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Folk Songs as Sources of History: An Analysis of Alhaji Odolaye Aremu's Ilorin *Dadakuada* Music

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Abstract

In their endeavours to reconstruct and interpret the past, historians make use of various sources including oral, written, and material evidence. Over the years, they have had to rely on oral literature in order to understand and reconstruct events, particularly in non-literate societies where the art of writing developed very late. Such forms of oral literature as songs (Orin), proverbs (Owe), praise-names (Oriki) and poems (Arofọ) have, therefore, become part and parcel of traditional sources of history. These "oral and recitative" forms have been described as "a chief characteristic" of traditional history among the Yoruba. Hence, palace drummers and ballad singers were among the 'professional oral historians' used in traditional Yoruba society to 'record', 'recite', 'preserve' and transmit 'history' from generation to generation. Odolaye Aremu's Dadakuada song (Orin) is one form of folk music that combines various forms of Yoruba oral literature (Oriki, Owe, Arofọ, etc.) With these forms, Odolaye did not only entertain and praise but also informs about past and contemporary events. Thus, issues in socio-economic and political life of the society are regularly subjects of Odolaye's folk music. At both individual and societal levels, therefore, Odolaye's songs contain historical information that is of importance in writing biography as well as aspects of socio-economic and political history. This paper seeks to identify, analyze, and draw attention to some of the historical values of the songs of the Dadakuada legend, late Alhaji Muhammed Odolaye Aremu.

Keywords: Folksongs, Dadakuada, History, Historical Value, Reconstruction

Introduction

Songs are among the non-material aspects of human culture. Though probably created for entertainment purposes, songs have come to play various functions in human societies such as political (i.e. for propaganda, campaign, and mobilization), educational (teaching, training, counseling, etc.), economic (as a means of livelihood and for advertisement), and historical (i.e. for recording, preserving and transmitting information about events (Kingan 2001; Constance 1910). Songs are among the various forms of oral literature, which have become part of the traditional sources of history (Charles and Abu 2005; Duffill 1986). Among the Yoruba, for example, such forms of oral literature as songs (*Orin*), proverbs (*Owe*), praise-names (*Oriki*) and poems (*Arofọ)* are known to contain very useful historical information (Biobaku 1956; Ayorinde 1987; Delano 1987).

The Yoruba *Dadakuada* music was created and developed by Ilorin's oral poets, at least from the early 19th century, and is, therefore, acknowledged as a kind of folk song indigenous to the Ilorin people of Nigeria andthe 'most popular and accepted among the various non-religious traditional genres,'second only to *Waka*, the most widely accepted traditional genrein the Ilorin emirate (Na'Allah 1988; Na'Allah 1992; Na'Allah 1994; Adeola 2014). Though performed basically for entertainment, *Dadakuada* has other functions like information, education, mobilization, and advocacy, among others (Adeola 2014).

In the *Dadakuada* music industry, Odolaye Arẹmu (d. 1997) was one of the most famous exponents in Ilorin and indeed Yoruba history. Born and brought up in Ilorin, Odolaye was based at Ibadan in the 1960s and 1980s; he was widely travelled in Yorubaland, other parts of Nigeria and West Africa. In addition, Odolaye was 'a partisan poet'; he supported various political parties during Nigeria's First, Second, and aborted Third Republics (Na'Allah 2011; Aremu 1979; Aremu "Awa ni Ẹ bi", meaning 'We are the one you should ask'). As demonstrated in his songs, Odolaye was quite informed of various contemporary events and issues—social, political economic and cultural. In addition, Odolaye and his songs have some features that inform an examination of their value to the historian here attempted.

First, drummers and ballad singers such as *Arokin* and *Onirara* are among professional oral historians that Yoruba rulers retained to serve, among others, as chroniclers and retainers of important historical information (Biobaku 1956). Odolaye and other *Dadakuada* musicians are like *Onirara* who could be likened to professional oral historians. Secondly, being oral and recitative, Odolaye's songs fit into one of the forms and devices, such as place names, epigrams, and praise poems, into which the Yoruba "compress events and circumstances" (Biobaku 1956). Third,

Odolaye's songs (*orin*) combine some of the major forms of Yoruba oral literature—i.e. *oriki* (praise songs) and *owe* (proverbs and epigrams)—that are known to be of historical value to the historian. Odolaye uses these forms to entertain, praise (or 'criticize') people, and inform about events. Thus, issues in socio-economic and political life and experiences of the society are regularly subjects of Odolaye's songs (Na'Allah 2011; Akano et al. 2017; Odolaye 2015). Na'Allah describes Odolaye as a blunt, brave, bold, and 'critical', albeit partisan, poet who commented regularly on various activities and 'rarely sang without touching on issues of national unity and survival' (Na'Allah 2011).

It has been variously observed that poems 'commenting on contemporary events', those 'describing personal character and achievements', or recording "exploits of prominent individuals" are of value to historians (Delano 1987; Ayorinde 1987). Therefore, Odolaye's collections of praise songs could be some sort of 'reference materials'. Such personalities covered in Odolaye's songs included Chief S. L. Akintọla, the late Premier of the defunct Western Region of Nigeria (hereafter WRN); Chief O. Awolọwọ, the late leader of the Action Group (AG) and Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN); Alhaji Adegoke Adelabu, the late Opposition Leader in the WRN); Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu and Dr. Olusọla Saraki, late strongmen of politics in Oyo and Kwara States; and Chief M.K.O. Abiọla. Others included such traditional rulers as Mallam Abdul-Kadir, Alhaji Sulu-Gambari, and Mallam Aliyu Baba-Agba, the 8th, 9th and 10th Emirs of Ilorin respectively; Ọba Lamidi Adeyẹmi and Mustapha O. O. Ariwajoye, late Alaafin of Ọyọ and Ọlọfa of Ọffa respectively.

