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A pragmatic analysis of selected Yoruba Christian pain-relieving burial songs in Nigeria

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Abstract. *The Yoruba culture, like many other cultures of the world, sees death as an eternal loss, hence the sadness and crying witnessed among the people whenever a soul departs to the great beyond. However, the Christian belief system, as evident in many of the Yoruba Christian burial songs, has been employed as an antidote to the pain of death among the Yoruba Christians in Nigeria. This phenomenon has not been addressed from a linguistic perspective. This study, therefore, applies a modified version of Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts theory to ten Yoruba Christian pain-relieving burial songs selected among Yoruba Christians in Nigeria. It concludes that Yoruba Christian pain-relieving burial songs are emotional acts that interact with such contextual factors as Shared Yoruba Cultural belief (SYCB), Shared Christian Religious belief (SCRB), Inference (INF), Relevance (REL) and Metaphor (MPH) to produce antidotes to the pain of death among Yoruba Christians in Nigeria.*

Key words: *Death, Christian belief system, Yoruba Christian burial songs, pragmatic acts theory*

1. INTRODUCTION

Death is undoubtedly a universal phenomenon whose fang and sting are meant to be experienced by every living being, irrespective of their status (man or animal), race, culture, religion or ideological beliefs. Because it is seen as an eternal loss by people, the pain that accompanies the experience of death is usually unquantifiable on the part of the family or associates of the departed soul. This pain manifests itself in the shock, the wailing, the crying and the mourning that attend the pronouncement of a relative's or an associate's death.

In the Yoruba language and culture, for instance, the phenomenon of death is such that is enshrouded in certain mysteries. The Yoruba see death as an unavoidable end for all human beings; they see it as an irreparable loss, and a journey of no return. Little wonder they shed tears of agony and pain whenever they lose anyone close to them, irrespective of the age of the fellow.

However, as an antidote to the 'terrible pain' of death, Yoruba Christians have fashioned out several songs usually sung at burial ceremonies. With these songs, they hope to neutralise, render impotent and ineffectual the pain that comes with losing a

loved one. This work, therefore, is a pragmatic analysis of selected Yoruba Christian burial songs which, in view of their pragmatic function(s), are referred to in this study as pain-relieving songs.

1.1. Yoruba Beliefs about Death and the Dead

Adeoye (1979, 319) admits that the Yoruba dread death just as little children fear darkness. However, since it is inevitable, they have devised a way of coping with it. They see death as a phenomenon that manifests itself in two forms: as it relates to the death of the young and as it relates to the death of the old. The Yoruba see the former as a very painful one that is usually prayed against. When it involves the latter, however, it is seen as a thing of joy that calls for celebrations, especially when the old fellow that passes away leaves children behind. Also, the Yoruba believe death could be a covering that covers one's shame. This explains why they often make the following proverbial statement: *Kí á kú ní kékérékí á fì ẹ̀şin ẹ̀şẹ̀ ìrelé ẹ̀ni ó sà̀n ju kí a dàgbà kí a má nì adìẹ̀ ìrà̀nà* 'It is better to die young and honourably than to die at a ripe old age without living a meaningful life'. In the dictum above, the Yoruba express their preference for premature death that will cover one's shame instead of living a life that is full of regret, shame, meaninglessness, and ultimately a worthless life. Daramola and Jeje (1975, 150) opine that the Yoruba believe that when one dies in this world, one goes to another world. This explains why the burial rite of such a fellow is given much attention. They believe the person should be given a befitting burial so that he or she is not put to shame in the midst of his or her fellow dead. If the fellow that dies is a woman, her hair is plaited and she is adorned in a gorgeous dress; but if the fellow is a man, he has his hair shaved, and he is adorned in a beautiful white dress. After the dead body has been dressed, it is lowered into the grave that is already prepared for it. During this process, the family members of the deceased usually talk to him/her with tears in their eyes as though him/her were listening. Consider the excerpt below:

<i>Bí o bá délé kí o kílé</i>	When you get home, greet all
<i>Bí o bá dónà kí o ọ̀yàyà</i>	When you are the way, be courteous
<i>Bí o ọ̀run o ọ̀run re</i>	When you get to heaven, be good
<i>Má jòkùn má jekóló</i>	Do not eat milipede; do not eat earthworm
<i>Ohun tí wón n̄ jẹ̀ lájùlé ọ̀run</i>	Whatever they are eating in heaven
<i>Ni kí o máa jẹ̀</i>	Is what you should be eating

