

***Jápa, Jáńù, Jápadà:*  
Dynamics of Migration  
Discourse in Adekunle  
Gold’s Music- “Ire”**

African Journal of Stability  
& Development  
Vol 17 No. 2, Nov. 2025  
pp. 880-902

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**Abstract**

Migration is a common phenomenon in human experience, which has manifested in a new concept called *Jápa* in Nigeria. *Jápa*, as a concept, has received scholarly attention in academic discourses in recent years, but earlier studies from sociology, health, education, economics, language, religious and cultural studies have focused more on its causes and effects on Nigerian economic development; however, scanty attention has been paid to its dynamics among Nigerians, especially from a musicology perspective. This study, therefore, examined *Jápa*, *Jáńù*, and *Jápadà* as migration dynamics using Adekunle Gold’s music- “Ire” to discuss the resultant effect of emigrants’ aspiration, failed quest, and reasons for the emigrants to retreat in their attempt at forceful ambitions. The study adopted a qualitative method to gather data using Adekunle Gold’s music track “Ire” through purposive sampling technique. The data (music content) were content analysed. The phenomenon of *Jápa* has taken different dimensions in which the aspiration of an

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emigrant may result in loss of identity, loss of worth, loss of freedom, loss of life, and deportation after a huge investment has been made to pursue the abortive ambition. Adekunle Gold's music track, "*Ire*", is therefore an encouragement and motivation to the emigrants to look inward and retreat if the aspiration is not achieved to avoid colossal loss in the end. It is recommended that artistes should do more in enlightening the citizenry on the need to "water one's ground" and make it greener instead of seeking a greener pasture somewhere else, where there are uncertainty and bait for voluntary slavery.

**Keywords:** *Jápa*, *Jánù*, *Jápadà*, Diaspora Metaphor, Music and Migration Dynamics

### **Introduction**

Music remains a powerful tool for social commentary, societal reformation and cultural identity; and musicians have been described as social engineers, social reformers and social prophets who use their artistic means to correct, enlighten, educate and advise the populace on trending and burning issue in the society (Daramola, 2007; Udoh, 2009; Vidal, 2012; Idamoyibo, 2013; Samuel, 2015; Adekola, 2018, 2024). In recent times, however, there is a concern by the culture stakeholders about the despicable situation of Nigerian society and how musicians fail in their social and cultural duties to use their musical art in addressing such issues of concern in the society. It must be noted that all hope is not lost as there are still a few musicians whose works mirror the situation in the society. One such music is "*Ire*" by Adekunle Gold, a song that addresses migration dynamics in Nigerian society.

There seems to be a common agreement among scholars on the concept of *Jápa*, a Yorùbá term that connotes "to run" or to "flee" "to migrate" or to relocate abroad, which has become part of everyday terms among Nigerians. Migration, a regular feature of human existence, is one of the postcolonial issues that has taken a different dimensional outlook. The colonisation saga and the ill-fated leadership challenges of post-independent African states are believed to be responsible for why Africans, especially Nigerians, seek life elsewhere to escape socio-economic hardship

confronting many people at home. This makes many Nigerians consider migration as a better option in which they “wander from place to place seeking comfort that eludes them in their original homeland in foreign places” (Awelewa, 2021: 151).

Migration may be permanent, momentary, voluntary, or forced; it may also be internal or international. Permanent migration is when someone moves from one place to another and has no plan to return to his/her original home, while temporary migration is limited by time. In recent times, migration, “an instinctual inclination to wonder and wander in search of opportunities and new horizons” (Wale–Olaitan, 2021: 58), is referred to as *Jápa* among the Yoruba. In Nigeria, migration from one space to another is part of people’s life and it is natural to human experience as a result of various reasons such as business, farming, pastoralism among others but recently, people migrate from Nigeria to places abroad to seek medical attention, pursue educational advancement and training, business activities, as well as for visitation, tourism, and interest to seek for greener pastures (Uwakwe, 2004). Among all of these, relocation from Nigeria to other countries of the world is occasioned by seeking for better life or looking for greener pastures, as many emigrants even hide under other reasons to achieve their craving for relocation at all costs. Therefore, Nigeria has witnessed a surge in a phenomenon popularly and colloquially referred to as *Jápa*, which is described as the mass out-migration in Nigeria.

*Jápa* is a novel term used by Nigerians to describe the outmigration trend of Nigerians into Europe and other parts of the world (Okunade and Awosusi, 2023). Liu (2023) observes that there has been a general concern in Nigeria about the increasing desperation of people (old and young) to seek greener pastures abroad by any means possible. *Jápa* syndrome is the recent high rate of emigration of Nigerian citizens to foreign countries in search of greener pastures (Afunugo, 2023) or a mass exodus of professionals from Nigeria to other parts of developed countries for greener pastures (Ogunode, Ngezack, & Usi, 2024). As a result, professionals in the fields of education, health, and technology, as well as some artisans, prefer to travel abroad to better their lives. Certain reasons have been adduced for the increase in *Jápa* syndrome in Nigeria. These include economic hardship, incessant industrial actions in tertiary institutions, poor

working conditions, bad governance, unemployment, and security issues, which have resulted in terrorism, banditry, and kidnapping for ransom.

