

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**THE LITERARY SIGNIFICANCE OF PROVERBS USED IN SELECTED  
WEST AFRICAN DRAMA**

**EBENEZER YAO AGBENYO**



**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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WEST AFRICAN DRAMA**

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**A Thesis in the Department of English Language Education,  
Faculty of Foreign Languages Education, submitted to the  
School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy  
(English Language Education)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**JUNE, 2023**

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **EBENEZER YAO AGBENYO**, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works, which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date:.....



### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation this research was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of M. Phil thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

**DR. MARTIN KYIILEYANG**

Signature:.....

Date:.....

## **DEDICATION**

In loving memory of the woman who truly believed in me (Madam Grace Aku Amega, my Mom). Behind every successful man, they say is a woman, but what they fail to add is that, that woman is his mother.

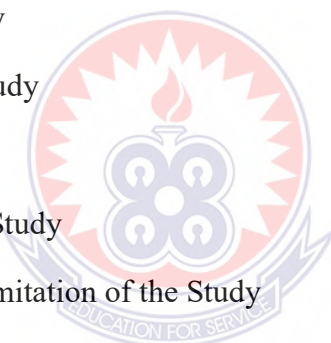


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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Pages</b>
DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	xiv
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Preview to the Study	1
1.2 Background to the Study	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem	5
1.4 Purpose of the Study	7
1.5 Objectives of the Study	7
1.6 Research Questions	8
1.7 Significance of the Study	8
1.8 Limitation and Delimitation of the Study	9
1.9 Organization of the Study	9
1.10 Methodology	10
1.11 Research Approach	10
1.12 Sample and Sampling Procedure	11
1.14 Method of Data Analysis	12
1.15 Justification for the Sampling	13
1.16 Theoretical Framework	13
1.17 Summary of Methodology	22
1.18 Chapter Summary	22



<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Definition of Technical Terms	23
2.3 Features of Proverbs	35
2.4 Language and Culture	40
2.5 The Reflexive Functions of Proverbs	45
2.6 Classification of Proverbs	47
2.7 Precautionary Proverbs	48
2.8 Premonition and Intuition Proverbs	51
2.9 Proverbs on Diligence	51
2.10 Forms and Sources of Proverbs	52
2.11 Verbal Proverbs	53
2.12 Folktales as Proverbial Expression	53
2.13 Proverb Names	55
2.14 Praise-Proverbs	58
2.15 Proverb-Riddles	61
2.16 Proverbs Used in Songs	62
2.17 Non-Verbal Proverbs	63
2.17.1 Drum language	64
2.18 Sculptures and Designs	65
2.19 Proverbs used as Incantations in Traditional Worship	65
2.20 Sources of Proverbs	70
2.21 Functions of Proverbs	71
2.22 Proverbs and Communicative Competence	84
2.23 About the Authors	85
2.24 Chapter Summary	88



<b>CHAPTER THREE: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS</b>	<b>89</b>
3.1 Overview of Analysis	89
3.2 Caution and Admonition	90
3.2.1 Proverb no. 6: Walls have ears	90
3.2.2 Proverb no.8: The only child must not wander at the verge of the evil grove (Owonibi, 2016 p.10.)	91
3.2.3 Proverb no.10: The only groundnut must not fall on a rock (Owonibi, 2016 p.10)	92
3.2.4 Proverb no.11: Why doesn't the egg eater think of the pain it costs the hen?	93
3.2.5 Proverb no.12: We do not treat ringworm at the expense of leprosy (Owonibi, 2016 p.14)	94
3.2.6 Proverb no.14: Teeth need not to be numerous before they bite (Soyinka, 2014 p. 22.)	95
3.2.7 Proverb no.17: He who does not speak, does not run the risk of having his pipe out	96
3.2.8 Proverb no.18: If a monkey dies of stomach ache, apes do not rejoice. (Owonibi, 2016 p.37.)	97
3.2.9 Proverb no.28: A father employs only a small stick on his child, he doesn't call in the policemen to take him to goal (Soyinka, 2014 p.7)	97
3.2.10 Proverb no.41: If fools didn't go to the market bad ware wouldn't be sold. Owonibi 2016, p.27	98
3.2.11 Proverb no.43: Blood is thicker than water	99
3.2.12 Proverb no.44: A good horse never stumbles	99
3.2.13 Proverb no.45: The insect that feeds on leaves lives on leaves	100
3.2.14 Proverb no.49: For a long stick not to go through your eyes you must avoid it from a distance	101
3.2.15 Proverb no.51: If you do not step on a dry palm branch it will not make a noise	102
3.2.16 Proverb no.63: A pot mustn't be rolled like a mortar	103
3.2.17 Proverb no.64: Cocoa pod is never to be plucked like okra (Owonibi, 2016 p.77)	103



3.2.18 Proverb no.60: A secret known to two is only safe if one of them dies. (Owonibi, 2016 p. 68)	104
3.2.19 Proverb no.76: The infant which tries its milk teeth on every bone and stone grows up with nothing to eat dried meat with (Aidoo, 1970 p.41)	104
3.2.20 Proverb no.80: One stops wearing a hat only when the head had fallen off (Aidoo, 1970 p.57)	105
3.3 Authority and Responsibility	106
3.3.1 Proverb no.20: A crown is a burden when the king visits his favourite's chamber	106
3.3.2 Proverb no.37: When an Oba stops the procession and squats on the wayside, it's on an urgent matter (Soyinka, 2014 p.4)	107
3.3.3 Proverb no.79: A crab never fathers a bird (Aidoo, 1970 p.53)	107
3.4 Contention and Violence	108
3.4.1 Proverb no.1: Fowl that perched on a rope, neither the rope nor the fowl shall know peace (Owonibi, 2006 p. iii)	108
3.4.2 Proverb no.42: As provocative words draw out sword from scabbard, so do soft words draw out kola nut from pocket. Owonibi, 2016 p.28.	109
3.4.3 Proverb no. 27: If the baobab shakes her head in anger, what chances has the rodent when an ear-ring falls and hits the head with thunder (Soyinka, 2014 p.6)	111
3.4.4 Proverb no.29: The royal python may be good at hissing, but it seems the scorpions tail is fire (Soyinka, 2014 p.9)	111
3.4.5 Proverb no.48: The price of peace is war	112
3.4.6 Proverb no.57: Tooth is sharper than knife	112
3.4.7 Proverb no.72: Any insect that dances on river has its drummer under the water. (Owonibi, 2016, p.88)	113
3.5 Arrogance	114
3.5.1 Proverb no.2: A man that swallows pestle, he certainly sleeps upright (Owonibi, 2016 p. ix)	114
3.5.2 Proverb no.15: No one plays with fire and gets away with it	115
3.5.3 Proverb no.24: Only a foolish child lets a father prostrate to him (Soyinka, Kongi's Harvest 2014 p. 5)	116
3.5.4 Proverb no.53: A pregnant woman cannot lose a virginity again	116

3.5.5 Proverb no.56: A coward that fears death will not possess his father's throne, (Owonibi, 2016 p. 59)	117
3.5.6 Proverb no.71: The hen never challenges the fox (Owonibi, 2016 p.88)	118
3.5.7 Proverb no.61: A twig that attempts to barricade elephant will surely go away with him. (Owonibi, 2016 p.72)	118
3.6 Perseverance and Determination	119
3.6.1 Proverb no.3: No hen will hatch a broken egg (Owonibi, 2016 p. ix)	119
3.6.2 Proverb no.13: On a long journey, even a straw is heavy (Owonibi, 2016 p. 18.)	119
3.6.3 Proverb no.50: A dog that shows its teeth occasionally will bite eventually	120
3.6.4 Proverb no.30: The pot that will eat fat, its bottom must be scorched (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)	121
3.6.5 Proverb no.19: It is because of the cap that we have the head. He that has cap has no head and he that has head has no cap	121
3.6.6 Proverb no.31: The squirrel that will long crack nuts, its footpad must be sore (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)	122
3.6.7 Proverb no.33: The tree of life is sprung from broken peat (Soyinka, 2014 p.1, hemlock)	122
3.6.8 Proverb no.46: It may take a long time, a stammerer will pronounce father in the end	122
3.6.9 Proverb no.47: Champions are not raised on the bed of roses nor stars made on the platters of gold	124
3.6.10 Proverb no.55: If you refuse to shake off the ant while it is on your legs, what would you do when it enters your pant? (Owonibi, 2016 p.59).	124
3.6.11 Proverb no.66: The head of an elephant is not a kid's load. (Owonibi 2016 P.79)	125
3.6.12 Proverb no.68: Not all palm trees can be climbed by a loop (Owonibi, 2016 p. 87)	125
3.6.13 Proverb no.69: Not all rivers can be crossed by a canoe (Owonibi, 2016 p.87)	126
3.6.13 Proverb no.70: If your tree is firm why should it fear the storm? (Owonibi, 2016 p.87)	126

3.6.14 Proverb no.59: When elders are in the market, a child's head is not allowed to droop	127
3.6.15 Proverb no.73: Whoever surrenders his head to be used to crack the coconut will have a taste of it (Owonibi, 2016, p.92)	127
3.6.16 Proverb no.5: The white ant's attempt to make a hill out of the rock will certainly be an exercise in futility (Owonibi, 2016 p.13.)	128
3.6.17 Proverb no.16: The playing teeth of a dog will soon turn to a biting instrument (Soyinka, 2014 p. 24)	129
3.6.18 Proverb no.32: The sweetest wine flows down the tapper's shattered shins (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)	129
3.6.19 Proverb no.38: The tunnel passes through the hills belly but we cry no defilement. Soyinka, 2014 p.9.	130
3.6.20 Proverb no.39: Whatever fly cuts a careless caper around the scent of sacrifice, will worship down the spider's throat (Soyinka, 2014 p.60)	131
3.7 Chapter Summary	132
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS</b>	<b>133</b>
4.1 Introduction	133
4.2 Hopelessness and despondency	133
4.2.1 Proverb no.4: Their past lacks pepper, present lacks oil. And their future lacks salts. Such is a people who do not know themselves	133
4.2.2 Proverb no.7: An old man running in the forest must be after something, else something is after him (Owonibi, 2016 p.10.)	134
4.2.3 Proverb no.25: the bridegroom does not strain his neck to see a bride, anyway bound for his bed chamber Soyinka, 2014 p.74.	135
4.2.4 Proverb no.26: The child is nothing; it is only the glory of his forebears that the world sees and tolerates in him (Soyinka, 2014 p. 6)	136
4.2.5 Proverb no.40: If eyes didn't see, heart wouldn't grieve. (Owonibi, 2016 p. 27) uttered by Akogun	138
4.2.6 Proverb no.58: Hundreds of termites can do but nothing to a stone	139
4.2.7 Proverb no.74: The yam that will burn, will burn, boiled or roasted	139
4.3 Prosperity and Fecundity	140

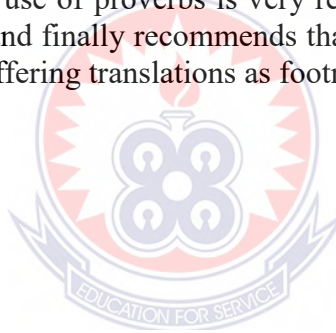
4.3.1 Proverb no.67: It is better to be a butterfly that soars like an eagle and swoops like a hawk than be a big ostrich without awe (Owonibi, 2016 p.82.)	140
4.3.2 Proverb no.75: A man of name is never judged by his beginning (Aidoo, 1970 p.41)	141
4.3.3 Proverb no.9: Cows give more milk in a happy environment (Owonibi, 2016 p.12)	141
4.4 Idiosyncrasy and weakness	142
4.4.1 Proverb no.34: A king does not become a menial just because he puts down his crown to eat (Soyinka, 2014 p.2)	142
4.4.2 Proverb no.36: The nude shanks of a king is not a sight for children (Soyinka, 2014 p.4)	143
4.4.3 Proverb no.21: When the king's wrapper falls off in audience, wise men know he wants to be left alone (Soyinka, 2014 p. 5)	143
4.5 Honour and Respect	144
4.5.1 Proverb no.35: A shilling's vegetable must appease a halfpenny spice (Soyinka, 2014 p.4)	144
4.5.2 Proverb no.22: A mindless clown dispenses thanks as a fowl scatters meal, not caring where it falls (Soyinka, 2014 p. 5)	144
4.5.3 Proverb no.23: The yam that belongs to a king should not be pounded in a small mortar (Soyinka, 2014 p.5)	145
4.5.4 Proverb no.62: A kid who knows how to wash his hand will dine with the elders (Owonibi 2016 p.76)	146
4.5.5 Proverb no.65: Any river that forgets its source will definitely dry. (Owonibi 2016 P.78)	147
4.5.6 Proverb no.52: Prostrating to a dwarf doesn't mean you are not the taller	148
4.5.7 Proverb no.78: However good the back of your hand is for licking, it can never be as good as your palm (Aidoo, 1970 p.49)	149
4.6 Persecution and Injustice	150
4.6.1 Proverb no.77: The man who hates you does not care if you wait in the sun for your clothes to dry before you can go and join the dance (Aidoo, 1970 p.46)	150

4.7 Chapter Summary	151
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>152</b>
5.1 Introduction	152
5.2 Summary of Research Findings	154
5.3 Final Conclusion on the Study	161
5.4 Recommendation for Future Research	163
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	<b>178</b>



## ABSTRACT

Literature is an avenue for the artistic re-production of the life and cultural elements of people in the form of prose, poetry, and drama. The culture of every group in particular is established linguistically through narrative exchanges that determine the relevance of the belief systems which hold the people together. To understand a culture, particularly one in which orality is still a predominant form of recording history and phenomena, one requires some acquaintance with its oral forms. As a group of people survive in a particular society, they continually foster their own relevant customs through different modes such as proverbs, songs, symbols, folktales and mythologies among others. These literary works express ideas and the concerns of the people at the time. One of such literary types which is well known in literary genre and often used to decode the culture of a people is proverbs. These proverbs often connote historical antecedents, customs, as well as the hopes, desires and fears of the people. This thesis therefore analyzed the use of proverbs in West African Drama with Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* (2014), Sola Owonibi's *Peace by Pieces*, (2016) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* (1970) as case studies. The thesis purposively samples 120 proverbs out of which eighty (80) are analysed using the reflectionist and performance art theories as frameworks, delving into the influence and significance of the socio-cultural contexts on the intra and extra-textual interpretation and understanding of the proverbs used. The study establishes that the use of proverbs is very relevant to the study of drama as it helps to sustain cultures and finally recommends that writers maintain the proverbs in their original languages offering translations as footnotes.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Preview to the Study

This thesis seeks to analyze the use of proverbs in African Drama, explore the moral significance of proverbs, and examine the influence of cultural context on the interpretation of the proverbs with Sola Owonibi's *Peace by Pieces* (2016) Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* (2014), and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* (1970) as reference texts. This chapter deals with the preview, background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, limitation, and delimitation, methodology, theoretical framework, and research design.

#### 1.2 Background to the Study

Every culture has proverbs in them, some may be similar across cultures, but the interpretation and application must be culture specific because proverbs arise out of situations and occurrences. Proverbs are very important because they give us deeper insights into a people's ideologies, worldview and cosmology, their history, motifs and tradition. Aderemi says they are "culture markers" in the sense that they tell us, though in rather brief and deep terms, so much about the past and the psychology of the peoples and communities from which they emanate (Aderemi, 1994). (Howell, 2013), a professor of anthropology at the state university of New York who has studied and written about the language and culture of various ethnic groups and different cultures across the globe for years, admits that her reading of Awedoba's(2000) work on proverbs revealed so much about Kasena culture and religion that she had never known before. This points to the power of a study of proverbs. Even if one knows nothing about a particular culture, a study of the proverbs used in that culture alone will lead to a great enlightenment on the ins and outs of that culture. For instance, the metaphors

and images used, as well as the allusions employed in the proverbs will, to a large extent, grant the reader an insight into what the community looks like.

Virtually, every African societal and ideological issue has in one way or the other received some attention in the African proverb: concepts such as humanity, growth, societal cohesion, justice, equity, kindness, truth, courage, respect, beauty, sexuality, leadership, confidence, generosity, oppression and prowess, kin, and kingship, amongst others all have their corresponding proverbs. Proverbs therefore reflect or are capable of reflecting the beliefs, values, norms, histories and any other aspects of a people's way of life. African proverbs, according to Mbiti, serve as reminders of the oldest forms of African religious and philosophical wisdom (Mbiti, 1969). The use of proverbs is an effective means through which African societies have succeeded in maintaining social order, keeping their languages alive, and passing on their values and beliefs to their future generations till this day. Proverbs constitute an integral part of the culture of each given society hence they address many themes, knowledge and areas of life that concern particular groups of people. Herskovits (1958) refers to proverbs as a grammar of values. This is because through them, one gets an idea of the dos and don'ts of a particular society.

In recent times, many more researchers have found proverbs to be of equal relevance, hence have ventured into researches on proverbs. Some of such works include "*An Analysis of the Proverbs the Yoruban Lives*" By Bolaji and Kehinde (2017), a contemporary work on the use of proverbs. "*A Pragmatic Analysis of Proverbs in Selected Works of Ola Rotimi*" was also carried out by Zakariyah, Moshood (2016). These, and many others attest to the fact that the use of proverbs is not only a thing of the ancient times, but modern scholars equally have interest in the relevance of proverbs



in African literature. Consequently, this research is of so much value and significance to contemporary researchers as well.

For the purposes of this research, stemming from the fact that two of the texts under discussion in this research are from a Yoruba background, there is the need to explore a little deeper into the culture and lives of the Yoruba people. This will help us appreciate better the socio-cultural influence on the interpretation of the proverbs under discussion. The (Encyclopedia Britanica 2010) has much to say about the Yoruba people. It says the Yoruba are one of the three largest ethnic groups of Nigeria, concentrated in the southwestern part of that country. Much smaller, scattered groups live in Benin and northern Togo. The Yoruba numbered more than 20 million at the turn of the 21st century. They speak a language of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family.

Most Yoruba men are farmers, growing yams, corn (maize), and millet as staples and plantains, peanuts (groundnuts), beans, and peas as subsidiary crops; cocoa is a major cash crop. Others are traders or craftsmen. Women do little farm work but control much of the complex market system-their status depends more on their own position in the marketplace than on their husbands' status. The Yoruba have traditionally been among the most skilled and productive craftsmen of Africa. They worked at such trades as blacksmithing, weaving, leatherworking, glassmaking, and ivory and wood carving. In the 13th and 14th centuries Yoruba bronze casting using the lost-wax (cire perdue) method reached a peak of technical excellence never subsequently equaled in western Africa. Yoruba women engage in cotton spinning, basketry, and dyeing.

The Yoruba have shared a common language and culture for centuries but were probably never a single political unit. They seem to have migrated from the east to their present lands west of the lower Niger River more than a millennium ago. They

eventually became the most urbanized Africans of precolonial times. They formed numerous kingdoms of various sizes, each of which was centred on a capital city or town and ruled by a hereditary king, or *Oba*. Their towns became densely populated and eventually grew into the present-day cities of Oyo, Ile-Ife, Ilesha, Ibadan, Ilorin, Ijebu-Ode, Ikere-Ekiti, and others. Oyo developed in the 17th century into the largest of the Yoruba kingdoms, while Ile-Ife remained a town of potent religious significance as the site of the earth's creation according to Yoruba mythology. Oyo and the other kingdoms declined in the late 18th and 19th centuries owing to disputes among minor Yoruba rulers and invasions by the Fon of Dahomey (now Benin) and the Muslim Fulani. The traditional Yoruba kingships still survive, but with only a hint of their former political power. They remain a largely patrilineal group that respect their Oba and other elders recognized and work sit in council with the king in his palace. They see the king as a divine being with the powers and backings of the gods. This explains their eternal reverence for the king and his words. Their language has an extensive literature of poetry, short stories, myths, and proverbs which characterize the speech of the elderly. The values upheld by the people include hard work, respect for the elderly, kinship, humility, service and communality amongst others.

The Fante of Ghana need to be discussed too as one of the texts under our consideration emanates or has its umbilical cords cut on the Fante land. The third reference text used in this research was written by Ama Ata Aidoo, a Ghanaian of the Fante extract of the Akan Ethnic group. The Fante speak the Fante language, a language spoken by the people of the Central and Western Regions of Ghana. The Fante uphold respect for humanity, hard work and reward as well as many other traditional tenets upheld in the African communities. These cultural values are evident in the proverbs

used in *Anowa*, the reference text used in this research. A careful and diligent reading of *Anowa* and the proverbs used in it will reveal more of these cultural values.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

From the afore discussion, it is evident that quite a number of works have been done on proverbs, in the works of other scholars. However, Sola Owonibi as a writer has not received much attention as far as research is concerned, and to the best of my knowledge, no researcher has analyzed the proverbs used in *Peace by Pieces*, *Anowa*, and *Kongi's Harvest*. That notwithstanding, this research did not attempt to analyze all proverbs used in Africa. Only selected proverbs in Owonibi's (2016) *Peace by Pieces*, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* (1970) and Soyinka's (2014) *Kongi's Harvest* have been analysed, with the reflectionist and Bauman's Performance Art theories as frameworks. Both the reflectionist and Performance Art theories postulate that the society or culture has a huge influence on the literature of those cultures, and by extension, their analysis should be done with the culture of the writer in mind. This is why proverbs used in literature should not be interpreted, oblivious of the cultural context from which they emanate. Studies on the effect of the society on literature, and proverbs in particular often do not consider cultural diversity of the language users as a basis for explaining and assessing the didactic qualities of these works. Most of these studies did not address how important context is, or how the culture within which the proverbs have been used affects its meaning, they adopted what is known as Universal Pragmatics (UP) principle which posits that the same socio-cultural reality underlies the use of language across the globe. This position is rather unfortunate. Works such as Malinowski (1920, 1923, 1935), Hymes (1966), Yule (1996), Mey (2000, 2006) as well as Olukoju & Eno-Abasi (2013) have successfully proved that without context, expressions either lack meaning or become difficult to be understood.

It is equally true of proverbs that without looking at the cultural context, the proverbs will be difficult to explain, which will result in getting inadequate understanding of the proverbs, this will result in the writer's intentions being misconstrued at last. (Opoku, 1997) draws a comparison between literature and cultural context linking them to sleep and dream. He argues that just as it is impossible to dream without sleep, it is equally impossible to interpret literature without reference to the culture from which it emanates. In spite of these, it is consequently important to look at the effect of the context on the meaning and intent in the original literary drama texts, which is the main focus of the Reflectionist Theory postulated by (Gloudblom, 1979). It is noteworthy, that proverbs are highly dependent on context and are culture specific due to their enormous metaphorical make up, philosophical intent and didactic significance (Opoku, 1997).

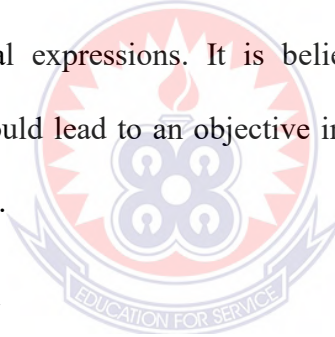
From these afore examinations, it is clear that many scholarly works have been done already on the use of proverbs in African Literature. Yet, nothing has been done, it seems, to the best of the knowledge of this researcher on Owonibi's *Peace by Pieces* (2016), Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*(2014), and Ama Ata Aidoo`s *Anowa* (1970) on the use of proverbs. It will also be observed that not many links have been established between the cultural context and proverbs used on certain occasions. This research has been conducted to fill this gap, to research into the literary significance of the Proverbs used in drama with selected proverbs from Sola Owonibi's *Peace by Pieces*(2016), Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Havest*(2014), and Ama Ata Aidoo`s *Anowa*(1970).

From the literature gathered on the study, the proverbs in these selected drama texts have not yet received collective attention to the best of my knowledge. Moreover, unlike the two other Nigerian dramatists, Owonibi as a writer and scholar has not received as much attention from the academia as he deserves.

The interpretation of proverbs in drama texts deserves cross-cultural examination and this explains why Ghanaian and Nigerian dramatists were purposively sampled for this study. Though proverbial expressions are universal in nature, their contextual application draws people's attention to the cultural values of specific groups of people such as those in Ghanaian and Nigerian societies.

It is in this light that the study examines the use of proverbs in the three plays. The choice of the playwrights is based on relating first generation dramatists to second generation dramatists. The researcher was also gender-conscious in the selection of the dramatists.

The three playwrights are noted for the promotion of traditional African wisdom and values through proverbial expressions. It is believed that a cross-cultural and a comparative approach would lead to an objective interpretation of the literary values embedded in the proverbs.



#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this work is to move beyond the literal meanings of proverbs, to look at the effect of the cultural context on the interpretation and application of these proverbs, and to arrive at their didactic value, and their relevance and significance as far as the study of drama is concerned.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

This study was guided three objectives. Thus, this research aims at

1. identifying and discussing the significance of the proverbs used in the selected texts; Owonibi's *Peace by Pieces* (2016), Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* (2014), and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*(1970)
2. examining the influence of the cultural context on the use of the proverbs

3. evaluating the moral implications of the proverbs used in the selected texts.

### **1.6 Research Questions**

This research sought to answer the following questions:

1. Why is it important to examine the significance of the proverbs used in Owonibi's *Peace by Pieces*, Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, Aidoo's *Anowa*?
2. To what extent do the cultural contexts of the proverbs influence the use of these proverbs?
3. How are the moral implications of these proverbs reflected in the context in which the proverbs were applied?

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

Through diligent enquiries, and learning, one realizes that, there are proverbs that define the right code of conduct pertaining to almost every aspect of human life. This work exposes us to the role of proverbs in the quest for finding answers to what is deemed right or wrong in cultures through their didactic values, and our ways of life in general. This research is very relevant and significant because although scholars have worked on the use of proverbs in various works of African literature, not much attention has been given to the works of Sola Owonibi and the proverbs used in the three texts under discussion. Thus, special focus is placed on the use of proverbs in Sola Owonibi's *Peace by Pieces*, Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*. This is the gap that this research has sought to fill. This thesis on proverbs contributes to ongoing literary studies on proverbs. It also serves as a preserve of proverbs, thus preventing them from going obsolete. Moreover, the investigation on these proverbs serves as reference point for later researchers, as well as learners. It will also serve as a

teaching and learning resource for teachers and other stakeholders of the education sector.

### **1.8 Limitation and Delimitation of the Study**

This thesis focused on only the proverbs in the reference texts, their links with the context, didactic values, their meaning as found in the cultural context of usage, and their relevance to the study of drama. A total of 120 proverbs were extracted from the three texts, and eighty (80) of them are sampled for the analysis. This notwithstanding, reference is made to other proverbs, as well as their meanings as and when necessary, to make the work complete.

In terms of limitations, identifying the difference between mere wise sayings and proverbs was quite challenging, but this challenge was smoothly overcome by careful study and in depth reading. Thus, the wise sayings were quickly identified and taken out of the analysis.

Also, translating proverbs from their local or original African languages into English would have made the work difficult and made the proverbs lose their original luster and literariness due to the unavailability of exact linguistic equivalence of some of the words in English language, and the variation in cultural and geographical contexts of the texts, however, the authors of the various reference texts made the work easier since they had the proverbs already translated into English language in the texts.

### **1.9 Organization of the Study**

This research has been organized into five chapters. Chapter one deals with the introduction and objectives, significance of the study, and the methodology (which includes the features of textual analysis, the research design, the population of the study, samples and sampling techniques, method of data collection, analytical procedure, and



Theoretical Framework). Chapter Two focuses on review of related literature. This includes various definitions of proverbs as opined by previous researchers, forms of proverbs, sources, style and language, functions, and general information on proverbs. It also presents brief information on the background of the authors Sola Owonibi, Wole Soyinka, and Ama Ata Aidoo. The third and fourth chapters deal with the analysis of the selected proverbs in the sampled texts *Peace by Pieces*, *Kongi's Harvest*, and *Anowa*. Finally, Chapter Five deals with further discussion of issues raised in the previous chapters, summary, conclusion, and recommendations by the researcher.

### **1.10 Methodology**

This section is principally concerned with the methodology and procedure employed in this study. Specifically, it focuses on the features of textual analysis, the research design, the population of the study, samples and sampling techniques, method of data collection, and analytical procedure.

### **1.11 Research Approach**

This study adopts a qualitative approach. Qualitative in the sense that the didactic significance of the selected proverbs are accounted for, bearing in mind the cultural background and context of usage in the texts. (Agu, 2020) opines that qualitative research presents the social event as naturally as possible without any manipulation of any event. The concept of “qualitative” is used here to mean that the selected texts represent a natural speech community under which the prevailing cultural context is considered for the analysis of the study.

This research adopts a textual analytical method in the sense that data for analyses are sourced from *Peace by Pieces* by Sola Owonibi, *Kongi's Harvest* by Wole Soyinka, and Aidoo's *Anowa*. A textual analytical research means that data for analysis



are sourced only from text(s) and interpreted in accordance with the usage of the data in the texts where they are selected, guided by the theoretical frameworks selected by the researcher. Textual analytical method does not allow external idea, opinion, or influence either in the form of gathering data or in the data analysis itself (Ajala, 1996).

### **1.12 Sample and Sampling Procedure**

Population refers to the sum total of a people or things from whom or which the needed sample is taken. According to Ajala (1996), population is defined as “designated part of the universe from which a sample is drawn. In this study, hundred and twenty proverbs are sourced as the total population, but eighty (80) have been selected for the analyses. This is because it is not possible to study all the proverbs from the texts as some have been repeated a number of times in the texts, for the sake of emphasis and attention, hence, a sample is selected systematically for the purpose of this study only. Therefore, a purposively sampled total of eighty proverbs, which constitutes about two-thirds (2/3rd) of the entire proverbs from the texts, are selected for analysis with the groupings based on their thematic ideas, and this manageable sample size becomes a representative (sample) of the study. According to Neuman, 2007, it is enough to sample 30% of population that is less than a thousand (1000). On this backdrop the two-thirds of the entire proverbs purposively sampled for the analysis is a fair representation of all proverbs used in the selected texts (Howell, 2013).

Sample is defined as a representation of a population selected in order to be investigated or studied. It also means a number of people or things taken from a larger group and used in tests to provide information about the group (Alabi, 2005). In this study, a total of 80 proverbs (two third of all proverbs in the reference texts) are selected from the texts which have been used as the case study of this work. To ensure a fairly balanced coverage of the three texts, the eighty selected proverbs are sourced from all

the acts and scenes of the texts with consideration on the moral significance of the selected proverbs, and their relevance to this study. Meanwhile, the texts do not contribute equal number of proverbs because the density of proverbial use differs from one text to the other, and this must be made clear. This study analyzed eighty proverbs from the three texts in order to be able to adequately justify the findings of the study.

#### **1.14 Method of Data Analysis**

The study adopts the case study design of descriptive research such that the selected eighty proverbs in the works of Owonibi, Aidoo, and Soyinka are analysed using Richard Bauman's (1975) Verbal Art as Performance Theory, and Gladsbloum (1979) Reflectionist Theory as theoretical frameworks. The reason for these two theories that they both agree that every literature emanates from a culture, hence, the interpretation of the texts could not be done without recourse to the cultural context. The utterance of proverbs is in itself a performance, and drama is performance. This makes it very significant to use the performance theory as basis for the analysis. The eighty proverbs are adopted as representing the proverbs emanating from the cultures which Sola Owonibi and Wole Soyinka discuss in their works. Only textual analysis has been considered because the data is sourced primarily from the two texts. To account for the didactic imports of the proverbs, the relevance of context is explored. Context evaluation is crucial because proverbs are essentially context dependent. The Reflectionist, and the Performance Theories will cater for this adequately. The ultimate context, appears to be the broadest, in that it refers to the language users' worldview, and the implicit references to the world or aspects of it, and to certain universally established facts. This is followed by the didactic import(s) of each of the selected proverbs.

After the establishment of the presence of context, the didactic significance of each of the selected proverbs is discussed to reveal the communicative purpose of the selected proverbs. The selected eighty (80) proverbs are analyzed according to their significance and later grouped according to their functional groupings at the appendices.

### **1.15 Justification for the Sampling**

This research was conducted on the proverbs in three West African Drama texts; Sola Owonibi's *Peace by Pieces*, Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*. The first two texts were first selected because the proverbs in them have not received much attention in the academia. However, a third text, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* was later added to boost the population for the research. Why these three texts? Consideration was first given to Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame*(1971), and Mamadou Kouyate's *Sundiata*(1960), but upon further reading, it was observed that so much work has been done on them hence the decision to switch to the three texts under discussion. It was observed that as famous as the authors have worked hard to become in the literary world, not much has been done on these books. What, to the best of my knowledge has even been worked on are the political issues in *Kongi's Harvest*, and the contrasting qualities of the old traditional leadership, represented by Oba Danlola, and the newly accepted democratic regime which turns out a huge autocratic failure, spearheaded by Kongi, brewed and served by his secretary for sycophantic reasons.

### **1.16 Theoretical Framework**

Gloudbloom's Reflectionist Theory of literature and Bauman's Performance Theory based on his *Verbal Art as Performance* (1975) served as frameworks for this study. When we speak about oral works as a reflection of a people's way of life, it

brings to mind the theory of reflection in literature. This theory was postulated by (Gloudblom, 1979). The reflection theory of literature postulates that there is an influence society wields on its literature (Watt 1964, Finnegan 1977). According to Watt, “All writings cannot but be a reflection of society since it contains many elements which are socially derived. Language, to begin with, is a social product and most writings, certainly most literatures are related to some established tradition or model of expression” (Watt, 1964).

What Watt says here is reiterated in Finnegan’s comment that, “All literature in an indirect and subtle way must reflect the society in which it exists” (Finnegan, 1977). This theory of reflection therefore confirms the idea that literary works such as proverbs are a mirror through which a society can be viewed. In other words, to have a clear view of what actually transpires in a society, and its culture, a good look at the literature of those communities will clearly expose them because they reflect the values of those societies. (Gloudblom, 1979) explains the reflectionist theory of literature further by opining that: “This relation between art and literature is not simply a reflection in the sense of mirroring reality. Literary imagination should be seen as a continuation and an extension of the human experience. That continuation can be a ‘reflection’ of the social world, but it may also be a ‘reflection’ or expression of what people hope for, deny, or fear (cited in Nanbigne, 2008). This suggests that in these literary works, people might try to comment on the future, looking at some of the recent occurrences. Nketia, a Ghanaian researcher observes some of songs. According to him, ‘...in songs are laid plain the hopes, fears, joys and worries of the Homo Africanus’ (Nketia, 1963).

