

YORUBA ORAL LITERATURE AS A PANACEA FOR UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In spite of Government efforts and policies towards tackling the problem of unemployment in Nigeria, the problem is still plaguing the nation. This paper aims at introducing some aspects of Yoruba oral literature as a panacea for unemployment syndrome. The efficacy of Yoruba oral literature in ameliorating unemployment problem shall be brought to the fore. Practical examples of utilizers of this subject matter in generating employment for themselves (self-reliance) and also as employers of labour shall also be drawn and discussed at length in this paper. Stakeholders of productivity shall be equally enlightened on how they can avail themselves of these lofty opportunities in Yoruba oral literature in Nigerian world of employment.

The claims of some stupid European scholars that Africans don't have literature until the era of literacy remain ever incredible to African scholars. Evidences abound that virtually all tribes in Africa have Literature. The failure of those early scholars to do thorough research on African Literature perhaps made them to jump into such parochial conclusion. The truth of the matter is that, Literature in Africa was purely oral in nature.

Finnegah (1970) and Olatunji (1984) among many other authors are of the opinion that African Literature, of which Yoruba is prominent, is oral in nature. It is evident in their daily lives, ceremonies, activities e.t.c. It is part and a great aspect of socialisation among the tribe.

Serious research on Yoruba oral Literature started in the early seventies. Abimbola (1975) observed that Yoruba oral literature is one of the best known areas of African verbal art.

Works of Babalola A, Ogunbowale O; Bascon W., Olatunji O., Olabimtan A., Olajubu O. are enough evidences to subscribe to this claim.

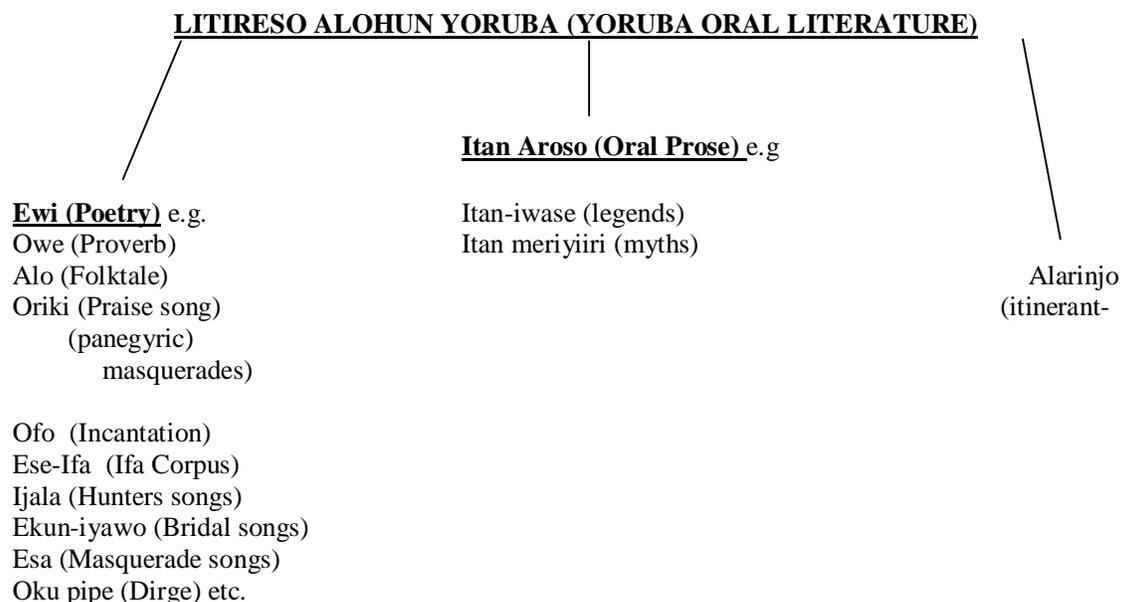
This paper covers various aspects of Yoruba oral literature – poetry, prose and drama.

As the name implies, this type of literature is purely oral. It is the type of literature before the so called "literature". It is commonly found in daily lives, activities, festivals, ceremonies etc among the Yorubas. Olukoju (1978) explains that such literature are often spoken, sung or chanted. It is also very close to music. No wonder why Okpala (2006) wrote that a very old phenomenon which existed in almost every sphere of human-race society, and endeavour a mark of cultural identity- - .

Characteristics of Yoruba oral literature are enumerated below:

- ❖ Unwritten; purely oral in nature.
- ❖ No one can claim its authorship.
- ❖ It could be easily forgotten.
- ❖ Its reference could be monopolised and thus not transferable.
- ❖ Some are gender-sensitive or oriented.
- ❖ It could be spoken, chanted or sung.
- ❖ At times, composition and performance are spontaneous, simultaneous and unedited.

Examples of Yoruba oral literature are owe, Oriki, Ofo, Ayajo, Olele, Obitun, Ekun Iyawo, Ijala, Esa to mention but a few.



Note: The above chart is not detailed; but for the purpose of this paper; we decide to limit our examples to these areas.

