonsoir
Le groupe Zamaza de Konsankuy voudrait vivre avec vous une page de l'histoire glorieuse des Bwa.

Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening
The group Zamaza of Konsankuy would like to live with you a page of the glorious history of the Bwa.

What is commonly referred to as the revolt is indeed a great moment in the history of this region of West Africa. The narrative takes place within a more global anti-colonial resistance, which gave rise to a conflict presented as a real war, the Bani-Volta War (Şaul and Royer; Coulibaly). The narrator himself points that the term 'revolt' was used disdainfully by white people. This designation is also discussed by scholars, notably by Patrick Royer, who compares this event to other anti-colonial struggles:

> African resistance movements have been the subject of typologies, all very similar to each other, which, like any classification exercise, shed useful light, but ignore or transform movements that do not fit the proposed models, leading to very fragile conclusions, such as the absence of a large-scale anti-colonial movement in West Africa. The 'Volta revolt', when mentioned, falls into the category of peasant uprisings, as opposed to mass movements (such as the Maji-Maji in Tanganyika from 1905 to 1907, the Kongo-Wara war in Central Africa from 1927 to 1932, or the Mau-Mau insurrection in Kenya from 1952 to 1956). The Volta War was, however, comparable to these movements in terms of the number of combatants and, unfortunately, victims. The question is not to decide which was the most deadly anti-colonial war, but to question the systematic use of terms such as 'rebellion' and 'revolt' by linking them to the military balance of power, a perspective that is not that of the local populations. (Royer 39, my translation)

According to Mahir Şaul and Patrick Royer (24), "[i]n terms of scale only […], the Volta-Bani War was by far more massive than any of these other movements".

They rightly point out that researchers have shown little interest in this event, which put French troops in difficulty for several months. However, as they show in their book, it was a large-scale conflict, "a seismic event in West African colonial history" (Şaul and Royer 23), which involved an uninterrupted territory of nearly 80,000 km2 (Şaul 59).

Historians explain this lack of interest in the event by political circumstances. On the one hand, the French authorities had no interest in revealing everything that had happened in West Africa during the First World War.[3] On the other hand, the nations that became independent, for other reasons, did not seek to highlight this episode of their history.

> One reason the Volta-Bani War is so little known in the scholarly literature is the attitudes of successive governments that ruled over these territories. […] This was the time of strong Allied propaganda against Germany. The German territories in Africa were attacked and taken over by joint British and French forces, with the loud justification of the South West Africa and Tanganyika insurrections being given as evidence. Any news about trouble in their own territories would expose both Britain and France to the charge of self-righteous hypocrisy. France especially had good reason to fear exposure. The violence in the suppressions of the Volta-Bani opposition probably surpassed German actions in either of the above-mentioned conflicts.
>
> […]
>
> Both in Mali and Upper Volta (the former Burkina Faso), the Volta-Bani anticolonial war concerned areas that were marginal in terms of the symbols mobilized to forge a national identity: ancient Mali and the heritage of the Bambara of the middle course of the Niger, in the first case, and the Mose kingdoms, in the second. In fact, in both countries large numbers of people who identified strongly with this national identity came from places that participated on the side of the French in the repression of 1916. (Şaul and Royer 24–5)

Indeed, the facts as reported in the narratives highlight a rather delicate situation, pitting not only the populations against the colonial soldiers (many of whom were '*tirailleurs sénégalais*', indigenous soldiers; see Echenberg), but also the local populations against each other. During the First World War, the French colonizer, whose presence was already contested in this region, came to take the most valiant among the villagers to make them soldiers. The others, including women and children, were asked to continue forced labour under the command of colonial auxiliaries from populations that had agreed to collaborate with the French. In contrast, the peoples of the region between Bani and Muhun were known for their insubordination, having previously resisted conquest and

Islamization. They had never considered themselves to be subjugated, claiming not only their cherished freedom, but also certain occult powers (Royer 42). The following extracts show how the event is narrated in the recital:

> It all began on 23 November 1915 in Bona, a small village in present-day Burkina Faso.[4] That morning, as usual, the Frenchman, the colonizer, had asked the people of *Bwatun* [the Bwa country] to rebuild the Bobo-Dioulasso-San road […]. Among the women required to fetch water from two kilometers away was a certain Téné Coulibaly from Bona. Téné was pregnant and had reached term. The work continued until nightfall. At around 3pm, Téné Coulibaly felt contractions and went to find the guard Alamisso Diarra who was in charge of monitoring the workers. She said to him: "Please, give me permission to go back to the village to be assisted by an old traditional birth attendant". But Téné Coulibaly's response was to be a sharp blow with a riding crop, sending her back to work. Around 4pm, Téné Coulibaly gave birth to her first child, a beautiful boy, in full view of everyone. Téné Coulibaly then took her baby, still covered in blood, in her arms and addressed the Bwa, saying:
>
> Valiant men of *Bwatun*
> Whether I, Téné Coulibaly, survive or not
> Whether my child here survives or not
> I name him *Hianbɛ*!
>
> *Hianbɛ* means war chief. The Bwa present on the site understood Téné Coulibaly's message. They rushed at Alamisso Diarra and laid him on the ground, bathed in his blood. A delegation of five people was immediately formed to report to the village chief of Bona, […] he said this:
>
> Bravo my children, you are worthy of us.
> I tell you that your mission has just begun.
> Go back to the site.
> Cut off the ears of this renegade.
> Cut off his limbs.
> Strip him of his clothes.
> Form two groups and go through all the villages of the *Tietun* (a region of the Bwa country). When you arrive in each village, blow the horns and when the people are gathered say to them this: "From today, we Bwa have defeated the White authority. From today, the Whites will no longer command us. So let us unite and defend the land of our ancestors."
> This war of liberation, disdainfully named by the white man as "the Bwa revolt" […], started by the workers of the construction site alone on 23 November 1915, had 30,000 combatants on November 26th. On November 29th there were 50,000 fighters and by mid-December there were 92,000 from all over *Bwatun*. (my translation)

Munuti beni (the Great Revolt) and the Bwa's claim to identity: A long-time ethnicization

Later in the performance, the narrator invites the president of the Niimi association—a woman at this time—to identify with the heroine whose name has been retained in oral tradition, the one who was forced to give birth on the road.[5] In this recital, she is presented as the initiator of the revolt by naming her baby *Hianbɛ* (arrows/chief, or chief of the arrows), a name usually given to a child born during a war. As in other African languages, it is common in Boomu to give names to children who carry messages addressed to a third person or to the community (for a more detailed discussion on this see Leguy, "What Do 'Message-Names' Say? The Management of Kinship and the Act of Naming among the Bwa [Mali]"). However, this trigger, dated 23 November 1915 by anthropologist Jean Capron, is presented as such by the French military officers themselves (100). The narrator here attributes to her a founding speech act: she merely names her new-born child, but this name is a call to war. In the stories of the Bani-Volta War, there are two frequently repeated narrative motifs featuring women at the origin of the conflict. In one, a young woman who has just given birth is forced to return to work at the risk of her child. In the other, as in this recital, a pregnant woman is forced to work until she gives birth to her child on the spot, in full view of everyone.

> What above we called 'a narrative self-understanding of the movement' are two stories about the war's beginnings that repeated, with slight variations, in many sources. These stories are laced with the emblematic themes of colonialism, forced labor, road construction, cruel guards, women at work, and threats to women's fertility and sexuality. Although only one of these stories finds confirmation in a record, we presume that they take their origin in actual incidents. (Şaul and Royer 132–3)

The live dismemberment of the guard and dispersal of his limbs in order to invite neighbouring villages to join the battle is also a frequent motif in war stories (Şaul and Royer 134). Nazi Boni's novel also states:

> The wisdom of the Bwamu recommends that the house should be swept before its surroundings. The purge began with the enemies within, the "black traitors and mercenaries". The inhabitants of Fatianna butchered alive the guard Alanenson, who was known for his cruelty: the first piacular offering to the "Sacred Land of the Ancestors, profaned by the godless". (222–3, my translation)

This conflict pitted the population not only against the French military, but also against their local auxiliaries, whose abuses they suffered. Those who had put themselves at the service of the colonizer—in this region mostly Fulani and Manding who are generally Muslims—looked like those who had sought to impose their power over the region in previous centuries, and against whom the Bwa people had always fought.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Bwa living in Mali still consider themselves marginalized in a country where Manding and Fulani individuals hold the majority positions of power. Thus, this narrative highlighting the deeds of the Bwa ancestors during this anti-colonial war is an invitation to the contemporaries to become part of the national construction and to take their future into their own hands.

In Burkina Faso, the revolt also concerns people who are far from power, albeit in a different way. Céleste Coulibaly recalls that Boni, the famous Bwa writer and first Burkinabe to publish a literary work (Millogo), was an opponent of Maurice Yaméogo, the first president of independent Upper Volta (Coulibaly 14). Boni was a deputy in the French National Assembly for ten years from 1948 to 1958 and in the Territorial Assembly of Upper Volta from 1947 to 1959 (of which he was president from 1958 to 1959). His word mattered. Yaméogo was not going to emphasize the glorious past of the people who supported his rival, whom he forced into exile and whose property he confiscated in 1960.[6] Boni's famous novel, *Crépuscule des temps anciens* (1962), ends in the already troubled period that heralds this war, which was also a way for him to show the strength of resistance of his people.

The situation is somewhat different today in Burkina Faso, where the Bwa do not feel as devalued by the state. The revolt has a strong historical meaning, since as a result the French decided to divide the colony of Haut-Sénégal-Niger into sectors which were easier to control, thus creating the colony of Upper Volta on 1 March 1919. The centennial commemoration was mentioned at the opening of the National Assembly in September 2016. Gaston Gnimien, a Burkinabe historian, had this to say at the opening:

> Under the impetus of its president Salifou Diallo, the National Assembly held its first parliamentary session under the sign of the 100 years of what colonial literature has confined to the name "Bwa revolt of 1915–1916" but which, in reality, was an insurrectional process that concerned almost all the peoples located between the Bani River (North Ivory Coast – Mali) and the Black Volta, today's Muhun. This initiative of the National Representation is worthy of interest in more than one respect. It brings to light a part of national history that colonization deliberately kept under wraps because not only was the terrible repression of the revolt the antithesis of the civilizing mission that colonial France had set itself, but also because its scale cast doubt on France's omnipotence.
>
> The initiative to commemorate the centenary of the first popular uprising in Burkina Faso shows the contribution of the peoples of the West to the building of the nation. It is indeed well known, as the rest of this paper will show, that it was following this revolt that the decision was taken to divide up the immense colony of Sénégal-Niger in order to bring the colonial administration closer to the territories under its control, thus creating the Colony of Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso. […] (Gnimien, my translation)

On both sides of the border, however, there is what can be called an ethnicization of the revolt, referred to as the "Bwa revolt", or Bobo revolt, which is made clear in the performance studied. In reality, the war was not fought only by the Bwa; other populations took part in it. Put differently, all the populations of this region between the Bani and the Muhun rivers, to the Dogon and Samo territories in the north, participated in the revolt. Alliances between villages go beyond ethnic or religious distinctions, as Royer says:

The colonial vision of the Bani-Volta region as inhabited by autonomous village societies linked only by ethnicity seemed to exclude the possibility of a large-scale movement like that of 1915–1916. By absorbing, eliminating, or neglecting the most important regional political actors, the French military, and the civilians who succeeded them, constructed an image of 'anarchic' societies, devoid of centralized political organization, which certainly posed problems of administration, but which could not present a military threat. The administrators, unable to move beyond an ethnic or village framework, were not able to suspect underlying structures that would make inter-village coordination possible. To the great surprise of the Governor General, ethnic and linguistic boundaries did not constitute an obstacle to the expansion of the anti-colonial movement. (43–4, my translation)

The revolt began in the Marka-Dafing country in November 1915. As early as 17 November, the people of Bona—a Marka village—refused to donate riflemen, rallying other villages to their cause the next day (Şaul and Royer 127–40). On 19 November, the village of Bona resisted the intervention of the commandant who was forced to retreat: this was the official start of the revolt. The insurrection quickly spread throughout the Muhun region, which was largely populated by Bwa, but also by Marka-Dafing, mostly Muslims. In the Malian region of *Bwatun*, it was only at the beginning of 1916 that villages rallied to the cause, in particular Mandiakuy and Tiotio (Capron 101). The important event for the anti-colonial insurrection in this region is the destruction of the military camp at Tominian on 4 March 1916 (105). According to Şaul and Royer:

A notable feature of the war around San and the neighboring areas of the two other cercles [Koutiala and Bandiagara] is that it flared up at a late date. Anticolonial activities reached their height in this cercle in April 1916, when the Molard column was immobilized in Dedougou for lack of ammunition, and continued on a high note until June, when refugees from the repression in Dedougou came to join them. The vigor of the movement forced the government to create a second column in San. (236)

Moreover, not all the Bwa villages revolted, and the dissensions between the communities in revolt and those that submitted to the colonist led to the destruction of many villages considered to be traitors: this was the case for Bénéna, for example. The narrator does not mention that the number of villages that sided with the revolt was even lower than those that sided with the French military: "It is proven to the French administration that the Bobo, Marka, and Minyanka country of San only revolted under pressure from the Dedougou rebels.[7] 308 villages were won over by the revolt against 481 that remained loyal, these populations brought 7,000 porters and 366,000 kg of millet" (Diarra 436). Thus, Royer blames the 'ethnic and religious' prism through which scholars view African realities for the misconception of what was presented as a population movement mixing people of different origins and languages:

The 1915–1916 war became known as the 'Bwa revolt' (or Bobo, as they were also called) because the first notable descriptions and analyses of this war are part of works about the Bwa. However, if Bwa communities suffered particularly from this war, it was not as Bwa. The movement was not initiated by Bwa, and Bwa communities sided with the colonial forces. Membership of the movement was not linked to any ethnic affiliation […] but reflected membership of groups and networks formed by ties of kinship, residence, or alliance between villages or neighborhoods of villages. It was not uncommon to oppose a neighboring village speaking the same language and to ally oneself, often through religious cults, with distant villages speaking a foreign language. Lineages, neighborhoods, military and economic centers, were the main social operators; not ethnic identity. (44, my translation)

However, in ordinary discourse, as in this recital, the revolt is claimed to be a 'Bwa revolt', even though it is known on the one hand that Marka, Dogon, Samo, and other people joined the insurgents, and on the other hand that not all Bwa villages joined the anti-colonial struggle. This was already the case when Boni's book was published and with works published by scholars afterwards, in particular Capron's monograph, even though he shows that the Marka populations of the department of Safané were at the origin of the insurrection (99–101).[8] Capron himself presents the revolt as the basis of a new identity for the village communities of *Bwatun*: "The 1915 revolt represents the culmination of a political awareness, the awakening of a people for whom the re-conquest of independence represents the only chance to be themselves again, to exist as a people. Taking up arms, the village communities erased, in one fell swoop, several decades of foreign domination; one by one, they rebuilt the Bwa people (101, my translation)".

Thus, as Şaul points out (60), this ethnicization is reinforced by the publication of Boni's novel, and then Capron's monograph, which remained the two major references dealing with the event, until the publication

of Şaul and Royer's book. There is also a bias emanating from the colonial discourse: as Vennes shows (*Civiliser et discipliner: la mission civilisatrice et la culture militaire coloniale lors de la guerre du Bani-Volta (1885–1919)*, 103–7), in the classification of populations that was made according to their supposed degree of civilization, Bwa were considered inferior to the Markas and other populations of Manding origin. The wearing of woven clothing, the existence of a hierarchical order, and conversion to Islam were important civilizational traits for the colonizer (Şaul and Royer 77). In the 1910 Military Manual studied by Vennes ("L'officier, la colonie et l'indigène: conceptions du maintien de l'ordre à travers le Manuel tactique du groupe de l'AOF (1910)"), the Bwa are mentioned among the lowest ranking populations: "very primitive, bellicose, with only rudimentary organization", they would not make good 'tirailleurs' (80). Used to infighting, they seem to be unmanageable. This implies that they are not recognized for their strategic skills and that they are thought to be incapable of organizing themselves to face the French army, which will be all the more surprised by the way in which the villagers of this region will resist it. French forces were amazed by what is sometimes considered to be a suicidal attitude on the part of the Bwa people, so disproportionate were the means brought into play. Their entry into the war forced the French military to reinforce itself and the fighting was particularly violent.

The Bwa themselves did not enter into combat before the episode recounted in this performance, when a woman who was about to give birth was forced to continue working under the whip of a guard. This incident is noted as having taken place on 23 November between Poundou and Koanko, on the Bobo-Dioulasso road construction site, in the Commandant Edgard Maguet's account of it, quoted by Capron (100). This episode would not necessarily have any connection with the revolt initiated by the Marka, but it would be the triggering element because of the sending of the guard's severed limbs for the insurrection to spread throughout the region, even to San.

In the recital, what happened in Bona and the reaction of Téné, the woman forced to give birth at the worksite, are assimilated. By making this amalgam, the narrator propels this woman, who names her child 'chief of the arrows' in Boomu, as the initiator of the revolt. He thus accentuates the attribution of the revolt to the Bwa even more. Leaving in the shade all the action carried out by the Marka of Bona, the performance reinforces *de facto* the identity aspect of the event, as it is presented at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

In the performance, the narrator pays tribute to various heroes of this war. He begins by mentioning El Hadj Adama Dembélé, the instigator of the revolt in the San region, who joined the movement in March 1916 and dragged the region into the fight (Şaul and Royer 243–4). The one who is praised first is a Dafing (Marka) hero, a cleric of Kula also called Kula Ladji.

> He had twice been a pilgrim to Mecca, and it is said that on his return from his last pilgrimage there in 1914, he had initiated contacts with influential Marka and Bwa leaders of his own region in preparation for a revolt against the French. On 11th March 1916, Batieri of Sanaba (who was not a Muslim himself) recognized Dembélé as the leader of the war in the San region. Dembélé carefully situated himself within the moral hierarchy of the movement. He first sent the traditional sheep and chicken to Batieri, who accepted the presents and in return encouraged Dembélé's emissaries to wear the *dafu*, saying it would help to fight the French and would deflect French bullets. (Şaul and Royer 243)

The *dafu*—which in Bambara refers to a cord woven from the fibres of the *hibiscus sabdariffa* (*da* in Manding languages)—was originally a Dafing insignia relating to an age class, consisting of two strings, one worn around the head, the other hung around the neck (Royer 47). This insignia had become a rallying ornament for insurgents (Şaul and Royer 131). Thus, the so-called Bwa revolt was initiated in the San region by a Muslim cleric, who included the insurgent villages of the region in the larger network of those engaged in the Bani-Volta War under the impetus of the Marka-Dafing inhabitants of Bona, who imposed their cultic practices as a rallying insignia on all anti-colonial people.

The narrator does not mention the heroes who have distinguished themselves in the bend of the Muhun region, not even Yisu Kote from the village of Bona who is considered by historians to be the inspirer of the movement, called by the French the 'great fetishist' (Royer 47–9). The heroes mentioned in the performance are more specifically heroes from the Bani region (i.e., on the present-day Malian side): Zuku Koné from Bénéna, Bouakari Dakouo from Mandiakuy, Papa Dembélé from Tiotio, and Bazanni Thèra from Sankuy. Each of these heroes is the subject of a panegyric.

Thus, the attribution of the revolt to the Bwa, already present in the military reports of the time, has been reinforced both by literature—due to the success of Boni's novel—and by research, notably that of Capron. In

the performance, the narrator only accentuates this ethnicization by emphasizing the actions of Boomu-speaking heroes and heroines. But one can see from the beginning that the narrator further narrows the focus by establishing a boundary that did not make sense at the time of the Bani-Volta War. In fact, he specifically addresses the Malians Bwa, and he presents their country as 'the' country of the revolt, further accentuating the identity perspective of the narrative by making it the account of a history specific to the Bwa of Mali.

Participating and setting boundaries: A paradoxical injunction
There is thus a kind of paradoxical injunction in this performance. While claiming a place in contemporary Mali, an invitation to participate in a common history, it does so by presenting as specifically Bwa an episode of history that marked a whole region, retaining more precisely the names of the Bwa and the villages of the Malian Bwa country concerned. The contemporary Malian situation, in which the inhabitants of this region feel marginalized, undoubtedly reinforces this attribution of the revolt to the Bwa.

Further in the recital one can see how the narrator focuses the action on the Malian region of Bwa country alone, as if the insurrection ultimately concerned only this region, between the Bani River and the current border with Burkina Faso. Not only is the revolt attributed primarily to the Bwa alone, but more precisely to the Bwa on the Malian side of the present border:

The first clash between Bwa fighters and French troops took place on December 27th, 1915, at Bénéna. That day, the small military post guarded by about thirty men was stormed and completely taken. After Bénéna, the next shock took place on January 9th, 1916 at Sabara near Mandiakuy. Once again, our Bwa fighters routed the French troops.

Then came the great battle of March 4th, 1916, known as the 'Battle of Tominian'. On that day, in Tominian, the battalion of 100 men parked on what we call today the hill of the Ancients Combatants was attacked by thousands of Bwa fighters. That day, the representative of the white power, the evil and reckless canton chief, was caught and shot with head-butchers. That day, the French lieutenant who commanded the French troops was taken and shot. In Tominian, you will still find today this place that we call the place of remembrance, a testimony to the bravery of our fighters. [*applause*] It was then that the Bwa fighters decided to march on San. Because at that time, a certain André Bonzot, administrator of the indigenous colonies, was living in San. It was necessary to take this administrator to completely defeat the white authority. The meeting took place on May 1st, 1916 in nearby Sienso.

The clash was brutal, deadly, relentless. In spite of the intervention of the 80 mm gun, our fighters still routed the French.

The appointment was made for July 14th, this time on the plain of Ténéni. On the evening of the 13th, they came, they came by thousands, from all over the *Bwatun*. [...] Minyanka, led by Zié Sogoba of Karangasso, joined our fighters that day. Dogons, led by Tomo Kodjo, joined our fighters. [*applause*] Then, warned at night by who doesn't know who, Mr. André Bonzot sent the Governor General a message that read:

'Mr. Governor General,

The situation is critical. The post of San is in danger. The Bobo will soon attack. They are around the post by thousands and thousands. Send reinforcements and more reinforcements. It must be recognized that of all the revolts that we have had to live through in the field, the revolt of the Bwa, of the Bobo, is the most tenacious. It has been going on for nine months, causing many victims among our men. The Bwa fighters are of unspeakable courage. They would rather kill themselves or each other than surrender. Send reinforcements.'

Reinforcements arrived from all the garrisons of the territory. So, on that day, July 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th, the French soldiers in Koro used for the first time, in addition to assault rifles and the 80 mm gun, machine guns and offensive grenades.

'We were getting a shower of bullets everywhere', an old survivor of this barbaric slaughter would later say.

[*yoo-lenu*: Music of sadness, tune for funeral oration]

The narrator's words encourage the public to identify with the insurgents. On several occasions, he uses the possessive pronoun to designate the insurgents: 'our fighters'; 'our Bwa fighters'. In a general movement, he

rallies all the Bwa in the same fight, specifying that "they came by thousands, from all over the *Bwatun*". If he does not forget to mention two non-Bwa heroes from the Bani region, Tomo Kodjo the Dogon and Zié Sogoba from Karangasso the Minyanka, the presence of the neighbouring populations remains allusive. In the appeal for help that he imagines sent by the administrator of San, he insists on the bravery of the Bwa fighters. He then alludes to the well-known saying from Boni's novel: "Rather *Humu* (death) than *Wobamu* (slavery)!" (233) Reports written by both administrators and the military often note, not without surprise, that people would rather die than submit.

As Fredrik Barth has well demonstrated, ethnic identities do not exist "as such", but are constructed in interaction, according to differences or oppositions that make sense and constitute boundaries, even if this does not involve cultural or linguistic differences. Andreas Wimmer (26), focusing on boundary making processes, shows that reality presents itself more as a continuum of possibilities between the two extremes represented by the essentialist and constructivist conceptions. According to the typology of "modes and means of boundary making" that he proposes (79–112), there are two kinds of boundary shifting strategies: either they are expansion strategies that make the boundary more inclusive, or they are contraction strategies, of isolationism, that make it more exclusive. It is this second way of making boundaries that is observed here, insofar as one is witnessing an identity claim that excludes, by omission, a large part of the protagonists of history to make it an event specific to the particular heritage of a small, marginalized population that thus claims pride in having a past that belongs to it alone.

The paradoxical injunction observed in this case, based on a performance composed for a cultural event that took place in 2001, at a time when it seemed important to assert one's own cultural identity by forming Niimi-Présence Bwa-type associations, seems to reveal the more general dialectical movement of tension between a certain universalizing globalization and the expression of local particularisms. Analysing this paradox at a more general level, Arif Dirlik, evoking not without humour "some devilish design to mock the postcolonial argument" (220), made the following observation:

> Cultural nationalism, ethnicism, indigenism have emerged as markers of cultural politics globally; over the last decade ethnicity has moved to the center of politics, overshadowing earlier concerns with class and gender. Claims to cultural authenticity, moreover, have been accompanied by efforts to discover or restore authentic pasts as foundations for contemporary identity; most urgently among those who have suffered 'the sentence of history'. The most basic problem presented by this paradoxical situation is the disjuncture between cultural criticism and cultural politics. Even as cultural criticism renders the past into a plaything at the hands of the present, the burden of the past haunts contemporary politics in a reassertion of cultural identities. (221)

The political situation, as experienced by the population of this remote and somewhat marginalized region of Mali, effectively leads them to look for a source of pride in their identity in a glorious past that sets them apart. For Wimmer, the ways of 'making boundaries' depend on the structuring of three dimensions of social space: the institutions, the individuals' positions in social space, and, finally, the networks to which they belong (146). While stories of the revolt circulated orally in the villages, the approach of the centenary, in a complex political context, prompted intellectuals from the region to commemorate the event. It is well known that the internet has played a role in the expression of an identity construction independent of states (see Galtier). If the colonial and independence periods contributed to an ethnicization of the populations, this work of constructing one's own ethnic identity is accentuated by the use of certain social networks, following the creation of cultural pages that are very popular.[9]

By creating specific Facebook groups, Bwa people referred to the revolt on the one hand to ask for a commemoration for the centenary in 2016, and on the other hand to call for a new revolt. If one looks more closely at the posts relating to the commemoration of the event, one can see an appeal to ethnic identity. Based on the image of bravery, honour, and insubordination transmitted by the memory of the revolt, it is asking for more equal treatment for the Bwa in Mali. A call for rebellion following the Tuaregs, who have succeeded in obtaining quotas in the administration, can be read too. In the thread of discussions on these Facebook pages created in the early 2010s, in a period of high political tension due to the conjunction operated between the Tuareg independence claims and the expansion of jihadist movements that are gaining popularity, the members express their desire not to be forgotten as Bwa. More specifically, following the signing in May and June 2015 of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (known as the 'Algiers Agreement'), after negotiations that took place in Algiers between the Republic of Mali and the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), which brings together

various Tuareg movements, there was an expression of concern about what is denounced as 'a premium for terror'. The Malian state is criticized for giving in to arms, while remaining deaf to the demands of other peaceful minority communities. In order to express their bitterness and to call for a true 'inclusive dialogue' that would give a fair place to each Malian, whatever their origin, the past is summoned: "In 1916, we fought the colonizer bravely and for well-known reasons. We feel that we are reliving the events that led the Bo community to rise up against the colonizer. Will we be forced to rise up a hundred years later to have our dignity restored?" (*Bwatun* sur Facebook page, posted on 19 July 2015, minutes of the Bwa-Niimi meeting of 14 July 2015, my translation).

Thus, as the centenary approached, in this politically tense period when some seem to be heard more than others, the Bwa who were active on the networks were inviting people to take up the path of revolt. For some, it was a question of making known the past that is too often ignored. But for others, it was time to take up arms again, which lead to lively debates in the midst of various publications highlighting cultural facts (the preparation of millet beer or the release of masks, for example), performances by young artists (Ben Zabo, for example, who calls himself "the warrior of the *Bwatun*"), linguistic questions (how do you call this fruit or this plant in your village?), or local announcements (sale of traditional fabrics, but also of cement or services).

In this case, as in other contexts, the use of social networks on the internet seems to accentuate the identity movement. The phenomenon of ethnicization already noted in the narratives concerning the historical event is reinforced in the messages posted more specifically on the Facebook pages run by nationals of the Bwa region, with sometimes violent identity claims.

However, the episode went down in history as the 'Bwa revolt', as the Bwa people had several war heroes in its ranks and the area inhabited by the Bwa was effectively in the middle of the region opposed to the colonists. The Bwa country suffered a lot of destruction (villages destroyed by cannon, granaries burnt down, etc.) and produced many victims (more than 30,000 deaths) (Şaul and Royer 4–5).

These elements, transmitted through oral accounts in the families and then staged and set to music with the purpose of commemorating the centenary in the performance studied, contribute to the claim of a specific identity, of a particular history, by a people known for their capacity to integrate external elements (Diarra), which in fact concerns a region described by Şaul and Royer as an "ethnic puzzle" (14–7). The recital ends with a call to preserve one's own culture, which sounds like a political claim to identity.

Then,
Niimi Présence-Bwa,
Together, let us acknowledge our entity.
It is a hard but noble fight.
The fight can only be done if we recognize ourselves Bo and if we cultivate our […]
Let's say, as if you allow it, that if we cultivate our culture.

[…]

I say to you, yes, people of *Bwatun*, let us be proud of our culture.
Because people without culture are destined to disappear, phagocyted by others who have known how to value and perpetuate theirs.

In this paradoxical injunction to be part of the Malian nation while at the same time reinventing their own communitarian and ethnicist history, one sees the expression of a re-invented and narrativized identity. The Bwa of Mali, by claiming the 1915–16 revolt as their own particular history, are not only asserting a particular identity that sets them apart from other Malians who do not share the same heritage, but are also separating themselves from the other populations of the region—and even from the Bwa populations of Burkina Faso whose language they share—who are heirs to the same past, but are located outside the borders of present-day Mali. The situation highlighted by this performance, composed to commemorate a glorious past, is part of an identity claim that goes beyond mere cultural expression. But as Dirlik points out, "Cultural identity […] is not a matter of 'identity politics' but a condition of survival, and its implications may be grasped only by reference to structures of power" (227). For a dominated population, which struggles to find its place within the Malian nation, commemorating the centenary of the revolt against the French colonizer is not merely a duty of memory towards the glorious ancestors.

Conclusion

In this article, I have shown how the identity claims of a minority population can be expressed through a certain rewriting of history, by studying the text of a recital performed in 2001. In this recital, created within the framework of a cultural association to prepare for the centenary of the anti-colonial war that caused unrest in a fairly large area of French West Africa in 1915–1916, now divided between Burkina Faso and Mali, the commemoration is part of a double identity claim. This can be described as an ethnicization, in the sense that the revolt is almost exclusively attributed to the Bwa people, their fellow fighters Marka-Dafing, Samo, or Dogon being barely mentioned. However, I have shown that it was not as Bwa that the insurgents fought, but as inhabitants of a region that refused to submit too easily to outside power, especially when that power was cruel and violent. On the other hand, this recital also shows a nationalization of the event, which participates in the construction of a border that acknowledges the separation of the region between Burkina Faso and Mali, even though this border is artificial and has long been contested. It cuts through the heart of a territory, thereby isolating the Bwa populations who live on the Malian border within a country of which they are marginalized, speaking a Gur language and sharing many cultural traits with the neighbouring Burkinabe populations. Thus, this recital paradoxically invites the Bwa to integrate into the Malian nation while insisting on a historical heritage of their own. This paradoxical injunction resonates with the identity claims that are expressed today in a particularly violent manner, notably on social networks.

Notes

1. The Bwa (or Bwaba or Bwawa, depending on the dialect) are called "Bobos Oulés" in ancient texts and military reports. "Bobo" is an exonym of Manding origin used by the colonial administration.
2. Transcription and translation by Zufo Alexis Dembélé, reviewed by Pierre Diarra and Cécile Leguy. Excerpts from the performance were presented in French (Leguy, "'Est-ce que vraiment'").
3. One can read in the military reports relating to this episode of the violence of the repression, in particular towards women and children massacred without restraint (Vennes, "*Understanding Colonial Violence: Military Culture, Colonial Context, and the Civilizing Mission in the Volta-Bani War (1915–16)*").
4. The village of Bona, department of Safané, province of Mouhoun, in present-day Burkina Faso.
5. Agnès Dembélé, president of Niimi from 2001 to 2004, was in charge of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family from 2002 to 2005, under President Alpha Oumar Konaré.
6. Boni went into exile in Bamako and then in Dakar. He returned to Upper Volta in 1966, after the fall of the Yaméogo regime following a popular movement (Millogo 12).
7. "Bobo" is an exonym of Manding origin used by the colonial administration to designate the Bwa.
8. This classic monograph is presented as a contribution to the ethnology of the Bwa and is the first large-scale ethnographic work conducted in this region.
9. Facebook groups: *Bwatun* sur Facebook (Mali): created on 9 August 2011, 32,351 members as of 5 August 2023 (10 moderators); Bwaba et amis (Burkina Faso): created on 26 October 2011, 26,239 members as of 5 August 2023 (6 moderators); Le Tominianais (Mali): created on 16 April 2012, 11,210 members as of 5 August 2023 (8 moderators); Comémoration de la Révolte des Bwa de 1916-2016 "100 ans" (Burkina Faso): created on 22 May 2017, 940 followers as of 5 August 2023; Bwaba: ma région, mon village, ma culture (Burkina Faso): created on 13 May 2019, 2 394 members as of 5 August 2023 (1 moderator); identitebwaba.org (Burkina Faso): created on 22 March 2015, approximately 4000 followers as of 5 August 2023.

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Folklore genre designation among the Manden peoples

Olga Zavyalova

Folklore genres designation among the Manden peoples
In this article I deal with the problem of division into genres and genre designation in the oral tradition of the Bamana, Maninka, and Dyula. These people belong to the Manden or Mandinka, Mandingo peoples (Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso). For comparison, the names of similar genres among the Dogon are also given, as the Dogon consider themselves a Manden people, even though their languages do not belong to the Mandé language family. Both expeditionary materials and written sources were used. Almost all the words related to genre formation were recorded, and a description of the genres themselves was given. It was interesting to understand what features are important for choosing genres for Manden peoples. Due to cultural characteristics and historical development, the generally accepted division into genres is not entirely suitable for the Manden peoples and forms a "Procrustean bed" for their subdivision. First of all, the degree of 'seriousness' of the genre is important, that is, its significance for tradition: 'true' texts are opposed to fictional ones. The degree of rituality of the folklore text is also significant. Restrictions on the performance of texts are associated with the ability to control the occult power of *nyama* energy. An important role in this is played by the presence of the griot tradition. Also, a formal feature plays a role in defining various folklore genres. **Keywords:** oral tradition, Manden, genres, folklore.

Introduction

The Manden peoples (the Bamana, Maninka, and Dyula) living in West Africa have a rich oral tradition.[1] Folklore is still a very important part of their life, as well as the institution of caste storytellers, or griots. In many parts of Africa, it is still one of the main mechanisms of culture, and one can analyse the living texts of classical folklore such as epics, fairy tales, and legends. Moreover, the institution of caste storytellers, or griots, is still alive. However, progress is relentless, and modern researchers have almost the last chance to see the traditional functioning of Manden folklore.

In this article I will analyse the definition of the genres of the Manden oral tradition. To achieve this, it is necessary to understand what features of the texts and their performance stand out when referring the text to a particular genre among the Manden people. As a result, a classification of genres and a genre repertoire of Manden folklore will be obtained.

In my study, I relied on both oral and written sources and examined the genres of peoples inhabiting Mali, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire—the Bamana, Maninka, and Dyula. The dissertation of Jean Derive on the oral tradition of Dyula Kong was used as the most complete study of the Dyula oral genres. I gathered most of the information about the genres of the oral tradition of this people from there. As sources of genre terminology in Bamana and Maninka languages I used some dictionaries (Bailleu; Bamadaba; Dumestre; Vydrin) as well as the results of my own research carried out during expeditions to Guinea in 1999 and 2014.

It is important to study which concepts are used in the Bamana, Maninka, and Dyula language to designate genres of oral tradition or correlate with them. Such linguistic analysis can help reveal the culturally significant features of the oral tradition of these peoples. All the genre designations of the Bamana, Maninka, and Dyula are outlined below, as well as each term's origin, a description of the functioning of each genre, its connection with the ritual sphere of life, possible restrictions on narratives, the place of each genre in the Manden culture.

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It must be said that a certain syncretism is characteristic of Manden folklore even today. The Manden people themselves do not clearly divide folklore texts into separate genres: songs and prose folklore are closely related and Manden song and non-song folklore are interconnected. In fairy tales, for example, narrative passages are interspersed with songs. It is difficult to say where the myth ends and the fairy tale begins, whether the text should be classified as a riddle or fairy tale, and so on.

Another difficulty in studying the oral tradition of other peoples is that one often cannot notice, let alone understand, this or that phenomenon in someone else's oral tradition because one has never encountered it before. When analysing oral tradition, one may miss some important things because they are absent in one's native literature or language, or because one does not have mechanisms to describe them. The absence of some components to which one, in turn, is accustomed, is also important. For example, due to the construction of the language, for example, in Bamana and Maninka, it is impossible to find either a description of nature or a description of the image of a hero, because there are very few adjectives in these languages.. The hero is described by his behaviour or actions.

Genres of the Manden oral tradition

According to Derive's research, Dyula people divide speech into *kumakɔrɔ* (old speech, or speech with significance) and *kumagbɛ* (pure speech). *Kumakɔrɔ* is a historical narrative, synonymous with oral tradition, and *kumagbɛ* is ordinary speech, not symbolic, with the literal meaning only. *Foli* (greetings) and *duga* (blessings), for example, refer to pure speech, since they do not need explanation, while *kumakɔrɔ* uses symbolism, i.e., it has a 'second meaning' or additional functions. Thus, oral folklore refers specifically to *kumakɔrɔ*. The Manden people believe that only they can understand the meaning of proverbs, legends, and other traditional texts that refer to speech with additional meaning. The Bamana and Maninka surely understand the meaning of these words (*kumagbɛ* and *kumakɔrɔ*), but they do not use them as the special terms.

Significant (serious) genres
Lasirikuma
Lasirikuma (genealogical storytelling) is the noblest form of Dyula oral tradition and is divided into genealogical songs and historical stories. Among the Bamana and Maninka peoples, serious narratives about the origins of societies and families are also the most prestigious and significant. Their only difference is that these stories are performed only by griots.

Fasa
One of the most important genres of Bamana and Maninka tradition is *fasa*. *Fasa* (*pàsa*) refers to praise, a motto, or laudatory melody (a melody dedicated to a family, dyamu, or a person, performed both with and without verses).[2] *Ka mɔ̀gɔ fàsa dá* means "to praise somebody, to sing a song of praise to somebody".[3] As a rule, every person (in the villages for sure) knows the melody of the *fasa* of his dyamu, which can be played in honour of the guest. In epic legends, you can also hear the *fasa* melody of the main characters, which indicates its origin; this melody may precede the appearance of a particular character in the narrative. However, it is worth noting that for representatives of this culture, it does not matter whether there is a text in *fasa* or not. In Guinea, griots played melodies for each dyamu on the balafon (Kuyate griots from Niagassola) or kore (Diabate griots from Siguiri).[4,5] All members of the family, even little children, immediately recognized their melody. However, many people say that *fasa* is just a small motto in several lines, which is sung in honour of the family. In particular, the national hymn is translated as *jamana fasa* (the *fasa* of the country). *Ka fasa fo* means "to play fasa" and *fasa da* means "to sing fasa". During my trip to northern Guinea in 2014 I heard only *fasa* melodies without words performed by various griots, whereas on a trip to Mali in 2022 the Kuyate griots from the village of Kela sang to me, as to a representative of Keita dyamu, a *fasa* praising the exploits of Sundyata, Keita's ancestor and great hero. So, different griots in different localities prefer to play only a melody or a melody with a laudatory text. It may also depend on the situation. In particular, the main task of the griots of Kuyate is to praise the Keita and tell their story. It is a very important genre related to the dyamu institute and to their history.

Also, the epic itself can be called *fasa*. Thus, it can be said with confidence that the Manden epic is, first of all, a laudatory song for certain families, and only in the second place is it a story about the history of the people and traditions. *Fasa* performance, like the performance of the Maninka and Bamana epic, is the prerogative of the

griots. In general, oral tradition is their professional field. It is necessary to say a few words about the Manden institute of griots. *Jeli* refers to a griot, a storyteller among the Maninka and Bamana and a professional caste of storytellers called "masters of words". It is believed that they control the energy of *nyama* (ɲàma), which is contained not only in living objects, but also in words. *Nyama* energy is the basic concept of Manden culture; it is an occult force (more or less harmful which is contained in certain living or dead beings—people, spirits, some animals, and some inanimate objects). Some knowledgeable people know how to manipulate it.

Griots are keepers of history and traditions, are mentors of rulers, play musical instruments, and perform epic stories. They can also tell fairy tales, but those tales are heroic or epic-like. Griot women are professional potters, but they also tell stories and sing songs at events. Griots carry out all social activities in the village. They are negotiators and solve problems. Griots belong to *ɲàmakala* (people of nyama), who are sometimes called "castes". The great griots are called *nwana*, or *ngara* (master griots) (Durán 570). Their power is great, and they are allowed to use words that have *nyama* energy in their stories. Anyone born into a griot family is a griot, but not everyone becomes *nwana*. As in any other metier, a griot cannot become a master until he reaches the age of 40, when all the secrets and fetishes of the family and dyamu will be revealed to him.

The Dyula have no real griots; their griots (*jeli*) are of the leatherworking caste and considered to be *woloso* (a third-generation slave, born in the house) and not *nyamakala* (those who belong to the professional castes). They are staff-bearers—they carry the staff as a symbol of power behind the leader—and they loudly announce the leader's words (i.e., they play the role of herald).

Among the Dogon, who consider themselves a Manden people, griots also belong to the caste of leatherworkers, but they are not slaves.

Among the Bamana and Maninka, griots are considered to be those who manipulate the energy of *nyama*. In particular, griots can use it to influence a person's life. Previously, only griots were called *nyamakala* (the nyama people), and later this name began to be applied to all professional castes.

Lasiri dɔnkili

The most similar genre to *fasa* in the Dyula oral tradition is *lasiri dɔnkili* (song of origin). *Lasiri dɔnkili* is a genealogical song, a song of praise, a motto, a song with musical accompaniment. These are very short songs about ancestors which are sung in public. One family sings it to another one. There is a person in the family/clan who knows the whole repertoire, but he cannot perform it for his family, only for others. There are two cases of its performance: at funerals (where it is sung by men) and at weddings (where it is sung by women). Historical stories often resemble genealogical stories.

Kokɔrɔ

Among the Dyula people *Kokɔrɔ* is a historical story (without music); it is the most prestigious genre. These are historical legends about the main families, childbirth, their ancestors, etc. They are told in archaic language and differ from the epic in the absence of music and prosodic organization. This is a closed genre: stories belong to families and are told by people over 50 years old in the circle of their extended family. If a young man tells *kokɔrɔ*, the days of his life are shortened (10–20 years for each untimely story, depending on the length). Children are forbidden from listening to such stories before they acquire social status. Texts are passed from one elder to another. A male narrator is preferable, but women may also tell them. Sometimes *kokɔrɔ* telling is initiated by the elders. These stories belong to the sphere of dyamu (*jamu*, clan names). To insult a person, one can say that he has no history. These stories are told during significant events such as family confrontations, wars, big holidays, or the funeral of an important person.

In the Bamana and Maninka language the word *kokɔrɔ* means "tradition", or "history". Stories about the origin of the family or dyamu were called *kokɔrɔ* (translated as old deeds, history). Such stories are also called *kuma kɔrɔma* (old speech, historical narrative). Despite the fact that *kokɔrɔ* is not a genre in Bamana; the Bamana say so about everything that belongs to the past: traditions, history, etc. but the logic of such stories and their structure were common, as well as the language of all such narratives; narrators tried to imitate the speech of griots. Such stories about the origin of clans, families, and villages are accepted by all Manden and neighbouring peoples; the Dogon in their villages even began to write them down.

In Guinea, practically all such 'histories of villages' were similar and could be defined as a genre. These stories told that the founder of the village, the head of the clan, having come to this place, met the spirit (*jina/jinɛ*) the

owner of the land, fell in love with her, and they began to live together. Later they entered into an agreement, and she promised him that she would take care of all his descendants on this earth if they regularly offered sacrifices to her. Apparently, the spirits, both water spirits (*faro*) and the spirits of the earth (*jina*), were originally considered androgynes, but later they began to be represented more "realistically" and a man and woman spirit appeared. As a rule, the names of these *jina* were known and in the villages regular sacrifices were made to them. In general, in Manden, each place has its own spirit, an owner of the land, and, accordingly, a legend about it. Such legends would also be called *kokɔrɔ*.

