

Socio- religious Analysis of Indigenous Drums in Olojo Festival in the sustenance of the King's Leadership role among the Ile-ife people

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Abstract.

The Yoruba people acknowledge the usage of drum for cultural and religious functions. These functions also influences the emotional aspect of their beliefs and practices. Drumming is seen as an action which portrays their identity and life style. These actions are shown in the acts of celebrations and worships where it plays a significant part in the collective socio-cultural experiences of the people as it reveals the pulse and their inner feelings. It also serves as instrumentation which could enhance the deity and their adherents to the level of spiritual ecstasy. Among the Yoruba the drum can be identified as holding deeper symbolic and historical meanings as it adds accompaniment for any manner of ceremony –births, deaths, marriages- together with a ritual dance. This usage is embedded with human, natural and spiritual formations which create leadership value for the people. This work will look at the use of *osirigi* and *agree* drums from these formational aspects by analysing usage through semiotic and phenomenological frame works.

Introduction

Festivals in Yorubaland represent the climax of public worship, as they manifest themselves through both oral expression and actions. A festival is at the centre of activities where devotees commit themselves to the care of the *òrìṣà*[or Yoruba divinities]. The devotees also use this period to show their gratitude both in word and dance to the divinities. From invocation to dismissal (Vidal,2012:201), it is noteworthy that communication is indispensable to the interaction that occurs between devotees, the society and the *òrìṣà*. This communicative interaction includes music and drumming as a mode of enacting a divine worship. The process of enactment requires particular drums to be played for such festival occasions. The effect of the drum is to stimulate ritual activities and also to sensitize worshippers during the stages of trance and frenzied mood attached to the festival activities (Vidal,2012:200). These traditional drums also possesses politico-religious significance which strengthens the leadership authority of the king of Ile-Ife. This paper looks at the socio-religious activities of Yoruba indigenous drums in the Olojo festival and its political value attached to the sacredness of the authority which the king wields over his subjects. The aim of this article will be to look at the major socio-religious importance of the drum among the Ile-Ife people, and the drum's critical role in maintaining not only the integrity of the sacred performances, but also the

leadership and control enjoyed by the sacred kingship within Ile - Ife society. The festival serves as the vehicle through which to achieve these fundamental objectives.

Origins of the Olojo Festival in Ile-Ife

Olójó is a communal festival attached to the worship of Ògún in Ilé-Ifè. The festival is meant to commemorate Ògún, the god of iron, and Òrànmiyàn, who was said to be the son of Ògún and Oduduwa. Oduduwà was recognised as the mythical ancestor of the Yoruba. From oral traditions, it was noted that Ògún is the Yoruba òrìṣà of war. He is one of the earliest divinities. He was a hunter; and before the earth was formed, he used to descend by a spider's web upon the primordial marshy waste for the purpose of hunting (Idowu, 1996:84). He was said to be one of the immemorial beings (*Oòyè*) who descended from Olódùmarè along with other divinities like Ọbàtálá and other òrìṣà (Oladapo, 1980:104). He was a warrior designated to pave the way for the other, less war-like deities who followed. His invaluable services and commitments to humanity compelled the Yoruba to remember, and memorialize him through ritual at least once a year until this very day. His service therefore led Ògún to be given the honorific title of "Owner of the Day" (Ọlójó) as he was the one that paved the way for other 'òrìṣàs' or gods.

Òrànmiyàn was an Ile-Ife prince and a warlord who later founded the Oyo and Benin Kingdoms. He was said to have been conceived through a cross-sex meeting of two deities over a slave woman known as Lakange Anihunka (a slave captured by Ògún in one of his war expeditions). The deities involved were Oduduwà and Ògún himself. Ògún slept with the woman upon returning from his war trip to Ilé-Ifè, but unbeknownst to him, the woman was already betrothed to Oduduwà. When Ògún came to confess to what he had done, it was too late to stop Oduduwa from marrying her.

The woman later gave birth to a child who had one side of his body fair and the other dark. The fair skin was Oduduwa's and the dark skin was Ògún's. This image of the child then gave rise to the saying *òrò-ló-yàn* which may mean "the child is very unusual" or "the child has become explicitly unnatural" or "my prayers have been answered". This saying then depicts the name of the deity Òrànmiyàn until today, and at the same time reveals the cultural model of gift of a child in an extraordinary way (*ifà lomọ*) which is always emphasised in Yoruba parlance. This parlance identifies the belief that people live out the meanings of their names. The philosophy of naming among the Yoruba is expressed in common saying that "*ilé ni à ní wò kí átó so omo lórúko*" (one must consider the tradition and history of a child's relatives when choosing a name). This tradition of naming is a long standing tradition and practice among Yoruba families and such customs often reference their sacred stories, beliefs and the vocations associated with the family.

