

***Ọfọ* (Incantation) as Lubricant for *Oògùn* in Yorùbá Traditional Medicine**

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Abstract

Oògùn in Yorùbá is an all-encompassing phenomenon that works for varieties of things. It is curative, protective, defensive and destructive. *Oògùn*, although is all encompassing, does not work without a complement which is *ọfọ* (incantation). While scholars have researched on *Oògùn* and *ọfọ* separately, not many scholars have researched on the connection between the two, thereby suggesting that *ọfọ* can be discarded and *Oògùn* will still perform its expected function. Hence, this paper attempts a critical study of *ọfọ* as lubricant for *Oògùn*. It argues, adopting the methods of description and philosophical argumentation that some *Oògùn* needs *ọfọ* to work. It concludes that the place of *ọfọ* cannot be quantified for effectiveness of some *Oògùn* in Yoruba worldview and that it will not be a tenable position to discard the efficacy of *ọfọ* in activating such *Oògùn*.

Keywords: *Oògùn*, *ọfọ* (incantation), Yoruba worldview

Introduction

The need to re-examine the import of *ọfọ* in Yorùbá medicine is onerous task in the contemporary age. This is not unconnected with the widely accepted assumption that such belief cannot be empirically substantiated. It is against this derailing assumption that this paper sets to validate the potency of *ọfọ* as a lubricant for *Oògùn* in Yorùbá traditional medicine. Though, this belief as pointed out earlier could not be established empirically, it is important to mention that the causal relations is reflective in the output, reactions and appearance of the users. By implication, the reality of *ọfọ* lubricating *Oògùn* in Yorùbá medicine is metaphysically inclined. It is beyond physical. This is because of the illness (unhealthness) often involves natural and supernatural causes (Balogun, 2008:107).

In establishing the magnitude of *ọfọ* in Yorùbá traditional medicine (*Oògùn*), this discourse attempts an exposition of the meaning, nature, and uses of *ọfọ*; it equally presents *ọfọ* as an artificial language that operates metaphysically. This is built on a brief explication of what *Oògùn* is, in Yorùbá society. Thus, the paper in its philosophical analysis attempt a symbiotic relation between *ọfọ* and *Oògùn* and conclude that such relation proved the efficacy of metaphysics as the hallmark of African philosophy. It also attempts a deconstruction of the logical positivists' postulation that for validation of any claim there must be empirical connection between the cause and the effect that such elicited.

Yoruba Understanding of *Oògùn* (Traditional Medicine)

Oògùn is a household name. It represents traditional medicine and/or charm and has been defined as the alternative modes of treatment that involves the use of natural herbs in a non-orthodox manner as well as the process of consulting herbalists, priests, witch doctor, medicine men and various local deities when seeking for solution or healing to one's illness or predicament. It is anchored on belief in superstitions that often create fear or faith in the people mind. Its adoption in this exercise, however, connotes charm. Therefore, when reference is made to *Oògùn* we stand to mean charm. This is imperative as conceiving *Oògùn* as charm make meaning of the subject matter of our discussion. Here charm (*Oògùn*) denotes an act or words believed to have magical power to control, protect, defend, cure and destroy somebody or something. It follows therefore that *Oògùn* in this context could be attributed to have dual legitimacy, one positive and the other negative.

Yoruba traditional medicine is all-encompassing; it involves more than the use of drugs as it frequently includes appeasement of spiritual forces, spiritual atonement, and making of rituals to spirits, divinities, god and goddesses with a view to ward off evil forces that are often believed to be responsible for sickness and diseases in the process of healing. Suffice to note that traditional healing and medicine is categorized into three. The categorization according to Ilasanmi (1995) as quoted by O.A. Bolarinwa (2014:148) includes; first, the use of metaphysical power that deals with atonement (*etutu*) incantation (*ọfọ*) and the observant of traditional law (*ofin ibile*); second, the physical use of herbs (*ewe ati egbo nikan*); and third, the combination of the two.

