

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL RELEVANCE OF THE HUNTERS' PERFORMANCE IN YORÙBÁ LAND

Akínşìpè, Felix Akíntúndé

Abstract

Art is considered a functional phenomenon which does not exist for mere pleasure or for its own sake in the Yorùbá land. Every performance in the Yorùbá society either for ritual or entertainment purposes usually has cogent reasons attached to them. This is perhaps one of the reasons why it has been difficult and impossible for the influence of the Western religion/cultures to eradicate the traditional performances. The roles they play in the peoples' life remain germane that they cannot afford to neglect them. Our main objective thus is to examine the significance of the hunters' performance as a functional art in order to evaluate its socio-cultural values to the Yorùbá people. This paper employed the analytical method where the researcher depended on written and printed sources from relevant journal articles, books and internet sources as our primary source of data collection. The unstructured interview instrument was also adopted in order to complement the information obtained from the books and library. Our findings revealed the fact that the hunters' performance remains highly functional across Yorùbá land. Largely for its dual roles and multi-facet approaches the hunters' performance is used for social (naming, wedding, coronation, birthdays...) and sacred ceremonies like burials, sacrifices and ancestral worships. The performance divulges the art, aesthetics, beliefs, taboos, ideals, communality and culture of the Yorùbá people. The belief of the people in what may be the consequence of not carrying out the performance is still very strong and they cannot neglect it. The paper concludes that the hunters' performance remains purposeful in the Yorùbá society till date.

Keywords: Socio-Cultural, Hunters' Dance, Performance, Functionalism, Yorùbá People

1. Introduction

Art is a functional aspect of Yorùbá culture. Music, dance, drama and the fine arts are merged into some social events that are inseparable from the culture and day-to-day activities of the Yorùbá people. Every structure of the society is embellished with one form of social activity or the other so much that there is always a ceremony to accompany every major event and occurrence in the land. Such covers events of birth to marriage and to death. The culture of the Yorùbá people can therefore not be separated from their social activities. Thus, performances among the Yorùbá societies are vastly functional. Lihamba (1985) posits that "the performing arts, dance, music and theatre, are cultural activities which contribute towards and at the same time manifest socio-economic development. These are social historical phenomena which embody man's expressive capacity at each moment of his development".

For the purpose of this paper we shall adopt the definition of *performance* as stated by Roach (2016) that a performance "must take a form of action – a play, a rite, a dance, a game, a parade, an utterance". He concludes that "the action of a performance may be practical or symbolic, but it is 'always doing or a thing done'. In all aspects, the hunters' performance of the Yorùbá people conforms to all the qualities mentioned above in the sense that a typical hunters' performance involves plays, rites, dance, games and utterances (chants, songs and poetics). The hunters' performance is also both symbolic and practical involving "doing things". In the same vein Schechner (2006) posits that a performance is any behavior that "are 'restored behaviors' 'twice-behaved behaviors', performed actions that people train for and rehearse".

The hunters' performance of the Yorùbá people is a product of a well-rehearsed, long prepared and elaborate process. The hunters' performance is rooted in the culture of Yorùbá people. The performance encapsulates their beliefs, art, religion, norms, economic and political orientation. Dance is a necessary accompaniment and sometimes the wheel of the vehicle of any typical Yorùbá performance. To say that dance is the string of life in the performances and a very vital tool of harmonious living in Yorùbá culture is

not an understatement. From birth to the grave, dance plays prominent roles in all their activities; in beginning, development and the shaping of the peoples life. It is observed that;

Yoruba Dancing is an important element to the live of the Yoruba Society. Trying to illustrate the importance of dance in the Yoruba culture is almost like trying to illustrate the importance of food in human existence. Dancing, drumming and singing are important to every aspect of life. For example, if you are a fisherman, there are special dances that you would perform along with special drumming and songs. (<https://sites.google.com/site/yorubadance7>)

