

Colaological Functions of Folksongs in the Ogun Festival: Oral Literature as Therapeutic and Communicative Instrument in Ekitiland

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Abstract

*This article examined the colaological functions of folksongs in the Ogun festival of Ekitiland, with particular attention to Ire-Ekiti, where Ogun is ritually remembered as Ogun Onire, the heroic deity of iron, warfare, roads, technology, justice, and protective power. The study used “colaological” as a deliberately theorised term derived from *cola/kola* as a ritual sign of hospitality, invocation, covenantal speech, communal opening, and affective communion. Rather than reducing festival folksongs to entertainment, the article argued that songs in the Ogun festival operate as oral-literary instruments through which the community communicates history, negotiates social order, manages fear, and stages collective healing. Methodologically, the article adopted qualitative textual and cultural analysis, reading documented accounts of Ogun Onire, Yoruba oral performance scholarship, festival studies, speech-event theory, and ritual-symbolic perspectives alongside representative song-motifs associated with Ogun praise, appeasement, warning, lament, and communal affirmation. The findings showed that Ogun festival folksongs perform at least seven interrelated functions in Ekitiland: historical recall, ritual invocation, moral regulation, conflict management, psycho-emotional therapy, identity consolidation, and intergenerational pedagogy. The article further demonstrated that the therapeutic value of the songs lies not only in verbal content but also in their performative environment: chorus, rhythm, call-and-response, procession, repetition, and embodied participation create a communal space in which anxiety is transferred into shared memory, grief becomes narratable, and danger is converted into protective vigilance. The article concluded that Ogun festival folksongs should be understood as a communicative clinic of indigenous oral literature and as a significant archive for African literary, ethnomusicological, and medical-humanities scholarship.*

Keywords: *Ogun Onire, Ekitiland, Yoruba folksongs, oral literature, colaology, therapeutic communication, festival performance*

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I. Introduction

The Ogun festival in Ekitiland occupies a distinctive place in Yoruba ritual life because it brings together myth, history, music, memory, healing, and social communication. In Ire-Ekiti, the town is popularly linked with Ogun through the name *Ire m'Ogun*, a formulation that identifies the community with the deity of iron, war, roads, creativity, and craftsmanship. Adeleye's historical account explains that Ogun Onire is celebrated annually in Ire-Ekiti in memory of Ogun and that the festival is associated with peace, protection from accidents, bountiful harvest, prosperity, safety, and communal security (Adeleye 33-34). The official cultural history of Ire-Ekiti similarly states that the annual Ogun Onire festival commemorates Ogun's deeds, appeases his spirit, and preserves the town's connection with his sacred site at Iju (“Historical Origins of Ire-Ekiti”). These accounts establish the festival as more than a religious event; it is a performative institution through which the community narrates its origin, stabilises its values, and renews its collective covenant with the past.

Within this festival environment, folksongs function as a major component of oral literature. They are not incidental musical ornaments attached to ritual; they are meaning-making instruments through which worshippers, elders, praise-singers, spectators, hunters, artisans, and ritual specialists communicate with one another and with the metaphysical order. Recent scholarship on Yoruba folksongs and traditional festivals has emphasised that they serve aesthetic, therapeutic, and communicative purposes, especially by relieving tension, consoling participants, educating the community, and reaffirming hope (Badru, Ogunniran, and Hamzat 203-12). This article extends that argument by locating the therapeutic and communicative power of festival songs

specifically within the Ogun festival in Ekitiland and by proposing a colaological reading of their social function.

The term colaological requires clarification because it is not yet a standard critical term in African oral-literary studies. In this article, it is used as a conceptual coinage from *cola/kola*, the ritual nut that often signals welcome, prayer, invocation, agreement, covenant, and ceremonial speech in many West African societies. Ezeifeke and Chinyeaka's study of the kolanut ritual in Igbo ceremonies demonstrates that kolanut is not merely a material object; it becomes a speech event that organises promising, blessing, requesting, invoking, thanking, and appealing (128-30). Although their evidence is Igbo-centred, the broader West African insight is useful: cola is a communicative object whose presentation opens channels of speech, relationship, and sacred attention. In Yoruba and Ekiti contexts, the article uses "colaological" more broadly to describe the ritual-communicative logic by which festival songs, like kola offerings, open the social body, summon memory, invite participation, and convert individual emotion into shared cultural meaning.

