



JOURNAL OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AND INDIGENOUS
KNOWLEDGE

Available online at <https://glotanjournals.com/the-journal-of-african-philosophy-and-indigenous-knowledge-2/>

A Pragmatic Experience of Ethico-Aesthetic Depiction of Yorùbá Village Communal Life in Written Poetry

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69778/3007-7192/2026/3.2/a1>

Oyèwálé, Ayòdelé Solomon

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1581-5240>

Department of Linguistics, African & Asian Studies

University of Lagos, Àkòkà, Lagos.

asoyewale@unilag.edu.ng

+2348111018399

Abstract

An increasing number of modernization factors and trending socio-cultural phenomena are rapidly eroding the Yorùbá traditional communal village settings, “abúlé/oko,” a feature that ultimately defines Yorùbá society. This paper critically examines how the Yorùbá poet Àyòadé Òkédòkun uses the theme of the Yorùbá rural communal lifestyle to highlight sociological and philosophical concepts of existentialism in a typical African village setting. The study focuses on Yorùbá rural communal life as portrayed in Òkédòkun’s poem “Nígba Tàwa,” (during our own time), which conveys deeper ethico-aesthetic themes for decolonization, renaissance, and integration within modern Yorùbá society and African ways of life. We employed a quantitative approach, analyzing the poet’s philosophical stance as a reference point, grounded in the theory of poetic communication. Findings reveal that the constant flow of information and technological advancement has somewhat truncated the natural, serene, and communal environment traditionally associated with Yorùbá rural life, with both positive and negative impacts on rural inhabitants. Their worldview and socio-ethico-responses to life have generally been shaped by modernity. It is also observed that some Yorùbá cultural values have been consciously or unconsciously jettisoned due to the great influence of city life.

Keywords: Modernization factors, Yorùbá rural communal Lifestyle, Ethico-aesthetic themes

Introduction

“Precolonial Yorùbá organized themselves in networks of villages, towns, and kingdoms headed by an ọba (king) or baálẹ̀ (chief) with the King’s palace in the center of the city and the King’s market opposite,” (Aṣọjo & Jaíyẹ̀ọba, 2017:259). The ancient, compelling, and captivating legacy of experiences has

caused a significant paradigm shift in Yorùbá rural lifestyles, cultural norms, and values. A village is an historic traditionally recognized egalitarian gathering of a group of intelligent and diplomatic people with a sizeable population in a natural, serene, and strategic place, that employs a mutually intelligible dialectology as a mode of communication, amalgamated from

different walks of life and lineages that reside together in an aura of an organized micro-communal system or settlement. A village is typically under an umbrella of a higher socio-political and economic hegemony within an aesthetically built topographical environment that is generally governed by its subjects through a traditional head, “Baálẹ̀”, and a handful of subordinates, using an exclusive set of ethical rules, lores and traditional regulations, native intelligence of locals or Aborigines. The etymology and structure of a Yorùbá village is based on philosophical stance, cultural and religious dogma or codes, and cultural ethos that are naturally internalized or imbibed and conscientiously practiced by all and sundry, with a view to achieving a set robust goal that is consciously and systematically transmitted as cultural heritage to coming generations. Regardless of age, ethnic or religious affiliation, status, gender, or family background, there is always a general sense of inclusivity and social integration among the villagers. The Yorùbá villages form the nexus that binds the people to their culture worldwide, especially at grassroots levels. One cannot fathom what might have gone through the minds of people living in the ancient Yorùbá town and city that made them give the village dwellers different derogatory appellations. Some affected youth could have chosen to be bitter and react vehemently, but behaved otherwise. The villagers are often nicknamed “Ará oko, ọré èlùbọbóbó,” meaning the villagers, friends of the yam flour. This nickname reflects the availability or abundance of varieties of food at the villagers’ disposal, which they often enjoy and freely share with neighbors, strangers, and others out of kindness.

2.0 A Review of the Yorùbá Culture, Social and Political Life in Village Setting

Life, in every clime and epoch, is lived in phases of socio-economic and political development. The Yorùbá people are known for not glossing over their cultural belief system. This feature underscores accurately how valuable their culture is held in high esteem, and especially how sharply the poet has been able to depict the concept of Yorùbá village, and cultural values in a poetic context. An encompassing point of cultural view is succinctly captured by Àjàyí (2005: 1):

Culture is a universal concept and experience...It is a collective and integrated whole, comprising everything about man’s idea, behaviour and products, or anything relating to his needs as a social being. It includes everything that makes him and what he is, as well as the heritage he possesses. It finds expression in his religion, language, philosophy, music, dance, drama, architecture, political organization, technology and so on. Man creates the things that make up culture, and he absorbs these things by living within a cultural setting. Everything made by man is culture; everything created by God is nurture.

There are clear indications in the Yorùbá culture that rural, according to their prose narrative and mythological belief to suggest that rural life, was germane to their communal living. However, modern-day life, especially in the villages, does not fit the specifications of a typical rural life that we intend to examine in the selected poem. Oshadre (2014:38) laments the ignorance of white people about African:

Times were when the whole of African continent had been generally referred to as the ‘Dark Continent’ by the Europeans. This darkness connotes darkness in the literary

sense. That there were no historical activities happening in that part of the world, except with the commencement of European interest in Africa and their writing culture, thus the notion ‘no record no history reigned supreme then. Among the protagonists of this Eurocentric philosophy were Sir Alan Burns, Professor H. Rocker among others.

