

Redefining Oral African Literature

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Abstract. Indigenous art is a peculiar medium. Everything about the human society could be documented, studied, displayed and enjoyed through this. Art, in this sense, encompasses all things that may enhance the human situation. The study examines art and the use to which indigenous people made of it prior to writing using aesthetics as a tool of analysis. The study reveals that art amplifies the glorious, the ennobling as well as the drawbacks from the attainment of lofty goals. Such goals are the ultimate for the evolvement of every society. It is fundamental that art be made a crucial component of human existence if humanity were to evolve, surpass the level of bestiality, and attain a level of decorum that may be germane to peace and progress. It is imperative that indigenous art be studied further in order to unravel the wealth of meaning and possibly the artistic force that might have informed such large scale presence in indigenous societies.

Keywords: Oral, Art, Performance, Indigenous, Festivals

1. Introduction

The study of indigenous art is an attempt at examining the foundation of human progress and, in plain language. It is like a visitation to the umbilical cord of modern developments and from which further upward dive may not be detached. It is not out of place, therefore, that different scholars are likely to approach the issue of definition from different perspectives ranging from the functional to the procedural approach (Stephen, Davies, 2006: 229). However, this

study considers art to be significantly tied to a composite record of probable realities from and positive and negative attitudinal descent may not be divorced from such endeavour. The study is an examination of such indigenous climates from where illuminating scripts permeating every significant endeavour may not be significantly removed.

Fallout of any restriction of art within the functional and procedural tempos may have removed the core philosophical impetus that necessitated art, in the first place. A preoccupation with the aesthetic value that may typify art in relation to the audience may equally dwell on the script and the possible neglect of the prevailing atmosphere that was instrumental in its emergence. Such misadventure may have necessitated the original definitions of art attributed to Plato as a form of ‘representation’ (imitation), ‘a medium’ and many generic definitions by Tolstoy and others that dot critical texts which are simply an exercises on the process and functions rather than a combination of the root and the spirit behind such artistic forms. Art is an expression that has its foundation in the resolution of a crisis or need and to which every human spirit may find yearning through satisfaction or dissatisfaction through disapproval of its abstract nature or the totality of its inherent aesthetic truth. Recourse to the historical significance may be limited as evolvement of artistic scripts may not be subject to the past neither is artistic evolvement removed from the present or a future.

Perhaps, a definition of aesthetics may be rewarding. Alexander Baumgarten was

acknowledged to have been the first to apply the term to 'cognition by means of the senses (sensuous knowledge) in the eighteenth century' and further enhanced its scope by referring it to the perception of beauty by the senses as may be applied to art' (Alan, Goldman, 2006: 255). Its application of meaning to 'the judgement of beauty in both art and nature was undertaken by Kant'. In its modern usage, aesthetics may refer to the diverse areas of criticism such as 'judgements or evaluations' as well as properties, attitudes, experience and pleasure or value' (255).

Myths are masks. They symbolise different things and conjure diverse images to different beholders at different times and at different occasions; depending on the perception of each beholder and the magnitude of the intellectual endowment, based on the realities of the moment. They may remain relevant to those with discerning mind all through time. These may simply define the capability of each beholder by which the level of imagination of the individual may be conceptualized. These masks may be meaningful or not depending on the aesthetic, cognitive, intuitive and perceptive endowments of members of the audience to which regularity at festive seasons may not be divorced and from which linguistic and awareness of history may be potent factors in the process of appreciation.

The masks of Ogoni (youthful masquerade) and Ilebe (the mother-figure) during Eje festival¹ at Ode Irele, for instance, represent iconic signs. Iconic signs are representations that are capable of diverse interpretations. From the original association of icons to paintings, the possibilities of sculpted images being categorised as potent means of recording ideas may not be denied in indigenous scripts. Beyond the images of birds of passage recorded on the mask of Ogoni and the mirrors on the costumes of Ilebe that can evoke affective responses from the audience are the inherent summations in them that may complement verbal, scenic and body behaviour. These totalities are tied to cultural intelligibility between the images deployed and the degree of enlightenment of members of the audience.

