
DEMYSTIFYING RITUAL PROCESSES OF HERBAL APPLICATIONS IN BONE-HEALING WITH PARALLELS IN WESTERN APPROACHES: THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Traditional medicines also known as alternative medicines of therapeutic practices and techniques are outside the mainstream of Western healthcare system. Evidence from the World Health Organization's report suggests that four billion people, about eighty percent of world population use alternative health therapies, the popularity of this choice of therapy and its global acceptance is therefore incontestable. This work aims to expound the efficacy of herbs in treating bone injuries as evidence of ethno-science with the view of demystifying the mysticism in the treatment process. Rosenstock's Health Belief Model is adopted for this work. This ethnographic case study was carried out through Focus Group Discussion, and Key Informant Interview in four traditional healers' clinics in Ibadan to gather qualitative data and content analysis was used for its data analysis. Respondents were purposively selected. Findings revealed that herbs and other materials deployed into treatment processes are embodiments of ethno-science with parallels in Western medications, throwing light on the similarities and differences between Yoruba and Western treatment processes. The work explains that treatment process and materials are embodiments of Yoruba worldview and mindset of patients that play important roles in the treatment rather than the mysticism attached; this is analyzed using the emic- insiders' perspectives and etic- researcher's perspective. This work concludes; traditional bone-healing practice is basically ethno-science with treatment situated within the cultural context of patients' mindsets in cognition and congruency that aid healing process of patients especially likes treating likes and similarities in nature and healing recommending herbal usage as healthcare.

Keywords: Ethno-science, Herbal treatment, Yoruba worldview, alternative health therapy, bone-healing.

Introduction

Among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria, health therapy, treatment management, medical advice including warnings are hidden or, embedded in myths, taboos and symbolic rituals. These are devices formed to ensure adherence to medication, hygiene, values and norms of Yoruba culture. This work is an exposition of the efficacies of the herbs deployed in the treatment procedures of traditional bone-healing with the aim of debunking the mysticisms attached to the treatment process. This is in contrast with Talbot's (1926) observation of Yoruba medicine, he opines that, probably, the main

efficacy of these medical mixtures is derived from faith and belief in them, but, Professor O. Onuaguluchi of the Department of Pharmacology, Medical school, University of Ibadan, in his discussion with George Simpson in 1964 reiterated that his analysis showed that certain plant materials used by traditional doctors among the Yoruba are effective. Ajose (1957) affirmed Onuaguluchi's assertion by citing certain plants used in treatment of illnesses among the Yoruba and the people's aetiology of diseases. In Ajose's further explanation for example, in smallpox treatment he confirmed that regardless of mythological explanation of

the causes of smallpox, its infectious nature is recognized and it is treated accordingly. Only smallpox priests and those that had earlier been stricken in the past with the disease were allowed to treat or move near the patients; this however stresses immunity in treatment process.

In agreement with Beattie's (1964) opinion, it is understandable that expressive ritual patterns of medical treatment should be much more prevalent in the technologically simple cultures but, extant literature affirms there is a body of empirical knowledge in such societies which inevitably, affirms that there is wider field of daily experiences in which scientific knowledge provides recipe for effective medication. Agreed, illnesses and death from diseases, starvation or accidents are not only more common in technologically simple communities, they are also much more public. They form an inescapable part of everybody's

daily experience. Notwithstanding, though unlike the Western societies there may not be adequate way of dealing with distressing and socially destructive events such as illnesses and accidents, but this does not mean that the communities cannot deal with the health challenges. Yoruba culture prescribes definite institutionalized ways of dealing with illnesses, death and other misfortunes and with the fear of them. What the Yoruba have more is the symbolic and expressive rather than the empirical or experimental. The symbolic and expressive ways of dealing with illnesses and misfortunes have important psychological and social consequences (Tegbe 2015). Broadly, these consequences are of three kinds:

- i cognitive level- rituals that always embody belief which provide acceptable explanation for events or actions which would have been otherwise inexplicable;
- ii. congruency- the use of things that are like one another as gold was used in treating jaundice due to the color or palm branch

measured in patient's exact height in treating spinal damage due to the length of the branch and its position at the mid-rib;

- iii. contagious- use of things that have once been in intimate contact with one another, things like clothes, hair, nails.