(Daramola and Jeje 1975, 152)

These statements and others like them are usually heard from the bereaved and mourners whose eyes are filled with tears whenever a loved one dies. The tears symbolise the fact that they will never see the departed soul again (Daramola and Jeje 1975, 52). Commenting on the phenomenon of death in the Yoruba worldview, Akinyemi (1984, 1) asserts that death is a phenomenon that confronts all human beings, and the fact that there is death makes a mark boldly written on the faces of all things, be it human beings or animals. Death is a phenomenon that brings to an end all human activities in the world. According to Akinyemi (1984, 2), the Yoruba word for death is *Ikú*. It denotes not only the end, but also a personified power that is believed to be commissioned by *Elédumarè* to take the lives of men from the earth plane whenever He (*Elédumarè*) feels it

is time for them to come to Him. That is why the Yoruba believe death can come at any time, hence the belief that there is a need to handle anything put in care of man with utmost seriousness and sincerity. This assertion is reinforced with the Yoruba common saying that: *Ikú ò dójó, àrùn ò dóṣù* 'Death does not give a specific time (to visit), neither does disease'. As claimed by Akinyemi (1984, 25), it is the Yoruba belief that every man shall give accurate account of their deeds on earth when they die. This ideological belief is established in the following Ifá song:

<i>E má ṣèkà láyé</i>	Do not do evil in the world
<i>Torí a ó rorun</i>	Because we are going to heaven
<i>E má ṣèkà láyé ooo</i>	Do not do evil in the world (emphasis)
<i>Torí a ó rorun ooo</i>	Because we are going to heaven (emphasis)
<i>Bẹ bá dé bodè</i>	When we get to Ibodè ¹
<i>E ó ro jọ ooo</i>	You shall give account (of your deed) (emphasis)

(Akinyemi, 1984, 25)

Akinyemi (1984) concludes that an average Yoruba man believes it is good to do good in the world as any wicked man/woman that dies will suffer endless wretchedness in the left-hand side of *Elédumarè* when he/she gets to *Orun* (heaven). The suffering and punishment experienced here (the left hand side of *Elédumarè*) is nothing compared to the unpalatable experience man has in the world.

1.2. The Christian Perspective on Death and the Dead

Death is among the many phenomena discussed in Christian theology. Little wonder death discourse has attracted the attention of many theologians and scholars. One of such scholars is Rodney Decker. In his commentary on death, Decker (2007, 4) opines that "death is defined theologically as the separation of the soul and the body, though neither ceases to exist". In death, according to this scholar, the body is not functional but slowly and surely returns to dust until the time of resurrection; although the soul is intact and very much alive, it is limited in some way without the body. Decker's (2007) assertion is predicated on the description of the relationship between the body and the soul in the book of 2 Corinthians 5 verse 3, where we can read that : without our earthly tent-house, that is our body, we are naked and unclothed, following death and prior to resurrection (Decker 2007, 4). What we can infer from the position of this scholar is that Christian theology believes that when one, especially a Christian, dies, his/her physical body becomes inactive and non-functional, but his/her soul remains passively active. The body of the dead gradually decomposes into dust awaiting resurrection; however, the soul is alive but not active because of the absence of the mortal body.

Decker (2007, 5) further opines that when an individual dies, the fate and future of the individual is sealed. Decker (2007) makes this statement in reference to the book of Hebrews 9: 27 that reads: "And it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgement" (KJV). Therefore, when an individual dies, he or she has no opportunity to change his/her destiny; there is nothing anyone can do here in the world to alter God's judgement concerning the fellow.

¹The boundary between heaven and earth

However, commenting on the Christian attitude to death, Decker (2007, 6) avers that physical death is seen as an enemy whom Jesus Christ had defeated at His resurrection. When it does come therefore, though they do not welcome the pain and suffering that comes with it, Christians need not fear it; their destiny is secure and they will be released from their suffering, no more death or mourning or crying or pain (Rev. 21:4, cf. Decker, 2007, 6). He further argues that Christians have two-sided feelings about death. This manifests itself in their abhorrence for death, even when they believe that death is the gateway to depart from this 'terrible' world to be with Christ, which is the utmost desire of every serious Christian. He makes reference to Philippians 1:21-24, where Paul describes dying as gain, yet acknowledges the fact that to go on living would also be fruitful labour. Decker (2007) says the picture painted above is the ideal model of the Christian attitude to death, realising the essential benefits of living and dying, yet be content to submit to God's providence whichever that should be (6).

