

Representation of Obaship Institution in Adéolá Fáléye's Poetry

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Abstract

Among the three genres of Yorùbá literature, poetry seems to be the most exploited among its peers as countless of literary works have proved this. A few from such literary works are: Olúkojú (1978), Adéjùmò (2008), Olátúnjí (1984), Ojúadé (2008), Fáléye (2011), Ajíbádé (2012), Afolábí (2014), Òjò (2016), Adéjùmò (2018), Oyèwálé (2018) and Oyèbámijí (2019). Till recent times, literary scholars have found research works relating to poetry as an undemanding and effortless research due to their enriched background in various facets of Yorùbá oral poetry. Nevertheless, as wide as Yorùbá literary scholars have trod the path of both oral and written poetry, little or no known work has ever elucidated the concept of the Yorùbá obaship system or institution. This study, therefore, examines the representation of Yorùbá obaship institution in Fáléye's poetry with the aim to prove that the issue of Yorùbá obaship system also abounds in Yorùbá poetry. This study adopted sociological and cultural theories as its theoretical frameworks. A total number of six tracks from four different discs were examined. The discs selected for this study are: Tótó Oba (2007), Oòrè Olòore Odùduwà (2010), È maa tú yàgbà (2010) and Mò ní b'Óba Rèhà (2015); while the tracks are Tótó Oba (track 2), Oba Oládélé Pópóolá in Oòrè Olòore Odùduwà. È maa tú yàgbà (track 2) and Mò ní b'Óba rèhà (track 2,3, and 4). The justification for the selection of the discs was based on the reflection of obaship institution in her rendition. The discs were adequately listened to, transcribed and later translated. These discs served as the primary source, while library, archival sources, articles published in journals and text books served as the secondary source for this study. This study reveals the hidden treasure embedded in Yorùbá obaship system as it sheds more light on the features of the obaship institution, that oba in Yorùbá society is regarded as a deity, the supreme head of a community, dreadful authority, peace-maker and an administrator. Fáléye's poetry serves as a comprehensive account and documentation of some notable kings in the Yorùbá society and this establishes the fact that literary poets are not blind to the concept of Yorùbá institutions. The study therefore concludes that Yorùbá oral poets stand as cultural archive because they discuss the various Yorùbá institutions so as to flash back on the past and observe the present for the usefulness of the future generation.

Introduction

Works of different literary scholars such as Babalola (1968), Olatúnjí (2005), and Òjò (2016) have proved that literature reflects the culture and customs of a society. In other words, literature and its genres serve as a mirror that reflects human society. Of all the three genres of literature (poetry, prose and drama), poetry seems to be a unique aspect that has the ability of featuring itself in other genres, depending on how an author make use of it as a distinctive style in his work. Unlike the language used in other genres of literature, i.e prose and drama, which are closer to ordinary discourse, the language of poetry (poetic language) also serves as an element that distinguishes it from others.

Yorùbá poetry is an important aspect of Yorùbá literature through which many poets have exposed the happenings in the society to the knowledge of everyone. Hence, it serves as a critical check on the different individuals and their ways of life in the society. Yorùbá poetry can therefore be classified into two major classes, namely: oral poetry and written poetry. Oral poetry is more prominent in Yorùbá traditional society. The advent of Christian Missionary and Western education has helped in reducing the Yorùbá language into writing which makes Yorùbá poetry to be documented. Despite the advent of written culture, oral poetry is more pronounced in Yorùbá society than written poetry (Òjò, 2016). Having said this, it is much pertinent to expatiate more on Yorùbá poetry as it stands as the core area of this research work.

Yorùbá oral poetry has been the most researchable aspect within the oeuvre of literatures, the reason being that, oral poetry predates all other forms of Yorùbá literature. This makes Ògunbà (1967:40) asserts that:

In traditional Africa, poetry is an everyday pre-occupation because of the oral quality of life. In oral society, poetry tends to perform a multitude of functions, literary and extra-literary, and it is the main vehicle for the apprehension of the universe. That is; in a non-scientific society, the substitute for systematic scientific probing is the imagination and poetry is its chief mode of expression.

Therefore, not only do Yorùbá artistes (literary artist and oral artist) serve as agents of change in the society as they condemn social vices in their works, but they also try to exhibit and reflect some of the various Yorùbá institutions such as marriage, religion, governance and the likes. The oral poets, most especially the palace ballads, by the virtue of their office, tend to become custodians of culture as they have been in the palace for many years. In other words, they tend to know more about several kings that had ruled and reigned

in such community which therefore made them one of the key personalities in the Yorùbá obaship system.