Iconic signs, which masks represent, may evoke positive or negative responses and may not be

removed from communication as they are potent motifs. Oral art harbour such messages that are delivered at the arena during festivals and they are internalised through the deployment of appropriate aesthetic codes. The paper examines such messages through analysis of oral scripts prevalent in the environment and concludes that societies are moulded through informal training especially at the arena prior to the advent of western education.

Masks contain images that are intelligible to people depending on knowledge of corresponding tales and practices in the milieu. Some images are recurring and similar across contiguous communities and, therefore, fundamental to some signifying imports latent in the scripts and of course, significant to further semantic implications. These masks or sculpted images, consequently, represent the ultimate direction of each performance. The image of the bird may be unravelled when it is understood that human beings are generally considered to be birds of passage in an existence that is equated with a journey.

The apprehension of meaning may be achieved through decoding potent coded signs that are carefully selected to compute landmarks, culturally held world views about existence, life and death, views of life as a journey, a market, a voyage, a dream and other artistic traditions of the milieu. The views about reincarnation may equally be perceived in these masks and thus fundamental to the nature of education that is prevalent in the environment. Ogoni masks, as earlier stated, parade such culturally illuminating images such as birds, the paddler and a canoe on a voyage that possess existentialist connotations which may seem contradictory but that are representative of the philosophical tempo of the clime.

Performance is a rare show of individual talent that is brought to the level of approbation. Everyone may engage in the unusual which performance is all about; however, it is talent that brings training to the level of elevation that spurs members of the audience to show their approval of the display. Performance arouses the joy in them, as they may be catapulted to the

realm of satisfaction and temporary relief from their disenchantment.

Colin Durrant et al (1995) lend credence to the fact that the composition and appreciation of a song might not have been achieved without a natural endowment on the part of the singer, dancer, and bard: 'composing appears to be an entirely cerebral exercise, inspired perhaps by poetry, a walk along the seashore, God or, in the case of a commissioned project, the deadline' (17). It is equally significant that performance may combine the aesthetic needs of the people and should be easily internalised without any form of semantic encumbrances (except where ambiguity is deliberately infused to achieve specific objective).

Indigenous performance may not fall into a distinct category but the different insertions of conflicting faces of reality that dot the renditions may reveal quaint artistry. This development makes a particular genre a combination of features from other genres. They may be salient to festivals. The different elements of other genres are brought to the fore by the singers, performers and ritualists during festive moment through experience, inspiration or learning. Festivals are, consequently, analogies that can engender reconciliation of potential sources of conflicts just as they are capable of awakening redundant keys towards unlocking the doors of peaceful co-existence at the level of the community and by extension at the global society. Socially desirable traits such as independence through labour, respect for elders and fear of karmic consequences may induce honesty, dedication and search for self-esteem. These scripts are latent in the masks as well as the Ifa corpus which combines indigenous metaphysics with the scientific database of manners, issues and developments and, therefore, synonymous with the voice of finality.

Consequently, decorum or change becomes a philosophical summation on the conscious need to maintain the prevailing tempo of peace and comradeship or exploration of a new ground, enforce filial bond among relations, couples, and members of the community where the golden rule is the ultimate. It is in this regard that

festivals may be categorized as the conscience of the society meant to intimate members of the agrarian community with best practices among members. In this regard, indigenous musical performance, festivals and folktales, for instance, perform significant functions to members of the agrarian society: '...the capacity of emotional expression, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation, physical response, enforcing conformity to social norms, validating social institutions and religious rituals, contributing to the continuity and stability of culture, and integrating the society' (Idolor Emurobome, 2002: 2).

