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**APPRECIATING THE USES OF  
LITERATURE:  
A YORÙBÁ EXAMPLE**

U. L. ARCHIVE

BY

**ISAAC OLUGBOYEGA ALABA**



**UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS PRESS - 2002**  
**INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES**

# **APPRECIATING THE USES OF LITERATURE: A YORÙBÁ EXAMPLE**

An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of  
Lagos on Wednesday, 22nd May, 2002.

BY

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University of Lagos, 2002

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First Published 2002

By

University of Lagos Press  
Unilag P.O. Box 132,  
University of Lagos,  
Akoka, Yaba – Lagos  
Nigeria

ISSN 1119 - 4456

# APPRECIATING THE USES OF LITERATURE: A YORUBA EXAMPLE

## Acknowledgements

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir,  
Distinguished Principal Officers of the University of Lagos,  
Fellow Colleagues,  
Invited Guests,  
Beloved Students,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Good evening.

Glory be to the God of my heart, the God of my realization for the gifts of Light, Life and Love. Many thanks to: my living-dead parents (Chief Gabriel Ojèwale Alaba alias Ọwayanrìnwayanrin kówósí ọmọ Şubuọla and Ruth Eégúnbíyí ọmọ Afọlabi Oníbùdó); my numerous teachers notably Elder Ogunjọbí Àyíndé, Elder Ọla Ọlasúnsí, Senator Professor Afọlabi Ọlábimtan, Ijòyè Emeritus Professor Adeboye Babalọlá, Professor Aкінwùnmí Ịşọlá, Professor Wande Abimbọlá, Professor Mrs Ọmọtayọ Olutoye, Professor Ayọ Bamgboşe, Professor Kọla Owolabi, Professor Funşọ Akere, Professor Ọladele Awobuluyi, Professor Ben Elugbe, Professor Chief Oludare Ọlajubu, and Chief Babatunde Ogúnpòlu; my better half, Deaconess Mrs Ọlubisi Alaba; my lovely children: Olúwatóóyín, Olúwàşẹun, Modúpéọlá, Olúwatóyẹşe and Olúwakóyẹjo; my brothers and sisters; my many friends my respected colleagues as well as my fellow numerous students, and finally the University of Lagos Council, my worthy employer. You have all worked with God to build me as a teacher,



researcher and community servant. Obviously the history of the story cannot be presented here due to lack of time and space.

What we have time and space for here is the inaugural lecture titled "THE USES OF LITERATURE: A YORUBÁ EXAMPLE". It is a token of that history.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As Graham Hough in his famous book An Essay on Criticism (1966: a, pp 10 & 14) has rightly observed, there are two categories of literary theories namely:

- (a) moral theories, i.e those that are concerned primarily with what literature is for; and
- (b) formal theories, i.e. those that are concerned primarily with what it is.

The first see literature as part of human activity in general while the other see literature as a self-contained activity. However, the two types are not mutually exclusive; a dialogue in some sense occurs between them.

The present lecture relates mainly to (a) above. It is concerned primarily with what Yorùbá literature, an art form, is for. Sufficient illustrations are taken from aspects of Yoruba literature as a token of those aspects which divine providence has helped me to have studied and appreciated. These include

- (a) Èṣẹ̀ Ifá (Ifá literary corpus),
- (b) Orin agbè (agbè art)
- (c) Òwe (Proverbs) and
- (d) Fágúnwà's Novels.

Now, scholars, the world over, have made many important points in favour of the utilitarian view of literature. For our purpose, however, highlights of the main points will do.

Eliot, in his famous work, On Poetry and Poets (1957: pp 15-23) has written on the social functions of poetry – both general and particular functions. Some early runes and chants had very practical magical purposes – to avert the evil eye, to cure some disease, or to propitiate some demon... The early

forms of epic and saga may have transmitted what was held to be history before it survived for communal entertainment only (p.5). Didactic may mean "conveying information", or ... "giving moral instruction, ... or something which comprehends both (p.16) Dramatic poetry has a social function... peculiar to itself: the making of an immediate, collective impression upon a large number of people gathered together (p.17). "Poetry is to give pleasure, ... and ... there is always the communication of some 'new' experience, or some fresh understanding of the familiar, or the expression of something we have experienced but have no words for, which enlarges or refines our sensibility". (p.17)

Wellek and Warren (1963: pp 30 – 32), writing on the functions of literature, rightly observe that, "poetry is sweet and useful." (p.30). To them the pleasure of literature... is not one preference among a long list of possible pleasures but is a 'higher pleasure' because pleasure is a higher kind of activity, i.e. non-acquisitive contemplation." (p.31). They also rightly note that "poetry is a form of knowledge." (p.32)

For Finnegan (1977: 270), "to speak of 'literature' in general terms can be misleading, whether or not it is opposed to another supposed entity termed "society". For what is interesting and significant is not, most often, something called 'literature' but rather what people do: the way they act within a literary context, the social conventions connected with literary activity which they observe and manipulate, the different uses to which they can put literary formulations – literature, in fact, conceived as social action by people rather than as a static entity in its own right.

According to Plekhanov (19157: pp 5-6), Chernyshevsky (1906:pp 33-34) wrote as follows in one of his earliest critical articles:

"The idea of 'art' for art's sake' is as strange in our times as 'wealth for wealth's sake', 'science for



science's sake', and so forth. All human activities must serve mankind if they are not to remain useless and idle occupations. Wealth exists in order that man may benefit by it, science exists in order to be man's guide; art, too, must serve some useful purpose and not fruitless pleasure." In Chernyshevsky's opinion, the value of the arts, and especially, of "the most serious of them", poetry, is determined by the sum of knowledge they disseminate in society. He says, "Art, or it would be better to say poetry... spreads among the mass of the reading public an enormous amount of knowledge and, what is still more important, familiarizes them with the concepts worked out by science – such is poetry's great purpose in life."

Plekhanov goes on to say that, "in the opinion of Chernyshevsky and his disciple, Dobrolyubov, the function of art was indeed, to reproduce life and to pass judgment on its phenomena." (p.6)

Plekhanov explains further in a footnote (p6. footnote\*\*) that this opinion was closely related to the views formulated by Belinsky in his article, "A view of Russian Literature of 1847," where Belinsky wrote:

"The highest and most sacred interest of society is its own welfare, equally extended to each of its members. The road to this welfare is consciousness, and art can promote consciousness no less than science. Here science and art are equally indispensable, and neither science can replace art nor art replace science. But art can develop man's knowledge only by passing judgement on the phenomena of life."