Although many scholars agree on the reflection theory of literature, Watt criticizes some aspects of the theory. To him, some of these literary works cannot be accepted as wholly true because the interest of the one who created them might influence what is

being put across. Apart from that, in the bid to be creative, literary artists tend to influence the actual work they intend to project (Watt, 1964). These views rather confirm the theory of reflection because the interest of the individual is modeled by the society and so any view he or she puts across is as a result of what he or she has been exposed to in the society. Finnegan opposes Watt's criticism of the theory of reflection in literature. According to her, the opinion of man is not forced upon him by the study of poetry, but people actively replicate the world around them. This is because in poetic institutions, as in any other institution, people act within a social context (Finnegan, 1977). Reference can be made to (Yitah, 2006) about how Kasena women now try to subvert the meaning of some of their proverbs quoted at them by men when the two sexes engage in verbal play or banter or even formulate new proverbs to suit their awareness of their social position. An example of such proverb is given by Yitah as, 'a woman who kills a python must not go on to cut off its head' (kaane ba gu diio gwonee de yuu). And the Twi proverb that says "obaa ton nyaadua, na ontɔn iron rod". These proverbs seem to suggest some acts which women should not partake in. Not only is a woman prohibited from performing an action that is traditionally reserved for men (because it is considered too daring or dangerous), but also she risks social disapproval for usurping a man's role and therefore demystifying "maleness" and threatening the boundary between male and female (Yitah, 2006).

It has been observed that, in recent times, women try to subvert the meaning of the proverbs that support male chauvinism by using counter-proverbs. According to (Yitah 2006), "the counter-proverb provides a resolution to the conflict created by a command to complete an action and a prohibition for a woman to do so". The point to be made here is that, in presenting the counter-proverb, the literary artist is not merely projecting his or her interest but is pointing to some arising societal, and cultural issues.

And these cultural markers could be unearthed by the use of the reflectionist theory in analyzing the literary significance of these proverbs.

There are different performance theories. These theories of performance as a focus of analysis have been approached from two main theoretical angles. One angle relates to language and communication, as well as sociolinguistics, and folklore. This approach has a base in the ‘ethnography of speaking’, pioneered by Dell Hymes and specially associated with a group of linguistic anthropologists and folklorists such as (Bauman, 1977), (Sherzer, 1983), Austin (1965), and (Finnegan, 1984). The Performance theorists in literature and language focus on an action centered and expressive view of language, on performance and on detailed ethnographic observation of how people actually use language (Finnegan, 1992). The second angle is what is found in, (Goffman, 1974, 1980), (Turner, 1974) and (Schechner, 1988), which relates performance to an understanding of social life, enacted as “social drama” (Turner, 1986) and as a continual “presentation of self” (Goffman, 1974). Each of these perspectives represents a single metaphor for conceptualizing performance, in the first case language and in the second theatre (Askew, 2000). Bauman’s approach views verbal art as performance, and attempts to substitute a performance centered approach for the text centered approach that has previously dominated folklore scholarship. According to him, “...performance is a mode of communication, a way of speaking, the essence of which resides in an assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill highlighting the way in which communication is carried out above and beyond its referential content” (Bauman, 1975).

Askew points out a loophole in Bauman’s notion of performance in the following statement: “One is then left wondering how non-verbal performance that communicates non-textual messages fit into this paradigm” (Askew, 2000). On the surface, Bauman

seems to only focus on verbal arts, leaving out non-verbal art forms such as drum languages, drama and dance drama which are all performance types, however, a critical look at these aspects of art reveals that, before any proverb will be deduced from them, it may have been raised by a voice. Drum language is certainly a verbalization, and dance drama is not mimicry only, but a combination of all drama forms, hence employing proverbs in dance drama will certainly be a verbalization. Therefore, Bauman's verbal art as a performance theory will be most appropriate to analyse the literary significance of the proverbs used in West African drama. Bauman's verbal art as performance also kind of shifts attention from the message being communicated to the act of communication but rather emphasizes "the way in which communication is carried out beyond its referential content" (Bauman, 1975). However, the fact that the way of communication is emphasized does not mean the messages communicated are of no importance under the theory. Because, although the act of communication is important, the message is also very important especially for literary types such as proverbs where one needs to analyze the symbolic references made in it to arrive at a better understanding.

The role of the audience in analyzing oral literary types is very crucial. In the case of the audience, attention has to be paid to their relationship with the speaker. Apart from that, there is the need to pay attention to the social data of the addressee in terms of his/her gender, age, occupation and some other characteristics that mark him/her out as a distinct member of the society. This will ensure an understanding of a particular proverb and why it has been used. Askew also points to the need to focus on the message communicated. In terms of proverbs, attention has to be paid to the words, and the symbols that are used since most proverbs are symbolic in meaning. Most of these proverbs are created by featuring familiar situations that abound in a particular



environment as a conduit, pointing out to the wisdom they wish to relay. It is therefore not only incorrect, but also erroneous for anyone to suggest that reference to animals, plants and other inanimate things in a people's literary traditions shows how primitive they are. Finnegan emphasizes this by making reference to the misinterpretation read into frequent use of animals in most African traditional proverbs. "Not because Africans have some mystical closeness to nature but many live in relatively rural and sparsely populated areas where the animal world impinges closely on their lives

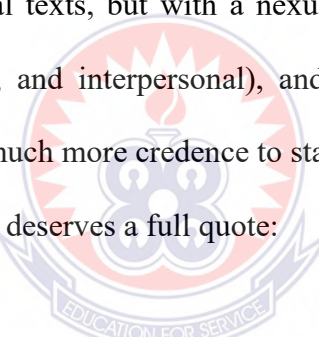
(Finnegan, 1977). This means people feature mostly, aspects of their environment in their literary works such as proverbs. In order to get a more complete understanding of these works, it is important to look at the symbolic meanings the people attach to these things. Awedoba used this approach by looking at the symbolic meaning of two hundred and sixty-six Kasena proverbs since he realized that these proverbs can be better understood by looking beyond their literal meaning (Awedoba, 2000). By adopting this approach, new areas of cultural discovery arise.

(Siran, 1993) applied symbolic theory to proverbs. He identified three aspects of proverbs: literal text that can be translated (signification), literal meaning in light of social and historical context (value), and symbolic or connotative meaning. All attesting the need to look beyond the literal meaning of proverbs and consider the impact of the cultural context of usage, and their symbolic interpretations.

Another aspect of performance which Askew and Bauman point to is the process of performance. This is the act of communication or the means through which the message is rendered. Here, it would be very relevant to clarify the issue of performance as far as proverbs are concerned. Looking at the form of proverbs, some scholars do not see the need for performance.



(Finnegan, 1970) points out that “In proverbs the actual performance as distinct from apt citation and picturesque form is not really important.” She states further that, “Unlike stories and songs, in proverbs the performance does not seem to be very important” (Finnegan 1970, p. 399). Awedoba (2000: 39) also points to the fact that, “There are therefore no performance sections in proverbs.” However, it needs be noted that Proverb rendition is a form of performance where the stage is the place where the communication is carried out, the proverb speaker being the performer and the addressee becomes the audience. It is only in light of this, that we would be able to use Bauman’s theory effectively. Yitah, who used the performance theory in analyzing Kasena proverbs posits more succinctly that in terms of proverbs, “...we are not just dealing with the proverbial texts, but with a nexus of factors: performer, audience, “stage” (temporal, spatial, and interpersonal), and action generated from conflict” (Yitah, 2009). This lends much more credence to stance of (Bauman, 1977). Yankah’s comment on this deserves a full quote:

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central shield with a sunburst at the top and a book at the bottom. The shield is surrounded by a wreath. Below the shield, the motto "EDUCATION FOR SERVICE" is written in a banner. The entire emblem is set against a background of a sunburst pattern.

Proverb speaking, whether attributive or otherwise is a performance insofar as it constitutes a stylized mode of communication in which executive skills are evaluated by an audience. They may be modified, embellished or made more prosaic with rhetorical remarks in order to sharpen its persuasive thrust... they may also be changed or complemented with a prose or poetic style to lend it clarity, density or emphasis. Even when the proverb structure is not altered, the same performance may be marked by a particular tone, pause and emphasis to achieve rhythm. Equally important in proverb performance is its effect on the audience, its ability or failure to please the audience, seize their attention or elicit sympathetic performance (Yankah 1989, pp. 249, 257).

From the above, one can say that there is a form of performance in proverbs which can aid in the appreciation and understanding of a proverb. Bauman indicates that, the use of the paralinguistic features ensures a better understanding of verbal performances and they therefore become an interpretive frame through which a particular performance can be appreciated.

Reference to performance calls for the need to pay attention to the performer. In this work attention is given to who is using a particular proverb, why? What happens before, during, and after the usage. Just as for the audience, there is the need to find out the social history of the performer. This will include gender, age, occupation, position in society, relationship to the addressee, and any other aspect of the person. This is important because these factors influence the use of certain proverbs.

(Askew, 2000) highlights another aspect of the performance theory which is the context of performance. Understanding of context is in most cases limited to the most immediate setting of the performance. That is the most immediate and simple social aspects that are readily and easily available and describable. Context includes anything that affects the content of performance. Bauman notes the importance of context in oral literature by stating that, “Concern has to go beyond a conception of oral literature as disembodied super organic stuff and to view it contextually and ethnographically in order to discover the individual, social and cultural factors that give it shape and meaning” (Bauman, 1986).

The above quote suggests that a full appreciation of an oral work should go beyond the text of the performance to embrace the context of performance. This is the point also highlighted by the reflectionists. (Malinowski, 1926) introduced the context of situation and suggests that “the concept of context has to be given a broader scope and the specific situation under which the words are uttered can never be passed over as

irrelevant in linguistic expression. The meaning of context is even taken further by Malinowski to include the entire cultural setting of speech and the personal histories of the participants and the context of concurrent human activity (Cited in Yankah, 1989). Following Malinowski's insight, this research also sets out to discuss the social system and the history of the people in order to enhance our understanding of the proverbs that are used in three two books.

According to Yankah, apart from the social context, for an ethnographer interested in proverbs, one must be more interested in the linguistic context. This requires the need to pay attention to the relevant discourse interaction in which the proverb is embedded. That is the documentation of the actual words used before and after the proverb usage (Yankah, 1989). This approach will help in analysis of the proverbs in the text because, since the researcher may not go to the actual societies, knowledge of who is saying what, where, when and to whom, in the presence of who and at what stage of the conversation will ensure a better understanding of what a particular proverb seeks to convey.

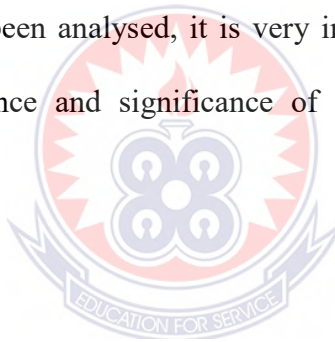
The performance theory is therefore useful for an analysis of proverbs since it suggests different areas that the researcher can look out for in the analysis of the proverbs and how they reflect the people's way of life or cosmology. I therefore propose that the reflectionist theory, particularly that propounded by Gloudblom (1979), popularized by (Keohane, 1988) and (Ruggie, 1986), and Bauman's Performance Art Theory (1977), Askew (2000), and Yankah's (1989) concern for the linguistic context can provide useful outlines for analyzing the proverbs in Sola Owonibi's *Peace by Pieces* (2016), Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* (2014), and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* (1970).

### **1.17 Summary of Methodology**

This section delved into the methodology, the ‘how’ of the research work. It has dealt with an explanation of the research procedure, data collection and analysis, as well as an exploration of the underlying cultures reflected in the two selected texts. The chapter has also treated appreciably, the theoretical frameworks appropriate for the analysis of the texts to reflect their reflexivity.

### **1.18 Chapter Summary**

This chapter sets the tone for the construction of the research. It has been established that because Sola Owonibi as a writer has not been much explored, and the proverbs in *Kongi's Harvest* and *Anowa* too, to the best of the knowledge of the researcher have not yet been analysed, it is very important to fill this gap with this thesis, hence the relevance and significance of this study on proverbs in these contemporary times.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

From the previous chapter, Chapter One above, it was indicated that quite a number of works have already been done on proverbs as far as African Literature is concerned. It is therefore relevant to proceed to a more detailed review of related literature in this chapter. This chapter focuses on review of related literature. This includes the various definitions of proverbs, forms, sources, style and language, functions and general information on proverbs, and finally, brief information on the authors.

#### **2.2 Definition of Technical Terms**

The task of providing a concrete, complete, and acceptable singular definition for proverbs has been a very herculean one to many scholars over the years. It has caused scholars from many disciplines much chagrin and headache over the centuries. A lot of these scholars and their attempts at a definition since the days of Aristotle to the present time have all ended in creating certain limitations with their definitions. Finnegan (2012) agrees with the above assertion thus:

The exact definition of ‘proverb’ is no easy matter. There is, however, some general agreement as to what constitutes a proverb. It is a saying in more or less fixed form marked by ‘shortness, sense and salt’ and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it.

So many scholars have written extensively, attempting to give a definition to the term. Others have put together the postulations offered by other researchers, and tried to fix

a middle range between them. Yet, anytime another scholar picks up their plume to expound the term proverb, there is always something else someone could add.

An American scholar Whiting, reviewed a lot of these definitions, attempting to give a particular definition that will capture everything concerning proverbs in a singular definition. Much as he tried, he only ended up with another very lengthy definition of his own, in his article “The Nature of the Proverb”. He says:

A proverb is an expression which, owing its birth to the people, testifies to its origin in form and phrase. It expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth- that is, a truism- in homely language, often adorned, however, with alliteration and rhyme. It is usually short, but need not be; it is usually true, but need not be. Some proverbs have both a literal and figurative meaning, either of which makes perfect sense; but more often they have but one of the two. A proverb must be venerable; it must bear the sign of antiquity, and, since such signs may be counterfeited by a clever literary man, it should be attested in different places at different times. This last requirement we must often waive in dealing with very early literature, where the material at our disposal is incomplete. (Whiting, 1932, p. 302; also in Whiting, 1994, p.80)

Taylor (1931), also attempted the definition of a proverb. He sought to come up with a definition that was both short, and could capture all the indicators, and exactly what a proverb is. He ended up with a definition that extended to over 200 pages. Finally, he just concluded that it was impossible to give a meaningful definition that was also brief. A popular proverb in Ga, a Kwa language spoken by the natives of Ghana’s capital, Accra, and Tema, they say “yitso kome eyaaa ajina.” (A single head does not give accurate advice.) The proverb is complemented by another proverb in Ewe, a Gbe language spoken by the natives of the Volta Region in the most eastern part

of Ghana, across Togo, Benin, and some part of Western Nigerian indigenes, which states that “*nunya, adzidotsie, asi metu ne o*”, (knowledge is a baobab tree, a single arm can never grasp it.) What these proverbs seek to put across is the fact that knowledge concerning a subject cannot be thoroughly exhausted by one scholar. These lend credence to the relevance of a critical literature review as far as the definition of proverbs is concerned.

In spite of the difficulty in getting a succinct definition for proverbs, I shall try to review a good amount of literature on the definition and use of proverbs as far as literature is concerned.

One school of thought has it that, a proverb is “a short well known pithy statement, stating a general truth or advice”. This definition is quite weak, in that, the term “well known” is relative. It is difficult to determine the number of people who should know a particular short saying for it to qualify as “well-known”, and consequently qualifying as a proverb. Additionally, a proverb needs not necessarily be true, says (Yusuf, 2012). All users of proverbs across Africa will agree that not everything expressed by proverbs is entirely true, however, they rather express revelations, didactic properties, and philosophies that could be related to by both the speaker, and the hearer, or audience. In instances where one of the interlocutors finds it difficult to relate the metaphors used in the proverb to the issue under discussion, the speaker would have to explain it for the listener to be able to decode the message. It needs not necessarily be true.

Part of the difficulty associated with defining proverbs is that they do not conform to a neatly categorised genre. Their form, content, origins, structure, purpose, application, and a range of other aspects are so varied that they sometimes give the impression and force one to conclude that there is no such single entity as a proverb. In some cases, a

proverb can be something as basic as a moral generalization, while at the other end of the scale, it could be a complex and extremely culture-bound metaphor that conforms to an intricate structure, and contains several layers of encoded meaning and message. It is very difficult to make a comprehensive analysis of what constitutes a proverb. We may end up compiling the thoughts of every scholar on the subject, thereby producing a very large and voluminous research work, and that would make our work very difficult. As a result, because of the various shortcomings, an intuitive, popular understanding of a proverb is relied upon in discussing and explaining the proverbs used in this thesis. The ability to understand and interpret proverbial sayings has been of great interest to researchers in many areas of psychology and psycholinguistics, attempting to account for the representation and processing of the figurative language used in literature, and in this case proverbs. Psycholinguists have researched proverb comprehension with the aim of uncovering the unconscious mental processes employed in understanding non-linearly language. Yet in all of these attempts, none has been able to come out with a succinct and singular definition of proverbs that has no loopholes. (Agyeman, 2015) says "...Proverbs reflect a short sentence that people often quote which gives advice, or tells something about life." Whereas (Olajide, 2012) defines proverbs as "a repository of wisdom that emerges through generations of people that have based their verbal reaction on keen observation of social, political and cultural events." Olajide in the above definition, lifts the debate to another dimension of the conceptual definition of proverbs by highlighting the importance of the verbal reaction in the equation. (Kquofi, 2013), in his "Symbolic Representation and Socio-Cultural Significance of Selected Akan Proverbs in Ghana", also noted that, with time, proverbs can lose their originality, due to geographical migrations. This is true because some of the images used in alluding a current situation to a previous one, as used in another



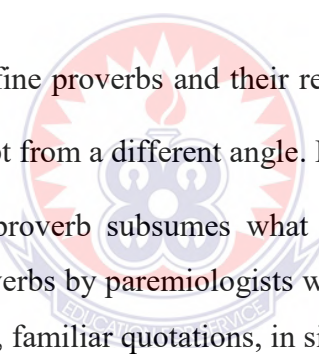
language, may not be present in another language because of geographical locational differences. There are certain types of fish that are only found in the sea. Therefore in the hinterlands, where there is no sea, in the absence of such type of fish, a proverb taken from the coastal area with those types of fish in it would have to be polished with a different image, item, or any other type of fish that the speakers can easily relate to. In doing this modification, the proverb loses its original luster, and quality. Meanwhile, proverbs, when used in their original sense, will adequately reflect the society and culture of its origin.

This same sentiment is reiterated in Setuba (2002) who sees proverbs as “the reflection of the depth of the repositories of social and cultural wisdom of a people.” A very important and obvious presupposition deduced from the above definition is that proverbs cannot be detached from culture. In fact, proverbs are integral to the culture of the people who use them. It would be almost impossible to enumerate the tenets of a culture without the mention of its language, and the note on language cannot be completed without a touch on proverbs and their usage. The assertion that proverbs are cultural artefacts, an indelible part of culture, and a reflection of societal reality is a clear augmentation of Ahmed (2009) who postulates that proverbs are means of expression in any culture and are used to address a number of societal issues including admonishing, encouragement, caution, and resolution of conflicts.

According to Addo (2001), proverbs in Africa are wise philosophical expressions, generally short and sometimes very funny yet make the language rich, picturesque, and express a hidden or obvious wisdom. Invariably, they express a relationship which is a general principle, or a characteristic of a certain category of static or dynamic systems. The emphasis has been on the wisdom that most proverbs carry, and the fact that the amount of wisdom embedded in the proverbs of a particular society, has a lot to say

about the thinking capacities of the people, and the value their culture places on wisdom. It all boils back to the point that proverb and culture are inseparable. (Kaplan, 2002) says the nature of proverbs allows them to be interpreted again and again, across time and in different situations to advise, educate and warn. In the home and in other community settings alike, proverbs are used to pass on rich cultural traditions, to transmit folklore, and to communicate expected codes of behaviour. These functions of proverbs as enumerated by Kaplan are clear tenets of many cultures in the world, and every culture seeks to protect and preserve its values from generation to generation. How are these values passed on? Through the use of proverbs. This offers enough justification for the thought that proverbs are inseparable from culture as opined by Setuba (2002).

Still on the attempts to define proverbs and their relevance to culture, Ojoade (2004) decided to view the concept from a different angle. He says



The word proverb subsumes what traditionally has been termed proverbs by paremiologists which include idiomatic expressions, familiar quotations, in similar expressions, that are still in caterpillar stage, on their way to the realm of proverbs as well as all types of stereo-typed sayings which can furnish a potent statement with a backing of public approval. (p. 3)

It is hard to entirely agree with Ojoade in this regard. It would not be acceptable to call idiomatic expressions proverbs. However, some proverbs are idiomatic in nature. Also, not all familiar expressions qualify as proverbs. We know the indicators of proverbs, hence if the familiar quotation or expression does not contain the very tenets of proverbs, one cannot just categorise it as a proverb merely because it is a familiar statement. However, here in this definition, we are offered the dynamism of proverbs since language itself is highly dynamic in nature. It implies that it is possible for new

proverbs to emerge in line with the general behavioural pattern and that the existing proverbs can be interpreted differently in different cultures and social circumstances. If in spite of these differences in the new interpretations or modifications, we still see the indicators of proverbs, we accept them as proverbs based on the new cultural context, and this is concretely backed by the reflectionist theory.

Okpewho (1992) does not go for any lengthy definition. He defines proverbs as “a piece of folk wisdom expressed with terseness and charm.” This definition itself is just as terse as the terseness he projects. His definition agrees with Finnegan who defines proverbs as “a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense, and salt, and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it” (Finnegan, 1970). These definitions point out the fact that proverbs are not just words for their own sake but a verbal string that so much demand much reasoning, must be captivating, and enthralling, and for that matter are often attributed to the elders because of the belief that wisdom is associated with old age. The terseness of proverbs is reflected in this Akan proverb “asempa ye tia”. Asempa means good news, and tia means short. To wit, good news is short. How significant that proverbs are also short. An Ewe proverb makes reference to this as, “amega xoxo di gbɔ menyɛ ɖevi ewo ‘o gbɔnu o.” This literally means, a useless old man is not a mate to ten youngsters. The proverb therefore can be interpreted as, no matter how unprofitable an elder is, he is not useless; he is still far above a youngster. But per our deduction from the quotations above, it is clear that wisdom is not a function of ages. Therefore, a youngster could be just as wise, if not even wiser than the old. It is therefore not strange if a child learns to use proverbs very effectively. In this case, he would be respected and accorded the veneration that the use of proverbs carry, as per the definitions of Finnegan. A Yoruba proverb, chiming with what the Ewes of Ghana have said, also puts it that, “Nwata tuo

ilu nna ya turn ya kwuo kwa ugwo nna ji” (If a child uses proverbs for which his father was known, let him also pay debts owed by his father). This proverb can be used to suggest the fact that there is a limit to what a child can do in an African society, however, if he decides to speak in proverbs, or act above his age, he must be ready to pay full price for it. Additionally, what you do determines how you are viewed. If you speak the language of the elders, then you should be ready to perform the responsibilities of an adult. Speaking in proverbs, as a result of the wisdom required to be in all proverbs, has been attributed to the elderly in society, and this is why when a child uses it, he is regarded with the same veneration that is accorded all users of the language.

Trench (2003) also says that nothing is harder to define than the term “Proverb”. As noted early on in this thesis, Taylor agrees with this, and so far, as goes this review of the thoughts of various scholars on the definition of proverbs, it is clear that this school of thought has so much truth in it. The term has never been easy to define. The broad nature of the concept, and the fact that different things preoccupy the mind of each scholar confirms this argument. Taylor (1931) observes that “an incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that the other is not (Taylor, 1931). In other words, I cannot define a proverb, but I know one when I see one.

Elimslie (1977) says a parable is an elaborate proverb, and a proverb is a parable in germ. In other words, a proverb is a short saying, a parable a some-what longer saying. The common denominator in all these definitions is that a proverb must say more, using fewer words. The shortness of a proverb is an indefatigable quality that every proverb must seek to possess. Not just that, it must carry a sense of wisdom that should be venerable. One that provokes the hearer to think deeply in order to unravel the moral lesson it seeks to teach.

Finnegan's definition of proverbs as "a saying in more or less fixed form, marked by shortness, sense and salt, and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it" implies that a proverb should be "a short saying' 'in more or less fixed form' which expresses a general truth in a delightful and figurative way." We may wrap it all up from the above that a proverb is a short, metaphorical wise saying that is full of didactics. The length and the meaning potentials are often used as indicators to determine what constitutes a proverb. Cultural relevance and shortness (in terms of the length) as already noted are also highlighted factors to be considered in the definition of proverbs. Due to the fact that proverbs are expressions that have been handed down from generations to generations, they have become fixed in structure and are often memorisable. The problem with the 'fixed form' requirement is that, it cannot stand the dynamism of translations and inter-cultural migrations and adaptations. When a proverb is translated, or moved from one culture to another, definitely, its form will change, whether in words, arrangement or the images used. It must be noted that the mere fact that a word or two get changed in the adapted forms, does not in effect render such adaptations as no proverbs. Proverbs are highly dynamic in nature and this is true in the sense of their production as well as interpretation in line with the contextual relevance to the discourse.

Beitel and Gibbs, (1996) posit that proverbs are seen as vehicles of culture in the sense that they express "well known truths, social norms, or moral concerns". Just as other previous definitions of proverb that stress cultural importance, this definition anchors largely on cultural values, and common societally accepted norms. This chimes with Mieder (1985) whose view on proverbs in particular on the expression of "truth". However, Yusuf (2012) and other recent researches on proverbs have shown that proverbs sometimes do not express any realistic truth. This implies that, a proverb may

not express a truth. This may not necessarily affect the didactic values that a proverb is supposed to carry. Some proverbs are simply used as cultural aesthetics or for linguistic colorization purposes, thus may not in any way reflect any particularly known general truth. In a broader view point, Winick (2003 as cited in Adedimeji, 2010), sees proverbs as brief inter-textualised utterances which derive a sense of wisdom, with an authority from explicit and intentional inter-textual references to a tradition of previous similar wisdom utterances. This intertextual reference may take many forms, including replication (repetition of the text from previous context), imitation (i.e. modelling a new utterance) or the use of features (rhyme, alliteration, meter, ascription to elders and other living things such as animals etc.) associated with previous wisdom sayings. Proverbs address recurrent social situations in a strategic way. They could also be carved out of new occurrences in society. A typical example is what this researcher carved out of the Ebola and Corona virus disease pandemic thus “even a full blown ebola is no mate to a baby Corona”. This proverb, though new, does effectively employ the format and of ancient proverbs and clearly qualifies as a proverb as it contains both metaphor, terseness, and wisdom.

Winick’s definition clearly goes beyond the length of a statement as a basis of defining proverbs. It is concerned, among other things, with the embedded wisdom in proverbs which reinforce moral lessons or didactics. This moral basis of defining proverbs can be described from the functional perspective. It is in view of this functionality that a proverb is defined as “a standard statement of moral and colloquial imperatives in fixed metaphorical paradigmatic form, dealing with fundamental logical relationship” (Barley, 1970). On the terseness of proverbs, Mieder (2004) says that “Of the various verbal folklore genres (i.e., fairy tales, legends, tall tales, jokes, and riddles), proverbs are the most concise but not necessarily the simplest form.” This assertion may not be

entirely true in all cases as other aspects of literary art may be shorter than some proverbs, whereas some proverbs too may be longer than some other forms of art that are assumed to be long in nature, and length and simplicity are not the same either. Thus, to say that proverbs are the most concise, is not adequate. There are idiomatic expressions and wise sayings that do not qualify for proverbs but are way shorter than some very short proverbs. For instance, the Ga expression, “jen saji fa” which literally translates as “issues of life are innumerable” is a very terse statement with so much sagesse embedded in it, but cannot qualify for a proverb as it does not contain most of the indicators of proverbs. Yet this short wise saying, comes handier, and shorter than some very notable short proverbs such as “faa ni obuu le, no du) m)”. This proverb is translated as “the waterbody you do not respect is the one that will drown you”. To wit, the river that you least expect to drown you is the one that will drown you. The moral here is that, one should not look down on anyone in society, as help could come from anywhere, especially where you least expect. Additionally, this proverb cautions against blindly trusting people, as anyone could betray you, especially those you least expect. This is enough evidence that the terseness, or shortness of a saying alone does not qualify it as a proverb. According to Seitel (1972), proverbs are “the strategic use of metaphor”. This summarily explains that proverbial statements are used to make reference to, or to compare one event to the other, whether a past event to the present, or a present situation to a past one.

Congruently, Olajide (2012) defines proverbs as “a repository of wisdom that emerges through generations of people that have based their verbal reaction on keen observation of social, political, and cultural events. In the above definition, Olajide has added another dimension to the conceptual definition of proverbs by highlighting the relevance of “verbal reaction”. It is a fact that proverbs which can be found in both



verbal and written conversations are found in larger quantities in verbal discourses than in written ones. This is primarily because verbal discourses are usually less formal than written ones. Therefore, speakers are at will to employ a vast array of proverbs available to them to express their points. This same sentiment is echoed in Setuba (2002) who views proverbs as “the reflection of depth of the repositories of social and cultural wisdom of a people.” One obvious presupposition about the above definition is that proverbs are indivisible from culture. And this is not just a supposition but an obvious truth, attested to by almost all users of proverbs across all cultures. Its relevance to this research is the justification it lends to the use of the reflectionist theory in the analysis of the proverbs in the selected texts examined in this thesis. Indeed, proverbs are cultural artifacts and a reflection of societal reality. This partly explains why Ahmed (2009) clarifies that proverbs are means of expression in any culture and are used pragmatically to address a number of societal issues.

Viewing the concept from a different perspective, Ojoade (2004) says the word proverb subsumes what traditionally have been termed proverbs by paremiologists which include idiomatic expressions, familiar quotations, in similar expressions, that are still in caterpillar stage, on their way to the realm of proverbs as well as all types of stereotyped sayings which can furnish a potent statement with a backing of public approval. This definition accounts for the dynamism of proverbs since language itself is highly dynamic in nature. It implies that new proverbs can emerge in line with the general behavioural pattern and the existing proverbs can be interpreted differently in different social circumstances. Accordingly, proverbs are actually not fixed (in structure) as opined by Finnegan, they have the tendency to be modified and even re-modified. This reconstruction, or modification, and reframing is what is known as post proverbial sayings or anti-proverbs. The concept of anti-proverbs is a process through which a



proverb has gone through some modifications which often affect its pragmatic imports in a negative way. Lastly, the definition touches on the intuitive linguistic competence of users of language in determining what a proverb is and what it is not. This is similar to Taylor's popular comment cited earlier that "an incommunicable quality tells this sentence is proverbial and that one is not". I cannot define a proverb, but I know one when I see it. Proverb is context-dependent in order to be fully understood and it is in view of this that most linguistic based researches on it are always concerned with social variables influencing its use, hence the appropriateness of the use of the reflectionist theory in the analysis of the proverbs selected for analysis in this thesis. It is a succinct way of saying very many things in few words. According to Agu (2010), when a proverb is used, there is an underlying meaning which the user may not have expressed. He argues on that proverbs are used non-literally and indirectly.

The general conclusion of the matter under discussion is that a proverb is terse, expresses a higher level of cognition, reflects the linguistic repertoire, and the socio-cultural values of the people who use them, indicating their general worldview.

### **2.3 Features of Proverbs**

In addition to all that has been discussed so far on the definitions of proverbs, Farb's features of proverbs also need to be examined in adding more flesh to what other scholars have said so far about proverbs. Farb (1991) points to some characteristics of English proverbs, the analysis of which is very important to a proper understanding of African proverbs as well. Proverbs have meaning and they deal with some basic truths about life- respect to elders, love of riches and morality etc. Dzobo (1997) collects five hundred proverbs and puts them under one hundred and fifty headings. The proverb,

‘Devi si nya asikoklɔa yeɔua nu kple dumegawo’ meaning “The child who knows hand washing eats with elders” is an indication of the ability of our elders (the composers of the proverbs) to deduce a moral lesson from this ordinary event. This is a basic truth about life. That is good behavior will make a person attractive and acceptable not only to his peers but also to other people he comes into contact with.

Proverbs make use of literary devices – repetition, alliteration, assonance, rhyme and parallelism. ‘Klo kpɔfe nye klo fɔfe’ (Where you see tortoise is where you own it). In this proverb, the noun “klo” tortoise the locative *fe* and the vowels /o/ /ɔ/ are repeated. Another striking feature is that the words of the proverbial sentence are similarly arranged. This is called parallelism. These features may however be lost in translation. Ahiaɖzegbe ahia vivina, takutsogbe ada ɔo eme (Meeting a lover is a sweet experience, but when you are to raise money for the dowry or pay for her expenses is when your irritating face appears).

Proverbs used a common communicative strategy. They express the ideas in an impersonal form. This makes a proverb an indirect way of criticizing a person. In most proverbs in Ewe the generic *wo* + negative + verb and the habitual aspect marker –“a” is very common. Womexea mə eve na vɔvɔnɔtɔ o. One should not block both paths for a coward. Wometsɔa ŋukpe noa gbe le ahame o. Meaning one should not be shy and drink a glass of liquor with dregs.

For proverbs to have a universal application the habitual aspect morpheme, –(n)a is mostly present. Ami mevɔna le galagui me o. Fat is never absent in the crabs shell. Dumedeɔu medoa gblɔ o. Meaning, the drum that is meant to be taken to town should not be dis-tuned.

Proverbs are known for the words of wisdom that they convey to the people. All the examples of proverbs are to give guidance in moral and ethical matters. It is for this

reason that when a person is going astray, proverbs are used to remind him of the social and moral codes. Proverbs can be 'said' using drums. Many African languages including Ewe are tonal. This implies that tone is contrastive and significant. Talking instruments, drums, for example are used to convey rhythm and tonal pattern without actual speech sounds. It is however limited to some extent to those who understand the drum language.

In some of the schools in Keta in the Volta region of Ghana this concept is improved upon. When students are to be assembled for dining, the talking drum is played. The drums sound and can be interpreted as, *Hadome sena hafi ha kua ati fe ke*. The pig is able to dig the roots of a tree when its belly is full. Other proverbs can be played on the drums to assemble elders, organize a village to go to war and to search for lost individuals in the bush.

