

**RETHINKING THE DYNAMICS OF YORÙBÁ DÙNDÚN MUSIC RESOURCE
MATERIALS IN THE CONTEXT OF CLAUDIUS OLAYEMI OLANIYAN'S
SCHOLARSHIP**

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ABSTRACT

Beyond the rhetoric and an intentional tribute to a retired teacher (professor), senior colleague and mentor, Claudius Olayemi Olaniyan, this essay re-examines how Yorùbá dùndún drummers across different generations utilize music resource materials for composition and performance. The article is premised on Cultural Dynamism and relies on data generated from Yorùbá dùndún practitioners using the ethnographic techniques. Drawing on Olaniyan's scholarly contributions, the ingenuity of dùndún practitioners in adopting oríkì (praise chant/music), òwe (proverbs), ìtàn ìbìlẹ̀/orin àbáláyé (folk history/folk song), àfojúinúwò (imagination) and iṣẹ̀lẹ̀ ojú eré (contextual occurrence) to craft their musical art and their contextual appropriateness was analyzed. Findings showed that there is a decline in performance dexterity, less opportunities for knowledge and skill acquisition on resource materials, as well as lower required discipline level and diligence for distinctiveness in modern dùndún performance. The argument is that a gradual shift from the normative Yorùbá music aesthetic assessment and the challenge of absolute meanings on and at different levels has implications for the promotion of dùndún music making now and in the future.

Keywords: *Dùndún* drum, Yorùbá music scholarship Music resource materials, Claudius Olayemi Olaniyan

INTRODUCTION

The age-old *dùndún*¹ musical tradition of the Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria continues to gain currency within the social ecology of the people. Its relevance has not been obliterated in spite of numerous changes that have attended the people's culture just as the musical art has attained global recognition. The numerous dimensions of *dùndún* music performance and its changing phases have attracted the interest of various scholars (Bankole et al., 1975; Oyelami, 1989; Euba, 1990; Omojola, 2012), and Professor Claudius Olayemi Olaniyan is no exception. His doctoral

dissertation² on *dùndún* and *sekere* music of the Yorùbá produced as far back as 1984, was quite enlightening and scholarly engaging. Olaniyan consolidated his academic grip on the subject of *dùndún* music by exploring various aspects of art, including the drummer as a composer-performer, performance modes and context, male/female dichotomy of African drums (Olaniyan, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2007, 2010) among others.

Dr. Olaniyan was my teacher in the African music class and the lecturer in charge of Choral/Ensemble Studies in one of the academic sessions during my training as an undergraduate at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. His approach to teaching African music was remarkably backed with practical examples in the class, a feat which earned him a secret nickname: *gbandikan*³ among his students, largely because he was fond of that particular *dùndún* music form. Few years after my graduation from Ife School of Music and upon enrolment for my master degree in African music at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, the same Olaniyan, an associate lecturer at the time, was assigned to handle a course: *African Music and Dance*, which he co-taught with Dr. F. Okwesa. One area where my research focus intersects with this distinguished teacher of mine is the *dùndún* musical tradition of the Yorùbá. I can confirm that his scholarly works on the subject matter partly inspired my interest in Yorùbá music in general and *dùndún* music in particular. Indeed, my first bold attempt in research into *dùndún* music was my doctoral thesis which was an attempt to deepen human understanding on *dùndún* as I interrogated female involvement in the art⁴. The outcome of that research has fostered my interest in *dùndún* music as I explored the gender dimension of the subject matter (Samuel, 2014; 2018). Beyond the celebratory intonation of this article in honor of Prof. Olaniyan who recently retired from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, it equally provides an opportunity to re-examine his and other scholars' positions on the subject of *dùndún* music, specifically as

informed by my practical field experience, particularly those relating to the dynamics of resource materials for composition and performance across Yorubaland.

Theorizing Cultural Dynamism in the Context of *Dùndún* Music

Euba (1990), while discussing the subject of continuity and change with respect to *dùndún* music, notes that the general pattern of its development is of a slow rather than a radical change. According to him, *dùndún* traditional performers made use of a mixture of stylistic elements comprising those learnt (passed from preceding/older generations) and elements they had introduced. He concluded that traditional *dùndún* musicians were not unduly preoccupied with change for its own sake; rather, they strove to retain the former activities with which *dùndún* was customarily associated and also tended to promote the continuity of the old characteristic style.

Evidence is lacking as to the precise period the *dùndún* migratory trajectory from the rural to the urban setting attained a meteoric dimension (Laoye, 1959; Omojola, 2012). It might have filtered quietly into popular consciousness and gradually expanded into the mainstream of urban popular genres alongside new musical forms about the same time colonial rule was winding down and the quest for independence was taking root in the country. Moreover, a living art as the Yorùbá *dùndún* tradition is bound to exhibit changes in many aspects from time to time. This is further buttressed by the observance of the traditional prescriptions by its practitioners, which invariably was an important carryover from the pre-colonial Yorùbá culture.

