

**Ojo, Matthias Olufemi Dada**<sup>1</sup>

Department of Sociology  
Crawford University of the Apostolic Faith Mission  
Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria.

## **SYMBOLS OF WARNING, CONFLICT, PUNISHMENT AND WAR AND THEIR MEANINGS AMONG THE PRE-COLONIAL YORUBA NATIVES: A CASE OF AROKO**

**Abstract:** This paper is an anthropological explanation of Aroko among the Yoruba natives of western part of Nigeria. Aroko is a non-verbal system of communication which is fastest dying out among these people. Attempts are made in this paper to explain Aroko that are for: warning, conflict, punishment and impending war, and the same are represented in pictures for content analyses. The paper concludes, by recommending more anthropological and ethnological researches on Aroko, which this anthropological work does not cover. The admonition is also made, that Yoruba parents who have the skills of encoding and decoding Aroko should teach their children the same thing to keep Yoruba culture alive. In addition, recommendation is also made, that the traditional priests should open up hidden Aroko being used in the past for proper documentation. Finally, governments of the south-western states of Nigeria are also requested to set up regional commission that will oversee the research into the dying aspects of Yoruba culture, document them and transmit the same from generation to generation to prevent the aspects of Yoruba culture from going into extinction.

**Keywords:** Aroko, Symbols, Objects, Meaning, Yoruba Natives and Culture

### **1. Introduction**

Yoruba tribe is well known in Africa and beyond. The tribe is among the Africans who occupy south of the Sahara desert. Yoruba natives are predominantly found in the South Western part of Nigeria. However, some of them can be equally found in Benin Republic and other countries in West Africa. Many of the Yoruba natives can also be found in the Diaspora, scattered throughout the countries of the world.

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<sup>1</sup> femfemty@yahoo.com

One thing which was very interesting about these Yoruba natives before their contact with colonial masters was the use of symbols in communication. Yoruba natives, before their contact with colonial masters and westernization, were very skillful in using symbols to communicate their thoughts and actions among themselves. Aroko is the native name given to those carefully prepared symbols which communicate their thoughts and actions to the others in the society.

This paper is an anthropological examination of 'Aroko' as a mean of communication of thoughts and actions among these people. Aroko can stand for goodwill like: arrival of a new born baby, message of love and affection, good wishes, hope, faith in others and many other positive phenomena in the society. Aroko can also stand for bad things. Such bad may include: warning or intimidation of danger, conflict, disaffection, anger, disapproval of action and even impending war.

## **2. Literature review**

Aroko revolves around objects, symbols and their profound meanings in the process of interaction between the sender and the recipient. Hence, this aspect of the paper, reviews: objects, symbols construction of social reality, symbolic interactionism and Aroko.

### **2.1 Objects**

Charon (1998) argued that objects may exist in physical form, but for people in the society; they are pointed out, isolated, catalogued, interpreted, and given meaning through social interaction. Therefore, objects for the human beings are really social objects. Objects may be said to represent shared, and commonly understandable, patterns of activity, although they appear in our experience only in the process of being indicated implicitly or explicitly to ourselves and others. Objects became significant in our experience on the basis of our plans and intentions, as these develop over time (Sharrock, et al, 2003).

Objects change for the people in the society, precisely because their use for them changes. Perspective exists between objects and the individual's overt action. Perspective is a definition, a meaning that is socially derived (Charon 1998). People organize their perception of objects according to the use they have for them. A social object, then, is any object in a situation that an actor uses in that situation. Its use has arisen socially. Its use is understood and can be applied to a variety of situations (Charon 1998). When social objects are used to represent some things, they became symbols. Many social objects are not used to represent something else and are, therefore, not symbols (Charon 1998).

## **2.2 Symbols**

Symbols are simply objects used by the actor for representation and communication (Charon 1998). A symbol is something that stands for something else (Hughes and Kroehler 2008; Curran and Renzetti 1998; Giddens and Mitchel 2010). A symbol is anything that represents more than itself (Johnson 1996). It is anything that meaningfully represents something else (Kendal 1996). Symbolic systems tell us how to mark and interpret perceptions, depending on their social situations. People respond to symbols just as they respond to their meanings or what they represent. Symbols are created, that is, there is nothing inherent in any symbol that gives it power over people but its power lies in what they signify to those people who share its meaning (Johnson 1996).