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This model therefore indicates the symbolic importance of Ogun and Oduduwa in the creation of Oranmiyan, most importantly that the child represented a gain for Oduduwa, who outsmarted Ogun through his authority as king. The Olojo festival has a display of colour symbols which brings to mind this mythical story that connects Oranmiyan with Ogun and Oduduwa. The image of fair and black colours which Oranmiyan was born with is also reflected in the ritual dress of the Lokolokos every year during the festival (see plate 2). The image also symbolises the reminiscence of the picture of Oranmiyan in every Olojo festival.



Plate 2: The Lokoloko team wearing the colour symbol of Oranmiyan during Olojo festival

When Ọ̀rànmiyàn grew up as a prince, the festival of Ọ̀lọ́jọ́ was inaugurated by him to venerate Ọ̀gún. He himself also became associated with the festival because he was warlike as Ọ̀gún, his partial father. The festival thus also served as an annual festival for every king enthroned in Ilé-Ifẹ̀ from the time of Ọ̀rànmiyàn to the present day. The Ọ̀lọ́jọ́ festival occurs annually in the month of October.

Theoretical Framework

Michael Halliday semiotic method as cited by Adeosun will be utilised in the course of this work. This method emphasises the importance of context, both context of situation and context of culture, in reconstructing the meaning of a text (Adeosun, 2013:91). It views language as the embodiment of the social process in a society through the use of symbols and signs. This method would be relevant because Yoruba language is context dependent. It shows that context is very important in the understanding of the symbol and sign. Halliday's method also takes cognizance of shared meanings among users of the signs, and decodes such signs primarily from their worldview. Thus, this paper will identify how drums express religious and cultural ideas and feelings through symbols and signs. Phenomenological methods will also be engaged to interrogate relevant tradition and to facilitate an understanding of the essence of the indigenous drum in the festival.

History of Òsírìgì, the Indigenous Drum in Ile-Ife

Daramola,(2001:144-147) wrote that Fabunmi traces the origin of Òsírìgì to the original inhabitants of Ilé-Ifè. The history, asserts that the drum originally belonged to 'Orìṣàtèkò (an important figure in ancient pre-dynastic Ife), as part of the revolution that accompanied the development of the institution of the Ọ̀nì as a dynasty. But that it was taken by force. It shows that the seizure of the Òsírìgì drum from its original custodian took place during a war led by Ọ̀rànmíyàn, founder of the dynasties in Benin and Oyo and child of Ogun and Oduduwa, who was reputed to have been originally an Ile- Ife prince. The drum was confiscated, and a musician called Omìtótó was appointed to play it at the palace under the supervision of a high-chief called Ọ̀bàlọ̀rà̀n. The drum was brought to the palace from Ilode Quarters (Ọ̀bàlọ̀rà̀n's base) on a daily basis for performance. The drum, therefore, became the possession of the Ile- Ife Court while its music began to be solely used on state occasions and for important 'national' festivals like Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀, Edì and Ọ̀rùngbẹ̀. Another version of the story describes the Òsírìgì and other drums as princes of Ọ̀lọ̀fin that used to make Ọ̀lọ̀fin happy on every occasion. After the death of these princes, it then became a custom to beat the drum for every succeeding Ọ̀lọ̀fin or Ọ̀nì to identify the presence of the princes in all occasions that involve the king.

Daramola also noted that the linkage of Òsírìgì with the personages and festivals mentioned above confirms that the music has a primordial origin in Ile -Ife traditions (plate 4.8). The drum emerged as an indigenous music and developed to become part of the paraphernalia of office in the court of the Ọ̀nì of Ife. It is a traditional royal music played for the Ọ̀nì and the Ìsòrò chiefs in Ile- Ife (Ologundudu, 2008:160).

The òsírìgì which is the drum of the Ọ̀nì is the traditional drum attached to the festival of Olojo(see plate 1). Also àgèrẹ̀, otherwise known as Keregidi, is another drum which Ọ̀nì must dance to during this festival (see plate 5). Òsírìgì is the drum of the first Ọ̀lọ̀fin, the first king of Ile-Ife kingdom. Before Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ could take place, the drum must be unveiled with sacrifice. The drum must be worshipped.



Plate 1: The Òsírìgì drummer enclosing the sacred door.

