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ALÁGA-ÌJÓKÒÓ AND ALÁGA-ÌDÚRÓ PERFORMANCES: TOWARDS A TRIADIC MODEL FOR ANALYSING THE CONTEMPORARY YORÙBÁ NUPTIAL REPERTOIRE

Abstract

The analytical frameworks used in music scholarship have historically been dominated by Western theoretical paradigms, which focus on harmonic movement, the formal structure, and notation-based analysis. Although these approaches have contributed significantly to musicological inquiry, they tend to be one-dimensional and fail to convey the multifaceted nature of African musical traditions, which are deeply enmeshed in social, cultural, spiritual, and performative contexts. This article offers a model for the study of African music, analysing Musical Styles in Alága-ìjókòó and Alága-ìdúró performances from a scholarly perspective that draws on the analysis of their music structure, performance practice, cultural significance, indigenous knowledge systems, and audience participation. It asserts that African music must be studied as a total art in which sound, movement, language, symbolism, and social purpose are integral. This study illustrates how the model can be applied to Yorùbá traditional marriage music, advancing the discourse on decolonization of music scholarship and offering a culturally appropriate model for further research in African music studies. The paper employs a qualitative ethnomusicological design that involves participant observation, performance analysis, interviews, and indigenous knowledge inquiry.

Keywords: African Music, Ethnomusicology, Music Analysis, Indigenous Knowledge, Performance Studies, African Music Theory, Decolonization, *Ìjókòó*, And *Alága `ìdúró*.

Introduction

The scholarship of African music has long contended with the epistemic limitations of Western formalist paradigms, which consistently prioritise autonomous structures over contextual meaning (Agawu, 2003; Nketia, 1974). These Eurocentric approaches treat music as a separate artistic product that is detachable from society, whereas African music is integral to the lives of the people. Yorùbá ritual and ceremonial art forms, for example, risks being stripped of ontological essence when conventional Eurocentric notation and structural analysis is applied in isolation. This is because musical expressions among the Yorùbá people of southwestern Nigeria, are inherently tied to social institutions, functioning as repositories of history, cosmology, and philosophy (Oladipo, 2018).

One notable contemporary expression of this socio-musical synthesis is the *Alága-Ìjókòó and Alága-Ìdúró* institution in modern Yorùbá nuptial events (*Ìgbéyàwó*). These *Alága* (traditional master of ceremonies) performances functions at the critical intersection of theatre, ritual, economics, and spontaneous musical composition. While early ethnomusicological literature tends to view African ceremonial music through a purely functionalist lens (Merriam, 1964), contemporary African societies have witnessed a highly commercialised professionalisation of these roles (Enigbokan, 2021). The *Alága* is not merely an entertainer but a custodian of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), deploying proverbs (*òwè*), panegyrics (*oríkì*), and ritual song-texts to navigate the delicate transition of individuals from singlehood to marital union. Despite this rich complexity, mainstream music theory lacks a consolidated, culturally responsive framework that is capable of simultaneously decoding the structural morphology of the music, its textual nuances, and its deeply embedded cultural symbolisms.

Existing scholarly evaluations of Yorùbá nuptial music is often polarised into one of two analytical ends. On one hand are ethnomusicological works that offer ethnographic descriptions of marriage ceremonies but relegate structural music analysis to the side-line (Moses, 2019). Conventional music analyses on the other hand, isolate pitch, rhythm, and formal contours from the socio-cultural realities that generate them, rendering the analysis incomplete (Agawu, 2016). This divergence in methodology conceals the sophisticated structural and textual interplay executed by the *Alága*. Furthermore, the rapid commercialisation of the *Alága* industry has introduced new performance dynamics and cross-genre musical interpolations that challenge classical definitions of folk performance (Enigbokan, 2021).

