

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FRANCOPHONE ORATURE TO THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIAN YOUTHS

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Abstract

It has been revealed that the bulk of overall challenges confronting human race today vary between worsening human rights violations, socio-cultural environmental problems, child abuse, terrorism, mental disorders, drug addiction, juvenile delinquency, youth disorientation and crisis of cultural identity. These challenges are direct repercussions of the insufficient acknowledgement of culture in national policies. It is remarkable to observe that oral tradition remains the authentic origin of African history and it is dependable evidence and societal guidance of African norms and values. It is the single approach of giving important and dependable records for a genuine understanding of ancient population and with the current status of oral tradition in stocking historical sources, we are now preoccupied with how to make it acceptable to the Nigerian youths both at home and in the diaspora. The main focus now is to get involved in the types of arts and politics that can liberate Nigerian youths to be able to create its own roles. The paper is based on cultural criticism. A theory that emphasizes the principle that individual human subjectivity develops in a reciprocal relationship with its traditional environment while we are compelled within the boundaries designed for us by our culture, thus we may strive within the limits set for us or change them.

We employed interpretive design method of literary analysis. A library-based method coupled with the use of communication and information technology. This interpretive design method studies social life which takes into cognizance human action. The study examines the idea of oral literature, analyses the social importance to Nigerian youths, it brings to the fore another cultural emergence and cultural consciousness. The paper concludes that francophone oral literature should not be relegated to the background because of its relevance to world thought.

Keywords: Francophone orature, Nigerian youths, literature, cultural criticism.

Introduction

African oral literature is a means of narrating our ancestors' accomplishments, their priceless and modern contributions to the growth of global thought and concepts to white men, who believe that Africans have no cultural values and are hereditarily substandard to other races. Africans have demonstrated to the entire world their philosophy, history and artistic desires. They are not as irrational as being presented by the white, rather, illiterate African societies still view the oral medium as a worthwhile context for imaginative self-expression. Some elements are sung, others are spoken in narrative form, and others are simply verbalized on

peculiar occasions. African oral literature serves to impart morals that are included in several stories targeted at the younger generation because they have not had much knowledge about the world. Francophone oral literature appears to be in risk of oblivion if drastic steps are not taken to correct the situation. Modern facilities like the internet, films, politics, television, telephone, radio and money currently drive most adults away from the traditional manner of sharing beautiful stories with young ones after the day's work, and the quest for the younger ones to be immersed in the African oral tradition continues to fade away. The reason is not far fetched as the changing economy has given room for people to engage in creative work.

Concept of African Orature

Akporobaro (2000:29) views oral literature as the heritage of imaginative oral creations, narratives, folk beliefs and song of ancient societies which have metamorphosed and passed on through oral means from one generation to another. It is not compulsory for literature to be written or verbal but the composition of verbal art, oral performances of high level of artistic expositions and recitations are the products of creative imagination by the artists of spoken art in the ancient African communities. These works are made and created by non-educated raconteurs, they are sung during special occasions, chanted, recited, spoken and stored in their memories. These creative works are committed to memories, available for writing and ready to appeal to our aesthetic imagination. On this note, the aforementioned aesthetic performance deserves to be known as oral literature. No wonder, the Malian Philosopher, Hampaté Bâ reiterates that in Africa, “a dying old man is a library set ablaze”. Traditionally, African culture is a spoken culture and the literature that comes from it is verbal in nature and they are songs, folklores, riddles, myths, proverbs epics genealogy and host of others that are passed from one period of time to another. Hampaté Bâ “burning library” emphasizes the scope of orature and the urgent need to keep and store as much as possible of folklores for preservation and study before the aged custodians leave the planet earth with their

knowledge and wisdom. Each society is endowed with its literature which serves as their experiences in life; therefore, literature is very essential to a group of people as it portrays their socio-cultural heritage. Chronologically, oral literature precedes others and it is widely known and lived by the African masses. (Jegede, 2021:8) avers that oral literature is a type of imaginative verbal expression that is transmitted from one generation to generation by the words of mouth. In the same vein, Simpson (1995:115) describes African orature as vital and ubiquitous in each community's language.

Verbal art is waxing stronger in black world despite all the frustrations from many areas to relegate it to the background. It is pertinent to note that without oral literature, our past would enter into complete oblivion. Besides, African orature includes the history and origin of the black people. More so, national wisdom cum tribal, material and non-material culture, norms and values were conveyed orally through orature.

Orature covers many areas in Africa because virtually all aspects of human endeavors are conveyed verbally. More so, this work implores African writers to take it as a point of duty to showcase the beauty inherent in orature especially the aesthetic beauty embedded in the choice of narrative techniques, stylistic devices, the preferences for describing traditional objects, the types of characters used and the forms of poetry at its peak. On the other hand, African literature being the umbrella for all branches of orature cannot be overemphasized since it consists of a body of creative works in various genres and in different languages which range from indigenous to colonial languages and from oral to written ones, therefore, orature has come to stay, it can no longer be relegated to the background as it includes some expressions that appeal to our imagination such as riddles, history, genealogy, epics oral poetry, myths and incantation etc. In the same vein, orature is a spoken sphere that is passed down from one generation to another, it lays the precedents for customs and traditions to move forward and encounter changes,

thus, it reminds the whole community about the past and its experiences.