A typical Yorùbá rural life in villages is much closer to nature and the people than the glitz and glamour supposedly being enjoyed in city life, with all sorts of hurly-burly, stress, anxiety, and environmental pollution, among other challenges. We would critically examine the historical development of the Yorùbá idea of village, as it appears in their cosmology, mythology, and poetic writing, to support the valuable components of Yorùbá philosophy of life. This will give credence to our analysis or facilitate debunking a few baseless cultural beliefs or stereotypes that may not be relevant in contemporary society. This is expedient, subject to (Adodo, 2000:16) assertion:

The day we lose the story, then it is all over for us. The day we forget our story, then it is all over for us. The day we forget our story, that day is the end of us. We need prophets, the visionaries, and the mystics to keep reminding us, to keep retelling the story, to keep singing the song. Modern men and women need to keep on retelling their story so that they may live.

“The fact that human existence is germane to general survival implies that human beings, as “social animals” are in a better position in making moral choices of cohabiting together for mutual benefits,” (Oyèwálé, 2025:483). Every generation desires to have a legacy for documentation and posterity to carry on with.

Hence, the need to be intentional about what is considered worthwhile in the culture that should be preserved, as relevant to the modern age. Unlike some events, festival or traditions that are intangible, there is quite a lot of logical thinking in the Yorùbá communal system that is very germane as an ethical value to modern society. Thus, Ogúndowálé (2004:28) in his succinct definition, underscores the significance of society:

Society, in the broad sense, is the aggregate of historically established forms of joint human activity. A unique and the highest stage in the development of living beings, society manifests itself in the functioning and development of social organizations, institutions, and groups, in their inner workings of class and other social conditions...In the pre-class period the main forms of ethnic human community were clan and tribe.... The clan or tribal community offered scope for the development of economic activity and culture brought people together.

Ogúndowálé (2004:43) explains further that, “community offers favourable conditions for the preservation and accumulation of production experience and rudiments of culture, for the perfection of the language.” However, within the Yorùbá culture, one can see two predominant themes or ideas that are competing with each other, Yorùbá cultural ethos and the conflicting ideas resultant from the influence of foreign culture, across the board in all spheres of life, as portrayed in the poem and literarily analyzed.

6.0 Analysis of Rural Themes in the Written Poem of Ayọadé Adédòkun and Findings

This study examines the rural theme and typical village lifestyle, as an example of Yorùbá communal living as depicted in the poem Ayòadé Òkédòkun (2003), titled “Nígbà Tàwa.” The poem was written about twenty-three years ago, which covers two epochs in the annals of Yorùbá written poetry. The historical background and the poetic context showcase the significance and its relevance to modern-day, as an express fulfillment of an inspired prophetic utterance about the future. The poet provides a clear insight into modernity, and a number of factors that bastardized and balkanized the Yorùbá village communal setting, as a unique grassroots mainstream. “The two concepts, community and society have both a historical and a supra-historical meaning they refer to the basic structure of human togetherness and also to different periods of social development. One ancient; the other modern. One is based on organic harmony, the other, on legal order” (Ògúndowálé, 2004:32). The traditional system of government in Yorùbá society was an organized political system with structures from hamlets to villages and towns, and traditional rulers of different status at the helm of affairs. “Traditional political authority declined in the face of the changes brought about by colonial rule. Colonial rule created a new geo-political framework within which Africans had to re-orient their lives,” (Crowther, 1968:336). The sociological themes that were examined in the poem were subdivided into ten sub-sections to expound on the salient points and to ensure easy comprehension. To this day, Yorùbá society struggles hard to get it right with getting understanding and applying the norms and values of ancient times. to bring out the salient points as sub-themes in our analysis.

6.1 The Idea of Child’s Growth, Cognitive and Intellectual Development in Yorùbá Villages

The Yorùbá people are keen observers of nature and the phenomena going on around them. Reflecting on the developmental stages of a child, Ayòadé explains that a newborn baby’s capacity to be conscious of the environment takes roughly three days, in contrast with what is obtainable nowadays. Like a psychologist, the Yorùbá community has some expectations and a series of observation methods to monitor a child’s growth. Therefore, a society is an umbrella under which a community survives, according to Ògúndowólé (2004:28-34) is well organized. The transmission of the Yorùbá cultural values on child-rearing is well-grounded in the villages, which are the grassroots and epitome of communal living and cordial relationships, (See Oyèwálé, 2024). The poet illustrates how a newborn baby is tenderly cared for with observation of developmental growth that could be taking place at every stage. In his poem, titled “Nígbà Tàwa,” Adédòkun (2003) illustrates:

Nígbà tàwa
Bọmódé rọ́yìn a sàkàrà nù
N lówè àwọn àgbà
Bá a bímọ
Wọ̀n a mǎa gbojọ́ mǎta
Kí wọ̀n ó tó lajú woni
Òkédòkun, (2003:26-27)

During our time
If a child finds honey, he will throw away the
fried bean cake
That is the proverb of the elderly ones
When a child is born
It would take three days
Before they would open their eyes, the person
carrying them

A child would not walk until he was a year old

Nature and nurture are two fundamental, integral parts of human life, especially regarding the mysteries of life and human development. A Yorùbá mythology has it that it was Vulture, “Igún,” that placed a curse on human beings that any child that does not eat (breastfeed) from his mother will not survive, due to the agony of hunger and homelessness he experienced, due to his voluntary assistance that helped humanity during famine. This sounds logical because breastfeeding is the first edible succulent meal a newborn baby could be exposed to at a tender age. The poet recounts the past experiences of life as peculiar to the Yorùbá society on a child’s growth, along with the necessity of breastfeeding. Growing up, he mentions the growth pattern that obtained them, where a newborn child would hardly open his eyes but close them in total oblivion of his environment for roughly three days or more before being conscious of what is going on thereafter. Beyond this, the ability to walk is also left to nature to determine for natural strength to take its due course, which takes up to a year or more, depending on the individual child. The idea of growth is measurable with observation, and a child’s responses within a time framework with expectations for development, certain natural stimulus or physical strength, ability, and maturity.

