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Contributors

1. Adesanya, Ahmed O.
Dept. of African Languages, Literatures &
Communication Arts,
Lagos State University, Ojo
2. Afisi, Oseni Taiwo
Dept. of Philosophy
Lagos State University, Ojo
3. Aja, Ngozi Chukwuemeka
Dept. of Philosophy
University of Port Harcourt
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4. Akande, Michael Aina
Dept. of Philosophy
Lagos State University, Ojo
5. Amara, E. Ani,
Dept. of Philosophy
University of Lagos
Akoka
6. Amosu, Kehinde Olorunwa
Dept. of Philosophy,
Lagos State University, Ojo
7. Fashola, Joseph Omokafe
Dept. of Religious Studies & Philosophy,
College of Humanities, Redeemer's
University, Ede, Osun State
8. Ikeke, Mark Omorovie
Dept. of Religious Studies & Philosophy
Delta State University
Abraka
9. Johnson-Bashua, Adepeju Olufemi
Dept. of Religions & Peace Studies
Lagos State University
Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria
10. Kuponu, Selome
Dept. of Religions & Peace Studies
Lagos State University
Ojo, Lagos
11. Moshood, Abdul-Wasi, Babatunde
Dept. of Political Science
Lagos State University
Ojo, Lagos
12. Offor, Francis
Dept. of Philosophy
University of Ibadan
Ibadan / Dean, Faculty of Humanities
Management & Social Sciences
Dominican University, Ibadan
13. Olatade, Damilola Peter
Dept. of Philosophy,
Lagos State University, Nigeria
14. Olubunmi, David
Dept. of Philosophy
Prince Abubakar Audu University
Anyigba
15. Osawaru, Osamede Christopher
Dept. of Philosophy, University of Benin,
Benin-City,
Edo State, Nigeria.
16. Oyekan, Adeolu O.
Nelson Mandela University
Port Elizabeth
South Africa
17. Paramole, Kabir Olawale
Dept. of Religions & Peace Studies
Lagos State University, Ojo
18. Sanni, Mubarak Oluwadamilola
PG Student, Dept. of Religions & Peace
Studies
Lagos State University, Ojo
19. Surakat, Ajibola Moruph
Dept. of Philosophy
Olabisi Onabanjo University
Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State.

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Geomantic Code as Nonverbal Communication in Yorùbá Novels

Adesanya, Ahmed O.

Abstract

Nonverbal communication accounts for a greater percentage of communication and unveils expressions, feelings, emotions, passions, etc. Geomantic code, which is a form of non-verbal communication, has hardly received attention from scholars especially as it functions in the Yorùbá novel. The theory of semiotics which is concerned with communication was adopted while the data were subjected to semiotic and textual analyses. Six Yorùbá novels, viz: Gbòbaníyí, Eégún Alaré, Şaworoide, Ika Àbámò, Ògbójú Ode, Nínú Igbó Irúnmoḽè and Ìrìnkèrindò Nínú Igbó Elégbèje were purposively selected because of the presence of geomantic codes in them. Findings reveal that geomantic codes (Ifá and kolanuts) operated in the cultural context and symbolically signified meaning cum interpretation of dreams, predestination, cause of barrenness in women and proffering solution, resolution of socio-political upheavals in the community and the predictable outcome of a day's venture. Geomantic code, as non-verbal communication helps in a deeper understanding of the novels.

Keywords: geomantic code; semiotics, textual analysis, Yorùbá novels

Introduction

Geomantic code is a non-verbal communicative system that is ingeniously employed by Yorùbá novelists in this study. Guiraud (1975:59-65) classifies divination under geomantic codes. He maintains that geomantic codes constitute the art of divination and the means of communicating with the gods, the beyond or destiny. In Yorùbá society, there are many systems of divination. Ajayi (1996), points out some forms of Yoruba methods of divination, some of which are èrìndínlógún (casting of sixteen cowries), obì dídà, (casting of kolanut), omi wíwò (water gazing), agbigba (employment of a set of separate strings with four markers each), iyanrìn títè (sand cutting), omi wíwò (water gazing), ọwọ́ wíwò (palmistry), owó wíwò (money gazing), abókúúsòrò (necromancy) and wíwo ojú (eye gazing).

