

Yorùbá Indigenous Knowledge on the Wane: Playwrights to the Rescue

Adérìbigbé, Morónmúbò Martina
*Department of Yorùbá,
Federal College of Education,
Osiele, Abeokuta, Ogun State*

Abstract

*Indigenous knowledge is the long-standing and unique traditional knowledge and belief of a local society transmitted orally from one generation to the other. However, this imperative knowledge is fast waning, and many indigenous knowledge systems are at risk of becoming extinct due to intrusion of foreign technology and ideologies, modification, modernisation and cultural homogenisation. The realisation of the importance of indigenous knowledge in areas like agriculture, human healthcare, interpersonal relationships within the society and sustainable development has endeared it to scholars and policy makers alike. Therefore, this paper, using postcolonial theory, attempts a descriptive analysis of four Yorùbá drama texts which are replete with issues on indigenous knowledge. These texts are *Ilé tí a fi itọ mọ* by Olú Dáramólá (1970); *Oníyangí* by Olúfadékémi Adágbádá (2008); *Ayé yẹ wón tán* and *Efúnróyè Tinubu* both by Akínwùmi Ìṣòlá (2009) and (2010) respectively, with a view to elucidating the attempts of Yorùbá playwrights in reminiscing, conserving and preserving the declining Yorùbá indigenous knowledge. The textual analyses of the plays reveal that playwrights serve as griots and cultural watchmen. Also, their works are cultural*



and indigenous knowledge preservatives. Therefore, the paper advocates that they reflect and refract more traditional culture of the society and highlight ideas, values of social conducts that are gradually fading away.

Introduction

Indigenous people have a broad knowledge of how to live sustainably. However, formal educational systems have disrupted the practical everyday life aspects of indigenous knowledge and academic ways of learning. Today, there is a grave risk that much indigenous knowledge is being lost and along with it, valuable knowledge about way of living sustainably. But one sure way of creating the awareness about indigenous knowledge among the educated populace is through literature, of which written drama is a vital part. This is corroborated by Isola's view that:

the duty of literature in the local language is to craft humane qualities like dignity, sense of duty, acceptable standard of right and wrong, hardwork, faithfulness, accountability, honour, fraternity and hope into valuable genres, the nuggets and souvenirs of language that will produce the memorable images that are stored in a bank at the front and back of the minds of the owners of the culture

Yorùbá playwrights seem to use literature to revamp the dwindling indigenous knowledge. To investigate this, data were drawn from four Yorùbá drama texts: *Ilé tí a fì itọ̀ mọ̀* by Olú Dáramólá (1970); *Oníyangí* by Olúfadékẹ̀mi Adágbádá (2008);



Ayé yẹ wón tán and *Efúnróyè Tinubu* both by Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá (2009) and (2010) respectively.

Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge (IK), also known as local knowledge (LK), Traditional knowledge (TK) or Traditional environmental or ecological knowledge (TEK) is the established age-old traditions and practices of a people. It encompasses the wisdom, knowledge, and teachings of the people. This knowledge includes the beliefs, relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment. It is handed down orally through generations by cultural transmission and first-hand observation (Berkes 1993:3; Stevenson 1996: 281; Adeyinka et al 2002: 3). Characteristically, indigenous knowledge is holistic, intuitive, qualitative, non-linear, moral, communal and spiritual. It is based on mutual well-being, reciprocity, and cooperation, often contextualised within the spiritual and promoting of stewardship (Clarkson et al, 1992; Berkes, 1993; Doubleday, 1993; Tyler,1993; Wavey,1993; Mitchell, 1994; and Cole, n.d.)

Today, many indigenous knowledge systems are at risk of becoming extinct, and this has become a major disturbing concern among academics which made them beam their searchlights on how it can be preserved (). Many scholars have given different reasons for the gradual move to extinction of IK: Kroma (1996) says it is because of the communication gap, since neither children nor adults spend as much time in their communities. Because IK is generally transmitted orally, it is susceptible to change, particularly when people move to new

regions, or when people's lifestyles tend to be different from those of their ancestors. Soni (2007) attributes it to modernisation, cultural homogenisation and current educational system that believe macro-level problems can only be addressed through the global knowledge pool, and the slow growth of institution supporting grassroots innovations.

