

PRINCIPLES OF
'TRADITIONAL'
AFRICAN
CULTURE

edited by moyo okecliji

THE UNIVERSITY OF AFRICAN ART PRESS

The University of African Art Press.

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First published 1992, Bard Books

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Catalog index:

African art, ethnography, literature, religion, education, philosophy, criticism, culture studies.

The University of African Art Press Electronic Book Media.

Africa eBooks

TUAAPEB.0005

PRINCIPLES OF 'TRADITIONAL'

AFRICAN ART

Edited By
Moyo Okediji

The University of African Art Press.
Denver and Ile Ife
(www.universityofafricanart.org)

To
Rowland Abiodun,
and
Janet Stanley

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FOREWORD

John Rowland Olufemi Ojo

Bi omo eni ba dara ka wi: if one's child is beautiful, one must say so; *bi eegun eni ba joore ori a ma a ya ni:* if one's masquerade dances beautifully, one is impressed.

These proverbs express my feelings when I was asked by the editor, Moyo Okediji my colleague and product, to write a foreword to a collection of essays including contributions from two other colleagues who are my products, Bolaji Campbell and Tokunbo Osasona, on an issue raised by a peer and fellow anthropologist, John Picton. Although the issue was raised in connection with the study of African art, it also affects other aspects of African culture as the essays in this collection show.

Now, the word 'anthropologist' evokes more negative than positive feelings. While I am not standing brief for the species, I must say that whatever one feels about anthropology and anthropologists depends on which epoch of the discipline and the particular anthropologist one has in mind. But it will be apparent as I proceed that in dispensing with the discipline of anthropology in the study of African art, we may be throwing away the baby with the bath water. Let me quickly add that in the current state of African art studies, anthropology is only one of the useful tools. Others include art history, history, archaeology, oral literature and religion. But what is most important is that a sound theoretical basis is needed for the study of African art (and culture).

The issue at stake in this book is the appropriateness or validity of the word 'traditional' (and tradition). All the contributors based the definition of the term on the translation from Latin to English and English to English (or explanation in English). I will like to complicate the issue by referring to the 1913 edition of the *Dictionary of the Yoruba Language* in which 'traditional' was translated to Yoruba Language as *Itan/Ofin/Asa*

atowodowo: that is, 'stories, laws, and customs passed on from hand to hand'. This is the same as the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* translation of 'traditional' as the act of transmitting or handing down from generation to generation. Like the word 'art', there is an equivalent in African usage. But the point in dispute is the connotation attached to the word when used as a descriptive adjective. If definition belongs to the definer, it seems from Picton's point of view that the word 'traditional' has pejorative connotations perhaps because it replaced more value loaded words, used by foreigners in the study of African culture.

But in suggesting other terms considered more 'acceptable', are we solving the problem or complicating the issue? Do we in fact need such 'descriptive' terms in the study of African culture at this point in the development of the Human Sciences? Our use of terms and concepts must take into consideration the people's culture (and tradition). We need analytical tools and concepts which are acceptable to the people described, scientifically precise for the analysis of the data available, and abreast of developments in cognate disciplines.

The main problem however is that the study of African art lags behind other disciplines which have abandoned pejoratively descriptive adjectives, published research findings, evolved theoretical bases and published comprehensively standard text books. One does not need any apology here for taking African art as a case in point because the debate in this volume of readings started with art for which the word 'traditional' is more often used. But first and foremost, I am more familiar with that discipline; and furthermore, this type of issue has been put to rest in disciplines such as African history, languages and literatures.

Unlike these and other disciplines, African art has no standard text book. The available texts are written by scholars whose training and background are not in art. And this is the crux of the problem. Even the specialists in African art have their undergraduate training in a variety of non-visual disciplines. That is why some of the leading African art scholars have suggested an eclectic approach and training in a variety of

disciplines including anthropology, art history, history religion, oral literature, music and dance.

Right now, there are two basic approaches as published in a special issue of the *African Studies Association Bulletin*. First is a social perspective approach, which involves an anthropological method, using social science modes of analysis and predicated on the relative importance of culture in understanding the meaning of art. In the process however, we must disentangle African art from Western categories by exploring indigenous concepts. This method does not however preclude a historical (synchronic) dimension.

The art historical approach faces many obstacles because African art has a marginal place in the main-stream of art historical studies, as a consequence of the methods of art history as an academic discipline.

But as the last paper in this collection demonstrates, there are aspects of Western art historical methods and modes of analysis which can be applied to African art studies. In addition to this, as one of the essays demonstrates, analytical tools can also be derived from the available data because such data are rooted in sound indigenous scientific traditions.

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Chapter One

ON THE INVENTION OF 'TRADITIONAL' ART

JOHN PICTON

The European and American engagement with African art has taken many forms. One, and perhaps the most pernicious, has been the invention of "traditional" art. In distinguishing between the concepts of tradition and the "traditional" it is evident that the latter is a fictional and ahistorical category; and the problem does not lie in the inhabitants of a culture claiming that such and such a practice is "traditional" (perhaps citing ancestral and/or ritual precedent) but in our proceeding to take this claim at face value as an analytical concept and historical verity. This is, of course, a general problem within African art studies, and Yoruba culture provides ample evidence. Thus, the visual culture of the communities that now identify themselves as Yoruba is comprised of many and various traditions. Some of these are pre-colonial in origin, while some are developments of the colonial and post-colonial periods; and the categorisation of some part of all this as "traditional" has its origin, not in the arts themselves, but in a variety of external perceptions, including the anthropology of the colonial period.

Another and related aspect of this engagement with Africa has been the collection and exhibition of its artifacts. Museum and gallery displays of Yoruba art tend to alternate between the single object in the well-lit case, and the invention of some kind of reconstructed interior. The one enables the work to be seen in ways at variance with its original purpose, while the other intends

to make the visitors to the exhibition feel as if they were really there, though the reality is, of course, illusion, parody and pastiche. There may be no solution to these problems other than to work within them knowing them for what they are; and recognising that in both, the works of Yoruba culture are effectively appropriated within a European "art world" from which, significantly, both a sense of time and the existence of contemporary work (i.e. the non-"traditional") are largely excluded. This exclusion, a function of an invented "traditionality" taken together with the "art world", indeed, excludes not only the contemporary, but also the mural painting traditions, textiles, the Islamic presence, the Brazilian traditions.....

Then there has been the ripping-off of Yoruba culture. As an employee of the old Federal Department of Antiquities in the 1960s I saw at first hand the depredations of the art-hungry savages of the western world. Ilobo was a case in point; and the ripping-off has continued. For example, in the wonderful catalogue of the recent New York exhibition, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of Art and Thought*, we find the three posts carved by Olowe of Ise-Ekiti for the palace of the Ogoga of Ikere, and all now in public collections in America. These sculptural monuments could not have been legally removed from Nigeria, and I doubt that they were legally removed from Ikere. However, the very particular context of these works at Ikere only serves to magnify the tragedy, for they were set within courtyard built according to the Ekiti Yoruba tradition, but embellished in the Brazilian style. This was a unique architectural ensemble, a unique monument of Yoruba architectural history.

In the pages that follow, I discuss the idea of "traditional" art, and in the presentation I will give examples of these various problematic engagements. (The positive effects of the European and American engagement I take for granted.)

Tradition, Authenticity, Context

This essay has many beginning's. Perhaps the single most important is with Marilyn Hammersley Houlberg's photograph taken during her field research of 1970-71. It showed a Yoruba mother of twins. One of the pair had died, and she acquired an image to stand for the deceased child, in keeping with the Yoruba tradition in these matters. In the photograph the living child and the image were both contained in her wrap-around skirt, again, in the usual manner. However, as an up-to-date young woman, a school teacher, instead of the familiar image carved in wood she was using a bright red plastic doll with bright blue eyes (and squeaker). Having seen this photograph I rushed to the cupboard and retrieved an identical doll that we had purchased in a Lagos market in the summer of 1971 for our infant daughter to play with. The photograph has been published (1973, p 26, fig 11, unfortunately reproduced only in black and white) in her paper dealing with contemporary transformations in the imagery of the Yoruba cult of twins: for example, at Ila-Orangun the practice had developed of using a photograph of the surviving twin as the image of the deceased twin. The use of a red plastic doll with blue eyes (and squeaker) as the image of a deceased twin may or may not be commonplace, and our doll is not the one in Marlyn Houlberg's picture; but I nevertheless added it to my teaching collection as emblematic of a debate about tradition and the "traditional" . For we still come across the desire, whether overt or covert, to freeze-dry the cultures of sub-Saharan African within a safe, authentic, "traditional", context. Yet traditions are not static, and context is not a fixed property, neither in Africa nor elsewhere. Indeed, by challenging the very notion of the "traditional" , the red plastic doll with blue eyes (and squeaker) enhances our understanding of whatever it is, whether artifact or

performance or process, we consider as art and/or consider art to be.

Abiola Irele (1982, p. 95) refers to tradition '... as not so much as (an) abiding, permanent, immutable stock of beliefs and symbols, but as the constant refinement and extension of these in a way which relates them to an experience that is felt as being at once continuous and originally new.' Irele later refers to '... the continuity of the imaginative life of Yoruba culture through the various phases of transformation in Yoruba society itself.' (1982, p. 117)

On the other hand, the word "traditional" is all too often used of Africa in ways that provide for and promote, no matter how innocently, caricatures of Africa; and, of course, the idea of the "traditional" subsists within a "context" signifying an "authenticity" that can be taken for granted. The front page of the travel section of *The Sunday Times* of 3rd September, 1989, was taken up with an article headed 'a village in Zimbabwe'. The author, Charles Hampton, was a teacher there in the early 1980s, and the article was well written and sympathetic to the realities of Africa today. I cannot imagine, therefore, that he was responsible for the two illustrations that someone had thought fit to use as the introduction to his article. One was captioned 'Traditional tools: while young people want to head for the city, older people remain on the land'. Fair enough, except that it showed a woman with a bowl on her head containing, among other things, an enamel bowl, a plastic bag (or, at least, a bag of some sort and sufficiently shiny in the photo as reproduced as to permit my interpretation) and a spade of the form familiar to any British Island gardener. To which of these does the phrase "traditional tools" refer? The other illustration showed a pair of giraffe captioned '...giraffe standing among the scrub trees and grasses of the plains are one of the most authentic sights of rural Africa'. "Traditional" and "authentic": this kind of

misrepresentation of Africa always comes as a shock. It is the Tarzan-film view of Africa; and when considering the first draft of this paper I did wonder if I had merely re-invented an Aunt Sally long since discarded. The persistence of such banal and uniformed stereotypes is always shocking (the more so when one remembers the concentration camps of apartheid).

One reason for this kind of image of Africa is, surely, the European and American nostalgia for the simpler life; and evidence of atavistic diggings into a real or mythological past are too many and too obvious to be listed here. Side by side with this, though, is the contrary wish to preserve, promote and define civilization at the expense of others, and in terms of their relative "primitivity". Slavery and colonialism are but earlier versions of this; and nowadays as the developing countries of Africa, and indeed elsewhere, choose to participate in the economy and life-style of the industrial world, they also threaten that economy and life-style. Europe and America react by projecting their fears onto those developing countries: over-population, AIDS, the failure to take adequate steps to protect the ozone layer.... At the same time there are those in developed countries that have shown themselves happy to use the developing world as a dumping ground for our own rubbish: high-tar tobacco, toxic waste....

The social anthropology of the colonial period has certainly, though unwittingly, played its part in the history of such attitudes. There is, of course, an irony here for that discipline would claim to give unique insight into other cultures; and the problem is less one of anthropology as such but of the gap between the popular perception of the discipline and its development. I refer, of course, to the *Ethnographic Present*, that view of culture and society as if the colonial presence were not there. It was always a composite reconstruction, from perhaps diverse sources, of an ideal state of affairs presumed to be as things were prior to the advent of colonial rule, which, of course, served to protect all that

was best in that ideal. It was an anthropological invention, a fiction placing the cultures of the developing world outside history. Reconstructing the past may in itself be a legitimate form of research; but inventing an ideal that denies present and past realities is another and more dubious matter.

It would be preposterous to attribute the idea of the "traditional" to the anthropology of the colonial period: the history of this idea is more subtle; but the Ethnographic Present is a potent source of various notions of "traditional" Africa with its "traditional" society, its "traditional" culture, its "traditional" religion, its "traditional" art. Incidentally, we should not forget that the majority of art works on which studies of the "traditional" are based are in fact works of the colonial periods, quite apart from the fact that their very presence in the collections of Europe and America is, directly or indirectly, a function of the colonial presence. The very word "traditional" conveys an authenticity (authentic: from Latin *authenticus*, coming from the real author itself from Greek, one who does anything himself; i.e. having authority, genuine, real, original). However, it is not just Africa that is misrepresented: the essential utility of the idea of tradition as revealed in its Latin origins is also obscured.

The word "tradition" comes from the Latin verb *tradidere*, to hand on/over; and in the history of making and using artifacts, tradition presupposes context: indeed, each presupposes the other (but not because of bogus ideas of authenticity....). "Context" comes from another Latin verb *texere*, to weave, and in this case to weave/put together. *Texere* gives us text, texture, and textile, and the interlacing of the two sets of elements to form a coherent fabric gives us the metaphor of "context". Whatever is this that is "handed on" is a "weaving together": the artifact itself is a context, i.e. of ideas, values, expectations, technical practices, performance.... At the same time that artifact is a functional part of a context extending from itself, a context for which it can

stand and from which it can stand apart. The artifact, thus both is and represents a context; and this representational capacity is not restricted to those we conventionally call "works of art" but is a potential inherent in any artifact, a potential which, of course, is not necessarily or inevitably realised. The handing on of all, or even some part only, of this constitutes the tradition; and at the same time, it also provides the very medium of development of and within that tradition: even the most basic act of replication can never be exact, at least not until the advent of mechanical means of reproducing forms.

Artifacts and traditions are contexts, and subsist within contexts; and if some element in that "weaving together" is changed, whether deliberately or coincidentally (and it may be the artwork itself), of course, then context is no longer the same. Whether we are considering the impossibility of exact replication, or the various effects of trade, the development of novel social institutions, or whatever, or rather our participation therein.... Moreover, the continuities that characterise a tradition do not necessarily subsist in the visual/material parts of that tradition. A prime example of this would be the illustrations of episodes in the novels of Amos Tutuola (1952, 1954, 1962, etc) by Twins Seven-Seven (see Beier 1968, plate I, p 93; figs 53-54, pp 114-5). These illustrations look nothing like the pre-colonial visual tradition of the Yoruba-speaking region; and they make use of novel materials that first made their appearance in Nigeria as part of colonial education. The same would apply to the form of the novel. However, the vivid phantasy dream world Tutuola describes surely is a feature of pre-colonial Yoruba life. What has changed here is not the content of that tradition but the manner of reproducing it; and Twins Seven-Seven has taken that process of reproducing that tradition one stage further. The essential continuity remains. As to context, the novels and drawings can now involve me in that phantasy dream world; and they can earn substantial amounts of cash for their authors. Yet it would be a

foolish person that would take issue with either of them as to the authenticity of their being Yoruba.

There is, then, an obvious contrast between the idea of tradition and the idea of the "traditional", even though the latter is derived from the former. Giddens (1979, p 200) refers to tradition as the '... most innocent mode of social reproduction' in which performance of some action is authorised by the assumption of previous performance. For this reason, the temporal status of a practice described as "traditional" can never be taken for granted: rather it must necessarily be proven; and some traditions turn out to be relatively latter-day inventions (see Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). We designate certain ideas and practices as "traditional" in order to provide them, wittingly or unwittingly, with a taken-for-granted legitimacy and authenticity. This happens in Africa as much as in Europe and America. However, a habit of thought in regard to elements of one's own culture cannot be taken for granted as an analytical principle in regard to the history of someone else's; but this is precisely the conflation of ideas presupposed in the notion of "traditional" Africa. The real danger, for Europeans and Americans in categorising, perhaps arbitrarily, some particular development as "traditional", is that they do more or less violence to an appreciation of African sensibilities. One can legitimately investigate the temporal status of particular traditions with regard to the possibility of their pre-colonial origin; and one must beware of assuming "traditionality", thereby ignoring the necessity of demonstrating that temporal status. Similarly, if one writes off certain developments because they seem to be not "traditional", then one writes off African responses to change, whether aesthetic or practical, as if people were the mere dupes of colonial overlords; and one writes off the desires of people in Africa to be part of the same century as anyone else.

Postscript I: the necessity for art

The transformations of and within traditions are not at variance with tradition: rather, particular traditions enable particular forms of artistry and thereby particular forms of development. None of this violates a contextual authenticity, for the very notion of authenticity is suspect if context is not a fixed property. Whatever our reactions to the "art world" of Europe and America, it is an "authentic" context within those parts of the world; and whether we think of Olowe's posts as contexts in themselves (which they manifestly are) or as functions of, or as participants within contexts, it is obvious that none of these have remained immutable. Context as a property of artifacts is both multiple and transient: while we cannot deny the determining effect of collective representations, in order to become collective these representations must be appropriated, consciously or unconsciously, by particular individuals; and this very process provides for variety and development in and of context: there is always the context of any particular individual, therefore. Artifact, tradition and context can be considered as essentially inter-related variables, each capable of change resulting from individual or social agency; and in turn determine change/transformations in the others.

The constant element here does not lie in discovering the authenticity of this, rather than that, context, or tradition, or whatever, but in that involvement with artifacts that is an inevitable dimension to the human condition. The transformations of and within traditions attest, therefore, not simply to questions of tradition and context, but also to that fundamental property of the human species, the creativity which we can all know and experience, until it is alienated from us; and they attest to our involvement with artifacts which, no less than our involvement with words, is that realisation of our creativity that defines our humanity. Moreover, we should not be surprised at any of this, for 'art has always been a process of reification, a making of

things with an independent and "worldly" existence' (Read 1959, p.280 in the 1974 edition). This is, of course, not to be taken as if artifacts were somehow animate. Their "independence" is a function of our necessity for art.

Postscript II: ars, artis + facere, factum.

I use the words "art" and "artifact" interchangeably, and I know this may worry some people. Susan Vogel in her introduction to *ART/artifact*, (1988), notes that the differentiation is particularly resistant to clarification; but this might be because the question of the difference is the wrong question to ask. Instead, 'let us suppose the idea of art can be expanded to embrace the whole range of man-made things....' (the opening sentence of Kubler, 1962). It may be helpful, therefore, to disentangle certain matters:

1. The words themselves: Latin, ars, artis, skill; plus facere, factum, to make/do. In effect they mean the same thing.
- 2, when we say we are talking about "art", what we mean is that we are talking about artifacts in regard to an interest in their forms and/or an interest in the ideas associated with those forms. The question of whether or not this or that is or is not a work of art is an essential irrelevance.
- 3, The question of whose interests or whose ideas is a matter for clarification and identification, not choice between right or wrong answers.
- 4, The question of whether or not the inhabitants of some other culture have a word or a concept that we can identify as like the idea of art as it developed alongside the ideology of industrial capitalism is a quite separate matter.
- 5, The aesthetic field local to any given culture has to be taken on its own terms.
- 6, What we choose to place within the rubric of aesthesis is another matter altogether.

