VOICES OF RESISTANCE IN *ORIN OLÓROGÚN GENRE OF* YORÙBÁ ORAL POETRY

Saudat Adebisi O. Hamzat Ph.D
Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages,
Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin
saudat@unilorin.edu.ng
08033777066
&
Ibrahim Àbáyọ̀mí Adeigbe Ph.D
Department of Linguistics, African & Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts,
University of Lagos
ibrahimadeigbe@gmail.com / aadeigbe@unilag.edu.ng
Phone: 08034314166

Abstract
Yorùbá oral literature, with its diverse forms such as chants, songs, and recitations, has long served as a vehicle for expressing dissent, challenging social injustices, and mobilising community action. Despite its significance, some aspects of the genre, like *orin olórogún* are yet to be explored for their function as a site for resistance and protest in Yorùbá oral poetry. This study explores the cultural significance of Yorùbá co-wife's poetry- *orin olórogún* as a traditional form of Yorùbá oral poetry. Through a culturalist lens, this study examines the ways in which co-wife songs employ humor, satire, and emotional expression to demonstrate how oral poetry reflects struggles and inspires collective movements for change in polygamous relationships. Through a critical analysis of the forms, structures, and lyrics of these songs, this research reveals how co-wife songs serve as a platform for women to express resistance, resilience, and agency in the face of patriarchal norms and relationship dynamics. Data for this paper was collected in situ via direct field interviews, non-participant observation, recordings of real-life performances, and intermittent conversations with poets. The analysis reveals the dynamic interplay between art and culture, as powerful media for navigating the complexities of polygamous relationships. In conclusion, this study underscores the enduring relevance of Yorùbá oral poetry, particularly *orin olórogún*, in articulating resistance against societal injustices such as oppression, corruption, and inequality. It recommends a continuous study and use of Yorùbá oral poetry to serve as a potent means of resistance and empowerment in traditional societies.
Keywords: Activism; oral poetry; protest; social justice; Yorùbá oral poetry

Introduction
Yorùbá traditional poetry is an oral art form transmitted through performance and sound. Songs are an integral and functional part of daily activities, permeating every level of traditional life, whether social, religious, or ceremonial. Unlike the European tradition, where poetry and music are distinct, the Yorùbá tradition interweaves these elements seamlessly. This integration suggests that adopting separate European terms for Yorùbá oral poetry and music might be unnecessary, as either term could suffice to describe this rich tradition.

Orímóògùnjẹ́ (2014) notes that songs belong to a subcategory of Yorùbá poetry that is distinguished by its highly musical mode of rendition different from the recitative mode. Songs and music are crucial forms of communication among the Yorùbá people, reflecting their thoughts and way of life. This is evident in various forms of Yorùbá poetry, including the co-wife's poetry, *orin olórogún*. Yorùbá poetry encapsulates the beliefs of the Yorùbá people in love, duty, friendship, freedom, protest, and adversity. The literary artist draws relevant materials from society to reflect and retract existing behavioural patterns in the society

(Olujinmi, 2008, p. 175).

Yorùbá traditional society is patriarchal, with men often practicing polygamy, largely due to their primary occupation as farmers, which necessitated having multiple wives and children to assist on the farm. This polygamous structure frequently leads to unhealthy rivalries among co-wives, sometimes resulting in chaos within the household. These rivalries could become so intense that one wife might spiritually attack another or her children, occasionally leading to tragic outcomes.

Many Yorùbá adages, proverbs, and axioms illustrate how women oppose and resent having rivals. One such saying is, "Òrìṣà jẹ́ n pé méjì obìnrin kò dénú" (When a woman prays to have a rival, it does not come from her heart). This means that when a woman prays for her husband to take a second wife, it is not a sincere wish but merely lip service. Women are naturally jealous and cannot bear to see their husband emotionally and romantically attached to another woman.

