CONTEXTS AND FUNCTIONS OF PROVERBS IN SELECTED PLAYS OF OLA ROTIMI

BY

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study was carried out by **Mr. Simeon Olufunso SONDE** in the Department of English, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, under my supervision.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the Almighty God, for His favour and blessing over me; and to my parents – **Late Chief Nathaniel O. Sonde and Late Mrs Olutayo Sonde --** through whose initial nurture and enabling environment the 'ladders' of my life and career were set.

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ABSTRACT

Proverbs describe, classify and judge a given situation with emphasis on moral/ethical recommendations. They also point to the life patterns of the society from which they are derived. Many studies have been undertaken on classification and definition of proverbs from various cultures and disciplines. Much attention has also been drawn to Ola Rotimi's proverbs from the point of view of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, but enough scholarly attention has not been given to the contexts in which the proverbs have been used to develop characters. Therefore, this study investigates the contexts in which proverbs have been used and how they have helped to develop dramatic characters in selected plays of Ola Rotimi.

Aspects of Troike's Ethnography of Communication served as the theoretical framework. Three plays of Ola Rotimi which have abundant proverbs and which exhibit thematic and stylistic similarities were purposively selected. These are *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, *Kurunmi*, and *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. One hundred and fifty-six proverbs were identified and selected from the three texts. The proverbs were subjected to content analysis and percentages.

Proverbs in the selected plays of Ola Rotimi are used in psychological and socio-cultural contexts. The psychological contexts are characterised by philosophical, religious and crisis-induced proverbs while the socio-cultural contexts are marked by political, moral/ethical and ideological proverbs. Philosophical proverbs are peculiar to major characters in the three texts while minor characters use more of moral/ethical proverbs. Philosophical and crisis-induced proverbs point out the major characters' submission to fate in the face of grave socio-political challenges. Ideological proverbs point to predestination and asymmetrical relations reflected in the Yoruba social structure and gender perspectives. Moral/ethical proverbs describe minor characters' submission to the influence and manipulation of major characters over social, physical and psychosomatic conditions. In all the three texts, the major characters employ more proverbs than any of the other characters. Traditional title holders, warlords, and political leaders (major characters) employ more proverbs than women, servants and ordinary citizens (minor characters). Out of the 67 proverbs in *The Gods Are not to Blame*, 38 (56.7%) are cited by Odewale, the king of Kutuje land. Kurunmi cites 36 (53.7%) out of the 67 proverbs used in *Kurunmi*, while Lejoka Brown alone cites 10 (45.5%) out of the 22 proverbs used in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. The predominant speech acts of proverbs include promising, acknowledging (in socio-cultural contexts); denying, criticising and advising (in psychological contexts), respectively performed by major characters and minor characters.

Proverbs, used in psychological and socio-cultural contexts, serve to delineate characters in the selected plays of Ola Rotimi. They, thus, add profound meanings to the texts and define their socio-cultural settings. Future studies could compare the character-development potential of proverbs as demonstrated in this study with that of other major Nigerian playwrights in their major plays.

Key words: Proverbs, Ola Rotimi, Literary characterisation, Speech acts, Sociolinguistics.
Word count: 467

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1.	*The gods*	–	*The gods are not to blame*
2.	*Our husband*	–	*Our husband has gone mad again*
3.	EOC	–	Ethnography of Communication

CHARTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Language and culture are closely related. The use of proverbs in African literature is to situate the texts, categorise and describe their characters. Scholars have made attempts to define language (Quirk, 1962, Langacker, 1967, Lyons, 1977, Owoeye, 1996, Ogunsiji, 2004a:646 and so on). Each of them predicates his definition on the instrumentality of language as human expression through speech sounds and it is socially acquired for the purpose of communication. For example, Owoeye defines language as "an expressive and interpretive system of vocal symbols to relate to others, objects and, events". Akindele and Adegbite (2002:2) describe language as, "a system of sounds or vocal symbols by which human beings communicate experience". It is a system sound which permits all people who have learned the system of a particular culture to communicate or interact. Ogunsiji (2004a:646) cites Sapir as defining language as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols". Quirk (1962:42) sees language as "a human instrument of expression through sound as released by vocal cords". Whatever the case, language is the use of written and spoken words to communicate. There is a mutual interaction between language and society, which is considered in relation to the laws, organizations, and so on, that make it possible for people to live together. Culture is the beliefs, way of life, art and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society. Language is a part of culture and it is also an instrument through which cultural practices are propagated (Jary and Jary, 1991:101, Odebunmi, 2008:1).

Gidden (2000:18) opines that culture is "the way of life of the members of a society. It includes how they dress, their patterns of work, religious ceremonies and leisure pursuits". Culture incorporates behaviour, thoughts, action, language, knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and other qualities acquired by man as a social being. UNESCO (2002) defines culture as the sets of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or social group, and that it encompasses: art, literature, lifestyles, and ways of living together, value systems,

tradition and beliefs. Among the elements of culture are beliefs, values, norms and sanctions, technology, symbols, language and tradition. The belief system is the basic ideas of a people about how to make the society operate meaningfully. The belief system is contained in the common sense of a people, their religious beliefs, folk wisdom, science and a combination of all. Values are standards and principles set by different cultures for morality in society. From the estimation of the Yor6bq in the western part of Nigeria, a cultured person is referred to as '*omol5zb7*'. Such a person must demonstrate the quality of a good citizen, that is respect elders, care for and be tender towards parents, dress responsibly, eat responsibly, show gratitude for every kind and good deed, abhor all forms of stealing and, at all times, remember the child of whom he/she is (Osho 2010:113-116). The interaction between language, culture and society is the study of the relationship between systems of communication, especially the linguistic system and the social situation in which they are used. The link between language and society is further shown in the language being a part of the society. Ogunsiji (2004b:19) opines that "language gives structure to the human society; without it, the society would be devoid of meaning, if it existed at all". Jawovski and Coupland (1997), assert any study that examines language in its social context and investigates social life through linguistic contexts is referred to as sociolinguistics. Social events determine language use just as language mirrors a social event (Stockwell 2002).

Holiness (1992: 1-2), examines the relationship between the structures of language and society and how and why people speak in various social contexts. He also discusses the different social functions of language and how social situations affect language status and attitudes. Similarly, Jaworski and Coupland (1997), widen the scope of sociolinguistics (the study of language and society) to cover disciplines such as dialectology (the study of communication), sociology of language (the study of language in relation to the society, for example multilingualism), and social psychology (the study of language and mind). They emphasize that the attempt to study synchronic/diachronic issues in language, individual and group identities through linguistic factors and the study of language discourse as an instrument of disparity, apathy, power, and oppression is within the discipline of sociolinguistics.

Language performs many functions. As an instrument of culture preservation

and transmission, language gives facts about changes that affect societal norms, habits, religious practices, fashions, education, and so on; from one generation to another. Other functions of language are to provide an effective communication system and to facilitate harmonious co-existence among human beings in any environment. Language is used in certain situations to make decisions, on daily basis, to process/share information and persuade people. Human beings use language to express their emotion. The directional function of language includes impartation of knowledge, idea, information, and instructions; while the regulatory function involves making law, passing rules, approving or disapproving of certain behaviours and putting in place behavioural control measures. Closely linked to the cultural function of language is its use as an instrument of social interaction. In any social organisation, people must relate with one another. In this communicative contract among human beings, language encourages social contacts and leaves available communicative channels open. This makes the use of certain signs and symbols, such as folklore, proverbs, slang, jargons, cultural mores, styles, jokes, and so forth, possible. Proverb is an instrument of language and culture which deals with issues that bother on the values, norms, institutions and artefacts across the gamut of the people's experiences, in the society.

The study of contexts and functions of proverbs in selected plays of Ola Rotimi is motivated by the absence of enough sociolinguistic perspectives in Ola Rotimi's criticism. As a result, a holistic cultural and sociolinguistic interpretation of his plays which is the concern of the present study will put Ola Rotimi's work in its rightful position in scholarship.

1.2 Language and Literature

The interdependence and interconnectivity of language and literature as disciplines and social "tools" is apparent (Lawal, 2003:11). Moody (1971) claims literature consists of specialized forms, selections and collections of language, either spoken or written. Wallek and Warren (1973) aver that "language is the raw material of literature as stone or bronze is of sculpture, paint of picture and sound of music". Awonuga (1984) describes literature as "an instance of language in use". Ajayi (1991) and Adeniyi (1991) are in strong support of the positive relationship between

academic performance in English and in Literature in English in a second language learning situation, irrespective of the gender and regional background.

Meaning is essential to literary studies. Langacker (1967: 84) defines language as "a device for pairing meanings and sound sequences". Meaning is the hallmark of communication which literary scholars tap to reach out to their audience. Ogunsiji (2003:127) asserts that language helps people to express pleasant, or unpleasant, political, moral, social, religious, poetic, intellectual or emotional views. As a result, what language does to communication is what it does to literature. Ogunjimi (1994:5) defines literature as "a discipline which attempts to depict man and his environment within a creative mode". The creative imagination and the use of specialized forms of communication make literature different from other disciplines. The vigorous exercise of the mind and the intellect afford the artist the creative ability to provide a service to the environment, objects, time and setting in a vivid, pictorial and elucidated manner (Ogunjimi 1994:5).

Literature is very relevant to the human society considering the various functions it performs. The joy derived from the entertainment function of literature cannot be separated from the values it adds to society. While reading for pleasure, one imbibes certain values which project the didactic nature of literature. Aristotle's theory of mimesis declares art as an imitation of life. As a result, the greatest literary artist is that who has lessons to teach his people. Literature performs educational, cultural, moral, recreational and socio-political functions. Literature helps to develop the learners' linguistic performance because it arouses their zeal and gives them an ever-ready inclination to read (Ogunsiji 2003: 128). Literature also performs imaginative function. Literature is very important not only in second language teaching, but also in the development of English as a second language (in Nigeria) and as the world's language. Writing about literary use of English in Nigeria, Akere (2004:270) says the use of English in the production of literary works is probably one of the significant contributions which Nigerians have made to the development of English as the world language. Nigerian literary works in the English language are read in several English-speaking countries throughout the world. Nigerian literary artists have produced works which do not only portray the regular pattern of the social life of Nigerians, their customs and traditions, their general cultural characteristics but

also review the processes of socio-cultural change, engendered by colonial experience and the consequent culture contact. They have achieved these effectively by using the English language.

However, an important aspect of the use of English in creative writing in Nigeria is the extent to which Nigerian artists have been able to adapt their "second" language to the complex cultural, socio- psychological and linguistic situations, over which the English language was superimposed to produce excellent works of art (Akere, 2004:270). Apart from the above, the various cultural elements embodied in the many literary works and conveyed through the medium of the English language show the degree of adaptation to which English has been subjected in order to be able to express the norms of the people's socio-cultural milieu.

Ogbulogo (2005:73) asserts that literature expresses meaning by coding the literary language in a creative way, using figures of speech. Because the meaning derived from the figures of speech is not the meaning of the different components of the expressions, figures of speech, which are a part of literature require special attention and exploitation in language study. Figures of speech operates from the point of view of extension of meaning, resulting in polysemy (or transfer of sense) and is able to cover different devices which are semantically and grammatically unusual Ogbulogo (2005:73). In the opinion of Platts (1977), "figures of speech depart from the [syntactic and semantic] norms of everyday language in some ways".

Folklore communication is essentially continuous and non-discrete phenomena (Nwachukwu- Agbada 2002: 41). Supporting the views expressed above, Arewa and Shreve (1975:165) argue that:

> in the study of folklore and all communicative behaviours, the concern should be with the study of the relation of meaning to the structure and constitution of speech events, the events themselves and with the interpretation of actors in the events with respect to their own actions.

It is not only the text or items of folklore which must concern the folklorists but also its use, its intents, and hence, its importance to the formation of new events. Nwachukwu-Agbada (1988: 59-63, 2002:42) opines that "communication through speech act could only be taken as meaningful depending on the perception of the

essence of situation, which are culture determined". Through acculturation, the individual not only learns the rules of interaction, but he/she also learns to make intelligible interactions as well as predict the course of such interactions. Communication through language is the product of an understanding of the cultural rules of interpretation and cognition. This knowledge of the cultural rules results in individual competence at three levels: the production of meaningful utterances, the use of utterances in interaction situations, and the interpretation/action upon the reception of meaningful utterances. "The great popularity of proverbs among most African people is a measure of that effectiveness in conveying even the most delicate and potentially exceptional message in the most unobtrusive, innocuous and economic manner" (Owomoyela 1984:12). Proverbs are brief with an oblique approach to their subject which makes communications possible. As a result, proverbs, like a message are available only to those who can work out the meaning.

Proverbs are a significant part of Yor6bq oral tradition. In the pre-colonial period, the number of proverbs an individual could cite during conversation was believed to be the measure of his or her wisdom. As time went on, new proverbs were added to the ones already known. At that time, children and youths had to be very close to the elders to have a good exposure to proverbs. For that reason, in Yoruba land, a young person does not cite a proverb in the presence of his/her elders without acknowledging such elders (Babalakin 2002). Proverb usage is believed to be elders' exclusive reserve (Odunjo 2002, Babalakin 2002). In conversation, proverbs have important roles they play. That is why the Yor6bq proverbs are "horses" to conversation. When the truth is missing, proverbs are used to restore it (*9we lesin =r=, =r= Lcxin 0we, b7 =r= bq son6, 0we la fi 7 wa*). Attempts have been made to express the symbolic nature of proverbs in Yor6bq. Delano (1966:16) and Osoba (2005:1) describe proverbs, in support of Fagunwa, as "*0g7d8gbo*" drum. In Yor6bq world view, proverbs are also described as tablets of wisdom and imaginary horses of speech, being applied by elders to buttress their conversation.

Proverbs occupy a very important position in African discourse. As a result, efforts have been made by scholars in different African cultures to document the contents, forms and functions of proverbs. Nwachukwu-Agbada's (2002) work is on the proverbs of the Igbo people; Colter (1996) compiles the proverbs and sayings of

the Oromo people in Ethiopia. There are also works on Yor6bq proverbs (Delano 1966, Babalakin 2002 and Owomoyela 2005, Lindfors 2011, and so on). Assessing the relevance of oral tradition to African people's life, Cotler (1996:ii) says:

> Africa is rich in a variety of ways, including natural resources manpower and culture. Within the framework of culture, there is a wide range of heritage including religion, music, dance, art, architecture and oral literature. And in the realm of oral Literature, we find the immensely rich world of stories, tables, recitations, songs, poetry and proverbs.

1.3 Statement of the research problem

Despite the diversity in the cultural background of Ola Rotimi's parenthood (his father is Yor6bq and his mother is Ijaw) his handling of Yor6bq cultural beliefs, values and socio-political issues in his plays selected for this study, *The Gods are not to Blame, Kurunmi* and *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again,* confirms that he mastered the culture of his own people. His works are essentially culture based and they are rich in different beliefs of the Yor6bq people. Ola Rotimi projects Yor6bq culture through an extensive use of proverbs of Yoruba background while writing in English. In each of the texts, Ola Rotimi uses proverbs to explore themes, characterization, and language choice in a very sophisticated but straightforward manner. The preponderance of proverbs in his plays indicates that proverb is a crucial linguistic feature for exploring a people's set of beliefs and values.