2. Indigenous Scripts as Consciousness and Codes.

The African concept of individuality is inherently dual in nature and stems from recognition of uniqueness and belongingness. Even when someone is responsible for his own actions, he is a unit in the group and thus bound by the norms and moral prescriptions in relation to the generality. As an individual, a member of the society belongs to the crowd. His selfish actions may rub off positively and negatively on himself and societal developments. This recognition makes the welfare of every member the responsibility of the collective whole. This claim is summed up by axiom that a member cannot afford to eat a poisonous substance without anyone raising an alarm as the effects of the misadventure may prevent everyone from a peaceful repose.

Closely tied to this is the recognition of individual responsibility and collectivism in the dispensation of justice and appraisal of individuals which approbates and negates the clime's stupefaction to fate as the architect of the type/individual within the crowd, but which is significantly individualistic in relation to adherence and departure from societal and religious norms. The verbal constitutions or moral codes of the people are carefully tucked in art. The underlying principle is that the individual is synonymous with a dot in the crowd, a part of the crowd, a reflection of a chosen typology in the spiritual/existential

computation and a manifestation of the yardstick he consciously chooses to reflect, manifest or exhibit within the larger society from which society and providence may be exonerated. The society, in this recognition of good and bad, is distinct from the individual just as nature too is detached from the behaviours which individuals may choose to exhibit and perhaps the attendant reward or punishment.

Societal codes are engraved in oral scripts and may be displayed periodically for the purpose of sensitising the younger generation. The avenues towards such amplification are the periodic performances of indigenous festivals, renditions of folktales, chanting of praise songs and other quaint devices such as proverbs which are meant to authenticate and cement any such claim with ancestral sanction as such proverbs are impeccable sources of authority.

Festivals, like other oral scripts, recognize the spiritual core of physical existence. Art is, therefore, a reflection of the philosophical summation that the individual is a recurring character in the eternal history and within the regular sameness that humanity manifests since the dawn of time. This philosophical representation is subtly considered from the standpoint of the stream of beings as in a tide that berths and begins the race anew though with a unique face, as an underlying mask that may not be strange to the sages but a quaint reflection of the original portrait.

Different summations may be drawn from the mask depending on time, setting and the individual. It is from this standpoint that art may be considered to be intertwined between the spiritual and the physical. This is vintage African oral philosophy from the standpoint of claims that existence is a script, the individual as a performer and the typology/category as the core within the taints or honours that all typologies and their consequent manifestations may exhibit, parade and exemplify.

3. Specific Issues in Oral Scripts

Birds are significant motifs and characters in Yoruba indigenous myths and tales as they

parody individuals from the highly elevated to the lowly. The birds reflect certain traits that are equally prevalent in human beings and these are explored in the search for meanings, parallels and impeccable summations. Apart from universalising and providing masks for the identities of the human characters involved, zoomorphic parallels provide inter-relatedness and this may be easily identified in any tale. Such motifs are timeless and may be applicable to people across cultures.

The birds range from odere-cuckoo, adaba-dove, eyele-pigeon, okin-peacock-, ogongo-ostrich, akokoligi-wood-pecker, ayekoto-parrot, akuko-fowl, eye-etu- guinea fowl, pepeye-duck, adie-odo-kiwi, igun-vulture, awodi-eagle, asa-kite, ega-sparrow, aparo-bush fowl, adan-bat, owiwi-owl to many others that may be deployed to shield the identities of the human characters who might be pissed off at the direct mention of their names but whose behaviours cannot be removed from the traits in such birds. This subtle representation is a high-water-mark of artistry where birds are given anthropomorphic qualities that may tend towards verisimilitude, by which the individual may be perceived as exhibiting similar traits that are inherent in the animals while shielding the true identity of the persona thereby preventing them from ridicule or reprisal attack.