It should be noted that the idea of the agreement is basic in tradition and is reflected in folklore. The legends about the origin of villages, settlements, traditions, marionette costumes, and so on tend to involve the important role of spirits. It was the spirits that either allowed people to settle in certain lands—and subsequently helped them—or gave magical objects, fetishes, or taught them certain traditions (puppets, theatre). The spirits were not something supernatural for the Manden peoples, but quite natural. The spirits are the owners of the land, on which people are only tenants.

In the Guinean villages in 1999, every head of the family was very happy and proud to tell such a story; all the storytellers of the *kokɔrɔ* (they were among the elders in the family) tried to make it an archaic language, similar to an epic narration. In the absence of written history, all historical memory is preserved and formed orally. This is reminiscent of an observation made in a different context by Yuri Lotman: "The presence of a single national memory was a sign of the existence of a national collective in the form of a single organism. Common memory was a fact of conscious unity of existence" (398, my translation). Not only has the collective unity depended on its history, but also the self-determination of the people. Thus, in the process of building the Mali Empire, the people who took part in it and created a common history, the connecting link of which was the epic of Sundyata. The peoples who later joined this system began to link their history with the history of the formation of the Mali Empire. For example, the according to the history of the origin of the Dogon people, they came from the Manden during the formation of the Empire, and now they consider all Keita to be their elder brothers in dyamu.

Maana

This type of culture requires a strict separation between texts that preserve history, the basic norms of society, and entertaining texts: the division into truth-oriented and fiction-oriented texts is fundamental. Texts that are classified as truthful have a higher status and many restrictions on their performance. The most significant genre in Bamana and Maninka oral tradition is epic legend, but the Dyula do not have it. However, the Dyula *lasiri kuma* performance and the epics of the Bamana and Maninka have a lot in common. The Bamana epic is most often called *maana*.

Maana (Arabic: *ma`nan*, the meaning of the narration) means "narration", or "story", and refers to epic legends. The epic is performed only by male griots; women are not allowed to perform it. During my trip to Guinea in 1999, I was told that a griot woman once sang an epic story despite warnings of other griots and lost her voice (it became hoarse as the voice of a man).

Epic legends differ in structure and plot in accordance with the time of their appearance: one, the classical epic about the creation of the Mali empire (legends about Sundyata, Fa Koli, etc.); two, cycles of the legends about Segu (Biton, Buakaridyan, Da Monson); three, historical songs of the pre-colonial and early colonial period. There are epic legends about the rulers (*mansaw*, *mansare*) and about warriors (*ton-tigi*) and epic songs. The Manden themselves do not subdivide them in this manner, however, as a rule, legends about Sundyata are in Maninka and Mandinka, and legends about Segu are in Bamana (later stories).

The Manden epic tales consist of different types of verses: plot verses are those passages in which the narration takes place and griots pronounce them or sing them to music. But there are also steady verses, those that do not carry plot information and are pronounced by griots in a patter. These are verses of the motto, *fasa*, verses containing a magical meaning. It is their sound that is important, not the meaning, and the task is to pronounce them. Listeners will immediately recognize them, but the interesting thing is that listeners cannot reproduce them verbatim. It is in such verses that *nyama* will be contained.

It can be assumed that the epic was initially born as small panegyric songs dedicated to one or two events (small plots). Over time they were combined into separate cycles formed around one hero or place. These sets of small plots can be called the griots' fund, which they all use in one way or another. Moreover, each griot tradition and locality has its own part of this fund. The epic legends themselves are built on a stable structure (skeleton)

that all griots know, but they all use different sets of plots. Over the centuries, griots have formed long narratives from their sets of micro-plots, varying them according to historical necessity, locality, and audience. Previously, when the griots clan belonged to a certain clan of rulers, their sets of plots were limited to stories related to this clan (Kuyate were the griots of Keita). *Fasa* is part of such epic stories: griots may include laudatory songs to heroes and even the ancestors of the listeners in the narrative, but as was already mentioned, the epic itself is a laudatory song for heroes and ancestors, so sometimes the epic is also called *fasa*.

Ngalen kuma

Ngalen kuma in Dyula means "etiological stories", perhaps "myths". This is not a term for a genre, as there is no common word and it is translated as 'old speech', from the word *ngalen/galen* (bygone days, first, before) and *kuma* (speech). In Bamana *galɛ* means "first", "in the past". Some of these texts are sacred and may consist of verses from the Koran. *Ngalen kuma* is performed without any musical accompaniment and songs. These can be tales that are associated by Dyula with other *ntalen* tales, with riddles and riddle tales (*ntalenkɔrɔbɔ*). The informants often group them into one class and the meaning and symbolism in them are the most important. Such a text is recited by heart. As with other narrative genres, the preferred time for storytelling is at night.

Ngalen kuma is narrated only by adult men; young people are not allowed to tell it, but they can listen to it like everyone else. The narration takes place in small groups when they want to explain any natural phenomena, the structure of the world, the cultural characteristics of society, etc. In everyday life, stories are told spontaneously, accidentally, not on specific dates. *Ngalen kuma* is more serious and dangerous than a fairy tale. Such texts do not contain musical parts, but there is a special beginning: "*ngalen, ngalen …*" (sometime…).

In my experience the Maninka know these words, but it does not refer to myth as a genre. My informants could not remember a single suitable text; in fact, tales about spirits (*jina*) or the origin of the stars' names (the tale about three brothers) were something as close as possible to the myth. All such texts were called *nsirin* or *ntalen* by informants. When I asked about the legends of the hunters, they said that these are not fairy tales (*nsirin tɛ, ntalen tɛ*); this is the speech of old (former) people, or old speech—*kuma kɔrɔ*. As I've mentioned, the legends about spirits are very popular, but they are also called *kuma kɔrɔ* (old narration), *kokɔrɔ* (history), or *ntalen* (story). In Bamako and among intellectuals, you can hear myths of the Bamana, Maninka, or Dogon peoples but this will be a retelling of the myths published by Germaine Dieterlen or Marcel Griaule. There are no restrictions for such a story: it can be told during the day or at night, and at any time of the year, but preferably in old age.

Symbolic genres

Lamara in Dyula refers to a proverb, perhaps derived from the word *mara* (to save). Proverbs are preferred by elderly persons—young people or children do not use proverbs in their speech. *Lamara* are used in everyday communication, often as evidence in disputes: proverbs in speech indicate a well-mannered and 'educated person'.

Nsana (*nzana*) in Bamana and *sanda* in Maninka means "proverb", "story", or "story-tale". Proverbs have traditionally assumed a response. For example, the Bamana proverb "No matter how much a piece of wood floats in the water, it will never become a crocodile" customarily has an answer: "But even a piece of wood can scare a person". If a proverb has an answer, its meaning can also be changed. In the epic story about Da Monson, the leader called his slaves-warriors using a proverb instead of a name, and they responded to him with an answer to the proverb. Proverbs are often used in fairy tales, while some etiological tales play the role of the proverbs' explanation.

Ntɛntɛn (*ntɛɛntɛ̀n, ntɛɛnma̋sa*) in Bamana means "a riddle". In Dyula, the riddle, like the fairy tale, is called *ntalenkɔrɔbɔ*. Riddles can be different in form and structural organization. Initially, they belonged to ritual folklore: after the circumcision rite, there was a competition organized for young men in which they were divided into teams and young men of the older age group acted as arbiters. Like fairy tales, riddles are usually told at nightfall. *Fɔlɔ, maakɔrɔ tun bɛ nsiirinw, nsanaw ni ntɛntɛnw da, ka kɔlɛ laɲɛnaje* (before, old people told stories, proverbs, and riddles to entertain the family).

Fiction genres

Ntaàlen (Bamana) means is a proverb, riddle, introductory words in proverbs and fairy tales, or a short story; *tali* (Maninka) means a tale or short story. This term refers to a small text, a little story. Sometimes in one storybook fairy tales can be called both *ntalen* and *nsiirin* in Bamana. This is a special term for short stories, while the long

fairy tales (more often about the interaction of the world of people and the world of non-human beings) are called *ntalenjan* (the long *ntalen*). The class of *ntalen* includes fairy tales, sayings, and stories in the form of riddles. The word is said to be derived from "speech of the spider", as *ntalon/ntalen* means "a spider". The spider does not often take part in Bamana tales, but in many African traditions it is the main trickster. But as can be seen in Maninka, a spider is *táIontalon*, so the relative to *ntalen* (Bamana), *tali/toli* in Maninka did not come from the word 'spider' and one can suppose that in Bamanait also derived from another word.

Anyone can tell such *ntalen* stories, but only in the evening or at night. Violation of this tradition can lead to the destruction of the society. They cannot be told during fasting, like other entertainment genres. As a rule, these stories are told in the circle of family or friends, and most often such parties take place during the dry season. During the rainy season, children can also have such evenings during their work on the Islam teachers' fields. The tale-riddle can be an intermediate genre between fairy tales and riddles, the narrative of which is similar to a short fairy tale, more often about animals, but at the end there is certainly a question: "Who is right?", "What do you think the hero will do?", etc. Tale-riddles, most likely, will be called *ntalen* in Bamana. They are told more often together with riddles during the competition of groups of teenagers.

Ntalenjan (Bamana, Maninka) is a long tale (a term not often used). It is a narrative with some little refrains, without music. The refrain is repeated several times throughout the story. Sometimes the storyteller's assistant sings it. These narratives have all the features common to fairy tale. The use of different words concerning a fairy tale can also be determined by dialectal features, sometimes they prefer to call it *nsiirin*, and sometimes *ntalen*. Fairy tales and riddles are often introduced with the phrase "*n ta ye, n ta ye*" (here is mine). Adults and children usually tell stories and riddles separately.

In Dyula "*N tɔ n tɔ*" (wait for me wait for me) are words that introduce a fairy tale or a proverb; the proverb itself may be also called *ntɔntɔ*.

Ntalenkɔrɔbɔ is a riddle in Dyula which can be translated as "to discover a tale (meaning)". In Maninka the term "a riddle" is formed in the same way as *sàndakɔdɔbɔ* from the word *sanda* (a tale) and *kɔdɔbɔ* (to discover).

Nsiirin is a "fairy tale", "fable", or "story" in Bamana and *sirin* in Maninka means "myth". Fairy tales are usually told during the dry season, in the evenings. Anyone can tell it, but men consider fairy tales to be a "low" genre intended for women and children. A fairy tale is often told in prose, but prose passages are interspersed with short refrains (according to the plot).

When the storyteller narrates, one of the listeners plays the role of *kumalaminɛlikɛla* (the one who supports the speech). He demonstrates his agreement with the narrator's speech, assenting to him, and thereby sets the pace for the narration. Thus, the narrator's monologue turns into a dialogue with the audience, which helps the perception of speech. This is the specificity of Manden narratives in which the dialogue absolutely dominates in speech. Today this manner of 'supporting of the speech' by the speaker's assistant can be heard during speeches of public figures.

Really long tales can sometimes be sung by a griot to accompaniment because it is similar to epic narration. The following phrase: "*Maakɔrɔ y'a fɔ ne ɲɛ na cogo min, ntalen tɛ, nsiirin tɛ, a bɔlen bɛ tiɲɛ fɛ*" (As the old men told me, this is not a fairy tale, not a tale, it looks like the truth) suggests that *ntalen* and *nsiirin* are marked as fiction.

A rare word, *ntɛlu* means "an anecdote", "story", "a story to the accompaniment of water drum playing". It may also refer to a fairy tale.

Yɛlɛko, yeélɛkofɛn means "something funny", "a joke"; the Bamana and Maninka call anecdotes by this word also. In the Manden languages there is no specific term for "anecdote". The significance of the Bamana funny stories is precisely that this is the formatting, the beginning of the form of anecdote. But so far, among such stories, one can find full-fledged anecdotes and a large number of stories. From the point of view of the structure and logic of the story, these stories are often completely similar to fairy tales about animals or fools.

Hunting folklore

Each folklore genre's features depend on the type of language, the presence of rhyme, tones, and on the type of culture. For example, the Manden folklore is more characterized by stability of texts due to the presence of the griot institution.

An important feature of the Manden oral tradition is that these peoples have a separate hunting oral tradition. As for the Bamana and Maninka peoples, they also have their own hunting griots, however, unlike ordinary griots, they are not from their caste. Any talented hunter can play the role of hunting griot. Hunters have their own stories,

legends, and myths. For hunters and for the entire Manden tradition, the Manden Hunters' Oath (*Manden Donsolu Kalikan*) and the legends about the founders of the hunter's union Kondolon and Saane are the most important. These legends are unmatched in their function in the Manden culture. If the Manden peoples had confirmed the existence of other myths, such as those recorded by Marcel Griaule, Germaine Dieterlain, and others, then it would be possible to draw analogies, since in many ways they are also genealogical myths. However, unlike hunters' myths, classical myths are not confirmed today.[6] It can be assumed that they were forgotten, having lost their functions, while the hunters' legends are still alive. Along with myths, less sacred texts about Kondolon and Fakombe, the first leaders of hunters, can be distinguished (let us call them legends), where Kondolon is the hunters' fetish. These texts have no narrative limitation, they can be told by all hunters or hunters' griots, while the myth about the origin of hunter's union (the legend about Kondolon and Saane) can only be told by the head of the hunter's union.

Hunters also have their own epic stories and fairy tales. Among all Manden tales the hunters' tales are numerous: as a rule, they are about the confrontation of a great hunter with animals or a certain animal, which can turn into a human being. This motif is very popular among the Maninka and Bamana. In fairy tales one can see how animals, or even inanimate objects, can take on the appearance of people. For example, the python or grave turns into a man in some fairy tales. According to Manden, all men also know how to transform into their dyamu totems (*tana*), changing their appearance. So, any man from the Keita family can turn into a lion, the Kulibali can turn into a hippopotamus, etc. The mother of Sundyata had a second hypostasis as a buffalo. If the Bamana and Maninka hunting epic differs from the ordinary epic not only in characters and plot, but also in performance, then only hunting griots sing it, but essentially hunting tales differ from ordinary ones only in plot about the interaction of hunters with animals. In hunting folklore, the heroes are not rulers, warriors, or just people, but only hunters, and their antagonists are animals. The main idea is the rules of interaction between the world of people and the world of nature, maintaining a balance between the two worlds.

Song folklore

As in many countries of West Africa, songs are the most popular genre in the oral tradition.

Dɔnkili means "the song". The majority of the songs are *dodɔnkili* (ritual songs of sacred societies or songs of masks). It is a small, short song of a phrase or two that is repeated many times. They are performed on the occasion of the ritual mask performances showing on certain calendar days, day or night, or during rituals and important events. *Dodɔnkili* are accompanied by mask dances. Most of the songs of secret unions, being part of the ritual, are hidden from the uninitiated, and women do not have the right to hear them. Women can only sometimes participate in the affairs of secret unions ten years after the end of menopause. Performing women's duties, they can hear some of the songs from the rituals of men. Currently, traditional holidays are often timed to coincide with Muslim ones, and mask songs are performed on the same holidays. Women, in turn, participate in the performance of wedding songs, many dance songs, songs for female circumcision (*kɛnɛkɛnɛ dɔnkili*), naming, etc., as well as *kurubi* songs that they sing when they have a grudge against their loved ones (Derive 123).

Jajon/janjo in Bamana is a hymn to bravery (*Màli jànjɔn*—the hymn of Mali), also "a great military battle". There are also many variants of war songs such as *cukuri cukuri* in Dyula. All these songs consist of one or two repeated couplets.

In the Manden tradition there are performances of traditional jesters (*kɔ̀rɛduga)*, as well as puppet performances (*merenkun, sogobɔ*; the Bozo call it *dobɔ*). They have their own songs also. *Kɔ̀rɛduga* (jesters) are rather characterized by statements of a paradoxical type, more like proverbs.

I do not cover different types of songs and their names in this article, although there are many of them, all of them significant and part of separate subgenres (military songs, wedding songs, etc.). It is song folklore that is most widely represented and most popular in the Manden territory. Both fairy tales and epics also contain song excerpts. A complete list of currently existing folklore genres does not exist, as some new genres are formed occasionally, and if we have not encountered any of them, this does not mean that they do not exist.

Jokes and prayers

In general, one can also talk about a huge layer of ritual jokes as a separate, small folklore genre (*túlon, túlonkɛkuma*) in the tradition of *sinankuya* (joking relationship). The jokes (bantering) used by *sinankuya* partners are quite traditional. As a rule, they indicate some peculiarities of food or behaviour of representatives of different ethnic

communities or dyamu clans; jokes used by *sinankunya* are based on stereotypes related to food, clothing, customs, behaviour, and lifestyle: everything that is unusual and incomprehensible is ridiculed. Bamana or Maninka *sinankunya* partners call the Fulbes "bean eaters" and the Bozos "land fishes". The Bamana can tell a Fulbe that "he is useless without a master". Similar jokes and banter are used between certain dyamu; however, such jokes are less based on differences in food, tradition, or lifestyle, and more on social status and professional characteristics. Keita (rulers) shame Kuyate (griots) by saying that they are all liars and chatterboxes. Kuyate respond by saying that Keita are not able to work at all. The same system of bantering exists between peers, people of the same age class, and between certain groups of relatives who need to communicate on equal terms, which is what this banter system helps with.

Prayers to spirits have not been practically studied, and I still cannot say whether it is possible to speak of them as a separate genre. It is only clear that the logic of construction of such prayers is always the same, but the content is not limited by anything. For example, in Niagassola a prayer was offered to the patron spirit so that I could conduct my research and understand the world of Manden successfully. Prayers to patron spirits take place on various occasions and correlate with the type of spirit to which they are dedicated: it can be the patron of a clan or a village, a deceased ancestor, the owner of the territory, etc. The prayer is said by the chief or the eldest of his adherents.

Traditional theatre

Kɔtɛba is the name of the traditional theatre, from *kɔtɛtulon* (theatrical performance and dances that precede it). *Kɔtɛ*, or *kwɔtɛ*, is the special word for dancing accompanied by performance in traditional Bamana theatre. *Kɔtɛba* is a satirical comedy. Its name is derived from the word *kɔtɛba* (kɛtɛ) (big snail). The snail is the mascot of the Segu city. "[…] no one knows the exact origin of *Kotéba*. But what we are sure of is that it has existed for more than two centuries since history tells us that villagers played the *Kotéba* at the time of King Da Mouzon" (Puren). The Manden peoples are highly valued for humour in their culture and theatrical performances can be found everywhere where Bamana live. In the *Kɔtɛba* tradition, the first part of the evening is devoted to dancing, after which the actors play a series of brief sketches. This dramatization is a satire over social evils and propensities in the life of the village. The actors, demonstrating violations of norms and rules in the life of the village community, ridicule the guilty persons and make them to be ashamed of their acts so as to never repeat them. The *Kɔtɛba* Union itself pays great attention to moral values not only within its group, but also supports them in society.

In their performance, the actors improvise in the form of dialogue. Actors and the audience can offer an opinion on the problems discussed in the spectacle of *Kɔtɛba*. There are several stereotypical characters of *Kɔtɛba* who are well known to the general public. They are: a lazy peasant, the marabout-charlatan, the merchant-thief, and the village rooster—a seducer of women (Meillassoux 54). Additionally, there are other characters as well. Thus, the performance uncovers reprehensible behaviour, but nobody is designated by name so as to not humiliate anyone, but people can recognize themselves and correct their behaviour: "The themes of the *kotɛba* are turned towards demystification and criticism: behind the appearances that certain individuals give themselves lies their real behaviour. Criticisms, however, are not all equal in scope and they are exercised only within an imitated and normative framework" (Meillassoux 56).

Kɔtɛba performance may be associated with certain events in village life such as theft, adultery, etc. It can also be timed to some important events, such as a wedding. The wedding *Kɔtɛba* is played for the bride: two variants of family life are played out, as always in a humorous way, with a good wife and a lazy wife. The bride is offered to choose the best option for her future behaviour. In addition, there is a certain date (after harvesting), which is selected every year by the *Kɔtɛba* Union, and is called *Kɔtɛba* Day. That day, many theatre troupes play performances based on *Kɔtɛba* Day traditions. Originally, "the *kotɛba* is a form of traditional Malian theatrical expression with a socializing function" (Bagayoko 19). All folk theatre's performances are prohibited during fasting.

Dyula, like many other peoples of Africa (and not only the Manden), also has its own folk theatre, *Bara*, or *Bala* (a musical performance, a play). The word comes from *bára* (dance, place to dance). *Bara* includes both songs and narration. The main role is played by an actor, who is accompanied by two musicians. *Bara* is mainly performed for family and friends, or in honour of the important guest. Musa Watara is considered to be the founder of the genre; he was taught it by spirits (*jinaw*). The performance lasts two to three hours, usually in the

evening with illumination: there are two to three people on the square, who have assistants who play rattles and bells to accompanying this performance and who also 'confirm' the speech of the main artist.

Manden and Dogon folklore

In the article "Manden Literature", the following definitions of terms are given (La bibliothèque numérique des littératures en langues): fairy tale: *nsiirin* (Bamana), *ntalen* (Dyula), *tali* (Maninka); proverb: *nsana* (or *nsanan*) (Bamana), *nsana* (Dyula Bobo), *lamara* (Dyula Kongo), *talen* (Maninka); epic and song of praise: *fasa* (Bamana and Maninka), *lasiri donkiri* (Dyula); riddle: *ntalenntalen* (or *ntɛntɛ*) (Bamana), *ntalenkɔrɔbɔ* (Dyula), *talen* (Maninka); myths: *galen kuma* (Bamana), *ngalen kuma* (Dyula); eulogy, song of praise: *fasa* (Bamana), *lasiri donkili* (Dyula); historical stories, chronicles: *maana kɔrɔ* (Bamana), *ko kɔrɔ* (Bamana), *kuma kɔrɔ* (Maninka).

Kokɔrɔ (old story), *galen kuma* (ancient speech), *yélɛko* (funny thing), and some others are not terms for denoting genres. Rather, they are descriptive words for specific texts (although other words and phrases are difficult to classify as full-fledged terms from the point of view of the modern philology). Only *maana* is a borrowed word since, as far as I can imagine, the Manden peoples did not need a special word for it before, neither did they for historical genealogical stories, of which they said: "so the old people told". Most likely, separate words were needed to designate symbolic and fiction genres, thereby denoting their lack of connection with reality.

To understand these Manden terms better I have used information collected by Peter Kutsenkov during his expedition to Dogon lands in January 2019.[7] I present Dogon terms sequentially in the Bamana language and in the Tengu language: *Ntalen, tale/talen, pari* is specialized, "professional" tales told by griot specialists. There are very few of them, and they do not exist in the Kani-Bonzon district, which includes the village of Ende. *Nsiirin/ini* is an ordinary fairy-tale that can be told by everyone. *Ntalenjan* is the same as *ini*. The Dogons make no distinction between long and short tales. *Nsana (nzàna) tale/talen* is the same as *ntalen*. *Jajon/janjo/logû (logou)* is a generalized name for all texts, which, in turn, are divided into two genres: *anran logû (logou)*, texts intended for everyone, publicly available; and *ôgo logû*, esoteric narratives intended exclusively for the leaders, *ogons*, who each have a special griot. In some villages *ôgo logû* are performed by the *ogons* themselves. For the terms *ngalenkuma/benikajé* no explanation was given; it was only mentioned that the terms are identical to those in Bamana.[8]

The division of folklore into genres, accepted in modern science now, like the generally accepted classifications of fairy tales, is not quite suitable for African cultures, since the peculiarities of the historical and cultural development of African countries, are not taken into account. For many years there was a discussion about whether there is an epic in West Africa, ignoring the fact that the specificity of the language determined the specificity of the epic genre. The oral tradition of West Africa is still active today, and its functions in culture are very different from the functions of European folklore, which, of course, determines its specificity.

It should be noted that the beginning of the 21st century brought the next wave of Islamic influence. In addition to it, one can observe the rapid development of public and individual literature and the strengthening of the influence of cinema, television, the media, and the internet on people's lives. The oral tradition is also undergoing changes, losing its position, and changing functions. The system of genre formation and the folklore repertoire are currently being transformed.

Conclusion

In this article, I examined the question of what the Manden themselves pay attention to in their folklore. I found that, first of all, the degree of "seriousness" of the genre is important—that is, its significance for the tradition, which is associated with the functionality and rituality of the genre. According to Manden philosophy, these texts carry a large amount of *nyama* magical energy. Bamana and Maninka people have the institution of griots, "masters of the word", who know how to control this power. As such, the most significant texts include those that can only be narrated by griots (*epic, fasa*).

In addition, I found that limitations regarding age and status of the performer is in indicator of the significance of the text. More important genres are not allowed to be performed by young people. For example, the myth about the origin of hunters' union can only be told by the head of the of hunters (while more private legends are told by the hunting griots) and the mythological stories about the origin of fetishes of the family and the family history have to be told by the oldest of the family (and only a person who has reached 40 years of age). Proverbs are not forbidden for young people but correlate with older age and wisdom.

Finally, I found that the degree of rituality of the folklore text is important. Restrictions on the performance of texts are related precisely with the ability to control the power of *nyama*. It is also important whether the texts are fictitious or considered to be true (from the point of view of Manden people themselves) as the degree of their correspondence to reality is significant. With regard to fairy tales a formal feature is important in defining various folklore genres. Fairy tales are divided into long and short tales: the long tales, like epics, can be told by griots. The presence of humour will also define the text as *yéleko* and form a certain attitude towards it, so it can be both an anecdote and a fairy tale. Thus, the ritual significance, the presence of humour, the degree of reliability, the identity of the performer and his audience, as well as formal characteristics (long text or short) are significant in determining genres in Manden oral literature.

Notes

1. Manden (Mandingo) is a group of peoples of West Africa (Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, and Gambia), whose languages belong to the western branch of the Mandé language family.
2. Dyamu (*jamu*) is a social group adopted by some peoples of West Africa, based on the idea of a common ancestor and origin, having professional and marital restrictions, and a certain system of interaction with other similar groups.
3. Note that with folklore genres, the verb *da* (to put, add) is used, which in this context means "to perform".
4. Balafon is a large xylophone having hollow gourds as resonators, used in West African music.
5. A kora is a stringed instrument used extensively in West Africa which typically has 7–21 strings.
6. During neither my expeditions, nor the expeditions of my colleagues, was there any confirmation of the reliability of the information recorded by French ethnologists about any Manden or Dogon myths.
7. The Dogon consider themselves to be a Manden people, however, their languages do not belong to the Mandé language family, but almost everyone can speak Bamana.
8. Informant Malik Gindo, leatherworker and griot, Ende village, Mopti region, the Republic of Mali.

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Performance in propitiatory reconciliation among the Nandi community

Anthony Kipkoech Biwott, Collins Kenga Mumbo & Robert Oduori

Performance in propitiatory reconciliation among the Nandi community

Propitiation is part of what it means to be human. Traditionally, propitiation has been studied from a broad sociocultural perspective with little consideration of the performance processes at play. Among the Nandi community in Kenya, propitiatory offering reconciliation forms the core of restoration of inter-communities relationships. It defines and enriches their culture, but what is propitiatory offering reconciliation? How is it performed? Are there any steps followed in its execution? Is there a specific place of performance? In this article we provide a framework to understand the Nandi propitiatory reconciliation through a literary perspective. We expound on the steps followed: investigation, interrogation, and cleansing, and the three features of performance: that is, place of performance, actions and signs, formulaic expression, costumes, and audience. The data collection took place in Kabiyet and Kipkaren Wards in Nandi county and was collected through participatory observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The sample population was 30 adults between the ages of 45–90 years who were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The data collected on performance in propitiatory reconciliation rites was analysed by use of functionalism theory as expounded by Foley. We found that the stages of propitiatory reconciliation must be religiously adhered to for its effectiveness and that the success of its performance heavily depends on the participation of its performers and audience. This article also brings out performance in form of particular acts, singing, and chanting. **Keywords**: propitiation, reconciliation, performance, Nandi community.

Introduction

In this article, we are interested in the question of whether oral literature can be useful in reconciliation processes. The Nandi people live primarily in the western part of Kenya in Nandi, Uasin Gishu, and Trans Nzoia County. They speak the Nandi language and are grouped with speakers of seven other related dialects under an umbrella term "Kalenjin" or "Myoot". According to Creider (13), this term "Kalenjin", which means "I tell you" in Nandi, was adopted by speakers as a self-designating expression during the late forties and the fifties. The term is now formally used in Kenya to refer to a group of languages and dialects which include Nandi, Kipsigis, Keiyo, Tugen, Marakwet, Pokot, Sabaot, and Terik.

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The Nandi community, just like any other human society, interacts at different levels, during which their intra-communal interaction may at times end in disputes that may result in severe curse to individuals or even a whole clan. In such scenarios, cleansing ceremonies are usually performed to avert the adverse effects of the curse on the members of the community through propitiatory offering reconciliation. It is done in a structured manner and conducted in a specific place and time, led by *kibirāiywō* (a cleanser) assisted by other leaders endowed by the community through a special installation ritual.

Propitiatory offering is one of the important sub-genres of African oral literature. Among the Nandi community, it is an art of performance which involves rituals, offering-giving, or cultural acts. This art (rite) includes, but is not limited to, playing of drums, boasting, chanting, singing and giving sacrifices and offerings. Propitiatory offering is done in a specific place, in a specified manner, and led by specific people ordained by the community through a special ritual. The Nandi community has different types of propitiation such as initiation, marriage, installation of leaders, naming, and reconciliation, among others. The data collection took place in Kabiyet and Kipkaren Wards in Nandi county and was collected through participatory observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The sample population was 30 adults between the ages of 45–90 years who were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The data collected on performance in propitiatory reconciliation rites was analysed by use of functionalism theory as expounded by Foley.

In this article, we argue that the Nandi propitiatory reconciliation should be done based on a restricted structured procedure according to the Nandi customs. We set out to answer the following questions: How does performance manifest itself in Nandi propitiatory reconciliation? And what is the place of performance in Nandi propitiatory reconciliation? In order to respond to these questions, we explain the concepts of propitiation and reconciliation, outline the theoretical framework, the steps followed in the implementation of propitiatory reconciliation, the performance of propitiatory offering reconciliation, and provide a conclusion.

Clarification of concepts: *mviga*, reconciliation, and performance

Kitoko (4) explains that propitiation is a ritual—an ancestral secret. It is a special ceremony which involves traditional practices which culminates into a big celebration with songs, beating of drums, and giving of offerings. Propitiation normally starts with invocation of the ancestral spirits through an offering meant to appease the ancestors and invite them to commune with the participants. Hence, *mviga* is a traditional ceremony which involves carrying out of a special ritual in a specific manner in accordance with customs and traditions of the society. According to Wamitila, during the execution of *mviga*, drama is incorporated depending on the type of ceremony being carried out. Kenyatta (qtd by Wa Thiong'o) explains that amongst the Kikuyu community, there is a ceremony known as *Ituika* which is carried out after every 25 years to allow one generation to pass on power to another generation. This ceremony is completed through the performance of *mviga*. The Nandi community also has various ceremonies in the form of *mviga*. For example, installation of a leader, initiation, purification, wedding, child naming, and reconciliation, among others. These rituals are conducted by different experts who are installed by the community through special ritual. Such leaders are given special names such as *matiryoot* or *kibirāiywō* amongst the Nandi community and are mandated to conduct ceremonies that involve rituals.

In any human society, people interact at different levels: an individual with another individual, an individual with a group of people, or even a group with another group. In any of these interactions, the society is involved in one way or the other. In order to ensure societal harmony, the Nandi culture holds that a reconciliatory ritual has to be performed. Christianity also teaches its adherents about reconciliation. According to its teachings, it is impossible to reconcile a human being with God without first reconciling him with fellow human beings. Based on this teaching, Christians ought to reconcile with their adversaries first before meeting their maker (Matthew 5:23–5; Matthew 18:23–35; 1 John 4:20). The church uses the penitence approach to reconcile people as a gateway to reconciliation with God. The penitence approach employs four key steps which focus on the offender. These steps are: submission, confession, penitence, and absolution (Galtung 1). Therefore, reconciliation is not only the act of seeking forgiveness, but also a structured process that involves confession and penance.

During ritual performance, the performer is either an individual or a collection of people. Thus, Goffman (28) justifies this when he argues that every one of us puts on a performance in our society. Whether through the clothes we wear, the conversations we hold, or the food we eat, all are performances designed as a signal-system to ourselves and others of our place within our social group. This article was guided by Foley's performance theory which was formulated to give guidance on the understanding of oral traditions. It proposes that researchers

who analyse oral literature should take a closer look at the non-literal meaning of spoken words and see the performance as an 'event'. It also brings out several aspects of decoding an oral performance and further brings about the concept of keys to performance and classifies each performance as part of the meaning of the genre of oral literature being analysed. The four main tenets that guided our research study are outlined by Foley in his functionalism theory: (a) Special place of performance: a specific place set aside for carrying out rituals. Words used here carry specific meaning. This place is vital since it allows the participants and the observers to meet during the performance. In Nandi propitiatory reconciliation, this special place could be somewhere in the bush, along the riverbank, or under specific trees. However, these special places vary depending on the environment where the affected participants live. (b) Register: the specific language used to present information during the ritual. It involves specific rules of engagement, choice of special words, and chanting of specific words so as to present the intended meaning in accordance with the ritual being performed. (c) Figurative language: during the performance of any ritual, language is used creatively with regard to the context so as to ensure that the intended meaning is communicated in a special way. (d) Culture in performance and special codes: culture ensures that the ritual is the same despite the changing environment. Special codes involve specific attire for the special occasion/ ritual and varies from one culture to another.

According to Foley, if the performer fails to adhere to these tenets which serve as rules of performance, or ignores them, the performance will not count as a viable example of the respective tradition.

Steps in the implementation of propitiatory reconciliation
In the course of our research, we found that the Nandi community adheres to three main stages during their propitiatory reconciliation: investigation, interrogation, and cleansing. Each of the stages has sub-stages which vary depending on the kind of wrong being handled. They are well structured so as to meet the needs of the community at large. This research found that each of these stages contains many performances. We focused on two kinds of wrongs that require propitiatory reconciliation to be resolved, namely killing/murder and promiscuity/ fornication with the aim of analysing the performances and their importance in the completion of the ritual as expounded in each stage below.

The Nandi people believe that unresolved wrongs bring harm to the wrong doer, his clan, and to the community at large. If a member of the community errs secretly, he will not go scot-free as the punishment will manifest itself through certain negative effects on the wrong doer, his clan, and/or the community at large. For instance, whenever a heinous act such as killing or theft occurs in the village, the affected person(s) reports the matter to the village elder (*poiyoopkook*), who in turn sends his aides to relay the message to the entire village and its neighbourhoods. This marks the beginning of investigation. Here, the act of ensuring that the information reaches everyone in the neighbourhood sets the stage for anyone with information with regard to the incident to record a statement within a stipulated time frame. This stage is important because it gives everyone, including the wrong doer, an opportunity to present himself/herself and admit his/her mistakes before the *poiyoopkook*. From the findings of this study, it is evident that whenever the wrong doer presents himself before the *poiyoopkook* within the set deadline, then stage two of this process will be skipped. However, if he doesn't present himself, the *poiyoopkook* begins the preparation for the second stage (interrogation). He does this by preparing a list of suspects based on the reports compiled in stage one. He then consults the elders (*baraza*) and rolls out plans for the second stage.

At the interrogation stage, the *poiyoopkook* calls for a meeting to be attended by the village elders, the accused or suspects, witnesses, and the complainant. This meeting is held at a special place identified for performing rituals where the complainant and the accused are required to fully participate from the beginning to the end. The rest of the participants are representatives of families drawn from the respective village(s) where the complainant and the accused hail from. The process is bias-free since all participants are given equal opportunity to present their grievances. The complainant is the first to be ushered on stage to present his grievances while standing before the audience who are seated in a semi-circle. Then the suspect/accused is given an opportunity to either confess or defend himself from the accusations. When testimony is given, interjection is not allowed, to avoid distractions. In case there are any, it is made after the accused has finished his/her submission. Witnesses are then given a chance to give their evidence towards the case and thereafter the audience is allowed to take turns to ask questions or to give comments/further explanations. This section is finally brought to a close through a summary (allegations versus evidence given) submitted by one of the lead elders. The sitting is adjourned shortly to allow

the jury (council of elders led by the *poiyoopkook*) to critically analyse the submissions. This is done by keenly looking into the accusations and the evidence given by the witnesses before the verdict is made. Basically, this stage could result in one of the following conclusions: (a) The accused accepting the accusations and asking for forgiveness; (b) The accused denying the accusations; Failure to identify the wrong doer.

Cleansing is the last stage in the process of propitiatory reconciliation. Cleansing is a special ritual that is performed in order to restore harmonious relations between two or more people and their families. This cleansing process varies depending on the kind of wrong committed. However, sacrificial offering essentially forms an integral part of the cleansing process. The participants go through different cultural acts depending on the kind of wrong committed. For instance, during the cleansing of a person who killed another person, a *kibirāiywō* is identified by the elders. He then starts the ritual by cleansing the place for performing the ritual by slaughtering a white sheep and sprinkling blood on the identified place using a fly whisk while chanting. He then offers the sheep as a burnt offering to the Supreme Being Asis. In this ritual, the offering does not only represent a communicative link with the ancestors to ask for forgiveness, but also shows a symbiotic relationship between the participants and the supernatural world, resulting in cosmic harmony. The cleansing is done after a determination is made in stage two (interrogation). The resolution (covenant) made here is final and binding to all. However, if anyone acts contrary to the covenant, a curse befalls them and/or their lineage in accordance with the ritual performed.

Performance and place of performance in *mviga*

Performance is an essential feature of oral literature. There is no genre of oral literature that is worth its name without its practical aspect which manifests itself through performance. Bauman (290) reminds us that meaning is vital in performance. Therefore, in order to interpret meaning in Nandi propitiatory reconciliation, the performance should be analysed in the context of the ritual being performed. In this regard, the Nandi propitiatory reconciliation is carried out to meet family, societal, and clan needs. Our research found that this performance manifests itself through the aspects discussed below.

The place of performance is a specific venue where the entire process of the ritual takes place. Performance in *mviga* is not done anywhere but in a specific cultural context. For example, during the performance of the cleansing ritual for a perpetrator of a murder in Lolkeringet village in Kabiyet Ward, Nandi County, we observed that the event took place at the banks of River Chebisaas. Before the cleansing ritual was performed, the *kibirāiywō* visited this venue and in his wisdom and power chose a specific place along the bank. Later, accompanied by four other village elders, he visited the chosen venue and cleansed it. They did this by slaughtering a white ram while facing the east from where the sun rises where it is believed Asis lives. By so doing, the ram was offered as a sacrifice to him, simultaneously seeking his permission/blessing to carry out the cleansing. They then sprinkled blood around the designated venue using a special fly whisk made from a cow's tail (*kipkalyaang'it*) which serves as a symbol of power and respect. It is believed to provide a connection between the living and the power of the ancestors. *Kibirāiywō* used the fly whisk to 'sweep' away the evil spirits while chanting the following words:

> *Po-iisyekchook chēbō keny', acheek choo …*
> *Ochāmweech keetuiyegeey agobo ng'aleechu …*
> *Asis, chāmwēēch …*
> *Isuldōōy ng'aleechu … Isuldōōy ole Isuldōōy!*

> Our ancestors, we are here …
> Kindly join us as we address this issue at hand
> Our supreme being, kindly allow us …
> This issue will be resolved … Let's all accept in one accord that it will be resolved!

The audience responded as follows:

> *Isuldōōy!*
> *Kibirāiywō: Sērē ole sērē!*
> *Sērē!*

> It will be resolved!
> It will be so; let's all affirm that it will be so
> It will be so!

This was done solemnly in turns. After this, they burnt the ram and calmly watched the smoke moving up the sky.

This entire exercise amounts to a performance: the slaughtering of the sheep while facing the east (the dwelling place of Asis), the act of sprinkling blood around the chosen venue along the riverbank using *kipkalyaang'it*, and offering the burnt offering so as to let the smoke blow in the sky. All these activities are accompanied by chants contextually made by *kibirāiywō*. For example, the word *sere* in this context was used to mean "let it be so".

Actions, gestures, singing, and repetition

According to Kyallo Wadi Wamitila (104), performance is anchored in actions and signs. It is a concept used in theatre arts which involves engagement, audience, and emotion. Oral performance is the presentation of oral literature genres through simulations by the use of gestures, movements, modulation of the voice and tone, and facial expression (Foley 3). In order to interpret performance in oral literature genres, there has to be an action/occurrence within the context of the words being used coupled with creativity across the entire *mviga*.

When performing the cleansing ritual, *kibirāiywō* assumes the ancestral spirit's role where he uses chants accompanied by certain gestures, voice intonation and modulation, facial expressions, and other non-verbal cues. For example, during a cleansing ritual when *kibirāiywō* says "*sāārēēm, sāārēēm, sāārēēm, sāārēēm*" (all is well, all is well, all is well, all is well); he uses a soft tone coupled with a change of facial expression and other gestures in every utterance. The intonation is a performativity marker that creates an interaction structure between him the agent (*kibirāiywō*), the ancestors, the divinities, and the addressee (the Supreme Being Asis). This brings them to the same level and their submission gains acceptance. It also gives solace and hope to the bereaved as evidenced in this case:

> [With his face turned downwards.] Here with us is the family of the deceased. They are crying for justice for their blood. I believe all of us have lost. Is there anyone amongst us who has any information concerning the death? [Deep silence engulfs the gathering for like three minutes or so, before *kibirāiywō* interjects]. All of you have witnessed the silence herein.
>
> *Kibirāiywō* then called in one of the elders in his company who asked the same question to which the answer was again silence. Each of the four elders (assistants of *kibirāiywō*) asked the same question which bore the same answer, silence. Finally, the village elder stood up and said, "Here I have a list of four names presented to me". The words oozed out with a mixture of fury and sorrow. The four elders were then invited onto the stage. This time, in the same mood as that of the village elder, each one of them stood and asked the same question they had asked before. The mood here was a sign of the seriousness of the matter at hand (murder/death). The village elder stretched his right hand towards an elder who was sitting on his right-hand side. This was a sign of asking him to start the meeting. The use of his right hand was deliberate since it is believed to have the power to bless and warn. Therefore, this was an indication that he was passing over the powers to whoever was taking up the role of starting the meeting. [...] *Kibirāiywō* took up the spear and placed it on the killer's mouth as he poured *suguteek* (sacred water) through it, from which he was asked to make four successful gulps.

A spear is a weapon used in war to attack the enemy. The act of placing the spear in the killer's mouth and pouring the sacred water (sourced from sacred springs and rocks) is an act of cleansing him. It is believed to deliver him from curses that would have befallen him. This performance is also evidenced in the cleansing ritual for fornication as follows:

> They brought him down at the center stage in the middle of women who out rightly began to torture him. They took off his clothes as they pinched him all over his body. Some went for his genitals and bit him, while others sat on his face and spat on him. At this point the man was crying in anguish, seeking for forgiveness and swearing not to fornicate again.
>
> [...]
>
> *Kibirāiywō* then rose up and began to sprinkle *suguteek* on him by use of a fly whisk (*kipkalyaang'it*) while still naked. All these acts were accompanied by chants from *kibirāiywō*, as a sign of cleansing the offender. The act of undressing the offender in public is to remind all and sundry that fornication is not permissible whether done in secret or not. The spitting and pinching of the offender's genitalia is a punitive measure for having offended the female fraternity. It makes him to be remorseful. [...] by use of *soosyoot* (a special stick made from palm tree) *kibirāiywō* scooped some ghee (*koraneet*) from *laaleet* (container made from a cow's horn) and placed on each of the participant's palms to smear it on the cheeks, arms and the legs of the offender in a queue. All these acts were accompanied by the words "*sāārēēm*" (all is well).

From the above extract, based on a recorded observation from the performance during the participatory observation, the art of performance is vividly expounded through various acts such as scooping of *koraneet* by use of *soosyoot* and oiling the offender's cheeks, arms, and legs in a queue. Smearing of *koraneet* signifies forgiveness and the promise of restoration of the relationship between the two parties (the offender and the offended). The act of each participant oiling the offender is a symbol of individually forgiving and accepting him back, and by extension the family members that each one of them represents.

