

From Cradle to Grave: Yorùbá Court Poetry as a Quintessential Source of Lifelong Learning

Mulikah Adeyemi Lawal,
Department of English,
University of Lagos,
[Email: madedamola@unilag.edu.ng](mailto:madedamola@unilag.edu.ng)
Phone Number: 07030903337

Abstract

This study attempts to discuss the way(s) through which Yorùbá Court Poetry (YCP) can be used as a source of lifelong learning, mainly because of its numerous characteristics and functionality. For instance, it contains much information about the cultural heritage of the Yorùbá people. Ironically, despite its multiple functions, previous work has focused on the genre's panegyric function. However, this study reveals that this genre of Yorùbá oral poetry can do so much more than praise. To do this, the study utilises the functionalist theory of Bronislaw Malinowski to analyse data from the palaces of the Aláàfin of Òyó, Ọ̀nì of Ifẹ̀ and the Ẹ̀yìn of Ògbómòṣó. These data were obtained from interviews with the established palace poets of the monarchs. Findings from the research reveal that YCP has many functions that make it an archetypal source of lifelong learning. Thus, it recommends that the genre be publicised more, especially through new media, so that more people can access it and learn salient lessons. The study concludes by establishing the relevance of the study of YCP to the field of oral poetry and society in general.

Keywords: Yorùbá Court Poetry, Lifelong learning, Functionalism, Panegyric, Palaces

Introduction

This research is multidisciplinary because it merges aspects of Oral Literature and Education through ethnographic field-based research. It does this by analysing the characteristics and functions of YCP that make it a veritable source of lifelong learning. YCP refers to the chants, poems and songs composed by palace poets, queens, princes and princesses for the king. These chants contain salient lessons for individuals to learn. This is because it aligns with informal learning, which the Yorùbá pride themselves on. Thus, whatever affects one is liable to involve the entire community. This is why the Yorùbá say that: “*ẹ̀nì kan ló ń bímọ, igba ojú ní ń wò ó*”- which literally translates as “it is only a single individual that begets a child, but two hundred eyes look out for the child (where eyes are synecdoche for humans). In essence, the Yorùbá uphold informal learning, which Alan Roger describes as “...unlike formal and non-formal learning, which are spasmodic, situated in specific places and times, is ubiquitous, universal and continuous (35). Roger also asserts that “... informal learning includes all the unconscious influences on us

through our family and groups within our wider society, through our workplaces and leisure activities, through religion and sport, through our chosen music and peer pressures in such things as dress and eating habits” (35-36). Informal learning is, therefore, an everyday activity. This is also in line with Roger’s position that “... all our everyday activities and most of our socialisation rely on and create this informal learning” (36). The idea that learning takes place every day, everywhere and in every situation, sometimes even on the level of the subconscious, accentuates the idea that oral literature can be used as a medium for learning important lessons that are crucial to the development of a society. This is so because oral literature, by its nature, is also with us daily. For instance, *oríkì*, which can be regarded as the most prevalent Yorùbá oral poetry, is used on many occasions: children use it to appreciate their parents, parents use it to eulogise good children, etc. (Barber). There is no doubt that lifelong learning also aligns with the principles of informal learning. In the opinion of Alla (2024), lifelong learning is “the broad term for education that is conducted beyond school” (27). Thus, by aligning with informal learning, both oral literature and lifelong learning share a close affinity that this study seeks to investigate through an examination of the characteristics and functions of YCP.

Literature Review

Many scholarly works have been written on the use of genres of oral literature as sources of different aspects of lifelong learning. However, to the knowledge of this researcher, no one has discussed the use of YCP as a form of lifelong learning, especially through its characteristics and functionality. For instance, Avoseh (2024) discusses the use of proverbs as a source of a theoretical framework for lifelong learning in Africa. The study argues that indigenous African knowledge should be used alongside Western canons in the production of theories for adult education. Thus, it used proverbs from Ogu and Yorùbá to advocate for the use of African pedagogy in the development of adult education theories. This is outside our scope here, as this study focuses on the characteristics and functions of YCP as a source of lifelong learning.

