

D. O. Fágúnwà on Progress, Development and Modernization: A Semiotic Study

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Abstract

This paper presents a semiotic study of Daniel O. Fágúnwà's engagement with the concepts of progress, development, and modernization, articulated through the Yorùbá terms *Ìlọsíwájú*, *Ìdàgbàsókè*, and *Òlàjú*. While Fágúnwà's narratives are deeply rooted in Yorùbá oral tradition and worldview, this analysis argues that he was a visionary proponent of change who sought to reconcile indigenous values with modernity rather than simply preserving the past.

Focusing on three of his novels—*Ògbójú Ọdẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmọlẹ*, *Ìrínkèrindò nínú Igbó Elégbèje*, and *Ìrèké Oníbùdò*—the study employs cultural semiotics to decode the symbolism inherent in the characters' quests, challenges, and environments. The paper demonstrates that the protagonists' perilous journeys are allegories for the societal search for advancement. Fágúnwà highlights that challenges are an inevitable part of development and that virtues such as determination, perseverance, and collectivism are essential for overcoming them.

The analysis reveals Fágúnwà's emphasis on exposure (*Ìrírí*) and education as crucial catalysts for progress, contrasting the limited knowledge of a static, rural existence with the expanded worldview gained through travel and new experiences. Ultimately, the paper concludes that Fágúnwà presents *Ìlọsíwájú*, *Ìdàgbàsókè*, and *Òlàjú* as an indispensable "tripod of human existence," advocating for a progressive transformation that skillfully blends cultural heritage with the imperatives of the modern world.

Keywords: D.O. Fágúnwà, Yorùbá literature, semiotics, progress, development, modernization, tradition, cultural studies.

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Introduction

This paper focuses on D.O Fágúnwà's search for *Ìlọsíwájú*, *Ìdàgbàsókè* and *Òlàjú* as articulated in his novels, with the three terms taken to connote progress, development, and modernity respectively. It is not difficult to decipher elements of progress and modernity in the works of D.O. Fágúnwà. The most obvious of them lies perhaps in the factor of literacy, in the fact that the stories in all cases are dictated by the novels' protagonists to individuals who take them down in writing. Supporting this fact are the regular but often indirect references to Christianity, colonialism and modern technological devices such as automobiles. But because, the novels in question are often set in the past, the language in which they are written is Yorùbá and the mode of presentation is in the language's oral narrative mode; and also because the actions of the works take place largely in rural areas and more often in thick forests; and the protagonists are always courageous hunters who spend much of their time wandering in the jungle; depending for protection against dangers on charms, magic and traditional weapons like dane guns, cutlasses and clubs, they are often taken to be concerned with the advancement of Yorùbá indigenous worldviews.

To be sure, providing validation to the people's original perspectives and systems represents major part of Fágúnwà's concerns in his writings; but it is also the case that the author also always seeks to transcend this, that he often seeks to stretch them, and connect them with modernity. Fágúnwà holds a dynamic view of identity and tradition. He is an advocate for progress and development for his Yorùbá people. However, he also does not

believe in discarding wholesale the things of the past. Rather, his position is for them to be transformed, and made part of progress and modernity. This paper is concerned with how Fágúnwà articulates this position in his works. It investigates this in details in *Ògbójú Ọdẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmọlẹ, Irinkèrindò nínú Igbó Elégbèje* and *Ìrèké Oníbùdó*.

Scope of Discussion and Terms of References

Three of the five novels of Fagunwa, namely - *Ògbójú Ọdẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmọlẹ, Irinkèrindò nínú Igbó Elégbèje* and *Ìrèké Oníbùdó* shall constitute the focus of our discussion in this paper. Categorically, for the copious examples that showcase issues of change and progress and development in the tasks and experiences of the various leading and minor characters of the author's narratives, we are made to argue further that issues of progress, development and modernization are very germane to the author. In this paper, our main pre-occupation therefore is to demonstrate how Fágúnwà projects the three as its necessities of existence in any, but in particular, Yorùbá society.

Progress – in Yorùbá, the term simply communicates *Ìlọsíwájú* or *Ìtèsíwájú* which are, or could be used interchangeably as well as connoting same concept of movement. In essence, as intended in this presentation, progress is equivalent to moving forward or an onward movement towards a targeted destination. A typical saying goes: "the darkness did not stop my progress", by inference, darkness is anti-movement, while movement involves sight and light, clarity of thoughts, brightness of idea and advancement. Therefore, we shall employ this term as a concept that involve gradual or steady movement of a conceded ideology from the traditional form, to an upward level in content and contact of the current age of technology. Our reference to the term upward-lifting communicates increase and advancement which is seeing in the light of knowledge enrichment from lower level to a higher realm, and from a point in status to a higher level of human achievement to an added value status.

