THE FORM AND CONTENT OF IYARA HUNTERS' POETRY

by

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D E D I C A T I O N

This work is dedicated to my children, 'TAYO and 'TUNJI whose remarkable zest for life has been a source of joy; and to all that are genuinely interested in the study of oral art.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been presented or accepted in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and the sources of information are specifically acknowledged by means of references.

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APPROVAL

This thesis has been carefully read and approved as having satisfied the conditions for the award of Master of Arts Degree in African Literature, in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

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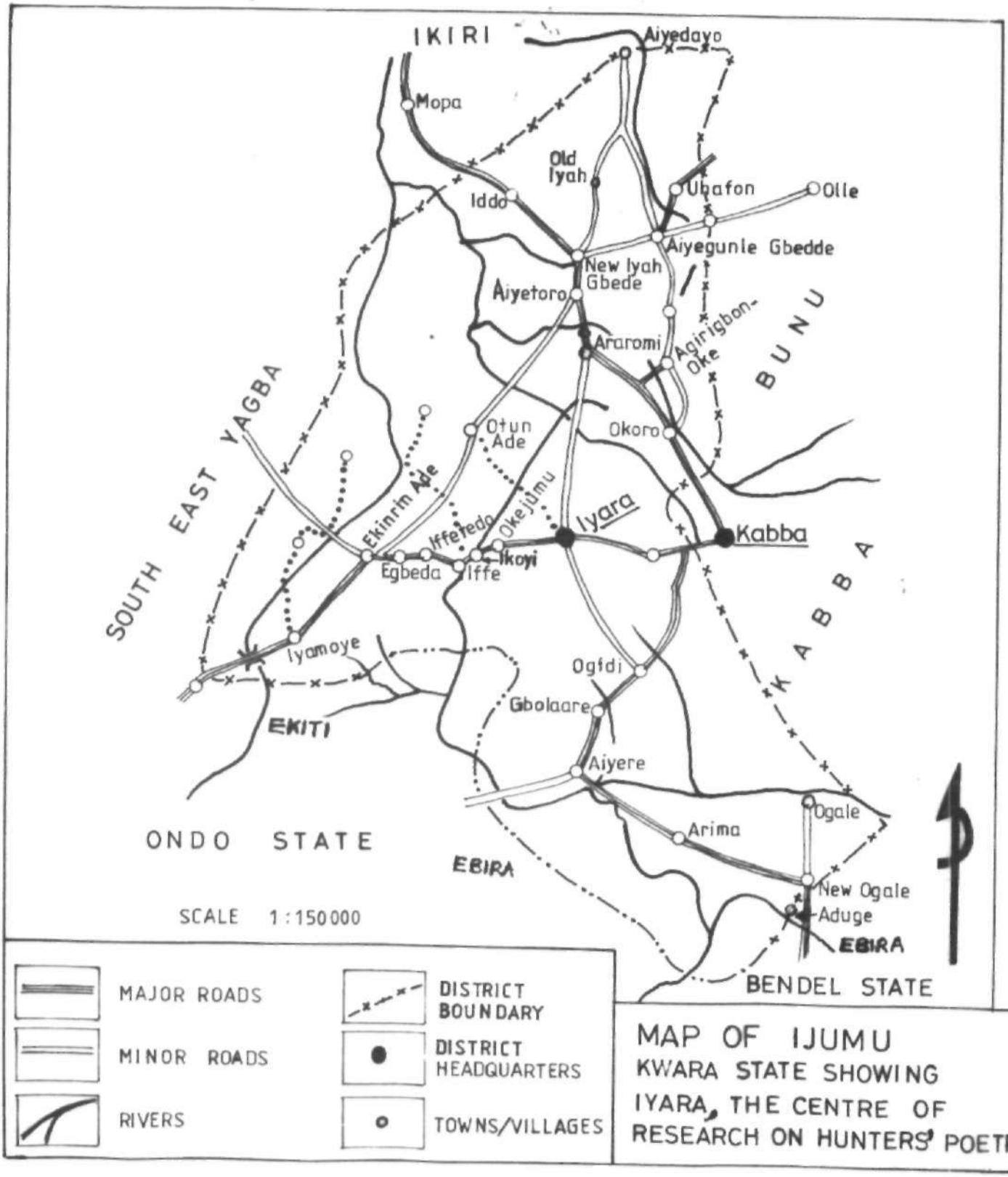
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ABSTRACT

Until now, the oral art of Iyara-Ijumu people in Kwara State has received no serieus academic attention. The present research work is born of the strong need to explore a specific art form - the traditional poetry of Iyara hunters - among the people. The work focuses on the complex and fascinating relations between form and content in the traditional poetry of Iyara hunters. This enables us to appreciate the phonaesthetic and intellectual patterning of the art, along with its functional values in society.

The first chapter provides a sociological framework for some major forms of Iyara oral poetry; this helps to establish some general patterns which are useful for evaluating the performance context of the hunters[1] poetry. Also in this chapter, there is a statement of the research methodology employed. Chapter two reviews some theoretical approaches to the study of oral poetry in order to give us an insight into the state of oral poetry and provide a sound basis for the researcher's own approach. Chapter three is a detailed critical analysis of the form and content of the hunters' poetry. The first part of chapter four examines the issues relating to the education and career of the hunter poet , while the second part of the chapter contains the concluding remarks. In the appendix, the full length of the chants is set down as recorded during the work,



MAP OF IJUMU
KWARA STATE SHOWING
IYARA, THE CENTRE OF
RESEARCH ON HUNTERS' POETRY

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Background

Iyara is the administrative headquarters of Ijumu District in Kwara State. The District itself is bounded on the east and north by Iyagba and Ikiri communities, on the West by Bunu and Kabba (Owe); and on the South by the Ekiti and Ebira (see map of Ijumu, p.viii). By current estimate,* the Iyara people number some 15,000 and are predominantly peasant farmers.

They speak a dialect of Yoruba, share a common heritage of oral tradition with their sister communities in Ijumuland made up of over 30 semi-urban and rural settlements, and maintain some cultural affinities with the rest of Yorubaland in Nigeria.

The exact origin of Iyara seems to be lost in myth. Though the people, like most other Yoruba communities, claim descent from Ile-Ife there is as yet not much historical information to back up this claim.[1]

Ijumu has been described as a mini-state, among several others in the North-East of Yorubaland. Unlike the large Yoruba kingdoms, the mini-state is characterised by an absence of a powerful royal dynasty or a highly centralized government. This feature, notwithstanding, there is ample historical evidence that the machinery of government is sufficiently developed to ensure a peaceful and orderly state.[2]

Like other African societies caught in the web of change, Iyara has witnessed tremendous socio-economic

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*Dar al Hardasal Consultants in the Ministry of Statistics, Ilorin (1974) put the rough population estimate of Iyara in 1985 at 8,900 at the (annual) growth rate of 3.60%, but the estimate is generally considered too low.

and political change for decades. The most obvious of the material changes is, perhaps, the massive drift of the younger generation from the community to urban centres as a result of the numerous attractions of Western industrialization. This trend has been most devastating to the community's rural economy as agriculture is abandoned by able-bodied hands.

Iyara Oral Poetry: A Sociological Overview

Some understanding of Iyara socio-political, economic and religious system is necessary for an appreciation of the people's oral poetry for some major reasons. Firstly, their oral poetry is not only culture-bound, but also an inseparable part of the people's artistic tradition. This artistic tradition consists of poetry, prose narratives and dramatic forms which are all unified by cultural elements, that is, the shared experiences of the people in their day-to-day strive for stability and progress. At political gatherings, weddings or religious festivals, song-poetry is rendered to reflect the importance of the occasions. Thus, one finds that from culture oral poetry draws its content and form.

Also, a sociological study of Iyara oral poetry would show the complex relations between poetry and culture. Oral poetry, for instance, functions as an invaluable vehicle for the transmission of the community's customs, beliefs, and practices. Taboos, mores and other communal lore all find expression in the people's poetry. In this way, poetry embodies values that help to give them a sense

of identity and reinforce their commitment to common social goals and ideals.

Similarly, the continuity of cultural practices usually ensures the preservation and development of poetic forms produced by the culture. Culture itself is perpetuated through diverse forms. It may seem independent of art forms but in reality they depend greatly on each other for proper functioning. In fact, the transmission of culture is often incomplete without a recognition and use of art as an educational tool.

In addition, a review of Iyara oral poetry and its social context helps to establish the general patterns of form and content for the study of any one poetic form in the culture. These patterns relate to composition, performance, transmission and certain stylistic features. For instance, a successful performance of poetry usually involves the collective cooperation of poet and audience even though the poet's individual creativity and talents would largely determine the quality of production. In this regard, composition is mainly a function of the oral poet/performer rather than audience/performer.

The poetry is characterized by complex imagery that touches on the very foundations of the people's life. Much of the poetry takes a definite, identifiable form, particularly when it is set in its musical context, involving singing/chanting, drumming, in addition to the use of musical instruments such as agogo[3], akutu and aje. The performance of Iyara oral poetry is, furthermore, antiphonal, whereby the leading performer and the chorus group are actively involved in the

production of oral art.

The classification of oral poetry in any culture would vary, depending on the criteria that are applied. In the light of growing knowledge of this art, such criteria are constantly being modified, or even changed. Iyara oral poetry can be classified into two major types.[4] Performance modes can be differentiated from feature types. Performance modes, that is patterns or forms of chanting, singing and recitation refer to poetic forms that are immediately recognizable by their contents and musical forms within the culture.

Contents and musical forms enable the audience to differentiate one mode from another. Examples of performance modes include erin ọdẹ (hunters' chants), erin ìyàwọ̀ (wedding songs) and erin isẹ́ (farmers chants). Feature types which include eríkí (praise poetry), egẹdẹ (incantatory poetry) and ọ̀ghẹ (proverbs), on the other hand are forms that recur constantly in the modes. They are the more flexible features which can be identified and analysed as integral parts of performance modes. Moreover, both the performance modes and feature types in the culture are usually unified by religious and other themes, which demonstrates the predominance of certain motifs over traditional art forms. For instance, there is a recurrence of the values of religious devotion, valour, honesty, feminine virtue in marriage songs, chants celebrating local gods/goddesses, and in the traditional poetry of hunters and farmers. In the following sections, only some selected poetic forms and their contexts would be reviewed, viz:- chieftaincy songs, wedding songs,

religious chants, farmers' chants and hunters chants.

A major institution in Iyara that has survived the eroding influences of Westernization is the political set-up . Iyara traditional government is characterized by the absence of a permanent royal dynasty and hence the Eléta[5] and other ranks are achieved rather than ascribed functions. This implied that seniority and claim to offices are realized only when certain traditional demands such as title-taking have been met. Thus, offices cannot be inherited and no family has the monopoly of any office. All the freeborn can aspire to any leadership positions provided they can meet the laid-down traditional demands of the positions being sought. Only slaves or their decendants (ọmọ-odọ) are denied this right.[6]

The position of Eleta is gained on rotationary basis among the four Quarters (Ọnà, Ilupà, Ọtun, Arárọ̀mì) which make up the Iyara community. This device helps to ensure a considerable amount of political stability as unnecessary political wranglings are easily curtailed. The Eleta enjoys the image of the supreme leader of the people, but in reality he can take political decisions only within the confines of traditional laws. He adjucates in serious cases, with the active assistance of his council of Chiefs (Ìjòyè)[7] and imposes fines or other forms of punishment on convicts in accordance with the gravity of their offences.

Male adults are often identified by their status, as either non-title holders (gbàrúfù or géndé) and title holders or chiefs (ijoye). In this case, age consideration does not count, for a middle-aged man will remain a gbarufu for life if he seeks no admission into the Council of Ijoye. He may hold political views but he cannot participate in any political decision; in fact, his political limitation is comparable to that of a young male or female adult who holds no political position at all.

Between the gbarufu and ijoye is the class of Ológun (hunter-warriors) whose leader is known by the title - Akọgun. Though the Ologun were originally non-title holders, they have now come to assume socio-political positions comparable to title holders'. In one respect, they are regarded as leaders and co-ordinators of the gbarufu, particularly when there is an important communal task. At other times, they function as emissaries and perform military duties as demanded by their training and ability.

There are clear distinctions in seniority within the rank of ijoye which has four distinct categories. They are: Igemọ or single title holders; Orótà or holders of two titles; Ìhẹ̀kùn or holders of three titles and Olólù (The Big Four) who hold four or more titles. The Ololu themselves who are also known as mini-ọbas are the heads of their respective Quarters, and from among them the Eleta is crowned, subject to a set of prescribed traditional laws. In general, all Ijoye are distinguished

by their exclusive privileges such as wearing an odi (a brand of red cap) and parading with an irùkẹ̀rẹ̀ (whisk). Hence, the people have read the following lyrical lines from the popular ijoye drum poetry:

Irùkẹ̀rẹ̀ l'ọwọ́ olóyé;
Àrù jẹ̀jẹ̀.

The oloye displays his magnificent whisk;
He commands reverence and awe.[8]

By virtue of their office, the Ijoye are expected to maintain their dignity and reputation. They are also required to work towards order and progress of the community as well as the protection of both their individual and corporate interests. They cannot divulge information or secrets traditionally regarded as confidential or sacred. A breach of their oath of office results in a corresponding punishment of the erring member(s). In addition, definite punitive measures are imposed on overambitious and mischievous members.[9]

A male adult seeking membership of the Council of Ijoye must demonstrate the requisite qualifications - wisdom, good reputation, powerful oratory and the financial means to carry him through the traditional rites and ceremonies. Title-taking (oye jijẹ) itself takes a complex but definite political process, though it has undergone some modifications in line with changing social realities. An ijoye aspirant must first meet the Ikọ̀nkù demands. That is, he is required to first demonstrate, in material terms, that he is qualified by informally declaring his intention to Council members

and presenting them with token gifts. The quantity of these gifts, usually in cash, varies according to the aspirant's means and seniority of members/ranks within the Council.

Having satisfied the Ikọnku demands, the Council can now consult the Ifá Oracle for advice on the selection of a hitch-free fortunate date (Ìdìjọ́) for the Ìrinye, the Irinye is the aspirant's processional parade in which he formally presents himself to the public. Also, on the advice of Ifa, the candidate solemnizes the Ìpàgbọ̀ rites on an appointed date. This is marked by killing of ram for the feasting of the Council of Ijoye and other members of the community.

The candidate can now proceed, on an agreed date, to Ìwòrò the sacred heart of the community to pay due respects to the gods and his forebears. This procession is marked by the typical drum poetry interpreted somewhat homorously as follows:

Leader: Ó d'ójà
L'Ìwòrò-Ọ̀nọ́;
Chorus: Ìdọ̀n a b'ọ̀mú
Pepele!

Leader: We shall meet
To celebrate at Iworo-Ọmọ
Chorus: There is the attraction of the young
maiden with pointed breasts!

After the solemnization of the relevant rites, the emergent oloye is deemed to have re-united with his people through certain symbolic gestures of brotherhood. He proceeds home amidst pomp and festivities. Various musical groups, in particular, emerge from all corners to escort him back home. The celebrants lavish cash

gifts and rewards on these performers. The olóyé is continually reminded of his newly acquired status as in the following:

F'ìrù lé'wọ́
F'irù l é'wọ́
Kí o m'áwù rẹ wù,
Ọmọ Aún f'irù lé'wọ́
Kí o m'órí gb'odi ò
Leader: Orí àgbà yọn'yè
Chorus: Oríì rẹ́ yon'yè

Display your whisk
Display your whisk,
And put on your attire
Display your whisk, Ọmọ Aún[10]
Put on your deserved odi
Leader: The elder's orí[11] deserves a title
Chorus: Your Orí deserves the title.

Food and drinks are served lavishly to entertain visitors and well-wishers. The celebrants are urged to greater heights and create a name for the family as revealed thus:

Òni káà m'ọ́ni
Ghó s'oyè;
Mò j'ẹrọn j'ẹrọn,
Mò j'ẹja j'ẹja
Òni káà,
M'elébí yéye

Today do we know him
Who takes a title;
I am overfed with meat,
I am overfed with fish
Today do we know him,
Who prides himself upon mammoth kith and kin.

The celebrants are filled with a deep sense of appreciation and songs of gratitude may be rendered immediately after ritual fulfilment, which ends the religious part of the ceremonies. Some of the songs are rendered by the drum:

Leader: Àríbàdi d'ópẹ́
Chorus: Eyẹ ẹkà;
È bámi d'ópẹ́.

Leader: The dove shows appreciation
Chorus: For being fed with the guinea-corn;
Do join me to give thanks.

The ceremonies are rounded off (ìtòjọ) by calling and feasting an assembly of Ijoye usually on the day following the Ìwòrò ceremony. Thereafter, the status of the new oloye is in no doubt. At Ìghárá[12] and Nkó assemblies, he can now join his colleagues at the Elcta or mini-ọba's palace or both to discuss important communal matters arising and take resolutions on them.

Unlike the political set-up, the Iyara traditional marriage institution (Ìgbèyawò) is faced with a serious threat of extinction by Western and Eastern forms of marriage. Its future is all the more bleak because it has little significance for the younger generation who should serve to maintain its continuity. Even among those who have never been through formal Western/Eastern education in the community, this form of marriage is gradually losing its value.

But when traditional marriage is effected with the necessary pomp, its values are clearly brought out. The occasion is a festival of joy in which the beauty, strength and glory of the land are celebrated. It is also a means of demonstrating a sense of commitment to communal welfare and progress. The extended family (ebí) and relevant age-groups (egbé) strive to meet their traditional obligations. Songs, marital exhortations and performance of marriage rites are the major

cultural and religious features of this form of marriage.

As in other traditional African societies, marriage is a familial rather than a personal affair. Before a young male adult ever sets his eyes on a suitable life-partner, his parents may have found him one. If there are no dissenting views about such a choice, preliminary marriage arrangements may commence, after Ifa has upheld the wisdom of the choice. The suitor's family now appoints a middleman (or, in some cases, more in number) to seek the girl's hand in marriage through her parents who not only make relevant investigations but also seek Ifa's advice. If the marriage request succeeds, certain traditional rites, which have marked stages, are actualized. Usually, the parents and extended family of the fiancee are feasted with palm-wine and kolanut among other things (dídá ẹmu). Changes are continually affecting the mode of these fulfilments, so that it is now possible to waive them for cash substitutes. For instance, the traditional arrangement of joint labour (oko ọ̀ghẹ̀) by the suitor's age-group on the farmlands of his prospective father-in-law can be paid off with cash. Having fulfilled all relevant demands, a date mutually agreeable to both parties, may be fixed for the marriage.

A few days to the consummation of marriage, all arrangements for the on-coming festivities are finalized. During this period, the fiancée's age-group organizes a number of humanitarian activities as a mark of respect for their member and to help the extended families of the couple-to-be. These activities include

fetching of firewood, doing laundry work or drawing of water. As members of this age-group arrive from their various assignments, songs are rendered to receive them as follows:

Leader: Émọ Kérùbọ̀ oko
Chorus: Óyá o, óyá o
Èrùbọ̀ kóko!

Leader: Émọ kérùbọ̀ omi
Chorus: Ó yá o óyá o
Èrùbọ̀ kokò!

Leader: You are welcome from the field
Chorus: It is a trip well made
You are welcome, indeed!

Leader: You are welcome from the stream
Chorus: It is a trip well made
You are welcome, indeed![13]

Wedding songs are a popular feature in traditional marriages. They consist of very short lyrical sections delivered by various categories of female performers. The soloist sings the lines which are immediately taken up by chorus group. There is often a definite rhythmical pattern of rendering, reinforced by clapping and rattling of aje to timed beats. A few of the songs carry satirical overtones; they ridicule weak manhood and pose sexually provocative challenges to the menfolk. But generally, these songs express feminine virtue and beauty as well as the greatness of the land:

Àkèré ólómi òjò
Àkèré ólómi òjò
Óbinrin Ghàrà k'ólóri òge
Óbinrin wèwè tọ́n
Á kóse danu
Óbinrin 'Ghàrà k'ólóri oge

The toad is lord of rain-water
The toad is lord of rain-water
The Iyara maiden excels in beauty
See her revel in a bath of beauty
And, alas, discard her cleansing soap
The Iyara maiden excels in beauty.

There is a pervading air of festivity, coupled with a sense of accomplishment among the celebrants as well-wishers are feasted and entertained by a variety of musical performances. The bride is distinguished by occasional traditional adornments and before being led to her groom's residence, she is blessed by Eleja, the goddess of beauty and fertility. To mark this singular occasion, prayerful songs are delivered thus:

Leader: Soyún wo'bo ghálé
Chorus: Omọ yọwuyọwu;
Gbòhún kèkè.

Leader: Come home a pregnant woman
Chorus: Your home will over flow with children;
Get yourself fully decked from a
calabashful of red camwood paste.

After the occasion, the bride becomes a blessed daughter of Eleja and her procession back home assumes great significance:

Leader: W'ọmọ Elẹ́ja,
Me ítòrin;
Refrain: Ítòrin
Wo bà dẹ́ẹ́ soyún kere,,
'Bá d'akódi gbọ́mọ pọ̀nyin.
Íroko iṣomi,
Ílana, ílana.

Leader: See the daughter of Eleja,
As she moves with regal dignity;
Refrain: Indeed, with dignity does she move.
Get pregnant as you step in,
Be a nursing mother as you settle down
God about your chores on the farm, at
the stream,
See her move, and pave way for others.

Iyara operates an agrarian culture that places much premium on farm yields as a source of fortune. To this end, farmers pull their resources towards not only food crops but also valuable cash crops such as cocoa and coffee. Many able hands are required to make such ventures a success. And fortunately, the polygamous system helps to ensure the availability of enough farm hands.

Prior to Western influences, virtually all in the community were farmers. Hunters and blacksmiths, for instance, were primarily farmers. To a large extent, one's personality could be measured by the seriousness attached to this age-old profession. A hunter may, thus make overt references to it in his chants:

Isẹ́ lila ki oko idi òro
Iya k'oko abu pọnnọn;
E mọ mọ dáko h'ọnọn
Àse mẹlẹ,
Tajá t'ẹ́ẹ̀rọn ki buni.
(11.308-312)

To farm the wild mango must entail hardship
And wayside loafing can only yield suffering;
He that farms by the wayside
Should avoid loafing,
A loafer becomes the centre of public ridicule.
(11. 308-312)

Farmlands may have three major categories, namely àkurọ (marshy land), ìpòtò (semi-marshy land) and Ofẹ (grassland). Because of the obvious differences in soil texture, these categories call for varying, even

specialized attentions if they are to have maximum yield. An archetypal farmer thus prides himself on being able to maintain some sizable portions of these three categories of farmlands.

Farming activity takes a variety of forms. Besides individual/familial ventures, social clubs and age-groups (egbẹ́) may decide to enhance their fortunes by embarking on joint labour in turns (àáṣú), the results of which are often as fascinating as they are rewarding. Traditionally, the Eléta and his mini-ọbas enjoy the privilege of seasonal communal labour on their farmlands. In the latter case, the people are provided with an opportunity to show their respect for traditional authority. A suitor may, also, request his age-group to render some services on the farmlands of his prospective father-in-law. Here, chants frequently feature and brotherhood and friendship are solidified through the ensuing social interactions.

In modern times traditional farming has been almost virtually abandoned by the younger generation and the pride derived from it has been diffused. The head of the household can no longer muster able-bodied farmhands - not even his children on holidays - to demonstrate the valour of the preliterate days. Farm yields also seem to be unable to cope with the social and financial commitments that Westernization has set in. Moreover, as this researcher witnessed, small-scale mechanized farming has been introduced to compensate partially for

the loss of farm-hands.

Despite this state of affairs, traditional farming system, with its values, has not gone into complete oblivion. There are still cases where manual work is desirable and these provide an avenue for the performance of oral poetry. For instance, community labour on royal farmlands gives the talented farmer an opportunity to demonstrate his chanting skills. Such an occasion is marked by drumming which is reserved only for the royalty. From the people's experiences, only distinguished farmers are known to be expert chanters. The major functions of their chants are to arouse workers' sense of heroism and strengthen their commitment to labour. In doing this, these chanters appeal both to emotion and reason, though much more to the former. The need for workers to perform their legitimate tasks is often stressed:

Aferẹ́ isẹ́,
Ngbokun ó
Èrò kèìn línú oko ligbijọ́!
Amọ́mọ játọ́
L'árun suru sùrù

...
Mà niwọ láyìn
Nmọ́ sọbutọn?
Já h'ọ́hẹ tèmi,
Mọ́ mọ̀ kò yalayàlà.

To the magic wand of labour,
I give my due greetings
See the usual crowd of diligent workers!
So rapid is your work-pace
That you make others mere panting novices

...
Could I lean on you
And still fear to play the woman?
Spare me your effort awhile,
But do it not with thoughlessness.[14]

Tact and restraint are the chanters' guidelines; they know their workers' soft spots and the stage of labour that is most appropriate for chanting. They are so versed in their art that they cannot but compel such workers to 'submission'. Their chants have a magical effect that soothes, enlivens and propels them to a greater achievement.

Of paramount importance to this review is the relationship of Iyara poetic expression with the people's religious system. From evidence available to this researcher, religious concerns are central to the people's day-to-day existence. This is clear from the various religious expressions that run through their occupational, social and political engagements. Fortunes or misfortunes are attributed to the supernatural, the god of fate (orí) which every individual is endowed with, though it is also believed that progress can be promoted or impeded by one's personal efforts.

A brief consideration of the people's pantheon is important. There is the Supreme Deity known variously as Olorun, Eledumore et cetera who controls the affairs of man through the lesser gods and spirits. Notable among these gods are Ogun, the god of war, iron and heroism; Ifa, the divination oracle and god of wisdom; Songo (Apara) god of thunder and lightning; Ẹlẹ́já, the goddess of beauty and (female) fertility; and yet another Ẹlẹ́já, god of the fields and productivity. They are believed to play distinctly recognizable, nd yet related

parts in the maintenance of peace and social stability among the people.

For his wisdom and vision, Ifa is basic to meaningful human existence. Through him, the feelings of the other gods are revealed, and thus he has to be consulted before one embarks on any major assignment. For instance, before a marriage is contracted, or prior to hunters' expeditions, the wise counsel of Ifa is usually sought. Similarly, the causes of misfortunes may be discovered when the god has been duly consulted.

Ogun commands significant followership among hunters (ọdẹ), farmers (agbẹ), blacksmiths (alagbẹdẹ), and motorists (olimọto/awakọ), in fact, all workers or users of iron implements. The various mythical beliefs surrounding the god portray him as the major guardian god and patron of all these vocational groups. A basic knowledge of the Ogun myth is necessary for the understanding of parts of the hunters' poetry used for this research. They myth has a religious form that is highly valued by devotees of Ogun, and assumes many versions, some of which seem contradictory.

Central to the myth is the claim that Ogun once led some other gods in the pantheon to earth from heaven in very heroic circumstances. On the way to earth, they were confronted by a demoralizing barrier - a thick jungle which Ogun cut through with his uniquely effectively blade to make way for the expedition. It was

in recognition of Ogun's invaluable function that the gods bestowed on him the title 'a chief among gods' - _ọ̀ọ̀ni imọlẹ_ - an epithet that is recurrent in the hunters' poetry (see appendix).

Ogun is an anthropomorphic god like most Yoruba gods. He is, by nature, restless and adventurous and his ceaseless travel took him to Ile-Ifẹ and later to Ire, where he was well received and made King. As explained in Oduyoye's _The Vocabulary of Yoruba Religious Discourse_,[15] Ire is a mythical town on top of a volcanic mountain, symbolically known as a 'Town of Fire'. Ogun is believed to have come down to earth in a fiery flame, hence the tendency to invest him with the fiery and violent qualities of fire.

