

PERFORMANCE PRACTICE OF ÌRÈGÚN CHANTS IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

Olusegun Stephen Titus

Abstract

In African societies generally, social commentaries as well as issues regarding etiquettes and societal values are clearly articulated in satirical musical performances. This is one notable way to ensure some measure of social control and foster cohesion among the people. Previous studies on Yagba people are scanty. The few available ones have not undertaken ethnomusicological analyses of Ìrègún music, even when the continuity of the genre is greatly threatened. This study, therefore, focuses on the performance of Ìrègún chant in Yagba, Kogi State, located in North Central part of Nigeria, in consonance with Percy Grainger's work on performance of early and folk music. The study is based on the theory of structural-functionalism as propounded by Kingsley Davis (1945) and the data used were collected through three in-depth and three key-informant interviews of leaders and members of Ìrègún musical groups. These are in addition to three Participant Observation and three Non-Participant Observation methods of data gathering from Yagba-West, Yagba-East, and Mopamuro Local Government Areas of Kogi State. Music recordings, photographs of Ìrègún performances, and six chants were purposefully sampled. Secondary data were collected through library, archival and Internet sources. Data analyses were carried out through transcription of the chants with Sibelius and Finale music software. The chants are characterised by musical intonation, narrow melodic range, tonal sequences and tonal contrasts. Although closely interwoven, Ìrègún chants performance practice is structured into preparation, actual performance and post-performance stages. Among the Yagba, performing contexts shape Ìrègún musical functions, and these include education, caution, counselling, criticism, chronological reference.

Olusegun Stephen Titus: Performance Practice of Ìrègún Chants in Kogi State, Nigeria

entertainment drive, and praise of individuals and group of persons in Yagba communities. Given these social roles, ìrègún chants should be promoted by the government of Kogi State and Non-Governmental Organizations through regular sponsorship of their performances in order to sustain and globally popularise the tradition.

Key Words: Ìrègún music, Thematic functions, Performance, Chants.

Introduction

Music has always been the most visible attempt employed by ourselves to listen to ourselves. African music is a powerful medium of communication, through which human actions and reactions are expressed by Africans. It provides a forum to mirror the society so that members could understand things better and learn more about life.

This paper focuses on the performance practice of *Ìrègún* chants. *Ìrègún* is a traditional music typology of Yagba people in Kogi State, Nigeria. It is a satirical genre, performed by adult men and women with a lead vocalist, and it uses imagery to criticise social ills and expose deviant members of the society. In this way, *Ìrègún* music, through satire, has played very significant roles in the functioning of the society. Nketia (1974: 195) notes that satirical songs have been especially suited for insult, exhortation, and warning the people in African societies. Those songs, according to Nketia, may be addressed to individuals, whether commoners, kings, the dead, the living or any other group in the society. It also identifies individuals who deserve to be criticised or ridiculed. Those who are praised or ridiculed may be mentioned by name. Sometimes, the satire may be presented through the use of appropriate allusions or oblique references.

One of the informants in the course of this research, explains that, before the colonial era, or the Nupe¹ and Ibadan² imperialism, *Ìrègún* music functioned as a social symbol for maintaining acceptable moral norms in Yagba communities. The music focuses on matters of patriotism, peaceful co-existence, and acceptable socio-cultural values.

Yagba society, including the musicians themselves, accept the criticism that comes their way through *Ìrègún* music, in as much as this helps to maintain the values and norms of the society and shape the lifestyle of individuals to conform to societal standards. Sunday (a respondent, and an *Ìrègún* singer) explains the place of satire when he was commissioned by late Agbana³ of Isanlu in Yagba East Local Government Area to compose *Ìrègún* songs to satirise a compound in Isanlu-Makutu, whose occupants are believed to be engaged in the stealing of produce from different farms. The songs were performed round the compounds, resulting in the reduction of the frequency of the said vice in the community. Maku, also an *Ìrègún* chanter, explains that *Ìrègún* satirical music has changed focus from the late 1960s to the 1990s, resulting in the transformation of its performance as currently observed. According to him, before this change in emphasis, *Ìrègún* songs focused on unfaithful persons, drunkards, misers, gluttons, murderers and so forth. The performers usually inserted real names of targets and pointed fingers at them if they were present at the scene of performance. This was acceptable in the performance context typically meant to educate and correct. At present, *Ìrègún* chants are observed to give preference to praise chants above chants of insult, resulting in less concentration on social vices.

