

Research Article

Aesthetics and Utilitarian Essence of Selected Yorùbá Folktales

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A B S T R A C T

Folktales constitute one of the oldest traditional forms of education based on the method of delivery through oral tradition. Among the Yorùbá, folktale is a viable medium for transmission of cultural values, belief, history and philosophy of the society to the younger generation. The fact that customs, morals and way of life of the African societies in general, are found to be ingrained and codified in folktales, shows the veracity of the indigenous knowledge system (IKS) embedded therein. This has contributed immensely to appreciating the culture, as well as the social norms of the African societies. This study examines the aesthetics and utilitarian essence of African folktales, using four purposively selected Yorùbá folktales as case study. This is with a view to revealing the aesthetics and usefulness of African folktales and documenting the songs therein in a staff notation for musical analysis. Data for the study were gathered through oral interviews and review of related literature. The selected Yorùbá folktales were examined through descriptive method. Findings show that the essence of African folktales, as noticed in this present day, is being jettisoned and gradually going into extinction by the current realities brought about by globalisation. This has greatly affected the cultural values which African folktales retain, maintain and disseminate. Hence, the need for the revitalisation and digitisation of African folktales, in order to preserve the indigenous knowledge system deep-rooted in the narratives for future generations. This study concludes that the importance of African folktales would be better understood if properly harnessed, translated and notated from the musicological viewpoint, as it will further popularise the old tradition of storytelling in this modern age.

Keywords: Folktales, Cultural, Utilitarian, Indigenous Knowledge, Africa

Introduction

It will not be out of tune to state that folktales have been an age-long tradition where social norms of communities in Africa are passed down orally from one generation to the other. It is one of the oldest traditional forms of informal education, being one of the indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) as a result of its method of delivery, mostly by elders

to further impact information and wisdom to the younger generation and from parents to their children. Kala (2012, p.194) notes that some forms of traditional knowledge systems find expression in folktales, legends, folklores, rituals and songs among others. Consequently, Okunade (2010, p.33) in his view, pointed out that the indigenous knowledge system which many people ignorantly describe

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as primitive, has so much been in existence in Africa and sufficed for the survival of the society until the introduction of the formal education. In line with the above statement, Sibanda (2014, p.1) asserts that while formal education is transmitted through institutions, culture is transmitted through music, dance, drama, folktales, folklores, legends, myths, proverbs, idioms, riddles and rhymes. The fact, notwithstanding, that the essence of African folktales, as noticed in this present day, is being jettisoned as a result of the current realities brought about by globalisation calls for urgent attention. To this end, Olorunsogo (2012) observes that

informal African traditional education has built into the practice of folktales, folklores, age-grade, rites and the celebration of festivals as method of educating the young in the culture of its people; unfortunately, colonialism and its educational system which we imbibed had gradually and steadily attempted to erode traces of this traditional method of passing on the culture to the young. (p. 257).

This statement clearly reveals how colonialism made us to neglect areas which dignifies our rich cultural heritage from across the world, most especially the knowledge derived from African folktales. This is why Ibekwe (2016, p.84) asserts that it will be too bad or odd to allow global influences impact negatively on the primordial practice of knowledge transfer, which is a prerogative of any African child, most especially as exhibited in African folktales. It would not be an overstatement to mention here that across the world, every society possesses indigenous knowledge system by which they practise and draw essential tools for their existence. The essential attributes found in culture are used to enhance and impact moral values to the inhabitant of the society. The process and ability to recognise and utilise these essential attributes, which are identified as African folktales in the present study, is what Olisaeke and Aimiwu (2016, p.302) define as "indigenous knowledge system". In Africa, the indigenous knowledge system revolves round the children who are given much affection and attention right from birth. In view of the above, Okunade (2010, p.31) asserts

children learn about their immediate environment while watching through the activities that go on within their immediate society, as well as through folktales, folklores, folksongs amongst others. He/she appreciates the cultural values of the society as they grow and interacts with people of the community. (p.31).

That music is an integral part of the people of Africa cannot be overemphasised, as it is evident in all aspects of their culture. This is to say that across the socio-cultural spectrum of the African people, music plays a significant role in accompanying such activities in which African folktales belong. This study, aptly describes African folktales as

stories that originated and is entrenched in the socio-cultural ways of life of the African society which are passed down orally in order to entertain, enlighten and to educate people on moral values, as well as social norms of the African society. However, songs which emanated from the folktales are also known to function beyond entertainment. This is not peculiar to the Yorùbá people alone, but Africa in general. In view of this, Olatunji (2008) succinctly states:

music among the Yorùbá people is beyond entertainment, as it is used to educate (especially the young ones about almost all the facets of culture and traditions). It is used to praise and to communicate (both in the physical and metaphysical realms). It is also used extensively in worship and as therapy for the drudgery of routines or to identify members of a particular occupation or association. (p.33).