He finally concludes with the following admonition to the bereaved and pastors:

Death is never easy-not for the family and not for the pastor. Yet it needs not be feared. The Christians need not fear death since he has the hope of God's promises. The family need not fear death; though it will bring grief and loss, they too have a Christian hope that will serve to carry them through difficult days. As a pastor you should not fear funerals. It will give you an opportunity to minister to the comfort of the Word of God in a very personal way, both to your own people, as well as to friends and family who will attend the funeral service. Many of them would not otherwise come to hear a sermon. Though funerals are often unexpected and unplanned, do not dread them, but learn to use them as opportunities to minister.

(Decker 2007, 21)

Another scholar whose view about the Christian perception of death is worthy of mention in this paper is Lynne Rudder Baker. Baker (2011, 367) explores the Christian doctrine on death and argues that Christian doctrines emanated from two major sources: the Second-Temple Judaism, which emphasises the idea of resurrection of the body, and the Greek philosophy, which emphasises the idea of the immortality of the soul (Cullman, 1973; cf. Baker 2011, 367). Baker (2011) makes reference to the view of Wolfson (1957, 8), who claims the early fathers of the church believed in the immortality of the soul - a claim that is predicated on their belief that Jesus rose from the dead, as demonstrated in their belief that his soul survived bodily death and was reinvested with his risen body. According to this Christian belief, the surviving souls, at the end of time, would be reconfigured with risen bodies. During the period between death and the general resurrection, a soul would have a lifeless body, but a person's final state would be embodied in a way. This position of Baker implies the Christian belief emphasises life after death.

Baker (2011) claims the Christian doctrine of life after death is hinged on the metaphorical reference to the case of Jesus in the Scriptures. According to the Christian doctrinal belief, Jesus is the Son of God, who was crucified, killed, buried and resurrected after three days. He thereafter ascended into heaven. Reinforcing this position further, Baker (2011) makes reference to the book of I Corinthians 15, where the human body is metaphorically likened to a seed sown in corruption and raised in *incorruption*; sown in dishonour, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown a natural body,

raised a spiritual body (367). Apparently, the argument of Baker (2011) is in consonance with that of Bynum (1995), who believes that the resurrected body will be radically changed, and will not be made of the same material as the premortem body.

As further claimed by Baker (2011), Christian views of resurrection have three major characteristics. The first is embodiment, the second identity, and the third miracle. In his opinion, as far as embodiment is concerned, resurrection requires some kind of bodily life after death. In other words, postmortem bodies are different from premortem bodies in the sense that they are believed to be spiritual, incorruptible and glorified. With regard to identity, it is believed that the same person that lives on earth will live in an afterlife. The relation between a person in the world (now) and in the afterlife (later) must be the identity (Baker 2011, 368). With respect to miracle, Baker (2011) claims that life after death, according to Christian doctrine, is a gift from God - a phenomenon that defies the understanding of man.

What becomes obvious from the positions of scholars whose views have been presented above is the fact that Christian doctrinal belief emphasises the concept of afterlife, which promises a glorious, beautiful and pleasant ending for any Christian who dies in Christ. In other words, the phenomenon of resurrection is central to the Christian belief on the concept of death.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK : PRAGMATIC ACTS THEORY

Pragmatic Acts theory was proposed by Jacob Mey (2001) to make up for the inadequacies of Speech Acts theory, which is said to 'be atomistic in nature' (Fairclough 1989, 9). In particular, Mey (2001) claims that speech acts theory is non-situated, hence the need for pragmatic acts theory that focuses on the analysis of a text in its context. He comes up with the concept of Pragmeme as represented in Figure 1.