According to Johnson (1996), there are four kinds of symbols: symbolic objects (Flag, Money and goods); symbolic characteristics of objects (purple for royalty, yellow for cowardice); gestures actions (a wink, a raised right hand) that have meaning in certain cultural contexts and the vast range of spoken and written words that make up language.

Charon (1998) argued that symbols are social objects, the use of which we understand, which we do not simply respond to, but we are able to describe them to ourselves and to others and we are able to apply them to thousands of situations where they seem to fit. Hence, when we understand symbols, it means we understand their representation. Symbols, according to Charon (1998), are social objects used by the actor for representation and communication.

Symbols have a shared social meaning that is understood by all the people living in a particular society. People communicate their values and beliefs to those around them through symbols (Schaefer 2008). Symbols are significant. Symbols are used intentionally and not by mistake. The person who used symbols does so for the purpose of giving meanings that he or she believes will make sense to the other. Symbolic thought, according to Giddens and Duneier (2000), frees people from being limited in their experience to what they actually see, hear, or feel. Therefore, human beings live in a richly symbolic universe.

## **2.3 Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic Interactionism involves the ability of human beings to communicate by means of symbols (Hughes and Kroehler 2008). Therefore, symbolic Interaction occurs when people communicate through the use of symbols (Kendall 1996). Society is merely the name for a number of individuals connected by interaction (Johnson 1996). Virtually, all interactions between individuals involve an exchange of symbol and when we do interact with others, we constantly look for clues to what type of behaviour is

appropriate in the context and how to interpret what others are up to. Symbolic Interactionism directs our attention to the detail of interpersonal interaction and how that detail is used to make sense of what others say and do (Giddens and Duneier 2000). People's actions, according to Curran (1998), are significantly derived from their interpretation of what goes on around them, and much of this interpretation is learned through interacting with others. This is done through the meanings that have been assigned to particular objects in the society. As people interact with one another over time, patterns of interaction develop, and rules governing interaction develop. These ritualized interactions become so much a part of people's lives, that they do them almost automatically, social reality, then, is constructed (Curran 1998).

#### **2.4 Social Construction of Reality**

Sociologists usually use an approach called the social construction of reality to explain how cultures are created and maintained. The underlying idea is that reality is, for any person, a collection of beliefs about what exists, in both a material and a nonmaterial way, and what it all connotes. People's beliefs about reality are products of social experiences and communications with other people. They reflect what the people around us believe to be true, moral and important (Branshaw et al 2001). It is the way that actors define situations that has quite important consequences in how it represents their reality in terms of which they structure their actions (Haralambos and Holborn 2008). Developing reality is social and what we see in the society and within ourselves is developed in interaction with others (Charon 1998).

Hughes and Kroehler (2008) explained that social construction of reality is based on three core assumptions. First, we respond to things in our environment on the basis of their meaning – that is to say, the understanding we have of them. Secondly, meanings are not inherent in things, but emerge from social interaction. Thirdly, because we are continually interacting, share cultural meanings are continually emerging and changing. Therefore, the world we live in is largely a social reality, created by people as they intervene in the world and interpret what is happening there, using the symbols and meanings available to them.

#### **2.5 Aroko: A Social Symbol of Communication Among Yoruba Natives**

The previous review on object, symbol, Symbolic Interactionism and construction of social reality is very important because the explanations on Aroko are centred on those mentioned concepts. Aroko is a Social object among the pre-colonial Yoruba natives which socially represents meanings that can be interpreted. Therefore, for the reason that it is socially meaningful, it is a symbol which depicts meanings within the Yoruba society.

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Aroko is a symbol whose meaning and interpretation are shared in the process of social interactions. It is a product from the interaction process which takes place within the society. Aroko is a social construction of reality because it is a by-product of social experiences and communications with other people in the society. Aroko reflects what Yoruba people considered to be true and important in their daily interactions and communication.