An opposing version of the myth states that Ire is not Ogun's home, maintaining that he only called there to drink palm-wine. This view is, however not shared by my major informant, Mr. Saliu Olugbemiro, (also referred to as _the poet_ in this research). Despite the symbolic status of Ire, many of his devotees now readily associate Ire-Ekiti in Ondo State with the god.

An extension of the myth, which is probably peculiar to Iyara-Ijumu locality, is Ogun's heroic feat among the _Ọ̀fọ̀sí_ - a powerful female cult in the community, whose symbol is _ajere idẹ_ - brass colander.[16] When members of this cult were faced with difficulty of crossing a huge river in order to reach their destination, Ogun emerged

and solved their problem in a singular effort. As a gesture of appreciation, the cult group offered Ogun some ẹ̀kuru - white bean-cake. Because the hunter is Ogun's human representative, the relationship between the cult and the Hunters' Guild has been most cordial. The cult never fails to acknowledge the valour and supremacy of the Guild as a mark of respect.

Religious festivals such as oro provide an opportunity for the seasonal worship of the gods and spirits of the land. Such a ritual worship is, however, confined to esoteric male followership which serves a link between man and the spirit world. Oro itself is symbolic of the combined strength of the people's spiritual forces. The festival has a material representation and the power derivable from it belongs ultimately to the people - no one sect or individual can claim sole possession of it. Females are generally barred from any public appearance when oro is abroad but all categories of citizens can participate in its feasting.

Though adherence to traditional worship has dwindled significantly, obviously due to the dominant influences of Islam and Christianity; a few traditional devotees survive up to date. There are yet others who have been caught in religious conflict; they have accepted Islam or Christianity but have not yet succeeded in detaching themselves wholly from traditional religious allegiance. This, in itself, is a measure of the profound hold that traditional religion has on the people.

Traditional religion, in general, provides an appropriate means of imparting religious values as they impinge on social and religious balance. These values are brought out through religious poetry which is a regular feature in religious worship and celebration. Thus, such poetry is an inseparable part of the whole religious culture and gives vent to both individual and joint needs as well as feeling of attachment to the supernatural. The essential components of such poetry include: praise in honour of the might and benevolence of the gods and goddesses; allusions to history, divine laws and precepts in relation to the obligations and fortunes of man in society; declamation of the strength and glory of the land and prayers for peace, prosperity and triumph over evil. A typical section in the ritual worship of Ẹlẹ́já, a water goddess runs thus:

Mò mó wà wọ
Ẹlẹ́já o!
Ọmọ olódó idẹ.
Ọmọ gbọ̀gbọ̀ l'Eyò;
Ọmọ ìrọ̀n Olúpẹ́ká
Ọmọ atitò,
H'ilẹ́ ghún o inrin
Fo rẹ̀ s'oyún;
Àfòrifò
Fi ifọ̀
Ói ho-o-o,
Ói hùn-ùn-ùn;
Ói kèkèréè keè.

To you, I give my greetings
The unmistakable Eleja!
The famed possessor of the brass mortar
You are the giver of health from Eyo;[17]
And a noble descendant of Olupeka[18]
From your divine drops,
You richly bless the barren
And make them fruitful.
When you consent,
It is always so.
When you give your word,
It never wavers;
Your voice is sonorous and unchanging
like the cockcrow.

Performance Context of the hunter-poet

Hunting in Iyara is, no doubt, an age-long socio-economic activity. Its origin here, as elsewhere, can probablybe traced to man's basic effort to meet his nutritive demands; hence his need to hunt and obtain game for food. Despite alternative modern means of sustenance, the tradition of hunting has continued to exist. Hunting activities have, however, been seriously curtailed.

As a chanting mode, Iyara hunters' chants interpolate feature types such as praise poetry, incantatory poetry, proverbs, riddles some forms of religious poetry and songs of lament. Similarly, these chants cover an astonishing range of subjects and it is fascinating to note that hunting, which arose originally from economic needs, has developed a poetic expression, encompassing the total world-view of the community. Thus, the chants may include: history, mythology, magic, religion, economics, heroism,solidarity, fortune, morality and general lore and values of the land.

Investigations by this researcher have revealed that Iyara hunters perform at three major occasions viz:- the annual ritual worship of Ogun, routine hunting expeditions and Ipàde or funeral ceremonies of their deceased leaders. As my major informant claims, hunters may also perform at occasions such as chieftaincy ceremonies if invited by celebrants. It would seem generally that Iyara hunters' poetry is mainly performed at three occasions, and hence, its functions are not as

diverse as the Oyo-Yoruba Ijala.[19] For instance, Iyara festive occasions relating to farm work and marriage have specialized poetic forms, erin isẹ́ and erin ìyàwò respectively; hence, hunters rarely perform at such occasions.

Hunters' chants are often tied to their practical field experiences. But the chants may also be distinct from them, as in the ritual worship of Ogun when interested members of the community are entertained on an open stage or from house to house.

Major hunting expeditions may be preceeded by ritual sacrifice to Ogun as a means of appeasing him and invoking good fortunes. Preparatory to expedition, either in the case of ipadẹ or in routine hunting, hunters may seek the aid of the gbarufu or ọ̀dọ̀ age-groups who constitute the most virile members of the community. But these age-groups are not expected to handle guns in the hunting proper. As more hunters join the expedition, their sense of comradeship is heightened:

Ògún On'Ìrè,
Ikon kàjọ se l'ímùlè;
Aii ye e.
Leader: A dì 'were o,
Chorus: B'ódé r'ódẹ,
A dì 'were pọ̀; (ll 424-29)

Ogun is Lord of Ire
And we are one in communion;
Ai ye e;
Leader: Relatives they become,
Chorus: As hunters perceive one another,
They become members of one family;
(ll.424-29)

The expedition sets off in high spirits, emphasizing the worthiness of their trip:

Rora o - o,
E mè ire ba;
Alé lé o,
Ogbèri dèyin,
Ode ire ba.
(ll 490-94)

Take care, I say,
Now do they depart;
For night is falling;
Let the novice step back,
The worthy hunters now depart.
(ll. 490-94)

The hunters' belief in the supernatural determination of their fortunes during hunting expeditions is immense. As a rule, they seek divine advice through any of the divinition processes, before selecting any one zone for their operation. On arrival at the possible operation zones, silence is maintained and some divinatory rituals are effected. Hunters line up their guns across a log that is long enough for that purpose. Ritual articles such as salt, alligator pepper and palm-oil are presented. Then, a four-lobed kolanut, separated into its component parts, is cast and interpreted by a seasoned member who is versed in the art of divination. Thus, the expedition is advised where to embark on its assignment and have fruitful results.

For maximum success, certain hunting strategies are adopted. The expedition breaks into two parts - the hunters or game-killers on the one hand and their assistants who serve as rousers on the other. They form two opposite rows which are considerably distant from each other.

Then the rousers whistle, drum and utilize all possible vocal resources to stir up the beasts and force them towards the hunters who, in turn, shoot at them from their hide-outs on tree branches.

The hazards of game-hunting have become an inevitable part of hunters' experiences. Because of the obvious limitations of physical combat against the wild beasts, hunters have been known to place much premium on magical power[20] as an invaluable element in hunting.

Apart from possible counter-attack from dangerous beasts, it is also believed that human mischief can manifest in form of deadly aggression from such beasts. Hence, hunters spare no efforts arming themselves for both defence and attack. They often claim that medicinal herbs do help to open up their inner vision to perceive the subtle devices of malicious individuals. Such individuals are said to disguise as beasts who are fully ready for an engagement at the slightest sign of attack. Hunters who can assess the situation may, hence, decide to attack or simply to ignore such assailants.

In the event of inevitable clash, transformation or total disappearance of a hunter is possible with magic formulas as the poet reveals in the following lines:

Ẹ̀ora o - ò
Í bá bámi
L'ínú Igbó,
M a d'edú igbó;
Í bá bámi l'aluju,
Mà dọ̀gọ̀ngọ́n igi.
(ll. 40-45)

Gently, I pray
Should I face a hostile force
In the forests;
I immediately metamorphose into the bushgoat;
If challenged in the jungle,
Instantly do I transform into a log.
(11.40-45).

In their expeditions, hunters and their assistants are united in the same fate. In emergency, members of an expedition are assured of immediate attention. For ages, hunters have developed a complex communication system understandable only to their circle or the initiated few. Such communication may be effected by hooting or whistling. This seems to be a common phenomenon elsewhere in Yorubaland as Beier has noted:

> When one has heard hunters communicate with each other across long distances in the forest, one begins to understand the extraordinary carrying power of this (Yoruba) language.[21]

Booty derived from such expeditions is normally shared out by the Asípa, a leading official of the Hunters' Guild. Traditionally, certain parts go to killers of game while other parts are shared out to the hunters' assistants.

As they proceed home, chants are rendered, and a festive mood dominates the procession. The themes of the chants are arbitrary and wide-ranging, but chanters' praises of Ogun and heroic individuals may be dominant:

Ọ̀rọ̀ o, ọ̀nikèjì mi o,
Apa-gbúrú-wọ̀lé-ìjẹ-rẹ-
Ẹ̀ríkọ̀ ghàn p'Ógùn;
Ijọ́ Ógùn bọ́ ghá'yé,
Asọ inó kó mú bo'ra,
Àwù ẹ̀jẹ̀ k'Ogùn wú,
Ìmọ̀riwọ̀ K'asọ rẹ,
(11.461-67)

Take care, my comrade,
The swift-moving one who takes his victim in violence
Is the name we give to Ogun
The day Ogun appeared on earth,
He clothed himself with a fiery flame
And draped himself in blood;
The palm-fronds are his sacred attire.
(ll.461-67).

Apart from joint expeditions, hunting is undertaken singly and in limited groups, depending on personal taste and convenience or other prevailing circumstances.

Ipadẹ occupies a unique place in the hunters' professional career, and it is an exclusive privilege of their deceased leaders. The ceremony consists of three related phases: a hunting expedition to provide material assistance (game) for the family of the deceased; the ritual sacrifices to appease the gods and prepare the dead leader's spirit for an undisturbed transition into the spirit world; the final rites in which the dead leader is 'cut off' from the hunters' fold on earth. This is part of the attempt to fully integrate him into the world beyond.

The procedure for ipadẹ game hunting follows the general pattern of the usual hunting expedition. There are some notable differences, though. All game obtained never prepared, nor shared out in the fields. Rather brought home by appointed carriers who lead the expedition back home. Some distance from home, food and drinks are brought to meet the expedition which consumes them there and then. Thereafter, random gunshots announce their arrival. Also, there is continuous antiphonal chanting thus:

Leader: Ọdẹ́ íródò, íródò
Chorus: Ọmọ ọdẹ́ a t'ẹ̀gùn dé
Leader: Ọdẹ́ íródò
Chorus: Ọmọ ọdẹ́ a t'ẹ̀gùn dé

Leader: Indeed, hunters retire home
Chorus: Hunters are back from tree tops
Leader: Hunters are back home
Chorus: Hunters are back from tree tops[22]

The expedition marches in a single procession and drums and gongs beat solemnly at slow, calculated intervals. Differing remarkably from the melodic attraction of the usual musical performance, the musical accompaniment, in this case, carries an awesome quality which leaves citizens in no doubt about the nature of the arriving expedition. Way is paved by all (no matter how headstrong) for an undisturbed procession of the group right to the celebrants' home.

The bulk of the booty derived from the trip goes to the extended family of the deceased, while token shares are given to members of the expedition.

The ritual requirements for an ìpàdẹ́ ceremony include male dog, a he-goat, a cock, kolanut, palm-oil, salt, pepper and palm-wine. These are offered to the gods, particularly Ogun as an invocation of health and good fortunes on the family of the deceased member. The slaughtering of animals is of central importance to these ritual fulfilments. The slaughtering has to be done in one violent stroke, otherwise the ritual procedure up to this stage will be annulled. A failed attempt indicates that something has gone wrong and the ceremony cannot continue until Ifa has been consulted to find out

the precise cause(s) of failure. Such a failure may have resulted from some mischief or malicious intent among the celebrants or participants. Or in exceptional cases, the slaughterer may have been bewitched! Whatever the situation, appeasement of the gods and cleansing of the people should follow and a seasoned member of the Guild who is also a strong religious devotee prays for all, as in the following lines, after which various festivities and artistic performances may follow:

Ògùn, Alágélúwà
Ó d'ọwọ́ rẹ
Iwọ kó lá'nà irúmọlẹ̀ gbogbo
À mú obi ko'wọ̀
À mú epo ko'wọ̀
À mú atare ko'wọ̀

...

Gbogbo ọmọdé nsó ghọn tilé
Nsó ghọn t'óde
Nmọ́ mù ìpalára ghá
Líbi isẹ́
Líbi gbogbo.

. . .

Ògùn, the guardian god of men
For survival, we depend on your blessings
You are the revered leader of the gods
We offer you kola
We give you palm-oil
And yet alligator pepper

. . .

Guide all children at home
Offer them your protection abroad
Distroy the obstacles before them
At their place of work
And everywhere.[23]

. . .

The concluding phase of the ceremony is the symbolic depositing of the dead hunter's figure in the wild fields at midnight. The rite, which is strictly limited to the Guild, indicates the dead man's <u>total</u> departure from the world of the living. He is no longer considered a disturbed

being and can now be fully integrated into the world beyond.

Apart from the President and Asípa, there are other important officials of the Guild that contribute to the successful staging of musical performances. There is an Organizing Secretary (Adarí Èto) who may also function as the Financial Secretary (Akápò). He supervises the smooth progression of performance and enforces observance of procedural rules or points. If he has any point of order or general comment to make, he signals by blowing his whistle and interrupts performance. He may also keep an account of gifts offered by individuals who are impressed by the quality of performance. Also important is the policeman (Ológà) who checks mischief makers and unruly persons during performance. His efforts help to ensure order and bring deviants to book.

In performance, there is usually a leading chanter (adá erin), who takes the lead; and the chorus group (agberin) that sings the refrains. But allowance is often made for budding chanters to lead other chanters and prove their mettle in turns. The interlude sections allow for the full participation of the audience as they dance, clap and sing. Such a scene, in fact, fuses performers and audience and make their productions richly entertaining. The degree of performers' success can be measured by the nature of response, that is, random commendations and comments as well as the variety of token gifts received. Variation in musical performance

is a notable feature. Sometimes the flautist (Afọn Akutù) enriches performance as he blends his own tunes with the basic melodic pattern of performance. My major informant, for instance, recollects nostalgically how he used to sing the praise of his master, Kolawọle on the flute. It is not uncommon to find hunters' performances taken round the community, that is, from house to house.

Research Methodology

The crux of the present investigation is Iyara hunters' poetry as it may be chanted at three major occasions: during routine hunting expeditions, hunters' funeral ceremonies and the ritual worship of Ògùn. They were collected from Mr. Saliu Olugbemiro, a hunter and motor-driver from Ilupa Quarter in Iyara between July and December 1984. This researcher personally induced the performance, and hence it was unaccompanied by the usual drumming, dancing or communal participation.

However, this inadequacy was, to some extent, compensated for by the active involvement of the performer and the two-man research group. The researcher and his assistant formed a chorus, tapping their feet on the floor to give a desirable rhythmical pattern to the chants. In addition, the chanter took some time to explain the main points of the chants in a post-performance interview. Thus, the art of the chanter and the context of his performance were clarified.

Oral literature research is currently being intensified in various parts of the world. This results from the general view that it contains values which are yet to be tapped by literary researchers, anthropologists and folklorists. In this light, many writers such as Abimbọla[24] agree that the tape recorder is still the literary researcher's best instrument for collecting oral literature, even though it cannot fully capture the intricacies surrounding actual performance.

Thus, this researcher relied heavily on the tape recorder as an invaluable device, despite its obvious drawbacks. The recorded materials were transcribed in their original version - Iyara - Ijumu Dialect - with the hope of retaining much of their essential values. In all the chants were broken into 107 parts of 788 lines, based on the researcher's perception of the patterns of rendering. Each part is considered as a major sense group which corresponds to a short, lyrical composition. Each part is often signalled by a repetitive formula such as 'Rọra o, ọnikọji mi'. A line is marked off by a pause of breath and consists of a secondary sense group as chanted in performance (See Chapter 3).

There are numerous differences between Iyara-Ijumu Dialect and Standard Yoruba,* but the most significant of these exist at the phonetic and lexical levels. In this respect, tonal patterns may vary considerably. For instance, Ọgùn and imọlẹ in Iyara Dialect are the equivalents of Ọgún and imọlẹ in Standard Yoruba respectively. Similarly, there are significant lexical

*Standard Yoruba (SY) itself is a dialect which draws its lexis, structure and phonology mainly from the Ọyọ-Yoruba speaking areas. The present classification of Iyara-Ijumu dialect as a subsystem within Yoruba rather than an independent language is tentative and should await further investigation.

clear by Abimbọla when he states that

> the best approach, then, would be to make translation in the target language as literal as possible so as to transfuse part of the cultural content, imagery and other literary characteristics of the material into the target language.[26]

Examples of attempts at achieving near-literal translations are: 'Ọ nó p'ọdẹ Olíjinwínin' and 'Orun nọ́ ímẹ̀ re ibi àgbè wọ́' which are rendered as 'He that calls the hunter Olíjinwínin' and 'The sun is retiring home' in place of the more straightforward and conventional English expressions - 'He that slights/insults a hunter' and 'The sun is setting' respectively.

Where there are no reasonable English equivalents or English equivalents are not known, the relevant lexical items are retained and explained by notes accompanying translations in the appendix or elsewhere in the study. Examples of items retained include Òrunmìlà, ikerè, ọ̀gbà and àwòdì. In many instances, therefore, notes serve complementary functions to translations that are considered inadequate. Such notes may relate to myth, history, or cultural belief and practice. The translation - 'The famed possessors of the brass colander/Who give the white bean-cake/By the riverside' makes little sense without an accompanying note on the myth surrounding the Òfòsí cult.

It has not been possible in a number of cases to give near-literal translations because of the danger of concealing or losing the essential ingredients of the original version. This problem is understood in the light of the wide cultural disparity between Iyara Dialect

and English. Abimbọla cautions researchers on translation from the original version into the target language:

> If translation, however, is too literal, it no longer makes sense in the target language and therefore loses the effect it is designed to produce.[27]

It must be stated here that translation work in this research, as in previous research efforts in this direction, is not altogether satisfactory. But given the sociolinguistic constraints of the second language user, the translations (see appendix) should be regarded as a fair attempt. They illustrate a genuine effort to express the essential elements of Iyara hunters' poetry.

A sociological framework has been used to analyse and appraise the poetry in this research. This is based on the premise that a work of art must be grounded in a specific cultural environment. To appreciate art, therefore, its essential cultural elements need to be considered. That explains why Iyara hunters' poetry, in particular, is examined within the people's historical, moral and religious and other values.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. P . C. Lloyd, 'Political and Social structure', Sources of Yoruba History (Oxford, 1973) pp.208-9.

2. A. Ọbayemi, 'The Yoruba and Edo-Speaking peoples and their neighbours before 1600' in History of West Africa Vol. 1 (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1976) p. 202.

3. Agogo is a musical gong and ajé is a musical instrument made from a small-sized gourd and covered by a net-like material, to which small spherical nuts are attached. Agogo and ajé can be beaten and rattled to timed beats respectively. Akutù on the other hand is a horn flute with which the flautist can sing his tunes.

4. This classification approximates that of O. Ọlatunji in 'Classification of Yoruba Oral Poetry' in Yoruba language and Literature, ed by A, Afọlayan (Ife & Ibadan: UPL & UIP, Press, 1982) pp.58-64. Since not all poetic forms can be identified by the way they are performed, the criteria of identifying and classifying forms by their mode of performance and certain characteristics within their internal structures become very useful. The new classification represents a development over earlier classifications by A. Babalọla in the Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala, (London: OUP, 1966) p. 23 and Wande Abimbọla in 'Oral Poetry' Introduction to Nigerian Literature ed. by B. King. In both works, the basis of classification is the 'group of people to which the reciter belongs and the technique of recitation he employs' rather than the contents or structure. By the new classification, ample allowance is made for the recognition of local variations in performance modes/feature types.

5. Eléta is the title for the Ọba of Iyara-Ijumu.

6. Some democratic principles are upheld in Iyara-Ijumu as regards title-taking and kingship affairs. Every freeborn, for instance, can aspire to any leadership position, including Ọbaship, if he has the means, strength of character and reputation. Despite this condition, slaves or their descendants, ọmọ odo, are denied certain rights and privileges. There is a bar to their rise. For instance they cannot take more than one title in any event.

7. The term ìjòyè usually refers collectively to titled men (chiefs) while olóyé applies to individual title holders, particularly the emergent ones. Oye jijẹ is the act or process of taking a title.

8. This and subsequent sections relating to Iyara political processes were chanted by Madam Tiyesori Salau and recorded in May, 1985.

9. Such overambitious and mischev ous members may be deprived of their right to acquire more titles or have any effective say in the deliberations of the Council of Ìjòyè.

10. The eríkí of the incumbent Olujumu, Ọba David Ọlọrunmaye.

11. The god of fate. Every individual is believed to possess his own orí, as the determiner of one's fate and fortune on earth.

12. Ighàrà in this sense, is the assembly of all chiefs in the community while Ìkó is confined to the meetings of chiefs separately held by any of the four Quarters.

13. This, and subsequent sections relating to traditional marriage in Iyara were chanted by Madam Sala Funmilayo and her musical group and recorded in December, 1984 at Iyara.

14 These lines were chanted by Mr. Rowland Dada and recorded in July, 1984 at Iyara.

15. See M. Oduyoye in The Vocabulary of Yoruba Religious Discourse (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1972) pp.73-4.

16. The colander is a perforated pot, artistically decorated. Its existence and function are embedded in myth but it has remained the symbol of the spiritual power of the Òfòsi.

17. Refers to Ẹlẹja's spiritual home. The poem was recited by Ọmọẹkẹlẹ Ibiọla and recorded in July, 1984 at Iyara.

18. A noble mythical/religious figure with whom Ẹlẹja shares her virtuous qualities.

19. A Babalọla, the Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala, (London: OUP., 1966) Refer to the various chapters for the wide-ranging socio-economic and political concerns of Ijala.

20. The efficacy or otherwise of magic in human affairs in a debatable subject. In my analysis of Iyara hunters' poetry, I have only expressed hunters' own impressions about magic, rather than allow my own viewpoints to influence this controversial subject.

21. U. Beier (ed), in Yoruba Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) p.12.

22. Chanted by Mr. Saliu Olugbemiro in April, 1985 at Iyara.

23. Recited by Pa Ọnimọla in July, 1984 at Iyara.

24. W. Abimbọla, 'Notes on the collection, Transcription, Translation and Analysis of Yoruba Oral Literature' in Yoruba Language and Literature (Ibadan & Ife: UPL and University of Ife Press, 1982) p.75.

25. Abimbọla, pp. 76-7

26. Abimbọla, p. 77

27. Abimbọla, p. 77

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW:
THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF ORAL POETRY

In various parts of the world, there is a growing interest in oral poetry (and oral literature in general) as a distinctly recognizable form of art. Some modern scholars of anthropology and literature have, in the recent past, geared their efforts towards the discovery of the values of oral poetry, rather than work on the biases of earlier scholars in this area. Particularly refreshing are Ruth Finnegan's[1] efforts in her Oral Poetry and Oral Literature in Africa. Many seminars and symposia have also been organized with a view to exploring the essential worth of oral literature, resulting in a proliferation of stimulating materials on the genre. Such materials have, in turn, produced publications such as Folklore Genres edited by Dan BenAmos[2] and, more relevant to Nigerian needs, Oral Poetry in Nigeria edited by Abalogu and others.[3]

Oral poetry has suffered from a serious crisis of identity. It was, for long, dismissed by early European scholars[4], missionaries and explorers, as artless, simple, primitive and hence, unworthy of serious study. The biases and ignorance of these scholars were further reflected when oral art was equated with oral tradition, folklore and popular culture.

But we now know that oral art forms - poetry, prose narratives and dramatic forms - are merely a segment of

'oral tradition' or 'folklore' which, usually refers to the aggregate of a people's lore, beliefs and practices. Oral art derives its living, distinctive quality from oral tradition/folklore. On the other hand, 'popular culture' was used as a loose and derogatory term implying that oral art is simple, backward and communal. Consequently, one finds that the stress on the communal nature of oral art often falsely suppresses personal creative ingenuity as an important quality of the oral artist.

The poetry of pre-literate societies, particularly in Africa and Asia as mentioned by Finnegen in Oral Poetry is

> ... likely to be placed in some special category - like 'oral tradition, or folklore' or perhaps 'popular culture'. This firmly separates it from mainstream literature as something with its own rationale but which, while no doubt splendid in its own terms, need not be taken into account when discussing literature proper.[5]

There is no doubt that such European scholars were not only ignorant of the cultures being assessed, it is also apparent that they had too little material to analyse. Denys Thompson in The Uses of Poetry explodes such erroneous views when he states:

> Many of the explorers, missionaries and anthropologists who have made contact with peoples labelled 'primitive' recorded examples of their poetry and noted the part it played in their lives. There is no reason to suppose that these peoples resemble the earliest human beings more than us, products of Western Civilization; they may be nomads and have few possessions - but over millennia they have developed codes of behaviour, forms of social organization, and languages of complexity and rich expressiveness, none of which can be styled 'primitive'[6]

A substantial amount of oral poetry has now been recorded from various parts of the world and we can thus make a more objective assessment of its values. Indeed, as a result of efforts in this direction, oral poetry has been differentiated from written poetry by its form, method of composition, transmission and performance. For instance, oral poetry is now seen not simply as a precursor of written poetry, but as an art form, with its distinctive characteristics and values, which should co-exist with the written form. This implies that the introduction of print and the eletronic media does not necessarily change the status of the verbal art; rather it serves to enhance its preservation and propagation in an age dominated by written art.

A number of competing theories and practices relating to oral poetry have emerged. These will be reviewed and then followed by a comparative analysis of their strength and weaknesses.

First is the Romantic approach to poetry that emerged in the 18th century Europe, mainly as a reaction against the preceeding classical period. The typical Romantic temper is marked by love of nature, primitive life, simplicity of art, imagination and, ultimately, freedom of expression. Thus, typical Romantic writers such as John Keats and William Wordsworth sought a break with the restrictions and formal orthodoxy of classicism. The Romantic theory emphasizes the spontaneous and simple

qualities of poetry and the poet. These qualities are believed to exist in the earliest forms of poetry and in primitive language and culture - that is, in pre-literate culture. Moreover, as A. E. Powell states in The Romantic Theory of Poetry, romantic poetry is characterized by the 'exaltation of content above form' and the romantic poet usually yearns for 'a form that is merely 'shadowy and suggestive' in sharp contrast to the classical poet who 'cares first for form and scarcely knows what he forms until it emerges in the completed work'.[7]

Closely related to the Romantic approach is the Evolutionary perspective which perceives poetry on the continuum of human evolution, as propounded by the 19th century British Anthropologists such as Edward B. Tylor[8] in The Origins of Culture. Oral poetry (known under the name folklore) was conceived as a permanent art form in a changing human society. It is believed that though forms of oral poetics have remained constant, they are nonetheless bound to lose their values as man's culture and knowledge advance. Historical or evolutionary factors, for example, would reduce a myth to the status of a fairy tale within a specific culture. Dan Ben-Amos highlights the central views of this school of thought when he writes in the introduction to Folklore Genres:

> In fact folklore genres stand in reverse order to the evolutionary phases. As a permanent form a genre continues its existence in a changing society, but while the culture progresses upward its position in society, and in the hierarchy of genres, is downgraded. Folklore forms that were central in the cultures of early evolutionary phases remain identical in form in later stages of progress but began to occupy peripheral positions.[9]

On the other hand, the History-of-Civilization-Approach conceives of oral poetry not as an unchanging element but as an evolving form. Again, as Ben-Amos puts it

> the idea that genres are evolving forms is based on the premise that at the root of each genre there is a distinct field of meaning. Folklore and literary types are historical variations of the respective fields of meaning manifested in human and verbal expressions.[10]

Andre Jolles[11], a German writer, is a leading proponent of this school. His main thesis is that poetry, through the ages, has changed from simple to complex forms. To him folklore forms, nine of which he identifies, are elemental and natural and they have generated more sophisticated forms in the evolution process. Poetic forms, therefore, have the ability to multiply, mutate and transform in accordance with human development.

