

# **Role of Indigenous Yoruba Music in the Cultural Development of Ilorin**

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## **Abstract**

Music is an important element of culture among African people. African music serves the purpose of entertainment, education, enlightenment, warning, chastisement and praises. The indigenous music has remained a veritable instrument of socialization among the Yoruba since the precolonial period. The study attempts to explore the role of indigenous music in the cultural development of Ilorin. The study adopted a historical research method, comprising the use of oral interviews as primary source, and relevant written materials as secondary sources. Ilorin is a heterogeneous community with a majority Yoruba, and a mixed Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Bariba, Kanuri and Gobir population. Indigenous music plays formidable roles in the preservation of culture and tradition among the diverse groups. There are several Yoruba indigenous music forms in the city. These include *Dadakuada*, *Balu*, *Waka*, *Were*, *Agbe*, *Senwele*, *Kengbe* and *Fuji*. The Islamic influence has been quite visible in the various music compositions because the religion is a strong unifying force among the various people. In addition to entertainment, Ilorin indigenous musicians use their composition give contents on the genealogy of their client, which makes the music a dependable source of oral history. The Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union has been a strong support in the sustenance of the culture of traditional music in the Ilorin emirate. The study discovered a strong influence of Islamic religion on the composition and deliverance of the Indigenous music in Ilorin. In spite of the external influence of foreign religions, European colonialism and the eroding impact of Western civilisation, the indigenous music has remained alive among Ilorin people.

### Introduction

Music is one of the non-material elements of culture in human society. It serves various purposes including entertainment, education and enlightenment, encouragement and moral aptitude, unification and solidarity. Indigenous music is also a reliable source of oral history among many societies in the reconstruction of their preliterate past. In Africa, the concept of culture deals more with indigenous heritage, and all the elements that are inherent in daily activities of the people. This description is apt because it clearly creates a unique room for the peculiarity of the African ways of life in the face of ranging European cultural domination of the Twenty First Century. Music has remained a potent tool for preserving the uniqueness of the African society since the precolonial period. This is because African music embeds in its content reality of the people's experiences in their everyday life. It is for this reason that music is so pervasive in traditional African society such that musicians are almost everywhere.

Music in African societies performs more prevalent roles than in the European world because it touches on the social, economic and political lives of the people. More important is the simplicity of the performance, its low-cost nature and geographical spread. Thus, every part of Africa is endowed with unique music genres and performances, which are used to advertise its peculiar culture. According to Nketia, African music is an aggregate expression of the music that characterize black people especially the south of the Sahara, which shows evidence of common origin, internal patterns and contextual similarities among other qualities.<sup>1</sup>

In another dimension, music, songs, dances and masks tell a story that relates to the daily lives and socio-political realities of the community. This substantiates the concept that art is not superfluous in Africa.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, music in Nigeria and indeed in Africa is a culture indicator.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the features of every African society's culture are adequately embedded in its indigenous music.

Within the Nigerian environment, the Yoruba are one of the culturally unique groups and music has been a major instrument for sustaining that identity. The Yoruba have musical compositions that befit specific occasions and situations. Thus, there are songs for felicitation and festivity, just as there are, for grief and commiseration. In fact, in precolonial Yoruba land, musicians were accorded a prime position in the court of the kings, at ceremonies, market place and at war front.

Consequently, music is an instrument of cultural education, which permeates every spectrum of African traditional society. For instance, African mothers have specially composed songs to entertain and educate children right from home. A popular Yoruba song by Funmi Adams in her popular album titled *Omolasho* released in 1988, underscores the unparalleled importance of children in African society. It goes thus:

*Oun to ba dara ma ra f'omo mi!*

*Oun to ba dara ma ra f'omo mi!!*

*Ti n ba logun eru, ti ya'wofa ogbon*

*Ti n ba logun eru, ti ya'wofa ogbon*

*Ojo ta ba ku o, baba l'oke je k'omo wa wo'le de wa*

*Ni tori pe omo l'aso l'aye*  
*Omo l'aso! Omo l'aso!! Omo l'aso!!!*

Meaning:

I will give all the good things of life to my child!  
 If I have twenty slaves, and thirty pawns  
 When death comes,  
 May God give us child to keep our heritage  
 Because a child is the cloth that covers the parents <sup>4</sup>  
 Another one, which gives the significance of the mothers, goes thus:  
*Iya ni wura iyebiye, ti ak'ole f;owo ra*  
*Iya ni wura iyebiye, ti ak'ole f;owo ra*  
*O l'oyun mi f'osun mesan*  
*O ponmi f'odun meta*  
*Iya ni wura iyebiye, ti ak'ole f;owo ra*

Meaning:

A mother is a jewel of inestimable value!  
 She carried my pregnancy for nine month  
 She carried me on her back for three years  
 A mother is a jewel of inestimable value!<sup>5</sup>

The above are few examples of the role of music in Yoruba society and how important messages are conveyed quickly, clearly and widely with the use of indigenous music.

### **The Concept of Culture**

Various writers and scholars including sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, ethnographers and a host of others have defined culture in relation to their disciplines. However, the rallying point across the fields of study is that culture is an indicator of how people live in a given society. Simply defined, culture is the whole way of life of a society or the way people live. Culture embraces all the characteristics, activities and interests of set of people. Put simply therefore, while a society is an organized collectivity of human beings located in a particular environment, a culture is a society's total way or pattern of life. The distinctive ways of a society as perceivable at a given point in time. These include ways of thinking, feeling, believing and behaving, and the system of related technologies and material goods that allow the members of a given society to adjust to its physical and social environments.<sup>6</sup> Culture also refers to learned behaviour of a society and how this is shared and transmitted by its members from one generation to another. Such learned behaviour could reflect in the various aspects of the society like rules and regulations, songs and dances, religion, language, beliefs, moral conduct, arts and craft and general ways of doing things.

Culture is broadly categorized into two: the material and non-material culture. Material aspects of culture refer to tangible or material objects, which are the creations of man such as buildings, works of art, tools and machines, bridges, clothes, pots, chairs and other physical things. A lot could be learnt about the practices and ways of life of a given society through the remains of the material elements of its culture. In Nigeria for instance, excavations have taken place at Ile-Ife, Iwo Eleru, Benin, Igbo-Ukwu, Daima and Nok.<sup>7</sup> Artifacts excavated from the various sites have given reliable information on the ways of life of the past generations. Relics of material culture also help anthropologists, sociologists and historians to study the activities of past inhabitants of the particular area in question and to reconstruct their histories.

The Non-material elements of culture however refer to abstract and intangible things that a society cherishes so much. Such non-material cultural elements refer to attitudes and values of a society such as its religion, philosophy and ideology. Others are language, music and dance, dressing, literature, patriotism, love, kindness and beliefs.

### **Cultural Significance of Music in Yorubaland**

According to Moisala, music is a specific part of expressive culture.<sup>8</sup> Among the Yoruba, music is held in high esteem because it is an instrument of socialization and unity. Yoruba music has remained relevant through ages, surviving the influence of western and eastern religions of Christianity and Islam. Indeed, many innovative Yoruba musicians have created new styles through a combination of indigenous and foreign methods to improve their contents for greater acceptability. Since the precolonial times, Yoruba music has been a medium for education, entertainment, and enlightenment. It also plays the role of information as occurrences in the society are embedded in musical contents. The musical arena often serves as a setting for the open expression and annotation of the values of the people. Music is also often employed to reinforce or reverse the social roles held by a community.

Ceremonies like outing of a newborn, coronation, and thanks giving for a new house, weddings, funeral and other related merriments are the usual occasions where Yoruba musicians display their talents. The Yoruba traditional music employs simple techniques, which remains a key feature that keeps the music alive. The simplicity of the style and the instruments are fundamental strength in the genre. Hence, the music could be a combination of verbal expression and drums. Sometimes, it could be only vocal expression without drums. In any of the cases, the music contains important messages for the individuals, groups, society and government. It expresses pertinent issues in the society at any given time. It covers economic, social and political lives of the people. It sometimes also contains some comic content to relieve tension among listeners.