Development – *Ìdàgbàsókè* - as used in this paper connotes improvement or advancement from a level of low standard unto a higher level. The illustration of a growing child, while at a crawling stage, gradually graduating to a standing point without the support of any object or help from an experienced human personality to stand; comes to mind; as a further interpreting concept of development in this analysis. In the works of Turner and Hulme (1997) the scholars observe that some continents such as Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the South Pacific; since the world war with respect to their political, economic and social interactions in standard with other world are best described as being underdeveloped. This is probably because there was no account of advancement in some areas of life involvement as viewed by their assessors. The aforementioned countries were reported to continually lean on other developed or well-to-do countries in respect of their stature, economy and socio-cultural relevance in the globe. Several nomenclatures were given to the tagged underdeveloped countries because of the measures expected of them in congruent with other countries of the world, which they did not meet. In essence, labels such as under-developed, less-developed, developing, etc are such names that put a nation like Nigeria under check. While the Yorùbá people and the larger Nigeria as a country is often viewed as the supposed "Giant of Africa", from the point view of some critics; and as evident from the assessment of DOF, (D.O. Fágúnwà) that the society in which he writes for, seem not developing as expected for certain factors which are subject of discussion in this paper. Such name seems a de-merit to the expectations of the Country; especially when compared to other world that are not categorized as such. In essence, in context of our discussion, the term shall be critically employed.

The term **Modernity** within the context of our use in this paper refers to a model of a progressive transition. By transition, we simply mean changes that involve the pre-modern setting or better called, the traditional days towards a modern society. The perception of modernization in this assessment therefore, is to look at the need for reconstruction of certain ideology (ies) which affects individual, collective reasoning and or the entirety of a country with respect to the term. While assuming that with certain assistance, focus, a good push for required passion for leaving a step for a better status through, the labelled "underdeveloped countries" can be improved to having a new nomenclature as listed among "developed countries" of the world. Modernisation, therefore, is a concept that identifies the social variables which contribute to social progress and development of societies; thus, seeking to explain the process of social evolution as the author's work suggests. The popular Yorùbá saying thus:

Bí ọmọdẹ bá tó ní ọkọ, ká fún un lẹkọ...
 As a child grows toward owning a hoe,
 We are due to provide the tool for the child...

The above excerpt foregrounds the notion of making the right provision for a child when such need arises. While another says:

Bí a bá dàgbà, bí a kò bá ní nnkan àgbà, bí èwe làà rí....

When a growing elder lacks the mantle of old age / seniority,
such elder is in effect mistaken as a toddler...

Our reference to the two Yorùbá adages is to foreground the fact that modernization is not only about process of change, but it speaks to the responses evolving the changes, blending with the need of time and the relevance of development. This paper among other things would be concerned with examining the various angle(s) at which people within the society even in supposed modern age reacts to the notion of change(s) and the various advantages that can be brought into any society within the ideology. This position is exemplified in Fágúnwà's novels. The internal dynamics, while referring to social-cultural structures and the adaptation of new technologies is also of interest to this thesis. Some nations, including China, see modernization as a guide to rapid development. The Question then is, is Nigeria ready for the various search (es) inclusive in the concept of modernity/modernization? This paper looks in the direction, with a mind to applying the Yorùbá concepts of *Ìlọsíwájú* – upward-lifting, *Ìdàgbàsókè* – upward-escalation and *Òlájú* - modernization to justify DOF's great, genuine and good intention for his generation and the generation yet unborn.

Tripod of human existence: By this term, we simply intend to look at the various supports guarding and guiding the existence of human being with respect to life advancement. A tripod is that base support which holds any object that is mounted or resting on it. The existence of being is viewed from the perspective of an object which needs to stand firm or sit on a perfectly built tripod to achieve the best. However, the term is used symbolically in this paper from the point of view of a sound knowledge acquired within a cultured society, built on a solid rock, called exposure into the culture of the society. A cultured personality is expected to know certain basic rules within his/her constituency to survive. This is sometimes referring to, as having a sound cultural grasp which is like a pillar, a tripod to rest on, for survival when challenges emerge. In essence, knowing the rules and regulation for keeping the sanity of mankind and that of the society is agreeably sometimes, if not most of the times, helpful in solving problems that may hinder progress or development of mankind. Hence, the tripod on which an active camera sits to pick and documents events for a better life in documentation process is likened to that knowledge of the environment, which serves as the base for any human being to behave very well within any given society that one finds him/her (self). It is assumed that, to emerge as the best personality, for the purpose of upward-escalation and upward-lifting of self, for collective people or for the entirety of a nation, there is an expected level of help, guard or assistance required. We shall explore some of the suggestions of DOF in his vision for growth and development amidst challenges.