The Structural-Morphological Approach assumes the universality of folklore genres and the supremacy of their structural - formal features. For instance, genre forms that are identifiable within European/American cultures such as myth, legend, proverbs are said to maintain their forms universally though the theme and style may differ

from one culture to the other. This theory has been clearly expounded by Robert Georges[12] and Alan Dundes in Journal of American Folklore. Scholars of this school believe that the discovery of the distinctive features of oral poetry, for instance, should preceed any analysis of it. The immediate pre-occupation of the structuralist is, hence, to define the genre in terms of its morphological characteristics.

An approach which has generated a lot of controversy among scholars of oral literature for decades is the historical-geographical model. It primarily concerns itself with retracing the life-history of a literary piece using Type and Motif Indexes.[13] Plots, episodes and motifs are identified, classified and labelled in order to facilitate their historical reconstruction and assess their geographical distribution. The greatest exponents of this model are European diffusionists such as Stith Thompson[14] whose work Motif Index of Folk-Literature in six volumes illustrates a typical working of the motif-index. Though this approach is most developed with regard to prose forms, sometimes it applies to verse forms.

In African Folklore and the New World, William Bascom[15] presents and analyses the diffusion of a Yoruba myth (in verse form) to Cuba and Brazil. He shows that though the myth differs, even within each of these regions, they have a common root. Bearing in mind the historical and

geographical experiences of the West Indian Blacks, from whom some versions of the myth have been collected, the writer deduces that the myth could only have originated from the Yoruba of West Africa. He also maintains that the central strands of the myth, despite its diffusion, help to explain and validate various religious beliefs and ritual practices among the Yoruba and their descendants to whom the myth has diffused.

Though sociological and functional approaches to the study of poetry have been part of man's artistic culture for several centuries, they only became formally recognized in Europe from the 19th century. Notable is the publication of the materials such as Leslie Stephen's[16] English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century, stressing the relations between literature and society. Other works were concerned mainly with sociology of literary creation and influence. Having discovered the functions which literature could serve in society, it was seen not merely as a vehicle for expressing cultural values, but also specifically as a political tool. For instance, German literature of the late 18th and early 19th centuries served to prepare the people for the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In this case, literary values and structure mattered very little; literature existed as part of the cultural - political superstructure, and was used to effect changes in society.

Allied to this perspective is the functional approach which maintains that genre forms-myth, legend, folktale,

history et cetera - do not merely exist as constant verbal expressions, but also play an active part in social affairs. In fact, the function of art in relation to social realities is given more prominence than its form. Bronislaw Malinowski[17] in A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays argues that genres are culturally effective forms. Besides their functions as transmitters of culture, they also help to stabilize society through a system of checks and balances and to encourage continuity of social habits which give various peoples all over the world their distinctive qualities.

The Romantic and History-of-Civilization approaches share a common weakness of dismissing oral poetry as simple and primitive without convincing supportive evidence. The Romantic approach, in particular, often wrongly assumes that oral poetry is artless, that is, devoid of artistic merits. It also overgeneralizes about the communal nature of the art.

There is the need to distinguish personal artistic creation from communal performance in order to arrive at a balanced assessment of the nature of oral poetry. The oral poet is an individual creator whose personality and ingenuity determine the nature and quality of his composition and performance. Since he operates within a specific cultural context, his art only becomes meaningful of it reflects his people's values and ideals. Also, due to the close, immediate interaction between poet and audience,

performance becomes not only a personal but also a collective affair that is, involving active participation (singing, clapping, dancing) by the poet and audience alike. Thus the performance context allows for a communal union which is desirable for successful production. Depending on the personal qualities of the poet, the degree of personal creativity and group involvement would vary.

Modern pioneer studies carried out by, especially, Finnegan[18] and particular researches on African oral literature by Kunene[19] in Emperor Shaka the Great and Anthem of the Decades; Abimbola[20] in An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus and Babalola[21] in The Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala among others show that African oral art is not only complex but also stimulating and artistically valuable. Moreover, the fact that the art is deeply rooted in its cultural context implies that the analyst needs to be well versed in the language and culture. The findings resulting from the above researches confirm that the claims of the Romantic and History - of - Civilization schools are mainly simplistic generalizations which cannot allow for a fruitful study of oral poetry.

Another major weakness is shown by the obvious bias of European scholars whose value judgements on the nature and worth oral poetry are bound to European culture. For instance, Jolles' recognition of nine genres[22] of oral literature is based on his knowledge of European culture and is not necessarily valid for other cultures. Similarly,

the Evolutionary and Structural - Morphological approaches wrongly assume that genre forms and formal features identified within European culture are universally applicable. Cultures determine genre types and knowledge or lack of knowledge of a language limits the kinds of features an analyst may identify in a work of art. Moreover, the over-emphasis on technical presuppositions by the Structural-Morphological approach tends to inhibit a full and coherent analysis and understanding of art. The approach has little relevance to the study of oral poetry, particularly outside European culture. Dan-Ben-Amos has cast a doubt on the validity of the approach:

> Whether these attributes are universal and common to respective genres in all cultures or whether they are particular and are part of the cultural system of communication is still a controversial point.[23]

Attempts at classifying literary genres in different cultures or even within the same culture may yield different results.[24] On the whole, the Evolutionary and Structural-Morphological approaches have limited interpretative value because they are culture-specific. They fail, in the main, to recognize that oral poetry - like any dynamic art, functions in accordance with socio-cultural changes.

The suggestion by the History-of-Civilization Approach that written poetry is a natural advancement on the oral form indicates a serious error of judgement. It is based on the premise that oral art is, in general, a primitive art form associated only with simple, non-literate cultures. This approach has little place in

modern scholarship because it fails to recognize that the values of oral art are not necessarily tied to written literature, though the study of one can help to throw light on the other, as Finnegan[25] has argued. In fact, oral poetry has evolved its own forms which keep developing as cultural beliefs and practices undergo inevitable changes or modifications. The oral poet, for instance, draws his themes not only from established beliefs and norms, he also infuses current social experiences, which probably account for the unique attraction of his art.

The Historical-Geographical school has set on a serious controversy among Africanists and scholars of anthropology and literature. Crowley in the preface to African Folklore in the New World summarizes the usefulness of the Type and Motif Indexes which are central to the approach:

> In use for most of a century in every major folklore study and archive on earth, these indexes are invaluable bibliographic aids to the comparative study of narrative which cannot be ignored or discarded. However, since their obvious European bias was admitted by their most recent compiler, the late Stith Thompson, and because African collections are only minimally represented, they provide more confusion than enlightement on the patterns of tales across Africa and the New World.[26]

In pursuit of their goals, diffusionists often fail to distinguish clearly one genre from another. In addition they pay little attention to the cultural situations that give birth to verbal art and thus fail to accept that no meaningful study of art can be done without a consideration of prevailing social conditions. Diffusionists hardly

offer notes concerning the social contexts of the materials they gather, Moreover, the failure of the school to find a comprehensive set of indexes to cater for all cultures, despite the highly developed nature of Aarne-Thompson Type and Motif Indexes, has been its most serious drawback. The approach on the whole is useful only to the anthropologist and hardly to the literary researcher or the sociologist of literature.

Sociological and Functional approaches to the study of oral poetry have proved to be more useful than other approaches because they encourage the study of art in context. However, sociological approaches are defective in the view of the literary analyst because they do not give enough emphasis to the exploration of the literary and aesthetic values of art. The ideal situation can, logically, be realized by drawing on a number of approaches such as the Romantic, the Functional and Sociological which are useful to the literary researcher in his endeavour to interpret a work of art. This multidimensional perspective is, thus, considered most useful in evaluating the form and content of Iyara-Ijumu Hunters' poetry.

Also basic to the study of oral poetry are a number of theoretical perspectives on the composition of oral poetry. First is the oral-formulaic theory whose major pioneer exponents include Milman Parry and M. Murko in their studies of the composition techniques of Yugoslav/ Homeric poets. They found that the poets were skilled in improvisation and the use of formulaic epithets.

Their findings were later confirmed through Albert Lord's[28] study of Yugoslav oral poets in The Singer of Tales. From these and subsequent studies of oral artists, some clear principles of composition emerged. Oral poets are known to build up or memorize some literary patterns such as verbal clichés, figures of speech, formulaic epithets and verbal aesthetic devices which enable them to compose easily during performance. Having mastered these techniques, they can manipulate their themes to fit these patterns.

This naturally leads to the often debated role of memorization in oral poetic composition. The view that memorization is the major, or even sole tool of oral performance as held by Magoun[29] in his essay 'Oral-Formulaic character of Anglo-Saxon narrative Poetry' published in Speculum 28 has been attacked by scholars such as Lord through his research findings. It is now known that the oral poet does not merely recall from memory what has been composed. He may have learnt some stock of formulas to facilitate fruitful and fast composition during performance; yet he is, to some extent, a creative artist who fashions his work according to the realities and demands of a particular performance.

The above argument hence implies that oral poetry is a somewhat fluid arrangement in which elements such as episodes, metaphors and other devices can be altered or deleted from one performance to the other. Also, as Finnegan[30] states in Oral Poetry, the poet is central to performance. He composes and develops his art according to the demands of the audience. He is, ultimately, a creative individual -

and the degree of memorization varies from poet to poet or from one region to the other.

The oral poet is both composer and performer. He composes singly or along with co-poets, depending on the specific demands of his art, such as the need to structure thematic concerns within a suitable musical framework. Necessary modifications are constantly being suggested and effected if considered appropriate. But the text is fluid at any stage and when it is being publicly performed, alterations may still be made. The audience are often co-performers who may influence changes or even partly dictate the trend of performance by the nature of their response(s). This is possible when the usual distinction between the poet and audience thins down significantly in active performance.

Specific researches on Nigerian oral poetry by Olajubu[31] and Abdulkadir[32] in Oral Poetry in Nigeria, as well as the present study on Iyara-Ijumu Hunters' Poetry, confirm the validity of the oral-formulaic theory. Writing on the composition and performance of Yoruba oral poetry, Olajubu maintains that a potential oral poet needs to internalize certain techniques which will help him produce spontaneously and meaningfully:

> in case of Yoruba Oral Poetry the artist receives his training informally through performance... He has to learn the style of performance, intrinsic structure, recurrent themes and language peculiar to the particular genre of Yoruba oral poetry of his choice. He also has to learn the devices and techniques of Yoruba (oral) poetic language. These include verbal cliche, formulas, various figures of speech and verbal aesthetic devices.[33]

Similarly, in his essay 'Oral Composition: A Historical Appraisal' Abdulkadir cites the example of the Hausa oral poet Mamman Shata who often relies on a formulaic framework or 'what the brain has patterned'.[34]

Yet, these writers, like Bowra[35] and others, submit that oral poets are creative artists who do much more than reproduce from memory. Due to the flexibility of oral compositions and performances, oral texts are continually changing and different performances may be marked by new creations and, hence, different poems. There is no correct or final version of most oral poems.

Variability of oral poems has been explained in terms other than creativity. A number of writers such as Gerould[36] in The Ballad of Tradition have argued that the 'inconsistencies' or variations that one finds in oral poems result from faulty human memory. In his research findings through the study of Homeric poets, Chadwick[37] finds such variations and contends that the oral poet is vulnerable to the omission of certain elements in his texts. The argument is partly plausible because the oral poet who forgets the storyline of a received composition or a statement of fact is likely to fall back on his own improvisation and alter parts of the text to suit his immediate local needs. While we can accept this as a natural development in verbal composition and delivery, variablity in oral texts must also sometimes be explained in terms of the poet's genuine needs to create and satisfy the varying needs of his audience.

But the composition - in - performance technique does not invalidate composition - prior-to-performance thesis. Certainly there are poets whose compositions can, in a way, be regarded as separate from performance. Andrzejewski and Lewis,[38] who have jointly carried out an elaborate research on the nature of Somali poetry in Somali Poetry: An Introduction, find that Somali oral poet labour for a considerable period in private composing and perfecting their skills before making a public performance. Oral artists could, therefore, have rehearsals during which improvements are effected. My investigations into Iyara-Ijumu poetic culture confirm the relevance of this method of oral composition.

The performance of oral poetry is its major distinctive quality. Unlike written poetry, it allows for a direct and immediate relation between the poet and his audience. The communal nature of the genre enables the audience to respond spontaneously to the delivery by clapping, singing and dancing, as noted in the performance of various forms of Iyara-Ijumu oral poetry. The values of such performances are formidable. Boulton in The Anatomy of Poetry, for instance, states that

> a great many poems gain enormously from performance... To hear a poem read by a skilled, sensitive reader may enormously improve our understanding and appreciation of it. We do well to remember that poetry began as an oral art and is still to some extent oral.[39]

The style of oral poetry is determined not just by the poet's creative talents but also the audience who could influence the contents and patterns of delivery. Due to the special relationship that exists between poet and audience, the poet has to be creatively involved in holding the attention of his audience. Thompson identifies this trend with oral poetry among early Chinese, English poets of the Middle Ages and 'half-civilized' or 'primitive' peoples described in the pioneer studies of Cecil Sharp the Chadwicks, Milman Parry and others:

> In cultures before the invention of print, there was this direct relationship between word and thing... so that when the poet came to compose, his need was to clothe this theme in language that would both hold the attention of the audience and be readily intelligible to it.[40]

Stylistic features of oral poetry differ from one culture to the other though certain key patterns, such as the repetition of ideas, using certain techniques seem to be universal constants. Also, the peculiarity of certain features is tied up with the nature of language that conveys the art form. For instance, as Finnegan[41] and Beier[42] in Oral Poetry and Yoruba Poetry state respectively, tonal patterns rather than rhyme or metrical considerations are strictly central to Yoruba oral poetry. Hence, Finnegan's warning that 'one has to look to cultural rather than purely external criteria' in order to fully evaluate its stylistic trends in multicultural settings.

The function of oral poetry as a transmitter of traditional values is hardly ever in doubt. It is quite

logical that since this art form operates within a cultural context, it inevitably helps to propagate the beliefs and values of the society. As Daiches[43] stresses in Critical Approaches to Literature, poetry serves to instil moral values. Similarly as noted by Ajuwon[44] and this researcher, the Yoruba Hunters' poetry is a moulder of public morality.

It is in these and similar regards that the oral poet has been described as a spokesman for society. He is seen variously as moralist, historian, critic and entertainer. He is able to open up new insights for his audience by keeping in touch with the past and present in order to find a meaningful direction for the future. In other words the influence that the poet in performance exerts on the audience - and the larger society - is considerable.

Indeed, this researcher's findings, from the investigation into Iyara-Ijumu Hunters' poetry, amply support Daiches' view[45] that the oral poet is a creator who draws on his creative talents and the experiences of the larger society, using available resources of the language.

Thompson has argued that the modern industrial age has increased man's control over his environment but repressed his humanity. As a result, he recommends the re-activation of poetry performance as a means of regaining what has been lost. Afterall, oral poetry can help to point out the essential truths about human existence and 'recreate for each age the traditional wisdom of man, to recreate old themes, to retell old tales'.[46]

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Ruth Finnegan in Oral Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) and Oral Literature in Africa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) takes a radical and realistic look at the worth of oral poetry/literature in relation to other established genres. She dismisses earlier views that oral art is unworthy of serious academic study and calls for its reappraisal. See, in particular, Chaps. 1-3 of her Oral Poetry.

2. Dan Ben-Amos(ed) Folklore Genres, (Austin & London: American Folklore Society, 1976). The publication also represents an encouraging trend in the study of oral literature. The editor's introductory analysis (pp ix-xl) is particularly enlightening.

3. In Oral Poetry in Nigeria ed. by Abalogu and others, (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981) there is a wide range of papers on the nature and function of oral poetry in some Nigerian communities.

4. See, for instance, H. M. Chadwick and N.K. Chadwick in The Growth of Literature Vol. III, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1940) pp.501-2 and C. M. Bowra in Heroic Poetry (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1961), pp. 477-8.

5. Finnegan, Oral Poetry, pp 1-2

6. Denys Thompson in The Uses of Poetry, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) p.25.

7. A. E. Powel, The Romantic Theory of Poetry, (New York: Russel & Russel, Inc., 1962) pp. 1 & 8.

8. Edward B. Tylor, The Origins of Culture (New York: Harper, 1958) pp. 89-90.

9. Ben-Amos, p. xxi

10. Ben-Amos, p. xxvii

11. The position of Andre Jolles as a proponent of the History-of-Civilization Approach is reviewed by Ben-Amos, pp. xxvii - xxx.

12. The application of the theory can be found in Charles Scott's 'On Defining the Riddle' in Folklore Genres, pp. 80-1.

13. Type and Motif Indexes are the major working tools of diffusionists. Aarne-Thompson Tale Types and Thompson Motif Numbers are by far the most popular. Motifs refer to characters, objects and incidents that feature repeatedly in traditional literature while Types are whole tales or poems that are diffused over time and regions and whose variants or versions are easily recognizable.

14. His system of classfying oral genres is discussed by Max Luthi in Folklore Genres p. 25 and Finnegan in Oral Poetry pp. 41-2.

15. Sixteen versions of the myth titled 'Oba's Ear: A Yoruba Myth in Cuba and Brazil' were recorded by William Bascom and based on a divination verse. Central to all the versions is the claim that Oba cut off her ear though the circumstances surrounding the incident vary in all the versions and variants of myth. Bascom's exposition of the myth is contained in African Folklore in the New World ed. by D. J. Crowley (Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1977), pp. 3-10.

16. Leslie Stephen; English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century, (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1904) pp. 194-200.

17. His views are stated by Dan Ben-Amos, pp. xxiii-xxv.

18. Finnegan, Oral Poetry and Oral Literature in Africa.

19. M. Kuneme in Emperor Shaka The Great (London: Heinemann, 1979 and Anthem of the Decades (London: Heinemann, 1981).

20. W. Abimbola, An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus, (Ibadan: OUP, 1976).

21. A Babalola, The Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala (London: OUP, 1966).

22. Jolle's classification system is analysed by Dan Ben-Amos, pp. xxviii - xxx.

23. Dan Ben-Amos, p. xxvi

24. The classification of oral genres in a particular cultural context may not be universally applicable since each culture is bound to produce its own peculiar set of genres. Even within a culture different scholars may produce different results. Compare, for instance, the latter case where the classification of Yoruba oral poetry by Abimbola in Introduction to Nigerian Literature ed by B. King (Lagos: Evans Brothers Ltd., 1971) pp. 12-13 differs from that of Olatunji in Yoruba Language and Literature (Ife & Ibadan: VI & UPL, 1982), p.58.

25. Finnegan, Oral Poetry, p.2

26. D. Growley in the preface to African Folklore In the New World, pp. viii-ix.

27. Refer to C. M. Bowra in Heroic Poetry (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1961) pp. 217-18, 232, 235 for a review of the research efforts of both Parry and Murko.

28. Albert Lord, The Singer of Tales, (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1960) pp. 68-98.

29. Magoun's thesis is highlighted in Finnegan's Oral Poetry, p. 67.

30. Finnegan, Oral Poetry, pp. 56-8

31. O. Olajubu in 'Yoruba Oral Poetry: Composition and Performance' Oral Poetry in Nigeria, pp. 77-80.

32. Dandalti Abdulkadir in 'Oral Composition: A Historical Appraisal', Oral Poetry in Nigeria, pp. 19-33

33. Olajubu, p. 79

34. Abdulkadir, p. 19

35. Bowra, pp. 246-48

36. G. H. Gerould in The Ballad of Tradition, (New York: OUP, 1932) pp. 163-88)

37. H. M. Chadwick, The Heroic Age, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), pp. 201-7.

38. Their joint findings are stated in Finnegan's Oral Poetry, p. 74.

39. M. Boulton, The Anatomy of Poetry (London: Routeledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), pp. 15-16.

40. Thompson, p. 85

41. Finnegan, Oral Poetry, p. 96

42. Beier, Yoruba Poetry, pp.11-25

43. D. Daiches, Critical Approaches to Literature (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1956) pp. 52 - 65.

44. B. Ajuwon, 'The Ijala (Yoruba) Poet' in Oral Poetry in Nigeria, pp. 196-207.

45. Daiches, pp. 56 & 58 - 62.

46. Thompson, p. 207.

Chapter 3

ANALYSIS: THE FORM AND CONTENT OF IYARA HUNTERS' POETRY

The relations between form and content have been variously stated by many modern literary writers such as Boulton[1] in her 'Anatomies' such as the Anatomy of Poetry and Richards[2] in Practical Criticism. It is generally contended that 'form' and 'content' are inseparable and a proper fusion of both is desirable in a work of art. A number of views also support the theory that 'form' gives 'content' its meaning or effect. Holman in A Handbook to Literature states that 'form' is used to 'designate the organization of the elements of a work of art in relation to its effect[3]. He then goes on to distinguish between the various types of 'form', such as verse form, stanza form, form of images and form of ideas and to place them in their related context.

Another useful definition, in Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics by Preminger and others, makes it clear that form is the

> actual welding of all parts into a whole the individual organization of a work so that all its constituents however defined - words, thoughts, diction or metre cohere and harmonize.[4]

From these and similar definitions, one can perceive two major critical positions. There is the Conventional or Structuralist - Formalist School which places more emphasis on the external preconceived structure of a work. That is,

the School presupposes certain characteristics of organization or pattern which must be present in the work. There is also the basic assumption that the quality of art is measured largely by the kind of order and harmony that the artist imposes on the content - the raw substance of human experience. Proponents of this School generally hold that form is superior to content.

The Radical School, on the other hand, strongly claims that content - the innate or organic form is really the dynamic and significant aspect of art. The School also contends that there is no need for a preconceived form; form should be allowed to shape and develop as the artist presents the realities of human existence with all its inherent contradictions. This means that content determines whatever form art may take.

In theory, one may distinguish between form and content but they are practically inseparable. Whether the Radicals see them as a fusion of opposites or the Conventionlists see form as superior, it should be accepted that form has far greater significance than is generally believed. That is, form refers not only to the structural and linguistic elements of a work but also to its thematic structure. Thus, if a work of art has internal unity, one form coheres with another.

In the case of oral poetry, its musical form should provide an appropriate background and blend with the general structure and design of the art. Similarly, the rhythmical form, the form of lineation and the pattern of

diction need to bear some relationship with the form of ideas - the message that the artist wishes to send to his audience. Though these relationships may not be easily perceived, they are likely to be ultimately discovered and appreciated if a work of art should be seen as coherent and balanced. Since content refers mainly to the pattern of ideas, it follows that no rigid division should be made between form and content in any purposeful literary analysis.

There is a need to establish the true relationship between musical form and tonal form as they relate to the traditional poetry of Iyara hunters. Tonal form refers to the tonal quality of language, that is, its inherent musical quality. The poetry is expressed in Yoruba, a tonal language which really functions when it is spoken with its proper tone patterns, rather than stress patterns. Despite the fact that its syllables can be indicated by a high (´), mid (¯) or low (`) tone, this musical form cannot be satisfactorily rendered in translation. As Beier has rightly noted 'the music inherent in this language (Yoruba) is something no rendering, however clever, can possibly attempt'.[5]

A tonal language can be placed somewhere between speech and singing; it is the tonal quality which allows it to be set easily to music. In this case, there may be musical accompaniments such as drumming, clapping, beating of agogo, rattling of aje or blowing of the horn flute (akutu).

End-rhyme is generally absent in Iyara hunters' poetry, but where it occurs, it is often irregular and hardly ever a contrived device as it is in conventional poetic forms such as classical European poetry. In parts 1 and 2 of the hunters' poetry, the following irregular end-rhyme patterns can, for instance, be observed:

Part 1		Part 2	
1 Ogun - Ọ	a	10 on'Ire	b
2 laka - aye	b	11 rọja	f
3 imọ.e	c	12 riro	a
4 l'ile	b	13 odo	a
5 we	c	14 mininminin	g
6 -ọrun	d	15 ghi	e
7 akeki	e	16 p'oso-o	a
8 pa	f	17 ibi	e
9 Sọngo	a		

In a different respect, the poetry reflects a great deal of internal phonological cohesion. The hunter-poet certainly manipulates internal vowel and consonant sound segments (in addition to supra-segmental features, prominence and tonality) to infuse a desirable sound quality into his art. In lines 10-17, there is a typical recurrence and fusion of certain sound patterns:

10 Ogun on'Ire

11 Ogun a'mérè r'ọjà,

12 Ahọn-ni-r'oko-ríro;

13 Koríko odo

14 Ghi ru mininminin.

15 Ọba ghì

16 F'osó-o-,

17 Ọkàkà-ghì-kání-ibi

Sound segments, /re/, /ko/, /ro/, /ri/, and /ka/ recur and exist in close, significant relationship with one another (as will be fully discussed later in the chapter). Internal sound harmony is a feature of not just individual lines, but sometimes of several lines combined. Sound devices, in general, function as a complement or reinforcement to whatever meaning that is intended by the sounds in which they occur. This is so because we usually create a more useful and lasting impression of sounds that have reasonable order and beauty of structure.

Iyara hunters' poetry does not lend itself to rhythmical analysis based on non-tonal (for instance, English) versification because a work of art is inseparably tied to both its linguistic and paralinguistic context. The rhythmic patterns of the poetry are determined by the nature of tonal variations - that is, the heightening and lowering of pitch as well as pauses or breaks in the patterns of expression/ideas, often known as caesura. Rhythm units refer to the basic units of expression (often more than a word) rather than to syllabic beats of particular sounds or stresses on certain syllables. According to Babalola,[6] stress or prominence in the (Yoruba) language is not really inherent in particular words, but is a 'function of the rhythm unit'. The argument

presented here is also in line with his thesis that a 'Yoruba rhythm unit is a 'sense-group spoken in one breath'. In general, tonal patterns and patterns of ideas/expression help to define the rhythm units which, in turn, determine lineation or line-ends of Iyara hunters' poetry as - laid out in this research (see appendix).

Below are a few lines to illustrate the point:

1. Kekere Ogun O!
2. Ogun laka-aye,
3 Ọhin imọlẹ;
4 Ọmọ an'epo l'ile,
5 A m'ẹjẹ wẹ.

(ll.1-5)

1. Hearken, Ogun's apprentice - hunter!
2 Ogun's might resounds through all the earth,
3 A chief among gods;[7]
4 He has palm-oil in stock,
5 But prefers to bathe in blood.

