

Significance of the Drum Language In the Psycho-Spiritual Formation of Yoruba People

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Abstract

Drums played a crucial and formative role in the cultural and religious life of the Yoruba people. The drum-assisted functions also influenced the emotional aspects of their beliefs and practices. Drumming is seen as an action which portrays their identity and life style. These activities are carried out during the performance of celebrations and worships where they play a significant part in the collective socio-cultural experiences of the people as they reveal the pulse and their inner feelings. They also serve as instruments which could elevate the deity and their devotees to the level of spiritual ecstasy. Drum of the Yoruba people also hold a deeper symbolic and historical meaning as they accompany crucial ceremonies like, births, deaths, marriages, etc. together with a ritual dance. The sounds of the drums in this case turn out to be a language in its transmission of information and messages. The use of drum language in this manner among the Yoruba identifies a spiritual modelling embedded with formation of signs and symbols that affects people's life psychologically. This study analyses of the language of *Bata* Drum among the Yoruba.

Introduction

Yoruba indigenous drum is a typical African instrument that displays the contents of Yoruba culture. According to W. Abimbola, "No culture

is ever static, and indeed traditional African culture was in its own way often dynamic" (Berger, 2012). This means that Yoruba indigenous culture and belief have an evolving way of providing landmarks for the styles and experiences of the people. These styles and experiences reflect the formation of ideas and spirituality that identify the substance of Yoruba culture. Akin Euba as cited by Berger noted that Yoruba Art and Culture is not simply an art form, but combine different bodies of knowledge including traditional medicine and science, history, law and philosophy (African Arts, Vol. 8). This indication attached the indigenous Yoruba culture to various contents which indicate special virility in the knowledge of culture transmission. Since history is part of its content, Yoruba people transmitted several proverbs, myths, legends, stories, songs, praise poetry and oracular verses through this medium (Olademo, 2009) which bring to light their history, religion and culture. These in turn have fostered harmony and cohesion among the people because every part of their philosophy takes their root from them. This study therefore takes a look at the way indigenous drum contributed to the formation of ideas and spirituality that makes Yoruba culture noteworthy. One must keep in mind that indigenous drums form part of styles and experience of the Yoruba. This paper will concentrate predominantly on the use of *Bata* drum language in its analysis.

It is semiotic method that is employed in this study. This method emphasises the importance of context, both context of situation and context of culture, in reconstructing the meaning of a text (Adeosun, 2013). It views language as the embodiment of the social process in a society through the use of signs and symbols. It shows that context is very important in the understanding of the sign and symbol because Yoruba language is dependent on context. Adesanya (2005) identify semiotic method as the type which takes cognizance of shared meanings among users of the signs and decodes such signs primarily from their worldview. Thus this paper will identify how drum is used to express ideas and feelings in religion and culture through signs and symbols.

Yoruba People as a Race

The Yoruba people are enormously significant in the history of West Africa. Centuries back, this race existed as one of the dominant empires during the Sudanese States. They received serious attention during Old *Oyo* hegemony and their contention with the Fulani Jihadists around 1350 AD. The Yoruba are commonly ascribed to different tribes which are linked by geography, language, history and religion and these tribes are found among Nigeria, Benin and Togo (Awolalu & Dopamu, 2005). According to Samuel Johnson (1976:143) the major thesis of

Yoruba existence shows that their primary ancestor was *Oduduwa*. He settled in *Ile-Ife* now designated as the ancestral home where they believe that the creation began. Yoruba myths further emphasized that, the founders of the Yoruba States were the sons of *Oduduwa* and this formed the appellation “*Omo Oodua*” (Children of *Oodua*) among the Yoruba people till today. *Ile-Ife* is universally recognized as the oldest and ritually most important Yoruba city and it is believed to date to about 500 to 850AD. Other dialectal groups include *Oyo*, *Egba*, *Ekiti*, *Ibadan*, *Ijebu*, *Ijesa*, *Ikale*, *Owo*, and *Ondo*.