The argument that art, like any other activity, is purposeful cannot but be valid – more so as it does not deny the aesthetic value of art. And Belinsky's observation that "art can promote consciousness no less than science" is reassuring to all those who are involved in the production and consumption of art.

Belinsky's view, that the road to the welfare which society desires is consciousness, agrees with the definition of art by Marx and Engels as "one form of social consciousness". And with its corollary "that the reasons for its (art's) changes should be sought in the social existence of men." (Marx and Engels 1976:p 17 Preface by Krylov). Krylov explains further in his preface that:

"Marx and Engels revealed the social nature of art and its development in the course of history and showed that in a society with class antagonisms it was influenced by class contradictions and by the politics and ideologies of particular classes. (*loc. cit.*)

Eagleton (1976:p viii) thus rightly defines Marxist Criticism as "part of a larger body of theoretical analysis which aims to understand ideologies – the ideas, values and feelings by which men experience their societies at various times. And certain of those ideas, values and feelings are available to us only in literature"

and he finally summarizes its value as he writes:

"To understand ideologies is to understand both the past and the present more deeply; and such understanding contributes to our liberation". (*loc. cit.*)

Eagleton's thesis here not only applies to literature but also to history. This theoretical perspective is therefore invaluable as it points to an assured means of achieving (through literary art) serenity in the face of the vicissitudes of life. Neither religion nor science can do more for human beings in their continuous struggle for freedom from all forms of enslavement of human beings by human beings, e.g. fear, exploitation, poverty and misery.

Having looked at literature critically, Eagleton (1983:22) declares in his celebrated work on literary theory thus:

"To speak of 'literature and ideology' as two separate phenomena which can be interrelated is... in one sense, quite unnecessary. Literature, in the meaning of the word we have inherited is an ideology. It has the most intimate relations to questions of social power".

To substantiate this point, he devotes the next thirty-one pages of the book to a detailed explanation of how English Literature has been changing with the English ruling class. He has rightly observed, "like religion, literature works primarily by emotion and experience and so was admirably well-fitted to carry through the ideological task which religion left off." (p.26). Indirectly, literature has been communicating ideological dogmas disguised as timeless truths, "thus distracting the masses from their immediate commitments, nurturing in them a spirit of tolerance and generosity, and so ensuring the survival of private property." Eagleton rightly ends the fascinating book with the following allegory:

"We know that the lion is stronger than the lion-tamer, and so does the lion-tamer. The problem is that the lion does not know it. It is not out of the question that the death of literature may help the lion to awaken."  
(p.217)



The 'lion-tamer' in this allegory represents the class of exploiters in modern capitalist society while the 'lion' represents the exploited class. The 'pill' of the class of exploiters' ideology is being sweetened by the 'sugar' of literature. It is true that the death of literature may help the exploited class to awaken. But can literature die?

The answer to this question appears to be an emphatic 'No'. Eagleton thus rightly reminds us that:

"Literature...is vitally engaged with the living situations of men and women: it is concrete rather than abstract, displays life in all its variousness, and rejects barren conceptual enquiry for the feel and taste of what it is to be alive." (p.16).

The aspects of Yorùbá literature under study bare out most of the issues raised above. The following three sections illustrate this point.

## **2.0 LITERATURE AS A SOURCE OF VIRTUE: ILLUSTRATIONS FROM IFA LITERARY CORPUS, TRADITIONAL YORUBA PROVERBS AND OTHER THOUGHTFUL YORUBA SAYINGS.**

The Greek Philosophers in their attempt to answer the question "What is the good life?" developed ethical theories. Following the Socratic dictum 'virtue is knowledge', Plato (427-347 B.C.) develops the thesis that the life of reason is the happiest and the best.

Plato believes that an object achieves its own true good when it carries out its own proper function. For instance, a knife can be said to have achieved its own true good if it can cut effectively.

Thus, Plato reasons that every thing has got its purpose and he asks 'what is the purpose of man?' His answer is, 'To achieve happiness'. Another question then is 'How?' 'The relevant and only answer according to Plato is 'Through reason (knowledge of the good)'.

Aristotle (384-322 B.C) in his ethical theory, agrees with Plato that virtue is knowledge by holding that well-being/happiness is man's ultimate goal which is achieved through the realization of his highest potentiality – rational activity – the only potentiality which is peculiar to man.

Aristotle, however, goes further than Plato in analyzing the Socratic dictum, 'Virtue is knowledge,' in that he says that virtue is not only knowledge but action. He holds that it is one thing to know what is good and another to do what is good. To Aristotle, man is born neutrally free, with neither virtues nor vices.

Therefore, Aristotle recognizes two classes of virtues namely (i) intellectual virtues, e.g. (a) philosophical wisdom, (b) understanding and (c) practical wisdom; the attainment of this class of virtues depends upon training and teaching and (ii) moral virtues, e.g. (a) liberality, (b) humility and (c) temperance; these virtues come as a result of good habits.

So far, we have summarized two analyses of the philosophical conjecture that knowledge constitutes the background for a virtuous, happy life. Given the will to live in accordance with the laws governing the universe of which man is an integral part, man is sure to attain happiness. We believe that every normal human being has the will.

But how to get true knowledge remains a problem for all philosophers (see Russell (1959), for perhaps the simplest philosophical discussion of the problems of philosophy, especially those that concern the acquisition of knowledge).

Hence the Yoruba cherish reasonably their traditional ways of life and thoughts, especially Ifa divination verses, traditional proverbs and other thoughtful sayings, in order to get true knowledge – the knowledge of the laws governing the universe, which knowledge is attainable in two ways; by acquaintance and by description. Knowledge attainable in the former way is limited while that obtainable in the latter way is limitless although it rests on the readiness of the learner to believe reasonably what is described by others. This latter way of obtaining knowledge is thus predominant in Yorùbá life and thoughts (including Yorùbá literature) as we shall see in this section.

“As you think so you live” is a wise saying which is relevant to our present discussion. As the Yorùba think and so live, virtue is knowledge to them.

Like Plato, the Yorùbá think that no normal person does evil knowing it is evil. That means sadists, for example, are an exception to this rule.

The Yorùbá know that whatever you do, you do it to yourself; hence they say:

Eni ɣe rere, ó ɣe é fún'ra rẹ;

Ení ɣe ìkà, ó ɣe é fún'ra rẹ;

Atoore àtikà, ọkan ò ní gbé.

(Whoever does good does it to himself;

Whoever does evil does it to himself;

Both good and evil (deeds).