The *Jápa* phenomenon, according to scholarship in Africa, has mainly been attributed to various factors such as security issues like killing, kidnapping for ransom, terrorism, burning of properties caused sometimes by high poverty levels, rising unemployment, and the deplorable economies of most African countries, especially Nigeria. (Liu, 2023; Olumoyo and Abiri, 2023).

Regardless of the reasons for relocation, the current practice of migration, which involves a massive movement of Africans, including Nigerians, to other parts of the world, especially Europe, due to insurgencies and economic hardship, especially in the last two decades (Nwalutu *et al.*, 2022; Okunade and Awosusi, 2023), has been a source of concern. The most worrisome part of it is the irregular migration culture, among the youths and old alike, with its debilitating effects on the migrants over the years, which have led to the deaths of many Nigerians and many migrants getting lost in the Sahara Desert, the Maghreb region, and the Mediterranean in the process of illegal boundary crossing. Although this has been attributed to the porous land borders and the inadequacy of national and economic restructuring to address the cross-border menace (Awosusi *et al.*, 2021; Ikuteyijo, 2020; Okunade, 2021a, Okunade and Awosusi, 2023), yet the reality is that people want to leave Nigeria by all means.

This paper, on the connection between migration and music, is one of the recent works on music migration as a budding area of study in music scholarship. It establishes the nexus between music as an area of study and migration studies. The paper confirms that there is an enduring intersection between music and migration studies and explains a fascinating connection between the two disciplines, thereby exploring both cultural and historical connections that gave rise to the concept of music migration. Music migration is therefore a budding concept coined from two distinct disciplines namely Musicology and Migration studies, which further show how both disciplines can benefit from each other.

**Conceptual and Contextual Discourses on *Jápa*, *Jánù*, *Jápadà***

As stated earlier, the term “*Jápa*” derives from a Nigerian slang that means to escape, to flee, or often to seek a better life abroad. It is the act of escaping, fleeing, or disappearing quickly, especially to relocate abroad, which is known as *Jápa* in the Yorùbá context. Ikyaator, Abachi and Doki (2024) note that the thirst by many Nigerians to seek better working and living conditions abroad has made popular the cliché known as ‘*Jápa*.’ There is a postulation about the etymology of the word *Jápa* as explained by a culture expert- Prince Tunde Odunlade<sup>1</sup> that *Jápa* came from the Yorùbá word- *já ɸparun* (literally, to break out). According to him, *Jápa* derived from the Yorùbá phrase *já ɸparun* (break the bamboo). Bamboo was usually used to construct animals’ pens, to restrict their movement in a given location; a common practice in Yorùbá rural settings. However, goats that are kept within an enclosure made from bamboo usually break their way out forcefully from the pen because of their nature, as they always want to go for green grass, which is not available in their restricted place. Also, because of their dislike for enclosure but wanting both fresh grass and freedom, they will break out, and people will say the goats have broken (*Já*) the bamboo (*ɸparun*). Therefore, *já ɸparun* (break the bamboo for greener pasture) was compressed to become *Já’parun* and later shortened to *Jápa*. It can therefore be deduced that when one sees himself/herself in economic, educational, financial “enclosure” or “bondage” in his/her own country, s/he may want to seek a greener pasture and seek to relocate by all means or by force to another country where s/he thinks his economic and other future aspirations would be met, hence, such a person may *Jápa* (i.e break the barrier and seek for greener pasture by force). The concept of *Jápa* in this context may therefore mean forceful relocation from Nigeria to other countries for a better life or in search of greener pastures in financial life, educational life, and other forms of fulfilment that cannot be obtained in Nigeria.

Another dimension of migratory discourse in this paper is *Jánù* or *Jálo*, which means “to get lost” or “to embark on the journey of no return” in this context. It is a term used to describe those who never return to their homeland or who get lost or lose their lives in the process of forceful relocation from Nigeria abroad. Many Nigerians who intend to relocate abroad usually use irregular migration processes and along the line get lost in the Sahara Desert,

the Maghreb region, and the Mediterranean in the process of illegal boundary crossing which has led to the death of many who will never come back home despite the hope and expectation of their family members and relatives who believe that they will return home one day with fortune. There are cases of “lost in transit” for many who intend to relocate through irregular or illegal means. Mpigi (2023) discusses the loss of church members, who may choose to use the irregular route in their quest to escape the country, to death, thereby making the church a secondary victim of trafficking as its members are taken away and used as sex workers, among other things. Many were trapped in the sea; many were caught, arrested, and sentenced to life imprisonment, and many lost their lives in various gruesome ways. Apart from these, other resultant effects of irregular *Jápa* that many times lead to *Jánù* is that they usually put their lives at risk by crossing the Sahara Desert or the Mediterranean Sea into Europe, which has many times resulted into untimely death, disappointment, failed aspiration which further make some people to go into depression and eventually commit suicide or become mentally derailed. One of the recent reported cases of people who *Jánù* in the process of *Jápa* according to the *Nigerian Tribune*, Thursday 22nd June, 2023 was the experience of a Tunisian fisherman, Osama Al-Dabibi who told the BBC that he was hoping for a big catch as he cast his net in the waters of the Mediterranean only to find 15 lifeless bodies of drowned immigrants (Olumoyo and Abiri, 2023).

