

A Critical Comparative Analysis of the Features of Ìgbálá and Ràrà Òkú Dirges

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Abstract

Ìgbálá funeral dirge is a distinctively peculiar dirge genre of the Egbá people, with a central role in their socio-religious system. This significance notwithstanding, studies on dirge poetry and performance have focused on Irémójé, Òkú pípè and Ràrà with little attention given to Ìgbálá. This study, Ìgbálá, therefore, examined the comparative analysis of the features of Ìgbálá and Ràrà Òkú with a view to foregrounding both dirges as a major oral performance in Yorùbáland. Sociology of Literature formed the major theoretical framework of the study, as it provide basis information about the society and the people therein while Semiotic is a science that is dedicated to the production of meaning. Semiotics exploration was adopted for symbols analysis of the items used during the performance of Ìgbálá and Ràrà Òkú. Data were collected through a structured multi-choice questionnaire administered to both Egbá and Oyo people for comparative analysis of the two dirges. The data collected were analysed using literary description of the features, divergences, and convergences, the socio-functions and the cultural objectives of both dirges. Five verbal acts identified are mourning the dead, which entails lamenting the departure, lamenting the loss of a gem, lamenting circumstances of the dead, comments on the deceased which require errand bearer, subtle condemnation, compliment and appreciation: comment on death is made by giving credence to its inevitability, positive instrument of socio significance mentioning of social ills and satirisation of team members as a handicap and female mischief. This elements show the distinctive nature and features of Ìgbálá and Ràrà Òkú dirges as a form of oral poetry in Yorubaland.

Keywords: oral poetry, Yorùbá oral poetry, Yorùbá funeral dirge, gbalá; dirge and Ràrà Òkú

dirge.

Introduction

Ìgbálá is performed during the funeral rites of an deceased, aged person (male or female). It has both religious and social functions; the religious function precedes the social aspect during the funeral rites. The religious aspect in some areas is in form of ritual purification of the deity, to which the deceased belonged during his lifetime. The social function comes in form of entertainment in the night after the internment for seven for a female deceased or nine days for male

deceased. Similarly, RaraÒkú, found among the people of Òyó is performed during funeral rites, but is organised in the daytime for seven days, irrespective of the sex of the aged deceased. These two dirges Ìgbálá and Ràrà Òkú are major dirges for the aged deceased in Ègbá and Òyò unlike Ìrèmójé which is only used after the demise of an Hunter.

The study of oral literature started in the 19th century by European scholars who had a sustained interest and concern for the origin of human culture and the best way to teach and impact it to the coming generation (Adejumo, 2009:1). According to this scholar, the study of Yorùbá oral literature, like all other African oral literature, was initiated by the debate about the creative ability of the so-called primitive primordial people called Africans.

The importance of Yorùbá oral literature cannot be over-emphasised as it is one of the major ways through which the Yorùbá culture is preserved, transmitted and disseminated from generation to generation. Purely, oral societies pass along everything that matters from one generation to another, without writing. Before writing evolved, Yorùbá as well as other cultures passed along their cultural traditions, including their history, identity, and religion through their oral literature also known as folk-literature which include their stories, proverbs, incantations, poems, songs, folk tales, ballads, myths and legends, riddles, orations, dirge, and so on from one generation to another.

According to Akporobaro (2005), the basic form of Yorùbá oral literary creation can be seen to fall into three basic literary genres – drama, poetry and prose, just as is the case of modern literature. Ìgbálásínsín and RàràÒkú which form the focus of this study belong to the dirge family of Yorùbá oral poetry. This study will discuss aspects of Yorùbá oral tradition with particular found in Ìgbálá dirge, which is peculiar to Ègbá as well as Ràrà Òkú which is peculiar to the Òyó people, both of the Yorùbá race.