6.2 The Norms and Values of Exclusive Breastfeeding in the Yorùbá Cultural Milieu

Exclusive breastfeeding is the practice of feeding an infant with only breast milk for the first six months of life, with no other liquids or solids, not even water, except for vitamins, minerals, or medicines. It is recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund

(UNICEF) to provide optimal health, growth, and development.¹ All these systematic growths have a positive way in which the life of a child is shaped from infancy into maturity without artificial aids or improvisation, as applicable to modernization. No one can really understand how the Yorùbá people have a better understanding of the consequences of breastfeeding, the exclusive one at that, which started right from time immemorial. In “Nígbà Tàwa,” it traces the genealogy of the breastfeeding tradition and how it is practically effective in a child’s cognitive development:

Bọmó ò pọdún kò rìn
Wọn kì í síwọbobó ọmú
Bómídan ò dàgbà
Kó tóó rán rodò
Wọn ò sòkọ ọmú
Kákọ ó tó rọ pọn
Yó lè rogba nínú oko
Nígbà tàwa, ọmọ ní í sin baba
...
Irú wa sin baba pé
Òkédòkun, (2003:26-27)

A child would not walk until they are a year old
He would not stop sucking his mother’s breast
If a damsel is not old enough
She would not be sent to fetch water from the river
Neither would she grow breasts
Before a boy grows testicles
He would be able to clear the bush for two hundred heaps
During our times
It was a child who served the father

...

Our agemates served our fathers for a long
time

The poet deliberates on the dynamism of culture, which serves as a yardstick for measuring a child's growth and development. In the Yorùbá tribe, a child is only restricted to run errands related to household chores if he has attained roughly adolescent age, which Aletan (2023:24) posits to be between 12 and 21 years. It is at this point, as the poet portrays it, that children were allowed to grow through seemingly daunting tasks or were saddled with errands commensurate with their ages or age groups. More importantly, Òkédòkun recounts, with nostalgia, how nursing mothers at the time not only adhered to exclusive breastfeeding but also extended the tradition beyond the six months recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Conversely, the modern mother who have formal education could hardly sustain the six months of exclusive breastfeeding. A typical Yorùbá child, in the village setting and hinterland, back then, has the exclusive right to keep sucking the mother's breasts until another conception takes place, probably at age two or thereabout. This singular act helped in developing the cognitive abilities of a child, such that they get mentally mature before they are exposed to formal education or life generally.

6.3 The Concept of Match-Making and Polygamy with Many Children in Yorùbá Society

From time immemorial, the Yorùbá have practiced a polygamous system of marriage until the advent of Christianity, which supported a monogamous system. The developmental stages of a child are usually meticulously monitored by parents, and by extension,

the society at large, until the marriageable ages. The poet, in "Nígbà Tàwa," affirms:

Bomó ò dàgbà kó láya lònà
Wòn ò jé yaşé
Irú wa sin baba pé
Ká tó dèni ara wa
Àyìndé Àgbé
ọ jọ ìyàwó mi ń bẹ lònà
N ò maya tí baba ń fẹ fún mi
òrò ìyàwó kì í şehun ó wù mí
Adédòkun (2003:27)

If a boy is not of age, he would not get a
partner to marry

The parents would not bestow on him his
independent vocation

Our agemates served our fathers for a long
time

Before we gained our self-independence
Àyìndé Àgbé

My wedding day had been fixed

I did not know that would-be-wife my father
wanted me to marry

The issue of wife-to-be is not what I wanted

The poet shares his heart-rending youthful memories of how he was match-made with the wife betrothed to him, whom he eventually married. The poet laments been kept in suspense close to his marriage before getting to know the wife betrothed to him. As the custom is, a bridegroom will know the fiancée with limitations to face-to-face conversation with the presence of a match-maker, known as, "alarinà." The poet's experience of not having knowledge or the privilege of knowing his fiancée is an extreme case. Adédòkun goes further to expatiate on the Yorùbá culture on the marriage system, where the parents

jointly engage the services of a go-between known as, “Alarinà” to investigate the family’s historical background before the parents give their consent and approval. Nowadays, the narratives have changed because the self-opinionated youth of marriageable ages are hardly patient enough to involve parents in the critical inquiry and decision of making marital choices. This is a germane factor that the ancient Yorùbá society considered fundamental before venturing into marriage; that enhances longevity and lasting marriages. The poet, in “Nígba Tàwa,” further expatiates:

Baba ní fáya fómó
Ìfètò sòmó bíbí ò sí
ọ mọ bẹrẹ la fí í yọ yì láwùjọ
Ibi iyàwó
La gbé n mọni tó lólá
Àyindé Àgbé
Baba ẹ mi díẹ o jàrẹ
ọ mọ yindinyindin bí taladí
òpọlà iyàwó yún-ùn bí eèrùn
Òkédòkun, (2003:27)

It is the father who marries a wife for his son
There is nothing like family planning
Having many children is a thing of pride
It is the number of wives in your house
That will know who is wealthy
Àyindé Àgbé
My father did a lot for me, so to speak
Several children like the small black ants
Numerous wives like soldier ants

From the perspectives of modern youth’s logic, the argument for an individual’s preference sounds much more convincing than the application of indigenous knowledge of traditional “alarinà.” However, this

system of match-making curbs frivolity, vulnerability, infidelity, and misbehavior among youths; though, it is considered to be an archaic idea in modern-day society because of individual differences and preferences. We concur with the saying that “beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.” This submission underscores the logical reason why a person of marriageable age, in the modern age, should be allowed to choose a partner, subject to the guidance of the parents. The dynamism of culture, as an evolving phenomenon, has totally changed the narrative and allows the youth to make choices as they desire today, sometimes, not knowing the gravity of what marital life entails.

The poet’s understated stance highlights his position on what he considers to be a relevant and enduring Yorùbá legacy, which he opines to be revisited and imbibed for marital sustainability. Suffice to say that online-dating, today, is a modernized form of Yorùbá concept of “Alarinà,” as an intermediary between a mature young man and a woman who wants to marry themselves, as husband and wife. If it is properly done, it could curb the premarital sex, perennial problems of domestic violence, and/or attendant divorce rates due to a lack of experience by some modern semi-adult couples. Contrary to ancient Yorùbá time, the realities of modern day, in terms of economic hardship and the need to adequately provide for an unborn child, have ethically supported family planning by adopting different suitable family planning method(s), as applicable to each couple. Beyond this cultural legacy, the Yorùbá people also distinguish themselves with their mode of dressing in traditional attire, for different occasions, according to social stratification or individuals’ status.

6.4 Traditional Dressing and Organic Food: The Yorùbá Insignia and Mark of Identity

The Yorùbá staple food and mode of dressing are parts of their cultural heritage. These manifest as significant factors and front burner of their cultural values. The poet enters into both the vocational and political history of the Yorùbá people to understand the centrality of how germane they are. In “Nígba Tàwa,” submits that:

Abà yangan
Àpọ èlùbó
La fi í m̀àawon àgbè
Ó dojú ogun ká tó mọ lóogun
Agbádá ñlá ñlá la fi í m̀obabá
Ìlèkè jìnwìnnìni ni tàwón ìjòyè
Aşo ñlá
Ìwà àtàtà
Ni ti b̀oròkinní
oni a bá pé lóri kò jẹ̀ hùwà ibi
Òkédòkun, (2003:27-28)

Corn's barn
Yam flour's bags
Is an identity of successful farmers
We can only identify a great warrior on the
war front
It is big agbádá that we use to recognize an
óba
The coral beads are the identification marks of
the traditional chiefs
Big traditional attire
Good character
Is for the well-to-do
Whosoever is called a leader does not engage
in evil deeds

Adédòkun eulogizes the farmers on food security and the agrarian lifestyle, which is a trademark of the Yorùbá people in the olden days. For example, Benue State, in Nigeria, is known as the “Food Basket of the

Nation.” Benue State leaders, led by the former Governor, Samuel Ortom, made a declaration that the State had no empty land to be designated as a cattle colony as had been proposed by the Federal Government.³ The challenges of skyrocketing prices of food in Nigeria could be attributed to the insecurity in the remote villages, where farmers are making their source of livelihood, across the nation. The poet evidently emphasizes the physical appearances in a class setting related to social stratification. óba is well known with his full regalia, which distinguishes him from his chiefs and other important dignitaries who might only be identified by the quality beads, beautiful clothing, and the order of their sitting arrangement in the Yorùbá palaces.

A village head, known as “Baálè,” under the hegemony of a particular town, is the chief security of his community and domain for peaceful co-existence, and maintenance of law and order in his domain. Today, the socio-economic developments like electrification projects, boreholes, road constructions, among others, have brought ‘civilization’ to some Yorùbá villages, thereby giving a facelift akin to towns, with some cultural values being truncated; either directly or indirectly, especially by the youths that are future generations.

6.5 The Traditional Security System: Harbinger of Peaceful Co-Existence in Yorùbá Villages

The problem of the modern security outfits lies not in being incompetent but in the exclusion of the traditional political leadership and the indigenous knowledge that could enhance their operation. The poet, for emphasis, reiterates that life was so peaceful and comfortable in the ancient time at the Yorùbá village setting, where he grew up. He avows:

Ayé dá a gbá à nígbà tàwa
Ayé ló burú ni sùnmòmí wòboloé dé
A ò mòdàgìrì nígbà tàwa
Bá a bá róhun tó burú
ọ bọ la fí i lé wọn ló
Àjálù kan ò sì ní gbẹbọ tán
Kó sì tún wẹyìn wò
Òkédòkun, (2003:28)

Life was so good in our times
The bad situation is responsible for
kidnappings
We did not know pandemonium in our time
If any looming calamity is observed
We purge such with sacrifice
No calamity will accept sacrifice and remain

