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Review

Colonial administration extortion in the African novel

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From all the colonial systems French, British, Belgium, German and Portuguese, the French one was the object of severe criticisms by the pioneers of the African literature of the Sixties through their works. The example of the Nigerienne Mahamadou Halilou Sabbo's *Caprices du Destin* [Destiny's Whims] (1981), the Cameroonian Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy* (1956) and *The Old Man and the Medal* (1956) was edifying. These two writers, although being themselves fruits of the colonial school, succeeded to be different from the non-committed novelists by a straight out denunciation of colonial system practices, ranking from the forced labor to the exercise of power, through the famous perception of taxes. One should not be deluded, in spite of the outside differences that existed between European colonial systems, in the content, they are the same. The French Direct Rule does not envy in anything, the British Indirect Rule, as insofar their fundamental objectives are identical and similar: political domination and economic exploitation of Africans.

Key words: Colonial systems, extortions, political domination, economic exploitation.

INTRODUCTION

The period between 1607 and 1775 was called colonial period. William Bradford, John Winthrop and the theologian Cotton Mather were the first writers of the 17th century to discuss the history of some colonies. The word colony is used to qualify a group of men who have left their area in order to live and exploit another country. And the colonization is the fact of transforming countries into colonies for social, political and economical exploitation. In 1923, for example, Albert Sarraut "presents colonies as the decisive recourse that will raise France of war miseries" (Ki-Zerbo, 1972: 429). Indeed, if Europeans

had developed and kept the colonial system, it was for a question of pride, socio-political and especially economic interests. It was necessary to find a transient and compensatory structure in view of the economic reconstruction after the two great wars (1914-1918 /1939-1945) and the economic crisis of 1929.

Colonial administrators' extortions brought back by Mahamadou Halilou Sabbo (1981) in their novels have mainly dominated the history pages of the colonization. One would necessary have to understand the perpetrated extortions on colonized people by the different actors of

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the colonial time - both expatriate and local actors. For them, a colonized person, far from being a human, has to be treated as a ferocious wild beast that must be tamed and educated like a circus animal. For the African having lived the bitter experience of this domination, they have especially complained about the inhuman and anti-social behaviour of certain actors of that period.

The objective of this paper is to enumerate a certain number of historical facts that can permit an understanding of some present behaviours, aiming at preventive projection for the future. Why do these two authors have denounced these extortions? What has been the impact of this denunciation?

Genesis of a colonization

As seen above, the colonial European countries systems have not by no means good for the colonized countries. For that reason they were object of stern critical, by pioneers of the African literature of the sixties, through their works of arts. Exactions committed on the colonized people were flagrant and murderous that some African authors of the moment were not able to pass themselves to denounce. One must not be deluded; in spite of differences of shape that existed between the European colonial systems, in term of content, they are not dissociable.

THE FRENCH COLONIAL SYSTEM

The French direct rule

The direct rule is the contrary of the British colonial system called indirect rule or indirect government. In opposition to the French colonial system the Indirect Rule had initiated and applied for the first time in Northern Nigeria, by the Governor Lugard between 1900 and 1906. It made a "tâche d'huile"- spot of oil and had become a doctrine for all. This doctrine sustained and kept the traditional chiefs' power notably in the emirate of Sokoto where the "Sarkin Musulmi" (chief of the Moslems) had representatives in villages that were judging and collecting taxes which a part was only put back to the central government. The white officials counselled and supervised emirs. Elizabeth (1983) affirmed that the Indirect Rule was concentrated on the position of kings or emirs and disregarded government's other traditional institutions: "Indirect Rule Concentrated on the position of the king, and neglected the other traditional institutions of government" (65).

The notion of Indirect Rule permits to better understand The Direct Rule. It was the direct command. En lieu et place des autorités africaines le colon français administrait lui-même ces colonies. At the place of the

African authorities, the French colonist managed directly the colonies. The traditional chiefs were annexed, dismissed, deported, constrained to exile or suicide; that was the case of Sarraounia, the queen of the Aznas of Lougou (Dogon – Douchi); Dan-Koulodo, chief of Province of Maradi (deported to Fada- Ngourma in Upper-Volta, the present Burkina - Faso); Amadou Kouran-Daga, Sultan of Damagaram or Zinder in Niger and the Almamy Touré of Guinea to only mention these ones.

For Kholer and Taylor (1985), the French administration was highly centralized. The African west colonies that formed a blocks, were managed from Dakar, the capital of French West Africa (AOF- or FWA). Every colony had a Lieutenant - Governor (delegated by the Governor - General based in Dakar) who applied politics as defined by Paris. A similar grouping of colonies formed French Equatorial Africa (AEF- or FEA) administered from Brazzaville. Every colony was straight forward directed by French at all levels. The traditional chiefs were attributed only subordinate roles. This system qualified of *direct rule* is the model *par excellence* of annexation of colonized people. For the French metropolis, colonized people must be subjugated and assimilated to the point to consider the Gallic as being his forebears. Africans were divided in two categories: The first group composed by native citizens of the four townships of Senegal and the others and the second category of Africans, significantly qualified as subjects, had a status of indigents.

French believed that peoples of colonies could not be civilized only if they would be assimilated to the French culture – when they would be converted to good French citizens. But having noted that in the only colony of Senegal there was may assimilated and that all African cultures could not be absorbed by the French culture, French people had created, as it had been said by the Burkina Faso historian, Ki-Zerbo (1972), a rigorous doctrine that preceded World War I (1914- 1918). An African could become French citizen if he knew how to read and to write in French; if he agreed to abandon his common laws-as the right for a man to have more than one wife- while integrating the French army or while working for a French man during ten (10) years.

The other Africans were declared French subjects, having a link with France without having the right to be French citizen. All these laws did not embarrass the colonized African laborious mass. What intrigued it, was the reason for which Halilou Sabbo and Ferdinand Oyono had denounced the colonial dictatorship. It was about the *indigénat* system. This system bestowed to the French administrators the summary jurisdiction power that was felt strongly by colonized people who were compelled to forced works. However, the small elite of assimilated African had the right of French citizenship; and even to occupy stations of responsibility in the metropolitan government of France and its colonies. But let us

examine the French system of *indigénat*.

The French System of *Indigénat*

The system of *indigénat* was governed by a decree of 1924 which gives to French agents the right to decide on the disciplinary pains (jail, fines) for a set of motives, among which, for example, the abstention to greet the commander or the flag. The administrative internment was sometimes a recruiting means of free labour.

The French administrator could jail a *native* during two weeks without judgment and could stop him again. *Natives* did not have the right to share the same hospitals with the French citizens. There were indigenous clinics that Oyono qualified in his works of art as “crève nègres”- negroes’ mortuary. Another injustice was with the native new recruits who did not have the privilege of wearing boots. Also they rarely reached officer's rank and hardly passed the grade of captain.

The indigenous security forces depended on the first degree court house of the Chief of canton or the chief of subdivision. They belonged to the second-degree of the commander's courthouse. That was why the Governor Van Vollekhoven declared “only the commander is responsible. The indigenous chief is only an instrument, an auxiliary.” These warrant chiefs did not have the right to judge peasants and to discern taxes. Can one believe that the system of *indigénat* was at the basis of the blockage of the native blossoming in the French colonies? How did the physical and psychic or psychological violence permit to annihilate the African societies known for their war strategies? (Case of the Aznas of Lougou - Doutchi in Niger under the reign of the Sarraounia).

