

## CULTURE, SOUND, SENSE AND FURY IN SELECTED YORUBA CURATIVE INCANTATORY POETRY

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the sound mechanisms in one of the Yoruba genres of oral literature, the incantation, for the purpose of revealing the significance and functionality of sound manifestations in their meaning realisation. The Yoruba curative incantation is especially popular for its potential to cause things to happen or not to happen, and it depends on several imaginative strategies and the use of figurative manipulations to realise this through the creative exploitation of some specific Yoruba words to reinforce onomatopoeic, repetitive and other metaphorical constructs which help to stimulate effects. The objective of this study is to reveal the connections between selected words, sounds, the contexts of usage and effects they are expected to unleash, adopting Durkheim structural functionalism theory which opines that every aspect of the people's folklore works to reinforce its overall functionality towards achieving stability. This theory offers a good premise for the content analysis of sounds in the verses of incantation. The selected Yoruba curative incantations, purposively gathered through ethnographic fieldwork, made use of the sounds based on mythical assumptions that they have magical potential through which things could be manipulated. The sounds which are coded are creatively patterned to reinforce healing. It is evinced through this study that sounds are capable of self-replication and dissolution for effects. This study concludes that, although sounds used in incantations are drawn from their quotidian usage, they become evocative and function to reinforce effects when rearranged and manipulated as components of incantations.

**Keywords:** Yoruba Incantation; functionalism; curative; sound; Yoruba genre of oral literature.

### **Introduction**

Sound and rhythm are the most prominent features of poetry. This is because they provide poetry with its musicality, which may, in turn, serve some functions. The first functions of music in poetry is aesthetics and pleasure, and the second is to reinforce meaning and intensify communication (Perrine, 1988), and this musicality is expectably made possible only when poetry is read aloud. Doing this in poetry reading partly helps to reinforce its inherent musical properties, and partly brings attention to both individual words that are drawn together through their sounds as well as to project the overall feeling or experience (Blank & Kay, 2019).

Most often, the Yoruba incantations (*Ofò* or *Àyájó*) are expected to be chanted aloud for both aesthetic and functional purposes. Aesthetically, reading a piece of incantation aloud reveals its tonal characteristic, and helps to emphasise and appreciate the choice of individual words, their uses and manipulations. Functionally, words in incantations are transcendently signifying to the extent that their uses are illimitable. So, all the manifestations of the word, ranging from the phonemes, morphemes, phrases, clauses and sentences are capable of being accounted for because of their potential to reinforce occurrences.

The Yoruba curative incantation is process-driven just as it is occurrence-oriented. As a process-driven practice, it involves strict focusing and a measured compilation of imageries that affirm or counterpoise its target. Its occurrence-oriented status is then determined by its quest to help prevent or redress conditions (Dasylyva, 1999). For instance, an appropriate deployment of certain sounds in Yoruba incantation could engender certain actions which possess reinforcement or dissipation potential. Curative poetry comprises powerful magically oriented chants meant to restore or redress the health conditions of people. The Yoruba idea of curative is three-fold. It involves 'prevention', 'exorcism' and 'healing'.

While the first involves all kinds of incantatory verses that, are believed, can prevent diseases or protect a person from becoming a victim of diseases or other forms of attack, the second comprises those incantatory verses which relieve spiritual related challenges, based on the belief that, they can remove evil attacks, and, the third, comprises incantatory verses that are believed to have capacity to promote recovery from illnesses. The importance and urgency attached by Yoruba people to health-related issues might have been the reason for their reducing its wherewithal to verbal compositions rather than choosing the prolonged process of obtaining herbs and further preparing them.

For Yoruba people therefore, the power in utterances for evocation, which enables it to make and mar also have potential for psychotherapeutic effects to the extent that different diseases and illnesses have different metonyms, myths, parables and wisecracks weaved around them. Some of these folk forms shape the attitudes of the people to most of the diseases and ailments.