In the traditional Yoruba setting, musicians played the roles similar to journalists as carriers of information from the authority to the people and vice versa. Indeed, in Old Oyo, the *Alaafin* (king of Oyo) had a catalogue of drummers and praise-singers, who chants his praises every morning to remind him of his powers and the

enormous authority at his disposal. They also convey important message from the king to his subjects.<sup>9</sup>

Indigenous music have found relevance in some annual festivals in Yorubaland. Prominent among these special celebrations are the *Eyo* festival in Lagos, the *Ojude Oba* festival in Ijebu, the *Ekimogun* festival in Ondo, the *Osun Oshogbo* festival in Osun and various new yam festivals to commemorate the harvest of new crops. Traditional musicians use the festivals to recount several themes surrounding the founding of the towns and the efforts of the early settlers.

People also compose musical lyrics to encourage unity, bravery, kindness, love, peace and security. Music is also used to discourage social vices like robbery, laziness, betrayal, arson adultery, fornication and hooliganism. It was didactic in that it teaches moral and virtue among the indigenous people. The Yoruba also used music as an instrument for the propagation of the conventions and customs among the people through constant reminder.

In the precolonial period, musicians, praise-singers and drummers, who sang to boost the morale of the soldiers and kept the camp active, accompanied a typical Yoruba military contingent to war front. For instance, in precolonial Offa land, the *Ikolaba*, was the commander of the theater group in charge of the war drum. He played a complementary role of entertainment and sounds- drumming to warn soldiers about the enemies. He was in charge of the four unique drums for the purpose of warfare in precolonial Offa. The drums were important for communication and warning about the advancement of the opponents.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, precolonial Yoruba communities usually built walls around their cities to prevent invaders. At the entrance of each settlement was located a "look-out watchman", *Alore*,<sup>11</sup> who was stationed on the top of a hill or a tree on sentry. If there were a spy, who had come to prepare ground for invaders, the *Alore* had a duty to inform the town people using his bugle. Also at the battlefield, musicians delivered songs to aid the warriors. The drummers could start by reminding the warriors of their past performances and achievements; and then urge them to set new records in their military career. The *oriki*, praise poetry was particularly employed to raise the morale of warriors at critical moments of the battle.

Music also serves as a veritable source in the reconstruction of the history of pre-literate societies, where oral accounts (traditions) provide ample information. According to Fadeyiye, oral tradition include myths and legends, which throw light on the origin of communities – their social, economic and political institutions, their taboos, totems, social concepts and practices.<sup>12</sup> Other aspects of oral traditions are folklores or folktales, songs and poems. Myths and legends about creation are widespread in different parts of Africa and music is a veritable medium for popularizing these elements. The Yoruba for example, have a popular myth that regards Ife as the centre of creation while the legend of *Moremi* and her son was popular among the Ife people. The *Bayajidda-Bawo* legend is also popular among the Hausa. These legendary stories are recounted through chants and musical compositions and this help to preserve them for future generations.

The significance of music as source of history in Yorubaland is further underscored by the presence of singers in different parts of her society including

the palaces, market places, town halls, festival arena, private gatherings and ceremonies.

