

Place Names as Source Material in the Derivation of Selected Yorùbá Riddles: A Sociological Approach

Ridwan Akinkunmi Rabiú

Department of English and Linguistics, Faculty of Arts

Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Email: ridwan.rabiú@kwasu.edu.ng

Phone No.-+2349060070668

Submission Track:

Received: 01-02-2024, Final Revision: 07-04-2024 Available Online: 25-06-2024

Copyright © 2024 Author(s)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Abstract

This work examined the place of naming, most especially place name in the derivation of Yoruba riddle known as “àlò àpamò”. The main thrust of this work is to examine and analyse the importance of place names as source material in the derivation of selected Yoruba riddles. The aim of this work is to examine the role place names play in the derivation and construction of Yoruba riddles. The theory adopted for this work is the sociological theory of literature and the model adopted under this theory is the mirror image approach which sees literature as the reflection of the society. Data for this research work were gathered from oral documentation through structured interviews and informal gathering of data in different social gatherings. The researcher also makes use of relevant data from existing literatures on Yoruba riddles such as Ajayi (1990), Akinyemi (2015) etc. Some of the place names that are used in the derivation of some Yorùbá riddles as analysed include important cities such as Ibàdàn, Qyó, Ilé-Ife and Ìkòyí. From the research carried out, the researcher observed the followings (i) place-name derive Yoruba riddles mirror the habit, traits and character of the people of the towns and cities whose names were used in the derivation of the riddles. It was observed that place-name derived Yoruba riddles can be classified as a distinct type of riddle. It was also discovered that place-name derive Yorùbá riddles are sources of historical construction and reconstruction, purveyor of Yoruba culture and system of government. In conclusion, it is established that place name serves as source of derivation for Yoruba riddles and can be used as an instrument of oral history.

Keywords: *Toponymy; Folklore; Yorùbá Society; Mirror Image; and Oral-literature*

INTRODUCTION

Riddle is a branch of oral literature whose main target audience are the children. It is a branch of oral literature that is classified under children literature. This is because its main function is to create in Yoruba individual a complete being. Adeyemi (2013) explained the aesthetic value as well as social function of riddle when he opined that “riddles have significant social roles that may be described as humorous, funny, entertainment, cultural, educative, intellectual and ideological”.

In Yorùbá society, riddles in question-and-answer form which is the focus of this paper are used to measure and examine the level of intelligence of children and teenagers. Riddles are used in Yorùbá society to ingrain in their youth, critical and logical thinking. Akinyemi (2015, p.87) explained the importance of riddle in Yoruba informal education. He opined that “before the introduction of Western education to Yorubaland, riddles and folktales were the principal means of shaping characters in children and young adults”.

What this means is that riddles are among the mechanism(s) through which Yorùbá moral codes and native knowledge are instilled in children and youths alike. It is also the instrument through which scientific based knowledge which involves principles of scientific discovery such as observation, experimentation, critical and logical thinking are ingrained in Yoruba children. Owoade (2019, p.75) explained the importance of riddle to the development of a Yoruba child when he opined that:

Yoruba riddles are very significant forms of Yoruba verbal arts. The riddle is a structured form of Yoruba oral tradition. Riddles entertain the young people in the society. They also help in cultivating wit and intellectual capability in the young people in the society. Riddles instruct the young people; they are also test of memory to both young and old world over.

Research works abound on riddles in Yorùbá language. While some of the research works focused on the documentation of Yoruba riddles for posterity, other works on Yorùbá

riddles focuses on its linguistics as well as literary analysis. Some of the earlier works on Yoruba riddles as opined by Akinyemi (2015) include Tugbiyile (1948) “*Àwọn àlọ àpamò Yorùbá*”, ‘Yoruba riddles’, Oyelese (1948) “*Àlọ Àpamò: Apá Kínní*” ‘Riddles: Part One’, Ajayi (1990) “*Ojìlélegbeta Àlọ Àpamò Yorùbá*” ‘Six hundred and forty Yorùbá riddles’.

Other works that focus on litera-linguistics analysis of Yorùbá riddles include Olatunji (1984) “Features of Yorùbá Oral Poetry” where the content and themes of Yorùbá riddles were examined. Akinyemi (2015) whose work focuses on the content, function as well as the socio-cultural relevance of Yorùbá riddles to the Yoruba society. Akinyemi (2015) in his work classify riddles in Yoruba into six main groups which are (i) Riddles on Agriculture: Farm products, farming tools and implements (ii) Riddles on Animals (Wild and Domestic), Birds and Insects (iii) Riddles on Human Anatomy and physiological functions and processes (iv) Riddles pertaining to Mathematics, Logic and Science (v) Riddles and Cultural Norms (vi) Riddles on Language, Humor, Satire and Entertainment.