The Yorùbá obaship system can be said to have been among the prominent institutions of the Yorùbá people, which is as old as the creation of Yorùbá entity itself. Before the advent of the British colonialists, the indigenous Yorùbá people had formulated a kind of indigenous knowledge on governance in which they adopted the running of their day-to-day affairs evenly in harmony without any form of external disruption (Kohode, 2016:1). Hence, the Yorùbá maxim which says “*Ò lóhun tádìye, ñ je, kágbàdo tó dáyé*” “that is “the fowl had been eating something even before the advent of corn”. This goes a long way in supporting the claim that, indeed, the Yorùbá people had already developed a set of knowledge on how to rule and control the affairs of the society and had had a perfect form of government which can be referred to as Yorùbá Obaship institution. Johnson (2001) gives a clear example of the Òyómèsì in the old Òyó empire who performed the function of the three arms of government and also represented the voice of the society; on them revolved the chief duty of protecting the interest of the kingdom.

As Yorùbá poets stand as a cultural archive, they therefore discuss the various Yorùbá institutions so as to flash back on the past and observe the present for the usefulness of the future generation.

Theoretical frameworks

There are many theories which can be applied to the study of literature, but we shall focus on the Mirror Image Approach of Sociology of Literature and Cultural Theory. Goldmann (1980) opines that:

It is the task of the sociologist of literature to relate the experience of the imaginary characters to the specific historical climate from which they stem and thus, to make literary hermeneutics a part of the sociology of knowledge

Sociology of literature sees the relation between a work of art and the society as one of the constant inter-relationship and that each one affects, and is affected by the other. The main preoccupation of Sociology of literature is the understanding of the relationship between literature and society. The mirror image approach under sociology of literature, as popularized by Louis de Bonald (1754-1840), emphasizes that a critic of Literature must research deeply to know whether what the Literature is talking about has a resemblance with what is happening in society. Critic must view literary works as reflections of

the social institutions from which they originate. The mirror image approach conceives a literary work as an attempt to depict events and happenings in a particular society. The approach aims at transforming the fictional world of literature to specific social meanings. Therefore, from the view of the mirror image approach, a literary work has to be interpreted in relation to definite facts of the society where it takes its root.

Cultural Theory

Cultural theory, which is a branch of anthropology, semiotics and other related social science disciplines often concentrate on how a particular phenomenon relates to matters of ideology, nationality, ethnicity, social class and gender (Fámúwàgún, 2016). Scholars often locate the rise of the study of cultural theory to late 1950s Great Britain and the publication of seminal works by Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, whose works dwell on the monolithic critical ideology of F.R. Leavis, but Hoggart and Halls efforts during the 1960s and 1970s in founding Birmingham University's centre for contemporary cultural studies which serve as the cultural studies movement of that era paved the way for cultural studies as a viable interpretative paradigm (Fámúwàgún, 2016).

Cultural theory was propounded to protect and preserve the culture of a certain society, and it serves as an interpretative lens which provides us with a means for exploring the cultural codes of a given work. As a preserved culture, it gives room for its exhibition to the outside world which in turn promotes the culture of that society, engenders the societal, identity prosperity and encourages educational research (Òjò, 2010:249). In corroborating Òjò's view, Womack (1999:595) asserts that:

Cultural studies – with its accent upon personal identity and the study of our rich diversity of cultural artifacts it provide readers and critics alike with an appealing form of intellectual cachet.

The above quotation emphasizes the fact that culture influences the literary work that we consume. Therefore, there should be a link between the literature and culture which produce it because the main reason for the sustainability of cultural studies is the reproduction of ideology as it will be shown in Fálèye's poetry in the analysis.

Previous works on Yorùbá oral poetry

Series of works abound in the study of Yorùbá poetry among which are: Olúkòjù (1978), Oḷátúnjì (1984), Adéolá (2006), Bello (2006), Olújìnmí (2007), Adéòṣun (2012 & 2013), Ajíbádé (2016), Àkàngbé (2016), Kíaríbèé (2016), Adéjùmò (2008 and 2018), Oyèwálé (2018) and Oyèbámìjì (2019).

Olúkòjù (1978) conducts research on *the place of chants in Yorùbá traditional oral literature*. The work encompasses the range of Yorùbá traditional oral literature and chant, categories of Yorùbá traditional oral poetry, types of Yorùbá chants, Yorùbá chants in performance and the characteristics of Yorùbá chants. In the researcher's efforts to classify Yorùbá oral poetry, he orates some of the criteria that have been suggested for classification of Yorùbá oral poetry, which are: the group of people to which the reciter belongs and the technique of recitation; stylistic devices employed in the recitals; the characteristic features of the internal structure in addition to mode of chanting. In the researcher's opinion, he affirms that by oral nature of Yorùbá traditional poetry, and from a musical point of view, it is on the basis of style of vocalization – performing modes, that classification of Yorùbá poetic forms should be considered. He continues that vocal styles of poetic performance include the 'speech or recitation mode' and 'song mode' the two styles mentioned are adequately explored by the poet (Fáléye) in her poetry as it will be revealed in the analysis.