Statement of the problem

Several scholars have carried out researches into bone healing. The subject is not so new to Nigeria academia, or, even to those in other parts of the African continent, or the far flung areas of the Asian continent. Indeed, in Nigeria, vast literature exists on traditional bone healing (Bonsi, 1980; Owumi, 1993; Ajala, 2006, 2009; Ajala and Binang, 2002; Udosen, 2009; Agarwal and Agarwal, 2010 and Kwaja, 2011). However, only a few of them are concerned with the parallels and similarities it draws with Western medications, therefore the efficacy is not expounded adequately giving the treatment an impression of mysticism.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this work is Rosenstock's Health Belief Theory that explains that individuals seek health in their perceived belief on the solution to the health problem. Health behaviors are in consonance with the perception of the cause of the health problem and where and what can bring solution to the health problem.

Methodology

The work is ethnographic using Qualitative case study design. It employs Focus Group Discussion and Key Informant Interview for its data gathering. Content analysis is used for its data analysis. Study population is local community of Omi-Adio in Ibadan southwest of Nigeria with a population of 19,940. Sampling technique adopted is purposive selection, 19 gave full participation. Participants consist 4 traditional bone healers as KII, and 5 FGD discussants in group session each in 3 different sessions (15) at 3 traditional clinic.

Data Presentation and Discussion

Case study 1 - Leg, Ankle, Arm and Thigh (femur) Fracture or dislocation (KII): At this point, we turn our attention to

problematic cases of the healing of the Leg, Ankle, Arm and Thigh (femur) Fracture or dislocation: We depend on “Dr” Taiwo’s narration; he is the healer at Lagbende Orthopedic Clinic Omi-Adio. The insight he offered is that:

Ti ese enia ba kan tabi ti o da, bi oti le wu ki o buru to, a o to pelu ase Olorun.

A ki lo X-ray kankan. Owo ni a fi ma nmo bi o se da si.

Ao ma gbo bi o se ndun woroworo ninu ara enia.

Ti won ba ti gbe enia de odo wa, a mo pe apa Olorun yio ka.

A o to egungun yi, ti yio to daradara. A o koko da eje yen duro pelu iodine tabi spirit, vitamin K ati ogun oyinbo miran.

Sugbon ti eje yen ba po pupo, awa na ma nran ara enia pelu abere ati owu bi ti hosipitu.

Egbo yi ni a o koko ma toju na, ki o jina, ki a to wa toju ese ti o da.

A tun ma nlo oyin gidi, omi idi igbin gidi ti a fo ikarawun ni ibi sonso ori re, ati ireke omode.

A ma nri ireke omode leti ipado, ireke na ma nkan lenu die bayi.

A o fi ireke yi ra ina ferefe lati mu oje re jade. Awon wonyi ni a fi ntoju egbo yen ti yio si gbe ni kiakia larin ose meta.

Ti egbo ba ti jina denu, a o fa ese yen ti a o gbo bi o se dun ti o ba kan ara won.

A o fi ese tabi owo mejeji si egbe ara won lati mo bi ikan ba gun tabi kuru ju ekeji lo.

Sugbon ti egbo ko ba tete san, a o ti mo pe owo aiye wa nibe niyen.

A o wa epo igi ijamo a o gun. A o tun wa egbo igi lapalapa, a o jo ninu ina, a o wa mu odidi atare kan, a o lo po mo. Eyi ni a o fi ma toju egbo na.

Gbogbo eleyi ni a fi ma ntu owo awon aiye kuro lara enia ti o sese.

Ti egbo ba jina tan, a o wa ewe ato, a o gun ninu odo tabi olo, pelu epo igi ijamo, a o wa po mo ori ti a o fi pa ibi ti o sese yen.

If the leg, arm, thigh are fractured or broken into bits, the hand is used to ascertain the severity and to detect the actual spot of the fracture. This healer does not request for any X-ray from his patients, rather he relies on the dexterity of his fingers. And according to him, the extent of the fracture would be detected even from the sound of the injured part and fixed back into place like a jigsaw puzzle. The wound would be treated first and the healer waits till it heals before fracture treatment commences.

Materials on wounds: Materials applied by this healer include; (i) Honey (ii) fluid from snails slashed tip (iii) ‘Ireke omode’ (*cosmos sulphureus*), a sour tasting specie of sugar cane that grows in the swamp or beside the stream.

