

# Changing Patterns of Yoruba Parenting in Nigeria

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*Ani ki omaku* – We pray that the child may not die  
*Kinlo npa omo bi aigbon* – What kills more quickly than stupidity?

-A Yoruba Proverb

## Introduction

This Yoruba proverb summarizes the philosophy, ethics and practice of parenting among the Yoruba in Nigeria. Parenting is the most important duty that an individual owes the Yoruba community. It is the foundational duty that establishes the individual as an efficient and responsible member of the community. The proverb, *Omo kogbon ani ki omaku, kinlo npa omo bi aigbon*, (the child is stupid and the parents pray that it may not die, what kills more quickly than stupidity) says that bad, selfish or stupid behaviors are unbecoming of a decent human being living in the community. These actions classify the individual, not into the category of one living human society, but one who is wild and living in a state of nature.

The measure of worthwhileness of existence of a parent is that he or she has, at death, left behind, intelligent, responsible, caring and nurturing children. These children brought up on the template of *Omoluwabi*, the epitome of the good person, are the ones who would, through their success in parenting, keep the memory of their ancestors alive. The well-brought up child is the core of the Yoruba worldview. That worldview is child-centered, adult-controlled and elderly ruled. The past gave

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birth to the present which in turn will give birth to the future. The evidence of life that is successful is that the Yoruba give birth to children that are nurtured to internalize the Yoruba way. The traditional Yoruba way encompasses respect for the elder, nurture and care of the young to become responsible adults, care of the elderly while still alive, and rituals of annual remembrance to keep the memory of the dead alive among the living. This annual ritual of remembrance take the forms of the *Egungun* masquerade festival, when the living dress up as dead Yoruba ancestors who are visiting their progeny on earth. Children and relatives of the deceased give proper burial complete with all rituals, to the elderly who have died well. The last funerary rite for the elderly who have died well in the eyes of the society, is the proper feasting of the living, who ensure that these elders rest in peace. These responsibilities of satisfying the living to guarantee that the dead are admitted to repose in afterlife, show the power of the dead on the living. The Yoruba husband and wife are supposed to give birth to and nurture the young to become sensitive, caring and nurturing members of the family who are completely loyal to their kinship members, competitive in society, exuberant in promoting the superior contributions of their ancestors and ostentatious in burying their dead elders, who have, according to the Yoruba norms of living, died well.

Emile Durkheim defined religion as consisting of beliefs and practices concerned with the sacred activated by a moral community (Durkheim 1947). The Yoruba idea of the sacred and the relationship between the sacred and the ancestors—intermediaries between the divine and the individual in the community—constitute the glue that binds Yoruba society together. This is the key to understanding the powerful influence of culture on all the Yoruba. Because they are mainly patrilineal, men are more highly privileged than women. This skewing of cultural privileges in favor of men has created a tendency bordering on the abusive for women. The watchful child undergoing enculturation often develops a preference for the mother over the father precisely because the child comes to learn that his or her mother is not treated properly. Preference for the suffering Yoruba mother is related in the proverb, *Iyani wura, baba nidigi*. (Mother is gold, father is glass) (Babatunde and Setiloane 2010). In Yoruba land, men can have more than one wife, while women can have only one husband. Children of the same mother feel very close. Preference is made again for the mother by showing that the closeness of bond is stronger among children of the same mother than children of the same father. Thus when the Yoruba in a polygynous household say, *'kini yi kini mi, o yatosi kiniyi kinii wa* (this is mine is different from this is ours), it means that a mother's children by the same father are mine; while father's children by different mothers belong to another category.

## Persona of the Husband in Yoruba Tradition

The family is the key to understanding the powerful influence of Yoruba culture on the Yoruba. Because the Yoruba family is child centered, adult-controlled and elderly ruled, the care of all in the extended family is the business of all.

Three significant elements are responsible for this cohesiveness in the traditional non-urban Yoruba environment. The first is the circular structure of the Yoruba compound. The second is Yoruba loyalty to ascription rather than achievement, where status and identity are inherited not earned. The third is the Yoruba epitome of the good person, *Omoluwabi*.

