

**Social Status of *Agbè* and *Kete*:  
A Historical and Functional Yorùbá Oral Literary Perspectives**

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Article Received June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022</li> <li>• Article Accepted September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022</li> </ul> <p><b>Keywords</b></p> <p>Social status <i>Agbè</i> and <i>kete</i> Historicism Yorùbá oral-literary materials</p>	<p><i>Agbè</i> (a gourd) and <i>kete</i> (a calabash pot) are both utensils in the Yorùbá socio-cultural setting. They are also made musical instruments in <i>orin agbè</i> and <i>orin kete</i>. Because both objects are structurally and functionally interwoven, many people could not delineate their status. As a result, some even take them for one. This has resulted in cultural and literary misplacement of the priority of the objects. Sequel to the identified problem, this study attempts a critical cultural and literary analysis of <i>agbè</i> and <i>kete</i> in order to validate their socio-cultural and literary status. New historicism is used as the theoretical framework. The study adopts an ethnological research design. Yorùbá oral historical and literary materials are the base of the study's critical analysis. Data were collected among the elders in Ìbàràpá and Òkè-Ògún, and some other parts of the Yorùbáland. It is revealed in the analysis that, <i>agbè</i> and <i>kete</i>'s uses to some extent are complementary. Thus, <i>agbè</i> is more useful than <i>kete</i>. <i>Agbè</i> is considered for keeping precious items, and as a musical instrument, it is having social status. <i>Kete</i> on the hand is also having a social status as it is both used as utensil and musical instrument. However, <i>kete</i>'s religious status is validated for its use in Ọ̀bàtálá religious service. Using <i>agbè</i> to save precious items is not enough to consider it more important than <i>kete</i> as <i>kete</i> in the religious context of Ọ̀bàtálá is also used for a significant religious function.</p>

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Kete* (a calabash pot) and *agbè* (a gourd) are utensils. Both are used to keep liquid substances like water or local wines. They are used to keep agriculture products, among other uses[1]. As a result, they are farm pieces of equipment. Apart from their uses in the house or on farmland, they also serve as musical instruments played in many Yorùbá poetic genres. Examples of such genres are *orin agbè* [2][3], *igbá títí*[4][5], *orin kèṅgbè*[6] and *ṣékérémoḍò*[7]. As a musical instrument, *kete* is covered with a soft membrane to make a drum in *orin kete* (*kete* song). *Kete* drum is played with both palms to give the required tune. In *orin agbè* (*agbè* song), *agbè* as the main musical instrument is either strung with beads or unstrung, also played with both palms to produce the required tune. *Orin kete* and *orin agbè* are found among the Ìbàràpá and Òkè-Ògùn people of Òyó State, South-West Nigeria. Both localities are extracts of the Old Òyó Empire. They are similar in culture language, religions, thought and belief. *Agbè* and *kete* are products of the calabash plant. *Kete* is a byproduct of *agbè*. This is because many a time, *agbè* is converted into *kete* if the neck breaks during harvesting. Sometimes, the importance or the preciousness of the items both are aimed to contain determine whether gourd will be made an *agbè* or a *kete*. *Agbè* is also called *kèrègbè* and *kèṅgbè*. Likewise, *kete* could also be called *koto*. We need to be noticed that other names these items are called are just the variants of the first names. This is evident in the morphological features of the variants' names when compared to the original names. The various dialects of the Yorùbá language spoken in different Yorùbá zones also determine which among the names a given sect of Yorùbá people accept and make use of. It is even not proper to assert that one name is more generic than others as this will be more difficult to determine. The pictures below show the natural outlook of *agbè* and *kete* before they were made as musical instruments of *orin agbè* and *orin kete*.



