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Essays

On the Etymology of the Yoruba Theonym Shango

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Abstract

This paper revisits the contested origins of Shango, a prominent Yoruba deity associated with thunder, lightning, and kingship. While Yoruba tradition often portrays Shango as an early king of Oyo who was deified, such accounts present inconsistencies. By examining linguistic evidence, the author proposes that the name Shango derives from the Gbari term $\text{ɛtswaʃɛg}^{\text{w}o}$ (ruler of the sky) and entered Old Oyo Yoruba via Nupe. In Gbari cosmology, $\text{ɛtswaʃɛg}^{\text{w}o}$ denotes a sky god, while in Nupe the borrowed form $\text{etsu } \text{ʃjɛg}^{\text{w}o}$ was reinterpreted as “King ʃjɛgo ,” thereby blending notions of rulership with divine power. This linguistic shift, the paper argues, set the stage for Yoruba tradition to merge the idea of a thunder deity with an actual royal figure, giving rise to Shango’s dual identity as both a celestial power and an Oyo king.

Drawing on analyses of tonal correspondences, morphological segmentation, and comparative phonology, the study demonstrates that the word Shango does not align with proposed Yoruba-internal or direct Nupe etymologies. Instead, the evidence supports a route of transmission from Gbari into Nupe and, subsequently, into Yoruba. By tracing these borrowings, the paper elucidates why Shango is closely linked to royal authority, highlighting how the etsu (“king”) component would have reinforced regal connotations. This hypothesis challenges earlier scholarship that relied predominantly on historical or mythological data, suggesting instead that the narrative of a once-living Oyo king was constructed to rationalize the deity’s regal attributes. Overall, the paper offers a fresh perspective on Shango’s etymology, demonstrating that his origins lie in a cross-cultural synthesis that profoundly shaped Yoruba religious tradition.

Keywords: Yoruba, Orisha, Shango, etymology, Historical Linguistics

Introduction

Shango (often spelled <Sàngó> or <Sòngó>, IPA: [ʃàngó] or [ʃòngó]) is a deity mostly worshipped by the Yoruba people of West Africa. Originally specific to the Northern Yoruba people of Oyo, it came to be worshipped in a large part of Yorubaland because of the territorial expansion of the empire of Oyo from the 16th-century onwards. The origins of Shango remain unclear as this question is complicated by the existence, in Yoruba tradition, of ‘two Shango’. One is a deity associated with thunder and lightning, while the other is an early king of Oyo. I propose a new approach to this debate by resolving another longstanding puzzle about Shango: its etymology. I contend that the name Shango [ʃàngó] is a loanword from Gbari *via* another language, Nupe, into the old Oyo Yoruba dialect. I claim that the source of the Yoruba theonym is the Gbari word for ‘God’, *etswafɛgʷo*, which can be analyzed as ‘ruler’ (*etsu*) of the ‘sky’ (*ɛggo*). In Nupe, it was phonologically rendered as **etsuf-jəgʷo*. The segment (*etsu*) was interpreted as (*etsu*) which means ‘king’ like in Gbari, while **ɟəgʷo*, of no meaning in Nupe, was interpreted as a name, with **etsu.ɟəgʷo* now meaning ‘King *ɟəggo*’. In the Oyo Yoruba dialect, this Nupe phrase was similarly rendered as *alaafi ɟàngó* ‘King Shango’. I suggest that this title meaning ‘king’ inherited from Gbari and Nupe was instrumental in the association of Shango with kingship and the invention, by Yoruba tradition, of the character of a historical Oyo king deified as the god Shango to rationalize the etymology of its name. This hypothesis is supported by the mention, in a fragmentary Nupe tale recorded in the first part of the 20th century, of a character named Etsu Shago. While this character has been interpreted by previous scholarship as a confirmation of the historicity of the Yoruba king Shango, I contend that the tale clearly points to a mythological time consistent with Etsu Shago not being a historical character as *etswafɛgʷo* is among the Gbari. This study is divided into the following parts. First, I introduce the reader to the deity Shango and to theories developed about its origins. In a second part, I evaluate the different etymologies suggested for the word Shango and show why my hypothesis of a Gbari origin is the most convincing one. In a third part, I explain why the existence of an Oyo king deified after his death as Shango is unlikely.

Shango: The Deity and the King

Shango is a deity now worshipped among several Yoruba populations of Nigeria and the Benin Republic. It is also very popular in Afro-American religions such as *Candomblé* in Brazil and *Lucumi* in Cuba. Its wide diffusion

is due to the rise and fall of the Oyo Empire between the 16th and 19th centuries. It is thought that *Shango* was originally unknown to other Yoruba populations outside the immediate area of Old Oyo, in what is now the Western part of central Nigeria. This now-abandoned site is geographically close to settlements of Nupe people. The origin of *Shango* within this area bordering with the Savannah is corroborated by the Oyo Yoruba tradition which presents *Shango* as stemming from Nupe land. According to Idowu (1995(1962)), *Shango* was the son of *Oran(mi)yan*, a Yoruba ruler of Ife, and of a Nupe princess. The same source claims that *Shango* grew up in Nupe land before ruling the neighboring state of Oyo.

According to Johnson (1960), *Shango* was a tyrannical ruler who used to spit fire. One day, as he was attempting to manipulate thunder and lightning, he inadvertently destroyed his own palace, killing several of his wives and children in the process. Ashamed of what he had done, he decided to leave Oyo for his Nupe motherland, expecting his followers to accompany him. None of them showed up, and Shango decided to hang himself out of frustration. He was then deified by his followers on the spot of his death.

A similar account of *Shango*'s deification was recorded by Hethersett (1941). In this story, *Shango*'s departure from Oyo was not caused by him destroying his palace. After a civil war between two of his powerful generals, he was accused by *Gbonnka*, the victor, to have supported the vanquished, Timi. Gbonnka thus ordered *Shango* to leave the town. As most of his followers did not accompany him as he was expecting them to do, he hanged himself out of frustration in a location called *Koso*. When his supporters learned what had happened, they decided to deify him, uttering the phrase *Ọba kò so* 'the king did not hang' in Yoruba, manipulating thunder and lightning to punish the late king who became progressively associated with thunder, lightning, and justice.

Another *Shango* existed alongside this deified *Shango* described as cruel or impetuous. Unlike the other, this *Shango* is considered as a just and loving deity. Leo Frobenius accounted for this disparity between the two *Shango* by their origin (Frobenius 1913, I: 210; II: 629). The original one, the *Shango Takpa*, was of Nupe origin. It would then have been followed by the *Mesi Shango*, which he wrote is of Borgu origin.

E. Bolaji Idowu explained that an Alaafin of Oyo called *Shango*, the one described by Hethersett and Johnson, was identified, through his deification, with a preexisting loving deity called *Jakuta* ('stone hurler', now an epithet for *Shango*), hence the deity's now seemingly contradictory characteristics (Idowu 1995 (1962)).

According to yet another author, *Shango* was not the original name of the deified *Alaafin*, but that of the deity. The *Alaafin* in question was, according to C.L. Adeoye, originally named *Salu Babayemi Itiolu* (Adeoye 1979).

Although they remain influential in the depictions of *Shango* in popular culture, these accounts were criticized by subsequent scholarship. Isola (2000) pointed out that the generals *Timi* and *Gbonnka* claimed by Hethersett to have been contemporary of the reign of the early *Alaafin* who was deified as *Shango* lived much later in history. More recently, Akinyemi (2009) pointed out further inconsistencies concerning the alleged deification of the *Alaafin* who hanged himself at Koso described by Hethersett. First, he claims that in order to be deified, an *Alaafin* has to be buried in the royal mausoleum, which was not the case of the *Shango* described by Hethersett, who was buried in Koso, where he hanged himself. Akinyemi adds that suicide by hanging is forbidden in Oyo Yoruba culture. According to him, the *Shango* described by Hethersett could hardly have been deified taking his life this way. Relying on the *Odu Ifa*, the verses of the Yoruba Ifa divination system, Akinyemi concludes that the deity *Shango* predated the creation of the Yoruba state of Oyo. *Shango* was later installed as the tutelary deity of the *Alaafin*. Because of this, identification of the *Alaafin* with *Shango* was both necessary for the former to be enthroned and to be deified after his deity. In his opinion, all deified *Alaafin* being referred to as *Shango* probably led to the erroneous interpretation of *Shango*'s worship having begun with the deification of a king.

I agree with Akinyemi's point regarding the anteriority of the deity *Shango* over any *Alaafin*. However, I contend that it does not properly explain why the deity *Shango* has been so closely associated with kingship. I argue that this can be demonstrated through the identification of its etymology, an issue I will deal with in the following part of this work.

The etymology of Shango

The internal Yoruba hypothesis

Ellis (1894) has suggested that *Shango* [*ʃàgó*] is a word of Yoruba origin. According to him, it is a word resulting of the composition of two Yoruba verbs, namely <*shan*> 'to strike violently' and <*go*> 'to bewilder'. The first word is attested with this exact gloss in Crowther's dictionary (Crowther 1843:163). Unfortunately, this dictionary does not mark tones. Two very similar meanings, 'to cut down', 'to throw down' are ascribed to the word *ṣǎ* by Abraham (1958:620). However, this word does not bear the same low tone as the *ṣà* in *ṣàgó* as it would be expected if Ellis' etymology was correct, but rather a high tone. This suggests that this Yoruba etymology suggested by Ellis cannot be substantiated. The invalidity of this hypothesis is furthered by the fact that to the best of my knowledge, no Yoruba dictionary attests to the existence of a word **gó* meaning 'to bewilder'. The closest words appear to be *gó*, which in Abraham (1958: 255-256) means 'to wear out', and *gò* 'to be stupid' because of its vowel differing from /o/, cannot explain the word [*ʃàgó*].

The Nupe hypothesis

As mentioned above, *Shango* is traditionally associated with Nupeland. Comparisons between the cult of *Shango* and that of *So(ko)gba* have been put forward by S.F. Nadel (Nadel 1942). *Sòkó* is the name of the Nupe Supreme Being, while *Sògbà~Sòkógbà* means ‘axe’ (*ēgbà*) of ‘God’ (*sòkó*). Among the Nupe, *Soko* is thought to cause lightning to punish thieves. The cult of *Sògbà~Sòkógbà* is also used to cure barrenness as this is the case with *Shango* in Yorubaland. These similarities, coupled with the connection of *Shango* with Nupeland, have led E. Bolaji Idowu to suggest that *Shango* [*fāgo*] was a ‘corruption’ of the word *Soko* [*sòkó*] in Yoruba (Idowu 1995:91-92). While the phonetic and tonal structures of the words are indeed similar, several facts go against this hypothesis. First, the word-initial syllable *so* is well attested in Yoruba, even probably at the Proto Yoruba level (Akinkugbe 1978). It is attested for example for the verb ‘to tie’ in Proto Yoruba. This root is still *so* in standard Yoruba, which is said to be based on the New Oyo dialect, which is itself likely to have been introduced by immigrants from the city of Old Oyo. Thus, it appears likely that the first consonant of the Nupe word *sòkó* would have been rendered as /s/ in Old Oyo Yoruba, not *f*. Similarly, Proto Yoruba *k is retained as such in standard Yoruba in intervocalic position, more specifically before *o (cf. **V-kòkò* ‘pot’ → Standard Yoruba *ìkòkò* ‘pot’; **òkò* ‘farm’ → Standard Yoruba **òkò* ‘farm’). If the Nupe word was directly introduced into Yoruba, one would have expected the /k/ of *sòkó* to have remained unvoiced in Yoruba *Shango*, yet it is not (**fàkó*). These arguments strongly suggest that the word is not an adaptation of the Nupe word *sòkó*.

The Gbagyi hypothesis

According to Nadel (1942), the cult of *So(ko)gba* among the Nupe was of Gwari origin. This exonym refers to two closely related ethno-linguistic groups, the Gbagyi and the Gbari. Harold Gunn & Francis Conant have suggested that one Gbari (sic) word for ‘god’, <*Sheko*> is ‘apparently cognate’ with the theonym Yoruba [*fāgó*] (Gunn & Conant 1960:106). <*Sheko*> [*fèk^wò*] is however not a Gbari theonym, but a Gbagyi one. While Gunn and Conant seem to suggest that the relationship between *Sheko* and *Shango* is that of genealogical cognates, I will here first address the possibility of Yoruba [*fāgó*] being a loanword from Gbagyi <*Sheko*>. As [*fāgó*] was thought to have been originally an Old Oyo idiosyncrasy among the Yoruba dialects, it seems more likely that it was borrowed from a neighboring language such as Gbagyi rather than a genealogical cognate. Another argument suggesting that both words are not genealogical cognates is that the word can be segmented in Gbagyi, but not in Yoruba. As we have seen, Gwari segment <*she*> [*fě*] is related to the word for ‘sky, above’ (Gbagyi <*òshè*> [*àfě*], Gbari *shèzhì* ‘land of She=sky’),

while the second segment, *ko* [*k^wo*] appears to be a nominal category marker found in a range of many other nouns. <*Sheko*>'s <*ko*>[*k^wō*] was probably a nominal suffix also found in words such as *zok^wo* 'road', *suk^wo* 'night', *mpy-ek^wo* 'sun' combined with the word <*òshè*> [əʃè] 'sky'. If this had been borrowed into Yoruba, it would be unlikely to appear as *gó*, given that Yoruba historically has had phonemes (e.g., /*k^w*/ or /*kp*/) closer to the Gbagyi /*k^w*/ than to /*g*/. Down to the Proto Yoruba stage, Yoruba dialects indeed appear to have always had the unvoiced labial velar consonant /*kp*/ and the unvoiced velar consonant /*k*/ in their inventories. Proto Yoruba probably also had a **g^w*, although it has not evolved as such in Standard Yoruba (Akinkugbe 1978). One could wonder why Yoruba would have rendered Gbagyi /*k^w*/ as /*g*/, while it has a /*k*/ which is closer to the former in terms of unvoicing, /*kp*/, which is closer in terms of both unvoicing and place of articulation and while it had a **g^w*, which is closer to *k^w* in terms of place of articulation.

However, that both words are genealogical cognates cannot be excluded a priori and the survivance of a cognate to Gbagyi *Sheko* in the neighboring Old Oyo language out of all Yoruba dialects could possibly be explained by a linguistic contact having preserved those genealogically shared features. As with the hypothesis of a loan however, there are issues with positing that *Sheko* and *Shango* are genealogical cognates. First of all, Gbagyi, as in Gbari and Nupe, [ʃ] is an allophone of /*s*/ before phonemes containing palatality. Nupoid **s* appears to correspond to Yoruba /*s*/, not to Yoruba */*y*/, which rather corresponds to Nupoid */*ts*/. Moreover, Nupoid **k^w* does not appear to correspond regularly to Yoruba **g*. If the Yoruba word *Shango* is the result of a loan from Gbagyi, at least three processes are left without any explanation. First, why did the [*k^wo*] sequence found in Gbari evolved into [go] in Yoruba? Secondly, why does the Yoruba word have nasality in its first syllable? Thirdly, why is *Shango* so closely associated with royalty? I contend that the hypothesis of a Gbari origin (via Nupe) of *Shango* can answer these questions.

The Gbari hypothesis

The Gbagyi suffix *-k^wo* appears to be related to the Gbari suffix *-g^wo*. If this is the case, synchronic forms seem to suggest an original form **-k^wo* for the Gbari *-g^wo*. If this was the case, there would be a lesser probability for Gbari ʃɛg^wó 'sky' to have been borrowed into Old Oyo Yoruba to yield the word ʃàgò.

However, the possibility that both affixes are unrelated cannot entirely be ruled out. The correspondence between Gbagyi *k^w* and Gbagyi *g^w* indeed appears to be irregular. It is possible that *g^wo* is a Gbari retention from Proto Gwari, Nupoid or even Proto Volta Niger. If this was the case, there would still be an issue with the lack of (regular) correspondence between Nupoid */*s*/ and Yoruba */*y*/.

Could the Yoruba word *ṣāgo* be a loanword from Gbari *ṣṣḡwó* 'sky'? In Gbari, Shengo [*ṣṣḡwó*] means 'sky'. One name of the supreme being of the Gbari, is *Etswashgo*. This word can be analyzed as *etsu* 'king' and *shengo* 'sky' and means 'ruler of the sky' (Blench et al. 1986, Dalhatu p.c).

If this phrase had been introduced in Nupe, one can assume that its first element would have been rendered as *etsu*, this sequence also being attested in Nupe. One would expect the sequence *shgo* to have been rendered differently in the target Nupe language. The vowel /*ɛ*/ hardly occurs as such phonetically in the Nupe native lexicon. In part of its borrowed lexicon, /*ɛ*/ is rather realized as the sequence [*ja*] (Kawu 2002). /*ʃ*/ is only found phonetically in both Nupe and Gwari. In those languages, it is an allophone of /*s*/ before segments containing palatality. One would expect the /*s*/ → [*ʃ*] / [+palatal] in Gbari to have been rendered as /*s*/ → [*ʃ*] because of its occurrence before /*j*/ in the source language (Smith 1967). In Nupe, the target language, the source language's first syllable [*ʃḡ*] would have been rendered as [*ʃja*]. [*ʃ*] would have been maintained in Nupe as it is phonetically expected before segments containing palatality. As for the second syllable, which would have been /*gwo*/ → [*gʷo*] in Gbari according to Rosendall (1992)'s phonological analysis, it would most likely have been rendered as [*go*] in Nupe since [*w*] only appears in Nupe before open vowels according to Smith (1967:157) or before a nasalized /*o*/ → [*ɔ*] (Blench 2013). The latter moreover only appears to occur in adverbs and ideophones (Blench 2009). Furthermore, [*gʷo*] sequences in Gwari correspond to [*go*] in Nupe. Thus, /*sjengwo*/ → [*ṣṣḡwó*] would, according to our prediction, have been rendered as [*ʃjago*] ← /*sjago*/ in Nupe. Notably, this latter phonetic form strongly resembles Yoruba [*ʃāgo*]. In Yoruba, with Standard Yoruba as an example, I am not aware of sequences of the type [*ʃjV*] except in a few surnames of Arabic origin such as *Ashiatsu* and *Ashiwu* and apparently complex words such as the apparently complex placename *Oshiele* located near Abeokuta (Abraham 1963). However, this scarcity may be due to both *ʃ* and *j* both having palatality, an obligatory contour principle prohibiting their adjacency.

As we have seen however, the Nupe name for 'God' reported by Nadel as being of Gwari origin is Soko, not [*ʃjago*]. Very interestingly, Nadel also reported a fragmentary tale referring to an *Etsu Shago* during the reign of which the tale takes place. It is interesting to note that in this tale, *Etsu Shago*, who communicates with *Kpara* and his other subjects is clearly distinguished from God, which is clearly described by *Kpara* as too remote to be 'watching man'. This distinction is probably evidence of the etymon *Shgo* having begun to be associated with a historical king among the Nupe rather than among the Oyo Yoruba.

Jimada (2005:33) rightly pointed out that *Akpara* (sic, actually *Kpara*?) means ‘thunder’ in Nupe. I suggest that if one looks at Akpara as a personification of thunder, one can see the text as an etiological tale about the first appearance of thunder.

Among the related Gbagyi, thunderbolts are thought to be a punishment by *Sheko* (Gunn and Conant 1960:106). One can assume that this was also the case for *Etsu Shengo*.

The scenario I suggest is the following. As pointed out by Nadel, the Gwari introduced their thunder cult among the Nupe people. The name of the Gwari god, which I assume to be Gbari, was also borrowed by Nupe speakers. Because of the word *etsu*, which was interpreted as meaning ‘king’ in Nupe, the Gbari theonym *etsu fɛgo* was interpreted as the name of a king named *ɟɟago* associated with thunder, and with its primary meaning, that of a sky god also associated with thunder. Both interpretations of *ɟɟago* were borrowed into Oyo Yoruba, therefore its ambivalent meaning as both a historical king associated with thunder and as a sky god, also associated with thunder. The use of the word Gbari word for the thunder cult was supplanted by the Nupe indigenous word for ‘god’. By the time Nadel recorded ethnographic data about Nupe religion, the Gbari etymon for thunder god was no longer found as a theonym among the Nupe.

However, it was found in tales featuring a legendary king during the reign of which some civilization features are invented, including thunder.

Against this theory, one could argue that the <*Etsu Shago*> reported in Nupe was actually introduced there from Yorubaland. This could be paralleled by the seemingly Yoruba origin of the Nupe word for ‘thunder’. The Nupe word *kpara* indeed appears to be a loan from Yoruba *kpaara*, as the latter is a morphologically complex word, but not the former. The Nupe word does not appear to have cognates in closely related Nupoid languages, while it is widely found in Yoruba dialects. Nevertheless, linguistic evidence shows that the word <Shago> **ɟɟago* is not of Yoruba origin. One crucial argument showing this is that known historical Yoruba loanwords into Nupe beginning with /ʃ/ (Proto Yoruba **ɟ*) are rendered as /ts/ → [ts], not /sj/ → [ʃ] or /tsj/ → [ʃ] (cf. Yoruba **ɟɔkpɔnɔ* ‘smallpox deity’ → Nupe *tsakpanagi* ‘smallpox’; Yoruba *ɟokoto~fokoto* ‘kind of trousers’ → Nupe *tsokoto* ‘kind of trousers’).

Conclusion

In this paper, I have provided evidence supporting a Gwari origin of the Yoruba theonym *Shango*. In Gwari, the source for this word was used to name the Supreme Being. This loan, made from Gbari to Oyo Yoruba, was mediated by the Nupe language. This conclusion is consistent with the Yoruba traditions

claiming origins from both Yorubaland and Nupeland, for *Shango*. However, as opposed to these, my hypothesis implies that Shango was not a historical character. This implies that his alleged descent from the Ife Yoruba prince *Oran(mi)yan* was probably a fiction created by Oyo Yoruba traditionalists aiming at by Oyo's claims of political and spiritual legitimacy in Yorubaland as already suggested, for example, by Robin Law (Law 1973).

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“Fathers ate sour grapes, but children's teeth hurt”: Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) impact on Maternal Healthcare in Abeokuta, Southwest Nigeria, 1986-1989

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) on maternal health in Abeokuta, Southwest Nigeria, with a focus on access, quality, and affordability of care. Implemented under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, SAP policies included cuts in government spending, privatization, and market liberalization, which led to the reduction of healthcare funding. Using archival data, interviews, and health statistics, this research reveals that SAP's austerity measures limited healthcare access and strained resources, disproportionately affecting maternal health outcomes. The paper adopts the qualitative research method. Data for the study was collected from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included oral interviews, secondary sources included newspaper, books, journals and newspaper. Findings indicate that these reforms disrupted service delivery, increased costs for families, and widened health disparities, contributing to higher maternal mortality rates and compromised healthcare quality. This study underscores the need for economic policies that consider public health implications, particularly for vulnerable populations, and highlights the lasting impact of SAP on Nigeria's maternal healthcare system.

Keywords: maternal health, SAP, neo-liberal policies, Nigeria, Third World countries, Underdevelopment

Introduction

After gaining independence in the 1950s and 1960s, African countries were hopeful about their futures. Leaders like Kwame Nkrumah believed that achieving political independence would lead to economic and social progress--- a vision highlighted the importance of political sovereignty, but sustainable development required deeper institutional and economic reforms.¹ However, many countries struggled with internal issues, lack of experience in governance, and external interference during the Cold War, which led to political instability and economic dependency.² Unlike some Asian and South American countries, Africa faced challenges industrializing and integrating into the global economy.

By 1970s, many African countries struggled with internal challenges, including ethnic divisions, inexperienced governance, and the rapid shift from colonial rule to independence without sufficient economic infrastructure or administrative frameworks in place.³ Additionally, the Cold War intensified geopolitical pressures on African states, leading to external interference, coups, and instability.⁴ Unlike some Asian and South American countries, African nations found it difficult to industrialize or integrate into the global economy on their own terms, partly because of these complex internal and external challenges. A case in point was Nigeria which just survived a civil war.

After its civil war of 1967-1970, Nigeria entered an economic boom driven by oil exports. However, by the early 1980s, the country faced mounting economic difficulties, including falling oil revenues, high inflation, and significant external debt. To address these problems, Nigeria, like many other developing nations, sought assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. In 1986, under military leader General Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria introduced the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). This program aimed to stabilize the economy by encouraging privatization, cutting government spending, and shifting towards a market-oriented approach.

1 K. Nkrumah, *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965

2 T. Mkandawire, "Thinking about Developmental States in Africa." *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 35, 3, (2011). 513-533.

3 G. Bertocchi, & Spagat, M. *The Political Economy of Colonialism and Development*. *European Economic Review*, 45, 4-6, (2001): 1101-1124.

4 R. W. Clough, *The United States and Africa: A History*. Indiana University Press, 1989.

However, the impact of SAP on the social sector, particularly healthcare, was profound and far-reaching. As part of the fiscal reforms, the Nigerian government was required to cut public spending, reduce subsidies, and privatize many state-owned services, including healthcare. These austerity measures resulted in a sharp deterioration of essential public services, with health outcomes suffering the most. Among the sectors hardest hit was maternal healthcare, which had already been a source of concern due to limited infrastructure, poor access to skilled professionals, and rising maternal mortality rates.

While a lot of studies have focused on different aspects of the Structural Adjustment Program,⁵ sufficient attention has not been given to the maternal health aspect especially Abeokuta, a Yoruba town in Southwest Nigeria. Abeokuta, the capital of Ogun State in Southwest Nigeria, is an important case study in understanding the effects of SAP on healthcare. As a regional center, Abeokuta was home to several hospitals and healthcare facilities, yet the city also faced the challenges of inadequate resources, poor healthcare infrastructure, and the economic pressures brought on by SAP. For women in Abeokuta, especially those in low-income communities, accessing quality maternal healthcare became increasingly difficult during the 1980s. This situation mirrors the broader challenges faced by the nation, where rising costs, limited access to skilled birth attendants, and inadequate medical supplies led to a decline in maternal health. The paper adopts the qualitative method. Data for the study was collected from both Primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included oral interviews, secondary sources included newspaper, books, journals and newspaper.

Literature Review

A lot of studies have dealt with neo-liberal policies, especially Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP). Studies have also examined its impact on all sectors of human endeavor that it affected ranging from education, healthcare to economy or industry. However adequate attention has not been given to its study on maternal healthcare. On the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), Kumar in his thesis on the “Traditional Health Beliefs and Practices of Post-natal Women in Trinidad” revealed how the introduction of the policy affected the vulnerable groups- Women, Children and Girls and how they were pushed to patronize traditional medicine since the orthodox medicines were expensive, lacked certain drugs and diminishes household

5 Annette Mullaney, “The Effects of IMF Programs on Women” (Unpublished PhD Thesis, New York University, spring 2007), 1-32; Ishrat Husain, *Poverty and Structural Adjustment: The African Case*. New York: The World Bank. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/ar/517231468741855925/pdf/multi0page.pdf>

incomes.⁶ Again, while the work is important to understand how certain policies affect health choice, it did not give other alternatives other than patronizing the Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs,) whereas there could have been other places such as homes and religious homes. Ajenifuja in his work, “Paediatrics Health Care in Nigeria: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” revealed how the introduction of certain economic policies, such as the SAP, led to mass exodus of medical personnel to other countries.⁷ While this study is important to our thesis, it failed to give any response by the government and other stakeholders to prevent the conditions. Although Sobotka, *et al.*, while focusing on developed countries noted in their work, “Economic Recession and Fertility in the Developed World: A Literature Review” that empirical observation indicated that childbirth were usually low at short recession but immediately this period is over, there is usually a surge,⁸ no work has adequately addressed this situation in Nigeria as a whole or Abeokuta in particular. However, its focus on developed countries also opens up a knowledge gap which this thesis intends to fill. Bhutta’s “Structural Adjustments and their Impact on Health and Society: A Perspective from Pakistan” further attested to the occurrences of maternal and childhood malnutrition and anaemia as direct result of austerity measures.⁹ While the work is important because it shares the experience of a developing country like, Nigeria, it did not look at Abeokuta in particular. Furthermore, Micheal Thomson *et al.*, in their paper, “Structural Adjustment Program adversely Affect Vulnerable Populations: A Systematic-Narrative Review of their Effort on Child and Maternal Health” opined that since adjustment programs usually have adverse effect on achieving maternal health goals, this must be considered if the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be achieved by year 2030.¹⁰ Again, this is a contemporaneous study which again failed to look at Nigeria or Abeokuta in particular. Although Mullaney’s work on “The Effect of IMF Programs on Women,” argued that funding affects women more than men during introduction of adverse effect

6 Kumar Mahabir, “Traditional Health Beliefs and Practices of Postnatal Women in Trinidad (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Florida, 1997).

7 B. Ajenifuja, “Paediatrics Health Care in Nigeria: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” *Nigerian Journal of Paediatrics*, 38, 4, (2011): 146-158.

8 Tomas Sobotka, Vegard Skirbekk and Dítěv Philipov, “Economic recession and fertility in the developed world: A literature review” *OAW*, (February 2010): 1-36.

9 Zulfigar A. Bhutta, “Structural Adjustments and their impact on health and Society: a perspective from Pakistan,” *International Epidemiological Association*, 30; (2001):712-716.

10 Micheal Thomson, Alexander Kentikelenis and Thomas Stubbs, “Structural Adjustment Programmes adversely affect vulnerable populations: a systematic-narrative review of their effect on child and maternal health,” *Public Health Reviews*, 38, 13 (2017): 1-18.

of IMF conditionality policies, but that it however raises women’s participation in workforce.¹¹ This paper helps our understanding of the effect of economic policies on the population, and how it affects women. This is important to women’s health in Nigeria and Abeokuta because it shows the challenges they may have undergone during the introduction of the SAP policies. However, its focus on women and not their infants or Abeokuta also makes it inadequate to fill the history of women’s healthcare in Abeokuta. The conditions faced by women during this period was further reaffirmed by Rosenfield and Maine, in their work, “Maternal Mortality --A neglected tragedy: Where is the M in MCH?” which reveals the state of maternal mortality and morbidity during the 1980s. Although, it offers a reflection of the conditions of women in third world countries,¹² it does not focus on Abeokuta, a Yoruba town in southwest Nigeria. The understanding of the situation of the SAP on this town could offer a spring board for future studies and also in understanding how the policy impacted the society and maternal patients in particular.

Maternal Healthcare Before the Introduction of SAP

Before the Structural Adjustment Program was introduced, maternal healthcare was at the state it was after independence--- weak and low quality and unequal access. Medical and Health Staff inadequacy and difficulties in acquiring land for healthcare infrastructures were some of the constraints in attaining an effective health plan for the people, including mothers and children.¹³ This also reflected in the shortage of registered medical personnel handling the entire population of Nigerians. The table below shows the doctor-patient ration in the country since the statistics for Abeokuta were not available.

| Year | Registered Medical Practitioners | Doctor: Patient ratio |
|------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1960 | 1, 079 | 1:47,330 |
| 1970 | 2, 683 | 1:24,530 |
| 1979 | 6, 584 | 1:12,550 |

Table 1: Registered Medical Personnel/ Doctor: Patient Ratio, 1960, 1970 and 1979
(Source: Fourth Development Plan, Chapter 20, 272-293)

11 Annette Mullaney, “The Effects of IMF Programs on Women” (Unpublished PhD Thesis, New York University, spring 2007), 1-32.

12 Allan Rosenfield and Deborah Maine, “Maternal Mortality --A neglected tragedy: Where is the M in MCH?” *The Lancet*, (13 July 1985), 83.

13 FRN, *First Progress Report on Third National Development Plan 1975-80* Lagos: FM of Eco Development, 80-81.

Table 1 above shows that, despite the improvement in medical staff training, the registered practitioners were still insufficient for the teeming population. Many of the available medical personnel could not be adequately trained before being deployed to public hospitals and maternity centres. In many parts of Africa, there was usually one doctor for more than 200,000 people.¹⁴ In Nigeria, Chad and Niger, for instance, the ratio was one doctor for 30,000, 73,460 and 56,140 people respectively.¹⁵ This had a huge implication on the general wellbeing of the citizenry on the continent.

In Ogun State for example, the inception of Chief Victor Olabisi Onabanjo's administration in October 1979, free healthcare treatment was introduced across the state hospitals. His administration built, equipped and expanded ten primary healthcare centres and funded the schools of midwifery, nursing and hygiene. His administration also implemented all the proposals made by the State House of Assembly on the provision of comprehensive health centres for each local government area in the state¹⁶ by introducing mobile clinics to provide healthcare across the State.¹⁷ To curb some of the challenges, the State House of Assembly under Victor Olabisi Onabanjo passed a motion to develop a medical program for the training of a strong, viable, and dependable paramedical unit to serve as an adjunct to the thin and negligible cadre of medical doctors that were available for the take-off of the free health care services in the State.¹⁸

At the national level, in 1983, the Shehu Shagari administration passed a budget, in which N279.6 million was allocated for health. This small budgetary allocation to the health sector amounted to only N3.00 per every Nigerian.¹⁹ This low budget was as a result of the dwindling economy. For instance, the Gross Domestic product in 1982 was 0.35%; -5.37% in 1983, and -5.18% in 1984.²⁰ There was no doubt that this could not address the maternal health-

14 Toyin Falola, "Economic and Social Development in contemporary Africa," 111-126. In *African History and Culture*, Richard Olaniyan ed. (Ibadan: Longman, 1980).

15 *Ibid.*

16 OHHA, Orders of the day and notices of motions 24 March 1981 No 101, 1980/81.

17 Ogun State Government, *Commissioning 40 Projects to Commemorate 40 Years* Abeokuta: OGSF, 2016, 14.

18 This was moved by Mr Bankole Okuwa, Dr Funmi Awojinrin, Chief Babantunde Elemide, Mr Solomon Adesegun and Chief Oladele Elegunde. See Ogun State House of Assembly Holder for Order Paper. Tuesday 12 October 1981, no 2, 6.

19 Wilfred O. Chukudebelu, "Welcome Speech on the occasion of the Nigerian Safe Motherhood Conference in Abuja". In *Safe Motherhood Initiative Nigeria 1990: Reducing Death and disabilities from Pregnancy and Childbirth Vol II*. Report of the conference held in Abuja Nigeria 11-13 September 1990, 6.

20 National Centre for Economic Management and Administration, NCEMA *Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria: Causes, Processes and Outcomes*. Revised Technical Report, (Ibadan, nd), 4.

care challenges until 1984, when General Muhammadu Buhari supplanted President Shagari in a military coup.²¹ Though the regime was welcomed with new hopes by Nigerians,²² the fiscal reality of the country only worsened in all ramifications, including healthcare.²³ By the end of the year, Muhammadu Buhari was also removed by General Ibrahim Babangida via a coup.

The emergence of General Ibrahim Babangida regime came with lots of hopes in all sectors including public health. The regime acknowledged the major challenges of the health sector to include shortage of manpower, poor state of private medical practice, maladministration of health institutions, inadequate coverage with limited accessibility to health services, inefficient utilization and poor management of health facilities and others,²⁴ yet, in the 1986 budget, Babangida committed only six per cent of the national budget to health as against the 1.7 percent of the previous regime, as a sign of a change.²⁵ In a reaction to such poor health allocation, the then president of the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Dr Bayo Banjo, stated that Nigeria’s fresh doctors risked becoming poorly trained as a result of insufficient funds to provide their basic necessities as a result of the economic recession which limited the ability of the Government to maintain its subvention at the required level while the functions of the colleges of medicine of the tertiary institutions in the country had increased.²⁶ In spite the efforts at improving healthcare personnel, there were still high cases of maternal mortality.

There were high cases of maternal mortality arising from preventable causes during the period. Most of the major causes of maternal deaths in developing countries were haemorrhage, infection, toxæmia, and obstructed labour.²⁷ Ten studies by the World Health Organization (WHO) in developing countries reported that at least 75 percent of obstetrics deaths were attributed to these causes. Some also included unsafe or illegal abortion.²⁸ Churches did not support premarital sex and pregnancies even though pregnancies were

21 *Sunday Concord*, “Shagari Deposed in coup,” 1 January, 1984, 1

22 Kllington Ayila Ijoba ‘Buhari’ A song released in 1984.

23 Excerpt from oral interview, Interview, Professor Bolanle I. Akeredolu-Ale, 24 June 2019.

24 FMI, *Fourth National Development Plan 1981-1985* (Lagos: Government Printers) 275-276.

25 Tola Tijani, “Babangida’s Health-care Policy” *The Punch*, 9 September, 1986, 5.

26 Najeem Kazeem, *Punch*. Wednesday 24 September, 1986, 7.

27 V. J. Hartfield. “Maternal mortality in Nigeria compared with earlier international experience.” *International Journal of Gynaecology and Obstetrics* 18, 1, (1980): 70-75; WHO, “Prevention of maternal mortality.” Report of a World Health Organization Interregional Meeting (FHE/86.1). Geneva: WHO.