Orature also serves as a working tool for the distinguished African writers like the late Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Ahmadou Kourouma, Camara Laye, Hampaté Bâ, Mariama Bâ and Aminata Sow Fall etc. They worked extensively on the major themes of African cultural heritage, racial discriminations, injustice, condemnation of European subjugations, the clash between the indigenous and colonial culture, independence of African states, thus, orature is a vehicle used to express nationalistic feelings. Orature attempts to serve humanistic and creative needs such that its importance and value cannot be over looked to the extent that it ranges from unlettered to lettered words of the mouth.

Orature is highly critical of a given society, hence, political satire emerges as an aspect of orature because it examines the relationship between literacy and orality such that it showcases of the verbal art in epics, oral poetry, riddles and genealogy, therefore, “when an old man dies in Africa, it is a library that burns” (Karim, 1992). He reiterates the fact that orature is concerned with the survival of the whole community likewise the regional ethnic group. To him, orature serves as a watchdog as it awakens people’s consciousness to dwell in unity as a society which serves as a didactic tool that always teaches a moral lesson at the end of a story. Orature improves the lives and moral values of people such that it is necessary for the development and growth of a society. For example, in Yoruba land, (Adeniyi, 2004) observes the functions of orature when it respects the constituted authority and gears the spirit of obedience and respect the elders in the community.

A lot of cultural norms and values, superstitions, crafts, death and birth ceremonies, religious and occupational activities are derived from Hausa-Fulani customs. Their proverbs contain lots of philosophy and wisdom that are time proven and also serve as a guide to the society and posterity (Traore, 1997). The traditional pattern of lifelong education in Africa is composed mainly of oral literature which

includes local myths, wise sayings, riddles (Owhotu, 1986). Therefore, the basis of literature is the traditional folktale which is an embodiment of traditional life and personality. Francophone oral literature is the sum total of the francophone people’s way of life that comprises of material and non-material components. Material components include carving of different shapes of woods, bronze, masks, buildings and cars while non-material components depend on values, beliefs, mores, custom, religion, superstitions and traditional stories. In others words, it is the fabric with which francophone societies are woven together because it covers the ordering of the conduct of people’s relations in the private, social and public spheres, therefore, francophone orature is planned to showcase the richness of African culture and her vitality. It embraces as well the entire essential feature of a group that embodies among other things as what people think of themselves and the universe they live, their worldview, how they organize their life in order to ensure their survival, institutions, religions and their educational systems. It is passed on from time immemorial till now and also learned but not usually inherited, dynamic but not static because its textual analysis changes from time to time and as individuals interact so also are cultures. Colonialism in Africa brought about francophone oral literature on the basis of this, the policy of assimilation and French colonial education were developed and imposed by French language and civilization at the expense of local languages of the former French colonies in Africa. Therefore, francophone African writers were not formally taught in their mother’s tongue nor educated in their native language at the school but Nigeria being a case study has more Anglophone African writers than their counterparts and were not totally assimilated like their colleagues in francophone world. More so, African writers as regards orature have made conscious efforts to showcase the beauty of African cultural heritage and they are greatly manifested in oral poetry, political satire, the figurative use of language stylistic devices, imagery and symbols etc.

Theoretical Approach

The theoretical approach applied to this study is cultural criticism. A theory which shares the opinion that culture and human history makes up complex area of dynamic forces which can construct solely a partial subjective picture. It also shares the belief that individual human subjectivity such as selfhood is bound to develop in reciprocal relationship with its cultural setting while we are limited within the limits laid down for us by our culture whereby we may struggle to transform them. To Foucault, the superior class dictates the forms of art to be considered high culture than the other one and forms of popular culture like popular music, songs, poetry and comedies have been reduced to inferior culture, therefore, the work considers Homi Bhabha and Micheal Foucault as cultural critics who refused to distinguish between the superior and inferior cultures, To them, both are meaningful with distinction, none is superior to other. Cultural criticism draws its foundation from a French Philosopher, Foucault, one of the most influential intellectuals of the twentieth century. Cultural criticism is politically oriented in the sense that it argues the fact that the working class culture has been undervalued and misunderstood. To Foucault, the dominant class dictates what forms of art to be considered superior or high culture and forms of popular culture like popular music, songs and comedies have been relegated to the status of low culture, therefore, for cultural critics like Foucault and Homi Bhabha, there is no meaningful distinction between the so-called high and low forms of culture. Tyson (1999:293) corroborates Foucault assertion which says that “all cultural productions can be analyzed to reveal the cultural work they perform, that is the ways in which they shape our experience by transmitting or transforming ideologies, which means, of course, the role of cultural productions in the circulation of power”. Based on this, cultural theorists believe that the superior and the dominant class are seen as "high and low culture in order to showcase its own image of superiority and power but cultural critics argue further as well that low or subordinate populations produce forms of art that

could transform the whole society, such culture is not proud but ready to tolerate and co-habit with other cultures of the world. In the light of this, some selected artists, poets, writers, musicians, historians, artisans have showcased their talents to the cultural world by singing, writing novels, poems and dramas. For example, Homi Bhabha debates the question of cultural hybridization as he maintains that cultural purity is not visible, His *Location of culture* (1994) places emphasis on cultural difference as opposed to cultural diversity, therefore, Kolawole (2014:8) confirms that “every culture has something to offer the world as well as something to learn from other cultures. No culture is so pure that it cannot be enriched by other cultures”.