Communication is the verbal, non verbal and visual language that allows the members of a culture to convey meanings or thoughts from one person to another (Brandshaw et al 2001). Communication helps a group of people develop a shared understanding of reality, coordinate activities, and transmit accumulated information and knowledge to new members of the culture. To communicate, people must share a set of symbols: socially defined, learned representations of meaning (Brandshaw et al 2011). A great deal of human communication is conducted with symbols. Symbols can be used to communicate because they have socially determined meanings, which mean a culture comes to associate a particular symbol with some particular aspect of reality (Brandshaw et al 2011).

Aroko as a social symbol is primarily used for communication among Yoruba natives before the coming of western culture. Aroko, according to Afolabi (2004), is the use of material objects (Social objects) packaged together in a specific way, which was the traditional system of sending messages to people among the Yoruba natives in the past. Aroko is a non-Verbal traditional system of communication among the Yoruba natives that was in vogue before the advent of the Europeans in Nigeria (Go-historic, 2012). Aroko involves sending an item or a combinable number of items to a person from which the decoder is expected to infer a piece of information (Abdullahi-Idiagbon 2010). Aroko can be classified based on the discourse functions they perform: warning, admonition, punishment, conflict, announcement/marketing strategy, indicator/directive, expression of affection and pleading (Abudullahi-Idiagbon 2010). Aroko could be sent by a traditional ruler, a chief, Ifa priest, Ogboni cult member, hunter, artisan, warrior or an ordinary person to a counterpart or any other person, group or body (Abdullahi-Idiagbon 2010 and Falola and Adebayo 2000).

There are three factors that are exigent and expedient to an effective Aroko. These are: the sender, the receiver and the transmitter. Both sender and receiver need to be Skilful in the art of interpretation of an Aroko sign (Abdullahi-Idiagbon 2010). Both sender and receiver have to operate within encompassing element and the context to make Aroko meaningful (Afolabi 2004).

Aroko is useful maly for the following purposes:

(i) To make the message very secret. The bearer or transmitter of an Aroko may not know the content of the Aroko let alone of its in-depth

interpretation. Even in some occasion, the bearer may be the conveyer of his own death sentence.

(ii) To avoid verbal message and its problematic features of omission, misconception, manipulation or distortion.

(iii) To express brotherhood, comradeship, confidence and solidarity among cult members.

(iv) To reinforce the credibility of the message, especially when the belonging of the sender accompanied the Aroko. (Abdullahi – Idiagbon 2010).

The particular form of the Aroko strongly rests on the intent of the sender and his/her relationship with the receiver. Aroko includes single or combined edible or non – edible items i.e. kolanut, comb, bitter kola, pepper, arrow and bow, gun, cowry shells, pieces of textile, chalk or barks of trees, rock, seeds, feathers tools e.t.c (Abdullahi –Idiagbon 2010; Go – Historic 2012, Nigeria World Forum 2011) some are delivered to a destination by either human or an animal and some can be stationed at a spot to be observed by people for possible interpretation (Abdullah – Idiagbon 2010).

Aroko codes are almost extinct and its demise was caused by many factors. Factors which make Aroko unpopular nowadays are:

(1) The invention of modern transportation and communication Facilities;

(2) Reduction in the popularity and power of the traditional rulers as a result of modern system of government (democracy);

(3) Shortage of people who are equipped with the arts of encoding and decoding the contents of an Aroko;

(4) Availability of conventional road signs which render the traditional ones unpopular;

(5) Constitutional and judiciary modern systems of regulating the power of an individual or a community or an institution;

(6) Finally, the refusal of the aged and the priests from making Aroko knowledge, universal (Abdullahi – Idiagbon 2010; Nigeria World Forum 2011), Aroko is still used today mainly among the priest groups in Edo community, Nigeria as they were used in the past for day-to-day dealings among people, in episodic and diplomatic occasions and during the intertribal war (Falola and Adebayo 2000).