Source: the researcher. 26/10/ 2012.

Omisakin, the Obalufe of Irewo (a royal father) explained the usage of this drum in different dimensions (Omisakin, 2013). He described the drum as “a natural royal drum” which belongs to Oòduà the mythical ancestor of the Yoruba. He noted that when Odùduwà arrived at Ife, he brought along twenty one (21) drums but òsírìgì was the leading drum among the rest. The drum has no replica within Yoruba tradition, as it is a peculiar drum used in the worship of the deities. It is not used willy-nilly, nor during just any festival. The òsírìgì drummers are traditionally endowed, and their stewardship to the king is established by the family genealogy. The tradition of the drum must be passed from one generation to the other by inheritance. It is noted that certain caution must be followed in the usage of the drum. The drum must only be beaten during a royal engagement. It is used, for example, to announce bereavement within the palace. It is also used for prayer and blessing. It is used for warning. The most peculiar attributes of the òsírìgì drummer is that they know how to beat the panegyric (*oriki*) of each chief that surrounded the king.

It must be noted that indigenous drums are highly sacrosanct and sacred among the African people. This is real among the Yoruba because it usually appeals to their consciousness. In several ways, it showcase the ability of the people in their consciousness shift as it creates within the environment the mood of spirituality through ritual performance. It also serve as sacred symbols of the ruler’s office because through it, the sanctity of the office of the African rulers are maintained. Mbiti (1991,163) established this when he explain that “ many symbols are used in connection with the office of the (African) rulers. Examples are.....the use of sceptres as symbol of authority, and royal drums which symbolize their ability to communicate with the people.” In this category as well, is the use of bata and koso (types of indigenous drum in Oyo) drum in the palace of Alaafin of Oyo (Johnson, 1976,58). The function of the two drums is to wake the king’s up every morning at 4.a.m.. This then signify a call to duty as we have the symbolic citation of the national anthem attached to the flag of any country. The implication of the seizure or silence of such indigenous drum means the authority of the ruler of such community or tribe would have been disengaged or probably such ruler

is deceased and the community is in a state of mourning as it is also the case when the flag of any country is lower down during the period of bereavement.

Socio-Religious Analysis of the Drums in Ọlójó Festival and Its Leadership and Cultural Connotation

Ademakinwa Adereti (2012:11) quoting Omigbule shows that the timing of the festival depends on the movement of the sun from West to East. This timing is done with the *cola* divination, which is the responsibility of Chief Eredumi, the chief priest of Ọ̀rànmíyàn. The festival is held in honour of Ogun, and it is observed for four days. The first day, which is Friday, is known as '*ilagun*' and involves the sacrifice and presentation of animal and other materials at the shrine. A dog, snails, palm oil, fowls, kola nuts, palm-wine and a special sacrificial provision provided in a small pot (*orù*) by the king, are given to Osògún (chief priest of Ọlójó), The priest who, along with his aides are known as *Àmurùn*, proceed gently towards the shrine without looking back (plates 3-4). The pot and the materials must be guided to the shrine safely. During the procession, the following chants are recited:

Ògún gborí ọ̀rá gbùrèfẹ Ọ̀gún received the head ọ̀rá got the remnant

Oo gborí, orí ògún fi (Oladapo, 2013) He takes the head



Plate 3: Osogun priest at the palace waiting for the ritual materials during Olojo festival at Ife.

Source: the researcher. 26/10/ 2012



Plate 4: Àmurùn Ogun with the ritual materials during Olojo festival.

Source: the author. 26/10/ 2012.

The climax of the festival takes place on a Saturday when the king wears his 'Are' crown to the shrine. A common belief among the people is that this is the day when the ancestors awaken to join the celebration. In the procession, the Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ni moves to Ọ̀gún's shrine amidst the jubilation of the participants. It is at this juncture that the sacred drum of the Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ni begins to play its critical role in the ritual.

The importance of the drum to the Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ni in Ọ̀lójó festival is critical. Àyàn, the deity of the drum, was considered to be the wife of the first Ọ̀lójó: Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ni of Ife. Her responsibility as wife was to continually praise her husband the king. So, in terms of praises and social dedication, the drum's purpose in the palace is to offer her praises. It was after the demise of Àyàn, that a male drummer now plays the drum for the king. This is because the drum must be where the king (*Ọ̀lójó*) is. It is at this point that the special drumlike *òsírìgì*, along with the common ones (*dùndún*), represent a critical component of the religious tradition of Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ni.

