

Communication in the Yoruba court: reflections from Yoruba video films

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Abstract: The thrust of this paper is that, just like any other society, the Yoruba royal court draws its communication strength from both the verbal and non-verbal codes to govern the citizenry. The paper sheds light on judicious use and insensible use of discourse codes associated with the palace as exhibited in the Yoruba video films, with special emphasis on verbal utterances, symbol-communication and telegraphic codes *vis a vis* Yoruba traditional governance.

Keywords: Yoruba royal court, discursive codes, symbolic communication, traditional governance.

INTRODUCTION

In any given society, varieties of language emanate from different social groups. These varieties of a specific language give a clear-cut distinction to each of these social groups. For instance, the Received Pronunciation (RP) is associated with the Buckingham palace or the educated English. The RP is thus seen as the language of the noble and the educated elite. Variety in speech is not restricted to the Western world; it is a common phenomenon to any linguistic group, African society inclusive. Let us draw a vivid example from the Yoruba linguistic group of the Western Nigeria. Adebayó Faleti's (1972) *Başórun Gáà* is used as the text-guide:

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- Akin (Akinkunmi): ... Mo fe tó ojàre.
 Agbónyin: O 'o gb'ara oko! "Mo fe s'èyó" ni nwón í wí. O j'aiye p'ó o 'ò sí l'áàfin
 Akin: "Mo fe s'èyó"?
 Agbónyin: Hanin. O 'o mò pe gbogbo nkan l'o ni àdàpè ti'ẹ l'áàfin ní,
 ...
 Akin: ... Bí mo ba wá fe yàgbfẹ nkó, bawo ni ng o tí wi?
 Agbónyin: Mo fe dá'wó tẹlẹ.
 Akin: Mo fe dá'wó tẹlẹ.
 Agbónyin: Han-in
 Akin: Kini nwón tun ndàpè l'aafin o?
 Agbónyin: O 'ò gbódó p'òkèlè; òwfẹ l'o ó pe e "Irun - Sàlákó l'o ó pè e
 "Idi - Ijoko l'o ó pè e; abfere: okinni l'o ó pè e
 (FALETI, 1972: 38-39)

- Akin (Akinkunmi): ... I want to piss now.
 Agbonyin: Hear what this uncivilized one is saying! "I want to urinate" is the appropriate expression. You are lucky not to have been in the palace.
 Akin: "I want to urinate"?
 Agbonyin: Yes. So you aren't aware that virtually all things have their euphemistical expressions in the palace?
 Akin: What if I want to pass excreta, how do I express myself?
 Agbónyin: "I want to squat".
 Akin: I want to squat?
 Agbónyin: Yes.
 Akin: What are other things that are euphemistically expressed In the palace?
 Agbónyin: You should not call "morsel"; bite, is what you should call it "Hair - Sàlákò"¹ "Buttocks – seat is what you should call it needle – "okinni"²

The inference drawn from Akinkunmi and Agbónyin discourse is that there is a variety of words associated with the palace. Whosoever is unable to employ the palace diction is regarded as 'uncivilized' (*ará oko*). This implies

¹ Sàlákó - a type of hairdo.

² Okinni – a name perhaps based on phonaesthetics depicting the smallness of the needle.

that the court uses polished and sophisticated language within. Observably, the Buckingham palace variety of English is deeply hinged on phonetics, whereas the Aláàfin palace as depicted in Adebayó Faleti's text has its base in lexicology. Thus it stares us in the face that we have 'register' that is peculiar to the royal court just like to any other domain. Hence "register" is seen as a "restricted language" (DE BEAUGRANDE, 1993: 8).