On Yorùbá oral literature, scholars such as Beier and Gbàdàmósí (1959) write on *Yorùbá Poetry*; Babalólá (1966) on *Ìjálá*; Òlájubù (1970) on *Iwì-Egúngún*; Abimbólá (1976) on *Ifá*; Barber (1979) on *Oríki*; Ìşòlá (1993) on *Şàngó Pípè and Olatunji (1984) on features of Yorùbá oral poetry*. Fólòrunşò (1999) noted that oral poetry is a significant macro sub-generic unit of Yorùbá poetry, which has enjoyed a critical scholarly attention.

The study also examines the sociological aspect of Ìgbálá and Ràrà, its their significance in the society, the poets' concerns; and its their usefulness as well as the functions of Ìgbálá. This is significant due to the fact that the Sociology of Literature which is adopted as theory for the study reflects events in the society as well as the people involved in the event and reflection of the relationship between literature and the society. Semiotics is used in interpreting items used during the performance of the two dirges. Also, the study addresses the poetic

features of Ìgbálá, with a view to establishing the fact that Ìgbálá genre is a significant poetic genre in Yorùbá oral literature.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study and to analyse the relationship between Ìgbálá and RàràÒkú:

1. What are the gender roles in Ìgbálá and RàràÒkú?
2. What are the similarities and differences between Ìgbálá and RàràÒkú?
3. What are the semiotic interpretations of the symbolic objects in the performance of these dirges?
4. What are the socio cultural significance of Ìgbálá and RàràÒkú within Yorùbá cultural enterprise?
5. What are the requirements, taboos and myths associated with these two Yorùbá dirges?
6. What are the pattern of rendition and content of the two dirges

Literature Review

The main focus of Yorùbá traditional funeral dirges are comments on the personality of the deceased connecting him or her to the origin by reciting the lineage praise and the descriptive poetry (oríkì orílẹ̀) referring to the deceased as an integral member of the departed family or community, commenting on the certainty of life after death and sending of message to the earlier departed members of the family (Àmòò, 1983:10-17).

In the context of this study, this paper elucidates on the repository of intellectual contributions of various authorities on Yorùbá oral literature with particular reference to oral poetry. The nature of this study requires the use of a combination of concepts which allow a thorough comparative analysis of the relevant arts in Ìgbálá and Ràrà Òkú poetic traditions in Ègbáland and Òyó. The relevance of sociology of literature and functional perspective of literature in the society and the interpretative function of semiotics in presenting signs and decoding of verbal and nonverbal codes in selected excerpts are also examined.

Oral poetry

Poetry is the content and form of genres (Babalólá; 1966); it is however, the first genre of literature because it is as old as man with epic as the first form of poetry, with popular poems of Hommer. As a branch of literature, poetry creates a vivid imagination, expresses strong feelings and experiences using figurative languages, usually written in verse with lyric effects. Williams (1990)

called poetry the art which selects and arranges symbols of thought in such a manner to excite the most powerful and delightful feelings.

According to Afolayan (1982), poetry has some characteristic features some of which are the expression of strong feelings and thoughts divided into stanzas and verses. It is usually lyrical and has metrical arrangement. The root of poetry consists of three elements; these are the image, music and word. Imagery in poetry is a faculty of making or creating pictures out of words, that is, words that express concrete meaning and ideas. Imagery is a sensuous element in poetry that is, all the six senses are applied. The best definition of imagery is the one given by 'Pound' in Iwuchukwu (2003:12) that 'image is that which presents an intelligent and emotions of what is being described'. The second part of the definition 'in an instant of time is that, an image is an essential speech element that explains the uniqueness of an idea as being perceived by the poet.

Afoláyan (1982) further affirms that the music root of poetry can be divided into three - pure song, chant and speech. Also, before man began to write, all poetry belonged to the oral culture-song. The song element is very explanatory, when it turns words into music. Chant on the other hand is a magical incantation. In chants, the development in fine poetic form is dependent on fine musical form. A good artist is judged by the qualities of his composition in an appropriate musical setting on a given occasion (Olukoju, 1987). Chant is the repetition of assonance and alliteration which are drawn from internal circle that is, they are drawn from people's speech. Examples of chant include Ifá poetry and incantation. The elements of chant are drawn from people's local language. It is believed that there is power in the word that is why at times, people make use of euphemism while speaking.

