Oral Expression in Yoruba Chieftaincy Dispute: An Interrogation of Songs, Chants, and Maxims as Instruments of Contestation

By

Dolapo Zacchaeus, Olupayimo Ph.D.
Department of History and Diplomatic Studies
Adeyemi Federal University of Education,
Ondo
+234 8034442478
olupayimozo@afuedondo.edu.ng
olupayimod@gmail.com

Abstract

Hereditary chieftaincy remains a foundational institution in Yoruba socio-political and cultural milieu. It validate notable elasticity in spite of far-reaching historical and modern-day revolutions. Putting this in perspective, this study examines songs, chants, and maxims as culturally encoded forms through which chieftaincy contests are articulated, contested, and remembered. These expressive resources are strategically deployed before, during, and after succession struggles, serving as tools of rivalry, persuasion, and public evaluation. Drawing on primary data comprising selected Yoruba songs, chants, and maxims associated with documented chieftaincy contests, the study employs qualitative textual analysis to interrogate their social functions. It explores how these verbal forms frame the identities of contestants and arbiters, construct narratives of victory and defeat, and extend the symbolic life of contests beyond their formal conclusion. Findings reveal that, although these expressions frequently contain ridicule and lineage-based satire, they do not deter participation in subsequent contests. Rather, they are normalized as integral elements of chieftaincy competition and cultural continuity. The study concludes that these coded expressive forms play a critical role in sustaining the legitimacy, memory, and performing character of the Yoruba chieftaincy culture.

Keywords: Yoruba chieftaincy; oral performance; symbolic politics; succession disputes; social memory; political legitimacy; indigenous institutions.

Introduction

The evolution of the Yoruba chieftaincy culture is deeply buried in the various traditions and legends of origin. The historical nexus of these various traditions and legends of origin and the chieftaincy culture is that the institution is as old as the community itself. This is obvious from the fact that every Yoruba Oba is described as a direct or indirect descendant of the founder of the community. According to Akinjogbin, 2002, despite the fact that there are many versions of the traditions of origin of the Yoruba ethnic nation, long-term research on Yoruba history seem to favor the establishment of the Oduduwa dynasty by a stronger wave of migration which successfully imposed itself on the existing highly decentralized political order and introduced a more centralized administration.

Irrespective of the various redefinition and reconceptualization introduced by socio-political modernism, the Yoruba chieftaincy culture remains one of the most enduring cultural legacies. The concept of Yoruba chieftaincy culture connotes both the institution i.e the rules, law and customs guiding the operation of the organization as well as the entire carefully woven together monarchical structure. This is perhaps because the titleholders are the custodian of authority and the totality of the Yoruba cultural heritage.

The thrust of this study is the contest for chieftaincy titles with particular focus on the Obaship position. It must be noted that it is the degree of importance of each chieftaincy title that determines the severity of the contest. Moreover, some of the indices of significance of a Yoruba chieftaincy title according to Munoz, 1977, include: the traditional power backing up the throne or title, the political control wielded by the titleholder, the hereditary status of the title, the societal recognition accorded the holder of the title, the royal insignia, the mode of selection, the complexity of the coronation rites and the degree of linkage to the Oduduwa dynasty (in case of an *Oba*)

All Yoruba thrones are traced to an ancestral spirit linked in all cases to the founder of each town or village. The Oba must therefore possess a blood link with the founder of the town to legitimize his occupation of the throne. This legitimacy qualifies him to wear the ancestral crown or use the title insignia (Munoz, 2002). Again this is because the crown or the title insignia is a crucial physical mark of

identification linking a title holder with his ancestors. In fact, it is the crowning of a Yoruba Monarch that transforms him to *Igba keji Orisa* (second in command only to the gods of the land). And it also accords him ritual validation of his authority. From the point of coronation of a Yoruba Monarch, he no longer prostrates for anybody including his biological parents (where they are still living). According to Alao and Adediran, 2003, every Yoruba Oba becomes an institution and no longer a person from the period of coronation.

