

A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF GANGAN DRUMMING AS A DISCOURSE FOR MORAL AND POLITICAL VALIDATION IN YORUBALAND: A CASE STUDY OF OMOTAYO PRAISE CHANTS

By

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Abstract

This study examines the role of gángan (talking drum) performances as a discourse for moral and political validation in yorubaland. It focuses on analysing the spoken meanings encoded in drummers' performances and the messages they communicate. The primary data is drawn from a recorded performance by professional gángan drummers in praise of Buhari Omotayo, a Nigerian senator representing Ogbomoso. Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic framework is used to identify and explain the linguistic and performative choices that structure the drum's messages. Our findings show that the gángan is not merely a musical instrument but a medium of communication, moral instruction and social regulation within Yoruba culture. The drum blends language and sound to convey cultural values and ethical standards that guide community behaviour. Stylistic features such as foregrounding, repetition, parallelism and metaphor are used to emphasise messages that promote harmony, correct misconduct and preserve cultural traditions. Overall, the

gáangan praises virtuous behaviour, cautions against moral failure and strengthens shared social values in Yoruba society.

Keywords: Stylistics, gáangan drum, Yoruba culture, social ethics, moral expectations, shared values.

1. Introduction

The Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria occupy an important place in African cultural history. Their importance in African cultural history is not only in their rich heritage but also in their sophisticated use of oral and performance arts as channels of communication. Among these arts, the gangan or talking drum stands out as a uniquely expressive instrument capable of reproducing the tonal patterns of Yoruba speech (Akinloye, 2019; Vidal, 2021), and in Yoruba society, language is tied to identity, morality and communal order (Adegbite, 2018). The gangan therefore functions as more than a musical instrument; it extends the communicative power of language by transmitting social, political and moral meanings through sound.

Scholars of African oral traditions have long noted that artistic performance often serves both aesthetic and social functions. Finnegan (2012) describes oral art as an instrument of social regulation as much as a form of creative expression. Building on this view, Olutoye (2020) emphasises that Yoruba drummers act as cultural messengers whose coded rhythms praise virtues such as honesty and generosity while condemning vices like greed and betrayal. Given that the gangan operates as an extension of speech and a vehicle for ethical instruction, it becomes essential to examine how drummers intentionally use stylistic choices to shape behaviour and reinforce shared values. This link between broader theories of oral communication and the specific case of Yoruba drumming provides the foundation for the present study.

Despite the cultural importance of the talking drum, the stylistic and linguistic dimensions of its communicative role remain under-researched. Existing studies largely focus on musical structure, rhythm and performance techniques (Adegbite, 2018; Oladipo, 2021), with limited attention to how the drum's "spoken" messages function as moral discourse. This gap is significant because a stylistic approach can explain how drummers use devices such as

metaphor, repetition, parallelism and foregrounding to encode moral lessons and maintain social order. Addressing this gap allows for a deeper understanding of the drum as a system of meaning-making, not just a musical artifact.

The purpose of this study is therefore to examine the stylistic features of Yoruba talking drum performances and to show how these features operate as tools for moral education and social control. Guided by Leech and Short's (2007) Stylistic Model, which provides a systematic framework for analysing how linguistic forms create meaning and artistic effect, the study investigates the following questions: What stylistic devices are commonly used in gangan performances? How do these devices promote moral values and regulate social behaviour? What cultural roles do drummers play in contemporary Yoruba society?

By answering these questions, the study aims at contributing to scholarship in stylistics, oral literature and performance studies. It spotlights the talking drum as a sophisticated indigenous communication system grounded in linguistic creativity and cultural philosophy. The insights gained can support ongoing efforts to preserve African expressive traditions and to understand how traditional art forms continue to guide social behaviour within modern Yoruba communities.

2. Literature Review

The gangan, or talking drum, occupies a distinctive place in Yoruba cultural life because of its ability to reproduce the tonal patterns of Yoruba speech. This capacity allows it to function not only as a musical instrument but also as a communicative medium capable of transmitting complex linguistic and cultural meanings (Akinloye, 2019; Vidal, 2021). As Ajayi (2020) argues, the drum operates as a communicative device that encodes messages tied to identity, morality, and social regulation. Its tonal flexibility makes it particularly suited to a society where pitch and rhythm are essential features of verbal communication.

Traditionally, the gangan is embedded in several contexts including festivals, religious observances, royal ceremonies, funerals, and community gatherings (Olutoye, 2020). Within these settings, it performs functions that go beyond entertainment. Drummers use rhythmic patterns, proverbs, *oríkì*, and

rhetorical expressions to praise individuals, offer counsel, issue warnings, or critique social conduct (Akande & Salami, 2022; Olatunji, 2021). These expressions reveal the didactic dimension of Yoruba oral art, where creative performance becomes a vehicle for shaping behaviour and reinforcing communal values. In this tradition, drummers act as moral guides, historians and cultural custodians who preserve collective memory and articulate the ethical framework of the community (Finnegan, 2012; Adegbite, 2018). Their performances publicly celebrate virtues such as loyalty, bravery, kindness, and generosity. Also, the drum performances condemn vices like pride, greed and betrayal, thereby contributing to what Barber (2018) identifies as the moral imperative embedded within Yoruba expressive culture.