The central claim of the article is that Ogun festival folksongs in Ekitiland function as therapeutic and communicative instruments through a colaological structure of opening, invocation, sharing, blessing, warning, and closure. They are therapeutic because they create communal release, emotional regulation, reassurance, and symbolic repair. They are communicative because they encode history, moral law, ritual command, communal identity, and warnings against disorder. They are colaological because they operate like ceremonial kola: they gather people into a field of sanctioned speech, mediate between the visible and invisible worlds, and convert performance into social communion.

II. Statement of the Problem

African oral literature has often been discussed as a repository of cultural memory, but its therapeutic dimension remains insufficiently theorised in relation to specific festival contexts. Yoruba oral genres such as praise poetry, proverbs, chants, riddles, dirges, lullabies, and songs have received substantial scholarly attention; however, the healing and communicative ecology of Ogun festival folksongs in Ekitiland requires closer examination. When festival songs are reduced to entertainment, their social labour is obscured. Such reduction ignores the ways in which songs organise collective feeling, regulate behaviour, transmit sacred history, and communicate communal expectations.

A second problem concerns the disciplinary separation between literary studies, ethnomusicology, ritual studies, and health humanities. Ogun festival folksongs are simultaneously verbal art, music, ritual speech, embodied performance, and psychosocial intervention. A purely literary reading may neglect rhythm and participation; a purely religious reading may neglect aesthetics; a purely musical reading may neglect speech acts; and a purely historical reading may neglect therapeutic experience. This article therefore brings these dimensions together through the idea of colaology, understood as the study of ritualised communicative hospitality and affective exchange.

III. Research Questions

The article was guided by four research questions. First, how do folksongs in the Ogun festival communicate communal memory, ritual knowledge, and moral values in Ekitiland? Second, what therapeutic functions do the songs perform for individuals and the community? Third, how does the colaological logic of offering, invocation, sharing, and communal speech illuminate the social role of Ogun festival songs? Fourth, how can the study of these songs contribute to African oral-literary scholarship, festival studies, and indigenous therapeutic humanities?

IV. Methodology

This article adopted a qualitative textual and cultural-analytic method. It did not claim to report new ethnographic field recordings; instead, it synthesised published scholarship on Yoruba oral literature, Ogun festival performance, Ogun Onire history, ritual communication, and African oral tradition. The method was appropriate because the article's aim was conceptual clarification and literary-cultural interpretation rather than statistical measurement.

The primary cultural context was Ire-Ekiti and the wider Ekiti environment in southwestern Nigeria. Ire-Ekiti was selected because documented accounts identify it as a major centre of Ogun Onire tradition. Adeleye notes that primary materials in the study of Ogun Onire include interviews, praise poems, cognomen, and rituals, showing that oral forms are central to the historical reconstruction of the festival (Adeleye 33). The present article built on such documented evidence and interpreted the functions of song-motifs within the festival system.

The study also used representative analytical song-motifs rather than presenting them as verbatim field transcriptions. These motifs were derived from recurrent Ogun praise themes in the literature: Ogun as path-maker, iron owner, warrior, protector, justice figure, dangerous force, and appeased ancestor. This

methodological caution is important because publishable oral-literary research must distinguish between documented texts, translated excerpts, and analytical reconstructions. The article therefore used the motifs as interpretive categories to describe functions, not as fabricated field data.

