

Traditional Songs of Ìlọrin: Enacting Identities, History, and Cultural Memories

Hakeem Olawale
Kwara State University, Nigeria
hakeem.olawale@kwasu.edu.ng
hakeemolawale4@gmail.com

Abstract

Ìlọrin is a distinct community and a melting pot where people of diverse ethnic and cultural identities came together to form a settlement in the 17th century. These ethnic groups include Yorùbá, Haúsá, Fúlàní, Núpé, Kànniké, Kéńbérí, Bàrùbá, and Malians, Arabs, among others. However, despite these ethnic and cultural diversities of Ìlọrin and the Fúlàní political hold on it, Yorùbá language is the lingua franca of the community. How these ethnic groups find their voices and articulate their historical and cultural identities within this unified framework becomes a source of concern. As a response to this concern, traditional songs of Ìlọrin like *dàdàkúàdà*, *bàlúù*, *agbè*, *wákà*, *kèngbè*, *orin ọlọmọ-ọba Ìlọrin*, among others sung in Yorùbá language become a site of contestation of ethnic and cultural identities. The focus of this essay is to analyze Ìlọrin traditional songs as they portray and contest ethnic identities, reconstruct history, and revitalize cultural memories of indigenes. The paper argues that given such a diverse ethnic and cultural origins, performance of Ìlọrin traditional songs become a reminder of family histories, origins, political structure, hegemonic influences, myths, legends, Islamization of Ìlọrin, and a way of ensuring harmony and bridging generational gaps among the various groups in a state that is known as the “State of Harmony”.

Introduction

It has been pointed out that oral artists are part of the custodians of cultural heritage due to their rich knowledge about their communities which they transform into songs. These songs are usually embedded with the themes

of what has happened in the past, the present happenings, and possible legacies that will enhance peaceful co-existence of the future generations. This paper, therefore, uses Ìlòrin Yorùbá traditional songs as a medium to mirror the historical reconstruction of different family's ancestral origin. Ìlòrin is a multi-ethnic community comprising of many tribes that successfully came together to form a distinct community that has adopted Yorùbá as its lingua franca. The memory and remembrance through the traditional song plays prominent roles for different families whose fore-fathers left their ancestral homes decades and centuries ago to trace their original ancestral origin. It even allows some families to re-unite.

Some foreign scholars had erroneously denounced African unwritten literature using the lenses of the Western written literature as the yardstick for all forms of literature. These scholars argue that anything unwritten cannot be regarded as literature. But this is totally untrue because there is cultural differentiation which arises from relativity in the sensorium of different cultures. Therefore, either oral or written, the function of literature as the channel that mirrors the society is of paramount importance to every society that has it (Ajíbádé, 2012: 30-31). This paper, which utilises Ìlòrin traditional songs as one of the oral genres that are prominent in African society is an approach to prove that traditional music through the rendition by the oral artists serves as tools for remembrance, fact findings, memory, and historical reconstructions. As Finnegan (1992) opined, "...interests in the oral tradition and verbal art is to understand people's cultural activities and artistries..." (25). What this implies is that many facts are richly embedded in oral traditions which serve as mirror of the society. In a nutshell, the oral traditional singers are like contemporary computer memory cards that stored information in their memory that could be explored for different purposes whenever needed. It has also been noted that oral tradition is the vast field of knowledge through which cultural information and messages are transmitted verbally from one generation to another. It is the complex corpus of verbal arts created as a means of recalling the past. Sometimes oral tradition is used interchangeably with folklore or elements such as language and belief systems that are shared by a group; what gives a community its cultural and national identity. In contemporary usage, oral tradition or folklore means popular and group-oriented expressions of culture (Akínyemí, 2011).

The opinions of Ajíbádé, Finnegan, and Akínyemí above center on the power of orality in any given society to remember the past and to update their memory. In a similar vein, Okafor (2005) maintains that,

Through song texts, a person learned the moral codes of his land, its chronology and history, and the guiding principles and ethics of his land.

He also learned about his own language, the things his people lives by, and how the society worked. All these were learned through music that ranged from folk tunes to highly specialised ritual music, including chants, incantations and minstrelsy (209).

The above opinion of Okafor also implies that oral literature mirrors society it focuses on and that it is useful in the maintenance of such society.

The analysis of our data in this paper hinges on sociological approach and diffusion theory. According to Barber (1979), "Sociology is a way of trying to understand society, its structure, how it works, and the forces that bring about changes in it" (1). This is in tandem with Ògúnsínà (1987) who portends that, "Literature is concerned with men and his society. It is an art composed of words in such a way that it proffers entertainment, enlightenment, and relaxation. It attempts to develop, elevate, expand, and transform the experience of its audience" (19). Our main argument is that sociology of literature proves that there is nothing in a particular work of art that is outside the society.