The cuckoo, dove and pigeon are considered to have evolved from the same ancestors. They are, however, expected to deploy meet rituals that they may not lose their young ones to untimely death. While the pigeon heeds the warning, the dove considers the warning out of place as it could afford to lay its egg in the height of the tallest tree, far from the reach of human intrusion. The dove, like the metaphor of the snail in indigenous art, expects that war is looming in the front, unknown to it that war may equally ravage the individual from behind. (This is another indigenous allusion on the possibility of conflict from unexpected sources which human wisdom may not be enough to foresee except the deployment of meet rituals that could fortify one against unforeseen circumstances and negate any untoward development). Before long, a terrible rainstorm ravages the area; and houses

and trees are shaken to their very foundation. The storm devastates the longest tree and it falls, killing the newly hatched young just as the pigeon survives the disaster and is acclaimed to have been singing ever since that its head touches the earthenware and survives.

Birds are philosophical underpinnings. They exhibit religious and environmental views and are illuminating motifs as they recur in tales of manners and other references to fatalism. Bush-fowls are symbolic of equality of individuals in the voyage of life while the dead ones represent trouble and whoever may be in possession of these may not be found wanting when it comes to disquietude. The quest for wealth falls in the category of the possession of the dead bush-fowls and such a personality may adorn a lean physique even after he comes into contact with money and honour. This is another image conjured by the motif of a bird on the masks.

The bird too may conjure the image of royalty and the Peacock readily comes to mind. This bird symbolises royalty and this image is succinctly summed up by the tale of two identical birds called Peacock (Okin) and Ostrich (Olokose) that are considered to be half-brothers and offspring of a royal father. Existence is considered a bird of passage that hardly rests as it is in constant flow and ebb and this axiom is represented through a festival named Ijengen at the Ode Irele milieu where dancers are meant to replicate the birds in flight during the transition rituals of highly placed chiefs.

The African consciousness situates the zoomorphic qualities in the Peacock and the Ostrich within relevant human qualities that can make or mar the evolvment of people even in the human environment. The two birds are, no doubt, beautiful to behold but salient attributes in them are significant and instructive. The attitude of the two creatures to sleep marks them out. Olokose is the elder and wakes at noon every day. However, the Peacock wakes at four am every morning on the instruction of the mother who wants it to accompany the father's slaves to farm. The Peacock is pissed off at the idea on the basis of the fact that he is being

treated like a slave. Irete Otura, the Yoruba artistic and mythological system of explicating reality sums up the natural traits of the two birds situating them within debilitating human qualities that could typify an individual in the journey or voyage through the bumpy road of life or the enclave considered to be a market.

The king, who is the father of Ostrich and Peacock, passes on and there is an urgent need to install a new monarch. The Ostrich is the heir-apparent and all kingmakers agree on the choice. He is billed to meet with the kingmakers as early as four am. The mother begins to train the would-be king towards waking up every four am to no avail. It is agreed that Peacock should be sent to the domain of the ritualists to get necessary materials for his brother since Ostrich could not afford to wake at that odd hour. The Peacock leaves for the ritualists' domain and narrates the reason the brother could not make the journey. The kingmakers are pissed off at the absence of the prince and decide to make Peacock the king. Consequently, specially made soap and balm are given to him to bathe and rub. Just immediately, his physique changes; and royal regalia appears on his body. This is how the mother of a baby could make or mar the destiny of the child. The lesson is that the mother may not be divorced from the positive and negative evolvment of the children through discipline or palpable indulgence.

The throne is synonymous with the authority. The decision to jettison the sleepy prince may have arisen from the fact that whoever would be installed a king should be disciplined and outstanding in all ramifications. The idea of a monarch who would sleep till noon strikes the kingmakers as odd and incongruous with realities of the office. This claim probably explains the belief that a king must have passed through the furnace of disquietude to meet the challenges of administering a complex society. One of the qualifications for the position of a monarch in the Ode Irele world is proper grooming in the school of suffering, endurance, dedication, tolerance, patience and longsuffering. The Peacock exhibits these qualities that are visibly absent in the life of the heir-apparent. The process of installing a

monarch equally requires rigorous and traumatic drilling in order to bring the suffering of the monarch to an apogee and perhaps a close as the rest of his life would be dotted by bliss and plenty.