Proverbs have been studied by scholar from the ancient times to the present age (Dundes 1975, Mieder 1985, 1996, 2004 and Bazqoz 1990). Delano (1966) studied proverbs from the perspectives of meaning and functions. Proverbs have also been analysed from the point of view of ideology, origin and forms (Bamgbose, 1968a). Many scholars have equally studied proverbs from the African scholar's perspectives (Nwachukwu-Agbada, 1993 and 2002; Yusuf, 1996; Colter, 1996; Oha, 1998; Raji-Oyelade, 2004 and 2011; Owomoyela, 2005; Fashina, 2006; and so on). Colter (1996) studied the proverbs and sayings of the Oromo people in East Africa. Nwachukwu-Agbada (2002) is on the content, forms and context of Igbo proverbs. Owomoyela did an extensive study of nature, functions, and forms of Yoruba

proverbs. Yusuf (1996) undertook pragmatic study of English and Yoruba proverbs about women. Oha (1998) examined the semantics of female devaluation in Igbo proverbs. A large concentration of the studies on Ola Rotimi's works has come from literary scholars (such as Monye 1995).

Oloruntoba- Oju (1998) did a stylistic analysis of actional tradition in *The gods are not to blame, Kurunmi* and *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi.* Dairo (2007) examines proverbs as an element of rhetorical expression in Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame.* Also, Odebunmi (2008) examined pragmatic functions of crisis-motivated proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame.* Much attention has also been drawn to Ola Rotimi's proverbs from the point of view of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, but enough scholarly attention has not been given to the contexts in which the proverbs have been used to develop characters. Therefore, this study investigates the contexts in which proverbs have been used and how they have helped to develop dramatic characters in the selected plays.

1.4 Research questions

The study is anchored to the following research questions:

a. How are proverbs used to reveal the various contexts of the selected plays of Ola Rotimi?

b. To what extent are proverbs relevant to the themes of the selected plays of Ola Rotimi?

c. What roles do proverbs play as a characterization device in the selected plays of Ola Rotimi?

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

This aim of the study is to describe the context and functions of proverbs in the selected plays of Ola Rotimi. More specifically, the objectives are:

a. To identify, describe, and interpret proverbs in their different contexts in selected plays of Ola Rotimi.

b. To explain how proverbs function to project the themes of the selected plays of Ola Rotimi.

c. To examine the use of proverbs by Ola Rotimi as a characterization device in the selected plays.

1.6 Significance of the study

The study will shed light on how Ola Rotimi uses proverbs to project the messages of his plays and develop the characters. It also shows the relevance of ethnography of communication to the study of contexts of proverbs in selected plays of Ola Rotimi. Besides, the study will contribute to the increasing literature on language, literary studies, proverbs, Ola Rotimi, speech acts, sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication.

1.7 The choice of the texts

The data for the study were derived from three purposively selected plays of Ola Rotimi: *The gods are not to blame, Kurunmi and Our husband has gone mad again*, which share certain thematic and stylistic continuities and also contain abundant proverbs. One hundred and fifty-six proverbs identified in the three texts were subjected to content and quantitative analysis: *The gods are not to blame contains* sixty-seven proverbs, *Kurunmi* consists of sixty-seven proverbs while *Our Husband has gone mad again has* twenty-two proverbs.

All the proverbs identified in the three selected plays were purposively selected for analysis. The purposive sampling method was found effective and useful for this study because it facilitates careful and conscious choice of elements to be included so that the sample can be developed for ones' needs. This is done on the assumption that with sound judgement and an appropriate strategy, elements which are typical or representative of the population can be selected.

1.8 Methodology

Aspects of Troike's Ethnography of Communication served as the theoretical framework. Three plays of Ola Rotimi which have abundant proverbs and which exhibit thematic and stylistic similarities were purposively selected, namely, *The Gods Are Not to Blame, Kurunmi, and Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. One hundred and fifty-six proverbs were identified and selected from the three texts. The proverbs were subjected to content analysis and simple percentages.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to review of related literature. The review covers issues on meaning, context, function, and language of proverb; language in African drama, and the use of language in the plays of Ola Rotimi. Also examined are characterisation and relevant theories in sociolinguistics that are important to the present study.

2.2 Meanings, origins, classifications, functions and characteristics of Proverbs

2.2.1 Meanings

Proverbs contain everyday experiences and common observations in succinct and formulaic language, making them easy to remember and ready to be used as effectively in oral and written communication (Mieder, 2004: xi). Other genres of phraseology are saying (well-known phrases), idiomatic expressions (which express meaning different from those of the individual words), truisms (statements that are accepted as obvious truth), aphorisms (short remarks which contain general truth), and wellerisms or post-proverbs (the use of supplementary proverbs inadvertently in place of an original ones (Raji-Oyelade 1999). Paremiology, which mainly deals with the collection, classification and the tracing of the nature and origin of individual proverb as well as investigating their socio-historical significance, has a longer tradition than phraseology (Burger, 2003: 110). Paremiologists usually look at proverbs from a more inclusive point of view by drawing on such fields as anthropology (the study of human origins, societies and cultures), communication (act of sharing or exchanging information), and culture (the arts, customs, and so on of a nation or group). Other relevant fields are folklore (the traditional stories, customs, and so on, of a particular area), history (the study and record of past events), literature (written works that are regarded as having artistic and creative merits), philosophy (the study of fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence), religion (the

belief in and worship of a God or gods) and sociology, which deals with the study of human society (Mieder, 2004: 13).

Scholars in the literary fields hold conflicting views about the definition of the concept of proverb. "A proverb is a generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphoric and 'memorisable' form as is handed down from generation to generation" (Mieder, 1993:5, 1996:597). Norrick (1985:78) asserts that in Anglo-American culture, proverbs are defined as "a traditional conversational, didactic genre with general meaning and a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning". Simpson and Speake (1998) postulate that: "a proverb is a traditional saying which offers advice or presents a moral in a short… manner". Whiting (1994:80) defines a proverb as "an expression having its source from the people, an expression of what is apparently a fundamental truth; usually short, with literal/figurative meanings and a sign of antiquity". Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (1991: 65) define proverbs as "oral compositions that come from the womb of tradition (…) they point to the individual, domestic and collective life patterns of the society from which they are derived". Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (1991: 65) further argue that: "the proverb is a traditional propositional statement consisting of at least one descriptive element".

Scholars have not arrived at a global definition of proverb. This is because it has not been easy to incorporate all noteworthy aspects of proverbial phenomena in a single definition of proverb. In the opinion of Mieder (1993), "a universal definition of proverb has not been possible as a result of a central ingredient that must be part of such a definition: 'traditionality,' which includes both aspects of age and currency which a statement needs for it to be considered a proverb". As a result, proverb scholars cannot determine whether a statement has certain age or currency among the population. To establish the "traditionality" of a text, external research has to be involved. This means that the most precise definition of proverb will still be incomplete (Mieder, 1993: 6). Norricks (1985) emphasizes the relevance of didacticism, figurative and political elements in his definition. Simpson and Speake's (1998) definition contains morality and emotional elements, while Whiting's (1994) mentions truthfulness, time, structural and figurative elements.

Generally, the distinguishing elements that make up the whole definitions are classified into three: truthfulness, specific observation about everyday experience and the issue of tradition. One major obstacle to the acceptability of the definitions that have been given above is the emphasis on "tradition" which takes different forms in different cultures. Also, truthfulness is not always correct in relation to proverb, since proverbial saying could be contradictory sometimes. For example, in Yor6bq culture there are cases where two or more proverbs are ambiguous in terms of the truth they express.

The definition that is adopted for this study is the one given by Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (1991: 65), which defines proverbs as "oral compositions that come from the womb of tradition, which embrace the philosophical/socio-cultural value system of a people and point to the individual, domestic/collective life pattern of the society from which they are derived". No wonder, Achebe (1958) describes proverbs from the points of view of the Igbo culture, as the "palm oil with which words are eaten". This shows that proverbs are an essential ingredient for harmonizing the life rhythm of any community. Also, from the Yoruba cultural point of views, "proverb is a horse of speech; when a word is lost, proverb is employed to search for it".

In Africa, proverbs are special prerogative of the elders. The elders are considered the custodians of wisdom in Africa. A Yor6bq proverb says the words of our elders are words of wisdom; it is expected that the elders play their wisdom and intellect through a profuse use of proverbs in their speeches. It is a taboo for a young man to cite proverbs in the presence of an elder without acknowledging the elder's authority. Unlike riddles, jokes, fairy tales, folk tales, myths, or legends, proverbs are expressions coined by individuals based on their daily and accumulated experiences. This supports the opinion of scholars that a proverb is the will of one and the wisdom of many (Mieder 1993).

2.2.2. Origin of proverbs

The origin of proverbs could be traced to the origin of the early man. Records confirm that there are four major sources of proverbs: records from classical times, the Bible, Medieval Latin and different cultural backgrounds around the world. The first is from Greek and Roman antiquity through the Latin Language. The scholarly

study of proverbs, with Aristotle and many Greek proverbs, have been found in the works of Plato, Sophocles, Homer, Aristophanes, Aeschylus, Euripides, and so on (Mieder & Bryan 1996). A few other very popular proverbs from classical times that are still very much in use today in Europe and elsewhere are: Barking dogs do not bite; one hand washed the other; Make haste slowly; children and fools tell the truth; still waters run deep; love is blind and fish always begin to stink at the head" (Mieder, 2004:11*)*.The second source of proverbs is the Bible, whose proverbs date to antiquity and early wisdom literature. As a widely translated book, the Bible had a major influence on the distribution of common proverbs, since the various translators were dealing with the same texts. Some examples of Bible proverbs are: "As you sow, so you reap (Galatians 6:7); He, who digs a pit for others, falls in himself (Proverbs 26:27); He that will not work shall not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The third source of common proverbs is Medieval Latin. In the middle age, Latin had the status of lingua franca, and as such it developed new proverbs that could not be traced back to classical times. A few examples of these are: "Strike while the iron is hot; new broom sweep clean; all that glitters is not gold; when the cat is away the mice will play; no rose without thorns; at night all cats are grey; cloth do not make the men" (Mieder, 2004 : 12).

Another source of proverbs is different cultural backgrounds around the world. Every traditional society has proverbs that project its culture. There are proverbs in Yor6bq, Igbo, Hausa, Chinese, Russian and American cultures, among others. For example some proverbs have their sources in the historical move from Europe to the United States. There are modern texts that have been disseminated since the middle of the twentieth century through Europe by means of the mass media. Some of the new American Proverbs are already spreading across the European continents. Among them are: "A picture is worthy a thousand words; It takes two to tango; Garbage in garbage out; What is good for General Motors is good for America*"*. However, the beginning of "paremiography" (the study of the collection and writing of proverbs) dates back to the 16th century when, in 1515, Erasmus of Rotterdam published his first collection of proverbs and proverbial sayings. Since that time, people have been interested in all kinds of proverbial locutions.

Proverbs and proverbial sayings, with their universal value and appeal, the truths they embody and the messages they carry, have, for centuries been equally popular with all nations, despite their regional diversities. Their brevity, the teaching they give (advice, warning and comments they offer on human experience) encourage people to act and behave in certain ways. It is not surprising that, through the ages, proverbs which have contributed significantly to the English language still form a living part of it and thus can enrich our everyday conversations. They make the language a more vivid and powerful tool of communication. A response receives an additional weight when we do not speak merely with our own mouths and we do not use our individual expression of state of mind, but a general opinion.

2.2.3. Classifications of proverbs

Proverbs are classified based on function, subject matter, region, inter-textual or general parameters (Adedimeji 2009:547). Mieder (2004) creates an international classification of system of proverbs which starts out with thirteen main themes that represent basic aspects of human life. They are proverbs about practical knowledge of nature, basic faith and attitudes, basic observations and socio-logic, the world and human life. There are proverbs about sense of proportion, concept of morality, social life and social interaction communication. Others are proverbs about social position, agreements and norms, proverbs about coping and learning, time and sense of time. The thirteen main themes are further divided to fifty-two main classes. For example, the theme of social life mentioned above has the following eight classes: kinship, development–a person's background, child (parents/upbringing), man (woman/ranking and position of sexes, marriage, youth (old age), health (illness), and death/the dead). The fifty-two classifications are further subdivided into three hundred and twenty five subgroups with different numbers of subgroups for each main class (Mieder 2004:16-17).

There may be positive or negative proverbs (Mieder 1996) or true or half true or fallacious proverbs (Adedimeji 2005). Proverbs could be classified according to culture e.g. English, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, American, Chinese and Russian; and they may be sexist or misogynistic (Yusuf 1994 and 1997). Proverbs could also be classified as parallel, religious, contradictory, moral, philosophical, cultural,

international/universal (Ojoade, 2004) or they may just be literary, colloquial/common and vulgar (Bhuvaneswar, 2003). Colter's (1996) classifies proverbs into: family, God, the human condition, value, virtues and vices, wisdom, feelings, social relations, property, rulers/leaders, occupations, home field and environment, plants, animals, the person, nature time and seasons, rituals and miscellaneous. In the views of Sheba and Oyewo (2006), there are proverbs on animals, insects, human beings, and miscellaneous things. Other classifications are proverbs of cooperation, courage, perseverance, prudence, humility, thoughtfulness, hard work, generosity, kindness, survival, common sense, patriotism, nationalism, nation's economy-building, child rearing, charity, good behaviour and discipline (Akporobaro and Emovon, 1994). In the opinion of Adedimeji (2003:71-72), proverbs are classified into rhetorical (pithy sayings that are geared toward persuading or influencing people to do certain things), epistemological (proverbs that tell stories at a glance, those whose origins lie in history, stories, folklores, myths, legends, and other oral traditional sources), didactic (proverbs that teach moral lessons, extolling virtues and condemning vices) and philosophical/analytic (proverbs rooted in the study of the cosmos, the universe and the knowledge of the world).

The classification adopted for this study is that of Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (1991). The classification focuses on Yor6bq world view, which is the point of concern of this study. They classify proverbs into cosmological reflections, socio-cultural/domestic, morality/ethical, and proverbs about science/logic. At the level of cosmological reflections, proverbs reveal the cosmological beliefs and views of the people. They are concerned about man and his existence, the minimum link between man and the supernatural world in relation to the "crisis" of creation. For example, 'we only find marks in our palm we do not know the creator'. In the proverb above, some of the dilemmas associated with the myth of creation are explained. Since nobody can tell who created the marks on the palms of humans, it may not be possible to explain certain mysteries. The socio-cultural/domestic category of proverb has to do with those that expose the belief of Africans about the ancestors, elders, and so on. An example is: 'When there are no elders in a town, the town becomes disorganized, when the head of the family dies, the home is deserted. The role of an elderly person in the society is illustrated in the proverb above. As the pilot of a community or home,

without the elders, there will be chaos. The respect for the wisdom of old age is stressed by another proverb: “No matter how a child has clothes, he can never have as many rags as an adult”.

Another class of proverbs in Yor6bq society, according to Ogunjimi and Na-Allah (1991), is that which promotes moral lessons and ethics of behaviour. Some of these proverbs perform educative functions by providing guidelines, codes of conduct and patterns of behaviour by which people can make the society function properly. In this respect, proverbs inform and educate the people on the norms, mores, and ethics of the society. Such functions are located in the proverb below: “A person who wants to eat the honey beneath the rock should not look at the mouth of the axe”. The proverb above teaches patience, sacrifice and endurance. If one desires to achieve success, one should not be deterred by obstacles on his way. The last classification of proverb deals with African logic and science, which has to do with the way African people reason. This negates what endocentric critics regard as the unscientific world order in non-literate societies. The following proverbs could be used to confirm the world view of the Yoruba people: A child who says his mother would not sleep, will himself never know sleep; When the fire dies out, it covers its face with ashes, when banana dies, it substitutes itself with its offspring, when the adder dies, it is the off springs that inherit its poison.

Some African proverbs delve into science and logic to pass their messages. Logic and science are an integral part of the intellect, wisdom and strong psychic vision that are inherent in African proverbs and other oral forms. The traditional African man is a compendium of knowledge and master of his natural environment. He does not need to go to the laboratory before making authoritative statements about the theories of reproduction, regulation and cyclical methods, as alluded to in the second proverb above.