Neither will go unrewarded).

If therefore, they see someone doing evil they conclude that he is ‘An-ignorant-person’ . Aláimọkan. To them,



Ohun tí . \_aláimọkan fí ń ẹ̀ 'ra rẹ̀ ló pọ̀.  
(The harm which the ignorant person does  
himself is great).

He still needs to be educated. What he needs is (i) true knowledge, the discovery of the 'Why' of things as opposed to (ii) skills, the knowledge of 'how' things are done.

But (i) above is sacred in traditional Yorùba society and it is not everybody that can have access to it. However, any Yorùba who has access to (i) above needs apply it reasonably before it can be of any benefit to him.

Hence Odù Ìwòrì-Atẹ̀ (Professor Afọlábí Ọlábímtán: Oral interview 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1978, Lagos) one of the minor 'chapters' of the Ifa literary corpus enjoins the initiate to true knowledge (wisdom) to constantly reflect upon and thus make the most reasonable use of that knowledge, as follows:

Ìwòrì tejú mọ́ 'hun tí ẹ̀ ẹ̀ teni  
Bí o bá tẹ́fá tán o tún'rà rẹ̀ tẹ̀  
A díá fáwo tí a ẹ̀ẹ̀ tẹ̀ nífá  
Awo má mà fí ẹ́já ígbà gun ọ̀pẹ̀.

....

Awo má mà fí ǎimọwẹ̀ wọ̀dò  
Awo má mà fí ìbínú yọ̀bẹ̀.

....

Awo má mà sán bàntẹ̀ awo

....

(Ìwòrì -face-what-is-one's own,  
After your initiation into the Ifa cult, re-initiate  
yourself.

Perform divination for a newly initiated diviner

Diviner, please do not climb a palm tree  
With an old climbing-rope.

...

Diviner, please do not enter a river without  
Knowing how to swim.

...

Diviner, please do not in anger draw out a knife

...

Diviner, please do not wear another diviner's  
apron around your waist (i.e. 'do not cohabit with  
another diviner's wife).

To show that the knowledge of how to do things is not sufficient  
for a happy life, but that the knowledge of the 'why' of things must be  
added, the Yoruba say,

Bó o lópò oògùn,

Bó o lékèè: kò ní jé;

Òtító inú gbé ni ó ju irọ lọ.

(If you possess a lot of magical charm/medicine  
And you have falsehood: it would not work;  
Honesty pays off better than falsehood.)

To show their conviction that the best and most invaluable  
legacy you can and should endeavour to bequeath your child is proper  
and adequate training requisite to acquiring intellectual virtues which are  
basic to all other kinds of virtue the Yoruba say,

Ọmọ ti a kò kọ ni yòò gbé ilé ti a kọ tà

(It is the untrained child that will sell off the home built  
with the efforts diverted from training him/her)

After one has been born and trained one should  
rejuvenate oneself. Through Odù Òtúrá ẹ̀tẹ̀ (Ọlábímtán, oral  
interview, 1978) the Yorùbá say:

Tún'ra rẹ̀ tẹ̀.  
Bí a bí ní à tún'ra ẹ̀ni bí  
Otúrarẹ̀tẹ̀.

(Re-initiate yourself  
After one has been born one should  
Rejuvenate oneself.  
Otúrarẹ̀tẹ̀.)

Likewise they say

Alágẹmọ̀ tí bí 'mọ̀ rẹ̀  
Àìmọ̀-ọ̀n-jó kù s'ọ̀wọ̀ rẹ̀ (ọ̀mọ̀ náà)  
(Chameleon has given birth to and brought  
up his child

Inability to dance (as his father trained him)  
Is left to the child.

In this regard the Yorùbá admonish whoever inherits money to try and acquire more so that the inheritance would not eventually vanish. They describe the wise person as Olusesi (One-who-acquires-more) in the following warning

Olúṣeṣí, ìnà ò tán owó  
(One- who-acquires-more, spending does  
not exhaust money)

Knowing that virtue is knowledge, the Yoruba employ all the facets of informal education (the physical, mental as well as the moral/spiritual) very well in order to lead their children to acquire what they know is true knowledge and to arouse in them the need to continuously search for more of it since they know and say that:

Ogbon kò lópin  
(Knowledge/wisdom is boundless)  
and



(No one can acquire all possible knowledge/wisdom)

Mr Vice-Chancellor Sir, respected members of this dignified audience, the foregoing excerpts from oral Yorùbá literature corroborate the thesis that literature is indeed 'sweet and useful'. Let us move on to the next section wherein we discuss literature vis-à-vis ideology.

### **3.0 Literature as a Source of Information on Ideology: A Case Study of Agbe Art**

From the point of view of psychology, one common sense assumption that may be confidently said to underlie the concept of literature as an ideology is that individuals arrive at opinions in part through identification with groups. People want to hold views that conform or at least are not in sharp variance with those of other people to whom they look for approval. In other words group identification normally influences the opinions of individuals in society. But where the group is actual and the members seek some kind of consensus, the individual opinions begin to become collective and thus potentially "public". This assumption is quite reasonable (Ernest R. May, 1923: 168). And it is more so in the case of oral poetry performances (Alaba 1988: 57).

This section attempts a brief discussion of how agbè art (i.e. orin agbè) comprises the ideas, values and feelings by which the Yorùbá people experience their society at various times. Agbè art is a genre of Yorùbá oral poetry which is still being practised as a unique social entertaining and instructive poetic activity in some parts of Yorùbá land. (For details see Alaba 1985: Chapter Two).

### 3.1 PRAISES IN AGBÈ ART

Praises are meant by the artists to cheer the addressee(s) and win substantial reward for the former on the spot. Therefore, praises are common in a formal stage performance of agbè art as a representative of certain types of Yoruba oral poetry. Only one example will do in this section to illustrate the point.

The excerpt below was a song raised by one versatile songster in the Idere agbè group in praise of the Qba

Àkàndé: Qbá déééé!

Qbá Afèlègb'owó-olówó

Elégbè: Qbá dééé!

Àkàndé: Hail the Qbá !

The Qbá He-who-gently-collects-other-persons'-money

Chorus: Hail the Qbá ! etc.

In this excerpt, the artists sing in support of the authority in the society in which they live. The Qbá, who is the President of the local Customary Court, collects money in the form of traditional gifts from his subjects who want either favour or justice in respect of the cases they bring before the court. The artists humorously present the Qbá as a diplomatic exploiter of his subjects. This is an example of subtle art to criticize authority.