The circular structure of the Yoruba compound exposes children, young adults and the very elderly to the care and concerns of the whole community. This traditional arrangement has created an open environment of interaction as children grow up, as elders become feeble and as adults pursue the daily business of taking care of the young, the sick and the feeble. The children are able to see the practices and activities of the lineage through songs which inform the children about the history of their ancestors. The elders who provide child care while the adults are absent also use other cultural instruments such as lullabies, ancestral lyrics, stories and practices that the children internalize.

The Yoruba loyalty to inherited over achieved status is another reinforcing element of Yoruba culture. The very competitive Yoruba often see loyalty to their family as superior to achieved status in the new professions of the modern society. Thus when I was ordained a Catholic Priest many years ago, the Muslim members of our extended family saw it as an achievement that raised the status of the family at large in the community. They not only contributed to the expenses, they came in their Haj dresses to show that whatever religion you are dealing with, the extended family of which the Babatunde family is just a unit has leaders who are holding their own and making the family proud. So, Muslims and Catholics see themselves, first as members of the larger Olola family, before they see themselves as Muslims and Catholics.

The Yoruba *Omoluwabi* template is the third most powerful element of transformation. Who is an epitome of the good person in Yoruba culture? One who has personal character, generosity, integrity as well as the ability to care for the feeble elderly and children. The foundation of these positive characteristics is hard work, thrift, and achievement. The Yoruba measure the worthwhileness of their existence in the symbols of Yoruba success. These are manifested in a man marrying many wives, having many children and building a big house. There is also a fundamental core requirement. What is important is the provision of proper and efficient parenting. To ensure this, children cannot be alone. They must always be in the company of some elder. It is the cultivation in the young of a sense of their importance as expressed in the time of their birth relative to that of others. Seniority is pervasive among the Yoruba, whether wives or children of the same lineage. In relation to wives, seniority is established on the time of incorporation of the female into marriage as a wife. In other words, her own age is not relevant in establishing her seniority over others. Anybody who was born prior to the incorporation of the woman as a wife is senior to her. She must assume the position of one junior. Even if they are very junior to her in age, she will not call them by name. She will call them by a reverential name that she gives them that is recognized by the extended kinfolk. Everyone who is born into the extended family is brought up to know why it is important that he knows who is junior to him in the group. In any traditional Yoruba grouping, the most senior makes it known that he is in charge.

## The Persona of Wife in Yoruba Culture

The persona of the wife is the end result of sound training in good behavior, decency, hard work, readiness to sacrifice and management skills. She is the epitome of good character. The term *Iyawo* is a Yoruba contraction of *Aya wo o* (we branch to admire her beauty). The Yoruba see the woman as the true currency with which to forge extra lineage interaction. The symbols of marriage involved in the ritual of engagement (*Idana*) reiterate fertility, fecundity and the superior management skills of a Yoruba woman as mother and homemaker. Her rights are the main focus of symbolic meaning and action. The items used to construct symbolic meaning which emphasize what Yoruba culture identifies as the reason for marriage are kolanut (*obi*), water (*omi*), native pepper (*ataare*) and palm oil (*epo pupa*). Also included are salt (*iyo*) and honey (*oyin*). The prayers that are composed around these symbols complement the Yoruba approach to life and its meaning. As Babatunde (2011) noted:

The Yoruba hope that each of these items will communicate its quality, homeopathically, to the union of husband and wife. The prayers referring to honey and salt express similar wishes deriving from a common quality of "sweetness". It is hope that the life of the couple will be happy. Furthermore, the preservative quality of salt is evoked and made to express the wish that the couple should live to a ripe old age.

The Yoruba wife is the fulcrum on which the Yoruba family revolves. As a person, she combines the quality of motherhood and that of the facilitator of all that is needed in a stable family that is positioned to produce *Omoluwabi*, children who are epitomes of all that is desirable in the successful Yoruba person. The Yoruba symbol that summarizes the complicated roles that these expectations in the wife call for is the hen and its chicks. The Yoruba who liken the protection of God for the faithful on earth to that of a hen who is solicitous over her chicks, say prayers like, *raga bowa bi edie tii raga bo awon moor re* (cover us with your shelter like the hen covers its chicks).