The present study focuses the position of Oba- Monarch. To strengthen the institutional status of a Yoruba Oba, according to Olupayimo, 2017 there are some cumbersome processes of selection put in place. Olupayimo, 2017 identified a number of ideals scrupulously followed to appoint a Yoruba Oba, some of these include: the concept of *Omo orite* (a child born when his father was still on the throne and where there are many *Omo orite*, *Ifa* determines which of them should actually be the crown prince. Another ideal is being the child of a former occupant of the throne. In some places, the crown prince must not be an *Abilagba* (a child born by an Ado-Ekiti *Olori* -the wife of a king- of a former occupant of the throne to his successor) *or* an *Aremooye* (the first male child of an Alaafin of Oyo) and must be a child by an accredited *Olori* with the traditional rank sign. One of the most important requirements is the approval of the *Ifa* oracle (the Yoruba god of divination) Olupayimo, 2017. The issue of possessing the requirements for the appointment is perhaps a major link between the contest and the use of songs, chants and maxims, which are the actual thrust of this write-up. This is because chieftaincy contest becomes keener as some *Omo-oye* are disqualified while others are recommended for further stages of contest.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative historical research design that combines archival documents with oral data. The approach is appropriate for cultural and historical investigation in which indigenous knowledge systems and performing traditions serve as primary sources of evidence. Data triangulation between archival textual records and oral testimonies was employed to increase reliability and depth of interpretation.

The research focuses on three Yoruba towns in Southwestern Nigeria. These are Ede, Ejigbo, and Iwo, purposively selected based on their documented histories of

chieftaincy succession disputes and rich oral traditions. Archival materials drawn from the National Archives Ibadan, were consulted. These include colonial government administrative reports, correspondences, and judicial records such as Minutes of Native Court sittings relating to Chieftaincy succession disputes. Oral data were gathered between 2003 and 2006 through in-depth interviews with palace chiefs, court historians, elderly residents, and other knowledgeable informants selected through purposive sampling.

The study examined texts associated with Chieftaincy succession disputes covering the reigns of Oba Adetoyese Laoye *Timi of Ede*, 1946–1976), Oba Rufai Ajani Adegoroye, the *Oluwo of Iwo*, 1953–1958), and Oba Oyeyode Oyesosin the *Ogiyan of Ejigbo,* since 1972). Eight songs, eight maxims, and one chant were carefully analyzed. Interviews were conducted in Yoruba, transcribed, and translated into English, with attention to performance context and audience reception.

Data gathered were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and explanatory hermeneutics, focusing on metaphorical explanations, political messaging, legitimacy claims, and cultural meanings in Yoruba chieftaincy culture. Archival and oral sources were cross-referenced to strengthen systematic accuracy. Ethical standards were observed by obtained consent and respect for local protocols. It must be noted that reliance on oral evidence presents limitations related to memory and retrospection, these were mitigated through corroboration across multiple sources.

Theoretical Framework: Performance, Symbolic Power, and Social Memory

The Yoruba chieftaincy contest is studied not simply as an institutional or legal processes but as a theatrical arena in which power, legality, and identity are overtly negotiated. Songs, chants, and maxims are treated as expressive performances embedded within structures of power and cultural continuity. It is based on this understanding that the present study is situated at the intersection of three fundamental theories of performance theory, symbolic politics, and social memory.

With lens of the performance theory, one can see and interpret these verbalized customs. In many African societies, political authority is endorsed as much as it is hereditary. The installation of an Oba, the coronation rituals, and the public reception of a candidate are all can all be deeply explained as theatrical processes in which symbolic signals produce dogmatic political meanings. Within this framework, songs and chants function as performance speech. They do not only describe genuineness; they actively build it. When supporters sing of predictable triumph, ridicule antagonists, or celebrate installation, they merely participate in shaping communal perceptions of acceptability. Language, therefore, becomes action.

