

Research

TRANSCENDING THE VERSIFICATION OF ORALITURE: SONG-TEXT AS ORAL PERFORMANCE AMONG THE ILAJE

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Abstract. Oraliture is a terminology that is often employed in the description of the various genres of oral literature such as proverbs, legends, short stories, traditional songs and rhymes, song-poems, historical narratives traditional symbols, images, oral performance, myths and other traditional stylistic devices. All these devices constitute vibrant appurtenances of oral narrative performance in Africa. Oral narrative performance is invariably situated within the domain of social communication, which brings together the raconteur/performer and the audience towards the realisation of communal entertainment. While the narrator/performer, plays the leading role in an oral performance, the audience's involvement and participation is realised through song, verbal/choral responses, gestures and, or instrumental/musical accompaniment. This oral practice usually take place at one time or the other in various African communities during the festival, ritual/religious procession

which ranges from story-telling, recitation of poems, song text and dancing. This paper is essentially concerned with the illustration of the use of song-text, as oral performance among the Ilaje, a burgeoning coastal sub-ethnic group, of the Yoruba race in the South Western Nigeria. The paper will further examine how patriotism, history, death and anti-social behaviours are evaluated through the use of songs among the Ilaje.

Keywords: oraliture, transcending the versification, song-text, oral performance, audience, communal entertainment, Ilaje ethnic group

Introduction

Oral art is embedded in the Ilaje's tradition and cultural proclivity in the form of poetic and prose narratives, and these serve as important tools in the hands of the Ilaje poets, musicians and story-tellers. These poetic and prose narratives most often dwell on the history, memory and past experiences in the various communities among its four ancestral kingdoms of Mahin; Ugbu; Aheri and Etikan. The traditional society constitutes the artistic focus of most of the performances in the Ilaje's song-text repertoire. Reason for this societal focus has been explained in the words of Olugboyega Alaba (1988):

[i]t is a privilege of Yoruba oral artists to talk about the traditional society in the practice of their art. The purpose of these utterances is mainly to put on record every significant event within the society. Local current affairs are therefore predominant in these talks. However, the most important element in each of these talks is one main idea which belongs to Yoruba traditional society's ideology...In a sense, Yoruba artists act as the conscience of the traditional society in the practice of their art. Appropriate random themes of the moment appear handy for these artists to do the specific job of verbalising specific ide-

as recognised as worthy of note by the society at large, at different times (pp. 62-63).

Aesthetics of the Ilaje oral art as discernible in the repertoire of Ilaje praise songs, dirges, ritual songs, story-telling and recitations are nuanced by the folkloristic rhythm that is mediated in the view of Ruth Finnegan (1980), not by:

[o]ne absolute criterion, but a range of stylistic and formal attributes-features like accompaniment, structural repetitiveness (like recurrence of stanzas or refrains), prosodic features like metre, alliteration, even perhaps parallelism (p. 25).

The performance of oral art among the Ilaje is not by anyway limited to formal presentations, to a specific audience. Although many instances of the song and dance performances are often community based and organised either at the king's palace or the market place, but sometimes oral performance do take place in the isolated places like the creeks, beaches and on the shore lines as boat regatta. For the Ilaje, oral performance is a vehicle of cultural revivalism, and oral performance is an artistic conduit through which it harnesses its cultural heritage. Nevertheless, language plays a significant role in carrying out the performance of oral art among the Ilaje, the performer is expected to be eloquent and grounded in any of the Ilaje dialects spoken in the four ancestral kingdoms of Mahin; Ugbo; Aheri and Etikan. Since language serves as the most important tool for discussing, illustrating and describing the inherent qualities of a particular culture, the language of a particular group of people is a reflection of its belief system, tradition and socio-cultural world view. This notion is underscored in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1986) submission on the relevance of language to the formation of culture in Africa as vividly

captured in his seminal book, *Decolonising the Mind* “language was not a mere string of words. It had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning. Our appreciation of the suggestive magical power of language was reinforced by the games we played with words through riddles, proverbs, transpositions of syllables, or through nonsensical but musically arranged words...” (p. 11). In the same vein, the mutual relationship between language and culture has been examined by Babatunde Olusola Opeibi (2000):

[l]anguage can affect a society by influencing or even controlling the worldview of its speaker, because more often than not, language affects the way the user think or perceive the environment. There are many examples which reveal that the language of a group serves as the window through which one can see, assess, and appreciate the culture, customs and cultural beliefs of the speakers (pp. 188-189).