Oògùn could be positively used for protection, favour, prevention, cure, antidote against food poisoning, spiritual attack and assist someone in problem or who is been beclouded with difficulty and finds no succour in the world. Such *Oògùn* includes but not limited to *abíwééré* (safe delivery), *mádárikàn* (don't

knock your head against me), *àgbéfò/egbé* (jump over), *òkígbe* (sharp object resistance), *òwò* (respect) among others. While it could be negatively used to hypnotize individual to do what ordinary cannot be done by such an individual. It could also be used negatively to inflict one with ailment, change ones destiny among others. This kind of *Oògùn* could be *àpèta* (call to harm), *àpèpa* (call to death), *àbilù* (affliction), *máyehùn* (hypnotizing), *àfòşę* (control for obedience), *gbètugbètu* (deception) just to mention but few. This dual nature of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá traditional medicine is suggestive of their wide belief that there is no limit to charm; this is well captured in their saying *nńkan tó gùn ni à n pè ni Oògùn*. It is however important to mention that *mádárikán* (don't knock your head against me), *òwò* (respect), *àgbéfò* (jump over), *òkígbe* (sharp object resistance) are all counter-medicine. They are used to counter evil machinations and the suppose effect of attack on the bearer of such charm.

It is however important to mention that foundation is fundamental in Yorùbá medicine just as in other African societies. This is not secluded from their belief system that gives credence to spirit as that which “guides and directs all that Africans do in their traditional mind set” (Ndubuisi & Okoro, 2005:15). This seems to corroborate Idoniboýe’s (1973:83) submission that the “ontology of any distinctively African world view is replete with spirit.” This reality is further established by Mámá Atókę Álá Atítebí²⁶ who in a personal discussion explained that for any herbalist to prescribe or make medicine (charm) in Yorùbá society there is always the need to consult the spirit, both of the terrestrial world and that of the individual in question. This is because the foundation matter in getting to the root cause of what need to be done. It is in this sense that preparation and administration of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá society is considered metaphysical. This position shares in the view of Ndubuisi & Okoro (2005:29) that “it is then not surprising that the practice of medicine in traditional Africa is spiritual. Africans trace ailments beyond the physical. This explains why African medicine is holistic.” Falola (2016:140) seems to have corroborated this when he avers that “medicine involves more than the use of drugs, but requires the appeasement of spiritual atonement and the application of rituals to ward off evil forces. This is suggestive of the fact that rituals have great influence in Yoruba medicine, especially in warding off sickness that are considered to be supernatural cum metaphysical. In this case “when divination has done the diagnosis, rituals may commence to provide the management of the disease and subdue the “evil” power that caused it – sorcery, witchcraft or mystical forces” (Falola, 2016:140).

The holistic nature of medicine in traditional Yoruba society enhances its viability as being allopathic and homeopathic. Balogun (2008:103) clarifies this when he posits that, “Yoruba medicine is allopathic in the sense that its administration is concerned with the elimination of symptoms. Not only this, its homeopathic nature derives from the fact that traditional Yoruba medicine is more concerned with identifying the causes of illness or unhealthiness in an effort to restore holistic balance in the biological system of the patient. Balogun’s view seems to share in the view of Abimbola (2006:79) that “Yoruba traditional medicine is homeopathic... it is not just interested in getting rid of symptoms, it is interested in identifying and removing the causes of illness, just as much as it is interested in maintaining holistic balance.

Given the above revelation, it is apposite to suggest that the essence of Africans (Yorùbá) tracing the foundation of ailment is a reflection of their thought that there is always a cause for any physical or spiritual ailment and discomfort one may be experiencing. They equally believe that to get a permanent solution and healing for such ailment, the foundation, that is, the source has to be found and corrected for it is only when this is done that such ailment could be cured both physically and spiritually. This is not unconnected with the presupposition of Balogun (2008:104) that “traditional Yoruba medicine is a reflection of the people’s dualistic worldview. Hence, medicinal practice in traditional Yoruba culture is a conjunction of services of traditional healers (herbalists) and the diviners.”