Another dimension of *Jánù* is when people determine never to return home after they have had the opportunity to travel abroad. For instance, some lecturers who have the opportunity for scholarship to study abroad may decide never to return to their universities or home country; therefore, they may decide to *Jánù*. Summarily, *Jápa* (relocation) can lead to *Jánù* (never to return home/lost forever) depending on the situation around one’s experience in the *Jápa* process.

*Jápada* is a Yorùbá concept that depicts “to return”, and it is sometimes used to advise the emigrants to return, especially those whose aspirations to have a better life become unrealised as a result of certain unforeseen circumstances beyond their powers. Such a person is usually advised to return home when it is perceived that staying at home would be better than staying abroad. It must be noted that *Jápada* (swift home return) could be

voluntary or involuntary. When it is voluntary, the person returns home himself or herself after realising that to do so is the better option, as many face some untold experiences. Uwakwe (2004) corroborates this and notes that many economic migrants whose documents have expired or are not in existence may experience sexual and gender-based violence, become vulnerable to illness, or lose access to essential health documentation in the course of the often long and precarious journeys they make to reach their countries of destination. It is, however, involuntary when an emigrant faces deportation after certain considerations, especially those who took irregular routes. An example of such is the deportation of Nigerians without residential documents that occurred after the victory of American President Donald Trump. Therefore, to avoid forceful deportation, many people sometimes voluntarily return home and continue their lives, but those who refuse to return home may face deportation. Therefore, *Jápada* (home return) may be in the form of deportation or voluntary return.

#### **Review of Literature on *Jápa* Syndrome among Nigerians**

*Jápa* has become a household term all over the world, especially among Nigerians both at home and abroad (Don-Baridam, 2023: 13). Many Nigerians are aware of the *Jápa* syndrome, and several studies have been conducted on it among Nigerian people, focusing on causes, effects on the economy, and so forth. For instance, Olumoyo and Abiri (2023) observe that the “economic downturn has been the key reason that drove many Nigerians out of the country to survive,” apart from the health sector crisis, which includes unpaid wages, endless strikes, and poor infrastructural facilities, these being seen as reasons for brain drain in the health sector. However, the *Jápa* movement, according to Olumoyo and Abiri (2023:88), is viewed as “beyond the desire for a better life,” as many Nigerians flee the country in response to the failure and corruption of public institutions that should serve them, resulting in increased terrorism and subsequent insecurity and unrest. Therefore, economic hardship and unemployment may drive the lower class to seek relocation, but the middle class often emigrates due to insecurity, as they aim to protect their lives and those of their families.

Ogunode, Clutus and Usi (2024) discussed the effects of *Jápa* syndrome on tertiary institutions' development and suggest certain measures to tackle the syndrome. Afunugo (2023) conducted a study on *Jápa* syndrome and its challenges to the Nigerian labour force, exploring religious solutions as a potential way forward. The study prescribed certain solutions to the challenges of *Jápa* syndrome from a religious perspective. Adegoke (2023) had earlier seen *Jápa* as an exploration of the roles of social media in an out-migration trend in Nigeria, but Ogunode, Ngezack and Usi, (2024) muse on the effects of *Jápa* syndrome on the development of tertiary institutions and measures to tackle the problem across tertiary institutions. Their paper identified factors responsible for *Jápa* syndrome among academic staff of tertiary institutions, which include poor salaries, poor work conditions, economic problems, and insecurity. In their studies, Jauer, Liebig, Martin and Puhani (2014), and Afunugo (2023) observe that when there is a mass exodus of citizens of a nation to foreign countries in search of a new lease of life, such a country is left brain-drained, impoverished, backward, and with reduced productivity.

Omonijo, Nnedum, and Ezeokana (2011); Oluwaseyi and Adeosun (2020); Odimegwu and Joe-Akunne (2023), and Afunugo (2023) have expressed concerns about the fact that the highest numbers of youths and young professionals in Nigeria are migrating to other countries or planning to do so. They advise that anyone wishing to travel abroad should first thoroughly research the conditions of service and living arrangements before making the move. 'Jápa' may lead to 'Janu' if caution is not exercised because available research shows a surge in people desperately leaving Nigeria to seek employment opportunities abroad, resulting in serious brain drain. Besides the fact that many lose their lives in the process—a point highlighted earlier by Olaniji (2021)—despite warnings from the Federal Government of Nigeria urging youths against illegal migration due to its severe consequences, the majority still ignore these warnings because of the harsh economy, pursuit of education, political policies, and insecurity in the country.