Baluku et al. (2024) also note that oral literature is germane to the development of moral values in learners. The scholars opine that oral literature can be used to eradicate the moral decadence pervading 21st-century society. Thus, they advocate for the inclusion of different genres of oral literature in contexts of study and education. The study also proposes ways to address challenges that may arise from the inclusion of oral literature. In the opinion of Mpumuje et al. (2024), oral literature can help to enhance the language proficiency of learners. This is because genres of oral

literature are expected to be steeped in the use of the language of the tradition from which they emerged. Based on this, the study recommends teaching oral literature in schools to further develop learners' language proficiency.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that the role of oral literature in education has been variously established. However, scholars have not really discussed the education that can be gained from aspects of oral literature. This study aims to fill this gap by analysing the characteristics and functions of YCP.

Methodology

This study utilised a field-based interview method of gathering data. From the totality of Yorùbá palaces, three palaces were selected based on: continuous practice of the court poetry tradition, existence of established palace poets, type of Yorùbá orthography, N.A. Fádípè's division of Yorùbá towns into the Òyó and Ifè groups in his book, *The Sociology of the Yorùbá*, and hierarchy amongst the Yorùbá monarchs. After the purposive sampling, the palaces of the Ọ̀ni of Ifè, Aláàfin of Òyó, and Ẹ̀ṣọ̀n of Ògbómòṣọ were meticulously chosen as archetypes of the Yorùbá monarchs. This is because the three palaces first have dialects that are closer to what linguists have referred to as "standard Yorùbá" based on their conventional intelligibility. Thus, any Yorùbá speaker is likely to understand the Òyó Yorùbá dialect regardless of that speaker's own dialectal leanings. Second, these palaces have continued to uphold the tradition of CP despite the advent of modernisation and democracy, which have partly eroded the hitherto significant sovereignty of the Ọ̀ba. Thus, the palace chanters of the Aláàfin of Òyó, Ọ̀ni of Ifè and the Ẹ̀ṣọ̀n of Ògbómòṣọ were contacted and thereafter interviewed. After the interviews, they were required to chant the court poetry of their patrons. These chants and interviews were recorded in audio and video drds, the chants were transcribed from audio to text, then later translated from Yorùbá to English by expert translators for objectivity of data and to achieve a near-perfect translation of the data. These data were analysed qualitatively by the researcher to reveal their characteristics and functions. The interviews with the bards of the Ọ̀ni and the Aláàfin (Akéwì Omíṣore Lateef Oyèwálé and Akéwì Ayòṣa Màyòwá) were conducted in the palaces of the monarchs, while the bard of the Ẹ̀ṣọ̀n (Ààre Aluṣèkèrè Abdul Rauf Àkàno) was interviewed in his house beside the palace.

Results and Discussions

Characteristics and Functions of YCP

This section focuses on the functions and characteristics of YCP that make it a suitable source of lifelong learning. Some of these include:

Identification of the Features of Natural Phenomena

As an interesting genre, YCP also reveals the features of natural phenomena. These features are usually sacrosanct and hardly ever change. Thus, they are typically used to emphasise the permanence of the monarch's majesty and superiority. It provides a rich knowledge of the nature of natural phenomena, thereby accentuating it as a form of education for the listener/audience. It also encourages people to think critically about the sublimity of nature in any form it appears. This is illustrated in the lines below:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Àràbà ò wó jéjé | 1. The silk cotton tree does not fall gently |
| 2. Apá èkútéelé ò káwùsá | 2. The house rat cannot crack the walnut |
| 3. Níbi yíyí kiri ló mọ | 3. It can only continue to roll it over |

The lines above literally illustrate the nature of the silk cotton tree, which is so huge that it cannot be easily felled, and the house rat that is (by nature) not capable of cracking a walnut. These illustrations enhance an individual's knowledge of the nature of these natural phenomena, both flora and fauna. Symbolically, the silk cotton tree and the walnut refer to the monarch who, like the tree and the fruit, cannot be easily "conquered", much as the tree cannot be felled easily and the house rat cannot crack the fruit. This highlights the poet's portrayal of the monarch as a powerful individual who cannot be overthrown.