It is an affirmation that an occupation with the most dreaded attributes like hunting still has room for dance and performance. The Yorùbá hunters' performance serves a significant purpose in the social life as well as cultural value in the society till date. The Yorùbá hunters' performance is therefore a functional art. It suitably falls under Christopher Caudwell's functionalism theory of art. As captured by Pawling (1989)

Caudwell saw art and science as complementary human activities which were directed at different areas of reality, but which shared the general function of helping human beings to survive, adapt and develop. Science appropriated 'external reality' -the natural and physical environment- for human ends, whereas art achieved its purpose by working on the 'inner world' of the emotions, adapting the individual to the 'necessity' of social existence. This was a dialectical process which involved not only the adaptation of human beings, but also the widening of their consciousness... Similarly, as artists explored the world of feelings and desires, so they were able to construct a more detailed picture of the needs and interests which governed that internal realm of human reality.

This theory stems from Emile Durkheim's functionalism theory which is more from a sociological perspective. According to Cole (2018)

Durkheim was most interested in the glue that holds society together, which means he focused on the shared experiences, perspectives, values,

beliefs, and behaviors that allow people to feel that they are a part of a group and that working together to maintain the group is in their common interest. In essence, Durkheim's work was all about culture, and as such, it remains deeply relevant and important to how sociologists study culture today.

Caudwell therefore developed his theory as a functionalism approach to art in particular. It is based on the notion that performances done in any given society has a purpose. It is believed that the different functions of different aspects of the society are somehow unified so much that a problem in one area will affect the others and the society at large. It debunked the theory that art can only serve aesthetic purpose. Where aesthetics is paramount, he argues that it is intended and in fact designed to serve a purpose. This is the new focus of the functionalism of art.

This position as corroborated by Beardsley (1982) defines functionalism as an artwork which "is either an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an aesthetic experience valuable for its marked aesthetic character, or (incidentally) an arrangement belonging to a class or type of arrangement that is typically intended to have this capacity". Aesthetics in art is no longer seen as "art for art's sake" but art serving considerable functions. The Yorùbá hunters' performance is vastly functional in the culture, belief and social lives of the Yorùbá people.

The focus of this functionalist theory of art is that 'art' like that of performance has major functions to perform in the society. It is rooted in the tradition, culture, believe, religion and worldview of the people. Where aesthetics is seen, it is indeed to be viewed as an intended function in such particular performance. Lihamba (1985) posits that "Like the other arts, the performing arts have been established to manifest man's work, needs and aspirations. But this manifestation is both peculiar and general. The performing arts demand to exist by their own laws, but at the same time they are part of the general activities of man".

It debunked the theory that art can only serve aesthetic purpose. Where aesthetics is paramount, he argues that it is intended and in fact

designed to serve a purpose. This is the new focus of the functionalism of art. Aesthetics in art is no longer seen as “art for art’s sake” but art serving considerable functions. The Yorùbá hunters’ performance falls squarely into this category as it is vastly functional in the culture, belief and social lives of the Yorùbá people. The focus of this functionalist theory of art is that ‘art’ like that of performance has major functions to perform in the society. It is rooted in the tradition, culture, believe, religion and worldview of the people. Where aesthetics is seen, it is indeed to be viewed as an intended function in such particular performance.

1.1 The Yorùbá People

The Yorùbá land of Nigeria according to Atanda (1980) lies between latitude 6⁰ and 9⁰ N and longitudes 2.30 and 6.30 East. Its Southern boundary is the Benin, and extends from the eastern limit on the west to the western border of the kingdom of Benin on the east”. The name Yorùbá is “is a synonym for an identifiable cultural group as well as the language spoken by that cultural group” (Adejumo 2005). The present site covers the six states of Òndó, Òyó, Ògùn, Òşun, Èkitì and Lagos states. Though all these people are called Yorùbá speaking people, they speak different dialects and can further be divided in these capacities. By their dialects, they can be classified as the Òyòş – the generally accepted standard Yorùbá language, which include; the Ìbàdàns, Ògbómòşşòş, Ifẹş, Gbòngáns, etc. Next are those whose dialects vary slightly from the standard Yorùbá. These include the Ègbás, Èkitìş, Ìjẹbús, Òndós, Òwòş, Àkókós, Ìkálẹş, Ìlàjẹş, Ìlòrins and others.