This paper investigates the performance practice of *Ìrègún* chants in Yagbaland, focusing on three communities selected from the three Local Government Areas in Yagba: Isanlu in Yagba-East LGA, Egbe in Yagba-West LGA, and Mopa, in Mopa-Muro LGA where the practitioners live. Attention is given to *Ìrègún* music performances deployed for burial, naming, house dedication, conferment of chieftaincy titles, coronation of kings, and marriage ceremonies in Yagba. Primary data were collected through six in-depth and six key-informant interviews of leaders and members of *Ìrègún* musical groups. Three Participant Observation and three Non-Participant Observation methods were also employed, while music recordings and photographs of *Ìrègún* performance were made. A total number of six chants were purposefully sampled. Secondary data were collected through library research.

archival and Internet resources. Transcription was done with the aid of Sibelius and Finale music software. Textual and content analyses were also carried out.

The essay adopts the theory of structural-functionalism as propounded by Kingsley Davis (1945). Structural-functionalism aims to explain the role of social structures and institutions in society, the relationship between these structures, and the manner in which these structures constrain the actions of individuals. It also explores the relationships between fundamental elements upon which some higher mental, linguistic, social and cultural values are situated. Structural-functionalism addresses six principles: firstly, order and interdependence property of system; secondly, that systems are self-maintaining, that is, having the tendency towards equilibrium; thirdly, ordered change (that is, change in system from one state to another); fourthly, interconnectedness (a part has an effect on the whole); fifthly, that systems have boundaries, allocation and integration necessary for equilibrium; and, lastly, self-maintenance involving boundary control and adjusting part-whole relationships, controlling environment, and internal control of change. The theory was applied by Blacking (1965,1971) to analyze Venda melodies. Akpabot (1998) also applied the theory to identify the structural devices and functions in Ibibio music. In this paper, the theory has been used to identify the performance practice of *Irègún* chants which are in three formations: pre-performance, performance and post performance, with specific functions to specific groups or individuals.

Yagba is one of the sub-Yoruba ethnic groups in Kogi State, located at the north-central zone of Nigeria (Iyekolo, 2006). It has boundaries with the Nupe and Igbomina in the North, the Ekiti and Ondo in the south and south west; Ijumu and Bunu in the south-east and east, respectively. Oral history reveals that the Yagba are Yoruba, descendants of a renowned Princess from Oyo who, in her later life, was called *Ìyá-àgbà* (old woman) from which the word *Yagba* derived (Ijagbemi, 1976; Iyekolo, 2000, 2006). Yagba settlements suffered incessant and severe

raids from Ibadan, Nupe and Fulani attackers resulting in total destruction of many of the settlements.

Concept of Artistic Performance in Africa

The concept and practice of performance are central to artistic expression and experience in African tradition. Barber (2003:1) asserts that performance is the unique, never-to-be-repeated realisation or concretisation of the text, a realisation that brings the text to life but which is itself doomed to die on the breath in which it is uttered. Performance animates any configuration of signs that are coherently interpretable by some community of users – encompassing not only oral and written discourses of innumerable types but also painting, music and film.

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

Features and Performance of Chants

Ogli (2010) asserts that chanting assumes a style that is midway between singing and speaking. He notes that in many African royal courts such as that of the Alaafin of Oyo and Atta of Igala, chants exist and are described as court poetry which, as an institutionalised art, is meant to revere a hero by recreating his achievements in verse. Vidal (1971) defines it as poetry or stylised speech sung to music. Bamgbose (1966),

Abimbola (1968), Vidal (1971), Babalolá (1976), Olatunji (1980), Adedeji (1992), Adeleke (2008), and Adédùntán (2009), employ the terminology "chanting" to describe the performance of Yoruba oral poetry. They assert that chanting can be described as a musical style rather than a speech style, because chanting is also singing though within a limited scope. Vidal (1971) explains that the word *sun* in Yoruba, means, to chant. Thus, one hears statements like *sun rárà* (chant *rárà*), *sun òjálá* (chant *òjálá*), *sun iyèrè* (chant *iyèrè*) and *sun iwi* (chant *iwi*). Others are *ekúniyàwó* (bride's lament) *ege* (an egba chant), *alamo* and so forth. Chants can be identified musically by their intonation, narrow melodic range, melodic contours and tonal register. Vidal (1971) notes that:

chants are distinguishable from other modes such as the speech and song modes, by the musical intonation, narrow melodic range, tonal sequences and tonal contrasts at the cadential points, the frequency of repeated pitches, melodic contours and their direction, the absence of regular or stereotyped rhythm and cyclic rhythmic units, and the variation in the structure of the melodic contour during performance from one artist to another (Vidal, 1971:36).