Analysis of Drum Language

Yoruba people have different categories and types of drums used for different occasions and seasons. Certain drums which are played only for particular deities during religious festivals or special occasions which involve rituals claimed to contain sacred qualities, hence they are regarded as sacred drums. These categories of drums are used during festival, celebration and ritual practices. Examples of these types are *Igbin* for *Obatala*, *Bata* for *Sango* and *Egungun*, *Agere* for *Ogun* and *Ipese* for *Orinmìlè* (Ajayi,2004). Other Yoruba drums are the set of *dundun* family which are used for both social and religious occasions. This set of drums consists of *Iya Ilu* (mother drum or master drum), *aguda*, *gudugudu* or *opon*, *omele isaaju*, *omele ikeyin*, *gangan* and *kannango*.

Drums among the Yoruba are used as a means of communication to describe action involved in ritual performances. The communication takes a descriptive form in case of socio-cultural activities. This makes it serve the purpose of musical instruments in ceremonies like naming, burial and other celebration, while the action in ritual performance is a kind of drumming that is linked to religious activities. *Agere* (hunters drum), *Igbin* (*Obatala's* drum), *Bata* (*Sango's* drum) *Ipese* and *Aran* (*Ifa* drum) are most applicable in ritual performances. For the purpose of analysis in this study, discussion will be confined to *Bata* drum.

It should be noticed that “drums are an essential symbol of art and culture, not only in Yoruba land but also in Nigeria and Africa in general. They are linked to entertainment, language and culture” (Punch, 2012). This association corroborated the assertion made by Yemi Ogunyemi (2012) that “one of the things that have come out of culture is the drum”.

With these dimensions, the drum has been shown as a conceptual metaphor through which humans emphasize their interaction. This interaction is the basis for the platform of entertainment and the use of language. These interactions are coordinated through the culture

of the people especially among the Yoruba. Olorunyomi (2012) from his understanding of this interaction showcased the implications of the uses of drums from three different angles. These angles are mode, messenger and message. He identifies the serving as mode, pattern of drum as manner, passion as a means through which one could create a theme. Thus in his view, it allows message to pass through it as it serves as a transit vehicle. As a message, it is identified within the communication medium.

Its function as a messenger portrays its ability to transmit information. Olorunyomi thus shows that drum, among the Africans, serves as propagator of African civilization because it gives rhythm which contributes to our social life. These contributions identify signal mode which encodes information that alerts everything around. This is stated in the following expression:

Mi mi do do

Mi mi

Re mi mi

Re do

The interpretation of this expression is given as ‘this is Nigeria Broadcasting Station’. The context of this expression outlines signals of identification for any listener. Apart from this, it helps with different projection and structure of words from the dimension of verbal resources and semiotic connotation. The opinion of Olorunyomi is that drum in its peak mode would be emphasised in form of social entertainment and ritual aesthetic. For social entertainment, it ushers in a rivalry or contextual engagement like game contest or political contest which shows the importance of drum.

In *Egungun* festival, for example, two opponents in their reactions to each other for supremacy could afford to influence or instigate an action of rivalry by issuing out provocative responses through the drum. A particular word of contest could go like this:

Opponent A:

<i>E je koripe</i>	You must be careful
<i>Eyin teo fewa</i>	Those who hate us
<i>Te feran wa</i>	Those who are not in love with us
<i>Eje koripe</i>	You must be careful

Opponent B:

<i>Ore lao mase oe</i>	We shall continue to be friend
<i>Ore lao mase o a</i>	We shall continue to be friend
<i>Awa o ba tija wa o</i>	We did not come here to fight
<i>Ore lao mase</i>	We shall continue to be friend

To understand the signal mode of drum, Ajayi (2004) notes the need to be familiar with the language of the immediate community. Among the Yoruba, to interpret Yoruba drum, one must understand the Yoruba language or else the voice of the drum will become meaningless. He also discovers that even the understanding of the language sometimes does not help to know the communicative intention of the drummer. This supports the Yoruba wise saying that “*ko si eni to mo ede ayan bi eni ti o mu gongo dani*” meaning; it is only the drummer that can interpret the language of drum.

In another dimension, he shows that the drum in Yoruba community has become an interpretative medium of what the drummer is trying to say. This corroborates the definition of Adegbola (2012) on drum that “drum is a membrane designed as a devise to produce sounds that are sometimes organized into uses”. This also portrays the pervasive drum tradition which overall emphasises the uses as manifested in the issue of continuity and change.