Figure 1. *Agbè* (A gourd container)



Figure 2. *Kete* (A calabash pot)

It could be seen in the first picture that *agbè* is a bottled-like object because of the bottleneck it has. In the second picture, the bottle-like neck is cut off leaving the opening flat. This object is called *kete*. As a musical instrument in *orin agbè*, *agbè* could either be enmeshed with beads or unmeshed. To make a drum from *kete*, a cylindrical wood is carved and a soft goatskin is then used to cover one out of the two faces of the cylinder. The other uncovered face is inserted into the calabash pot, all possible holes will be blocked and the drum is dressed up with colourful clothes called *apà ilù*. The pictures below show the enmeshed type of *agbè* and *kete* drum:



Figure 3. Enmeshed *agbè* (gourd)



Figure 4. *kete* drum

*Orin agbè* is a secular song while *orin kete* is a religious song of Yorùbá children's related deities like Ọ̀bàtálá, Alárá-Igbó, Ìbejì, Kórikóto, Ìrókò among others.

While researching *orin agbè* and *orin kete*, the researcher discovered that some people even within the area where *orin kete* and *orin agbè* are performed still find it difficult to differentiate between the genres. This as discovered emanated from their inability to differentiate *agbè* from *kete*. Some take both genres as a single poetic genre. Some even conclude that *agbè* is more important than *kete*, this ideology is therefore attributed to both utensils as musical instruments of *orin agbè* and *orin*. As a result, this study made use of historicism as the base of argument in exposing the socio-cultural and literary status of *agbè* and *kete* in the Yorùbá socio-cultural setting.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an ethnographic research design. Data were collected through participant observation and oral interviews with resource elders in Ị̀bàràpá and Ọ̀kè-Ọ̀gùn. Yorùbá oral historical and

socio-cultural beliefs and thoughts about *agbè* and *kete* were revealed. Many of the oral accounts narrated have their roots in *ẹ̀sẹ Ifá* (Yorùbá divination verses), *òwé* (Yorùbá proverbs), *oríkì* (Yorùbá panegyrics), *ìjálá* (Yorùbá hunter's chant), *ọ̀fọ̀* (Yorùbá incantation), several Yorùbá traditional songs, among others. These were necessary as utterances from the aforementioned oral traditions help in determining the social status of *agbè* and *kete* in the traditional Yorùbá setting. As argued by Williams that oral history has a lot to benefit the society[8][9], as is an essential part of human tradition[10], the Yorùbá oral historical facts are the only dependable means through which Yorùbá thought and perspective can be validated. This is evident in the Yorùbá saying, "Bómọ̀ ò bá itàn, á bá àrọ̀bá, àrọ̀bá ni baba itàn" (If a child does not witness a historical event, he/she will hear an oral historical narration, however, an oral historical narration is the father of history). This implies that oral historical narration is full of historical events a child can learn from. Since the Yorùbá people are indigenously illiterate, oral forms of documentation remain the only dependable form through which the people document their historical experiences. Though, oral accounts many a time are manipulated for selfish interests. To cover lapses which might result from using the method as a means of analysis, this study then employed new historicism in its data analysis.

As noted by Nathaniel, Mogu and Akpagu, historicism as a literary theory embraces the fact that textual meaning is best derived when using a historical perspective[11]. They further that historicism believes that history is the best source of information required for the understanding of actions, substances, people and narratives. What this is emphasizing is that historical information is enough to be relied on as a base of information in understanding literary texts and no other ideological stands. It was further added that critical analysis and textual criticism should also give room to other societal variables which are in one way or the other related to the subject matter in the meaning-making process of a literary text[12]. This is because literature is a replica of the holistic lifestyle of the people of its environment. As a result, new historicism discards the place of historicism in the formation and examination of the text. This is

*Social Status of Agbè and Kete: A Historical and Functional Yorùbá Oral Literary Perspectives*

because it moves ahead in making literary analysis more objective than historicism. It however believed that while history is considered useful in literary analysis, other aspects of life should as well as history be useful to literary appreciation and analysis. To Lyu, new historicism focuses on practice than theoretical construction[13]. As a result, new historicism considers some other factors apart from history which are capable of influencing literature, as historical value changes over time[14]. In this study, with the use of new historicism, research data were critically analyzed from the Yorùbá worldview. This is done in order to fully expose the socio-cultural status of *agbè* and *kete* in all ramifications within the Yorùbá socio-cultural context.