Wound Treatment Process: This sugar cane specie would be heated by fire and the juice coming out of it would be applied to dress the wound, which speeds up drying and healing of the wound. But, regardless of the wound, the injured part would be pulled, and stretched until it sets. When the part is set, it gives a cracking or popping sound which assures proper alignment. The alignment would be ascertained by placing both parts, legs, arms, thighs perpendicularly to show if one is still shorter than the other. However, when both parts are of equal length after the stretching, it is an indication of proper setting.

Fracture: Fracture is set at that point in time, to prevent the tip of the bones from blocking and forming round ball at the tip. But, according to the healer, if the wound becomes intractable, evil forces would at once be confronted by burning the root of:

Materials and treatment process: ‘botuje’ or

Lehin eyi, a o di ni bandage tabi aso, ki ise nylon o sugbon bi Ankara.
Lehin eyi, a o mu pariko ti a ti hun lati fi de mo oju kan, ti ko fi ni ma ye.
Ojo meta meta ni a o fi ma tu ibi ti a de yi, ti a o si ma fi ori ati awon nkan ajo re pa titi yio fi sa
Ti o ba je itan ni o ti sese, tie-rod ni a ma lo dipo pariko yi nitori itan enia tobi ju apa ati ese lo.
Bakanna ni a se ntoju owo ati ese pelu itan.
Ounje bi efo riro ati boogo ni a ma nkilo ki alaisan yi ma je titi yio fi gbadun tan patapata.
A tun ma nlo abo adie fun obirin tabi, akuko adie fun okunrin. A o kan adie yi ni ibikibi ti o da ni ara enia na. A o ma toju adie yi ni igba kanna ti a ntoju enia yi. Oun ti a ma nlo ni; ewe ato, epo igi ijamo, ori ati ewe abo odan.
A o gun gbogbo re papo, fi ma wo ara alaisan yi. Ewo re nipe alaisan yi ko gbodo je eyin adie, ko gbodo je eran adie tabi eran abiye kankan ti ara re fi ma san. Oun ti a ba lo fun adie ni a ma lo fun enia yen, iye ojo ti adie ba lo ki o to san, ni alaisan na ma lo, iba se osu mefa. Ti ese tabi apa yi ko ba to daradara, koda lehin odun marun, ese tabi apa yi a yo si ita lati inu eran ara. O di dandan ki a tun eleyi ti pada sinu ara ni aye re pada. Ounje bi efo ati egugun boogo ni a ma nso fun alaisan ki o ma je.

'lapalapa' (jatropha curcas) mixed with 'epo ijamo', bark of 'ijamo' tree (alchonea laxiflora) and a whole pod of alligator pepper, ground into powdered form and applied on the wound. 'ori' shea butter (butyrospermum parkii) would be mixed with the bark of 'ijamo' tree (alchonea laxiflora) 'ato' leaf (chasmothera dependes) and ewe abo odan female specie of anogies leicapus, all, ground on the grinding stone, mixed together to form a paste. The paste would be used to vigorously to massage the fractured part. The part would be covered with bandage, after which woven 'pariko', bamboo and raffia splints would be used to immobilize the part. The splints would be tied in place with stripes of clothes and then bandage would be used to wrap it again. The fractured part would be opened every three days for massaging, with the materials mentioned above, until healing is achieved. That is, the woven bamboo splints and bandages are removed every three day for massage therapy until healing is accomplished. However, in the case of treating thigh fracture, wooden tie-rod, usually meant for ceiling houses are used to immobilize the thigh as alternative to bamboo and raffia splints. The healing process is the same with leg and arm fractures. Special meals are recommended during treatment period, such as vegetable and bone-meal and taboo of meal avoidance is given to patients to adhere.

KII- Traditional Bone-healer. Male. 45 years. Lagbenede clinic. 23 June 2023

Inference: In this treatment procedure, the arm, leg and femur fractures are treated by the traditional bone-healers by using experience through constant training by events and dexterity on detecting the injured and fractured parts which are then aligned and then materials in herbal ingredients turned into paste are applied in form of massage on the affected parts and immobilized by wooden splints before being bandaged. Treatment is every other day as the fracture is opened every three days for herbal application as

