

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND MUSICAL  
STYLE IN THE COURT MUSIC OF  
THE ALAAFIN OF OYO

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SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC,  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY € F  
THE OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY,  
ILE-IFE, NIGERIA.

*2007*

**TITLE:** **SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND MUSICAL STYLE IN  
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**DEGREE:** **Ph.D (MUSIC)**  
**YEAR:** **2007.**

#### **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the court music of the Alaafin of Oyo in order to establish its origin, development, organization, and performance. This was with a view to highlighting the aesthetic and moral functions embedded in the music.

The research combined historiographical and ethnomusicological approaches . Historical oral information was collected through interviews with the Alaafin, his Court Chiefs and the Court Musicians who were custodians of traditions in the Alaafin's palace. Performances of the Court Music of the Alaafin of Oyo, the historical chants of the genealogies of all the Alaafin- from Alaafin Atiba I to the current Alaafin Adeyemi III – and the songs that accompanied the music were recorded on tape. The recorded music, chants and songs were transcribed, analyzed, categorized and described using the ethnomusicological method.

The results showed that the origin and development of the Alaafin Court music could be dated back to the beginning of the 19th Century when Alaafin Atiba with some leading Oyo families and the fleeing population moved from the old Oyo and settled in the present Oyo town. The study discovered that out of the various musical genres/styles in the court music of Alaafin of Oyo, such as dundun- sekere, rara, sekere and aro, akunyangba, apinti, igbatiti, kakaki and gbedu, dundun - sekere was the official music of the palace . The study discovered three forms of social organizations of music in the Alaafin's palace – (1) music for social occasion in the palace,

such as naming , religious worship, and coronation; (2) music to communicate to the Alaafin (e.g to wake him up and to announce the arrival of important dignitaries in the palace ; and (3) music to entertain visitors and audience in the Alaafin's palace. The study revealed that the Alaafin's choice of a musician was usually from the descendants of court musicians.

The study concluded that both the vocal and instrumental genres of the Alaafin's court music were historical in nature, reminding people of the past and of the traditional values of the society. It also concluded that court music embodies historical allusions and had become part of the political institution in the Alaafin's Court.

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**Number of Pages: 443**