The Yoruba curative incantations could best be understood based on the peoples' belief about the nature of sickness and related challenges. The people's culture distinguishes among the nature and seriousness of health challenges using such terms as, *Áárè* (sickness/ailment), *Àrùn* (disease), *Àisàn* (illness) and *Àjàkálè-àrùn* (epidemic). *Áárè* could simply be interpreted as indisposition, resulting from stress or as a consequence of the natural bodily rhythm which would require some rest or application of common herbs, and or medication for health restoration. In *àrùn* is seen the more serious and acute forms of illness, while the most serious and chronic form of illness is known as *àisàn*. The major difference between *Àrùn* and *Àisàn* is that the latter is the debilitating variety of the former. This is affirmed by the saying among Yoruba that, *Àrùn tí a wò tí kò sà nì à ñ pè nì àisàn* (The disease which is treated and yet defies healing is what is called illness). *Àjàkálè àrùn* represents a disease of epidemic proportion and the term that could simply translate as pervasive sickness. Indigenous Yoruba curative incantations are so many and are adaptable depending on needs. They are, however, known to only very few and are sparingly put to use by those who own

them. They rather prefer to keep and guard the incantations very jealously either for the purpose of ensuring their own personal economic security or for other personal and family needs.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Generally, structural functionalism underscores a societal equilibrium where everything works to sustain the systemic order, and upon which the system keeps adjusting to ultimately achieve stability. Durkheim, according to Jones (2003) is quoted to have asserted that,

Society should be analyzed and described in terms of functions; it is a system of interrelated parts where no one part can function without the other. These parts make up the whole of society. If one part changes, it has an impact on society as a whole (p. 52).

In oral literature, functionalism refers to how traditional oral narratives (such as myths, folktales, legends, and other forms of storytelling) serve specific social functions within a culture, particularly hinged on the idea that cultural practices, including oral traditions, work together to maintain the structure and stability of society to regulate behaviour, transmit values, and reinforce social cohesion.

To Durkheim, society is to be viewed as an entity in itself, distinguishable from and irreducible to its constituent parts, as cited in Jones (2003, p. 53), that "...the society is formed by the structure of the rules of culture, thus the community so submissive and obedient to their beliefs and practices" thereby, agreeing that the oracy of a people functions to reinforce a people's sense of identity of particular group of people. Functional approach, according to Sims and Stephens (2005) is a strategy to discover meaning of folk practices. As a broad perspective in sociology and anthropology which interprets society as structure with interrelated parts, functionalism addresses the society as a whole in terms of function of its constituent elements such as norms, customs, traditions, institutions, names, and so on. Function as intended, is distinguished from "purpose" or "use" because it does not presuppose any conscious or deliberate intention in bringing about effects. In the current study functionalism will help to discover the meaning associated with specific symbols and how names function within the folk incantations of Yoruba people.

Whereas as a concept, culture delimits the indigenous Yoruba background of the study from where the data is collected and whose language provides the templates for observing the sound in action in its different manifestations, the study approximates the patterns of wishes and actions, either as prayed or as boomeranging back to their initiators. This is validated by the Yoruba saying that, *Ení da eérú ní eérú ñ tò* (He who throws the ashes is the one to be stained by the ashes)

### **Literature Review**

The Yoruba culture, through its use of language, presents a peculiar dimension to how reality is conceived and perceived. This is because in Yoruba ontology, the transcendental nature of the word, beyond describing and expressing reality, also, according to Akande (2022), changes reality as could be seen through the use of incantations to alter existing realities and human conditions. He claims that any feature of a natural object, symbol or imagery could be exploited to work in man's favour or disfavour.

Speaking on the significance of sound symbolism in Yoruba incantation is Ladd (1996) who opines that the deployment of sound in Yoruba incantation may serve to deepen the meaning of the invocation. He particularly cites the instance where the repetition of certain vowels or consonants may evoke specific forces or spirits, and the sound structure becomes pivotal in shaping the spiritual efficacy of the incantation. In a related vein, Ajayi (2013) draws prominence by noting that Yoruba incantations habitually follow specific metrical structures, and the choice of sounds can determine the flow and pace of the incantation. The use of plosives, fricatives, nasals, and glides can enhance the sonic texture, thereby influencing the energy of the chant. For Oluwole (2015), some phonemes in Yoruba language have symbolic meanings that are grounded in cultural practices. In incantations, the selection of phonemes is not arbitrary as could be seen in the use of the vowel “a” and or “o”. He noted that while the first of the two is often associated with life or power, the second may signify connection or divinity, the intentional use of which can imbue incantations with spiritual significance and their consequent potency.