Recently, Ikyaaator, Abachi, and Doki, (2024) found out in their empirical study that the *Jápa* syndrome is fast becoming a threat to the domestic economy in Nigeria due to high population growth, high cost of living, high level of youth unemployment, and low levels of government ineffectiveness



in engendering sound policies. The quest to leave Nigeria by all means and anyhow is a result of issues of high levels of unemployment, high cost of living, and poor quality of governance in Nigeria (Ikyaator, Abachi, and Doki, 2024). Uwakwe (2004) also laments that *Jápa* has created a situation that has exposed a lot of economic migrants to certain human rights deprivations due to their weak status in the countries they migrated to for better opportunities. He observes further that many emigrants face mental health issues that come as a result of the social isolation they experienced as a result of being separated from family and social networks, as well as job insecurity, difficult living conditions, and exploitative treatment. Ezegwu, Chukwuemeka, David, and Ude-Akpeh (2023) researched the awareness and perception of Onitsha residents on *Jápa* syndrome among Nigerians, and they found that the majority of Onitsha residents are aware of *Jápa* syndrome to a great extent through the internet, friends, and television.

Don-Baridam's (2023) study on best practices for human resource leaders struggling to manage the "*Jápa* syndrome" in Nigerian organisations, recommended that organisations can create a reward scheme, adopt a humancentric approach to managing talents, provide a wide range of services such as cloud migration; data analytic and AI-based solutions to create a more productive work environment which can help reduce dependence on human labour. Olaolorunpo, Oyinloye and Temitayo et. al. (2024) carried out a study on effective strategies to address *Jápa* syndrome among Nigerian nurses for better workforce retention. They discovered that the *Jápa* Syndrome has both beneficial and detrimental effects on the nursing profession in Nigeria. They noted that while it may offer individual career advancement for nurses, it also exacerbates the shortage of healthcare professionals and undermines the quality of the healthcare system. They identified poor governance, inadequate working conditions, and low remuneration as contributing factors that must be addressed. They also suggested increased salaries, improved working conditions, and enhanced educational opportunities to effectively tackle the challenges, as the measures are vital for retaining nurses and strengthening the healthcare system in Nigeria.

In another development, Ebisi's (2023) study on international migration (*Jápa Syndrome*) and institutional development of Nigeria: perception of

stakeholders in southeast Nigeria revealed that the negative impact of international migration is mostly reflected on the brain drain phenomenon, which continued to affect the growth and viability of local institutions. Ratzinger (2004) had earlier examined the *Jápa* pandemic: battling for the souls of Nigerian youths and concluded that the current *Jápa* pandemic is fundamentally rooted in bad governance and leadership failures. Yusuf, Adewale, Jimoh et. al. (2023) worked on *Jápa* Syndrome: environmental and socio-economic factors as drivers of mass emigration of Nigerian youths. They noted that the mass emigration of youths in Osun State, Nigeria, is influenced by various environmental and socio-economic factors such as violence, insurgency, insecurity, poor environmental conditions, seeking greener pastures, high unemployment rate, infrastructural deficit, human trafficking, bad governance, and poor conditions for workers. Mpigi (2023), who worked on the implications of the *Jápa* syndrome on the church in Nigeria, maintains that migration has enabled the expansion of the kingdom of God and openness to the diversity of culture, which enriches the human family but has also made the church a secondary victim of trafficking. Adelowo, Bello and Oyewusi (2023) studied the impact of *Jápa* syndrome on human capital availability in Nigeria's medical industry and found out that economic factors, particularly low salaries and inadequate working conditions, significantly contribute to the emigration of medical professionals and that emigration of healthcare workers negatively impacts the quality of services, resulting in longer wait times and reduced patient care in Nigeria.

The mass exodus of youths, skilled workers and professionals in Nigeria, referred to as *Jápa* syndrome, is affecting the country's labour force adversely, although it may have its own advantage as some believe that it is a gainful opportunity that will lead to "brain gain" for Nigeria in the future. Expectedly, apart from the existing strains of secrecy that surround *Jápa*, migration also alters social relationships and leaves untold pain among the left behind; an experience that resonates with the theory of Extalgia propounded by Olaoluwa (2019). A lot of Nigerians migrated abroad because of the unsafe working conditions for workers in Nigeria, as they hope that migrating to other parts of the world would afford them better education, better career opportunities, better-paying jobs, and of course, a safer and more secure future for their children, the benefits they believe are quite vague in Nigeria at the moment.