However, among all these systems, according to Bascom (1969), *Ifá* or *Orúnmilá* is the most important, most dependable and most popular. This view is corroborated by Abimbólá (1976:9) who avers that *Ifá* is the Yorùbá god of wisdom and one of the most important Yorùbá deities. He notes:

Without *Ifá*, the importance of the other Yorùbá gods would diminish...

with his great wisdom, knowledge and understanding, *Ifá* coordinates the work of all the gods in the Yorùbá pantheon. He serves as a middle-man between the other gods and the people, and between the people and their ancestors. He is the mouthpiece and the public relations officer of all the other Yorùbá gods.

The wide acknowledgement, acceptance and general use of *Ifá* from among the various methods of divination by the novelists in this work may not be unconnected with Abímbòlá's (1976) assertion about it; *Ifá* is widely consulted by the characters to investigate the diverse aspects of human life in the society. However, the non-verbal sign systems of *Ifá* are interpreted into verbal communicative codes to the client by the *Ifá* priest. When characters are confused, troubled, in doubt, disturbed, they go to consult the *Ifá* priest.

Theoretical Framework

In the sub-section below, we discuss the theory on which this analysis is anchored. The theory adopted in this study is semiotics. Semiotics is a communication/signification theory that investigates sign systems and the modes of representation that human beings and animals use to convey feelings, emotions, thoughts, ideas and ideologies. Semiotics is rarely considered a field of study in its own right; however, it is used in a broad range of disciplines, including medicine, science, arts, literature, anthropology, sociology and mass media. Semiotics attracts cultural and psychological patterns that underlie communication and other cultural expressions. It is the study of the action of signs. In the words of Eco (1976: 7):

Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands for it. Thus semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie. If something can not be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used "to tell" at all. I think that the definition of a "theory of the lie" should be taken as a pretty comprehensive program for a general semiotics.

A synthesis of Eco's views above indicates that semiotics is something that can be used to represent something else. It equally shows that semiotics may be used to mislead because it can represent or stand for the truth as well as a lie. If one considers, for instance, someone who puts on a wig of red colour and whose hair colour is black, one may believe that such a person has red hair. This is a lie and, therefore, misleading even though it is harmless. In the

Yorùbá culture, when the head is raised up and brought down immediately, it is a non-verbal sign for giving approval for something. This same sign may be used to tell a lie for the same thing. Equally, dyeing a cloth from its original colour of white to blue or pink and dyeing of a mat from its original colour of brown to another colour are examples of lie and may mislead.

Semiotics is not a new phenomenon. According to the *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology and Ethics* (2006) the Sophist, Procticus (c. 460 – 395 B.C.E.) based his teachings on the practical idea that properly chosen words are germane to effective communication. Challenging this notion that words possess some universal, objective meaning, Plato (427 – 347 B.C.E.) delved into the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign and suggested that there must be a separation between an object and the name that is used to signify that object: “Any name which you give in my opinion, is the right one, and if you change that and give another, the new name is as correct as the old.” (*Cratylus*, 360 B.C.E.). Also, Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.E.) recognized that the linguistic sign is instrumental in nature observing that human thought proceeds by the use of signs and that spoken words are the symbols of mental experience, (*On Interpretation*, 350 B.C.E.). Six centuries later, Augustine of Hippas (354 – 430 A.D.), elaborated on this instrumental role of signs in the process of human learning and averred: “All instruction is either about things or about signs; but things are learned by means of signs” (*On Christian Doctrine*, 1:2).

