**Yoruba Music Ensemble: A Window into the Complexities of Gender, Identity, and Culture in Globalized World**

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**About The Author:** Dr. Bayo Ogunyemi holds a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from the University of Lagos, Nigeria. His research focuses on African Musicology, with a particular emphasis on redefining the narrative of African music from an Afro centric perspective. Through multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches, Dr. Ogunyemi explores complex issues in African music, shedding light on diverse themes and presenting nuanced insights.

**Funding details and disclosure statement:**

This research work has been funded me. I have received no compensation or inducement from no one or any interest that may be related to the topic. I have not consulted anybody or organization for compensation or inducement in any form. I therefore declare no potential conflict of interest.

**Data Availability**

The data collected for this research consists of interview with musicians of different categories, historians and culture activists. They are in form of qualitative interviews, observational notes, archival records. The datasets generated and/or analyzed during this study are publicly available.

3. **Ethical Approval** Statement

In accordance with the principles of cultural humility and respect, this research was conducted in collaboration with Yorùbá community leaders, musicians. Every effort was made to ensure that the research was conducted in a culturally sensitive and respectful manner, and that the rights and dignity of all participants were protected. This report, though made use of human participations, and does not require ethical approval for the following reasons;

1. The data for this study was gathered largely using observation method of data gathering. In cases were focus group discussion in necessary, consent form was issued to the group. (see attached forms)
2. Being an informal sector, there is no such ethics body in Nigeria in relations to ethno musicological research. What is required is adherence to diverse cultural dictates as stipulated by the participants or the group of participants and their local representatives.
3. Of more paramount to this research of this nature is the informed consent. You can see the attached for reference in the next paragraph.
4. In my opinion, the research does not raise any ethical concern provided I have the informed consent of the participants.

4. **Informed Consent**

All participants in this research were properly informed of the purpose of the research and the extent of their involvement was stated to them in oral forms and subsequently, a form was issued

**Abstract**

This paper examines gender as social reality in the perspective of the Yorùbá of South west, Nigeria. The paper posits that the structure of Yorùbá traditional instrumental ensembles and the people’s musical practices, reflect the people’s understanding of gender. Hence, characterization of Yorùbá as patriarchal society might be controversial in so far as it might fail to reflect people’s perception of gender conception. The paper uses, conventions and practices in Yorùbá instrumental ensembles in traversing the whole spectrum of discourse. Based on an ethnographic approach, data for this paper were gathered in the six Yorùbá states of Nigeria through mixed methodology of interview, observation and bibliography. Drawing from Ọlájubù's theory of gender complementarities, (2003), this paper posits the relativity of gender in Yorùbáland. Although the culture is gender sensitive, Yorùbá people, through practice, conceptualize gender in terms of complimenting one another and not in terms of sub serving one another. Hence, sex, which is indicative of gender in Yorùbá's eyes is an indicator of human body beyond an object for stratification.

**Keywords:** Yoruba people, Yoruba traditional ensemble, Gender, Patriarchy society, Yoruba musical ensembles

**Introduction**

Discussions focused on gender have attracted considerable research by scholars from different disciplines. One of the key areas of interest to these scholars is gender and its use in negotiating social relevance. This topic has generated debates particularly in Africa where foreign ideas have greatly influenced the traditional gender belief and have resulted to imposition of Western narratives on gender categories (Afọláyan, 2016; Òkè, 2017). As Nnaemeka (2002) observes, gender in pre-colonial Africa has primarily been influenced by novel ideas and directions foreign to Africa. This development fueled the emergence of new cultures resulting from globalization and civilization (Appadurai, 1990). In Yorùbáland, Southwest, Nigeria, sexualization of gender and its employment as social stratification is gaining popularity. Yet, as Oyèwùmí (1997), Ọlájubù (2003), and Múráínaa and Ajímátanraẹ̀ja (2023) contest, such practice has nothing to do with ancient Yorùbá society, in which sex was just used for reproduction and identification purposes rather than for social advantage.