Beyond the positive contributions of diaspora remittances and the enterprising nature of Nigerians—who actively export their talents, products, and even themselves in what has been termed “self-exportation”—the Jápa phenomenon has triggered a significant outflow of skilled professionals from Nigeria to labour markets across the globe, including other African nations (Olumoyo & Abiri, 2023). This migration wave captures doctors, nurses, medical practitioners, bankers, academics, and tech professionals, all seeking better opportunities abroad. Okunade and Awosusi (2023) proposed a framework that interprets the Jápa syndrome as a multifaceted response to persistent insecurity, accessible foreign employment, career advancement prospects, economic decline, psychological exhaustion, the pursuit of a secure future, and migration-related illusions and compulsions. The consequences of this mass migration are far-reaching. Nigeria faces a severe brain drain, with a shortage of competent professionals in critical sectors such as healthcare, education, technology, and skilled trades. Additionally, the country suffers from talent depletion, organisational skill gaps, stunted industrial growth, increased demand for foreign currency (which weakens the naira), and a loss of tax revenue and financial resources to other nations. Further research by Kareem, Oniyide, and Bello (2024) examined how the emigration potential associated with Jápa affects the motivation and teaching efficacy of pre-service science teachers, while Adeyanju, Alao, and Ajibade (2024) explored Jápa as a survival strategy among Nigerian youths from a socio-economic perspective. Despite the breadth of existing scholarship on Jápa, no study has yet investigated its dynamics among Nigerians through a musicological lens—an important gap this study seeks to address.

### **Theoretical Explanation**

The Yoruba’s philosophy of Advancing Retreating Alive (ARA) was adopted for this paper. The philosophy postulates: *mọ̀ ‘jà mọ̀ sà ní a fí n mọ̀ akínkanjú. Ológun t’ó bá mọ̀ ‘jà, tí kò bá mọ̀ sá, irú u wọ̀n ní bó ‘gun un lẹ̀*, (literally means that an experienced warrior must know when to advance and when to retreat during war; a warrior who knows how to advance but lacks wisdom to retreat, when necessary, will eventual be killed by his opponents). Although this paper is not on war or conflict discourse but the philosophy derived from the proverb is apt as it explains

human need to make a move (advancing), or make a retreat when it seems things fail to work out the way it was planned- may be to reorganise (Retreating) instead of dying on the battle. It is better to live for another plan and make another effort (Alive). This philosophy is further buttressed by common encouragement for people that: *bí iwájú kò bá se é lq, ẹ̀yìn yó se é padà sí* (when it becomes difficult to proceed in a journey/process, it is advisable to return home- may be to reorganise). It is also explained in another concept- “if a strange land refuses to accommodate one, such should return home” (*Bi’la kò ba se é gbé, a sì má n gbé Ìlaláá*). This philosophy postulates that if one makes an advance to migrate or relocate to a place but seems to face difficulty, instead of putting one’s life at risk or instead of losing one’s life in the process, one should retrace his/her steps to where s/he is coming from and look inward for a better plan. This philosophy in relation to the dynamics of migration is therefore well articulated in Adekunle Gold’s music-*Ire* as shown in the analysis below.

### **Dynamics of Migration Discourses in Adekunle Gold’s Music-*Ire* from a Musicological Perspective**

#### ***Content Analysis***

Adekunle Gold’s music- “*Ire*” provides dynamics that surround the myth and reality of migration from Nigeria abroad using music as an instrument of communication, projecting hardship that many who ‘*Jápa*’ face in the process of searching for “Golden Fleece” in a foreign land (Awelewa, 2021: 151). His music portrays the life of Nigerians who many times chase shadows and leave reality for mirage; leaving certainty for uncertainty. The music is a reflection of the reality that many Nigerians face in their *Jápa* adventure. Adekunle’s music, “*Ire*” debunks the imagination of the migrants and the metaphors that the diaspora is an Eldorado, a utopian space where every problem disappears immediately one leaves the shore of Nigeria. A significant part of Adekunle Gold’s style is his use of Yoruba folk music and highlife, genres that have deep roots in African musical traditions. He has shown an affinity for traditional rhythms, melodies, and instruments that reflect Yorùbá musical customs. Many of his song tracks are deeply inspired by highlife music style, with its smooth rhythm and storytelling style. Adekunle Gold’s song, *Ire* conveys significant life

occurrences, timely lessons, cultural history, and personal experiences; the lyric resembles the oral storytelling tradition of the Yorùbá people in Nigeria. His songs are rich in narrative, offering listeners a chance to connect with both the music and the stories they tell. An example of such is “Ire,” which means “goodness” in the Yoruba language.

The song’s lyrics acknowledge the blessings and successful outcomes one encounters and convey thankfulness for life’s pleasant things. It is a song about embracing the positive things that happen in one’s life, conquering obstacles, and appreciating life. This attitude of thankfulness is embedded in Yoruba culture, where daily existence is greatly influenced by an appreciation of life and divine favour. The Yoruba concept of “*Ire*” is associated with concepts of harmony, prosperity, and spiritual fulfilment. The Yoruba people hold that everyone has a destiny, also described as *Ori*, and that success and happiness are closely related to one’s alignment with one’s life’s purpose. These ideas are reflected in the song *Ire* by Adegunle Gold, who expresses gratitude for his blessings, which seem to be consistent with a feeling of contentment and spiritual fulfilment. In “*Ire*,” Adegunle Gold’s lyrics highlight the idea of appreciating life’s blessings and the journey toward prosperity, which resonates with the reason why many people embark on the journey abroad, to seek prosperity, peace, and fulfilment; but the *Jápa* may result into *Jánu* if the person refuses to *Jápada* when one faces life threatening situation.