Literarily, *Òpó* in Yorùbá means pillar as in English language equivalent. The pillar that upholds the continuation of being is sound health. Living a successful life should be progressive, which is seen in this presentation as sustenance, hence called *ìgbé-ayé-ró*. Therefore, *Òpó Ìgbé-ayé-ró* is likened to a tripod which is also illustrated as the traditional three legged stones that stands as stove-support for cooking, called *Ààrò mēta*. A three legged stone-based is often used to sustain pots in Yorùbá setting while cooking before the advent of cooking gas, etc. Therefore, the maxim, "*Ààrò mēta kì í dà oḃè nù, (literarily - three stones – tripod never throws a soup-pot away)*" informs a symbolic tripod of support which the (three stones) supports for life stands. It is in this same way we consider that the basic tripods required of a human being to maintain his/her existence, are residual in the concept of progress, development and modernization which Fágúnwà's teachings highlights in his narratives. In essence, *Ìlọsíwájú*, *Ìdàgbàsókè* and *Òlájú* - communicate the concept of essentiality, importance, indispensability - as discussed by DOF in his novels. In addition, it is taken that the various proverbials of the Yorùbá within the rules of their culture are ideological and serves as propellants to good life, survival, and greatness if consciously and adequately applied to life. We shall explore more of the sayings to substantiate some of our views

Literature Review

Without overstressing the fact, works of DOF have engaged the academic circle and other social discussants on social, electronic and print media in the past ages till now. To Bámgbósé (2007), Fágúnwà is a moralist, as Bámgbósé (2007) opines that the issue of moral insolvency of leaders in Africans affects the youths' behaviour in modern age; and thus, he advocates for the revival of morality and decency in appreciating their attention. For instance, Oyèbámíjí's (2016) position is that, the teachings of Fágúnwà with respect to the

relationship, believe about the dead and death is an antidote to improving human behaviour on earth, as a fall back from the teachings and revelations of the creative writer. While several other scholars' works reveal Fágúnwà as a promoter of one man, one wife, giving promotion to western form of marriage. Other scholars see Fágúnwà as advocator of the western religion (Adékòyà, 2011). Others, among Olúpòná (2013), and Fáléyè (2016, 2018) are of the view that Fágúnwà is a social commentator, and a culture promoter who relays, pass commentary on contemporary status of his society; as well as warning against the ills of the future for the growth of his society. In agreement with earlier scholars' views, therefore, three of his novels shall form the bulk of our examples to justify the thrust of this paper, to indexicate him as a visionary author, a teacher, who engages in passing his message across to the world. In the same line, we see DOF as that cultured, moralist, who preaches modesty and demands for a blending of ideology with time and tide, with respect to progress, development and modernization as being best with its various advantages attached.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural semiotics is a branch of comparative anthropology and semiotics theory which seeks to define the heuristic concept of culture in operational or scientific terms. Adéyemí (2006) infers that the exponent of the cultural theory points this fact out:

the major pre-occupation of any literary work is to protect and preserve custom and culture of particular group or set of people - Adéyemí (2006).

While dynamism is inevitable for growth, the base which is the value within the culture must be maintained or functionally sustained. The various quests, search and discoveries of the human, main characters of Fágúnwà i.e Àkàrà-Oògùn, Ìrìnkèrindò, Ìrèké-Onibùdó and other sub-characters in the novels confirms that life is full of challenges, troubles and these troubles can be adventurous, depending on the nature of human quests and involvement; all geared towards a progressive attainment. We see through the eyes of semioticians that the names of characters, towns, and other mentions in the artistry of DOF are full of symbolism. So also, are the story and the quest for *Èso irònú* (fruits of thoughts) for instance.

In tandem with Fágúnwà's view as presented in his works, a popular Yorùbá saying that readily comes to mind to substantiates his view is from an Ìjálá hunter, who attests to this constant and unavoidable challenges of mankind as part and parcel of their creation, especially when in need to move from a level to another. The saying expresses that whoever seeks or required promotion or advancement, may experience problems. This is best captured in the saying thus:

*A bí sọsọ mó ètán ni,
 A bí epo mó ẹyin,
 Bìbí la bí ìṣòro mó ẹdà èniyàn...*

*Sọsọ was born inseparably made from ètán,
 The palm-oil was made an inseparably a product of the palm-kernel,
 Human beings are born inseparably with challenges...*

The three exemplified items: *sọsọ*, *epo* and *ìṣòro* as found in lines 1 to 3 in the excerpt above, are symbols of closeness, affinity to each other, and known elements attached by distinction to be inseparable with the opposite items; as having common attributes. The uses of these three items are considered symbolic in the context of its uses. It is an enlightening hint and signifier therefore, that certain things are bound to happen in life. Bearing it in mind that human being who yearns for success in life is bound to face basic challenges as well.

Imperatively therefore, it is instructive that, for one to advance from a step to another, challenges of all kinds abound to surface. The attitude put up in solving the emerging challenges however matters. One would not because there are challenges run away from moving forward in life. In the process of searching for ways out of whatever challenges one finds oneself, it must be borne in mind that through determination to pursue success, solutions to such challenges should be sourced for, by not compromising for retardation. This is why there is sense in the saying, "challenges exist because there is breakthrough". By the pedigree of the Yorùbá people, their behaviour is guided by certain adages which exist as part of their culture. These proverbs are mostly valued as they caution people's behaviour and steps taken on certain behaviour. We shall explore more of these sayings

to bring home some of our points as discussed in the views of Fágúnwà. The question is why do most creatures of the world search for development?