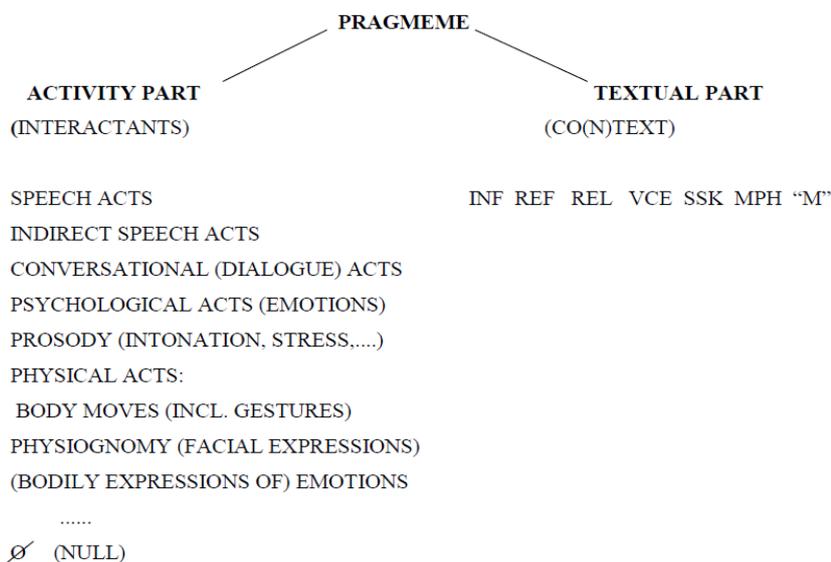


Figure 1: Mey's (2001) pragmeme schema

2.1 INTERPRETING MEY'S SCHEMA

2.1.1 PRAGMEME, PRACT, AND ALLOPRACT

In the words of Mey (2001, 221), the pragmatic acts theory focuses on “the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as what is actually being said”. This view is captured as a *pragmeme*, a generalized pragmatic act regarded as the only force associated with making utterances (Odebunmi 2008, 76). In the argument of Capone (2005, 1357), “[a] pragmeme is a situated speech act in which the rules of language and of society work together in determining meaning, intended as a socially recognized object sensitive to social expectations about the situation in which the utterance to be interpreted is embedded”. Also commenting on the phenomenon of pragmeme, Kecskes (2010, 2894) argues that pragmemes represent situational prototypes to which there may be several pragmatic access routes (*practs*). He then proposes that situation-bound utterances (SUBs) are instances of pragmatic acts. He explains that the pragmeme, inviting someone to take a seat, for instance, can be concretely realised by the following SUBs: ‘Why don’t you sit down, Please take a seat; Sit down, please’. A pragmatic act is instantiated through an *ipra* or a *pract*, which realizes a pragmeme. According to Mey (2001, 221), “every pract is at the same time an allopract, that is to say a concrete instantiation of a particular pragmeme”. What determines a pract is solely participants’ knowledge of the interactional situation and the potential effect of a pract in a particular context.

Thus, *practicing* resolves the problem of distinguishing illocutionary force from perlocutionary force (Odebunmi 2008, 77). In Figure 1, the column on the left itemises the various choices that the [S]peaker and [H]earer have at their disposal while speaking. Thus S may choose one of the options; if all the cells are empty, the matrix goes to zero, indicating the borderline case of silence (Mey, 2001). The column on the right shows the textual part, that is, the context within which the pragmeme operates. For meaningful communication, the interactants rely on such speech act types as indirect speech acts, conversational (dialogue) acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts and physical acts. These are engaged in contexts, which include INF representing "inference"; REL, "relevance"; VCE, "voice"; SSK, "shared situation knowledge"; MPH, "metaphor"; and M "metapragmatic joker". Thus, the interaction between the activity and textual part results in a *pract* or an *allopract*.

However, Odebunmi (2006) (cited in Odebunmi 2008, 78) introduces SCK (shared cultural knowledge) to be able to adequately account for the cultural factor in the use of proverbs in *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, a novel that reflects the socio-cultural life of the Yoruba. Following the cue of Odebunmi (2006) which projects the flexibility of Mey’s (2001) Pragmatic Acts theory, we have, for the purpose of this work, reviewed and modified the pragmatic acts model of Mey (2001) as shown in Figure 2.