Drum among the Yoruba serves as speech surrogates. It facilitates functional devices over distance (Institute of African Studies, 2012). Olajubu (1978) identifies drums as instruments that act as substitute for the human voice. He shows that a drum could communicate through direct representation of the spoken language itself, simulating the tone and rhythm of actual speech. This ability is demonstrated within the basis of adequate understanding of the voice of the drum. Someone who could not do this is considered as “*ko gbo ilu*” which means uneducated fellow. In Yoruba parlance, there is a conventional signifier to this knowledge of understanding the voice of the drum. This is conveyed by Campbell (1993) as follows:

Lowe lowe La a n lulu agidigbo Messages of *agidigbo* drums are usually conveyed in proverbs *Ologbon ni i jo*, Only the knowledgeable dances its rhythm; *omoran nimoo...* (Campbell, 1993) Only the discerning understands its pulsating nuances.

The above context from Campbell's view shows the methodology adopted for drum uses, which no untrained person can do. It also signifies embodiment of drum as part of African heritage. This heritage, therefore, epitomised African music in which certain inner feelings of black people are expressed.

The language of the Yoruba drum is therefore attached to the fora of instrumental music that talks (Olajubu, 1978). Drum as instrumental music serves as ingredient that increases the level of ritual and religious oscillation in festivals done in three ways (Olajubu, 1978). First, drum is played as dance music with its rhythm used to guide the feet and body movement of the dancers involved in festivals. Example of this is emphasized by Ogunwale as follows: "as the "Bata" drums resound, people dance excitedly, and the procession leaves from the palace on its two and a quarter mile journey to the grove on River *Oshun*"

The use of drum in dance music is also common to most votaries of religious worshippers during the occasion of ritual or religious worships in festivals. Secondly, drum is played as an accompaniment to a song or a chant with the rhythm of the music serving as a marker for the rhythm of the song in any festival. This marker is identified during the period the votaries and the ritualists exhibit advanced level of their spiritual ecstasy. The high tempo of the occasion is then controlled by the chant of the drum.

This chant allows the audience to observe a theatrical interpretation of a valuable and fascinating Yoruba religious ceremony. This chant also, in the lights of the first point, prescribes the steps of the dances and movements of the celebrants. This delighted dance and movement give the audience impression of being part of a traditional Yoruba festival.

Thirdly, drum is played to talk. This talk passes messages and also brings out a performance of *oriki* (descriptive poetry). It is also rendered in a stereotyped statement in form of proverbs. The *oriki* is a special praise for a deity. Vidal (2012) acknowledges that *oriki* forms an important part of the ceremony, since the song signifies the commencement of dancing. He also shows that as the person chanting the *oriki* enters the song portion, he or she is joined by drum accompaniment, echoes and dancing, from the audience. The uses of Yoruba drum from this particular talking mode could only be understood by those who have been educated in the language of the drum especially talking drum. The 'Iya Ilu' or mother drum is used to play the *Oriki* for *Ogun*, while *Bata* is used to play the *Oriki* for *Sango*. The use, according to him, emphasises the situation, through which the language of drums replaces the human voice. These uses are mostly exhibited during religious festivals.

The language of the drum is thus seen so far as important marker of ritual and religious actions in festival and celebration as considered by Lugira A.M. (2009) that “music usually accompanies African religious ritual and is used in prayers to request favours or help from the spirit world. The drum unlocks communication with the spirit world” This marker could be seen from different perspectives as already discussed above. Since drum holds an important position in the affairs of celebration and festival, it is very clear that its uses in both ways must have a potential significance.

