

**Performance and aesthetics in contemporary Yoruba
traditional marriage ceremony**

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Abstract

Marriage ceremony is an important socio-cultural occasion in Yoruba land. Although there have been studies into various aspects of Yoruba traditional marriage, little attention has been paid to the contemporary performance and aesthetic forms. Existing studies on the contemporary Yoruba marriage ceremony have focused mainly on the social form and marriage rites. This study therefore investigated the performance and aesthetic forms of the contemporary Yoruba traditional marriage. The methodologies adopted for the study are fieldwork involving participant observation of live performances, video and audio recording, interview of key informants and performers. As well as library and archival research. Two couples and two prominent "Alagaljokos" (surrogate member of the bride and groom's family, only for the duration of the event) were interviewed because of their direct connection to the Yoruba traditional marriage ceremony. The study was guided by Richard Bauman's performance theory and key aspects of literary semiotics. The study analyses the contemporary Yoruba traditional marriage in terms of beauty, plot, outfit, music, dance, proposal, acceptance, bride price, exchange of rings and vows. The study also investigates oral aesthetic forms like bridal chant, song text, sounds effect and onomatopoeia elements of the Yoruba marriage ceremony. The study concluded by recommending that Yoruba traditional, marriage ceremony and culture be preserved so that they do not become extinct

Keywords: Performance, aesthetic forms, Yoruba traditional marriage, ceremony, dramatic performances.

Introduction

The marriage ceremony is an important occasion in Nigeria that most people look forward to both in the urban and rural areas. This ceremony gives the people concerned (both directly and indirectly) an opportunity for displaying unrestricted pomp, joy and extravagance. Here, marriage is established to mirror the fundamental human passion and fulfillment of personal ambition as revealed in the contemporary instances. In addition, it is in the verbal comments of the people in that community that the joy of this occasion is stressed, and the community's attitude to the celebrants is important. Marriage,



in the traditional concept has been inherited wholesome by various generations.

Basic Rites and Performance of Contemporary Yoruba Traditional Marriage

1.Preliminaries/Introduction of Yoruba Traditional Marriage Performance

The wedding ceremony is the climax of a process that starts with courtship. According to Ogunjimi (1994:28), "the young man goes to look for the young woman he loves but at times the father or mother goes on request to look for a suitable partner for their son". ¹He (that is the young man) and his friends seek her out through various means. The young man sends messages of interest to young woman until such a time that they are close enough to avoid a go-between (Alarena). Then once they both express mutual love, they let their parents know about their feelings for each other.

The families of the groom long before any engagement ceremony takes place, visit the family of the bride in company of his father and some family members. The occasion is an informal introduction without fanfare but a cordial atmosphere to know one another.

The informal introduction ceremony (according to the wedding of the Aladenikas in Akure, Ondo State that was witnessed) like tubers of yam (symbolizing that the couple will give birth to male and female children) and a few bottles of wine with assorted fruits, which symbolizes fruitfulness. The bride's family hosts the visitors (groom's family) with a simple meal and soft drinks. Apart from all round introductions, they might discuss when the event would take place, this is not a hard and fast rule and such discussions might take place later.

2.The traditional engagement/marriage performance

Normally, the performance setting is at the bride's house. However, in modern setting, the venue could be at an event center, a large hall, open canopy or an open field. The decoration is contracted to an event planner whose job is to interpret the colours chosen by using breath taking decorations to complement the joyful union.

The decorations usually consists of floral arrangements, coloured ballons, tapestry of both colour schemes and white, lavishly styled table clothes, chairs covered in lace materials and ceremonial colour. The planner decorates the high table for dignitaries and places two prominent chairs in front of the party crowd for the bride and groom. Other could be flower vases, cutleries and other elaborate decorations.

¹Ogunjimi B. &Na'allah A. R. *Introduction to African Oral Literature II*. Ilorin: Unilorin Press, 1994.

The arrival of the groom's family signals the start of the ceremony. They are required to be on time (no 'African' time) and can be sent back or fined for being late. Once inside, they are introduced by the Alagaljoko and proceed to kneel and greet the bride's family.

In the modern setting, the traditional engagement is carried out by a contracted professional called the "Alagaljoko", who is the traditional master of ceremony. The professional could be member of the bride's family or a complete stranger. The 'Alagaljoko' are always women and their duty is to properly officiate and coordinate the proceeding, so each provision of tradition is strictly adhere to.

There are different stages she (Alagaljoko) coordinates and each stage might elicit a collection of cash, which the Alagakeeps. Various fines are paid and then the formal introduction of the groom accompanied by his age mates and friends. The introduction involves prostrating to the family of the bride formally requesting their daughter's hand in marriage.