Social mobility was largely responsible for the movement of typical non-literate but highly proficient master *dùndún* drummers from their locale to the city in search of a better quality of life (Samuel, 2018). In some cases, the migration of master *dùndún* drummers was facilitated by socialites who were fascinated by their versatility on the instrument. It generated such sub-forms

of practice classifiable as *vintage* and *extrapolation*, which are two vital elements that embody contrasting notions of authenticity and transgression within the vast musical ecology of Yorùbá drumming. Although *dùndún* drummers try very hard to preserve and retain the traditional framework in terms of structure and internal patterns, they were never afraid to explore new sounds, patterns or other forms of innovation deemed acceptable. The inevitability of change became more vivid especially as *dùndún* drummers traveled around, encountered new realities and widened horizons with a new world of endless possibilities aided by acculturation. It also applies to their utilization of resource materials for composition and performance.

METHODOLOGY

My strategy for analysis is to compare resources for traditional compositions and performances for *dùndún* music as revealed through the academic lens of Olaniyan with those found among contemporary practitioners and also to explore the degree of shifts and continuity, and their possible implications. I drew on ethnographic approach and specifically relied on expert/key informant interviews and participant observation to generate data. Fieldwork involved audio and video recordings of performances of various traditional and modern *dùndún* artistes (male and female) from different Yorùbá towns and communities. The data formed the essential parts of the content and musicological analyses.

EXPLORING RESOURCE MATERIAL DYNAMICS FOR DÙNDÚN COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE

Olaniyan (1984) identified nine resources which traditional *dùndún* drummers use for composition and performance. These are *oríkì* (descriptive poetry), *òwe* (proverbs), *ìtàn ibílẹ̀* (folk history), and *orin ibílẹ̀* (folksongs including chants, poetry and rhymes). Others are

àfojúinúwò (imagination or seeing things through inner eye), *àfiwé ohùn* (imitation of sound: onomatopoeia), *ìrírí ojú eré* (contextual occurrence), *àlùjò* (rhythm for dance gesture) and *ohun tó nlọ* (current affairs). In a latter and evidently more critical appraisal of the initial study, Olaniyan (1993) reclassified the foregoing materials by compressing the avenues into four categories, namely verbal genres comprising *oríkì*, *òwe*, and *orin ibíle*, stylistic/aesthetic elements, which consist of *àdúnjọ ohùn* (onomatopoeia) and *àlùjò*. The third category comprises *ìtàn ibíle*, *isẹlẹ ojú eré* and *ohun tó nlọ*, while the last category is made up of *àfojúinúwò* which is a motivating factor in creativity. These materials are attributable to a combination of the form of training acquired from mentors and their music-enhancing environment, and are utilized by traditional *dùndún* drummers at performance outings.

a) Oríkì

Oríkì is one of the most important *vintage* sources of composition and performance by traditional *dùndún* drummers. As a musical genre, it has received considerable attention and discussion from various scholars including Vidal (1969), Oduyoye (1971), Barber (1991), Olaniyan (1997) and Samuel (2014). For instance, Vidal (1969) defined *oríkì* as a Yorùbá special praise song principally for a deity, a king or aristocrat, members of a royal family, descendants of a lineage, or members of a clan. It describes a person's personality, his ancestors, virtues, qualities and special attributes, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. In the same vein, *oríkì* could be addressed to a deity, animal, a plant or a people. For example *oríkì orilẹ* describes the town from which an individual comes by making reference to the scenery and the characteristics of the inhabitants. Below is an excerpt from the *oríkì* of Ibadan:

Oríkì Ibadan

Ibadan kúre!

Ibadan, bèrè kí o tó wọọ,

Ibadan mesìogọ! N'ílé Olúyọlé,

Níbi olè 'gbé jàre olóhun;

Ibadan kii gbe oníle bí àjèjì

A kii wáyé ká má'lárùn kan lára

Ìjàgboro lárùn Ibadan

Ibadan descriptive poetry (Text Translation)

Hail Ibadan! Home of warriors,

Ibadan, the city about which enquiries must be made
before entry

Ibadan, the child of *Esi* (the bush pig), the home of
Olúyọlé,

The city where thieves get the better of the rightful
owners,

Ibadan which gives more succor to strangers than its
indigenes,

It is impossible for any being in this world not to
have a defect,

Ibadan's blemish is its constant street fight! (civil
war)