When in palace, 'formality' takes the centre stage; and so no one can afford to be casual. There are set norms and standards, which must be strictly adhered to, if only to avoid royal rage or wrath. In fact, 'register' is taken to be a 'field'. Based on this disparity, different fields exhibit different technical terms (or different verbal codes). This inherent phenomenon makes scholars to regard field as 'the institutional setting in which a piece of language occurs' (John Pearce as cited in de Beaugrande, 1993: 12). Perceiving 'register' from lexicogrammatical plane solely will exclude some speech items either at morphological or syntagmatic level. Besides, the register is not elastic enough as to take care of paralinguistic elements in communication. The linguistic elements depend on verbal code (spoken form), or graphic code (written form); whereas the paralinguistic elements flourish on non-verbal code. A common feature to the two codes is being culture bound. Hence, the users of these codes have to mutually share same modes of life or value if any effective communication activity is to take place. Simply put, communication is an interpersonal activity based on mutual sharing of common codes between two or more individuals. This must not exclude 'the reciprocal relationship' (feedback) between the communicator and the receiver (ADELEKE, 1995: 34).

These two codes are preponderantly featured in communication activity of the Yoruba royal court (just like any others). The effort in this paper is to examine the verbal and non-verbal codes being employed in and by the Yoruba court; their effects and implications on both the ruler (Óba-in-council), and the ruled. It should also be possible to establish the communication ethos prevalent in monarchical governance.

It is a worthy thing that this issue of communication in and by the palace has not escaped the artistic lens of the Yoruba videographers. Some of them who have burdened themselves with different incidents in the royal court employ verbal and non-verbal codes as they related to governance in monarchical system of administration. Therefore, the data are extensively drawn from their productions.

It is important to state that the two codes – verbal and non-verbal – form the two broad sections in our explication of communication activity in the palace.

VERBAL CODE

Verbal code is realised through the speech form. The form to be used is determined by the situation, the personage involved on either way – the Óba as the ‘speaker’, or the ‘listener’ to the chiefs, the court entertainers (the drummers, the minstrel), the messenger, the town crier). Each of them displays different decorum in communicating with one another.

THE PROSAIC FORM

The prosaic form is uttered when homage is being given to the Óba or there is a general discussion on state matter in the palace. To acknowledge the authority and sovereignty of the Óba, his chiefs, the townspeople, and the vassal towns pay homage by making the following utterances either anchored on lexical expression or syntactic expression. Lexical expression involves the use of one word. On the contrary, syntactic expression is in two-fold viz: phrase and sentence. It combines two or more words.

- a) Lexical expression
 - (1) Kábíyèsí [Your Majesty], or [Your Highness]
 - (2) Alaṣẹ (Owner of authority)
- b) Syntactic expression
 - bi) Phrasal expression
 - (3) Èkejì oriṣa (Second in command to the gods)
 - (4) Iku, bàbá, yeye (Death, Father Mother)
 - (5) Ókó ilú (Lord over subjects)
 - (6) Olúwaà mi (My Lord)
 - Bii) Sentential expression
 - (7) Ka bí í kò sí (No one dares to question your authority)
 - (8) Óba ti i ba lórí ohun gbogbo (The King who has authority over everything)

(10) Óba ki ó (The king also salutes you), or

(11) Óba ni kẹ ẹ pẹ.

Óba ni kẹ fíkalẹ̀ sí í

(in *Iyalode*)

The king wishes you long life

The king asks you to take your seat.

In 10, the second person singular pronoun ‘ó’ [singular You] is deliberately used so as to show the supremacy of the monarch over that subject who has earlier been the addresser, and has now become the addressee. As for 11, ‘ẹ’ [plural You] refers to many eminent visitors or vassal chiefs who have come to either pay annual tributes or grace a state ceremony like ‘Ódun Ẹlà/Ilasu (yam festival) as highlighted in *Ódun Ẹlẹ̀*, and *Awíṣẹ* respectively.

It is important to state that there are occasions when the Oba personally acknowledges the phatic communication of his chiefs. He does this by addressing each of these chiefs by their traditional titles such as: *Ótún*, *Òsì*, *Asípa*, *Balógun*, *Iyalode* (the only female chief in council), *Seríkí Ẹlẹ̀ monà*, *Aró*, *Òdòfin*. These titles vary from one town to other, the numerical strength also differs. The monarch can employ metonym ‘*ílú*’ (town) to refer to them collectively. He can decide to address them as *ilúmoyè* (chiefs in town).