Finally, reflecting on the deployment of stress and emphasis to highlight specific syllables or words that carry a deeper spiritual meaning such as could be found where emphasising particular syllables through stress can enhance the potency of a Yoruba incantation is (Ayodele, 2021). He found that in some incantations, stressed syllables can serve to mark the invocation's climax or moment of spiritual realisation. These stressed syllables, often accompanied by melodic shifts, serve as auditory cues for both the practitioner and the power being invoked.

### Methodology

Four purposively selected Yoruba therapeutic incantations were used in the study. The incantations were selected based on how they effectively use sounds as bearers of meanings and actions. The verses were first recorded from an oral delivery by a willing indigenous Yoruba traditional healer (*Onisekun*), transcribed and then translated into English using Abraham, R. C. 1958 model. The selected incantations are comprised of those used for resolving spiritual attack, protection and reviving the fainted. Both the Yoruba versions and English translations of the verses of the incantations have been placed side by side in a table for ease of interpretation and analysis. The research adopted a qualitative research method through which the functionality of the highlighted sounds is revealed.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

The following incantatory verses are said to have potential to relieve or cure spiritual/health conditions in people:

**Table 1: Incantation for Protection from Conspiracy (Eléniní)**

Line	<i>Yorùbá</i>	Translation
1	<i>Mo bojú wo apá mi ọ̀tún</i>	I look to my right-hand side
2	<i>Mo rí igba erin tí wón ń feyín leyín</i>	I behold innumerable elephants locking tusks
3	<i>Ó doní ké-ké í ké-ké</i>	Sounding <i>ké-ké n ké-ké</i>
4	<i>Mo bojú wo apá mi òsì</i>	I look to my left-hand side
5	<i>Mo rí igba ẹ̀fọ̀n wón ń fiwo lùwo</i>	I behold innumerable buffalos locking horns
6	<i>Ó doní gbà-gà í gbà-gà</i>	Sounding <i>gbà-gà n gbà-gà</i>
7	<i>Ọ̀kánkán ni mo wò</i>	I look far ahead of me

8	<i>Mo rí igba alágẹmọ tàwọ̀n tìwo lórí</i>	I behold numberless chameleons with their spikes
9	<i>Ó di oní sara ñ sara</i>	Flaunting, sara ñ sara
10	<i>Mo ní eyín erin tí ñ fẹyín leyín ké-ke n ké-ké</i>	I command that you tusk-locking elephants sounding ké-ké n ké-ké
11	<i>Ẹyìn ẹfọ̀n tí ñ fíwo lùwo gbà-gà n gbà-gà</i>	You horn-locking buffalos sounding gbà-gà n gbà-gà
12	<i>Ẹyìn alágẹmọ abìwo lórí sara ñ sara</i>	You spiked chameleons, flaunting sara ñ sara
13	<i>Àgò yà à èmi lágbájá ọmọ olúfẹ́ ñ bọ</i>	Make way so that I, so-so, the child of Olúfẹ́, am coming
14	<i>Kí ibi gbogbo kó yàgò lónà fún mí</i>	May all evils give way for my passage

This verse of incantation has the potential to prevent the user never to come in contact with any form of danger, planned or accidental. Since it is, oftentimes, hardly possible for someone to foresee a danger that lies in waiting; different kinds of precaution are taken to prevent incidents that could attract sympathies and condolences.

The auditory imageries in this text of incantation rely on the exploitation of the metaphysical power by which it projects connotations. Specific words contained in the text have ways of helping to deepen meaning-making and consequently advance the potentiality of the verse to meet the expectations of the user. To begin with, quite early in the first line of the incantation is the suggestion of curiosity, seen in the act looking from side to side, using the expression, *Mo bojú wo apá mi ọ̀tún* (I look at my right-hand side), the sense of which is also repeated in lines 4 & 7, the instances which are all followed by shocking revelations highlighting the fact of the presence of challenges around and about man.