Thus, for the Yoruba, it is not out of place if a traditional healer appeals to supernatural forces in their process of diagnosis, they do so because of their belief that these forces have full knowledge of the causes of illness, no matter how mild or severe. This often gives credence to the essence of sacrifice in Yoruba traditional medicine. It is believed that some *arun* (illness) are beyond ordinary and the need to appease the supernatural forces becomes imminent for effectiveness and efficiency of such medicine, hence, the Yoruba saying *ebo gingin, oogun gingin nii gba alaisan la* – it is a little bit of sacrifice and a little bit of medications that saves the patient who is going to die. It is interesting to note that in the process of some of such sacrifice *òfò* (incantation) is a fundamental tool. This is avidly captured by Balogun (2008:110) that “we can also see

²⁶ Mama Atoke Ala atitebi is an aged woman and matriarchy of Atitebi dynasty of Bonni-Okeloko, Igboho, Oyo State. A traditional worshipper and the *Atokun* of *Abilere* and *Arosoju* masquerade.

that illness through the use of amulets, recitation of incantations and the offering of sacrifices and rituals to the affected spirit causing illness.” The essence of sacrifice is not unconnected with the Yoruba belief as something that have great influence in warding off sickness, especially those that are considered to be supernatural in this case “when divination has done the diagnosis, rituals may commence to provide the management of the disease and subdue the “evil” power that caused it – sorcery, witchcraft, or mystical forces” (Falola, 2016:140).

Fundamentally, *Osanyin* is traditionally believed to be the deity that plays crucial role that could not be discarded in traditional medicine. *Osanyin* is believed to be in charge of all roots and leaves, as such, it is considered to have a grasp of the knowledge of leaves and roots. Put in another word, *Osanyin* rules over all wild herbs. Given these attributes and abilities of *Osanyin*, many practitioners of herbal medicine are devotees of *Osanyin*. The place of *Osanyin* as a deity to recon in Yoruba traditional medicine is crisply explained by Simpson (1980:42) when he posits that “*Osanyin* plays a crucial role in traditional Yoruba medicine by revealing to his adherents herbal cures that will ensure good health.” In a nutshell, *Osanyin* according to Mama Atoke Ala Atitebi is the god of traditional medicine who possesses a clear understanding of how natural herbs function.

Let wrapped up this section by making recourse to the methods of treating ailment with the use of *oogun* in traditional Yoruba society by the traditional healer. The first stage is the preparation stage; here the traditional healer will prepare the medicine by mixing leaves, barks of tree, roots, fruits, parts of animals, water among others. After this is the administration stage, this could be done either in ointments, orally, bathing or through scarification (Soyanwo, 1962:26). In the view of Borokinni & Lawal (2014:23) traditional medicine products can be “prepared in several forms. They can be liquid (decoctions, infusions, oily mixtures, and gargles), solids (powders for internal administration with hot maize pap or other drinks), semi-solids (certain crude balsams, resins, latex) or gaseous (steam inhalation preparations, fumigations like incense.” It is paramount to mention that at the point of preparation and administration, some of the medicines are often accompany with relevant *ofò* (incantation) with the intent of activating the potency of such medicine. What then is *ofò*? This we shall turn to in the next section.

Conceptualizing *Ofò*

Ofò as a phenomenon is literally and linguistically interpreted to mean incantation. It is the verbal aspect of the magical act among the Yoruba, the other being the rites and charms or medicine (Olatunji, 1984:140). *Ofò* in this context refer to the power of the word by virtue of which some people perform actions which the ordinary man cannot normally perform. It often takes the form of “a play on words (pun) delivered orally in poetic form apparently to induce the spirit controlling a particular plant to conjure up efficacies” (cf. Borokinni & Lawal, 2014:26). It suggests a propeller that enhances the effectiveness of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá traditional medicine and as lubricant aid free movement of mechanical devices so is *ofò* augments the potency of *Oògùn*. However, *ofò* is conceived to mean charge words that have metaphysical forces for its operation. It is in this sense that *ofò* is considered as “a restricted poetic form, cultic and mystical in its expectations. It is seen as a source of mystical power and the attainment of metaphysical manhood by the Yoruba *ofò* is jealously guarded by those who have acquired it, for to reveal it to others is to lay oneself bare to the attack of real or assumed enemies” (Olatunji, 1984:139). It is equally important to mention that *ofò* has its characteristic elements which according to Olatunji (1984) include, symbolic word-play, repetition and the personal nature the poetry. It is often involve invocation, problem, assertions, and the application (See Olatunji, 1984:152-167) for details.