Africans use this medium to instil uprightness and impact the younger generation. As a matter of fact, the interdependent of culture and education cannot be divorced from each other. This is why Edward and Donaldson (2018, p.2) affirm that a society devoid of any culture will have no definite educational organisation. As important as the combination of culture and education is to a society, folktale is believed to have the power to hold the community together. Through folktales, other societies get to learn about the history and cultural values of the society where such tales are rooted. The above statement is corroborated and expatiated by Hanlon (2000, p.17) when he notes that folktales are universal and it enhances globalisation of cultural knowledge. Hanlon's assertion amplified the true essence which folktales portray as indispensable element and medium of transmission of indigenous knowledge system of the African people. Africans, like other people across the world, have an established norm which they consider valuable and necessary for the conservation and well-being of their children. There is no gainsaying to the fact that every society possesses a distinct culture and way of life which they skilfully narrate through various stories. It is in view of this that the Yorùbá people of Southwestern Nigeria, just like any other ethnic group across Africa, are known for their rich cultural heritage which are embedded and exhibited through various modes such as folktales, folklores, folksongs, proverbs, myths, just to mention a few. In relation to the above, David (2013) states

the indigenous culture of the Yorùbá has some certain phenomenas that are embedded in it, as the case may be in other world cultures. This includes norms and tradition, belief system, folktales, folksongs, cultural philosophy, religion and literature. All of these constitute and form the way of life of the Yorùbá people. (p.100).

Folktales, over the years, has played significant role in the cultural matrix, especially within the purview of creative art through which people get acquainted with the philosophy

and cultural heritage of the indigenous African societies. It is however, believed that folktales, being an effective method of teaching, has more benefits because it involves many mediums of communication. Most importantly, songs which accompany these stories help the children to not only follow the narratives, but to think deep and reinforce their expectations on how to live a meaningful life. In addition, the retelling nature of the songs in-between the storylines, subsequently stanch to the hearts of both the narrator and the listeners, the message(s) which the story intends to pass across. Furthermore, the practical and fun nature of African folktales' presentation through the use of indigenous language, animals as cast and plots were also known to engage and captivate the minds of the listeners.

It is important to note that African folktale narratives mostly revolve around one or two characters identified as; protagonist and antagonist. These cast are portrayed with the use of personification of diverse animals such as lion, tiger, elephant, dog, snail, squirrel, tortoise, just to mention a few, as human character in the stories to teach morals and traditions to the young in preparation of life's difficulties. From the pool of characters above, tortoise is mostly used in tales because of his distrustful and overzealous attitude (ológbón èwé). As a matter of fact, tortoise that is known for his sneaky wisdom and insatiability attitude, often times, plays the role of antagonist by leading the protagonist to his or her demise. So also, in some cases, tortoise is used as a protagonist because of his jovial and kindness. This does not remove the fact that his demented greed, naivety, and pride remain his weakness. This is evident in the stories which will be discussed in the course of the study. However, this study is set, not only to examine the aesthetics and utilitarian essence of African folktales; using the four purposively selected Yorùbá folktales, but to preserve the stories and each of the songs which accompanies the tales, from going into extinction by documenting them in staff notation within the purview of musicological framework for posterity. To this end, studies on African culture have continued to receive wide coverage from eminent scholars of international repute across the world. Areas of African culture from its history, philosophy and tradition have been discussed from diverse fields of studies and humanistic viewpoint. Meanwhile, special attention might have been given to African folktales and its aphorism, historical reconstruction and folklores of various societies in Africa. Nonetheless, attention has not been given to the aesthetics and utilitarian essence of Yorùbá folktales. Engaging this area will help in revealing the usefulness of African folktales. More so, interested researchers would find the results of this endeavour useful and as premise for further studies. This is the gap this present study intends to fill.

Scope of The Study

There is no doubt that the essence of African folktales is being eroded as a result of globalisation. This has greatly affected the cultural values which African folktales retain, maintain and disseminate. This is why the paper, in the course of the study, solicits for the digitalisation of African folktales in order to preserve the indigenous knowledge system deep-rooted in the narratives for future generations. This study, however, is concerned with the aesthetics and utilitarian essence of African folktales; using the four purposively selected Yorùbá folktales. Hence, textual analysis of each of the selected Yorùbá folktales will be engaged, while each of the songs will be transcribed, notated and documented for posterity.