Like stage productions, oral performance is anchored on an immediate interaction of a performer and audience, and contact between the two parties is underlined by the use of language.

For a performer to function well in the art of oral performance, “he must be consistent in his mastery of the language and should possess an effective voice that can charm the audience. Since most members of the audience are usually much younger than the narrator, the narrator’s use of language should be good enough to provide an enviable language-performance model to which members of the audience may aspire in their own use of language” (Sekoni, 1990). While a performer is expected to be sufficiently grounded in the Ilaje history, since a performer is both a historian and artist combined, on the other hand, he should be proficient in any of the Ilaje dialects, because language serves as a unifying factor in the relationship between

the performer and the audience. If both of them are effectively grounded in the Ilaje dialect, which also serves as the language of performance, there will be no room for either the performer or the audience playing any prank that could artistically jeopardise the enactment of a performance.

This mutual link between the performer and the audience has been strikingly reiterated by Isidore Okpewho (1990) in his identification of the two essential roles of the audience in an oral performance:

[T]he first sees the performer as one member of a society of which his audience is only a random portion. Though he is an artist blessed with uncommon skill in executing a song or a tale before an audience, sometimes to the accompaniment of music played by him or attending instrumentalist, his outlook and sensations are not different from those of the rest of the society. The images of his tale are simply the same as those experienced by other members of his community, and at the moment of performance he merely bears with him the charge to convey to a wider public a world-view which he shares with his fellows. The reason why the audience is able to participate actively in the performance of a tale is that there is no division whatsoever between the narrator's perception of the *world* of the tale and their own (pp. 160-161).

It is taken for granted that most oral performances in Africa usually derive their successes from the harmonious cooperation between the performer and the audience as “the implication of this emotional-intellectual harmony between the artist and his audience is that there is no point at which the artist may be seen to be contravening or rebelling against the outlook of his society of which the audience is a random sample” (Okpewho, 1990).

A brief history of The Ilaje

The Ilaje is a resilient, migratory coastal people scattered along the coastal belts of Lagos, Ogun and Ondo states of Nigeria, but has its original ancestral homeland in the four historical kingdoms of: Mahin, Ugbo, Aheri and Etikan in the present Ondo state of Nigeria. The Ilaje is a sub-ethnic group and an extraction of the Yoruba race, which is geographically situated in the South-Western Nigeria. Ilaje currently has its headquarters at Igbokoda in Ondo state, Nigeria. History has it that the Ilaje migrated from the cradle of the Yoruba race, Ile-Ife to their present abode in the 13th century. The 2006 Nigerian population census shows that the Ilaje has a population of 1.59 million. While most towns and villages in the Mahin kingdom are distributed on arable lands, the towns and villages in the Ugbo, Aheri and Etikan kingdoms are distributed along the beach and swampy terrains of the Atlantic Ocean.

The Mahin kingdom shares an eastern boundary with the Ikale, a Yoruba sub-ethnic group and has its ancestral capital at the Ode-Mahin. Its paramount ruler is called the Amapetu of Mahin kingdom. The Ugbo kingdom occupies the southeast of the Ilaje territory which stretches from Ode- Ugbo to Oghoye in the north, and also shares a boundary with the Itshekiri ethnic group in the Delta state. Ilaje historically considers the Itshekiri as its cousin, due to their common historical, cultural and linguistic affinities. The ancestral capital of the Ugbo kingdom is Ode-Ugbo, and its paramount ruler is called the Olugbo of Ugbo kingdom. Both the Aheri and the Etikan kingdoms occupy the western axis of the Ilaje country that borders the Ijebu to the west, a sub-ethnic group of the Yoruba race in the West Africa. The Aheri kingdom has its traditional capital at Agerige and its paramount ruler is called the Maporue of Aheri kingdom. The Etikan kingdom has its traditional capital at Ode –Etikan, and its paramount ruler is called the Olikan of Etikan kingdom.

The Ilaje's topographical fructification is grounded in its abundance of natural resources: fish, timber, coconut and crude oil. Ondo state of Nigeria is

today classified as an oil producing state due to the presence and the exploitation of crude oil in commercial quantity in most Ilaje towns and villages. According to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation's archive (NNPC), crude oil was first discovered in Nigeria at the Araromi, a coastal village of Ilaje in 1908 although in less commercial quantity, but was later found in commercial quantity in 1958 at Oloibiri, in the present Bayelsa state of Nigeria.