Explicating the attributes and peculiarity of *ofò* to *Oògùn* Makinde (1988: 92) contends that “it is often employed by traditional medicine man for both preventive/protective and curative purposes.” It is essential to mention that to every *ofò* in Yorùbá land, there is a deep meaning to it and it is powerful. Hence, *ofò*, “once obtained, becomes the individual’s personal property.” It involves the uttering of words according to a formula and in a set order (Olatunji, 1984:139-140). For instance, it is not unusual to have a traditionalist who is out to cast spell on friends metaphysically reciting an *ofò* in the following words:

Orí mi dori minimini
Orí minimini àti orí gbìgbẹ̀ kì í ro jọ
Màrìwò ọ̀pẹ̀ kì í gbé egúngún lọ s’òrun
Ọ̀jọ̀ tí ẹ̀yin adìẹ̀ bá forí sọ̀ àpáta
Ọ̀jọ̀ náà ní í gba iwe ibanuje
Ọ̀jọ̀ tí atare àti àrò̀ bá tí pàdé
Ọ̀jọ̀ náà ní wọn ja ijà àtúkà

*Sìṣe ṣìṣe tí ó bá ewúrẹ́ tí ó fì bá iyá ẹ̀ sùn
Kó máa bá lágbájá àti lágbájá kiri
Kó ṣẹ̀ bẹ̀ẹ̀!
Kó rí bẹ̀ẹ̀!
Aṣẹ̀ gùn ún!*

After this *ọfọ* the user may spread some prepared concoction (*ẹbu*) to the air and before you know two friends begin to quarrel without pre-mediated disagreement or rancour. The preponderance of this reality is evident and leaves us with much to be desired as every Yorùbá man who has grown up in the traditional environment will, no doubt, know something or hear about this possibility which often is experienced or manifested in different forms. Borokinni & Lawal (2014) give an example of *ọfọ* (incantation) that could be used to cast spell or make one loose his/her senses in the following:

Igbagbe se oro ko lewe (3 times) [Due to forgetfulness, the oro (cactus) plant has no leaves],
Igbagbe se afomo ko legbo (3 times) [Due to forgetfulness, the mistletoe plant has no roots],
Igbagbe se Olodumare ko ranti la ese pepeye (3 times) (due to forgetfulness God did not remember to separate the toes of the duck),
Nijo ti pepeye ba daran egba igbe hoho ni imu bo 'nu (when the duck is beaten it cries hoho),
Ki igbagbe se lagbaja omo lagbaja ko maa wogbo lo [May forgetfulness come upon (name the enemy), the son/daughter of (name the mother); that is, may he loose his senses],
Tori t'odo ban san ki iwo ehin moo (Because a flowing river does not flow backward)

It is important to mention that as we have *ọfọ* that could be used for negative ends, so are countless *ọfọ* available for positive purposes. For instance, during childbirth, if there is any complication, the herbalist who is ready to help out after using the necessary *Oògùn* for the woman often time follows it with *ọfọ* to invoke the potency of the *Oògùn* already used. Such *ọfọ* is one poetically cited by Adeoye (1985:244):

*Eewo ni, enikan ki i gbebi ewure
Eewo ni, enikan ki i gbebi aguntan
Were niti iwele l'odo
Were ni ki Lagbaja ki o bimo
Tipetipe ni oore bi omo re
Tojutimu ni ejo bo awo
Ojiji ni afon imoon wo o
Atokunrin ati obirin
Ojiji ni ki Lagbaja bi omo re
Omi gbigbona ki i moo pe l'enu*

One other version of *ọfọ* (incantation) that could be used to hasten child delivery is one cited by Borokinni & Lawal (2014:26) it runs thus:

Kankan l'ewe ina n jomo (the leaf of ina burns in haste),
Kankan ni ki lagbaja omo lagbaja bi mo re loni [(name the labouring woman) the daughter of (name her mother) should deliver her child in haste today],
Konu koho ki roju ti fifi aso re toro [The Konu koho tree does not hesitate to give off its cloth bark (name the labouring woman)],
Ki lagbaja omo lagbaja a ma roju ti ofi bi omo re loni [The daughter of (name the mother) should not hesitate to deliver her child today, because the snake sheds its skin easily]

Also the Yorùbá in their traditional medicine have a way of getting the true nature of events from those involved in secret activities and not ready to speak out. To this end, after necessary *Oògùn* might have been prepared they activate such with *ọfọ* such as