Oḷátúnjì's (1984) *Feature of Yorùbá oral poetry* is a work on whose template any certified research on Yorùbá oral poetry must stand. The work explains the criteria in classifications of Yorùbá oral poetry. The researcher presents three forms of classifications which are: the feature type, the chanting mode and the song mode. He says the oral poetry with poetic form that has features which distinguish them whether they are spoken or written are the feature type. While the poetic forms which are recognized solely by the musical manner in which they are chanted produces the chanting mode. The song mode is musically identifiable. He is of the opinion that the occurrence of the feature types in the *repertoire* of performers of chants and songs derives from the fact that the different artistes draw formulas and themes from the feature types as a stock of traditional materials. He rounds off by stating that while linguistic and semantic features are described for the class of feature types, it is musical properties that can be used to distinguish one chanting from another. As earlier stated, Oḷátúnjì's classification is very crucial to this study.

Adéolá (2006) work centers on *The poetry of Àlàbí Ògúndépo'*. She classifies Yorùbá poets based on the setting or place of performance of their poet-

ic piece. Based on this premise, she identifies two types of Yorùbá poets: the oral poet and the literate poet. She sub classifies the oral poet into the roving poet, the court poet and the religious poet. She says oral poets perform most of the time to an audience in the public, mostly in market places, naming ceremonies, funeral ceremonies, house warming etc. She concludes that the oral poet is more involved in social situations of his people. On the other hand, the literate poet, who could be an academic poet, or commercial poet is a poet who composes his/her piece in the study and later transmits same through the print medium. Literate poets write their piece in books, seminar papers, periodicals and even sometimes record in cassette. Adeola's works may have treated Yorùbá poets in general, but the aspect of the oral poet creates a path for our study as it will later be revealed in our discussion.

Bello (2006) explains the impact of poetry on drama. In his work *Poetry in Láwuyì Ogúnníran's drama*, he says the extensive use of poetry and poetic devices is what he describes as poetry of drama. In other words, poetry is used as a means of stylistic communication. According to him, the story of an author is not enough because a distinctive work of art is appreciated by the way an author makes his epistemic choices. He posits that the primary function of poetry is entertainment. Bello's claims that "poetry is used as a means of stylistic communication and that the primary function of poetry is entertainment" is vital to this study.

Yorùbá oral poetry is further explained by Olújìnmí (2007). While emphasizing the social relevance of Yorùbá poetry, he expresses that, the Yorùbá poet, literate or non-literate, is acclaimed and appreciated as a social commentator. He continues that they (the poets) are indebted in their works to the society as they draw relevant materials from the community. These raw materials could be issues on politics, social, religious, festivals, events and the economy. He further states that the poet's major role is to present lucid happening in his society in any area he decides to treat. He concludes his thought by saying that poetry in one way or the other is the expression of socio-political and economic realities of this society. The point which Olujinmi emphasizes in this analysis is that poetry is not just an art but an art for the survival of humanity.

Àkàngbè (2016) dwells on the use of *Àlò*, as one of the features of Yorùbá oral poetry. In his work *'Àgbéyèwò àwoṅ iwé itàn àròso, Fágúnwà gégé, bí àlò*; he explains that *Àlò*, as one of Yorùbá oral poetry is used for entertainment, relaxation and teaching of moral. He says *Àlò*, is sub-divided into *àlò, àpamò*, (Yorùbá riddles) and *àpagbè* (Yorùbá tales). He states that *àlò, àpamò*, is used

as a prelude to *àlò, àpagbè*. He later expatiates on the introduction, relationship between the living and the non-living, teaching, themes, structure, repetition, negative occurrence and language as some of the important features of presentation in *àlò, àpagbè*.

Kíaribèé (2016) views poetry as a form of literature. He states in his work titled *The semiotic analyses of Àtàrí Àjànàkú's Orin Ewúro* that poetry is literature, and literature is the method of expressing beliefs, feelings, ideas and thoughts, therefore poetry can also be seen as an image of the society. He explains that Olátúnjí (1984) affirms that the role of oral poets in the Yorùbá society shows through his analysis of Yorùbá oral poetry data that Yorùbá oral poets are entertainers, custodians of culture, social commentators, political activists, students of history and the advocators of norms. These functions are not limited to oral poets alone; they also extend to the literary poets. Adéjùmò (2018) examines the representation of human rights and developments using the templates provided by selected Yorùbá poets. The work established that the poet[s] ideological stance on the issue of development is radical in nature while the poets stance on human rights is dialectical and propagandistic in nature. The paper therefore advocates the need for the government to prioritise human development above physical development. Oyèwálé (2018) discusses the historical trend in the Yorùbá Written Poetry with a view of refuting the controversial claim as to how the Yorùbá females have fare in terms of poetic writing as a literary genre. The study concludes that the erroneous impression that women cannot adequately compete with men in poetic writing can no longer stand because female poets to a great extent have achieved their quest for self-assertion, recognition and relevance amidst the challenges in a patriarchy society.