The encyclopedia further maintains that semiotic consciousness became well-articulated in the Middle Ages, due largely to the work of Roger Bacon (1214–1293). (The writing, *De Signis* (c. 1267) Bacon distinguished natural signs (i.e. smoke signifies fire) from those that have to do with human communication (both verbal and non-verbal signs). Bacon introduced a triadic semiotic model that describes the relationship between a sign, its object of reference, and the human interpreter. This triad remains a fundamental concept within the modern study of semiotics. John Poinset (John of St. Thomas, 1589-1644) elaborated on the triad, laying down a fundamental science of signs in his work *Tractatus de Signis*, (1632). Poinset observed that signs are relative beings whose existence consists solely in presenting to human awareness that which they themselves are not. It was the British philosopher, John Locke (1632–1704), who finally gave a name to the study of signs. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke declared that the “semiotic doctrine of signs” should be one of the three major branches of science along with natural philosophy and practical ethics (Locke, 1690:XXI). The word *Semeiotika* is still used in Italy to refer to the study of symptoms in medical science.

However, modern day semiotics can be traced to two important per-

sonalities according to Chandler (2006). The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) who is regarded as the father of linguistics, and the pragmatist philosopher and logician, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) are associated with semiotics of the modern day. Saussure uses the term “semi-ology” and the term is generally adopted by scholars who belong to the same school of thought with him. Saussure explains that semiology is the science that has to do with the study of signs in the society. According to Saussure (1974:33):

Language is a system of signs that expresses ideas, and is therefore comparable to writing, to the deaf-mute alphabet, to symbolic rites, to codes of good manners, to military signals, etc. A science that studies the life of signs in society is therefore conceivable: it would be a part of general psychology; we shall call it semiology (from the Greek *semeion*, ‘sign’). Semiology would teach us what signs are made of and what laws govern their behaviour. Since this science does not yet exist, no one can say quite what it will be like, but it has a right to exist and it has a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology: the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics and the latter will therefore find itself linked to a well defined area within the totality of facts in the human sciences.

Saussure in the above quotation argues that semiology is a very wide subject to the extent that linguistics is only a branch of it. Semiology, according to Saussure determines the constituent of sign and the rules that govern it. On the other hand, the American logician, Charles Sanders Peirce terms the general theory of the action of signs *semiotics*. This term, as expected, has been adopted by the scholars who toe his path. Peirce (1931–58, 2. 227) relays:

I hope to have shown that logic in its general acceptance is merely another word for semiotics, a quasi-necessary or formal doctrine of signs. In describing the doctrine as ‘quasi-necessary’, or formal, I have in mind the fact that we observe the nature of such signs as best we can, and, on the basis of fine observations, by a process which I do not hesitate to call Abstraction, we are led to eminently necessary judgements concerning what must be the nature of the signs used by the scientific intellect.

While Saussure emphasizes the social function of the sign, Peirce emphasizes its logical function. Both aspects are closely correlated and today, the two words ‘semiology’ and ‘semiotics’ refer to the same discipline with the Europeans using the former and the Americans using the latter. Peirce (1931–58, 1. 538) opines that “every thought is a sign.” Contemporary semioticians study signs not in isolation but as part of semiotic sign systems (such as a medium

or genre). They study how meanings are made, being concerned not only with communication but also with the construction and maintenance of reality. Today, both 'semiology' and 'semiotics' are regarded as semiotics.

The concept of sign is also significant in the study of semiotics. A sign is something that is used to represent or stand for another thing. According to the *New World Encyclopaedia* (2011:1)

It may be understood as a discrete unit of meaning, and includes words, images, gestures, scents, tastes, textures, sounds – essentially all of the ways in which information can be communicated as a message by any sentient, reasoning mind to another.

The opinion found in the *New World Encyclopaedia* is that communication of message is the concern of sign. In semiotics, Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure have seemingly similar views about the form of sign. While Saussure offers a dyadic or two-part model of the sign, Peirce offers a triadic or a three-part model. According to Saussure, the sign is composed of the signifier (signifiant) which is the form the sign takes and the signified (signifié) which is the concept the sign stands for. The sign is therefore the outcome of the affiliation of the signifier with the signified. In Saussure (1974:67), the relationship between the signifier and the signified is therefore referred to as signification. Saussure insists that a sign must have both the signifier and the signified and that there cannot be a totally meaningless or unpurposed signifier or a wholly formless signified (Saussure 1974:103).