### 3.2 SALUTATION IN AGBÈ ART

In the body of a text of Agbè art consisting of entertaining and didactic utterances, agbè artists chant the oríkì (verbal salutes) both of individuals and of lineages, in order to enumerate the outstanding attributes of members of the immediate audience. These members of the audience are entertained and edified by these oríkì chants. They are often so excited and inspired that they respond to the artists' communication by showing their appreciation in cash and kind.

Oríkì chants also help the artists to hold the attention of their audience. Therefore, the rendering of Oríkì is a prominent communicative function of agbè art. This is the case because the traditional society in which this art is practised is capitalism: in it, money is power. The excerpt below is from the repertoire of the Akòyà group. The performing songster on the particular occasion is Mr. Gàníyù Àkànjí:

Gàníyù: Ará Èko mòò rí mo pè o.  
 Elégbè: L'owó bá n bọ  
 Gàníyù: Àyànlérè mi ò, à mo dúpẹ o  
           ' Dàrà!  
           N'gba tó fi n rÈkó o.  
           Bùròdá afínjú oníbàtá o à.  
           Afínjú oníbàtá, Jagunlabí!

Ajómágberin

(ÈNIKAN: Àwun ní lo mòtò ní ísìn-ín o!)  
 Bàtá ló lù şáájú o  
 Bàtá ló lù şáájú o  
 Kó tóó donímòtò lèyìn-odi: babaa wa!

Gàníyù: On seeing a Lagosian  
           I saluted him  
 Chorus: Immediately bank notes showered.  
 Gàníyù: O my dear Ayànlérè!  
           Ah! I am grateful indeed  
           Dàrà (shortened form of Ayandara 'The god of drum  
           music performed wanders')!  
           When he used to travel to Lagos  
           My Dear Brother (not a blood brother but a foster-  
           brother, a smart bàtá-drummer)  
           A smart bàtá-drummer, Jagunlabi (i.e. 'the tough one')  
           He-who-dances-but-doesn't-sing-a-song's-refrain.  
           (SOMEBODY: He now drives a car)



It was bàtá drum he used to play indeed.  
 It was bàtá drum he used to play indeed  
 Before he became a driver far from home.  
 Our dear foster-father.

This excerpt was addressed to a prominent member of the audience. His generosity, his artistry as a bàtá drummer and a seasoned driver, his Lagos experience which put him in the privileged class of those who have stayed in the famous Lagos Metropolis, his toughness and his prosperity as a car-owner were all brought into sharp focus to flatter him for gratification. He was addressed as a Dear Brother and as a foster-father by the artists as a sign of the respect they had for him as a worthy patron of their agbe group.

### **3.3 CHARACTER SKETCHES OF INDIVIDUALS IN AGBE ART**

A lot of information about the Yoruba traditional society's ideology is also contained in character sketches of individuals in agbe art. The individuals whose character sketches occur in the particular art include the agbè - artists and members of their immediate audience.

The excerpt below is from the repertoire of the Akòyà group. It was meant as an introductory bit in a particular performance.

Gàníyù: Èmi Àkẹ̀njín Ọ̀lọ̀pọ̀-ẹ̀sẹ̀-tí-ń-jó  
 Èmi Àkẹ̀njín Ọ̀mọ̀-ò-şéé-fíbínọbí  
 Àkẹ̀njín Aǵínýọbíọ́gọ  
 Ọ̀mọ̀ yá Ọ̀lọ́tí  
 Àkẹ̀njín ẹ̀ni a bíire  
 Èyẹ̀n gbogbo ló molè:  
 Èyẹ̀n mélòò l'ol è ọ̀ mò ń'lé ayé yi?

Gàníyù: I, Àkànǽ surrounded by many dancing legs.  
 I, Àkànǽ, it-is-not-possible-to-beget-a-child-at-will  
 Àkànǽ, He-who-daily-grows-taller-like-a-palm-frond  
 A son of the woman who sells guinea-corn liquor.  
 Àkànǽ, a person of noble percentage.  
 All human beings know a thief:  
 How many people will a thief know in this life?

Mr. Gàníyù Àkànǽ introduces himself as a tall lanky person; a versatile songster usually surrounded by many competent agbè dancers on occasions of formal stage performances of the poetic activity; a son cherished by his mother who is a hard-working, popular local guinea-corn-liquor-seller; a person whose parents, are morally upright (noble); a person one of whose nicknames is a pointer to the Yorùbá belief that child-birth depends on divine providence and a popular songster who, though known by many people in the locality, does not and cannot in return know all the people. This last point of self-introduction made in lines 6 and 7 of the excerpt, has a moral overtone. The idea is that the average Yoruba man should guard his (good) conduct jealously because many people are watching his every step and behaviour.

### 3.4 CURRENT CHRONICLES IN AGBÈ ART

It is a privilege of Yorùbá oral artists to talk about the traditional society in the practice of their art. The purpose of these utterances is mainly to put on record every significant event within the society. Local current affairs are therefore predominant in these talks. However, the most important element in each of these talks is one main idea which belongs to Yorùbá traditional society's ideology.

The following example is taken from the repertoire of the Ilorin group. It relates to an unfounded fear.

Omótáyò: Èyin-in bọwọbọwọ,  
 Wọn ní ẹ sọraa  
 Pẹlú ọwọ  
 Kẹ ẹ sọra pẹlú ọwọ  
 Bàbá kẹn bàbà kẹn  
 Lọ bọwọ pupọ n'gárẹjì o  
 {ÈNÌ KAN: Òótọ ni}  
 Ànì ló bá bọwọ l'ẹpon bá wọlé!  
 N'bii ká bọwọ pupọ  
 Ló bá bọwọ l'ẹpon....o  
 Elégbè: Ló bá bọwọ l'ẹpon bá....abpl  
 Omótáyò: You who are fond of handshakes  
 You are warned!  
 You are warned about handshakes  
 Beware of handshakes  
 One particular old man in the lorry park  
 Happened to be too fond of shaking hands  
 {SOMEBODY: It is true}  
 After a certain handshake, his testicles just got  
 Pushed into his body!  
 As a result of shaking hands indiscriminately,  
 After a certain handshake, his testicles just -!  
 Chorus: After a certain handshake, his testicles just- ! etc

This is meant to release tension by its comic overtone by reference to a popular but unfounded fear. The particular fear is that some evil-minded persons possess a certain poisonous magical charm which they employ to embarrass men; when any of them shakes hands with another man, he charms the latter whose testicles instantly get pushed into his body! This reminds one of the widespread rumour in Lagos and some other Yoruba towns between 1974 and 1975 of disappearing sex organs after a touch or a handshake. However, the main idea seems to be an abhorrence for the modern habit of shaking hands which tends to breed disrespect for superiors which is incongruous with Yoruba traditional practice of respect for superiors.