Theoretical Framework

Culture theory of Sardar (2004) as used by Serrat (2008) is employed in the study. Culture, according to Serrat (2008, p.1), is described as the totality of a society's distinctive ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge. The fact remains that there is no society without its own distinct culture which binds its members. This is why culture is described as people's way of life in a society. This is because it is the culture that gives them their identity as a people, Agbanusi (2015, p.19). Notwithstanding, it is possible that during a process of social collaboration, an individual who grows up in a certain environment is likely to be instilled with the culture of that society. While cultural activities, language, occupation, music and dance could be differentiated among communities across Africa, the purpose and utilitarian essence of some of their tradition in which folktales belong, remain intact. In discussing African cultural values, Idang (2015) explicates that:

it will be out of tune to presuppose that all African societies have the same explanation(s) for events, the same language, and same mode of dressing and so on. Rather, there are underlying similarities shared by many African societies which, when contrasted with other cultures, reveal a wide gap of difference. (p.97)

The statement above explains the fact that culture involves some traits which are peculiar to the inhabitants and as well, distinguishes them from other people or societies. The truth is that though cultural practices may be a distinctive identity in every society, however, there are some common values which run across these societies. As part of the culture and tradition of the African society, folktales, from time immemorial, have contributed immensely to learning, as they serve as channel for other communities to be acquainted with the social norms in Africa societies. Folktales, besides being a tool used in teaching moral values and impacting wisdom to the younger generation, also

serves as a medium where cultural tradition are being propagated. The fact that people are the main object and ultimate purpose of endeavours to progress, a society's culture is not just an instrument of communality, but it becomes an identity of the people where such culture is rooted.

Consequently, Offor (2014, p.1) sees culture as the sum total of the attainments and activities of specific race or people, including their handicrafts, agriculture, economy, music, religious beliefs, traditions and language. It is interesting to note that culture theory is committed to an ethical evaluation of a society in order to understand its complex forms, expose and attempt to reconcile knowledge divides so as to overcome the split between tacit cultural knowledge and objective (so-called universal) forms of knowledge. This is corroborated by Nwamara (2020, p.46) when he explains culture to be a complex whole which includes knowledge, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society. Culture, is however, known to strengthens the way of life because it is powered by social beings through their distinctive ideas, beliefs and values. It becomes imperative, however, that the illustration technique ingrained in the transmission of African folktales makes it more effective for African child. Therefore, this theory is applicable to this study in the sense that the indigenous knowledge system derived from media such as folktale, folklore and folksongs is one of the oldest traditions of the African people which distinguishes them from other cultures. Therefore, this study is set to examine the aesthetics and utilitarian essence of African folktales, using selected from the Yorùbá continuum.

Definition of Operative Terms

Listeners, children, young, child and youths which were used interchangeably in this study, refer to the audience who are being impacted with the indigenous knowledge system deep-rooted in the African folktales.

Discussion of Findings

From the foregoing, this study, therefore, attempts to discuss the four randomly selected folktales. Thus, the narratives which will be presented and examined from the selected Yorùbá folktales will help in revealing the aesthetics and utilitarian perspectives of African folktales

Ìjàpá àti Babaláwo: Tortoise and The Herbalist

In the olden days, the tortoise's wife (yáníbo) was barren. The tortoise tried so hard to find a means through which his wife could conceive and have her own child. The tortoise began to look for help from different herbalists which he

believed could solve his problem. After some time, he discovered one herbalist which was said to be powerful. He went to see the man and explained in details what had happened. Thereafter, the herbalist consulted and appeased the oracle. After sometime, the herbalist told the tortoise that his wife would conceive. He however, told the tortoise that he would prepare some concoctions to give to his wife to eat. The herbalist warned the tortoise not to make any attempt to taste from the concoction. The herbalist made the concoction and handed it over to the tortoise to take home for his wife to eat and after which, she would conceive. As the tortoise perceived the aroma of the concoction and noticed that it was pleasant, he tested the taste of the concoction, thinking that the small quantity he tasted would be of no effect to his body. However, reverse was the case, as his stomach began to swell like that of a pregnant woman. He became very scared and went back to the herbalist. As he got there, he began to sing.