Methodological element	Application in this article	Scholarly justification
Cultural-context analysis	Ire-Ekiti and Ogun Onire were treated as the central festival context.	Ogun Onire is historically linked to Ire-Ekiti and celebrated annually in August (Adeyeye 34; "Historical Origins of Ire-Ekiti").
Oral-literary interpretation	Folksongs were read as verbal art, ritual speech, and social performance.	Yoruba oral literature functions as education, social influence, and communal expression (Akinyemi 161-79).
Ritual communication	Songs were examined as speech events and performative utterances.	Ritual objects and utterances can organise blessing, appeal, promise, and invocation (Ezeifeka and Chinyeaka 128-30).
Therapeutic humanities	Songs were interpreted as indigenous emotional and communal therapy.	Yoruba folksongs and festivals relieve tension, console participants, and communicate hope (Badru, Ogunniran, and Hamzat 203-12).

V. Conceptual Framework: Colaology, Orality, Ritual Speech, and Therapy

5.1 Colaology as Ritual-Communicative Theory

Colaology, as used here, refers to the study of how ritualised acts of offering, greeting, invocation, sharing, and verbal blessing create social and affective communion. The term draws on the symbolic logic of kola or cola, not merely as a botanical object but as a cultural sign of welcome, covenant, prayer, and communicative opening. Ezeifeka and Chinyeaka argue that kolanut ritual qualifies as a speech event because its presentation and breaking produce distinct act sequences, including thanking, appealing, requesting, pronouncing, and invoking (128-30). This insight is adaptable to festival songs because Ogun songs similarly "open" the ritual field: they call attention, name the deity, gather the community, invite response, and authorise emotional participation.

In the Ogun festival, colaological function does not mean that every song is literally accompanied by kola. Rather, it means that the songs operate according to a kola-like grammar of social exchange. A song is offered; the community receives it through chorus or response; the deity is invoked; shared memory is broken open; blessings and warnings circulate; and the event becomes a communion of living participants, ancestors, and sacred powers. Colaology therefore bridges material ritual and oral performance.

5.2 Orality and Performance

Oral literature is not simply literature without writing. It is a performance-centred system in which voice, body, audience, space, rhythm, and occasion shape meaning. Finnegan's classic work on African oral literature shows that oral forms must be understood in relation to performance, audience, and social function rather than as detached texts (Finnegan). The Palgrave Handbook of African Oral Traditions and Folklore similarly frames African orality as a multidisciplinary field involving performance, festivals, documentation, oral poetry, praise, proverbs, myth, and cultural transmission (Akinyemi and Falola). In Ogun festival songs, meaning emerges through the convergence of sung words, iron symbols, processional movement, drumming, costume, sacrifice, communal attention, and shared memory.

The performative environment is crucial because the same words sung outside the festival may not carry the same ritual authority. Within the festival, the song becomes socially charged. It does not merely describe Ogun; it presents Ogun, reactivates his history, and places the community under the discipline of his symbolic power. Oral literature is therefore not passive representation but active social doing.

5.3 Speech Acts and Ethnography of Communication

The communicative power of Ogun festival songs can also be understood through speech-act theory and the ethnography of communication. Austin's theory of performative utterance shows that words can do things when spoken under appropriate conditions (Austin). Hymes's ethnography of communication further emphasises that speech must be studied within culturally specific settings, participants, ends, acts, keys, instrumentalities, norms, and genres (Hymes). Ogun festival songs are precisely such culturally situated speech acts. They praise, warn, bless, request protection, recall violence, invite courage, mock cowardice, discipline antisocial behaviour, and dramatise communal solidarity.

A praise line naming Ogun as the path-clearer is not merely descriptive; it invokes protection for roads, hunters, drivers, farmers, blacksmiths, and all who depend on iron. A warning song about Ogun's anger is not merely narrative; it regulates behaviour by reminding participants that arrogance, silence at the wrong moment, disrespect, and communal negligence can have destructive consequences. A chorus that asks Ogun to protect the town is not simply musical; it performs a collective petition.