The above chart shows that Yoruba oral literature could be categorised into three main areas; oral poetry, oral prose and oral drama.

Yoruba oral poetry has its own characteristic features. These differentiate it from the written category. Olatunji (1984) have worked extensively on features of Yoruba oral poetry generally and specifically on each of the genres. However, Omolasoye (2011) observes that the manner of presentation depends on the nature and context of presentation/performance. He also identifies some of the specific characteristics of poetry as:

- Collections of words spoken and (or) sung in an artistic way
- The language of poetry is usually richer than standard language.
- Usually presented in short sentences
- Full of rhythm.

Yoruba oral prose (Itan Aroso) does not have any serious feature due to its narrative nature. It is like story telling with a narrator and audience having a motive of establishing facts or beliefs.

Whether Yoruba people have drama or not before the coming of Ogunde, Duro-Ladiipo, Ojo-Ladiipo and the recent proliferations of films and home videos have been discussed and aptly proved by Adedeji (1998) and Ogundeji (2002) juxtaposing the features of written drama (as in texts and video) with the repertoire of the Alarinjo theatre we can conclude that the Yorubas have drama ever before the western drama, the followings are the identifiable features of oral drama (or traditional drama) that establishes it as Drama per-ce.

- ❖ Multiple performers (actors)
- ❖ Dialogue is used.
- ❖ The use of costumes is present.
- ❖ Mimicking is common
- ❖ Professionalism is also common e.g (The Olojes)

The Syndrome of Unemployment in Nigeria

The history of unemployment in Nigeria could be traced to the coming of the Europeans into Nigeria political scene in the pre-independence era. Reason is because right from the traditional settings, of various communities/races in Nigeria, every young adult was busy doing one thing or the other to earn their livings. This ranges from; farming, hunting, black-smiting, weaving, dyeing to shaving etc. Some of these professions are common to some specific family or lineages.

The introduction of western-education which brought about the quest for urbanization and hunt for white-collar job could be seen as the genesis of unemployment in Nigeria.

Increasing number of young graduates, craze for certificates and its demand or condition for employment by various employers of labour (public and private) with some other policies as dictated by foreign culture, all in the pool of rotten political scene in Nigeria are, among other, factors that aggravate the level of unemployment in our society. Evidences of unemployment abound in the rate of armed-robbery, bombings, kidnapping, stealing, hooliganism and other cases of social-vices.

The recent pronouncement of Nigerian President on Monday, 16th January 2012 in the Presidential National broadcast that; the Government will generate seven hundred and fifty thousand (750,000) employments is enough evidence to prove that the Government herself is aware of the high level of unemployment in Nigeria.

At this juncture, we want to see how Yoruba oral literature could serve as a panacea for this problem of unemployment.

The Place of Yoruba Oral Literature in Unemployment in Nigeria

Yoruba people as earlier noted in this paper are predominantly farmers, hunters, weavers, drummers, dyers etc whose economy was never depend on anything less or more until the coming of the Europeans.

The introduction of new trends of professionalism via westernization such as: Engineering, Teaching, legal practices, clerics, trading etc have changed the taste of majority as far as the issue of employment is concerned.

It is observed that re-branding and self-reliance bids by the Government have recorded mass failure according to the opinion of the writer. In a bid to diversify the general clamour for the so called white-collar job; the writer opines that Yoruba oral literature could be employed as a panacea for the problem of unemployment.

The Use of Yoruba Oral Poetry

Omolasoye A. (2006) show-cases the importance of Yoruba oral poets in the society; as against the derogatory general view of people about them; some called them "mere-beggars". For instance, the use of owe (proverbs) could be annexed for generation of employment. People like Supo Koseemani utilise Yoruba proverb to create employment for himself in "Ela loro" on Broadcasting-Corporation of Oyo State (Radio- O-Y-O) as a freelance. More or other young graduates of Yoruba studies can follow-suit; by doing a similar programme on various radio and television stations in the south-western part of Nigeria.

Ela-loro is a programme where Yoruba proverbs are said, explained and its historical background are, usually analysed to educate the younger generation.

The use of Oriki (panegyric) according to the writer, is so important to the Yorubas in every phase of life. A lot of young graduates could be self-employed on this; useful in academic settings (as a resource person), social-functions, entertainments or as guest artists. For musicians e.g. Alabi Ogundepo's part in Ayinla Kolington's Fuji music. also, as an example; Alade of Ekiti uses oriki a lot in Oku pipe at different functions while Suleiman Ayilara (Ajobiewe) and Foyeke Ajangila do the same, through Esa-Egungun in their repertoire.