The poet reminds us of how peaceful and organized Yorùbá society was in olden times, which was devoid of chaotic situations, unlike the modern political dispensation with political divide and religious bigotry. The concept of making sacrifice, through what Ifá prescribes, is still very much in vogue in Yorùbá culture, as established by the poet. Nevertheless, it is adequate to understand that combating the present reality of insecurity challenges in Nigeria has gone far beyond the reach of making or depending only on sacrifices, “ẹbọ”, due to its complexity and the modern-day logistics, techniques, and strategies it requires. However, adopting the Yorùbá principle of combined efforts, “àgbájọ ọwòbóbó” for community and the Nation’s vigilance, could serve as a protective measure with everybody as a stakeholder. This will help to minimize crime waves in the village setting and towns where terrorists and kidnappers are targeting most due to the lack of a self-defense mechanism that might be grossly inadequate due to the strategic operation of the

insurgency of bandits, kidnappers, and the mayhem of Fulani herdsmen.

The implication shows that despite the sacrifices made to the divinities in the Yorùbá society, they did not mean that deities would logically do what humans could or should do to practically provide security, and swing into action, as when due. Today, however, the security of the Nigerian citizens’ lives and properties is fundamentally in the hands of the law enforcement agencies and the self-employed guards who could be infiltrated by saboteurs or compromise the standard or effectiveness at any time, as regularly reported in the media in the case of the Boko Haram insurgency.

The deep-rooted security of yesteryears, in Yorùbá communities, is a sweet memory the poet, in nostalgia, compares to the paradigm shifts that ushered in a more problematic situation of kidnappings, which is now a very lucrative business in Nigeria. The poet’s position displays a logical balance between the ability to reason with traditional ways of employing indigenous knowledge for societal security management and orderliness. The best alternative in the midst of security issues is a regional improvisation as applicable to a security outfit known as “Àmòtekun,” in the Western part of Nigeria, to complement the modern security efforts. It is the security of a community, society, or nation that could seamlessly facilitate adequate food production and social security for all and sundry in Nigeria.

6.6 The Yorùbá Village Lifestyles as a Potential Source of Longevity, Food, and Social Security

The significant roles being played by villagers, in food production and as a veritable source of social security, might not be well appreciated until the insurgency of banditry in Nigeria started wreaking havoc in the rural

setting. From general to specific, the poet is intentional about the village life, which he refers to as “ayé oko,” (village life). Such a peaceful life is akin to a delightful maximum enjoyment likeness of heaven-on-earth lifestyle in line with, “ayé oko, bí ayé àjẹrọbobòun.” The poet, in “Nígba Tàwa,” affirms:

Ìjèní Àgbé
Ayé oko dùn níjọbobóun
Àjẹyó àjẹtì ní tọmọ àgbè
Bẹran ọkéré bá dọbè
Wọbobón dùn jẹran ẹtu lọ
Bẹfọọ ẹgùnmọ bá bẹja lẹbóbè
Tí wọbobón ẹpàdẹ lóri ẹgbín
ọ bẹ a dùn jojo
Níjọbobó a bá pẹran akatá
Iyán a máa wuni í jẹ
Níjọbobó àgbè bá tàrètàrè
Tó pàpàrò lákíoró lákọsìn
Gbogbo ilé ní i mẹran tọdẹ pa (Òkédòkun,
2003:28)

Ìjèní Àgbé
Village life is more joyful in those days
Eating satisfactorily, having leftovers, is a
farmer’s son’s experience.
With squirrel’s meat in the soup
They are sweeter than more than the
antelope’s meat
If ẹgùnmọ vegetable meets fish in the soup
And hold a meeting on a snail
Soup is mouthwateringly tasty
The day a farmer kills a jackal
Pounded yam is invitingly appealing
The day a farmer skillfully
To kill partridge lákíoró lákọsìn

The whole household will know the type of
meat the hunter killed.

The modern non-natural foods may appear cheap and available, but their consumption is not as safe as organic foods that are available in the Yorùbá rural setting to date. Going by my formative years upbringing in an unadulterated Yorùbá cultural background, back in the 1970s, one will concur with the poet’s position that a comfortable, peaceful, serene, and enjoyable life commences and ends in the villages as applicable to the Yorùbá villages. Adédòkun emphasizes the farmer over the hunter, as the killers of the animals he mentions as delicacies. The reason is not far-fetched: farming occupation predates other Yorùbá traditional vocation or occupations, known as “ìṣẹ ìṣẹ́nbáyé”. A crucial statement one could make is that national insecurity, social influence from city life, tends to drive away farmers from villages in search of a “better life” in the towns and metropolitan cities.

The notion or an incorrect understanding of a balanced diet should be put in the right perspective, as itemized by the poet. Some people’s knowledge as to what it entails makes them attribute a balanced diet to eating foreign or processed foods, as opposed to fresh organic food, as listed by the poet. The combination of natural, nutritious foods in the right proportions, as rightly reckoned by the poet, is a typical lifestyle of Yorùbá people in the villages. By implication, the poet affirms that eating a balanced diet is neither achievable with the financial status of being wealthy nor is it alien in Yorùbá culture. Today, the World Health Organization (WHO), health and social workers, and non-governmental organizations are vigorously campaigning on the importance of eating a balanced diet. Incidentally, modern society has resorted to eating junks to find self-defined self-assured pleasure and a

“balanced diet.” On the contrary, Adélékàn (2007:1) passionately counsels:

It is generally believed that man has three basic need viz: food, shelter and clothing. The most important of these is unarguably good food as humans can survive for only a few weeks without food whereas, there are millions of people in the world without clothing and shelter who nonetheless survived into their old age.