Research on African oral literature has generated extensive insights into performance, aesthetics, and communication, yet studies that focus specifically on the stylistic mechanics of Yoruba drumming remain limited. Finnegan's (2012) foundational work establishes that African performance forms operate as systems of communication, while more recent scholarship highlights the richness of stylistic features in oral genres such as *oríkì* and proverbs (Adegbite, 2018; Oladipo, 2021). These works demonstrate how devices like metaphor, parallelism, repetition, and tonal imagery contribute to meaning and artistic resonance.

Studies such as Ajayi (2020) and Akande and Salami (2022) further show that *gangan* drumming relies on structural connections to speech tone, symbolic patterns, and sociopolitical commentary. However, these analyses remain either primarily musical or thematic, which did not explore the stylistic processes through which drummers construct meaning. Very few studies systematically apply an explicit stylistic framework such as Leech and Short's (2007) model to examine how linguistic features embedded in drum language work together to shape moral and cultural messages.

Stylistics, generally, focuses on how linguistic forms create meaning and aesthetic effect (Leech & Short, 2007; Wales, 2014). Analytical concepts such as foregrounding, deviation, parallelism and repetition are particularly relevant to oral performance because they enhance attention, aid memory and reinforce key cultural values. Foregrounding highlights moral emphasis by deviating from expected rhythmic or tonal patterns (Leech, 2014). Repetition

and parallelism strengthen communal messages and ensure their transmission across generations (Finnegan, 2012). These features align with Jakobson's (1960) view of the poetic function of language, where the interplay between form and meaning is central to communication.

This review illustrates that while Yoruba drumming has been discussed as a form of communication, the specific stylistic strategies through which it communicates values, teaches moral lessons and reinforces social ethics have not been thoroughly examined. Most existing literature identifies what drums do culturally but not how stylistic choices carry out these functions. This lack of systematic stylistic analysis leaves an important gap in understanding the drum as a structured communicative system.

This study fills that gap by applying a clear stylistic framework to Yoruba *gangan* performance to investigate how artistic techniques not only perform aesthetic functions but are integral to the drum's role in moral education and cultural continuity. By linking stylistic form to social function, the study deepens scholarly understanding of Yoruba communication practices and contributes to the broader study of African oral performance traditions.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study employed Leech and Short's (2007) Stylistic Model, which provides a clear and systematic way of studying how language forms create meaning and artistic effect in communication. The model is rooted in the concept of *foregrounding*. *Foregrounding* focuses on special features of language that stand out from normal usage, draw attention and emphasize meaning. This approach draws heavily on stylistic devices such as repetition, parallelism and metaphor to highlight moral, cultural or emotional messages. Leech (2014), holds that stylistic analysis can be done at the lexical, grammatical, phonological and at the discourse levels. This analytical procedure is very relevant and apt to the *gangan* drum performances which combine language, rhythm, tone and other sound features to send moral and social messages. The model, therefore, fits well with the nature of *gangan* communication, which is both linguistic and musical. It also allows for a detailed and organized analysis of how style contributes to meaning through carefully chosen words and through their effect on listeners. The model analytical procedures help to explain the stylistic techniques *gangan*

drummers use to teach, warn and guide their audience. By using Leech and Short's model, this study explains how Yoruba drummers use style to create meaning, promote ethics and strengthen the moral fabric of their community.

4. Methodology

This study is grounded in Leech and Short's (2007) Stylistic Model, which provides a systematic framework for analysing how linguistic choices generate meaning, emphasis and artistic effect. Anchoring the research in this model strengthens the descriptive and interpretive procedures by ensuring that each stage of analysis focuses closely on the relationship between form, function and cultural significance in Yoruba gangan performance. The study adopts a qualitative research design with descriptive and interpretive orientations. This approach is appropriate because the aim is not only to identify stylistic features in talking drum performances but also to understand how these features shape moral and social values within Yoruba society. A qualitative framework allows for an in-depth examination of meaning-making processes, enabling the study to move beyond literal translation to the cultural and ethical intentions embedded in the performance. Data were drawn from two publicly accessible video performances of gangan drummers in Ogbomoso town: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AzZEz7neQ/> and <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/169xMNWMV2/> were selected because they offer a rich, naturally occurring context in which gangan drumming conveys political, social and moral messages. The performances praise Buhari Omotayo, a Nigerian senator representing Ogbomoso. The recordings capture real-life interaction, making them suitable for ethnographically informed stylistic analysis. To ensure analytic clarity, the data were transcribed, translated and organised into 12 stanzas. Each stage of the process contributed systematically to the final interpretation: The performances were first transcribed using Yoruba tonal markings (high, mid and low). This step aligns with the stylistic model's focus on linguistic form by revealing how tonal variation functions as a meaning-making device in drumming. Recording tonal patterns ensures that interpretations of each message are grounded in its actual acoustic structure. The tonal sequences were then converted into their corresponding Yoruba lexical items or expressions. This stage bridges sound and language, providing the linguistic units necessary for stylistic examination. It clarifies what the drum "says" at the lexical and syntactic