Deborah S.L. in her analysis of celebration and festival identified the fact that most celebrations were of a religious nature and called “holy days”. She further emphasized that community celebrations in recent days are either religious or secular in nature. The community platform of the events of the celebration is, therefore, seen as the sites for affirming cultural identity, for renewing acquaintance with people and customs, and for other human benefits. The festival or celebration-fair, according to her, is then a way to showcase the event in different ways. Firstly, to show the baseness of the humanity, secondly, it identifies art behaviours and thirdly, it shows how parts of the community are ritualised and how certain values of a community are publicly reinforced. These opinions, according to her, are reiterated by Riley as follow:

Human kind created rituals or monodramas that engraved order and acceptance of the circular cycle in the minds of the participants. Such rites are common in every society and they establish and maintain cultural identity”. (Deborah, 1963)

The indication in her analysis, therefore, informs us that cycles of anticipation and remembering are significant human rituals that give meaning and coherence to life. The cycles of anticipation and remembering are bases through which drum language emphasised its significance and usefulness. As a medium of socialization, it serves as ritual signifier because it influences the behaviour of the participant and the celebrants in festivals. It also creates signs with coded ritual events that necessarily sometime push the celebrants into frenzy action. Its uses in festivals and ceremonial rituals, therefore, provide “reason for cohesion and cooperation which ultimately provides the habitual structure for the community to respond in the same ways to adversity and threat (Deborah, 1963).” Drum language embraces the attitudes of people towards celebration. It also identifies the act of religious heritage of the people through its making of music, singing, dancing and recitation which are seen as vehicles for ritual tradition. These methods that enacted rituals or entertainment are located within “activities that

unite participants with one another, performances with their audience and the community as a whole” (Deborah, 1963).

Five varieties are considered by Israel S. as modes of ritual symbolization or references. These varieties, namely denotation, exemplification, expression, mention-selection and re-enactment are considered as relevant to the interpretation of rituals (Israel, 2012). Within the use of these varieties, varieties in ritual interpretation allow the understanding of the use of drum language as well.

Denotation as explained by Israel is a ritual gesture that represents historical occurrences or occurrences which are believed to be historical. The gestures may portray hope for contingencies or purport to denote persons, gods, or things. The gestures, according to him, also may employ the voice in songs or speeches which could be in form of formulas, blessing, prayers and incantations. All these are ritually embedded in festivals in forms of actions and practices. Drum thus facilitates the formation and performance of the song and speech involved through its language. It also functions symbolically most time as ritual objects because it stands to denote the connectivity of most ritual worship to gods or deities. In some cases, it serves as the basis for worship as its recognition dictates the tune and contents of the festival or religious proceedings. Its language serves as the basis for transmitting the oral information that is connected with rituals in forms of incantations, praises, prayers and blessings. The tune of this transmission exemplifies and directs the mood in ritual dance that is applicable to specific rites.

Ritual rites may not only liberally exemplify certain features but they also have some metaphorical traits. The metaphorical expression of rituals involves several properties like joy, sorrow, humility, steadfastness, elation, exaltation, supplication, and gratitude (Israel, 2012). All these properties serve as platform through which language of the drum is metaphorically involved. An example of this is seen in the dirge song of the burial of any important Yoruba personality. The use of drum language in this regard tends to show a certain linkage between expressed properties and participants’ mentality and sensibility.

The ritual metaphorical expression already discussed brings drum to the fora of mention-selection. Within these fora, the drum serves as an object representing a particular religious or festival tradition. The tradition of worship in most festivals or religions will not be completed if some particular drums are not mentioned. Examples of these drums are, *Ipese* in *Ifa* worship, *Igbin* in *Obatala*, *Agere* in *Ogun*, *Bata* in *Sango*

worship and *dundun* which is connected with most deities. These drums are recognized as sacred objects employed in ritual practices of religious festivals and worships. They are seen as life-givers and must be revered and placated with service and sacrifice.

The notion of re-enactment as a concept describes the relation of a ritual performance to its past replicas (Israel, 2012). Drum language among Yoruba people through its *oriki* (praise songs) normally brings to the fore a commemoration of the extent or origin of a particular historical event. It also normally initiates past performances that have taken place through the lifetime. In addition, it refreshes the memory of the participants and worshipers of the ritual's origin nearest to the commemorated historical event. This medium is exemplified through the use of drum language. The significance of this fact shows that religious consciousness of the people is activated through this means as Yoruba drum is proved to be a record keeping archive. This activation then reaffirms the notion of tradition embedded in religious contexts.