28 *Ibid.*

perceived as gifts from God.²⁹ This forced some to engage in unsafe abortions to be able to get wedded in Church. While many experts and organizations called on the government to legalize abortion, this call continued to meet a brick wall. For example, in 1981, the Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics in Nigeria (SOGON) initiated a national debate which led to the introduction of a bill in the House of Assembly on legislation of abortion, the bill was not adopted.³⁰

| Region | Live births (Millions) | Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births | Maternal deaths (thousands) |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Africa | 23.4 | 640 | 150 |
| Northern | 4.8 | 500 | 24 |
| Western | 7.6 | 700 | 54 |
| Eastern | 7 | 660 | 46 |
| Middle | 2.6 | 690 | 18 |
| Southern | 1.4 | 570 | 8 |
| Oceania | 0.2 | | 2 |
| Developing Countries | 110.1 | 450 | 494 |
| Developed | 18.2 | 30 | 6 |
| World | 128.3 | 390 | 500 |

Table 2: Excerpt Of Estimates Of Maternal Mortality By Region, About 1983 (Source: World Health Organization, *Maternal Mortality Rates*. Document FHE/86.3. (WHO, Geneva, 1986) in Barbara E. Kwast, “Maternal Mortality: Levels, Causes and Promising Interventions” J. biosoc. Sci., Suppl. 10 (1989), 53.)

The above shows the live birth, maternal mortality rate and maternal deaths across the globe. It is also a demographic study of maternal mortality of Africa and other regions. It further revealed that West Africa accounted for the highest number of maternal mortality rate (MMR) and maternal deaths and the figure for developing countries also defers from that of the developed countries. The low figure in developed countries was among other things attributed to improvement and innovations in medical science.³¹ Rosenfield and

29 Personal discussion David Folowo 12 July, 2018.
30 SOGON, *Safe Motherhood Initiative Nigeria 1990: Reducing Death and disabilities from Pregnancy and Childbirth Vol II*. Report of the conference held in Abuja Nigeria 11-13 September 1990, 1.
31 Being an excerpts from a paper delivered by Mr Olu Onagoruwa to members of the Medical Students Association of the University of Ibadan. See, *The Guardian* “revolution in medical science and the perspective of the law” 4 December 1984, 11

Maine reported that though there had been some interest in improving maternal and child health (MCH) in developing countries, the interest was not strong enough to adequately tackle the menace during the period.³² This was because the causes of maternal mortality remained neglected by professionals, policy makers and politicians.³³ This neglect manifested in the increase in the rate of women dying from pregnancy-related causes as seen below:

| Region | Lifetime Chance of Maternal Death |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Africa | 1 in 21 |
| Asia | 1 in 54 |
| South America | 1 in 73 |
| Caribbean | 1 in 140 |
| North America | 1 in 6,366 |
| Northern Europe | 1 in 9850 |

Table 3: Estimated Lifetime Chance of Dying from Pregnancy-Related Causes, by Region, 1975-84 (Source: Calculated by Dr. Roger Rochat, Emory University School of Medicine, in Ann Starrs, “Preventing the Tragedy of maternal Deaths,” 13.)

Table 3 shows the lifetime chances of dying from pregnancy related cases in Africa, including Nigeria. In contrast, other regions including Asia which was almost at par in terms of development with Africa even fared better. It was however further exacerbated by the dwindling economy arising from the oil fall and international economic interventions. All these had serious implications across the country including on Abeokuta. The most common of these impacts in Abeokuta were malnutrition and mortality.³⁴

There were incessant strike actions across the country. General Muhammadu Buhari on resumption of office, banned the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD), bringing frustration and uncertainty within medical practitioners in the country.³⁵ This was also coupled with mass retrenchment of health workers and medical personnel. The military government promulgated the Private Practice Prohibition (Decree 34) of 1984³⁶ to reduce the increasing rate of private practices in the health sector. However, this had enormous implications on public healthcare in general and maternal healthcare in particular. Aside from

32 Allan Rosenfield and Deborah Maine, “Maternal Mortality --A neglected tragedy: Where is the M in MCH?” *The Lancet*, (13 July 1985), 83

33 *Ibid.*

34 Excerpt from oral interview, Akanni Kolawole 30-8-2019; Janet Musuru.25-5-2019.

35 Tola Tijani, “Babangida’s Health-care Policy,” *The Punch*, 9 September, 1986, 5.

36 *Ibid.*

the high cost of healthcare, hospitalization was also expensive.³⁷ This strike actions put the lives of pregnant women, nursing mothers and their infants at risk because the pregnant women would not be able to go for their antenatal appointments, likewise the nursing mothers and their babies would miss their post-partum and post-natal appointments. While the privileged ones could go to private hospitals or private maternity homes, the poor ones resorted to self-help or unskilled healthcare providers including spiritual homes, which was unsafe to their health and survival.

Most Pentecostal churches³⁸ combined the fervour of African traditional worship with international or transnational Pentecostal network elements.³⁹ It could be regarded as one of the fastest growing sectors in Nigeria's complex social fabric. Despite the recurrent divisions and criticisms of commercialization from critics and pundits, its proliferation continued. These sects believed in healing through exorcism and other materials, especially water,⁴⁰ anointing oil, handkerchiefs and other things used in delivering people and even maternal patients and infants.⁴¹ For example, crucifixion, mantles or cloaks were tied around the waists of some pregnant women till they delivered. These items symbolized protection from either miscarriages or spiritual attacks during pregnancy and labor, or after delivery.

On 11 September 1985, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) was officially formed. Subsequently, it began to proliferate across the country, including Abeokuta. Fake Pentecostal churches also increased. However, it was hard to distinguish a fake religious healer from a genuine one. Sebastain Ofurum puts it succinctly: "History is replete with men, mere charlatans, not the really ones, who know the power in things and use water, salt, spirit i.e. alcohol etc. to practice exorcism. They take to the ritualistic aspects of their exorcism and perform wonders".⁴²

37 See 'Crusade Medical Aid Plan' Advert on *The Guardian*, "Now Out! Crusade medical aid plan" 9 December 1984, 4.

38 Asonzeh Ukah, "African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems," *Working Paper, Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikanistik Nr 79* (2007), 9.

39 Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

40 Interviews: Adewale Florence 53 years, at Ake, near Abeokuta South LG. 22 June, 2016; E.A Olajumoke, c.70 years, Leader Oke Igbala C& S Church Movement, behind Moore Junction, Asero, Interview at church premises, 21 January, 2017. Water is also used by Traditional healers. See Eva-Marita Rinne, "Water and Healing- Experiences from the Traditional Healer in Ile Ife, Nigeria" *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 10, 1 (2001): 41-65.

41 Interviews, E.A. Olajumoke; David Folowo, 12-7-2018.

42 Sebastian Ofurum, "Spiritual acrobatics and quest for healing power" *The Guardian*, Saturday, 3 May, 1986, 16.

Sola Oke described this period as an era where faith healers, exorcists, and prayer-hawkers, turned the university to a spiritualist’s laboratory, where they could experiment with all kinds of faith.⁴³ Despite some of these noticeable short-comings in some Pentecostal churches, some women continued to patronize them for pregnancy-related reasons, particularly due to fear of the unknown.

In 1987, the Federal Government asserted that its fiscal measure would be ‘generally tight’.⁴⁴ The implication of this was that every sector of the state including health got paltry allocations. With this development, pregnant women, nursing mothers and their infants were faced with serious healthcare challenges. Acknowledging these challenges, the Federal Government revealed that healthcare across the country were affected by so many factors. It went further to state that there was:

...inadequate coverage as not more than 35 percent of the population had access to modern health care services while rural Communities and the urban poor were not well served; orientation of services inappropriate with disproportionately high investment on curative services to the detriment of preventive services; waste and inefficiency in service management as systems were poorly coordinated; low level of community involvement in decision making process; lack of basic health statistics as major constraints at all stages of planning, monitoring and evaluation of health services; poor allocated resources to health services especially to some priority areas; defective infrastructure and logistics owing to inadequate maintenance of buildings, medical equipment and vehicles, unreliable supply of water and electricity, and poor management of drugs, vaccines and supplies system.⁴⁵

The above shows that public health including women’s health was affected by cultural, political, economic as well as social dynamics leading to their death and that of their children from precolonial times.⁴⁶ Due to the eco-

43 Sola Oke, ‘Faith healers in academia’ *The Guardian*, Friday, 20 February 1987, 9.

44 Kelechi Onyemaobi, ‘Govt to avoid deficit’ ’87 budget will be tight says Aik-homu’ *The Guardian*, 4 December 1986, 1, 2.

45 FMI, *The National Health Policy and Strategy to Achieve Health for All Nigerians*, (Lagos Nigeria, October, 1988), 4-5.

46 Nigeria and India account for over one-third of maternal deaths worldwide in 2015 with 58,000 (19%) maternal deaths and 45,000 (15%) respectively. See, WHO, *Trends in maternal Mortality, 1990-2015: Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, WBG, UN*, (Geneva: WHO, 2015). In 2017, Nigeria accounts for 814 mortality deaths per (100,000), proportion of Birth by Skilled Personnel is only 35 %, being the 4th lowest and 108.8 % of under-five mortality and neonatal mortality ratio. See WHO, *World Health Statistics 2017*:

conomic reality, the Government was forced to get the International Monetary Fund/ World Bank loan, which attached and attracted certain conditions and measures to access—Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). Asakitikpi noted that the cost of healthcare services led to high mortality which reflected the virtual collapse of the state as a result of the military junta's abdication of governance.⁴⁷ The question however is, did the SAP improve the lives of our mothers and their children?

Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and Maternal Healthcare in Abeokuta

The introduction of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in July 1986 was intended to restructure the economy, achieve fiscal balance, establish foundation for a sustainable and non-inflationary growth and intensify private sector participation, among other things.⁴⁸ Following the debt crises of the early 1980s, such programs achieved notoriety for requiring low- and middle-income countries to move away from state-led development models towards free market-oriented ones, premised on reducing public spending, limiting the role of the state, and deregulating economic activity. The SAP policy meant that there had to be cutbacks, elimination of subsidies and marketing boards for agricultural products as well as the privatization of basic services such as potable water, healthcare, and education.⁴⁹

However, the policy had enormous negative effect on public and maternity healthcare services. Ihonvbere (1993) described the situation as a reproduction of contradictions owing to inheritance of a highly distorted, disarticulated, and generally underdeveloped economy.⁵⁰ Many healthcare pro-

Monitoring Health for SDGs, (Geneva: WHO, 2017), 52-54; Personal discussion, Dr A Nasir, Medical Officer, FUNAAB Health Centre, 5 June 2019.

47 Alex Asakitikpi, "Healthcare Delivery and the Limits of the National Health Insurance Scheme in Nigeria" *Africa Development*, Vol. XLI, No.4 (2016): 32.

48 World Bank, *Nigeria Structural Adjustment Program: Policies, Implementation and Impact*, (Washington: World Bank, 13 May 1994), vii; A.O., Philips, "A General Overview of Structural Adjustment Programme" in Philips A. C. and Ndekwu E.C (eds) *Structural Adjustment Programme in a Developing Economy: The Case of Nigeria*, (Ibadan: NISER, 1987), 1-12; John Anyanwu, "President Babangida's Structural Adjustment Programme and Inflation in Nigeria". *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 7, 1, (1992): 5-24; D. Oriakhi, "National Economy: Balance of Trade and Economic Self-Reliance" In A.D. Nzemeke and E.O. Erhagbe, Eds. *Nigerian Peoples and Culture*, (Benin: United City Press, 1997), 110-111.

49 Halifax Initiative, "What is the G8?" 3; In Asad Ismi, "Impoverishing a Continent: The World Bank and the IMF in Africa" A report of Halifax Initiative Coalition, (July 2004): 9.

50 J. O. Ihonvbere, "Economic Crisis, Structural Adjustment, and Social Crisis in Nigeria." *World Development*, 21, 1 (1993):141.

grams and projects across the country were also suspended as a result of low budgetary allocation caused by the economic downturn. Shortage of funds further led to lack of executive capacity to implement the plans and thus posed a serious problem to State governments.⁵¹ Other reasons for the failure to implement the plans were high cost of building materials, lateness in preparing design briefs and awarding contracts, abandoning of jobs by contractors as well as delays by consultants in preparing relevant completion certificates.⁵² To buttress the negative impact of the SAP policy on Africa and Africans as a whole, the former President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, described it as a witch whose operation was detrimental to the Third World economies.⁵³

A former Chief Medical Director of a federal teaching hospital, Abeokuta recalled that the SAP affected healthcare, just like it affected every facet of life in the country.⁵⁴ To further corroborate the point above, a national daily revealed that a maternity hospital at Ifo/Ota Local Government Headquarters was abandoned due to paucity of funds. The reporter noted that most of the women gave birth to their babies at home, while some lucky ones managed to get to the general hospital which was ten kilometers away from Ifo town.⁵⁵ While the reporter did not mention religious homes and TBAs, oral interviews conducted revealed that women also utilised these places.⁵⁶ If the maternity hospital was functional and the general hospital closer to the dwellers, there is no doubt that it would have saved many women including pregnant women, nursing mothers and their infants from dying or pregnancy complications. The NMA Secretary, Dr. Korede Alabi, acknowledged that the Primary Health Care (PHC) also faced some challenges as a result of poor finances.⁵⁷ These challenges included lack of adequate health manpower and equipment. In fact, Dr Nasir described most of the PHCs as mere buildings without achieving its primary potentials.⁵⁸

With the level of poverty in the country during this period, maternal health-care services were grossly affected. Some of the ways in which mothers were affected was poor nutrition, high cost of food items, including baby foods,

51 FRN, *Third Progress Report on The Third National Development 1975-1980*, 89.

52 *Ibid.*

53 Nwalimu, “IMF is a Witch” *Daily Sketch*, 11 September, 1987, 8.

54 Interview Dr Dapo S. Sotiloye, retired CMD, Federal Medical Centre Abeokuta, 8 April, 2019.

55 Taiwo Rauph, ‘Maternity project abandoned’ *Ogun Community Concord*, 3 October 1986, 3.

56 Interviews: Olajumoke; Kolawole Bisi; Olubunmi Abeke Ajayi, 28-8-2019.

57 Najeem Kazeem, “Health Care” *Punch*. Wednesday 3 December, 1986, 4-5.

58 Interview, Dr A. Nasir, 5 June 2019.

which were mostly imported.⁵⁹ The emergence of the General Babangida regime did not also help matters. Introducing austerity measures as one of the conditions of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) had enormous effect on human reproduction across the country. The then Minister of health, Dr Oladipo Otolorin, urged Nigerians to avoid irresponsible reproduction.⁶⁰

| Year | Currency Unit | |
|------|---------------|-------------------|
| | Naira (N) | Dollar (\$) |
| | | (Period Averages) |
| 1986 | 1.755 | 0.570 |
| 1987 | 4.016 | 0.249 |
| 1988 | 4.537 | 0.220 |

Table 4: Currency Equivalent, 1986-1988 (Source: World Bank, Nigeria Structural Adjustment Program: Policies, Implementation and Impact, (Washington: World Bank: 13 May, 1994), i.)

Table 4 shows the exchange rate between 1986 and 1988. Similarly, a study found out that inflation moved from 5.4 percent in 1986 to 40.9 percent in 1989.⁶¹ The widening exchange rate and the dependence on foreign countries for the importation of basic facilities, such as drugs, equipment, baby food, among others, negatively affected pregnant women, nursing mothers and their infants.

In Abeokuta, the State capital, the budget for 1987 was ₦282, 696, 200.00, and only three million naira was expended for health,⁶² representing just 1.06 percent of the total budget of the state. This showed that very low amount was allocated for healthcare services. A medical practitioner, Dr Bola Arominiwura of the PHC Aiyetoro while delivering a lecture entitled “Malaria, Cancer and AIDS: Has Medical Science Failed?” attributed the loss of confidence of the public in medicine to the unavailability of adequate health facilities

59 Eunice Damisa, “Babies suffer as prices of baby food escalate” *The Punch*, 6 August 1988, 5; E.O. Otolorin, “The Health Implications of Growing up in Nigeria” 134. In J.O.M Oduwaiye, R. Adegoke & Ben Edegbai, *Issues on Science and Health Education of the Nigerian Child* (Ibadan: FCE Osiele, 1998).

60 *Daily Times*, “Call to aid SAP through reduced birth rate” 18 March, 1987, 3.

61 J.C. Anyanwu, “President Babangida’s Structural Adjustment Programme and Inflation in Nigeria.” *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 7, 1 (1992): 5

62 The budget of 1986 was N272,122,184, See *Community Concord*, “Ogun budgets N282m” 14 January 1987, 1; Bayo Onakoya, “Health to Gulp N3 in Ogun” *Community Concord*, 14 January 1987, 3

and manpower in all health institutions. He further posited that these factors caused healthcare seekers, including maternal patients, predominantly in the rural areas, and the densely populated and disease-ridden urban slums, to resort to patronizing quacks and drug peddlers.⁶³ He blamed some of the problems on over-dependence on the developed world, adding that with about 90 percent drug production worldwide, more than 75 percent of pharmaceutical trade was controlled by a handful of Europeans and American trans-nationals, thereby affecting drug supply in the nation’s healthcare delivery.⁶⁴ This showed that much was not done to improve drug production locally for the teeming population with women and children in particular. This prevented most of them from trying to have babies, even as many still had unprotected sexual acts and without contraception.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, most of the unprotected sex led to pregnancies which were aborted.

Another impact it had on the citizenry, including pregnant women, nursing mothers and their infants was on the cost of medical care. The Governor Diya’s military administration canceled the free health services initiative of his predecessor, Chief Olabisi Onabanjo civilian administration, by introducing a nominal fee for services provided by the government health institutions.⁶⁶

The cost of healthcare and consultations affected the patronage of these hospitals and maternity centres as a result of the dwindling economy.⁶⁷ Some Obstetrics and Gynaecology experts, Friday Okonofua, A Abejide and Roger Makanjuola in a study on maternal mortality in Ile Ife, observed that the socio-economic status of women accounted for one of the major factors of maternal mortality during the period.⁶⁸ Aside from the fact that private hospitals were not many and cheap, they were costlier than the public hospitals.⁶⁹ And in a town where the citizenry including the pregnant women were grappling with the economic realities, patronizing private hospitals were considered a luxury while the available private maternity homes were filled with many quacks. This also made many pregnant and nursing mothers rely on self-medications especially through their patronage of patent stores (Chemists) which

63 Kehinde Soyoye, “Hospitals’ problems ex-rayed.” *Community Concord*, Wednesday 11 February 1987,1

64 *Ibid.*

65 Interviews, Akanni Kolawole; Alhaja Olusoji, Secretary CGNS Department, COLAMRUD, Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta.

66 *Ibid.*

67 Interview, Janet Abike Musuru, 25 May 2019; Pa Akanni Kolawole.

68 Friday E. Okonofua, A. Abejide, and Roger A. Makanjuola, “Maternal Mortality in Ile-Ife, Nigeria: A Study of Risk Factors,” *Studies in Family Planning*, 23, 5 (1992): 319-324

69 *Ibid.*

attendants often times impersonated trained medical officers. Most of the prescriptions they gave to pregnant women and nursing mothers were wrong and this practice endangered the lives of the pregnant women, the fetus and infants. For example, a woman revealed how her sister almost lost her life during a botched abortion in a patent store (Chemist) at Adatan during this period.⁷⁰

Aside from the high cost of healthcare services caused by the economic recession, maternal healthcare also suffered from the mass exodus of medical personnel travelling to foreign countries where their services were more appreciated and adequately compensated.⁷¹ While Nigeria yearned for more medical doctors during the period, the aftermath of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) led to many leaving the shores of the nation to seek greener pastures abroad where they believed they were valued and better paid (Brain Drain). With such shortage, the high mortality rate in the country as a whole and among mothers and their infants persisted.

Consequent upon the state of inadequate healthcare, few privileged health consumers in the country, including maternal patients followed suit in what is now popularly referred to as medical and birth tourism.⁷² Falola and Heaton captures the social institutions including the health services of the period aptly:

The state of Nigerian health services and education facilities declined, as these institutions were unable to afford regular maintenance or basic supplies. More and more people, unimpressed by quality of these social services, and unable to afford them in any case, increasingly took their children out of Government schools and stopped attending Government clinics,

70 Interview, (Mama Sodiq) She wanted to remain anonymous, Hairdresser at Obantoko, 21 December 2020.

71 It was believed they went to countries like, Saudi Arabia, UK, and the US. See, B. Ajenifuja, "Paediatrics Health Care in Nigeria: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," *Nigerian Journal of Paediatrics*, 38, 4 (2011): 148. It also had effect on Women, see Charmaine Pereira, "National Council of Women's Societies and the State, 1985-1993: The Use of Discourses of Womanhood by the NCWS" in Attahiru Jega, ed., *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*, (Sweden: NACRD, 2000), 109; S. Ogoh Alubo, "Health Services and Military Messianism in Nigeria (1993-1990)" *Journal of Social Development in Africa* 7, 1 (1992): 45-65; Alex Asakitikpi, "Healthcare Delivery and the Limits, 32

72 Aside the billions of dollars lost as a result of this; there is also a problem of miscegenation. However, on the cost of medical tourism, See, Biodun Ogunbo "factors influencing Medical Tourism in Nigeria" Abstracts from Nigerian Medical Association annual scientific meeting, International Conference Centre, Abuja, 51, 1, (2010): 39-51; Professor Isaac Adewole estimated \$1billion at the West African College of Surgeons held in Yaba, Lagos in February 2017.

preferring instead to have traditional medical practitioners treat their physical and spiritual ailments.⁷³

The austerity measure of the FG also pushed most people, including pregnant women, nursing mothers and their infants to resort to unskilled birth attendants or even delivered at home and even religious institutions. During the period of austerity measures, the traditional birth attendants (TBAs) and some religious organizations became sources of refuge for the teeming population,⁷⁴ including pregnant women, nursing mothers and their infants.⁷⁵ In short, the austerity measure which had socio-economic impact on the pregnant women and nursing mothers would further be exacerbated by the coming Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). In order to address the challenges of poverty and malnutrition which arose as a result of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), revealed that the policy had negative impacts on nutrition, food security,⁷⁶ and conditions of the vulnerable groups in developing nations.⁷⁷ It therefore, advised the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to implement the economic measures with a human face.⁷⁸ Any wonder a woman stated that “Awon baba lo je kikan, awa omo ni eyin nro--- The fathers (refereeing to the government who borrowed the loan) have eaten sour grapes, And the children's (the citizenry including mothers and vulnerable population) teeth are set on edge”⁷⁹

73 Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, (New York: University of Cambridge, 2008), 219-220.

74 Ruth, Marshall. (1993). “Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria: An Overview,” In Paul Clifford, ed. *New Dimensions in Africa Christianity* (Ibadan: Sefer, 1993), 8-39; M.O. Okai, “The Proliferation of Churches in Modern Nigeria: A Socio-political and Economic Reconsiderations” *Research in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6, 18 (2016):52-56.

75 C.M Ormhaug, “Effects of Civil War on Maternal and Child Health Care in sub-Saharan Africa (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, 2014), 25-33; Kumar Mahabir, “Traditional Health Beliefs and Practices of Postnatal Women in Trinidad (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Florida, 1997), 12-61. It was even observed that it led to series of divorce, see “How the IMF-World Bank and the Structural Adjustment Program destroyed Africa world” Tuesday 7 September 2010. At <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1297403>. [Accessed 14/11/2017].

76 F. Heidhues, and G. Obare, “Lessons from Structural Adjustment Programs and their effects in Africa,” *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture*, 50, 1 (2011): 60.

77 UNICEF, *UNICEF Annual Report 1987*, (New York: UNICEF, 1987), 1-61.

78 G.A. Cornia, R. Jolly and F Stewart Eds *Adjustment with a human Face Vol I: Protecting the Vulnerable and Promoting Growth, vol. I*. (New York: Clarendon Press Publication, 1987); F. Heidhues, and G. Obare, “Lessons from Structural Adjustment Programmes,” 60.

79 Excerpt of oral interview, Mrs Kolawole, 73 years (who was pregnant then), Abeokuta, 12 May 2019

Did Structural Adjustment Program Improve Maternal Healthcare in Abeokuta?

The Structural Adjustment Program came with so much hope for the country based on the predictions and promises. Despite Nigeria's commitment to improving maternal health outcomes as part of its health policies, the SAP era saw little improvement in this regard. Rather, the reforms deepened the divide between the rich and poor, with those in wealthier areas or able to afford private care accessing better healthcare services, while those in rural and peri-urban areas like Abeokuta faced neglect. The reduced funding for public health services, staff shortages, and the increased burden on underfunded public healthcare facilities exacerbated maternal health issues, leading to higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity. It among other things led to the reduction in govern expenditure, increased cost of healthcare, staff shortage and brain drain, health infrastructure deterioration and increased maternal healthcare. This situation was not different from what was observed prior to the adoption of the SAP policies. In Abeokuta did the situation change? Was it different from what obtained at the national level?

Abeokuta, as the capital of Ogun State in Southwest Nigeria, serves as a regional hub for healthcare in the area. However, like many other Nigerian cities, the effects of the SAP were felt acutely in its healthcare system. Maternal health services were often compromised by the economic reforms of the 1980s as access to skilled birth attendants were rare thereby, increasing the risks of complications during childbirth, led to a sharp divide between private and public healthcare services and this state gave the religious organizations to come in and further led to alienation and abandonment of western and skilled healthcare.

Thus, the era of SAP in Nigeria serves as a stark reminder of how macroeconomic policies can have unintended and severe consequences for vulnerable groups. The focus of this study is to explore the intersection between economic reform, maternal healthcare, and public health outcomes in Abeokuta during the 1980s, a period in which many women's hopes for better healthcare under the SAP were dashed. The phrase "We thought things would get better," often used by critics of the SAP, reflects the disillusionment of Nigerians who expected economic growth and improved social services but instead found their access to basic healthcare increasingly restricted.

Conclusion

The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in the 1980s had a significant and negative impact on maternal healthcare in Abeokuta, Southwest Nigeria. The economic policies, aimed at stabilizing the economy, led to cuts in

government spending, a reduction in healthcare services, and increased maternal mortality. The SAP period thus stands as a stark reminder of the social costs of economic reforms when public health is not adequately prioritized. As the 1980s ended, Nigeria faced increasing public dissatisfaction with the SAP and the rising maternal mortality rates, pushing for the need for a more holistic approach that balanced economic reforms with the well-being of its citizens, especially women and children.

This case study highlights how global economic policies can have profound local consequences, particularly on marginalized groups. It also underscores the need for policymakers to consider the social implications of economic reforms, especially in critical sectors like healthcare.

A Comparative Study of Romantic Love in Three Literary Texts

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Abstract

Love is a universal language that can unite two or more persons. It becomes romantic when it finds itself in the wrong context, a rigid situation, an unrealistic relationship, and an uncertain situation. The study examines romantic love literarily in three languages and cultures (Yorùbá, English & French) of three different centuries – the sixteenth century (England), the nineteenth century (France), and the twentieth century (Nigeria). The paper specifically analyses Romanticism in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas*, and Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* through the adoption of Hebert's Architextual and Intertextual comparative methods. Contrary to popular opinion, which limits Romanticism to 19th-century literary activities, this study argues that Romanticism had existed even before the 19th century and still exists in different forms in this modern epoch. This is why the 17th-century Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, 19th-century Hugo's *Ruy Blas*, and the 20th-century Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* are captured as romantic works spanning different countries, centuries, geographical locations, cultures, and situations.

Keywords: Romanticism, Romantic Context, Romantic Love, Unrealistic relationship & Tragedy.

Introduction

Romanticism is derived from the French word ‘*roman*’ which means a novel. Being romantic will therefore mean behaving like a literary character in a non-fictional world. Romanticism is a literary movement of the late 18th century and middle 19th century in Europe and America. It promotes the individual over the community; sentiment over reason; courtship over marriage; and love at first sight over organized relationships. According to Clemens (2009), Romanticism can be defined as “a movement in the literature of virtually every country of Europe, the United States, and Latin America between 1750 and 1870, characterized by reliance on the imagination and subjectivity of approach, freedom of thought and expression, and an idealization of nature. The term romantic first appeared in the 18th-century English and originally meant romance-like; that is, resembling the fanciful character of medieval romances.” This definition of Clemens is universal as he considers the movement in the whole world. According to M.A. Johnson (2004, p. 41) “Romanticism is defined as an upsurge of man’s imaginative spirit and search for the absolute favours reflecting exceptional situations in literary works, poetry in particular, and fully tapping the resources of language in the depiction of human emotions.” Johnson highlighted the concepts of imagination, search for the absolute, and emotions in her definition. *Romanticism*, which is a way of life or an ideology that leads to abnormal behaviours and expressions, must not be confused with the word *Romance*, which, according to Karandashev (2015: 4), is the fanciful, expensive, and pleasurable feeling from an emotional attraction towards another person”.

Karandashev (2015: *ibid*) defined romantic love as “the form of love that is most salient in public view, but it has different subcategories; some of them are related to sexual love”. One cannot separate sex, which is the ultimate expression of romantic love, in a romantic period of courtship. Karandashev (2015: 5) distinguished romantic love from platonic love. He declared that “platonic love is purely spiritual and emotional and presumably free from physical desire. It is exclusively expressed in a non-erotic way and lacks emotional closeness”. Most romantic writers express their freedom of literary creation to produce literary texts of aberration. Littell (2008: 309) described romantic writers by saying that they “focus on the individual led to the creation of a different kind of hero: unique, bold, sometimes brooding or eccentric”. Romantic writers produce romantic heroes who are idols, superstars, individualists, and ideological freedom fighters. Littell (2008: *ibid*) further explained that romantic heroes “were often larger than life, and always unforgettable. Their stories are still told today, and they inspired a modern array of equality vivid character”.

This is a comparative study of English; French and Yorùbá cultures feature a constant generational conflict between parents' children. The bone of contention is "marriage with love or marriage without love." The parents recommend a marriage partner based on culture while the new generation seeks to marry the one, they love. This romantic context makes the love between young people to be a romantic love. Previous studies that examined Romanticism in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas*, and Akinwùmi Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* have failed to compare Romanticism to romantic love. Other specific objectives include: (i) examining what makes love romantic through the analysis of obstacles to the realization of their dreams in the three texts, (ii) depicting how they react to these obstacles, (iii) examining the factors that contribute to their tragic ends and (iv) how the texts end in a tragedy.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Hebert (2013) proposed nine comparative methods which includes (i) intratextual comparison - endotextual analysis of elements of the same literary work, (ii) intertextual comparison - exotextual analysis of elements of two or more literary works, (iii) intersemiotic comparison - comparison of a literary text and a non-literary text, (iv) architextual comparison - comparison of a literary text and a literary movement; (v) infra-architextual comparison - comparison of different parts of a literary work and different parts of many literary works; (vi) intergeneric/interdiscursive comparison - comparison of a tragedy and a comedy or a lyric poem and an epic poem; (vii) intrageneric/intradiscursive comparison- comparison of a novel and another novella play and another play; (viii) typological non generic comparison - comparison of a literary text having as theme polygamy and another text having as theme monogamy; and (ix) text/world comparison - comparison of a literary text and the reality of the real world. (Hebert, 2013 & 2014)

This study adopts two of the nine comparative methods proposed by Hebert (2013) as they are very useful for the analysis of the plays. These are Architextual Comparative Method (ACM) and the Intertextual Comparative Method (ICM). Architextual Comparative Method (ACM) enables the comparison of the three literary texts to a literary movement of Romanticism while the second, Intertextual Comparative Method (ICM) facilitates the comparison of the three works. Comparison of a work to a literary movement is the uniqueness of this study, and this justifies the choice of Hebert's method. These methods are suitable for the study as they allow the comparison of three texts; and then the comparison of Romanticism in three different literary texts of different centuries, cultures, and peoples. Also, the methods were employed to carry out the analysis of romantic love in the three selected

literary texts. The three texts were subjected to four questions and seven factors to enable objectivity and empiricism of the text analysis.

This study is a comparative study of romantic love in two plays and one novel. Hugo's play *Ruy Blas* is the primary literary text that inspired this study. Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* is added to being an English play that has always been criticised as a romantic work, even when the playwright did not belong to the English romantic writers. It also serves as a meeting point between the two researchers: literary critics of French Literature and Yorùbá Literature. Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* is selected because the work suits the aim of the study which is romantic love. Certain factors that make love romantic were examined in the three works and were presented in a tabular form for comparative textual analysis. Factors examined include: age difference, parental philosophy, religious belief, parental ambition, cultural ideology, adultery, adolescence, and social class.

Textual Analysis of the Three Literary Texts

Love can never be said to be romantic if there are no obstacles to expressing it. These obstacles include parental control, separation of partners, and differences in social status such as wide age differences, different traditions, cultures, races, and beliefs. The love between adolescents is often romantic because they are under parental control and cannot have access to each other every time publicly without adults' criticism. The love between two people of different age groups is said to be romantic as the lovers have to resist societal criticism to continue their relationship. (Tiamiyu 2017a & 2017b) France's President, Emmanuel Macron, aged thirty-nine (39), and his wife, aged sixty-four (64), is a good example of romantic love in the 21st century. Their relationship would have become catastrophic if it were to be either in the 17th century of *Romeo and Juliet*, the 19th century setting of *Ruy Blas*, or the 20th century setting of *Ó Le Kú*. To explore and analyse these three literary texts, the following research questions will be examined. These are: (i) What constitutes the obstacles to the realization of romantic love for both partners? (ii) How do the romantic lovers react to these impediments? (iii) How have these hindrances led to the tragic end of the texts? (iv) What constitutes tragedy in the texts?

Analysis of Romantic Love in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has always been captured as a romantic play, though what makes it a romantic text has not yet been studied before now. Every literary critic of Romanticism is aware of the fact that Shakespeare

does not belong to the Romantic writers such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, John Keats, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Shakespeare is the most romantic English playwright of all time because almost all English romantic writers were poets. This explains why most critics of Romanticism concentrate on studies of romantic poems, which are lyrics. The criticism of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is essential because literary works change in meaning over time. This is because we understand the past better as we move into the future. The critical approach, methodology, experience, and competence of the critics can bring new interpretations and discoveries to any literary text even in the period of Antiquity.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* presents two adolescents who fall in love in a world of constraints called Verona. The fact that these adolescents have to meet secretly to express their feelings makes their love a romantic one. The following factors constitute obstacles for Romeo and Juliet to express their love: (i) the ancient grudge between Lord Capulet and Lord Montague, (ii) Tybalt's hatred for the Montagues as well as his temperament, (iii) the killing of Mercutio by Tybalt, (iv) Killing of Tybalt by Romeo as an act of revenge, (v) Absence of Romeo in Verona by running away to Mantua to escape the judgment of the Prince of Verona; and (vi) Imposition of County Paris on Juliet as a husband. All these are the obstacles for the romantic partners to realize their dream of marrying and living afterward as husband and wife.

The romantic lovers, Romeo and Juliet react to these obstacles through the following: (i) Night and secret meetings, (ii) Romeo Jumping over the wall of the Capulets' villa, (iii) Secret marriage conducted by Friar Lawrence, (iv) Juliet's defence of Romeo secretly owing to criticism as a result of death of Tybalt, Lady Capulet's nephew, (v) confrontation of her parents on the choice of marriage, (vi) drinking of sleeping syrup by Juliet to deceive her parents by pretending to be dead; and (vii) Romeo's purchase of poison from an apothecary to commit suicide.

These hindrances constitute a classical system while the responses of the new generation can be summed up into the romantic system. "The cat and rat race" always occurs from generation to generation. These impediments are stronger than the moves to escape from them thereby leading to a tragedy. The older generation is rigid on shifting ground while the new generation is not also ready to compromise. Thus, these hindrances lead to the tragic end of the play in the following ways: (i) The ancient grudge between the two families serves as a demarcation which makes the children to be in different contexts. They cannot meet openly in the day to express their feelings.