Chapter Two

THE DEFAMATION OF 'TRADITION' IN THE INVENTION OF 'TRADITIONAL' ART

UKO ATAI

Scholars and researchers in the field of "traditional" human societies in Africa and elsewhere had better beware. Of especial stridency and urgency is this note of caution wherever the scholarly and research efforts intend to glorify and preserve the so-called "Ethnographic Present". John Picton of the London School of Oriental and African Studies' recent and bold paper "On The Invention Of 'Traditional' Art"¹ is timely and most welcome. In a brief but succinct paper, Picton raised fundamental issues about the important and related concepts "tradition", "traditional", "authenticity" and "context" all and more as these relate to the cultural life of and praxis in what is usually glibly referred to as "traditional" Africa.

In African societies generally and the Nigerian society in particular, the notions of "tradition", "traditional" and "culture" in especial evoke, even among certain scholars, rather sacralized attitudes and adherence. Art, therefore, as an expression of a certain notion of "tradition", and wearing as its garb some "traditional" aura that informs its "authenticity" becomes, in this rather strange twentieth-to-twenty-first century "context", a sacred culture-fact..²

Picton's paper is an urbane warning of the social and cultural consequences of a boorish hankering for the "traditional" in art

as well as in life as created and lived out respectively in the rural and urban societies in Africa. Insightful in places, the paper articulates its burden, nonetheless, with an understandable self-consciousness. First, Picton is English. Having lived and worked in Lagos, Nigeria, he knows enough of the sensitivity of the now "independent natives". There is therefore that straining not to strike a patronising tone in his address of an issue that is of supreme sentimental importance to a people with received (i.e. "sacred") notions of both "tradition" and its often dubious derivative. Needless to add here that to compound his need of this sense of caution, the paper was presented in Ile-Ife, the source - as tradition holds it - of all humankind. Second, and of more relevance to the thrust of this paper, Picton defines appropriately the key concepts in his discourse but stops short of exposing and confronting the ideological basis of this institutionalisation of the so-called "traditional" in both the art and the life-rhythms of African peoples generally and the Yoruba specifically. This equally brief paper takes off from Picton's premise, draws on his valid notions of "art", "tradition", "traditional", "authenticity" and "context" but seeks to extend them in regards to their powerful and committed interplay with the related and equally powerful concepts like history, ideology and the cultural nexus of our social ethos.

Let us start then with the received, powerful category, "tradition". Picton notes its roots in the Latin verb, *tradere*, "to hand on/over" (p.5) Raymond Williams³ gives a fuller account of both its Old French (*traditionem*) and Latin (*tradere*) roots, its subsequent developments in its specialized senses from the 14th century to the present. The combined roots of the concept has had four senses: (i) delivery; (ii) handing down knowledge; (iii) passing on a doctrine and (iv) surrender or betrayal. Our modern development of the notion, important and powerful as it has been, is in senses (ii) and (iii) above. In this process, Williams⁴

notes that "there is a very strong and often predominant sense of this entailing *respect* and *duty*" (my emphases). Since the word embodies a particularly difficult and complex "active process", Williams again points out that

the word moves again and again towards *age-old* and towards ceremony, duty and respect.⁵

"Age-old", "ceremony", "duty" and "respect" all collectively and severally convey a certain sense of religious sanctity. There accrues to the word, therefore, a sense of sacrosanctity. But, if the notion implies an active, not static process as Picton observes again and again in his paper, then sense (iv) above - i.e. surrender or betrayal - becomes very crucial in our modern conception of "tradition". Williams concludes:

Considering only how much has been handed down to us, and how various it actually is, this, in its own way, is both *a betrayal* and *a surrender*⁶ (Emphases mine).

We have come to the meat of our argument. Construed as *a given*, static and sacrosanct, "tradition" and "traditional" become rather obscene notions, whether lived out or employed as "inspirational sourcing" for the creative arts and sciences of a people. The tragic consequences of this reactionary and retrogressive notion of the concepts become clear in the related praxis areas of human culture, history, society, politics, economics, philosophy, religion, etc. The invention of "traditional" art (or history, society, politics, philosophy, religion, economics, politics) in the spirit of a static, sacrosanct "tradition" becomes a "defamation" of the active process that is tradition, properly understood.

The split in contemporary consciousness between "art" and "society" is an unfortunate but understandable phenomenon of

the late Euro-American bourgeois world. The ideological motive of this split has not skirted the nascent bourgeois societies - the so-called traditional societies - of Africa, Asia, the Orient and the Americas. Indeed, it can be said that this split, and its ideological foundation, provoke in the nascent African, Asian and Oriental societies the invention of the concept of "traditional" art in these equally "traditional" societies.

This invention must be seen for what its ideological basis is. In a world anxious to catch up with the scientific and technological advancement (minus, of course, the self-inflicted negative aspects of this admirable *cultural* advancement) of the advanced West, a certain ideological need arises to fetishize important cultural forms, notions, concepts and values.⁷ "Tradition" and "traditional" are such endangered concepts!. After all, as Ernst Fischer⁸ reminds us, is the loss of a sense of reality not the hallmark of bourgeois or nascent bourgeois society?

To approach "tradition" and "traditional" as specialized to the work of an African (i.e. Yoruba) theatre artist, for instance, we may not escape thoughts about the *nature* of the work of the theatre artist. In addition, what work of the theatre is, properly speaking, authentic (i.e. *native*) to the African theatre artist? "Native" itself speaks of "nature" and "natural" and the ultimate meaning and implication of this suggestion in reference to an authentic (traditional) theatre as well as the authentic (traditional) artist of authentic (traditional) African theatre become frightening indeed.

Tied to "traditional" - what is handed down from generation to generation - and the respect, veneration, as well as an almost religious duty it solicits, is of course the participating human beings, the "folk", in this act of packaging a form of art (i.e. theatre). This form of art (theatre) deserves our veneration as our duty to it; we must also hand it over to succeeding generations.

This sense of duty which we owe to and veneration which we have for "traditional" theatre which had been packaged by and handed over by preceding generations necessarily operates within a social context, orchestrated by folkways and a folk mind.

The "Folk", as in the German "Volk"⁹ is rather a "poetic" means of referring to people, working, creative and productive agents of history. However, when this same poeticized (i.e. ethereal and abstract) folk are then given the role of makers of "tradition" and of "traditional" art as well as also handing over this "traditional" art, they cannot escape being seen as superstitious (i.e. naive = native = simple-minded). This same folk and their folk mind and folk ways, in essence the seed-bed of "tradition" and "traditional" art (and theatre), could only be expected to cognize and artistically (theatrically) generalize life in simple (i.e. child-like, almost childish) images. In a fervent bid to invent so-called "traditional" art (theatre), we arrive at also inventing the "traditional" artist. From the fore-going, we have legislated folk who, logically speaking, would be incapable of the more abstract thought; folk that, by implication, would be incapable of the specialized and specializing thought-processes of science and technology, philosophy and politics, economics and history, etc. We then have on our hands folk that is time-honoured, static; folk that complement the ideas of "tradition" and customs, habits and ceremonies which, invariably, get tied to some or other sense of religiosity. Finally, such folk become, in the joint sphere of politics and economics, the *objects* for use by the men of politics and not the *subjects* capable of serving themselves in an active and an increasingly conscious manner with politics and economics.

We started this brief sketch by pointing to the ideological expedience in inventing so-called "traditional" art (theatre). It should hopefully be clear by now the meaning, value and socio-cultural implication of such a culture-fact for a society such as ours. This implication becomes clearer - and more frightening -

when we think of the tremendous gap that exists in almost all spheres of human endeavour between us in our "traditional" societies of Africa and the West. All talk, therefore, about our "uniqueness", or "authenticity" or even "naturalness" as Africans becomes an exercise in self-derogation.

Let us conclude then by reaffirming the potential and dynamism of tradition - and any traditional creative (progress-making) endeavour. In any human society, if a meaningful level of culture is to be attained, tradition - and the traditional - cannot but be spiced with the yeast of *betrayal*. Ogun himself had blazed that trail. So, too, Prometheus of the Greeks.

NOTES

1. John Picton's paper was presented at the 1990 International Conference on Yoruba Art, organized by the Department of Fine Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The paper caused a stir among certain academics announcing as it did a crisis of traditional culture, and necessitating the organisation of a subsequent Workshop on the "Crisis of 'Traditional' Culture" on June 25, 1990 at Ife.
2. "Culture-fact": I believe I have not heard of or met in use this coinage before. All the same, I prefer it to "artefact" for the simple reason of its more comprehensive and articulate resonances!
3. See his *Keywords; a Vocabulary of Culture And Society*, Fontana, Great Britain, pp. 268-9
4. *ibid.*, p. 269

5. *ibid.*, p. 269
6. *ibid.*, p. 269
7. For an incisive expose of the specific role which "ideology" plays in social structural adjustment, through the subtle use of sacred notions of "duty", "respect" "tradition", etc., see Istvan Meszaros, *Philosophy, Ideology And Social Science: Essays In Negation And Affirmation*, Weatsheaf Books, Great Britain, 1986. In particular, the Introduction and Ch. 1.
8. *The Necessity of Art*, (trans. Anna Bostock) Penguin Books, England, 1963. Chs. 3 & 5.
9. We rely heavily hereafter on the illuminations provided by a veritable popular theatre theorist, practitioner and critic, the German Bertolt Brecht. See his "The Popular and the Realistic" in David Craig (ed), *Marxists On Literature: An Anthology*, Penguin Books, England, 1975, pp. 421-428.

Chapter Three

THE CONCEPT OF THE 'TRADITIONAL' IN AFRICAN ARCHITECTURE

C.O. OSASONA (MRS)

"Tradition" is defined as "belief, custom, narrative, etc., transmitted by word of mouth from age to age; religious doctrine not recorded in writing, but preserved orally from generation to generation" ¹. The etymological root of the concept is traced to the Latin word "tradere" which means "to hand over". One factor common to all the definitions is the idea of passing something on - an attempt at preserving continuity. Over the years, scholars in various fields - ethnologists, anthropologists and art historians, to name a few - have given their own particular interpretations to the word "traditional". Some of these, either deliberately or otherwise, have been rather prejudicial to the society or culture under study. Elsy Leuzinger (1972, 5, 14, 20), in her book on African art, paints a picture of the African artist being very tradition-conscious: the "ancient tribal traditions" (p.5) of his people influence his artistic creativity to the extent that they are his sole source of inspiration. All that has gone before notwithstanding, the meaning most commonly given to the word "traditional" is that which can be inferred from its colloquial usage: a concept embodying the earliest representative occurrence of a phenomenon within a people's culture, having some semblance of continuity, with which they can readily identify.

The concept of the "traditional" with respect to architecture, can now be addressed. To talk of the traditional architecture of a

people is to refer to that brand of building, characteristic of that particular culture, having its roots in antiquity. Of necessity, such architecture satisfies climatic conditions; more importantly, it satisfies socio-economic requirements translated into the language of space. It could have been the result of the marriage between local building practices and externally-motivated trends, but it nevertheless, gives birth to a typology that produces a relatively homogeneous architecture. It is always characterised by the use of readily-available, inexpensive materials, simple tools, and a high degree of spontaneity in the actual construction process (Rudofsky, 1964, 1).

Closely akin to the concept of the "traditional" in architecture, is that of the "vernacular" - or "folk". (Amos Rapoport defines folk architecture as "the direct and unselfconscious translation into physical form of a culture, its needs and values - as well as the desires, dreams and passions of a people".) In mathematical parlance, one is a subset of the other: as such, what is "traditional" in architecture, is, of necessity, also "vernacular". However, the vernacular need not be strictly "traditional". Vernacular architecture, as a concept, recognises the influence of other cultures, clearly discernible in the modifications and adaptations of the "traditional" model. (Note that this outside influence is quite different from the subtle type referred to earlier with respect to "traditional" architecture, where such interventions are the result of cultural diffusion between social groups already very close - geographically and/or otherwise). Here, the adaptations are quite obvious, with stylistic origins quite distinct, and the exchange is more commonly between peoples of widely divergent cultural backgrounds. The significant phenomenon here is the borrowing and gradual adaptation of certain stylistic features to the traditional archetype, such that a house form emerges which satisfies not only climatic, cultural and economic requirements, but also psychological needs.

With vernacular architecture, this borrowing is usually from a "higher" to a "lower" culture. Thus, in an effort to enhance social mobility, the strictly rudimentary traditional is replaced by the vernacular - a visual testimony to having been exposed to a "superior" culture, as well as a tribute to social "advancement". (Aradeon, 1984, 7.) As such, vernacular architecture bears witness to cross-cultural exchange; it absorbs those aspects of an archetype which enhance socio-cultural interactions and promote social standing, rejecting others deemed unnecessary, or with a potential to alienate. The emergent building type is neither strictly traditional, nor totally stylistically foreign. Rather, it is a blend of the old and the relatively new. Its greatest asset - and hence the secret of its success (borne out by its wide acceptance) - lies in the fact that its evolution involved the local people, the emergent typology being one with which they can readily identify. Expatiating further, Rapoport contends that this folk practice accounts for the bulk of the built environment, and is much more closely related to the culture of the majority, and life as it is really lived, than is the "grand design" tendency, which represents the culture of the elite (Rapoport, 1969, 2).

On the African continent, it is possible to cite various examples of what constitutes vernacular architecture. Here in Nigeria, there is the so-called Brazilian architecture - a type whose deepest roots can be traced to Portugal, popular in big cities like Lagos, Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode and Ilesha. It is characterised by multi-storey construction, the use of columns and curvilinear balconies, and lavish decorative moulding of columns, corners and balusters. An even more widely-accepted version has filtered to some rural areas; the major difference lies in its being more rectilinear, and single-storey (Marafatto, 1983, 25-41). Similarly, our much-celebrated Hausa architecture incorporates features of Arabic origin, such as arches, vaults and mural decoration using geometric motifs. The generally-accepted use of cement plaster as a basic wall finish bears out the influence of

Western colonial forces. In Ghana, among the Ashanti, a house-type centred on a courtyard and rich in the use of both figurative and geometric motifs in finishing facades, is popular. The widely-practised use of corrugated metal sheets to replace the traditional thatch, and the substitution of reinforced concrete for lintels, are concessions made to the impact of colonisation.

Reacting to John Picton's treatise, the following points appear to sum up the thrust of the article:

- i) the word "traditional", as applied specifically to art, often connotes relative primitivity or backwardness;
- ii) culture undergoes continuous change i.e. it is not static;
- iii) as such, the "traditional" cannot be seen as a time-bound phenomenon;
- iv) therefore, what is really "traditional" is what society, in its present stage of development, makes of a particular aspect of its culture.

In support of the last three statements, Leuzinger (1972, 14, 20) states: "An African artist who is capable of concentration and devotion is not hindered by religious pressure and standard forms from varying and enriching his work by his own creative imagination, and from influencing the existing style". Also, "in spite of the strength of tradition and the force of convention, the styles continue their constant process of change".

Going back to Picton, he appears to be advocating for art a context in which the "traditional" can only be properly appraised in the light of transformations taking place *presently*, in a people's culture. In architecture, the proper term to apply to the parallel of this phenomenon is "vernacular", or 'popular folk' i.e. a house-

form that depicts, at any given point in the development of a people's identity, the generally-accommodated influences, and the style of living of the majority. (Perhaps in this we are fortunate, as we can thus safely describe a building practice that is neither strictly "traditional", nor totally modern).

In order to show that it would not be appropriate to use the term "traditional" in referring to the bulk of contemporary building being proliferated all over Africa, some architectural typologies will be analysed. This building practice constitutes, in part, the architectural equivalent of present-day cultural development i.e. it is one of the by-products of current social realities; as such, it would appear to fall in line with Picton's stipulations. It is characterised essentially by concessions to the tropical climate (such as sunshading fins or hoods, favourable orientation for optimum ventilation, and designing for through ventilation), as well as gross cultural anonymity. Thus, it can be conveniently rubber-stamped all over the continent. The product of the "Modern Movement" in architecture (and thus of the "International Style"), it is the brand of building characteristic of our large, commercial or industrial cities, in developing African countries. Such buildings - in terms of morphology, materials and overall form - often do not reflect the cultural content typical of the traditional dwelling. Even where the prospective user is actively involved in drawing up the design brief, the finished product is, at best, personal to him - not something representative of his cultural background. This then, is the contemporary picture, with respect to African architecture.

In Paul Oliver's compilation of various articles dealing with selected African settlements, the distinction between what constitutes "traditional", vernacular and modern architecture, is clearly drawn. Thus, the circular-hut, puddled-mud-and-thatch, organic compounds of the Nabdam can be cited as "traditional" (as no readily-identifiable external influence has tampered with

this typology). The earlier-mentioned courtyard typology of the Ashanti is relatively more widespread in distribution, and is obviously influenced. Nevertheless, it is distinct from the characterless "match-boxes" of Accra, Kumasi and other big towns. As such, it is more representative than either the former or the latter typology, of Ghanaian architecture (Oliver, 1971, 46-57, 153-171). The view of the "traditional" that Picton would have us take, does cover the wicker-work-and-leaf building types of the Chenchu and Sidamo of Ethiopia. Two of many prevailing African traditional styles, these practices are restricted to pockets of rural activity; as such, they are not representative. The main stream of cultural development identifies with architectural typologies that have adjusted to pressures from outside, and are still adjusting i.e. vernacular architecture within the Ethiopian context. In Ralph Mithawanji's contribution (Oliver, 1971, 195), there is an aerial photograph captioned, "An example from Lusaka: urban areas are being built as though the prospective tenants had no differentiated background." This succinctly sums up the realities of contemporary living, all over Africa, in our urban centres, with respect to architecture. The picture shows tiny match-box-like units, rigidly arranged in grid-iron formation. It is true that in our older cities, examples of vernacular architecture exist side by side with such regimented development; however, they serve to relieve some of the monotony and alienation of the urban landscape. In our newly-developed areas of urban settlement, the situation described above is generally the case. Since such developments do not satisfy a people's yearning for cultural continuity (while selectively adapting features from foreign archetypes), they are not representative and cannot be regarded as a proper yardstick to judge their building culture by.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made to define what, in architecture, constitutes the "traditional". The "vernacular" or "folk" has been

described as having its roots in the "traditional", but with the added dimension of conscious, selective borrowing of features from other stylistic groups, such that the resultant archetype represents a house-form the particular society can readily identify with, culturally. While agreeing with the main points of John Picton's paper, I would like to submit that the concept of the "traditional" in African architecture might not be the direct equivalent to that in art - as ably expounded by him. Rather, I would like to suggest that, with respect to architecture, the concept of the "vernacular" (or 'folk') would correspond more appropriately, to the phenomenon he describes.

NOTES

1. *Collins Shorter English Dictionary*

2. *Ibid*

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Chapter Four

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CULTURE IN CRISIS - THE QUESTION OF NOMENCLATURE

E.O. BABALOLA

Introduction

It is to be understood from the beginning that religion in Africa is as old as time. It an important cultural practise which has refused to die despite the incursion of Islam, Christianity and other forces of social change. Since no religion is static, it is known to grow and as it interacts with other religions, it compares favourably with them.