5.4 Therapy, Affect, and Communal Healing

The therapeutic function of folksongs should not be understood only in the biomedical sense of curing disease. In this article, therapy refers to symbolic and psychosocial processes through which song helps participants manage fear, grief, uncertainty, guilt, aggression, and social tension. Badru, Ogunniran, and Hamzat describe Yoruba folksongs and festivals as “soul-searchers and soul-menders” that relieve tension, educate, console, heal, and provide solace (203-12). This formulation is useful because Ogun is an ambivalent deity: he protects, but he can also destroy; he opens roads, but he is associated with blood, iron, and violent force. Songs therefore provide a safe and culturally sanctioned means of confronting danger.

The festival chorus converts private anxiety into collective sound. Repetition stabilises emotion; rhythm regulates the body; call-and-response distributes speech across the community; and narrative memory gives form to fear. In this sense, Ogun festival folksongs function as indigenous group therapy, though not in the clinical institutional sense. They create a ritual environment in which the community remembers violence without being consumed by it, honours danger without surrendering to panic, and transforms the deity’s destructive possibility into protective energy.

VI. Ogun Onire in Ekitiland: Myth, History, and Ritual Context

Ogun is widely recognised in Yoruba cosmology as the deity of iron, tools, war, roads, technology, and creative transformation. Lawal’s account of Yoruba aesthetics identifies Ogun among the **orisa** associated with tools, weapons, and warfare, while also showing that Yoruba art links aesthetics with religious, social, political, and ontological functions (Lawal). In Ogun’s case, the materiality of iron becomes an expansive cultural metaphor. Iron is the cutlass that clears the farm, the knife used in sacrifice, the gun of the hunter, the vehicle part that moves travellers, the blacksmith’s implement, and the symbol of technological transformation.

In Ire-Ekiti, Ogun Onire tradition gives this general Yoruba figure a local ancestral form. Adeleye records that Ire-Ekiti is called **Ire m’Ogun** because of its connection to Ogun and that Ogun’s role in Ire’s history led the people to immortalise him as Ogun Onire, meaning Ogun of Ire or Ogun, owner of Ire (Adeleye 34-35). The article further explains that the festival is celebrated annually in August and is believed to promote peace, protection from accidents, bountiful harvest, wealth, safety, and security (Adeleye 34). These are not abstract benefits. They correspond to the anxieties of a community dependent on roads, iron tools, farms, hunting, social order, and protection from visible and invisible danger.

The origin narrative of Ogun Onire also carries a deep communicative lesson. Adeleye reports that Ogun returned to Ire and encountered people in a silent meeting, **Ujo Oriki**. Because speaking was forbidden, they did not greet or acknowledge him, and Ogun, angered by the silence and by the failure to offer him palm wine, killed many people before being appeased (Adeleye 37). He was later offered food and drink, promised to assist the people when called, and disappeared into the earth at Iju, leaving a ritual memory of both violence and protection (Adeleye 37). This story is central to the present article because it dramatizes the danger of broken communication. Silence at the wrong moment becomes catastrophic. Greeting, offering, praise, and appeasement become therapeutic repairs.

The Ogun Onire myth therefore justifies a colaological interpretation. The problem in the myth is a failure of communicative hospitality: Ogun is not greeted, not offered drink, and not recognised. The repair occurs through offering, appeasement, promise, and renewed channels of invocation. Festival songs repeat and transform this mythic lesson. They ensure that Ogun is never again met with silence. Through song, the community speaks continuously to the deity, to itself, and to history.

VII. Folksongs as Oral Literature in the Ogun Festival

Folksongs in the Ogun festival can be classified according to performance situation and social function. Some songs praise Ogun’s attributes; some recall the myth of arrival, anger, appeasement, and disappearance; some accompany processions; some energise martial displays; some warn against reckless conduct; some invoke protection for travellers and workers; and others consolidate communal identity. Their literary features include repetition, parallelism, formulaic epithets, call-and-response, metaphor, tonal play, ideophones, praise names, and compressed narrative.

Yoruba oral literature has long been recognised as a source of indigenous education. Akinyemi’s study of Yoruba oral literature for children shows that songs, riddles, folktales, game poetry, and related genres shape thinking, transmit values, and educate social conduct (161-79). In the Ogun festival, the same pedagogic logic operates at a community-wide level. The songs teach participants who Ogun is, what he represents, what the town remembers, what behaviour is dangerous, and what forms of courage, respect, and solidarity the community values.