This dispute continues from the beginning to the end of the play. This serves as a rope tying and separating the lovers by force which eventually leads to its tragic end. (ii) The killing of Mercutio in the family of Montague

and that of Tybalt in the family of Capulet increases the tension and strengthens the dispute. The enmity increases and this makes the families worse enemies. (iii) The imposition of Paris on Juliet only pushes to collide with friar Lawrence to deceive her parents by driving a drug that can make her partially dead for 24 hours. (iv) The failure of Friar John to deliver Friar Lawrence's letter from Verona to Mantua significantly contributes to the tragic end. This is the reason Romeo buys a bottle of poison from Mantua to commit suicide and fails to exercise patience for Juliet to wake up. (v) Romeo's death pushes Juliet to commit suicide by stabbing herself with Romeo's dagger at the Churchyard. This is because her reason for living is Romeo and without him, life is not worth living.

The play is a tragedy because of the death of five characters, the failure of the romantic lovers to realize their dream, and the settling of a dispute between the parents when their children are dead. Juliet struggles to keep her secret wedding with Romeo but fails to do so even when she has to deceive her parents by pretending to be dead, to sleep in the cemetery to achieve this. Friar Lawrence's assistance to keep the romantic lovers together in marriage fails, his letter to Romeo and visit to the graveyard to stop the mishap also did not achieve the intended result. Romeo fails to marry his true love as he abandons Rosaline for Juliet. He runs away to Mantua to avoid being killed to live for Juliet. His death is a result of the communication gap between him and Friar Lawrence. Paris' death for the lady who does not love him constitutes another tragedy. How can a man die for a lady who does not even love him and who will not love him after he dies? One should also pity Paris for obeying his future in-laws' proposal of marriage without wooing the lady and without seeking her consent to marry him.

Analysis of Romantic Love in Hugo's *Ruy Blas*

Victor Hugo, the leader of the French Romantic club called *Cénacle*, depicted the romantic traits he argued for in the preface of his play *Cromwell* published in 1827. To demonstrate romantic plays to other French romantics such as Lamartine, Musset, Vigny, Nerval, and Bertrand, Victor Hugo published two plays *Ruy Blas* (1827) and *Hernani* (1830). These two plays were the applications of characteristics of a romantic play such as the condemnation of rule of unity of time and unity of place. A play can now end more than twenty-four (24) hours and the setting can be more than a place. The play *Ruy Blas* is considered the most appropriate for this study as it presents two lovers whose love is impossible to realize. This conforms to the researchers' perspective of romantic love. How can an assassin get married to his target? In

the 19th century when the play was written, a commoner couldn't get married to a queen.

If love is romantic, it has to be a kind of love in the courtship period, love between secret lovers; love between two people that their society will likely oppose to getting married. This situation occurs in many romantic plays such as Musset's *on ne badine pas avec l'amour*, Vigny's *Chatterton*, Hugo's *Hernani*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Goethe's *Faust* and İşölâ's *Ó Le Kú!* The following obstacles prevent Ruy Blas and the Queen of Spain from getting married and living happily thereafter: (i) The fence of the palace was too high for any secret lover to penetrate, (ii) The status of a queen makes it impossible for her to walk freely on the streets at night, (iii) The quest for vengeance of Don Salluste to assassinate the Queen, (iv) The conflict between two suitors of the Queen, don Guritan and Ruy Blas, (v) The mission to assassinate the Queen by Ruy Blas on behalf of his master, Don Salluste, (vi) The fake life Ruy Blas lives as don Cesar, which he impersonates, (vii) The context of assassin versus victim, (viii) The arrival of real don Cesar at the place to stop Ruy Blas, the impostor; and (xix) The pressure of don Salluste on Ruy Blas to carry out his mission.

The romantic lovers, Ruy Blas and the Queen of Spain react to these obstacles through the following: (i) The Queen falls in love immediately after he sees Ruy Blas by taking him as don Cesar, the noble who writes a love letter to her, (ii) Ruy Blas pretends to be in love in order to kill the Queen, but he falls really in love and delays the execution of his plan, (iii) The Queen promotes Ruy Blas and assigns more official duties to him for criticizing the nobles for their corruption, (iv) The activeness and dynamism of Ruy Blas makes the Queen to declare her love for him, (v) She becomes shocked to see Ruy Blas with don Salluste, the noble she had insulted, (vi) Ruy Blas declares his real identity to the Queen, kills his master and kills himself too.

These contexts (assassin versus the targeted victim, a commoner versus a queen as well as an impostor versus a real person) show how difficult it is to live according to the love between the partners. The Queen of Spain- being a young lady who is not married- and Ruy Blas - a servant acting like a noble to have access to the monarch- are both subjected to a romantic love situation. These hindrances lead to the tragic end of the play through the following points: (i) The life of a prisoner in which the Queen is living makes her fall in love quickly with an impostor, Ruy Blas and makes it difficult for Ruy Blas to continue living as a lover of the mother of the dynasty, (ii) Don Salluste's appearance at the palace court for vengeance and to usurp the throne from the Queen precipitates Ruy Blas to kill his master, (iii) The duel between the two prospective suitors of the Queen announces the tragic end of the play, (iv) The arrival of the real don Cesar also pushes don Salluste to hasten his

hired assassin who has to, first of all, make the Queen fall in love before killing her, and (v) The context of assassin versus the victim is not favourable for a positive outcome.

Victor Hugo's Ruy Blas is a tragedy for the fact that two characters die (don Salluste and Ruy Blas), and the Queen fails to realize her dream of marrying the man she loves for the first time. Ruy Blas fails to change the plan and continues to live. He has to kill the master planner of the coup instead of assassinating his lover, the Queen of Spain. The tragedy lies in the fact that a commoner who falls in love with a queen who loves him in return fails to live in reality. This makes him commit suicide to continue dreaming instead of living as a commoner later. The disappearance of the ephemeral love of a commoner by the Queen makes her cry bitterly and even calls Ruy Blas' name instead of calling him Don Cesar as she did before the truth was revealed. The killing of an old master who was insulted by the young Queen to prevent the overthrow is another example of tragedy. This will likely be the position of somebody using the method of deconstruction to criticise this play.

Analysis of Romantic Love in Ìṣòlá's Ó Le Kú!

There is no gainsaying the fact that Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá is a romantic writer. Although some writers like Kẹhìndé Adépegba (2004) and others have written romantic texts like *Òkèlè Àkóbù*, yet, Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá is clearly distinguished as a romantic author, poet, and playwright. Examples of romantic themes in his literary works are well portrayed in his poetic work - *Àfàimò àti àwọn àròfò míràn*; (1978) drama text, titled *Nítorí owó* (2014), and novel *Ó Le Kú* (2015), which is being examined in this paper. In the three literary texts mentioned above, Ìṣòlá portrays romantic subject matter far above what obtains in the Yorùbá traditional setting as classically depicted by most early Yorùbá authors and poets. Ìṣòlá's worldview about the manner of expressing romantic love is a departure from the regular practice in the Yorùbá culture, in the sense that it is the societal values that usually dictate the pace, manner, conditions, and premise upon which prospective lovers must base the regimented expression of their love affairs.

Ìṣòlá's romantic works are generally accepted by the modern Yorùbá society because they reflect or express the hitherto suppressed desires of contemporary society, especially the youths of the 19th & 20th centuries. Scholars who have worked on Ìṣòlá's aforementioned works align with the view that *Ó Le Kú* is the foremost Yorùbá thrilling romantic novel that depicts the trending, fashionable, and romantic behaviour of the modern-day generation. First published in 1974 and shown in the cinema years after, Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* portrays such themes as romance, cultural shift, education, social revolution, and

ideological conflict. For instance, the Yorùbá youth's advocacy for the emotionalization of romantic affairs has been exposed to Western education which gives some sort of freedom and independence from the stereotypical love expression dictated by culture and parental ethical judgment. Contrary to the Yorùbá tradition, Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́ are in a secret and obsessive relationship. According to the Yorùbá culture, it is Àjàní's parents who have the moral right to seek Àṣàkẹ́'s hand in marriage from her parents. Besides, the Yorùbá custom demands that spiritual inquiry be made from the *Ifá* oracle or any other spiritualists. But, Àjàní defies this cultural ethos with his audacity and requests for Àṣàkẹ́'s hand in marriage by himself from Àjàní's father. Baba Kékeré, Àṣàkẹ́'s father aligns with the Yorùbá age-long tradition of first inquiring from the gods. According to the Seer-Caleb, the oracle does not support the prospective marriage of the two lovers. Aside from this, Baba Kékeré thinks that Àjàní's marriage proposal is self-imposing and needs the endorsement of his eldest brother living in Ghana as the eldest in the family.

The several "logical pleas" by the lovers (Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́) for the eldest member of the family to reason along and support their marriage proposal proves abortive. Desperation and infatuation engrossed the two lover birds connive into making a drastic and rash decision of impregnating Àṣàkẹ́ with a view that her parent would have no choice but to give in to their self-opinionated plans. The plan of Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́ is not only a rude shock to the family but a taboo in the Yorùbá society for a lady to get pregnant before a wedding or outside wedlock. The information about Àṣàkẹ́'s pregnancy for Àjàní does not make her father bulge. Rather than getting approval from Àṣàkẹ́'s parents the pregnancy creates more hatred and constitutes a major setback on the personal and cultural reason they cannot be married. Before the ugly incident of pre-marital pregnancy, Àṣàkẹ́'s father mandates Àjàní to wait for Àṣàkẹ́ to finish her tertiary education if he is interested in marrying her. This is intended to serve as an excuse to vehemently kick against what he considers an under-age marriage for Àṣàkẹ́. The immeasurable number of ladies who are getting married in Nigerian tertiary Institutions and still excel in their studies debunks the notion that education cannot be combined with marriage.

Baba Kékeré devises different tricks to keep Àṣàkẹ́ indoors, a kind of "house arrest". Ìjàòlà is the only sympathizer who counsels Àjàní to be patient because they both belong to the same romantic age. Despite the obstacles and challenges to the fulfilment of marriage plans by Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́, Àjàní courageously pushes on in his attempt to express love to Àṣàkẹ́. He visits her to strengthen his romantic commitment to her. The exchange of love letters between them is a modern-day romantic behavior common among the elite group. Àjàní affirms that although he would have to marry another lady, yet,

his first love would still be retained for Àşàkẹ and nothing can contest that in his heart. (p.120)

Asake pade Ajani ni ile-itawe yunifasiti ni akoko yii. Ajani ki i. Won soro die, Ajani naa so nigba naa pe looto, oun le fe elomiran sugbon ko si ife to le dabi ife to wa laarin awon nibere. O ni oun si mo pe bi Asake naa tile tun fe elomiran, ki o tole ri eni ti o maa fẹran re bii toun ona a jin.

(Àşàkẹ met Àjàní at the University at the time. Àjàní greeted her. They talked for a while. Àjàní said that, truly, he can marry someone else but there is no love that can be like the one between them at the onset. He said that he knows that, though Àşàkẹ too married someone else, it will take a while for her to see someone else who will love her like him.)

Àşàkẹ confronts her father and expresses strong emotional pain for being hindered to marrying Ajani, the man of her choice.

Nigba ti Asake gbo pe Ajani ti fi ojo iyawo sona, Ko tile gbagbo ni. Ni ojo ti igbeyawo sele bi aye ni Asake wa ni, bi orun ni ko mo...Inu bi Asake, o si dahun, 'E fi mi sile omo-ale ni mi. Ika ni yin. Eyin le si mi lona, mo ti ri ii pe iro ni gbogbo oro e n so fun mi. Tara yin le mo. N o k ii somo yin. Mo tile n lo fun yin'... Nigba ti ile su Asake mu iwe kekere kan, o mu kalamu re, o si ko awon oro wonyi: 'Ki i se ejo Ajanmi, sugbon emi ko le fara mo jija ti o ja mi sile. Ejo aburo baba mi ni. Ika ni. Ko fẹran mi, omugo si ni pelu. Sugbon mo lo fun yin o.' O mu igo majele kan, o da a konu, o mu ohun to wa ninu re. O si daso bori...Ariwo sese wa ta pe o pa ara re ni... (pp. 120-121)

(When Àşàkẹ heard that Àjàní had fixed his wedding date. She does not believe herself. She does not know whether she is on earth or in heaven on the wedding day...Àşàkẹ was annoyed, and she remarked, 'Leave me alone, I am a bastard. You are wicked. You are the one that misled me, I have realized that you lied to me in your counsel. You achieved your selfish motive. I am not your child. I am leaving the house for you.'... Àşàkẹ took her paper and pen and scribbled these words: 'It was not Àjàní's fault, I cannot endure the way he broke my heart, It is the fault of my father's brother. He is wicked. He does not love me; he is foolish too. But I am leaving for you.' She took one poison bottle and poured it into her mouth, she drank the content... She covered herself with cloth...Then there was an outcry that she poisoned herself.)

She eventually poisoned herself with a mind that she could not be fulfilled without marrying her only love, Ajani. The tragic end shows that the love and romantic behavior that exists between the two is purely genuine and selfless. It further strengthens the view that humans, by nature are romantic beings and demonstrates that the Yorùbá cultural norm constrains self-expression and the emotional will of whom to marry.

Romantic Love in Three Literary Texts

The term *romantic* is used to suggest any kind of love relationship between two which may not materialize because the lovers belong to different social groups which are inimical to each other. Romantic love also entails any kind of sincere and unconditional love that exists between two people who are not allowed to be together because of maturity, socio-class, family principles and beliefs, cultural values, moral ethics, racial and tribal discriminations, level of education and social exposure, or divergent geographical location. Examples of romantic love include the following: love between a wealthy man's daughter and a poor man's son; love between a servant and his mistress; love between a young man and his stepmother; love between a pastor's son and an Imam's daughter; as well as love between a white woman and an African man during slave trade and colonial era. From the three texts examined in this study, there is a common concept of romantic love which serves as the driving force towards the existing societal system.

Although William Shakespeare does not belong to the class of English romantic writers like Lord Byron, William Blake, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, his plays published in the 16th century depict the traits of romanticism of 19th century (Tiamiyu, 2017b). For instance, *Romeo and Juliet* is considered one of the most influential romantic plays of all time. Shakespeare has immortalized himself through the acceptance of this play by different generations beginning from the 16th century to the present 21st century. From the play, romantic love can be said to exist between Romeo and Juliet simply because their love is a secret affair. They both belong to two different socio-contexts which constitutes a hindrance to the realization of their dream marriage. This romantic love between the two lovers leads to a romantic principle of nights, nature, imagination, dreams, and duality. It also leads to romantic behaviour like secret marriage, sneaking out at night without parental permission, confrontation with their parents and cultural beliefs, elopement, as well as murder and suicide. Romeo sneaks into the Capulets' compound through a ladder and a rope at night just to see Juliet.

He secretly gets married to her without her parents’ approval. This occurs at Friar Lawrence Den, the Priest of Verona.

Romeo and Juliet are also considered romantic heroes and heroines because the Montagues and the Capulets are ancient enemies who are not ready to end their disputes and rivalry. This is manifested in Act One, Scene Four where Juliet inquires after “the strange man in a mask” who kissed her twice while they were dancing at the ball at her father’s organized party.

Juliet: Go ask his name. – If he is married, /My grave is like to my wedding bed./Nurse: His name is Romeo, and a Montague,/The only son of your great enemy./ Juliet: My only love sprung from my only hate!/Too early seen unknown, and known too late!/Prodigious birth of love it is to me /That I must love a loathed enemy.

From the above excerpt, it is very obvious that Juliet is not willing to withdraw from her romantic adventure with Romeo regardless of the relational threat it poses to both families. This means that romantic love is either an impossible love or a true love that falls between two hostile environments like a seed attempting to grow amid thorns.

Factors Leading to Romantic Love: Comparative Analysis

Since romantic love is a kind of love that is impossible to express publicly, young romantic lovers often engage in clandestine activities like meeting each other at night, lying to their parents to meet secretly, making love secretly when the sexual urge becomes high, and abortion of unwanted pregnancy. A romantic lover may sometimes steal his or her parents’ belongings and present them as gifts to his or her lover. Usually, several factors characterize romantic love. These include: wide differences in age, parental philosophy, religious belief, social class, parental ambition, cultural ideology, adolescence, and adultery, among others.

| Factors/Texts | Ìṣọlá’s Ó Le kú | Shakespeare’s <i>Romeo & Juliet</i> | Hugo’s <i>Ruy Blas</i> |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Age Difference | The same age group | The same age group | The same age group |
| Parental Philosophy | Education before marriage | Choice of husband by Lord Capulet | Not applicable |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|
| Religious belief | Not applicable | Religion does not pose a threat | Not applicable |
| Social Class | Àjàní & Àṣàkẹ́ belong to the lower social class | Romeo & Juliet are from the elite/upper social class | Ruy Blas (a servant) falls in love with the Queen |
| Parental Ambition | To have a university degree | To continue the decades of dispute between the Capulets and the Montagues | Not applicable |
| Cultural Ideology | The same cultural background | The same cultural background | Very divergent: Ruy Blas (Romantic ideology), Queen (Classical ideology) |
| Adolescence | Both are adolescents | Both are adolescents | Both are adolescents |
| Adultery | Fornication applicable | Fornication Implied | Not Applicable |

(a) Age Difference: From the three texts in this study, both romantic partners are young lovers. The ladies are teenagers while their lovers are young men in their early twenties. This demonstrates that age is not a barrier to romantic love. Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́ love each other. They share the same culture, philosophy, taste, fashion, and emotional expression. Romeo and Juliet are also of the same age bracket just like Ruy Blas and the Queen. France's President (Emmanuel Macron) and his first lady (Brigitte Marie/Claude Macron) constitute a modern example of romantic partners. Brigitte Marie/Claude Macron was born in 1953 while her husband, Emmanuel Macron was born in 1977. At the time they got married, Brigitte Marie/Claude Macron was 54, while Emmanuel Macron was 29 years old. This kind of marriage is not likely possible in the 16th, 19th century, or even the contemporary African society because of the social norms and parental philosophy.

(b) Parental Philosophy: Both Akinwùmí Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* and William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* depict the parental philosophy which contradicts the philosophy of their children. In Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas*, the role of

parents in children's love affairs is exempted as there are no parent figures in the text. Isola's novel satirizes illiteracy as Baba Kékeré, a parent figure, struggles to give his daughter what he does not have the opportunity to attain. This must have been a function of his social status and the humiliation experienced in post-independence Yorùbá society. Àṣàkẹ's father opposes her marriage to Àjàní before the completion of her university education. His view is that marriage after secondary education will prevent his daughter from proceeding to a higher institution. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Lord Capulet, like most parents of his time, believes that the choice of a husband for his daughter is his sole responsibility. This is why he imposes Paris on Juliet. He believes that Paris is a gentleman, decent, and noble enough to be a son-in-law to the Capulets. The Capulets' philosophy about marriage (marriage without love) is different from Juliet's philosophy of love before marriage. This is one of the main causes of conflict in the literary text.

(c) Religious Belief: Both Ìṣòlá and Hugo ignored the influence of religious sentiment in marriage decisions which is always a critical factor in romantic affairs. Although, Shakespeare depicts the Christian religion in the text, yet, this is not so significant as the lovers share the same religious belief. Religious belief can only pose a threat to love when both partners belong to different religious groups and their parents are rigid in their religious positions. Friar Lawrence agrees with the secret marriage plans between Romeo and Juliet regardless of their parent's unresolved feud. He secretly weds the two romantic lovers in the church and gives Juliet a sleeping drug to escape the imposed marriage by her parents. In the African setting, it would be very difficult, even in modern times, for a Reverend's daughter to marry the son of a Chief Imam who is a Muslim. If eventually, they do, it would most likely be that they eloped or got married without parental consent. However, this may be very impossible in the setting of Isola's *Ó Le Kú*.

(d) Social Class: - Both Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* of the 20th century and William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* of the 16th Century contextualise their romantic characters in the same social class, although in different ways. For instance, in Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú*, Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ belong to the lower class. Their parents are both poor and illiterate. This explains why parents of that period were servants to their children's age mates. Since Àṣàkẹ's father wants to maintain his superiority over his daughter, he often condemns the moral support of his wife for Àṣàkẹ's position. Àṣàkẹ eventually confronts her father and even attempts suicide when Ajani marries Lolá, a newly admitted student into the Nigerian University. Àṣàkẹ's father is, however, an exception considering his generation. Despite his educational status, he can win his argument concerning the marriage intention between his daughter, Àṣàkẹ, and Ajani, her suitor.

The conflict between Western civilisation and African culture dramatically plays out in this intra-family saga. In William Shakespeare's play, both Romeo and Juliet belong to noble families, that is, the upper class. Romeo is a knight while Juliet is a lady. In the 16th century period of Europe depicted in the city of Verona, only girls from noble families could be considered as ladies. The fact that they belong to the same social class makes their love a natural one. Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas* is the only literary work of the three texts in this study that depicts the influence of social class in the pursuit of love. This intensifies the context of romanticism as an impossible mission, an unrealistic adventure, and an unattainable pursuit. It was extremely difficult in 16th-century Europe for a commoner to marry into a noble family, let alone the Queen. The fact that Ruy Blas, who is a servant to a noble, falls in love with a teenage Queen makes the love specifically romantic. This is all the more reason the play ends in tragedy as Ruy Blas commits suicide when he fails to carry out the plot to kill the Queen he falls in love with.

(e) Parental Ambition: This occurs in both Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Àṣàkẹ's father is ambitious to produce a university graduate because of the honor and prestige attached to being a learned person in the early 70s in Nigeria. Due to his low literacy and exposure, he becomes adamant in shifting ground to give his daughter out in marriage to Àjàní before she graduates from the University. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Lord Capulet's ambition is to sustain the age-long dispute between his family and the Montagues. He is not ready to give his daughter out in marriage to his sworn enemy. Factors contributing to this dispute include: pride, honor, prestige, hatred, self-centredness, and wealth.

Neither of the two fathers is ready to be subjugated or humiliated by conceding to the love proposal of the two romantic partners in the classic text. Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas* does not feature any parent figure or character. An example of parental ambition is the "best seller" film of the 20th century, "The Titanic," where Rose's mother imposes a rich man on her to save her family from bankruptcy. This imposition prompts Jack's intentional deflowering of Rose in a car parked in the ship store. The conflict from parental ambition leads to the loss of thousands of lives. Rose is from a wealthy family, while Jack is from a poor family. This parental ambition proves that parents could impose marriage on their siblings based on their ambition.

(f) Cultural Ideology: Both Romeo and Juliet share the same cultural ideology. They belong to the classical era, where the monarchy is absolute. This European culture of the 16th century portrays citizens who are submissive to the monarch as well as children who obey their parents. The culture then allows marriage between two noble families and between two commoners. Since Romeo and Juliet belong to the same noble families, they both

understand the cultural norms applicable to their society. The situation is the same in Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* because both Ajani and Àṣàké are from the Yorùbá tribe, and they both believe in the importance of parental consent. This is why Àjàní did not impose his wish on Àṣàké. Upon continuous disapproval by her parents, he disengages from her and marries another girl, Lola, who is yet to have her university education. The only literary text where cultural ideology transforms into a romantic one is that of Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas*. The implication of this is that culture plays a vital role in influencing parental consent in the choice of marriage. However, there is an observable trend that culture, in contemporary society, no longer constitutes a major threat or hurdle for romantic lovers. Ruy Blas, as a protagonist, represents romantic cultural ideology which means anyone could get married to his or her desired lover irrespective of religious, cultural, ethnical, racial or economic differences. The question Victor Hugo is asking through the character, Ruy Blas, is that: Why can't a commoner get married to a queen? The female character in *Ruy Blas* from the noble class also questions the classical cultural ideology which restrains a princess or a queen from marrying a person she passionately loves regardless of class. She is attracted at first by the nobility of Ruy Blas when he impersonates another noble character in the text. Regardless, she continues her love adventure despite realising the true identity of Ruy Blas, a commoner.

(g) Adolescence: Most adolescents who love sincerely for the first time are romantic personalities. Their emotions and sentiments usually dictate the way they reason, talk, behave, and relate to themselves and their parents. According to the *American Psychology Association*, (2000:5), "no adolescent can be fully understood outside the context of his family, neighbourhood, school, workplace, or community or without considering such factors as gender, race, sexual orientation, disability or chronic illness, and religious beliefs". In Iso-la's novel, Àjàní and Àṣàké are both adolescents who love each other sincerely and are ready to break all moral values, cultural norms, and established etiquette before marriage. This explains why Àjàní impregnates Àṣàké.

The question of the importance of virginity in marriage in the Yorùbá cultural milieu is raised by the Nigerian novelist. The same situation occurs in Shakespeare's play. Romeo and Juliet are both adolescents who have a common ideology, passion, sentiment, and experience. Although Romeo has been dating Roseline, he abandons her for Juliet because she is the lady of her dreams. In Victor Hugo's play, both the Queen and Ruy Blas are adolescents who do not care about the classical system that constitutes a seeming obstacle to their romantic love. The three literary works depict adolescence as an agent of change. The romantic partners in the three texts either question or confront the established values of the preceding generations.

(h) Adultery: This is the type of love that exists between a married woman and another man besides her husband or between a married man and another woman besides his wife. This can be likened to what occurs between two adolescents who are experiencing love for the first time. What makes adolescents commit to fornication is the fact that their love is secret, and they are not free from parental monitoring or opposing views. From the three texts studied, adultery does not exist because the romantic partners are officially in a courtship. Romeo and Juliet, for example, secretly get married, which implies or legitimises their conjugal intimacy. This explains the reason why they go the extra mile to defend their secret marriage to the extent of committing suicide. To them, they are free to have sexual intercourse since they are religiously married. But, to their parents who are not aware of their secret marriage, it is tantamount to fornication. In Isola's novel, Àjàní impregnates Àṣàké without the consent of her father. This implies nothing but fornication. In the case of Victor Hugo's play, there is no opportunity for romantic lovers to express or experience illicit sexual intercourse. Nowadays, both adultery and fornication have become a norm among romantic lovers in modern society.

Conclusion

The study has examined the literary movement of Romanticism in three different centuries, countries, and cultures. The study discussed factors leading to romantic love such as age difference, parental philosophy, parental ambition, religious belief, social class, cultural ideology, adolescence, and adultery. The researchers discovered that all three texts examined present the same age group, that is; all the romantic lovers in the three works are adolescents. The study showed that there is no parental influence or ambition in Hugo's *Ruy Blas* whereas both Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* depict parental influence and ambition. Although the specific difference between the duo is that while Juliet's father, Capulet imposes a husband on his daughter, Juliet; Àṣàké's father, Baba Kékeré prioritizes university education before marriage. However, both authors observe class balance by depicting the romantic lovers in the same social class: Àjàní and Àṣàké are in the lower class while Romeo and Juliet are in the upper class. However, Hugo offsets the balance by depicting the love relationship between the Queen in the higher class and Ruy Blas in the lower class. The latter has to impersonate Don Cesar to enjoy an upper-class experience for a while. There is no explicit case of adultery in the three texts. However, the probability of having premarital sex is higher in both *Ruy Blas* and *Romeo and Juliet*. This is because Hugo presents lovers who live together in the same palace for a while and Shakespeare depicts lovers who are secretly married and can do what a married couple does.

The *romantic context* in the three texts goes thus: *Romeo and Juliet* (inter-family dispute), *Ruy Blas* (different social status), and *Ó Le Kú* (different educational status). The *romantic lovers* finally react to their contexts in these ways: *Romeo and Juliet* (both partners commit suicide), *Ruy Blas* (one partner commits suicide), and *Ó Le Kú* (one partner drinks poison and falls terribly and psychologically sick). Finally, one can conclude that Shakespeare, Ruy Blas, and Ìṣòlá are three romantic writers of different centuries, geographical spaces, cultures, and situations. This implies that Romanticism existed before the romantic period and continues in different forms.

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Motherhood and Infertility as Performance Paradigms of *Ọpá* Festival

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Abstract

Ọpá festival is famous among Ìpínṣà, its surrounding communities and Àkúrẹ̀, in the southwest of Nigeria. The festival holds annually in Ìpínṣà¹ to celebrate Èyẹ̀ Mòḗ,² and by extension, female indigenes of Ìpínṣà, irrespective of age, political affiliations, and social status. Though scholarly works abound on women, yet, there seem to be paucity of research on how the female Deity of *Ọpá*, proffers amazing solution to infertility and childlessness. The primary aim of *Ọpá* festival in Ìpínṣà is to resolve infertility among married women. This article identifies the orature of *Ọpá* festival on infertility and motherhood and critically analyses them, using Acholonu's motherism and Freud's Psychoanalysis. The result confirms that infertility is traumatic among the Yorùbá, particularly the Yorùbá women, due to the strong importance attached to motherhood in their society. The methodology involves in-depth interviews with ten purposively selected individuals. These consist of three female Ìpínṣà chiefs, two of Akápinṣà's wives and five women seeking fertil-

1 A town located in the south of Àkúrẹ̀. Ondo State.

2 A female deity.

ity. There was participant observation of the festival, where audio and visual recordings were made. The paper concludes that the orature of *Ọ̀pá* festival archives the importance of procreation among the Yorùbá.

Keywords: *Ọ̀pá* festival, motherhood, infertility, childbearing, Yorùbá women

Introduction

According to oral tradition, the people of Osí³ inherited *Ọ̀pá* festival from Ìsẹ̀-Èkìtì,⁴ the traditional home of Akinlúàdusè,⁵ who is popularly known among the people of Ìsẹ̀-Èkìtì as Akinlúùsè.⁶ *Ọ̀pá* festival holds annually in Ìsẹ̀-Èkìtì to celebrate Akinlúùsè, the valiant warrior, due to the great feat he had performed in warfare to rescue the people of Ìsẹ̀-Èkìtì from their attackers. About six centuries ago, a kingship tussle resulted in some Ìsẹ̀-Èkìtì indigenes breaking away from their kinsmen. This group started a journey with stops at different location and forward movement for diverse reasons. Finally, they pitched their tents in Osí and took up permanent residence there. The fourth Ìrẹ̀ṣì of Osí⁷ fathered Èyè Mòé, the princess who imported *Ọ̀pá* festival from Osí to Ìpìnṣà, the hometown of Akápinṣà,⁸ her husband. In Ìpìnṣà, it was customary for Èyè Mòé to bless women and children; her primary concern was with the barren. During the course of the festival, she did shower blessings on them so much that, the following year, the majority of the women would return to appreciate Èyè Mòé whose blessings must have helped sever infertility. She persevered in that benevolent act until her death. In acknowledgement of Èyè Mòé's importation of *Ọ̀pá* festival from Osí to Ìpìnṣà and the memorable role she played in solving barrenness problem among women, on *Ọ̀pá* festival day, Ìpìnṣà indigenes tagged Èyè Mòé, a central figure that would be celebrated on every *Ọ̀pá* festival day; she thus became deified.

Ọ̀pá, the indispensable implement of *Ọ̀pá* festival, means a cane or a stick used for the purpose of flogging. Among the Yorùbá, the use of *ọ̀pá* is not uncommon wherever *Ọ̀pá* festival is being celebrated. In other words, cane is the hallmark of every Yorùbá traditional festival that is named after *ọ̀pá*. In all *Ọ̀pá* festivals, flogging prevails mostly among the youths - male and female. An exception is the *Ọ̀pá* festival in Ìpìnṣà, over there, it is a taboo to flog the female-folk during *Ọ̀pá* festival. Ìpìnṣà people are of the opinion that

3 A town located in Akure North Local Government Area.

4 An ancient city in Èkìtì State, Nigeria.

5 The male deity that Ìsẹ̀-Èkìtì and Osí indigenes celebrate during their own *Ọ̀pá* festival.

6 Ibid.

7 The king of Osí town.

8 The pioneer king of Ìpìnṣà town.

flogging of any female dishonors Èyè Mòé, who is regarded as the mother of all in that community. Hence, flogging is restricted to the male-folk. The essence of flogging one another on every *Òpá* festival day is to demonstrate prowess and bravery. Besides, cane has spiritual significance, this is because every cane used for flogging during the festival, is considered sacred. Thus, none must be taken home by any participant. The *òpá*⁹ are meant to be gathered and kept in a designated enclosure.

At this juncture, it is necessary to look at the existing scholarly works on infertility and childbearing among the Yorùbá, comment on these and present our own opinion. Ilesanmi (2014) affirms that “barrenness is despicable in Yorùbá culture” (14). According to him, “a barren Yorùbá woman is often a miserable, wretched and sorrowful woman” (14). The affirmation above, pin-points emphatically that barrenness is considered awful among the Yorùbá.

Infertility is defined as “inability of a couple to achieve a pregnancy or live birth despite having unprotected sexual intercourse for one year.” Bola-Oye-bamiji (2018) maintains that “due to the premium placed on childbearing in our environment,¹⁰ this could be a cause of significant psychological problem for the couple concerned, but more importantly the woman (17). Her submission confirms that worries and anxieties are associated with infertility, she points out that this is especially so for the woman.

Ottu (2012) observes that marriage enhances “relations of solidarity; maintains bonds of affection, provides moral support, friendship and love; gives people a sense of belonging, ontological strength and empowerment and makes them feel good” (295). Admittedly, the benefits enumerated by Ottu (2012) are among the expected blessings of marital life that an intending couple looks forward to and works hard to achieve in marriage. However, in the Yorùbá value system, the blessings, as rich as they seem, cannot be maximally experienced and enjoyed in a childless relationship. In other words, Yorùbá women feel a sense of emotional fulfilment and satisfaction, only when they become mothers.

Ngcobo (2007) explains that “the paramount reason for marriage is not marriage itself; it is the children of the marriage; it is not the companionship, nor the love or friendship, nor the mutual emotional satisfaction of the couple” (534). By implication, “the basis of marriage amongst Africans implies the transfer of a woman’s fertility to the husband’s family group” (Ngcobo, 533). Thus, social necessity is placed upon a married woman to propagate her husband’s lineage.

9 Canes.

10 The author has Yoruba environment in mind.

Rájí (2014) asserts that “every woman is conscious of the stigma associated with barrenness.” According to him, “most Yorùbá women are well aware that their ability to reproduce is a seal to lasting relationship; they hold that procreation puts them in a favored position with their husbands” (177). Ráji’s assertion affirms that children are a necessity in the life of the Yorùbá, particularly the female-folk. Hence, no amount of affection, care and riches could attract genuine tranquility to a childless wife.

Sheba (2009) explains that “the Yorùbá view women as those having the responsibility to become pregnant, care for the fetus and nurse a newborn. She adds that women are indispensable in child-care.” According to her, “the challenges of conception, the hazards associated with delivery and the stress of administering care to a baby situate women in a significant light among the Yorùbá” (9). Her explanation makes it crystal clear that even though being expectant is a joyous experience for a wife, the conception period is not absolutely smooth. Frankly, Sheba’s explanation holds true. The most dreaded moment for a couple, as well as friends and family, is the day of delivery, as this day may result in either ecstasy or sorrow. The reason is that not all pregnancies lead to a safe delivery. In certain instances, there could be either maternal or fetal death. Should a woman be fortunate to be safely delivered of her baby, sleepless nights, breastfeeding, consumption of adequate diet, abstaining from certain meals and drinks become necessary. Despite these new trends with diverse challenges, every Yorùbá woman is eager to taste the pleasure of motherhood.

Ajíbádé (2009) indicates that “children are very important, and their importance is metaphorically enshrined in the nuptial poetry. They are seen as àtùpà,¹¹ ògèdè,¹² ilèkè,¹³ aṣọ”¹⁴ (120). The contents of the Yorùbá nuptial poetry, as pointed out by Ajíbádé specify the pride of place children are accorded in the Yorùbá worldview. That the Yorùbá regard children as lamp, simply signifies brightness and the lovely atmosphere that is enabled by the presence of a child in a family. The metaphor of ògèdè symbolizes softness and sweetness. That is, the birth of a child attracts a sweeter¹⁵ relationship between spouses and enhances tenderness. The use of beads and cloth to describe children is a pointer that children are the beauty, the essence of marriage. When a childless woman adorns herself with expensive clothing and quality beads, she feels good and elegant, but not too good, not truly elegant as she admires herself in the mirror. The cause? The agony of infertility mars joyful moments. In ef-

11 Lamp.

12 Banana.

13 Beads.

14 Cloth.

15 More affectionate.

fect, the Yorùbá believe that children adorn much more than jewelries. The Yorùbá traditional style of clothing is full and unrevealing; it covers every vital part of the body properly. Thus, children are ‘clothes’ to their parents in the sense that their birth serves as a ‘cover’,¹⁶ a hiding place, from the wind of sarcasm and the distressing experiences that result from infertility. The birth of a child saves a couple the ado of attending to diverse cares and concerns that are associated with infertility. Since children are regarded as light, sweetness, adornment/beauty and protective garb, childlessness invariably connotes darkness, bitterness, unsightliness and vulnerability. Little wonder childless couples, wives in particular, strive to subdue the gloomy and agonizing state of barrenness.