Vidal (1971) asserts that *iwi*, *iyèrè-Ifá*, *òjálá* and *rárà* are the four main modes of chants in Yoruba. The *iwi* mode uses a high falsetto voice quality. It employs antiphonal, solo, and unison styles of chanting, and is performed by old women and men who are devotees and members of the *egúngún* ancestral cult. Its characteristic tone quality and intonation and its almost flat melodic contours make it easily identifiable (Vidal, 1971).

The *iyèrè-Ifá* mode has, characteristically, a trembling voice quality, clear and pure tones, and highly structured sequences. It employs a responsorial style of chanting in which the chorus responds with the word *hen* at the end of every chanted line of the poetry by the leader,

who is the soloist. The tone of response is dictated by the particular cadential tone at the end of the line. The chanted lines of poetry (about five or six) form a verse, each of which is followed by a refrain chanted by both the soloist and the chorus before another verse is started. The verses are taken from the *Ifá* liturgy.

Vidal (1971) observes that besides these four modes of chanting, there are other modes that, because of their localisation and diversity, are not widely distributed throughout Yorubaland. Among the diversified ones are those connected with various religious groups such as Sango, Osun, Erinle, Orishala and Ogboni. The modes of chanting for these groups are universally classified as *ohun osha*. That means the musical tones of the gods.

Barber (1990) notes that *oriki* can be described as attributions or appellations: epithets, elaborated or concise, which are addressed to a subject and which are equivalent to, or alternatives to, names. All entities in existence are said to have their own *oriki*. *Oriki* are felt to capture and evoke the essential characteristics of the subject: to have the most profound and intimate access to its inner nature. In utterance, therefore, they evoke the subject's power, arouse it to action, and enhance its aura. They are always in the vocative case, and in utterance, the performer always establishes an intense, one-to-one bond with the addressee as long as the utterance lasts. Barber describes *Oriki* as a labile and disjunctive textual form. Epithets are accumulated over time; they are composed by different people, on different occasions, and with reference to different experiences. Any subject's corpus of *oriki* is, therefore, composed of a number of autonomous items. Furthermore, *oriki* are often obscure, their meanings carried in a separate, parallel explanatory tradition transmitted outside them.

Each *oriki* gestures away from its location within the performed text to a hinterland of meaning outside the text (Barber, 1990). Barber further notes that not only this, but each *oriki* may lead to its own hinterland by a different route. Some are literal, some ironical, some are specific historical references and some are generalised comments referring to a timeless or ideal state of affairs. An *oriki* chant is a shifting,

fluctuating combination of fragments, which are linked only tenuously and variably in performance, and which may take on different meanings when differently combined. *Oriki* are felt not only to encapsulate the essence of the subject, but also to augment its presence in the social and natural world. Towns, lineages, individual people, *orisa*, *egúngún* and even animals are enhanced in relation to – sometimes almost at the expense of – other like entities through the performance of their *oriki*.

Irègún Chants Performance Practice

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

Pre-Performance Activities

According to *Iya Egbe Irègún*⁴, pre-performance of *irègún* music starts with the invitation letter; that is, when the group has been given an invitation, whether for burial, wedding, launching, house warming, child dedication or the conferment of a chieftaincy title. A meeting is then called among the executive to discuss the invitation and consider the personality, cost, and terms of agreement and to be sure the group does not have another performance on the same date. When all the factors are well considered and the date is free, a favourable message will be sent to the person inviting the group stating the cost, which ranges from ten thousand to fifty thousand naira depending on the location, time and distance. Ògúnleye, an *irègún* singer, explains that on the day of performance the group would have been ready at least an hour before the performance, if the place is within the town so that they can have enough time for spiritual preparations and to create awareness. Most of the time the group sings from the house of *Iya Egbe Irègún* to the venue of the ceremony, if the ceremony is within the town, and if it is outside they

urge a driver to drop off the group about one hundred meters before the venue so that the group can create awareness.

Actual Performance Activities:

Ìrègún chants are performed principally during certain activities and ceremonial events involving members of Yagba people whether at home or in the Diaspora. At performances, performers sing *Ìrègún* lines as part of their total involvement in the music.