Back then, in ancient times up to roughly the 2000s, food security as well as safety or security of lives and property were just a fraction of the advantages that the villagers often enjoyed with very huge income from bountiful harvests of cash crops and minimal health risk factors. This is prominently due to the application of indigenous knowledge, and an advantageous factor of the communal system, mentioned by the poet. Besides, the availability and privilege of eating the itemized fresh foods, fresh vegetables, and fruits without self-anxiety about life or tomorrow, naturally gives the villagers good health and longevity. There is an unscientific notion of attributing any villager in the adulthood stage to as “Ara oko, a bẹdọ pàààlià/jàòntì,” meaning, a village person with a big liver. Meanwhile, the causes of such a health condition, as expatiated by Google:

A swollen liver, known medically as hepatomegaly, is usually a sign of an underlying condition rather than a disease itself. Common causes include fatty liver disease, excessive alcohol consumption, viral hepatitis, heart failure, and toxic damage from medications or toxins. It can cause upper right abdominal pain and a feeling of fullness.²

However, the typical life of the Yorùbá villagers has been truncated with a level of exposures, influence, money consciousness, inorganic foods, advent of the so-called civilization, among other variables. The poet’s observation is the corresponding of the resulting line of interrogation: What has changed? What are the razor factors? Is there any possibility of redeeming the battered image of Yorùbá culture?

6.7 A Comparison of Abundance in a Typical Yorùbá Village Setting and The Modern Paradigm Shifts of Scarcities

Observable evidences abound, which are mirror image of the realities that the paradigm shifts in societal values and behavioral patterns are creating a vacuum of affection and attention of parental obligations in the homefront Today, rural lifestyles have given way to modernity, and villages’ lifestyle, as somewhat a shadow of itself, have been greatly influenced, ethically and aesthetically, by towns and cities lifestyles around them. Consequently, what now obtains in towns’ social circle life resonates in the Yorùbá villages. The poet, in “Nígbà Tàwa,” further narrates in lamentation:

Kò síhun tí jẹ gbáguúdagba
ọran ọsìn ní í jewùrà nígbà tàwa
ọnu ì bá mọ mo-jẹ rí ní
| bá rẹran lẹbóbẹ
| bá mọbobó sìnṭóbó
Kò síhun tí jẹ búrẹdì níjọbobóun ànà
ẹwà ò sí nínú ọúnjẹ àjẹsùn
Ìpanu lásàn la fí í ẹ
Òkédòkun, (2003:29)

There is nothing like cassava
It was our pets that ate water yams

Were it possible for the mouth to detect
having eaten more than enough meat?
I would be nauseated to see meat in the soup
I will therefore be spitting
There was nothing like bread in the olden
days
Beans was not reckoned as our dinner
It was just a light refreshment

The poet's assertion could be buttressed with a self-esteem statement very common to the Ìjẹ̀sà people, "ọ̀bóbó síhun à á fògèdè ẹ̀ ẹ̀ lálẹ̀ Ùjẹ̀sà, ẹ̀yẹ̀ lẹ̀ é jẹ̀!" meaning that nobody makes use of the plantain in Ìjẹ̀sàland; it is birds that eat them. The surplus food security could only be responsible for this self-confidence boasting among the ancient Ìjẹ̀sà people. about mass food production. The idea of leaving behind the farming system, which was the main source of income and internally generated revenue of the former Western Nigeria Government, is having a serious impact, which comes with an extreme cost. The term the poet uses to describe the transformation of having food security in Yorùbá society to the present situation of food scarcity, where once jettisoned food items now become the most valuable, most sought-after, and somewhat expensive beyond the daily reach of a common man, is of great concern. The poet opens with more or less a clarion call while lamenting that there was no food like cassava, "gbágúúdagba/ègégé" which he attributes to animals' feeds, in ancient times. Bread, and anything related to flour production are foreign to the Yorùbá people.

This, perhaps, is responsible for different names like "Búgan," "Páfun," that were given to bread to indicate that it was not part of what the Yorùbá counted as food. Worthy of mentioning is the bread, "búrèdì." However, bread has been the most common food, and prominent

in the Yorùbá menu, sometimes beyond affordable for the masses in the society. Though a typical Yorùbá man will still makes preference for traditional delicacies, like: "Iyán," "Àmàlà," "ẹ̀bà" with relevant soups and meats as accomplishments, as against foreign foods or Intercontinental foods. The agrarian-lifestyle plan was crafted right from homo sapiens' existence for societal practices, basically for human sustainability and continuity. It is so germane that it should takes a center stage in all human endeavors. The only solution, therefore, is to go back to the roots, the legacy of agriculture left behind by the Yorùbá ancestors.