Violence as a consequence of the change

The method of pacification of colonized people by the colonizer is incontestably the strong manner - the physical and psychic violence. This is the reason for which some African writers denounced him through their works. To criticize colonization, Oyono and Halilou have skilfully chosen, selected, organised and presented their characters in order to depict how the colonizer has succeeded to annihilate and annexe natives. It is better known to show evidence of ingenuity in the choice and the order of passage of their characters in order to put to naked the convenient of extinction and annexation of *natives*. To reconstitute negative practices of the colonialism, it is more logical and realistic to pass through the romantic characters as done by the two aforementioned authors. They both used the characters of commanders of circle, guards, “goumiers” and police that were the direct active actors of the system. These

personalities can be categorized as follows:

Working Ankle of the Colonialism

This work designates characters who had helped the development of colonial system through their functions. We had both good and wicked actors. Colonized people had kept especially in mind the mediocre ones. The Commander of circle is a “whole” in the colonial works. He is “*L'homme orchestre*”- man orchestra, the master Jacques assigned to prepare decisions and to execute them. He must be at the same time judge, finance officer, civil engineer, agent of police and security, chief military, manager of public attics, inspectors of teaching, sanitary agent or recruiter, etc.,... Brief, all in all, he was commending.

This “Jacques in all trades” is described by Mahamadou Halilou (1981) in his novel *Destiny's whims* like a man “sans cœur”- heartless man- that does not have any mercy for *natives*. “The commander's cruelties are immeasurable... Currently interdiction is made to dogs of Garin-Kowa to bark at night, for fear of disturbing the sleep of Mr. and Mrs. Goumaibe” (27). The infringing are castigated publicly to stroke of horsewhip before being jailed for some days without counting the chore of pounding millet and the preparation of other prisoners' meals. For the commander, “violence is the only language known by Negroes” (28). What is illogical, contradictory and coercive, is that the Commander possessed a gigantic and superb dog - wolf [that] terrorized all the district. From time to time, under people's eyes, it devoured goats and sheep of security forces. And owners had not the right to complain.

At this level Mahamadou Halilou thinks that the contempt of Goumaibe—Commandant of Circle - for the Black surpasses the intendment and his wife constitutes the absolute limit of negrophobia. The Commander was not the first administrator to forbid the toads to cry at night. Long before the colonization, there were customary chiefs (as Bawa Jangorzo- Gobir Empire) that forbade roosters to sing, donkeys to bawl and the interdiction spread to all house pets. Even to cough was forbidden. That is why Jangorzo was nicknamed *Hana Tari*. Between the interdiction made by the customary chief and the one made by the Commander of circle, there was a difference. The one of the customary chief was generally enacted by the protective mystical powers of the clan. While the colonial administrator made it by pride. In *Destiny's Whims*, the attitude of Mrs. Goumaibe pushed him to make this allegation. Indeed, during the rainy season, she ordered to make toads keep quite because they disrupted her sleep. For that, the Commander asked his guards of circle, to constitute teams in order to forbid the batrachians to produce any noise.

For the commander it is a definitive solution permitting to put an end to croaks of toads, but for villagers it is a cynical act; because they will not be able to water their herds anymore; since the fountain is more than one kilometre long from the villagers' district, in the white area, as notified by Oyono (1956) in *Houseboy*. "The most laborious task was to climb the hill a can of water on the head, with a guard who made natives moved with whip" (173).

Halilou and Oyono have both deplored the collaborative attitude of circle commanders, when it comes to satisfy their women's fantasies. In their novels, these African writers have denounced the behaviour of the white women's officials who have qualified natives as loafers, lazy and macaques.

The two writers have succeeded to draw the reader's attention on the white man and white woman's behaviour, especially in the colonial context. Oyono and Halilou have pointed out and compared these white characters to African actors, mainly African women. Although these women were taking part to the development of their region, they underwent the masculine ascendancy. The reader could deduct that all commanders of circle looked alike and assembled around their wives' caprices.

All the condemnation and disapproval of these actors of the colonization only constituted a *garde-fous* to the African intelligentsia in order not to follow the traces of their white predecessors. After the Commander of circle, I qualified the security forces as the blinded of the colonial system.

Blinded of the Colonial System

Why did I nickname them blinded of the colonial system? It is because simply they had the charge of defending and protecting a system based on the extinction, the exploitation and the pass-right. These personalities are divided in two groups: Commissioners of police and managers of jail on one hand, guards, *goumiers* and policemen on the other hand. They have all one common denominator, that is torture and oppression. They had only one target, to pacify the colonized native by force only.

Commissioners of Police and Managers of Prisons

In the colonial system commissioners of police and managers of prisons have a primordial role to play. Far from accomplishing the noble mission of security and defence, they turned into excellent executioners. Halilou and Oyono's present them like real torturers. In *Houseboy* for example, Mr. Moreau the manager of the jail is qualified of *Eléphant blanc*- White elephant- who "teaches how to live to Negroes. Toundi the hero of the

novel has said that Mr. Moreau, helped by a guard, whipped his compatriots. They were naked until the belt... it was terrifying. The nerve of hippopotamus ploughed up their flesh... Mr. Moreau, dishevelled, sleeves of shirt rebuked, persecuted Toundi's poor compatriots with such a violence that he wondered with anguish if they would live long after this beating.

The image of colonial prisons managers and police commissioners has been tarnished by the bad role that they had to play. Characters of *Gosier-d'oiseaux-Throat of Bird* - and *White elephant* in *Houseboy* are edifying. Even the prison took the nickname of the "natives' hospital"- *Negroes mortuary*, because generally suspects sent in jail after the stay to the police were agonizing and died one or two days later. Commissioners of police and managers of prisons represent the symbol of the modern power. The creation of police stations and prisons is a new thing among natives. Traditionally they only know the *dogari* of the customary chief – kind of traditional guards playing the role of republican guard or policeman. The only quick change of the security actors in colonies had disturbed the social climate that reigned within the local communities.

Guards, *Goumiers* and Police

Direct torturers of natives, they act, without worrying about the wrong deeds caused to their fellow citizen or similar. These security forces are issued from the natives, although belonging to other tribes and clans or to other parts of Africa. If in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, they are nicknamed *Kotma* or Court Messengers, Oyono and Halilou described them like real executioners, as testify the description of the Guard Ndjagouma in *Houseboy*: "Ndjagouma [the big Sara] gave a stroke with his gun on kidney. The Negroes subsided and stood up to subside under another more violent stroke than the first..." (115). Compared to the traditional *dogaris* that they know, colonized people do not want to feel the presence of these new security forces, who are only present to molest them. Indeed, the goodwill of guards is so excessive that they never wait their master's order when they will hurry on the young Africans whom they started to beat with a whip, up to the point where they let them lying down. They hit them with their boots on all the body. They will never stop until they live their victim inanimate or when the commander asked them to stop.