It is noted from the above discussion that drum serves an important and indispensable instrument in a Yoruba community. Its significance could be seen from various points of view as already enumerated. This significance and indispensability is explained by Vidal as follows:

Drum in a Yoruba community is ... evidenced by its use as a medium of both verbal and non-verbal communication. The drum is used to recite the *Oriki* of kings, aristocrats, and commoners. It is used to signal danger, warn people of curfew and guide the dancer's foot patterns (Vidal, 2012)

Bata Drum in Yoruba Belief and Practices

Bata is a double membrane drum ritually identified with *Sango* (god of thunder) and *Egúngún* (god of the dead-ancestor). It was noted that *Bata* had a long history and the drum is sacred to *Sango*. *Sango* was the third *Alaafin* after *Oranmiyan* and *Ajaka* the kings of old *Oyo* Empire (Shop-Bill Summers). He was a mythic king who founded his cult in the ancient city of *Oyo*. He was forced to flee from his court because of the cruelty of his rule, and abandoned by all, hanged himself on a tree (*ayan-an* tree). He was later deified as *orisa* (Hallgreen, 1988). This development began the festival in honour of *Sango*.

Jeleel Ojuade (African Notes, p.18) in his work identified two versions of mythical stories that connected *Bata* drum to *Sango* and *Egungun*. In one version, *Sango* who was referred to as '*Oba ko so*' was once a traditional king in old *Oyo Ajaka*. During his reign, *Timi* and *Gbonka* were his warriors. During the period *Sango* and *Egungun* were friends,

but *Egungun* was older. The two friends loved to dance to *Bata* music and thus the drum always accompanied them on social occasions. After the death of *Egungun*, *Bata's* full attention as an accompaniment shifted to *Sango*. Later, *Sango* ascended to heaven to avoid any humiliation that would have overcome him from his warriors, who rebelled during his reign. On his journey, *Sango* summoned the *Bata* drummer, and instructed him to accompany him to where he was going to hang himself.

Another version of the myths by Ojuade identified the ace-drummer known as '*Saate*' as the one who made innovation in the musical instruments used in *Bata* dance. The use of *Bata Koto* was also linked to him. *Sango* was a beautiful dancer, and '*Saate*' an expert drummer. Their acquaintance blossomed into a beautiful relationship and interdependence. They always performed together at festivals and other public ceremonies so much so that people came to associate them with each other and always looked out for their performance together. It was noted that *Sango* and *Saate* later fell out due to sharing of some gifts which they were given after a performance. *Saate* felt he had been cheated and withdrew his services. *Sango* thought he could do it alone and began to dance without drums. He was shocked when people began to run away from him, taking him for a mad man. He later sent his wife *Oya* to make peace between him and his friend *Saate*. *Sango*, therefore, discovered that it was *Saate's* drums that added glamour to his dancing.

The Common *Bata* Drum

Bata has three different forms and each form has different shapes. The forms are, the real *Bata*, *Bata koto* and *koso* drum. A *Bata* drum has a



set of long conical type and three round ones that are short but tied together. The short ones are hung on the neck of the *Bata* drummers.

Bata is beaten with strap and palm simultaneously. *Bata* sets are four types namely, *Iya-Ilu Bata*, *omele abo*, *omele ako*, and *kudi* (Oluga & Babalola, 2012).



***Bata Koto* (a form of *Bata*).**

Bata koto is a type smaller than the real *Bata* drums but made of calabash and soft skin. The calabash has a cloth strap by which it could be hung around the drummer's neck with the drum resting in front of him.

***Koso* Drum (a form of *Bata*).**

Koso is also long and conical but the size is not as big as that of the real *Bata* but produces the same sound (Oluga & Babalola, 2012). The major difference between the real *Bata* and *koso* is that *koso* is a type of drum that is used by the drummer within the palace of *Alaafin*. Its function is to wake the king up every morning at 4.am (Johnson, 1976). The real *Bata* from the emphasis given by Alao shows that, the lyrics of the drum gave it an important place in the heart of *Sango*. Since *Sango* enjoyed the sound of the drum, it became significant to his social outfit. Any



time when he was angry, it is said that he used to fork out fire and smoke from his mouth and nostrils. This action is normally instigated by the performance of *Bata* drummer. The sound of the drum is highly intriguing and this increases the level of his emotional reaction. Alao (interview) in his explanation clearly identified *koso* as the

original drum for the king of *Oyo* whom *Sango* was among but that the display of *Bata* won for it a significant honour.