The syntactic expression features prominently when the Óba has to adjudicate [on land matter, chieftaincy tussle, etc.], or when it is his burden to offer *ìwúre* (prayer or benediction); or declare war on enemy town. A vivid illustration is given in *Ajagùnà*. Óba Onílàrí passes death sentence on Akin (his co-rival) who will not allow Adejókẹ to consent to his marriage proposal:

(12) Ẹ gbe ómó oloriburuku yí ló sí ìta baba rẹ, kẹ ẹ tojú
ẹ yódà ke ẹ tẹyin rẹ kì í wò ó.

Take this worthless being to his paternal compound.

There and then execute him with the sword.

(13) At ‘Adejókẹ, àtoyún ínú rẹ

Mo gbẹ̀sẹ̀ le e.

I seize in confiscations Adejókẹ with the foetus

in her womb.

The orders given by the Óba are carried out with precision. We may need to recall example 8, above to affirm the unlimited powers that had been displayed by traditional rulers in the past.³

INFORMATIVE AND NON-INFORMATIVE COMMUNICATION

‘Informative’ means “meaningful to the receiver” (LYNOS, 1977: 53). Anyway, not all communication is informative, especially when the information is stale or a commonplace knowledge.

In the royal court the *akígbe* can engage in non-informative communication especially if he is preoccupied with intent to entertain the royal court or the public. He makes recourse to poetic form, where he has the artistic license to trade in propagandistic language. We should not forget that *propaganda* is inherent in communication activity.

When in public ceremony the court minstrel strives to give a tasteful and impressive performance. He eulogizes the Óba by chanting his lineage *orikí* or by creating humour. An example from *Abóre* video film will do:

Akigbe: Yánbí-n-lólú
 Tẹ e jẹ jẹ
 Jeje ní wón tẹlẹ n Ikòyí ile
 Bí wón pe iwó ni
 Iwó ni o
 Iwó ni báalà
 Óba òkè lo diri ẹ wà fákukó
 Aşó me ta là á da láye
 E bí mi pe, írú aşó kín ni

Awón Ara ilú: Aşó kín ni

Akígbe: Àkókó -
 Irun dúdú ori

³ Aláâfin Ayibi asked Tetù (executioner) to fetch the heads of his father and in-law and mother in-law, because their daughter had jocularly insulted him when having his bath, “and this is all of the man so much dreaded by all!” (JOHNSON, 2001: 172-173).

Ni wón pe lásó dúdú
Àṣẹṣẹyewú lèkùkó làlà,
Igbà tewú ba gborí tán
Ní wón pè láàlà fun
O ò da ti ẹ o tó ló
Ohun tó fi sóókó ómóge
Ómó aráye ò ni gbàa lówó ẹ

Minstrel: Yán bí-n-lolú
Walk with characteristic gaits
For so they walk at Ikoyi fortress
If they say you are the one
Yes, you are
You are the father of immaculate linen
God of the high-heaven
Designs the beautiful comb for the cock
Three garments are adorned on terrestrial plane
You ask me: What these garments are?

Townspeople: What are these garments?

Minstrel: First one –
'Tis the dark hair
That is called the black velvet
The-initial-appearance-of grey hair
Defaces the immaculate linen
When the grey hair is fully blossomed
Then it is called the immaculate linen
You shall possess yours before departure
The symbol that makes you manly to your mistresses
May the evil doers deprive you not of it.

Aside from allowing the townspeople to share from court entertainment, the minstrel employs the first person singular pronominal 'Ìwó' (You), which even highly placed chiefs, dare not use for the monarch. This confirms the poetic immunity being enjoyed by the oral artiste:

Óba kì í pòkórín

The monarch does not hang the minstrel

This is analogous to the freedom being enjoyed by the press.⁴

The excerpt also reveals the existence of spontaneous feedback, which is crucial in any interpersonal communication especially in a face-to-face situation. The *akígbe* is able to draw the townspeople's attention. However, he has not passed any informative message as such.