Nevertheless, fishing remains the major agricultural preoccupation of the Ilaje. This is underscored by the fact that the Ilaje's geographical sphere has the longest coast line in Nigeria. Ilaje's fishing dexterity is underlined by a popular saying among the Ilaje that, "Ubo eri pa to, Ilaje gwa to rin", meaning, "where ever the river current runs through, there you will find the Ilaje". This notion is underscored by the fact that the migrant Ilaje fishermen can be found in many other coastal communities all over Nigeria like Epe, Oron, Warri and Nembe. Also many migrant Ilaje fishermen have often been seen in Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Togo, Angola, Sao Tome and Principe.

Song-text as oral performance among the Ilaje

The Ilaje song-text is often communally rendered rhythmically in poetic forms to pass across some symbolic messages, and the effect of these songs is often emphasized by its attendant employment of dance as a non-verbal means of dialogue between the performer and the audience. Since poetry "is not traditionally recognized as an individual art form but as a collective artistic experience that is performed and shared with an abiding communal spirit" (Ododo, 2003). Hence, the artistic signification of these song-texts, are usually rooted in communal patriotism, incantatory chants, dirges/laments and story-telling. The verbal composition of these songs conforms to the three basic modes of oral discourse: the sung, the chanted and the spoken modes. The performance of the Ilaje song-text vibrantly displays a network of words,

music and movement (dance). In the Ilaje oral performance, the song verbalises the dialectics of the ocean currents; the passage of time, history and the interchanging social tensions between it and her neighbours.

The Ilaje song-text as national anthem

Song plays an important role in the construction, moulding and shaping of the identity among the Ilaje and other African nationalities. This notion has been underscored by Ruth Finnegan (1984), “songs can be used to report and comment on current affairs, for political pressures, for propaganda, and to reflect and mould public opinion” (p. 272).

Eri Bale Igbogi o!, is an Ilaje poetic recitation which reiterates the Ilaje patriotism. As far as the musico-poetic effect of this song is concerned, it is the emotional arousal of the audience by the cantor which gives the song its patriotic aura and elicits a considerable ecstasy from the audience. As in most oral performances in Africa, the cantor of *Eri Bale Igbogi o!*, starts the rendition of the song by walking briskly to the spectator and shouts the Ilaje communal praise loudly, “ Ilaje aaye ma fuge”, to which the audience will respond, “Aa wa yee. While savouring a response from the audience, the cantor imbued with a calculated element of delivery and rhythm, bursts into a rousing rendition of *Eri Bale Igbogi o!* :

Eri Bale Igbogi o!

Eri Bale Igbogi o! (x 2)
akokoo
awa yo mi s'omo ulu ode
me ma le gban ode , 'ba mi ree
o!
o ye ree o!

Eri Bale Igbogi o!

When the dew touches ground (x 2)
 it becomes solidified
 yes its true
 we are the children of the land
 I can not forsake nor deny my father's
 land
 no, I can not.

The established pattern in this song is an assertion of patriotism, which starts with the rhythm of the narrative that proceeds from the image of a home. This image manifests in patterns of differing levels: words, actions and modulation of voice whose major shaping tool is repetition. The symbol of home as a collective possession of the Ilaje ethnic group becomes a narrative rhythm. This is a song-text which serves as a wake-up call to every Ilaje man/woman, at home and the diaspora, it significantly tasks the affirmation and assertion of his/her Ilajeness. It is a patriotic song which resonates and deftly articulates the Ilaje's indivisibility amidst disagreement, chaos and threat to the Ilaje country. The song was originally created by the Ilaje multi-talented poet and maestro, Chief Lelerekoko Ajayi, but was later adopted as an Ilaje national anthem, during the Ijaw/Ilaje internecine war in Nigeria between 1996 and 1998.

The importance of song in the African political process has been acknowledged in the words of Ruth Finnegan (1984):

[I]t is perhaps not generally recognized how widely political songs are used in Africa. Songs are now accepted by African political parties as a vehicle for communication, propaganda, political pressure, and political education. Their exact nature and purpose vary, but they have in common the fact of being *oral* rather than visual propaganda... One of the advantages songs may have as vehicles of political expression is their apparently innocuous nature... (p. 284).