On the other hand, Peirce offers a triadic model of the sign. He refers to the form which the sign takes as *representamen* which he claims may not necessarily be material, the sense made of the sign is termed as *interpretant* (not an interpreter) and finally, the thing to which the sign refers to is labeled *object*. According to Peirce (1931–58; 2: 228)

A sign (in the form of a representamen) is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that code, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of ideas, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen.

A look at Peirce's definition shows that his model of the sign includes an object which is absent in Saussure's model. However, the representamen shares the same meaning with Saussure's signifier while the interpretant is an equivalent of the signified.

Sign has been defined by various authors, especially semioticians. For instance, Barthes (1964:1) in his definition of semiology states:

Semiology therefore aims to take in any *system of signs*, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification.

Barthes explicates that semiology is concerned with every system of signs but maintains that non-verbal signs are conveyed in a linguistic message (p. 2). Also, Hawkes (1977:7) referring to Jakobson takes all message to be sign and semiotics as comprising all the principles through which the structure of the signs, their functions within messages, their systems, the various messages they exude through verbal and non-verbal are based.

Eco (1976:16) offers a definition of sign based on his reference to Morris (1938) with modification:

I propose to define as a sign *everything* that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as *something standing for something else*. In other terms I would like to accept the definition proposed by Morris (1938) according to which "something is a sign only because it is interpreted as a sign of something by some interpreter... Semiotics, then, is not concerned with the study of a particular kind of objects, but with ordinary objects in so far (and only in so far) as they participate in semiosis."

Eco is of the opinion that sign is everything that stands for something else. However, he believes that there must have been an earlier established social rule to validate *something* that *stands for something else*. In his modification of Morris's definition, he says "the interpretation by an interpreter, which would seem to characterize a sign, must be understood as the *possible* interpretation by a *possible* interpreter" (p. 16). What Eco is trying to put forward is that sign must be socially acceptable as sign in the communal environment where it is regarded as a sign.

Signification is equally important in this study. According to Saussure (1974:114), signification is the relationship between the two parts of the sign, which is the signifier and the signified. Barthes (1964:33) also agrees with Saussure that signification is not the 'thing', but the mental representation of the 'thing', which is the concept. He maintains that signification is the association of the signifier with the signified but points out that the association is arbitrary. Eco (1976:8) explains that "a signification system is an autonomous semiotic construct that has an abstract mode of existence independent of any

possible communicative act it makes possible.” A synthesis of the authors’ views above on signification shows that it is the outcome of the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Signification is further subdivided into three, these are: symbol/symbolic, icon/iconic and index/indexical. However, only the symbolic signification is relevant to this study especially because it relates to divination.

Symbolic Signification

According to Chandler (2006:49), symbolic signification is a mode in which the signifier does not have any resemblance with the signified which is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional – that the relationship must be studied. Examples are language (alphabetical letters, punctuation marks, words, phrases and sentences), numbers, Morse code, traffic lights, national flags, etc. The symbolic signification does not have a natural link between the form and the thing represented, but only has a conventional link. The traffic sign of an inverted triangle is such symbol, as a matter of fact; it shares no natural link between its form and its meaning, ‘give right of way’. The link between its form and meaning is purely conventional. The same may be said of military emblems, the naira sign ₦, almost all flags and all languages. Thus there is no natural connection between the Yorùbá word *sá lọ* (run away) and its meaning. According to William et. al. (2004:90), the term *symbolic* as used in linguistics is understood in the sense that, by general consent, people have “agreed” upon the pairing of a particular form with a particular meaning. This sense of *symbolic* goes back to the original meaning of the Greek word *symbolon* ‘a token of recognition’ used between two guests or friends, e.g. a ring broken into two halves, which allowed them to identify each other after a long time by matching the two parts and checking whether they fit together. The two halves of the ring are inseparable, just like the form of a word and its meaning.

William et al. (2004:91) further argue that symbolic signs are the exclusive prerogative of humans. In other words, other lower animals cannot make use of symbolic signs. The authors maintain that human beings have more communicative needs than pointing to things and replicating things. Also, man wants to talk about things which are more abstract in nature such as events in the past or future, objects which are distant from him, hopes about peace and a host of others. They believe that all these can only be achieved by means of symbols which humans all over the world have created for the purpose of communicating all possible thoughts.

