

PASTORALISM IN SELECTED SONGS IN UMALE FESTIVAL OF ILAJE-ETIKAN, ONDO STATE, SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Pastoralism has been conservatively conserved to continually connote style of teachings or writings that characteristically follow the manners and styles typical of a pastor or shepherds in Christocentric contexts. Conversely, available literatures point to the fact that Pastoralism can equally be adapted to song texts found in rituals and secular festivals which have been found to embody homiletic contents that serve similar purpose as pastoral sermons. Irrespective of the catalogue of researches conducted on masquerades festivals and the various renditions therein, the songs in Umale Festival of Ilaje-Etikan folks in the littoral parts of the present day Ondo State vis-a-vis their examination along the wavelength of the polemical praxis of pastoralism have not received adequate academic attention. This, thereby, justifies this research. Data for the research are collected through direct or first-hand observation, purposive selection of Umale Festival songs and analysed through the binoculars of Walter Goldschmidt's model of functionalism. The theory is considered suitable because of its advocacy for the examination of an indigenous practice vis-a-vis its functions among the people. Findings are revelatory that songs in Umale Festival of Ilaje-Etikan are sermonic in contents and serve similar purpose with the homilies of foreign religions; Ritual dances in Umale Festival underscore symbolic gender representation and can be "loan-shifted" to various contexts for the purpose of value re-engineering. The paper, therefore, recommends quotidian accentuation of the songs for the purpose of value re-orientation, with emphasis on the didactic ones; especially in this postmodernist era where morality ebbs out daily.

Keywords: Pastoralism, Umale Festival songs, Ilaje-Etikan, functionalism, Christocentric sermons.

Introduction

This research examines the employment of the bi-polar concept of pastoralism which has animal husbandry, religion cum theology as its roots to the study and critique of the songs in Umale Festival of Ilaje-Etikan people in the present day Ondo State, Southwestern Nigeria. The application or adaptation of the concept to masquerades songs is not out of place since it is believed that masquerades songs are also epistemically laden with messages that are morally motivated for the purpose of moralising the society in manners typical of the pastors or Christian shepherds. The festival is a replica of the general masquerades festivals in other parts of Yorubaland, an amalgam of which Ilaje-Etikan is. It replete with liminal correlates and aesthetical elements that are found in those of other climes. Ilaje is situated on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean to the south and Rivers Oropo and Alape to the southeast and southwest.

Ilaje-Etikan is one of the four aboriginal kingdoms in Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria. Ilaje-Etikan is situated on the southwestern flank of the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. The people of Etikan trace their origin back to Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba clan of southwestern Nigeria. In the ancient history, the Ilaje-Etikan folks are reputed as one of the aboriginal inhabitants that Oduduwa met in Ile-Ife; who later migrated southwards either sequel to oracular instructions or the usurpation of the leadership wrungs by Oduduwa which they could not stand. They formed parts of the people earlier referred to as the I/Ugbo or I/Ugbomekun in Ile-Ife in the pre-Oduduwa history of Yorubaland. They hail from the present day Oramfe and are descendants of Oramfe Onile-ina.

This paper is a radical repudiation of the colonial mentality held by members or adherents of the foreign religions of the Arabs and Jews/Hebrews which demonise and circumscribe festivals, rites, rituals and ceremonies as demonic, sinister, ungodly or full of gruesome acts of savagery. The paper is a strident advocacy for the decolonisation of the African worshippers' minds, thoughts, religious activities, belief systems, worships and piety; thereby emphasising the motif that until Africans begin to see the supreme or arch-deity and life from the point of view of their indigenous cultures, praying, teaching, thinking, representing and governing themselves in their indigenous manners, with their indigenous creeds and ethos and languages, misrepresentation of identity and Afro-centric selfhood or personhood is inevitable and meaningful or unflinching unity will always elude them. The paper also takes the advocacy for the promotion of Nigerian local contents with the inclusion of our cultural heritages which can be harnessed to become the bedrock of tourism, cultural pilgrimages and revenue generation to another pedestal. It is also a demythologisation of the Euro-morphic indoctrination, stereotypical misrepresentation of the Afromorphic festivals and the jaundiced myths, immoral propensities and unholy practices in them; using *Umale* Festival of Ilaje-Etikan as an exemplary specimen. On the whole, this paper sees the festival from the point of African theology also known as Afrotheology which studies the theological fabrics, kernels and basis of *Umale* Festival as an Afromorphic or Yoruba-morphic activity and its socio-cultural influences on the people of its society of origin.

Re-interrogating Pastoralism

Intellectual discourses on pastoralism are bi-polar due to the application of the concept to farming/animal husbandry and theology. This paper constructs a model that engages the concept from theological/doctrinal or Christological praxis. The word pastoralism has its root in the Latin term "pastor" which means shepherd and his/her attitude of feeding the flock not only with earthly food but also with spiritual food. Julia Dietrich (2015) sees pastoralism as the model of pastoral authority that stresses the importance of the shepherd's/pastor's virtue to the success of his preaching (136). Pastoralism is also the quality of life style typically characteristic of a pastor or shepherd especially in Christendom. It relates to the spiritual care or guidance of the people or congregation by a religious leader, shepherd or pastor. Vhumani Magezi (2016) also sees pastoralism as being synonymous with pastoral care (125). According to Wikipedia, pastoralism is rooted in the word and assignment of a pastor or shepherd in relation to the tendency to tend a flock or feed the sheep. Guillaume H. Smit (2015) examines pastoralism along the wavelength of the development of a missional ecclesiology as well as the challenges of pastoral life and ministry (238). Alfred R. Brundson (2014) admits that pastoral praxis finds itself in methodological limbo (245). In the context of this paper, the people of God or the congregation under the "episcopal see" of a pastor/shepherd are seen as

the sheep given by the sovereign will of Edumare, to a pastor care for, feed with the right teachings and moral instructions for the purpose of spiritual education and edification of their souls. The paper adapts the concept outside the context of Christian theology to African indigenous festival, *Umale* Festival of Ilaje-Etikan, which has morality and entertainment as its core features. Certain songs rendered in the festival have sermonic contents embedded in them and such songs with the pastoralist messages they pass to the adherents of the festival.

Conceptualising Festival/ *Umale* Festival of Ilaje-Etikan

Since Africans believe that the destiny of man is tied, like umbilical cord, to his physical and metaphysical environment, there is a dire need for the evolution of quotidian and existential liturgies of fraternisation between him and the environments. Such liturgies include festivals, rites of passage, sacrifices, rituals and indigenous ceremonies. These liturgies help man to strengthen the covalent bond between him and his environments, the ancestors and other metaphysical forces believed to rule or mediate in his affairs. They are indices of Afrotheology and Afro-culturalism through which man understands himself more and relates or fraternises with Edumare or transcendental forces that rule in his quotidian affairs. Thus, those who live in littoral habitations with fishing as their staple occupation, like the Ilaje of Ondo State, often attribute great catch or bounteous fishing season to the deity of the sea known as Malokun while those who live in agrarian habitations attribute bountiful harvest and immense productivity on their farms to the deity of the soil or the forest. It suffices to conclude that man's existence, subsistence, survival, continuity and prosperity are tied to these liturgies which are expected to be piously and religiously observe and memorialised periodically or seasonally. Observances of these festivals or trado-cultural or trado-doctrinal liturgies are heralded with merriments and great feasts. In some cases, they are for the memorialisation or commemoration of the end of a season, epoch and the commencement of yet another one or the annual re-living of a historical landmark or annal in the collective existence of the people.

Cardinal to the celebration of festivals among peoples of colours, cultures and creeds is appreciation or gratitude to deities or supernatural forces whose benevolence is believed to be transcendental and incomprehensible. Festivals are also observed with the intention of rededication, phatic communions with unseen spaces and forces that rule in the spaces; supplications, pacification or appeasement of deities or ancestral "godheads". Festival is the medium of eternal or quotidian fraternisation of human beings with his physical and metaphysical environments religiously or piously observed with plethora of reverence and veneration to the ancestors, lesser deities and supreme deity of the universe. So, it is the feast of fraternisation or the annual re-union of the ephemeral human world with the eternal and changeless world of form and purity inhabited by the deities. Festivals are special feasts of "spiRITUAL" communions between the living and visible humans and invisible deities or terrestrial powers in which the adherents and officiants believe and hallow with tremendous reverence. They are indispensable aspects of the "spiRITUALity" of the people. Ajimisan, S. Ola (2022a) and (2022b) avers that "ritual" is the nucleus of every spiRITUALity and that ritual is the liminal fabric of every spiRITUALity, irrespective of the holier-than-thou stance of the adherents or officiants of the foreign, Arabic or Judeo-Christian faiths and creeds (134) & (87). Ajimisan (2023) also pontificates that:

Festival is a periodically observed customary ceremony among
 a people or within anethno-cultural or geo-ethnic isotherm.
 Observances of festivals serve the fulfillment of specified

communal or traditional purposes like piety, memorialisation, rededication or appreciation to/of some gods, deities or totems and epochal events among a people. Etymologically, the word festival traces its root to the Latin lexicon and the root word is “festum” and “feria” which literally mean sense of “public joy, merriment and revelry” characterised by abstinence from work in honour of the gods” (90).

Ajulekun (2018) defines festival as “sacred or profane times of celebration marked by series of performances amidst gaiety, conviviality and cheerfulness” (23). Ekpeyong (1981) considers festival to be:

Periodic recurring days or seasons of gaiety, merry-making set aside by a community, tribe or clan, for the observation of sacred celebrations, religious solemnities or musical and traditional performance of special significance. It is an occasion of public manifestation of joy or celebration of a historical occurrence like the conquest of a neighbouring village in a war. It can take the form of a religious celebration during which sacrifices are offered to different gods having power over rain, sunshine, marriage and good harvest (31).

Ekpeyong's standpoint sees festival as an appendage of religion as it fails to acknowledge the secular background of some Yoruboid, Afromorphic and Afro-cultural festivals. Ogunba (1978) concludes that:

Traditional festival is an indigenous cultural institution, a form of art nurtured on the African soil over the centuries and which has, therefore, developed distinctive features and whose techniques are sometimes totally different from the borrowed form now practised by many of our contemporary artists (4).

I have propounded the concept Afromorphism, Yoruba-morphism and Afro-culturalism as concepts that encompass all activities, indigenous deeds and cultural liminalities that are peculiar and unique to the cultures of Africans both at home and in diaspora; and emanate from the cultures. Afromorphism, Yoruba-morphism or Afro-culturalism can, therefore, be employed or adapted to the examination or appraisal of festivals, rites, rituals, performances and other cultural acts that have their sources traced to and evolved by Africans from their quotidian and ancestral existence.

Picard and Robinson (2006) see festival as luminal and playful practices that offer ways of exploring and securing being, belonging and meaning in the world (142). Ugonna (1981) assumes that in human history, certain days, periods of life are set aside for ritual commemoration, celebration or enactment, or anticipation of events of season, agricultural, religious or socio-cultural that gave meaning and cohesiveness to an individual and to the community (17). These celebrations, memorialisations and ritual re-enactments, according to John S. Mbiti (1969) shape the perceptions of the people who observe the festivals about the world they live in, around them and beyond them, which is transcendental (256). Nirmal (1976) also agrees that the perpetuation of festivals in any community is precipitated on the

need to keep religions or pious practices alive and the affirmation of associative theological or liturgical codes and truth (76). Awolalu and Dopamu (2005) affirm that:

Most festivals are associated with specific divinities, spirits or ancestors and they are, therefore, religious in outlook. Among the Yoruba, for example, each divinity has an annual festival associated with him or her and this is called Odun (festival). Odun also means year and when used in relation to festival, it means an “annual festival (153).

Egboworomo (1999) sees festival as a sacred activity through which the people reverence the Supreme or paramount creator of the universe through the lesser gods or goddesses (99). The belief of Agbejoye (2016) that festival is a culturally religious activity that serves as the pulley that draws people of the communities, home and abroad, to paying obeisance to the deities or ancestors (23) suffices. Segun Omosule (2009) submits that festivals exhibit primordial knowledge, values and realities that are channeled through art within which are infused the philosophical, social, moral and religious ethos of the milieu (89). Haven examined other postulations by established authorities in the study of festivals, I hold that festival is a chain of anthropomorphic activities periodically, seasonally or consistently re-invented and re-inforced with monotonous rituals, imbued with sacred codes, so much enshrined or shrouded in mytho-mystical garb, attributed to a specific deity, an ancestral figure, godhead, epoch and landmark in the collective history of the people and have become a way of existence of a people.

Umale Festival is the masquerades festival celebrated mostly among the people of Ilaje-Etikan folks based on trado-cultural prescriptions; mostly towards the end of the year. According to Ajimisan (2023),

This timing applies to the celebration of the festival for appreciation to the ancestors for sustaining the people, year-long peace and prosperity. In this context, celebration of the festival has the motive of appreciation and entertainment at the background. Conversely, the celebration of the festival may also have spiritual cleansing, in case of the outbreak of epidemics such as small or chicken pox, pneumonia or other diseases perceived to be spiritual, as the intention of its celebration. In this context, it can come up any time of the year as approved by the monarch of the town, the officiants of the festival and the people.

Odolo (2023) and Ikuesan (2023) also take the discourse on *Umale* Festival further as they agree that

Among the people of Ilaje-Etikan, *Umale* Festival, which is also masquerades festival is celebrated as re-union festival between the revered ancestors and their surviving progenitors. It is interesting as the people see each of the masquerades as one of the visiting ancestors of the people who have returned to bless their children or take their pleas and humble supplications to the Supreme creator of the universe. This is exemplified in the

way the people give the masquerades and the officiants who follow them money and solicit their ancestral blessings in form of prayers (91)

Ajimisan (2023) affirms that the Ilaje-Etikan people have many masquerade troupes but the following are the most commonly featured ones: Luepe, Igbinle, Kalagbile, Okorobojo, Ilebe, Apo-leri, Igodo, Arayelu and Ejiyemi. According to Mebawondu (2023); Ajimisan (2023) and Ayenomuro (2023) while Luepe, Igbinle and Okorobojo are typified as *Umale-lila*, masquerades of grand cultic order with preponderance of ritual magnificence, grandeur and splendour; while others are regarded as *Umale-gweere* which are "masquerades of lesser cultic echelon or order" with lesser ritual grandeur and splendour.

Textual Exemplifications of Pastoralism in Selected *Umale* Festival Songs

In this section, cursory examinations of some purposively selected *Umale* songs are undertaken to show how they preach moral in manners typical of the Christian or Islamic sermons or homilies even though they are supposedly categorised as secular festival songs. The song-texts are indexed as texts 1-15 below:

Text 1

Uwa la ooo,	Character is key ooo
uwa lala.	Character is key
Uwa la ooo.	Virtue is important
Oma mi abebelube.	My exceedingly exuberant child
Itebu ooo.	Learn from Itebu
Wee roja Elero.	The abode of Elero
Uwa la ooo.	Virtue is key
Oma mi abebelube!	My exceedingly exuberant child

In Text 1, the moral essence of character or virtue is emphasised for the exceedingly exuberant child which is allegorical of sinful mortal beings. Historical allusion is made to Itebu, the abode of Elero of Itebu-Manuwa in Ogun State. The people of Itebu-Manuwa in the present day Ogun State have Ilaje ascendancy but geography or state creation cut them off from their Ilaje kiths. The song presupposes that they have enjoyed peaceful cohabitation with the Ijebu folks who the Ilaje believe to be implacable or difficult to understand and please through virtue, without which they could not have enjoyed peaceful co-existence.

Text 2

P'uwada, Koko !	Koko, change your way
P'uwada, p'uwada eee.	Repent, repent, you heard!
P'uwada, Koko.	Repent, Koko
P'uwada!	Repent

In Text 2, the need for repentance and value re-engineering is central. The name Koko in the text is allegorical of evil doers whose name we do not want to mention to avoid communal crisis. Repentance or a new way of doing things is necessary for progress to be possible.

Text 3

Eji irawo mi eji irawo!	The stars do not want the moon to shine
Eji irawo mi eji irawo.	Enemies do not want us to shine too
Eji irawo ji osun gbe.	The stars do not want the moon to shine
Eji irawo mi eji irawo!	So, do the enemies of our progress

In the text above, those who are making progress or waves in their chosen careers or life's endeavours are admonished to tread with caution because it is not everyone that wants their progress just the way the stars are envious of the glory or lustre of the moon. The song is admonitory as well as pastoralist in contents and context.

Text 4

Aimugwe, mama yu agan	Unskilled swimmers, steer clear of the lagoon
Agan ma mi ja!	For the lagoon is tempestuous
Aimugwe mama yu agan ooo!	Unskilled swimmers, do not swim the lagoon

This text is a call for caution on the part of every human being on earth to swim the water or tempest of life with caution. The world or life is seen in this text as the vexatious lagoon or sea that can sweep away even skillful swimmers that do not swim with wisdom and caution. The cardinal sermon in the text is that life is full of vicissitude, complexities and unpredictable circumstances that are capable of endangering man and derailing his destiny.

Text 5

Apo-leri	Apo-leri, lord of the waters
Igodo ba leri.	Igodo too is a lord of his littoral habitations
apo-leri Igodo ba yangbo.	Hence Apo and Igodo should Hobnob peacefully with rivalry.

In the text above, Apo-leri and Igodo are two of the masquerades believed to rule the waters in Etikan Kingdom. However, the two have littoral/nautical boundaries ruled upon by each. The two are thus entreated to live peacefully without interference or any form of unhealthy rivalry which is inimical to their peaceful co-existence. The reference to Igodo is an example of historical allusion to Igodomigodo or Ogiso Igodo, one of the progenitors of the Benin people with whom Erede, Adetufewa and Oronmakeja co-existed without feud. The text alludes to the fact that the Ilaje-Etikan, Ilaje-Aheri and Ilaje-Ugbo folks who were believed to have historical or filial affinity lived together in peace and harmony because each of the three groups knew and respected boundaries with mutual and diplomatic finesse. The current and future generations are thus entreated to learn from that and be at peace with their neighbours in the interest of peace and collective prosperity.

Text 6

A bo ago	Prodigals/travellers, return from diaspora
A bo ago.	Return home, home calling!
Odon jo ooo.	The year has come of age!
A bo ago ooo!	Return home for reckoning!

The themes of exile, migration and nostalgia are decipherable from this text. Prodigals or itinerant wanderers are invited or reminded of the time of reckoning, the way sinners are reminded of the day of judgement in the hereafter. The travellers in the text are symbolic of all human beings believed to be strangers or travellers who must inevitably return home for reckoning because life is a journey while heaven is the eternal home.

Text 7

Owe owe o,	It is proverbial
Owe owe o.	It is like proverbs
Owe loro aye	Worldly affairs are like proverbs
Owe owe oo.	Proverbs, so they are
Owe deedee ro!	Proverbs they are, tread softly!
Owe, owe ooo!	Proverbs they are!

Text 8

Apo eye	Apo is a bird
Ilebe eye.	So is Ilebe
Apo ma ma talo Ilebe ka ikoko	Apo should not backbite Ilebe
Apo eye.	Apo is a bird
Ilebe eye.	So is Ilebe
Apo ma ma bino Ilebe ooo!	Apo should not begrudge Ilebe

In this text, reference is made to Apo and Ilebe, which are other examples of masquerades in Ilaje-Etikan. The two of them are described as birds fated by nature or the sovereign will of Edumare to fraternise together without conflict. For the fact that they are both birds equally yoked together by the Creator, they must live together in peace. This is a great lesson and lectionary teaching on national unity. As a nation, the Creator and Controller of the universe has destined us to live together as a nation, one people, great nation and we should avoid any act that ignite civil unrest or endanger the unity bequeathed to us by the founding fathers. It is believed that if we leave together in peace, the labour of our heroes past in building a nation whose strength and greatness lie in her diversity shall never be in vain.

Text 9

Eeeh, Olorobojo!	Eeeh Olorobojo!
Eeeh Olorobojo, yari moye ooo!	Eeeh Olorobojo, dance with caution
Eeeh Olorobojo!	Eeeh Olorobojo!
Eeeh Oloyiya-ayegbe	Eeeh, owner of the glassy comb
Yari moye ooo!	Gyrate with wisdom!
Eeeh Oloyiya-ayegbe!	Eeeh owner of the glassy comb
Yari moye awolo,	Gyrate with wisdom, we entreat you
Eeeh Oloyiya-ayegbe!	Oloyiya-ayegbe, take caution!

In this text, reference is made to Okorobojo and Oloyiya-ayegbe, the masquerades believed to possess an essemble of glassy or coral combs, which is a thing of pride and a subject of envy. Both of them are beseeched to dance with caution because the world is a cruel place, the ground is slippery and because they have got a fragile heritage, the coral combs to guide and guard jealously.

Text 10

Giriwo, giriwo ooo, giriwo!	They will fall, fall, they will!
Oye ighanyi gbe nino egba mi soro.	All those who hide in the mangrove forest to unleash terror
Giriwo, giriwo ooo, giriwo!	Downfall is their lot!

This text sends sermonic message to those who hide in the thick mangrove forest to unleash terror and evil on fellow human beings to expect irredeemable collapse as their recompense. It centres on the concept of action and reward or consequences for whatever action one takes in life.

Text 11

Ibarigha, we r'adodo ooo	The pure white heron, can't you see the curlew?
Ibarigha we r'adodo ooo!	The pure white heron, can't you see the curlew?
Adodo wo'no iyanma.	The curlew has danced into iyanma (trap)
Ibarigha we r'adodo ooo	The pure white heron, can't you see the curlew?

In this text, allusion is made to the white aquatic heron and the curlew. In the folktale, the curlew is an exceedingly exuberant bird that throws caution into the wind while dancing but eventually danced exuberantly into the trap sequel to lack of caution.

Text 12

Aghoro meji meji	Initiates, the birds fly in pair
Eye fo!	So, they fly (pair/twos)
Arogho ule ee j'ule jo.	The familial scoundrels rob the home of it's order
Eye fo!	Birds fly in pair.

Peaceful cohabitation is also the thematic preoccupation of this text. The birds are fated to fly in pair or in company of others and live for others to live. This is because human existence is precipitated on the order of binary opposition.

Text 13

Uriburi, atabata.	It is precious and priceless
Ogun bami mee gbe ghun one.	My father's heritage, I will not surrender to outsiders
Uriburi atabata!	For they are dear and precious to me.

This text centres on the need to protect one's heritage jealousy like Naboth in the holy book of the Christians who laid down his life by his refusal to surrender his his ancestors' vineyard to Ahab. Here, the cultural worldview that a people's destiny and continuity are tied to their heritage and meaningful progress will elude them if they allow westernisation or foreign religions and cultures to erode them. One's heritage is believed in Ilaje philosophy to be the essence of one's existence without which one is nothing but a condemned derelicts and scoundrels living in the silhouettes of the culture of outsiders or destructive strangers.

Text 14

Uwa lele kerebu eee!	Virtue is the greatest, show your own
Ajaluwa, wee raye eee!	Ajaluwa was a man of virtue

Was worthy of emulation, though, dead
 Uwa lele kerebu eee! Mind, therefore, your character!

Here, the sermon on good character is emphatically re-echoed with legendary allusion to Ajaluwa, the fifth Olikan (traditional ruler) of Etikan Kingdom. Ajaluwa, according to Etikan Oral Tradition was so pure in character while on this space that, when he died, he was assigned the keys to the eternal abode of the Olikans in hereafter. This fact is preserved in the royal funerary song of the Ilaje-Etikan people thus: "Ajaluwa, ma ma h'ekun, oba mi wa Ajaluwa..." The song is translated to mean "Ajaluwa, bolt not the gate, a king is coming home..." The text underscores the belief of the people in the fact that one's place in heaven or transcendental space is dependent on one's character in this mortal space.

Text 15

Agbada-gbada,	Hear the alarm
Ogbodo-gbodo	hear the herald
Oran ghanyii ke.	the looming crisis
Oju dede wa ghan se!	Will pan out before our eyes
Afenju oja	Celebrities in the land
Aghan re si osika oja	Are the village's villains
Epo idi re ghan ka je	And profit from villainy
Agbada-gbada	hear the alarm
Ogbodo-gbodo	harken the herald
Oran ghanyii ke	this brewing bomb
Oju dede wa ghan se	will explode before our very eyes.

This text is apocalyptic in contents and context as it envisages the aftermath of a rash or unguided actions of the supposedly sophisticated celebrities. They pervert the way of the land and circumvent the norms, ethos and moral algorithm of the land just to conform to the standard of western values and contemporary 21st century realities. These realities uphold the institutionalisation of the unrepentant departure from the norms and tradition in flagrant disregard for the indigenous ethics. The thematic kernel of the text is the prevalent destruction of the cultural ecosystem of Africa all in the name of conformity with the western values and its attendant destruction to both man and society that houses and nurtures him. This is one of the numerous creative ways in which *Umale* Festival songs employ sarcasm, invectives, lampoon and satire all well fused together to infuse moral sanctity and social sanity into the society. In most *Umale* songs, performers deliberately murder tact or most of the politeness maxims that we know in Pragmatics in order to give clarity and mutual intelligibility preference over tact and finesse.

Interestingly, during most of the ritual dances of the *Umale* (masquerades), the masquerades go together as a troupe to pay homage to the women whose main role in the performance are to sing special songs and chant the praise poetry of Etikan Kingdom and those of the masquerades. This is liturgical because it is an opportunity to celebrate motherhood and honour the mothers of the earth without whom the rituals will be unacceptable. Although *Umale* Festival is phallus-centric, there is still room for the veneration of the women whose feminine sweetness makes the kingdom and humanity worth living in and whose goodwill is supportive to the dominant and domineering masculine gender in the festival. The dance is a

ritually significant liturgy in the festival. It resonates the deep honour and high esteem in which the traditional institution of Etikan Kingdom holds the women. In the tradition, women are believed to be sources of sweetness, fruitfulness and pillars of support and loyalty to the men they choose to love and storm of destruction to the men they choose to destroy. This is of tremendous interest to gender studies. All the texts and ritual acts in the festival are liminally and characteristically worldview-oriented. Their translations and interpretations can only be accurate by making recourse to the socio-cultural worldviews that birthed them. The songs reveal one of the ways which show the nexus of festivals or performances with Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics, Cultural Studies and Stylistics.

Besides the renditions during the festival, their adaptability to other contexts including the church situations and politics adds to their aesthetical beauty, pragmatic elasticity and complements linguistic complexes. One of the major stylistic features of *Umale* Festival is the foregrounding of invectives and banters for the dual purposes of entertainment and moral education/activism. This duality or stylistic hybridity further enhances the significance of the songs, the festival and the need for its perpetuation with the society of its origin. This functional significance which the functionalists call "network of needs" which elicit the continuity or perpetuation of the festival and all its liminal elements make them evergreen and worthy of research attention from the theoretical binoculars of the functionalist theory in the digital age. Thus, the festival is an agency for moralisation cultural education even in the digital or GenZ age. The availability of numerous digital media vis-a-vis the technology of filming or what Walter J. Ong (1982) call "the technologizing of the word" foster the perpetuation of the practice as a performance and its enhancement as a tool for teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The 21st century Nigeria which is drastically drifting away from reason, knowledge, science and technology by surrendering everything to religion especially foreign religions of the Arabs or Judeo-Christian folks is incurably under the noisome spell of colonial slavery, crass colonial mentality which continues to uphold the belief that all indigenous contents, including the belief systems are fetish and full of idolatrous propensities, symbolisms, trado-cultural stereotypes and tapestries. This line of thought, as has been shown in the purposively selected *Umale* Festival songs of the Ilaje-Etikan folks of Ondo State, is warped and in need of urgent redemptive and systematic desensitisation. The song texts analysed above are revelatory that the supposedly ritual, fetish or indigenous cultural practices can serve as alternative sources of etho-moral codes for the purpose of value re-orientation, production/dissemination of indigenous knowledge system and infusing sanity and sanctity into the societies where morality is at a lower ebb. The songs are morally codified to serve similar purpose with the Christian homilies/sermons and Muslim Hadith; and they pass their messages in manners typical of the sermons of pastors or shepherds with biblical correlates.

The sermonic contents and pastoralist temper in the songs herald the socio-cultural commitment of the adherents, officiants, community of origin of the festival and the songs therein to the propagation and transmission of indigenous ethics and moral education. This, among other things, are the functional significance that has continued to precipitate the ceaseless observance of the festival and the rendition of the songs in it. According to theorists in the functional school of thought, an indigenous performance or trado-cultural heritage

subsists or exists only because of the network of needs to which it ministers. This is true of *Umale* Festival of Ilaje-Etikan Kingdom. It serves not only the purpose of ritual and entertainment alone, but also serves the purpose of education, cultural socialisation, social cohesion, tourism, revenue generation/mobilisation, campaign for nation building and national development. The paper, thus, recommends quotidian rendition of the songs for the utilitarian accentuation and perpetuation of moral ethos and cultural best practices.

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