Concomitant with the Finnegan's appraisal of the role of song in the African political milieu, the *E ri Bale Igbogi!* Song has survived the Ijaw/ Ilaje war, and is now functioning as the Ilaje national anthem. It also functions as a tool for fostering cohesion among the Ilaje nationalities in the four ancestral kingdoms of Mahin, Ugbo, Aheri and Etikan. The utilitarian value of the song

is usually harnessed during the Ilaje social gatherings and functions, but it serves primarily as a national anthem of the Ilaje ethnic group. The song has to be recited by all and sundry at every Ilaje social function before the commencement of other social activities. In the course of recitation, every Ilaje man/woman is expected to be on his/her feet, as a mark of respect for the Ilaje's ancestral homeland.

The Ilaje song-text as a serenade

The Ilaje cultural world-view believes that a man has to undergo three phases of growth: childhood, adolescence, and the adult life. During the adolescence, a man is expected to woo a woman, as to seek her hand in marriage. The union between man and woman is essentially designed to achieve two fundamental purposes: companionship and procreation. When a man is of marriageable age, he is expected to pick a wife of his choice, but this process could often be cumbersome, as a young man, he most often will have to compete with other eligible young men in making himself acceptable to a beautiful and well-endowed young woman in his immediate community. A song-text called 'Tuturutu Gulu Tu' is usually rendered to mark this process:

Tuturutu Gulu tu Saworo

Tuturutu Gulutu ni ,Saworo (x 2)

Tuturutu gulutu o, saworo

Tuturutu gulu tu o, saworo

ekini l'e ri ojo meje ni

ekeji l'e ri ojo meje ni

eketa l'e ri ojo meje ni

ono ba ti la ro naya ni saworo

Ige saa o laya mi, saworo

Chorus: Saworo (x 3)

saworo

saworo

saworo

saworo

tuturutu gulu tu!

This is a historic contest today, yes it's a major epoch (x 2)
this is a historic contest, yes it's a major epoch
the first suitor boasts of seven days
the second suitor boasts of seven days
the third suitor boasts of seven days
but it's the one who is rich, that will marry a woman
it's the rich that will marry Ige!
I'm rich, so I can marry Ige as my wife.

Chorus: This is a major epoch (x 3)
It's a major epoch
It's a major epoch
It's a major epoch
It's a major epoch.

Even though this song-text is a serenade, it entails a fixed rhythmic form of poetry, myth and song. As serenade the song-text incorporates the infusion of music and oral narrative that beckons on the audience participation and feedback. This infusion reiterates Franz Boas' (1955) remark that "the song and tale are the two fundamental forms of literature found universally which must together be considered the primary form of literary activity" (p. 301). As a serenade, the Tukurutu Gulu, Saworo song-text is expected to have varying effects on the audience, but the song-text when dramatized, could stimulate enduring reactions which shifts between resentment to admiration for each of the suitors by the audience. Individuals in the audience are expected to empathize with the loser-suitors in the contest. It is a contest, whose signification is not embedded in the test of quality of character; humility and perseverance, but a contest to determine the richest suitor! A striking criticism that immediately emerges from the action of the winner-suitor in the song-text is that of self-aggrandizement.

The Ilaje song-text as satire

Songs are often employed as satiric jabs against socio-cultural transgression of the societal norms among the Ilaje. It is pertinent to note that satirical song-poetry is discernible in the oral tradition of most African communities. For instance, among the Kivu of Congo, song provides a means of hauling verbal assault against the plantation taskmasters during the Belgian, colonial occupation of the country. Satiric song-poetry has often been realised in the song-texts of the Ilaje, the Ijebu, the Igbo, the Ibibio, the Tiv and the Bachama ethnic groups of Nigeria. For these groups, the need to relieve tension and restore societal harmony, essentially necessitate their use of satiric song-texts.

This view has been further underscored in the words of Darah (2005) when he enthuses that:

[i]n some of the socio-anthropological literature on Africa, satire is discussed as an aspect of the *season of license*. This is a period set aside in the year for the citizens of a given community to express themselves freely, in disregard of social and legal sanctions. Underlying the practice is a kind of Freudian tension between the repressive institutions of the society and the libertarian spirit of the citizens. Unrelieved repression, according to this theory, is capable of harming the well-being of the society. The periodic relaxation of this tension through the free ventilation of repressed grievances and views is believed to restore social harmony (p. 19).