To several observers, African religions is aged and archaic and should be thrown away into the dustbin for one reason or the other. However, to an insider and to the scholars of African religions, the sacred and transcendental is a force to be reckoned with despite the opprobrious² terminologies that have been given to the religion by Western anthropologists and sociologists respectively.

The Problem And Its Setting

It is important to note that foreign observers and scholars in their adventure had actually played down on the religion and culture of the African society. An important citation in this connection is in the works of John Picton:

The European and American engagement with African Art has taken many forms. One and perhaps the most pernicious for its very innocence, has been the invention of "traditional art"³

From the foregoing, art and other aspects of African culture did not enter the book of the foreign anthropologists. The problem associated with African culture actually began with the foreign researchers and since then it has trickled down to the present century. Up till now, scholars that are not in the field of African religions tend to follow the same line with the foreign anthropologists. But thanks to the contemporary scholars⁴ of religion in Africa, a new wave in the study of the discipline is known to have begun.

Scope And Focus

The scope of this paper is limited to Yoruba religion and culture. Since no religion is static, the forces of Islam and Christianity are also considered by the author. However, specific references are made to religion and art as a discipline. In essence the author sets out to examine critically the correct meaning of the word "traditional"

Methodology

The author of this paper has adopted the phenomenological approach by conducting some field work. This enables our readers to understand the response of the Yoruba society to some important religious phenomena.

Definitions And Explanation:

It is important to attempt a clarification of some terms that may

come up from time to time in this paper. These two words are "traditional" and "indigenous". Traditional is from Latin word *trado* which means "handover". Thus "traditional" has the meaning of something being handed over from generation to generation.

Another word which is necessary to be examined is the term "indigenous religion". In the first place, it refers to the autochthonous religious practises.

A thorough consideration of the term 'indigenous religion' shows that the term is appropriate since the word "indigenous" means something arising from the soil, it means something native to the soil, that is something that has been with the people from the beginning.

From the foregoing Islam and Christianity are not indigenous. They are extended religions because they come from outside the continent.

Aim and Purposes

The aim and purpose of this paper is to discuss the problems of nomenclature for the religions of Africa since the term African traditional religion is not doing justice to the religion of the people. Which term shall we then adopt? If other religions are traditional, there is then nothing new in calling the religion of the Africans "traditional". For how long shall we continue to accept the terminology of 'African traditional religion and culture' even when the *traditional* culture is able to compete favourably with the forces of modernity and social change? Is it even right to adopt the term 'traditional' when even some aspect of the Yoruba religion and culture are better (for the indigenes) than the alienating forces of modernity and Westernisation? An important question to raise is that why have the forces of modernity

unable to eliminate the 'traditional' force?⁵ All these questions shall be attempted in this paper and finally the author shall attempt some analysis of the continuity and the discontinuity of African indigenous religions on African soil.

The Traditional Nature of African Indigenous Religion Vis-a-vis Other Religions

As explained above, there is nothing new about the term "traditional" since almost every religion has its own *traditional* nature. African religion has its own traditions, customs and beliefs that are being handed over from generation to generation. In a nutshell, African religion is traditional while Christianity and Islam are traditional. Since there are Christian and Muslim evangelists that are responsible for the expansion of these religions respectively.

An important thing to emphasise is that the concept "traditional" associated with African religion is being understood negatively by some scholars whereas the "traditional" associated with Islam and Christianity is never questioned by anybody since these latter religions are assumed to be new. The point the author is making is that these adopted religions are regarded as *traditional* where they emanate from, though they are relatively new in Africa.

Religion and "Traditional Art"

We are to understand that the word "traditional" should not be misunderstood. Many scholars have misunderstood this terminology. They see it as something that should be done away with in the light of modernity and secularity⁶. The intention of this author is to argue against such a thesis.

With particular reference to religion, African art is functional expressing some activities in the society. If it is so, it should not

be despised but should be understood as an instrument of functionality. This type of functionality in connection with African arts is expressed below:

Thus many African art forms will be better understood once it is appreciated that, more than works of art, they allow men to enter into contact with the supernatural beings and mystical forms of different kinds in order to appeal to their kindness or appease their wrath.⁷

It is to be reiterated that science and technology are impotent in dealing with supernatural beings and mystical forces. This is the specialisation of religion. Concrete religious artefacts have been preserved for this purpose, including not only sculptural arts, but also painting and the *egungun* phenomenon among the Yoruba. Many beautiful decorations are displayed on the *egungun* and these convey some socio-religious messages to the society⁸. In a nutshell, if art in Africa performs the foregoing activities, then it becomes evident that it should not be viewed as an obsolete phenomenon.

Traditional Healing in Yorubaland.

Today, when traditional healing or medicine is mentioned in the society, people tend to despise it. The major reason for this is the noninvolvement of science and technology as known in the West in its preparation⁹. That apart, the way African medicine is dispensed is not 'orthodox'. Thus these cultural therapies have been underplayed. However, to a careful observer, African medicine thrives and should not be discarded. According to Professor Lambo, African medicine is superior to other forms, particularly, in psychiatry.

Only one out of the five different ways by which man is afflicted with diseases is known to modern medicine, the rest are known to traditional practitioners¹⁰

Lambo further submitted that even Bishops and Imams do visit the *babalawo* secretly to receive healing:

This has been responsible for the search by many Nigerians for cure from traditional healers including Bishops and Imams who do so secretly¹¹

At this juncture, we must understand that the religio-spiritual dimension of healing is very important in Africa. The total world view must be considered. Healing to the African society is not taken in the face value. The cultic functionaries have to ensure that there is a sort of wholesomeness in the system of health - i.e. there should be an harmonious relationship with all the beings with whom man is linked: God, the deities, the spirits, people, animals and plants. The disintegrated relationship between man and these items are known to be responsible for ill health. In this direction, modern scientific medicine is not important and hence Lambo remarked:

Modern doctors were only conscious of physical ways of disease affliction and were ignorant of the occult, metaphysical, astral and esoteric ways of affliction. A disease caused via occult, could not be diagnosed by X-ray and thus made cure impossible through modern approach¹².

This explains why many Africans are not satisfied with modern medicine. Most Africans recognise the efficacy of modern

medicine. However, very many would simultaneously take treatments from a doctor and a medicineman with indigenous training.

The doctor they would argue, heals the bodily illness, which is only a symptom of the deep mysticospiritual disturbance. Only the non-orthodox healer can handle the metaphysical aspect, which if left unattended to, is only postponing, the re-occurrence of the sickness. In other words, modern medicine tries to heal the body while indigenous medicine tries to "make whole". In the light of the foregoing, African healing has become an inexplicable seed of immortality in the community

Divination and Yoruba Practices

Divination as an aspect of African religion calls for consideration in this paper. For the purpose of this paper, it is enough to define divination as:-

... a means by which divine will and directives are ascertained. It is also a guide as to how to approach the divine and the problems of life¹³

The application of the above in the face of modernity becomes relevant. Much has been said about African healing in this work. It remains for the author to add that without divination, complex ailment will remain incurable. When ailments are of the mystical nature, it is the belief of the people that no amount of radiology, radiography or radioscopy could solve the problem. This is where the role of divination becomes important.

The religious factor in the Yoruba economy is a very important issue. Deities, spirits and ancestors all have important roles to play in the economy of the people. When embarking upon an

economic project, the Yoruba will not simply dabble into it. Ifa must be consulted. This economic role of Ifa is expressed in the sentences below:

*Ifa teju mo mi ki o wo mi re
Bi o ba teju mo ni laa lowo lowo
Bi o ba teju mo ni laa rire*¹⁴

Ifa fix your eyes upon me and look at me well. It is when you fix your eyes upon a person that he is rich. It is when you fix your eyes upon a person that he prospers.

In Yoruba economy, indigenous religion and Ifa in particular is essential and catalytic. Modern practices have not satisfactorily replaced or displaced the indigenous approaches.

The place of divination in the administrative system of the Yoruba is cogent and compelling. Professor Idowu has this to say:

It seems absolutely impossible for a Yoruba whose soul is still fettered to his traditional belief to attempt anything at all without consulting the oracle by Ifa... Before a king is appointed, before a chief is made, before anyone is appointed to a civic office. Ifa is consulted for guidance and assurance¹⁵.

With particular reference to Ifa and the installation of a new Oba into office, Fadipe puts it in this form:

At the time a new king is to be elected in place of a dead one, it is the priest of Ifa who has to be consulted in order to determine not only which of the royal houses shall supply

the new king but also to know the person who shall be the new king in the house¹⁶

From the submission above, Ifa is seen as a force to be reckoned with despite the invasion of the forces of social change in the society.

“Traditionality” Versus “Modernity” in the 20th Century.

This is an important issue since it uncovers the continuity of African indigenous practices. The indigenous type does not only belong to the medieval period, its importance is felt in the present century. Despite the advancement of science and technology one would have thought that the indigenous religion would have been wiped out completely. This is not so. It is a living phenomenon. The reason for its continuity is that science and technology are not able to solve all human problems. Matters dealing with spirits, psyches and metaphysics belong to the domain of religion. The African people and their worldview emphasize the existence of spirits, deities, witchcraft and sorcery. This is not the specialisation of science and technology, but the domain of the indigenous rites.

Furthermore, it should be observed that African indigenous religions encourage the use of magic and ritualistic therapies. Magical practices are still applied to the present day problems and contemporary challenges. The observation of Awolalu and Dopamu is important in this regard:

Magical practices are still applied to new circumstances. For example, magical objects of all kinds are sold all over the place. People can still be seen wearing magical objects, hanging them in their stalls, or burying them in their homes. Thus, magic

and medicine are used side by side with Biblical and Quranic texts for protection and security¹⁷

The continuity of African indigenous religion is further expressed by Awolalu and Dopamu thus:

Many people still resort to the traditional religion in times of crisis. When all is well, they follow the new religions with gusto; but let there be any problem or crisis, people forget all about the new religions which they believe cannot give them the much needed protection and they seek after the diviners or magicians, whom they now believe can give them guidance¹⁸

The reasons why modernity has not been able to wipe out divination among the people of Nigeria and Africa at large have also been analysed by Ikenga-Metuh in his work:

The problems referred to the diviners and *dibia* have multiplied. They are no longer limited to the traditional problems of birth, health, protection, prosperity and misfortunes. They now include the problems arising from the tensions of urban life - unemployment, competition for promotions, admission into institutions of learning, success in examinations, love affairs, sports lotteries, etc. Thus, divination, fortune telling and medicine making services have grown into the large business far beyond the limits of their traditional roles. They now

flourish in the supposedly more Christianized urban areas, where the pressures of modern life create more crisis situations.¹⁹

Concluding Remarks

The paper so far has been considering the critical problem of nomenclature in African religion and culture. The nature of these indigenous approaches *visa-a-vis* other religions has been examined. A case in point is that there is an element of "traditionality" in all religions be it Islam, Christianity or African indigenous religion. Here the "traditionality" is projected as a factor of temporality, whereby the major norms of each religion is being circulated from one generation to another. Here, "traditionality" is not presented as an archaic phenomenon, with negative and pejorative valuation.

With particular reference to art, it is noticed that that the works of art found among the *egungun* in particular, allow men to enter into contact with the supernatural. Science and technology cannot do this. In addition we have observed that modern medicine is even relatively impotent in dealing with ailments that are mystical in nature. If the non-orthodox medicine could perform what modern medicine is incapable of achieving in terms of healing, it then means that the 'traditionality' of African religion and culture does not imply backwardness as some earliest anthropologists and sociologists have viewed the phenomenon.

Apart from the above, the author has also uncovered the relevance of African indigenous religion and culture for the socio-economic activities of the Yoruba. Marriage, installation of chiefs and kings, and the adventure into a new economic project require the intervention of divination which is an important aspect of religion in Africa

The views of seasoned scholars such as Lambo, Dopamu, Awolalu and Ikenga-Metuh have been adopted and most of these scholars have proved beyond reasonable doubt that traditionality does not imply irrationality and crudity. Some of these studies have even indicated that some aspects of medicine and socio-economic activities could not thrive properly without the application of African indigenous methods.

It is therefore the submission of the author that the word "traditional" had been irrelevantly mishandled and misrepresented and therefore should be removed from the vocabulary of religion and religious activities particularly with reference to Africa. To buttress the recommendation of the author, another vocabulary could be substituted. In a nutshell, instead of referring to the religion as 'Traditional', it could be referred to as 'Indigenous' to reflect the autochthonous identity which informs these ancient rituals.

NOTES

1. Interview with Chief S.O. Saka, an indigenous Chief and diviner at Owo on 20/5/90. He is aged 65. This submission is also confirmed by the Yoruba saying stated below.

Ile la ba 'fa

Ile la ba mole

Osan gangan nigbagbo wole de

We met Ifa at home

We met divinities at home,

but Christianity arrived late in the day.

- See also E.O. Babalola, "The interaction of Islam and Christianity in Akoko, Yorubaland", *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, X Viii/2 December, 1986, p.93.
2. Apart from the term "traditional" which had been misunderstood, other obnoxious labels are "the withdrawn god", "polytheism" "Idolatry" etc. For details see J.O. Awolalu and P.A. Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion*, Onibonoje Press, 1979, pp.11-26.
 3. See John Picton, "On the Invention of Traditional Art",
 4. These scholars include J.O. Awolalu, P.A. Dopamu, Ikenga-Metuh, etc.
 5. Today, it is noticed that modernity is unable to conquer the indigenous religion. This is as a result of the inexplicable seed of immortality which African religion has planted on African Soil.
 6. See J.O. Awolalu and P.A. Dopamu, *op.cit.*
 7. See Ikenga-Metuh, *African Religion in Western Conceptual Schemes: The Problem of Interpretation*, Claveriances Press, 1985, p.2.
 8. See *Ibid.* , pp.1-19
 9. Interview with Chief S.A. Arajulu, a traditional bone setter at Owo on 15/5/90. He is aged 70.
 10. See *Nigerian Tribune*, Monday, 28, July 1986, p.16.
 11. See *Ibid.*

12. See *Ibid.*
13. See J.O. Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (London, Longmans, 1979), p. 121.
14. This uncovers the economic impact of divination. See E.B. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (Longmans, London, 1966), p.78
15. See *Ibid.*, pp.77-78.
16. N.A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba* (Ibadan University Press, 1970), p.269
17. See J.O. Awolalu and P.A. Dopamu, *op.cit.*, p.283
18. See *Ibid.*, p.283
19. Emefie, Ikenga-Metuh, *op.cit.* p.167

Chapter Five

TRADITION AND THE 'TRADITIONAL' IN THE AFRICAN NOVEL

CHIMA ANYADIKE

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis, they anxiously conjure up spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them, names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language¹.

Karl Marx's view of the cardinal role of the "traditional" in the revolutionary transformations of societies, provides the moving spirit behind this paper, which seeks to show that if there is no "traditional" African novel, traditional African cultures nevertheless play crucial roles in the transformations of the novel genre of literature in Africa in our time. John Picton² has

pointed out that the danger in categorising "perhaps arbitrarily, some particular development as 'traditional'" and writing others off because they seem to be not 'traditional' is that one thereby not only "writes off African responses to change, whether aesthetic or practical" but also "writes off the desires of people in Africa to be part of the same century as anyone else". That is why we agree with his view that "the transformations of and within traditions are not at variance with tradition: rather, particular traditions enable particular forms of artistry and thereby particularly forms of development". Picton is also of the view that "artifact, tradition and context can be considered as essentially inter-related variables, each capable of change, resulting from individual or social agency; and in turn determining change/transformation in the others". All these lead him to the important observation that

The transformations of and within traditions attest therefore, not simply to questions of tradition and context, but also to that fundamental property of the human species, the creativity which we can all know and experience, until it is alienated from us, and they attest to our involvement with artifacts which, no less than our involvement with words, is that realisation of our creativity that defines our humanity³.

It is on the foregoing observations of Marx and Picton that we would like, using the instance of the African novel, to build our proposition that tradition does not stop at one point to allow modernity, or an alien culture to begin, except in cases where whole cultures are either forcibly wiped out by an invading culture or suddenly rendered incapable of sustaining the meaningful contemporary existence of their peoples. Put in other words, tradition, artifacts and context, to use Picton's terms, not being static, generate and absorb change as they interact with one

another and the kinds of foreign intrusions with which they can cope. Where the foreign forces become overpowering and provide a suffocating context, tradition and artifact may go under only to re-emerge in different ways, in other contexts. In this sense, the word "traditional" can only have the historic significance of referring to those cultural features that are now more or less dormant whereas 'tradition' is the total picture of how cultural artifacts have continued to undergo processes of transformation in "time-honoured disguise" and "borrowed language".

And now to the African novel: it is important to state that the novel form is not indigenous or traditional to Africa. For, if we are able to demonstrate that the tradition of literature, common to all cultures, has, among other literary traditions in African cultures, begun to manifest itself in contemporary times, in a unique tradition of the African novel, then our point would have been made. In other words, the fact that we do not have 'traditional' African novels do not stop us from having a tradition of the African novel anymore than the fact of not having the traditional counterparts of the instruments of a modern musical ensemble stops us from having traditions of "high life" or "juju" music made possible by these instruments. Let us take as our first example that form of the novel usually described as the epic and which may also take on the form of the historical novel. Ayi Kwei Armah, in *Two Thousand Seasons*⁴ Yambo Ouloguem in *Bound to Violence*⁵ and Sembene Ousmane in *God's Bits of Wood*⁶ or Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Petals of Blood*⁷, give us three different but in important ways, essentially African instances of this novel genre that entitle us to at least begin discussions on a tradition of the African epic/historical novel. Together, they bring to this genre, the aesthetics of struggle by ordinary men and women in the context of oppression and exploitation, thus transforming our familiar notions not only of epic heroes but also the very purpose of epics.

The point is that the tradition of story telling in Africa has absorbed and is transforming the epic novel form to meet its own contemporary need. And if it is admitted that the most urgent need of Africa today is the true decolonization of Africa in order to set it on the path of true economic and spiritual development, it becomes clear why today, this novel form in Africa reflects that need. In *Two Thousand Seasons* we encounter a vast temporal itinerary, epic struggles of a people, a grandeur of themes and the sublimity of language which all characterize epic novels. Yet these are put in the service of the redemptive or revolutionary philosophy of "the way", the organizing principles of which are "remembrance", "connectedness", "reciprocity" and "return". The epic hero becomes, not one great leader, but the people of the way, as represented by the collective voice of Anoa, Isanusi and the twenty revolutionaries. Realism is redefined to include the past and the future. In other words, both characterization and the narrative strategies transform the would be epic novel in accordance with the perceived needs of the contemporary and future peoples of the way. In this way, both context and artifact change within the tradition of story telling in order to determine a new direction for the tradition. Above all, the ends of creativity are met, namely, that new and adequate albeit fictional responses are fashioned to meet new situations on an on going basis.