As regards informative communication, both *akígbe* and *Awo/Awişę* (the Ifa priest) are obliged to pass informative messages to Oba-in-council on affairs of the state. The minstrel has to be acknowledged as a great resource material of the culture, history and tradition. He is a 'rememberer'/'reminder' who refreshes the memory of the Oba-in-council (OS?UNDARE, 1987: 134-167). Thus the minstrel can be regarded as the information officer or information agency. The *akígbe* alludes to the distant past with easy either to (i) pinpoint to antecedents or (ii) show mythological implications of defiling the customary rites of the town. *Akígbe* can subtly chide the monarch without being gagged. The concrete examples are featured in *Ogedengbe*, *Ódun Eja*, and *Şàngó* video films. We may need to add that *akígbe* ushers in visitors to the court with praise poetry, and bids them goodbye the same way. He may also be considered as image-maker of the palace.

Apart from *akígbe*, there exists another information officer in person of *akede Oba* or *alagogo Oba* (the town crier). Olaoba (2001) sees the *akede Oba* as "the envoy", "liaison official" between the ruler and the ruled and as "the public relations officer (PRO)". I further consider the *akede Oba* as the "itinerant information officer" whose main duty is to disseminate information bothering on "political, economic and social announcements (OLAoba, 2001: 7) round all the quarters in that town. He delivers the piece of information couched by the Oba-in-council in his own language. He thus becomes *the channel* of communication between the palace and the townspeople. Let us take an instance from *Èkùró Olójà*:

⁴ The press freely employs personal names of heads of government, presidents of countries with or without the appropriate titles.

Akede Oba: (Lu agogo ɓem̄eta ní idágbándágbá awón ara ilú ladùúgbo roó jáde)

Akede Oba: Àgò ókùnrin
Àgò obinrin
Àgò oníle
Ago àlejo
È bọ síhàhín
Kẹ e wa gbó'un t'ón wi o
(Iró agogo)

Akede Oba: Ètò ilú yí,
Ó tún ti de lákòtun o
Ohun lo jẹ k'áwón àgbàgbà kan sóríjọ
Wón ni gbogbo ídile
Tómó óba bá tó sí
Ko fí aṣoju kóókan ranṣe saafin
Nijó márùn-ún òní.
(Ìdánudúró diẹ
Mo wì í re
Àbí n wì í re

Awọn Ara ilu: O wì í re.

The town crier: (Strikes the gong thrice, at an interval between each strike).

The town crier: I hail the males

I hail the females

I hail the citizens

I hail the denizens

You should all converge here

So as to listen to what they have proclaimed

(The strike of the gong for the second time)

The town crier: The political organization of this town

Has been rejuvenated now

That is why the Chiefs have decreed

That all the families

Who have rights to the throne

Should send a representative each to

The palace in five days' time.

Have I passed a good news or I have not

Townspeople: You have passed a good news

The function of the gong, an object metal, being carried by the *akede Oba* is in twofold: (i) the insignia of his office; and the speech surrogate. The gong as the insignia of office gives the royal imprimatur to his message. The speech enables him to draw and gain the attention of the townspeople within the precincts of the quarters he is. Attention gaining is crucial to public announcement especially when it bothers on issue of governance. The shrillness of the gong can be heard at a far distance than the human voice which has its limits.

The perennial problem with *akede Oba's* message is occurrence of noise. The noise refers to interference arising from semantics or inherent ambiguity in language. For instance, the town crier in *Ekuró Ólójá* beats the gong on three occasions, when it ought to be just two occasions. The striking of the gong is a form of signature tunes that connotes 'converge' (that is, the opening beat) or 'depart' (that is the closing beat).