African oral scripts have been under-utilised and at times denounced by critics as culture. This is a product of the negative pictures painted by western scholars to which Africans have blindly subscribed over the years. Yet, the African society and the whole world generally may not recover from the ingrained attachment to the oral environment in a hurry as the system thrives through it and the people are products of the norms just as its allusions and beliefs determine human relationships, names of people and scientific inventions. Traces and manifestations of such impacts and indoctrination dot the climes; the texts and literatures generally and these may not be visible to scholars operating outside the purview of such inimitable oral scripts. The reality of scapegoatism, for instance, may not be easily internalised but the truth confronts the texts notwithstanding the religious sophistication of everyone. African literature shows that the milieu where various creative ingredients are latent and may be explored by artists depending on their level of internalisation of the tales, myths and allusions that are rife in the environment is significant in any examination of the texts.

Tales, myths and festivals, the world over, are a web of codes, signs, secret ideograms, hieroglyphics and maze of intentions, conventions and possible practices that may be unravelled in any attempt at explicating a system no matter the time and clime. The intellectual endeavour of the Yoruba people finding expression in Ifa, for instance, has several references to male and female members of the society and by implication some women generally the world over. In Ogbe Irosun, Orunmila is married to Moriyeke, a spoilt-brat, “whose mother reincarnated to become her child” (Ibie, Osamaro, 1992: 128). These female and male personalities are represented with zoomorphic symbols. The reasons for these are not far-fetched.

Oral artistic performance may seem static to western critics. This subjectivity may stem from the association of scripts with time even when it is a mask of different garbs that is capable of diverse manifestations. This inexhaustibility parades a chameleonic-twist within the same frame and the web of meanings may inform inimitable perceptions and uncoordinated but inter-related interpretations. The reality of the oral African performances may negate western conceptions of existence and reality as human existence-essence precedes human nature and this is amply demonstrated through scientific compartments/groupings of the born and the unborn within specific traits and for which different songs, dance steps and allusions have been ascribed. These facts may delimit the present but it cannot be detached from an earlier conception of being at a stage in the past which informs such considerations and conclusions.

This strong-point in African oral performances may be construed from a priori determination of characters within the types and the crowd and within the stream of humanity. Individuality, therefore, is an aberration. Good and bad are inherently significant to humanity as a whole and no one may be capable of one without being liable to the other. From this standpoint, the pantheon of gods has ambivalent capabilities and may devolve good, at a time and bad, at another time.

African artistic domain harbours references to knowledge and wisdom. The artistic scripts of the people, no doubt, exhibit quaint-references and monumental deliveries of wisdom-laden ingredients though festivals, folktales, myths and legends. The imports of such wholesale-conditions can hardly be internalised to the fullest in the informal-learning environment thereby confining knowledge to the formal-learning-setting and wisdom to romance with fate such as when individuals are consciously tutored and pass through such harrowing experiences before they could be considered wise and qualified for monumental roles, energy-sapping tasks and wisdom-laden assignments such as the throne, leadership of a volatile organisation and titles that may require exhibition of vibrancy, which must have been

earned through suffering, service and intensity of experience.

Truth in the African philosophical summation is a reflection of a unique totality within the class or group to which time may not be detached. Time is consequently analogous to lunar reflection and the individual may not exceed the bound of realities that are significant to the class. The past may not be significantly different from the present just as it may reflect the future. Rather, the past might be nothing save the eye-on-the-knees and since the knee cannot be detached from the body, the individual remains a metaphor of the ever-rebranding dawn.