6.8 Historical Exploration of a Well-Organized Yorùbá Society: What now Changes?

The peace and tranquility the poet espoused are based on his real and personal life experience beyond mythology or fables. External influences are a major factor in truncating the cultural principles of any particular culture or tribe. The poet, in "Nígbà Tàwa," narrates once an organized Yorùbá society in nostalgia:

Àyìndé Àgbé
Ayé létò nígbà tàwa
ọ̀ mọ̀ Ólúgbòbóbón
Ó ẹ̀, ayé ẹ̀ beẹ̀ ó dètè
Ìgbà ẹ̀ beẹ̀ ó yí bírí
Àgbọ̀n rìn pàdí dà ó n lájá
Ayá ẹ̀ bí eré bí eré
Ó n pọ̀kó lórúkọbóbó
Bàbá mi ò sí mọbóbó
Pọ̀bóbósí lẹ̀mọ̀ n pe bàbá ẹ̀
Bọ̀módé ìwòyí rọ̀yìn
Wọ̀n a fàkàrà sọwó òsì
Kómìdan tó tọ̀dún mífà
Wọ̀n a sòkọ ọ̀mú
Òkédòkun, (2003:28-29)

Àyindé Àgbé

The society was well organized in our times
The child of Ólúgbobóbón
It is a pity that the world has turned to trickery
The gradually changed pusillanimously
Deer turned back and pursued the dog
Wife systematically and gradually
Calls her husband by name
My Dad is no longer in vogue
Puppy is what a child calls his father
If a contemporary child sees honey
They will hide fried bean cakes on the left
hand
A contemporary female child develops breasts
before reaching six years

From an evidently clear observation of what is going on in society, the poet made a measure of comparisons. In this way, he brings to the fore the dichotomy and the peculiar attributes and attendant challenges that are embedded in each epoch. It is noticeable to call attention to the poet's blind eyes to the weakness of what he seemingly eulogizes as a perfect kind of lifestyle, which, though, possesses a unifying strength but is lacking in the oppressive nature of some dictatorial traditional rulers, sometimes subjected to misgivings and misjudgments of the power-that-be.

6.9 The Concept of Marital Match-Making in the Yorùbá Traditional Marriage as the Modern "New Normal."

Sometimes, modern parents are accused of being overbearing in the affairs of their children or wards. In an attempt to protect them from any calamity or life-threatening danger, especially in self-expression and making life choices. In "Nígbà Tàwa," Adédòkun counsels:

Ìyá tí ò bá sì fẹ́ tẹ́
Kó má gbiyànjú àtiyankọ fọmó
Níjòbobó yeye bá yankọ fọmó
Ní rí pípòbón ojú ọmọ
Ìewe iwòyí sì mèèbú àgbà tó péú
Wọbobón a wọbobó lúarẹ́
Wọbobón a sì wọ tuurutu
Ìewe iwòyí ò bèrù àgbà mọbobó
Ìgbà yí padà ó dẹrò
Ayé ọ lẹbórùn baba ò sí mọbobó
Tọ lẹbórùn ọmọ là n ló ló
Láyé ọjòbobó sí, ọmọ ní í sin baba
Ìewe iwòyí ò sòbí mọbobó
Baba ní i padà wá sàwọn ọmọ wọn
Ayé ọmọ beẹrẹ ti rékojá ó ti ló
Fètò sọmó bíbí sì ló kàn
Òkédòkun, (2003:31)

A mother who wants to be disgraced
She should attempt to match-make her
daughter with a man
When a mother attempts to matchmake her
daughter
She will see the other side of her daughter
The contemporary youths know how to abuse
the elderly to delight
They would gracefully shame such
They would disgrace him/her
The contemporary youths do not have regard
for the elderly ones again
Time has changed for deliberation
The time of the Father has since gone
We are in the era of the children
In ancient times, it was the child who served
the father

The poet begins with a pivot message that connects with the past legacy of match-making in the Yorùbá cultural milieu, which the modern Yorùbá society has consciously returned to with different online dating sites on the Internet. Though the poet sounds a note of warning for parents not to endeavor to match-make their children in romantic relationships, the reality and necessity have compulsorily mandated both genders to be pragmatic, seeking a way out of getting “right” partners that could lead to marriage. Even at that, some adolescents rarely take kindly to the idea of being matched-made, as rightly observed and affirmed by the poet. Having the determination to contend inevitably with the modern reality of self-preference by modern youth (Gen-Zs) on marital choice and resolute to navigate it, through thick and thin, may be why the poet gave this express guidance. However, the modern Yorùbá society seems to have lost a clear logical sense of who they are as people of a peculiar culture, which many people around the world are longing for with admiration.

In line with what the poet affirms in the previous excerpts, Adédòkun wishes to shore up the Yorùbá oral tradition, unique identity, cultural heritage, and legacy on principles that sustain the homes of the elderly ones who made adequate consultations for proper guidance. The Yorùbá traditional custom of consummating marriages has tremendously helped most elderly couples in navigating the unpredictable familial institution in life. The trending phenomenon is that it is the parents, not only the mothers, who are serving their children from stages of conception, babysitting, kindergarten, nursery, primary, secondary school, tertiary institution, and thereafter. This ‘new normal’ development has left the children to be virtually dependent on the parents for different decisive

decisions, with little application of native intelligence, “ogbòbobón-inú” to use their initiative to make the right judgment at critical moments of their lives.