Further-more, Adeosun and Ajibade (2020) also adopted the blending model of conceptual integration to examine and analyse selected Yorùbá riddles in their work titled “A Conceptual Blending Analysis of Yorùbá riddles “. In their work, they opine that the knowledge of cultural context, logical semantic and personal experience play a vital role in logical interpretation of Yorùbá riddle. Zaccheaus (2022) in his work also examines the status of Yorùbá riddles within a tripod scope of the past, the present and the future of Yorùbá riddles. He posits that without urgent attention, Yorùbá riddles in its entirety will be lost for posterity without proper documentation, research and its day to day usage at home and in school. As far as the researcher is concerned little or no work known to the researcher has been carried out on place-name related Yorùbá riddles and its social implication as a mirror of the society.

The aim of this paper is to fill this vacuum by analysing selected place-name related Yorùbá riddles. Akande (2020, p.1) gave credence to our assertion that the norms, value

system and history of a particular town can be traced through oral literature such as riddle. She opined that:

Every Yorùbá town has certain peculiar norms, patterns of behaviour, tradition and sometimes history. These norms and tradition are often found mainly in either the way inhabitants of such a town use language or the way people from other places use language in relation to such town.

Place name is a given name that is attached to a particular place or region. It has been established by researchers that place names in Yorùbá language serve as raw data in the analysis of linguistics units such as phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Some of the works in Yorùbá language that is related to place names include Adeleke (2009) who examined historical related Yorùbá proverbs. Akande (2020) in her work titled “On the pragmatic implications of Oyo-related proverbs in South-Western Nigeria” examine the role of proverbs in the process of gathering verifiable facts on the history of Oyo and its people. In addition, Rabiun and Olutope (2021) also analysed Ìbàdàn related Yoruba proverbs and proverbial expressions using a model of Austin Speech Act theory. Their work revealed that Ìbàdàn related Yoruba proverbs perform different speech acts function and can be used to trace the history of the town. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, little or no work has been carried out on place name related Yoruba riddles, and no work on riddles to the best of the researcher’s knowledge has been centered on place name as its area of interest in riddles study.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research work adopts a qualitative cum socio-historical method of research, which is the ideal methodological approach to examine and analyse place-name related Yoruba riddles. Data for this research work were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Our primary sources include language informants who are ideal native speakers of Yoruba language and over the age of forty such as family heads (Mogàjì), Báàle (Village head), religious leaders, elders, teachers, civil servants and artisans. Our pool of secondary sources

includes existing literary works on Yoruba riddles such as Olatunji (1984), Ajayi (1990) and Akinyemi (2015). Also, the intuitive knowledge of the researcher as an ideal native speaker of Yoruba language also helped in the analysis of place-name derived Yoruba riddles. Yoruba language has two modes of folktale which are the narrative mode known as “àlò àpagbè” and the riddle or quiz mode known as “àlò àpamò”. For the purpose of this research, ten place-name related Yoruba riddles were gathered and examined using the mirror image model of the sociological theory of literature.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literary theories are instruments that are used to dissect a literary text. Orimoogunje (2015, p. 76) explains that “a literary theory can be viewed as a set of logically related statements that seek to explain an entire class of events of a given text”. Theories are analytic instruments which literary critics use in the analysis of a given text. The theory adopted for this work is the sociological theory of literature. Adeyemi (2006) explained that the theory of sociology is a combination of two distinct disciplines that is sociology and literature. While sociology entails what concerns man and his environment, literature on the other hand is used to educate and entertain man about his society.

The aspect of this theory that we are adopting for our analysis is the mirror image approach. This model sees work of literature as the imitation of occurrences in the society. Proponents of this theory opine that literature mirrors what is happening in the society. One of the proponents of this theory is Lous de Bonald (1754-1840). According to Adeye.mi (2006) Bonald is the first person to explain that we can know about the thought, philosophy, ideology, beliefs and culture of a particular group of people or tribe through their literatures. Ògúnsínà (2006, p.112) explains the connection between literature and society when he asserts that:

Literature is part and product of society; its nature is essentially social. It has no independence from man. For it is produced by people living together, it is a structure of words and ideas which are shared and understood by members of a community.

What this means is that literature in its entirety is about man in relation to his society. Proponents of this theory are of the opinion that literature mirrors what occurs in the society. For this reason, what is paramount for critics using this theory for analysis is to successfully link what transpires in the selected texts to what is happening in the society. Ògúnlo.lá (2014) buttresses this point when he opines that:

The theory (sociology of literature) postulates that there is a very close link between literature and the society. It is therefore essential to have a deep knowledge of the social life, economy, history and the entire life style of a society in order to fully understand the society.

Since this work is primarily based on an aspect of Yoruba oral literatures i.e. riddle, the researcher is of the opinion that the theory that fits our analysis is the theory of sociology of literature, and the approach suitable for our analysis under this theory is the mirror image approach. This is the main reason the researcher adopts this model for analysis.