Dáramólá and Jéjé (1967) aver that “right before a wife conceives an embryo in her womb, her husband must have pondered a competent *Ifá* ¹⁷ priest that would be entrusted with the care of his wife and that of his unborn child.” According to them, “the first step that the *Ifá* priest would take is to tie the pregnancy with charm, so that the fetus might not be miscarried” (52-60). The Yorùbá know that health issues and spiritual attack on an expectant mother could wreak havoc on an embryo and result in miscarriage. This informs the proactive stance adopted by the caregiver, *Ifá* priest, in tying the pregnancy with charm to avert the loss of the fetus before maturity.

The Yorùbá are so passionate about the safety of a pregnant woman that they readily counsel and offer help, no matter how distant their relationship with the couple. Awoniyi (1978) submits:

Pregnancy is a visible indication of new life... once pregnancy is effected, the society, conscious of its responsibility, starts to give guidance on what the pregnant woman should eat, how she should not walk and so on. All these precautions are taken so that nothing adverse, affects the child. (2-3)

Awoniyi’s submission makes it obvious that counseling and offering of guidance to a pregnant woman is a collective responsibility among the Yorùbá. The motive behind their concern is to ensure the safety of the pregnancy and enable the expectant mother have a safe delivery. The few works reviewed are indications that the Yorùbá appreciate childbearing and favor motherhood highly. Hence, Yorùbá women do diligently persevere in any course that will help kick out infertility from their world.

16 As cloth covers nakedness.

17 The spiritual encyclopedia of Yoruba traditional religion.

Theoretical Paradigms

Western feminism could be described as the foundation stone for African feminism. It could as well be seen as a necessary deviation from it, because of the distinct dichotomy between Western culture and African culture. This deviation is significant because a people cannot be put apart from their cultural heritage. Kolawole (1997) remarks that “the majority of African women cannot search for autonomy and self-fulfillment in the same manner as the western woman because their criteria of values are sometimes poles apart” (197). For instance, “the importance of motherhood and childbearing in African women’s lives is probably the most fundamental difference between the African women and her western counterpart . . .” (Steady 1985, 89). This statement simply means that the identity of a people could be captured in their value system. Since two dissimilar cultures hardly favor identical ideology, the existence of African feminism became a necessity. Variants of African feminism are womanism, stiwanism, negro feminism, motherism, femalism and snail sense feminism. For the purpose of this study, we are going to adopt Catherine Acholonu’s (1995) motherism. The rationale for adopting this theory is that the theory is more specific to the traditional role of African women as wives and mothers; the complementary positions that serve to propagate the African society. Acholonu (1995) affirms that “several African societies reflect systems with ranging degrees of dual-sex hierarchies in which men and women exist in parallel and complementary positions and roles within the society” (6). Her affirmation simply portends that male and female gender co-exist to complement each other. In Africa, the woman is “known for her ability to combine several roles and to function in various capacities within her society” (Acholonu 1995, 25). Acholonu (1995) enumerates the six crucial positions that place upon women’s shoulders, diverse responsibilities. These, according to her, are: The woman as a wife; The woman as a daughter/sister; The woman as a mother; The woman as a queen, priestess; The woman as goddess; and, The woman as a husband (24).

The focus of this study is on the woman as a mother; a position that is prized among the Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria. Generally, “the indigenous African society holds motherhood in high esteem because it is conceived as a means through which their humanity is preserved and proliferated” (Lawal, 1996). In the Yorùbá belief system, for instance, motherhood paints a ‘real’ picture of womanhood. So, “being childless simply identifies a woman, not as a female, but as a ‘man’” (N’guessan, 2010). Little wonder “childbearing is prioritized” (Araroba, 2019). In other words, birthing a child means a whole lot to women. At this juncture, it is imperative to mention that motherhood as a concept, has plural implications among the Yorùbá. Apart from biological

mothers, who are the primary concern in this study, there are foster mothers - step mothers and adoptive mothers - who tend children, other than their own, goddesses, such as Ọ̀ṣun¹⁸ and Ọ̀ya¹⁹ are classified as mothers. Deified heroines among the Yorùbá, such as Mòrèní, Madam Tinúubú and Èyè Mòé etc, are also regarded as the mothers of all in the Yorùbá socio-cultural setting, because of their great and memorable socio-economic and religious contributions to their various communities. Therefore, motherhood could be viewed from biological, religious and socio-cultural perspectives. Steady states that “the most important feature of women in the traditional African society is their role as a mother” (1985). Thus, it would not be out of place to concur that “mother is supreme and there is nothing beyond her, except God” (Acho-lonu, 1995).

In the African setting, women who are unable to attain motherhood through procreation, experience frustration and suffer social stigmatization. Certain unlettered women among the Yorùbá naively regard their inability to become pregnant and have a child as a personal deficiency, while they ignorantly see their husband as having no medical challenges with regard to fertility. Besides, their society has made it seem as if it is inappropriate to accuse men of inability to impregnate. ‘As a result, childlessness is associated with women, for the alternative is unthinkable’ (Ngcobo 2007). Therefore, women, for the most part bear the brunt alone by running from pillar to post to seek help – spiritual, medical or otherwise.

Since childlessness, especially the chronic sort has psychological effect on the woman, this study deems it necessary to also employ Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytic criticism. ‘Psychoanalytic criticism is a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature’ (Barry 2009, 92). Psychoanalysis as a term has been defined as ‘a set of psychological theories and therapeutic techniques that have their origin in the work and theories of Sigmund Freud’ ([https://www.verywellmind.com>w...](https://www.verywellmind.com/w...)). Specifically, ‘the discipline was established in the early 1890s by Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud, who retained the term, psychoanalysis, for his own school of thought. Psychoanalysis was later developed in different directions, mostly by students of Freud, such as Alfred Adler and his collaborator, Carl Gustav Jung, as well as by neo-Freudian thinkers, such as Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, and Harry Stack Sullivan. ([https://en.m.wikipedia.org>wiki](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki)). ‘The primary assumption of psychoanalysis is the belief that all people possess unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories.

18 Female primordial deity in the Yorùbá pantheon.

19 Female deity, who is believed to be the most cherished among the wives of Sango, the god of thunder and lightning in the Yorùbá pantheon.

The aim of psychoanalysis therapy is to release repressed emotions and experiences; make the unconscious conscious' (<https://www.simplypsychology.org.>...>). Having studied the meanings of dreams, slips of the tongue, forgetfulness and other mistakes and errors in everyday life, Freud was led to a new conception of the structure of personality: the id, ego, and superego. The id is the conscious reservoir of drives and impulses derived from the genetic background and concerned with the preservation and propagation of life. Freud remarks that the ego operates in conscious and preconscious levels of awareness. It is the portion of the personality concerned with the tasks of reality: perception, cognition and executive actions. In the superego lie the individual's environmentally derived ideals and values and the mores of family and society; the superego serves as a censor on the ego functions. In the Freudian framework, conflicts among the three structures of the personality are repressed and lead to arousal of anxiety. The person is protected from experiencing anxiety directly by the development of defense mechanisms, which are learned through family and cultural influences. These mechanisms become pathological when they inhibit pursuit of the satisfactions of living in a society (<https://www.britannica.com/science>). Using psychoanalytic criticism, this study pays attention to the positive emotions that are generated by means of Èyè Mòé's benedictions and the caring dispositions that other women manifested toward the barren.

Òpá Festival, Infertility, and Childbearing

Òpá festival rituals and prayer sessions²⁰ are meant to appease Èyè Mòé, the female deity that the festival celebrates and honors, that she might manifest her God-given power, that Olódùmarè might purge, if possible, every infertile womb of infertility, enable the germination of a seed,²¹ grant its maturity in the womb and endorse its safe delivery. In the course of the interview, a consultant explained that while in the flesh, it was customary for the deity to pray for infertile women and re-assure them of the gift of a child, a set of twins or triplets, the following year. Her *ìwúre*²² are said to work like magic, such that, within the space of a year, most of those women that were blessed would experience childbearing and become mothers. Besides, it was gathered that the women who converged to receive *ìwúre*,²³ did have with them, every

20 Known as *ìwúre* among the Yorùbá of Southwest Nigeria.

21 Fetus.

22 Prayer/benediction.

23 Ibid.

sort of children's edibles such as *àádùn*,²⁴ *ẹ̀pà*,²⁵ *gúgúrú*,²⁶ *ìrèké*,²⁷ *àkàrà*²⁸ and the likes, that would be packed and thrown away in the bush after Èyè Mòè had finished saying her *ìwùre*. In the *oríkì* of Èyè Mòè, we find the following extract:

Ùre ẹrun rẹ
Lí mú ú nu omijé àgàn nù
Ùre ẹrun rẹ
Lí í sọni ke é rí bí ọni ko rí bí
 (By means of her prayerful utterances,
 She wipes the tears of the barren
 By means of her blessings,
 The barren become fruitful)

During the interview, it was gathered that prolonged childlessness is a source of intense emotional agony for the barren. However, according to an old woman interviewed, some of those women that have become emotionally crushed, did feel relieved, and those that have practically given up hope did have their hope rekindled; after they have listened to, and said a resounding *àṣẹ*²⁹ in response to Èyè Mòè's prayerful utterances that seemed to have searched out their thoughts and emotions before being uttered. The consultant even mentioned the remark of one of those childless women regarding Èyè Mòè's *ìwùre* thus: "*Ùre rẹ dà lé mi lóri bí omi ko tutù rinrin núnú orìrùn ko gbóná janjan*"³⁰ This remark simply demonstrates the positive effect that the genuine concern of a woman can have on another woman. Èyè Mòè's utterance is comparable to a form of psychiatric therapy in which the therapist attempts to explore the conscious mind of the subject and uses the findings to help resolve emotional problems. Admittedly, she did not make any enquiry as a psychoanalyst would do, but she had been in the shoes of those barren women for about fifteen years in her first marriage, before she later became a mother in her second marriage to Akápinṣà.³¹ So, if she were asked, she well knew how it felt to be childless because she had experienced such pinching of the toes in the shoes before. After the *ìwùre* session, women that had gath-

24 A palatable refreshment made of ground maize, mixed with palm oil.

25 Groundnut or peanut.

26 Popcorn.

27 Sugarcane.

28 Fried ground beans.

29 Amen.

30 Her prayers poured on me like chilled water under scorching sun.

31 The pioneer king of Ípinṣà town.

ered to receive Èyè Mòé's blessings would dance energetically to the beating of *bènbé*³² and *agogo*,³³ cheering up, leading and chorusing various songs on childbearing.

Among the numerous drums that could be beaten during Yorùbá traditional festivals, *bènbé* was chosen for use on *Ọpá* festival day. This research gathered that it was the favorite drum of Akinlùúsè, the Ìsẹ-Èkìtì royal hero, whose valor helped exonerate Ìsẹ-Èkìtì people from notorious invaders. Àjàyí explains that *bènbé* is among the musical instruments that the Yorùbá used to carry to the war. According to him, the drum serves to spur the warriors (2017). Little wonder Akinlùúsè, the great warrior and the custodians of *Ọpá* festival in Ìsẹ-Èkìtì and Osí prefers the beat of *bènbé* to the beat of any other drum. In *Ìpinṣà*, *bènbé* is also beaten during *Ọpá* festival to ensure that there is no dull moment, especially for childless women who are looking forward to receiving the blessings that will enable them become mothers. One of the authors of this article witnessed how women, both young and old alike, sang and danced gracefully to the beat of *bènbé* so much that mothers and childless women could not be told apart. Arowoṣẹgbẹ (2017:45) avers that the loudness of *bènbé* is the reason why the ancient people of Ikún³⁴ beat the drum to announce the birth of a first-born child. Thus, apart from its usefulness in times of war, *bènbé* could also be said to be associated with childbearing.

The anxiety associated with infertility, the fulfillment of being expectant of a newborn and the belief in the intervention of *Orí*³⁵ is revealed in one of the songs of *Ọpá* festival as shown below:

Àgàn ke é rí bí í retí àrenù,
Ọnì kó lóyún ún retí ugbe (2ce)
Èye mi í retí mi ...
 (The barren longs for conception but she remains unpregnant
 The pregnant woman is expectant of her baby's outcry
 My mother is expectant of me...)

Part of the above song indicates the helpless condition and anxious state of mind, a wife who has never tasted the untold joy of conceiving a baby, has

32 One of the oldest indigenous Yorùbá musical instrument. It is made up of wooden body with a face at each end, which is made up of animal skin. It is played during cultural festivals such as coronation of the Oba and several other festivals. (This is extracted from Alamoja Yorùbá post on Facebook).

33 An age-old Yorùbá percussion instrument that emits a sonorous sound when struck.

34 An ancient town in the Akoko area of Ondo State, Nigeria.

35 Destiny.

to contend with. The use of “*àgàn ke é ribí í retí àrenù*”³⁶ describes the wish and anxiety of a woman each time she and her husband have sexual relations and her incessant longing to miss her period. On the contrary, the thought of a woman who has already conceived would be on hearing the first cry of her baby; an elated experience! This is indicated in the expression “*Ọni ko lóyún ún retí ugbe*”³⁷ which, of course, is a joyous expectation. “*Èye mií retí mi*”³⁸ My mother is expectant of me affirms the Yorùbá belief in the involvement of unborn children in the selection of the kind of vehicle³⁹ that would convey them from the land of the unborn into the world. It also alludes to the expectation of an unborn child to have the targeted woman do her best to enable it to exist in human form. Ngcobo (2007:534) submits:

Central to many African beliefs is that there are three states of human existence – the land of the unborn, the land of the living and the land of the ancestors and the dead. Belief has it that the children of any given family are always there waiting for the mothers to come and rescue them from oblivion and bring them to life in the land of the living.

A childless woman’s awareness of her inability to give birth, as an indication of prolonging the stay of a child who is eager to be born, and consequently delaying it, making it feel frustrated and disappointed, having had to keep waiting indefinitely, as it were, will invariably add to her sense of discomfort. This state is regarded as “failure to ‘rescue’ the children.” It is also described as ‘a sorrowful capitulation and a betrayal’ on the part of the infertile woman. (Ngcobo 2007: 534).

Hence, the infertile woman is in dire need of encouragement and reassurance. Since what concerns one, concerns all among the Yorùbá, family, friends, and other well-wishers manifest a caring disposition by rallying around the childless woman, who must be undergoing some sort of trauma. Thus, to alleviate her worries, or facilitate an absolute removal of the woman’s psychological injury - the resultant effect of her inability to become a mother, people, especially women inform her about *Ọpá* festival, and urge her to participate. The childless woman’s awareness that people care, and are willing to offer succor, helps allay her anxieties and restore to her some peace of mind. If she has virtually given up hope, the counsels received help sustain her, and she forges ahead, rather than give up. The findings establish that most childless women become mothers, after participating in *Ọpá* festival.

36 The barren longs for conception but she remains unpregnant.

37 The pregnant woman is expectant of her baby’s outcry.

38 My mother is expectant of me.

39 Mother.

When Èyè Mòè had gone the way of all flesh, older Ìpínsà women⁴⁰ become her representatives. They step into Èyè Mòè's shoes and offer prayers on behalf of every woman who wishes to become a mother. They do engage in a musical conversation with each woman thus:

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Lilé:</i> | <i>Ara ò, Àyànná</i> |
| <i>Ègbè:</i> | <i>Ara ò, Àyànná</i> |
| <i>Lilé:</i> | <i>Èyè Mòè ti gbómọ kò ó</i> |
| <i>Ègbè:</i> | <i>Èyè Mòè ti gbómọ kò ó</i> |
| <i>Lilé:</i> | <i>Àyànná mọ morire ò</i> |
| <i>Ègbè:</i> | <i>Àyànná mọ morire ò</i> |
| <i>Lilé:</i> | <i>Ò mò ya a ọpẹ kẹyé ò</i> |
| <i>Ègbè:</i> | <i>Ò mò ya a ọpẹ kẹyé ò</i> |
| <i>Lilé:</i> | <i>Ùgbòràn mo suón ò!</i> |
| <i>Ègbè:</i> | <i>Ò mò ya a ọpẹ kẹyé ò</i> |

| | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|
| (Lead: | Greetings to you, Àìná ⁴¹ |
| Chorus: | Greetings to you, Àìná |
| Lead: | Èyè Mòè has given you a baby |
| Chorus: | Èyè Mòè has given you a baby |
| Lead: | Àìná, be grateful |
| Chorus: | Àìná, be grateful |
| Lead: | Do not fail to pay your vow |
| Chorus: | Do not fail to pay your vow |
| Lead: | So good to be obedient! |
| Chorus: | Do not fail to pay your vow) |

The song cited above, is led by one, and chorused by other female custodians of *Ọpá* festival in Ìpínsà. It reveals that these women do mention an intending mother by name and reassure her that she is as good as received what she craves.⁴² The musical expression, “Èyè Mòè ti gbómọ kò ó”⁴³ corroborates this claim. The Yorùbá strongly believe in expressing gratitude whenever a kind act is exhibited, they frown at ingratitude and encourage gratitude. According to them, a grateful individual will surely be blessed with more benevolence. Conversely, an ungrateful person will hardly receive another. The issue of acknowledging a good act is especially important when the making of

40 custodians of *Ọpá* festival

41 The name of one of the childless women that participated in *Ọpá* festival held in Ìpínsà in 2018.

42 Becoming a mother.

43 Èyè Mòè has given you a baby.

vow is involved. Findings confirm that Èyè Mòè loathes liars and impostors. Hence, she compels no woman to vow. That is, should a woman make a vow, she is doing so of her own volition. So, any woman that chooses to vow, must vow what she can afford to pay. Once she vows, it has become a deal; she must pay up her vow, lest she incurs the deity's wrath. Èyè Mòè's representatives are well aware of this fact, little wonder they repeatedly stress the need for a woman making a vow, to be faithful.

Òpá festival celebrants in Ìpínṣà strongly believe in the power that Olódùmarè⁴⁴ has bestowed on Èyè Mòè. Hence, women who wish to be granted the fruit of the womb do sing thus:

| | |
|--------------|---|
| <i>Lilé:</i> | <i>Témí tòmó èyìn lá a jọ a sẹ</i> |
| <i>Ègbè:</i> | <i>Tèmì tòmó èyìn lá a sẹ ò è</i> |
| <i>Lilé:</i> | <i>Qdún ulé mi é mè tì mí lójú,</i> |
| <i>Ègbè:</i> | <i>Tèmì tòmó èyìn lá a sẹ ò è</i> |
| (Lead: | I will surely celebrate with a baby strapped to my back |
| Chorus: | Surely, I will celebrate with a baby strapped to my back |
| Lead: | I am not ashamed of my traditional festival |
| Chorus: | Surely, I will celebrate with a baby strapped to my back) |

The song cited above evinces the confidence that barren women have in the potency of the blessings they receive on *Òpá* festival day. Worthy of note is their use of 'lá a,'⁴⁵ when the verb 'will,' is employed in a statement or a song, this simply portends certainty; no element of doubt at all. What these barren women singers are in effect insinuating is that, even though they participate in the current *Òpá* festival without an issue, they will definitely celebrate the next *Òpá* festival with "*omọ èyìn*".⁴⁶ In psychoanalysis, to abreact is to release (repressed emotions) by acting out, as in words, behavior, or the imagination, the situation causing the conflict. With the use of the song above, the women are partially discharging or desensitizing the painful emotions that have built up over the years, by virtue of their infertility.

While enumerating Yorùbá proverbs that feature motherhood, Sheba (2006:40) remarks "*A-mọ-ọn pọ̀n bí iyá ò sí; iyá omọ nń mọ omọ tọ́jú*".⁴⁷ The Yorùbá believe that sleep is sweeter and far more enjoyable at the back of one's mother, because she will always do her best to position her baby so carefully that the baby will derive maximum comfort. Besides, the song also indi-

44 The Almighty.

45 Meaning 'will'.

46 Baby strapped to the back.

47 No one can aptly strap a baby to the back like its mother; mother does best in childcare.

cates the Yorùbá belief in the mother's responsibility to strap her baby, not to the back of another woman or girl, but to her own back. This act, according to them, enables a cordial relationship between mother and child. This research further confirms that the singers' use of "omọ èyìn"⁴⁸ has a deeper meaning, as it also has a figurative interpretation. More often than not, the Yorùbá do describe excellent mothers as 'abiyamọ'.⁴⁹ To place emphasis on the sacrificial roles of 'abiyamọ,' the Yorùbá usually accompany it with the phrase 'abọjá gbọpọ gbọpọ'.⁵⁰ Among the Yorùbá, the long material that mothers use to ensure the safety of their baby, is regarded as *ọjá*.⁵¹ So, if a mother or another caregiver is seen using a wrapper without an *ọjá*,⁵² elders, females in particular, will unreservedly register their disapproval and see to it that the mother in question or the person concerned takes heed of their warning. In their belief system, it is a taboo for a child to fall from the back of his or her mother.

The Yorùbá adults comprehend that their being "omọ èyìn"⁵³ is perpetual. In other words, they philosophically understand this to be a lifetime experience. This is due to the value placed on mother's responsibility in the prosperity of a child. So, whether dead or alive, the Yorùbá strongly believe in the positive intervention of a mother in the affairs of her child. Acholonu (1995:30) remarks that "motherhood places a woman in a position of immense and ever-increasing strength." Hence, whenever any Yorùbá (adult) child is contending with life's adversities, s/he will appeal to his/her mother, whether dead or alive for succor. S/he may express his/her wish thus: *Mà má, ẹ pọn mí, ẹ má ẹ jẹ kí ẹsẹ mí wọlẹ*⁵⁴ Their utterance could also be *Mà má ẹ fún ọjá mọ mí, ẹ má ẹ jẹ kí n jábọ*.⁵⁵ These two statements show that Yorùbá children, young and old, favor a Yorùbá proverb that says, *Bàbá nì aláàárò, iyá nì olùrànlọwọ*.⁵⁶ So, the implication of the appeal made is that mother should rise up to her duty as a helper. The Yorùbá hold that Olódùmarè has empowered mothers so much that no matter how hard a situation, their help and support will in most cases, enable a child sail through, owing to the great level of self-sacrifice that they are endowed with. The child's feet will not drag neither

48 Baby strapped to the back.

49 The word 'Abiyamọ' in the Yorùbá worldview does not refer to every woman who births a child, rather it strictly describes self-sacrificing mothers, and in some cases, fathers who are self-sacrificing.

50 Referring to the one having a strap which is exceptionally long and strong.

51 The English word for *ọjá* is *strap*. It is among the most significant materials that the Yorùbá believe that a nursing mother must possess.

52 Ibid.

53 Meaning baby strapped to the back.

54 Meaning mother, strap me to your back and prevent my feet from dragging.

55 Meaning mother, strap me tight, do not let me fall.

56 Meaning father is the counselor; mother is the helper.

will s/he falls, as it were. That is, the child will be able to experience success in the long run. Summarily, ‘*omọ ẹyìn*’⁵⁷ in the context of *Ọpá* festival songs has two meanings. First, it refers to a baby that is physically strapped to its mother’s back. Second, it signifies the lifelong bond that exists between that baby and its mother; the mother’s ability to strive for the safety and success of her child continually.

Kern (1997:108) observes that “women bear ultimate responsibility for their children, and they expect gratitude and obedience in return.” In the Yorùbá society, a promising child is regarded as his/her father’s, while a child that manifests detestable attitude is viewed as his or her mother’s. In other words, if a child does well, the father receives commendation, but the inability of a child to do excellently well is usually attributed to his or her mother. Hence, while *Ọpá* festival is around the corner, women involve in singing thus:

Lilé: Ọdún Ọpá mò dọla ò

Ègbè: Yeye omọ wí a ọlómọ

Lilé: Ọdún Ọpá mò dọla ò

Ègbè: Yeye omọ wí a ọlómọ

(Lead: *Ọpá* festival holds tomorrow

Chorus: Mothers, see to it that your child abstains from trouble

Lead: *Ọpá* festival holds tomorrow

Chorus: Mothers, see to it that your child abstains from trouble)

With the song above, *Ìpinṣà* women remind one another that the responsibility to ensure the sanity of their children rests mainly on their shoulders. That *Ìpinṣà* women sing this song of reminder amongst themselves as the *Ọpá* festival day draws near, underscores that they have internalized their stereotypical position as required by their society. As they strive to discharge their duties as mothers, it is expected of children to be cooperative. The expectation of mothers to nurture obedient and appreciative children is foregrounded in Kern (1997:108) cited above.

Besides, the rationale behind the song is that *Èyè Mòé* feels much more honored when a throng of mothers and their children participate happily in *Ọpá* festival celebrations. A child who involves in questionable acts and gets remanded will miss *Ọpá* festival, likewise the mother, who would be running helter-skelter to have her child released. In the Yorùbá belief system, true mothers are expected to stay by their child/children through thick and thin. Sheba (2006:40) categorizes a Yorùbá proverb that foregrounds this notion in the Yorùbá worldview, thus: “*Bí mọnimọni kò bá mọni, bí mọ-òn-yàn*

57 Meaning baby strapped to the back.

mò-òṅ-yàn kò bá mò-òṅ-yàn, iyá tó bínì kò ní sàimọ̀ni.”⁵⁸ In every society, it is not uncommon that most friends and benefactors do stay by an individual that is faced with hard times for a while. However, findings confirm that with time, most sympathizers unconsciously withdraw and concentrate on their daily routine. At such times, the Yorùbá strongly believe that a self-sacrificing mother will continue to stay by her child, no matter what. In their worldview, it is not cultural, and hence unthinkable for a reasonable and responsible mother to abandon her child in troubled times. Even, insane mothers never do, except the children are forcefully taken away from them. According to the Yorùbá, mother is the most intimate person to her child, so she is expected to remain a friend in need as buttressed by Sheba (2006:40). For her unique roles and great responsibilities, an ideal mother deserves to be doubly honored and greatly appreciated. So, in the Yorùbá value system, it is unacceptable for a child to be rude to the mother. Acholonu (1995:10) states: “A man can stand up to his father and deride or oppose him, but he dares not do the same with his mother. For the mother is seen as an institution, the silent heroine.” In this excerpt, Acholonu is by no means speaking for incivility or rudeness from a young man to his father, rather, she is indicating and stressing how much a mother deserves to be shown honor, even by an aggrieved child. That is, nothing, however disgusting is expected to make a child engage his mother in a face-off.

During the interview, questions were raised about women who remain childless after their participation in *Ọ̀pá* festival. The response received, corroborates the Yorùbá belief in the concept of *orí*,⁵⁹ as explained by Abimbólá (1976:115):

Whatever a man’s *Orí* has refused to approve cannot be granted by any god. The gods themselves have their own *Orí* directing their daily life like human beings, the gods know the wishes of their *Orí* by consulting Ifá. Ọ̀rúnmìlà- himself consulted his Ifá divination instruments in order to find out the wishes of his *Orí*.

The quote above reveals that gods or goddesses are only able to grant the wishes of an adherent/inquirer whose *Orí* favors his/her request(s). In other words, no matter how portent a divinity is, his/her blessings will at best be unproductive, if a woman’s *Orí* does not favor her of having a baby. Deities themselves are said to have their own *Orí*. They are conscious of the need to

58 Meaning, should an intimate friend desert one, should an acquaintance abandon one, one’s own mother will be there for one perpetually.

59 An individual’s personal deity.

be aware of, and to harmonize their wish with that of their *Orí*. Hence, they attach importance to consulting Ọ̀rúnmílà⁶⁰ in a bid to intimate themselves with the wish of their *Orí*. Since Yorùbá women seeking help to become mothers are cognizant of the fact that their personal deity⁶¹ has the final say, they make their appeal by singing thus:

Orí jé mi bímọ̀ ọ̀
Dábò jé mi tọ́ ọ̀là bosùn
 (*Orí* favors me becoming a mother
 Please let me have a child to rub with camwood powder)

It is believed that women whose requests are granted by their personal *Orí* are the ones that are eventually favored with the gift of a child or more. “In fact, it is the belief of the Yorùbá that the good and bad fortune of mankind depends on the ‘will’ and ‘decree’ of *Orí*, head.” (Adelegan 2009:303).

Furthermore, this analysis will be incomplete if this study fails to acknowledge that there are means, other than participation in *Ọ̀pá* festival through which infertile women can overcome the serious problem of infertility. Specifically, the process introduced by medical science. The process is called In Vitro Fertilization (IVF). IVF gave impetus to assisted reproductive technology (ART), which encompasses all forms of fertility treatments that involve the use of egg and sperm. Ever since this procedure was introduced, there have been high success rates, in that, it has resulted in the birth of hundreds of thousands of newborns. “In 2018, there were 306, 197 ART cycles that occurred in the United States. Approximately 73,831 live births happened that year. More than 1 million babies have been born via IVF in the U.S.” (<http://www.fertilityoutloud.com/>). Also, “Alexander Forbes auditing firm estimates that over 2,550 live births have been recorded at the Bridge Clinic, a fertility center in Nigeria till date. That is, one baby in every three days, while the recent record has shown an improvement with an average of one baby born every 41 hours” (<https://m.guardian.ng/science/fur...>). Despite these milestones, risk factors are associated with Assisted Reproductive Techniques (ARTs). “Many studies carried out on the health implication of IVF revealed that children born through assisted reproductive technology might be at increased risk for high blood pressure as adolescents ... while another study has associated the fertility procedure with a higher risk of intellectual disability in children among other problems” (<https://m.guardian.ng/science/fur..>). Besides, the procedure

60 Primordial Divinity, the custodian of *Ifa* Corpus, who is also known as *Elerí Ipin*.

61 *Orí*.

is quite expensive, each treatment or circle costs handsomely. Employer-sponsored plans, national health insurance services and private insurances do not usually cover the costs. Little wonder ART is used mainly in developed countries. Even though assisted reproduction offers hope to African couples, whose only option, when it comes to having children has been adoption, financial constraints have made it pretty challenging for them to access the service. Thus, they opt for traditional festivals such as *Ọ̀ṣun* or *Ọ̀pá*, whose orature have been thoroughly discussed in this essay.

Conclusion

This article has analyzed the Yorùbá perception of infertility, childbearing and motherhood as contained in the orature of *Ọ̀pá* festival, using Acholonu's motherism and Freud's Psychoanalysis as theoretical frameworks. It discussed the significant role played by Èyè Mòé, the Ìpínṣà female deity, in freeing most barren women from the bonds of childlessness. It revealed the anxious and the discontent state of women who lack children and focused on mothers as bearing the brunt, should their children become wayward. The paper concludes that Yorùbá women feel a sense of fulfillment when they become biological mothers. Hence, in their value system, motherhood is non-negotiable, and it is what every married woman among the Yorùbá longs for.

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Development of Yoruba based Communicative Gestural Emoji Contents for Digital Devices

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Abstract

This paper articulates the prominence of communication in human society. It accentuates the role of information technology in transforming communication and interaction as it leverages on graphic user interface of electronic devices to shape and drive user-centered contents. Emojis are expressive graphical characters that are used in text messages, e-mails, and social media

applications. This paper explores the non-verbal communication system in traditional Yoruba societies. Gestural expressions are common medium of communication amongst the Yorubas. The paper also identifies the àrokò system (use of symbolic physical objects) as a non-verbal means of communication. The symbolic gestural contents were selected from some Yoruba novels as *Şaworoidę* by Akinwunmi İşòlá, *Oşùólálę* by Tẹ̀là Lasunkanmi and *Igbo Olodumare* by D.O. Fagunwa. The selected Yoruba symbolic gestures are “Tàka òşì dànù” (Snapping of the fingers), “Dì òpó mú” (Holding the Pillar), “Fara ę léti” (Pull your Ear) and “Öşùbà” (Skillful Interlocking of the fingers). Developed emoticon contents were evaluated on WhatsApp social media platform. Sampled population totaling 150 purposively selected amongst the Yoruba speaking populace of Lagos, Nigeria. The population of respondent are 150, constituting of 68 females and 82 males. The criteria considered in the design of the emojis were categorized into visual comprehension and visual rendering. The criteria were subjected to the opinion’s respondents who are of Yoruba origin. Respondents were purposively sample using an unstructured questionnaire on WhatsApp social media platform. The evaluation outcome indicated that respondents could interact and communicate with the developed emoji contents based on their Yoruba cultural background.

Keywords: Communication, Emoji, Semiotics, Yoruba Codes, and Culture.

Introduction

Communication is the exchange of ideas, feelings, messages, and other information amongst people. According to Anyacho (2007), communication is a human act that has been with man from the beginning of time, it is a process in which people do not only share ideas and feelings but do it meaningfully. Communication in its simplest sense involves two or more people who come together to share, dialogue and commune or just to be together (Hasan, 2010, 123). Hasan (2010, 125) further noted that communication encompasses a multitude of experiences, actions, and events, as well as a whole variety of happenings, meanings and technologies. The channels of communication are either verbal (spoken) or visual (written, facial expression, gestures, appearances and others). Several meanings are adduced to verbal interpretation and visual communications vary from one culture to another culture. Anyacho (2007) asserted that in some cases a smile can communicate pleasantry; a yawn can communicate tiredness or hunger and a nod. Therefore, communication is a combination of different elements which are exchanged in the process of interaction between two or more individuals through signs and symbols.

Information communication technology has transformed the way people communicate and interact. The graphic user interface of electronic devices is

shaped and driven by user-centred content which is increasingly redefining communication in modern times. The usage and interpretations of lexicons in contemporary discourse are the emerging communicative scaffolds in the digital age. The new media has introduced paradigms that aid the utilization and understanding of communication systems.

Emojis represent a paradigm in the digital exchange of information across people of different cultural backgrounds. Dressner and Herring (2010) posited that the term ‘emojis’—a blend of pictorials refers to graphic signs, that often accompany textual computer-mediated communication (CMC). Emojis are expressive graphical characters that are used in text messages, e-mails and social media applications. 60 million emojis are exchanged every day on Facebook and another five billion emoji are used on Facebook Messenger alone, they are also used extensively on Twitter and Instagram as well as on other social media and mobile messenger platforms such as WhatsApp (Lynne Tan, 2017). Emojis reduce ambiguities in the exchange of information. Researchers found that emojis when used in conjunction with a written message, can help to increase the “intensity” of their intended meaning (Derks, Bos, & von Grumbkow, 2007).

These graphical representations are interpreted in a light sensor and are mostly humorous means of communication. However, emojis have a rich and multifaceted socio-cultural history that predates the range of digital devices where they are used. The iconic “smiley” face’s emergence in the second half of the 20th century marked the beginning of the emoji’s cultural emergence., corporate strategies, copyright claims, online chat rooms, and technical standards disputes (Stark and Crawford, 2015). Emojis were historically created from pictographs, which are symbolic illustrations of a concept, item, activity, place, or event. In photography, thoughts are expressed through drawings as a sort of writing. It is the foundation of both hieroglyphs and cuneiform. Early written symbols were based on ideograms and pictograms, which are images that resemble the concepts they express (pictures which represent ideas). They were utilized by various ancient cultures all over the world since around 9000 BC and began to develop into logographic writing systems around 5000 BC (Pandora.cii.wvu.edu).



Fig. 1. Pictures of “hands” in the cave of Santian, Spain; (Jelinek, 1972)

Clearly, pictorial art and writing systems dramatically transformed language and this was pertinent to modern spoken language where documented standards essentially became a tradition that emphasizes non-verbal communication. Emojis are contemporary medium of communication that emanated from the early image-based pictograms.

Emoji signs are effective means of emotive expression in interactive textual communication platforms. Thollander and Kumar (2019) asserted that emojis were introduced in 1999 by a Japanese cellular provider designer Shigetaka Kurita to satisfy the demand for image-based text messaging. This effort greatly improved the market viability of the cellular company in the Japanese market. Observably, graphical icons are affective non-verbal medium of communication having perceptual stimulus that amplifies messages in the mind of the receiver. Emojis are means of conveying nuances and, in some instances, also have the ability to effect emotion or thought across language and cultural barriers, examples include a smiley face, a thumbs-up or a wink (Lynne Tan, 2017). Dressner and Herring (2010), enunciates the general connotation and perceptive interpretation of some of the existing emojis by users in the following: Pictorial art and writing systems dramatically transformed the language and this was pertinent to a modern spoken language where documented standards essentially became a tradition that emphasizes non-verbal communication. Emojis are a contemporary medium of communication that emanated from early image-based pictograms.

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However, as we now turn to argue, this conception of emojis is incomplete at best, because it ignores crucial elements of how they are used. For one thing, as a quick look at any emoji dictionary shows, many facial emojis do not seem to express a single emotion, or indeed any emotion at all. Is a face with the tongue out, like;-p, indicative of a certain emotion? According to several authors, it has the connotations of teasing, flirtation, and sarcasm—all of which may be indicative of emotional states but are not emotions in and of themselves... Or consider the familiar winking face 😜: Conventionally, it indicates that the writer is joking, but surely jokes are not associated with a single emotive state.

