



Truth-Telling an African Heritage: It's Ethical Implications in Igbo Traditional Religion

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Abstract:

Africans have a rich store of traditional culture of telling the truth through the mediation of their names and proverbs which are encapsulated as an ancient wisdom, beliefs and accumulated experiences of past generations. Truth telling is nothing but short sayings, full of symbolic innuendos which have become part of everyday use for the indigenous African people. The nature of scientific truth and the significant of truth telling as primary source of material for ethical code of conduct in the contemporary African society are derived from the high esteem in which truth telling through names / proverbs are held as part of the people's culture. This paper investigates how the Igbo uses proverbs as a way to stress some vital and remarkable points or issues making it the palm oil used in eating yam in any gathering be it religious or secular. This paper also explores how proverbs reflects the Igbo people's world view through as an African heritage and projecting her belief system, moral inclinations, justifications and people's inner self.

Keywords: *Conduct, Education, Ethics, Morals, Truth, & Wisdom.*

1. Introduction

The nature of scientific truth and the significant of truth telling as primary source of material for ethical code of conduct in the contemporary African society are derived from the high esteem in which truth telling through names / proverbs are held as part of the people's culture. In the socio-political arena, the adherents of the indigenous African religious practices are aware that the potency of truth telling symbolism would be dangerous if contacted, and beneficial if it is reverently handled, and the general tendency is to use it for positive means, for it is only through such a process that man is believed to experience total well-being. In other words, it has been argued that the psychology and the mysteries surrounding the scientific nature of truth telling in Traditional Religion should be upheld; guarded and not be lost in antiquity for sustaining indigenous education and human development in Igbo land, in other for internationalization of indigenous education for sustainable development

2. African Concept of Truth

According to Ikenga-Metuh (1987:20), truth telling "spring spontaneously from the people. They are *vox populi* [the voice of the people] in the profound sense and consequently, should be accepted as true index of what a people regard as true, and are interpretative of their principles of life and conduct". Such truth telling through the mediation of its usage are believed to be sacred and the symbol of authority that commands respect from all the community members for whom and by whom that knows how to use them (Ozah, 2006:71). Truth telling are trustworthy witnesses of the social, political, ethical and religious ideals of the people among whom they originated and circulate (Kelso, 1918:415). Closely related to the above is the notion that truth telling traditionally is associated to the elders and the voice of the elders is the voice of wisdom. The implication of this of this according to Nabofa (1994:19) "is that the elders are regarded as being all-wise and more rational and reasonable beings

than the young ones. The young are religiously enjoined to draw from the wealth of the elders' experience".

3. Truth Telling as an African Heritage

Through the symbolism which the truth utilizes and the sacred ethos it invokes, truth telling as part of African heritage possesses the power to influence the spiritual state of its users and it plays a role in the ethical and educational consciousness of the community "by whom or for whom it is performed" (Dunbar-Hall, 2006:59). According to Blench those who are wedded to European notions of language, in particular regular time signatures, and the key system, find these truth telling "hard to interpret and it is thus often ignored in scholarly accounts and other types of anthropological description" (2009:1). Ademola Adegbite posits that such truth telling to the traditional African peoples may be described as "the vehicle for articulating an abstract idea in concrete form – for communicating thought as matter" (1991:45). It is from this position that he argues that truth "is regarded in traditional African societies as the most immediate expression of Eros; a bridge between ideas and phenomena" (Adegbite, 1991:45). It is on this perspective that Rainer Polak affirms that truth "has become an integral part of a supra-ethnic, local culture" (2006:163), while others like Gerard Behague (2006) believes that truth telling has significantly shaped African religious heritage.

Regrettably, in the socio-political perspective of the Igbomina people in Osun State Nigeria, Igbo song embellished with proverbial truths which is used to praise and condemn good and bad behaviours among the people as the case may be is no longer rendered (Agboola, 1987:29). Ayantayo asserts that "it is also a pity that as a result of modernity African youth does not only find it difficult to speak in proverbs but cannot even understand it because they are less concerned about it. Sad enough, when a proverb is said, the youth have their own artificial and superficial meanings and interpretations to it. This development is doing havoc to African culture" (2001:44).

Basically, in Igbo traditional society, proverbial truths add good taste and flavour to speech as sugar does to tea and they lubricate, embellish, objectify societal and ethical values and religious truths and render them suitable or palatable to the ears of the people who care to listen (Nabofa, 1994:61). No wonder Ikenga-Metuh comments that:

The use of proverbs is cultivated as an art and cherished as an index of good oratory and acquaintance with traditional knowledge and ancestral wisdom. The Zulu say that 'without proverbs, the language would be but a skeleton without flesh, a body without soul'. The Ovambo have it that 'a speech garnished with proverbs, parables and wisdom saying is pleasant to hear'. Proverbs, the Yoruba would say are 'horses for chasing missing words'. The Igbo people say 'proverbs are vegetable for eating words'. Another Igbo proverb claims that 'a child, who knows how to use proverbs, has justified the dowry paid on his mother's head' (1987:20).