(ll. 1-5)

Each of the lines above would be intoned in one breath in actual performance. Thus, there is a noticeable pause, however slight, after each line as set out above. Each line is a rhythm unit conveying an idea that is basically meaningful even though it does not express complete thought. In addition, pitch levels at which the rhythm units are intoned may be significantly or only slightly different from one another. For instance, the unit, 'Kekere Ogun o!' would receive far greater prominence or stress than all the other

lines, possibly because of the significance of the poet's address to the apprentice - hunter. Indeed, the units are internally marked by complex tonal variations that can only be satisfactorily rendered and appreciated through a musicological approach, as already noted by some concerned scholars.[8] Hence, we find that the literary researcher is somewhat handicapped in this important respect.

On the whole, while one may safely assert that Iyara hunters' poetry has a free rhythm because it is not tied to any metrical constraint, there is, nonetheless, a reasonable degree of regularity in its rhythmical patterns. This regularity is perceived not in terms of a fixed or preconceived metrical form but by certain patterns of expression and tone/pitch which dictate rhythm and lineation.

Besides prosodic features such as tone, rhythm and lineation, certain language patterns provide a useful index for an appraisal of the form of the people's hunters' poetry. Though the Iyara hunter-poet hardly ever receives formal training on his art, he nonetheless demonstrates remarkable sensitivity in his use of language. Over the years, he has learnt to develop a complex art form, embedding sound elements such as ideophone, onomatopoeia parallelism and grammar-related devices including antithesis, epithet and nominalization. There are also a host of other (more familiar) devices - metaphor, symbolism et cetera which the poet regularly employs.

In general, the language of the poetry is dignified for its important treatment of the heroic motif. It is also concrete because images are drawn from natural environment, human occupation, religion and other practical engagements which are fundamental to the day-to-day survival of the people.

Ideophone, like onomatopoeia, is a descriptive device of sound which creates pictures and feelings relating to colour, smell, manner and so on, by appealing to the visual, auditory and other senses. But in both structure and suggestiveness, ideophone is a more subtle device than onomatopoeia. The form of an ideophone can enable us to gain a considerable insight into its meaning.[9] An ideophone may be monosyllabic or polysyllabic; suggestive tonal patterning and reduplication of sound are also its major features. Examples of polysyllabic ideophones in Iyara hunters' poetry include:

(a) réerèe (1.38) - unsteady and miserable (picture of the hunter - poet who has failed to live up to expectation in a hunting engagement).

(b) KóngunKòòrun (1.6) - outermost corners (of heaven). This illustrates the pre-eminence of Ogun god in the cosmos.

(c) berẹkẹtẹ (1.77) - brimful. Part of the epithet, declaiming the ability of Iyara (as a heroic figure) to fend for himself.

It would be seen from the above presentation (a) - (c) that ideophones are bound to have significant semantic relationships with their non-ideophonic context. Ideophones also readily lend themselves to phonological analysis since their ability to function properly depends primarily on their phonemic[10] and tonal structures. Both <u>rée-rèe</u> and <u>Kóngun-Kòngun</u> illustrate the reduplication of whole stems, emphasizing the ideas conveyed.

An extended duplication of /<u>e</u>/ is observed in <u>bẹrẹkẹtẹ</u>, with its flatness of vowel sound which collocates with the poet's 'even' or indifferent feeling after having a satisfactory meal.

Parallelism is a useful sound device that has often been extensively exploited in both music and poetry.[11] It is a form of repetition consisting of binary or other structures in which similar or related ideas are illustrated. It is effective in strategic variation of ideas and provides coherence and structure to oral production. Take the following, for instance:

O ję́ gbígbẹ,
E mọ họn wùkọ́;
Bẹ o jẹ tútú,
E họn bì.

(ll. 54-57)

He dares to feast on the mature and elderly,
But does not contract a cough ;
And feasts on the youthful and immature,
Without a trace of vomit.

(ll. 54-57)

In the above lines, the poet presents Ogun's ability to fully provide for himself, even in the most difficult conditions and without any adverse effect on him. Two related ideas are presented (ll. 54-55, 56-57); and they are slightly varied but effectively linked by the motif of the god's might.

Also useful is the device of antithesis - 'a figure of speech characterized by strongly contrasting words, sentences, or ideas'.[12] This device relies on a structural balance for its appropriate effect. Such strong contrasts are expressed in the following ideas and yet they are ultimately logical and coherent when perceived in a wider context:

Mé mọ̀ r'àtàrí ọ̀nọ̀;
...
Wọ̀ ɔ'ọ́kúnrin mẹ́ta.
(ll. 104-8)

I am no better than the footpath's crown;
...
Where I could pass for a monster.
(ll. 104-8)

In the above case, the poet sees himself in two seemingly contradictory images. He seems immaterial (l.104) but this does not detract from his might (l.108) which he would employ when required.

Epithets, the commonest feature of panegyric composition, are noted for their pictorial, connotative values. They may be simple adjective phrases such as 'Oligeregere' (l. 195) - 'The Swift, Vicious killers' or fairly complex ones that run into a few lines:

Àtu òbèjè aláré
Elẹ́hín ọwọ
Ọmọ-arí-tete-gbọ́nnininRírùkèrè l'ọ́wọ́ ọkọ Ọrunmilà
(ll. 109-12)

There is the swift-footed antelope,
Whose legs are broom strands;
The possessor of a tail that shakes off the morning dew -
A wondrous gift from Lord Orunmila.
(ll. 109-12)

Complex epithets are often expressed by means of nominalizations - noun-phrases and other nominalized phrasal/sentence groups which directly stand for the object of description. In the above lines, the poet's fascination for, and praise of, the antelope come out clearly.

In broad terms, Iyara hunters' poetry can be analysed in terms of both organic or innate form and conventional or mechanical form.

Its conventional form refers to relatively fixed structures such as tonal and musical qualities and a variety of formulaic patterns, while its organic form is the more flexible innate part which gives the poetry its original, living form. The formulaic patterns include formulaic epithets/expressions, word-groups, phrasal patterns and stock episodes which the poet has learnt to facilitate rapid composition and performance.

Formulaic epithets are a regular feature. In consonance with Ogun's stature among gods and men, the poet considers it suitable to address him at various stages of performance in glowing epithets. These epithets are merely recollected and wholly or partially repeated at

certain stages of performance, and include:

Ògùn lákà-ayé,
Ọhin imọlẹ;
Ọmọ an'épọ́ lílé,
Á m'éjẹ̀ wẹ̀.
(ll. 2-5)

Ogun might resounds through all the earth,
A chief among gods;
He has palm-oil in stock,
But prefers to bathe in blood.
(ll. 2-5)

This descriptive pattern, which recurs wholly or partially in lines 23 - 27, 185 - 187 and 639 - 641 among others, reflect generally acclaimed facts about Ogun, which the poet wishes to impress on the audience. In addition, certain nominalizations, 'Abilé-Kọ́ngunkọ̀ngun-orun' (His home stretches to the outermost corners of heaven) l.6, 'Ahọn-ni-r'oko-ríro' (And his blessings exceed farm yields) l.12, also recur consistently in performance. Introductory formulaic expressions such as Rọra-o-o' or 'Ogun laka-aye' serve as invaluable tools for the poet during performance. Altogether, these epithets are ready-made descriptive terms which are used to build up the image of Ogun as a powerful and benevolent god.

Within this formulaic framework, a lot of creativity and variability can, and does, still come in. An idea can be modified or substituted for another just as a new expression can be incorporated. Finnegan in Oral Poetry has duly noted that :

> a formulaic style need not mean lack of flexibility in the poet. He can select from the common stock of formulae; and choose slightly different terms that fit his metre (...) and vary the details.[13]

An instance of such variability is the poet's lament over his poor performance in the fields. He uses the same basic structure to convey slightly different ideas at various stages of performance. In the two citatious (a) and (b) below, the ideas vary slightly even though the same syllabic and tonal pattern is maintained in the first four lines of each citation. In addition, one notes that this structure is used by the poet to extend pertinent ideas about his fortunes and fate, viz:-

(a)
1 2 3 4 5 6
Ó / pẹ́ / mọ / j'i/ yọ́n/ mẹ
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Má/ tì / mọ́'/ké/lè bù/bú ;
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
I/kè/lè/mi/ di/ ré/e /rè/ e
1 2 3 4 5
L'á/àr /ín ọ/dẹ.

(11.36-39)

(a) For too long I have tasted no pounded yam,
No longer can I make befitting morsels;
So unsteadly and miserable have my morsels become
In the company of hunters.

(11. 36-39)

(b)
1 2 3 4 5 6
Ó/pẹ́/mọ/j'i/yọ́n/mẹ,
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Má/ti/mọ́'/ké/lè bù/bú;
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
I/Kè/lè/ mi/da/ró/do/rò/do
1 2 3 4 5
Bi/è/hó a/gbọn.
Yíyẹ kì y'ẹyẹlé,
Ríró kì r'ádábà l'ọ̀rún;
Ọ̀pà téré kọn'lẹ
Ó kọ́n'run.

(11. 346-353)

(b) For too long I have tasted no pounded yam,
No longer can I make befitting morsels;
So tiny and miserable have my morsels become
Like an undersized coconut.
Yet the dove is always at peace,
And the pigeon is ever at ease;
So is the Slender stick that reaches earth
And touches heaven.
(ll. 346-353)

Stock episodes or themes may also be deciphered. In this case, the poet illustrates the same idea repeatedly, using different tonal and syllabic structures/expressions. In some refrain sections, the general public is warned to avoid courting the hunter's anger. One who fails to heed the warning is bound to regret his action: This idea is expressed in three different ways (a) - (c) as follows:

(a) Leader: Ọ nó p'ọdẹ Olíjinwinnin
Refrain: Àmú 'Jinwinnin bá ghọn ja,
Ijinwinnin o.
(ll. 47-9)

(a) Leader: He that calls the hunter Olíjinwinmi[14]
Refrain: Shall be attacked by 'Jinwinnin,
Ijinwinnin is the hunter's avenger.
(ll. 47-49)

(b) Leader: Abẹ kòn ìlọ́wọ́ ọdẹ o
Ilọ milọ!
Refrain: É mò si ghọn gbẹ̀ri mò
Ilọ milọ!
(ll. 181-184)

(b) Leader: Behold a certain blade[15] in the hunter's hands,
A wonderful tool indeed!
Refrain The novice dares not play with it -
A wonderful tool indeed!
(ll. 181-184)

(c) Leader: Olí sòkòtò jánpe
Mǫ́rọ̀ s'ọdẹ
Refrain: Wo mǫ́rọ̀ se rà rẹ
Mǫ́ mọ̀ m'ǫ́rọ̀ s'ọdẹ

(ll. 612-615)

(Our worthy Asípa)

(c) Leader: Famous for the hunter's outing shorts;
One who dares hurt the hunter
Refrain: Lives to regret his effrontery,
Never court the hunter's wrath.

(ll. 612-615)

Various parts of the chants are sometimes episodic since there may be no apparent thematic connection of one part to the other. For instance, part 4 deals with the might, splendour and richness of Ogun and has no apparent link with part 5 in which the poet laments an obvious degeneration in his performance during a hunting expedition. Similarly, part six, which immediately follows, throws upon the audience a confident, valiant and challenging hunter who will dare to embark on the most hazardous assignment, involving even magical display.

Perhaps, the sudden shifts of ideas in some parts of the poetry cannot be explained away simply as indications of incoherence or illogicality. It appears to be a deliberate technique. The hunter in performance is often an emotionally pent-up artist, seeking vent for a wide range of conflicting feelings. In consonance with his professional orientation (the hunter is often a violent and challenging character), he seeks to challenge, shock and draw the full attention of his audience by means of

impressive, non-casual language and technique. Hence, the startling change of his position from one whose 'morsels' are 'unsteady and miserable' (1.38) to an exceedingly confident figure who can 'metarmophose into the bushgoat' (1.43) or 'transform into a log' (1.45), if 'challenged in the jungle (1.44) or faced by 'a hostile force/in the forest' (ll. 41-2). Moreover, one finds that the hunter in the act of performance not only draws attention through such ingenious poetic creations, he also captivates his audience by demonstrating an extraordinary gift of physical alertness and dexterity.

On the other hand, certain parts may have clear thematic unity and coherence. These qualities may be achieved by repetition or elaboration. Parts 1 - 4, for instance, show a central connection, being a development of the image of Ogun god. Part 1 sees Ogun in all his might, richness and majesty.

At the same time his violent, awe-inspiring and respectable nature is indicated. For instance, we learn that his 'home stretches to the outermost corners of heaven and quite ironically that 'he thunders his warning/Before he makes a kill' (ll.6 & 7-8), since gunshots which are supposedly his warning signs often indicate that he has already made a kill. In part 2, Ogun is invested with benevolent qualities, for his devotes strongly believe that faithful adherence to his laws can yield immeasurable fortunes. Thus, Ogun not only 'suppresses evil' (l. 17),

but also his 'fortunes surpass market profits' (l.11). Part 3 illustrates the poet's unwavering loyalty to Ogun who commands considerable respect in the cosmos. The poet acknowledges the efficiency of the god when he insists that 'Ogun suffices as my god/I need not serve other gods' (ll. 19-20). Part 4 is a partial repetition of the ideas in part 1. Thus, all these parts are united by theme.

The procedure of poetry performance by Iyara hunters takes a recognizable form. Performance is antiphonal, whereby the leader and chorus group are both involved in performing. The leader usually begins chanting by invoking the image of Ogun. He often resorts to formulaic expressions and epithets and their variant forms. Thereafter, provision is made for a musical section which is marked by drumming, beating of agogo, rattling of ajé or blowing of akutù. As the audience gradually get immersed in performance, they may become involved in the musical interludes by clapping, singing the refrains as in parts 7 and 25, or even dancing along with the hunters, singly or in pairs.

The musical section is broken by the previous, or a new leader as he signals a pause by proclaiming any of the rhetorical devices - 'Rọra o - o' 'A o tito----', 'Ogun laka-aye'. In this way the leader is able to resume chanting. Performance is a kind of dramatic opera in which performers make gestures to one another, engage one another in conversations of a poetic nature, or make suggestive body movements through dancing. Thus, there

is a fusion of action, word and feeling as performance progresses.

Iyara hunters poetry is, primarily, religious poetry. Hunters, as noted elsewhere in Yoruba oral literature[16], do not only predominate among the worshippers of Ogun, they are also some of his strongest devotees. The poetry, thus, celebrates the might and benevolence of the god giving him a tremendous symbolic stature. He is revered not only on earth and in heaven (part 1), but also 'a king/That dares to call a witch a witch to her face' and 'supresses evil' (ll. 15-17). The elaborate exultation of Ogun derives from the belief that real progress can only be achieved through faithful adherence to his laws. Hence the hunters' declamation:

> Ò, Ògùn Ò!
> Ogun tó mi hínhín,
> Lái hin ebo k'ébo;
> Ogun tó mi hinhin,
> Lái hin òrìsà k'órìsà.
>
> (ll. 18-22)

> Oh Ogun, how mighty you are!
> Ogun suffices as my god,
> I need not serve other gods.
> Ogun suffices as my god,
> I need not serve other deities.
>
> (ll.18-22)

The opening line of the chants 'Hearken, Ogun's apprentice-hunter!' is a powerful address to the apprentice-hunter to learn useful facts about their guardian god. Similarly, apostrophic references are made to Ogun, 'Oh, Ogun how mighty you are!', invoking his help and drawing

the attention of the audience to the significance of the poet's invocation. Ogun is lauded as 'a chief among gods' whose 'might resounds through all the earth' (ll 3 & 2). These and other epithets are in recognition of the god's preeminence in the pantheon, and of his vital relations with man on earth, as propounded by myth.

The nominalization 'Abile - Kongun -orun' (l. 6) is ambivalent. On the one hand it refers to the tremendous influence and respect that Ogun commands among other gods. At another level, it suggests the god's home/shrine which is hardly ever ornamental, nor even shapely. The sketchy and irregular nature of his shrine (usually an open hut or shed) does not match his acclaimed status, and it seems to lend more force to the awesome position in which he is placed by his followers. The ideophonic description, 'Kongunkóngun ' emphasizes the the irregularity of the structure and draws the feelings of charm and mystery towards the god.

The motif of valour is central to the chants. Ogun is seen as a most daring being who can take his victim in harsh or difficult circumstances. He does this without the slightest adverse effect on him, as shown in the following parallel images:

Ó je gbígbe,
É mọ̀ họn wùkọ́
Bẹ́ ọ je tútú,
É họn bi

(ll. 54 - 57)

He dares to feast on the mature and elderly,
But does not contract a cough,
And feasts on the youthful and immature,
Without a trace of vomit.

(ll. 54-57)

Ogun's valour has close links with his benevolent qualities. In lines 15-17, Ogun's valour and, ultimately his might enable him to suppress evil and thus protect his followers from harm. The contraction of the expression p'osó is ambiguous. It can be rendered as p'eríkọ osó - call a witch by her name or pa osó - suppress a witch, both of which are suggestive of Ogun's overpowering and benevolent qualities.

Furthermore, the nominalization, 'Okaka - ghi - kani - ibi' (l.17) blends a series of suggestive sounds. Okaka is an ideophone indicating Ogun's resounding ability to combat evil. Ka is the word- base meaning 'overcome' or 'overpower'. The combination of its duplicated form, alliteration /k/ and assonance /i/ and /a/ helps to give strength to the motif of Ogun's might and the uniqueness of his position in the cosmos.

This explains why Ogun's loyal adherents are always eager to seek refuge in his shrine in times of want and in their quest of courage and power. The poet thus pays homage to his master for his vision and wisdom in this respect:

Mò jíbà l'ọ̀wọ́ Kọ́láwọlẹ́,
Ọmọ - aháré - wọ'lé - Ògún -
Tẹ́jẹ́tẹ̀jẹ̀

(ll 152-54)

I give honour to Kọlawọle,[17]
Who urgently sought refuge in Ogun's shrine
In a total blood-bath.

(ll. 152-54)

Ogun is further presented in elemental similes to show that his ways to man are pure and straightforward. The poet urges his companion to accept Ogun's honourable service because the god never fails:

Gbéra lílẹ́ ko dide,
Gh'Ogun o!
Ògùn tótó bí aró
A se gbọgbọgbọ bi ọghà,
Ọ̀kọ́ mi,
Mò j'íbà lẹ́dẹ́ rẹ.

(ll. 406-11)

Rise up to duty,
To Ogun's call!
Ogun is pure as untainted aró[18]
And fit as fresh ọghà,[19]
My worthy Lord,
To you I pledge.

In the above lines, the qualifiers, tótó and gbọgbọgbọ have direct sound connections with aró and ọghà respectively. Apart from the obvious harmony of their internal vowel segments /o/ and /ọ/, both qualifiers function as phonemic units which are tied up with culturally established notions of purity and fitness. It is clear, therefore, that the essential values of the above epithets are realized within a meaningful continuum of sound impressions which are culture-specific.

The poet often explores man's relationship with the forces of the universe, and the conflict of these forces underpins the uneasy state of man. Being at the centre

of conflict, he has to acknowledge the tremendous influences such forces can exert on him, which is the first step towards survival. The poet alludes to the indisputable might of some of these forces who may not be inherently evil, but are capable of tremendous vengeance when hurt. The Òfòsí cult (part 21), the witches and wizards (part 15) and Death (part 55) are known by various mysterious and terrifying epithets. The cult for instance, dares to 'kill with impunity' (l. 59), while the witches/wizards can 'carry a deadly burden' over considerable space and time and yet 'need no relief!' (ll.98-9). In short, their control over man's life on earth, that is, his physical existence is immense. Against this background, the poet's resort to divine help, particularly his invocation to Ogun, can be seen as a most sensible effort.

Related to the above is the usual pledge to the gods, which is an essential part of the hunter's religious obligation, for it shows the vision and wisdom of the supplicant. The importance of this obligation is expressed in a clear aphorism:

Ogun on'Irè,
Mo mó j'ibá o.
Omodé bá ti j'iba
Ẹgbẹ agba,
Í bá d'ọ́ko,
Í mà r'ílẹ́ kọ.
(ll.319-24)

Ogun is Lord of Ire,
My respects are due to him.
If the child pays due homage
To the elders,
And proceeds to the fields,
He shall be blessed with abundant farmlands.
(ll.319-24)

From the Ogun myth, devotees of the god have evolved a basic religious concept: that as long as they are faithful, Ogun will always meet their material needs. The prosperous reign of Ogun in Ire and his invaluable dealings with man are, to them, a living testimony. The god's blessings are bound to belittle the gains derivable from every other human endeavour. The point is graphically expressed, using images drawn from human occupation and nature:

> Ogun - am'éré - r'ọja,,
> Ahọn - ni - r'oko - riro;
> Koriko odọ, ` `
> Ghi ru mininminin.
> (ll. 11-14)

> Ogun's fortunes surpass market profits,
> And his blessings exceed farm yields;
> His fortunes are the fresh foliage by the water
> That blossom into lusty growth.
> (ll. 11-14)

There is a strong belief that a hunter devotee can wade into Ogun's fortunes through a singularly valuable kill of, for instance, an elephant or a duiker. There are acclaimed cases of 'double killers by the swamp' (l. 580) who, with purported magical aid, are able to gun down two victims with a single shot. Such 'master-hunters', according to the poet, can almost always boast of 'meaty' meals in addition to the economic advantages that can be derived from their expeditions (ll.581-82). In an over-stated point, the poet makes reference to his late father who provides a typical case study of one that was richly

blessed by Ogun. The emphasis of this point is achieved by the use of pointed parallel claims:

Baba, mọ́ róntí o,
Ogun họn'wọ́ yéye;
Igba ọmọ kí m'ọ́wọ́ kẹ́ wọ,
Igba ọmọ kí se kẹ́ rẹ́,
Wọ́ tó lọ́ h'ọ́run alákeji.

(11. 525-29)

Oh father, I do remember,
You were richly blessed by Ogun;
Two hundred offspring[20] gave you comfort,
Indeed, two hundred offspring gave you succour,
Before you passed to the world beyond.

(11. 525-29)

Benevolent and satisfying as Ogun is, he can be violent, vicious and vengeful. In this respect, lines 4 - 5 'He has palm-oil in stock/But prefers to bathe in blood' contrast with his life-saving quality in lines 15 - 17, thus providing an appropriate antithetical structure to the image of Ogun. Blood is Ogun's most significant sacrificial symbol. Despite the god's possession of palm-oil which is also one of his symbols sharing the same colour, the ritual shedding of animal blood on Ogun's alter has no substitute.

Ogun's demand for blood is not necessarily so formal as in regular ritual worship of the god. When the hunter, or indeed any user of iron tool, makes a kill, the blood thus shed is indicative of the god's sacrificial fulfilment. It is, for instance, not uncommon in Iyara-Ijumu locality to find hunters' guns smeared with the fresh blood of victims at opportune times as ritual fulfilment. The act is a symbolic identification with

the principles or concepts underlying the existence and function of Ogun. It is a recognition of his essence and ways as they relate, in particular, to man. The fact that blood is the symbol of life and activity also underlines the potent, living attributes of the god.

Even though Ogun is a violent and hot-tempered god, he is believed to be less ruthless than Songo who has the temper of lightning - 'He is Songo's young brother'[21] (l. 9). Ogun attacks his human victims usually liars, thieves, perjurers and other mischief makers, with hardly a warning. There is a sharp verbal irony in lines 7-8 - 'He thunders his warning/Before he makes a kill'. His acclaimed warning is, in fact, no warning at all because his 'thundering warning' is quite often a clear signal that he has already made a kill or effected a punishment. The only wise precaution against Ogun's violent temper is faithful adherence to his laws.

Many sections of Iyara hunters' poetry are concerned with heroism. They celebrate valour and fortitude as shown in hunters during their expeditions. Yet, whatever professional skills demonstrated are attributed not only to personal efforts and talents but also to Ogun's benevolence. The archetypal hunter is, in fact, an embodiment of Ogun's heroism, even his violent propensities. A hunter who is sure of his grounds can, thus, boast of his invincibility, challenging an enemy, or sometimes a comrade, to a test of strength. The hunter's world of

magic fuses with his material professional competence:

> Í bá bámi,
> L'ínú igbó,
> Mà d'edú igbó;
> Í bá bámi l'álùjù,
> Mà dógòngón igi.
> (11.41-45)

> Should I face a hostile force
> In the forest,
> I immediately metamorphose into the bushcat;
> If challenged in the jungle,
> Instantly do I transform into a log.
> (11. 41-45).

Like his guardian god, the hunter can, and does, in fact, fly into a violent rage when slighted. The two symbols of his vengeance are Ijinwinnin, his messy, filthy outfit, and abẹ, a blade or matchet as revealed in the refrain sections, parts 7 and 35 respectively. The reference to ijinwinnin is not only ambiguous, but also indicates the subtle irony that underlines the hunter's temper and shapes his personality. The hunter's working outfit looks messy and wretched and for all its ordinary and unimpressive appearance, it is the very source of his fortune and attacking power. The audience are, therefore, warned not to ridicule the 'wretched' outfit. He that fails to heed the warning will certainly be attacked by 'Jinwinnin' known as the 'hunter's avenger' (11. 48-9). A victim of the avenger's attack can, according to the poet, be literally dehumanized or rendered useless to himself and his society by means of potent magical charms and incantations. Similarly, the hunter's blade is symbolic of his vicious magical power. As emphasized in

the refrain, the blade is a 'magnificent tool' which 'the novice dares not toy with' (ll.271-2)

Despite the hunter's prowess and spiritual endowments, he is shown to be human after all. Thus, the quality of his performance in professional engagements and his resulting mood alternate between prolapse and excellence. In one instance, he laments his inactivity; he is disturbed by the feeling of loss and, consequently, draws relevant parallel images relating the temporary loss of his usual dexterity in the fields to the loss of a most natural art - the art of eating!

Ó pé mò j'iyón mọ,
Má ti mọ'kèlè bùbú;
Ìkèlè mí da ródorodo,
Bí èho àgbọn.

...

Ìkèlè mí di réerèe,
Láàrin ọdẹ.

(ll. 346-350, 38-9)

For too long I have tasted no pounded yam,
No longer can I make befitting morsels -
So tiny and miserable have my morsels become,
Like an undersized coconut.

...

So unsteady and miserable have my morsels become,
In the company of hunters.

(ll. 346-350, 38-9)

The vividness of the associated images and the resultant emotive values cannot but be deeply felt, if the above lines are properly intoned before a receptive audience, that is, versed in the language and culture. The ideophone, ródorodo, impresses on the audience the idea of the coconut's stunted growth - a physical handicap

that is transferred to the poet because he cannot perform creditably in the fields. Similarly, réerèe evokes feelings of misdirection, desertion and neglect which are typical of a child (poet) that has been abandoned and left to wander off aimlessly by some 'mischievous' parent (Ogun or fate?).

The diversification of sound impressions has limitless possibilities for the poet as he further bemoans his lack-lustre performance:

Ó se mí yéyéeyé,
Ó se mí yèyéèyè,
Bo ki mo gb'áṣọ yèyé mi bo'ra
(ll. 247-49)

I feel a drowsy numbness,
I am weighed down by inactivity,
As if I were in my mother's bosom.
(ll. 247-49)

This section illustrates an ideophonic wordplay in which the poet sends across to his audience sound sensations with imaginative reality, the impact of which can be intensely emotive. Yéyéeyé and yèyéèyè in the first two lines have no significant phonemic and semantic differences, despite their tonal contrasts. The poet's mother, yèyé, in the third line is a symbol of femininity and a warm refuge for a loved child (poet). It coheres with his drowsy and helpless feeling as expressed by the ideophones in the first two lines. The range of near-morbid feelings that the poet is living through, hence, greatly dampens his morale, almost to the point of resignation. This explains why, in the subsequent sections of his chants (ll.250-253), he expresses a curious desire to join his

departed mother in the world beyond to free himself from the pangs of shameful failure!