The third element in the root of poetry is word as earlier mentioned. Poetry is about the power of words, that is, to bring something that is not in existence to exist, to create words out of non-existence. Language is the basic element by which man creates his reality. In primitive poetry, one can talk about two typologies of language of poetry, the esoteric and the common typologies. The language of poetry can be divided into two, the literal or denotative and the figurative or connotative.

Babalola (1981:7-11) suggests that oral poetry is a dynamic art form. It is produced in a dynamic context where the artist and the audience freely interact to produce an effective and lively performance. Without it, there would be no performance. With regard to poetic devices, African poetry contains features which make it easy and attractive to sing. These features are repetition, rhyme, alliteration and careful choice of words (Miruka 1994:90, Finnegan 1970:239, Okpewho 1985:9).

Dirge in Yorubaland

In oral culture, a dirge is a straightforward monologue. It is used to mourn the dead. The dirge covers three areas; the song which announces the death, the funeral and the song which accompanies the dead to the grave. The dirge expresses concerns about life, death and ancestors; it embodies the metaphysical belief (Akporobaro, 2006). In Yorùbá belief, death is the translation to another world. This must be followed by rites of passage for the deceased.

A dirge is a song of lamentation intended to provide memories of the deceased. The mournful and solemn aspect of it makes it associated with funeral; hence, the term dirge. A dirge is characterized by themes of isolation, loneliness and death. Being a song, that is sung at funerals, the speaker piles on e image of nature upon another to describe the grief he feels. It expresses sorrow, condolences and sympathy for the family of the deceased as a means of displaying communal solidarity, typical of traditional setting. It touches on philosophical and metaphysical components that create the linkage between the cosmic realm and the abode of the generic man. This implies the supernatural correspondence between the world of the dead and that of the living. Dirge relates the heroic performance of the deceased in terms of social status, traditional influence and political relevance. It employs death as a metaphor of existence which sensitizes people to know about the ephemeral nature of human existence.

Dirge in Yorùbáland has different names across the South-Western part of Nigeria and part of Kwara and Kogi states. Scholars have worked extensively on this. Ajuwon (1981) says “among hunters, the professional dirge is called *irèmòjé*.” Another form of dirge in Yorùbáland is *ràrà*, which is prominent among the Òyó people.

Theoretical frameworks

Sociology is concerned with people’s customs, habits, organizations, institutions and points of views. It looks at each group and examines how these norms and values influence individuals behaviour’s. According to Stewart (1981), sociology informs on actions which are considered private, but which are socially shaped and determined. In Yorùba ‘society, for example, the sound of a certain bird may suggest a bad omen to a person. In another society, the sound may lack any significant reference to warrant any attention. It is in the light of this that Stewart (1984:4) opines that; “the groups and societies in which we live and act continually influence our interpretation of ostensibly private beliefs and actions.” The establishment of sociology of literature was to achieve a particular purpose which according to Ògùnsina (1987:16), is “to submit literature and art to the same research methods as those employed in the physical and natural

sciences.” Thus the term sociology of literature is a combination of two distinct disciplines, sociology and literature.

Wellek and Warren (1949:94) view literature as “a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation.” In other words, literature uses language to explain the society. The literary artist is part of the society, he produces literature, using structures of words and ideas that are understood and shared by the society. All the norms and conventions and all other traditional literary devices such as symbolism and metre which are inherent in the language are socially-based.

Sociology of literature is a subfield of the sociology of culture. It studies the social production of literature and its social implications. Sociology of literature is a branch of literary study that examines the relationships between literary works and their social contexts, including patterns of literacy, kinds of audience, modes of publication and dramatic presentation, and the social class and positions of authors and readers. The main pre-occupation of Sociology of Literature therefore, is the understanding of the relationship between literature and society. A literary artist cannot ignore the influence of the society on his work.