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This paper is anchored on the theoretical framework of Symbolic Interactionism, which of course perfectly fit in with the sociological and anthropological explanations of Aroko, which is the main concept addressed by this research paper.

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Unlike conflict and functionalist approaches to the study of society, symbolic interactionists are primarily concerned with the micro-level aspects of human culture. Their main focus is on how culture is generated, sustained, and changed in a society, not by the social institutions, anyway, but by the members of the society, interacting during their day-to day activities. The symbolic interactionism theorists study the basic elements of culture – symbols, values, norms, ideas and of course objects because these are the raw materials that humans use to create and reinforce social reality (Curran and Renzetti 1998).

According to Kendall (1996), interactionist perspectives see society as the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups. The approach focuses on how people act toward one another and how they make sense of those interactions. Storer (1980) posits that the central issue in symbolic interactionism is the assumption of the approach that the reality of society lies importantly in the perceptions of the members rather than its objective existence in time and space. In order to understand society, we must understand how people assign meaning to their own and others' behaviour and develop shared images of society that enable them to interact effectively. Symbolic interactions, Storer (1980), argued further, refers to people coordinating their activities through the use of symbols, hence, it must involve shared assumptions about motives, expectations, and goals. Interactionists see symbols as an especially, important part of human communication (Schaefer 2008). Andersen and Taylor (2003) argued that people behave based on what they believe not just on what is objectively true. Therefore, symbolic interactionists see social order as being constantly negotiated and created through the interpretations people give to their behaviour. It is very difficult, therefore, to understand social life without paying attention to how we attach meaning to our experience and behaviour. To explain why people behave as they do, we must have some idea of what they believe and value, and what they think others expect of them, and this will vary from one social situation to another (Johnson 1996).

Interactionists believe that it is possible to analyze society systematically and that it is possible to improve society (Haralambos and Holborn 2008). Symbolic Interactionism is a valuable approach because it draws out attention to the ways in which routine behaviour and taken-for-granted beliefs, help make social order possible. It directs our attention to the detail of interpersonal to make sense of what others say and do. In addition, by emphasizing the role of social learning, it places; the possibility of social change firmly in our grasp that is, if a specific harmful behavior or beliefs has been learned, it can be unlearned; other behaviours and beliefs may be taught in its place (Curran and Renzetti 1998; Giddens and Dunier 2000). Aroko as a channel of communication among the Yoruba natives involves a chain of interactions among the senders and recipients. The Aroko as symbols and their meanings were shared among the participants involved and such can be illustrated in diagram (see figure 1)

#### **4. Methodology Applied**

This research paper uses qualitative approach. Qualitative approach makes use of soft data like impressions, words, sentences photos, symbols and so forth. Qualitative research relies largely on the interpretive and critical approaches to social sciences. It gives the researcher rich information about the social processes in specific settings (Neuman 2003). It is concerned with the interpretation of action and the representation of meaning (Adler and Clark 1999). It focuses on human subjectivity, on the meanings that participants attach to events and that people give to their lives (Schutt 2004).

This paper applied qualitative approach. In using qualitative approach, soft data in forms of photos (which contain the symbols of Aroko) were taken. Furthermore, the work was based on the interpretation and representation of meaning that people attach to events and give to their lives.

The method of analyses employed in this work is content analyses, being a qualitative approach. The data were described in ways that capture the setting or people who produced these data. The work utilized an emic focus which represents the setting in terms of the participants rather than researcher (Schutt 2004).

#### **5. Aroko as Social Symbols and the Interpretations of their Meanings**

This section explains Aroko as social symbols and their interpretations among the Yoruba natives. Different forms of Aroko which depict warning, conflict, punishment and war were explained under this section of the paper. The photos (the Social symbols of Aroko) are meaningfully interpreted.

##### **5.1 Aroko that Symbolise Warning and their Meanings**

Yoruba natives are very sensitive to both natural and social environments that surround them. Through this sensitivity, they have the feelings of looming dangers and communicate the same to the individuals or communities concerned.