### **3.5 RANDOM THEMES OF THE MOMENT IN AGBE**

#### **ART**

In a sense, Yorùbá artists act as the conscience of the traditional society in the practice of their art. Appropriate random themes of the moment appear handy for these artists to do the specific job of verbalizing specific ideas recognized as worthy of note by the society at large, at different times.

The example below relates to the concept of death as perceived by the Yorùbá. It is taken from the repertoire of the Ìluà group:

Tájù:: Inkú yí ọ ẹ ẹ ni  
Inkú tí í fọ́o'gun alágbára  
Inkú ìnbá gbowó,  
A bá fun un lówó.  
Inkú ìnbá gbẹren,  
À bá ràgbò fun un  
Inkú ọ gbowó  
Inkú ọ gbobì  
Inkú pa Múrítàlá ọmọọ Mùẹẹmẹdù!

Tájù: This being, Death, is indeed terrible.  
Death that routs the strong  
Had Death demanded money,  
We would have willingly given him money.  
Had Death demanded an animal,  
We would have willingly bought him a ram.  
Death did not demand money;  
Death did not demand kolanuts.  
Death killed Muritala, son of Mohammed!

This excerpt is a standard dirge at a funeral ceremony in Yoruba culture. It represents part of the Yoruba traditional society's attitude to death. That death is inevitable is mournfully

conceded. Also, beside the inevitability of death, we have a side-view into Yoruba's cosmogony: There is need to sacrifice to the òrisha (divinities) to placate them. But over and above them is death before whom all others tremble and in whose sight all sacrifices are more than useless. This idea, that death is the leveler, is an important element of the sermon by the wealthy exploiters whereby they exhort the poor exploited class to accept their social condition in life since the wealthy and they (the poor) are equal before death. This fallacious sermon is actually a subtle way of deceiving the poor thus urging them to endure their plight for life and do nothing to overthrow the exploiters. The plain truth, of course, is that there is inequality in life and even in death between the rich and the poor in this society. And sooner or later, the children of the rich inherit the wealth of their parents leaving the children of the poor masses as the 'Hewers of wood and the drawers of water', in the service of the former.

The next example of random themes of the moment relates to the Yorùbá traditional attitude to marriage. The excerpt comes from the repertoire of the Idere group. It is a song on the theme of wife-as-mother.

- Àkándé:        A a ti n wòmọ látèsín;  
                     Àwa ò rọmọ o oo  
 Elégbè:        Èròò bá mi kiyàá  
                     Iya ọmọ dé: ọmọ dé!  
 Àkándé:        We've been looking for a child since last year  
                     (But) we haven't got a child  
 Chorus:        People, join me in greeting Mother  
                     Mother is here: child is here!

This excerpt contains an important aspect of Yoruba traditional society's ideology namely that the primary aim of acquiring a wife is to produce offspring. Love is not at all enough – if it is necessary in the first place!

### **3.6 Appeals (Direct or Indirect) for Monetary Rewards in Agbe Art**

In the practice of their art, agbè artists usually appeal (directly or indirectly) to members of their audience for monetary rewards.

They do this because they believe that, among the social functions of their art, is the gaining of money and prestige by the artists. And the audience responds favorably to these conventional appeals. The excerpt below, a direct appeal for monetary rewards, is taken from the repertoire of the Idere group.

- Àkándé:           È maa pé:  
                          È maa péè:  
                          Àlàbá, tóró ni n wón gbà o  
                          Pènwùn ni n wón gbà  
                          Kórèèṣì ni n wón gbà  
                          Arí-tẹn-ń-genren-ṣ'apóólé!  
                          Tóró!  
Elégbè:           Arí-tẹn-ń-genren-ṣ'òpóólé!  
Àkándé:           Àpò ni n wón gbà o  
Àkándé:           Please, sing the refrain thus:  
                          Please, sing the refrain thus:  
                          O Àlàbá, it is three pence I demand  
                          Tis pound notes I demand  
                          'Tis paper money I demand.  
                          He-who-has-porcelain-pillars-in-his-house!  
                          Three pence!  
Chorus:           He-who-has-porcelain-pillars-in-his-house!  
Àkándé:           'Tis a bag full of money I demand.

The next excerpt, an indirect appeal for monetary rewards, is taken from the repertoire of the Ilorin group.



- Omọtáyò: N wọn mọ'bi eléérí yenrí o  
 N bá lè yẹn temiii.  
 N wọn mọ 'bi Ìsòṣàlá yenrí ò  
 N bá lè yẹn tèmi  
 B'Òlòrun fẹ!
- Elégbè: N won mo 'bi eleeri yenri o, abbl
- Omọtáyò: Had I known, (regarding the man of good fortune)  
 Where he picked his personal divinity (Abimbola 1975:  
 34 p. 158-197)  
 There should I have gone-  
 To pick mine, too.  
 Had I known  
 Where Ìsòṣàlá picked his personal divinity  
 There should I have gone  
 To pick mine, too.  
 God willing!
- Chorus: Had I known (concerning the man of good fortune, etc)

In this excerpt, the songster was flattering the member of the audience for gratification. Her verbalizations also give us a side-view into Yorùbá cosmogony featuring the belief in Orí (destiny) or Ayanmo or Ipin and so on, whereby they believe that a person who picked a good Ori was born with potentialities for success in life and vice versa, and that hardly could any medicinal charm or even scarifies to the òrìṣà (divinities) effect a dramatic change in what the person's soul personality had unconsciously picked before he/she was physically born. The main idea, however, is that the wealthy who are the elite class in a capitalist society are deliberately preaching tolerance to the poor masses by using this myth of ori. Any poor person or a group of poor persons who rise(s) against the class of exploiters in this society is/are regarded as literally rising against his/their own personal divinity/divinities! Ironically, these oral poets (agbè oral poets, who belong to the class of the exploited support this idea which is meant by the minority elite class (i.e. the Oba and chiefs,

politicians, and wealthy businessmen and women) to keep the poor masses (i.e. the peasants, petty-traders, local craftsmen, labourers and salary or wage-earners) in perpetual slavery!