Oral Traditions in Francophone Novels

The African village gives their writers the opportunity of entering into the mysterious world of their forefathers through their writings, for example, in *Trois Pretendants Un Mari* of Guillaume Oyono Mbia, *Ville cruelle* (The Wicked City) of Eza Boto, *Les Nouveaux Contes et Contes d'Ahmadou Koumba* (The New tales and tales of Ahmadou Koumba) by Birago Diop. In the following literary texts mentioned above, the African rural area is portrayed as the natural habitat of the custodians of tradition such as traditional Priests, Healers and The Griot. Camara Laye in his depiction of the village draws our attention to symbolic objects such as amulets against diseases, charms and grigris africain that keep evil spirits far away from the villagers, potions and the sacred snakes which is the mystery behind the success of the artisan employed in *L'Enfant noir* (The dark child) by Camara Laye. For example, the part of recurrent theme in African literature is the portrayal of snake in the novel as a guiding spirit which represents the unbreakable link between the dead and the living. More so, the animal has a decisive role to play in picking the heir to the family through nocturnal communion with the elect and the capacity to give foreknowledge of events to its protégé cannot be overemphasized, for instance, in *Ville Cruelle* (Wicked City) Banda analyses the extent to which the dead can go to help the people they love as it happened in *Le pagne noir* (Black

wrapper) by Bernard Dadié where the lost spoon of the wicked step-mother was found by the assistance of the little girl's dead mother. According to Eza Boto in *Ville cruelle*, the dead could appear to their loved ones in the dream to warn them about an impending dangers and suggest possible ways out of them all, for example, Banda, who was single because of his inability to pay dowry for the girl he loved found on his dead 15,000 francs the exact money he needed for the dowry, therefore, Banda, interpreted it as a divine help from his ancestors.

The Griot

The Griot is a praise singer who reproduces oral history, legendary events, fables, riddles and folktales to suit his audience. He is respected personnel in African society, he is a depositor of indigenous knowledge, often consulted by the African elders about the origin of a particular place. Such example is given in *Climbié* by Bernard Dadié as he acknowledges the Griots as the people who make other people happy. According to the writer, the praise singers are there "to gladden a company to maintain tradition, to stimulate again the vitalizing fluids of the past. (Dadier 1971:104). In *L'Enfant Noir*, Camara Laye features a praise singer who uses music and words of flattery to stir emotion. His performance creates a state of ecstasy, which keeps the spirits, against which the artisan alive till the piece of art is accomplished. Sometimes, the accompanying chant evokes powerful spirits, against which the artisan has to arm himself. The griot is the very son of the soil of ancient Africa and custodian of historical traditions. Griots are artists who chant, epics and legends are veritable works of art. They also sustain the interest of the listeners through their narrative skills and inventiveness. Praise singers help to preserve African epics, for their performances are usually about a past that needs to be preserved. Their performances deal with history, warfare and war heroes on their achievements. One of the most popular epic Soundjata Keita who founded the empire of Mali. *Le maître de la parole* is a reproduction of oral history. It relates war events (the battle of Kirina), the reign of kings (King of Sosso), traditional festivals, the prediction of oracles

and stories pertinent to totemism, divination, magic, traditional consummation of marriage, traditional honour for the virgin, The book gives a greater insight into the role and attribute of the griot, the means by which performance outstanding memory is developed and etiquette to be observed (mode of dressing, gifts to be presented) by approaching him for information.

Folklore

The study of folklore in Africa has taken the shape of the collection and the recording of folkore materials in order that the oral traditions may not disappear with the rise of literacy Oyegoke (1997). As Okpewho (1990) has argued, the centrality of performance at the level of orality is an inescapable fact. On this same point, Iyasere's observation seems relevant (1980:170) when he says:

In keeping with traditional emphasis on creativity in all artistic endeavors, the critical evaluation was considered a creative act, artistic performance. No matter how insightful or imaginative a critic might be, if he lacked the art of theatrical rendition, verbal dexterity and specifically, the mastery of the rhetorical techniques of delivery, he would hardly find an audience, of it's dancing with irregular steps.