In this situation, when proverbial truths of this nature are given the African youth of nowadays would simply misinterpret it and not only that would equally treat such with contempt (Ayantayo, 2001:44). Nabofa (1994:17) argues that our African proverbs which serve as symbols are impregnated with diverse theological, doctrinal, philosophical and psychological interpretations are not left out and these are symbols that suppose to serve as a medium of communication in traditional society. It is a pity that today most of the African cultural heritage like the Igbo proverbial truths and its usage are allowed to be influenced and overshadowed by the Western culture and things are designed to suit European taste in Africa (Sofola, 1973:15).

4. Ethical and Moral Implications of Truth Telling in African cosmology

Truth telling are highly regarded in the thinking and communication process of Africans as a whole and generally, the social functions of proverbs in African cultures have been well documented in

folklore scholarship (Oladele, 2010:22). Invariably, no matter how deculturalized an African person is regarding the use of African indigenous communication systems in projecting truth as it pertains to proverbs, research has shown that Africans has not totally lost the moral, religious, and socio-political “strength and values inherent in them” (Sofola, 1973:62). Mocquereau affirms that (1896:106) “it is enough to know that in its primitive purity it rose to such heights”.

In this way, Ohadike (2007:98) posits that use of proverbs through the mediation of truth telling could be a source of light. He argues that reggae musicians through their songs and lyrics “believed that the world would be changed if people saw the light and this therefore made them to sing songs that praised uprightness and condemned the evil path. They ridiculed politicians who fooled the people. They despised leaders who stuffed their bellies while the masses starved”. It is on this note that Scholes (1970:268) points out that “the critic who dares not to attack what is bad is, but a half-hearted supporter of good”. Izibili (2009:14) asserts that by truth telling “these rewards and awards served as encouragement to those who emulates good things and shorn evil entirely”. Nabofa (1994:6) argues that truth telling as a symbolic form of communication “inwardly reminds and urges the Africans, especially the cruel, savage, and dishonest elements to lead a pure and chaste life in order to avoid the wrath of the gods and goddess”.

5. Truth Telling as a Social Control in Traditional African System

Here, it has been observed that truth telling as part and method of communication is used as an agent of social control among the Igbo race, no wonder Omoregbe (1993:62-63) argues that they “provide guides for human conduct indicating certain things or certain ways of behaviour, which should be avoided and other things or ways of behaviour which should be adopted”. In this way, they are “reminding people of their responsibility to conform to the wishes of their society” (Adejumo, 2013:44). Bloch (1987:278) argues that because of the calendrical nature of the African people, truth telling therefore becomes the social order and part of temporal and astrological order where this theme of social order is repeated again and again. Falola (2003:35) asserts that such form of communication is “serving as cultural agents to present African to Westerners while becoming a powerful tool to articulate the ideas of Pan Africanism that united blacks in different countries, also it received a wide affirmation as a socialist ideology based on long-established African values”. Udo (2008:6) argues that “as character makes for good social relations, it is laid upon every members of community to act in such a way as to promote always the good of the whole body”, and “thereby partly creates the image of orderly antithesis” (Bloch, 1987:287). Ekeke (2013:12) comments that through the use of truth telling, ethics in African Igbo traditional society is what a person does in accordance with the established norms which contribute to the welfare of the whole community. Opoku (1978:168) affirms that at the same time, such misdeeds, however, can bring calamity to his immediate family, extended family, his lineage and the entire community, and to avoid the shame that his misdeeds would bring to the entire community, every African [Igbo person] try as much as possible to live good life.

Ogbu (2010:19) affirms that from the injunctions, messages and textual proverbs exuding from the natural truth telling, it tries “to recover social credibility and wholesome impact on local community” like the Igbo and in this way it solves “the social and psychological well-being of individuals” (MacGaffey, 1994:243), and by this method also, truth telling “tells it as it is by asserting its social relevance in the community” (Adejumo, 2013:46). McAdams (1988:217) posits that it is through such notion on truth telling that “personal and societal solutions enable individuals and societies to take ontological, epistemological, and ethical stands in the face of ambiguity”. Young (2003:29) argues that “it can also be used more metaphorically, as a way of describing how the individual or group can be transformed by changing their sense of their own place in society”. Okafor (1998:189) affirms that Igbo people turn truth telling “into metaphors for conveying their feelings and emotions and for giving oral spectrum description”.