As for the case of propitiation for murder, performance is eminent in the entire process across all stages. For instance, in stage one or two, there's the act of taking a black cow to the home of the deceased at night and later taking nine cows across the river or at a crossroads which point towards the deceased's home. The act of taking a black cow to the home of the deceased is an admission of guilt and taking responsibility. The black cow symbolises death and mourning. It is also an acknowledgment of the pain that the bereaved family is going through. The nine cows on the other hand represent the "nine openings" in the human body where the curse manifests itself through. The act of driving the cows across the river is a sign of averting any curse that would befall the offender and his family/clan through any of the 'nine openings'.

Performance is also conspicuous during sanctification of the place of ritual performance. *Kibirāiywō* casts out the evil spirits through sprinkling blood around the place by use of *kipkalyaang'it.* By so doing, he seeks permission from Asis and the ancestors to carry out the ritual. Furthermore, he sanctifies the place in preparation for ritual performance. The participants in the ritual also take an early morning bath together in the river. They cross the river together, they exchange sorghum/millet and honey, oil each other with *koraneet*, they sing, let the cows across the river, and finally disperse in two opposite directions without looking back. The act of the participants taking a bath together from the same river unites them in thought and focuses them to a common goal. This binds them in mind and spirit from which they finally reciprocate through common deeds throughout the ritual and life thereafter. It also acts as an outward sign for inward purification prior to the ritual. As the participants cross the river, *kibirāiywō* sprinkles *busaa* (traditional/local brew), milk, and *suguteek* on each of their heads. This is believed to cleanse the evil spirit and bring forth blessings. The crossing of the river signifies the freedom of cohesion between the two feuding parties. There is also the act of drinking *busaa* from one *kerebeet* (traditional bowl), licking of honey, and hugging one another as a sign of peace and restoration of unity among the parties involved.

Singing forms the core of the ritual performance. Much of the singing is solemn affirmation of the participants led by the soloist. During the performance of the propitiatory reconciliation ritual among the Nandi, the audience observes and actively participates in the singing at different stages. During the course of singing, squatting is a requirement for all participants. It is a penitent posture of submission to the will of Asis. This is shown in the ritual performed for a murder-related ritual as cited below:

Soloist: [As he squats] *Woo … i woi …… ee eeee ….*
Participants: [As they squat] *Woo-i … woo … oi ee … eee … iya, aha aiya woi!*
Soloist: *Woo… i woi … ee eee …*
Participants: *woo-I … woi ee … eee … iya, aha aiya woi!*
Soloist: *Woo … i woi … ee eeee …*
Participants: *woo-i … woi ee … eee … iya, aha aiya woi!*
Soloist: *Woo … i woi … ee eee ….*
Participants: *woo-I … woi ee … eee … iya, aha aiya woi!*

From the above-cited example, based on a recorded observation from the performance during the participatory observation, words in the song are contextually used to convey a special message. It is a solemn submission by the entire community represented by the participants in the ritual. It is sung at the beginning and the end of a ritual. Here, the song is illustrative since the soloist actually performs it together with the participants. By so doing, it postulates solemn affirmation and communal agreement to what is set to begin and to what has been done at the end. The art of intonation at the climax wraps it all up at a point where the pitch of the song rises and finally falls. At this moment, the incantation by *kibirāiywō* ascends as he rebukes and scatters the evil spirits. In the end, he calms down in deep contrition and seeks blessings from Asis. The oral performance is enhanced and enlivened through his body language coupled with the dramatic elements such as gestures, facial expressions, and mimicry to convey messages which, if in print, could hardly convey the same impact.

Repetition as a literary device is very important in any oral performance. Given this natural tendency to say and repeat matters of deep personal concern many times over, it helps the participants to express themselves expansively on matters which deeply affect them. Okpewho (163–4) posits that the repeated hammering of the same issue in the same manner and using the same words, sounds, etc. is a veritable way of releasing inner feelings of sadness or joy (this serves certain practical purposes in the overall organisation of oral performance). It also sets the atmosphere for the performance by aiding the performer in introspecting himself and getting actively involved. It brings out realism in the performance by enabling the performer to bring out his innermost feelings. It must be noted from our research that there is a deliberate use of refrain as a form of repetition in various stages of the propitiatory reconciliation ritual. Apart from the body language and gestures such as squatting to show deep contrition, the participants repeat key phrases and certain words after the lead singer. This comes at the beginning and climax of the reconciliation ritual emanating from the death offense as cited in the example below which formed part of the data we collected as part of our fieldwork:

Elder: *Woo… i woi … ee ee …*
Audience: *Woo… i woi ee … ee … ei, iya … ahaiya woi!*
Elder: *Woo … i woi ee … ee … ei, iya … ahaiya woi!* (x 4)

From the above examples, there's deliberate repetition of the words "*woi … ee … woi*" (yes … yes indeed!). This is not only meant for dramatic license purposes, but also to bring out the solemn affirmation aspect. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of the covenant made by the participants through the ritual and oath(s) taken. It also forms part of catharsis to the offender.

Formulaic expressions, costumes, and audience

Every stage of the *mviga* is preceded by some prefatory statements and/or chants which are made by the lead performer, especially before and after the cleansing ritual is performed. For instance, during a cleansing ritual relating to murder or fornication, after the offender has confessed, *kibirāiywō* makes a prefatory statement which invites spontaneous audience participation as evidenced below:

Kibirāiywō: Kaa-i nyoo … anyiny' ole anyiny'!
Audience: *Anyiny'!*
Kibirāiywō: Kaa-i nyoo, ne lalang' kobooch keny' … lalang' ole lalang'!
Audience: *Lalang'!*
Kibirāiywō: Makomaasu buunyoo … makomaasu ole makomaasu!
Audience: *Makomaasu!*
Kibirāiywō: Ngomoos koimeniit …! Imeniitu ole imeniitu!
Audience: *Imeniitu!*
Kibirāiywō: Kibageenge ko kiim …! Kiim ole kiim!
Audience: *Kiim!*
Kibirāiywō: KING! OLE KING'!
Audience: *KING'!*

Kibirāiywō: Our community has no curses …! Let us all affirm that it has no curse!
Audience: It has no curse!
Kibirāiywō Our community is peaceful since time immemorial …! Let's all affirm this!
Audience: It is peaceful!
Kibirāiywō: The enemy has no place here anymore …! Let's all affirm to this!
Audience: He has no place anymore!
Kibirāiywō: May he find no place amongst us …! May he find no place …!
Audience: No place!
Kibirāiywō: Our unity is our strength …! May we affirm that it is our strength!
Audience: It is our strength!
Kibirāiywō: AMEN! Let's all affirm this!
Audience: AMEN!

and

> *Kibirāiywō: Ong'utchii lee … sere ole sere!*
> Audience: *SERE!*

> *Kibirāiywō*: Let us all forgive him …! It is well with him now …! It is well! Let's all accept that it is well!
> Audience: IT IS WELL!

In the above example, *kibirāiywō* chants while swinging *kipkalyaang'it*, directing it to the audience. In this performance, he laments the loss of the deceased and recounts his great deeds, rich ancestry, and the vacuum created by his death. The chants of grief and emotions of *kibirāiywō* affects the members of the audience, enjoining them to spontaneously reciprocate to the chants while facing him. The language used in the chant brings about certainty of the performance: for example, the use of the phrases "*King! ole king!*" (it is well) and "*sere ole sere!*" (all is well) by *kibirāiywō* enjoined by the audience. The message conveyed here is full of certainty and truth, an affirmation of reparation of the offender by the entire community. The offender and offended at this point feel some sense of restoration. This forms part of healing, thus, cleansing begins.

Costume is special attire for clothing the performers which plays an important role in character description because what the audience sees gives a more immediate impression of who the character is (Matti 51). It naturally gives a form of expression about an individual's social status, culture, religion, and so on. During propitiatory reconciliation among the Nandi, *kibirāiywō* is the only participant who puts on traditional regalia. At stage three of propitiatory reconciliation for murder and fornication cases as earlier cited in examples one and two during the performance of cleansing ritual, *kibirāiywō* puts on the special attire during the ceremony which comprises of *sambuut* (a gown made of the skin from rock hyrax) and *kuutweet* (a fluffy head gear made of lion's skin), worn in the body and the head respectively.

These special costumes are dramatically symbolic. They give the audience a sense of structured perception of the reality about the happenings and contain divine powers bestowed to *kibirāiywō* by the community. It is through this that whatever he executes during propitiation is accepted by the entire community. What he says becomes.

The audience is primary to any oral performance and forms a basic component to any verbal art without which there is no performance. The crucial role of the audience is to provoke and galvanise performers to better dramatization and rendition (Kipury 12). In African communities, the audience and participants are inseparable (Matti 55). As has been discussed earlier, it is a normal and natural practice for the audience and/or participants to actively participate in propitiatory reconciliation through various means. The participation of the audience can be observed during stages two and three of propitiation, and more conspicuously during ritual performance. It may start with prefatory statements and/or chants, followed shortly after by musical interludes, then continues concurrently or interpolates and/or ends with a musical interlude (*kayandaayta*) such as the one reproduced above. The examples also illustrate active and voluntary audience participation during a cleansing ritual performance.

Much of the various audience participation forms in various stages of the Nandi propitiatory reconciliation are natural and flow spontaneously during the course of performance. When a performer takes to the stage, the rest of the participants serve or function as audience, and they beautifully interject, exclaim, and sing. This role of the audience evokes real participation and active involvement which is the core of performance.

Conclusion

In this article, we have managed to expound the three main stages adhered to during propitiation among the Nandi community: investigation, interrogation, and cleansing. These stages are structured in such a manner that they must be religiously adhered to; failure to do so means the ultimate reconciliation outcome won't be met. Furthermore, we have established that performance in Nandi propitiatory reconciliation heavily depends on active participation of its performers and the audience. This presupposes that performance is the core of propitiation and that, without it, *mviga* as a sub-genre of Nandi oral literature is elusive. We also revealed that performance in *mviga* is not a mere fiction or imaginative reasoning, but a true description of a socio-cultural event. It also establishes the fact that performance as a phenomenon is pragmatic. This is evidenced in various stages of *mviga* through actions and gestures, singing, repetition, formulaic expressions, and audience participation.

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Masking death: Covid-19 inspired humour in the everyday orality of a Luo community in Kenya

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Masking death: Covid-19 inspired humour in the everyday orality of a Luo community in Kenya

Death, especially death which comes through disease, is often a hard subject that the human mind wishes to bury deep in the unconscious. The lack of ease with impending death eventually finds expression in everyday discourse. In this paper I look at performance of Covid-19 discourse through humour in a short episode of everyday orality of a Luo community in Uyoma, Siaya, in Kenya. The performance of the everyday language is textualized to display the aesthetics of contextual language through coinage, jokes, and puns, which manifest as humorous responses to an otherwise dire situation. From the feminising of the disease as *Acory Nyar China*, literally translated as "the petite Cory from China", to the symbolic naming of aspects of the Covid-19 protocols and verbal jokes about the same, there is an inherent, deliberate attempt to literally laugh in the face of death. The identified aspects of language are treated as metaphorical masks, even as the mask as an object also becomes a metaphor. I employ discourse analysis, which treats language as living social phenomena capable of change, growth, expansion, and adaptation for contextual spatial and temporal expressions. **Keywords:** Covid-19, orality, humour, mask.

Introduction

Klimczuk and Fabiś (1) describe death as "a state of the total disappearance of life" and dying as "a process of decay of the vital system, which ends with clinical death". The massive number of fatalities from Covid-19 infections, first in Wuhan, China in 2019, then in literally all other parts of the world, led to the declaration of Covid-19 as a global pandemic. The Covid-19 dis-ease (both as disease and lack of ease) and death gripped the world's attention, not only due to its gravity, but also due to the ease with which it spread literally across the world in the era of globalisation through efficient transport networks. The whole world was no longer at ease. The language of fear united the world in the year 2020. The language comprised of daily dire statistics of new infections, total fatalities, few survivals, pathetic overwhelming of medical facilities, and images of body bags and funeral piers, punctuated by concerns about the availability of effective vaccines. It was the discourse of doom and a time in which language demonstrated its power as a key vehicle for the transmission of emerging consciousness and responses to new realities, in this case, dis-ease and death.

In Kenya, the situation was no different and the communal fear was palpable in the statistics of the infected, the dead, and the lucky to survive streaming in on a daily basis through various media. It was literally the language of death all round. Death, especially death which comes through disease, is often a hard subject that the human mind wishes to bury deep in the unconscious. With the declaration of the Covid-19 disease as a global pandemic in early 2020, the world was thrown into a frenzy of activities ranging from survival to submission. For survival, there was an urgent need for various defence mechanisms against the harmful external stimuli, and in this context, the crippling fear of death.

The Luo generally are a Nilotic ethnic group that inhabits Western Kenya, particularly the Nyanza region. The textual material studied herein was collected mainly from the Luo of Uyoma, one of the Luo sub-groups which claim direct ancestry from Ramogi Ajwang', the founder of the first permanent Luo settlement on Ramogi

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Hill in Yimbo, who belong to the Joka-Jok, the first wave of Luo migrants in Nyanza (Ogot 486). Administratively, the Uyoma people, among whom the studied texts were collected, are in Siaya County. The Luo speak Dholuo which has variant dialects within the Luo of Kenya and also the Alur, Acholi, and Padhola of Uganda and the Nuer and Dinka of South Sudan. The Luo are renowned for incorporating humour into everyday speech, which then finds its way into performed and literary arts. Amuka, Masolo, and Owiti have studied humour in Pakruok' among the Luo, while Michieka and Muaka highlight the humour in Luo speech as acted by comedian Eric Omondi.

Theoretical framework

In this paper, I analyse sampled discourse from the Luo Community of Ogango village in Nyanza that arose from situational contexts, and which exhibit a deliberate bend toward humour in the performance of everyday orality as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is preliminary research into emergent linguistic and literary responses to threatening situations, which should lead to a wider investigation on the coping mechanisms afforded by creative language. This is because everyday orality is a space that affords intuitive and innovative coinages and other linguistics expansions that mirror cultural adaptations for survival. I draw from the Bakhtin school of thought (Selden *et al.*) which regards language as social phenomena where "words are active, dynamic social signs, capable of taking on different meanings and connotations for different social classes in different social and historical situations" (29). My study focuses on the discursive elements of five selected texts that arose from the social context of everyday language with express references to the Covid-19 pandemic, and which manifested the deliberate employment of humour.

In this paper I focus on discourse from the Covid-19 situation in the performance of everyday verbal intercourse amongst this community and interrogate the same as negotiations with death through the mask of humour. The performance of the everyday through orality is textualized to display the aesthetics of language through coinage, jokes, and puns. This performance is captured in the language that was encountered in oral communicative moments and which then become entrenched in the verbal corpus of the speech community. In the preface to *Orality: The Power of the Spoken Word*, Furniss notes that: "The oral communicative moment is of interest because it is in understanding its dynamics that we can understand the how and the why of transmission of ideas and values, information and identities" (xi). What Furniss refers to as the "communicative moment" is interpreted here as that moment of creativity and spontaneity that characterises oral performance. The product of this performance can be isolated to be of interest in the interrogation of phenomena beyond the surface function, which would be covert communication of intentions, expectations, and other situations that make up everyday intercourse between people in a speech community. The reflections in this paper are based on the communicative moments as experienced by me as the researcher in the oral performance of the texts under study within the span of a two week stay in the rural village of Ogango. One text (*Acory Nyar China*) was obtained from both phone conversation and non-participant observations of conversations, while the other four texts were obtained from non-participant observation of conversations. After each encounter, I probed the speakers on the texts' origins and meaning. The texts encountered were then analysed for their function as humorous responses to an otherwise dire situation.

Analysis of the texts was done within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Wodak and Meyer (2) define discourse as "anything from a historical monument, *lieu de mémoire*, a policy, a political strategy, narratives in a restricted or broad sense of the term, text, talk, a speech, topic-related conversations, to language per se" (3). The texts reflected upon are speech acts in the form of contextualised conversations, which seem to offer a sustained trend that captures the cultural and social moments. Fairclough describes CDA as the "analysis of the dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements or moments as well as the analysis of internal relations of discourse" (4). The words and phrases are examined in relation to the social occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic. CDA sees "language as social practice" (Fairclough and Wodak 4), with Fairclough reiterating that CDA studies social interactions by focusing on their linguistic elements "to show up their generally hidden determinants in the system of social relationships—as well as hidden effects they may have upon that system" (5). I therefore seek to unearth the underlying humour in the texts in relation to the implications of disease and death presented by Covid-19 pandemic in this paper.

This study, in which I focus on an instance of performance of orality in the contemporary culture of this community, falls within the broad field of oral literary studies, and is informed by the socio-political and situational

contexts of Covid-19, with orality being the basic medium of interaction with our social reality that incorporates all the relationships that enter and exit it.

Everyday Covid-19 discourse as text

I posit that the everyday conversations around the Covid-19 pandemic in this community forms a corpus of heightened use of language with notable distortions, adaptations, coinages, and expansions of words and phrases that provide textual landscapes for the study of intentionality in discourse creation and performance which goes beyond the surface of ordinary communication. According to De Certeau, the act of speaking "operates within the field of a linguistic system; affects an appropriation, or re-appropriation of a language by its speakers; establishes a present relative to a time and place; and posits a contract with other (the interlocutor) in a network of places and relations" (xiii). Everyday discourse creates publics around phenomena through communicative action that can be dialectically opposed to prior meanings attached to the same phenomena. This is exemplified here by the conferment of new meaning to words and phrases in day-to-day speech. In his *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman notes that "when the individual is in the immediate presence of others, his activity will have a promissory character" (2). The verbal texts scrutinised herein were collected from instances of ordinary conversations in which the writer was a non-participant observer of the dialectism in these conversations which belong to the everyday discourse.

Data collection is a systematic process of gathering observations or measurements. Traditional data sources are often structured and empirically determined. However, everyday conversations—face-to-face or through technical devices—and overheard commentaries offer unique opportunities as unconventional data sources which can be exploited for distinct phenomena. These instances enable insight into emerging trends in real time and can be studied, as done in this study, to interrogate phenomena of literary interest and as platforms for further research.

From instances of participant observation from telephone conversations and non-participant observation of situational conversations over a two-week period in the rural village, the following vocabulary emerged as coinages with regard to new realities presented by the Covid-19 pandemic:

Text	Literal translation	Referent
Akory Nyar China	Akory (diminutive of Corona) the daughter of China	Covid-19
Abuog rombe	I scare the sheep/the sheep scare	Mask
Lakayana Ouru	The underpants of Ouru (localisation of Uhuru, in reference to the President)	Mask
Aina	Move/get away from me	Physical distancing
Logo ng'eny, chiemo to onge	Plenty of handwashing but no food	Mandatory handwashing before entering a premise

Figure 1: Vocabulary related to Covid-19

For this study, the phrases were captured aurally, and then noted in the phone notebook for study. This is because they occurred when no recording device was activated. Written notices using some of the phrases were also photographed and archived for study.

Conversations offer effective spaces for discourse analysis as they are characterised by spontaneity and immediacy of performance that point to urgent and current mindsets about phenomena. During a phone conversation with an ailing friend during the enforced lockdown of Nairobi City and its environs, my query as to the friend's health was responded to thus: "I'm well, it's this *Akory Nyar China* with her hard eyes who has locked me indoors". This threw me off balance because I had no idea who *Akory Nyar China* was, and it was clear from the response that it is a person. My inquiry as to who this is was met with laughter and a revelation that it is a reference to Covid-19. From this conversation emerged the appropriation of the name of the virus 'Corona' to the name of a person. Further, the name is feminised by the prefix 'a' which renders a diminutive stature to the name it is appended to. This is commonly done to accord an equivalent of the English petite to the woman in reference and is a term of endearment created from her name. As such, in this community, the oral performance of names like

Arosy (from Rose), *Apolly* (from Pauline), and Aterry (from Teresa/Theresa) are found in situations of endearment that can be either filial or seductive.

The ideological association of Covid-19 with the female gender is instructive and there are two possibilities for this development. Either the term "Corona" seems to readily lend itself to a female name, which would be a simplistic explanation, or the disease is deliberately feminised to draw it into a particular communicative discourse as a lesser gender. The endearment of the name that suggests playful seduction furthers the second argument. This would make this renaming a deliberate seduction of Corona—now an anthropomorphic term—to take the hedge off her viciousness. It seems to be an oral performance of power over the virus. From the telephone conversation, the speaker refers to Corona as having "hard eyes". This is a literal translation of the Dholuo statement "*gi wang'e matek*", making use of the phrase "*wang' teko*" (hardness or stubbornness). This refers to someone who is daring and can do what they wish, especially the unpopular. This gives Corona, the personified disease, a characteristic of negative and destructive stubbornness shown by her audacity to lock grown people and whole populations indoors!

The requirement to wear a mask on your face when in public took this piece of protective wear from the hospital setting into the public domain. This new reality forced the coinage of a term for the mask worn in public. While attending a burial in my rural home, the mourners encountered men manning the entrance who directed them to a handwashing station and reminded everyone without a mask to wear one before entering. The instructions were variably: "*Dani, ruak abuog rombe*" (Granny, put on your mask), "*Ere abuog rombe ni?*" (Where is your mask?), and "*Onge donjo ka ionge gi abuog rombe*" (There is no entry for you if you don't have a mask).

The phrase "*abuog rombe*" is a coinage which invariably means "I scare the sheep", referring to the action of scaring sheep when you wear the mask, or 'the sheep scare', a noun-phrase naming the mask. It is a combination of "*buogo*" (scaring) and "*rombe*" (sheep). Sheep in this community are often regarded as foolish animals. It is common to hear an insult referring to a person as exhibiting sheep-like qualities. "*Ifuo ka rombo*" (you are as foolish as a sheep) or "*wie pek ka wi rombo*" (his head is as thick as that of a sheep) are common expletives among the Luo. The implication here would be that the sheep, who are foolishly gullible, would be scared by the look of people who now look strange wearing masks. This not only captures the estranging aspect of the mask, but also the seeming foolishness of covering a large part of one's face in public.

In one particular situation, an old woman, while rising to depart from my house after a visit said, "*miya uru lakayana Ouru na*" (give me my Ouru's underpants) in reference to her face mask which she has misplaced while eating. Upon inquiry, I was informed that that was another recently coined term for the mask. "*Lakayana*" means innerwear in traditional Dholuo. It is rarely used today because this speech community now commonly uses the corrupted "*sirwari*" (from the Kiswahili "*suruali*") to refer to this piece of inner clothing. *Lakayana* was a small strip of leather that women tied around their waists to cover their frontal private parts. As such, it nuances a very private aspect of the human anatomy. In the evolutionary lexicology, *afuong'o* or *abongu* replace *lakayana*. These are now made of cotton and other synthetic textiles to be worn inside outer garments, and which now cover the entire private area in the advent of exposure to western cultures. However, these words are being phased out of ordinary discourse. They are now used mostly as metaphors or for other deep reflections by elders or for insulting. Subsequently, only few people, particularly the elderly, are aware of and use the word *lakayana*. Further, it is considered a taboo word to be spoken openly in public and often euphemisms are used as its referent. In this coinage, the mask is referred to as Uhuru's underpants using the most impactful word that points to nakedness.

At the local health centre in the rural village where the I had gone to see a relative, I overheard a conversation between a woman and a young man who was about to sit next to her on a bench while waiting to see the doctor:

Woman: *Owada aina.* (Please get away from me)

Young man: *mos dani, ok aparo ni aina ni kae.* (Sorry, granny, I didn't remember that "get away from me" is here)

Woman: *Sani wadak kode.* (Now we are living with it)

From this conversation, it emerged that the word "*aina*" (get away from me) was used to refer to the required spacing in physical proximity due to the Covid-19 protocols, commonly referred to as 'social distancing'. This word was commonly used with an exclamatory tone in conversations of jest or anger when one told the other person to 'get out of their hair'. Its appropriation to mean physical separation was meant to address to the disease itself, telling it to 'get away from us', to 'get out of our hair' as it was separating people, a negative development that affects the community.

Humour in the Covid-19 discourse as defence mechanism

Humour, often in the form of jokes, is held to be "a contrast of ideas, sense in nonsense, bewilderment and illumination". Theodore Vischer (qtd in Freud 1617) defines joking as the ability to bind into a unity, with surprising rapidity, several ideas which are in fact alien to one another both in their internal content and in the nexus to which they belong. A joke is the arbitrary connecting or linking, usually by means of a verbal association, of two ideas which in some way contrast with each other. The Platonic theory of humour, which labels it irresponsible and unfit for progressiveness, is discarded in this reading in favour of both the Freudian relief theory and the Kantian incongruity theory of humour. This is because, as Morreall (4) notes, "in the Relief Theory, laughter is a release of pent-up nervous energy. In the Incongruity Theory, humour is the enjoyment of something that violates ordinary mental patterns and expectations". Both theories can explicate the humorous incongruities in the coinages as well as their laughter-induced relief prowess. The core of humour is words and words find their immediate and often fluid expression in oral discourse.

Culturally, mandatory handwashing—*logo*—is associated with preparation to eat. It is common to hear the Luo say "*wan e logo*" (we are at a handwashing) to mean they are eating. The imposed handwashing and sanitising as part of the Covid-19 prevention protocols distorted the common function of hand hygiene and elicited a new reference to bring out the incongruity in the exercise. Interestingly, this text was first encountered as a jocular proverb "*logo ng'eny, chiemo to onge*" (plenty of handwashing yet there is no food). Afterwards, young children performed it as a riddle thus:

Riddle: Plenty of handwashing but no food?
Answer: Corona!

Riddles are characteristically incongruous and the relationship between the posed riddle and its answer points to both the observed similarities and the distortion of expectations. These creative oral performances which were woven into the performance of the everyday are important in presenting the deep-seated humorous masking of the Covid-19 pandemic. The association of handwashing with eating only is a humorous way of expressing the distortion of its functionality by Covid-19. Now the handwashing is done even where there is no food to be eaten.

Sigmund Freud, one of the early proponents of a defence mechanism, proposes that a defence mechanism is an unconscious psychological mechanism that reduces anxiety arising from unacceptable or potentially harmful stimuli. Thoughts of disease and death are potentially harmful stimuli because of their fatality in the human psyche. Perottta (1) defines defense mechanism as "psychological processes, often followed by a behavioral reaction, implemented to deal with difficult situations, to manage conflicts, to preserve their functioning from the interference of disturbing, painful and unacceptable thoughts, feelings and experiences". One of the most prevalent collective defence mechanisms is humour, as seen in both the proverb and riddle about handwashing.

The intensity of handwashing at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic from early to mid-2020 manifested the palpable fear of death and subsequent performances of self-preservation like handwashing. In Kenya, it is instructive to note that the Presidential Order of Service, the Uzalendo (Patriotic) Award which recognises acts of service to humanity, was given to a nine-year-old boy for his innovative hands-free handwashing invention during the 2020 Jamuhuri Day celebrations. This signifies the fact that every handwashing act was a statement of dis-ease and a reminder of death. The created riddle thus effectively shifted the mind from death to the humour of the illogical handwashing where there is no food, successfully masking the thoughts of imminent death through contaminated hands. By resolving the riddle of this strange handwashing, the community comes to terms with the new reality through the mediation of creative orality. Language is herein used to effectively take away the edge from a worrying aspect of emerging reality.

Rizutto (12) notes that for Freud "words are a plastic material with which one can do all kinds of things. There are words which, when used in certain connections, lose their original full meaning, but regain it in other connections". In the coinage *abuog rombe*, the literal translation into the ambiguity of "I scare sheep" or "sheep scare" do not directly refer to an interaction with sheep but to the alterations (read distortions) of facial features by wearing the mask. The intention is to draw attention to the funny look of the mask wearer rather than the reason for wearing the mask. The laughter elicited effects relief of anxiety over death and a purging of negative energies is achieved by the distortion of meaning. In the phrase "*lakayana Ouru*", the humour of referring to the mask as the underpants of a sitting president is both provoking and subversive of power. The president is the ultimate symbol of authority in a state and is ideally the protector of his citizens. His 'exposure' in the phrase is a

subversion of power and a humorous expression of the same. The president seems helpless in the face of Covid-19 and this helplessness is succinctly captured in the mask that the citizens are now 'forced' to wear. The president's vulnerability in the face of a ravaging dis-ease is projected onto his nakedness in a humorous manner. This joke at once captures the protest against the enforced wearing of the mask and the association of the president with powerlessness. The crudeness of this expression in the conversation takes off the edge of the pain of death that is attendant to Covid-19. The humour here draws attention to the incongruity of the variables paired together: underpants and mask.

Freud looks at speech as a vital key to the unconscious. This, I can argue, is due to the power of the spoken word. Furniss explains that this power can be realised in "how people's daily experience as individuals is articulated and evaluated, and then shared and amended or refined, until a growing force of common views emerge as an articulated combination of statements about how the world 'really' works […]" (18). The shift in the meaning assigned to the Covid-19 coinages that alienate them from their 'original' meaning and reference points to the power of the spoken word to direct and redirect shared communication as seen in the phrase "*lakayana Ouru*". There are various things to note in this speech performance. Firstly, the speaker is an old woman who can get away with a taboo word in a general audience. Secondly, the association of the mask, worn on the face, and reference to the underwear of a sitting president and a symbol of ultimate authority in the land, points to the subversion of power and the expression of disgust with the enforced wearing of masks. The expression is humorous. Thinking of wearing the president's underpants on your face and the resultant laughter hides the implications of disease and death, but also draws attention to the psychological underpinnings of the mask. Its enforcement (complete with not wearing it in public being declared a criminal offence punishable by law) is embodied in the person of the president and disgust with it is manifest in his exposure. Reference to the mask as *abuog rombe* shifts from its ominous meaning of self-preservation from impending death to its humorous referent of scaring of sheep when one wears a facemask.

Art creates community through the communication of shared aesthetics. However, other than communication of emotions through external agencies, artistic expressions offer spaces for reflection, deflection, and inflection that are necessary for survival. In a Freudian sense, a clearly discernible artistic defence mechanism like the use of humour would then heighten a sense of security in both individuals and the community, in turn forming a coping mechanism. The use of humour emphasises the importance of language in power play where the speaker seeks to bring a threatening phenomenon under control by taking away its fearful aspects through the creation of laughter. The performance of everyday life within the context of creative language is treated as text for interrogation of communal psyche in the appropriation of power over the Covid-19 pandemic through creativity of humour which is indicative of the importance of verbal art.

The Covid-19 mask as metaphor

Britannica (Wingert) defines a mask as "a form of disguise or concealment usually worn over or in front of the face to hide the identity of a person and by its own features to establish another being". It goes on to posit that "this essential characteristic of hiding and revealing personalities or moods is common to all masks". Culturally it is associated with spirituality where, in the performance of rituals, the target spirit is to be present in the mask, therefore the wearer of the mask must disappear for the spirit to appear. This is the associative function of masks appropriated by the performed arts.

The mask in itself is a concrete object that functions as a cover that prevents access to what is behind it without eliminating it altogether. This means that the viewer of the mask still has a distant consciousness of the personality behind the mask but the personality before the mask—Goffman's "front" (Goffman 16)—is what is foregrounded and looms large to command visual and psychological attention. The mask therefore acquires a personality of its own and enters the discourse space as a participant. This enables it to create a negotiated space for dialogue with the unseen but known. Masking, therefore, is an act of concealment, a functional deception like the mask of Calliope, the Greek goddess of tragedy.

We can read a dual metaphor in the discourse of the Covid-19 pandemic. It speaks of fear and death on one hand, and of control and resistance on the other. Goffman (12) looks at the mask as a conception of self, which becomes a second nature, but which incidentally forms the truer self of the person behind it. The mask as a metaphor captures an individual's movement from "sincerity to cynicism" where initially it is worn to prevent the spread of a deadly virus—an aspect of sincerity—but later gains the symbolism of an alternative weakened

and cowering self: the cynicism offered by our vulnerability to the Covid-19 virus, which when accepted gives us, ironically, control once again. It is in this context that the object of the mask has been accorded nuances of scare in the phrase "*abuog rombe*" and exposure of nakedness in "*lakayana Ouru*".

These associative factors seem to inspire creative coinages that occur in the communicative moments that at once anthropomorphise the mask and elevate it to symbolism.

Conclusion

In this study I have reflected on the use of humour in words and phrases in everyday communication within the context of Covid-19. The collected phrases and words which were coined to refer to Covid-19 and its attendant protocols and shifts in lifestyles have been analysed as indicative discourses of humour with special referent to the threatening phenomenon of a global pandemic.

The vocabulary selected for the study seemed to function as humorous responses to an otherwise dire situation, thereby providing the necessary mask through which death can be looked at and lived with. Inherent from the onset of the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic, is a discernible refusal by a majority of the members of this community to be rendered hopeless by Covid-19. From the feminising of the disease as "*Acory Nyar China*", to the symbolic naming of aspects of Covid-19 protocols and verbal jokes about the same, there is an inherent, deliberate attempt to laugh in the face of death.

The usage of these coinages in everyday discourse entrenched their integration into the community's linguistic corpus and normalised discourse. The words and phrases discussed herein kept the mind from literal death through humour. Conclusively, we can deduce that the creative power of oral language in devising and establishing novel usage of existing vocabulary for both lexical and semantic incongruities bring out humour, as well as the significance of verbal interactions in recreation of meaning in response to emerging contexts.

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Oral performance as substitute for ritual: *Ekutet*, a Teso exhumation ceremony

Joseph Mzee Muleka

Oral performance as substitute for ritual: *Ekutet*, a Teso exhumation ceremony

Among the Teso of Western Kenya, *Ekutet* (the exhumation ceremony) has for centuries been practised to treat physical, mental, and/or emotional problems. A family's, or the community's, persistent misfortunes such as frequent deaths, illnesses, accidents, or unexplained feuds and such other grief causing occurrences may be attributed to an unhappy dead member of the family or community. To correct the situation and bring life back to normal, the unhappy dead member's bones are exhumed, either for reburial or display in a sacred place. Notably, the ritual is performed to the accompaniment of oral performances, rendered as narrations, incantations, swearing, prayer chants, and occasional re-enactments of attendant dramatic anecdotes. This article is written against the backdrop of the realisation that the *Ekutet* ritual itself appears to be diminishing, which then raises a pertinent question: What replaces, or has replaced, the role that this highly psychological ritual has usually played in the lives of the Teso people? I interviewed members of the community, while analysing the oral performances incorporated in this socio-cultural cum spiritual endeavour. Due to the fact that the actual ritual has become quite rare, people apparently try to keep it alive by revisiting the memory of the ritual, which they do through re-enactments and mock exhumations. This then also draws attention to the role of memory, narration, and re-enactment in either the resuscitation of, or the reliving of, diminishing ritual practices. **Keywords:** *Ekutet*, ritual, memory, narration, re-enactment, emotions, displacement, replacement, representation.

Introduction

The role of ritual in shaping the thoughts and worldview of a people cannot be gainsaid. For a long time, before and even after the arrival of Christianity in Africa, ritual was, has been, and to a large extent still is a popular practice among African societies. From time immemorial, these rituals have remained deeply rooted and felt among the people that practise the particular rituals. In a way, the rituals define the said people and become part and parcel of their lives. Researchers in ritual such as Samovar *et al.* have argued that ritual serves to reduce a people's anxiety, boost their confidence, alleviate their grief, or simply serve a psychological relief. In a good number of cases, ritual may serve a religious purpose just as much as it serves secular purposes. Among the Digo at the Kenyan Coast, for instance, the *Kayamba* dance is performed for ritual healing, i.e., it is used as alternative medicine, in the same way *Kilumi* is performed among the Kamba in Eastern Kenya. In Western Kenya, the Luo perform *Tero buru* for the purpose of driving the spirit of death from the village. The spirit of death—it is believed—remains active and should not be left to hover around lest it victimises another member; rather, it must be cast away, presumably to the land of the enemy. Meanwhile, the shaving ceremony among the Luhya, other than being a sign of loss and suffering, reassures the bereaved of a new beginning without the loved one. The shaving, thus, is a kind of release and self-liberation from the deceased's grip so that life can start afresh. Of course, other communities have their own rituals that serve different purposes. Indeed, these practices touch strongly on the people's belief systems. In other words, ritual is often rooted, not only in the people's social life, but in the spiritual or religious dimension as well. Sometimes, there is such strong belief and adherence to some rituals that this can, in some cases, mean life and death.

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My focus in this article is on the *Ekutet*, which is a death ritual among the Teso people of Western Kenya, Busia County. I interrogate the practice of the ritual that involves the exhumation of a dead person's bones for reburial or display and what it means to the people, past and present. The article is the result of several fieldwork visits among the Teso and extensive interviews with members of the Teso community. My interaction with the Omong'oluk cultural group (believed to be strong custodians of the Teso culture) was extremely valuable regarding the practices of the Teso community. Under the guidance of the late Mr. Mwalimu Charles Ogola and later Mr. Anthony Adeng'oi, I was able to meet interviewees from different corners of the Teso region, including Malaba, Kaliwa, Amukura, Okame, Aterait, Kocholia, Adung'osi, and many other places. The climax of my visits was my interview with the late Omoding, the man who was believed to have the powers to make people who had committed crimes to eat grass as punishment, and/or to make them own up to their crimes. I conducted one-on-one interviews with individuals and groups. I also witnessed cultural dances, mock dramas, and re-enactments of the *Ekutet* ritual and recorded the accompanying oral narratives, songs, and proverbs, which I analysed with the assistance of Adeng'oi to get further insight into the *Ekutet* ritual.

The role that *Ekutet* performance has always played in the socio-cultural and emotional wellbeing of the Teso community notwithstanding, the ritual—according to the findings during my research—appears to be diminishing or has already diminished altogether in some parts of the Teso community. I noted that a majority of the youth, some in their late twenties, have never witnessed an actual performance of the *Ekutet* ritual, thereby confirming its rareness. The pertinent question I posed in this article, therefore, is: How is the community accessing the remedies that this ritual always served, in the absence of *Ekutet*?

I realised that while the performance of the ritual is becoming rare, literature about the ritual abounds. Individuals and groups will, on inducement, readily engage a willing listener in oral performances about the ritual, rendered as narrations, incantations, swearing, prayer chants, occasional re-enactments of attendant dramatic anecdotes, and mock exhumations. This is a factor that has prompted me to ask: Are the oral performances a sort of psychological substitute for the diminishing actual *Ekutet* ritual performance? Indeed, what is the relationship between orality and ritual performance in general and/or the oral performances witnessed in the field and the *Ekutet* ritual in particular?

In this article, I firstly briefly recap the role and meaning of ritual in general and death ritual in particular, as considered by various scholars in different contexts. I then explain the *Ekutet* ritual itself: its context, purpose, and the process of its performance. I follow this with a discussion on the current state of the ritual among the host community, the Teso. I then conclude with how oral literature, through memory, narration, and dramatic re-enactment, act as a way to keep alive the otherwise diminishing ritual.

Ritual in society in general and the *Ekutet* ritual in particular

Commenting further on the central role of ritual in society, Samovar *et al.*, posit that "ritual recalls past events, preserving and transmitting the foundations of society" (80). This observation appears to echo an earlier stand by Annemarie de Waal Malefijt that "participants in the ritual become identified with the sacred past, thus, perpetuating traditions as they re-establish the principles by which the group lives and functions" (47). Both scholars appear to agree on ritual as a people's connection to their past and perhaps how that past impacts their present.

Meanwhile, William Haviland, on the importance of ritual, notes: "Not only is ritual a means of re-enforcing a group's social bonds, and for relieving tensions, but it is also one way important events are celebrated and crises such as death made less disruptive and less difficult for individuals to bear" (48). In Haviland's view, therefore, ritual is a kind of social support system, without which a community as an established entity runs the risk of disintegrating.

Ekutet being a death ritual, in this article I also take an interest in how scholars relate ritual and death. Commenting on *The Strong Breed* in which Wole Soyinka presents a death ritual, Thierry Dubost posits that what the playwright is in fact saying is that ritual should prevent death. According to the critique, this is because ritual testifies to the connection between the world of the living, that of the dead, and that of the unborn. If this be the case, then ritual dissolves the barriers that exist between life and death such that the dead and the living remain one community. Of course, the very expression of the ritual being a "tragedy of hope", in Dubost's words, sounds paradoxical. This, however, apparently ties in with William Haney II's assertion that while participating in ritual—in particular one involving death—the audience undergoes a "cathartic transformation". Haney, who

analyses Soyinka's ritual drama *A Dance of the Forests* and *The Road*, interprets the works as involving the process of self-discovery through which the gulf between the self and the other, as well as mortality and immortality, is momentarily crossed. The sum effect of the two assertions by Dubost and Haney is that a death ritual should bring life back to the living, which—it appears—the *Ekutet* death ritual is purposed to do.

Perhaps among the most revered rituals in the Teso community is the *Ekutet*, a ceremony that involves the exhumation of the bones of the dead for reburial, or preservation in the family shrine. This could happen at two levels. It could be a normal exhumation, or one that happens when there is a crisis. A normal exhumation takes place after fifteen years since the dead were buried. The family then feels that the spirit (*eparait*) of their dead is ready to be honoured, by being ascended to ancestral status. The bones are, therefore, exhumed and reunited with the *eparait*, believed to have been living in the bush since it was separated from the body at burial. Several rites by elders who are past child-bearing age are performed for the exhumed bones, which are then transferred to the shade in the family shrine. Meanwhile, a crisis exhumation is done when it is felt that the dead is not happy for one reason or another. In such cases, the dead could be disturbing the living and causing calamities. This necessitates early exhumation, so as to perform the rites of appeasement before the bones are either reburied or taken to the family shrine for safe keeping.

Depending on the purpose of the exhumation, the subsequent treatment of the bones could involve other/ more attendant rituals that also aim to appease the dead person's spirit. In a majority of cases, one may deduce the purpose of the exhumation from the accompanying oral performances such as declamations, incantations, swearing, and prayer chants as the community elders implore the dead for mercy, leniency, support, and protection against misfortune and suffering. The afflictions calling for the *Ekutet* ritual may be physical, mental, or emotional. The ritual may be performed to remedy an individual's, family's, or community's persistent misfortunes such as frequent deaths, illnesses, accidents, or unexplained feuds. As already explained, the said calamities may be attributed to an unhappy dead member of the family or community. Thus, the need to right a wrong done against the dead person.

Often, the activities of the community may perceivably anger the entire council of ancestors, a situation that will affect people on a larger scale. The entire Teso community may then suffer great calamities such as extended drought and/or consequent famine, massive crop failure, and other widespread hardships. In these cases, the *Ekutet* ritual is performed accompanied with song and dance. As I established during my field research, the rendition of the accompanying song and dance must attain purity and perfection, which calls for the best musicians in the community. The purpose of flawless musical renditions, as believed by the members of the community, is to excite the nostalgia of the living dead and render them more approachable. As a custom, the main musical instruments of the community (particularly the ones that the living dead are expected to relate to, or instruments they played when they were alive) make part of the ensemble. They will include but not be limited to special *atenusu* (drums), *adeudeu* (a five stringed lyre), *arupepe* (the traditional horn), and *adongo* (the plucked lamella-phone). Through the appealing music and dance the community's prominent ancestors may also be implored over those times of hardship and appeased to forestall more disaster. Of course, *Ekutet* may also be performed to thank the ancestors for provision(s) as a way of attracting more in the future. It then becomes a good show to preserve the bones of such dead with greater care and honour to ensure continued favour from the benevolent ancestors. All in all, *Ekutet* is thus for sustaining a favourable situation or correcting a bad one and bringing life back to normal.

(Dis)placement, (re)placement, and (re)presentation in the Teso community

During my fieldwork, I was assisted in my choice of respondents by my two guides, Mwalimu Charles Ogola and Anthony Adeng'oi, who were knowledgeable members of the community. The guides knew the groups and individuals that could provide me with the answers I was seeking on the position of ritual in general and *Ekutet* in particular for the Teso people. Ogola in particular was instrumental in my task of understanding the role of oral performances in the ritual. The interviews with the respondents took many forms: conversation, narration, demonstration, and dramatic performances. I sought explanations on the question of oral renditions (in particular music and dance, incantations, declamations, swearing, prayer chants, and dramatisation) during the performance of the ritual. I similarly sought the people's views on both the current position of *Ekutet* and its future.

Coming to the key question of how, in the absence of *Ekutet*, the community was dealing with the spiritual and psychological remedies that the ritual had always served, I resorted to psychoanalysis in the attempt to establish what fills the gap created by this absence. In the process three terms related to psychoanalysis offered

themselves, which I use here not in their strict theoretical sense, but rather in their ordinary day to day reference. These are (dis)placement, (re)placement, and (re)presentation. The prefixes 'dis' and 're' in brackets allow me to address the antithetical component of normal 'placement', while 're' before 'presentation' introduces the element of meaning and role of the presentations. With these three terms, considered side by side with the expressions coming through the oral renditions, I came to make my conclusions on the position of *Ekutet* in the contemporary Teso community.