According to Danesi (2004:31–33), a symbol stands for its referent in a conventional way. A cross figure can stand for the concept “Christianity”;

white can stand for “cleanliness,” “purity,” “innocence,” and dark for “uncleanness,” “impurity,” and “corruption.” The author expresses that symbolism is more prevalent in mathematics and science than any other area of human endeavour pointing out that the science of geometry, as an example, has helped human beings solve engineering dilemmas since ancient times. Symbol equally plays a role in religious life – the Cross symbolizes Christ’s death and all Christian beliefs. The Star of David represents Jewish teachings. People throughout the world have agreed on certain symbols to serve as a short-hand system for recording and recalling information. Every branch of science has its own information system—astronomy uses a set of ancient symbols to identify the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars; in mathematics, Greek letters and other symbols make up an abbreviated language. Specific kinds of symbols appear in such fields as commerce, engineering, medicine, packaging and transportation. All the countries of the world have official or unofficial national symbols. A flag or an anthem may symbolize a nation. In Nigeria, for example, two horses facing each other and raising their forearms to carry an eagle is the symbol for the country. The United States is symbolized by Uncle Sam and the statue of Liberty. Canada is symbolized by the maple leaf while John Bull stands for England.

Commenting on the arbitrariness of symbolic signification, Johansen and Larsen (2002:43) declare:

Negatively symbolic signs are characterized by being arbitrary, unmotivated, i.e. neither connected to the object nor similar to it. In other words, it is not their own characteristics that make them signs, as with iconic signs; nor is there a natural bond between sign and object, as with indexical signs. Instead, symbolic signs are constructed or agreed upon to be used as signs for given purposes in the internal or external world, i.e. as conventional designations with a referentiality and a meaning that are determined by conventional usage.

The authors above pinpoint that there is no relationship whatsoever between the symbolic sign and what it stands for. Language is a good example of symbolic sign. If we take the word *ewé* which translates to ‘leaf’ in English, we see that there is no bond or association in any form between the word and the object it represents. We may decide to give the same name to *igi* (tree). However, there must be a communal consensus. An illustration is given from Fágúnwà’s *Ìrìnkèrindò Nínú Igbó Elégbèje* below:

Baálè fún èbò ní obì àbàtà mēfà, èbò la mèjì sí wéwé. Ó mú òkan, ó sì ní kí wọn pín iyókù kárí (p. 29)

(Baálè gave six pieces of kola *acuminate* to the white man. The white

man broke two into pieces, took one and asked them to share the rest among all.)

In the text above, the present given to the white man (six pieces of kola *acuminata*), a particular kind of kolanut is *àrokò*, a Yorùbá symbolic nonverbal communication. The kola is used to encode an offer of friendship by the *baálè* to the white man. Although both the object (kolanuts) and the number (six) presented are symbolic, they have a great tie with what they connote in Yorùbá sociocultural context.

Methodology

Textual and semiotic analyses are adopted as research methodology in this paper. The reason for their adoption is that both methods are not only relevant to qualitative data analysis but also to non-verbal communication which is pertinent to this study.

Textual analysis can be stated as the scrutiny of a text with a view to finding the most likely interpretations from that text. It is where the analyst must decentre the text to reconstruct it, working back through the narrative's mediations of form, appearance, rhetoric and style to uncover the underlying social and historical processes that guided the production. McKee (2003: 1) states:

Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology—a data gathering process—for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live. Textual analysis is good for researchers working in cultural studies, in mass communication, and perhaps even in sociology and philosophy.

According to Halliday (1978: 136), inside the text is a semantic unit containing specific textual components which makes it 'internally cohesive' and functioning 'as a whole as the relevant environment for the operation of the theme and information system'. The idea that Halliday is trying to convey is that the textual analyst is guided by the textual component of the text in his/her analysis. This idea is buttressed by Hall (1980) who, applying the theory of encoding and decoding, maintains that an ideology is encoded into the text which the textual analyst decodes but warns that the autonomy of the analyst must not be abused due to the polysemic nature of the text.