Turner (1968:21) posits that such truth “is regarded as a magnificent instrument for expressing, maintaining, and periodically used in cleansing a secular order of society without strong political centralization and all too full of social conflict”. It is in this wise that Popkin & Stroll (1981:1) defines ethics as “a code or set of principle by which men live”. Through this means, the concept of truth telling among the Igbo ethics becomes a “social justice, peace, and strivings for harmonious coexistence” (Daniel, 2010:24). Askew (2006:15) idiomatically describes such ethical truths as “a silence that echoes loudly”, “which has become a primordial reservoir of moral obligations” (Ekeh, 1975:100). Pinkerton (2011:191) asserts that “its unique transcendence is paradoxically grounded in an earthly embodiment, and..., somehow corporeal”. It therefore entails that the concept of ethics in traditional African Igbo society “is in living to avoid shame in any family or community (Ekeke, 2013:13).

No wonder then that Metuh (1999:206) comments that to maintain truth telling “people insist on swearing on the shrine of the local spirits because it is more effective. The Bible does not kill, they say. Traditional ordeals are frequently used to detect criminals, sorcerers and witches. Divination, fortune-telling and medicine-making services have grown into large businesses far beyond the limits of their traditional religious roles. They now flourish in the supposedly more Christianized urban areas, where pressures of modern life create more crisis situations”. In fact, one cloud further enquires why certain norms like telling lies attracts divine sanctions in traditional religion. Here a clear demarcation needs to be made between ‘interdiction’ and ‘social norms’. This is the reason why Metuh (1987:246) again concedes that “with social norms, the average African knows that they are bad because they undermine the social order..... Destroy lineage kingship values. God punishes them because he is the author of the social order”.

As an agent of social control in the contemporary indigenous Igbo societies truth telling are to be used freely to express the feelings of the people (Nti, 1990:11). It is primarily regarded as a “cultural and social thing which acts as a source of authority” (Pals, 2009:113) while it acts as “the only guarantor of social order” (Ventakesh, 2006:202) through which stingy, corrupt and bad behaved members of the community are abused and criticized freely for partaking in what Ventakesh (2006:202) again describes as “backroom diplomacy” – evil deeds during the celebration period. While, honest and generous, members of the community are praised or elated (NTI, 1990:11) with such proverbial statements “it does not exclude the large area of partnership and overlap that turns out to be extremely fruitful of a morally attuned society” (Sanneh, 1999:105).

It is on this position that (NOUN, 2009:107) argues it is through the use of Igbo proverbs that good orators “were accepted in the society as people who can offer solutions to some societal problems. They addressed issues concerning the welfare of the society, like propagating community development programmes and address the excesses of some individuals in the society without fear of reprimand through satirical forms”. According to Tunji Vidal “just as kings, individuals, towns, corporate groups, social institutions and events are praised and romantically glorified, so also are they derided, satirized and condemned. No one is spared from the pangs of bitter satire and derision, for the proverbial statements provides members of the society with an avenue for uninhabited self-expression through its usage” (1989:124). He argues that corporate groups and privileged groups in the realm of government may also be the focus of satire (Vidal, 1989:124).

6. Societal Engineering and Human Management through Truth Telling in Igbo Musical Instruments

According to Nzewi et al (2001:93) the concept of encoding ethical lingual text on a music instrument derives from instituting authority voicing in a worldview that processes openly disseminated information for particular, cognitive audience. They argue that the essence is in its imperative transcendental attributes, which empower it to coerce conformity in issues of societal engineering and

human management (Nzewi et al, 2001:93). Truth telling in Igbo worldview provides “a symbolic system that supported the authority of elders and initiates in the homestead” (Chidester, 1992:11). It is on this positions that Nabofa (1994:19) connected/interpreted this proverbial ethical values to the notion that wisdom belongs to the elders and describes the Igbo proverbs as “the voice of the elders which invariably is the voice of wisdom”, that “reminds an initiate of his responsibilities and obligations to his fellow members” (Nabofa, 1994:14). Ohadike (2007:95) affirms that such truths are “used to expose and denounce the evils of society”. Konsky et al, 2000:248 affirms that truths “are mediated by cultural forces resulting in more or less pronounced adherence to such values” “which deems necessary to save humanity from the catastrophic death-wish it has given into in its very desire for the infinite” (Maes-Jelinek, 1990:55).