Yoruba culture recognizes the tremendous stress that these complicated roles exact on the Yoruba woman. They know that the foremost roles of the woman are bearing children, nurturing them and keeping the whole family alive by house chores which keep the house clean and the children presentable. Faced with these priorities, the birth and nurture of multiple children exact their tolls on the wife as solicitous mother on whom the burden of keeping the family alive rests. The substantial nature of the preoccupations of the Yoruba mother to the survival of the Yoruba collective consciousness is so paramount to the scheme of things in Yoruba society, that the comparison of the roles of the father and the mother is noteworthy.

A gaping hole in the sophisticated analysis of Yoruba in Falola's *A Mouth Sweeter than Salt* is the absence of the celebration of motherhood. If the key to unraveling the complicated aspects of Yoruba culture is the family, the Yoruba father is the gate as well as its exterior appearance. The mother, on the other hand, is the key to the family. She is the thermostat that regulates the temperature of the home and the quality of homeliness. The homeliness

of the house is not a function of size but of the incarnated warmth, affection and level of comfort that is present in the family, exemplified by the Yoruba proverb, *bife ba wa, yara sokoti lee gbeyan merila* “where there is love, a small room can accommodate fourteen people” (Babatunde 2011, p. 70).

In Yoruba culture, the mother-child dyad is the foundation of wholesomeness and holiness whether expressed in the tenderness, nurture and coziness of breastfeeding or the natural warmth of being carried on one’s mother’s back.

That bonding is expressed in the tenderness of breastfeeding; it is also found in the warmth of being carried by the mother on her back, or wiping tears from the face of a crying child. That bonding is found in the encouragement of the mother, urging her frightened child to stand up to the bully once and for all. Specifically in polygyny, when access to resources is a function of the mother’s energetic resourcefulness, bonding with the mother becomes a child’s only reliable passage into the future (Babatunde 2011).

More importantly to parenting is a balancing exercise between the complementary roles of the father and the mother. That role among the Yoruba is conceptualized in the categories of the right hand and the left hand. Among the patrilineal Yoruba, the cultural responsibility to bring up children in the disciplined manner that is required, lies with the father and all men. In the absence of men, an elder, male or female, corrects an offending child immediately. Of course, the treatment is reported to the Yoruba father who then imposes his own discipline. The act of correction reinforces the lesson that bad behavior will not be tolerated. However, when the child is dealt with in accordance to the level of severity that the father may impose as a future deterrence for foolish or stupid behavior, it is the duty of the mother to comfort the child and explain to the child why the punishment was necessary in the first case. That is why the Yoruba proverb reiterates that, *ti aba fi owo otun no omo, a fi tosin wo o mora* (when we use the right hand to discipline a child, we use the left hand to bring the child close for comfort). The father is the right hand of punishment. The mother is the left hand of comfort and reason as to why the punishment was necessary so that the child may become a useful member of the society.

## Persona of the Concubine in Yoruba Culture

The rule of polygyny allows the Yoruba man to marry more than one wife. It also accommodates a promiscuous man to have, in addition, a concubine (*ale*). Another group that practiced this is a Hausa Muslim member of the Sokoto Caliphate who, as Lovejoy noted:

Could have as many as four wives, who had to be free women, and they could have as many concubines, who were supposed to be slaves, as they could afford. ... Although women were legally minors under Islamic law, there was a clear distinction between concubines and wives. Concubines were slaves, and wives were not. As slaves, a concubine could not marry, own property, or inherit without the consent of her master. A wife by contrast, had the rights of a free born, even though as a woman, she had fewer rights than a man (Lovejoy 1988).

While there is no suggestion here that the Yoruba converted to Islam because its practices were similar in terms of their attitudes to women, their status and their worth, it would be right to state along with Robin Horton and J.D.Y. Peel, that the only way to explain conversion is to relate it to the experience of its authors in the social context of its emergence. People interpret this new experience in terms of their existing ideas, which are adapted and transformed in the process. If alien ideas get incorporated in the course of adaptation, the fact has to be explained in terms of the appropriateness of such incorporation given the total social situation (Horton and Peel 1976).