The study also draws from the concept of symbolic power. Chieftaincy contests are rarely limited to procedural eligibility; they are struggles over recognition, lineage prestige, and interpretive authority. Songs and maxims operate as symbolic resources through which actors assert moral superiority, question the authenticity of rivals, and encode political commentary in culturally reverberating metaphors. The ridicule embedded in some of these expressions should not be read solely as insult but as social sanctions of political critique. By circulating through marketplaces, wrestling arenas, riversides, and recreational spaces, these expressions integrates the contest into social fabric.

Yoruba oral traditions have long been used as the repository of historical consciousness. Songs, chants, and maxims preserve details of chieftaincy disputes long after judicial rulings have been made or political tensions have receded. Genealogical claims are encoded in them, the narrate histories of litigation, and venerate factional divisions. Indeed, they serve as unconventional archives that coexist with written records and Court judgments. Communal interpretations of events are stored in them and transmitted across generations. And this is why this study has adopted the significant dimension of social memory.

The concept of normalization is brought in as well because the satirical connotation and sometimes metaphorical aggression, these expressions rarely produce institutional rupture. Instead, they are absorbed into the accepted grammar of competition. The Yoruba maxim *Oye taa ba du kii dun* (chieftaincy is only sweet when keenly contested) captures this ethos. Contestation is not an

aberration but an expected measurement of political culture. Songs, chants, and maxims thus function within an established Yoruba moral economy of rivalry, where figurative hostility replaces violent separation.

By combining performance theory, symbolic power analysis, and social memory perspectives, this study interprets oral expression in chieftaincy disputes as structured political communication. These verbal forms do not merely accompany contests; they constitute an integral part of production, negotiation, and safeguarding of traditional authority.

Songs in Yoruba Chieftaincy Contests

The very rich traditions of the Yoruba ethnic nation are reflected in many ways. One of such outlets of expression of the culture is the various songs used for different purposes. In fact Beier, 1956: p.23 said, "…There is no occasion in Yoruba life that is not accompanied by songs. Birth, marriage and funeral are all occasions for lyrical songs of great beauty…" Omojola, 1992, also said "…traditional Yoruba music…represents a mirror through which the Yoruba culture in its totality can be understood." Songs can be simply defined as music for the voice or further still as a piece of music with word that is sung to a specific rhythm Gasby, 2001. This simple definition of songs has to do with the use of word in line with chieftaincy culture. The chieftaincy culture is a process spanning many phases. Each of the phases has it own specific type of songs designed by the singers to tally with the mood of the stage.

Some songs are used when the contest has just been flagged off by the declaration of the vacancy made by the kingmakers. At this stage, various contestants employ offensive songs. This might be to intimidate their opponents to withdraw from the contest so as to reduce the number of contestants and give more room for self-consideration. Sometimes, the purpose of the song is to demonstrate the pool of support at the disposer of one contestant. In this category of songs we have songs like:

Ajekun Iya nio je.
Ajekun Iya nio je.

Eni ti o to nii mu to n sona deni
Ajekun Iya nio je.

He who cannot withstand his opponent
And went ahead to waylay him
Is only opting for an additional defeat

Ile won naa nu-un ni
Ile won naa nu-un ni
Ile aberewo bii ile ekute
Ile won naa nu-un ni

That's their house over there
That's their house over there
A house only comparable to that of a mouse
That's their house over there.