As it is evident from the foregoing, the indigenous knowledge of a people is part and parcel of their culture. This is corroborated by James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, when he says "Indigenous knowledge is an integral part of the culture and history of a local community" (Gorjestani 2000:1). However, it is not limited to their ways of life only because it encompasses their relationship with their environment and local resource use practices. These two aspects of indigenous knowledge, that is, culture and use of local resources are examined in the drama texts under study in this paper. The use of herbs in attaining good health as projected by the playwrights will be looked into as well as cultural ethics. Under ethics, we will see the concept of *omólúàbí* and salutation. Playwrights are believed to play a major role in stemming the tide of the extinction of indigenous knowledge because the new generation that is supposed to take the knowledge orally from the older generation cannot do so due to migration from rural to urban areas and the reasons earlier mentioned, they can learn it by reading it up in plays.



Postcolonialism

The term "postcolonial," in a very general sense, is the study of the dealings of the European nations with the societies they colonised in the modern period. Post-colonial theory deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously or currently colonised countries, or literature written in colonising countries which deals with colonisation or colonised peoples. It focuses particularly on the way in which literature by the colonising culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonised people. It also focuses on literature by colonised peoples which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past's inevitable otherness.

Postcolonialism can also deal with the way in which literature in colonising countries appropriates the language, images, scenes, traditions of the colonised countries. Postcolonial literature and theory also investigate what happens when two cultures clash and when one of them with its accompanying ideology empowers and deems itself superior to the other.

Postcolonial literature seeks to describe the interactions between European nations and the peoples they colonised.

Healthcare

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2002) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. In contrast to health, many people think of disease as an undesirable, serious and limiting circumstance. Hughes et al (1999:363) define disease as:



condition in which an organism does not function properly due to biological cause. The problem may result from microbiology infection, dietary deficiency, heredity, or a harmful environmental agent.

This definition does not take spiritual causes of disease into consideration, but in Yorùbá cosmos, *àrùn* (disease) has at least two layers of meaning (Abimbola 2006:81). The first being *àrùn* (the anti god), that is, one of the *ajogun* (warlords). They include *ikú* (death), *àrùn ègbà* (leprosy), *òràn* (trouble), *èpè* (curse), *èṣe* and *èwòn*. In Yorùbá theology, the *ajogun* are completely evil and as such they have no redeeming virtues whatsoever. The avowed aim of all the *ajogun* is complete ruination of humankind; only sacrifice or special pleading to *Èṣù* by one's *orí* can save one from the powers of *àrùn* - the *ajogun*.

Secondly, there is *àrùn* the physical illness or disease which results in physical imbalance. Herbs and medicine are the prescriptions for this kind of *àrùn*. At times, the activities of *ajogun* in a person's life may result in the second type of *àrùn*, and this is where divination comes in as a means of diagnosis. According to Dòpámú et al (2004:427), divination is diagnosis which reveals the root cause of a disease, while ritual is therapy. This is corroborated by Abimbola (2006:34):

If after divination the *onísègùn* (native doctor) determines the source of the disease, illness or affliction is spiritual, then in addition to herbs and medications



designed to treat and repair the body, the *onísegun* will also prescribe something for 'spiritual repair'".

This is evident in a Yorùbá saying that *ẹbọ gínńgín, oògùn gínńgín ní í gba aláìkú là* (it is a little sacrifice and a little medication that saves a survivor). Yorùbá traditional medicine not only removes the symptoms but also identifies and removes causes of illness. Yorùbá medicine (*egbògi*) is an herb-based form of the science and art of healing. This form of herbal medicine, also called botanical medicine or phytomedicine, refers to the use of any plant's seeds, berries, roots, leaves, bark, or flowers for medicinal purposes (Osewa, et al 2013). According to Buckley (1985), Yorùbá medicine has major similarities with conventional medicine in the sense that its main thrust is to kill or expel from the body tiny, invisible germs or insects (*kòkòrò*) and also worms (*aràn*) which inhabit small bags within the body. For the Yorùbá, however, these germs and worms perform useful functions in the healthy body, aiding digestion, fertility and so on, but if they become too powerful in the body, they must be controlled, killed or driven out with bitter-tasting plants contained in the medicine. Yorùbá medicine is quite different from homeopathy, which uses medicinal ingredients that imitate pathological symptoms. Rather, it strives to destroy the agencies that cause disease.