In a different way, but also in epic proportions, Yambo Ouloguem transforms the griot story telling tradition in *Bound to Violence* in order to perform his iconoclastic duty to that tradition and lay bare its other side which has been instrumental to the centuries long subjugation of African peoples by all manners of perverted leadership, whether of African or non-African origins. What we witness here therefore, is the complete reversal of the conventional epic purpose as plot structure, characterization and language are powerfully deployed, not to depict epic victory over obstacles but to show how mindless and incessant power struggles, corruption and selfish exploitation of the common people of Africa

by pretenders to power, ensure the perennial failure of Africans to rise above unproductive violence. Tradition is turned against itself within the relatively same context that Armah deals with, to produce a new artifact that in turn, seeks to inaugurate a new direction for the reversed tradition. Supernatural agencies which are deployed in conventional epics to ensure victory are in these novels cut out as these new epics concentrate on human foibles and mindless pursuit of power and wealth.

The epic qualities are used in the most positive way to transform the story telling tradition in *God's Bits of Wood* and *Petals of Blood* because of the basic faith of their authors in the power of the people, when properly organised, to rise up successfully against oppression. In this respect, they share the same aesthetics of struggle with *Two Thousand Seasons*. With the focus shifted to the creation of new contexts, tradition and artifact become means to an end and moreover, a means constantly in need of critical examination for usefulness and relevance. As Karega puts it in *Petals of Blood*:

... I mean we must not preserve our past as a museum; rather, we must study it critically, without illusions, and see what lessons we can draw from it in today's battle field of the future and the present....I don't want to continue worshipping in the temples of a past without tarmac roads, without electric cookers, a world dominated by slavery to nature. (p. 323)

Put differently, we first have to use the present context to decide the context we want created, and this in turn, will determine what from tradition and artifact are useful, so that in using them, not only are tradition and artifacts transformed by the chosen context, but more importantly, the envisaged context will be in

the making. It is therefore clear why the envisaged African future as proposed by these authors necessitated an epic novel form that was in turn determined by the unique African context: massive corruption of values leading to massive poverty and underdevelopment of African societies. If the epic form celebrated heroic leadership and a people's victories in other cultures, in African cultures it must be made to satirise inept and mindless leadership while it suggests the kind of struggles that will create better African societies.

Chinua Achebe occupies a paramount and unique position in that effort to create an authentic African tradition. His understanding of the nature of the struggle for the liberation of Africa is firmly rooted in the belief that any people that ceases to believe in itself and accepts an inferior status for its total culture, cannot refuse to be imposed upon by other self confident cultures. His whole life work is therefore devoted to demonstrating that the African peoples, with all the pitfalls of their cultures brought about by forces both from within and without, can come to their own only if they learn from the many past decades of self-denigration. He therefore brings to the realistic novel tradition in Africa, a distinctive tone of self-affirmation. And because Achebe believes that the finest examples of prose occur, in his tradition, not in folktales, legends, proverbs and riddles, these being more or less cast in rigid moulds, but in the higher creative order of oratory and good conversation⁸, it is not surprising that it is these categories of prose fiction which best exemplify this tone of self-affirmation in his novels. A good orator or conversationalist creatively deploys for great effects, the more rigid forms of prose to create new contexts, challenge or support existing ones, and in the process, show up the values and aspirations of his people as they affect his own life among them. It is instructive that the best of these come not from the tragic heroes of these novels, who are normally pushed by the powers of event beyond the point of balance, but from elders and close observers of these events.

Two examples will do as illustrations of Achebe's achievement in this area of using the African form of oratory to transform the novel form. After Okonkwo and five other elders of the Umuofia clan have been released from prison towards the end of *Things Fall Apart*, a meeting of the clan was summoned to deliberate on recent happenings which portend a great danger for the clan. Oguéfi Okika makes an impassioned speech which beautifully captures the moment and may have led to Okonkwo's desired action if Okonkwo himself had been more patient:

'You all know why we are here, when we ought to be building our barns or mending our huts, when we should be putting our compounds in order. My father used to say to me "wherever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then know that something is after its life". When I saw you all pouring into this meeting from all the quarters of our clan so early in the morning, I knew that something was after our life'. He paused for a brief moment and then began again:

'All our gods are weeping. Idemili is weeping. Ogwugwu is weeping, Agbala is weeping and all the others. Our dead fathers are weeping because of the shameful sacrilege they are suffering and the abomination we have all seen with our eyes' He stopped again to steady his trembling voice 'This is a great gathering. No clan can boast of greater numbers or greater valour. But are we all here? I ask you: Are all the sons of Umuofia with us here?' A deep murmur swept through the crowd.

'They are not' he said. 'They have broken the clan and gone their several ways. We who are here this morning have remained true to our fathers, but our brothers have deserted us and joined a stranger to soil their fatherland. If we fight the stranger we shall hit our brothers and perhaps shed the blood of a clansman. But we must do it. Our fathers never dreamt of such a thing, they never killed their brothers. But a white man never came to them. So we must do what our fathers would never have done. Encke the bird was asked why he was always on the wing and he replied "Men have learnt to shoot without missing their mark and I have learnt to fly without perching on a twig". We must root out this evil. And if our brothers take the side of the evil we must root them out too. And we must do it NOW. We must bale this water now that it is only ankle-deep....' pp 143-4

This passage is not only one good example of how oratory, in the hands of Achebe, gives a distinctive flavour to language use in the African novel; more importantly, it shows how traditional forms like proverbs, maxims and aphorisms combined with progression of argument, rhetorical questions, etc can be used to create new contexts and values in the face of new situations. But above all, can any one perceive in the above speech, any form of alienation, apology, self-doubt, equivocation or ambiguity?

Let us take another example. I refer to that long speech by the bearded old man leading the delegation from Abazon in *Anthills of the Savannah*¹⁰. It is too long to be reproduced here, but its general import is to the effect that the most important part of any

the novel it is transformed by a living African tradition. During the trial of Diara, the traitor, in Bamako, the people had gathered and given evidence before a jury, giving in the process, suggestions for punishment. These include death, flogging etc. Now listen to parts of Fa Keita's address to the tribunal and the people gathered, which carried the day:

... We all wanted the strike, we voted for it and Diara voted with us. But then Diara went back to work. You say that he is a traitor, and perhaps you are right. If we are all to win, then we should live as brothers, and no one should go back unless his brothers do. I have heard you calling for punishment, but I know that you will not kill Diara. Not because some of you should not have the courage or the will, but because others would not let you do it and I would be the first of them. If you imitate the hirelings of your masters, you will become like them, hirelings and barbarians. For godly men, it is a sacrilege to kill and I pray that God will forbid such a thought to take root in your minds.

You have spoken also of flogging, of beating Diara. The child who is seated beside me is punished that way very seldom, although my father beat me often and the same thing is probably true of most of you. But blows correct nothing. As for Diara, you have already beaten him - you have struck him where every human worthy of the name is most vulnerable. You have shamed him before his friends and before

the world and in doing that, you have hurt him far more than you could by bodily punishment. I cannot know what tomorrow will bring but in seeing this man before me I do not think that there is one among us who will be tempted to follow in his footsteps.....

And Now... Diara lift up your head. You have been the instrument of destiny here - it was not you who was on trial; it was the owners of the machines. Thanks to you, no one of us now will give up the fight.

Fortunately for the people, there is no Okonkwo among them, so that they listened to the old man and unanimously agreed to leave Diara and his family to live in shame afterwards, while they went on more determined to win a victory over their enemies. It is important to notice in the old man's speech, a readiness to reinterpret tradition and accept changes while at the same time remaining within the traditional framework. It is no surprise then that the African communities of the Dakar-Niger rail-line come out of that experience victorious, and with a stronger sense of who they are and how their destinies are in their hands.

We have therefore tried to establish in this paper, that the 'traditional' is being actively used by African novelists to create a tradition of the African novel. But we hope we have also shown that that tradition will continue to grow and respond to the historical givens and imperatives in the way that sensitive African minds perceive them and their far-reaching consequences for the development of the mind of man in Africa. It follows therefore that the African novel must be studied for the ways African history compels it to emphasize different values at different times - social justice, freedom from oppression, individual fulfilment etc, at different times as it also develops forms

of great literariness that best exemplify these values.

NOTES

- Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Century Brumaire of Louis Bournapate*, Moscow, Progress Publishers 1907 p. 11.
- John Picton, "On the Invention of traditional Art" Paper presented to the 1990 International Conference on Yoruba Art, Obafemi Awolowo University April 23-29, 1990.
- Ibid p.7.
- Ayi Kwe Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons* Nairobi. East African Publishing House, 1973.
- Yambo Ouloguem, *Bound to violence*, London, Heinemann, 1908.
- Ousmane Sembene, *Gods Bits of Wood*, London Heinemann, 1970.
- Ngugi wa Thiongo *Petal, of Blood*, London Heinemann, 1977.
- See Foreword in
- W.H. Whiteley (ed) *A Selection of African Prose 1* London, OUP. 1964 p.vi.

- Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, London, Heinemann 1965.
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Chapter Six

THE TRIAL OF 'TRADITIONAL' ART THE BIRD SYMBOLISM IN CONTEMPORARY YORUBA PAINTING

BOLAJI CAMPBELL

The John Picton paper 'On the invention of traditional art' has generated many controversies. It questions the terminologies found in current usage, and provides useful insights into the problem of definition confronting researchers in the field of African art scholarship in recent time. Useful as his observations may be for a cautionary categorisation of African art of colonial era, it provides room for explorative engagement for the sensitive researcher.

Unlike Eliot,² Picton is not essentially interested in the significance of the 'historical sense' which Eliot regards as uninheritable. However, Eliot recognises the crucial importance which the admixtures of this sense of the 'timeless' and 'temporal' can produce in any creative individual - that which makes one 'traditional'. This 'historical sense' in essence is borne out in the Yoruba axiom: *e je ka a se bi won ti n se, ki o le ri bi o ti n ri.* Interestingly this provides what may be regarded as the index to the almost rigid or strict adherence to tradition in the visual arts of the Yoruba. Yet the paradox in Eliot's thesis lies in his admonition '... If tradition consisted of a blind or timid adherence to the successes of the historical past, then tradition must be discouraged ...'. Perhaps, herein lies his choice and preference for individual talent or individual creativity, which in

an attempt to break with the past is conscious of and contains elements of the historical past it is breaking away from. In the same vein, Adedeji,⁴ reminds us that '... creativity is a conscious and organised design which results in change in the way of doing things - an innovation which results from an intelligent and intelligible relationship with ones environment'.

African art and culture has unfortunately been bedeviled with many abuses by some Western scholars who sometimes out of ethnocentric bias reveal too easily their ignorance of the art and people they claim to understand most intimately. All too frequently we hear of certain terminologies adopted today only to be discarded tomorrow. 'Primitive', 'tribal', 'black', 'curiosities' and quite recently 'classical' are controversial terminologies which have lately found their way into the vocabulary of African art scholarship. As Brain has rightly advocated, systematic and cautionary approach should be adopted in the dealings with categorisation of African art. That even 'classical' with its seemingly salutary intentions is a highly convenient term, which has several meanings in general use⁵. So traditional presently on trial, can equally be garbed in several cloaks depending essentially on usage, time, place and historical antecedents. It is in this regard that one sees the Pictonic proposal as most timely and crucial. It therefore calls for reassessment and re-examination of our contextual analysis and engagement with African art in general.

Of primary importance to this writer is the definitional base of certain terminologies that will recur throughout the length of this paper. These definitions shall be used as tools with which to buttress our argument and position concerning 'traditional'. Therefore if tradition is '... then passing down of elements of culture from one generation to the other', then 'traditional' is that which pertains to, or in accord with tradition⁶. We shall look at 'traditional' in this paper in terms of that which is indigenous,

peculiar and pertaining essentially to a particular culture, and in this respect the Yoruba culture we are familiar with. Very quickly we shall examine the antithesis of traditional, which is contemporary in light of our line of argument in order to establish the fallacy inherent in the previous position concerning contemporary. 'Contemporary' in the visual arts is often erroneously used almost exclusively in relation to and in reference with works executed in the European idiom and style. Yet the 'freeze-dry' approach and sometimes outright ridicule in which those executed in the 'traditional' manner is held without any regard to their contemporaneity with the alien ones only shows the bias and the inadequacy of our categorisation of African art generally. Sometimes we conveniently ignore the changes affecting the 'traditional' ones in favour of those we regard as modern. Very rarely do we take into consideration or remember that, that which is modern today too soon becomes antiquated tomorrow. In the same vein, the Osogbo art which forms part of the focus of this analysis has equally elicited vehement criticism and branded "an extension of German Expressionism", in spite of their apparent Yoruba provenance, subject matter and authorship.

Picton's observations are not in themselves infallible. The two main issues which shall presently engage our attention are:

- (i) questioning the validity of the term 'traditional' with respects to works created during the colonial period, and
- (ii) the illustration of Tutuola's Palm Wine Drinkard by Twin Seven even which he says looks nothing like the precolonial visual tradition of the Yoruba people"

We shall attempt to examine those elements of continuities and similarities which have characterised Yoruba painting tradition, executed in both modern and traditional idioms. We shall regard influences of the material culture not only as the dominant stimuli

but also as the mode and standard upon which the art created within the colonial period must have been anchored. We shall presently see how this art could not have existed in isolation of and devoid of its historical past.

Down to the pre-historic times, man has often been fascinated by his environment and the corpus of images produced by him have largely been reflective, influenced and dependent on this. The pre-historic ancestors of man in the Sahara, visually documented some 8,000 years ago crucial episodes of their various exploits, styles and manner of living in the desert. Today legacies of the astounding frescos they left behind are 'pointers' to the level of sophistication of the culture that once thrived in that part of the world. Shocking realistic images of Bison, Giraffe, Camel, Hippopotamus and several other animals that once roamed freely on the terrains of the Tassili are historical evidence that once in the distant past, the Sahara was home to these animals. Today, people no longer dwell in caves. The facade of their living apartments also provide a readily available canvas on which people record the diversity of human encounters with the force of nature. Regrettably this tradition is fast becoming extinct. What obtains today is the confinement of such experience to ancestral shrines devoted to the worship of culture heroes, and in recent times such experiences are increasingly recorded on portable canvases.

At this stage we shall examine one of the dominant motifs found prevalent in the corpus of Yoruba art in general. The bird icon is one of the most persistent and favourite motifs of Yoruba verbal and visual arts. Several allegories, proverbs, and folktales recount and extol the virtue of the bird. Yet the symbolism of the bird is controversial even within Yoruba culture itself. While the bird is regarded as the 'divine and vital power: *ase* of Orunmila' (a positive attribute), on the other other hand it is also regarded as the sign of *Eleye* - symbol of witches in Yoruba culture -

(definitely a negation of the former).

But our investigation shows that various artists male and female whether drawing inspiration or patronage from city-dwellers or traditional institutions, use the bird motif for various reasons, aesthetic consideration being the most paramount.

The image of the bird is mesmerising, arresting and most engaging. It is the potential harbinger of good and ill omen. Perhaps examination of the attributes of a few of these birds amply demonstrate the significant import of their role in Yoruba culture.

Akala/Gunugun/Igun (the vulture) is regarded as a sacred bird in many ways. It is wisdom, old age and long life personified. A popular Yoruba song attests to this:

... *Gunugun ii ku lewe dan dan,
a ka sa i d'arugbo dan dan ...*

The Vulture is related by folk etiology to the three Yoruba royal houses.¹⁰ Indeed on this account it is considered king of all birds. Ifa literature lends credence to this assertion on the enthronement of the vulture in the comity of birds¹¹. Perhaps it is on this score that a Yoruba maxim holds that no one kills, eats or offers vulture in sacrifice:

*A ki i pagun
A ki i jegun
A ki i figun bo ri.*

The vulture is the consumer of sacrifices. It is believed that the sacrifice the vulture ignores has not been found acceptable. Indeed, Ifa literature states that it was only the vulture that could

effectively transport the sacrifice of appeasement by *Oba-ajalaye* to *Oba-ajaloron*, when a truce was being called after many years of want, hunger and pestilence occasioned by their disagreement.¹²

Representing a distinct antithesis to the attributes of the vulture is the hoopoe *agbigbo* which features prominently in Yoruba folk stories. Though endowed with a brilliant plumage, *agbigbo* represents the principle of unfaithfulness, deceit, strife, doom and "the negation of the strict sanctions of Ifa divination system".¹³ Usually like *Esu*, *Agbigbo* is often placated. Some folk songs regard him as *alade ori igi*: The king who makes the tree top its abode.

Okin, *Oburo*, *Ayekoto* and *Eyele*¹⁴ are among many other equally important birds which occupy symbolic positions in Yoruba cosmology. *Okin* is regarded as the King of Birds: *Okin loba eye*, on account of its association with royalty and beauty. Yet its beauty is never highly regarded because it is thought arrogant. Absolute beauty is a virtue that is usually not desired by the Yoruba. Instead Yorubas often strive for intrinsic beauty¹⁵. While *Oburo's* sonorous voice is acknowledge as enthralling, *Eyele* occupies a crucial position because it is a favourite choice of sacrifice by the average Yoruba. *Ayekoto* on the other hand represents the principle of faithfulness, justice and truth. Therefore its feathers are often used in communicating secret and symbolic messages where verbal dialogue is avoided¹⁶.

Though the motif of the bird is not confined to the art of painting alone, it shall form the central focus of the present investigation. However, it might be necessary to state very quickly that the 'bird' is a favourite and consistent motif in nearly all the visual arts practised by the Yoruba. In textile design, wooden and metal sculptures, beadmaking, calabash engraving and painting,

the bird representation has featured most prominently as an allusive image encapsulating many traditional legends.

On the *opa orere*,¹⁷ the 'bird' is used appropriately as a reflective symbol of authority as well as the dependable fortress of hope and restitution for the human soul, in whose quarters and head the sanctity of sacrifice is rested. In the beaded crown of royalty, the 'bird' often seats at the apex of power: *ibi gongo ori* - the seat of wisdom and the abode of a man's destiny. The motif of the 'bird', therefore, represents the divine authority, ase of Orunmila, which kings represent in Yoruba society. Hence they are regarded as *Igbakeji Orisa*: the titular deputies of *Orisas* (divinities).

So potent is the symbolism of the 'bird' that even the three basic colours in the Yoruba spectrum are attributed to it; certainly this is on account of its beauty and subtlety of plumage:

Agbe lo laro
Aluko lo losun
Lekeleke lo lefun.
Agbe owns the Indigo (dye)
Aluko owns the red-camwood
Lekeleke owns the white-chalk.

Also in textile design, the bird forms one of the favourite and commonly used designs employed by traditional dyers. Often repeated in several ways or forming an integral part of an overall design, the 'bird' is one of the most consistent patterns found on the popular '*adire*' clothe, well favoured by Yoruba women. *Olojuawo* and *eyele* are some of the commonest and they fall under this category.

We shall now attempt to investigate the use of the 'bird' motif in contemporary Yoruba paintings. Four paintings executed for

religious rituals and three for secular purposes shall be critically examined. The religious paintings shall be drawn from amongst those executed for traditional institutions. We shall attempt investigating the symbolic import of the paintings, with a view to highlighting the rationale for their particular choice and manner of rendering.