Semiotics

Semiology aims to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limit; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects and the complex association of all these, which form the content of ritual, conventional and public entertainment: these constitute if not languages, at least system of signification. (Barthes, 1967:9).

Lotman (1975:57-83) describes cultural semiotics as a holistic approach to the problem of meaning generation. He defined meaning generation as the ability of culture, both as a whole and as the sum of its part to generate as “output” nontrivial new texts.

Signs and Signification

Eco (1976:7) defines a sign as anything which may be interpreted to “stand for” (or substitute for) something. He also accepts Hjelmslev’s definition of signs an entity which has both an ‘expression form’ and a ‘content form’ and which is established by the interdependence between them. The expression of a sign presupposes its content, and the content of a sign presupposes its expression.

Features of Ìgbálá and RàràÒkú

Ìgbálá is generally believed to be originated from the Ègbá in Abẹ̀òkúta, Ògùn State, Nigeria. This paper examines the forms and structural features of Ìgbálá and Ràrà Òkú, its historical realities and how the dirges are organized, produced and practiced. Gender plays a greater role in the rendition of Ìgbálá and Ràrà Òkú; both males and females participate in the rendition of the dirges.

Performance of Ìgbálá

When the session is about to start, all the performers will surround the mortar and start dancing round the mortar face-down. As they dance round, they start singing and clapping their hands to the talking drums which draw the attention of participants, spectators and everyone in the neighborhood.

The daily session of Ìgbálá commences at 9:00pm and ends around 5:00am. The participants will dance and sing round the mortar with rendition of different song. In Ìgbálá rendition, the first among other instruments is the clapping of hands to back up the songs being sung by the singers. Then, there is the piling up of cloths in one wrapper for the participants to beat with the hands. This makes it sound like drum and therefore features as one of the musical instruments for Ìgbálá dirge.

Ìyáwa là n wá, àwa ò ri o,
 Bẹ̀ẹ̀ la ò sùn, bẹ̀ẹ̀ la ò wo
 Bàbá wa là n wá, àwa ò ri o,
 Bẹ̀ẹ̀ la ò sùn, bẹ̀ẹ̀ la ò wo.

We are searching for our mother
 We could not find her/him
 And we could not sleep we could not rest
 We are searching for our father
 We could not find her/him
 And we could not sleep we could not rest

As the performers are displaying, they can even be throwing banter at one another, and this is done to evoke feelings. Gradually, the rendition will become full blown for the night. The local gin, food and financial motivation from the children and relatives of the deceased will be the motivating factors that help the singers to be at their best.

In modern times, traditional drums like Bè̀n̄bẹ̀, Gá̀ngan and Ìyáàlù feature in the performance of Ìgbálá dirge. It should be noted that the coming of these modern musical instruments does not dislodge the clapping of hands as part of the instruments used in for Ìgbálá dirge. Music is the food of the soul. Apart from the fact that Ìgbálá is organised to honour a departed soul, it is also a form of entertainment where people tend to enjoy themselves. Infact, drumming, which energises music, is an integral part of Ìgbálá and there is a symbiotic relationship between the musical instruments employed and the success achieved in the staging of Ìgbálá, since music itself is the soul of entertainment.

Performance of Ràrà Òkú

Ràrà òkú starts immediately after the aged adult has passed on even before the internment. First is the bathing of the corpse (*wíwẹ̀ òkú òkú wíwẹ̀*), dressing it up in good clothing materials and shoes, and shaving (*ori fifa*) or plaiting (*irun dídì*) depending on the sex of the deceased in preparation for the journey to another life after death. The dressing may involve some ritual elements depending on the family (*agboilé*) of the deceased. For instance, if the death is from *Ile Alájá*, a dog will be slaughtered and its skin removed. This dog skin will be used to wrap the corpse before clothes are put on the corpse. The remains of the dog will be boiled for people to eat. After this, the corpse is laid on a mat before it is taken to the grave for internment. This is the equivalent of lying-in-state in modern burial ceremony. Here, elderly women (not older than the deceased) gather round the corpse in a circle and start chanting the family praise song (*ooleile*) in proper Ọ̀yọ́ (Ìlọ̀ràá) dialect:

“Bàbá mi lẹ̀,
 Àdẹ̀yí, ọ̀mọ̀sàjẹ̀ máṣe e,
 Ọ̀mọ̀sahérédilé,
 Bàbá mi nàá ló sọ̀mọ̀igbẹ̀ẹ̀ dì ‘gboro.
 Ọ̀mọ̀ s’àkìtàn dojà,
 Ọ̀mọ̀sán wọ̀n n pọ̀n kanrín – kanrín
 Àdẹ̀yíni kẹ̀ni má tẹ̀òde bàbàòun,
 Àdẹ̀yí ní kẹ̀ni maátẹ̀jẹ̀ajẹ̀ mọ̀lẹ̀...
 My father has gone to the grave beyond!
 The great Àdẹ̀yí, the most truthful man.
 The great warrior who turned a hut to a building’
 The great warrior who turned desert into a city

My father who turned the refuse depot to a big market.
 Àdèyi who gives order not to see any one passing through
 his father's house even in the scorchy Sun.
 He order no one to step on a witch blood;

In this case, the deceased is a man. In the event that the wife of the deceased had died before him, the deceased will be praised in connection with his dead wife thus:

Aládèyí o kú àlejòaya,
 Àdèyí o kú àlejòaya,
 Àmòpé lọ o.
 Oní ònkanti mú òkan rẹ lọ.
 Àmòpé lòmọ rẹkan léje – léje
 Àmòpé lòmọ àtòri kan léje – léje
 Àmòpé tíngbáwo rọ ní kòrílẹ...

Aládèyí, your wife is on her way to the grave beyond,
 Aládèyí, your wife is on her way to the grave beyond,
 Àmòpé is gone!
 The owner has requested for his property,
 Oh great Àmòpé!
 Àmòpé the great, who is known by all..

At the internment of the corpse, the first phase of the burial is completed. Ràrà òkú is observed for seven days irrespective of the sex of the deceased. It is predominantly more of family eulogies (*oríki idílẹ*), praise songs and encomiums reflecting the family's line of profession (hunters, drummers, farmers, masqueraders, etc). Like Ìgbálá, it involves *adiye irànà* used to alert passers – by because the corpse must not meet anyone ~~one~~ on the way. This *adiye irana* will later be eaten by the youth and children. Drummers are either hired or invited. The drummers start first followed by songs '*omọ ò láyólé, ẹni omọ sin lóbímọ*. The instruments used also reflect the deity being worshipped by the family. Such instrument include blade, thunder – bolt (*ẹdunàrà*), mortal, palm oil and so on.

On a daily basis, there will be clothes donation by every member of the

family as well as well-wishers. On the final day, the children of the deceased and the family, led by the drummers, visit all donors for appreciation. The drummers provide the lyrics in praise of the children of the deceased in the form of sound and the rárà singers follow suit:

Ìyá reń kío, Óń yìn ó,
Óń yìn ó,ojú reńiò to,
Yíyẹ ní yẹ eýelé, òní yó rọọ lórùn,
Òníşuomọ yòòjiná fún ọ je.
Greetings from your mother, She is adoring you,
She is adoring, it is a pity, you cannot see her,
Birds never struggle to fly, Things will fall into pleasant places
for you,
Today, you shall eat the fruit of your labour.

When the rárà òkú session is about to start, all the performers will surround the corpse. The eldest son or daughter of the deceased will stand on the mortar turned face-down where he/she eats okro soup prepared without oil (ọbẹ ilasa). The essence of this is for easy identification of the children of the deceased (ọmọolódókú).