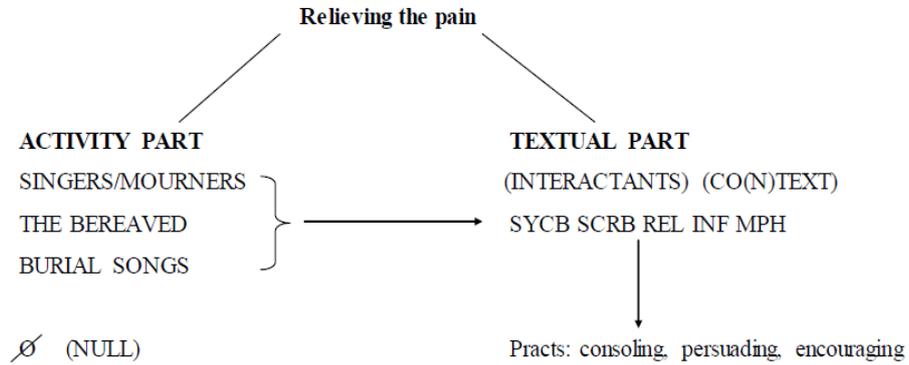


Figure 2: The revised Mey's (2001) pragmeme schema (as adopted in this work)

In Figure 2, SYCB stands for Shared Yoruba Cultural Belief, SCRIB for Shared Christian Religious Belief, REL for Relevance, INF for Inference, and MPH for Metaphors.

3. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Ten songs, generated from introspective reminiscence of songs sung at Christian burial ceremonies in Nigeria, have been selected for analysis in this work. The songs are presented as emotional acts that interact with such contextual variables as Shared Yoruba Cultural Belief (SYCB) and Shared Christian Religious Belief (SCRIB), Relevance (REL), Inference (INF), and Metaphors (MPH) to achieve the pragmeme of 'pain-relief' in Yoruba Christian pain-relieving songs. The analysis of each song is done in connection to others. This is with the view to discussing the pragmatic features that aid the conceptual interpretation of each one. However, we would make appropriate reference, where necessary, between/among songs that have certain features in common. Our analysis is carried out within the purview of the revised model of Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts theory, as shown in Figure 2.

SONG 1

<i>Bàba/Màmá ò kú</i>	Baba/Mama has not died
<i>Ìlẹ̀ ló lọ</i>	He/she has gone home
<i>Ìlẹ̀ ló lọ ò</i>	He/she has gone home
<i>Ìlẹ̀ ayọ̀</i>	Home of happiness/joy

In the song above, the sting of death that usually brings about eternal departure between the deceased and the living, especially the family and associates of the deceased is neutralised with particular and emphatic metaphorical reference to the destination of the departed as 'home'. This assertion is predicated on both the Yoruba shared cultural belief that when an individual dies, such an individual has gone to another world to rest,

and the shared Christian religious belief that any righteous believer who dies has gone home to rest in the bosom of the Lord. The interpretation of *home* here therefore relies heavily on the shared cultural belief of the people, the Yoruba, and the shared Christian religious belief of Christians. The inference that can be drawn from the following is the fact that the dead person, after having worked tirelessly in the world, has gone home to rest. The song, is therefore, interpreted as a message of consolation, a pain-reliever, to the family and associates of the departed soul not to cry any more, as the deceased has only gone to rest.

SONG 2

<i>Abaṣo fẹ́lẹ́lẹ́ o</i>	The one clothed in a flowing garment
<i>Abaṣo fẹ́lẹ́lẹ́</i>	The one clothed in a flowing garment
<i>Abaṣo fẹ́lẹ́lẹ́ o</i>	The one clothed in a flowing garment
<i>Abaṣo fẹ́lẹ́lẹ́</i>	The one clothed in a flowing garment
<i>Ángẹ̀lì tó gbé bàbá/mà má lọ sọrun rere</i>	The Angel that has taken baba/mama to a good heaven

In the song presented above, the shared Christian religious belief and the shared Yoruba cultural belief about the fate of the dead person is projected. Both belief systems support the existence of *ọrun rere* (paradise). This place is strictly meant for those who lived to 'please' God/*Elédùmarè* while on earth. However, the mention of the phenomenon, *Ángẹ̀lì*, in the song is a mark of the shared Christian religious belief in angels, especially those that accompany the righteous departed soul to heaven, paradise. There is no such belief in the Yoruba socio-cultural beliefs that angels perform such a task. The song is consolatory in that, according to the shared Christian belief, before an angel can appear to take a fellow to paradise, *ọrun rere*, he/she must have been of good conduct while in the world. He/she must have obeyed all the commandments of God and served Him wholeheartedly. And for the particular fellow for whom this song is sung to have been said to be accompanied home by an angel, it means the fellow had been of good behaviour while on earth.