D. O. Fágúnwà on Progress, Development and Modernization

Without mincing words, Fágúnwà's narratives show him as a man who is committed to searching for knowledge through adventure. DOF shows that he loves progress; he preaches development and beliefs in modernization. This is evident in the search for basic seeds of improvement, of development by most of the characters he created in his narratives. We consider that one of Fágúnwà's visions is achieved through the added value of translation, done to his first publication by Wólé Sáyíńká. In spite of the fact that the piece was originally written in Yorùbá language, which ordinarily limits his readers to people who could read and digest Yorùbá language, the frantic efforts taken by Wólé Sáyíńká at translating what arguably is Fagunwa's best known work - *Ògbójú Qdẹ̀ nínú Igbó Irínmọ̀lẹ̀* into *Thousands of the Forest Daemons* – eventually increased the circulation outlet and therefore audiences. In a way, this is a step towards development, the promotion of Yorùbá authors, and narratives beyond their immediate readers; which language barrier would have naturally caused.

With particular reference to the themes already discussed as dominating the works of DOF's creative writings, we also buttress the fact that the author's narratives in the three novels under focus, discuss issues connected to basic life experiences and exposures in the modern world. In our view, his intention is meant to correct certain notions connected to traditional ways of life, on one side, and to satirize or correct the societal ills on another. The knowledge shared is also meant to reform any ideology that is not totally useful, or that can be changed for the best within the Yorùbá and other cultures of the world. In addition, our study shows that he shares certain useful values as contained in the Yorùbá culture and these are placed on the issues of progress, development and modernization - *Ìlọ̀síwájú*, *Ìdàgbàsókè* and *Òlájú*. Through the narratives, Fágúnwà foregrounds the need to project the concept of progress, development and modernization beyond just the limited notion as contained in the outlook of some people, who may not have the privilege of experiencing what the author got exposed to in the western world. Hence, he perfectly teaches the concepts of this tripod - *Ìlọ̀síwájú*, *Ìdàgbàsókè* and *Òlájú* as a necessity of life; a tripod on which human existence rests. We shall begin to explore the areas of his teachings in this respect.

Progress, Development and Inevitability of Challenges

Experience of life shows that at the instance of an expected growth which is denied or hindered by any factor, the personality or communities concerned are full of thoughts as a reflex of the challenges they face. This is the situation of the community of reference in some of Fágúnwà's novels. The case of *Ìlú Èrò Èyìn* (the backward town), *Ìlú Àlupàydà* (the unchangeable town) and several other towns that were retarded in growth as a result, their king could not march the status of others around them. This informs the search for solution to getting out of the problems connected to their growth and development as expected. The experience of the brave men in *Ògbójú Qdẹ̀* (1949) and the conglomeration of the type of people with varied parentage or link with human and animal is a typical example of DOF's encouragement of his readers. The main character says:

Báyi ni a jẹ onírúurú èniyàn tí a n lọ sí irin àjò ńlá yí, nígbà tí gbogbo wa sì dúró tan, tí a to lọ lẹ́sẹ́sẹ́, ọba gbà wá ní iyànjú...
Ògbójú Qdẹ̀... (1949:56).

This is how we assembled, different types of people embarking on this great journey. When all of us assembled and lined up, the king then advised us.

Ògbójú Qdẹ̀... (1949:56)

The expression: *onírúurú èniyàn tí a n lọ sí irin àjò ńlá yí*... is an indication that different kinds of people with different traits parentage, attributes and of personal challenges, essences, and vision for life, are the chosen ones for the mission for search for improvement and development for the nation. As they are of varied background, their shared mission was a search for particular solution, and which is towards development of their city. This indeed, is a great mission. In essence, as such individual or collective persons face several difficulties in life, with respect to issues of advancement or any form of progress; they are always finding lasting solution to their issues. The account of DOF's narrations shows this fact.

The steps taken by the two kings in *Ògbójú Qdẹ̀*... and *Igbó Olódumàrè*... summoning the brave hunters to undertake an expedition to *Òkè Lángbódó* and *Òkè Ìrònú* respectively, in search of *èso ogbón* – (seed of wisdom) and *èso irònú* (seed of thoughts) again respectively are steps towards upward-lifting. The hunters are

sent in search of what can bring progress to their respective communities. The first step is agreeing that there is a challenge which needs a solution. It is in this regard that the community also agrees that there are obstacles hindering development. The other step is their acceptance that the challenges lie in their not searching for the seeds which have just been identified lurking somewhere in the sacred forest of *Òkè Lángbòdò* and *Òkè Irònú*. The other step is their agreeing with the king who initiated the idea to sourcing for capable men that can join the identified hunter on the expedition. For the king and the famous hunters to have agreed to move out of their supposed comfort zones, to get the needed items for the purpose of improving their community, it is considered a progressive step which is inevitably required by mankind. In essence, the knowledge enshrined in Fágúnwà's narrative here, is symbolic in the sense that, it points out steps considered important to achieving progress and development. First, is identifying and agreeing to finding solution to any form of retardation. The sense is that tackling problems connected to life and living involves self-determination. The Yorùbá have a saying to the effect that, "*Àjèjé ọwọ kan kò gbérù dórí...*" (a single-hand cannot be functional in moving a load up the head) The saying is particularly instructive here.