When pleased or depressed, people may joke. We now focus on the smiley face itself: Its purpose is to convey a variety of emotions, not only happiness. As well as providing and sharing information, news, ideas, and emotions, meaning is also created. Communication, in general, is a way to link individuals or locations.

The development of graphical user interfaces (GUIs) for digital platforms enables users to interact with electronic devices through graphical representations and visual indicators such as secondary notation, as opposed to only text-based interfaces. Emojis are a unique way to convey information through a graphical representation of bodily movements and facial expressions.

Visual Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs, which includes how people derive meaning from words, sounds, and pictures (Ambrose, Harris, 2010). It entails the use of language, signs, and images to depict events. Semiotics is the study of signs and sign processes (semiosis), indication, designation, likeness, analogy, metaphor, symbolism, signification, and communication (Saussure, 1959). The sign consists primarily of the “signified” and the “signifier” (Saussure, 1959; Culler, 1986). The signified is the object or concept to which the image refers. The signifier is the image or words used to label the signified, allowing people to communicate more easily (Callow, Schiffman, 1999). Morris (1964) observed that human actions include signs and meanings at the following stages:

In the perception stage – the person becomes aware of a sign.

- In the manipulation stage – the person interprets the sign and decides how to respond to it.
- In the consummation stage – the person responds.

Peirce (1931) expanded the scope of semiotics beyond the conception of Saussure. Peirce noted humans associate meanings with their creations including signs. Man’s environment is filled with signs that can be interpreted. According to Peirce’s philosophical semiotic position, human ideas are also signs. In the following, Barthes (1961) bases his opinion on the paradox of semiotics on the Saussurean lexical term “semiology” and the Peirce theoretical scope of semiotics:

Semiology encompasses any system of signs, regardless of their substance or limits, images, features, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all of these that form the content of ritual convention or public entertainment; these constitute, if not language, at least systems of signification (p.9).



Salomon (1979b) indicated that “most objects, marks, events, models, or pictures that serve as bearers of extractable knowledge are symbols” and that “Symbols serve as characters or coding elements. Codes represent cultural values. Eisner (1990) enumerated the importance of representation as follows.

- It serves as a potent means of communication.
- Enables recall and reduces evanescent.
- It provides the platform for externalizing the internal.

- It's a voyage of discovery.

Visuals have a strong communicative impact on the mind, ritual ceremonies of certain cultural groups embellished with visuals in terms of symbolic representations and ritual dance movements are believed to have a direct impact on the subconscious minds of the practitioners (Obielodan, 2003).

Literature Review

Studies have shown that social and non-verbal cues in computer-mediated communication can create an intimate and hyper-personal conversation in comparison to physical interactions (Walther, 1993). Emojis give messages a sense of visual expression. Shao-Kang Lo. (2008) discovered that emojis expresses sender's emotions in messages, strengthening the meaning of the text itself and providing for "quasi-nonverbal cues". Users usually communicate their feelings using animated GIF on Tumblr (Elli Bourlai and Susan C. Herring, 2014). The interpretation of emojis by users across digital platforms varies according to the visual renderings and cultural inclinations. Miller, Thebault-Spieker, Shuo Chang, Johnson, Terveen, and Brent Hecht (2016) in their study of emoji interpretation discovered that intended meaning of an emoticon can be misconstrued by the receiver which might lead to upset or confusion. Rendering and visual representations emojis across digital platforms and application. For instance, the smirking as displayed on Apple devices is different from Google devices, Facebook and Twitter. The alteration in the visual representation of the "Pistol" emoji  to a "Water Gun"  by Apple was aimed at raising the stake on gun control in United State (Roy, 2016).

Emojis transcend cultures and language differences. However, the facial expression and skin colours across cultures differs. Japanese digital users embrace kaemoji typescripts arranged as vertical faces in preference to the emojis used by Western users (Park, Barash, Fink, and Meeyoung, 2013). Popular emojis on digital platforms have their influences mostly from Western and Eastern cultures. The available emojis do not reflect cultural diversities of users in relation to contents and skin tones (Sweeney and Whaley, 2019). Thollander and Kumar (2019) in their study titled "Examining the Global Language of Emojis Designing for Cultural Representation" observed that there exist cultural gaps in available emojis. Thollander and Kumar (2019) classified the origins of popular emojis based on design background and influence according to the countries of origin in the following:

Out of the 2,666 emojis in Emoji 5.0 (the most recent version of emoji), 94 are emojis of Japanese origin, or 4% of the total. Following Japan is the

United States, with 31 emojis of American origin making up around 1% of all emojis. Trailing behind those two countries is the United Kingdom and China with 6 emojis (0.2%), and then France and Mexico with 2 emojis (essentially 0%) (see Figure 3). These origins were determined by looking at the design inspiration of the emoji and where it came from. The remaining 94% of emojis mostly consist of people-related emoji (professions 🧑 and smileys 😊), flags 🇺🇸, symbols 🏠, animals 🐶, travel 🌴, and tools 🛠.

The available emojis do not reflect the cultural inclinations of users who are not of Western and Eastern origin. The contents and renderings of the emojis are sometimes ambiguous and create a feeling of miscommunication amongst users of different cultural backgrounds. Clark (1996) noted there can be miscommunication if the sender and receiver assign different meanings to a message. Intercultural differences in emoji use were identified as another possible cause of miscommunication.

Yoruba Non-verbal Communication Systems

The Yorubas of the Southwestern part of Nigeria have rich cultural values which is resonated in their communication systems. The advancement in social developments reflects the sophistication in their linguistic behavior and non-verbal communication systems. Yorubas are generally reputed for the use of non-verbal medium of expression. Hall and Hall (1987:79) explained the conceptual frontier of language transcend sound and visual elements, language entails postures, facial expressions, gestures, costumes, walking styles and others. The semantics of a language cannot always be universally decoded, but meanings are often determined by socio-cultural leanings.

Historically, the Yoruba people use symbolic physical objects with diverse connotative meanings to communicate to each other of impending disasters, threats, disagreements, love and other relevant issues. Non-verbal medium of expression can be basically classified into two; Aroko system (use of symbolic physical objects) and gestural expression. According to Ajetumobi (2014), Aroko is a form of Yoruba non-verbal communication using objects and materials in varied numbers, colours or combinations with meanings understood only by members of the palace society or culturally educated members of the African society Wildgen (n.d) also noted that the style of language employed by Yoruba tribes, the message is coded for the messenger, who “reads” it when he arrives after a long journey. This guarantees that he does not forget important contents, but it presumes that he understands the message.

Body languages such as facial gestures form a functional medium of exchanging ideas, intents, and information amongst Yorubas. Gestures are cultural norms in Yoruba societies. For instance, a typical Yoruba child is cultured

to discern bodily expression of his parents. The younger ones cast down their heads or somewhere else to the lower left or right side in reverence when addressing an elder. Apparently, the use of verbal and body language, objects like fire, drum, gong, ostrich feather, honey, white cloth, oil, pepper, cowries shell, iron implement, crab, and fish, among others were used in the early period and some are still in use as media of communication (Ajetumobi, 2014). The gestural and interpretive nature of emojis emphasizes the non-verbal communication systems practice by the Yoruba culture and other cultures across the world. Abdullahi Idiagbon (116) (2009) emphasized that connotations from non-verbal signs deeply enriches people's understanding of the interdependence between language and society.

William, Archibald, Arnoff, & Rees-Miller (2004, p.91) argued that symbolic signs are instinctual prerogative of humans. Apparently, lower animals do not make use of symbolic signs. William, Archibald, Arnoff, & Rees-Miller (2004, p.91) asserted that human beings have more communicative needs than pointing to things and replicating things. Often, humans employ abstract ideas to deeply express their thoughts and feelings to people of same cultural heritage. These abstract signs are fundamentally symbolic signification of an idea or feelings. Symbols is an essential part of human world of meanings which are often unrelated with the represented. Chandler (2006) noted that in symbolic signification, the signifier does not have any similitude with the signified and the interpretation is fundamentally conventional. The traffic light is a typical example of symbolic signification where there is no natural link between form and the meaning. Yoruba gestural communicative expressions are symbolic signification and interpreted based on the broad understanding of Yoruba cultures and traditions by the target audience.

However, emojis used across the digital devices used by Nigerians does not reflect cultural heritage of the users. Popular microblogging platform, Twitter officially endorses the slang of renowned Nigerian Hip-Hop star Davido "Echoke" with the creation of an emoji that shows the illustrated portrait of the artist holding his neck. "Echoke" emoji literary implies "It is choking". Ghaniya (2021) explained that "Echoke" is an exclamatory remark for overwhelmingness and extreme surprise, when Nigerians feel elated beyond expectation, this slang reflect people's emotion with bodily gesture represented by choking of air or saliva. However, this digital content is a street language that has no relation with the traditional Yoruba semiotic code. Therefore, the graphical content and interpretation cannot sufficiently communicate the mind and intention of a typical average Yoruba user. Yoruba semiotics codes can be easily utilized as a non-verbal means of communication for textual computer-mediated communication platforms. Hence, this paper developed selected emoticon graphic user interface feature contents denoting the Yoruba existing

nonverbal indicators while relying on broad interpretation of these semiotics elements. The Yorubas of the Southwestern part of Nigeria have rich cultural values which are resonated in their communication systems. The advancement in social developments reflects the sophistication in their linguistic behavior and non-verbal communication systems. Yorubas are generally reputed for the use of non-verbal mediums of expression. Hall and Hall (1987:79) explained the conceptual frontier of language transcends sound and visual elements, language entails postures, facial expressions, gestures, costumes, walking styles and others. The semantics of a language cannot always be universally decoded, but meanings are often determined by socio-cultural leanings.

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Creativity in Design

Creativity involves the formation of original ideas through inquisition and discovery. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines creativity as the ability to create and the quality of being creative. Kohl (2015) posited that creativity is centered on exploring, discovering, and imagining. Creatives explore imaginative concepts as a primary tool influencing the creation of artworks. Creativity can either be instinctive or the creatives are creating their realities while applying imaginative tendencies (Virtosu, 2020). The fundamentals of creativity are an anchor on creating objects of value with a focus on functionality and aesthetics. UKessays (2018) expounded on the connection between creativity and art in the following:

Creativity is enhanced by arts in three different ways; arts allow finding multiple solutions to a definite problem, there is greater use of imagination in the world of arts, and arts encourage motivation.

The development of Yoruba emojis for digital devices is pre-conceive on creativity. The conception, design and integration of these non-verbal code communication mediums are centred on creating a solution creatively to enhance the communicative medium of interactions amongst users of Yoruba origin.

Methodology

The research design of this study employs both descriptive and survey. The study focuses on semiotic signification and communicative interpretation of Yoruba gestures. The gestural symbols were selected from some Yoruba literature novels. These novels are *Şaworoidę* by Akinwunmi İşğlá, *Oşùğálélę* by Tęlà Lasunkanmi and *Igbó Olódùmarę* by D.O. Fagunwa. These literature novels were selected based on the rich usage of Yoruba symbolic gestures in the content of these novels. The gestural expressions were selected purposively due to their communicative significance in traditional Yoruba societies. Selected gestural content was illustrated digitally to create pictorial representation in form of emojis using Photoshop and CorelDraw design package. Created emojis were integrated into textual computer-mediated communication. The criteria considered in the design of the emojis were categorized into visual comprehension and visual rendering. The criteria were subjected to the opinion’s respondents who are of Yoruba origin. The population of the respondent are 150, constituting 68 females and 82 males. The respondents were purposively sampled using a structured questionnaire on WhatsApp’s social media platform.

| Age | Frequency | Percentage % |
|----------|-----------|--------------|
| 20-30yrs | 80 | 53.3 |
| 31-60yrs | 70 | 46.7 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork, (2016)

The created emojis were used as a medium of interaction with selected Yoruba users on WhatsApp platform to ascertain the level of understanding.

Discussion

A. Snapping of the Fingers (*Tàka òṣì dànù*)

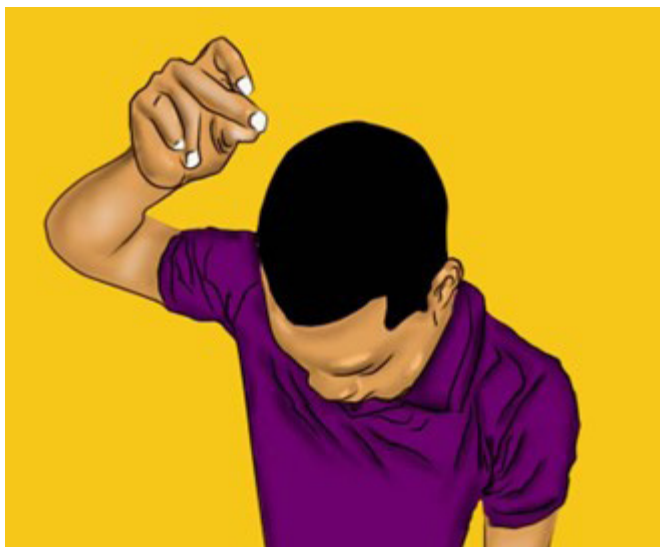


Fig. 3. Snapping of Finger. Source: Researchers Fieldwork (2021)

“*Tàka òṣì dànù*” is colloquially translated in English as “snapping the fingers to cast poverty away”. Usually, the Yorubas encircle the hand around the head and snap the finger to demonstrate their disdain and rejection of poverty. The head literary means “*orí*” in Yoruba metaphysical concept. It refers to human spiritual instinct and purpose. In the belief of the Yorubas, *orí* (head) is a reflective spark of man’s consciousness embedded into human essence (Makinde, 1985). Ademuleya (2007) posited that *orí* (head) signifies the man’s personality soul, guardian angel and deity which is elevated to the level of divinity. Therefore, Yorubas snap fingers over the head to gesturally communicate the rejection of poverty and prevention of other unpleasant situations from becoming a reality.

Visual Comprehension

143 (95%) of the respondents could visually comprehend the illustrated representation of *Tàka òṣì dànù* (snapping of the fingers). *Tàka òṣì dànù* (snapping of the fingers) is a popular Yoruba non-verbal code embraced by most Nigerians irrespective of ethnic identities.

Rendering

141 (94%) of the respondents can identify with the color tone of this emoji. Likewise, the worn outfit is a typical representation of an average Nigerian dress with no ethnic influence. This is aimed at reflecting the broad usage of this gestural communication across the ethnic divide in Nigeria.

B. Holding the Pillar (*Dì òpó mú*)



Fig. 4. Holding the Pillar. Source: Researchers Fieldwork (2021)

In the Yoruba palace court, there are several ways of communicating remorsefulness and humbleness to the king. Especially in a situation where the individual is one of the palace chiefs or a personality in the community. The Embracement of pillars in the palace is aimed at showing self-reproach and seeking the protection of the king. This was exemplified in the Yoruba movie titled *Tolúwa Nilẹ̀*. According to Adeleke (2007), Òtún had to embrace the pillar in the palace of Ọba Apátira to gain his protection from the imminent danger of death being an implication of his misdemeanor.

Visual Comprehension

70% (49) of the respondents between the age 30-60years and 16% (13) of the respondents were able to visually comprehend and interpret this illustrated emoji. The low rate of comprehension of this emoji amongst users is because the non-verbal communication emanates from the palace court of traditional Yoruba society. This cultural practise is becoming obsolete because the tradition is fast disappearing even in contemporary Yoruba palaces.

Visual Rendering

The visual rendering is expressive 120 (80%). The attire project the Yoruba cultural heritage. Hence, Yoruba users can easily relate to the emoji based on the rendered skin tones and the worn outfits.

C. Pull your Ear (*Fara ẹ lẹ́tí*)



Fig. 5. Pull your ear. Source: Researchers Fieldwork (2021)

The ears represent the sense of hearing. When children of teenage years and below default on prior warnings or instruction, the parents, guidance, or tutor could pull the child's earlobe to inform the child of his/her apparent disobedience or forgetfulness. Yoruba phrases like "adití" (deaf) and *kò l'etí* (lacks hearing) are active descriptions of an individual that does not heed advice. Also, when a speaker desires the listener to be attentive and focus on the discussion meaning "fi etí sílẹ̀" (listen), the speaker pulls his ear to communicate non-verbally to the listener(s).

Visual Comprehension

Users 148(98.7%) visually understood the illustrated emoji representing Fara E leti (Pull your Ear). This non-verbal communication is common to act transcending the diverse ethnic inclinations in Nigeria. Therefore, all the respondents were familiar with the illustrated emoji.

Visual Rendering

The rendering is distinct and communicative 139 (92.7%). The users can relate to the colour representations and the visual depiction.

D. Interlocking of fingers (*Òṣùbà*)



Fig. 6. Interlocking of Finger. Source: Researchers Fieldwork (2021)

Òṣùbà is the skillful interlocking of the fingers in both palms by the Yorubas to express profound humbleness and regret. The clenched fist is offered to the wronged party in seeking a meaningful apology (*itúbá*). The gesture communicates a plea for forgiveness and the offer of a truce” (Agwuele, 2014). It also implies acknowledgement of the supremacy of the other party. The word “*òṣùbà*” consists of two syllables which are “*Òṣù*” translating “compaction or moulding of an item” and “*ìbà*” meaning “to show reverence to an individual”. This is a widely recognized non-verbal medium of seeking entreaty amongst indigenous Yorubas.

Visual Comprehension

129 (86%) respondents could discern and construe the illustrated emoji. Although the developed emoji had its influence from the cultural heritage it’s

a common non-verbal means of communication even amongst non-Yoruba speakers.

Visual Rendering

The visual exclusively depicts the brownness of a typical African skin tone 150 (100%).

Conclusion

Yoruba cultural tradition values non-verbal medium of communication due to its depth of meanings and interpretation which are revered more than spoken words. The richness and originality of the Yoruba communication system are embodied in the non-verbal gestural means of passing messages. Actions and symbolic representations expressively appeal to the sense of emotion and cognition. Semiotic non-verbal codes are an integral form of communication amongst the Yoruba-speaking populace of Southwestern Nigeria. The development of Yoruba gestural communication into digital emotion icons deepens social interaction across digital devices amongst Yorubas. The developed emojis foster intimate connection among Yoruba users. These emojis can project the values and norms of Yoruba cultural heritages to the admiration of contemporary Yoruba digital users who are not conversant with these symbolic cultural gestures. It also reawakens Yoruba cultural practices that are gradually fading into oblivion.

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A Critical Assessment of Selected Warning and Advisory Proverbs in Yoruba Routine Conversation

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Abstract

This paper delves into the utilization of proverbs among the Yoruba people, focusing specifically on their role as instruments of warning and facilitators of peace and unity within the community. Proverbs, deeply embedded in the Yoruba culture, serve as reservoirs of wisdom, reflecting beliefs, cultural norms, historical contexts, and moral principles. They are employed to elucidate, moralize, and embellish discourse across various aspects of human life. Using a stylistic analysis approach, this study examines twenty randomly selected Yoruba proverbs from routine socio-linguistic communication. Through the lens of Yankah's (1989) Theory of Proverb Praxis and other stylistic and pragmatic tools, the aim is to unveil the nuanced meanings and

patterns inherent in warning proverbs. The analysis reveals that warning proverbs play a significant role in shaping desirable traits, fostering credible character development, and maintaining a harmonious societal structure within Yoruba culture. These proverbs serve as guiding lights, illuminating diverse human situations and offering timely warnings to navigate through challenges. Warning proverbs exemplify the cherished values and strategies for personal growth characteristic of African societies, particularly the Yoruba community. They serve as invaluable tools for cultivating peaceful coexistence and fostering unity among individuals. Through the analysis of these proverbs, a deeper understanding of Yoruba cultural values emerges, highlighting their pivotal role in nurturing a cohesive and harmonious human community.

Keywords: Stylistic Analysis, Selected, Warning, Advisory Proverbs, Yoruba

Introduction

Proverbs are concise and often witty expressions which serve as potent vehicles for encapsulating the beliefs, culture, and worldviews of language users. The richly woven African discourse utilizes proverbs to function as palatable spices that impart conversations with depth and meaning. Proverbs not only reflect the realities of life but also serve as pillars upon which the expression of culture and societal values rests. As Chinua Achebe famously remarked, "In Africa, proverb is the palm oil with which words are eaten," thereby accentuating the vital role of proverbs in communication and cultural transmission.

These linguistic ornaments, often marked as figurative and idiomatic expressions, serve versatile functions within societies. Such functions of proverbs are in the areas of moralizing, acculturating, and fostering social cohesion. As a result, Proverbs act as guiding principles of socialization; directing individuals towards desirable behaviors and attitudes, especially for a peaceful and ongoing society. Their diverse functions can be categorized into three distinct categories, each shedding light on different aspects of human experience.

The first category comprises abstract statements that express universal truths and life's realities, such as "what goes up will surely come down" or "a hungry man is an angry man." This category of proverbs serves as timeless reminders of fundamental principles. The second category draws attention to everyday occurrences through vivid examples, crafting indisputable points that echo universal truth. For instance, "Don't count your eggs before they are hatched" expresses the folly of premature assumptions. The third category delves into specific domains of wisdom, encompassing traditions, agricultural

practices, and the vagaries of nature. Proverbs in this category draw on established patterns of life, beliefs, and behavioral norms, such as "a hand that refuses to toil deserves no morsel of food."

In the Yoruba worldview and culture, proverbs play requisite socio-cultural roles, serving as vehicles for the reiteration of views, beliefs, and traditions. They substantiate facts, sanction behaviors, and teach moral and societal norms, contributing to the overall education and social order of the Yoruba society. Proverbs pervade Yoruba music, literature, and various socio-political and economic activities, dynamically enriching these domains with their wisdom. Their persistent usage underscores their significance as integral components of Yoruba identity and corporate existence.

Moreover, proverbs persist in popularity across Africa, serving as commentaries on life and guardians of social order. They serve as signposts illuminating Yoruba civilization's commitment to equity and peaceful coexistence, moving the timeless wisdom of ancestors into the contemporary milieu.

Given the profound impact of proverbs on societal values and character formation, it is imperative to assess, illustrate, and analyze warning and advisory proverbs among the Yoruba people. Understanding their effects on peaceful coexistence, moral values, and character development will further illuminate the enduring relevance of these linguistic resources in shaping Yoruba society in particular and that of the world in general.

Literature review

Proverbs are "short traditional utterances" which serve as potent vessels that sum up cultural truths and reflect recurrent social situations. Embedded in nonfigurative statements, proverbs offer insights into the general truths and realities of life, providing expressive means to showcase the beliefs, culture, and worldviews of language users.

In their comprehensive roles, proverbs apply persuasive and dissuasive powers, expressing reverence or confidence, echoing worry, instilling fear or esteem, and even employing mockery, as specified by Meider (1985:6). Proverbs concentrate their attention on specific spheres of conventional wisdom and traditions, drawing upon established patterns of life, beliefs, and behavioral attitudes to convey their messages.

Contemporary Yorùbá writers adeptly employ Yoruba proverbs to depict colonial and post-colonial political experiences, thus inspiring political consciousness and active participation in public administration for socio-cultural and political emancipation, as noted by Adeyemi (2009:531). Proverbs thus serve vital socio-political functions, creating awareness and stimulating engagement in the governance process.

Asade (2000:124) underscores the versatility of proverbs as a universal linguistic phenomenon, particularly among the Yoruba people. Proverbs enrich speech by logically presenting ideas and elevating discourse content, concretizing and clarifying the underlying messages. They remain enduringly popular across Africa and within the Yoruba-speaking world, serving as commentaries on life and guardians of social order, reflecting Yoruba civilization's commitment to equity and peaceful coexistence.

Reflecting Dynamic and culture-specific roles, proverbs portray the evolving relationships among phenomena, beings, and thoughts, expressing various characteristics of static or dynamic systems, as highlighted by Paczolay (1996:59). Marital norms, codes, and women's roles are deeply ingrained in Yoruba proverbs, reflecting societal values and norms, as noted by Kolawole (1998:73). Through proverbs, the concept of an ongoing society is realized, incorporating general and personal behavioral patterns, family values, marriage customs, and societal norms.

Proverbs serve as invaluable sources of knowledge, fulfilling functions of warning, education, and moralization throughout history. Hussein (2005:58) underscores the roles of proverbs as value-carrying instruments, facilitating cultural understanding and social transformation. Therefore, meaningful analysis of proverbs as a linguistic form should consider such factors as cultural, social, cognitive, and historical surroundings, the degree of mediation between text and situation, and the range of context being addressed. In this vein, Mey (2001:246) stresses "the universe of discourse which comprises an ensemble of phenomena in socially determined conditions." These conditions define the cultural background of an occasion as formal, informal or festive.

Halliday (1996:89) emphasizes the role of language in establishing and maintaining human relationships, while Akinlade (1987:54) underscores the importance of proverbs as a linguistic resource to articulate warning proverbs as the instrument for the maintenance of peaceful coexistence. Widdowson (1996:97) suggests that investigating language use in texts or talks reveals linguistic patterns that inform intuitive awareness of artistic values. In analyzing warning proverbs, Critical analysis enhances our understanding of the inherent ideologies and communicative intentions embedded within these proverbs and pragmatic analysis which explores the contextual and situational factors surrounding the use of proverbs and, its role in promoting peaceful coexistence and social cohesion.

This paper critically assesses, illustrates, and analyzes proverbs that perform warning and advisory functions, exploring their impact on peaceful coexistence, moral values, and character formation among the Yoruba people. Through this exploration, deeper insights into the cultural richness and societal dynamics of the Yoruba community are illuminated.

The theoretical framework

The Theory of Proverb Praxis, as formulated by Yankah, presents a comprehensive framework for understanding the nature and utility of proverbs within specific cultural and situational contexts. Emphasizing the significance of context and situation, this theoretical framework facilitates a nuanced comprehension of proverbs' cultural intricacies and communicative roles. Yankah (1989) underscores the importance of context, which encompasses various socio-linguistic factors such as the social status and linguistic proficiency of both the speaker and the audience, as well as the specific circumstances in which the proverb is employed. Central to the Theory of Proverb Praxis is the acknowledgement of proverbs as repositories of profound cultural knowledge. By delving into the contextual and situational dimensions of language use, this theoretical approach enables a deeper understanding of the cultural subtleties embedded within proverbs. Furthermore, Yankah's framework recognizes the multi-layered nature of proverbs, acknowledging their capacity to convey diverse meanings. Through a contextual analysis, the Theory of Proverb Praxis aims to unravel the intricate layers of meaning inherent in proverbs, thereby elucidating their cultural significance and communicative functions. In the context of this research, this theoretical framework serves as a valuable analytical tool for examining the warning functions performed by proverbs. By adopting a contextual approach, researchers can discern how the context shapes the meaning and intent of proverbs, particularly regarding their role in reinforcing cultural values, social norms, and cohesive communication. On this note, Yankah's Theory of Proverb Praxis provides a robust foundation for conducting thorough studies and analyses of proverbs, offering valuable insights into their cultural relevance, communicative strategies, and socio-linguistic functions.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

This research involved selecting twenty proverbs randomly from Yoruba socio-linguistic communication to represent diverse warning and advisory functions. Critical analysis focused on linguistic features contributing to these functions, while pragmatic analysis explored contextual and situational factors. Illustrative examples supported the analysis, providing insights into proverbs' practical application in everyday discourse. Overall, the method of data collection and analysis provided valuable insights into proverbs' cultural significance and communicative efficacy.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done mainly at stylistic and pragmatic levels to demonstrate the issue of warning proverbs and their capacity to employ proverbs to perform warning and advisory functions and their effect on peaceful coexistence, moral value and character formation among Yoruba people.

-Data 1. *Mákùú ò mawo, ó n bá wọn bọ́ 'pa; Mákùú ò mọ̀ wẹ̀, ó n bá wọn mòòkùn lódò, igbàwò ni Mákùú ò ní kú? '*

(Mákùú is uninitiated but he dabbles in the occult; he cannot swim yet dives into a river. How long could he survive such escapades?)

The proverb employs metaphorical imagery, comparing uninitiated individuals to someone dabbling in the occult and unable to swim yet diving into a river. This imagery emphasizes the recklessness and danger of engaging in activities without proper preparation or knowledge. The proverb uses a rhetorical question to drive home its message. By asking, "How long could he survive such escapades?" the proverb prompts reflection on the potential consequences of reckless behavior. The structure of the proverb follows a parallel pattern, repeating the phrase "Mákùú ò" to emphasize the contrast between someone uninitiated and their reckless actions.

The proverb makes use of the illocutionary forces of assertion, warning and doubt to assert the foolishness of engaging in activities beyond one's capabilities and warn against reckless behavior as well as illuminate the potential consequences of overestimating one's abilities. Rhetorical question is utilized to express doubt about the survivability of someone like Mákùú engaging in risky behavior. The proverb reflects Yoruba cultural values and beliefs, particularly the importance of initiation rituals and acquiring necessary skills before undertaking certain activities. It underscores the significance of wisdom and caution in decision-making.

Data 2: *Qba n pe ó, O ní ò n mu gaàrí lówó, ta ló ni ó? Ta ló lomi tí ò fi n mu gaàrí?*

(The King is calling you, and you claim to be drinking *gaàrí*. Who owns you? Who owns the water with which you are drinking *gaàrí*?)

The proverb employs rhetorical questions to emphasize the absurdity of making excuses and to express doubt about the sincerity of the excuse given by the person being called by the King. The repetition of "*ta ló*" ("who owns") in both questions reinforces the rhetorical effect. The proverb juxtaposes the regal command of the King with the mundane act of drinking *gaàrí*, adding

a humorous element to the expression. This juxtaposition highlights the incongruity between the authority of the King and the triviality of the excuse. The use of "drinking *gaàrì*" metaphorically represents engaging in everyday activities or making excuses, while "The King is calling you" symbolizes a summons or command from authority.

A pragmatic force of assertion is utilized to assert the authority of the King and emphasize the necessity of obedience to his commands. It warns against disobedience and the consequences of making flimsy excuses when called upon by those in power. The rhetorical question expresses doubt about the sincerity of the excuse provided by the individual being called by the King. The analyzed proverb, therefore, serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of obedience, respect, and accountability in Yoruba society.

Data 3: "*È jọ tó o rò tíí láàárò, tóò jàre, báwo lo sẹ fẹr ọ ó lálẹ tóò jàre?*"
(A case you could not win with your pleadings in the morning, how do you hope to win it in the evening?)

The proverb exploits a rhetorical question to express doubt about the effectiveness of delaying action in resolving issues. The question challenges the logic of postponing action, highlighting the futility of hoping for a different outcome by delaying intervention. The metaphorical comparison between winning a case with pleadings in the morning and winning it in the evening illustrates the concept of delayed action and its potential consequences. It vividly portrays the idea of addressing issues promptly to avoid unfavorable outcomes. The structure of the proverb follows a parallel pattern, repeating the phrase "*tó*" ("that") to emphasize the comparison between morning and evening and the actions taken within those time frames.

The proverb asserts the importance of taking timely action in resolving issues or challenges. The rhetorical question expresses doubt about the effectiveness of delaying action and highlights the necessity of addressing issues promptly. The proverb reflects the cultural value placed on diligence, promptness, and taking proactive steps to address issues within Yoruba society. The proverb functions as a warning to individuals to take immediate action when faced with challenges or responsibilities. The analyzed proverb serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of diligence and the pitfalls of procrastination within Yoruba culture. Its stylistic devices and pragmatic functions contribute to its effectiveness as a tool for imparting cultural values and practical wisdom.

Data 4: "*Ẹran tó bá siyèméjì lọdẹ́ ń pa*"

(A hedging animal betrays itself to the hunter's gun.)

The proverb uses metaphorical language comparing indecisiveness to a hedging animal. This figurative language makes the message more vivid and memorable. It adds depth to the warning by drawing a parallel between human behavior and the behavior of animals. The proverb is concise and rhythmic. The proverb repeats the idea of indecisiveness leading to exposure to danger, reinforcing the central message. This repetition emphasizes the importance of decisiveness and the consequences of indecision. The stylistic features of metaphor, rhythm, and repetition contribute to the proverb's effectiveness.

Understanding the cultural context of Yoruba society is crucial for fully grasping the meaning of the proverb. Yoruba culture places value on decisiveness and taking a clear stance, making this proverb particularly relevant within that cultural framework. The proverb serves a social function by guiding proper behavior in critical situations. It warns against indecisiveness and encourages proactive decision-making, which aligns with societal expectations of assertiveness and accountability. The proverb can be applied to various real-life situations, such as decision-making in personal relationships or career choices. The pragmatic function lies in providing cultural guidance and practical wisdom for coping with life's challenges.

Data 5: "*Ẹni tó dúró kó kíyè sára*"

(He who stands should beware of falling.)

This proverb utilizes metaphorical language, comparing standing to maintaining a position or stance and falling to failure or downfall. Metaphors make the message more vivid and impactful. "He who stands should beware of falling." The proverb employs a parallel structure, with the first part stating a condition ("He who stands") and the second part providing a consequence ("should beware of falling"). This parallelism reinforces the cause-and-effect relationship between maintaining a position and the risk of failure. The stylistic features of metaphor, parallelism, and conciseness contribute to the proverb's effectiveness in conveying its message.

The proverb serves to heighten awareness of the risks inherent in maintaining a position or stance. By cautioning individuals to beware of falling, it encourages them to assess the potential consequences of their actions and remain vigilant against complacency or overconfidence. It encourages humility by

emphasizing the need to acknowledge one's vulnerabilities and limitations. Its pragmatic function lies in promoting risk awareness, humility, and self-awareness among individuals.

Data 6: "*Ẹnì kan kì í wọdo tán kí ó máa kígbẹ òtùtù*"

(He who steps into the river should not bemoan cold.)

This proverb employs analogy by comparing stepping into a river to making certain decisions or taking certain actions. Parallelism is used to draw a line between familiar experiences (feeling cold in a river) and the consequences of one's actions. The proverb establishes a clear cause-and-effect relationship between stepping into the river and feeling cold. This causal relationship emphasizes the inevitability of certain consequences and discourages complaining about them after the act. It states a direct result of an action and highlights personal accountability. The stylistic features of analogy, causal relationship, and pithiness contribute to the vividness of the proverb's message.

The proverb underscores the importance of personal responsibility and accountability for one's actions. By cautioning against complaining about foreseeable consequences, it encourages individuals to accept the outcomes of their decisions and take responsibility for them. The proverb promotes resilience and adaptability by urging individuals to accept and cope with the inevitable outcomes of their choices. Functionally, the proverb serves as a cautionary reminder for individuals to consider the potential consequences of their actions before taking them. The pragmatic function of the proverb lies in promoting personal responsibility, resilience, and strategic decision-making among individuals.

Data 7: "*Ẹni bá dalẹ á bá ilẹ lọ.*"

("He who betrays will surely die of betrayal".)

The proverb makes use of a parallel structure by repeating the pronoun "he who" followed by a verb phrase "betrays" and a consequence "will surely die of betrayal". This parallelism emphasizes the cause-and-effect relationship between the action of betrayal and its consequences, "*Ẹni bá dalẹ á bá ilẹ lọ.*" The repetition of the word "betrayal" in both the action "*ba dale*" and the consequence "*bá ilẹ lọ*" reinforces the message and emphasizes the severity of the warning. This repetition adds rhetorical weight to the proverb. The use of the word "surely" in "will surely die of betrayal" conveys a sense of inevitability and finality. This certainty strengthens the warning by implying that

the consequences of betrayal are unavoidable and absolute. The stylistic features of parallelism, repetition, and emphasis contribute to understanding the proverb's message,

The proverb conveys a moral lesson about the principle of retribution. It advocates that betraying others will ultimately lead to facing similar betrayals in return. In Yoruba culture, betrayal is viewed as a serious offence that disrupts social harmony and damages trust. The proverb reflects cultural values of honesty, integrity, and loyalty while warning against behaviors that undermine these values. The pragmatic function lies in promoting the karmic principle of retribution, reinforcing cultural values of honesty and integrity, and serving as a deterrent against betrayal.