Hence, without an integrated multi-dimensional analytical model that is rooted in indigenous knowledge, the *Alága* performance tradition risks being misinterpreted or subjugated by Eurocentric analytical approaches, as its pedagogical, historical, and structural value of may not be captured. This study addresses this gap by formulating and applying a Triadic Analytical Model that is designed to adequately decode the *Alága* musical performance complex. The proposed model comprises six interconnected analytical dimensions: contextual analysis, textual analysis, structural analysis, performance analysis, functional analysis, and cultural-symbolic analysis. The questions that guide this study are:

1. What are the structural, formal, and socio-cultural dimensions of the musical performance complex executed by the *Alága* in contemporary Yorùbá nuptial events?
2. How do *Alága* performers strategically deploy linguistic devices, speech-tone melodies, and indigenous knowledge systems to negotiate ritual and economic spaces during ceremonies?
3. In what ways can a culturally responsive, six-dimensional analytical framework resolve the historic epistemological tension between structural musicology and ethnography within African music scholarship?

Conceptualising the *Alága* Institution in Yorùbá Nuptial Culture

The Yorùbá marriage ceremony, *Ìgbéyàwó*, is fundamentally a communal covenant rather than an individual contract (Oladipo, 2018). Scholars have noted that traditional Yorùbá performances are multi-artistic, seamlessly weaving together music, dance, drama, and verbal arts (Adedeji, 1978). The *Alága* tradition developed from the historic role of the *Alágbàwí* (advocate or spokesperson) and the *Olórí Èbí* (family head), who originally managed the formal negotiations between the two unifying lineages. Contemporary Yorùbá traditional marriage ceremonies is now conducted by two parties: the *Alága-Ìjòkó* (sitting chairperson) represents the bride's family while the *Alága-Ìdúró* (standing chairperson) represents the groom's family. They are chosen by the families of the bride and the groom to coordinate the procedure of nuptial performances with regard to music, dance, and drama.

In contemporary urban spaces, this role has become a highly specialised and monetised sub-sector of the creative economy (Enigbokan, 2021). This shift is linked to a broader debate within African ethnomusicology regarding the impact of capitalism on traditional art forms. Scholars operating from classical preservationist paradigms often argue that the commercialisation and monetisation of ritual performance inevitably erode its indigenous authenticity, reducing sacred practices to mere spectacles for financial gain (Adedeji, 1978; Merriam, 1964). Conversely, contemporary theorists suggest that commercialisation can serve as a mechanism for cultural resilience, allowing oral traditions to adapt and survive within modern urban economies (Enigbokan, 2021; Waterman, 1990).

Despite this modernisation, the performance remains anchored in ritual stages: the arrival of the groom's family, the reading of the proposal and acceptance letters (*Lètà Ìdúró* and *Lètà Ìjòkó*), the paying of the bride price (*Anjòónú*), and the formal presentation of the bride. Moses (2019) observes that the musicality of the *Alága* is characterised by high spontaneity, where well-known Christian hymns, Islamic chants, and popular secular genres (such as Jùjú, Highlife, and Fuji) are retrofitted with contextual lyrics to suit the immediate socio-economic standing of the patrons.



Fig. 1: Alága `idúró and Alága ijókòó at a traditional marriage ceremony.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Methodological Trajectories in African Musicology

As articulated by Oladipo (2018), indigenous knowledge comes from the cultural practices of a people, built up over many years of community experience. In Yorùbá culture, indigenous knowledge is represented through proverbs, praise poems, ritual chants, stories, songs, and ceremonial activities. While modernization poses problems for oral traditions, African performances frequently represent the social history, ethics, environmental understanding, and communal identity, particularly in musical and performative genres. Indigenous knowledge is still central to African musical practices because music is one of the most important means of keeping cultural memories and passing on community knowledge.

The debate regarding how to analyse African music remains central to the discipline. Early formalists, influenced by Western analytical traditions, focused extensively on transcribing African rhythms into standard Western meters, leading to debates over concepts like "additive rhythm" and "polymeter" (Jones, 1959). This approach was heavily critiqued by subsequent African scholars who argued that isolating rhythm from its linguistic and somatic contexts misrepresents the music's architectural intent (Nketia, 1974; Agawu, 2003).

Conversely, contextualists anchored their analyses in the anthropological traditions established by Merriam (1964) and Blacking (1973), viewing music primarily as humanly organised sound that derives its validity entirely from its social functions. In Nigerian musicology, this binary has manifested in works that either detail the musicological structures of art music (Euba, 1989) or trace the socio-historical trajectories of popular and traditional forms (Waterman, 1990; Omojola, 2012). This study builds upon the synthesis proposed by Agawu (2016), who advocates for an "ethno-musicological" harmony where structural rigour is not sacrificed for cultural context, nor context for structural abstraction.