Pattern of Rendition of Ìgbálá and Rárà Òkú

The pattern of rendition of different songs differs and varies based on the purpose of the song. The pattern of rendition of Ìgbálá takes cognizance of all the literary connotations. Sometimes, hyperbolic expressions are used, and some other time, metaphor is used to drive home the point. At intervals, dramatic and humorous elements are added, making the session a blend of all literary realities. The entertaining nature of the daily sessions will attract more audience to the Ìgbálá dirge rendition throughout the period it covers for the rites of passage (seven or nine days). Anyone whose parents are still alive should not participate for fear of losing their loved ones soon. It is time bound and on this it is noted: *Ìgbálá kí Şorin igbà tó wù mí?* (Ìgbálá is an unusual song)

In Òkú pípẹ, immediately a person dies, the female children of the deceased will chant 'Rárà' round the town to announce the demise of their father or mother. This indicates that the deceased left behind children of note. The eldest of them will be holding horse-tail behind them. By the time the *Asunráràs* return, the elderly female 'Apòkú' will start their performance. They will seat round the corpse, some will even be robbing the chest of the deceased as the

chanting continues. The 'Apòkús' will continue until the corpse is lowered into the grave. Some of the features of 'Òkú pípè' are: Reference to the deceased, reference to the dead as an integral family member of the living and life after death.

On Ràrà, Raji (1991) defines 'Ràrà' as a kind of poetry used to entertain celebrities like kings, chiefs and warriors and others in that category. The study also observed that Ràrà has no attachment with idolatry esoteric religion but purely entertaining. Ràrà Òkú singers wobble their voice while chanting and this makes them appear as if they are weeping. In Òyó town, when the prince and his wives (ayaba) are celebrating the remembrance of their great grandfathers, they celebrate them with Ràrà chants in lamentation tone. It is always a session to behold as women display their dexterity by showcasing their skill.

Ràrà has no gender boundary as male or female, young or old even the non-native can partake in Ràrà session. Ràrà can be chanted anytime and anywhere and at any entertaining session including celebration of the deceased. However, Ìgbálá is unique as it is not lamenting just any deceased but an aged deceased. If a deceased is not aged, he or she will not be celebrated with Ìgbálá session.

Rules, Restrictions and Taboos Associated with Ìgbálá Rendition and Ràrà Òkú

As a custom, Ìgbálá is usually rendered at night. Being a special cultural practice, it is strictly recommended that it is a rite of passage that must be done at night and never in the day light. The beliefs associated with this is contained in the fact that Ìgbálá is mainly organized to invoke the spirit of the dead one into the midst of the performers, as a way of making him/her appreciate how well he was loved, cherished and being remembered. Therefore, it is better done in the night in order not to endanger the living if per adventure the spirit of the departed soul, as intended surfaced to be among his people.

Ìgbálá is a reflection of the sociocultural setting of Ègbá people. It is a taboo for anyone to sing any part of Ìgbálá song at anytime other the specific night of funeral performance it is meant for. Also, despite being a cultural practice that is characterised by entertainment, and humour, it is not a ritual that anyone can decide to be a partaker at will or better still handles with kid gloves.

It is also pertinent to note that the taboo associated with Ìgbálá affects directly the bereaved spouse directly. The widow of the dead must not go out for forty days and must not be beaten by rain within those forty days. For widower in the case of a male, he must not travel far or walk about aimlessly, if he does, ominous signs await him.

One of the the taboos associated with Ìgbálá according to one of my resource

person is that those who still have aged ones as parents must not partake in the rendition of the dirge because of its dire consequence. In African setting, it is a taboo for anyone to sing any part of Ìgbálá song at neutral time for the sake of it. As earlier said, it is strictly recommended that this rite of passage must be done at night and never in the day light in order not to endanger the living if per adventure the spirit of the departed soul as intended surfaced to be among his people. The children of the deceased will make adequate arrangement for entertainment of the participants throughout the period that the Ìgbálá sessions last. These dirges cannot be observed for pre mature death, or infants, they are strictly for the aged. Also deaths by suicide, thunder bolt, poisoning, or drowning cannot be considered for Ràràòkú, it is a taboo.