### **A Brief Background on Ilorin**

Ilorin is a town located in the savannah region between the south and north of Nigeria. The town is fondly referred to as a gateway between the two geographical zones due to this middle-belt location. Majority of Ilorin's inhabitants are Yoruba of Old Oyo extraction but there is also a mixed population of Fulani, Hausa, Nupe, Bariba, Gobir, and Kanuri, who migrated to the town at different periods. Some of these groups had been in Ilorin before the establishment of the emirate system.<sup>13</sup> There are two categories of immigrants: the early settlers, who came before and during the jihad, and the latter settlers, comprising merchants, scholars, artisans, smiths and warriors. The Hausa immigrants, for example, have a long history in the town. It is worthy to note that a Hausa community had existed in Ilorin before the establishment of the emirate system in the nineteenth century. Some of them came in search of their livelihood as traders, servants and scholars.<sup>14</sup> The Hausa lived in the Gambari area under their leader named Bako. Other groups settled at Okesuna, under the leadership of Solagberu, a Kanuri man, and there was a Fulani community led by Olufadi. With time, other groups such as the Nupe, the Bariba and the Gobir migrated to Ilorin.

However, the dwindling fortunes of the Old Oyo occasioned by internal political crises among the major chiefs contributed to the rise of Ilorin into limelight as it favored the emergence of the emirate system in the area. Ilorin had since remained the only emirate in Yorubaland. It is pertinent to state that the Yoruba, which constitute the majority, have largely acculturated the other groups through language, dressing, festivals and other paraphernalia of culture.

### **Socio-cultural Ceremonies in Ilorin**

Apparently, since Ilorin was under the Old Oyo Empire, it follows that her religious beliefs and practices were in line with what obtained in the empire. Thus, in ancient Ilorin, traditional religions existed. The main ones were *Yemoja*, (the chief religion), *Ifá*, *Òrisàálá (Obàtálá)*, *Sàngó* (headed by *Ìkólàbà*), *Oro* and *Egúngún* (headed by the *Alápinni*).<sup>8</sup> These traditional practices were popular in ancient Ilorin, especially in the Yoruba quarter of Idi Ape, throughout the pre-Fulani rule. Indeed, the following excerpt from a popular song indicates reminiscence of traditional religious practices in the Afonja domain of Idi Ape:

*Iyemoja lo n' Idi Ape, Iyemoja,  
Ogunmo Yee Yee Yee Iyemoja*

Meaning:

*Iyemoja,*  
the great deity that thrive in Idi Ape  
We hail thee

However, in the outlying areas of Gambari, Gaa and Oke-Suna, Islam was widely practised before Sheik Alimi's arrival in Ilorin. In fact, Oke-Suna was known throughout Yorubaland as the home of several Muslim divines popularly known as the Sheiks of Oke-Suna.<sup>15</sup>

The establishment of emirate system brought far-reaching changes to the socio-cultural life of Ilorin inhabitants. As Islam became more widely practised in the city, it gradually affected cultural practices of the people. In line with the practice in the classical emirates of Northern Nigeria, the Ilorin emirate authority also began to adopt the Islamic doctrine in aspects of trade and commerce, religious practices, judiciary, political institutions and general social life. Ilorin thereafter evolved a unique cultural identity popularly referred to as the "Ilorin culture". This is a hybrid culture, which emerged from a combination of the Islamic doctrine and the traditional ways of life among the various inhabitants of the town. Islam thus served as a rallying point for the varied cultural practices and with time, many aspects of the diversity became integrated.

Socio-cultural ceremonies provided the platform to strengthen the unity among Ilorin people. There are two broad categories of cultural ceremonies in Ilorin. The mega or state celebrations involving the emir and the ruling class, and the general everyday (private) celebrations among the people. Under the first category are ceremonies like the Dabur of Horses, the yearly Eid celebrations, and the annual Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union's Day celebrations. The second category comprises naming for newborn, chieftaincy, weddings, *Moulud Nabiyyi* (celebration of Birth of Prophet Muhammad), and various cultural day celebrations in the different quarters in the town.

### **Indigenous Music Genres in Ilorin**

There are various indigenous music compositions in Ilorin, which display the city's rich culture. These include the *Dadakuada*, *Balu*, *Agbe*, *Waka*, *Senwele*, *Pamu Pamu* and the popular Fuji music. Ilorin indigenous music is didactic and moralistic as it is used to mold behaviour and teach acceptable norms in the society. For instance, Jaigbade Alao, the *Oba Orin* (King of Music) of Ilorin, had at various times used his music to expose people to the norms and traditions of Ilorin, the need to be upright in moral as well as teachings of the holy Quran. The following excerpts from his songs underscore the didactic nature of traditional music in Ilorin:

*Alukurani n s'oro, oni lakaye ni nba wi.*

Meaning:

The Quran is addressing only the intelligent people.