The Yorùbá had their indigenous ways of attaining and maintaining good state of health before the advent of the Europeans medicine. For a common illness like malaria fever (*ibà*) for instance, the Yorùbá have different types of herbal



mixtures used in curing it. Some are in liquid form (*àgbo*), while some are in powdery form (*àgúnmu*). Also, they believe that the intake of good palm wine is both curative and preventive measures against malaria fever, but with the advent of the western knowledge, there came a shift in this belief. In *Ilé tí a fì Itọ Mọ* Adésódún goes to visit Àníké, and the latter complains about her health. This is the conversation that ensues between them.

Àníké: *Mo ti lo oògùn mélòó kan, asipirin, nifakwin ati bẹẹ bẹẹ lọ, sùgbón sibèsibè ní ẹ se ni gbogbo ara n fà mí kànkàn bí eni pé a fì okùn ẹrù wà mí mọ igi.*

Adésódún: *Hun un, ibà gidi niyẹn, mo sì fẹ wí fún yín wí pé oògùn òyìnbó wònyì kò ran ibà àsikò yìi mọ. Nígbà tí àmódi ibà mú mi ní oşù tó kojá àwọn oògùn òyìnbó wònyì fẹrẹẹ hù lóri mi, nitorí pé mò n kó wọn jẹ bí igbà tí à n jẹ erée ni sibèsibè, ibà náà kò fì mí sílẹ, àfì igbà tí mo lọ ka àgbo ni mo tóó gbádùn.*

(*Ilé tí a fì itọ mọ: 6*)

Àníké: I have taken some drugs, aspirin, nivaquine and so on, but still I have pains all over my body as if I am tied to a tree with a rope.

Adésódún: Yes, that is real malaria. I want to tell you that all these white-man drugs are no longer potent on malaria these days. When I had malaria last month, I took those tablets excessively; I was



literarily eating them like beans, all to no avail, until I went for local herbs, before I recovered.

This excerpt shows a shift from the use of herbs to foreign drugs. Adésódún is a teacher by profession, which implies that she has imbibed the culture of the Europeans. This could explain why she thinks of treating malaria in the European way. Not until she is disappointed by not achieving the desired result does she think of traditional medicine. The fact that Adésódún does not think of local herbs at first shows that local treatment is no longer paramount. It is only when the desired result is not achieved by the foreign treatment that she reverts to the traditional, which eventually cures the ailment. This affirms that the playwright affirms the potency of traditional medicine over the foreign one.

But in *Ayé Yẹ Wọ̀n Tán*, when Níyì, the son of Sẹ̀gilọ́lá and Àyàn is ill, his mother suggests that he be taken to the hospital, but the father replies:

*...Ibà ló mún un, ó sì fẹ̀ẹ̀ san, Àyànwálé
yóò bá mi gba àgúnmu kan bọ̀ látoko
lónìí, kì-bà-á-tì ni. O kúkú mọ̀ pé kíkì
wọ̀lẹ̀ lásán ni tábulẹ̀tì máa n kì ibà
wọ̀lẹ̀. Agbo lo lè yọ ọ̀ dànú gan-an
(Ayé yẹ wọ̀n tán:62)*

...He has malaria and he will soon recover. Ayanwale will bring herbal powder from the farm for me. It is very potent. You know that tablets bring



pseudo-healing. It is local herbs that can really cure it.

Àyànwálé, on the other hand, does not acquire Western education. He does not have close or personal contact with the European culture, so he still holds the Yorùbá tradition in high esteem. Even when his wife suggests taking the sick child to the hospital, he insists on the traditional way of treatment because he believes it makes the child come out of the illness with a clean bill. Apparently, these excerpts show that contact with European culture makes one jettison his/her cultural heritage. But as one of the aims of postcolonial writers, these playwrights are directing the people's attention back to their cultural heritage that is fast waning. They uphold the superiority of the orthodox treatment of illnesses to the foreign one.