Semiotic Interpretation of items used in Ìgbálá and Ràrà Òkú

A symbol is a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as to that object (Pierce 1931:58). However, in extra – linguistic symbolization, of the type found in *Yorùbá àròkò* and *àlèlè*, there is usually a sort of indirect and hidden motivation that can only be contextually explained (Ogundeji, 1988:38).

Items Used in Ìgbálá and ràrà òkú

- **1. Odo – mortar:** The belief about the importance of the mortar in every home conveys the importance of Ìgbálá dirge to the Ègbá people. Symbolic action of dancing round the mortal depicts prayers and good wishes for the performers and the families of the diseased.
- **2. Àtùpà – lamp:** Light is the opposite of darkness and lamp lightens the environment and gives illumination. It sends out the signal that the programme in itself is purely social with nothing ritualistic or occultic about it (*kòsiawo kan l'áwojèwà*).
- **3. Òwúotutu:** Cotton wool - Cotton wool are used as lightning devices by performers during Ìgbálá dirge.
- **4. Epo pupa – Palm oil:** Epo is used as oil for lamp in Ìgbálá dirge. It serves as the fuel of the light used during the night. This is wishing the deceased ease and friction free voyage as he/she journeys to the world beyond.
- **5. Ìṣáná – Matches:** Matches are also used in lightning the cotton wool used during Ìgbálá. This serves as the source of fire (energy) for the lamp.
- **6. Ògógóró – Alcohol:** Ògógóró (locally brewed alcohol) serves as ògùn ìṣyè (memory charm) for performers. They belief that drinking it wades away

cold, it is also believed to revitalize their energies. It refreshes their memory, the tunes, lyrics and lines of the family panegyrics, praise songs (*oriki*) of the deceased which they have earlier learnt.

- 7. **Ẹní – Mat:** *Ẹní* in this context serves as object that provides comfort for the performers in the sense that they could sit or lie down to relax and rest between sessions of performances in order to regain their strength.
- 8. **Owó– money:** while the performance is on - going, anytime the children or family members of the deceased feel motivated, such individual sprays the performers with money. It is also a means to show off the economic power of the family and to prove their prowess and the wealth of the family.
- 9. **Ìlànà ìjókòó –Seating arrangement:** The *Ìgbálá* performance sits in between the members of the deceased family and the viewers. This sitting arrangement is so done so as to get the totality of the attention of the deceased family.
- 10. **Ẹdun àrà- Thunder bolt:** This item represents the deity being worshipped by the lineage. The presence of this item symbolises the acknowledgement and reverence to the family deity or god at the funeral rite of the deceased.

Areas of Divergence and Convergence between *Ìgbálá* (*Ẹgbá*) and *Ràrà Òkú* (*Ọyó*)

Ìgbálá and *ràrà òkú* as funeral dirges are used for the aged deceased and a lot of programmes are involved in the rendition of the dirges. There are a lot of similarities between the two. Also, there are certain striking differences between *Ìgbálá* (*Ẹgbá*) and *Ràrà òkú* (*Ọyó*) which cannot be overlooked in a work of this nature.

Areas of Divergence between *Ìgbálá* and *Ràrà Òkú*

1. *Ìgbálá* is rendered for seven days for female and nine days for male deceased respectively while *Ràrà Òkú* is only for seven days, irrespective of gender.
2. *Ìgbálá* is being performed at night while *Ràrà Òkú* can only be performed in day
3. time.
4. *Ìgbálá* rendition or performance commences on the night of interment of the deceased
5. while *Ràrà Òkú* commences at the point of announcement of the death of the deceased.

- 6. All the sessions of Ìgbálá rendition or performance are performed in the family
- 7. compound of the deceased while in Rárà Òkú, the last day of performance is
- 8. a procession of the deceased family dancing round to acknowledge family members and
- 9. well wishers who donated clothe for the final burial.
- 10. In Ìgbálá, there is no emphasis on donation of clothe for the final burial while in Rárà
- 11. Òkú, members of the family of the deceased are expected to donate clothe for the final burial rite.