Yoruba counts the first day of encounter. The opening is done because of aeration and re-application of herbs until healing is achieved. In the event of evil spirit being suspected as detracting healing, another set of herbal materials are deployed into the treatment to appease the spirit world or prevent their interference in the healing process. What we gathered here is that the fractured parts are aligned and herbal preparations are applied. Bones naturally heal if properly aligned and immobilized for some time. The herbs applied

contain active and effective healing properties as proven scientifically but deployed in symbolic forms to imbue the patients' confidence in the healing process as located in the patient's belief and mindset. ***It is revealed that the herbs are scientifically proven as efficacious but deployed in symbolic format as embedded within the patient's worldview.***

Further in the process, a fowl deployed in gender form a cockerel for male patient and hen for female patient has the body part fractured at exact point of the patient's fracture. The fowl is treatment with same herb as the patient in the patient's presence with the belief that the patient would heal as the fowl heals. The logic is that fowl survives bone fracture however severe. The juxtaposition of human and fowl imagery is to sustain patient's confidence as located and obtained in the patient's worldview and cosmogony.

Here; the Emic perspective is the insiders' perspective that explains the traditional healers and their patients' worldview and mindset located in their cosmogony while the Etic perspective is the researchers or outsiders' perspective and explained scientifically.

Materials turned into paste as massage and deployed in treatment process

Emic perspective- Egele leaves Euphorbia eterophilia: The leaves have sharp thorny edges that are believed can harm or injure detractors. The native exegeses of *egele* indicate injurious or dangerous act. Fractures and dislocations are from high force impact traumatic stress that can come from accidents and carelessness. A child among the Yoruba who is being involved in rough play or activities in the homestead is always warned by the elders against such *egele*; injurious act that is activities that can cause injury to the body. The thorny and sharp edges of this plant, probably informs the name that has parallel not only with the cause but also the cure.

Etic perspective- Western Parallelism: Egele leaves *Euphorbia eterophilia* contains tannins, *saponins*, *alkaloid*, *terpenoid*, *phlobatanin* and *glycocides* clinically effective in the treatment of wounds and bone injury in China and Malaysia healthcare system (Apiamu et al, 2005).

Emic perspective- Ato leaves Chasmanthera dependes: This plant has its full name as *atora* which in native lexical means kneading or setting the body. 'A' is a prefix indicating action, 'to' means set or put in place. The leaf is used in Yoruba bone healing to unionise fractured or displaced bones.

Etic perspective-Western parallelism: *Chasmanthera dependes* is used in bone fracture treatment management in Indonesia, India and China (Onabanjo et al, 1990).

Emic perspective- Arunpale leaves Chenopodium ambrosioides: This plant has strong pungent scent. The local exegeses indicate a scent that pervades the whole area. The strong scent informs the use by the healers.

Etic perspective -Western parallelism: The plant is used by Chinese orthopaedics as poultice and massage on traumatic injuries (Bergstrom 2000), as examples; Chinese balm and Confo lotion from China, Meka balm from Malaysia. The common characteristic of these balm and lotions is the strong/pungent scent.

Emic perspective- Shea butter Parkia butryospermum is the main balm in bone healing. The oil producing tree grows across sub-Saharan Africa. The balm production is a household skill and trade among women within the region. The balm contains collagen having oleic, palmitic, stearic, arachnid acid for skin rejuvenation and elasticity. It also has ultra violet (UV8) and vitamins A&D Shea butter contains collagen that has phenolic properties like stearic, oleic, palmitic, linolic, and arachnid, ultra violet (UV8) (Adeogo et al, 2005).

Etic perspective - Western parallelism:

Western cosmetics; body cream, lotions and soaps have collagen as the main property.

Emic perspective- *Botuje Jatropha curcas*:

This plant is believed to ward off witchcraft and sorcery among Yoruba and is thus added to treatment of bone injuries and wounds.

Etic perspective -Western parallelism: *Jatropha curcas* extracts contain resin, *sarponin*, *curcin*, *tannins*, inulin that can cure wounds, bone fractures, epilepsy and fibroids (Adodo, 2000).

Emic perspective- *Atare Aframomum*

***melengueta/alligator pepper*:** Most rituals and medicinal preparations in Yoruba households contain *afframomum melengueta*. Among the Yoruba, alligator pepper is reputed to bestow spiritual sanction on medicines, events and activities. The native exegesis is *ata rere* meaning good pepper, indicating its good and positive value to the community. Among the Yoruba, alligator pepper confers spiritual sanction on incantations, ritual materials and acts. It is used in the treatment of wounds, bones and spine fracture. It has pungent taste that smartens the mouth, thus debilitating detractors

Etic perspective Western parallelism: Alligator pepper is a broad spectrum that cures among others; wounds, infections, arthritis, diabetes, fibroids and it is antidote to snake poison. In western correspondence, alligator pepper is clinically proven as a broad spectrum. It treats wounds, infections, fibroid and diabetes. It is also effective as antidote to snake poison (Adesokan et al 2010, Doherty et al 2010).