Oyèbámíjí (2019) examined the forms, contextual configuration and phenomena of animism in the Yorùbá lineage poetry with a view to describing the interdependence of creatures in the Yorùbá worldview. The study concludes that human being should accept the fact that natural creatures, ancestry, reincarnation, taboos and superstitions are all attributed with soul, will and spiritual essence which is globally known as animism and is not alien to the traditional and even contemporary Yorùbá society. Humans therefore should be cautious and have high sense of intimacy with the natural creatures and other phenomena in their contributions to the total well being and peaceful co-existence of society.

Previous works on Yorùbá Obaship system

Johnson's (2001:155-176) work dwells on the period of growth, prosperity and oppression among the kings in Yorùbáland. He begins with the analyses of the historical kings. He expatiates on the lives and reigns of kings like: Àgánjù, Kòrì, Olúaso, Onígboyì and Òfinràn. He further x-rays the lives of kings of Òyó, Ìgbòho which are: Eguguojú, Òrònpòtò, and Ajibóyèdé. He concludes the section by considering the lives of despotic and short-lived kings. He groups the following kings in this section: Obabòkun Àgàná Erin, Àjágbo, Òdaráwù, Kánran, Jáyin, Ayíbí, Oşinyàgò, Ojígí, Gbérú, Amúniwáyé and Ònísilé. Johnson's work may not have directly dealt with the scope of study in this section, but the information gathered from the reigns of all the aforementioned kings helped in comparing the changes that have occurred in Yorùbá Obaship.

Dáramólá and Jéjé, (1967:124-128) in *àwoṅ àṣà àti òrìsà ilẹ̀, Yorùbá* explain the position and power of whoever is referred to as king. According to them, the king owns everything in his domain. He gives land out to whoever he likes, but he does not sell it. If the land given out is used for farming, certain percent of the farm products goes to the king. Furthermore, they explain the nitty-gritty of choosing a new king. They observe that a new king can only emerge three to six months after the demise of the late king. The method is that all the qualified princes will be called to a meeting by *Afobaje*, (the king maker), after which the leader of the *Afobaje*, will explain the purpose of their gathering. Immediately after his speech, whoever is hit on the head with an *Akòko* leaf will be pronounced as the new king (the *Afobaje*, would have made consultation from *Ifá* and must have agreed on the person before the public declaration). They rounded-off by stating that on no condition should the person chosen enter the palace before the completion of 'the ritual teaching' which normally lasts for three months.

Olájubù (1978) in his work *Ìjòba ibílẹ̀, láyè àtíjọ́*, discusses the relationship among Oba (king), *àwoṅ ijòyè* (chiefs), *baálẹ̀*, (regional heads) and *baálé* (family heads). In the analysis, he explains that there are two types of kings in Yorùbáland: the most superior and the superior. He says the most superior kings are kings who never pay homage to any other king. These set of kings regard themselves as Odùduwà's descendants. Kings in this group are *Aláàfin* of Òyó, *Awùjalẹ̀*, of Ìjẹ̀bù land, *Owá* of Ilèsà and the likes. These kings have other kings under their influence. He expatiates further that the kings in the superior group are the *baálẹ̀*, (regional heads) or *Olòjà*. They may be crowned or uncrowned kings. They are loyal to the most superior king in influence. According to him the kings in the superior group are the *baálẹ̀*, (regional heads) or

Olójà. They may be crowned or uncrowned kings. They are loyal to the most superior king in their domain. If the most superior king wishes, he can give him (the *baálè*, or *olójà*) permission to put on a crown. For example, all the *Olúbàdàn* before Òkunoḷá Àbààsì Alésinlòyé, of 1930 were called *baálé*, and were under the influence of the *Aláàfin*. Furthermore, he says the chiefs assist the king in running the affairs of the state. They are spokes persons for the king. Collectively, they are more powerful than the king. He concludes by stating that *Baálé* (family heads) heads people that are mostly blood-related. Olájùbù's work may have treated Yorùbá leadership in its totality, but we consider aspect on kings and its types a useful platform in this study.

The main thrust of Bólàrinwá (2013) thesis is conflict management strategies. In her work, *conflict management strategies in selected Yorùbá novels*, the researcher concentrates on giving of the definition, nature, causes, effects and management of conflicts. She explains management of conflicts under the traditional and western method. She states under traditional method of conflict management that during the pre-colonial era, kings were regarded as the political and social head. The power conferred on the king makes him to settle all conflicts and his viewpoint on all conflicts is unquestionable. But in the contemporary society, the king has to obey the law. The contemporary society depicts the king and his chiefs as advisers. She goes further to dilate upon three types of conflicts which are: religious, cultural and political conflicts. As earlier said, Bólàrinwá's (2013) work dwells on conflict management but the aspect of the traditional method of conflict management is very paramount to this present study.