Recently, discussions center around gender has come up with the introduction of new concepts such as feminism, inequality, Afrocentricism, and Westocentricism. Feminism, for example, is a western idea that supports political, economic, and social equality of the genders. These are ethnocentric concepts that have never existed in traditional Yorùbá terms, in whose society, gender was not an organizing principle. “The social categories "men" and "women" were nonexistent, and hence no gender system was in place” Oyèwùmí, (1997, 31). She states further that,

compared to "male" and "female" in the West, obìnrin and okùnrin are essentially anatomical categories implying nothing in terms of presumed personality or psychology resulting from either. Since they are not explicated in relation and contrast to one another, they are not gendered and certainly not sexually dimorphic. In Old Ọ̀yọ́, neither of them implied social precedence; nor did either one imply masculinity or femininity, since those were not Yorùbá categories in life or in thinking (34).

The opinions about gender as a social reality are diverse, conflicting, and contradictory (Mùràìnà and Ajímátanraẹ̀ja, 2023). However, two positions of the opinions will be interrogated in this research. The first is that which describes Yorùbá society as patriarchal. This opinion holds that men pre-dominate social, religious, and political domains (Oyèwùmí, 1997). The second position expresses the complimentarity state of gender. This explains that gender cannot be differentiated by social relations but rather complement one another to ensure social equilibrium (Ọlájubù, 2003). As Múráìnà and Ajímátanraẹ̀ja (ibid.) posits, Yorùbá society operates within the heteronormative gender category, which views heterosexuality as the norm. For clarity purposes, this study treats gender strictly from an African perspective and not in the global view where biological sex may not always align with gender identity or where gender expression can vary widely regardless of biological characteristics.

In spite of the importance of music in reflecting sociological and cultural values, conversations about the intersection of gender and social reality have remained largely within the realm of such disciplines like Sociology and Anthropology (Rusak, 2004: 218) living music out of it. Meanwhile, musical practices as described by Omojola (2014), like other forms of artistic expression, represent an integral part of culture. “Music as a product of the human minds cannot but reflect human cognitive process. (p8). Ethnomusicology, which is simply defined as the study of music in culture becomes handy in this investigation. Ethnomusicology, an area of research that intersects quite naturally with those conversations under scrutiny has been relatively unexplored for this purpose. This monograph aims at filling this void by taking an ethno-musicological approach in interrogating the subject – intercession of gender and social reality. My basic hypothesis is that an in-depth examination of Yorùbá musical tradition, in terms of organization of music ensembles shall shed considerable light into gender constructs in Yoruba land. As Ọlájubù (2003: 66) correctly suggests, "gender as a construct should necessarily accommodate multiple paradigms in order to remain valid in scholarly discourses." In a nutshell, through an examination of Yorùbá’s musical traditions, this research aims at enriching our understanding of gender constructs in Yorùbá culture. It draws conclusions on the worldview of traditional Yoruba society and gender as a social reality.

This study intends to interrogate Universalist conceptions of gender by exploring the intersection of gender and social hierarchy in Yorùbá people's cultural context. This research conducts a critical examination of power dynamics in Yorùbá society, with a specific focus on uncovering the complex relationships and hierarchies shaped by gender. The study also locates Yorùbá music within Yorùbá culture by analyzing organization of Yorùbá traditional ensembles, and its implication in relation to people's gender systems. All these are intended to be achieved by answering following questions; how does Yorùbá ensemble organization reflect and construct gender relations in Yorùbáland? Does Yorùbá gender equate to hierarchal formations or is it in its nature a binary opposition without importance to social relations and lastly, can critical discussion of the organization of Yorùbá ensemble give a broad view of people's conception of gender? Employing an interdisciplinary approach, research derives knowledge from two disciplines; Sociology; to analyze social importance of gender in Yorùbá musical practice and Ethnomusicology; to explore Yorùbá music's cultural context and its relation to gender relations.