“I took the ride because I thought the grass is greener on the other side, I burned the bridge”. This explains the effort of people to migrate by all means, which is termed *Jápa* in this paper. Many migration activities are usually based on costly assumptions and processes with costly prices and financial involvement from loans, selling of properties, and so forth. “If I have known...” explains that many *Jápa* experiences usually go with regret after discovering that it was fortune which was looking at one at home, that one had deserted. “*Eda mi s’atokun fun ese mi, je n pada s’ile, ma je n sin won w’aye, ma je n rarin ra*”(my creator be my guide, let me return home in peace, do not let me a failure, do not let me get lost in life)- this explain that one can get lost in the process of looking for a greener pasture which this paper termed as *Jánù*, the musician therefore prayed not to experience this because there is tendency to get lost in the migration process

and diaspora after relocation. “*Ire n be nilé, o n pe mi ki n ma bo, ‘[d]á mi s’atÑIkun fun mi, je n padà s’ilé* (there is goodness at home, it is calling me to come, my creator be my guide, make me return in peace).” This explains that it is honourable and profitable for many migrants to return home for the future they are searching for, which this paper called *Jápada*, is really at home. *Jápada* can be voluntary or forced; the former is better than the latter. The content of the excerpt below is analysed and examined in line with migration dynamics using themes to explain them.

### **Themes in Adekunle Gold’s music-*Ire***

Principally, the song- “*Ire*”, focuses and addresses the *Jápa* mentality among Nigerians today, where many people think that one cannot succeed until one leaves his/her own country and migrates abroad, even though the reality of life makes one see that not all that glitters is gold as expected. This is because many who finally succeeded in travelling out of their countries in search of greener pastures encounter various problems such as racism, discrimination, disappointment, fierce competition, lack of employment, and unbearable taxes, among others. Sooner or later, people realise that “*the grass is greener where you water it*” since success is not necessarily tied to a particular location, but it is about what you make out of where you are, through decisive and concerted efforts. Some of the themes generated from Adekunle Gold’s music, “*Ire*”, are further elaborated below.

#### ***i. Hope and positive expectation***

The theme of hope and positive expectation is vividly manifested in Adekunle Gold’s track- “*Ire*”. “*Ire*” (goodness) conveys a message of hope and optimism for the people in Nigeria, encouraging Nigerian citizens to keep hope alive and to stay positive about the situation around them, looking forward to better things despite the present life’s challenges. It offers a message of resilience and hope for self-improvement. The opening statements after the instrumental introduction- *The grass is greener on the other side, that’s what I thought before I took the ride* presuppose that many migrants who *Jápa* to abroad from Nigeria usually do so because of the promise and hope of greener pastures. Adekunle Gold uses “taken the ride” in his music to explain the concept of *Jápa*, as many usually “take

*the ride*” because they believe that they will make it easily and early if they relocate abroad. The hope that if one travels abroad, things will be better sometimes does come through social media postings of people who have earlier migrated. Uwakwe (2004) corroborates this when he notes that through print, electronic, and social media, poor people across developing countries are inundated with the lifestyles of people living miles away from them, which were unimaginable in the past. They usually demonstrate the power of believing in oneself and being confident in one’s journey, even when things eventually seem uncertain or difficult.

The song also touches on themes of faith, with references to divine intervention and trust in a higher power to guide one through life’s trials. Therefore, hope and positive expectation that “*the land is greener on the other side*” make many who Jápa by all means to sell their properties in Nigeria and borrow excessively to offset the bills required for them to Jápa. Many even conclude that they have nothing to do with their home country, as the song rightly says: “*I burned my bridges, so I never look back*”. Many swore never to come back home because of their painful experiences at home before they got the opportunity to relocate; hence, many sold all their properties, such as houses, businesses, and other belongings, to secure visas and pay for the flight and other expenses. The phrase, *Ire n bè nilê -Ire, ayo* (there is goodness at home) is a word of hope and encouragement to those who believe that they cannot make it at home until they travel abroad. Adekunle Gold advocates for hope and optimism about the future, signalling that positive change can happen in Nigeria as people continue to invest in it and work towards improvement.

#### ***ii. Regret and Disappointment***

The song also presents the theme of regret that sometimes accompanies the shallow decision to relocate to greener pastures. Many who relocate abroad sometimes experience disappointment and subsequent regret. Disappointment and regret set in when the hope, aspiration, and expectation are not fulfilled, instead one is being confronted with more complications and unfavourable situations. For instance, the text of the song below speaks to that:

But if I had known,  
The life I was searching for was looking me right in the eye, Oh.  
If I had known  
The life I was searching for was already my own  
*Ire n bè n'ilê (Ire, ayo)*

This is a true picture of some who migrated abroad but later found out that the situation is not like what they thought; that they were even better placed at home than abroad. The point here is that citizens should look inward; that growth and success can be achieved without necessarily leaving one's home country. The message encourages individuals to seek improvement, transformation, and fulfilment from within their current circumstances as they continue to hope for better conditions.