*Ẹnu òròfò ní í pa òròfò
Ẹnu òròfò ní í pa òròfò
Maròmarò ní í ṣe orógùn ọkà.*

In this instance, after all this might have come to play what usually follow is a reflection of what Yemi Eleuibon (2008:55) refers to as *Ọfà Ajẹ Ninà*. This is a term used to denote the power endowed the witch to shoot a spiritual arrow against someone. Once she puts a mark on her victim, she can shoot the arrow from anywhere and the arrow will physically hit the person wherever she/he may be. This is the reason why the Yorùbá believe that physical presence or absence is immaterial when it comes to an attack from mysterious

beings or forces. This belief is also ascribed to *ofò*. It is believed that *ofò* has potency of activating the prowess of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá society. They believe that distance could not be a barrier in connecting *ofò* to the object to which it is designed for, hence, their saying *A tori ikú, a sá lẹ Okuku. Nìgbà tí a dé Okuku ẹ ni wọn kú* – To avert death, we fled to Okuku. When we got to Okuku, we found that even people there were dying.

It is pertinent to mention that the herbalists and/or the user of *ofò* as a matter of necessity must internalize the wordings of the needed *ofò*. It is relative to reveal that the internalization of *ofò* is paramount to its users because often time, recourse has to be placed on it, especially, when least expected, that is, for emergency. For instance, in difficult situation or when something or someone perceived to be ones enemy or blocking stone cross one's path unexpectedly. One of such *ofò* that is often adopted in this situation is one that has to do with *Àfòṣẹ* (magic spell). *Àfòṣẹ* is being regarded as “the most powerful aspect of traditional medicine” (Makinde, 1988: 92). This kind of charm has its activating *ofò* which could but not limited to this:

Abe ki ko se ori
 Ọrọ tí òkété bá ti bálẹ sọ, nilẹ n gbọ
 Bí egúngún bá tẹrí gbasọ a pòundà
 Bí adię bá gun orí abà a pòundà
 Lónií, ohùn ibi dá lóri èmi lágbájá ọmọ lákáṣẹgbè
 Ohùn ibi wa dá lóri lágbájá ọmọ tẹmẹdù

In the same vein there are *ofò* that could be used to manipulate situation and through which individuals could be hypnotised to get things that ordinarily the person will not release willingly. This kind of *ofò* is categorized under *Máyẹhùn, Apèta, Apèpa, Olúgbòhùn*, etc. An instance of this is “*ohun a wi f'ogbó l'ogbó n gbó, ohun a wi f'ogbà l'ogbà n gbà, ohun ti mob a wi fun lagbaja ni ki o gba ẹ* – whatever is said to the ogbo leaf it hears, whatever is said to ogba (the receiver) it receives, whatever, I tell (name of the person) must be accepted

However, as we have *ofò* that could be used to dispel unwanted situation in form of soliloquy, so also available *ofò* that could be used in form of dialogue while in tight corner. An example of this is when one encounter mysterious being that is trying to attack one with evil. In this kind of situation someone that is well informed in Yorùbá medicine with prior *Àsẹjẹ* or *Àjẹsára* encounter like “*Òòrùn kì í ràn kó má fori sọgiri, iwájú ilé àti èyìn ilé kì í ríra wọn, bí o bi mí ọyọ̀n rẹ kọ ni mo mu*, the other party may reply by asking *ọyọ̀n ta lo mu bí kì í ẹ tẹmi?* To this the best and victorious response is *ọyọ̀n Elédúmarè/Ọlórún*. Thus, if one knows the secret names of death and the grave, one would live till ripe age. Olatunji (1984:141-142) gives an instance:

Apanisígbómóde là á pekú
 Ó ní ẹnì bá mọ òun ní Apanisígbómogbe
 Ó ní òun kò ní pa olúwa rẹ ní kékeré
 Ọdàràmogbò n là á pe kòtò tí wọn ọ̀n gbé òkú sí
 Ó ní ẹnì tó bá mo orúko òun
 Ó ní òun kò ní gba olúwa rẹ sọdò ní kékeré

Meaning

Apanisígbómóde is what we call death
 He says whoever knows him as Apanisígbómogbe
 He says he will not kill that person in his youth
 Ọdàràmogbò is what we call the pit into which corpses are put
 He says whoever knows his name
 He says he will not take that person to himself in his youth.