levels. The Yoruba texts were translated into English with attention to idioms, figurative language, proverbs and *oríkì*. This step preserves the cultural and moral nuances essential for interpreting the social purpose of the messages. Keeping the moral force of figurative expressions ensures that the analysis reflects not only linguistic form but also cultural intent. Using Leech and Short's model, features such as foregrounding, repetition, parallelism, metaphor and deviation were coded within each stanza. This stage directly informs the findings by showing how stylistic devices carry moral evaluation, praise, social instruction or critique. Observations of the performance environment, audience responses and cultural conventions were incorporated to situate stylistic features within their social functions. This final step connects linguistic analysis with community values, making it possible to explain not only how the drum communicates but why certain messages matter in Yoruba society. The combination of stylistic analysis and ethnographic engagement provides a holistic understanding of *gangan* drumming as both an artistic and moral practice. By tracing each message from sound to meaning and to cultural purpose, the methodology ensures that the findings accurately reflect the communicative, ethical and social significance of the Yoruba talking drum.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis.

This analysis offers a comprehensive stylistic and cultural interpretation of a twelve-stanza Yoruba *gangan* (talking-drum) performance addressed to *Omotayo*. Through close reading, the analytical endeavour sets out to demonstrate how repetition, foregrounding, parallelism, symbolism, metaphor, personification, and contrast interact to produce a layered discourse that blends praise, social commentary, moral instruction and communal identity in the analysis below:

5.1. Repetition.

Repetition functions as the dominant stylistic device across the twelve stanzas of the performance, shaping its rhythm, message, and cultural depth. The repeated phrases create cohesion and continuity between stanzas, while culturally they reflect the oral-performative nature of Yoruba praise poetry. In this tradition, repetition is not arbitrary; it operates as a structural and ideological technique that frames the poem's aesthetic movement and ensures

that core ideas are etched into communal memory. Thus, repetition serves as the central artistic mechanism through which meaning, emotion and cultural identity are built throughout the performance as shown in the succeeding paragraphs.

In stanzas one and two, repetition performs the essential function of consolidating communal unity. Phrases such as “*a jọ n bẹ ni*” - we are here together - and “*e máa ganu sí*” - keep being expectant- (stanza 1 and 2) recur three times, each, to create a rhythmic refrain that invites audience participation. These repetitions signal inclusiveness and collective identity, while culturally they reflect Yoruba values of togetherness(*alajobi*). This technique helps to establish the type of social environment necessary for effective communal praise.

Stanza three continues this communal emphasis by repeating “*Irú rẹ là n fẹ*” - it is your kind we love (stanza3). Here, repetition functions as an instrument of intensification aimed at strengthening the evaluative force of the praise. Culturally, it expresses the Yoruba principle that good character (*ìwà rere*) deserves public recognition. By reiterating this single line, the performers elevate Omotayo’s virtues to an ideal standard that the community collectively upholds.

In stanza four, repetition takes on a didactic role through the thrice-repeated line “*Orí ò gbódò fọ*” - **he** must not suffer headache (stanza4). The use of repetition highlights caution and solemnity, while culturally it reflects Yoruba metaphysical beliefs surrounding the head (*orí*) as the bearer of destiny. The repetition ensures that the moral warning is reflected upon by both the subject of the praise and the listening audience. This makes the stanza not merely expressive but instructional.

The fifth stanza repeats the phrase, “*Rébété ló kù*” - **it** only remains a while - (stanza5) to communicate anticipation and perseverance. The refrain creates suspense and optimism, while it aligns with Yoruba cultural and communal expressions of hope and encouragement. The stanza utilises repetition to stress that success is close by. This transforms a simple message into a motivational communal chant.

Stanza six uses the repeated question in “*Òkè wo lòkè wọn?*” - which hill is theirs? -(stanza6) as a rhetorical device to undermine Omotayo’s rivals. The

repetition of the phrase creates a mocking tone and magnifies the satirical intent of the stanza. It should be noted that such repetition intones Yoruba culture and tradition in the way they use rhetorical questioning to expose falsehood, feigned status and vainglory. The repeated inquiry thus strengthens Omotayo's superiority while decreasing the credibility of his opponents.

In stanzas eight, nine and ten, repeated expressions such as "*Yẹpẹrẹ k'ékú asín*" - **asin is not a simpleton**, (stanza8) "*Irú yín ò ní parun*" - may your kind never perish (stanza9) - and "*Ogun ò kó wa rí*" - we have never been plundered (stanza10) - are employed to sensually heighten emotion and create memorable refrains. Also, the refrains function as ritual blessings, protective affirmations and invocations of collective history. Here, repetition fortifies community values such as compassion, continuity, pride and resilience. It transforms poetic lines into cultural affirmations shared by performer and audience.