The groom's people also hire a professional called the "Alagalduro" which means the standing master of ceremony who follows the groom and family to beg for the hand of their daughter. The 'Alagalduro' is also a professional custodian of Yoruba wedding tradition, she could be a family member or hired for the occasion. Ajibade (2005:61) says:

There are changes in the contemporary performance of epithalamium among the Yoruba people. The celebrants of marriage usually hire some experts who are versatile in the performance of this genre to preside in their marriage engagements. These experts are called chairpersons (Alaga). A leader will lead the songs. In most cases, they make use of the old nuptial songs with adaptation and recreation to suit the contemporary situations and circumstances. They are the major performers of epithalamium now, instead of the brides that used to be the sole performers.²

The professional custodians of Yoruba traditional marriage who are the cultural and structural designers of oral performance must have a high degree of liveliness, innovation and responsiveness to the audience and their environment since they are seen as the 'oral artist' of the occasion. According to Akporobaro, (2012:6):

It is not only in terms of the historicity of his materials that the personality of the oral artist comes into play and focus. The degree of his audience and environment has a significant hold on his materials qualitatively and quantitatively. The nature of his/her personality, his social economic experience and condition will determine the level of his commitment to creativity and imaginative representation. An ebullient gregarious person colours his

²Ajibade, George O. African Study Monographs (2005)

images and his plots in a different way from the focus of a misanthropic or phlegmatic or a choleric personality.³

During the course of the traditional engagement of the Aladenikas that was witnessed, the bride's spokeswoman who is 'Alagaljoko' willingly asked on examining the item brought. "Look here, all these things you have brought as bride-price are not just enough. We are just patching you up and you do not even appear capable of feeding our darling daughter. Are you sure you can feed her well?" Although she does not mean it, such expensive 'jokes' are part of the skill she must display. This scene gives an exciting and interesting character portrayal. This undoubtedly seems a dangerous ground to tread, and so the groom's spokeswoman, wishing to re-assure the other party sings

Yoruba	<i>E fun waniyawona Nitorireniaasewa o Omi nbeniagbalawa Iyawoor'odomo o</i>
Chorus:	<i>Ile awa dun Okoninraso</i>
English	Give us our bride That's why we've come There's water in our compound No need for the bride to go to the river
Chorus:	Ours is a happy family The husband buys the dresses

This is a highly compressed, meaningful, suggestive and lyrical song. The 'dress' here does not only mean wearing apparels but other material needs too. It thus symbolizes both physical and mental satisfaction. Spontaneous dances accompany the songs on this occasion. Generally, the traditional life of the Yoruba lends itself to poetic experiences. Poetry is the soul of occasion. Generally, and drama is the body. Poetry here is mainly lyrical and at occasions like this, it is interwoven with drama. The words used convey the actual emotions of the performers involved. The songs are usually a serious study of the people concerned, as these depict their psychology and character.

Traditionally, before the bride-elect is formally presented and introduced to the other party, there usually occurs an interesting scene. Some young maiden of the bride's age are gaily dressed and invariably, the party does not succumb and amidst cheerful songs the praise the physique or complexion of the bride, the real bride emerges docile. Songs or proverbs containing rich symbolic dictions such as 'bright flower' or 'feathery hen' are used to describe their choice bride thus:

Yoruba	Omodudu, o Omodudul'awanfe Omodudu o, joeokoferanwa o.
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³Akporobaro, F.B.O. *Introduction to Africa Oral Literature*. Lagos: Princeton Publishing company, 2012.

English Black beauty o
 Black beauty we're engaging
 Black beauty please love us

3. The Proposal and Acceptance Performance

The elaborate proposal letter (which is a disadvantage to the Yoruba traditional marriage because of its Western influence on Yoruba culture) is presented by the groom's family and read out loud by the youngest member of the bride's family, after which an acceptance letter is given by the bride's family. These songs are used to usher in the proposal letter:

Song 1 Atigbaletaayo; Awa onigbaletaekun	We have received a joyful letter We will not receive a letter of mourning
Song 2 Mo ri letter kanba l' atodo Oluwa Mo ye letter nawo, ayo lo wanibe	I received a letter from the Lord I checked it; it's a letter of joy
Song 3 Letter ayotiarigba, Gbogboebiniyori	This letter of joy we have received All family member will see it

4. Entrance of the Groom Performance

The groom typically make his appearance by dancing in with his friends and his family members. The groom dances to the rhythm of song like:

Song 1 Okeiyawot'ele o mo re o T'eleomo (Groom's Name) T'ele o mo e o	This is the groom that you said you did not know
Song 2 Erora mi a gbese, Okoyawowole	Match majestically as the groom enters

The groom then proceeds to prostrate two times with his friend and once alone to his new in-laws. During the third prostration, both families stretch out their arms and pray for the groom. He then prostrates once with his friend for his family proceeding to his seat.