The features of the natural objects are also adopted by the monarch or ascribed to him. Examples of these abound in the chants collected during the fieldwork of this research, and some of them are presented below:

Table 1: Identification of the features of natural elements in YCP

Source: Summary of the researcher's qualitative analysis

S/N	LOCATION	SAMPLE	DESCRIPTION	NATURAL PHENOMENON USED

1.	Canto 11-line 23	Àràbà ò wó jẹ́jẹ́- the silk cotton does not fall gently	Describes the invincible nature of the monarch	Uses the features of the silk cotton tree.
2.	Canto 25-line 5/6	5. Ní kùtùkùtù ni à ñ ká yèèpè- 5. It is at dawn that we harvest the nettle. 6. Èní ká Baba mi lósàn-án, olúwa rè ñ fẹ̀ iyọnu ni-6. Whoever harvests the nettle during the day seeks trouble.	Describes the fearsome/complex nature of the monarch as well as the need to do things punctually.	Uses the features of the nettle.
3.	Canto 26-line 13	13. Yàkàtà yakata kò jẹ́ a rídíi ìṣápá 13. The scattered nature of the Roselle plant does not make us know its secret.	Describes the monarch as a protector and guardian, just like the scattered nature of the Roselle plant protects it.	Uses the features of the Roselle plant.
4.	Canto 34-line 44/45	1. Pínńsín lọmọ erin-1. The calf is seemingly small 2. tí i fí ọlá yagi – 2. yet wields wealth to bring the tree branches down	Describes the bantam and stout features of the stalwart monarch.	Uses the features of the calf.

The table above reflects the way(s) in which the monarch appropriates features of natural objects (flora and fauna) and metaphorically utilised. This deepens the portrayal and description of the monarch. Natural objects have specific, important, vital features that make them distinct. By

appropriating these features for their patrons, the poets also foreground their unique characteristics while educating listeners about the features of these natural items.

Coronation Procedures

YCP also explains the coronation process of a new king. This is done to recount the process and make people familiar with it. It also ensures the perpetuity of the reverence accorded to the monarch, as the tough, detailed, and complicated process the monarchs have to go through before becoming one is revealed. This also enhances the description of the monarch's tenacity. An example is given in the lines below:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 23. Àràbà ò wó jẹ́jẹ́ | 23. The silk cotton does not fall gently |
| 24. Bẹ̀nẹ́ ń hó gudu | 24. bẹ̀nẹ́ drums were Ẹ̀ún ding
ferociously |
| 25. Lọ̀naa Bàrà | 25. en route to the royal
mausoleum |
| 26. Ará Agódóńgbó | 26. the people of Agódóńgbó |
| 27. Wọ̀n ò gbọ̀dọ̀ lọ oko | 27. must not go to the farm |
| 28. Tàjàgà ààşè | 28. those of Àjàgà ààşè |
| 29. Wọ̀n ò gbọ̀dọ̀ rodò | 29. must not go to the river |

The lines above highlight the coronation process for a new king, who is expected to visit the royal mausoleum to pay homage to his predecessors buried there, thereby ratifying and completing the coronation. While on this journey, the people are expected to be indoors as the previous monarchs accept the new king, since they (the people) are not likely to see the dead kings. From the lines above, it can be deduced that the coronation procedures may not be given in detail because of the compact nature of poetry, which does not provide room for an extended narration like prose.