DATA PRESENTATION

In this section, the researcher will present place-name derived Yoruba riddles for analysis. This is vital because the study of place-name derived Yoruba riddles shows the importance of naming among Yoruba people. Ogunwale (2016, p.1) buttressed this claim when he opined that “Yoruba names are based on the fact that they provide useful apparatus for the identification and description of Yoruba people within the context of their language varieties, social background and their cultural ideologies”. This researcher observed that analysing place-name derived Yoruba riddles will reveal some hidden information about Yoruba people and their culture. Some of the riddles examined include:

SN	Yorùbá Riddle (Quiz Question)	Meaning in English	Answer in Yorùbá	Meaning in English
I	<i>Tísà kùkurú ọ̀nà Ìbàdàn; Bó ti dára tó ewé ló fi ń bora.</i>	The short teacher who lives in Ìbàdàn; as beautiful as she is she covers her body with leaves'	Eka eléwé	cooked corn meal wrapped in leaves
ii	<i>Opó erí ọ̀nà Ìbàdàn; ó yeyin méjì ó pa ọ̀kan soṣo.</i>	The standing pole on Ìbàdàn road; he produced two eggs and hatched one'	Okó àti epon	Penis and the two scrotums
iii	<i>Olófèèré ọ̀nà Ìbàdàn; ó yeyin méjì ó wá fagbò lé e</i>	Olófèèré on Ibadan Road; it lay two eggs and cover it with basket'	Okó àti epon	Penis and the two scrotums
iv	<i>Aláìlórí ọ̀mọ ogun Ogúnmólá Aláìlátàrí ọ̀mọ ogún Ìbàdàn Ó lówó kò fi jagun; Idí ló fi ń jà</i>	'The headless army of Ogúnmólá; 'the headless army of Ìbàdàn; he has hand and did not fight with it; but fights with his buttock	Àkekèé	Scorpion
V	<i>Awe obì kan à jẹ dé Oyó</i>	a slice of colanut that can be eaten till we reach Oyo	Ahon	Tongue
vi	<i>À ń ló ó kojú sí Oyó; à ń bọ ó kojú sí Oyó</i>	on our way it faces Oyo; on our way back it also faces Oyo	Ìlù Dùndún	Talking drum
vii.	<i>Oòṣà kán wà lójà Akésán; Ojoojúmọ ní gbẹbọ; Bó ti ń gbà lówó ọ̀mọdẹ; Ní ń gbà lówó àgbà Bó ti ń gbà lówó ọ̀kùnrin Ní ń gbà lówó obìnrin</i>	'There is a deity at Akésán's market; it takes sacrifice daily; from children as well as elders; 'it takes from men as well as women 'as well as women' 'it takes sacrifice da 'it takes from men' 'as well as women'	Àkítàn	Refuse dump site
viii	<i>Iyá ńlá ọ̀nà Ìkòyí; Ojọ tó bá jẹyọ ni yóò kú.</i>	the fat woman on Ìkòyí road; she will die the day she tastes salt'	Ìgbín	Snail

ix	<i>Àgbà márùn-ún sin Olú Ife lọ sí ogun; Olúfe rá àgbà márùn-ún padà</i>	<i>five elders accompanied the king of Ife to battle; the king of Ife dies and all five elders returned</i>	Ìka.wo. màrààrún àti òkèlè	The five fingers and morsel
x	<i>Òrìṣà kan ní bẹ lójúde Olúfe; ojoojúmọ ní í gbẹbọ</i>	<i>'There is a deity at the king of Ife square; it takes sacrifice daily'</i>	E.nu	Mouth

DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, the researcher made effort to examine and analyse selected place names related Yorùbá riddles in a bid to re-evaluate and reconstruct Yoruba history using evidence from Yoruba riddles as case study. Falola (2007) gave credence to this approach when he explains that “the humanities must search for Africa in Africa and elsewhere”. What this mean is that we must start our research from home, as the Yorùbá belief that charity begins at home. Adeleke (2009) echoed his thought when he says:

It is useful and valuable for the African histographers, especially the Yorùbá to always explore and exploit available oral traditions such as proverbs to revisit the past and its cultures, as it has become clear that past cultures shape present culture.