### 3.6 INCANTATIONS IN AGBÈ ART

According to Professor Qlábímtán (1971) and Professor Qlátúnjì (1984: 140-145) incantations are magical poems. Agbè artists as representatives of Yorùbá traditionalists therefore incorporate some magical poems into the text of agbè art, as and when appropriate, to reinforce their wishes. In the form of Ofò, each of these poems goes with specific medicinal charms attributed to Ọsánỳìn, the Yorùbá divinity of healing. In the form of Àyájó, they are associated mainly with ancient myths and legends peculiar to Ifá literary corpus. Only one excerpt will serve our purpose here. It is a piece of Àyájó including Ofò utterances meant to edify a prominent member of a particular immediate audience. The excerpt is taken from the repertoire of the Àkòyà group:

Gàniyù: Infá ni "Aré, Pa-mí-ń-ku, dẹdẹ  
'Ebí ẹni 'ọ tóká 'in, l'ọ káá jásẹn:  
Ẹni 'ọ tọ wèrèpẹ ni wèrèpẹ kù sí  
Àgbàlagbà tọ t'Èkọọ 'gbónẹ  
'Un l'ẹkọọ 'gbónẹé rá lówọ."  
Aásìikì òò!!

Oşó ilé ẹ ma'e tọ ọ!

Àjẹ ilé ẹ má'e tọ ọ!

Gàniyù: Ifá says, "Stubborn goat, run for dear life, fast!  
Surely, it is he who provokes the oká snake  
That the Oká snake bites.

It is on one, who provides the wèrèpè stinging bean.

That the wèrèpè shakes off its hairs.

It is the hand of the elder

Who provokes hot creamy èkọ (maize gruel)

That hot creamy èkọ will burn,"

This Isaac!

Wizards of the household, don't provoke him!!

Witches of the household, don't provoke him!

By chanting the above incantation, the songster sternly warned local malevolent forces not to try their evil art on one of his patrons who, from appearance, looked vulnerable but is in actual fact a tough person. The particular patron is metaphorically described in the context of the properties of the seemingly benign but dangerous entities - (a) the gabon viper (b) the wèrèpè stinging bean and (c) hot maize gruel. The normal effect of this on the patron who was a prominent member of the audience was likely to be a revitalized sense of security since he would firmly believe that the incantation would prevent malevolent forces from trying their art on him. The main idea, of course, is the reinforcement of the Yorùbá belief in the efficacy of incantations.

This brief discussion of the content of Yorùbá agbè art demonstrates that the participants in agbè poetic activity - the artists as well as members of their audience - live in a Yorùbá traditional society. As tradition-bearers, these people express "the ideas, values and feelings, through which they experience their lives in society at different times". In doing so, they act as metaphorical spokesmen and spokeswoman for their society at large. It is therefore valid to conclude that Yorùbá agbè art is, in one sense, an ideology.



#### 4.0 LITERATURE AS A SOURCE OF AMUSEMENT AND INSTRUCTION: ILLUSTRATIONS FORM FAGUNWA'S NOVELS

"Fágúnwà is a very humorous writer." (Bámgbóṣé 1974: 117). Bámgbóṣé (*ibid*) illustrates briefly in three paragraphs how Fagunwa exhibits humour in his five novels - Ògbójú Ọde nínú Igbó Irúnmolè (Ògboju) Igbó Olódumarè (Igbó), Ìrèké Onibùdó (Ìrèké), Ìrinkerindò nínú Igbó Elégbèje (Ìrèké), and Àdiitú Olódumarè (Àdiitú) -- "through parody and witty comments put in the mouth of the characters". We have identified five other important ways through which Fagunwa exhibits humour in his novels. They are comic episodes; witty comments by the novelist; the rhetoric nature of the novelist's language, suggestion of laughter by the novelist, and the nicknames the novelist gives to some characters and places (for details see Àlàbá 1996: 35-50).

Humour is one of the delights of story-telling in Yorùbá (Ogunpolu 1975: 6). Thus Fágúnwà rightly aims at amusing his readers who would have been his listeners were he to be telling the story verbally. Another aim of Fagunwa as a writer is to instruct his readers about how best he thinks human beings should live. In effect, Fágúnwà "undertakes to mingle pleasure with instruction."

{The words of Samuel Johnson in Brown, J.E. (1926. p.3}.

The Ways through which Fágúnwà exhibits humour.

If we add the five other ways just identified to the two ways already identified in Bamgboṣe (1974), we now have seven ways through which Fágúnwà exhibits humour. These may not be exhaustive. Suffice it to say that the burden of this section is a brief description of this important aspect of Fágúnwà's novels.

#### 4.1 PARODY

It appears that Fagunwa makes use of parody to exhibit humour in order to underline the fact that whatever one can think of has its own significance and some relationship with the other things in the universe both severally and individually.

For example, Yoruba street cries are parodied out of recognition: a strange woman trader hawks diseases instead of curative medicine:

Ará igbó, eró ọ̀nà, ẹ́ wá bá mi rà o.

Ojà mi pò, owó kékeré ni: Wárápá: pọ̀n-ùn mètá

Şònpònná: pọ̀n-ùn méjì, ètẹ́; pọ̀n-ùn mérin

Wèrè : pọ̀n-ùn mífà, orí fifọ́: şìlè mệwáá;

làkùrègbé; pọ̀n-ùn kan, igbẹ́ ọ̀rin pọ̀n-ùn kanààbò

Ifọ̀n, sisi, ẹ̀sẹ̀ didùn; şìlè mífà, oówo: şìlè kan

inú rírun şìlè mệwáá, sòbiyà, pọ̀n-ùn kan, ọ̀tútù,

tọ́rọ́, kúrúnà, tọ́rọ́, ikọ́ pọ̀n-ùn kan; ibà; şìlè meje,

aràn şìlè mệẹ́ẹ́dógún (*İrinkè* , p. 26).

People of the forest and passers-by, do come

and buy from me; my offer is cheap, it costs

just a small amount of money: epilepsy;

three pounds; smallpox two pounds, madness:

six pounds, headache: ten shillings; rheumatism:

one pound, dysentery; one and a half pounds

measles; six pence, sore: six shillings; boil; one

shilling; stomach ache: ten shillings; guinea worm;

one pound; cold, three pence, kwashiohor; three pence,

cough, one pound, fever; seven shillings; worm: fifteen

shillings.

Although this example satisfies the amusement aim, it also reiterates the fact that diseases are older than curative medicine. They constitute "necessity" which people say is: "the mother of invention" - curative medicine in this case.