The emphasis made on *Bata* here is also applicable to its use among the *Egungun* worshippers. *Egungun* in Yoruba land is considered as the spirits of the ancestors. There is need to worship these spirits from time to time since most departed forefathers are seen as still occupying an important place among their kith and kin who they left behind. They are still regarded as protectors and supervisors of their fellow members of the family who look forward to them. In this regard, to usher them back to the cult of the ancestors, *Bata* drum is employed along with the ancestral praises (*oriki*) which stimulates the spiritual activities of the occasion. The drum, therefore, bridges the gap between the worshippers and the departed spirits. Adegbite A. identifies the use of drum with *oriki* as a stimulant which aggravates the level of ritual and religious platform between the *orisas* and the worshippers. It shows a vehicle of communication between man and the *orisa* and in which the *orisa*

are influenced mystically and this helps them to relate with the outer most world.

T. Vidal (*African Arts*, p.56) shows that at festivals and vigils, *oriki* forms an important part of the ceremony; the song signifies the commencement of dancing. The echoes of *oriki* in the dance are joined by drum accompaniment and dancing from the audience. He thus identifies *bàtá* as drum accompaniment used for playing the *oriki* of *Sango*. He also indicated that the content of *oriki* (oral traditions) is emphasized through the drum to invoke the spirits of ancestors, propitiating them and soliciting them for help and support.



Alubata (Bata drummer) playing for Egungun at Ossun Festival.



Alubata (Bata drummer) playing for Egungun at Modakeke-Ife.

Bata Language and Formation of Signs and Symbols

G.A. Arbuckle (2010) define symbol as any reality that by its very dynamism or power leads to another deeper reality through a sharing in the dynamism that the symbol itself offers. But how does this sharing in the dynamism occur? Arbuckle clarifies this further through seven

facet qualities of symbols. He specifies these qualities as meaning, emotive, directive, multivocality, timelessness, polarity and models.

In the meaning aspect, the symbol makes a statement about something that the mind is able to grasp. With emotive, the symbol is able to touch the hearts and imaginations of people and thereby evoking positive or negative feelings. The directive shows how symbols create quality of feelings because it generates an emotional impact. The multivocality of symbol shows how it gather many meanings overtime and this allow the essence of polarity in which it can evoke opposite meanings at the same time. The model quality identifies the ways things are and how people are expected to behave. Arbuckle thus summarise that “the effect of symbolic action is emotionally experienced meaning. Signs are concerned about visible and quantifiable, but symbols seek to draw us beyond the observable to a higher experiential, transcendent level of knowledge.”

These identifications overall are platform through which formation of symbols and signs manifested through *Bata* drum language in religio-cultural dimension of spiritual activities of the Yoruba. The qualities already mentioned shows that symbols and signs could be verbal or non-verbal and this allow the essence of dynamism display through the actions of *Bata* language.

In a community in Yorubaland called *Modakeke* located within *Ife*, the artistry of masquerade is usually display in gathering at *Itamerin*. The gathering is called *Igbale* (a ritual connected with spiritual cleansing of the city). During this program, the *Egungun* and the chiefs gather themselves in prayers in front of the assembly of people. It is an occasion where different kinds of drums with *Dundun* and *Bata* dominate the centre stage. *Bata* drum in this forum always accompany the services of prayers involved in the ritual. The drum must lead the masquerade and the participants to the four crossed road (*Itamerin*) where the masquerade will perform their arts of dance.

H.J. Drewal’s scrutiny of this kind of performance indicates that those men who can “hear the drum” that is, dance well, will perform inside the masquerade costume. While, women who can compose songs and sing well will be part of the large chorus that chant praises, poems and historical narratives of the lineage. The artistic enterprise thus helps to create family unity and cooperation as it celebrates ancestors.

In another dimension, Drewal indicates the idea regarding Yoruba cosmos. He identifies Yoruba cosmos as the type that consists of two separate interactive realms. The Other World (*orun*) of invisible spiritual

forces and the world (*aye*) of the visible, tangible realm of living. The Other World is the abode of the deified ancestors and spirits of specific sacred spaces in which the spirits of the ancestors (*egun*) inhabit. In the world, some people have gained knowledge and wisdom during their lifetimes and these people after their death serve as mediators between the otherworldly and the worldly realms. He noted that the other world and the world are separate and distinct realms but they interpenetrate. He explains that crossing the permeable threshold are spiritual forces, like the gods who possess their devoted followers during trance ceremonies, and *Egungun* masqueraders who embody the spirits of their ancestors during performances.