In addition to these characteristics, it has also been observed that proverbs in Ewe are based on the sociocultural environment of the people. This is exemplified by the proverb: *Wometsɔa miasi fia ame de o*. One should not use the left hand to point at one's place of birth. Among the Ewes using the left finger hand is a non-verbal way of showing disrespect or looking down on a person, place, or thing. This proverb is an indirect way of saying one should not look down on one's land of birth or one should be patriotic. We can appreciate the meaning of this proverb only if we know what the left hand means to the Ewe people because it is considered to be unclean; it is used to clean the anus when one visits the washroom.

In Proverbs, reference is made to animals in the cultural environment. "Dadi be, *avu ɲutɔe dɔ efe mo dɔ ye wokplɔe yi agble*." Such a proverb may involve a story. For example, the proverb: *Agala be, xɔlɔwɔwɔ fũũ wɔe be yefe ta tsi golo me*, meaning

“The crab says that its unbridled friendship has caused its head to remain in its shell” involves the story below:

Crab, Lobster, and Spider were very close friends. Crab helped his friends readily when they were in difficulty. One day Spider asked Crab to loan him his head. He agreed and Spider wore Crab’s head to the chief’s house when he was summoned by the chief to appear in a serious case. When the case was heard, Spider was found guilty and was to be beheaded. Spider knew very well that the head was not for him so he submitted himself and the head was cut. Crab waited indoors for Spider to bring the head back but he never came to inform him that the head was cut off at the chief’s court. God empathized with Crab and gave him a mouth, teeth and a pair of claws to use in defending himself.

The ostensible form of proverbs is a reference to a statement made by an animal or thing but the real form is the person to whom the proverb is directed. The animals are often referred to in proverbs have some symbolic qualities. This quality is a cultural knowledge shared by all in the community. The spider is seen as cunning, full of intrigue, the pig as hardworking, filthy, the lion as brave, and authoritative.

In the world of Ewes, a proverb is the cream of the Ewe language. In arbitrations at the chief’s court, proverbs are used by both parties and by the elders who are adjudicators to support their cases in the same way as lawyers in law courts quote legal precedents to support their arguments. In one of the cases at the chief’s court in one of the Anlo towns, a man claimed ownership of a parcel of landed property. He stated that his ancestor stayed with the founder of the town. He was however found guilty. The chief asked him (the applicant) to pay one thousand cedis and three bottles of schnapps concluding in Ewe that Atikpo menɔa tɔme zua lo o. Which when translated means, “a log cannot stay in a river and become a crocodile.” One of the elders was plain and

articulate. He recited the genealogy of the clan mentioning the names of slaves that were bought and brought to the town. Another elder pensive and sharp came in to arrest the situation by reminding and cautioning him (the elder) of the harm that his ‘over information’ will cause the unity of the clan. He finally remarked, ‘Avu medzia vi dutofo o’. The dog does not give birth to its young one in public. The applicant who had become the accused pleaded in Ewe saying that ‘Vi menyea mi de atadzi na ame wotsɔa he kpanɛ o. Meaning, we do not remove the faeces of a child by cutting the soiled lap with a knife.

This makes the elders to reduce the fine, consequently yielding apparent peace.

Proverbs are composed by our elders who are the educators in our communities on moral behavior. Proverbs are not identified with any particular person in the community. They are credited generally to our elders. For example, most proverbs are prefaced with Tsitsiawo be ...it our elders who say....

Anyone who wants to translate proverbs effectively should have to consider carefully all these characteristics. Dzobo is aware that proverbs are deeply rooted in the value system of the Ewe people. He is also aware that Ewe proverbs go beyond their superficial ostensible forms. Armed with this knowledge and the characteristics that proverbs possess, Dzobo prefers to adopt a method of translation that helps to depict the cultural knowledge of the Source Language (Ewe) to the Target Language (English) reader in a way they understand. In his own words Dzobo (1997) he explains his method of translation:

The proverbs are first presented in Ewe and then followed by their literal translation in English. This is followed by the explanation, where necessary of difficult words, metaphors and phrases in the particular proverbs and of any allusions to customs, religious beliefs and historical events implied in them. The exposition is followed by a

statement of the moral lesson of the proverbs and an illustrative context where necessary.

In addition, Dzobo gives other proverbs in English or Ewe which are synonymous to the proverb that is explained. One thing that makes Dzobo stand out is arranging of the proverbs under themes. In sum, among the Ewes there is the proverb, “Evi metsɔa miasi fiana eƒe dedu o” meaning “No child can ever pay for the mother’s milk” (Agbemabiese, 2003). The values embedded in this proverb share with the world knowledge about cosmic relations between a mother and her child, and it reveals what they consider as the concept of humanity and the productive relations in the Anlo-Ewe society. Proverbs also dramatize for us the society’s ability to exist with the tensions of two opposites (the male and female), and maintain a congenial balance between the male and female principles (gender dynamics/feminist concerns). Normally, gender imbalances exist in the use of symbols and metaphors in the use of proverbs, and more the reference to rituals, jokes, riddles, wearing of particular clothing, and jewelry can depict a woman’s status among the Ewe culture. In particular, the proverb may narrowly allude to articles of clothing or jewelry on females as ornaments of decorations and in these their meaning and function transcends their surface value.

## **2.4 Language and Culture**

The relationship between language and culture is deep. Language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. Different ideas stem from differing language use within a culture and the whole intertwining of these relationships start at an individual’s birth (Liveridge, 2008).

There are many ways in which the phenomena of language and culture are intimately related. Both phenomena are unique to humans and have therefore been the subject of a great deal of anthropological, sociological, and even mimetic study. Language, of

course, is determined by culture, though the extent to which this is true is now under debate. The converse is also true to some degree: culture is determined by language - or rather, by the replicators that created both, memes (Pinker, 2000).

Crystal (1971) says that it is impossible to conceive of a rational being, or of a society, without implying the existence of a language. Language and thinking are so closely related that any study of the former is bound to be a contribution to our understanding of the human mind. An Analysis of these proverbs reveals the various aspects of the way of life of the writers' people and that of the African society in general. These proverbs fall under various aspects of the Nigerian culture such as their religion, kinship, customs and values, their ecology among others.

The term 'culture' in this study is defined strictly to mean the knowledge that an individual is expected to possess in order to function optimally within the expected social values of any community. In the words of Goodenough (2010, p. 230), culture refers to "whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves". Culture covers every aspect of human endeavour and it is usually generally defined as the total way of life. The concept of totality in this sense means everything a group of people or a human community does. Cultural knowledge societal dependent, that is, it is socially acquired. The necessary behaviour are learnt and do not come from any genetic endowment or external exposure (Wardhaugh, 2010; Romaine, 2000). It is through culture that a people's perception of the world around them is known. It is a connecting rod that unifies a people to do things in a uniform way or in a manner that gives them a social identity. "To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts, in ways which will be understood by each other". From this



submission, culture depends on its participant interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them and „making sense“ of the world in broadly similar ways (Wardhaugh, 2010, p. 229), (Liveridge, 2008). According to Malinowski (1935), “the main function of language is not to express thought, not to duplicate mental processes, but rather to play an active part in human behaviour”. There has been a long standing argument on the nature of the relationship between language and culture. To this end, three different positions are maintained. The first is that the structure of a language determines the way in which speakers of that language view the world. This is what Chandler (n.d) describes as mold theory. The second is that the way a people perceive the world around them is reflected in the way they use language. This, according to Chandler is called cloak theory and it implies that the culture of a people can be known through the language that they speak. The third is that there is little or no relationship between language and culture. This stand is not widely supported by linguists, psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists. Studies such as Sapir (1929), Lado (1957), Romaine (2000), Yule (2006), Wardhaugh (2010), Hornberger and McKay (2010) among others have confirmed that there is a relationship between language and culture. The starting point of this belief is the work of Edward Sapir which was later expanded by his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf. Sapir (1929) maintains that there is close relationship between language and culture to the point that one could not understand or appreciate the one without the knowledge of the other (Wardhaugh, 2010: Yule 2006). The commonly quoted passage from Sapir on the issue states thus: Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is



merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the “real world” is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group ...we see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choice of interpretation.

In Whorf's view, language provides a screen or filter to reality; it determines how speakers perceive and organize the world around them, both the natural and the social world. Consequently, the language an individual speaks helps to inform his/her worldview. One important thing to notice from the views of Sapir and Whorf is the use of the word “largely” to mean that language and culture are indeed related but only to a large extent. Language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. Different ideas stem from differing language use within one's culture and the whole intertwining of these relationships starts at one's birth. Without language, cultures could not have occurred because cultures just do not pop into a group of people's head and suddenly make people do the same things. Cultures occur through interaction and agreement on common ideas, beliefs, ethics, etc. Although cultures do not form languages, they can affect languages. This is evident when a culture degenerates, one's use of language will change. New words will enter the language and new meanings will often emerge.

According to Lexiophiles (2010), language and culture are closely related as language can be viewed as a verbal expression of culture. It is used as a connecting rod of cultural ties among a group of people. It provides language users with many of the categories they use for expression of their thoughts. It is therefore natural to assume that thinking is influenced by language. The values and customs in a speech community determine the way in which people of such communities think, often to a certain extent. Hantrais

(1989) as quoted by Leveridge (2008) maintains that culture is the beliefs and practices governing the life of a society for which a particular language is the vehicle of expression. Consequently, everyone's views are dependent on culture, which has influenced him or her. Leveridge (2008) concludes that language and culture are intertwined to such an extent that one cannot survive without the other. It is impossible for one to teach language without teaching culture. The implications for language teaching and policy making are therefore vast and far reaching. This submission posits that the understanding of culture and its people can be enhanced by the knowledge of their language. Proverbs are generally an aspect of language and it is an avenue through which a people's culture, worldview, historical antecedence, value system and identity are known. Proverbs cannot be separated from language particularly in African societies where a good mastery of proverbs in one's language is considered a great asset and a hallmark of responsiveness (Adedimeji, 2010). This is because in Africa, there are as many proverbs as possible on every aspect of daily endeavour to be used, depending on the linguistic competence of language users. It is in line with the above submission that Finnegan (1970) quoted in Abubakre and Adebola (2012) argued that "proverbs actually make a language and that a language is alive and functional as a result of the proverbs which that very language embodies." The nexus between a language and its proverbs could be likened to a skeleton with flesh as well as a body with soul. Simply put, the richness of a language largely depends on the proverbs it has. It is not surprising therefore, that Achebe (1994) views proverbs as "the palm-oil with which words are eaten".

Among the Yoruba people, a "proverb is the horse with which speech rides and vice versa (Owe ni esin oro). When wisdom is lost, proverbs are used to find it" (Adedimeji, 2010; Alabi, 2009).

According to Ajadi (2012), Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* does not only deploy proverbs as lubricant of effective and culture-sensitive interaction among the Igbos, but he also uses them to illustrate the beautified language elements with the aesthetics that enhance the culture and value of the African existence. The concept of value system of the African existence is very important and it partly explains why Africans hold on to the proverbs in their languages. This view is echoed by Setuba (2002) who sees proverbs as “the reflection of the depth of the repositories of social and cultural wisdom of a people.” They are used to warn people of certain imminent danger, as a means of admonishment, to console, to rejoice with people, and in several other ways. However, proverbs more often than not are used to teach certain lessons even in communicative instances where they appeared to have been used just for the sake of fun. This possibly accounts for the description of proverbs by Yusuf (1997) as “a short witty, traditional, ideological-laden statement.”

## **2.5 The Reflexive Functions of Proverbs**

Lawal, Ajayi and Raji (1997) approached some selected Yoruba proverbs from a pragmatic standpoint using Lawal’s (1997) pragmatic model. Olubunmi (2010) focuses specifically on Yoruba proverbs using an ethno-methodological approach. Olusoji (2011), however, does a pragmatic analysis of eight Nigeria proverbs in Wole Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel* employing John Searle’s Speech Act Theory as analytic tool. Owoeye and Dada (2012), attempt a demographic analysis of Ola Rotimi’s historical tragedies: *Kurumi, The Gods are not to Blame*. Omoera and Inegbeboh (2013) choose a yet different approach. Using Dell Hymes Ethnography of Speaking, they explore the context of usage and aesthetics of selected proverbs from the southern part of Nigeria. Abiodun (2014), using ten Yoruba and Igbo proverbs on carefulness (five from each group) as his data, conducts a research on the sociolinguistic

implications of these poems. Saleh (2014) attempts “a contrastive analysis of English and Hausa proverbs. He adopts Wilson (2009) and Benathy (1968) contrastive models. Although, the focus of Saleh’s study is proverb use in different cultures but the theoretical framework is considered a little bit deficient.

Whether original or regular in oral circulation, the strategy and message of these literary forms primarily reflects the cultural values and are projections of social and psychological tensions in the society. This reflective role of art is very evident in African proverbs. In most societies there are proverbs that focus on the people’s religion, gratitude and appreciation, honour and respect, arrogance and pride, contention and violence, perseverance and determination, kinship systems, marriage, their perception about death and afterlife among others. Stevenson (1973, p. 53) gives an example of a proverb among the Agni of South-eastern Ivory Coast. As, ek’pho gumi zua mabi, which translates as ‘The lizard alone does not carry the burden of his own excrement.’ This proverb, according to Stevenson goes to confirm an observation about the people that there is an emphasis on the group, whether in terms of community cooperation or extended family relations rather than the individual. There is an Anlo equivalence that says that one man does not get satisfied and we conclude that there is wealth in the town. This means that everyone must be satisfied before we can conclude that we have wealth, thus, the one who is fortunate to have something small must endeavor to share it till everyone else has a bit to his satisfaction. The individual is only a part of the community conformation; he/she both reaps the benefits and shares in the misfortunes of others, and even in the guilt of their misdeeds. She states further that, “I realized that Agni social codes are not based on individual responsibility. Rugged individualism is a Western notion that is very alien to our culture as Africans, while

sharing is the essence of the African tradition. The proverb in this case becomes a vehicle through which the people's values are driven.

Proverbs help to express important aspects of culture. The Maasai of Kenya express some important aspects of their society through their proverbs. Kinship is an esteemed institution in Africa. Regardless of all sorts of differences, blood relationships are not completely dissolved. This is expressed in a Maasai proverb as "Eiv oltung' ani osuuji naa olanya." This means 'A man's son may be a coward but he is still his son.' There is another Anlo equivalence to this too that says "norvi dz'arava ha, made megbe ne" to wit, even a sibling that has gone mad deserves to be defended. The Maasai are a gallant pastoral community that highly values bravery. A father is most embarrassed by a cowardly son, but he cannot disown him. If we apply the science of genetics, the father's recessive genes may have been responsible for the child's cowardice (Okumba, 1994, p. 79). The proverb therefore is the summary of the beliefs and values of the people. This is why Quarshie (2002, p. 11) states that when people abandon their languages, they give up on more than merely words; they reject to a certain degree their very identity. Language in this case goes beyond syntax and morphology and includes the image, concepts and the beliefs of a people. The preservation of the proverbs of the people helps to preserve all these aspects of culture.

## **2.6 Classification of Proverbs**

This comprises the forms of proverbs, their various functions, and the style in which these proverbs are presented within the West African culture.

Proverbs as used in African literature can be grouped into various themes depending on their thematic functions.

## 2.7 Precautionary Proverbs

Proverbs serve as a tool for the reconstruction of societal misbehavior. Yusuf (2001) examines English and Yoruba proverbs and the spiritual denigration of women. Here they examine how proverbs of various cultures make known their maltreatment of women, exposing them for redress and reconstruction. In many African societies, proverbs are used to sound words of caution to errant youngsters as well as to forewarn people about impending danger. In all genres of literature, we see the use of proverbs to throw caution to the readers. A typical example is Owonibi's poem "Caution". In this poem, he uses proverbs to give a clear message to both government and readers as well. "If fire consumes tortoise with its iron suits, feathered fowl must take caution." The Ga speakers of Ghana say "baa ng)n kp) baa gbing kp)" (both green leaves and dry leaves fall). This proverb says that, children die, just as adults also die. Everything that happens in life can happen to anybody at all. The moral implication is that, do not use anyone's current predicament to undermine or maltreat them, because tables could turn any day. *Kε nu tse ye to mli le eshaa* (if water stays too long in a bottle, it rots). Imperatively, it is not very prudent to stay at one place for too long. If you stay too long in your in-law's house, it will breed familiarity which will result in contempt and disrespect. This proverb has an Ewe version said thus "Atsi deka te nono, xevi de wo nyea emi de ame dzi." (Staying too long under a tree will only invite the defecation of the habitat birds.) Another version says, a bird that stays too long on a tree invites stones. The moral implication of these proverbs is that, there should be novelty in everything. Do not stick too much, and too long at a single model. Some mischievous adults use this proverb to justify their promiscuity. They opine that one has to change partners intermittently to make room for fun and novelty. This they do oblivious of the fact that the same culture frowns upon such adulterous relationships.

Yet another way in which proverbs can be used to advise is in the form of mockery. Example is evident in the Ewe proverbs, Enu dze xɔ̃ menyɛ xɔ̃ tɔ (the fact that something perfectly fits you does not mean it is yours). They also have, “Atikpo no tɔme dzidzi metɔna zu’a lo o” (A log does not become a crocodile by staying long in water). These proverbs are normally used if someone tries to be what he/she is not; or jettison to his identity. We can imagine this happening where a person prefers speaking other languages to his mother tongue or always associates him/herself with people of other ethnicities. “xe bidzi medzona kple at) ‘o.” (An angry bird does not fly away with its nest.) in another proverb, they say “Xe kple luhoe menyɛ nɔvi o.” (A bird and the butterfly may both possess wings, but that does not make them siblings.) A Nigerian version says “*The lizard and the millipede may both crawl on their feet, but that does not make them siblings.*” Where the bird needs to hurt the butterfly, it would do so without considering its wings. Even so will the lizard hurt the millipede when the need arises. Monkeys are to play by sizes. In cases such as these, the use of proverbs is purposely to shame non-conformists. This proverb may be used as a piece of advice for people to identify themselves with their origin. We may want to allude to the current new voters’ register being compiled, in light of the seeming target at eliminating Ewes from the register, and many Ewes who belong to the ruling New Patriotic Party have joined the government to brandish their kin as Togolese who should not be allowed to vote as Ghanaians. These proverbs may be used to caution them to be cautious of their actions, of pointing to the homes with their left hands. Parents employ proverbs, riddles and fables to instruct their children on socially appropriate behaviours. The anonymous but authoritative nature of proverbs coupled with the oblique and tactful way in which they are used to advise people make them very effective.



Proverbs that serve as a tool for the preservation of archaic lexical items that could have become extinct. Sanusi and Omoloso (2006) concerned themselves with the use of proverbs for the preservation of archaic lexical items. They explain that proverbs, as passed on from generation to generation, if maintained in their exact form, will help preserve the lexical items of languages that could have gone extinct if not for their use in proverbs. This is really true, in that, most of our youngsters as far as this generation is concerned, because of modernization and globalization, and the tendency to focus more on international languages to the detriment of one's local mother tongue, a lot of words in our local languages, if not for their use in many proverbs, would have gone extinct by now. Adedimeji (2010) works on a Stylo-Pragmatic study of proverbs in selected Nigerian novels in English, using T.M. Aluko, Zainab Alkali and Chinua Achebe. Here they surmise that the role of proverbs as mode of instruction in most African societies cannot be underestimated. They recognize the relevance of proverbs in the reconstruction of societal behaviour comments made on behavior may be made in the form of a proverb and used to warn advice or bring someone to his or her senses. The person concerned is reminded of the general implication of his or her action. Among the Ewes, there are proverbs that discourage individualistic or egoistic behaviors, and stress on the communal or communitarian life of the people. "Ame deka mediafo le dume wo gblona be yede dunyo o." Meaning that, one man's satisfaction cannot lead us to conclude that it is well with the town. The import of this proverb is that, communalism, or the spirit of oneness is an integral part of the Ewe culture. Thus, if you find yourself very satisfied, there is the need to find out of from your neighbours, and extend help to the needy around. The wellness of everyone has always been everyone's concern. Another example of this is "Asibide deka melɔa dzowɔ o". This translates as, "A single finger cannot collect ash." This can mean that, it is easier



working in group than working alone. Of a certainty, you just cannot pick ash with a single finger; you definitely would need to put all the fingers together to collect the ash. In summary, there is the need to have everyone moving together to have a harmonized, and focused society, poised for development. A Zulu proverb also says, 'If you want to walk fast, walk alone but if you want to walk far walk in a group.' We may want to ask, what is the sense in walking fast to a place alone without any impact in the lives of others? The Zulu community, further concretizes this philosophy with the word, 'ubuntu' which is explained as "I am, because you are, you are because we are."

Amongst the Ga of Ghana, there are proverbs too that discourage unilateral, egotistic and selfish behaviours. A typical example is "yitso kome eyaaa ajina" (one head is not enough for a proper counsel) and "kɛ oyɛ lɛlɛ mli lɛ, aloɔ emli nuu"(when you are in a boat, you are obliged to bail water out of it). The second proverb forbids individuals from sitting on the fence when the effort of everyone is needed to have a piece of work done. It is a good example for what is known in English as "all hands on deck".

## **2.8 Premonition and Intuition Proverbs**

All traditions of Africa acknowledge the existence of premonition and intuition in the life of man. It is on this intuition that all spiritualists build to foretell omens in the future. The priests build on this to consult their oracles and they hear them through the spirit of man, and there are proverbs also that address this issue clearly in the cultures where the reference texts are set.

## **2.9 Proverbs on Diligence**

In all African societies, emphasis is laid on hard work, and there is almost no place for indolence in our culture. Just as there are proverbs that address all other

important tenets of our culture as Africans, likewise are there proverbs that give enough inspiration and provoke to hard work. The Ewe proverb “ngused) me gbana pu o, (Hard work breaks no bones), lays emphasis on the place of hard work in our community. It subsumes that concept of hard work and an encouragement to work diligently in order to gain everything one desires in life legitimately.

## 2.10 Forms and Sources of Proverbs

The definitions of proverbs, as have been reviewed above have suggested some of the sources of proverbs. I will, in effect, go on to discuss and shed light on some other sources of proverbs, and how they are formed. Proverbs are not just formed from vacuums but arise as a result of certain occurrences. Odedimeji studies the crisis motivated proverbs in Rotimi's *The Gods Are not to Blame*, where he infers that some proverbs arise as a result of certain crises that the society finds itself in. This lends credence to the fact that proverbs do not just come into being, but are orchestrated by certain situations. They are also not just haphazardly placed in the literary world. Proverbs come in different forms. The chief methods of expressing proverbs in African society are by literal statements, similes, metaphors, hyperboles, and paradoxes. Some are also presented in anecdotal forms, and riddles. Some scholars such as (Sharpin, 2001) have made attempts, classifying proverbs into such categories as adages, aphorisms, apophthasms, clichés, commonplaces, dicta, epigrams, exempla, gnomes, maxims, precepts, saws and sayings. Proverbs could also be found in verbal forms as well as written forms. It should however be emphasized that before the proliferation of written proverbs, the main mode of usage and passage of proverbs from generation to generation in West Africa is the oral form; in drum languages, songs, incantation, appellations, poetry, and narrations. There are some proverbs that are more commonly used in the verbal forms, others more often appear in the written form, and some too in

both written and verbal forms. It is a known fact that proverbs that could be found both in verbal and written conversations can be found in larger quantities in verbal discourses as compared to written ones. This is mainly because verbal discourses are usually less formal than written ones, thus eliciting more proverbs than in the written which is more formal.

### **2.11 Verbal Proverbs**

Verbal proverbs are those proverbs that are mostly delivered through words, as opposed to pictorial presentation or through drum languages. Bascom defines verbal art as “the form of literature expressed in words whether spoken or written” (Bascom, 1955). As earlier indicated, African proverbs have always been used in the verbal forms prior to the proliferation of writing and written texts across the continent. These verbal proverbs are those that have been passed on from generations long gone, to the generation of writers. Because of the dynamic nature of proverbs, new ones spring up along the way, and all find their ways into the new, and latest collections of proverbs. The proverbs in this category are those in the form of folktales, proverb-names, praise-proverbs, proverb-riddles and proverbs used in songs. This is how to distinguish the ancient proverbs from the current ones.

### **2.12 Folktales as Proverbial Expression**

In some cultures, there is a very close relationship between proverbs and folktales such that they are both referred to by the same name. (Finnegan, 1970) gives examples from various societies to ascertain this fact. The Nyanja people, also known as the Chewa, speak the Nyanja language in the Eastern and central provinces of Zambia. These people for instance, refer to story, riddle or proverb, as the “Ganda olugero” which means, amongst other things, a saying, a story, a proverb, and a parable,

and they use the “Mongo Bokolo” for all expressions, including fable, proverb, poetry, and allegory. This overlap in terms is fairly common in Bantu languages and also sometimes occurs in West Africa too. The Limba Mborɔ refers to story, riddle, and parable as well as to sayings which we might term proverbs, while the Fulani Tindol can mean not only a popular story but also a proverb or a maxim. Some proverbs arise out of folktales. Yankah notes that, the basis of the link between the tale and the proverb seems to be that these two are among the most accessible tools of rhetorics in which morals can be embedded. He goes on to stress the relationship between the proverb and the folktale by pointing out that, among the Akans, the fictional tale “Anansesem” becomes “Ebe” (proverb) when used in an illustrative anecdote in discourse interactions (Yankah, 1989). In other words, some folktales are narrated to stress on a particular points which the narrator seeks to emphasize. Agbaje (2002) prefers to call them “Allusive Proverbs.” With this kind of genre, there are two components: a proverb is quoted and then is followed by the narration of the tale or alternatively the narration is concluded with a proverb.

In some cases, the narrator just gives the narration to emphasize what he intends to say or what he has said earlier. For example, the Akan proverb, “esie ne kagya enni aseda” to wit, the anthill and the “kagya” tree do not need to thank each other. This proverb derives from a folktale, thus, one needs a knowledge of the folktale in order to understand the proverb, to enhance its judicious application. The story is thus told about the anthill and the *giffonia simplicifolia* tree. A very short tree that grows on the anthill. Esie is the local name for anthill in the Akan language, and the local name for *giffonia simplicifolia* is “kagya”. The tree does not get enough sunlight because of its height, and hence is hindered by other trees; the anthill as well, needs trees to give it shade. As a result, the tree and the anthill came to an agreement that the tree will grow on the

anthill to give it shade whilst the anthill also grants the tree the needed height in order to get sunlight. This union is symbiotic relationship is very important to the African society, where partners are both expected to be beneficiaries, and selfish exploitation and usurpation of others is frowned upon.

(Arewa, 1970) also gives this example to buttress his explanation of proverbs in folktale to stress the fact that a person signing up to a contract must first get a better understanding of the conditions underlying the contract. In this case, the story is about a thief who stole some goods which he put in a sack and then started looking for somebody to help him carry the stolen goods. He then met a passerby and asked him to help him carry the stolen goods. The man obliged but when they got to a gate, the gateman stopped them and then inquired who the owner of the goods was. The owner then responded by pointing at the one carrying the goods. The innocent helper tried to defend himself by saying that, he only helped the other man who owned the goods. The gateman then replied with the proverb that, “It is expected of a child carrying a burden to know what the burden is.”

### 2.13 Proverb Names

Proverbs can and do appear in the form of names. These are shortened forms of proverbs. Some names serve as summary of what a particular proverb seeks to put across. Among the Akan of Ghana for instance, by default, people with the same family name are expected to be genetically related, may behave alike. This would therefore reinforce the ideology that names are not arbitrarily given. A popular maxim, well known amongst the Akan says “*ne din ne ne honam se* ‘his/her name befits his/her body’”. This explains that there is an amount of element inherent in the name that is expected to chime with the bearer’s mental, and social behavioural attributes.

According to (Zawawi, 1993) “a name constructs a person because the name one bears may create an attitude in those who hear it before they meet the name bearer.”

(Agyekum, 2006) says the first automatic name of every child is their ‘souls name’ also known as (kradin) in Akan. Every child has this name given him according to the day they are born. Except in very rare cases, this soul name is never changed. It is the souls of the child that determines when they enter this world. And based on the day one was born, certain characteristic attributes are almost predictable in each child’s life. As a result, certain proverbs have been carved in addition to some of the names as *appellations*.

(Frege, 1949) and some other scholars of anthroponomy confirm this in admitting that names do have attributes. Anyone born and bred in Africa who has a fair grasp of the African cultural system would bear witness to this, hence all Africans consider names to be attached to referents. This is exactly what pertains in the Akan culture where the sociological and cultural context analyses of personal names strongly reveal the place, and ability of names to emphasise social relationships.

Agyekum, (2005) says “Personal names are iconic representations of composite social variables that indexicalise and relate to the name and the person. They include sex, hierarchy in birth, circumstances surrounding the birth, the person’s structure, power, status, etc. Undoubtedly, names form an important feature of African Literature. This, as observed by Nketia, (1955) cited and commented on by Anyidoho (1983, p. 119), gives an illustration of how names and name clusters ensure a vivid appreciation of the poetic effects of Akan dirges.

Anyidoho further points out that, this extends to written Literature too. He says: “For contemporary written African literature, a study of names may yield fruitful results for a richer critical appreciation” (Anyidoho 1983, p. 119). In most African societies, the

names are a summation of certain proverbial concepts, hence, the mention of the name brings to mind the proverb from which it is derived and even in some cases people mention those names in place of the entire proverb whenever they want to make a point.

Finnegan comments on the immense role of these proverbial names by asserting thus:

We can certainly find some literary significance in the occurrence of these condensed, evocative, and often proverbial or figurative forms of words which appear as personal names in African languages... sometimes appearing directly as elements of large-scale creations, sometimes affording scope for imagery, depth, personal expressiveness, succinct comment, or overtones in otherwise non-literary modes of speech (Finnegan, 1970,p. 479).

Finnegan's assertion is evident in Ewe names such as 'Agbenyo', Ganyo, and 'Vinyo' meaning respectively: "Life is good, Money is good, and Child is good." These names emphasize the importance placed on life and opportunities, money, and children. These names suggest that once one has life, and a good and reputable life, it is better than anything else on earth. Thus, people with the name Agbenyo are expected to value the life of others, and live lives worth emulating. Usually, the name suggests a contrast between life and death on another hand. One may hear "Agbenyo gake eku nyanyram" to imply that (though life is good, death threatens it) that is why there is the need to be cautious not to take one's life for granted, nor that of others. When the name "Ganyo" is juxtaposed to that of the former, it is deduced that life is good, money too is good, but never seek money at the expense of life. Vinyo, on the other hand portrays the importance society places on children. Thus, no matter what offences a child commits, there is no reason to sack the child or throw him or her out of the house. It goes in tandem with the saying that "a dirty child is not to be thrown away together with the



water that was used to wash it”. Rather, the child is kept, and the dirty water thrown away”. It is noteworthy that some of the proverbial Ewe names are cautionary in nature. That is, they carry caution messages for evil doers in the society. A typical example is “Dzotokuna” meaning the wicked sorcerer also dies. This name presupposes that, killing others does make you a tree of life. Pointing to evil doers that one day, they too will die. Thus, every individual should take caution and be mindful of their actions against others.

The name Dormelevo is also another proverbial name which is culled from “adu konu dometɔ levo” implying that people can be laughing with you while harboring wicked intentions and malice in their stomach against you. Additionally, the elders say “Xɔɔ ma tekpɔ avlie.” To wit, an untested friend is not a friend. You need to test people to know if their smiles are genuine. Awedoba (2000) admits to the fact that personal names can double as proverbs. He points out that majority of the names Kasena people bear for instance are proverbial names with accompanying appellations. This is because these names reflect on personal circumstances and the name givers attempt to philosophize and comment on life. He gives examples of names such as Keimtogedetu (‘deeds follow their authors or what you sow is what you reap’) and Goronongdiga (‘the murderer is within or those to fear most are the enemies within’). These names just like proverbs express the wisdom of the people (Awedoba, 2000). This points to an important role of African naming system that, the people have a reason for whatever name they give.

#### **2.14 Praise-Proverbs**

Beside these various forms of proverbs, there are some which are occasionally connected with appellations. These proverbs in most cases serve as a prelude or an interlude to a story or a song. Okpewho says these proverbs are used because they have



a direct link with the theme of the performance. Such a device serves various purposes for the performer: to gather momentum before launching into the act of narrative performance, to recover energy or stability before moving to the next episode and more importantly, to put the content of the story within the larger philosophical and cultural outlook that proverbs generally define. This practice has been recorded among the Mandinke storytellers especially in Mali (Okpewho, 1992).

The use of proverbs in appellation serves as spice to the speech and also ensures a better appreciation of the performance. This is because the narrator needs to use skill and tact to select proverbs that fit a particular performance, one that would inspire interest and veneration of the audience. In addition, the proverb helps to emphasize whatever the narrator wants to put across.

In Seydou Camara's "Heroic Hunter's tale "Kambili", the editor referred to these proverbs as praise proverbs (Bird, 1974). Okpewho (1992) observes that:

These are series of lines in which the narrator steps a bit outside the main line of the story to praise various personalities, especially to recount and chant some proverbial statements relating to life, the hunting profession, destiny, war, death, and other subjects. (p. 232)

This example is very clearly evidenced in "Kambili". The entire story of two thousand, seven hundred and twenty seven (2727) lines starts off with about one hundred and fifteen lines of such praise proverbs which set the pace for the performance; it is then interspersed from time to time, between episodes, with other bundles of such lines dealing with various subjects. An example of the proverbs in Kambili is given below.

Born for a reason and learning are not the same. A man doesn't become a hunter If he can't control his fear. The coward does not become a hunter or become a man of renown. Death may end the man; death doesn't end his

name. The omen for staying here is not easy on things with souls. A slave spends but a late evening with you; a slave doesn't stay long among you. Look to the rolling stone for the pebble crusher. Look to the deathless for the sightless. Kambili, the Hunter Kambili Sananfila (Bird, 1974, p. 94).

The praise-proverbs cited above play very important roles. They provide, first and foremost, a transition from one event to the next. For example, as the writer moves from the need to be courageous, which ends on line 2542, he uses the proverb "Death may end the man; death doesn't end his name" to introduce a new theme which means there is the need to leave good legacies after one passes away. This is a praise-proverb since the praises are couched in proverbial language. (Yankah, 1989) gives an example of the use of proverbs in the royal appellation performance called "Apaæ" amongst the Asantes.

Ono no Mmirikisie, yeantumi anno Na yefre no nsamanpɔ Yede so de so na yeangya no so Osee Tutu wɔkɔ ano oo Abɔɔfo se yerenye no yi e. Kaakae Gyaame ayede ntutuaa ko apremo ano. Osee Tutu, yede apremo sum wo a wonkɔ aawo.