Song Translation

Table I

	Song	Translation
Call:	Bàbáláwo mo wá bé bè	Herbalist I came to beg
Response	Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Call:	Ògùngùn tó se fún mi lérèkàn	The concoction you made for me earlier
Response:	Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Call:	Ó ní n mó mò mowó ba nu	He said I should not have a taste
Response:	Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Call:	Gbòngbò ònà ló yò mí tètèrè	I accidentally hit a taproots and stumbled
Response:	Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Call:	Mo mó wó ba lè mó mú banu	My hand touched the ground and mistakenly touched my mouth in confusion
Response:	Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Call:	Mo bo júwokùn, ó rí gbendu	I look at my stomach as it began to swell
Response:	Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Call:	Bàbáláwo mo wá bé bè	Herbalist I came to beg
Response:	Aluginrin	Aluginrin

Call

Lead Vox

Response Ba-ba-la - wo mo wa be-be, O-gun-gun t'o-o se fun-mi le - re-kan

Melody 1

A - lu-gbin-rin A -

Melody 2

A - lu-gbin-rin A -

8

O - ni-n-mo - mo mo-wo ba-nu, Gbon-gbo o-na lo - yo mi

lu-gbin-rin A - lu-gbin-rin

lu-gbin-rin A - lu-gbin-rin

15

te-re-re, Mo mo-wo ba - le, mo mu ba - nu,

A - lu-gbin-rin A - lu-gbin-rin

A - lu-gbin-rin A - lu-gbin-rin

21

Mo bo - ju - wo - kun o - ri gben - du,

A - lu - gbin - rin

A - lu - gbin - rin

2

25

Ba - ba - la - wo mo wa be - be,

A - lu - gbin - rin

A - lu - gbin - rin

Figure 1. From Folktale titled: Ìjápá àti Babaláwo- Tortoise and The Herbalist

After listening to the tortoise's plea through his song, the herbalist had compassion and forgave his attitude of theft and greediness by giving him another concoction and also healed his swollen stomach. The herbalist later gave him another concoction to take home for his wife to eat. As we know, attitude can never be hidden. Again, the tortoise tested the taste and his stomach became swollen the second time. The tortoise was afraid again and went back to the herbalist, repeating the same song in the excerpt 1.

For the fact that the herbalist was not pleased with him, he decided to help him the second time. The herbalist, again, had empathy and forgave his attitude of theft and greediness, healed his swollen stomach and gave him another concoction to give to his wife to eat, but greediness has taken over the tortoise and had become his lifestyle. For the third time, the tortoise tested the taste of the concoction and his stomach became swollen. Shamelessly, the tortoise still went back to the herbalist. This time, the herbalist refused to help him, because he had warned him twice. His stomach became swollen until it burst. That was how the tortoise killed himself because of his greediness. Anytime this narrative is told, children are expected to learn to be faithful and abstain from being self-centred. The narrative is also told for children to also learn from the repercussion in which the tortoise faced due to his greedy attitude and to be obedient to every instruction given by the elders.

Asín àti Òkéré - The Shrew rat and Squirrel

Shrew rat (Asín) is a small rat with a long mouth and a distinctive smell. There is no place where the shrew rat (Asín) is present that one would not perceived its odour. Likewise, squirrel is also a small rat with a hairy tail which

usually jump from one tree to the other. Squirrel loves palm-fruits. In the olden days, when animals sounded like men, tortoise was selling dishes. One day, tortoise took his dishes to the market for sale. As he was selling his dishes, he heard a rumour of fight and immediately, left his sales to watch the scene. As he got there, he saw shrew rat (Asín) and squirrel exchanging combat. Then tortoise decided to settle their quarrel, but was being sentimental in his judgement by siding the squirrel and condemning the shrew rat (Asín). When the shrew rat (Asín) discovered that the tortoise was sentimental, he ignored the squirrel, faced the tortoise, and bit his nostrils. The tortoise shouted in agony and began to sing the song below.