Every aspect of Yoruba appears to have religious undertone. The palace greatly thrives in this. The monarch reveres and cherishes his ancestors as he believes that with the support of *òkú órún* (the departed) or the 'Alálẹ̀' 'Onilẹ̀' or 'Alesekù (the pristine head) he would be able to govern and enlist the loyalty of his subjects. Ibitokun (1995: 22) affirms; "The ancestral is the measure of the Yoruba past". It behoves the Oba to establish 'cosmic harmony' between the physical and metaphysical planes Traore (1972: 64). To achieve this, Ifa is consulted. The Ifa priest known as 'Awo' or 'Àwise' or 'Arùbà' is the surrogate of Órunmilà. He casts the 'ópẹ̀lẹ̀ (divination chain) or throws 'owo ẹ̀yó' (cowries) to know what the problem or issue is and what step to take to resolve it. Cosmic communication is therefore resorted to. The Órunmilà surrogate (Awo) makes cosmic communion possible between the ancestors (the past), gods (the eternal) and the unborn (the future). This is a common phenomenon in a terrestrial-based culture like the Yoruba where 'gods and mortals freely interact' (IBITOKUN, 1995: 22). Through Ifá divination, the community is able to reassess, redefine and perhaps recreate its values.

Virtually all the Oba in the video films viewed have one thing or the other to consult Órunmilà (the all seen) for. This goes to show the importance of Órunmilà (or the oracle) in traditional Yoruba governance. This cannot be underscored. In fact, Órunmilà can be regarded as the precursor of the 'akewì-tayese' (He-who-chants-valuable-lines-that-reshape the world) (OLABIMTAN,

1986: 65). Before the Awo casts his 'ópeḷe' he would persuasively implore Orunmilà to give a point blank message. Let us consider the excerpts below drawn from *Kòtò Aye*:

Awo: O gbọ Ifá
Ma fire pebí
Ma fi bi pere
Ma fòlòlò fohùn
Iṣẹ t'Olódùmarè ba ran ó
Ni kó ó je
Iwájú ópón
E?ṣyìn ópón
Olùmú ọtún
Olùkànràn òsì

You all know Ifá
Never swap good with evil
Never swap evil with good
Never exhibit apprehension in passing the message
The message couched by Olódùmarè through you.
Should be the one you deliver
Hail to you the fore of the divination tray
Hail to you the back of the divination tray
He-who-strides-to-the right uninhibited
He-who-strides-to-the left uninhibited.

After the preambles, the Awo then throws the sixteen cowries (owó ẹyó) or the ọpẹlẹ (the divination chain) to know the type of Odu (category of Ifa divination poetry) that has appeared on tray. In *Arẹmó Olókùnẹ sin*, the chiefs ask Araba to consult Ifa to know who will succeed the late Óba Adenrele. Odù Ọyẹkùbìwòrì appears on the Ifa tray and it runs thus:

Be-n-be
Awo be-n-be
Bi-n-bi

Awo bì-n-bì
Àṣáke lè bẹ̀
Òde lè bẹ̀
Óyẹ̀kú ẹ̀ bawòrì
Ló difá fún Órúnmìlà
Níjọ́ tó fẹ̀ rẹ̀ e ba wón bẹ̀ ninu ógbun.

You-take-a-leap-and-I-take-a-leap
Was the Ifa priest of you-take-a-leap-and-I-take-a-leap
You-take-a-plunge-and-I-take-a-plunge
The hawk was able to take a leap
The dove was able to take a leap
Óyẹ̀kú fraternized with Iwòrì
Ifa divination was performed for Órúnmìlà
The day he was to take a plunge into the valley
[with some others]

After this poetic rendition of the Ifa verse Araba resorts to the layman language to interpret Órúnmìlà's message to the chiefs. He informs the chiefs that Ifa rejects Adewumi, whom everybody has been eyeing as the heir apparent. He warns the chiefs not to ignore Ifa's message for:

Ifa è e puró o
Òpẹ̀lẹ̀ ì í ẹ̀ke

Ifa does not lie
Ópẹ̀lẹ̀ does not trade in treachery

All the chiefs agree, but Olorì Motólani, Adewumi's mother strives to constitute herself to a *mechanical noise* in this cosmic communication. She believes that:

Ohùn Ifá ni ohùn Àràbà
Àràbà ni ohùn Ifá

Ifa's voice is Araba's voice

Araba's voice is Ifa's voice

Perhaps Araba has to be induced with money or other valuable materials, so as to make him interfere with Ifa's message. Araba is firm on Ifa's decision in spite of this mechanical noise. It is imperative to say that many a priest has had cause to manipulate Ifa's "voice" to satisfy a specific group interest after material or financial inducement. After all a Yoruba saying attests that:

Ómóde ò jobi

Agbà ò joye

'Tis failure to induce the youth with material lots

That accounts for the elder's failure to secure the chieftaincy title.