In another composition, he states that:

*Eni t'oba le binu e so fun ko ma se ise mo,*

*Tori ise to ba fi ogun odun se,  
iseju kan abo ni yok o da si kanga  
ko lorun so wa pelu inu bibi.*

Meninig:

Anger instantly destroys the good efforts of people,  
May God save us from anger and annoyance!<sup>17</sup>

In Ilorin, indigenous music has also been a veritable oral source of history because it contains praise poetry and ancestral traditions. This has made significant contribution to historical reconstruction in the town in tracing the origin of its diverse inhabitants. Due to Ilorin's heterogeneity, indigenous musical genres are reservoirs of traditions of origin, folklore, myths and legends that are important sources of history of its inhabitants. Even though Islam has united the people in Ilorin into a hybrid culture, various groups in the town retain certain salient aspects of their original cultural identity such as names, songs, dance and ceremonies. For instance, the Nupe and Fulani groups in Ilorin still uphold some aspects of their tradition in the solemnization of marriage. They use these elements to keep their origins alive. Such reminiscence is popularly displayed during traditional festivals and ceremonies. Indeed, entertainment and programmes on the Kwara State radio are made to accommodate different languages to give a sense of recognition to the major languages in the state. Therefore, musical compositions in Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe and Bariba, are broadcast on the Kwara State Radio and Television to cater for the culture of the various groups. Some of the popular indigenous music genres in Ilorin are highlighted as follows:

### ***Waka***

*Waka* is a Hausa word, which means song. The word probably entered Ilorin diction following the migration of Hausa groups into Ilorin before the establishment of the emirate system. It is on record that the Hausa had been in Ilorin before the arrival of Sheu Al Salih (*Alimi*). They were residents of the Gambari quarter of the city, where they were engaged in commercial transactions in the long-distance trade between the people of the north and south of what later became Nigeria. O'Hear buttresses this commercial role and the influx of people of Hausa origin from the north in her studies on Ilorin economy in the Nineteenth Century.<sup>18</sup> The Hausa settlers comprising of itinerant traders and permanent inhabitant were entertained by singers in the market as well as in their various places of abode. This was the origin of the *waka* music in Ilorin. However, with the passage of time, the word became adopted in Ilorin to connote the Yoruba musical genre that is delivered on the eve of wedding ceremonies, usually in the night. *Waka* music is a unique aspect to the Ilorin society due to the city's heterogeneous nature.

The music is delivered orally devoid of any form of drums. It involves several messages cutting across moral, economic, prayers, eulogy, admonitions and sermons. Both male and female are involved in the *waka* music and the band comprised of a lead singer and a chorus, which sometimes was a mixture of different



voice tones such as the pitched voice, baritone, and deep bass tone. These were combined to give fun, amusement and entertainment to the audience. As the song was being delivered, the people in the audience came out in turn to give present gifts of cash or other valuable materials to the singers in appreciation of the music. Sometimes, the celebrants were elated through praises and prayers for peace and success of the wedding ceremonies as well as God's blessings for the couple. These kind of eulogy elicited great admiration from the audience and they came out in turn to offer gifts, usually of money, and sometimes, clothing, to the *waka* musician.

*Waka* singers are so creative that they form a danceable rhythm with the coherence of the sounds coming from their mouth. They could manipulate their voice to produce the sound of various traditional drums as to make people dance freely. *Waka* musicians of the 1960s and 1970s were more poised to compose songs to correct the hills in the society and remind Muslim faithful of their expected roles as ordained in the Quran. This was in line with Ilorin's position as an emirate and a centre of Islamic evangelism. Notable *waka* musicians in Ilorin include *Alfa Dodo*, *Alhaji Labaeka*, *Alhaja Rukayat Batimoluwasi*, *Alhaja Afusat Onise* to mention But a few. The *waka* music is still alive and constitutes a salient feature of a typical traditional wedding in Ilorin.