These challenges are hinted at, exploiting the natural activities or attributes of the wildlife in lines 2, 5 and 8, as follows: ...*igba erin tí wọ̀n ñ fẹyín leyín* (...innumerable elephants locking tusks), on the right side, ...*igba ẹfọ̀n wọ̀n ñ fíwo lùwo* (...innumerable buffaloes locking horns) on the left side, and, ...*igba alágẹmọ tàwọ̀n tìwo lórí* (...numberless chameleons with spikes on their heads), right ahead. Whereas, the first two revelations appeal to the auditory sense, the third one appeals to the sense of sight. These are evident in the onomatopoeic representations arising from the terrifying confrontations of the animals in lines 3 & 6, are respectively expressed in the sounds, *ké-ké i ké-ké* and, *gbà-gà i gbà-gà*, which signify the gravity and the potential danger posed to man by the confrontation.

The imagery represented in the sound *sara-ñ-sara* (flauntingly) in line 9, is no less hazardous, however exaggerating in the context, because chameleons are not known to have spikes on their heads let alone, flaunting them. As an extension of the hyperbolic mechanism in the incantation is the Yoruba numeric denotation, *igba* which, ordinarily, is 200 but usually used to suggest a sense of the innumerable presence due to lack of the time to count. All the words whose sounds are cited connote some sense of existential monstrosity, struggle, strife and confusion that the incantation stands to repudiate. This could be seen in how they are, in spite of their threats, disdainfully commanded to make way for the passage of *Olúfẹ́*'s child. As far as the efforts of the enemies are concerned in relation to the user of the incantation, the overwhelming feeling that runs through the

verse, could be summarised in the words of Macbeth in a Shakespeare's play of the same title, as, '...all noise and fury signifying nothing', thereby, driving home the central desire of the text for protection.

**Table 2: Incantation for Protection from Witches and Wizards (Oṣó àti Àjé)**

Line	Yorùbá	Translation
1	<i>Gbiri ñ yí gbiri kánú igbó</i>	Tumbling tumbles about the bush
2	<i>Gbìrì ñ yí gbìrì já ojú ọ̀nà</i>	Tumbling tumbles about the pathway
3	<i>Àpààdì tó dojú kọ ọ̀gìrì tògìrì nì ñ se</i>	The broken earthen pot that confronts the wall will be overcome by the wall
4	<i>Ó dífá fún Ọ̀rúnmilà nígbà tí ó sawo rèlú àwọn ẹ̀lẹ̀yẹ</i>	So was it divined for Ọ̀rúnmilà while embarking on questing among the terrestrial powers
5	<i>Wọn ní oṣo yóò dí i lówó, àjé yóò dí i lówó</i>	They said wizards will disturb him, witches will disturb him
6	<i>Ó ní bí ó bá jé tòun nì</i>	He said, if it were for himself
7	<i>Ó ní n̄jẹ wọn mọ bí igbín se ñ yò</i>	And asked if they know how slimy the snail is
8	<i>Ó ní ọ̀un yóò máa yò lẹnu wọn bí igbín</i>	He said, he will be slippery in their mouths like the snail
9	<i>Ó ní bọ̀lọ̀ nì igbín ñ yò</i>	He said, slippery, the snail becomes
10	<i>Oṣó ilé nì ñ perí mì nìbì</i>	Be it the wizards within that think evil of me
11	<i>Bọ̀lọ̀ nì kí wọn máa yò kí wọn máa fara yílẹ̀</i>	Thus, will they become slippery and roll in the dust
12	<i>Àjé ilé nì ñ perí mì nìbì</i>	Be it the witches within that think evil of me
13	<i>Bọ̀lọ̀ nì kí wọn máa yò kí wọn máa fara yílẹ̀</i>	Thus, will they become slippery and roll in the mud
14	<i>Aṣọ̀niṣeni, afàṣọ̀niṣeni</i>	Be it the familiar or non-familiar enemies
15	<i>Bọ̀lọ̀ nì kí wọn máa yò kí wọn máa fara yílẹ̀</i>	Thus, will they become slippery and roll in the mud
16	<i>Babaláwo tàbí aláàásán nì ñ robì sí mì nì</i>	Be it the herbalist or the enchanter that think evil towards me
17	<i>Bọ̀lọ̀ nì kí wọn máa yò kí wọn máa fara yílẹ̀</i>	Thus, will they become slippery and roll in the mud

This piece of incantatory verse has the potential to make an enemy suffer public humiliation, and by so doing, repent from doing evil or alternatively, lose his/her life. It is one of the protective measures that people use while going on outing where they envisage the presence of enemies who could possibly launch attack on their persons.

