

Glocalization of Yorùbá *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* Ideology

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Abstract

Ọmọ́lúwàbí, a Yorùbá concept of the ideal *persona*, is well foregrounded in the *Ifá* corpus, the full meaning and import of which are either lost or taken for granted. Previous studies have examined the concept of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*, investigated its possible source(s) or origin, and explored its philosophy. The present writer has also been privileged, at different forums, to extend the study's frontiers in different directions, including evolving a home-grown theoretical basis for ideologizing the indigenous Yorùbá concept. On each occasion, he has come up with additional exciting findings. The present discourse attempts to stretch the horizon of intellection a little further, such that the theoretical basis for interrogating the Yorùbá personality using the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* concept is guided by revisionist/historicist assumptions since one is dealing with an all-encompassing philosophical hermeneutic that both defines and engages the sociology of life and living, the prevalent patterned attitude, and values in the indigenous Yorùbá society. "Glocalization," in this context, refers to the extent of the local relevance of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* and the possibility of its attaining a higher pedestal of global ideological competitiveness. The paper argues that *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* remains one great ideology in the Yorùbá *Ifá* knowledge systems practice that possesses a capacity for gauging socially approved human relations of global magnitude; there is a plurality of poetics, not just one. The paper succeeds at, among other things, harnessing and streamlining previous findings of this writer on *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* with the current ones, with a view to sharing fundamental cultural information on the subject for the purpose of making it globally acceptable and adaptable. The paper concludes that the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideology is capable of fostering genuine development, and that its relevance to worldviews, core universal values, and principles naturally compels an acknowledgment of its profundity, as well as ensures the possibility of its assuming a

pedestal of universal philosophical and ideological mediation in an apparently troubled world, albeit not without some soft challenges.

Introduction

Since the historic seminar¹ on “*Ọmọ̀lùàbí*” was held by the Igbimo Agba Yorùbá, otherwise called the Yorùbá Council of Elders (YCE), in 2006, there has been an increasing interest of critics, especially of scholars of Yorùbá studies, in the Yorùbá *Ọmọ̀lù(w)àbí*,² a philosophical concept. *Ọmọ̀lùwàbí* is copiously foregrounded in the *Ifá* corpus,³ though this concept’s full meaning and import are either lost or taken for granted. I have conducted different researches on the topic and have had the privilege of presenting some of the findings to the public. The theoretical basis for interrogating the Yorùbá personality, as will be demonstrated shortly, using the *Ọmọ̀lùwàbí* concept is in the assumption that one is dealing with an all-encompassing philosophical hermeneutic that both defines and engages life, living, and the prevalent attitude and values in the indigenous Yorùbá society. This essay contends that *Ọmọ̀lùwàbí* remains a great ideology in the Yorùbá *Ifá* knowledge systems and practice; it possesses a capacity for gauging approved human relations that is of global magnitude. One of the motivations for this paper’s advocacy is foregrounded by V. B. Leitch’s⁴ observation on contemporary theories on literature relating to ethnic enclaves, which, according to the critic, call into question traditional claims for a single universal poetics applicable to all humanity. He argues, “There is not one but a plurality of poetics. The pluralizing of poetics characteristic of recent decades is often linked with political

1. “Education in Yorubaland and the Concept of *Ọmọ̀lùàbí*” was the theme of a two-day-seminar, 19–20 October 2006. The convener was Prof. Adétówún Ọ̀gúnşéyẹ, and the host was the former executive governor of Ọ̀gùn State of Nigeria, Ọ̀túnba Gbénga Daniel. The proceedings of the seminar were subsequently published in 2009 by the Ibádàn Cultural Studies Group of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ibádàn, Nigeria.

2. *Ọmọ̀lùàbí* and *Ọmọ̀lùwàbí* are synonymous. My preference is for the latter, which is used throughout the study.

3. The *Ifá* corpus is the indigenous Yoruba divination and divinatory process; a body of knowledge systems arranged in verse form of sixteen each; and each corpus having a multiplication of singularized narrative units. All the units put together constitute the *Ifá* corpus. The Yoruba nation is located in Southwestern Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. See also William Bascom’s *Ifá Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa* (Indiana University Press, 1969); see also Adélékè Adéèkò, “‘Writing’ and ‘Reference’ in *Ifá* Divination Chants,” *Oral Tradition* 25, no. 2 (2010): 283–303.

4. V. B. Leitch, *Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, Poststructuralism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

forces advocating decentralization and self-determination as well as with social forces promoting subgroup unity and purification."⁵

Leitch's contextual concern, I believe, covers both ethnic or minority literary theorization and postcolonial theories of the oppressed, as well as their ideologies to which *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* belongs. This paper, besides examining *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí*'s cultural knowledgescapes,⁶ theorization, and practical usage in the indigenous Yorùbá society, will explore the possibility of retrieving the seemingly extinct *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* concept with a view to applying it, as appropriate, to foster understanding and peaceful co-existence among people across the globe, regardless of region, religion, or race. Therefore, *glocalization*, in the context intended in this paper, refers to the extent of the local relevance of *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* and how it can attain a pedestal of global ideological adoption, application, and competitiveness. The present effort and topicality are born of a perceived necessity to streamline and share the cultural information on *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* for reasons of global understanding and socioeconomic stabilization.⁷

Granted, contradiction has always defined and characterized humankind — which explains why although certain regions of the world, including most African countries, may have the potential for economic viability, or are richly endowed in natural and human resources to cope with basic needs, we are far from solving many of our self-inflicted hydra-headed problems. The challenge of modernity is characterized by wars, diseases, and poverty, as well as poor governance, especially in developing nations. Other problems include man's inhumanity to man, greed, corruption, political intrigues, and, in Nigeria and perhaps some other African countries, ritual murder, arson, kidnapping; climatic changes as a result of environmental degradation and general pollution, etc. This scenario summarizes the reality of the so-called modern world. Therefore, this paper shall critically examine the Yorùbá *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* ideology with a view to locating and situating its significance and global relevance, and explore the possibility of deploying its mediating potential in

5. *Ibid.*, 83.