The revealing thought of this in *Modakeke Egungun* festival is the symbolic four crossed roads (*Itamerin*) where the masquerades usually perform their ritual activities. The element of four among the Yoruba is an emblem or formation of “the four corners of the world” (*igun merin aye*). This symbol is a platform for the recognition of the pillars that hold and connect the world to the other world. *Itamerin* in this connection thus serves as the basis for interconnections which embrace the crossing of the permeable threshold of the spiritual forces. *Bata* drum serves as a leading drum ensemble that will usher the masquerades to *Itamerin* where they will display their arts of dance and communication with the ancestors. At this juncture, it is believed that the ancestors will join them amidst dancing and singing. The *Bata* drums thus influence the state of trance and frenzy of the masquerades and the devotees. The *Egungun* priests at this stage of the festival are the ones in charge of invoking the spirit of the ancestors through which they are ushered out. The invocation is done when the *Egungun* worshippers dance to the drums and are possessed by the ancestral spirits. There is the indication that at this point both the dead and the living are influenced in the ritual dance at *Itamerin* as this is shown to be an imagination of successful ritual in the festival. The beating of drum in this situation identifies twofold formation. The model of identity in ancestors which is created and which confirm the spiritual ecstasy and the model for action which instigates the adherent towards the ancestral identity.

The use of *Bata* drum is also seen from the dimension of *Sango* festival. The *Ayan* (the drummer) and *Sango* are very good friends. It was noted that *Sango* was the owner of *Bata* drum and thus the drum could not be beaten for any other occasion except *Sango's* occasion. *Ayan*, the *Bata* drummer and *Sango* were both in human forms in the ancient period. Their friendship later fell apart when *Ayan* snatched the wife of *Sango* “*Roro*” in marriage. Both of them later experienced serious calamity in their different endeavours due to their separation and quarrel. Both

of them, therefore, consulted *Ifa* (the oracle of wisdom) to know why and they were advised to settle disputes in which they have to provide certain sacrifice. After the sacrifice, they reconciled again. During one of the outings, while *Ayan* was playing for *Sango*, *Esu* (the Implacable deity), whom *Ayan* gave his sacrifice, advised him to be telling *Sango* through his drum that he had finally taken *Sango's* wife "*Roro*" from him. *Sango*, due to the lyrics he enjoyed from the drum, could not contend this but approved the request of his friend. The lyric goes thus:

<i>Mo fe roro naa</i>	I have finally taken over <i>Roro</i>
<i>Okanran soso mba</i>	The only one important
<i>Mo fe roro naa</i>	I have taken over <i>Roro</i>

This lyric is a communication between *Ayan* and *Sango* through the drum and only a drum listener can decode the meaning. It is, therefore, noted that *Bata* drum among the *Sango* worshipper plays a serious role in the area of dialogue. In this type of dialogue, there is always formation of symbol of meanings which the mind is able to grasp.

Ayànwande A. (interviewed) described *Bata* drum as most essential in the *Sango* worship. In the light of its use in *Sango* worship, the drum is usually described in the following *oriki* (lineage praise):

<i>Oburin da gojo gojo</i>	The one who walks majestically
<i>Afinju woja, won a rin gbendek</i>	The neat and decent that walks majestically into the market
<i>Obun woja pa siosio</i>	A filthy one enters the market with disgrace <i>Obun to woja ni o reru afinju wole</i> The filthy one will carry the load of the decent one into the house.

The theme in this *oriki* shows elements of hard work, hospitality, relationship and cleanliness. It describes *Bata* to be an element of good profession which gives the drummers prestige anywhere they are found. It also shows that the drummers are not indolent as they make provision for their families and also provide for their dependant. This then portray an emotive symbol which evokes positive feelings about the drummer whenever the sound comes through the drum.