The inference that comes from this song, therefore, is that, there is no need for the family and associates of the departed soul to mourn any more; after all, the departed soul had done well while in the world, even when the singers and mourners who render this pain-relieving song could not really say much about how the deceased spent his/her life.

SONG 3

<i>Àd padé lẹ̀sẹ̀ Jesu</i>	We shall meet again at the feet of Jesus
<i>Nìbití a kò ní yara wa</i>	Where we shall part no more
<i>A ó ríra wa</i>	We shall see one another
<i>A ò yò mọra wa</i>	We shall rejoice with one another
<i>Jesu ní yóó ẹ̀ àlága wa</i>	Jesus will be our Chairman

The Yoruba believe in the life after death but not in the same way as the Christian religious belief conceives of the phenomenon. In the Yoruba belief system, anyone who dies, especially a fellow believed not to have completed his/her number of days in the physical world, would continue to live in the spiritual world. However, the shared Christian religious belief as projected in the song above depicts is contrary to what the

Yoruba belief projects. In the song, the ‘feet of Jesus’ is said to be the meeting point where both the dead and the mourners shall meet again to part no more. In Christendom, the ‘feet of Jesus’ is a metaphor for a place of joy, happiness and victory for Christian believers who live in conformity with the precepts and principles of God in the world. The singers and mourners refer to this shared Christian religious belief to ‘relieve the pain’ of the family and associates of the departed soul with a promisory message of re-union and resurrection, trying to paint the departed soul as someone who had lived creditably well to have access to the place where Jesus lives. The inference drawn from the song therefore is that the departure between the dead and his associates is only temporal and temporary; they shall meet again and rejoice with one another.

SONG 4

<i>Ílé o, ilé</i>	Home, home
<i>Ílé o, ilé</i>	Home, home
<i>Bàbá/Mámá relé ò</i>	Bàbá/Mama has gone home
<i>Ilé ló lọ tàràrà</i>	He/she has gone straight home
<i>Ó fẹ̀ lọ dádé ògò</i>	He/she wants to go and wear the crown of glory
<i>Ó fẹ̀ lọ wẹ̀wù oyé</i>	He/she wants to go and wear the clothes of royalty
<i>Ó fẹ̀ lọ sinmi nibè</i>	He/she wants to go and rest there
<i>Bàbá/Mámá relé ò</i>	Bàbá/Mama has gone home
<i>Ilé ló lọ tàràrà</i>	He/she has gone straight home

In the excerpt above, reference has been made to those Yoruba cultural items associated with royalty and life of splendour to describe the lot of the departed soul where he/she is going. In the Yoruba culture and tradition, the crown, *adé*, is associated with the king, the one referred to as ‘the second in command to the gods’. Kings are unquestionable for their absolute power; they live in splendour and affluence to the admiration of their subjects. Similarly, the clothes of royalty, *ẹ̀wù oyé*, are associated with chiefs who are a little lower than the kings in the Yoruba socio-cultural system. The singers and mourners being Yoruba, like the family and relatives of the deceased, understand the cultural values of these items; they believe the deceased would enjoy them when he/she gets to his/her home in heaven. This cultural belief is in tandem with the shared Christian belief that Christians who make heaven will live as kings in heaven. It takes, therefore, both the shared Yoruba cultural belief and the shared Christian religious belief to interpret the song as painting death as a means of transport into a life of glory, splendour, affluence and untamed access to power to reign for ever. The inference from the song is the fact that there is unending joy and enjoyment for anyone who dies in Christ, hence, there is no need to continue to wail and cry over departed souls.