2.2.4 Functions of proverbs

Proverbs perform different communicative, pragmatic, social, and other functions. Scholars have expressed their views about the various functions that proverbs perform in communicative discourse (Mieder 1993: 90, Rohrich 2003: 20, Burger 2003: 118, and so on). In the opinion of Rohrich (2003: 20), proverbs

disseminate traditional wisdom, knowledge and apparent truth that are handed down from one generation to another. Proverbs may be applied in political speeches and propaganda. Proverbs may contribute to spreading and reinforcing prejudices and stereotypes of any kind, especially when they are deliberately misused. They also perform political roles. Proverbs are culture bound, and contain components which may be restricted to a specific culture, depending on the language of its usage. Proverbs are intentionally used to describe, classify or judge a given situation. Apart from the above, proverbs are used to propagate certain norms/principles and emphasise moral/ethical recommendations. Proverbs in their original forms are used in everyday conversation, written texts, oral speeches, horoscopes as well as headlines of newspapers and magazines. In recent times, the traditional patterns of usage and arrangement of proverbs are disappearing in favour of playful innovative forms. Well-known proverbs are often partially cited, modified or simply implied rather than stated explicitly. Some other times, they are parodied and combined with different "phraseological" elements. In the opinion of Jamal (2010), this is possible because the native speakers of a language are not only familiar with the original proverbs, but are also well aware of the hidden associations and allusions.

Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (1991:66) examine the functions of proverbs according to their relevance to African cosmology. According to them, proverbs give substance to speeches, since ideas are put in concrete terms through this medium. They show the depth of knowledge and wisdom in African heritage. Proverbs entertain, enlighten and educate listeners. Proverbs command respect for the speaker and show his level of maturity. They expose and explore the socio-cultural realities of African societies. Proverbs usage demonstrates the tradition of theories and eloquence in the articulation of ideas by African people. Proverbs help in settling disputes, explaining issues. They equally serve as warning, rebuke, praises, suggestions and advice. They also present the cosmological views and interests of the speaker.

Nowadays, proverbs are used as an effective spoken or written tool of expressing various meanings and intentions. They include wisdom, knowledge and truth which manifest in a few colourful words. In spite of the fact that proverbs have figurative meaning, the messages they carry are delivered very quickly and to the point, which makes them very functional when used in spoken language, political

speeches, newspaper headlines, cartoon titles and slogans in advertisements.

Taylor (1996) avers that, “as a guide to life's problems, the proverb summarizes a situation, passes a judgement and offers a course of action. It is a consolation in difficulties and a guide when a choice must be made. It expresses a morality suited to the common man”. Collections of proverbs are read to reflect on the world and life. Proverbs are also often used to describe the characteristics of a country or its inhabitants. Passing judgements is also done by means of proverbs and, because of that; they often appear in legal contexts.

Proverbs have a didactic function; by using them we teach people, give them some advice, help them in difficult situations, and show them most important things in life and the proper way in life. Most proverbs having a didactic function originate from the Bible. This didactic function makes them very indispensable in church sermons and other day-to-day speeches. Examples of such proverbs are: “Seek and you shall find (Math. 7:7); every man must carry his own cross (Math. 6, 24); you cannot put new wine in old bottles (Math. 9,17); do as you would be done by others” (Luke 6, 31, Dakes 1961).

Also, proverbs are very often used in personal interaction. They can function as warning (Keep your weather eye open), suggestion (It is never too late to learn), scolding (He that seeks trouble, never misses it), explanation (He who lives by the sword dies by the sword), justification (Too many cooks spoil the broth), a summary or a comment (Learn wisdom by the follies of others). They also bring out the essence of a given phenomenon, warn of danger, tell people how to behave and give direct orders or prohibitions. With the aid of proverb, one can aim to provide an endorsement to ones statement or opinions, forecast something, express doubts, accuse someone of something, jeer at somebody's misfortune, justify or excuse somebody. Proverbs are also used to sum up life experiences.

Proverbs can be used to discredit, mock or criticise someone or a situation. Using politeness, in a short, pithy sentence, one can hide our own thoughts and say something one would not dare to say in a direct manner. By means of proverbs, one can depict wide range of basic people's experiences and problems of modern life in a satirical and moralising way. One would say “a good husband makes a good wife” if we hear a man complaining about his wife while we know it is not only her fault. In

modern writings the function of proverbs differs a little bit from that of traditional ones. “While proverbs in older literature usually served didactic and moralistic purposes, they are now often employed for expressions of parody, irony, or satire” (Mieder (1993:71). They can perform different roles as speech acts, depending on the text and the type of communicative setting they are used. Proverbs can be analysed with reference to formal paradigm of discourse because they refer to language 'above the sentence'. The relevance of some proverbs is to state some information and such proverbs can be interpreted on the locutionary speech level. Others, however, can be understood only with their metaphorical meaning and such proverbs need to be analysed on the illocutionary speech level. Some proverbs may also be examined as perlocutionary acts when they produce some important consequences concerning feelings, thoughts or action of the audience.

Proverbs express intellectual and emotional attitudes, such as disappointment, sympathy, intention and acceptance as well as moral attitudes, like approval, disapproval, appreciation, apology or regret. Proverbs have socialising functions. They are used to congratulate, attract attention and give advice. Besides, they offer suggestions or warning. Speech acts or speech events may involve requests, advice or words of criticism directly or indirectly. The indirect way of doing that can be by means of proverbs or politeness strategies.

Almost all proverbs are context - dependent (except for some biblical proverbs having a didactic function); it is impossible to define the role of a proverb without reference to the context of its use. Language means something to someone when it is used in a certain situation. Meanings are generated by contexts and the same holds true for proverbs, too.

All the works reviewed in this section attest to the socio- political, cultural and publicity functions of proverbs. It is evident that proverbs are also instrument of: assessing wisdom/emotion of the people, dispute settlement and socialising. The meaning and function of a proverb usually depend on the situation in which it is used. For example, 'All's well that ends well' can be used as a statement, a justification or an explanation.

2.2.5 Characteristics of proverbs

Concerning the characteristics that distinguish a proverb from other statements, Arora (1994:3) argues that: "proverbiality depends upon tradition, currency, repetition, certain grammatical or syntactic features, semantic markers (parallelism, metaphor, paradox, irony, etc), lexical markers (archaic words, etc) and phonic markers (rhyme, meter, alliteration, etc,)". She further emphasizes that the more a given statement possesses such markers, the greater are its chances of being perceived as a proverb. Traditionality is a very important and the most consistently accepted characteristic of a proverb in many languages. The level of tradition is measured by how historically derived the societal authority is. The extent to which a community's wisdom is sanctioned and some incommunicable qualities that mark some sentences as proverbial or not determine the level of tradition of a proverb. The knowledge that one has in a language as a first language user helps one to recognize the proverbs used in that language. Arora (1994:4) says "those who do not speak a language can never recognize all its proverbs".

The age of the user of the proverb is another very important characteristic that determines that a proverb is an ethnic genre. Arewa and Dundes (1964:70) cite a situation where a parent who wanted to direct a child's action or thought by means of a proverb transferred the guilt or responsibility for directing the child to the anonymous past. Most of the time, the child knows that the proverbs that are used to approve or disapprove of his/her actions do not originate from the parents but from the cultural past: from those whose voices speak the truth in traditional form. Therefore, the use of words such as "the elders, or the 'they' in they say" is the instrument through which the proverb speaks to the audience (Arora 1994:5). However, the success of a proverb performance must depend ultimately on the listener's ability to perceive that he or she is being addressed in a traditional proverbial term.

Currency is another characteristic of a proverb. It has to do with how current the use of a proverb is. To be current is to have a widespread acceptance in the past or present. Some proverbs circulate on an international level, while others are within a single community. Arora (1994:7) opined that: The description of the process by which a saying achieves currency or popularity often seem to imply a kind of trial

period between invention and adoption into the great family of proverbs during which the proverb-to-be is struggling into recognition.

Repetition is among the features of a proverb. This is possible in proverbs that are relatively simple statements, queries, or replies to questions in conversation. However, the more complex utterances are not, as a rule, repeated word for word.

Other clues to proverbiality are internal features that serve to set a proverb apart from its surrounding discourse. The identities and relative significance of these internal clues vary from language to language. Some of these clues make up what is generally described as proverbial style. Some of them are syntactic markers, semantic markers, lexical markers and phonic markers. Syntactic markers are certain syntactic features that offer essential contrastive clues to proverbiality. Some of these grammatical features could be used in the study of the hearer on an oral proverb performance. They could also be used to study proverbial usage in dead languages. Among the grammatical features of proverbs are conditional and imperative sentences which are used to express doubtful situations.

Another important marker of proverbiality is semantic marker. Among the different semantic markers are metaphor, parallelism, paradox, irony, and other sharp contrasts and surprising comparisons. Metaphor as an effective feature of proverb is characterized by the sudden shift in topic that disrupts the normal conversational flow. Metaphors are commonly associated with proverbs as a result of their power to make a vivid representation. Not that alone, the metaphoric characteristic is used commonly to distinguish proverbs from other sub categories of traditional sayings. However, it should be noted that not all proverbial sayings are metaphorical. While some proverbs contain metaphors, in most instances, the proverb as a statement becomes metaphoric only within a context that rules out a literal interpretation (Arora, 1994:11).

Semantic parallelism, paradox and irony as characteristics of proverbs are added to the impression of an utterance as a "polished artefact", rather than a casual statement. They can enhance rhetorical effectiveness and increase the probability that a particular saying will be memorized, recalled, and repeated in some future occasions.

Another important feature of a proverb is rhyme. It usually combines with metre, although one may be present without the other. Scholars have shown that two

third of proverbial sayings are rhymed and another eighteen per cent exhibit assonance (Arora, 1994:14). The more the markers a given saying has, the greater its chances of being perceived as a proverb at initial hearing. On the other hand, a genuinely traditional but unmarked saying may well fail as a proverb the first time it is heard, essentially because the listener does not recognize it as such.

One of the most effective indicators of proverbiality is metaphor. The sudden shift in topic that disrupts the normal conversational flow and signals by its 'out-of-context' quality that the statement in question is to be interpreted figuratively and not literally leads to its identification as a proverb. Most proverbs are inherently metaphorical in meaning; however, in some instances the proverb is simply a statement that becomes metaphorical only within a context that rules out a literal interpretation.

Although many scholars and writers believe that proverbs and proverbial expressions have ceased to be used in modern world culture, it can be easily proved that they are still used in every domain of life. It may be claimed that they have not lost their popularity and they are continually existent in present society all over the world.

In the modern time, proverbs are not limited to the old ones from classical times, the wisdom literature of the Jewish and Christian tradition or from the middle ages. They are being created all the time. There is a need because as Wolfgang says “Even the most sophisticated and best educated people appear to be in need of the pithy wisdom contained in metaphorical proverbs” (Mieder 1991:ix). Their texts cannot only be interpreted literally but their metaphorical meanings may be taken to present succinct statements of evident truths. They may deride or satirise sometimes but they are not absolute truths because they make sense only in certain contexts.

Proverbs are timeless. The variety and number of proverbs and proverbial phrases are limitless. No matter how old people are, and what country they come from, proverbs are part of their heritage. To all proverb users, proverbs comprise a good portion of common sense, experience, wisdom and, above all, truth.

Proverbs do not usually function as mere poetic adornments of speech, neither are they used to meet man's needs for philosophising. As a rule, they are used for some practical purposes in various circumstances of everyday communication.

According to Taylor (1996), "Men buy and read collections of proverbs to awaken and enlarge reflections on the world and the nature of man, to suggest subjects for conversation, or to provide themselves with comments appropriate to situations in daily life". It would not be wrong to state that proverbs are used to convey general human problems and concerns by means of traditional language. Mieder (1993:11) asserts that, "By employing proverbs in our speech we wish to strengthen our arguments, express generalisations, influence or manipulate other people, rationalize our own shortcomings, question certain behavioural patterns, satirize social ills, poke fun, etc".

2.3 Proverb lore and its use in literature

Modern African writers, especially those of the older generation, have deployed proverbs in their works to achieve specific purposes, one of which is the creation of artistic beauty. Monye (1995) emphasizes the functions of proverbs in a traditional society as an instrument of embellishment and a booster of argument during conversation and other speech events. Monye (1995), quoting Ogbaa (1981:5) during an interview with Achebe, says:

> The proverb is both a functional means of communication and also performance (…). I think that proverbs are both utilitarian and little vignette of art. I use this forms to re-enact the life of the people that I am describing and also delight through elegance and aptness of imagery.

Several scholars have highlighted the importance of the study of proverbs in literary texts. Among them are Owomoyela (1984), Nwachukwu - Agbada (1993), Oha (1998), Raji-Oyelade (1998) and Fashina (2006) to mention a few. In African literary discourse, most writers (among whom are Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, D.O. Fagunwa, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Olu Obafemi) skilfully achieve an appropriate language for each of their literary works through the use of proverbs. Their proverbs can serve as keys to understanding their works.

Lindfors (2002), classifies the proverbs used in some of Achebe's novels into five types. They include: those about the value of the Ibo society, the importance of

status and the value of achievement; the idea of man as a shaper of his own destiny. This value, according to him, is what Okonkwo lives and dies for in *Things fall apart*. For example, if a child washes his hand, he could eat with kings. He also observes that some Achebe's novels show proverbs expressing different opinions on the same subject. For instance, the Igbo people believe that a child should take after his parents but become disappointed if he fails to do so: "when mother cow is chewing grass, its young ones watch its mouth". He is of the view that Okonkwo's disappointment over the behaviour of his first son, Nwoye leads to another proverb: "a chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches" (p.80). Other types of proverbs are those that comment on or warn against foolish and unworthy actions. For example, "the fox must be chased away first after that the hen might be warned against wandering into the bush". Lindfors (2002:86) also avers that Achebe uses proverbs to express the need for man to be responsible. For example, "an adult does not sit and watch while the she-goat suffers the pain of childbirth tied to a post". He concludes that Achebe's literary talents are clearly revealed in his use of proverbs (p.92).

In his analysis of the use of proverbs by Soyinka in his literary works, Lindfors (2002:105) declares the Yoruba proverbs as horses of speech, which is used to find lost communication. Wole Soyinka's proverbs are studied from the prospective of the Yoruba culture. They can be used not only to retrieve communication that has gone astray but to speed it up, slow it down, convey weighty messages, deliver light-hearted jests, sharpen arguments, blunt criticism, and clarify difficult ideas and disguise simple ones beyond easy recognition. The same proverb, in fact, can be an ordinary "beast of burden" or a rave racing through bred, depending on its use and user (Lindfors, 2002:105). He illustrates with proverbs used by Soyinka in *A Dance of the Forest*, to advise Old Man to be patient:

> The eyes that look downward will certainly see the nose; the hand that dips to the bottom of the pot will eat the biggest snail. The sky grows no grass but if the earth called her barren, it will drink no more milk. The foot of the snake is not split in two like a man's or in hundreds like a centipede's, but if "Agere" could dance patiently like the

> snake, he would uncoil the chain that leads into the dead (…) (Lindfors 2002:108, quoting Soyinka, 1963:38).

He explains further that Soyinka frequently weaves proverbs so intricately to the fabric of drama actions that they become a vital part of the artistic design (p.108). He concludes that 'Soyinka's proverbs are capable of carrying readers to the heart of his drama to the extent that understanding how proverbs function and what they mean in his plays make the readers to gain a better understanding of his texts and deeper appreciation of his arts/crafts as a playwright (Lindfors, 2002:115) .