The Yorùbá people are concentrated in the south western states of Nigeria, including a substantial population in states like Kwara, Kogi in the north central and Edo in the South- South parts of the country. A substantial population of these people is also found in the west coast of Africa and southern America states of Brazil, Haiti, Cuba and a few other nations. Like most nations of Africa, music in Yorùbáland is symmetrical to life in its entirety. The social organization of Yorùbá society, which makes people the center of all activities, allows situations or, circumstances in the land to have corresponding music or musical performances. There is music for the commemoration of all activities embodied in the cycle of life. Music is employed to mediate conflict, instigate wars and social dialoging just as it is used to construct and deconstruct societal values and ethics. (Bernard, 2023). Yorùbá music has evolved over the time. The pre-contact era in Yorùbáland saw the people with their own type of music that is generic to them. This category of music is called traditional music. Though still in practice, it has waned in influence and patronage. Another category of music prevalent in Yorùbáland is the neo traditional or contemporary music. Music in the category is that that have elements of foreign influence. In this study, since my focus is the state of gender before the interference of foreign bodies, I shall sample the Yorùbá traditional music.

Yorùbá traditional music is both in vocal and instrumental forms. (Akin Euba, 1990; Vidal, 2007; Ọláníyan, 2003; Ògúnyẹmí, 2018, 2020, 2025) There are also solo and ensemble formations which incorporate male and female together or separately. Unaccompanied vocal music exists in the form of chants, poetries and recitations. Although it is generally believed that females in these ensembles are relegated to singing and dancing, in the course of my fieldwork leading to this study, I discovered there are cases of female only ensemble just as there are male ensembles. For example, Abẹ̀bẹ́ ensemble in Ile Ife, Sàbàríkòlò Ensemble, Òkèmẹ̀sí Èkìtì, Ìgbè Ọba, Lagos Island, Ọbitun Dance, Ondó, and so many are wholly female ensembles. In female ensembles, the women take up the responsibility of playing musical instrument, composition as well as singing and dancing.

In the present context, particular in the post modernity era, the Yorùbá identity has been intensely contested. These contestations have been influenced by various socio-political delineations that have continued to shape the Yorùbá space for centuries. While language and culture have been identified as defining features for Yoruba identity, certainly, this identity has be proliferated with other reflections. It is in this vein that Adéjùnmọ̀bí (2017) notes that Yorùbá identity has been shaped by complex power dynamics, including colonialism, slavery, globalization and possibly civilization. The imposition of colonial laws and social norms has had a lasting impact on African understandings of sex and gender, often imposing Western binary perspectives.

 The Yoruba people's experience has invariably shaped their identity negotiations, reflecting a complex interplay between local traditions and global forces. The pursuit of global connections has reshaped emerging scholars' perspectives, yielding fresh insights into Yorùbá music, arts, literature, and beyond. The Yorùbá people’s worldview is also increasingly engaging with Afropolitanism, as evident in the work of Yorùbá artists, writers, and musicians like Adégòkè Odúkọ̀yà known as Adé Bantu, Fẹmí Kútì and a few others who draw on global influences to create new forms of cultural expression. However, it is also expedient to constantly review the new identities in conformity with the realities of the Yoruba people. This is what this article intends to do.

**Literature review**

Many studies have examined gender from various dimensions, (WHO, nd, Kent, 1998, Hodgson D, McCurdy S, 2001), with key emphasis placed on gender constructions and its social significance. World Health Organization for instance considers gender, as ‘the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with others. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time’ (WHO, nd). This definition serves as a driver for this paper. This paper as stated earlier, contests the gender stereotypes reinforced by ethnocentrism, examining the impact of cultural bias on our perceptions of gender. Beyond the global look at gender, several authors within and outside Africa explore the nature of gender with special focus on Africa. Cole, Catherine M. et al (2007) explores gender issues relevant to the 21st century across the African continent: sexuality, activism, masculinity, misogyny, and seniority as expressed through writing, organizations*,* theater, and theory. This group of activists strives to provide answer to such intricate questions of the meaning of gender in African context, Why has gender taken hold in Africa when feminism hasn't, Is gender yet another Western construct that has been applied to Africa however ill-suited and riddled with assumptions? It is in this same vein that this paper explores the concept of gender in Africa.