This practice is common to all colonial security forces. It has been denounced by some African writers of sixties like Chinua Achebe (1958), Eza Boto (1954) and Ahmadou Kourouma (1968). Once on duty, guards or policemen misbehave. These *Goumiers* [the commander's nomadic guards] terrorize everybody. Whole villages are depopulated to the announcement of their passage. They sow consternation everywhere, abusing peasants' women

and confiscating people's belongings at their ease. Humiliated villagers are bound to flee the village or to commit suicide. That is the case of Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. He has preferred to hang himself rather than to surrender, after decapitating a *kotma*. For guards, *goumiers* and police, the Commander's order is like a sentence that they must apply to the letter. They consider the white man like a "*demi-dieu*". His orders must not endure any carelessness. Toundi the hero in *Houseboy* noted that when "the Commander arrives, the chief of guards howls. All guards and convened to them greet. The chief of guards howls again and everybody continues to do what he is doing before..." (26). Everybody knows the power of the white man. No one can escape to his claws.

In *Destiny's Whims* for example, the guard on order of the Commander, put the rope to the neck of the teacher Kasko and attached the other extremity to his horse to drag the village school teacher from the village of Korzalé to Garin Kowa where resides the Commander. The school teacher has neither drink nor eat, or even take a rest or have the possibility to satisfy all other needs. This act is the proof that a colonized person, no matter his social rank, if he goes against the interests of the metropolis, can be liable of the most atrocious pains.

To sum up, Halilou and Oyono have presented guards, *goumiers* and police as the zealous of the colonial system. They take advantage of their statute of uniform wearer and valets of the Commander to go beyond/ or to abuse their power. When they are on ordered tour in villages, they make themselves more royalist than the king. The guard's language is authoritative. He is much more listened in villages than the Commander of Circle. The horsewhip sent in advance is the symbol of repression. The name of *Kafi-Rana-Zahi* assigned to the guard is an anomatic of the Hausa language meaning "hotter than the sun". It translates the guard's stern character; he only knows the language of oppression- to beat the Negro to force him think. The horsewhip nicknamed *Sa Maza Goudou*- forced brave men to run- in Hausa language, denotes the guard's spitefulness. Halilou also qualified the horse of the guard as *Kafi Sarki-better than a customary chief*- to point out the extravagance with which the colonial guards have behaved with their counterparts. For the single horse of the guard about ten old women and twenty young boys have been mobilized to take care of it; some people are in charge of the straw, others dealing with the watering and the rest supply millet. These people will work in turn up to the guard's departure; a true chore for a horse. The paradox is that the guard does not represent anything to eyes of the official white. He is only a vulgar auxiliary of the colonial administration assigned to execute all odd tasks without being himself safe from caprices of the Commander's wife or of any other white.

Halilou and Oyono have insisted on the dictatorial

behaviour of these underlings of the colonial administration to denounce them; and on the other hand, to bring other Africans not to follow their steps. If the French colonist mistreats an African one can understand it because he has his reasons. But an African who denigrates his brothers, it is incomprehensible and inadmissible.

ACCOMPLICES OF THE COLONIAL SYSTEM

Men of faith

Priests as presented in Oyono's works are the true accomplices of the colonial system. Oyono wonders through the character of Toundi, if in front of the atrocities of the security forces, in presence of "all these priests, pastors, and all these white who want to save our souls and to preach the love of our fellows...who can be silly enough to believe again in all what is said at the church and the temple" (1956: 115).

Natives being tortured unjustly in front of the leaders of the church, do no longer have confidence in this institution; because even if it comes that a Negro succumbs under the effect of oppression, the priest will only say a banal sentence on Sunday: "My dear children, pray for all these prisoners who die without having made the peace with God". It is not proper for a priest to say that prisoners "didn't make the peace with God", since they have been beaten unjustly to death.

In opposition to Oyono who has complained about the indifferent attitude of the colonial priest face to the colonial officials 'extortions on the colonized people, Halilou has evoked the theme of religion through the character of *Malam* - marabout in Hausa language. On contrary to Oyono, he used the character of *Malam* to show that the koranic school has existed in Niger before the colonial school; and also that the colonist have stopped its expansion by torturing *Malam* to death. The white colonizer has killed *Malam* the promoter of this koranic school under the deceptive pretext of incitement to the revolt. Therefore, the death of *Malam* is symbolic of the change; French school has taken the place of the Islamic school. After the men of faith, there is another category of persons who have taken advantages of the colonization. They are the traders.

Tradesmen

The European tradesmen were also accomplices of the colonial officials. Oyono has denounced in *The Old Man and the Medal*, the interdiction made to natives to distill the low-priced banana and corn alcohol to lead them toward the European hot drinks and red wine that flooded the commercial center. Delinquents were beaten,

amended and jailed. If the European tradesmen accused them of robbery, the Africans were beaten fatally to the great pleasure of these merchants that were sometimes *kura* - Lebanese in Hausa. In *Houseboy*, Oyono has given the example of a Lebanese tradesman that he has described in these terms: "The fat Janopoulous chewing his cigar and non happy to see his so called thieves whipped to death, launched his dog against them. The animal nibbled at their calves and had fun to tear their bottom of trousers" (114).

Consciously or not, these European and Lebanese tradesmen have participated in the extinction of the local production in favor of metropolitan articles. As their name indicated, they are merchants. They are ready to do all what they can, if they know that the action will be fruitful for their trade. In any case, the colonizer and the tradesman have a common denominator - to become rich on the back of colonized people.

During the colonial period, French colonies have served as sources of provision in raw materials to French industries; and also they have been used as commercial counters of goods out-flowing. The example of the old West African French Company (CFAO) has been edifying. To sum up, Christian religious and European or Lebanese tradesmen have in one way or another, directly or indirectly, contributed respectively to the pacification and the exploitation of natives during the colonial period.

Conclusion

Colonization has passed and it is now part of history. There were blunders, casualness and even considerable human lives, material and financial losses. The balance is very heavy. Some people have qualified colonization as a necessary disease; but it is to note that even the African leaders who have taken the white commanders place, have perpetrated the same exactions and sometimes worse than the white colonizer. That is why Halilou has said in *Destiny's Whims*, even after independences in Africa, only the color of the leaders' skin has changed; but their method of leading people has remained the

same. His statement is true because today in 2015, after 55 years of independence, some African countries are to the embryonic stage. That is to say, they do not develop until now. The outcome of their fiftieth anniversary is practically negative.

The important thing to do between Europeans and Africans, is to be able to forgive each other, so that to maintain cordial relations of friendship and cooperation. If one persists to keep the status quo of relationship metropolis/ colony or developed/ developing countries, it would be difficult to have a worldwide lasting peace. Especially when leaders of certain developed countries have said aloud that in term of cooperation they do not have friends but interests to protect or to preserve. They also affirm that democracy is a luxury for Africa. The world present day socio - politico - economic situation is like an extremely flammable liquid, that, to the least spark, risks to take fire. The different conflicts, riots or attempts perpetrated throughout the world testify it.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Review

The Undoing of the Black Race: Transgression of traditional religion by money in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragment*

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In the context of Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragment* (1969), the undoing of the black race means the falling apart of ancestral rites. By taking the Ghanaian traditional religious beliefs as a sample, the author depicts the disintegration of the black race's social, political and economic system. He skilfully develops the impact of money and colonization on the Ashanti community. Armah shows how corruption and nepotism, which overwhelm the Ghanaian society, are offshoots of materialism, which banes people with insufficient time to spend on their ancestral rites. Because traditional religion is a focal point in the fiction of the Ghanaian writer - like his Nigerian counterparts Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Elechi Amadi- Armah uses ancestral religion to defend and prove the authenticity of the African culture.