Òsírìgì drummers must announce the emergence of the Oni with the 'are' crown. They will move to the sacred door from which the Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ni will emerge and they must usher the king out with a particular song (plates 1 & 5).



Plate 5: The sacred door in the palace where the king (Ọ̀ṣin) will emerge.

Source: the researcher. 26/10/ 2012.

The following is the song they will sing seven times while parading around the premises of the palace. After the seventh circumambulation, the king will emerge. The song goes thus:

<i>Ọ̀dé tó o</i>	It is time for outing
<i>Ọ̀dé dèrè</i>	Good outing
<i>Mo bọ̀ba re a ọ̀sìn</i>	I must follow the king on Ọ̀sìn outing
<i>Ọ̀dé tó o</i>	It is time for outing
<i>Síjúadé olúbùṣe</i>	Sijuade the son of Olubuse
<i>Ọ̀dé tó o</i>	It is time for outing
<i>Ọ̀lọ̀dún mi sọ̀dún</i>	Everyone celebrates their festival
<i>Olósù mosù</i>	Everyone knows their period of joy
<i>Ọ̀dé tó o</i>	It is time for outing.

The *àgèrẹ̀* the hunter's drum, also known as *keregidi* among the Ifa worshipers of the Ife people, is an Ifá version of indigenous drum which is beaten during Ifá festival. The drum is stationed inside the palace and it is beaten only on the day of Ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ festival. The Socio- religious Analysis of Indigenous Drums in Olojo Festival by Olusegun Oladosu

sacredness attached to this drum is that it must be beaten by an old man of at least (70) seventy years or above. The drummer must sit while beating the drum. It is this drum that the king must first dance to while he is inside the palace's court before showing himself to the mammoth crowd. This is considered as a spiritual and religious exercise. This is so because all the 'isòrò' (the palace chief) and the *lókólóko* (the palace messengers) must be at this dancing forum of the king (Akinyemi,2012)(see plate 6).After the exercise, the king will now be ushered out through an age-old sacred door which must be opened with the sound of òsírìgì drum(plate 5).



Plate 6: Ifá version of àgèrè beaten by elderly drummers during Ọlójó festival.

Source: the researcher, 28/10/ 2011

The ritual connection of the drum to Ọlójó festival is both symbolic and mythical. The sound and beating of òsírìgì symbolize the presence of Àyàn, the wife of Ọlófin at the festival. This indicates that Àyàn is ever loyal to any reigning Ọ̀nì on the throne. Mythically, it underlines the fact that the Ọ̀nì, being in a joyous mood, revalidates his allegiance to God, the deities and his deceased ancestors. This he did to strengthen his political authority over the throne. Òsírìgì is thus seen as a symbol of completeness, perfection and symbolizes a bridal function for all deities. This is clearly shown in the song explained above. The lyric of the song is of a woman calling her husband out on a special social occasion or appointment. This voice, the king must honour after the call has been done seven times. The voice also serves as general announcement to the attendant at the festival to show that the king is prepared for his ritual visit to the shrine of Ogun.

The òsírìgì also functions as a kind of ecological ritual. The drum, according to Daramola (2001), is related and understood in the light of the Yoruba belief about 'the four corners of the world' (*ìgun méréin ayé*) which represent the four cardinal points believed to be the pillars that uphold the universe and make it a complete or 'perfect' planet for human habitation. This premise is based on the musical instruments in the

ensemble, which include the òsírìgì drum and three metal gongs: *kónkóló*, *agbe* and *ojo*. This ensemble symbolizes the traditional Yoruba experience that the number 'four' is a sacred number, expressed through instrumentation and ritual.

In another sense, this is also connected to the activities of 'Ogún who is being celebrated through the festival as the pathfinder for the deities. This connection, therefore, brings to fore the fact that Ilé-Ifè is connected to the belief which qualifies the city as the "dawn of days" (*Ibi ojúmọ́ tí mọ́ wá*). This according to Samuel Johnson (1976,15) shows that "Ile-Ife is fabled as the spot where God created man, white and black, and from whence they dispersed all over the earth." But meanwhile the Yoruba myth stated that during the expedition of the of the four principal Yoruba deities (Orunmila, Obatala, Ogun and Esu) , it was Ogun that was given the qualities of pathfinders and he could do this through his hunting skills and this helped him to locate the route in a spot known as Ife and hence label the spot as an ancestral land with the appellation " dawn of days" . This identifies the fact that other human generation also took their queue from this route. The symbolic uses of this drum, therefore, establish this ecological fact.