Likewise, it is the contention of diffusion theorists that history, migration, and culture are products of society and that probably, cultures have a particular origin before dispersal to various societies. The argument is that culture is a product of society and that it lends itself to diffusion, adaptation, and variation.

Identity and Creation of History

Ìlorin is the capital of Kwara State in Nigeria. It is about 300 kilometers to Lagos, the economic capital of Nigeria and about 500 kilometers to Àbújá, the political capital. Ìlòrin was founded in the 17th century (Salihu & Jawondo, 2006:1). Though there are multifarious themes embedded in different kinds of Ìlòrin songs, the main focus of this paper is how the artists make use of their songs in the creation of social history and identity.

Music plays prominent roles for some family members to know and trace their ancestry despite some diffusions of languages and cultures. For example, Jimoh (1994) argues that,

...the core families in Àgbajì namely Ilé Sáúrà, Ilé Àbùro, Ilé Bàbá Sàáré, Ilé Àgòrò and Ilé Imam Àgbajì were originally Sudanese Arabs from a town called Ar-Baji on the Blue Nile...Members of Ibrahim Bàtùrè family at Òkè Apòmù are Arabs by origin. They migrated to Ìlòrin from Agades in Niger Republic. The Òjìbàrá family in the same area are of Fúlání descent... The Şólágberú family at Àgbajì, the Ònágún family of Ìta-Ègbá, the

members of Ilé-Olóyin (formerly called Ilé-Igbón) at Ìta-Èlẹ̀pà, the Gíwá family of Pópó Gíwá, and the Mèkábàrà family of Ìta-Ògúnbó are Kànúrí migrants. Şólágberú migrated from Bama in Bornu and was founder of ancient Òkèsúnà...The family of Magaji Kúntú are Boko-Barubas paternally but Fulani maternally while members of Ilé Èlẹ̀ran, Àdángbá are Barubas... Members of the following families are Hausa by ancestry: Ilé Alálíkínlá at Ìta Ògúnbó, Ilé Shírù at Òde Alfa Nda, Ilé Saba'ani at Òde Aláúsá and Ilé Saba'ani at Ìdí-Òrombó, Ilé Jávòndó at Ìta Ògúnbó and Ilé Alfa Ajóngó̀lò which was formerly called Ilé Alápatà... (10-11).

The above excerpt reveals that many families in Ìlọ̀rin are confined and interwoven. But despite their different background, songs are used as the tool for self-identity and remembrance of the past and update of memory. For instance, the excerpt of *agbè* song (gourd rattle) of Kárikáná and Núúrù Àjàdí Kúrè of Ìlọ̀rin below, recorded on 15 February, 2015, reveals that eleven Emirs have been enthroned in Ìlọ̀rin.

Àwọ̀n baba n'lá wa ló mórin agbè,
 Délúú Ìlọ̀rin, lójó tó ti pé ni.
 Ìpele ẹ̀lẹ̀ẹ̀keje làwá jẹ
 Nínú olórin agbè nílúú Ìlọ̀rin.
 Lát'Ọ̀yó Ilé,
 Wón ti n'jọba nílúú Ìlọ̀rin ojó pé.
 Ọba bii mókànlá ló ti jẹ.
 Èlẹ̀kínni jẹ, ikejì jẹ.
 Èlẹ̀kẹta jẹ, ikerin jẹ.
 Títí tó wée dérii mókànlá tó kan Súlú.
 Súlú Kàrináàni Gàmbàrí lọba kẹsàn-án ní Ìlọ̀rin.
 Ọkùnrin méeédógbòn.
 Ọba tí pọba ránnsé ni Súlú ọba wa.
 Ọba Alárisìkí tó lówó lówó, ó láyà;
 Ó ní tírà, ó lógùn.
 Ìgbà tó délẹ̀kẹwàá lọba kan Àlú Baba Àgbà.
 Ìbùràimò ọmọ Súlú Gàmbàrí
 N lọba kọkànlá n'Ìlọ̀rin wa,
 Tí n' bẹ lẹrí ọba

(Our forefathers brought *agbè* music
 Into Ìlọ̀rin long time ago.
 We are the seventh generation
 Among *agbè* artistes in Ìlọ̀rin

That came from Ọ̀yọ́-Ilé.
 There have been kings in Ìlọrin long time ago.
 Eleven kings has been installed so far.
 First king, second king.
 Third king, fourth king installed.
 Until Súlú the eleventh king.
 Súlú Gàmbarí was the ninth Emir of Ìlọrin.
 A very powerful man.
 A king that send other kings on an errand.
 Rich king, brave king.
 He had different metaphysical powers.
 Bàbá-Àgbà was the tenth Emir;
 Ìbùràímọ̀, the son of Gàmbarí.
 The eleventh Emir
 Is the one on the throne).