Key words: Ancestral rites, money, corruption.

INTRODUCTION

In his second novel, *Fragments*, Armah deviates from the approach of a writer like Amadi, who, in his first novel, *The Concubine*, depicts a village life, its conflicts, ancestral customs, and goes further into mythological level. However, in that novel, Armah avoids the mawkish terrain of charms, favouring the path of Achebe, an "ancestor worshipper" who "describes a dual mission to educate both African and European readers, to reinstate a sense of pride in African cultures" and to help his society "regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of years of denigration and self-abasement" (Cora, 1998: 2). The Ghanaian novelist counterposes traditional

religion as a direct remedy to westernisation. He gives impetus to the view expressed by J.B. Danquah, who states in his book *The Akan Doctrine of God*, that "Life, human life, is one continuous blood of the Great Source of their blood" (1971: 24).

J.B. Danquah's assertion explains the importance of ancestors and the gods in Ghanaian communities. But is the traditional religion as important up to the level where Armah counterposes it to a direct solution to westernization? How does Armah succeed to develop his point of view?

The aim of this dissertation is to focus on the "Undoing

of the Black Race" in term of transgression of traditional religion by money. It is the case study of Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragment*. For a better understanding of the work, this paper is divided into three sections: *Tragic Lyricism*, *Disintegration of the Black Race* and *Transgression of Ancestral Religion*. In Section 1- Tragic Lyricism, themes of continuity and endless world will be discussed. Section 2- Disintegration of Black Race, deals with the discontinuity of the circle between the world of the living and that of the ancestors who are no longer considered as saviours. The last section, section 3- Transgression of Ancestral Religion, criticizes the introduction of money in the African culture which affected Africans and developed corruption.

Tragic lyricism

In Armah's *Fragments*, we find the expression of tragic lyricism or lyric. In the most common use of the term as any fairly short poem, uttered by a single speaker, who expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought, and feeling. Many lyric speakers are represented as musing in solitude. In dramatic lyrics, however, the lyric speaker is represented as addressing another person in a specific situation; instances are John Donne's 'Canonization' and William Wordsworth's 'Tin tern Abbey' as developed by M.H. Abrams (2005: 153).

Here, lyric or lyricism has a link with the hero's grand mother- the representative of the traditional Africa, expressing her strong personal feelings about the change brought with the colonial encounter. Naana's condition determines it. Tragic lyric is symbolic in this work. For instance "the tragic hero, like Oedipus in Sophocles' Oedipus the King, [who] moves up to pity because, since he is not an evil man, his misfortune is greater than he deserves; but he moves us also to fear, because we recognize similar possibilities of error in our own lesser and fallible selves" (Abrams, 2005: 332).

Naana as was discussed is complaining about the social, cultural and political decay in Africa through the Ghanaian experience. Although she is not the heroine in *Fragments* she plays an important role as the guardian of the remaining ancestral traditions. Her wailing complaint reminds me Aristotle's tragic hero. Aristotle says that "the tragic hero will most effectively evoke both our pity and terror if he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly bad but a mixture of both" (331).

The introduction of the old lady in Armah's work shows clearly the author's preoccupation on one hand to adopt slightly and skilfully the Elizabethan tragedies to his writing- "A few minor Elizabethan tragedies, such as *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (of uncertain authorship), had as the chief character a man of the lower class, but it remained for eighteenth- century writers to popularize the bourgeois or domestic tragedy, which was written in

prose and presented a protagonist from the middle or lower social ranks who suffers a commonplace or domestic disaster. Since that time most of the successful tragedies have been in prose and represent middle - class, or occasionally even working- class, heroes and heroines" (333). Armah (1969) on the other hand develops, through Naana, the philosophy of self- accusation or auto- evaluation via a vision of regeneration. In Naana's lyrical language the reader notes a certain fear of a menacing chaos born with the colonial clash of culture as she keeps on insisting that "where you are going..., do not let your mind become persuaded that you walk alone... There are no humans born alone... There are no humans who walk this earth alone (3-4). Naana's lyricism translates her consciousness; she seems to represent "the values of the old Africa being swept away under the influence of Western ideas" (Span/33/Gillard.html, 03/06/2003:1).

Through Baako's grandmother's lyric, Armah succeeds to point out the irresolvable problem of cultural clash between the Western values and the African ways of life. Naana's philosophy of cycle and continuity is expressive. This female character is aware of the danger linked with her grandson's departure to Europe when she affirms that always there has been a danger in such departures because much of their blood has run to waste. The danger here is a certain fear, not of the death itself but the death of the body and the soul. Naana thinks that such departures are dangerous because she affirms that most of their blood has run to waste. For her, Baako is a victim, a kind of escape goat sacrificed by his pairs.

Moreover, the concept of madness raised in "For we are not mad with the sorrow of moments that pass", is an appreciation of Naana's lyrical vision towards the general people's viewpoint on Baako's behaviour. Since he refuses to accept bribes and to behave like the other 'been- to', he becomes a hermit or a marginal over-weening fighting alone for a noble fight but against the whole society's will. Baako's mistake is his stubbornness to defeat a whole community. He has thought that he alone can change the system. As a consequence, he was forced to be mad. Naana through her Lyricism emphasized on Baako's fatality as nearly the same as in Efua's baby's farewell. When Efua says "Cruel Death took you from our hands" and "The blow was hard, the tears bitter" (1969:187-188), the lyrics are meaningful and expressive of a dual feeling. Both feelings share the same root; that of the non-respect of the traditional religious beliefs.

The idea of unity introduced by Efua when she says: "You will never leave our hearts till once again we are all united in the bosom of our Lord", reinforces Naana's belief "not only that those who go away will return, but also that there is a continuity of life in death, and that contact with the dead must be maintained." (Gillard. html, 2003:1). Baako's grandmother insists on the cyclical

aspect of the world and continuity. She does not begrudge her offspring for the divisive pressure of the clash of cultures. She makes a kind of confession by saying: "My spirit is straining for another beginning in a place where there will be new eyes and where the farewells that will remain unsaid here will turn to a glad welcome and my ghost will find the beginning that will be known here as my end" (196).

Naana's viewpoint on the death is clear. She will travel. When there is no use she said, the spirit in us yearns for the world of other spirits, travellers who have crossed over from this side, just as the spirits themselves hope and wait for the new one coming. She concludes at the end of the novel with the mere thought of the endless world: "... you are the end, the beginning, you who have no end, I am coming" (201).

Armah uses the character of Naana to represent the values of the old Africa. Through lyrics, he succeeds to point out the clash of culture between Europe and Africa. As it is said by Garry Gillard (Gillard.html, 2003:1), "The novels of Ayi Kwei Armah provide an opportunity to study a confrontation between European and African patterns of thought. This confrontation (and its effects: the original confusion and disillusionment, followed by fragmentation and disintegration and then by compromise and consolidation) is a principal thematic concern running through the novels".