One of the prominent features of African writings is the folklore techniques which incorporates music. Musical instruments such as kora (harp) the balafong (the xylophone) and the khalarm (small guitar) are commonly used in Senghor's poetry to dictate the pace of performance and enhance poetic elegance. The public appearance of the king in *Le Regard du roi* (The Radiance of the king) and circumcision in *L'Enfant Noir* (the dark child) are graced with music and dance. In *Unpiège sans fin* (Endless trap) Bhely Quenum inserts some fun songs, some of them translated into French for maximum effect. Awa's song of appeal in *Le Pagne Noir* recalls similar songs of appeal like that of the dog which hid its mother in heaven in order to receive nourishment from her in time of want. Johnson (1990:222). The chants are not

only intended for breaking the monotony of the narration and reinforcing poetic elegance, they are also used for initiating audience participation to retain the dramatic nature of the source. When audience participation is implied, only the refrains of the original songs are used. An example is the song in honour of Sogolon's future husband, which is repeated by the assembled guests.

Proverbs

Proverbs are distilled sources of knowledge of past generations. According to Emmanuel Obiechina (1975:153), proverbs are the kernel which contains the wisdom of the traditional people. They are philosophical and moral expositions shrunk to a few words, and they form a mnemonic device in societies in which everything worth knowing and relevant to everyday life has to be committed to memory. Proverbs are equally significant features and are, in fact very numerous in African novels and drama. Their aim may be ascribed to the African belief that proverbs are the essence of discourse. According to the Yoruba, when discourse begins to drag, it must be revitalized with appropriate proverbs. In francophone oral literature, proverbs are either loosely translated or adapted to specific contexts. Sometimes, they are formally explained wisdom of the elders, Assiemien is informed in Assiemien *Dehyle*, that is “Quand la jeune tortue a perdu son chemin, elle retourne sur ses pas pour demander conseil aux vieilles” (When a young tortoise has missed the road, it must go back to older ones for advice).

Beauty of Francophone Oral Tradition

Francophone oral traditions are interesting not only because of their potency for analogy and vivid illustration, but also evoke equivalents in the specific cultures of readers thereby facilitating the perception of affinities and divergences in Africa modes of expression. E.g. Totems are commonly used by African writers as symbols of performance and integrity. Totemism also underlines the belief in the mystical communion between an animal or a plant species and a special group to which the consumption of the totemic object may be a taboo. Geomancy is another traditional practice found in

most African literary works of art. The only difference in the pertinent texts is the types of instruments used and the modes of integration. E.g. Yoruba Ifa priests use 16 sacred nuts for Ifa divination as documented by Prof. Wande Abimbola (1975) while Malinké Geomancers use 30 stones as we find in Camara Laye's *Le Maître de la parole*, Traditional Africans believe in the predictions of the sage and would under no circumstances undertake an important enterprise without consulting one. There is a remarkable similarity in the disposition of African deities. Ogun and Sango in *Une Piège Sans fin* and N'Tomo in *Noces Sacrées* (Sacred honeymoon). These gods are portrayed as materialistic and vindictive forces, which chastise those who defy them and grant the requests of those who offer sacrifices. Another common feature is circumlocution or round - about expression. In African discourse, circumlocution is very often a manifestation of reverence for important personalities. In Yoruba land for example, an Oba is never pronounced dead. He is often said to have ascended through ceiling or to have gone to join his ancestors. In Dadier's Assiemien *Dehyle the Agni* equivalent is "the tree is broken" similarly the transition of an influential person is often compared to the fall of an elephant. Sometimes, it is the animal symbol of an Oba that is used for breaking the news of his death. For example, people would say in respect of the Oni of Ife, the most elevated of the Obas of the Yoruba: "the leopard is gone". The use of animal symbols, which evoke the rule is qualities, was very fashionable in Benin Republic. Thus, in literary discourse, such rulers may be alluded to by using their symbols, notably the buffalo for Ghezo, the chameleon for Akaba.

Literature and Culture

Generally speaking, culture refers to the totality of people's way of life. As Bamikunle (1999:52) put it, "each work of art, literature finds inspiration in the historic social realities in which the author finds himself" from the above, it is clear that the literary artist does not operate in vacuum, he derives his preoccupation from culture Ubioworo and al (2008:136) Francophone oral literature has drawn

inspiration from African culture. Therefore, closely tied to the above is the fact that the literary artist animates culture thereby giving the people a new vision of life. Obiechina (1978:34) submits that it is obvious that the West African writer cannot write without strong commitment and propaganda motive if he is to contribute to the rehabilitation of the traditional culture". In his opinion, he systematically described the relationship between culture and literature such that it is necessary to agree with Obiechina who observed that the West African writer bases his authority for an art that is "functional and utilitarian as well as producing aesthetic pleasure". On the other hand, literature whether written or verbal promote cultural continuity.

Culture

Culture is "the whole complex of distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also made of life, the fundamental rights, traditions and beliefs" This definition is cited from UNESCO'S 1982 declaration on culture. It means that culture makes human beings distinct not only just a way of life as it was defined by the sociological critics. This definition in essence, attempts to define culture as fulfilling its societal role which may enable human beings to achieve their uniqueness or differences. Leopold Sedar Senghor ¹ of Senegal observes on the eve of the cultural festival "no problem is more important for black culture. Black people are engaged in discussing and often disagreeing about negritude or the African personality. He asks "what is culture". To define it, it will be necessary to compare it with civilization.