Some *ìrègún* performers explain that in the process of singing, when they are "moved", they are able to tap into a vast repertoire of songs/chants, not always accessible to them outside of the context of the performance. As one *ìrègún* performer explains, "when I am chanting, the words come out without my trying to say anything, when I am thinking deeply about the history of Yagba people and what we have passed through." *Ìrègún* chants are frequently based on texts on a common stock of traditional lines and themes. The performers alter them in ways which reflect their own personalities and which suit the particular situation about which they wish to comment.

Ìrègún chants do not follow a continuous thematic development, but is rather a mosaic of texts, each dealing with the total life experience of the people, their proverbs, social and political commentaries, encouragements to participants of *Ìrègún* music, praise to the present and past members of the participating family; including humorous references to common troubles, and so on. Sometimes, as a singer slowly weaves his story through this mosaic of different themes, an idea is developed for a while and then dropped until later in the song. Sometimes, different ideas are developed at the same time. The *Ìrègún* lines are performed as long as the artist remains in the mood and receives new ideas and images from his/her music sensibility.

During a performance of *Ìrègún* song, a rapport is established between the singers and members of the audience as the singers express their feelings, bringing the audience into the challenge of interpreting their song-texts. Since subtlety is an important element in the art of *Ìrègún*, performers strive at times to express themselves indirectly and

members of the audience must guess at the meaning of their words. It is not uncommon for individuals listening to a performance of *Irègún* music to derive differing meanings from the singers. The explanation for this can be found in examining a number of different factors related to the performance of *Irègún*. They range from the techniques utilised by singers in a deliberate attempt to obscure their meaning to the different contexts in which the performance of *Irègún* is heard. *Irègún* singers frequently express their feelings about personal, social, or political issues, through allusions rather than direct statements. An informant reports that this is accomplished by using such forms as traditional Yagba language proverbs (*oghe*), parables (*itan abi alo*), and secret language or obscure allusions.

According to an informant, *Irègún* chants are led by a chanter. Who starts by greeting the people that are seated at the ceremony from the highest person, who could be a king or a chief, to the least, praising and thanking everybody for gracing the occasion. *Irègún* ensemble, led by a chanter, includes the drummers and dancers. Sometimes the chanter is also the lead dancer. In all the performances of *irègún*, the performance procedure is similar and often follows a sequence. The sequence, according to Iyabode, an *irègún* singer, is that chant will come first, followed by the song; then the musical instrumentation; with the dance taking the rear. In any of the performances the first chant and song is generally to greet members of the audience. See this example in chant and song below:

Chant 1

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

*Mo wa'n li Kwara li gbogbo Nigeria,
lomode lagha lobinrin Lokunrin,
Mo wa ghin loke lodo gbogbo ghin
pata,*

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

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

*Jesu ase gho sian ghun gbogbo gha
pata,*

*A ke moin lule tele loju araiye, Aseye
k'alakan ise poin, Ori aje ghun sian a
yenilegbe, ti gha je gbo seti, Tigha
dunmoni, adun megbe li gbo gbo aye,*

*T'oba oba noin akalesoke tan gha
dope, Mgbo ikuborije, kibarare
senle, Oba kabiyesi, obatorise oba
teran enu saka Ati oran Tile moka
je, Amoko aje mudamuda oka
pasa, Oro ken le oroke lalade, Oba
saki, oba 'sanlu kuratijo, Mo rio
l'alafia e ro kun o,*

*Irohin etafojuba esono gbon tan, Oba
arinurode o, modepe lowo jesu oba
olola, I gho gbem re, agbem bo, agbem
sokesodo, onimodele, Afara bale ejem
ranti,*

*Mgbo kabiyesi isawe...aga/dara
Mo wa ghin loke lodo e okun o,
Akande olinuoro o kun o,*

I greet you all my people. I say I
greet you
Even when you are misunderstood
as evil person you don't worry I
greet you all

My people from Kwara, Kogi, all
over Nigeria

Women, men young and old
I greet you all.

Ayeye, you are the true son of your
father,

son of the real father you are.

I'm greeting you all, you have
really endured to be, here, Jesus
will bless all of us as we are here,
we will not fall in the presence of
our enemies;

may destiny prosper us

so that life will be pleasant for us,
so that friends can rejoice with us,
even kings will see the goodness
and they too will be happy. I greet
you my king, Ikuborije, the
Agbana of Isanlu land,

the great leader, whose father is a
great leader,

I hail you, my king,

I greet you, my king, it's been such
a long time, hope you are living in
good health.