Shrine paintings from Ikirun, Ayede-Ekiti, Ilesa and (Orisakire) in Ife shall be our reference materials. While *Peacock* by Jimoh Buraimoh and Labayo Ogundele as well as *Eleye* by Moyo Okediji shall be examined under the second category (the secular.)

Totem of Power, Authority and Beauty : The Religious Category

Sacrifice is central to many religious observations and worship all over the world. That *Akala/Igun* (Vulture) eats up sacrifice is therefore of paramount importance to the efficacy of ritual. The 'bird' symbolises the principle of ritual acceptance, potency and power of the very act of sanctifications.

Yorubas approach the Almighty God, Olodumare with a multiplicity of requests. Hence, He is referred to as *eleti gbaroye*. Yet He must be approached through an hierarchy of lesser divinities. Most of these divinities are deified ancestral heroes who must constantly be placated in order that requests to Olodumare may be favourably presented by them. It is believed that only by sacrifice can requests become fruitful and therefore a reality.

It is in this respect that Yorubas recognise the crucial importance of the vulture and other carrion birds in the efficacy of rituals. The vulture is therefore eulogized and venerated. Furthermore, because the vulture is bald and baldness is synonymous with old age and authority; the Vulture is seen as a totem of authority,

wisdom and old-age which its physiognomy features suggest.

It is common knowledge that many birds have sonorous voices. The 'music' they make are not only pleasant to the ears, it is known to be soothing and a welcome balm for many a raw nerve. Music is an integral part of religious worship. The songs of the shrine printers are therefore reminiscent of the chanting of birds, as in,

Eni ba sun ko ji o e e
Eni ba sun ko ji o a a
Ko la gbolun Oloburo eye oko¹⁸.

The birds on the Orisakire, Obaluaye, Loogun and Oluorogbo shrines in Ile-Ife and the Irele shrines in Ikirun are therefore painted in recognition of these, amongst other attributes, in mind. Generally, they are painted in a lateral and almost spherical manner, with about five projections representing the head, and two on either side representing the fore and hind limbs. Furthermore, the spherical shape is filled in with white and red dots, sometimes, it is painted white, at other times in any colour that catches the fancy of the women. Occasionally though, it is the oracle that dictates the choice of colour and image to be represented.

Questioning the rationale for their choice of those particular images, one discovers that their choice is often informed and guided essentially by aesthetic consideration rather than some other allusive reasons one may infer. In the same vein, if one realises that birds are perhaps one of the most beautiful creatures in the universe one would doubtlessly empathise with the sentiments these women express.

In the Ogboni repository of Ilesa, an entire panel is devoted to the image of a bird. (This also relates to the Yemoja shrine painting in Ayede-Ekiti). The bird image is painted in about five different

colours with a prominent beak and a jaunting projection at the back of its head. It suggests the image of a Vulture, when we view its peculiar features.

Setting aside the image of the bird on religious altars, modern Yoruba painter (by this is meant those who have been influenced or exposed to Western art), have equally been fascinated not only by the sheer beauty but also the artistic merit and possibilities, to which the "bird" can be put.

The Secular Category

One of the foremost graduates of the Osogbo art workshop of the sixties, Jimoh Buraimoh is the exponent of beaded painting techniques. Though trained initially as an electrician he was employed as a stage lighting technician by the defunct Institute of African Studies, where his artistic talent was discovered. This lighting background has been put to good use by Jimoh as evident in the fluorescent choice of colours, characteristic of his paintings. Clearly he has a penchant for warm colours. The treatment of his 'Peacock' is a visual attestation to the aforementioned, as shall be presently shown.

Buraimoh depicts the peacock¹⁹ in all its resplendent glory. Nearly all colours of the rainbow are expended in the treatment of this highly eulogised but vain-glorious king of the avian wild. The painting is warm and inviting, certainly reflective of the temper of this bird, that exudes the air of nobility.

The painting is handled in an abrealistic manner without much regard for realistic details. The concentric circular lines which stand for the head of the bird, with two perpendicular lines standing for the beaks occupy the central portion of the canvas. The 'concentric circular line-device' is further accentuated in the treatment of the tail and wings to good effect. This stimulates the

feeling of balance which is further orchestrated by the burgeoning ripples of the circular lines around the crown. Evidently this represents the interlocking mesh of colours occasioned by the rustling contact of crown and tail. The effervescence of colours thus associated with the Peacock is what Buraimoh has immobilized on his picture frame for posterity.

Red, Blue, Green, Yellow, White, Black and Violet are the seven colours employed by Jimoh Buraimoh in the treatment of this pride of the forest. Like a diadem around the head of a king, carefully arranged beads in sequin details are added in multi-colours to grace and enhance the beauty of the peacock.

Apart from its aesthetic consideration, The *Peacock* by Buraimoh does not hold any regard for 'realistic' details. Without the title it would have been difficult to prove to viewers and critics alike, that this indeed is a portrait of a peacock. Though the beads are used in good measure, the artist has not explored the possibilities which intricate details, particularly the sensitive designs, which the feathers offer to their full realisation. Repetition of a few of those concentric circular lines within the ripples around the head would have convinced us without much ambiguities.

Treated in simple realism is Ogundele's *Peacock*. The gait and exquisite patterns on the bird is a convincing portrayal of the psychological resemblance of the bird. Though a black and white print, it leaves no room for any ambiguity or doubt.

Finally Okediji's *Eleye* proves to be particularly interesting because it represents a synthesis of the old and the new. Traditional and modern influences are latently apparent in the handling of the painting. On the one hand is the material of execution which conforms wholly with Yoruba painting tradition. Yet the medium of execution is entirely modern and academic in outlook. This is in view of the fact that the painting follows in some

respects Western rules of perspective, though distorted to a large extent. Moyo Okediji's *Eleye* is therefore a celebration and homage to the witches rather than a true portrayal of the birds. Although the two birds on the heads of the dominant figures in dialogue are more symbolic than real.

Observations

From our attempt to review the bird motif found in contemporary Yoruba paintings, a number of inter-related yet conflicting issues are raised, particularly in relation to Picton's "Open-textured"²⁸ attempt to debunk the "traditional" appellation of African art. We shall attempt itemising them.

- (i) There is tradition in modernity and modernity (by which is meant social imperatives) in the 'traditional'. Images represented on Yoruba shrines for instance have often contained glimpses of contemporary situation in our society.
- (ii) It will be quite mischievous and inaccurate to regard the exquisite Benin Plaques of the 17th and 18th centuries, documenting such episodic encounters between the Edos and the Portuguese as not authentically Benin or following Benin sculptural tradition. Yet it fits in within the colonial category under Picton's "trial".
- (iii) Can one safely say that the religious carvings executed in the Kelvin Carrol's worship for the Catholic Mission, do not exhibit traditional traits? Doubtlessly categorising them along with traditional Yoruba sculpture when in fact they were executed in line with the Yoruba canon, with an alien subject-matter and patronage, is in itself contradictory. Perhaps the Picton's cautionary observation contains in itself denying con-

tradition and conflicts.

- (iv) That the illustrations of Twin Seven Seven does not follow the canon of the visual traditions of the Yoruba people, is ridiculously inaccurate. In the first instance, the Seven Seven pictures or illustrations one is familiar with exhibits all the attributes and traits of traditional Yoruba art, be it sculpture, painting or textile traditions. They are not only decorative but also in conformity with the important point of social perspective, crucial in Yoruba art generally. That Picton agrees that the subject-matter is Yoruba is enough complication, compounding further the very basis on which his thesis is rested. What indeed is not Yoruba in my opinion is the medium rather than the subject matter of Twin Seven Seven's illustrations.
- (v) Finally, one considers branding of the plastic doll regarded as a substitute for an authentic Ibeji figures as some of the inherent contradictions which in fact triggered Picton's call for a reassessment of the term 'traditional', with respect to works of the colonial period. One is tempted to regard such apparent problematic situation arising out of this case as
- (a) a deliberate attempt by the informer (in this case one takes the model in the said picture as the informer) to mislead, misinform and deceive the researcher. In other words, it is an apparent ploy to distort and a tool deliberately employed to misrepresent totally the cult of Ibeji. Treating as final this apparent misinformation of one whose level of sophistication as claimed by Picton is totally at variance with the ethics of the Yoruba culture one is familiar with, might be a little unfortunate and misleading.

Conclusion

Having attempted highlighting some of these conflicting observations arising out of the definitional problems of African art in general, one can only hope that the crisis of terminologies and categorisation of African culture itself may require a surgical operation as a matter of urgency.

The debate has definitely commenced.

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Chapter Seven

SCIENTIFIC TRADITIONS IN YORUBA TRADITIONAL EDUCATION OF IFA 'SCHOOL'

MODUPEOLA OPEOLA

Abstract

The paper is an attempt to make it clear that the ethnocentric use of the terms "tradition" and "traditional" to make the indigenous African system of education look primitive derives from three main sources. First, is the interpretation given by the Protestant Missionaries to African religions. Second, is the methods adopted by the Europeans ethnologists to study the African Communities. Third, is the belief that the patterns of thinking of Africans are underived from scientific traditions. After proving these sources invalid, the paper proceeds to reveal that most aspect of the Yoruba traditional (traditional, meaning, indigenous education propagated on Ifa "School") curriculum are derived from scientific traditions ("tradition", meaning, acceptable principles of doing things) It concludes that, this characteristic of Ifa literary corpus makes it relevant to the modernisation of Yoruba Culture.

Introduction

The use of the term "tradition" and "traditional" may at times carry some traces of racism. For example, talking of African indigenous medical system, George (1983)¹ said the meritocracy eludes traditional medicine because its intellectualism is not

institutionalised, so no accredited degree is officially awarded. Whereas he realised that traditional medicine is professional and the theoretical aspect is taught in the Ifa "School" and initiation ceremonies are performed when learners pass out. This is because he said in the same article that the teaching of traditional medicine in institutions would be inferior to the old apprenticeship system. Probably by institutions he was referring to Western School System.

When Olatunji (1973)² said "In West African traditional poetry the term "traditional" cannot safely be taken to refer to a kind of static or fixed specimen of primeval curiosity". He was perhaps observing the eurocentric sense of using the term "tradition" as the fixed pattern of behaviour of the primitive Africans. Hence, he quickly pointed out that "West African traditional poetry is nothing fixed or static. It continues to take in new ideas within its traditional literary devices." He here uses traditional to refer to the peculiar nature of African literature which he described as "mainly oral", to distinguish it from Western literature which is "mainly written".

In a non-political sense it is common to think of things "ancient" and "archaic" as being "traditional". In the Middle Ages system of education there was a good deal of flogging and driving and loud-roaring brutality (Highest, 1965)³. Schools of the mid-nineteenth century were to modern educators, sorry places. The protestant tradition was still strong as was the German influence, and between them produced the principle that children were essentially evil creatures desperately in need of Katian constraint and Calvinist punishment. Children sat in one place in one position for hours on end, with periodic arm-swinging for exercise and perhaps occasional permission to go to the bathroom. The method of instruction was the catechism. The teacher fed the stuff out one day, and wanted it back the next day in his own words. Wherever such a system exists nowadays, it is

referred to as "traditional" system of education.

Ethnocentric use of the terms "Tradition" and "Traditional"

In this paper, we are concerned principally with an indigenous system of education, the Ifa "School" System. From here onward, we use the phrase "traditional African education" to refer to "the traditional education system of Ifa School". To those who may doubt the existence of any organised system of education before the arrival of the Europeans, Cameroon and Dodd (1970)⁸ remarked that "it is a fallacy to believe that the early pioneers moved into a complete educational vacuum." John Wilson (1966)⁹ even observed that in some West African societies, one form of education is very carefully organised, namely, the teaching of drummers. He further observed that indigenous African education, beside using rote learning also used dramatisation, mime, and role playing; these being not only modern educational methods but of the very root of universally approved means of learning and teaching rediscovered in the so-called modern education. Another recognised by Abimbola (1976)¹⁰ is the Ifa School.

The European ethnocentric use of the terms "tradition" and "traditional" to make the indigenous African system of education look primitive derives, among other things, from three sources.

First is the interpretation given by the Protestant Missionaries to African religions. Second, is the method adopted by the European ethnologists. Third, is the belief that the patterns of thinking of African are "underived from scientific traditions."

African Religions

Some, if not all, of the early Protestant Missionaries who came to Africa believed that Africans were heathens. They, therefore,

believed that eternal damnation and hell fire waited Africans in heaven, (Read, 1956)⁷. However what they mistook for African religions are mysteries. Mystery seems universal. It was practiced by the Greeks in form of secret ceremonies which professed to satisfy man's desire for knowledge of eternal truth by means of symbolic initiation. Among the Yoruba of West Africa, mysteries are common among traders, craftsmen and professional guilds. The hunters, the farmers, the traders, the carvers and others, hold annual mysteries. This mystery is a festival in which members of the same craft, trade or profession display activities and feasting, related to the life style of their patron god (Orisa) when alive. Many guilds in Great Britain, in the 16th century, were in the habit of producing mystery plays which were based on biblical stories connected with their craft.

Another issue is the use of symbols at some places of worship. The missionaries thought that Africans believed that the symbols were real gods (Orisa) as their own pagan forefathers. To the missionaries it was idolatry to confuse the symbol with the reality. Thus, many western travellers, missionaries and traders misconceived the religious aspect of the life of the Black man of Africa. All Yoruba people believe in only one God, *Olodumare*.

E. Bolaji Idowu testifies to this.⁹ *Olodumare* is not represented by any idol, neither is any temple built for Him. They acknowledge His greatness every morning, facing the sky; they pray to Him as the creator of the world and all living things and the Lord of all beings in heaven (*Orun*) and earth (*Aye*).

This is monotheism, a belief in only one God who is present in the world, yet transcending it, as in the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This claim is made clear in *Odu Ifa Ogunda Meji*

o o
 o o
 o o
 oo oo

*Eniti awon baba nla wa njuba ni Olodumare
 Igba meta ni ojojumo ni won si njuba re
 Aworan baba nla wa a ma wure ni igba meta
 Sinu omi tutu, ti o mo, ti o si wa ninu
 igba mimo funfun balau
 Won a sita omi na s'ile
 Nitorina, awon baba nla wan (awon orisa) je.
 Aworan Olodumare ni, won ki i se Olodumare
 Ti a ba njuba awon baba nla wa, a njuba won
 nitori pe won je aworan Olodumare ni
 ki se pe nitori pe won je Orisa.*

Our deified ancestors worshipped Olodumare.
 They prayed to Him three times daily.
 They prayed into clean water in a clean white calabash,
 each time they wanted to worship.
 They then poured the water outside.
 Our ancestors (Orisa) were incarnates of Olodumare;
 they were not Olodumare
 if we worship Orisa, it is not because they
 are Orisa but because they are incarnates of Olodumare.

This ese Ifa makes it clear that the Yoruba are not idolaters. Use of symbols make the Christians consider Yoruba traditional worshippers idolaters. The Christian churches use similar symbols they are hating the Yoruba traditional worshippers for using. The cross, the statues of saints, including the Virgin Mary, the creeds (especially the symbol of the Trinity), the

days of fasting and festivals are such symbols¹⁰.

Yoruba as a Primitive Race

The European missionaries, traders and travellers for a long time were responsible for carrying out ethnographic research in Africa. According to Radin (1966)¹¹ they were amateurs. To them civilisation was understood in terms of Western culture which had been literary for many centuries and its capitalist system. Arthur J. Vidich (1966)¹² considers this attitude of the European to the culture of non-western peoples illegal. There are no reasons for considering Yoruba along with the Pygmies and Hottentots as aboriginals because they had no written literature of the type recognised by the European. One reason is that ethnological theory was cultivated long before it ever dawned upon the students that each "primitive" group had a very specific culture and a very specific history. The view that portrays Africans as pagan savages that were simple-minded, childish irrational and non logical is very unfortunate.

In Australia we have the Aborigines, in Japan we have the Ainu; the Eskimos, the Tierra del Fuegians are other examples. The existence of such tribal peoples does not make their country or continent a primitive nation or continent. Despite the social and economic development of the West, primitive people existed in England till the end of the 19th century¹³. The existence "of tramps" in England till late in that century does not make historians proclaim England a primitive country.

The Ifa "School" is an ancient learning institution. No exact date could be given but the school was a product of an ancient civilisation of a people who lived in cities. Dooney and Halloday (1966) recorded that the Yoruba enjoyed substantial urban development and craftsmen of Benin and Ife have left evidences of their skill.¹⁴ Zaslavsky (1973)¹⁵ also reported that "the Yoruba

people and the related people of Benin in Nigeria have been urbanized farmers and traders for many centuries and have complex numeration system. Stolper (1963)¹⁶ also observed that "Western Region (now part of Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, and Bendel States) was mainly populated by the Yoruba who are traditionally town dwellers."

African Patterns of thought underived from Scientific Revolution

The term "primitive" as used by the colonial rulers may mean that African patterns of thought are underived from "scientific revolution". For example Kingsley¹⁷ thinks that the longer you know and study the West African and his institutions the more convinced you are that his chief mental trait is to be narrowly logical. She gave reasons for her thinking so thus:

He is no dreamer, no doubter; for him everything is real He is not critical and failure does not convert him ... His mental processes are simple and unperturbed His observations, outside a limited range, are seldom correct and his inferences are faulty His chief errors are referable to the lack of criticism which would require analysis, comparison, and true generalisation, operations impossible in the absence of an accumulation of experience which the savage like the child could not possibly have in available form. Hence his mental processes remain uncorrected.

The reasons she gives make one believe that the patterns of thought of African are underived from traditions of science. When I quoted this passage in one of the papers I presented at the Faculty of Education Seminar,¹⁸ my colleagues were very emotional in their reaction to the paper. By then Professor Fafunwa,

now the Education Minister, was a member of the Faculty, though he was not present at the seminar. I wonder what their reaction could have been if I told them that the author was Fafunwa for he said a similar thing if not worse, about Africans. According to him, "Many village people in Africa, south of the Sahara, are closer to the sixteenth century than the twentieth, except in their possession of a few modern utensils"¹⁹

In holding fast to the view, that Africans are primitive because their patterns of thought are "underived" from "scientific revolution", one under rates the standards of development of the African peoples. The scientific revolution in question started in the 16th century. It was a revolution of ideas that produced what has become known as scientific culture. It also means that Europe was primitive until the last part of 19th century when the revolution became a routine part of Western culture. This is not tenable because the men of *Anglo-French* Enlightenment were empirical and utilitarian in outlook.

Even if Fafunwa were right to say that traditional Africans are closer to the sixteen century than the twentieth, this does not mean that the patterns of thought of the African peoples are underived from scientific traditions. Like the *Anglo-French* Enlightenment, men of Ife and Benin civilisations were empirical (the chemistry of production of bronze) and utilitarian in outlook. The Benin bronze heads which were not as fine as those of Ife, were made by craftsmen who were extra-ordinarily accomplished in casting the metal. Captain de Norman in 1922²⁰ reported that in Bauchi Plateau, there are very interesting stone bridges most cleverly constructed with a curious semi circular bend by which the force of water is diminished and the erection firmly built to the bank. This could have not been done with a simple and undeveloped mental processes. It involves a lot of knowledge about the properties of water and hydraulics.