Another idea that is tangentially related to that of coronation, which is found in YCP, is the information on the governance of the community. In different instances, the people involved in the governance of the town/community are revealed on the lines of YCP, as it is expected that the king works in conjunction with chiefs, priests, and other individuals for the development of the community, as well as to uphold its traditions and cultures. Examples of this are provided below:

Table 2: Identification of lines describing governance composition in YCP

Source: researcher's qualitative analysis

S/N	LOCATION	SAMPLE	DESCRIPTION
1.	Canto 37 lines 132-135	<p>132.Şebí méjọ ni àgbà ijòyè tí n bẹ lápá ọ̀tún–132. There were eight elderly chiefs on the right</p> <p>133.Şebí méjọ ni àgbà ijòyè tí n bẹ ní ọ̀sì Ọ̀nì –133. And eight elderly chiefs are on the left, Ọ̀nì left.</p> <p>134.Àgbà ijòyè di m̀erindínlógún-134. That sums it up to sixteen elderly chiefs</p> <p>135.tí í bá Olúfè gbimòràn-135. that perform the advisory role with the king</p>	Description of the number of chiefs involved in governance and advisory roles in Ifè .
2.	Canto 35 line 62-63	<p>62. Abóbakú n bẹ lálède Ọ̀yọ 62. There is Abobaku in Ọ̀yọ</p> <p>63. Onífọ́, abóbakú dùn loyè 63. Onífọ́, the Abóbakú is a very great chief</p> <p>64. Ijọ ikú abóbakú 64. The day Abobaku dies</p> <p>65. bóbó ní í kan bí i jogbo 65. is always as sour as poison</p>	Description of the Abobaku chief and his importance in Ọ̀yọ.

The identification of governance procedures and those involved in them further enhances the knowledge people can gain about different communities through YCP. This knowledge aids in the identification and distinguishing of one community from another based on their peculiarities and practices.

Yorùbá Beliefs and Cultural Practices

Culture is the totality of a people's way of life. It could be divided into tangible and intangible aspects. Tangible culture, also called material culture, comprises objects, goods, clothing, and household items. Intangible/non-material culture includes ideas, values, beliefs, social behaviour, etc. As a part of culture, the content of YCP encapsulates the beliefs of the Yorùbá, especially as it relates to the community whose YCP is being chanted. These beliefs are varied and multifaceted as they include different ideas and notions. One belief portrayed in the chants collected during this research's fieldwork is the people's hierarchical system. The Yorùbá people believe in the hierarchical structure of almost everything. The society is thus usually polarised along these hierarchies, which are well-established and entrenched. These hierarchies are upheld to a great extent, so it is unacceptable to disregard them. In the Yorùbá cosmology, hierarchies exist among humans, natural objects including plants and animals, issues, household objects, etc. Some of the instances of hierarchical ordering are provided below:

Table 3: Distribution of hierarchies in YCP

Source: Researcher's qualitative analysis

S/N	Location in Chants	Sample from Chants	Description
1.	Canto 5 line 102	102. Ògún ló níkòkò baba ìsáàsùn 102. Ògún owns the earthenware, father of all soup-pots	Hierarchy amongst household items
1.	Canto 9 lines 191-194	191. Oníkéké ojú ò gbòdò bù mu, 191. One with the three tribal marks must not drink from it, 192. Alábàjà ò gbòdò bu wẹ ẹşẹ 192. One with the Àbàjà tribal mark must not take it to wash his feet, 193. Sọbọṛọ b'onílà nínú jé 193. A bare face saddened the person with a tribal mark,	Hierarchy of preference amongst facial marks