Today, the Yorùbá people are found all over the world. While Ibitokun (1993). Posits that the “Yorùbá people are also found in parts of Kogi State, Kwara State and Kétu in Benin Republic”, Adejumo (2005) asserts that:...the Yorùbá population spreads far beyond the borders of Nigeria. It is estimated that there are about fifteen million Yorùbá in the rest of Africa, with most of them residing in the western part of the continent, especially in the People’s Republic of Benin. A large part of the Yorùbá population was relocated outside

the African continent as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. For this reason, several Yorùbá settlements could be found in Europe, Asia, the Caribbean Islands, and the Americas – especially in Brazil where they have gained strong roots.

Also agreeing with these spread, Liberman and Awoyale (2005) categorize the Yorùbá people in terms of their language into three main categories of “global Yorùbá” spoken by the “native” speakers in Nigeria and has become a global language of the world. The “continental Yorùbá”, they are identified as “the vibrant mother tongue of several millions in West Africa” and the African continent at large while the “Diaspora Yorùbá” – essentially a language of liturgy and songs, has found its way outside the African continent where the Yorùbá language is spoken today. The hunters’ performance takes place in virtually all Yorùbá communities with slight details and differences.

1.2 The Hunters’ Performance

At inception, the hunters’ performance was generally known and called Ìrèmòjé before a distinction was made and Ìjálá was carved out as the name for the entertainment/social aspect of it while Ìrèmòjé retained for the sacred part. Àlàgbé (2006) posits that; “Ohun tí a n pè ní Ìjálá lónìí. Kì í jé bẹ̀ẹ̀ tẹ̀lẹ̀. ‘Ìrèmòdò tàbí Ìrèmòjé’ ni wón n pè é” [What is called Ìjálá today was not so called before. It was called ‘Ìrèmòdò or Ìrèmòjé’]. His reference to Ìrèmòdò here is peculiar to him. The name is not mentioned by any of our contacts throughout the research period.

There are two major categories of Ìjálá performers in the Yorùbá communities. The first, which is fast becoming extinct, is by women who used the chants to beg for arm. This form of performers is no longer common in Yorùbá communities today. Àjàdí (1977) on this categories of Ìjálá performers recaps;

The first category (comprises mainly of females just tainted by few males). They are the people who are conceived that their vocation had to be begging, since they had consulted Ifa oracle, and they had been told to do

nothing else but beg through *ìjálá* chanting is *hortatory*. That is, praying for people and wishing them well.

This submission is corroborated by Babalola (1974) when he posits that;

Ìjálá artists, that is, persons who chant the *ìjálá* poems of Yorùbá spoken art, fall into two categories. The first consists of Ológun beggars, mostly female, from certain specified descent groups who perform individually on any day designated by Ifa oracle.

The second category of *Ìjálá* performers which is the concern and focus of this paper are the hunters. Àjàdí (1997) again reiterates;

In contrast to the first category, the second category consists of male hunters whose mode of *ìjálá* chanting is *epideictic* oratory, in which Ogun's heroic deeds and the metaphysical dimension of his historiography are sung.

Babalola (1974) who described *ìjálá* as "aré ọdẹ (hunters' entertainment) also agrees in relation to the second category of *ìjálá* performers when he posits that "the other *Ìjálá* artists are the trained bards (male) who after a period of training are asked to perform on various occasions of merry-making: wedding, child naming, housewarming chieftaincy, celebration, funeral, feast, family reunion and others." *Ìjálá* is thus associated with the social performances of the hunters.