The songs also belong to the broader field of Yoruba praise and invocation. Ogun is not only named; he is multiplied through epithets. He may be called the owner of iron, the clearer of roads, the one who eats first through the knife, the warrior who protects the weak, the dangerous force that must be appeased, and the patron

of those who handle iron. The accumulation of names is a literary technique and a ritual necessity. Naming gives presence. Repetition deepens attention. Chorus distributes memory.

Song type	Dominant literary features	Communicative function	Therapeutic function
Praise songs	Epithets, repetition, metaphor, call-and-response	Identify Ogun's powers and reaffirm communal reverence.	Replace fear with reverent confidence and symbolic protection.
Historical songs	Narrative compression, allusion, place names	Recall Ogun's migration, anger, appeasement, and link to Ire-Ekiti.	Convert traumatic memory into shared explanation and continuity.
Warning songs	Imperatives, proverbs, moral contrast	Regulate behaviour and discourage disrespect, violence, or disorder.	Reduce social anxiety by asserting moral boundaries.
Processional songs	Rhythm, refrain, collective chorus	Coordinate movement and organise public participation.	Produce bodily synchrony, emotional release, and solidarity.
Appeasement songs	Petition, humility, blessing formulae	Request protection, peace, safety, and prosperity.	Create reassurance and hope in the face of danger.

VIII. Colaological Functions of Ogun Festival Folksongs

8.1 Opening the Communal Field

The first colaological function of Ogun festival folksongs is to open the communal field. Just as ceremonial kola opens a gathering by announcing hospitality and authorised speech, festival songs mark the transition from ordinary time to ritual time. They call the people together, identify the occasion, and announce that the community has entered the presence of Ogun. This opening function is important because festivals are liminal spaces, in which ordinary social roles are temporarily reorganised. Turner's theory of ritual process helps explain this movement from everyday structure into intensified communal experience (Turner). In the Ogun festival, song provides the audible sign of this transition.

Opening songs also prevent the dangerous silence that the Ogun Onire myth condemns. If the myth recalls a moment when Ogun was not greeted and violence followed, festival singing becomes a ritual correction. The community sings so that Ogun is acknowledged; it sings so that memory remains awake; it sings so that absence becomes presence and danger becomes addressable.

8.2 Invoking and Appeasing Ogun

The second function is invocation and appeasement. Ogun's ambivalence requires careful speech. He is protector and destroyer, path-maker and warrior, civilising force and violent energy. Songs negotiate this ambivalence by praising his greatness while requesting peace. They perform what Austin would describe as actions through words: to sing "Ogun, protect us" in a ritual context is to enact a communal petition, not merely to express a wish (Austin). Such songs are therefore practical ritual instruments.

Appeasement is also therapeutic. Communities often carry anxieties about accidents, violence, illness, failed harvests, and social disorder. Because Ogun is associated with iron, roads, weapons, tools, and technological danger, his appeasement symbolically addresses many everyday risks. Adeleye's account that the festival is associated with protection from accidents, harvest, prosperity, safety, and security confirms this protective logic (Adeleye 34). The song becomes a way of naming danger and transferring it into ritual order.

8.3 Sharing Memory Like Broken Kola

A third colaological function is the sharing of memory. In many ceremonial contexts, kola is presented, blessed, broken, and distributed. Ogun festival songs similarly break communal memory into shareable units: a refrain, a name, a mythic episode, a proverb, a rhythm, a repeated line. Each participant receives part of the memory through hearing, singing, dancing, or responding. This shared memory is crucial in Ekitiland because Ogun Onire is not merely a theological figure but a historical ancestor within the symbolic identity of Ire-Ekiti.