What is similar between both groups of men, the Yoruba and the Fulani, is that concubinage concentrated women in the hands of those who could afford them. But concubinage was practiced among the Yoruba and not just among the Yoruba elite. Falola's deconstruction of polygyny identified a third model of polygyny which seemed to have increased the privileges of the mercantile class.

The control in this model is sophisticated but certainly there. The Alhaji co-opts all his wives to serve as managers of his six stores. In an age in which male relations cannot be trusted with money and property, the wife as mother of one's children re-circulates any stolen money to take care of their children (*owo ati dukia*). Thus, the money is kept in the family (Babatunde 2011).

Among Yoruba converts into Christianity, concubinage did not help to consolidate the subculture of the household of the men who fathered the children of the concubine. Children born out of wedlock, in whatever circumstance, are seen to have the soul of a dead ancestor within them. The Yoruba need to be seen as a normal and obedient member of the congregation would force many monogamous Christians who have concubines or celibates who have multiple children by multiple wives to pretend to be monogamous or celibate in church circles. The desire to be seen as a good Christian makes the Yoruba in this predicament prefer the offence of being an untruthful follower of his faith. The gregarious Yoruba prefers the social approval of being seen as a churchgoer to the guilt and punishment that God would visit on the individual for transgressing the law of monogamy or celibacy. The shame from social disapproval is more important than the guilt and eternal punishment for attempting to deceive God. Heaven is not some permanent abode that one is consigned to after death. Heaven is leaving good memories in the heart of the living who keep the memory of the dead alive. The children who have been well brought up and schooled in the mannerisms, courtesy, work ethics, nurturing expectations by good parents are the ones who keep the memory of the dead alive. There is a difference between Christian beliefs and African expectations after death. The irony is that as the supposed celibate tries to keep his lapse hidden, he is unable to identify with the child in public, nor be as open in parenting the child in the elements of Yoruba good upbringing. This lapse will translate into very poor parenting.

To return to the persona of the concubine, the fundamental questions that need to be asked are, What pushes the concubine to become one in a society that is over-indulgent to its men and very taxing on its women? Is it desperation when women fight among themselves to please the men who oppress them? Is it the success of the

dominant practice of patrilineal ideology that has made most Yoruba women believe that what is against their best interest in an attempt to please their men, is actually good for society? Must one see the concubine only in her role as one and not in her role as a mother of her own children?

Claude Levi-Strauss has provided a taxonomy of social practices in terms of 'culture' versus 'nature'. Under these two headings come others such as the 'cooked' and the 'raw', the 'tamed' and 'wild'. This analysis of the dialectics of the wife versus the concubine locates the 'wife' under 'culture' and the concubine under 'nature' in terms of process, rules of engagement and expectations. The process of starting a relationship of concubinage is short and involves acquaintanceship, flirting and immediate gratification. The process of courtship of a wife in traditional societies is long, tedious and involves deferred gratification. The shortest process of courtship often takes 3 years and is fraught with tests and evaluations that show that the initiands going through them associate great value to what each stage means.

The concubine does not go through these phases. Yoruba does not accord the man and his *Ale* equal status because the concubine does not have public recognition. While in marriage, the wife is seen as an ambadress of her extended kinship group, the concubine enjoys no such kinship support.

To return to the parameters of our ethnographic analysis based on Levi-Strauss' bipolar categories, the concubine belongs to the category of nature or the wild. She has the momentary attention of the husband and wants to keep him hooked. She is able to take him sexually to where the mother cannot take him. It is the birth of these children by the wife which transforms the parents to responsible members of the community. The wife's thrift ensured that the husband became a respected member of the community. What Falola noted about the expectation of the Yoruba wife in the urban center was true of most Yoruba before Free Primary Education provided equal opportunity for both sexes to go to school. Falola (2004) noted that:

It was expected that the wife would have an unimportant part-time job, take care of children, and help the man to save and build a family house. The house was the ultimate testimony of success. Whether one wanted to listen to their stories or not, they would tell them, narrating their struggles in life, the good fortune of meeting a woman who was not wasteful, and the saving of pennies and pounds in order to build a house. In a system without mortgages, whoever had a house lived in what had been fully paid for. One would save money to buy the land, then save to build the foundation, followed by a long break and more savings to buy bricks and eventually to build. ...It was when the house was completed, when the labor of years of joint effort had produced a result, that the man, now with time and some change in his pocket, began to look for mistresses. At least, this is what the betrayed women told me, and they all said much the same thing. The belief of the women at Ode Aje was that a struggling man was devoted to his wife, so as the wife paid for the husband to succeed, she was also asking God to bring sorrow into her life.

The wife was committed to the pursuit of what the Yoruba define as success of the husband. The concubine's periodic momentary controls over the husband is a throwback to the Yoruba phase of young adulthood when he was so busy trying to prove his manhood by having sex with unrelated maidens from other descent groups. It is yet another instance of what was referred to earlier as one of the many moral contradictions of a vibrant culture.

## Yoruba Traditional Parenting in Comparative Context

Seen in comparative context to modern Western families, there are three fundamental differences in the parenting of the Yoruba. The first is that the unit of analysis of the Yoruba is the community. Second, the social sphere of Yoruba parenting is single and unified whereas the modern Euro-American family has two spheres – that of the child and that of the parenting adult. Third, the style of parenting differs according to the intention of socialization in the comparable spheres of social experience.

The Yoruba style of parenting, like many sub-Saharan African cultures, is based on three responsibilities: hard work ethics, maintenance of discipline, and social etiquette built on respect for elders and their views about how to tackle life experiences. The definition of role as a set of culturally defined rights and responsibilities, related to expected behavior patterns, obligations and privileges squarely agrees with Yoruba parenting purpose. The core basis of the understanding of these responsibilities is a religion-based understanding of worthwhileness of existence and remembrance after death. Yoruba see the child as the most important measure of parental success in life and the only proof of resurrection. The fundamental question that the Yoruba ask at the moment of making crucial decisions about the future is, “Who would remember one after one is dead?” The answer is a disciplined and respectful child. The next question is, “How can one raise a child who would be able to combine all these qualities?” The answer is that the parent who wants to accomplish this feat would raise his or her child according to the Yoruba template of *Omoluwabi*, the Yoruba epitome of good person raised by the village community of committed hard-working, gratification-deferring, kind hearted people. The Yoruba believe that from the womb to the tomb, the child’s uprightness and wellbeing is a function of the collective effort of the village keyed on the example of the father and the mother of the child.

The Yoruba parenting role is divided into two complementary parts: discipline and comfort. The father is the right hand of discipline. He accepts the role of being the parent who imposes harsh discipline when necessary on the child. The mother is the left hand of comfort. This is one of the very few occasions when the symbolism of the left hand is auspicious and very necessary to the social fabric of Yoruba parenting. The Yoruba principle of discipline is not harshness that disgraces one to ostracism. The goal of discipline is to reform, correct and reinstate into a situation that can lead to improvement. That is why the Yoruba repeat, *Ti aba fi owo otun ba omo wi, afi tosin faamora* (when we use the right hand to flog the child and he cries, then we use the left hand to bring him close and comfort him or her). At birth, the child sleeps in the warmth of the mother’s bosom. The child suckles from the mother’s breasts. She is carried not only by the mother but other family members. Any crying draws the attention of quite a few people. The warmth of being carried on the back means that not only the mother but also the child’s grown sisters and females in the extended family can comfort the child. She is, already in childhood, the active business of all the community. When a teenager or young adult misbehaves, any adult provides instant discipline or



correction. Then when the parent of the offending young adult comes back home, the young adult is reported again to the parent. A second round of disciplinary correction is enforced on the recalcitrant to show that insubordination will not be tolerated in the young adult. This keeps the young adult disciplined and has been used in the schools to encourage students to perform better in the school environment by ensuring that the child that is punished in the school is reported to his parent who would punish him again at home.