All accounts agree that Ògún (the god of iron in Yorùbá land) while he was on earth was the originator of *Ìrèmòjé/Ìjálá* the hunters' performance. Ògún, a great hunter of his time was said to engage in the chants and dance usually with his followers at his leisure. Babalola (1999) ascertains that "no hunter can vividly claim the authorship of an *ìjálá* piece which he is first to chant. The god, Ògún is the source and author of all *ìjálá* chants; every *ìjálá* artist is merely Ògún's mouthpiece". The major believe among the hunters is that everything done by any hunter is a copy or reproduction of what Ògún had done or what he laid down to be done. Omoniwa (1994) posits "that hunters in the Yorùbá land are not only the worshippers of Ògún but are his

strongest devotees who do everything to celebrate the benevolence of the god, giving him a tremendous symbolic status”.

There are several accounts about the origin of the name Ìjálá in Yoruba history. The origin of the name Ìjálá as captured by Àjàdí (1977) is traced to Ògún who he claims;

was the one who commanded all the hunters to sing the epideictic name (oratory) to commemorate his “big fight”, with Aparo Dengbe-aha whose fault it was that he could not get palm-wine to drink when he descended from the top of the hill where he was, to look for palm-wine in a town around Iree, a town in the present day Osun-State of Nigeria.

This concept of this “big fight” is however contradictory to the origin of the name by Àlàgbé (2006) who posits that the name evolved from what he calls the “big fight” that characteristically ensues among the hunters whenever they gather for a performance.

Ohun tí ó sọ ọ̀ dì Ìjálá ni pé láyè ọ̀jọ̀sì tí àwọn ọ̀lọ̀dẹ̀ bá pàdẹ̀ lóde tí wọn bá ń ta kànn gbọn orin Ìrèmọ̀jẹ́ sísun láàrin ara wọn, tí ẹnì kin-in-ni bá rí wí pé ẹnìkejì fẹ̀ bọ̀rí ẹ̀un, irú ẹnì bẹ̀ẹ̀ lẹ̀ yín atare sí kọ̀rọ̀ ẹ̀nu, yóò sì máa pògèdè títí débì wí pé ẹnìkejì tí wọn ń dìjọ ń ta kànn gbọn yóò máa pọ̀ ẹ̀jẹ̀ lẹ̀nu.

What turns [the name] to Ìjálá is that in those days when the hunters meet at a ceremony and they began competition in the art of Ìrèmọ̀jẹ́ chanting, if anyone sees the other person is about to outshine his, such a person can throw some alligator pepper into his mouth and chant incantation to the extent that the other person competing with him can start vomiting blood.

It was this display of dangerous charms and the corresponding dangers it poses that makes people to refer to the performance as an avenue for a “big fight”. Ajuwon (1981) reiterates that “Ìdìje ńlá gbáà ni àwọn ọ̀dẹ̀ ń fi Ìrèmọ̀jẹ́ Ògún ẹ̀”. [Ògún’s Ìrèmọ̀jẹ́ is made a highly competitive event among the hunters]. Àlàgbé (2006) concludes that; “Èyí ló bí ibẹ̀èrè tí àwọn ènìyàn maà ń bi ara wọn wí pé, ‘Níbo lẹ̀ ń lọ?’ Tí àwọn yókù yóò sì máa wípé àwọn ń lọ sun Ìrèmọ̀jẹ́ ni, ní ibi tí a ti ń seré “Ìjà ńlá”. [This led to the question people ask one

another that; 'Where are you going?' and the answer that we are going to Ìrèmòjé performance where there is going to be a display of "Big Fight"

Over time Ija Nla "Big Fight" becomes pronounced as Ìjálá. Ìjálá. According to Àlàgbé (2006) Ìjálá is the assimilation of the "n" in the name "Ija Nla" which he captures thus;

Ija + nla γ nlá

Ija nla thus becoming Ija (n)la and consequently Ìjálá as it is known today. Alagbe's account was corroborated by all of the hunters interviewed in course of this research. For example Chief Ìdòwú Ògúnlàdé simply says; Ìrèmòjé lo bi Ìjálá [Ìrèmòjé gave birth to Ìjálá]. Chief Àlàbí Ògúndépò added a dimension that when people (i.e. the audience/non-hunters) were no longer coming out to watch the Ìjálá performances because of the fear of being harmed or charmed and the performers noticed that they were only performing for themselves without the audiences, they realised the need to mellow down the fight of charms. Chief Ìdòwú Ògúnlàdé added that the absence of the audience was making the hunters poor because nobody was appreciating their performances by giving (spraying) them money as usual during their performances.