Scientific Traditions

From Kinsley's thought mentioned above, one can deduce that the West African is incapable of developing scientific traditions. Also Max Weber²⁰ was quoted by B. Rose and S. Rose (1971) as saying that "the belief in the value of scientific truth is not derived from nature but a product of definite culture". By value, maybe Weber meant tradition. For Rose and Rose (1971)²¹ said "Because of the non-scientific nature of their culture, the development of western type of technology has been impossible in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the poor and culturally unsympathetic environment prevailing among the nations of the Third World, the problem of being any sort of scientist is great"

Maybe it is good here to ask "what is this "science" that is so great a knowledge, that not only Africans but all the peoples of the Third World are incapable of knowing?" This is because abstraction and discovery are characteristics of mammals. Even the relatively weak-brained primates (prosimians) form complex social grouping in which the young learn the lessons of life that frame their reactions to future events, and a scientific tradition is established. That is why Nnabugwu (1983)²² defines science as an institutional form of reason that shows reason as a cultural tool rather than simply as an inborn faculty. Considering science as a product of a complex social society, Sanders Pierce (1839-1914) defines science as an evolving system, a co-operative and unending attempt to make the world intelligible. That science, even the modern science to which Max Weber and Rose and Rose were referring to, as quoted above, is by no means the exclusive product of the West.²³ There have been leading contributions to both the theoretical and practical aspects of science from other countries, through the long period in time of the development of modern science. The process of science has been cumulative over thousand of years (Synge, 1969).²⁴

Scientific Traditions

As an institutional form of reason, science has a peculiar tradition, agreeable procedure of "searching to discover unity in the wild variety of nature." Science is a search for relations among things or events that look unrelated in everyday life. Experienced scientists, in their tradition, look for order in nature's activities because order does not display itself in nature. Order must be discovered, and for purpose of predicting nature's behaviours it has to be created. According to Bronowski (1965)²⁵ the discovery is made in three steps (i) observation (ii) interpretation and (iii) abstraction. The interpretation involves raising and testing hypotheses and the abstraction involves creating mathematical symbols and models of nature's behaviour. The scientific method is ultimately quantitative and numbers are basic to precise observation and prediction²⁶. Model formation is essential because the purpose of scientific thought is to postulate a conceptual model of nature from which the observable behaviour of nature may be predicted accurately. Man specialized in predicting the future, and the systematization of this process in science²⁷.

The use of mathematical symbols in science is historical. Mathematics originated as the abstraction from empirical experience of the external world. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) in *Novum Organum* published in 1720 hinted that logic and experiment (that is, mathematics and scientific experiment) are locked together in the scientific method.

Yoruba Traditional Education of Ifa "School"

The curriculum of Ifa "School" cover among other things mathematics (Arithmomancy), theology, theological biology (natural history), geography, sociology, agricultural science, psychology and philosophy. All are well interwoven and pre-

sented through theme teaching as general knowledge of the past believed to be of importance to maintaining the stability of the society. In this scheme, each subject, as a discipline, has only apparent identity.

The education starts at the age of six to seven (but age limit is not enforced). The first stage which could be called the primary education includes story-telling, mental arithmetic, music, dancing and natural history of plants and animals. The beginners start with a sort of sacred games of probability, using materials like kola nut pieces, *opele* or *ikin*. Casting kola nut piece, cowry shells or *opele* may mean nothing except the exercise is based on propositions. The propositions used by Ifa priests cover money, wife, child, house and all good things as well as their complements, poverty etc.

The second stage is from the age of thirteen to eighteen. Here he learns about the empirical knowledge of the society based on communal experience and derived from logical inferences. This knowledge of the natural history and biology of the plants and animals in the "small world" of his race becomes developed. Much emphasis is placed on systematics and ecology. Several classification models are used by the *babalawo*.

After the general education, the graduates of "Ifa School" become specialists in one of these main lines: (a) priests involved in medical practices, (b) diviners, (c) healers and (d) ifa literary corpus scholars. The healer and diviner have to undergo further training in determining recipes for medical and concoction preparations.

Ifa School as a Western School Equivalent

To modern educators, Ifa school may be regarded as an informal institution. This is not quite true. The culture in which the school

grew is very different from the Western culture. We may equate ifa training organisation to a "traditional western school" because not unreal 1888 was group recitation (a method of training ifa priest), like choral chanting of the Ifa school, replaced with individual recitation by Search² in the programme of Pueblo Golarado School, United States of America. Also like the Greeks of the classical period, the society believed in the idea of "sound mind in a sound body". The training of the mind was not devoid of the psychological principles of learning held by the community. It was mainly rote learning. But the philosophy behind it has been better expressed by Abimbola².

... the training of the Ifa priest is a supreme example of sacrifice in human endeavour. It demonstrates that human memory can be stretched to an almost extent for the retention of knowledge.

This philosophy is similar to Thorndike's theory of learning which recognises heavy drills and memorising as the sole valid procedures of education. It must however be pointed out here that other methods beside rote learning method were employed. These include mime, role play and dramatisation.

Scientific traditions in Ifa literary corpus

It is obvious from the study of the science of Cabbala (ancient sacred oral or written tradition) that all arts and science were based on the same cosmic truths expressed in numbers. Ifa literary corpus is a type of cabbala that relates closely to the Greek and Hebrew ones. In Greek and Hebrew cabbala, gematria, the science of relating words to number was developed. Since the ancient Yoruba had no alphabets, they couldn't have used the same route to arrive at their own cabbala. They

used Arithmomancy, the science of theological interpretation by number. The system developed was binary system. From the study of one of *Ese Ifa, Eji Ogbe* it is discovered that the members of Ifa Cult developed the arithmomancy from their empirical experience. The concepts abstracted from the facts of observations were subjected to the principles of logic. As said above, abstraction involves creating mathematical symbols and models of nature's behaviour. Part of the *Ese Ifa Eji Ogbe* reads

I bless in pairs
I no longer bless one by one.

This means "I no longer count one by one but I count in one, two, one." This is counting to base two. This is a universal system called binary system.

Also to determine the notation for the signature of each *Odu Ifa*, the biology of the pigeon was used. The male and the female, unlike in the case of other birds - the cock and hen-look much alike, and move together. The portion of *Odu Ifa* reads:

Eji gbede eyele o' s'ako, o s'abo
won ajumo jo araa won
Laijumo yato.

Ejigbede, pigeons both male and female
Resemble each other
without any difference.

The analytic study of Ifa Literary Corpus reveals the following scientific traditions:

1. The discovery of the symbol of *Odu Ifa* is made according, prescription. These are (i) Observation (ii) Interpretation and (iii) Abstraction. (Bronowski, C. 1965)²⁸
2. That scientific method is ultimately quantitative and numbers are basic to precise observation and prediction (Walker, 1963)²⁹
3. That logic and experiment are locked together in the scientific method as hinted by Francis Bacon, in his *Novum organism*.
4. That the process of Science has been cumulative over thousand of years (Synge, 1969)³⁰.

Discovery

(i) Observation

The Yoruba in particular are painstaking and adroit as far as observation of their environment was concerned. They are noted for their ability to note the minutest thing that is happening around them (Ogunyemi, 1982)³¹. The case of the natural history of the pigeon was mentioned above. *Eji Ogbe* is used to personify the number "iwo". The pigeon lays clutch of only two eggs. The initial used for the divining instruments, the kolanut, the cowry shell and the *opele* half-nut, each has two faces, back and front, the back having convex shape while the front has concave shape.

The *Opele* has two arms and on each arm are four half nuts. The *Ikin* consisting of 16 Sacred Palm-nuts kept in ornaments bowl represents Ifa (Orunmila on earth).

The palm-nuts chosen are those with 2, 4, 5 and six

eyelets. Women mostly use 16 cowry shells for divination purpose.

Interpretation

From the observations the interpretation follows that in nature there is a series of events or phenomena that occur in the series 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, ... 256. Interpretation involves raising and testing hypotheses. The 256 *Odu Ifa* were derived from the binary system, each number representing an *Odu*. the use of *Ikin* reveals this. For the purpose of divination the priest puts the sixteen palm-nuts in one hand and tries to take all at once with the second hand. If one palm-nut remains in his hand, he makes it clear that not signs but symbols are made to represent the *Odu Ifa* signatures. If more than two is left in his hand he makes no sign, the same thing happens if none is left in his hand. It means in the making of the *Odu Ifa* signature he does not use mere tally. This is explained further by the practice among the Ijumu Ifa Okpele priests. The priest allows the few seeds in his hand to fall in two (even). If an odd number remains, two marks are made on the Ifa tray, and if an even number, a single mark.

The Ijumu priest uses a more ancient but universal method of reducing large number of events of things into binary system. Let us say the number of nuts in his hand were 17 and not 16 as in the case of the Ifa Opele, priest. To drop two by two means dividing by two. The method in modern way is carried out thus: Write the number in Arabic numeral and divide by 2. Write the quotient underneath, and write the remainder which is 0 or 1 at the side. Then divide the quotient by 2, and record the remainder at the side and the quotient below, continue dividing successive quotients by two until you get a quotient which is 1.

$$\begin{array}{r} \underline{2} \quad \underline{17} \quad \underline{1} \\ \underline{2} \quad \underline{8} \quad \underline{0} \\ \underline{2} \quad \underline{4} \quad \underline{0} \\ \underline{2} \quad \underline{2} \quad \underline{0} \end{array}$$

1

The successive remainders and the least quotient give the number (bits) on the binary system. The number is written from bottom to top. In the case we have above it is 10001.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Let us check } 1000 &= 1 \times 2^4 + 0 \times 2^3 + 0 \times 2^2 + 0 \times 2^1 + 1 \times 2^0 \\ &= 16 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 1 = 17 \end{aligned}$$

The number 17 = *Osa Meji* using the *Opele Ifa*. Let us represent the arms by two parallel lines and then locate the points of each remainder and the least quotient:

$$\begin{array}{r} 2^4 \times 1 \quad 2^0 \times 1 \\ \quad \quad 2^1 \times 0 \\ \quad \quad 2^2 \times 0 \\ \quad \quad 2^3 \times 0 \\ =16 \quad \quad =1 \\ 16+1 \quad \quad =17 \end{array}$$

The *Odu Ifa Osa Meji* is represented thus

$$\begin{array}{cc} oo & oo \\ o & o \\ o & o \\ o & o \\ & \text{Osa Meji} \end{array}$$

In *Opele* the reading is from the right to the left, just as in Arabic system.

As demonstrated above, McClelland (1966)³³ and McGree (1983)³⁴ observed that the number of Odu Ifa could be derived from the binary system using, according to McGree, the laws of permutation and combinations.

Ifa literary corpus consists of *Odu Ifa* and *Ese Ifa*. In realms of meaning both belong to symbolic, especially non-discursive symbols. Symbols are used to express the more profound meanings in human experience. Unlike signals, these visual symbols (*Odu Ifa* signatures) are not merely cues to action. They are bearers of meanings that exceed the bounds of ordinary logic.

Most of *Ese Ifa* are allegories with figurative or metaphorical sense rather than the literary sense of ordinary discourse. As shown above, *Odu Ifa* signature reflects a form of arithmetical process involving conversion from base ten to base two.

2. That Scientific method is quantitative

We have shown above the use of mathematical symbols and principles in deriving the *Odu Ifa* signature.

In the sketch above, the right arm of the *Opele* refer to the principal Odu and the combination of the right and left to *Amula Odu*. Let us consider the two arms. B refers to back up = 2

$16 = 2^4 B$	$B = 2^0 = 1$
$32 = 2^5 B$	$B = 2^1 = 2$
$64 = 2^6 B$	$B = 2^2 = 4$
$128 = 2^7 B$	$B = 2^3 = 8$
240	Total = 15

The signature is

oo oo
oo oo
oo oo
oo oo

Oyeku Meji

Considering the combination of face (f) and back (b) of the 8 half-nuts of *Opele* we can derive a formula (using the 16 cowry shells) $f + (b -) = k$; the k is a constant = 15, which is the *Oyeku* on the right arm. All the backs are up. The value of k for the two arms = $255 = 15 + 240$ as shown above.

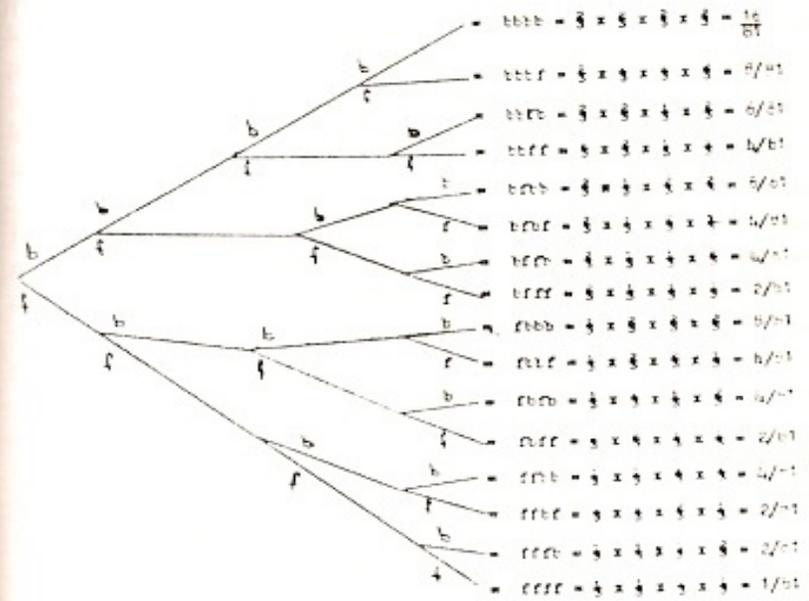
3. Logic and experiment are locked together

The purpose of experimentation is always to acquire knowledge about a phenomenon. In the years just before the first World War (1914 - 18) Bertrand Russell and his pupil Wittgenstein (1889-1951) worked out a theory of language known as Logical Atomism³⁵. In 1922, Wittgenstein perfected the theory of language known as Logical Anatomism, in which he applied Russell's new logic of analysis not just to mathematics alone, but to discourse as a whole. He started from the conviction that the essential nature of statements was a mirror or picture of facts. A statement that depicted a possible facts was meaningful and if it predicted an actual fact it was true. Statements that were not pictures must be either equivalent to collection of pictures or else meaningless.

Statements of divinations are propositions. The property of proposition is that it is either true (1) or false (0)³⁶. To apply logic to divination, a mathematical model is essential. In asking from the Oracle whether a lady will marry successfully or a man will become a chief, outcome cannot be predicted without the use of mathematics.

It is usual to describe observation of a random phenomenon as a random experiment, for example casting the kola-nut pieces, cowry shells or the *Opele* for the purpose of divination. The casting of these instruments of divination and observing the combinations of face up and face down is about the simplest possible random experiment ³⁷.

In divination with 4 kolanut pieces, each piece with concave face (f) and convex back (b) is considered a twisted coin. If the coin is badly bent as in the case of the kolanut piece, or cowry shell, or half *Opele* nut, the probability of a head on each toss is 1/3, but the tosses are independent as in the case of the kola nut pieces and the sixteen cowry shells, the equations is $X + Y = 3$ where X = number of heads and Y the number of tails. In the case of kolanut pieces we have, back up = 2, and face up = 1.



$$\frac{16 + 4(8) + 6(4) + 4(2) + 1}{81}$$

$$= \frac{16 + 32 + 24 + 8 + 1}{81}$$

$$= \frac{81}{81}$$

The combinations represent the principal *Odu Ifa*.
Combinations Name of Odu No. in binary system

Combinations	Name of Odu	No. in binary system	No. to base 10
bbbb	<i>Oyeku</i>	=1111	15
bbbf	<i>Obara</i>	=1110	14
bbfb	<i>Ika</i>	=1101	13
bbff	<i>Irosan</i>	=1100	12
bfbf	<i>Onurupon</i>	=1011	11
bfbf	<i>Ose</i>	=1010	10
bffb	<i>Iwori</i>	=1001	9
bfff	<i>Ogunda</i>	=1000	8
fbfb	<i>Okaran</i>	=0111	7
fbff	<i>Odi</i>	=0110	6
fbfb	<i>Ojun</i>	=0101	5
fbff	<i>Irete</i>	=0100	4
ffbb	<i>Owonrin</i>	=00211	3
ffbf	<i>Otura</i>	=0010	2
ffff	<i>Osa</i>	=0001	1

4. The process of science is cumulative

Ifa believes that knowledge belongs to the society, that knowledge itself breeds little power. It is the man who receives communal education that becomes a wise man. According to Senghor³⁸ Negro African Society is collectivists or communal, because it is rather a communion of souls than aggregate of individuals. According to Milingo³⁹

We are what we are because our society still has something special; we can speak with the dead, and a community may thus be guided in its endeavour to carry out decisions which affect the whole community.

It is not certain whether Orunmila actually lived as a human being. In Ifa literary corpus the name Orunmila seems to refer to a school of philosophy the school of Existentialism in its primordial form. The Ifa cult, according to the meaning of 'cult' in the universal Dictionary of English usage, is an intellectual homage paid to carry out the work of a certain ancient society in Ile-Ife, by the admirers, who were members of Ogboni cult.

Ifa is not a religion as many people seem to believe. Ifa is not regarded as a deity to be worshipped but an Oracle⁴⁰; Ifa literary corpus is a product of not only the pupils of Orunmila, some other intelligent members of the society contributed to its birth and growth. In fact, it might even be considered a disintegrated aspect of a once perfect universal system of thought. The reason for assuming disintegration is obvious. Neither the art of the use of symbols nor the use of letters is a natural human attribute. Both were invented or received, and both have been lost or rediscovered at various periods of history⁴².

The witch council contributed to the literary corpus. The *Odu Ifa Irete Owonrin* (Olofa) revealed the association between the witches and Orunmila. The establishment of *Odu Ifa* itself was described in *Odu Ifa Ose yeku* known as *Igbadu*. However *Odu Ifa Ose Meji* that established Ibadan and the *Odu Ogbegunda (Ogbeyomi)* listed seven rivers from which the witches drank before they met human beings on earth. This list included *Oleyo omi Ibadan*. Ibadan was a new city compared with the ancient city of Ife whose name was not mentioned on the list. Also, Ibadan was a product of the recent intertribal wars of Yoruba land, hence, the claim to the cumulative nature of Ifa literary corpus.

The second group that contributed to Ifa literary corpus is the Ogboni cult. The groups contributed the mathematical aspect while the witches contributed the empirical aspect. The Ogboni

was formed by Orunmila. Ogboni is the equivalent of the gnostics of the Western culture. Odu Ifa, Odi Meji reveals how Orunmila formed the Ogboni cult. The Ogbonis believe in Olodumare as a supreme being, and the Goddess of Earth, called *Mole*. They believe that Olodumare is ready to open to members of the cult all mysteries. They emphasize the fundamental importance of knowledge acquired through sharing in a secret tradition. The eight children of Orunmila who went to Orun (heaven) to receive *ikin*⁴³ were probably Ogboni chiefs among the followers of Orunmila.