Source Oral Interview Siyanbade 73+ on 27th July, 2005 in Ede

The songs above were part of the specific songs employed during the contest for the Timi of Ede Chieftaincy throne between Adetoyese Laoye and Memudu Lagunju (1946 to 1954). Immediately after the announcement of the demise of Sanusi Akangbe, in February, 1946, the kingmakers of Ede began to make moves to install Memudu Lagunju being the only *bonafide* contestant as of that period. However, some educated people of Ede felt that for Ede to occupy its pride of place in the history of the newly created Osun Division, the Timi must be educated. As a result of this Adetoyese Laoye was tipped to also contest for the vacancy Olupayimo, 2006. The Memudu side of the contest that were aware that their candidate had all it took to occupy the Timi throne sang many songs to include the two selected above. Some of the criteria paraded by Memudu Lagunju included the following:

- Having been on the bench of the Native Court since 1916,
- Having contested with the immediate past Timi and won but was persuaded to allow Sanusi Akangbe to rule before his turn.

- He was customarily qualified because it was the turn of his family to present a crown prince.
- He has the support of Olubadan Okunola Abass and Suberu Fagbinrin who ruled in succession when Ibadan had the consenting power over Ede
- He also had the support of Alaafin Adeniran Adeyemi (bearing in mind the place of Oyo in Ede history of origin.)

Contrary to the above, Adetoyese Laoye only had better education. (He was a dispenser, today's equivalence of a pharmacist) If the rotational order were to be scrupulously followed, Sanusi Akangbe, the immediate past Timi was from the same ruling line with Laoye so he would not have been considered at all. From the foregoing, the songs of the supporters of Memudu were actually a presentation of the defeat, which they were so sure of securing over the Laoye side.

Songs are also used when the contest is over and one of the contestants has been declared winner. The winning team sometimes employs songs to celebrate the victory won. In their celebration however, the loser might be ridiculed and described in derogatory terms. This is done to silence him permanently and force him to cooperate with the proclaimed winner. One of such songs used by the Lagunju side when the court decided in their favor in 1947 was:

A moye yi je
Iwo npapa Iwo nna
A moye yi je.

We have been finally installed
on this chieftaincy stool.
Scheming not withstanding

Moreover, the Adetoyese Laoye faction also sang songs of solidarity in reply because the same judgment mandated Laoye to relocate from Ede to a place not less than 100 Miles away from Ede within 48 hours. Such songs included:

Awa re lan jo n lo…
Bo se 'lu oyinbo

Awa re lan jo nlo

We will certainly follow you
Even if it is the land of the white
We will certainly follow you

Source: Oral Interview with Mogaji Ajeniju 88+ on 27th July, 2005 in Ede

Songs are also used when a candidate emerged as the winner in a particular chieftaincy contest irrespective of very strong opposition. An example could be found in the Oluwo chieftaincy contest of 1953. In the contest, Rufai Ajani Adegoroye. (1953-1957) won the Oluwo seat. Despite the fact that late Oba Adegoroye was not the crown prince since he was not the first son of his father and became the Oluwo contrary to the rule of primogeniture succession. When he therefore fell sick for several months out of the three years of his reign, his opponents alleged that the throne was opposed to his health because he usurped it. At the death of Rufai Ajani Adegoroye, his children sang some coded songs to ridicule the successor to the throne who was considered more eligible. These included songs like:

Lori Oba loku le
Lori Oba loku le
Ki baa s'odun meta ko s'osu meta
Lori Oba loku le.

Our father died as king.
Whether he spent three months or three years,
Our father died as king

Source: Oral interview with Abanikannda, 60+ on 14/6/2004 and on 20/05/2005

On the grounds of chieftaincy contest, songs are also used to describe what subsequent ascension to the throne would be like. Another song credited to the children of Rufai Ajani Adegoroye could illustrate this:

O si 'gbada lori Esu, O si 'gbada lori Esu
Eni ti o jOba lola, Wahala ni o je

Osi 'gbada lori Esu

Our father has belled the cat and broke the jinx,
Whoever will succeed him must work hard,
to brake further jinxes

Source: Oral interview with Abanikannda, 60+ on 14/6/2004 and on 20/05/2005

Our analysis of the above song is that since Rufai Adegoroye had ruled as Oluwo, the primogeniture succession has been altered. The Oluwo throne was therefore no longer the exclusive preserve of some monopolists. Indeed after the demise of Rufai Ajani Adegoroye, the contest for the Oluwo throne became so keen that before another Oluwo could mount the throne, there were as many as eighteen litigations and three administrative and judicial inquiries. Olupayimo, 2017.