There is a paradox in Ibadan's traits according to this popular *oríkì*. The city is described as a place where pilfering, an ignoble act, may be excused on account of the owner's negligence, while the latter is roundly condemned for failing to safeguard their property. Secondly, Ibadan indigenes are described as trouble shooters who relish and constantly engage in street fight. *Oríkì* often makes a person or family proud of their pedigree. Olaniyan (1997) stated that *oríkì* literarily means praise name. According to him, it is a combination of two words - *orí* (head) and *kì* (praise) in concert with the Yorùbá belief in the concept of destiny or fate. Therefore, whatever happens to an individual is attributed to their fate. They prescribe veneration and worship of one's head from time to time. This belief is expressed in the adage: "*Orí là bá bọ, ẹ bá jẹ kà f'òrìṣà sílẹ; ìgbà t'òrí ngbe ni, níbo l'òrìṣà wà?*" meaning "it is preferable to worship one's head rather than deity, for the deity was not available to offer the much needed assistance when one was left to one's fate". Oduyoye (1971, p. 27) submitted that an ill-fated person is called '*Olórí burúkú*' (one with a bad head), while a lucky person is referred to as '*Olórí rere*' (one with good head)'. Through personal ingenuity, a keen sense of observation and imagination,

traditional oral poets recite and *dùndún* drummers play an individual's *oríkì*. They may also make necessary additions during a performance as they deem fit. In a mild contrast to the *vintage* stance characteristic of the traditional mode, modern/popular *dùndún* practitioners in contemporary times strive hard to adopt *oríkì* as a valuable resource material in their performance although their extrapolative knowledge is limited compared to their traditional *dùndún* counterparts.

The art of eulogising remains a common feature of Yorùbá music. Praise music is used to promote the values of virtuous living and condemn ignoble acts, which are considered antisocial behaviors. Traditional and modern *dùndún* drummers play *oríkì* for the listening pleasure of their patrons and to attract their subjects' benevolence. A person that is emotionally touched by the rendition of their *oríkì* is described in the following words: '*oríi rẹẹ wú*', literallyly 'his head is swollen'. A well performed *oríkì* often elicits favorable response from the person being praised and often expressed through appropriate rewards such as monetary gifts, clothing and so forth (Samuel, 2015; Villepastour, 2010). Projected attributes contained in the praise texts need not be directly related to the subject, but they are meant to boost the individual's image, articulate their past achievements and personality traits as well as those of their ancestors. The attributes are often expressed through the use of imagery. A typical example is an excerpt from the performance of the *oríkì* of His Royal Majesty, Ikú Bàbá Yèyè, the Aláàfin of Oyo played by an Ilora-based female *dùndún* drummer known as Ayanbanke Lawani on the *iyáàlù* in free rhythmic style.

Example 1: Excerpt from oríkì of the Aláàfin of Oyo played by Ayanbanke

iyáálù

A de ye mi_ I gi Jc ge de, A lo wo lo du, bi i ye re_

5
O mo lo gba, lo gba, ti nrin ta kun ta kun, A b'owo fa pa, o wo o t'a pa,

8
A be re fe se, o wo o t'e se, Ka be re sikan ga, ko se bi nu ko si.

Drum Texts

*Adeyemi, Igi Jẹgẹde,
Alowodu, bi iyere,
Omọ logba logba ti nrin takun takun
A b'owo f'apa, owo o t'apa
A b'owo f'ese, owo o t'ese,
Ka b'ere si kanga, ko see b'inu kosi.*

Translation

Adéyemí, Jẹgẹde the tree
One who is as wealthy as iyere tree
Ever fashionable son, who walks majestically
We paid obeisance to the arm, the arm is not
hand's age mate
We paid obeisance to the feet, the arm is not
feet's age mate
Stooping to cite a well, does not mean we should
jump into it.

In the above passage, the current Aláàfin of Oyo⁵ is described as one born into incredible riches, and he is highly fashionable crown head who walks majestically. His authority cannot be questioned, just as no sane person would choose to jump into a well full of water because he is dissatisfied with the king's position on any matter.

Similarly, an *oríkì* played by a group of *dùndún* drummers led by Ayanlere Ayanwonu for an *egúngún Tánbólá* (spirit manifest) as captured during my field investigation in Ogbomoso goes thus:

Musical example 2

iyáàlù

I re na nwi, O mo A kin de le___ Gbo lo un kan na nwi; O ko'gi

A ba ra ja ti ja ti O r'o wo o lo wo, f'o kan ba le,___ O ni fi la o do do,

ti won npe la la a so ko, Ta n bo la, O mo A kin de le, I re ni won mba

___ wi. O kan un l'e se, mo di de; O kan un l'e se, mo di de; O

kan un l'e se, mo di de; A mu ni t'o ke le bo²'mu A mu ni

t'o ke le bo²'mu A mu ni t'o ke le bo²'mu A mu ni t'o ke le bo²'mu

Drum Texts

Ìrẹ̀ ná nwi, Ọmọ Akíndélé,

*Gbólóhun kan ná nwi,
 Òkò'gì, A b'ara jàti jàti
 Òr'ówó olówó f'okàn ba lẹ̀*

Oní filà òdòdó, tí wọn npè lálàà so 'ko,

Tanbọ́lá, Ọmọ Akíndélé, Ìrẹ̀ ná mbá wí.