Ellen Koskoff's 1987 book, "Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective", is a seminal work that provides an in-depth examination of the intersection of gender and music from diverse cultural perspectives. The book examines women's participation in various types of musical activity across cultures. In the same vein, Dunbar (2021) discusses the unrepresented musical activities of women in her book, "Women, Music, Culture: An Introduction." Although such studies offer good insights into an understanding of gender in relation to music at the global level, seminars focused uniquely on Yorùbáland is in scarce supply. Oyèwùmí's (2007) thesis, "The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses" discusses gender as an unknown term in pre-colonial Yorùbá sociology. For Oyèwùmí, sex was not used to predict social ranking and hierarchies in Yorùbáland, contradicting the idea of fixed gender reinforcing the notion of gender as a social construct. Some scholars have, however, criticized Oyèwùmí's claims, suggesting her views do not appreciate the essential functions of feminine power in Yorùbá land's history (Matthew, 2014). Ọlájubù (2003) advances an alternative position, positing Yorùbá thinking rests upon holistic harmony, while relatedness principles govern social and religious life. In the field of ethnomusicology, academics have examined gender and its intersection with music in Africa, using Yorùbáland as an area of research. Olúdáre's (2018) article, "Masculinity and Femininity in Yorùbá Traditional Musical Instruments," discusses social and musical influences affecting Yorùbá traditional instruments' gender status and names. This research is an extension of Oludare's research, classifying gender in Yorùbáland as culturally determined and investigating the interdependent relation of the ensembles' drums in shaping Yorùbá people's worldview of gender.

**Methodology**

This qualitative research used an ethnographic approach, conducting fieldwork for 5 consecutive years in different locations within Yorùbáland. Participating ensembles were accessed from all 6 states of Yorubaland in Nigeria, namely; Ọ̀yọ́, Ògùn, Ọ̀sun, Kwara, Lagos, and Èkìtì, and other states such as Kwara and Kogi which have a large Yoruba populace. Two major Yoruba ensembles of music, namely Dùndún and Bàtá, were the primary focus of this research, from which participants were chosen. In-depth unstructured interviews were held with Yorùbá́ drummers, musicians, musicologists, and community residents. Participant observation and discussion groups were also used in data collection. Apart from this, other complementary data were gathered from secondary sources, such as in-store research in libraries, archives, and online and offline databases. Due diligence was done with the participants to secure their consent to participate in the research before I commenced the process of data collation. Through content analysis the paper interrogates the study using the methods as stated above. The two methods of data analysis used in the study are content and discourses analysis. These methods allow me to analyze interviews, images, or videos to identify patterns, themes, or meanings as the case may be. It also permits me to examine the language use, power dynamics, and social context in the data.

**Theoretical framework**

This research draws upon complimentarity theory of gender which suggests that three layers of complimentarity, dualism, and interpenetration shape gender relations. Gender complimentarity theory emphasizes that men and women are different but equal in value and worth. The identifiable differences in men and women, instead of it being used against any of the two sexes can lead to mutual enrichment and collaboration. Ọlájubù (2003) argues in support of the complimentarity theory. In advancing this theory, she states that Yorùbá cosmology assigns each gender specific qualities, implying gender constructs within society. But she suggests these constructs do not of themselves constitute oppression or domination since they are governed by complimentarity philosophy born out of Yorùbá people's universal experience. A Yorùbá adage, "*Ọ̀tún wẹ òsì, òsì wọ ọ̀tún, lọwọ́ fi n mọ́*" ("the left hand washes the right hand, and the right hand washes the left hand"), captures this idea of interdependence, highlighting complementing dualism, an essential aspect of Yorùbá thinking. This adage, one among many, captures significance in complimentarity within Yorùbá culture in terms of valuing complementary relations between genders. Ọlájubù's theory is reinforced by Sófọlá's argument for Yorùbá cosmology's foundation in holistic harmony, which elucidates principles of relatedness in religious and social reality.