##### **Warning against Unwanted Incidence**

Aroko can be sent to a recipient to intimate him on something or incidence which is untoward. Such incidence may be unpleasant one and therefore, not wanted by the recipient and the sender. When two cowry shells were tied together with black thread (see figure 2), it symbolizes unwanted happening or incidence is coming to the recipient. Through this Aroko, the recipient is expected to be very vigilant and keep watch over himself. This Aroko is widely used among the Ife people (an ethnic group among the Yoruba natives).

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### **Warning against Pride or over bearing**

Pride is an unpleasant and irritated behaviour among the Yoruba natives. Very similar to this is 'being overbearing'. Both pride and overbearing behaviours may be dealt with through the Aroko, to forewarn those who are proud and over bearing. Hence, if some leaves from odan tree (see figure 3) are plucked and put in front of the house of a person, it means that the person is proud or overbearing and if care is not taken, he will fall to shame, disrespect or disregard. Odan tree is an important tree among the Yoruba people. It provides shade during the hot weather for those who come under it. It is equally useful for those who play traditional ayo game as a pleasant place to play such game. However, the leaves from odan tree are usually eaten up by goats, therefore, losing its value and prestige to animals. Hence, there is a popular saying among the Yoruba natives which goes this way "Ewe odan seju be lo, eran lo fi je" meaning (odan leaves are more valuable but eventually were eaten up by goats). Hence, heaps of odan leaves in front of the house of a person is a warning against pride and over bearing.

### **Warning against Adultery or Illicit Sexual Relationship**

Adultery is an outrageous crime among the Yoruba natives. It is an offence against the religious objects of the husband, including his ancestors. It is also a criminal act against the gods (Adewale 1994). Hence, adultery is a total abomination. A person who is having an illicit sexual affair with another man's wife can be warned through Aroko. For instance, if feathers of a fowl are plucked and deposited at the entrance door of a man (see figure 4), it is an indication that the man is having an illicit sexual affair with a woman who is not his wife, and probably the wife of the sender of the Aroko or the relative of the sender. The message encoded in such Aroko is that, the husband of the woman he is having illicit sexual affair with, is aware of the illicit relationship, and therefore, the erring man should desist from such woman, otherwise, a doom will be let loose on the erring man.

Apart from plucked feathers of a fowl, firebrands can also be made as an Aroko and deposited at the back yard of the house of such an erring man (see figure 5). Firebrands represent fire and the interpretation of this is that, if the adulterous man does not stop his illegal sexual relationship with the wife of the sender, his house will be eventually burnt down by the offended rightful husband of the woman. Hence, there is a popular saying which goes thus: "Eni ba se n kan Itufu, ni boju wehin ikule" – meaning (it is somebody who is wayward in his character that will always fear that firebrands might have been deposited at the back of his house). Feathers of a fowl and the firebrands are Aroko, warning against adulterous man within Yoruba context.

### **5.2 Aroko that Symbolize Conflict, Separation and their Meanings**

Yoruba natives cherish affection, love and good relationship. However, like other tribes in Africa, relationship may turn sour between the parties concerned. Conflict, fight, misunderstanding and separation may ensue in the relationship. Such things are unpleasant happenings and Yoruba man or woman may find it very difficult to pronounce the separation or conflict verbally. Hence, Aroko is a proper way of disseminating such unpleasant message. The following are the forms of Aroko which carry such message:

(1) Cowry shells string back to back and sent to a recipient means the sender is breaking his/her relationship with the recipient (see figure 6) for a sample.

(2) Two or three cowry shells wrapped in a leave and sent to a recipient, means that the sender is requesting the recipient to pay the debt he owns the sender to avoid conflict or fight (see figure 7).

(3) When three cowry shells are parceled and sent to a recipient, it means the sender is rejecting, out rightly the offer made or given by the recipient on a particular matter or issue (see figure 8).

(4) When a man or a woman sends a torn palm front to another person (the recipient), it means the sender is breaking his/her blood relationship or ties with the recipient (see figure 9). This is especially common among siblings.

(5) If a man or a woman sends a comb to his/her lover it signifies that their union, love and affection have ended. It is a symbol of total separation (see figure 10).