This excerpt also shows the belief of the Yorùbá in the superiority of local herbs to tablets in treating common ailments like malaria fever.

In conclusion, it can be deduced that most playwrights prefer to project the traditional medicine as superior to, and more potent than those of the Europeans. This is a bid to create the awareness in Yorùbá society of the need to go back to the basics. At the fiftieth meeting of the World Health Organization's (WHO's) Regional Committee for Africa in August 2000, it was reported that in the last decade, there has been a global surge in the use of complementary and alternative medicine in both developed and developing countries due to the affordability of the treatments as well as changing needs and beliefs. The most widely used traditional medicine and



complementary and alternative therapies are herbal medicines and acupuncture. Today traditional medicine and complementary and alternative medicine play an increasingly important role in the reform of the health sector of many countries.

In Nigeria today, some local herbs are now processed and presented in the foreign way, that is, preparing the herbs in a modernised factory and making them into tablets, capsules and liquid in sealed bottles with prescription labels pasted on the bottles and cartons of the drugs. Examples are ‘Oròkí herbal mixture’; ‘Yoyo bitters’; ‘Swedish bitters’; ‘Eroxil 5000’; ‘FIJK Flusher’, to mention but a few. This awareness of this indigenous knowledge may be traced to the efforts of literary artists of which playwrights are part.

Ethics

Ethics is a system of moral standard and principle that govern a person’s behaviour. Ethical values are the standards of moral behaviour and the norms with which man's conduct should conform. They provide guides for human conduct indicating certain things or certain ways of behaviour, which should be avoided and other things or ways of behaviour which should be adopted (Omoregbe, 1993:62-63).

According to Ayantayo (1999:123), ethical principles are of two types: positive and negative. The positive values include justice, gratitude, honesty, loyalty, truthfulness, tolerance, responsibility, hard work, cooperation, generosity, kindness, fidelity to one's duty. The society expects its members to apply these values to all social relations. Conversely, negative values,

which are just direct opposites of positive values, consist of actions and ways of behaviour which are considered wrong and which people should abstain from. They include idleness, laziness, injustice, selfishness, greed, avarice, intolerance, stealing, exploitation, oppression, hatred, falsehood, dishonesty, irresponsibility and many other social vices (Brandt, 1961:20). For the purpose of this, only two aspects of Yorùbá ethics will be discussed: *omólúàbí* and salutation.

Omólúàbí

One of the very important aspect of Yorùbá culture and with which they do not joke is the concept of *omólúàbí* which is the accumulation of a lot of training and learning that results in the in-built shock-proof ability to resist evil (Ogundeji and Akangbe, 2009). It encompasses the moral values of selflessness, hospitality, kindness, generosity, straightforwardness, truth and rectitude, avoidance of wickedness, dependability in keeping covenants and bonds, honour and respect to parents, elders and those in authority, etc. In a nutshell, the expectations of a person called *omólúàbí* in Yorùbá society is that he or she must be upright, respectful, hardworking and a good custodian of Yorùbá culture. As asserted by Abimbólá (1975), an *omólúàbí* must, most fundamentally, possess attributes like respect, knowing the right thing to say at the right time, good mind, hard work, truth, bravery and good character. In *Efúnróyè Tinubu*, Ìṣòlá portrays Tinúbu as an epitome of *omólúàbí* and she displays this virtue in many ways and on many occasions. She is rich and powerful, yet she submits and accords due respect to her husband who is



not as prominent as she is in the town. Even when she is in a business meeting with her European business associates and her husband enters the house, she excuses herself, kneels down and bows to greet her husband. No wonder her husband appreciates her saying *O ʃeun. Ìtẹ̀ ìgúnwà tẹ̀mi nìkan* (Thank you, my exclusive majestic throne). She immediately adjourns the meeting till later in the evening saying

...ẹ̀yin ará mi, ẹ̀ dákun, ẹ̀ yònda mi báyi
ná, mo ní láti lọ tójú ọkọ mi ná o.
(*Efúnróyè Tinubu*:11)

...my people, please, you have to excuse
me now. I have to attend to my husband
now.