6. Knowledgescapes, as used by Fiona Cameron and Helena Robinson, citing Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, are "the shifting nature of knowledge, reason, and the truth-value of particular practices and world views." "Digital Knowledgescapes: Cultural, Theoretical, Practical, and Usage Issues Facing Museum Collection Databases in a Digital Epoch," in *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*, ed. Fiona Cameron and Sarah Kenderdine (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2007), 169-70.

7. See Ingrid Mason, "Cultural Information Standards: Political Territory and Rich Rewards," in *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*, ed. Fiona Cameron and Sarah Kenderdine (Massachusetts: The MIT Press 2007), 228.

fostering psychosocial understanding and mutually beneficial international relations.

It is apparent that the world faces serious global socioeconomic and sectarian crises, the most recent being ISIS, and that all conscious efforts at attaining global peace and understanding seem to defy critical processing and solutions. It is also evident that over-reliance on the military and political manipulations in situations of armed conflict, have often been a bane, rather than a solution. These did not work in Iraq, Libya, Egypt, or, lately, Syria. Indeed, the military option and political manipulations have sparked major crises across the globe. Sarah Joseph discusses “the curse of modernity” succinctly in her classic book:

The focus of criticism, therefore, has now shifted from social and economic factors within a society to a critique of modernity as it was transmitted through the colonial state and subsequently through global forces operating through the postcolonial state. The violence and destruction associated with development processes, or with colonial rule, are now explained as consequences not so much of political failure or of class differences or social problems, but as the inevitable outcome of imposing modern science with its instrumental attitude towards nature and man on these societies.⁸

Therefore, the current evaluation of the Yorùbá *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* model being proposed in this study shall be based on a non-secularist template that is premised on the fact that the *Ifá* divinatory knowledge systems of the indigenous Yorùbá society, through which the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* model evolved, had their daily activities conditioned by a cosmology governed by a pantheon of gods and goddesses. In practice, and as a way of life, *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* is both a philosophy and an ideology that is connected to the Yorùbá worldview and religious principles aimed at guiding practical living.

In practical terms, this paper takes *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideology from the local indigenous Yorùbá setting and relates it to the contemporary society, local and global. The idea is to argue that a culture of the past is not necessarily dead; rather, that it is possible to consciously select a philosophical concept like *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*, and identify elements that are adaptable, modifiable, and applicable to a given reality at the local or global level.⁹ This is justifiably so, considering that when the various other aspects of, say, religion, are critically examined, it is possible to see how older ideas or concepts, for example,

8. Sarah Joseph, *Interrogating Culture: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Social Theory*. (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998), 59.

9. *Ibid.*

witchcraft, “evil eye” (vendetta, loathing, envy), demonic operations, etc., have been revived and made part of Christian or Islamic teaching and general concern, especially in Africa.

Yorùbá Èniyàn Concept

What in indigenous Yorùbá is called èniyàn is a being or persona. Ọmọ́tádé Adégbindin¹⁰ opines that indigenous Yorùbá agree with the Western dualist school, by identifying two elements that constitute èniyàn: the physical and the spiritual. And beyond this position, Adégbindin recognizes Yorùbá’s “tri-partite conception of man.” He explains that the elements include *ara*, the physical body and tangible entity. *Ara*, according to the critic, is “composed of flesh, bones and blood”; and “*ẹ̀mí*, often translated as the soul, is the spiritual element . . . immaterial and regarded as the vital force which gives life to the body.”¹¹ He identifies another intangible sub-component called “*orí*, which literally means the ‘inner-head,’ which is also spiritual, and popularly held to be the essence of human personality.”¹²

While one may agree with the respected philosopher-critic’s Yorùbá tri-partite constituents of èniyàn, his English translation of èniyàn as man, and *ẹ̀mí* as soul is a bit problematic. There is need to clarify some issues at stake here. No doubt, there are two broad components of èniyàn, the physical and the spiritual. According to *Ifá*, èniyàn/persona is made of two components: the physical, which is also the tangible body, and the spiritual. The spiritual is further subdivided into two sub-components: the spirit, *ẹ̀mí*, and the soul, *orí*, that both occupy a compartment. In other words, èniyàn is made of the body, spirit, and soul (the soul is the essence, *orí*, or “*orí inú*,” inner or invisible head).¹³ It is a significant deity in the Yorùbá pantheon. In the Igbo¹⁴ belief system, it is similarly referred to as a personal god, *chi*. It is believed that everybody has a personal *chi*. The soul warehouses the intellect¹⁵ and *kádàrá* and *àyànmọ́*. While “*kádàrá*” refers to destiny, “*àyànmọ́*” refers to fate.

The identified three layers of meaning shall briefly be examined: first, èniyàn as persona is the physical being (human),¹⁶ the tangible; or a “char-

10. Ọmọ́tádé Adégbindin, *Ifá in Yorùbá Thought System* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press. 2014), 105.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Orí*, Wándé Abimbólá explains, is the god of predestination who knows what is good for everyone. *Ifá Divination Poetry* (London: NOK Publishers, Ltd., 1977), 9.