What this clearly means is that African oral traditions such as proverb, panegyrics, and riddles which is the focus of this paper can help in historical construction and re-construction. Some of Yoruba place names derived the riddles to be examined and analysed within the context of Mirror image approach of sociology of literature include:

(i). *Tísà kùkúrú ọ̀nà Ibàdàn; Bó ti dára tó ewé ló fì ní bora.*

‘The short teacher who lives in Ìbàdàn; as beautiful as she is she covers her body with leaves’
Answer- “Eka eléwé” ‘cooked corn meal wrapped in leaves’

The researcher observed that this riddle reflects the geographical location Ibadan occupies as a link between South and the Northern region. The “onà” ‘road’ in this riddle depicts the position of Ibadan as a getaway city that connects the northern part of the country with the innermost part of the south. The feature of Ibadan as a gateway city is best captured in this

proverb “igun mérin ni ìlú ní; merìndínlógún ni ti Ibàdàn” that is every town has four entry point or border, Ibàdàn has sixteen entry routes. The answer to this quiz, which is “eka-eléwé” meaning ‘cooked corn meal wrapped in leaves’ also serves as bank through which this Yoruba traditional food can be preserved for posterity. This is because through the incursion of globalization and westernization many African foods and snacks are now extinct or nearly going into extinction because of the craving of western foods and cuisines by many Africans, Yoruba people inclusive.

(ii). *Opó erí ọ̀nà Ibàdàn; ó yeyin méjì ó pa ọ̀kan soṣo.*

‘The standing pole on Ibàdàn road; he produced two eggs and hatched one’

Answer- ‘Okó àti epon’ ‘Penis and the two scrotums’

(iii). *Olófèèré ọ̀nà Ibàdàn; ó yeyin méjì ó wá fagbòlén lé e.*

‘Olófèèré on Ibadan road; he hatched two eggs and cover it with basket’

Answer- “Okó àti epon” ‘Penis and the two scrotums’

The researcher observed that these two riddles (riddle ii and iii) mirror some of the deeds, sayings and actions that can be attribute to the Ibadan people. Some of the attributes of Ibadan indigenes which have been attested to by previous researchers include affrays, street fighting, warfare and the use of vulgar words. For example, some of the songs that are used during the celebration of the popular “Òkèbàdàn” ‘the Ibadan hill’ festival which is a very popular festival in Ibadan are laden with vulgar words. Some of the songs used during the festival include:

(a). “okó alopàá kíkí belîtî”.

‘Policeman penis as big as his belt’

(b) “Bàbá tó òlò; jàwàjawa epon”

‘The man that is going with big scrotum’

(c). Okó tísà

‘the teacher’s penis’

Òbò mísîsî

‘the mistress vagina’

Okó tísà kíkí sookì

‘the teacher’s penis as big as the chalk

(d). Okó onímotò bí ìrèkè

‘the driver’s penis like sugarcane’

ìyàwó onímotò kúúrójù

‘the driver’s wife keep enduring’

All these songs show the vulgar use of sexual related words which are common usage in Ìbàdàn, most especially by Ìbàdàn indigenes during the celebration of the Òkèbàdàn festival. We observed that the common usage of sex related taboo words also found in the examined riddles related to the city of Ibadan as highlighted in riddle two and three mirror the way of life of Ibadan people. Riddle (ii and iii) and the examined Òkèbàdàn festival folksongs give credence to this assertion.

<i>(iv). Aláìlórí ọmọ ogun Ogúnmọlá</i>	<i>'the headless army of Ogúnmọlá'</i>
<i>Aláìlátàrí ọmọ ogún Ìbàdàn</i>	<i>'the headless army of Ìbàdàn'</i>
<i>Ó lẹwọ kò fì jagun</i>	<i>'he has hand and did not fight with it'</i>
<i>Ìdí ló fì n jà</i>	<i>'but fights with his buttock'</i>
Answer- "Àkekèè 'scorpion'	

We observed that this riddle can be classified under historically derive place-name related Yoruba riddle. This is a type of riddle that is used for oral autography. This is because as opined by Aristotle in Adeoye (1978) that poetry is the best way to relay history. Akinye.mi (2015) buttressed the researcher's claim of the classification of riddle (iv) as an historical account of past event when he opined that:

This riddle most certainly originated in the nineteenth century during or after the 1860-1885 Yoruba Ijaye war and the lifetime of General Ogúnmọlá, the great Ibadan warlord. Ogúnmọlá led the army of King Adélù, the Aláàfin of Oyo in the Aláàfin's conflict with Kúrunmí of Ijaye and his Egbá ally.

Agbájé (2016) also in his work buttressed our claim that record of past events can be gleaned from oral literatures which include Yoruba riddles. He opined that:

Yorùbá orature helps to remember important cultural information and history of the Yorùbá people. It is pertinent to note that the role of orature in the construction and reconstruction of history is remarkable.