Olatunji (1984:169), examines the characteristics of Yoruba proverbs from the sociological background. He opines that proverbs occur in day-to-day communication of the people. He declares anybody who cannot understand the application of proverb among the Yoruba people as unwise (p.170). Olatunji further declares that the content of Yoruba *'owe'* (proverbs) serves as social charter to praise virtues and condemn bad practices (p.175). He identifies the major function of proverbs among the Yoruba people as prescriptive: they state the do/do not and lay down conditions for certain actions and attitude. Olatunji also describes the grammatical structures of Yoruba Proverbs as simple, complex, segmental and parallel sentences. Other features of Yoruba proverbs identified by Olatunji are high incidence of lexical repetition and its terseness. According to him, proverbs are terse and pity condensation of the discriminating sentiments into a small compass.

Dairo (2011) makes a speech act analysis of `Yor6bq` proverbs. He uses thirty proverbs to determine how utterances convey meaning in communication. In his opinion, proverbs are used in communication to accentuate an idea or to add flavour to the discourse so as to enhance intelligent elocution. Among the speech acts identified are adjudicating, stating facts, warning or admonishing, giving advice, issuing threat and giving directives. Proverbs are a rich heritage of the Yoruba people is a vehicle for conveying ideas.

Adeleke (2009) illustrates the value of the proverb genre to Yoruba historiography. He uses the concept of globalization as a launching pad. The study shows that proverbs have been able to capture different historical experiences of the `Yor6bq` spanning both pre-colonial and colonial experiences. The experiences he

gives cover mythological period, deified heroes, historical heroes, indigenous forms of domination and exploitation (feudalism, gendered violence and ethno-racialism). Yor6bq proverbs also shed lights on the missionary and Europeans impact on Yor6bq in the area of religion, war, slavery and British indirect rule. He concludes that the historical past can easily be reconstructed with the proverbs serving as the primary data, with other sources such as oral interviews archival documentations and written materials complementing.

Bello (2011) analyses how proverbs in Yor6bq cosmology are used to express condolence. This study investigates the interplay between language and culture with particular reference to the use of proverbs and proverb-related expressions in condolence of educated Yor6bq English speakers. The study reveals that proverbs are rarely found in natural condolence discourse but feature in condolence register, which suggests that condoling with the bereaved does not put participants in a right psychological state of mind to bring about their frequent use. Condolences in natural speech are directed at the bereaved. Proverbs in this case may not suppress but rekindle sorrow. There are not many proverbs associated with condolence; similar forms that are connected with other social events are employed.

Adeniyi (2011) examines proverbs as names in Yor6bq. The Yoruba value names as much as the life of an individual. Quoting Johnson (1969), he avers that, "when the *or5k[* (name), the *or7k8* and *or7l2* (totem) are given, the individual is distinctive, the family is known and he can at any time be traced". He classifies names derived from proverbs into seven types. They include those that stress individual responsibility within the society (as in *Apqlarq*), those that touch on human conduct in the society (such as *8jz0d[lz*), those that express hope of a bright future (as in *Bq0k5*) and those that comment on human character and behaviour (for example *Znj6w-n*). Others are those that dwell on general values (as in *Zgbz0s7)*, those that express absolute faith in God (such as *Zbqy=m7*) and those that express facts about life (in *Om-lay=l3)*.Those proverbs are indeed words immediately after their conversion. The evidences are based on mobility, internal stability, non-referentiality and some morphological processes.

Egbe (2000:296-297) examines the use of proverbs as aspects of the creativity of language. In his view, although proverbs are said to belong to the shared

experience of the people as a nation, there is room for creativity in their selection and use. He further describes three steps involved in proverb selection: knowledge of the meaning of the proverbs, ability to recall them with ease and ability to use them appropriately. Alabi (2000:215-230) attempts an analysis of the proverbs used by Olu Obafemi, in five of his plays. She divides the proverbs into three types: those created by Olu Obafemi which echo existing Yoruba proverbs, those garnished by rhetorical elements, such as unusual collocates, lexemes, parallel structure, parenthesis and ellipsis, and proverbs sparkle in their translation of L1 and its culture with significant grammatical features. Out of the forty-one proverbs cited by Alabi (2000) part of the context of only five are cited from two plays, while the others are explained out of context.

Nwachukwu-Agbada (2002:131-134) examines the roles of context and the performance in the communication of meaning of proverbs. He discusses some functions of Igbo proverbs as social and communicative, amplificatory, authoritative, educative, rhetorical, image making and aesthetic. An important feature that distinguishes, Nwachukwu-Agbada's work from the previous ones is his ability to examine the context and performance of proverbs. This he does in line with Firth's view that meaning, literal translation, the accompanying social situation, the reason for its use, its effects and its significance in speech are very important to a proverb. Abraham (1968:143-158) further corroborates this: "It is not enough to perceive how ideas and attitudes are embodied in forms that produce pleasure and beauty and edification. Function and the relations between form and usage are equally critical".

This review is incomplete without considering scholarly works on Ola Rotimi, whose plays are the focus of this study. Ukala (2000) studied Ola Rotimi's work from the perspective of theatre. In his opinion, Ola Rotimi's works are embellished with the use of proverbs (though they are relatively easy to understand as texts and in performance) they express literal and figurative meanings (p.91). The plays are also very theatrical and very popular with Nigerian English-speaking audience. The popularity of Ola Rotimi outside the university campus as a director is noted by scholars (Osanyin 1983:4-5, Ogunbiyi 1981:35 and Adelugba 1978:217).

Monye (1995) gives a list of the proverbs in *The gods are not to blame*. Monye (1995:259) passes specific comments on Rotimi's use of proverbs. According

to him, "a cursory look at the use of proverbs in Ola Rotimi's plays reveal that he has used proverbs to enhance our understanding of his themes, illuminate his story and delineates his characters". Through this he has brought his drama very close to the people he is portraying. As a shrewd observer of his immediate environment, he presents his audience with an apt and concrete image of the futile attempts of his tragic hero. Through the transfer of association of ideas from the animal world to the human terrain, in the proverb "the snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell" Rotimi obliquely tells the reader that Odewale is merely struggling. His snail-shell image is, therefore, a fore visioning to the reader of the tragedy that awaits King Odewale.

The two available works on *Our husband has gone mad again* consist of a summary of the plot, setting, dramatic structure, themes and language of the text (Asaolu and Asein 1986). The second work is a scholarly journal article written about the study of "markers of information management" (Olateju 2006). Ogbulogo (2002) merely mentions *The gods are not to blame* in the discussion.

More relevant studies about Rotimi is the one made by Dairo (2007) and Odebunmi (2008). Dairo (2007:23-29) does a stylistic study of Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame*. The work focuses on the analysis of Ola Rotimi's style of writing, particularly his use of native proverbs and axioms in English translation to make the play life-like and original. He concludes that Ola Rotimi uses proverbs as a veritable tool to affect and effect desirable actions and to project the Yoruba cosmology. Odebunmi (2008) makes a pragmatic study of crisis-motivated proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame*. The work focuses on the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that their situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation as well as what is naturally being said (Mey 2001:221; Odebunmi 2006). Odebunmi (2008) divides the proverbs into social crisis-motivated proverbs and political crisis-motivated proverbs. In his opinion, crisis makes a lot of demand on the psyche and produces practs such as counselling, cautioning, accusing, challenging, persuading, and threatening among others.

2.4 Language in African drama

Language issues in African literature have been explored by scholars from the early post-independence era. Over this period, there have been two major schools of

thought: the essentialists and the hybrid schools whose leading proponents are Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. There are other theorists such as Frantz Farnon, Obiajunwa Wali, and Chinweizu. The works of some of these scholars inspired practices in the choice and use of language in African Literature among other studies (Ilo 2006:1). Frantz Farnon (1952) gives an account of the psychological consequences of colonial subjugation. He asserts that the black Africans are mentally enslaved to universalized Western norm at the expense of his own consciousness, the consequences of which is the disorientation or alienation of the African race. Farnon (1952) noted that the issue of language in African literature is important because speaking a colonizer's language means existing absolutely for the colonizer.

> To speak means to be in a position to use certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language but also to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization… Every colonized people…in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of his local cultural originality… finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation: that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above the jingle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standard (Farnon, 1952:17-18).

Thus, Farnon (1952) rejects the colonizer-colonized relationship and advocates total rejection of the standards of the colonizing culture including its language. He opines that the person who has taken up the language of the colonizer has accepted the world of the colonizer and therefore the standard of the colonizer. This is in line with the views of Bell (1993) that we do not speak in particular languages, but more fundamentally become the person we become because of the particular language community in which we grew up. Language, above all, shapes our distinctive ways of being in the world. Language is the career of a people's identity, the vehicle of a certain way of seeing, experiencing and feeling things, determinant of particular outlook on life.

Supporting Farnon (1952), Wali (1963) says that "the adoption of English and French as media of literary creation of African writers is an aberration which could not advance African literature and culture". African literature in European languages is only a minor appendage of European literature and that an authentic African literature could not be created in non-African languages. African literature could only be written in African languages because these were the languages of the peasantry and working class, which most suitable for triggering the necessary and inevitable revolution against neo-colonialism' (Wali 1963).

Substantiating Wali's arguments, Ngugi (1986:22) opines that "African languages are languages of the people who the writers want to address". They provide direct access to the rich tradition of African people and, by using them; writers participate in the struggle against domination by foreign languages and against wider imperialist domination. He agrees that African writers should write in traditional languages of Africa rather than in the European languages. When literary works are written in the language of the colonizers, many Africans are not able to read those works. The real point of weakness of writing in European languages is its audience: the partly bourgeoisie leadership that is automatically assumed by the very choice of language. He submits that literature written in a European language cannot claim to be African literature. He therefore classifies the works by Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, and Gabriel Okara as Afro-European literature.

Ngugi (2000) opines that language occupies a significant position in the entire hierarchy of the organisation of wealth, power and values in a society. To him, language is the most important vehicle by which the colonial power captivates and holds the colonized soul as prisoners. While the bullet is the means of physical subjugation, language is the means of spiritual subjugation. Africa is in need of healing from the long-standing injuries that colonization has wrought on the indigenous languages and cultures. This healing can only come through cultural autonomy and self-determination. Hence, writing in African languages is a crucial step towards cultural identity and independence from continuous neo-colonial exploitation (Ngugi, 2000).

Although we cannot dispute the claim of the "essentialists" school, writing in African languages only will not bring about the expected renaissance. And if literature

does not communicate the message of revolution, unity, hope and embody the content of the people's anti-imperialist struggles for socio-political and economic liberation, the needed emancipation will not come. While Ngugi begins his career and attained fame as a novelist in the English language, the new change in him led to his venturing into a community theatre projects. Contrary to our submission above, Ilo (2006) is of the opinion that dramatic works be written in the most widely used language in a society. He cites the example of the role Creole is playing in Mauritius in the development of theatre through the plays of Dev Virahsawmy, Azize Asgarally and Henri Farori. Manritius is a former French and British Colony where English enjoys an official status and French a semi-official status. However, the playwrights believe that Creole is the only language that can translate the experiences and the culture of Manritius for the stage. Using the language is also a political struggle against the class system since the language is identified with the exploited proletariat. Thus, theatre is shown to be an important and influential area where the official status of language, or lack of it, can be confronted by concrete practice. Reviving a language and its culture through drama gives voice to the silenced and threatened communities (Mooneeram, 1999:25-35).

The views of the hybrid school, on the other hand, could be substantiated through the pamphlet of the FESTAC (1977), which suggests that the African content in literature consists of the following five elements: (1) The writer must be Africa, and must use (2) traditional themes from oral literature, (3) African symbols, (4) linguistic expression taken from African languages, and (5) local imagery, that is, images from the immediate environment (Amoda 1978). These clearly express the objectives of African literature in colonial languages, to express an African content in the medium of a European language such as English or French. The characteristics of traditional African oral literature such as myths, legends, folktales, poetry, proverbs and other forms of African languages constitute the background of African writing. These imprint they must impose on the colonial language. This is highly commended and accepted by African critics (see Chinweizu and Ihechukwu (1985), Irele (2001) and Asante-Darko (2000), among others).

Achebe (1975: 55-62) argues that although English is imposed on the African people by colonialism, it is now an asset to Africa as an instrument of promoting

continental and national unity. In Achebe's opinion, "English offers Africans the opportunity to use language". He adds that an African does not need to use the language like a native speaker:

> The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best, without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange is lost. He should aim at fashioning out English [in a way that] is able to express his peculiar experience (Achebe 1975:62).

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's approach is to attempt a "literary fidelity", to translate actual words which might have been used in his language into English and thereby preserve the local flavour of the situations (Obumselu 1959:2-8). Mortty (1959: 48-50) observes that "Achebe knows and uses English with consummate skill, and his language has the ring and rhythm of poetry". At the background of the words, according to Mortty "can be heard the thrumming syncopation of the sound of Africa - the gongs, the drums, the castanets and horns". Irele (2001) also observes that "the Nigerian poet - playwright J.P Clark recognises that in the African content, the task that faces a creative writer in English is more than that of adapting the foreign language to the reality of the African environment". Rather, it involves rather a total appropriation in order to bring African expression into a living relationship with the tradition of literature in English. Adeleke (1998:14-20) comments on Soyinka's use of language:

> Soyinka's special contribution to home grown content of Africa literature is his reinterpretation of Yoruba myths to give a local philosophical depth to his drama. His poetics is embodied in the 'Four stages', which explores the philosophical implications of pre-colonial cultures for modern African arts, 'Idanre' his poetic celebration of Ogun's myth, literature, and the African World an appropriation of Yor6bq rituals for a theory of tragedy.

In Soyinka's poetics, the duty of a serious African literature is to impose the cosmic overview that organizes traditional performances. Soyinka (1988:107) equally subscribes to the method of indigenising the colonial language in African literature. He says:

> When we borrow an alien language to sculpt or paint in, we must begin by co-opting the entire properties of that language as correspondences to properties in our matrix of thought and expression. We must stress such a language, stretch it, impact and compact it, fragment and reassemble it with no apology, as required to bear the burden of experiencing and experiences, be they formulated or not in the conceptual idiom of the language (Soyinka, 1988:107).

In support of the above Botha (1992:172), prefers what he sees as being truly commonsense about language: when a person knows a language, he is taken to know "what makes a sound and meaning relate to one another in a specific way, what makes them hang together". This structural notion regards language as consisting of sentences and words, including grammatical forms and syntactic constructions. Grammaticality expresses the essential property of language, whereas the ideology language embodies is only incidental and does not constitute its property. Every language, therefore, is a harvest of grammaticality, which makes it a tool in the hands of users who can mould it to suit their purpose (Ilo, 2006:7).

Soyinka uses the English language to express his cultural, religious and emotional experiences. His strategies include neologisms, extension of, or change in meaning, colourful idiomatic expressions, word for word translations and loan words from the background language into English. He deploys lexico-semantic and syntactic devices such as direct borrowing, cultural and religious loan and customs, and indigenous norms. At the syntactic level, some of the strategies he uses are repetition, translation of Yoruba proverbs into English, reduplication, and direct translation of Yoruba into English. Other examples are code switching and code mixing, and transfer of Yoruba language communicative strategies, such as indirectness, punning, riddles and proverbs (Ajani 2005).

The two schools of thought discussed are divergent in their conception of language, audience and purpose of literature in African society. The essentialist school is of the opinion that, in the spirit of cultural essentialism, writers should reject every linguistic influence of colonialism in favour of pre - colonial African languages, and thus they propose African culture as purveyed in the traditional languages as "antithesis hegemonic Western cultural universalism". The hybrid school concludes that if the Whiteman has used English for domination, Africans can return it for resistance through literature. It is also of the opinion that, owing to post colonial hybrid reality, writers should utilize the linguistic influence of colonialism blended with pre--colonial African oral traditions. "There will never be a final resolution of African aesthetic since taste always changes with time, though the change may take several years, it is enough to warrant a continuous process of re – evaluation" (Balogun, 1981:17). As a solution to the above problem, however, Ilo (2006:6-7) observes the emergence of another generation of scholars whose cultural orientation came into being in present day post-independence, multicultural milieu.