The third group consisted of Orunmila and his followers often called *babalawo*. They were equivalents of the Western Pythagoreans. As the Yorubas quote Orunmila in many ways, by the sixteenth century, Pythagoras was liable to be quoted according to the interest of the writer as a magician or as a champion of the contemplative life. In fact Ifa cult resembles very much the Pythagorean Brotherhood (a religious, scientific and political order of about sixth century B.C).

Conclusion

The Africans, especially the Yoruba believe they have a peculiar tradition. The tradition is a fixed acceptable pattern of behaviour to which every normal person must conform. The tradition is better described in the words of Cameroon and Docid (1970)⁴⁴.

Indigenous education was a life-long process whereby a person progressed through predetermined stages of graduation from birth to death

It was also social education aimed at fitting the young into a fairly rigid social systemEducation in conformity began at the

mother's knee, or rather perhaps on her back, and continue through on-the-job training and personal conditioning reinforced by moral stories and illustrative proverbs....

African elites use the terms "tradition" and "traditional" to identify them, with the culture of the community they belong. Many of them, including civil servants politicians, university professors, ministers of religion gladly accept traditional chief titles and use such opportunities to become influential members of their society. The Western school has also been turned into a broad road to becoming a "wise older" persons. Thus in Nigeria, many brave soldiers, competent teachers, creative scientists and engineers, often withdraw their services, on the pretence that they received the call of the spirits of their ancestors to come and sit on the thrones of their fathers. For example it is easier for a geography graduate to become an "Oba" than to work very hard and become an explorer of Nigeria. Keeping to the "tradition" is highly rewarded by the African communities. It, therefore, looks much a dream to hope that the imported Western school can modernise Africa. Many African elites don't mind the ethnocentric use of the terms "tradition" and "traditional".

However, that Olatunji (1973)⁴⁵ has said traditional "cannot safely be taken, to refer to a kind of static or fixed specimen of primely curiosity" is the start of revolution. At the first Pan-African Conference in 1900, William E.D. de Bois⁴⁶ a pioneer Black activist predicted that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line - the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the Island of the sea". Once the battle line was drawn, the struggle has spanned decades and has begun to set anchor in various ways. In Africans' acceptance of the ethnocentric use of "tradition" and

“traditional” they have shown a mature way of recognising the existence of other cultures. But the acceptance does not mean that African tradition is fixed or static; it continues to borrow new ideas and use them to create new things. The occurrences of scientific traditions in traditional African education system are enough proof that Africans are capable of selecting and resetting traditional symbols, both mathematics and scientific ones, for contemporary interpretation.

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Chapter Eight

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA: A SYNOPSIS

KOBIOWU S.V.

In spite of the great ethnic and cultural diversity of the people of Africa, and the variety in forms of social organization, reflecting differences in the level of economic, political and social development attained before the colonial conquest, one discovers in the educational domain a certain number of common traits which clearly demonstrate the cultural unity of the African people. Essentially, traditional education in Africa is characterised by the following prevalent attributes:

- (1) The great importance which is attached to it, and its collectivity and social nature.
- (2) Its bound with social life, both materially and spiritually.
- (3). Its multiple character, both in terms of its goals and the means employed.
- (4) Its progressive and graduated achievement, in conformity with the successive stages of physical, mental and emotional development of the child.

In this examination of the different traits of traditional African education, one of its most striking characteristics, which deserves special attention, is its multivalent nature, embracing all

facets of the personality of the child and the adolescent.

a. The development of the physical aptitudes of the child is stressed right from the beginning. Children's games are often very active, and some of them are completely devoted to athletics. On the other hand, many utilitarian tasks assigned to the child help considerably in his physical development. They involve many of the physical movements used in different sports: running, walking, jumping, climbing and balancing. Furthermore, because he is obliged to do them, the child is made more aware of the physical movements he accomplishes, particularly since there is always a precise objective whose significance and utility are clear to the child or adolescent.

b. Moulding character and providing moral qualities are primary objectives in traditional education. Almost all the different aspects of education of the child and adolescent aim towards this goal, to a greater or lesser degree. In the family, parents concern themselves with the bearing, manners, honesty and integrity of the child. Outside the home, games, the society of his friends in the same age group, and the demands they make on each other, constitute a real source of character-building. Sociability, integrity, honesty, courage, solidarity, endurance, ethics, and above all the concept of honour are, among others, the moral qualities demanded, examined, judged, and sanctioned, in ways which depend on the intellectual ability of the child and adolescent.

c. Traditional education, because of the degree of economic and social development of pre-colonial Nigeria society, does not seem to emphasize the intellectual training of the child as markedly as other aspects of education. From the point of view of general knowledge, intellectual training touches on a limited number of areas: history, geography, knowledge of plants and their attributes - botany, development of reasoning and judge-

ment, and in the acquisition of elements of philosophy.

The above is true of non-Moslem Nigerian societies. In Moslem communities, until the eve of colonial conquest, there were a large number of schools and university centres which provided education in Arabic, and the various fields of knowledge and abstract thought held an important place for them. Although, the importance of the Islamic schools should not be exaggerated as regards intellectual training (because of their pedagogical techniques, the small number of these schools, and above all, their strictly religious goals and the partial and limited course of study, given the great majority of students), it is still true that they played an important role in pre-colonial Nigeria on the intellectual level.

In any case, it is incontestable that traditional education in Nigeria as in Africa includes the intellectual training of the child and the adolescents. An important place was reserved for mastery of the language, and to abstract thought, in admittedly limited ways, such as riddles and proverbs, and discussion of various problems. In particular, certain adult and adolescent games, such as 'ayo' and draught, among others, are real exercises in mathematics, which involve geometry, combinations, and the properties of numbers. At the same time, the acquisition of the ability to reason and form solid judgements was considered extremely important.

Outside the area of religious phenomena, traditional African education, through a whole series of processes, develops logical reasoning, and the critical spirit (the riddle, games, debating contests and mathematical games). A great number of questions and problems demonstrate, to anyone willing to reflect on them, that concepts of classical logic were not unknown to Nigerians, prior to the advent of formal education. Finally, although the transmission of general knowledge is not systematic and organised as in "modern" education, nevertheless in traditional Nigerian

education, it is effected through practical experience and through the oral teaching given the child and adolescents in historical recitations and discussions.

d. It is hardly necessary to point out that traditional Nigerian education constantly combined manual activity with cognitive activity. This has been made obvious from the above discussion. With the means available to it, and within the framework of the limits imposed on it by economic, political, and social conditions, traditional Nigerian education thus sought to mould men, in the largest and fullest sense of the word. The existence of clearly defined age groups is a widespread phenomenon; despite differences in detail, such as the size of groups, the three following groups are always found:

- (i) First age group : birth to six or eight years. During this period, which corresponds to the first and second infancy, the education of the child falls mainly within the ambit of the mother, and takes place within the framework of the family. The father has relatively little to do with the children during the first few years.
- (ii) Second age group : six to ten years. When they are six, children are separated according to sex, the boys answerable to the men, and the girls to the women. Children participate more and more in work, but a large part of their time is devoted to games with boys or girls in the same age group.

In Moslem communities, the children go to the Koranic school in the morning and in the evening, which in no way prevents their engaging in other things during the rest of the day.

- (iii) Third age group : ten to fifteen years.

Children of both sexes are increasingly involved in the life of men and women, respectively, and are called on to accomplish adult jobs in a more complete manner. They are gradually given more and more independence, more of the various public affairs, and to see and hear more about the problems of daily life. They lead a collective life with their contemporaries in the same age group, and of the same sex, which strengthens their sense of esprit-de-corps. They learn an occupation, which may be a hereditary one, in their own families with a father or uncle, or in professional groups.

Initiation takes place after a child reaches fifteen or sixteen, and varies according to the region, and whether or not the community is Moslem. It signifies the passage from adolescence to adulthood, to the moment when the child, until then considered as being outside the adult world, is admitted to it. In animistic religions, ritual and group ceremonies take place during initiation, and in some Islamic communities, it involves the marriage of the young man in a special ceremony.

Generally speaking, circumcision is performed during initiation, and constitutes the essential part of the ceremony for Moslems. The young men live in an isolated group of thirty or forty, under the care of elders, who give them instruction. They undergo physical exercises for endurance and lighthness. They develop the spirit of comradeship and solidarity among themselves.

The beginning and the end of this turning point in the life of adolescents is marked by grandiose ceremonies, for which they wear special dresses. When the young men emerge from initiation, they are men; and as such allowed to participate more fully in the life and social activities of adults. In general, a young man is willing to have his parents choose his first wife, and after his marriage, he takes full part in the life of the community.

Some Observations about Traditional Education:

Pre-colonial Nigerian education as elsewhere in Africa responded to the economic, social and political conditions of pre-colonial Nigerian society, and it is in relation to these conditions that it must be examined and analysed. Traditional education, as described above, was fully capable of supplying the necessary elements to maintain in all its essentials, the level attained by the society (before the slave trade), in the economic, social, technical and cultural spheres. In this sense, one can say that it fulfilled its objectives, if the retrogressive effects of the slave trade are taken into account. Even today, the technical achievements, political and economic organization, works of art, the striking personality of more elderly persons, and the intact vitality of the people of Nigeria, bear testimony to this fact.

But it is not enough to simply state the fact. The success must be explained, and from the analysis of the content of traditional education, it will be seen that its proven effectiveness stems from a certain number of characteristics. In its general conception, traditional education never separated education, in the real sense of the word, from instruction, in the precise, limited sense. These two aspects of all attempts to 'mould' human beings are constantly and intimately connected, to the point where it is often necessary to resort to abstract analysis to separate the factors relating to one or the other.

Traditional education in Nigeria, as we have seen, embraces character-building, as well as the development of physical aptitudes, the acquisition of those moral qualities felt to be an integral part of manhood, and the acquisition of the knowledge and techniques needed by all men if they are to take an active part in social life in its various forms. In all these, its objectives do not differ from those of education in other societies living in other parts of the world.

The effectiveness of this education was possible because of its very close relationship with life. It was through social acts (production) and social relationships (family life, group activities) that the education of the child or adolescent took place, so that he was instructed and educated simultaneously. To the extent that a child learned everywhere, and all the time, instead of learning in circumstances determined in advance as to place and time, outside of the productive and social world, he was truly in the 'school of life', in the most concrete and real sense.

From another perspective, the pedagogy of traditional education reveals a profound knowledge of the physiology of the child and adolescent. The different age-groups correspond generally to the different stages of mental and behavioural development of the child. Pedagogical methods employed in each of these stages show striking evidence of adapting to the physical and psychological potential of the child, which necessarily requires knowledge and understanding of the fundamental characteristics of 'personality' at each different stage of a child's evolution.

In the old Nigerian society, prior to the advent of colonialism, education was regarded as a means to an end, and not an end in itself. In view of this, education was generally meant for an immediate induction into the society, and preparation for adult life. Children learnt by doing from adult, through ceremonies, rituals, recitations, and demonstration. They were also involved in practical farming, weaving, dyeing, carving, cooking, and knitting, among others. Nduka (1964) observed that "indigenous education was an integrated experience, in that it combined physical training and manual activity with intellectual training."

Traditional education in Nigeria aimed at perpetuating the culture of the society. The child just grows into and within the cultural heritage of his people. He imbibes it, as a matter of course. Critics of this educational set-up say that the goals of

traditional education is limited, because it is geared to meeting the basic needs of the child within his environment, and that the system is conservative and conforming, because it does not develop the spirit of criticism of the existing system. However, the system is largely and inherently functional. It remains true, that in seeking the qualities needed for any system of education in a given society - adaptation to concrete conditions, desired goals, foundation on a profound knowledge and rigorous observation of the laws and characteristics of child development, richness of human and social content, sufficient flexibility to allow for subsequent changes - as well as in seeking the faults and pitfalls to avoid- Traditional African education is a rich source of information worthy of creative reflection. This is particularly true now, when all of Black Africa is faced with the crucial problem of creating an educational system which answers to the aspirations and needs of our peoples and at the same time is worthy of the great future, which can be ours.

The seeming simplicity of the induction process of traditional education, taking place under somewhat primitive condition, obscures a very complex series of events. Through interaction and imitation, the cultural heritage of the society is being transmitted to the young. In the formal sense, there are no teachers, and no schools, yet, there is a great deal of teaching going on, and children are being "schooled" in the society's basic departments of knowledge. The young are taught what the culture regards as "important". Fundamentally, the purposes and outcomes of traditional education in Yorubaland, and/or any educational system for that matter, are the same: to condition the plastic growing human, so that he/she will be able to function in a society made up of similarly conditioned people.

The 'Crisis of Traditional Culture', as it relates to education, is almost a non-issue. The tradition of education or traditional education, among the Yoruba, as elsewhere in Nigeria, and

Africa, prior to the advent of colonial usurpation can be regarded as authentic and original to the people. It is not an attempt to invent an ideal that denies present and past realities, as may be claimed in some quarters.

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Chapter Nine

ALGEBRA OF PICTON'S COMPLEX

MOYO OKEDIJI

*Igi yii ko dara
E yo o kuro nina
Tolun ko sunwon
E yo o kuro nina
Tibi n seefin
E yo o kuro nina
Eleyi i gbun
E yo o kuro nina
Ewo ni o seku
Lati se ounje jina !'*

The above Yoruba parable was chanted by a friend as a warning, when he learnt that we were holding a workshop for scholars from various disciplines and biases, to reconsider the appropriateness of the term 'traditional' in the definition of African culture. The workshop, which eventually took place on Monday, June 25 1990, was provoked by a paper delivered by John Picton during the 1990 International Conference on Yoruba Art, held at the School of Architecture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile - Ife, Nigeria. My article is a discussion of the papers given during the workshop.

Several scholars participated in the workshop, and the selection presented in this volume is carefully made to present the diversity of views. Shades of opinion range from the position of conservatives who defend the terminology, to those who want it

discarded, for reasons they have carefully given and debated.

Picton's fears are founded on his assumption that certain African art objects are arbitrarily lumped together and labelled 'traditional' by scholars from outside Africa, who consequently 'invented' these artistic images. The makers of these works do not identify the corpus as 'traditional' and as a result nothing makes the work 'traditional' except the terminology itself. And, as Wole Soyinka has rightly observed, words make worlds, therefore the labelled objects immediately become known as 'traditional' as soon as they are so named.

Picton's fears are further compounded by his suspicion that the terminology contributes to the underdevelopment of Africa, not only because it fossilizes the labelled arts in an artificial temporal cell, but also because it hinders Africa from enjoying and participating in the ferments of contemporary culture. He therefore proposes that the term be jettisoned, while the art historiographic label of 'pre-colonial' be adopted in its stead.

Victor Kobiowu, Bolaji Campbell and Modupe Opeola disagree with Picton, because they see no problem with the existing terminology, drawing eloquently from the theories and practice of art and education to buttress their position. They consider Picton's fears to be unfounded and reiterate the concern that if the term 'traditional' is a label alien to Africa, the Picton call to remove it is equally ectopic, because it is emanating from the outside.

Others sympathise with Picton. Atai notes Picton's peculiar empathy for African art because he (Picton) lived and worked in Nigeria as a young man. He is therefore able to respect African concerns, and particularly careful to cultivate views which promote African interests, while challenging Euro-American prejudices. Atai thinks that Picton's views must be given a fair

hearing and that it is important that his opinion is not delivered esoterically in some American seminar, but in Ile-Ife, in the midst of those most concerned about the abuses of African culture. With the use of radical ideological arguments, Atai debunks the myths of 'traditional' culture, laying it bare.

Babalola contends that the terminology 'traditional' has become tainted by common usage, particularly as applied to African religion, though it looks innocent in some other contexts which he mentions. The distinction people seek to make when they label autochthonous African religion 'traditional' in relation to Christianity and Islam, is suspect because while they may be new in Africa, Christianity and Islam are old and 'traditional' in other contexts. Babalola highlights the pejorative connotations of the terminology, a problem which Picton does not emphasise directly. While Picton focuses mainly on the usage of 'traditional' as a superlative summoned to define 'authenticity' in African art, Babalola concentrates on the use of the term to imply the inferiority of African religions. Babalola therefore proposes the elimination of the terminology in preference for 'indigenous'.

Cordelia Osasona compounds issues much beyond the scope envisaged by Picton. Extending what Picton describes by 'traditional', she regards as 'vernacular' an idiom which combines the 'traditional' with foreign influences, within a milieu she calls 'folk'. In her study of African architecture, she defines a corpus beyond Picton's purview, an alloy of the ancient and the new, of the indigenous and alien, reflecting Africa's confrontation with the outside world.

In an interesting paper by Chima Anyadike, while neither agreeing nor disagreeing with Picton, he refuses to grapple with the problem of terminology in a manner which suggests consent to and tolerance for the usage. In his treatment of the medium of

novel writing in Africa, he freely applies the terminology 'traditional', evading the need to engage that problematic term critically. Instead he attempts to demonstrate how the art of novel writing is built upon the timeless oratures indigenous to Africa, drawing examples from acclaimed novelists of the sub-sahara.

Similarly, Bolaji Campbell's position is cautionary, but he finally confronts the details of Picton's papers, without decisively dealing with the problem of meta-language. He emphasises the relationship between the visual and verbal arts among Yoruba people, and analyses the avian image in the corpus of Yoruba art, laying emphasis on the works of certain artists. Thus he attempts to show how the works of 'modern' Yoruba artists have a direct link with the literary, religious and visual legacies.

The contributions of these scholars show that we have a problem on our hands, even though not all of them have succeeded in identifying the problem, or in proffering specific therapies. Their difficulties indicate the malignancy of the cultural pathology which Picton has diagnosed, a philosophical problem strictly of the second order. For Picton is not discussing any particular art work, but his essay is 'talk about talk about art'², in the realm of analytic aesthetics.

The remaining essays are also on this level of critique, with the exception of Anyadike's paper, which remains largely focused on the first order of discourse. He deals directly with particular art forms, drawn fresh from the novel medium. This stems from his refusal to confront the problem of meta-aesthetics, while he investigates issues of cultural fracture and regeneration. Similarly Campbell's paper is largely on the first order but he occasionally rises to the second, especially towards the end of his arguments.

Of all the contributors, only Opeola and Atai show concern over

the causes of the problem, though each writer has a different answer. While Atai condemns it, Opeola fatalistically accepts the condition as one he could live with. Apart from Kobiowu who dismisses the problem as a 'non-issue', the others, following Picton, medicate the symptoms without addressing the causes of the ailment. Thus, like Picton, their treatment is merely cosmetic. Picton, for instance, is satisfied with an art historiography based essentially on the colonial experience, and proposes an art categorisation consisting of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, with the so-called 'traditional' art corresponding, with the pre-colonial. Convenient as this term appears at first, a second reading shows that the 'traditional' forms could be found in all the three historical periods he is proposing. The work of Bamigboye, the master carver of Odo Owa, spans the three categories, and Lamidi Fakeye who is regarded as a 'traditional' carver continues to work in the ancient style which Picton labels 'pre-colonial' form, till today, among the rugged hills of Ekiti.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, progressive Africans are no longer willing to define their identity solely in terms of the colonial misadventure, a short, gruesome, and unforgettable trial. That brief spell alone is inadequate for interpreting and measuring the timeless depth and breadth of African art historiography. That amounts to looking at Africans merely in terms of the calamitous foreign intervention, at the neglect of an entopic lens.