Adeleye's documentation of the migration account, the title Onire, the smallpox relocation, and the ritual importance of Iju shows how history and myth are intertwined in the town's identity (Adeleye 35-37). Songs make such history portable. They condense complex narratives into memorable phrases that can be transmitted across generations. In this sense, folksongs are mnemonic technology.

8.4 Regulating Moral Conduct

Ogun festival songs also perform moral regulation. Ogun is associated with truth, justice, and the defence of the oppressed. Adeleye notes that Ogun is viewed as a guardian of truth and defender of the poor and oppressed (Adeleye 33). Songs that invoke these attributes remind participants that social life must be governed by courage, fairness, respect, and responsibility. The communicative function here is not merely devotional but juridical: the songs help to create a moral court in sound.

Yoruba aesthetics places strong emphasis on *'iwa'*, or character. Lawal explains that in Yoruba thought, character determines beauty and that **iwa rere**—good character—constitutes a major ethical and aesthetic ideal (Lawal). Ogun songs contribute to this moral education by praising bravery and truth while warning against arrogance, cowardice, betrayal, violence, and disrespect. The festival therefore becomes a public classroom in which moral knowledge is sung rather than lectured.

8.5 Coordinating Social Participation

The fifth function is social coordination. Festival songs organise movement, procession, dance, ritual timing, and communal response. Call-and-response structures allow leaders and chorus groups to distribute authority. The lead singer may introduce the line, but the community completes it. This structure teaches a political lesson: communal meaning is not monopolised by a single voice. It is produced through response.

The social organisation of Ire-Ekiti, as described by Adeleye, includes family heads, chiefs, age groups, guilds, hunters, herbalists, and other communal structures (Adeleye 36). Songs provide a medium through which these groups can participate in a shared symbolic order. Age groups may dance; hunters may display; elders may bless; youths may respond; women may provide chorus; spectators may join refrains. In this way, folksongs transform social plurality into ritual synchrony.

8.6 Healing Collective Anxiety

The sixth function is therapeutic. Ogun's domain includes iron and roads, and these remain associated with risk: cutlasses wound, guns kill, vehicles crash, tools injure, and war destroys. A community that venerates Ogun must therefore manage fear of the very forces it needs for survival. Festival songs provide this management by symbolically containing danger. They do not deny risk; they name and domesticate it.

The therapeutic process operates through several mechanisms. First, rhythm regulates the body by aligning breath, movement, and attention. Second, repetition reduces anxiety by creating predictability. Third, chorus prevents isolation by allowing individuals to enter a shared soundscape. Fourth, narrative explains suffering by linking present danger to ancestral memory. Fifth, praise transforms fear into reverence. These mechanisms correspond to Badru, Ogunniran, and Hamzat's claim that Yoruba folksongs and festivals relieve tension, console, comfort, and heal (203-12).

8.7 Mediating Between Worlds

The seventh function is mediation between the visible and invisible worlds. Yoruba religious thought recognises the **orisa** as intermediaries between humanity and Olodumare, and Lawal explains that sacrifices and shrines are directed to them because they personify specific forms of **ase** (Lawal). Ogun songs participate in this mediatory system. They carry human petitions upward and bring divine memory downward. The community sings to Ogun, but it also sings itself into Ogun's protection.

This mediatory function is colaological because kola-like ritual speech often connects hosts, guests, ancestors, and spiritual forces. Ezeifeke and Chinyeaka's account of kolanut ritual as a mediator between the living and the dead is Igbo-specific, but it illuminates a broader West African understanding of ritual objects and speech as bridges between worlds (129-30). Ogun festival songs similarly bridge worlds by converting voice into offering.

IX. Therapeutic Dimensions of Ogun Festival Folksongs

9.1 Emotional Catharsis

The Ogun festival permits emotions that everyday life may suppress: fear, aggression, grief, excitement, reverence, remorse, and hope. Songs provide a culturally organised channel for these emotions. Martial rhythms and praise chants allow aggression to be aestheticised rather than randomly enacted. Laments and historical songs allow grief over Ogun's destructive anger to be remembered without overwhelming the community. Appeasement songs allow guilt to be transformed into humility and repair.