"Civilization" is the combination of facts and social phenomena, structures and values which characterize any given society. "Culture" is within the framework of this "civilization" the combination of its values; in one word, its spirit. It follows from this, that each race, and ethnic group, each nation indeed each society has its own values. Because there is a black race and a black ethnic group, there is similarly a black civilization and a black culture. Senghor affirms:

"The Arabs are divided on practically every issue except that which really matters, that is culture Arabness. It is exactly this faith which they have in their culture that gives Arabs their strength and their advantage over us the black"(Senghor 1977:13).

He explains further that "Black culture is a set of values originating from blacks as is expressed in their different national societies. "Our culture is so strong that it is expressed even in the way we walk, laugh or cry: the German Philosopher, Herman Von Keyserling used to say that the Americans dance, walk and laugh like the blacks". Senghor asks:

"What are these original values that make up black culture? They are fundamentally the sense of communion between the visible and the invisible, man, nature and God: the sense of analogical images which expressed this communion and finally the sense of rhythm."(Ibid: 14)

All countries whether they are developed or developing now agree that their essential problem is to ensure their development through a national coherent and effective plan. All economists equally agreed that from start to finish of any development plan, there is man himself, with values, his culture. It is man supported by his values who produces the plan and this plan has as its objectives the development of man, that is to say, development of all his facilities in life in relation to the values of National culture (Akinola 2009:5).

Senghor's strong espousal of the potency of culture is to change, redefine, propel a people, an ethnic group and a race to higher heights. Most of these people are black human right crusaders and indeed actors and actresses of African descent who have taken Africa to greater heights, they include: Ali Mazrui, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Mariam Makeba, Nelson Mandela, Cyprian Ekwensi, Bob Marley, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Obafemi Awolowo, NnamdiAzikwe, Sembene Ousmane, Ahmadou Kourouma Leopold, Sedar Senghor, Opral Benson,

AyiKwehArmah and several other living and not living "prophets of the black and African culture.

Factors militating against the growth of francophone oral literature

Over the years, there has been a perceptible decline in the quality of education in Nigeria. The Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP), bad policy and governance have adversely affected higher education, facilities in all levels are in a state of disrepair and staff morale has been very low. University education generally is in a poor state and scholarship award has declined. It is self-evident that there is a need to revamp the system. Moreover, Nigerian society is now marked by a disappearing reading culture which itself seems symptomatic of an ailing intellectual culture. Nigerian students are no-where to be found in terms of reading culture compared to their counterparts outside Nigeria. Most of them engage in unprofitable activities that would not take them to new grounds except prison yard. They are mostly found at internet centers engaging in yahoo frauds, prostitutions and terrorism has eaten deep into the bone and marrow of Nigerian youths. The case of Farouk Abdul Murtalab, a terrorist who engaged in different deadly activities while airborne on a journey. Thus, a review of a problem of reading may be a reliable barometer of the intellectual worth of a society at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the educational system. Lekan Oyegoke in his work "riddle of literate and mounting illiteracy in Nigeria" says that Nigerian youths are the main victims of a deleterious social order. Respectful and respectable role models seem few and far between. As the roll-call of intellectuals and other achievers national and international icons is progressively diminished by age and passing the country's youths thus find themselves at the mercy of hacks, pseudo-intellectual and imposters. He says further that with a general erosion of positive values and a comprehensive take-over of national life by political and economic sharks on persons, the youths inherit a culture of shallowness, diabolism and violence. So ill-motivated, the ideal youthful mind that should have regaled and refined itself on good books turns to cultism and the occult for excitement.

Regrettably, a society that allows its youthful mind to be converted into the devils' workshop is doomed and has no decent future to talk about Eyitayo Aloh, writing on issue on world bank quotes Nigerian author Phebean Ogundipe as saying: "a mind that does not read is a dead mind and a life without books is not worth living" (Aloh, 2004:9). Therefore we have to get francophone oral literature back into our cultural diets. It must be included to the school curriculum and taught to pupils with vigour and enthusiasm at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Moreover, the mind of the undergraduates is steadily becoming a theatre and spring board of violence, diabolism and murder and a threat to the wider society. This danger can be averted by getting the students' mind busy absorbing knowledge and profitable skills through increased contact with books and journals and leaving the students little time in which to engage in negative anti-life pass- times (Oyegoke, 1997).

Social relevance of francophone and literature

Literature is the creative work of imagination and the art of composition in prose and verse, this art began as an oral form such as heroic poetry, folktale, the traditional ballad (also known as popular ballad and folk ballad) in every culture before the advent of literacy. The oral art form or orature should be as old as man and woman; it has sought to enlarge the mind over ages. The ability to read and write and the invention of the printing press in the Middle Ages further transformed the capacity of the human mind to enlarge itself with information and knowledge. Research has continued to unearth new folkloric materials as oral literature; scholars endeavor to record the oral art forms for the purpose of their preservation for posterity. Thus, literature reminds us of our humanity or we risk getting so carried away by the many benefits of science and technology that we begin to operate like robots, the mindless machines. The significance of African folktale in the upbringing of children in Africa is that it explores the moral lessons derived from some popular tales among the francophone and Nigerians. It may be observed that the absence of this particular medium of instruction is a great loss to our educational

system in Nigeria. A return to culture is imperative and must not be seen as a return to the past but rather as an appreciation of the resources of the past and their contributions to the present as well as our imaginative response to such contributions in the light of our present problems.