The period of childhood from the age of reason to young adulthood is a period of internship with the adult in practical life experiences. These same three components of culture are expressed in internalized expectations of dependence on each other in the traditional Yoruba parenting principles.

### ***Omoluwabi* and the Yoruba Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis of the Yoruba is the community. As Colin Turnbull said, in the absence of modern technology, the members of the traditional community serve as one another's technology (Turnbull 1974, pp. 227–228). The newborn Yoruba child is in the cozy environment of the mother's warmth. The child is breastfed and mounted on the mother's back for emotional and physical comfort. When she is weaned, she transfers to the company of her age mates. She will eat from the same plate with them, play in the same groups and sleep on mats in the same area of the house. The child is brought up to prepare to participate in the adult social world, on adult terms. That way of life is encapsulated in the Yoruba *Iwa Omoluwabi*, the template of good character.

The *Omoluwabi* is the child who is well trained in treating others with respect, speaking about others with cordiality, well-mannered and well behaved enough to be included in the activities of the group. The *Omoluwabi* is trained to begin the day by going up to her parents and greeting them on her knees if female, or flat on her chest if male, with the early morning Yoruba greeting, *Ekaaro O* (Good morning parent). The parent responds to the greeting by asking whether she slept well and praying for the child. Those Yoruba children who have reached the age of reason, thereafter without prompting, take the container for fetching water and go with their mates to get water from the river. After fetching water, the well brought up child takes a broom and sweeps the homestead. When the child does not attend school, the mother may send her to sell prepared food. If the child belongs to a farming family, s/he goes to the farm with her parents and contributes to the work in the farm, either by plucking peppers from their small trees or by ferrying cocoa pods to the place where the cocoa pods are broken and the cocoa seeds fermented. The child is always given a duty to perform. Idleness is severely discouraged. As the Yoruba proverb says, *Ti oma je asamu, lati kekere lati maa jenu shamushamu* (A child who is going to be smart and successful will prove to be smart and committed to success and hard work from childhood).

Yoruba culture has assigned roles that are very physically demanding to males and delicate and nurturing to the female. The female child begins to learn cooking prowess from a young age by staying near her mother in the kitchen and learning by watching her cook. The Yoruba are one of the few ethnic groups that insist that if the adult male is to become independent, he too ought to pay attention to her mother's cooking skills in the kitchen. He too, like his sister, ought to know how to perform chores in the family. These chores include keeping the house clean, fetching firewood for cooking, and knowing how to cook basic Yoruba foods. He too like his sister shares the responsibility of looking after his younger sisters or brothers. Traditional parenting begins to separate the roles of the sexes about the age of 14 around the time when the Yoruba female child begins her menstruation.

## Moments in the Parenting Experience

To the Yoruba, the role of parenting is a set of expected behavior patterns, obligations and privileges that include the father as a breadwinner, as an autonomous individual, who works hard to make the basic needs of life available for the members of his family. This role also includes him as an involved father who is often absent in order to take care of his family responsibilities. It is the extent of the internalization of the values in the child who goes on to succeed that really matters. That is why, in societies in which parenting is based on community effort, no one is praised at the expense of the other. Both parents are making sacrifices to transform their child to be one whose life is rooted in total dependence on others for the well-being of the group. It is only when the group is strengthened that the individual rights can be enforced for the benefits of all in the society. One's humanity is affirmed only in relation to that of others in the community of people brought up to think of and cooperate with others for community wellbeing. Whether parenting is gleaned from the perspective of the individual as the unit of analysis or the community is seen as the core of parenting, each culture aggregates values, norms and rules to construct the unit of analysis of its worldview and mobilizes the salient elements of its institutions to enthrone that construct.

For the Japanese and the Yoruba, the traditional unit of analysis is the compound family of grandparents, parents and children, all of whom play a role in looking after one another. The grandparents look after grandchildren. This trans-generational child care is highly regarded in the socialization pedagogy. The grandparents teach their children songs that pass on the achievements of their ancestors. They teach the children what their cultures regard as essential to life, community, loyalty, hard work and the importance of taking care of the young and the old. While Yoruba parenting is based on transforming the child into the *Omoluwabi*, Japanese parenting is based on the notion of *Amae*—complete dependence based on loyalty, love and caring for one another and the young. This caring is founded on the bond of belonging to common ancestors.