Oral performances are a priori in time and the futuristic ingredients tie human actors to the past and the present just as the future may be garnered from the two underpinnings. Within the manifestations of the generic traits are salient departures and these have been accommodated through generalizations. Terms such as ennobling, elevated, rich and distinguished may refer to such traits, but the degrees may not be amplified or specified. However, what is undeniable is the recognition of the individual as imbued with qualities that may necessitate celebration and adjudged successful just as success is relative and the successful may not be devoid of innate shortcomings. The supposed failure has a stereotype, and within such demeaning situations are qualities that may be adjudged worthwhile. Consequently, within the hero are renditions that tend towards vilification, revulsion and rejection amid the associated glorification or amplification. It is, therefore suspect if anyone may be considered in all ramifications without some taints and faults which are succinctly termed hubris in heroes.

Apposite to Yeats W. B. (1965) is the fallibility of claiming that actors like their human ordinary equivalents are controlled by an external force: "that there is a hand not ours in the events of life" (761). This is what the concept of fate tends to claim. Claims such as "accident is destiny" and "the Daemon is our destiny" reveal salient religious and philosophical summations about fate or destiny. It is, however, apt to consider every being in the African philosophical compendium as far from being inherently

"doom-eager" (Yeats, 1965: 761). Rather, the character in each destiny is a symbol of comedy and existence as existence is tantamount to a tragedy. It is comedy as the individual approaches existence with a will. The will is a desire, intrinsic intentions the hero or villain intends to manifest. Therefore, fate in everyone depends on choice. The choice may be good or bad but with traces of the negative or the opposite within the realizations.

At the moment of choice, the consequences are hardly considered but the creative artist unlike providence may be responsible for the doom in every hero or villain. It will be unnatural and a far cry from reality to arrogate positive, ennobling traits to individuals without amplifying the negative tendencies that may be inherent or innate in them. The same holds good for the villain. He is not totally condemnable as everyone might tend to claim. Within evil are flashes of positive anecdotes that may be overwhelmed by the inclination towards evil. The interplay of the choice of the script and the performance or manifestation of the letters of the script, selfish considerations and external control over the persona may not be considered. Whatever typology may be salient to the hero or villain is far from absolute. It is the duty of individuals to redress such frailties through conscious address of the letters of the script which is the term for destiny or fate in this study.

Art is a total vehicle to indigenous people. It is a device that is next to nothing and the people rely on it for the realization of their collective goals and aspirations. They are conscious of the need for decorum and regulation of society which absence would have been devastating to the survival of the people. Judging by the limited power of communication at the disposal of monarchs to enforce their will and pronounce their proclamations recourse to art becomes inevitable. Art is a credible medium that could draw the attention of all and sundry especially during the festive seasons since the town-criers could hardly achieve more than is humanly possible and the bell which now metamorphoses to modern correlates such as the radio broadcast, television transmission and Internet facilities, is

grossly inadequate in meeting the needs of monarchs for acculturation, information and entertainment.

Art becomes a veritable vehicle for reaching out to the larger society through conscious convergence at the arena laden with the delivery of cleverly-woven art that could fulfill several sociological and artistic needs to the milieu. The tools of delivery of such artistic imports range from folktales to festivals. Myth, for instance, becomes the essence that is explored from time to time towards meeting the scientific needs of the settings. The reference to *langue* in the preceding statement is what the study terms a form of tributary and where other foreign terms may be found especially the language that is alien to the continent are further examples of the tributaries. They are far from the core and these may be recognized in every study as much as the flora and fauna of the African environment are accessible to the scholar.

Even when the core remains pseudo-scientific, constant recourse is made to it in order to seek explanations for realities, beliefs and human traits that have been cleverly-woven around art. Such recourse is latent in the interactions between the flora and fauna of the milieu that are symbols and cleverly woven around art to exhibit transparent and worthy qualities that are attestable in animals but that may be adored as worthwhile which may be applied to human actors in the system. Legendary personalities, fabulous as they may seem, emphasize the possibilities of such traits being exhibited by individuals among the people in the course of time. Apart from the inherent entertainment that may be garnered therefrom, oral scripts exemplify the totality of the essence of the people whose physical and spiritual essence may be unravelled from the carefully-woven scripts in the environment.