Amidst such conflicts, poetry, particularly co-wife's poetry (orin olórogún), emerges as a means of protest. When a husband favours one wife over the others, the less favoured wife might use poetry to resist the harassment and injustice she faces. This poetry could be directed against the husband or the favoured co-wife, and it is typically performed to ensure the target could hear the message. The poetry, often filled with abusive or insulting content, alerting neighbours and passers-by of the brewing tensions. It serves as warning of impending conflict.

Orin olórogún is practiced throughout Yorùbá land and is usually performed without drumming, although the singer might use her mouth to create a rhythm that complements the song. In traditional Yorùbá culture, both men and women play active roles in social, economic, political, and religious activities. The Yorùbá marriage institution recognizes men and women as co-builders of families and society. However, men, seen as the heads of families, have historically dominated societal roles. Despite cultural and customary recognition of women's contributions, domestic responsibilities have often limited their participation in social, political, and economic spheres.

There is paucity of work on activism and protest in Yorùbá oral poetry. The aim of this study was to evaluate the themes of protest and activism in Yorùbá oral poetry, particularly in co-wife's poetry (orin olórogún). It examined how women use poetry to resist oppression in polygamous marriages, an issue that continues to affect contemporary society.

This paper explored resistance in Yorùbá co-wife's poetry (*orin olórogún*) and opened a new research vista into the oral genre of the Yorùbá people as practiced in their community. It aims at a structural analysis of the song and a descriptive analysis of the content, contributing to the understanding of Yorùbá traditional oral genres. The study reveals the rich knowledge embedded in the song to literary scholars, creating fresh awareness of Yorùbá culture. Additionally, it highlights the use of language, symbolism, and performance in expressing dissent.

Theoretical Framework: Cultural Theory

Several literary theories could be employed to analyse protest and activism in co-wife poetry. However, the one that best accommodates the dynamic and complex nature of the subject is cultural theory. This theory emphasises the paramount importance of economic interests in human relations, positing that nearly all human activities, such as trade, religion, and association are based on economic values, which largely determine survival.

Cultural theory provides a robust framework for analysing co-wife poetry in Yorùbá literature, offering insights into the interplay between culture, economics, and social structures. Developed primarily by cultural theorists such as Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, this theory emphasises the role of cultural practices and traditions in reflecting and shaping economic and social relations (Williams, 1977, p. 30; Hall, 1996, p. 266).

Cultural theory highlights the concepts of hegemony and the roles of dominant, residual, and emergent cultures as crucial tools in analysing culture and customs in any given society. It offers a unique perspective on cultural activities, viewing them as tradition and as practice. Cultural tradition and practice are more than mere superstructural expressions, reflections, meditations, or deifications of a formed social and economic structure because of the thoroughness with which cultural influence is lived.

One of the strengths of cultural theory is its flexibility and adaptability to various cultural texts (Hall, 1996, p. 270). This is particularly useful in analysing co-wife poetry, as it allows for a nuanced exploration of how cultural practices and economic conditions intersect. The theory's adaptability ensures that it can address the diverse themes and issues present in Yorùbá co-wife poetry. While no literary theory is without limitations, each having its specific focus that may not effectively address every aspect of a work of art, the merits of cultural theory significantly outweigh its demerits. Its flexibility makes it adaptable to various segments of this study.

Method of Data Collection

The study utilised both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included oral data collected through interviews and field recordings, while secondary sources comprised published and unpublished works, including recordings on compact discs. Notably, the song "Ìjàòdọlà," performed by Muinat Adunni in 2017, was significant secondary source.

Oral data were collected in Abẹ́òkúta, Ìbàdàn, and Òṣogbò. During this process, we gathered 50 co-wife's songs and purposively selected 10 for analysis. Additionally, non-participant observations of co-wife's songs, performed by friends of similar age groups in these cities, provided valuable insights. Before proceeding with data collection, the researchers reviewed existing literature on co-wife songs (orin olórogún) to refine the research approach. While most songs in the collection were recorded, some informants, due to personal principles, declined to be recorded. In these cases, they sang at a slower pace to ensure accurate transcription. The collection and collation of materials aimed to provide a comprehensive and precise interpretation of the subject matter. The researchers meticulously utilised all available sources to ensure the study's thoroughness.