Also, the different difficulties, challenges and dangers which the team encounters on the way, including having to defeat *Wèrè Ọrun*, *Ọjòlá Ibinú*, and the fight to destroy *Àgbàkò* and the rigours of searching for safety at *Elégbàrá's* den, among several others; while on the journey is another parable which Fágúnwà sends to his readers. The importance of endurance, perseverance and determination which are basic part of the symbolic message are well-articulated in the parable of the journey which is simply up-ward lifting in context. These three to us, are the wheels that drive the zeal of the characters in getting to the end of the success attained. In great importance are the examples of *Ìrínkèrindò* in finally getting married to *Ìfèpàtáki* in *Ìrínkèrindò* and *Ìrèké Oníbùdò* who does everything to get hooked to *Ìfèpàdè* in *Ìrèké Oníbùdò*.

Determination is an important question which Fágúnwà often stresses in his novels. The virtue is often projected in the main characters. It is seen demonstrated in *Àkàrà-Oògùn*, *Kàkó*, *Èfòyè*, *Ìmòdòye*, *Olóhùn-iyò* of *Ọgbójú Ọdẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmolè* and in *Ìrínkèrindò* in *Ìrínkèrindò nínú Igbó Elégbèje*. In our view, determination remains an important ingredient needed in the course of prosecuting a project. It is one thing to accept to take up the challenge put forward by the king to the intrepid hunters, but it is another matter entirely for the hunters to be able to pursue the course to a logical conclusion. Fágúnwà makes it clear that it is normal to encounter difficulties while pursuing a search. The step to solving problems of development could however be individual with the right skills and or collective as exemplified in the three novels. Fágúnwà projects determination as a very important factor in any quest for development.

Agreeably the brave characters (hunters) in *Ọgbójú Ọdẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmolè* and *Ìrèké Oníbùdò* are willing to embark on the search for the required sacred seeds to improve the lots of their community, but more problems and challenges await them in the course of finding solution to ameliorate the problems identified. Even as they set out on the journey and encounter challenges, they all encourage themselves and remained determined throughout the course of the journey. This is a signal that problems are parts and parcel of mankind. Hence, the relevance and application of the popular Yorùbá statement as earlier cited: "*a bí ịsòro mọ ẹdà ẹniyàn ni*", and that such problems are issues to be confronted as they feature in human lives and endeavours. At times, one could run into another problem in the process of solving one but in spite of this, a quester still has to remain resolute. Since the dilemma of getting the plant in their mission plucked with the various challenges surrounding the going into the location for their advancement required collective efforts, what that indexicates is simply enumerated in the Yorùbá adage that says, "*Àgbàrà ọjò kò lóhun kò nílẹ wó, onilé ni kò ní gbà fún un*" – the flood is battle-ready to bring down a house but it is the owners of the house that has the responsibility of putting a check to it. The lesson is that whenever there is problem, human beings should be determined, and ever-ready to confront it. Success awaits only the determined minds. This is the case of the entire preaching of Fágúnwà's narrative from the beginning of *Ọgbójú Ọdẹ ...* and *Ìrínkèrindò...* right till the end of the novels.

Our observation is that hindrances to development as projected in Fagunwa's novels are multifarious. They are however classified into two broad groups in this essay. Sometimes, individual or collective factors are results of hindrances just as they can simultaneously be sources of solution. These could be as a result of headiness, carelessness or over-zealousness. A typical example of individual factor is that of *Kàkó*, whose act of killing his newly wedded bride - *Pamín-n-kú*, on his journey to mount *Lángbòdò* - an index of troubles for others - caused the rest of the group untold crises. The short hindrance experienced by the rest of the characters before they offered sacrifice to appease the spirit of *Pamín-n-kú* is an example of several people paying for one person's sin. On the other hand, it could be said that *Kàkó* couldn't be totally blamed for what he does to *Pamín-n-kú*. As somebody determined to embark on a journey in the service of his land, what *Pamín-n-kú* tries to do has become a kind of hindrance. *Kàkó* believes he has to find a way to remove the obstacle on his way, and he does it in the only way he understands. This certainly represents the reason for his brutal act of cutting his wife into two with his matchet.

In *Ọgbójú Ọdẹ...* Fágúnwà presents *Àkàrà Oògùn* as a typical example of an individual who yearns for progress and development, and who thus has to tackle the different challenges impeding his upward lifting. His

parental and traditional, background gave him two issues. One is positive and the other negative. He has the opportunity of making use of his traditional and cultural exposure in the village to address issues which are relevant to such challenges. However, he assists himself by being a determined personality, tackling his numerous challenges by employing solutions proffered within his culture. The characters as created by the author are able to bring to reality in action as he narrates their different personal links with human, animals and the fauna, apart from their collective experiences on the great mission. In the cause of searching and finding solutions to their various challenges, they continue to engage in orders. Some of the causes of their personal behavioural actions, lack of skill or and retardations of the co-hunters are brought to the fore as lessons, which Fágúnwà concerns himself with.

To demonstrate that human progress or societal development is framed by several factors, the account of other challenges as encountered by the characters on the great mission in both *Ògbójú Ode...* and *Irinkèrindò ... with Egbère*, the *Àgbákò* experience, the encounter at *Ìlú àwọn ẹyẹ (the land of the birds)*, the fight with *Wèrè Òrun*; the various challenges and solutions sourced for as narrated in the encounters of *Irinkèrindò* and his colleagues on their way to *Òkè Ìrònú (mountain of thoughts)*, shows that collective wisdom can also solve individual problems or challenges in the cause of upward-lifting. Hence, DOF calls for proper consultation when expedient. The various wisdom and skills so applied by the characters at combating the problems on their journey are indexes of collectivism being preached by Fágúnwà as a viable methodology for solving procrastination, retardation, stagnation; which are signifiers of negative tripod and that may pose hindering upward-lifting called *Ìlòsìwájú*. This in our view is enshrined in Fágúnwà's characters and generally in the narratives showcasing that the society which is the domain of his creativity lives in the past, yet not conforming to global trends requirements for actual development.

In *Irinkèrindò*, a quick remembrance of the *Èlégbára*'s emergence on their way which caused disorder among the brave hunters, along with other kinds of rancor as experiences of *Irinkèrindò* at the ocean called *Odò-Ìrántí* (Ocean of Remembrance) before *Ìfẹpàtàkì* came to his defense and support is also relevant here. The signifier of that act as articulated by *Ìfẹpàtàkì* is a lesson to the world that what looks so big and insurmountable as some individual problems are sometimes placed so little in the hands of others that are endowed with other hidden strengths; depending on environment, knowledge acquired and gift from the supreme being, who in other words, have not given evenly to each and every creature. Bearing in mind that things do not happen just for the sake of it, but rather for a purpose. Such is the shocking instance of an incident which occurs in the middle of the night in *Irinkèrindò nínú Ìgbó Elégbèje*. The narrator is awake, ruminating on a number of things when a voice suddenly interjects, saying:

...Bèè ni, má se jé kí eléyíi yà ó lẹnu, iwo orẹ mi ojú fẹrèsé, bí nkan kò bá rí bèè olúkúlùkù èdà aláàyè íbá wà ní itélórùn, nwon íbá dúró sí ojú kan bí adágún omi, ní ojú tí enikan bá tí wí pé ibi tí òun dé ní inú aiyé yíi tí tó, igbádùn oluwàrè tí de òpin, eni tí ó wà ní òde aiyé tí kò múra ilosíwájú dàbí òkú láàrin aláàyè, bí aiyé bá kún fún ayò, omo ènià kò ní mo ipò tí tálákà wà, bí aiyé bá kún fún iségún, omo ènià kò ní mo bí a tí n yò nígbà tí a bá borí isòro. Nítorí nàà, iwo òrẹ mi ojú fẹrèsé, tí inú Elédáá ye elédáá kí o tó dá ènià bí ó tí dá a...

Ìrìnkèrindò... (1954: 2)

...so it is, do not allow this instance to surprise you, my dear friend on the window, if things do not happen in that manner, several people on earth would have been contented such that they are stagnant like the pond water. Once anyone says, he is satisfied at his position, then, the enjoyment of such person has come to the end. Anyone who is on this earth and such is not aggressive about forward-lifting; such a person is already a living-dead among the living. If the world is full with happiness, no human being will appreciate what poverty is all about. Should the world be filled with victory, no human being will know how to overcome challenges of life, and they will not know how to rejoice when they eventually conquer the problem. Therefore, my friend on the window, God is quite apt about what He has done, when he created man the way they are ...

Ìrìnkèrindò... (1954: 2)

The above excerpt attests to the injunction that human beings should always be conscious of his/her environment. Also, it is evident that people who are conscious of searching for reasons to issues or occurrences may, and would readily find solution(s) if they seek for it. In addition to the intention of the statement above, by the author, is to convey to the readers, that human beings are always not contented for the purpose of yearning for progress. No wonder that most achievers of the developed world are not comfortable with stagnation. They prefer to have new happenings reported about them. Each person is with a mind that always seek for improvement, and improvement leads to development. DOF makes this point again and again in his works.

Inevitability and Attainment of Progress for Development

Fágúnwà states that human beings need to always seek for solution to their various problems, and points out doing so, confers a lot of advantages. Let us examine the authors' recommendations further.

Exposure: In the Yorùbá worldview, *Ìriri* (experience) signifies exposure. *Ìriri* is very important for growth and knowledge as it is enshrined in the saying: "*Ìriri se àgbà ogbón*". DOF opines in his novels that, the more exposed a person is, the better he becomes. Exposure makes it possible for a person to develop a large heart and reason better. And when a person reasons well, he is able to achieve a lot more, at least when compared with someone who stays put in the same environment in which he/she was born. The following are the words of Irinkerindò's father, as he admonishes his son:

Omo mi, Irinkerindò, mo fe so fún o lóni pe kò sí eni naa nínú ayé tí o feran omo re ju bi mo ti feran re lo. Idi tí n ko si ti i fẹ́ kí o ba àwon egbé re lo si Oke Lángbòdó yii pin si onà méjì: Lónà kini, oran aburo re yii wa lókàn mi, nko fe ki omo naa lo se bayii so ori ara re nù sí ilú onílúú, lónà kejì, **mo fe kí oju iwo paapaa tubo là sí i: nitorí eni ti ó n gbé aba oko, ogbon abà oko nikan ni yíò ní; eni tí ó n gbé iletò, ogbón iletò ni yíò ní, sùgbón eni ti ó bá n làkàkà láti de ibi púpò ní ilé aye yí, oju olúwarè yíò là ju ti òpòlopò lo...** *Ìrinkèrindò...* (1954: 2)

My son Irinkerindò, I want to inform you today that there is no one on this earth who loves his child as much as I personally love you. The reason why I didn't want you to follow your mates to mount Lángbòdó are in two folds: first is that the case of your younger brother is so important to my heart such that I do not want him to lose his life or get stocked into a strange land; on the second note, I want you personally to have move exposure: because, anyone living in the village would only be restricted in knowledge to that environment, anyone living in a small setting cannot have similar wisdom as that person who lives in a bigger setting; but anyone who sojourns and struggles to reach several places in life, would have several experiences of life, by being exposed to many great things in life... *Ìrinkèrindò...* (1954: 2)

The statement "*mo fẹ́ kí oju iwo paápàà tubò là sí i...* simply means that the father wants his son to be well exposed. It speaks to modernity. The need to break out of a cocoon, and venture out, search for challenges and exploits, as well as take risks. Also, Fágúnwà dwells on the advantage(s) that lie in getting exposed to city life when he says:

...Kò sí bi a ó ti se ti Ifá kí ó má hùwà èkùró, ko si bi a ti le se eni ti **o n kaakiri ehin odi, ki ogbon re ma ta yo ti eni ti ko kuro loju kan lo. Mo dá sásá àgbè, òbùn ara ilu ni.**

Ìrinkèrindò ... (1954: 2)

...there is no way Ifá would not portray the index of palm-kernel, there is no way one would equate the experiences of someone who moves about, beyond his society that his/her exposure would not outshine that of a person who is static or permanent on a spot. The intellect of a farmer is filth to a city personality.

Ìrinkèrindò ... (1954: 2)

The nomenclature: *abà oko* - signifies a small hut within a farmland, while *iletò* indicates a small settlement and *ibi púpò* - simply refers to a large community. The difference as instinctive in Yorùbá naming and descriptive form is also true of the concept of growth and improvement. For *Ìrinkèrindò*'s father to educate him on the need for him to move away at that point in time, demarcating the three places as enumerated above, informs that Fágúnwà specifically used the naming as contained in Yorùbá culture to show that the features of the three locations are not and cannot be same in size, in happenings, in challenges and in achievement. Therefore, the mention of these places indexicates distinct exposures that people can acquire, giving reasons for expansion and why yearning for greater development is inevitable for human beings. Beyond the lower level, surely, movement to expand in scope for better reasoning as the author emphasises becomes a necessity. This is the metaphor and symbolism contained in *Èso Ìrónú* (seed of thoughts) that the brave men led by *Ìrinkèrindò* goes in search of. The more they travelled on their expedition, the more exposed they are in thoughts, in perspectives towards changing their old order. This is equally likened to life, a well-travelled individual seem to have more

knowledge and exposure in context than an individual who is restricted by seating in a remote location without exposure to what goes on the social media or any ict-based knowledge in the modern age.

Also, the pointers to places of various experiences of bitterness or joy for the brave men such as accounted for in *Ìlú àwọn Èyẹ* (the cities of the birds), *Ìlú àwọn Àrògidigbà* (the towns of the fishes), in *Ògbójú Odẹ...* and at *Èdidàrẹ's* town, or as seen in *Òmùgòdiran* and *Òmùgòdimẹta's* attitude to life, or where the characters enjoyed themselves in the course of their expedition, – at *Odò Írántí* (Ocean of Remembrance), at *Ìfẹpàtáki's* house and *Ìrinkerindó's* wedding, or at *Ìrèké's* wedding with *Ìfẹpàdẹ* in *Ìrèké Onibùdó* – are all confirmation that deep thoughts, reflections with respect to people around, and environment that one lives, often have impact on development and growth of either individual or a collective people in life. This is one of the very germane lessons contained in DOF's artistry.

As the saying goes, “*afògbón-ològbón sògbón kù tẹ*”, the Yorùbá principle of learning from the past before the modern form is enshrined in the various narrations of DOF. In the same manner, DOF employs the use of exposure of an elderly man – a supposed strange friend, whose name is *Ìrinkerindó*, the one who lives in the house of *Alárinkiri* – a wonderer or sojourner- in this novel, *Ìrinkerindó* educates the masses on various issues of his past and present experiences of village life when he says:

... E kú àtíjọ o, e je ki a jo se asaro bi meji tabi méta, mo ni nkan kan lati so fun yin, nitori mo ranti loni, bi eni pe àná ni nkan naa sele ni, mo ranti aiye atijo nigba ti n ko ju kekere lo, ti mo maa n ba baba mi lo si oko wa lohun, ni oke egán wa, nitori lati igba ti mo ti wa ni kekere ni baba mi ti si mi si ile iwe, sugbon nigba ti a ba gba isini ni ile iwe, emi a gba oko wa lo, akoko yii se pataki pupo ni igbe aiye mi, akoko igbadun patapata gbaa ni. Itan ti n g o so fun yin loni je itan nipa okunrin kan ti mo ba pade nigba naa; akoko didun ni oko wa, nigba ti a ba ko agbado tutu lu ina, ti a n fi ehin ho agbado tutu je, bi a ba je agbado tutu ni osan, a maa je iyan lale, iyan titobi ori ewe ogede, ti o maa n se inu wa bi apo ekuro, mo si tun ranti daadaa pelu pe takute wa a maa pa eran, awa a maa se alabaapade igbin, olu a si maa hu kaakiri ninu oko wa. *Ìrèké Onibùdó* (1949: 1)

... Quite an age! Please come together for us to deliberate on two or three issues. I have few issues to discuss with you all, for, I remember today, it is just as if it happened yesterday. I remember the olden days when I was very young, when I used to accompany my father to his farm, I was although very young since my father registered me in school, but whenever we are on holidays, I often go to the farm. This was a very crucial time to my life. The farm period was a very good season to me. The story I am going to narrate today is about a man that I met then; our farm time was very interesting, when we were used to eating fresh corn, roasted corn, and eating the fresh uncooked corn-cub with our teeth, after eating corn in the noon, we eat pounded-yam at night. Heavy pounded-yam on the banana leaf, that will make our stomach look so heavy like the sack of palm-kernel. I also remember very vividly well, that we were used to hunting game such as meat, search for snail, as mushroom grows all about in our farmland. *Ìrèké Onibùdó...* (1949: 1)

As evident in the above, there are certain linguistic features, DOF has employed. We are of the view that the author deliberately selects his words, to express his experiences of the past, as a cultured individual who now intends situating the knowledge within the modern age, and to achieve his aim; i.e. to teach the need for changes to conform to modernity. Whereas, the style he employs is in the mode of Yorùbá orature. These words - *nígbà tí, lójọ tí, nígbà tí iṣẹ̀lẹ̀ náà ṣẹ̀lẹ̀*, etc- (meaning: on the day it happened, when it occurred, about the time the event occurred), are references to the traditional oratorical mode, which often authenticates the history of the past, making references to issues of account for the listeners to learn from.

Hence, the saying, “*bí ọmọdẹ bá ṣubú, a wo iwájú, bí àgbà bá ṣubú, á á wo èyìn...*” which can literally be translated as, history is the best teacher- One can say that, DOF peeps into the past, to remind his readers of how things were, as a fall back to the use of history in schools, and how things were done which everyone in search of real development cannot forgo, but must learn from to advance. But consequent upon what the author has become accustomed to in the modern age, he advocates that there is the need for progressive transformation, which is not a total move away from the past, but a useful and systemic movement away from the old way of doing things for an improved situation of the nation and individuals. Neatness, sanitation, book reading, documentation among others is preached and encouraged by DOF as a healthy way of life for whoever is in search of the tripod of existence.

The example of reformation and serenity that the group of men on expedition to *Òkè Ìrònú* (mountain of thoughts) in search of *Èso Ìrònú* (seed of thoughts) put in the town of *Èdìdàrẹ* before leaving the town is simply a call for support of the western world and ideology by DOF.

In order to achieve a successful move of collectivism at the search for development of any community or a country like Nigeria and other countries tagged as under-developed, borrowing a leave from the various narratives of DOF, it is evident that there is the need for global partnership to reduce poverty, need for collaboration in research and findings, finding solutions to various elements of retardation, which are products of family background and inexperience or lack of exposure into other culture or world in general.

Conclusion

This paper investigates the different ways in which Daniel Olorunfemi Fágúnwà, otherwise referred to as DOF engages with the concepts of progress, development and modernization in his works. We have pointed out that he employs the use of cultural elements, exposure to his environment cum western world to educate his readers in this respect. Additionally in this paper, we highlight how Fágúnwà as a novelist, a visionary writer and a teacher advocate for sound education as antidote to poverty elimination, and relevance for human development. The issues of education and its relevance to both human beings and the society are extensively brought to the fore in the three novels explored in the paper. While this paper expatiates on various causes of human and societal challenges with respect to individual and collective factors, we have also pointed out that problems of retardation, are surmountable if the teachings of DOF are properly applied to life. As evidently positioned in DOF's view, we have also stated that modernity should not be seen as post-traditional devoid of progress, or merely see culture and tradition as showcasing only issues of the past without reference to contemporary legitimacy.

On a final note, whatever forms of modernization a society would apply to the existing culture, steps that would consider the well-being of others within the same environment as exemplified in DOF's creative works should be first. Exposure and experiences of life should always be applied but more in a positive way to assisting others for co-existence required for development. We have equally suggested that the self, in individual should be down-toned, individual should be encouraged to imbibe the spirit of collectivism and selflessness for the growth of the nation.

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