Stanzas eleven and twelve employ repetition to merge praise with moral guidance through the thrice-repeated line, "*Oríre lo ní*" - you have good fortune (stanza11). The repetition of this line deepens the praise and intones the theme of destiny. It reflects Yoruba culture and principles of linking fortune with responsibility and spiritual alliance. The recurrence of the phrase ensures that Omotayo's blessings are publicly acknowledged and also, a reminder that that prosperity must be managed with ethical consciousness. Thus, repetition is used as an instrument for both spiritual affirmation and moral education.

5.2. Foregrounding.

Foregrounding operates as a major stylistic device throughout stanzas 1 to 12. It draws special attention to names, metaphors, contrasts and specially loaded expressions. Linguistically, foregrounding isolates particular words, images or structures so that they stand out from the surrounding discourse. This allows for stylistic prominence that aligns with the Yoruba tradition in which praise poetry highlights significant individuals, virtues and symbolic lessons. Through this technique, the performance becomes both an act of artistic expression and a medium for reinforcing communal values as shown in the analysis below.

Throughout the performance, the name of *Bùhàrí Omótáyò of Ìbàfòn* (stanza1-12) is foregrounded to underscore respect and social recognition. The placement of the names in prominent positions gives him rhetorical emphasis. Yoruba culture views naming as a powerful marker of lineage and identity; therefore, naming Omotayo through his ancestral connections affirms his legitimacy and authority. The foregrounding of personal names strengthens the connection between leadership and inherited values.

Foregrounding also appears in expressions such as “*otí gbé tuntun dé*” - he has brought something new (stanza2). The expression highlights innovation and renewal. This phrase is elevated above surrounding lines to emphasize distinction. Yoruba praise tradition associates “bringing something new” with progress, responsibility and communal uplift. By foregrounding this idea, the drummers construct Omotayo as a transformative figure whose contributions surpass those of previous office holders.

The performance also marks moral distinctions through deliberate use of contrasts. Phrases such as “*Àwa ò fẹ̀ Wèrè*” - We do not love the wayward - and “*A ò fẹ̀ Dùgbòlùgi*” - we do not love the reckless (stanza3) - stand out because their negative conjecture interrupt the flow of the praise. Such contrasts highlight oppositional values in Yoruba praise chants which often combine commendation with moral instruction. By placing unacceptable behaviour beside commendable virtues, the drummers illuminate ethical expectations for leaders and community members.

The use of metaphor in “*Ẹyingẹde t’Alào fisilẹ*” - the delicate pumpkin that Alao left behind (stanza4) is foregrounded to deepen the symbolic meaning of the performance. The metaphor interrupts the literal language, thereby attracting interpretive action that draws cultural attention to the delicate nature of pumpkin as a symbol of vulnerability, responsibility and the fragility of human destiny. The drummers act of foregrounding this figurative expression aid the transformation of a simple warning into a profound moral reflection on the consequences of neglect and carelessness.

The employment of contrast to distinguish between the terms “*Rébété*” (a little) and “*Régéjà*” (much) is a hallmark of foregrounding (stanza5). The juxtaposition of these terms spotlight social inequalities and differing stages of achievement. The tension reflects Yoruba socio-political and culture dynamics

where rivalry, honour and progression shape public life. The phrase “*Òtáre ó sẹ́sín ígbangba*” - your rivals will be exposed to public dishonour (stanza5)- is highlighted to dramatize the movement from struggle to triumph. This heightens the sense of moral vindication associated with legitimate leadership.

The use of unusual imagery in “*Òkè tí ò lákàsọ*” - a hill without footholds - (stanza6) is a mark of foregrounding. It points to deviation from the expected image of a stable hill that disrupts normal perception and demands attention. Yoruba worldview associates’ hills with strength and authority but when a hill that lacks footholds is in juxtaposition, it calls attention to the instability and illegitimacy of Omotayo’s rivals. This technique contrasts between Omotayo’s grounded leadership and the weakness of those who attempt to oppose him.

In stanzas 8, simile is employed to liken Omotayo to *asín* (house rat). This comparison is achieved through the use of repetition and metaphoric extension. In Yoruba world, *asín* carries symbolic values of generosity, protectiveness and communal loyalty and, this enables the use of the extended metaphor in “**the rat that cares for its own young and those of others**” to foregrounds Omotayo as a leader who nurtures his household and the wider community. This culturally resonant image is used to assert that true leadership is defined by compassion and collective responsibility.

5.3. Parallelism

Parallelism functions as a major stylistic device across the twelve stanzas to create balance, rhythm and structural symmetry. Parallel structures guide the flow of the performance by presenting ideas in paired or mirrored forms. These balanced patterns reflect Yoruba cultural expectations that leaders exhibit harmony, stability and self-control. Through this stylistic technique, the performers achieve an equilibrium between artistic beauty and thematic clarity which demonstrate how Yoruba oral poetry unites form with meaning.

Parallelism is used to balance collective affirmations with personal recognition. The repeated statement “we are here together” is employed to produce a rhythmic interplay between communal relationship and an agreeable personality of Omotayo. This alternation creates a structure that enhances coherence which reflects Yoruba performance traditions that employs praise to highlight both the community’s unity and the individual’s

achievements. This parallel structure therefore strengthens the dual emphasis on togetherness and identity.