Owing to extant tonality in African languages, the direct relationship between the language and musical melody forms a critical component of analysing African musical structures. Yorùbá has three primary lexical tones: high (*òkè*), mid (*àárín*), and low (*ilẹ̀*). Any melodic line assigned to a verbal text must respect its linguistic contours to preserve meaning (Euba, 1989). Scholars like Omojola (2012) have demonstrated that in Yorùbá vocal traditions, the linguistic tone dictates the primary direction of the melody, creating specific undulating, cascading, or oblique shapes. When an *Alága* performs, they constantly balance linguistic preservation with artistic variation, occasionally employing intentional tone bending or shifting to accommodate specific musical modulations or emotional expressions. This intricate linguistic-musical matrix requires an analytical model that treats text and pitch not as separate entities, but as co-dependent variables.

Defining the Triadic Analytical Model

To effectively capture the multifaceted nature of the *Alága* performance practice, this study constructs a triadic analytical model that synthesizes the ethnomusicological theories by Merriam (1964) and Nketia (1974) with (1988) Schechner's performance theory and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Theory as buttressed by Oladipo (2018). The model satisfies a growing demand for decolonized and culturally responsive analytical approaches in African music by favouring indigenous perspectives and culturally-grounded approaches. The model is an all-encompassing analytical framework that integrates three interrelated dimensions:

- i. Musical Structure (rhythm, melody, form, vocal style, instrumentation);
- ii. Performance Context (ceremonial setting, social interaction, audience participation, performative function);
- iii. Indigenous Knowledge Systems (proverbs, oral tradition, cultural values, symbolic communication, indigenous philosophy)

By unifying these three paradigms, the model cuts across six analytical dimensions that are concurrently applied during data analysis. They include textual, contextual, structural, performance, functional and the cultural-symbolic dimensions

Methodology

Based on the foregoing, this study adopts a qualitative, ethnomusicological research design, prioritising interpretive ethnography and structural music analysis. The design captures the dual realities of the *Alága* performance tradition by examining both its technical musical structures and its socio-cultural functions. It accommodates the fluid, highly spontaneous nature of oral performance traditions in southwestern Nigeria. The primary geographical area for this study is southwestern Nigeria. Fieldwork was concentrated across three major urban and cultural hubs within the region: Ibadan (Oyo State), Abeokuta (Ogun State), and Ikeja (Lagos State). These sites were selected because they represent distinct points along the contemporary Yorùbá performance spectrum: Ibadan serves as a primary repository of historical Yorùbá customs and linguistic purity; Abeokuta exhibits localised Egband musical idioms and historical wedding performance variations; Ikeja reflects the highly commercialised, hybridised, and multi-genre evolution of the modern *Alága* corporate industry.

The research population consists of professional *Alága* practitioners, traditional master drummers (*Onílù*), family elders, and couples who participated in contemporary Yorùbá nuptial events. A non-probabilistic sampling framework was deployed, combining purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive Sampling is used to deliberately select experienced *Alága* practitioners who have maintained a continuous performance profile for over a decade, as well as master drummers possessing specialised knowledge of Yorùbá talking drum language patterns (*ààyàn*). Snowball Sampling was utilised during field observations to identify legendary legacy practitioners and traditional elders.

Data collection was executed over a twelve-month fieldwork period, utilising four primary qualitative instruments to ensure data triangulation: Participant Observation, Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Audio-visual Documentation. The collected field data was processed using verbatim transcription and transliteration, musical notation, conceptual classification and synthesis.

Analysis

The musical repertoire of the *Alága-Ijókòó* and *Alága-Ìdúró* consists of a curated sequence of songs, including *Rere Lẹbí Àwa*, *Olóórìrè Dà*, *È Fàdúrà Gbe Dìde*, *Moremi Àjàsorò*, *Gbé Mi Lékè Ayé*, *Tún Mi Gbé*, *Onílù Tó N' Lù*, *Má Na Bòbó Yẹn*, *Fún Mi Lówó O*, and *O De Bẹ*. These pieces form a unified liturgical system rather than an isolated item of entertainment. The following sections evaluate this repertoire through the three core dimensions of the Triadic Analytical Model. Each subsection summarises key findings from field recordings, interviews and transcriptions.