I thank Jesus the king that knows
all things

He that protected me when I was

*Alafia kose, eja dupe lowo jesu oba
olola,
Baba Furaide egbegbere ijoko
ijotile, Iranni sitoko, pasu baba mgbo
omo olori ode, Ode gho gba samsam,
ode gho pa tutu, pa bigbe,
Omom olose ya kankanran, egbeni
sesese,*

going will bring me back safely.
I am greeting all of you once again
I greet you,
Akande the son of the gods, I greet
you,
Hope you are fine?
Friday's father, the blessed one,
how are you?
The son of the chief hunter, how is
home? I can remember that your
father killed big animals; in the
rain and also during the dry season
he was such a skilful hunter.

E OKUN O

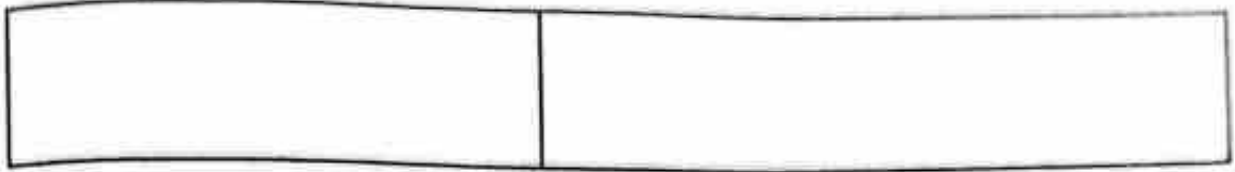
6 *Li o kun o to-ke lo-do i gho mun' bo-ran de be e kunpe - pe. e-ni-yan be woghin*
 11 *si ghan an' se bo lu - ru, mo wa ghin lo-ke lo-do gbo gbo phin pa ta. mo wa ghin li*
 16 *Kwa-ra li Ni-po-ri-a lo-mo-de la-gba lo ti - rin lo-kun-rin mo wa ghin lo-ke lo-do gbo gbo phin pa-ta*
 21 *e-ku ri rin e-ku-ra-bo e o-kun o A-ye-ye o-lu ro bo da lu gbo o-mo a - la-po i-so jo gbo-re gha-re o-mo le-ti-ju*
 26 *a-mo li se le e o-kun o, mo wa'n e ku ri rin e ku ri bo, e ku ri ra da Je-su*
 31 *a-se gho si han ghan gbo gbo ghu pa ta, a le mo in lu le te-le lo ju a-rai-ye, a se ye ku-lu-lan i se po in, o ri*
 36 *a-je ghan si'an a ye ni le gbe ti gha je gbo se ti, ti gha dun mo ni a dun me ghe li gbo gbo ai-ye to-ba o-*
 41 *ha no in a-ka-le soke tan gha d'o-pa-, m'gbo i-ku-bo-ri-je ki ha ru re sen - le o-be ku-bi-ye-si o-*
 46 *ba to ri se o-ha te ran e-nu ka-ku, a-ti o-ra ti le mo kan je a gha do a mo ko a-je mu da mu da o*
ka pa-sa, o ro ke nle o ro ke la la dso-ba su-ki o-ba San-lu ku ra ti jo, mo ro la la ti a e ro kan
o, i ro hin e ta fo ju ha e so no gbon tan, o-ha a-ri mu ro de mo de pe lo-wo Je-su o-ha o
lo la, i gho gho'm re, a ghe'm bo, a ghe'm so ke so do o ni mo de le, e fa ra ba le e jehin rin
ti, m'gbo ka-bi-ye-si i su we le a yi ra mo wa ghin lo ke lo da e o kun o, A-kun-de o li mu o-ro

Chant is usually the starting point in the performance of *irègún* music in which audience, kings and all those gathered for the occasion will be greeted, including the performers themselves. The chant above is a general greeting to people, both male and female, and *Aghana* (King) of Isanlu Oba Ikuborije. After the chanting, the *irègún* chanter, who is also the song leader, will now introduce the song which will be chorused by the back-up, and dancers, including drummers, as the case may be. The chant above expresses respect for the elders in the community and also at the specific occasion. *E okun* is a plural way of greeting two persons or more; it also connotes reverence for elderly persons in Yagba communities. Also the expression *e okun pe, pe*, is generally used for an elderly man that is not less than sixty years old. The word *pe* is used to greet a grandfather, or someone who is not younger than the speaker. The words *l'omode*, *'lagba*, *'lokurin*, *'lobirin* are ways of specifying different age groups and genders in the arena. Certain individuals are also recognised in the song such as 'Friday's Father', 'Akande', and their praise names are chanted.