Parallelism is also used to create ethical clarity by pairing positive and negative tendencies. Preferential statements such as “we love your kind” followed by “we do not love the wayward” present a direct structural contrast. The symmetry enhances the impact of each assertion. Yoruba praise poetry often blends commendation with correction by foregrounding paired oppositions to communicate moral boundaries. The use of the parallel structures therefore reinforces the expectation that good character must be supported while misconduct is rejected.

Employment of alternation of literal warnings and metaphorical imagery is achieved through the use of parallelism. The repeated caution in *Ori ò gbòdò fọ* - he must not suffer headache - (stanza4) is linked with the symbolic image of the delicate pumpkin to create a balanced movement between direct meaning and figurative depth. This structure provides a rhythmic flow that enhances interpretation of Yoruba culture and oral discourse that often blend proverbs with explicit statements to convey bedded wisdom. The parallel arrangement thus unifies physical caution with moral responsibility.

The alternation between *Rébété ló kù* and *Régéjà ló kù* (stanza4) demonstrates the use of parallelism through contrastive vocabulary. This binary pattern establishes rhythm through opposing terms that mirror each other in form. The time limit contrast reflects social dynamics within Yoruba society, where status, patience and rivalry determine communal outcomes. The parallel arrangement also supports the moral message that destiny rewards the deserving while exposing false rivals. Thus, parallelism builds both poetic balance and ethical insight.

Parallelism is used to intensify the moral tone in the alternate statements “*Ẹnikan èé lóriire / Kó má níwà íre,*” -It rare for anyone to possess good fortune/and not have a good character-(stanza11) which balances the concepts of fortune and good character. The symmetry of the two lines produces a harmonious and memorable pattern that echoes a central Yoruba belief that destiny (*oríire*) must be accompanied by proper conduct (*ìwà íre*). By placing these ideas in a parallel structure, the drummers remind the audience that success is meaningful only when it is supported by virtue.

5.4. Symbolism and Metaphor.

Symbolism and metaphor function as useful stylistic devices throughout stanzas 1–12 to shape both the linguistic, character and cultural depth of the drum performance. These devices enrich the text by creating layers of meaning that extend beyond literal expression. They reflect Yoruba cosmology, moral philosophy and the traditional use of drum poetry as a medium for communal instruction. Their consistent use demonstrates that the drummers are not merely praising Omotayo but are embedding ethical guidance within poetic language.

One of the most prominent symbols utilised across the stanzas is the *Orí* (head). *Orí* symbolizes destiny, inner essence and spiritual direction in Yoruba belief. Its repeated use creates a cohesive pattern that anchors Omotayo's success in spiritual legitimacy. The warnings in "*Orí ò gbòdò fọ*" - he must not suffer headache - (stanza4) function as moral reminders that destiny must be protected through good character. The symbol therefore connects praise with caution and shows that honour must be accompanied by responsibility.

The metaphor of the house rat (*asin*) expands the portrayal of Omotayo as a caring and responsible figure (stanza8). The comparison builds an image of a leader who supports not only himself but also the community. Yoruba praise tradition often uses animal imagery to highlight virtues such as provision, care and social responsibility. Through the use of this metaphor, the drummers communicate that true leadership is measured by one's ability to nurture others.

The symbol of the hill without footholds appears as a metaphor for instability and false claims to power. The imagery creates a vivid contrast between Omotayo's legitimate authority and the rivals' unsupported ambitions. Yoruba society values leadership that is rooted in moral grounding and communal acceptance. By describing the rivals as "hill" lacking footholds, the drummers ridicule their pretensions while affirming the stability of Omotayo's position.

Concepts such as "*iru re*," "*Wèrè*," and "*Dùgbòlùgi*" (stanza3) operate symbolically to differentiate moral categories. These terms form contrasting labels that classify individuals into virtuous and deviant groups. Such contrasts reinforce Yoruba social values by praising good conduct and condemning destructive behaviour. Through these symbolic identities, the

drum language becomes a moral tool that promotes communal order and discourages negative character traits.

The metaphors of *Rébété* and *Régéjà* (stanza5) extend the performance's moral dimension. They signify contrasting states of endurance and temporary authority. The images reflect Yoruba beliefs about destiny and divine justice. When the drummers declare that disgrace has "written to" the rivals, the metaphor strengthens the idea that moral failure leads to public shame. These symbolic expressions elevate the stanza from simple praise to social commentary on humility, patience and rightful honour.

The closing stanzas use metaphor to unite ideas of destiny, character and communal accountability. Phrases describing Omotayo's fortunate destiny provide a thematic conclusion grounded in repetition and parallelism. The reminder that destiny must align with good character emphasizes Yoruba moral philosophy which notes that success is incomplete without integrity.

5.5. Contrast.

Contrast functions as a stylistic device to provide both moral and political structure. The juxtaposition of virtue and vice, strength and instability, or loyalty and rebellion create sharp distinctions that guide interpretation. Yoruba drum messages frequently use contrast to teach social norms and to remind the audience that good character and responsible behaviour remain central to communal life.