## Food and Parenting

The use of food to teach lessons on life is significant to traditional education and etiquette. The abundance of food is a function of the climatic seasons in most areas of West Africa which has only two seasons; the rainy season and the dry season. Since the rainy season is given over to planting seeds, tubers, vegetables and other food items, it is also the season for scarcity and patiently waiting for what has been planted to ripen for consumption. It is the season of mild forms of famine due to scarcity. Yoruba parenting is very tough on how the child must respond to offerings of food or to hunger. The child is trained not to visit other compounds during their meal time. If the meal time arrives around the time that a child is visiting, even when he is hungry, he ought to refuse the invitation to join the family to eat. If he accepts, he gives the impression that his parents cannot perform the basic duty of feeding their family members. When eating out of the family home becomes unavoidable, Yoruba parenting education teaches the child to be calm, not to rush to eat food and certainly to leave the meat or fish that the child is given untouched until the meal is about to be finished. Protein source foods such as chicken and meat are quite rare and expensive. In most of Yorubaland, people depend on wild game to provide meat for the family. This is an irregular source of animal protein. Breeding animal protein source foods like poultry and cattle for food is very limited.

The Yoruba use food as a means of teaching children what they need to do if they want to become successful. The well brought up child is the one who can defer gratification, be thrifty and accumulate wealth that can be used to build a modern house, marry many wives who will give birth to many children who will be trained to become good members of the society. The idea behind using food to teach discipline, etiquette and a sense of sacrifice is that, unless children are taught harshly to defer gratification, they will develop a syndrome of expensive tastes. Since animal foods are scarce, those who consume them regularly would not be able to save their money to do the things that the Yoruba see as constituting success. Hence children are taught not to eat eggs which are scarce and very expensive. The eating of eggs also reduces the projected population of chickens. As Paul Bohannon (1968) noted in his fieldwork notes among the Tiv of the Middle-Belt of Nigeria in what has become known as the theory of 'spheres of exchange', when eggs are hatched, they give rise to hens and roosters which fetch a lot of money when sold (Bohannon and Bohannon 1968). One who is thrifty converts the money accumulated from the sales to build a house, marry more wives and do something substantial in the community. The code of ethics of eating in the Yoruba cultural environment is therefore one useful moment of teaching the child to internalize the essential elements of the culture of discipline. The insistence that the child does not eat the little piece of meat allocated her during the meal but must wait until the meal is over is one of the opportunities to inculcate the need for deferred gratification.

## Conclusion

Parenting among the Yoruba clearly involves a movement from birth to death. It involves moving the child through socialization into the adult world built around Yoruba understanding of the key issues of survival and success. Parenting efforts make the child internalize the key issues about the meaning of life, the measure of success and the methods of achieving them. Yoruba socialization process allows the child to imbibe, through enculturation, the fundamental wisdom behind adult Yoruba views about life, its challenges, its triumphs and failures. Ultimately after death, as the Yoruba surmise, only the well brought up child will continue to remember and celebrate the memory of parents who have gone into the world of the ancestors. The Yoruba afterlife is ensured in the memory of the living.

Japanese parenting, based on the concept of *Amae*, agrees with the Tswana concept of *Botho* and the Yoruba style based on *Omoluwabi*. The uniting core of these three cultural concepts is reliance on others for durable and mutually enriching success and wellbeing. *Botho*, *Amae* and *Omoluwabi* concepts emphasize, 'I am because we are.' They reiterate that one's humanity is affirmed in relation to others. Without crushing the creative will of the individual in the society, the individual's potential to progress and wellbeing increases exponentially when individuals cooperate to pursue the common good of the society. These concepts introduce the child into the world of the adult, its challenges, triumphs, failures as well as its meaning of existence. They invite the individual to situate his or her world within this pragmatic existential narrative. When young people in the society do, they provide opportunities for themselves to receive correction from the adults while the adults are still alive and able to share the benefits of their experience with the young.

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