As a poet-commentator on contemporary issues and events, Odolaye sings as one who was quite fairly informed. In one instance, he presents himself as one who was 'well acquainted with Nigeria' ('*oju awa da 'gboro Nanjeria-a*') while in another instance, he is described as one who was 'acquainted with the cause [literally root] of *history*' ("*o ri idi itan*"). In the former, Odolaye claims to be someone from whom enquiries could be made concerning Nigeria and various characters that, in his opinion, abounded there. These included those who 'have made it', those who 'wanted to take good care of or help fix Nigeria', those who wanted to 'spoil Nigeria'; the 'greedy and gluttonous Nigerians'; and the 'truthful' and the 'liars' (Aremu 'Awa ni Ẹ bi'). By extension, if 'history' is all about events and their causation, Odolaye may be considered a 'historian'. However, Odolaye does not always subscribe to the 'official view of history'. For example, in his "*Ọrọ Nigeria*", he rejects and 'corrects' existing views among some unnamed musicians and individuals as to the parental background of a late Emir of Ilọrin, Abdul-Kadir (1919-1959). Odolaye's position on this is corroborated in other sources. It should also be noted that, while doing what has been idenitified as the 'principal function' of praise poems, namely, 'exalting and glorifying' (Ayorinde 1987),

Odolaye does not fail to present 'the other side of the coin' of his fans, patrons and clients. This includes such apparently negative descriptive information that was, probably, originally used by adversaries and critics to condemn or criticize such personalities.

A typical example of the above includes various epithets Odolaye uses to describe and 'eulogize' Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu. In his *Olowe Mowe*, for instance, he describes Adedibu variously as "*ilolodi eyan ti i han ra ẹ l'emọ*" ('an odd human who torments himself'); "*ika ajẹ oloju ẹyin tii pọn robẹ-robẹ*" ('the wicked witchwith eyes red like the ripe palm fruit'); "*oso ọmọ oso*" ('wizard, son of a wizard'); "*ika ọmọ ika*" ('wicked, son of the wicked'); "*ọmọ ajẹ tii r'aja tii beere eni*" ('the witch's child who buys and demands for extra portion'); "*iku tii j'agbe mọ ni o to pani*" ('death that shouts at you before killing'); "*ara mọka tii dun t'ojo t'ẹrun*" ('thunder that strikes both in the rainy and dry seasons'); "*a s'eni bani d'aro ọkọ mi*" ('one who consoles after inflicting harms'); "*a jẹ ni l'owo maa se sin, ọkọ mi*" ('one who cannot be asked to repay his debt, my lord' [1]); "*oni nkan kọọ, Adedibu gba-a*" ('Adedidu [who] gladly takes possession of what the owner rejects'); '*o l'arin Ibadan, ọ k'adiẹ bọ bi ọmọ Onsẹ Nla*"; '*ọ ta a, ọ ra a, o gbe e, wọn o si bun ọ*, *agbako l'ọmọ adiẹ se*" (meaning '[Adedibu] who went through Ibadan and returned with fowls like an offspring of the Great Messenger'; 'you did not sell, buy or steal them nor were you given as gifts; those fowls were only unfortunate!'). Such blunt presentation of 'factual information' on subjects of his songs and rebuttal of 'existing knowledge' on issues and personalities may well explain why Odolaye is noted to have 'created myths on issues and around personalities' and 'broke a lot of mythical masques shielding many people' (Na'Allah 2011). The following sections analyse some examples of the historical value of Odolaye Aremu's songs on activities and exploits of individuals as well as reconstruction of aspects of socio-economic and political history.

On the Emergence of Emir Mohammed Sulu-Gambari of Ilorin (who reigned from 1959-1992)

Recalling the emergence of the ninth Emir of Ilorin, Odolaye informs us of certain individuals who had ruled the prince out of the throne. He also indicates Ilorin's attitude to such critical decisions as the appointment of their traditional leaders. Reporting the 'opposition' to Sulu's candidature, Odolaye sings:

Alabi Opo mo gbadun ọkọ mi ọjọ	Alabi Opo, I do enjoy you, my Lord
Sulu Ọba gbogbo wa ni Ilorin	Sulu, our King in Ilorin

[1] "Ọkọ mi" literally means "My husband."

Ilorin la-a, Ilorin la wa, a lọ ibi Kankan	We are here in Ilorin, we did not go anywhere [2]
Asiko ‘gba kan ti wọn se kanpe	At that time when they were conducting campaigns
Wọn ni “Sulu-Gambari, oo ni jẹ Aliara o”	When they said: “Sulu-Gambari, you will not even become Aliara”
“O si ni r’aye baba rẹ lọ”	“And you will not ascend to your father’s throne”
Wọn fi t’Ọlọhun lẹ	They failed to consider God’s plan
Sibẹ sibẹ, Alabi Opo pada o si j’Ọba	In spite of their opposition, Alabi Opo eventually became King!
Ni wa n s’ọba l’eri gbogbo wa	And he now reigns over all and sundry
Boto: Ọlọhun lọ kọ lẹ fun	It was God who destined it for him
Eyin-igbẹti, o ku alejo afẹfẹ ooo	Well done, Eyin-igbeti, for hosting the winds
Igbimo Afonja, ẹ ku alejo ọba tuntun	Afonja’s Council, [3] well done, for the reception of the new Emir,
T’ẹni Sulu l’Ọba tọ si	for deciding that Sulu was befitting for the kingship
Ko wa j’Ọba tuntun	to become the new Emir.

In his *Olowe Mowe*, Odolaye also recalls:

Ah! Ah! Ah!	Ah! Ah! Ah!
Awọn kan fẹju-fẹju Ọlọhun d’apẹ sii	Some people looked ferociously but God poured sands into their eyes
Sulu-Gambari!	Sulu-Gambari!
Ọrọ rẹ ti wọn sọ, ti wọn se bi yio yọ’lẹ nii	They thought your matter would not be successful
ko yọ loju babanla baba wọn	But such did not happen in their grandfather’s lifetime
Baba Isọla, Alaya t’ole gbe ile nla	Isola’s father, the brave who live in a mighty mansion
Baba afinju alikali ti nfi tira se’dajọ	The father of a renowned judge who adjudicate cases by using *Tira*

In the first track, Odolaye informs us, as an eye-witness, that some unnamed individuals had vowed that Sulu-Gambari would never ascend the throne of his ancestors. Oral evidence suggests that the remarks were originally made by a prominent leader of the Ilorin Talaka Parapo (ITP), a mass opposition party in the city and in alliance with the radical AG during the mid-1950s. The remarks had been made in response to an apparently ridiculous comment made by another ITP member concerning Sulu-Gambari, then Ilorin Native Authority Chief Court Registrar and a prominent member of the Ilorin branch of the Northern People’s Congress (NPC). The comment had reportedly been “*ẹ ma daa lamu faa*, *ọmọ ọba nii*’, that is ‘don’t trouble the prince’ (i.e. Sulu) and/or “*Ọba l’ọla nu-un faa*’ (‘that is the Emir-apparent’). To this, the prominent ITP member taunted thus: “Taani? Ko da ko le jẹ Aliara ni Ilorin,” meaning “Who? He cannot even become Aliara here in Ilorin” (Jimba 2015).