Drawing from Ọlájubù's theory of complimentarity, ethnomusicologists Andrew and Uzoigwe (2003) introduce in African music ensembles and performances, gender dynamics based on "differential complementarities." In "Ensemble," Andrew and Uzoigwe argue that difference and cooperation among musical parts constitute key elements of African music, and each part's potential can only be realized in its relation to other parts. Springing from all those, this work departs from condiments of harmony, rhythm, and vocal relations in a conventional Yorùbá music ensemble, to explore how musical instruments' functions in an ensemble's creation and practice, consolidate gender constructs in Yorùbá worldview. These place me in position to respond to the following questions: how do Yorùbá musicians see and live gender relations in ensemble and performance? For Yorùbá musicians, in what ways do complimentarity and differential complimentarity play out in ensemble and performance? What, in Yorùbá ensemble and performance, is the function of instruments, their naming, and interdependent functions in structuring gender relations?

**Findings and Discussions of findings**

In Yorùbáland, ensemble music is fundamental in Yorùbá musical tradition, and this produces rich diversity in musical forms. While I will not rule out the existence of solo musical works in Yoruba land, the conception of their musical performance is largely collective in nature. Music performance is largely conceives as a group work emphasizing the communal nature of Africans. Ensemble music includes a wide variety of expressions, ranging from instrumental, vocal, to combined vocal-instrumental performances. Even in solos, ensemble concepts apply, as Andrew and Uzoigwe write, "every music piece has got a combination of differential parts, rhythm, timbres, and entry points" (ibid, 74). This research deals in detail with instrumental ensembles, which have consistent structural organization. A critical look at the organization structure of musical ensemble in Yorùbá musical traditions is discussed later in this monograph. In Yorùbá culture, binary oppositions are an integral part of social structure and worldview. In every situation, two harmonious sides coexist, each contributing to a balanced whole. The Yorùbá people believe that opposing forces - such as positive and negative, life and death, good and bad - are interconnected and interdependent. This binary perspective is fundamental to Yorùbá thought, where life's various aspects are understood through complementary oppositions that work together. Instances of such oppositions include Death (Ikú) and Life (Ààyè), goodness and misfortune (Ire and Ibi), woman and man (Obìnrin and Ọkùnrin), left and right (Òsì and Ọ̀tún), Crest and Trough (Gegele and kòtò), Affirmative and dissenting views (Bẹ̩ẹ̀ni and Bẹ̩ẹ̀ko̩). This idea is captured in Yorùbá aphoristic thinking in "*Tibi ti ire la dá íle ayé*", (the world is premised upon good and bad prisms). Paralleling and apart as those dichotomies appear to be, complimentary they must be in understanding life and living in Yorùbáland. In Yorùbá thinking, nothing can possibly be in existence independent of its complementary counterpart. Such internal balance finds reflection in society upon its structure, implying patriarchy is not absolute in that woman (Abo) and man (Ako) principles remain inter- and intra-dependent. That is what is expected to be explored in detail in this paper.

The Yorùbá traditional ensembles can be grouped into three categories in terms of gender constructs: male, female-exclusive, and gender-neutral. Among them, those in the first category include ensembles such as Bàtá, Àgbà, Gbẹ̀du, Ìgbìn, Àgẹ̀rẹ̀, and Ìpèsè, known for its extraordinary musical experience in Yorùbáland. Each of them is related to at least one Yorùbá pantheon, making each ensemble sacred. For example, the Bata ensemble, which includes two-headed conical drums, is used in dedication to Sàngó, the Yorùbá god of thunder (Villepastour, 2010). Àgbá ensemble, which includes standing drums, is male-exclusive and attached to the Ògbóni cult, who exercise extensive constitutional powers in religious, juridical, and political domains (Ìdòwú, 2005). Gbẹ̀du, sacred-royal drum, is for the use of Oba (kings) and kingship institutions, and thus, represents kingship institution. Others, for example, Ìgbìn and Àgẹ̀rẹ́, serve specific gods, Ọbàtálá and Ògun, respectively. Women participating in such musical ensembles enjoy limited freedom, owing to communal values and societal beliefs. For example, menstruating women are not deemed clean and are not allowed to touch the drums or gods, creating a stigmatizing practice and gender stereotype (Bernard, 2023, Ukpokolo & Lameed (2017). That said, we can argue that this practice needs not be seen as segregation and restriction of women's social status. Instead, it emanated from an understanding of femininity and its biology in culture, which suggests the intricate interplay of gender role and culture.