The symbolic use of òsírìgì identifies the pledge of loyalty of Oṣòni to his ancestors. It indicates an expression of spiritual mediation during the festival. This recognition, in the opinion of Daramola, is attached to the sacredness of the drum when its life span terminates (retired) with the demise of an Oṣòni. A new Òsírìgì drum must be made for new successor and this must be done before the enthronement of a new one. The set used during the reign of the deceased Oṣòni is permanently hung at the palace never to be played again. The symbolic explanation for this is that the drum accompanies a deceased Oṣòni to the great beyond. This is an important aspect in the rite of passage that explains how the drum re-aggregates the king with his ancestors. It also establishes the concept of life after death. The hanging of the drum also expresses the concept of continuity in the rulership of the Oṣòni. This symbol identifies the continued support of the deceased king to the present Oṣòni and the fact that death could not in any way separate the dead from the living.

De Silva in his review of Pemberton gives a reason for ritual symbolism in Ògún festival. He showed the purpose of symbolizing Ògún as a feature of his:

Reality and ambiguity of violence in human experience, a violence that is created through act of destruction, but which can also destroy what it has created". The rites... require that Yoruba recognize the irony of cultural existence as death is essential to life" (De Silva,2006:54).

This acknowledgment in his view shows the understanding that to achieve social peace and maintain political harmony, Ògún must be appeased. This is done by surrendering to this higher cultural power. In the light of this, the involvement of ritual drums like òsírìgì and àgèrè in Ọlójó allows the fulfilment of this purpose in the festival. In this case, the king and the people have a special role in the sacrifice needed for the drum to make it sacred for spiritual undertaking among the people. This allows the leadership control of the king over his subjects to be more formidable. Apart from the two drums, specified drums like *dùndún* ensemble, and *bẹ̀m̀bẹ̀*, a form of indigenous drum recognized for Òrìṣà also contributed to this fulfilment. The beating and their sound are related and directed to a particular song which seeks for clemency of Ògún. The song is as follows:

Ògún o ọwọ ẹrọ Ògún please do it gently

Ògún o ọwọ ẹrọ(Olojo festival, 2012) Ògún please do it gently

One important thing noted in two year episodes of Ọlójó festival witnessed so far is the absence of physical beating of hunter version of *àgèrè*, *aféfé* and *apinti* which are the ritual drums for Ògún as well. These drums according to Akinyemi are the ensemble mandated by Ògún himself for the cult and his generation(Akinyemi,2013). The drums must be beaten by mature and aged hunters. Recently, due to external pressures that have led to the erosion of such traditions, the participation of the old hunters has reduced. This reduction adversely affects the transmittal of expertise from those who possess deep knowledge of the culture of the drum in the festival. The young people who are left sometimes lack the patience to continue the line of the traditions left by their forefathers.

The *àgèrè* drum apart from its use during Ọlójó, must also be used during burial rites of the deceased hunters. It is specialized only for dirge song of the hunters during burial transition ritual rites. The beating of the drum must be repeated with a lamentation song which is sung fifteen times. My informant declined to sing any of the songs because he was not ready to die (Akinyemi,2013).

This remark identifies the ritual uses of the drum for the hunters. It is meant only for remembrance of Ògún and his generation every year. In Ọlójó, it is used to commemorate the covenant between Ọ̀nì, the Ọ̀lòfin, and Ògún who was a warrior and hunter during the early stages of Earth's formation. This covenant revalidates the leadership authority of the Ooni (the king of Ile-Ife) every year and it also establishes his throne.

Conclusion

The indigenous drums described and analysed here serve as critical media of socialization that influence values and affirm cultural unity of the Yoruba of Ile-Ife. This unified cultural ethos is what the king relies upon for the actualisation and manifestation of his political leadership over his subjects and the entire community. The use of drum languages presents innovative words for petition, supplication and acceptance in religiously mediated ways. Their use helps the minds of the participants to interpret and decode these political and religious messages in dramatic ways. Overall, indigenous drums facilitate the acts of spiritual expression in ritual passages. It awakens and invokes the spirits of deities in festivals and thus motivates connection between them and the participants. This shows the drum's ritual salience. An indigenous drum personifies the interest of the worshippers as it influences the acts of the gods. These influences allow the goodwill of the gods to be extended to the people by authenticating their prayer requests in various ways. It also shows that the king of Ile-Ife could only assume his office as a vicegerent of the deities consequence of receiving the indigenous "osirigi" drum as a sceptre recognised for the throne which he assumed. This establishes the fact that African traditions embellish their royal spiritual constitution through symbols for their political outfit and practices.

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