There he is the ticket, when they cannot clear it, they call it a sacred grove. They try and try and give it up. Osei Tutu went to the war front. The whiteman did not treat him well the frightful Kaekae Gyaame, who confronts canons with a small gun, Osei Tutu when you are pushed with the canons you don't succumb.

The appellation stanza, celebrating the personality of the Asante King, opens with the proverb "Mmirikisie, yeantumi anno na yefre no nsamanpɔ" which translates as "The ticket, when they cannot clear it, they call it a sacred grove" ridiculing the king's foes who, unable to overcome his strength and courage give him up on the pretext that he is sacred. The message of the king's invincibility is enhanced and sustained throughout the stanza. The stanza is unified with the proverb acting as the focus. These proverbial

lines lend to the performance, some of the wit and in-depth understanding that proverbs are noted for.

### 2.15 Proverb-Riddles

Proverbs can also be expressed in the form of riddles. There is a close relationship between proverbs and riddles. (Barley, 1972) and (Dundes, 1981) have both discussed the structural relations between proverbs and riddles, noting that proverbs can sometimes be used as riddles and vice versa (cited in Lieber, 1984). Finnegan refers to these proverbs as “Proverb-riddles.” At some point it even becomes difficult to distinguish between the two. (Fletcher, 1912) gives an example of this among the Fulani. According to him, Fulani epigrams are closely related to proverbs and riddles. An example is as follows “Three things are like three things but for three things.” This is the general statement and the following can serve as the responses. Sleep is like death but for breathing; marriage is like slavery but for wifely respect; guinea fowl is like grey cloth but for being alive (cited in Finnegan, 1970). The above epigrams can be regarded as riddles with the first general statement as the challenge and explanation as the response. When one takes a second look, these riddles and their responses go beyond just joke and entertainment and state some proverbial ideas. (Finnegan, 1970) affirms the relationship between proverbs and riddles by pointing out that, though proverb-riddles have not been widely reported as a distinct named type, it is possible that proverbs may turn out to occur more often than is realized in connection with riddles either explicitly or by allusion, so that for a full analysis of the literature of any group of people, proverbs and riddles should really be treated in conjunction. Lestrade (1935, p. 294) gives an example of this among the Bantus of South Africa; according to him proverbs are sometimes used in a regular game similar to riddles.

Again, the Anlo Ewes of Ghana have yet a large collection of such proverbs. An example “Anlo dze so”. Literally meaning that Anlo lies prostrate. This riddle is supposed to be unraveled with a response “a tengu alewoe” (can you catch them?) This riddle with its proverb response is meant to portray the spiritual and physical prowess of the Anlo, both as a state and as an individual. The sense is that, Anlo lies prostrate, can you catch them? Implying that even if the Anlo lies prostrate, without any arm tool, you cannot do anything to him, as he would always find his way of defeating you, whether physically or spiritually. The full proverb riddle is also a song that reads thus: Anlo dze so, Anlo Klotsiko dze so, atenu alewoe”. The song features the Anlo man who lies prostrate unarmed, daring anyone, no matter how mighty, to attempt or dare attack him.

## 2.16 Proverbs Used in Songs

Proverbs are also expressed in song form. These types of proverbs, according to Anyidoho (1983) are what the Ewes (a Gbe linguistic group found in Ghana, Togo, Benin, Cameroun, and Nigeria) refer to as ‘*hamelo*’ which literally means song proverbs or proverbs used in songs. These Song Proverbs are some of the captivating lines in songs which are not actually the poet’s own creation, but are traditional proverbs which are put into aesthetically appropriate use in songs. Yankah gives an example of the use of Song Proverbs in an Akan popular song, which mourns the plight of an orphan, and draws attention to the divergence between the Akan aphorism “*agya bi wua, agya bi tease*” which means, (‘When a father dies, another lives’) which is often cited by sympathizers to console an orphan, and the social reality whereby orphans are neglected by successors to their father’s estates in a matrilineal society. Part of the song runs as, *Agya bi wu a agya bi te ase dee, Yeka a yede dadaa awisia. Nea ehia ara ne se yeasie agya yi ama deca gyanka beda mpo abo no, eho aye den ama no*”. This translates

as, when a father dies another lives they say; but that is just to delude the orphan. The father is buried, and soon the orphan loses his place of sleep. It becomes rare, even a sleeping place becomes rare. This song criticizes the Akan matrilineal system of inheritance whereby the child may lose his father's estates to his father's matrilineal relatives upon the death of the former. The child becomes hapless and destitute if the successor of the father is not a benevolent and kind hearted individual enough to take good care of the child.

The singer does not only attack the matrilineal system, but he indulges in oral literary criticism, exposing the often cited consolatory proverb as mere rhetoric (Yankah, 1989). The use of proverbs is also a common feature in the Borborbor musical type of the Northern Ewes of Ghana. An example of this song is indicated below.

Ɖenu le ŋku dzinam eyata nɔvi o zɔna veve ɔ, wozɔna veve, wozɔna veve wozɔnaveve loo. Ɖenu le ŋku dzinam, eyata nɔvi' o zɔna wozɔna veve loo.

This literally means, 'It is due to the fact that people need someone else to help them remove a mote from their eyes that is why there is the need to walk in pairs.' This highlights the communal life of Africans and emphasizes that nobody is independent in life. The use of proverbs in songs points out the creativity of the poet in selecting a myriad of proverbs that fits a particular song and this also helps emphasize the point the song intends to make. Typical Ewe proverb songs could be found in most of the poems of Kofi Awoonor, Ketorwu, and Akpalu. The relationship between proverbs and other literary types as well shows the flexible connection that exists between African oral literary types. But there are also the non-verbal proverb forms.

### **2.17 Non-Verbal Proverbs**

Apart from the verbal ways in which proverbs are presented or conveyed, a proverb's idea may be expressed through non-verbal ways such as through drum

languages, paintings, drawings and sculptures. Doran (1982, p. 56) attests to the fact that among the Akans for instance, nearly all their visual arts such as Adinkra symbols, gold weights, names of cloths etc. have a traditional proverbial interpretation.

### ***2.17.1 Drum language***

Drum language is another beautiful art form that everyone with true African blood can relate to. The highly stylistic and structured drum language is replete with proverbs. One cannot complete a training in drum language without learning a great deal of African proverb because part of the training in drumming is the accumulation of both a large store of proverbs and the knowledge of the appropriate occasions for their use. Nketia says that, among the Akans, almost every ordinary proverb can be reproduced on drums, and in drum poetry in general there is frequent use of proverbs to provide encouragement and excitement (Nketia, 1958). Kaminski (2008) gives an example of atumpan drum language used to praise the power and majesty of the king: Opoku ten-ten-ten-ten-ten-ten-ten-ten-ten-ten-ten, Asante Kotokohene, Okosu Akyeao Prempon bra, Qpanini mmpenin suro no. Odokroo Kwanta dan kesse na se awuno, Asante Kotokohene. Otwe dua etia, Firi tete, Ode saa na pra ne ho, Firi tete. Ode saa na pra ne ho.

Tall Opoku, King of the Asante porcupines, the elder who elders fear. Great Odokroo Kwanta is feared, King of the Asante porcupines. The antelope's tail is short, from ancient time, but it uses it to clean itself, from ancient times. But it uses it to clean itself. The proverb, Otwe dua etia and Ode saa na pra ne ho ('The antelope's tail is short, but it uses it to clean itself'). This proverb connotes that people make do with what they have, and it especially relates to how the Asante, with small resources, defeated the Denkyira Kingdom in 1701 (Kaminski, 2008).

## 2.18 Sculptures and Designs

Another means through which proverbs are presented in non-verbal ways are through sculptures and drawings. This is very common in the courts of African traditional chiefs via the symbols of regalia such as the Akan linguist staffs. Most Akan linguist staffs have some form of carving that inscribes a proverbial saying with a chain of metaphorical associations. Doran, gives an example of this at the Fante paramountcy of Enyan Abaasa. There is a linguist staff which depicts a tree with several birds on its branches and is interpreted as *Anomaa nua ne nea ine no da kori* this means ‘birds of the same species roost in the same tree.’ The image emphasizes the need for unity and solidarity within the state and within the royal family (Doran, 1982). In Yoruba culture, proverbial discourse may be set in motion through visual symbolism, for example on designs of cloth, on walls, on the staffs or walking-sticks of chiefs and royal fathers (Agbaje, 2002).

## 2.19 Proverbs used as Incantations in Traditional Worship

Aside the didactic component of the use of proverbs in the African culture, there are instances where they are used as incantations and sources of invocation of all kinds of deities. Whereas other forms of spirit worships involve the use of written words that have to be memorized and recited for certain spiritual effects to manifest in the physical, Africans sometimes rely on the use of proverbs for invocation purposes. Many times you might come across two or more people engaging each other in spiritual battles, they employ the use of proverbs. Ola Rotimi’s *the gods are not to Blame* makes very good use of proverbs as incantations for stylistic effects. These words with magical powers show hatred and anger and thus summons the powers that each believes in to act in the favour. In the *Gods are not to Blame*, a controversy over a farmland ensues between Odewale and the old man (King Adetusa). Here, they both resort to their powers in



employing proverbs as words of incantations. They end up using their incantations to destroy each other in anger. Odewale brandishes his tortoise talisman pendant and holds it towards the old man's servants (Olojo and Gbonka) to mesmerize them. The tortoise could not have worked just on its own without the invocation of the proverbial words. He uses the following incantations to destroy them:

What are these before my eyes?  
What are these before my eyes?  
Are they mountains or are they trees?  
They are human beings and not trees,  
They are human beings and not mountains  
For trees have no eyes, and mountains have no eyes  
Then let these eyes around me close.  
Close, close in sleep, close in sleep  
That is my word-the mountain always sleeps. Sleep... sleep  
Remain standing, remain rooted,  
a tree stump never shifts.  
Stand there... stand back and sleep, sleep, I say sleep till the  
sun goes to sleep and you wake up (p. 47).

In no time, the men fall asleep in obedience to the words of the old man. As they fall fast asleep, the old man pulls out his own charm of dried eagle's skull, vulture's claws, bright red parrot tail-feathers and begins his own enchantment using his proverbs:

*No termite ever boasts of devouring rock*  
I am your lord, your charms can do me nothing  
Venom of viper does nothing to the back of a tortoise,  
The grinding stone says you must kneel to my power;  
The basket says you must tremble  
When you see me;  
Mortar and pestle say you must bow



Countless times to power  
The day the partridge meets the lord of the farm  
It jumps into the bust with its back  
Or it drops dead. Drop dead, drop dead--- (p.48)

In the midst of the exchange, the old man reaches out for his own spell and uses his spell on Odewale amidst his recitation of the proverbs he believes has the magical powers to give him the effect he desires on his assailants, Odewale then begins to stagger and struggle with his breathing.

The old man then continues with his magical words thus:

The plant that rivals the opa tree in size is killed by Opa;  
The tree that over-reaches the Oriri  
Seeks its own death;  
And the plant  
That entwines its branch  
With the branch of  
Omoluwere will be strangled by  
Omoluwere.  
drop dead... drop deed.... I say drop  
deed ... drop d-e-a-d ... (48)

Odewale, in a drawl, reaches out for something to use on the old man and says :

When ogun, the god of iron,  
Was returning from Ire  
His Loin cloth was a  
Hoop of fire. Blood... the deep red stain  
Of victim's blood  
his cloak (p.49)

Odewale finds a hoe and holds it high in the air with might and strength, high above his head and resumes his own side of the incantation:

This is... Ogun  
and Ogun says; flow  
flow... let your blood flow  
flow ... flow ... flow (p.49)

Suddenly, Odewale advances, and strikes the old man down with a blow of hoe and killing the old man in the process instantly.

In *Peace by Pieces*, we see the use of the incantation proverbs when Komukolo meets Adewale in their final battle before the wicked king is finally brought down. Listen to Adewale when he enters at the point Komukolo gives out the poison to all the sub chiefs to drink and die:

I am from the world beyond, sent by the old ones, the toothless that munches bone to come and retrieve my throne as their heir to Bojuri...with the handle of the sword in my hands, I now ask for the cause of my father's day.

In this opening remark from Adewale, Komukolo gets the message from the prover he that does have the handle of the sword in his hands dares not ask for the cause of his father's death. Adewale's message is just loud and clear that he has reached a mature age now where he could avenge his father's death. Komukolo's response indicates his readiness for the spiritual battle that is about to unfold. He says:

You will die without mercy like your odious father because you are yet to get the handle of the sword...the mouth the snail used to revile the gods must be used to crawl on the floor of the shrine. p.85

In the heat of the exchange of spiritual words, Komukolo hits Adewale with a lancelet which does not affect him in any way. He then says:

Who can it be that gives you courage? have you ever heard of a hen challenging a fox? The three elders to whom the creator committed the world will never desert me.



Adewale then responds thus:

It is ignorance that did not let you know that without an aid, fire can never cross a river... I command all of your charms inactive, your power void and impotent. The leaves to leave you, and your herbs to harm you. The cover of a sheathe covers it with its dangerous containers. Your immunities are locked up in your bowels. I command you to hand over your charms. A dead dog barks not, a dead ram fights not. You are a dead man that mustn't complain.

The effect of the potent words is seen on Komukolo as he begins to hand over his charms and powers to Adewale. From the above we see the power in the use of proverbs as incantations.

## **2.20 Sources of Proverbs**

A large group of proverbs are formed as a result of man's continuous observation of the various aspects of the natural environment as well as general human behavior, conduct and activities. This made some to say that, "Proverbs are largely imaginative propositions and reflections about life and are not primarily scientific statements about man and the universe" (Brookman-Amissah, 1986). This assertion by Brookman-Amissah is too general and cannot be wholly true because most of these proverbs did not arise out of the blue but as a result of continuous observation and logical deduction, and are therefore scientific. Some of these proverbs relate to nature (the world of animals). An example of this is the bird lore. Among the Ewes, an example is about the parrot called akpakpa. It is said that the sound made by the parrot means "Ame gedewoyi ketome", literally, 'a lot of people have gone to the grave.' This is an observation on the inevitability of death, hence the need to do all we can, and do it well while we are still alive.

Apart from the bird lore as a source of proverb, there are proverbs about other animals. The Ewes also have a proverb about the monkey that “kese be dome tonye ameto alongo me to ya adelawo tce. This literally means, the monkey says, it is what you have in your stomach that belongs to you, as for what is in the jaw, it belongs to the hunter. This is also an advice to people who are stingy not to always hoard things but spend if necessary, especially on others, and not always on their own selfish needs.

Apart from animals, there are also proverbs about plants. Among the Ewes, it is said of cassava that, “Yevea amenu gake yeme xoa akpe o.” This literally translates as, ‘the cassava says although it helps a lot of people, it does not receive thanks.’ This is also an advice that there is the need to show gratitude for whatever help received. These proverbs are attributed to these plants and animals due to the unique characteristics observed about them which can serve as useful symbols to ensure a better understanding into these proverbs.

Having explained the place of proverbs in language generally, an attempt will be made to look at specific functions of proverbs as may be applicable to different discourse settings.

## **2.21 Functions of Proverbs**

The use of proverbs has been indirectly dealt with in the preceding chapters but it is not out of order to still discuss in detail other aspects which have not been fully addressed, such as their functions. Proverbs have social and literary significance for their users. They exist in large numbers in many Afro-Asiatic languages in Africa such as Hausa and Arabic. They are also in abundance in many Niger-Congo languages such as Yoruba and Igbo in Nigeria. According to (Nutsuakor, 1977) one must be able to express himself very well in proverbs (“lododowo”), idiomatic expressions (“adaganawo”) in order to be able to identify confidently and fully as an Ewe. The

Yoruba people consider proverbs as “the horse which can speedily be used to rediscover wisdom when the wisdom is lost.” Such is the place of proverbs in African communities and this perhaps, and most certainly explains why African proverbs draw from all aspects of human experience as there is hardly any topic that does not enjoy assorted proverbs. And why most discourses are usually replete with proverbs. These topics, according to (Adeoti, 2012), range from ill health, sports and games, social functions and ceremonies, to animals and the cosmos in general.

Proverbs make communication more persuasive and effective. Proverbs show their oral literary significance first of all in the appeal they make to our ear. As Okpewho (1992) points out, “When people make speeches, they frequently use proverbs to add some wit or spice to their statements.” Part of the beauty which proverbs add to speech is achieved through the repetition of sounds in successive lines, alliteration, parallelism and rhyme among others. Through the use of these devices, the communication becomes more poetic in style and distinct from straightforward maxim. Okpewho points out that, among the Yoruba of Nigeria, many chants of the Ifa divination begin with a proverb or a series of proverbs (Okpewho, 1992). An example of this poetic chant is given by Abimbola as, “It is scarcity of iron which makes the blacksmith to melt needles in his fire. It is scarcity of water that leads to the loss of calabash water container. It is scarcity of children which makes the people of Ido to overlook stealing on the part of a child” (Abimbola, 1975). The parallelism in these three lines of the proverbial prelude, add some poetic effect to the charm. The ‘beauty and charm’ lie in the skill with which the chanter weaves various insights together and the steadiness with which he sustains a proverbial chant.

This device helps sustain the interest of the listeners and breaks boredom. Achebe says they are “Palm oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe, 1958). Owonibi on the other

hand says they are the palm oil with which the yam of language is eaten, (Owonibi, 2016). These two scholars are actually translating almost the same proverb but from two different cultures; Owonibi from Yoruba, and Achebe from Igbo, just that they both approach it with different words. However, the underlying meaning and message of the original proverb is not lost. It is that proverbs are the spices added to color language. They help you make your points clearer, more forceful, and better understood. Proverbs aesthetically help communication to be more enticing and persuasive. Another clear instance is in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where the persuasive force of proverbs is aptly manifested. It is the point when Okonkwo approaches Nwakadibe to borrow some yam seed. He puts it this way:

I know what it is to ask a man to trust another with his yams, especially these days when young men are afraid of hard work. I am not afraid of work. The lizard that jumped from high Iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did. I began to fend for myself at the age when most people still suck at their mother's breasts. If you give me your yam seeds, I shall not fail you.

Okonkwo could just have stated straight forward in clear terms that he needed the yam seeds and then brag of his past glories for them to speak for themselves, but he circumlocutes and praises himself in an acceptable way, using an appropriate proverb in a way that penetrates the heart of Nwakibie forcing the latter to yield to his demands. The end of the matter is that, Okonkwo is given his request because he is able to use proverbs very well to advance his request. This aesthetic function of proverbs allows language users to achieve three things: involve the audience by challenging their knowledge of their language; entertain them by introducing variety; and getting the message across more forcefully. This special communicative force, (Laukahangas,

2009) posits, makes people to be keen to use proverbs, even though they call them clichés or well-worn expressions.

Another function of proverb is their entertainment role. This is not very common in most cultures as proverbs are commonly known to arise out of discourse. (Opoku, 1997) attests to the entertaining role of proverbs by stating that “Some proverbs appeal more to emotions than just reflection.” If that be true, then proverbs are able to arouse that emotions of their listeners, emotions not only sadness but the joy and excitement that releases boredom. Finnegan has admitted that, in some societies, there are cases of contests in proverb telling. Among the Fantes, proverbs are recited as entertainment both at casual gatherings in the evenings and at ceremonies and celebrations with a panel of judges to decide between the contestants (Finnegan, 1970). Lestrade also says that among the Bantus, proverbs are used in a regular game similar to that of a riddling. In this case, participants take turns in the utterance of proverbs the loser being the one with no proverb at hand during his turn (Lestrade 1935:294). The use of proverbs in discourse is a form of entertainment since it makes speech less boring and interesting. This has been addressed in the poetic language of proverbs.

Proverbs have always reflected the values of the societies in which they originate. Whether original or regular in oral circulation, the strategy and message of these literary forms primarily reflect the cultural values and are projections of social and psychological tenets of the society. This reflective role of proverbs is very evident in Africa. In most societies there are proverbs that focus on the people’s religion, kinship systems, marriage, their perception about death and afterlife among others. As earlier cited, the example Stevenson (1973) gives of a proverb among the Agni of South-eastern Ivory Coast as *ek'pho gumi zua mabi*, which translates as ‘The lizard alone does not carry the burden of his own excrement.’ This confirms an observation



about the people that there is an emphasis on the group, whether in terms of community co-operation or extended family relations. The individual is only a part of the community conformation; he or she both reaps the benefits and shares in the misfortunes of others, and even in the guilt of their misdeeds. She states further that, “I realized that Agni social codes are not based on individual responsibility rugged individualism is a Western notion, while sharing is the essence of the West African tradition. The proverb in this case becomes a vehicle through which the people’s values are driven. The enormous function of proverbs in the preservation of socio-cultural tradition cannot be brushed under carpet. Stressing the psychological and philosophical value of proverbs, Tiamiyu and (Olaleye, 2009) observes that proverbs point to the way and living of a group of people who are bound by homogenous beliefs, norms and values.

They also manifest the interaction and relationship among members of a speech community.

Through this, historical facts are kept alive and handed over from one generation to another. In the word of (Olajide, 2012), “proverbs are repository of wisdom that emerges through generations of people that have based their verbal reaction on keen observations of social, political and cultural events.” The idea that proverbs are bearers of philosophical insights is also echoed in (Ojoade, 2004). The Maasai of Kenya also express some important aspects of their society through their proverbs. Kinship is an esteemed institution in Africa. Regardless of all sorts of differences, blood relationships are not completely dissolved. This is expressed in a Maasai proverb as “Eiv oltung’ ani osuuji naa olanya.” This means ‘A man’s son may be a coward but he is still his son.’ The Maasai are a gallant pastoral community that highly value bravery. A father is most embarrassed by a cowardly son, but he cannot disown him. If we apply the science of

genetics, the father's recessive genes may have been responsible for the child's cowardice (Okumba, 1994). The proverb therefore is the summary of the beliefs and values of the people. This is why (Quarshie, 2002) states that, when people abandon their languages, they give up on more than merely words; they reject to a certain degree their very identity. Language in this case goes beyond syntax and morphology and includes the image, concepts, and the beliefs of a people.

The reflexive function of proverbs refers to the ability of proverbs to summarise a people's philosophy of life, including their traditions and beliefs. From the things that happen around, and recurrences that are present in these communities, empirical conclusions are drawn and framed proverbially on the nature of life in most of these African societies. These are mostly expressed in proverbs as tested truths transcending the past through the present into the far and near future. They have survived yesterday, are aptly applicable to today and show the pathway to tomorrow. The reflexive function of proverbs is historically significant as they become reservoirs of traditions pass on from generation to generation. Miruka adds that Proverbs are largely didactic because they render normative functions. They are intellectual submissions that guide the development of the society. They are used to point out facts of life where there is an anomaly so as to re-structure things and to realign the deviants back to normality. This presupposes that every society regards and expects a certain standard way of behaviour as desirable and which should be maintained by all and sundry.

The reflective function of proverbs also deals with the embedded meanings of the proverbs and how they project the culture of their original sources. The proverbs are condensations of larger issues, sometimes, containing historical significance in terms of real life situations. Proverbs are veiled expressions, and as such they need to be carefully explained in order that their hidden or embedded meaning could be

understood, particularly by strangers and people who are not very conversant with the particular society. This explains why proverbs are considered as not saying what they mean, and not meaning what they say. This is particularly significant because even though there are general interpretations to each proverb, a proverb may be used in fresh contexts when it requires a fresh meaning (Adedimeji 2010). However, Miruka's identification of four functions of proverbs does not capture the mediatory capabilities. Therefore, this study posits that the functions of proverbs are six. They are aesthetic, reflexive, normative, summative, mediatory and eulogistic or abusive.

Africa is widely considered to be exceptionally rich in proverbs, thus, to be considered a good speaker, an individual must demonstrate a perfect understanding of the proverbs of his/her language in terms of literal and philosophical meanings. Proverbs express not only a people's inherited wisdom and code of behaviour; it is through proverbs that the rich African cultural values can be best understood. This is the crux of the reflexive function of proverbs. An Igbo proverb which asserts that "Anyone who needs interpretation of the proverbs used for him, his mother's dowry is a waste" foregrounds that proverb use confers maturity and respect upon the user. A Yoruba proverb also asserts that "the drum of agidigbo" sounds in parable. The wise ones dance to it and the intelligent ones comprehend it."

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2010), proverbs express not only a people's inherited wisdom and code of behaviour ("If a child washes his hands, he will eat with kings" [Igbo]), but also imagination and sense of humour ("If the earthworm does not dance in front of the cock, he will still be eaten, but at least the cock cannot say that he was provoked" (Yoruba)). It is through proverbs that people skillfully pass their intended communicative meaning to one another in the most effective way. The social, linguistic, and philosophical significance of proverbs reflect the importance that

the African society attaches to proverbs as a veritable tool for expressing cultural values. Alabi (2009) opines that proverbs are highly regarded among Africans and elders are their custodians. The elders who are the custodians are mostly unlettered; hence, verbal means of communication are often employed in both the usage and preservation of proverbs.

Nationalism, cultural erosion and higher education have made Africans more conscious of their cultural heritage; hence the collection and preservation of oral tradition have received renewed interests. Some of the best collections of African proverbs are by African writers and scholars, and many universities in Africa are engaged in recording and interpolating this material (Preece and Goetz, 2010). The volume of researches on proverbs, particularly African proverbs, is a strong indication that more attention is now being paid to this area of research interest than before.

Proverbs are context-dependent and cultural based, and discussion on culture centres on a People's values system. Therefore, values are essential components of proverbs. Uguru (2002) describes values as the aspects of norms and other social beliefs that are desirable in a society. In a similar way, the American Heritage Dictionary of the English language (2009) defines the concept of value as "a principle, standard or quality considered worthwhile or desirable by a group of individuals or a society." For the purpose of this study, value is taken to refer to the ethical practices which the people of a particular society regard as acceptable behavior. On the basis of this, there is a connection between the concept of value and morality as social constructs.

Every social group has a set of values covering every aspect of human endeavour. This is as Kanu (2010) stresses that Nigeria, like other African countries, has its own cultural values or value systems which cover the whole ramifications of the society, playing regulatory roles in human relationship and also stabilizing factors in the society.

The Yoruba and Fante value systems for instance are directly connected to morality, and these are very relevant to this research. Values such as honesty, transparency, hard work, mutual respect and lack of passion for worldly possessions are what the Yoruba people called “Iwa omo luabi” (the conduct of honourable persons). Ahmed (2005) opines that the value system from proverbs, used to comment on social conflict situations, to criticize people or event in an indirect and metaphorical way, to counsel when a situation requires it, to criticize unacceptable attitudes, to discipline children and youth, to direct certain human behaviour, etc. is now under threat.

Considerable numbers of researches have been done to prove that there is a connection between value systems and proverb use. According to Lawal (1992) as cited in Lawal, Ajayi & Raji 1997), Proverbs reinforce and sustain the traditional respect for elders and also serve as a potent social control. Proverbs and maxims are traditionally frequently used to teach moral and honourable behaviour.

As a means of social control among the Yoruba, proverbs can take corrective, didactic, abusive or even eulogistic forms (Balogun, 2010). Such honourable behaviour includes warning against greed, dishonesty, deception, adultery and fornication, stealing, etc. Hence, there is no substantial controversy about the value of proverb in culture, and the significance proverbs in Yoruba traditional societies (Remi-Raji, 1999).

Comments made on behavior may be made in the form of a proverb and used to warn, Advise, reprimand, or bring someone to his or her senses. In a more specific way, proverbs are used to warn and admonish people concerning certain imminent danger. They are a vehicle of warning people of danger associated with behavioural attitude such as temperament, over reaction, greed, selfishness, stinginess and a host of others. In a crisis situation, proverbs are used to reduce tension or generally manage a volatile situation. This is possible because proverbs appeal to the inner consciousness of the

language users. Baalbaki (2000) asserts that “proverbs bear the rhetorical force of communicating special meanings in certain situations, like in the resolution of conflicts and teaching of valuable lessons in pithy expressions.” Supporting this view, Olajide (2012) posits that “the linguistic, psychological and philosophical fireworks in proverbs make them a great instrument of behavioural control”.

The person concerned is reminded of the general implication of his or her action. The Ga-Dangme of Ghana are not exempted from this reflectional function of proverbs. It reflects the emphasis or importance the people place on instructions in their culture. There are a wide range of proverbs in Ga and Dangme which address different themes in the society, including the respect for the elderly, warnings against adamant, and recalcitrant behaviours, as well as why children should not say certain things amongst elders, and so much more. One of such Ga proverbs says “adɔdɔŋ gbane ni nuuu ŋaawooɛ, afuo le ke gbonyo” meaning that, the housefly that refuses to heed counsel, risks being buried with the dead body. An old Twi proverb says, “abɔfra a onim nsa hohrow nu, one mpaninfuo ɛna ehyia didi” to wit, a child who knows how to wash his hands dines with elders. Blema kpaɔ nɔ atsaɔ (Ga). This proverb says it is according to the contours or twists of the old ropes that new ones are woven. This teaches the current generation to learn from the ancient paths, the ways of the old people and walk accordingly. Before the Ewes migrated from Notsie, in present day Togo, the old man at the time gave this response to the people to send as a response to the king Agorkorli who had asked them to mold mud into ropes. When the people consulted Torgbui Tegli who was then in isolation because Agorkorlie had ordered the killing of all the sages, he asked them to go tell the king “eka xoxo wo nu wogbea yeyea wo ɔfo”. This proverb is exactly what has been put in Ga, so succinctly. Another instructional proverb says “Onukpa leee nɔko le, ele wɔdɔi wɔɔ (Ga). (If an old person knows nothing at all, he at

least knows how to slumber.) This is just a sarcastic way of telling a youngster who looks down on an elder, that, the elder is no match to a youngster regardless of how worthless the latter might appear. The next proverb is in Dangme, a dialect of Ga which says that the beard has no right, or is in no position to tell the eyebrow about issues of old. “Kpêni tui hungme se buomi blema munyu” (Dangme). (The beard does not tell the eyebrow ancient stories.); this is because, before the beard grew, the eyebrow has always been there! The younger may have gone to schools and learnt so much, but is still not permitted to stand up to the elderly when the latter makes a decree!

Yet another way in which proverbs can be used to advise is in the form of mockery. Example is evident in the Ewe proverbs; “evi matsedukpɔ, ebe yedada ɣaa nuvivi”. This proverb is used mockingly to tease anyone who experiences something for the first time, and thinks it is the best form of it that ever existed. The proverb literally says “a child who has not travelled wide says his mother is the best cook”. Another of such mocking proverb says “Enu dze xɔmenye xɔ̃ to o”. This means ‘an item that fits a friend does not necessarily belong to him or her’. They also have, Atikpo nɔ tɔme dzidzi metro zu’a lo o (‘No matter how long a log stays in water it cannot turn into a crocodile’). These proverbs are normally used if someone tries to be what he or she is not; or jettison to his identity. We can imagine this happening where a person prefers speaking other languages to his mother tongue or always associates him/herself with people of other ethnicities. In cases such as this, the use of proverbs is purposely to shame non-conformists. This proverb may be used as an advice for people to identify themselves with their origin, or encourage them to be proud of themselves, and be content with what they have. Parents employ proverbs, riddles, and fables to instruct their children on socially appropriate and acceptable behaviours. The tactful and picturesque way in which proverbs are used to advise, makes them very effective.



In traditional African courts, proverbs form part of the adjudication of cases, and since elders are the ones who judge cases, the use of proverbs in the adjudication is very common since proverbs are mostly used by elders. During the resolution of conflicts, the mediators introduce proverbs into their speeches at crucial moments.

Okpewho (1992:231) points out that, the use of proverbs in the adjudication of cases is very common. A Yoruba proverb says that, “A counselor who understands proverbs sets matters right.”

Various scholars have pointed out the important role of proverbs in the adjudication of cases in African traditional courts. For example, according to Messenger (1965), the use of proverb by the Anang of Nigeria helps one to win sympathy for a case that is not so good, and may even swing the case in favour of the guilty party (Cited in Finnegan, 1970: 231). This assertion has rather reduced the African court system to what can be termed as the “survival of the eloquent” and if this were accepted to be true, it would undermine the role of reasoning in African judicial systems. Meaning that, the guiltiness or otherwise of an accused, would not depend on sound reasoning and judgment of cases presented, but based on the literal capabilities of the counsels. Yankah vehemently opposes this shallow interpretation of the use of proverbs by saying that:

Issues deliberated upon during judicial proceedings are often too grave for judgment to be based exclusively on competence in proverb use. Verdicts often involve heavy fines, loss of access to expensive property-land, farm, wealth, building, title, position children or spouse. This makes the use of evidence, witness, testimonies and customary law the bases of judges’ verdicts (Yankah, 1989: 221).



By this, an argument is not being raised against the relevance of proverbs in the African traditional court systems, however, the conclusion of decisions on a matter of judiciary concern should not be said to have been solely based on the ability to use proverbs effectively. For example, among Ewes, during the resolution of misunderstanding between parents and their children, and between family members, it is said that “*novi dze aɣava ha wo dea megbe ne*” meaning that, “even a mad sibling must be catered for” the implication is that, no matter how much grave the offence of a brother is, he must not be thrown away. “*Evi dada metsɔa vi kple tsilele fua gbe o*” to wit, ‘A mother does not throw her child away with the bathing water’). The Igbos of Nigeria have a similar proverb, “anger against a brother is not felt in the bone”. This would mean that a brother is blood, and no matter the amount or gravity of offence, they must not be thrown away forever. These proverbs may be used to address misunderstandings between people in high authority and their subordinates as well, telling them to limit their punishment to the subordinates and not to write them off totally. Yet another proverb that can be used is, *Evi menyea mi de dada fe atadzi wotso he kpa ne o*”. A mother does not cut her body together with her child’s feces.

These proverbs may be used to emphasize the fact that, there is an extent to which an individual could be punished for their offences. These proverbs work very well because they are more of analogy rather than a straight forward injunction, since the mother should not be rebuked in the presence of her child. Yankah adds that although proverbs do not take over the faculties of reasoning in judicial cases, they tend to validate the trend of argument and make the argument more conspicuous (Yankah 1989). Proverbs when used in speech situations help the speaker to make his point more forcefully and convincingly.

## 2.22 Proverbs and Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is a linguistic term that refers to the morphological, syntactic, and semantic knowledge displays as guided by social conventions. Communicative competence is the totality of linguistic repertoire that is required of a competent language user to communicate effectively with his or her language, understanding when and how to use certain utterances.