The performance employs contrast to ridicule Omotayo's rivals and also use satire to expose the emptiness of ambition without moral support. Systematic portrayals of shame, disgrace and magnified downfall of perceived rivals bring out the gulf between Omotayo's honourable character and the instability of his opponents. Yoruba oral art has always combined praise with reprimand by using contrast to discourage arrogance, betrayal and unfounded claims to authority.

A direct form of contrast appears in the lines “*Àwa ò fẹ̀ Wèrè*” and “*A ò fẹ̀ Dùgbòlugi*,” (stanza3) which reject wayward and reckless individuals. The negative similitude foregrounds the difference between responsibility and irresponsibility. By stating what the community does not admire, the drummers strengthen their praise of the virtues embodied by Omotayo. The use of contrast reflects Yoruba expectations that individuals must cultivate discipline, reliability and self-respect. This device thus functions as a corrective tool that guides listeners toward moral behaviour.

Parallelism is used to contrast the act of deliberate and spontaneous generosity in the paired lines, *Èyin tẹ́ n tọwọ̀ bàpò/ Tẹ́ n fún wa lówó* - You who dip hands in your pockets / You who give us money freely- (stanza9). These expressions contemplate each other to show deliberate action versus spontaneous generosity. The contrast enriches the portrayal of Omotayo’s kindness as both intentional and heartfelt. Yoruba society values leaders who support others through tangible and willing assistance. By contrasting effort with free-giving, the stanza highlights the completeness of Omotayo’s generosity.

Contrast is also used to show that fortune without good character is rare and undesirable. This juxtaposition creates a moral warning embedded within the praise. It reflects a core Yoruba belief that destiny (*orí*) must be matched with upright conduct if honour is to endure. While the drummers affirm Omotayo’s favourable destiny, they simultaneously caution that leadership requires humility, discipline and social responsibility. The use of contrast deepens the moral dimension of the performance.

The consistent use of contrast, therefore, transforms the drum message into a form of social commentary. The opposing images and expressions create clarity and emphasise the values that the community upholds. Employing contrast strengthens Yoruba perspectives on leadership, character and communal accountability. By placing Omotayo’s virtues side-by-side the flaws of his rivals, the drummers affirm the qualities expected of reputable individuals while condemning behaviour that threatens social harmony. Therefore, contrast functions not only as a stylistic device but as a cultural instrument for shaping moral consciousness.

5.6. Personification.

Personification is used throughout the performance to give life to abstract ideas such as ridicule, shame and disgrace. This device gives human agency to concepts that normally lack physical presence and transforms them into active participants in the performance. Yoruba performance poetry often uses personification to make moral consequences vivid and memorable. By giving opportunities to these forces to act within the stanza performances, the drummers created a dramatic atmosphere that heightened the seriousness of ethical behaviour.

The use of the expression *Àbùkù kówé sí wòn* - disgrace has written to them - (stanza7) shows disgrace acting like a conscious seeker. This indicates that shame does not simply happen but intentionally seeks out wrongdoers. This echoes Yoruba beliefs that immoral conduct attracts inevitable consequences from both society and spiritual order. Personifying disgrace therefore illustrate the idea that wrongdoing leads to severe punishment anchored on moral necessity.

Personifying *yèyè* (ridicule) and *àbùkù* (disgrace) intensifies and enlarges the imagery of humiliation to be inflicted upon Omotayo's rivals(stanza7). These abstracts, *yèyè* (ridicule) and *àbùkù* (disgrace), are given the ability to attach themselves to people, expose them and publicly shame them. This dramatization intensifies the emotional tone of the performance and beef up its communicative power. Such vivid use of personification reflects Yoruba oral traditions in which abstract values and consequences are portrayed as living forces that shape human experience.

Use of personification, in this situation, functions as both a stylistic marker and a cultural teaching tool. Its use enables a narrative in which ridicule and shame become moral agents deployed to enforce communal values. The message of the drum performance reminds listeners that reputation, character and social responsibility are central to Yoruba life. By depicting disgrace as an active retaliatory agent, the performance warns that actions contrary to communal expectations will attract public and spiritual consequences. Thus, personification strengthens the moral voice of the drum and reinforces the ethical foundations of the society.

5.7. Cultural Allusion

The drum performance employs cultural allusion as a major stylistic device, especially through references to Ogbomoso's warrior history and the ancestral identity of Omotayo. These allusions refer to the ancient identified virtues of Ogbomoso people marked by courage, resistance, and honour. By bringing up these historical merits, the performance locates the praise within a broader cultural narrative rather than presenting it as a mere personal compliment. The mention of a community that has "never been plundered" establishes a framework of resilience that surrounds the subject of praise.

The use of the naming formula or panegyric in *Bùhàrí ọmọ Ìbàfẹ̀n* (stanza1-12) helps to identify the praised figure through his paternal lineage. It stylistically reflects Yoruba cultural practice where an individual's identity is defined through ancestry. The repeated invocation of Omotayo's lineage gives the performance a rhythmic and ceremonial tone. It highlights continuity between past and present and stresses that personal greatness is a continuation of inherited virtues rather than an isolated achievement.