Owoàdé (2019, p. 88) also corroborates this claim when he opined that "There are some riddles that impart historical knowledge in Yorùbá society. Such riddles refer to some historical facts and events in Yoruba land". It was also observed in riddle four as stated earlier that the riddle that is associated with some of the place-names mirror the attributes

and characteristics of the indigenes of this cities and towns. For example “ogun” ‘war’ and the use of “oro-àlùfànsà” ‘vulgar words’ are associated with Ibàdàn people. This researcher observed that riddles and proverbs are two Yorùbá verbal arts that can be used to explain societal values and are also repository of history. Ajikobi (2007, p. 112) gave credence to this assertion when he opined that “In any society, they are the sociocultural framework of reference that contains succinct general truth of moral reflections of rules of conduct and also excellent sources of data that asserts events or situations”. Evidence of a Yoruba proverb that shows the sociocultural traits of some Yoruba cities is:

A kílí wáyé ká má lárùn kan lára	‘no one comes to the world without blemish’
Iná jìjọ ní í dá lseyìn láàmú	‘wildfire is the bane of lseyìn’
Ìjà ìgboro làrùn Ìbàdàn.	‘Affrays and street fights is peculiar to Ibadan’
Mo su mo to ni t’Èkó	‘Lagosians are known for hustling and bustling’
Ká gbórí fòrò ni t’Egbá Aláké	‘Offering of heads to Oro deity is peculiar to the Egbá people’

This proverbial excerpt gave credence to the researcher assertion that Ìbàdàn people are popularly known for affrays which reflect in the Yoruba riddles associated with Ibadan town. In addition, according to oral and written accounts, the intra-tribal conflict between Ijàyè and Oyo allied forces which is used as a riddle (in riddle four) is as a result of the annulment of the Oyomèsì that is Oyo council of chiefs succession law which states that “the crown prince of Oyo must be killed once the Aláàfin joined his ancestors that is ‘died’ by Aláàfin Àtìbà who was Alaafin Adelu’s father. The aftermath of the war led to the ruin of Ijàyè and made Basorun Ogunmolá a war hero with the war linked panegyric that goes thus:

“Ope Ijàyè lólèròyìn ogun Ogunmolá”
 ‘It is only Ijaye’s palm trees that can narrate Ogunmolá’s war’
 (v). Awe obì kan à jẹ dé Oyó
 ‘a slice of colanut that can be eaten till we reach Oyo’
 Answer- “Ahon” ‘tongue’

This riddle shows the importance of Òyo kingdom in the history of Yorùbá nation whose power and prowess span across many West African empires and cities in present day countries such as Benin republic (formerly Dahomey), Togo, Ivory coast and Ghana.

(vi). *À n lẹ́ ó kojú sí Oyó; à n bọ́ ó kojú sí Oyó*

‘on our way going it faces Oyo; on our way back it also face Oyo’

Answer- “Ìlù Dùndún” ‘Talking drum’

This riddle also shows the importance and status of Oyo town as a town that holds military, political as well as economy power in Yorubaland and beyond most especially in pre-colonial Yoruba states. One of the Yorùbá proverbs that compliment this riddle is:

“N ò bá wà ní Oyó, esin mi ì bá tí se jàntirere; àgùntàn mi kì bá tí níye”

‘Assuming I am in Oyo, I would already have many horses and my sheep would be numerous’

The riddle i.e. “*À n lẹ́ ó kojú sí Oyó; à n bọ́ ó kojú sí Oyó*” which this proverb corroborates shows that Oyo was the center of commerce and the financial capital of the Yorùbá nation in pre-colonial era. The usage of Oyo place-name is also found in a special form of riddle in Yoruba language known as “Aro”. Akinyemi (2015, p. 164) examine the status of Oyo in Aro song. The Aro goes thus:

Oníde. Kábíyèsí	the brass for his royal majesty
Kí ní n̄je kábíyèsí?	What does Royal majesty mean?
Kábíyèsí Aláàfin	His royal majesty the Aláàfin
Kí ní n̄je Aláàfin?	What does Aláàfin mean?
Aláàfin t’Oyo	the Aláàfin of Oyó
Kí ní n̄je Oyo?	What is Oyo?
Oyo tapá Osun	Oyo town along Osun

According to Akinyemi (2015, p. 164) this Aro song presented the Aláàfin ‘the king of Oyo’ as “the king with absolute power of authority which no one can challenge or question”. The authority of the Aláàfin as presented in this Aro song confirm and buttress the power of the Aláàfin over his subjects most especially in pre-colonial era. One of the proverbs that give credence to this assertion is:

'Alaafin calls and you are consulting the oracle; what if your consultation is positive and Alààfin's verdict is negative'.

This proverb and the Aro riddle are evidences that the Alááfin stool enjoy absolute power throughout the length and breadth of Yorubaland and beyond in pre-colonial Yoruba state. We also observed through the Aro song that one can know exactly which Oyo from the three Oyo of Oyo-ile, Oyo-Igbòhò and Oyo-Atìbà the song is depicting. The correct answer based on geographical knowledge gleaned from the information embedded in the Aro song will be Oyo-Atìbà which is the current Oyo in present day Oyo state, Nigeria. This is because it is only the present Oyo town that borders Osun state. While Oyo-ilé can be found presently in part of Kwara and Niger states and Oyo-Igbòho which is located in-between Oké-Ogun and Ìbàràpá towns in present-day Ò yò state. This shows that place-name derived Yoruba riddles also give geographical information as well as information on the topography of a particular place used in riddle derivation.