Alfa Bello supports the above claims when he recalled that some hunters die as a result of the "big fight" that takes place during the Ìjálá performances either right there at the performance venue or later when they get home as a result of the attack or injury sustained during the performance. Thus the hunters came together to remind themselves that entertainment was their main purpose and they should go back to it. There was no need for the entertainment to claim the lives of fellow hunter. The removal of the dangerous fights led to the change in the name of the performance from Ija nla (big fight) to just Ìjálá.

When the distinction was made between Ìrèmòjé and Ìjálá, Ìrèmòjé thus became the name given to the special performance by hunters to permanently stop and disconnect a dead hunter from hunting activities and usher him to the world beyond to either take a rest or to hunt only with the

guild of dead hunters. That is why it is usually referred to as “aré ípà ọdẹ” - the performance for the disengagement of a dead hunter from hunting and his transition into the world beyond. It is a form of rites of passage believed and designed to accompany a dead hunter to the world beyond and enable him rest peacefully. It is a performance that cannot be undertaken during the day time but takes place only in the night. That is the reason the hunters chant;

Ìrèmòjé kì í s’orin ìgbà-kùùgbà,

Orin tá ì í kọ lọsàrán,

Àfi lóru ni. (Àjùwòn, 1981)

Ìrèmòjé is not a song for every time

It is a song not sang in the noon

Except in the night

They also chant;

Ìrèmòjé kì í s’orin ìgbà-kùù-gbà,

Kì í s’orin tí à á gbọdèdè ẹnii kọ

Orin tí à á kọ nígbà tó bá s’òro fún ọdẹ ni. (Àjùwòn, 1981)

Ìrèmòjé is not a song for every time

It is not a song normally sang in the comfort of one’s compound

But a song of difficult time for the hunters.

Àlàgbé (2006) aptly captures the essence of Ìrèmòjé thus;

Ìrèmòjé jẹ orin tí ó wà fún idágbére fún ọdẹ tí ó tí kú àti pàápàá jù lọ,

ó jẹ orin tí àwọn ẹgbé ọdẹ fi ní yọ ọwọ ọdẹ tí ó kú nínú ẹgbé ọdẹ ayé

kí ó lè darapọ mọ ẹgbé rẹ, àní ẹgbé ọdẹ ọrun. Ní sókí, a ó ri pé orin

ta á ní kọ lákòókò tí ó bá sòro fún ọdẹ ni.

Ìrèmòjé is the song of farewell for a dead hunter; more so, it is a song the hunters’ guilds use to detach the dead hunter from the activities of the

living hunters so that he may join the hunters' guild of the world beyond. In short, it is a song usually sang at a difficult time for the hunters.

The origin of this sacred art was traced to Ògún who was credited with the love for and ability to render some unique song/chants to capture a sorrowful or tragic period of his life. Àjùwòn (1981) captures it this way; "ní àkókò tí nńkan burúkú bá ẹ̀lẹ̀ gẹ̀gẹ̀ ọ̀fọ̀ tabi àdánù kan, Ògún ní àwọn orin arò tí máa ń kọ lati fi kẹ̀dùn ohun àjálù náà". [Whenever there is a sad occurrence, Ògún has some dirges he used to sing to empathize such calamity].

Before his demise, Ògún who was said to have thought of how to immortalize his unique art consulted the Ifá oracle and he was counseled to instruct his hunter-followers to render this song/chant at his funeral and at the funeral of all hunters that die. In fact, the oracle named the song/chant Ìrèmòjé according to Àjùwòn (1981) "Ọ̀rúnmilà sọ fún Ògún pé 'Ìrèmòjé' ní á ò má a pe orúkọ orin arò yìí" [Orumila told Ogun that the chant shall be called 'Ìrèmòjé'].