Tinubu is hardworking, kind and brave. Her kindness is displayed in the way she treats her servants (p. 9) and also in giving out one of her maids to Mrs Sandeman when she is in dire need of a house help after the delivery of her new baby (p. 60). Her bravery is exhibited throughout the story. She single-handedly championed the resistance of colonial occupation of Lagos and damned the Yorùbá that imbibe European culture like Adéjùmò and Vikiansony.

The fact that she decides to leave Lagos for Abẹ̀òkúta shows bravery and intelligence. She knows that her prolonged stay there may cause war and that will mean destroying the very thing she is trying to protect. Her intelligence is displayed in the allegoric story about the smelling venomous rat (*asín*) and the snake she tells her servant (pp. 82).

Işòlá portrays Tinubú as very intelligent. She knows when to talk, when to keep quiet and the right thing to say at the right



time. When king Dòsùmú calls for a meeting between her and Sandeman who claims Tinubu does not have the right to take back the maid she gives his late wife, Tinubú does not utter a word when Sandeman is narrating his side of the story until she is given the floor to air her own side despite the fact that provocative insults are hurled at her especially by Mrs Toker who says:

... ó yà mí lẹnu láti gbọ pé Tinubu fẹ gba Alábọn padà. Kò tilẹ ro ti ọfọ nílá tí ó ẹ Sandeman lákòkó yí. Àmọ o, kò lẹ yà mí lẹnu ẹ. Ẹ ẹ mọ pé Tinúbú ọ bímọ, kò lẹ mọ bí ikú ọmọ ẹ n dun ọbí.

(Àwọn èniyàn pariwo, wọn sì n bu arábìnrin Toker nítorí ọrọ tí ó sọ gbèyìn. Sùgbón Tinubu kò tilẹ mira).

(Efúnróyè Tinubu: 64)

... I am surprised to hear that Tinubu wants to withdraw Alábọn. She is not even mindful of the great misfortune that just befell Sandeman. Well, I am not really surprised anyway. You know Tinubu is barren so she cannot possibly comprehend the agony of a parent who loses a child.

(The people there shouted her down and insulted her for her last statement. But Tinubu did not even bat an eye).

The playwright intentionally contrasts Tinubu and Mrs Toker who the people present at the meeting refer to as somebody that is not well nurtured because of her utterances:



Àwọn kan: Ìwọ ni o sọ irú eléyí lẹnu,
obinrin yí ò mà lẹkòó o.
(*Efúnróyè Tinubu: 64*)

Some people: You uttered a statement of
this magnitude; this woman is not well
trained.

Dòsùmú also reprimands her and comments

...ó yà mí lẹnu pé ìwọ tó jòbinrin ò tún
mọ irú ọ̀rò tí ó yẹ kí o sọ jáde lẹnu.
(*Efúnróyè Tinubu: 64*)

...I am surprised that you, a woman, do
not know what should proceed out of
your mouth.

This is to show that an *omólúàbí* who is well nurtured must be
capable of intelligent use of language, and should know what
ought to be uttered or not. She or he will not also go against her
people and culture. Rather, like Tinubu, her or his motto will be

Àsà ibílẹ̀ mi jọ mí lójú, inú àwọn
aláwòṣe, aláfarawé a máa bí mi.
(*Efúnróyè Tinubu: 66*)

I cherish my culture, I detest copycats.

Ìṣòlá is advancing the *omólúàbí* aspect of Yorùbá culture here.
He is trying to say Yorùbá should not jettison this laudable
culture by embracing a foreign one. He uses Mrs Toker to
project this opinion.

The way Adágbádá projects issue of *omólúàbí* in
Oníyangí is a bit different from that of Ìṣòlá. Wúraólá, whom

she depicts as *omólúàbí*, is a university graduate, which means she has come in considerable contact with the European culture. Wúràqlá has the attributes of *omólúàbí* as against Àyòkà who does not have formal or Western education at all; she has not imbibed any Western culture, yet she is very far from being called *omólúàbí*. Wúràqlá pays her husband's fees through school when they were both in school. Despite this, she never acts or talks about it even when the husband, under the influence of his mother's charms, misbehaves and beats her up regularly. Her mother-in-law, Ìyá Èlẹ̀wà utters all manners of unprintable words to her; she insults not only Wúràqlá but her (Wúràqlá's) parents too (pp. 21-22). Ìyá Èlẹ̀wà makes sure she destroys the peace and harmony in Wúràqlá's marriage to Súnkànmí her son, but in all these, Wúràqlá never raises her voice at her. She keeps respecting her and imploring Iyá Èlẹ̀wà to let her be (p. 31). When Wúràqlá visits her husband's childhood friend and his wife, Láyíwọ̀lá and Adéníkẹ̀é, she narrates her ordeals, and when she is asked how she reacts to these, she says:

Kí ni mo fẹ́ẹ́ wí? Mo sà n bẹ̀ wọn
nàà ni wọn bú iyá àti bàbá mi
dánwò, síbẹ̀ nàà mò n bẹ̀ wọn ní.

(Oniyangi:31)

What would I say? I was just
begging her, she even insulted my
parents, still I was begging her.

At the peak of provocation, Wúràqlá never talks back to her mother-in-law; she rather begs her. These are qualities of



omolúàbí. But Àyòkà is not so. She has been married thrice. She is quarrelsome and sharp-tongued. She beats up her first mother-in-law and the latter places a curse on her that she will never procreate (pp. 60-61). She insults Ìyá Èlẹ̀wà, her last mother-in-law, and ultimately sends her away from her son's house together with herself when she leaks their secret that they both connive to charm Súnkànmí so that he could marry her (p. 88).

It could be inferred that the playwright uses this contrast between Wúràṣlá and Àyòkà to showcase her perception that even coming in contact with foreign cultures or civilisation does not mean abandoning one's indigenous culture. Some people in the Yorùbá society, despite their contact with westernisation, still hold on firmly to the Yorùbá culture, while there are some that throw culture to the wind even as illiterates.

In both plays, that is, *Oníyangí* and *Efúnróyè Tinubu*, the characters that exhibit *omolúàbí* tenets are always victorious in any challenge they face. They are highly respected and appreciated, while the *omokómọ* or *èyànkéyàn* end in shame and regrets. The playwrights succeed in preaching the message of reviving *omolúàbí* that is already waning in the face of globalisation. This revival of *omolúàbí* culture will consequently lead to the development of Yorùbá society in all ramifications as Adé Àjàyí (2002) says in *Ìṣòlá* (2010:11); we cannot develop adequately without a culture that stresses virtue, integrity, diligence and caring.



Salutation

Yorùbá are sociable, polite and hospitable. They exhibit politeness in the way they greet their superiors either in age or position. Examples of Yorùbá ways of greeting abound in the Yorùbá play texts under study. A woman kneels down on her two knees to greet her husband early in the morning while the husband may respond by reciting her lineage praise poetry (Oríkì). As for men, they prostrate, lying flat with their chest touching the ground. In fact as a mark of respect, anybody who walks into a palace must prostrate (male) or kneel (female) in front of the throne even in the absence of the king; then the palace messenger will answer “Ọba n kí ẹ” (the King greets you). Such is the high level of respect accorded the king in Yorùbá land. But this is changing in this era of globalisation and Western education. For example, in *Ayé Yẹ Wọ̀n Tán*, Òní, Chairman of the Development Committee of Ìpo town, summons a meeting of all the Chiefs and the King of Ìpo. The King is already seated at the venue of the meeting with some of his Chiefs when Aşípa enters in company of the Engineer. The Aşípa prostrates for the King, while the Engineer just bows. This triggers the following dialogue:

Aşípa: Káábíèsí, (ó dọ̀bálẹ̀) Ẹ kú iwájú

Ẹnjinià: Ẹ kú ikàlẹ̀ o (ó rọ̀ra tẹ̀)

Başòrun: (ó kojú sí Ẹnjinià) Mọ̀dékùnrin, ará ibo niwọ̀?

Oni: Ẹnjinià wa niyẹn

Basorun: Bó bá jẹ Ẹnjinià níkó? Ẹnjinià a máa fọ̀ ni lójú? O ò rí Kábíyèsí nijòkó, àbí o ò dá ọba ilẹ̀ yí mọ̀?