Bata functions in the *Sango* worship according to Sangodele and Ayanwande (interviewed) could be seen from three different dimensions. The drum could provide a social flavour and it could also serve as a medium of pronouncing the honour of *Sango* and also could send signals to the *Elegun Sango* (*Sango* priest) in form of communication.

The three dimensions fall within the medium of ritual denotation in which messages are sent. These messages are fundamentally secretive and could only be recognized or understood by the ritual person involved. In this light, it is only *Elegun Sango*, the ritual members, the followers within the cult group and the *Bata* drummer, that is, the *Ayan* that send the signals that can understand the meaning. The outsiders or the uninitiated are denied from such understanding. The code or symbol used in this kind of communication is known as “*Ena*” *Bata* (*Bata* irony). This symbol could be explained in its multivocality and polarised form. The multivocal understanding of *Bata* language in this form shows how *Bata* language could gather many meanings with its formation. The meanings always form different polar semantically. The meaning identifies the signs that must be noted by would be addressee as the drum address the receiver. The most intriguing thing about this is that the meaning could evoke both negative and positive feelings which could only be understood by the drummer and the initiated or professional member. It is always impossible for the layman in this occasion to unravel the semantic understanding of the *Bata* language been communicated as the language of the drum is far above the Yoruba word that can be decoded.

During festivals, *Elegun* (the chief priest) may have been deeply engrossed in the spiritual or mystical activities of the occasions. It is only the beat of the *Bata* drum that can send signal of impending danger around him and this allows the priest to be attentive psychologically. This signal is, therefore sent in a language which no other person can decode except him. Such communication can be as follows.

***Bata* Language**

Isasare ti n jafa o

E je a mo ja o

Yoruba meaning

Ija ti n bo wa o

E je a mo lo o

English meaning

There is possible commotion around

Let’s take our leave

The above language is multivocal but with one polar. In other dimension, the code can be used in form of greetings or pleasantries. In such a case, we have the following:

(a) **Bata language**_

E ni pa bi o

Yoruba meaning

E o ni sonu o

English meaning

You will not get lost

(b) **Bata language**_

Nje kala e gidun

Yoruba meaning

Nje e gbo ba se e wi

English meaning

Did you hear us well

The above is also multivocal but with one polar. In another way, the language of the drum can be used in form of mocking denotation. In this dimension the semantic connotation of the word involves may denote a different picture entirely in the ear of the receiver who is not a professional. In such a case, language like the following can come up:

Bata language

Kain kain ni

Yoruba language

Were ni

English meaning

He/she is insane

Bata language

Sari ni

Yoruba language

Were ni

English meaning

He/she is insane

Kain kain ni ordinarily in Yoruba word is a name given to an insect and but now connotes a mocking word in this situation. The term *Were* which is a Yoruba word show how an insane person is described. *Sari* is a Yoruba term used by Muslim during the Ramadan when they are to break their fasting. But when the language passes through *Bata* drum it connotes a mocking gesture.

These phases in which *Bata* drum languages are used to give the festival and worship of the people a formation of spiritual flavour that allows

the participants to enjoy the dramatic action that portray the psychology of *Elegun* (the priest) of *Sango*.

Conclusion

The indigenous drums in the process of these analyses therefore show that they serve as media of socialization or social psychology that influence values that affirm cultural identities. The use of drum languages presents innovative words for petition, supplication and acceptance in religious ways. Their use helps to interpret the minds of the participants in a dramatic way.

It is shown by J. Enuwosa (1992) that “religious language concerns the special sense which a term bears when it is used in religion different from its normal and secular meaning”. This sense is the performance made through the use of indigenous drums in religious communication of the festivals. The communications are oral methods of spiritual expression done vertically between man and deity which exist outside the material universe but not limited and also horizontally, between man to man. This shows spiritual communication of one level of authority which is celestial and resonates in another level which is terrestrial. This could also be regarded as spiritual benefits acquired at the mundane level.

The implication also shows that the drum could evoke or stimulate the emotions or feelings. This in due sense stirs men to action and improves practical commitment within the festival. There is also the fact that as a symbol, its use unifies and binds group and community together. They help in the conceptualization of the absolute and thus help man to achieve harmony and highest psycho-spiritual satisfaction in the society.

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