The term (dis)placement is used to serve the dual purpose of 'placement' and 'displacement' in which something accustomed to being in a place is shifted to another, thereby altering its position and/or significance. The Teso *Ekutet* ritual can be seen in this light of placement and displacement. While none of the respondents wanted to admit outright that the *Ekutet* ritual was, as a matter of fact, dead, all were in consensus that its performance had become rare, perhaps only still regarded by quinquagenarians, sexagenarians and those older. Indeed, the middle-aged and elderly who lived during the active days of the ritual recalled it with nostalgia and reverence. They attributed several of the community's afflictions today to the abandonment of this sacred ritual: "In the olden days, cases of, say, sons killing their parents, leave alone just fighting them over land, were unheard of," complained Mzee Adung'o, the chairman of the famous Omong'oluk Traditional Cultural Group, who was in his seventies. He then added:

> "Of course, the parents who happen to die in that manner, instead of bequeathing blessings to their children, descend on them with bitterness, causing misfortunes. *Ekutet* must then be performed so that the bones of that dead parent may be appeased then reburied, or preserved in the family shrine where the offending son would regularly visit to atone himself with the malevolent spirit of his aggrieved father." (Adung'o and Muleka)

"But why have you as a community decided to abandon a practice you seem to still value so much", I asked. "It is today's young generation. They have relegated our practices and chosen to replace them", Adung'o lamented. "Replace them?" I probed further. "They have relegated our practices such as *Ekutet* in favour of Western education and practices. They have replaced our practices with Christianity; what they call modernity and other apish cultural practices". One could feel an element of agitation in Adung'o's tone of voice. Then, without waiting for me to ask him another question, he spoke again, this time more calmly, a kind of confirmation that he had perhaps recovered from his earlier outburst or had reconciled himself to the way things were: "The faith of the young people today appears to be wholly represented in Christian prayers. They believe that Christian prayers will address all their concerns". "And won't they?" I asked, perhaps to remind Mzee that he still had an audience before him. To which he responded like one who had not heard me:

> "Diseases such as madness, epilepsy, leprosy and many others, as well as conditions such as barrenness and others are now referred to hospital. The hospital cannot manage some of these conditions because they are associated with the spirits, more so, evil spirits. Only our ways of dealing with evil spirits can address them. It is then no wonder that our world is now reeling under the weight of a myriad problems". (Adung'o and Muleka)

I observed that the sentiments from Adung'o seemed to set the tone for sentiments from other respondents across the spectrum. And because the ritual could now only be placed in the distant past, one would be right to conclude that *Ekutet* as a therapeutic ritual had been displaced and replaced. In its place were the Christian faith and modern medicine as representative remedies to the psychological, physical, and even emotional concerns of the community, particularly for the younger generation who seem to trust that prayers could protect them from the ravages of the evil spirits. "Take everything to the Lord in prayer", is perhaps their clarion call. Would this by any chance mean that the elderly who still looked up to *Ekutet* had nothing to do with Christianity? A majority of the elderly people who I talked to admitted to being believers in the Christian faith. Many said that they never missed attending their local Christian churches. But from their sentiments, one notes that deep inside, *Ekutet* remains part of their spirituality even as they go to the church services. Indeed, from the responses of some, they would be prepared to perform the ritual, albeit secretly and outside the knowledge of their Christian priests and pastors. Many are also those who go to hospital but come back to reconsider *Ekutet* as the ultimate solution if they believe that the afflictions are (in their own terms) "African" in nature, thus, requiring the enlisting of some of the African practices such as *Ekutet*. For instance, where it is believed that the afflictions are a result of, say, witchcraft, then hospitals become irrelevant. It became clear to me that the displacement of *Ekutet* had occurred in

the face of the Christian faith, which had psychologically replaced the earlier reliance on the traditional practice. The presentations that were being displayed were a mere representation of a nostalgic memory.

The role of oral literature in keeping *Ekutet* alive

In spite of the above revelations, I still asked myself a couple of questions: Firstly, did the *Ekutet* ritual stand a chance in the face of the invading Western practices, and Christianity in particular? Secondly, in view of the diminished stature of *Ekutet*, what would happen to the memory of the ritual that worked for the people before? To put it another way, what were the people to do with their nostalgia about the ritual? Were there any remedies for keeping *Ekutet* alive? I found these to be weighty questions, not only in relation to *Ekutet*, but also in relation to other traditional rituals in African society.

In this section, I want to start with the latter concern, i.e., the possible remedies for keeping *Ekutet* alive. The other concerns are likely to be addressed in the process of interrogating this latter concern. To start with, if I am to go with what I gathered from their responses, the people, particularly the elderly, have a memory of and nostalgia about the *Ekutet* ritual. Adeng'oi confirmed that some cultural adherents in the community have—on cultural days—tried to campaign for its resuscitation. But, as he pointed out, this interest clearly appeared to be going against the tide and the resuscitation of the ritual has to surmount the objections of the Christian church which most, if not all, cultural adherents are members of. Consequently, open participation in the ritual—which, as I learnt, the church ministers had time and again dabbed 'satanic'—would be tantamount to open and deliberate 'sinning'. This in itself, the people have always been warned, would——invite condemnation to "burn in the fire of hell", as Adeng'oi quoted some church leaders. Meanwhile, one can predict that participating in what some members of the society appear to shun is likely to attract scorn or cause stigma socially. However, the biggest obstacle to the resuscitation of *Ekutet* could perhaps be said to be the disregard by the youth who view the ritual as outdated and/or obsolete, at least according to what those I managed to interact with said. This means that the ritual is easing out with the older generation who have nobody readily willing to be handed over the baton to when they're ready to exit—mostly through natural attrition. So, how may *Ekutet* survive? Incidentally, the answer to this question could be found in oral literature.

It may sound idealistic, abstract, or even farfetched, but during my research into the ritual, I concluded that its continued survival resided in orality realised through narration and dramatic re-enactment of the ritual. This may be an unconscious process, but the eagerness with which the cultural adherents talk about the ritual makes it clear that perhaps this is one of the ways it will remain 'alive': through frequent narrations to the youth and visitors about its process and value. I would argue that, for those who heavily feel the loss of the ritual, there is a kind of self-actualisation and fulfilment in the very process of narrating the ritual and conducting 'mock' exhumation. This is perhaps akin to the psychological concept of wishful thinking and wish fulfilment in which a wish that cannot be met is realised in a disguised manner. Indeed, talking about the ritual puts the narrator on the psychological journey of rediscovering, if not resuscitating, the practice. Narration, therefore, seems to bring the ritual back to life.

Meanwhile, as the ritual is narrated, it is clear to those listening how vivid the memory of the ritual is to the narrator. Even for the listeners themselves, there is a feeling of freshness of the events of the ritual due to the manner in which they are told. Indeed, the narrator makes it sound like it is perhaps only yesterday when the events of the ritual took place. And, since the said narration is done from the narrator's memory of the ritual, this posits oral literature memory—and preservation in whatever form—as the repository that will keep the ritual always alive and as a part of the people's culture. From the memory of the ritual, its re-enactment becomes a reality. It therefore behoves researchers to be ready to record—especially with modern audio-visual instruments—yearly cultural performances of *Ekutet* and post them into the internet, so that it becomes a kind of repository to pass the ritual on to the next generations.

While narration only explains the events of the *Ekutet* ritual, mock exhumations involve practical demonstration of how the exhumation itself was done. As a matter of fact, mock exhumations sound and feel like the actual exhumation and the observer can hardly tell the difference in most instances. In fact, on one occasion, I thought that I was witnessing an actual live exhumation. The person performing the mock exhumation had prepared the ground in advance and had even ensured that the object to be exhumed had been buried there and that the grave looked convincingly old. As the digging went on, I found my apprehension growing. When the object to be exhumed was reached, it was a well-wrapped decayed object that made one believe that it was a real

human corpse. Those accompanying me believed and continuously insisted that it was a real exhumation. As the old man performing the mock exhumation explained to me and my companions, the exercise was designed to be like an actual exhumation. Those assisting in the process dug out the soil carefully to make sure that the bones were not crushed in case they were reached. One has to bear in mind that burying bodies in coffins was not part of the Teso culture. When the bones are found, these are lifted out carefully, trying as much as possible to keep the skeleton intact. All this time, strict silence is kept. As some elders explained to me later, silence is kept to avoid scaring off the dead person's spirit, which having been living in the 'bush' since it left the body during burial, has to return to the now exhumed body. The returning of the spirit, as the elders explained, is crucial because it is the very spirit that is either bound, appeased, implored, reprimanded, and/or sacrificed to if the exhumation was about curing a bad relationship between the dead and the living. Once the skeleton has been extracted and is on the surface, people break into song and dance around it. Those who were fasting can now break the fast. From the songs, chants, incantations, declamations, swearing, prayers, and dramatization, one can tell what the exhumation was all about. If the spirit was, for example, disturbing the living, the leader of the ceremony may curse, reprimand, swear, and so on. If the body was to be reburied, the body would, after numerous rituals and libations, be buried back in the same grave or in another grave dug afresh. If the body was to be taken to the family shrine, this would be done by designated individuals, after which the occasion is opened to eating and drinking *ajon*, the traditional beer brewed from fermented millet. The celebrations also become another rich source of oral performances in which stories are told, songs are sung, and prayer chants are recited.

What comes out then is that the act of re-enacting the ritual seems to bring it back to life. Re-enactment, thus, becomes a very potent repository of this revered ritual and could serve as an encyclopaedia to teach future generations as well as visitors to the community. Much as I have pointed out that the youth today tend to disregard the ritual, it is not the entire population of the youth. Some young people that I talked to still believe that the ritual is in fact useful. Depending on the particular exposure of the youth, some confirmed to me that they had had the opportunity to witness and/or participate in a number of mock ceremonies at a tender age. This meant that perhaps the ritual still had chances of being carried into the future.

As I found out, the educated population is incidentally the one advocating for the resuscitation of not only *Ekutet*, but also the other cultural practices that appear to be fading out. As Ogola explained to me:

> [...] the more enlightened and financially able members of the community have of late been sponsoring annual cultural festivals which bring together Teso people of all walks of life. During such festivals, induced performances of the *Ekutet* ritual, like many other community rituals, are given special shows in what has come to be known as "cultural displays of our traditional way of life". (Ogola and Muleka)

One then concludes that the *Ekutet* ritual may be diminishing or in fact is already diminished in most parts of the Teso region, but it continues to remain alive through memory, narration, and re-enactment as a substitution, even if the substitution is only psychological in nature. In essence, multiple audio-visual recordings are the direction to take: this, in a way, cements the place of oral literature as the encyclopaedia of the people's indigenous knowledge and practices.

Conclusion

In this article, I examined *Ekutet*, the Teso exhumation ceremony that involves the exhumation of the bones of the dead for reburial, or preservation, in the family shrine. The ceremony, said to have been performed from time immemorial, is believed to protect the family from the wrath of displeased ancestors. Incidentally, the ceremony appears to be dying out due to the divided opinion concerning its continued usefulness. Despite the diminishing or diminished position of the Teso *Ekutet* ritual, a section of the population, mostly the more elderly in society, still feel nostalgic about it and hold it in great reverence. For this section of the society, their apparent hope is that the ritual may regain its former role, which perhaps explains their eagerness to narrate or re-enact it whenever an opportunity arises. Some members of the Teso elite are making attempts to re-popularise the ceremony but they have to deal with prevailing contexts such as multiculturalism, better hospitals, and the ever expanding Christian Church, all of which make the revival of the ceremony an uphill task. The continued existence and survival of *Ekutet* and many other rituals like it are likely to depend on memory, narration, and re-enactment—and especially recording— albeit as a psychological fallback. Literature in general and oral literature in particular, therefore, is

what may become the main, if not only, platform depended on to offer the lifeline for diminishing or diminished rituals as they are memorised, narrated, re-enacted, and safely stored on the internet.

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A feminist analysis of 'Dhako en …' (A woman is …) proverbs among the Luo community of Kenya

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A feminist analysis of '*Dhako en* …' (A woman is …) proverbs among the Luo community of Kenya
Postcolonial feminism conceptualises the female body as volatile to theorise the inherent vibrant activities of (re)identification of the self from the social masculine inscriptions. In addition to that, the female body is also understood as a subject of conquest in a political struggle to emancipate the self from the instigators of its suppression. Given this, the female body is highly political and attempts to emancipate itself from oppressive patriarchal hegemony. In spite of these efforts by feminist scholars to proclaim the inevitable transfiguration of the female body, and to elucidate a transformation towards autonomy of self, discourse in emerging oral tradition and emerging genres of oral literature in contemporary African societies derail the quest for recreation of an 'envisioned woman'. In this study I analyse '*Dhako en*' (a woman is) proverbs among the Luo community of Kenya, and investigate their dominant role in the objectification of the female body in contemporary society. These proverbs were collected from Facebook, and then analysed through a deconstructionist approach and postcolonial feminist theory of sexualised objectification. At the superficial level, '*Dhako en*' proverbs are supposed to entertain by creating comic relief. I argue that the signified is a woman relegated to a mere object of misappropriation, and that the signifiers embody sexual connotations in the pretext of artful use of words verbally. I conclude that these proverbs become existential threats to the 'transfiguration' process of the female body and continue to 'other' the image of the woman, complicating the overall feminist struggle. **Keywords**: *Dhako en*, objectification, female body, social degradation, social other.

Introduction

The body is a critical subject for postcolonial studies. In particular, postcolonial feminist studies engage with representation and (re)creation and (re)identification of the female body from the hegemonic masculine inscriptions, which have played a critical role in 'othering' the woman in society. Elizabeth Grosz, a postcolonial feminist scholar, describes the female body as highly "volatile" to explicate and conceptualise the inherent activities of resistance against demeaning patriarchal inscriptions, in what then becomes the larger process of re-identifying the self (14). Another notable scholar, Ketu Katrak, argues that the female body should be viewed as a subject of conquest, and is thus often experiencing "internal exile" as resistance against demeaning and marginalising social identities within masculine space (2). Given these arguments, it is apparent that the female subject grapples with the continuous challenge to (re)create an identity which she can be proud of. Nevertheless, society makes this aspiration complex and complicated in representation of the female body in various oral performances. That is to say that societies place further obstacles against the feminist struggle, and this is visible in the language of composition and transmission of '*Dhako en*' (a woman is) proverbs among the Luo community in Kenya. As I argue in this paper, '*Dhako en*' proverbs are anchored in objectification of the female body, and this is reflective of the society's marginal positioning of female subjects.

Oral tradition and performances, which embody a community's way of life, are some of the avenues in which social degradation of the female body is exacerbated, particularly among the Luo community of Kenya in contemporary times. Oral tradition is conceptualised for the purpose of this study as the transmission of messages orally from one generation to the next. These messages are passed through normal conversations and may also

find themselves embedded in oral arts such as songs, narratives, and poetry of the people that use them. Since oral tradition relies on language, it becomes susceptible and vulnerable to a hijacking that reinforces the perceived status quo such as patriarchal norms within the society.

Linguist Robert Lakoff argues that "Language uses us as much as we use language" (45), and theorizes on what is "women's language" by asserting that: "It will be found that the overall effect of 'women's language'—meaning both language restricted in use to women and language descriptive of women alone—submerges a woman's personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in the subject-matter and uncertainty about it" (48).

From Lakoff's argument, it is notable that language has a role in constructing and reinforcing certain identities. Besides, its role as a political tool that highlights the contradiction between genders in the community is explicit in most cultures. Another critic, Kuber Bathla, argues that patriarchy, like all social systems, is constructed by people and is reinforced and cemented when it seeps into language. The idea is that language, which is the medium of communication in oral tradition and performances, is a breeding ground for gendering that occurs in societies, and particularly the social marginalisation of women in the society. Language usage thus portrays a community's values, beliefs, and social relations.

Given the above, in this article I posit that the Luo community, which is at the centre of this study, have proverbs within its oral tradition which highlight the othering and marginalisation of women, and this could be suggestive of how a part of this society perceives women and womanhood. Lakoff avers that there are specific linguistic expressions that allow the woman to be discussed and treated as an object, sexual or otherwise (48), and this is conspicuous in the deconstructed '*Dhako en*' (a woman is) proverbs among the Luo community in Kenya.

The primary texts used in this article were collected online through Facebook as a dominant social media platform. First, I searched for similar posts on Facebook with the keyword '*Dhako*' to locate the primary texts. Posts and comments with '*Dhako en*' proverbs were then collected for analysis. In addition to that, on 7 January 2020, through my Facebook account, I created a post requesting for '*Dhako en*' proverbs, and users responded to this in the comment section by sharing proverbs that they were aware of or had heard being used in their communities. Importantly, these proverbs naturally occur orally but were collected in written form based on the method of data collection. Their 'orality' in the text is further reinforced by Peter Amuka who argues that readers are ever engaged in an oral exercise when interacting with a written text. The data collected was then thematically analysed, where emphasis was placed on those that 'objectify' female bodies. Critical engagement with the texts was augmented by the poststructuralist theory of Deconstruction and postcolonial feminist reflections on objectification.

The humorous use of words among the Luo community intended to render communication artistic and enjoyable, and as Ruth Finnegan (219) argues, to make commentaries on social life. '*Dhako en*', which is translated into English as "a woman is", is a phrase commonly used in proverbs that describe women. "Woman" is the English equivalent of '*Dhako*'. Generally, these proverbs describe women by comparing them to an object, often traditional or contemporary, but within the community's social realities. In the first part of the proverb, the woman is described by comparing or linking her to the object. For instance, 'A woman is x', where x is a descriptive statement or an object. In most cases, x as an object is a metaphor that needs to be qualified in the second part of the proverb. In other words, the second part is the signified, and can take the form of a caution or advice, or even be humorous. Thus, it is the second part of the proverb that contains the meaning.

At face value, these proverbs are supposed to be humorous and entertaining among those who use them, but deeper interpretations of them highlight the prevailing social degradation of the female body through systemic sexual objectification using language. Notably, these proverbs exists in day-to-day conversations, and may be used by both men and women. However, the rate of their usage among men exceeds that of women, who can be argued to be conscious and uncomfortable with their sexual connotations, and how they are objectified. Aside from that, these proverbs are also prevalent in the lyrics of Luo traditional and popular music genres such as *Nyatiti*, *Benga*, and *Ohangla*, where the artists use them to entertain their listeners and to pass critical messages. Jayne Otwack Odhiambo, for instance, has analysed how the Luo Benga music, with emphasis on Okatch Biggy's songs, reinforces sex stereotypes within the Luo tradition (47).

Importantly, in the verbal performance of the proverbs, the auxiliary verb '*en*' (is) is dropped for simplicity purposes. For example, *dhako ndiga. Ka ijienge marach to ng'ato okwale* (notice the absence of '*en*'). It is translated as "A woman is a bicycle. It will be stolen if you do not keep it well". At the superficial level, this message is supposed

to be a caution to men to take good care of 'their women'. In addition to that, it offers dark humour, where it will likely trigger a mixture of laughter and discomfort in the audience.

Regardless of the humour, such proverbs and their usage in society are problematic as the undertone is a situation where the woman is objectified. The given example implies that a woman is like a physical object that can be taken or stolen at will. Her human attributes are taken away, and she is given mostly inanimate features. Most of them, as will be explained, sexually objectify a woman and her body when deconstructed.

According to Martin Hohendorf and Alessandra Pucci Daniele, Derrida's deconstruction helps in disclosing the gender oppressions expressed through language (41). In Derrida's view, there is a connection between the signifier and the signified, where the signifiers can have alternative and non-fixed meanings. According to Guillemette and Cossette, "Deconstruction criticism subscribes to the poststructuralist vision of language, wherein the signifier (the form of sign) does not refer to a definite signified (the content of a sign) but produces other signifiers instead". Thus, through deconstruction, one can depart from the obvious and superficial meanings of 'Dhako en' and delve into how they portray the Luo woman with sexual undertones. As a result, the danger is that these proverbs intensify the oppression of the woman, and because they are delivered with supposed dark humour, they therefore remain normalised and invisible. Along with other postcolonial feminist arguments on objectification, deconstruction is a critical analytical tool in unmasking such objectifications to enable criticism against them and continue the struggle of (re)creating positive identities of the female body in society.

Representations of objectification in 'Dhako en …' proverbs

"The act of 'objectifying' means making into an object or treating something that is traditionally not an object as an object, which then becomes susceptible to manipulation and control through the physical properties that it possesses" (Calogero 574). When a human being is objectified, the perpetrator of the objectification no longer sees the victim as a human being and perceives the subject as an 'it'. In this case, the 'it' disqualifies the human attributes as the individual is identified with properties of the object that it has been linked to, or is perceived to be.

Notably, objectification theory was originally developed by Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts but has been widely used in feminist studies. According to these scholars, objectification theory attempts to elucidate the extreme and pervasive tendency to equate women with their bodies, which can have negative consequences for women's body image and beyond (Calogero 574). When a woman's body is sexually objectified, it is put on public display in and its identities and images become subject to misappropriations. It is problematic because sexual objectification has traditionally fragmented the woman into a collection of sexual parts and/or sexual functions. The danger is that this strips the woman's unique personality and positive identity. Jayne Odhiambo supports this by arguing that the consistent naturalisation and normalisation for men to treat women as mere sexual objects, and for women to be told that their bodies function only as things of value to men, present lasting effects on the mentality of women (48).

Sexual objectification of women in 'Dhako en' proverbs is a construct of the social realities of the society in which they are performed. Feminist scholar Rosalind Gill aids in understanding the existing social problem in her argument that "all women's bodies are available to be coded sexually" (150). In addition, the essentiality and meaning of the female body predominantly rests on the socially generated codes in communities. Amuka supports this claim and says that the human body is "a language unto itself; the body is imbued with the power to create stories, culture and history". Amuka's conclusion is derived from his study and analysis of Okoth Okombo's *Masira Ki Ndaki*.

Like most African communities, the Luo of Kenya are patriarchal, and this influences the society's perception and imaging of women as objects. According to a sociological study of Luo gender relations carried out by April Gordon, "the Luo represent more than retrograde patriarchal dominance over women" (886). In such a society, the woman is perceived as inferior in a retrogressive way, and this always paves the way for misappropriation of her body. The social implication of such cultures is that the male becomes dominant, and the woman is defined by the man, especially in terms of her identity. Besides, it offers the impression that the woman is owned by the man, and therefore the man can do to her whatever pleases him. Given these realities, the patriarchal orientation of the Luo society becomes a breeding ground for the objectification of women which is reinforced from one generation to the next.

Feminist studies have also engaged with the sexism of Luo oral performances. Aside from sexism, humour is a dominant feature of the Dholuo language as noted in most oral performances such as *Pakruok* (praise for oneself), *Ngero* (proverbs or sayings), or '*Dhako en*' proverbs. In her study of *Pakruok*, Beatrice Atieno Owiti observes that humour derived therein is culturally bound, and the level of appreciation for the humour will vary from one culture to the next ("Humour in Pakruok Among the Luo of Kenya: Do Current Theories of Humour Effectively Explain Pakruok?" 31). Owiti identifies power relations in the Dholuo language oral performances, and how women are represented as less equal to men.

The uniqueness of the Dholuo language is also observed in popular culture's treatment and appreciation of the human body as figurative codes for various modes of thoughts, feelings, and features that do not coincide with English idioms (Odhoji 2). Amuka has also argued that the human body is a narrative text, especially among the Luo people, where it "enjoys a very special place as a literal object in Luo oral art". Thus, it is not by coincidence but by socio-cultural design that '*Dhako en*' proverbs among the Luo community figuratively treats female bodies with socio-culturally generated signifiers that target socio-culturally acknowledged meanings. Amuka further posits that the body, with the female in mind, inspires songs, dances, and feasts, among other forms of oral art. According to him, the preoccupation of a woman's body in '*Dhako en*' proverbs is socio-culturally pegged and understood.

A proverb like "*Dhako jek, ting'o gari size moro amora*" (a woman is a hydraulic jack, she can carry a vehicle of any size) tends to instigate laughter in the audience and elicit admiration for the perceived power of a woman. The metaphorical usage of a hydraulic jack represents the function and power of a woman. The most arrived at meaning of the proverb is that, like a hydraulic jack is capable of lifting vehicles of any weight despite its small size, so is the suggested power of a woman. When deconstructed, the proverb portrays the woman's capability to withstand the weight of any man during sex. Therefore, the strength of a woman is equated to her sex life and capabilities.

"*Dhako Turkana tur gi chuore makata opek*" (a woman is Turkana, she struggles with her husband however heavy she is) highlights a similar meaning as above. Importantly, the humour and meaning in this proverb rests in the vocabulary of the Dholuo language. Turkana is a geographic space, whose first three letters "*tur*" form an independent root word in Dholuo that means 'to struggle'. Given this clarification, the proverb uses Turkana within the local context of conversationalists to image a woman who struggles with the weight and burdens of her husband. The social problem with objectification is explained by Jayne Odhiambo in her analysis of the Luo Benga music, where she argues that:

> Many problems arise when stereotypes are seen as ideal behavior, for instance when a woman's body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is viewed primarily as a physical object of male desire: she is then judged and evaluated on the basis of her appearance and not on her competence based attributes. (56)

In addition, the overall problem underpinned by this proverb is sexual objectification, which according to Sarah Gervais *et al.* is a given type of appearance focused on sexual body parts (743). These scholars further explicate this is based on objectification theory that manifests in two ways. First, whenever one objectifies a woman, he or she always separates a woman's sexual functions or body parts, and then reduces the body parts to just instruments (743). Secondly, it entails regarding the sexual body parts of the individuals as capable of representing their entire persons (743). Overall, a woman's body is perceived in her sexual functions and not by her personhood and essence of being a human.

Reflecting on Gervais *et al.* and Jayne Odhiambo's argument, it is noted that the above proverbs are exemplifications of the Dholuo language's capability to foster sexism and objectification of women. First, the woman is compared to an object, the hydraulic jack. Secondly, the signifier (the hydraulic jack) has several aspects of the signified, where one of them is the strength of a woman while the other is strength in her sex life. The proverb symbolises a woman's ability to sustain the weight of any man during intercourse. By in so doing, the proverb furthers sexism, which is the "set of expectations of women's (or males, however, in a misogynist society, females are the focus of prejudice) appearance, actions, skills, emotions, proper place in society" (Wilson 45). It continues to marginalise women and their bodies become objects of sexual perversion, where it represents the woman as a body designed for sex and sustaining the weight of every man's body during intercourse.

There are instances where some '*Dhako en*' proverbs encourage not only sexual objectification but loss of autonomy of the female body. As argued by Miruka Philip, Nathan Joshua, and Jack Obongo, Luo culture is

patrilineal and this implies that it is a society where "male ownership" is predominant (240). Within such a society, the female body is identified through her relationship to a particular male (father or husband), and this encourages the assumption that a woman can be owned or used by the man. The audience for this proverb is undefined, and this is attributed to the contemporary vehicles within which they are performed and transmitted. Importantly, sexual overtones manifest in most Luo oral performances. For example, in his study of *Ohangla* music among the Luo, Fred Atoh emphasises the sexual overtones in lyrical composition and dance moves as an integral part of the performance (49). Thus, it speaks volumes of why most of these proverbs are overtly used in *Ohangla* music. In addition to that, it can be seen that the proverbs are transmitted verbally through several channels, and this demonstrates their increasing popularity among contemporary Dholuo language users.

Several proverbs assume the meaning expounded above. For example, "*Dhako puodho, ng'ama ni gi kweye to choro mana keyo*" (a woman is a garden. Whoever has his hoe/*jembe* gets to plant in it). Herein, a woman is compared to land as a physical object, which then implies that she is rendered usable and own(able) by men. In addition to that, this proverb has a sexual connotation as it portrays the woman as a conquest of a man's sexual desires. It reinforces the marginalisation of the role of women in society to merely a man's form of sexual satisfaction. A proverb with a similar meaning is "*Dhako gas, ng'ama ojase ema tiyo kode*" (A woman is a gas cylinder, any man that refills it gets to use it). Notably, Gayle Rubin presents an apt explanation of this through the theory of sex/gender systems. She argues that this is the "set of arrangements by which society transforms the biological into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied sexuality" (159). The above proverb demonstrates how language becomes a tool to transform the woman's body into a product that can be owned and is therefore capable of satisfying the sexual needs and wishes of the capitalist and masculine hegemonic society.

"*Dhako nam, ok dei pong'e ng'ato achiel*" (A woman is a lake, you cannot fill it alone) also highlights the appropriation of a woman's body and autonomy, and denotes her useability by men. Furthermore, it depicts a consumerist image of a woman, disregarding her voice and self-determination as she becomes a subject of conquest by anyone. By implying that anyone can fill water in a lake, the suggestion is a precursor and reinforce(r) for degradation of the woman in its representation of a female body capable of being used by any other man. Rubin further argues that: "There is an economics and a politics to sex/gender systems which is obscured by the concept of 'exchange of women.' For instance, a system in which women are exchangeable only for another has a different effect on women than one in which there is a commodity in equivalent for women" (205)

The proverb explicitly reveals that a woman is seen merely as an object owned by a man that can be used by anyone who fulfils her demands. Critics would argue that it robs the woman of her dignity and autonomy of self and relegates her to a social space of vulnerability through misappropriation of the body. It normalises the objectification of the female body, and the fact that such proverbs are popular offers clues on how contemporary society furthers the degradation of the woman from what is typified with the traditional society's treatment of the woman.

Social degradation of a female body is also notable in the proverb "*Dhako chuodho, ng'ama oruako gambut ema yore*" (A woman is a muddy ground, whoever puts on gumboots gets to cross over it). This could imply that a woman shares similar properties and attributes as mud, and is thus relegated to a social "other". She becomes that which people must wear protective gear in engagement with for she is described as having unclean properties. Indeed, several studies have been conducted on how societies perceive women as unclean, socially exclude them, and treat them negatively, especially during menstruation (McHugh 410; Mengi and Rajput 401).

Another proverb is: "*Dhako mit makata omuonyo chloroquine*" (A woman is sweet even if she has taken quinine medication). Chloroquine/quinine is an anti-malarial drug that is characterised by its bitter taste and itchy skin sensation as side effects. The proverb employs the drug's irritating side effect and creates an assumption that a woman is sweet even if she takes the drug, where 'sweetness' is contrasted with the taste and side-effects of the drug. In this case, sweetness is deconstructed as a sexual metaphor. Also related to this proverb is "*Dhako milimili karatuon*" (A woman is as tasty as a food additive) which equally uses taste and food to signify the sweetness of a woman's body. By linking a woman to 'sweetness' she is relegated to an object that can be consumed or eaten by a man, and she becomes an object that is supposed to satisfy a man's desire for sweetness, pleasures, and other sensations. Indeed, Josephine Shui-Kei Chin, a feminist scholar, includes "sweet in taste" as one of the obscene and indecent metaphors that are used to describe women in Hong Kong magazine (28). While her study is based on the language of print media, the phrase "sweet in taste" is used in verbal messages as demonstrated by the above '*Dhako en*' proverb.

The tendency to see the female's body as an object that is consumable or 'eatable' by a man is observed in an analysis of 'Dhako en' proverbs that use food images in representing women. In her analysis of the relationship between food and the woman's body, Naomi Graetz argues that "[w]omen are often thought of as either food, or in relationship to food. This might be related to the fact that a woman's body is traditionally conceived as deficient, as an imperfect male, and even a subhuman" (1). Tisha Dejmanee's analysis of women in food blogs helps in further understanding this relationship by explaining it as "food porn" (433). In other words, women are portrayed as tasty and edible foods with the most attractive descriptions by using erotic language to trigger interest in buying.

Take, for instance, this example: "Dhako packed lunch" (A woman is a packed lunch) which implies the readiness and the available nature for eating or consumption with which her body is imaged. Another proverb, "Dhako matumbo, ichame ka oliet" (A woman is cooked intestines, it is eaten when hot), also employs the food trope in describing a woman. Matumbo (tripe) is a local delicacy in Kenya made from cooked intestines and other stomach organs from slaughtered cows, goats, or sheep. Characteristically, matumbo has a lot of fats, and when cooked, these fats will melt but then solidify very fast. Therefore, the meal has to be served and eaten quickly when it is still hot to avoid the unpleasant solidifying fats. The above proverb likens a woman to "matumbo" (an object) where the signified is sex. It means that a man should have sex with a woman when the woman's body is still 'hot'.

"Dhako ok mur mor mor pile" (A woman is not warmed for her body is always warm) is also accompanied by food imagery, and it particularly denotes the 'warmness' of a woman's body with emphasis on the sexual and intimate relationship that a man has with a woman. Arguably, food's palatability is enhanced by warming. However, this proverb advises that a woman's body should not be warmed for it is already warm, and ready for consumption. It can then be concluded that the symbolic reference of a female's body with food in composition and usage of this proverb suggests the hyper-sexuality of the community. Dejmanee elaborates further that "in a hypersexual context in which the exploitation, regulation and objectification of women's bodies is predictably commonplace, 'food porn' plays with ideas of the pornification of the female body" (445).

The most apparent element in these proverbs is the sexual objectification of the female body. Notably, the 'sacredness' of the institution of sex is contested in these proverbs, where the performer says what is hitherto considered taboo or sacred. The cultural views of the institution of sex are challenged, and this could be explained by two theories. First, it could be linked to the increased liberalism wave that is sweeping through society worldwide (Sindima 190)—this is also relevant for understanding the cultural crisis of Luo society. Alternatively, the trend demonstrates deviance and is in a way a kind of power contest between the norm and what is not normal. In the theory of "The Everyday Forms of Resistance", James C. Scott posits that "Most 'everyday resistors' are rather like opponents of the law who estimate that it is more convenient to evade it or bribe their way around it rather than to change it" (57). These proverbs can be put into the context of everyday resistance against the social conventions of conversation, where the everyday resistors employ the proverbs to defy and challenge the norms in their aspirations of freedom of speech. As such, there is an inherent battle to be free of refrains in conversation, which manifests as the undertones of the proverbs in the mainstream.

Upon analysing the words (signifiers) used in 'Dhako en' proverbs, a critical concern is the question about the level of obscenity of the language used. In the above examples, the words (signifiers) are derived from local objects and actions, which when used in normal conversations, would not be accused of vulgarity. Nevertheless, it is upon deconstructing these words, and their contextual elements, that obscenity is unmasked in the form of the signified (meanings). 'Dhako en' proverbs use simple and sexually explicit language and euphemisms to speak about what is regarded as social and cultural taboos. Ideally, such proverbs are used by adults among adults, and they come as euphemisms. Nevertheless, their proliferation on social media platforms and in popular music, which are unguarded vehicles for their performance, implies that they are available to all audiences. It explains why the performers make use of imagery and euphemisms as resorts of covering the hidden meanings. Owiti explains that unravelling the concealed meanings demands social and cultural competence "whereby the conversationalists can produce and interpret both verbal and social contexts using sociocultural rules and rules of discourse" ("Pragmatics of Dholuo Panegyrics" 134). Another scholar, Ogone Odhiambo, underlines the importance of audience in Luo oral performance by stating that the audience possesses a repository of the virtual text, where they consult memory (45). Therefore, while the signifiers, on the surface, are ordinary and 'innocent' words, the signified 'Dhako en' underlying sexual connotations are only derivable by those who are conversant with the 'playbook'.

Users of '*Dhako en*' proverbs must be reminded that objectification through these verbal messages elicit psychological harm to the woman in the long term. Peter Koval, Elise Holland, and Michelle Stratemeyer argue that sexual objectification of the woman leads the woman to objectify her body, which harms her emotional wellbeing. These critics further comment that the danger of such socially degenerating proverbs is the ability to generate a cycle of objectification, where the woman becomes preoccupied with her physical appearance and the sexual values that she offers others. In other words, 'self-objectification' succeeds the objectification that is explained in '*Dhako en*' proverbs. According to Koval, Holland, and Stratemeyer, self-objectification results in women experiencing unpleasant feelings such as shame and anxiety. Therefore, '*Dhako en*' proverbs could be used innocently in the Luo community among users who may not mean harm for the woman (arguably) but the reality is psychologically detrimental to the female body which may take long to correct.

Conclusion

I have argued in this article that '*Dhako en*' proverbs among the Luo community of Kenya establishes grounds on which the objectification and social degradation of women are performed. As a form of oral tradition, '*Dhako en*' proverbs are verbally passed from one generation to the next through day-to-day conversations, on social media platforms, and in the lyrics of Dholuo music genres such as *Ohangla*, *Nyatiti*, and *Onanda*. At face value, these proverbs are humorous, and thus entertaining to the users (audience). On the other hand, when deconstructed and subjected to poststructuralist feminist theories, '*Dhako en*' proverbs bear undertones of marginalisation and objectification of the female body in contemporary society as a socially constructed 'other'.

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Gender and power as negotiated in Bukusu circumcision ceremonies

Scholastica Nabututu Wabende & Simon Nganga Wanjala

Gender and power as negotiated in Bukusu circumcision ceremonies
Recent studies on language and gender that focus on songs and beer drinking sessions within the context of the Bukusu circumcision ceremony have shown that language is gendered and that it espouses male gender. Against this backdrop, in this study we aim to denaturalise this view by focussing on conversations within the circumcision ceremony. By using theoretical and methodological principles from critical discourse and conversation analysis in particular, we argue that, by using linguistic strategies, traditional gender roles are not only discursively highlighted but they are also negotiated and even resisted. This study falls within recent discussions in critical discourse analysis that have shown that language masks asymmetrical power relations on the one hand, and within postcolonial studies that have shown that gender discourses can reflect collisions between differing points of views on the other hand. The data used in this study is four audio recordings of conversations that took place alongside the main ceremony. This data has been analysed at the level of content and prosodic organisation to identify discursive practices that reveal the negotiation and contestation of gender roles. The study contributes to recent discussions in critical discourse analysis by exposing gender asymmetries and contestations that lie behind 'taken-for-granted' realities, with specific examples from the postcolonial context of the Bukusu circumcision ceremony. **Keywords:** Kenya, discourse, negotiation, power, circumcision, Bukusu, asymmetries.

Introduction

Recent research by Thorne and Baron reveals a renewed interest in gender studies. What renders this research particularly interesting is the gradual shift in perspective from the focus on "women's subordination within economic, political, and social institutions" (Thorne 10) to the study of gendered dynamics in interaction. Within this perspective, Coates (285) defines gender in terms of "selves" that individuals enact in interaction. Gender as a negotiated concept features prominently within this approach that has links to recent poststructuralist theories that "point to splits and fissures in categories previously seen as bounded or dichotomous and brings into focus hybrid […] identities" (Pavlenko and Blackledge 13). Thus, these studies go beyond what scholars have described as "deliberate one-sidedness" and focus on how, through linguistic means, gender is legitimised, challenged, and negotiated "to open new […] options for [the] oppressed and subjugated" gender (Thorne 10).

In this article, we focus on how real-life conversations are related to gender constructions and negotiation. Focusing on conversation that accompanies and dramatizes the circumcision ceremony among the Bukusu in Kenya, in this study we investigate which linguistic resources the participants use to challenge male domination within this male-dominated ceremony, how the appropriateness of such linguistic resources is negotiated, and how they contribute to the understanding of the relationship between male and female participants. In this way,

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we aim to extend the conceptualisation of gender as a negotiated concept and to find out more about circumcision ceremonies and gendered relations within the postcolonial Bukusu interactional setting.

The Bukusu circumcision ceremony held during every even year forms part of the cultural rites among the Bukusu people. There are other practices like naming, funeral events, and wedding ceremonies, among others. Our concern for this article is the circumcision event which is characterised by different speech actions centred on the 'cut' as a rite of passage. Specifically, we focus on conversations that take place in many locations within the speech event. Participants—both male and female—use this platform to talk about themselves as they are presented by the society. They therefore introduce several aspects of their identities, then discuss and contest them. The Bukusu society is essentially patriarchal, with men presented as superior to women, and in this context, therefore, gender has links to power.

The young male members must undergo this rite as a transition to adulthood. Thus, different speech actions dramatize the socio-biological transition of the young men to adulthood. The event is characterised by speech actions before, during, and after the event. The pre-event actions are mainly preparatory in nature as they instil courage, a hallmark of adult life.

Before, during, and after this event, initiates learn about various issues concerning the Bukusu tradition. It prepares the youth for marriage life in the community and orientates them to practise the norms and values through several activities: singing, dancing, drinking, and other interactional contexts. For instance, they are taught how to be men and how men conduct themselves in the society.

In our study, gender is defined in line with Coates's notion of 'selves' as a term applying to "a wide range of ways of being" and ways in which these "ways of being" are enacted in discourses (285). Unlike Coates, in this article we do not privilege femininity. Instead, we argue, together with Pavlenko and Blackledge, that gender, like all identities, happens at the interstice of being male and being female, being old and being young, being rich and being poor, and so on. Thus, in the enactment of 'selves', female interactants do not necessarily assume female roles, they also pick male roles, and the way they pick these roles reveals how they construct, align, and even contest traditional roles assigned to them. This sets our study apart from studies that privilege gender or treat gender one-sidedly as a dominant correlate over other correlates.

The dynamism in the construction of gender has been linked to conversation among men and women. However, studies in pragmatics into gendered relations as interactional accomplishments reveal interesting results and show that, in some cases, asymmetrical gender relations can also emerge in discourses that involve negotiations such as TV debates by Kotthoff. Implied within this understanding is the view that interactional gender studies have to do with "reconstructing the relevance of social difference in context" (Kotthoff 139). This is especially the case when gender is viewed, partly in the sense of Kotthoff following from Goffman, as a "category of the social order, and not the person". Emphasising the role of power in the process of categorisation, in this article we propose to go beyond the dichotomous or binary view to an understanding of gender as a hybrid concept (Pavlenko and Blackledge 13).

The two contrasting perspectives on gender can be related to two major phases in the development in gender studies: the *structural approach*, which focuses on gender as "a process embedded in social structure", and the *constructionist approach*, which gives "attention to the gendered dynamics of language, speech and everyday interaction" (Thorne 3–5). As both perspectives contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of gender, we have opted for a combination of the structural approach and the constructionist approach in order to see the parts in interplay and how they are revealed. We propose the post-structural perspective in order to illuminate ways in which particular gendered identities are "legitimized and devalued" in the context of the Bukusu circumcision ceremony.

We begin with a brief description of the data and setting, followed by an extension of discussions about literature related to gender studies, which are embedded in the context of recent poststructuralist perspectives. This is followed by a brief discussion of critical discourse analysis theory and its relevance. After a brief methodological discussion regarding the data, identification of linguistic means, analysis, and ethical considerations, the section that follows will show how participants use them. The next section, organised under themes and hence divided into two parts (construction of gender and gender contestations), will focus on how linguistic resources are used. This will be followed by the conclusion.

Theoretical specifications and method

Relatively deep research on gender, especially by the first and second wave of feminists, adopted a binary approach, with emphasis on why one gender was superior to the other. The feminist studies following socio-psychological and variational approaches aimed at investigating the "socially acquired characteristics which are perceived as masculine and feminine" (Talbot 7). With this hierarchical perspective, these studies presented men as dominant. Recently, however, studies adopting a poststructuralist approach, especially by third and fourth wave feminists, have tended to approach gender as a construct. Thus, these studies have focused on how men and women construct and negotiate their different roles.

The need for the change in approach has been articulated in literature. For instance, Mills, following Crawford, asserts that gender should be viewed as something which is enacted or performed and, thus, is a potential site of struggle over perceived restrictions in roles. This argument is relevant for this study as we examine how gender is negotiated within the patriarchal Bukusu setting. Our view is in line with Mills's argument, as we do not subscribe to the perception created within literature (especially in this context) that male and female members pick assigned roles passively. Rather, participants actively construct and negotiate their roles.

The argument above implies that even within a context such as the Bukusu circumcision ceremony, male and female members 'do' gender. This is especially the case when gender is viewed in terms of a continuum of roles or 'selves'. In line with this view, Coates argues that the 'selves' are located in discourses and that it is within these discourses that individuals perform their individual selves. Together with Coates, we argue that the performance of selves is an active process and that, even in cases where women pick their roles, they do so through negotiation that opens room for contestation. Coates's argument is important for this study because circumcision ceremonies are discourses that allow participants to access different roles. We therefore define these roles by looking at the different tokens of interactions.