Data 8: "*Eni bá ní baba ní gbéjò ní ja òjà ìgboro*"

(He, who does not have a backing, does not go about looking for trouble)

The proverb employs a parallel structure by repeating the phrase "does not" followed by a verb "have" and "go about" and a consequence "looking for trouble". This parallelism emphasizes the cause-and-effect relationship between lacking support and avoiding trouble. The use of negation "does not have" and "does not go about" adds emphasis to the message by highlighting what one should avoid. It reinforces the idea of caution and restraint in certain situations. The proverb provides a clear and specific scenario -not having support- to illustrate the broader lesson about avoiding trouble. The stylistic features of parallelism, negation, and specificity contribute to the proverb's effectiveness in conveying its message,

The proverb offers practical advice for risk management by advising individuals to assess their limitations before engaging in confrontational actions. It promotes a strategic approach to decision-making by encouraging individuals to prioritize self-preservation and avoid unnecessary conflict. In Yoruba culture, there is recognition of the importance of social support networks and alliances in navigating life's challenges. By highlighting the importance of having support or backing, it encourages individuals to consider the potential consequences of their actions on themselves and others. The pragmatic function lies in promoting strategic thinking, and risk management, and reinforcing cultural values of prudence and discretion. -

Data 9: "*Fàlànà gbọ̀ tìrẹ̀, tara ẹ̀ni là ń gbọ̀*"

(Falana should learn to mind his own business...)

The proverb utilizes imperative sentence and parallel structure to accentuate the verb phrase "should learn to" followed by two contrasting actions "mind his own business" and "dabbling into what does not concern him". This parallelism highlights the contrast between appropriate behavior -minding one's own business- and inappropriate behavior -meddling in others' affairs-. The use of imperative verbs "should learn to" emphasizes the directive nature of the advice, urging Falana and others to heed the warning and adjust their behavior accordingly. The stylistic features of direct address, parallelism, and imperative form contribute to the proverb's effectiveness in conveying its message.

Meddling in others' affairs can lead to unwanted conflicts and disruptions. The proverb serves as a pragmatic reminder to prioritize one's concerns and responsibilities, thereby avoiding unnecessary entanglements and maintaining harmony in relationships. In many cultures, including Yoruba culture, there is a recognized social norm surrounding the concept of minding one's own business. The proverb reflects this cultural value by offering practical guidance for navigating social interactions and relationships, conflict avoidance, and adherence to social norms surrounding privacy and discretion.

Data 10: *"Jàkùnmò kì í rinde ọsán, ẹni a bí ire kì í rin ìrìn òru."*

(A well-bred personality should avoid wandering in the night.)

The proverb makes use of a parallel structure by comparing the prohibition for *Jàkùnmò* to wander in daylight with the expectation for a well-bred individual to avoid wandering at night. This parallelism emphasizes the similarity between the two situations and reinforces the directive to adhere to societal norms. The proverb uses metaphorical language to convey its message. It compares the prohibition for *Jàkùnmò* to roam during the day with the expectation for a well-mannered individual to avoid being out at night, illustrating the broader lesson about appropriate behavior. The repetition of the "r" sound in "rinde" and "rìnru" creates a rhythmic quality in the proverb to reinforce its message. The stylistic features of parallelism, metaphorical language, and alliteration contribute to the proverb's effectiveness in conveying its message.

The proverb reflects cultural norms and expectations surrounding appropriate behavior and conduct. It underscores the importance of propriety, decorum, and respectability in society. By promoting adherence to societal norms and expectations, the proverb contributes to the maintenance of social order and harmony within communities. It encourages individuals to consider how their actions are perceived by others.

Data 11: *"Mòjà mòsá làá mọ Akinkanjú lójú ogun"*

(A valiant should know when to fight and when to retreat.)

The proverb presents a contrast between fighting and retreating, emphasizing the importance of knowing when to engage in battle and when to withdraw. This contrast highlights the complexity of decision-making in challenging situations and underscores the need for strategic thinking. The proverb uses metaphorical language by comparing the actions of a valiant individual to the strategies employed in warfare. This metaphorical comparison makes the message more vivid and emphatic. Parallel structure is utilized in repeating the phrase "know when to" followed by a verb ("fight" and "retreat"). This parallelism reinforces the directive nature of the proverb and emphasizes the importance of both actions.

The proverb functions as a directive, offering advice on how to approach challenging situations with wisdom and foresight. It emphasizes the importance of strategic thinking and decision-making, particularly in situations involving conflict or adversity. The proverb reflects cultural values surrounding bravery, courage, and strategic thinking. While valor and bravery are esteemed, the proverb also acknowledges the importance of intelligence and discernment in navigating conflicts. By emphasizing the need to know when to fight and when to retreat, the proverb offers practical guidance for conflict resolution. It encourages individuals to assess situations rationally and make decisions based on the likely outcomes, rather than acting impulsively or recklessly.

Data 12: *"Orí bíbẹ kọ ní oògùn orí fífọ."*

(Decapitation is not the antidote for headache.)

The proverb uses metaphorical language by comparing the extreme act of decapitation to the relatively minor issue of a headache. This metaphorical comparison makes the message more vivid as well as emphasizing the absurdity of using an extreme solution for a minor problem. The proverb presents a contrast between decapitation and headache, highlighting the disparity between the severity of the problem and the proposed solution. This contrast underscores the message of proportionality and restraint in problem-solving. The repetition of the "o" sound in *"Orí bíbẹ kọ"* and *"oògùn orí"* adds a rhythmic quality to the proverb.

The proverb functions as a warning or piece of advice, cautioning against the use of extreme measures to solve problems. The proverb offers a pragmatic

perspective on problem-solving, advocating for a rational and proportionate approach. Highlighting the absurdity of using decapitation to treat a headache, it underscores the importance of considering the severity of the problem and selecting an appropriate response.

Data 13: "*Tóró tò òn sísé sànjú sílè kan tò jókòó sí ojù kan lọ.*"

(A three-penny coin that is busy working is better than one shilling that sits in one place doing nothing.)

The proverb employs metaphorical language by comparing the diligent three-penny coin to the idle one-shilling. This metaphorical comparison highlights the contrast between industriousness and idleness. The proverb presents a contrast between the active three-penny coin and the inactive one-shilling, emphasizing the superiority of proactive behavior over inactivity. This contrast underscores the importance of industriousness and productivity. The repetition of the "s" sound in "*tó òn sísé sànjú sílè*" adds a rhythmic quality to the proverb and reinforces its message.

The proverb reflects a universal value found in many cultures about the virtue of hard work and the importance of being proactive and industrious. It encourages individuals to adopt a strong work ethic and take appropriate initiative. From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb encourages individuals to adopt a proactive mindset and approach to life. It promotes the idea that taking initiative and engaging in productive activity can lead to positive outcomes and personal fulfillment.

Data 14 "*Omò aráyé òn pàtèwó fẹfòn, ẹfòn òn yò, ẹfòn kò mò pé òun òn fíkú síré*"

(People clap for the mosquito and it rejoices, oblivious that it is toying with death.)

The proverb uses metaphor by comparing individuals receiving praise to a mosquito being clapped for. This metaphorical comparison vividly illustrates the idea that individuals may receive superficial or misguided recognition for actions that are ultimately harmful. The proverb utilizes irony by highlighting the contradiction between receiving praise and the potential harm it may bring. While the mosquito rejoices at the applause, it remains unaware of the danger it faces, creating a sense of irony in the situation. The proverb incorporates vivid imagery, particularly with the image of clapping for a mosquito. This imagery adds depth to the metaphor and makes the message more impactful.

The proverb serves as a cautionary tale, warning individuals to be discerning and critical thinkers, recognizing that not all praise or recognition is beneficial. From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb offers practical advice for navigating social interactions and avoiding deception or manipulation. It prompts listeners to be wary of superficial gestures of approval and to critically assess the intentions behind them. By highlighting the irony of clapping for a mosquito, the proverb encourages listeners to be critical thinkers and reflect on the importance of perceiving the true nature of situations and recognizing when praise may be misleading or insincere.

Data 15 “*Ti baba bá bínú tí ó sọmọ sínú èèrùn, tí ibínú baba bá tán tí ibínú èèrùn kò bá tán òkò*”

(If a father gets so angry as to throw his kid into a raid of army ants, by the time he calms down, the ants may not be.)

The proverb utilizes metaphor by comparing the consequences of acting in anger to the scenario of a father throwing his child into a swarm of ants. This metaphor vividly illustrates the potential harm caused by impulsive actions fueled by anger. The proverb incorporates vivid imagery, particularly with the image of army ants. This imagery adds depth to the metaphor and makes the message more impactful. The proverb utilizes hyperbole or exaggeration to emphasize the severity of the consequences of acting impulsively in anger. By describing an extreme scenario, the proverb highlights the irreversibility of impulsive actions.

The proverb serves as a cautionary tale, warning listeners about the dangers of allowing anger to cloud judgment. It urges individuals to pause and reflect before acting impulsively. From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb offers practical guidance for managing emotions and making sound decisions. It advocates for emotional restraint and the importance of exercising caution in decision-making, particularly when emotions run high.

Data 16 “*Ìjàlọ kò lẹ wọsọ fún òmírán sùgbọ́n ó lẹ bọsọ fún òmírán*”

(The soldier ants are certainly not as big as a giant, but if disregarded, they may easily disrobe anyone.)

The proverb employs metaphor by comparing the threat posed by soldier ants to that of a giant. This metaphor vividly illustrates the idea that seemingly minor issues or adversaries can escalate into significant problems if neglected or overlooked. The proverb presents a contrast between the size of soldier ants

and that of a giant, highlighting the disparity between the perceived threat and its potential consequences. This contrast underscores the importance of vigilance and proactive action in addressing potential challenges. The proverb incorporates vivid imagery, particularly with the image of soldier ants disrobing someone. This imagery adds depth to the metaphor and makes the message more vivid.

The proverb serves as a warning against complacency and underestimation. It emphasizes the need for vigilance, attentiveness, and proactive action in addressing potential threats or challenges, regardless of their initial size or apparent insignificance. From a pragmatic point of view, the proverb offers practical advice for risk management and problem-solving. It emphasizes the importance of foresight and proactive action in identifying and addressing potential threats or challenges, even if they initially appear minor.

Data 17 “*Tí ògiri ò bá lanu aláńgbá kò lè wọhò ògiri*”

(If there are no crevices in the wall, the lizard cannot penetrate it.)

The proverb makes use of metaphor to vividly illustrate the negative consequences arising from underlying vulnerabilities or weaknesses. The proverb incorporates imagery, particularly with the image of a lizard attempting to penetrate a wall. This imagery adds depth to the metaphor and makes the message more memorable and impactful. The proverb explores the concept of cause and effect by suggesting that negative consequences or problems arise when there are weaknesses or vulnerabilities in a system or situation. This idea underscores the importance of addressing root causes to prevent problems effectively.

From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb offers practical advice for problem-solving and decision-making. It emphasizes the importance of identifying and addressing underlying weaknesses or vulnerabilities to prevent or mitigate undesirable outcomes. The proverb underscores the importance of prevention in avoiding negative consequences.

Data 18 “*Ilé tí a bá fí itọ mọ, ìrì ní yó wó o*”

(A house built with saliva will collapse under dew drops.)

The proverb makes use of metaphor to compare structures built on deceit to a house constructed with saliva collapsing under dew drops. This metaphor vividly illustrates the idea that anything built on dishonesty or deceit is inherently unstable and likely to fail. The proverb incorporates imagery,

particularly, the image of a house collapsing under dew drops. This imagery adds vigor to the metaphor and makes the message impactful.

The proverb utilizes symbolism by representing structures built on deceit as unstable and likely to fail. This symbolism underscores the importance of honesty and integrity in all actions and relationships. From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb offers practical wisdom about the importance of honesty and emphasizes the value of personal integrity and truthfulness.

Data 19 “*Tí ikú ilé ò bá pani, tòde ò leè pani*”

(If there are no enemies within, those without can do us no harm.)

The proverb utilizes metaphor to vividly demonstrate the idea that internal discord or weaknesses pose a greater danger than external threats. The proverb presents an antithesis by contrasting the dangers posed by internal conflicts or weaknesses with the lesser threat posed by external enemies. This contrast emphasizes the importance of addressing internal challenges proactively. The proverb exhibits parallelism in its structure, with the repeated use of "no enemies within" and "those without" to emphasize the comparison between internal and external threats.

From a pragmatic perspective, the proverb offers cautionary advice about the dangers of neglecting internal conflicts or weaknesses. The proverb offers practical wisdom about the importance of addressing internal conflicts and weaknesses to strengthen resilience against external threats. It encourages a proactive and self-reflective approach to conflict resolution and defense, promoting unity and resilience in the face of adversity.

The analysis of the selected proverbs above, explicates the pivotal role of warning proverbs in shaping desirable character traits, fostering credible character development, and upholding a harmonious societal structure within Yoruba culture. These proverbs act as guiding principles, shedding light on various human situations and offering timely admonitions to navigate challenges effectively. They exemplify the cherished values and strategies for personal growth inherent in African societies, particularly within the Yoruba community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, proverbs serve as invaluable tools for cultivating peaceful coexistence and fostering unity among individuals. Through the examination of these proverbs, a deeper comprehension of Yoruba cultural values emerges, underscoring their central role in nurturing a cohesive and harmonious human community.

Scholars are encouraged to explore additional functions of existing proverbs and contemplate their integration and sustenance of their usage in enriching routine communication, preserving cultural heritage, and transmitting the inherent communicative competencies to future generations.

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Cultural Heritage as Vehicle for Knowledge Delivery: A Study of Some Selected Yoruba Proverbs

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Abstract

Yoruba Proverbs are treasured sayings imbued with demonstrated wisdom of ages. Existing studies have not sufficiently established the use of proverbs for nurturing self-identification and sense of self-worth in pupils. This study examines the gap in learning and proficiency of the Nigerian indigenous languages among pupils with a view to establishing its usage for nurturing self-identification and self-worth. Sociological Hermeneutic theory is adopted to describe, explain, and interpret selected proverbs within the content usage in Yoruba. Ten proverbs were selected and subjected to stylistic and descriptive analysis. Findings revealed that proverbs are stylistically suitable for oiling conversation and functional for knowledge delivery.

Keywords: Learning, pupils, Self-identification, Self-worth, Yoruba proverbs.

Introduction

Yoruba proverbs have been extensively employed to address numerous academic issues by several scholars in the past. Unfortunately, and despite this, proverbs have not been sufficiently utilized to create a medium of awareness of the rich Yoruba culture for nurturing self-identification and sense of self-worth in pupils and by extension, the youths. There is no doubt that this has

consequently created a monumental gap in learning and proficiency of this important aspect of the Nigerian indigenous languages, especially in the area of knowledge delivery.

In Yoruba Traditional Education (YTE), proverb plays a pivotal role in the delivery of knowledge, especially to pupils and the youths. It should be stressed that from childhood to adulthood, it is expected that these group of people listen and pay adequate attention to instruction given by the elders using proverb. Culturally, proverb is believed to be wise saying that is exclusively belonged to elders but it can also be used to train and pass across information to both the pupils and the youths in order for them to develop sense of self-worth and self-identification as they grow in age hence, the saying that ‘*láti kékeré n’ímòlè ti n k’ómò rẹ lásò*’, meaning - it is from childhood that a Muslim faithful starts teaching his child recitation of Quran.

Also in Yoruba Traditional Education, it is believed that pupils and the youths of today will become elders of tomorrow. Hence, the proverb captures the saying that - *eyin ló n d’àkùkò* which can be interpreted as “children are the future of tomorrow”. However, if today’s pupils and the youths are not well versed in teaching and learning of proverbs as it is presently in schools and in daily routine discourses, it is obvious that proverb will soon go into extinction and this important group of the society cannot be said to be custodians of proverb as the elders assert in the proverb - *Òrìṣà tí a bá n Ẹ tí a kò fi han ọmọdẹ kò ní pẹ parun*, meaning “worship of deity in which children are not carried along will soon go into extinction.” The scenario presented here is playing out today as teaching of proverb or using proverb for knowledge delivery in classroom and routine discourses of pupils and the youths is not visible. It is against this background that this paper sets out to examine gap created because of the neglect of this important aspect of the Yoruba indigenous knowledge delivery in routine discourses and in teaching and learning environment with a view to proffering possible way out.

Views on Proverbs

There are several views on proverb due to its phenomenality and universality. Generally speaking, proverb can be described as a short, recognised expression of the folk which is full of wisdom, morals, and philosophies, worldviews in a metaphorical, predetermined, and memorisable form, transmitted from generation to generation. In other words, proverbs are made up of short expressions like idioms, whose meaning cannot be correctly determined from the individual words in them which are characteristically metaphorical, predetermined, and figurative (Bolaji & Akanmu, 2017). Yoruba proverbs are perceived as the ‘horse of speech’ often used to unravel complex discussion

or resolve entanglement in communication. Yoruba proverbs are primarily deployed to establish truism in the discharge of moral instructions or to be factual and blunt against any form of social ills.

Yoruba proverb is perceived as traditional phenomenon and cultural endowment of a people's collective wisdom exclusively preserved and transmitted from one generation to another (Lawal, 1992); (Friday-Otun et al. 2017). This view is all about orality and preservation of proverbs and the way proverbs are verbally communicated and transmitted from one generation to another generation. Similarly, to show that African proverbs are the same in term of orality when expressing views on Igbo proverbs, Chidoka (2021) describes proverbs as traditional materials taken from the Igbo life world proverbs full of accumulated experiences and which show numerous facets of a people's culture that is transmitted from generation to generation. Mbah (2023) shares same view by portraying proverb as a form of oral communication within the socio-cultural notions in which thought, and experiences based on people's cultural and social orientations, philosophies, moral values, psychological makeup and worldviews are communicated.

Corroborating this view and to describe the nature of proverb, Osoba (2014) quoted in Adetoro (2019), distinguishes proverb from other verbal arts because of its shortness, sense and salt. He is of the view that the shortness connotes brevity hence, the Yoruba proverb that says 'half a word is spoken to a wise man, and when it gets into his 'inside' it becomes a whole. He posits further to say that the 'sense' in his established tripartite in Yoruba proverbs are derived from the total meaning and that, the allusive nature of proverbs enhances the need for a sharp comprehension to comprehend and grasp the intended message. On the saltiness, he asserts that Yoruba proverbs are enhanced by the convoluted use of figurative expressions like metaphors, similes, personifications, symbols, and euphemism which subsequently adds poetic effect to statement and making them an art of speech making.

The trio of Nwachukwu-Agbada (2002), Osakwe (1999) and Olatunji (1970) established pedagogical importance of proverb in African society as traditional material and vital means of communication used by literary scholars and artists to educate and impart lives. In their views, proverbs are social licences for praises of what is considered as good qualities and condemnations of awful practices in the society. Summarily, this position implies instructional, cognitive, and corrective purposes of proverb which consequently enhances proper guidance and enforcement of social control in the society.

Apart from the aforementioned, several other studies have been conducted on Yoruba proverb. Among this are Olateju (1999), Idowu (1997), Olatunji (1984; 1970), Adeleke (2009), Owomoyela (2005), Agbaje (2005) and Ojoade (1983). Each one of them perceived proverb either as source of entertainment,

moral instruction, historical record or philosophy and therapy. As unique as these works are in Yoruba studies, little or no attention has been given to the pedagogical use of proverb to achieve communicative competence of pupils and the youths in routine communication as well as in teaching and learning environment.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this study is the Friedrich Schleiermacher Sociological Hermeneutic Theory (1768-1834). Originally at inception, the theory is used to interpret Biblical, wisdom literature and philosophical texts. This theory gained prominence between 1960 and 1970 because of its ability for interpretation and understanding of social events through analysis of their meanings for human participants in the events. This is in tandem with the belief of Friedrich Schleiermacher, the proponent and father of the Sociological Hermeneutic Theory, that for an interpreter to comprehend the work of another author, he must familiarize himself with the historical context in which such author published his thoughts. This theory is adopted because it has capacity to emphasise the importance of both content and form of proverbs within any given social behaviour as well as means to explain and interpret proverbs selected within content usage in the Yoruba language and culture. The theory is primarily meaning oriented and to understand and comprehend meanings of selected proverbs in this study, the contents, form of proverbs, historical contexts and social events that lead to them must be culturally familiar with.

Methodology

Data relevant to this study were sourced from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary source was collected through personal observation, consultation with elders and unstructured interviews with some primary school teachers and few pupils to ascertain the use and non-use of proverbs in teaching and learning environment. The secondary source was taken from the published texts of Odugbemi, O. (2014), Aladejobi, G. (1999), Bada, S. (1985) and Delana, I. (1983). In all, thirty proverbs were collected but only ten were purposively selected for stylistic and descriptive analysis. The following proverbs were considered for Analysis.

Analysis

Proverb 1. *Eni ti kò kini kú ilé; pàdánù kú àbò.* (Odùgbèmi 2014)

(One that fails to greet one when s/he comes in forfeits one's response to the greeting)

The above proverb lays emphasis on Yoruba culture of greetings which is unique and cherished by the people as one of the attributes of *Ọmọlúàbí* (a person with prominent level of good pedigree). Literally, it means ‘to deliberately disregard someone on ground or at home when coming in without greeting the person’. The latter will assume that the former is uncultured and because of this, he will not respond by saying ‘you are welcome’. In line with the theory adopted for this paper, which is meaning based, this proverb can be interpreted connotatively to mean ‘when one fails to do the needful, one should not expect a positive reward’. A proverb of this nature is used to inculcate moral lesson, especially that of ‘respect’ in children and the youths in traditional education. Yoruba people take greeting particularly important as way of life but unfortunately, as observed today, this is not replicated in teaching and learning environment among the youths and in most of the primary schools in Nigeria. It should be stressed also that in the 1960s cum 1970s and early part of the 1980s, traditional materials like proverb and idiom were part of the cultural heritage used for knowledge delivery during assembly and in the classroom. These are no longer in practice today on the assembly, in classrooms and routine discourses among the youths. The implication of this is that awareness of rich Yoruba cultural heritage for nurturing self-identification and a sense of self-worth in pupils and the youths is gradually eroding and this is not good for the growth and development of the contemporary society.

Proverb 2. *Ọmọdé gbón, àgbà gbón*
La fi dólẹ̀ Ifẹ̀. (Odùgbèmi, 2014)
 (It is through the display of mutual
 Elders and the youths that Ife land was founded)

Stylistically speaking, the above proverb is metaphorical and typical of most of the Yoruba proverbs that reflect certain aspect of mythological history. It is through the analysis of this nature (descriptive) that one can really comprehend the meaning. This is because meaning cannot be predicted from the individual elements in the proverb without studying the historical context. Historically, this proverb establishes the general belief that Ile Ife is the cradle of the Yoruba race, and it took the wisdom of both the children and elders to found it. The proverb can be interpreted to mean ‘collective responsibility’ useful and needed for nation building. This type of proverb is good for historical and pedagogical purpose in teaching and learning environment because it has capacity to broaden the historical knowledge of pupils and the youths, especially now that most schools do not take the teaching of history as a subject

very serious. It will also boost their courage and confidence having realised that their efforts are also required in the collective process of nation building.

Proverb 3. *Bòmọdẹ bá mọwọ wẹ*
Yóò bá àgbà jẹun (Aládẹjọbí 1999)
 (A child who knows how to wash his hands
 Will dine and wine with elder)

The above proverb is also metaphorical irrespective of the context of usage. The àgbà (elder) and ọmọdẹ (child) are metaphor; while ọmọdẹ (child) represents inexperience/immaturity, àgbà stands for wisdom/experience/maturity. Literally speaking, it can be said that if a child knows how to wash his hands clean, he would be able to eat in the same plate with elder. But it goes beyond this in terms of meaning. It should be stressed also that connotatively, elder in the proverb represents wisdom and humility and that is why it is culturally believed that only the elders are repository of proverbs, hence reason a child or youth must acknowledge elder before uttering a proverb (Adélékè, 2009). A child or youth that is fond of doing this is embraced and allowed to keep company with elders. It is as a result of this display of humility, respect and wisdom on the part of the child that the proverb emerged - 'bòmọdẹ bá mọwọ wẹ á bágbà jẹun' meaning that 'if a child is wise and humble, he would always be in the company of elders and be regarded as a child that behaves like elder (ọmọ àgbà). Proverb of this type is short and easy to memorise, and it is expected to be used at the primary school level and in routine discourses of the youths, especially now that traditional education in most homes is dying. It should be noted also that no educational programme stands apart from the society which created it. Education in Yoruba should be exclusively based on the ideals and values of the Yoruba society.

Proverb 4. *À n gba òròmọdiẹ lẹwọ ikú*
Ó ní wọn ò jẹ k'òun lọ sórí àkìtàn lọ jẹun (Aládẹjọbí, 1999)
 (We are trying to save a chicken from death, and it complains
 That it is not allowed to go to the refuse ground to pick up
 rubbish)

The above proverb is always used to warn, caution and counsel adamant or stubborn person who bents on facing imminent danger ahead of him in spite of a wise counsel. Literally, the imminent danger ahead for the chick is the hawk whose strength is too enormous for the chick to contend with when meeting on the refuse ground. Again, both the chick and the hawk search for food on the

refuse ground but ironically, while the chick looks for seeds, hawk searches for chick and the likes. Stylistically speaking, this is a case of personification and metaphor where a chick (metaphor for human being) is made to complain like human being whose utterance is comprehensible. Refuse ground on the other hand is a metaphor for danger or death. Here, the figurative usage is to give concreteness and vividness to the proverb. The proverb can be interpreted to mean ‘complaint against life-saving counsel is perilously consequential’. The proverb is to rebuke someone who grumbles because he is not allowed to do certain things which those who prevented him from doing known to be dangerous. Looking at the proverb from its stylistic import and meaning, it can be said that it is simple, brief, memorisable and useful enough to be part of the proverbs capable of inculcating moral lessons in pupils and by extension, the youths in routine communication.

Proverb 5. *Ìgbà kì í tọ lọ bí òrére*
Ayé ò tọ lọ bí ọpá ibọn (Délàná, 1983)

(No season goes on endlessly
 Life is not as straight as the barrel of gun)

The above is another instance of a figurative proverb where the word ‘igba’ (season) is personified as human being with legs to walk or travel around and compared with the expression ‘orere’ (endless enterprise) through the use of simile to portray realism and straightforwardness. Indeed, time flies and never comes back. It should be stressed here that all the figurative ingredients in the proverb makes it entertaining without taking away the underlying meaning and moral lesson that ‘one should grab every opportunity to be useful and successful in life because nothing is permanent in life except change’. Despite the figurative import of the proverb, and as stated in the theory adopted for this paper, meanings are easily derived through careful study of the form and content of the proverb. It should be established also that captivating traditional material of this nature with instructive and insightful moral lesson, is good for knowledge delivery to pupils and the youths. If it is perfectly delivered and comprehended, it will go a long way in creating awareness for nurturing self-identification and a sense of self-worth in pupils and by extension, many of our youths who cannot speak and write in good Yoruba autobiography.

Proverb 6. *Tí ajá bá lẹni lẹyìn yóò pa ọbọ* (Bada, 1985)

(If a dog gets good backing it will easily kill a monkey)

The above proverb is not about animal (dog and monkey), it is metaphorically used to depict dog as an individual who is incapacitated to subdue his predicament (monkey), whose strength, sneakiness and intrigues could be too much for him to withstand. No matter how powerful a monkey is, it cannot survive in the midst of many hungry dogs. Here, emphasis is on the aid, support and reinforcement one can receive from people around him when confronting with difficulties beyond his capacity. The moral lesson here is that there is no impossibility with someone who benefits from the backings and support of people. This proverb is also simple, brief, and straightforward enough to comprehend, especially through careful study of its form and content. This view is corroborated by some of the few teachers and pupils in an unstructured interview conducted in the course of this study, that pupils and the youths can benefit immensely from the moral lessons of proverbs with captivating structure and contents as well as attaining a perfect proficiency and fluency if they are appropriately impacted in them.

Proverb 7. *Ajá tí yòò sọ̀nù*
 Kò ní gbọ̀ fẹ̀rẹ̀ ọ̀lọ́dẹ̀

(The dog that will be lost
 Will never hear the hunter's whistle)

Literally, the proverb means 'a dog that will get lost will not listen to the whistle of the hunter. This is another proverb with metaphorical nature stylistically used to create imagery in the heart of listeners or readers. From the above, it is obvious that human being is contextually represented as *ajá* (dog) and (ode) for the purpose of presenting illustration of a universal truth. Metaphor is a veritable ingredient for composition of proverb because of its involvement in the transfer of meaning through a figurative use as shown in the above proverb. This proverb can be interpreted as 'a person who is deliberately ready to follow the path of destruction will not listen to a wise counsel or advice'. Naturally, dogs are created to be sensitive but occasionally, there are few stubborn ones just as there are stubborn human being who will not listen to advise especially when it is obvious that danger is imminent and looming. It can be said that proverb of this nature exhibits certain entertainment value based on its figurative trait, especially when it is used in a context to spice up a statement. This proverb is also suitable for knowledge delivery in the classroom and in routine communication of pupils and the youths to warn against stubbornness and troublesome.

Proverb 8. *Bí a bá ñjà*
Bí i ká kú kọ (Badà, 1985).

(If we are fighting,
 We should not wish ourselves death)

The above proverb is brief and straightforward because it devoid the use of any animal in a metaphorical manner. Although, there is a stylistic import in the composition of the proverb, especially in the second line which makes it look like certain words that would have made it more explicable have been deleted nevertheless, it is comprehensible enough for those who are well versed in the language. The second line should have been presented as ‘bí kí á ro ikú sí ara wa kọ’ (not to the extent of wishing ourselves death). However, if it is so presented, it would have defeated one of the purposes of the use of proverb which is coding, especially when the speaker does not want the third party to decode the message of the proverb. Literally, the proverb means ‘if we are fighting, it is not to the extent of death. The proverb can be interpreted to mean ‘fight is inevitable but it should not be to the extent of wishing one’s detractor death’. The proverb is used whenever one’s detractor is suffering or experiencing horrible situation and needs attention or help from his counterpart’. It is a proverb that expresses love and affection as moral lesson and should be considered as pedagogical tool for teaching, especially now that the country is witnessing religion bigotry and ethnic divide among the youths because of the outcome of the just concluded gubernatorial and presidential election.

Proverb 9. *Ilé ẹnì nì a tí ñjẹ*
Èkúté onídodo

(It is in one’s house that one eats
 A rat with big navel)

Literally, the above means ‘it is in one’s house that one eats a rat with an unusual navel’. The proverb, like the previous ones is metaphorical. It sounds funny, excites laughter and entertaining, especially when one remembers that rat, whether bush or the house one is too small in size and quality for one to exaggerate that he eats rat with a big navel. It is not what one can be publicly proud of amid those who eat chicken, goat, and cow meat on a daily basis. In other word, it is demeaning, shameful and ridiculous for one to publicise eating of a rat with big navel. Obviously, it portrays one to be in abject poverty. However, connotatively the proverb can be interpreted to mean ‘you don’t put your dirty details out there’ or ‘you don’t wash your dirty linen outside

depending on the context of usage. The proverb can be used to tell someone that a family secret should not be exposed to the outside world especially if it is not pleasant. This proverb can be uttered to the addressee who is about to reveal certain family secret in the presence of another person whose knowledge of proverb is shallow in order to caution the former and prevent the latter from decoding the message. Instance of this nature expresses one of the most important functions and purposes of proverb in routine discourses (coding) worthy of use for teaching pupils and the youths.

Proverb 10. *Afasé-gbèjò n tan ara rẹ je.* (Delano, 1983)

(He who tries to fetch rainwater with
A sieve is deceiving himself)

This is a proverb meant for cautioning someone who is trying to embark on something that is beyond his capability or an unrewarding adventure. The proverb is simple, short and self-explanatory to those who are versed in the language. Here, its simplicity and brevity should be considered suitable for oiling conversation in routine discourses and for teaching at the elementary level where pupils develop interest in fascinating and stimulating utterance like the above. Literally speaking, *asẹ* (sieve), is a perforated house utensil used to sieve grinded grain/food stuff and cannot be used to collect a drop of water or liquid. However, using it for collection of rainwater is comparable to someone trying to embark on the impossibility and such a person may be seen as an abnormal person. The proverb can be interpreted as 'an exercise in futility'. It is used to mock, deride, or ridicule someone who is trying to do something that is beyond his capacity or seeking for a position he can never get.

Inference

It can be deduced from the foregoing that before now, to be précised, in the 1960s, 1970s and early part of the 1980s, Yoruba proverbs, idioms and other rich sayings served as knowledge delivery to pupils on the assembly and in the classroom as it was in the traditional education. Then, instances of Yoruba proverbs and idioms imbued with moral lessons abound in J.F. Oduño's collection of poems and works from other earlier Yoruba writers. It has been revealed that today, Yoruba proverbs (embodiment of moral lessons) have not been explored and taken serious again to serve as vehicle for knowledge delivery at the primary school level and by extension, in teaching and learning environment of our contemporary society. This paper revealed that Yoruba proverbs are stylistically suitable for oiling conversation in routine discourses

and functional for knowledge delivery to pupils and the youths in teaching and learning situation. It has also been revealed that most Yoruba proverbs are figurative or metaphorical and this figurative use give concreteness, and vividness to them. It has been established that most of the Yoruba proverbs that are simple, brief and memorisable are useful and capable for inculcating moral lessons while the stylistic import in them has capacity to excite laughter and entertainment in a way that creates awareness of rich Yoruba cultural heritage for nurturing self-identification and a sense of self-worth in both the pupils and the youths. It has also been revealed in the study that one of the major significances of proverb is 'coding' linguistically used for concealing information from the non-initiates. Here, non-initiates are non-speakers or speakers who are not well versed in the Yoruba proverb. The study equally emphasised the possibility of achieving proficiency in the language and by extension, Yoruba proverbs if they are introduced early to pupils at the primary school level just as it is done in the traditional education where it is believed that no educational programme can stand apart from the society which created it.

Conclusion

This paper is on Yoruba proverb, a cultural heritage used for knowledge delivery. The paper has examined entertaining and pedagogical values of proverb used for aesthetics, teaching and imparting lives in routine discourses and classroom situation at the elementary level. Examination of this phenomenon has revealed that it can be used to serve as instructional, cognitive and corrective purposes as it was in the traditional Yoruba setting where elders, the custodians of cultural heritage, utilized proverbs for teaching young ones the social values of life. Although, it has been established that the figurative and stylistic imports of Yoruba proverb induced amusement, its utilization goes beyond entertaining value; it is also for the purpose of controlling and leading others in the right part and to implement social control in the society. It has also been stressed here that some of the virtues (patriotism, humility, prudence, futility, discipline and good pedigree) embedded in the selected proverbs discussed have the capacity to engender awareness of rich Yoruba cultural heritage for nurturing self-identification and a sense of self-worth missing in pupils and the youths of today if they are used as model for teaching at the primary school level.

Based on the discoveries in this paper, It can be concluded that the use of Yoruba proverbs for communicative and teaching at the primary school level underscores the versatility and resourcefulness of the socio-cultural heritage acquired by the Yoruba through proverbs. As reiterated earlier, this phenomenon has been used in the traditional setting to teach children proficiency and

moral lesson, and now that proficiency and moral lesson are lacking among the children and the youths, it is only reasonable to go back to the basics and ensure that Yoruba proverbs with insightful and instructive moral lessons are well entrenched in the scheme of things at the primary school level and in the routine communication of the youths. This will go a long way in moulding and turning out responsible and egalitarian youths who will be proud of their identity and cultural heritage.

Finally, now that the traditional education is declining, government at every level should as a matter of urgency, make a policy that will make the use of indigenous proverb like Yoruba compulsory at the elementary level to promote effective proficiency of the Yoruba language which will consequently strengthening our dying traditional education. Government at all levels should know that no educational programme can stand apart from the society which created it. Therefore, education in Yoruba should be absolutely based on the ideals and values of the Yoruba society.

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Peaceful Co-existence in a Multi-ethnic Society: An Appraisal of Two Yoruba Prose Narratives

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Abstract

The Nigerian nation is a plural society. Before they were grouped as a nation-state, the various ethnic groups had their distinct traditional, cultural, and social institutions. This essay starts from the premise that peaceful co-existence among the various ethnic groups making up the Nigerian nation-state is non-negotiable. In other words, there is a compelling need for the Nigerian nation-state to remain united despite the diversities of the cultures, traditions, languages, and religious affiliations of her constituents. Realizing the enormous role that literary works can play in catalyzing national integration and unity, which are essential components of peaceful co-existence, the essay examines two Yorùbá prose narratives viz: (i) *Okùnrin* and (ii) *Kò sí Láte*, both authored by Folúkẹ Adékéyè. This is done to identify the extent to which literary texts particularly prose narratives can serve as tools for achieving peaceful co-existence in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. The examination of the selected texts is carried out with insight drawn from Max Weber (1864-1920) nation-state model of the theory of sociology. The model emphasizes that the state reaches into the lives of all members of society, and has a great capacity to influence the individual, the family, and other social groups. It asserts further that the thinking that began with nation-states was continued in the idea of social systems. The essay concludes that literary works inclusive of the two selected texts, are potent weapons for birthing peaceful co-existence in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria.