To do this, the content of this *ofò* needs to be internalized by the user just as language is being internalized. Hence, *ofò* is a form of language that could be classified as artificial language for it shares virtually all the attributes of artificial language. And just as language determines human action so does *ofò* determine the effectiveness of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá traditional medicine. The determinate effect of *ofò* as lubricant of *Oògùn* could be backward looking, forward looking, prediction and it possibility of collapsing the distinction between action and event in favour of the latter (see Momoh, 1982:20). This nature of *ofò* is not unconnected with Momoh (1981:20) explanation of the theory of determinism which itself is the doctrine that every event in the world is the inevitable outcome of previous events. The previous events in this sense *shares striking similarities with ofò* that percolate the efficacy and efficiency of charm (*Oògùn*) in Yorùbá traditional medicine. Though, “not all incantations are accompaniment to herbal preparations; there are many

which operate by the sheer power of being spoken. The spoken names, the origins and incidents alluded to, the symbolic correspondence between the name of an agent and some external activity and the force in the incantatory agents are believed to work the desired effect once the wishes of the enchanter are spoken (Olatunji, 1984:145).

Thus, the application of *ofò* differs in its usage. We have some *ofò* that are recited once, especially at the point of administering the *Oògùn* (charm). This is common with incision (*gbéré*) and medicinal ring (*òrùka*). Some are recited prior the usage as in *gbètugbètu*, *àbámódá*, *idán*, etc., while some are recited at the preparation stage. For instance, *Gbetugbetu*, is an incantation use during crisis. With *gbetugbetu*, words spoken are powerful commands that must be followed. It can be used for protection, for example to force an enemy to put down a gun; but it also has an enormous potential for harm to, for instance, to compel an enemy to jump off of a cliff (Makinke, 1984, Borokinni & Lawal 2014:27). Aside this, Olatunji (1984:167) posits that “some *ofò* are uttered on herbal preparations before the concoctions are used.” The question that do strike the mind is how reliable is the potency of *ofò*? Is it in all cases that *ofò* works? What of the situation when two people engage in warfare and both are using *ofò* to counter each other? These questions are raised not to be answered in this discourse but to really show that for effectiveness or otherwise of *ofò* human agent is seen as one of the decisive antecedent causative factors or elements. In such a situation, however, we say that the outcome of the occurrence could possibly have turned out otherwise, if the human agent acted other than the way he did (Momoh, 1982:19). It is in this sense that the fundamentality of taboo in the usage of *ofò* becomes imperatives. There are rules and regulations that needed to be guided jealously for effectiveness of *ofò* in order for its functionality. These rules and regulations are coined as taboos in Yoruba worldview. Olatunji (1984:140) put this in a perspective when he state “the man who performs incantation often has some taboos to observe or some actions to take so that the utterances may be effective, e.g. the chewing of alligator pepper who acts as a catalytic by the nature of its hotness, or the tasting of some preparations stuffed into a deer’s horn (*afose*).” He explains further that “the user of an *ofò* may be asked to observe some taboos in order that the *ofò* may be effective. He may be asked to utter some *ofò* thrice or seven times or he may not cohabit with his wife or greet anyone before he uses the *ofò*. Some rites may have to be performed by the enchanter while he utters the *ofò* (Olatunji, 1984:166). Beyond this, name is very vital for the effectiveness of *ofò* in actualizing the potency of *Oògùn* in Yoruba society. By name, it is meant the primordial names, that is, names that are not commonly known. They are the unusual names which familiar divinities and objects bear in the incantations. Olatunji (1984:142) gives some instances one of which is:

Olasunlola loruko a a pAje
Olasunloro loruko aa pEsu Odara
Ojinikutukutu-bomi-orò-boju loruko a a peyin iya mi

Meaning

Honour-sleeps-in-honour is the name call Aje

Honou-sleeps-in-wealth is the name call Esu Odara

One-who-wakes-early-to-wash-his-face-with-water-of-wealth is the name we call you, my mothers.

The possibility of the relation of *ofò* and *Oògùn* to the extent of seeing *ofò* as lubricant of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá medicine might not appeal to common sense or a scientific mind in the contemporary age. However, it is against this backdrop that we tend to disprove the scientific claim to the fact that for anything to constitute reality, it must be empirically established. Hence, the next point of call interrogates the possibility of *ofò* as a lubricant of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá traditional medicine.