Food avoidance taboo during treatment process

Emic perspective: Yoruba bone healing practice recognises the effects of allergens as deterrents in healing. Poultry meat, egg and okra are taboos to patients in Yoruba traditional bone healing. This is because fowl image transference in telepathy is employed

by healers during treatment procedure, while egg is synonymous with fowls and okra is linked with witchcraft. Also okra being a drawl soup after preparation is believed to slow down healing in patients. Patients avoid okra soup believing it harbours evil, and have linkage with witchcraft. Being a drawl soup, the belief is that it can slow down healing. Patients are therefore under strict instruction to abstain from certain type of food like; okro (*abelmoschus esculenta*) soup. We gathered that even if a patient eats okro soup in the dream, the healer would have to start all over with his treatment. It is believed okro is used by witches and sorcerers to harm people and eating it would make a patient susceptible to spiritual attack. According to Akeem Isola, during KII, '*Ila ma ngba abode*' meaning, okro (*abelmocus esculenta*) harbours evil.

In the same vein, witches as found in Yoruba belief system and worldview are believed to have totem of deers in the spirit realm. These animals love okro as delicacy. Okro is, thus, linked to witchcraft. The patients are also under strict instruction not to eat fowl's egg, as the egg is synonymous with the bird; so also, eating any poultry meat (*nkan abiye*) is forbidden until the healing is completed. The explanation is that, the fowl's imagery is juxtaposed in a ritual dialectics with that of human during healing session. As mentioned earlier, at the commencement of treatment of the arm, leg or femur injury, a fowl body part would be broken at the exact part of the injury incurred by the patient, and the fowl would be treated simultaneously with the patient. As the fowl is responding to treatment so also the healing would be reflecting on the patient, in a dialectics of rituals and symbolism. This we found in alignment with the theory used in this work-Rosenstock Health Seeking Belief.

Etic perspective: Western medicine also recognises and identifies some foods as allergic. A few examples of allergens in the Foods and Drugs Administration (FDA) list include among others; egg, crustacean shell

fish, peanuts, milk, soya, tree nuts, pollens, okra and fish. The body immune system, sometimes mistake these foods as harmful and attack them. Egg is one of the common foods that have been identified as an allergen. Egg contains cholesterol that blocks the arteries preventing free circulation of blood necessary in healing. Certain age groups have been warned against egg consumption. Other foods that interfere with the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and obstruct the immune system from fighting against it also have this warning. The proteins are often mistaken as harmful substances and thus the white blood cells react against them, thereby, interfering with healing or causing death.

Fowl/Human Image Juxtaposition

Emic perspective: In the case study above, there is a juxtaposition and transmigration of fowl and man. The fowl's leg, arm or thigh is fractured by the healer at the exact point of the patient's fracture and treatment is applied. The belief is that the patient would heal simultaneously as the fowl heals. The saying is that *adie kii ti ese ku* meaning; no matter the severity of injury, fowl do not die from bone fracture.

Etic perspective: This assertion is in Rhine (1934), while a similar phenomenon had earlier been introduced in Frederick Myer (1903) known as 'synchronicity'. It is also referred to as ESP extra sensory perception. Both psychic experiences explain similar occurrences happening at the same time in health management. In the same vein, Sir James Frazer had discussed the phenomenon of like treating likes in his "Golden Bough" 1911, which we also found being employed in Yoruba bone fracture treatment.

The Western parallelism in the ethno-science expounds the similarity in human anatomy and that of the fowl. From the scapula to the toes, fowl bone structure is analogous with

human; they are both tubular and when cut or fractured, they both form a tubular end preventing infections or germs from penetrating. Western fracture treatment acknowledges human bones heal on its own as long as it is properly aligned (Ajala 2012). This is in line with our Theory of Rosenstock Health Seeking Belief Behaviour that health seeking behavior is influenced by the belief and mindset of causes and solution.