The Yorùbá Obaship system

According to Johnson (2001: xix), the Yorùbá country lies to the immediate West of the River Niger (below the confluence) and South of the Quorra (i.e the Western branch of the same River above the confluence). Yorùbá setting is monarchical in nature and is based on the not-too easy to run principle of checks and balances. The system is based on the principle of inheritance known as patriarchy (Anyaele, 1995:202).

A king is the supreme head, but he is not a dictator. He rules according to the advice of the Chiefs-in-Council. These chiefs have different names from one area to another, but are popularly known as the *Òyómèsì* in the 'Old Oyó, Empire'. Any attempt of violence against a king's person or of the Royal family, or any act of wantonness with the wives of the king, is punished with death (Johnson, 2001: xx). The king is more dreaded than even the gods (Johnson

2001:40) and his person is considered sacred (Fadipe, 1970:205-206). The right to the throne is hereditary, but exclusively in the male line.

Like the saying, “a tree cannot make a forest”, so it is for a king. He has the Chiefs-in-Council and other people around to support him in the smooth running of the affairs in his land. Oḷájubù (1978:90) affirms that

...ṣùgbón kò sí oḃa tó ń dá nìkan sè ilú. Ó ní àwọn kan tí ó ń ràn án lówó, láti sẹ ètò ilú. Àwọn wónyí ní àwọn ijòyè àwọn baálé ilé, àwọn àwòrò imalẹ, àwọn babaláwo àti àwọn olórí egbé, àti ogbà gbogbo.

[...but no king rules alone. He has some set of people assisting him in ruling. These are: the chiefs, the heads of clan, the initiates, the herbalists and the leaders of groups.]

Àlámú (2013:40) also echoes this claim when he says:

Oḃa ní àwọn ijòyè tó ń ràn án lówó, láti darí ilú. Àwọn ijòyè yí ní wón màa ń péjú sí ààfin láti jíròrò lóri àwọn ohun tó ń lo, ní ilú àti ònà ti àlàáfíà yòò sẹ joḃa kí ilú fi roṣùn láti gbé fún mùtúmùwà.

[The king has chiefs that always assist him in administering justice. These chiefs always converge at the palace to deliberate over the happenings in the land and ways to allow peace to reign for the betterment of all and sundry.]

Each of these chiefs has a particular portfolio to execute in seeing to the smooth running of the governance. For example, a *Balógun* is charged with responsibility of defending the land against any internal or external insurgencies, while *Iyálóde* sees to commerce.

By and large, the Yorùbá Oḃaship system is democratic in nature in the sense that it allows individual participation with specific boundary, but supreme power resides with the king.

The roles of Oḃà in Yorùbà society

- a. The king is the paramount ruler and the custodian of authority (Oḷájubù 1978:89).
- b. He is seen, during the pre-colonial era, as the political, social and spiritual head (Bólárìnwà, 2013:25).
- c. He leads in any ceremonial or religious activities (Oḷájubù 1978:91)

- d. He owns the land and gives it to whoever he wishes (Dáramólà and Jéjé, 1967; Oḷájubù 1978:109).
- e. The king settles dispute between /among people of the same family or families, most especially, land dispute (Oḷájubù 1978:101)

The Laws and Taboos associated with Yorùbá Oḃaship

Laws and taboos among the kings in Yorùbáland vary from one area to another. A taboo is anything (act or otherwise) that is not good and which one should not do (Ògúnsínà, 2013:16). Some laws and taboos are peculiar to some kings in some areas, while other kings may go scot-free from the same 'said offence'. For example, in Èrúwà, a town in Ìbàràpá Centre Local Government of Oyo State, there is a particular mountain called *Akoḷú*, which can be looked at by every other person in Èrúwà excerpt *Elérúúwà* of Èrúwà, that is, the king of Èrúwà. If he has to pass-by within the vicinity of the mountain, he must look away from the direction of the mountain. Also, *Òkèrè* of Saki land, that is, the king of Saki, is forbidden from looking at the River Ògùn wherever it flows. There are other numerous laws and taboos that are peculiar to kings in different villages or towns in Yorùbáland, but those that are common among them are as follows:

- a. The king must not leave his head uncovered.
- b. The king must not look straight into the inner part of his crown.
- c. The king must not see or touch a corpse.
- d. The king must not be seen eating in public.
- e. In the past, the king does not speak in public except during traditional festivals (Oḷájubù 1978:91)
- f. A new king can only emerge three to six months after the demise of the late king
- g. Whoever is being elected as the king-designate must not enter the palace for any reasons until he is crowned (Johnson 2001:12)