This oral literature is meant to reform Nigerian Youths. To correct some mistakes committed by old African writers, African youths should imbibe their culture in all facets of life. The use of oral traditions enables writers to expand their readership and enlist the interest of lower cadres of readers. Language is used as a means of communicating ideas, opinions and facts for better understanding in every society. Besides, no society has a better way of communicating facts without the instrumentality of language. One of the roles of literature is to correct the ills of the society by exposing and correcting the ignorance of the populace. In addition, Africa as a continent has experienced setbacks as a result of prolonged colonization, slavery and oppression. Africa has been described by writers as continent of corrupt people. Perhaps this is why governments at all levels fail to support the drive to assist in the downtrend against the reading habits as experienced in our higher institutions of learning in order not to agitate the minds of youth against corrupt leaders.

Francophone oral literature is particularly designed to showcase the vitality and richness of African culture, values and ethos. Children are told stories with morals to caution about an immediate act of disobedience, bravery to encourage on a mission or assignment and history to educate and inculcate values. Stories are meant to inculcate morality in young ones, they also entertain, in fact, some of them may serve dual purposes of education and amusement.

The concern of the narrator in these stories is to influence children to conform to the norms of the society while at the same time reminding adults of their responsibilities. Evil is contrasted with good in this category as in all cases the good emerging the winner. The reward of being bad is always a punishment. Francophone African stories are about bravery in order to give people especially children a

sense of pride and belonging. Furthermore, such stories teach children that there is a reward for bravery and that they should not shy away from responsibilities. Stories about endurance, challenges and selflessness are commonly told for both didactic and entertainment purposes. Again, it takes extra courage to save and serve the whole community, the input of those normally looked down upon could be critical and sound, therefore people's views and ideas should not be suppressed. Apart from its aesthetic role, francophone oral literature teaches the young about the major social values of life. Stories and proverbs are used to teach the lessons of honesty, kindness, hard work, helpfulness, good faith, obedience and endurance.

Proverbs are used by elders to instruct other elders about specific codes of behaviour and to remind listeners of age-long wisdom and truth. Francophone African creative writers take pride in exploring their oral traditions as a step in the process of desalination to mental decolonization and to bring Africans closer to their roots, thus filling a gap created by their educational upbringing. Elements of oral traditions provide variety and extend the scope of readership. It gives room for audience participation. The use of oral tradition in francophone writings promotes cultural awareness and it provides useful data for historians, ethnographers and anthropologists.

Oral tradition reveals the inherent beauty of Africa languages and assists readers to appreciate the complexity of these languages. The need for francophone literature to flow into the cosmopolitan mainstream of world literary writings has given birth to oral traditions in some francophone novels. The image of African tradition could be well projected through image and correct the facilities and half-truths written about Africa and her people. For the vast majority of pre-literate societies, oral traditions in the form of legends, myths, proverbs, stories have provided a means for recording the events of the past.

Oral tradition is also an artistic mode of communication in which there is a dialectical and play between fact and fictions, between reality and myth. Oral traditions entail a high degree of

creativity and use of imagination. They are literary artistic forms. Oral traditions in their metaphors and symbols make historical facts vivid, concrete and comprehensible. African oral traditions are rich tapestry of images that present simultaneously diversified perspectives of the past events, characters and episodes. Mythical narratives, legends, myths, personal poems, lyrics and testimonies from the core of African oral tradition. The beauty and source of the value of oral traditions is that they present diverse viewpoints which together can give a total comprehensive picture close to the original facts or state of affairs long forgotten. The lyrics, folktales, myths, proverbs and incantations have been an integral part of the cultural traditions and institutions of human development in Africa. African people expressed their worldview, culture, history, philosophy and artistic aspirations through these forms. They have constructed their social historical experiences and sense of being,

Importance of francophone oral tradition

Among other oral literature across the world, our focus is on Francophone.

Oral literature and its value include the following:

- It transmits culture and knowledge;
- It expresses human thoughts and emotions;
- Literary creativity in the form of dance, storytelling, drumming and chants recitations has been part of the primal vision and social life of African people irrespective of their stage in human economic and political development.

The potentials of francophone oral literature are to promote cultural linkage and integration is well documented (Moody. 1981, Nwosu, 1986, Opara, 1989).

- It breaks the barrier among francophone and anglophone peoples and cultures and plays a unifying role;
- It helps to preserve and transmit cultural values and makes for their further development due to its oral nature;
- It offers young learners the chance to dialogue with different cultures, different milieus and different peoples;

- It reengages them in the process of integration and exteriorization;
- It teaches coping, survival and prosperity skills from the moral lesson it gives,
- It enables the ability of the individual to reflect on his own values and attitudes as well as his personality and world view.