The excerpt reveals that the singers are the seventh generation of *agbè* singers/performers in Ìlọrin, and that their forefathers migrated to Ìlọrin from Ọ̀yọ́-Ilé. The singers claims further that the ninth emir, who is the father of the incumbent Emir of Ìlọrin, was very powerful metaphysically, brave, and rich. Mention was also made of Àlìù Bàbá Àgbà who was the 10th Emir of Ìlọrin.

In another excerpt from the *bẹ̀nbe/àlugétà* song of Àlàájì Ismaila Àtándá, the prowess and characteristics of one of the prominent tribes in Ìlọrin is revealed. Their forefathers were known to be brave in war front because they don't condone unnecessary rivalry. They resemble themselves in character and they also have significant tribal mark of identification wherever you see them. These are encapsulated in the song below:

Gòbírí rorò, éé ijà roro
Gòbírí rorò, éé ijà rorò
Gògòbírí o ní jògò
Taa ló ní ọ fẹ wọn?
Gògòbírí o ní jògò
Taa ló ní ọ fẹ wọn?

Àgékù ejò
Gògòbírí, oro lẹ é ẹ
Tó bá dijà tán
Gòbírí ni ẹ pè sí wọn
Gòbírí jọraa wọn

*Wòn tún fiwà jọraa wòn
Gòbírí jọraa wòn
Wòn tún fiwà jọraa wòn*

(Gògòbírí are wicked, wicked fighters
Gògòbírí are wicked, wicked fighters
Gògòbírí dont take nonsense
Who asked you to marry them?
Gògòbírí dont take nonsense
Who asked you to marry them?

.....
You are like a wounded snake
Gògòbírí you are so wicked
When it comes to fighting
Invite Gògòbírí to tackle them
Gògòbírí resembles themselves
They resemble one another in character
Gògòbírí resembles one another
They resemble one another in character)

In the excerpt of Àrẹ̀mú Òsẹ̀ dàdàkúàdà song from his record tagged “Àrẹ̀mú Gbàwọ̀dù”, the historical identity and the relationship of the present Emir of Ìlọ̀rín with the past emirs were revealed as seen in the song below.

*Ilé iyá rẹ̀, ilé ọ̀ba Ìlọ̀rín ní
Ilé baba rẹ̀, ilé ọ̀ba Ìlọ̀rín ní
Àlìù Baba Àgbà,
Ègbón mòmó rẹ̀ ní,
Ọ̀ jọba Ìlọ̀rín.
Àbùdùkáádírì,
Baba mòmó rẹ̀ ní,
Ọ̀ jọba Ìlọ̀rín.
Báwà tó bí Káádì,
Baba-baba mòmó rẹ̀ ní,
Ọ̀ jọba Ìlọ̀rín.
Súlú baba rẹ̀,
Ọ̀ jọba Ìlọ̀rín.
Báwà tó bí Ládófé,
Baba-baba rẹ̀ ní,
Ọ̀ jọba Ìlọ̀rín,
Ọ̀ wáá terí i Lóyà,*

Ọ *bọ sérí Adájó*.
 Ọ *torí Adájó*,
 Ọ *bọ sérí ọba*.
Aséèjoyè ọmọ Súlú, ọmọ Bóláńtà.

(Your mother is from the royal family
 Your father is also from the royal family
 Àlìù Baba Àgbà
 Is your mother's uncle
 He became the king in Ìlọrin
 Àbùdùkáádírì
 Is your grandfather
 He became the king in Ìlọrin
 Báwà, the father of Káádì
 Is your maternal great grand-father
 He became the king in Ìlọrin
 Súlú, your father
 He was an Emir of Ìlọrin
 Báwà, the father of Ládòfé
 Is your grandfather
 He became the king in Ìlọrin
 You graduated as a Lawyer
 To a Chief Judge
 From Chief Judge
 You become the king in Ìlọrin
 Àséèjoyè, son of Súlú, son of Bóláńtà)

The above song excerpt of Àrẹ̀mù Ọ̀sẹ̀ explains a lot about the detailed relationship of the Emir of Ìlọrin and his progenitors. It was pointed out in the song that he, the incumbent king is a bonafide royal family member and would be successful on the throne. According to the opening lines of the song, both his paternal and maternal families are entitled to the throne of Ìlọrin emirship. Furthermore, his mother's uncle, his grandfather, his great grandfather and his biological father who were past Emirs of Ìlọrin were mentioned as authentic members of the royal house who had access to the throne of Ìlọrin when they were alive. With all these multifarious facts that are embedded in the traditional music, it can be clearly seen that in any society, oral literature can never be over-emphasized because it mirrors the society and it is very useful in identity creation and reconstruction of social history.