Points of Convergence between Ìgbálá (Ègbá) and Rárà òkú (Ọyọ)

Ìgbálá and rárà òkú are both dirge, the performers are both dominated by women. They both agree on the inevitability of death and they see the deceased as a message bearer. Adiyẹ ìràná, drums (talking drum) are used in both occasions. We shall examine these similarities under some sub – headings:

Similarities in themes:

The themes of morals, mourning, life after death, caring and generosity of the deceased are very prominent in the two funeral dirges. Both emphasises the inevitability of death. Ìgbálá and Rárà highlight the achievements and the personality of the deceased. For example:

Theme of mourning:

Gbawájú ilé o,
Gbèyìnkùlé ilé o,
Ko wá wò dàrò tọmọ n ẹ.

Come through the front of the house,
Come tthrough the back of the house and
Listen to your children growning about your death.

Generosity:

Ìyá lọ o, a ò ri,

Ìwòyí èsì a jàmàlà bí ọgọ́fà,

Ìyá lọ Àmàlà kò má sí mọ o.

Our mother is gone, we cannot find her,

This time last year we ate like one hundred wraps of Àmàlà,

Our mother is gone, no more free Àmàlà.

Similarities in Patterns: Repetitions, metaphor, humor, satirical and hyperbolic expressions among others, are part of the pattern of rendition of Ìgbálá and Ràrà òkú. For example, both dirges make use of repetition for emphasis:

Ìyá wa, là ní wá, àwa ò ri o bàbá mi lọ o in ràrà òkú. (In Ìgbálá and was repeatedly in the two dirges for show of great grief over the deceased).

Humour and satire also form a forum to warn the audience of the possible social ills that might happen. This is presented in satirical form in one of their songs towards the end of their performance.

È é e à, ẹ fasọbabé

È é e à, ẹ fasọbòbò

Bókó, bá le tán

Kò mọbàkan

Ará yéeyéé, ẹ fasọbabé.

Please, dignifies your womanhood,

Please, dignifies your womanhood,

Arouser of man could be dangerous.

It depicts the level of solidarity the neighbors give to the family of the deceased and a reflection of the character of the deceased during this life time.

- **Similarities in items used:** Both Ìgbálá and Ràrà òkú makes use of same item in the exceptional of thunderbolt in igbala.
- **Similarities in participation:** Both dirges are majorly the pre occupation of women. Although, few men may participate as observers and as a source of morale for the performers but whoever is older than the deceased cannot perform in both dirges and whoever has parents cannot also perform in the dirges.
- **Similarities in taboo and rules:** Any individual who is older than the deceased

cannot participate in the two. It is a taboo for children to participate in either of the two dirges. Ìgbálá and rárà òkú cannot be observed for pre mature death, or infants, they are strictly for the aged. Also death by suicide, thunder bolt, poisoning, drowning or any other mysterious death cannot be considered for rárà òkú and ìgbálá as well, it is a taboo.

- **Similarities in purposes:** The purpose of rárà òkú is seen from the point of view of preparation for transition into another world. Ìgbálá too is seen from the perspective of farewell package for the deceased.

Conclusion

This study gives detail explanation on features, item used, pattern of rendition, areas and points of convergents and divergents between ìgbálá and rárà òkú. The Yorùbá norms reflected in the two dirges, the similarities in themes, patterns, participation, taboos and rules. This details explains deep similarities and uniqueness of these dirges in their forms and significance to the community where is been being used as rites.

Ìgbálá and rárà òkú which are forms of poetry by all intents and purposes live up to the billings of modern day poetry. This is due to the fact that, in subjecting this form of oral literature to all the tools of modern literature, known as literary devices, it was discovered that Ìgbálá, a form of modern African literature has been discovered to possess all the elements of modern literature, be it poetry or drama and other aspect of literary practices. Besides the literary reality which abounds in this study, this paper has also provides clear understanding of what the two dirges are all about. They are not songs that are sang for the sake of it, ditto rárà òkú.

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