Practical solutions of teaching francophone oral literature to Nigerian students

In Africa, lasting and prolonged contact have undoubtedly brought about the intermixing of different kinds of civilization notably Anglophone and francophone cultures and civilizations. The effects of colonialism have replaced African languages to that of the colonizers, for example, the official use of French and English in Africa, jettisoning their own mother tongues. Conscious of the reality of this phenomenon on Africans and their cultures, French and English were recommended as second official languages in Anglophone and francophone countries respectively, with the aim of achieving cultural understanding and all literature in French completes the process of acculturation which is characterized not only by the gradual acquisition of another culture, but also by the inevitable loss of a part of the traditional culture, leading to the creation of a new cultural phenomenon.

In this regard, it helps to achieve the global trending language and cultural co-existence and integration leading to inter-regional understanding. Hence, Nigerians should learn how to speak, read and write French Language. They should equally learn their traditional songs and poems, stories and plays in French. Hence, the contributions for francophone oral literature to the educational development of Nigerian youths cannot be overemphasized. They are susceptible in novels, songs, comedies, drama, poetry and stories. For example, in Africa, they are literary texts written and translated by Francophone and Anglophone writers such as:

Le lion et la Perle

The Lion and the Jewel

(Wole Soyinka. 2014)

La Greve Des Battu Beggar's strike.

(Aminata Saw Fall 2010)

Le Monde s'effondre Things Fall Apart.

(Chinua Achebe, 2008)

Destinée à survivre

Destined to survive

(Enoch Ajunwa, 2015)

Défi à la force

Toi qui plies toi pleurs

Toi qui meurs on jour comme ça sars

Savoir pourquoi

Toi qui luttés qui veilles pour le repos de l'Autre

Dans les yeux

Toi mon frère au visage de peur et d'angoisse

Relève –toi et crie: Non!

David Diop (1973)

You who bend yooo who weep

You who die one day just like that not knowing why

You who struggle and stay awake for the other rest

You with no more laughter in you look you my brother with face of fear and anguish Rise and

shout: No!

Oladitan (2011)

Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba Tales of Amadou Koolumba. Translated by : Dorothy Blair (1966 *Le Pagne Noir : Contes Africains* (Bernard Dadie :1955)

Le Monde S'effondre

The Black cloth. Translated by Karen Hatch (1987) *Things Fall Apart* (Chinua Achebe 2008)

Peotry

French Version

Sois sérieux au travail mon ami

Le travail fait de l'homme une grande Personne

Quand tu n'as personne

On te prend pour un fainéant

Quand tu n'as personne pour t'aider compte

On s'acharne au travail

Ta maman peut être riche

Et ton papa peut avoir un cheval

dan l'écurie

Si tu comptes sur eux

Je te le jure, l'échec t'attend à coup sûr

Balogun (2014: 18)

English Version

Work hard my friend

Work is used to elevate one in respect and importance

If there is no one to learn on

We appear indolent

If we do not have anyone to trust

We simply work harder

Your mother may be wealthy

You father may have ranch full of horses.

If you depend on their riches alone.

You may end up in disgrace, I tell you

Ajibade (2019: 58)

Music

Awilo Longomba in Nigeria was born as Louis Albert William Longomba on May 5, 1962 in Kinshasa to a Mongo father and an Ngombe mother from Equateur Province. He hailed from a well-known musical family, his father, Vicky Longomba, was the lead vocalist and founding member of Tout Puissant Ok Jazz. Awilo Longomba became famous in Nigeria as a result of general acceptance of his music by both the youths and the adults.

The music was so popular in Nigeria to the extent that an average Nigerian child, youth become conversant with the francophone mode of dancing. It is worthy to note that, the Nigerian adults, both women and men were not left out in the Awilo Logomba song and dance. Based on this, Nigerian youths should do the following to enhance their knowledge on francophone oral literature.

b) Compose letters, poems, stories in little French based on love, respect of elders, tolerance and harmony.

c) Act and mime French songs. e.g. Awilo Longomba.

- d) Learn and play musical elements from composed music based on francophone cultural themes.
- e) Draw, sketch and paint students' village, objects and materials in their class and name them in French.
- f) Organize story telling in the class and encourage same at moonlight at home.
- g) Organize excursions to cultural centres such as French Village in Badagry, attend cultural festival especially at Ouidah in Benin Republic.
- h) Identify and prepare francophone dishes and their recipes such as Cousous, la bagouette (le pain) le'kenkey' (Boules de pate) (de mais) une bouillie de mais (<<Eko>>).
- i) Read elementary French novels such as *Un Nègre a violé une Blonde à Dallas* Ramonu Sanusi (2016)

More solutions, concepts, experiences and methods could be proffered in the nearest future.

Discussion on Findings

In this paper, relevance of francophone oral literature to Nigerian students has been established. The challenge is for us to make use of our schools and cultural institutions to facilitate the reorientation of our youths and political actors to imbibe the spirit of brotherhood and service as well as cultivate a sense of commitment among other virtues of societal significance. Again, African culture has to be critically and analytically documented for posterity and the world at large. The most treasured method of reaching generations yet unborn and youths in less than three years is publication of books on cultural and socio-political activities of our forefathers and present generation of our leaders. Babawale (2007) in lessons for Nigeria makes a case for sustainable development in Nigeria through a combination of culture and politics. He notes that one reason for the chaotic political lifestyle in Nigeria is the total neglect of culture in the national life. He advocates for the use of cultural institutions like CBAAC (centre for black and African arts and civilization) to facilitate reorientation of the youths and political actors to imbibe the spirit of brotherhood and service. Moreover, agencies like CBAAC, he argues,

can be engaged to organize refresher courses for key political actors who are presumed to be agents of change. He goes further to say that we should reclaim our cultural belongings and histories and then confidently move forward.