**III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

When the status of *agbè* and *kete* continue to stand elusive, the study traces the origin of these utensils to *ẹsẹ ifá* and some Yorùbá oral poetry in order to decide which of the item is more important, value and use. It has been mentioned before that *kete* is a byproduct of *agbè*. This is when the bottle-neck of *agbè* is slashed out that it becomes *kete*. So *agbè* has not lost much of its natural physical structure compared to *kete*. It is also mentioned that *agbè* and *kete* choice at the point of making is determined by the items they are considered to contain. What are these items? What motivates the consideration in determining the choice of making *agbè* and *kete*? And how do these contribute meanings to the current study? All these shall be answered as we proceed in this section.

According to an Ifá priest, priest Adétóyèşe Adeníjì, a resident of Ìwó town in Ọşun State, Nigeria, *agbè* has different historical accounts in *ẹsẹ ifá*. This is revealed in the *Ọsálogbè* chapter of *ẹsẹ ifá*. *Ọsálogbè* is a combination of two independent chapters of *ẹsẹ ifá*; the *Ọsá* and *Ogbè*. The two combined chapters are best stated and referenced by Ifá initiates as *Ọsá ló'ùn-ún*, *Ogbè ló'sì*, this is to mean 'Ọsá at the right-hand side of the divination tray and *Ogbè* at the left-hand side.' According to the account revealed by the priest whose name is mentioned above, *agbè* is used for the first time to welcome *ará òkè ilẹ̀ funfun* (someone from the land of white people; a white person) as stated in the below verse of the chapter:

<i>Ọsá n lù</i>	<i>Ọsá</i> is drumming
<i>Ogbè n jó</i>	<i>Ogbè</i> is dancing
<i>Adiá fun kèrègbè méjì</i>	Ifá divination was made for two gourds
<i>Tí wọn n roko àìlerè ọdún</i>	That are going to an unfruitful farm
<i>Sá lù mí n sá lù ọ́</i>	Collide with me and let me collide with you
<i>Sá lù mí n sá lù ọ́</i>	Collide with me and let me collide with you

As contained in the historical accounts of the above *Ifá* verse, there are two gourds that made a complaint about how their people do not hear their tunes to their *Ifá* priest. They made the sacrifice as prescribed by their priest. Consequently to their prayers, they were used by the people to entertain and welcome Mọladé, *ará òkè ilẹ̀ funfun* (someone from the land of white people). Mọladé is an *Ọyìnrinbó/Ọyìnbó* (a white person). Mọladé according to the verse is the first white person to come to the land of the black people. The verse continues:

<i>Adiá fun wọn lókè ilẹ̀ funfun</i>	<i>Ifá</i> divination was made for them in the white peoples' land
<i>È mà kú àbọ́</i>	You are welcome
<i>Ará òkè ilẹ̀ funfun</i>	The person from the white peoples' land
<i>È mà kú àbọ́</i>	You are welcome

Mọladé was welcomed with the tune of the gourd. By this, gourd was used and was recognised for the first time as a musical instrument by the people of the Yorùbáland.

There is also an account of *agbè* in the *Ọkànrànsogbè/Ọkànrànsodè* chapter of *Ifá*. *Ọkànrànsodè* is also a combination of two chapters of *Ifá*. The combined chapters of *Ọkànrànsodè* are *Ọkànràn* and *Ogbè*. In the background myth of the chapters. *Agbè* went to an *Ifá* priest on how it could be speaking valuable utterances. This is revealed in the verse of the chapters below:

<i>Ọlọgbón n ló sodè ló tú</i>	It is a wise man that ties a knot that becomes loosen
<i>Ọrunmúsẹgbun ọrọ́ ló n bọ́ yù</i>	Here come deep utterances
<i>Ọmọràn ló sodè ló dẹ̀</i>	It is a clever man that ties a knot that becomes loosen

*Òrunmúsẹgbun ọ̀rọ̀ ló* Here come deep utterances  
*ń bọ̀ yìí*  
*Adiá fún agbè* Ifá divination was made for  
gourd  
*Èyí tí ń lọ rẹ̀* That will go to seek advice  
*gbàmọ̀ràn wá* from someone with full  
*lọ̀dọ̀ akọ̀rinkọ̀rin* knowledge of music  
*Èyí tí ń lọ rẹ̀* That will go to seek advice  
*gbàmọ̀ràn wá* from a very wise being  
*lọ̀dọ̀ Ọ̀rúnmúsẹ̀gbunkòtò*