To sum up, as stated in the above quotation, Armah's intention is to denounce the change occurring during the colonial encounter through a highly stylistic device. Naana's lyrics strengthens the idea of the disintegration of the Black race or the collapse of the traditional order including tradition, custom and culture.

Disintegration of the Black Race

The black race's disintegration takes root when the recognition of the "community of ancestors living underground is limited to reverence by the African themselves" (Ezebaye, 1975: 238). In *Fragments* for instance, these ancestors are not considered as serious saviours as in Achebe's or Amadi's earliest superficial faith in their traditional beliefs, though Naana keeps on reminding them that: "The circle was not broken... The departed ones are still watching over those they left here above. Even Foli felt their presence. His soul within those hours left the heavy body so as to be with the departed one's, to ask their help upon the head of the one about to go. Nothing was said then that was not to be said, and nothing remained unsaid for which there was a need" (3).

Naana's dialectic alludes to the belief in the ancestors and the role they are supposed to play to their children. Baako's uncle Foli, is cited because he belongs to the generation which will constitute the elders after Naana's death. For the time being, he is the one performing the

rituals. Surprisingly, Foli, who is assumed to be the old traditions' protector, is the first one who destroys them by cheating the ancestors. He refuses to pour the schnapps destined to his fore-fathers. The narrator describes Foli's act with strong voice: "The pig Foli, in spite of the beauty of the words he had spoken, remained inside his soul a lying pig. A shameful lot more than a whole half bottle of the drink had remained outpoured, and now he went and took from among his many shiny things a glass to pour the traveller's drink of ceremony for Baako" (6).

Foli's greed for drink will break the welded circle existing for years between the world of the livings and that of the dead. His drunken gluttony then, contributes to the subversion of the relationship between the ancestors and their offspring.

Naana's reaction at that point is quick and effective because she knows the importance of the offerings. She takes the schnapps and offers the libation herself. Armah describes the scene in the first person singular to demonstrate the importance accorded to the sacrifice by the representative of the by-gones who thinks that she can stop the undoing of the Black Race.

Naana is ready to fulfil her mission. As long as she is alive, she will not accept any marginalization of the ancestral rites. The negligence of the new generation (represented by Foli and Korankye) to perform the traditional rituals gradually destroys the members of the community and the remaining African ancestral religious beliefs. Naana, who is aware of the situation, tries in vain to make her society understand that the helpful traditional religion is collapsing. Armah uses this old lady as an eyewitness of the fragmentation of the African ancestral values. She attests that things are no longer what they used to be. That is why the Nigerian researcher Ode Ogede (1991) has argued that: "It is not a coincidence that in *Fragments*, it is the old woman Naana who witnesses and report the origin of the decline of spirituality both in the episode in which Foli... drinks up the wine for the supposed ancestral libation... and at the ceremony marking the outdoor of Araba's child where Korankye cheats the ancestors in the same manner (532-533).

Ogede insists on the fact that Naana is the voice of the elder who has witnessed the threatened ideal past. He also adds that Naana laments the erosion and distortion of African civilization by an alien system of values and reveals her respect for the order under siege. Naana's role as a guardian of a cherished traditional religion introduces a feminist theme in the novel. Armah ascribes life-sustaining potentials to women. Female characters such as Juana, the Puerto Rican psychiatrist, and Efua who follows the prophet are illustrative.

To conclude this point, I can affirm that the disintegration of the Black race is precipitated by the young generation who do not care about the survival of the old order. These youngsters are more concerned with

material things rather than wasting their time on ancestral values. They think that money is above all.

Transgression of Ancestral Religion

The transgression of the ancestral religion is made here by money. The attempt to outdoor the new-born baby only five days after its birth is a travesty of traditions and, naturally, Naana is astonished to hear it by crying out: "Five days. The child is not yet with us. He is in the keeping of the spirits still, and already they are dragging him out into this world for eyes in heads that have eaten flesh to gape at (97).

This act, as Naana understands it, contributes to the degeneration of the traditional religious beliefs of the Ghanaians. The fake ceremony in *Fragments* directed by Korankye, to atone the anger of the ancestors, does nothing but inciting them. Naana concludes that the infant will not last long. The society underestimates the ancestral rites for materialistic reasons, for Araba and her mother are eager to celebrate the baby's birthday just after the payday when every worker get his salary, without thinking about the child's fate and the survival of their customs. The priority for them is to amass money. With only Baako as her confidant, Naana cries out: "Baako, how can I say what is in my soul? Often a quick child like that is only a disturbed spirit come to take a brief look and go back home. But I am too old. Let me say this to them and inside their hearts they will take the infant life just to lengthen mine" (97).

Naana, who is considered as the "eyes" of the ancestors and the guardian of the traditions, reveals a great secret to Baako. She knows that the infant will not stay because of his mother and grandmother's haste, and she laments the fact that the new generation does not respect the traditional religious system since it cannot differentiate a witch from an experienced elder. Ogede (1991) links Araba's child's death to the abuse of tradition : "The death of Araba's child is attributable to [the] abuse of tradition; as the abuse of tradition provokes the anger of the ancestors, they withdraw their protection, thus allowing humans to become vulnerable to antagonist forces" (533).

Tradition is a very long process, which must not be interrupted. The disintegration of traditional religion in *Fragments* can be attributed to several factors among which the transgression of the ancestral religion by money. Instead, the society in *Fragments* is greedy for money and other material objects, thus forcing Naana, the conservative guardian of the ancestral beliefs to complain about the explanation people give to her. "Always and everywhere the same words that bring a sickness to the stomach of the listener. The world has changed... And they think it is enough to explain every new crime, to push a person to accept all..." (98).

Naana does not accept change as a justification for the Ghanaian abuse of traditional rites. For her, the absence of any good-will shown by the new generation towards tradition is the deep rooted cause of the undoing of the Black race. The introduction of money contributes to the quick and easy collapse of the Ghanaian traditional values.

The corrupted society in *Fragments* refuses to offer to the ancestors, the required quantity of offerings necessary to obtain their blessings. Step by step, with what they have called "change", the Ghanaian community in Armah's second novel abandons a great portion of its civilization.

Conclusion

To stress on the disintegration of the Ghanaian traditions, Armah deliberately starts his novel with Naana and finishes it with the same character. The use of this old lady is significant. She represents the ancient order characterized by its mystical rites and rituals, in a context where nothing can be done without consulting the ancestors. Naana's crucial role, which is clearly defined in the last chapter of the book, is that of a town-crier who laments the changed order and warns about the undoing of the Black Race.

The rejection is almost total because even Naana the remnant of the past is seen as a bothersome elder. Her offspring want her to die so that they can bury her with all the remaining ancestral beliefs. Through Naana's monologue, the author decries the symbolical subversion of traditional religion. He presents traditions as a fragile object; when it falls down (from a certain distance) it will break into (useless) pieces.

The book ends with Naana's concluding idea concerning the cyclicity of the world. She says: "I am here against the last of my veils. Take me; I am ready. You are the end, the beginning, you who have no end, I am coming" (201). This idea of everlasting life is the author's concern. The world is considered as a transitional camp, where human beings are tested before joining the definite world of the ancestors, for life is endless and eternal.