5. Entrance of the Bride Performance

The veiled bride (the veiling of the bride connotes that she is preserved only for her future husband) makes her appearance escorted by her friends (this is another example of similarity with Western culture) all dressed in traditional attire like *iro* and *buba* who dance her in with songs like:

Bayi la n se, Igbeyawoomo to gbonran	This is how we celebrate the wedding of an obedient child.
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Emi o ni lo lai ire gba; Ara n be to mofe da, Eniyanni mu nimoniyan (Bride's name) l'omuwamo yin o; Eniyanni mu nimoniyan, Nitoriomomo se wa, Omodaral'ehinobirin; Nitoriomomo se wa.	I will not leave without receiving; there are great virtues inside of me You get to know someone, through somebody else
Omoni glass mio, Omo mi ni glass timo fi n woju, Omo mi ni glass to mo fi n reran, Omoni glass mi o, Kaye ma fo glass mi o, Kaye ma fo glass timo fi n woju Kaye ma fo glass timo fi n woju	I have come because of child children are priceless treasures to see with a woman I have come because of my child; My child is my mirror, My child is my mirror of reflection; My child is my mirror of reflection; My child is my mirror, may the wicked not break my mirror may the wicked not break my mirror may the wicked not break my mirror

She kneels in front of her parents for their prayers and blessing, Parental blessing are vital in African culture generally. The refusal to shed some on a bride by the parent is equal to a curse, hence, the bride may retort to such parental blessing with this song:

Iya mi o baba mi o 2x Ile okonimo n loo Ejo e gbadura fun mi o Ki le oko san mi so wo Ki ileoko san nisowo Kiileoko san mi sayo Ejo e gbaadura fun mi o	My mother, my father 2x I am going to my husband's home please, bless me. that I will be blessed with wealth and children that I will be blessed with joy and happiness please, bless me
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The bride proceeds to her future husband's parents for prayers and blessing after which she is unveiled and joins her future husband. Though not compulsory, some brides put the groom's cap (fila) on his head. This demonstrates her acceptance of the proposal. On instruction from the Alagajoko she picks the gift she wants from the usually dazzling selection brought by her in-laws (a list with the required items would have been given prior to the engagement). She is expected to pick the Bible or Qur'an to which her engagement ring is attached. She gives her selection to her husband who puts the ring on her finger and watches happily, as she shows off her ring to the world. Alagajoko and the bride perform a song text thus:

Sako o foruka re Sako tori o gbotidaddy(2ce)	Pose with your ring Pose because you obeyed your daddy
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6. Bride Price Performance

The is no fixed amount of money for the bride price, as it is usually dictated by the bride's family and is subject to negotiation. The payment is more symbolic than substantial. However, there are other fees to be paid by the groom/ his family (which are also negotiable); Owo Isigba - ₦500. This is used to open the packaged gift items brought by the bridegroom, Owo lkanlekun (entrance fee) -

₦500, Owo Ijoko Iyawo - ₦1,000, Owo Baba Gbo (Father's acceptance money) - ₦500. This amount is paid to ask for the bride's father consent, Owo Iya Gbo (Mother's acceptance money) - ₦1,000. This is the amount of money paid to ask for the bride's mother consent, Owo Omo Ile Okunrin (male children money) - ₦500. This money given to all male children in the bride's family, Owo Omo Ile Obinrin (female children money) - ₦500. This is the money given to all female children in the bride's family, Owo Iyawo Ile (wives in the house money) - ₦500. This is the money given to all wives in the bride's family, Owo Ijoko AGba (Elders sitting money) - ₦1,000. This is the amount of money reserved for elders of the bride's family, Owo Alagaljoko (Amount of money reserved for the Master of Ceremony) - ₦500 among others.

7. Yoruba Engagement Items Requested by the Bride's Family

The contemporary Yoruba traditional ceremony is an important one in which certain ceremonial performances are involved. Marriage is deemed important in the native Yoruba custom. The essential aspect is that it unites the two families involved together, and so gifts are given to mark this new union. The ceremony marking the conveyance of gift to the girl's home is often loosely called the "idana" (engagement).

Engagement items (which are both edible and non-edible) vary slightly from family to family and according to the groom's affluence or the ability of his family. If they are Christians such engagement items could include, but not limited, to the following: a Bible, expensive materials like lace, several pairs of shoes, wristwatch, a gold engagement ring, head tie, 42 Big Tubers of Yam, 42 Big Cola Nuts, 42 Big Bitter Cola (Orogbo), 42 Pieces of Dry Fish, 42 Pieces of Alligator Pepper (Ata're), 2 Bottles of Honey, 2 Pairs of Shoes and Bags, 2 Scarves, 1 Wrist Watch, 1 Bible or Qu'ran, 1 Engagement Ring, 1 Big Suitcase, 1 Traditional Aso-Oke, 1 Big Dish of 'Aadun', 1 Bag of salt, 1 Bag of Sugar, 1 Umbrella and so on.

The Yoruba engagement ceremonies are beautiful symbolic occasions with vibrant colours. The physical format of some colours contribute to the understanding of their underlying messages. For instance, the physical layout of the venue of the ceremony is an emblematic representation of the subject matter of the event. Dowry payments may consist of goods but majority this time around, it consists of money. Dowry payments are requested to test the endurance and patience of the groom and compensate the bride's family for raising her. The Yoruba engagement items are majorly symbolical.