Death and Afterlife

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

Chant 2 <i>iye ha ho'ku ise ki hin mi jeje,</i> <i>eni bukata ihin mi jeje</i> <i>iye ilodo jesu tehin mi jeje</i>	Our mother that is being buried today she is just resting fully, she does not worry, with everlasting rest over issues of life again. She is at the feet of Jesus; Our mother is at the feet of Jesus, resting.
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IYE GHA GHU KU MO



The chant above informs us about the death of one *irègún* lover and fan. The chanter remarks that the dead mother is resting peacefully; that in the present state in which she is, she does not have any care or worry whatsoever. This is an example of songs that tell us about life in the great beyond and also deal with metaphysical reality.

The Singers' Needs

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

Chant 3

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

Help me call Banke, who resembles the mother so perfectly.

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

My drummer, hope you are listening to Banke? Do you know the sickness? The hunger that I'm facing is not as much as the thirst.

IBANKE

The musical notation is written on five staves. The lyrics are written below the notes. The notation includes a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The melody is primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. The lyrics are: E pe 'Ban-ke kom' ran o-ni gan-ran gan-ran o joni. Ban-ke, o ni gan-ran gan-ran jo ni a-i-sen me sem'lo wo. o ba mo se Ban-ke li le Ya-gba le ro tan I-ban-ke ni kan so so ko ran tan a-la hin' se we gbo Ban-ke we gbo ghin dun m' unni wi e-gbo e-bighi pam' li nu e tu run gbe wa mu ko-re so mi ko m' a-run-gbe.

The singer, here, is calling a daughter of the dead woman, called Banke and eulogising her that she resembles her mother. The chanter says that he is sick at present and that it is only Banke that can bring about the healing. He says that though he is hungry, the thirst is the greater pain he is experiencing at the moment; that she should use *kere*-cup to bring

water for him to quench the thirst. In the actual sense, he is asking Banke to bring wine for him to drink.

Commentary on Events Taking Place at the Time of the Performance

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

Chant 4

*Alu nla emo bam se kilo h'Egere
Egere o ,egere egere,
Oni noin emo bam se kilo h'Egere*

My chief drummer help me warn
Egere,
Egere, Egere Egere;
everybody help me warn Egere.

E BAM' SE KILO GH'EGERE



The chant starts by calling on the chief dancer who is a male, named Egere. Egere is actually dancing with another female dancer at the time. Using satire, the chanter asks that members of the *irègún* group should please warn Egere; that he should not, through dance, take another man's wife, since the woman is already married. The chanter concludes that if Egere succeeds in taking another man's wife after the warning, he will

not defend him when he is facing the consequences of taking another man's wife. The song teaches us to live in peace and not take what does not belong to us. That is, we should not steal other people's money, wives, or landed property.

Post Performance Practices

Post-performance activities include the assessment by the performers themselves of their own performance; eating their food, sharing of the money made at the performance and preparation for another performance.

Conclusion

The paper has examined the performance practice of *irègún* chants in Yagbaland. *Irègún* performances are the main source of entertainment for Yagba people. The performers are also people of great experience. The performances in all the ceremonies are mainly in three sections as already stated.

Recommendations

Irègún chants performances present a wealth of knowledge and stimulate learning experiences among its audience. It is often rich in proverbs and idioms, so that the audience is always given food for thought. Indigenous music like *irègún* should be empowered by giving some allowances on monthly basis to the artistes. Also, the present administration should focus on giving good and quality education to our children as advocated by Nigerian artistes, especially *irègún* musicians. Also artistes should be given national honours to encourage them to greater performances. Private individuals and Non-Governmental Organisations should help sponsor more performances to help preserve and promote this ancient indigenous art.

End Notes:

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

People interviewed

Chief Makanjuola O – chief drummer, *Ìrègún* Musical Group, Mopa-Muro LGA. Yagba Land.

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

Chief Wemimo *Ògúnniyi* – a singer and chanter, *Ìrègún* Musical Group in Yagba-West LGA.

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

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

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

Chief Kayode O., the Otun Oba of Ejiba land.

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