Babalola, on his part seems to engage in an exercise of substitution, by merely replacing the word 'traditional' with 'indigenous'. While the result appears pleasant and salutary, it is ultimately adiaborous, because it cannot solve the problem which Picton poses, as we shall demonstrate. How, for example, will the use of the term 'indigenous' succeed in thawing and freeing a culture already 'dry-frozen' and 'fossilized', due to the

use of the term 'traditional'?. How does it enable Africa to participate in the currencies of this century, like other continents?. How does it liberate Africa from a mould invented by outsiders, and imposed stiffly on her past, present and future? These are the worries of Picton, and no game of substitution can allay his fears.

Osasona however does not attempt to solve Picton's problem, but further complicates it. Her 'vernacular' forms still rest on a foundation of the 'traditional' forms which ulcerate Picton. Without that foundation her 'vernacular' buildings cannot stand. and since Picton denies her that foundation, her theoretical edifice may collapse. Her corner-stone, in a metaphoric manner of speaking, is a rock already rejected by Picton.

Ultimately, what is required is an algebra, a structural surgery, a breaking down, a deconstruction of the problem, before a reconstruction and restructuring can be affected. An algorithm of the crisis of 'traditional' culture must be composed, before a fitting meta-aesthetic can be formulated.

In order to vigorously confront this cultural ailment, we shall explore and examine its genesis and historical course of complication, before dispensing any therapy.

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Nicholas Wolterstorff has rightly observed that 'the glory of twentieth-century analytic philosophy is not revealed in the field of the philosophy of art'. In a similar vein, one may maintain that the gem of Western art historical scholarship has not reflected on the subject of African art, with a few recent exceptions. The conservative stance of art history has been largely responsible for this anomaly, where there is a tardiness to concede as art the

creative output of Africans. This overt gregarious protectionism has laid the discipline of art history open to revealing attacks from the 'outside', in recent years specifically by semioticians.

The ectopic position of semiotic art criticism has been challenged by leading scholars of visual arts, who nervously suspect the motives and motifs of language structuralists and poststructuralists. Derrida, Bryson and Goodman⁶ challenge the stasis of mainstream art historians, notably Kuspit,⁷ who defines and founds an 'autonomous' frontier for the visual arts against the threatening incursions of rampaging semioticians. Kuspit's nervousness is apparent in a virulent defence of his threatened territory. Under the aegis of Friedrich Schiller and Sigmund Freud, he tries to hide the visual arts from serious critical gaze, pleading insanity and libido among other shocking 'complaints' and excuses. The professor of art history complains that,

the visual work of art is closer to the madness of inner life - has more of sacred madness, as it were - than the literary work of art The best visual works can be regarded as careful orchestrations of libidinal excitations. The visual affords a greater opportunity for the expression of repressed libidinal impulse than the verbal⁸

This excuse is a reaction to Norman Bryson, whom Kuspit labels 'a mischievous trouble maker', after Bryson claimed that 'it is a sad fact: art history lags behind the study of other arts'. Kuspit therefore pleads desperately for the visual arts to be left alone to the slow devices of art history, even if they are obsolete. Dismissing Kuspit's pleas, Nelson Goodman and Catherine Elgin¹⁰ still insist that art criticism must be allowed to benefit from the latest tools of language analysis.

The outside intervention is timely and necessary and deserves full consideration. This is especially important when we consider how shoddily art historians continue to handle the affairs of African art, all in the name of trying to protect the tenets of the discipline, which Kuspit describes as 'legalistically territorialized as an area of clearly marked boundaries'¹¹.

Thus is it with relief that one welcomes Drewal's¹² view that an 'eclectic' approach is required, if one must fully embrace the study of African art. Yet Drewal's call is ambiguous, because he has not clearly articulated the strategies of the 'eclectic'. Will the proposed multidisciplinary approach still operate with the controversial terminologies in current application? Will it develop an alternative meta - language?

Drewal seems quite comfortable with the term 'traditional', but Picton insists that that term deftly imposes a 'Tarzan - film view of Africa in order to preserve, promote and define civilization at the expense of others in terms of their relative "primitivity"'. Thus the use of 'traditional' to replace primitive is a puerile game of substitution, a game which dates back to the early days of anthropology's 'discovery' of African art¹³. It has a history that is not only short, but easily traceable, with its emotional theories. Scientific theories, as Kuhn¹⁴ warns, are not formulated as a system of substitution, where one idea gives way to a better one, in a unilineal drive towards an ultimate, superior truth.

The game of elimination by substitution, where one term gives way to better or less-offensive ones, continues to rule African art. Thus the term 'traditional' is the 'acceptable, fine way' of calling a body that used to be known as 'primitive', 'tribal', 'fetish', etc. The term now is up for trial, its days numbered.

The terminology itself is not the problem, because substituting the word 'traditional' for 'indigenous' or 'vernacular', as being

proposed, will serve no lasting purpose. Indicted, the term 'traditional' is already tainted, objectionable and suspect, rendering it no longer suitable for any non-offensive discussion. The ambiguities and distortion which Picton associates with the term can no longer be disregarded.

But after abandoning 'traditional' and adopting another 'nicer' sounding term, the fear is founded that it would not survive any lengthy usage. One is then caught in a trap of developing a new term only to later reject it as inadequate. It seems as if the 'spirits' of Popper¹³ keep popping out of every chosen term, causing the need for continual exorcism, in African art historical criticism. The critics are then turned into witch-hunters, who suspect every term of hosting evil spirits, that must be inquisitioned.

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African art gesthetics may be spared this wanton witch-hunting of individual terminologies. Instead of emphasizing the differences between the substituted terms, their relationships could be investigated. Though their relationships might not be immediately apparent, most of these objectionable terms are related. Once the relationships are discovered, they could be viewed as parts of one huge problem, and a common solution sought.

What do we always find objectionable with these discarded terminologies? What factors relate them, present them as the various features of one colossal mirage, and disturb the study of African art?

All of these loaded terms have one major characteristic: they contribute to the exploitation of African art, albeit in various manners. Some of them, including 'idol', 'primitive' and 'tribal' convey the erroneous impression that the art objects are inferior,

retrogressive and undesirable, entreating Africans to reject and discard these images and ignore whatever function they might perform. While African, under pressure and force, discard these images, others collect them in foreign museums and galleries. Nowadays the most outstanding examples of African art are found in private and public collections in Europe and America.

The term 'traditional' in African art, poses a different type of danger, because it begins its damages where the other terms terminate. Unlike 'idol', 'primitive' and 'tribal', it is not meant to offend, because it is adopted as a palliative measure after people were offended by the other terms. It is therefore a 'superlative' term, which defines a collection mostly outside Africa, a collection whose constant celebration denies attention to the work of living African artists. In the current search for 'authenticity' in African art, the works regarded as 'traditional' are given priority. Modern African art is often condemned as aping foreign models and lacking in the 'Africanness' found in the 'traditional' works.

Thus 'traditional' art has been 'invented' also to render and keep the work of living artists invisible and consequently inaccessible to the international art market. Under derogatory terms like 'primitive' and 'tribal', influential museums and galleries in Europe and America stock up ancient African objects. These terms sound exotic and psychologically satisfying to their customers, who are thus reassured of their own civilisation and sophistication, relative to the 'primitive' collections they jealously guard. But to buy 'contemporary' African art is to accept that Africans are capable of contemporary sophistications, like the people of the northern hemisphere. Hardly therefore, is there any important gallery that caters to the interest of contemporary African art in Europe and America. They prefer to promote the anonymous, so called 'traditional' art objects, while suspecting 'contemporary' artists.

The collectors of the objects termed 'traditional' can now name high prices for their collections, because they have a virtual monopoly over that limited corpus. Secondly, they are able to regard modern works of Africa with disdain as an inferior category while, simultaneously, a 'reconsideration' of the modern work proceeds, as a minor activity in the West, facilitating the acquisition of the masterprices of 'contemporary' African art cheaply. An example is the magnitude of noise and fanfare which attends the exhibition of 'traditional' Yoruba art by the Smithsonian. Yet several exhibitions of contemporary African art are shown with little or no promotion.

Thus, once again, the best of the modern works are being acquired and alienated from Africa, with minimal fuss.

The cycle continues, because those contemporary works which the North avidly collects and stores in museums will no longer be available to Africa in the near future; by that time those African artists who now produce works will have passed away, and their work will have become part of African history, and a visual documentation of our times. But by the time the loss is felt, it will be too late to do anything. Only then would it become clear that the present terminology may, in the wrong hands serve as ploy to distract the attention of Africans, confuse and manipulate their taste, in order to exploit them even further.

Consequently, the tools of the good people who tirelessly expand the frontiers of African art scholarship require substantial theoretical reconsideration. Thompson is already well-reviewed by Hallen,⁶ for presenting his own conceptual analysis as Yoruba aesthetics. Omari has imposed a similar critique on Abiodun's work¹⁷. In a similar vein, the methods of Drewal, Pemberton and Cole remain within the Panofskian 'iconography' mould, whose shortcomings are elucidated by Christine Hassenmueller¹⁸.

Most timely, therefore, is the irritation of semioticians with art history, even though their methods might not be wholly adequate for the investigation of visual form, despite Elgin's and Goodman's¹⁹ conviction.

Hassenmueller²⁰ has carefully demonstrated some of the problems inherent in semiotic analyses of the visual art. Similarly Nicholas Wolterstorff²¹ has criticised Goodman's approach, submitting that conceptual analysis lacks the language to 'purchase' art, due to the problems of visibility. He suggests a 'Realist' approach emphasizing 'the social practices of art as dealing not just with actuality but with possibility and impossibility, and not just with particulars but with properties and actions and kinds'²². He however does not show us clearly how to apply this method to aesthetic, apart from saying that 'it offers us a cogent and powerful way of explaining what it is to project a world'²³. Though Hassenmueller provides no alternative approach, her work also underlines the reservations about the suitability of semiotics for analysing visual arts. These reservations become urgent and compelling when we consider how Barthes²⁴ and Heidegger²⁵ subjugate visibility with their semiotic engagement of photography and van Gogh's painting of boots respectively. Huckle's review is a grave portent of how ridiculously remote and inaccessible a semiotic misappropriation of the visual form can be.

If such an alienation can transpire in the discussion of relatively secular and simple Western forms, one shudders to imagine what a mess semiotics will make of the studies of African forms, with its more transcendental and complex contexts.

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To allow for the appropriate analysis of visual forms, semiotics

will submit to deconstruction and reconstruction. When the word 'semiotic' is opened to reveal its cotyledons, we have two Grecian components of *semeion* and *otic*, meaning 'sign' and 'hearing' respectively. Herein are buried the roots of semiotics as an analytic system, devised for the interpretation of verbal constructs. That language in semiotics, is both the *signa* and the *aesthetics*, has become the most insurmountable problem with attempts to analyse visual signa with semiotic theories.

Semiotics is really an aspect of semiology. Semiology is a generic subject, combining *semeion* with *logos*, 'sign' and 'studies' respectively, to become the study of signs in cultures. As it is being practised, semiotics monopolises semiology, whereas it is only one of its two arms. To obtain the second arm of semiology, the visual, we need to combine *semeion* with *optic* (visuality) to arrive at 'semioptics'.

Drawing from the treasures of critical resources replete in semiology, semioptics is a dynamic composite approach to critical inquiry, specifically designed to address the challenge of visual arts. Semioptics attempts to evaluate art objects from an eclectic multidisciplinary perspective, using the existing tools of semiology where they prove applicable, but devising other analytic methods, where the extant ones fail. That language remains the tool of semioptics does not imply that it is also the subject. Unlike semiotics, language is employed merely to facilitate analysis and remains secondary to the visual substance of semioptics.

The major difference between semioptics and the existing Panofskian systems is the integrative study of art: semioptics does not separate the execution of form from its implementation. Therefore in semioptic, the Panofskian separation to three levels of interpretation, pre-iconography, iconography and iconological²⁷, does not operate. Neither does it accept

Goodman's²⁸ definition of implementation as beginning where execution concludes. If the goal of art is 'implementation', the process of implementation commences with the execution of the work, and continues well after the work is 'completed', even after the makers have ceased to exist physically. The maker continues to exist in the object, much like da Vinci continues to live in *Mona Lisa*, and Olowe Ise continues to live in his *Ogaga Gate*. The artist makes the work, and the work makes the artist, in a synchronic system fusing both form and function.

Emphasis in semioptics is on the life of the form, from the moment of conception, through its physical realisation, to the strains of restoration and curating. Semioptics thus imposes more responsibilities on the art critic, much beyond the call of art history as practised now.

Perhaps the greatest assets of semioptics is its relationship with its twin subject, semiotics, which defines it by delimiting it. It is able to draw extensively from semiotics, and at the same time learn from the problems of that discipline. For instance, while semiotics *reads* art as *text*, as propounded by Goodman, semioptics *views* art as *pattern*. Even when texts appear in visual art, they may be viewed as patterns, which fit within the whole picture. All visual images form patterns of interacting shapes and colours. Patterns of meanings may also be derived from these interacting patterns of shapes and colours. The aim of semioptics is to view the relationship between these two principal parallel patterns, reflect upon it and articulate these reflections in words.

Since semioptics is also a system based on *signa*, its interaction with semiotics gives it access to the rich resources of critical dissemination already available in semiology. For example Saussure's 'signified' and 'signifier'²⁹, and Goodman's³⁰ meta-language of 'density' and 'repleteness' are useful and

applicable to the description of visual patterns. To fully understand semioptics, therefore, a study of semiotics must be made in deference to the contribution which it has made and will continue to make to semioptics. But each discipline is different despite their common derivation from semiology.

A combination of both semiotics and semioptics will open up the analysis of African culture, and infuse energy into the interpretation of visual and verbal symbols. A knowledge of both disciplines is necessary for the analysis of visual art objects which according to Abiodun²¹ have verbal corollaries crucial to the understanding of the material culture, without the need to use loaded terms. Thus semioptics and semiotics can be useful as tools in the first order of aesthetic discourse.

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Semioptics is not only an aesthetics of the first order, it is also applicable to the analysis of aesthetic discourses, by relating the patterns of thought with the visual patterns provoking these thoughts. This, when applied to Picton's paper, shows that it falls within a particular pattern in Western discussion of aesthetics. This pattern we shall call 'Picton's complex.' Picton's complex is the tendency for a (master?) culture to continually review its terminologies in order to maintain control over the (subject?) culture. It is not only a practical disposition, but also a pattern of psychological needs, based on old habits.

What the outside has managed to invent is not 'traditional' African art. What is fabricated is a false 'talk about art; a pseudo-aesthetics, a Picton's complex, extending beyond the visual into other areas of African culture, including history, literature, religion and philosophy. Some of the motives and motifs are already outlined in Picton's paper as well as mine.

What John Picton is doing is asking us to see through this mirage, so that we may view properly what we are trying to study. Few people have made a more practical call in the study of African art aesthetics, though it may be misconstrued as an emotional display.

Whoever suffers from Picton's complex will never see anything wrong in using 'primitive' to describe African art. The severity of this ailment, quite rampant in the North, is manifest in the pages of California's *African Art*, especially the ads. A full semioptic study of that famous journal, based on Picton's complex, begs to be made.

NOTES

1. This firewood is bad
Remove it from the stove
That (firewood) is ugly
Remove it from the stove
Another is smoky
Remove it from the stove
Yet another is bent
Remove it from the stove
Which one is then left
To cook the meal with!
2. Catherin Z. Elgin and Nelson Goodman, 'Changing the subject', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. XLVI, Special Issue, 1987, p.220.
3. See John Pemberton III, 'The Carvers of the North-East', in *Yoruba, Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*; The Center for African Art, New York, 1989.

4. See *Yoruba Images: Essays In Honour of Lamidi Fakeye*, ed. Moyo Okediji, Ife Humanities Society, 1989.
5. Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Philosophy of Art After Analysis and Romanticism', *The Journal of Aesthetics And Art Criticism*, Vol XLVI, Special Issue, 1987, p.151.
6. See Jacques Derrida, *Positions*; (London, 1981), p.82; Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The logic of the Gaze* (New Haven, 1983); Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of symbols*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, 1976).
7. Donald Kuspit, 'Traditional Art History's Complaint Against the Linguistic Analysis of Visual Art', *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, Vol XLV, No 4, 1987.
8. *Ibid.*, P. 347
9. Bryson, P. XI
10. Elgin and Goodman, P.223.
11. Kuspit, P.345.
12. See Henry Drewal's paper in *African Art Studies: The State of the Discipline*, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C. 1990.
13. See *African Art Studies: The State of the Discipline*, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C. 1990.
14. See T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago, 1962).

15. See *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, ed. Paul Schipp, Library of Living Philosophers, Vol XIV (Lasalle,) 1974).
16. See Barry Hallen, 'The Art Historian As a Conceptual. Conceptual Analyst', *The Journal of Aesthetics And Art Criticism*, Vol XXXVII, No3, 1979, PP.303 - 313.
17. See Mikele Omari's discussion of Abiodun's paper in *African Art Studies: The State of the Discipline*, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C., 1990.
18. Christine Hasenmueller, 'Panofsky, Iconography, and Semiotics', *The Journal of Aesthetic And Art Criticism*, Vol XXXVI, No 3, 1978, pp. 289-301.
19. Cf note 10.
20. Hasenmueller, op cit.
21. Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'The Philosophy of Art After Analysis And Romanticism', *The Journal of Aesthetics And Art Criticism*, Vol XLVI, Special Issue, 1987, P. 155.
22. *Ibid*, P. 166
23. *Ibid.*
24. Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Cited in note 26.
25. Roland Bathes, *Camera Lucida*, cited in note 26.
26. Nicholas Huckle, 'On Representation And Essence: Bathes And Heideggers', *The Journal of Aesthetics And Art*

Criticism, Vol XLIII, No.3, 1988, pp. 275-280.

27. See Erwin Panofsky, 'Introduction' in *Studies In Iconology : Humanistic Themes In the Art of the Renaissance* (New York, 1939).
28. Nelson Goodman, 'Implementation of Art', *The Journal of Aesthetics And Art Criticism*, vol XLI, No 3, 1982, pp. 218-284.
29. See Wendell V. Harris, 'On Being sure of Saussure', *The Journal of Aesthetics And Art criticism*, Volume, XLI, No 4, 1983, pp. 387-397.
30. See Nelson Goodman, '*Some Notes on Languages of Art; Problems And Projects* (Indianapolis 1972); Douglas Arrell, 'What Goodman should Have said about Representation', *The Journal of Aesthetics And Art Criticism*, Vol. XLVI, No 1. 1987, p. 47.
31. Rowland Abiodun, 'Verbal And Visual metaphors: Mythical Allusions In Yoruba Ritualistic Art of Ori', *Ife : Annals of the Institute of Cultural Studies*, Vol, 1, No 1 1986, pp 8-38.

The author is grateful to Michael Harris for his comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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DENVER & ILE-IFE