Fáléye's Representation of Yorùbá Oḃaship Institution in Her Poetry

Oḃa as diety

The Yorùbá people are people of culture and norms. They believe in a supreme being called *Oḷú-Òrun*, that is, the one that owns the heaven (God), and they relate with this supreme-being through the different deities they worshipped because the deities were seen as intermediaries between the people and God. These deities were and are still held in high-esteem. Among the Yorùbá people, an *Oḃa* is considered to be the second in command to the deities. She ex-

presses this during the rendering of the praise poetry of King Ògúnwùsì in *Mò nì bóbà rèhà* (Track 2) when she says

Àdìmùlà lòrìsà kejì, mo forì balè, fóbà

[Àdìmùlà, you are the second in command, I salute.]

The poet states that the person of an Oba is revered irrespective of the age. As nobody dares show contempt to any of the deities without facing the consequences, so it is for an Oba. Also in *Mò nì bóbà rèhà* (Track 2) she states that:

Eni fojú àná wòkú eborá á bo, láṣo,

Ení bá fojú oṃoḍè woḃa rega éborá á bo, láṣo,

Èniyàn fibì ò,

[He who despises the dead is doomed

He who disrespects our king based on his age will be doomed

Human should be feared.]

With the high position which the kings occupy, Yorùbá people therefore reference them as deities in which no one dare to disrespect or fault their commandment as age is not a barrier. The deities can kill without anybody raising an eyelid. So also is an oḃa, this leads to the birth of a maxism which says “*aróbà fín loḃa á pa*” the king kills whoever disrespects him. This shows that the person of whoever is crowned as an oḃa should be looked upon as a deity, because, according to Yorùbá belief, power had been given to them to discipline or kill any erring individuals who try to disregard their authority without any of his subject questioning him for such an act. However, the poet, being a custodian of culture, tries to represent this attribute of oḃa as a deity in her work, that he who disrespect their king based on his age or stature will be doomed.

Also, she reflects the sacredness of an Oba in *Òòrè Olóòrè* in the choruses rendered during the praise poetry of King James Adédàpò, Oḷádélé Pópóolá when she says:

Ègbè: Eḃa n kókò, òkè Pópóolá

Baba Fadékémi baba Adébínpe ò ó ó

Ègbè: E, bá n kókó, òkè Pópóolá

Baba Adékúnlé baba Adédàpò, Pópóolá

Ègbè: E, bá n kóko, Pópóolá
Baba Adébùsólá baba Adésùbòmí Pópóolá
Egbè: E, bá n kóko, òkè Pópóolá
[Chorus: Greetings to Pópóolá, the sacred
Fadékémi and Adébínpe father
Chorus: Greetings to Pópóolá, the sacred
Adékúnlé and Adédàpò's father
Chorus: Greetings to Pópóolá, the sacred
Adébùsólá and Adésùbòmí's father
Chorus: Greetings to Pópóolá, the sacred.]

In the above excerpt, the poet tries to give the attributes of a mountain (*òkè*) to the king. Yorùbá believe that certain mountains (*òkè*) served as deities and are revered. Propitiations are sometimes made to appease these mountains which serve as intermediaries between the people and God. An example of such is Òkèbàdàn in Ìbàdàn. The poet places much reverence on King Pópóolá by calling him 'The lord of the mountain' who his subjects must dread, respect and worship from time to time.

Oba as the supreme head

Yorùbá society sees the kings as the supreme head through whom the supreme-being gives instruction to the people. Yorùbá people have the belief that whoever is selected as a king has been divinely favoured, as it is only the supreme-being that can install. And the directives given by such a person must be strictly adhered to. This is to further buttress Christians' belief that only God makes one a leader. The poet explicates that:

Adé ló, mà yeyè
Adé ló, mà yeyè o
Oni Èdùmarè se, lósòó ire látòrun wá ni
Adé ló, mà yeyè
Mò ní bọba rèhà (track 3)
[The crown suits him]

The crown befits him

Crown matches the head and the bead fits the neck

It is he who God has decorated from above, the crown suits him.]

The poet, with the belief that God ordains anyone He sees worth of the position, states that Oba Adéyeyè Enitàn Ògúnwùsì has been found worthy by God who has been divinely decorated with crown and beads to be the supreme head of people of Ilé-Ifè. In other words, the position he assumed (the supreme head) befits and suits him.

She continues that the supremacy of the king over his subjects made him to have control over everything, both human and divine, irrespective of the person's position or wealth and property to ascertain the popular saying among Yorùbá that '*Obá ba lé ohun gbogbo*', that is, the king has power over everything. She elucidates further:

Tótó oḅa è é

Ègbè: Tótó oḅaaa...