14. The Igbo language is spoken by one of the three major tribes in Nigeria.

15. The soul also processes all human intellection.

16. Being, not in the Platonic or Parmenidean conception of Being or reality, but being as predicating God, or human, in the sense of Scotus and Ockham. See Omoregbe’s

acter" as in a literary narrative, especially prose fiction and drama; or the "voice," as in poetry. This does not, however, include cases of personification and apostrophe where abstractions like joy, melancholy, wind, death, etc., could also assume the status of a character in a literary work. Second, *èniyàn* connotes what has earlier been expressed by J. A. Šófolá and Bólájí Ìdòwú,¹⁷ as the essence of humankind, the soul. *Èniyàn* refers to the quality of the human mind, or that which foregrounds a refined intellection, and perception of, and attitude to, life and living. Third, *èniyàn* refers to such principles or values that define and determine the degree and quality of humanness in a personality. Šófolá discusses the idea of how personality (*èniyàn*) develops through the structured different constituents, and how the constituents respond to, and are simultaneously influenced by sociological stimuli: "And there is the basic personality [*èniyàn*] which comprises the deeper, more unconscious aspect of the personality often referred to as the 'character-structure' said to be more stable and more difficult to change. There is also the relatively more superficial structure built around specific value systems and, therefore, 'modifiable'"¹⁸

The meanings espoused above perfectly fit into what is intended in this study. The idea of *èniyàn* informs expressions like, "*Ọmọ yí mà n'iwà o, bàbáà rẹ náà s'èniyàn púpò.*" (This child is well behaved and disciplined; the father also is such a kind or nice or pleasant personality). Should a persona behave to the contrary or lack discipline, kindness, and such virtues as are approved of by the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*-inclined community, he is said to be emptied of virtues. It is predictable that the child would misbehave or lack self-restraint, in which case the persona is said to be "mutilated." It informs statements like, "*Ọmọ́dẹ yí bàjẹ púpò, kò sé'èniyàn lára rẹ.*" (This is a terrible child, s/he is uncouth and lacks discipline, or lacks character). A mutilated persona, therefore, is a crude person with a warped mind. *Èniyàn* in the third meaning refers to the sterling quality of mind that is acquired or developed over time. It is not an inborn virtue; it is acquired, inculcated, internalized through the process of indigenous acculturation and education. Šófolá corroborates this point while commenting on H. S. Sullivan's interpersonal theory of personality: "[an] individual develops his personality through interpersonal interaction with other human beings in social situation starting from infancy through childhood..."¹⁹

Knowing Philosophy, 162.

17. J. A. Šófolá, *African Culture and the African Personality: What Makes an African Person African* (1978); Bólájí Ìdòwú, *Olódúmarè: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longmans, 1962).

18. Šófolá, 1.

19. *Ibid.*

Therefore, it is assumed that for èniyàn (physical) or the tangible being to qualify as *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*, it must first have undergone a distillation of spirit (i.e., have been purged of the natural bestial instincts²⁰), by means of a conscious and measured acculturation from infancy onward. The *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* product is a compliant and refined personality in culture and practice, and has a historical antecedent. For example, *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* as a philosophy conditions and defines the best practices in interpersonal and intergroup relations, which practices are strictly based on the assumption of fairness and equity. Therefore, the following questions will be addressed shortly:

- i. What is *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*, and what is its source or origin?
- ii. What are the possible causes of its decline?
- iii. How far and best can *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* be revived?
- iv. What are the implications for contemporary local relevance and global adoption of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideology?

Similarly, the following hypothetical deductions are apposite to the thrust of the present argument:

- i. The èniyàn-persona is originally unrefined, rustic, and wicked.²¹
- ii. The *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*-compliant system produces a persona that has undergone a distillation of spirit to become a refined and goodly personality.
- iii. Humankind across the globe will benefit from *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideals if it is resuscitated and adopted.
- iv. If adopted as a global ideology, *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* is capable of mediation in contemporary society, in promoting international relations and global peace.

A revisionist/historicist²² approach shall be adopted in interrogating and interpreting the apparent contradictions that characterize the modern world, their impact on humankind and their implication(s) on the persona. Additionally, the possibility of retrieving and justifying the global adoption of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideology will be considered. The choice of theoretical approach is largely informed by culture and history, as well as the simple logic of digging deep into the source of a problem the purpose of which is to solve it through revisionist pragmatism.

20. See also Sigmund Freud's compartmentalization of the human mind or levels of consciousness in his classic book, *Psychoanalysis*.

21. Besides the classical Greek philosopher Plato stating something to this effect in *Timaeus*, all the major religions of the world also recognize this fact. Various studies, especially in psychology, have confirmed it, too.

22. It is a Marxian socialism that favors an evolutionary approach to issues rather than the upheaval of a revolution.

Two possible sources of the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* concept have been identified so far. The two schools of thought shall serve as preliminary guides: the first is Judeo-Christian based (what I call the Johnson/Lucas school),²³ and the second is the *Odù Ifá* divinatory verses.²⁴ The Judeo-Christian school argues that *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* is a contraction of *Ọmọ [tí] Núà bí*²⁵ (a child Noah begot). Noah or Nuh (as he is known in the Qu'ran) was a prophet. The story goes that when God decided to destroy the world with a flood on account of people's failure to repent of their numerous trespasses²⁶ and God regretted creating Man, God found only Noah and his eight-member family obedient and faithful; therefore, He spared the family and destroyed the whole world with a deluge.²⁷ So the argument of the Johnson/Lucas school is that, since God approved the conduct of Noah and his extended family, they automatically became the Yorùbá model of approved moral conduct: *Ọmọ Núà bí*. However, anyone familiar with Noah's narrative in the Bible²⁸ will agree with the apparent limitations of Johnson and Lucas's fallible premise. For example, the latter life of Noah and subsequent events around him and his family could neither justify this claim nor qualify Noah as the ideal persona the indigenous Yorùbá nation had in mind.