In contemporary times, instead of coded communal songs, popular singers were employed to wax records made up of self-composed songs to either praise the wisdom of the appointment or analyze the victory with a view to presenting the communal position. Songs were also employed by the winner to keep the opponent silent or by the loser to ridicule the victory won. For illustration, Sunday Adeniyi Adegeye, alias *King Sunny Ade,* (after the judgment in favour of Oba Omowonuola Oyeyode Oyesosin) released an album where he rendered a song titled "Elejigbo" in his support. He described the Elejigbo chieftaincy contest and the division occasioned by the contest in words like:

"…Ilu da meji , toba lawa o se…
Ijekuje magbalagba dobale fomo kekere,
Oba o !Oba o !Ami lo wi f'Oba,
Ote Ilu ma n pa niyan…"

Though the town be divided in to two,
We are on the Oba's side.
It is glutony, that makes an adult to prostrate for a kid,
May the Oba live long! We shall report to the Oba (that)
Rebelion would only kill the rebels

*Source: Adeniyi,1977 King Sunny Ade & His African Beats'77

In this short excerpt from the album, Sunday Adeniyi referred to the division in Ejigbo town occasioned by the contest and personally advocated identification with the Oyeyode side by all and sundry in their own interest. The strength of the opponent in the Elejigbo case was described as of little or no effect since majority of the town people desired a literate Oba and Omowonuola Oyeyode was a graduate as against the other contestant. He described what a few elders of the town had done in the process of the contest as the peak of gluttony.

In the concluding part of his lyrics, Sunday Adeniyi sounded a note of warning that some of the loyalists of Oba Oyeyode Oyesosin would not hesitate to report the rebels to the Oba. The import of this was that since a typical Yoruba Oba purportedly had the power of life and death over all his subjects, if the report of the rebels were made to the Oba, he might order their execution.

Maxims as Moral Commentary and Political Strategy

Maxims occupy a distinctive position within Yoruba expressive culture. While commonly understood as condensed statements of moral truth (Gasby, 2001, 884), within the context of chieftaincy contests they function less as abstract wisdom and more as strategic political commentary. Their authority derives from their anonymity and antiquity; because they are framed as inherited communal truths rather than personal opinions, they allow speakers to advance partisan arguments under the guise of cultural continuity.

Unlike songs, which often dramatize rivalry through rhythm and collective performance, maxims operate discursively. They circulate in everyday conversations such as in the marketplaces, family meetings, wrestling arenas, and informal evening gatherings, thereby embedding political interpretation within ordinary speech. Their brevity permits rapid moral judgment without extended debate. They encapsulate long events and stories in few words, thereby becoming a repository of knowledge in abridge forms.

During the early stages of a chieftaincy contest, when aspirants begin courting family heads and kingmakers, maxims such as *Enu fifo kii dun yanmu-yanmu* (an empty mouth cannot produce the sound of one filled with food) become politically instructive. This maxim encodes the expectation of material inducement in the selection process. Rather than openly endorsing bribery, it frames patronage as logical necessity. In this way, the maxim naturalizes transactional politics without direct accusation (Olupayimo, 2020, 33).

Similarly, in situations where non-blood affiliates (Alajogbe) are allowed to compete for titles traditionally reserved for blood descendants (Alajobi), the maxim *Bewe ba pe lara ose, ose ni i da* (a leaf that remains long with soap becomes soapy) legitimizes extended residency as grounds for inclusion. The Maxim transforms social proximity into symbolic kinship. Yet its deployment may conceal internal tensions, especially when family heads permit such candidacies for ulterior motives. Here, the maxim becomes a tool of selective inclusion masked as cultural wisdom.