***Ofò* as a Lubricant of *Oògùn*: A Philosophical Analysis**

The concept of *ofò* and *Oògùn* could be philosophically analyzed with reference to language and metaphysics. This claim suggests the fact that language in its entirety is a medium of communication while metaphysics is the study of reality as such. Be that as it may, one is poised to interrogate the possibility of *ofò* being the lubricant of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá medicine because *ofò* possesses both the attribute of language and metaphysics. As argued earlier *ofò* qualify to be categorized as language in the sense that its attributes are similar to what is attributable to artificial language, that is, rule guided language which needs to be learned as against ordinary language that one grew up to understand and use naturally without learning. It is also metaphysical as the relationship and/or causal relation between it (*ofò*) and *Oògùn* could only be established metaphysically. In order to justify the above claim, it is pertinent to make recourse to the fact that “for ages linguistic interpretation has been one of the herculean task that every users of linguistic expression grapple with”

(Oladipupo, 2013:94). This reality is enshrined in Wittgenstein's (1977) who defines language as "the totality of propositions which picture reality. That is propositions which describe the State of affairs – the material world as it is." The acceptance of this definition of language to an extent lends credence to *ofò* as a form of language for the wordings that are put together in creating *ofò* is a collection of proposition. The fact that *ofò* serves as a medium of activating the potency of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá traditional medicine could be claimed to have shared inalienable legitimacy with language which according to Laleye (2000:130) is "a medium through which reality is brought to the level of expression and understanding."

The above possibility, therefore, suggests that the way *ofò* operates is similar to the way the mind communicates with each other. This could be linked to Bloomfield (1935:139) who exemplified behaviours and the crisis of linguistic expression *inter-alia* "... meaning of a linguistic form ... is "the situation in which the speaker utters it and the response which it calls forth in the hearer," just as in *ohun a wí f'ògbò l'ògbò n'gbò, ohun a wí f'ògbà l'ògbà n'gbà*, therefore, it is arguable that "the ritual incantation expresses the conviction that the *no mmo*, i.e the word or 'logo' alone has total power over the force of nature" (Ndubuisi & Okoro, 2005:15). This implies that, though conjuring of *ofò* is often done privately, its effect is always open at long run. This in a way negates Descartes' *introspectionism* that presupposes the establishment of the existence of self before other things. This probable negation is an offshoot of the fact that in Yorùbá traditional medicine *ofò* is the primary aspect of virtually all charms (*Oògùn*) either at the preparation stage or at the stage of use. This conform to one of the major attributes of language as articulated by Tucker (1981:16) that, "for any human procedure the public aspect of that procedure must be the primary aspect. That whenever there is a private procedure, or a private aspect of some procedure, this private component must be secondary and derived from, dependent upon, some public procedure which is primary." The relevance of this argument as related to *ofò* and *Oògùn* is built on the assumed possibility of *ofò* being the lubricant of *Oògùn*. Thus, it is suggestive to argue that the essence of *Oògùn* is meaningful if and only if it is accompanied by relevant *ofò* which is believed to be the activator of the potency of *Oògùn*.

Given the preponderance reality of public nature of language, it follows just as Tucker (1981:15) argues that "the famous *cogito* of Descartes cannot occupy the primary position accorded to it by him." By implication, *introspectionism* as a practice could not really hold water-tight as language more importantly that the effect of *ofò* in the activation of the potency of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá society is metaphysical in nature. This assumption in what could be termed *logico-metaphysico* principle is enough to knock out the verification principle of the logical positivists on which the plausibility of the causal relation between *ofò* and *Oògùn* could be refuted. This is because "solution to the problem that we are discussing is, briefly, that any experiments that are devised *presuppose* that our problem has *already* been resolved. We cannot find the solution to our problem by experiment simply because whatever experiments are *allowed* as legitimate depends upon the solution to our problem. So trying to investigate it by experimental means lands us in vicious circle" (Tucker, 1981:16).