SONG 5

<i>Àtipó àti àlejò ni a jé láyé</i>	We are sojourners and visitors in the world
<i>Lójó kan ní bàbá wa lokè yò rànşé pè wá</i>	One day our father above we call for us
<i>Pé ọmọ dari wálé o</i>	that son, come home
<i>Kò wà jìhìn fún mi bo ti sè ló áyè rẹ</i>	and give account of how you fared in the world

The song above, as sung by singers and mourners, makes reference to the shared Yoruba cultural and shared Christian religious beliefs to describe the concept of death. The Yoruba culture, just as the Christian belief, emphasises the fact that every human being in the world is a visitor and sojourner who must surely go home no matter how much time they spend in the world, their visited place. The relationship that exists between fathers and their children in the world is equally expressed in the song above. In Yoruba culture, fathers, by virtue of their position in the family, can send their children on errands, and any obedient child will not turn down the request of his father to run errands for him; and such a child is expected to return home after having completed the errand. It takes the shared Yoruba cultural belief and the shared Christian religious belief on the part of the singer(s) and the bereaved to interpret *bàbá* in this context as the supreme being, God, who controls the time one is to be born; come to the world to accomplish certain tasks as commanded by Him, and the time to leave the world, come home and give report of how the tasks have been carried out in the world; and we human beings as *omọ* who cannot determine when to come to and leave the world.

Thus, we can assert that the singers *persuade* and *console* the bereaved to cheer up as the departed soul has only gone to answer the call of his/her father, being an obedient child who must go back home and give reports to his/her father on how he/she has carried out the assignment he/she is asked to carry out in the world.

SONG 6

<i>Áyé kí ñ sẹ́lẹ̀ wá</i>	The world is not our home
<i>Áwá kàn sẹ́rẹ̀ wá nì</i>	We have just come to play there
<i>Ìgbà tò ba yá</i>	When it is time
<i>A ó padà lọ</i>	We shall go back

This song is similar to Songs 1 and 4, where reference is made to *ilé* 'house/home'. In the song, the world is referred to as a playground where human beings have come to play, after which they must return home. The consolatory tone of this song lies in the shared Yoruba cultural belief and is supported by the shared Christian religious belief that heaven is our home, our place of permanent abode. The 'play' referred to in this song is not to be interpreted in its literal sense. It actually means the various assignments different human beings have been given to perform and carry out while on earth. The inference from this is the fact that death is a transporter of humans to their homes, considering the Yoruba belief that *ájò ò dà bí ilé* 'No place like home', as home is seen as a place of comfort and rest. The singers therefore practice that the dead has only gone to his/her place of natural abode where comfort and rest are assured, hence the bereaved should be cheerful.

SONG 7

<i>Ó di gbére o</i>	It is bye for ever
<i>Ó dàrinnà kò</i>	Till we meet by chance
<i>Ó di gbére o</i>	It is bye for ever
<i>Ó dàrinnà kò</i>	Till we meet by chance
<i>Mo sẹ́báyé lójá</i>	I take the world as a market
<i>òrun mà nilé o</i>	Heaven is home

This song further reinforces the fact that the Yoruba believe the world is not their home as people. In the song above, the world is metaphorically referred to as to *ọjà* 'market'. In the Yoruba worldview, *ọjà* is a place for buying and selling, among some other activities; and one of the particular features of the market is that different people have different times and periods of arrival, just as they do for departure. This explains why we all came/come to the world at different times and would all leave at different times. No matter how much one enjoys the market, one must certainly go home; no matter how much profit or loss one records at the market, one must retire home. This shared Yoruba cultural belief is shared by the Yoruba Christians, as reflected in many of their burial songs, of which the song presented in the excerpt above is an example. The knowledge of the world as an *ọjà* is such that the bereaved are expected to share with the singer(s), who are largely Yoruba. The inference practiced by this song is that the deceased person has completed his/her 'transaction' in the world, *ọjà*, and has to go home for rest and comfort; thus, the bereaved need not continue to languish in pain and bereavement.

SONG 8

<i>Ah ikú</i>	Oh death
<i>Ikú, oró rẹ dà?</i>	Death, where is your sting?
<i>Ah ikú</i>	Oh death
<i>Ikú oró rẹ dà?</i>	Death, where is your sting?
<i>Bónìgbàgbọ bá kú òò</i>	When a believer dies
<i>A jìhde o</i>	He/she will resurrect

This song is a deliberate mockery of the power of death as depicted in the rhetorical question posed at death as though it were listening. This interpretation of the song is dependent on the shared Christian religious belief that death has no permanent grip or hold on the dead, especially when the fellow is a Christian believer. Although the Yoruba believe in the life after death, they do not believe in resurrection as projected in this song. However, it is believed that the bereaved, who are themselves Christians, would relate to the song, employing their shared Christian religious belief that sees death as powerless, after all. If it were powerful, it should not have been possible for any dead Christian believer to resurrect, and resurrection to a faithful Christian believer, as projected in this song, is everlasting life, full of enjoyment in the bosom of God in company of His beautiful angels. The relevance of this song in the context of use is pragmatically symbolic. The departed soul for whom this song is sung was a 'Christian' when in the world, and not just a nominal one, but one that was devout; even when the singers of the song as well as the mourners do not know how much of Christian principles were upheld by him/her while alive. After all, it is often argued that faith is personal and internal. The inference drawable from this song therefore is the fact that the departed soul is assured of resurrection into everlasting joy, hence the bereaved need not cry.