The opinion Ilo expresses above is that there should be a third school through which we could handle language in African literature. This new school should be characterized by another African language: "unembellished English language, pidgin, Creole, the English of secondary school leavers, campus slang, the English of university graduates, official English, etc" (Ilo 2000). An African writer can write with the language he knows best, provided it is appropriate for his content and context, and that work will still bear the weight of his experiences as an African. The beliefs of the imperialist that there is only one Western culture which is universal and permanent and which must be imbibed through colonization has been debunked by anthropology (Ilo 2006). In the view of anthropologists, the civilization that cultural imperialists are spreading is potentially universal. Culture should no more be defined as universal but as diverse. Every society has its own culture. Since language choice has something to do with audience choice, the target audience of a play should normally influence the playwright's use of words. As a result, the appropriateness of a playwright's diction should be assessed on the basis of the play's intended audience.

Varieties of the English language have come to stay in African dramatic expression. The language has consistently mediated among various languages and

ethnic groups that have been in different parts of the continents over the years. As a result, there is a need for a new aesthetic paradigm for contemporary African literary expression based on the fact that: 1) language as a medium of subjective communication bears the tint of a user's experience; 2) the audience of literature may be local or international and the purpose can be any matter; 3) it is assumed that, in an environment of cultural diversity, a writer may use any language on the basis of competence and communicative criteria (Ilo 2006:9). However, Ilo does not propose the relevance of African culture as a result of multi and inter-cultural reality that he believes has overtaken hegemonic Western cultural universalism. In the opinion of the present study, the African culture that will distinguish African literature from literature from other parts of the world should still be retained as a necessary feature of African literature.

2.5 The development of modern Nigerian drama

The origin of Nigerian theatre/drama lies in the numerous traditional religious and functional rituals found in practically every Nigerian society. There are arguments about whether Nigerian drama evolved from ritual. Those who argue for are of the opinion that the two (drama and ritual) are interwoven. Those who speak against the opinion are of the view that ritual is essentially functional while drama is not, at least not in the sense of immediate results and consequences beyond itself (Ogunbiyi, 1981:5). However, Yor6bq masquerade theatre, a courtly form of traditional entertainment, is characterised by song, dance lavish costumes and extraordinary spectacle. Drama in the Yoruba context was taken outside the court and was known first as '*E3g5n Alqr3*' and eventually '*Alqr8nj9*' in the professional travelling theatre (Adedeji, 1972).

Ogunbiyi (1981:6) notes that *Alqr8nj9* has remained an integral part of ritual. Theatre developed alongside ritual. Adedeji (1972) draws extensively from historical evidence. He demonstrates how Sango, who reigned as Alafin of Oyo probably about the fourteenth century might have introduced the phenomenon of the ancestor worship called '*bzbq*' (father) or later '*eg5ng5n*' (masquerade). The most often quoted spokesman for another school of thought, the evolution school, is M.J. Echeruo. He takes Finnegan (1970) as a theoretical starting point. He contends that

there are considerable limitations to be encountered in any attempt to classify Igbo festival as drama. With some traditional festivals, in the view of Finnegan, certain dramatic phenomena or 'peri-theatrical' modes are present. However, festivals may be dramatic in themselves without being drama.

Attempts are made by scholars to classify Nigerian drama into different types. In his study of traditional forms of Hausa drama, Kofoworola (1981) indicates that traditional Hausa drama is classified almost entirely by context of performance. He classifies them into occupational, social, ceremonial, dramatic and royal forms. Clark (1981) classifies Nigerian drama broadly into two – traditional and literary drama. Clark further breaks the group into religious/sacred and secular forms. Within the sacred species, there are again two types, the myth and ancestral plays on the one hand, and the masquerade plays of different cults and age groups, on the other hand. Under the secular forms of traditional Nigerian drama, he identifies five different types: magic or trick plays, pastoral or puppet plays, civic drama, dance or song drama, narrative or epic drama. Starting with Yoruba travelling theatre as his first example of modern theatre, Clark concludes his classification with the addition of contemporary literary works as parts of that section. Ogunbiyi (1981) argues the classification of J.P. Clark is useful as a conceptual framework since it provides us with a neat structure to operate from.

One of the concerns scholars have with his classification is that the contemporary Yoruba Travelling Theatre cannot be rightly classified under the literary tradition (Ogunbiyi 1981:9). As a modification to J.P. Clark's classification, two broad categories of drama are suggested by Ogunbiyi (1981:10). They include: traditional and literary forms of drama. Traditional forms are further split into three: dramatic rituals, the popular tradition and Yoruba Travelling Theatre. Under dramatic rituals, there are traditional festivals in the forms of celebration of cults or ancestral heroes, ritual ceremonies (where drama is discernible), and serious masquerade plays (as distinct from the light ones), and so on. Popular tradition is used in the tradition of a genuinely popular theatre where all that a living popular performer needs is not necessarily a text or an elaborate stage, but a place, a time, an audience and himself. Among these are: the Anang drama of the Ibibio, *Yor6bq Alqr8nj9* theatre, Kwaghhir and Bornu puppet show (the Hausa comical art of Yankamana), and Ikaki,

the Kalabari tortoise masquerade. The contemporary *Yor6bq* travelling theatre include: the theatres of Ogunde, Ogunmola, Duro Ladipo and others. The literary traditions are the literary plays that have been written since Ene Henshaw's *This is Our Chance* (1956) and excluding any work written before 1956.

There were different views about the real origin of the modern dramatic tradition in Nigeria. The roles of the freed slaves who acquired some forms of Western education and some Brazilian emigrants who imported the Western forms of the drama which constituted the basic framework of early modern Nigerian drama were noted. Also the opening of an Academy in 1866, as a social and cultural centre for public enlightenment towards the promotion of the arts, science and culture cannot be forgotten. Records also showed that between 1866 and 1910, there were various groups that organised shows in the form and content of the English music, such as comic songs, love songs, duets, solos and comic sketches that were prominent in England in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Another factor that helped to develop modern Nigeria drama was the Christian missionaries' use of Nigeria languages to conduct church business. This resulted from the conflicts that occurred in the protestant churches in Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan leading to the establishment of secessionist independent churches in 1917 when Yoruba music and the Yoruba language was freely used. Through this, attempts were made to blend European materials with indigenous in entertainments. This also led to the writing of a play by Oloyede, titled *King E13j8gb0 and Princess Zb2j3 of Kotangora* which was performed by *Cgb1 8f1* at the Bethel African Church School room (Adedeji I973 and Ogunbiyi 1981). Two decades after, as a result of some favourable conditions on ground, Hubert Ogunde revived the interest in Yor6bq theatre for over three decades. He achieved success in his first two plays "The Garden of Eden" and "The Throne of God" along with "Worse than Crime". Not contented with the audience in Lagos, he hit the road and intensively toured the whole nation. During these tours of his, Ogunde discovered artists like Kola Ogunmola, Duro Ladipo, and Moses Olaiya, among others

1960 was taken as the significant starting point in the discussion of the contemporary theatre at the University of Ibadan, with the foundation of *The Mask* by Soyinka. Prior to his arrival from Britain, the University Dramatic Society produced

Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers* and a cut version of *The Lion and the Jewel* in 1958. Soyinka's arrival in 1960 coincided with a new wave of national consciousness that gave room to aspects of Nigerian cultural life. On his arrival, Soyinka produced his new plays, *The Trial of Brother Jero* and *Dance of the Forest.*

The School of Drama Company started by Soyinka assisted actors. Through the school, efforts were also made to bridge the gap between the academic and professional theatre on the one hand, and between the elitist theatre and mass/popular tradition on the other hand. An achievement in that direction was the joint production of Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists,* Amos Tutuola's *Palm-wine Drunkard* and other works by Soyinka. Part of the contribution of Ibadan to literary and dramatic arts was the production of most renowned writers of the early period, among who were J.P Clark, Nkem Nwankwo, Christopher Okigbo and Chinua Achebe.

In the same 1960, Ola Rotimi arrived from Yale University after completing his Master of Arts degree. His *To stir the god of iron* was produced in 1963 and *Our husband has gone mad again* in 1966. His reputation became established further when his *The gods are not to blame* was produced in 1968. Ola Rotimi's other works are *If…the tragedy of the Ruled* and *Ovonranwen Nogbasi*. His practice began with the Ori-Olokun theatre, which he found as an organ in the then University of Ife's Institute of African Studies. This was concerned with the practical expression of music dance and drama in Nigerian culture contact.

Attempts to provide a meeting point between the university trained artists and traditional artists seemed to have also taken root at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. At post-war Nsukka, Meki Nzewi, among others, carried out extensive research on traditional theatre materials in collaborations with traditional artists in the field. Meki's dance drama works were produced in an attempt to incorporate in a less rigid way, traditional materials into the more structured situations for urban audiences. Two among Meki's works are *The Lost Finger* and *The Third Coming*. The emergence of a different group of playwrights known as second-generation playwrights came after the Civil War. These playwrights were set apart by the wounds and trauma of the Civil War. Among them were Fela Davis, Soji Simpson, Kole Omotoso, Bode Sowande, Meki-Nzewi, Laolu Ogunniyi, Bode Osanyin, Zulu Sofola, Ahmed Yerimah, Femi Osofisan and Wale Ogunyemi.

2.6 Proverbs and contexts

Context is defined by Ochis (1979) as "the social and psychological world in which the user operates at any given time: language users' beliefs and assumptions about temporal, spatial and social settings, prior, ongoing and future actions and the state of knowledge and alternativeness of those participating in the social interaction at hand" (Levinson 1983:23). Odebunmi (2006:22) opines that, "for communication to be effective, participants have to be sensitive to the cues that are given off by the entirety of the locale in temporal, spatial, cultural, psychological and physical terms". Hymes (1964) identifies a number of features of context. They are participants, topic, setting, channel, code and message form. The participants concern the speaker, hearer, reader, and so on. Topic is what is being talked about. Setting has to do with the place and time of events including physical relationship of participants. Channel involves the medium which could be speech, writing or sign. Code could be language, dialect or style of language being used. Message form is communication variety; chat, debate, story telling, sermon, love letter, and so forth.

Osisanwo (2003:75-97) classifies context into physical, socio-cultural, psychological and linguistic contexts. Physical context includes the participants, the activities (merry making, quarrelling, listening to a broadcast, reading a newspaper), the place (school, church and mosque) and the time (morning, afternoon or night). Socio-cultural context involves the social and cultural environment within which a language is used. For example, in a country where people from different ethno-cultural backgrounds are using a language, the element of their beliefs, habits, values, systems, cultural heritage and religion will be different. Adequate interpretation is necessary for a speech act that is socio-culturally based. Psychological context has to do with the state of mind of each of the interlocutors, whether it expresses sadness, joy, anger, happiness, boredom, excitement or bitterness, for example, a girl whose father has just died. Linguistic context involves the choice of words or synthetic types for coding the message. For instance, an elderly person talking to his younger ones may speak to them in proverbs, parables and other figurative forms to express his opinion. It is very important that the listeners understand the message. The concern of a language analyst is to see whether the speakers use language for any peculiarity.

To ignore the relevance of context in language use is to imply that there are no rules governing language use or that there are no cultural influences on linguistic performance. Dundes (1975:255) opines that "most of the works of folklorists have been with text and that texture has been almost ignored". He adds that "a discussion of a proverb without mention of what the proverb evokes is as fruitless as studying literary allusions without knowing to what the allusions allude" (p. 263).

In the views of Odebunmi (2006:22), "context provides the background from which the meaning of a word springs". Context embraces linguistic and non linguistic factors of language use. The meaning of words meanings are inextricably linked to other words in a linguistic context (Alo 2004:74). This is an aspect of context as provided by conditions to construct meaning in a manner that is socially acceptable. Locke (2004:15-19) claims that:

> the relationship of lexicon (dictionary) to the social context of the utterance can be thought of as exemplifying the way in which codified sign systems in general (verbal, visual, behavioural) are rendered meaningful only in relationship to the social structures which constitute them.

Halliday developed a framework for describing the context of situation, the social context of a text which allowed for exchanged of meaning. The field of discourse is the general sense of what a text is about. It refers to 'what is happening, to the social action taking place. This aspect is compared with Bakhtin's (1986) sphere of communication. Halliday's tenor of discourse is concerned with the participants, their relationship, their roles and relative status. His mode of discourse focuses on its function - the way discourse is organized, the medium (print, spoken, and so on) and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories of functions as persuasive expository, didactic and the likes (Halliday and Hassan, 1985:12).

For an adequate description of any language event, cultural context and practice are important. Context resolves ambiguities in spoken or written language. It is the continually changing surrounding, in the widest sense, which enables the participants in the communication process to interact (Alo 2004:74). We shall quote an Akan story cited in Nwachuckwu-Agbada (2002:32) to explain the relevance of

context to proverb study: an Omanhene (Paramount Chief) who had heard another Omanhene to be well versed in proverbs, had sent his linguist to him praying to him that he might recite a hundred proverbs to pass them over to his own Omanhene. The linguist went and, having been given water to drink as the custom demanded, was asked the reason for his appearance. He told the king the reason. The king asked him to close his eyes. After a time, he was asked to open them. The king asked him what dream he had dreamed. He replied that he had not slept to be able to dream. The king interjected saying 'You have rightly answered. Go and tell your Omanhene that one sleeps to dream, proverbs do not come out of the absence of a situation (Evans-Pritchard 1963:4-7). The anecdote above emphasizes the relevance of context in relating the meaning of proverb and shows that there are automatic association between proverbial utterances and circumstances of usage. In the opinion of Nwachukwu - Agbada (2002:33-34):

> It is not easy to establish when this realization took place in African culture but it would seem that the use of proverbs in nearly all aspects of the informal education, of the African child, and the facts that practically every activity conjures its own proverbs are evidence of an immemorial awareness of the place of context in proverb application.

Commenting about Chinua Achebe as an ethnographic data, Seitel (1969:128) observe that believes that, if it could be shown that the novelistic depictions of cultural features are substantially accurate, and then it would not be unreasonable to assume that accounts of proverb usages were similarly true to life.

2.7 Characterization in literary works

Etymology shows that the term character is derived from the ancient Greek word 'kharakter'. The earliest use of it in English in this sense dates back to the Restoration, although it became widely used after its appearance in Tom Jones in 1749 and in African oral tradition since time immemorial. Ukala (2012:3) defines characterisation as "the creation and portrayal of characters in a play or a narrative by ascribing to them certain attributes which make them, not only recognisable, but also distinct from others. Characters are imitations of real people". Character is the

representation of a person in a narrative or work of art such as a novel, folktale, play or film. Character is a model of communication which conveys special messages from the author/narrator to the reader/ audience. This denotes that characters are the basis from which themes of a novel or work of art and intentions of the authors are drawn. Characters may be presented by means of description through their actions, speech, or thoughts (Ukala 2012:3).