Communicative competence goes beyond linguistic competence which is concerned only with knowledge of phonology, syntax and semantics without any reference to the situation of use.

In his reaction to Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance, Hymes (1966) examines ethnographic exploration of communicative competence that includes communicative form and function in integral relation to each other (Leung, 2005). According to Lin (2004), Hymes proposes the study of the implicit knowledge people have when they communicate.

Communicative competence is simply decorum. Thus extends to both knowledge and expectation of who may or may not speak in certain settings; when to speak and when to remain silent; whom one may speak to; how one may talk to persons of different statuses and roles; how to ask for and give information; how to request; and how to give commands. It encapsulates the use of language and other communicative dimensions in particular social settings. Thus, proverbs and communicative competence can be described as two sides of a coin, interdependent on each other, implicitly they both depend on each other. This is because proverbs are veiled expressions that require a level of communicative competence for the language user to be able to situate them in appropriate contexts of use. According to Miruka (1994) and Alabi (2009), the need for communicative competence in the use of proverbs often makes them the exclusive

linguistic preference of the elders. This is basically because the elders are believed to have a lot of experience with reference to the origin of some proverbs, the required wisdom to interpret the proverbs correctly, and also the speech situations where the proverbs are assigned with new but related communicative roles. The linguistic repertoire of the African heritage is replete with the stylistic use of proverbs. In the interlocution between the young and old, between the young and their colleagues, from the old to the young, in the kings' courts, in homes, the market place and everywhere African languages are spoken, proverbs play a major role and feature prominently. For many centuries and ages, the proverbs canon has been updated, added to, and some also become less relevant. What can we pick as lessons on proverbs? They are used in all African countries, some extremely very similar though used by people widely apart geographically.

### **2.23 About the Authors**

Sola Owonibi is a multiple award-winning Nigerian poet, playwright, culture activist, and literary critic, he has taught at the Department of English Studies, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba, Nigeria. With over two decades of teaching literature and language across Nigerian Universities, and elsewhere on the globe, Owonibi has authored numerous academic papers, poetry, and drama texts. In 2005, his drama text *Peace by Pieces* (published by Rasmed) was adopted by Universal Basic Education for nationwide Junior Secondary School syllabus of Nigeria. In 2009, his poem 'Homeless, not Hopeless' from his collection *Chants to the Ancestors* (Kraft Books) was adopted for the 2011-2015 WAEC/NECO joint syllabus on literature. He was a 2011 Visiting Scholar at the Centre for African Studies, University of Florida, Gainesville, Owonibi is currently the Chairman of the Association of Nigerian Authors,

Ondo State Chapter. Currently, he lectures at the Department of English Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

This researcher took time to ask some students who have sat under the tutelage of Sola Owonibi. Debora Bayode says “He has been a great influence on my life, and my response to life in general. He is very approachable too.” Paula Tekper, an M’Phil student of English in the University of Education Winneba says “He has taught me through his life that the higher you climb, the more humble you must become”. Personally, as a direct student of his, I must say as approachable and humble as he is, taking his humility for granted should be the last thing you ever think of when close to him. He does not take work for play. He is very serious and disciplined when it comes to academic work, but he does not also disregard the humanity of humanity.

Sola Owonibi always blends oral tradition with modern story telling. This makes him a very unique writer who demonstrates a high level of knowledge of the traditional African system. His love to inject his literary works with some touch of African traditional culture, and wisdom, stems from his background as someone who grew up in the palace of his father, who was a powerful traditional ruler at the time. A careful study of his writings will reveal the repeated pattern of the words of the African sages. A lot of his poems are almost pieces of fatherly counsel, woven in very crafty, and artistic language, just as is noted of the very old African ‘wisemen’. He also does a lot of social criticism of social life and the lifestyle of the political class of Nigeria and how it has much affected the people they lead, and generations after them. He is the typical poet you can call the “Prophetic Poet” without any doubt or fear of contradiction. A lot of his writings in times past, especially regarding the potential uproar and revolution that the youth of Nigeria might stage as he wrote about in times past recently played out before our own eyes during the recent ‘End SARS’ protests

across Nigeria that resulted in the death of many and the looting of hidden public COVID 19 relief items and other properties that had hitherto been concealed by some corrupt politicians and public servants, probably for future consumption by only a select few. The prophetic poet wrote about all these before they played out.

Wole Soyinka was born Akinwande Oluwole "Wole" Babatunde Soyinka on July 13, 1934, in Abeokuta, near Ibadan in western Nigeria. Mr. Samuel Ayodele Soyinka, and Grace Eniola Soyinka.

After finishing preparatory university studies in 1954 at Government College in Ibadan, Soyinka moved to England and continued his education at the University of Leeds, where he served as the editor of the school's magazine, *The Eagle*. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in English literature in 1958. In the late 1950s Soyinka wrote his first important play, *A Dance of the Forests*, which satirized the Nigerian political elite. In addition to drama and poetry, he has written two novels, *The Interpreters* (1965) and *Season of Anomy* (1973), amongst other works.

Soyinka has been married three times. He married British writer Barbara Dixon in 1958; Olaide Idowu, a Nigerian librarian, in 1963; and Folake Doherty, his current wife, in 1989.

**Ama Ata Aidoo**, whose full name is **Christina Ama Ata Aidoo**, was born March 23, 1942, at Abeamzi Kyiakor, near Saltpond in the Gold Coast, now Ghana, is Ghanaian writer whose work emphasizes the paradoxical position of the modern African woman. Aidoo began to write seriously while she was an honours student at the University of Ghana (B.A., 1964). She won early recognition with a problem play, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965), in which a Ghanaian student returning home brings his African American wife into the traditional culture and the extended family that he now finds restrictive. Their dilemma reflects Aidoo's characteristic concern with the "been-to"

(African educated abroad), voiced again in her semiautobiographical experimental first novel, *Our Sister Killjoy; or, Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint* (1966). Aidoo herself won a fellowship to Stanford University in California, returned to teach at Cape Coast, Ghana (1970–82), and subsequently accepted various visiting professorships in the United States and Kenya.

## 2.24 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an understanding of the concept of proverbs, delved into various definitions of proverbs, and through the exploration of these definitions, various features of proverbs have been arrived at including their terseness, metaphorical allusions, and the use of poetic language which is achieved through the use of parallelisms, and hyperboles. Through these definitions, the anonymity of the proverb authors has also been realized and to achieve this, it has been noted that the proverbs are attributed to inanimate objects such as animals, trees and the elders in the society. It has also been realised that proverbs express the general wisdom of the society since they mostly come from the elders who are believed to have more knowledge of the society due to their age and experience. This chapter has outlined some forms in which proverbs are expressed such as songs, riddles, folktales, names, sculptures, and paintings. It has been realized through this research that proverbs are very indispensable, and cannot be detached from language, and that the importance of proverbs transcend their literary values, and help as mode of instruction, are used in adjudication and settlement of dispute cases and help to preserve archaic language lexical items that could have gone extinct if not for their use in proverbs. Various criticisms from scholars regarding the use of proverbs have also been discussed thoroughly under this chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The previous chapter centered on the concept of proverbs, delved into an extensive review of literature that contains the opinions of various scholars on the various definitions of proverbs, and through the exploration of these definitions, various features of proverbs have been arrived at, including their terseness, metaphorical allusions, and the use of poetic language which is achieved through the use of parallelisms, and hyperboles. This chapter will begin the data presentation and analysis, analyzing from proverb no.1 to proverb no.40.

#### 3.1 Overview of Analysis

One hundred and twenty (120) proverbs have been sampled in all, and appropriately numbered for the purpose of the thesis, out of which eighty (80) have been selected for the analysis. The first five thematic groups are analysed in this chapter while the second set of ten thematic groups are also presented in the next chapter. All sampled proverbs are later presented and grouped into thematic areas at the appendixes for easy reference and identification. The eighty (80) proverbs from the three texts are presented for analysis using the embedded moral significance or thematic concerns as a basis of the selection of the proverbs. The data for the analysis are sourced in the following order: fifty (50) from *Peace by Pieces*, twenty (20) from *Kongi's Harvest*, and ten (10) from *Anowa*. To avoid repetition of the titles of the texts, the three selected texts for this study are numbered as follows: *Peace by Pieces* (2016) as book One (1), *Kongi's Harvest*(2014); Book Two (2), and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*(1970); Book Three (3).



### 3.2 Caution and Admonition

#### 3.2.1 Proverb no. 6: Walls have ears

This proverb is a precautionary proverb. In most African societies, keeping secrets is an important value. One must therefore be careful when talking about others since anyone could hear what is being said and get it carried across to unimaginable destinations. It is just very prudent to be very watchful of what one says, where, and to whom it is said. You might think no one is around to hear what you are saying but whatever you say could travel far, and may potentially cause trouble between kith and kin. Walls have ears. Here we have a metaphorical and imagist structure of a proverb in its usual personified form. Walls have ears. Walls here may refer to anyone you presume to be a confidant or you presume to be incapable of transferring confidential information to other quarters, or anyone passing by who may pick up information unknown to the speakers.

In Oyaland, a place where the king has set up for himself spies in all spheres, even amongst the sub chiefs he has those sellouts who are ever ready to sell out the collective dream to their common enemy for peanuts. In all kingdoms that have been subdued and conquered by their rival warriors, it has been these walls with ears that have sold out their kinsmen to their invaders for silver and gold that never lasts a lifetime. Consequently, it is not really the walls that have ears, but that rich people always have moles planted amongst people they perceive to be their rivals and opponents. Adaobi (2023) captures this poignantly that Africans raided for slaves often in connivance with local chiefs and then acted as middle men between Europeans and Arab purchasers. These are the walls that still exist with us today. They sell us in our workplaces, and sell the public sector workers to the government thereby defeating any attempt to uniformly defeat all sinister plans of government official to forever enslave the people.



Until such walls are eliminated from our societies, there is no hope of a future that is suitable for us and our children.

This is what Yusuf, 2001 calls reconstruction proverbs. According to him, proverbs of this nature are employed to reconstruct young people in society, warning them of the repercussions of their actions including too much talk. It advises children to be cautious of what they say and where they say them as walls have ears, representing the fact that anyone at all could pass by and pick part of a piece of information you shared and misrepresent it elsewhere resulting sometimes in irreparable damages. This proverb is very reflexive of the Yoruba context from which the text originates as one of the values of the people includes wisdom, the ability to know when to say something and when to keep quiet.

**3.2.2 Proverb no.8: The only child must not wander at the verge of the evil grove  
(Owonibi, 2016 p.10.)**

Children in the Yoruba tradition are valued greatly. The value is immeasurable when it is a male child. Male children are regarded in very high esteem due to the patriarchal system of inheritance in most of these African countries. It is therefore imperative that allowing your only son to wander freely around the evil forest, a place of utmost danger is very much unsafe. This is why an only child must not be allowed to wander around or at the verge of the evil grove. By extension, this proverb teaches us to be as protective as possible of whatever we find very valuable. Of course, every man would protect what is valuable to him. It is against this backdrop that both Ajibode and Ajamu, in Owonibi (2006 p.10) agree that the only child, Arewa must not be allowed to wander, roam around in Komukolo's evil forest. Komukolo already has a harem of wives he does take for anything but pleasure and slavery. Thus, allowing

Arewa to join them will mean allowing his only daughter to go join a den of criminals. Proverbs are a reflection of what the people believe and uphold as beneficial or otherwise in the society. As it is against the beliefs of the people to reward bad character with good things, the people refuse to give more to a wicked and a destructive king.

**3.2.3 Proverb no.10: The only groundnut must not fall on a rock (Owonibi, 2016 p.10)**

A peanut farmer who has only one groundnut and goes to farm only to leave that single ground nut on a rock would certainly have to explain where he had kept his reasoning cap. That groundnut must be carefully placed in a dutifully selected fertile soil with adequate manure to help it grow and bear other groundnuts that would multiply for the farmer's enjoyment. Why then would Ajibode allow the wicked Komukolo to take his only groundnut for a rock? He needed to defend her at all cost, and make sure that dream does not become a reality. But fight as he could, he is unable to stand the might and networks of Komukolo when Akogun his kinsman is sent to kill him. Although Akogun makes it clear that he has no intentions of carrying out the directives of the king, Ajibode knows too well that Komukolo would stop at nothing until he had done whatever pleases him because of this, he swallows a substance and dies even before Akogun and his men attempt doing anything to him. He dies painfully, exposing his only groundnut rather to more harm than before. The following words spoken by Komukolo on Akogun's return from one of the numerous conquests after the latter reports of having lost some young bloods in the war despite the win attests to this, that Komukolo does only what pleases him even if others disagree.

The loss of battalions of soldiers in a battle is nothing new.  
Recruit other young men as early as possible. What are they  
for? If anyone refuses, drag him to the battlefield. Now give  
me the details (Owonibi, 2016 p.26)

The king is described by Ajibode as one who “would stop at nothing” his desires are met. He is further described as “the ridiculous boil that chooses to settle on the nose tip.” All these attest to the fact that Komukolo is that wicked man who despite having a several barns of grains would not want to see another’s single groundnut safe but to make it fall on rocks to be destroyed so it doesn’t yield any more fruits for its owner. Stevenson, 1973 states that the lizard alone does not carry the burden of his own excrement. This chimes with the reflectionist ideology that literature must be analysed with the cultural context in view. The above proverb by Stevenson is from the Agni of Ivory Coast who use this as a cautionary proverb to warn people to min their actions as they would not be the only people to be affected by their actions.

#### **3.2.4 Proverb no.11: Why doesn’t the egg eater think of the pain it costs the hen?**

This rhetorical proverb is a lamentation on people who only benefit from others without ever considering what it costs to be offered those sacrifices and favors. In every society, there are people who are very unappreciative of the efforts of others in making life less unbearable for them. This attitude is not celebrated in Africa. Gratitude is an exalted value in our culture, hence it is expected, that the hen be appreciated, for her pains endured in order to encourage her to produce more. Children are encouraged to consider the pains of their parents in fending for them. Men, and women are expected to appreciate each other for the sacrifices we make for each other every day. Unfortunately, this never happens in Oya kingdom as the leader is a narcissistic fellow who only thinks of how to use others to satisfy his ego and insatiable lust for power. He cares less what the people go through to get him the comfort he enjoys. When they complain, he fumes at why they have to complain about anything. Komukolo had caused the disappearance of Ajibode’s only son a few months ago, yet he does not seem

satisfied with that. His move to have Arewa as part of his harem of wives is just an indication of his desire to totally annihilate his family which he finally succeeds in doing.

### **3.2.5 Proverb no.12: We do not treat ringworm at the expense of leprosy**

**(Owonibi, 2016 p.14)**

We see Ajibode and his wife, Adunni in their misery trying to find solution to Komukolo's new riddle that he has thrown to the family. As natural of women, being the emotional beings they are, Adunni shrieks into the emotional abyss of despondence, weeping and pitying herself. Ajibode quips: "Iya Arewa! Will you kill yourself over this problem? Can weeping solve this problem? Why treating ring-worm at the expense of leprosy?"

This question imbedded with the proverb gets Adunni, Arewa's mother, affectionately called Iya Arewa, the Yoruba translation of Arewa's mother, to her feet and she puts on her critical thinking for problem solving caps once again thus asking the right questions devoid of emotional disequilibrium. Adunni now asks "please my husband what can we do about it? Have you come by any solution? Please, please tell me." Ajibode's excitement when his wife finally asks a question geared towards solution finding, rather than emotional outbursts is captured beautifully by the author in these words "that is what you ought to have asked instead of crying yourself out..."

In life, we are expected to give priority to things that deserve priority. Less important things should not be attended to at the expense of the seemingly less important. People must major in events that require majoring, and minor in events that require minoring. It is obvious from the discussion that Adunni appears to be majoring in minor things rather than seeking to solve the problem at hand permanently. If at the hospital, there is an emergency involving a head-on crash accident victim, we do not expect such severe

cases to be pushed aside, while minor cuts from domestic accidents are treated. It is against this backdrop, that we do not treat ringworms at the expense of leprosy. Leprosy is more dangerous, contagious, and lethal than ringworm. Serious issues deserve commensurate attention. Ajibode's proverb to his wife is just a call to focus on the possible solutions to the problem at stake and asking the relevant questions that would eventually lead to the discovery of a lasting and permanent solution to the problem at stake rather than falling in an emotional quagmire that may only amount to self destruction.

**3.2.6 Proverb no.14: Teeth need not be numerous before they bite (Soyinka, 2014 p. 22.)**

This comes up from Komukolo to Olotun, reinforcing the need to conquer other kingdoms and nations around, regardless how small they appear. Even children with their milk teeth are able to wreak havoc on the nipples of their mothers. A child with a single pair of teeth is able to cause so much pain merely for pleasure. It is not surprising that some old scholars of the Bible have opined that wickedness is an innate nature man is born with. He doesn't need so much of an opportunity to cause the harm he wants to cause. Here 'teeth' stand for weapons, or opportunities, while 'bite' represents every harm that the weapons could be used to cause. Metaphorically, we are talking of a friend who wishes to hurt you, would do so with the slightest opportunity presented with him. A man who intends to hurt you will dwell on your slightest mistake to get you fingered. Workers are also cautioned to be wary of people who show even the smallest signs of hatred, as such people do not need very big doors to enter in, fueling your dismissal. Murderers and blackmailers do not need as much doors as a little breach of ethics as such could lead you into innumerable troubles. Politicians are to note also as their opponents could take advantage of any little neglect in their constituencies to unseat

them. Indeed, he who would harm you does not need too much of an opportunity to harm you. This calls for so much vigilance even in the case of the slightest events.

### **3.2.7 Proverb no.17: He who does not speak, does not run the risk of having his pipe out**

This proverb is repeated severally throughout the drama. At other instances it is put in a different grammatical structure. However, the content and subject matter does not change. He who speaks not does not run the risk of having his pipe falling out. Its effect is to re-echo the need to know when to be silent, and when to speak. Clearly, those who do not like trouble must do well to stay away from too much talking. The smoking pipe, and speaking are all done using the same human part; the mouth. If one does not speak, then his pipe remains intact. However, if he speaks, then he runs the risk of having his pipe out of his mouth. Imperatively, one must keep his mouth shut over certain matters, until there is a very right and appropriate time to make comments. In *Peace by Pieces*, the character who says this proverb in the text, in other to be exemplary, does not speak often. In some cases, he only reiterates this proverb and goes scout free. This probably explains why he hardly falls into trouble, or the traps of Komukolo, the wicked king. The first time he attempted speaking his mind honestly to the king, where he was actually giving a very wise counsel to the king, he is threatened with total annihilation and murder. From thence he learnt his lessons and maintains his proverb as answer to every quest to talk. What must be noted also is that leaders who taught such statements use them to keep their subjects in sheepish obedience to their whims and caprices. This only ends up breeding more sycophants who would not point out the ills of leadership. But leaders need people who are not afraid of their pipes falling out to speak their mind on very pertinent issues. Indeed, He who keeps quiet, does not run the risk of having his pipe out.

This has to do with the gold of knowing when to be silent and observe things rather than opening one's mouth everywhere. If you don't say anything, nobody has anything to accuse you of. There are things in everybody's life they would not want anyone to know of. There may be a man's own thoughts regarding an issue under discussion, but until they speak, no one knows which side of the divide they belong to. The proverb argues that such people are always out of trouble. But those who put their mouth into everything end up finding themselves in trouble almost always.

**3.2.8 Proverb no.18: *If a monkey dies of stomach ache, apes do not rejoice.***

***(Owonibi, 2016 p.37.)***

Both monkeys and apes are presumed to belong to the same family, hence any illness that kills a monkey could kill an ape too. There any ape that ignorantly mocks a monkey for suffering from stomach ache should rather prepare itself, or look for standby solution. It is this same proverb that is express otherwise in Ghana thus when you find your brother's beard on fire, it is most prudent to place a glass of water by your side not just as a security measure for your own case which may come later but as a necessary anticipation of yours which is in effect, most certain to come sooner than later.

**3.2.9 Proverb no.28: *A father employs only a small stick on his child, he doesn't call in the policemen to take him to goal* (Soyinka, 2014 p.7)**

This proverb has a lot in common with the Ewe proverb that opines that a dirty child should not be thrown away with the dirty water. "wo me pua vi podi gbe kple tsi o" The child should be saved while the water that was used in washing him is thrown away. Parents, elders and people in authority need to be lenient and more tolerating with their subordinates and less privileged in society.



Sarunmi has taken on the role of an attorney, calming down the nerves of the king, and calming the waters for the disagreement not to escalate into anything that would disgrace either the king or both. He continues thus *“he doesn’t call the policemen to come and take him to goal”*. He further cautions the superintendent to be ware of causing the Oba to say things that will have very dire consequences on the life of the superintendent. He says words spoken will never be possible to recall after the anger in which they were said dies down and one begins to feel kinder. *“when you feel kinder, they cannot be recalled.”*

### **3.2.10 Proverb no.41: If fools didn’t go to the market bad ware wouldn’t be sold.**

**Owonibi 2016, p.27**

This proverb explains the important place of everybody in society. As much as wisdom and sagesse is celebrated in every African setting, even the fool also has his place in society to the point that, without him people cannot sell their bad wares. In other words, he is also relevant. Komukolo says this to his chiefs, subtly insulting them to be the fools who keep tolerating his activities as the cunning king. Vigilance has always been one of the many virtues of the African culture. This explains why the Yorubans and other African tribes like the Fon Ewes of Dahomey in Benin got involved in wrestling as a sport. It affords them the opportunity to practice their vigilance and body balance skills. This was a means of training their warriors for protecting their territories. It was not a preserved sport for men especially the Dahomey warriors. Both men and women were trained alike for war. It taught the Africans the need to be on guard at all times as many other nations could just go after each other in raids for conquest. The same level of vigilance is expected on the markets as it been well known that many sellers deliberately went to market with fake wares also hoping to have others buy them at the prices of genuine ones. This is why wisdom requires vigilance even on



the markets to avoid buying pig out of pork. Unfortunately, there have been a lot of cases where people, even with their eyes open, have been sold bad wares. This proverb says that all those who buy bad wares even with their eyes wide open are fools. Indeed, without these fools, the bad are would not also sell.

### **3.2.11 Proverb no.43: Blood is thicker than water**

This deeply portrays the connotation that blood relations cannot be treated as mere friends. And that when two family members, blood relations meet, they do not need too much introduction. There surely would be something pointing to that fact. (Owonibi, 2016 p.32), Aworo laments the demand of the king to have the parents of Arewa killed. And more ridiculously, he chooses, Akogun, a close blood relation of the girl's parents to carry out this gruesome murder of the girl's parents. When Akogun finally gets to the house of the girl's parents, the exchanges, his own guilty conscience, and the moral burden of looking deep into your own kinsman's eyes and killing him in obedience to a king who would sooner than later call for your own head and get you dismissed is very disturbing. The result is that, Ajibode kills himself. Yes, he would rather kill himself than have a kinsman kill him in obedience to a king whose power he does not respect.

### **3.2.12 Proverb no.44: A good horse never stumbles**

(Owonibi, 2016 p. 32) Aworo tells Akogun in the presence of Komukolo why Akogun should not fail in the task of killing the parents of Arewa though they are his kinsmen. If Akogun upon all the wars he had fought cannot accomplish this seemingly small task him, then he is not the good horse he has always touted himself to be.

A good horse never stumbles does not mean that if you are good at something you will never make a mistake at it. It is not uncommon knowledge that humanity is nowhere

near infallibility. It foregrounds the fact that one may fall a thousand times, but what is done with the knowledge gained from that error or mistake of a downfall is what tells whether one is a good horse or not. This proverb could be surmised as one does not drown in a river merely by falling therein. It is the choice to remain therein the river that drowns.

### **3.2.13 Proverb no.45: The insect that feeds on leaves lives on leaves**

In this proverb we have here the principle of interdependence of living organisms. The leaves depend on the insects that live on them, as the insects also depend on the leaves for sustenance and survival. On another hand, it has a relationship with the Akan proverb that has it that “aboabi bekawoa efire wontoma mu.” Which is what the context of usage here presupposes in (Owonibi, 2016 p. 35) which captures this proverb from the interaction between Adunni and Akogun. The proverb comes from Adunni, talking about Akogun’s role in making their lives miserable though they are kinsmen. Adunni says the insect that will bite you will not be any farther from you. It has to be in your cloth. By extension, it is the enemy within that gives us out to the enemies outside. Adunni here, is the insider, giving out his kinsmen to Komukolo the wicked king. This is why one must be more wary of his friends than the declared enemies. A friend could be smiling at you yet sabotaging you behind. It is not uncommon to find friends who smile so much you while plotting all the evil there is in the world against you. There should be very little surprise if your bewitcher is of your own kindred as there have been parents who have rendered, rather deliberately, their own children barren and paupers in life. For whatever reasons, one might not be able to explain. It only foregrounds and lends credence to the fact that life is complex and does not always have explanations for its occurrences. Indeed, if an insect will feed on a leaf, it should live nowhere than on the leave.

### **3.2.14 Proverb no.49: For a long stick not to go through your eyes you must avoid it from a distance**

Big problems do not need soothsaying to avoid. If you spot a troublesome person or occurrence from afar, just avoid getting closer. Else if it gets close, its havoc could be disastrous, and its damages could be irreparable. Take for instance a young girl who aims at achieving something great in life, gets entangled in an affair with a man who she knows clearly has no good intention for her, if she avoids him in a good time, she safeguards herself and her future, but if she sheepishly falls for every deception, she would have herself to blame later in life. This proverb says also, implicatively that no one in his right senses will see a ditch and just throw himself into it and expects to be saved. You can not drink poison and look for to living long. There is actually a consequence to every action. To avoid the consequence, avoid the action because people usually know the consequence of their actions before they embark on them. This proverb appears in (Owonibi, 2016), in which Komukolo tells his chiefs of the mischievous plans he has towards them if they don't comply with him. But they have always known the man to be this wicked, but because they were benefiting and others were at the suffering end, they did not find it needful to speak for the people till it finally landed in their courts and they also become victims of the monster they had raised. He threatens to unrobe Akogun the conqueror warrior, add all of them and make them menials. He later changes his mind and decides to feed them with poison. Fortunately for them, Adewale, the son of the dead chief shows up in his salvation elements early enough to save them from drinking the poison.

### **3.2.15 Proverb no.51: If you do not step on a dry palm branch it will not make a noise**

Here in (Owonibi, 2016), Akogun responds to Komukolo's threats of unrobing him. He says if the king does not touch him, he Akogun would not respond either. In this proverb, we have two metaphorical images; a dry palm branch, and its noise. If the palm branch is left alone, it does not make any noise. Of course one of the Newton's laws states that an object that lies at a spot will remain in its initial spot unless an external force is applied to it. Implicatively, there are people in life who are very self-defensive. They never attempt to harm anyone, yet they can be very toxic, and dangerous. Such persons hardly look for trouble anywhere. They are very quiet and appear very harmless. They are melancholic introverts who hardly bare their teeth at anyone. They have a philosophy of "Trouble does not trouble him who does not take a trouble to trouble trouble." These are the dry palm leaves. Either leave them alone, let them be on their own while you enjoy their company, or try them and see the other side of their true colours. It is typical of those quick tempered choleric too. They hardly meddle in other people's matters. They love to mind their business, and expect everyone else to also mind their own business and allow others to also be, but if you take the trouble to go interrupt and meddle in their activities, they show you where power lies. In this proverb Akogun rightly tells Komukolo the king to his face on page 57 that he was the course of all the uproar in the palace and the trouble in the kingdom. Every dried leaf that was making noise as he describes it was stepped on by Komukolo. Therefore, to stop the noise of the dried leaves, the king must make conscious effort to stop stepping on them. But the truth is, the king would not budge. Very well did the elders say that who the gods want to destroy, they first make arrogant. In this instance, it is obvious the gods have determined to destroy komukolo the king.

### **3.2.16 Proverb no.63: A pot mustn't be rolled like a mortar**

A pot is delicate. It is very fragile and could easily get destroyed. In contrast, the mortar has a property of malleability. No matter how a mortar is rolled, it is never spoiled or destroyed, merely by rolling it. However, both the pot and the mortar have what destroys them. In as much as the mortar has what it takes to control its external environments, it still fears certain elements. More so, each of them have their own strengths and weaknesses. The pot is valuable to those whose crafts require it, and so also is the mortar. They who value the pot so much, dare not roll it or tolerate those who roll it anyhow. Likewise also, every human has places where they are valued. The people to whom they are important and delicate. These are the people who cry when a man closes his mouth finally in death. So then, what is the conclusion of this proverb? Value what you have and do not compare it to what others have since they are unique and valuable in their own worlds.

### **3.2.17 Proverb no.64: Cocoa pod is never to be plucked like okra (Owonibi, 2016 p.77)**

This proverb from 3<sup>rd</sup> Old Woman to Adele in his final training moment, chimes with the one above in thematic concerns. The cocoa pod and the okra have their individual properties that dictate how they are harvested. The cocoa, harvested in large scale, calls for more advanced methodology, and industrial machines. On the other hand, the okra are softer in nature and easier to pluck without much energy. This cannot be said of the cocoa. This explains their individuality. They should be approached according to their individual properties. This proverb could be applied in so many circumstances. Leaders are told here how their followers many differ in properties and make ups. They should be addressed accordingly. Parents would learn here that their children are not the same. Some may require extra attention and comeliness to deal

with, others might require an iron hand. Individuality in the society and work places, if respected and approached appropriately, would enhance the progress of our communities and speed up human resource development.

**3.2.18 Proverb no.60: A secret known to two is only safe if one of them dies.**

**(Owonibi, 2016 p. 68)**

This is obviously so obvious that one might be tempted to exempt it from the list of proverbs, but it deeply communicates proverbially. Its major import is that, there is no secret once a second person is involved. Thus, it is better to not reveal anything you call a secret to any other person apart from yourself. This proverb comes from the narrator's opening prologue where he foreshadows the herbalist from whom Komukolo derives his occultic powers to kill and escape without apprehension. Komukolo kills him to test the efficacy of the powers he has been given. This is because he wants to conceal the secret of his source of power.

**3.2.19 Proverb no.76: The infant which tries its milk teeth on every bone and stone grows up with nothing to eat dried meat with (Aidoo, 1970 p.41)**

A great proverb for cautioning inquisitive children of the consequences of attempting to try hands on everything. Also a very good source of the continuing morality debate. This proverb admonishes youngsters to keep themselves chaste, and not to attempt trying their sexual prowess at every tom dick and harry they find. It presupposes that if a child finds himself trying hands at sex too early, he would not find it any longer necessary to even get married. And even if they do, their tendency of breaking apart too quickly is too high.

The old woman is having a discussion with the old man. She blames Anowa's mother for Anowa's attitude, she says the woman should have taught her daughter her

place in the home and to know how to address issues as a woman at home. Unbeknownst to the Old Woman is the fact that this girl, Anowa is not a product of her mother as the woman had tried all she could to correct and put Anowa on the right track but she, being one of the “children of several incarnation who listen to no one but their own tales”p.25 wouldn’t bulge. A typical “kpla mase” case as has been explained earlier from the Ewe cultural perspective, a child who refuses to be straightened by her parents.

**3.2.20 Proverb no.80: One stops wearing a hat only when the head had fallen off  
(Aidoo, 1970 p.57)**

This proverb is almost a repetition of the one that comes immediately before it that has to do with wearing the hat so long as the head remains in its place. The hat was made for the head, and until the head is no longer in existence, there is hope of wearing a hat. Did others not say that surely the charcoal seller’s son will also wear a white coat? Indeed, one can only stop wearing a hat if the head is off. In another vain, so long as the source of your problem remains where it is, there is no option than keep exploring options of various solutions.

Anowa still doesn’t understand why her husband insists she shouldn’t work but remain at home to be fed and served. Why should she stop working when she still has her head on, or while she still has her body intact, not incapacitated by any illness or misfortune. “How can a human being rest all the time? I cannot...I shall not know what to do with myself as each day breaks....” She concludes.

### **3.3 Authority and Responsibility**

#### **3.3.1 Proverb no.20: A crown is a burden when the king visits his favourite's chamber**

Africa is largely polygamous. That implies a freedom to marry as many spouses as possible, provided one has the wherewithal to cater for them effectively. This, in most cases has helped many households consolidate their financial gains as farming in those days was the major economic occupation of most folks. The kings and chiefs of the various kingdoms and villages have been at the forefront of polygamous marriages. They could even take other people's wives in addition to theirs, and even travel outside their jurisdictions to get more wives. One thing common in such marriages, is the preference of the fathers towards their wives. Usually, the younger wives were more favored and preferred above their senior wives, but the first wives were given their respected positions. The first wives are still given their due of respect as senior wives. With this system of marriage, the husband has scheduled days on which he visits each wife in their chambers. The day he enters his favorite's chamber, it is expected that he has enjoyment to the highest orgasmic achievements possible. However, the crown on his head will hinder or impede his performance. The counsel then is for him to drop the crown, go down there and service himself and his queen. The import of the proverb is that whatever would be a burden to a man in the pursuit of his goals and aspirations, he needs to drop it, in order to access his favorite. Men need to learn how to come down from their high horses to get what needs be done, done. If your place in the society hinders you from meeting certain demands, there is the need for personal resolutions and adjustments for progress to be made. This proverb comes from the king Danlola to the superintendent when the latter whisked off the king's wrapper. Here, the king says it is because of the crown he has to keep a dignified stature, not because he cannot react



or respond to his assailants in equal measure, but because of the respect he commands for the crown on his head. This is the metaphorical comparison he posits in this proverb relating to visiting his favorite's chamber.

When the king visits his favourite wife's chamber, he most certainly desires to explore, and do some very naughty stuff with his mistress, but then, he remembers he is the king and not some small boy young man who can engage in every naughty thing, not even in the bedroom where no one is watching. For the sake of the crown, the king must not engage in any open scuffle with anyone no matter the provocation.

### **3.3.2 Proverb no.37: When an Oba stops the procession and squats on the wayside, it's on an urgent matter (Soyinka, 2014 p.4)**

The Oba is a King of the Yoruba. There are certain things he would not naturally do. In doing so, it means there is something very seriously pursuing him. It is just almost the same as the owl coming out in the day, or the night bird that comes out in the day, or the proverb that an elder does not run in the market for no reason. When a procession is on, no chief will dare stop the procession. Not even when he is pressed biologically to do so. The day he does that implies a very serious compelling situation, forcing him to stop the procession.