Aeration of Injury

Emic perspective: In treatment process, the traditional bone-healers open the fracture every other day. The wood splinter and bandage application is removed the third day as Yoruba counts the day of encounter as the first day. In the belief system and patient/healer mindset, three is a significant figure in healing decision especially in health seeking as three signifies agreement and mutuality sought in healing for the patient.

Etic perspective: Scientifically, time spacing allows aeration of bones and the sun's Ultra violet ray for fast healing (Malkmus 2012). This aligns with our Theory of Health seeking behavior by Rosenstock.

Photokinesis in Plant Botany

Emic perspective: In this work, FGD reveals traditional bone-healers do not collect plant leaves from the farm at sunset or nightfall, it is believed, the plant are asleep and cannot be effective for treatment-*Ewe ti sun l'oko*.

Etic perspective: In Western correspondence, photosynthesis do not take place at night or at sunset Thus the absence of sunlight thus reduces the vitality of plants (Ngubane 1977).

CASE STUDY 2 –Spinal Injury

On the 8th of January 2013, a spine injury case was brought to the healer's clinic at ile baba ido, oloko clinic. The patient, a twenty-six year old man looking frail, could not be said to be near the age as he looked more like an eighteen year old, due to emaciation.

Ti enia ba subu, ti o ja sinu koto tabi ti o ja bo lori igi; ehin re le re,

An extensive interview was conducted with Baba Adekojo at his clinic on the 12th of

tabi kan, tabi ki oye, o si le wo. Sugbon ti ehin ba ti da , ko si atunse o.

Ti enia ba subu sinu koto, ehin ni yio ti re ati ese ti ole kan tabi ro.

Ti eleyi ba sele, a wa apadi ti o d’oju ko ile. Apadi ti won ti mo si ara ile ti o ti pe.

A o wa atare meje ti o ba je obirin, mesan ti o ba je okunrin.

A o wa igbin gidi , ki i se ilakose o, igbin nla gidi ni o, a o fo idi re lati mu omi idi igbin jade.

Eyi ni a o popo, ti a o fi sin gbere meje fun obirin tabi mesan fun okunrin.

Lehin eyi a o po apadi ti a ti gun yi mo ori a o fi ma pa alaisan yi ni ara lati ori de isale ni ojojumo.

Gbere ti a ba sin yi gbodo je lati oke wa si isale, ko gbodo wa lati isale si oke o, bi be ko riro yi a pada si ori ni, nitori ese ni oro ma ngba jade lara enia.

Enia yi ko gbodo kuro loju kan titi ehin ti yio fi san tan.

A ma nlo apadi ti o d’oju ko ile nitoripe o ti ni itan. A ki dede lo apadi ti a kan ri he nile.

Idi ti a fi n lo apadi nipe ko si ebo tabi etutu ti ko ni apadi ninu, ko si ounje ti a se ti a ko ni lo

apadi.

Ti enia ba subu lule lati ori oke, a tun ma nlo opa ope, a o ge ni iye ese bata ti enia na ga to.

A o fa ara opa yi, a o wa atare meje fun obirin, mesan fun okunrin,

eyi ni a o fi sin gbere meje fun obirin, a bi mesan fun okunrin, pelu apadi,

ti a ti gun yi ati omi idi igbin gidi. Ogere ehin, larin ehin gangan ni a o sin gbere yi si.

Nitoripe owa ope ki kan a fi tin won ba ge

A o toju opa ope si ori ibi ti o ga ti ko si gbodo kan ile mo lailai ti enia fi ma jade l’aiye.

Ti opa yi ba kan ile, oro yi a tun pada, ehin yi atun beresi dun enia yi pada.

Omiran tun ni ki won bo enia mole sinu erupe sugbon a o se eleyi mo nitori awon agbofinro

January 2013, and it focused heavily on spinal injury. This was the record of the exchange:

Translation: Injuries to the spine can come from different physical causes; from the patient falling into a deep ditch, from falling down from heights like trees and houses, especially when artisans are at work, and from farmers continuously bending down to hoe on the farm. This casualty is ‘*ehin rire, yiye, wiwo, fifo*’, all in vernacularized language, which can be interpreted as; spine shift, crack, sunken. But the fall from palm tree requires a different approach (this will be treated in a separate analysis). With casualties, other than the fall from the palm tree, the patient would be taken carefully to the healer’s clinic. The healer will look around the neighbourhood for ‘*apadi ti o d’oju ko ile*’, a broken potsherd that got pasted on the mud wall of a building while being constructed, with the convex side facing the wall. The potsherd would be added to nine pieces of alligator pepper (*afmomum melegueta*) if male, and seven if female and then ground on the grinding stone, mixed with fluid from ‘*igbin gidi*’ (*achatina*) and not ‘*igbin ilakose*’. That is, big snail and not the small narrow shell specie. These will be formed into paste and used on incision on the spine of the patient from the base of the neck downwards to the base of the spine. The incision must not be a downward to upward move otherwise the pain would go to the head. It must be the reverse move, to allow the pain to leave the body, through the sole of the feet, because the belief is that pain or toxin leaves the human body through the sole of the feet. This same potsherd would be ground and mixed with ‘*ori*’ shea butter (*butyrospermum parkii*), and used to massage the whole body of the patient every day until healing is achieved. Immobility of the patient during this period is important to the healing.

nitoripe won le ni a fe pa enia ni.	
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FGD. 15 August 2023. Omi-Adio Ibadan. Healers, Care-givers and Patients

Emic perspective Inference: From our Key Informants Interviews, Focus Group Discussion and in our observation clinics, reveal the interwoven concept of symbolism and rituals as for instance; in the use of the potsherd whose convex side faces the mud wall, which is then grounded, with ‘*ato*’ leaf (*chasmonthera dependes*) and nine alligator pepper *atare* (*afromomum melengueta*) for male patient, seven for female, and further mixed with fluid from the snail’s gonad (*Achatina*), for incision on the spine. The ritual assemblage in our view, have been set up to not only heal the injured spine but also fortify the patient’s healing process against any probable opposition that may likely arise. It is however, pertinent at this juncture to explain some meanings of key symbols in all these various sets of combinations. The first of these elements is the **Potsherd** referred to as ‘*nkan agba*’ meaning, it belongs to the witches and the ancestors. Been attached to the wall for a long time indicates it has historical value, one that dates back in time. However, potsherds found along road paths are not used for the medication most probably because they are not attached to buildings most probably too because, it is not visible in the activities at home. It is alleged that the use of metal and ceramics as utensils in the modern time has reduced the potency of traditional medicine and this is why they are not useful in health promotion, unlike the potsherd. Another perspective is that, the potsherd attached to the wall has some connections with man, that is to say, having been staying with man at home for some time, it thus, has an attachment with man. The potsherd is made of sand from which *Olodumare*, God in Yoruba belief, molded man, and man himself goes back to soil. Concerning the slimy fluid from the snail’s

gonad, it is symbolical with the ease that the healer wants for the process while the ‘*ato*’ leaves (*chasmonthera dependes*) is to set in place the displaced bones. Of course, the nine incisions agree with Yoruba worldview that man has nine bones while the female counterpart has seven. Incision is significant here because the blood flows through the whole part of the body and is the source of life it invariably carries all herbs throughout the body system. The use of the potsherd, ‘*nkan agba*’ advertently forces the hand of the ‘*agba*’, witches off the matter and thus, their protest.

Another element that features in healing process is bark of *Ijamo tree* (*alchonea laxiflora*). It is an indigenous Yoruba tree reputed to ‘belong’ to the ‘elders’. According to our healer/key informant, there is a certain gourd it produces that is swallowed by diviners and powerful herbalists for spiritual potency. Any medicinal preparation with the tree bark extract may hence have spiritual potency. It is recognized as a sacred tree for use in ritual process of divination. *Ijamo* in Yoruba means, disruption of a plot presumably, evil. Whatever the bark of *ijamo* tree is added to, is believed to forestall the evil plan the opposing force has against the patient’s healing. What this insinuates is a strategized battle of wits whereby offense is better than defense. It is akin to taking the battle to the enemy. It is also an ‘*aroko*’, a coded Yoruba non-verbal message to the witches to hand off the matter. Other materials added with *ijamo* (*alchonea laxiflora*) are, ‘*ewe ato*’ (*chasmonthera dependes*) and ‘*ori*’ that is, *shea butter* (*Butyrospermum parkii*), an emollient balm. ‘*Ato*’ leaves are to knead and set the bones into place as the name indicates; *a*, is a prefix,

'to' is set and it is suggestive of what it is employed to do.