Even in the entertainment industry, Wilson (1998:41) echoes that entertainers use Igbo truths proverbially “inform of satire, criticism, moralization, praise, symbolism, didacticism, suggestion and labelling to communicate with individuals, groups and society at large...Also, gossips about the rich and proud are presented in the lucid details in music”. Mython (1983:86) posit that such proverbial truths “can teach, can reinforce the norms of the society and can often provide reassurance of order and continuity in confused and troubled times”. Guadeloupe (2009:55) argues that this understanding about the unjust world, which includes everyone, is still being promoted by the use of popular Igbo proverbial truths.

This actually makes it to function more as an agent of ethical, moral, social control and mediation (Nti, 1990:11). No wonder Nzewi et al (2001:92) asserts that in terms of Igbo musical instruments “the African worldview is richly suffused with spirituality”. They argues that societal control and conformity were more effectively transacted as well as enforced as supra-human processes in which truth is central (Nzewi et al, 2001:92). Through such means, Igbo musical instruments through its truth telling proverbs may be used to enhance the learning of oral traditions and it plays a significant role in maintaining social solidarity (Haviland, 2002:361). In Igbo culture, tradition and hegemonic paradigm, indigenous proverbial truths serves “as a medium of inculcating moral truths to the people” (Akintola, 1992:2) and it serves “as a medium of teaching men morality through symbolism” (Akintola, 1992:2). Adejumo (2013:46) asserts that “it is this effort at masking satiric jibes under humorous acts that distinguishes it from invectives”, and this makes the community to “admire and respect the views of this distinguished musician” who make use of proverbial truths through the mediation of the *Ikolo* drum (Mocquereau, 1896:106). It is on this position that Adejumo (2013:46) affirms that a sacred drum like the *Ikolo* is “an instrument of publicity producing social infractions and their agents with the ultimate aim of correcting and reforming the human community”. In Igbo communities, the drummer of the *Ikolo* is seen and “accepted as a communicator, with the ability to get people’s attention easily through his art” (Noun, 2009:107) because “he possesses a great amount of ritual esoteric knowledge; he is wealthy; ...he is accorded high prestige and enjoys charismatic appeal” (Guenther, 1975:163). Olupona (1991:7) argues that a drummer like the *Ikolo* drummer therefore must not be regarded as a technician alone; he still has to learn the words and also acquire the special skill of drumming. If he is not a good artist, the message cannot be reproduced fully. He posits that on the issue of the language of the drum being fixed, it was observed that while there may be some sets of phrases, proverbs, and wise sayings that form the drummer’s repertoire, the drummer is free to improvise in-between in order to make his message fit the particular occasion (Olupona, 1991:7). According to Gladstone et al:

Music is a parable for this century. Creeds have ceased to express that which men in their inmost hearts most reverence, and are now symbols of division rather than of unity. Music is a parable, and like all parables is unmeaning, foolish, and sensuous to those who will not think, to those who having eyes see not, and seek not the revelation of God through modern life. It condemns the fools who will not understand, to greater folly, but tells the thoughtful, the student and the earnest seeker, in sounds that will not change, of that which is worthy of worship; and tells to each truth hearer just in so far as

by nature and circumstances he is able to understand it, while it gives to all that feelings of common life and that assurance of sympathy which has in old times been the strength of the Church. By music men may be taught to find the God who is not far from any one of us, and be brought within reach of the support which comes from the sympathy of their fellow creatures (1884:165).

Buttressing this further, Nti asserts that:

The critic must be a widely read musician. He the critic must be guided by instincts no matter how knowledgeable he may be. He must be able to recognize various qualities of a musical performance and then to strike a balance. It is in this respect that the trained and experienced critic surpasses the lay man. The critic should try and make sure that he does not allow personal likes and prejudices to affect his remarks or judgments'. He should be constructive and never be grateful. He should not always allow situations to affect his standards of performance. He must never hide the truth (1990:44).

Iyorchia Ayu (1986:16) asserts that through the proverbial sound that emanates from the pounding sound of the *Ikolo*, the sound is now seen as "the voice through himself and for himself; and despite the odds, must be prepared to stage the festival of the oppressed", while preservation and inscription of such a distinctive voice would signify the site of their own cultural differences and identity (Gikandi, 1990:14-15). He argues that the voice of such sacred sound like the *Ikolo* in radically contrasting ways, is an instrument of struggle and a depository of African values in a world in which tribe like the Igbo's and their traditions were denigrated and their selfhoods repressed, and in terms of narrative, the recovery of voice becomes one way through which unspoken and repressed experiences can be represented (Gikandi, 1990:15). According to Melville Herskovits:

Crowds come to see the display and to watch the dancing, but most of all, to listen to the songs and to laugh at the ridicule to which are held those who have offended members of the quarter giving the dance. Names are ordinarily not mentioned, for then fighting may result. In any event, the African relishes innuendo and circumlocution too well to be satired with bald, direct statement. However, everyone who is present already knows whose reference is being made (1934:77).

In this vein, Wilson (1987:93) opines that "itinerant musical entertainment groups sing satirical songs, and generally criticize wrong doings of individuals in the society. Names of those being satirized or praised may be mentioned or descriptions of their physical or personality attributes, where they live, or what they do may form part of such songs". Bourdilion comments that:

A study of dance may help us to understand the communicative aspect of ritual. Dance, like ritual can be communicative in an explicit sense when the dancers deliberately perform plays that comment on authority or on the behavior of individuals within the community. In theatre, the stage sets the action apart from normal life, and in religious ritual it is the sacred context that sets the action apart. Similarly, the context of the dance sets the action apart, and gives the actors lenience to express ideas which in other circumstances might be taboo or might provoke anger and conflict. In particular, the dancers can jestingly criticize individual members of the community, or particular types of behaviour. Such dances perform similar functions of reinforcing societal values, as do initiation rites, for example (1990:325).

Chernoff argues in support of the assertion by saying that: African song lyrics...are especially concerned with moral ethical questions and attack pride and pretension in whatever form these unsociable qualities appear...such songs serves as vehicles for the mobilization of authoritative community values. In many African societies, someone with grievance may hire a song writer to prepare a song which states the problem: a song may exceed the boundaries of social property without giving undue offense, and at the same time, people attracted to the song will be more accessible to its argument and may help induce a miscreant to make amends (1979:70-71).

Also, for the proverbial sound from the *Ikolo* to serve as an agent of social control and culture indicator, De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach (1977:124) holds that “the communication act as a means by which social control is exerted, roles are allocated, coordination of efforts is achieved, expectations are made manifest, and the entire social process is carried on. In their opinion, without such exchanges of influence human society would simply collapse”. According to Stokes (1997:2) through proverbial sound, music and dance [sic] fundamental aspects of [sic] social organization are reorganized, social time is ritually articulated, and an entire cosmological system is grasped. Also, the *Ikolo* as a musical form like other sacred drums according to Tuohy, through its proverbial sound act as a “symbolic expression of order and musical performances as active means of organizing people drawing upon widespread beliefs that music can stir as well as depict emotions, can create as well as represent community. Going beyond the image or text, music adds a performative dimension-an active means by which to experience the nation, by which to feel and act national” (2006:227).

The Igbo communities has the *Ikolo* as a sacred talking drum which “speaks the language of the communities” (Oziogu, 2011:1). According to Nti (1990:16) “they own and use them”, to express their feelings, circumstances, situations and events of life among the people of the community and “they also enjoy an array of entertainment genres that exude a sense of the religious in their execution” (Stone, 1994:389). Adedeji (2013:1) asserts that the contemporary Igbo person takes delight in the use of Igbo proverbs in music playing of the *Ikolo* drum because of “its beats and instrumentation, among others”. Stone (1994:393) argues that communities in the entire Igbo land “admire the human voice” of sacred drum like the *Ikolo* and that “they call the sounds of the instrument voices” which speak the “voice of the mother”, “voice of the child”, “voice of the chief...”. They say that such voices can also possess certain magical or superhuman capabilities”. This is why Ayu (1986:20) asserts that they construct popular beliefs about society, which at the end act as a material force in class struggle. Ayu (1986:22) again argues that “the music draws on the life experience of the sufferer’s, including their everyday language. It is this experience and language which provides the themes determines the rhythm, the tempo and the tone. It draws into communion those who identify with its message and modalities. And conversely, it invites hostility from those who see in it subversion to their interests”.

According to Stone (1994:396) the spirit voice of sacred drum like the *Ikolo* bring with it “both danger and power, necessary components in the daring enterprise of making good music. The knowledge of these spirits is limited to a special few in any event and that knowledge in itself is a form of power for those who possess it. Spirits enter events as they are summoned by singers and players carrying responsibility for quality. They also come as characters in musical dramatizations such as those of the epic. They are often beings who are necessarily permanent spirits but creatures who move easily from human to spirit and even to the animal world”.

Buttressing this further, MacGaffey (2000:246) asserts that indigenous musical instruments like the *Ikolo* through its proverbial sound are commonly thought of as “the voices of the dead” that completely “manifest itself in the body of the community and the individual medium-priest” (Murphy, 2012:90) in which socially despised individuals are also singled out and ridiculed in the songs and lyrics (Ray, 1976:81). Wilson (1987:93) asserts that these proverbial sounds of the *Ikolo* “are potent sources of information and the latent gossip”. Jacobson (1969:334) argues that they are “an unconsummated symbol which evokes connotation and various articulations, yet is not really defined”. Omu (1978:4) affirms that when such drums like the *Ikolo* drums are expertly sounded proverbially, “they are capable of conveying specific meaning i.e. they talk. The talking drum is one of the most fascinating agencies of communication in Africa”. He argues that “the Yorubas of South Western geo-political zone of Nigeria have an impressive array of talking drums sets and probably possess the richest heritage of drums the prominent of which is *dundun*-said to be able to imitate all the tones and gibes in Yoruba speech, hence can be used to communicate, insults, praises, admonition and

even proverbs which are understood by the initiated” (Omu, 1978:4). Guadeloupe (2009:199-200) describes such talking drum like the *Ikolo* as “spiritual drumbeats which make sounds that help us to understand that we are all spirits incarnate, regardless of our different stations in life. He argues that its drumming alerts us that a world of disincarnate ancestral spirits is out there, spirits with whom we are associated and whom we must obey (Guadeloupe, 2009:200).

Carson (1996:230) posits that “they are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages”, which is “believed to be so powerfully charged and considered unsafe for anyone to obstruct it” (Abiodun, 1994:311). Carson (1996:230) argues that they are true levelers which give to all who will faithfully use them, the society and the spiritual presence, of the best and greatest of our race. Parrinder (1969:67) asserts that anyone who listens to African prayers must have been impressed by the sonorous rehearsals of divine qualities.

It is in this context that Nabofa (1994:10) asserts that artistic/ritualistic object like *Ikolo* drum is regarded as “the people’s theologians and religious spokesman. This is because it provides the language with which the people’s thinking is expressed”. In this wise, African theology should be understood in the context of African life and culture (Appiah, 1995:119). Buttressing this further, Uwah (2010:89) posits that ideologically God is pre-eminently a force in Africa, spiritual, but totally immanent and that everything revolves around him as the supreme force. Onwubiko (1991:31) argues that one’s entire action is reflective of one’s religious concepts and practices as seen in the ordering of society. This is because social morality is dependent on religion. Sacred drum like that of the *Ikolo* and its proverbial sounds according to (Olupona, 2000: xxxv), “relates to the social, historical, religious, and communal ideas and feelings of the people”. No matter how archaic, barbaric, or rudimentary indigenous communication systems like *Ikolo* might be to thinking of the critics, “it still and will continue to represent traditional and ancient communication systems” (Emenegu, 1966:328), because it “speak, and act for events of the men” (Stone, 1994:389). Agbogun (2011:1) asserts that proverbially “it is beaten to warn passersby that funeral procession is using the route”. It is on this position that Omari (1994:135) posits that sacred instrument like the *Ikolo* as an embodiment of ideological corpus of the Igbo communities encompasses —“its myths, belief system, worldview, cosmology, values, rituals, and ethics—as well as the physical locality where deities are enshrined and the ceremonies are held”. Sacred objects like the *Ikolo* as “a valuable source of historical information” (Finn, 2000:66) has been described as an “object-based epistemology” (Conn, 1998:4), “a formation of a classical canon” (Belting, 1987:72), “invested with a meaning deeper than as signifiers of status” (Conn, 1998:14) through which its principle of historical enterprise powerfully convey historical meanings than words (Conn, 1998:154), that is used to understand their world (Conn, 1998:4). Guneratne (2003:7) argues that sacred drum like the *Ikolo* through the mediation of its sound is “imbued with historical specificities and ideological orientations in its claims to represent the highest aspirations of a post-colonial world in the throes of resisting neocolonialism”. This is why Ruschenberger the founding father of the American Museums Academy and his colleagues in 1872 remained convinced that such natural sacred object like the *Ikolo* is the best approximation of what Conn (1998:44) refers to “the book of nature”, which its sound constituted “the pages” (Conn, 1998:44) through its truth telling. To study and understand the *Ikolo* music proverbially in the culture of Igbo people, “one must use its language as a mediator” (Nettl, 1983:144) and in doing so an understanding of the *Ikolo* sacred music rest on at least some understanding of Igbo culture, past and present (Nnamah, 2002:9). No wonder Belting (1987:92) affirms that sacred drums like the *Ikolo* “form as a historical source bearing witness to history and itself standing within a history of forms while transcending its historicity”. It is on this position that Melville Herskovits argues that:

The African past must be included under the rubric “traditions of the past,” whether these traditions are held overtly or not, becomes apparent when the religious habits of Negroes in the Caribbean and South America are anchored to both ends of the scale whose central portion they comprise—to Africa, the

aboriginal home of all these varieties of religious experience, on the one hand, and to the United States, on the other, where the greatest degree of acculturation to European norms has taken place (1941:224).

7. Truth Telling and Some Interpretative Proverbial Paradigm

Many Igbo proverbs attest to some ethical and moral attributes of society and God like God's mercy, his goodness, his justice and uprightness. An Igbo proverb says that: an enemy may beat the drum of someone's down fall, but God will not let it sound. This means that as you plan for somebody so God plans for you. Another Igbo proverb says '*ezi okwu bu ndu*' = truth is life. '*ezi okwu ga achi*' = truth must prevail. Interpretatively, these proverbs try to inculcate that ethical and moral value system on how truth is very important in shaping the lives of the people. As a point of emphasis, it is a known fact that in human history today, an average African person is to some extent a castrated, deschooled and deculturalized "social animal" living in a no-man's land and imbibing cultural and socio-religious values that are not African (Sofola, 1973:xiv &16-17). According to Loomba (1998:139) "this deculturation was the cause of rising insanity of Africans".

This recent change or development is brought about by several factors which includes: colonization, assimilation of foreign religions like: Christianity and Islam, Western education, urban development, technology, modern man's communication and socio-political ideologies which suddenly swept into main stream of international relations and world politics (Metuh, 2002:238). As it has to do with education many Africans especially Nigerians try as much as possible to imitate white-man's way of spoken English Language and by this way, they are trying to elevate themselves as critical and classical acquirers of foreign education not knowing that they are carriers of "confusion and cultural self-annihilation" of "time-honoured and time-tested values of their heritage" (Sofola, 1973:17&xi). Buttressing this point further, Sofola again asserts that:

In Nigeria we have a group of people, mostly women, known as the "been-to's" [i.e. those who have been to "civilized" world or the U.K]. Theatrical elements with confirmed inferiority, this group is characterized by exaggerated, bizarre forms of cosmetic make-ups; impeccable British accent often projected sometimes to distort their native tonal language thereby making them look confused and most unintelligible; their catlike gyrating exhibitivie manner of walking and such like things. These were the women who invaded the British nursing institutions for their training with pay while on training. Usually possessed of a bare minimum of education generally not exceeding the standard six grade, this group has swallowed British mannerism with unmitigated assimilation. Their low education did not allow them to have a critical, analytical assessment of the new culture which they only see fleetingly and from afar because they do not actually have opportunity for full and intimate participation in the foreign culture of Britain (1973:17).

Again, Sofola observes that:

Nowadays, some Nigerians are extending this cultural suicide to the next generation. They would send their children of tender age to the Nursery Schools where they are taught values of an alien culture, told the folk tales of a foreign land and even play the games and sing the songs of foreign land. In fact, some Nigerians would rather send their children to the preferred nursery schools in London or elsewhere so that they could be brought up by those whom the parents call, civilized people. And yet the children are expected to come back and live in an 'alien' land of Nigeria (1973: xi-xii).

Buttressing this assertion further, Asante, illustratively affirms that:

...in the past it was easy to locate the discourse about African communication, ...in the public sphere of other places and with the intellectual projects of Europeans and Asians, [which] means that African scholars abandoned their own historical experiences in order to imitate what had occurred

elsewhere...Disconnected and hooked from community, people floated from place to place without the benefit of the profundity that comes from inner cultural resources (2004:5).

However, having a good understanding of the concept of truth telling equally gives protection or immunity to our indigenous culture and tradition as the case may be, against the self-contradictory, false dramatization and deceitful decoration of doctrines of “cultural nationalism” (Patten, 1999:1). Abiola Irele (1982:20) illustrates the methods in which the well-known concept of ‘culture’ as ‘tradition’ has frequently been thwarted and fraudulently manipulated by Africans for selfish purposes. He further comments that:

This kind of manipulation has attained a remarkable level of cynicism in the politics of some African states, popular attention is diverted to the wearing of leopard skins over the safari suit, the wholesale adoption of indigenous names, the animation of traditional dancing, while the serious business of holding on the power and amassing fabulous wealth goes on elsewhere. In such a situation an attitude of robust scepticism seems to be perfectly in order. When the notion of tradition isn’t being invoked in order to confuse deliberately, it obeys a selective principle. Those who make the appeal to tradition are perfectly willing to enjoy the satisfactions of modern civilization; sometimes even, the appeal to tradition is made to ensure their unhindered access to its material benefits. This throws a sharp light upon the superficial understanding of tradition and culture that is being fostered among us by the organization of festivals and the like which do nothing, in their banality, other than rob our indigenous artistic cultures of their poetry and dignity (Irele, 1982:20).

Insufficient research and lack of adequate knowledge of the language through its traditional culture of telling the truth coupled in some cases with racial bias, resulted in a number of wild speculations and misrepresentations by certain missionary writers and ethnographers of the Igbo traditional belief and practice relating to such notion to truth telling contributed also to this negative attitude (Ejizu, 2002:114). Sofola (1973:xii) argues that some were either ignorant of the rich values of their African past or were made in their education to look down upon them or shun the values entirely. Ohadike (2007:13) affirms that “one of the aims of assimilation is to achieve political and cultural control by mounting a vicious attack on the victim’s consciousness and self-esteem. When put in motion, the victim begins to hate the customs of his people, their language, music and religion”. People that are knowledgeable in the use of these proverbs through truth telling seem to “reflects the life of common folk, mainly living in rural areas than urban ones” (Po, 2007:1).

Hendrickson (1996a:9) writing on the context of Bori devotees argues that truth telling has a relationship with the supernatural by providing attire for the spirits and such “clothes gives substance to these incorporeal beings...They extend the spirits’ *personae* in space and time”. Masquelier (1996:74) affirms that truths “concretize the conversation between human and spirits by literally providing the connecting threads through which they can relate to each other”. In addition, truth telling appropriately add so much effect on the prestige of man which becomes totally transformed into what Thot Hermes Trismegistus, the ancient adept and founder of Egyptain learning, describes as the “mystic chemistry of the soul” (Hall, 1928:46). Hall (1928:46) again stresses that truth telling “symbolize the spiritual energies radiating from the human body of the initiated users”. Buttressing this further, Hall (1928:136) again in mystical and philosophical form describes truth tellers as “the garments of glory, for they resemble the regenerated and spiritualized nature of man, symbolized by a vestment which all must weave from the threads of character virtue before they can become high priests after the Order of Melchizedek”.

8. African Interpretation of Truth as a Method of Education and Human Development

As African Traditional Religion is practically written everywhere, so also human beings in diaspora are greatly influenced psychologically, emotionally in their thinking, feelings and behavioural attitudes

by truth telling. Insofar as, truth make an indelible mark on human minds and consciousness thus they are found to be very vital methods of psychological communication of religious belief and ideas. Ontologically, every tribe in Africa give interpretations and symbolic meanings on the same notion of truth.

Consequently, truth telling is the most widely accepted concept in the religious practices of the adherents of African Traditional Religion to overtly express the totality of the holiness and purity of a person and the divine. Sundermeier (1998) argues that truth is like white colour which indicates the coolness of water. To be cool means to act thoughtfully, level-headedly and wisely. Coolness symbolizes self-control. The cool person is pure, hiding nothing, and living in peace. The sorcerer has no power over such a person. Coolness stands for healing and new birth (1998:47). Sundermeier (1998:46) argues white is the colour of the ancestors, who have greater power than the living. Therefore, colours can affect emotions. Some colours make us feel happy and excited. Others make us feel sad as the case may be.

According to Kaplan (2004:190), in Benin Kingship, “the clothing the Oba chooses to wear each day is traditional (with some innovation and symbolism); it is a statement of occasion, intent, mood, and power. The crowns, the beads, the ornaments, and the symbols of power held in the hand are chosen with care according to occasion and ritual need. All have meaning and evoke memory. Privileges of dress accorded to the chiefs are also statements of more than rank; they are statements of the Oba’s level of confidence in them, and signal the regard in which the wearer is held. No privilege in Benin is without its history, and carries responsibility for proper behaviour and demeanor”. In fact, colour white is “colour par excellent” (Wood, 1905:227) through the mediation of its transparency symbolically and interpretatively representing natural truth.

9. Conclusion

We can tersely express the central significance of truth telling in African belief of its various symbolism and symbolic meanings as method of indigenous education. The ascribed mystery and scientific nature of truth makes it seem to have both positive and negative powers, depending upon its source. While its positive properties ushers in peace and harmony, its perils defile and destabilize, and this makes men shrink from contact with any possible source of such defilement. Truth plays a very symbolic role in man’s daily life be it secular or religious, and this makes it symbolic. In the socio-political arena, the adherents of the indigenous African religious practices are aware that the potency of truth telling symbolism would be dangerous if contacted, and beneficial if it is reverently handled, and the general tendency is to use it for positive means, for it is only through such a process that man is believed to experience total well-being. In other words, it has been argued that the psychology and the mysteries surrounding the scientific nature of truth telling in Traditional Religion should be upheld; guarded and not be lost in antiquity for sustaining indigenous education and human development in Igbo land, in other for internationalization of indigenous education for sustainable development. All together, it has been concluded therefore that the philosophical nature of scientific truth as pertains to its socio-political and ethical implications through the instrumentality of *Ikolo* as an indigenous sacred drum that exudes proverbial and sound symbolic reassert the importance of truth telling in fostering and propagating African traditional religion.

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