(6) Finally, if three Agbaarin (a kind of non-edible fruit) are sent to a recipient as Aroko, the meaning is that the sender is picking up quarrel or fight with the recipient. A quarrel or fight that will break a cherished relationship, in which a reconciliation is not imminent (see figure 11).

### **5.3 Aroko that Symbolize Punishment and their Meanings**

Yoruba society is a highly organized one, politically, socially and spiritually. Within the political structure is a strong administration of law and order. Non compliance with law and order is a great offence against the society, the gods of the land and the ancestors. Hence, offences are promptly and justly punished among the people. Punishment of offences may not take the form of verbal declaration. Aroko may be sent to the offender instead of verbal declaration of punishment on such offender, even including the erring king or high chief.

In Yoruba land, especially, in the old Oyo kingdom, people usually rejected the reigns of cruel and tyrant kings. Whenever people rejected such

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kings, an Aroko (an egg of parrot in a calabash, see figure 12 for a sample) was usually presented to such kings as a symbol of rejection and punishment for misrule. Such kings committed suicide in the history of Oyo kingdom i.e. Alaafin Majeogbe, Alaafin Labisi, Alaafin Awonboju and Alaafin Agboluaje. The meaning of a parrot egg in a calabash, presented to any erring Alaafin, like those mentioned earlier on is: 'the people of Oyo reject you, the ancestors reject you and the gods of the land reject you'. The implication of the pronouncement is that they wanted such king to commit suicide or at least go on self exile.

An offender in the Yoruba community may also be banished from the community as a result of the offence or crime such person has committed. Hence, when a king or a high chief has sent a handful of sand, wrapped in a leave (see figure 13), as an Aroko, to a member of such community, the meaning is banishment or self exile. Such a member is not expected to come back to such community in his life time. This usually happened when grievous offences are committed against the society and gods of the land.

#### **5.4 Aroko that Symbolize War and their Meanings**

Yoruba natives are mighty people, skilful in art of war and military expedition for expansion of kingdom or territory. Wars were fought against other neighbouring kingdoms and within the kingdom (Intra – tribal wars). Warning on an impending war may be sent before hand through Aroko. A bow and some arrows may be sent to other community as a form of Aroko which means the community which sent the materials of war is sending message of war to the recipient community. If the recipient community embraces peace, the matter will be settled amicably, but not without payment of tribute. However, the recipient community may decline in sending message of peace, which may eventually lead to both communities engaging in warfare. A gun or a cutlass tied with palm frond may be sent too, as an Aroko of war (see figure 14). Palm frond is a symbol synonymous with Ogun, who is god of war and cutlass is one of his military weapons.

#### **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Aroko is a non-verbal channel of communication among the Yoruba natives, especially, those that lived before the western civilization. It is a means of communication widely practiced by traditional rulers, chiefs, priests, warriors, artisans, cult members, hunters and others who were very skillful in encoding and decoding Aroko. It is a means of communication which convey deeper meaning, even, more that what words can express. The use of Aroko

covers all the aspect of Yoruba life, for instance: on warning, conflict, punishment and war as explained in this paper. However, the influence of Aroko as a channel of communication has been eroded as a result of modern means of transportation and communication. The use for Aroko, is now restricted to the remote rural communities in Yoruba land, where the aged people are still the custodians of Yoruba culture. Hence, it is hardly used in the wider community of Yoruba people, and this has seriously undermined its communicative powers. Aroko is a reminder of the transitory nature and conventionality of signs in tune with our own time (Abdullahi – Idiagbon 2010).

Aroko as non-verbal communication is quite revealing and interesting because it embodies volume of meaning. Therefore, it is recommended that more researches be conducted on Aroko which this work does not cover and such should be documented. Yoruba parents who are skillful in encoding and decoding Aroko should teach their children the same thing as a way of keeping the part of Yoruba culture alive. We enjoin the traditional priests to open up the hidden forms of Aroko that are kept secret, so that Yoruba people can benefit from the knowledge of this. Finally, it is recommended that the Yoruba states governments should inaugurate a standby commission that will oversee the research into, keeping and transmission of Yoruba culture from generation to generation. This will prevent all the aspect of Yoruba culture, from going into extinction, including Aroko, as a non-verbal channel of communication.