*Ó kàn nlẹ̀sẹ̀, mo dìde,
 A mú ni t'òkèlẹ̀ bọ̀ 'mú*

Translation

It is you that is being praised, Son of Akíndélé

Just one whole statement is being made
 The fearful one, whose body is full of tremor
 One who is rest assured on someone else's money

One with flowery cap, also called 'owner of great farm'

Tanbọ́lá, Son of Akíndélé, It is you that is being praised

He stepped on my toes and I quickly stood up
 His arrival makes people to run helter-skelter

Analysis of the excerpt in musical example 2 above reveals that it began in free rhythmic style but later became metricalized (see bars 14 to 26).

It is instructive to note that there seems to have been a paradigm shift in the usage of *oríki* among the Yorùbá of today. Indeed, it may not be out of place to question its relevance in the modern day society, especially its inverse utilization by musicians to encourage ignoble acts of their patrons. Unpatriotic acts, including corruption, tyranny and other vices by powerful, wealthy and influential persons in the society, which ought to be derided by musicians, are openly praised. A handful of urban popular artistes in Nigeria may be described as sycophants who engage in public praise singing of their sponsors irrespective of the vices of such patrons. By way of *extrapolation*, they opt to compose and produce special music for those whose source of wealth is culturally detestable. Such patrons are recognized as persons either with questionable character or leaders with corruptive pedigree and whose behaviors are not worthy of emulation in the society. This practice is not unconnected with the Machiavellian syndrome, poverty mentality and poor character judgment, which seem to be reversing societal values. Those who strive towards honest living are vilified, while those who had corruptly enriched themselves at the detriment of the society at large illogically exemplify societal heroes. This was however not the situation with the typical *vintage* form of *dùndún* music typified by traditional drumming.

b) Òwe (Proverbs)

Òwe, among the Yorùbá are enacted brief sayings customarily derived from the elderly. They are epithets laced with imagery and are largely informed by different acts, careful observations and lived experiences. *Òwe* serve as guide posts for regulating human actions, careful attention of the listeners and meant to teach wisdom. As a resource material, *òwe* can be used as a tool for *ìmòràn* (advice), *àlàyé* (explanation), *ibáwí* (reproach or rebuke), *ìkìlò* (warning) or *ìsírí* (encouragement) depending on the situation (Samuel, 2015, p.160). Proverbial sayings constitute a vital part of the Yorùbá ontology. This finds deep expression in the saying:

Text

Òwe l'ẹsin ọrọ

Ọrọ l'ẹsin òwe

B'ọrọ bá sọ̀nù, òwe l'a fí nwa

Òwe at'ọrọ ló jọ n'télé 'ra wọ̀n

Translation

A proverb is the horse of conversation

A conversation is the horse of the proverb

When the conversation droops, a proverb
revives it

Proverbs and conversation follow each other

In daily conversations, a young person is expected to seek the permission of the elderly ones present before quoting an *òwe*. Such an individual is adjudged to know how to wash hands and earned the right to dine with the elders. Failure to seek permission before quoting an *òwe* amounts to usurping elders' authority, an affront and an indication that the younger person regards himself as wiser. Seniority by chronological age is traditionally affirmed by the Yorùbá. Older persons are naturally deemed wiser mainly because of greater experience they had acquired over a long period of time. This is aptly expressed in the saying '*b'ọ̀mọ̀dé bá l'ásọ̀ bí àgbà, kò leè l'ákisà bí àgbà*', translated as 'if a child possesses as many clothes as the elderly, s/he cannot equal the latter in terms of the number of rags'. This implies that the older possesses more worn out clothes, referring to experience and wisdom. Olatunji (2008) submitted that the Yorùbá strongly believe that experience is superior to intelligence since experience is considered as the "elder brother" of intelligence.

Music has often served as an agent for social control to correct, rebuke or deride any anti social behavior by any member of Yorùbá society irrespective of the person's status. Ayanlere Ayanwonu, a notable *dùndún* drummer from Ogbomoso, quoted a proverb: *Labalábá nfira re w'eye, kò leè sù se eye*, meaning, 'a butterfly compares itself to a bird although it can never perform a bird's feat' to deride a rival group. Criticisms, insults, uncomplimentary and provocative statements can be made through allusions without mentioning the concerned

person's name and sometimes, a drummer can indirectly praise a person by attacking his enemies (real and imaginary) and without specific knowledge of who such enemies are.