Literature Review

Yorùbá Oral Literature: History and Evolution

Yorùbá oral literature has a deep historical foundation, originating from pre-colonial times when it was a primary means of cultural transmission among the Yorùbá people in southwestern Nigeria (Abímbọ́lá, 2011, p. 92). According to Euba (1990), this tradition adapted during the colonial period as Western literary forms began to influence and blend with indigenous practices, creating a hybrid cultural expression (p. 78). In the post-colonial era, there has been renewed interest in preserving Yorùbá oral literature, which has become essential for maintaining cultural identity and heritage (Adegbindin, 2014, p. 242). This historical evolution demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of Yorùbá oral traditions in a changing world.

Yorùbá oral literature comprises various forms, each with specific societal functions. Folktales, or *Ìtàn alálọ̀ọ́*, are fundamental in this tradition, used to convey moral lessons, historical events, and cultural values through storytelling (Ogunbiyi, 1981, p. 33). These tales play a critical role

in socialising individuals and reinforcing community norms. Riddles, known as *Àlọ́ Àpamọ̀*, serve both educational and entertainment purposes. They stimulate cognitive development and encourage critical thinking, especially among younger generations (Soyinka, 1976, p. 90).

All genres of poetry; recitations, songs and chants, are significant in various ceremonies and rituals, highlighting the performative aspect of Yorùbá oral traditions. Proverbs, referred to as *Òwe*, encapsulate collective wisdom and philosophical insights, often used in daily life to provide guidance and resolve disputes (Isola, 1992, p. 21). They reflect the practical and moral dimensions of Yorùbá culture. Overall, Yorùbá oral literature is a vital component of cultural heritage, contributing to social cohesion and the reinforcement of Yorùbá identity.

Global Perspectives on Protest and Activism in Oral Traditions

Oral traditions, characterised by their reliance on spoken rather than written forms, serve as a vital mechanism for protest and activism across various cultures globally. These traditions, encompassing genres such as songs, chants, storytelling, and poetry, are instrumental in voicing dissent and advocating for social and political change.

Oral traditions have long been utilized as tools for social critique and resistance. In many indigenous cultures, oral narratives serve to challenge colonial and oppressive systems. For instance, Native American oral traditions have been pivotal in articulating resistance against historical injustices and contemporary encroachments on Indigenous lands and rights (Deloria, 1999, p. 45). Similarly, Australian Aboriginal songlines and stories function as both cultural preservation and resistance against
Colonization (Gunson, 1974, p. 32).

In the Caribbean, oral traditions, including calypso and reggae, have played significant roles in political activism. Calypso emerged as a form of resistance against colonial rule and has been used to address issues such as inequality and corruption (Stolzoff, 2000, p. 60). Reggae, with its roots in Rastafarianism, has also been a medium for social commentary and resistance against systemic oppression (Hebdige, 1987, p. 102).

In the context of African oral traditions, the richness of oral literature as a form of protest and activism is evident across various cultures. Traditional forms such as griot storytelling in West Africa and oral poetry in Southern Africa have been central to political resistance and social mobilization (Hale, 2001, p. 128).

In West Africa, griots or griotte (Djéli) are traditional storytellers, poets, and musicians who play crucial roles in preserving and disseminating cultural knowledge and political dissent. The griot tradition is particularly significant in Senegal, where griots have been pivotal in articulating resistance against colonial and post-colonial regimes (Hale,1994, p. 82). The griot's role extends beyond storytelling to include the performance of songs and poetry that critique political leaders and social injustices (Counsel, 1997, p. 50).

Ouattara (2018) opines that one notable example is the role of griots in the anti-colonial struggle in Mali. During French colonial rule, griots used their art to rally support against colonial policies and to preserve the memory of resistance leaders. The griot's ability to influence public opinion and mobilise communities underscore the power of oral traditions in political activism. In Senagal every political party has its griots, whose task is to bolster the party's image and elevate its leaders in the public domain (Counsel, 1997, p. 50).