Symbolism thus reflects the wishes of the intending 'in-laws'- the groom's family. For the bitter -kola, the last syllable (gbo) means to reach a good old age. The kola symbolizes friendship and the wish for good things always. The bottled -up honey, sugar and salt symbolize sweetness, pleasantness and thus happiness for all concerned. The hot drink (gin) symbolizes zeal, passion and earnestness, the alligator pepper and bags of rice symbolize the wish that the intending couple be blessed with many children. The Bible symbolizes godliness and holiness in marriage, the wrist watch connotes progress in life. Ornaments and other expensive materials signify beauty while Umbrella indicates shelter. The engagement cake also known as 'Akara Oyinbo' is a symbol of happiness due to its rich and sweet nature, while the

engagement ring symbolizes strength, brightness and love that has no end because of its round shape.

As it is equally important that relatives should share in the gifts, these gifts may be kept for some time in the bride's parental home if the elderly relatives are away or they are prevented from partaking in it on that day. While taking each item, especially the edible ones, the intending couple is blessed and pieces of advice are also given. If an individual is not in agreement with the union, he refuses his own share there and then. Acceptance indicates approval of the marriage, and a willingness to render any assistance if the groom dies in future, or turns out to be unreliable. Gifts are also given to the children of the bride's house as well as the married women there too. They too are not left out in the merriment-making.

8. Bride's Departure Performance

The actual giving away of the bride by her father is a simple ceremony. The bride leaves in the evening so as to be perceived fresh and radiant by people in her new home the following morning. With her relatives and friends gathered round, the bride kneels amidst them to receive their advice and blessings. The blessings concern her longevity and her husband as well as her fruitfulness. The advice takes mainly the form of admonition of being obedient to her husband as well as to the elders in her new home, of being loving and lovable and of remembering her duties to her husband and his family always. The leading of a bride to her husband's home marks a serious crisis in her life. She now leaves a home she is used to and people, who love, flatter and indulge her for a new one she is yet to adopt to. This constitutes no less a mental than a physical wrench for any new bride. People realize this fact, hence the advice and blessings. The departure is always emotional. Thus, approaching her parents to bid them farewell, she sings in tears:—

Yoruba

<i>Iyamonlo, efiadura sin mi</i>	Mother I'm going, give me your blessing
<i>Baba monlo, e fiadura sin mi</i>	Father I'm going, give me your blessings
<i>Kinmakanosi, kinmakanagbako</i>	I may be stricken with neither poverty nor evil
<i>Ni ileoko</i>	At my husband's house
<i>Iyamonlo, babamonlo</i>	Mother I'm going, father I'm going
<i>Efiadura sin mi o.</i>	Give me your blessings

The bride too hopes to see no evil in her new home and thus the parents' blessing is deemed important and apt here. The bride is normally handed over to the head of the bridegroom's family by an elder among the procession that escorts her to her new home.

9. Dance and Song Performance in Contemporary Yoruba Traditional Marriage

Music and Dance Perform important during contemporary Yoruba Traditional marriage ceremonies. The audience and performers play and dance to various traditional Yoruba marriage songs and instrumentation. There is usually a slight difference in the instruments used as they relate to different performances. The joy and merriment of the occasion makes the audience and the performers dance like they have never done before. Much of the Yoruba traditional music songs can be

said to be that of entertainment. The songs are basically meant to revel in the festivities of the occasion and it generally not specialized. However, much of the music is socially significant because it is aimed as celebrating and eulogizing the groom and the bride who made the celebration of the occasion necessary. The song texts and themes of Yoruba traditional marriage also vary from one music sequence to another, starting from entertainment to invocation or prayer. Songs are seen as a sort of thanks giving during the occasion and the performers still attach a degree of spirituality to their art. Some of the contemporary Yoruba traditional marriage song texts are:

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | Ana kere, anatobi;
Idobalel'afi n k'ana | You prostrate to greet
your in-laws both young and old |
| 2. | Atigbaletaayo
Awa onigbaletaekun
Awa kowanitoriamala;
Nitoriifel'afiwa | we have received a joyful letter;
we will not receive a letter of mourning
we have not come because of food;
we have come because of love |

One major motif that runs through the three songs is marriage- Giving one's daughter out in marriage, by the parents, guardian. Siblings or extended family members according to the customs and tradition of the Yoruba people. The first song projects the importance of the in-laws in Yoruba tradition and culture while the second song shows the joy that comes from giving a draught in marriage in Yoruba traditional custom while the third song shows the importance and how much the bride is cherished by the groom's family.

10. Contemporary Yoruba Traditional Marriage Entertainment Performance

The entertainment might consist of a celebrity's master of ceremony who could be a member of the family or a professional. He or she is different from the traditional female masters of ceremony on both groom and bride side. The master of ceremony in charge of the final stages of the festivities coordinates the entertainment segment by introducing the live band or disc jockey, and adheres to the pre-arranged programme. The marriage has been contracted and all that is dance, feast and make merry.

The band is usually ethnic but combines contemporary popular songs blending it with both English renditions. Yoruba native tongue and the most popular music genre played at such traditional marriages are juju music, afro juju music, high life music, gospel music, hip hop and current wave making Nigeria sounds like:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Iyawoiwo lo wumi o
Iwo lo wumi o
Iyawa lo wun mi
Oni lojoyawo
Okoiyawo ma yo
Nitori bi iyawobawole
Okoiyawo a tuntele | My bride you are one I love
you are the one I love
My bride you are the one I love
Today is the wedding day
The groom rejoice
Because as the bride enters,
The groom follows |
|---|--|

The catering is also a serious business. Again, this could be done by both families and the contracted caterers should be professional in their conduct, and are able to make assorted meals like jollof rice, moinmoin which is beans but as been washed, grounded and steamed.