<i>(vii). Oòṣà kán wà lójà Akésán</i>	<i>'there is a deity at Akésán's market'</i>
<i>Ojoojúmò ní gbẹbọ</i>	<i>'it takes daily sacrifice'</i>
<i>Bó tí nì gbà lówọ ọmọdé</i>	<i>as it takes from children'</i>
<i>Ní nì gbà lówọ àgbà</i>	<i>'as well as elders'</i>
<i>Bó tí nì gbà lówọ ọkùnrin</i>	<i>as it takes from men'</i>
<i>Ní gbà lówọ obìnrin</i>	<i>'as well as women'</i>
<i>Answer- "Àkítàn" 'Refuse dumpsite'</i>	

This researcher observed that Akesán's market which is the king's market in present Oyo-Atibà is an important market that contributes to the socio-economic development of the Oyo royal palace and its citizens. This is because of the status of Oyo town as the financial capital of the Yorùbá nation in pre-colonial era and an important town in present day Oyo state. The importance of Akesán's market in Oyo socio-political history can also be found in some Oyo-related Yorùbá proverbs such as:

(a). Akesán lòpin Oyo; Iléaka lòpin obìnrin
'Akesan is the end of Oyo.; marriage is the zenith for a woman aspiration'

(b). Kí á tó gbé iwí dé Akesán; Oba Jáyin terígbasò
'before we reach Oyo with our masquerade chant; king Jáyin have committed suicide'

This researcher observes that the “òòs.à” that everyone bows to and pay tributes to as shown in this riddle is the “Aláàfin” who is the supreme being and whose authority cannot be questioned by anybody. This riddle also shows the power and might of the Aláàfin’s stool, most especially during the pre-colonial era before the advent of democratic system of governance. This riddle also shows the socio-cultural belief of the Yoruba people of equality of all irrespective of age or gender.

(viii). *Iyá nílá ọ̀nà Ìkòyí; Ọjọ́ tó bá jẹyọ̀ ní yóò kú.*
'the fat woman on Ikoyi road; she will die the day she taste salt'
Answer- “Ìgbín” ‘snail’

Oral and written accounts show the Ìkòyí people as one of the most skillful people in the system of warfare in Yoruba land. They are known for the mastery of warfare just as the Àgberí are known for the knowledge of medicine and healing and the Ojowon are known for wood carving. Ìkòyí town is one of the important towns that have contributed to the socio-political development of the Yoruba race most especially in pre-colonial Yoruba state. This Ìkòyí place-name derived riddle shows the socio-cultural belief of the Yoruba people on the efficacy of taboo which is known as “èèwo”. As shown in the riddle, taboo is used in Yoruba society as check which once violated will lead to severe punishment and sometimes death as shown in the riddle.

(ix). *Àgbà márùn-ún sin Olú Ife lẹ́ sí ogun* ‘five elders accompany the king of Ife to battle’
Olúfe rá àgbà márùn-ún padà ‘the king of Ife dies and all five elders
returned’

Answer- “Ìka ọwọ́ márààrún àti òkèlè” ‘the five fingers and morsel’

We observed that the “Olú” in Olúfe in this riddle is a prefix that is attached to name of towns in Yorùbá land to derive royal titles for kings. Some of the royal titles that are related to “Olú” in Yorùbá land include:

Olúbàdàn ‘king of Ibadan’

Olúwòó 'king of Iwo'
Olú Ìlaròó 'king of Ilaro' etc.

From the examples above, one can conclude that “Olúfẹ̀ ” that is Olú + Ifẹ̀ is another royal title for the king of Ife whose royal titles also include “Ọoni”, “Ọlofin”, “Adímúlà” etc. Also, it was observed that riddle (ix) reflects the respect the Yoruba people have for kings as leaders. Analysing the Ifẹ̀ derived Yoruba riddles reveals the socio-cultural belief that the King is supreme and the representative of God on earth. It also depicts Yorùbá unwritten law of leading by example which states that kings or their war chief must lead their army to battle rather than follow. Some Yoruba folksongs that buttressed the Yorùbá philosophy of leaders leading by example which is being portrayed by this Yorùbá riddle are:

- (a). Bóo ní ọmọ ogun bóò ní ọmọ ogun; wo eyìn re wò
'if you have foot soldiers or not look behind you'
- (b). Jagunjagun lóńbo o 'the brave warrior is coming'
Asíwájú ogun kò gbado keyìn ogun 'the war leader must not fall behind in battle'
Jagunjagun lóńbo o. 'the brave warrior is coming'

In addition, the disappearance of the king in this riddle also reflects the Yoruba belief that death is preferable to embarrassment i.e. “ikúyá ju esín”. This Yorùbá belief as enshrined in this riddle is in agreement with the Yoruba proverb that says “eyìn àgbà rè é sàń ju ojú àgbà rè é lo.”. That is it is better to die rather than face disgrace and embarrassment. Oral and written historical accounts show that many Yorùbá heroes and heroines choose death to enslavement and going back to their abode without being victorious in battles. Also, it has been proven historically that some Yoruba kings pay the supreme sacrifice in protecting their honour, dignity, people and land. Examples of such include Aláàfin Jáyin, Aláàfin Olúewu etc.