### **3.3.3 Proverb no.79: A crab never fathers a bird (Aidoo, 1970 p.53)**

This is a popular Akan proverb that translates "koto nwo anomaa." The message of this proverb is that people have so much inherited from their parents. Thus, if your parents were good and serviceable people, then you are also expected to portray some of their attributes, however, if they were bad and insensitive people, nobody then would be surprised if their child demonstrates same sentiments. If a child demonstrates any trait that is quickly identified as a trait from any of his parents, especially the father, because Africans, and Ghanaians not exempted, are largely patriarchal in nature. Boys are

expected to act like their fathers while girls are expected to also act like their mothers. There is surprise and wonder if a child takes another tangent, different from what is known of their parents.

This proverb comes from Badua in response to Osam's statement that he had always feared Anowa. Badua says whatever Osam sees in Anowa that he doesn't like is a trait she inherited from her father since a crab does not father a bird. She further says that if you the father are afraid of your own daughter, what would others say of her? She says:

You have always feared her? And is that a good thing to say of your own bowel-begotten child? If you fear her, then what do other people do? And if other people fear her, then since a crab never fathers a bird, in their eyes, who are you yourself...? (Aidoo, 1970, p.56)

### **3.4 Contention and Violence**

#### **3.4.1 Proverb no.1: Fowl that perched on a rope, neither the rope nor the fowl shall know peace (Owonibi, 2006 p. iii)**

This proverb stems from the narrator's speech foreshadowing the cat and dog relation that is to exist between the wicked king Komukolo and his subjects who will not give him peace since he also refuses to allow his people to have peace.

In his full element, the narrator says: "When life is good for a man, he becomes bad. The tappers that cut the climbing rope in an attempt to harm the palm tree...."

This proverb is left unfinished because the reader is expected to conclude it and draw the moral message from it. Did the chiefs not support Komukolo to kill the former chief in order that they too will get promotions? What did they think they were doing when they joined forces with Komukolo to kick out the former king to the great beyond? Obviously they thought they did that to harm the palm tree only to realise that

Komukolo would become worse, and situations under his rule would be more intolerable. This is the only time they begin to miss the former king and realized they were better off with him, though he also had his own negative sides. But what? Do we all not have our own blights? It is in continuity of his introduction that the narrator adds that “the fowl that perches on rope, neither the rope nor the fowl shall know peace.”

In most African societies, troublesomeness is frowned upon. Young people are discouraged from being a thorn in the flesh of others. Rather, people are encouraged to seek the progress of each other. It is believed that, when you give your brother peace, you will have peace. It is this concept that is re-echoed in this proverb.

Amongst the Ewes of Ghana, there is an equivalence to this proverb “*egbo nye mitsi be ye kpɔdome gbleɔ, vɔa, eya ntɔ pe mepinu gbleɔ wo le.*” To wit, the goat that has diarrhea may think it is soiling the community but forgets that it is soiling its own anus in the process.

### **3.4.2 Proverb no.42: As provocative words draw out sword from scabbard, so do soft words draw out kola nut from pocket. Owonibi, 2016 p.28.**

It is nothing new in Africa to grease palms or try to influence people to do things in your favour. It is also not unknown that when a man, no matter how wrong or guilty he is shows remorse with soft words, he gets favour and forgiveness. However, the loud-mouthed ones who think they have to always argue out everything in order to get things done the right way always at the end get animosity, enmity, and eventually aggravate the situations they try to ameliorate. There are four principal metaphorical images in this proverb. There is the provocative word, the sword, soft words, and the kola nut. Provocative words are words of anger and are harsh and forceful. They are blunt, assertive, and straight forward. The proverb says these kind of words draw swords. They only lead to wars. That is why one has to be measured and extra extra-

careful of their words especially when their needs and expectations are not being met. On the other extreme end of the comparison is the soft word, which the proverb says draws cola nut. In the Yoruba community where Owonibi borrows this proverb and gives to his character to speak, cola nuts are signs of peace and good will gifts. When a friend visits the other, it is cola nuts that are given as welcome tokens. If a host refuses to break cola nuts with their visitors, it is assumed that the host is not ready to welcome the visiting team. Thus, if this proverb says soft words draw cola nuts, it portrays the value and importance Africans place on humility and softness, and all the benefits that come with it. In Africa, people who are soft toned, and soft spoken are seen as humble while those who claim to know their rights and insist on the right things being done, and other things being done their own way are seen as arrogant and too knowing. Soft people get the cola nuts, while the forceful ones end up with more wars. However, the danger of upholding this philosophical proverb is the breeding of a culture of silence where the few who think they have power to do anything could just go ahead and manipulate the system to their own selfish satisfaction while the poor masses remain subservient to these crooks. If we continue to idolize soft words as against challenging the status quo, and leading a paradigm shift, we might not be able to reach a consensus on what is good for our collective goal. We must come to a point as a people who do not only appreciate softness, but also encourage people to speak up, and challenge an oppressive and repressive status quo like those of Komukolo in *Peace by Pieces*. This is the philosophy with which the tyrant runs his kingdom, turning all the chiefs into bootlickers and ass wipers who dare not challenge the deeds of their authorities. In response to the prover, Olotun says in his own proverb “he who keeps quiet does not run the risk of having his pipe out, Kabiyesi....”

**3.4.3 Proverb no. 27: If the baobab shakes her head in anger, what chances has the rodent when an ear-ring falls and hits the head with thunder (Soyinka, 2014 p.6)**

An ear ring is hooked to the head; rodents do not have hooks to hold them to the trees. This proverb says if there is a shakeup, and even the earrings that are hooked fall off violently, what chances have the rodents on the tree without hooks? Its implication is that, man needs to be humble, know his level and be able to decipher between where his strengths can reach, where he needs to stand his ground, and where to run for shelter. Where strong boys are running for shelter, pride should not lead a weakling to prove his bravery. For short, not substitute bravery for intelligence or wisdom.

It has already been established in this research, the place, the indispensable valuable place of the king in the Yoruba traditional setting. This proverb from Sarunmi just reinforces that place. He sees the king as a mighty force of wind despite he being in the grips of the law. He pleads with the king not to get angry with the superintendent to the point of unleashing any harm on him.

**3.4.4 Proverb no.29: The royal python may be good at hissing, but it seems the scorpions tail is fire (Soyinka, 2014 p.9)**

The python may have frightened others with its venomous hissing but at a point it meets the scorpion, it understands that there is a superior power to it. Similarly, no matter how wicked or strong a man may appear to be, he surely will meet his match. When Danlola utters these words, he meant that finally, the superintendent has seen his level, giving Danlola the feeling of conquest and triumph.

### **3.4.5 Proverb no.48: The price of peace is war**

The price of peace is war explains the title of the drama; *Peace by Pieces*. If you want peace, and freedom from the oppression of your enemies, one must be ready to fight and clamp down on your terrorizers to free yourself and your people from bondage. Throughout history, peace, and freedom have always been very expensive. It calls for war, war on oppression, war on dehumanizing treatments like those meted on the poor villagers by Komukolo. To the end of the drama, the soothsayer prescribes that for the tyranny to end in Oyaland, there must be bloodshed, bloodshed of youth, boys and girls. This is not supposed to be a religious sacrifice in the first place. For peace to return to land, and for the people to reclaim their land from the tyranny of Komukolo, there obviously would be the need to face him and his men who wield spiritual and physical weapons. The wicked king and his men know the consequences of losing the power they now wield in the land. They know how miserable their lives would become if they should lose control of the resources and attention of the people. They know how painful it is to be in your own house and have someone enter and take away your daughter, your sons, your household and you do not have the power to speak back nor ask any questions. They know that the food they are serving others on their tables, should the tables turn, they would not like to eat of the same food. Thus these people would put up a spirited fight to defend their daily bread. And this is why for peace to reign in the land, some people must be hewn into pieces. There must be blood shed and some heads must roll! Indeed, the price of peace is war.

### **3.4.6 Proverb no.57: Tooth is sharper than knife**

The teeth may appear blunt in the face of the knife, but the knife can never compare itself to the teeth in the mouth, the teeth's stronghold. In the mouth, the teeth have dominion, and is able to perform its function to the fullest by chewing on even

hard bones that would be difficult for the knife to cut. It must be noted that as has been indicated earlier in this research, proverbs need not necessarily propound truthful realities. Some too are spiritual incantations expected to achieve a certain effect as soon as they are uttered. If a man whose spiritual totem is the teeth tells another man whose spiritual totem is the knife, you will hear them say the tooth is stronger than the knife, and with your ordinary understanding, you think they are talking of the strength of both items, but here they are comparing spiritual to spiritual, and the one with the higher power is known to the two people fighting. The sweetness will be in the pudding, the stronger side will be shown on the field of play, and the bravest at the end of the battle. At the end of the spiritual encounter, the veracity of the proverb will be proven.

**3.4.7 Proverb no.72: Any insect that dances on river has its drummer under the water. (Owonibi, 2016, p.88)**

This proverb says that the cause of a problem is not far from it at all. Thus, in search of solutions, one needs not look too far from where the problem is, as the solution is also lurking around the corner. Many men who are oblivious of this proverb spend years and even decades in search of a solution to a problem that otherwise would have been solved with a simple click of a computer mouse. A similar proverb comes in Pidgin that says “the thing wey you dey search go Sokoto, e dey your Sokoto trouser.” This one portends the fact that, going to Sokoto market, a popular Nigerian market in Sokoto to look for something is a waste of time when in fact you already have a sokoto trouser on you in which that very thing could be found.

### 3.5 Arrogance

#### 3.5.1 Proverb no.2: A man that swallows pestle, he certainly sleeps upright

(Owonibi, 2016 p. ix)

Still from the narrator, in this proverb, we are clearly taught that a person's behavior is dictated by what you carry. It is the inner contents of man that dictate his responses and reaction to all other situations of life. A man who knows himself to be a king will not go about playing anywhere, and shouting everywhere. The African is expected to behave according to what he carries or sees himself to be, or what expectations his people have of him. In the traditional society for instance, a priest has restrictions, chiefs also have their restrictions. Based on your portfolio, one is expected to behave as such. Another Ewe proverb that is similar to the didactics of this proverb has it literally that "a priest with insatiable appetite will eventually, offend the gods." And this leads to the other possible meaning that could be derived from this proverb that men must be ready to bear the consequences of their actions. It must be noted also, that offending the gods in the African setting is a highly dreaded and sacrilegious omen. Everybody dreads offending the gods. Thus, he who takes the risk of offending the gods must be ready to bear the consequences of their actions.

On another hand, swallowing a pestle could be related to committing a crime. Thus, the guilty person will definitely be exposed by his guilt. Two lizards lay prostrate, how do you tell the one that has stomach ache? The guilty one will definitely show signs of self-betrayal.

According to Adeoti (2019), proverbs may appear similar to others used in other cultures, but the culture within which it is used will determine the possible interpretation that is suitable for each context of usage. And that assertion is upheld by this particular proverb judging from the two possible interpretations that could arise out



of its analysis. And Yankah (2012) agrees that each new socio cultural milieu or element affects the performance of proverbs, and that context wields a large influence on the paremiology.

### **3.5.2 Proverb no.15: No one plays with fire and gets away with it**

From Komukolo to his sub chiefs while threatening to wipe all of them out leaving no traces of ash. He refers to himself as the fire that is ready to devour anyone that tries to oppose his decisions and choices. To Komukolo, there is always a freedom of speech, but as to a guarantee of freedom after speech, he did not have it in his dictionary. Kongi is a fire on his own, ready to devour any material that steps on his toes, whether human or spirit. If you know someone who does not have much space in his heart for tolerance, you do not go provoking such individuals, because you would not go unpunished. Just as Kongi is dictatorial and does not take divergent views on matters, even so does Komukolo in *Peace by Pieces* not take other people's views on matters regarding his inhuman treatments meted out on his subjects. The difference between the two villains here is that, whereas Kongi does not permit the expression of opposing views, Komukolo permits the expression but does not take it into consideration in his decisions. In fact, he wants you to talk as much as you can, only provided it chimes with whatever he wants to do. In another vain, aside, humans that must be feared, and avoided at all cost because of their 'fire' nature, and their ability to burn or rave down years of investments, there are also so many things, human desires, that if not subdued, have the potential to destroy an otherwise promising future, including infidelities, and other self-destructive tendencies.

**3.5.3 Proverb no.24: Only a foolish child lets a father prostrate to him (Soyinka, Kongi's Harvest 2014 p. 5)**

It is expected of children to show respect to the elders in the society. However, in some cases, a child who has learnt how to wash his hands well, and gains prominence in society, will, by virtue of his position or place in society get the homage and respect of even the elders of the community. A wise child knows how to balance the equation and give the elders the respect they deserve by declining the homage the elders pay to him.

It is this statement from the superintendent that shows that despite his power drunkenness, he still has an amount of respect for the culture of his people at heart. He refuses to allow the king bow before him and interprets that as a curse the king was trying to bring upon him. He rather says he only asked that respect should also be accorded constitutional powers.

**3.5.4 Proverb no.53: A pregnant woman cannot lose a virginity again**

What virginity is there for a pregnant woman to lose again? It is rather the case of once bitten, twice shy. If you already have your hand in the mess, just go through the process and clear it out rather than try to feign ignorance and innocence. The implication in the text here is that the chiefs already have their hands in the mess as part of the mess they have all plunged the people of Oyaland into. Therefore, to now turn around and feign innocence was just like pretending that you do not have your hand in the ostrich feces.

Proverb no.54: The pot that boils over doesn't know that it is only dirtying itself. (Owonibi, 2016 p.59) is a direct attack on rage and anger. This proverb warns us of the dangers of being angry. That anger only destroys the angry instead of the one who makes you angry. Anger, just as all other toxic emotions only destroy their owners

instead of their targets. An angry person is like the pot that boils over. He rages and boils like the pot boils its content water. Eventually, this water spills over and finally aids in the destruction of the same pot. A similar proverb exists in Ewe that talks about the goat that has diarrhea; it supposes to be making the town dirty, unbeknown to it that it is its own anus that is being dirtied. Komukolo thought he was setting up his chiefs for destruction by engaging them in all kinds of nefarious activities. At the end he is the one who suffers for all his bad deeds as well as those perpetrated by those he sends on his evil errands.

### **3.5.5 Proverb no.56: A coward that fears death will not possess his father's throne, (Owonibi, 2016 p. 59)**

If you want to possess possessions in a land where people are willing to die just to claim and lay ownership of things that don't belong to them, it is an understatement to prepare for war in order to protect what is yours. A man who would safeguard his father's properties must be ready to die to defend and ward off uncles and greedy family members who would not be available during labor but would want to claim and amass wealth that others have labored for. This proverb supposes that in order to take back their possession, the people need to braise themselves up for warfare and bloodshed. To fear death is to forfeit the possibility of possessing what belongs to them by inheritance. Adewale's proper understanding of this proverb comes as a result of his mother's grooming through tortuous experiences including the meeting with the three withes. And it is by virtue of this understanding that he is able to meet the wicked king and defeat him. He is able to defeat him because he has not been afraid of shedding blood in order to restore to the people what has always rightfully been theirs.

### **3.5.6 Proverb no.71: The hen never challenges the fox (Owonibi, 2016 p.88)**

A hen would never in its wildest dreams attempt to challenge a fox. It risks being devoured, and denied its very right of existence. A hen never challenges a fox. A hen, no matter how built it is, has no chance against a fox who has been wired with everything it needs to attack and devour hens. The implication is that, there is the need to wary of people who have the ability to devour or destroy you. This proverb is used by bullies to put fear into their victims. Bullies exist everywhere, amongst students, the seniors bully the juniors. In the military, the higher-ranking officers bully the lower ranking officers. Uniformed men bully civilians, and as hens, the one with less power, the vulnerable does not have the wherewithal to challenge his superior. It is even noteworthy that educational administrators bully teachers and cow them into submission with threats of salary blockage, or deletion from payrolls, and so many other avenues. A hen dares not challenge a fox.

### **3.5.7 Proverb no.61: A twig that attempts to barricade elephant will surely go away with him. (Owonibi, 2016 p.72)**

Before a man attempts to be a shield or impediment to another, there is the need to assess one's strength and be sure that he has what it takes to perform the role of a hedge successfully, or risk losing himself in the process. If after assessing your own strengths and abilities, you judge yourself unworthy of preventing the unimaginable from happening, you just advise yourself before you rather become the prey. Away from the literal interpretation of this proverb, there is the incantation aspect of the proverb as it stems from Agbako, warning Arewa and her lover Ogundele who are on their way escaping the wrath of Komukolo and his men.

### **3.6 Perseverance and Determination**

#### **3.6.1 Proverb no.3: No hen will hatch a broken egg (Owonibi, 2016 p. ix)**

Of course, if the egg is already broken, no hen will be able to hatch it. It is a cherished value in every African setting to be importunate, to persevere, and never give up. But where a task is clearly unsurmountable, or everything seem to be beyond repairs, staying at it will just be a waste of time and effort. It is better to go look for more productive endeavors that stay with a broken egg, trying to hatch it. This explains why Arewa and her lover Ogundele decide to elope seeing that they do not have what it takes to escape the long arms of Komukolo's wickedness supported by their own kinsmen. It is also for this same reason that Awero escapes into exile after the death of her husband the slain king even though she was with child.

One of the main indicators of African proverbs is the use of animals and their characteristics as metaphorical comparisons to unearth the wisdom of the elders. Agbemabiese (2022), calls it the animal index. A further reading of Farb (1991) reveals the animals as index as one of the principal features of the English proverbs. It would be concluded that these are not only peculiar to English proverbs but proverbs across all cultures.

#### **3.6.2 Proverb no.13: On a long journey, even a straw is heavy (Owonibi, 2016 p. 18.)**

A straw, a stick, naturally is not heavy. But this proverb indicates that on a long journey, that is if the straw is carried for too long, it becomes heavy. Another proverb says if water stays too long in a jar, it stinks. Implicatively, no matter how small a burden is, the earlier it is cleared, the better for the burdened partners. This proverb comes up from Ogundele to his lover, Arewa urging her to be brief as he does not have enough patience to be waiting for her to finish her long woman tales. They might get

caught by Komukolo's search team the longer they wait there talk and making much ado about nothing.

### **3.6.3 Proverb no.50: A dog that shows its teeth occasionally will bite eventually**

There are dogs who do not show any teeth at all, yet bite. How much more one that shows its teeth occasionally? It is in the nature of dogs to bite. Therefore, any dog that shows its teeth will eventually bite its victim. This implies that anyone who shows you signs of hatred, even the minutest signs will harm you eventually if you do not advise yourself in time. Here, we are presented with a dog, symbolic of a potential friend who has the tendency of hurting his friend. He shows very little sign of evil plots, but he will eventually bite you if he shows you his evil intentions once in a while. You keep forgiving and tolerating those red flags at your own risk. Akogun tells this to Komukolo with all the fierceness he could garner, trying to tell the king that he is not afraid of the king. He also wants the king to be weary of taking him Akogun for granted because the mere fact that they all decide to serve him without fighting him nor resisting his tyranny does not mean they cannot one day rebel against him. He says they may appear to be dogs, very loyal dogs to Komukolo but when the need arises, they were going to bite him very hard. But readers keep wondering why these chiefs get the desire and appreciate the need to resist the oppressor's rule but took them too long to take action. The conclusion is that they remain loyal because of convenience and the fear of victimization. In such a condition, one or two elders may decide to take action against the king but the king has planted sellouts among them who would certainly go and give the king information regarding the plans they had made.

### **3.6.4 Proverb no.30: The pot that will eat fat, its bottom must be scorched**

**(Soyinka, 2014 p.1)**

Pots are always placed on fire before cooking could be completed. A lazy pot is the one that rests in the room, used in cooling water. But the pot that wants to enjoy the beef, and pork, the very juicy and delicious meat, needs to prepare for the scorching of the fire. Implicatively, nothing comes on a silver platter. If you aspire for greatness and achievement in life, ready yourself then for some sleepless nights, and extra mile sacrifices. But to sit aloof and expect manner to fall from heaven, nothing will change, and no progress would be made in your life.

This proverb from the hemlock, the song being sung by Danlola's retinue. A source of inspiration to themselves and encouragement to the king, to endure the pain of fighting off the tyranny of Kongi. But if they have to win the fight and enjoy the fruit thereof, there is the need to have your feet scorched and your footpad sore.

### **3.6.5 Proverb no.19: It is because of the cap that we have the head. He that has cap has no head and he that has head has no cap**

These proverbs, though imperatively saying different things, one can see that they could be drawn together into one basket. They imply the dual roles played by the user and the used. Both exist because of the mutual benefits they enjoy from each other. If the cap isn't there, the head would not get his covering over the scorching sun, and if the head is not there, the cap will then be useless. It is because of the head that we have the cap. This implicatively means that the right benefits should be derived from the right sources. Another proverb of like content says it thus: He that has cap has no head. This comes with its antithetic proverb as used above that he that has head, has no cap, telling us of the inequalities and unpredictability of life. You may have a cap to wear today, but no head to wear it on. The day you get the head, the cap is not available. It is

just part of the lamentations of the unexpected occurrences in life, and how unfair life could be some times.

**3.6.6 Proverb no.31: The squirrel that will long crack nuts, its footpad must be sore (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)**

This proverb is congruent to the immediate one above. Squirrels love nuts, but they don't grow oil palms. Thus, for the squirrel to get its nut to enjoy, it has to go deep into the forest, and be ready to comb land and sea in search of the nuts it loves so much; its footpad will grow sore in the process, and that is the only way by which its desires could be met. By extension, humans should be ready to have their feet going sore if they aspire for anything great in life.

**3.6.7 Proverb no.33: The tree of life is sprung from broken peat (Soyinka, 2014 p.1, hemlock)**

The men you see today, who look so refined and polished, and successful have never had things on silver platters. The most disrespected and basest amongst properties have led to some very fantastic revelations, and some very disregarded men and women have done some very remarkable feats in the history of the world. We have seen poor men who have risen from the dust to the throne, and some have reason from prison into prime ministers. The conclusion of the uncertainties of life as far achievements are concerned is summed up in this proverb.

**3.6.8 Proverb no.46: It may take a long time, a stammerer will pronounce father in the end**

This posits that no matter how long one struggles to achieve a feat, it will definitely be achieved provided the person perseveres with importunity. A stammerer is a person who finds it difficult to speak freely without abnormal delays. These people



may struggle to say just a word freely, even to the point of hitting objects close by including their listeners. Stammering could be so intense that one has to cough and clap, and move their head, and other parts of the body just to be able to utter a single word. It is not that they do not know the words, or do not know what to say, but that reflex obstruction, that involuntary delay that they have little control over, hinders their speech, and prevents them from saying what they want to say, when they want to say it, and how they want to say it. This obstruction could be likened to the difficulties life presents to man in his pursuit of excellence and progress. There are certain obstructions to man's victory and glory that he is unable to subdue. There are heights and depths of life that people desire to attain, but these natural and unpredictable difficulties of life make such challenges unsurmountable. It is against these backgrounds that men encourage each other that no matter how hard, even if it is as hard as a stammerer finds to pronounce his father's name, just as a stammerer does not take forever to pronounce his father's name, one day, the poor man will also surmount his challenges and achieve his goals. This proverb comes handy when one remembers the Ghanaian proverb that says one day, the charcoal seller's son will also wear a white suit. No matter how herculean a task may seem or appear, it will surely be overcome.

Akogun is hwere to explain to Adunni and her husband that he has no intentions of carrying out the king's demand to have them killed, and that no matter how long it takes, the people will finally get to have their freedom, and the oppressed will get to know that the people Komukolo has used to torment and oppress the people do not obey him nor carry out his instructions out of love or will, but mostly against their wish. It further foregrounds the thought that those who usually carry out the instructions of the wicked do so for their convenience, just so they can also get their sustenance and not have their lives at risk.

### **3.6.9 Proverb no.47: Champions are not raised on the bed of roses nor stars made on the platters of gold**

A bed of roses is a metaphorical expression for places of comfort. A place where you are content with what you have and have no compelling force to go an extra mile to achieve a landmark legacy. When many people get to achieve one feat or the other, they become so comfortable that they do not see the need to push any further for anything new. Any man who desires to remain in a bed of roses, or live in a land of roses, where comfort and satisfaction, cozy breezes are their thirst and hunger, never get to achieve the height of the influential in society. People with such tendencies should not be dreaming of becoming anything near influential or champions in life. This proverb comes from the preparation of Adewale for the task ahead of him as saviour and liberator of the people of Oyaland. He complains to his mother of the tiring experience of walking long miles into the forest and the fearful experience of meeting the three old woman who appear to him in the grove, but his mother says these are the necessary experiences he needed in order to be able to fulfill the task ahead of him.

African proverbs have these motivational and inspirational components that have been used for ages to inspire work, bravery and marksmanship in all fields since time immemorial. Motivation is not new to the African culture. On our farms, in the fields, on the fishing expeditions, and all spheres of life that concerns the Africa, when the temptation to give up comes to them as it comes to everyone, it is these proverbs that become their source of motivation, usually woven into songs and recitations.

### **3.6.10 Proverb no.55: If you refuse to shake off the ant while it is on your legs, what would you do when it enters your pant? (Owonibi, 2016 p.59).**

This is one of the cautionary proverbs that Africans use to caution and warn each other to take certain actions or not to take them. It is Baasi who admonishes his

colleague chiefs to take action while the sun shines, to stop Komukolo from his tyranny while it is still possible. He laments the fact that they watched the genesis of his behaviour, saw the revelation of its end but did nothing to stop it from aggravating or escalating into bush fires without borders. Another proverb from the Ewe tradition has it that when it is young, that is when a leaf could be molded, says the tree ant.

**3.6.11 Proverb no.66: The head of an elephant is not a kid's load. (Owonibi 2016 P.79)**

There is a limit to what a child is expected to be able to do in the African society. This proverb is not all about that but goes an extra mile about individuality and potentials of individual members of the community.

At war, each fighter is expected to cut their opponents according to their physical abilities. For a child to stand in confrontation of an old and mature king like Komukolo who is so skilled in all matters of wickedness and deception, is like attempting to carry the head of an elephant as a child. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Old Woman to Adewale, (Owonibi, 2016 p. 81)

**3.6.12 Proverb no.68: Not all palm trees can be climbed by a loop (Owonibi, 2016 p. 87)**

The Yoruba people are noted for their industry when it comes to palm wine tapping, and other agricultural expeditions. As the tapping of palm wine is so known to the people, they use this for this proverb, and the knowledge of the metaphorical images aids the understanding of the proverb. Every problem is to be tackled from the right perspective, and using the right tools. Of a truth, if the only weapon you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail, attracting hammering. But there are certain times you even have a problem with a nail but doesn't call for a hammer but a crowbar or even a hacksaw as some nails need to be removed totally, other need to be

cut, and others may require some other approach rather than a hammering. Therefore not all palm trees can be climbed with a loop.

**3.6.13 Proverb no.69: Not all rivers can be crossed by a canoe (Owonibi, 2016 p.87)**

Implicatively, there is a specific solution for every particular problem. By extension, it is clear that bolt and knots are loosened with spanners, but each of the spanners have sizes commensurate with the bolt it is designed to unknot. Hence the fact that one knows how to paddle a canoe does not mean they could cross every river with the canoe. There are rivers too deep for a canoe to paddle on, and there are those too shallow for a canoe. There are those also too slim and too wide for canoes. It is up to the paddler to assess the situation, and determine exactly whether a canoe could cross that river or not before embarking on the journey.

**3.6.13 Proverb no.70: If your tree is firm why should it fear the storm? (Owonibi, 2016 p.87)**

Storms are noted for uprooting and pulling down trees, and anything erected in their way. However, it is not unknown that trees that have very strong and deep roots are hardly affected by the storms. In this proverb, we are told that a tree that is firm rooted does not need to fear the storms. This is because its trust is in the roots. Storms here would be symbolic of all difficulties that life throws at every ambitious person in the world. The difficulties of life might include hunger, as in the case of Komukolo and his subjects in Peace by Pieces. The famine in the land is the storm. Komukolo's threats and machinations are the storms that the young prince and his mother would have to battle, but if their roots are deep, why do they need to fear any storm?

**3.6.14 Proverb no.59: When elders are in the market, a child's head is not allowed to droop**

This proverb is repeated in the text, yet on each instance of use, some of the words used differ, but they are all talking of the same content. In one instance he uses 'droop' in another, he uses 'loop' yet both instances are talking of the same subject. Elders are expected to be a source of protection for youngsters. When youngsters go astray, elders are expected to be a source of correction for them. Thus, where there are elders, even strangers, once they are elders, there is an expectation that any child in that enclave, whether known or unknown, the safety of that child must be guaranteed. Implicatively, a child's errors are supposed to be corrected and covered by the elders. The child shouldn't suffer when there are elders around. They are to ensure that the child gets everything he needs to succeed. Where there are closed doors, the elders are expected to open the doors, and make it easier for the child to get through.

**3.6.15 Proverb no.73: Whoever surrenders his head to be used to crack the coconut will have a taste of it (Owonibi, 2016, p.92)**

He who sacrifices for the success of an endeavor must not be left out of the benefits. This is the proverb that drives the organization and formation of governments and teams across every country on the continent. It is the people who were instrumental in the campaign and electioneering process that enjoy the juicy appointments into political and ambassadorial positions. It is therefore a praiseworthy act to surrender yourself for the benefit of others. To sacrifice one's comfort for the freedom and enjoyment of others. It is only decorous, and proper to allow those who surrender their heads for the cracking of the coconut to have a taste of it.

**3.6.16 Proverb no.5: The white ant's attempt to make a hill out of the rock will certainly be an exercise in futility (Owonibi, 2016 p.13.)**

This proverb was used by Adunni, Arewa's mother in expressing her disagreement and prayer against Komukolo's demand to have Arewa become his latest wife. Everybody dreads the king because the suffering and abuse the king's wives and members of his household endure are common knowledge to the people. Under normal circumstances, marrying the king, or having your daughter marry the king or the prince of all kingdoms has always been the dreams of many a subject of many kingdoms and states. Why in the case of Komukolo does his prospective mother-in-law have to offer such a prayer? She regards Komukolo in her emotional state as an ant trying to make a hill out of her, a rock. This portrays subtly, the power of women, and their desire to usurp power. In Efo Kojo Mawugbe's *In the Chest of a Woman*, he explains this concept in his famous quote that in the chest of a woman is not only an extension of breast but the earnest desire to possess and use power. Adunni is here, by this statement declaring her determination to see the king's dreams of marrying her daughter come to naught. Oblivious of her husband's entry, she continues her declarations "by the grace of my two knees with which I knelt down at child birth, and the blood shed upon her, Komukolo will never live to fulfill his intentions on my only daughter...." She breaks into tears and sobs, sobs upon sobs and tears of disagreement and prayers of rejection and refusal, but as fate would have it, and as men would always have their way in a chauvinist society like that of Oyaland, Komukolo finally has his way with Arewa. Well, not until her mother and father are both killed.

**3.6.17 Proverb no.16: The playing teeth of a dog will soon turn to a biting instrument (Soyinka, 2014 p. 24)**

Komukolo uses this proverb to warn his chiefs not to attempt to take him for granted. As used on page 24, he threatens that anyone who attempts to take him for granted will bear the brants of his sharp teeth. This proverb says that the person who seems so playful today, may be hiding their destructive nature. Dogs are known to be barkers and biters, but also very playful at times. This is the very nature of man. He may be playing with you in a moment but turn sour and bitterly destructive in the next moment. This is why men have to be on the alert, no matter how playful others may seem to you on the surface.

**3.6.18 Proverb no.32: The sweetest wine flows down the tapper's shattered shins (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)**

No matter how sweet wine is, it would never flow upward. Indeed, the way up is down. This proverb touts humility and service to all manner of persons. Regardless of their possessions and standing on the social ladder of the community. The African culture in itself uphold humility, praises the humble and makes room for the humble to thrive. The veneration for humility is so much such that the highest person in the land is expected to show a level of appreciation and respect for even the meanest of all men. A rich man who doesn't look downward to be blessing to the less privileged is laden and smeared with all sorts or derogatory and name calling at all levels. People ignore him, and others laugh at him to scorn. Indeed, if you claim to be sweet, then let your sweetness be measured by its flow downward. The palm wine tapper's dirty cloth is what enables him to produce the wine that all men enjoy. Thus, this proverb implies that one should not be shy of his source of livelihood so long as it is genuine.

The proverb comes as continuity for what had already been said, all in the hemlock, giving more encouragement to the king, assuring of their support in his trying times while trying to fight off Kongi's insensitive attempts to break down the traditions of the fathers.

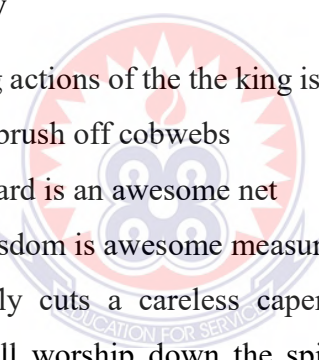
**3.6.19 Proverb no.38: The tunnel passes through the hills belly but we cry no defilement. Soyinka, 2014 p.9.**

This proverb smacks of injustice and unfairness in our society regarding offences and punishments. One offence committed by two different people may have different interpretations. For instance, if a man moves into the bathhouse of a woman, it could even attract gunshots from the woman. But this same woman can go to the same man in a consulting room and willingly remove her clothes for examination. The same thing is being done in these two instances, but different interpretations. What then is the conclusion? Know where you are, who you are, and what is expected of you, and act accordingly. In other instances, two people may commit the same crime and one called and seriously reprimanded or even remanded to prison custody, but another person who is politically connected or financially loaded would be left off the hook. This is the injustice this proverb no.38 addresses. The theme of injustice runs through *Kongi's Harvest* as the Oba finds himself being maltreated and manhandled by Kongi's puppets with no one calling them to order. The proverb is in the commentary of the drummer's drum language as he bemoans the current state of the king's status in society. Kongi and his men constantly degrade and denigrate the king and disrespect his authority in the name of new political leaderships yet no one calls them to order.



**3.6.20 Proverb no.39: Whatever fly cuts a careless caper around the scent of sacrifice, will worship down the spider's throat (Soyinka, 2014 p.60)**

This is a typical example of proverbs used in praise songs. Before this proverb, other parts of the song also seek to praise the deity of the king. They seek to establish the fact the king is no mere mortal. This is not new. It has always been part of their tradition to regard the king as the gods and forefathers personified. The proverb seeks to caution any fly that carelessly crosses the path of the spider finds its way down the throat of the spider. By metaphorical extension, this proverb performed in songs sends strong signal to all subjects that the king is not a menial, and that anyone who dares find himself obstructing his progress would find themselves swallowed by the king's wrath. In the song, they say



The ensuing actions of the the king is not to be shaken off as  
a man may brush off cobwebs  
A king's beard is an awesome net  
A king's wisdom is awesome measure  
Whatever fly cuts a careless caper around the scent of  
sacrifice will worship down the spider's throat (Soyinka,  
2014 p.60?)