Mo wá rí fḱḱba n ò jé, rḱḱba fin o

Ègbè: Tótó oḅaaa

Oḱba ló ladé orí o tí mo fi n wá rí o

Ègbè: Tótó oḅaaa

Oḱba ló nìlèkè, tá a fi n dáfún tòlò

Ègbè: Tótó oḅaaa

Oḱba ló lohùn ti mò ní ò jé, rḱḱba fin

Ègbè: Tótó oḅaaa

Mo wá rí fà yé o

Ègbè: Totó

Tótó Oḱba

Respect to the king

Chorus: Respect to the king

I dare not disrespect him

Chorus: Respect to the king

The king owns the crown, so I show respect

Chorus: Respect to the king

The king owns the beads

Chorus: Respect to the king

The king owns my voice, I must respect him

Chorus: Respect to the king

I respect the elder

Chorus: Respect to the king

Also the king's supremacy over everything that is on the land is reflected during the praise poetry of the immediate past *Oṣùni*, *Oṣa Sijúádé* when the poet says:

Baba re, lo, nilè, ó

Ègbè: Baba re, ló nilè, o

Sijúádé olódò apitì okùn

Egbè: Baba re, ló nilè, o

Baba re, ló nilè, óóó

Ègbè: Baba re, ló nilè, o

Olódò apitì Sijúádé

Egbè: baba re, ló nilè, o

Baba re, ló nilè, máa yan

Ègbè: Baba re, ló nilè, o

E, màa tú yàgbà (track 2)

Your father owns the land

Chorus: Your father owns the land

Sijúádé the mighty one

Chorus: Your father owns the land

Your father owns the land

The mighty one Sijúádé

Chorus: Your father owns the land

Your father owns the land, walk majestically

Chorus: Your father owns the land

The poet, in the above excerpt, tries to reiterate more on her claims that the king, being the supreme head of a given community, controls and dominates both the living and non-living things, and by the virtue of his position he owns all the land in his community, though, not all the land belongs to him, yet he can confiscate if he so wishes.

Oba as dreadful authority

As earlier stated, the person of the king is more dreaded than even the gods and he is considered sacred in Yorùbá society. This made the people to ascribe to the king 'a deity status' and is made to have absolute and dreadful authority. This in turn makes the people, even their relatives not to over-step their boundary while dealing with them. This claim is projected by the poet when she says:

Mo sùn móba níwòn egbèje èrù re tó bà ò

Ègbè: Adéyeyé Enitàn èrù re, tó bà ò

Mo jìnnà sOba níwòn ègberùdínlógún o èrù re,

tó ba Ògúnwùsì

Ègbè: Adéyeyé Enitàn èrù re, tó bà ò

Mò ní bóba rèhà (track 2)

I move closer to the king in some ways

Chorus: Adéyeyé you ought to be feared

I rever the king in many ways, you are to be

feared, Ògúnwùsì

Chorus: Adéyeyé you are to be feared

The poet sees Oba Adéyeyé Enitàn Ògúnwùsì as a dreadful authority that one must move closer to in order to obtain his favour and at the same time be revered so as to escape his wrath. She later states in clear terms the absolute and dreadful authority which kings possess when she reiterates that:

Kò séyàn tí í bi kábìèsí lówó isé,

Kò séèyàn tó lè be, kábíyèsí è, lówò, isé,

Ohun tóba bá se àsegbé ni

Tótó Oba

No one questions the king

No one dare question the king over his actions

Whatever the king does is final

According to a Yorùbá myth, long time age, a queen who was privileged to be with the king in the bedroom, having observed the small stature of the king, asked him why people dreaded him so much even with his small stature. The king thereafter replied his darling queen that he would show her what makes people dread the king the following day. At the dawn the king called out his queen at the presence of his chiefs and asked her to open up a covered calabash placed at her front, and when she did, behold the queen saw the head of her father in the calabash. The king then said to the queen, this is the reason why people dread kings, for kings have the power to do whatever they wish without anyone questioning their authority. The king is highly respected in Yorùbá society.

The king is acknowledged and his person held sacred and his wives and children is also not left out. In *Tótó Oba*, the poet states how the honour given to a king is being extended to the king's family at large thus:

Gbogbo oba léyin odi

Mo júbà oba oba-aládé gbogbo tí n be, nílè,

Yorùbá

Gbogbo aládé oba tí n be, léyin odi àtèyí tá a ti

mú je, àtèyí tá a ti i jé,

Àti gbogbo omo, oba ti yòò wálé wá soriíre

L'Éde, lèmi n kí

T'omo, oba

Tijòyè oba

Tobinrin oba

E ó pè, é fún wa l'Éde, yìi e, ò ní sé, kú

Ègbè: E, ò pè, é, fún wa l'Èdè, e, ò ní sé, kú

Èni oḅa

Omo, oḅa

E ó pè, é, fún wa l'Ède, e, ò ní sé kú

All the kings in the diaspora

I pay homage to all the beaded kings in

Yorùbáland

All the kings in the diaspora that had been

crowned and those that are yet to be crowned

And I greet all the prince and princesses that

would later be fortunate in Èdè,

The princes and princesses

The chiefs

The king's women (queens)