Thus, Ayi Kwei Armah succeeds in presenting a disintegrated ancestral way of life in *Fragments*. He has shown, through the characters of Naana, Efua, Taraba, Foli, Korankye and Baako, how Ghanaians have progressively lost their ancestral values in the rat race to embrace a new way of life in their look for money that created an unthinkable corrupted network.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflicts of interest.

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Full Length Research Paper

The role of orature in African socio-cultural space

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The spoken words are more natural and perhaps better understood than the written letters, which are invented to capture and to re-enact human mind, intention, emotion, opinion, view, experience and prediction among other things. Oral narratives, all over the world, set the pace for the written literature. It is an integral part of every human culture. However, the sophistication of the modern world, particularly the globalisation, has directly or indirectly affected the potency of oral narratives in Africa. Having discovered the neglect of orature in Africa as a whole and in the Yoruba land in particular, this article seeks to explain the essentials of this aspect of life which is at a dangerous point of extinction. The study sets its search light on certain elements of African oral literature such as folklores, myths, legends, proverbs and oral poetry which emanate from the Yoruba community. Using the theme study method/approach, the article aims at reversing the dying fortune of the oral narratives being a tool to achieving sustainable socio-cultural transformation among the African people.

Key words: Orature, folklores, myths, legends, proverbs, socio-cultural space, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Before things fall apart, from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age and to the Iron Age, the fortune of African folk narratives was unmistakably impressive and encouraging. There was a beautiful communion between Africans and nature. In one of his poems, "Celui qui a tout perdu", David (1980) captures the symbolic communion between nature and Africans thus:

*Le soleil riait dans ma case
Et mes femmes étaient belles et souples
Comme des palmiers sous la brise des soirs
Mes enfants glissaient sur le grand fleuve*

*Aux profondeurs de morts
Et mes pirogues luttèrent avec les crocodiles*

*La lune, maternelle, accompagnait nos danses
Le rythme frénétique et lourd du tam-tam
Tam-tam de la Joie, Tam-tam de l'Insouciance
Au milieu des feux de liberté*

The sun used to laugh in my hut
And my women were lovely and lithe
Like palm-tree in the breeze.
My children would go gliding over the majestic river

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Whose waters were deep as death.
And my canoes would wrestle with the crocodiles

The motherly moon would accompany our dances
Frenzied and heavy was the rhythm of tom-tom
Tom-tom of joy, tom-tom of care-free life
Amid the bonfires of freedom.

However, the story changed when one day, there was silence. "*Puis un jour, le silence.*" Silence or an end to the mutual agreement between Africans and their environment stands for the arrival of the foreign civilization, which remains a serious disruption to the African civilization. The successful introduction of Christianity and Islam affected the entire culture of the African people. Christianity encouraged the creation of a new elite class, whose members believed that Western education was needed to be in power and have a mind of what progress is in the contemporary context. Islam, on its own part, brought about the use of clerics and the conduct of laws and diplomacy based on certain written documents. This emphasis on written documents and Western education marked the beginning of the gradual erosion and disappearance of the use of oral literature in most African communities, if not all. In fact, the print technology, the new media and the internet have adversely affected African culture.

Now, Africa is willing to appear before the world not only as a mere political expression but also as a cultural entity. It therefore, cuts for itself an image which represents its aspirations and real being. One of the ways by which this can be attained, is the re-orientation of Africans in the use and management of the various genres of oral narratives.

The term "development" has many definitions given by different scholars. But in this study development is simply seen as the act or process of growth, progress, state of socio-economic advancement. Human beings are naturally development beings. They are always in a constant struggle for ways by which they can improve the situation in which they are. The major challenge for the African people, however, is that the West has been the template or the model standard and example of how to attain development. Meanwhile, if development is to be successful, patterns of such development must emanate from and respond to the needs of the people concerned. This study argues that there is the need for drawing a line between African and Western models. Hence, this paradigm shift will enable the revalidation of African culture and appreciate how it explains and gives room for sustainable development. Sustainable development should take into account the people on whom it is planned and to be executed for.

Mazrui (1996) remarks:

... development is modernisation minus dependency...

African culture is central to this process of reducing dependency in the dialectic of modernisation... What is needed is more of modernity and less of "the Western spring". A non-Western route to modernity is possible for Africa – provided African culture is fully mobilised as an ally in the enterprise (3 – 4, 17).

DISCUSSION

Literature, as a reflection of life and human activities, expresses human experiences and culture. For the purpose of this study, on the definition of literature, we shall draw some strength from Wellek and Warren (1968). They see literature as:

a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation... Literature represents life and life is in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation (228)

It is obvious from the above definition that language is the topmost instrument by which human experiences and activities are expressed in literature. In recent times, the quest for linguistic and cultural identity has become a major concern not only for the Yoruba ethnic group but also for the whole of Africa. Tribes, all over the world, express their thoughts, beliefs, world views, culture and tradition through language. Language is the only faculty which differentiates man from other animals or creatures. Fromkin and Hyams, (2007) observe:

The possession of language, perhaps more than any other attribute, distinguishes humans from other animals. To understand our humanity, one must understand the nature of language that makes us human... (3)

As a means of communication by man, language thrives on its use to capture the reality of human's environment. But, if a language is endangered and is scarcely used, its survival and the transformation agenda of its speakers are threatened. According to Kuju (1993):

Languages are also instrumental in our perception of reality. They influence the way we perceive things in our environment, the way we think, the way we act and speak as well as the way we behave in any given social context... (37).

It is unfortunate that almost all the traditional patterns of life are today in a mess. Modernity has grossly disrupted and destroyed them as we have pointed out in the introduction. Colonisation and missionary operations have caused the "old mushroom", the native language to decay while the "new mushroom", English or French language has grown in the place of the indigenous

language at the expense of the black man, because his language through which his cultural heritage can be better transmitted has been displaced (Rubingh 1969: 57).

The natives, especially the educated Africans, who are indeed suffering from mental slavery, do not help the sordid situation. Dawulung (1999) captures the nonchalant attitude of most native speakers thus:

...A look at the native speakers' attitude towards their native language should help us to see into the problems facing the language. For example, most native speakers, particularly, the youths behave as if the survival of their native tongue is nothing to worry about. They exhibit attitude by preferring to speak to each other either in English ... Some would think it is necessary to teach their children their own native tongue but instead would nurture them in English (or French). We believe that most of them do so in ignorance of the repercussion (35).

In view of this, Aimé Césaire (1956:15) warns that there are two major ways to lose oneself: First, by building a wall of segregation in the particular (one's own culture) or by a dilution in the "universal".