Regarding the relation between character and plot, Sternberg (1985) argues that character is not subordinated to plot in works of art (as in Aristotle's view and modern structuralism) but that there is a two-way traffic between them, an inferential movement from character to action and action to character. Character development is very important in character-driven literature where stories focus not on events but on individual personalities. In ancient and modern literature the two elements of a story are events and characters (Bennema 2009a). Much has been written about events and on the logical or causal sequence of events known as 'plot'. Character appears to be neglected in literary analysis. Similarly, Rimmon-Kenan (2002) remarks that the elaboration of a systematic, non-reductive but also non-impressionistic theory of character remains one of the challenges poetics has not yet met. "with few exceptions, literary criticism has not advanced beyond the well known categories of 'flat' and 'round' classification of characters" (Forster 1976). Schools and Kellogg (1966) commenting about the Hebrew literature in the ancient times opine that character in primitive stories are invariably 'flat' 'static' and quite opaque and the inward life is assumed but not presented in primitive narrative literature. The absence of an articulate and comprehensive theory of character is partly due to Aristotle's idea that character is fixed and secondary to plot (Aristotle, *Poetics* 6:7-21), on which twentieth-century Russian Formalism and French Structuralism have capitalized. Another reason is the complexity of the concept of characters. Characters resemble people but are not real people. Bennema (2009b) makes attempts to distinguish between character and characterization. According to him, consideration of characters involves attempts to understand what a character is, and how the reader can reconstruct character from indicators in the text. Characterization refers to the authors techniques of constructing character, how the various indicators have been put along the text continuum.

Alter (1981) examines Bible characters. He asserts that "Hebrew characters who are treated at any length exhibit the capacity for change, and this developing and transforming nature of character is one reason why biblical characters cannot be reduced to fixed 'Homeric types'. Sternberg (1985) affirms also that "biblical characters such as Jacob, Joseph, Saul or David can hardly be labelled as 'static', or 'flat'. They can display change, unpredictability, ambiguity, complexity and surprise".

In Ancient Greek literature, characters are developed through their actions and thoughts, and through external factors. For Aristotle, character is unchanging: character has to do with people's nature and qualities (Poetics 6:12). Characters reveal moral choice (*Poetics*, 6:24). Aristotle's character comes close to the notion of disposition, people's inherent qualities that influence their thought and actions. Aristotle's notion of character compares to the modern category of flat or static. Gill (1983) sums up the issue:

> It is often claimed that in the ancient world, character was believed to be something fixed, given at birth and immutable during life. This belief is said to underlie the portrayal of individuals in ancient historiography and biography, particularly on the early Roman Empire and to constitute the chief point of difference in psychological assumptions between ancient and modern biography. (Gill, 1983, cited in Bennema, 2009a:5)

Lesky (1967) finds it unsatisfactory to label his protagonists as types but the term 'round' is also inadequate since they lack the abundance of individual features that can be seen of modern characters. Gill (1983) ascribes personality to Sophocle's character by associating personality with a response to people that is emphatic (that is understanding someone by placing oneself in the place of other person) rather than moral (that is evaluating a person from the outside in terms of vice and virtue) and with a concern with the person as an individual rather than as the bearer of character traits which are assessed by reference to general moral terms. Although the Sophoclean characters could have personality, Lesky (1967) argues that the characters are unable to change since Sophocle adheres to the basic idea in ancient Greek culture that the inherent qualities of people determine their character after a revolution in

ideas about nature. Some characters are given personal features, such as a name and the novelists often make psychological remarks beyond the stereotyped categories 'good' or 'bad', thereby providing the character with a true psychological existence that comes close to ordinary people.

In modern fictions, the view that character is subordinate to plot was further developed by Russian Formalists (such as V. Propp and French Structuralists (such as A .J. Greimas), arguing that characters are merely plot functionaries. Chartman (1978) challenges this Aristotelian and Structuralists approaches to character. He argues that plot and character are equally important, with Rimon-Kenan (2002) suggests that character and plot are interdependent. Chatman (1978) disagrees that characters in fiction are mere words restricted to the text. He contends that characters should be treated as autonomous beings that we try to figure out. He maintains that to curb 'a God-given right to inform and even to speculate about characters' would be "an impoverishment of aesthetic experience. He does not however confuse fiction and reality. According to him, "characters 'do not have 'lives' beyond the text but we endow them with 'personality' only to the extent that they are familiar to us from real life". He points out two important features of traits: (i) inferred trait: often the trait is not named in the text but inferred (ii) culturally coded trait since readers rely upon their knowledge of the trait-name in the real world. Therefore, he defines character as a paradigm of traits, in which trait is a relatively stable or abiding personality quality. Bennema (2009) agrees with Chatman (1978) to a great extent, but she realizes that Chartman's character as "a paradigm of trait" may become too static a construction where the reader reaches a point where he can no longer integrate an element within a constructed category. This implies that the character has changed.

2.7.1 Classifications of characters

One of the earliest and well-known classifications of characters in literary criticism is Forster's (1976) categories of 'flat' and 'round' character. Flat characters or types are built around a single trait and do not develop, whereas round characters are complex characters that have multiple traits and can develop in the course of action. He classifies characters according to traits and development. Harvey (1965) categorizes characters into four, namely: (i) Protagonists: the central characters in the

narrative. (ii)Card- characters, that support and illuminate the protagonists (iii) Ficelles-typical characters, who serve certain plot functions (iv) Background characters (characters according to traits and development). Harvey (1965) classifies characters according to narrative presence or importance. This classification does not improve our understanding of the characters themselves but only of how active they are in the plot. If we accept Chatman's (1978) definition of character as a paradigm of traits, Forster's (1976) "psychological" classification has scope but is still too "reductionistic" since not every character would neatly fit into either one of his categories. As a result of the above, some scholars have further refined Forster's classification.

Rimmon- Kenan (2002) draws attention to character classification of Yosef Ewen, who advocates three continua or axes upon which a character may be situated: (i) Complexity: characters may vary from those displaying a single trait to those displaying a complex nexus of traits, and in-between there can be various degrees of complexity. (ii) Development: characters may vary from those who show no development to those who are fully developed. (iii) Penetration into the inner life: characters may vary from those who are seen only from the outside (their minds remain opaque) to those whose consciousness is presented from within. Some other scholars hold the same opinion with the above. For example, Sternberg (1985) and Bar- Efrat (1989) perceive characters to move along a continuum rather than to exist as two contingencies, either flat or round. This would imply that, for a narrative that is true to life, the focus of characterization should be on the degree of characterization rather than on, characterization as primarily typical. The classification of character as points along a continuum is a significant development but the question of how such a continuum should look has not been resolved.

Baker (2000) gives four classification of characterization which he divides into two groups: flat/round and static/dynamic characters. A round character manifests the natural excellence that is expressed in a distinct sphere (physical, intellectual, moral, and so forth). The various traits of a round character will not all line up in some coherent hierarchies. A wealth of distinct aspects of intelligence must be observed in each of these realms. For example, at the physical realm, he should be agile, graceful, swift and beautiful. The brilliance of his intelligence should not only

be on logical competence, but also on imaginative powers and aesthetic sensibility. He must not only be tactically clever, but must also be strategic. Ethically, he should be evidently courageous and resolute as well as clear-sighted about the rights of individuals to realize their potential. In essence, he should not only be strong willed, he must also be committed to presumably sound values. A flat character easily changes his mind. He is chronologically indecisive. He has a simple set of traits when he is faced with decisions. He ties himself in knots thinking of a host of pros and cons and ends up procrastinating his way into decisions, for example the car he intends to buy gets sold to someone else, the wife he intends to marry leaves in disgust and the two weeks of his holiday run out.

A static character is one that does not undergo an important change in the course of the story. He remains essentially the same at the end as he was at the beginning. He also remains cheerful, humble, easy going or, on the other hand, outgoing, bitter, resentful, cynical, suspicious and selfish. A dynamic character is the one who undergoes an important change in the course of the story. These are not changes in circumstances but changes in some sense within the character in question. Change in insight or understanding (of circumstances, for instance) or change in commitment in values. The change (or lack of change at stake in this distinction is a change in the character (nature) of the character (functional figure). The protagonist undergoes a radical change in his self- identification. Whether this change is good, however, depends on whether we judge it to represent a 'fall' or an achievement. When a drastic change in one's circumstances (whether good or bad) might motivate a change in one's outlook in life. If it results in this sort of change, we are confronted with a dynamic character. The definition of characterization adopted for this work is that of Ukala (2012), while Baker (2000) classification of characterisation is also adopted for our analysis of characters.

2.8 Scholars' perspectives on the use of language in the plays of Ola Rotimi

The major characteristics that distinguish the use of language in Ola Rotimi's plays have been identified by scholars. Among them are the use of simple structures, selection of Nigerian variety of English expressions (words and phrases) and selection of images in the context of the culture of the Yor6bq people. Although they are

relatively easy to understand as texts and in performance, Ola Rotimi's works are embellished with the use of proverbs. These proverbs express literal and figurative meanings and are very theatrical and popular with Nigerian English-speaking audience. Ola Rotimi winnows and selects words, phrases and images that run close to vernacular parlance. In the opinion of Ukala (2000:91), Ola Rotimi tempers the phraseology of the English language to suit "the ear of both the dominant semi-literate as well as the literate classes, ensuring that his dialogue reaches out to both groups with ease in assimilation, clarity and identification". This results in an adventurous brand of English which assimilates the flavour tones, rhymes, emotional and intellectual content of (indigenous) language and thought (Ukala (2000:91, Osanyin 1983:4-5, Ogunbiyi 1981:35 and Adelugba 1978:217).

The gods are not to blame, Kurunmi and *Ovonvamwen Nogbaisi* were written predominantly in this indigenized brand of English. The plays are peopled mainly by traditional elders and aristocrats, who are illiterate and whose indigenous speech patterns Rotimi recaptures in the English language. Since the speech pattern is structured in the traditional cultures represented in his major plays (for example he portrays Yoruba culture in *The gods are not to blame* and *Kurunmi)* while he portrays Edo culture in *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*), speakers of Yor6bq and Edo languages identify with the English in the plays. Apparently, Rotimi reserves indigenized English, enriched with proverbs, poetry and analogies, for pro-classical tragedies with traditional cultural settings and personages. However, that brand of English does not feature in *If... a Tragedy of the Ruled,* which has cosmopolitan setting and characters and no tragic hero in the classical sense.

We shall give an example of indigenized English, which derives partly from what Rotimi calls "imagistic simplification" (Rotimi 1991b:28) In *The gods are not to blame*, there is this exchange:

> Odewale: I cannot name names
> Chief: Why not?
> Odewale: All Lizards lie prostrate: how can a man tell which Lizard suffers from bellyache? (P.25)

All speeches in the said tragedies are not written in the parlance just exemplified. This parlance is used mainly by elders in formal discussions. It drops at

urgent and informal moments. It is also hardly used by woman and children, who are seen as presumptuous if they address elders in adages and parables. Furthermore, the white men who appear in *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Kurunmi* do not use language in that manner. Yet it is used frequently enough to give the plays a prevalent and distinctively indigenous linguistic ring. The ingenuity, humour and beauty of the manner of speaking never cease to fascinate the Africans. The challenge of decoding it never fails to engross his African audience.

Idiophone and non-verbal expression also occur freely in Rotimi's plays. They are readily identified with by his audience. In the cultures portrayed by him, these devices are commonly employed. Noss (1972:75) describes the idiophone as:

> a descriptive word that, unlike the verb (which merely) creates an emotion, creates a picture; it is sensual, enabling the listener to identity a feeling, a sound, colour, texture, expression movement for silence through his own senses. The idiophone is poetic; it is in the purest sense imagery.

The idiophone is not, however, a 'word' in the lexical sense, like onomatopoeia. Rather, it is a sound, the meaning of which depends on its context. It may be a dispensable addition to a complete sentence, but with the important function of making the sentence clear, as in these examples: "when una talk munumunumunu finish make una fin me come for my house" (*Our husband p*.68). "Master, why are you biting people yaun yaun like that, this evening?" **(***Hope of the living dead:* p.79). Each of the idiophones, like imagery, inspires in the Nigerian a vivid mental picture of its referent, with its full nature and import. According to Ukala (2000:97),'munumunumunu' creates the silhouette of comparators engaged in a hushed talk that will come to naught. 'Yaun yaun' recalls the threatening snaps of a distressed dog'.

Ukala (1990) suggests that a qualifier might be replaced with the idiophone. For example, "By dat time… Your Betty go done old kune-kuje, kuje-kuje" *(If*….p.22), or a group of words as in, "they were returning from Ilorin in peace not troubling anybody". All of a sudden: "gbam gbam, gba!" (*Kurunmi* p.53). "Kune-kuje, kuje-kuje' is a substitute for "well-well" (Nigerian Pidgin for "very well") while

gbam…gbam… gha gha gha is a substitute for "they were attacked with guns and machetes. In the transmission of the folktale by print, the use of the idiophone helps in capturing "traditional linguistic flavour" which is a crucial determinant of the authenticity of translation (Ukala 1990:297). The same function is served by the idiophone in Rotimi's plays. By adding the idiophone to his African phraseology of the English language, Rotimi enhances the authentic ring of his work, which inspires the African audience to identify with it.

Another important use of language in Ola Rotimi's works is the use of polyglotism, which involves the use of many traditional languages in the play (Rotimi 1991a:28). This feature occurs remarkably in *Hopes of the living dead* and *If (…)* Here is an example from *If (…)*

> Mama Rosa: Dis na my broder way I go bail now – now for Police station, Sah, Dem catch am for fishing port say eno pay tax (…) Banji: I see: what really happened?
> Mama Rosa: (...) Moiku uko o pirii (….)
> Fisherman: Duko o piri, yeri njibabo
> Mama Rosa: He say him be fisherman
> Fisherman: Tarri da so njibabo
> Mama Rosa: Hm papa na fisherman (….)
> (pp.25-26)

This is the beginning of the fisherman's story to Banji which covers two pages and a half. According to Ukala (2000:98), "using polyglotism, Rotimi attempts to solve a linguistic problem apparent in his earlier plays and one which confronts many African creative writers (…)" When a character who is proficient only in the English language and another one proficient only in a given indigenous language are engaged in a dialogue, they have the problem of communication. Another example of polyglotism is the interaction between Okavbiogbe (the chief security officer of Benin) and Philips (the British Vice-Consul) with Idiaghe his Benin-born guide (*Ovonranwen Nugbaisi*, pp.29-30).

Rotimi also adopts a strategy in which there is audience participation in the action. He allots a feature of mannerism to Madam Ajanaku in *Our husband has gone mad again* "No more no less". In the view of Ukala (2000), in performance, after Ajanaku has said it once or twice, the audience, in keeping with traditional practice,

joins her in completing it each time it recurs in her subsequent speeches. What we then get is."Madam Ajanaku: No more. Audience: no less" (p. 68). The same feat is achieved when one of Rotimi's characters directs a question to the audience, for example, Man wey carry Ogbono soup-pot for hand, and di man way carry foo-foo for head, na who go fin who (*Our husband*, p.68).

The review above confirms that the major concern of the playwright in his works is to reach out to his Nigerian audience. A non-Nigerian audience of his texts may not appreciate the beauty embedded in his use of language.

2.9 Theoretical framework

2.9.1 The Ethnography of Communication

The ethnography of communication (EOC) is a method of discourse analysis in linguistics which draws on the anthropological field of ethnography. EOC takes both language and culture to be constitutive and constructive. "Ethnography of communication conceptualizes communication, as a continuous flow of information, rather than as a segmented exchange of messages,"(Lindlof and Taylor 2002:44). According to Cameron (2001), "EOC can be thought of as the application of ethnographic methods to the communication patterns of a group". Dell Hymes, according to Littlejohn & Foss (2005:312) suggests that cultures communicate in different ways, but all forms of communication require a shared code, communicators that know and use the code, a channel, a setting, a message form, a topic, and an event that is created by transmission of the message.