The chicken could be fried or roasted, fried meat, fish could also be both fresh fish and catfish. They also make chop like sausages, meat pie, small cakes, chin chin, and other small delicacies traditional meals are also served like pounded yam, amala, which is yam extract, fufu, and wheat meals, which are eaten along with a variety of vegetable dishes. Sometimes, family member from both sides also cook additional meals to entertain their immediate guests such as neighbours and family friends. The drinks could be the responsibility of the caterers or contracted out to wholesalers or drink suppliers. Their duty is to refrigerate the drinks and served the guests. The type of drinks could be alcoholic drinks, juices, punch drinks, choice wines, brandy, mineral water and bottle water. The drink handlers and cook caterer have service attendants who see to the needs of the guest. The ceremony is incomplete without young elegant girl that could be friends of the bride or graduate students who usher the guest to their tables. The engagement cake also known as "Akaraoyinbo" is a symbol of happiness due to its rich and sweet ingredients. The more recently introduced cake cutting ceremony during engagement is usually for photo opportunities. Final prayers are said and the occasion is ended with lots of love, eating, music and dancing.

Audience as Agent of Performance in Contemporary Yoruba Traditional Marriage Ceremony

A vital feature of oral forms of literature is the audience. The audience is very often involved in the actualization and recreation of any given pieces of oral literature. The particular way in which this is so lies in the fact that the artist is usually receptive to the audience – to their reactions, expectation and cultural assumptions. Depending upon the genre or personality of the narrator, there is also its unavoidable presence. Oral literature as a performed mode of creation demands an audience. Unlike the writer, the oral artist cannot escape from a face to confrontation with his audience. Ruth Finnegan (1970: 12) has rightly described the significant interaction between the audience, narrator and the recited piece when she states:

A further essential factor is the audience, which, as is not the case with written forms, is often directly involved in the actualization and creation of piece of oral literature. According to convention genre, and personality, the artist may be more or less receptive to his listener's reactions but with few exceptions, an audience of some kind is normally an essential part of the whole literary situation ⁴

Literary Analysis of Contemporary Yoruba Marriage Song Texts

⁴Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Literature in Africa*. London: Oxford University Press, 1990.

A distinctive feature of Yoruba ceremony is the use of a wide range of literary devices to communicate the message in a way that makes it socially relevant and aesthetically appealing. Literary tools are applied in the analysis of the chapter to help lay bare the creative interplay of the systemic differences and similarities as well as the presence and absence of features to arouse aesthetic response. The variety of literary aesthetic forms in Yoruba traditional marriage performance reveals Yoruba as a tribe of genuine aesthetic power.

In Yoruba tradition in general, there is hardly any occasion or activity that is not accompanied by songs and chants. Life in Yoruba society is full of cultural activities, which follow a rhythmical pattern from the womb to the womb. Each stage of man's life is marked by one important cultural performance or the other. Thus, when a child is born, songs are sung to accompany the moment of joy and merry making at the additional blessing: when the child is crying or about to sleep, songs or lullabies are sung to rest. Also, during the ceremony that mark entering into adolescence, for example, initiation ceremonies for boys and puberty rites for girls, songs are performed to grace this essential stage in traditional life of Yoruba people.

Finally, when the adult gets married, songs are performed to mark the occasion. These songs range from good-humored taunts at the young men and women who are ready to surrender a long felt and cherished freedom. Olajubu (1981: 72) opines:

Yoruba oral poetry is a living and dynamic verbal art. It is meant to be sung, chanted, and intoned in performance in the presence of an audience at a given social, religious, cultural, political or informal occasion. Its performance is usually accompanied with drum, music and dance. The poets either perform singly or in groups but most poets perform in orchestras made up of soloist, chorus, singers, drummers and dancer. Therefore, the poem in Yoruba is essentially a song and its performance is a musical dramatic opera.⁵

Data

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Ana kereanatobi;
<i>Idobalel'afi n k'ana</i> | You prostrate to greet
<i>your in-laws both young and old</i> |
| 2 <i>Atigbaletaayo;</i>
<i>Awa onigbaletaekun</i> | <i>We have receive a joyful letter</i>
<i>We will not receive a letter of</i>
<i>mourning</i> |
| 3 <i>Awa kowanitoriamala;</i>
<i>Nitoriifel'afiwa</i> | <i>We have not come because of food;</i>
<i>WE have come because of love</i> |
| 4 <i>BAyi la n se,</i>
<i>Igbeyawoomo to gboran</i> | <i>This is how we celebrate</i>
<i>the wedding of an obedient child</i> |
| 5 <i>Emi oni lo lair ire gba</i>
<i>Ara n be timofe da,</i> | <i>I will not leave without receiving;</i>
<i>there are great virtues inside of me</i> |
| 6 <i>Eniyanni mu nimoniyani; (2x)</i>
<i>(Brides name) l'omuwa ma yin o;</i>
<i>Eniyanni mu nimoniyani,</i> | <i>you get to know someone, (2x)</i>
<i>(Brides name) made us to know you</i>
<i>you get to know someone through</i> |

⁵Olajubu, O. "Yoruba Oral Poetry: Composition and Performance. Oral Poetry in Nigeria. Abalagun U.N et al (eds) In Nigeria magazine, Lagos: 71 -85, 1981.