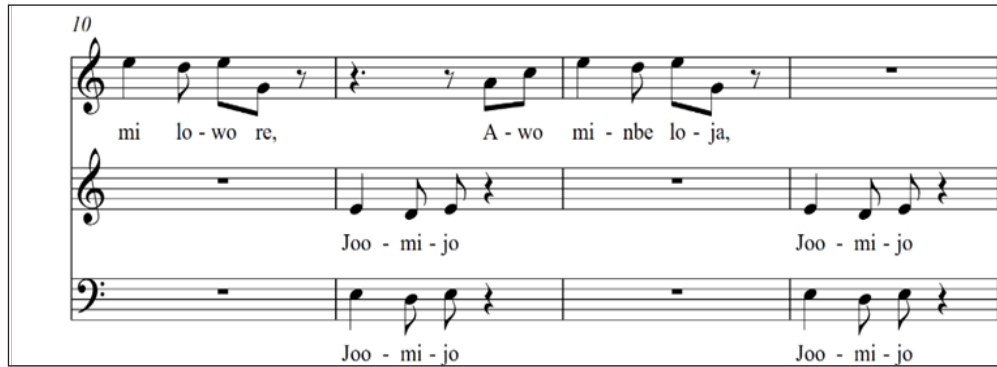
Table 2

	Song	Translation
Call:	Asín toun t'ò kéré	The Shrewrat and the Squirrel
Response	Jómijó	Jómijó
Call:	Àwon ló jo n jà	The two were fighting
Response:	Jómijó	Jómijó
Call:	Ó ní n mó mò mówó ba nu	The Shrew bite my noise
Response:	Jómijó	Jómijó
Call:	Ègbà mí ló wó rẹ	Save me from his hands
Response:	Jómijó	Jómijó
Call:	Àwò mi n be ló jà	My dishes were in the market
Response:	Jómijó	Jómijó

Call
Lead Vox: A - sin to - un t'ò ke - re, A - won lo - njo - o ja, I - ja re, mo - wa - la,

Response
Melody 1: Joo - mi - jo Joo - mi - jo
Melody 2: Joo - mi - jo Joo - mi - jo

7
La - sin ba fi mi ni - mu je, E - gba
Joo - mi - jo Joo - mi - jo
Joo - mi - jo Joo - mi - jo



Excerpt 2. From Folktale titled: Asín àti Òkéré - The Shrew rat and Squirrel

As the tortoise was singing in agony, the other traders and passers-by came to his rescue, but unfortunately, the shrew rat (Asín) had already damaged tortoise’s nose with his prolonged bite before he was rescued. This was why tortoise’s nose was short and disfigured till date. This narrative is told in order to redirect children’s mind-set from being sentimental and to always mind their business. Most importantly, children are also expected to stay away from fight and quarrel.

Olúrónbí àti Olúwéré - Olúrónbí and the Herbalist

In the olden days, there was a certain woman whose name was Olúrónbí. This woman was barren, she could neither conceive nor have a child. For a long time, she looked for a child but all to no avail. Instead of her to wait for God’s time, she went to Olúwéré, an herbalist. She did this because her contemporaries had already given birth and had their own children. One day, she rose up and went to Olúwéré (herbalist). With desperation, she vowed to return the child to Olúwéré once she had one. This vow was exceptional because it was goats and sheep that women in her situation used to pay back as vow to Olúwéré (herbalist). Meanwhile, Olúrónbí conceived and gave birth to a girl whom she named; Apónbíepo. As Apónbíepo was growing, Olúrónbí forgot her vow which she made with Olúwéré (herbalist). When Olúwéré (herbalist) expected Olúrónbí to come back to pay her vow and did not see her, he decided to pay her a visit. As soon as she got to Olúrónbí and saw her child; Apónbíepo, Olúwéré (herbalist) grabbed the child and took her away. This child (Apónbíepo) started crying while Olúrónbí ran after them. Eventually, Olúwéré (herbalist) disappeared into a tree with the child (Apónbíepo). Olúrónbí started persuading Olúwéré (herbalist) with tears on her face to return the child (Apónbíepo). Instead of Olúwéré (herbalist) to return the child- (Apónbíepo), he responded with the song below:

This was how Olúrónbí lost her child (Apónbíepo). Anytime this narrative is told, children are expected to learn that it is not good to make a pledge beyond their ability and

should not be in haste to make a vow. So also, it is always important to cast all our cares on God and not to be too desperate to seek for answers because God does not forget anybody.

Ìjàpá àti Erin – Tortoise and Elephant

In the olden days, there was a certain village. The King of the village died and the community wanted to install another. As custom of the village demanded, they had to consult the oracle before they could nominate another person. Meanwhile, whoever the oracle selected was automatically crowned as the King. As the villagers were performing the rites required, the oracle informed them to make a sacrifice, using an elephant as the object of the sacrifice before they could install another King. There is no doubt to the fact that elephant is a huge animal that cannot be easily captured. In fact, there is a saying that a King that would capture an elephant does not exist. So also, that you can never tie an elephant to a tree using a rope, as the elephant is going to uproot the tree. The community, however, began to deliberate on how they could get an elephant for the sacrifice. With all the attributes bestowed the elephant, it became a burden for the community on how they would capture such a huge animal for sacrifice. This request from the oracle, caused a commotion even between the elders among the villagers, as it saddened their hearts. As we are all aware of the saying that where there is ‘I will kill you’, there is also ‘I will save you’. That is; where there is a No, there is also a Yes. The villagers were in this situation when the tortoise came and assured them that he would bring an elephant into the village alive. When the villagers heard how the tortoise boasted on how he would bring an elephant into the village unharmed and unhindered, they left him to do what he could.