In East Africa, particularly in Kenya and Tanzania, oral traditions have been employed as tools

of resistance and social critique. The Swahili poetry genre, known as Mashairi, has historically been used to address socio-political issues. During the colonial period, Swahili poets critiqued colonial rule and advocated for independence through their works (Nyang'oro, 1996, p. 148). Similarly, the *Ngoma* performances in Kenya, which combine music, dance, and oral poetry, have served as platforms for expressing dissent and resistance against political oppression (Kimenyi, 2003, p. 317).

In Southern Africa, the tradition of oral poetry has been instrumental in anti-apartheid activism. The Izibongo (praise poetry) and other forms of oral literature were employed to criticize the apartheid regime and to inspire resistance among oppressed communities (Kuper, 1991, p. 12). The works of South African poets such as James Matthews and Don Mattera reflect the use of oral traditions as a means of political protest and social commentary (Opland, 1998, p. 22).

Central Africa's oral traditions also reflect significant resistance movements. In the Congo Basin, oral narratives and songs have been utilised to resist both colonial exploitation and post-colonial dictatorial regimes (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p. 8). The Mbudi songs of the Bantu peoples, for example, serve not only as cultural expressions but also as forms of protest against external pressures and internal injustices (Murray, 1996, p. 92).

Oral traditions across the globe and specifically within African cultures serve as powerful mechanisms for protest and activism. These traditions, through their various forms and practices, provide a voice to marginalised communities and serve as vehicles for social and political critique. The continued relevance of oral traditions in contemporary activism underscores their enduring significance in shaping political and social landscapes.

Foundational Works on Yorùbá Oral Poetry

Yorùbá oral poetry has long served as a medium for social commentary and political resistance. The study of Yorùbá oral poetry has been significantly advanced by early researchers who documented and analysed its forms and functions. The thematic content of Yorùbá oral poetry is vast, encompassing a wide range of subjects from everyday life to the metaphysical. One of the seminal works is Beier (1970) provides an analysis of the *Egúngún* festival songs, highlighting their role in social and political commentary (pp. 22-27). Furthermore, Abimbola (1975) discusses how Yorùbá poetry often reflects societal values, history, and cosmology, with recurring themes of heroism, morality, and spirituality (pp. 45-46). For instance, Oríkì poetry celebrates the achievements and qualities of individuals and deities, reinforcing social hierarchies and cultural identity (Abimbola, 1975, p.47). Euba (1990) also provides an extensive examination of the integration of poetry with other art forms, highlighting its performative and communal aspects (pp. 15-19).

Several scholars have focused on the role of Yorùbá oral poetry in articulating dissent and mobilising resistance. Barber (1991), in her work "I Could Speak Until Tomorrow: *Oríkì*, Women, and the Past in a Yorùbá Town," explores how *oríkì* (praise poetry) serves as a vehicle for expressing resistance, particularly among women, against patriarchal structures (pp. 52-57). Similarly, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) in "Re-creating Ourselves: African Women & Critical Transformations" discusses how Yorùbá women's poetry embodies a form of protest against social injustices (pp. 79-82).

Thematic studies have delved into specific instances of protest and activism within Yorùbá oral poetry. Olatunji (2005) in "Features of Yorùbá Oral Poetry" identifies recurring themes of social justice, political corruption, and resistance in the genre (pp. 103-108). Additionally, Adeeko (2017) in "Proverbs, Textuality, and Nativism in African Literature" examines how proverbs

and aphorisms in Yorùbá oral poetry encapsulate and transmit subversive ideas (pp. 67-72).

Individual poets and poetic movements have also been the focus of scholarly attention. Recent studies have explored the continuing evolution of Yorùbá oral poetry in the context of modern political and social issues. One notable example is the study of the work of Adébáyọ̀ Fálétí, a renowned Yorùbá poet and playwright, whose poetry often critiques political leaders and societal norms. Olaniyan (2004) in "Arrest the Music! Fẹ́lá and His Rebel Art and Politics" discusses Fálétí's contributions to the tradition of protest poetry in Yorùbá culture (pp. 45-48).