This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) which helps to uncover the role of language in the definition of gender roles and power with emphasis on how the two social practices are negotiated in interactions. According to Phillips and Hardy, CDA is useful in order to analyse the connection between power and meaning and to grasp those processes by which social constructions lead to taken-for-granted social realities. Moreso, CDA explicitly explains the dynamics of power, knowledge, and ideology that surround discursive processes (Phillips and Hardy 20). For Fairclough (59), CDA focuses on the role of discourse in the way that the abuses of power are constituted and sustained. It explores the nature of persuasion, ideology, and conflict. Practically, CDA is useful for analysing how communicative strategies are shaped by and help shape contexts.

At the text level we shall look at what is represented in the text. Here, the analysis is descriptive and, in many ways, described as a form of linguistic analysis of texts in that texts are analysed by looking at the language used to identify "representations [and] categories of participant[s]" and how they construct identity or relations as participants (Fairclough 58), The second dimension of CDA is process analysis and emphasises the interpretation of data. The analysis objective is to unpack the message which refers to identifying the constructed "social identities", "social relationships", and "knowledge" and "concepts" and to understand and interpret the relationship between the data and its producers. The third dimension is social realities in a wider dimension, which involves the connecting of the discursive practices to the otherwise taken-for-granted social realities. With these three dimensions we are able to draw a clear relationship between language and society, discourse and society, and power and the invested ideologies.

Talk in interaction is the basis for Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA). In this article, we use foundations of CA in the analysis of data alongside CDA. Sacks's concern of talk in interaction is the nature of turn taking in interaction: how it is organised, how participants accomplish order or disorder, and the resources used in accomplishment. Sacks also talks about inferential order of talk. This is in reference to the kinds of cultural and interpretive resources participants rely on in order to understand one another. The four areas CA is based on are: adjacency and preference structures, the rules of turn-taking, the management of overlapping talk, and repair and correction in conversation.

While CDA allows us to focus on discursive structures and how they reveal the construction and negotiation of gender, CA helps us to structure our data and to see how the turn-taking machinery aids in the process of synchronisation of gender relations.

In this study we analyse the use of language by male and female participants in conversations that constitute the Bukusu circumcision ceremony, a bi-annual ceremony that marks the transition of young male members of the

community from childhood to adulthood. Four speakers—two female and two male—were selected on the basis of their regular participation in the ceremonies. At the time of recording their ages fell between 20 and 40 years. They were all born and brought up in Bungoma County. On separate occasions each of the four participants held conversations which were recorded.

Participants were approached by the researchers and asked to request their friends to take part in research that involved recording of conversations. We wanted to have a naturalistic setting and the person carrying the recorder was a participant in the conversations. The setting of conversations during the circumcision ceremony was chosen because conversations around ceremonies involving the rite of passage of male members have links to power and are, therefore, more likely to capture conversation as it happens in a natural setting and can create ideal opportunities for power relations to be negotiated—and even contested—by participants. Having sought their oral consent, the researcher gave the participants a voice recorder and asked them to switch it on at the onset of the conversation and off at the end. During analysis of data real names of the participants were not used.

Each conversation lasted between 30 minutes and one hour (all recorded materials added up to five hours in total). Since the conversations took place at night, their awareness of being recorded reduced constrain on their conversational behaviour as we thought night time would make them free to talk about a range of taboo-related topics. For instance, the interactants discussed a range of topics, including those they would not discuss in public, such as sexual relations. The study examined how the participants constructed and negotiated gender on all four occasions.

All conversations were transcribed by the researchers and analysed closely with focus on turn allocation, sentence initial and final features, questions, and imperatives, in order to find out how the participants construct and negotiate gender. As the participants used the Lubukusu language and we have included a translation as well as the transcription.

Negotiating gender in conversations

We now turn to the question of how gender is constructed and negotiated in the Bukusu circumcision ceremony. Organising the section following emerging themes, we begin with how gender is constructed.

Constructing gender

The following excerpt follows a discussion on what circumcision means. Below the interactants focus on the circumcision song sung in the morning shortly before the act.

A: *Sioyayo sie khukhwama ebukhocha*
Sibechanga na maana sina

The circumcision song from the uncle's place
Normally has which significance

B: *Sie khukhwama ebukhocha sili nende maana*
engali sana engali sana eli engali sana

That comes from the uncle's place has a lot of
Significance, a lot of it, it is a lot of it

Participant A begins his contribution with a question, which is completed by participant B; thus, the entire excerpt constitutes what Sacks calls an adjacency pair. With the locative *ebukhocha* (the uncle's side), the mother of the candidate is identified. With the locative the mother's side is metonymically constructed in terms one of the relations, i.e., the uncle. The locative also becomes part of what Antaki and Widdicombe call categorisation, i.e., the maternal side is identified with a key feature of the entire ceremony (the song), and this implies that the circumcision ceremony is only complete with participation from both sides: the paternal and the maternal sides. With the use of repetition, the significance identified by the word *maana* is constructed and highlighted.

In the recording from which the second excerpt was transcribed, the participants spoke about how people behave when they are offered a drink. In the excerpt they discuss what well-prepared beer implies.

A: *Mala akano kayile kafwana omukoyi mawe yo omwana*

And this is ripe (beer) it looks like the one prepared by the initiate's mother

B: *Kalaya kari eli mbo omwana alema embalu bulayi sana*

When ripe like this, it is that the initiate will endure the 'cut' very well

With *akano kayile* (this brew is ready), participant A constructs a category identified with the brewing of beer, and with *kafwana omukoyi mawe* (looks like the brewer is the mother), the female gender is revealed as a category of members of the community who brew beer. The success of the initiate is indicated by the quality of beer as shown in *Mala kalaya kari eli mbo omwana alema embalu bulayi sana* (The ripeness of the brew indicates that the initiate will bear the circumcision successfully). This excerpt serves to show the metonymic understanding of circumcision in terms of beer and the success of the ceremony in terms of the making of good beer. Other than showing the role played by the participants, the conversation also shows how, through conversations, participants self-categorise themselves in line with the roles they perform.

In the third excerpt Manguye (a pseudonym for a circumciser) counsels his son:
Saa hii kumwinyao mbao ta
Ne buli buri bwe ku-mao

There's no playing/joking now
If it is fear then that has been inherited from your mother

In this short excerpt, Manguye categorises women as a group of people who fear, by saying *nebuli buri bwe kumao* (if it is cowardice, it is your mother's). With *kumwinyao mbao* (no games), Manguye associates failure to withstand circumcision with games or a lack of seriousness. This lack of seriousness is further associated with fear. Thus, the female gender is constructed as a category of non-serious and cowardly people. As this example shows in conversations, participants within the Bukusu circumcision ceremony construct their roles and with these roles categories emerge. The categories are further negotiated and synchronised as we show in the next section.

Negotiating gender
The following excerpt follows a brief discussion on how people behave when they see beer (a feature of the circumcision ceremony). Below, one participant expresses his interest in drinking.
A: *Ese mbelesie busa sipoko nywelemo.*
Sendi nende chisa che khulinda tawe

Give me the cup. I want to drink from it.
I don't have time to wait

B: *Ewe wes ba anga basecha babasio kamalwa*
Ke mubasinde kabechanga kamanulu nebarengekhe
Bipoko lekhela bakhasi … nibo barengekha barie?

You be like fellow men. Circumcision beer
Is sweeter when taken from the pot
Leave the cups for women. How can they drink from the pot?

In the excerpt, the two interactants discuss beer and how one has to drink it. With the expression *basecha* (men), the male gender is constructed and with *kamalwa kabechange kamanulu nebarengekhe* (beer is sweeter when set in a pot), the male gender is identified as a category of people who drink from the pot. Participant B advises participant A not to be like women who drink beer from cups/tins as is indicated by *bipoko lekhela bakhasi* (leave the cups/tins for women). Thus, with *ese mbelesie busa sipoko nywelemo* (just give me a cup/tin I drink from it), participant A contextualises—at least according to B—the female gender identified as a category of people who drink beer

from a cup. That participant A offers to drink from the cup since he does not have time as indicated by *sendi ne chisa chekhulinda tawe* (I don't have time to wait), implies that certain circumstances necessitate the assumption of roles assigned to the female gender. Thus, B's contribution is meant to persuade A to follow laid down roles as indicated by *ba nga basecha babandi* (be like other men), and B backs up the argument by stating that wine taken from the pot is sweeter (indicated by *kabechanga kamanulu ne barengekhe*) and ordering that cups should be left to the female gender (as indicated by *bipoko lekhela bakhasi*). The final rhetorical question *nibo barengekha barie* (how can they drink it from the pot?) indicates a fixed social order and a prefabricated place for women.

In the next excerpt, three female participants are sitting outside the house as they listen to the father advising the candidate. Then they engage in the following conversation.

A: *Mala ese naiulilakho basecha nebapa lukalakala*
namwe Manguye kakhabolelanga omwana ali sina?

And have I ever heard that men ululate?
Or what was Manguye telling the initiate

B: *Si-kalakal si bakhasi, mayi wo mwana niye*
onyoanga nekapa sikalakala basecha balelo bali
nende siungu namwe?

Ululation is for women. The initiate's mother is the one
Who begins ululating. Are the men of today
Mad or what?

In the excerpt, the female participants are talking about what Manguye tells the candidate, his son. With the question *Mala ese naiulilakho basecha nepaba lukalakala?* (Have I ever had that men ululate?), participant A introduces the conversation. Embedded in the question is the contextualisation of the female gender as indicated by *nepaba lukalakala* (they ululate). This is a role that is traditionally assigned to women. Thus, through the categorisation based on what women are supposed to do, the female gender is revealed. The initial question therefore shows surprise at what Manguye, a man, tells his son as is shown in *namwe manguye kakhabolelanga omwana ali si* (or what has Manguye been telling the child). The fact that a man pledges to ululate after a successful ceremony is picked up by participant B who specifies the gender of those who ululate: *sikalakala sie bakhasi* (ululation is for women) and *mayi wo mwana niye onyoanga nekapa sikalakala* (the child's mother is the one that begins to ululate). B ends the contribution by criticism captured in the statement *basecha ba lelo bali nende siungu namwe* (are today's men mad or what?). This excerpt is an illustration of the many instances in the conversations around the Bukusu circumcision ceremony that show that gender is not just contextualised, but that men and women engage in negotiations through which they discuss, evaluate, and in some cases accept what is traditionally assigned to them. This negotiation goes on in the excerpt below where the third person picks the idea raised above and comments on it.

C: *Wakana sebaelewa sikila nekhupang sikalakala tawe.*
Ese mayi anga neyaba nebakheba omutuwa owange
yaani naba nekamariarani, buri bwaba bwechule mu-nda
mayi mala lasima bali mayi wo omwana alambisia
busa paka sichiriba sipe aba omwana kemile embalu

Perhaps they do not understand why we ululate
For me when they were circumcising my last-born son
I was very worried, my mother
And it was a must that the initiate's mother sits
Till the whistle is blown, an indication that the initiate has undergone the cut

D: *Ese mala engorwa nenyala bali khulambisia busa paka*
omwana keme embalu

I don't know if I can sit
Till the initiate endures that cut

B: *Mala onyala busa, babukusu balomanga bali*
okhukonia akhila okhusikha. Olanga balebe
bakhwikhasia, bakhutila engubo nende kumoyo.

The one that lays you is better than the one that buries you. You call relatives
You can. Bukusu people say
To be with you, to hold your dress and your heart

C: *Lekha khulinde mukha manguye muchuli*
Khumulolele …
okhachekhenga
babandu tawe okhakanyale?…

Let's wait and see Manguye's wife tomorrow
whispers
Always do not mock
Other people. Will you manage it?

In this excerpt participant C also levels their criticism framed as a reason why some men ululate: *Wakana sebaelewa sikila nekhupanga sikalakala tawe* (Maybe they do not understand why we ululate). Participant C cites a lack of understanding on the part of men as a reason why some men ululate, and she explains why women ululate using her own personal experience. According to participant C, ululation comes at the point when the circumciser blows the whistle, an indication for the successful completion of circumcising. The whistle therefore serves to break the worry that mothers experience as they wait to hear the news, as is shown in *naba ne kamariariani* (I was worried) and *buri bwaba bwechule munda* (I had a lot of worry). The whistle also signals the end of a period of obligatory waiting as shown in *mala bali lasima mayi wo mwana alambisie paka sichiriba sipe* (and that the candidate's mother must sit and wait for the whistle). Participant D picks the argument offered by C, i.e., that the child's mother must sit and wait. D seems to be a mother who has never experienced this, as is shown in *ese mala ngorwa nenyala bali mayi wo mwana alambisia paka sichiripa sipe* (I don't know if I can; that the child's mother must sit until the whistle is blown). Participant B focuses on D's inability and encourages her with *mala onyala busa* (you can just manage it). With the proverb *okukonia akhila okhusikha* (one that lays you is better than one that buries you), B constructs the Bukusu understanding of circumcision as an important element of reproduction, i.e., the child is a product of sex and circumcision prepares the child for reproduction through sex. With the argument that one is never alone, as shown in *olanga balebe bakhwikhasia, bakhutila engubo ne kumoyo* (you call relatives to be with you, to hold your cloth and heart), B further encourages participant D. C's contribution ends with *okhachekhanga babandu ta okhakanyale* (do not jest at others; will you manage it?), suggesting that Manguye's wife ridicules other

women and now it is her turn to act out the role. It is also a warning to the other participants not to deride others. This excerpt, like others, indicates that gender roles are not just picked, but that they are handed down through negotiations. The negotiation serves to encourage those who doubt their ability and to warn those who mock others.

Conversation data in this article, as well as many instances in the recordings, show that the Bukusu circumcision ceremony is punctuated by conversations that take place in many places.

Conclusion

In this article we have shown, first and foremost, that gender categories emerging in the context of the Bukusu circumcision ceremony are based on roles that individual members of the community are assigned or assign themselves. Secondly, the constructed roles are negotiated before being accepted and/or rejected. Examples in the article have shown that women are constructed as participants who brew local beer, sing the circumcision song the first time, and are by nature non-serious and cowardly. Women are further constructed as those who ululate and sit and wait for men to perform the actual circumcision. On other hand, men are by implication categorised as participants who taste and gauge the quality of beer, sing the circumcision song afterwards, and are brave. These categories are, as we have shown, fine-tuned or negotiated through the conversations with the aim of encouraging others, contesting what the next gender enacts, and criticising those who show a lack of commitment. In this article, we have raised the need for research on gender in the Bukusu context to get beyond essentialisation characterised by a hierarchical approach to gender. Instead, we propose that gender is best understood in the context of how it emerges through roles and how it is negotiated, accepted, and/or contested.

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Orality in Yorùbá films: A study of selected films of Akínwùmí Ìṣọ̀la

Abidemi Olusola Bolarinwa

Orality in Yorùbá films: A study of selected films of Akínwùmí Ìṣọ̀lá

Despite technological innovations, orality still forms one of the aesthetic elements in the new media such as home video films as a result of the unending interface between orality and the literacy tradition. Using intertextuality as an approach, in this article I examine orality in selected films of Akínwùmí Ìṣọ̀lá, with a view to showing how he uses verbal arts as a powerful tool for the transmission of cultural values. The selected films are *Saworoiɖe* (1999), *Agogo Èèwọ̀* (2002) and *Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà* (2005). The films were selected based on their preponderant featuring of oral narratives. My findings reveal that folktales, legends, songs, Ifá corpus, drumbeats, incantations, and panegyric are the Yorùbá oral genres that Akínwùmí Ìṣọ̀lá incorporates into his films. One can infer from Ìṣọ̀lá's films that there is an overlap between his oral culture and his creative work because culture is the active force that energises and drives the creative work. I conclude that Ìṣọ̀lá uses his creative ingenuity to re-awake and preserve Yorùbá oral tradition in his films, which points to the fact that oral literature has a continued vitality for contemporary society. **Keywords:** oral culture, preservation, intertextuality, Akínwumi Ìṣọ̀lá, film.

Introduction

In this article, I analyse the films *Saworoiɖe* (1999), *Agogo Èèwọ̀* (2002) and *Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà* (2005) (directed by Tunde Kelani) by the Nigerian scriptwriter Akínwùmí Ìṣọ̀lá, with a specific focus on the oral genres he utilises in these films, which I approach as a form of intertextuality. I argue that he uses verbal arts as a powerful tool for the transmission of cultural values in his films. Firstly, I explain what I mean by cultural values and intertextuality before providing a brief overview of existing studies on Yorùbá films. Then I proceed to analyse the ways in which various oral genres are utilised in the three films.

Terminology and relevant existing research

Film falls under the intangible aspect of human culture; it is an integral part of the expressive arts which comprise the literary arts, the plastic arts, and the music arts, hence it is taken as the set of traditions from which a person draws his or her sense of identity (Irele; Adélékè, "Culture, Art and Film in an African Society: An Evaluation"). From the foregoing, it can be observed that film as a cultural artifact reflects or shares the common meanings and values of a particular culture during a particular time. Therefore, more than any other entertainment form, films reflect the cultural and social experiences, and convey core cultural values of a society. Filmmakers write their stories from the common pool of the society where they belong. Different societies have several cultural practices which are mirrored/showcased to the world though films (Ekwuazi; Ògúnléye).

According to Johnson (99), "Film is the most effective medium for promotion, propagation and preservation of culture. Many cultures of the world have used its potential to their advantage". Adesanya asserts that the British, American, Chinese, and Indian cultures have influenced some Nigerians and people of other countries who enjoy watching their films. Also, the cultures and verbal arts of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria—that is, Yorùbá, Hausa, and Igbo—have been communicated to the world through Nigerian films.

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According to Durey (616), intertextuality is a coinage used by Julia Kristeva to discuss Mikhail Bhakti's texts as the interplay of writers, texts, and other texts. Abrams and Harpham (364) use intertextuality to signify the multiple ways in which any one literary text in fact consists of other texts, by means of its open or covert citations and allusions, its repetitions, and transformations of the formal and substantive features of earlier texts. This reveals the relationship between a writer, his works, and the influence of other works or texts on his style or content of his work. Shakib (123) defines intertextuality as the literal and effective presence in a text of another text. Allen opines that: "Text is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, in which several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (35).

Yamasaki (2) asserts that the core idea of the theory is that texts, such as plays, novels, and films are always related to other texts in a way that produces multiple meanings. Bazin(qtd in Barthes), while discussing the issue of intertextuality in film, enunciates that there is no doubt that all films were, in principle, works of authors who at a certain time and with certain technical and aesthetic means had managed to create certain distinctive cinematic artwork (Barthes). Drama and fictional texts such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, *Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà*, and *Lísàbi Agòngbo Àkàlà*—to mention but a few—have been adapted into films.

Adaptation, according to Hutcheon (6), is a form of intertextuality experienced differently by each reader. There are multiple sources available to scriptwriters; they may create an entirely new work from history, myth, pure fiction, or from his society; they may also decide to translate or adapt existing work which involves/requires modification, alteration, and recreation. The implication of this is that the scriptwriter is re-presenting the existing work in another form that will be most acceptable and accessible.

Hyginus Ekwuazi's work centres on the emergence of films in Nigeria and provides information on the film concept and reality in Nigeria. Manthia Diawara dwells on popular culture and oral tradition in African films. He affirms that African film makers have deviated from foreign film culture by making use of cultural elements within their culture. Onyero Mgbejume focuses on the historical development of Nigerian films with its associated problems. He concludes that, if the stakeholders could play the game according to the rules, the film industry in Nigeria would thrive. Olagoke Àlàmú ("Trends in the Development of Yorùbá Film: The First Decade (1976–1986)") focuses on trends in the development of the Yorùbá film within the first ten years of its existence between 1976 and 1986, and discusses extensively the historical, development, and classification of Yorùbá films, and also examines the aesthetics of the Yorùbá video films ("Documenting the Yorùbá Traditional Religious Festival for Posterity; Issues and Challenges"). Adélékè ("Audience Reception of Yorùbá Films: Ìbàdàn as a Case Study") carries out an analytical study of audience reception of Yorùbá films in cinema houses. He submits that psychological and sociological factors affect the attitude of audiences of Yorùbá films. Joseph Dàìró looks at the Yorùbá beliefs in predestination "*omì ìpín*" (water of destiny) where he uses a Yorùbá film drama, a weekly television broadcast which exploits the theme of predestination as a case study. Adekunle Yusuf focuses on Adébáyọ̀ Fálétí on screen by exploring the different stages of Fálétí's art from stage to television productions, and the era of home video films. He eulogises Fálétí as a dramatist, novelist, and poet.

Akintunde Akínyẹmí discusses oral literature, aesthetic transfer, and social vision in two Yorùbá video films. He centres the article on the playwright's use of elements of oral literature in depicting the socio-political realities of contemporary Nigerian society. Sèsan examines African aesthetics in two Yorùbá language video films. He investigates the origin of aesthetics from the ancient (classical) period to the contemporary period and examines the use and effect of aesthetics in the selected films. Ureke and Tomaselli's work focuses on the transformation of African cinema to film services. The duo explore how African cinema can be examined in terms of a film services framework which includes both industrial criteria and ideological shifts as a way of deepening screen media studies in search for a more holistic value chain framework. In my 2019 article, I study the recreation of oral poetic genres in selected Yorùbá home-video films. I conclude that, with the filmmakers' recreation of the Yorùbá oral poetic genre in their films, they have been able to initiate continuity and change in the use of the Yorùbá oral poetic genre.

Orality in three films of Akínwùmí Ìṣọ̀lá

This section has been organised according to genre. I indicate in which ways Ìṣọ̀lá has incorporated the following oral genres: folktales, legends, songs, Ifá corpus, drumbeats, incantations, and panegyric.

Folktales

Yorùbá people educate and entertain themselves though folktales and folktales represent the Yorùbá philosophical way of thinking and serves as a vehicle of self-expression (Taiwo 38). Folktales are also deep in ideas, rich in expression, and enthralling to hear. The cultural content and the inclusion of songs and wise sayings in folktales make them entertaining and informative. Among the Yorùbá people, folktales serve as cultural identity. It is a veritable tool for cultural transmission, character development, and historical education. Majasan (41) asserts that folktales are one of the most appropriate instruments of educating and acculturating the youth. Aligning with the position of Majasan, Awoniyi avers: "Stories, songs, myth and dancing were combined to stimulate the children's emotions, quicken their perceptions, and guide them as they explored, exploited and interpreted their environment. The objective of education was to make an individual an Ọmọlúàbí, to develop his personality and character and weave him (or her) harmoniously into the social fabric" (63).

Folktales cover a wide range of areas but the common types of folktales include fairy tales, fables, trickster tales, and why stories. They can reflect cultural, historical, geographical, mathematical, and political content and Yorùbá folktales are heavily influenced by the people's worldview and traditions. Instances of folktales occur in Ìṣọlá's films. There is an example from Ṣaworoide in which Adébòmí and his wife Adédigba narrate a folktale that has to do with a hunter and his dog to their son. According to them, whenever the hunter found himself in a difficult situation, he would summon his dog to come to his aid. When the dog was stolen, the hunter was devastated. The hunter succeeded in getting his dog back because of the cordial relationship that existed between the two of them. The lesson that can be deduced from the folktale that is embedded in the film is that nobody is an island and that we need one another. What the filmmaker is canvassing for is cordial relationship. Through the folktale, Ìṣọlá provides an avenue for African children to receive instruction through their mother tongue, thereby learning to love the mental heritage of their people and the natural and necessary expression of their heritage which is the language.

Legends

A legend is a story handed down through generations which is believed to be historical. Ọlátéjú (85) opines that legendary tales are about the lineage history of a particular family or personage as told orally by their progenitors, the bards, or as contained in their lineage poetry. The legends once lived many years ago as human beings in the various communities and were deified after death as gods and goddesses as a mark of appreciation for their contribution to the development of their people and community.

Legends are largely extended oral histories of some unusual humans—that is a filius or a filia figure—who are imbued with superhuman, heroic qualities, such as uncommon or unique carriage, courage, and pedigree. Legends are stories of men and women who contributed significantly to advancing the cause of their people. Examples of these legends in Yorùbá society are: Basọrun Ògúnmọlá of Ìbàdàn, Ṣódẹké of Egbaland, Ìyálóde Tinúubú of Ẹgbáland, and ẸfúnṣetánAníwúrà the Ìyálóde of Ìbàdàn land Dasylva (139).

In the film Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà, reference is made to the great warriors of Ìbàdàn land. These are Iba Olúyọlè, Iba Afọkọjà, Balógun Ìbíkúnlé, Basọrun Ògúnmọlá, and Ààrẹ Látoòsà whose heroic deeds were brought to the fore. An example of a legend from the film Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà is that of Balógun Ìbíkúnlé, a renowned farmer and warrior in Ìbàdàn land. He quickly rose to the rank of Balógun of Ìbàdàn during the reign of Baálẹ Oyèṣílé in 1851. Ìbíkúnlé's regime as the generalissimo of Ìbàdàn was characterised by many wars. Ìbàdàn won all the wars with his expertise and he was responsible for the large number of vassal states brought under Ìbàdàn's hegemony. BalógunÌbíkúnlé was very tireless in warfare and, as such, fought gallantly throughout the breadth and length of Yorùbaland. As a result of his military might and restlessness, he became dreaded and no town wanted his encounter. Ìbíkúnlé was therefore likened to a formidable power that shook the whole world of his time. He was, however, given a befitting burial as a legend. As a mark of respect to this great man, a major street in Ìbàdàn, from Mọ́kọlá round-about going through his palace to Orita-Mẹrin junction, was named after Ìbíkúnlé by the Ọyọ state government.

The legend Balógun Ìbíkúnlé, as reflected in the film Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà, is endowed with supernatural and heroic deeds like courage and unique carriage. He contributed immensely to advancing the cause of his people. Therefore, the story of this legend was used by the scriptwriter as a potent weapon to boost the morale of the society as well as an instrument to safeguard its communal security. It was also used in the film to implant or inculcate sound moral values in the minds of the people. The legacies of oral tradition are therefore documented in motion pictures by the film makers who are believed to be custodians of their societal history.

Songs

In Yorùbá tradition, almost no ceremony occurs without a corresponding song attached to it. Different rites of passage are marked with songs and dancing (Adéyemí 58). Singing songs during important ceremonies is a way of life and has become an undying cultural legacy of the people. Adéyemí (58) classifies Yorùbá songs into eight categories, namely: ceremonial (*orinayeye*), religious (*orinajeméṣìn*), children's (*orinomodé*), war (*orinogun*), work-reinforcement (*orinamúṣéyá*), folktale (*orinalò*), proverbial (*orinowe*), and invective (*orinèèbú*). Euba and Adéolá also agree that songs are described by their functions—that is, the singing is described by a function to which it is associated. Specific songs accompany specific occasions and songs are mainly accomplished with some musical instrument such as idiophones, chordophones, membranophones, and airophones.

Songs serve functional purposes. Entertainment comes first among the goals of performance. However, the use of songs for therapeutic, psychological, and emotional wellbeing is exemplified in lullaby, a kind of song used to lull children to sleep (Hamzat 163). It is also effective for the emotional wellbeing between lovers. The use of songs in fanning the ember of discord is also rampant and it can also incite groups and individuals against each other. There is fluidity in song in Yorùbá culture, and recitation could also be concluded with song.

Ìṣọlá used songs extensively in the selected films under study to drive home his points. In *Ṣaworoidẹ* and *Agogo Èèwọ̀*, he showcases nine proverbial songs, including the following examples from the films:

Wọ́n mà le ò
Wọ́n mà le ò
Àwọnìjọyè yìí mà le ò
Ajàntíele (Ṣaworo Idẹ)

They are terrible
They are terrible
These chiefs are terrible
Ajàntíele

Ẹ wá wayé ọṣelú
Òṣelú alábòsí
Wọnkowó ìlú sapò
Wọ́n fowó mutí (Agogo Èèwọ)

See the lot of the politicians
Our fraudulent politicians
They loot the treasury
They squander the money

The first song from the film *Ṣaworo Idẹ* is a protest song by the people of Jogbo town that has been under the servitude and tyrannical reign of the king Oníjogbo. They used the song to ridicule the indiscipline king and chiefs of the town; the song is used by the people of the town as a weapon to express their mind so as to curb the excesses and unruly behaviour of their leaders. The second song from the film *Agogo Èèwọ* is sung to expose their fraudulent leaders who squander the money meant for the people. The two songs expose the suppressive and subversive posture of rulers of Jogbo town on those they govern. The songs are therefore employed by the filmmaker as an accompaniment of the element of oral tradition in achieving the theme(s) of these films.

Ifá corpus

Scholars like Abímbọ́lá (*Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus*), Olátúnjí, and Oláléyé assert that Ifá is one of the most important Yorùbá deities. Ifá is believed to have been sent by Olódùmarè, the Almighty God, to use his profound wisdom to put the earth in order. The belief of the Yorùbá concerning the great wisdom of Ifá is manifested in some of the praise names they give to him. Two of such praise names, according to Abímbọ́lá (*Ifá*), are Akéré-finú-sọgbọ́n (The small person with a mind full of wisdom) and Akọni-lọ́ràn-bí-ìyekan-ẹni (He who gives one wise advice like one's relative) (9). It is this great wisdom of Ifá that gives him a high position among the other Yorùbá gods.

Without Ifá, the importance of the other Yorùbá gods would not be appreciated. If a man is being punished by the other gods, he can only know this by consulting Ifá. If a community is to make sacrifice to one of its gods, it can only know this by consulting Ifá. Thus, Ifá is the only active mouthpiece of Yorùbá traditional religion taken as a whole. As a mouthpiece, Ifá serves to popularise the other Yorùbá gods, and to immortalise them (Abímbọ́lá, "The place of Ifá in Yorùbá tranditional religions"3–4). Ifá co-ordinates the work of all the gods in the Yorùbá pantheon with his great wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. He serves as a 'middleman' between the other gods and the people, and between the people and their ancestors. He is the mouthpiece and the public relations officer of all the other Yorùbá gods (Abímbọ́lá, "Place of Ifá" 4). The wisdom and understanding of Ifá is believed to cover not only the past but also the present and the future. According to Olátúnjí (111), by consulting Ifá, the Yorùbá find meaning and purpose in the past, the present, and the future. In traditional Yorùbá society, the Yorùbá consult Ifá before they do anything important and in all the major affairs of life: with the birth of a new child, in sickness, in contemplating a journey, in choice of a life partner, and at any other important turn in their lives.

This is an example from Òtùá méjì in *Ṣaworoidẹ*:

Aṣọ funfunní sunkúnaró
Ìpìlẹ̀ ọrọ̀ ní í sunkúnekejì tan tantan
Adía fúnAdérìnmọ́kunọmọ oní alánàkánesu
Ijọ́ tí ń mẹkúnsèráhùn ire gbogbo
Bókanbá yo nínú ibú a bọ́nà wá
Ire gbogbo ọ̀ mọ̀ wá Jogbowá ò ìre gbogbo
Bá a bá damisórí a bẹ̀ṣẹ wá
Ire gbogbo ọ̀ mọ̀ wá Jogbowá ò ìre gbogbo

White cloth longs for indigo dye
The first part of a statement cries for the second
Divination was performed for the offspring of Alánàkánesu
The day he was crying for all good things
When one comes from the deep it comes straight to the path
May all blessings come to Jogbo
When water is poured on the head it runs down to the feet
May all blessings come to Jogbo

As an age-long practice in Yorùbáland, Ifá is normally consulted before a king is enthroned but in *Ṣaworoidẹ* the reverse is the case because the kingmakers install a king without consulting Ifá and without performing the necessary rites. Due to this act, the town is witnessing a lot of problems that had not been seen before. The chief in the end consults the Ifá oracle for a way out of the pandemonium that the people are experiencing. The Babaláwo offers prayers of blessings for the town of Jogbo and normalcy returns to the community. In the film Ṣaworoidẹ, Ìsọ̀lá makes it clear that Ifá literary corpus is the repository of Yorùbá culture inside which the Yorùbá perception of their own historical expertise and understanding of their environment can be ascertained. In relating belief practices to films, Ìsọ̀lá makes selective use of resources from the people's oral tradition.

Drumbeats

Graphic or phonic substances are not the only means of communication; we can also communicate through semiotic-symbols or signals. One of the means of communication among the Yorùbá is the talking drum. To understand the signal of any talking drum, one must be familiar with the language of the immediate community. A person without the knowledge or understanding of the Yorùbá language will find it difficult to interpret the signal of the Yorùbá talking drum because sounds produced by the drum would not be meaningful. The language of the drum differs from human speech in that the latter is articulated but the former is not. The implication of this is that drum sounds have a lower level of structural distinctiveness than the human language per se. A drum is manipulated by man to produce sound initiating speech tones. Therefore, the message given by the drum is always ambiguous because it is based on tones and rhythms (Ajayi, "The Talking Drum" 575). The Yorùbá drum performs both rhythmic and communicative functions. It may also serve as therapy for troubled minds and may give warning, signal danger, or mobilise people to do some kind of work. A lot of people find it very difficult to

interpret the obscure message of the drum because of the narrow means by which the drummer communicates his thoughts, which are merely tones and rhythms.

Due to the fact that only few people can decipher the language of the drum, there is ambiguity or multiplicity of meanings. In Yorùbá traditional society, drumming is a family profession, which requires skill and perfection that cannot be attained without proper tutelage (Ajayi, "Talking Drum"). Therefore, a son in Yorùbá society whose father is a drummer learns the art from childhood from his father and thereafter inherits his father's skill. In the contemporary Yorùbá society, drumming is no longer the profession of the Àyàn family; interested individuals can now learn the art of drumming.

In *Ṣaworoidẹ* when Adébòmí and Adédigba are mysteriously killed by an unidentified person, the drum is used magically to communicatively commandeer Àyánníyì to come back home as a matter of urgency because he is the only living person in the Àyàn family that can unravel the mysteries that surround the Àyàngalú drum. He is summoned thus:

Àyánníyì súré tetetewá
Àyánníyì súré tetetewá
Ikú ò dójó aárùn kò dọsù
Ikán á jorí, ìdin a jẹdọ̀
dí tobìnrin ń fìlèkẹ̀ sí
Nilẹ̀ á fi jẹ
Òtítọ ọrọ nìyí

Àyánníyì come quickly
Àyánníyì come quickly
One day the earth will swallow us all
Termites will consume the head
And maggots the liver
The buttocks that woman adorns with beads
Becomes food for mother earth
Alas the bitter truth

On hearing the drumbeat, Àyánníyì deciphers the hidden message embedded in the communication and immediately leaves all he is doing and heads home to obey the clarion call. Ìṣọlá uses drumbeats to showcase Yorùbá cultural values and to establish the parable of the drum as the voice of the people. He therefore uses traditional elements symbolically and metaphorically instead of being mirrored slavishly. These therefore appeal to the viewers and win their passion for the filmic text.

Incantations

Works on incantations include those of Oníbon-Òkúta, Fábùnmi, Fádípè, Bacom, Beier, Ògunbà, Olátúnjí, and Ọ̀pẹ́fèyítìmí. According to Olátúnjí, incantation is a restricted poetic form, cultic and mystical in its expectations (139). Olátúnjí further affirms that the moment incantation is obtained it becomes an individual's personal property. It is therefore guarded jealously by the owner, for to reveal it to others is to lay oneself bare to the attack of foes. Incantation can be chanted or recited and entails uttering of words according to a formula and in a set order. For an incantation to be effective, certain taboos should be strictly adhered to and it may be necessary to take some actions such as tasting certain concoctions or chewing alligator pepper which serves as a catalyst. In Yorùbá society, four beliefs underlie the use and practice of incantation: the belief in sympathies, belief in the magic of names, belief in origin, and belief in the magic power of the spoken word. Bámgbóṣé classifies incantations into five types, namely, *ọfọ̀*, *ọgèdè*, *àyàjọ́*, *aásán*, and *ohùnifá*, which are all incantatory poetry. Ọ̀pẹ́fèyítìmí, under terminological underpinning, re-classifies incantations into four types. He asserts that *Ohùn Ifá* is not a genre per se, but rather a combination of all the verbal legacies which Ọrúnmìlà left behind for his followers (213). Incantation, therefore, is a personal poem, closely associated with a user who directs the powers he has invoked to carry out his desires and observing all the taboos and rites associated with the incantation. Below is an example of incantation in Ìṣọlá's film *Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúra*:

Àgbẹ́rọ́ niikún ń gbọ́wọ́
Àrùmasọ̀ nisìgìdì ń rugbá ọṣẹ
Ẹnìkankii síwọ́ lumí
Ẹnìkan kì i fẹ̀sù jòkòó
Afọpokii rọwọ́ họrí
Àrí tagìrì nitejọ̀
Bínà bá rómi a gbàgbé ilé tó fẹ́ẹ́ jó
Bẹ́tù bá rómi a gbàgbé ariwo tó fẹ́ẹ́ pa
Ó yá mádàà ọwọ́ rẹ wá

The squirrel's hands are forever suspended
Sìgìdì forever carries the calabash soap
No one raises hand to beat excreta
No one sits on Èsù
Palm oil maker cannot have hand to scratch her head
One cannot but panic on seeing a snake
Fire forgets the house it wishes to burn
Immediately it sights water
Gunpowder forgets the sound it wishes to make
Immediately it sights water
Now surrender the cutlass in your hand to me

After the demise of Àwẹ̀ró, Ìtáwuyì decides to kill Ẹfúnṣetán with a cutlass as revenge for losing his two female friends and confidant to the cold hand of death in quick succession through Ìyálóde. Ẹfúnṣetán, being a powerful woman, recites the incantations above to render Ìtáwuyì powerless and to subject him to her will through the power of the spoken word. She also wards off the evil designs of Ìtáwuyì and becomes victorious. One can infer from the incantation made by Ẹfúnṣetán that incantation is closely associated with a user who directs the powers she has invoked to carry out her own desires. Through his work, Ìṣọlá has therefore established the Yorùbá belief in the magic power of the spoken word.

Panegyric

Panegyric, a form of praise poem, is universal and has been explored by critics such as Abbott, Sweet, Sperl, Smith, and Finnegan respectively. Finnegan says that panegyric, in its specialised form, is: "[…] a type of court poetry and one of the most developed and elaborate poetic genres of Africa. It seems to go with a particular ethos, stress on royal or aristocratic power, and an admiration for military" (111).

In the film *Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà* the court poet eulogises the king and the chief with the praise name of the Ìbàdàn indigene thus:

Ìbàdàn a gbọ́ sásá ogunmásàá
A gbọ́ yàyà mọ́ yà
Ìlú Ọjọ́, ilú Àjàyí, ilú Ògúnmọ́lá Olódògbokẹ̀rí lójú ogun
Ìlú tó gbeoníle tó gbealejò
Ìbàdànmajà majà tó fi kárá iwájú ḷẹrú
Ọmọ a jòrosùn, ọmọ a jẹgbínyọ́
Ọmọ a fikarahunfọ́ri mu
Ìbàdànkii bá ni sọrẹ́ àì múnirogun
Ìbàdànbeèrè kí o tó wọ ọ́
Níbi olè gbé ń jàreolóhun
Ìbà lọ́wọ́ òkè Ìbàdàn
Kò síluú tó lè fojú diá
Fúlàní dán an wò ó tẹ́ tẹsintẹsin
Bẹ́ẹ̀ agbàrá ẹyin akin yìí náani

Ìbàdàn that heard the sound of war and refused to run
They heard that war was close by but not bothered
The town of Òjó, the town of Àjàyí
The town of Ògúnmólá the valiant at war front
The town that is hospitable to the indigenes and strangers
Ìbàdàn that refrained from fighting until the predecessors were enslaved
The offspring of he that ate Òro as supper and ate snails to satisfaction
The offspring of him that uses shell to make pap
Ìbàdàn is not a friend to him who doesn't take him to war
Ìbàdàn where you ask before you enter
A place where the thief is exonerated
Homage to Ìbàdàn hill
Any town who dares Ìbàdàn's mettle will regret such boldness
The Fúlàní who tries it was disgraced together with his horse
Due thanks to you great warriors

In the panegyric of Ìbàdàn, the chanter reveals the prowess in warfare that the Ìbàdàn people are known for. He also accentuates the audaciousness of the Ìbàdàn people; they are eulogised as fearless, bold, and tactical at the war front. The panegyric no doubt stirs pride and confidence in the king and his chiefs who are Ìbàdàn indigenes because their fierceness in battle was brought to the fore. Panegyric is deliberately used by Ìṣọlá in *Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà* for aesthetics and for arousal of strong emotions.

Conclusion

In this article I have examined orality in three of Ìṣọlá's films, with a view to showing how he uses verbal arts as a powerful tool for the transmission of cultural values in his films. I found that folktales, legends, songs, Ifá corpus, drumbeats, incantations, and panegyric are the Yorùbá oral genres that Ìṣọlá incorporates. One can infer from Ìṣọlá's films that there is an overlap between his oral culture and his creative work because culture is the active force that energises and drives creative work. I conclude that Ìṣọlá uses his creative ingenuity to re-awake and preserve Yorùbá oral tradition in his films, which points to the fact that oral literature has a continued vitality for contemporary society.

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Variations in the application of the components of the oral performance to Yoruba chants

Gboyega Kolawole

Variations in the application of the components of the oral performance to Yoruba chants

It is common knowledge in oral literature that every oral form is naturally performed. The components of the oral performance are, namely, the text, the oral artist, the audience, music, and histrionics. Though these components apply to the performance of all oral forms, whether narrative or poetic, they are employed in diverse manners in consonance with the nature of the oral form being actualized. This is called the context of performance. The aim of this article is to do an inquiry into the contextual varying of the use of the components of the oral performance among oral traditional forms with emphasis on Yoruba oral traditional chants. My objectives are to verify how the nature of each chant dictates the degree to which the components can be applied to it in context. In other words, the prominence or unimportance of any component of the oral performance in each poetic form is determined by the rules surrounding the actualization of the subgenre. This survey is delimited to the Yoruba oral poetic forms classified as chants. The first is the context-restricted group that limits the use of the components of the oral performance by its own rules, thus making any deviation a taboo. The second group comprises forms that were originally context-bound but have begun to acquire secular features thus deemphasizing their invocatory worth and metamorphosing into entertainment subgenres. The third is the class of poetic forms that were originally secular. They have not only remained so, but have also absorbed the many influences of modernity. The data for analysis constitutes 13 oral forms which have been transcribed and translated from Yoruba to English. (Yoruba is one of the indigenous languages or mother tongues of Nigeria.) The oral performance theory which enumerates the variables listed above and functionalism which reveals the essence of the contextual applications of those components are handy for the theoretical framework and grounding of this article. Further, the oral-formulaic theory will be applied to chants in the first group above because their potency is tied to their formulaic structure. **Keywords:** oral performance, artist, text, audience, music, histrionics, Yoruba modern oral chants.

Introduction

In this article I investigate the variations in the adaptation of the ingredients of the oral performance to Yoruba oral traditional chants. The components of the oral performance are the text, the oral artist, the audience, music, and histrionics. Though they apply to the performance of all the poetic forms, they are not used to the same degree; their application is informed by the individuality or background of the oral traditional poem. In other words, varying standards and procedures surround the performance of each chant. 'Yoruba' refers to the group, culture, and language of more than 44 million people predominantly living in the southwest of Nigeria and other parts of Nigeria and on the fringes of Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Ivory Coast.

In this study, upon its findings on the variations, I posit that there are three categories of poetic forms in the context of the oral performance. The first is the context-restricted group that limits the use of the components of the oral performance, by its own rules, thus making any deviation a taboo, sometimes with consequences. These forms are Ìyèrè ìfa (*Ifa* divination chant), Èsù pípè (*Esu* invocatory chant), ofò (incantation), ìrèmòjé (hunters' funeral dirge), and òkú pípè (funeral dirge). The second group consists of forms that were originally context-bound but have begun to acquire secular features, thus deemphasizing their invocatory worth and metamorphosing into entertainment subgenres. They include Sàngó pípè (Sango invocatory chant), Oya pípè (Oya invocatory chant), ìjálá

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(hunters' chant), and *èsà egúngún* masquerade (ancestral) chant. The third is the collection of poetic forms that were originally secular in the sense that they have no leaning with any divinity, they have remained so, and have also absorbed the many influences of today's vicissitude. These are *oríkì orílè* (lineage praise chant), *rárà* (praise chant), *ekún ìyàwó* (nuptial chant), and *etíyerí* (satirical chant). This work is delimited to the 13 oral forms that belong to the chant mode.

The fieldwork that produced the current qualitative data used in this analysis was done in conformity to principles of collectanea—a pre-fieldwork activity of sourcing for competent artists; the actual fieldwork activity of recording the performances on audio devices; and the post-fieldwork activity of transcribing, translating, and analysing the data or performances. The data used in this discourse are part of the mass used for my doctorate which was awarded in 1990. Vansina's principle of the verbal testimony of the chain of transmission was adopted throughout the fieldwork activities. This was applied to both individual and group informants or performers. The technique of analysis is content analysis.