The cultural allusions not only elevate Omotayo but also fortifies a collective identity rooted in history. By linking him to Ogbomoso's warrior lineage - **Ògbómòşó kîí şerú ẹ̀nikòđkan /Ogun ò kó wa rí - Ogbomoso never bows or serves anybody/War has never ravaged us** (stanza10) - the drummers depict him as a custodian of communal values. This shifts the praise from individual celebration to communal affirmation that his leadership reflects the enduring strength of the entire community. The rhythmic and deliberate repetition of names and historical references enhances cohesion and expresses the relation between the individual and the society he represents.

The analysis shows that Yoruba praise performance is inseparable from moral instruction and communal values. The drummers use the identified stylistic devices, in the analysis paragraphs above, to affirm Omotayo's virtues and remind him of the ethical responsibilities expected of a leader. Overall, the interplay of the identified stylistic devices transforms the gáńgan performance into a cultural and ethical archive. It preserves communal memory, promotes responsible leadership and expresses Yoruba ideals of character, harmony and social balance. The linguistic artistry supports a deeper cultural purpose used to guide behaviour, strengthen identity and uphold a shared moral vision.

Thus, the combined effect of these devices is a performance that transcends entertainment, serving instead as a medium of cultural education and a reaffirmation of collective values.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to identify the stylistic features of gangan drum performances, explain how these features communicate moral and social values and evaluate their cultural significance within contemporary Yoruba society. The analysis addressed these objectives by showing that repetition, parallelism, foregrounding and metaphor are not decorative techniques but central to how drummers organise meaning, highlight key messages and achieve emotional and moral impact. These findings confirm that stylistic choices shape the drum's communicative force and support the study's aim of demonstrating how language and performance work together in Yoruba oral art.

The study also showed how these stylistic devices guide behaviour and reinforce shared values. Messages about destiny, character and responsibility consistently promote the Yoruba ethic of good conduct, while praise and caution work hand in hand to uphold accountability. In linking these patterns to the second objective, the study demonstrates that the gangan functions as a moral tutor and uses rhythm and coded language to sustain the community's ethical expectations.

The cultural relevance of the drum in modern contexts completes the third objective. Even as society changes, drummers continue to use traditional forms to comment on leadership, promote unity and maintain collective memory. The performances directed at contemporary figures, such as Senator Omotayo, reveal how oral traditions adapt to current realities while retaining their moral core.

The study focused on only a twelve stanzas' drum messages which offers deep but not full coverage of the wide regional and stylistic variations found across Yorubaland. Future work could compare performances across different communities or integrate ethnographic interviews to enrich interpretation.

Despite the limitation of wider coverage stated above, the study contributes to scholarship by showing how Leech and Short's (2007) Stylistic Model can be

effectively applied to non-written and oral-performative texts. The model's categories helped organise the analysis of linguistic choices, rhythmic structure and symbolic expression which made it easier to explain how each contributes to meaning, emphasis and artistic effect. By extending the framework to drumming, the study demonstrates its flexibility and helps broaden stylistic inquiry beyond conventional language forms.

The key findings of this study show that the gangan is more than a musical instrument. It is an active, living medium of cultural teaching, social regulation and ethical reflection. Through its layered rhythms and expressive techniques, it continues to shape behaviour, affirm communal ideals and carry Yoruba wisdom across generations.