Keyword: Ethnicity, Pluralism, Social institution, Nationhood, and National Integration.

Introduction

The frightening reality in Nigeria today is that we live in a time of great anxiety. According to Abífárin (2015:5), “There have been few times in all history when Nigerians in every part of the nation have been subjected to fear, uncertainty, and disunity as now.” There is no doubt that governments at all levels in the past and even in the present have continued to devise elaborate schemes for security and peaceful co-existence but to no avail. The Nigerian nation confronted by such wars as war of religion, insurgency, attrition, ethnicity, etc., such that the needed peace for a happy co-existence is lacking. Kólápò (2017:23) says the “peace available to Nigerians can best be described as fragile.” While one may not dispute the foregoing assertion of Kólápò (2017), it is however incumbent on every peace-loving man and woman to search for the path of peace if the Nigerian nation will not disintegrate.

One of the first paths we chose was labeled “political freedom.” Give everyone political freedom, it was said, and the nation will become a happy place in which people will co-exist peacefully despite their religions and ethnic diversities. Therefore, we achieved political freedom, but we did not achieve a peaceful co-existence. The daily news we hear is that of corruption in high places, of favoritism, exploitation hypocrisy, etc. This means that political freedom is a precious and important thing, but it alone cannot give us the kind of nation we long for.

Another path considered brightest, and most inviting is “education”. Many embraced it, in the belief that political freedom coupled with education will work out the magic wand. Therefore, we all rushed eagerly along the educational path with high expectations. However, alas, where has it led us? Èdúng-bólá (2013:ix) provides the answer. He says, “Our heads are crammed with knowledge, but our hearts are not united”. This means that while we cannot deny the fact that education has given us some of the things we wanted; it has not led us to the desired peaceful co-existence. Education only stands like a somber shadow behind our waking thoughts. This means that we are ensnared in the web of our thinking in so far as peaceful co-existence is concerned.

Literature Review

According to Dàda et.al (2002), “literature is a means by which the people in a society try to understand one another and their environment”. This means that literature has always been and will always remain an abiding human concern. Hence no age in the history of humankind has lacked literalists in almost

all literary genres, be it, prose, poetry, or drama. It suffices to say that literary writers have always been preoccupied with bringing afore the experiences and or the ills of human society, often to create an enlightenment scenario that calls either for improvement or change. Tolufashe (2007:17) reinforces the foregoing when he asserts “Yorùbá fictional writers have never relented in opening the eyes of the public to societal ills from the pre-independent era Nigeria”. In the same vein, Ojúolápé (2010:38) sees Yorùbá writers as agents of change in a disoriented Nigerian nation.

It is however worrisome that despite the efforts of Yorùbá literary writers to use their writings as platforms for fostering peaceful co-existence, there has continued to be a disturbing increase in the disturbance of public peace at both the regional and the national levels in Nigeria. In other words, there has been a steady increase in ethnic and religious strife with an attendant threat to peaceful co-existence. The question that readily comes to mind now remains: Is there still hope for salvaging the situation? Obakin (2013:2) answers in the affirmative. He says, “The rightful applications of some given themes in Yorùbá novels to the collective life of our society can without doubt provide the antidote to many of the ills of the society”. Famolu (2008:16) concurs when he says that “an increase in literacy contains the propensity to expose restless minds to creative writings that can more than anything else, temper their restless minds from exploding into destructive vices”.

From all the foregoing, the conclusion is that literature inclusive of Yorùbá fictional narratives is doubtless a potent weapon for charting a course to the path of the desired peaceful co-existence in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria.

Synopsis of the Selected Yorùbá Fictional Narratives

The two Yorùbá texts under study in this paper are (i) *Ọkùnrin* and (ii) *Kòsì Látẹ*. The same author writes both. The synopsis of the two texts is what we next turn our attention to.

Ọkùnrin depicts an all-women liberation group under the leadership of the protagonist of the text, Ìbídàpò. The women group and their teenage counterparts perceiving that their rights are being suppressed take their grievances to the monarch and his governing council for redress. In ventilating their grievances, Ìbídàpò identifies the root cause of female marginalization as foundational to the problem of the society. She points the attention of the monarch and his chiefs to the uneven composition of the council relative to gender inequality. She says only one female is among the eight-member council (p.42) saying that underscores the problem of the society.

Even though the women’s grievances appear near inexhaustible, Ìbídàpò presents their cause meticulously, articulately, and with comportment.

Consequently, the monarch demands acquiescence on the ground that the requests accede to their request contain wisdom (p.100). The narrative closes with a joint meeting between the Adult female group-Alatise-led by Ìbídàpò, and their teenagers' counterparts – *ẹgbẹ ọdọ ológo* - where they resolve to pursue the defense of their rights and to advance their cause to a logical conclusion.

The focus of the narrative *Kò sí Láṭẹ* is mainly on Agboṣá and his two wives, Sẹgilólá and Àyóní. Agboṣá marries Sẹgilólá but two years into their marriage, Sẹgilólá remains infertile. Agboṣá becomes visibly distraught resulting in his love for Sẹgilólá waning. Sẹgilólá notices this and desires to know from Agboṣá the reason for his change of attitude towards her: Agboṣá says that inability of Sẹgilólá to get pregnant is responsible for his change of attitude towards her. He says a full-grown hen who does not lay eggs let alone hatch is better discarded. He likens Sẹgilólá to the proverbial hen (p.42).

Consequently, Agboṣá goes ahead to marries a second wife – Àyóní who turns out to be the exact opposite of Sẹgilólá in matters of personal hygiene, good manners, and human relations. Àyóní gives birth to two children in quick succession, both of whom she loses to dirtiness and carelessness. Sẹgilólá continues to seek for solution to her problem of bareness in the process of which she falls prey to a fake prophet simply called Baba Woli who defrauds her. However, her search later pays off, as she gets pregnant after returning from the convention of the Redeemed Christian Church, which she attends at the instance of an acquaintance, simply referred to as Comfort. She too gives birth to two male children within three years. This propels the restoration of Agboṣá's love for Sẹgilólá. Consequently, he joins Sẹgilólá in attending the church where he gets her miracle. Àyóní becomes unhappy and complains that she no longer commends Agboṣá's attention.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is what serves to underpin every given literary work. It is like a discursive screen through which every given work of literature could be viewed, for appraisal, review, analysis, or criticism. This essay finds its theoretical framework in the sociology of literature. In tandem with its name, the sociology of literature is a merger of two distinct disciplines viz (i) Sociology and (ii) Literature.

The sociology of literature in its broad sense, serves to foster a general understanding of the intrinsic relationship between literature and the society from which it emanates. It also sheds light on the interrelationship between members of a given society on one hand and the other hand, novelists, and

their society. This explains why novelists have come to be seen as both teachers and influencers of the public mind in every human society (Fasan, 2004).

Various approaches are suggested for the sociology of literature. The mirror image approach, to mention but one, sees literature as a direct reflection of various facets of social structure such as family relationships and class conflicts. One of the first proponents of this approach was Louis de Bonald (1754-1840). However, there is a strong argument against this approach to the effect that it de-emphasizes the writer's personality, awareness, and intention as far as the happenings in his society are concerned.

For this study, we adopt the nation-state approach to the sociology of literature. Our adoption of the approach premised on the fact that it is the most germane to the focus of this paper. The earliest proponent of this approach was Max Weber (1864-1920), a German sociologist. He asserts that the impact of international trade, industrialization, and colonization had vast implications for all human societies globally. Akínyemí (2010:17) sheds light on the postulation of Max Weber. He posits, "It is Max Weber who has brought to public awareness the several unique and novel problems that such factors as colonization and revolution threw up globally, with which man had not previously had to grapple". He goes further to explain, "Just as Max Weber asserts, the creation of nation states facilitates the creation of whole new classes and the very basis of society was shaken". The result is that old values, customs, and allegiances were forsaken, and new ideas, lifestyles, and institutions took their place.

The deduction from the foregoing is that the nation-state approach emerged in response to the need for social reconstruction in the wake of observable upheaval in many global societies. Akínyemí (2010:21) reinforces this when he asserts, "The main emphasis of the nation-state approach is that the mass of the people must be involved in the political process so that their will might be known and done, and hopefully that liberty, equality, and fraternity might be achieved".

This accords with the basis of this essay, hence the adoption of the approach as the paper's theoretical framework.

Grudges and Multi-ethnic Society

The unsettling reality in the Nigerian nation today is that grudges are being nursed either by one ethnic group against the other or by people or by groups against the government. Many have cautioned against the shared public/private inaction in curtailing the national shame that these grudges have become. Presently, no day passes without a reported case of insurgency and banditry, as well as the overheating of the polity through unguarded and provocative

utterances by politicians often based on ethnic and tribal sentiments. It is noted that the purpose of politics in a free society is to focus public attention on possible alternative courses of action in a given situation.

The focus of this paper is to chart a course towards peaceful co-existence. Therefore, it is apt to examine the likely results of these national grudges and juxtapose them with the views of the author of the selected texts for this study.

Falana (2017:68) surmises that the result of these grudges may be unpalatable. He contends, "Peaceful co-existence will continue to be undermined in Nigeria, so long as our democracy is not oiled by the pursuit of happiness for every citizen by governments at all tiers". What this means is that there is a compelling need for peaceful co-existence catalyzed in Nigeria through a deliberate policy and action of our governments.

This is what led to some questions that need to be interrogated in this study. These questions include: (i) What there any good action taken by the people themselves to spur the government into the desirable action? (ii) How can the desired change be achieved by the people without recourse to violence and acrimony? (iii) Has Adékeyè been able to offer acceptable solutions to the problems that the observable grudges have imposed on the national psyche? (iv). if yes, are those solutions implementable or workable in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria? These questions are the basic issues that this paper addresses itself.

Adékeyè and her Society

An examination of the thematic concept of Adékeyè's *Okùnrin* and *Kò sí Látẹ* being focused on this paper succinctly reveals her undisguised identification with the cause of the womenfolk in the Nigerian nation. She sees herself as part of the struggle for women's emancipation in every ramification, who is out to present the grievances of the women to the society for redress. Her intention is unmistakably, the facilitation of peaceful co-existence among all the members of the society.

Therefore, it is Weber's nation-state approach in its broad sense that her works cohere. We believe that the approach will enrich our understanding of the message that Adékeyè is passing across to society through her two selected texts for this paper.

The campaigns for the extrication of women from societal norms and practices which purposefully subject women to abuse to serve certain twisted ideology, have continued to resonate in many nations of the world including Nigeria. In many parts of Nigeria, in the past women's movements employed attention-getting strategies skillfully trumpet their cause. This is exactly what Adékeyè replicates in *Okùnrin*.

In making literature an abiding human concern, Adékeyè believes that writers can use their works as a platform for the expression of the vision, goal, or aspiration of their social class. She speaks plainly in emphasizing the fact that each social class in the society must approach the issue of peaceful co-existence from a realization that individuals and groups in the society need to be accorded their inalienable rights as members of the society wholly and absolutely.

Just as we have earlier mentioned in this paper, Adékeyè depicts the women group under the leadership of Ìbídàpò the protagonist of *Ọkùnrin* as ventilating their grievances through the employment of an attention-getting strategy. They hold a peaceful rally and demand to see the monarch intimate him and his chiefs with their misgivings against patriarchy.

Because of their comportment and the meticulous way the women group articulate their grievances, they secure the acquiescence of the monarch, who orders that the men should adhere to the wishes and demands of the women strictly, because it is replete with wisdom (p.100).

What emerges from the foregoing, is that it is only a fundamental transformation based on dialogue and on the necessity of according to everyone or social group in the society their right without recourse to gender, tribe, or religion that can provide any basis for peaceful co-existence in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Nigeria. If we go back to our approach for this paper, one will find that Adékeyè's message coheres with the approach. This is because popular sovereignty such as nationhood always brought with it a new sense of identity and ideology. This is what McIntosh (1968) cited in Olúfẹmi (2013:14) means when he asserts that "the bureaucracy needed to run a nation-state as explored in the studies of Max Weber, was a novelty".

In other words, the fact is beyond any sane denial that the state reaches into the lives of all members of society, and has a great capacity to influence the individual, the family, and other social groups.

A curious reading of Adékeyè's *Ọkùnrin* shows that the understanding of many people of what a society is at a very elementary stage. Adékeyè is therefore letting us know that there is a chance for writers to make their contribution from a distinctive literary position.

When we turn to our second text *Kò Sí Láṭẹ*, we find that Adékeyè symbolizes the political life of the Nigerian nation with the family life of Agboḷá and his two wives. In the novel, Agboḷá is married to Sẹgilọlá a virtuous woman by all standards. However, because Sẹgilọlá could not give him a child just two years into their marriage, he marries wives Àyọní, despite his knowledge of the desperate bids Sẹgilọlá is making to pregnant. Adékeyè is using Agboḷá to reflect the selfishness of our politicians. The often scenario of carpet crossing among our politicians because they could not get one position or the

other in the parties they originally belonged to, is enough evidence of this. What Agboólá does in the guise of desiring a child cannot validly invoke the cherished and sacredness of marriage, any more than the carpet crossing of our politicians from party to party, validly invoke the cherished and sacredness of democracy. This much is what Adékeyè is sensitizing the discerning public to.

It is noteworthy that Agboólá's house becomes a hotbed of crisis as an aftermath of his marrying Àyòní. The two wives become arch-rivals with irreconcilable differences. Peaceful co-existence become a near impossibility among them.

Adékeyè is sending a clear message here that peaceful co-existence will always be found wanting in any society whose constituents are embroiled in irreconcilable differences. Olúfẹ́mi (2013:19) reinforces this fact when he asserts that "so long as a nation is seen in terms of a series of warring classes, a collection of opposed strata of society, it cannot in real sense achieve peaceful co-existence".

Adékeyè finally uses the birth of Sègilólá of two male children within a spade of three years, to depict the possibility of workable solutions to the multi-faceted problems of the Nigerian nation, and to that extent peaceful co-existence among the diverse people of Nigeria.

In the novel, *Kò Sí Láṭẹ*, hostility ceases between Sègilólá and Àyòní, when Sègilólá becomes productive, even though Àyòní complains of losing the affection and attention of Agboólá. The foregoing invites us to attempt answers to the questions left unanswered in the background to the study stage of this paper.

The first question is what good action can be taken by the people themselves to spur the government into desirable action? A cursory reading of *Okùnrin* would readily suggest that the need for a coherent explanation of happenings at a particular time and to particular classes of society is vital to the attainment of peaceful co-existence. The aspect of playing down people's misgivings and resentments whatever they are must not be encouraged by a society in quest of peaceful co-existence. This much is what Adékeyè emphasizes in *Okùnrin*. The two women groups – Alátise and Egbẹ́ odo olago are allowed to ventilate their grievances with the attendant result of peaceful co-existence.

Adékeyè is emphatic that the goal of protest should always be peace. Ibídàpò the protagonist of *Okùnrin* affirms this fact. She says: "Ọlórún tí fí wá tí ra wá ná, nitorí náà a ó rí bí yẹ ara wá sí (p.36). God has knitted us together therefore, we must necessarily live together".

The deduction from this scenario, relative to this paper, is that government must not be designed solely to retain and maintain the privileges of the privileged if peaceful co-existence is to be achieved.

The second question is how can the desired change be achieved by the people without recourse to violence and acrimony? From the point of view of the nation-state model of the sociological theory, one finds that individuals and groups in society can although often disagree with the government or other groups over basic assumptions, should never dismiss all government actions or policies as invalid. Adékeyè succinctly emphasizes this salient fact through the comportment of Sègilolá.

Agboolá suddenly brings Àyóní home as his second wife without Sègilolá's prior knowledge and asks Sègilolá to prepare a meal for the new wife. Sègilolá complies even though she is unhappy with the development. She does not because of that seek to divorce Agboolá, but instead, she continues to search for a solution to her problem of barrenness. Eventually, she is finally succored and Agboolá's estrangement from her is broken. Adékeyè's message is clear: a peaceful climate that is the prerequisite for peaceful co-existence is always contingent on the exhibition of good conduct by every citizen.

The third question is Has Adékeyè been able to offer acceptable solutions to the problems that the observable grudges have imposed on the national psyche? The first starting point is to take the 'national psyche' in the context of this paper to mean the society that Adékeyè creates in the two texts under study. In *Okùnrin* as we have earlier noted, Adékeyè has been able to offer an acceptable solution of dialogue. When the women group dialogue with the statutory authority in *Okùnrin* to ventilate their grievances and state their wishes, they get their felt desire. In *Kò Sí Láte*, when Sègilolá notices an attitudinal change in her husband Agboolá towards her, she engages him in a dialogue and gets to know what is responsible for the change. Fálana (2017:18) echoes the message of Adékeyè to this effect when he asserts, "Dialogue is the bedrock of national harmony". We contend that Adékeyè's knowledge of our challenges of national disharmony and the possible solution to it is acute.

The final question is whether the solutions are implementable or workable in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria. We are inclined to answer this question in the affirmative. This is because, from all that we have so far discussed in this essay, the solutions that Adékeyè has proffered are quite practical.

- i. Good conduct is a culture that every citizen can imbibe.
- ii. Every protest, ventilation of grievances, or advocacy campaign by groups; and individuals within the society can be carried out in an orderly manner and in compliance with laws and orders.
- iii. The door of dialogue should not be shut at any time.
- iv. The inference of all the foregoing is that good government can be achieved when the emphasis is on the whole and not on the part.

Conclusion

We have attempted to argue in this essay that Adékeyè has successfully asserted in her two texts under study *Okùnrin* and *Kò Sí Láṭẹ* that our lives as human beings can be used experientially as the theme of narrative. It is beyond doubt that whatever people's origin in time or culture was, they tend to organize their experiences in a narrative form. Therefore, this fact hardly disputed that men have been created to live in a world where narrative define who they are. The two texts under study in this essay underscore the author's invaluable contribution through her writings to the quest for peaceful co-existence in the Nigerian nation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are considered germane in light of the conclusion reached in this paper.

- a. A curriculum especially on peace education as a core academic subject should be designed at all levels of academic learning in Nigeria.
- b. Conflict resolution should be promoted among all ethnic groups in Nigeria through the constitution of an inter-ethnic conflict resolution panel/committee for the country.
- c. The reading and life application of fictional narratives particularly by Nigerian indigenous authors must be encouraged among students in every academic institution in Nigeria.
- d. Literary and debating society based on Nigerian fictional narratives must be constituted in all schools in Nigeria.

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Language Practices and Social Integration among Multi-Ethnic Youth: A Yoruba Perspective

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Abstract

This research investigates the influence of language practices on social integration among multi-ethnic youth, with a specific focus on the Yoruba ethnic group. Employing ethnographic methods such as participant observation, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews, the study explores how language choices and interactions shape the formation of social networks, group identities, and sense of belonging among youth from diverse ethnic backgrounds. By examining language use in various social contexts, including educational settings, peer groups, and digital communication platforms, this research aims to elucidate the role of language in facilitating or impeding intergroup cohesion and cultural exchange among Yoruba and other ethnic

groups. The findings of this study have implications for promoting inclusive policies and intercultural understanding in multi-ethnic societies.

Keywords: Language practices, social integration, multi-ethnic youth, Yoruba, ethnography, cultural exchange

Introduction

In contemporary global society, the intricate relationship between language and social integration has become a focal point for researchers across various disciplines. Language not only serves as a means of communication but also plays a pivotal role in shaping social interactions, identity formation, and cultural integration. Particularly in multi-ethnic contexts, where diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds converge, understanding the dynamics of language practices among youth becomes imperative for fostering harmonious coexistence and inclusive social environments.

This study delves into the realm of language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth, with a specific focus on the Yoruba perspective. The Yoruba people, one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and across the African diaspora, boast a rich cultural heritage deeply intertwined with their language. The Yoruba language, a member of the Niger-Congo family of languages, serves as a significant marker of Yoruba identity and cultural heritage. However, in the context of urbanization, globalization, and increasing multiculturalism, the language landscape among Yoruba youth is undergoing transformation, presenting both challenges and opportunities for social integration.

Nigeria, often dubbed the “Giant of Africa” due to its vast population and diverse ethnic composition, serves as a microcosm of linguistic and cultural diversity. With over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups and more than five hundred languages, Nigeria epitomizes a nation characterized by plurality and heterogeneity. Among these ethnic groups, the Yoruba people, primarily concentrated in the southwestern region of Nigeria, stand out for their historical legacy, vibrant cultural practices, and the widespread use of the Yoruba language.

Traditionally, the Yoruba society was structured around communal values, with language serving as a fundamental tool for interpersonal communication, cultural transmission, and social cohesion. Yoruba youth grew up immersed in a linguistic and cultural milieu where the Yoruba language played a vital role in daily interactions, ceremonies, and rituals. However, with the advent of urbanization, globalization, and modernization, the traditional fabric of Yoruba society has undergone significant transformations, impacting language practices among the youth.

Urbanization has led to increased migration and the formation of ethnically diverse urban communities where multiple languages coexist and interact. Globalization, facilitated by advancements in technology and mass media, has exposed Yoruba youth to diverse linguistic and cultural influences from around the world. Consequently, the linguistic landscape among Yoruba youth has become more dynamic, characterized by code-switching, language mixing, and the adoption of globalized linguistic norms.

Moreover, Nigeria's educational system, inherited from the colonial era, often prioritizes English as the medium of instruction, relegating indigenous languages such as Yoruba to secondary status. This phenomenon has led to concerns about language shift, language loss, and the erosion of cultural identity among Yoruba youth, as proficiency in the English language becomes increasingly essential for educational and socioeconomic advancement.

Objectives of the Study

Against this backdrop, this study aims to explore the intricate interplay between language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth, with a specific focus on the Yoruba perspective. The following objectives will guide the research:

1. Examine the language practices of Yoruba youth in urban, multi-ethnic environments, including patterns of language use, language preferences, and language attitudes.
2. Investigate the role of the Yoruba language in identity construction and cultural affiliation among Yoruba youth, exploring how language intersects with other markers of identity such as ethnicity, nationality, and urbanity.
3. Assess the impact of globalization, urbanization, and modernization on the linguistic repertoire of Yoruba youth, examining phenomena such as code-switching, language borrowing, and the hybridization of linguistic norms.
4. Explore the implications of language policies and educational practices on the maintenance or erosion of the Yoruba language among youth, analyzing the role of formal education, media, and digital communication platforms.
5. Investigate the relationship between language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth, examining how language barriers or linguistic diversity may either facilitate or hinder interpersonal relationships, social cohesion, and community participation.

By addressing these objectives, this study seeks to contribute to existing scholarship on language, culture, and society while offering insights into the dynamics of social integration among multi-ethnic youth from a Yoruba perspective. Furthermore, the findings of this research may inform policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders in developing strategies for promoting linguistic diversity, cultural inclusivity, and social cohesion in multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria.

In summary, this study endeavors to shed light on the complex interplay between language practices and social integration among Yoruba youth, thereby enriching our understanding of how language functions as both a barrier and a bridge in the multicultural tapestry of contemporary society.

Literature Review

Language Use Patterns among Yoruba Youth in Urban, Multi-Ethnic Settings

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a marker of identity and cultural affiliation. In multi-ethnic urban settings, individuals navigate through a complex web of linguistic influences, shaping their language use patterns (Heyyi & Mekonnen 2023). This literature review explores the everyday language practices of Yoruba youth in such environments, focusing on the frequency of Yoruba usage, code-switching tendencies, and preferences for communication with peers from different ethnic backgrounds (Aina 2020).

Yoruba, one of Nigeria's major languages, holds significant cultural importance among the Yoruba ethnic group. However, in urban environments characterized by ethnic diversity and globalization, the frequency of Yoruba usage among Yoruba youth varies (Evbayiro 2022). Studies by (Familusi & Ajayi 2019: 207-227) indicate that while Yoruba remains a vital language for familial and cultural contexts, its use in everyday interactions among youth is declining. Factors such as urbanization, exposure to Western media, and educational pursuits contribute to this trend (Wu, Liu & Deng 2023). Nevertheless, there is evidence of efforts to preserve the language through initiatives like Yoruba language classes and cultural events.

Code-switching, the alternating use of two or more languages within a conversation, is prevalent among Yoruba youth in urban, multi-ethnic settings (Kimani 2019). A study by Olatunji (2022) reveals that Yoruba youth frequently code-switch between Yoruba and English, the latter often serving as a prestige language associated with education and modernity. Additionally, code-switching serves pragmatic functions, such as expressing solidarity with peers from different linguistic backgrounds or accommodating speakers of other languages. While some view code-switching as a sign of linguistic

dexterity, others perceive it as a threat to language preservation and cultural identity.

Preferences for Communication with Peers from Different Ethnic Backgrounds

Yoruba youth's preferences for communication with peers from different ethnic backgrounds are influenced by various factors, including social networks, shared interests, and perceived linguistic proficiency (Ilesanmi 2019). Research by (Onadipe-Shalom 2018) suggests that Yoruba youth often engage in language accommodation strategies, adjusting their language use based on the ethnic backgrounds of their interlocutors. While some prefer to communicate primarily in Yoruba with fellow Yoruba peers to reinforce cultural ties, others opt for a more diverse linguistic repertoire to facilitate social integration and cross-cultural understanding. These preferences underscore the dynamic nature of language use among Yoruba youth in urban settings.

In conclusion, the language use patterns of Yoruba youth in urban, multi-ethnic settings reflect a complex interplay of cultural, social, and pragmatic factors (Ayomoto 2019). While Yoruba remains significant for familial and cultural contexts, its usage in everyday interactions is declining among youth due to urbanization and globalization. Code-switching between Yoruba and English is common, serving pragmatic functions and reflecting the linguistic dexterity of Yoruba youth (Agbo 2022). Preferences for communication with peers from different ethnic backgrounds vary, with some prioritizing cultural preservation and others emphasizing social integration (Brannon, Carter, Murdock-Perriera, & Higginbotham 2018: 57-90). Understanding these language dynamics is crucial for promoting linguistic diversity, cultural identity, and intercultural communication among Yoruba youth in urban environments. Further research is needed to explore the impacts of these language practices on identity formation, social cohesion, and community development.

The Role of the Yoruba Language in Constructing Identity among Yoruba Youth

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping individual and collective identities, particularly among ethnolinguistic groups (Karimzad & Catedral 2018: 89-113). Among the Yoruba people of Nigeria and the diaspora, the Yoruba language serves as a conduit for cultural expression, communication, and identity formation. This literature review aims to explore the intricate relationship between the Yoruba language and the construction of identity among Yoruba youth, highlighting how language intersects with ethnicity, nationality, and urban upbringing to shape cultural affiliation and sense of belonging (Lasisi 2021).

The Yoruba language, a member of the Niger-Congo language family, is spoken by over twenty million people primarily in Nigeria, Benin, and Togo (Hammarström 2018: 1-57). It serves as a marker of Yoruba cultural heritage, encapsulating centuries of history, traditions, and values. For Yoruba youth, proficiency in the language not only facilitates communication but also fosters a deep connection to their cultural roots (Lubogo 2023). Studies have shown that language proficiency positively correlates with a stronger sense of ethnic identity and pride among Yoruba youth (Okunogbe 2018).

The Yoruba language intersects with broader constructs of ethnicity and nationality, influencing how Yoruba youth perceive themselves within the context of Nigerian and global society (Isiaka 2020: 68-89). Nigeria's multi-cultural landscape underscores the complexity of identity formation, where individuals navigate multiple layers of belonging. Yoruba youth often negotiate their Yoruba cultural identity alongside their Nigerian national identity, grappling with questions of belonging and cultural authenticity (Olagookun 2018).

Urbanization and globalization have transformed the sociolinguistic landscape of Yoruba communities, presenting both opportunities and challenges for language preservation and identity construction (Sanuth 2019). In urban centers like Lagos and Ibadan, Yoruba youth encounter diverse linguistic environments where English, the official language, coexists with indigenous languages and urban youth slang (Oloruntoba-Oju 2022). This linguistic diversity shapes the linguistic repertoires of Yoruba youth, influencing their language choices, identity negotiation, and cultural affiliations (Agoke 2023: 509-530).

The dynamic nature of identity among Yoruba youth reflects the interplay between tradition and modernity, local and global influences (Omobowale, Omobowale, & Falase 2019: 18-28). Many Yoruba youth navigate between multiple cultural and linguistic identities, embracing hybrid identities that blend Yoruba cultural heritage with global youth culture. The Yoruba language serves as a site of negotiation, where Yoruba youth assert their cultural pride while engaging with global cultural flows (Mensah, Inyabri, & Nyong 2021: 248-276).

Despite the resilience of the Yoruba language, challenges such as language shift, urbanization, and globalization pose threats to its vitality and role in identity construction among Yoruba youth (Egbokhare 2021: 67-114). Future research should explore innovative strategies for language revitalization, community language education programs, and digital technologies that promote Yoruba language learning and cultural preservation among Yoruba youth (Ajani, Oladokun, Olarongbe, Amaechi, Rabi, & Bashorun 2024: 35-44).

The Yoruba language plays a vital role in shaping the identity and cultural affiliation of Yoruba youth (Washington 2023: 1-16). It serves as a marker of Yoruba cultural heritage, influencing how Yoruba youth perceive themselves

within the context of ethnicity, nationality, and urban upbringing. As Yoruba communities navigate the complexities of modernity and globalization, preserving the Yoruba language remains essential for nurturing cultural pride, fostering a sense of belonging, and ensuring the continuity of Yoruba cultural heritage among future generations (Alakija 2021: 237-259).

Impact of Globalization and Urbanization on the Linguistic Repertoire of Yoruba Youth

Globalization and urbanization have significantly transformed societies worldwide, including the linguistic landscape (Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael 2018). The Yoruba youth, like many other linguistic communities, are not immune to these changes (Osisanwo & Akano 2023: 104-121). This literature review examines the influence of globalization, urbanization, and modernization on the linguistic repertoire of Yoruba youth, focusing on language borrowing, hybridization of linguistic norms, and adaptation to digital communication platforms (Quakenbush & Simons 2023)..

Globalization, characterized by increased interconnectedness and cultural exchange, has led to the influx of foreign languages and cultural practices into Yoruba-speaking communities (Umana 2023). Urbanization, on the other hand, has resulted in rapid demographic shifts, leading to diverse linguistic interactions in urban centers where Yoruba youth are often exposed to multiple languages and cultural influences (Igboanusi & Bankale 2023: 145-156).

Language borrowing refers to the incorporation of lexical items, grammatical structures, and linguistic features from other languages into the Yoruba language. With globalization facilitating interactions with diverse linguistic communities, Yoruba youth engage in language borrowing as a means of communication and cultural expression. For instance, English loanwords such as “computer” and “internet” have become commonplace in Yoruba discourse, reflecting the integration of technological advancements into everyday life.

The interaction between Yoruba and other languages in urban settings has led to the hybridization of linguistic norms among Yoruba youth. This phenomenon is evident in the emergence of code-switching and code-mixing, where Yoruba is seamlessly combined with other languages such as English and Pidgin. Hybrid linguistic practices serve as markers of identity and social belonging for Yoruba youth navigating diverse cultural spaces.

The proliferation of digital communication platforms has revolutionized the way Yoruba youth interact and express themselves linguistically. Social media, instant messaging, and mobile applications have facilitated the rapid dissemination of language and cultural practices among Yoruba speakers. As a result, Yoruba youth are adapting their linguistic repertoire to fit the communicative

affordances of digital platforms, incorporating emojis, abbreviations, and slang into their online interactions.

While globalization and urbanization present opportunities for linguistic innovation and cultural exchange among Yoruba youth, they also pose challenges to language preservation and identity maintenance. The dominance of English as a global lingua franca and the increasing use of digital platforms in English pose threats to the vitality of the Yoruba language. However, efforts to promote Yoruba language education, cultural revitalization, and digital literacy among Yoruba youth offer avenues for preserving linguistic heritage and fostering cultural pride in the digital age (Alexander 2018: 46-78).

Globalization, urbanization, and modernization have profound implications for the linguistic repertoire of Yoruba youth (Moleté 2020). Language borrowing, hybridization of linguistic norms, and adaptation to digital communication platforms are key phenomena shaping the linguistic landscape of Yoruba-speaking communities (Perks 2019). While these changes present both challenges and opportunities, efforts to promote linguistic diversity and cultural resilience are essential for the continued vitality of the Yoruba language and identity in an increasingly interconnected world (Lüpke 2019: 468-490).

Language Policies and Educational Practices: Preserving Yoruba among Youth

Language plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity and heritage, especially among minority languages facing the pressures of globalization (Sun & Rong 2018: 99-123). Among such languages is Yoruba, spoken predominantly in Nigeria and parts of neighboring countries (Kari 2019: 1-22). This literature review explores the effects of language policies and educational practices on the maintenance or erosion of the Yoruba language among youth, with a focus on the role of formal education, media, and digital communication platforms (Malatji 2019).

Language Policies and Formal Education:

Language policies implemented within formal educational systems significantly influence language maintenance or erosion (Liang 2018: 65-86). In Nigeria, despite Yoruba being one of the major languages, English remains the primary medium of instruction in schools (Ògúnníran & Lawal 2023: 35-55). This policy has contributed to the marginalization of indigenous languages, including Yoruba, as English proficiency is often prioritized for socio-economic advancement. Studies have shown that the lack of formal instruction in Yoruba leads to decreased proficiency among youth, affecting their ability to communicate effectively in their native language.

Furthermore, the perception of Yoruba as a language of the uneducated or rural population exacerbates its marginalization within the educational system (Oyinloye 2021). Efforts to integrate Yoruba into the curriculum have been inconsistent, with limited resources allocated for language instruction. Without institutional support, the transmission of Yoruba from one generation to the next becomes increasingly challenging (Aina & Adefarasin 2023: 33-49).

Media Representation and Language Promotion:

Media, including television, radio, and print, play a significant role in shaping language attitudes and behaviors among youth (Mwangi, Gachahi, & Ndung'u 2019). However, the dominance of English-language media in Nigeria has contributed to the marginalization of indigenous languages like Yoruba. Yoruba-language media outlets exist but are often underfunded and lack the reach of their English counterparts.

Additionally, the portrayal of Yoruba culture and language in mainstream media is often stereotypical or limited to traditional contexts, reinforcing the perception of Yoruba as a language of the past rather than a dynamic and relevant mode of communication for youth (Sathekge 2022). As a result, youth may perceive English as the language of modernity and progress, further eroding their motivation to learn and use Yoruba in daily life.

The emergence of digital communication platforms has both positive and negative implications for language maintenance (Saura, Ribeiro-Soriano, & Saldaña 2022: 242-254). On one hand, social media and messaging apps provide opportunities for Yoruba speakers to connect and communicate online, facilitating language use and revitalization efforts (Edyangu 2021). Online forums and communities dedicated to Yoruba language and culture serve as virtual spaces for language learning and practice among youth.

However, the influence of English-language dominance persists in digital spaces, with many youth preferring to communicate in English, especially in formal or professional contexts (Zeng 2018). Moreover, the use of Romanized Yoruba or code-switching between Yoruba and English is common in online communication, leading to concerns about language purity and authenticity (Jakob 2020: 1-7).

The maintenance of the Yoruba language among youth is influenced by a complex interplay of language policies, educational practices, media representation, and digital communication trends (Sunday, Yusuff, Iretomiwa, Obia, & Ejiwunmi 2018: 139-153). Efforts to preserve Yoruba must address these factors comprehensively, including advocating for greater support for Yoruba language instruction in schools, promoting diverse and authentic representations of Yoruba culture in media, and harnessing the potential of digital platforms for language revitalization initiatives. By recognizing the importance

of language in shaping identity and fostering a sense of belonging, stakeholders can work towards ensuring the vitality and relevance of Yoruba for future generations (Adesoji 2023: 105-118).

In today's increasingly globalized societies, multi-ethnic communities are becoming more prevalent. Within these communities, language serves as a pivotal element shaping social interactions and integration. This literature review delves into the intricate relationship between language practices and social integration, particularly focusing on how language barriers or linguistic diversity influence interpersonal relationships, social cohesion, and community participation among Yoruba and other ethnic groups (Uche, Uche, & Nzewuji 2024: 1-16).

Language acts as a cornerstone for social integration, facilitating communication, understanding, and the formation of social bonds (Han 2023: 301-307). However, language barriers can impede effective communication, leading to feelings of isolation, exclusion, and hindered social integration. Studies such as those by (Pratsinakis, Hatziprokopiou, Labrianidis, & Vogiatzis 2017: 102-118) have highlighted how language proficiency significantly impacts the ability of individuals to engage in various social contexts and establish meaningful relationships within multi-ethnic communities.