EOC can be used to study the interactions among members of a specific culture or, what Philipsen (1975) calls a "speech community." Speech communities create and establish their own speaking codes/norms. Philipsen (1975:13) avers that "Each community has its own cultural values about speaking and these are linked to judgements of situational appropriateness". The meaning and understanding of the presence or absence of speech within different communities will vary. Local cultural patterns and norms must be understood for analysis and interpretation of the appropriateness of speech acts situated within specific communities. Thus, "the view that "talk" is not anywhere valued equally in all social contexts suggests a research strategy for discovering and describing cultural or sub cultural differences in the value

of "speaking". "Speaking" is one of the symbolic resources that are allocated or distributed in social situations according to distinctive culture patterns (Philipsen, 1975: 21).

In the opinion of Saville-Troike (1982:1-2), the ethnography of communication is particularistic and generalizing. On the one hand, it is directed at the description and understanding of communicative behaviour in specific cultural setting, but it is also directed towards the formulation of concepts and theories upon which to build a global meta theory of human communication. It is concerned with holistic explanations of meaning and behaviour. Much of the impetus for this approach was Hymes challenge to Chomsky's linguistic competence. Instead, Hymes proposes that scholarship focus should be on communicative competence – the tacit social, psychological, cultural and linguistic knowledge governing appropriate use of language (including but not limited to grammar) (Schiffrin 1994:8). Communication cannot be assumed to be constant across cultures. Cultural conceptions of communication are deeply intertwined with conceptions of person, cultural values, and world knowledge, such that instances of communication behaviour are never free of the cultural belief and action systems in which they occur.

The focus of EOC is to examine topics, such as: subject matter (what the speaker needs to know to communicate and learn appropriately) and the speech community (the way communication within it is patterned and organized as systems of communicative events and the ways in which these interact with all other systems of culture). Other concepts are communicative competence (which extends to both knowledge and expectation of who may or may not speak in a certain setting, when to speak and when to remain silent, to whom one may speak, how one may talk to persons of different status and roles, the appropriate non-verbal behaviour at various contexts, and so on), purpose and needs of the participants (Hymes, 1961:77). These include such categories of functions as expressive – conveying feelings or emotions, directive, requesting or demanding, referential (true or false) prepositional context, and metalinguistic reference to language itself. This is similar to Searle's (1977) classes of illocutionary acts: representatives, commissives, and so forth, (Saville-Troike 1982:2-3). Searle (1979) criticises Austin (1962). First, he regards Austin's classification as of illocutionary verbs rather than illocutionary acts. He notes further

that even when the classification is regarded as one of illocutionary verbs, not all the verbs listed (for example, intend) are really illocutionary verbs. He observes also that 'there is a great deal of overlap from one category to another and a great deal of heterogeneity within some of the categories', that is, 'a very large number of verbs find themselves smack in the middle of two competing categories. 'For example, the verbs 'describe; is listed by Austin (1962) both as a verdictive and an expositive. Moreover, Searle argues that not all the verbs listed in each category really satisfy the definitions given by Austin. For example, 'nominate', 'appoint' and 'excommunicate' do not imply the 'giving of a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action' (Searle, 1979:11).

Searle (1979) proposes an alternative to Austin's (1962:153-164) classification. The first category of the alternative is referred to as 'assertives', and its members commit 'the speaker (in varying degrees) to something being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition'. Examples of verbs which mark assertives include 'boast', 'complain', 'conclude', and 'deduce'. Searle observes that most of Austin's expositives and verdictives belong to this class and the simplest test of its members is that they can be characterised as true or false. The second category in Searle's classification is 'directives', and they indicate attempts by a speaker to get a hearer to do something. Verbs denoting directives include 'ask', 'order', 'command', 'beg', and 'advise'. Some of Austin's behavitives (that is, 'dare', 'defy', and challenges') and his excercitives belong to this class, and so do questions. Searle's third class of illocutionary acts is 'commissives', which 'commit the speaker… to some future course of action'. The class is marked by such verbs as 'promise', 'vow', 'pledge', and 'swear'. The fourth category, 'expressives', is represented by verbs such as 'thank', 'congratulate', 'apologize', 'condole', and involve expressing ' the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content'. The fifth category is 'declarations'; and the defining characteristics of this class is that 'the successful performance of one of its members brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality. While agreeing with Searle's criticisms of Austin's classification of illocutionary acts, and thereby acknowledging the superiority of Searle's classification over Austin's, Bach and Harnish (1982) present an alternative taxonomy of

communicative illocutionary acts, which is apparently more explicit and more comprehensive.

Schiffin (1994, 141-142) gives the classificatory grid of EOC proposed by Hymes (1972), which is known as SPEAKING grid: each letter is an abbreviation for a different possible component of communication. (S-Setting/Scene, P-Participants, E-Ends, A-Act sequence, K – Key, I – Instrumentalities, N – Norms of interaction and interpretation, G – Genre). To further clarify the SPEAKING grid, Saville-Troike (1982:137 – 138) gives a ten point description of the components involved in the analysis of a communicative event which are likely to be salient (Hymes 1967: 1972; Friedrick 1972). The components include: the genre or type of event (for instance, Jokes, story, lecture, greeting, and conversation), the topic or referential focus, the purpose or function of the event in general and in terms of the interaction goals of individual participants. The settings include location, time of the day, season of the year and physical aspects of the situation (such as, size of the room, arrangement of the furniture). The participants involve the age, sex, ethnicity, social status, or other relevant information about the participants and their relationship to one another. The message form takes account of both vocal and non-vocal channels and the nature of the code which is used (for instance, with language variety). The message content or surface-level denotative references consist of what is communicated. The act sequence or ordering of communicative events takes account of speech acts, including turn taking and overlap phenomena. The rules for interaction consist of what proprieties should be observed. The norms of interpretation takes account of the common knowledge, the relevant cultural presuppositions, or shared understanding, which allow particular inferences to be drawn about what is to be taken literally.

2.9.1.1 Setting (genre, topic, purpose, function and setting)

In Saville-Troike's (1982) approach, the first four components comprise the scene, or extra-personal context of the event. Of all of these, only the setting may be directly observed. Choice of language form often affects the time of the day, day of the week or season of the year while place and time may also affect the meaning of greetings. The questions to be answered regarding the scene involve why the kind of communicative event happens and how the setting looks like.

In respect of understanding the significance of a setting, questions that are asked relate to how individuals organize themselves for various purposes, the belief that exists in the group, knowledge and significance of cardinal direction, the beliefs or values associated with concept of the time of the day or season and behavioural perceptions or taboo associated with them. Other components of the scene are not directly observable. The relevant background questions for both genre and purpose are to be categorized according to indigenous perceptions and division. These might involve what the culture considers sacred and secular. Other questions are about the belief and practice associated with natural phenomena, the range of behaviour approved for work and play, the worth of special occasion, and, whether there are signs of participation in any ritual event.

2.9.1.2. Participants

Participants are made up of speakers and learners or the writers and the readers, depending on the medium of communication. The basic descriptive question to answer about participants is about who is taking part in the event? An adequate description of the participants involves not only observable traits, but also background information of the composition and role relationship within the family and other social institutions, distinguishing features in the life cycle, and differentiation within the group according to sex and social status. The questions to be answered in the view of Serville-Troike (1982:141) are about members of the family, the hierarchy of authority in the family, rights and duties of each family member, criteria for definition of sages, periods, transition in life, who has authority over whom, what the varieties of social control are.

In the context of literature, for example, the sender of the message may not necessarily be the addressor. The sender may be the author of the literary piece, while the addressor may be the character in the work. Besides, the addressee may be a character in a literary work, while the receiver will be the reader of the work.

2.9.1.3. Message form

Both verbal and non-verbal codes are significant in the message form and act sequence components of communicative events, and each type of code is transmitted by both vocal and non-vocal channels. This is more important in studying the

message form of the various social, cultural and situational constraints on communicative behaviour. Serville-Troike (1982:143) provides a table reflecting the relationship between code and channel in communicative event:

Table 2.9.1.3: Codes and Channels in Communicative Events

	VOCAL CHANNEL	NON-VOCAL CHANNEL
Verbal Code	Spoken language	Written language (Deaf)Sign, whistle, etc. Whistle/Drum Language. Morse Code
Non-Verbal Code	Paralinguistic/Prosodic features	Kinesics, Proxemics, Eye behaviours pictures and Cartoons

In most communicative events, the message is carried by both verbal and non-verbal codes simultaneously. In some others, only one may be involved. Although such forms are universal, the specific value and meaning of each are relevant only in terms of individuals or particular groups.

2.9.1.4. Message content

Knowledge of the message content involves understanding the meaning of what is not said and presupposed by members of the group, as well as what is said. Here silent communicative acts are to be distinguished from the pauses which may not occur in conversational turn taking, or between questions and responses, but such temporal patterning is also conventional and relevant in ethnographic description. Silent acts are parts of the verbal code while pauses are part of the non-verbal.

Among the questions which Saville-Troike (1982:144-145) says may be asked about message form and content are "What gestures or postures have special significance or may be considered objectionable? What meaning is attached to direct eye context? What range is considered normal speech behaviour? What language taboos are there? and What should not be discusses?"

2.9.1.5. Act sequence

The components of act sequence involve information about ordering of communicative acts within an event. In the opinion of Gottman (1971:149),act sequence deals with "the sequencing of action in which the move of one participant is followed by that of another, the first involves establishing the environment for the second and the second confirms the meaning of the first, in ritual events" such as greeting, leave taking, complimenting and condoling. Ordering is usually very rigid in this case but less so in conversation. Communicative acts may be characterized in terms of their function with a typical example of the message form and content often listed. In most cases, description is usually at the level of abstraction, which accounts for regular patterns in recurring events.

2.9.1.6. Rules for interaction

Rules in this concept refer to prescriptive statements of behaviour of how people should act, which are tied to share value of the speech community. The rules for interaction component include an explanation for the use which is applicable to the communicative event. The rules may additionally be descriptive of typical behaviour, which may not be a necessary criterion for inclusion in this component. How and the degree to which this 'idea' is indeed 'real' are part of the information to be collected and analyzed, in addition to positive and negative sanctions which are applied to their observance or violation. Some of these rules are already codified in the forms of aphorisms, proverbs, or event laws or they may be held unconsciously and require indirect elicitation and identification. Rules for interaction are often discoverable in relation to their violation by others, and feelings that contrary behaviour is 'impolite' or 'odd' in some respects. Examples of rules for interaction are turn-taking rules in conversation, politeness, non-verbal behaviour, silence, and so on.

2.9.1.7. Norms of interpretation

This refers to all the cultural knowledge needed to fully understand communicative events. They usually constitute a frame of reference, some kind of background knowledge against which norms of interaction are created and evaluated. Norms of interpretation may be related to rules of use (norms of interaction) in the

prescriptive sense, but the positive or negative evaluation and sanction which characterize the latter are not a necessary condition for the existence of the former (Serville-Troike 1989:155).

2.10. Justification for the choice of theoretical framework

Ethnography of communication theory has been considered relevant in this study. It choice was informed by our attempt to examine how and to what extent the use of proverbs in the selected plays of Ola Rotimi has been influenced by the socio-cultural contexts of the Yoruba people. Ola Rotimi is a Yoruba man who has a clear knowledge of Yoruba culture and oral tradition which he uses to his advantage in his works. This knowledge of his is exploited to the fullest in the process of creating the world depicted in his plays. Hence, It helps him in situating his texts, categorising and describing his characters in his portrayal of the Yoruba in his artistic creation. Ethnography of communication includes aspects of speech act. Aspects of sociolinguistic choice that are studied in the work are the roles of the "interractants" in discourse - who is speaking, to whom, where, when, how and why? Our choice of ethnography of communication is to explore the relevance of the contexts that proverbs users find themselves in the selected dramatic texts to the culture of the people the playwright is depicting. Saville-Troike's (1982) version of Hymes (1972) feature of socio-context which has been encapsulated as "SPEAKING" has been utilized.

A sociolinguistic approach has been considered suitable for the present study because it:

1. Explores the different contextual variables that determine the choice of proverbs in the selected plays.
2. Describes the sociolinguistic features of the proverbs and how these vary, depending on the individual speakers, the subject matter, the speaker's communicative goal and contexts of the discourse.
3. Gives satisfactory explanations to how the contexts of discourse determine the various functions proverbs are used to perform.
4 Categorises the contexts features of the proverbs and classifies the characters that use them.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE SELECTED TEXTS

3.1 Introduction

The three plays have their backgrounds in Yor6bq culture. A lot has been written about the Yor6bq people who have been described as one of the largest cultural aggregations in West Africa with a history of political unity and a common historical tradition. For example, Johnson's (1921) *The History of the Yorubas* reprinted in 1997 confirms this. The concern of Ola Rotimi in the three plays touches on the history, socio-political activities, tradition, religions and warfare of the Yoruba people in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times. Apart from issues on the topics above, there are few issues on the ideas and thoughts of the Yor6bq people. The Yor6bq are thoughtful in their ideals about various subjects, such as destiny, wisdom, pride, life, justice, truth, kindness and friendship. These abstract ideals are encapsulated in their oral tradition, such as songs, proverbs, Ifa, incantations, part of which are now being collected and amplified by modern Yor6bq writers and philosophers (Babalola 1966:33). The Yoruba spreads across the country and beyond. They predominantly occupy the western and southern parts of Nigeria. The Yor6bq people are found in)g6n, +y-,)nd9, Lagos, $k8t8, and parts of Kwara and Kogi States of Nigeria. Although the source and period of their migration remain unresolved, theories and myths advanced by Yor6bq historians about the origin of the Yor6bq people share unity of possible migration. All the sources attest to the fact that the Yor6bq are a people with ancient kingdoms, strong political organisations and a rich cultural heritage. Some scholars traced their origin to the East; others have suggested that their origin stem from Mecca in Saudi Arabia; still others theorised a possible migration from the upper Nile as a result of upheavals in the ancient Egypt. Because of these various non-Negro origin theories of the people, some scholars have concluded that they were not in fact of Negro blood, and their culture and civilization not African.

However, resent investigations on the origin have greatly reduced the credibility of the Middle-East theory. For instance, observation and the analysis of the artistic archaeological findings of art have also strengthened the ideal that artistic

product belongs to 'a people who seems to have been of wholly African origin.

The second body of tradition is more generally known among the Yor6bq. According to this tradition, the various tribes of the Yor6bq nation trace their origin from Od6d5wz and the city, Ile-Ife (*Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 2012). From there, Oranmiyan, the grandson of Od6d5wz went to establish +y--Il3, which later became the known traditional capital of the old +y- Empire. The Yor6bq people scatter into various places where they are now, both within the country and in the Diaspora. Currently, the Yor6bq land is peopled by the $gbqd0, now Yewa, the $gbq, the *j2b5, the R1mo, all in Ogun State. The +y- people are in +y- State; the various small groups of related people collectively known as the Ekiti, among who are the people of +t5n, Ad9, *k=l3, and so on, all found in $k8t8 State. The *lzjc, the)nd9 and other groups are in)nd9 State. The *j2xz, the If2 and a part of +y- people occupy the present day +xun State. The Yzgbz and the *gb9m8nz of *l[rin are in Kwara State. While the *gb9m8nz and Kzbz people are in part of Kogi State. There are the K3tu people in Republic of Benin, among others. All these speak a language known as Yor6bq which belongs to the Sudanic family (*Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 2012).