### ***Dadakuada***

This is a popular music genre, which originated from, and is pervasive among the people of Kwara.<sup>19</sup> *Dadakuada* is male dominated music, for which Ilorin has been noted since the 1970s. As a praise song, *Dadakuada* is rich in information about the genealogy of its patrons. The music is delivered by a band, which usually comprises of a leader (lead vocalist) and a chorus of four to five men. The band drums and beats comprise of *Omele*, *Dundun*, *Iya-Ilu*, *Sakara*, *Sekere* and *Agogo*. The leader gives direction of the flow of the music by initiating the track, and the chorus follows. He controls and coordinates the stage and ensures that the best positive response is elicited from the audience. Whose overshadows the others, and after the group is thus named after him. For this reason, *dadakuada* has remained relevant among people who cherish indigenous music genre especially those composition that traces the origin of groups and give historical antecedents about their ancestors. This is one unique feature that distinguishes *Dadakuada* from other types of music genres. Therefore, *Dadakuada* musician are quite versed in cognomen, agnomen as well as the oral histories of the various people found in Ilorin. Prominent *Dadakuada* musicians in Ilorin include *Jaigbade Alao*, *Odolaye Aremu*, *Aremu Ose*, *Omoekee Amoa*, *Saka Kolobo*, and *Hanafi Atanda Ketere*, *Jolomiro Alabi Ayidede*, *Ayegbajeje Adio*, *Baba Eyinoke Ajape*, *Larewaju Oloje*,

*Kengbe* is another traditional song delivered by a group of women to entertain maiden during her wedding ceremony. It is thus an exclusively women music which comprises of messages of admonition, education and warning on the challenges of the new life a newly wedded wife would encounter in her new home.

*Kengbe* (gourd) is the main instrument that produces the sound for the base of the song and the music is thus named after the instrument.

*Alagbe*, is another traditional entertaining group, usually consists of acrobatic displays among its members. Such display involves the climbing of two long bamboo poles by different individuals and the exhibition of different stunts to the admiration of spectators. The group has various musical composition to stimulate the acrobats and give exhilarating stimuli to their acts. There are claims that the acrobats are assisted by spiritual elements in their trade because they always venture into some dire-devil moves in the course of their entertainment. For example, three or more dancers could resting atop of the pair of long poles one on top of the other. Sometimes, a dancer could use his teeth to carry another to display strength.<sup>20</sup> However, there are people reject the ascription of spiritual element (*juju*) to the *Alagbe*, believing that their prowess in the stunts is a result of constant training. *Balu and Senwele* are two other popular traditional musical genre in Ilorin. The unique feature of the two is that the leading vocalist is usually a female unlike in other music earlier explained.

#### **Were Music**

One popular cultural heritage of the Ilorin people in the 1950 through the 1960s was a traditional music known as *Were*. It was a traditional music performance usually carried out during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan and was quite popular in different parts of Yorubaland. *Were* music, like the *Ajisari*, is an indigenous music used to arouse the Islamic faithful to pray and fast during the month of Ramadan in Yorubaland. A source revealed that ‘*were*’ is a Yoruba word meaning something done quickly or done on time.<sup>21</sup> It was from this time consciousness of the midnight and early hour obligatory activities that are attached to the Ramadan fasting that the name of the wake-up music known as *Were* was coined. This traditional music was common in southwest Nigeria, precisely in the cities of Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta and Ilorin. Other Yoruba towns also had their own *Were* groups. Both *Were* and *Ajisari* practices had their foundation rooted in the Islamic religion. *Were* began to expand due to the influence of Islam in the 1940s, and the 1950s, the practice had become very pervasive in Yorubaland.<sup>22</sup> Unlike the *Ajisari*, *Were* performed in groups. The *Were* performers were known as *Ajiwere* or *Oniwere*. Usually, young men or boys numbering up ten or more came together to write, arrange and practise songs and dance moves. Again, unlike *Ajisari*, who would always sleep a bit in the night before setting out for their music foray around 2:00 a.m. in the morning, the *Ajiwere* or *Oniwere* usually left their houses each night during Ramadan shortly after the Isha’a Prayers. They would then roam the streets singing and dancing. A couple of days before the end of fasting month, all *Ajiwere* or *Oniwere* groups in the area would meet in town hall to compete for prizes – the grand prize is a shiny silver-plated trophy.