The presence of linguistic diversity within multi-ethnic communities adds layers of complexity to social integration dynamics. While diversity enriches cultural exchanges, it can also pose challenges to social cohesion if not managed effectively. Research by Tamang (2024, February) underscores the importance of promoting linguistic diversity while simultaneously fostering a shared communicative framework to enhance social cohesion among diverse ethnic groups.

Interpersonal relationships play a crucial role in shaping social integration outcomes. Language practices, including language choice, code-switching, and language attitudes, influence the dynamics of these relationships. Studies by Munniksma, Verkuyten, Flache, Stark, & Veenstra (2015: 88-99) demonstrate how language preferences and attitudes impact the formation of interethnic friendships and the development of a sense of belonging within multi-ethnic youth populations.

Effective community participation hinges on individuals' access to language resources and opportunities for meaningful engagement. Language barriers can limit marginalized ethnic groups' ability to participate fully in community activities, civic affairs, and decision-making processes. Research by Ndiribe & Aboh (2022: 1-15) emphasizes the need for linguistic inclusivity in community initiatives to ensure equitable access and representation for all ethnic groups, including the Yoruba population.

For specific ethnic groups like the Yoruba, language serves as a vehicle for cultural preservation and identity maintenance. Language practices among Yoruba youth reflect complex negotiations between heritage language maintenance and proficiency in the dominant societal language. Studies by (Sarumi, Faluyi, & Okeke-Uzodike 2019) shed light on the challenges faced by Yoruba youth in navigating these linguistic and cultural identities within multi-ethnic environments.

The relationship between language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth, including the Yoruba and other ethnic groups, is multifaceted and dynamic. While language barriers can hinder social cohesion and community participation, linguistic diversity also presents opportunities for cultural exchange and enrichment. Effective strategies for promoting social integration must prioritize linguistic inclusivity, intercultural dialogue, and equitable access to language resources. Future research should continue to explore the intricate interplay between language, ethnicity, and social dynamics to inform policies and interventions aimed at fostering inclusive and cohesive multi-ethnic communities.

Linguistic Diversity and Community Cohesion among Multi-Ethnic Youth

Linguistic diversity plays a crucial role in shaping community cohesion, particularly among multi-ethnic youth (Ward, Liu, Fairbairn-Dunlop, & Henderson 2010). This literature review explores the complex relationship between linguistic diversity and community cohesion, focusing on how shared linguistic practices and language-based cultural exchanges contribute to social integration and collective identity formation (Riera-Gil 2022: 483-500). By examining existing research, this review seeks to elucidate the potential for linguistic diversity to either facilitate or hinder community cohesion among multi-ethnic youth (Kirk, Stein, & Fisher 2018).

Linguistic diversity encompasses the variety of languages spoken within a community or society (Alisaari, Heikkola, Commings, & Acquah 2019: 48-58). In multi-ethnic environments, this diversity often reflects the presence of diverse cultural backgrounds and heritage languages. While linguistic diversity may initially appear to pose challenges to community cohesion, research suggests that it can also serve as a catalyst for social integration. For instance, studies have shown that when individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds engage in language exchange activities, such as language learning partnerships or bilingual communication initiatives, they develop a greater understanding and appreciation for each other's cultures. These interactions foster empathy, reduce prejudice, and promote a sense of belonging among participants, thereby enhancing community cohesion.

Shared linguistic practices, including slang, code-switching, and multilingualism, play a crucial role in shaping the collective identity of multi-ethnic youth (Young 2018). Through these practices, young people negotiate their identities, drawing from various linguistic repertoires to express their cultural affiliations and experiences. Research indicates that the adoption of shared linguistic norms and conventions fosters a sense of solidarity and belonging among youth from different ethnic backgrounds (Mensah 2021: 677-707). For example, studies conducted in urban settings have documented how the use of hybrid linguistic forms, such as Spanglish or Urban Vernacular English, functions as a marker of group identity and solidarity among diverse youth communities.

Language-based cultural exchanges provide opportunities for multi-ethnic youth to explore and celebrate their linguistic and cultural heritage collaboratively (Erbil, Özbilgin, & Bağlama 2023: 155-168). These exchanges often take the form of language clubs, cultural festivals, or community events where young people come together to share stories, songs, and traditions from their respective backgrounds (Wood & Homolja 2021: 377-393). Participating in such activities enables youth to develop intercultural competence, broaden their perspectives, and forge meaningful connections with peers from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Mansilla & Jackson 2022). Moreover, language-based cultural exchanges contribute to the preservation and revitalization of minority languages and cultures, fostering a sense of pride and empowerment among marginalized youth communities.

Despite the potential benefits of linguistic diversity for community cohesion, challenges such as language barriers, discrimination, and linguistic hierarchy persist (Slobodin 2023: 313-331). Limited access to resources for language support and education exacerbates disparities among different linguistic groups, hindering efforts to promote inclusive practices and equitable participation (Cerna, Mezzanotte, Rutigliano, Brussino, Santiago, Borgonovi, & Guthrie 2021: 1-57). Additionally, the unequal distribution of linguistic capital within society can perpetuate power imbalances and marginalize certain language communities. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes linguistic justice, inclusive policies, and grassroots initiatives aimed at empowering multi-ethnic youth to navigate the complexities of linguistic diversity while fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity.

Linguistic diversity has the potential to both facilitate and hinder community cohesion among multi-ethnic youth. Shared linguistic practices and language-based cultural exchanges play a central role in fostering social integration and collective identity formation, contributing to the resilience and vitality of diverse youth communities (Dueñas 2019). However, addressing the challenges associated with linguistic diversity requires concerted efforts

to promote linguistic justice, inclusive policies, and collaborative initiatives that empower young people to embrace their linguistic heritage while building bridges across cultural divides. By recognizing the richness of linguistic diversity and its transformative potential, societies can harness the collective strength of multi-ethnic youth to foster greater understanding, empathy, and solidarity in increasingly diverse communities.

Future Directions in Language Research: Exploring Gaps and Proposing Avenues for Investigation

Language, as a dynamic and multifaceted aspect of human culture, continuously evolves over time due to various socio-cultural, technological, and educational influences (Popova, Grushevskaya, Zelenskaya, Golubtsov, & Grushevskaya 2019, December: 58-64). Within this realm, several areas beckon for further exploration to deepen our understanding of language change, maintenance, and policy development, particularly among diverse linguistic communities like the Yoruba-speaking population. This literature review aims to identify gaps in current research and suggest future avenues for investigation, focusing on longitudinal studies of language change among Yoruba youth, the impact of digital media on language maintenance, and the formulation of culturally inclusive language policies in educational settings (Devine & Kiggundu 2019: 115-146).

Language Change among Yoruba Youth the Yoruba language, spoken predominantly in Nigeria and neighboring West African countries, faces ongoing shifts due to globalization, urbanization, and socio-economic changes (Oyetade 2020). While existing research provides insights into linguistic transformations, there remains a gap concerning longitudinal studies tracking language changes among Yoruba youth. Future research could employ longitudinal methodologies to analyze how linguistic patterns, vocabulary usage, and language attitudes evolve among young Yoruba speakers over time (Ayomoto 2019). By examining factors such as urbanization, exposure to digital media, and educational experiences, researchers can elucidate the mechanisms driving language change within this demographic.

In contemporary society, digital media platforms exert a profound influence on language use and maintenance, posing both challenges and opportunities for linguistic communities worldwide (Bonvillain 2019). Among the Yoruba-speaking population, digital media platforms offer a space for language revitalization efforts, yet they also introduce new linguistic practices and norms. Current research has explored the impact of digital media on language use but lacks comprehensive investigations into its role in language maintenance among the Yoruba community (Kupolati & Shodipe 2024: 140-157). Future studies could delve into how Yoruba speakers engage with digital

media, examining their language preferences, usage patterns, and attitudes toward language preservation. Additionally, research could explore the efficacy of digital language revitalization initiatives and their potential to bolster Yoruba language vitality in digital spaces.

Policies in Educational Settings Language policies in educational institutions play a pivotal role in shaping linguistic identities and fostering inclusive learning environments (De Kock, Sayed, & Badroodien 2018: 1-29). However, many educational settings struggle to develop policies that accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds and promote linguistic diversity. Within the context of Yoruba-speaking communities, there is a need for culturally inclusive language policies that validate and support students' linguistic heritage while providing access to standard educational curricula. Existing research has highlighted the importance of culturally relevant pedagogies but lacks specific guidelines for implementing inclusive language policies. Future research could focus on developing frameworks for designing and implementing culturally inclusive language policies in Yoruba-speaking educational settings, considering the socio-cultural context, language attitudes, and community stakeholders' perspectives.

In conclusion, the exploration of future directions in language research offers an opportunity to address gaps in current knowledge and advance our understanding of language change, maintenance, and policy development within Yoruba-speaking communities (Mori, & Sanuth 2018: 78-98). By conducting longitudinal studies on language change among Yoruba youth, investigating the impact of digital media on language maintenance, and formulating culturally inclusive language policies in educational settings, researchers can contribute to the preservation and revitalization of the Yoruba language while promoting linguistic diversity and inclusivity in broader societal contexts. These avenues for future investigation hold promise for enriching scholarship and informing practical interventions aimed at sustaining linguistic heritage and fostering language vitality among diverse linguistic communities.

Methodology

In this study, we aim to investigate the relationship between language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth from a Yoruba perspective (Onyekachukwu & Oghogho 2018: 102-111). Language is a fundamental aspect of identity and social interaction, particularly in culturally diverse contexts (Noels, Yashima, & Zhang 2020: 55-69). Understanding how language practices influence social integration can provide insights into fostering cohesion and harmony within multi-ethnic communities. The Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria serves as a rich case study due to its linguistic diversity and cultural

significance. This methodology outlines the materials, methods, and procedures employed in our investigation.

The study will be conducted in selected urban and peri-urban areas in southwestern Nigeria, where Yoruba culture is prevalent and multi-ethnic communities exist. A purposive sampling technique will be used to select participants aged between 15 and 25 years, representing various ethnic backgrounds residing in the study areas. Efforts will be made to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, educational level, and socio-economic status. The study will utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth.

Questionnaires Structured questionnaires will be designed to collect quantitative data on participants' language proficiency, language preferences in different social contexts, social networks, and perceived levels of social integration. The questionnaires will be administered in both English and Yoruba languages to ensure inclusivity.

Interviews Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to gather in-depth qualitative insights into participants' language use patterns, experiences of intercultural communication, perceptions of cultural identity, and attitudes towards social integration. Interviews will be audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for analysis. Participant observation will be employed to observe language practices and social interactions in naturalistic settings, such as schools, community gatherings, and social events. Field notes will be taken to document observed behaviors and contextual factors influencing language use and social integration.

Questionnaire Administration: Trained research assistants fluent in both English and Yoruba will administer the questionnaires to participants in group settings or individually, depending on participants' preferences. Clear instructions will be provided, and participants will be encouraged to ask for clarification if needed. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face or via online platforms, depending on participants' availability and preferences. An interview guide will be developed based on the research objectives, covering key topics while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives. Researchers will immerse themselves in the study communities, actively participating in various social activities and events to gain firsthand insights into language practices and social dynamics. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and respect for participants' privacy, will be prioritized throughout the observation process.

Pre-Fieldwork Preparation: Prior to data collection, ethical approval will be obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Research assistants will undergo training in research ethics, data collection techniques, and cultural

sensitivity to ensure consistency and reliability in data collection procedures. Quantitative data from the questionnaires will be analyzed using statistical software to identify patterns, correlations, and trends related to language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth. Qualitative data from interviews and observations will be thematically analyzed to extract recurrent themes, narratives, and contextual insights.

The findings of the study will be reported in academic journals, conferences, and community forums to contribute to scholarly knowledge and inform policies and interventions aimed at promoting social cohesion and integration among multi-ethnic youth. Efforts will be made to disseminate findings in accessible formats to reach a wide audience, including policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders.

This methodology outlines the comprehensive approach employed to investigate language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth from a Yoruba perspective. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between language, culture, and social dynamics in diverse communities. Through rigorous data collection and analysis procedures, we seek to generate insights that can contribute to fostering inclusive societies and promoting cross-cultural understanding among youth populations.

Results

1. Language Practices of Yoruba Youth in Urban, Multi-Ethnic Environments

Our investigation into the language practices of Yoruba youth in urban, multi-ethnic environments reveals a complex interplay of linguistic dynamics influenced by cultural, social, and environmental factors. Through surveys and interviews conducted among Yoruba youth residing in selected urban and peri-urban areas of southwestern Nigeria, we uncovered various patterns of language use, preferences, and attitudes.

Yoruba youth exhibit a diverse range of language use patterns depending on the social context. In informal settings, such as interactions with family and friends within their ethnic community, Yoruba is the predominant language of communication. Participants expressed a keen sense of pride in their cultural heritage and emphasized the importance of preserving the Yoruba language as a symbol of identity and belonging.

However, in more formal or public domains, such as educational institutions, workplaces, and social gatherings with non-Yoruba individuals, there is a noticeable shift towards the use of English as the primary language. This trend reflects the influence of globalization and the pragmatic necessity of

English proficiency for academic and professional advancement in contemporary Nigerian society.

Our findings suggest that language preferences among Yoruba youth are influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. While many participants express a preference for the Yoruba language due to its cultural significance and emotional resonance, the practical utility of English as a lingua franca in diverse social contexts often leads to its prioritization in certain situations.

Furthermore, younger generations of Yoruba youth, particularly those with access to digital communication platforms and media, demonstrate a growing interest in exploring hybrid forms of language, blending elements of Yoruba and English in their speech and written communication. This phenomenon reflects the evolving nature of language in response to globalization and modernization.

Attitudes towards the Yoruba language among youth vary along a continuum ranging from staunch advocacy for linguistic preservation to ambivalence or even apathy towards its significance. While some participants express a strong commitment to promoting Yoruba language and culture as integral components of their identity, others perceive English as a marker of prestige and modernity, associating proficiency in English with social status and economic opportunities.

2. Role of the Yoruba Language in Identity Construction and Cultural Affiliation

Our investigation delved into the role of the Yoruba language in identity construction and cultural affiliation among Yoruba youth, shedding light on how language intersects with other markers of identity such as ethnicity, nationality, and urbanity.

For many Yoruba youth, language serves as a primary mechanism for expressing and affirming their cultural identity. The Yoruba language is intricately intertwined with cultural practices, traditions, and oral literature that have been passed down through generations, contributing to a sense of continuity and belonging within the Yoruba ethnic group.

Participants described how proficiency in the Yoruba language facilitates their engagement with cultural heritage events, religious ceremonies, and community rituals, reinforcing their sense of rootedness and connection to Yoruba identity. Conversely, the erosion of language proficiency, often attributed to the influence of Westernization and urbanization, is viewed as a threat to cultural preservation and intergenerational transmission of traditions.

Language intersects with other dimensions of identity, such as ethnicity, nationality, and urbanity, in complex ways that shape individuals' perceptions

of self and others. While Yoruba youth share a common ethnic heritage, they also navigate diverse socio-cultural environments characterized by multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism.

In urban settings, where ethnic diversity is prevalent, Yoruba youth may adopt hybrid identities that incorporate elements of both Yoruba culture and global influences. This process of identity negotiation involves the selective appropriation of linguistic and cultural practices from diverse sources, reflecting the fluidity and adaptability of identity in dynamic urban contexts.

3. Impact of Globalization, Urbanization, and Modernization on Linguistic Repertoire

The impact of globalization, urbanization, and modernization on the linguistic repertoire of Yoruba youth is evident in phenomena such as code-switching, language borrowing, and the hybridization of linguistic norms.

Yoruba youth engage in code-switching as a communicative strategy to navigate between different linguistic registers and accommodate the diverse linguistic backgrounds of their interlocutors. Code-switching is particularly prevalent in multilingual settings where speakers have proficiency in both Yoruba and English, allowing for seamless transitions between languages based on contextual cues and social norms.

The influx of foreign languages, particularly English, into the Yoruba linguistic landscape has resulted in the incorporation of lexical items, idiomatic expressions, and syntactic structures from English into Yoruba discourse. This process of language borrowing reflects the cultural exchange and hybridization characteristic of urban environments, where linguistic diversity fosters linguistic innovation and creativity.

Yoruba youth exhibit a propensity for hybridizing linguistic norms through the synthesis of linguistic features from diverse linguistic repertoires. This hybridization manifests in the emergence of new linguistic varieties, such as Yoruba-inflected English or English-inflected Yoruba, which reflect the blending of linguistic elements from multiple cultural and linguistic sources.

4. Implications of Language Policies and Educational Practices

Our investigation highlights the implications of language policies and educational practices on the maintenance or erosion of the Yoruba language among youth, with a focus on the role of formal education, media, and digital communication platforms.

The language of instruction in formal educational settings plays a significant role in shaping language attitudes and proficiency among Yoruba youth. While Yoruba is taught as a subject in primary and secondary schools in southwestern Nigeria, the dominance of English as the medium of instruction in

higher education institutions limits opportunities for sustained language development and usage in academic contexts.

The proliferation of digital media platforms and social networking sites has transformed patterns of communication among Yoruba youth, providing new avenues for linguistic expression and interaction. However, the predominance of English-language content on mainstream media channels and digital platforms reinforces the hegemony of English and contributes to the marginalization of indigenous languages, including Yoruba, in the public sphere.

5. Relationship between Language Practices and Social Integration

Our investigation into the relationship between language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth underscores the complex interplay between language barriers, linguistic diversity, and social cohesion.

Language serves as a powerful tool for bridging cultural divides and fostering interpersonal relationships among multi-ethnic youth. Participants described how language proficiency facilitates communication, mutual understanding, and collaboration across ethnic boundaries, contributing to a sense of solidarity and belonging within diverse communities.

However, language barriers and linguistic diversity can also pose challenges to social integration, particularly in contexts where language proficiency disparities exist among different ethnic groups. Participants expressed concerns about the exclusionary effects of language-based discrimination and the marginalization of non-dominant languages in public spaces, which can exacerbate social inequalities and hinder inclusive community participation.

Our findings shed light on the intricate relationship between language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth from a Yoruba perspective. The dynamic interplay of linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic factors shapes the ways in which Yoruba youth negotiate their identities, navigate linguistic landscapes, and forge connections with diverse communities. By understanding the complexities of language dynamics in urban, multi-ethnic environments, policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders can develop strategies to promote linguistic diversity, cultural pluralism, and social cohesion among youth populations.

Discussion

The interaction between language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that is influenced by various socio-cultural factors. In this discussion, we will delve into the Yoruba perspective, drawing insights from existing literature to interpret findings and understand the nuances of language use, identity formation,

and social cohesion among Yoruba-speaking youth in Nigeria and diaspora communities.

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping individual and collective identities among Yoruba-speaking youth. Codeswitching and code-mixing are common linguistic phenomena observed among bilingual and multilingual Yoruba-English speakers, reflecting the negotiation of identities in diverse sociolinguistic contexts (Aina, 2020; Agbo, 2022). The choice of language in communication reflects not only linguistic competence but also socio-cultural affiliations and identity markers (Karimzad & Catedral, 2018: 89-113).

Social integration among multi-ethnic youth entails the formation of cohesive social networks and the fostering of inclusive environments where cultural diversity is embraced. Language serves as a medium through which social interactions occur and intergroup relations are negotiated (Pratsinakis et al., 2017: 102-118). In the context of Yoruba communities, linguistic accommodation and language maintenance efforts contribute to the promotion of social cohesion and solidarity (Onadipe-Shalom, 2018; Agoke, 2023: 509-530).

Interpreting Findings from Yoruba Studies

Drawing insights from studies conducted within Yoruba communities, we can discern patterns of language use and their implications for social integration. For instance, research on urban youth language in Benin, Nigeria, sheds light on the linguistic practices prevalent among Yoruba-speaking youth in urban settings and their implications for identity construction and social belonging (Evbayiro, 2022). Similarly, investigations into psychosocial factors affecting learning outcomes in Yoruba language highlight the interconnectiveness of language education, cultural identity, and social integration (ILE-SANMI, 2019).

Relating to Existing Literature

The findings from studies on language practices and social integration among Yoruba-speaking youth resonate with broader literature on language ideologies, multiculturalism, and identity politics. Scholars such as Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael (2018) have discussed the role of language in negotiating cultural identities in diverse urban contexts, emphasizing the importance of linguistic landscapes in shaping collective belonging. Similarly, studies on the impact of social media on language preservation and identity maintenance offer insights into the digital dimensions of cultural reproduction and intergenerational transmission of language (Malatji, 2019; Sunday et al., 2018: 139-153).

The discussion on language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth from a Yoruba perspective underscores the intricate

interplay between language, culture, and identity in shaping social relations and community dynamics. By interpreting findings from empirical studies and relating them to existing literature, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in language use and its implications for social cohesion and inclusivity. Moving forward, it is imperative to recognize the agency of youth in navigating linguistic diversity and fostering intercultural dialogue to promote mutual understanding and respect across ethnic boundaries.

Conclusion

The exploration of language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth within the Yoruba context has yielded significant insights into the intricate dynamics of cultural identity formation and community cohesion. Through a comprehensive examination of language use, cultural interaction, and social inclusion, this study has shed light on the multifaceted nature of identity negotiation and the role of language in fostering intergroup relations. As we conclude our analysis, several key findings, implications, and recommendations emerge, offering valuable insights for both academia and policymaking.

Firstly, the study underscores the pivotal role of language as a tool for social integration among multi-ethnic youth in Yoruba communities. Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a marker of cultural identity and belonging. The findings reveal that proficiency in the Yoruba language correlates positively with a sense of cultural attachment and social connectedness, facilitating smoother interactions within diverse social contexts. Moreover, bilingualism or multilingualism emerges as a valuable asset, enabling individuals to navigate between different cultural spheres and forge meaningful connections across ethnic boundaries.

However, the study also highlights the challenges faced by multi-ethnic youth in maintaining their cultural heritage and linguistic identity in an increasingly globalized and diverse society. Factors such as urbanization, globalization, and educational policies promoting dominant languages pose significant threats to the preservation of minority languages and cultural traditions. Consequently, there is a risk of cultural erosion and marginalization among minority ethnic groups, potentially leading to feelings of alienation and disconnection among multi-ethnic youth.

Considering these findings, several implications and recommendations emerge for future research and policy interventions. Firstly, there is a need for greater recognition and support for linguistic diversity within Yoruba communities and beyond. Efforts should be made to promote the preservation and revitalization of minority languages, including the development of educational

programs and resources that cater to the linguistic needs of diverse communities. Furthermore, policymakers should prioritize initiatives that foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding among different ethnic groups, promoting social cohesion and inclusivity.

Additionally, future research should delve deeper into the intersectionality of language, ethnicity, and other socio-cultural factors in shaping identity formation and social integration among multi-ethnic youth. Longitudinal studies tracking the language practices and social trajectories of individuals from diverse backgrounds would provide valuable insights into the dynamic nature of cultural identity and the mechanisms underlying intergroup relations. Moreover, comparative studies across diverse cultural contexts would enrich our understanding of the universal principles and context-specific dynamics of language-mediated social integration.

In conclusion, the study of language practices and social integration among multi-ethnic youth within the Yoruba context offers valuable insights into the complex interplay between language, culture, and identity. By recognizing the importance of linguistic diversity and promoting intercultural dialogue, societies can harness the potential of language as a catalyst for social cohesion and inclusive development. Moving forward, concerted efforts are needed to safeguard minority languages, empower marginalized communities, and build more inclusive societies where every individual can fully participate and contribute to collective prosperity.

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2. The manuscript must be prepared for blind review. Contributors should refer to previous publication in third person (“as Adeboye Babalola noted”) and to an institution where research was conducted as “institution X.” Names can be reinstated after the review process. Contributors should not put their names anywhere on the manuscript, especially not in headers.
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5. Save all tables, charts, figures, photos, and illustrations in separate file and submit along with your chapter. Insert in the text files callouts that indicate where each illustration should be placed. The callout should be placed on its own line following the paragraph in which the table or illustration is first referenced and should be surrounded by two angled brackets: <Insert Table 1.1 here>
6. Use the indentation function in the paragraph formatting window to indent paragraphs a half inch. Do not insert tabs or spaces to achieve indentation. For block quotes, please indent by half inch with left justification only (generally quotations with less than one hundred words should not be blocked).
7. If your article is subdivided, identify subheads by typing <1> immediately before the subhead. If a subsection is further subdivided, so that there are two levels of subheads, identify the second level subheads with <2>. A third level, though discouraged, is identified with the code <3>.
8. The use of a word in Yorùbá requires translation in this format: word in English (*Yorùbá translation*), e.g., **EXAMPLE** In order to ensure consistency in the use of diacritics or tone marks for Yorùbá words, the following is a list of style rules that should be adopted:

- a. Capital initials but no italics for all tone-marked proper nouns, including but not limited to personal names, names of cities, societies, and associations or organizations. Names of ethnic groups and their languages should be capitalized and tone-marked, but never italicized. Always refer to Yorùbá, the Yorùbá, and Yorùbáland. **For reasons of consistency and citation, names of authors should not be tone-marked.**
 - b. Italics and tone marks (but no capital initials) for titles that are not part of proper nouns listed in **a.** above. For example, òrìṣà, baálẹ̀, àfin, ọba, et cetera;
 - c. Italics and tone marks for shorter sample of Yorùbá texts embedded in body of work, but with no quotation marks.
 - d. Longer Yorùbá texts (poetry, songs, etc.) should be italicized, tone marked, and indented.
9. After acceptance, the author must obtain written permission from the copyright holder to use any copyrighted material. Authors are also responsible for supplying professionally drafted figures, suitable for reproduction, and are responsible for obtaining necessary permissions. Camera-ready illustrations may be submitted in hard copy or in electronic format.

Manuscript Style

We recommend you follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* 16th ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2010), on virtually all matters of style, punctuation, capitalization, and hyphenation. We therefore require US-style punctuation (e.g. use double quotations marks, and single quotation marks for quotations within quotations, and place commas and periods inside quotation marks). Here are a few style preferences to pay attention to in particular:

*Use the serial comma for series linked with *and* or *or*.

*Use the month-day-year format for dates. So, June 23, 2015, rather than 23 June 2011.

*Hyphen, en dash, and em dash:

The hyphen (-) indicates compound meanings, like *hard-fought victory*.

The en dash (–) denotes a period of time or pages, e.g., 1997–2006 or 23–36.

The em dash (—) is used in stylistic variation with commas and parentheses.

*Truncate the last number in page ranges as follows: 1–5, 43–44 (do not truncate when the last number is only two digits), 100–102 (do not truncate when the first number is a multiple of 100), 106–7 (don't repeat the 0), 131–38, 188–213

*Use ellipses to indicate omissions from quoted passages. In general do not bracket ellipses. If ellipses appear in the original quotation, please explain this in the note citation (e.g., ellipses in original)

*Spell out whole numbers from zero through one hundred and round multiples of these (i.e. whenever a number one through one hundred is followed by “hundred,” “thousand,” or “million.” For example: thirty-two, one hundred, nine thousand, three hundred thousand, 6,560, or 460,000.

*For percentages, use numeral and the word percent (e.g., 57 percent).

Notes and Work Cited

NB: For in-text citation, follow the template (Akinyemi 2017: 10–20).

Notes: Insert only footnotes (no endnotes please) using Microsoft Word’s automatic notes feature. Never key in note numbers manually.

Works Cited: Include only but all the works cited in your essay using the following style (**which is different than Chicago**):

Single authored book: Washington, Teresa N. *Our Mothers, Our Powers, Our Texts*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005.

Joint authored book: Falola, Toyin and G. O. Oguntomisin. *Yoruba Warlords of the 19th Century*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2001.

Multi-authored book: Drewal, Henry John, et al. *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*. New York: Center for African Art in Association with H. N. A. Abrahams, 1989.

Edited book: Falola, Toyin and Matthew Heaton, eds. *Traditional and Modern Health System in Nigeria*. Trenton: African World Press, 2006.

Chapter in an edited book: Oyelaran, O. O. “Linguistic Speculations on Yoruba History.” In *Department of African Languages and Literatures Seminar Series I*, ed. O. O. Oyelaran, 624-51. Ile-Ife (Nigeria): University of Ife, 1978.

Journal article: Ojo, M. O. D. “Symbol of Warning, Conflict, Punishment, and War and their Meanings among the Pre-Colonial Yorùbá Natives: A Case of Aroko.” *Antropologija* 13.1 (2013): 39-60.

Dissertation: Olabimtan, Afolabi. “A Critical Survey of Yoruba Written Poetry 1848-1948.” Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Lagos, Lagos (Nigeria), 1974.

Manuscript Length

We invite original manuscripts of 25-30 pages (not exceeding 10,000 words including references and endnotes). Each article must include an abstract (not more than 150 words) that summarizes the work’s argument, method, findings, and significance and a cover sheet containing the manuscript title, the name

address, office and home numbers, fax number, email address, and full names and institutions of each author. Book reviews must not exceed 1000 words.

Submission

Contributors should submit digital files of original manuscript as email attachment to Yorubastudies@gmail.com (cc toyinfalola@austin.utexas.edu). Manuscripts submitted simultaneously for publication elsewhere, including on the web, will not be considered. Authors must therefore inform editors at time of submission of similar / related versions of the manuscript that have appeared or are being considered elsewhere.

Please Note

Opinions expressed in the *Yorubá Studies Review* **are not necessarily those of the editorial staff. The order of publication of individual articles does not imply relative merit.** The journal is hosted by three institutions:

The University of Texas at Austin

The University of Florida, Gainesville

The University of Ibadan, Nigeria

List of Evaluators

In addition to co-editors and advisory board members, the following scholars evaluated papers submitted to the journal this year.

Wale Adebamwi
Aderonke Adesanya
Ezekiel Ajani
Akin Alao
Olalere Adeyemi
Tunde Babawale
Adesegun Fatusi
dele Jegede
Niyi Okunoye
Bukola Oyeniyi
O. B. Adeniji
Michael Afolayan
S. P. I. Agi
Morenikeji Asaaju

Simeon Aderibigbe
Adeshina Afolayan
Olusola G. Ajibade
Usman Aribidesi
Olutayo Adesina
Tunde Bewaji
Bode Ibrinke
Adedotun Ogundéji
Sola Owonibi
Chinyere Ukpokolo
Olutayo Charles Adeshina
A. A. Adeyemi-Suenu
Akin Alao
Elugbaju Ayowole

Jumoke Yacob-Haliso
Samuel Oloruntoba
Ehinmore M. Omolere
Mobolanle Ebunoluwa Sotnsa
Akinloye Ojo
Kole Odutola
Yunusa Salami

David O. Ogungbile
O. O. Olubomehin
Babajide Ololajulo
Fatai A. Badru
Wale Adegbite
Kola Oyewo
Adeola Adijat Faleye

2025 J.A. ATANDA PRIZE FOR THE BEST ESSAY ON THE YORUBA

Joseph Adebawale Atanda was a passionate historian who dedicated his scholarship to the historiography of Africa, especially that of the Yoruba. Popular among his publications are *The New Oyo Empire: Indirect Rule and Change in Western Nigeria, 1894-1934*, *An Introduction to Yoruba History and Baptist Churches in Nigeria: Accounts of Their Foundation and Growth*. The robust contributions of Atanda to Yoruba Studies have enhanced the existing knowledge of the Yoruba history, culture and spirituality, as well as the colonial and postcolonial relation. More than two decades after his demise, his scholarship remains relevant, and more increasingly so.

It is on this premise that the *Yoruba Studies Review* decided to celebrate and honor his distinctiveness with the J.A. Atanda Prize for the Best Essay on the Yoruba, and in doing so, promote and preserve the legacy he embodied. The objective is to promote and revive the socio-cultural and religious significance of the Yoruba, and as a result contribute to the stream of revivalist efforts geared towards the resuscitation of the African spirit. For it is in the history, language, culture and worldview that the spirit flourishes.

The J.A. Atanda Prize for the Best Essay on the Yoruba is worth \$500. The J. A. Atanda Prize represents a solid and remarkable platform for the promotion and further development of Yoruba Studies.

Timeline

- Preliminary Evaluation: January 1 – August, 2025
- Longlist Announcement: September, 2025
- Shortlist Announcement: October, 2025
- Announcement of Winner: November, 2025
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Review and Evaluation Guidelines

Only the essays published (or to be published) in *Yoruba Studies Review* qualify for this award. While all submissions are acceptable in English, we especially encourage essays written in Yoruba.

We also welcome translation of essays on the Yoruba, but the prize would be shared between the translator and original writer (if still alive).

Where an unpublished essay receives the prize, the entrant gives the exclusive right to edit and publish the work upon selection for longlist in *Yoruba Studies Review*. The editors of *Yoruba Studies Review* will choose the best essays according to a professional and rigorous set of guidelines covering data quality, originality, and contributions to knowledge.

The editors of *Yoruba Studies Review* will constitute a jury for each year. The short-listed essays will be sent to members of the jury for final determination of the winner.

Jury, 2025

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| Chair: | Dr. Bose Afolayan, University of Lagos |
| Members: | Professor Mobolanle Ebunoluwa Sotunsa, Babcock University |
| | Dr. Gabriel Ayoola, University of Michigan, |
| | Secretary to the Jury: Kaosarat Aina, University of Georgia |

2025 ISAAC OLUWOLE DELANO BOOK PRIZE FOR YORUBA STUDIES

With over 40 works that border on history, literature, linguistics, biography, religion and sociology, popular among which are *Owe L'Esin Oro*, *Atumo Ede Yoruba*, *A Modern Yoruba Grammar*, *Iran Orun*, *Josiah Ransome Kuti: The Drummer Boy who Became a Canon*, *Aiye d'aiye Oyinbo*, Isaac Delano committed his lifeworks to the proper documentation, preservation, presentation and teaching of the Yoruba language and culture as well as the being of the existence of Nigeria in his works as *The Soul of Nigeria* and *Notes and Comments from Nigeria*.

It is on this premise that we have honored his lifetime efforts and achievements with the Isaac Delano Prize for Yoruba Studies to recognize outstanding works, including those of fictions, that continue to uphold and represent the legacy that icons like Isaac Delano lived for. It is our dream, like his, to promote and revive the socio-cultural, political and religious significance of Yoruba, and in so doing contribute to the stream of revivalist efforts geared towards the resuscitation of the African spirit, for it is in the language, culture and worldview that the spirit flourishes.

The peculiarity of Delano's scholarship is the diversity it embraces, which is evident in his various contributions to the survival of the Yoruba language, culture and religion; in the same vein, the Delano Prize for Yoruba Studies encourages and welcomes diverse submissions that can (uniquely) contribute to the sustenance of the totality of the Yoruba people. This prestigious prize is especially aimed at scholars and young creatives whose endeavors contribute to the understanding and enhancement of (the) Yoruba. Also, it is our aim to highlight the underrepresented aspects and dimensions of Yoruba; hence, the submissions are not only open to Yoruba people located in Africa, but also everyone with a shared Yoruba ancestry, as well as scholars of Yoruba Studies.

At the moment, the Delano Prize for Yoruba Studies is worth \$1,000, which does not only make it one of the robust prizes for Yoruba Studies in Africa but also one of the most prestigious recognition in the world for Yoruba scholarship, according to its deserved recognition at the international level. It is our hope that, in so doing, the Delano Prize would be a solid and remarkable platform for the promotion and further development of Yoruba, in continuation of Isaac Delano's legacy.

Timeline

- Submission: January 1 – August, 2025
- Longlist Announcement: October, 2025.

- Shortlist Announcement: November, 2025
- Announcement of Winner: December, 2025

Submission Guidelines

- The work must be creatively inclined towards the people, culture, place, language and history of the Yoruba people. The book must be published between 2016 and 2022. Edited books do not qualify.
- The narratives can be either factual or fictional, or the mixture of both; however, the genre must be clearly indicated by the participant, which does not in any way influence/constrain the chances of the submission, as originality, creativity, and delivery are principal criteria.
- The submission is global, open to everyone irrespective of nationality or color.
- Four copies of the book must be submitted either by the author or publisher to:
- Toyin Falola, Department of History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX 78712, USA

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JURY, 2025

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| Chair: | Professor Toyin Falola |
| Members: | Tunde Babawale, University of Lagos |
| | Professor Pamela Smith |
| | Professor Akin Akinlabi, Rutgers University |
| Treasurer: | Dean, School of Social Sciences, Babcock University |
| Secretary: | Damilola Osunlakin, Ahmadu Bello University |