*Agbè* went to its priests on how it could be versed in making deep and valuable utterances. *Agbè* was told that the sentences it will be making will not only be uncountable but will also be deep and valuable. The *Ifá* mythological account about how *agbè* was introduced into *dùndún* (a Yorùbá talking drum) ensemble cannot be undermined. *Dùndún* drum is the most popular and widely known Yorùbá drum[15][16]. The historical account according to priest Adétóyẹ̀şe Adéníjì is revealed in the *Òtúrúpọ̀ngbè* chapter of *Ifá*. *Òtúrúpọ̀ngbè* is the combination of *Òtúrúpọ̀n* and *Ogbè* of chapters *Ifá* literary corpus. This is narrated as in the excerpt below:

*Òtúrúpọ̀ngbè ó pọ̀ngbá* A wordplay form of the title  
of the chapter  
*Pọ̀ngbà pọ̀ngbá pọ̀ngbá* A wordplay form of the title  
of the chapter  
*Adiá fún gúdúgúdú* *Ifá* divination was made for  
*gúdúgúdú* (a foredrum in  
*dùndún* ensemble)  
*Tí í ẹnìgbẹ̀jẹ̀ dùndún* Which is *dùndún*'s advocate  
*Àìgùn káidàgbà* Being short does not mean  
being young  
*Gúdúgúdú ì í ẹnìjọ̀gbà* *Gúdúgúdú* is older than *dùndún*  
*dùndún*

*Gúdúgúdú* and *dùndún* according to this *Ifá* verse are brothers. *Gúdúgúdú* is the elder of the two while *dùndún* is the younger brother. Only the two of them go to perform on different occasions and return with a huge amount of money that makes them rich. People accuse them of being stingy and selfish. They thought this could affect their business. As a result, they went to meet *Àjàlá Alámọ̀*, *Ọ̀bátálá*'s personal assistant. They plead with him to give them *agbè* so as to join their performance group. *Àjàlá* does as requested, he tells them to take *agbè* to the earth and enmesh it with cowrie so that its tune will be louder

and sonorous. They tried what they were told and this step made more people like their performance. Instead of losing out their audience, they gain more supporters. Since then, *agbè* was included among *the dùndún* ensemble.

Almost during this same early period of *gúdúgúdú* and *dùndún*'s performance, there also exist a musical instrument called *àjà* (the Yorùbá traditional worshippers' bell) and *agogo* (a gong). Both are *Ọ̀bátálá*'s slaves. This is revealed in the below verse of *the Ọ̀kànrànsogbè* chapter of *Ifá*:

*Ogún lohùn ọ̀lọ̀gbọ̀n* A wise person speaks in  
twenty  
*Ogbọ̀n ni tí wèrè ẹ̀nìyàn* A mad person speaks in thirty  
*Gbólóhùn kan ọ̀so* A single statement of  
*N ò gbà, n ò jẹ̀* I am not going to let the issue  
go  
*Ní í mú kí aṣiwèrè ó* Makes a mad person to win  
*jàrẹ ọ̀lọ̀gbọ̀n* case against the wise  
*A diá fún Àjà* *Ifá* divination was made for  
*Àjà*  
*A sì diá fún Agogo* *Ifá* divination was made for  
*Agogo*  
*Wọ̀n ní kegélékegélé* *Agogo* sounds *kegélékegélé lohùn*  
*agogo* (ideophonic sound of gong)  
*Àjà nara tìpètìpè* *Àjà* stretches it parts to  
*lohùn àgà* sound