For these communities, the annual festival of satirical songs is one opportunity for celebrating the freedom of speech. Satiric song-texts are usually deployed against moral wrongs like theft, adultery, bickering and jealousy among the wives in the Ilaje communities. However, most of these songs are

remarkably derived from the folk-tales, as underlined by the ‘*Soromi-Soko* song-text’, a song which criticises covetous desires:

Soromi-Soko:

Soromi, Soromi-Sokoo oo! (x 2)
soromi, soromi-sokoo, oo
egbon se bi no, eran pa mi no, o!
emi re yi n’o ke, aye o!

Chorus: Eye o, sooro mi! (x 2)
eye o, sooro mi

Eye o, sooro mi
eye o, sooro mi

Soromi-Soko

Listen to me, listen to me in the farm
listen to me, listen to me in the farm
my elder brother, coveted my game and killed me
I am now at the pinnacle of the earth!

Chorus:

Bird, please listen to me oh! (x 2)
Bird, please listen to me

Bird, please listen to me
Bird, please listen to me

The song-text is derived from a folklore, which narrates how two brothers went hunting. While the younger brother was successful in killing some games, the elder brother could not kill any. This aroused jealousy in the elder brother, who coveted the younger brother’s games, killed his brother and buried him close to the father’s farm. But when the father went to the farm, the spirit of the younger brother appeared in the form of a bird and narrated his ordeal to the other bird perching on the near-by tree, this conversation caught the attention of the father, who called a meeting of the family elders,

and the elder brother was eventually banished from the village due to the atrocious act. The song draws on the parallelism between musical structure and oral narrative patterns to condemn covetousness. The strength of the *Soromi-Soko* song-text is derived from the oscillation of the rhythm from sotto voce to crescendo which provokes a sobriety effect on both the performer and the audience. Rhythm of the song is reinforced by the inherent Ilaje mythology in which the song is subsumed.

The signification of mythology as a modifier of the rhythm in a song-text has been examined by Lévi-Strauss's (1975) position on the music-myth parallels:

[it can now be seen how music resembles myth, since the latter too overcomes the contradiction between historical, enacted time and a permanent constant. Like a musical work, myth operates on the basis of a twofold continuum: one part of it is external and is composed in the one instance of historical, or supposedly historical, events forming a theoretically infinite series from which each society extracts a limited number of relevant incidents with which to create its myths; and in the other instance, the equally infinite series of physically producible sounds, from which each musical system selects its scale. The second aspect of the continuum is internal and is situated in the psychophysiological time of the listener, the elements of which are very complex: *they involve the periodicity of cerebral waves and organic rhythms, the strength of the memory, and the power of the attention...* (p. 16).

The mythological elements of the *Soromi-Soko* song foregrounds a binary opposition between greed and contentment, life and death which is rendered intelligibly through a musico-narrative patterning that elicits an effective response from the audience. The *Soromi-Soko* song-text is originally

grounded in a thematic preoccupation of satire that is didactically directed at covetousness and gluttony, but which in the contemporary days, has now been appropriated as an Ilaje song-text.

The Ilaje song-text as a burlesque

Oral performance among The Ilaje is best captured during the dry season, usually between October and April. During this period, women in the various Ilaje communities are expected to organise themselves into choreography groups and perform some song rehearsals. Men are expected to be passively involved in these rehearsals, because they only handle the aspect of drumming and other assortments of percussion. These rehearsals usually ferment burlesque and melodramatic operas, one of the songs in such operas is called '*Ojere Made N'oko*':

Ojere Made N'oko

Ojere Made N'oko (x 2)
Ojere Made N'oko (x 2)
'yo wa jimi n'ogho
'yo wa jimi n'eja
'yo wa jimi n' ahete
'yo wa jimi n'aso
Ojere made, ojere made we mi si' raye
Ojere made, ojere made one burukun!

Chorus:

Ojeremade, ojere made o! (x 2)
Ojeremade, ojeremade o! (x 2)

Ojeremade we han n'omo
Ojeremade we mi s'odidi raye

Ojere Made N'oko

A bandit in the swamp (x2)
a bandit in the swamp
'he that came to steal my money

'he that came to steal my fish
'he that came to steal my plates
'he that came to steal my clothes
bandit, bandit you are not good
bandit, bandit the wicked one!