Olúnládé (2009) in "The Love Poems of Akin Isola'", highlights the integration of contemporary themes of love into traditional poetic forms, illustrating the enduring gender-related struggles as represented and utilised in modern contexts for both entertainment and communication (pp. 449-462). Akinyemi (2015) in "Orature and Yorùbá Riddles" investigates how new media and technology are being used to preserve and disseminate Yorùbá oral poetry, thereby expanding its reach and impact (pp. 88-93).

The literature on Yorùbá oral poetry reveals a rich tradition of using poetic expression as a means of protest and activism. From foundational studies to contemporary analyses, scholars have documented how Yorùbá poets have engaged with social and political issues, utilising poetry as a powerful tool for resistance and change. This body of work provides a crucial foundation for understanding the ongoing relevance and transformative potential of Yorùbá oral poetry in the context of protest and activism.

Activism and Protest in Yorùbá Co-wife's Songs

Co-wife song (orin olórogún) is a traditional form of Yorùbá oral poetry, mostly performed by women to protest against social practices in polygamous family setting. It is not exclusive to women, men also use such songs to protest against wives' unruly behaviour. It may or may not have musical accompaniment, if by musical accompaniment we mean musical instruments like various types of Yorùbá drums and other instruments used in singing. Co-wife song is not a form of poetry related to any ritual or religious belief, hence, any type of musical instrument can accompany it. When singing within the household, the musical accompaniment may include abẹ̀bẹ̀ (hand fan) or apẹ́ ṣíṣá (clapping hands).

According to Chief Alimi-Adéníran (personal communication, July 10, 2022), in some Yorùbá societies, it is considered taboo for wives of the same husband to engage in physical fights. It is believed that this could lead to the husband's death. To prevent this, when co-wives engage in a dispute, they are asked to pound water in nudity, and each time water splashes from the mortar, the woman involved will be lashed. Thus, co-wives are cautious of engaging in physical combat. Instead, they may sing or hurl verbal abuse at each other in extreme cases, but they must not resort to physical confrontation.

There are many occasions for singing co-wife songs (orin olórogún). Quarrel, jealousy, and rivalry are central themes. These songs can be sung during social ceremonies or at leisure times, or when working in-door or out-door. It is also common for women to sing during quarrels.

Often, the cause of the quarrel in a co-wife song may not be clear to the audience, but some songs reveal grievances. For example, if a farmer takes his junior wife to the village where his farmland is located and she complains about rural life, the senior wife may sing a song to express her thoughts as thus:

Àwa tá ǹ gbélé a ó ha ti ṣé?	What do you expect we living in town to do?

Àwa tá ǹ gbélé a ó ha ti ṣé?	What do you expect we living in town to do?
Ẹ̀yin tẹ́ ǹ gbóko ẹ̀ ń ṣàròyé	When you staying (with the husband) in the village are complaining
Àwa tá ǹ gbélé a ó ha ti ṣé?	What do you expect we living in town to do?

The senior wife uses this song as an outlet for expressing emotions of missing the hussband's company. The junior wife, upon receiving the message, may feel offended and expect her senior wife to convey such an offensive song without her responding. However, she may also want to retaliate and might reply as follows:

Kò dùn máwọ̀n tínú ń bí o	The disgruntled ones cannot be satisfied
Èéè	Oh yes
Kò dùn máwọ̀n tínú ń bí o	The disgruntled ones cannot be satisfied
Ká gúnyán elébòlò	That we pounded elébòlò pounded yam
Ká fapẹ̀pẹ̀ ròfọ̀	That we use apẹ̀pẹ̀ to make vegetable soup
Ká jẹ̀un tó dára lọ́dẹ̀dẹ̀ ọkùnrin	That we feed well in one's husband's house
Kò dùn máwọ̀n tínú ń bí o	The disgruntled one cannot be satisfied

There are times when the co-wife song, *orin olórogún*, is used to challenge a junior wife or cast aspersions, especially when the junior wife is older than the senior wife. In protest against her husband marrying someone older than her as a junior wife, the senior wife may mock the junior wife with a protest song. She might say the junior wife allowed herself to be married after a woman who is the same age as her first child. This sentiment is expressed in the following co-wife song, *orin olórogún*:

Adàgbà-yankọ	She that chose husband at old age
Ẹ wá gboóunjẹ fọ́kọ	Come serve our husband
Adàgbà-yankọ	She that chose husband at old age
Ẹ wá gbooúnjẹ fọ́kọ	Come and serve our husband
Ṣe bí ilé lo bá mi	Surely, you met me at home
Ṣe bémi ni ìyálé	I am the senior wife
Adàgbà-yankọ	She that chose husband at old age
Ẹ wá gboóunjẹ fọ́kọ	Come serve our husband

According to Madam Fọláṣadé Mọ́lumọ̀ (Personal Communication, July 10,2022), there are variants of all the songs depending on the creativity of the woman singing them. The words of the song can be twisted to convey the insult the singer wants to pass to her addressee. The previous excerpt may also be reframed thus:

Adàgbà-yankọ	You that choses to marry at old age
Ẹ wá palẹ̀ mọ́ o	Come serve our husband
Adàgbà-yankọ	You that choses to marry at old age
Ẹ wá palẹ̀ mọ́ o	Come and serve our husband
Àkọ́bí ọmọ́ rẹ lo fi ṣèyáálé	You chose the age group of your child as your senior wife
Adàgbà-yankọ	You that choses to marry at old age
Ẹ wá palẹ̀ mọ́ o	Come serve our husband

On the other hand, the junior wife is often believed to be the husband's favorite. In cases where the junior wife has not been blessed with children, her co-wife may sing the song below to reveal and mock her condition. The Yorùbá people consider childbearing an important aspect of life. Hence, the saying "ọlọ́mọ ló layé" (it is those who bear children that own the world). A barren woman is often seen as unfortunate individual, as reflected here:

Òréré ilá ẹja lónibú o	Palatable soup, the depth of water belongs to fish
Wọ́n sọ pọ́lọ́bẹ̀ ló lọkọ	It was said that she that cooks well is husband's favourite
Ọbẹ̀ aàyò, ọbẹ̀ aàyò	Favourite's soup, favourite's soup
Wọ́n sọ pọ́lọ́bẹ̀ ló lọkọ	It was said that she that cooks well is husband's favourite
Ọlọ́bẹ̀ tó bá lo sáà tán o	After the reign of the woman that cooks well.
Ṣe bọ́lọ́mọ ló layò o	The turn will be fertile woman's
Ọlọ́bè tó bá lo sáà tán	After the reign of the woman that cooks well
Ṣe bọ́lọ́mọ ló lọkọ	The turn will be fertile woman's

The issue of fertility that the song mentioned above will deeply sadden the woman it targets, likely prompting her to muster the courage to sing a retaliatory song in protest against the initial song. Her response might be filled with tears and agony, but she will undoubtedly respond. This response is captured in the following co-wife songs:

N ò ní lọ sí Gbági n lọ gbégi jó o	I will not go and back a wooden doll at Gbági
Ṣebólúwa ló ń ṣọmọ	Afterall, it is God that provides children for one
N ò ní lọ sẹ́yìn Ìgbétì lọ gbé bèbí pọ̀n o	I will not go to the back of Ìgbẹ́tì town to back a plastic doll
Ṣebólúwa ló ń ṣọmọ	Afterall, it is God that provides children for one
Lásìkò tọ́mo ó mà dé o	Anytime children will arrive
Kó báṣọ, bá gèlè o	Let them meet clothes and headgear
Àsìkò tọ́mọ ó má dé o	Anytime children will arrive
Kó báṣọ lára wa	Let them meet me fully clothed

The Yorùbá people believe that it is by the grace of God that one bears children, not by their own power or might. It is common in their prayers to ask for the blessing of offspring. This belief is also reflected in the Ifá corpus, which states, *ire méta làwa ń wá, àwa ń wówó, àwa ń wómo, àwa ń wá àìkú bàále ọrọ̀* (we wish for three good things: we wish for wealth, we wish for offspring, we wish for good health and long life). In the above co-wife song, the junior wife reaffirms her faith in God's blessing, by telling her senior that it is only God who can bless a woman with children. She also asserts that she has more clothes than her senior, believing that these material possessions will attract children to her. The song shows her frustrations, and concerns.