The dance between Oba Sarunmi and Oba Danlola in response to these proverbial words praising their ingenuity, position and power is glorious that it takes the reader's attention off the treachery of Kongi and his secretary and ushering in the beauty of our traditional dance, music, dance and other aspects of our culture. This is the encouragement Nketia, (1958) says proverbs on African drums bring. It is what in Anyidoho (1983) Ewes call *Hamelo*. It boosts the confidence of the despondent, awakens the bravery in the wounded soldier and binds up the broken-hearted king. Okpewho (1992) calls it praise songs in proverbial statements.

### **3.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has effectively analyzed proverbs no.1 to no.40, considering their thematic relevance and significance to the interpretation of the text and topic under discussion.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter, like the previous chapter is concerned with data presentation and analysis. The chapter analyses the remaining five thematic groups of proverbs sourced from the three secondary sources. The cultural contexts of usage and the intra-textual contexts are also discussed in the analysis of the selected proverbs.

#### 4.2 Hopelessness and despondency

##### 4.2.1 Proverb no.4: **Their past lacks pepper, present lacks oil. And their future lacks salts. Such is a people who do not know themselves**

This proverb talks of self-discovery. A man must first know where he comes from, in relation to where he has reached, and this will help him assess his progress, and also project the possibilities ahead of him. It is expected of Africans to know their cultural values and project them extensively. According to this proverb, a man's level of knowledge of these values is what determines whether he will be a successful man in his old age or not. After all, what is the point in growing old without a thorough knowledge of one's nativity? Very well did the Ewe folks put it thus: staying long in water does not turn a log into a crocodile. The people of Oyaland, in taking stock of their lives under the leadership of Bojuri the slain king, and comparing to the current situation of chaos, anarchy, hunger and imprisonment conclude finally that indeed their future lacks any hope hence the use of this proverb to advise and to console each other. According to Adeoti (2019), proverbs in many cultures across the world arise in the human attempt to terms with the complexities of the relationship between the past and the present. It is this same sentiment that is expressed in Mieder (2012) a renowned

paremiologist, who says “proverbs are the wisdom of the ages gone by” he further asserts that “*they are based on the “observations and generalizations about basic human behaviour, and the trials and trepidation of human life.”* These observations are expressed in short terse and memorisable language, and embedded with metaphorical and imagistic relations, and are called proverbs.

#### **4.2.2 Proverb no.7: An old man running in the forest must be after something, else something is after him (Owonibi, 2016 p.10.)**

Ajamu says this to Ajibode expressing his surprise at seeing the elderly man in his farm when he could just have waited for him at home. As noted earlier, there is a certain standard of conduct expected of the elderly in the Yoruba culture. As a result, elders are supposed to walk gently without any strife or argument in public. Therefore, this proverb postulates that, if it is true that elders do not run in public, then seeing an elder run in public means there is a cause for alarm. There certainly must be a serious issue at stake like the threats of *Komukolo* in *Peace by Pieces*. It is threats such as this that make the otherwise gentle and mild old men to now take to running, an activity regarded with little dignity. As it ensues in Owonibi (2006 p.10) between Ajamu and Ajibode, if Ajibode could not wait for Ajamu to come and meet him at home, then the animal chasing him was indeed a very huge and dangerous one. This transpires when *Komukolo* finally makes his intentions of marrying Arewa, Ajibode’s only daughter. This the man finds a bog threat to his happiness and peace. He finds himself between two opinions. Either lose his only daughter to the treacherous king or face the wrath of the king. This is finally what drives him to go seek counsel from the seemingly younger kinsman.

It is very common and natural for youngsters to go seek help and counsel from the elderly in times of need and difficulties, but if the tide turns, where the elder has to now

go look for the younger as is happening now in this instance, then something must be chasing the elder, or he is chasing something valuable he finds in this youngster that he does not find in his fellow adults. It is at the enquiry of Ajamu with this proverb that Ajibode finally breaks the news of his concern that Komukolo desires to marry Arewa, a demand they both agree amounts to killing herself slowly if she should agree to the king's demand. He says we are between the devil and the evil grove. What a dangerous place to be indeed.

**4.2.3 Proverb no.25: the bridegroom does not strain his neck to see a bride, anyway bound for his bed chamber Soyinka, 2014 p.74.**

This proverb comes at the back of Kongi's secretary's inquisitiveness to know who Daodu intends to impress with his dance moves for which reason he invites Oba Danlola and his entourage to come along to the celebration of the new yam. The secretary admits that Daodu's farm had won the best yam competition but is quick to add on that even his team members aren't invited to Kongi Square to watch the ceremony hence doesn't understand why the big fuss about inviting his uncle the king to come watch the ceremony. Danlola says he doesn't know who he intends to honour with the dance, but he and his team are there because they have been invited by Daodu. In the midst of the back and forths of queries and altercations, Danlola, as the image of the wise African in the play, finally replies in this proverb no.25 "the bridegroom does not strain his neck to see a bride, anyway bound for his bed chamber' so let you and I wait like the patient bride groom." The implication here is that, so long as the man whose idea it is for them to be there was on the to the square, it is just prudent to remain patient like the bride groom and see him for themselves and finally know his intentions. This would finally answer all the questions and clear all doubts, rather than the fruitless debate they are engaged in. This proverb has an Akan equivalence that says "ye de

agorɔ ɛɛba wo fie a, yɛndwane nnkohyɛa.” Literally meaning, when the drum ensemble is on its way to your house, you don’t run to go meet it on the way. It is certainly coming to your house when you’d dance to it and get fed up with it. After the proverb is uttered, its effect is just a confirmation of the power proverbs wield in the African cultural context. Both parties agree, and decide to wait and see everything for themselves rather than go on with the debate.

#### **4.2.4 Proverb no.26: The child is nothing; it is only the glory of his forebears that the world sees and tolerates in him (Soyinka, 2014 p. 6)**

This proverb robs in the faces of young people who have achieved some level of success in life and, as a result, turn around to point left hands to their parents and forbears, tagging them as under achievers. Whatever you have today was contributed to, even if in the slightest amount, by your forebears. Your DNA and physical features were all determined by who gave birth to you. Blood groups and genotypes are all passed on to us by our fore fathers. If all these be true, what then could any of us have achieved without our roots to point accusing fingers at them for not contributing much to our development?

In this scene we see the superintendent trying to be humble after he notices that Danlola is not ready to stoop low and descend into the gutters with him. He forestalls Danlola and prostrates first, throwing himself on the ground. He says “I call on you all to witness, Kabiyesi, I am only the fowl droppings that stuck to your slippers when you strolled in the backyard.” Apparently, he wants to prove his innocence to Danlola that he is just a tool being used by another. In effect, he is doing nothing on his own accord. This scenario here has a lot in common with the case of the chiefs in Oyaland who are being used by the wicked king, Komukolo. When Akogun arrives in Ajibode’s compound at the command of Komukolo, he attempts to explain this same issue here,

that he isn't a man doing his own bidding but that of the King whose voice must be obeyed at all times. Ajibode misinterprets Akogun's presence in his home and takes it to be a consolatory visit. He says:

Akogun my kinsman, leader of Oya's warriors. You are welcome to my grieve-stricken home. You have come well. To console me I think? I need not be consoled. I am a man of myself. You better console Adunni and Arewa. (Soyinka, 2014)

Akogun's response comes in a sober mood, indicating his remorse and unwillingness to carry out the assignment imposed on him by the king. He had earlier indicated his unwillingness to the king but as soon as the instruction is followed with some threats, he succumbs. His response is worth quoting in full:

My coming is not for condolence but something worse than that. Komukolo has sent me to your home on a bitter errand...the message is as hueless as a ghost, as horrible as a bad dread. Yet you are the recipient.

In a subsequent response to Adunni's shock at Akogun's courage in coming to their house to carry out such a gruesome assignment against no mean a person than his own blood relatives, Akogun thus expresses his unwillingness, and lays bare the fact that he had no intentions of carrying out the king's instructions since they are against his will.

He says:

"I am between an inferno and a flood. If-if I want to carry out the king's order wont I cc-come with a sword? Have you seen any cutlass in my hand? Is blood not thicker than water...?"

It is clear from the afore discussed that the wicked only make use of good people to achieve their parochial interests. In *Kongi's Harvest*, it is Kongi using the superintendent, the secretary and all the others to molest and maltreat their fellows much against their own consciences and will, but for the sake of their own convenience and survival, they have had to obey without questioning. This phenomenon is replete in most human establishments. But my question here is if these continue in our societies without people picking up the challenge to oppose the tyranny of the wicked, will our societies know justice and peace?

**4.2.5 Proverb no.40: If eyes didn't see, heart wouldn't grieve. (Owonibi, 2016 p. 27) uttered by Akogun**

This proverb lends credence to the view many hold of life, that it is better to be ignorant of what an enemy says, or has to say about you. By this, you save yourself the headache, and impact such negative comments are meant to achieve on your psychological being. To many, ignorance is a negative trait of life, but this proverb makes evident the positivity that ignorance brings; a peaceful heart. It is not worth gainsaying the value of a peaceful mind, and heart free of anxiety and fears that come from things you heard that you should not have heard in the first place. The direct relation between what is heard and what is seen must not be underrated. There are things you should not see, in a bid to protect your mental sanity, and health. For instance, you may live happily with an adulterous spouse if their escapades are kept out of your view. You may protect your heart and mind if you make a conscious effort not to get to know. Breaking into their phones, diaries, and other privacies may only compound your insecurities, and lead to heartaches, and heartbreaks resulting from either misinterpretations of what you see, or the realities that you come to terms with after such discoveries. Indeed “eni enhu a, ennye tang” as the Twi speakers of Ghana put it.



If the eye does not see it, it is not ugly. So stay away from certain pieces of information to protect your mental sanity. As much as this is helpful in certain circumstances, it is not in every situation that this is applicable. There are however certain cases under which one needs to investigate matters, not for confrontation purposes, but for clarification and to aid the search for possible solutions.

#### **4.2.6 Proverb no.58: Hundreds of termites can do but nothing to a stone**

This proverb explains the importance of knowing what you are capable of doing, and staying in your lane. It is usually used in incantations and battles of war and verbal challenges. A protagonist may use this proverb against a villain in letting him know that once, he the protagonist is a stone, the enemies who are the termites, can assemble themselves in troops, as many as possible but can do but little to him. On the other hand, this is one of the incantation proverbs where people employ their words to invoke their spirits to have their enemies dealt with by the spirits. Komukolo says to his chiefs that all of them together, he sees them as termites who can do him nothing. (Owonibi, 2016 P.63).

#### **4.2.7 Proverb no.74: The yam that will burn, will burn, boiled or roasted**

A child who has determined to spoil will get spoilt no matter the punitive measures the elders put in place to correct him. This proverb stands against the fruitless and futile efforts we make at correcting people who do not want to be corrected, or straightening crooked paths that do not want to be made straight. In *Peace by Pieces*, a similar proverb comes up thus “if the victim does not complain, it will be safe for the avenger to sheathe his sword” (Aidoo, 1970 p.79.)

In another jurisdiction, it is stated that a visitor to a funeral should not weep louder than the bereaved. Our Ewes say “ame si da ta di kpoo la, eyae wo kona ta nyuie

na”. If a child would be well trained, it largely depends on the child. The parents may try their possible best, but if the child resists proper training or decides that no one should talk about him, the outcomes of his decisions are his sole responsibility. Such children are called “Kpla mase” a child who refuses straightening. In this case, the parents are exonerated from the repercussions of his actions. So a child that will do well, will do well regardless of where he is trained.

### **4.3 Prosperity and Fecundity**

#### **4.3.1 Proverb no.67: It is better to be a butterfly that soars like an eagle and swoops like a hawk than be a big ostrich without awe (Owonibi, 2016 p.82.)**

No matter how small and downtrodden an individual may be in the social hierarchy, he still has what it takes to soar to higher heights much against the winds like the eagle does. He may be as tiny and fragile as the butterfly, vulnerable and easily destructible like the butterfly, but given some little time and a little push, the butterfly could fly as the eagle.

In this case the chiefs are saying they have had enough, and would rather have their peace and live in harmony with the people than to continue with Komukolo in his wickedness. In another instance, a similar proverb is used by Aworo to Komukolo. He says that “the butterfly may soar like an eagle and swoop like a hawk yet doesn’t make him a bird’s sibling.” P.83

**4.3.2 Proverb no.75: A man of name is never judged by his beginning (Aidoo, 1970 p.41)**

This is a total caption of what our society has become. People emerge suddenly with untold wealth; nobody questions their sources of wealth. We only think of what they have got to offer today, and praise, and worship them so long as their riches could get to us. So long as we can also get our meagre fare, we are more than ok, and ready to defend them at all levels. It is equally true that the struggling stages of a man are never recognized. Someone perfectly captions it thus; no one cares about your struggles until you win, so win! It only the end that is judged. Nobody cares how you struggled or whatever you did to become rich, or get to wherever you have reached in life.

The old man says this in regarding Ako who would become rich overnight but no one would talk about his source of wealth, nor his previous struggles. Nobody cares if he sold his manhood to get this wealth. They do not care the sacrifices he has had to endure to become what he has become. He asks further “who judges a man of name by his humble beginnings?”

**4.3.3 Proverb no.9: Cows give more milk in a happy environment (Owonibi, 2016 p.12)**

While discussing the current predicament of the land, they lament Komukolo’s refusal to see wisdom in the ancient words of the forebears who have said that cows give more milk in a happy environment. It is the duty or natural expectation of cows to give milk. That is what makes them cows, however, this proverb says that, when the cow is given enough to meet all her needs, and is given the happiness it deserves, it will definitely produce more milk than expected. It is a very didactic proverb in the sense that it teaches us to give happiness to our subordinates to spur them on to give off their best. This is what Komukolo misses in *Peace by Pieces*. If your subjects are not happy,

how will productivity increase? This happens in marriages and all other relationships with expectations. If you make people happy by giving them what they need to make them happy, you get more than you expect in return. It happens also at work places, and even in classrooms and anywhere there is a leadership and followership relation chain.

#### **4.4 Idiosyncrasy and weakness**

##### **4.4.1 Proverb no.34: A king does not become a menial just because he puts down his crown to eat (Soyinka, 2014 p.2)**

Owonibi's Peace by Pieces also has a similar proverb to this one. Coming down to the level of your subordinates does not reduce your greatness in any way. Oppressing and scaremongering does not in any way make a great leader. Respecting and showing love to everyone does not make you the meaner or a commoner. In actual fact, the men who have entered the heart of many, are those who, in spite of their high estates, have come down to the level of commoners, making them also feel loved, and respected. These are the men who have entered the hearts of many indelibly. However, the situation under which this is used does not portray the user nor the addressee being admonished to come down to anybody's level. Rather what we see here is the superintendent admonishing the king to act his age. That merely because he has found himself outside the palace does not mean he could behave anyhow, nor say just anything. He is still the king, and must act accordingly. It is however, rather ironical that the superintendent knew all this, yet chooses to maltreat him. But again, the argument is refuted when we remember him saying he is just the fowl droppings that got stuck on the king's soles when he strolled the backyard.

#### **4.4.2 Proverb no.36: The nude shanks of a king is not a sight for children**

**(Soyinka, 2014 p.4)**

The king is human too, but even in his low moments, there are those who must not under any circumstance be permitted the privilege of getting access to him. No matter how common a chief becomes, he is still not a colleague to the commoner. It has already been established that the Yoruba people place so much premium on their traditions and customs. In view of this, and for the fact that they see the king as a rep of the gods, he must be accorded the due reverence and respect. Oba Danlola in this scene tells the superintendent to be minded of the place the Oba occupies before attempting anything funny. This is just before he removes the king's wrapper.

#### **4.4.3 Proverb no.21: When the king's wrapper falls off in audience, wise men**

**know he wants to be left alone (Soyinka, 2014 p. 5)**

It is good to have knowledge of a subject, and also a variety of subjects, but knowing when to apply them is a matter of wisdom. It takes a different level of wisdom to know when to apply what you know for it to work appropriately for you. As much as it is a good thing to desire to save the king in his moment of trouble, the ability to decipher how long he desires that help and to what extent will take a different level of wisdom to decipher. When the king's wrapper falls in public, the first instinct of anyone present will be to rush in to help cover the king's nakedness, but wisemen know, and are able to read the environment to know if the king really wants to be helped or not. This proverb emanates from the exchange of words between Oba Danlola and the superintendent, reminding him of the fact that though works with Kongi, the president, and though they have successfully detained the king, it doesn't make him any less, but still their king.

## **4.5 Honour and Respect**

### **4.5.1 Proverb no.35: A shilling's vegetable must appease a halfpenny spice**

**(Soyinka, 2014 p.4)**

This proverb takes us into the traditional African kitchen where the delicacy of a meal is not really in how expensive the ingredients but how good one is at mixing them appropriately to make the soup enjoyable. Consequently, the beauty of one's life is not in the abundance of his possessions but how he manages and appreciates what he has.

### **4.5.2 Proverb no.22: A mindless clown dispenses thanks as a fowl scatters meal, not caring where it falls (Soyinka, 2014 p. 5)**

At this point, King Danlola is in Kongi's detention cell, and the superintendent of police expects the king to be thankful to him for even allowing others to pay him a visit in cell. The king does not see this as any favour that deserves any thanksgiving. He says it is only mindless clown that dispense thanksgiving for just any and every thing. He is not even enthused, neither is he bordered by the antics and displays of the superintendent of police thus doesn't see any reason to be thankful for his unjust, unlawful and presumptuous detention that's only meant to bloat another person's ego and self-aggrandizement. Why should he even be grateful for a solution to a problem you created yourself? That would just be like setting your own questions and answering it. In his own words, he says he would even have broken jail and gone home if not for his crown that forbids him from engaging in nefarious activities, but to remain law abiding. Therefore, his peace-loving nature should not be misconstrued to be a weakness that would warrant him dispensing thanksgiving and appreciation like a fowl does its food, not caring where it falls.

#### **4.5.3 Proverb no.23: The yam that belongs to a king should not be pounded in a small mortar (Soyinka, 2014 p.5)**

This proverb comes on the back of Kongi's detention of Danlola with oversight responsibilities given to the superintendent who is supposed to be a subject of Danlo. As a subject of Danlola, he knows the customs very well, and knows that the yam of a king should not be pounded in a small mortar. This is because the king is the official representative of the gods and forebears of the land. It has become very disheartening for his subject to be given so much powers to disrespect and mistreat the king because of Kongi's political powers which he now uses to harass and oppress other rulers, traditional rulers in particular.

As it stands at this point, it has become necessary for the king to remind the superintendent of who he was dealing with, and the powers he still had over him as the traditional lord of the land, and why his yam should not be pounded in small mortars. A king must be treated with dignity regardless of what his current conditions are. It seems apparently that what his yam was being pounded in didn't even qualify to be mortars to even call it a small mortar; maybe a small earthen ware, or possibly a little milk tin. To wit, the treatment being meted out to the king isn't befitting of his status at all. The superintendent talks down the king. He says *"too much indulgence, that is why. It is all the fault of the organizing secretary permitting your wives and all these other creatures to visit you. And you are not even grateful."* (Soyinka, Kongi's Harvest 2014 p. 5) A statement of this nature should not even be made to another person in the presence of the king. Interestingly, this is the king himself being addressed in this manner. What else could be more demeaning?

It is very poignant to note the cultural context of this proverb. The Yoruba are a group that so much respects the authority of traditional leaders. In many cases, the king

adjudicated cases for peace to reign. Even in the cases of land and property disputes, the king had the power to rule for an amicable settlement. It isn't only the king's authority Yorubas respect. Even the authority of family elders and normal elderly people in society are held in high esteem, and the superintendent and the secretary, both being Yorubas, know the repercussions of treating the elderly with disdain and contempt. This explains why in the next statement made by the superintendent, he forbids Danlola from prostrating before him and sees that gesture as a curse. Hence his statement, "I did not ask for a curse on my head." The king is thus baffled by the superintendent's treatment if he truly understands the culture of his people and respects same. In another statement by Sarummi "don't pound the king's yam with a small pestle." (p.9) and also in the song sang by the king's praise singer "the king is he who anoints the head's pulse centre with the oil of sacrifice. The king is a god"

In sharp contrast to the traditional king whose yam should not be pounded in small mortar with small pestles, Danlola says the wicked political rulers pound their own yams with stamp and pads of violet ink, making omelets of stubborn heads" who refuse to dance to their tunes.

#### **4.5.4 Proverb no.62: A kid who knows how to wash his hand will dine with the elders (Owonibi 2016 p.76)**

This proverb is not only in the Nigerian setting. It has a Ghanaian counterpart in the Twi language. A child who knows how to wash his hands will eat with elders. This implies that even though children would not naturally be admitted to the council of elders, or a dinner of elders, a child who exhibits certain qualities as humility, service and commitment will easily be admitted to the table of elders. That is if the child is able to show that he has something meaningful and worthwhile to contribute to the table.



These are part of the words spoken to Adewale after Ogundele and Arewa's ordeal. The three witches under whose training the boy has been for all this while in anticipation of the day he would finally come down from Gbejamija kingdom to face the tyrant and troubler of his people in Oyaland. It is amazing but not surprising how he is so well received by the people of Oyaland immediately he introduces himself as the son of the former king of Oyaland, and gets the support everyone. Obviously, this is because the people had been under the bondage of Komukolo and his chiefs for long, and had waited in vain for the rise of any leader who would help them fight for what belongs to them. It is noteworthy, that it is due to Adewale's training in how to wash his hands well that has won him the admiration of all the elders of the land of Oya.

**4.5.5 Proverb no.65: Any river that forgets its source will definitely dry.**

**(Owonibi 2016 P.78)**

Your source is your blood, or father line. In the African lineal system, people are expected to demonstrate the pride of belonging and nativity by speaking your native language, and identifying with your people no matter how high one has travelled or aspired in life. There is a similar proverb already discussed earlier in the literature review that a log does not turn into a crocodile merely by staying long in the river. Forgetting your roots is a sign of loss, and immaturity in the African cultural system. Therefore, to remain relevant in the African parlance, one has to maintain a constant contact and touch his roots or source of existence.

Here we see the ungratefulness of the wicked king being punished. Because he thinks he has attained power and cannot be questioned by anyone, he forgets those who put him there, and it is the very reason the women training Adewale are so passionate about helping him defeat Komukolo once and for all. The king has forgotten that his power emanates from the people, and the chiefs and begins to issue threats and even

threatening to feed them with poison. He has gone too far, and deserves the punishment of the gods.

#### **4.5.6 Proverb no.52: Prostrating to a dwarf doesn't mean you are not the taller**

A person may be bigger in stature, bigger and more loaded in terms of finance, but if a little boy is appointed or installed a chief over them, the rich, the young and the old all have to bow to this little boy. The truth however is that, bowing to this boy does not reduce anybody's stature or entitlements. This proverb upholds humility in spite of upliftment and success in society. No matter how uplifted and prosperous one is, respecting others does not reduce your level of success. Another group has it that, helping your brother light his candle will not dim your own candle. When you offend even the smallest person in society, and apologise, or even apologise without being guilty, you lose nothing out of your personality. Indeed, prostrating before a dwarf does not mean you not taller than him; it only shows your humility, and strength of character.

In (Owonibi, 2016 p. 58), Baasi tells Akogun not to keep exchanging words with the king. This is because although Akogun is stronger in muscle and taller in stature, the king still remains the king. If you are dissatisfied with his leadership, and you think his offences are enough to remove him from office, you initiate steps to effect same but not to confront him and engage in open battles.

In (*Soyinka*, 2014 p. 2), we see a similar situation where the king refuses to engage the secretary in an open brawl. He says the crown is a burden when the king visits his favorite's chamber because anytime he wants to do the real stuffs lovers do in the bedchamber, he is reminded of his crown for which reason he could not go very wild with his mistress. A typical example of this is what we have here in the case of Komukolo and Akogun.

**4.5.7 Proverb no.78: However good the back of your hand is for licking, it can never be as good as your palm (Aidoo, 1970 p.49)**

The right tools must be applied to the right jobs; so also should the right procedures be employed in dealing with every societal issue. No matter how sweet the back of your palm is, it can never replace the feeling that comes with licking one's palm. This proverb can be related to family lineages. You cannot relate to outsiders more confidentially than your forebears and family kinsmen. No matter how sweet an outsider is, he or she cannot replace the beauty of a united family tie.

Here, Kofi Ako in this apostrophe to the sleeping Anowa further reiterates the point that proverbs do not always describe the truth of reality. This chimes with the position of Dzobo (1997) who posits that proverbs do not always express what is true but have very moral significance for specific situations. Kofi Ako had earlier stated that only your sisters or kinsmen could make certain sacrifices for you when you are in dire need. This earlier position he arrived at due to what a proverb had taught him. Almost immediately, he makes a U-turn, dispelling that notion, and embracing the fact that his wife may sure have a lot of defects but she has a great personality too, and that things could work if he decides to be a new husband, and his wife, a new wife. In many cases we say the elders say that, then we continue with a statement or proverb made by them, forgetting that the old men are not always wise, and that fools also grow old.

## 4.6 Persecution and injustice

### 4.6.1 Proverb no.77: The man who hates you does not care if you wait in the sun for your clothes to dry before you can go and join the dance (Aidoo, 1970 p.46)

This proverb explains why hatred is unexplainable. It opines that even if you have only one cloth or one dress, you are so poor that you have to wait every time after washing for the cloth to dry before you wear it, you would still be hated. Those who hate, do not need any reason to hate. They just hate, and this is why hatred is very dangerous and self-destructive.

Kofi Ako says this to Anowa his wife in an attempt to convince her to agree with her to go get protection from some powers. This is in anticipation of his soon coming wealth which he had gone to acquire through the trading of his manhood, the reason they are unable to give birth to any child of their own. He wants to make a case that one needs not be rich to be hated by anyone. The man who hates you does not care whether you have only one shirt you wear every day!

In response to this proposal, this ensues between them:

Anowa: but who hates us?

Ako: my wife, you speak as if we left Yebi with the town singing and dancing our praises

Was not everyone saying something unkind about us? Led by your mother? Anowa, we did not run away from home to go mushroom-hunting or fish-trapping (Aidoo, 1970, pp.46-47)

Anowa's response after this shows her disinterest in her husband's proposal. She doesn't want to be entangled in any spiritual web of medicines although she finally agrees with her husband that they may have enemies despite having little possessions. The convincing power of proverb use is once again demonstrated here.

#### 4.7 Chapter Summary

Here, we have finally discussed the final part of the eighty (80) proverbs we set out to analyse. This chapter has successfully considered the didactic significance of the proverbs used in the selected West African drama texts and how the interpretation of these proverbs have been influenced by the contexts within which they have been used both in the text and outside the texts. The chapter explored some really intriguing proverbs in the three selected texts, considering their environmental influences where the proverbs emerged from, and how these could be applied to our current living. It should be noted that these proverbs are not necessarily precise or accurate sources of information about the historical life of the people and events described in the texts, but do provide some very useful insight into how certain African traditions developed. This work will therefore be useful as reference point into certain seemingly neglected but important aspects of the West African culture, like respect for the elderly, the place of women in society, love, unity, communal labour, and others. The researcher admits, though, that the categorization done of the proverbs are not isolated but could overlap and might fit into other categories as well. But each category is based on the researcher's consideration of proverbs that best suit a particular category than others.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have set out a plethora of literature that have been explored in treating the literary significance of proverbs used in West African Drama. There description of the research problems and purpose statements have fully spelt out the focus of the work with the third and fourth chapters exploring the methodology, and analysis of data respectively.

The thematic concerns of West African proverbs have also been of keen interest to this research, beaming spotlights on some core values of the various African communities from which the sampled texts originated, as well as the African continent in general. On the communality and kinship system of the African people, it has been laid bare that sharing a social life and having a sense of common good regardless of our individual diversities is reflected in the use of proverbs. In spite of the existence of this communal value, there is an attempt to drive home the need for individual responsibility for actions, since it is equally taught that people need to take responsibility for their actions. This idea is shared by Gyekye (1996) who admits that African cultures usually identify that “the natural human being also has individuality, personal will, and an identity that must be exercised.” Take Komukolo, the principal character in *Peace by Pieces* for instance, even though his evil reign could have been averted by a community mobilization against his reign, thereby saving the whole community from the misfortune of famine which ravaged the whole kingdom, he is the only one who suffers finally in the hands of Adewale, the son of the previous king after he had gone through training in exile and not any other member of the community. This lends credence to

the fact that, although we live communally, certain actions require individual responsibility, because its consequences are not communally borne, but individually borne. This theme is presented in the proverbial statements of the Ewe people. A typical example portraying our communality as Africans is seen in this proverb, “*ame ntɔe yɔna efe akplekoe be akplekɔ.*” (*It is a person’s own responsibility to call his little morsel of food, a full meal.*) this means that people may have their own understanding of the situation of others, but the responsibility lies on the individual to build it into whatever he hopes, or wishes to build into. Another proverb in the same language has it that “*Amekpela meɔoa kpo o*” (‘A helper does not develop hunch back’). This presupposes that, it is no crime to help another person in their times of crises. You don’t lose anything by helping another bear their burdens. This forestalls the importance of the communal value system practiced by most African cultures. “*kɔe ɔo klota na woali aɔo ta nawo*” (Lift it to your knee so that you will be helped to put it on your head). For the communal goals to be achieved, it takes the individual little efforts to come together to have the communal dream achieved. This is why the individual needs to first lift a load to his knees before the others come in to help him put it on his head. “*Agbenye nu si newɔe*” (‘Life is how you make it’). Here, the emphasis is on the role of the individual, which implies that, although Africans cherish communal life, an individual must be responsible for his or her actions first.

The issue of individualism now takes almost center stage in the kinship system due to the rapid globalization which promotes nuclear families, rather than the extended communal system where one expected members to be each other’s keeper. Of course this has been a major shared belief, and philosophy of Africans, that one person’s down fall is a collective downfall, but just as other values seem to be of less importance in our fast developing nations, this value system too is almost being neglected, hence the

need to call attention to it. It is not gainsaying the fact that we cannot overlook the fact that the care and concern that blood members have toward one another as evident in the proverb, “when elders are in the market, a child’s head is not allowed to droop” will need to undergo some changes in the recent global dispensation due to what transpires around us daily; the anger parents unleash on teachers for disciplining their wards, the fear neighbours have now in attempting to add a voice to the discussions of another family, and even the fear of doing good to a neighbor now and being tagged as nosy and sycophantic points valiantly to this prophecy.

A research by Nanbigne on the Changing Discourse on Care Among the Dagaare of Northern Ghana attests to the fact that changes in care among members of the Dagaare kinship group is present in most of their daily discourse such as proverbs, conversations, folktales and songs. The proverb, “*Saazu kuuri la lere; nie zaa man porin la u zu*” (‘A stone is falling from the sky; everyone covers his own head’), buttresses the decline in kin support (Nanbigne, 2008).

## 5.2 Summary of Research Findings

The research reveals that proverbs in West African drama do not only teach moral lessons, but are also a great way of mirroring the society from which the proverbs emanate. It would therefore be out of place to attempt an analysis of these proverbs without recourse to the cultures from which the proverbs are used. It is also significant to stress that the development of oral literature in Africa has advanced progressively as more researchers are engaged in various activities relating to oral literature. There is no doubt that oral literature is wide in scope and can hardly be exhausted by any one scholar. Oral literature continues to play an important role in the West Africa contexts, particular in the development of drama. This is because there are many unexplored areas of the study in African oral literature. As one scholar noted, “proverbs enshrine much



of the cultural heritage of the people, their traditions, history, wisdom and ethics. They are viable means of transmission of culture from generation to generation” (Opoku, 1997) This is equally true of the Fante and Yoruba people, hence a study of the proverbs from texts that emanate from the two cultures is very relevant and must elicit continuous interest from various scholars.

### **The Importance of analysing the significance of proverbs**

1. The main significance of proverbs in the West African drama is in relation to utterance and performance. Judging from the fact that proverbs are utterances that include two agents, a speaker and an audience, be it an individual or a group of listeners. Drama is performance, thus the use of proverbs enhances the performance in drama and makes it more enthralling to keep the interest of the audience aroused. This explains why the use of proverbs in West African drama is very significant.
2. Proverbs aid easy recollection of moral principles. When children are spoken to and corrected in proverbs, they are able to remember such dense reprimands when confronted by other temptations similar to the particular instance when they were corrected. Since one of the key functions of drama is to educate and imbibe moral principles into the reader, it is very relevant to inculcate proverbs in the reading and study of drama.
3. Each community cherishes its body of proverbs and other wise sayings which serve as pointers to how rich its language is;
4. In education, proverbs help students and other learners to not only pick aspects of language like pronunciation, spelling, and writing, but also the most important parts of speech making; the art aspect of speaking to be able to express oneself well be convincing enough to have your listeners buy your thoughts.

5. Studying proverbs from different parts of the world helps to foster a more global education, helping learners to develop positive attitude towards other people's culture and ways of life.
6. A user of proverbs is regarded as knowledgeable, and wise in the traditional sense since only those who can combine proverbs with ordinary speech are those who command respect in the traditional societies of old;
7. The use of proverbs in learning new languages facilitates the acquisition of new vocabularies and phrases that will last a lifetime on the minds of the learners of every new language.
8. Proverbs largely dominate the language of the Chief's Court; to be there, you must learn how to use them and speak as is done in that discourse community;
9. Appellations enunciated through traditional "talking drums" and interpreted by only a few who understand the language of the drums gives those who are able to interpret them a certain level of honor and prestige to the individual interpreter of drum language;
10. The use of proverbs in an Indicator of a good and reliable memory because one needs to be able to remember them exactly when he needs them.
11. Generational differences: only those who spent time with the "old" ones in society could the proverbs, their interpretations and how to use them; an indication that the user has humbled himself to be taught by the elders and has not been corrupted by the light language of the modern speakers.