As contests intensify, maxims shift from strategic advice to moral evaluation. When factional divisions deepen and reputations are attacked, proverbs encode communal judgment of both victors and losers. For instance, *Meji ni okiti: okan atatu, ekeji ata fehinbele* (somersaulting ends either in upright landing or in collapse) frames contestation as a game of risk. Victory and defeat are portrayed as structurally inevitable rather than morally catastrophic. This interpretive framing mitigates personal humiliation by situating loss within accepted competitive logic. Once installation occurs, maxims frequently affirm the irreversibility of outcome. Expressions such as *A ti fi ooje bo oloosa lowo o ku baba eni ti o yo o bo* (once the priest's brass ring is fixed, only death removes it) assert the sanctity of coronation. By emphasizing ritual finality, such maxims discourage continued agitation while reaffirming sacral legitimacy.

Crucially, even when kingmakers' conduct is publicly scrutinized, as in the judicial examination of the Timi of Ede dispute (Memudu Lagunju v. Olubadan-in-Council and Adetoyese Laoye, 1947), their authority remains intact. The maxim *Oye taa ba du kii dun* (chieftaincy contest is only sweet when keenly contested) normalizes procedural irregularities by framing intense rivalry as fundamental to

the institution itself. Rather than subverting the chieftaincy system, moral critique becomes absorbed into its performative Chieftaincy theatrical grammar.

Maxims therefore function as interpretive regulators. They discipline ambition, rationalize patronage, contextualize defeat, and sacralize victory. Through them, political contestation is domesticated within a moral vocabulary that preserves institutional continuity.

Chants and Elite Performance Politics

Just as the present study shows that maxims operate as conversational regulation, chants function as elite performance politics. Unlike communal songs, which often circulate straight among supporters, chants, particularly *Ikin riro*; are uprightly structured performances associated with royal courts and specialized praise chanters (Adeoye, 1979). They dramatize justice through controlled ceremonial exhibitions.

Within the purview of chieftaincy showground, the *Akunyunmu-Oba* (royal chanter) occupies a critical mediating role. By embellishing the *oriki* (cognomen) of a newly installed ruler, he reframes contested history as triumphant inevitability. The chant does not merely recount victory; it aestheticizes it. Through metaphorical exaggeration, and rhythmic pace, it converts political skirmish into valiant narratives.

Adetoyese Laoye's oriki provides a clear example:

Ari gege da mo lekun an se kondu-kondu…
Ari gege da mo lekun an se kondu-kondu…
O seyin agbalagba di kobokobo…
Oni sokoto abokun baba Aawa…
Timi ekun oko ibolo…

English Translation

One who uses the pen to tackle the arrogant man,
Beating an elderly man on his back beyond treatment,
The owner of additional trouser,
Timi Leopard, the tackler of Ibolo.

Source: Oral Interview with Mogaji Ajeniju 88+ on 27th July, 2005 in Ede

The literacy which was an initially controversial qualification was transformed within chant into symbolic weaponry: "one who uses the pen to tackle the arrogant man." Here, Western education is reframed as cultural prowess rather than colonial contamination. Likewise, references to defeating an elderly opponent metaphorically convert generational rivalry into decisive conquest.

The chant further recasts the throne itself as "additional trousers," Oni sokoto abokun baba Aawa…symbolizing expanded status and dignity. In this performative moment, institutional authority is stitched onto personal identity. Meanwhile, the defeated rival, was caricatured as incapable of shaking a tree stump, an image of futile resistance.