This cathartic process is particularly important because Ogun is associated with violence and protection at once. A community cannot simply celebrate Ogun's power; it must also acknowledge the danger of that power. Songs make such acknowledgement possible by holding contradiction within performance.

9.2 Narrative Therapy and Historical Explanation

Narrative therapy, in this cultural sense, refers to the healing power of story. Ogun Onire songs repeatedly return to origin: Ogun's journey, the silent meeting, anger, massacre, appeasement, promise, and disappearance into the earth. These narrative elements explain why the festival matters. They also provide a moral frame through which the community understands communication, recognition, hospitality, and danger.

The myth of the silent meeting is especially significant. It teaches that communication is not optional in communal life. Greeting, recognition, offering, and responsive speech are forms of social medicine. The absence

of appropriate speech produces rupture. Songs repair that rupture by ensuring that Ogun and the community remain in dialogue.

9.3 Communal Reassurance

Ogun songs repeatedly reassure participants that the deity can protect the town. Adeleye records that the festival is associated with safety, security, protection from accidents, prosperity, and harvest (34). Whether interpreted religiously, psychologically, or symbolically, the songs provide a language of assurance. They tell the farmer that the cutlass can serve rather than wound; the driver that the road can be safe; the hunter that the gun can be controlled; the blacksmith that fire and iron can create rather than destroy; and the community that violent energy can be transformed into protective vigilance.

9.4 Social Reintegration

Festivals also heal by reintegrating individuals into community. In everyday life, social divisions may arise from age, gender, class, lineage, political affiliation, religious difference, or personal conflict. During the festival, songs produce a temporary community of voice. Even where hierarchy remains, chorus creates a shared sonic identity. The therapeutic value lies in the experience of belonging.

This does not mean the festival is free of power relations. Ritual authority, gender roles, and lineage privileges may shape participation. Nevertheless, the song event offers a public form through which participants experience themselves as members of a larger cultural body. Such reintegration is one reason festivals remain powerful even under modern religious and economic pressures.

X. Communicative Dimensions of Ogun Festival Folksongs

10.1 Communication with the Deity

At the sacred level, Ogun songs communicate with Ogun. They praise him, plead with him, remind him of his covenant, and request protection. The songs therefore function as ritual messages. They also carry a theological grammar: naming, praise, offering, petition, and blessing.

10.2 Communication within the Community

At the social level, the songs communicate among participants. They announce stages of the festival, direct attention, coordinate movement, and instruct behaviour. A song can tell participants when to gather, when to respond, when to move, when to show restraint, and when to celebrate. Oral performance thus functions as public communication infrastructure.

10.3 Communication across Generations

At the historical level, songs communicate across generations. Younger participants may not have read written accounts of Ogun Onire, but they can learn through repeated refrains and festival participation. Akinyemi's argument that Yoruba oral literature educates and influences thought is directly applicable here (161-79). Songs are therefore intergenerational archives.

10.4 Communication with Outsiders

At the cultural-political level, festival songs communicate identity to visitors, tourists, researchers, and neighbouring communities. Olusegun's study of Ogun festival in Ondoland argues that Ogun worship has rich literary and poetic features and can serve unity and cultural heritage preservation (Olusegun). In Ekitiland, Ogun songs similarly present the community's heritage to outsiders. They are cultural diplomacy in performance form.

XI. Representative Song-Motif Analysis

Because the present article did not report field transcriptions, the following analysis uses representative motifs rather than verbatim texts. The purpose is to demonstrate how recurring Ogun song-types function within the festival system.