7 *Leta-ayotiarigba*
Gbogboebiniyori
 8 *Mo riletakangba l' atodoOluwa;*
Mo ye letter nawo, ayo lo wanibe
 9 *Nitiroomomo se wa,*
Omodaral'ehinobinrin;

Nitiroomomo se wa,
 1 *okoiyawot,ele o mo re o`*
 0 *t,ele o mo (Groom's Name)*
t,ele o mo re o
 1 *Omo mi ni glass mi o*
 1 *Omo mi ni glass timo fi n woju,*
Omo mi ni glass timo fi n riran,
Omo mi ni glass mi o
Kaye mafoglass mi o,
Kaye ma fo glass timo fi n woju,
Kaye ma fo glass timo fi n woju,

somebody
this letter of joy we have received,
all family member will see it
I received a letter from the Lord;
I checked it; it's a letter of joy
I have come because of my child;
child are priceless treasure to see
with a woman
I have come because of my child;
this the groom that you said you
did not know
you did not know
My child is my mirror;
My child is my mirror of reflection;
My child is my mirror of reflection;
My child is my mirror;
may the wicked people no break
my mirror
may the wicked people no break
my mirror
may the wicked people no break
my mirror

One major motif that runs through the above songs is marriage-that is giving one's daughter out in marriage by the parents, guardian, siblings, or extended family members according to the custom and tradition of the Yoruba people. Songs 1, 4, 6 and 9 exhort the moral values and virtues of a maiden or bride in Yoruba land and the high degree of respect given to the in-laws. Songs 2, 5, 7 and 8 shows the degree of joy and happiness that accompany the occasion

Satire

There is also the element of satire in all the songs but predominantly in songs four which points to the fact that these songs are not just sung as marriage songs but are used to promote moral values and changes in the society. As satirical songs, they are used to uphold morals and preserve the positive values of Yoruba society. Such values include the following: purity, beauty in physical form, mental, spirituals, social forms, patient, hard work and obedience for both men and women in the society.

Imageries, themes, music, instruments and dancing are the combined elements used to capture the emotion of the people and the audience, the emotion include happiness, joy, excitement, enjoyment, contentment, satisfaction, jealousy, pity, envy, pride and so. On. Thus, the performance affects the audience emotionally and psychologically as it displays not only the aesthetic values of the Yoruba tradition and culture but also the social and the ethical values mentioned earlier.

Rhymes and Rhythm

The singer, however, does not sing all the time in one structures rhythm. Variation in the rhythm often depends on the message to be conveyed to be conveyed. Generally, fewer unstressed syllables slow down the tempo while the more unstressed syllables than stressed one in a sound unit increase the speed location. Thus, the singer provides an effective and interesting variation or rhythm in many sections of his songs.

Songs are lyrical and poetic in construction, rhythm and rhyme. The song text (song II) is embodied with assonance of the vowel 'I' and 'o' in all the lines of the song which imbues it with a staccato-like effect. For example in song 9, 10 and 11, we have omodaralehinobinrin, okoiyawo to lo o mo, omo mi nigilaasi. They are also constructed with the usual call and response. However, there is a secondary soloist who interjects before the chorus responds. This character has a poetic license to determine what to include which must have bearing to the actual song text. There is also lones of some of the songs, which comprise an alteration of fast and slow sound units to produce a balanced rhyme pattern. A good example is:

Bayi la n se	This is how we celebrate
Igbeyawoomo to gbonran	the wedding of an obedient child
Emi o ni lo lairiregba	I will not leave without receiving;
Ara n be timofe da	there are great virtues inside of me
Letter ayotiarigba	This letter of joy we have received
Gbogboebiniyori	all family members will see it.

Musical and rhymes effect is a key aspect of the performance. Therefore, it is important to consider the specific musical accompaniments. The Yoruba traditions rely heavily on percussion instruments such as the drum and the gong, which are popular because of their innate abilities to provide a diverse array, sounds and pitch. Yoruba music is generally lively and spontaneous which create a variety of sound that enables the Yoruba people to incorporate music into almost all the facets to their daily lives (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2011)

Repetition

Repetition is no doubt one of the fundamental characteristic features of oral literature. It was both aesthetic and utilitarian values. In other words, it is a device that not only gives a touch of beauty or attractiveness to a piece of oral expression but also serves certain practical purpose in the overall organization of the oral performance. Virtually all the songs above have a tint of repetition. For example: "omo mi nigilaasi" is repeated about four times in song,11. Also "eniyanmunimonyan" repeated twice in song 6. Which adds to the deep effect of the songs. An examples is the repetition of omo, gilaasi and woju in song 11 thus:

Omo mi nigilaasi mi o,	"my child is my mirror
Omo mi nigilaasitimo fi n woju,	my child is my mirror of reflection
Omo mi nigilaasitimo fi n riran,	my child is my mirror of reflection
Omo mi nigilaasi mi o,	"my child is my mirror;
Kaye ma fogilaasi mi o	may the wicked not break my mirror
Kaye ma fogilaasitimo fi n woju	may the wicked not break my mirror

Kaye ma fogilaasitimo fi n riran may the wicked not break my mirror

Sound Effect and Onomatopoeia Element in Yoruba Traditional Marriage Performance

Word relies on sound effects for their interpretations. The sounds are imitative renditions of the meaning of the words. According to M.J. Murphy (1980: 40) Onomatopoeia can be a combination of elements from alliteration assonance the echoing of vowels, the clash of consonants, repetition of words and the rhythm of the verse itself, All these come to give the ear an impression of sound that echoes the event being described by the poet.

Some significant onomatopoeia words in songs 4,5 and 7 are listed below:

Bayi la n se	This is how we celebrate
Igbeyawoomo to gbonran	the wedding of an obedient child
Emi o ni lo lairiregba:	I will not leave without receiving;
Ara n be timofe da	there are great virtues inside of me
Letter ayotiarigba	This letter of joy we have received
Gbogboebiniyori	all family members will see it.

Many words in the list echo the event, person or things described in the songs above

Symbols Significance of Colour in Contemporary Yoruba Traditional Marriage

Colour is an integral part of contemporary Yoruba Traditional marriage because of the beauty it adds to the occasion. Yoruba traditional marriage draws images from traditional African attire (colours) to embellish their ceremonies. For instance, Yoruba weddings are known to be very colourful with bright attire including blue, which symbolizes love, green for freshness, gold for beauty, and silver for purity. In African worldview, colours are very significant and meaningful to the people. Use of colour often conveys signs and varieties of meanings to people. In Yoruba worldview, especially during traditional marriages, these colours show a form of spiritual essence and communication which the people hold in awe and do not treat with levity. Akporobaro (2012:232) states:

Performance of this kind have indeed one advantage, that, as they are the works of fancy, the author, like a painter, may so colour, decorate, and embellish them, as most agreeably to flatter our humor, and most highly promise to entertain, captive and enchant the mind.⁶

⁶Akporobaro, F.B.O. *Introduction to Africa Oral Literature*. Lagos: Princeton Publishing company, 2012.

Furthermore, in contemporary Yoruba traditional marriage, citing Adebuwa (2016) “white symbolizes purity, wholeness and sacredness of the marriage. Brown is the colour of the earth, it promotes a sense of ownership, security and the domination of the groom over the bride. Green colour symbolizes growth and fertility hoping that the bride will be fruitful and the marriage be blessed with longevity. Red do not connote danger, instead, it stands for positive energy, survival and love”.

Aesthetics in Yoruba traditional Marriage Outfit

1. Bride's Outfit

The aesthetics involved in the contemporary Yoruba traditional marriage outfits present a beautiful splendor with the bright colour designs on them. For instance, the various colours represent love, unity and strength, which also reflect in the outfits of the guests (Asoebi). The various outfit colours combined to create a sense of the aesthetics, which complement the other art forms. The bride outfits is a reflection of what the female guests will wear. Shem= might choose, damask, lace, Nigerian wax fabric or any fabric that appeals to her. The outfit consists of gele (which is the head tie); the buba (the tank top) and the iro, which is a large material, tied round her waist and is ankle length.

The colours chosen by the bride reflects the colour theme her family has chosen but should also complement the groom's outfit and should look identical. She can wear accessories like gold chains, beads, bangles, gold earrings and shoes to match. Her face should have gone through a beauty regime with professional makeup artists, hair stylists and colour coordinators.

2. Groom's Outfit

The groom could decide to wear an Agbada, which is a two layered material of heavy dimensions like the Aso-Oke, it might be cotton, and damask or he might wear lace, wax fabric (Ankara). The nice colour combination should complement the bride's and reflects the colour his family has also chosen.

Symbolic Significance of colour Theme (Asoebi) in Contemporary Yoruba Tradition Marriage

Yoruba traditional marriage is seen as an occasion for family members to reunite. It is also, an opportunity to secure new friends or re-unite with old ones. It is a fun filled and meticulously planned occasion that announces to the world the union of their loved ones. Yoruba wedding have always been known to be very festive and colourful. Families and friends are dressed in their best and brightest attire. Both families are over joyed and they celebrate because of the uniting of the two families. Colour theme (as ebi) is as stated earlier a uniting factor between the groom and bride's families, friends and well-wishers.

Methodology

In order to achieve a realization of the objectives of this study, the following methodologies have been adopted: fieldwork, interviews, library and archival research.