**iii. Reality and Consciousness**

The theme under this section presents the reality of life and calls for attitudinal change towards the uncontrollable mindset for *Jápa* among the citizens. Certain revelations came up from the song texts below:

The grass is greener when you water the ground  
That's what I found when I took the ride  
I realised the mountain I've been climbing is nothing but sand, oh  
I didn't know I already had the answer  
No, I didn't know'.

The musician realised that no grass becomes greener than the other when special effort is not made by the people. Greener pastures become desirable because some people put effort into watering the ground. The reality of this dawned on the musician because "he took the ride," and he realised that the mountain he was climbing was mere sand. He did not understand this until he moved closer, and then the true picture of the situation that initially looked beautiful afar off showed its true picture as mere fantasy. Adekunle Gold encourages people to see the value in their immediate environment and situation instead of always looking to leave for greener pastures. The music discourages the notion that leaving the country is the only solution, but that individuals can create his/her opportunities and contribute to the positive transformation of his/her environment. Many



Nigerians have actually “*Jápa*” before the reality dawned on them, of which some prefer to cope with the unbearable situation and refuse to return home. One of my informants recounted his experience during the interview of how he met in the US a man who resigned as a bank manager in one of the notable cities in Nigeria, now working as a security man over there. The bank manager became open when he saw my informant with traditional attire and noticed he would have come from Nigeria. He related his experience that was full of regret because he did not know then that the “mountain he was climbing was a mere sand” until he resigned and used his fortune to relocate before the reality dawned on him.

***iv. Prayer and Positive Confession for Goodness and Hope***

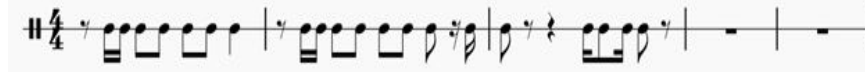
A careful content analysis of Adekunle Gold’s song track, “*Ire*” reveals themes of prayer and positive confession. For instance, the phrases “*ma je n sin won wa’ye, ma je n rin arin ra*” (don’t let my coming to the world be a waste and don’t let me get lost) are words of prayer to God to fulfil destiny. Prayer and positive confession are essential in attracting fortune and goodness to one’s life. Among the Yorùbá, words are not just mere expressions and are not usually careless declarations but tools that are believed to have positive or negative influence on one’s destiny and path in life. In Yorùbá cosmology, one’s destiny can be influenced by positive confessions, which can come in the form of prayers, affirmations, self-declarations, helping in reinforcing a person’s aspirations and manifest blessings. “*Ire, ire, ire, ire, ire, ayo*” (Goodness, goodness, goodness, Joy), as repeated many times in the tract, suggests an affirmation that expresses hope in goodness and a successful life. It is a declaration of faith to oneself, which aligns with the Yorùbá concept that speaking positively about one’s life invites divine and spiritual blessings. The repetition of “*Ire o, Ire o, Ire o*” throughout the song confirms and reflects a belief that constantly confessing good things into one’s life can bring peace, success, and prosperity. It is an affirmation of goodness and fortune. Repeated positive words are believed to carry spiritual weight and bring about real-life blessings in the Yorùbá belief system. *Ire, ire, ayo, O n pe mi* (goodness and joy are calling out to me), *Ire fi le poti o fi ona ro’ka, O ni ki n ma bo* (goodness has prepared banquet for me and asked me to come home) are all statements of faith and positive confession.

### Structural Analysis

The structural analysis of the song “*ire*” reveals certain elements and features of the music. The music begins with a guitar prelude, establishing a motif sustained on a tonic pedal tone. After this, the guitar introduces the melody, which consists of conjunct intervals in a descending and stepwise motion. Additional harmonic colours are introduced through synth effects, complemented by Yorùbá percussive instruments, creating a blend of cultural exchange and acculturation of both Western and traditional musical elements.



*Motif in the different variations sustained on a tonic pedal tone.*



*The rhythmic representation of the percussive instrument is superimposed on the established motif.*

The piece is set in a major key, specifically D flat major, and is predominantly in unison. A contemporary harmonic style emerges as the soprano, alto, and tenor voices enter intermittently. A notable feature of the music is its B section (chorus), which is emphasised through repetition. This section highlights the central theme, with the first two sub-phrases being largely monotonous, emphasising the dominant note (*soh*) on the primary text (*Ire*). Harmonically, this section follows the chord progression: i – iv – i – vi – iv – i. The music concludes with a guitar postlude. The chord progression follows a cyclical pattern, giving a sense of continuity. The use of major chords (I-IV-V-vi) reinforces the song. The repetitive harmonic structure of the music coincides with the repetitive nature of the text of the song.