Any oral text is so described because its life is founded on its performance. Considering the quantum of oral performances recorded so far, in contrast to the diverse repertoire of myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, invocatory chants and songs, panegyrics, funeral dirges, lullabies, and topical songs, there is no gainsaying that the oral performance as the soul of the oral text has been underutilized for a long time. But the situation has changed recently as scholars have begun to make the conscious effort to address the prominence of the oral performance by taking folklore out of its relegation. When African folklore received any attention at all, it was from scholars who were more interested in the taxonomy and the functions of its diverse repertoire; little or no attention was given to the actualization of the oral text by ethnologists like Edward Tylor and James Frazer, who carried out the pioneer exploration of Africa culture, and also anthropologists like Claude Levi-Strauss. Many theories were propounded for the purposes of doing meaningful research in the new area. The historical-geographical, the historical-reconstructional, the functional, and the psychological aptly took care of the forms and purposes of the subgenres of African oral literature but the germane role of performance was ignored. However, Milnum Parry, Albert B. Lord, and David Bynum realized the lacuna and propounded the oral-formulaic theory. W. E. Abraham, Dan Ben-Amos, and Alan Dundes, among others, brought to the limelight the often-taken-for-granted importance of the oral performance. Isidore Okpewho's contribution is special here. He has consciously and consistently geared his efforts towards finding a strong foothold for the oral-formulaic theory, using his vast field experience. His efforts are complemented by the fieldwork of other experienced scholars such as Eldris B. Makward, Chukwu Azuonye, Enoch S. T. Mvula, Ropo Sekoni, and Liz Gunner. On her part, Ruth Finnegan laments the fronting of "generalized theory" (40) by anthropologists above fieldwork and the analysis of the data collected.

The oral performance theory readily applies to this analysis because its components are in focus and are to be applied to the 13 oral forms employed in this article. The oral-formulaic theory is a natural theory to use because most of the context-restricted oral forms are frozen in content for the sake of potency or to deter proliferation of content. The functionalist theory is an inevitable tool for analysis as it posits that folklore has four functions which collectively hold society together and ensure its survival. The adherence to the rules that guide the performance of oral forms strengthen society just as the violations of the taboos and totems threaten it. This applies most prominently to the context-restricted group of chants which are invocatory in purpose and design and must be followed to the letter to experience its potency. On the other hand, deterrence naturally erupts when a taboo is broken; for example, the invocation to *Èsù pípè* is not chanted when the sun is at its peak as death may strike even the surrogate of the same godhead chanting it. The chants in the group have outright medicinal value and they are used for spiritual healing. This sustains the functionalist approach.

The performer or the oral artist
The marked difference between the oral and the literate poet is the medium of delivery. While the latter leaves the words to be decoded by the reading public, the former realizes the words through concrete actions, thus bringing the message directly to a watching and listening public, the well-informed audience. Okpewho duly acknowledges Malinowski's seminal insight and in re-wording it, he reaffirms that "Performance is the lifeblood of the oral art, and a proper understanding of that art must take due account of the context […] of its creation" (*A portrait of the artist as a scholar: an inaugural lecture delivered at the Faculty of Education Lecture Theatre, University of Ibadan, Thursday, 18 May, 1989* 24). This is to be replicated, for emphasis, in a subsequent discourse where he illustrates

the pre-eminence of performance ("The Primacy of Performance in Oral Discourse"). In an equally apt manner, Malinowski opines that "the text […] is extremely important, but without the context it remains lifeless" (24).

The importance of the style of delivery is confirmed in Finnegan's aphoristic statement that "[t]he bare words cannot be left to speak for themselves" (15). This assertion is corroborated by Tedlock's view of the impossibility of translating style even when words have been converted from one linguistic medium to another (40). Finnegan and Tedlock's views and the related opinions of other folklorists negate Levi-Strauss's structuralist view or Fischer's psychoanalytic view which lays undue emphases on content at the expense of its verbalization. It becomes imperative, in Okpewho's words, to consider "the text of performance in the circumstances from which it is derived" (*The Oral Performance in Africa* 17).

Many scholars have argued that the essence of folklore is its verbalization. Dundes hardly hesitates therefore to denounce those literary critics who elevate the text and relegate its context (22). It is also in sharp reaction to this that Wilgus provocatively and ironically entitles his article "The Text is the Thing"; he defines the text from the point of view of the indispensable nature of context which itself determines the texture of the text (240). Ong's fundamental question "What is the text, oral or written?" (*Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* 10) corroborates Wilgus's definition of the oral text. It is in consideration of the variables just mentioned that Wilgus pleads with deviant folklorists to address the issue of performance. A lonely person of the oral performance is such that every performance of a particular piece produces a new text. This applies even to near frozen poetic forms like *Ìyèrè Ifa/Ese Ifá* among the Yoruba. Even when the same odù (*Ifá* chapter) emerges twice, the client is not the same, even when there is an apparent similarity of purpose. Even though *ofò* or incantation is expected to be rendered with precision, the tone and tempo may vary. Further, the performance of the same text by ten performers will be equal to ten actualizations of one text because the nuances of extra-linguistic gestures will vary. The reason is that each performer is likely to have a peculiar emotional interface with the content. Variation in the performance of the same text does not necessarily lie in word content but in certain unconscious factors of performance by the artist. This is attested to in Abdulkadir's description of oral poetry as "open-ended" because "at different performances, the singer may add new elements" (24). A discussion of the factors of performance and how they are varied to match the circumstances of the oral poetic type is necessary at this point.

The nature and mode of the oral performance have been the concern of various scholars, including Okpewho, who has devoted two classic books—*Myth in Africa* and *The Epic in Africa*—to the elements or resources of the oral performance. Despite their differences in the use of terminology, Innes, Okpewho, and Azuonye agree that the oral performance is either spoken, sung, or recited; Azuonye further emphasizes the four principles of "functionality", "authenticity", "clarity", and "creative variation" in any oral performance (42). The performer, the narrative images tapped from the related culture, and the audience are major elements in the oral performance. Other elements are the artist's "objectifying of the action" (42), his emphasizing of the message by repetition, and his use of bodily gestures to complement the verbal codes to express other aesthetic elements.

The oral performer is not the Western-oriented actor who is on stage to render his memorized lines after which he takes his exit, nor is the place of performance the proscenium structure in which a curtain is drawn between actor and audience, and lighting parameters are calculated to achieve ambient lighting using a luminaire (Oni 22). The performer is that traditional and historical artist who performs certain ceremonial rituals as a priest, surrogate, or whoever is involved in a spiritual enactment as a devotee. The traditional performer is also the poet who uses as his repertoire the vast material of the culture in which he is performing and to which he belongs. He can be construed as an "alternative to traditional historiography", to borrow the words of Johnson (51). He is bound by certain conventions dictated by both the poetic sub-genre he performs and by the cultural milieu in which he is performing. A lonely person in a secluded place at the height of the night recounting a piece of *ofò* (incantation) for a benevolent or malevolent purpose is a performer of the verbal art, even when the text is essentially secretive like the following:

Onírèkú-n-kú kii fidí bale
Ki àyè o mo gbà á
Agbon lomo àgbonin
Àwònìn lomo Olóta
Ìlébè lomo Olóku
Olápémi làá pe
Àlàjàlà làá pébò
Olówò maje kí òwò ó kú
N là á peeyan
Ifá bá n wèèyàn ma jéèyan okú
Kí wón ba n kó gbogbo ire ayé tèmi (Owolabi I)

Onireku-n-ku's chest never touches the ground
Without the ground accepting it
The wasp is the child of Agbonin
Awonin is the child of Olota
Ilebe is the child of Olokun
Olapemi is what we call always
Any sacrifice is shared according to Alajala
The spirit of trading forbids the death of trading
That is the name we call man
Ifa let people multiply, forbid their death
Let them give to me all my life.

The performer of the lines above is seeking blessings and protection using magic as a catalyst, while also praying for fellow humans to partake of the supernatural benevolence. There is an element of syllogism in the approach; because the benevolence is given to others (premise) he cannot be denied it (conclusion) The text is expectedly secretive because incantation is believed to be a selfish tool. The woman with a wailing child strapped to her back for which she sings lullabies to lure it to sleep so that she can minimize the distraction from her chores is no less a performer. In *èsà egúngún*, the Jénjù masquerade of the Alípini clan of the Oyo Kingdom with his group of cane bearers and the ensemble of drummers that trail him is the obligatory performer. The artist can be the *adósù* or surrogate in *Sàngo pípè* and *Oya pípè*, the lead mourner in *ìrèmòjé*, or the solo chanter in *òkú pípè*. Bascom adds that the time and place of performance determine the nature of the performance (334). It is probably to corroborate these ideas that Okpewho in his study of *The Ozidi Saga* attempts "to marry aesthetic and sociological insights" (*Oral Performance* 14) because "Literature and Sociology must fuse" (8). In view of these peculiar demands of the oral performance, it becomes odd to define oral poetry without due consideration of "the fervid atmosphere of the open performance" (*Epic in Africa* 52). Nor is it proper to analyse oral texts in isolation from the context of actualization.

The text

One peculiarity of the oral text is its complex, changing nature during performance, which separates it from the literary text, a fixed text. This raises the question of authorship of the text. An outstanding feature of any oral performance is the fluidity and malleability of the text. The volume of his text and its power to give the audience a high degree of upliftment is the mark of the eminence of the oral artist. The oral artist often has a pre-performance text which he rehearses at home and then the real performance text which is the product of a heavily altered version of the former. The determining factor here is the nature of the audience he encounters. His pre-performance text is easily sub-merged by his performance text, which is usually the result of the spontaneity of his reaction to the diverse histrionics of the audience before him. This is besides the high voice quality and the mellifluous voice, which he should possess: "A charming voice", Sekoni contends, greatly effects "aesthetic harmony" (141).

Ngal raises a number of questions: "Who is the Creator? The people? The artist? Or both at the same time?" (335). The importance of the question is better realized in the elasticity or malleability of the oral text in various ways such as "thematic addition, subtractions or rearrangement", to allude to Tedlock's terms (285). The non-

fixity of the oral text is itself determined by the authorial empathy which makes the artist side with the hero and denounce the villain in oral narratives. Bowra therefore comments on such a poet who can "indulge emotions and sentiments and add greatly to the richness and variety of this poetry" (32). Obafemi's findings on the Okura expatiate for us the probability of a single but lengthy performance involving ritual, masque dramaturgy, and dance for entertainment (6).

The non-fixity of the text is also the result of the dual role of the poet as both the performer of the text and the critic of some distinguished members of the audience. The experience shown below confirms Basgoz's assertion. As he puts it, the performer "discloses his opinion, ideas and values. He praises and condemns persons, institution, human relationship of the past and present like a social commentator" (7). These complementary remarks are so described as internal digression because they are not in the pre-performance text which the author has rehearsed; they are the results of his encounter with the audience. Among the Yoruba chant repertoire, the text of *ijálá* (hunters' chant), which has metamorphosed into a near secular text over time; *rárà*; *oríkì bòròkìní* (praise chant); *ekún ìyàwó* (nuptial chant); and *etíyerí* (satirical chant)—which are essentially secular—are good matches for the malleable, elastic kind of text. In contrast, religious oral poetic forms such as *Ìyèrè ìfa*, *Èsù pípè*, and *ofò*—which are known as frozen forms—will not allow this editing because it will tell on the potency of the performance.

The case of Owolabi Aremu, an Oyo *ijálá* artist reported by Olatunji, is quite interesting as a watershed. The artist who was paid to entertain the visiting governor of the state impulsively did a turnabout to express his bitterness over the negligent posture of his government (Olatunji 194). This was an unusual situation of the artist's preference of satisfying the taste of the audience to the distaste of the patron. The sponsor of the performance was unsuccessful in dictating the tune, so he readily stopped the piper's own 'deviant' tune; the elderly *ijálá* artist was immediately harassed out of the hall.

The maltreatment of the performer as experienced by Owolabi Aremu would have been a taboo in a different context of performance where sacred texts are enacted on behalf of the community. The Yoruba *gèlèdé* poet, either of the Ketu area or of Oyo North, is essentially a satirical poet and his text is basically dominated by vituperations, lampoons, and even curses directed towards evildoers, whether highly placed or of low origin. He is believed to have been endowed with psychic powers and therefore cannot be harmed or hounded by any controlling character who feels hurt. *Gèlèdé* is a more ritualistic brand of *èsà egúngún*. Every *gèlèdé* performance is a ritual process for socio-religious cleansing, in which case the text is non-elastic. As for *èsà egúngún*, the texts of masquerades that are performed for cleansing purposes, they remain reverent as in *Olóòlù* and *Jenyò* in the Oyo area and *agemo* in the Ijebu area. But the texts of the *eégún aláré* are fluid and audience-influenced because they are an entertainment group as indicated by their title.

The assertion of the sacred text in a performance is confirmed by Okpewho's fieldwork on Aniocha storytellers in the defunct Bendel State where a raconteur claimed to have been spiritually bestowed his *opanda* (box-harp) and a Sunjata narrator traced his *Kora* (guitar) to a spiritual origin (*Oral Performance* 7). Even among the Hausa, the Bori surrogate is believed to be under spiritual guidance when he metamorphoses into a trance just as the Yoruba Sango surrogate's hypnotic state is considered spiritual. Subsequent pronouncements made by artists in this state of trance are deemed to be prophetic and authoritative. Their texts in general are fixed and reverent. Texts of this character are reverberations of the oral-formulaic theory; they are structured and designed to achieve a target upon their rendition. An example chant is incantation which relies on collocation and repetition for its potency. Vansina classifies texts of this type as belonging to the "esoteric traditions" (34). So far it has been established that the artist has at best two texts, the first being the pre-performance text, which he rehearses prior to the performance, and the second being the audience-prompted text, which is the consequence of the audience-artist encounter and reactions.

But the idea of elasticity of the text does not cut across all 13 Yoruba oral poetic forms within the current delimitation. This yardstick can only be applied at varying degrees. Gizelis identifies three major types of creation: "re-creation", "limited creation", and "real creation" (167). In my fieldwork, diverse encounters match the descriptions of Gizelis on the higher side; we can easily distinguish among these three-ritual performance, secular performance, and other performances that fall between the first two.

In the rituals of community or personal worship, the performer must not add or subtract, for it is either forbidden or it renders void the prevalent purpose of worship. 'Amankulor describes this situation as that of "limited creation". He reveals the spiritual repercussions of a superfluous deletion or addition of the text by the artist from the main concern in the Ekpe masquerade ritual performance among the Igbo (122). Ritual poets

cannot and must not create their own texts because of the peculiarity of purpose. There are replications in the Yoruba setting for illustration here. There are the *orò* purification rites, the *Èsù* invocatory performance, and the annual *Egungun* propitiatory rites as performed by the *Olóòlù* and *Jenyò* of the Oyo area, the *agemo* of the Ijebu area, the *gèlèdé* ensemble of Oke Ogun, and the Ketu of Benin Republic. For the illustration of texts that are forbidden to be edited by the performer, *Èsù* invocatory chant is handy:

> *Akinkèhindé baba sûré wá o*
> *Ki o wa gborò lódò omo*
> *Otékoyodé, ológbòrò kùmò*
> *Kudu lópòópó, bó o de bo de bó o*
> *Bá enu odi nì í gbé roko*
> *Èsù ti o lohun ni tà lágbo,*
> *Baba ò lóhun tà lágbò, ewó ebo ni n wá*
> *Bo ba si kòró ebo, yo di kùuúkù ruru*
> *Kente orun, èpè ji ni kùtùkùtù daşo eèèmò bolè* (Esubunmi I)

> Akinkeinde, father hasten
> And collect money from your child
> Otekayode possessor of the big cudgel
> The short one on the street
> Who farms at the outskirts of the town
> Esu who has no single purpose among the crowd besides collecting sacrifices
> When he has collected the money for sacrifice, he makes ready his fist
> The trouble of heaven who awakes to foment trouble.

In the above chant type, the performer should not add to or delete from the text, it is performed in a low tone, it must not be recited past noon time or when the sun is at its upper culmination and it is accompanied by the sacrifice of a domestic fowl. That is the process when the purpose is that of seeking the benevolence of the divinity. In converse, the process can be initiated for a malevolent purpose by reversing it or by violating the procedure. This is done when the surrogate is invoking the spirit of *Èsù* to cast a spell on a perceived enemy. The chant is now performed in a high tone, at past noon and palm kernel oil (not a fowl this time), which is a totem to the divinity, is offered as sacrifice. Deliberately committing these taboos is for the purpose of invoking the wrath of the divinity against the victim. The performer must take to her heels after the act, or she could be the first casualty of the wrath of *Èsù*. The duality of purpose in the liturgy, of using it for good or bad purpose is a validation of the Yoruba belief that *Èsù* is an ambivalent divinity that does good and bad.

Liz Gunner has revealed of the Zulu *izibongo* that forms in this category tend to be oral-formulaic in content and performance (47). Because these forms do not accommodate any deviation in style, forbid any digression, and restrain any textual addition or subtraction, they can be described as context-restricted or frozen. The creation of the text of performance is of great importance here. When the texts of religious performances are concerned, ownership and control can only be ascribed to the cult of origin or the community in general and, as such, additions or subtraction, or even re-arrangement, are not allowed to preserve the potency of the supplication and to ensure divine intervention. These are echoes of the theory of functionalism as these chant types are designed to keep society intact through the intervention of the supernatural and to sustain the moral code through reward and deterrence. Gronemeyer reveals the precursor of the modern-day proscenium theatre as the liturgical process that featured the passion enactments of ancient Egypt in the worship of the god Osiris or Nimrod. This is only an amplification of the general view that modern imaginative theatre started with a living theatre that centred on invocations for divine intervention (42).

As for primarily religious oral forms which gradually take on the features of the secular such as the Yoruba *Sàngó pípè*, *Oya pípè*, and *ìjálá*, the artist usually starts with the religious text and later delves into the relevant secular matter such as lineage praise chants to the satisfaction of the audience. This metamorphosis of the text from the ritualistic to the secular, or the enactment of a context-restricted form in a context-free manner, has been described by Bynum as "Optative performance" (12). For illustration, *ìjálá* is a chant that is primarily dedicated to *Ògún* the Yoruba god of iron, it is performed only by hunters. But it has since acquired some secular content and in contemporary experience, the repertoire has become an entertainment sub form less than a poetic form

composed for the liturgy of the god. The only part of the repertoire that still echoes the origin of purpose is the regalia of the hunter which is compulsively donned by the performers. Even the opening part of the text which procedurally should be the homage to the god of iron is no more considered an obligatory element in the chants of successful but chiefly commercial artists like Ogudare Foyanmu whose music pervades the length and breadth of Yorubaland. The lines below demonstrate a subject matter that is essentially secular, patriarchal and sexist; they have no nexus even with Ogun or his lifestyle:

> Táa bá kógún aya jo nínú ilé
> Tipá tipá la ó fi ri méta won.
> Tí wón n tójú oko gẹgẹ bó se ye
> Won n se sánmori oko
> Níbi tó ye de góńgó gégé boó se tó
> Wón moko ó tójú
> Wón mò bo se ye kó dára fóko
> Awon iyàwó ti Lákáayé
> O selégbè léyìn won nun-un. (Ogunmodede)

> If you have a harem of twenty women
> Hardly do you find three out of them good enough
> Who would take good care of the husband
> Whose mannerisms give the husband joy
> Who behave according to expectation
> They take good care of the husband
> They prepare good meals for the husband
> Those wives whom Ogun *Lákáayé*
> Will prop up tremendously.

The artist is either making a social commentary in support of polygamy generally or he is using his performance to settle a score with some women in his harem who are not indulging him as he expects. But Ogun the god of iron whose benevolence is being invoked in favour of wives that are caring, was not known to be a polygamist like Sango the god of thunder. Nor did Ogun make any tenet that encouraged polygamy. The harem is intended to make wives compete for the husband's attention by pampering him with food and sex at the whims and fancies of the husband, or according to his dictates.

The performance of *The Ozidi Saga* in Ibadan in 1963, a rather long distance from its original context of performance, is yet another instance (Okpewho, *Oral Performance* 6). In Gizelis' classification, the above will be regarded as a re-creation. However, secular oral forms leave the artist to determine his own text and he usually has a relatively skeletal material or text at the initial stage of performance; the bulk of his subsequent text is determined by the kind of audience he faces and the extent to which he is inspired by the same audience, and more so his ingenuity. This third category of creativity is "real creation". For illustration, *rárà*, *oríkì bòròkìnì*, *etíyerí*, and *ekún ìyàwó* are good matches for this category.

An outstanding feature of any oral performance is the fluidity and malleability of the text. The volume of his text and its power to give the audience a high degree of upliftment is the measurement of the eminence of the oral artist. His pre-performance text is easily sub-merged by his performance text, which is usually the result of the spontaneity of his reaction to the nature of the audience before him.

In view of the notion of textual interpolation, which is a sustaining element in oral performance, it is necessary to make a few remarks on the idea of digression, which constitutes the bulk of the supplementary text. The notion of digression is peculiar to all oral performances. In any given context, deviation from the subject matter of the moment will be considered as digression. Although 'digression' is a negative term in most contexts, it is a positive and obligatory element in oral performance. In fact, it is a common saying among folklore scholars that any fieldwork on oral performance short of digression is fake. This is because an oral performance is a live performance and the mark of it are the inevitable 'intrusions' and the consequent elasticity of the text. The poet's own realization of an unwarranted deviation from an oddity in the text and his prompt move to check this could constitute digression. In his analysis of the *Kambili Epic*, Okpewho cites the example of music which, when overutilized, constitutes digression (*Epic in Africa* 61), and examples abound in Yoruba oral performance

where the audience constitutes the chorus. When the artist senses that the excesses may cause him to stray, he conventionally cuts in to say, "*E máà jé ó ju méjì méjì lo*" (Do not let it exceed two in number). This is in reference to the chorusing of the refrain.

One can also distinguish between internal and external digression (*Epic in Africa* 185–8). Internal digression is that situation in which the chorus or the co-performer gives input. A ready example in the Yoruba context is found in the practice of *ìjálá* by Ogundare Foyanmu whose *ajánánsí* performs the role of the random commentator. In *dadakúàdà*, a Yoruba song form domiciled among the Yoruba of Ilorin, the *bòtó* does casual ejaculations to affirm the lead performer's proclamations. This is done with great rhetorical strength as shown in Ajadi's study of the *ìjálá* chant, "*Iba Olodumare*". External digression can be considered as the artist's reaction to the various forms of happenings, mostly among the audience, which are directly or indirectly related to the context of performance. An intrusion from someone not in the audience may also be a source of digression. An example of this is an *èsà egúngún* performance recorded by me, in which there was an instance of this. The noisy manner in which an erring marriageable girl snatches an object from a toddler makes the latter to cry out. In anger, the female artist quickly admonishes the aggressor by singing an abusive piece on her physical defect of a near-breast-less chest.

The audience

The audience is next in importance to the artist. The traditional African poet is neither the solitude-loving poet like the contemporary modern one nor is his poetry the frozen type accessible to only a limited literate audience. The audience of the poet is a live one, which gives an instant critique of the poet's performance. The audience is a product of "living oral traditions" which Tedlock describes as "participatory" (515). If the oral performer is the kingpin of the verbal art, then he revolves only around the audience. In Olatunji's assertion, the audience is the "raison d'etre" (180), for without an audience, the oral performance ceases to bear its title. It takes two entities to enact the oral delivery: the oral poet and the live audience. Okpewho's experience in *The Ozidi Saga* has shown that the influence of the audience could be felt in a "participatory of critical capacity" ("Primacy of Performance" 160). In a stronger sense, he views the sage as a true test for the audience-artist relationship. Okpewho entitles this section on the audience "Approbation and Encouragement". That the audience is an inevitable force in the performance is seen in their ability to slow down or quicken the pace of the performance. Okpewho's study of *The Ozidi Saga* has revealed that some factors are responsible for the reaction of the audience. For instance, an audience treated to a good song will urge the artist to play an encore while it choruses. In contrast, they may urge the artist to hasten if a particular aspect of the performance bores them or if the artist introduces an unwarranted suspense. For illustration, let us consider the case of Azemarotu's die-hardness or magical invulnerability in *The Ozidi Saga* which tenses up the audience that is curious to witness Ozidi's triumph over this antagonist. So, they urge the artist to quicken the pace of performance. However, this same audience wants a prolonged session of the butchery of this foe by Ozidi.

In some contexts, the artist is like a puppet on the strings of the audience because the latter is a product of a culture and is well versed in its customs and traditions. The oral poet simply obeys the dictates of the culture, for if he deviates unnecessarily, even when the content sounds offensive, his verbal art is considered out of place, and he is at the mercy of the audience. The performance of the Onikoyi praise poetry illustrates this. A performer of *oríkì orílè* is considered a custodian of the history of the lineage whose praise poetry he is chanting. The performance of the *Èsó Ìkòyí oríkí* often elicits emotional purgation in the descendants of the lineage who are present. They are respected, professional warriors though the honour ascribed to their feats is rooted paradoxically in disgrace because they are also warmongers who would initiate aggressions for the sake of the spoils of war. Expressed in another way, the Olukoyi (Onikoyi) lineage as soldiers of fortune were equally great looters of the property of their captives. They had the uncontrollable urge to steal such that when there was no war, they would start one. That is the reason their *oríkì* or lineage praise reflects these two contrasting sides. The picture thus created is that their valour is enmeshed in stealing, "their honour rooted in dishonour" to borrow Alfred Lord Tennyson's words in *Idylls of the King*. This oxymoronic nature of the *Èsó Ìkòyí* is revealed below:

Eni tí kò mòkan mòkàn
A ní Oníkòyí rèé kólé
A ní Oníkòyí rèé jalè
Íkòyí ò jalè rí
Íkòyí ò kólé
Bì wón ba rógun
Tí ègbón ba mérú
Àbúrò a sì mérù (Duroriike)

The one who is less informed
He will say that Onikoyi have gone to burgle
He will say that Onikoyi have gone to steal
Ikoyi have never stolen before
Ikoyi have never burgled
When they encounter any war
As the elder brother gathers slaves
The younger brother also gathers their belongings.

The choice of words in the chant is informed by a deliberate attempt to play on the graphology of words using tonal contrast that is characteristic of the Yoruba language. For instance, *mérú* (take slaves) and *mérù* (loot property) look alike in orthography but they are semantically in contrast; they are differentiated by the high tone (ú) and the low tone (ù). There is also parallelism in "*Tí ègbón ba mérú*" (As the elder brother gathers slaves) and "*Àbúrò a sì mérù*" (The younger brother also gathers their belongings.) The beauty of this linguistic device is in the rhythm it creates in its performance as a chant mode. The artist's rendering of the lines above is not taken as offensive because those unpleasant lines are part of the repertoire and he must not deviate from the established corpus.

A great degree of originality is required of the artist because there is nothing new in a performance whose text is already familiar to the audience; his ability to make fresh the old wine skin of the oral tradition in a new wine skin of the oral performance makes the difference before an audience that is both the respondent and the judge. This is usually achieved using rhetorical devices that enable the creative genius to blossom.

The size of the audience is also determined by the kind of performance. By virtue of functionality, some performances require a limited audience. The performance of *ofò* restricts the audience. In fact, it does not require an audience if the performance of it strictly requires some secrecy, and most incantations are performed in privacy. The content of the following lines demonstrates this idea very clearly:

Ìbà o o o èyin ìyá mi àjé
Ológìnni òru
Afínjí eye tí nfòká
Eye nlá ti n fegungun se'yín
Ajèdò èyàn má bì (Owolabi VII)

I salute you: mothers called witches
Cats in the heart of the night
The scrupulously neat birds that fly about
Big birds that have bones for teeth
You who feed on human liver without any feeling of nausea.

The performance requires a zero direct audience because it must be clandestine; if this were performed in the open the performer would probably be demonised, declared a witch, or lynched because it is only for a diabolical purpose that any being will invoke the spirit of witches. The real audience is the victim of the performance as he is being hexed through the intervention of the witches. The lines are can as well be recited by an *Ifá* priest who must chant the eulogy of witches before expressing his plea for intervention into the plight of his client. For some type of incantations, for example the Yoruba *gbètugbètu* (a charm that throws the victim into a trance hence forcing the will of the performer on the victim), only the immediate audience or the desired audience is the victim. Another instance of a limited audience is in the performance involving *Ifá* (verse for divination purpose) in which the client of the *Ifá*, who by virtue of the context is passive, constitutes the only audience. The priest of *Ese Ifá* (*Ifa* divination

chant) chanting a chapter of the corpus to a troubled individual who has come to solve his problems is a performer before a limited audience. If he chants the same corpus of *Ifá* in a responsorial style with a complementing chorus before a whole community at an annual festival, there is a change in context which has necessitated a change in the size of the audience. *Èsù pípè* forbids the presence of a large audience because in most cases it is the surrogate of Esu the Devil invoking the spirit of the god to hex some targeted person(s). *Sàngó pípè*, *Oya pípè*, *èsà egúngún*, and *ijálá* are religious poetic performances associated with an unlimited audience personified by entire communities. *Ìrèmòjé* falls in between the limited and the unlimited audience types; its audience is limited to only the guild of hunters who are witnessing the funeral rites of a fellow deceased hunter. It is forbidden for non-initiates to eavesdrop on, overhear, or spy on any part of the rites. This funeral process as a rite of passage has been analysed by Ajuwon (16–31) stage-by-stage using representative examples.

Music

"Music is the griot's soul", says Okpewho of the Madingo griot (*Epic in Africa* 59). The oral performance may turn stale without music (Darah 24). Music is a refuge for a straying poet—it is a face-saving device for his faulty performance. Also, music has a therapeutic effect; Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron and custodian of the sacred oath who is also the subject of *ijálá* was said to have been cured of his skin disease after listening to an *ijálá* (Babalola 4). In addition, Euba (471) has clearly asserted that poetry and music are inseparable and considers music from the perspective of its mode of delivery. There is vocal music and instrumental music and Okpewho has on his part given it a functional consideration for it is employed for thematic reiteration or as interlude ("Primacy of Performance" 170). Music is the crux of any oral performance. It is as indispensable to the oral performance as rhythm is essential to written poetry. Music is an obligatory element in some performances, especially in invocatory chants, because such performances are consummated by the performer's falling into a trance, which would have been impossible without the commensurate music. In a context of this kind, music is the springboard that lifts the artist to the spiritual realm.

The mode of performance of any piece of music is of great importance and it deserves a comment here. The mode could either be solo, responsorial, or antiphonal. In most cases, songs are performed solo when there is only a single performer without accompaniment. In this context, the audience complements the artist's effect by playing the role of the chorus—but only if the song falls within its familiar repertoire such as the Yoruba *ìwérènde* (traditional songs). Some poetic forms do not allow the use of chorus or instruments; *Èsù pípè* and *ofò* forbid this while *òkú pípè* is performed solo by the professional mourner., In his study of the role of the chorus (*amshi*) in the Hausa context, King (118) asserts that the presence of the chorus gives the desired melody. Among the Yoruba, *ekún ìyàwó* requires an obligatory chorus that comprises the bride's age group which accompanies her in the roving performance. The chorusing of the bride's tune enlivens her spirit amid the burden of sobs she must cope with.

Another mode of musical performance involves the use of accompaniment which refers to the use of musical instruments, especially drums. In totality, African musical instruments have been categorized into membranophones such as the drums, aerophones such as flutes, chordophones such as harps, and idiophones such as gourd rattles (Ndege and Nicholls 3–13). Some instruments of origin accompany several oral sub-genres which enable the audience to identify the kind of performance even without any knowledge of the verbal content. This is to say that drums are generic and have cultic origins. For instance, the *ijálá* ensemble includes drums regarded as those of hunters such as *àgádá*, *àgèrè*, *akítínpá*, the hunter's flute *ogo* and the *dùndùn* drum. Any performance of this set echoes the activity of guild of hunters, immediately, even from a remote point. However, the situation is open-ended because many oral forms have borrowed from other sub-genres in the Yoruba context.

Drums are the dominant forms of musical instruments. Most drums are either single-headed or double-headed membranophones. They vary in size and acoustic effect. Drums are usually generic sets and are primarily traceable to cult worship. For illustration, the *àgèrè* set is dedicated to *Ifá* and Ogun worship and are beaten in sessions of *Ìyèrè Ifa* and *ijálá*. Royal sets are associated with stools and are restricted to such contexts—an example being the *Òwò* set which resides only in the palace of *Òlòwò* in Ondo State. Drums in this group are context-bound, they are designed to achieve mystical goals, and are not used outside such goals because of the taboos attached to them. The attribute of fixity of use demonstrates their oral-formulaic nature and the religious and social goals they achieve for the community are in tandem with the functionalist theory.

Among the Yoruba, the most prominent musical instrument is the talking drum, *dùndùn*. The *dùndún* and *bàtá* sets are the most used in traditional events because they are not context-bound and are secular instruments

(Laoye 17). In general sense, drums are means of economizing thought or words; they are place holders for verbal expressions. The talking drum is particularly noted for its ambiguity of expression, a quality that could be engineered by the drummer when he sets out to confuse an addressee who is seen as an object of ridicule. What the drummer simply does is to beat a familiar formulaic tune of praise for the contrasting purpose of aspersion.

Ong describes the African talking drum as "an abstract signaling code [...] a way of producing, in a specially styled form, the sounds of words of a given spoken language" ("African Talking Drums and Oral Poetics" 411). However, the language of the drum is not for the novice and Ong expresses it succinctly: "The drum language is not understood ipso facto [...] when one knows the spoken language it reproduces. Drum language has to be specifically learned even when the drums speak one's own mother tongue (411). Ong's observation points to the acoustic semiotics involved in the interpretation of the language or the generic identification and their cultic origins. The talking nature of the drum is determined by the extent of mastery of the drum by the drummer. No drummer was comparable to Ayanyemi in their ability to make the drum talk among the Yoruba (Fatokun 24). Ayanyemi Atokowagbowonle is by indigenous public consensus the most skilled master drummer in Yorubaland, Nigeria. In another vein Babawale (109) describes the *bàtá* set of drums as "stammering" drums because they can pass messages, but they do have the nimbleness found in the *dùndùn* set.

Histrionics

Extra linguistic gestures are also surrogates of verbal expression. The performer employs them as a device of mime. In some cases, they could be a placeholder for verbal deficit on the part of the performer. Okpewho cites the case of Erivini, the lead performer in *The Ozidi Saga* who did "not have the gift of words" but was a "fine performer" (*Blood on the Tides: The Ozidi Saga and Oral Narratology* 115). Eyewinks, different facial expressions, and manipulations of the body express the mood and the emotion of the characters. In Scheub's words: "The body movements of the performer reveal the basic repeated patterns of complex narrations and in so doing lead the members of the audience to aesthetic experience of the message" (348).

Okpewho's study of *The Mwindo Epic* and *The Ozidi Saga* has revealed a great deal of the effect of histrionics or the unspoken but understood message. The first manifestation of an *ekún ìyàwó* performance is the bride-performer's shedding of tears and the sustenance of a jocund mood. These extra-linguistic gestures are natural; the young girl is metamorphosing from puberty to full adulthood and motherhood but in an unknown environment, in the name of marriage. This is a situation that makes her future tricky by a fifty-fifty chance. This temper pervades the totality of the performance of the nuptial chant on the eve of her marriage. *Èsù pípè* is actualized with precision and in a frenzy devoid of distraction because any disruption will incur the wrath of Satan (*Èsù*) who in his blind rage can make his own invocator the victim. During an annual festival the *Sango* surrogate advances into a trance like the Hausa *bori*. As soon as he loses the power of speech, he acquires the psychic power to probe the unknown. The process gives birth to prophetic messages of varying moods of joy, sadness, surprise, fulfilment, and resignation, reflecting his encounter with the spirit of *Sango* directed to community and its leadership and its influencers. The case of metamorphosis into trance matches the principle of the oral-formulaic theory that activities involved are fixed and must be observed with precision and focus, without which those activities amount to nothing. In *èsà egúngún*, the ancestral masquerade performance, one marked feature is the elevation of body manipulation and the relegation of the voice. As the sharp tones of *bàtá* drums take over, a figure in a mask and robe must use his neck, chest, waist, buttocks, arms, and legs in a masterly display which now determines the success of his art.[1] Any such person performing a masquerade is expected to be an acrobatic dancer. The manifestation of the performance of *ofò* is the total concentration of the performer on the subject. He must not only look desperate in activating the potency of the text (or in avoiding the repercussion of a breach of the process), and the repetition of words in symbolic numbers of three, seven, nine, etc. are matched by an eager face. Though repetition may be used for the beauty of rhythm in some contexts, in the performance of incantation, repetition is for the purpose of potency assurance, without which there will be no verifiable outcome. For illustration the following lines will suffice:

Ogóró ogóró ogóró
Ògúnsan Ògúnsan Ògúnsan
Òjodá omo afidídàlúrú
Ìjà té jo jà níjósí
Tí Olú Ifè fi gbórí lówó ò re
Omo Olú Ifè náà lo wá taà yí
Óní tóo bá ta òun tóo bá ro òun
Òun o pàgbín fún oríì re
Má à ta máà ró o (Owolabi VIII)

Ogoro ogoro ogoro
Ogunsan Ogunsan Ogunsan
Ojoda son of he-who-uses-his curving tail to cause pandemonium in town
The battle both of you fought the other day
In which Olufe defeated you
It is the child of the same Olufe you have stung
He promises that if you do not pain or hurt him
He will sacrifice a snail to your head
Don't pain him, don't ache him.

The efficacy of this incantation was verified by this writer by a mere chance while on a second field trip to Owolabi Aremu, an Ifa priest and the head of Ifa priests and medicine men in Oyo State of Nigeria. This author was with him when a person stung by a scorpion was brought in nervously, and upon sacrificing a snail to complement the incantation rendered, the young girl was relieved and discharged. While the example just given is that of repetition for potency of charm, repetition may be for the reason of celestial connection for the purpose of getting revelation, let us consider the example below:

Eríwo yà,
Eríwo yà,
Eríwo yà,
Àyà gbó àyà tó
Omo eríwo osinki
Òrúnmìlà Elérìí ìpín
Ikú rí bí àtéwo
Òrun ajepo má pòn ón
A tóri eni ti o sunwòn se
Odúdú tíí du orí elémèrè   10
Kóri elémèrè má fó
Atóbájayé má jáyà lolo (Famoriyo II)

Eríwo yà
Eríwo yà
Eríwo yà
Aya gbo Aya to
Offspring of Eriwo Osinki
Òrúnmìlà, the sole witness of predestination
Iku is like the palm
He who feeds on palm-oil without turning red
Rectifier of the ill-fated *ori* [destiny]
So that the *Emere's ori* is not destroyed
He who provides a good company in life.

The lines constitute the panegyric of Òrúnmìlà, the Yoruba god of divination who is the author of the corpus of Ifa divination. Ifa is also a synonym for Òrúnmìlà. The piece of poetry is the beginning of an inquiry process of seeking revelation concerning a troubled client who has approached the Ifa diviner for healing. The lines have no variations because it is forbidden for the *babaláwo* to vary it by adding to or deleting from any part of the corpus.

If he does no vision may be revealed. Prior to the performance of these lines, the client must have been asked to bring out any money earned by him to which speaks silently, divulging the challenges that have brought him to the enclave of the babaláwo or diviner. After rendering the short verse, the diviner is expected to get a revelation that links him to one the sixteen major chapters of Ifa corpus. He then chants the story of the persona whose name is eponymous to the chapter. The client is asked if the story told matches the purpose for which he has come, and in most cases the answer is the affirmative. The solution is usually by analogy; the divine prescription given to the ancient persona is extended to the present client. In most cases sacrifice is offered. The phrase "*Eríwo yà*" has been retained in the translation because they have no English equivalents and because of the tinge of mysticism in the words. By inference the phrase is a like a code used in opening the doors of the abode of Olódùmarè the Supreme God to the diviner. In *Òfún Meéjìì* (the 16th chapter) of Ifá corpus, Òrúnmìlà clearly states that "Olódùmarè is the be-all and end-all of human existence" (Kolawole 92).

This experience fulfils the principle of the oral-formulaic theory that the content of the oral form can be frozen or fixed, and it also justifies the principle of functionalism that folklore plays a role in the lives of persons and the community. In Christian worship, for example, certain extra-linguistic gestures have universal symbolic meanings. Ojoade (124) reports on Eto Baba's vast use of unspoken gestures that are clearly understood. For illustration, a performer's making of the sign of the cross on the forehead or chest symbolizes the holy trinity; it also means that he is a Christian and not a Jew. My fieldwork inquiry into the 13 Yoruba poetic forms has enabled us to know the vastness of extra-linguistic movements of body features as complements or as placeholders for verbal messages.

Conclusion

This analysis has accounted for the obligatory nature of the components of the oral performance, namely the oral performer, the oral text, the audience, music, and histrionics. They are obligatory in every oral form on one hand, but imperatively varied in their degree of occurrence or application to the diverse poetic forms on the other. This is informed by the peculiarity of each oral poetic form. All 13 sub-types enumerated can easily be categorized as context-restricted (frozen) because they are religious or diffused (having the quality of a categorical variable) because they are losing their religious steam and turning secular or context-free because they are not religious in origin. The significance of a study on oral performance is in our realization of the fact that it is important to appreciate the verbal parameters discussed so far because they are resources that give the art its life. The performer must be conscious of the participatory but critical audience, which applauds his creative genius but condemns his inability to meet the expectations of the audience. Digressions are the result of spontaneous observations of the oral text by the artist or reaction by the audience, which force the artist to add, to subtract from, or re-arrange his text. Music is ancillary to a successful performance for it enlivens both audience and performer and ensures continuity of performance. Added to this are the stylistic resources that the artist employs, tapped from the vast mine of socio-cultural and linguistic elements for rhetorical effects.

Notes
1. There is also a remote human who manages the performance of the masquerade who is called *Maríwo*. He is hardly seen as he is confined to the grove from which the masquerade proceeds and to which he recedes.

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The state of Hausa children's folktales and play-songs in Gombe, Nigeria

Bilkisu Abubakar Arabi

The state of Hausa children's folktales and play-songs in Gombe, Nigeria

In this paper I investigate the state of Hausa children's folktales and play-songs in Gombe, Nigeria to ascertain whether they (folktales and play-songs of children) are still alive and active in this culturally important town in northern Nigeria. My specific objectives are to examine how much parents and their children know of Hausa children's folktales and play-songs and argue that folktales and play-songs are to some extent infused with modern technologies because of globalisation and that mass media has taken over the dissemination of such cultures. To achieve this aim, I employ questionnaires as the instrument of data collection. The subjects for the research are 150 parents and their school-going and out-of-school children aged 20-above and 0–10 respectively. Arguing that globalisation impacts the oral transmission of cultural knowledge more than ever, I adopt technauriture and cultauriture as the theoretical models. Analysis of the data reveals a more than 90% awareness of folktales and play-songs from all respondents. However, some school-going children prefer to watch such oral traditions via satellite rather than listening to a narration as it enhances their language development and nurtures and preserves culture using the paradigm of technology with audio-visual media. The out-of-school children, on the other hand, listen to the narration but are not captivated by it because it only uses the oral means of dissemination. They prefer to watch television and play video games as this educates and entertains using technology, orality, and visuals. **Keywords:** children's literature, folktales, play-songs, globalisation, cultauriture.

Introduction

Children are the bedrock of every society because they are the seeds in which culture is nurtured. Children who grow up in a traditional African society always have folktales and play-songs as great tools for socialisation. Culture, therefore, plays a very significant role in shaping the thinking faculty of a child. In modern African society, knowledge transmitted orally changes and adapts to contemporary times. The media-mediated knowledge transmission involving satellite television, video games, and social media platforms, among others, has almost totally replaced its oral counterpart. Today, children's culture is to some extent 'hybridised' because it has taken on a new pattern as new media has created new ways of interrogating the oral culture and making meaning in the computer-mediated society. Sackeyfio (6) points out that the role of African children's literature in the 21st century is important for connecting past, present, and future generations through the celebration and expression of cultural heritage. Children universally represent the future and the writers, storytellers, and disseminators for this audience have a commitment to use their crafts in ways that foreground the preservation of African cultural integrity in a globalised world.

Culture is an all-embracing and heterogeneous concept that encompasses every aspect of a man's life and experiences. To further expatiate: culture is expressed in man's religion, language, philosophy, music, dance, drama, architecture, political organisation, technology, and so on (Ajayi 1). To Jungudo (144), culture is the way of life. It embodies the meaning of a tradition. It creates frontiers and boundaries since, through cultural practices, one human society differs from others and insists on its unique identity and autonomy over and against others. However, culture is not static. It is dynamic and changes in time and circumstance from age to age.