In an oral interview with Chief Òjó (2023), a traditional leader and an Èrìn-Ilé drummer based in Kwara State It is only reproductive-aged women who have any restriction from contact with some instruments or have limited roles in some musical practice. It is for the reason that ‘it is taboo for a woman who is in her menstruating days to get into the sacred confines or altar of any god in Yorùbáland’ according to Òjó. The same can be found in Chief Jimoh Sẹ̀mí̀ú Akéréle's (oral interview, 2023) words as the Àró of Ọ̀tọ̀ Àwørì who holds Gbẹ̀du Ọ̀ọ̀tọ̀ in his care, ‘Gbèdu Ọ̀ọ̀tọ̀ is an altar of worship for Ọ̀ọ̀tọ̀. It is revered, placated and greatly honored. Similar to any other gods in Yorùbáland, various taboos surround the use of the drum. Even though other drums within the ensemble do not have an embargo against them, they keep themselves at bay from Ìyálòde because she is the mother drum as well as the scepter of the ensemble, ‘since in Yorùbáland, women are deemed unclean at their menstrual period. This is also supported by Fámilúsì (2012):

A menstruating woman should not take part in sacrifice to Ọbàtálá, Yorùbá fertility god and other religious acts. Ọbàtálá is famous for whiteness and this represents purity (since Menstrual period is said to be an impurity of defilement) also, they should not be allowed to enter into any sacred areas because they might make all items there useless (303).

This suggests that the gender segregation observed in this context is influenced by a natural or inherent design, rather than being a socially constructed phenomenon to emphasis segregation of supremacy of one gender over the other.

However, a new layer has opened in this construct. Women who had attained menopause enjoy some level of indulgence in this regard. Since this category of women is no more experiencing the monthly flow, they enjoy a relatively equal status with men in certain instances. This new practice is what Àlàbá (2004) expresses in his work, ‘Understanding Sexuality in the Yorùbá Culture’ where he says that there is no known Yorùbá cult, which has no female representative, not even the Orò, bullroarer cult. In all ensembles sampled in the course of this research, the imagery of male and female is recreated but not in the contest of gender or reproduction but rather in that of functionality and value placement.

In the musical ensembles examined in this study, the principal drum is prefixed with "Ìyá," meaning "mother" in Yorùbá. However, this designation does not imply a feminine drum. In Yorùbá culture, the term "mother" carries a deeper significance that transcends gender connotations. This is evident in drum names such as Ìyáìlù dùndún (Mother Drum of Dùndún), Ìyáìlù Bata (Mother Drum of Bàtá), and Ìyáìlù Gbẹ̀du (Mother Drums of Gbẹ̀du). This does not mean the female drum in all circumstance. Therefore, the mother as applied in this context may not represent the female gender in the context of the western world. The Ìyáìlù drum serves dual functions, producing both rhythm and melody (melo-rhythm), which is achieved through improvisation and speech imitation. Although the Ìyáìlù drum is not subordinate to any other drum, its functionality is interdependent with other instruments in the ensemble, relying on their complementary roles to fulfill its purpose.

As previously noted, the word "Iya" (gender typified) literally translates to "mother of feminine" in Yorùbáland. However, a nuanced understanding of its conceptual significance within the Yorùbá worldview requires more than a literal translation. To gain a deeper insight into the dynamics of Iya as gender symbol within these ensembles, it is essential to delve into the cultural and conceptual connotations of "Iya" (mother feminine) in the Yorùbá language. Yorùbá words like Ìyá Ayé, Ìyá Ajíbọ́lá, Ìyá ńlá, Ìyàmi Òsòròngà come with derivational prefix; Ìyá. Ìyá Ajíbọ́lá for instance is a name adopted by the members of Ògbóni cult to reference Edan Ògbóni which is the scepter of Ògbóni cult. (Ogboni refers to a powerful fraternal institution indigenous to the Yoruba people.). The name describes the essence of the Ìyá status in Ògbóni cult and by extension, in the Yorùbá worldview, Ọláìyá (2021) says, Ìyàmi (my mother) are the carriers of Àsẹ (Authority). They favor the acquisition and wisdom of beings and they transmit it to the ọ̀run (heaven) through settlements already consecrated to them, initiations and the realization of constant offerings and ẹbo (np). In Yorùbá culture, the term "Ìyá Ayé" literally translates to "Mother of the World." However, the word "Ayé" also connotes metaphysical powers, thereby imbuing "Ìyá Ayé" with a deeper significance. The mother in this category does not necessarily means feminine but one that is believed to possess mystical powers that govern the universe, patronizing the spirit world and often serving as initiates of revered cults such as Òsùgbó, Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ́, and Ògbóni.