Concerning the form, the piece follows a “thorough-composed” structure, with significant emphasis on the chorus. A thorough-composed form of music occurs when a piece of music is constructed in verses. The music has two verses, both of which are set on the same tune. The texture of the music is predominantly homophonic, in which the parts move together in

simple harmonisation, with sections where the lead singer carries the melody while instruments or voices provide harmonic support. The harmonic structure of the music is built on a Soprano, alto, and Tenor (SAT) arrangement, differing from the traditional Western SATB style. The parts are layered with an intervallic relationship in thirds, both above and below the melody.

The meter of the music follows a **regular 4/4 meter- a simple time**, with rhythms that are predominantly **syncopated**, creating a sense of rhythmic drive. The drum pattern follows syncopated highlife rhythms with light percussion (shakers, subtle and congas). Despite the syncopation, there is a strong emphasis on the **downbeat**, reinforcing the overall groove and structure of the piece. The melody of the music is based on a major diatonic scale and aligns with the Yorùbá speech tone pattern (*do-low, re-mid, mi-high*). It features both stepwise motion and leaps, adding to its uniqueness and appeal. The melody is simple, soulful, and repetitive, making it easy to remember and sing along. The song is in a major key, giving it a bright and uplifting feel. The ascending vocal phrases symbolise progression, moving towards *Ire* (goodness). The tempo of the song is a mid-tempo groove. See the musical example below:

♩ = 90

Soprano  
I-re,i - re,i-re I-re,i - re,a-yo on-pe - mio

Alto  
I-re,i - re,i-re I-re,i - re,a-yo on-pe - mio

Tenor  
I-re,i - re,i-re I-re,i - re,a-yo on-pe - mio

### Conclusion

This study has examined *Jápa*, *Jánù*, and *Jápadà* as migration dynamics using Adekunle Gold's music- "*Ire*" to explore the aspiration, failed aspiration, and reasons for the emigrants to retreat in their forceful ambitions. The song track "*Ire*" is a reflective song that is deeply rooted in the Yorùbá philosophical meaning about reason to appreciate one's home and cultural roots. It speaks about the importance of one's home against the common belief that life is better elsewhere, leading many to overlook the richness of what they already have at home. The song explains the Yorùbá philosophy "*Ajo ò le dàbí ilé*" (there's no place like home) and emphasises the reason to look back even if one travels abroad. This song serves as both a lesson and a reminder, encouraging people to value and invest in their homeland rather than constantly seeking better opportunities elsewhere. It aligns with the Advancing Retreating Alive Theory (ARAT), emphasising the reasons to look inward and the need to embrace and take pride in one's cultural heritage. More than just music, Adekunle Gold uses the track "*Ire*" as a way to preserve and celebrate Nigerian identity, making it a powerful piece of storytelling and cultural documentation. Adekunle Gold uses his music to explain personal experiences with broader social themes like migration and the pursuit of a better life, which manifests in the phenomenon of "*Jápa syndrome*" in Nigeria.

There are factors that make people think of *Jápa*- government insensitivity, security issues, joblessness. This makes the search for a greener pasture to be in tandem with the Yorùbá philosophy of "*wa woroko sada*" (get alternative solution to your problem), since he who is hungry is wretched (*eni ti ebi n pa iya ko kuro loro re*). Hunger can lead to breaking orders. It must be noted, however, that lack of contentment has been the major reason for some people who migrated or sought to migrate abroad. This is clear from the track under study. Many of these desperados take illegal routes, which may lead to death, and many do not have a concrete plan of where they are going to. Many later become wanderers since they do not have immigration permit. They thought to move to greener pastures and decided to *Jápa*, but later discovered that "there was no grass" in the place they migrated to, which then results in regret, and sometimes family disintegration and loss of life. Instead of retreating and returning home,

many *Jánù* (refuse to retreat and thereby get lost), as they continue to endure the unbearable situation that is even worse than where they left at home; they refuse to return until they get lost in a strange land. Only those who realise and determine to return “to water their ground” or those who are deported by force are the only people who are said to *Jápada*. Philosophy of advancing and retreating is a good encouragement for Nigerians, especially the youths. The musician, Adekunle Gold, discourages the *Jápa* syndrome, especially the one that comes in the form of forceful movement or illegal migration that may later result in regret. He emphasises the value of “staying at home and transforming one’s home”, appreciating the opportunities and blessings within one’s own country. Through the lyrics, contentment, optimism, and the belief that good things can still happen despite challenges are emphasised by the musician. This paper has established that migration dynamics has gone beyond *Jápa* but has now extended to *Jánu* and *Jápada*. Musicians are therefore encouraged to continue to discourage forceful migration.

#### **Note**

1. Tunde Odunlade is the chairman, Odunlade Art and Gallery, Bodija, Ibadan. He assisted on the concepts of *Jápa*, *Jánu* and *Jápada* in relation to Yorùbá understanding and Philosophy.

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