Example 3a below is another of such:

iyáàlù 

o jù won lo, o ki i s'e gbe e won, e gbe e ba ba won lo n se

Drum Texts

O jù won lo, O kii s'egbe e won
Egbe e Baba won lò nse

Translation

You surpass them, You are not their equal
 You are their father's mate

Example 3b further buttresses the point:

iyáàlù 

i wo la fi se___ i wo la fi s'a gba la gba i wo la fi se - b'eni kan

8

nse kon du, kon du, kon du o, i wo la fi se___ i

12

wo la fi s'a gba la gba, i wo la fi se

Drum Texts

Ìwọ la fi seé, Ìwọ la fi s'àgbàlagbà
Ìwọ la fi seé.
B'ènikán nse kòndù, kòndù, kòndù
Ìwọ la fi seé, Ìwọ la fi s'àgbàlagbà
Ìwọ la fi seé.

Translation

You are the one chosen, You have been made
 the elder
 It is you that was chosen
 Even if someone, grumbles willy nully,
 You are the one chosen, You are made the
 elder
 It is you that was chosen

The foregoing was played on the *iyáàlù* drum by Ezekiel Ayanleke during the victory celebration of Honorable Wale Ogunmola⁶ as soon as the Oyo State Independent Electoral Commission declared him as the duly elected Chairman of Atiba Local Government Area election. Ayanleke,

the master drummer, confirmed during an interview that the drum text was used to send signal to rivals from the various opposition parties that the contest has been fought and won, and a winner emerged. In other words, regardless of the efforts of the rival parties, the reality is that they have lost (whether justifiably or not), they have no other choice but to resign to fate. *Òwe*, thus, remains relevant in contemporary times.

An obstinate person may be warned with an *òwe* against antisocial acts such as envy. An example is this *ikilò* (warning) and an advice to a wicked person to desist from hurting or taking someone else's life, especially for no just cause. There seems to be an omnipresent truth in *òwe ikilò* since being recalcitrant may boomerang as expressed in example 4 below:

Example 4:

iyáàlù



Ba a ba l'e ni, ba a ba b'a ni, i won la un ba ni i s'o ta mo

c) *Ìtàn ìbìlẹ̀ / Orin àbáláyé* (folk history/folk song)

Ìbìlẹ̀ (traditional) refers to one's place of birth or simply origin, *ìtàn* means history, tale or story, while *orin* means song. Both resource materials are interrelated, and sometimes used interchangeably; but above all, they are vital sources of historical reconstruction meant for preservation and transmission of historical accounts and Yorùbá worldview in form of myths, legends, and folktales or presented in song form. Facts concerning Yorùbá religious beliefs, social organization, political set ups especially chronicles of paramount rulers and related events associated with their reigns, economic systems as well as other relevant information about the people's cultural traits are embedded and well preserved. They are transmitted from older generation who are repositories of such knowledge to the younger ones through *ìtàn ìbìlẹ̀* or *orin*

àbáláyé. A *dùndún* drummer that is well versed in the folk history and songs of the people often displays this knowledge in composition-performance setting.

Vital information regarding a person's history, ascendancy, conquests and exploration of his ancestors as well as notable feats with which his lineage are associated in the past are available to *dùndún* drummers. As traditional historians, they recount, draw inspiration from and utilize them as valuable resource materials for compositions. *Orin àbáláyé* are folksongs transmitted orally over several generations. Their composers are unknown because written culture had not yet developed in Yorubaland when the songs were composed. *Orin àbáláyé*, when played on *dùndún*, are often known by many participating audience, who normally join in singing them with great enthusiasm especially when a dignitary such as a king is being praised. Below is an example of a foremost Yorùbá folksong alluding to peaceful and economically prosperous reign of the immediate past Ataoja of Oşogbo.

Drum Texts

*Laye Olugbon, mo ro borun meje,
E o ma fiwe l'orin
Laye Aresa, mo ro borun mefa
E o ma fiwe l'orin
Layee Matanmi, Mo ra koko, mo
Raran, mo ra sanyan baba aso
A f'ole, eni pe le yi o dun, ko wa
k'eru, ko gb'oko lo*

Translation

During Olugbon's reign, I owned seven dainty veils
Listen as I sing my song
During the reign of Aresa, I owned six dainty veils
Listen as I sing my song
During the reign of Matanmi, I bought exquisite
textile, including velvet and sanyan (chief of textiles)
Only an indolent would deny that this land is
prosperous; let him vacate with all his belongings and
head for an hamlet

This music was performed on *iyáàlù* by Ayannikẹ and chorused by the king's subjects.