[2] This shows that Odolaye was an eyewitness of the incident being reported.

[3] Ilorin is often referred to as “Ilorin Afonja” or “Ilorin, Gerin Alimi.” The phrase “Igbimo Afonja”, therefore, refers to the Ilorin Emirate’s Kingmakers’ Council, the institution traditionally responsible for the selection of new emirs.

As Odolaye's song would indicate, the latter remark was used by ITP members during the political campaigns in Ilorin in the 1950s to taunt Prince Sulu-Gambariwho had contested for election into the Northern Regional House of Assembly on the NPC's platform. It is not impossible that leading members of the ITP/AG Alliance, which won the elections and in control of the local councils, had also resolved that they would not allow the defeated Prince Sulu-Gambari to ascend the Emirship. Though not probably documented in any written source, Odolaye's recallof the above development has corroboration in oral source. Indeed, the concerned 'prominent ITP member' who allegedly made the remarks was among opposition leaders eventually imprisoned during the early years of Emir Sulu's reign (Jimba 2015).

Furthermore, Odolaye's song indicates that the appointment of Sulu-Gambari was the decision of what he calls "*Igbimọ Afonja*", that is Ilorin's Council of Electors. Other accounts, however, show that Sulu-Gambari was not the initial choice of that council but got appointed due to the intervention of prominent leaders of the NPC at the local and regional levels who preferred him to the initial choice of the electors (Jimoh 1994, 285). The eventual announcement of Sulu's election as Emir, despite popular expectation, must have been considered by many, like Odolaye, as a result of divine intervention and, therefore, welcomed as part of God's plan. Odolaye reflects the Ilorin's belief in divine intervention in the frustration of the 'plot' against Sulu's ascension. On these, he sings *"wọn fi t'Ọlọhun lẹ"*, *"awọn kan fẹju, fẹju, Ọlọhun d'apẹ sii"*, and "*Ọlọhun lo kọ lẹ fun*." Thus, for many, like Odolaye, who were oblivious of the intervention of the powers that be at Kaduna, the decision to elect Sulu as Emir was that of the *Igbimo Afonja* albeit 'predestined' by God.

Daily Life Experiences in Lagos

Apart from personal praise-poems dedicated to prominent individuals or towns, Odolaye sang about other issues concerning the day-to-day activities of the common people. In the following track from his "A ti rira ko desin?", Odolaye sings about the daily experiences of ordinary men and women in Lagos thus:

Eniyan ti o m'Eko	Those who do not know Lagos
O se b'Eko laa ti 'n r'owo	think it is easy to get money in Lagos
Isẹ kiisẹ nbẹ l'Alakoro	Various kinds of jobs abound in Alakoro
Ẹru k'ẹru nbẹ l'ẹyin Igbeti	Various kinds of luggage at Eyin-Igbeti
Gberu mi sọ mi nbẹ l'Ebute Mẹta	'Help me lift up' or 'bring down' [the load] are common [utterances] in Ebute-Meta
Kadara o l'ogun	Destiny has no antidotes
Aya se ẹni ori ba ko yọ l'ọna Apapa	Save he who is saved by *Ori* on Apapa Road

Owo Apapa l'ẹn wo Ẹ wo'ya Apapa	You only envy the money made at Apapa but ignore the sufferings at Apapa
Mo yo, moyo Apapa bi a lai jẹ nkankan nii	Claims of being stomach-filled in Apapa is synonymous to having eaten nothing
Ẹni o ba lọ bi isẹ Apapa t'oba da ri de l'alẹ	Those who go to work at Apapa and return safe in the night
Emi a maa kii wọn nii ma ni ẹku alọbọ ogun 'Jojumo n'iku pa wọn si'nu omi	I used to congratulate them saying 'welcome from the battlefront' [Because] it is everyday that death kills people inside the lagoon
Igba kuu gba sa ni mato pa'yan	[And] it is every moment that vehicles kill humans
Waya tin bẹ l'Eko e ja lasan ooo	The wires [Cranes] in Lagos do not just get cut without a cause
Bo ba tun ja pipa nii pa'ni bi eyan to ba ja l'eri kuro a sii tun da l'apa	When it does cut, it kills people instantly Or whoever it fell on get 'lucky' to get injured on the head or with a broken arm
Iku nbẹ l'Eko Ọlọhun ni o fi pa nii	Death abounds in Lagos; only that God saves one from it
Ọrẹ mi Isola l'eri mato ni kẹkẹ ngbe s'are	Isola my friend, it's on vehicles that bicycles are moving at a fast pace!
Ọna t'eniyan nko ni mato rin Ẹ tun wo oku gbajumọ l'aarin omi Ti gbogbo wọn funfun kin-kin-kin Ẹyin odi, Ẹyin iya Bi o ba si owo ooo, dẹIf not for money Kin ni ng a ta l'ẹyin odi At'ẹgbin at'iya tin nbẹ ni 'dalẹ o kere	And both humans and vehicles use same roads See corpses of celebrities on the lagoon! All visibly in white There is suffering outside of one's hometown What would I go to find in distant places? Little is not the insults and sufferings one encounters outside one's hometown
Ero j'iya bi ẹni pe koni'le	Strangers suffer there as if they had no homes.