Yorùbá women also use co-wife songs, orin olóròguun, to draw their husbands' attention to issues that concern them. For example, when a husband has two wives and consistently favours one over the other, the wife who feels cheated might sing a song to express her grievances:

Apàyálé borí ìyàwò	He that acts in favour of the junior wife against the senior
Ọ́ọ́ wa nà mí kọ́	Do you want to beat me?
Apàyálé borí ìyàwò	He that acts in favour of the junior wife against the senior
Ọ́ọ́ wa nà mí kọ́	Do you want to beat me?

The excerpt above is a protest against a husband's act of favoritism by his wife, who feels cheated and offended by the husband's unfair treatment. A wife may also sing in protest to mock her husband who has just taken a new wife. If she observes that the new wife is not morally upright, she may sing thus:

Gbélé ó ríṣẹ́ ọkọ má yà lọ́dọ̀ọ wa	Let us not pray for an unjust husband
O gbé dídùn ṣọnù	He throws away the sweet one
Ó gbé kíkan wálé	He brings home the sour one
Gbélé ó ríṣẹ́ ọkọ má yà lọ́dọ̀ọ wa	Let us not pray for an unreasonable husband

Gbélé ó ríṣẹ ọkọ má yà lọ́dọ̀ọ wa	Let us not pray for an unreasonable husband
O gbé dídùn sọnù	He throws away the sweet one

In Yoruba culture, idleness, laziness, and irresponsibility in a husband are strongly disapproved. The Yoruba people believe that a man should be diligent and proactive. It is also considered the man's duty to provide for his family's needs. When a husband is deemed lazy and irresponsible, his wife might express her discontent through songs, reflecting these cultural values:

Ó gbé kíkan wálé	He brings home the sour one
Gbélé ó ríṣẹ ọkọ má yà lọ́dọ̀ọ wa	Let us not pray for an unreasonable husband

In some cases, a husband and his favoured partner may join forces against one of the fhusband's other wives. In such situations, the affected wife might find solace in the following protest song, which is sung with a touch of sarcasm:

Ọkọ pa jáńkán	Husband is minute
Ìyàwó pa yárò yárò	Wife is latent
Ọkọ ń ṣòfófó	Husband is backbiting
Ìyàwó ẹ̀ ń jalè	Wife is stealing
Bí i ká fìkan nàkan	They are both the same
Mo ti ráwọn méjéèjì	I have watched close
Bí i ká fìkan nàkan	They are both the same

Moreover, a protest song may be sung by a mother-in-law who feels her son's wife is hostile and unkind. In the Yorùbá communal family system, even in modern times when a husband and wife live outside the husband's family compound unlike traditional practices situations arise where the mother-in-law regularly visits her son's family or, in some cases, lives with them. In such scenarios, tensions often occur between the wife and the mother-in-law. The mother-in-law may feel that her daughter-in-law is creating a barrier between her and her son, thereby preventing him from giving her attention and care she believes she deserves. Conversely, the wife may perceive the mother-in-law as overstepping her boundaries. In response to this perceived denial of access to her son, the mother-in-law might sing the following protest song:

Kò jẹ́ kẹ́ya ọkọ	She will not nurture her mother in-law
Kò jẹ́ kẹ́ya ọkọ	She will not nurture her mother in-law
Obìnrin òjòwú o	A jealous woman
Kò jẹ́ kẹ́ya ọkọ	She will not nurture her mother in-law

In a situation where the mother-in-law views her son's wife as lazy, untidy, and meddlesome, she may perform the following song:

Ọ̀lẹ mà mà dáràn o	It is indeed terrible for a lazy woman
Ọ̀lẹ mà mà dáràn o	It is indeed terrible for a lazy woman
Ọ̀lẹ fagbádá ọkọ ṣèró o	Lazy woman used husband's agbádá to make wrapper
Ọ̀lẹ mà mà dáràn o	It is indeed terrible for a lazy woman