There is no controversy concerning the originator of Ìrèmòjé among the hunters in Yorùbá land. Àjùwòn (1980) submits in relation to the origin of Ìrèmòjé dance that

he god Ogun himself is claimed to have invented the style, either for worship or social dancing. When skilful dancers perform it today they resurrect an otherwise forgotten dance-form to the enjoyment of all present. What interests the dancers most, however, is the hope that their dance is pleasing in the sight of Ògún, whom they are honouring by it.

There is no controversy however, on the fact that at the origin the dance and chants were established by Ògún obviously as Ìrèmòjé before the carving out of Ìjálá from it. Babalola (1999) ascertains that "no hunter can vividly claim the authorship of an ìjálá piece which he is first to chant. The god, Ògún is the source and author of all ìjálá chants; every ìjálá artist is merely Ògún's mouthpiece". The major believe among the hunters is that everything done by any hunter is a copy or reproduction of what Ògún had done or what he laid down to be done.

It can therefore be concluded that the design of both Ìrèmòjé and Ìjálá were purposeful from the onset; one to capture sacred event and the other for social events. These major functions however include some sub functions.

1.3 Functions and Usages of Ìrèmòjé among Yorùbá Communities

Àjùwòn, (1981) identified nine purposes of Ìrèmòjé among the hunters in Yorùbá land which we have translated as follows;

- i. The need to give peace to the deceased hunter's children. Until this rite is preformed there will be no rest for the entire family of the deceased.

This is because the deceased can choose to appear to and scare any of the children from time to time. Also, it is after observing the rite for the deceased that the children can have confidence to approach their father's grave to seek his assistance, support for anything and or expect his good will.

- ii. The remaining living hunters too believe that Ìrèmòjé provides them the opportunity to acquire more powers. They believe that in honouring Ògún's command to perform the rite for the dead hunter, Ògún will be happy with them and bring more support and successes their way.
- iii. They also believe that observing Ìrèmòjé for the dead hunter will make him so happy that he too will now join other departed hunters to begin to support them in their hunting expeditions having become a spirit at death.
- iv. It is assumed that participating in according a befitting burial for the deceased hunter will ensure the same thing is done for them too when they pass on
- v. Even to the immediate family and the entire community at large, it is believed that Ìrèmòjé rite will prevent the havoc the unused and unknown charms of the deceased hunter can cause in the society.

- vi. It provides an opportunity to recount and learn the history of the people. The foundation of the village, histories of families and the reasons for their taboos.

It is a common practice during the performance for; "chanters of Ìrèmòjé poetry regularly refer to past Yorùbá rituals, customs, and ancestral skills in their performances. By making these references "they provide their audience with oral information bringing their cultural heritage once more into the limelight" (Àjùwòn 1980). Till date one of the inherent features of and attractions to Ìrèmòjé performances is the urge to hear the stories and recount of deep Yorùbá history.

- vii. Having heard the great attributes of the departed hunter and how he was praised for them, it elicits the resolve to replicate good deeds so as also to be accorded such when they die.
- viii. It is an avenue for the members of the community to get together and dance
- ix. It is also an avenue to train and learn the art of Ìrèmòjé chanting

In addition to the above, we identified and added other functions as follows;

- x. Entertainment
- xi. The praises of family lineages is also a very common feature of the Ìrèmòjé performance.

Babalola cited in Àjùwòn (1990) concurs that "the salute to Yoruba lineages is the axis around which other basic themes in Ìrèmòjé and applied poetic genres revolve. The lineages are the various lines of descent from the initial group of the Yoruba ancestors". These are specific family praise names and account. Every Yorùbá man is always proud and interested in listening to the recount of this. The hunters are versed in the keeping of these records and

their oral presentation at their performances. Accordingly Àjùwòn (1980) posits that,

The hunters view the theme of lineages as being of great significance in the performance of funeral dirges. The lineages are patrilineal in character, each having its own totem. The totem may sometimes be a particular animal or an object believed to have had some close relation with the particular lineage in the remote past. Crocodiles and lizards are typical examples, and the eating of such animals is often strictly forbidden to all members of the lineage concerned.