Twisting of Ifa's message has precipitated chaos. *Ounjẹ Oluwa* highlights such an incident. The gods vent their anger on the Óba-in-council and the townspeople. The non-indigenes have to flee Kajóla, the cursed town. In sum, cosmic communication is fundamental to monarchical government. It cannot be undermined.

NN-VERBAL CODE

The palace also makes excessive use of non-verbal code in communication. It is a ubiquitous code in the royal court as it complements verbal expressions. As earlier noted the Óba responds to phatic communication through his surrogates – the chiefs, the messenger. Since he is no robot, he usually waves his royal horsetail to the guests or the chiefs who have paid due homage as a mark of honour to him. When homage is being given to the Óba the male guest is to prostrate full length with his (guest's) cap off his head. But the female guest is expected to kneel, then bow until her forehead is on the ground. She may even roll on the ground like her male counterpart will do just to show obeisance.

The non-verbal communication in the palace can be classified into: symbol-object communication, kinesic communication, and telegraphic communication.

SYMBOL-OBJECT COMMUNICATION

There are many royal paraphernalia which the monarch utilizes for communicative purposes; viz.: *ade* (crown), *òpá àṣẹ* (sceptre), *ópa* (walking stick), *àkún* (chieftaincy beads), *ìgbá ìwa* (sacred calabash). All these royal materials are capable of being used as àrokò (symbol-object) (Morgan n.d., Ópadótun 1986; Ogundeji 1997). Symbol communication becomes valuable when the monarch is not and cannot be physically present to execute an order. He then depends on his royal paraphernalia. The monarch can summon and arrest anybody by sending his personal effects such as *àkún* or *ópa àṣẹ*. The townspeople take the Óba's insignia of office as being the person of Óba to the extent that people accord *ìkò/òjìṣe* (courier) respect and honour due to Óba, if he were to be physically present (OJO, 1966: 75). Implicitly, a human agent is required in 'àrokò' symbol-communication system (OGUNDEJI, 1997: 145). Typical examples are present in *Àyàngalú*. Even, the executioner at verge of carrying out the judicial order can be stopped. If the *òpá àṣẹ* or *ìrùkèrè* (or both) is/or are placed on the neck of the condemned culprit, the axe of the executioner would have to wait for another day. As highlighted in *Ejò Orí Apáta*, Fodeṣó benefits from *aroko* symbol-object communication as his life is saved by mere placement of '*ìrùkèrè*' and *ópa àṣẹ*.

"Ìgbá ìwà" is an ominous symbol and it is rarely employed in court communication as it connotes death or suicide for the monarch. When an Óba has perpetrated atrocities to the extent of being rejected by his people, he is advised to 'open the sacred calabash (*s í ìgbá ìwà*) as no being can have the effrontery to hang or execute a king. The reason for this is not far to seek. An Óba is the visible symbol of deity among the Yorubas (OJO, 1966: 75). Therefore, 'it is an unthinkable horror among the Yorubas for any man to lay hands upon a being regarded sacred' (JOHNSON, 2001: 173). On rejection from exalted position by all and sundry on account of atrocities perpetrated by him, he is advised to fetch '*ìgbá ìwà*'.

The placement of royal paraphernalia, such as '*ade*' '*ópa*' '*ìrùkèrè*', and '*òpá àṣẹ*' on the throne or royal seat, indicates the period of interregnum in the life of that community. The display of these royal effects makes the deliberation and decisions taken by the chiefs valid since these royal insignia denote the physical presence of the monarch. This is a common feature in any Yoruba

community that regency is alien to. The most senior chief can then stand in as the head of the meeting. The town of Kajóla in *Oúnje. Olúwa* has such an experience.