Ma mi kukute… Ma mi kukute… Ma mi kukute…
Eni to mi kukute ara re lo mi
…Ma be mi l'ori sonu emi ko si ninu won…
Emi o si ninu onirikisi, onirikisi
Emi o si ninu onirikisi, onirikisi
Abirun ipako jonloki-jonloki…
Oro fini dugbe-dugbe fini nu
Oro nbo wa tan oju a ti elegan a si ti ayonuso
A kii ki eru baba eni ka na tan,
Adetoyese Akanji boo ka 'se o na kan…
Makanju Oloriire lo dade …Akanji Oloriire lo dade
Oba ti mbe loye ti ilu toro kin-kin
Oloriire lo dade Adetoyese Omo 'Mowaare…

English Translation

Do not attempt to shake the stump,
Whoever shakes the stump is merely shaking himself
I am not part of the back-biters
whose rear-hair has thickened-up for lack of care
This matter of contest is capable of flinging a person like stone
However, it will soon be settled and muck-rakers will be put to shame
No one greets his father's slave in prostration

At worse, bend one leg and straighten the other
Makanju, the fortunate one is the one given the crown
Akanji, the fortunate one is the one given the crown
The fortunate one Adetoyese is wearing the crown.

Such performances do not occur in isolation. They are delivered before assembled audiences, thereby consolidating public memory. The transformation of contested installation into poetic inevitability stabilizes authority through spectacle. In this sense, chants operate as elite narrative management.

Moreover, chants contribute to long-term archival preservation. As Babalola's (1981) documentation of oriki demonstrates, these compositions endure beyond the lifespan of particular disputes. They become part of the genealogical memory of the throne. The metaphors embedded within them encode details of contestation that formal court judgments may omit.

Thus, chants serve three interlocking political functions: They legitimize authority through aesthetic dramatization. They convert rivalry into heroic narrative. And, they archive institutional memory within poetic form. Through elite-controlled performance, chieftaincy politics is ritualized and symbolically resolved.

Conclusion

This study has examined songs, maxims, and chants as integral components of Yoruba chieftaincy contests. Rather than treating these forms as peripheral cultural embellishments, it has demonstrated that they constitute structured political communication embedded within institutional processes of succession.
Songs operate as collective rhetorical interventions, shaping public perception before, during, and after installation. Maxims function as moral regulators that interpret, normalize, and discipline political rivalry within accepted cultural logic. Chants, particularly those performed within royal settings, transform contested succession into aestheticized legitimacy through elite performance.

Importantly, these expressive forms do not merely reflect political conflict; they actively participate in producing its meaning. Through metaphor, satire, praise, and moral framing, they construct narratives that outlive formal adjudication.

Even when litigation proliferates—as in the Timi of Ede and subsequent disputes, the symbolic vocabulary of contestation persists. Courts may settle procedural questions, but oral expression preserves communal interpretation.

The persistence of these verbal forms helps explain the durability of Yoruba chieftaincy institutions despite colonial intervention, administrative restructuring, and modern state apparatuses. By absorbing rivalry into culturally sanctioned performance, the institution mitigates violent rupture while sustaining legitimacy. Contestation, far from undermining the throne, becomes part of its vitality.

Songs, chants, and maxims thus function as alternative archives repositories of political memory that coexist with written judgments and administrative records. Their continued relevance underscores the importance of attending to oral expressive forms in the study of African political institutions. To understand chieftaincy solely through legal or constitutional frameworks is to overlook the symbolic infrastructures through which authority is negotiated and remembered.

Reference

Oral Interviews

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1	Abanikannda, B.A.	60+	Iwo	14/6/2004 and 20/05/2005
2	Mr. Faninyo	50+	Ola-Ejigbo	21/7/2004
3	Kamoru Ajani	60+	Isale-Afo	23/12/2003
4	Lamidi Ajao	65+	Yidi Street, Ikirun	24/12/2003
5	Mogaji Ajeniju	88+	Ede Osun State	27/07/2005
6	Mogaji Osuolale Laoye	68+	Ede Osun State	27/07/2005
7	Olawole Amoo	58+	Ile Oosa, Ejigbo	19/05/2005
8	Janet Aduke Siyanbade	73+	Ede Osun State	27th July, 2005
9	The Osolo of Isundunrin Chief N.A. Busari	70+	Isundunrin	July, 15 2005
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