According to a respondent, *Were* is Yoruba word, which means “to do something quickly”. The word was adopted to describe the musical genre used to wake up Muslim faithful in the early hours during the Holy Month of Ramadan because the people had very little time to eat before day breaks. The popular

saying: *e se were ka jesari*, which translates as let us be quick in taking our meal. In the early 1970, *Were* music genre became popular and forced its way into the mainstream Yoruba culture alongside other popular genres like Sakara, Apala, Waka and Sekere. Singers like Dauda Epo Akara, Gani Irefin, Saka Laigbade, Jolly Lawa and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister popularized the music.

In Ilorin, the *Were* music was promoted by the Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union (IDPU) members. The Ilorin version of *Were* music started in Kano under the auspices of the IDPU and Alhaji Oba Jolly, an indigene of Ilorin, performed then. The first *Ajiwere* in Ilorin was a man called Aduagba in Muse Compound.<sup>23</sup> It was organised to encourage people in the early hours of a day's fasting, beginning with the mid-night meal *Sahur*, known in Ilorin as *Saari*. The *Ajiwere*, singers, came from different locations usually starting from 10.00pm moving from one location to another in different streets. The music usually contained messages about the benefits that awaits the Muslim faithful if they perform the Ramadan fast according to the dictates of Allah. One of the obligation of the fast was to wake up in the midnight for the early morning meal as performed by Prophet Muhammed. Thus, the *Ajiwere* used their performance to sensitise people on this sacred duty.

Even though *Were*'s origin is connected with the Muslim Ramadan fast, the performer obtained gifts from members of the society for their efforts. Indeed, with time, the music became popular and generally accepted by many people in Ilorin as the *Ajiwere* always visited rich and prominent individuals within their localities and received gifts and money.

In 1969, the Ilorin Descendant Progressive Union introduced a new dimension to the, *Were* music in Ilorin, by organizing a competition for the *Ajiwere*. The union set up a committee for the successful organization of the completion. The committee members included: Alhaji Oba Ayelabegan, Alhaji Aremu Zubair, (the Present Magaji Aare of Ilorin), Alhaji Adebayo Alikinla among others. From that period, the Emirs Palace became the venue for the *Were* competition unlike the initial practice whereby the *Ajiwere* met and competed at designated junctions, which was not subjected to proper organization and supervision. This development took place during the reign of Emir Dhul-Qarnainin Gambari, the 9<sup>th</sup> Emir of Ilorin.

Among the *Ajiwere* that performed at the emir's palace during this period are:

Alhaji Oladimeji Iyalayo Popogiwa

Alhaji Waliji Oke-Aluko

Alfa Muhammed Nuhu Ile Baki also known as Layeri

Alhaji Wahabi Titilope Okelele

Alhaji Adisa Ita Ajao Alhaji Hassan A. Bobo

Alhaji Muniru Baba Olobi Pakata

Alhaji Alao Baba Miliki

Alhaji Ismaila Basket of Trouble Balogun Alanamu

Alhaji Salihu Kuntu

Alhaji Saka Danfo Layeri

Alhaji Shehu Ishola Itamerin

Alhaji Saka Jagun Okelele

Alhaji Isiaka Ayinla Easy Kabaka Ita Ogunbo  
 Alhaji Isa Aremu Alade Owo  
 Alhaji Mashood Ayinla 2<sup>nd</sup> Kabaka  
 Alhaji Ayinde Magester  
 Alhaji Isiaka Ayinde Baruba