Thus, the argument that the possibility of *ofò* lubricating *Oògùn* as mythical might end up grappling with the epistemological question of the relationship between mythical beliefs, thoughts, conceptions and reality. But as this could be used to attempt a refutation of the reality of *ofò* by the scientists, especially the logical positivists, the claim that mythical thought is ancestral to scientific thought seems to negate its validity for if this is correct, we have *prima facie* reason for the view that there is no unbridgeable gulf between the world of myths and the world of science (Fashina, 1981:32). It is in this sense that we tend to form an alliance with Fashina (1981:33) to agree with Quine that mythical world is language-dependent, mythical language simplifies the myth believer's reports of the world and make mythical action intelligible (in some sense), as conceptual schemes in science contribute to the success of scientific practice (see Fashina, 1981:33), so is the role of *ofò* which is metaphysical in nature to the effectiveness of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá society. This presupposes the fact that the workings of *ofò* might not be known to empirically-minded scientists with their understanding of causation which differs from the Yoruba understanding of causation. Falola (2016:139) reveals Yoruba understanding of causation in relation to medicine and disease when he argues that "the concept of causation in indigenous practice is not just about science of disease but also about the spiritual forces that cause diseases and trouble the mind."

Therefore, the question of the causal relation between *ofò* and *Oògùn* as may be raised by logical positivists is beyond what could be established with object. Most of the plants, animals and objects referred to in *ofò* are often items in herbal medicinal compounds on which the incantations are spoken (Olatunji, 1984:151). This account for the endeavour of the philosophers to spell out what differentiates the real from unreal, it follows that all that could be done to relate the reality of the causal connection between *ofò* and

Oògùn is to bring out the important features of reality. Using Oluwole's (1978:22) illustration in this light will help to unload the burden of the required causal connection. She writes:

When something is described as real, the first distinction that is commonly drawn is between the 'real' as physical and the 'unreal' as abstract. Hence quality (e.g., redness) will be unreal in this sense while a chair will be real. Next, we speak of different level of reality. Redness, for instance, is real because there are instances of red things in the world. Hence, although there is no tangible object which we can refer to as redness, philosophers still regard it as real in its own way, though having no objective independent existence.

It is apposite here to contend that just as redness has no tangible object that qualify it to be real and yet linked with red, so is the relation of *ofò* and *Oògùn*. Though this cannot be empirically demonstrated, it is however tenable within the belief of the Yorùbá and the preponderance of metaphysics as that field of philosophical discourse that presupposes that "a theory do not necessarily have to refer to physical insatiable entities" (Oluwole, 1978:22). That is, "metaphysical speculations do not usually refer to anything empirically insatiable" (Oluwole, 1978:22). The implication of this metaphysical postulation is that denying the role of *ofò* in sustaining the potency of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá traditional belief (because it does not designate something tangible or observable nor does it refer to something that has an independent existence either in the sense of being actual or true is unfounded and metaphysically illogical. This, of course), does not rule out the possibility of *ofò* as lubricant that enhance the potency of *Oògùn* in Yorùbá belief having a metaphysical reality, which is the hallmark of African philosophy. Should Oluwole's submission as quoted earlier fails to put to rest any doubt about the causal relation of *ofò* and the potency of *Oògùn* in Yoruba traditional medicine as may be raised by the logical positivists, we, tend to leave the logical positivists with the puzzle whether metaphysical and ethical issues are not philosophy, or whether a world view must be scientific in order to be properly called philosophical worldview? This aptly shares some affinity with Falola (2016:139) that "the concept of causation in indigenous practice is not just about science of disease but also about the spiritual forces that cause diseases and troubled the mind.

Conclusion

This paper, within its scope, synthesizes the relevancies of *ofò* to the effectiveness of *Oògùn* in enhancing the potency of *Oògùn* in traditional Yoruba society. It refuted the logical positivist and empiricist claim to establish a physical connection between cause and effect. This is built on the presupposition of Fashina, (1981:33) that "mythical world is language-dependent, mythical language simplifies the myth believer's reports of the world and make mythical action intelligible (in some sense), as conceptual schemes in science contribute to the success of scientific practice," so is the role of *ofò* which is metaphysical to actualizing the potency of *Oògùn* in Yoruba worldview. It is hoped that given the foregoing, the epistemological question of the relationship between cause and effect as may be held on to by the scientists, especially the logical positivists, to negate the effectiveness of *ofò* as a lubricant to *Oògùn* will not be a subject of contention for the effect of the scientific orthodox medicine could also not be traced except by the actions and inactions of the users and/or patients. This reflects the possibility of metaphysical connection between *ofò* and *Oògùn*, as that which moves from the unknown to the known as metaphysics studies reality from the abstract to physical in establishing ultimate reality, hence, the workings of *ofò* might not be known to empirically-minded scientists with their understanding of causation which differs from the Yoruba understanding of causation.

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