Meaning is realized in the text with the accurate deployment of cultural symbolic sounds which facilitate and influence the central objective of the text. One noticeable characteristic of the verse is the manner it manipulates words through the use of onomatopoeic sounds in order to insist on what must happen to the supplicant's enemy. The expressions in line 1 and 2: *Gbiri ñ yí gbiri kánú igbó* (Tumbling tumbles about the bush) and, *Gbìrì ñ yí gbìrì já ojú ọ̀nà* (Tumbling tumbles on to

the pathway), simply emphasise the total loss of self-control that would befall the enemies of the supplicant just as they are met with disgrace everywhere.

Indeed, the onomatopoeic indicators, *Gbiri* (Tumbling) and, *Gbiri* (Tumbling), showcase instances of manipulative play on words and yet having similar connotation. Also, there is a way in which the words bear resemblance with the action which they refer. The importance of locales, ...*inú igbó* (...the bush) and ...*ojú ọ̀nà* (...the way), is to include both the private and the public domains where the enemy must face with disgrace. Another instance of the exploitation of sound is found in line 3 which recites as, *Àpàdì tó dojú kọ ọ̀giri* (The broken earthen pot that confronts the wall) and, ...*ọ̀giri* (...the earthen wall) which are meant to intensify the supremacy of the latter over the former, and also functioning to evoke a victor and vanquished relationship. Both elements, therefore, prefigure the confrontation between the enemy and the cantor and the ultimate victory of the latter over the former.

The significance of *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* (Yoruba god of divination and wisdom) and his excursion among the terrestrial powers, in lines 4 and 5, is to assure the safety of the cantor. The warning against the machinations of, *oṣó* (wizards) and *àjé* (witches) therein, is to refer to the agents of disruption who, in Yoruba thoughts, are associated with human challenges. The invincibility of the deity which is anchored on ...*bí igbín ẹ̀ ń yò* (the sliminess of the snail), anticipates for the cantor, on one hand, a lack of grip from the claws of the evil ones and assures that he goes unscathed, and on the other hand, it foreshadows ceaseless slips and falls for the enemy.

In the final analysis, what could be considered in the tradition of the Yoruba people, as an inventory of enemies, is clearly highlighted in lines 10, 12, 14 and 16, as the supplicant concludes his prayers. These include, but not necessarily restricted to, *Oṣó ilé* (Wizards within), *Àjé ilé* (Witches within), *Aṃọ̀ṣeni* (Familiar detractors), *Afàìṃọ̀ṣeni* (Unfamiliar detractors), *Babaláwo* (Herbalist) and, *Aláàásán* (Enchanter). Deducible from these is that, the enemy, known as *Ọ̀tá* in the Yoruba language, is indeed, an umbrella concept which has multiple connotations from which all the listed terms derive their individual relevance.

For example, *Oṣó ilé* (Wizards within) and, *Àjé ilé* (Witches within) are so called, because, they inhabit the same dwellings as their victims and may sometimes pretend to offer assistance even while seeking to harm. They sometimes also offer assistance to enemies without, to strike effectively, thereby affirming the Yoruba saying that, *Inú ilé l'ọ̀tá wà, aṣeni l'ode kò tó t'ilé* (The enemy lives within and the enemy without is not as brutal as that within), or, *Èhìnkùlẹ̀ l'ọ̀tá wà inú ilé nì aṣeni ń gbé* (The enemy lives behind the house but he who harms lives within). Also, *Aṃọ̀ṣeni* (Familiar detractors), and, *Afàìṃọ̀ṣeni* (Unfamiliar detractors) distinguish between detractors who, in spite of whatever bonds, unleash harm or 'gives out' a person to be harmed, and a person who is hired to cause harm to another based on unverified accusations. Coming last on the list are the duo of, *Babaláwo* (Witch-doctor) and, *Aláàásán* (Enchanter). They differentiate between those who may make use of herbs and roots to cause harm to people and those who use mere words of the mouth, as enchantments, to achieve similar end. The influence of the verse on everyone belonging in the stated categories is for them to slip, fall and tumble uncontrollably, and get disgraced while being compelled to confess their evil acts.