The *Were* competition always came up on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the Ramadan fasting. The *Ajiwere* would converge at the emir's palace to compete for the year's best performer. Among the yardsticks for selecting the best singer were the rhythm and sound, the composure of the singer, the quality of the message involved in the songs, praises and eulogies for dignitaries present and ability of the singer to captivate the generality of the audience. At the end of the competition, the first, second and third place finishers would receive gifts. Some of the winners of the competition are Alhaji Saliu Kuntu, Alhaji Easy Kabaka, Alhaji Saka Danfo, Alhaji Shehu Ishola Itamerin and Alhaji Isa Aremu Alade- Owo.

The 1974 edition of the competition was quite special because the IDPU invited Dr. Olushola Saraki and A. G. F Abdulrasaq, SAN as Special Guests of Honour to the event at the emir's palace. With that development, the *Were* music had progressed from mere street song to music loved by all section of the society. The elites in Ilorin became a strong vanguard in promoting different aspects of Ilorin religious and cultural lives through the instrumentality of the *Were* music. Meanwhile, the highpoint of the *Were* music was its transformation to an ever popular genre known as *Fuji*, which has since enjoyed a wide following across the length and breadth of Yoruba land. With the Ilorin metropolis, numerous Fuji musicians emerged in the 1980s. Some created new styles and voices while others followed the model established and popular musicians. Among the popular Fuji musicians in the 1980s are Easy Kabaka, Manso Ayinla, Adisa Owala, Saka Danfo, Isiaka Baruba, Besco Azeez, Aremu Aladeowo, Ibahim Lambo, Ganiyu Abefe, Orisunmade Ganiyu, Adelodun to mention but a few.

### **Islamic influence on Ilorin Indigenous Music**

Islam has influenced different aspects of Ilorin society since the establishment of its emirate in the 1820s. Indeed, the religion is a strong unifying factor among the diverse inhabitants of the city. Furthermore, several aspects of Ilorin cultural practices, which ran counter to the Islamic tenets have either been abandoned or modified. Cultural elements such as dressing, marriage, trade, politics and general traditional administration in Ilorin have also been influenced by Islam. In this regard, indigenous music shares from this religious influence because of its pervasive nature. This is imperative because singers must comply with the norm of Ilorin society in order to enjoy the patronage of the people. Therefore, indigenous musicians always devote a reasonable portion of their contents to address religious issues. This involves a didactic and moralistic methodology, which most times, encompasses the inclusion of Quranic verses in the music content to capture the attention of varied audience. Also, most of the indigenous musical compositions

help to carry messages in line with the teachings of Islam on the social, economic and political aspects of life of the Ilorin people.

### Conclusion

Traditional music is an important tool for strengthening cultural integration among the various groups in Ilorin. Traditional musical genres in Ilorin include *Dadakuada, Balu, Senwele, Agbe, Kengbe, Waka, Were and Fuli*. Majority of the music forms are male-dominated, with the exception of *Balu*, and *Senwele*. In Ilorin, traditional music is used to entertain, enlighten, educate, praise, rebuke, and most time, to highlight the genealogy of the people. Ilorin is, even though, a heterogeneous community, the Yoruba, which constitute the majority, have largely acculturated the other groups. Thus, the language for delivering these music forms is squarely Yoruba. Traditional music in Ilorin has a prime place in different cultural gatherings in the city ranging from major to minor celebrations. The Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union has been a major force in the promotion of Ilorin cultural heritage through the support of indigenous musician. While ethnic diversity could have been a force of division, the fellowship provided by Islam has remained a strong factor of unity among the different groups and this has been constantly preserved by indigenous music. In spite of the external influence of foreign religions, Christianity and Islam, European colonialism and the eroding impact of Western civilisation, the indigenous music has remained alive among Ilorin people.

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