Culture is all embracing. It explains what the people, collectively and as individuals would gain from the appropriate use of cultural institutions. It is everlasting in as much as the people live on. It gives room for sense of belonging and commitment as it paves the way for their identity at all times. Ndoon (cited in Oamen, 2013) defines culture as:

the sum total ways of life of a particular people. It includes customs, traditions, conventions, practices, values, beliefs, folkways, plays, songs, food, dressing, laws, religion, craft and language... (68 -69)

What we transmit from one generation to another in any way can be described as tradition. It can be seen as people's heritage. The collection of all forms witness handed down from one age to another since it is practically a communal participatory experience is orature/oral narrative. The African cultural heritage can be expressed in many ways. Traditional African festivals are indeed pieces of drama. Proverbs, oral poetry, myths, legends, folktales, music, songs, chants and invocations also form parts of daily life of the African people in which their culture is expressed. All of these depict social realities and help to keep the events of the past and the present for the future generations. Bascom (cited in Akporobaro, 2001) remarks thus:

The mythological system of a people is often their educational system, and the children who sit listening to an evening's tale are imbibing traditional knowledge and attitudes no less than the row of sixth graders in our modern classrooms. Myths and legends may contain detailed descriptions of sacred ritual, the codified belief or

dogma of the religious group, accounts of tribal or clan origins,, movements and conflicts. Proverbs have often been characterised as the distilled wisdom of past generations and are unmistakably so regarded by a projective system (62).

Oral narratives help to affirm and validate spiritual realities and experiences. Stories in various forms stand out as a means by which early man handled serious experiences such as untimely death and diseases as well as other problems of natural disasters.

Many folktales, myths, legends and proverbs use characters that are spiritual beings who also behave like human beings with great powers and influences. For instance, *Obàtálá*, *Ògún*, *Sàngó*, *Òsun*, *Oya* in Yoruba land and *Amadioha*, *Chi* or *Chukwu* in Igbo land. Most of these oral narratives, no matter how they are perceived in these modern days, have created a world view, which appeals to the artistic moral and psychological being of the primitive African man. And, of course the basic functions of these oral genres of literature are still there and will continue to be there.

Again, oral narratives can build social binding and develop the sense of community. In every human society, stories are told to enhance the development of human relationships whether in a form of friendship, sense of collective responsibility for the general well-being of the community or social binding.

There is notwithstanding an economic aspect of people's involvement in oral narratives. It is a source of earning a living. Survivalism cannot be ruled out among the functions performed by oral literary creations. A sum or material is collected for the performance of different oral narratives. A good and talented story-teller or praise-singer in a community can earn himself a status or a title which confirms that he is recognised for his artistic contribution as an entertainer apart from collecting money for his work.

As tale and fictive imaginative which contains some fundamental elements of reality, folklore entertains and teaches moral lessons. It is commonly considered as false because it is not an actual record of history or social experience. Folklore is an artistic communication of a group which concerns the relationship of the individual creativity to the collective order of the people. These aspects of the people's life are dynamic and effective, and cannot go undocumented (Ben-Amos, 1977). Let us consider the following example of folklore.

Once upon a time, there was a serious trouble in a village. The king consulted the oracle and he was ordered to make a sacrifice of a life elephant to his ancestors to save his throne and protect his people.

After several attempts by the king's powerful men, hunters and the marabouts, they were unable to capture an elephant alive. One fateful afternoon, the tortoise walked into the king's palace and told him, he could help

the villagers to get a life elephant. After all necessary consultations, a deal was signed with the tortoise.

The tortoise prepared balls of beans cakes coated with honey and off he went to the forest, where the elephant lived. He told the elephant having eulogised him that the human king had kicked the bucket and the villagers had sent him to invite the elephant to come and be their new king. He gave some balls of the honey coated beans cakes to the elephant to have a taste of the luxuries which he would enjoy when he became the human king.

The elephant was unable to resist the "grec gift". He was simply taken-in and followed the tortoise to land of the human. Unknowingly to the elephant, a deep pit had been made and decorated with beautiful mats. The village hunters were battle ready for action.

The journey to the "throne" was eventful. The tortoise was drumming and chanting: "*A o m'erin joba, èwèkú ewele*". He did not also stop throwing the specially made cakes to the elephant. On getting to the village, the villagers took the song and echoed it. The elephant was indeed warmly received.

As the elephant prepared to settle down, he found himself in the deep pit and he was killed by the villagers. The king and his people honoured the tortoise for his wisdom and sincerity of purpose.

This story is a typical example of a folklore/folktale. It is a fictive imaginative narrative. It is not true. However, it entertains and teaches morals. It warns people, particularly highly placed individuals like politicians and other office-holders to be cautious of sycophants around them.

Myths deal with people's way of life and the basic structures on which their sustenance is built. They can be linked to religious attachments which are taken to be sacrilege. Calvino, (1986) says:

Myth is the hidden part of every story, the buried part, and the region that is still unexplored... Myth is nourished by silence as well as by words. A silent myth makes its presence felt in secular narrative and everyday words, it is a language vacuum that draws words up into its vortex and bestows a form on fable (18 – 19).

Myths are entertaining, educative and informative as well as dialectic in nature. They are usually prose narratives. Meanwhile, legends are relatively true stories which have connection with the culture of the people which they represent. Legends are closer to life because they talk about past accounts of people or events. The major criticism against legends is that most legends are exaggerated. The story of "*Móremi*" is factually not strange to the Yorubas, on how she helped her people in Ile-Ife to unmask the secret behind the potency of the then Igbo warriors and eventually ended the old insurgency. Also, from generation to generation, it was handed down that "*Sàngó*" was one time a king in the old

Oyo Empire and that "*Òsun*", the goddess of wealth, fertility and power was the only woman present at the creation of the world (Badejo, 1998:96).

Proverbs identify and dignify a culture. They express the collective wisdom of the people, reflecting their thinking, values and behaviours (Malunga and Banda, 2004). As a matter of fact, proverbs, in a traditional African setting, unlock wisdom, clarify vision and unify different perceptions. They add humour and reduce tension on perceived sensitive issues.

Proverbs are often used to confront issues as well as to build institutions and relationships. They create strong mental pictures which can motivate people to action. No one ever dares to dispute the message a proverb contains because it is a proven conclusion of a sort. Gulere (2000) posits thus:

Proverbs and riddles are some of the commonly applied forms of orature in the day to day communications among serious minded people. Whether in song, story recital or statement, they make a person wiser, more sociable happier and more respectable in society (3).

The following examples are some Yoruba proverbs that can be used to enhance sustainable development, not just in the Yoruba communities but also in Africa as a whole.

1. *Owó tó bá dilè ni èsù bè nísé* = the idle hand is the devil's workshop. It means that people should be gainfully employed and kept busy to avoid been used as miscreants or trouble-makers. For a society to be peaceful, citizens must be meaningfully engaged. This proverb is instructive to prevent insecurity and political instability in any society.

2. *Àti kékeré lati n peka irókò, bóbá dàgbà tán á gba ebo lówó eni* = a stitch in time saves nine. This proverb warns us to quickly find a lasting solution to a problem/conflict at its inception because it will be deadly if it is allowed to linger.

3. *Igi kan kii dá igbó se* = a tree cannot make a forest. It is evident from this proverb that no matter how powerful somebody might be he/she cannot survive in isolation. By extension, no community or nation can survive without relating and co-operating with others. This statement therefore calls for co-operation of all and sundry in the affairs of nation building or global advancement.

4. *Ilé n lati n kó èsò r'òde* = charity begins at home. This proverb instructs people to put their home/house in order before they extend their hands of fellowship to people outside.