In conclusion, this incantatory verse makes an extensive use of repetitions to reinforce the overall effect sought by the supplicant. Apart from the repetition of identical expressions which suggest instability in part of lines 1 and 2 of the incantation, there is the repetition of slimmness or related words and expressions across the lines of the incantation, all of which help to underscore the sense of instability which is prayed to overwhelm the cantor's enemy.

**Table 3: Incantation for Reviving the Fainted (Àpèjì)**

Line	Yorùbá	Translation
1	<i>Kogó kogó ni à ñ gbohùn agogo</i>	Kogó kogó is the sound of the gong
2	<i>Kangè kangè ni ohun tààjà</i>	Kangè kangè is the sound of the sacred gong
3	<i>Ará ayé ñ pè ó</i>	People of the world are summoning you
4	<i>Èrò ọrun ñ pè ó</i>	Sojourners to the heaven are summoning you
5	<i>Ará ayé ni kí o dá l'óhùn</i>	It is the people of the world that you should answer
6	<i>Oníbodè ti ilẹ̀kùn!</i>	The gatekeeper, please, lock the entrance (to the beyond)
7	<i>Torí lágbájá ọmọ lámọrín</i>	Because of so-so the child of so-so
8	<i>Tí kò tii san owó oníbodè</i>	That has not paid the gate-fee

This text of incantation, which helps to resuscitate a fainted person back to life, depends largely on its manipulative use of sound mechanism for effect. This is revealed in the metaphorical and onomatopoeic use of the two types of gongs in the process of resuscitating the fainted. The symbolic interpretation of the separate sounds of the conventional gong in lines 1 and 2, *kogó kogó*, and that of the sacred gong, *kangè kangè*, impose the auras of the living world and that of the beyond on the text because the former belongs to the living while the latter belongs to the dead. The Yoruba saying that, *Wọn kì í fààjà kéde ilú, agogo ni wón fì ñ kó wón jọ* (No one uses the sacred gong to make communal announcements, the conventional gong is only meant for the purpose), is an attestation to the dichotomy between the different worlds which are represented. The regular gong is stricken with a stick for it to produce sound while the sacred gong is jiggled for it to produce sound and this is corroborated by the Yoruba saying that, *Ààjà kì í ró kómọ inú è má mì* (If the Ààjà gong must sound the pendulum must swing). Expectedly, the sound associated with the conventional gong is louder than that of the sacred gong and it, therefore, should have more invitational impact on the fainted person than the latter. This is supposedly so for a person who return to life would while it will be the other way round for a person whose fate to go to the beyond has been sealed.

This analogy of representation is made with the analysis of the structure of the incantation and the referential signification of the subject of discourse. The fainted person in the discourse is presented as a sojourner whose friends and associates are displeased with his/her departure, yet the people of the beyond are expectant of his/her arrival. The reference to *owó oníbodè* (gate fee) is symbolic of the permit to get admitted to the other world. The sojourner in the discourse has not paid the gate fee, and for this reason, he/she should be denied permission to enter. The expected outcome of the discourse is that the fainted person is resuscitated to continue with his earthly life.

The success of the discourse is based on the exploitation of mythical sound with its transcended meaning. The expressions in the discourse need to be interpreted beyond the spectrum of their denotations. In the analysis of the text, there is congruity between image and object/subject of



discourse and this is why the expectation is hoped to be attained at the end of the performance. The consciousness of the textual experience hangs on the reality of the encounter of someone who, according to lines 3 and 4, is straddling between the worlds of the living and that of the dead. The association and analogy of the sounds and the requests of the living and the dead are symbolic of the small gap between life and death in Yoruba thought.