KINESIC COMMUNICATION

Kinesics manifests itself in royal court communication through the offering of ‘òsùba’ (skilful locking of two palms), ‘dí e.sẹ́ óba mu’ (embracer of the monarch feet), ‘dìpómú’ (pillar embracer). The use of ‘osubà’ can mean ‘ìtúbá, (apology) or acknowledgement of the supremacy of the monarch. The embracement of either the monarch feet or the pillar of aafin is synonymous with refuge seeking from the monarch in the palace. In *Tí Oluwa ni ilẹ̀*, Ótún has to hold on to Óba Apátira’s feet since he wants his protection from imminent danger of death.

TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION

The drummers, trumpeters and flutist in the palace send telegraphic messages to the monarch who seldom appears in public unless there is an official function or religious rites to perform. Almost four decades ago, Professor G. J. A. Ojo captures the communicative functions of these musical artists in the ancient Yoruba palace:

They in fact gave the Óba signal-tunes at appropriate time for him to rise or perform some action. Using the talking drums, the drummers passed on messages to the Óba informing him of every important happening, in and around the open courtyard, worthy of his knowledge and attention. Thus, Óba staying most of the time in the inner recesses of the palace was kept informed by their telegraphic messages of the events outside his direct observation.

(OJO, 1966: 73-74)

This is even prevalent till date in some Yoruba palaces, such as Afin Alaafin Óyó.

Ogedengbe, *Şango*, *Şaworoidẹ* films vividly highlight all these communicative functions. These various musical ensembles include – dundun

(a membranophonous instrument); and *kakàkí* (trumpet) *fêrè* (flute) (aerophonous instruments).

It is important to say that the royal court also sends telegraphic message to townfolk via the membranophonous instrument known as *'gbèdú'* (sacred drum) announcing the passing away of the monarch. Its beat is only heard at the deep of night or dawn. Through this, the townspeople are aware of interregnum.

We may compare the use of telegraphic communication in the palace to the use of modern day intercommunication in offices.

CONCLUSION

My discussion so far on communication has revealed that the Yoruba royal court has its own communication network, which is germane to effective administration and successful governance. The royal court draws its communication strength from both the verbal and non-verbal codes. The verbal code draws attention to fundamental elements in the communication model: addresser, message, addressee channel, noise and feedback. It is obvious that the ruled as a matter of obligation and rule have to employ honorific pronouns and pronominals for the king so as to accord him the royal homage attached to his office, while the ruler who usually answers through a surrogate uses non-honorific pronouns in order to show his monarchical superiority. However, the minstrel, who trades in propagandistic utterances, has the licence to call the oba by his name when engaged in eulogy, and can even caution the king when he feels he is transgressing. In other words the oba's surrogates play the role of image maker, liaison official and information officer as exemplified in the activities of the town crier and the drummer respectively (telegraphic codes at work).

With regard to the non-verbal code, it highlights the following communicative elements: symbol-communication, kinesic communication, and telegraphic codes. The semiotic representation of the oba through his paraphernalia is also highlighted with premium given to elements such as human and non-human agents, courier, and speech surrogates (musical instruments). The study has shown that judicious use of communication in the royal court may bring about good governance, while its improper use may lead to

insurrection, more so in a pre-literate society, where communication has its base in verbal and non-verbal code. This goes to confirm that, there exist symbiotic relationship between communication and governance in a traditional African setting, like the Yoruba community of Western Nigeria.

Resumo: O foco deste trabalho é que, como qualquer outra sociedade, a corte real ioruba extrai sua força de comunicação tanto de códigos verbais quanto de códigos não-verbais, para assim governar seus cidadãos. O trabalho elucidar o uso criterioso e inconsciente dos códigos discursivos associados ao palácio (associados à corte) como exibido no vídeo/filme ioruba, com ênfase especial nos enunciados verbais, comunicação simbólica e códigos telegráficos confrontados com o modo de governo tradicional ioruba.

Palavras-chave: corte ioruba, códigos discursivos, comunicação simbólica, governo tradicional.

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