Chorus:

Bandit, bandit the vicious in the creek! (2)
Bandit you are a vicious personality

Bandit, bandit the vicious in the creek! (2)
bandit you are not a honourable one

Here, the communal artistic consciousness of the Ilaje oral performance is displayed in the rendition of the *Ojere Made N'oko* song-text. '*Ojeremade*' is a bandit in the Ilaje linguistic vocabulary, and his notoriety for break in, burglary, stealing and assault on the members of the public, strikingly reverberates in the rhythm of the song-text. The rendition of the song engages a group of women which provides a medium through which many voices can collectively speak against a social misdemeanour that affect all and sundry. The occurrence of the image of *Okoko* or creek invokes an eerie habitation of the bandit, which accentuates the narrative rhythm of the song and nuanced by its repetition. Song in the performance is employed to ridicule the anti-social behaviour of the bandits in the Ilaje communities. Consequently, *Ojeremade* or bandit's atrocities are sequentially catalogued in the song-text, and its negative attributes collectively denounced by the chorus.

The Ilaje song-text as an elegy

The Ilaje usually mourn their dead by singing elegiac songs to articulate the irreparable loss caused by death and to rebuke death. In the view of Ruth Finnegan, "elegiac poetry is an exceedingly common form of expression in Africa. We hear of it from all areas and in many different forms... the most obvious instances of elegiac poetry are those poems or songs performed at fu-

neral or memorial rites’’ (Finnegan, 1984). In the ‘Aja’ song –text, the poem employs ‘Whirl wind’ as a leitmotif of theft, this is underscored by the constant featuring and repetitiveness of ‘Whirlwind’ in the song, which shows that a Whirlwind is death’s *agent provocateur*:

Aja

Aja kubo, kubo yeeeh?
Aja ku bo, kubo yeeeh?
me rii
memo
me ma mubo yii
aja gb’omo ree o!

Chorus:

Aja ku bo, kubo yee (x 2)
Aja ku bo, kubo yee (x 2)

Aja

Whirlwind where, where?
Whirlwind where, where?
i can not see
i do not know
where it is
that Whirlwind has taken the child to!

Chorus:

Whirlwind where, where is it? (x 2)
Whirlwind where, where?
Yeeeh!

This is a song-text which also serves as an elegy in the Ilaje song-text repertoire. It highlights the enormity of loss caused by death, which has been represented in the song-text as a Whirlwind. The swift action of the Whirlwind is likened to the speed of a light, which left in its wake the sudden theft (death) of a person. The song is usually sung with some degree of submission

to the will of nature, which is euphemistically typified as a cosmic force: Whirlwind, or 'Aja', whose superiority is acknowledged in the song-text. The repetition in the song-text underscores Ward Parks' (1992) observation of role of the voice in a song:

[a] word or phrase grips the common consciousness for as long as it is physically voiced; when a singer moves on to a new word or phrase, the narrative present changes for all, or at least for all who are paying attention. The vocalization and the immediate linguistic deciphering of auditory sense impressions must occur with near simultaneity, i.e., in common public time. Thus the eventuality of oral performance comes to the foreground as immediately shared experience... (p. 103).

The voice modulation of the chorus is filled with lamentation and despair for the void created by death, which is represented as 'Aja' or a Whirlwind in the song-text.

Conclusion

Song-text as an integral part of African oral tradition, constitutes a vibrant medium of expressing the emotion and artistic diversity of African cultural potpourri. Songs are sung at different intervals in black Africa, either during festival, hunting, fishing, ritual/religious procession, burial and harvest. The paper has examined the significance of song-text among the Ilaje, a sub ethnic group in the Yoruba country, as a way of navigating the past, time and seasons as well as narrating its rich culture. The paper has convincingly established that the song-text plays a significant role in the collective life of the Ilaje, as an anthem, a serenade, a satire, a burlesque and as elegy/lament. These songs are communally based, and they are effectively rendered in a language that can be deciphered by both the performer and the audience. The paper has

further established that the performer must be eloquent and versatile in the Ilaje's history and language, to be able to communicate the Ilaje socio-linguistic repertoire rooted in its oratory and song.

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