### **The Influence of cultural context in the use of proverbs**

Proverbs are employed by African writers to express cultural identity, reinforce traditional values, and convey moral lessons. The proverbs also serve as literary devices that showcase the rich tapestry of African culture and its intricate relationship with language. (Okumba, 1994)

It is very interesting to note the use of images and symbolisms that reflect the culture and depict the unique differences between the culture of the Fante from which Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* emanates against that of Peace by Pieces and Kongi's Harvest. It would be discovered for instance, the fishing images found in the proverbs used in *Anowa* and the presence of farming imagery and symbolism in Peace by Pieces, and Kongi's Harvest. "In proverbs like hundreds of termites can do nothing to a stone" (Owonibi, 2016). This proverb shows the use of termites, and stones as images, reflexive of the Yoruba farming communities. In "the boldest hunter knows when the gun must be unspiked", we see the reflexivity of proverbs in the use of the hunter, and gun, as words peculiar to farming areas where hunting is also part of their daily activities in addition to their farming. Juxtaposing that to the fishing images portrayed in *Anowa*, we observe the presence of images like 'dry nets', 'fishing boats' and others. Similarly, we see proverbs that portray the two cultures as patriarchal. In a proverb like "the dumbest man is still better than a woman" (Aidoo, 1970) and "it may take a long time but the stammerer will mention his father's name". The proverbs give prominence to the male, while relegating the woman to a second class citizen which just mirrors the dominance of male chauvinism in the two cultures.

Proverbs play a significant role in shaping gender roles in African literature. Proverbs are also often employed to reinforce gender stereotypes and societal expectations. Some African writers subvert these gendered proverbs to challenge and reshape prevailing notions of gender inequality. Agbemabiese, 2002.

Olubunmi examines cross-cultural perspectives in an ethno-methodological study of Yoruba proverbs. He emphasizes the impact of colonialism and globalization on the evolution of African proverbs in literary works and also explores how African writers incorporate proverbs from different cultures to create a hybrid discourse that reflects both local and global perspectives.

This cross culturality is also found in the similarities between some of the proverbs like “a child who knows how to wash his hands dines with the elders” as used in *Anowa*, and *Peace by Pieces*.

In his article on the influence of proverbs in resolving conflicts in Yoruba land, Agbaje investigates the influence of proverbs in African conflict resolution. The author argues that proverbs help instill moral values, promote social cohesion, and preserve cultural heritage among African children. He shows how the elders utilize proverbs as educational tools to teach important life lessons and cultural norms, contributing to the formation of young minds and the continuity of African cultural practices.

Conclusively, the use of proverbs profoundly mirrors the culture from which the proverbs in African literature are used. From their role as cultural signifiers to their impact on gender roles and children's literature, proverbs offer a window into the riches of the African cultural heritage. Moreover, even in the face of globalization, proverbs continue to evolve and remain relevant, enabling African writers to navigate the

intersectionality of cultural identities. It is through these proverbs that African literature showcases the resilience, diversity, and interconnectedness of African societies.

### **The moral implications in the use of proverbs**

On Religion and Morality in the African cultural system, the relationship is expressed in proverbs. In fact, proverbs have helped cultures to maintain, uphold, and pass on Religion and morals to generations. This draws our attention to the origin of morals and societal norms; the demands and sanctions. The debate continues unabated on whether or not morality depends on human experience, religion, or common sense. Gyekye (1996) who is of the view that morality depends on human experience argues that morality is intrinsically social, arising out of the relationship between individuals...it would be more correct to say that African moral values derive from the experiences of the people living together, or in trying to evolve a common and harmonious social life... the moral values of the African people have a social and humanistic basis rather than a religious basis. Although religion cannot be completely banished from the domain of moral practice, the moral values of the African society did not derive directly from religion.

Another school of thought argues that, morality is the product of religion. Scholars in this area include Opoku (1978), and Quarcoopome (1987). They maintain the view that “In West African Traditional Religion, morality is the fruit of religion. The social and moral ordinances are the injunctions of God, who Himself had instituted them...the Yoruba say of a criminal whom misfortune has overtaken that, he is under the lashes of Oludumare. God himself has punished him for breaking His moral laws...the traditional belief that God created the world and man, means society came into being by God’s ordinance. Thus religion has a bearing on every institution. West Africans further strongly hold a belief that moral values are not invented by human

beings, but are the offspring of religion because God has put his law into man and it is this which we refer to as conscience. Thus man is expected to use his conscience to behave morally upright.

There is another group of scholars which views morality as a function of common sense. According to Geertz (1983), “common sense is more than just using eyes and ears, but is keeping them open, using them judiciously, intelligently, perceptively, or trying to, and being capable of coping with everyday problems in an everyday way with some effectiveness.”

To survive, man must adapt himself to his environment, and by that he must apply this common sense so much to be able to fully survive. This is the position of another school that emphasizes the role of common sense as the basis of morality. According to them, experience soon teaches man what could be done and what must be avoided. There is however, a loophole in this school as it appears to be a try and error method of knowing what is moral and what is not. In their perspective, an accumulation of these experiences over a long period of time will result in a very strong sense of what becomes popularly known as right and wrong. What, however, is wrong with this direction of thought is that one may not have all the luxury of life time for this try and error kind of life. It might be too late to learn one’s lessons. Would it not have been better to rather learn from what others had experienced and passed down as right or wrong?

Conclusively from these discussions, it has been undoubtedly revealed by this research that proverbs are an indispensable part of the African life, and culture since they have what it takes to preserve the cultural heritage, and moral sanity of any groups of people, and that if societies and elders of various cultures gave more attention to proverbs rather than allowing them to go obsolete as many young people are making

them become, the complaints and worries of the elderly on the constantly declining moral standards would cease, and societal cohesions would gradually gain their lustre again in our lives.

### **5.3 Final Conclusion on the Study**

It has been established that proverbs form a part of what is called verbal arts *or* oral literature as used in Drama, Poetry, and Prose. Proverbs are typically a form of unwritten communication, although in modern scholarship, many writers have now documented so many volumes of proverbs as used across the African continent and beyond. Stylistically, proverbs are set apart from regular speech, adopting their own grammatical structure as has been explored during the literature review, usually, they are metaphorical or symbolic in nature and adopt a certain well-known format of comparison. Many speakers have used proverbs to impart knowledge, offer advice, teach or reinforce morals, make an argument, relieve interpersonal tensions, aid in understanding, or to console or inspire others, which still stand tall as some of the significance of proverbs-use in West African drama.

According to (Arewa and Dundes 1964), proverbs derive most of their significance “from the cultural past whose voice speaks truth in traditional terms.” Thus a proverb may serve as an effective impersonal vehicle for personal communication Agbemabiese (2002). For example, if parents use proverbs in straightening or correcting their child, they outsource this responsibility and transfer the power onto an anonymous or impersonal voice of authority from the past. Indeed, part of the rhetorical power of the proverb comes from its inherent authoritativeness as the collected wisdom of “the elders” alongside a desire to pass this knowledge down to non-elders (Yankah 1989).

Whereas other verbal arts like jokes or rhymes may be deliberately taught to younger people, proverbs are not just taught to children by repetition. People weave them into daily speech acts like stories or instructions given by parents or the elderly in society, and they eventually find their way into everyday conversation of people who seek to use them. However, it is also noteworthy that proverbs may also be tied to very specific places, or said through surrogate language forms like saying “the monkey says my eyes are my gods”. In many cases too even speakers of the same language in different dialects from different villages, towns, cities, or countries, may not recognize or interpret proverbs in the same way. This is the reason it is important to interpret proverbs together with a proper understanding of the culture from which they were used in each text. According to (Lubis 2018). Some proverbs may share similar meanings across cultures and languages, although translating them can be a challenge. A typical example being this proverb that says a child who knows how to wash his hands dines with kings. The Ewes, Akans, and Igbos all lay claim to this proverb, but it is just another proof of Lubis’ position.

Because proverbs communicate to the world the shared experiences or lessons of different people, they have full potential to tell us a great deal about the culture in which they are used (Smith 1920). A major reason they must not be interpreted without recourse to the cultures within which they are used.

From the afore discussions, it has been concretely established that proverbs are an indispensable part of the African life, and culture. Proverbs have what it takes to preserve the cultural heritage, and moral sanity of any groups of people. It is thus recommended, that writers explore and add up more proverbs to their works. Proverbs can also be created by situations and events in everyday lives. One needs not stick himself to using the old established proverbs, new ones could be created with the



application of the features and forms of proverbs as have been discussed extensively in this work.

It is further recommended, judging from the literary value and weight that proverbs carry in their respective African languages, writers do their best to maintain a good number of the proverbs in their original native languages, with translations of such as footnotes to help non speakers of such African languages to also better appreciate the proverbs used. Also, culture is very important to the African people, hence as a unique marker of each tribe, the proverbs need be widely taught, and children also encouraged to use proverbs even though it has over the years been regarded as adult language. I strongly recommend that a government policy on the use of proverbs be enacted for it to be added to the curriculum of schools. This will go a long way to preserve the language and culture of the people.

#### **5.4 Recommendation for Future Research**

Proverbs are a simple way of expressing well-known and relatable truths and lessons or adages based on common sense or experience. They may not always be true, but can be applicable to specific situations and experiences.

All proverbs are wise sayings, but not all wise sayings are proverbs. And they are usually considered to be full of known and acceptable ancestral wisdom, passed down from one generation to another generation until they finally form a part of a society's oral tradition. The research has discussed more of what West African drama has done to the body of knowledge called paremiology, the study of proverbs and its significance to the African societies.

Finally, later researchers may want to go into researching proverbs with an interdisciplinary approach, suggestively of linguistics and literature, exploring code switching in the use of proverbs in West African drama or any other of the three genres of literature.



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## APPENDIX A

### List of all proverbs

1. Fowl that perched on a rope, neither the rope nor the fowl shall know peace
2. (Owonibi, 2016 p. iii)
3. A man that swallows pestle, he certainly sleeps upright (Owonibi, 2016 p. ix)
4. No hen will hatch a broken egg (Owonibi, 2016 p. ix)
5. Their past lacks pepper, present lacks oil. And their future lacks salts. Such is a people who do not know themselves. Owonibi, 2016 p.x  
Proverb no.5: The white ant's attempt to make a hill out of the rock will certainly be an exercise in futility (Owonibi, 2016 p.13.)
6. Walls have ears. (Owonibi, 2016 p.3)
7. An old man running in the forest must be after something, else something is after him (Owonibi, 2016 p.10.)
8. The only child must not wander at the verge of the evil grove (Owonibi, 2016 p.10.)
9. Cows give more milk in a happy environment (Owonibi, 2016 p.12)
10. The only groundnut must not fall on a rock (Owonibi, 2016 p.10).
11. Why doesn't the egg eater think of the pain it costs the hen? Owonibi, 2016 p.12
12. 12.We do not treat ringworm at the expense of leprosy (Owonibi, 2016 p.14)
13. On a long journey, even a straw is heavy (Owonibi, 2016 p. 18.)
14. Teeth need not to be numerous before they bite (Owonibi, 2016 p. 22.)
15. No one plays with fire and gets away with it. Owonibi, 2016 P.22
16. The playing teeth of a dog will soon turn to a biting instrument (Owonibi, 2016 p. 24)
17. He who does not speak, does not run the risk of having his pipe out. Owonibi, 2016 p25.
18. If a monkey dies of stomach ache, apes do not rejoice. (Owonibi, 2016 p.37.)
19. It is because of the cap that we have the head. Owonibi, 2016, p.27
20. A crown is a burden when the king visits his favourite's chamber. Soyinka, 2014 p.5
21. When the king's wrapper falls off in audience, wise men know he wants to be left alone (Soyinka, 2014 p. 5).

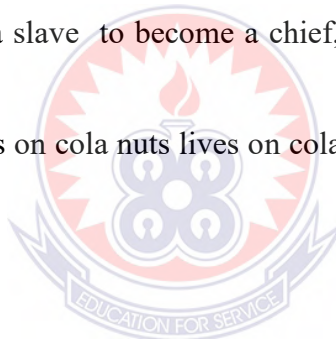
22. A mindless clown dispenses thanks as a fowl scatters meal, not caring where it falls (Soyinka, 2014 p. 5)
23. The yam that belongs to a king should not be pounded in a small mortar (Soyinka, 2014 p.5)
24. Only a foolish child lets a father prostrate to him (Soyinka, 2014 p. 5)
25. The bridegroom does not strain his neck to see a bride, anyway bound for his bed chamber Soyinka, 2014 p.74 see also Owonibi 2016 p.91 “a person preparing to receive his bride does not peep over the wall to see her”
26. The child is nothing; it is only the glory of his forebears that the world sees and tolerates in him Soyinka, 2014 p.6
27. If the baobab shakes her head in anger, what chances has the rodent when an earring falls and hits the head with thunder (Soyinka, 2014 p.6)
28. A father employs only a small stick on his child, he doesn't call in the policemen to take him to gaol (Soyinka, 2014 p.7)
29. The royal python may be good at hissing, but it seems the scorpions tail is fire (Soyinka, 2014 p.9)
30. The pot that will eat fat, its bottom must be scorched (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)
31. The squirrel that will long crack nuts, its footpad must be sore (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)
32. The sweetest wine flows down the tapper's shattered shins (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)
33. The tree of life is sprung from broken peat (Soyinka, 2014 p.1, hemlock)
34. A king does not become a menial just because he puts down his crown to eat (Soyinka, 2014 p.2)
35. A shilling's vegetable must appease a half penny spice Soyinka, 2014 p.4
36. The nude shanks of a king is not a sight for children (Soyinka, 2014 p.4)
37. When an Oba stops the procession and squats on the wayside, it's on an urgent matter (Soyinka, 2014 p.4)
38. The tunnel passes through the hill's belly but we cry no defilement Soyinka, 2014 p.9
39. Whatever fly cuts a careless caper around the scent of sacrifice, will worship down the spider's throat (Soyinka, 2014 p.60)
40. If eyes didn't see, heart wouldn't grieve. (Owonibi, 2016 p. 27) uttered by Akogun.
41. If fools didn't go to the market bad ware wouldn't be sold. Owonibi, 2016 p27

42. As provocative words draw out sword from scabbard, so do soft words draw out kola nut from pocket. Owonibi, 2016 p28
43. Blood is thicker than water. Owonibi, 2016 p32
44. A good horse never stumbles. Owonibi, 2016 p32
45. The insect that feeds on leaves lives on leaves. Owonibi, 2016 p.35.
46. It may take a long time, a stammerer will pronounce father in the end. Owonibi, 2016 p36
47. Champions are not raised on the bed of roses nor stars made on the platters of gold. Owonibi, 2016 p41
48. The price of peace is war. Owonibi, 2016 p47
49. For a long stick not to go through your eyes you must avoid it from a distance. Owonibi, 2016 p56
50. A dog that shows its teeth occasionally will bite eventually. Owonibi, 2016 p57
51. If you do not step on a dry palm branch it will not make a noise. Owonibi, 2016 p57
52. Prostrating to a dwarf doesn't mean you are not the taller. Owonibi, 2016 p58 ref Soyinka 2014 p.2 a king does not become a menial....
53. A pregnant woman cannot lose a virginity again. Owonibi, 2016 p58
54. The pot that boils over doesn't know that it is only dirtying itself. (Owonibi, 2016 p.59) is
55. If you refuse to shake off the ant while it is on your legs, what would you do when it enters your pant? (Owonibi, 2016 p.59)
56. A coward that fears death will not possess his father's throne, (Owonibi, 2016 p. 59)
57. Tooth is sharper than knife. Owonibi, 2016 p60
58. Hundreds of termites can do but nothing to a stone Owonibi, 2016 p63
59. When elders are in the market, a child's head is not allowed to droop. Owonibi, 2016 p59
60. A secret known to two is only safe if one of them dies. (Owonibi, 2016 p. 68)
61. A twig that attempts to barricade elephant will surely go away with him. (Owonibi , 2016 p.72)
62. A kid who knows how to wash his hand will dine with the elders (Owonibi 2016 p.76)
63. A pot mustn't be rolled like a mortar. Owonibi, 2016 p77

64. Cocoa pod is never to be plucked like okra (Owonibi, 2016 p.77)
65. Any river that forgets its source will definitely dry. (Owonibi 2016 P.78)
66. And the head of an elephant is not a kid's load. (Owonibi 2016 P.79)
67. It is better to be a butterfly that soars like an eagle and swoops like a hawk than be a big ostrich without awe (Owonibi, 2016 p.82.)
68. Not all palm trees can be climbed by a loop (Owonibi, 2016 p. 87)
69. Not all rivers can be crossed by a canoe (Owonibi, 2016 p.87)
70. If your tree is firm why should it fear the storm? (Owonibi, 2016 p.87)
71. The hen never challenges the fox (Owonibi, 2016 p.88)
72. Any insect that dances on river has its drummer under the water. (Owonibi, 2016 P.88)
73. Whoever surrenders his head to be used to crack the coconut will have a taste of it (Owonibi, 2016 p.92)
74. The yam that will burn, will burn, boiled or roasted. Aidoo, 1970 p.33
75. A man of name is never judged by his beginning (Aidoo, 1970 p.41)
76. The infant which tries its milk teeth on every bone and stone grows up with nothing to eat dried meat with (Aidoo, 1970 p.41)
77. The man who hates you does not care if you wait in the sun for your clothes to dry before you can go and join the dance (Aidoo, 1970 p.46)
78. However good the back of your hand is for licking, it can never be as good as your palm. Aidoo, 1970 p.49
79. A crab never fathers a bird (Aidoo, 1970 p.53)
80. One stops wearing a hat only when the head had fallen off (Aidoo, 1970 p.57)
81. Little babies only cry for food when they are hungry, but do not instruct their elders Aidoo, 1970 p.64
82. The sourest yam is better than the sweetest guava Aidoo, 1970 p64
83. 83.The dumbest man is better than a woman Aidoo, 1970 p64
84. One never stops wearing a hat on a head which still stands on its neck Aidoo. 1970 p.79 Anowa to Kofi Ako, her husband.
85. The strings of orphan beads might look better on the wrist of the leopard but it is the lion that has lost its mother Aidoo, 1970 p76. Ref Soyinka, 2014 p64 'only a phony drapes himself in deeper indigo than the son....'
86. The best way to sharpen a knife is not to whet one side of it only. Aidoo, 1970 p40

87. When dog started roaming the streets, monkey was still in the forest Owonibi, 2016 p57
88. The eyes of divination never close, but whoever boasts, Ifa greets him with open lips Owonibi, 2016 p64
89. When the tree swells its pot, the rotten bark is spurned Soyinka, 2014 p.2
90. When men blow their noses, it is the mucus that is snorted out. Soyinka, 2014 p.2
91. The yam that belongs to a king should not be pounded in small mortars Soyinka, 2014 p.2 repeated p.57: don't pound the king's yam in a small mortar
92. Small as spice may be, it is not swallowed whole. Soyinka, 2014 p.2
93. The Jackal's call is not heard when the father speaks Soyinka, 2014 p3
94. The dandy's wardrobe may be as lavish as the dealer in brocades, but it can never match an elder's rags. Soyinka, 2014 p9
95. Men stay where their hunger is stilled Aidoo, 1970 p.25
96. The boldest hunter knows when the gun must be unspiked Soyinka, 2014 p.58
97. When the squirrel seeks sanctuary in the Iroko tree, the hunter's chase ends. Soyinka, 2014 p.58
98. The voice of the king is the voice of the dawn pigeon that summons men from their drowsy mats Soyinka, 2014 p58
99. If the elephant does not wearily thread, it will step on a thorn Soyinka, 2014 p.59
100. A child that tells the proverbs of his father will have to pay his father's debt Owonibi, 2016 p.88
101. An empty sack can never stand erect Owonibi, 2016 p. 91
102. Toads like water but not when it's boiling. Owonibi, 2016 p.92
103. Dead dogs never bark Owonibi, 2016 p.87
104. Dead rams never fight Owonibi, 2016 p.87
105. Even if the ass stands on his hind legs, he can never be as tall as a camel Owonibi, 2016 p.81
106. A parrot may mimic Nightingale and monkey, apes the gorilla but it doesn't make them same. Owonibi, 2016 p. 84
107. The hunter doesn't care if the monkeys sulk Owonibi, 2016 p.85
108. Whoever the gods love dies young Owonibi, 2016 p. 82
109. The insect that feeds on cola nuts lives on cola nut tree Owonibi, 2016 p.66 Aworo the diviner
110. One must first get to the forest before finding the elephant Owonibi, 2016 p.82

111. It is unwise to plant guinea corn in the presence of guinea fowls. Owonibi, 2016 p.60 Aworo the diviner to other chiefs
112. When a woman carries load, the weight is on her husband Owonibi, 2016 p. 69
113. Dogs take delight in feeding on rabbit's kids, yet, she breastfeeds her puppies Owonibi, 2016 p. 70
114. Cutting a dog's tail in a single slash is more merciful than bits Owonibi, 2016 p. 75
115. When the hands of a stupid man is stuffed with gold dust, that is when he decides to walk with his palm. Owonibi, 2016 p.58 Akogun to Komukolo the king
116. It is the scarcity of men that allows dogs to be humanized Owonibi, 2016 p. 58
117. When the hand of a stupid man is filled with gold dust, that's when he decides to walk with his palm Owonibi, 2016 p. 58
118. It is unwise to plant a guinea corn in the presence of a guinea fowl Owonibi, 2016 p. 60
119. If the elders allow a slave to become a chief, the entire town suffers Owonibi, 2016 p. 62
120. The insect that feeds on cola nuts lives on cola nut trees Owonibi, 2016 p.66 by Aworo the diviner





## APPENDIX B

### THEMATIC GROUPING

#### 1. Caution and Admonishing

Proverb no. 6: Walls have ears. (Owonibi, 2016 p.3)

Proverb no.8: The only child must not wander at the verge of the evil grove (Owonibi, 2016 p.10.)

Proverb no.10: The only groundnut must not fall on a rock (Owonibi, 2016 p.10).

Proverb no.11: Why doesn't the egg eater think of the pain it costs the hen? Owonibi, 2016 p.12

Proverb no.12: We do not treat ringworm at the expense of leprosy (Owonibi, 2016 p.14)

Proverb no.14: Teeth need not to be numerous before they bite (Owonibi, 2016 p. 22.)

Proverb no.17: He who does not speak, does not run the risk of having his pipe out. Owonibi, 2016 p.25.

Proverb no.18: If a monkey dies of stomach ache, apes do not rejoice. (Owonibi, 2016 p.37.)

Proverb no.28: A father employs only a small stick on his child, he doesn't call in the policemen to take him to gaol (Soyinka, 2014 p.7)

Proverb no.41: If fools didn't go to the market bad ware wouldn't be sold. Owonibi, 2016 p.27

Proverb no.43: Blood is thicker than water. Owonibi, 2016 p.32

Proverb no.44: A good horse never stumbles. Owonibi, 2016 p.32

Proverb no.45: The insect that feeds on leaves lives on leaves. Owonibi, 2016 p.35.

Proverb no.49: For a long stick not to go through your eyes you must avoid it from a distance. Owonibi, 2016 p.56

Proverb no.50: A dog that shows its teeth occasionally will bite eventually. Owonibi, 2016 p.57

Proverb no.51: If you do not step on a dry palm branch it will not make a noise. Owonibi, 2016 p.57

Proverb no.60: A secret known to two is only safe if one of them dies. (Owonibi, 2016 p. 68)

Proverb no.63: A pot mustn't be rolled like a mortar. Owonibi, 2016 p.77



Proverb no.64: Cocoa pod is never to be plucked like okra (Owonibi, 2016 p.77)

Proverb no.76: The infant which tries its milk teeth on every bone and stone grows up with nothing to eat dried meat with (Aidoo, 1970 p.41)

Proverb no.80: One stops wearing a hat only when the head had fallen off (Aidoo, 1970 p.57)

Proverb no.85: The strings of orphan beads might look better on the wrist of the leopard but it is the lion that has lost its mother Aidoo, 1970 p76. Ref Soyinka, 2014 p64 ‘only a phony drapes himself in deeper indigo than the son....’

Proverb no. 86: the best way to sharpen a knife is not to whet one side of it only. Aidoo, 1970 p40

Proverb no.87: when dog started roaming the streets, monkey was still in the forest Owonibi, 2016 p57

Proverb no.88: The eyes of divination never close, but whoever boasts, Ifa greets him with open lips Owonibi, 2016 p64

Proverb no.94: The dandy’s wardrobe may be as lavish as the dealer in brocades, but it can never

Proverb no.99: If the elephant does not wearily thread, it will step on a thorn Soyinka, 2014 p.59

Proverb no.109: the insect that feeds on cola nuts lives on cola nut tree Owonibi, 2016 p.66 Aworo the diviner

Proverb no.110: One must first get to the forest before finding the elephant Owonibi, 2016 p.82

Proverb no.111: it is unwise to plant guinea corn in the presence of guinea fowls. Owonibi, 2016 p.60 Aworo the diviner to other chiefs

Proverb no.118: It is unwise to plant a guinea corn in the presence of a guinea fowl Owonibi, 2016 p. 60

## **2. Authority and Responsibility**

Proverb no. 81: Little babies only cry for food when they are hungry, but do not instruct their elders Aidoo, 1970 p.64

Proverb no.91: The yam that belongs to a king should not be pounded in small mortars  
Soyinka,2014

Proverb no.92: Small as spice may be, it is not swallowed whole. Soyinka, 2014 p.2

Proverb no.108: Whoever the gods love dies young Owonibi, 2016 p. 82

Proverb no.112: When a woman carries load, the weight is on her husband Owonibi,  
2016 p. 69

Proverb no.119: If the elders allow a slave to become a chief, the entire town suffers  
Owonibi, 2016 p. 62

Proverb no.20: A crown is a burden when the king visits his favourite's chamber.  
Soyinka, 2014 p.5

Proverb no.37: When an Oba stops the procession and squats on the wayside, it's on an  
urgent matter (Soyinka, 2014 p.4)

Proverb no.79: A crab never fathers a bird (Aidoo, 1970 p.53)

### **3. Contention and Violence**

Proverb no. 1: Fowl that perched on a rope, neither the rope nor the fowl shall know  
peace (Owonibi, 2016 p. iii)

Proverb no.16: The playing teeth of a dog will soon turn to a biting instrument  
(Owonibi, 2016 p. 24)

Proverb no.18: If a monkey dies of stomach ache, apes do not rejoice. (Owonibi, 2016  
p.37.)

Proverb no. 27. If the baobab shakes her head in anger, what chances has the rodent  
when an ear-ring falls and hits the head with thunder (Soyinka, 2014 p.6)

Proverb no.29: The royal python may be good at hissing, but it seems the scorpions tail  
is fire (Soyinka, 2014 p.9)

Proverb no.42 As provocative words draw out sword from scabbard, so do soft words  
draw out kola nut from pocket. Owonibi, 2016 p28

Proverb no.48: The price of peace is war. Owonibi, 2016 p47

Proverb no.57: Tooth is sharper than knife. Owonibi, 2016 p60

Proverb no.72: Any insect that dances on river has its drummer under the water. (Owonibi, 2016 P.88)

Proverb no.89 When the tree swells its pot, the rotten bark is spurned Soyinka, 2014 p.2

Proverb no.90: When men blow their noses, it is the mucus that is snorted out. Soyinka, 2014 p.2

Proverb no.114: Cutting a dog's tail in a single slash is more merciful than bits Owonibi, 2016 p. 75

#### **4. Arrogance**

Proverb no. 2: A man that swallows pestle, he certainly sleeps upright (Owonibi, 2016 p. ix)

Proverb no.15: No one plays with fire and gets away with it. Owonibi, 2016 P.22

Proverb no.24: Only a foolish child lets a father prostrate to him (Soyinka, 2014 p. 5)

Proverb no.53: A pregnant woman cannot lose a virginity again. Owonibi, 2016 p58

Proverb no.56: A coward that fears death will not possess his father's throne, (Owonibi, 2016 p. 59)

Proverb no.61: A twig that attempts to barricade elephant will surely go away with him. (Owonibi, 2016 p.72)

Proverb no.71: The hen never challenges the fox (Owonibi, 2016 p.88)

#### **5. Perseverance and Determination**

Proverb no.3: No hen will hatch a broken egg (Owonibi, 2016 p. ix)

Proverb no.13: On a long journey, even a straw is heavy (Owonibi, 2016 p. 18.)

Proverb no.19: It is because of the cap that we have the head. Owonibi, 2016, p.27

Proverb no.30: The pot that will eat fat, its bottom must be scorched (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)

Proverb no.31: The squirrel that will long crack nuts, its footpad must be sore (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)

Proverb no.32: The sweetest wine flows down the tapper's shattered shins (Soyinka, 2014 p.1)

Proverb no.33: The tree of life is sprung from broken peat (Soyinka, 2014 p.1, hemlock)

Proverb no.46: It may take a long time, a stammerer will pronounce father in the end. Owonibi, 2016 p36

Proverb no.47: Champions are not raised on the bed of roses nor stars made on the platters of gold. Owonibi, 2016 p41

Proverb no. 54: The pot that boils over doesn't know that it is only dirtying itself. (Owonibi, 2016 p.59) is

Proverb no. 55: If you refuse to shake off the ant while it is on your legs, what would you do when it enters your pant? (Owonibi, 2016 p.59)

Proverb no. 59: When elders are in the market, a child's head is not allowed to droop. Owonibi, 2016 p59

Proverb no.66: And the head of an elephant is not a kid's load. (Owonibi 2016 P.79)

Proverb no.68: Not all palm trees can be climbed by a loop (Owonibi, 2016 p. 87)

Proverb no.69: Not all rivers can be crossed by a canoe (Owonibi, 2016 p.87)

Proverb no.70: If your tree is firm why should it fear the storm? (Owonibi, 2016 p.87)

Proverb no.73: Whoever surrenders his head to be used to crack the coconut will have a taste of it (Owonibi, 2016 p.92)

Proverb no.84: One never stops wearing a hat on a head which still stands on its neck Aidoo. 1970 p.79 Anowa to Kofi Ako, her husband.

Proverb no.96: The boldest hunter knows when the gun must be unspiked Soyinka, 2014 p.58

Proverb no.97: When the squirrel seeks sanctuary in the Iroko tree, the hunter's chase ends. Soyinka, 2014 p.58

## **6. Despondency and Hopelessness**

Proverb no.4: Their past lacks pepper, present lacks oil. And their future lacks salts. Such is a people who do not know themselves. Owonibi, 2016 p.x

Proverb no.7: An old man running in the forest must be after something, else something is after him (Owonibi, 2016 p.10.)

Proverb no.25: The bridegroom does not strain his neck to see a bride, anyway bound for his bed chamber Soyinka, 2014 p.74 see also Owonibi 2016 p.91 “a person preparing to receive his bride does not peep over the wall to see her”

Proverb no.26: The child is nothing; it is only the glory of his forebears that the world sees and tolerates in him Soyinka, 2014 p.6

Proverb no.40: If eyes didn't see, heart wouldn't grieve. (Owonibi, 2016 p. 27) uttered by Akogun.

Proverb no.58: Hundreds of termites can do but nothing to a stone Owonibi, 2016 p63

Proverb no.74: The yam that will burn, will burn, boiled or roasted. Aidoo, 1970 p.33

Proverb no.82: The sourest yam is better than the sweetest guava Aidoo, 1970 p64

Proverb no.83: The dumbest man is better than a woman Aidoo, 1970 p64

Proverb no.101: An empty sack can never stand erect Owonibi, 2016 p. 91

Proverb no.102: 102. Toads like water but not when it's boiling. Owonibi, 2016 p.92

Proverb no.103: Dead dogs never bark Owonibi, 2016 p.87

Proverb no.104: Dead rams never fight Owonibi, 2016 p.87

## **7. Prosperity and Fecundity**

Proverb no. 9: Cows give more milk in a happy environment (Owonibi, 2016 p.12)

Proverb no.67: It is better to be a butterfly that soars like an eagle and swoops like a hawk than be a big ostrich without awe (Owonibi, 2016 p.82.)

Proverb no.75: A man of name is never judged by his beginning (Aidoo, 1970 p.41)

## **8. Idiosyncrasy and weakness**

Proverb no. 21: When the king's wrapper falls off in audience, wise men know he wants to be left alone (Soyinka, 2014 p. 5).

Proverb no.34: A king does not become a menial just because he puts down his crown to eat (Soyinka, 2014 p.2)

Proverb no.36: The nude shanks of a king is not a sight for children (Soyinka, 2014 p.4)

Proverb no.100: A child that tells the proverbs of his father will have to pay his father's debt Owonibi, 2016 p.88

Proverb no.105: Even if the ass stands on his hind legs, he can never be as tall as a camel Owonibi, 2016 p.81

Proverb no.106: A parrot may mimic Nightingale and monkey, apes the gorilla but it doesn't make them same. Owonibi, 2016 p. 84

## **9. Honour and Respect**

Proverb no. 22: A mindless clown dispenses thanks as a fowl scatters meal, not caring where it falls (Soyinka, 2014 p. 5)

Proverb no.23: The yam that belongs to a king should not be pounded in a small mortar (Soyinka, 2014 p.5)

Proverb no.26: The child is nothing; it is only the glory of his forebears that the world sees and tolerates in him Soyinka, 2014 p.6

Proverb no.35: A shilling's vegetable must appease a half penny spice Soyinka, 2014 p.4

Proverb no.52: Prostrating to a dwarf doesn't mean you are not the taller. Owonibi, 2016 p58 ref Soyinka 2014 p.2 a king does not become a menial....

Proverb no.62: A kid who knows how to wash his hand will dine with the elders (Owonibi 2016 p.76)

Proverb no.65: Any river that forgets its source will definitely dry. (Owonibi 2016 P.78)

Proverb no.78: However good the back of your hand is for licking, it can never be as good as your palm. Aidoo, 1970 p.49

Proverb no.93: The Jackal's call is not heard when the father speaks Soyinka, 2014 p3

Proverb no. 95: Men stay where their hunger is stilled Aidoo, 1970 p.25

Proverb no.98: The voice of the king is the voice of the dawn pigeon that summons men from their drowsy mats Soyinka, 2014 p58

Proverb no.120: The insect that feeds on cola nuts lives on cola nut trees Owonibi, 2016 p.66 by Aworo the diviner

### **10. persecution and injustice**

Proverb no. 38: The tunnel passes through the hill's belly but we cry no defilement Soyinka, 2014 p.9

Proverb no.77: The man who hates you does not care if you wait in the sun for your clothes to dry before you can go and join the dance (Aidoo, 1970 p.46)

Proverb no.107: The hunter doesn't care if the monkeys sulk Owonibi, 2016 p.85

Proverb no.113: Dogs take delight in feeding on rabbit's kids, yet, she breastfeeds her puppies Owonibi, 2016 p. 70.