		194. Ni ó ọ̀n omi odò náà gbẹ 194. Was the one who fetched the river without remaining	
2.	Canto 13 line 206	206. Èmi ò rájá tó le mómọ ẹ̀kùn 206. I do not know a dog that can take the child of a leopard as a prisoner	Hierarchy amongst animals
3.	Canto 13 line 207	207. Owó lorí ọ̀rò 207. Money is the most important of all discussions	Hierarchy amongst discussions/issues
4.	Canto 13 line 299	299. Láéláé ọ̀ba tí jará oko ọ̀ 299. The king has always been more honourable than the commoner	Hierarchy amongst humans
5.	Canto 13-line 300	300. Gbọ̀gbọ̀gbọ̀ ọ̀wọ̀ yóò jorí 300. just as the upwardly stretched hand will tower above the head	Hierarchy amongst parts of the body
6.	Canto 13 line 301	301. Gbọ̀gbọ̀gbọ̀ ọ̀gómọ̀ yóò jọ̀pe 301. The palm fronds also rise above the palm tree	Hierarchy amongst parts of a tree

The table above depicts the hierarchy portrayed in the chants. It emphasises that hierarchical structures exist in all aspects of human life, especially among the Yorùbá. Thus, while the lower members of the hierarchical spectrum are enjoined to be kind, the upper level is admonished to be respectful and humble. Awareness of and adherence to this class stratification can create a peaceful, united community where everyone knows their place.

YCP also sometimes includes the cultural practices of the society, as well as the people's reactions to them. Tangible and intangible cultural practices such as drumming, dressing, facial marks, food, dancing, etc., are revealed/identified through YCP. Thus, the chants educate people about these practices, which encompass the totality of the people's way of life, and help properly identify and distinguish them from others. This is why they are also referred to as folk culture, because they represent the practices of a single society or community.

Some of the instances where cultural practices are described in the chants are given below:

Table 4: Description of cultural aspects in YCP

Source: Researcher's qualitative analysis

S/N	LOCATION	SAMPLE	CULTURE
1.	Canto 8 lines 167-168	167. Kò ga kò bẹrẹ 167. It's neither by standing nor by prostration 168. ni wọn n' kí wọn n'Ífẹ̀ Oòtẹ̀nì 168. is how they greet them in Ifẹ̀ Oòtẹ̀nì,	Greeting
2.	Canto 8 lines 174-175	174. Ká fàrí apá kan 174. Shaving a side of the head 175. ní í mú'lé yín sún mi í lọ 175. exhausts my interest in going to your home	Dressing
3.	Canto 29 lines 18-23	2. Ó dé èyìnkùlẹ̀ Ọ̀sinlẹ̀ ló di àbàtà 18. And reaches Ọ̀sinlẹ̀' s home to form a marshy place 3. Onípélẹ̀ ò gbọ̀dò mu 19. The water is off-limits to be drunk by a three-vertical-facial-mark bearer 4. Ìran akàbàjà kan kò gbọ̀dò bù san ẹ̀sẹ̀ 20. The descendants of Àbàjà tribal mark bearer must not wash their legs with it. 5. Kìkídá onísòbòrò ní ó mumi odò náà gbẹ̀ 21. The water of the river is for those without marks, until it dries up. 2. Sòbòrò mi wùn mí di dandan kó máa bá alábẹ̀ 22. Those who do not have a tribal mark must respect the tribal mark inscriber. 3. Ojúràbẹ̀sá ni Onífẹ̀ Ọ̀nì n' jẹ̀ 23. Onífẹ̀ Ọ̀nì is the one who does not bear tribal marks	Facial marks (Ifẹ̀)