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Appendix 1

TRANSCRIPTION OF ORIGINAL YORUBA DRUM MESSAGES

1. Bùhàrí ọmọ Ìbàfọ̀n

Ọmọ́táyọ ọmọ Ìbàfọ̀n

Ẹ kú ọjọ méjì 'Jọ mọta

Oò rí wa, oò béèrè wa

Ọmọ́táyọ

A jọ n bẹ ni

A jọ n bẹ ni

Àwa ò pẹ̀nìkan ò ní

A jọ n bẹ ni

2. Bùhàrí ọmọ Ìbàfọ̀n

Ẹ máa ganu si

Ẹ máa ganu si

Ọmọ́táyọ̀ tí gbé tuntun dé

Ẹ máa ganu si

3. Ọmọ́táyọ̀

Irú rẹ̀ là n fẹ̀

Irú rẹ̀ là n fẹ̀

Àwà ò fẹ̀ Wèrè

A ò fẹ̀ Dùgbòlùgì

Irú rẹ̀ là n fẹ̀

4. Bùhàrí ọmọ Ìbàfọ̀n

Ọmọ́táyọ̀

Orí ò gbọ́dọ̀ fọ̀

Orí ò gbọ́dọ̀ fọ̀

Ẹyingẹ̀dẹ̀ t'Àláo fí sílẹ̀

Orí ò gbọ́dọ̀ fọ̀

5. Bùhàrí ọmọ Ìbàfọ̀n

Ọmọ́táyọ̀

Rébété ló kù

Rébété ló kù

Ọ́tá rẹ̀ ó sẹ̀sín ígbangba

Régéjà ló kù

6. Bùhàrí ọmọ Ìbàfọ̀n

Ọmọ́táyọ̀ ọmọ Ìbàfọ̀n

Òkè wo lòkè wọn

Òkè wo lòkè wọn

Òkè tí ò lákàsò

Tí n jọ wọn lójú

Òkè wo lòkè wọn

7. Bùhàrí ọmọ Ìbàfẹ̀n

Yẹyẹ fẹ́dí sí wọn

Àbùkù kọ̀wé sí wọn

Eni tó jòkó sí tiwa

Yẹyẹ kọ̀dí sí wọn

8. Ọmọ́táyọ̀

Yẹpẹ̀rẹ k'ẹ̀ku asín

Yẹpẹ̀rẹ k'ẹ̀ku asín

Asín tí n wo' mọ rẹ

Tí n wọmọ ọlọmọ

Yẹpẹ̀rẹ k'ẹ̀ku asín

9. Bùhàrí ọmọ Ìbàfẹ̀n

Ọmọ́táyọ̀

Irú yín ò ní parun

Irú yín ò ní parun

Èyin tẹ n tọwọ̀ bàpò

Tẹ n fún wa lówó

Irú yín ò ní parun

10. Bùhàrí ọmọ Ìbàfẹ̀n

Ọmọ́táyọ̀ ọmọ Ìbàfẹ̀n

Ọmọ́táyọ̀

Ogun ò kó wa rí

Ogun ò kó wa rí

Ògbómòşşó kí şerú

ẹ̀nìkòşşkan

Ogun ò kó wa rí

11.Ọmòtáyò

Oríire lo ní

Oríire lo ní

Ẹ̀nìkan èé lóríire

Kó má níwà íre

Oríire lo ní

12.Ọmòtáyò

O kú bíbíire

O kú bíbíire

Nílé iyá

Atilé baba

O kú bíbíire

**THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE TALKING DRUM
MESSAGE**

1. Buhari, child of Ìbàfọ̀n

Omotayo, child of Ìbàfọ̀n

It has been two, even three days,

You neither saw us, nor asked after us.

Omotayo,

We are together here,

We are together here,

We did not wish lack for any person,

We are together here.

2. Buhari, child of Ìbàfòn

Keep been expectant,

Keep been expectant,

Omotayo has brought something new,

Keep been expectant.

3. Omotayo,

It is your kind we want,

It is your kind we want,

We do not want the wayward,

We do not want the reckless,

It is your kind we want.

4. Buhari, child of Ibafon,

Omotayo,

He must not suffer headache,

He must not suffer headache,

The delicate pumpkin that Alao left behind,

He must not suffer headache.

5. Buhari, child of Ibafon,

Omotayo,

It only remains Rébété,

Your enemies will be brought to open dishonour,

It only remains Régéjà.

6. Buhari, child of Ibafon,

Omotayo, child of Ibafon,

Which hill is theirs?

Which hill is theirs?

A hill without footholds,

That dazzles their eyes,

Which hill is theirs?

7. Buhari, child of Ibafon,

Ridicule has exposed its rumps to them,

Disgrace has written to them,

Whoever gathers together against us,

Shame has beckoned to them.

8. Omotayo,
Asin is not a simpleton,
Asin is not a simpleton,
The rat that looks after its young,
That also nurtures the child of another,
Asin is not a simpleton.
9. Buhari, son of Ibafon,
Omotayo,
May your kind never perish,
May your kind never perish,
You who put hands in the pocket,
And dole out wealth,
May your kind never perish.
10. Buhari, son of Ibafon,
Omotayo, son of Ibafon,
Omotayo,
War has never ravaged us,
We have never been plundered,
Ogbomoso never bows or serves anybody,
War has never ravaged us.
11. Omotayo,
You have good fortune,
You have good fortune,
A person cannot possess good fortune,
And be bereft of good character,
You have good fortune.
12. Omotayo,
Congratulations on your noble birth,
Congratulations on your noble birth,
Noble birth inherited from your mother's home,
And the one bestowed on you from your father's house,
Congratulations on your noble birth.

Appendix 2

Audio/Video Links

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AzZEz7neQ/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/169xMNWMV2/>

Appendix 3

Setting: The study was conducted in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, a major Yoruba cultural hub.

Participants: The primary data source is a recorded performance by professional gangan drummers during a public event.

Recording: A digital audio recorder and smartphone were used to capture the drum performance in a natural setting.

Observation: Field notes were taken to document the context, audience reactions, and the sequence of performances.

Appendix 4

Transcription Process

Initial Listening: The recorded drum sounds were repeatedly played to decode tonal patterns corresponding to Yoruba language speech tones.

Oral Interpretation: Assistance was sought from experienced drummers and native speakers for accurate interpretation.

Textual Rendering: The tonal messages were transcribed into Yoruba orthography, followed by English translations.

Validation: Transcriptions were reviewed and verified by cultural experts for accuracy.

The drummers are Ogbomoso based. They were praising Buhari Omotayo, a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria representing Ogbomoso in Oyo state. The Senator is an ally of the late governor of Oyo State, Adebayo Alao Akala.