- xii. Invariably, Ìrèmòjé also serves as documentation of the history and culture of the Yoruba people. Not having a writing culture Yorùbá people document their history and pass it down to the coming generation orally.

A close analysis of Ìrèmòjé chant will tell us the history of the particular village, the family and the families involved, the deeds and major achievements of the deceased and his family lineage.

- xiii. Prestige for the children and families of the deceased. After this ritual, there is honour and prestige accorded to the children and families of the deceased for giving their father a befitting burial.

1.4 Functions and Usages of Ìjálá in Yorùbá land

Ìjálá being an art conceived to praise people and Ògún especially, delves into the mainstream of Yorùbá history, culture and religion. As argued above, though Ìjálá performance could be largely aesthetical in nature it is a functional one. The following functions can therefore be identified wherever Ìjálá performance takes place;

- i. The first function of Ìjálá can thus be concluded to be the praises of people, lineage, towns and animals.
- ii. Through these praises the documentation of Yoruba heritage is invariably carried out. This is because Ìjálá is the "common avenue for Yoruba hunters

to display the knowledge of their Yoruba heritage in terms of culture, history, philosophy, and general world-view" (Ajadi 1997)

- iii. No doubt Ìjálá serves entertainment purposes. From on set it was meant to be. Àjùwòn (1981) asserts "Fún ìdaráyá àti ìgbádùn ara rẹ̀ tàbí ti àwọn ọmọ_ìyìn rẹ̀, Ògún a máa sun Ìjálá" [For his personal enjoyment and that of his followers, Ògún do chant Ìjálá].
- iv. Socialization is another major function of Ìjálá in the Yorùbá society. Any occasion that calls for Ìjálá performance is a social one where many people from far and near will be gathered. Most of such occasions also include both sexes young and old.
- v. Ìjálá performance can be termed ceremonial performance which Enem (1976) describes as "dances that feature in ceremonies". These kinds of dances are found any where there are birthdays, naming and such joyous activities.
- vi. One can also chant Ìjálá for personal pleasure as a means of relaxation. Ògún himself enjoys using Ìjálá to amuse and enjoy himself.
- vii. Today, Ìjálá performance is widely used as a source of livelihood. There are many Ìjálá chanters who have bands that travels from one place to the other to perform on invitation at different occasions. There are many of them who perform on radio and televisions. We also have those who have recorded their chants/performances on tapes, CDs and DVDs and are making money from their sales.

2. Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper has so far examined the socio-cultural relevance of the hunters' dance and performance in Yorùbá land. The hunting profession and the performance by the hunters have remained a highly recognized and embraced cultural activity in Yorùbá land. The origin of the two basic types of hunters' performances, *ìrèmòjé* and *ìjálá*, were traced and the reasons for the evolution of the latter from the former were adduced. The functions and usages of the two in the Yorùbá society were enumerated. The functions they

perform in the lives of the hunters as well as the society in general are so germane that it cannot be jettisoned. It was established that they were not for mere entertainments but are used for serious purposes in the society. Where entertainment is achieved they are in conjunction with cogent underlying principles.

The paper concludes that the cultural functions of the hunters' performance in the society will make it almost impossible to stamp out. The tolerance the performance has for other religion is also an advantage which prohibits its elimination. It is therefore recommended that the tolerant approach should be further studied and applied in the national policy to advocate harmonious living and restore order in our country.

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Interviews

1. An oral interview with Chief Àlàbí Ògúndépò, a veteran Ìjálá artist based in Òşogbo during a workshop in Ilorin, on the 8th of July, 2014.
2. An oral interview with Chief Àkàndé Abogunde, a veteran hunter based in Odińjò, Ibadan, on the 22nd of April, 2016.
3. An oral interview with Chief Idowu Ogunlade, the majeobaje ọdẹ of Ogbomoso land, Ògbómòşò on the 14th of January, 2017.