3.2 The plot of *The gods*

The play begins with the enthronement of King Odewale as the King of Kutuje. As a warrior, he rescues the people of Kutuje from the terrible attacks of the Ikolu people. This leads to his coronation as the King of Kutuje. He delivers his maiden speech to the people. Through this, he expresses how he paid the people of Ikolu in the same coin. According to him, they were paid in the same coin they win: "he who pelts another with pebbles asks for rock in return". After his speech, the chiefs invest him with royal robes and crown. Odewale rules for about eleven years with Queen Ojuola, the queen to the former King as his wife. She is the mother to the four children by Odewale. However, the joy of the people does not last as they suffer the attack of pestilence, sickness and death of their young ones. The people meet the King for solutions to the problems. In an attempt to pacify them, King Odewale compares sickness with rain and says "whoever the rain sees, on him it rains" meaning that sickness is everywhere including his own palace. In order to get rid of

the pestilence, the king and his council send Aderopo to Ile-ife to consult Orunmila. The report from Ile-Ife reveals that the trouble in the land is on vcaccount of the curse on the murderer of the former king. However, the name of the murderer is not mentioned by "*Ifq*".

On a second journey, Aderopo is sent to bring Baba Fakunle, the Ifa priest, from Ile-Ife. The investigation on how to find out when and how the former king was killed begins. In the process, King Odewale soon becomes the prime suspect of the act. In the opinion of King Odewale, a villain might have been sponsored to kill King Adetusa. King Odewale swears before)g5n, the God of Iron, that he would expose the murderer of the former King. On arrival, Baba Fakunle, the seer, smells the truth about the murderer right in the palace. King Odewale becomes uncomfortable with this, and insists that the culprit be brought to book. However, the priest is accused of insincerity. After some persuasion and disagreement, Baba Fakunle confirms King Odewale as the wanted murderer. Coincidentally, Alaka, an old friend of Odewale pays a visit. King Odewale tells him about his adventures, including how he kills a man who provokes him in his farm. King Odewale continues his search for the murderer of the King. Alaka's accounts disturb the peace of the king and he turns down Alaka's request to eat with him. Queen Ojuola narrates an encounter that she earlier had with the same blind soothsayer which led to their losing their first baby. The same moment, Alaka breaks the news of the death of Ogundele, the hunter, a foster father of Odewale. The king invites the chiefs to share in the news that is brought to him by his friend. He narrates the conflict he had in the farm with an old man who died in his hands. Alaka confesses in public that the hunter, Ogundele, and his wife are not King Odewale's biological parents. This confession causes a serious disagreement between Alaka and Odewale. He further demands to know who his parents actually are. With much pressure, Alaka confesses that he picked Odewale in the bush when he was hunting with Ogundele his master. He further confesses how a man brought Odewale into the bush, 'wrapped up in white clothes like a sacrifice to the gods'. Gbonka, the surviving messenger to King Adetusa, is invited to shed more light on the story of the death of the former King.

The king orders Alaka to be brought before Gbonka for identification. He later reminds Gbonka that he gave his master, Ogundele, a baby boy when they met at

Ipetu bush, with the baby boy tied up in cowry strings. Pointing to King Odewale, Alaka says "that is him. The very baby you brought into the bush tied up in cowry-strings". Gbonka is ordered by)g5n priest to kill the baby, but he tries to spare his life. King Odewale insists on knowing who gave him birth. Queen Ojuola is pointed to. She is King Odewale's mother and the bearer of his four children. This causes a moment of mental obsession. King Odewale staggers into the bedroom where he meets Queen Ojuola lying motionless on the bed. She has already committed suicide.

Bending over Queen Ojuola, the King pulls a dagger from her body which she had pushed deep by her own hand to reach her very womb. King Odewale is also later found in the bedroom, with his eyes pierced and profusely bleeding. At the end, a moment of reconciliation is noticed between Aderopo and King Odewale as the King calls him 'my brother' and expresses his sadness over the wrong he has done to him. In response, Aderopo says it is the way the gods meant it to happen. King Odewale cautions Aderopo not to blame the gods. Leading his four children into exile, Odewale warns the people to learn from his downfall.

3.3 Thematic preoccupations of *The gods*

The play is set in the kingdom of Kutuje, the domain of Odewale. Kutuje has a monarchical form of government, although Odewale is not the absolute ruler. He has a council of chiefs with whom he rules the people. Among the major themes of the text are: hopelessness and restoration of hope, political oppression and dictatorship, suspicion, fate and tribal mistrust.

Hopelessness and restoration of hope is the first theme of the text. This is shown in the circumstances that led to the ascension of Odewale to the throne of Kutuje when a saviour-figure is needed to deliver them from the throes of slavery. The people of Ikolu have enslaved Kutuje people and taken over their land. So, Odewale's arrival at the scene gives hope to a people who are despairing. Odewale is not only an able soldier, but also a charismatic leader. Through his leadership, the Ikolu threat is warded off permanently.

Odewale saves Kutuje from war and enslavement. He identifies with the plight of the people although he considers himself a stranger in their midst. After that initial problem, another more grievous situation arises. Since the people of Kutuje have always looked for a saviour whenever there is a problem, they still go to Odewale to

complain to him about the sickness, pestilence, death and chaos on the land. They do not expect the salvation to come from any other source apart from their one-time saviour. Odewale scolds the people for over-dependence on him. As a result of his high handedness, he does not consult his council, neither does he confer with his queen before he banishes Aderopo from the kingdom; a decision he ought not to have taken unilaterally.

Another theme in the text is suspicion and political oppression. Odewale believes that Aderopo is plotting against him, to pull him down and become the ruler of Kutuje. If Aderopo is found guilty, he has committed a very serious crime against the state. In some countries, people who commit treasonable felony are executed. In order to determine the guilt of Aderopo, the king has three options which he does not fully exploit. The first option would have been to produce witnesses who would have sworn to the fact that they have evidence that really confirms that Aderopo desires to take over the throne of Kutuje, thereby colluding with Baba Fakunle to implicate Odewale in the murder of King Adetusa. Secondly, he would have allowed Aderopo to swear an oath of innocence. If he were guilty, he would be caught by the oath. Odewale initiates this, telling Aderopo to swear to)g5n to prove his innocence. However,)g5n priest prevents Odewale from completing the oath. The priest implores Odewale not to swear. According to him, "my master)g5n, is a god with fierce anger, son; one does not call him to witness so freely" (35). Being innocent, Aderopo is ready to swear to the oath. The priest may have feared that Aderopo is not innocent. The idea of not swearing to the oath is not Aderopo's but that of the over-cautiousness of the)g5n priest. We could not blame him for guarding the youths against reckless oath taking as he thought. However, Odewale does not wait for the matter to be settled. He swears to the ironic oath, "May my eyes not see Aderopo again till I die" (p.35). After pronouncing the oath, he bites the sword and goes into the bedroom. Ironically, by the time Aderopo will see Odewale again after the oath; his eyes have been gouged out in fulfilment of the oath. The last option is divination fine. However, the option would not have been welcomed since Baba Fakunle, the only priest who would have done it is accused of complicity. The disagreement of the king with Baba Fakunle leads to the problem at hand. Hence, Aderopo is banished without a fair trial. The king is the accuser, prosecutor, and judge at the same time.

The attitude of king Odewale towards Aderopo is tyrannical.

Furthermore, Odewale is disrespectful in his attitude to the chief priest, Baba Fakunle. The fact that the priest is blind alone ought to have made him treat Baba Fakunle in a humane and sympathetic manner. However, in his harsh and rash manner, he casts aspersions on the dignity and integrity of the priest and almost makes a mess of him. He abuses the priest. Hence, he incurs the wrath of the priest who proclaims him as the murderer he is seeking to find. Every member of Odewale's cabinet would have felt hurt if he was side-tracked when an important decision is to be taken. Odewale governs in suspicion, since the circumstances in which Adetusa died is not known. Odewale fears that if he does not take care of himself, he might also die mysteriously. He accuses Aderopo of plotting his overthrow on mere suspicion. Since Aderopo is the one sent to bring Baba Fakunle, Odewale would not have done otherwise.

Another major theme in the text is fate. The gods have predetermined that Odewale, the cursed baby boy, would kill his father and marry his mother. Efforts of King Adetusa and his wife to prevent this evil proved abortive. Gbonka, the king's messenger, on the request of the)g5n priest, is asked to take the child to the evil forest with cowries tied to his neck. However, on getting to the forest, Gbonka meets Ogundele and Alaka. On request, he gives them the baby boy. Unfortunately, as he becomes older, Odewale is not made to know anything about his past, so he believes that Ogundele is his biological father and Mobike is his mother. As time passes on, Odewale becomes a grown up and he consults a priest at Ijekun-Yemoja. The priest tells him that he is not whom he thinks he is, and that he will kill his father and marry his mother. Had Odewale hid the warning of the priest 'not to flee', it might have been possible to avert the will of the gods. Odewale runs away. The place he runs to becomes where he unknowingly goes to fulfil the first part of the will of the gods – he kills his father. He flees from that place until he gets to Kutuje and meets the people wailing over the suffering they encounter as a result of the invasion from Ikolu. He fights and gets victory for them. As a saviour of the people, Odewale becomes the crowned king of the people. As tradition demands, Ojuola, the wife of the former king automatically becomes Odewale's wife. Thus, the second part of the mission of the

gods comes to pass.

One would feel displeased that when the priest says that the child be taken to the forest to avert the will of the gods, the other priest would have left him in Ijekun-Yemoja rather than predicting that he will still kill his father and marry his mother. Had Odewale been left there in the real sense he would not have been able to meet his biological parents. Nasiru (1979:24), comments that "the adaptation does not work well along this line, and part of the problem stems from Rotimi's imposition of the Greek world view on the Yoruba one".

Another theme of the text as explained by Ola Rotimi himself is theme of tribal distrust. In the words of Nasiru (1979:24): "Rotimi has pointed out the title of the play presupposes a political theme that warns the developing African nations not to put the blame of their shortcomings on the former colonial masters".

The intention of Rotimi specifically is to refer to the Nigerian Civil War which has tribal distrust as one of its major causes. Odewale in the play is roused by his sense of patriotism, as well as his belief about his invincibility which leads to his committing an act that later leads to his undoing. In the view of Lindfors (1974:60):

> *The Gods*, does not refer to the mythological gods or mystic deities of the African pantheon. Rather it alludes to natural political powers such as America, Russia, France, England, etc, countries that dictate the pace of world politics. The title implies that these political gods should not be blamed or held responsible for our own national failures.

The gods would not have been able to manipulate Odewale had he not believed so much in them and all their predictions. King Adetusa too would have used his initiative, unfortunately he believes so much in the gods that he had to contend that the child be taken to the evil forest for sacrifice. The same experience applies to some African nationalists and political leaders who take over power from the Europeans. Had they known, they would not have allowed the white people to deceive them into the perpetual slavery that the people are indirectly subjected to now. Unfortunately, with their eyes wide opened, they allowed the white imperialists to

lead Africa into the "bottomless pit" of colonization.

3.4 The plot of Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi*

The events in the play revolve round the warfare between the $gbq, and the *jzy4 on the one hand, and the +y- and *bzdzn people on the other. The play begins with Abogunrin, the aide de camp to Kurunmi, celebrating)g5n, the god of Iron. The arrival of Balogun Ogunkuroju, the chief warrior of Ijaye, is later followed by that of Kurunmi the Aare-ona-kakanfo, who arrives from +y- in a bad mood. This results from the proposal by Alaafin Atiba to make his first son, Adelu, king after his death, an attempt to slap tradition in the face. This was kicked against by Kurunmi: "the day the Iroko tree loses its root, is the day the baby ant shits on it" (pp.15-16). While Kurunmi is ruminating over the issue, Timi Ede and Oluyole of Ibadan arrive to persuade Kurunmi to change his mind. However, the two are not received warmly. Angered by the poor reception, they change their language of persuasion to warning. Being the only chief that opposes the Alafin's proposal, Kurunmi holds firm to tradition. To him, "Atiba dies this evening, his first son Adelu dies by midnight. We bury them both: everybody is happy" (p.19).

The Christian missionary, Rev. Mann, and his converts are presented with his converts expressing their fear of "*eg5ng5n*" masquerade. In Kurunmi's compound, emissaries arrive from Alafin to give Kurunmi a chance to choose between war and peace for not supporting the Alafin's views. Kurunmi opts for war, as he sends a piece of white cloth soiled with "okra stew" to Alafin Adelu to show his contempt for his reign. As Kurunmi is preparing for the war a violent disagreement begins between him and his soldiers. The soldiers accuse him of unilaterally deciding to go to war without their consent. They resolve this and pledge their support. At a crucial meeting of the council of elders and the warriors of Ibadan, the two most prominent war leaders - Balogun Ibikunle (the war General) and Ogunmola (his second in command), are in violent disagreement over whether to fight Kurunmi. Ibikunle, the more elderly and more experienced warrior advocates a peaceful approach to the crisis, while the fiery arrogant, but equally powerful Ogunmola rejects the path of peace. In Kurunmi's camp, Ijaye is getting ready for war. The British consul in Lagos

is planning intervention, as Rev. Mann is asked to secure Kurunmi's permission. Kurunmi makes it clear to Rev. Mann the philosophy of the frog when he (Rev.) continues to preach forgiveness in the face of aggression. According to Kurunmi*: "B6 5 mi n b6 5 ["* Give and take is the best philosophy of life" (pp.50-51).

Kurunmi sends message to Ilorin to seek the support of Afonja. Only one returned out of all the twenty-one soldiers sent, an indication that Ibadan is ready to fight. Prayers are offered by Kurunmi and the entire Ijaye warriors and the war starts. The five sons of Kurunmi, Arawole, Ogunlade, Sangodale, Fatoki and Efunlabi, are asked to lead five thousand soldiers to defend Iwawun: where Ijaye people get their supply of food. Ijaye soldiers are happy at the beginning of the war for their apparent victory. As a result of their excitement, the warriors cross River Ose to pursue Ibadan warriors against instructions. The Ibadan warriors lay an ambush against them, killing all but only three out of five hundred soldiers.

There is a clear indication that the Ijaye soldiers are not doing well so the Egba warriors are invited to assist them. Ibikunle, the Chief warrior of Ibadan consults Kujenyo, a native doctor, to predict for Ibadan to win the war. A spell is cast on the Ijaye warriors so that they can cross River Ose the second time. Being desperate for a quick victory that is necessary for a quick return to their own land, the Egba warriors blackmail Kurunmi into allowing the warriors to cross River Ose. Rev. Mann gives the progress report of the war. According to him the combined team of Egba and Ijaye perform well until 3.p.m. of June 4, 1860 when they cross the river Ose, and the allied force are ambushed and crushed. We are brought to the resolution of the armed conflict when a clear report shows that Ijaye has been defeated. Both Ijaye and Egba losE thousands of soldiers. Kurunmi condemns all attempts to attribute the loss of the Ijaye warriors to the advice of the Egba; in his opinion, "when a one-legged man needs help, he must not say that the friend who carries him on his back stinks" (pp.83-84).

At Ibadan camp, there is a report that Basorun Ogunmola is around to congratulate Balogun Ibikunle and other warriors on the victory they have had so far. Efforts are put together to attack upper Ogun, Erin and Iwawun, which are still being controlled by Ijaye. Kurunmi is preparing for his final battle when he is told that the battle is lost in Iwawun with all his children killed. The head of his eldest son,

Arawole, is presented to him. The Egba are noted for recounting their bitter experience at the war. There is a report that Rev.Mann has left Ijaye. The Egba soldiers also leave the Ijaye people to face the wrath of Ibadan people alone.

At the end, Kurunmi commits suicide. However, before that, he instructs his aides-de-camp to bury his body in the bed of River Ose. A report reveals that the Ijaye city eventually falls to *bzdzn warriors. Kurunmi's body is taken to River Ose for burial as agreed. This marks the end of a great warrior, Are-Ona Kakanfo, Kurunmi of Ijaye.

3.5 Thematic preoccupations in *Kurunmi*

The subject matter of *Kurunmi is* the warfare between the Ijaye and the Egba on the one side, and the *bzdzn and +y-, on the other side. On the surface, the war is fought to protect the tradition of the people. