

Ecocritical Consciousness in Selected Ifá Corpus

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Abstract

Ifá corpus is a collection of aphorisms, poems and riddles orally transmitted from one generation to another. It is an embodiment of the Yorùbá people's belief, ideology and philosophy. As a result, it has been explored by scholars and critics. The existing works on Ifá centre on its origin, persona, thematic preoccupation, its role in conflict resolutions and/or guidance and counselling, stylistic analysis of the corpus, and several other areas. Despite the extensive critical works, little attention has been paid to the ecocritical consciousness in Ifá corpus. This work fills the vacuum. It employs ecocriticism by Cheryll Glotfelty and Laurence Buell as its theoretical framework. The theory is chosen because it foregrounds the relationship between literature and the physical environment, as well as the spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis. Data for this study are drawn from some relevant verses of Ifá textual materials and content analyzed in order to make replicable and valid inferences through interpretation and coding of the said textual materials. Ifá corpus is used in explaining the nature of man and his environment. The references drawn to both flora and fauna and other objects make man understand and get more familiar with his ecosystem better as his act makes or mars him. As a result, there are many cases of anthropomorphism since nature is treated as human beings in Ifá corpus. This study, beyond Bascom and Abimbola, enroots that the ecocritical consciousness in Ifá corpus and other related genres such as folktales and myths therefore establish a mutually interactive relationship between man and nature.

Keywords: *Ifá corpus, ecocriticism, anthropomorphism, myth, folktale*

Introduction

Èṣẹ-Ifá, as a result of its uniqueness, purposiveness and peculiarity, has received close attention and discussed by several critics. This is also mentioned by Chirila (2014:116) who explains that “on account of its popularity in the diaspora, particularly in Cuba and Brazil, as well as in the United States, the Yorùbá spiritual tradition and pantheon attracts a good deal of attention.” As a result, it is no fallacy to assert that *èṣẹ-Ifá* is the most popular and studied, of the examples of Yorùbá poetry home and abroad. Scholars and/or critics who have explored and written on *èṣẹ-Ifá* myths therefore include Bascom (1969), Abimbólá (1975,2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2016), Longe (1983), Euba (1990), Gbadamosi (1997), Olúnládé (1999), Opeola (2001a, 2001b), Salami (2002), Èlèbùibon (2004, 2008), Okunmakinde (2006), Fáshínà (2009), Adégbindin (2014), Ọdégbolá (2014), Adépòjù (2015), and many more.

It suffices to mention that these scholars and writers have written extensively on the origin of Ifá, his persona, thematic preoccupation and stylistic analysis of the corpus, his role in conflict resolution and/or guidance and counselling and several other areas. *Èṣẹ-ifá* (Ifá verse) is rooted in *odù*,¹ which can also be likened to the sacred books, the bible and quran. *Odù*, as Eze (1998:171) expounds, is “a collection of thousands of aphorisms, poems, and riddles passed on from generation to generation of *abaláwo*. These *odù* were believed to be divinities who also came from heaven. *Odù* is obtained either by throwing the palm nuts or by casting divine chain (McClelland, 1982:46; Adégbindin, 2014:59). Ifá corpus are embodiments of thoughts, beliefs and philosophy of the Yorùbá people, hence, they represent the traditional Yorùbá worldview. They form one of the repertoires of history, medicine, myth, legends, etc.

Elẹbuibon (2004:vii) succinctly points out that *ẹṣẹ-ifá* is “the repository of all information concerning the language, culture and belief system of the Yorùbá as a people . . . hence, the scope of Ifá literary corpus is so encompassing that it entails details about all the sociological peculiarities of the Yorùbá people.” They contain answers to the request of a client and are carefully rendered by a priest well-versed in the art form. They are categorized into *odù* and there are 256 *odù*. These *odù* are also subclassified into two; the major *odù* (16) and derivative *odù* (240). Each of these corpus has hundreds of verses (short and long) referred to as the corpus and they have a structural sequence (Abimbola, 2015:26). Its contents are therefore based on the interactions of the components of the ecosystem. The ecosystem permeates Ifá corpus. It shows the indigenous African view of his environment. Abimbola (2015:30) explicates that “there are many poems focusing attention on hills, rivers, wild and domestic animals, birds, insects, etc.” All these components of the ecosystem are anthropomorphised in Ifá to achieve the desired goal without inhibitions.

Ecocriticism Theory

The emergence of ecocriticism precedes the existence of ecological challenges. Childs and Fowler (2006:78) mention that the evolution of ecocriticism occurred in the second half of the 20th century. Ecocriticism investigates the relationship between literature and nature on man’s environment, (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996; Garrard, 2004; Buell, 2005; Borlik, 2011). Childs and Fowler (2006:68) see ecocriticism as the study of literary texts with reference to the interaction between human activity and the vast range of natural or nonhuman phenomena which bears upon human experience encompassing (amongst many things) issues concerning fauna, flora, landscape, environment and weather. In this, man’s attitude towards the natural environment is usually foregrounded as seen in the works of many environmentally-oriented writers as William Wordsworth, Niyi Osundare, John Keats, Tanure Ojaide, Samuel

1 See http://www.unesco.org/culture/intangible-heritage/29afr_uk.htm

Taylor Coleridge, Odia Ofeimun, Ken Saro-Wiwa. Ecocriticism is essential to this paper as it intimates man with his physical environment, thereby familiarizing him with his eco-system. The Ifá verses talks about flora, fauna, hills and landscape. These are presented in anthropomorphism to accentuate man's active involvement with his physical environment.

Ecocritical Consciousness in Selected Ifá Corpus

Priests draw inferences from the ecosystem. Since there is fluidity in oral literature, the priests draw from the life, culture, religion, ideology or beliefs, philosophies, and the experiences of the society through a careful interaction with the components of the ecosystem. Inherent in the corpus are therefore the ecocritical consciousness of fauna, flora and man. Since man is the end-product of the Ifá literary corpus. This paper focuses more on ecocritical consciousness of fauna and flora, thereby looking beyond the surface of the corpus as mere mention of animals and metaphors for human life and experiences.

Fauna

Fauna is given prominence in Ifá corpus. Aside from using them metaphorically to make comments on humans through anthropomorphism, their physical features and natural habitat are also mentioned, to draw attention to them. An Ifá verse draws attention to some animals and their relations. It says:

*Mà mú tà,
 Mbá mú relé lẹ sòbìnrin.
 Ọ̀ràn bí òyí bí òyí.
 A díá fún Itú,
 Ọ̀kọ ewúré.
 Ọ̀ràn bí òyí bí òyí.
 A díá fún àgbo,
 Ọ̀kọ ilagùtàn.
 Ọ̀ràn bí òyí bí òyí,
 A díá fún àparòyèyè,
 Ọ̀mọ Olúoko.
 Ọ̀ràn bí òyí bí òyí,
 A díá fún akérépónju.
 Ọ̀mọ agẹmọ bá wọ̀n lóhun gbogbo lóhungbogbo . . . (Abimbola, 2015:94)*

[I would have sold many into slavery,
 And I would have taken some home as wives.
 Matters that seem always unstable.
 Ifá divination was performed for he-goat,
 The husband of goats.
 Matters that seem always unstable.
 Ifá divination was performed for ram,
 The husband of all sheep.
 Matters that seem always unstable.

Ifá divination was performed for featherless bush fowl,
Offspring of the king of farmland.
Matters that seem always unstable.
Ifá divination was performed for Akereponju,

The son of chameleon who always shares out everything . . .] (Abimbola, 2015:95)
In Ifá corpus, each rendition has the name[s] of the person or people who went for divination. The subject or client can therefore be human, flora, fauna or other objects. The myth draws our attention to different examples of fauna as the clients who went for divination. Aside mentioning them, the Ifá verse also gives specific reference to their family which affords the listener or reader the full grasp of the fauna. It makes reference to *itú* (he-goat), *àgbo* (ram), *àparò* (bush fowl) and *agẹmọ* (chameleon). Attention is drawn to what the male goat and husband of sheep are called in the Yorùbá indigenous language. Also, it draws attention to where the bush fowl is commonly found. Also, the verse draws our attention to the characteristic feature of the chameleon, who changes colour based on the habitat or environment it finds itself, as seen in the last line above.

Attention is drawn to where we find flies, it says:

Eşinşin bà sóri igbá otí,
Wọn a şedí rẹ̀bẹ̀jan rẹ̀bẹ̀jan.
Dífá fún Aláayè
Ọmọ Agúnpopofóşómu . . . (Abimbola, 2015:68)

[The fly perches on the calabash cup of palm wine,
It shoots out its abdomen.

If'a divination was performed for Alaaye
Offspring of Agúnpopofóşómu . . .] (Abimbola, 2015:69)

Flies are usually two-winged insects that mostly cause direct parasitic diseases to domestic animals, hence, the advice that an environment must be clean while all foods are well covered. Their breeding sites include food courts, dumping ground, food-processing areas, and poultry farms. They are also common where people drink palmwine and beer. This ecocritical-consciousness is what is foregrounded in the first two lines as it reveals that palmwine attracts flies and they shoot out their abdomens and possibly transmit disease into the palmwine. The characteristic feature of the giant rat based on what it does is highlighted in an Ifá verse. It says:

Kó poun ọ̀ bọ̀ta bójú.
Ló woenu ònà òde,
Ni ikú faşọ osùun rẹ̀ bora.
Ló fi gbórigbó kọ̀rùn,

*Ní ríkúú bò fià.
 Juu tó luòòdè,
 Apata òkété t'Òrúnmilà sì e rúbo,
 Ọ kọlú yàrá,
 Ó tún jáde nýàrá,
 Ó tún bọ́nńúu pàlò
 Hùn, ló bá teri bọ . . .
 Apata òkété sì ti gbésà,
 Láti idí Èṣù tó ti ẹ àrúbo sí.
 Ó sì wáá lujú ẹ sòòdè Ọ rúnmilà.
 Ju t'Òrúnmilà lunúu ihò òkété,
 Èyìnkùlé ẹ ló yọ sí . . . (Abimbola, 2015:114-116)*

[And as he stepped out of his house in order to wash his face,
 He looked up towards the main entrance to the compound,
 And saw Death clad in his red clothes,
 With his heavy club on his neck,
 Coming along in great haste.
 Ọrúnmilà ran into the house.
 And the giant rat which Ọrúnmilà offered for sacrifice had . . .
 Ọrúnmilà ran into the bedroom,
 And ran out again from bedroom,
 And went inside the palour.
 He then ran inside the . . .
 The giant rat had made a big hole
 From the shrine of Èṣù where the sacrifice was placed into
 Ọrúnmilà's sitting room
 When Ọrúnmilà went inside the hole of the giant rat,
 He came out of it at the back of his house . . .] (Abimbola, 2015:115-117)

The Ifá verse reveals the giant rat as one of the fauna present in Africa, especially Yorùbáland. They have multifarious functions, but one of them is emphasized above. They are known to dig and make holes in the house or environment wherever they are, to escape danger, especially from humans, who kill them. A careful look at the verse points our attention to the consciousness that fauna is not meant to be treated solely for meat as they all have their benefits to the ecosystem at large, which can only be seen or felt through keen ecocritical consciousness. Their unique feature and contribution to the ecosystem, even in this contemporary era is mentioned by Wexler, who talks about “How Giant Rats are Saving Lives in Former War Zones”:

They are African giant pouched rats, rodents whose keen sense of smell allows them

to sniff out explosives faster, and more reliably than traditional minesweeping technology . . . The rats' noses are so hypersensitive that they can detect tuberculosis in sputum samples more accurately than local lab tests and ferret out criminals trying to smuggle endangered species.²

This therefore draws our attention to the roles played by fauna even in the contemporary era. Fauna isn't a total threat to our ecosystem or solely meat but a complement to man if man can consciously harness or channel them to his/her advantage. The digging in the Ifá verse is only a pointer to the multifarious functions of fauna to man. An Ifá verse also brings to fore the ecocritical consciousness of fauna that fly. This verse mentions some of the birds which form the ecosystem. It says:

... *Ni àṣá bá bọ síwájú,*
Ó e ẹbọ nílẹ pónkán . . .
Ni awodi bá tún fò bọ síta.
Ó ní òun ó gbèè ẹbọ náà . . .
Ni àṣádi bá fi ibínú jáde,
Ó ní ní ìṣẹ́jú akan ni òun ó gbèè ẹbọ náà dọrun . . .
Àwòdì gbẹ̀bọ, kò lèè gbe dọrun . . .
Ni àkàlà bá bọ síwájú . . . (Abimbola, 2015:220-224)

[The kite came out in front of everyone,
Grabbed the sacrifice . . .
The black kite then came out,
And boasted that he would carry the sacrifice away . . .
At that point, the eagle came out of the crowd in anger,
And boasted that he would take the sacrifice to heaven in a moment of time . . .
And boasted that he would take the sacrifice to heaven in a moment of time . . .
The black kite carried the sacrifice, but he could not take it to heaven . . .
At that crucial time, akala went to the front of the crowd . . .] (Abimbola, 2015:221-225)

The birds are implored to carry a sacrifice to appease the lord of the heavens who has been offended by the Lord of the earth over a game hunted by the duo. The birds are known to be strong and they soar higher as reflected in the verse. This draws our attention to the names of birds among the Yorùbá people and their strengths. It is pertinent to mention here that the plot focalizes on the attributes of the vulture, especially its sickly appearance and sluggishness. It says:

Gbogbo àwọn ọlọgbón sori kọ.
Ẹnikan ò lèè pe gúnnugún sí í,

2 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-giant-african-rats-are-saving-lives-in-former-war-zones-1525435200>

*Nítorí pé wọn mò pé araa rẹ ọ yá . . .
 Ló bá gbébo rílẹ̀,
 Ó wàà nìse kàngẹ kàngẹ kàngẹ
 Bí ẹni pé yóó jàà lulẹ̀.
 Ó nìse bí ẹni pé yóó ẹ̀bù,
 Bí ẹni pé yóó yẹgẹ̀.
 Báyii ni igun ẹ tí ọ fi nísún mọ ọde ọrun . . . (Abimbola, 2015:226)*

[The wise men dropped their heads down.
 No one could call on the vulture
 Because they knew that he was not well . . .
 Picked up the sacrifice,
 And moved unsteadily all over the place
 As if he would drop down.
 He was moving unsteadily as if he would fall down,
 As if he would drop to the ground.
 That was how the vulture moved along until he was near heaven . . .] (Abimbola, 2015:227)

Awareness is drawn to the fact that vultures are not good-looking and they stagger. This is what is reflected in the above Ifá verse, though presented as if the ailment affecting the vulture causes such. Despite its unwell state, it still performs extraordinarily and does the task which other birds couldn't. This verse points to the fact that the vulture has its own good points. This includes its wide wingspan, which makes it soar for longer periods without flapping like some other large birds and a sharp hooked beak. Aside from this, attention is drawn to the vulture's bald head to accentuate its unique physical feature and its habit of feeding on dead prey or carcasses. It says:

*Bó bá ní kí òun ọ wọlé onítẹ̀hún,
 Wọn a nà án lórógùn lórí.
 Nínà ànàgbà ọjọ náà,
 Lẹ b pá igun lórí dóniolónì . . .
 Kí ilẹ ọ tóó mọ,
 Ebí ti bèrẹ sí pa á.
 Bí ọjúlẹ́ ti ndá,
 Tí igun wo waju,
 Òkú kan ló rí kakakúkú.
 Ló bá bèrẹ sí jẹ . . . (Abimbola, 2015:232)*

[If he attempts to enter into another house,
 They would use their orogun [wooden pestle] to strike him on
 the head. It was the repeated beating of that day,

Which made the vulture's head to become bald till this very
day . . .
Before daybreak,
The vulture became hungry.
As day was dawning,
The vulture looked in front of him,
And saw one big, swollen corpse,
And he started to eat it,
Not knowing that it was his own mother's corpse . . .] (Abimbola, 2015:232)

The verse reveals the baldness of the vulture and portrays it as a bird which feeds on carcasses through the myth. This act of helps reduce disease in the ecosystem. On the vulture, a post says:

Vultures are also important in India, as they help remove dead animals without spreading disease. In other parts of Asia, religious and cultural traditions call for the carcasses of domestic animals to be left out for "disposal" by vultures. In some regions, even human remains are left out for the vultures prior to burial.

Awareness is drawn to fauna here to establish that man should not overlook and underestimate people as the slow and steady sometimes wins the race.

Flora

By flora we refer to the indigenous plants of a particular region, which can be indigenous, or weed grown by humans for agriculture or horticulture. These are gainfully employed in Ifá corpus to teach man about himself. While it teaches man, it also makes man more familiar with flora and its physical components as is illustrated below and reflected in many parts of the Ifá structures, whether introductory, main body or conclusion. In the narration of the travails of Ọ̀rúnmilà and reason for his final return to heaven in *Ìwòrì Méjì*, the introductory lines reflect ecocritical consciousness. It says:

Apá ní gboko tan iná oṣó
Orúrù ní wẹ̀wù èjẹ̀ kanlẹ̀
Ìlẹ̀ ni mo tẹ̀ tẹ̀ tẹ̀
Kí ntóo tọ́pón.
Ọ̀pẹ̀ tẹ́érẹ̀ erékè
Ní yà sí ya búkù méré̀ndínlógún
A díá fún Ọ̀rúnmilà . . . (Abimbola, 2015:48)

[It is the apá tree which thrives in the forest and produces fearful flowers of wizards

It is the orúrù tree which wears a garment of blood from top to bottom

It was on the bare ground that I printed Ifá marks before

I started using the wooden tray for divination.

It is the slender palm tree on hilltop
 Which branches here and there and has sixteen hut-like heads.
 Ifá divination was performed for Ọ̀rúnmilà . . .] (Abimola, 2015:49)

The corpus above foregrounds flora and talks about the *apá*, *orúrù* and *òpẹ* (palm) trees with a little information about their physical description to be able to identify them amongst many trees. The *apá* tree is described by Abimbola (2015:60) as a “rain forest and savannah hard wood which grows tall like the African teak.” The corpus describes it as a tree which has a reddish colour. The red colour is so illuminating that it terrifies people, hence, the assertion that it produces fearful flowers of wizards. The *orúrù* is also a type of tree common in many parts of Yorùbáland with bright red flowers. This red flower is aptly described as clothing of blood to depict the colour. The *òpẹ* (palm) tree is a common and important tree because of its religious symbols and economic value. One of the distinguishing features of the palm tree is the many evergreen leaves arranged in a spiral on its trunk of the tree. This is what is described in the corpus as “having branches here and there”. As a result, this introductory aspect intimates us with the physical properties of the flora mentioned and its perception. Another Ifá verse complements the multifarious use and symbols of some flora, when it says:

Apá nílá nigí àjé,
Oṣè a bigi rẹ̀rẹ̀rẹ̀.
A díá fún Ọ̀rúnmilà,
Ifá nílọ̀ lẹ̀ gbé Ọ̀ rọ̀ . . . (Abimbola, 2015:174)

[The mighty *apá* is the tree of witches.
Oṣè always has a mighty shade.
 Ifá divination was performed for Ọ̀rúnmilà
 When he was going to marry Ọ̀ rọ̀ . . .] (Abimbola, 2015:175)

The Ifá verse points to the *apá* and *oṣè* trees which are one of the biggest trees in the savannah. The verse reveals the physical feature of the *apá*, which brings it to our consciousness as tall and huge while *oṣè* is metaphorized into a tree with a mighty shade. Apart from the physical features of the trees mentioned the verse points to the beliefs and perception of the Yorùbá people about big trees. The *apá* is sacred to witches and wizards while the *oṣè* (baobab) is where the spirits of *abiku* children reside, as also reflected in JP Clark’s poem, “*Abíkú*” (<https://www.thebookbanque.com/literary/abiku-jpclark>).

Humans, Power and Symbols

There are many reflections of man in Ifá corpus and their interactions with the ecosystem, especially with other humans. As a result, Ifá corpus reflects man’s adventures, needs, greed, moral uprightness, moral decay, rivalry, power tus-

sle, and many others. Critics such as Olatunji (1984), Abimbola (2006, 2015) and many others have discussed these in the contexts or themes of the corpus. Emphasis is placed on man's need and issue of symbols and power. *Èjì ogbè* emphasizes the importance of shelter to mankind by comparing some settings in the ecosystem. It ecocritically juxtaposes *ònà* (path), *ọjà* (market) and *ilé* (shelter/house) based on their purposive functions. These three are important to man as they are connected in their daily encounters or activities as a result of their needs.

*Erín je jẹẹ je,
Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni kò fowọ́ kó aṣá
Èfọ̀n je jẹẹ je
Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni kò fẹsẹ̀ bọ̀ pòdòlò;
Èye kérékèrèkéré nífò lókè,
Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni wọ̀n ò forí gbági;
A díá fún Riri
Níjọ́ tó nífomi ọjúú sògbéré ọmọ . . .
Ìgbà tí ó kọ́ọ́ bí,
Ó bọ̀nà.
Ìgbà tí ó tùún bí,
Ó bọ̀jà
Ilé nikan ní sọmọ̀ ìkeyìn wọ̀n léjje léjje (Abímbólá, 2006b:21)*

[The Elephant eats
It was never trapped
The Buffalo eats
It never entered a trap
The birds fly in the sky,
Yet, they don't collide with the trees
It was divined for Riri
When she was barren . . .
When she first gave birth,
She gave birth to Ònà
Again, she gave birth to Ọjà
Ilé was her last child]

After the introductory statement, the verse proceeds to the main story where Riri is faced with rejections at Ònà and Ọjà's place when she needed to heed nature's call. While at Ilé's place, she is shown to all parts and advised to do the needful anywhere she prefers. It says:

*Rírí wáá múra
Ó lọ sẹ̀yìn odi*

Ìgbà tó darí dé,
 Ó darí sódò ònà
 Ònà sá kí í,
 Ó yò kí í;
 Ó múlé pòntí,
 Ó mọ̀nà rokà,
 Ó fí gbogbo agbada dínran.
 Rírí ní ìwọ̀ ònà, ọmọ̀ òun,
 Mọ̀ tî múlé pòntí,
 Mọ̀ tî mọ̀nà rokà,
 Mọ̀ tî fí gbogbo agbada dínran,
 Nítórí pé àrùn kan níṣe òun.
 Ọ̀ nà ní àrùn kín ní ṣe ọ̀
 Tí òun ọ̀ níí le wò san?
 Rírí ní àrùn ìgbònsẹ̀ ní.
 Ó ní òun fẹ́ẹ̀ ṣu ní.
¹Foot path, ²Market place, ³House
 Ọ̀nà ní nibo ní o ó ha ti ráyè ṣu?
 Ó ní gbogbo èrò oko,
 Gbogbo èrò odò,
 Gbogbo èrò àlọ,
 Gbogbo èrò àbò,
 Ló ngba ọ̀dọ̀ òún kọ́já
 Ó ní máa lọ sódò ọ̀já
 Tíí ṣe àbúrò òun.
 Nígbà tí Rírí dọ̀dọ̀ ọ̀já . . .
 Ọ̀já ní nibo lo ó ha ti ráyè ṣu?
 Igbá aláta nìyí,
 Igbá onírú nìyí,
 Igbá oníyò nìyí,
 Níbo ló ó ha ti ráyè ṣu?
 Máa lọ sódò ilé
 Tíí ṣe àbúrò òun.
 Nígbà tí Rírí dọ̀dọ̀ ilé, . . .
 Rírí ní àrùn ìgbònsẹ̀ ní.
 Ó ní òun fẹ́ẹ̀ ṣu ní
 Ilé ní àti kín tún ní?
 Ó ní ṣe bí èmi ní mo nítàgẹ̀;
 Ṣe bí èbi ní mo ní káà,
 Èmi ní mo ní sáré.
 Ní Rírí bá rá giiri wọ̀lé . . . (Abímbólá, 2006:21-23)

[Riri prepared
And travelled to another town
When she came back,
She went to Ọ̀nà
Ọ̀nà ran to meet her
Ọ̀nà was elated.
Ọ̀nà got drinks,
Ọ̀nà prepared food,
Ọ̀nà use all the pots in the house to fry meat
Riri says, Ọ̀nà, my child
Don't bring any drink yet
Don't bring any food
Don't fry me meat yet
Because I am suffering from a disease.
Ọ̀nà says what kind of disease affects you
That he cannot cure?
Riri answers, I want to use the toilet.
She says she wants to defecate.
Ọ̀nà says where will you have the space to defecate?
He says, People going to the farm,
People going to river,
People moving to,
People moving fro,
Take his route
He says, go to Ọ̀jà's
My younger brother.
When Riri got to Ọ̀jà . . .
Ọ̀jà says where would you have the space to defecate?
This is the pepper seller's calabash,
This is the locust beans seller's calabash,
This is the salt seller's calabash,
Where will you have the space to defecate?
Go to Ilé,
My younger brother.
When Riri got to Ilé, . . .
Riri says, I have a disease/problem
I want to use the toilet
Ilé asks, "What else"? He says, I own the frontage
I own the backyard
I own the compound.
Riri then ran inside. . . .

The Ifá verse illustrates that *ojà* (market) is usually a public place where many buy and sell. It is a temporary place to stay and it's for commercial purposes which occur most times in the daytime. The path is also not left of its limitations since people pass through to reach their various destinations. Both the marketplace and the path are not personal to anyone but *ilé* serves as a personal place of abode, shelter, comfort and a place of rest. It is therefore a pointer to other good things as illustrated below:

Ilé niyì òun aya.
Ilé niyì àtaya ò,
Ilé niyì òun aya;
Èèyan è é şe fújà láì nílé,
Ilé niyì àtaya.
Ilé niyì òun omọ ò,
Ilé niyì òun omọ;
Èèyan è é şe fújà láì nílé,
Ilé niyì òun omọ. (Abímbólá, 2006:24)

[Ilé is as honourable as a wife (shelter),
 Ilé is as honourable as a wife,
 Ilé is as honourable as a wife;
 One does not have pride without a shelter
 Ilé is as honourable as a wife
 Ilé is as honourable as a child,
 Ilé is as honourable as a child;
 One does not have pride without a shelter
 Ilé is as honourable as a child.]

The Ifá verse, through the interaction of man with parts of the ecosystem, emphasizes the most important of the three to man. It suffices to mention here that a Yorùbá adage complements this: *Eni tí ò lobinrin kò lóunje, eni tí ò nílé, àsírí rẹ kò ò tí ò b.* ["A man without a wife has no food, a person without a home is not secure."] (Èlẹbuibon, 2008:98). Humans engage in different struggles, especially power tussle and supremacy. As a result, the power tussle leads to different consequences. An example of the issue of symbols and power tussle is seen in *Ìwòrì Mèjì* where *Ọlọwọ* disrespects and insults his father, *Ọrúnmilà*. This happens when the father asks him to do the needful by acknowledging his supremacy and pay homage due him. *Ọlọwọ*'s refusal is met with the father's annoyance, exile and grievous consequences felt by the people at large.

ìgbà-tí-mo-bímo-tán-ni-wón-ńfọwọ-omọ-ọ-mií-wọ-mí,
Tí wón fi joyè Ọlọwọ lótù Ifẹ dé,
Ó dúró.

Òrúnmìlà ní ìwọ náà pàbọ́rúbọyè bọ sísẹ.
Ó ní òun ò lè pàbọ́rúbọyè bọ sísẹ
Òrúnmìlà ní éé tí jẹ?
Ọlówọ ní Ọrúnmìlà sòdùn, o sòdùn kó,
Òun Ọlówọ nááá sòdùn òun sòdùn kó,
Ìwọ Ọrúnmìlà fòsùn idẹ lówó,
Òun Ọlówọ nááá fòsùn idẹ lówó,
Ìwọ Ọrúnmìlà bọ sálúbàtà idẹ
Òun Ọlówọ nááá bọ sálúbàtà idẹ.
Ìwọ Ọrúnmìlà dádé,
Òun Ọlówọ nááá dádé
Bẹẹ ni wọn sì ní
Ẹnikan kíí forí adé balẹ fẹnikan.
Ní Ọrúnmìlà bá bínú.
Ó fòsùn idẹ rẹ tu.
Ní Ọrúnmìlà bá kọrí sí idí òpẹ àgùnká
Èyí tó yà sí ya búkà méréndínlógun.
Ló bá di wí pé aboyún ò bí mọ,
Àgan ò tọwọ àlà bosùn,
Òkùnrùn ò díde.
Akérémoḍḍó wẹwù ìràwé.
Àtọ gbẹ mọ ọmọkùnrin ní idí,
Obìnrin ò rí àséẹ rẹ mọ.
Iṣú pẹyin ò ta,
Àgbàdó tàpẹ ò gbó.
Erèè yojú òpòlọ.
Òjò páá pàá páá kán sílẹ,
Adìẹ sà á mì.
A pọ́n abẹ sílẹ,
Ewúré mú un jẹ . . . (Abimbola, 2015:52-54)

[Ọrúnmìlà's child named Ìgbà-tí-mo-bímọ-tán-ni-wọ́n-ńfọwọ-
ọmọ-ọ-míí-wọ-mí,
Who was given the title of Ọlówọ in the city of Ife arrived, and stood still.
Ọrúnmìlà said, You also, say, "May the sacrifice be blessed and accepted.'
But he said he could not say "May the sacrifice be blessed and accepted.'
Ọrúnmìlà asked, "Why is it (that you stand still)? Ọlówọ said,
You Ọrúnmìlà wrap yourself with ọdùn cloth.
I, Ọlówọ wrap myself with ọdùn cloth.
You, Ọrúnmìlà, carry òsun walking stick made of brass.
I, Ọlówọ, also carry òsun walking stick made of brass.

You, Òrúnmìlà wear a pair of brass sandals.
 I, Ọlówò, also wear a pair of brass sandals.
 You, Òrúnmìlà, wear a crown,
 I, Ọlówò, also wear a crown.
 And it is usually said that
 Nobody uses a crown head to bow down for another person.
 Then, Òrúnmìlà became angry,
 And he snatched from him his osùn walking stick made of brass.
 Òrúnmìlà then went to the foot of the much-climbed palm tree.
 Which branched here and there and had sixteen hut-like heads.
 The result was that pregnant women no longer delivered.
 The barren ones remained barren.
 The sick remained infirm.
 Small rivers wore garments or leaves
 Semen got dried up in men's testicles,
 Women no longer saw their menstruation.
 New yam tubers appeared but could not develop,
 Ears of corn came out but they could not become ripe.
 Beans flowered but could not develop into seeds. Scanty rain
 drops fell on the ground,
 Chickens picked them up.
 Well sharpened knives were placed on the floor,
 And goats ate them up. (Abimbola, 2015:53-55)

The above Ifá verse, through the ecocritical consciousness on how humans relate with one another, foregrounds office insignias, power tussle, as well as war. The insignias include *òdùn* cloth, *osùn idẹ* (walking stick made of brass), *sálúbàtà idẹ* (a pair of brass sandals), and *adé* (crown). The *òdùn* cloth is made of raffia while the *osùn idẹ* is a sacred insignia of a high-ranking Ifá priest that he uses as a walking stick. He does not need to introduce himself as the members of the community and other neighboring towns who practice African traditional religion identify him and his office without any difficulty. The insignia is also complemented with the *sálúbàtà idẹ* and crown to show the office of a king and these symbols confirm them (Òrúnmìlà and his children) to be priests, kings and rich men. The insignias have honor accorded their office, as reflected in the refusal of Ọlówò to bow before his father. This verse points to one of the problems associated with power, hierarchy, and it is faced till date even among Yorùbá kings who quarrel, exchange words and even expose myths to show supremacy. Even in contemporary governance, there are cases of such occurrence. Òrúnmìlà, insulted by his son, resorts to leaving for heaven and show his supremacy over the so-called mortals. This results in anarchy and dreadful situations beyond

the people's comprehension to the extent of a total collapse if not for Ọ̀rún-mílà's timely intervention after making sacrifices to appease him. The verse pictures power tussles even in today's world and battle for supremacy with nuclear weaponry. The myth, through ecocritical consciousness, addresses the issues of hierarchy and respect for one another especially respect for an office to avoid unpalatable repercussions.

Conclusion

Ecocritical consciousness is foregrounded in Ifá myth, realized through the components of the ecosystem inherent in them. Ifá corpus talks about fauna, flora, nature, hills and man. Through this, attention is drawn to the ecosystem as man learns more about his/her physical environment. This can intimate man with names of any of the aforementioned contents, physical features and the behaviours of what the corpus identifies.

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