SONG 9

<i>Ajòjì la jẹ láyé</i>	We are foreigners in the world
<i>Ajòjì la jẹ láyé</i>	We are foreigners in the world
<i>Bòşewù kayé yìi ladùn tó</i>	No matter how sweet this world is
<i>A ó padà lojọ kan</i>	We will go back some day
<i>Ìlẹ ayé yìi a wá najà ni</i>	We have only come to transact (business) in the

world

This song, very much like Song 7, reinforces the shared Yoruba cultural belief about the world we live in. This Yoruba cultural belief is borrowed into this Christian Yoruba burial song by the singers(s) who are themselves Yoruba to console the bereaved whom they believe share the same knowledge with them on the world being a market-place where people have come for business transactions. The song metaphorically projects human beings as foreigners in the world, making reference to how the idea of the market is conceived of in the Yoruba socio-cultural worldview. In the Yoruba system, there are no residents of the market; people just come around, carry out their business transactions and depart when they are done; and the departure comes at different times. The bereaved draw on the shared Yoruba cultural belief to interpret the concepts of *Àjòjì*, foreigner(s) and *Ìlẹ̀ ayé yìí a wá nàjà ní* 'We have only come to transact (business) in the world'. Hence, the bereaved do not need to cry, as the departed soul has only gone back to where he/she came from, where he/she originally belongs.

SONG 10*Ayọ ayólé ò*

Joy unspeakable

Ayọ ayólé ò

Joy unspeakable

Ojọ a bá pàdé o ní yàrá oké

The day we shall meet in the upper room

Ayọ ayólé ò

Joy unspeakable

Ojọ a bá pàdé o lèsè Jesu

The day we shall meet at feet of Jesus

Ayọ ayólé ò

Joy unspeakable

This song is partially akin to Song 3 where reference is made to the feet of Jesus. However, it is particularly distinct in that it features the concept of *yàrá oké* 'upper room'. Certainly, the concept of *yàrá oké* as conceptualised in this song is alien to the Yoruba cultural belief system. However, the concept is taken from the shared Christian religious belief that revolves round the paradise being Jesus' abode where the righteous Christians who die converge to reign with Christ in his heavenly kingdom. The song prays the fact that the deceased person has gone to wait for the remaining Christians in the world, including the singer(s) and the bereaved, in paradise where he/she is enjoying the comfort and pleasure that characterise Jesus' abode. The inference the bereaved are expected to draw from the song, therefore, is the fact that the departed soul is enjoying where he/she is, for no sinner can have access to 'Jesus' feet', according to Christian doctrinal belief. Hence, they need to cheer up and do well while in the world so as to be able to join the departed soul where he/she is, living far above the worries of this world.

4. CONCLUSION

Death is an inevitable end for all creatures, irrespective of their status: man or animal. The Yoruba culture, like many other cultures of the world, sees death as an eternal loss, hence the sadness and crying witnessed among the people whenever a soul has departed to the great beyond. However, as demonstrated in this study, the Christian belief system, as evident in many of the Yoruba Christian burial songs, and the Yoruba

socio-cultural beliefs have been employed as an opium and antidote to the pain of death among the Yoruba Christians in Nigeria. We, therefore, conclude Yoruba Christian pain-relieving burial songs are emotional acts that interact with contextual concepts such as Shared Yoruba Cultural belief (SYCB), Shared Christian Religious belief (SCRB), Inference (INF), Relevance (REL) and Metaphor (MPH) to pract consolation, encouragement and persuasion. The Yoruba Christian pain-relieving songs are a clear manifestation of Christian ideology that death can only kill the physical body but cannot tamper with the spiritual body, hence Christians' victory over death.

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