One could figure out a fresh or emerging school of thought here, an offshoot of the Judeo-Christian school of thought, and the possibility of a synergy between the *Odù Ifá* and the Johnson/Lucas narrative, coupled with the adaptation theory as a possibility that is suggestive of the efforts on the part of Christians who found a ready template in the existing indigenous narrative of *Odù Ifá* (*Ifá* corpus). This flexibility allows for add-ons and ellipses in the two narrative models which run simultaneously. The second origin-theory of the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* concept, as represented by Wándé Abimbólá, is emphatic on the basic components of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* philosophical paradigms that are determined by a comprehensive and holistic Yorùbá indigenous education. This aspect shall be explained in the next section.

23. Two scholars of Yoruba studies have severally and at different times advanced this argument in some of their scholarly works: Samuel Johnson, a renowned Yorùbá historiographer, and Olúmidé Lucas, a retired Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Ibádán.

24. For convenience, Wándé Abimbólá is cited in support of the *Ifá* school. Abimbola has written extensively on the *Ifá* corpus and verses.

25. See also Adédòtun Ọ̀gúndèjì's "Èdè Yorùbá gégé bí ọ̀kọ́ tí a fì n' t'wà ọ̀mọ́lúwàbí gúnlẹ̀ sẹ̀bùtẹ̀ ayọ́ l'áwùjọ́" in *Ọ̀MỌ́LÚWÀBÍ: Its Concept and Education in Yorùbá land*. Ibádán: Ibádán Cultural Studies Group, 2009: 73.

26. Genesis 6:1–8.

27. Genesis 6:9–22; 7:1–13.

28. Genesis 9:20–27.

Ọmọ́lúwàbí Philosophical and Ideological Paradigms

Odù Ifá as source and guide reveals in *Ìrètẹ̀ Méjì* that *iwà-pẹ̀lẹ̀* is the very soul of Ọmọ-tí-Oníwà-bí or *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* — the child begotten of Oníwà. Ọbàtálá-Ọbatóriṣà (or Ọriṣà Ẹ̀lá), was the first Oníwà (custodian of the symbolic staff of good conduct).²⁹ The characterology of *Oníwà* or *Oníwà-pẹ̀lẹ̀*, is better appreciated through the etymology, which explains *iwà* as good conduct, and *pẹ̀lẹ̀* as both a greeting and a warning, in an indigenous Yorùbá setting. There are three main *iwà pẹ̀lẹ̀* (or *iwà-pẹ̀lẹ̀*) types, which are further subdivided into 21 layers as sub-types. But for the purpose of this study and due to space constraints, only the three main types of *iwà-pẹ̀lẹ̀* as recognizable principles that serve as *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* paradigms for the thesis of this discourse shall be explained shortly:

- i) (*Iwà-*) *Pẹ̀lẹ̀ kó má baà kú*. (Be careful, or be of good conduct, so that you do not die suddenly/get hurt or harmed); i.e., take extra caution to avoid a sudden death or fatal harm caused either by sheer negligence or carelessness, etc.
- ii) (*Iwà-*) *Pẹ̀lẹ̀ kó má baà kóbá àwọ̀n ará yòókú*. (Be careful that you may not cause problems for others); i.e., avoid behavior that indicates that one does not have consideration for others, like reckless driving, drug dealing, gun running, abuse of office, or engaging in all manners of corrupt practices, or acts which often result in senseless communal conflicts or full-scale war for selfish and parochial reasons.
- iii) (*Iwà-*) *Pẹ̀lẹ̀ kó má baà para rẹ, or (kó má baà para rẹ lára)*. (Be careful so that you do not kill yourself or bring some harm upon yourself); i.e., self-inflicted harm, as in cultivating dangerous habits, like drug addiction, promiscuity, alcoholism, smoking, etc.

29. Ọbàtálá (-Ọbatóriṣà) is also known as Ọriṣà Ẹ̀lá (Senior Deity or Big Deity). As the name suggests, Ọbàtálá ranks next to Olódumarè-God, the Supreme Deity in the Yorùbá pantheon, as contained in Yoruba mythology. The myth of Ọbàtálá, which is an extraction from the *Ifá* narrative, clearly states that Ọbàtálá is the first Oníwà (owner of good conduct), symbolized by his staff of office, on the top of which is delicately placed the *iwà*, which he carries with him wherever he goes. The myth has it that he got drunk one day and lost the highly prized *iwà*. Ọbàtálá-Ọbatóriṣà/ Ọriṣà Ẹ̀lá/the Oníwà plays a major role in the creation process of humankind: the myth has it that after Olódumarè molds man with clay, usually without the limbs, it is the responsibility of Ọbàtálá to add the limbs as appropriate. The quality of the finished creative job solely depends on Ọbàtálá's mood which is critical to the final outcome of the creative process: it is believed that, occasionally, Ọbàtálá gets drunk with palmwine, such that the created man ends up misshapen, and that this is responsible for those who are physically challenged in the world.

I shall briefly explain each of the three (*iwà*-)*pèlẹ* types. In *iwà-pèlẹ* type i, *Odù Ifá* in “*Ìrètẹ-Méjì*”³⁰ states in part:

<i>Agílúntí rọra máa sọ jẹ;</i>	Alligator, be careful how you peck your delicacies
<i>Aláàmù-pètẹ rọra máa sọmu</i>	You lizard, watch what, and how, you drink
<i>Nígbèrí ọsà, nígbèrí ọkun,</i>	From the fringes of the lagoon; from the fringes of the ocean
<i>Kóo má baà fíbi háíháí kan háíháí,</i>	That you may not find your- self in a dangerous situation
<i>Ègún ló gún ọ lésẹ lẹẹkan</i>	Your foot was pricked once by a thorn on a footpath,
<i>Kóo má gbabi ègún kojá mọ!</i>	Then do not take the same way again!