6.10 The Trending Phenomenon of Civilization in Modern Yorùbá Society

The only reality to face is that the only constant thing in life is change. In addition, the poet mentions the bad behavioral patterns that are common in modern-day: In “Nígba Tàwa,” Adédòkun observes:

Omidan pàdí àṣà dà
Wòbobón kò, wòn ò róṣò mòbobó
Yèrì ò sí nídí ìyàwò mòbobó
Ṣòkòtò ni tókótáyá n wò kiri
ọ dómókùnrin ìwòyí doníṣàngó àpàpàndòdò
Wòbobón wérún sóri winnikinkin bíí tókó ọ
ya
Yétí léti bíí tìyàwò àṣèsègbé
...
Igba yí padà ó dèrò
Sànmòrí óní n gbé kokèni
òbobo bà mi
ọ ba wòbobón n gbìng bó
Òkédòkun, (2003:32)

The damsel refused to tie her wrappers
The wife is not wearing underskirts anymore
Both husband and wife are wearing trousers
The contemporary boys have inadvertently
turned to Ṣàngó worshippers
The plait like ọ ya’s husband
Earrings in their ears like a new bride
...
Time has changed in recollection
The important dignitary is a cocaine peddler
Rescue me

Their ọ ba is planting Indian hemp

The modern-day youth are expressly looking for more dynamic ways of self-expression, with a view to having a sense of belonging and relevance among their peers. The poet perceives this phenomenon as emotional or psychological problems that emanate from hormonal imbalance, as they are experiencing developmental stages. But more importantly, they want to follow the fashion trend or be relevant with what their peers are doing. The tradition of men plating their hair is a cultural feature attributed to the Sàngó worshippers, as rightly pointed out by the poet. However, it has become a trend whereby the boys are now stylistically plating their hair for different reasons best known to them. Similarly, the modern custom of wearing skimpy skirts that reveals thigh and blouses that reveal cleavages is well pointed out by the poet. It is important to note the way the poet faults some mothers who have constituted the habit of not wearing underskirts, at least, as an example to the young ones. Obviously, one reason for this is the overdependence on foreign clothes rather than giving patronage to the traditional wear like “àdìrẹ” “àkàrà, “òfì,” outfit, among others. Suffice to affirm that modern youth are using the Yorùbá clothing materials in different “Ówànbè” parties.

Conclusion

In reality, the Yorùbá rural life exemplifies the traditional lifestyle and cultural belief system of the African (Yorùbá) people. Children learn more quickly through communal activities like moonlight

storytelling, traditional games, self-familiarization with different environmental flora and fauna, with ample opportunity to engage with nature. Throughout history and across regions, experiencing an ideal communal setting and speaking one’s mother tongue are fundamental to truly enjoying life, especially in villages, as portrayed by the poet. It was established that the Yorùbá village and its way of life provide a true picture of an ideal human existence in African culture. Finding shows that communal dwellers often look out for one another’s well-being and interests, and serve as food security providers to the people living in urban areas, and beyond. Conversely, town or city life often causes people to become lost in the chaos of the crowd, where everyone is vying for “survival of the fittest.” The Yorùbá ideology of community is rooted in the kindness found in rural life. However, population growth, socio-cultural and economic development, insurgencies, and the influence of modernization have brought many transformations and sparked instability in the Yorùbá villages. As a result, Yorùbá society is facing, like other parts of Nigeria, numerous socio-economic and political vices that were at their minimum level during the ancient communal life. Growing up, one cannot help but concur with the poet’s worldview while feeling nostalgic and conflicted about the current state of Yorùbá rural communities. Adédòkun accurately depicts a typical Yorùbá setting, highlighting benefits that have been truncated and issuing a clarion call for rebirth of orientation.

References

- Aletan, S. (2023). Introduction to Educational Psychology. Lagos: BSD Creation Ltd.
- Asojo, O. & Jaiyéoba, A. B. (2017). “Settlement Pattern.” In Culture and customs of the Yorùbá. Fálọla, T. & Akínyemí, A. (Eds.), Austin, TX: Pan-African University Press, 259-268.

- Adénékàn, D. A. (2007). "Diet, nutrition and chronic diseases: What you eat is what you get." Inaugural Lecture Series, 2000. Delivered at ọ báfẹmí Awólówò University, Ilé-Ifẹ, Nigeria.
- Adodo, A, M. (2000). Nature power: A Christian approach to herbal medicine. (Third edition). Ewu-Esan: St Benedict Monastery.
- Crowther, M. (1968). West Africa under colonial rule. London: Hutchinson & Co (Publishers) Ltd.
- Ògúndowàlé, E. K. (2004). Philosophy and society. Lagos: Correct Counsels Ltd.
- Òkédòkun, A. (2003). "Nígba tTàwa" In Kíké olóbùró. Òsogbo: SUMOB Publishers.
- Oshadare, O. T. (2014). "38-47. "Indigenous Sociopolitical Organization Among the Owe People of Okunland" In Studies in Okun, ọ báfẹmí, O. (Ed.) Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited. 38-47.
- Metiboba, S. "Marital Stability and Social Chang Among the O-kun Yoruba of Nigeria." In Studies in Okun, Olú ọ bafẹmi (Ed.) Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited. 160-17
- Oyèwálé, A. S. (2021). "The Yorùbá Concept of Landed Property and Shelter" In Architectural Confluence: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: A Festschrift for Professor Joesph Igwe, Adéjùmò, T. & Shittu, T. (Eds.), Faculty of Environmental Science, University of Lagos, Nigeria, 116-128.
- Oyèwálé, A. S. (2025). "An Appraisal of Yorùbá Communal Philosophy in the Context of Modernity" In New Trends in Yorùbá Studies: Essays in Honour of Àrìnpé Adéjùmò. Bọlarińwá, A, O, et al, (Eds). Ìbàdàn: Matrix Publications Nig. Enterprises, 483-504.