Every text which is produced can be seen to have a function in the environment in which it is created. Whenever a text producer (speaker or

writer) uses language, whether verbal or non-verbal, he or she does so with particular communicative objectives in mind. In different contexts, human communication is a fundamentally wilful endeavour, the primary role of which is to fulfil personal or social needs in some ways. According to Gavins (2007) a participant may use text as a form of creative expression to inform, question, deceive, argue, command, request or fulfil some other objective in a multifarious range of possibilities. However, it is not sure that the producer of a text and their reader and/or listener shares the same perspectives. The reasons for the disagreement that normally occurs between authors and their readers may be traced to the factors which normally influence the production of the text as posited by Gavins (2007: 59):

The immediate physical surroundings, the previous experiences of the participants involved, as well as their positions within a wider cultural community, have as a great role to play in the communicative process as the content and structure of the language at its core. Human communication is not simply the transmission of a predetermined message from participant A to participant B by means of a fixed linguistic code. It is a dynamic context-driven process involving the online negotiation of meaning and purpose by all those involved.

Some elements of semiotics are also used in the analysis of data in this study. Semiotic concepts like the sign, signification (symbolic) and code are employed in the analysis. Semiotic elements are adopted to interpret data beyond the text.

Analysis

In *Gbọbaniyi*, Bámdélé's mother goes to consult an *Ifá* priest after a dream that puts her in confusion about her son, Bámdélé, who is in London:

Ọkọ Ìyá Aláró wọ àpótí m'òdò, ó jókòó. Ìyá Bámdélé nàà gbé àpótí tirẹ. Léyìn tí Ìyá Bámdélé tí ẹ̀ ẹ̀ àlàyé bí òun tí ẹ̀ lá àlá nàà tán, ọkọ Ìyá Aláró kò ẹ̀pòpò ẹ̀ méjì, ó dídè bọ̀ ẹ̀pò ifá rẹ̀ légbẹ̀ẹ̀ ọ̀giri. Gbàrà tí ọkọ Ìyá Aláró na ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀ mọ̀lẹ̀, ọ̀dù Ìwòrì-Méjì ló jáde. Ó kì í síwá ó kì í sẹ̀yìn. 'Kí ni a fẹ̀ fún ẹ̀niyàn tí kò gbà á lówọ̀ ẹ̀ni? Ẹ̀ni nàà ni mò ní wò lókèèrè yí. A wulẹ̀ ní ẹ̀ é ni, ire nàà kò tẹ̀ onítòhún lẹ̀rùn. Ká jáwọ̀ nńbẹ̀.' (pp. 28-20)

(The husband of Ìyá Aláró draws a stool to himself and sits down. Bámdélé's mother too, also takes her own stool. After Bámdélé's mother had explained how she dreamed to him, iya alaro's husband straightly goes to unhang his *Ifá* divination bag from the wall. As soon as Ìyá Aláró's husband casts the ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀ on the ground, the sign of Ìwòrì-Méjì features. He chants it up and down. 'What do we intend to offer someone who is not willing to accept from us? I am looking at that person

from a far distance. We are only bothering ourselves; the person is not satisfied by it. Let us desist from doing it.’)

Bámdélé’s parents, in the novel, are planning to marry a wife on his behalf and send her to him in London. In the process, Bámdélé’s mother dreamed a dream which throws her into confusion. This makes her to consult the *Ifá* priest, who divines with his non-verbal divination object – *òpèlẹ̀ seed* which later reveals a symbolic signification of Bámdélé’s refusal in accepting the bride.