You shall all live long in Èdè,

Chorus: You shall all live long in Èdè,

The king's relatives

The princes

You shall all live long in Èdè,

The above excerpt buttresses the saying that '*ewé ló n be, lára isu tí a fi n bówò, kàinkàin'* – respect is shown to a person or group of people because of the personality around him/her. The king's relatives are also being revered because of the king. In Yorùbá society, a contempt shown to any member of the king's family is indirectly shown to the king because a Yorùbá adage says *A ki í malájá ká na ajá è*, – you do not show retaliate on the person you know.

Oḅa as peace-maker

One of the duties of a king is to promote peace within and outside his territory. He should ensure that there is unity among different groups and families within his domain and between the neighboring towns or villages. Even,

in a situation where there is already heated enmity on ground before a king ascends the throne, his ultimate duty is to make room for peace between/ among the aggrieved. The poet reflects this in *Mò ní bóbà rèhà* (track 3) thus:

Kórí bá o, sẹ̀ ìwo, ò lé è da sẹ e e oḅa Ògúnwùsì

O fidí òtè, jan lè pò, pò, pò, bi odi eyìn

Kórí bá o, sẹ̀ ìwo, ò lé è da sẹ

Èlédá o gbà fún adébù lóri Ifè

May you be lucky you cannot rule alone, king

Ògúnwùsì

He ends enmity

May you be lucky you cannot rule alone

The creator did not give room to destroyer over Ifè

From the above excerpt, the poet tries to reflect on one of the attributes of an oḅa as a peace maker in the Yorùbá society. In her work she claims that Oḅa Adéyeyè Enitàn Ògúnwùsì has exhibited this attribute (peace-making) as he has settled some forms of disputes within and outside his jurisdiction, and ends enmity and grievances among his kinsmen.

Oḅa as an administrator

The king is expected to be a good administrator. The person of a king must be able to use his influence to bring developments to his community. Part of what constitutes a good and peaceful reign of a king is his ability and capability to 'administer' in all its ramifications. The administrative status of a king is revealed by the poet in *Tótó Oḅa* (track 2) when she says:

Oḅni sogbó dilé

Ó sàkitàn gòngò dilè ojà

Eni bááá tóba ló ní sẹ bí oḅa òdé tó odedere

Mo ní bÓgúnwùsì ròde

Oḅni refurbishes

He brings development

He who is capable of being a king acts like one,

It is time to reign with Ògúnwùsì

With the high level of Oba Adéyeyè Ògúnwùsì literacy and exposure, he therefore deems it fit that it is high time his kingdom experienced a kind of tremendous developments which they have never experienced by refurbishing and reconstructing some old and dilapidated buildings. Not only this, during his coronation ceremony, he promised that he would take his kingdom and his people to a better place as a form of development. Therefore, Oba Adéyeyè Ènìtàn Ògúnwùsì has presented himself as a knowledgeable and profound administrator. Furthermore, she reiterates the same idea in *Tótó Oba* (track 4) thus:

La gbóhun sẹ

Laà gbóhunre sẹ

Ó sogbó dilé

Ó sàtàn gònḡò dojà

A gbóhunre sẹ

Aà gbóhun sẹ

Ènìtàn fitàn balè,

That we became prosperous

That we became prosperous

He refurbishes

He develops

We became prosperous

We became prosperous

Ènìtàn re-writes history

Conclusion

The Yorùbá oḡaship system can be said to have been among the salient institutions of the Yorùbá people, which is as old as the creation of Yorùbá entity itself. Before the advent of the British colonialists, the traditional Yorùbá people had formulated a kind of indigenous knowledge on governance in which they adopted the running of their day-to-day affairs evenly in harmony without any disruption. By and large, we have been able to explain the nitty-grit-

ty of Yorùbá Obaship system, as exemplified in Fáléye's poetry. The study discusses various roles of Oba in Yorùbá society as well as the various laws and taboos associated with Yorùbá obaship system. Fáléye, through her poetry represents Oba as a deity, the supreme head of a community, a dreadful authority, a peace-maker and as an administrator. Through this research work it has been established that literary poets are not blind to the concept of Yorùbá institutions since Fáléye, through her poems gives explicit information on Yorùbá kingship institution. The study concludes that Yorùbá oral poets stand as cultural archive because they discuss the various Yorùbá institutions so as to flash back on the past and observe the present for the usefulness of the future generation.

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