Odolaye here captures the daily struggles and sufferings that ordinary people encountered in order to make ends meet in Lagos. Our attention is first drawn to those who lived outside Nigeria's former Federal Capital, and who, being apparently envious of those working there, and oblivious of the danger and suffering involved, thought it was quite easy 'to make money' in Lagos. In another track in "A ti rira ko desin", Odolaye refers to the widespread belief that thosethat went to work in Lagos were bound to 'make it', and that whoever failed to do so was considered an irresponsible, lazyand unserious person. He sings thus:

Oniyẹyẹ lo s'Eko ko m'epini de	The jester went to Lagos but returned without a penny
Ọlẹ eniyan lo s'Eko ko m'epini de	The indolent went to Lagos but returned penniless
Nkan ti nf'owo jẹ l'Eko emi o ma fun-un	I don't understand what he ate with money in Lagos

In the previous song, Odolaye reports that various kinds of manual unskilled jobs abounded in Lagos.His reference to "*isẹ kiisẹ nbẹ l'Alakoro, eru k'ẹru nbẹ l'Eyin-Igbẹti, gberu mi sọ mi nbẹ l'Ebute-Mẹta*" are indirect references to those called *Alaaru* or *Alabaaru* (head porters) and 'Agbe-po' ('night soil men'). Alakoro (on Lagos Island), Eyin-Igbẹti (along Ido) and Ebute-Mẹta are different parts of Lagos where people engaged in various kinds of similar jobs. Eyin-Igbẹti is said to be an area where human feaces (*igbẹ*) was dumped in the past; the manual evacuation of such wastes to Eyi-Igbẹti involved 'night-soil-men'. Though detested by most people (hence its description as "*isẹ kiisẹ*"), it was a job from which some had 'made their money' (Aiyelabegan 2015). Ebute-Mẹta was where the construction of railway began in Lagos in the late 1890s. With a railway station, it was a busy settlement and a centre of such activities as *aaru sise* (head porterage) and a place frequented by head-porters. Being home to seaport and wharf, Apapa was an area where *iseaaru* had also thrived (Aiyelabegan 2015; Ajao 2015).

Odolaye reports that many people were killed on daily basis while working at Apapa in particular and Lagos generally, and that their corpses were usually visibly seen floating on the lagoon. His song also indicates various circumstances in which people got killed or maimed while struggling to earn a living in Lagos. These included drowning in the lagoon, accidental cutting of cranes used in lifting and moving containers and other heavy luggage from ships, and car accidents. Odolaye's song also refers to overcrowding that was and has remained a major feature of Lagos life. Here, he specifically points to the overcrowding on the roads when he says "*Ọrẹ mi Isọla l'eri mato ni kẹkẹ gbe ns'are; Ọna t'eeyan nko ni mato rin*. Various informants corroborated Odolaye's description of the Lagos situation (Ajao 2015; Eliasu 2015). The vivid image of the life of the ordinary struggling men and women there, which Odolaye captures in the above tracks, gives us important insights, and indeed helpful factual clues, to work with when using an approach to historiography called "history from below"—that is history from the experiences of common people as opposed to "history from above," which sees history as being all about those in the upper social classes, the powerful and very important personalities.

On the Death of G. A. Adelabu and S. L. Akintola

Alhaji Gbadamosi Adegoke Adelabu (1915-1958) died in a ghastly motor accident on 25th March, 1958. In his "Iku Adelabu" (Aremu 1977), Odolaye recalls the event thus:

Ke tii pẹ ke jina	It wasn't quite long
a gbo 'ku Adelabu Ọmọ l'ogun	That we heard the death of Adelabu, Logun's son
Adegoke t'olọ 'le Iya lọ mumu	Adegoke, who went to his mum's house to suck breast

Iku Adelabu, O da tulasi lẹ	Adelabu's death caused 'tulasi'
Ogunlabi ti da'sọ bo'ra lọ Makah	Ogunlabi who wraps his body with cloth when going to Makkah
Ajao Oji ọmọ ab'ẹkun pa mini jọjọ	Ajao Oji, son of Ab'ẹkun pa mini jọjọ
B'aye ti ri ohun naa nun o	Such is life!

Odolaye gives further information on the circumstances of Adelabu's death thus:

Adelabu, o lohun o rọ ọna Eko	Adelabu said he was going to Lagos
Asaraelu lo lọ de na fun	It was Azrail[4] who went to waylay him
O ku dẹdẹ ko wọ Oluyọle l'ọlọjo de o	His death came just a short while to reach Oluyole
Njẹ o yẹ ka dẹ pakute de 'ra wa?	Is it proper for us to set deathtrap for one another?
Ni 'jọ ti Asaraelu nbọ wa ilẹ aye	On the day when Azrail descended to earth
Oyin n le wọn l'oko	Bees pursued people in the farms
Ejo n le wọn k'aala	Snakes pursued them along the boundaries!
Eyan nla ni 'ku pa	Death has killed an important personality
Ọfọ nla mi 'lu jiji	A big bereavement that shook the entire city!
Yeeeee! Hunhun!	Yeeeee! Hunhun!
L'Ọlọpa n le wọn n'igboro	Police running after people on the streets
Awọn sọja npa 'yan	[As] soldiers continue to kill people!
Emi t'obọ o l'onka	The casualties were uncountable!
A sa kiigbe kiigbe	We ran helter-skelter and lamented here and there!
Akande o wa'ye mọ	Akande is no more; can't come back to life
Ọrọ t'oba j'ẹkun lọ ẹrin l'afin rin	when a matter is beyond tears, you laugh over it!

In the above track, Odolaye gives an account of Adelabu's sudden death in what was then considered as 'controversial' circumstances. We are here informed that he died on his return from a trip to Lagos.This is corroborated in anaccount credited to one of his daughters (and other sources) that Adelabu had gone to Lagos to help a friend[5] to sort out some issues with the government (*Prime People* May 13, 1958). In the ghastly motor accident involving a head-on collision with another vehicle, Adelabu and two other relatives died while the three passengers in the other vehicle sustained injuries (*Nigerian Citizen* March 29, 1958). Although Odolaye does not make any direct reference to a motor accident, his song indicates that Adelabu's death came when he ran into a deathtrap that was set for him by some unnamed detractors. Here, Odolaye, undoubtedly, reports the widespread belief, at least in Ibadan and its environs, about the death of a man widely considered as the "People's Hero."

[4] In Muslim belief, Azrail (Yoruba: *Asarelu*) is the angel in charge of taking human souls at the time of death.
[5] Identified as Mr. Albert Younan, a 30-year old Syrian textile merchant who had solicited Adelabu's intervention to "rescue him from an unidentified predicament", and was the one who drove the ill-fated car. Sklar 303; *Daily Times* 30 May 1958; *Nigerian Tribune*30 May 1958.