Example 5a:

iyáàlù

L'a ye O lu gbon, Moro borun me je, E o ma fi we l'o rin, L'a ye A re sa,
 6
 mo ro bo run me fa, E o ma fi we lo rin, L'a ye e Ma tan mi, mo ra ko ko, mo
 11
 ra ran, mo ra san yan ba ba a so, A fo le, E
 14
 ni pe le yi o dun, ko wa ke ru, ko gbo ko lo

The sung melody by the voices is slightly different from the tone of *iyáàlù* as can be found in the transcription of example 5b below:

Example 5b:

voice

L'a ye O lu gbon, Moro borun me je, E o ma fi we l'o rin, L'a ye A re sa,
 6
 mo ro borun me fa, E o ma fi we lo rin, L'a ye e Matan mi, mo ra ko ko, mo
 11
 ra ran, mo ra sanyan ba ba a so, A fo le, E ni pe le yi o dun, ko wa ke ru, ko
 16
 gbo ko lo; a fo le, E ni pe le yi o dun, ko wa ke ru, ko gbo ko lo

As an epitome of a convergence point of *vintage* and *extrapolation*, the song compared Ọba Iyiọla Matanmi's prosperous reign to that of Olugbọn and Aresa⁷. The land was prosperous during their reigns such that their subjects could afford their hearts' desire, including being able

to buy lovely and expensive textiles. According to the song, Matanmi's reign proved the most prosperous to which everybody could attest. The music is quite relevant in contemporary times.

d) Àfojúinúwò (Creative Imagination)

Ọlaniyan (1997) defined *àfojúinúwò* as seeing things through the inner eyes. This is based on the belief of the Yorùbá that composers such as poets (oral and literary), chanters, and musicians including drummers possess a rare gift of forming mental images of things, ideas and concepts which have not been experienced. Imagination requires a great deal of creativity; thus *dùndún* compositions are often filled with imageries and ideas not verbalized. *Àfojúinúwò* remains a potent tool through which drummers appeal to the emotions of their audience, especially prospective patrons. Ayanbanke Lawani⁸ confirmed this when she noted that:

... sometimes, when vital information about a dignitary in a social gathering are not quite evident, we (drummers) look out for certain ethnographic information especially facial marks or anything that could suggest the person's nativity or position, so as to know the appropriate *oríkì* to play. Where this is not forthcoming, we make do with the physical build up in terms of stature and the person's mode of dressing including entourage to generate ideas, which we then develop into themes or we merely fill in as the case may be (Personal interview, at Ilora).

According to Ayanbanke, the extent to which each drummer is able to transform what s/he witnesses or imagines into new composition shows the level of the drummer's dexterity. Creativity in *dùndún* composition is displayed by the level of the drummer's imagination and determines his or her performance prowess. *Dùndún* drum texts are like stones hauled into the market place of thought and ideas. They are, to a large extent, potent. The words can be plain or embodied, iconic or semiotic (Villepastour, 2010). This explains why they are carefully considered before being crafted. This position was strongly made by Ọlaniyan (2010, p. 685) when he remarked that 'it is a power without which a composer cannot excel.' *Dùndún*

drummers who are able to extrapolate philosophical stance with high level of precision are regarded as skilful and accorded great respect. The excerpt below, a medley of three ideas (bars 1-7a; 9-22a; 22b-30, respectively), was performed by Ayanbanke Lawani in Ilora, depicts imaginative composition. A close reading of the drum texts reveals the musician's expression of three interrelated subjects in the Yorùbá worldview, namely, belief in fate/destiny, gratitude for good friends/neighborliness and gratitude for good fortunes.

Example 6:

Drum Texts

Orí eni kó má f'iyà j'eni
Àtari eni kó má f'iyà j'eni
Mo dúpe, Oloun ò pa mí l'èkún, mo dúpe.
Dà bi, dà bi, Jẹ jẹ l'ayé gbà;
Ènìyàn l'asọ mi 2x

Translation

May one's fate never causes one to suffer
 May one's head never make one to suffer
 I am grateful, God did not cause me to weep, I'm grateful
Dà bi (nonsensical words) Life is fragile, handle with care
 Friends are like clothes! (without them you feel naked) x2

<i>Bí mo bá b'ojú wẹ̀yìn tí mo rásọọ mi,</i>	Whenever I look behind me, and find that I'm surrounded
<i>Inúù mi a dùn, Araà mi a yá gá gá,</i>	I become glad; I am vigorously cheerful
<i>Eniyan l'asoo mi.</i>	People are my clothing, If you feel lonely, don't be afraid,
<i>Ènìyàn l'asọọ mi B'ó bá g' òkè, má mikàn</i>	You can never be alone. (Fortune smiles at me)
<i>Eniyan l'asoo mi.</i>	Friends are like clothes! (without them you feel naked) x2
<i>Ìwọ nikan kọ. (Ó di pẹkí) x2</i>	This is just perfect!
<i>Ire gbogbo pàdé mi lònà Ó di pẹkí</i>	Every good thing meets on the way. I am fortunate

e) *Ìṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀ ojú eré* (contextual occurrence)