In *Eégún Aláré*, geomantic code is employed in the investigation of the destiny of *Ọjẹ̀ Lárinnàkà’s* son when he was born:

Nígba tí wọn kómọ náà tán, àwọn ara ilé bàbá rẹ̀ gbé e lọ s’ílẹ̀ babaláwo láti wọn èsẹ̀ntáyé rẹ̀ wò. Nígba tí babaláwo dá ifá, ỌSÁ MÉJÌ ní odù tí ó yọ lójú ọpọ̀n... Babalawo sọ fún wọn pé irú isẹ̀ tí bàbá ọmọ náà n ẹ̀ se ni ọmọ tuntun náà yóò se pẹ̀lú; ọmọ náà yóò sì lókíkí púpọ̀ ju bàbá rẹ̀ lọ lẹ̀nu isẹ̀ náà. (pp. 7-8)

(When they have christened the baby, his father’s kinsmen take him to the babalawo’s house to examine his destiny. When the babalawo divines, ỌSÁ MÉJÌ is the divinatory sign that appears on the Ifa divination tray... babalawo explains to them that the baby will take after the father’s occupation and that the baby will be more popular than his father in the job.)

It is a practice among the Yorubá people to inquire a child’s destiny which unfolds how it will journey in life—its profession, taboos, and general lifestyle. This is done to be able to provide guidance for it in life. This is mostly done by nonverbal communicative divination system as carried out in *Eégún Aláré* above. The geomantic code, *ọsá méjì*, which appears on the tray is a symbolic signification of the destiny of the baby which is interpreted by the Ifá priest.

Geomantic code is used to investigate barrenness in women and also proffer solution to it. In *Ìka Abámò*, *Tóyìn’s* friend takes her to an Ifá priest to inquire about her barrenness:

Ọrẹ̀ rẹ̀ bá a daniyàn sówó ó fi síwájú ifá. Babaláwo gbé ọpèlẹ̀ janlẹ̀, ó dáfá sọtùn-ún sòsì, odù Ìwòrì Méjì ló yọ lójú ọpọ̀n... Bí babaláwo ti ki ifá délẹ̀, ó mú irókẹ̀ rẹ̀, ó ró ohun tí ifá wí fún wọn. ‘Eni tí a daniyàn fún n ẹ̀sẹ̀ráhùn ọmọ. Àbí bẹ̀ẹ̀ kó?’ ‘Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni’ ‘Èlẹ̀rírí- ìpín ní yóò bímọ̀ sùgbọ̀n ó gbọ̀dò pààrò àyè. Ilé ọkọ̀ tó wà kí í sààyè rẹ̀’ (pp.68-69)

(Her friend whispers her wishes into the money on her behalf and puts

it before *Ifá*. Babaláwo casts his òpèlẹ̀ on the ground and divines to the right and left side then the sign of Ìwòrì Méjì appears on the divination tray... As the babaláwo ends chanting *Ifá*, he takes his ifa ivory tapper and interprets *Ifá's* message to them. 'The person that we whispered into the money for is in dire need of a child. Is that not so?' 'Yes'. 'The Witness-of-destiny says she would have a child but she must divorce her husband for another man. The husband with whom she is presently is not meant for her.'

Tóyìn's barrenness gives her friend a great concern. She then takes her to an *Ifá* priest to investigate the cause of the barrenness and seek solution through geomantic code. The *Ifá* priest unveils the problem of Tóyìn to her and her friend upon divination—Èni tí a dàniyàn fún ní ñrèhùn ọmọ (the person that we whispered into the money for is in 'dire need of a child). Also, *Ifá* asserts that the barren woman would definitely have a child but she should leave her husband and marry another man—Èlẹ́rí- ìpín ní yóò bímọ̀ ẹ̀gbón ó gbòdò pààrò àyè (The Witness-of-destiny says she would have a child but she must divorce her husband for another man). The geomantic code, in the text, is a symbolic signification of barrenness and the way out of it.

Sociopolitical upheavals are resolved through geomantic code. In *Saworoide*, Lápítẹ ascends the throne, refusing to perform the traditional rites of oath-taking and incision and thus throwing the whole nation into socio-economic crisis. Through divination, Amawomárò guesses that Arẹ̀sẹ̀jábàtà would solve the nation's problems:

Arẹ̀sẹ̀ jókòó. Amawomárò gbé *Ifá* rẹ̀ kalẹ̀
 Ó ju òpèlẹ̀:
 "Háá! Irosùn Méjì.
 Ìtarúkú, awo wọn lóde Ìtarúkú.
 Ìtarúkù, awo Ìtarúkù...
 Amawomárò wá ní dá ọ̀rọ̀ sọ "Àbí ọmọ tí yóò yanjú ọ̀rọ̀ wa rẹ̀ é?"
 Ó tún gbé òpèlẹ̀ wónlẹ̀: "Ìrosùn náà!"
 Gúnnugún lá àlá,
 Gúnnugún ní jorí
 Àkàlámàgbò lá àlá
 Àkàlámàgbò a sì jẹ̀dò... (pp.85-86)

(Arẹ̀sẹ̀ sits down. Amawomárò puts down his *Ifá* paraphernalia.