Algerian President Abdelaziz Boutifika, emphasizes the importance of culture in continental renaissance during the 2009 Pan African Festival of Algiers. Culture in all its breadth and depth, has a key role to play in fostering change in our society. According to him, culture fosters unity by striving to enhance our unique identity which is smudged by globalization and the universal development of new information technology. It will finally do so by encouraging openness to the world that is no denial of ourselves and by helping exert our influence to the world. In the absence of books, when most of the people were illiterate, history and tradition were handed on by word of mouth; therefore, it is extremely important part in African life. Tam-tam is a native drum used on special occasions to pass on messages. It also gives the signal for harvesting to begin. These traditions must be conveyed to Nigerian students to know certain seasons for certain activities. Chinweizu was quoting Okotp'bek "it is important that in Africa, we should have our own culture as the dominant factor in our national culture centers and not the reverse. Take the situation at the university for example, there you have professors and lecturers who are virtually ignorant of African music and poetry and who purpose to teach these subjects, while in the countryside, you have the real masters of these subjects.

The great African dancers and singers, the carvers, the pot makers and the story tellers are in the countryside and they are kept out of our schools, universities" and he recommended "that we should breakdown the walls that surround our schools and universities and let the people who knows our culture teach our people. Let us Africanize our curriculum in a meaningful manner. Let Africans culture form the core of our curriculum and foreign culture be at the periphery" (Chinweizu 1986:196).

From Diop, we need to recover our ancient texts, get them, look at them, study them, learn from them and

continue the traditions which they created. Oral tradition is deliberately neglected. That tradition is the oldest and most enduring tradition of literature we have on the continent of Africa. If we are going to derive any sensible and original history, theory for explaining our literary activities, these theories and ideas will have to derive from that oral tradition, the dangers of the prolonged text of this tradition are volume of literature. From such works would be enormous, concentration on minority tradition will illustrate the real tragedy. Those who are interested in oral literature should make more investigations on the oral tradition and make it available to those who are not endowed to do so. What is imperative at the moment is to engage in the kind of art and the kind of politics what will emancipate the continent and its peoples so that Africa can formulate its own rules, its own aesthetic criteria for assessing its literature. The best tribute that one can pay to literature and to the arts is to associate oneself with the struggles of the masses of the continent whose energies and thoughts produced the oral tradition and whose energies are sustaining the continent at the moment.

All the artists and writers, poet singers, musicians who want to be relevant to the present need to rescue African societies from the domination of imperialists and their "local agbero" who help them to plunder resources of the continent must be involved politically and practically in organizations that wage struggles of liberation. Artists have to be part of those movements so that whatever they create will reflect the best aspiration of the continent. The struggles of the African people are to establish a new society whose content will be socialism, a new society in which we will have centralized economies, in which the primary function of politics and economics will be to enhance the quality of life, to preserve and recreate life.

These societies are already being born in South Africa, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Cameroon. Oral traditions are being produced in new media, new techniques of production, on radio, on television or on cassettes tapes which also have to do with new economic realities, new methods of producing and vitalizing this literature. Writers should go back to

the roots and learn from the oral tradition of our people and to be able to infuse whatever they write with the images and mythologies which they learn from there. They should also produce means of interpretation.

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the social relevance of francophone oral literature to the Nigerian youths. Therefore, Nigerian youths must seek earnestly total liberty and cultural freedom from all forms of juvenile delinquency; they should seek for social justice and political rights without exploitation, clear and new dynamic and positive direction for our peoples all over the world. Youths of nowadays are our tomorrow's leaders; they need urgent and sound awareness in order to become progressive leaders.

They need to seek original solutions to the problems of underdeveloped we are facing in Nigeria in particular and in Africa as a whole. We must face the challenges before us which is the inability to contribute meaningfully to the world thoughts and ideas. Many races have contributed largely to civilization through contacts, unless the black race makes its own significant contributions to civilization, our generation will continue to be pitied. Nigerian youths need mental revolution, we must break away from economic, social and mental bondage and backwardness the Europeans have subjected us to.

Let us break away from agonizing penury, misery and helplessness as our country falls into harsh neo-colonialism, entrapment through globalization, economic slavery, promoting IMF loans, hasty and dubious privatization of the commanding heights of the national economies which belong to the citizens. We must as well remember that black heroes such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, pioneer African revolutionary, a man of positive action and uncompromising integrity, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, let the black youths of world spearhead the mental revolution and then seriously re-examine our stand and refuse to become white imitators. Also worthy of references, is Wole Soyinka, Nobel Laureate, playwright, poet, author, teacher and political activist.

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