Representative motif	Literal thematic content	Colaological reading	Therapeutic/communicative effect
"Ogun clears the road before the people."	Ogun as path-maker and technological force.	The song opens a symbolic road for communal safety.	Reassures travellers, farmers, and workers dependent on iron and roads.
"Do not meet Ogun with silence."	Allusion to the silent meeting and Ogun's anger.	Speech, greeting, and offering are communal medicine.	Warns against disrespect and teaches communicative responsibility.
"Ogun of Ire, owner of fortune, protect your	Ogun Onire as ancestral protector.	The community addresses Ogun as kin and patron.	Produces belonging, protection, and local identity.

children.”			
“Iron may wound; iron may feed.”	Ambivalence of tools, weapons, and technology.	The song ritually negotiates danger and usefulness.	Helps participants manage fear of accidents, violence, and labour risk.
“Let the town be cool; let anger depart.”	Appeasement and peace-making.	Song functions as verbal sacrifice and affective cooling.	Reduces tension and symbolically resolves conflict.

These motifs reveal that Ogun festival songs are not random. They organise a moral universe in which communication, respect, courage, memory, and appeasement are necessary for survival. They also show that the therapeutic and communicative functions of the songs are inseparable. Healing occurs through communication, and communication is deepened through shared emotional experience.

XII. Discussion: Oral Literature as Communicative Clinic

The findings of this article support the argument that Ogun festival folksongs in Ekitiland constitute a communicative clinic of oral literature. This phrase does not imply that the festival replaces hospitals or formal mental-health institutions. Rather, it describes an indigenous cultural system through which communities process emotion, regulate conduct, and maintain symbolic wellbeing. The clinic is communicative because its tools are voice, rhythm, narrative, gesture, praise, warning, and chorus. It is therapeutic because it produces reassurance, release, continuity, and social reintegration.

This perspective contributes to oral-literary studies in three ways. First, it moves beyond the idea of oral literature as preserved tradition and emphasises oral literature as active psychosocial practice. Second, it shows that festival songs are not merely expressive but performative; they do things within the community. Third, it proposes colaology as a useful conceptual vocabulary for analysing ritual hospitality, communicative opening, and affective exchange in African performance contexts.

The argument also contributes to Yoruba studies by foregrounding the communicative significance of the Ogun Onire myth. The myth’s central crisis is not only violence but failed communication. The people’s silence, however ritually required by the silent meeting, is misread by Ogun as disrespect. The later appeasement restores communication through food, drink, speech, and promise. Festival songs re-enact this repair annually. They ensure that silence is replaced by praise, fear by dialogue, and danger by negotiated protection.

Finally, the article contributes to the medical humanities by showing that healing may occur through collective symbolic action. Contemporary societies often treat therapy as an individualised, clinical, and privatised process. Ogun festival songs suggest another model: healing as communal rhythm, shared memory, moral instruction, and ritualised speech. This does not romanticise tradition or ignore the need for modern healthcare. Rather, it recognises that communities possess cultural technologies for managing affect and meaning.

XIII. Conclusion

This article has examined the colaological functions of folksongs in the Ogun festival of Ekitiland, with particular attention to Ogun Onire in Ire-Ekiti. It argued that Ogun festival folksongs function as oral-literary instruments of therapy and communication. They communicate history, invoke Ogun, regulate conduct, coordinate participation, transmit values, and present Ekiti identity to both insiders and outsiders. They heal by transforming fear into reverence, grief into narrative, danger into ritual order, and individual anxiety into communal sound.

The concept of colaology has been used to describe the ritual logic by which songs operate like ceremonial kola: they open the social field, invite sacred attention, distribute memory, and create communion. In the Ogun festival, this colaological structure is particularly significant because the Ogun Onire myth itself centres on the consequences of failed communication and the necessity of appeasement. Festival songs therefore become annual acts of communicative repair.

For future research, fieldwork-based documentation is necessary. Scholars should record actual Ogun festival songs in Ire-Ekiti and neighbouring Ekiti communities, transcribe them in Yoruba and Ekiti dialectal forms, translate them carefully, and analyse performer roles, gender participation, melodic structure, audience response, and contemporary transformations. Such research would strengthen the empirical base of the present conceptual article and contribute to the preservation of Ekiti oral heritage. Nevertheless, the present study has shown that Ogun festival folksongs deserve serious scholarly attention as therapeutic, communicative, aesthetic, and ritual instruments within African oral literature.

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