Closely related to *àfojúinúwò* is *ìṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀ ojú eré* (contextual occurrence). This was described by Olaniyan (1997) as *irírí ojú eré*. This resource material is commonly adopted by both traditional and contemporary *dùndún* musicians especially in specific social contexts where performances are often indeterminate despite a group's rehearsal. It is also a major feature of African traditional and popular music and a hallmark of artistry. The Composer-Performer takes the liberty to either create freshly new musical piece on the spur of the moment based on inspiration or adapt the music to fit the performance situation. Just as the drummer's thought process is highly imaginative, occurrences around often stimulate ideas that are developed into musical theme on many occasions as shown in example 7 below:

Example 7:

iyáàlù

O mo bo la, I ro koni ba ba i gi, — Okunrin ro po to, I ji me re ni ba ba o

7

bo, A dun_ ba rin, ma to si; O lo mo si ka ta, ba ba a gba

11

do; A kan bi, O mo A kin wa le, I wo ni ba ba won.

Drum Texts

*Ọmọbọla, irókò ni baba igi,
Ọkùnṛìn rọpọto, Ìjímèrè ni baba
ọbọ,
A dùn ún bá rìn, má t'òsi;*

*Ọlọmọsikàtà, baba àgbàdo;
Àkànbí, ọmọ Akìnwálé, Ìwọ ni
baba wọn*

Translation

Ọmọbọla, irókò is the father of all trees
A robust man, Baboon is father of monkeys

Pleasant individual with which to associate without regrets

The brazen-faced type is father of harvested maize
Àkànbí, Son of Akìnwálé, You are their father (master)

In the foregoing example, the physique of Ọmọbọla (the subject being praised), is described as well built in the phrase ‘Ọkùnṛìn rọpọto’. It is interesting to note that Ayanbanke - a female *dùndún* drummer merely heard during a conversation when the investigator mentioned the name of his colleague who accompanied him on one of the field trips. She was able to retain the name and adapted an *oríkì* (Akanbi), the son of Akinwale to complete the composition. She made up everything on the spur of the moment; and for this, she was rewarded by the investigator’s colleague who promptly reciprocated through cash gifts.

CHANGE, CONTINUITY AND IMPLICATIONS

Besides the shift in the usage of *oríkì* among Yorùbá musicians mentioned earlier, there are also observable changes where *vintage* productions are compared with *extrapolation* in resource material utilization by the *dùndún* drummers. I argue that though tropes of continuity and change may appear to be mildly expressed in general, they certainly have far reaching implications.

First, there seems to be a decline in performance dexterity among contemporary *dùndún* performers compared to their older counterparts. Opportunities for robust knowledge and skill acquisition on the resource materials and the level of discipline and diligence required for distinction in operations are much lower to what obtained in the past, especially with new entrants who do not share affinity with the Àyàn lineage and spiritual tradition (Samuel, 2018, p.

169). However, the transformative bearing of the extrapolative mode of performance cannot be ignored owing to the fact that besides the regular (traditional) forms, new styles of *dùndún* performance have emerged among the generation of younger drummers. These styles are considered more exciting and seem to be receiving better appreciation among music enthusiasts and patrons. In addition to the bold attempt to explore new sounds, younger contemporary musicians have unapologetically infused refined *dùndún* forms, especially *àlùjò* into other Yorùbá popular musical genres, including *tùngbá* gospel and *àpàlà* fusion. Indeed, adoption of *àlùjò* is one of the survival strategies of modern *dùndún* drummers in a fast-changing world (Omojola, 2012, p. 68).

Closely tied to the issue of emergence of new styles is a gradual shift from the normative stricture for assessing Yorùbá music aesthetics in a holistic sense and the *dùndún* in particular to absurd standards. Well-versed elderly persons are cultural custodians and adjudicators of aesthetics of the art. Based on their experience, they may describe the music as being ‘sweet’, a synonym for what is acceptable and ‘interesting’. On the other hand, they may refer to a poor music performance as being ‘austere’ (Durojaye, 2019). However, as globalization engenders utilization of *dùndún* music by musicians of different backgrounds, the once well established parameters for measuring music aesthetics are increasingly getting blurred. A vital implication of utilization of historical narrations as shown in the adoption of *orin àbáláyé* can be understood in the context of the narrator’s possession of the license to inflect or skew the message. With a waning interest in folksongs by today’s listening audience, boundaries are shifting and experts’ opinions less valued. In the same vein, digitally generated sounds through the aid of modern technologies especially synthesizers have resulted in an upsurge in audience/patrons’ appetite for a fusion music sounds, making it difficult to recognize ‘authentic’ Yorùbá music.