At a particular period in time, *Ọ̀bátálá* went on a sojourn and before he returned, *Agogo* and *Àjà* have gang-raped his favourite and the most beautiful wife, *Ogele*. When they realised that *Ọ̀bátálá* was aware of their action, they went to beg him before they were arraigned. However, *Ọ̀bátálá* told them to leave the heaven, that they should return to the earth so far that they are not pure and whatever is not pure cannot live in heaven. They pleaded with him that he should give them the spectacular tune which they can be identified when they are performing for people on getting to the earth. *Ọ̀bátálá* told them to go and be telling the people the offence they committed against him. He said by doing so, people will know them for their uniqueness and they will gain popularity. Since then, both musical instruments descended onto the earth and they continue to tell people the offence they committed in the musical tune as stated below. *Agogo* is the first to start the revelation of the offence while

*Social Status of Agbè and Kete: A Historical and Functional Yorùbá Oral Literary Perspectives*

Ààjà backs him in a pleading manner as revealed below:

Agogo: <i>Mo fÓgele ná</i>	Agogo: I once had sex with Ogele
<i>Mo fÓgele ná</i>	I once had sex with Ogele
Ààjà: <i>Fi jìn</i>	Ààjà: Please have mercy
<i>Fi jìn</i>	Please have mercy
<i>Àgbà Òrìṣà fi jìn</i>	Elderly deity have mercy
Agogo: <i>Mo fÓgele ná</i>	Agogo: I once had sex with Ogele
<i>Mo fÓgele ná</i>	I once had sex with Ogele
Ààjà: <i>Fi jìn</i>	Ààjà: Please have mercy
<i>Fi jìn</i>	Please have mercy
<i>Àgbà Òrìṣà fi jìn</i>	Elderly deity have mercy

With these utterances, the musical instruments were known by people for their style. Agogo and Ààjà allied with *dùndún's* group. By doing so, the performance group was known everywhere on earth. This account was revealed because we need to show how *agbè/kèrègbè*, both strung and unstrung become musical instruments that are used in many oral poetic performances.

At this juncture, it should be noticed that *agbè* right from its onset has a relationship with Ọbàtálá, a deity considered most senior among other the Yorùbá deities, though this relationship is not religiously based. It is, however, a social relationship. It must also be mentioned that *agbè* referred to in the above *Ifá* verses was not enmeshed. This same unstrung *agbè* was firstly used on a secular occasion as it was used to welcome a stranger, Mọladé who was called a white person in the narration made earlier. The fact that needs to be emphasised as revealed in the above storyline is that *agbè* from the onset was in Ọbàtálá's custody (a religious environment) but served a secular function (a means of creating entertainment).

*Kete*, on the other hand, is shown by many oral traditions as an instrument uses to carry out domestic functions at home. The most prominent among *kete's* works is its use as a container for fetching water. This is reflected in below oral traditional material narrated by Dr Oyebamiji Akeem when he was answering the

researcher's questions about the status and functions of *kete* and *agbè* among the Yorùbá people:

<i>Bí mo bá n lẹ nìbà ibẹhun</i>	If I'm going in that direction
<i>Orin ọdẹ níú bọ́ sími lẹnu</i>	I choose to chant hunter's poem
<i>Èlú ló laró</i>	It is <i>èlú</i> (a popular leaf use in making indigo) that owns a black indigo
<i>Ètù ló nìbọn</i>	It is the gun powder that owns the gun
<i>Kete ló lomi</i>	It is the calabash pot that owns the water
<i>Èjìkà ló lẹnu</i>	It is the shoulder that determines the fitness of a shirt

The excerpt is from *ijálá*, a Yorùbá hunters' chant. The utterances are used when the *ijálá* chanters want to prove their level of competence in *ijálá* poem. It was indicated in the above usage that *kete's* major function is its use as a container for fetching water. This is what the expression "*Kete ló lomi*" (It is the calabash pot that owns the water) connotes. This however makes the function performed by *kete* as shown in the above excerpt a secular function. When comparing this *kete's* function with that of *agbè* as expatiated in the preceding analysis, both materials could be said are performing secular functions. However, there are instances of oral materials in which *agbè/kèrègbè* is also cited as a water fetching utensil. An example of such an account is evident in the below oral excerpt of the Yorùbá people's prayer song:

<i>Kèrègbè tó fọ́</i>	The broken gourd
<i>Dẹ̀yìn léyìn odò</i>	Can no longer be used to fetch water
<i>Ọ́tá mi dẹ̀yìn léyìn mi</i>	My enemy, get away from me
<i>Kèrègbè tó fọ́</i>	The broken gourd
<i>Dẹ̀yìn léyìn odò</i>	Can no longer be used to fetch water

A prayer of parting with one's enemy is the theme of the above song. The user uses the song to seek refuge against his/her enemy. In doing this, the instance of a broken gourd which could no longer be used to fetch water is used as a prayer reference. This corresponds with how users of *ọfọ́* (the Yorùbá

incantational utterances) make use of assertive sentences and the magical power of utterance in solving their immediate needs. What the user of the above song wants to achieve by citing an instance of a broken gourd which could no longer be used to fetch water is that his/her enemy should be incapacitated from following him/her just like how a broken gourd is incapacitated of fetching water. By expansion, the user's enemy becomes a broken calabash while him/her becomes the water. This explanation further confirms the secular status of *agbè* (gourd) among the Yorùbá people.

There is also an oral poem that further shows how *kete/koto* is much more used in fetching water. Let's consider the utterances in the excerpt below:

<i>Kẹ̀hìndé rodò</i>	Kẹ̀hìndé goes to the river
<i>Kẹ̀hìndé fọ́ koto</i>	Kẹ̀hìndé breaks the calabash pot
<i>Òrìṣà ló bun Kẹ̀hìndé lómi mu</i>	It is the Deity that gives Kẹ̀hìndé water to drink
<i>Kẹ̀hìndé rodò</i>	Kẹ̀hìndé goes to the river
<i>Kẹ̀hìndé fọ́ koto</i>	Kẹ̀hìndé breaks the calabash pot
<i>Òrìṣà ló bun Kẹ̀hìndé lómi mu</i>	It is the Deity that gives Kẹ̀hìndé water to drink

First, it is obvious that *koto*, a variant word for *kete*, is mentioned to be used in fetching water in the excerpt. Second, *Òrìṣà*, who was said to have given Kẹ̀hìndé water to drink is *Ọ̀bàtálá*. *Ọ̀bàtálá* is sometimes referred to as *Òrìṣà* (Deity), *Àgbà Òrìṣà* (Elderly deity) and *Òrìṣà Òkè* (The god of the mountain) etc. It must also be mentioned that *kete*, in the religious services of *Ọ̀bàtálá*, where water is used to cure barrenness, is the container used in fetching the medicinal water into the *ìkòkò àṣẹ̀* (the sacred pot of *Ọ̀bàtálá*). From this point of view, *kete* is not only used for secular purposes but also use for religious activities. Using *kete* to fetch water into the sacred pot of *Ọ̀bàtálá* on the other hand makes it a religious symbol of medicine in the *Alára-Igbó* and *Ọ̀bàtálá* religious practices.

It now becomes a must to discuss the value of the items both *agbè* and *kete* contain. Because of its long narrowed neck which guides against spilling away of the item it contains, *agbè* is chosen and preferred in storing more precious items than *kete*. Examples of

the items *agbè* are used to store are *emu* (a palm wine), *ṣẹ̀kẹ̀lẹ̀* and *bùrùkùtù* (local Yorùbá wines and malts). Local wines and malt are scarce, as a result, a valuable and protective container (*agbè*) is used to bottle them. On the other hand, water is cheap and it can be found easily in the rainforest where the Yorùbáland is located. As a result, an opened and less valuable container (*kete*) is used to fetch it. This obviously shows that *agbè* in the social functionalities among the Yorùbá is more valuable than *kete*. This is because it can be used to perform the functionality ascribed to *kete* and beyond. *Agbè's* value is at times consider ahead of the so-called previous items it used to store. There are oral utterances to back up this claim. Let's consider the proverbs itemised below:

1. *Omi ló dànù agbè ò fọ́* It is the water that spills away, the gourd does not break
2. *Ọ̀rọ̀ agbè níi dun eḻemu* It is the issue of gourd that bothered the palm wine seller

The first excerpt is a persuasive statement used to console someone who lost her baby during the delivery process among the people of Yorùbá. *Omi* (water) in the statement is an iconic metaphorical signification of the child lost while *agbè* iconises the mother of the lost baby. The instance of how *agbè* contains *omi* is used to signify how women carry babies in their wombs for months during pregnancy. Preferring *agbè* to the content it holds signifies *agbè's* preciousness over the content. By extension, as it is preferable to lose the child and have the mother alive, so as it is to lose the content in *agbè* than to lose *agbè* itself.