## 4.2

*op.cit* p.12)

The episode of Olowo-aye's wedding party is our chosen example:

Igbà tí Kíniun bá bèèrè ‘̀nkan- nàà ti àgbònrín ti ó jẹ olórí agbáwo bá sǐ ní fi ‘̀nkan-nàà fun un, a bèrè sí í ha àgbònrín ní èékán a sǐ máa fà á mọra bí ẹnì pé ó ní fẹ́ pa á jẹ, a wí pé òun ní bá àgbònrín şeré ni... Bakan náà sǐ ní lódò awọn eye.

...Ìgbà ti àṣàdì ba sī fi ibi ti ó jókòó sí sīlẹ̀ òun a  
wá sí ọ̀dọ̀ awọ̀n-àlẹ̀jò mẹfà yí a bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí i fi ọwọ̀  
pa àgbébọ̀ mẹfà lára a wí pe òun ní bá wọ̀n širé  
(Ìgbó, p. 47).

Whenever Mr. Lion asked for anything and Mr. Deer the head steward brought the thing to him he would start scratching Mr. Deer with his claws as if he wanted to kill and eat him but saying that he

(Mr. Lion) was merely playing with him (Mr. Deer)... And it was the same among the birds.

When Mr. Hawk left his seat he would come to these six guests and start to caress the six hens and say that he was merely playing with them.

The funniest part of the episode is that in the end all the animals and birds at the party got drunk and they started behaving abnormally.



Àjànàkú bèrè sí wo igi lulè kǐnǔn bèrè sí í pa awọn ẹranko, kòlòkòlò pa ọkan ninu awọn àgbébo; àṣádí sǐ ń lé àwọn ẹyẹ kiri. (Igbó, p.47)

Mr. Elephant started pulling down trees, Mr. Lion started killing other animals, Mr. Fox killed one of the hens while Mr. Hawk was chasing all other birds.

### 4.3 WITTY COMMENTS BY THE NOVELIST

Fagunwa's own witty comments are found mostly at the beginning and at the end of each novel.

In the preface to the first novel he shows that he is so sure that the novel is full of wisdom and is very interesting. He says, "Oro inu iwe yii kun fun ogbon o si dun bi oyin 'The contents of this book are full of wisdom and they are as sweet as honey.' (Ogboju p.ii). In the same novel, Fagunwa shows that he is as humorous as his 'host' Akara-oogun who becomes the protagonist in the novel.

Fagunwa reports:

Léyìn ìgbà tí àwà méjèèjì jókòó tán, a bèrè sí í ẹ àwàdà a sǐ ń rẹrín-ín bi ẹni pé a tilẹ̀ ti mọ ara wa ri ni (Ogboju, p.2)

After both of us had settled in our seats, we cracked jokes and we laughed as if we had known each other before then.

Most writers would not show that they are convinced that their readers have enjoyed the writers' works as Fagunwa humorously does at the close of that novel. He says

"Músò! "Músò!!" Músò!!!" Ẹ kú ìgbádùn ìtàn yí o (Ogbojú, p. 102).

"Heep!" "Heep!!" "Heep!!!" May you all become luminous spirits as you have enjoyed this story.

#### 4.4.0 THE RHETORIC CHARACTERISTIC OF THE LANGUAGE

Another important way through which Fagunwa exhibits humour is the rhetoric characteristic of the language he employs. This characteristic is made manifest by Fagunwa's love of words, his use of hyperbole, excessive repetition and declamatory speech. To the Yoruba people, Fagunwa is a 'sweet-tongued-fellow'.

##### 4.4.1 HIS LOVE OF WORDS

In the following example, the words with which Fagunwa is humorously in love have been underlined. Since every word must refer to some object, phenomenon or concept it follows that Fagunwa is indeed in love with the reference of the words underlined:

Èmi nàà kò tún sọrọ nipa ìrùngbòn onírùngbòn  
mọ, mo fi onírùngbòn sílẹ kí ó máa gbé ìrùngbòn  
rẹ lọ. (Igbó, p.79)

So I stopped talking about someone else's beard,  
I allowed the owner of the beard to go away with  
his beard.

In this example, Olowoaye, the protagonist in the novel is fascinated by the strangely long beard of *bàbá onírùngbòn yéúkẹ ẹni ti ó ní gbé ibi gegele okúta* ('the old-man with-a-long-beard-who-resides-on-the-top-of-a-hill') and is commenting on it before the owner of the beard stops him. By repeating the nouns, 'owner of beard' and 'beard', Fagunwa is calling our attention to their amusement value as far as the story is concerned.

#### 4.4.2 HYPERBOLE

In the example below, Ifepade's father in preparation for his daughter's marriage buys

Ìrínwó màlùù, ẹgbèrín ìgàn aṣọ, ẹgbèrún  
garawa epo pupa... ọgọrùn-ún àpò iyọ, ọgófà  
àpò ata, ọgójẹ àpò àlùbòsà (Ìrèkẹ p.88)

four hundred cows, eight-hundred (six-meter)  
pieces of cloth, one thousand tins of palm  
oil,... one hundred bags of salt, one hundred  
and twenty bags of pepper, one hundred and  
forty bags of onions.

This is an exaggerated preparation for a marriage ceremony and it is in effect humorous.

#### 4.4.3 DECLAMATORY SPEECH

The example is taken from Fagunwa's most recent novel. It is a mixture of pathos and humour. A disappointed wife rails at her husband:

Bí mo mò pé ìjàngbọn ni mo máa kàn mo jẹ fẹ  
ọ? Mo jẹ fẹ olóríburúkú? O sì wo mò mi nàà  
ni. O wo mò mi koko... A wí fún ọ, o gbọ? A  
ni kí o yéé kégbékégbé o gbà? A ni kí o yéé yó  
kèlèkèlè tò obínrin olóbinrin, ó wò ọ létí?  
(Àdùtú, p.9)

If I knew that I would meet trouble, would I  
have married you? Would I have married a  
luckless man? Yet you clung to me. You  
clung to me like a leech... We warned you but  
did you listen? We asked you to stop keeping  
bad company, did you accept? We asked you



to stop secret affairs with other people's wives,  
did the warning enter your ears?

The excerpt seems to employ sarcasm. Whoever knows the future? And a person who has been warned of his failings repeatedly but who still persists in them is bound to end up in trouble or failure.