6.	Canto 46 lines 430-432	430. Ògbómòṣó Ajílété 430. Ògbómòṣó Ajílété 431. Ibi wón gbé n jẹkà 431. where they eat pounded yams 432. kí wón tó mùko yangan 432. before they drink pap	Food
7.	Canto 23 line 20	20. Èmi ò rí oòṣà tí n bání jà léyìn orí ẹnì 20. I have not seen a deity that fights for one except one's head	Beliefs (in the inner head/destiny)
8.	Canto 25 lines 1-3	1. Bólántà a hun won 1. When wealth increases, they desire it 2. Bọlá bá dojú dé, ọlá á máa sù wọn-ọn ṣe 2. When wealth declines, they tend to grow tired of being wealthy. 3. Àkòyìsì ọlá kíí rọ 3. The decline in wealth isn't always good.	Sayings (philosophy of life)
9.	Canto 36 lines 94-97	94. Nítorí ẹnì bá b'Ọbá kú 94. because he who was buried with the king 95. La mò ní Olókùn ẹṣin 95. is known as the horseman 96. Èyàn tí kò bá b'Ọbá kú 96. he who wasn't buried with the king 97. La mò ní Olókùn ẹran 97. is known as the goat man	Burial rites
10.	Canto 37 lines 132-134	132. Ṣebí méjọ ni àgbà ijòyè tí n bẹ ní ọ̀ṣì Ọ̀ṣì 132. And eight elderly chiefs are by the left side of Ọ̀ṣì left. 133. Àgbà ijòyè dí méréndínlógún 133. That sums it up to sixteen elderly chiefs	System of governance

		134. tí í bá Olúfẹ̀ gbìmòràn 134. that perform the advisory role with the king	
11.	Canto 40 lines 228-231	<p>228. Nítorí bí Oya bá pani, àpagbé 228. because if Oya kills someone, nothing can be done</p> <p>229. Bí Sàngó bá pani, àpagbé 229. If Sango strikes someone to death, nothing can be done</p> <p>230. Bí Ògún bá pani, àpagbé 230. If Ogun strangled someone to death, nothing can be done</p> <p>231. Bí Sànpònná bá pani, àpagbé 231. If Sanponna strikes someone, nothing can be done</p>	Beliefs (in gods)

As said earlier, cultural practices help to identify the peculiarities of the monarchs and their towns. This, thereafter, informs people of how to relate to them. For instance, the sample from canto 8 reveals how the Ifẹ̀ people prefer to be greeted. In addition, the identified cases in cantos 29 and 41 in the table above reveal the people’s opinion about facial marks. It reveals that while the Ifẹ̀ people do not acknowledge or revere people with facial marks, the Ọ̀yọ́ people do. This fact distinguishes the people and shows their preferred cultural practice. This is why cultural practices are very significant and abound in the lines of YCP, which is itself a cultural practice. This makes it a good educational resource at any level.

It also portrays the Yorùbá belief system on gods, oracles, and other supernatural powers. The Yorùbá believe in a chthonic world of the unborn, living, and dead. The unborn are expected to choose their destiny (àkúnlẹ̀yàn) or get it selected for them (àyànmó) before coming to the land of the living through birth. The dead are expected to watch over the living. The belief in the supernatural in the form of gods and deities is also portrayed in YCP. This fact is illustrated in the lines below:

88. O gbórí Ifá

88. He consults the Ifa oracle

89. O ránni sákoḡun

89. And summons Akogun

340. O n jenu wúyè wúyè	340. When he keeps muttering to himself
341. Ògùn ní n sà	341. He is chanting some incantations
342. O n lolo sùkùsùkù	342. When he is busy with the grinding stone
343. Ògùn ní n lò	343. He is preparing some charms
525. Wón dífá dífá	525. They made consultations upon consultations
526. Ọwọ wọn lu	526. Till they had a hole in their hands
527. Wón jatare tíí	527. They chewed the alligator pepper
528. Èèké wón papó	528. Till their cheeks became slack like pockets
529. Sùgùdù kan ò ran Àtándá mó	529. No charm was able to overpower Atanda
530. Àjé-kùnrin	530. A very tough wizard

The lines above illustrate the Yorùbá belief in the supernatural by making references to the Ifá oracle, incantations, and charms- items with which humans can seek the help of supernatural entities. This help could be in the form of seeking wealth, health, etc. In this instance, the monarch uses his relationship with the supernatural beings to seek protection from evil or devilish beings, whatever form they may take. After gaining this protection, he becomes indomitable and invincible. Hence, the lines portray Yorùbá belief in the existence of supernatural beings capable of both good and evil. The lines also communicate the power and help of the monarch to his enemies or detractors in a bid to try to dissuade them from trying to attack him. This could also help prevent or eradicate conflict, since people would rather be in his good graces than risk conflict with him because of his powers.