The range of associated impressions can be further analysed. For instance, the poet's link of yèyé (mother) with inactivity and resignation points to the usual sex discrimination in a culture that perceives activity and heroism only in terms of the male figure. Traditionally, a woman is never known to rise beyond her class!

Nonetheless, the poet soon becomes hopeful of regaining his former excellence as evident in the subtle play on words, dá - 'be' and dábì - 'become'.

Àgbà kí mò dá
Má tì dábì,
Ijó nbà dábì,
Mà re'lé ókó mi.
(ll. 692-95)

I have only lived to maturity,
My sap is not yet gone;
When my sap is gone,
I shall retire to my Lord's fold.
(ll. 692-95)

Sometimes, he experiences such an overwhelming power of inspiration and a surge of energy that he cannot help bursting into chants. In the lines below, the Iyara hunter-poet perceives himself as a hero endowed with imposing physical and spiritual qualities. As he sets out on expedition, he declaims his worth, especially his bubbling zest in a lively manner. But he does so in a measured tone by varying pitch levels and emphasizing relevant sound segments in accordance with the reality of action:

Mó mì ré - é,
Mó mì bọ́ - ọ́;
Kí mì sẹ́sẹ̀ j'árun bọ́ ọ́ -
Bí àkọ̀tún ọkọ́ tuntun - un.

(ll. 87-90)

Here I do proceed,
And here I shall return;
I am full of bottled-up zeal
Like a newly forged hoe in its maiden outing.

(ll. 87-90)

In performance, all of these lines would be intoned at a generally high pitch level, which collocates with the poet's high spirits on his departure to, and return from, the fields. Sound segment ends, /re-e/, /bọ́-ọ́/ and /tuntun-un/ in general are heard as being more prominent than their neighbouring sounds, due mainly to their lengthening. In general terms, the poet's expectations are directly brought to bear on composition and performance, so that the whole range of tonal variations, particulaly the more complex ones, can only be hinted at on printed pages.

The success of the hunter in the fields can partly be explained in terms of his chameleonic image. This image is built up through several ingenious devices tested over the years as well as reliance on magical power. The hunter can deliberately reduce his status to that of his prospective victim in order to enhance his chances of ensnaring them. His intensions assume practical significance as he, for instance, lets 'out a shrill in the forest/And sound like/The forest porcupine' (ll.101-103), which puts him at a vantage position to launch his deadly attacks.

In addition, magical craft can enable the hunter to entrap his preys, since it is possible for him to make his presence unnoticed, even among the most dangerous of wild beasts. The poet makes it clear that only the daring hunter would dare to 'share his victim's den unknown' or retire 'with the wild game unseen' (ll.720-21). Such feats as these are usually associated with seasoned hunters and warriors. With a sense of pride, the poet recollects the unique achievements of his late father who would not only crouch 'delicately' but firmly 'on the tree bough' as if 'fastened to it, permanently' (ll.684-5) but also 'build/his charms on banana tree tops (ll.221-22) in preparation for an attack.

A major mark of accomplishment among hunters is engagement in night-hunting, since not all hunters can confidently test their strength in this respect. The night is believed by man to provide a suitable cover for evil and dangerous encounters. At this time, the most ferocious beasts prowl; ghommids, imps and other spirits, disturbed and agitated, search for an outlet to vent their anger on victims. Though the task of the hunter-poet is a hazardous one, he is not scared. In addition, the poet's relentless encouragement of his companion to brave all odds and 'release your powerful shots' (l.278) underpins the vibrant mood of the lines:

Ọra o - o
Ọdẹ agbẹ́'nọ́ h'órí
Dẹ'gbẹ̀ òru,
Leader: A h'igbo roro;
Refrain: Múkò hi
Leader: Igbó roro;
Refrain: Ọmọdẹ múkò hi.

(ll. 274-80)

Softly proceed
The hunter dons his head-lamp,
And hunts at night,
Leader: Yet the forest is bitter;
Refrain: Release your powerful shots -
Leader: The forest is bitter;
Refrain: Let the apprentice-hunter release his wonderful shots.

(ll 274-80)

An extension of this idea is found in the poet's homage to the 'front-rank hunters' in the adjoining Ekitiland (ll.542-48). They are honourable hunters whose valour has been tested in various night-hunting expeditions. Thus, the poet, through an association of facts and feelings, impresses his point upon the audience.

Despite the hunter's spiritual and material protective devices, his task is fraught with danger - more so if his allegiance to Ogun or his general conduct has become questionable. In a sense, Ogun's tool (gun/matchet et cetera) may be the unwary hunter's undoing if it is used for bad intentions, or the hunter breaks any of Ogun's laws. The 'dog' and 'gun' are seen as symbolic representations of Ogun's temperament and vengeance as revealed thus:

Ijó mò ti se kékeré
Mí mẹ̀ ti gbe igi Ogun;
Rọra, onikeji mi o.
Ajá dúdú e mọ
Tó'kun,
E ti m'olúwa rẹ -
Eríkọ Ogun m'ẹrin.

(ll. 724-30)

Since my youth,
I have faithfully carried Ogun's wooden tool;
Take care, therefore, my mate.
The black dog may be faithful.
But when incited, it becomes blind,
And recognizes its owner no more -
That is Ogun's praise name.

(ll. 724-30)

The above lines, again, illustrate the conflicting, and often extreme, tendencies of Ogun in his relations to man. The god can turn round to attack his erring devotee just as an offended dog may attack its oppressor, even if he is its master. Ogun is at once a benevolent and vicious god.

For important reasons, therefore, the hunter is expected to demonstrate significant commitment to his professional goals as well as to the wider social ideals encapsulated in the Guild's code of conduct and divine laws. The loafer and the weakling momentarily caught by the fancy of heroism dare not seek membership of the Guild. The poet draws on the contrasting images of femininity iye and manliness, baba as they impinge on a vital decision. Final decision should come only when an intending hunter has carefully weighed his fortunes and strength in relation to his onerous task ahead. The relevant lines are capable of achieving both emotive and

sensory effects on the audience. Of central concern here is the satirical undertone against the lily-livered:

Ọni bá ni baba,
Nmura a jaa lọ,
Ọni ba n'íye
Npada l'ayin gha;
Torí ijọ́ mirín,
Ijọ́ ire.

(ll. 558-63)

He that leans on his father
Should get ready for our trip,
But he that counts on his mother
May step back;
Because one lives,
To witness better days.

(ll. 558-63)

Notwithstanding the poet's cautionary statement, he rhapsodizes over the invaluable fortunes that await prospective hunters, using images that appeal chiefly to our sense of taste. Thus, he encourages the daring to join the hunters in their expedition which is not only 'seasoned with palm-oil' but also 'flavoured with salt' (ll.555-56). Also, as the poet puts it in some familiar similes, he would willingly offer his 'briefly worded' advice as repeatedly as 'the busy tongue' or 'a working paddle' that is regularly associated with the yam flower paste in the cooking pot (ll.604, 564-66). Admission of prospective members into the Hunters' Guild is based strictly on personal appeal and strength of character; there is no compulsion.

Various sections of the chants emphasize professional distinction as the hunter's watchword. The poet, thus, refers to the distinguished achievements of both his

compeers and forebears (parts 29, 36-38, 64, 74). He singles out his father out for description, relying partly on the effects of ideophone, conceit and the association of feelings that we derive from them:

Baba mi, mo j'iba o -
Ọmọ Olígèrègèré,
Ọmọ adúró gbọingbọin
L'ójú Ogun

(ll. 666-69)

To my father I give respects -
The Swift, Vicious Killer,
Who would remain unshaken
In the heat of war

(ll.666-69)

Altogether, the lines point to the remarkable fortitude of the poet's father. Also, his deadly attacks are comparable to those initiated by Death, witches and wizards since they are all described by a common epithet, Olígèrègèré (ll.95-97, 414-15, 666-67). The ideophonic rendering of hero's posture as gbọingbọin (solid, unmoved) strengthens the image of one who could weather the harsh conditions of human war and game-hunting and emerge unscathed.

There is conceit in the use of Ogun-war (l. 669), which refers, at one level, to human war. This is understandable when we know that, in the past, hunters served as warriors whose function was to ward off external aggression and defend their community from time to time.[22] At a more subtle level, 'war' refers to the hunters' battle against the deadly beasts of the jungle. There is

a more overt suggestion of this point in a panegyric section, extolling the stoicism of the community's heroes, past and present:

> Agba ọdẹ ghọnyi!
> Abotita - gọrọgọrọ,
> Ọmọ ẹlẹfọn
> Ija bamba, ija ghèréké.
> Baba ghẹnighẹ̀ni,
> Ojo-Eriki-Tọla, nghokun.
>
> (ll. 749-54)

> Hear me, you seasoned hunters!
> The owners of stools that radiate a majestic look,
> The famed killers of the buffalo;
> In life and death expeditions.
> There is our firm, but easy-going father,
> We give honour to Ojo-Eriki-Tọla.[23]
>
> (ll. 749-54)

Considering the odds against which hunters in earlier times were working such as the ferocity of the wild beasts and the limitations of the dane gun, it must be accepted that the wild fields were a veritable battle ground for many hunters.

Another major feature of the chants is character portrait which often contains panegyric elements. Heroic figures such as distinguished hunter-warriors, deities, cults and wild beasts come under the poet's direct focus. The image of Ogun, for instance, is variously impressed on the audience. He possesses qualities that are antithetical and which indicate the range of his temper (for instance, parts 1 & 2). He is the mythical Lord of Ire, who has more than enough resources to give him necessary comfort, as indicated by the richness of his sacrifice.

Altogether, the poet recreates various images that give Ogun a place of honour among men and gods.

The poet pays due respects to the Supreme Father in a series of epithets. He is referred to as Elédùmarè (l. 416), and Baba Lílá (ll. 422 & 704) whose 'vision of 'morrow is sharp as today's' (714). He is also the 'Great Araba' who 'shakes the forest to its foundation' (ll.706-7). The ideophones - gbọgbọgbọ (mighty/protective) and Kijikiji (thoroughly effective, even to the very foundation of existence), (ll.705 & 707) underline the overwhelming influence of the Supreme One in the Universe. There is a striking harmony of assonance /ọ/ and /i/ in lines 705 and 707, - 'Ọlọwọ gbọgbọgbọ'.../Araba ghi m'igbo kijikiji' - 'Whose mighty and protective hands .../ The Great Araba that shakes the forest to its foundation', producing patterns that are both pleasing and suggestive. Araba itself yields various connotations.[24] Primary among them is the reference to the Supreme Father whose greatness is likened to the unrivalled supremacy of Araba, the silk-cotton tree in the botanical world.

Iyara, like every other community in the locality, maintains a praise name with which it is commonly identified. The community is captured as a solid, triumphant male figure who dares to brave the hazards of war and emerges victorious, even unscathed. A section of the people's praise poetry runs thus:

Ì-ghà-rà - Ọ́-gọ̀ - M'o - gún,
Ọ-mọ - A-lá-pa-ta,
Ọ - gbé - gẹ̀ - gẹ̀ -
W'ọ - jà.

(ll. 63-66)

Iyara is a most worthy hero,
Who wields the shield,
And carries it with consummate ease
Right into the teeming crowd.

(ll. 63-66)

The importance of these epithets attracts the poet's use of certain special chanting devices during performance. Rhythm is deliberately slowed down and sound segments are given prominence of intonation in consonance with the situation and object of focus - the heroism of the people. In this way, the lines produce an effective rhythmical and tonal sequences that accentuate the heroism of the community. The shield, apata, is a material representation of communal strength of character and it, thus, performs a vital referential function, part of which is rooted in the people's historical experiences.[25]

The nominalization 'Ọ́-gbé-gẹ̀-gẹ̀ - W'ọ-jà' (ll.65-66) and metaphorical description of Iyara as àpàra, the Thunderbolt (l.67) underscore the idea of nobility/valour and inherent indestructibility of a people united in thought and deed. The Thunderbolt (Iyara) can be an agent of violent destruction as revealed in lines 67-68 - 'He is the Thunderbolt that seeks death/But finds none'. That is, he wants to give up his own life but fails and is, therefore compelled to continue living. It is highly ironical that an agent that is capable of destruction,

even in justifiable circumstances, should be imbued with a living quality against his wishes!

In another section, Iyara is perceived as proud, daring and self-sufficient. He not only 'rejects his meal in virtuous protest' (l. 75), but is fully capable of fending for himself as evident from the subsequent lines which reveal that 'he emerges, brimful/When night is falling' (ll. 77 & 76). And though it seems foolhardy for Iyara to 'tread the wild paths' (l.79) when they can be cleared and made more passable, the action is considered as the very source of his pride and valour. It connotes his ability to stand the test of time in the most appalling conditions. In lines 69-73, Iyara is invested with a ubiquitous status, making his impact felt everywhere; and in lines 80-85, there are repeated echoes of his image as a freeborn who has taken some of the most highly revered titles in the locality. None other than the free-born can boast of having achieved such a feat.[25] Altogether, these epithets affirm the people's solidarity and mutual faith in one another's competence and honour.

They also provide a direct appeal to the audience whose noble, ancestral qualities are being celebrated before them. By implication, the hunter is an embodiment of the community's sense of fortitude and pride. By declaiming the people's prowess and honour, therefore, the hunter shows that he is a proud, legitimate son of the land.

The hunter-beast relationship naturally attracts the poet's attention. The worlds of hunters and beasts have vital links, yet their relationship is an uneasy one, for they are almost virtually on a war path when they meet. The hunter demonstrates his admiration and fancy for the most dexterous and magnificent of the beasts; but when at war, he represses these feelings and spares no effort to silence his victim(s). It is only in fanciful admiration, therefore, that the poet sings the praise of the antelope whose qualities provide a curious but interesting study:

Atu òbèjè alárè,
Elẹ́hín ọwọ;
Ọmọ-arí-tete - gbọ́nninin -
Irúkẹrẹ lọwọ ọkọ Ọrunmila.

(ll. 109-12)

There is the swift-footed antelope,
Whose legs are broom strands;
The possessor of a tail that shakes off the
morning dew -
A wondrous gift from Lord Ọrunmila.

(ll. 109-12).

The antelope's limbs are its most obvious attractions. Its tail looks insignificant; yet it is highly functional serving primarily to 'clean its genitals' (l. 119). Similarly, the animals legs are apparently fragile but they can easily outrun the unwary hunter in the fields. Indeed, the antelope can be most challenging to the hunter in some other respects, particularly for its characteristic boldness. On the whole, it is endowed with attractive

qualities which are strengthened by certain artistic devices. The nominalized expressions; arí-tete - gbónninnin (l.110) and 'abawọ - ghò - to - baálẹ́ - hún (l. 115) clearly reflect the antelope's wonderful endowments. Also the ideophonic descriptions of it - mòdùmòdù (l. 114) and gbọnrọngọndọn (l.116) reinforce its confident, even majestic posture.

The poet's praise of himself,[27] signalled by his customary payment of respects to Ogun, is yet another dimension of the chants and part of it runs as follows:

Emi k'ọmọ Òdukúrukúru,
Òdugbègbè li Nka;
Ọmọ am'ọ́wọ́ fọnnọn,
Àrù bẹ́pipọ.

(ll. 163-66)

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I am the bearer of Òdukúrukúru[28]
And Òdugbègbè from Nka;[29]
My palms serve to fetch live coal and remain unscathed,
While the tree-bark is struck with awe.

(ll.163-66)

The descriptive terms, Odukurukuru and Odugbegbe, in particular, have an onomatopoeic quality. They reflect the poet's valour and a forceful, imposing character, marked by the sonority and heaviness of the sounds. Odu - itself is a highly useful word - base which opens various possibilities of epithetical formations that are peculiar to the praise poetry of the poet's lineage. Lines 165-66 further impress the idea of valour. The 'tree-bark' is personified because it is 'struck with

awe' by the poet's palms which have usurped its traditional function.[30]

The poet's temperament has close resemblance with that of his patron god, for he reacts to situations very swiftly and in accordance with the dictates of the times. Like the maiden who is forced by prevailing circumstances to change partners at a critical stage (ll. 170-1), the poet would not hesitate to make an enemy of a friend or vice-versa if he has justifiable reasons to do so.

In addition, he is an astute, perceptive figure who is never confused by 'two intriguing paths', since he can wisely decide to tread on the better one (ll. 174-75). His day-to-day dealings with others are straightforward and devoid of impropriety. Hence, he enters 'only through the legitimate entrance/And drinks only with ikere'[31] (ll. 172-3).

Comradeship, solidarity, humility and respect are highly valued within the hunters' fold. The poet reveals that hunters are one another's keeper, and when the need arises, they present a united front to protect their interests. The formulaic expression of comradeship 'Rọra, ọnikeji mi' yields various shades of the same meaning - 'Softly, my comrade' 'Gently move on, my mate, et cetera which are all linked by a friendly, cautionary note. A worthy hunter can always count on good companionship as the poet urges his companion:

Rinsó, rinsó o
H'ibi wẹ re;
Ma ba wọ re,
Tarin tarin
K'inọ jo kókó igi.

(ll. 442-46)

Move on, move on with confidence
Towards your avowed target;
I shall be your ready companion,
As the wild fires are eager to consume
The dry wood trunks with rip-roaring mirth.

(ll. 442-46)

The repetition 'move on, move on with confidence' is not only re-assuring but also carries a note of urgency about the proposed trip. The expression 'rip-roaring mirth' underscores the happiness and zeal with which the poet is ready to accompany his mate. The ravaging quality of 'the fires' collocates with the violent propensities of hunters themselves, particularly in their field engagements.

The poet shows that hunters must demonstrate an acute sense of brotherhood.[33] When they meet one another, interpersonal grudges and malice must give way to the feeling of brotherhood; hence 'as hunters perceive one another/They become members of one family (ll.428-29). The relevant refrain contains parallel images of brotherhood with a specific reference to the cat family:

Leader: Àgbaragha rí ragha,
Refrain: Ológìnnì r'ọ́mọ ẹkùn,
Àgbaragha rí ragha.

(ll.538-40)

Leader: We hunters must find companionship in our fold,
Refrain: The cat finds companionship in the leopard,
We hunters must find companionship in our fold.

(ll.538-40)

A hunter wishing to progress must consciously strive to build up a firm and respectable image for himself. He must be humble and accept seniority[33] and experience as the major indicators of one's status. Just as a devotee would give Ogun due honour, so the apprentice-hunter is required to pay due respects to his superiors. The point is lucidly expressed by a familiar aphorism:

Ogun on'Íré
Mo mọ j'iba o
Omọdé bá ti j'iba
L'ẹ́dọ̀ àgbà
I ba ti d'óko
I ma r'ilẹ́ kọ

(ll. 319-24)

Ogun is Lord of Ire,
My respects are due to him.
If the child pays due homage
To the elders,
And ventures into the fields,
He shall be blessed with abundant farmlands.

(ll. 319-24)

The hunter prides himself upon proven abilities and despises the empty boaster or ineffectual challenger. When he challenges, he does so on account of his professional ability and potentials, and must be able to draw a significant support from his compeers and seniors. For instance, a hunter may boast of his tested magical ability to transform himself into lesser elements, as shown by his claims in lines 41-45. The predator-prey image in lines 194-98 shows the folly of empty boasts. As powerful as the hawk (hunter) is, its screech only

'follows a catch', quite unlike its much more vulnerable victims (novices, whose boasts do not reflect their practical abilities. The poet becomes satirical, insisting, but not boasting this time, that:

Ó d'ábộ́ oke,
A to m'ẹvẹ
Ghò bộ́ ọ re.

(ll. 196-98)

Not until the return journey,
Shall we know the bird
That comes to roost, unscathed.

(ll. 196-98)

The novice in hunting is advised to acknowledge his limitations and not to overreach himself, otherwise he may get destroyed. Fame and distinction in the Guild are achieved through proven records and continuing struggle for perfection rather than in one fell swoop, except by an extraordinary stroke of fortune. The advice is illustrated by two parallel injunctions:

Kùlékùlé àdábà,
Nmọ mọ kọlu gógo;
Ewi ghọn ọmọdé ọdẹ
Nmọ mọ kọlu olorí ghọn,
Torí ijộ́ mìrín,
Ijộ́ ire kọ

(ll. 508-13)

Let the dove maintain its peaceful nature,
Let it not fly against palmfrond thorns;
Tell the apprentice - hunter,
Not to engage the master- hunter
Because one lives
To witness better days

(ll. 508-13)

The danger of courting the master-hunter's wrath is comparable to the obvious results of wreckless or wanton sexual provocation and toying with poison! (ll. 514-17).

At various stages of the chants, the values of humility and seniority are emphasized. The crucial principle is that since people are differently endowed, one must duly acknowledge his potentials and limitations which, the poet suggests, is the real beginning of progress. This principle is rendered in figurative terms as follows:

Kokíkogí ke
Gbóún agogo;
Kẹ̀rẹ̀bẹ̀ no ke
Gboun ikeregbè;
Ibi ikeregbè lala to
E mọ n'bún agogo.

(ll. 200-5)

One never mistakes
The ringing sounds of a bell,
Nor does one confuse
The dull boom of the gourd;
Large as the gourd is
It can never sound like a bell.

(ll. 200-5)

In the above lines, appropriate sound pictures are created and reinforced by an overwhelming unity of assonance, /o/ and /ẹ/, and alliteration, /k/, /g/ and /gb/. In addition, our feelings are given stronger impression by the realization of onomatopoeic contrasts between /kokíkogí/, with its dominant plosives /k/ and /g/ and /kẹ̀rẹ̀bẹ̀/, which gives a rather dull effect.

Prayers and incantations are some of the hunters' means of protecting their vital interests and seeking

progress. In lines 416-23, there is a poetic invocation to both Eledumọre and Ogun for sound health and deliverance from Death. Since the poet does not wish to 'face Death' or 'confront Disease' (ll.418-19), he seeks to 'overpower/The workers of evil/Through the Mercy of the Supreme Father' (ll. 420-22).

Sometimes, the invocation to God is more subtle. The example below is, for instance, couched in an aphorism, followed by a riddle:

> Yíyẹ ki y'ẹyẹlé
> Rírọ ki r'àdàbà l'ọ̀rún;
> Ọ̀pá tẹ́rẹ́ kọn'lẹ
> Ó kọ́n'run.
>
> (ll. 350-53)

> Yet the dove is always at peace,
> And the pigeon is ever at ease;
> So is the slender stick that reaches earth
> And touches heaven.
>
> (ll. 350-53)

As Ogun's faithful follower, the poet believes that his lot should be comparable to that of the dove or pigeon, which are traditionally associated with peace and progress. This feeling is further observed through an elemental image: the poet's wish for comfort and success is likened to the natural ease with which the rain (slender stick) falls (reaches the earth).

The power of potent incantation is equally considered by hunters as an efficacious, and often complementary, means of their defence and attack. The poet presents himself as an invicible figure who will remain unhurt in the face of malevolent forces by drawing clear parallel

images from nature. The first two lines are proverbial:

Àgbèré k'ikọ́n gbé,
E mọ rọ j'ókùta;
Se bi ọmọ mọ lọ kaa gbọ́
Aa gb'ọ́mọ mọ bọ;
Eghẹ́ ghi s'ọmọ lọ
No ki s'ọ́mọ bọ ghà lé,
Atẹ gbe k'ẹ́hin t'ọnọ,
Koríko ghọ ni bá ti tẹku
É mẹ ti gbéri mọ lai.

(ll. 588-96)

The ant must be frustrated by its unavoidable slips,
It can never devour the stony mass;
One may restrain the child from an outing,
But one never obstructs his return;
The medicinal herbs that protect the child on departure
Are the same that guide him back home.
When the feet match on a footpath, they always return,
safely;
Once the weeds on the pathway are destroyed,
They never again come to life.

(ll. 588-96)

The efficacy of such incantations is measured not only by their ability to ward off evil but also to disarm enemies in a most subliminal manner. Egbére[34] and the bush fowl are thus used to express the poet's magical intentions:

Bí akún bi akún ki ti Egbére,
Bí ọfọ̀ bi ọfọ̀ ki t'apàro;
Ọni wi mi mọ́ se temi,
T'emi e mọ ni s'ojú rẹ́ -
E mọ ni rọ se nkọ̀n.

(ll. 629-33)

One always meets Egbere in mourning wails,
And the bushfowl in persistent gloom;
He that attempts to block my progress,
Shall not live to see me fail -
He must be disarmed.

(ll. 629-33)

So long as the hunter's ways are clear and his cause is just, he can always rely on Ogun's support to safeguard his interests. Moreover, to the poet, a faithful follower is like an innocent little child whose inadvertent faults are easily pardoned by his parent. He is 'at full liberty/To step on his mother's genitals' (ll. 240-1). Thus, the follower has no doubt that his enemy's boasts will come to nought', because they are loud, meaningless noises' as emphasized in a refrain section (ll. 696-97). In fact, the aggressor of Ogun's 'child' who remains unrepentant stands the risk of directly facing the god's anger as cryptically expressed in the following lines. The 'dog' and 'ram' now become metaphors for expressing the fate of the unrepentant aggressor:

Ajá ghò rí mi gbó,
A d'ajá Ogùn,
Agbò ghò rí mi kọn,
A d'ágbó òrìsà;
Ogun on'Ìrè,
Oko mi.

(ll. 737-42)

The dog that growls[35] at my sight,
Becomes Ogun's sacrificial lamb,
The ram that is restless at my sight
Becomes a sacrificial lamb to the gods;
Ogun is Lord of Ire,
He is my Lord.

(ll. 737-42)

Iyara hunters' dirge is rendered during Ìpadẹ, an occasion for hunters to pay the last respects to their deceased leaders. In consonance with the seriousness of the occasion, the poems in this section consist of short, elegiac parts, mostly marked by definite rhythmical

and tonal patterns that help to convey a solemn, reflective mood. Also, in line with the characteristic wording patterns of lament in the community, the poet 'advises' his deceased father to shun a miserable life thereafter and adapt to the life-style of heavenly beings. In any case, he trusts that his (father's) strength of character will carry him through. The nominalized expressions below - 'Iwọ- Ọmọ - Kẹkẹrẹ - wi' and 'Ọmọ - alati - l'oke - iba' (ll. 386-87), with their suggestive sound effects reinforce the stoicism of the deceased hero. The poet laments:

Mo j'iba Olugbemiro,
Gho r'ọrun alakeji;
Mọ mọ jọkun,
Mọ mọ jẹkolo;
Nghẹn bẹ ti jẹ l'ọrun -
Iwọ nọ nmọ jẹẹ
Iwọ - ọmọ - kẹkẹrẹ - wi,
Ọmọ - alati - l'oke - ib a,
Àtilọ ro.
(ll. 379-87)

I give honour to Olugbemiro,[36]
Who has passed to the world beyond;
Never should you feed on the millipede,
Never should you feed on the earthworm;
Only the offerings of heaven
Should you partake of -
You are a most enduring being,
Whose nobility comes from above,
You are always of the strong breed.
(ll. 379-87)

It is hence with a deep sense of loss and pain that the poet remembers the legendary exploits of not only his forebears (ll. 518-20, 666-69) but also the great figures of the community such as Ọjọ-Eriki-Tọla:

Baba ghẹnighẹ̀nì,
Ọjọ - Ẹrìkì - Tọ̀la, nghokun.
Ọpa - gọ̀gọ̀rọ̀ - l'ọfọ
Amú - kọrọn - lé - gbaógbaó;
Ale Makun jẹjẹ,
S'ọkọ Mọyaki,
Ó k'ápá ghọn.