Enjinia: Mo kí wọn sà

Başorun: O ti kí wọn, bí wọn ṣéé kí alayé nù un? Ayánga ẹ láyé. Dòbálè! Èyin alákòwé ẹ gò báwònyí gan-an? (Enjinia dòbálè)

(Ayé yẹ wọn tán: 98)

Aşipa: Káábiyèsí, (*he greets the King and prostrates*)

Engineer: Hello sirs (*he bows slightly*)

Basorun: (*turns to Engineer*) Young man, where are you from?

Oni: That is our Engineer

Basorun: What about that? Does being an Engineer blindfolds him? Didn't you see the king on seat or you don't recognise our King?

Engineer: Sir, I greeted him

Basorun: You greeted him, is that how to greet a king? Don't be silly. Come on, prostrate. Why are you these learned people so stupid? (*Engineer prostrates*)

Obviously, the Engineer has imbibed the Western education as well as their culture and way of greeting. His exposure to Western education must have got him alienated from some aspects of Yorùbá culture. After being reprimanded by Başorun, the Engineer corrects himself and asks for the King's forgiveness. This is a vivid picture of influence of globalisation on an aspect of culture for which Yorùbá are known: respect. In Yorùbá society today, though people still kneel and prostrate, the seriousness about it is not as it used to be. Genuflecting and

bowing are more popular now than kneeling and prostrating respectively. Engineer does not notice anything wrong in how he greets the King. He thinks failure to greet is the probable offence; he never thinks of how the greeting is done. That is why he quickly defends himself that he greeted the King when he entered. Baṣòrun had to tell him what to do before he could correct himself. This indicates the fact that some youths have lost this aspect of Yorùbá indigenous knowledge. Ìṣòlá uses this scene to frown at such abnormality, correct the erring youths and remind them of what it used to be.

Also in *Efúnróyè Tinubu*, in the palace, the king is supposed to hold a meeting with the Europeans, some citizens of the place like Tinubu and those that identify with the Europeans like Adéjùmò and Vikiansony. When the king enters,

...àwọ̀n ọ̀kùnrin dọ̀bálẹ̀, Tinubu kúnlẹ̀.
Ajélẹ̀ dúró, ó ẗẹ̀riba. Vikiansony kékeré
ló jókòó ti Ajélẹ̀. Ọ̀un náà ẗẹ̀riba lásán.
Tinubu wò ó ní iwòkuwò. Èrù bà á, ó
sáré dọ̀bálẹ̀.

(*Efúnróyè Tinubu*:18)

...the men prostrate, Tinubu kneels. The District officer (Ajélẹ̀) stands and bows, Vikiansony junior sits beside the Ajélẹ̀. He too just bows. Tinubu looks at him disdainfully. He is scared, and quickly prostrates.

This shows that this aspect of Yorùbá culture is being eroded by foreign cultures. Engineer and Vikiasony are Yorùbá, but due to their romance with Western culture, they have lost this



indigenous knowledge. But it is also noticed that somebody like Vikiasony has not completely forgotten Yorùbá culture because by mere looking at him, he gets Tinubu's message and does the right thing. In Yorùbá society, parents are fond of using their facial expressions to communicate to their children not to act in certain ways. A child who harkens to facial expression of his parent is called a disciplined child (Olabimtan et al, 1986:71). Such a child is called *Omọ tó mọ ojú* (a child who understands facial expression or sign) (Ayantayo 2010:5). Communication with the eye is part of Yorùbá traditional practices. Indeed, people still greet each other in the society, but how the greeting is done traditionally is fast becoming a thing of the past.

It can also be inferred from the texts that the playwrights are saddling the elders in the society with the responsibility of correcting the youths whenever they act contrary to Yorùbá culture.

Conclusion

Obviously, Yorùbá playwrights are leaving no stone unturned to revive the dwindling Yorùbá indigenous knowledge, especially among the youths who are the future of the society. They are using the same tool, western education, which militates against indigenous knowledge to bring it back into focus of the society. However, more literary texts which are replete with Yorùbá indigenous knowledge should be published so as to always joggle the people's memory about the diminishing knowledge.