Though the Yorùbá believe in supernatural beings, like the Christians and Muslims, their belief is different from that of these other religious adherents. This is because in the Yorùbá belief system, there are many pantheons of gods, each with its own powers, worshippers, and jurisdiction. This is like the numerous gods worshipped by the Greeks. In Yorùbá cosmology, there are gods such as Ògún, Sàngó, Ọbàtálá, Ọya, Ọṣun, Yemoja, etc, who are expected to serve as helpers to the Supreme Being. Thus, they perform different functions, and people go through them for specific things. For instance, Yemoja is believed to be able to cure infertility. Thus, in

From the lines above, the Yorùbá believe so much in upholding one’s kinship ties that they call the individual who abuses kinship ties “mad/stupid” while the one who unites the family is regarded as “wise”.

History

There is no doubt that YCP usually contains a genealogy of a monarch and his town. It also traces the history of past monarchs who have occupied the position. In addition, it sometimes includes the personal biography of the monarchs themselves. Thus, it is indeed a source of history in its varying forms. In fact, Akintunde Akinyemi’s seminal book on YCP titled *Yorùbá Royal Poetry: a Socio-historical Exposition and Annotated Translation* used the chants from the YCP composed and sung by the wives of the Alààfin of Òyó called Yungba to do a genealogy of the community and noted that besides using stories, poetry can also be used to reveal the history of the town, people, and community for and in which it was composed. It should be noted that due to the nature of poetry, especially in terms of compactness, it does not have the luxury of space. Thus, historical incidents are merely alluded to and are usually not elaborately discussed. Instances of this abound in the chants collected during the fieldwork of this study, and examples are given below:

Table 5: Description of historical events in YCP

Source: Researcher’s qualitative analysis

S/N	LOCATION	SAMPLE	DESCRIPTION
1.	Canto 11 line 134/135	134. Àtìbà Olúkúewu 134. Àtìbà Olúkúewu 135. Ni orúkọ baba tó wá láti Ilẹ̀sà 135. is the name of the father that came from Ilẹ̀sà	Reveals the historical origin of Àtìbà
2.	Canto 13-line 305/307	305. Olújídé 305. Olújídé 306. Ó kó Kúrunmí tọmọtọmo 306. You imprisoned Kúrunmí along with his children 307. Àbọ̀ Ìjàyè n ló sÁwáyè kábíáwó 307. when he returned from Ìjàyè, he destroyed Áwáyè	Reveals the military exploits of the monarch and communities that were hitherto under the control of the monarch

3.	Canto 16 line 477-478	477. Ó mú baba délé Èkó 477. The father went to Lagos 478. Wolé nílé Núrù Oníwo 478. he stayed in the house of Núrù Oníwo	Reveals the places the monarch had once migrated to avoid challenges he was facing in his town.
4.	Canto 20-line 16	16. A-ti-Ìbàdàn-wá-joyè, bí ọmọ jógí oró 16. He who came from Ìbàdàn to be crowned, like the offspring of jógí oró	Reveals the previous location of the monarch (he was based at Ibadan before coming to become Şòún of Ogbómòşó
5.	Canto 25-line 9	9. Bí ò sí Adìgún Ewégbè mí, ogun ò bà kó'lorin 9. If there were no Adìgún Ewégbè mí, war would have waged Ìlorin.	Reveals the monarch's support for the people of Ilorin.