(ll. 753-59)

There is our firm, but easy-going father,
We give honour to Ọjọ-Ẹrìkì-Tọ̀la.
Who silenced the wart-hog by the swamp,
And whose attacks were steady and vicious;
He is the famous suppressor of Makun
And the master of Mọyaki,
He routed them both.

(ll. 753-59)

Ìpadẹ is also a hunting celebration that admits of both the novice/uninitiated and seasoned hunters. The invitation for all to participate in game-hunting as a befitting honour to the departed in unequivocal; but beneath it lies a satire against the weakling and the unproductive who are perennially dependent on others for survival:

Paun lílá, lílá ghun,
Ọmọdẹ́ a bù,
Ọ̀gbẹ̀rì a bu,
Paun lila ghun.

(ll. 775-78)

Make a big, big kill for him,
So child may feed from excess,
And the novice from surplus,
Make a big kill for him.

(ll. 775-78)

The occasion is a means of re-affirming the solidarity of Guild members. Its appeal is also significant because it draws people from outside the Guild into the

celebration. As the hunters and their sympathizers leave the fields, they chant and their tone reflects a significant degree of urgency:

À gbée re o!
À gbée re o!
Ẹ mu láyin ọgba,
Ẹ se jèjí gbe;
...
Ẹ damú tètè gbe,
Igbẹ yún n'ọra

(ll. 764-67, 770-1)

Now we depart with our kill!
Now we depart with our kill!
Find your game at the backyard,
Join hands in twos and ease your task;
...
Hurry up and carry your game,
Because the fields itch.

(ll. 764-67, 770-1)

The poet urges the celebrants to step on the stage with the hunter's whisk[37] (ll. 779-83). On the whole, there is a pervading air of festivity as the celebrants and their well-wishers become more involved in the dances.

The hunter-poet may not be a moralist, but he often has an acute sense of moral standards and social norms. His religious attachment to divine laws enables him to acknowledge the fruitful possibilities in faithful adherence to moral laws in society. Accordingly, the poet reminds his audience that a lasting solution to one's problems can never be found umtil they (problems) have been faithfully attacked. Folly and indolence are satirized as he expotulates that

A kárí bọ'nú
A tọ̀nya ara oni,
Àrò kà
E mọ pari gbehe.

(ll. 304-7)

Hiding one's problems
Can never alleviate one's sufferings,
A debt is never paid
By making it public gossip.

(ll. 304-7)

The poet restates the familiar maxim that any worthy engagement must entail some difficulty. One should, therefore, never search for an easy way out, for there may be none:

Isẹ́ líla k'oko idi òro,
Iyà k'oko abu pọnnọ̀n;
E mọ mọ dá'ko h'ọnọn
A se mẹ̀lẹ́,
T'ajá t'ẹrọn ki búni.

(ll. 308-12)

To farm the wild mango must entail hardship,
And wayside loafing can only yield suffering;
He that farms by the wayside
Should avoid loafing,
A loafer becomes the centre of public ridicule.

(ll. 308-12)

The above analysis, in general, shows the wide thematic range of Iyara hunters' poetry. It is quite evident that the poetry touches on the people's most important concerns and its performance should, hence, be seen as fulfilling one of the vital social functions of oral art.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. M. Boulton, The Anatomy of Poetry, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953) pp. 1-7.

2. I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1929) pp. 55-6.

3. C.H. Holman, A Handbook to Literature (Indianapolis: the Pdyssey Press, 1936), p. 231.

4. Preminger and others ed., Encyclopaedia of Poetry & Poetics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955) p. 286.

5. U. Beier ed., 'On Translating Yoruba Poetry' in Yoruba Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) p. 11.

6. Beier, pp. 14-15

7. Refers to Ogun's heroic deeds which gave him distinction among the gods. See chapter 1 of the thesis for the Ogun myth.

8. Beier, p. 15 and W. Abimbola in 'Notes on the collection, Transcription, Translation and Analysis of Yoruba Oral Literature Yoruba Language and Literature ed. by A. Afolayan (Ibadan & Ife: U.P.L. & University of Ife Press, 1982) p. 76.

9. Yiwola Awoyale, 'On the Semantic fields of ideophones'. Paper presented at the 4th LAN Conference, University of Benin, Nigeria, July 20-23, 1983.

10. Phoneme in Yoruba derives its real significance at the word level. In English, words can often be broken into their constituent phonemes.

11. Ruth Finnegan, Oral Poetry, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 106.

12. Holman, pp. 35- 36.

13. Ruth Finnegan, p. 62.

14. A pejorative term for hunters in their working outfit. The outfit consists of shorts, sòkòtò and a loose-fitting garment, àlàbọrun. In this outfit, hunters can move fast in the fields, and its numerous pockets serve to carry game and ammunions. As a result, the outfit always maintains a bloody, grimy appearance, ìjìnwìnnìn, hence the term olìjìnwìnnìn, that is, one with a grimy look.

15. This may literally mean the matchet which hunters carry with them during their outings. It symbolizes their spiritual power.

16. A Babalọla, in 'Ijala: The Traditional Poetry of Yoruba Hunters' ed. by U. Beier, Introduction to African Literature (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1967), p. 12. The point is also expressed by my major informant/poet in a post-performance interview in July, 1984.

17. Refers to the poet's master.

18. Local dye of varying colours, which is here, given a quality of profound purity.

19 Branch-like parts of palm-trees which hold the fronds. Locally, they are highly functional, serving as artistic and construction materials. The palm-fronds themselves are part of Ogun's cherished symbols.

20. A deliberate overstatement of human productivity.

21. Sọngo and Ogun share similar fiery qualities, notably violence and hot-temper, but it is believed that Songo is senior. As a material illustration of this seniority, it is claimed that the thunder with which Songo is identified is significantly louder and more forceful than the boom of the gun which is Ogun's symbol.

22. This was made known by the poet

23. One of the poet's illustrious forebears who was once a leader of the Hunters' Guild.

24. It has been pointed out that Araba is the title of the Chief Priest of Ifa in Ile-Ife. The Araba occupies a position of influence and might, which collocates with the greatness of the Supreme Father and the unrivalled supremacy of Araba as the largest African tree.

25. In earlier times, before Nigerian Independence, the urge by powerful states for territorial conquest and expansion was strong. Iyara, like her sister communities in Ijumuland, had powerful enemies such as the Nupe. Despite the continual aggression from these external forces, the community's socio-political system managed to survive. The community's heroism thus lies in her ability to reasonably ward off these aggressors.

26. A clear auggestion that only the free born and not the slave of Iyara dares to boast of being able to take several titles.

27. The praise applies equally to all members of the lineage.

28. The epithets, Odukurukuru and Odugbegbe suggest the poet's valour, strength and splendour.

29. Nka is the nucleus of the poet's original home within the community.

30. Traditionally, tree barks serve to fetch live coal from one hearth to another to make a fire.

31. A handy drinking cup, usually placed on water jars.

32. The Hunters' Guild's code of conduct places much emphasis on brotherhood. A hunter who keeps malice is bound to receive a corresponding punishment from Ogun.

33. In the heirarch of leadership, for instance, a buffalo killer outranks one who has only killed an antelope.

34. A forest creature that wails incessantly and is, therefore, permanently moody.

35. It is taboo for the dog to growl or the ram to become restless at the sight of a hunter. The logical reaction of a hunter so slighted is to literally reduce them sacrificial objects.

36. The poet's deceased father.

37. Hunters and their families are privileged to parade with the whisk only at certain ceremonies such as Ìpadẹ - the funeral ceremonies for their deceased leaders. Otherwise only the ìjòyè enjoy this privilege.

Chapter 4

TRAINING, STATUS AND FUNCTION OF IYARA HUNTER - POET; CONCLUSION

The training of the Iyara hunter-poet can be viewed in the context of his practical field experience or his artistic performance. His training as a hunter provides him with part of the raw materials for artistic expression. But not all hunters are poets and hence, hunting and chanting skills may develop quite separately.

The training of the hunter can be both informal and formal, depending on his personal volition and prevailing social circumstances. As my major informant states, the requirements for training are quite flexible but the would-be hunter has to be physically and mentally fit. No age limit is imposed and one can be apprenticed well before adulthood. In fact, according to the poet, he has, since youth, faithfully lived by Ogun's 'wooden tool' (gun) (11.724 & 25). Hunting is a bold and enterprising venture. It entails the utmost spirit of endurance, moral and physical fortitude and a prospective hunter will do well to consider his fortunes before plunging headlong into it. This point is suggested in parts 75 & 77 of the poet's chants.

Preparatory to being a Guild member, one's association with established hunters is usually considered invaluable. This is the very beginning of informal training, whereby the aspiring hunter learns useful

facts about the tradition of the community through the hunter's viewpoints. The apprentice's knowledge is greatly broadened as he enters and explores the heroic world of hunters. Education at this stage includes almost any vital element in the life of the people - history, morality, religion and others. The trainer may expound their people's historical experiences, particularly the role played by warriors, who were also hunters, in the defence of their territory. The poet for instance, cites the activities of a legendary hero[1] who availed the community of available material and human resources to successfully ward off the aggression of their enemies at the Òkìtìparapò war. Thereby, his people were saved from a seemingly inevitable doom.

The inculcation of certain moral values occupies an important place in the apprentice's early training. There is a statement of approved relationships among hunters and between hunters and other members of the community. Hunters are expected to have a primary commitment to the solidarity and advancement of the Guild. Malicious tendencies and adultery within the hunters' fold are expressly forbidden. The Guild's code of conduct also clearly condemns stealing and other criminal acts in the community. Because hunters deeply rever Ogun, their guardian god, they endeavour not to rouse his anger, or else their fortunes may be marred.

The apprentice may also learn about the community's mythological, supernatural, magical and other concerns.

He is taught important facts about the position of man in relation to the supernatural, particularly the degree of his dependence on divine guidance and fortunes. In addition, the trainer may emphasize the relevance of magical art, how it can be learnt and used to defend or attack, as may be necessary. Such concerns constitute a vital part of the hunter's educational process. They equip him not only intellectually, but also serve as an invaluable basis for relevant poetic creations when he is later introduced to the art. He can draw his images or analogies from them as my informant has done in his chants. He pays homage to the powerful Ofɔsi cult and uses that as a basis for subtly propounding the wisdom of humility and respect. The dangers of haughtiness and effrontery are stated:

Mo ji̇ba l'ọ́wọ́ ọ̀ghọn iye gha,
Alájere idẹ;
Aghún n'ẹrọn funfun
L'oya;
Ọmodé e ri
Idì omi;
Ọ̀a r'idi omi,
A b'omi ra.

(ll. 137-44)

I pay my respects to our spiritual mothers,
The famed possessors of the brass colander
Who offer the white bean-cake
By the riverside;
A child never beholds
The secrets depths of the waters;
If he sees the forbidden depths,
He vanishes with the waters.

(ll. 137-44)

In the fields, the apprentice's training becomes largely formal and it assumes practical significance as he begins to handle the gun and learn about its culture.

An important part of the training, here, is that he is placed under strict supervision. The master supervises his performance and assesses his vulnerability to accidents, particularly the ones arising from carelessness and ignorance of practical skills. The learner is taught to be a perfect marksman and is given ample opportunity of shooting tests. He aims at specific target points or areas of trees, for instance. Through the master's exhortations and corrections, the learner improves on his performance. In due course, he learns to accept the most tasking of hunters' professional demands as a result of his continuing efforts to improve and endure.

Of crucial interest to the apprentice is that he should always guard against committing manslaughter (àsìta), arising from wild shooting. Hence, he is instructed never to shoot below an average man's height while holding the gun at a level which is about parallel to the ground. He is also made aware of the serious hazards usually posed by wild beasts to the unwary hunter. Thus, he should not allow greed, over-haste or lack of caution to gain hold of him in any hunting engagement. He is advised not to shoot at a beast until he has studied the situation because wounded beasts can suddenly turn round to give their aggressors a most vicious fight. As an aid to defence the apprentice learns to identify beasts by their various qualities and to watch out for carnivores such as the lion and tiger.

Sometimes, the learner's spirit of endurance is tested in arduous assignments that might take his expedition away from home for about a week or two. In the fields, a tent is built for shelter and the expedition hunts for game as principal food. Night-hunting is, thus, introduced. A scientific device, the head-lamp has been the hunters' invaluable possession for ages. Its penetrating beam gives the night-hunter profound vision. Through training, he learns not only to differentiate one type of beast from another, but also to distinguish between immature and adult beasts.

Various interviews with Iyara hunters[2] reveal that from the community's cultural experience, hunter-poets rarely receive formal training. These informants claim that accomplished chanters in the culture have always acquired their skills through informal training which is reinforced by natural talents. My major informant claimed that he received no formal training as a chanter though he was apprenticed very early in his career as a wielder of the gun.

In Iyara, hunting and chanting are never full-time jobs. Hunter-poets are primarily farmers who supplement their nutritive and economic needs with game obtained from hunting. It is, therefore, quite understandable that Iyara hunter-poets cannot involve themselves in rigorous, formal learning of chanting skills that Babalola[3] has observed among the Oyo - Yoruba Ijala chanters. In addition, specialized female chanters who

occupy a recognizable place in the tradition of Ijala chanting are conspicuously absent in the performance of Iyara hunters' poetry. Opportunity for female chanting in the latter case is provided only in public performances when females, along with the male audience, can dance, clap or sing the refrain, or chorus.

A talented hunter-poet who aims at developing his skills does so by example, that is, imitating accomplished chanters in the locality. This does not mean that the performance of a poem is a verbatim reproduction of the poem as earlier received. In fact, as the poet gains more experience, he learns not just to imitate but also to create. My major informant revealed in a post-performance interview that a substantial part of his chants was derived from the performances of other poets in the locality.

He cited the case of the ipade as a basis for artistic creativity. Hunters from all over the district are invited to such an occasion which provides ample opportunity for the beginning or even established poet to enrich his artistic experience. According to him, what a chanter gains from any one performance depends on its specific appeal. It may include musical features such as tonal qualities or thematic preoccupations relating to traditional lore, mythology or professional ethics. This point partly explains the variety and richness of his chants. As the poet further remarks, he selects his areas of appeal or interest from such performances

and synthesizes these with his own creations. In this way, he is able to produce poems that give an appearance of genuine, personal compositions.

The role of personal talents in poetic creations has been variously noted by my informants. It is, however, generally agreed that hunting and chanting do not always have mutual co-existence in the hunters' sphere of activity. The art of game-hunting can, and does indeed, develop without a corresponding knowledge of chanting. The current President[4] of the Hunters' Guild for Ilupa Quarter of the community, like some distinguished hunters in the other Quarters, humbly confessed to this investigator that he had neither the voice quality nor the creative ability to compose and chant commendably. In view of the foregoing points, therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the Iyara hunter-poet hardly ever receives formal instruction on his art. The factors that are decisive to his status as a poet are personal and include mainly interest and creative intuition.

Some chanters receive and develop the relevant skills through close association with established poets. There are yet others whose artistic skills are passed on to them from parents. Because of the special privilege of the latter group, creators and genuises of oral poetry seem to run through family lines. Thus the performance of a talented poet is enhanced by a rich

poetic culture, as my major imformant explains:

> If one descends from a line of hunters and is naturally endowed with chanting skills formal training becomes insignificant. Also, through close association with accomplished poets one acquires basic skills which can be developed through experience.[5]

Using his own experience as a chanter, he stressed the spontaneous nature of poetic creation and performance. He states that if the poet is emotionally ready for performance, he often feels a tremendous surge of inspiration and energy. His sub-conscious or dormant thoughts emerge and begin to crystalize as chanting progresses. His creativity is limitless in this situation and he often does not foresee the total range of thematic concerns he may cover in any one performance. This point was proved right in a post-performance explanation of certain points by the poet. As some of the lines, which were apparently new but unconscious creations were reproduced, he honestly confessed not knowing that he actually chanted them at the time they were recorded!

Composition can be distinct from performance, From his existing stock of knowledge or fresh experiences, the innovative Iyara hunter-poet can compose new lines or modify parts of the existing compositions to fit into the general pattern of his art. These may be done in his private rehearsals prior to a public performance. Therefore, a new composition is not only a product of spontaneous creation, the poet might have laboured for a significant period of time to give his art a fresh look.

The poet comments on the context of his composition which may clearly preceed public performance:

> When I am in good mood, I compose in private almost as an unconscious act and burst into chants. If this happens before an audience, they would most certainly be fascinated by my performance. The beauty of my rendering and the resultant enjoyment they derive from the performance would show on their faces. One need not ask them if they enjoy the chants.[6]

Iyara hunters' chants may thus differ from one performance to the other, as modifications or additions (afikun) are effected. When additions take place, some older sections of the chants may be deleted. The ability to modify, or add to, his chants is a mark of an accomplished poet. The audience themselves admire a resourceful artist and demonstrate open admiration for a poet who can successfully work in this direction. As my major informant recollects, he once everheard some members of his audience remarking excitedly:

> He has brought an innovation, a new dimension to his art. Certainly, these chants differ from last season's.[7]

Altogether, these points prove that Iyara hunters' chants are a dynamic art form. While the chants are expected to reflect traditional lore, their values are also determined by the poet's ability to infuse into them the poeple's changing realities.

At the very roots of order and stability in traditional Iyara community were hunters. They were among the front-rank personalities that were trusted with

the safety and integrity of the people. Because hunters have been known for their valour and strength, they were expected to function in any sensitive communal engagement that demanded the demonstration of these qualities. Hence, in war times, hunters functioned as warriors; their possession of arms already prepared them for an easy change of role. In these days, hunters are no less useful. When the security of the community is being threatened by robbers, kidnappers and other criminals, they are often informally called upon to protect their people by keeping watch at strategic locations. Thus, their role is comparable to the present-day armed forces.

The Iyara hunter-poet is a propagator of social values as evident in the recorded chants (see appendix). Primary among these are religious beliefs and practices relating, in particular, to the worship of Ogun. As a strong devotee of Ogun, he repeatedly expounds his fortunes, material or otherwise (part 2, ll. 11-13). Faithful adherence to his laws and precepts, also, offers one protection against evil forces (part 2, ll. 15-17). From the poet, we learn about the authropomorphic qualities of Ogun. Like man, he can be violent, vengeful, and when angry, hardly spares his victims (part 1, ll. 5-9; part 4 ll. 26-33). In addition, we are made aware of the existence of supernatural forces such as witches, wizards and cult groups and the tremendous influences they can exert on man (part 2, ll. 16; part 15, ll. 95-99; part 21, ll. 137-140.

The poet can also be a historian. In the recorded chants, there are allusions to historical issues, specifically in the praise sections. The heroic stance of Iyara community is, for instance, placed in a historical context (parts 10 - 13). The exposition of heroic activities such as Ojo-Eriki-Tọla's are similarly perceived in the historical past (part 101).

The teaching of moral values is a function of the Iyara hunter-poet, who often reminds the community of the values of humility and respect. Just as the haughty apprentice-hunter is bound to fall, so any member of the community will meet his doom if he overeaches himself and fails to heed the advice or seek the wisdom of the elders - the acclaimed repositories of traditional lore (parts 21-22). To demonstrate the point, the poet pays due homage to the community's supernatural forces - such as the witches - even though he trusts in divine help, in addition to his own magical power to carry him through danger (parts 2, 21 & 46).

Moreover, the poet is a sharp social critic who focuses on human weaknesses with a view to effecting desirable changes. In various sections of the chants, he satirizes the empty boaster or ineffectual challenger (part 61), the weakling (parts 75 & 77) and the loafer (part 41).

Conclusion

This research has shown that an understanding of Iyara socio-political, economic and religious system is necessary for a fruitful appraisal of the traditional

poetry of Iyara hunters. The necessity stems from the basic fact that art and culture are closely intertwined and a study of one helps to throw light on the other. Iyara hunters' poetry draws its content and form from the people's cultural beliefs and practices. Similarly, the performance of the poetry helps to nurture and propagate cultural beliefs and practices. Hence, the poetry functions as a vital educational tool.

It is fascinating to note that hunting which arose originally from man's efforts to meet his nutritive and economic needs has developed a complex poetic expression, reflecting the world-view of the community. Through the view-point of the hunter, we gain a tremendous insight into such areas as history, mythology, magic, religion, economics, morality and all other ancestral wisdom and lore of the land. The contents of the poetry relate not only to the hunter's peculiar interests but also to the general, more appealing concerns of his people, whatever their professional calling. A proper performance of the poetry before a receptive, participating audience can, therefore, be most enlightening.

Central to the poetry is the religious aspect. Hunters are some of the strongest devotees of Ogun and hence, a significant portion of their poetry celebrates the might and benevolence of the god. Their religious beliefs are embedded in myth and Ogun's

heroic deeds among men and gods (as handed down by myth) give him a distint image in the cosmos. Thus, hunter-devotees constantly invoke the image of Ogun, believing that he is capable of suppressing their enemies and blessing them abundantly in their endeavours.

The antithetical image of Ogun is also grounded in myth. While he is benevolent and satisfying, he can also be vicious and vengeful, depending on the dictates of his mood. Ogun is generally acclaimed to have come down to earth in a fiery flame, which accounts for why his believers tend to invest him with the fiery and violent qualities of fire. Since the god is quick to judge and punish accordingly, his devotees take the utmost care to abide by his precepts. Misdeeds are instantly atoned for in order to avoid his wrath. Ogun is, moreover, an anthropomorphic god as he is quite susceptible to a variety of human feelings and reactions in his dealings with both men and other gods.

The archetypal hunter-poet is often regarded as the embodiment of Ogun's heroism, even his fiery and violent tendencies. The poet is also a symbol of his people's valour and fortitude. Consequently, we find that he is imbued with starting moral and physical qualities. Various sections of the chants reflect the heroic and indomitable personality of the hunter. He is valiant, strong, visionary, astute and invincible and can withstand the test of time in the most appalling conditions. The hunter's field experiences and social

commitments provide appropriate means of strengthening his character and to prepare him for the challenges in life. Yet, whatever virtue that the hunter-poet demonstrates, it is always attributed not only to his personal talents and efforts but also to divine benevolence.

In Iyara hunters' poetry is a considerable amount of traditional wisdom. The virtue of professional distinction is often emphasized and contrasted with the much detested mediocrity. Various allusions and references to the heroic deeds of Ogun and the distinguished achievements of certain forebears are used to illustrate the point. By this, the hunter-poet indirectly attempts to spur his audience to great heights, whatever their vocations.

Though a great achiever should be proud of his status and achievements, he need not be haughty. In addition, the poet condemns the empty boaster or foolish challenger. He insists that professional distinction is attained through proven records of achievements and experience. This explains why the apprentice - hunter is cautioned, in certain parts of the chants, not to overreach and, hence, destroy himself. An indisputable mark of wisdom is the acceptance of one's potentials and limitations.

Other cultural elements abound in the chants. High moral standards are advocated. The hunter-poet

sees himself as Ogun's worthy representative on earth - thus he makes a conscious effort to abide by the laws which are encapsulated in his Guild's code of conduct. Ogun's iron instruments must never be put into mischevous use and hunters must never keep malice, particularly against members of the Guild. Indeed, hunters are expected to be one another's keeper, most importantly during trying periods. Therein lies the essence of Guild solidarity.

Apart from reliance on divine guidance material competence, hunters are known to rely on magical power for success in their various engagements in the field. Hunters themselves often claim that magic, with its incantatory power, helps to strengthen both their physical and spiritual beings. This enables them to perceive and destroy the subtle but deadly devices of their enemies, in whatever forms. Magic, to them, serves as a complementary means of attack and defence. This is especially useful in night expeditions which are usually full of dangerous and evil encounters.

The chants contain a wide variety of panegyric elements. The poet focuses on Ogun and the supreme Deity to whom man's survival and progress on earth are inseparably tied. They are fortune-giving, benevolent beings whose might is never in doubt. Similarly, distinguished hunters, cults and beasts come under the poet's direct focus. Allusions and images illustrating their temperament, tendencies and strength are used to make points and hence

create relevant impressions about them.

Iyara hunters' poetry also provides a means of lamenting the passing away of their leaders during the Ipade ceremony. The ceremony is important because it is a means of re-affirming the solidarity of Guild members. Its appeal is also important because it draws people from outside the fold into the celebration.

The poetry is classified as a major form which is identifiable by its peculiar tonal and musical forms. The tonal quality of Iyara dialect allows the poetry to be set easily to music, which is marked by drumming, chanting, clapping and use of musical instruments such as agogo or akutu. It has, furthermore, been observed that the rhythmical patterns are not tied to any metrical constraints. Rather, the regularity of rhythm is evaluated in terms of certain patterns of expressions consisting of significantly related words. The rhythmical patterns are also dictated by the pitch and tonal variations employed in performance.

The performance of Iyara hunters' poetry does not only give clarity to a traditional art form, but also helps to define the existence of the people. The poetry ensures ample enjoyment through its phonoaesthetic appeal and provides functional values for both poet and audience. The latter point becomes clear when we understand that, as a product of culture, oral poetry has much to gain if it is actively involved in preserving and propagating culture.

The poetry serves to impose some order on the people's sense of values through the transmission of the traditions and laws of the land. Mores, taboos and other moral laws inevitably become part of oral transmission. In this way, the social contexts of a performance are given special significance. That is, the contents of this art form often transcend their immediate contexts to reflect the total sphere of the peoples' needs, potentials aspirations and achievements.

Valuable as oral poetry is, it is being rapidly displaced by modern musical forms and the written art. Maintaining its continuity, in one form or the other, should therefore be a primary focus of the present generation. Despite the current national interest in the reactivation of the values traditional art, as stated in the National Policy on Education,[8] oral poetry has not yet received a systematic treatment in our educational institutions, even the universities. This is a challenge to Nigerian educators and educationists. Not until we give oral art, in general, its due place can we hope to develop or fashion it to reflect contemporary times. Oral poetry is a dynamic art and it is highly erroneous to treat it as static or belonging only to the past.

Consequently, there is an urgent need to adequately provide for a proper performance of oral poetry among other art forms in our school curriculum. We do not solicit that the younger generation should revert to traditional

vocations to which some of these art forms are so closely attached; but they certainly need to imbibe some of the traditional lore and wisdom contained in the art forms for genuine personal and collective survival and development. We can gain tremendously when we infuse our age-long values into contemporary realities in order to provide a desirable focus in our search for social reconstruction and progress.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Refers to Eleseku, a distinguished warrior who saved the whole of Ijumuland from her aggressors in the Okitiparapo war, otherwise known as Ogidi war.

2. They include Lasisi Ojo from Araromi Quarter, Pa Onimola and Saliu Olugbemiro from Ilupa Quarter.

3. A Babalola, 'Ijala Poetry among the Oyo-Yoruba Communities' in Oral Poetry in Nigeria ed., Abalogu and others (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981) pp. 4-5.

4. Refers to Pa Onimola

5. Translation of a post-performance interview with the poet, Saliu Olugbemiro in July, 1984.

6. Translation of a post-performance interview with the poet in December, 1984.

7. Translation of a post-performance interview with the poet in April, 1985.

8. See, in particular, Section 4, 18(d), 25(2), among other relevant Sections in the National Policy on Education, revised 1981.

APPENDIX POEMS

1

Kekere Ogùn-o!
Ogun lákà-aye,
Ọhin imọlẹ;
Ọmọ an'epo l'ile,
A mèjẹ wẹ,
Ab'ilé-Kọ́ngunkòngun-ọrun,
Ọmọ akeki
Nto pa;
Abi gbayin Sọngò.

2

Ogun on'Ire
Ogun am'érè r'ọja,
Ahọn-ni-roko-riro;
Koriko odo,
Ghin ru mininmini.
Ọba ghi
P'oso--o-,
Ọkakà-ghi-Kání-ibi.