1. Musical Structure

The internal architecture of the *Alága* repertoire is built on deliberate blending of indigenous tonal principles and westernised melodic structures. These structures are examined under tonality and scale structure; form and singing style; Rhythm, metre and melodic contours.

Tonality and Scale Structure

The melodic lines in this repertoire rely on specific scale systems that dictate their pitch options and intervals. Master practitioners primarily use heptatonic (seven-note) and pentatonic (five-note) frameworks, occasionally using tetratonic (four-note) scales for simpler, energetic sequences. The heptatonic system provides a wide scalar foundation for pieces like *Rere Lẹbí àwa* and *tún mi gbé*, allowing for expressive melodic variation.



Fig. 2: Melody in “Rere Lẹbí Àwa” showing its heptatonic scale structure

The pentatonic framework (specifically the *d-r-m-s-l*) forms the structural core of pieces like *E Fàdúrà Gbe Dide*. This layout removes the 4th and 7th scale degrees, producing stable intervals that easily accommodate group singing.



Fig. 3: Melody in “E Fàdúrà Gbe Dide” showing its pentatonic scale structure

The tetratonic scale is used in pieces like *Má na bòbó yẹn*, restricting the pitch range to four tones to maximize vocal projection and drive group responses during fast-paced moments. (See Fig. 5)

Form and Singing Styles

The vocal layout of the *Alága* repertoire relies on traditional African structural forms, using call-and-response variants to manage group interaction. The following are the types of call-and-response encountered in the songs:

- **Direct Repetition of the Cantor:** The chorus repeats the exact phrasing by the soloist, maintaining structural consistency across the performance.
- **Refrain and Response Repetition:** The ensemble maintains a continuous, repeating phrase (such as the hook in *Moremi Àjàsòrò*) as a structural anchor, while the cantor extemporises lyrics over the top.
- **Sectional Repetition:** The chorus isolates and repeats a specific short phrase or sentence from the cantor’s line (such as the hook in *Gbé mi lẹkè ayé*), building acoustic energy and focusing attention on key themes.

The musical score for "Gbé mi lékè ayé" is written in 4/4 time. It features three staves. The first staff, labeled "Call", contains the melody for the call phrase "Gbe mi gbe mi gbe mi gbe mi leke aiye" and the response phrase "Gbe mi gbe mi gbe mi gbe mi". The second staff, labeled "Response", contains the melody for the response phrase "Gbe mi le ke". The third staff, labeled "CHORUS", contains the melody for the chorus phrase "gbe mi leke aiye ni to ri pe ke ke i na lo fi gbeli ja so ke". The score is marked with a 6-measure rest at the beginning of the chorus.

Fig. 4: Sectional repetition in "Gbé mi lékè ayé"

- **Short Leading Phrase (S.L.P.):** The cantor introduces a brief phrase to cue the ensemble, who then join in to sing along with the soloist until the final cadence, as heard in *Má na bòbó yèn*.

The musical score for "Má na bòbó yèn" is written in 4/4 time. It features four staves. The first staff, labeled "Lead/Call", contains the melody for the lead phrase "K'eni k'eni ma na bo-bo yen a-ra wa ni a-ra wa ni bo-bo". The second staff, labeled "Chorus/Response", contains the melody for the chorus phrase "yen a-ra wa ni K'eni k'eni ma na bo-bo yen a-ra wa ni a-ra wa ni bo-bo". The third and fourth staves, both labeled "S. Solo", contain the melody for the solo phrase "yen a-ra wa ni K'eni k'eni ma na bo-bo yen a-ra wa ni a-ra wa ni bo-bo".

Fig. 5: Short Leading Phrase in "Má na bòbó yèn"

- **Overlapping and Concluding Responses:** The vocal lines are timed to interlock, with the chorus joining just before the cantor finishes their phrase. In some instances, the response functions as a direct continuation or completion of the cantor's text (exemplified by the call of "Olóri ire dà" answered by "Èmi re o è é" in *Olóórire dà*).