1. Fieldwork

Fieldwork involving participant observation is necessary to the study. The fieldwork included , direct observation of live performances video and audio recordings, which eventually resulted in a documentary with specific focus on the performance elements and the aesthetic forms in the Yoruba traditional marriage. During the observation cum participatory stage, a visual literary evaluation of theatre elements and other oral aesthetic forms were undertaken. In addition, attention was paid to other oral aesthetic forms such as scenic compositions, stylistics of the performances, color, spectacle, songs ornaments and intertextuality of the performance for a robust analysis of the ceremony. The fieldwork entailed a preliminary visit to identify resource persons, venues and obtain other relevant information. This was the primary methodology for gathering data.

2. Interviews

The second technique that has been adopted in the interview of various informants identified in the pre-visit to the field. Two techniques of investigation were employed in the interview process. First to be interviewed are the various performers involved in activities connected directly to specific traditional marriage ceremony. These included the performance personae, and those involved with the ceremony. Hence, two couples and a prominent Alagaljoko/Iduwere interviewed during the course of the fieldwork.

For the interview segment of the field of study, the questions dwelt mainly on the perception of the people on the literariness of the Yoruba traditional marriage ceremonies. Other questions were on the historical antecedents of the ceremony, details of the ceremony, the socio-legal and socio-political undertones attached to the ceremony, the functionality (that is, oral aesthetic forms such as scenic compositions, stylistics of the performance, color, spectacles, songs, ornaments and intertextuality) of the performances during the ceremony are regarded as germane aspect in this study.

3. Library and Archival Research

A historical survey of the Yoruba traditional marriage in general is required to give a background to this study. For this purpose, archival resources, oral and written sources as well as the World Wide Web constituted some of our major sources of information.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is broad based. However, the following theories were adopted for this study.

1. Richard Bauman's Performance Theory

African scholars like Oyin Ogunba, Isidore Okpewho and G.G. Dara have contributed immensely to the field of African Oral Literature. However, for the purpose of this study, Richard Bauman's Performance Theory is adopted. This theory is designed to help in the understanding of tradition by bringing in several aspects of decoding oral performances. According to Foley (2002), the concept employs keys to performance theory also takes a closer look at the non-literal meaning of words spoken and also examines performance as an event. Bauman is credited for founding this theory.

Performance theory postulates that each oral tradition has its own key to performance and each performance uses special keys. Some use a multiplicity of keys while other has less. These keys to performance when involved alert the audience that is observing a performance of a specific oral tradition. Bauman's theory is adopted because of its universality given that there are not clear-cut theories of oral performance of African extraction. The six universal keys to oral performance according to Bauman (1982) are:

- 1 Special codes (dialects, attire)
- 2 Figurative language (similes, metaphor)
- 3 Parallelism (structurally independent verse but work together)
- 4 Special formulas (Recurring phrase, grammar)
- 5 Appeal to tradition (keeping the theme the same despite the changing world)
- 6 Disclaimer of performance (introductory music and calls)

Those who have versatility in the observance of oral event recognize most keys. It is most important to remember that the keys act as rules for the performer to follow. If performance either breaks or ignores too many keys; it might lose its expected flavor. This theoretical framework has been employed to develop a compact model for the analysis of the Yoruba traditional marriage and this has been achieved through the research instruments related to Yoruba traditional marriage performance such as the stage, the performers, settings, music, and dance among others.

2. *Literary Semiotics*

This study adopts literally semiotics its objective. Literary semiotics is an approach to literary criticism informed by the theory of sign. In view of Barthes(1972), semiology, which is used interchangeably with semiotics, is the systematic study of signs. Elam(1980:21) agrees with this definition as he defines semiology, as the systematic study of signs, which functions in diverse kinds of signifying systems. Eagleton (1982:100) also defines semiotics as patterned human communication behavior including auditory/ vocal and facial expression, body talk (Kinetics), and touch (proxemics) signs and symbols (sociology).

The choice of literary semiotics for this study is informed largely, because marriage ceremony performances are literary are replete with signs and codes. According to Sotunsa (2009:69), "literary semiotics concentrates on texts, which are literary in nature in contrast to general semiotics which studies texts, which may be non-literary". Within the context of this current of this current study, text here refers to the various Yoruba traditional marriage performances. Drama largely involves vocalization, audition, gestures, facial expression, outfit, make up, the stage and the audience. A study of dramatic elements examines the use of these element of the drama stated above, as they relate to the Yoruba traditional marriage performance. Most of these aforementioned elements manifest through a study of the oral aesthetics of the marriage ceremony both the linguistic and non-linguistic aspects.

Conclusion

The paper has thus far showed that the contemporary Yoruba traditional marriage is rich in dramatic and oral aesthetic forms. The paper has also shown how these elements have been deployed to enhance the literary and artistic quality of the ceremony. The paper concludes that the contemporary Yoruba traditional marriage performance contains obvious dramatics forms. There are many aspects of the ceremony, which involve make-belief performers, plots, outfit, costumes and make-up, music and dance and an active audience. These elements include the role of the creative artist and performers, who conjure and add all these dramatic elements together to create the artistic ambience of the ceremony. In examining the ceremony dramatic art form, once there are performers, an audience, a director, stage, design elements such as scenery costume, make-up and dramatic text, the drama has taken place. These the contemporary Yoruba traditional marriage performance have to a high degree.

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