As Oláìyá notes, Ìyá Ayé belongs to a group of spiritual beings known as Ajogún. Furthermore, the appellation "Ìyàmi Òsòròngà" represents the women ancestral power, embodying the mystical and dual nature of women as both protective and destructive. This term specifically refers to witches, although it's essential to note that the coven is presumed to be female dominated, it does not preclude the involvement of male. See Awólàlú and Dọ̀pàmú (1974). In essence, the term "Ìyá" may not necessarily denote gender in the classical Western sense, revealing the complexities of Yorùbá cultural nuances. A nuanced analysis of the term "Ìyá" uncovers its multifaceted nature, yielding rich insights into the Yorùbá understanding of this concept within musical ensembles. This perspective transcends a narrow gender-based interpretation, revealing that in Yorùbáland, the name "Ìyá " is bestowed upon the mother drums not because it is seeing and a subordinate of the other drums in the ensemble but a principal power block. Although these drums are symbolically linked to femininity, they embody spirituality and power in a way that is not inherently restricted to the female gender.

Another layer in the organization of Yorùbá musical ensemble that illustrates Yorùbá’s worldview of gender as a complimentary nuance is constituted in the rhythm section of most of the ensembles sampled for this article. The rhythm section of Dùndún ensembles for instance, consists of two principal drums, Omele Akọ (male rhythm drum lead rhythm player) and Omele Abo. (female rhythm drum) (Ogúnyẹmí, 2018). The same goes in the Bata ensemble. In the two ensembles, the Omele Akọ also known as Omele Isàájú in Dùndún ensemble leads the rhythm line while the Omele Abo, otherwise known as Omele Atẹ̀lẹ̀ in the Dùndún ensemble, corresponds the lead. Because the naming of these two instruments is gender inclined (Ako and Abo) (Male and female), it shall be used to interrogate my position at this juncture. An examination of the sonic components of these two musical instruments shows that Omele Akọ is higher in pitch than the Omele Abo. However, none of the two is superior to the other. It does not also indicate that one is weaker that the other. Both the male (Omele Ako) and female drums, (Omele Abo) siamese in nature, work symbiotically in providing rhythm line. Though independent, they functions correspondingly in providing meaning in the ensemble. This has further established the complimentarity nature of gender in Yorùbáland. The functionality of these two drums in this ensemble is not premised on any idea of gender or sexuality but relational complimentarity.

While discussing gender in Yoruba culture, in his 2004 article, Understanding Sexuality in the Yorùbá Culture,Àlàbá is still able to highlight the complimentarity relationship between male and female in Yorùbáland. As he puts it:

Both males and females in the Yorùbá culture have access to power, albeit relatively. However, the patrilineal lineage system practiced by the Yorùbá gives apparent upper hand to the males. But in reality the males derive spiritual power from the females who, in their wisdom, prefer anonymity in most cases. The main idea is that behind every powerful Yorùbá man there is at least a woman – mother, wife or wives, concubine(s), and daughters(s). A case in point is that of Ọ̀rúnmìlà and Ààbò, his wife. She ably assisted her husband to properly entertain Mr. Death, Mr. Sickness and Mr. Èsù, his mischievous guests, in spite of Ọ̀rúnmìlà’s financial handicap…(7)

It is also important to examine the circumstance of the non-involvement of the female gender in certain musical events and renditions in Yorùbáland. The non-inclusion of women in the performance process of some musical ensemble in Yorùbáland, according to my findings is not discriminatory of the body-type of women. Examination of the ensembles where women are restricted shows the ensembles are sacred ensembles and largely domiciled in the grooves of specific pantheons. They are, though musical instruments, anthropomorphic and objects of worship. This opinion is general across the Yorùbá space. For instance, Ìyálòde, the mother drum of the Gbẹ̀du ensemble of the Ọ̀tọ̀ Àwórì people of Lagos state is a deity. It is venerated and propitiated like any other gods in Yorùbáland. Ìyálòde has all the attributes of a god in drums forms.