The musical score for "Olóri ire dà" is written in 4/4 time. It features two staves. The first staff, labeled "Call", contains the melody for the call phrase "O lo ri i - re da e - mi re o eh eh". The second staff, labeled "Response", contains the melody for the response phrase "O lo ri i - re da e - mi re o eh eh".

Fig. 6: Overlapping and concluding responses in "Olóri ire dà"

Rhythmic, Metre Melodic Contours and Range

The metric frameworks are explicitly organized around the physical milestones of the wedding, alternating between duple, triple, and compound meters. Standard duple meters (2/4 and 4/4) utilize a syllabic text-setting technique, assigning a single note to each syllable to create

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accessible rhythms. Triple and compound structures (6/8, 9/8, and 12/8) introduce syncopation and cross-rhythms (such as two-against-three patterns). The compound triple feel (9/8) in *O de bẹ* shifts strong beats to create an engaging rhythmic drive, while the compound duple in *Eyin òrẹ́ ọ̀kọ ẹ support* allows fluid improvisation between the voice and percussion.



Fig. 7: Compound duple in “*Eyin òrẹ́ ọ̀kọ ẹ support*”

These rhythms are paired with specific melodic shapes over a fairly wide pitch range (C4 to E5) which allows for ample pitch-wise expression. This study identifies six melodic contours in the *Alágas*’ performance, they include irregular, undulating, oblique, cascading, angular and ascending contours. The rise and fall of melodic contours result in undulating contours where the melody begins at a high pitch, moves downwards then goes back to its starting point. Cascading melodies begin on a high pitch but gradually descend. Ascending melodic structures start on a lower pitch and go higher and higher to the end of the melody. Oblique melody rises slightly at the beginning and then drops towards the end. Angular melodic contours contain some pointed angles.

Table 1: Types of melodic contours in the studied *Alága* repertoire

Type of Melodic Contour	Repertoire Examples	Graphic representation
1. Oblique	<i>Emi o ba to'rogun waye</i>	
2. Undulating	<i>Olóri ire dà</i>	
3. Cascading	<i>Oni lojo ayo re</i>	
4. Ascending	<i>Iroyin Ayo</i>	
5. Sequential	<i>E wa wo</i>	(See Fig.9)
6. Irregular	<i>E je o jo</i>	



Fig.8: Oblique melodic contour in “Emi o ba torogun waye”



Fig.9: Sequential melodic contour in “E wa wo”



Fig.10: Irregular melodic contour in “E je o jo”



Fig.11 lowest note to the highest note (range) in the studied *Alága* repertoire

2. Performance Context

The social environment dictates the timing, volume, and style of the *Alága*'s performance, ensuring the music adapts to real-time interactions and physical spaces. Musical performance operates as a functional tool to navigate physical boundaries. At the venue, the *Alága Ìdúró* uses an open-throated, resonant vocal style (*gòbì*) to project over ambient noise during *Rere Lẹbí Àwa*, using the music to negotiate formal entry into the hall. Once inside, the performance space opens up; the *Alága* utilizes a wireless microphone to move between family sections, using eye contact and syncopated handclapping to turn individual viewers into an active chorus during *Olóórìrè Dà*.

Body Movements and Choreographed Rituals

Specific musical arrangements are paired with traditional physical gestures to reinforce social roles:

- **Prostration (*Ìdòbàlẹ̀*) and Kneeling (*Ìkúnlẹ̀*):** The groom and his companions show respect to the bride's parents by prostrating, the tempo slows down. The *Alága* drops her vocal register to a warm, reverent tone for *Ẹ Fàdúrà Gbe Dìdẹ*, guiding the physical acts of submission and parental blessing.
- **Bridal Procession:** During the entrance of the bride, the triple-meter pulse (12/8) of *Moremi Àjàsorò* creates a measured, swaying rhythm that matches the slow steps of the bridal train, emphasizing the importance of this passage.

- **Prop Manipulation:** During the presentation of the proposal letter (*Lẹ̀tà Ìdúró*), the document is lifted toward heaven and moved through the room in time with the rhythm, transforming it into an active performance prop.

Instrumental Behaviour and Drum Dialogue

The relationship between the voice and the *dùndún* drum family (*iyá-ilù*, *gudugudu*, *kerikeri*, *ìṣáájú*, and *kanango*) dynamically shifts based on the needs of the ceremony. At boundary points, instruments are played quietly to ensure the lyrics remain fully audible. On the main floor, the instruments transition into an open dialogue. In *Onilù Tó Ní Lù*, the *iyá-ilù* imitates spoken dialects to recite proverbs and historical praise, directly interacting with the *Alága*'s syncopated vocal delivery to drive financial support and tips (*owó dídá*) from the audience.

3. Indigenous Knowledge Systems

The cultural core of the *Alága* performance preserves and transmits Yorùbá philosophy, ethics, and history through specialized language devices and performance gestures.

The Speech-Tone and Melodic Contour Intersection

The *Alága* mostly aligns melodic movement with linguistic contours to protect the meaning of the words in Yorùbá. However, field data highlights an ongoing compromise between musical style and linguistic accuracy, creating a distinct performance paradox. In pieces like *Oní Lò Jọ Ayò Rẹ*, the melody does entirely conform to the natural contour of the Yorùbá language. The word "*òní*" (Today) is flattened into *m.:m* instead *d.:m*. which would have been the correct speech tone. While this distortion alters the literal definition, the community accepts it within the performance context because the song has been indigenised over time and its wider musical setting keeps the core message clear.

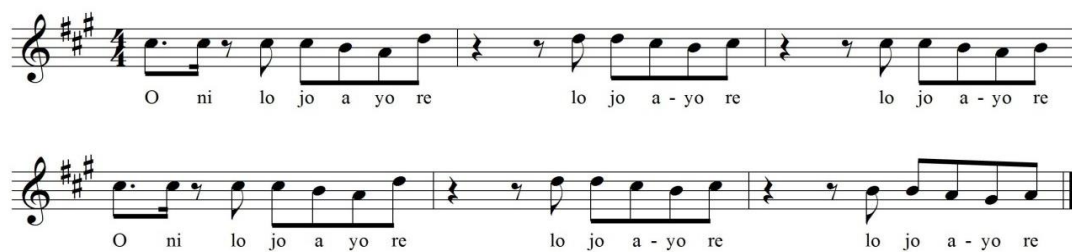


Fig.12: Cascading melodic contour in “oni lojo ayo re”

Proverbs and Lineage Praises

Proverbs (*Òwè*) and panegyrics (*Oríkì*) are inserted into the music as tools for cultural validation. In *Onilù Tó Ní Lù*, flat melodic lines are used to deliver the proverb “*Ilé jìn jìn, tí tí kò mòrìn*” (Distance does not prevent a dedicated traveller from reaching their destination), framing the groom’s journey as an honorable pursuit. Historical phrases specific to the origin families (such as *Ègbá*, *Ìjẹ̀bú*, etc.) are woven directly into the vocal lines. These ancestral references create deep emotional connections with the family elders, reinforcing the identity of their lineage and encouraging financial generosity.

Transmission of Marital Philosophy and Social Values

The repertoire functions as an accessible community classroom, using song texts to teach foundational social values.

- **Gratitude (*Ìmóòrè*) and Character (*Ìwà Rere*):** Lyrics in *Tún Mi Gbé* frame the choice of a partner around personal character and destiny (*Orí*), reminding the couple that a successful marriage relies on moral alignment.
- **Mutual Interdependence (*Ajòṣe*):** In the commercialized highlife phase of the event, pieces like *Fún Mi Lówó O* and *O De Bẹ* use light-hearted demands and economic imagery to navigate their collection of money. Giving money is presented not as an unwanted distraction, but as a modern expression of *Ajòṣe*, a way for the community to show financial support and validate the social status of both lineages.

Discussion of Findings

Consequent to the systematic application of Triadic Analytical Model, this study finds that the contemporary *Alága* institution operates as an elite socio-musical mechanism. It balances the strict preservation of ritual traditions with the demands of a modern commercial economy. While earlier functionalist perspectives (Merriam, 1964) viewed African ceremonial music primarily as an unbending, community-driven practice, the field data demonstrates an evolution. Within the Contextual and Functional Dimensions, the modern *Alága* has successfully professionalised a historically informal family role into a commercial career (Enigbokan, 2021). As demonstrated in the analysis of the first thematic group (*Rere Lẹbí Àwa*), the *Alága* maintains the foundational structures of Yorùbá kinship. However, the analysis of the fourth thematic group (*Fún Mi Lówó O*) shows that these traditional milestones are now intentionally paired with financial negotiations.

This finding challenges the idea that commercialisation always erodes indigenous performance arts. Scholars operating from classical preservationist paradigms often argue that the commercialisation and monetisation of ritual performance inevitably erode its indigenous authenticity, reducing sacred practices to mere spectacles for financial gain (Adedeji, 1978; Merriam, 1964). Conversely, contemporary theorists suggest that commercialisation can serve as a mechanism for cultural resilience, allowing oral traditions to adapt and survive within modern urban economies (Enigbokan, 2021; Waterman, 1990). The *Alága* effectively resolves this paradox by reinterpreting the traditional Yorùbá concept of *Ajòṣe* (mutual economic interdependence). They frame financial tipping (*owó dídá*) not as an unwanted distraction, but as a necessary performance element that validates the social status of both lineages.

This study effectively addresses the historical tension between structural musicology and ethnography within African music scholarship (Agawu, 2016). By exploring the Textual and Structural Dimensions of performance pieces, the analysis demonstrates that Western formalist toolkits are incomplete when divorced from indigenous linguistics. The data confirms that the structural movement of *Alága* melodies is governed by the tonal patterns of the Yorùbá language. The *Alága* balances linguistic preservation with musical creativity through three primary tools: undulating, cascading, and oblique melodic contours. When an *Alága* performs lineage panegyrics (*oríkì*), they do not simply pick arbitrary pitches. They construct a musical line that preserves the historical and semantic meaning of the spoken words. This finding supports the assertions of Nketia (1974) and Euba (1989) regarding the reliance of African melody on linguistic speech-tones. It also provides an empirical framework for analysing this relationship in modern, multi-genre settings.

Lastly, this study demonstrates that the *Alága* ensemble is a primary repository for Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in urban Southwestern Nigeria. In spaces where formal colonial education systems often overlook indigenous history, philosophy, and ethics, the nuptial ceremony serves as an accessible community classroom. Through the performance of proverbs (*òwe*) and physical gestures (*ará*), such as prostration (*ibàlẹ̀*) and kneeling (*kun lẹ̀*), the *Alága* models and teaches foundational Yorùbá values like character (*Ìwà*), respect (*Òwò*), and gratitude (*Ìmóore*). This performance system ensures that younger generations engage with their ancestral heritage within a modern setting.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the *Alága* performance tradition is a highly organised liturgical system that manages both ancestral rites and modern economic interactions. The research showed that the *Alága* performance serves as a living cultural archive, teaching and preserving traditional Yorùbá values in modern urban spaces. As contributions to African musicology and cultural studies, this study offers a reusable framework that allows scholars to analyse technical musical structures and ethnographic contexts simultaneously. This helps resolve the long-standing debate between formalist abstraction and contextual description. It also elevates an urban, commercialised oral tradition into a serious subject of academic study. This challenges Eurocentric hierarchies that exclude contemporary African popular and ceremonial practices from classical music theoretical analysis.

Pedagogically, this study provides a framework for integrating indigenous performance practices into formal music education curricula in Nigeria and across the continent. It demonstrates that traditional music theory can be taught through living community arts rather than relying solely on Western classical examples.

Having established a multi-dimensional baseline across three major urban centres in Southwestern Nigeria, it is recommended for future research to expand this work by applying the Triadic Analytical model to examine how Yorùbá nuptial musical traditions are preserved, altered, or hybridised within the global diaspora, such as in the Brazil Cuba, United Kingdom and United States. Future studies could also investigate how the documentation of these performances on social media platforms (such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube) affects song lengths, performance structures, and global audience interactions.

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