Emic perspective- Ato leaves *Chasmanthera dependes*. This plant has its full name as atora which in native lexical means kneading or setting the body. 'A' is a prefix indicating action, 'to' means set or put in place. The leaf is used in Yoruba bone healing to unionise fractured or displaced bones.

Etic perspective-Western parallelism: *Chasmanthera dependes* is used in bone fracture treatment management in Indonesia, India and China (Onabanjo et al, 1990).

Emic perspective- Shea butter *Parkia butryospermum* is the main balm in bone healing. The oil producing tree grows across sub-Saharan Africa. The balm production is a household skill and trade among women within the region. The balm contains collagen having oleic, palmitic, stearic, arachnid acid for skin rejuvenation and elasticity. It also has ultra violet (UV8) and vitamins A&D Shea butter contains collagen that has phenolic properties like stearic, oleic, palmitic, linolic, and arachnid, ultra violet (UV8) (Adeogo et al, 2005).

Etic perspective - Western parallelism: Western cosmetics; body cream, lotions and soaps have collagen as the main property.

Emic perspective- Atare *Aframomum melengueta*/alligator pepper: Most rituals and medicinal preparations in Yoruba households contain *afframomum melengueta*. Among the Yoruba, alligator pepper is reputed to bestow spiritual sanction on medicines, events and activities. The native exegesis is *ata rere* meaning good pepper, indicating its good and positive value to the community. Among the Yoruba, alligator pepper confers spiritual sanction on incantations, ritual materials and acts. It is used in the treatment of wounds, bones and spine fracture. It has pungent taste that smartens the mouth, thus debilitating detractors

Etic perspective Western

parallelism: Alligator pepper is a broad spectrum that cures among others; wounds, infections, arthritis, diabetes, fibroids and it is antidote to snake poison. In western correspondence, alligator pepper is clinically proven as a broad spectrum. It treats wounds, infections, fibroid and diabetes. It is also effective as antidote to snake poison (Adesokan et al 2010, Doherty et al 2010).

Emic perspective- Potsherd referred to as '*nkan agba*' meaning, it belongs to the witches and the ancestors. Been attached to the wall for a long time indicates it has historical value, one that dates back in time. The potsherd attached to the wall has some connections with man, that is to say, having been staying with man at home for some time, it thus, has an attachment with man. The potsherd is made of sand from which *Olodumare*, God in Yoruba belief, molded man, and man himself goes back to soil.

Etic perspective: Western parallelism states that terra sigillata was used by ancient physicians in curing injuries and festering wounds. **Clay** is used as poultice and active when the heat opens up the pores on skin in tissue engineering. Clay was used by Cleopatra to preserve complexion, it is anti-inflammatory agent and antiseptic as used in ancient Egypt. It is a traditional gauze exhibiting anti-bactericidal against *E.coli* and growth of *Saureis* (Carretano et al 2006, Mascolo et al 1999) **Emic perspective:** Concerning the slimy fluid from the **snail's gonad**, it is symbolical with the ease that the healer wants for the process

Etic perspective: Snail's fluid has antibodies and antibiotics for wound treatment and also used in circumcision and Yoruba tribal mark healing (Brieva et al 2009)

Incision used as intravenous treatment by traditional healers carries herbs through the blood system and found efficacious in treatment process (Jegade2010).

Conclusion

This work explores the seeming mysterious dark curtain of Yoruba traditional healing treatment. Though mostly shrouded in secrecy except for the initiates, which is common among Yoruba traditional healers. This is to protect their trade secret that is only passed down to the children and the apprentices but, it has been revealed that Yoruba traditional healing practice is basically ethno-science with evidence in phyto-science of Western medicine. Yoruba traditional healing therapy rests on the axiom of likes healing likes and the law of similarities which run through the healing process reinforcing and imbuing patients; belief in the process situated in the worldview. The healers and the patient belong to a worldview located in their cosmogony. There is thus no mystery nor mysticism in the therapy but it aligns with our Theoretical model of Rosenstock's Health Belief Model that explains that patience health seeking behavior is in consonance with their perception and belief of the cause as well as the solution of health problem.

Recommendations

It is recommended based on this work that the herbal Bill be passed at the legislative Houses in Nigeria to encourage the use of herbs in healthcare. It is also recommended that scientific research be geared up on the efficacy of the plants within the nation to assess the effectiveness in medication. We recommend a comparative study of Hausa and Ijaw traditional bone-healing with the Yoruba for more lights on the demystification.

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