The second proverb shows how palm wine sellers prefer to lose the product than to lose the gourd. Gourds are protected by palm wine sellers purposely because it is difficult to get new well-formed ones in return. It is discovered during the interview section held with Pa Tiámíyù Òjọ of Ajóṣàkàrà's compound, Oke-Ìṣẹ̀rin, Igbó Ọ̀rà, Ọ̀yọ̀ State Nigeria that view calabash plants produce a well-formed *agbè*. That is, the gourd that has a full bottle form is rare. So, instead of wasting the gourd that is not well-formed totally, those that are big among them are converted to *kete* (which functions are restricted to fetching water only

*Social Status of Agbè and Kete: A Historical and Functional Yorùbá Oral Literary Perspectives*

or keeping some other items). In this regard, *agbè* is also shown to be more valuable than *kete*.

While considering the religious function of *kete* in the semiosphere of Ọ̀bàtálá religious practices, rating the value of *agbè* ahead of *kete* is limited to the social and economic use of the items. This is because *kete* in the religious setting of Ọ̀bàtálá and Alára-Igbó is considered more valuable than *agbè* as a result of the medicinal role it is used for. *Agbè* is believed by the Yorùbá people to be a symbol of merriment. The perception of most sociable Yorùbá people about *agbè* is that wherever the item is seen or present, there is a possibility of excessive dining and wining at the place. To buttress this point, *agbè* as a musical instrument in *orin agbè* as shown in this study's investigation, at the initial stage of the genre is the bottle-gourd converted into a musical instrument after the warlords who initiated the genre have consumed the wine it contained, purposely to get them stimulated before embarking on war expenditure. In this wise, *agbè* is no doubt more relevant in social settings than religious settings. As mentioned before, *kete* on the other hand though may have less socio-economic value, however, it also has a religious value. This is for the fact that it is been used as an instrument used to contain medicine for treating barrenness.

Aside from this, the Yorùbá people also consider water, to which *kete*'s function is limited, as medicine. This is evident in the Yorùbá proverbial saying, "*Omi tó ò̀gàn*" (Water is a medicine). The Yorùbá also believe that "*ò̀mi ni è̀yàn*" (human beings are water). This statement has different interpretations, it can mean human beings can easily get anywhere on earth just like how it is easy for water to flow around the world. Also, it can mean human beings are a composition of water[17]. If human beings are a composition of water, and water is also believed by the Yorùbá people as life, then whatever is closely attributed to water like how *agbè* is to it, can therefore never be frivolous.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In the study, the status of *agbè* and *kete* are critically examined, using the Yorùbá oral historical and other Yorùbá oral materials as the base of the argument. The social status of *agbè* is traced to *ẹ̀sẹ̀ Ifá* (the Yorùbá divination poetry). It is also established

through the Yorùbá proverbs that *agbè* is basically a social symbol. It functions not only as a safe and economic container but also as a musical instrument. The physical structure of *agbè* gives it priority ahead of *kete* in saving valuable items. On the other hand, *kete*'s function like *agbè* is not limited to housework i.e. fetching water. This is because it is also used in making *kete* drum. It is strongly argued that though *agbè* might be more valued than *kete* as a result of the preciousness of the items it uses to save, however, *kete* on the hand is precious as it is used to perform an important function in the traditional medical practice in the religious setting of Ọ̀bàtálá. It is also established that as long as *kete* is attributed to water, which accords prestigious respect, as it is considered as a life by the Yorùbá people, *kete* can never be therefore considered a frivolous item. To conclude this part, using *agbè* to save and contain precious items may not be enough to consider it more important than *kete*. This is because *kete* in another context (religious setting of Ọ̀bàtálá and Alára-Igbó) also performs significant functions.

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