**Table 4: Incantation for Protection from Enemies (Òtá-Ilé àti Òtá-Òde)**

Line	Yorùbá	Translation
1	Òyèkúlogbè! 3ce	Òyèkúlogbè! 3ce
2	Kí ó rìn gbangba yekú mi lówon òtá mi lóri	Do walk openly to revert your death onto your enemies' heads
3	Òyèkúlogbè! 3ce	Òyèkúlogbè! 3ce
4	Kí ó rìn kòkò yekú mi lówon òtá mi lóri	Do walk furtively to revert your death onto your enemies' heads
5	Nítorí ojó tí làgìdì bá fojú kan iyámòpó	Because the day làgìdì sets his eyes on iyámòpó
6	Ojọ náà ló máa da tawó rẹ sílẹ	That day does he surrender all in his possession
7	Ojọ tí ewúré bá bímọ tiẹ ní ń dide	The day the goat births its kid does the kid stand up
8	Ojọ tí àgùntàn bá bímọ tiẹ ní ń dide	The day the sheep born its kid does the kid stand up
9	Ojọ tí lèkélèké bá bímọ tiẹ ní ń rìn	The day the cow egret births its baby does the baby walk
10	Àbàwọn àṣẹ lóri iwọ lágbájá omọ lágbájá	Authority proclaimed on you so-so child of so-so
11	Báyìí báyìí òun ní kí ó jí dide	To immediately now awake and rise up
12	Tó!	So shall it be!

This incantatory poem also thrives on the use of mythical names to bring about sound which help to restore a fainted person back to life. Its use of the name, *Òyèkú*, according to Fabunmi (1972), indicates 'an end of a cycle', while its extension as, *Òyèkúlogbè* in lines 1 and 3 combines with a form which projects the reversal of destructive essence for the purpose of giving way to the constructive essence of life. The validity of this, regarding the dilemma of the referent, is in the belief of its capability to revert the danger of death, and in its stead, replace it with life. *Òyèkúlogbè*, therefore, functions to parallel the expectation of the cantor or whosoever the chant is rendered on behalf, according to the perception in Yoruba culture, to avert misfortune and replace it with happiness.

The request for passing over death, as mentioned, is further directed onto the enemies of the supplicant or the subject. It seems as if the nature of the workings of the enemies, either as, *òtá tó fojú hàn* (known enemies), and, *òtá ikòkò* (hidden enemies), determine the direction targeted in the verse as could be seen in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> lines. The requests to, ...*rìn ní gbangba* (...walk in the open) and, ...*rìn ní ikòkò* (...walk furtively), are meant to emphasise the locale of action which, as well, determines the classifications or perceptions of the enemy in Yoruba thought.

The above wish, to revert death, is contingent upon certain configurations and the factuality surrounding them, all of which are meaningful as well as helping to advance the expectation of the text such as could be seen in the binary relationship between, *làgìdì* (the phallus) and, *ìyámòpó* (the genitalia), and upon which the latter surrenders its possession, otherwise rendered as, ...*towó rẹ*. The names, *làgìdì* and *ìyámòpó*, are euphemistic references (Abrams and Harpham 2012) as pointed out above, just as, ... *towó rẹ*, refers to the male semen. The three objects mentioned are complementary to one another such that mentioning one of them suggests the existence of another or all others, most especially where intercourse is involved. Also, the sense of swiftness that is reflected in the post-natal growth of the kids of goat and sheep as well as the post hatching development of the baby egret, which enable them to stand as well as walk, become the veritable support for the desired health restoration for the ailed. Such activeness that characterise the newborn creatures, as alluded to in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> lines of the verse of incantation, as symbolic as they are in the circumstance, function as models for the central desire of the incantatory piece, that is, emphasising that the sick becomes active again.

Finally, the emphatic expression of request coming up in the last two lines but one is also hinged on some or all the affirmations already made in the three lines earlier quoted. Apart from personalising the realisation of a central desire of the named, the lines clearly incorporate the requests that the sick should 'rise and walk' - an indication of restoration of health which could, in turn, renew the hope of the embattled towards the restoration of his/her health.

## Conclusion

As a form of verbal art, the Yoruba curative incantation comprises of thoughts whose validation is derived the people's cultural epistemology. There is, in Yoruba thought, a connection between a particular content word and the force generated through its sound, and which is expected to stimulate an effect otherwise referred to as the *fury*. This is particularly so when both the sound and the associated action are intense. Most of the content words which generate the sounds in the incantations used in this study are purposively and intricately arranged and are intensified so as to stimulate the desired affects. Most of the effects, derived, incidental or consequential are in conformity with the acceptable realities of the people's culture.

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