It is pathetic that the woman could not have known the future while deciding to marry the man. Marriage is thus an adventure of fate just as the whole of life is. But it is also humorous because the woman did not behave wisely. She should have accepted things as they came since they were not in her power. If only she knew that the man she saw as luckless and stubborn was not the ultimate designer of events but an adventurer in the universe ruled by providence.

#### 4.4 WITTY COMMENTS PUT IN THE MOUTH OF CHARACTERS

Àkàrà-oògùn commenting on the conceited man says:

Aláṣẹ̀jù kò tǐ ní owó ó ń ta ọmọ ọba ní ìpá, bí  
ó bá ní owó tán ịṣẹ̀ ní yóó ẹ̀ (Ògbójú p.18).

The conceited man has not got money and he is kicking the princess, when he would have got money he would perform wonders.

This comment is at once sarcastic and humorous. The import of the joke is to advise man not to lord his wealth/riches/position or whatever he has over others. The story as told in Ògbójú (pp 87-88), summarized here to conserve space, actually has it that the man who inherits a pile of china-ware is only imagining how he would marry a princess, how she would offend him one day and beg for pardon; how he would refuse her apology and she would go and solicit the help of her mother, the queen, how both of them would kneel before him begging him to pardon his wife and how he would kick his wife instead of forgiving her. We have seen that he actually kicks all

he has and becomes devoid of all he has. Here the man is building castles in the air.

#### 4.5 THE SUGGESTION OF LAUGHTER

By using the lexical items ẹrín (laughter) and rẹrín-ín ('to laugh') in many places Fagunwa displays his sense of humour and so suggests that his readers should normally laugh. The fact that laughter is a universal response to humour (Gossen 1971: 157) cannot be over-emphasized. Even when it is covertly expressed as the mere absence of unpleasant reaction to a joke, humour is assumed. So, whenever one comes across the suggestion of laughter in Fagunwa's novels one automatically responds either by laughing or smiling.

For example, the novelist suggests laughter as he reports his own rapport with his visitor:

... a bèrẹ sí n ẹ àwàdà a sǐ n rẹrín-ín

(Ògbójú, p.2)

...we started cracking jokes and we were laughing.

In another instance, the novelist suggests laughter as he reports that a strange visitor whom he met on an evening stroll laughed at his polite request for the visitor's name:

Lẹyìn nàà wàyí mo wá bí í léèrè mo ní, 'È jòwọ, ẹ má ní mo ẹ àfójúdí sí yín, n kò mà rántí yín mọ.' Ó bú sí ẹrín ó ní òun kò tǐ fẹ sọ ẹni tí òun jẹ fún mi (Ìrèké, p.18).

After that I asked him: 'Please do not say that I disrespect you, I do not remember who you are.' He laughed and said that he did not want to disclose his own identity yet.

#### 4.6 NICKNAMES GIVEN TO CHARACTERS AND PLACES

In the realm of Yoruba jokes, funny nicknames are given to playmates. Outside such a group, the names would not be used otherwise 'insult'/'disrespect'/'abuse' or any other undesirable speech act would result with the consequent alienation of the language-users concerned. In Fagunwa, the funny nicknames are used in appropriate cultural contexts.

For example, a glutton is called Abolounjeku ('He-who-would-die-with-the-owner-of -food') by some people, definitely his playmates(Ògbójú, p. 15cf, Fágúnwà/Şóyínká 1982, p.28) 'the one who accompanies the cook to the grave;') A trickster is given the nickname Ayédèrú-èdà 'The-world-becomes-fraud' (Ìrèké p.101).

The imaginary story teller, Àkàrà-oògùn, is nicknamed bàbá omúlèmófo (Ògbójú.p101) 'father/master of illusion" (cf. Fágúnwà/Şóyínká, ibid. p. 139 - ;Father of Born Losers') after his miraculous disappearance.

The above examples corroborate the Yorùbá adage which says,

Orúkọ a maa roni

'One is prone to behave

as one's name suggests.'

The same is true of the names of places in Fágúnwà. For example, the name Ìlú Èdídàrè(Ìrínkè, p.70) ('The-town-of-imbeciles') seems funny to us but it seems to be the appropriate name for the inhabitants are all imbeciles. In the same town is rightly found a compound named Ile Òmùgò-parapò (Ìrínkè p.72) ('The compound of Fools-congregate.')



Although Fágúnwa's novels are full of fables, folktales, legends and myths and so prone to incongruities which would make humans laugh, the messages presented in the novels are realistic enough for us to maintain that Fagunwa is a very humorous writer. He believes so much in cheerfulness and laughter that he incorporates same into his philosophy of life. He believes that he who can take all things cheerfully with laughter has happiness.

Fagunwa as a novelist "undertakes to mingle pleasure with instruction." (The words of Samuel Johnson quoted in Brown J. E. (1926, p.3) already referred to above). Therefore, one can simply describe each of his novels as an extended humorous metaphor.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

My Vice-Chancellor Sir, other Principal Officers of the University, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, although there is so much to say on the topic of this lecture there is limit to what can be said here. From the foregoing discussion of a particular Yorùbá experience, we have tried to show that Literature is indeed not only “sweet and useful”, it is also, in one sense, an ideology.

One potentiality which this latter aspect of African (Yorùbá) literature has is that political leaders (i.e. the ruling elite) may make a profitable use of “public opinions” expressed in these verbalizations in the formulation of government policies. This is in addition to the value it has in helping to maintain the status quo by diverting the attention of the poor masses from their immediate pressing needs (such as food, clothing, and shelter) to the appreciation of the so-called “timeless truths” expressed in these verbalizations. Indeed, literature as an ideology is a useful weapon in the hands of politicians on the battlefield of politics whereby human beings organize their lives together in society. Literature as an ideology is indeed a barrel of important questions of social power. Hence, according to Eagleton (1983: 234), “the spirit of a national is determined by the class which rules it and subjects literature to itself.”

Therefore, African (Nigerian) rulers should not only encourage the teaching and learning of their indigenous languages, they should also see to it that all hands in their various societies are always on deck to promote the production, advertising, distribution and consumption, digestion and assimilation of literary works of art (oral and written) in these languages. All the levels of education – (a) mass literacy, adult and non-formal, (b) pre-primary (c) primary, (d) secondary and

(e) tertiary, must be involved so that each of these literatures "as a form of artistic creation (a form of social consciousness) will thrive and continue to actively influence the social reality from which it emerges." (Marx and Engels 1976, *ibid.* p.19) There is no doubt at all that investing so wisely in literature promises a bountiful harvest of lasting stability and excellent development in the societies.

Thank you for listening. Glory be to God for everything. Amen!



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