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Eze and Buhari see culture from the same perspective, defining it as the totality of a group's behaviour derived from the whole range of human activity. Fanon (32), on the other hand, views it as a combination of motor and mental behaviour patterns arising from the encounter of men and women with nature and with their fellow human beings.

Culture and transmission

Cultural knowledge, codes, and norms are transmitted from person to person, from generation to generation and from one group to another via different channels such as family, peer group, school, religious institutions, mass media, and society. Out of the six agents of cultural transmission, I focus more on the family, peer group, mass media, and society in this paper. Be it nuclear or extended, the family is the first point of call where the individual interacts with his/her family members. The family inculcates cultural ideas in a person through direct instruction, as well as emulation of parents, siblings, and relations. It is through the family that children learn the societal norms, values, rules and regulations, and group culture which guide them to conform to societal expectations. Peers have a common identity and great influence on one another in terms of cultural transmission and socialisation. They influence the child's thinking in shaping his attitude towards life. The mass media comprises print and electronic media and performs three complementary functions: education, information dissemination, and entertainment. In this respect, it plays a formidable role in moulding individuals, especially children. It also helps in transmitting different aspects of human culture; what people listen to, read, and watch through print and electronic media mostly leaves lasting impressions on the recipients. Positive and negative cultural traits and practices are mostly picked up by young men and women in their formative years through the mass media, especially audio-visual media.

Cultural elements, however, change over time through diffusion as a result of contact between different groups. Of course, cultural configurations do have originality in terms of values, language, customs, beliefs, and methods of transmission from one generation to another which is what makes a particular people different from another. However, cultural elements are easily susceptible to foreign ideas; they keep changing continually, dropping some of their original characteristics and embracing new ones. The development of science and technology further creates the opportunity for faster diffusion of culture through the existence of communication satellites such as mobile telephones, television, and the internet (Felix 2). This development in science and technology helps facilitate globalisation.

Globalisation

Globalisation gained prominence in the 21st century because of the increasing consciousness of people to relate with one another and share experiences in the world (Felix 2). This increased consciousness is propelled by improvement in the technology of information exchange. To Flint, globalisation is the process of harmonising different cultures and beliefs. Consequently, Bilton defines globalisation as a process whereby political, social, economic, and cultural relations increasingly take on a global scale, which has profound consequences for individual local experience and everyday life. Indeed, the impact is all-encompassing, as there is diffusion of cultures that ultimately affects the economic, social, and political behaviour of the people. This explains why Giddens opines that globalisation brings out human societies which are located far apart under one umbrella called a 'global village'. The possibility is that every happening in this 'village' is shared by all the members, be it in the realm of culture, politics, or economics.

There is no doubt that globalisation unifies the peoples of the world into one orbit and has drastically caused changes. For instance, since globalisation brings about technological advancement, it is pertinent to note that the prominent Ruth Finnegan decided to upgrade her famous *Oral Literature in Africa* to an online version with the intention of bridging the gap between the old and the new oral literatures in Africa. Kaschula, in his review of the text in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, opines that oral literary forms are simply building on the past, adding another dimension to the continual building of the continuum that is linked between the past and the present. It is not a continuum that divides us but a continuum that unites us as a people, underpinned by the cultures and traditions that place us on an ever-changing continuum rather than a linear trajectory of existence. Today one can speak of an oral-literate-techno continuum, and it is to this continuum which Finnegan alludes in her new online book (142–3).

The state of Hausa children

The children of Gombe who the study is focusing on are not exempted from all the instances discussed above. The Gombe Emirate is in the south-western Borno area or region and was part of Lower Benue Valley. The region was earlier inhabited by independent ethnic groups of Bolewa, Jukuns, Tera, Tangale, Waja, and Fulbe. These groups developed a system of economic, social, and political organisation before Bubayero's Jihad that led to the establishment of Gombe Emirates (Arawa 23). Gombe Emirate was established in the 19th century as part of the Fulani reform movement witnessed across Hausaland and beyond. Gombe Emirate, therefore, is part of the Sokoto Caliphate and is in the North-eastern region of Nigeria. The city of Gombe is named after Gombe Abba, the seat of government of Gombe Emirate established by Buba Yero in 1825 (Gombe, *et al.* xvi). After a long period of political function as the Emirate's municipality, the British colonial government transferred the capital from Gombe Abba to Nafada and later to the modern Gombe town in 1919. Linguistically, the people of Gombe speak diverse languages and adhere to diverse customs and traditions. The Afro-Asiatic and Niger-Congo family of languages are the dominant linguistic group found in the area. The ethno-linguistic composition of Gombe State includes, amongst others, the Bolewa, Fulbe, Tera, Tangale, Tula, Waja, Wurkum, Jara, Dadiya, Cham, Awak, Pero, Kamo, Kushi, and Bangunji. There are also more recent entrants such as the Kanuri, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. In addition to the speaking of all these various languages, the Hausa language does serve the purposes of commerce, interaction, and education at the lower levels of the school system (Abba, *et al.* 3). However, English remains the official language used in Gombe State and Nigeria at large.

Culturally, the emirs of Gombe accommodate, feed, and clothe more than 12 groups of public and palace singers that entertain the populace within and outside the seat of the palace during ceremonies (Gombe *et al.* xvi). The Tera have a culture of merry making, songs, and music; the Tangale are great hunters and fishermen; while the Fulani rear cattle and are warriors who use weapons such as bows and arrows, swords, metal helmets, and suits of chain armour (Gombe *et al.* 42). These cultures form the subject matter and themes of their folktales and play-songs.

The presence of the British colonial administration in Gombe brought about the commencement of western education in 1916. Initially, it was under-patronised and dreaded because it was created by non-Muslims. In order to encourage patronage, the Qur'an and Arabic teachers were employed and the royals were enrolled (Gombe *et al.* 102). Furthermore, a senior primary school was opened in 1952 and a teachers' college in 1956. After Nigerian independence on 1 October 1960, Gombe witnessed an influx of secondary schools among which were: Teachers' College in Kaltungo in 1961, Sudan Interior Mission (S. I. M.) Secondary School in Billiri in 1966, Government Secondary School in Gombe in 1967, Arabic Teachers' College in Gombe in 1968, Government Secondary School in Kaltungo in 1968, to mention but a few (Abba, *et al.* 141–9). The established schools gave the people of Gombe and its environs the opportunity to be literate and useful to the modern society.

Recreation and entertainment are part and parcel of the life of the people of Gombe. Abba, *et al.* explain that recreation and entertainment in Gombe takes the form of orature such as folktales, traditional theatrical performances, legends, myths, proverbs, riddles, songs, *tashe* (a Hausa traditional pantomime performance that is popular during the month of Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting), wise-sayings, tongue-twisters, and jokes as well as traditional sports and games like boxing, wrestling, bull fighting, archery, *sharo/shadi* (a Fulani festival of flogging young men to show courage in order to win brides), *langa* (a traditional Hausa game of hopping on one leg), horse-riding, hunting, *dara* (a traditional Hausa game played with cubes which are placed in minor holes in the ground), bird-keeping, and circus—these are what "have characterised and continue to characterise life". However, the upsurge of urbanisation and education brought about the transformation of traditional entertainment forms in Gombe with the following alternatives: "transistor radio, the gramophone, television, newspaper, mobile cinema, and football […]" (Abba *et al.* 154). Implicitly, urbanisation and education bring about transformation in the ways oral traditions are being rendered.

Historically, Gombe State was created on 1 October 1996. It was carved out of Bauchi State of which it had been a local government area. It has 11 local government areas: Akko, Balanga, Billiri, Dukku, Funakaye, Gombe, Kaltungo, Kwami, Nafada, Shongom, and Yamaltu Deba. Being located at the centre of the North-eastern region, Gombe is opportune to border with all other five states of the region: Bauchi, Yola, Yobe, Borno, and Taraba. Like Nigeria, Gombe is highly multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual. The influx of both foreign and indigenous immigrants into the city is the sole consequence of its recent modernisation whose antecedent is the creation of Gombe State in 1996. Before its creation, Gombe State had many primary and secondary schools that are both

public and private with only two tertiary educational institutions: Gombe State College of Health Sciences and Technology and Federal College of Education. Now it has more than 15 additional tertiary institutions: Federal University Kashere, Gombe State University, Pen Resource University, Federal College of Horticulture, Gombe State College of Education, Gombe State Polytechnic, Federal Polytechnic, and Gombe State School for Legal and Islamic Studies, among others. This educational boom is the same or even higher in other sectors such as health, commerce, sports, agriculture, and many more. As a result of this ongoing modernisation project, the city has most, if not all, parts of the country represented ethno-linguistically, for it evidences highly complex and multi-layered ethno-linguistic migratory trajectories. This implies that the children in Gombe State are highly affected by modernisation, thus making them cosmopolitan. They prefer to play with video games and watch cartoons, sitcoms, and children's educational programmes via satellite channels.

It is pertinent to note that the indigenous people of Gombe are not Hausa, even though Gombe is a Hausa-speaking community. The influx of different cultures with the advent of modernisation has replaced the act of storytelling and children's play-songs beside the fireplace in the evenings with satellite televisions where such tales and play-songs are recounted. This is in line with Ashiomole's assertion that "[…] grannies hardly recount tales. They are too busy struggling for sitting space in front of the TV with their grandchildren!" (73).

Furthermore, the social environment of Gombe can be contextualised based on residential areas. The Government Residential Area (GRA) constitutes the area where the elites live and where the school-going children and their parents were derived from, while Bolari, the provincial area which is inhabited by the ordinary man, is where the out-of-school children and their parents were derived from. The children who reside in the latter location have different notions and perspectives of the world and thus have a different understanding of the same socio-cultural environment. Iwoketok rightly points out in her inaugural lecture that "Children's play-songs have a wide distribution and great variety as well. They accompany work, running, skipping, imitation, and sedentary games" (9).[1] These play-songs portray the everyday life of the child in and outside the home. This everyday life, which is portrayed through play-songs, reflects the tradition, values, beliefs, and norms of these children and their society. The way children think, play, learn what no one can teach them, solve puzzles, create and recreate, and operate within the actual etiquette of their people. It embodies such items as games, toys, magic, riddles, play-songs, game-songs, lullabies, jokes, tongue-twisters, chants, and so on (9). These cultural practices are the replica of what is obtainable in Gombe State where the children carry out such practices based on their perspectives and experiences. Children living in the cosmopolitan areas carry out such play-songs with a touch of modernisation because they are influenced by the cartoons and Hausa children's cultural and educational programmes they watch on satellite television. The children living in provincial areas, on the other hand, perform it based on their socio-cultural experience.

Various research has been carried out which relates to the present study. Some researchers are of the opinion that Nigeria's children's literature is static, while most researchers focus on the cultural and traditional perspectives which to some extent have slight variations with the Hausa culture. For instance, Onukaogu and Onyerionwu explain that most written children's literature does not possess possibilities of dynamism in terms of the socio-historical context. To them, a children's book written in the 1960s may have the same subject matter, themes, and style as a children's book written in the 21st century. This is unlikely for a children's literature book written in this era of globalisation and mass media awareness. A very good example of this is Muleka and Mwangi's *The Folktale Revisited* (2020) which combines the use of old and new ways of storytelling while infusing modern and original oral narrative characters that operate using modern gadgets, terminologies, and machinery as members of a dynamic society. Modern children will always give in to the most captivating folktales. In the same light, Ashimole looks at how written literature is competing with mass media for children's attention and consumption because children will always give in to the most captivating presentations on satellite television. Amali pays attention to Idoma folktales and narration which may have similarities and differences with the Hausa version of folktale narration. Furthermore, Sackeyfio, Diala-Ogamba, and Ayodabo share similar perspectives on African children's literature with a focus on Igbo cultural practices of southern Nigeria. Their research focuses on folktales, gender preference, and cultural aesthetics. Storytelling and folktales are an integral part of the African oral society. Folktales usually connect to and illuminate the various cultural and traditional aspects of the society they come from and perform salient functions of entertainment, enlightenment of cultural orientation and traditions of the people, and educating the young on various aspects of society. Folktales, therefore, portray the values and traditions of a society, where children and adults alike learn through the events conveyed. The

function of folktales as an oral literature genre cannot be over emphasised (Amali 89). There are lots of educational benefits derivable from them, the most important being their potency as an educational tool. Today's children have abundant opportunities to access this oral genre via technological gadgets available for use in the collection, documentation, dissemination, and promotion of our cultural heritage (95).

Folktale sessions are now presented to the child through television and radio programmes to which parents and their children in Gombe do not give considerable attention. A major challenge with Hausa children's folktales in Gombe is that they have not found/enjoyed the needed attention in documentation, dissemination, and promotion as needed. Considering the above challenge, exposing the school-going children and out-of-school children in Gombe to folktale oral genres would create a lasting, positive impact on them. However, a challenge that may be encountered in the process can be the lack of proper documentation for Hausa children's folktales in particular. Most parents seem to consider it a 'traditional part time art'. This may be why the children prefer to watch movies on television, play video games, and pass time on the internet instead of listening to folktales being retold. Nevertheless, there is hope in revamping the genre. In essence, in this paper I attempt to bridge the gap between the school-going children and out-of-school children by rendering Hausa children's folktales and play-songs in Gombe without altering the original versions in order to enhance language development, remove cultural inhibitions, and create cultural continuity within Gombe State.

Interestingly, through their deep understanding of the challenges faced by indigenous cultures in Africa, Kaschula and Mostert (ii) rescue the situation by discussing the impact of technology on the vitality and transmission of oral traditions because we are in an era where technological developments affect more than ever before the ways societies interact. They help us imagine ways for new digital tools to be harnessed for the benefit of communities with rich traditions of oral performance. In essence, theirs is an urgent global initiative to document and make accessible endangered oral literatures before they disappear without record.

Theoretical framework and methodology

Cultauriture as a theoretical framework is an offshoot of technauriture (Kaschula and Mostert) that aims to deliver a suitable and practical paradigm that captures the dialectics between society, technology, and culture. Cultauriture expands the concept of technauriture into a wider perspective that aims to capture all aspects of the interface between technology and culture, thereby creating a suitable framework for integrating cultural development with the philosophy of technology. It also provides analytical tools for the assessment and evaluation of existing and future applications of technology to cultural modalities (Mostert *et al.* 43). Cultauriture aims to embrace the aspects of technology, society, and culture that promote cultural sustainability and cultural entrepreneurship. It is the exploration of meaning of culture drawn from the contemporary application of technological and systematic skills to provide knowledge to inform how we understand a community's reaction to contemporary historical arts. This will result in all heritage culture being significant, understood, and appreciated.

Cultauriture treats technology as an enabler for all things cultural, allowing technology to enhance and support the locating of cultural artefacts within relevant social contexts. It offers a paradigmatic and ontological base to develop a strategic and effective approach to the impact of technology on culture. Through developing cultauriture, these complex cultural networks and interfaces can be assessed, adapted, and expanded to meet underlying needs of cultural development and social wellbeing through a process of digitisation using contemporary technologies (Mostert *et al.* 46).

As indicated earlier, in this study I focus on school-going and out-of-school children and their parents. The geographical scope of the study is the city of Gombe where such respondents reside. Locations like Government Residential Area (GRA), Federal low-cost housing estate, and Shongo housing estate are where the school-going children and their parents reside while locations like Bolari, Herwa Gana, and Arawa are where the out-of-school children and their parents reside. I selected three private schools located in the elitist dominated areas and Bolari, Herwa Gana, and Arawa were chosen as non-elitist dominated areas. The information about the state of Hausa children's folktales and play-songs was self-reported via questionnaires which contained a mixture of open-ended and close-ended questions. Although questionnaires can be highly biased, in order to reduce the subjectivity to the barest minimum, I gave out the questionnaires to the selected school-going children in their schools; each pupil was given two copies (one copy for the child which contained the questions for children and another for the parents which contained the questions for the parents) with an explanation on how to complete it. The copies

were returned to their schools' head teachers within three weeks. It took us (the researcher and three research assistants) a week to collect the returned copies from the head teachers and verify them.

For the out-of-school children, specifically, we went around Bolari, Herwa Gana, and Arawa for three consecutive months, one for each location, administering the questionnaires. Since most of the respondents were illiterate, we read out the contents of the questionnaires to the respondents and immediately filled them out with their responses. To authenticate the entries, we reread the answers to the respondents for clarity and authenticity. All in all, we were able to use 150 questionnaires from both parties. Based on the nature of the work, I have categorised the respondents into four groups: school-going children, parents of school-going children, out-of-school children, and parents of out-of-school children. The data analysis was therefore conducted based on the completion of the questionnaire by both parties (parents and children). The data collected was analysed in order to arrive at an understanding of what the state of Hausa children's folktales and play-songs is within Gombe in terms of awareness, narration, and practicability or usage. The analysis of these components was done qualitatively, but the data is presented quantitatively using simple tables with percentages to code the information. Thereafter, the quantitative data was subjected to quantitative-cum-qualitative analysis. The analysis of the data is mostly qualitative; thus, it is mostly thematic. Worthy of note is the researcher's referral to the data on media consumption of the questions and answers in the open-ended questions section below. In addition, Kaschula and Mostert's technauriture is used side by side with Mostert *et al.*'s cultauriture for assessing the state of Hausa folktales and play-songs in Gombe State with a view to understand the continuum of three different paradigms that capture the dialectics between society, technology, and culture.

Data-based assessment of Hausa children's folktales and play-songs in Gombe
*School-going children and their parents' statistical analysi*s

Sex	Number of respondents	Percentage
Male	18	50%
Female	18	50%
Total	36	100%

Figure 1: Sex of the respondents (school-going children)

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
3–4	13	36.1%
5–6	13	36.1%
7–10	10	27.8%
Total	36	100%

Figure 2: Age of school-going children

Occupation	Number of respondents	Percentage
Civil servant	15	41.7%
Businessman/woman	14	38.9%
Housewife	7	19.4%
Total	36	100%

Figure 3: Occupation of parents (school-going children)

Awareness	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	30	83.3%
No	6	16.7%
Total	36	100%

Figure 4: Awareness of Hausa children's folktales/play-songs (school-going children)

Narration	Number of respondents	Percentage
Father	4	11.1%
Mother	7	19.4%
Sister	6	16.7%
Brother	1	2.8%
Nil	18	50%
Total	36	100%

Figure 5: Who does the narration? (school-going children)

Frequency	Number of respondents	Percentage
Regularly	3	8.3%
Not regularly	12	33.3%
Not at all	21	58.4%
Total	36	100%

Figure 6: Frequency of narration (school-going children)

Place	Number of respondents	Percentage
Home	12	33.3%
School	0	0
Both	0	0
Not at all	24	66.7%
Total	36	100%

Figure 7: Place of narration (school-going children)

Sex	Number of respondents	Percentage
Male	8	22.2%
Female	28	77.8%
Total	36	100%

Figure 8: Sex of the respondents (parents of school-going children)

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
20–30	0	0
31–40	12	33.3%
41–50	24	66.7%
Total	36	100%

Figure 9: Age of parents of school-going children

Number of children	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	1	2.8%
2	5	13.9%
3 and above	30	83.3%
Total	36	100%

Figure 10: Number of school-going children

Awareness	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	33	91.7%
No	3	8.3%
Total	36	100%

Figure 11: Awareness of Hausa children's folktales/play-song

It is interesting that most of the school-going children and their parents are aware of folktales and play-songs meaning school-going- children and their parents have the knowledge that Hausa children's folktales and play-songs exist. In fact, 91.7% of parents and 83.3% of children indicated their awareness of these important oral genres. However, most of the school-going children's parents do not partake of or engage their children in folktale narration and teaching of play-songs at all. A glaring 58.4% of parents and children (more than half of the respondents) indicated that they do not participate in narration. The distance between 91.7% awareness of Hausa folktales and play-songs and 58.4% of not participating in the narration can be said to occur because of social transformations. This is evident in the open-ended questions tables as captured below, where the children listen to folktales using various media. This discovery can be explained by Wise's assertion (qtd in Mostert *et al.*) that: "[w]e live in societies which are rapidly transforming due, in part, to new technologies. The understanding of the relationship between culture and technology is then quite important to understanding our contemporary world" (39). It is imperative to note that, where there is an awareness of folktales and play-songs in Gombe, they are not prioritised. Parents do not see it as their obligation to teach and narrate folktales and play-songs to their children and to encourage them to use it as a tool for cultural continuity and enhancing language. The frequency of narration of both folktales and play-songs is telling us that something is amiss despite the awareness. This statement suggests that children listen to folktales and play-songs through radio, television, and the internet as captured in the tables of open-ended questions below. This development implies that the data from the questionnaires can be understood when taking into consideration the use of other media by children and parents. This assertion is captured by Slack and Wise (qtd in Mostert *et al.*) who observe that when "[…] people understand the relationship between culture and technology, they can evaluate the options and negotiate better choices" (39). This relationship is complex, but in its most simplistic form it tries to explain the relationship between technological and cultural determinism which suggests a continuum between the old and the new that is inevitably influenced by the critic's disciplinary background (39). To some extent, Slack and Wise's assertion clearly explains the attitude portrayed by the school-going children and their parents of not practicing the narration but preferring to watch it on the television.

Another aspect that is worth discussing is who does the narration. 50% of the children responded to this question with a nil which means that half of the pupils are aware of folktales and play-songs but nobody within their families has ever narrated these to them. This means that the state of Hausa children's understanding of folktales and play-songs in Gombe is affected by modernisation of technological knowledge, given the nature of the society's trajectory of rapid technological developments where the impact is shared extensively across many sectors in society, from highly positive to more negative results. This outcome created an environment where technological solutions are applied haphazardly and in a non-systematic manner, which most times undermines the innate potential associated with the respective applications. Kaschula, however, "recognised the opportunities that new technologies presented in terms of effective digitization of oral cultures, as a means of preservation, development, and enhancement" (39) of the paradigms between culture and technology. In order to portray the importance of combining the two paradigms together because of the dynamic nature of oral genres and society,

Kaschula and Mostert observe that "oral poetry and, by extension, oral tradition is […] intrinsic to the human cultural mosaic (1)". Since oral tradition is essential to the human cultural mosaic, Kaschula (qtd in Kaschula and Mostert) coined the word "technauriture in response to the intersection of orality, the written word and digital technology. Regarding its etymology, the 'techn' represents technology, the 'auri' derives from the word *auriture*, and the 'ture' represents literature" (3). To Kaschula and Mostert, technauriture serves as a paradigm that offers the producers and practitioners of oral material a "framework for conceptualization of the interface, or the three dialectics between primary and secondary orality and technology" (1).

The pace of narration is something else worth mentioning because the home— which ought to be vital in imbibing society's cultural values and norms to the children in my opinion—and school respectively are among the agents of socialisation of a child. In this table, 33.3% of respondents (less than half) selected the home while the school received a 0% response. Likewise, the combination of both home and school recorded 0% and "Not at all" recorded 66.7%, which is the highest percentage. The schools in Gombe do not see the importance of including any of the aforementioned cultures in their curriculum because they see it as something that is out of place and less important in the child's development. Instead, they introduced the watching of cartoons and nursery rhymes that do not portray the cultural practices of the children's immediate environment. It is of utmost importance to consider the social context of the children when drawing up the school curriculum because the oral folktales and play-songs are part and parcel of the social settings in which these children live. As a result of development, the parents and their children start to interact with other people and institutions that influence their perspective in life, where they learn and incorporate the cultural practices of the other participant. In essence, the combination of the oral folktales and play-songs infused with cartoons and nursery rhymes bring about hybridisation which is vital in the development of the child in this modern world.

This challenge is addressed by Mostert *et al.* who suggest cultauriture, which is an offshoot of technauriture, as the solution. They expatiate: "Cultauriture is the exploration of meaning of culture drawn from the contemporary application of technological and systematic skills to provide knowledge to inform how we understand a community's reaction to contemporary historical arts. This will result in all heritage culture to be significant and to be understood and appreciated" (43). Mostert *et al.* are advocating for the continuity of oral traditions in a modern world where culture, orality, aurality, and technology are fused together in order to assist in the preservation and development of language and the education of the young ones growing up in a dynamic digital world.

Out-of-school children and their parents' statistical analysis

Sex	Number of respondents	Percentage
Male	19	48.7%
Female	20	51.3%
Total	39	100%

Figure 12: Sex of out-of-school children

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
3–4	15	38.5%
5–6	14	35.9%
7–10	10	25.6%
Total	39	100%

Figure 13: Age of out-of-school children

Occupation	Number of respondents	Percentage
Civil servant	7	17.9%
Businessman/woman	5	12.8%
Housewife	27	69.3%
Total	39	100%

Figure 14: Occupation of parents of out-of-school children

Awareness	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	36	92.3%
No	3	7.7%
Total	39	100%

Figure 15: Awareness of Hausa children's folktales/play-songs (out-of-school children)

Narration	Number of respondents	Percentage
Mother	27	69.2%
Father	2	5.1%
Sister	7	18.0%
Brother	2	5.1%
Nil	1	2.6%
Total	39	100%

Figure 16: Who does the narration? (out-of-school children)

Frequency	Number of respondents	Percentage
Regularly	16	41.0%
Not regularly	17	43.6%
Not at all	6	15.4%
Total	39	100%

Figure 17: Frequency of narration (out-of-school children)

Place	Number of respondents	Percentage
Home	30	77.0%
Playground	2	5.1%
Both	0	0
Not at all	7	17.9%
Total	39	100%

Figure 18: Place of narration (out-of-school children)

Sex	Number of respondents	Percentage
Male	3	7.7%
Female	36	92.3%
Total	39	100%

Figure 19: Sex of parents of out-of-school children

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
20–30	19	48.7%
31–40	15	38.5%
41–50	5	12.8%
Total	39	100%

Figure 20: Age of parents of out-of-school children

Number of children	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Nil	0%
2	Nil	0%
3 and above	39	100%
Total	39	100%

Figure 21: Number of children (out-of-school children)

Place	Number of respondents	Percentage
Home	38	97.4%
Playground	0	0
Both	0	0
Not at all	1	2.6%
Total	39	100%

Figure 22: Place of narration (parents of out-of-school children)

Narration	Number of respondents	Percentage
Mother	27	69.2%
Father	2	5.1%
Sister	7	18.0%
Brother	2	5.1%
Nil	1	2.6%
Total	39	100%

Figure 23: Who does the narration? (parents of out-of-school children)

In terms of awareness, 92.3% of out-of-school children and their parents indicated that they are aware of folktales and play-songs and 7.7% indicated that they are not. The frequency of narration figures indicated 41.0% regular narration, 43.6% irregular narration, and a 15.4% response to the 'not at all' option. These percentages suggest that both parents and their out-of-school children are aware of folktales and play-songs and do pay regular attention because the slight difference between regular and irregular narration is just 2.6%. In essence, the percentage shows that the out-of-school children and their parents are putting into practice the narration of folktales and play-songs which suggests that the parents of out-of-school children are advocates of Hausa folktales and play-songs because it is manifest in their responses and those of their children respectively. Nevertheless, the out-of-school parents and their children are not helping the situation because we live in a dynamic and digital world where mass media plays a vital role in our everyday life. Focussing only on the oral aspect of the preservation, sustainability, and continuity of these (folktales and play-songs) oral genres may serve as a threat to the past, present, and future children of Gombe State because such practices do not consider preserving the folktales and play-songs via documentation for immediate and future reference.

Essentially, out-of-school children and their parents should be schooled in this dynamic and digital world where such oral traditions must be harnessed, sustained, and preserved in their original form via the use of

technology. Essentially, Mostert *et al.*'s cultauriture model helps me understand what is going on in the society of the out-of- school children and their parents. In order to change the narrative, harness, sustain, and preserve Hausa folktales and play-songs in Gombe for immediate and future reference in their original form, the adoption of Mostert *et al.*'s model of cultauriture can go a long way. Overtly, cultauriture:

> Endeavours to use technology to overlay the contemporary with the historical to maintain a neutral timeline for the cultural dialogue, and to allow the dialectic between society, culture, and technology to deliver insight into the human journey. Cultauriture does not take sides, it delivers the human journey, not simply to inform but to inform in a contextual manner. (46)

This quote explains the potential of cultauriture to be the new technology that has "the collective frame through which we view the past, present, and future of society and culture" (46).

The occupation of the parents also plays a significant role in shaping their children's views towards life, especially the socio-cultural perspective. For instance, the occupational figure of the parents indicates 69.3% of mothers are housewives which is the highest for parents of out-of-school children in comparison to their counterparts in the other group, 17.9% of parents are civil servants, and 12.8% are businessmen/women. In my opinion, the children are cared for and supported by homemakers with limited education and minimal exposure to the advancements of the modern digital age.

Open-ended questions analysis of parents of school-going children and their children

For entertainment	1
Retain them at home	1
They are not interested in them	2
Not to distract them from studying	2
Total	6

Figure 24: Reasons for narrating folktales and play-songs, or not (parents of school-going children)

Activity	Number of respondents
Telling jokes and being nostalgic	3
Watching television	8
Playing with toys	3
Reading	3
Watching cartoons	7
Playing football, or videogames	4
Riding bicycle	2
Total	30

Figure 25: Alternatives to folktales and play-songs (parents of school-going children)

Activity	Number of respondents
Watch cartoons (*Power Rangers*, *Frost*, *Frozen*, *Sophia the First*, *Angelina Ballerina*, etc.)	6
Playing with dolls together with siblings	3
Watch Arewa 24 (*Akili and Me*, *Ubongo Kids*, *Zauren Yara*, *Sapne Suhane*, *Agent Raghav*, *Dadin Kowa*, *Gari ya Waye*, etc.)	8
Mobile phone games (Subway Surf, Candy Crush, Temple Run, Angela, etc.)	2
Play video games and PlayStation (FIFA19, GTA, PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER)	2
Football	1
House construction with rubber blocks	1
Watch Zee Cinema/ Zee One (*Ra One*, *Doom*, *King of Hearts*, etc.)	2
Local games; physical games (race, police and thief, etc.)	2
Riding bicycle	1
Reading	2
Total	30

Figure 26: Alternatives to folktales and play-songs (school-going children)

In terms of importance, a considerable number of children (eight out of 30) watch cartoons and children's educational programmes, including a Hausa programme titled *Zauren Yara* (Children's Corridor) that features children's folktale and play-song narration, demonstration, and dramatization with an embellishment of cultural attires and nuances. This singular act showcases cultauriture in action where it "[…] addresses all aspects of technology, culture, orality and aurality, and how culture is manifest, maintained, and developed in a digital age (Mostert *et al.* 39–40)". It also aims to bring together the aspects of technology, society, and culture in order to promote cultural sustainability and cultural entrepreneurship (43). The action/attitude of the school-going children puts cultauriture in practice. Arewa 24 is a satellite TV channel that is based in Kano, Nigeria with a goal to provide original content, including comedies and children's programmes that will be created, developed, and produced by Nigerians.

To bring the example home, and excerpt from Mostert *et al.*'s adoption and application of Bijker's table of distinction between standard and constructivism images of Science and Technology (S&T) to the ideas associated with cultauriture in the table below showcase cultauriture in action.

Standard view of S&T (Bijker)	Constructivist view of S&T (Bijker)	Cultauriture
Social needs as well as social and environmental costs can be established unambiguously.	Needs and costs of various kinds are also socially constructed, depending on the context relevant to social groups, varying with perspective.	Recognition of the complexities of society and culture and the need to apply technological solutions cost effectively and in an appropriate manner to meet diverse needs and aspirations of the society.

Figure 27: Views of Science and Technology (S&T) and cultauriture (Mostert *et al.* 41)

This table puts Zauren Yara as the recognised complexity that demonstrates cultauriture in action. Arewa 24 recognises the Hausa society's need to apply technological solutions to its culture in an appropriate manner in order to meet diverse needs and aspirations of the society, in the words of Mostert *et al.* (41). In essence, Zauren Yara effectively entertains and educates the children on language development, cultural preservation, promotion, and sustainability.

On the other hand, the school-going children's responses portray the real breeding of digital children in the sense that the responses of 20 children out of 30 indicated instances of media influence in their lives. This assertion is affirmed in their responses of watching cartoons, playing games via mobile phones and PlayStation, and watching the famous Arewa 24 and Zee One/Zee Cinema. This indicates that the parents of the school-

going children are aware of folktales and play-songs but do not partake in the narration, they only encourage the children to watch such programmes via satellite television because it captures the attention of the children more than the oral narrative. Moreover, the use of cultauriture in showcasing children's play-songs and folklore using film techniques unconsciously lures both parents and children into watching it. This entertains and educates the children, thus imbibing the necessary cultural norms the society is willing to pass across.

Open-ended questions analysis of parents of out-of-school children and their children

Reasons	Number of respondents
Narrate/teach for entertainment	11
Narrate/teach only when excited	4
I do not engage in any	5
Preservation of culture	6
Transfer of culture from generation to generation	4
They are not interested in them	5
Busy not at home mostly	4
Total	39

Figure 28: Reasons for narrating folktales and play-songs, or not (parents of out-of-school children)

Activity	Number of respondents
Watch television for entertainment	6
Watch cartoons (*Tom and Jerry*)	4
Give stipends for video game houses	4
Total	14

Figure 29: Alternatives to folktales and play-songs (parents of out-of-school children)

Activity	Number of respondents
Watch television for entertainment (*GMC & NTA Gombe*)	6
Play video games at video game houses	4
Go outside the home and play with peers	4
Total	14

Figure 30: Alternatives to folktales and play-songs (out-of-school children)

The out-of-school children pose a better chance of sustaining the Hausa children's folktales and play-songs in Gombe, but through the single oral medium. This is apparent as 25 out of the 39 children interviewed engage in folktale and play-song narration. Therefore, the preservation, transfer of culture from one generation to another, and entertainment is carried out using one-way traffic where the audience can only rely on memory for telling and retelling which can fail the narrator anytime. In what seems to be situational irony, the practice of folktale and play-song narration favours the parents over the children in the context of interaction in a digitised world. In fact, the out-of-school children partake in listening to the narration but they prefer to watch television stations owned by the state like Gombe Media Corporation (GMC) and the Nigerian Television Authority Gombe (NTA Gombe) that air cartoons like *Tom and Jerry* or to pay a stipend to play video games in video game houses which captivates their attention more because the dissemination channel is not only oral but a combination of audio-visual media in a technologized way. More so, the education and entertainment are more satisfying here. This finding thus points to the use/application of technology in sustaining and preserving the culture of folktales and play-songs and corroborates Mostert *et al.*'s discovery of the ubiquitous presence of cultauriture, serving as an enabler for all things cultural, where technology can "enhance and support the locating of cultural artefacts within relevant social contexts" (Mostert *et al.* 43). Explicitly, the out-of-school children have an understanding of the paradigms

between technology and culture; it is now up to the parents and the state government to locate the cultural artefacts that will be relevant in promoting Hausa children's folktales and play-songs via the media in order to enhance the lives of the children of Gombe.

The out-of-school children's parents do not perceive their children's attitude towards folktales and play-songs narration a problem whatsoever, given the deep syncretism of their culture and modernisation in an ever-dynamic society. The fact is that cultural dynamism is an undeniable fact—whatever explanation is given— and it is clear that this finding indicates that cultauriture has something to offer to the current global discourse on "how technology is applied to culture" which is "invariably empirically-positivist in nature" (Mostert *et al.* 38). The understanding of the relationship between culture and technology, therefore, is quite important to understanding our contemporary world.

Conclusion

My overarching preoccupation in this paper has been the study of the state of Hausa children's folktales and play-songs in Gombe. I have discovered that globalisation influences the narration of these oral genres. Via the analysis of the data collected, we unveiled that more than 90% of the school-going children are aware of folktales and play-songs but more than 50% do not partake in narration at all as a result of rapid changes and transformation in their society due to new technology. This is a finding which corroborates Wise's (qtd in Mostert *et al.* 39) argument that our contemporary world can only be understood if we understand the relationship between culture and technology. For example, a nonchalant attitude towards narration shows hybridity in the characters of both parents and children as a result of globalisation. They understand that they can evaluate their options and negotiate better choices. They choose the option of Kaschula's means of preservation, language development, and promotion of oral culture through effective digitalisation of the three-way dialectics between the primary orality, literacy, and technology. However, a challenge was discovered in the place of narration where schools that serve as second agents of socialisation record 0% because they do not incorporate the teaching of oral cultural tradition in the curriculum. A suggestion is advanced of using cultauriture in the curriculum for the preservation and promotion of culture, education, and language development. The out-of-school children on the other hand are also aware of folktales and play-songs and partake in narration but only through oral means. The dissemination through oral means may serve as a threat to the future of these oral genres because the oral resources can easily go extinct as they are not properly documented.

Interestingly, the school-going children who engage in watching satellite television instead of folktale and play-song narration, especially Arewa 24 that features *Zauren Yara*, demonstrate cultauriture in action which effectively entertains and educates them on language development, cultural preservation, promotion, and sustainability. The out-of-school children enjoy watching television and playing video games more than engaging in narration because the combination of audio-visual media and technology in action is more captivating than oral dissemination.

The state-owned television channels (GMC and NTA Gombe) can adapt children's educational programmes like *Zauren Yara* in order to bridge the gap between the school-going and out-of-school children. Schools in Gombe should introduce storytelling for pupils to enhance their language fluency and the development of culture and traditions. For example, in the primary school system, cultauriture can be used to document the children's folktales and play-songs and should be incorporated into the curriculum. In addition, I recommend the idea of establishing a grant fund to support the introduction of Nigerian oral literature into the world of digital media by the Gombe State government. The platform will give not only scholars, but also the creators of cartoons and comic books, the opportunity to promote and commemorate the rich heritage of folklore in Gombe and Nigeria at large.

Notes
1. Iwoketok's inaugural lecture is referring to children living in provincial areas in Nigeria, precisely the children of the south-south region as it is the focus of the inaugural lecture. I stand to be corrected but I feel each child applies Iwoketok's viewpoint based on their perspectives, exposure, and experiences.

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Gospel Àpàlà music in African Christian worship: Thematic and stylistic analysis

Esther Titilayo Ọjọ

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Music is an indispensable tool of cultural transmission. Considering the vast nature of oral traditions, of which indigenous music is encapsulated, many studies on Nigerian indigenous music have concentrated on Jùjú, Ìjálá, Dadakúàdà, Èsà, and Àpàlà. However, much research still needs to be done on Gospel Àpàlà, a variant of Traditional Àpàlà which was popularised by Hárúnà Ishọlá and Àyìnlá Ọmọwúrá, noted for its highly proverbial folklore, blended with percussive instruments of which *dùndún* drum and *sẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀* play leading roles to give aesthetic appeal. In this research, therefore, I investigate and document Gospel Àpàlà as it translates from traditional Àpàlà into praise and worship of God, in order to identify and describe its unique style and communicative functions, especially in these changing times of modernisation and globalisation. Drawing on systemic functional linguistics and sociology of literature, in this article I provide an analysis and interpretation of six Àpàlà Gospel songs from three Àpàlà Gospel artistes: Sadé Ọ̀sọbà, Yọmí Ọlábísí, and Boiz Ọlọ́run. I portray the relevance of Àpàlà music both in Christian worship and events and gathering. Themes in Àpàlà Gospel include praises, thanksgiving and adoration to God, salvation/acknowledging Jesus, God's greatness and miracles, forgiveness, unity, holiness, heaven, love among brethren, commitment, and dedication to God's work. My findings reveal, among others, that Gospel Àpàlà music encapsulates indigenous knowledge contained in oral literature. I identify stylistic devices such as repetition, rhetorical question, personification, loan words, code-mixing/code-switching, and proverbs which garnish the metamorphosed music and conclude that Àpàlà has metamorphosed from traditional Àpàlà into Gospel Christian worship. **Keywords**: stylistics, deviation, Gospel Àpàlà music, Christian worship, oral literature.

Introduction

Music is an essential phenomenon and a vital part of everyday life in African societies. Vidal (28) states that over the ages, music "has proved to be one of the indispensable arts cultivated by [humans] for growth, nurture and transfer of [their] institution and value to future generations". In the same vein, Isaac illustrates that "the society places a high premium on music and by extension musician[s]". These claims further foreground music as a tool for cultural preservation. Music is quite important in the lives of Africans who make music at home, at social functions and gatherings, at event centres, and in the marketplaces. Music accompanies and celebrates festivals, social rituals, religious gatherings, and political rallies to mobilise people for solidarity. It also involves ceremonial life such as rites of passage, birth and christening, marriage, initiation into adulthood, housewarming, chieftaincy, death, and mourning. Music has roles in healing; therapy; educative purposes; visits of important dignitaries; announcements of the presence of important dignitaries such as kings, chiefs, and governors; and important personalities in society. To be human is to make music, therefore the music we make says a great deal about who we are, or at least who we think we are. Music projects African values with various traditions accompanied by a melody.

Music is a universal phenomenon among the Yorùbá of South-West Nigeria. Extensive studies have been carried out on indigenous music such as Jùjú, Ìjálá, Dadakúàdà, Èsà, Sákárá, Wáká, and Àpàlà. Yet not much attention has been paid to Gospel Àpàlà in African Christian worship. Furthermore, Àpàlà's metamorphosis from traditional to Gospel Àpàlà, which involves the worship and praise of God in churches, is not generally

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captured. This lacuna in knowledge is what I aim to bridge in this article by studying the music of three Gospel Àpàlà artistes, namely: Ṣadé Ọ̀ṣọba, Yọmí Ọlábísí, and Boiz Ọlọ́run, thereby foregrounding their contributions to the development and preservation of Àpàlà, an indigenous Yorùbá musical heritage. In this study therefore, from a stylistic point of view, I investigate Gospel Àpàlà, a variant of Àpàlà which is an Islam-influenced genre, which is indigenous to the Yorùbá people in Nigeria and noted for its highly proverbial folklore, with a view to identifying and describing its unique style and communicative functions. With the aid of transcribed albums of three Àpàlà artistes, I also look at stylistic devices which garnish Gospel Àpàlà music and anchor my research on the theoretical perspectives of systemic functional linguistics and the sociology of literature.

I document Àpàlà, especially in these changing times of modernisation and globalisation. In this article I argue that Gospel Àpàlà music in Christian worship has not received the attention it deserves.

Àpàlà: Origin, development, and metamorphosis

Scholars like Mustapha, Euba, Olúsọjí, Làsísì, Olúdáre, Ajétúnmọbí and Adépọ̀jù, Ọmọ́jọlà, Adémowó, and Ajíkòbi have examined the origin and development of Àpàlà music. Àpàlà is a Yorùbá popular music whose origin could be traced to many sources cutting across such disciplines as music, linguistics, history, religion, and so on. Mustapha and Olúsọjí ("Nigerian Dances for piano") argue that Àpàlà evolved from the indigenous music of the Yorùbá and can be regarded as folk songs which later metamorphosed into social music. Àpàlà is a socio-religious music with a prominent instrumental part and a vocal accompaniment rooted in Yorùbá philosophy and poetry. Àpàlà is of the indigenous musical heritage transmitted from generation to generation, performed, recreated, and promoted by the musicians, thus giving the Yorùbá people a sense of their cultural history and identity. It is worth noting that *sakárà*, *Àpàlà*, *Wàkà*, *dadakúàdà*, and *fújì*, which are largely influenced by Islamic and more recently Western cultures, are new developments in Yorùbá dance music song poetry. It developed as a non-liturgical Islamic music used during Muslim festivals, from *weré* and *wàkà* musical forms, used by Muslims to wake up the faithful to eat *sàárì* (an early morning meal during the Ramadan fast) and welcome pilgrims back from the hajj pilgrimage in Mecca (Ọmọ́jọlà; Olúdáre). Euba also argues that Àpàlà began during the fasting season when young Muslims got together to perform music to awaken people for the early morning meal known as *sàárì*, while some scholars (Ọmọ́jọlà; Làsísì) admit that Àpàlà has no particular date of origin, and that it has been in existence since 1930 and was called *eré ṣowọ́ b'eti* (cover your ear). According to Ajétúnmọbí, Osiyale, and Sogbesan, Àpàlà has been in existence since before the likes of *Muráínà*, *Àláò*, and even *Ligali Mùkáíbà*, but it was popularised by Hárúnà Ìshọlá and Àyìnlá Ọmọwúrà. Therefore, the origin and development of traditional Àpàlà music cannot be complete without reference to Hárúnà Ìshọlá and Àyìnlá Ọmọwúrà.