To complement and appreciate the efforts of the playwrights, however, Yorùbá should intimate themselves with their literature by endeavouring to read Yorùbá literature books.

Government should also make literature compulsory at different levels of education. This will serve a dual purpose: apart from intimating the youths with their indigenous heritage, it will also serve as springboard in developing their reading culture.

References

- Abimbólá, K. (2006). *Yorùbá culture: A philosophical account*. London: Ìrókò Academic Publishers.
- Adeyinka, A. A. & Adeyemi, M.B (2002). Some key issues in African Traditional Education. *McGill Journal of Education* 20 (2) 1 – 5.
- Ayantayo, J. K. (2010). The Ethical Dimension of African Indigenous Communication Systems: An Analysis. In *LUMINA*, Vol. 21, No.1. Pp 1-15.
- Ayantayo, J.K. (1999). "The Challenges of African Social Ethics in Cultural Context" in Ifie, E. (ed) *Coping with Culture*. Ibadan: Opoturu Books.
- Berkes, F. (1993). Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Perspective. In *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Concepts and Cases*, J. T. Inglis (ed.). Ottawa: International Program on Traditional. Pp 3-8.
- Centre for Traditional Knowledge. Unknown date. Unknown publication information. Retrieved on 6th August, 2014.
- Clarkson, L., V. Morrissette, and G. Regallet. (1992). *Our Responsibility to the Seventh Generation: Indigenous Peoples and Sustainable Development*. Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development.



- Clayoquot Sound Scientific Panel (CSSP) (1995). First Nations Perspectives Relating to Forest Practices Standards in Clayoquot Sound. Report 3.
- Cole, David. n.d. Traditional ecological knowledge of the Naskapi and the environmental assessment process. In *Law and Process in Environmental Management*. S.A. Kennett (ed.). Calgary: Canadian Institute of Resources Law. Pp 18-25.
- Dáramólá, O. (1970). *Ilé tí a fi itọ mọ*. Ìbàdàn: Oníḃonòjé Press.
- Doubleday, N. (1993). Finding Common Ground: Natural Law and Collective Wisdom. In *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Concepts and Cases*, J. T. Inglis (ed.). Ottawa: International Program on Traditional Ecological Knowledge and International Development Research Centre. Pp 1-9.
- Ecological Knowledge and International Development Research Centre. Pp 1-9.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_knowledge
Retrieved on 2nd August, 2014.
- Gorjestani, Nicolas (2000). Indigenous Knowledge for Development: Opportunities and Challenges. Paper presentation the UNCTAD Conference on Traditional Knowledge in Geneva.
- Grenier, L. 1998. Working with indigenous knowledge: A guide for researchers. http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-28703-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

- Hughes, M., Kroehler, C.J, Vander Zanden, J.W. (1999). *Sociology: the core*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies Inc.
- Ìṣòlá, A. (2009). *Ayé Yẹ Wón Tán*. Ibadan: DBMartoy Books.
- Ìṣòlá, A. (2010). *Efúnróyè Tinubu*. Ibadan: DBMartoy Books.
- Kroma, S. (1996). The science of Pacific Island peoples. *Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor*, 4(2). <http://www.nufficcs.nl/ciran/ikdm/>. Rerieved on 2nd August, 2015.
- Ogundeji, A. and Akangbe, A. (ed)(2009). *Omolabi: Its Concept and Education in Yorùbá Land*. Ibadan: Ibadan Cultural Studies Group.
- Olambitan, L et al (1986). *Àkójopò Ìwádíí Ìjìnlẹ̀ Àṣà Yorùbá*. Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd.
- Omoregbe, J.I. (1993). *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*. Lagos: Joja Educational Press Ltd.
- Osewa S.O., Alamu, O., Adetiloye I.S., Olubiyi M.R., Abidogun, E.A. Olubiyi (2013). Use of some Neglected and Underutilized Plant Species among Rural Dwellers in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State. In *Greener Journal of Agricultural Sciences*. Vol. 3 (12), pp. 817-822.
- Soni, Kailash (2007). *Indigenous Knowledge and Importance*. CINE Project Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.
- Tyler, Mary Ellen. (1993). "Spiritual stewardship in aboriginal resource management systems". *Environments* 22 (1): 1–7.