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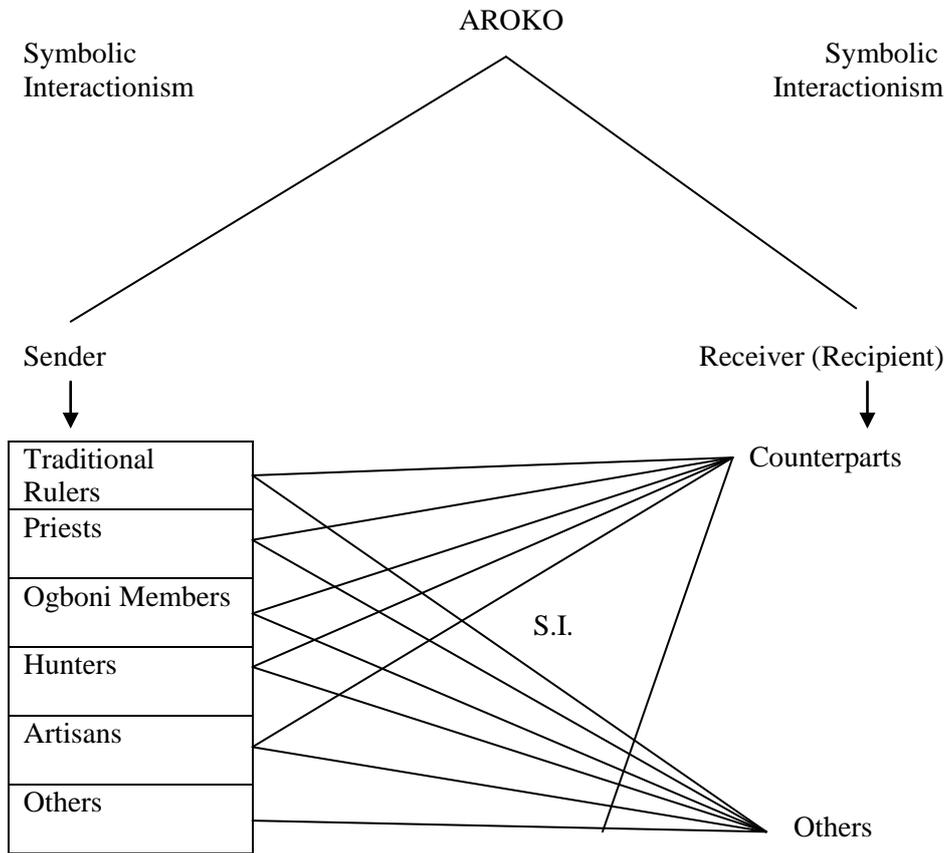
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Figure 1



Aroko (discourse) participants: adapted from (Abdullahi-Idiagbon 2010: p6)  
S.I. in the Figure stands for Symbolic Interactionism

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**Figure 2**



Two cowry shells tied together with black thread: as an Aroko, for an impending bad incidence. Black thing among Yoruba signifies doom or mournful incidence.

**Figure 3**



Some 'Odan' leaves at the front of a house: as an Aroko of warning against pride and overbearing. It signifies that the person is proud or overbearing and if not desist, the person will fall into disrepute or shame.

**Figure 4**



Deposited plucked feathers of fowl at the backyard of a house: as an Aroko, warning an adulterous man in that house to desist from the act, otherwise, the doom will let loose. It is a symbol that the illicit sexual act has been discovered or exposed.

**Figure 5**



Firebrand at the back of a house: as an Aroko, warning an adulterous man in that house to quit his illicit affair with another man's wife. The meaning of the firebrand is that, if he does not desist, his house will be burnt down.

**Figure 6**



Four cowry shells strung together back to back: It is an Aroko which means "I am breaking my relationship or friendship with you". The back to back position of the cowry shells is an indication that the sender does not want to see the receiver or recipient face to face again.