(translation mine)

Common sense requires that anyone whose foot has been pricked once by thorns or a sharp object should not take the same route again, or should consciously avoid repeating the same mistake. This warning underscores the fact that a wise person, a society, or a nation should normally not make the same mistake twice. The Yorùbá proverb, *iná èsìsì/èsùsù kì í jóni lẹẹmejì* (A disguised fire³¹ does not burn a (wise) person twice), summarizes it all. The emphasis here is the significance of learning from past errors or mistakes. *Ọmọlúwàbí* as a philosophy acknowledges that there is no perfect human, not even the *òrìṣà*, only *Olódùmarè*-God is the perfect one.³² However, *Ọmọlúwàbí* as a philosophy encourages the need to strive for perfection. Whoever lives to the contrary is not and cannot be described as *Ọmọlúwàbí*.

The illustrations above are metaphoric projection and, by implication, are indicative of habits and behaviors that amount to poking one's finger into a naked, or disguised flame. *Ọmọlúwàbí* discourages and does not approve of anyone who gets involved in any such practices like, stealing, land grabbing, promiscuity, abuse of office, murder, corruption, etc. The indigenous *Ọmọlúwàbí*-driven society considers them as “no-go” areas, because they bear serious consequences on the culprits.

30. Wande Abimbola, *Ifa Divination Poetry* (New York: NOK Publishers, 1977), 134–140.

31. A fire is said to be disguised when live or hot charcoals are covered with some thin ashes

32. Adégbindin similarly attests to this universal acknowledgment of the Supreme being, citing Aristotle's “Being qua being (Pure being) is God”, 94.

Iwà-pẹ̀lẹ́ type ii, “Be careful so that you do not put others into trouble,” is a demonstration of someone who, against all advice, chooses to do something which is injurious or lethal to the immediate family, community, or larger society, although the individual might enjoy some benefits from such acts. For example, drug dealers, human traffickers, kidnappers, armed bandits, money launderers, corrupt government officials/community leaders, Internet fraudsters and scammers, etc., belong to this category. *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* values are sustained on mutual understanding, respect, and consideration for the well-being of others.

Iwà-pẹ̀lẹ́ type iii, “Be careful so that you do not kill yourself or bring harm upon yourself.” This arises from the apparent danger, harm, or calamity that is self-inflicted. These are often the result of avoidable but cultivated habits which apparently are unapproved of by the indigenous *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*-propelled society. The harm or calamity can be avoided, provided the willingness or determination to apply requisite discipline is there. *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* recognizes the tendencies in humankind, largely through peer influence, sheer puerile curiosity, or ignorance, to indulge in activities that are self-destructive, which either kill instantly or destroy incrementally. They include drug addiction (including alcoholism), promiscuity (adultery/fornication/sex outside approved marriage),³³ and any form of excess and indiscipline. *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* draws attention to the consequences of such habits and advocates that they be avoided altogether, as part of the acculturation process from childhood to adulthood. One’s response to this acculturation, or one’s failure to heed it, defines their space, status, and degree of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*. Therefore, any behavior not approved by the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* principles attracts dire consequences of deterrence.³⁴

Ọmọ́lúwàbí, in summary, fosters a dynamic, positive, pleasant and rewarding human relations. It is both a people-centered and a personality-propelled philosophy that helps to advance the collective vision of a people. A child that is raised in an *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* community enjoys close parental attention, love, and discipline, and undergoes a process of focused systemic socialization and cultural integration through internalization of core cultural values, ethics, and mores. S/he is, predictably, a psychosocially integrated personality, consciously guided by the *iwà-pẹ̀lẹ́* codes that constitute the core values of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*.

33. It is a serious embarrassment to any family whose daughter is not found to be a virgin by her husband on the night of their honeymoon. She is shamefully and publicly dismissed, and returned to her parents in order to serve as a deterrent to other ladies.

34. The communal code of conduct also serves as deterrent laws to the extent that culprits and their families are stigmatized and ostracized. Other decent families are discouraged from interacting with or marrying into the stigmatized family.

The *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* child is a consistent and steadily developing personality. By implication, the child is not a perfect personality; he or she makes mistakes but does not make the same mistake twice because he or she consciously works himself/herself towards perfection (cf. *ìwà-pẹ̀lẹ̀* type i). The cultural upbringing compels the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* child to recognize the “no-go” areas as defined clearly by the ethical codes, including distancing themselves from *ọmọ-alejà* (social misfits, miscreants, and dissociating from activities that are considered injurious to the well-being of the society (*ìwà-pẹ̀lẹ̀* type ii). The *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* child cherishes healthy human relations and consciously invests, fosters, and maintains good neighborliness based on trust, genuine love, understanding, and sacrifice even at personal cost, for mutual or communal benefits (*ìwà-pẹ̀lẹ̀* type iii). Therefore, whoever lives within this code of psychosocial conduct is considered an *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*, a true offspring of the Oniwà (Ọbàtálá-Ọbatóriṣà).

Indigenous Education

Although childhood education was initiated at home in the indigenous Yorùbá setting, it continued and went beyond the confines of the home to include the wider society. The acquired education was, predictably, in stages and age-group informed. It was meant to last a child for life, ever expanding in scope as the child interacted more with people at every stage of their growth.