The table above shows the different instances in which history is alluded to in the chants. Some, like in canto 20 line 16, are even as short as a simple nominalisation where the history is used like a noun to refer to the king whose history is being told. In this instance, the monarch is referred to as “A-ti-Ìbàdàn-wá-joyè”, meaning “he who returns from Ibadan to become king”, thereby revealing his previous base or location. This suggests that a nominalisation can sometimes indicate the history of a monarch, his people, or a town.

The Yorùbá concept of hierarchy is also revealed in YCP. Despite being a communal society, individuals are expected to know their place and act accordingly. This does not diminish the relationship between the indigenous people. The classes of individuals in the society are the oba (king), àrẹmọ (prince), ọmọ (child), iwọfà (pawn), and ẹrú (slave). This hierarchical order is revealed in the song below as the prince is cheered for reaching the pinnacle of human hierarchy.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 308. Olújídé ò léèkàn | 308. Olújídé, has no opposition that can defy him |
| 309. Àlào ò léèkàn o jù wọn lọ | 309. Àlào, you have excelled and surpassed them |
| 310. Ò-şomọ-şàrẹmọ | 310. You were a child and then a crown prince |

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 311. O tún jọba | 311. Then you became king |
| 312. Àlào ò léèkàn | 312. Àlào, you have become successful |
| 313. O jù wọn lọ | you surpassed them |

The lines below also illustrate the premium position elders are placed in the society, thus:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 288. Àgbà ò sí | 288. a town devoid of elders |
| 289. Ìlú ò gún | 289. Cannot be peaceful |
| 299. Láéláé lọba ti n jara oko lọ | 299. The king has always been more honourable than the commoner |
| 542. Òròmọdiẹ ò màwòdì òkè | 542. The chick may not be able to identify the kite |
| 543. Ìran baba ẹ ló màsá | 543. But its father's generation will be able to |

The people also maintain a good relationship with the gods and deities as they maintain customs and traditions. This is revealed through imagery in the lines below:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 352. Wọn dòrì ká kànga | 352. They tried to assail the well |
| 353. Şùgbọn kànga ò ẹ é bínú kó sí | 353. But it is difficult to jump into it in anger |
| 354. Wọn dòrì kÁdió | 354. They tried to assail Àdió |
| 355. Sugbon apa o kadio | 355. But they could not overcome Àdió |
| 356. Wọn ló bẹ Şàngó lówè si | 356. They invoked Sango to make an onslaught against him |
| 357. Şàngó ì í bọmọ rẹ jà | 357. But Sango cannot attack his children |
| 358. Eré ni baba omọ n bọmọ ẹ | 358. The father can only play with his child |

The last three lines of the excerpt above illustrate the relationships between gods and humans, and between parents and children. The relationship is expected to be very cordial and friendly. People are, thus, enjoined to maintain a good relationship with their gods to be saved from his anger and wrath. The lines also allude to the reign of Şàngó and his subsequent deification by reiterating that the Aláàfin and Şàngó are one of a kind, since Şàngó is considered the third Aláàfin of the Òyó Kingdom and is regarded as the father of succeeding monarchs of the kingdom. This is perhaps why Matory opines that “indeed, crowned in the Şàngó’s shrine by the same official who initiates

Ṣàngó possession priests, the Alààfin himself is not only a descendant of Ṣàngó but also a “bride” of the god and “Ṣàngó himself” on earth” (98).

Conclusion

As an educational resource, the YCP can also enhance language acquisition and vocabulary development. This is because an individual can learn new words, proverbs, idioms, etc. from the chants. These can be deduced from the literary devices and non-causal language utilised in the chants. Thus, the poems can enrich an individual's use of language by helping them acquire the right words to use in conversations. This has become very poignant because many teenagers and young adults cannot speak Yorùbá correctly and clearly, often mixing it with other foreign languages like English, generally because they lack the vocabulary to express themselves appropriately. Situations such as this can be prevented when people build up their vocabulary through cultural activities like YCP.

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