**Figure 7**



Three cowry shells in a leaf: It is an Aroko which a sender uses to request the recipient to pay the money owing the sender. Otherwise, there will be conflict or fight over the debt owing.

**Figure 8**



Three cowry shells: It is an Aroko which conveys the message to the recipient that the sender has rejected his/her proposal, offer or request.

**Figure 9**



A torn piece of palm frond: It is an Aroko which signifies that the sender is breaking up the blood ties or kinship relationships with the receiver or recipient. This is usually common among the fighting siblings.

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**A case of Aroko...**

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**Figure 10**



A local traditional comb: If a person sends this to his/her lover as an Aroko, it means their love, affection and relationship as lovers have ended and no reconciliation can be made.

**Figure 11**



Three Agbaarin fruits: If these are sent to a recipient, it is an Aroko which signifies that a fight or severe brawl is impending and no reconciliation would be made after the fight or such a quarrel.

**Figure 12**



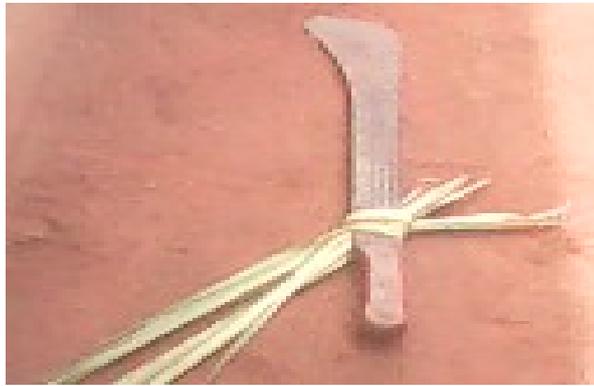
A parrot egg in a calabash: It is an Aroko which signifies the rejection of a king or traditional chief. Such a king or traditional chief has been symbolically requested to impose self punishment by committing suicide. A parrot is a sacred bird in Yoruba land.

**Figure 13**



A handful of sand in a leaf: It is an Aroko which tells the recipient to go on self exile for the offence he/she has committed against the community, ancestors or the gods of the land.

**Figure 14**



A cutlass with a fresh palm front tied to it: it is an Aroko which signifies that a war is looming against the recipient community. Cutlass and palm fronts are the symbols attributed to Ogun (the Yoruba god of war and hunting).

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**Ojo, Matthias Olufemi Dada**

**SIMBOLI UPOZORENJA, KONFLIKT, KAŽNJAVANJE I RAT I  
NJIHOVA ZNAČENJA MEĐU PREDKOLONIJALNIM JORUBAMA:  
SLUČAJ AROKOA**

Ovaj rad predstavlja antropološko objašnjenje arokoa među Jorubama u zapadnom delu Nigerije. Aroko je neverbalni sistem komunikacije koji brzo odumire među ovim ljudima. U ovom radu se pokušao objasniti aroko za: upozorenje, konflikt, kaznu i predstojeći rat, a isti su prikazani na slikama u svrši analize sadržaja. Rad se zaključuje preporukom da se sprovedu dalja etnološka i antropološka istraživanja arokoa koja ovaj antropološki rad ne pokriva. Takođe se iznosi primedba da bi jorubanski roditelji koji su vični dekodiranju arokoa trebalo da poduče svoju decu istom zarad očuvanja jorubanske kulture. Pored toga, predloženo je i da tradicionalni sveštenici otkriju skriveni aroko koji se koristio u prošlosti da bi se propisno dokumentovao i na kraju, traži se da vlade jugo-zapadnih nigerijskih država uspostave regionalnu komisiju koja će nadgledati istraživanje odumirućih aspekata jorubanske kulture, da ih do-

### **Ojo, Matthias Olufemi Dada**

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kumentuje i prenosi sa generacije na generaciju i time spreči aspekte istrebljenja kulture Joruba.

**Ključne reči:** aroko, simboli, predmeti, značenja, Jorube, kultura