(x). *Oriṣà kan n bẹ lójúde Olúfe; ojoojúmọ ní í gbẹbọ*
'there is a deity at the king of Ife square; it takes sacrifice daily'
Answer- “Ènu” ‘mouth’

Riddle (x) shows the importance of “Òrìs.à” ‘deities’ and “e.bo.” ‘sacrifice’ in the day-to-day running of the Yorùbá nation states in general and Ilé-Ife in particular. The Olùfe that is the king of Ilé-Ife is seen as the leader of all deities and is referred to as “Oonirìsà” which mean the supreme deity. This riddle shows the importance of Òrìs.à ‘deity’ and the prevalence of festivals in Ilé-Ife that is “ojoojúmo ní gbebo” ‘it takes sacrifice everyday’. Some of the festivals that are used to appease the Gods and Goddesses in Ilé-Ife include Edì festival, Yémowó festival, Osàrà festival, Olókun festival, Ajé festival, Olojo festival etc. Olupona (2011) in Akinyemi (2015, p. 163) affirm this claim when he opined that:

It is said that every day in sacred groves the traditional worshippers celebrate a festival dedicated to one of these deities. Often the festivals last more than twenty-four hours and involve both priestly activities in the palace and theatrical dramatizations in strategic locations within the city.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

From the researcher’s data presentation and analysis it is observed that place-names play a pivotal role in the derivation of some Yorùbá riddles and should be seen as a class of Yorùbá riddle that is place-name related Yorùbá riddles in addition to Akinyemi (2015) classification of Yoruba riddles to six groups which are (i) Riddles on Agriculture: Farm products, farming tools and implements (ii) Riddles on Animals (Wild and Domestic), Birds and Insects (iii) Riddles on Human Anatomy and physiological functions and processes (iv) Riddles pertaining to Mathematics, Logic and Science (v) Riddles and Cultural Norms (vi) Riddles on Language, Humor, Satire and Entertainment.

The researcher also observed that beyond the aesthetics and entertainment function of Yorùbá riddles, its stimulation of the mind to think logically and its ability to spur children to answer critical questions. Place-name related Yorùbá riddles mirror the deeds and actions of the citizens of the towns and cities that were used in their derivation. For example, “ogun” ‘war’ and the use of vulgar words that is associated with Ìbàdàn in Ìbàdàn related riddles examined is a reflection of the city and its people. Adegbodun and Olaniyan (2022, p.89) gave credence to this assertion when they explained that the environment and ecosystem play a

vital role in the derivation of Yoruba riddle. They assert that “environment or ecosystem plays important role in Yoruba riddle making. This assertion is based on the fact that most Yoruba riddles emphasize on the environment which also forms the context of their formation”. By environment we mean the deeds and actions of inhabitants of a particular place, the geographical setting of the town and other salient issues surrounding the town or cities.

Also, the presence of “*Orìsà*” ‘deity’ and “*ebu*” ‘sacrifice that is associated with Ilé-Ife form an integral part of the day-to-day activities of Ooni and the people of Ilé-Ife since time immemorial shows the socio-cultural belief and ideologies of the people of Ilé-Ife in particular and Yoruba people in general. This shows that place name serves as the mirror through which socio-cultural belief and ideologies embedded in Yoruba riddles are revealed to the world. Hamzat (2024, p.2) corroborates the researcher’s claim when he opined that “literature is the mirror through which people’s identity, passions and perceptions are best seen and appreciated”.

Further-more, vulgar words that are used in some of the riddles examined and in some of the songs that are used during the celebration of the popular “*Òkèbàdàn*” festival in *Ìbàdàn* shows the people of the town as one who revel and enjoy the use of sex related taboo words for entertainment purpose. In addition, the status of Oyo as the pace setter and the most powerful empire that traverse beyond present day Nigeria as well as the reflection of Oyo as the symbol of Yorùbá royalty is reflected in the riddle that says “*à ní ló a kojú sí Oyo; à ní bọ́ a kojú sí Oyo*” this shows Oyo as an important city that people throng to for one business or another.