At adolescence, indigenous education was partly secularist and partly non-secularist. It was secularist to the degree that education was aimed at a lifetime occupation/career. For example, there were different occupations or careers available to the child to choose from, and pursue. Some of the occupations were tied to the family lineage, and reflected in the family deital or trade names either as prefix or suffix.. For example, Ifá divination for the Ifá priests; drumming (*àyàń*); hunting (*ọdẹ*, which also doubled as soldiering), blacksmithing (*àgbẹ̀dẹ*), carving and woodwork (*agbẹ̀nà* or *gbẹ̀nà-gbẹ̀nà*) all have Ògún as their patron-deity. Examples include, Ifáwùnmi, Ifábùnmi, Àyángúnà, Àyáńsínà, Ògúndánà, Ògúngbẹ̀mí, Ògúnmókun, Adéògún, Àrẹ̀ògún, Ọlónàdẹ, Ọdẹ̀wálẹ, Ọdẹ̀bùnmi, Ọdẹ̀bòdẹ, etc.

Again, the indigenous education was partly non-secularist to the degree that the indigenous Yorùbá, like most Africans, were, and still are, largely animists. It was the reason why the professions/careers were, and still are, tied to deities as patrons. Therefore most, if not all, known home-grown professions in addition to those already mentioned, including hairdressing, farming, goldsmithing, drumming and drum making, cloth weaving, cloth dyeing, etc, had gods and goddesses(or deities) as guardian patrons, the way the Catholic Church, for example, recognizes patron saints of specific activities and

causes. The emphasis was on the youth learning a trade or a profession. The youth was apprenticed to a profession, and the duration was dependent on how soon they acquired the required skills. There was the usual continuous assessment by the masters for quality and general competence in the chosen jobs/careers. Two reasons could be adduced for the non-secularist nature of the choice of careers/occupations here: in the Yorùbá pantheon, every deity has its ministry and related occupations which the deity guards jealously. And because the indigenous Yorùbá society was largely agrarian, the patron deity is “*Ọ̀rìṣà Oko*” (earth/farm deity) that, among other things, guarantees fertile lands and bumper harvests,³⁵ and to which most, if not all, families subscribe. Another example is *Ọ̀gún*, the patron of all occupations that have to do with iron and metal tools. *Ọ̀gún* is not, however, limited to metallurgy, hunting and soldiering; he is also the patron of hairdressers, and of wood and calabash carvers. It was, and still is, the general belief of the people that the guardian deity bestows a sense of direction and inspiration for quality skills, grants favor or “good luck,” guarantees a generous patronage of products and services, as well as offers protection from known and unknown enemies to the devotee-subjects or professionals.

At the level of secularity, indigenous education was directed at consolidating the youth’s potential. The youth was introduced to the dynamics of social interaction and relations, the citizen’s social responsibility to oneself, to the family, and to the general community. This was the mechanism for general social engineering and control in an *Ọmọlúwàbí*-compliant society, ensuring good governance, communal peace, and cohesion, and advancing the ideological and socioeconomic goals of the society.

In an *Ọmọlúwàbí*-driven society, it was compulsory for every youth to belong to a social or professional group. The royal court (the monarch and his cabinet) gave each social group specific responsibilities according to age group and social need. This practice still exists in some Yorùbá towns like Adó-Èkiti and Ijẹ̀bú-Òde, among others, where the *rẹ̀gbẹ́-rẹ̀gbẹ́* social age groups mark their anniversary each year, and are encouraged by the monarchs to pledge their loyalty and offer the kings gifts at such occasions as the *Ojúde Ọba* and *Udi’Roko* in Ijẹ̀bú-Òde and Adó-Èkiti, respectively.³⁶ The professional and social groups were also made to engage in various development projects for the

35. Further on fertility, there are other deities that address fertility in humankind, *Ọ̀bàtálá/Ọ̀rìṣà Nlá* and *Ọ̀ṣun*.

36. *Ojúde Ọba* and *Udi’Roko* are both annual hegemonic festivals. At such festivals, the monarch is the chief celebrant. The chiefs, social groups, professional associations, associations informed by age groups (*rẹ̀gbẹ́-rẹ̀gbẹ́*), etc., troupe out gleefully accompanied with different orchestras, proudly dressed in their best clothes and uniforms, and displaying the paraphernalia of their professions or associations. The groups in turn pledge

progress of the community. The orientation of the youth was geared towards appreciating collective efforts and communal spirit as opposed to individualism, and that whatever affected one of them affected all of them. In effect, *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*, in many ways, is on the same pedestal as some other philosophies and ideologies, including Chinese Communism, Russian Marxism/Socialism, etc. Like these other ideologies, *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* also has had its own share of decline in relevance and significance. Factors responsible for the decline in awareness and influence of the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* philosophy and ideology will be examined briefly.

The Wane of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*

That the social structure which informed the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* principles and legacies in the indigenous Yorùbá society began to decline many decades ago is a fact. The decline was gradual; it began shortly before the transatlantic slave trade, followed by the bilateral trading partnership between the European trading companies and Africans serving as middlemen and traders along the coast of West Africa. The European traders, for example, witnessed and indeed contributed to the decline of the long-established *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*-structured system that predated the hundred years of the Yorùbá inter-tribal wars (1793–1893). Three factors that are responsible for the wane of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*, namely, the transatlantic slave trade, the Yorùbá tribal wars, and colonialism and neocolonialism (including the attendant problems of the military incursion which gave the Nigerian-styled democracy its character and notoriety of corruption and violence).