Thirdly and perhaps, most importantly is the fact that musical retention privileges re-enactment and reinforcement of traditional resource materials over elements that tend to promote change. Point of departure is evident in the less deployment of creative resource materials by younger (contemporary) *dùndún* practitioners although evidence suggests that they are contextually crafted to achieve some measures of authenticity or its resemblance. For instance, the notion of seeing things with the inner eye (*àfojúinúwò*), as well as making up things on the spur of the moment (*ìṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀ ojú eré*), raises the issue of the possibility of seeing beyond what is intended. Is it possible that a *dùndún* drummer has misread a situation? How consistent or actionable is meaning in a particular context? Answers to the foregoing questions are not so straight forward or simplistic.

It is common knowledge that representation is a complex business, especially when dealing with the ‘politics of representation’. It is not on all occasions that a phrase or sentence has a literal, denotative level of meaning. Sometimes, there could be a more connotative or thematic meaning which refers to a hidden event, a kind of ‘myth’ which speaks to other sub-themes, including race, ethnicity, gender and matter of difference. In such a situation, the image created through *àfojúinúwò* could be enormous and much greater than how it is visualized by the listener-audience and its meaning may be ambiguous. Barthes (1977) and Chanta-Martin (2014) rightly suggest that there could be more than one meaning depending on the context, as well as reader’s state of mind and experiences. Within the broader scope of cultural belongingness and difference, as well as tropes of representation, the same word can carry different and sometimes diametrically opposite meanings; indeed, binary extremes — good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, and so forth. At other times, it can also be caught up in power play, some sort of hegemony to generate much deeper and more unconscious effects, including

fantasy, fetishism and disavowal (Hall, 1997, p. 277). The level of adumbration displayed in *ìṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀ ojú eré* by contemporary *dùndún* drummers suggests an understanding that meanings do ‘float’ and cannot be fixated. As a result, any attempt to ‘fix’ it will require delving into representational practice, which intervenes in many potential meanings of an image so as to privilege one of them. Such an attempt should provoke the question: ‘which possible meaning is being privileged?’

CONCLUSION

The ubiquity of Yorùbá *dùndún* drumming not merely as an artistic expression, but also as an endeavor worth scholarly dissecting remains almost ceaseless across many ages judging by its omni-relevant position. The name of Claudius Olayemi Olaniyan will reverberate among its scholar-practitioners. The unique contributions of Professor ’Yemi Olaniyan to Yorùbá music scholarship can be appreciated in terms of how he highlighted the features of *dùndún* music. His writings exemplify a robust engagement of a thoroughly researched art culminating in development of conceptual paradigms informed by Africa-sensed philosophy largely derived from his ethnographic experiences across Yorubaland. The classificatory prism he promoted on Yorùbá *dùndún* scholarship, to a large extent, set the tone for many other writings. It offers an opportunity to investigate the subject from other lenses with a view to gaining fresh illuminations and generating sound debates through re-examination as was attempted in this article.

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Interviews by author with Expert Male and Female *Dùndún* Drummers

Ayanlere Ayanwonu. (M), Ogbomoso, Nigeria, October 9, 2007 & March 4, 2008

Ayannike Odeyoin. (F), Osogbo, Nigeria, November 2, 2007

Ezekiel Ayanleke. (M), Oyo, Nigeria, July 10, 2008

Ayanbanke Lawani. (F), Ilora, Nigeria, July 11, 2008 & May 15, 2012

Olákanyè, Olúwatósìn Esther. (F), Ibadan, Nigeria, February 14, 2015

Oluseyi Adebayo. (M), Ibadan, Nigeria, October, 3, 2020.

¹ The *dùndún* is the generic name for the most popular hourglass shaped, pressure drums of the Yorùbá with laces that may be squeezed to tighten the goatskin head and alter the drum's pitch to imitate the human voice. It is often referred to as the "talking drum". The typical *dùndún* ensemble has *iyáàlù*, *ìṣáájú*, *àtẹ̀lé*, *kẹ̀rikẹ̀rì*, *gáangan*, *kà̀nàngó* and *gúdúgúdú* (a kettle-shaped drum) as its instruments.

² The dissertation, entitled 'composition and performance technique of *dùndún-sẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀* music of Southwestern Nigeria', was submitted to the University of Belfast.

³ A vigorous celebratory dance form requiring vigorous dance steps. Olaniyan claimed it was introduced by *dùndún* drummers in the early 1950s to enable successful and wealthy young cocoa farmers publicly display youthful exuberance and their affluence after experiencing unprecedented boom and bountiful harvest.

⁴ Samuel, K. M. (2009). Female involvement in *dùndún* drumming among the Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria. (Unpublished PhD Thesis), University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

⁵ Oba Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi III

⁶ The candidate for the People's Democratic Party (PDP) at the local government council chairmanship election

⁷ Two foremost Yorùbá kings at one time or the other in ancient past according to history

⁸ A prominent female *dùndún* practitioner based in Ilora, Oyo State.