In addition, the status of Ilé-Ife as the cradle of civilization, the source from where the Yoruba people scattered all over the world, the symbol of Yoruba spirituality and the spiritual capital of the Yorùbá race was shown through riddles that are associated with Ilé-Ife. Finally, it was observed that just as oral literatures such as panegyrics and proverbs can be used to

trace and reconstruct history. Yorùbá riddles can also be used to examine past actions, document as well as reconstruct history. Example of such riddle is riddle four which examined the Ìjàyè war between Ààrè. Kúrunmí who was the Yorùbá generalissimo that is “Ààrè Onà Kakaṣfò” of the Yorùbá race and the Oyo allied forces which was led by Balógun Ibíkúnlé ‘general Ibikunle’ and Basorun Oḡúnmolá ‘prime minister Ogunmola’ of Ibàdàn.

It was also observed that the use of riddles that has popular place names such as Ibàdàn, Oyo, Ilé-Ife, Ikòyí etc. that children know can help stimulate their mind to the learning of Yoruba riddles and help save a dying Yoruba art i.e. riddle from going into extinction.

REFERENCES

- Adegboodu, O.Z. & Olaniyan, S.O. (2022). Pedagogical Relevance of Selected Nature-Related Yoruba Riddles to Teaching-Learning Process. *Akungba Journal of Linguistics and Literatures: No.13*
- Adélekè, D. (2009) Aspects of Yorùbá History in the Proverb. In Odebunmi, A., et al (Eds.) *Language, Gender and Politics. Festschrifts for Yisa Kehinde Yusuf*: Concept Publication Limited
- Adeosun, H.O. and Ajibade, M.I. (2020). *A Conceptual Blending Analysis of Yoruba Riddles*
- Adéye.mi, L. (2013). *Children Literature and Yorùbá Literary Disability Criticism*: Matrix Publications
- Adèyemí, L. (2006). *Tíṣọ̀rì Lítírésọ̀ ní Èdè Yorùbá*: Shebiotimo publications.
- Agbaje, J.B. (2016). A Literary Appraisal of Poets as Historians: *Global Journal of Human Social Sciences*.
- Ajayi, B. (1990). *Ojìlégègbeta Aló Àpamò*: Tawfiqullah Publishing House
- Ajikobi, O. (2007). *Verbal Arts: A Promising Mountain of Gold*: Krafts Book Limited.
- Akande, I.D. (2020). On the Pragmatic Implications of Oyo-Related Proverbs in South-Western Nigeria. *Proverbium*: Year book of International Proverb Vol. 37
- Akinyemi, A. (2015). *Orature and Yoruba Riddles*: Palmgrave Macmillian

- Falola, T. (2007) *Nationalizing Africa, Culturalising the West and Reformulating Humanities in Africa*. Akinrinade, S.F. et al., (Eds.) *Rethinking Humanities in Africa*: O.A.U Press.
- Hamzat, I.A. (2024). *Decoding Collective Identity through Literature: A Reading of the Literary Tradition in Ilorin Emirate. Faculty of Art Seminar Series, Kwara State University, Malete.*
- Ogunsina, J.A. (2006). *The Sociology of Yorùbá Novel. 1930-1975*. Ibadan: Integrity Publication
- Ògúnlo.lá, L. (2014). *Yorùba Proverbs and Morality (ìwà o.mo.lúàbí): The Past, Present and the Future*. In Abdussalam, A.S et al (Eds). *Bringing Our Cultures Home: FESTSCHRIFT FOR BADE AJAYI AT 70*: Chrimadel Publisher.
- Ogunwale, A. (2016). *Naming in Yoruba: A Sociolinguistics Exposition*: Obafemi Awolowo University Press
- Orímóògùnjẹ., O.C. (2015). *Socio-Mythical Approach to Yoruba Indigenous Health Related Verbal Art in Abdussalam A.S (Ed.) Ilorin Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture. Vol 5*: Unilorin Press.
- Oyelese, J.O. (1948). *Àlọ o: Apa Kinni Alọ Apamọ*: Oxford University Press
- Olatunji, O.O. (1984) *Features of Yoruba Oral Literatures*: University Press Limited Owoade,
- S.C. (2019). *The Significance of Proverbs and Riddles as Verbal Arts in Imparting Indigenous Knowledge in Yorùbá Society in Akangbe C.A. (Ed.) YORÙBÁ: The Journal of Yoruba Studies Association of Nigeria. Volume 9 Number3.*
- Rabiu, R.A. and Abiola, O.L. (2021). *A Speech Act Analysis of Selected Ibadan Related Yoruba Proverbs and their Communication Values. In Linguistics, Civilization and Literature in the Service of Humanities. Festschrifts in Honour of Professor Abayomi Kizito Ayele*: Uniosun Press
- Tugbiyile, E.A. (1948). *Àwọn Alọ Àpamọ Yorùbá*: Monigraph.