The character in the Ifa corpus that is cuckolded in his relationship with the paddler (driver) has three categories: *Asipale* (the weird-one), *Afuwagale* (the belligerent-one) and *Osepeletu* (the patient-one). The three categories have similar fate or possibilities but their approaches to the realization are different. The first two

categories may be equated with people that are assertive, proud and self-seeking. They believe in their physical power and bank a lot on their noble positions in the society. They hardly could accommodate the counsels of others. Defeat is relative just as victory is subject to time. The winning team may soon have its brow to beat in the course of time.

In the first encounter, the paddler wins in all ramifications. He defeats the two noble princes and ravages the wife of the meek. He seems to be above the law and strikes at his opponents in their vulnerable positions. He wins the weird-one and submerges the man in the sea. He rescues the wife to a safe-haven where she becomes her permanent wife. He wins the noble prince named *Afuwagale* as the husband pays dearly for having a beautiful wife. *Uriah* and *David* come to the fore in this regard. *David* wins and crops *Bathsheba*. However, the orgies of blood have taken a permanent root in the household of *David* till the present. The same may be said of the paddler. He is cursed like the *Atroid* family (*Agamemnon*, *Menelaus* and *Aegisthus* are inferred). The spectre of blood has taken a permanent root in the household and the descendants will pay dearly for this.

Fate has a crooked path in the question of justice. It is not unusual for the unjust to get fair and undue advantage over the weak. Indigenous philosophical disposition does not mince words in the deployment of justice to the aggrieved when the hope of a redress seems fleeting and almost impossible. Far reaching consequences may be salient to the aggressor. The husband will inadvertently annex the blessings of the concubine. The concubine may even crop a baby in the home of the rightful husband. The child will become a superstar and it would be difficult for the concubine to claim he is the biological father of the baby. The biblical allusion too shows that *Solomon* is the re-incarnation of the original husband of *Bathsheba* named *Uriah* whose wealth and knowledge have become subject of discussion all through time in his reincarnation. *David* pays for his orgy and loses everything to the household of *Uriah*.

Osepeletu, whose name is synonymous with patience and long-suffering, is a symbol of the powerful but chameleonic one. His name belies his true nature. He is weak in outlook, full of compassion but remains a powerful individual and you may not dare him without a corresponding fatal consequence. He is a summation of the philosophical claim that power or energy is latent in passivity. He is exceedingly powerful but parades the mien of a weakling. Several attributes characterise his personality. He is weak, no doubt, but he is innately dreadful when the need arises. He has no knowledge of his own but depends mostly on the counsels of elders in the environment. He does not pursue a course without the advice of poor, rejected and weather-beaten old men and women in the milieu. He does not discountenance the advice of elders and deploys meet rituals when told to do so. Such a character should be dreaded as immediate justice may elude him but eventual victory may tend his brow. Such tales and summations dot indigenous scripts and festivals in particular.

A possible aesthetic experience may be drawn from the image of power where a perceived weakness may have been assumed and vice versa. A mental picture may be conjured possible from an experience in the oral environment where the powerful is subdued by the weak through other factors such as the slippery ground; a miss from a powerful onslaught is directed at the wrong position. Redress may come the way of the weak through disapproval of the action by people around who may defend the weak and possibly fight his cause. Pleasure or entertainment may be garnered and thus a fulfillment of Kant's association of aesthetics with "mental" picture subsisting through "perceptual, cognitive, affective" and the permanence that may be associated with that experience (Alan, Goldman, 2006: 262).

It is an irony that the supposedly powerful in outlook finding expression in Asipale and Afuwagale are natural sluggards after all. They cannot discern the looming chaos in spite of their size or weight. It is equally ironical that the supposedly deaf and dumb prince has dynamite

in his kitty. African oral arts and the written components parade such characters. The scholar, drawing from "the crossroads" should not be oblivious of the root which is the wisdom in the African setting that attributes wisdom to silence and emptiness to noisemaking. Eri wo ya (which is the conclusion of a segment and the beginning of another and thus the equivalent of hallelujah in Christianity) becomes a segment of the tale and may even be considered a pause from where other issues may be considered by other members of the gathering. It is far from an address to a god or phenomenal being. It is rather a submission and a dot like a full-stop to indicate withdrawal.