When the disapproval becomes overwhelming for a wife-who may initially find it difficult to respond due to the respect she has for her mother-in-law, she might eventually reply with the following excerpt:

Ọlọ́run ó ba tìyá àgbà jẹ́ o	May God ruin the old woman
Ìyá àgbà tó rẹ́ran nílẹ̀ tí ó jọmọ	The old woman that prefers eating a child to goat's meat
Ọlọ́run ó ba tìyá àgbà jẹ́ o	May God ruin the old woman

In the excerpt above, the wife accuses her mother-in-law of being a witch, particularly if she has experienced multiple miscarriages or the loss of children. The wife blames her mother-in-law for these misfortunes.

It's important to note that the co-wife song, *orin olórogún*, is not sung exclusively by women. Men also use such songs to protest against wives whose behavior they find intolerable. An example of such a song is as follows:

Ìyàwó leléyìí àbí sunwó-ń-ná o?	Is this a wife or a waste of money?
Ọmọ lásán	Useless being
Ṣojú mi ló ṣe pèyá ẹ̀ lólòṣì	It was in my presence that she called her mother a destitute
Ẹ̀ ẹ́ ṣe o?	What else?
Ṣojú mi ló ṣe pèyá ẹ̀ lólòṣì	It was in my presence that she called her mother a destitute
Kò lè bú mi kórí ó wú o	Her abuse cannot budge me
È éè	Oh yes

The song is used to checkmate an abusive and disrespectful wife. The person addressed may react violently as this may not be true, but it is used to provoke her. Co-wife songs are used to abuse and provoke the person addressed. An example is the song below, used to assert that the person addressed is having teeth decay. The singer resorts to using decayed teeth to abuse her co-wife, It may be that the person's teeth are not all that white, the next song encapsulates such abuse:

To bá máa bú mi rè é rorín	If you want to abuse me, go and chew chewing stick
Wẹ̀sí wẹndẹ	A dirty person
Eyín ọ̀kánkán rẹ̀ ló ru mi láyà	Her front teeth is what irritates me
E ṣé o	That is it
Eyín ọ̀kánkán rẹ̀ ló ru mi láyà	Her front teeth is what irritates me

The other wife may respond by likening the mouth of her co-wife to a valve on bicycle tyre tube and
her chest to the chest of a chick after eating:

Kò lè bú mi kórí ó wú o	Her abuse cannot budge me
È éè	Oh yes
Èyí tó ṣe páìpù lẹ́nu bí i ti kẹ̀kẹ́	She that has a valve in her mouth like bicycle
Tó ṣàjésí láyà bí òròmọ́dìẹ	She that has grit in her chest like a chick
Kò lè bú mi kórí ó wú o	Her abuse cannot budge me

Conclusion

This paper has anlysed the content, forms, modes and style of resistance as explicated in *orin olórogún* co-wife song genre of Yorùbá oral poetry. It analysed the contents, language, symbolism, and performance to articulate resistance against oppression, corruption, and inequality. The paper concluded that the co-wife song, *orin olórogún*, is a rich and complex aspect of Yoruba cultural heritage, offering insights into the dynamics of polygamous relationships and the role of music in navigating these complexities. Through their use of humor, satire, and emotional expression, these songs provide a unique window into the experiences of co-wives and the ways in which songs can be used to cope with challenges and tensions in life. It is our opinion that the songs will continue to thrive as a social activity among rival wives. Its future appears promising, largely because Western education has facilitated the documentation and preservation of this genre of Yorùbá oral poetry, making it accessible to interested individuals. Additionally, some of these songs are available in audio and video

formats, contributing to their continued enjoyment. Modern-day Yorùbá musicians also promote *orin olórogún* through their recordings. Jùjú, Fújì, and wákà musicians are attuned to the songs of their competitors, use these songs like co-wives. With these songs, they respond to taunting rivals and engage social issues.

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