My argument presented in this study as exemplified by my findings, is that music performance is not a zero-sum game where one gender is excluded or dominates the other, but rather a multifaceted landscape with various genres and ensembles catering to different genders. If this is related to the organization of social life of the Yoruba people, it gives a clear insight into the worldview of this people. It is equally important to mention that there are ensembles exclusive to the women. Notable examples of women-exclusive musical forms include Yùngbà (also known as Rárà), Ìgbè Olorì, (Prince and Princess ensemble), Ọbitun (maiden dance), Ẹkún Ìyàwó (bridal song), and others. Additionally, Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ́ is a unique genre of Yorùbá musical plays that specifically celebrates the female gender. Through the application of musical arts, which may come either in form of song, chants, speech song, dance drama, poetry (drama in Africa is intertwined with music), spoken verses, the Yorùbá women had made themselves relevant. While there is a school of thought that attributes greater success in vocal music and vocaling to the women some others like Ọmọ́jọlà (2014) have also submitted that the women in certain regions of Yorùbáland are involved selected traditional drumming activities.

**Conclusion**

With multidisciplinary strategies, this research examined gender in Yorùbá society using an approach grounded in music and sociology. It examined the variation in instrumental ensembles and other forms of practice in music to explain Yorùbá people's perspective of gender. The research found that Yorùbá people's conception of gender informs the structure of each other's lives as they believe in collaboration and complimentarity in life, which is demonstrated in gender relations. In recognizing Yorùbá society's patriarchal nature, this research defines the role of females in Yorùbá society as fundamental. The research also opposes the idea that sexualization of events or items in Yorùbá culture always translates to connotations identical to those in European culture. Rather, they argue, such elements frequently possess meanings within Yorùbá culture different from those in European culture. In addition, research observes, although women do not participate in some forms of musical practice, such exclusion is different from discrimination against women in European society. In fact, research contends, dominant gender ideals in Western culture have imposed themselves upon Yorùbá culture, distorting gender relations in Yorùbáland. Finally, this research reaffirmed Yorùbá complimentarity of sexes, not denied patriarchy's existence nor discredited female gender's significance. Through an examination of Yorùbá musical culture, this research offers a rich, contextual understanding of gender relations in Yorùbáland and one contradicting dominant Western discourse, one situating gender as culturally specific, with its boundaries. It highlights Yorùbá acknowledgement of sex as biological, not gender as in the West. This research has further emphasized the necessity of taking into account the cultural specificity of gender constructions, and not projecting Western conceptions of patriarchy and sexism. In listening to Yorùbá musicians' and practitioners' own voices and experiences, we can better learn about performances, negotiations, and transformations of gender in and through music. Finally, this research has illustrated the strength of music as a site for the construction and contesting of gender in Yorùbá culture. As such, it provides an unparalleled insight into Yorùbá gender and power complexity, and underscores the necessity for further research into intersections of music, gender, and culture.
This research offers an initial examination of gender and music in Yorubaland, yet there remain various directions for research to further shed light upon this multifaceted subject. In order to better ground our understanding, future research might seek to make an inter-communal, comparative examination of gender and music in various Yoruba communities, investigating ways in which gender roles and gender-based expectations in various environments reflect upon and structure themselves through music. Moreover, research might further explore how globalization and urbanization have influenced Yoruba gender and music relations, such as in terms of new genres of music and shifting functions for women in music production. Yet another potential area of research lies in investigating intersections among gender, music, and relations of power, potentially revealing rich details about ways in which gender reinforces and subverts existing relations of power for men and women in Yorubaland.

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