Popularly known as "*Pẹnkẹlẹmẹsi*" (from 'Peculiar Mess') and "Lion of the West," Adelabu was a ferocious and effective Leader of Opposition to the AG government in the WRN. As Abati (2005) puts it, Adelabu "stood on the other side in Yoruba politics" and was variously known as "the stormy petrel of Ibadan politics," the "Scourge of the Action group," and "a thorn in the flesh of Chief Obafemi Awolowo" (Oduntan and Rotimi 2015; Olabode 2019). When he suddenly died, therefore, many of his supporters and followers suspected a foul play. They apparently fell back on conspiracy theory to explain that his death was orchestrated by his opponents, that is, AG members. Recently, one of Adelabu's children reportedly claimed, *inter alia,* that his death had been "sponsored by his political opponents" (*Prime People* May 13, 1988).

Corroborating the widespread belief that Adelabu's death was masterminded by his opponents is a report that during the crisis between Chief Akintola, Premier of the WRN, and Chief Obafemi Awolowo, AG Leader, in 1962, the former's supporters took to the streets singing:

Akintola o se pa, Akintola o se pa	Akintola cannot be killed (twice)
eyin tẹ p'ete p'ero, tẹ p'Adelabu	Those that conspired and killed Adelabu
Akintola o se pa	know that Akintola cannot be killed[6]

As expressed in his song, Odolaye's account of Adelabu's death recounts the general belief in Ibadan about what was widely considered the cause of his death. As Sklar notes, "an awful gloom came over" Ibadan when news of Adelabu's death was broken (Sklar 1963, 304). The general belief in the assassination of Adelabu probably explains why the news immediately led to widespread riot characterised by looting, arson, murder, and insecurity in Ibadan, the headquarters of the WRN, and its environs (*Prime People* May 13, 1988). The month-long "Adelabu Riots" became so serious that the government had to impose a curfew.

Odolaye expresses the resultant situation when he says "*iku Adelabu, ọ da tulasi lẹ*" ('Adebalu's death caused *tulasi*'), and that on the fateful day (i.e.*ni 'jọ ti Asarelu nbọ wa ile aye*), *oyin le wọn l'oko, ejo nle wọn k'aala* ('bees and snakes pursued people in their farms and along the boundaries') and *ọfọ nla mi 'lu jiji* ('a big bereavement shook the entire city'). Odolaye uses the word "*tulasi*" to describe the entire pandemonium associated with the crisis that greeted Adelabu's death. The word seems to be the 'Yorubanisation' of the phrase "through lash," which must have been used to express a situation in which law enforcement agents compelled individuals to do or refrained them from doing things. This was usually *through* beating with wooden batons (*kondo*), as

[6] Abati (2005) claims that, Chief Awolowo refers to this song in his *Travails of Democracy and the Rule of Law*.

often used by police officers, or *lash* (*koboko* or *bilala*), and sometimes, in extreme cases, through sporadic shootings by police and military officials.

Odolaye sheds further light on the situation when he sings: "*Yeeeee! Hunhun! L'Ọlọpa n le wọn n'igboro, awọn Sọja npa 'yan…a sa kiigbe-kiigbe*": 'policemen [were] chasing after people on the streets, while soldiers continued to kill! We ran helter-skelter and cried uncontrollably!"' As the killing and looting continued, people ran for their safety; while some reportedly hid themselves in the roofs of their houses to escape the attacks, many left Ibadan for other places (*Daily Service* March 31, and 15 April 15, 1958). As newspaper reports show, the 'Adelabu Riots' began on 26th March, 1958, and just two days after Adelabu's burial, three people had been reported dead, and about 80 others arrested. Eventually, reinforcements of policemen and paramilitary police were mobilized to contain the riots and to restore peace in the affected areas (*Daily Service* March 27 and 29, 1958; Oduntan and Rotimi 2015). It would seem that it was the paramilitary policemen that Odolaye refers to as "*awọn soja*" (soldiers) who he says also killed some people. Odolaye's account of the events of the Adelabu riots was from the experience and perspective of the ordinary people rather than those of the elite or officials.

At the end of the '*tulasi*' period, no less than twenty persons were reportedly killed although, in the view of Odolaye, *ẹmi tobọ o l'onka* ('the number of the dead was countless'). It is not impossible that, as often happened, the 'official' figure of casualties may not reflect the actual number of victims.A recent source gives the casualties as fifty (Oduntan and Rotimi 2015). Other facts that have shown the extent of the '*tulasi*' and 'city quake' triggered by Adelabu's death, as Odolaye's song indicates, include reports that some 606 people were arrested, 341 persons charged for various offences relating to the riots; some 64 persons out of the 102 charged for murder were sentenced to death, while over 1,000 persons claimed about £50,000 for damages to property (*Daily Service*, April, 9, 14, and 23 1958; Sklar 305).

In another track dedicated to mourning and paying tribute to one of the victims of January 15, 1966 coup d'etat and the lopsided assassinations that attended it, Odolaye recalls circumstances surrounding the death of the former Premier of the defunct WRN, Sir, S. L. Akintola (1910-1966). In his tribute to, and lamentations about, Akintola's death, Odolaye uses his poetic skills, a vividly mournful voice, and a number of metaphors drawn from the Yoruba language and mythology to tell us few 'facts' about the assassination of Akintola, its immediate aftermath, and the 'general consequences' that Nigeria (which he uses the word "*Aye*", literally 'the world', to refer to metaphorically) had to face thereafter. Odolaye opens the tribute thus:

Mo ranti Ololufẹ mi Oooooo	I remember my beloved
Akintola Puremian' Western Region	Akintola, the Premier of Western Region
Boto: (Baba O!)	The Father!