The Yorùbá Tribal Wars

Since valuable data are available in libraries across the globe through the efforts of historians and scholars of African studies on the causes of the Yorùbá tribal wars, it is no use belaboring it further. Rather, what is more relevant to this essay are the implications of such wars on the once-robust *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*-driven Yorùbá civilization, and its cultural values and mores. The inter-tribal wars were certainly a debilitating experience for a once-culturally flourishing, powerful, and vibrant Yorùbá nation. It is painful to imagine the life-long damage, disruption of family and social structures, loss of values, dispersal of cultural artifacts, even across international borders, etc.

Naturally, people's behavior in wartime is bound to be different from their general conduct during peacetime. So the wars contributed fundamentally to

their support, loyalty, and commitment, as well as offer gifts, to the monarch. He in return prays for them.

the apparent rupturing of the *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* legacy. The activities of the monarchs, war generals, mercenaries, warmongers, foot soldiers, etc., were to fulfill diverse interests, chief among which was their desire to perpetuate armed conflict. The monarchs and their generals, besides territorial expansion, show of supremacy, and the defense of their respective communities, also had their eyes on war booty, including slaves. Similarly, mercenaries and foot soldiers were usually out to maximize their take of the booty, including, among other things, slaves that could translate to instant wealth since there were ready markets for them.

War of any type, whether conventional, asymmetric, or guerilla warfare, by its very nature is dehumanizing. The activities of most Yorùbá monarchs, warlords, and warriors, and their attitude to general decorum, were predictably selfish, and psychosocially devastating to the vanquished communities. They were activities and attitudes that ran contrary to the established principles and social ethics of *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* philosophy. Acquisition of slaves (a major commodity) and slave trading became the main impetus of sporadic wars, and the means of sustaining the *status quo* for the ruling class. The European slavers also encouraged wars and skirmishes which provided ready markets for the vanquished to be sold into slavery. Towns, communities, farmlands, and livestock were razed at night while those who tried to escape with their lives were hunted and trapped by the snares of their vanquishers. They were subsequently carted to the coastal ports of Badagry and Lagos, etc., sold to waiting European slavers at the slave outposts and markets, and shipped to Europe and the Americas as labors on the plantations or in factories or made to serve as domestic servants and mistresses. It dealt a devastating blow to the *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* principles. Other factors that finally nailed the coffin of the declining *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* legacies included colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Colonialism, Neo-colonialism

The erosion of cultural values and mores became much more apparent during the colonial era. This was predictably so in view of the very nature of the capitalist-informed colonialism which thrived on maximization of profits through exploitation. It foregrounded the agenda colonialism was designed to achieve in the colonies, including Nigeria. Following the amalgamation of the Northern and the Southern Protectorates in 1914, the nation-state of Nigeria was decreed into existence as a British colony. The sociological implications of colonialism on the Yorùbá people equally applied to other more than 300 ethnic groups in Nigeria. The North-South amalgamation was the lumping

together of “many nations” into one mega-entity called Nigeria.³⁷ This action was to be the foundation of many crises the country has since been faced with: the coercive integration of peoples of diverse languages, cultures, and values; the struggle among ethnic groups for the center; religious intolerance and conflicts; the threat to cultural identity of ethnic groups, the ethnic militias — the Arewà in the north; Odùduwà People’s Congress (OPC) in the southwest; MEND, MASSOP, and BAKASI in the south; and lately, Biafra agitators, among others.³⁸ Colonialism was characterized by apparent contradictions which were meant to fulfill the specific agenda of the colonial government through its agencies and local beneficiaries. Frantz Fanon describes the effect of colonialism on the colonial subjects: “Colonialism is not satisfied with merely withholding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.”³⁹

Therefore, colonial Nigeria and, in particular, colonial Yorùbá cut a picture of a rather warped, culturally disoriented and confused image of “the running nigger” Bigger Thomas, the protagonist in Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, or the invisible protagonist in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*.⁴⁰ By implication, colonialism played a major role in the basic contradictions that characterized the colonial Yorùbá. After fifty-five years of political independence the obvious challenges of cultural identity and the *Ọmọlúwàbí* ideological decline have remained intractable. The Yorùbá emerging culture, thoughts, and attitudes characterized by greed and self-centeredness, loss of self-esteem, etc., are directly and indirectly conditioned, manipulated by former colonial masters or their agents. Ngugi wa Thiong’o captures the tragic impact of a colonized psyche more graphically: “[T]he economic and political conquest of the colonized was accompanied by cultural subjugation and the imposition of an imperialist cultural tradition whose dire effects are still felt today.”⁴¹

Similarly, Bill Ashcroft et al. reiterate the significance of history and why it was always a target of the colonial power: “The emergence of history in European thought is coterminous with the rise of modern colonialism which in its radical othering and violent annexation of the non-European world found

37. For a comprehensive historical account, see Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

38. See Tóyín Fálólá, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*. (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1998).

39. Frantz Fanon, “On National Culture” in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, et al. (London: Routledge, 1997), 154.

40. Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (Penguin Books, 1978); See Richard Wright’s article, “How Bigger Thomas Was Born,” *Saturday Review* XXXII (June 1, 1940).

41. Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “The Writer in a Neo-colonial State,” *Moving the Centre (Struggle for Cultural Freedom)* (London: James Currey, 1993), 42.

in history a prominent, if not the prominent, instrument for the control of subject peoples.”⁴²

Earlier, Ngugi traced the language handicap that seems to characterize the captive nations to the pre-independence phase of African history as part of the violence which European colonizers inflicted on the continent, and the consequences on the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* legacies: “The languages of the captive nations were suppressed ... the culture and the history carried by these languages were thereby thrown into the rubbish heap ... to perish.”⁴³ In other words, colonialism destroyed the indigenous componential psychology of the colonial subjects, dislocated their cultural values, ruptured their languages, mutilated their history, obliterated their dances, ruined the basis for indigenous education and belief system, and robbed them of their identity. It is safe to conclude this section by stating that since the slave era, the average African, and by the same token, the Yorùbá, has hardly experienced any significant positive change.⁴⁴ It marked a significant decline of the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* philosophy and practice.

Similarly, the military incursion into government in Nigeria further encouraged the decline in popularity of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* philosophy and principles. The 30-month civil war, institutionalization of corruption, and decay that characterize the civil service, the public service, and the academic institutions all registered another devastating blow on *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* principles and legacies. This is the tragic story of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*'s demise. Now, let us briefly consider the possibility of its resuscitation or retrieval.

***Ọmọ́lúwàbí* Principles, Retrieval, and Sustenance**

The efforts, so far, in this essay, have been to trace the etymology and possible origin of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* as a philosophical hermeneutic and an indigenous Yorùbá ideology of the precolonial era. The paper emphasizes the possibility of the deployment of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideology as a mediating agent, and a veritable means of promoting an ideal society. Additionally, the historical trappings of possible causes of its decline in modern Nigeria are also considered. Therefore, one feels obliged to propose possible ways of fast-tracking the resuscitation of the ideals of *Ọmọ́lúwàbí*, as well as the process of psychic retrieval of

42. Bill Ashcroft et al., eds., *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. (London: Routledge, 1997), 356.

43. Ngugi wa Thiong’O, “The Writer,” 31.

44. See Tóyìn Fálólá and M. D. Childs, eds., *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); and Tóyìn Fálólá, *The Power of African Cultures* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003).

the mutilated persona as a panacea, first for the contemporary Yorùbá society, and then for tackling current global challenges.

The new media must be engaged to facilitate the process of a cultural rebirth through the internalization of those values and legacies that define the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideology. The family unit is crucial and central to the proposed rebirth and restoration of the mutilated persona who must, for its part, be willing to unlearn habits (humanly difficult as this is) that are alien to the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideals, and adopt the socially approved virtues. Such a cultural suction will, therefore, necessitate a conscious replacement of the dropped habits that alienate one from *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideals. This is a great way to make the *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideology once again locally relevant, and a ready answer to the apparent national and global decay that stinks to high heaven.

On the possibility of globalizing *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* ideology, however, one suspects that the problem with this position, especially with the idea of pushing the proposed philosophy beyond its original Yorùbá cultural base is, primarily, how best or effectively can the limitations of interpretation, in relative terms, be dealt with? No doubt, societal values do differ, and vary from place to place, and from region to region. For example, a villain in Britain or China may be a hero in Africa. But then there is always a common denominator that unifies all cultures. Besides, there is what has been referred to elsewhere as “universal cultural correspondences.”⁴⁵ In which case, regardless of one’s location, or race or color, the very fact of being human (*homo sapiens*) makes everyone that is normal and emotionally stable to react or respond the same way in any similar experience occasioned by some natural phenomenon in their day-to-day life. Examples abound, albeit, in measured degrees, in such randomly selected cases as expressions of joy at the birth of a new child, expressions of fear in an encounter with threats to life, mourning the death of loved ones, fostering healthy neighborliness, loyalty to kin, friendship,⁴⁶ kindness, love, reciprocity, expressions of gratitude, reactions to ingratitude, celebratory acknowledgements of heroic feats or greatness or uniqueness;⁴⁷ the idea of good and evil, etc.

Therefore, regardless of obvious cultural differences, it is assumed that there is common ground that can accommodate *Ọmọ́lúwàbí* basic principles despite the possibility of a paradigm shift each time the principles are applied to different societies. The likelihood of the paradigm shift is occasioned

45. See A. O. Dasyíva’s *Studies in Drama* (Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers Nig. Ltd., 2004).

46. For further reading, see Shuaib Na’ibi and Alhaji Hassan, *Gwari Gade and Koro Tribes* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1969).

47. David T. Okpako, *Kpeha’s Song: Ethics and Culture in Urhobo Udje Poetry*. Ibadàn: Book Builders. Africa Edition, 2011).

by different factors, including economic systems as well as existing political structures. There is also the fear of a paradigm shift that may share a common ground with the familiar, for example, in a society that places priority on, say, wealth and economic status, it is almost predictable that *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* will be commoditized, and the values seen or represented differently.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing, here are a few suggestions for further consideration:

a) Genuine development in the direction being proposed in this study demands a mental reorientation and change. It is a change that comes from within, propelled by the individual will and determination. *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí*'s connectedness to worldviews, core universal values and principles that naturally compels an acknowledgment of its profundity, as well as ensures the possibility of its assuming a universalist philosophical-*cum*-ideological mediation. But then, this is not without its challenges, as already pointed out. Therefore, such mediation using the *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* model must recognize each region and its cultural idiosyncrasy in negotiating its domestication and adaptation.

b) Besides, it is generally assumed that the *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* ideology proposed here is fundamentally a mental model that propels all actions and defines all activities. All of these foreground the present advocacy for the adoption of, and a return to, the indigenous Yorùbá educational process and model in which every family, everyone, every economic, social and religious unit of the society is a stakeholder.

In view of the above, the *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* ideological model is capable of evoking and re-awakening a truly humanist consciousness, culminating in the rebirth of the persona from childhood to adulthood. The current effort at glocalizing the ideologized *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* principles readily offers an alternative option to a holistic mediation and global psychic retrieval for an already troubled world that is at war with itself. It must also be added that this is one significant way of making obvious hibernating resources, or ancient knowledge, relevant; and *Ọmọ̀lúwàbí* ideology is just one of such great ideas.

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