It is generally believed or assumed that tortoise is a wise and cunning animal. This is why he baked some cakes with lots of honey and went straight into the thick forest. When the tortoise got there, he saw an elephant and began to hail the elephant, as to how the elephant has been the head of all other animals and that there is no animal who

can act contrary to his instructions. When the tortoise saw that the elephant was so happy about how he hailed him, he told him the reason he came into the thick forest in search of him. The tortoise told the elephant that the villagers wanted him as their King and the elephant laughed him to scorn. The elephant told the tortoise that human-being are harsh and wicked. As the elephant was saying this, the tortoise served the elephant with the cake he had baked with honey. As the elephant was eating the cake and noticed that it tasted so sweet, he changed his mind and decided to follow the tortoise. The tortoise told the elephant that when he became the King, he would be coming to visit him. The tortoise now asked the elephant if he could be permitted to climb and ride on his back so that the villagers would see how intimate they were and also their journey would be faster. Quickly, the elephant carried the tortoise and headed to the village. As they were going, the tortoise started singing the song below:

After they had journeyed for some time, the elephant wanted to change his mind and turn back. The tortoise swiftly fed the elephant with another cake. The elephant was so happy, while they continued with the journey. Meanwhile, before they entered the village, the tortoise had already instructed the villagers to dig a very deep pit and cover it with a fine and expensive clothing materials. He also instructed the villagers to place an expensive chair and make a throne on the pit they had dug. As the tortoise and elephant got into the village, the tortoise raised the same song (in excerpt 4). The villagers were so happy and filled with joy and started to sing along with the tortoise. As they got to the village, the tortoise asked the elephant to sit on his throne without the elephant knowing it was a pit. Eventually, the elephant sat and sank into the pit, while the hunters shut at him sporadically till he died. This was how the tortoise deceitfully brought the elephant into the village.

This narrative is told to enlighten the children on the fact that when they determine and focus their attention on a particular goal, they will definitely achieve it. The story is also used to discourage children from being greedy, deceitful and to be contented with what they have. The tale also teaches the children to not condemn or underrate anybody. When one looks at the fragile nature of the tortoise, one would have concluded that tortoise can never bring such a huge animal into the community for sacrifice in the fourth folktale narrated in this study. Hence the folktale makes it clear that it is not a good idea to underrate anybody as well as overrate oneself above others. Parts of the message which the folktale passes across is that there is no problem without a solution. In the story, it was vivid that the tortoise availed himself and solve the problem of the community by bringing the elephant for the sacrifice.

Analysis of the Accompanied Songs of the Selected Yorùbá Folktales

Music is one of the artistic forms through which culture is expressed. It is important to state that songs which emanated from African folktales, belong to the category of traditional folk music. In view of this, Omolaye (2014, p.5) opines that traditional music in particular, helps in maintaining and safeguarding the cultural tradition and history of the people, entrenched in the music and passed from one generation to the other. Therefore, these songs are usually in two musical forms: Solo and Chorus and Call and Response pattern from the pool of musical forms in which African music is performed. The solo and chorused form possesses antiphonal character where the lead singer raises the song and the chorus responds. This is exemplified in the excerpt three of the selected folktales. The call and response pattern is a situation whereby; the lead singer calls while a group of people responds with another text, as evident in excerpt one, two and four of the selected folktales.

Consequently, the songs employed an-hemitonic pentatonic pattern, being a scale without half step. This is because the auditory properties of the Yorùbá language pave the way for the ordering of sounds on a frequency related scale. It is important to mention that traditional folk music has no fixed pitch since they are passed orally. Hence, the lead singer determines the pitch of the songs during performance, while the tuning also depends on his/her vocal quality. In addition, the time signature of the four selected folktales employed compound duple meter ($\frac{6}{8}$). Furthermore, the text-settings of the songs are in syllabic structure, that is; a syllable to a note in order to protect the tonal inflection of the indigenous language which is the medium of transfer. The textual structure of the songs as observed in the two musical forms are in binary structure. All these musical elements and nitty-gritty are parts of the musical aesthetics which make the songs to be well structured, melodious and easily committed to memory.

Aesthetics of African Folktales

According to Idang (2015, p.105), the concept of aesthetics in Africa is grounded on the fundamental traditional belief system which gave vent to the production of the art. Meanwhile, Abiodun (2001) in Sanga (2017) explains the three main concepts which he finds to be important in understanding Yorùbá art, its relationship with language, culture and aesthetic sensibility to include *àsà* – culture, *ìsè* – tradition, and *iwà* – character (p.317). Folktale is one of such arts where culture and traditions of the people, as well as attitudes and patterns of behaviour are decoded through a very simplistic expression by the characters in the tales. Therefore, the beauty of these folktales' songs during the presentation is that it gives the listeners a

sense of participation, as African music is known to be participatory. This is evident in not just the four selected folktales examined in this study but all, as it helps in drawing the attention of the listeners. African concept of music aesthetics, therefore, is beyond the quality, beauty or enjoyment of music, but include the functionalism of such music, Forchu (2012, p.208). Therefore, it is the functionality of such art, as exemplified in songs which accompany folktales, that enhances the aesthetics of other activities that go with it. As a matter of fact, these songs bring to bear the sense of aesthetic value among African people.

It is expedient to note that aesthetic development of African folktales began from the real setting which is known to be one of the moonlight genres from time immemorial, being the space where folktales are performed. In Africa, folktales are usually performed in the night, especially during harmattan season, while children gathered to listen after their daily works. Africans generally are industrious and thus, cannot afford to be affected by any other activities. This is because every activity in the African settings is organised in accordance with the tradition of the society. To Africans, there is time to work and time for leisure. The context at which folktales are performed are mainly in the night. This further explains the aesthetic space where folktales are performed, specifically, during the moonlight in an open arena. In addition, the aesthetic values of African folktales are also entrenched in words which has no logical translation in the narratives. An example of such word is *Álúgbínrín*. Therefore, folktales are performed in that kind of environment after people must have finished with their daily works in a kind of relaxation atmosphere. There is no doubt to the fact that farming is a major occupation in Africa. This makes the period of raining season to be the period for cultivation, planting and other activities therein.

The Utilitarian Essence of African Folktales

Folktales have a unique narrative construction and description used to inculcate effective moral values to the young without naming or defaming anyone. This is also exemplified in Yorùbá folktales while its contents do not differ from tales from other parts of the Africa continent. The utilitarian perspectives of African folktales are enormous. This is why Manda (2015, p.600) refers to it as euphemistic and witty ways of criticising and accepting human fallibility of praising success and warning against bad human practices and behaviour; and as forms of entertainment. They are also used to discourage children from being self-centred and disobedient. This is affirmed by Mphande (2014, p.54) when he notes that the contents of the Malawian folktales mostly relate to human society and centre around, inter alia, greed, jealousy, foolishness, inheritance and succession, witchcraft and the importance of *umunthu* or one's identification with and submission to

collective social thinking that defines most Bantu societies. In the same vein, Uwah (2008, p.87) notes that the above themes are common themes which Nollywood films feature, as they are quite popular amongst African rural audiences. Meanwhile, songs which accompany the tales, apart from helping the listeners to develop retentive memory, are used to instil wisdom in the hearts of the listeners. It is on this basis, the study observes different essence by which African folktales could be used in order to appeal to the model of "thinking locally and acting globally", especially among the young generation. These various ways include but not limited to:

- **Entertainment:** African folktales create an avenue for children to socialise and relates with other children. The essence of the songs which are set in-between African folktales also help the children to retain the message(s) embedded therein, thereby, develop retentive memory, follow a plotline or recall a sequence of events. The performance of the songs gives the children the capacity to relay stories to their peers as well as the learning outcomes
- **Teaching:** African folktales are used to teach and pass down ethics and right behaviour to the next generation. It can never be an overstatement to say that African folktales help children to develop strong reading skills, study other peoples' cultures and model positive character traits. They also make it easier for children to differentiate between good and bad characters as a result of the plots. In addition, they teach the children how to make effective decisions. Chapman (1978, p.117) in his view, sees education to be a means of cultural heritage and the extension of social consciousness. Research have shown that children learn faster and assimilate easily in school because of the use of music and storytelling methods in teaching the pre, primary and secondary schools
- **Cultural Awareness:** They help children to know about taboos in the culture and tradition of the Yorùbá. It reminds children of the traditional occupations in the past, core values and norms of the Yorùbá culture. They also help children to learn about the history and philosophy of the Yorùbá people. African folktales carry lots of information which help the society in maintaining order and unity
- **Moral Values:** They help children to think deep and reinforce their expectations on how to live a meaningful life. It helps children to learn how to dress and behave. There is an adage that says: *Bí omodé bá ni ìtàn, àgbà ló lò we* – meaning- If folktales belong to the children, adults are known with proverbs. That is; while the usefulness of folktales rests so much among the children, adults are believed to be the carrier and major patronage of proverbs. Through folktales,

children learn language, culture, tradition, custom and norms. Folktales are not just for fun. They are used to achieve a desire sustainability in the community. That is; through folktales, concerted effort as a result of the people's communality and unity can be harnessed in order to arrive at sustainable development within the community. Folktales are used in a way to promote patriotism among the children so as to be patriotic to their society, nation and continent at large. African folktales promote social values and open a space for the understanding of the social norms, concepts and thought of the society in order to draw positive change among its inhabitant. African folktales make us to understand the environment we live in and how to depend on one another. Although, folktales are known to be transmitted orally, there is a need to further revitalise and digitise African folktales in order to acquaint children of today on the cultural and moral values imbedded in African folktales

The Need for Digitalisation of African Folktales

Almost all human endeavours in today's context are being digitised to meet the trends in global community space. Hence, the need for digitalisation of African folktales. Some of these folktales could either be revamped or be told as they were. As Usman (2013, p.40) rightly notes that folktales can be retold in any fanciful way as nobody has copyright over them. This compels the call for the digitisation of African folktales for global consumption. It is pertinent to state, however, that the dissemination of African folktales has always been an oral tradition from generation to generation. The effectiveness of this medium, as noticed today, cannot be compared to the media. This is because the tradition which African folktales are known is on a decline gradually. This has greatly affected the cultural values which African folktales disseminate, hence, the best time for the digitalisation of African folktales. The rapid way in which technological advancement is springing up and changing the society into a global community, further confirms the need for the digitisation of African folktales. This is evident in the Western world as they have been employing this medium, by creating and redirecting their

fairy tales into films for children. As a result of this, many African children of today are not familiar with African folktales, as they are used to watching the foreign cartoons. Watching those cartoon films while growing up is said to have negative impact on their behaviour because lessons from those cartoons are derived from foreign cultures. Therefore, African scholars at this present time need to put in more effort so as to revitalise the essence of African folktales in this modern era.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has explained African folktales to be a unique narrative construction and description which is used to inculcate effective moral value to the young without naming and defaming anyone. This study has also revealed the utilitarian essence of African folktales and the indigenous knowledge system embedded therein. The aesthetic progression of African folktales is said to have begun from a setting known as moonlight from time immemorial, being the space where folktales are performed, especially during harmattan season, while children gathered to listen after their daily works. Although, African folktales are known to be transmitted orally, the fact remains that all aspects of human endeavours today, are being digitised. It is however expedient to revitalise and digitise African folktales in order to acquaint children of today on the cultural and moral values imbedded in African folktales. Effort from African scholars at this present time is extremely required so as to revitalise the essence of African folktales in this modern era. In conclusion, it is expected that the importance of African folktales would be better understood if properly harnessed, as it will further popularise the old tradition of storytelling in this modern age.

This study, therefore, recommends that African folktales, being one of the medium where indigenous wisdom and moral values are passed transmitted be revitalised and digitalised, so that the practice will continue to impact positively to the younger generation. In addition, once adequate attention is given to this African cultural practice, it is certain that the residue of knowledge passed on to children through African folktales would be preserved from possible extinction.

Table 3

S.No.	Name	Age	Sex	Folktales retrieved in Yorùbá	Location	Date
1	Pa. Oduremi Eluwole	80yrs	Male	Ìjápá àti Babaláwo (Tortoise and The Herbalist)	Oke-Ola, Modakeke	12/03/22
2	Elder Adeoye Olarewaju	75yrs	Male	Asín àti Òkéré (The Shrew rat and Squirrel)	Akodi-Aga, Ile-Ife	03/02/22

3	Madam Funto Odumakin	71yrs	Female	Olúróńbí and Olúwéré (Olúróńbí and the Herbalist)	Apata, Ibadan	17/02/22
4	Mr. Adisa Yusufu	68yrs	Male	Ìjàpá àti Erin (Tortoise and Elephant)	Oke-Oniti, Oshogbo	26/01/22

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