In interviews I conducted with Mr Babáwálé Gàníyù on 16 April and 25 September 2020, he mentioned that Ẹdẹ is the birthplace of Àpàlà and that a man called Balógun and his son Tìjání were renowned Àpàlà singers as early as 1938. Olúsọjí ("Comparative Analysis of the Islam influenced Apala, Waka and Sakara Popular Music of the Yoruba"), on the other hand, suggests that Àpàlà music started long before 1938. Àjàdí Ìlọrin, for instance, was remembered to have played Àpàlà music as early as 1930 (Ajétunmọbí, Babatunde and Sogbesan 38). Whatever position is true, what is certain is that Àpàlà evolved among different Yorùbá sub-groups that drew their inspirations from popular Yorùbá musical forms at different times. This explains why there are more than three different styles or forms of Àpàlà music, as dictated by the frequency of sound production and combination of instruments used at different times. Each individual developed his own Àpàlà version among the people of his community, getting inspiration from other Yorùbá music, local experiences, and creative ingenuity. According to Ajétúnmọbí, Osiyale, and Sogbesan, among such styles of Àpàlà are: Àpàlà San-an (cool beat)—Hárúnà Ìshọlá; Àpàlà Songa (hot beat)—Àyìnlá Ọmọwúrà; Àpàlà Wiro (in between *Apala san-an and Songa*)"; Àpàlà Igunnu (mixture of beat)—Musiliu Haruna Ishola and Àpàlà Ọlalomi (mixture of beat)—Àyìnlá Ọmọwúrà. (39)

Whichever form it takes, Àpàlà music is noted for its highly proverbial folklore blended with percussive instruments of which drums play a leading role. An Àpàlá ensemble consists of *Àgídìgbo* (a thumb piano having four or five keys and a rectangular box resonator), *ekere* (a gourd rattle), *agogo* (metal gong), *Àkúbà* (membrane drum), as well as two or three king drums. The Yorùbá people referto Àpàlà as "*Pálapàla ilu* àpàlà" (Àpàlà drum; of different sounds to form a whole). This implies that Àpàlà music is a conglomeration of various types of songs and drums to produce a unique whole. What this signifies is that Àpàlà music does not have a clear-cut identity or origin per-se but is a representation of other musical variances. In these present times, Àpàlà traditional music now has a variant which is Gospel Àpàlà. This is performed in church services and various entertainments. The

instrument of Àpàlà is still the same with Gospel Àpàlà. Gospel Àpàlà is a variant of Àpàlà music used in churches for the elevation of God's name. Generally, the stylistic features that are used in Gospel Àpàlà music include repetition, rhetorical question, personification, loan words, code-mixing/code-switching, and proverbs, among others. Instruments of Gospel Àpàlà include a rattle (ṣẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀), thumb piano (àgídìgbó), and a bell (agogo), as well as two or three king drums. In the present times, traditional Àpàlà has effectively moved to Gospel Àpàlà.

Systemic functional linguistics and sociology of literature

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) was propounded by M. A. K. Halliday. SFL is an interpretive framework that views language as a strategic meaning making resource. This means that it is an important instrument for interpreting texts (Halliday; Matthiessen). The term "functional" symbolises that language performs many functions, hence it is functional. This model (SFL) accounts for how the language is used, whether spoken or written. SFL is functional and semantic rather than formal in orientation. It is bordered on how language is used in spoken or written form and this takes place in contexts of use. Language is viewed as a social activity that has evolved in the functions it serves and also in the structures which showcase these functions. In other words, the model operates in the context of use, which is the environment, situation, or circumstance of use, and not in isolated sentences or words. SFL is based on the context of situation and the context of culture and, in this article, my focus is on context of culture. Apala music as performed in the culture of Yorùbá society—which includes views, beliefs, emotions, psychology, and philosophy. Since culture is the way of life of a people, their language therefore reflects and transmits the cultural norms and values of the group. Context of culture is an eye-opener to the socio-cultural rules or codes of behaviour which one must understand in order to communicate appropriately in the society. SFL is a sociological theory which focuses on the sociological aspects of language description, and it is also an interpretive and contextual model.

Sociology of literature, on the other hand, is a scientific theory propounded by Hippolyte Taine (1828–1893). Sociology of literature as a whole deals with how society is represented in the literary work and the interaction of literature with other social institutions. The theory's focus is to show the symbiosis, interconnectivity, and interaction between literature and all the sociological activities occurring in society. Ògúnsínà reveals that literary works do not exist in isolation from the society that produces them, and that literature burdens itself with human expression, human experience, and human behaviour since man is a product of his society. Aside from this, literature employs language to represent the happenings of a particular society. As the name suggests, sociology of literature is a fusion of two separate disciplines—sociology and literature. As literature uses language as tools to reproduce human experience the society, the literary Àpàlà artistes produce songs by using materials from the society which are the property of the society. Sociology comprises of the study of social relationships and the outcome of such relationships for on-going systems, and the process of social change. Sociology burdens itself with all that happens to human beings as a result of their relationship with one another in the society (Barber 43). It is an art of words which entertains, enlightens, educates, and instructs—thereby projecting the experience and behaviour of man in the society. While sociology examines social institutions of family, marriage, economic, religious, and political structures (which form the social structures), literature involves the social world of man and his desire to change the same. Therefore, the field of sociology of literature concerns the study of society, and the social life of people cannot be discussed in isolation, since the culture of a people is reflected in their social life. In this study, Gospel Àpàlà music is a product—inclusive of content and language—of the society, and it is sung by, and for, the people of the society.

Method and literature review

This is a qualitative research study which adopts a historical and descriptive analysis for its research design. This historical method traces the origin of Gospel Àpàlà, which is a variant of Àpàlà music performed only by the Yorùbá people of South-West Nigeria, its development, and the exponents. Moreover, it focuses on the contribution of three Gospel Àpàlà artistes, namely: Ọ̀ṣọbà, Ọlábísí, and Olórun. The descriptive method engages a content analysis of the musical structure of Àpàlà music and particularly that of the three artistes, highlighting how their creative processes and performances of the genre in its authentic form has aided in promoting and conserving this indigenous musical and cultural heritage in order to safeguard its loss to modernity. My field work consisted of identifying selected Gospel Àpàlà artistes, attending their performances and recording them on audio devices, and thereafter the rigorous activity of transcribing, and analysing the performances. I also conducted

unstructured oral interviews with five respondents between the ages of 59 and 82 to get their views on the two different kinds of Àpàlà music.

In the study I adopt the views of Beier in his understanding of the term 'music' when he explains how the Yorùbá people engage music in all their endeavours:

> There is no occasion in Yorùbá life that is not accompanied by songs. Births, marriage, house warming and funeral are all occasions for lyrical songs of great beauty. Everyday life is also accompanied by a great deal of impromptu singing, a kind of musical thinking, in which the singer puts everything to tune which happens to pass through his head. (23)

Beier's argument regarding the Yorùbá engagement of musical composition in all spheres of life is germane as nothing happens whatsoever that doesn't prompt the Yorùbá people to sing. Mention one area of human participation in life, and the Yorùbá people always have a ready-made song that can neatly fit into that domain. It is pertinent to also consider the contribution of Nketia's (*African Music in Ghana*) belief of Africans and music, of which the Yorùbá society is an integral part. He explains thus:

> The African life and music are inseparable. Music accompanies him in the worship of his gods. The African gods (divinities), some of whom are deified heroes, and each with his own praise chants, chanted in his praise by his own established cult and devotees at worships and special rituals, serve intermediary purposes. The African believes in the existence of a Supreme God, who is the "Prime mover" and maker of all that exists. The African approach Him in worship, praising Him and making their request known through the gods. And in doing this, song is mostly adopted. (4)

The above statement explains that music is one of those tools Africans makes use of during the worship of their gods or deities. It is used to invoke the spirit of the gods, to make supplications, and to pray in terms of people's need. The power of music is brought to the lime-light here. This implies that there is a strong spiritual bond in music generally. In another vein, Nketia (*Music of Africa*) tries to categorise the African songs. He ponders the category of songs that he terms the 'songs of the elders'. He stresses that these types of songs remind one of the past, and it requires some kind of knowledge to understand them: "One of the most important categories of songs found in African societies, may be described as 'songs of the elders'. They remind people of the past and values of a society and require some knowledge of oral tradition before one can understand them" (196).

Nketia's position here is very straightforward and can be likened to the Yorùbá songs meant for the elderly people, *Orin àgbà* (songs of the elders). This type of song, unlike contemporary music, takes more experience of life to digest and understand, hence they are mainly understood by the elders. Apart from this, there are songs referred to as *Orin awo* (songs of the initiates). Omíbìyí gives a detailed explanation of the effect of music on the Yorùbá life and the categories of songs:

> Among the Yorùbá of Nigeria, as well as other ethnic groups in Africa, music is an integral and functional part of daily activities. It permeates every level of traditional life be it social, religious or ceremonial. Consequently, there exist a large repertory of both vocal and instrumental music such as various songs for entertainment, songs for individual and group labour, praise songs for kings, deities and other important people to mention a few. (492)

Wachsmann gives an insightful explanation as to how the African child imbibed the spirit of musicality from the mother at cradle. He asserts:

> He starts off on his mother's back and for a long time he never leaves it [...] When she speaks he must feel the vibrations of her body, when she pounds a mortar he must be aware of the muscular effort of lifting the pestle; he probably is aware of the actual thud of the pestle reaching the bottom of the mortar. Here an experience of rhythm is introduced. (499)

Ìdòwú supports Omíbìyí's views about the African take on music, providing further evidence that Africans always accompany everything in life with music:

> We have the songs. These constitute a rich heritage of all Africa. Africans are always singing; and in their singing and poetry, they express themselves: All the joys and sorrows of their hearts, and their hopes and fears about the future, find outlet. Singing is always a vehicle conveying certain sentiments or truth [...] in each people's songs, there is a wealth of material for the scholars who will patiently sift and collate. (85)

Awólàlú and Dòpámú (qtd in Ajíkòbì) compliment the above statements on music thus: "In all, songs tell the stories of the people's past [...] they also express the joy and sorrows of the people, their assurances, hopes and fears of the future and life after death" (1).

One important point he tries to lay emphasis on with the above statement is the fact that a good relationship exists between dance, drum, and music.

Olúkójù (118) explains the various ways and manners by which one can make use of songs or music. He outlines those ways based on life phenomenon and human endeavour, and views music as a vehicle that transports our thoughts for people to hear in terms of joy, sadness, or during praise and thanksgiving. He attests to the fact that music serves as a therapeutic tool to heal and ease the mind of the bereaved and goes further to explain that music serves as a motivational tool that boosts and encourages the mind of the African towards any physical engagements such as war or during stressful work.

Themes of Gospel Àpàlà
Praises, thanksgiving, and adoration of God
This theme is common to Gospel Àpàlà artistes as it is their usual practice to make it a priority. Before they commence their performance, they give praises to God for the gift of life, their audience, and their hosts' invitation to minister. The praises they offer include the gift of salvation which speaks volumes of deep knowledge of Jesus. It is obvious that praises permeate their performances.

Salvation/acknowledging Jesus
In the excerpt below, Òṣọbà, a female Gospel Àpàlà artist, sings about salvation thus: "Òré e kálọ, wá lọ tọ́ Jésù wò" (Friends follow me, come and taste Jesus)":

Lílé: Òré e kálọ, wá lọ tọ́ Jésù wò)
Ẹgbẹ̀: Ká jumọ̀jumọ gbé Jésù sókè
Lílé: òré ẹlẹ́ṣẹ̀ táráyé ń fẹ́
Ẹgbẹ̀: Òré e kálọ, wá lọ tọ́ Jésù wò
Lílé: Ẹni tí ò bá ṣá ti ni Jésù o)
   Ó ti dájú, o ń fina ṣeré
Ẹgbẹ̀: Dájúdájú, olúwa rẹ̀ á fimú dánrin)
   Á gba pé bẹ́líìtì yàtọ sí bàntẹ́ ò e
Lílé: Ẹ̀yin ẹlẹ́gbẹ́ mo ní
   Ẹ ṣá à ń gbo'hùn lẹ́nu mi n na
   À ní o gba Jésù,
   O lọ ń gbémú
Ẹgbẹ̀: O lọ ń ṣapá kọ́ndu)
Lílé: Àánú rẹ̀ ló ṣe mí, mi ò fẹ́ ko' o jó nínú iná
   Ẹni tí ò bá ṣá ti ní Jésù
   Ẹni tí ò bá ṣá ti ní Jésù
Ẹgbẹ̀: Ó ti dájú, o ń fina ṣeré
Lílé: Dájúdájú, o ń fina ṣeré
Ẹgbẹ̀: Á gbàgbé pé bẹ́líìtì yàtọ sí bàntẹ

Lead: Friends follow me, come and taste Jesus)
Chorus: Let us together lift Jesus up
Lead: Friend of sinners that the world loves
Chorus: Friends follow me, come and taste Jesus)
Lead: Anyone who does not have Jesus)
   Certainly, he is playing with fire
Chorus: Certainly, he will suffer seriously
   He will know for sure, that belt is different from charmed belt.
Lead: My esteemed comrades
   At least you are hearing my voice
   We implore you to accept Jesus,
   You are proving stubborn.
 Chorus: You are proving arrogant
Lead: I am only pitying you, I don't want you to burn inside fire
   Anyone who does not have Jesus
   Anyone who does not have Jesus

Chorus: Certainly he is playing with fire
Lead: Certainly he is playing with fire
Chorus: He will know for sure that belt is different from apron.

From the excerpt above, the artist projects Jesus as a friend of sinners whom the world loves (*òré̩ e̩lé̩s̩è̩ táráyé ń fé̩*). She also spells out the spiritual implication of not accepting Jesus such as playing with fire and encounters with poverty/suffering (*Ó ti dájú, ó ń fina s̩eré*). She counsels people not to be stubborn and arrogant. The next example is titled, "Since I've known Jesus, I have liberty".

Lílé̩: Since I've known Jesus, I have liberty
È̩gbè: There is no tíró̩bù fún mi rárá)
Lílé̩: Afo̩lás̩adé̩
   Since, I've known Jesus, I have liberty
È̩gbè: There is no tíró̩bù fún mi rárá.
Lílé̩: Gán án ní á fi jí, ìró̩yìn ò tafojubà
È̩gbè: Gán án ní á fi jí, ìró̩yìn ò tafojubà
Lìlé̩: Gbogbo ènìyàn e̩ sáré wá
È̩gbè: Gbogbo ènìyàn e̩ sáré wá
Lílé̩: The difference is clear, I té̩lì you
È̩gbè: O̩ga ní Jé̩su wa ló̩jó̩kó̩jó̩
Lílé̩: Mo wòkun, mo wò̩sà
È̩gbè: Olúwa tóbi
Lílé̩: Ó dá sánmò̩
È̩gbè: Ó tún déja sínú ibú
Lílé̩: Dájúdájú pé kò s̩ó̩ba bíi TOlúwa
È̩gbè: Dájúdájú pé kò s̩ó̩ba bíi TOlúwa
Lílé̩: Olupèse s̩áá ni Jé̩sù
Egbe: Ó kú ká wa lè ní igbàlà
Lílé̩: Jé̩sù mi o
È̩gbè: Since I've known Jesus, I have liberty
Lílé̩: I have liberty o
È̩gbè: There is no tíró̩bù fún mi rárá
Lílé̩: Bé̩yin bá forí s̩o àpáta)
È̩gbè: Ó ti dájú, fífó̩ ló mí a fo̩ dájúdájú, kò s̩Ó̩ba bíi tOlúwa)
Lílé̩: Anú re̩ ló s̩e mí ló jé̩ kí n bá e̩ damò̩ràn
È̩gbè: Ò bá ní Jé̩sù, Kóo lOlúwa.
Lílé̩: S̩é̩ e̩ rí e̩ni bá ní Jé̩sù kó lOlúwa
Egbe: S̩é̩ e̩ rí e̩ni bá ní Jé̩sù nínú ayé rè̩
Lílé̩: Ìye̩n dájú.
È̩gbè: Àmó̩ e̩ni ì bá ní Jé̩sù nínú ayé rè̩.
Lílé̩: Di e̩ni à mú s̩eré fún sàtánì
   Since I've known Jesus, I have liberty o
È̩gbè: There is no tíró̩bù fún mi rárá

Lead: Since I have known Jesus I have liberty
Chorus: There is no trouble for me at all
Lead: Afolásadé
   Since I've known Jesus, I have liberty
Chorus: There is no trouble for me at all
Lead: Seeing is believing, news cannot be compared to eyewitness
Chorus: Seeing is believing, news cannot be compared to eyewitness
Lead: Everybody come quickly
Chorus: Everybody come quickly
Lead: The difference is clear, I tell you
Chorus: Our Jesus is the master any time
Lead: I look at the seas and rivers
Chorus: God is big

Lead: He created the firmament

Chorus: He also created fish in the depths of the sea

Lead: Surely, there is no king like Lord

Chorus: Surely, there is no king like Lord

Lead: The provider is Jesus

Chorus: He died that we may have salvation

Lead: My Jesus

Chorus: Since I've known Jesus

Lead: I have liberty

Chorus: There is no trouble for me at all

Lead: If an egg collides with a stone)

Chorus: It is certain, it will break, certainly there is no king like God)

Lead: I pity you, that is why I'm counselling you

Chorus: You would have accepted Jesus, have God

Lead: You see, anyone who does not have Jesus, has no God

Chorus: You see, anyone who has Jesus in his life

Lead: Certainly,

Chorus: But anyone who doesn't have Jesus in his life

Lead: Becomes a play person for Satan

    Since I've known Jesus, I have liberty

Chorus: There is no trouble for me at all.

In the above example, she emphasises confidently that she has not encountered trouble since she encountered Jesus, thereby sending out such invitation to accept Jesus into their lives. She expresses that, since she received Jesus, she has never been disappointed.

    The following example is titled "Orúkọ Jésù Làwá Ńlò" (It is the name of Jesus that we use):

Lílé̩: Orúkọ Jésù là wa ńlò

Ègbè: Ìwọ dìrọ̀ mọ́ Jésù

Lílé̩: A᷄ á fiọ́ ṣe wọ́ńdà

Ègbè: A᷄ á fiọ́ ṣe wọ́ńdà

Lílé̩: Olúwa ni transformer tó ńtọnà)

    Kẹ́ni má nìí rò poógùn ni, orí ni.

Ègbè: Kẹ́ni má nìí rò poógùn ni:

Lílé̩: You na de du mi well well

Ègbè: Jesus you too much

Lílé̩: You na de du me well well

Ègbè You carry my matter

Lílé̩: You carry my matter for your head

Ègbè: You na dey do me well well

Lead: It is the name of Jesus, we use

Chorus: You uphold Jesus

Lead: He will turn you to wonder

Chorus: He will turn you to wonder

Lead: God is the transformer that is bringing light

    A selfish person thinks it is medicine, it is destiny

Chorus: A selfish person thinks it is medicine

Lead: You are doing me well

Chorus: Jesus, you are too much

Lead: You are doing me well

Chorus: You shoulder my matter

Lead: You shoulder my matter as a priority

Chorus: You are doing me well

From Ọ̀ṣọbà's examples above, she mostly sings about her salvation and the liberty she has in Christ Jesus. She narrates her encounters since she came in contact with Jesus and says there is no trouble for her (*There is no tírọ̀bù fún mi rárá*). She mentions the differences between her former life and her present experiences.

Ọlábísí, a male Gospel Àpàlà artist, also makes the theme of appreciation to God his major pre-occupation as he sings: "Ladies & Gentlemen, Ẹ sọpá ijó" (Let us dance):

> *Lílé: Ladies & Gentlemen, Ẹ sọ̀pá ijó*
> *Ẹ̀gbè: O my Jesus mo love rẹ gan-an*
> *Lílé: Wàká jéjẹ́ ọmọ Jésù)*
> *Ẹ̀gbè: Wàká small small*
> *Lílé: Wàká jéjẹ́*
> *Ẹ̀gbè: Wàká jéjẹ́*
> *Lílé: Léfù mi ti change mo ti elevate*
> *Ẹ̀gbè Mo ti elevate*
> *Lílé: Mí o níí pẹ́ gbà visa lọ sí ìlú ọba*
> *Ẹ̀gbè: Ẹ bá mi dúpẹ́*
> *Lílé: Ayé mi ti change*
> *Ẹ̀gbè: Mo ti elevate*
> *Lílé: Sànmọ̀rí ẹ dìde, ẹ jẹ́ á jó, o yá ṣọpẹ́*
> *Ẹ̀gbè: Gbẹ́sẹ̀ jẹ́ ká yin Oluwa*
> *Lílé: Rọra gbẹ́sẹ̀, ẹ jẹ́ ká yin Bàbá Ẹ̀gbè: Gbẹ́ bodì rẹ̀, jẹ́ ká yin bàbá o*

> Lead: Ladies and gentlemen let us dance
> Chorus: Oh my Jesus I love you very much
> Lead: Walk gently, child of Jesus
> Chorus: Walk softy, softly
> Lead: Walk gently
> Chorus: Walk gently
> Lead: My level has changed I am elevated
> Chorus: I am elevated
> Lead: I will soon collect my Visa to overseas.
> Chorus: Join me to thank God
> Lead: My life has changed
> Chorus: I am elevated
> Lead: Important dignitaries, stand up, let us dance, please, rejoice
> Chorus: Lift up your leg, let us praise God
> Lead: Lift up your legs gently let us praise father
> Chorus: Lift up your body, let us praise father

Ọlábísí makes appreciation to God his major priority as seen above. He employs loan words from English and Pidgin English. He expresses faith in Christ by using faith language such as *Léfù mi ti change* (my level has changed), *mo ti elevate* (I am elevated), *Mí o nípẹ́ gbà visa lọ sí ìlú ọba* (I shall soon obtain visa abroad), *Ayé mi ti change* (my life has changed), *Rọra* (lift your leg gently), *gbẹ́sẹ̀* (lift your leg), *ẹ jẹ́ ká yin Bàbá* (let's praise Father), *Gbẹ́ bodi rẹ̀* (lift up your body), *jẹ́ ka yin bàbá o* let's praise Fathero)". This use of language portrays him as an international man in this age of civilisation and globalisation.

Another male Gospel Àpàlà artist, Olọ́run, focuses on appreciation and gratitude to God. The name "Boiz Olọ́run" means "God's Boys". This implies that "God's boys" is a special name chosen by the leader of the group. Just like other Gospel Àpàlà artists, Olọ́run's preoccupation is praises and adoration to the Lord. He mentions many negative experiences that God shields one from as in the examples below: "*Olọ́run tí o jẹ́ o ya wèrè*" (God that does not allow you to run mad), "*Olọ́run tí o jẹ́ kí ṣọ́jà nà ọ́*" (God that does not allow soldier to beat you), "*Olọ́run tí o jẹ́ kí o rìn lọ*" (God that does not allow you to get lost) in the song "Olọ́run tí o jẹ́ o ya wèrè" (God that does not allow you to run mad):

Líle: Ọlọ́run tí ò jẹ́ o ya wèrè
   Ọlọ́run tí ò jẹ́ kí ṣọ́jà nà ọ́
   Ọlọ́run tí ò jẹ́ kí o rìn lọ
   Jésù ló dámilọ́lá, mo ṣe wá ń dúpẹ́
Ẹ̀gbè: Jésù ló dámilọ́lá, mo ṣe wa n dúpẹ́
Líle: Ó ti ní kí n má mà jáwé
   Ó ti ní kí n má mà jobì
Chorus: Jésù ló dámilọ́lá, mo ṣe wá ń dúpẹ́

Lead: God that does not allow you to turn mad
   God that does not allow soldier to beat you
   God that does not allow you to get lost
   Jesus has made me wealthy, that is why I'm giving thanks
Chorus: Jesus has made me wealthy, that is why I'm giving thanks
Lead: He has said I should not go eat leaves
   He has said I should not eat Kolanut
Chorus: Jesus has made me wealthy that is why I am thanking Him

Olọ́run also sings "Ṣọpẹ́ tìẹ" (Give thanks for your own):
   Líle: Sọpẹ́ tìẹ
   Ẹ̀gbè: Mo ṣọpẹ́ tèmi
   Líle: Ẹni bá moore Olúwa
   Ẹ̀gbè: Ẹ mà mà ṣọpẹ́
   Líle: Dákun wá ṣọpẹ́
   Egbe: Ẹ ṣeun tí Ẹ kú fún wa
   Líle: Immortal Invisible God
     Títí ayé la ò má a yìn Ọ́ o
   Ẹ̀gbè: A dúpẹ́
   Líle: Somebody shout Hallelluyah
     Immortal Invisible God
   Ẹ̀gbè: Ó yá ká praise the Lord
   Líle: Lọ́kùnrin –Lóbìnrin praise the Lord
   Ẹ̀gbè: A dúpẹ́
   Líle: Ẹ mà mà praise the Lord
   Ẹ̀gbè: Mo ní kí la ò bá ṣe fún Baba
   Líle: À fi ká máa dúpẹ́
     Bí bàbá bá ní ká mu pẹ́pẹ́yẹ wá
   Ẹ̀gbè: Pẹ́pẹ́yẹ one million ò lè tó laílaí
   Líle: Wọ́n ni bàbá ń jẹ́ raísì
   Ẹ̀gbè: Rárá
   Líle: Àbí ń jẹ Bọ́gà?
   Ẹ̀gbè: Rárá
   Líle: Àbí ń jẹ Ṣèmó?
   Ẹ̀gbè: Rárá
   Líle: Ń mu koókì?
   Ẹ̀gbè: Rárá
   Lile: Ń mu kùnú
   Ẹ̀gbè: Rárá
   Líle: Kí loúnjẹ bàbá mi?
   Ẹ̀gbè: Ọpẹ́ loúnjẹ bàbá mi
   Líle: Kí loúnjẹ́ bàbá mi?
   Ẹ̀gbè: Ọ̀pẹ́ loúnjẹ́ bàbá mi

Lead: Thank God for your life

Chorus: I thank God for my life

Lead: Anyone who knows the goodness of God

Chorus: You better give thanks

Lead: Please come and give thanks

Chorus: Thank You for dying for us

Lead: Immortal invisible God

    Forever we shall praise you

Chorus: We give thanks

Lead: Somebody shout Halleluiah,

    Immortal, invisible God.

Chorus: Its time, let us praise the Lord

Lead: Men, women, praise the Lord

Chorus: We give thanks

Lead: We should please praise the Lord

Chorus: I say what can we do for the father

Lead: We should give thanks God

    If father say we should bring duck.

Chorus: One million ducks can never be enough

Lead: They say father eats rice?

Chorus: No

Lead: They say father eats Burger?

Chorus: No

Lead: Or He eats Sẹ̀mọ́?

Chorus: No

Lead: He drinks coke?

Chorus: No

Lead: He drinks a type of Hausa drink called Kunu?

Chorus: No

Lead: What is the food of my father?

Chorus: Appreciation is the food of my father

Lead: What is the food of my father

Chorus: Praise is the food of my father.

and "Children of God are you here?":

Líle: Children of God are you there?

Ẹ̀gbè: Yes, we are here?

Líle: Some have food, and cannot eat

Ẹ̀gbè: Àwọn kan lè jẹ́lẹ́run tí wọ́n ò roúnje jẹ́

Líle: Kí la à bá fı san án?

Ẹ̀gbè: Kí la à bá fı sán òre Bàbá mi

Líle: Tí wọ́n bá ní n kówó wá?

Ẹ̀gbè: Ṣẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀ n bẹ níbí

Líle: Omele n bẹ níbí

Ẹ̀gbè: Onígángan n bẹ níbí

Líle: Ọpẹ́ loúnje bàbá mi

Ẹ̀gbè: Ọpẹ́ loúnje bàbá mi

Lead: Children of God are you there?

Chorus: Yes, we are here?

Lead: Some have food, and cannot eat

Chorus: Some people can eat a whole building but don't have food to eat

Lead: What shall we use to appreciate?

Chorus: What shall we use to appreciate my Father?

Lead: If they say I should bring money?

Chorus: There is rattle

Lead: There is a type of talking-drum
Chorus: There is *gángan* drummer here
Lead: Appreciation is the food of my father
Chorus: Appreciation is the food of my father

God's greatness/miracles

Another song by Olọ́run is "Iṣẹ́ Olúwa Ó Ta Lẹ́nu" (God's work is pepperish in the mouth):

Lílé: Iṣẹ́ Olúwa ó ta lẹ́nu
Ẹ̀gbè: Iṣẹ́ Olúwa ó ta lẹ́nu
Lílé: Àbí ẹ ò rí lójọ́ ojọ́ yẹn?
Ẹ̀gbè: Kí ló ṣe?
Lílé: Ó sọ ẹnu ẹja di ATM
Ẹ̀gbè: O sọ ẹnu ẹja di ATM
Lílé: Mi ò gbọ́ọ rí
    Ó ní 'Peter wá lọ gbowó wá'
Ẹ̀gbè: Ó ní 'Peter wá lọ gbowó wá'
Lílé: As in, ó ki ike bọ ẹnu irin
Ẹ̀gbè: Ó ki ike bọ ẹnu irin
Lílé: Kí lẹ ló wí?
Ẹ̀gbè: Ó ní 'enter your pin'
Lílé: Ló bá ní "J E S U S"
Egbe: À fi gọ̀rọ̀ọ̀rọ̀, lowó bá jáde
Lílé: Ló jẹ́ wí pé
Ẹ̀gbè: Iṣẹ́ Olúwa ó ta lẹ́nu
Lílé: Ló jẹ́ wí pé
Ẹ̀gbè: Iṣẹ́ Oluwa ó ta lẹ́nu

Lead: God's work is pepperish
Chorus: God's work is pepperish
Lead: Can you see on those days?
Chorus: What did He do?
Lead: He turned the mouth of fish to ATM
Chorus: He turn the mouth of fish to ATM
Lead: I have never heard it before
    He said 'Peter come and go and withdraw money'
Chorus: He said 'Peter, come and go and withdraw money'
Lead: As in he inserted ATM card inside the ATM machine
Chorus: He inserted ATM card inside the ATM machine
Lead: What do you say?
Chorus: He said 'Enter your pin'
Lead: He then said 'J-E-S-U-S'
Chorus: Instantly money started gushing out
Lead: That is
Chorus: God's work is pepperish in the mouth
Lead: That is
Chorus: God's work is pepperish in the mouth

Olọ́run showcases *ṣẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀*, *omele*, and *gángan* as the major instruments of Gospel Àpàlà music. He mostly asks his audience to praise and appreciate God for all His goodness. An example of such appreciation is "*Ọlọ́run ti o jẹ́ o ya wèrè*" (God that does not allow you to run mad), "*Ọlọ́run tí ò jẹ́ kí ṣọjá nà ọ*" (God that does not allow soldier to beat you), "*Ọlọ́run tí ò jẹ́ kí o rìn lọ*" (God that does not allow you to get lost), "*Ẹni bá moore Olúwa*" (whosoever appreciate the goodness of God), and "*À fi ká máa dúpẹ́*" (We should just thank Him)". He frequently asks pertinent questions about the nature of the appreciation, for example "*Bí bàbà bá ní ká mú pẹ́pẹ́yẹ wá, Pẹ́pẹ́yẹ One Million ò lè to láílaí*" (perishable things or natural things are not enough to appreciate God). He asks if God eats rice, burgers, or drinks coke: "*Àbí n jẹ Bọ́gà?*" (Does he eat burger), "*Ṣẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀ n bẹ níbí*" (There is rattle here), "*Omele n bẹ níbí*" (There is

talking drum here), "*Onígángan n'bẹ̀ níbí*" (Gángan drummer is here), and his lyrics "*Iṣẹ́ Olúwa ó ta lẹ́ nu*" (God's work is pepperish in the mouth) align with current happenings and money-related matters as it happens in a globalised world. It is very germane to mention this aspect as it showcases the present/modern day foods and drinks such as burgers, cokes. etc.

Stylistic devices

The use of stylistic devices and oral traditional materials such as repetition, rhetorical question, personification, loan words, code-mixing/switching, and proverbs explicitly beautify, embellish, and magnifying the dominant intents of the singers. It thereby positions the two genres—traditional Àpàlà and Gospel Àpàlà—as pieces that breathe into one another in terms of form, voices, and popularity. The excitement most Christians get from it affirms people's nostalgic feeling for their heritage embedded in Àpàlà music. Scholars such as Ìṣọ̀lá, Bámgbóṣé, Ọ̀lábọ̀dé, Ọlátúnjí, Adébọ̀wálé, Ọlátẹ́jú, and Òjó have emphasised the importance of stylistic devices in works of art. Stylistic devices are linguistic resources employed deliberately to fulfil a stylistic task or expressive means of the language. Their primary goal is to achieve aesthetic ornaments, that is, to beautify literary works. In order to make their Gospel Àpàlà music enticing and classical, the artistes employ different stylistic devices to enrich their performances. They dexterously exploit the resources of the Yorùbá language in a special and heightened manner with the intention of transforming their experiences into works of art. Ọlátẹ́jú asserts that the ambition of any literary writer/artist is to achieve two things, and these are 'message' and 'entertainment' (277). Ọlátẹ́jú's point is further buttressed with the fact that in order to achieve his purpose of writing, the "writer/artist employs consciously his literary and linguistic skills by packing into the work all ingredients that would generate aesthetic pleasure" (277). As a work of art, literature involves a skilful exploitation and manipulation of language and, through this, an artist may be described as brilliant and ingenious. In the following section, I examine a few stylistic devices employed by the multi-talented artistes who skilfully mint and mend words in both Yorùbá and English languages. This act of skilfully smiting words could be seen in all their songs. They achieve this through the use of stylistic devices such as repetition, rhetorical questions, personification, loan words, code-mixing/code-switching, and proverbs, among others.

Repetition

This is a stylistic device that involves intentional usage of a word, phrase, or full sentence two or more times in a speech or written work to create effect. As an aesthetic device and chief among all stylistic devices, repetition creates beauty and good taste in a work of art (Babalọ̀lá). It projects creativity of the writer's sense of value, thereby aiding and sustaining memorability. It helps in shaping and sharpening one's memory and is used as a foregrounding tool in highlighting and reiterating an important message. For repetition to be noticeable, the words, phrases, or sentences should be repeated within close proximity of each other for the purpose of emphasis and memorability. The lexico-structural pattern can be either full or partial (Ọlátúnjí). Repetition is common in almost all the Yorùbá poetic genres, such as *orin* (songs), *oríkì* (praise-poetry), *ọfọ̀* (incantation), *ẹṣẹ-ifá* (ifá divination poetry), *ẹkún-ìyáwó* (bridal cry), and *òwe* (proverbs). There are six types of repetition: full, partial, lexical, semantic, phonetic, and thematic repetition. Traditional Àpàlà also use repetition, which explains the occurrence of repetition in Gospel Àpàlà.

Full/sentential repetition

Full or sentential repetition is the intentional repetition of a sentence structure in several lines in a literary work for effect, usually to create a concrete and stronger impact in a poem or song. Ọ̀ṣọbà, Ọlábísí, and Ọlọ́run repeated the full sentences to provide clarity and emphasis, highlighting deeper meanings of their songs. Also, the whole elements of the sentence being repeated are reduplicated to vividly express what they have in mind. The examples given below are sentential repetition:

Ọ̀rẹ́ ẹ kálọ, wá lọ tọ́ Jésù wò
Ọ̀rẹ́ ẹ kálọ, wá lọ tọ́ Jésù wò

Ẹni tí ò bá sá ti ní Jésù
Ẹni tí ò bá sá ti ní Jésù (Ọ̀ṣọba, "Ọ̀rẹ́ ẹ kálọ, wá lọ tọ́ Jésù wò")

Friends follow me, come and taste Jesus
Friends follow me, come and taste Jesus

Anyone who does not have Jesus
Anyone who does not have Jesus

Iṣẹ́ Olúwa ó ta lẹ́nu
Iṣẹ́ Olúwa ó ta lẹ́nu (Ọlọ́run, "Iṣẹ́ Olúwa ó ta lẹ́nu")

God's work is pepperish in the mouth
God's work is pepperish in the mouth

The layman's judgement of the above repetitions may be light and inconsequential, but a close look at them will make one see the basic rudiment and stylistic purpose of full/sentential repetition

Lexical repetition
Lexical repetition foregrounds or focuses on some items which may occur at the beginning, middle, or end of the sentence. The effect of this kind of repetition is intensification and topicalisation. The writer beams his searchlight on a particular word repeatedly for emphasis, bringing out a central message. Whenever there is a preponderance of a particular word, lexical repetition is found. To avoid ambiguity, lexical repetition is necessary. Lexical repetition is shown in the example below:
    Léfù mi ti change
    Mo ti elevate
    Mo ti elevate
    Ayé mi ti change
    Mo ti elevate (Ọlábísí)

    My level has changed
    I am elevated
    My life has changed
    I am elevated

    Sọpẹ́ tiẹ
    Mo sọpẹ́ tèmi
    Ẹni bá moore Olúwa
    Ẹ mà mà sọpẹ́
    Dákun (Ọlọ́run, "Sọpẹ́ tìẹ")

    Thank God for your life
    I thank God for my life
    You better give thanks
    Please come and give thanks

Wọ́n ni babá ń jẹ́ ráìsì
Ráráʼ
Àbí ń jẹ Bọ́gà?
Ráráʼ (Ọlọ́run, "Ṣọpẹ́ tiẹ")

They say father eats rice?
No
They say father eats Burger?
No

The words *Jésù, change, elevate, ṣọpẹ́, and ráráʼ* are constantly repeated to prevent ambiguity.

Partial repetition
In partial repetition, the sentence structure is repeated, but not all the lexical items are repeated. Below are few examples of partial repetition:
 Ó ti dájúʼ, ó ń fína ṣeréʼ
 Dájúdájúʼ, ó ń fíná ṣeréʼ (Ọ̀ṣọbà, "Ọ̀rẹ́ ẹ kálọ, wá lọ tọ́ Jésù wòʼ")

 Certainly he is playing with fire
 Certainly he is playing with fire

 Ọlọ́run tíʼ ò jẹ́ o ya wèrè
 Ọlọ́run tíʼ ò jẹ́ kíʼ ṣọ́jà nà ọ́
 Ọlọ́run tíʼ ò jẹ́ kíʼ o rìn lọ (Ọlọ́run, "Ọlọ́run tíʼ ò jẹ́ o ya wèrè")

 God that does not allow you to turn mad
 God that does not allow soldier to beat you
 God that does not allow you to get lost

In partial repetition, half of the sentence, that is, a phrase, is repeated for effect. The phrase may occur at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence. In the above example, the bold phrases such as: "*O lọ ńʼ, Ọlọ́run tíʼ ò jẹ́, ó ń fína ṣeréʼ*" are examples of partial repetition.

Semantic repetition
Semantic repetition is the re-occurrence of words that are synonymous which are placed at close range in a given literary text. For example:
 Àʼ ní o gba Jésù,
 O lọ ńʼ gbèmúʼ
 O lọ ńʼ ṣapá kọ́ńdúʼ (Ọ̀ṣọbà, "Ọ̀rẹ́ ẹ kálọ, wá lọ tọ́ Jésù wòʼ")

 We implore you to accept Jesus,
 You are proving stubborn.
 You are proving arrogant

In the above examples, the words *gbèmúʼ* and *ṣapá kọ́ńdúʼ* are semantic repetition for they are synonymous and mean "proving stubborn". *Jáwéʼ* and *jobìʼ* are examples of semantic repetition, meaning consultation with other gods. Also, *ya wèrè* and *ṣọ́jà nàʼ ọ́, rìn lọ* are examples of semantic repetition representing something evil.

Rhetorical questions
The rhetorical question is derived from classical rhetoric. It is the art of public speaking in which a speaker asks some questions in order to buttress a point. A rhetorical question is stylistic use of interrogative language, in such a way that the response to the said interrogation is already suggested as provided by the speaker him/herself. In literature, a rhetorical question is a question posed to the audience in which an answer is not expected since the answer is already suggested in the question. This is known as apparent interrogation and when rhetorical

questions are uttered, they are not expected to be responded to by the referents/addressee. This stylistic technique is very conspicuous in the songs of all the artistes. Examples abound in the provided texts.

Personification

Personification is a stylistic device which gives animate qualities and strength to inanimate things (Òjó, "Predominant Stylistic Devices of Proverbs in Selected Yoruba Literary Texts" 282). Personification is a reference to inanimate objects as if they were animate. It is an extension of a metaphor, especially as it invests non-human things with human attributes with the intention of making them vivid (Ọlátúnjí). Examples of personification employed by the artistes are "Ṣẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀ ń bẹ níbí" (There is rattle here) and "Omele ń bẹ níbí" (There is talking drum here) (Ọlọ́run, "Ṣọpẹ́ tiẹ")—the gourd or rattle, and talking drum are personified, as if they can attend events.

Loan words

These are words taken from one language and incorporated into another language's vocabulary. The selected artistes loan words from English, Pidgin, Hausa, etc. Examples are: "A á fi ọ́ ṣe wọ́ńdà" (He will make you a wonder) (Ọ̀sobà, "Orúkọ Jésù Làwá Ńlò") "béliìtì" (belt); (Ọ̀sobà, "Ọ̀rẹ́ ẹ kálọ, wá lọ tọ́ Jésù wò"; "There is no tírọ́bù fún mi rárá" (There is no trouble for me at all), "The difference is clear and "I télì you" (I tell you) (Ọ̀sobà, "Since I've known Jesus"); "You na de du me well well" (You are doing me well) and "Gbẹ́ bódì rẹ̀, jẹ́ ká yin babá o" (Lift up your body lets praise the father) (Ọ̀sobà, "Orúkọ Jésù Làwá Ńlò"; and "Gán án ní á fi jí" (Ọ̀sobà, "Since I've known Jesus"). In these examples, the following words are loaned from English: wonder, belt, trouble, tell, rice, burger, coke, body, and level, while Gán án ní á fi jí is from the Hausa language.

Code mixing/code switching

Code-mixing is a means of linguistic socialisation and a sign of modernisation. It signifies an interaction of two languages within a sentence as a result of bilingualism. In the following examples the inclusion of words like transformer, love, ATM, and Visa makes for a code-mixing expression: "Olúwa ni transformer tó ń tọná" (God is the transformer that brings light), "You carry my matter" (You shoulder my matter) and "You carry my matter for your head" (You shoulder my matter on your head) (Ọ̀sobà, "Orúkọ Jésù Làwá Ńlò"); "Ladies & Gentlemen, Ẹ sọpá ijo" (Ladies and Gentlemen, let us dance), "O my Jesus mo love rẹ gan-an" (Oh my Jesus, I love you seriously", "Léfù mi ti change mo ti elevate" (My level has changed, I am elevated), "Mí ò níí pẹ́ gba visa lọ sí ìlú ọba" (would soon get VISA abroad), "Gbẹ́ bódì rẹ̀, jẹ́ ká yin babá o" (Lift your body, let us praise the father) and "Wàkà jéjé ọmọ Jésù (Tread softly, child of Jesus) (Ọlábísí); "Ó sọ ẹnu ẹja di ATM (He turns the mouth of fish to ATM) and "Ó ní 'enter your pin', Ló bá ní 'JESUS'" (He said enter your pin, He then said JESUS) (Ọlọ́run, "Iṣẹ́ Olúwa Ó Ta Lẹ́nu").

The examples contain many instances of alternation between Yoruba and English.

Proverbs

Proverbs are reflections and expressions of wisdom, ethics, philosophy, and beliefs of a given society (Òjó, "A Stylistic Analysis of Proverbs in Selected Yorùbá Written Literature" 2). Proverbs employ figurative language to make a statement of fact as shown below:

Béyin bá forí sọ àpáta
Ó ti dájú, fífọ́ ló mí a fọ́ (Ọ̀sobà, "Since I've known Jesus")

If an egg collides with a stone
It is certain, it will break certainly there is no king like God

The above proverb expresses the truth that if an egg collides with the rock, it will break. It shows how fragile an egg is. This proverb means "to attempt the impossible".

Conclusion

In this article I explored the description, thematic, and stylistic traits of Gospel Àpàlà music which is a variant of Àpàlà music. I argued that Gospel Àpàlà artistes Ọ̀sobà, Ọlábísí, and Ọlọ́run improved on traditional Àpàlà's original form in terms of the music, lyrics, language, and instrumentation by resuscitating the dying traditional Àpàlà into global limelight. I I present the description and relevance of Gospel Àpàlà in line with the principles

of systemic functional linguistics and sociology of literature. Themes of Gospel Àpàlà focus mainly on praise and worship of God, thereby projecting God's greatness, and entertaining, educative, informative, and therapeutic functions of literature. The styles, beats, and instruments of traditional Àpàlà have been retained but modernised to project the continuity of the genre. Stylistic devices which garnish their music include repetition, rhetorical questions, personification, loan words, code-mixing/code-switching, and proverbs. From the discussion, it is clear that traditional Àpàlà has become a variant of Àpàlà music. It is therefore safe to conclude that Gospel Àpàlà has become a new register of African music.

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