3

O , Ogun--o!
Ogun to mi hinhin,
Lai hin ẹbọ kẹbọ;
Ogun to mi hinhin,
Lai hin òrisà k'orisà.

4

Ogun on'Ire,
Laka-aye
Ọhin imọle;
Ọmọ an'epo l'ile
A mẹjẹ wẹ;
Ab'ile - Kọngunkòngun-òrun,
Ọmọ ejo
Oliwara!
Ọmọ akeki
Nto pa;
Abi gbayin Sọngo ko

5

Rọra, o - o - o,
Hin - in - in -;
O pẹ mo j'yọ́n mọ ,
Ma ti mò'kèlè bubu;
Ikele mi di réerèe,
L'áàrin ọdẹ.

1

Hearken, Ogun's apprentice-hunter![1]
Ogun's might resounds through all the earth,
A chief among gods;
He has palm-oil in stock,
But prefers to bathe in blood.
His home stretches to the outermost corners of heaven,
He thunders his warning
Before he makes a kill;
He is Songo's younger brother.

2

Ogun is Lord of Ire[2]
Ogun's fortunes surpass market profits,
And his blessings exceed farm yields;
His fortunes are the fresh foliage by the water
That blossom into lusty growth.
He is a King
That dares to call a witch a witch to her face,
The mighty one that suppresses evil.

3

Oh, Ogun how mighty you are!
Ogun suffices as my god,
I need not serve other gods;
Ogun suffices as my god,
I need not serve other deities.

4

Ogun is Lord of Ire,
His might resounds through all the earth
A chief among gods;
He has palm-oil in stock
But prefers to bathe in blood;
His home stretches to the outermost corners of heaven,
He is a swift -moving serpent
Whose deadly attack is instant!
He thunders his warning
Before he makes a kill;
Indeed, he is Songo's younger brother.

5

Tread on, softly,
Hin - in - in;
For too long I have tasted no pounded yam,
No longer can I make befitting morsels;
So unsteady and miserable have my morsels become,
In the company of hunters.

6

Ọra, o - o
I ba bami
L'inu igbó,
Ma d'edú igbo;
I ba bami l'álùjù,
Ma d'ọ̀gọ́ngọ́n igi.

7

Ọra onikeji mi;
Leader: Ọ no p'ọdẹ olíjinwinni
Refrain: Amu 'Jinwinni ba ghon ja,
Ijiwinni - o.

8

Ogun láká-ayé;
Ogun nikọn nmẹ hin-in,
Nmọ ni hin ẹbọ k'ẹbọ,
Nmọ ni hin orisa k'orisa;
O jẹ gbígbẹ,
E mọbọn wùkọ́;
Bẹ o jẹ tútú,
É hòn bi.

9

Alajere idẹ
Apa - mọ́ - wọ́'ru;
Iwọ ko m'ọni
Wa mu j'ẹ̀mìdìn.

10

Ọra - o - o - ,
Ighara - ọgọ - M'ogun
Ọmọ alápata,
Ọ - gbe - gègè -
W'ọja;
Apara - fẹ'ku -
Amọ ri

11

Ọmọ Ighara de -
Agha no kein;
Ighara l'ilé,
Ighara l'ode;
Agha no kein.

12

Ighara ba de'le
A ghe jẹ rufè;
Alẹ be ti lẹ,
Ọmọ - ayọ́ - bẹrẹkẹtẹ;
Ọmọ - an'ọ́kọ́ - l'ile
Am'éhín - wọ - pọnnọn.

6

Gently, I pray
Should I face a hostile force
In the forest,
I immediately metamorphose into the bush goat;
If challenged in the jungle,
Instantly do I transform into a log.

7

Softly, my comrade;
Leader: He that calls the hunters Olijinwinni
Shall be attacked by 'Jinwinnin,
Refrain: Ijinwinni is the hunter's avenger.

8

Ogun's might resounds through all the earth;
Ogun only shall I serve,
Other gods I cannot serve,
Other deities I cannot serve;
He dares to feast on the mature and elderly,
But does not contract a cough,
And feasts on the youthful and immature,
Without a trace of vomit.

9

And there are the famed possessors of the brass colander
Who dare to kill with impunity;
You know best with whom
You shall celebrate the New Yam.[3]

10

Gently, I say -
Iyara is a most worthy hero
Who wields the shield,
And carries it with consummate ease
Right into the teeming crowd;
He[4] is the Thunderbolt that seeks Death
But finds none.

11

The children of Iyara have come -
Here we are;
Iyara is at home,
Iyara is abroad;
Here we are.

12

Iyara retires home
And rejects his meal in virtuous protest;
When night is falling,
He emerges, brimful;
He possesses an abundance of hoes
But dares to tread the wild paths

13

Ighara ẹ̀ oyẹ ìbìlẹ́:
Ighara ẹ̀ Ẹlẹ́gha,
Ighara ẹ̀ Olówé,
Ighara ẹ̀ ọlọ́wá,
Ighara ẹ̀ Ẹlẹ́ta;
Agha nọ kein.

14

Rọra, ọnikeji mi o
A hi mi me re-e,
Bẹ mi hẹn ti bọ - ọ;
Ki ní sesẹ já'run bọ - o
Bi àkòtun ọkọ́ turtun - un
Ogun gbe mi l'ija o,
Ogun k'olusọ mi -
Ma rọ hin ẹbọ k'ẹ́bọ.

15

Rọra - o - o -,
Oligèrègéré -
Erikọ ghan p'osó,
Erikọ ghan mu k'ájẹ̀,
Ọmọ araru,
Mo họọ!

16

Rọra - o - o -
Mo ki l'ínú igbó,
Mo móún ja
Awúrú igbó;
Me mọ r'àtàri ọnọ,
Me mọ r'ekutélẹ.

17

Wọ se tọ́n ọdẹ,
Wọ bami linu igbó,
Wọ b'ọkunrin mẹta.

18

Atu Òbèjè aláré,
Elẹ́hín ọwọ;
Ọmọ - ari- - tete - gbọ́nninin -
Irukẹrẹ l'ọwọ ọkọ ọrunmila.
A hun linu igbo,
Mòdumòdu
Ab'awọ - gho - to - baálẹ́ - hun;
Ahun - gbonrongondon -
H'ínú - oko;
Ọmọ - amú'rù -
T'óbò-se.

13

Iyara revels in traditional titles:[5]
Iyara owns Ẹlẹgba,
Iyara has taken Olowe,
Iyara has assumed Ọlọwa,
Iyara bears Eleta;
Here we are.

14

Softly, my companion -
Here do I depart
And here I shall return.
I am full of bottled-up zeal
Like a newly forged hoe in its maiden outing
Ogun shall fight my cause,
For he is my sole guardian -
Other gods I cannot serve.

15

Gentle, move on,
For there are the Swift, Vicious Killers -
The name we give to witches,
The name we give to wizards,
Who carry a deadly burden,[6]
But need no relief!

16

Tread on, gently;
I let our a shrill in the forest,
And sound like
The forest porcupine;
I am no better than the footpath's crown,
I am no greater than the house rat.

17

Get ready, fellow hunter
And join me in the heart of the forest,
Where I could pass for a monster.

18

There is the swift-footed antelope,
Whose legs are broom strands;
The possessor of a tail that shakes off the morning dew -
A wonderous gift from Lord Ọrunmila.[7]
It dwells in the forest
Most pleasantly
And its hide is fit for a chief to lie on;
Its most comfortable home
Is the farm fields;
It possesses a tail
That cleans its genitals.

19

Leader: Ọ no p'ọdẹ l'ijinuinnin
Refrain: Àmu 'Jinwinnin ba a ja;
Ijinwinnin, o.

20

A o tito,
Ogun tótó!
Ogun amére r'ọjà,
Ahọn - ni - r'oko - riro;
Koriko odo
Ghin ru mininminin;
Iwọ ko m'ọni
Wa mu j'ẹmídin;
Iwọ ko m'ọni
Wa mu j'égbẹ;
Wa jẹ gbígbẹ,
A mọ wùkó
A ti jẹ tutu,
E họn bi.

21

Mo jiba l'ówó ọghọn iye gha,
Alájere idẹ;
Aghun n'ẹrọn funfun
L'óya;
Omọdé e ri
Idi omi;
I ba r'idi omi,
A bómi ra.

22

Rọra; omikeji mi;
Omọdé ba dẹdẹ,
I ba mọ r'ibà
L'ẹdẹ àgbà,
Agba ma m'ori rẹ
Tẹ'lẹ apo bọ'ko.

23

Ogun laka - aye;
Mo jiba l'ọwọ Kọlawọle,
Omọ - abá'ré - Wọlé - Ogun -
Tèjètèjè;
Omọ - ari'gbẹ - dabora
Bi - asọ;
Telé l'óri èghùn
Bi ọni ghan de mọ'bẹ,
Omọ - alósò -
P'atu - abu - pọnnọn.

19

Leader: He that calls the hunter Olijinwinnin
Refrain: Shall be attacked by 'Jinwinnin;
I'jinwinnin is the hunter's avenger.

20

A pause, I plead
Ogun is a most potent god!
Ogun's fortunes surpass market profits
And his blessings exceed farm yields;
They are the fresh foliage
That blossom into lusty growth;
You know best with whom
You shall celebrate the New Yam;
You know best who shall be your victim
When the times are hard;
You dare to feast on the mature and elderly,
But do not contract a cough
And feast on the youthful and immature,
Without a trace of vomit.

21

I pay my respects to our spiritual mothers,
The famed possessors of the brass colander
Who offer the white bean-cake
By the riverside;
A child never beholds
The secrets depths of the waters;
If he sees the forbidden depths,
He vanishes with the waters.

22

Softly, my companion;
If the child goes hunting,
And fails to pay due homage
To the elders,
The child's head shall fall
And become the elder's primary booty.

23

Ogun's might resounds through all the earth;
I give honour to Kọlawọle,[8]
Who urgently sought refuge in Ogun's shrine
In a total blood-bath,
And for whom the wild fields
Serve as clothes;
He crouches so firmly on the tree bough
As if fastened to it, permanently,
And stoops so confidently
To kill a chance antelope by the wayside.

24

Ogun mo r'iba l'ẹdẹ rẹ
Mi to a re;
Emi k'ọmọ òdukúrukúru,
Odugbègbè l'Inka;
Ọmọ - amọwọ - fonnón
Àrù - b'épìpo.
Ọmọ - abánise-,
Mọ-họn - ti - banise;
Ọmọ ghọn bi pídidá
B'ọmọ gho k'ọkọ rẹ,
O ti mu ghónkọ mirin
O tarun ile wọ'lé,
O tarun ikerè m'omi;
Ọmọ gho ri ponnọn meji,
À mu ko kọn rẹ;
Ọmọ - el'énlá -
Áb'owo - kọn - soso - gìdigbà.

25

●,Ogun o!
I wọ nmẹ hin lemi.
Rọra onikèjimi o,
Leader: Abẹ kọn àlọwọ ọdẹ o,
Refrain: Ilọ milọ!
E mọ si ghọn gbèrì mọ -
Ilọ mi lọ!
Ogun láká-aye;
Cro - an'epo - l'ile - ,
Àm'ẹjẹ-wẹ;
Ase abẹ kọn ìlówó ọdẹ.

Leader: Ọ no p'ọdẹ olijinwinnin,
Refrain: À mu 'Jinwinnin ba a ja.

26

Rọra o - o -
Kọlawọle, mo jíbà lẹdẹ rẹ,
Mi to a re;
Àsà me pa nto ki,
Bẹ a wi ghi ki;
O d'ábò oko,
A to m'eyẹ
Gho b ọ ọ re.

27

Rọra, onikeji mi o;
Kọgìkọgí kẹ
Gb'oun agogo,
Kèrèbè nọ kẹ
Gb'oun ikeregbe.
Ibi ikèrègbè lála to,
E mọ n'oun agogo.

24

My respects I pay to Ogun
Before I depart;
I am the bearer of Odukurukuru
And Odugbegbe from Nka;
My palms serve to fetch live coal and remain unscath
While the tree-bark is struck with awe.
I am a friend
And enemy to all and none,
Whose temperament changes with occasion
Like the maiden who wisely rejects her suitor
And finds fortune in another man
I enter only through the legitimate entrance,
And drink only with ikere;
When confronted by two intriguing paths,
Wisely, I decided to tread on one;
I am the famed possessor of a bull,
With the monstrous horn.[9]

25

Oh Ogun, how mighty you are!
How deserving you are of my service.
Tread on gently, my companion
Leader: Behold a certain blade in the hunter's hands,
Refrain: A wonderful tool indeed!
The novice dares not toy with it -
A wonderful tool indeed!
Ogun's might resounds through all the earth;
He has palm-oil in stock,
But prefers to bathe in blood;
There is a certain blade in the hunter's hands.
Leader: He that calls a hunter Olijinwinnin,
Refrain: Shall be attacked by 'Jinwinnin.

26

So tread on, gently -
To you Kolawole, I pay my respects,
Before I set off;
The hawk's screech only follows a catch
And it never boasts of its power;
Not until the return journey,
Shall we know the bird
That comes to roost, unscathed.

27

Gently, my companion;
One never mistakes
The ringing sounds of a bell,
Nor does one confuse
The dull boom of the gourd;
Large as the gourd is,
It can never sound like a bell.

28

Rọra, ọnikeji mi o -
Ọghọn ọdẹ ghin p'er ọn
Abu ponnọn kọ?
Ogun ma gbe ghọn l'ija o;
Oko lílá
T'arun ibọn ju;
Ogun laka-aye,
Ohin mọle;
À yọ yẹ́rẹ́,
A pa gburu wọlé, kee!

29

Rọra - o - o ,
Mo jiba lẹdẹ ẹghin ọdẹ,
Mi to a re;
Mo jiba l'ọwọ
Ọghọn baba mi,
Baba mi adigùn
L'ori ẹgẹdẹ;
Baba mi, kare o.

30

Leader: Ọ no p'ọde Olijinwinnin
Refrain: Àmu Jinwinnin ba a ja
Ijinwinnin o.

31

A o tito -
Ọ ba a tito,
Ọlílu a họn hinmi;
Alágèrè mi o,
Gbera l'ile ko dide -
Tori ọjọ re ibi anọ,
Orun nọ imẹ re ibi àgbè wọ.

32

Rọra o, ọmkeji mi
Ọmọ mọ́ lọ káà gbọ,
À a gb'ọ́mọ mọ bọ;
Eghe ghin s'ọmọ lọ
No ki s'ọmọ bọ gha 'lé,
Atẹ gbe k'ẹhin tẹ'nọ;
Itẹ kutẹ
K'ọmọde tẹ obo iya rẹ.
Ogun ghe binú aye,
Mọmọ binu mi;
Ogun mo r'iba l'ẹdẹ rẹ,
Alebelebe jòinjòin!

28
More on subtly, my comrade -
How about hunters of chance,
Who make their kill by the wayside?
Indeed, Ogun shall fight their cause.
Behold the powerful shots
That are let out from the magnific ent gun;
Ogun's might resounds through all the earth,
A god among gods;
His shots are so swift-moving,
Indeed, a deadly, swift-moving device!

29
Caution, I pray,
My respects to you hunters
Before I proceed,
I give honour
To my worthy forebears;
My father who dares to build
His charms on banana tree tops,
To my worthy father, I give greetings.

30
Leader: He that calls the hunter Olijinwinnin
Shall be attacked by Jinwinnin,
Refrain: Ijinwinnin is the hunter's avenger.

31
Enough, I plead -
When we bid the drummer pause,
He should take a rest;
Oh, my worthy Alagere[10] -
Rise up to duty,
For the day is making its usual retreat
And the sun is retiring home

32
Tread on gently, my comrade
One may restrain a child from an outing,
But one never obstructs his return;
The medicinal herbs that protect the child on departure
Are the same that guide him back home, safel
When the feet match on a footpath, they always return/
The child is at full liberty
To step on his mother's genitals.
Ogun, who never nurses malice against man,
Never grow annoyed with me, I pray;
Ogun, to you I give my respects,
The watchful, valiant one!

33

Ọọra, o - o
O se mi yéyéeyé,
O se mi yèyeèyè,
Bo ki mo g'asọ yèyé mi bo'ra;
Ọnọ ọ̀run ẹ̀e n'akaho
Iba mọ se bẹ,
Ma ti k'ógún r'ọrun,
Litori iku yèyé mi.

34

Mo kare o -
Emi k'ọmọ ọ̀dukúrukúru
Odugbèègbè li Nka;
Ọmọ am'ọwọ - fọnnọn -
Aru - b'epipo;
Mọ-họn-ti-bánisẹ,
Ọmọ ghọn bi p'idídá;
B'ọmọ ekéré e n'adeun -
Ọti mu gh'ọkọ mirin;
Mo t'arun ile wọle,
Mo t'arun kere m'omi,
Ọmọ gho ri pọnnọn meji,
Amu ko kọn rẹ;
Ọmọ - el'ẹ̀ẹ̀la -,
Abowo - kọnsoso-gidigbà.

35

Leader: Ase abẹ kọn ìlọ́wọ́ ọdẹ
Refrain: Ilọ mi lọ!
E mọ sighọn 'gbèrì mọ-
Ilọ milọ o!

36

Ọọra, o - o
Ọdẹ agbé'nọ́ h'ori
D'ẹgbẹ oru,
Leader: A hí'gbó roro;
Refrain: Muko hi -
Leader: Igbo roro;
Refrain: Om'ọdẹ muko hi.

37

Oya, kékeré Ogun o,
Ahare - wọle
Ogun - tèjètèjè;
Ọmọ - arigbẹ -
Dabo'ra - bi-asọ.

38

Tele l'órí egun
Bi ọni ghọn de mọ bẹ;
Gẹgẹgẹ,
Bi oko sù lé -
Mo j'iba l'ẹdẹ rẹ.

33
Softly, I plead
I feel a drowsy numbness,
I am weighed down by inactivity,
As if I were in my mother's bosom;
But for the heavens
That are beyond the reach of the living,
I would now willingly resign my fate,
Even for the cause of my mother's death.

34
To my person, honour is due -
I am the bearer of Odukurukuru
And Odugbegbe from Nka;
My palms serve to fetch live coals and remains unscathed
While the tree bark is struck with awe;
I am a friend
And enemy to all and none,
Whose temperament changes with occasion,
Like the maiden who wisely rejects her suitor
And finds fortune in another man.
I enter only through the legitimate entrance,
I drink only with ikere;
When confronted by two intriguing paths,
I wisely decide to tread on one;
I am the famed possessor of a bull,
With the monstrous horn.

35
Leader: There is a certain blade in the hunter's hands
Refrain: A magnificent tool indeed!
The novice dares not toy with it-
Indeed, it is a wonderful tool!

36
Softly, proceed
The hunter dons his head-lamp
And hunts at night,
Leader: Yet the forest is bitter;
Refrain: Release your powerful shots-
Leader: The forest is bitter;
Refrain: Let the apprentice release his wonderful shots.

37
Rise to duty, you apprentice - hunter,
Who seek refuge in Ogun's shrine
In a total blood-bath;
The wild fields serve for you
As clothes.

38
He[11] crouches so firmly on the tree bough
As if fastened to it, permanently;
So uniquely does he emerge,
Like the new moon -
To you, I give due honour.

39

Ogun on'Ire,
Am'ere ghá'lé,
Am'ere r'ọjà;
Ogun to mi hinhin,
Lai hin ẹbọ k'ẹ́bọ
Ogun to mi hinhin,
Lai hin òrìsà k'orisa.

40

Mo mọ wa ọba gha,
Asẹ Ọlújùmù,
Lat'ọwọ Èdùmòrè;
Adé a pẹ l'ori,
Ibata a pẹ lehin,
Ọba o.

41

A kari bọ'nú
A tọ́n'yà ara ọni
Aro ka
E mẹ parí gbehe.
Isẹ́ lílá ki oko idi òro,
Iya k'oko abu pọnnọn;
Ẹ mọ mọ dá'ko h'ọnọn
Á se 'mẹlẹ,
T'ajá t'ẹrọn ki bǔni.

42

Ogun o!
Leader: Ogun on'Ire;
Refrain: Ikọ̀n soso
K'ajo se l'ímùlẹ̀;
Ogun am'ere r'ọjà,
A họn ni r'oko ríro.

43

Ogun onIIre,
Mo mọ j'iba o,
Ọmọdé ba ti j'iba
L'ẹdẹ àgbà,
Iba ti d'oko,
I ma r'ílẹ́ kọ.
Ogun láká - aye -
Mo j'iba o.

44

Emi K'ọdẹ agbénọ́ h'ori,
Dẹ'gbẹ oru;
Emi K'ọmọ òta
Ogbarun imọdo b'ọfọ;
Aye a ta bi igbòn,
Ọ pa gògòrò l'ẹfọ;
Tele lori ẹgùn
Bo ka de mọ bẹ,
A ta ba ghọn.

39
Ogun is Lord of Ire,
He is the bringer of fortunes
Which surpass market profits;
Ogun suffices as my god,
I need not serve other gods
Ogun suffices as my god,
I need not serve other deities.

40
I give my greetings to
His Royal Highness Olujumu,[12]
By the grace of Edumore;[13]
May the royal crown and shoes
Last till maturity,
Our most worthy king.

41
Hiding one's problems
Can never alleviate one's sufferings,
A debt is never paid
By making it public gossip,
To farm the wild mango must entail hardship
And wayside loafing can only yield suffering;
He that farms by the wayside
Should avoid loafing,
A loafer becomes the centre of public ridicule.

42
Ogun, how mighty you are!
Leader: Ogun is Lord of Ire;
We are one in spirit
Refrain: And in comradeship;
Ogun's fortunes surpass market gains,
And his blessings exceed farm yields.

43
Ogun is Lord of Ire,
My respects are due to him,
If the child pays due homage
To the elders,
And ventures into the fields,
He shall be blessed with abundant farmlands.
Ogun's might resounds through all the earth-
To him, I give my respects.

44
I am the hunter that don the head-lamp,
And hunt at night;
I let out my volleys
And the warthog[14] falls unconscious by the swamp;
Swift and stinging like the wasp,[15]
I silence the warthog by the swamp;
So firmly do I crouch on the tree bough
As if fastened to it, permanently
To launch my deadly shots.

45
Iba ki mi ẹ,
Iba kóko;
Mo j'iba a s'ọdẹ,
Iba koko.

46
Oso ile mo j'iba lẹ́dẹ̀ ghin,
Ajẹ ile mo j'iba lẹdẹ ghin,
Mi to a re.
Be Ògùn ko lákáyé;
A n'épo lile,
A m'ẹjẹ wẹ.
Opẹ mo j'iyọ́n mọ,
Ma ti mokèlè bubu;
Ikele mi da ródorodo,
Bi eho agbọn.
Yiyẹ ki y'ẹyẹlé,
Riro ki r'ádábá l'orun;
Opa tẹ́rẹ́ kọnlẹ
Ò kọn'run.

48
Rọra, ọnikeji mi o
Oligèrègéré -
Eríkọ ghan pe'kú;
Rọra o
Litori ọgẹ̀rẹ́ ghi labu odo;
Se yara wọ mu 'jẹrẹ

49
O jẹ gbigbẹ,
O wukọ,
O jẹ tútú,
A h'ebibi;
Mo rọ́nti
Oghọn alájere idẹ,
Apa mọ wọ́'rù èniyọn.

50
Rọra ọnikeji,
Asa me kẹji nto pa,
Be a wi ghi ki.
O dábọ́ oko,
A to m'ẹyẹ
Gho bọ o re.
Ọ no wi mi mọ bọ
Ma dé'lé ba a;
Ọjìjí ke gbọ'ku oro
Ọjìjí k'àpọn wọ;
Ayọnmọ emọ sisẹ ọnikan.

45
Here, I do give due respects to all,
Indeed, I give due honour;
To go a-hunting entails a pledge,
Indeed, I give my respects.

46
I give respects to you awesome witches,
I give respects to you mysterious wizards,
Before I proceed.
Yet, Ogun's might resounds through all the earth;
He has palm-oil in stock,
But prefers to bathe in blood.

47
For too long I have tasted no pounded yam,
No longer can I make befitting morsels;
So tiny and miserable have my morsels become,
Like an undersized coconut.
Yet, the dove is always at peace,
And the pigeon is ever at ease;
So is the slender stick that reaches earth
And touches heaven.[16]

48
My companion, take care over
The swift, Vicious killer -
The name we give to Death;
Take care
Over the warthog that stands by the swamp;
Be swift and take your victim.

49
He dares to feast on the youthful and immature
And contracts no cough,
And feasts on the mature and elderly,
Without a trace of sickness;
I do remember
The famed possessors of the brass colander,
Who dare to kill with impunity.

50
More on steadily, my companion,
The hawk's screech only follows a fatch,
And it never boasts of its power.
Not until the return journey,
Shall we know the bird
That comes to roost, unscathed.
He that wishes me no return
Shall live to see me return, safely;
The wild mango tree dies suddenly
And its fruit drops unannounced;
No man has control over destiny.

51

Rọra, ọnikeji mi o -
Mọ j'iba Olugbemiro,
Gho r'ọrun alákeji;
Mọmọ j'ọkùn,
Mọmọ j'ẹkolò;
Nghẹn tẹti jẹ l'órun -
I wọ nọ nmọ jẹ ẹ
Iwọ - omọ - kẹkẹrẹ-wi,
Ọmọ - alátì-l'oke-iba,
Átilẹ ro.

52

Ogun on'Ire,
Ọkọ mi;
Í ba bámi
L'inu igbó,
Ma d'edu igbo.
I ba bami l'álùjù,
Ma dọgọngọn igi;
Iba bami loke ilẹ,
Ma dàwòdì oke,
Ma da tintin;
Nto mu mi
I ma pẹ o.

53

O d'ijọ mirín,
Ọjọ ire;
Ogun on'Ìrè -
Ọkọ mi,
Ai ye ke yi o.

54

Rọra, ọnikeji mi o
Gbera lilẹ ko dide,
Gh'Ògùn o!
Ogun tótó bi aró
A se gbọgbọgbọ bi ọgha,
Ọkọ mi,
Mo j'iba l'ẹdẹ rẹ,
Mi to a lọ.

55

Rọra - o - o
Oligèrègéré,
Erikọ ghan pe'ku
T'ọri Eledumọre,
Gbami l'owọ Iku,
Mọmọ jẹmí ribi Iku,
Mọmọ jẹmi ribi Aisan
Ogun wọ d'enọ
Ọni ghọin se'bi
Lagbara Baba lila,
Ogun a gbemi l'ija o.

51

Move on gently, my companion -
I give honour to Olugbemiro,
Who has passed to the world beyond;
Never should you feed on the millipede,
Never should you feed on the earthworm;
Only the offerings of heaven
Should you partake of -
You are a most enduring being,
Whose nobility comes from above,
You are always of the strong breed.

52

Ogun is the Lord of Ire,
He is my worthy Lord;
Should I encounter a hostile force
In the forest,
I immediately transform into the bushgoat.
If confronted in the jungle,
I instantly metamorphose into a log;
Should I face an encounter in the skies,
I become a soaring awodi,
I become an elusive, tiny element;
Dreams of my capture
Can only be illusive.

53

Here do I bid farewell,
For a better future;
Ogun is Lord of Ire -
He is my Lord,
Indeed, he is my worthy Lord.

54

Take care, my companion
Rise up to duty
To Ogun's call!
Ogun is pure as untained aro
And fit as fresh ogha,
My worthy Lord,
To you, I give my respects,
Before I proceed.

55

Take care I say over
The swift, Vicious Killer,
The name we give to Death.
Through the mercy of Eledumore,
Save me from Death;
Let me not face Death
Let me not confront Disease,
May Ogun overpower
The workers of evil;
Through the mercy of the Supreme Father,
Ogun shall fight my cause.

56

Leader: Ogun on'Ire,
Refrain: Ikọn k'àjọ se l'ímùlè;
Ikọn k'ajọ se!

57

Leader: A di'were o,
Refrain: B'ódé r'ọdẹ,
A di'were pọ;
Rọra o
Ogun laka aye;
Mo r'ọnikeji mi,
Adebọla r'ọdẹ
A di'were pọ o,
A di'were o.

58

A o títo ó,
Ọ ba o tito
Olílù a họn hinmi
Alukùnọgo mi o,
A o d'ijọ mirin -
O d'ijọ ire.

59

Rinso, rinso o
Hibi wẹ re;
Ma ba wọ re,
T'arin t'arin
K'inọ jo kóko igi.
Ogun tóbi o !
Ogun on'Ire.

60

Rọra o -
Í bá bami
Linu Igbó,
Ma d'edu igbo;
Iba họn bami l'álùjù,
Ma dọgọngọn igi.

61

Rọra, ọnikeji mi ọ
Sigọngọn i mẹ kéki nto pa
Bẹ e mọ wi ghi ki;
O d'abọ oko,
A tó m'ẹyẹ
Gho bọ ọ re.

62

Rọra, ọnikeji mi o,
A pa-gbúrú-wọle-ijẹ-rẹ-
Erikọ ghan p'Ogun;
Ijo Ogun tọ ghaye,
Asọ inó kọ mu be're,
Awu èjè k'Ogun wu,
Imọriwò K'asọ rẹ.

56

Leader: Ogun is Lord of Ire
Refrain: And we are one in communion;
Indeed, we are one!

57

Leader: Relatives they become,
Refrain: As hunters perceive one another,
They become members of one family;
Yes take care for
Ogun's might resounds through all the earth;
I perceive my companion,
Adebọla[18] sees a fellow hunter
And we become members of one family,
We become one.

58

A pause, I plead,
When we bid the drummer pause
He must take a rest
Oh, my worthy Alukunọgo[19]
We shall meet another day -
A day of hope.

59

Move on, move on with confidence
Towards your target;
I shall be your ready companion,
As the wild fires are eager to consume
The dry wood trunks with rip-roaring mirth.
Oh, how great Ogun is!
Ogun is Lord of Ire.

60

Take care, I say
Should I face a hostile force
In the forest,
I immediately metamorphose into the bushgoat;
If challenged in the jungle,
Instantly do I transform into a log.

61

Tread on with care, my worthy companion.
The hawk's screech only follows a catch
And it never boasts of its power;
Not until the return journey,
Shall we know the bird
That comes to roost, unscathed.

62

Careful, my comrade,
The Swift-moving one who takes his victim in violence
Is the name we give to Ogun
The day Ogun appeared on earth,
He clothed himself with a fiery flame[20]
And draped himself in blood;
The palm-fronds[21] are his sacred attire.

63
Rọra, ọnikeji mi,
Ọmọdé ba dẹ'lẹ,
I ba mọ j'iba l'ẹdẹ àgbà,
Agba ma mori r ẹ
Tẹ'lẹ àpò bọ'kọ.

64
Rọra o-o-o,
Pa'kọn gbori eji
Gha 'le,
Baba 'Yekẹmi o.

65
Rọra - o - o,
Mo mi re,
Mo mi bọ,
Ki mi sẹsẹ ja'rum bọ
Bi àkòtun ọkọ tuntun;
Gbéra lile
Ko dide.

66
Ogun laka-aye,
Òrìsà oke ẹ gbọ o,
Ìwọ ko m'ọni,
Wa mu j'ẹmídìn,
Iwọ ko m'ọni
Wa mu j'ẹgbẹ.

67
Rọra - o - o,
Ẹ mẹ ireba,
Àlẹ lẹ o;
Ọgbèrì d'ẹyin,
Ọdẹ ireba.

68
Rọra o, ọnikeji mi,
A o se mi yeyeeye,
O se mi yéyéeyé,
O se mi rìgìjọ;
A o pẹ mo j'iyọnmọ,
Me ti mo'kele bubu.

69
Ikeji mi o
A hi emi k'ọmọ adúró gbọin,
Aloso p'atu oju pọnnọn;
Rinso h'ibi wẹ re,
Ma báwọ lọ;
Tarìn t'àrin ki inọ
Jo kókó igi.

63
Softly, my colleague,
The if the child goes hunting
And fails pay due homage to the elders,
His head- shall fall,
And become the elders' primary booty.

64
Take care, I say -
For some do go for a double kill,
In a singular effort,
I do remember you, Baba 'Yekẹmi.[22]

65
Tread on softly, I plead,
Here I do proceed
And here I shall return;
I am full of bottled-up zeal
Like a newly forged in its maiden outing;
Rise up to duty,
And take up your task.

66
Ogun's might resounds through all the earth,
Hear my call, heavenly being,
You know best with whom
You shall celebrate the New Yam;
You know best who shall be your victim
When the times are hard.

67
Take care, I say,
Now do they depart,
For night is falling;
Let the novice step back,
The worthy hunters now depart.

68
Softly, my companion,
I feel a drowsy numbness,
I am weighed down by inactivity,
I am utterly helpless;
For too long I have tasted no pounded yam,
I can no longer make befitting morsels.

69
Oh, my worthy comrade,
I am the valiant that remain unshaken by danger,
Who stoop by the wayside to kill a chance antelope,
More on towards your target;
I shall be your ready companion,
Indeed, the wild fire devours
The dry wood trunks with rip-roaring mirth,

70

Kulekule àdàbà,
Nmọ mọ kọlu gogo;
Ẹwi ghọn ọmọdé ọdẹ
Nmọ mọ kọlu olóríí ghọn,
Tori ijọ mirin,
Ijọ ire kọ;
Mọ mọ m'ọwọ Kọn'bò,
Mọ mọ m'ọwọ b'oro,
Tori oro,
Ma'ja Linú akẹ'ran.

71

Baba mi - o - o ,
Adigùn l'ori ègèdè
Kare - o - o ,
Ai hin - in - ,
Mo mi lọ;
Ọjọ ilọ bi anọ,
Orun mẹ ilọ bi àgbè wó.

72

Baba, mo rónti o,
Ogun hon'wọ yéye;
Igba ọmọ ki m'ọwọ kẹ wọ,
Igba ọmọ ki se kẹ rẹ,
Wọ to lọ h'ọrun alákeji.
Rọra o, ọnikeji mi
Rọra o, ijọkọn ibere,
Rọra o, olóríí ọdẹ,
Ati Asipa gha,
Mọ mọ ya ghin.

73

Oko lila
T'arun ìbọnju,
Ògbarun ìmọdò b'ọfọ;
Àgharagha ri ragha,
Leader: Ọlọ́ginní r'ọmọ ẹkun,
Refrain: Àgharagha ri r'agha.

74

Rọra o - o - o
Ero mi t'Ekiti,
E ba mi wa
Asipa ghọn
Ati asoju ọdẹ ghọn;
Ọdẹ agbénọ́ h'ori
Dẹ'gbẹ oru,
Mo j'iba l'ẹdẹ ghọn.

75

Rọra - o - o - o ,
Ọdẹ ghọnyì o,
Mo mi lọ;
Tori alẹ ti lẹ,
Ògbèrì dẹyin.

70
Let the dove maintain its peaceful nature,
Let it not fly against palm-frond thorns;
Tell the apprentice-hunter
Not to engage the master-hunter,
Because one lives
To witness better days;
Do not toy with a woman's genitals,
Never play with the poison,
Because the poison
Destroys the roots of life.

71
Honour I give to my father,
Who could build his charms on banana tree tops,
The worthy one,
Indeed, a worthy one,
Now do I proceed;
For the day is making its usual retreat,
And the sun is retiring home.

72
Oh father, I do remember,
You were richly blessed by Ogun;
Two hundred offspring gave you confort,
Indeed two hundred offspring gave you succours,
Before you passed to the world beyond.
Take care, my companion,
Softly tread on this day,
Take care, our worthy leader,
And our recered Asipa,
I seek your support.

73
Powerful shots
Are let out from the gun,
And the warthog is silenced by the swamp;
We hunters must find companionship in our fold,
Leader: The cat finds friendly company in the leopard
Refrain: We hunters must find companionship in our fold.

74
Take care, I plead,
My people are moving to Ekiti;
Give my hearty wishes
To their Asipa
And their front-rank hunters;
They are hunters that don the head-lamps
To hunt at night,
To them all, I give my respects.

75
Softly, move on,
Fellow hunters;
Now shall I depart,
For night is falling,
Let the novice step back.

76
A hi àjò ghan re in o,
Ajo gho n'épo,
A ti n'iyọ,
O dun rọinrọm bi oyin.

77
Ọni ba ni baba,
Nmúra a ja a lọ
Ọni ba n'iíye,
Npada l'ayin gha;
Tori ijọ́ mìrín,
Ijọ ire.
Mo wi mo wi ki semi l'arun
Be ki mọro mọro
Ki s'orógún elubọ.

78
Rọra, ọnikeji mi o,
Wò atu òbèjè aláré,
Elẹhin ọwọ;
Ọmọ ori tete gbọ́nnini,
Ìrùkèrè lọwọ ọkọ Ọrunmila,
Ahun hinu igbo
Mọdumọdu;
Ab'awọ gho to baálé hun,
Ahun gbọnrọngọndọn
H'inu ọkọ,
Omọ amú'rù
T'óbò se.

79
Rọra, ọnikeji mi o,
Ọghọn ọdẹ apeji l'afọ kọ?
Ọghọn ọdẹ gidi kọ;
Ọmọ ajimọjasọn,
J'aa d'óko fẹrẹ,
O ya o.

80
Rọra, ọnikeji mi,
M'ẹhin rẹ kọnkòn, duro;
Mọ mọ ta ba ọnikẹni,
Agbèré ki'kọn gbe,
E mọ rọ j'ókùta;
Se bi ọmọ mọ lọ kaa gbọ,
Aa gbọmọ mọ bọ;
Eghé ghi s'ọmọ lọ
Nọ ki s'ọmọ bọ ghà lé,
Atẹ gbe k'ẹhin t'ọnọ;
Koriko ghọn ni ba ti tẹ ku
E mẹ ti gbéri mọ lai.

76

This trip we are undertaking
Is seasoned with palm-oil,
And flavoured with salt;
It has the supreme sweetness of honey.

77

He that leans on his father[24]
Should get ready for our trip,
But he that counts on his mother
May step back;
Because one lives
To witness better days.
My advice comes repeatedly
Like the busy tongue
Or a working paddle in the yam-flower pastry.

78

Take care, my companion,
Watch the swift-footed antelope
Whose legs are brrom strands, dew
The possessor of a tail that shakes off the morning /
A wond rous gift from Lord Ọrunmila
It dwells most pleasantly
In the forest,
And its hide is fit for a chief to lie on;
Its most comfortable home
Is the farm fields,
It possesses a tail
That cleans its genitals.

79

Softly, my colleague,
What about the double-killers[25] by the swamp?
They are the master-hunters;
Their meals are always meaty
Let us take an urgent trip to the fields,
Prepare for a trip.

80

Take care, my comrade,
Let your steps be slow and firm,
And do not hurt a soul.
The ant must be frustrated by its unavoidable slips,
It can never devour the stony mass;
One may restrain the child from an outing,
But one never obstructs his return; on
The medicinal herbs that protect the child/departure
Are the same that guide him back home. safel
When the feet match on a footpath, they always return/
Once the weeds on the pathway are destroyed,
They never again come to life.

81

O Ogun o!
Ogun on'Ire,
Ọkọ mi;
A hi alẹ́ ti lẹ,
Ọgbọ̀rì dẹyin,
Ọdẹ me ireba.

82

A o tito-o-o,
Kẹ́kerẹ́ k'orin Ogun se,
Erin ọdẹ janpe kọ;
Rọra, ọnikeji mi;
Leader: Ọ no p'ọdẹ Olíjinwinnin,
Refrain: Amu 'Jinwinnin ba a ja,
Ijinwinnin O.

83

A o tito - o - o,
Asípa gha gọn,
Leader: O li sòkòto janpe;
Refrain: M'ọrọ s'ọdẹ,
Wọ m'ọrọ se ra rẹ,
Mọ mọ m'ọrọ s'ọdẹ.

84

Rora - ọ - ọ -,
Ogun winiwini,
Ogun winikọkọ;
Laka ayẹ,
Ọjọ me re bi anọ,
Orun me re 'bi agbe wọ;
Ọni bá wí mi mọ́ bọ,
Mi ma dele ba a.
A tẹgbè k'ẹhin tẹ'nọ -
Mi me ilọ;
Bẹ ma họn ti bọ -
Nọ ki olímóto o jare.

85

Rora o - o - o ,
Bi akún bi akún ki ti Egbére,
Bi ofo bi ofo ki t'aparo;
Oni wi mi mo se temi,
T'emi e mọ ni s'oju rẹ-
E mọ ni rọ se nkọn.
Ọ run Ighara a gbe gha o !
Ẹ ba mi wa ghọn I'Idoro -
Ibi ghẹn ti jẹ Odukúrukúru,
Omọ am'ọ́wọ́ fonnọ́n
Aru bepipo.

81

Oh Ogun, how mighty you are!
Ogun the Lord of Ire,
He is my Lord;
Now, night is falling
Let the novice with-draw,
Because the hunters are departing.

82

Enough awhile,
Ogun's chants are briefly worded,
And hunters chants are never prolonged;
Take care, therefore, my companion.
Leader: He that calls the hunter Olijinwinnin
Refrain: Shall be attacked by 'Jinwinnin,
Ijinwinnin is the hunter's avenger.

83

A pause, I plead . . -
Our worthy Asipa,
Leader: Famous for the hunter's outing shorts;
Refrain: One who dares hurt the hunter
Lives to regret his effrontery,
Never court the hunter's wrath.

84

Move on gently;
Ogun is the mysterious god,
Ogun is the awesome god
Whose might resounds through all the earth;
The day is making its usual retreat,
The sun is retiring home.
He that obstructs my return
Shall live to see me return, safely. safely-
When the feet match on a footpath, they always return /
Indeed, I shall depart,
And I shall return -
A prayer much cherished by motorists.[26]

85

Careful, I say,
One always meets Egbére in mourning wails,
And the bushfowl in persistent gloom;
He that attempts to block my progress,
Shall not live to see me fail -
He must be disarmed;
Let the blessings of Iyara fall on us all![27]
Give my people hearty wishes at Idoro,
Where they bear Odukurukuru,
And whose palms can contain live coal, unscathed,
While the tree bark is struck with awe.

86
Ogun laka-aye,
Ọmọ an'épo l'ile,
A m'ẹjẹ wẹ;
Ab'ilẹ - kóngunkòngun-òrun,
Orisa oliwàrà,
Bi ejo olóró.

87
Ogun to in hinhin,
Lai hin ẹbi k'ẹbọ -
Ogun to mi hinhin,
Lai hin òrisà K'orisa.

88
A kárí bọnu,
E mọ tọn'ya ara ọni;
Aro kiri,
E mọ pari gbehè.
Isẹ lila
K'oko ode Ighara -
E mo d'ako hoju pọnnọn
A se mèlé,
Tajá terọn ki bu ni.

89
Rora ọnikeji mi
Sàko sáko k'oghe ki l'inu oko
Ọghọn ara rẹ a họn ghoun rẹ
Rora wọ m'éti re
Mo wi mo wi ki s'emi l'arun
Bẹ moro moro ki
S' orogun elubọ

90
Ye e Ogun toto!
Baba mi mo jiba o
Omo oligerogere,
Ọmọ aduro gbọngbọin
L'ọjú ogun;
Mo j'iba palaba ọwọ
Mo j'iba pẹlẹbẹ ẹhin
Mo jiba elẹ
Ghe d'orikodo
Ti e họn r'omi l'árun!

91
Rora, onikeji mi-
Ijọ me irodo,
Alẹ ilẹ,
Ọgbèrì dẹyin
Ọdẹ irodo.
Emi ọmọ a ta bi igbọn,
O pa gọgọrọ l'ọfọ.

86
Ogun's might resounds through all the earth,
He has palm-oil in stock,
But prefers to bathe in blood;
His home stretches to the outermost corners of heaven.
A swift - moving god,
Who attacks like a deadly serpent.

87.
Ogun suffices as my god,
I need not serve other gods;
Ogun suffices as my god,
I need not serve other deities.

88
Hiding one's problems
Can never alleviate one's sufferings;
A debt is never paid
By making it public gossip;
Indeed, it is a heavy task
To build up Iyara;
He that farms by the wayside
Should avoid loafing,
A loafer becomes the centre of public ridicule

89
Take care, my companions,
When the monkey chatters-sákó, sákó in the forest,
Its kind recognizes it as a significant call.
Be ..alert to my words;
My advice comes repeatedly
Like a busy tongue,
Or a working paddle in the yam-flower pastry.

90
Oh, Ogun is a most potent god!
To my father I give respects -
The swift, Vicious killer,
Who would remain unshaken
In the heat of war;
I give honour to the remarkable flatness of the palm,[28]
I give honour to the wonderful flatness of the sole
I give honour to the female genitals[29]
That do not look dowcast,
Nor give off a messy drip!

91
Take eare, my companion,
The day is making its usual retreat,
Night is falling;
Let the novice draw back -
The hunters retire home.
I am swift and stinging like the wasp,
I silence the warthogs by the swamp.

92

Ogun laka-aye,
Eja jiba l'ọwọ́ ọghọn babagha
Ghọ́n ee tele l'ori ẹgun,
Bo ka de ghọn mọ bẹ,
A ta ba ghọn.
Ọghọn ọdẹ alọ́sọ́
P'atu ọju pọnnọn,
Mo ya ghin.

93

Ogun on'Ire,
Ọkọ mi;
Agbà ki mo da
Má ti dabi,
Ijọ nba dabi,
Ma r'ele ọkọ mi.

94

Leader: A se obèré koko,
Refrain: Ariwo ọja k'ẹpa,
Obere koko;
A tẹgbe kẹhin t'ẹno;
Yiyẹ ki y'eyelé,
Riro ki r'adaba l'ọrun.
Ọpa tẹ́ré kọn'lẹ,
Ọ kọn'run;
Baba lila,
Olọ́wọ́ gbọgbọgbọ
Ghi y'ọmọ rẹ l'ọ́fin;
Araba ghi m'igho kijikiji.

95

Ogun on'Ire,
Ogun am'ere r'ọja;
I ma yẹmí d'alẹ o,
Mo jiba l'ẹdẹ re,
Mo jiba l'ẹdẹ Baba Lila,
A m'ọni m'ọla,
A m'ọnọ bi ọla
O wowo tiri wo.

96

Ogun laka-aye,
Ohin imole,
A họn ni r'oko ríro;
Ẹghin ọdẹ nọ mo wa ghin
Ọdẹ a ba jẹjẹ wọnú itẹ,
A b'ẹranko họ bi ọni
Mo mọ j'iba a.

92

Ogun's might resounds through all the earth;
Let us pay homage to our fathers beyond, bough
Who delicately, yet firmly crouched on the tree /
As if fastened to it, permanently,
To launch their deadly attacks.
Oh, the able hunters who stooped
By the wayside to kill the antelope,
I seek your support.

93

Ogun is Lord of Ire,
He is my Lord;
I have only lived to maturity,
My sap is not yet gone;
When my sap is gone
I shall retire to my Lord's fold.

94

Leader: Their boasts[30] will come to naught -
Refrain: They are loud, meaningless noises, return, safely.
Their boasts are empty.
When the feet match on the footpath, the always /
The dove is always at peace,
And the pigeon is ever at ease.
The slender stick reaches earth
And touches heaven;
Honour to the Supreme Father,
Whose mighty and protective hands
Deliver his children from danger; foundation.
The Great Araba[44] that shakes the forest to its /

95

Ogun is Lord of Ire,
Ogun's fortunes surpass market profits;
I shall prosper till night fall
To you I give my honour,
To the supreme Father I give honour,
For he can recount 'day and 'morrow
His vision of 'morrow is sharp as todays,
The mighty, imposing one.

96

Ogun's power is overwhelming,
He is a chief among gods
Whose fortunes exceed farm yields;
To you hunters also I give my hearty wishes
The hunter shares his victim's den unknown,
He retires with the wild game unseen,
To you all I pay homage.

97
Mo j'ibà gbogbo ghi o,
Ijọ mo ti se kékéré
Mi mẹ ti gbe igi ogun;
Rọra, onikeji mi o
Ajá dúdú e mọ
To'kun
E ti m'olúwa rẹ -
Erikọ Ogun m'ẹr n

98
Rọra, olori ọdẹ gha,
Mo mo wo yéye,
Pòròǹun ọdẹ ghọin,
Mo mọ wo yeye o;
Rinsọ h'ibi wẹ lọ,
Ma báwọ lọ.

99
Aja gho rí mi gbo,
A d'ajá Ogun,
Agbo gho ri mi kọn,
A d'àgbò òrisa;
Ogun on'Ire,
Oko mi.

100
Ogun al'Árá,
Ajajá;
Ogun on'Ire,
Ajagbo,
Ogun gbẹnọgbẹnọ,
Oje igi ki jẹ.

101
Agba ọdẹ, ghọnyi!
Abotità gòròǹgòrọ,
Omọ elẹ́fọn,
Ija bamba, ija ghereke.
Baba ghẹmghẹni,
Ojo - Eriki-Tọla, nghokun.
Ọ pa gòròǹb l'ẹfọ,
Àmú kọrọn le gbnógbaá;
Ale Makun jẹjẹ,
Sọkọ Moyaki,
O K'ápá ghọn.

102
Baba gha k'oku,
A gha de bẹ wo;
Ijo kọn laye,
Agha de bẹ wo.

97
My respects I give to all,
Since my youth,
I have faithfully carried Ogun's wooden tool;[31]
Take care, therefore, my mate
The black dog[32] may be faithful,
But when incited, it becomes blind,
And recognizes its owner no more-
That is Ogun's praise name.

98
Take care, President of our Guild,[33]
I sing your praise,
You seasoned hunters;
I sing your praise,
Match on to your targets-
I shall be your ready companion.

99
The dog that growls at my sight
Becomes Ogun's sacrificial lamb,
The ram that is restless at my sight
Becomes a sacrificial lamb to the gods;
Ogun is Lord of Ire,
He is my Lord.

100
Ogun is Lord of Ara,
He must be appeased with a dog;
Ogun is Lord of Ire,
He accepts the sacrifice of a ram;
Ogun is the worker of wood,
He must be appeased with fresh sap.

101
Hear me, you seasoned hunters!
The owners of stools that radiate a majestic look,
The famed killers of the buffalo;
In life and death expeditions.
There is our firm, but easy-going father,
We give honour to Ojo-Eriki-Tola.
Who silenced the warthog by the swamp,
And whose attacks were steady and vicious;
He is the famous suppressor of Makun,
And the master of Moyaki,
He routed them both.

102
Our leader is dead,
We shall witness his burial rite;
It is a unique day,
We shall grace the occasion.

103

Agbére o!
A gbere o!
E mu láyin ọgba,
E se jèji gbe;
E mu layin ọgba,
E damu tètè gbe,
Igbẹ yun n'ọra.

104

Erọn rárárá,
I ba gegidi,
A n'ọra gb'ọ fa.

105

Paun lílá, lila ghun,
Omọde a bù,
Ọgbẹ̀rì a bù,
Paun lila ghun.

106

Oya ọ dẹ,
Egha f'iru gbe;
Ọmọ ọdẹ,
Egha f'iru gbe,
Iru jọjọ.

107

Ai ighọn ni bẹ se
Nmọ jẹ́wọ́ rẹ bein,
Ọni bẹ h'obó,
Ọni bẹ s'ole,
Nmọ jẹ wọ rẹ ba.

103
Now we depart with our kill!
Now we depart with our kill!
Find your game at the backyard,
Join hands in two's and ease your task;
This is a remarkable day indeed,
Find your game at the backyard,
Hurry up and carry your game,
Because the fields itch.

104
This beast looks a promising victim,
Let it not resist,
Else, the arrow shot shall welcome him,

105
Make a big,big kill for him,
So the child may feed from excess,
And the novice from surplus,
Make a big kill for him.

106
Let the hunters' wives,
Join the dance with the whisk;
Let the hunters' children
Step in with the whisk,
The hunters' worthy whisk.

107
Let the sinner
Confess his sins now;
He that thrives on lies,
He that lives by theft,
Let all confess their sins now.

Notes to Appendix Poems

1. The hunter is Ogun's foremost representative on earth, while the gun is one of his material symbols; hence both share the god's most pertinent characteristics.

2. According to myth, Ogun was once King of Ire and his reign brought fortunes to his subjects.

3. The celebration of the New Yam (_emidin_) marks the season of food surplus in contrast to the dry season (_arun/egbe_), particularly the planting period in which food (mainly yam) becomes scarce and expensive.

4. Iyara is seen in a manly rather than feminine image in consonance with the people's heroic culture.

5. From time to time, the community 'buys' titles from elsewhere in the locality after fulfilling traditional requirements. Apart from satisfying the growing demands for titles locally, this device serves to boost the people's image.

6. Witches and wizards are known to have vicious spiritual powers, and can travel through limitless space and time, carrying with them deadly spiritual weapons.

7. The gift is believed to have come down from the Supreme Deity through Ọrunmila who is widely known as the Ifa Oracle.

8. Refers to the poet's master.

9. Historically, the poet's forebears are said to have owned a herd of cattle containing a monstrous bull with _one_ extraordinarily large horn.

10. Handler of the _agere_ drum

11. Refers to _Ọbagbege_, a one-time President of the Hunters' Guild.

12. The title of the Ọba for Ijumu District

13. Also _Eledumọre_. It is synonymous with _Ọlọrun_ or _Oluwa_, usually known as the Supreme Deity

14. Considered by hunters in the locality as really the most senior of wild beasts, though not universally recognized as such. It has a symbolic feature - the so-called royal mane, ika. The mane served as threads on which a red bead was strung and worn by distinguished personalities in the past.

15. The line is the poet's professional epithet.

16. Lines 352-53 are a riddle, meaning the falling of rain.

17. A kind of fast-moving bird

18. A hunter. Names can be substituted as desired.

19 Handler of the Kunagɔ drum.

20. Lines 465-66 refer to Ogun's mythical appearance on earth. See chapter 1 for the myth.

21. Palm-fronds are a symbolic part of Ogun's home(Shrine).

22. One of the community's past distinguished hunters, who hailed from Ọnọ Quarter.

23. The sharer of hunters' booty obtained in their expeditions. The 'leader' in line 532 refers to the President of the Guild.

24. 'Father' stands for valour and strength in contrast to 'mother' who is best known for her feminine qualities.

25. Those who can gun down two animals with a single shot

26. Since motorists are also devotees of Ogun, they naturally invoke his blessings on their endeavours.

27. A section of Ilupa Quarter, from where the poet hails.

28. The soles of the feet and palm of the hands are flat and seem ordinary, but they are invaluable parts of the body.

29. The hunter-poet's absurd humour. A woman must not reject her partner's sexual request , to avoid embarrassing him. Otherwise, she stands the risk of being ridiculed for incompetence!

30 The poet detests the empty boaster

31 The mechanism of the local dane gun, which shoots out bullets consists of iron parts, but its frame is mainly wooden.

32. A metaphor illustrating the shared dispositions of both Ogun and the gun.

33. The Hunters' Guild.

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