Alabi Ogundepo, Ogundare Foyanmu, Bade Ojuade and a host of others are examples of people that did not only create employment for themselves but are employers of labour through Yoruba poetry (Ijala

The use of Ofo as an aspect of Yoruba/oral literature is another fallow-ground that awaits breakage among the younger generations in Yorubaland. The efficacy of Ofo in security maintenance among the Yorubas could not be over-emphasised. Now that there are many challenges on the already porous security of our Nation; the use of metaphysical power (which may not be effective without Ofo) is what many scholars are agitating for as a way out. Olajide (2012) wrote that the use of Egbe (a Yoruba metaphysical power) is seen to be more effective than aircraft - - - "

The writer also is of the opinion that most of the Yoruba metaphysical powers are more effective compared to the so called modern or western technological powers; Omolasoye (2006).

The major constraints in the use of Ofo is the way modernization is presenting and portraying it. For instance, modern religion sees Ofo (incantations) as demonic, archaic and ungodly.

In Nigerian film industry actors such as Abija, Dangunro, Agbako, Ara-o-san-an etc are very popular due to the fact that they are well versed in Ofo. No younger actor or actress is seen to replace them! It is even disheartening to see a Ph.D holder in Yoruba traditions and culture who cannot recite a single line of Ofo (incantations) off hand. The theoretical aspect is being given more emphasis rather than the practical.

The Use of Yoruba Oral Prose

Yoruba oral prose, according to our chart in this paper, include series of oral stories; such include; folktales, legends, myths etc. These kind of narratives are dying gradually among the Yorubas. However, we are of the opinion that these areas, if tapped, could generate employment opportunities for people. Babalola A. (1985) opines that Alo like other genres is explicitly distinguished by name in Yoruba culture and has key features by which it could be immediately recognised. Alo is one of the most popular genres among younger generations in Yorubaland. Story telling in nature having tortoise as the principal actor with didactic themes.

Introduction of Television and Computers are the main factors militating against popularity of Alo among the younger ones in this era. Notwithstanding, it is the cultural responsibility of the older ones to encourage the young ones. This also could be tapped into generate employment.

Some musicians in Yoruba land have tried to inculcate the lessons in Alo in their fans and audience by including some Alo Onitan into their compositions. Examples are Alhaji Dauda, Akanmu-Epo-Akara, and Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde Barrister in "*Ode n regbo*" and "*Suuru*" respectively.

The Use of Traditional Drama

The history of traditional drama in Yoruba land could be traced to as far back as the era of Oyo-Yoruba Empire Adedeji (1998). The Alarinjos were initially regarded as "rogues", vagabonds and sturdy beggars. Works of Arohunmolashé, Adedeji, Ullie Beier, Ogundeji and so on proved that Yoruba people have drama (traditional drama) ever before the coming of stage plays, films, videos and so on. The popular opinion is that Eegun-Alare according to Olajubu (1972) fondly called Alarinjo in the works of Adedeji J. is the drama being referred to in this paper.

Their rehearsal, publicity, presentation and general repertoire open doors for creation of employment. The making of their costumes, bata drumming, dancing publicity and real performance are the likely discipline or area of specialization in this lofty opportunity.

If a none-native could learn and master the beating of Dundun drum (A Yoruba traditional drum), there is no reason for a young Yoruba man to excuse himself from such profession even if he comes from outside the Agalu or Oje lineage that are traditionally known for it.

Today, we see various hired-dancers in musical bands such as: Fuji, Juju and even Gospel musical bands, the question now is what stops the younger generation from joining and embracing the Alarinjos (who will equally pay them heavily)

The recent trends in the production, growth, development and proliferation of home videos in Nigeria (i.e. Yoruba films) are another area where young graduates could get employed. Writing of scripts, direction and shooting of films, publicity, acting and sales of films are various areas of specialization in film – (drama) making that could enhance self-productivity and self-reliance.

Conclusion

This paper has so far analysed various areas of Yoruba oral literature. The problem of unemployment that is biting hard on the younger generation in our Nation has also been discussed. The consequence of unemployment has been manifesting in diverse areas such as in cases of: Armed-robbery, political hooliganism, vandalization of public properties, lots of social-vices and crimes of different shade all of which are not good omen for a developing nation like Nigeria.

Yoruba Oral Literature as a Panacea for Unemployment in Nigeria

It is discovered in this paper that Yoruba oral literature will have a great impact on Nigeria in alleviating the problem of unemployment, provided it is religiously tapped. A lot of prominent individuals are found in the society today who though not public servants are earning their living via the use of Yoruba Oral Literature.

However, we want to conclude that; there are still much fallow-grounds in Yoruba oral literature that need to be broken so as to generate employment, self-productivity and thus reduce the number of applicants in the Nigerian labour market.

Recommendation and Suggestions

- Nigerian Educational Policy and Curriculum should be tailored towards self-productivity.
- Parents should encourage their children who have flare for Yoruba studies.
- Parents should not mistake learning of Yoruba studies for mere fetish religion.
- Incentives, on the part of the Government, should be provided for those who have interest in tradition and culture.
- Dogmatic quest for securing white-collar job should be discouraged.
- Craze for “certificate” as a pre-requisite for employment should be discouraged; skills and ability to excel in any of these traditional values could serve as a waver from mere paper certification.

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