He casts his divining chain:

The *Ifá* priest named Ìtarúkú

Is their *Ifá* priest in the city of Ìtarúkú

The *Ifá* priest named Ìtarúkù

Is their Ifá priest in the city of Ìtarùkù...
 Amawomárò, in a state of soliloquy "Is this the child that will solve our problems?" He casts his divining chain on the ground again:
 Ìrosùn again!
 The vulture dreams a dream
 The vulture is eating the head
 The ground hornbill dreams a dream
 The ground hornbill eats the liver...)

As Amawomárò casts his divining chain on the ground, the geomantic code of Ìrosùn Méjì appears on the divining tray. The code is a symbolic signification of Arẹ̀sẹ̀jábàtá as the 'saviour' of Jogbo community from the shackles of oppression of the king, Lápíté. This code comes to reality towards the end of the story because Arẹ̀sẹ̀ finally becomes the king who ascends the throne, performing the traditional rites of oath taking and taking the incision required after the assassination of Lápíté and the subsequent death of Làgàta through a supernatural headache.

Geomantic code is used by Yorùbá traditional professionals to investigate their success or otherwise in their daily activities. In *Ògbójú Ode Nínú Igbo Irúnmoḷẹ̀*, Àkàrà Oògùn, the hunter and the protagonist, divines with kolanut segments to investigate the success of his day's hunting expedition:

... mo gbé ibon mi tí mo fi obì yìì bọ ọ̀ ùgbón nígbà tí mo da obì náà, kò fọ rere, ẹ̀e bí yód bá fọ rere, ó yẹ kí awé méjì da ojú dé kí méjì sí ojú sí? ùgbón kò rí bẹ̀ẹ̀ fún oun- ìgbà mìràn mẹ̀ta á da ojú de, ọ̀kan á sí ojú sí, ìgbà mìràn ẹ̀wẹ̀, méré̀ẹ̀rin á da ojú dé... (p.22)

(... I take my gun and offer sacrifice to it with this kolanut but when I cast the kolanut on the ground, it speaks negatively. Should not two segments of the kolanut turn upside down while the remaining two face up for it to speak good? But it is not so for it-- at times three would turn upside down while only one would face up, at other times, all the four would turn upside down...)

Geomantic code such as kolanut is another object of divination that is very important in Yorùbá society and which is not devoid of formula. Ladele et al (1986) explains that kolanut is used for sacrifice in Yorùbá divinities like Èṣù, Òriṣàálá, Ṣàngó, Ògún among others. As a hunter, Àkàrà Oògùn belongs to the sect of Ògún worshippers and that is why he offers sacrifice with kolanut to his gun—the symbol of Ògún. As seen in the text, he divines with the kolanut to know what the day has in stock for him but the interpretation of the sign whereby the segments of the kolanuts unfold is that danger is ahead for him – *mẹ̀ta á da ojú dé, ọ̀kan á sí ojú sí, ìgbà mìràn ẹ̀wẹ̀, méré̀ẹ̀rin á da ojú dé*

(three would turn upside down while only one would face up, at other times, all the four would turn upside down). This is at variance with the kolanuts sign for success whereby two segments should turn upside down while the remaining two should face up. The geomantic code is a symbolic signification of trouble to the particular character in the text.

Conclusion

In this paper, divination has been employed as geomantic codes in all the novels examined. The codes are *Ifá* and kolanut which are symbolic signification of meaning of dreams, inquiry of a child's destiny, investigation of barrenness in women and proffering solution, resolution of socio-political upheavals in the community and the predictable outcome of a day's venture.

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