After singing Akintola's *oriki*, Odolaye sets the stage for an understanding of the prelude to, and aftermath of, his assassination thus:

An pe kii wọn o ma pa a, wọn pa a tan-tan-tan!	We warned them not kill him, but they did!
Wọn pa Agbe tan aye o r'aro da mọ oooooo	After killing the *Agbe* bird, the world has been unable to prepare [black] dye
Wọn si pa Aluko tan aye o k'osun!	They killed the *Aluko* bird and the world ceased to enjoy the camwood
Wọn wa pa Lekeleke aye o gbadun ẹfun	They killed the *Lekeleke* bird and the world ceased to enjoy chalk
Wọn wa pa Gunungun aye o gun mọ ooooooo!	They killed the *Gunungun*, the world has not been orderly again since
Wọn si pa Akalamagbo tan aye o kalẹ!	They killed *Akalamagbo*, the world has not been settled since
Bi Atata eyan ba ku o yẹ ko damu 'lu o	Indeed the death of an important personality ought to trouble the land
E wo iku Ọlọla bi n ti le gbogbo ọmọ ara aye kiri!	See how the death of the noble continued to haunt land's inhabitants! [7]
The 'holu Nanjeria-aaa!	The whole Nigeria!
Ẹ s'ado oke e wo 'bi ewu nlọọ	Why not cast a gourd up to unveil the path of the pervading evil
Ojo tin rọ ti e da Ọlọhun lomọ ẹni ti o pa	Only God knows how many would be beaten by the unceasing rains
Ajala Agbe Akintiọla Puremian' Western Region	Ajala Agbe, Akintọla, Premier [of] Western Region

As it was with Adelabu's death, Odolaye sees Akintola's deathas a result of a conspiracy by people he indicates had not heeded 'warnings' against such a development (Aremu 1977, 021:1). On the cause of Akintọla's death in particular, Odolaye sings:

Aye binu kanhun,	The world hated potash,
wọn da kanhun s'omi	they poured potash into the water
Aye binu iyọ	The world hated salt,
wọn da'yọ s'epẹ	they poured salt into the sand
Aye binu Ajala Agbe,	The world hated Ajala *Agbe*
wọn k'ori ẹ s'ọna ọrun	that they sent him to the great beyond
Akintọla Ọkọ Faderera,	Akintọla, Faderera's husband
Ajala Agbe Ọmọ Ọkọ l'ogun ọmọ aale!	Ajala *Agbe*, true son of his father, the appropriate remedy for the bastard!
…….	…….

[7] For Odolaye's use of literary devices such as metaphors, satires, etc. see Na'Allah 2011.

Ajala Agbe nbẹ ni ọrun ọsan gangan	Ajala Agbe, sent to the great beyond in the heat of the mid-day
Ki iya o ma jẹ Yooba lo fa sababi ẹ!	That the Yoruba should not suffer was the cause [of his assassination]!

Thus, in his typical mono-causal explanation of events, Odolaye reduces the main cause of Akintọla's assassination to hatred ('*aye binu Ajala Agbe*'), which emanated, in his view, from Akintọla's fighting for the cause of the Yoruba. What Odolaye expressesas "*ki iya o ma jẹ Yooba lo fa sababi ẹ*" was connectedwith the root of the AG crisis of 1962, described as a 'superficial ideological conflict'between the AG Leader, Chief Awolowo, and his deputy, Chief Akintọla.

It has been explained that Awolowo (leading a majority "Leftist," pro-socialism faction) wanted to continue his 'radical opposition' to the NPC-National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) coalition government at the federal level and AG's penetration into other regions to canvass for support at the grassroots. Akintola, as spokesman for a minority, conservative "rightist" faction, had preferred that the AG should confine itself to its home base and to consider cooperation with other parties, especially those in power at the federal level. This, in his reckoning, would help secure the Yoruba-dominated WRN for the AG as well as afford the region to benefit from federal patronage rather than suffer from the politics of opposition that Awolọwọ espoused (Sklar 510-1).

The conflict eventually culminated in attempts to remove Akintola from the AG and from the premiership of the region and in his joining forces with the Ahmadu Bello-led NPC in the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) for the 1964 General Elections. The latter development made many Yoruba supporters of Awolowo and AG, on the one hand, to denounce him as a 'betrayer of the Yoruba'. On the other hand, for 'lovers' and staunch supporters of Akintola and his alliance with the NPC such as Odolaye (Na'Allah 2011), the Premier was 'fighting' for the interest of the Yoruba. Although Odolaye's mono-causal 'explanation' gives a partisan account of events leading to Akintola's assassination, it, however, neither rules out other possibilities nor suggests that there were no other sides to the crisis. Odolaye alludes to the general disorderliness that attended the assassination of Akintola (and by extension other victims such as Sir Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Balewa, Festus Okotie-Eboh, among others). To show that the death of Akintola (and others) was followed by major repercussions for Nigeria as a whole, Odolaye deploys various metaphors to reflect the consequences of the 'murder' of *Agbe, Aluko, Lekeleke, Gunungun* and *Akalamagbo*.

On Contemporary Social and Political Changes in Nigeria

As a poet who regularly commented on local and national issues, some songs of Odolaye Aremu draw attention to aspects of contemporary history while others reflect his advocacies on a number of emergent socio-political developments in the country. In one of his songs devoted to 'commenting' on Nigerian issues, Odolaye identifies eight developments, which he seems to have considered as 'phenomenal'thus:

Nanjeria-aa! Ẹ dakun Ooo	Nigeria! Please
Mo bẹyin pipọ	I plead with you on a serious note
Ẹ wo igba ta n tin ba kinni yi bọwa	Consider how long we have come on this matter
Sarkin Goma, Samani Goma	Sarkin Goma, Samani Goma
Ọba mẹwa, igba rẹ mewa	Ten kings, ten eras
E bi mi ẹni kin ni mo ri ti me wi bẹẹ	Ask me what informed this my submission
O dọdun kẹtadinlogun t'ile aye tin yin-in	It's now seventeen years the world has been changing
Nka mẹrindinlogun lo s'aju	Sixteen things are at the forefront
Mẹdogun lo tẹ le ooo	Followed by fifteen others
Igbati o dun mọ, mejila lowa pada ẹyin,	Twelve withdrew when it was not well again
Lo wa wa'ile yan-yan	And returned home completely
Nkan mẹjọ bawa n bẹ ni, a o ba dada	Eight things met us, we didn't meet them on ground
Iru kin ni?	What are such things?
Ẹyin onka, tẹ ma n ka kan	Those who are professional note-takers
Ẹ ba wa sẹ gege ẹ m'ọwọ	Help us get your pen ready
Ki ọlọgbọn o ma f'inu ran…….	Let the wise safe-keep these in mind

Akọkọ bigeni, Baalu to de nkọ?	First to begin with, what about the 'advent' of airplane?
O bawa nbẹ ni, a o ba dada	It met us here, we didn't meet it on ground
Ogun Ojuku to de nkọ?	What about Ojukwu's War?
O ba wa nbẹ ni, a o ba dada…..	It met us here, we didn't meet it on ground
Ogun ka ma sun 'le, ogun abẹle	[a] War characterised by arson, a civil disorder
ka ma sun 'le, ka ma sun r'ẹni;	involving setting houses and persons on fire
O ba wa nbẹ ni, a o ba dada	It met us here, we didn't meet it on ground
Ogun ki okunrin o f'ile lẹ f'obinrin	'War' which makes a man abandon his house for the wife
O ba wa nbẹ ni, a o ba dada	It met us here, we didn't meet it on ground
So-ko-to Je Biii, to si se yagbua-yagbua, to sọ, to da-aa,	The baggy-mouthed and fine JB's trousers,
ti awọn obinrin fi n w'akọ ni Nanjeria	that women used to drive cars in Nigeria
O ba wa nbẹ ni, a o ba dada	It met us here, we didn't meet it on ground
Agbada ti o d'oke, ti o de s'alẹ!	The neither long nor short Agbada
Oju yii la ju	This new exposure is getting too much!
Agbada ti o d'oke, ti o de s'alẹ	And the neither long nor short Agbada
T'awon obinrin nda kọọ?	That women now sew?
Ti wọn ng wọ nkọọ?	That they [women] now put on?

O ba wa nbẹ ni, a o ba dada	Is a new development, we didn't meet it on ground
K'obinrin o kọ ọkọ, ko tun di 'jọ k'ẹfa ko tun dari wa 'le, ko tun ko 'gba w'ale?	For a woman to divorce her husband and then to return to the same house six days later
O ba wa nbe ni, a o ba dada	Is a new development, we didn't meet it on ground
Eyi ta wa bọ si yi Ogun o ma-ma ni wo Nanjeria Oooooo…….	Our current situation, War will not be Nigeria's lot……..

Five of the emergent eight developments Odolaye considered as 'phenomenal' are socio-cultural, while three are political. The former included the advent of the airplane (and air traffic) in Nigeria; two types of dress in vogue among the women folk namely 'JB Trousers' ("*sokoto* JB") and an apparently new type of *Agbada* ("*ti o d'oke, ti o de s'alẹ*"); absentee heads of household, namely, men who abandoned their homes/responsibilities for women; and a 'new' divorce practice, which involved women seeking for divorce and moving out of their matrimonial homes only to soon return to the divorced husband apparently without shame. Unfortunately, Odolaye gives no clues as to which part(s) of Nigeria such 'new' social practices as absentee heads of households and divorce were becoming prevalent.

The three 'phemonenal' political developments included the 'Operation Wet Ẹ' ("*Ogun ka ma sun 'le, ka ma sun r'ẹni*") in Western Nigeria in late 1965; the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 (popularly known as "*Ogun Ojukwu*" [Ojukwu's War]), and the 'current' (then) political situation ("*eyi ta wa bọ si yi*") in Nigeria. On the latter, Odolaye 'prays' that war should not be Nigeria's lot: "*Ogun o ma-ma ni wọ Nanjeria Ooooo.*" This would suggest that he was referring to the post-civil war era in Nigeria, which was largely dominated by military rule and its authoritarian tendencies and threats of disintegration similar to those that led to *Ogun Ojukwu*.

In his "*Awa ni Ẹ bi*," Odolaye reflects the painful paradox of the Nigerian situation during the military era of the 1980s and early 1990s when he sings thus:

Nanjeriaa!	Nigeria!
Ẹnpe a ma sunkun ma, ọfọ o si dagun sẹ!	You said we should stop crying, yet sudden death does not stop striking!
Ẹn gbawa n'ko, ẹ la gbọdọ sunkun ma!	You keep knocking us on our heads and yet say we should not cry!
Ẹn na wa n'kumọ, e ni a ma wi nkanka o!	You keep beating us with wooden batons and still say we must not utter a word!

The above track is followed by Odolaye's identification of those issues on which he feels he should be asked (as noted above) including the various categories of people in Nigeria and indeed those who were aspiring to the presidency in the transition to civil rule during the period.

Closely related to the latter situation is Odolaye's appeal to the military President, General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993), during the course of his transition to civilian rule, which culminated in the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election. In his "*Ọrọ Nigeria, Ẹ Ro wo*," Odolaye calls on all Nigerians to prevail on Babangida not only to 'fix Nigeria for all' but to 'step aside' and hand over power to civilians thus:

Ẹyin agbalagba obirin tẹ n bẹ Nanjeria-aa	Elderly women in Nigeria
Ẹyin Aafa tẹ n bẹ Nanjeria-aa	Islamic Clerics in Nigeria
Ọmọ k'ewu tẹ n bẹ Nanjeria-aa….	Students of Qur'anic education in Nigeria
Gbogbo wa yan-yan	All of us in our entirety
Ati gbogbo olorin ti n bẹ Nanjeria	And all musicians in Nigeria
Ẹ jẹ a p'anu pọ	Let us all resolve unanimously
Ka lọ le ba Babangida	To go and meet Babangida
Ka raba, ka gode, ka bẹ ẹ	To plead with him with respect
Ko ba wa tun Nanjeria wa se o-o-o	Urging him to help fix our Nigeria
……	…….
Sọ lẹ ẹ, fi lakalaka, sọ lẹ	Hand it over, dangle it anyhow, hand it over
Babangida-aa! O to gẹ-gẹ iyan n'Ile Apa	Babangida! Enough to *Iyan* at Ile-Apa
O to gẹ-gẹ ọka l'Oke Oyi	Enough to *Ọka* at Oke-Oyi
Ro wo-ooo, Ọrọ Nanjeria-aa, ro wo-o!	Think over it. Think over Nigeria's matter
Rọju sọ gbogbo kin niyi lẹ	Be patient [and] hand over all these things
Ko wa wo wa l'oju l'ọdun mẹrin	And observe us for four years
Ẹni ti o ba le se suru, tin ba tun ba r'awọn ja	if, then, there are still impatient ones fighting one another,
Ko tun wa gba-a l'ọwọ awa oo	You can then take it back from us again
…….	……..
Hajji Babangida……..	Hajji Babangida……
Ẹkun kan, Ọmọ ẹ kan, Babangida	The Sole Tiger, and his Cub, Babangida
Asu l'ogun bi ẹfi, Babangida…..	Smoky at the battlefront as smoke, Babangida
Ogbologbo sọja ti-i rin t'epe t'epe	The Versatile Soldier who moves with curses
Sọ lẹ-ẹ, ti ẹ jẹ a s'ewo o!	Hand it over; just allow us to do it [and see]
O mọ iye eyan ti wọn gb'apoti	You know the number of people contesting
Ti wọn fẹ jẹ presidenti	to become President
Iyan, o dide n'lẹ, ohun fẹ jẹ presidenti	Pounded yam, stood up, wanted to be president
Amala dide n'lẹ, ohun fẹ jẹ presidenti	*Amala* too stood up, wanted to be president
Ẹkọ dide n'lẹ, ohun fẹ jẹ presidenti	Pap equally stood up to become president
Eeyan ro gbogbo ẹ wo ni-i	Humans just need to ponder over all things

In the above excerpts, we can have a peep into Babangida's regime including the transition programme, the aspiration of several individuals to the presidency, the widespread disillusionment with Babangida's regime and his transition programme. Apart from telling the military ruler '*O To Gẹẹ*' ('Enough is Enough'), Odolaye could also be seen advocating for a four-year 'trial-and-observe' period for civilian rule during which Babangida was to 'step aside' and 'watch' things and return to power if not satisfied with the conduct of the civilians.

Odolaye Aremu's Employment of Epigrams

In addition to his use of various forms of oral literature (songs, proverbs, praise poetry), Odolaye also made use of epigrammatic expressions that contain valuable historical information. Various tracks from his songs suggest that he employs epigrams to give commentaries on contemporary developments, and to draw attention to various aspects of life. For instance, Odolaye composed and used epigrams on the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of such prominent individuals that shocked the community in his Ilorin home as Muhammad Jimoh Sauta (aka Jimoh Omo Aboki l'Adifa), the fourth Daudu Adifa and District Head of Ejidongari (d. 1950), Alfa Girimandogo Alabidun, an Islamic cleric who died in February 1972, and Jimoh Isọla of the Oju-Ekun chieftaincy family, a former "*Daodu*" (District Head) of Alapa (Aremu 1977, 023: 2; Alabi 1992, 45-8; Katibi 2019; Jimba 2019; Sambo 2019).

The context in which Odolaye employs the epigrams shows that he had intended to use them to warn or counsel his admirers (and others) on the inevitability of death, the need for caution and vigilance especially when dealing with those considered as intimate friends such as those that reportedly orchestrated the sudden death of some of those prominent personalities. However, such epigram as Odolaye composed on Jimoh Isola Oju-Ekun informs us not only about his brief tenure but also draws attention to the fatality that was attending contests for the chieftaincy title. It also indicates a change from a period when the contest for the chieftaincy office was apparently free of much acrimony to a time when it became unsafe to aspire to the title. Epigrams such as those Odolaye composed from the life and death of Jimoh Omo Aboki l'Adifa and Alabidun (among others), compare well with a similar one which summarises the life and death of Gaha, the Basorun who dominated politics in the 18th-century Old Oyo Empire, and which reportedly inspired Samuel Johnson, the author of the *History of the Yorubas*, to investigate more about the Basorun (Delano 1987).

Conclusion

Odolaye Aremu's *Dadakuada* songs may be quite different from those categorized as "historical songs" but they fit well into the "topical songs" category and could be useful for historical reconstruction. The historical value of Odolaye's songs includes documentation of information on prominent individuals as well as events of significant importance at local and national levels and confirmation, refutation as well as tendency to call for a reconsideration or reinterpretation of conventional information on persons and events. By offering critical and important insights into past conditions and situations, Odolaye's songs offer important clues of historical significance and 'guides' to further historical study and interpretation of events.

Although oral sources of information suffer from a number of limitations including being open to distortions, manipulation, outright fabrication, exaggeration and propaganda, Odolaye's songs, as presented here, would appear to be comparatively free from most of such negative tendencies. Also, as Delano (1987) observes, "a frequent limitation in the value of poems for historians," which some of Odolaye's songs share, "is that it may not be known to what event they refer." However, on a number of occasions, Odolaye, as a blunt artist and narrator, often, without mincing words, gives straightforward information on the events and people that he refers to. More often than not, he gives clues to guide further investigation on such events, issues or personalities that he might not have seemingly presented detailed accounts.

In addition, Odolaye, like other poets, may be accused of exaggeration but, more often than not, he may not be accused of fabrication or manipulation of historical facts. This probably explains why the factual evidence contained in his songs is quite verifiable from other sources. Odolaye was not, therefore, just a praise singer but also a reporter; not just an informer, but also a careful observer and critical commentator on local and national affairs and issues. In doing all these, and much more, Odolaye was a captivating narrator and a sort of 'historian' albeit non-professional one.

Of course, like other forms of oral literature usable for historical reconstruction, Odolaye's songs show lack of dating and chronology. The latter limitation probably explains why he places Adelabu's death, which happened in 1958, *after* that of Akintola in January 1966, when he sings "*Ke tii pẹ, ke tii jina, agbọ iku Adelabu*…" But his comparative accuracy and depth in reporting events may well have paid off for this common limitation of oral literature or evidence as a source of history. While Odolaye's folk songs show frequent tendency to follow the mono-causal approach to causation in history (as typical with traditional oral sources), his 'narrations' at times adopt the cause-effect approach that is central to historical scholarship. Also, his mono-causal approach does not always indicate that there were no other possible cause(s) to the events he sings about, thereby leaving enough room for further historical probing into such.

Furthermore, in view of the fact that many of the issues, events and personalities that Odolaye's songs cover are contemporary in his days, he could well be considered as an eye-witness and active and critical observer and/or participant. Thus, as an eyewitness, his 'accounts' (songs) contain 'historical facts,' which can be considered more as "first-hand evidence" than mere hear-say without verifiable historical information. Despite the limitations that his accounts share with other oral sources, there is, in conclusion, in Odolaye's Ilorin *Dadakuada* folk songs information of real historical value for various aspects of history including biography, social, cultural, economic, and political history.

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