From the above excerpt, element of cultural and linguistic diffusion are discernible. The title of community leader among the Yorùbá people is *ọba*

while the Fúlàní equivalent title is the emir. Although the king is a Fúlàní man but the title used by the musician is that of Yorùbá, in the Yorùbá language. The singer did not use emir because of the Fulani's language that has diffused into the Yorùbá language. Therefore, the Yorùbá perception of king is used.

In a similar vein, the chronological ascension of the past Emirs of Ìlọrin is mentioned in one song of Jólómírò Àlàbí specifically tagged “Ìtàn Ọba Ìlọrin” in which he highlights the period of individual emirs on the throne. It is very informative. The song goes thus:

E sún mọ yín-ín
 E gbótàn àwọn ọba Ìlọrin tí wọn ti je
 Abùdùsàlámi lọ kọ joyè n'Ìlọrin
 Nínú ọba tó ti je
 1831 lọ joyè n'Ìlọrin
 1842 lọ padà lọ wàjà.
 Ọdún mọkànlá lọba yẹn lò
 Tée jáde láyé.
 Tèléèbó n' pè ní Ìlẹ́bín yìàsì
 Sítà ló tún tẹ́lẹ e
 Nínú ọba tó tún je
 1842 ló joyè n'Ìlọrin
 1860 lọ padà lọ wàjà
 Ọdún méjìdínlógún lọba yẹn lò
 Tèléèbó n' pè ni eetín yìàsì
 Ìgbà tí Sítà wá kú tán,
 Ọdún ọhún ló wá kan ọba Sùbáírù
 1860 ló joyè n'Ìlọrin.
 1868 lọ padà lọ wàjà
 Ọdún méjọ pére lọba yẹn lò.
 Tèléèbó n' pè ní ètì yìàsì
 E má je ọ bàjé o o
 Kò báje tẹ́lẹ́tẹ́lẹ o o
 Àliú ló tún tẹ́lẹ e
 Nínú ọba tó tún je
 1868 ló joyè n'Ìlọrin
 1891 lọ padà, lọ wàjà
 Ọdún mètàlélógún lọba yẹn lò
 Tèléèbó n' pè ní tuẹnti-tírí yìàsì
 Ọdún tó kú ni Mọmọ wá jọba
 1891 ni Mọmọ joyè n'Ìlọrin

1896 ló padà ló wàjà
 Ọdún márùn-ún péré loba yẹn ló
 Tèléèbó n' pè ní fáifù yìàsì
 Ọ wá ku Súlè ọmọ ọba Ìlọrin tọ lọ
 Kàú Àlàbí tí n' bẹ lójà tí n' tàwo wa
 Kàú Àlàbí 'mọ Súlè, 'mọ Wòrú.
 1896 ló joyè n' Ìlọrin
 1915 ló padà ló wàjà
 Ọdún mọkàndínlógún loba yẹn ló
 Tèléèbó n' pè ní naintín yìàsì
 Sàìbù ló tún tẹlẹ e
 Nínú ọba tó tún jẹ
 1915 ló joyè n' Ìlọrin
 1919 ló padà ló wàjà
 Ọdún méréin péré loba yẹn ló.
 Tèléèbó n' pè ní fọfọ yìàsì
 Sàìbù wá kú tán
 Ló kan Káádì ọba Ìlọrin
 Agemọ Adáké-má-fòhùn ọmọ Labówó.
 Àtándá Ọpó baba Dáódù Bààlà.
 1919 n ló joyè n' Ìlọrin
 1959 n ló padà ló wàjà
 Ogóji ọdún loba yan ló.
 Tèléèbó n' pè ní fọfọtì yìàsì
 E má jẹ o bájẹ o o
 Kò bájẹ tẹlètẹlẹ o o
 Ọdún tí Káádì kú
 Ni Súlú jọba...

(Come over here
 Listen to the history of the past kings of Ìlọrin
 Abdulsalam was the first emir
 Among the past kings of Ìlọrin
 He was installed in 1831
 He died in 1842
 He spent eleven years on the throne
 Before his death
 Which means eleven years in English
 Sità was installed after him
 Among the past kings of Ìlọrin
 He was installed in 1842

He eventually died in 1860
 This king spent eighteen years on the throne
 Which means eighteen years in English
 After the demise of Şítà
 It was the turn of king Sùbáírù that same year
 He was installed in 1860
 He eventually died in 1868
 He spent only eight years
 Which means eight years in English
 Don't destroy the tradition
 Tradition should be protected
 Àliù followed him
 Among the past kings of Ìlọrin
 He was installed in 1868
 He eventually died in 1891
 He spent twenty-three years on the throne
 Which means twenty-three years in English
 The year he died, Mọmọ was installed
 Mọmọ was installed in 1891
 And he died in 1896
 He spent five years
 Which means five years in English
 Then came Súlè, the prince of the departed Ìlọrin king
 The father of Àlàbí who sells our musical record at the market
 The father of Àlàbí, offspring of Súlè and Wòrú
 He was installed in 1896
 He eventually died in 1915
 He spent nineteen years on the throne
 Which means nineteen years in English
 Şàíbù followed him
 Among the past kings
 He was installed in 1915
 He eventually died in 1919
 He spent only four years
 Which means four years in English
 After the death of Şàíbù
 Then was Káádi, the Ìlọrin king
 Agẹmọ the cool-headed one, son of Labówó
 Àtàndá of the Òpó lineage, father of Dáódù Bààlà
 He was installed in 1919 in Ìlọrin
 He eventually died in 1959

That king spent forty years
 Which means forty years
 Don't destroy the tradition
 Tradition should be protected
 The year Káádì died
 Then Súlú was installed)

This long Pàkenke song of Jólómíró Àlàbí cited nine kings of Ìlọrin in chronological order. As at the time he released his music album, Emir Súlú Gàmbàrí, the father of the incumbent eleventh emir was on the throne. The song is also informative as the singer mentioned the years of installation, years spent on the throne, and the year of death of each emir. The information provided by the artist is highly useful in the construction of the social history of Ìlọrin emirship. This shows that traditional songs can surely be regarded as one of the authentic sources of information and archive of the society. The musicians are part of the society, and they compose their life experiences and observations into songs for the benefit of the populace.

Like his colleague, Àrẹ̀mú Òsé, the singer of the above long excerpt did not refer to the king as emirs but he referred to them as *oba*. Besides, he portrayed element of linguistic diffusion beyond Fúlání/Yorùbá divides, he also manifested element of understanding of English as the language of the colonial masters and the lingua franca for Nigeria. In the conclusion of Jólómíró Àlàbí's song, he added to the historiography of the kings of Ìlọrin that the incumbent king/emir should endeavor to emulate the identities and personalities of the past kings in maintaining peace and stability of the community. He used the theme of identity consciously to create a visual self-examination of the past, present, and the future to project anticipated expectations of the masses.

As said earlier that the Ìlọrin folksingers use their songs to reveal the identity of people, especially the kings/emirs. An example of such is seen in *àlùgétà/bẹ̀nẹ̀* songs by Alhaji Ismaila Àtándá in which Sulu Gambari, a past Emir of Ìlọrin is praised.

Húkùhúkù dé o
Gàmbàrí dé o
Húkùhúkù dé o
Gàmbàrí dé o
Arógúnmásàá dé o
Gàmbàrí dé o
Arógúnmásàá dé o
Gàmbàrí dé o

Arógúnmásá dé bíí tíí dé
Gàmbàrí dé bíí tíí dé
Arógúnmásá baba àwa o
Gàmbàrí baba àwa o
Aríbíkólá o, ogun la ó lọ
Aríbíkólá o, ogun la ó lọ
Ogun nísé wa o
Ogun lowó wa a
Ogun nişé wa o
Ogun lòwò o wa a
 (Húkùhúkù has come
 Gàmbàrí has come
 Húkùhúkù has come
 Gàmbàrí has come
 The-one-who-never-run-away-from-war has come
 Gàmbàrí has come
 The-one-who-never-run-away-from-war has come
 Gàmbàrí has come
 The-one-who-never-run-away-from-war has come as usual
 Gàmbàrí has come as usual
 The-one-who-never-run-away-from-war has come,our father
 Gàmbàrí, our father
 Aríbíkólá, we will go to war
 Aríbíkólá, we will go to war
 War is our job
 War is our business
 War is our job
 War is our business)

In the above example, we can see how the artist metaphorically represents his thought and emotion expressively to create a conceptual visual representation of the king/emir. He presents him as the one “one-who-never-run-away-from-war”. This shows that the king was a dexterous warrior; who was capable of leading the community successfully.

In another example below drawn from Àrẹ̀mú Òsé *dàdàkúàdà* traditional song of Ìlọ̀rín, both past and present emirs are listed. The singer referred to the kings as *ọ̀ba* instead of emir and made mention of their ancestral origin which is Sókótó. This is also an indication that traditional singers of any society are like archive of knowledge with multifarious historical facts.

Àbùdùsàláámì, Şítà,

Sùbèérù, Àliyù
 Mómó, Súlè
 Báwà, Àbùdùkáádìrì,
 Súlú, Àliù Baba Àgbà
 Bùrèémò Kólápò
 Ọba di mọkànlá n'Ìlọrin tọ jẹ
 Bùràímò ọba ò
 Ọba ò, ọba o ò
 Bàágbà ọba o
 Ọba ò, ọba o o
 Súlú ọba ò
 Ọba ò, ọba o o
 Àbùdùkáádìrì ọba o
 Ọba ò, ọba o o
 Báwà, ọba o
 Ọba ò, ọba o o
 Ọba Súlè, ọba o
 Ọba ò, ọba o o
 Ọba Mómó, ọba o
 Ọba ò, ọba o o
 Ọba Àliù, ọba o
 Ọba ò, ọba o o
 Ọba Sùbèérù ọba o
 Ọba ò, ọba o o
 Ọba Sítà, ọba o
 Ọba o, ọba o o
 Àbùdù Sàláámì, ọba o
 Ọba o, ọba o o
 Ìṣòlá 'Mọ Àlímì
 Fúlání Sóokótó
 Ìṣòlá 'mọ Àlímì
 Fúlání Sóokótó ó ó ó.

(Abdul-Salaam, Sítà
 Zubair, Aliyù
 Mọma , Súlè,
 Bawa, Abdul-Kadri
 Zulu, Aliù Baba Àgbà
 Ibraheem Kólápò
 Eleven kings have been installed in Ìlọrin
 Ìbrahim, the King

The king, the king
 Bàágbà, the king
 The king, the king
 Súlú. the king
 The king, the king
 Abdul-Kadri, the king
 The king, the king
 Báwà, the king
 The king, the king
 King Súlè, the king
 The king, the king
 King Mọmọ, the king
 The king ,the king
 King Àlìù, the king
 The king, the king
 King Zubair, the king
 The king, the king
 King Şítà, the king
 The king, the king
 Abdul-Salaam, the king
 The king, the king
 Ìşọlá offspring of Àlímì
 Fúlàní of Sókótó origin
 Ìşọlá offspring of Àlímì
 Fúlàní of Sókótó origin)

People's identity can be determined by their self-conception as well as their social presentation; and how they behave within civilization. In the below example of song from Jáígbadé Àlàó, we see how the singer situates Súlú Adébímpé within the matter of national concern, the demise of the then President of Nigeria who was murdered. He presented Emir Súlú Adébímpé as the one who mourned the president. Let us examine what the artist said about the emir's reaction to the murdered president of Nigeria in his song.

Ó dodò oooooo
Èkún Múrítàlá dodò láyàà mi
Ọkọ àwa lọ
Múrítàlá tó lọ túù táà ri kó dé mọ'
Ọlọhun ó fọrun kẹ ẹ
Níjọ Múrítàlá kú
N ò rí omi rí lóju Ọba ilú Ìlọrin wa.

*Mo rómi lójú Súlú Adébímpé Oba wa tuntun tọ jẹ.
Lójú Émíà wa t'Ìlọrin
Émíà sunkún tíí d'Ògbómòşó*

(It has turned into river
Muritala's mourning turned into river on my chest
Our benefactor has gone
Múrítalá who left and we didn't see his return
May God forgive him
The day Múrítalá died
I have never seen the king of Ìlọrin wept before
I saw tear on the face of Súlú Adébímpé, our newly installed king
On the face of our emir in Ìlọrin
The emir wept untill he arrived in Ògbómòşó)

Constructing identity figuratively involves metaphor and hyperbole or exaggeration. The artist above figuratively exaggerated the reaction of Emir Súlú Adébímpé to the death of Múrítalá by saying that he wept profusely from Ìlọrin until he got to Ògbómòşó, (a town that is about fifty miles from Ìlọrin). This he did in order to present that the emir as humane and a considerate person. In the first two lines, the artist creates and constructs his personal identity as a concerned citizen of the society, especially in regards to the demise of the then Nigeria president.

Beside identity creation and historicity, the indigenous oral artists in Ìlọrin use their songs to reveal religious diffusion. As at today, the predominant religion in Ìlọrin is Islam. However, it is discernible from the song of Àrẹmú Òsé that majority of the original inhabitants of the community before the advent of Islam were predominantly worshippers of the Yoruba traditional religion. In fact, up till today certain areas and neighborhoods in the city still bear names related to Yoruba deities, such as, Qbátalá, Şàngó, Mọlẹ, Yemoja, Ifá, Enlẹ and Qşun, among others:

*Èrò tí n bá n lólé Qlójẹẹ 'Lọrin
Èrò tí n bá n l'Qlójẹẹ Ilọrin
E bá mi kí Aníbaba-lérí-odó
Ará Oníkasan
Àdisá Ògbín omọ Jàálà
Omọ Abínbólùgbón*

(Those going to Qlójẹẹ in Ìlọrin
Anyone going to Qlójẹẹ in Ìlọrin)

I send my greetings to Aníbaba-lé-í-odó
 A native of Oníkasan
 Àdísá Ògbín, the offspring of Jàálà
 The offspring of Abínbólùgbón)

The Olójèè neighborhood is where the worship of Egúngún (Masquerade) was prominent before Alfa Alimi and his warriors defeated Àfònjá and captured Ìlòrin as part of Sókótó caliphate till today. The history of Ìlòrin presents it as a Yorùbá town which was originally used as a military outpost by the Aláàfin, paramount ruler of the Old Òyó Empire (Òyó-Ilé). At the period of its creation, Ìlòrin was administered by Àfònjá, the sixth Ààrè-Ònà-Kakańfò (generalissimo) of the Òyó army and successor of Ààrè-Ònà Oku of Jàbàtá. It was from this outpost that Àfònjá carried out military functions for the then Aláàfin named Aólè, the son of Aláàfin Abíódún. Aólè reigned between 1789 and 1796. It was during this period that Shehu Alimi, a Fúlàní cleric, arrived Ìlòrin with some of his tribesmen and were all welcomed and hosted by Àfònjá.

After a while, conflict broke out between Aláàfin Aólè and Ààrè-Ònà-Kakańfò Àfònjá. This made Àfònjá sought the support of Shehu Alimi also known as Salih Janta who had both spiritual and military power. After defeating Aólè, Àfònjá and Alimi's relationship strengthened to the extent that Àfònjá enlisted Alimi's men into his army and disbanded many of his men whom history claimed he didn't fully trust. After Shehu Alimi's death, his son, Abdulsalam, earnestly yearned to rule Ìlòrin, and clandestinely plotted against Àfònjá. After Àfònjá's death, Abdulsalam declared himself the Emir of Ìlòrin and pledge allegiance to Sokoto Caliphate. This was how the monarch of Ìlòrin holds the title of emir till today instead of the Yoruba title *oba*.

Afterward, the Yorùbá attempted to regain control of Ìlòrin from the Fúlàní but failed. Tóyèjè, the successor of Àfònjá, led the first and second attempts to drive the Fúlàní people out of Ìlòrin. The second attempt is known in history as Mùgbámùgbá War in which Yorùbá people suffered untold defeat in the attempt to regain the throne of Ìlòrin (Danmole et al, 1993, Johnson, S. 1921, Jamiu, 2014). This aspect of Ilorin history is aptly captured by Àrèmú-Òsé, showing that the forefathers of Sééhù Álímì migrated from Sokoto.

Wòlì Dan Báwà
Àáfàà Sééhù
Ìşòlá Òpó omọ Sùbéérù ní Sókótó
Áá tí n jòba nílúú 'Lòrin
Ojò tó pé ni
Irú Bùràímò Ìşòlá

Irú rẹ è tii je
Ìṣòlá ọmọ Bùrẹ́ẹ̀mọ aráa Sókótó
Ìṣòlá Ọ̀pó
Ọmọ Àkáádì aráa Sókótó
Ọmọ-ọmọ Ayélabówó
Ọmọ ọmọ Sàídù Àlàó
Ọmọ Gògó Àlùkò

(Dan Báwà
 Alfa Sẹ́ẹ̀hù
 Ìṣòlá Ọ̀pó child of Sùbéérù in Sókótó
 The institution of kingship in Ìlọrin town
 Has been in existence for a long period
 Somebody like Bùràímọ Ìṣòlá
 Somebody like him has not been made king
 Ìṣòlá Ọ̀pó child of Sùbéérù in Sókótó
 Ìṣòlá Ọ̀pó
 Child of Àkáádì native of Sókótó
 Grandchild of Ayélabówó
 Grandchild of Sàídù Àlàó
 Child of Gògó Àlùkò)

It is really amazing the kind of identity that diffusion of culture created in Ìlọrin as seen in the example of the song above. There is a combination of Yorùbá and Fúlání names. For example, we have a combination of Ìṣòlá and Bùrẹ́ẹ̀mọ from Sókótó. Also, Ìṣòlá, the child of Bùrẹ́ẹ̀mọ, bearing one of the totemic appellations of Yorùbá lineages, 'Ọ̀pó'. Social interaction and cultural diffusion have given room for the above kind of representation in the artist's song. Also, the king is referred to as the offspring of Bùrẹ́ẹ̀mọ, Àkáádì, Ayélabówó, Sàídù Àlàó, and Gògó Àlùkò. There is a diffusion of Yorùbá and Islamic names. Another example of this is seen in the *kèngbè* song performed during a wedding ceremony of a princess thus:

Ọlọhun kó feríi jòkú wa
Súlú n bẹ lẹrun, bàbáa Kọ̀lápọ
Ọlọhun kó ferí jòku wa
Àlàbí n bẹ lẹrun, baba Làwepọ
Ọlọhun kó feríi jòku wa

(May God forgive the dead in heaven
 Súlu, Kọ̀lápọ's father is in heaven)

May God forgive the dead in heaven
 Àlàbí, Làwepò's father is in heaven
 May God forgive the dead in heaven)

The above excerpt refers to Súlú as the father of Kólápò. The singer also mentioned Àlàbí as the father of Lávépò. Súlú is not a Yorùbá name, but through diffusion of culture and languages, the Fúlàní also bear names like Kólápò, Àlàbí Òpó, Ìṣòlá, and many others that are Yorùbá names.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, attempt has been made to study the contributions of indigenous singers in Ìlòrín to the construction of social history and identity of the people in their locality. Identity construction is an integral part of human beings. In Yorùbá society, oral artists use the medium of oral performance to construct identity and social history of the society they are performing for. As we've shown in the essay, a substantial part of Ìlòrín songs, chants, and recitals is devoted to eulogy because, according to Abubakre (2006:103), praise singing is part of the rich oral culture of the Yorùbá, who are the majority of the inhabitants of Ìlòrín. This culture of praise forms a basic element of their public life. In addition to this, Islam, the religion professed by the people of Ìlòrín, teaches that good deed should be acknowledged and appreciated.

References

- Abubakre, R.D. (2006). "The leading Roles of Ilorin in Arabic Scholarship in Nigeria." In: S. A. In Jimoh (ed.). *Ilorin: Centre of Learning, Ilorin*, Ilorin: University of Ilorin Press for Jimson Publishers, pp 99-111.
- Ajíbádé, G.O. (2012). "The Yorùbá Oral Artists and Their Use of Words." *Journal of Yoruba Studies Association of Nigeria* 7(1):30-62.
- Akinyemi, A. (2011). African oral tradition then and now: a culture in transition. *Centrepoint Journal, Humanities Edition*. 14(1): 27-51.
- Barber Karin. (1979). "Oriki in Okuku: Relationships between Verbal and Social Structures." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ife, Nigeria.
- Ògúnṣínà, B. (1987). "The sociology of the Yorùbá Novel: A Study of Isaac Thomas, D.O. Fágúnwà and Òkédijí." Unpublished Ph.D., Ìbàdàn: University of Ìbàdàn.
- Finnegan, Ruth. (1992). *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*. Indiana University Press.
- Okafor, R.C. (2015). *Music in Nigerian Society*. Enugu: New Generation Books.

- Danmole, H., T. Falola, & S. Bada. (1993). "The Documentation of Ilorin by Samuel Ojo Bada." *History in Africa*, 20, 1-13. doi:10.2307/3171960.
- Ibraheem, L. O. (2018). "The Contributions of Ìlọrin Scholars to Poetry in Arabic in Nigeria" *Research Gate* 17(2):129-144.
- Jamiu, F.O. (2014). "Contributions of Ìlọrin scholars to Arabic and Islamic studies in Yorùbá land: Focus on Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Iluri," *African Journal of History and Culture* 6(8):112-118. DOI: [10.5897/AJHC2014.0193](https://doi.org/10.5897/AJHC2014.0193)
- Johnson, S., (1921). *The history of the Yorubas: From the earliest times to the beginning of the British protectorate*. O. Johnson (Ed.). CMS, Lagos.
- Salihu, H.A. & Jawondo, I.A. (2006). "Ilorin Emirate: Its People and Politics." In S.A. Jimoh (ed.). *Ilorin: Centre of Learning*. Ilorin, JIMSON Publishers.