Osepeletu is the symbol of a gentleman who may not hurt a fly. He is, however, surrounded by powerful people who may not forgive anyone for daring the innocuous young man. His wife may parade a feminine weakness finding expression in promiscuity but she is characterized by innate cruelty and may make or mar the husband. She could send him to an early grave in view of her penchant for extra-marital affair. Except the man is all-discerning by which he associates with wisdom-imbued members of the milieu, catastrophic consequences may tend the zenith of his success. The tale sums up such possibilities in the chapter of Ogbe Suuru.

The promiscuous wife inadvertently becomes a blessing to the innocuous husband. The devilish tendency in her turns to a favour to Osepeletu. The negative effects of the promiscuity may be associated with the decreed rise of the husband to renown. His patience becomes a source of celebration as he annexes the blood and blessings of the concubine in his quest for greatness. Asipale and Afuwagale are the symbol of those who may refute the sermon of patience and long-suffering. They are right in denouncing the tendency of the concubine even when they are far from any affinity with elders and powerful clerics in the land. They may be economical and spend sparingly on issues of their welfare unlike the foolish Osepeletu who spares no expenses in the cause of his spiritual comfort. They symbolize innocuous but brave individuals whose powers are limited to their brawn.

The race of life may not be won only through agility. The chameleon is involved in the race just as the millipedes and its multiple legs may not be in a hurry to complete the race even when their ultimate is the touchline. Everyone is right in asserting their rights but some rights may not be asserted at all times. Some may be overlooked, while some may be deferred. There is a crossroads here in apportioning blame to the promiscuous wife. She is like the Biblical Judas Iscariot and his messiah. She may be virtuous at the outset, no doubt. This state may lead nobles to a quick summation about a virtuous wife whose faithfulness may not be questioned unknown to them that the overbearing power of time may make mincemeat of vows and tie virtues to the tethers of indiscretion.

Eventual comfort may beckon on indiscretion spree. The claim is rife in indigenous festivals and other oral renditions that every successful man has a female backbone as an impetus. The reference may be a tacit allusion to the situation. The same claim has a negative pair which lays some descents into the abyss on the threshold of the same women too. According to authorities the word over, women are ambivalent and may mar a destiny while they may uplift another. The promiscuous woman becomes a boost to her unsuspecting husband. She takes to flirtation in order to uplift the husband. She destroys the destiny of the concubine inadvertently in order to facilitate the astronomical rise of the husband. She is paradoxical in nature an embodiment of destruction and regeneration at once. She is the scapegoat and seeks another as her accomplice in the uplift of her husband. This is the simple and nagging logic.

4. Conclusion

It is awesome that indigenous art and Ifa mythology, in their limitless capacity, contain a web of songs, tales, symbols and archetypal parallels that individuals can tap from whenever a nagging situation that is difficult to resolve at the level of rationality presents itself. Ifa, for

instance, remains the compendium that inspires artists, sages and high-ranking individuals over the years and the logical or illogical claims in it may remain relevant till the end of time. It is doubtful that people would cling unto indigenous African art if there was nothing fundamental to its existence. The freshness that characterizes it makes it a thing of nostalgia to members of the audience that no sooner is a periodic celebration concluded than the next one is expected.

Consolation, address, code, message, entreaty, epistle, simulation, statement, perspective

Note: Eje festival is celebrated annually in Ode Irele and becomes a means of harvest and thanksgiving. It also doubles as an instrument for gauging the welfare of female descendants of the clime who may be married to non-indigenes outside the shores of the enclave. Such female members are celebrated and entertained by the masquerades for days.

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