5. *Iná èsì kii j'ómo l'èmeji* = once bitten, twice shy. It means that if you have experienced an unpleasant thing one time, you are more careful to avoid a repeat of it. Hence, this assertion reminds us to learn from the past/history so that a mistake will not repeat itself.

6. *Gbogbo ohun tó n dán kó ni wúrà* = all that glitters

is not gold. This is another proverb of warning. It educates us that appearance can be deceptive and that we should not judge the value of things by their charming appearance.

7. *Eni tó bá yára n l'ògún gbè* = the early bird catches the worm. It means that one should always be punctual and that only prompt action will bring success.

8. *Bí èmí bawà, irètí n be* = when there is life, there is hope. This proverb is often used to encourage someone who is confronted with a problem or someone who suffers a defeat of a sort or one whose property is destroyed in a calamity.

9. *Igi ganganran má gun mi l'ójú, òkèèrè l'a ti n yèè* = make hay while the sun shines. It means one should not wait till the eleventh hour when it would have been too late to do anything meaningful.

10. *Ohun tí ó ye ni l'ó ye ni, okùn orùn kò ye adiyè* = good name is better than gold. This is a warning that people must be upright at all times and not to get involved in shameful acts.

11. *Eni tí kòbá ní iyá kíí dá egbò léhìn* = cut your cloth according to your size. It means everybody should know his/her limits; e.g. one should live within one's income.

African children can also be taught the basic tenets of a happy and successful life through oral poetry. In African context, an educated person is one who is excellent in knowledge and character and contributes meaningfully to his society. He is acceptable to his community as an "Omolúàbí"; that is, someone of virtue. One of such numerous traditional poems that can be used to educate the youth runs thus:

Isé ni òògùn isé

Múra síse òrèè mi.

Isé ni a fi í di eni gíga.

Bí a kò réni fèyin ti,

Bí òle là árí;

Bí a kò réni gbékèlè,

À tera mó isé eni.

Ìyá re le lówó lówó,

Bàbá sì le lésin léèkàn.

Bí obá gbójúlé won,

O té tán ni mo so fún o.

Ohun tí a kò jìyà fún,

Kí í lè pé lówó eni.

Ohun tí a bá fara sisé fún ,

Ní í pé lówó eni.

Apá lará, igúnpá niyèkan

Bí ayé n fé o lóní

Bí obá lówó lówó,

Ni wón máa fé e lóla.

Tàbí bí o bawà ní ipò àtàtà,

Ayé á yé o sí tètèntèrín.

Jé kí o di eni n ráágó,

Kí o ríi báyé ti í símú sí o.

Èkó sì tún n so ni i dògá,

Múra kí o kó o dáradára.

Bí o sì rí òpò èniyàn,

Ti wón n fi èkó se èrín rín,

Dákun má se fara wé won.

Ìyà n bò fómo tí kògbón,

Ekún n be fómo tó n sá kiri.

Má fòwúrò seré òrèè mi,

Múra sí isé ojó n lo

Hard work is the cure to poverty

My friend, take your work seriously

Only hard work can make one to be great

Without a helper, one is like a lazy man

Then, one should face one's work

Even if your mother is rich

And your father has a lot of wealth

Do not rely on them

You are finished if you put your trust in them

Something we do not work for does not last

Our hands are our helpers and, our strength is our comforter

When you are rich, people always like you

Or, when you are in a highly placed position

People will dance and fellowship with you

But, when you are in a problem

They will mock and desert you

Education paves the way for one's greatness

Try and take it as a priority.

Even if you see a lot of people,

Those who do not take education seriously

Do not imitate them.

A child who does not heed this advice shall suffer

And a vagabond shall definitely weep and regret at the end

My friend, do not waste your youthful age

Work hard, for time and tide wait for nobody

A careful examination of this poem tells that it teaches the significance of hard work, warns against laziness as well as over dependence on the affluence of one's parent, which is a common phenomenon this day. It also emphasizes the importance of education as the key to unlimited opportunities.

In the traditional African society, education is rooted in functionalism. Immediate induction into society and readiness for adulthood remains a major principle. Social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral values are taken seriously. Physical training includes farming, fishing, hunting, weaving, cooking, and carving, knitting while intellectual training presents itself in terms of the study of local history, legends, the environment, poetry, reasoning, riddles, proverbs and storytelling. Wrestling, dancing, drumming, acrobatic display, racing and other recreational subjects are also not neglected. African children are indeed involved in a participatory education through ceremonies,

rituals, initiation, recitation and demonstration (Fafunwa, 1974).

In the pre-colonial African society, there was no formal and structural system of education. The children learnt different things deliberately through careful imitation of the adults and parents. Education or teaching and learning could take place anywhere and anytime. Sometimes, there used to be certain forms of organized training through initiation to transmit some specialized skills, values or attitudes into adolescents who are moving into adulthood. Consolidating the significance of traditional African education in his book, *History of Education in Nigeria* (1974), Fafunwa highlights seven fundamental goals/aims which are:

- i. To develop the child's latent physical skills;
- ii. To develop character;
- iii. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position (of authorities);
- iv. To develop intellectual skills;
- v. To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour;
- vi. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs;
- vii. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

The essence of most of the practical skills, socio-cultural values and attitudes, that are required of African children are embedded in different genres of oral literature. In a slim case, however, the written literature has started keying into the adoption of oratory and other verbal forms for its productions. Oamen (2013) notes:

Oral literature has remained extant in our modern literary genres, especially as it provides the essentials and salient communal fibre of the modern story in its aesthetic cognitive tendencies, episteme (knowledge) and ideological direction. Literary texts, now, adapt and modify oral tradition in order to communicate to a wider and greater number of people because of vital, productive and current exigencies that the society is faced with (108).

The above quotation indicates that all hope is not lost yet. However, there is still the need for parents to educate their children with their oral traditions, in their mother tongue. Media houses, particularly the radio and the television should also include folklores, myths, legends, proverbs and oral traditional poetry in their local contents when they are packaging their programming.

There should also be competitions on oral traditions for different levels of education, which will attract attractive prizes. And, research works on this aspect of African literature should be encouraged through adequate funding from government, institutions or organisations.

Conclusion

The assumption that civilisation with sustainable development is a phenomenon which was introduced into Africa by the West through colonisation is untrue because Africans were already civilised in their own way before the invasion of their territories and sustainable development had always been there in Africa. For the Western idea of development to be meaningful to and appreciated by Africans, there is the need to incorporate the African concept of development. What is meant by development, in African context, is contained and expressed in African philosophy, of which orature is a part.

This study has been pre-occupied with the role of orature in the African society, particularly the Yoruba socio-cultural space. We have emphasized the use of traditional practices such as folklores, myths, legends, proverbs and oral poetry in the training of an African child. In our struggle as human beings to survive, we must make sure that our actions do not destroy our cultural heritage, which in most cases stands as the pillar of our peaceful co-existence. From what we have discussed, it is clear that orature has meaningful contributions to make in ensuring sustainable development in the Yoruba socio-cultural space in particular and that of the black continent in general because traditional oratory is functional and purposeful.

Apart from constituting a historically artistic means of communication, orature has provided a platform for recording cultural heritage which can effectively perform several functions such as entertainment, warning, education, healing, information, indoctrination and encouragement, in a simple and direct way, free from complex theories and models.


Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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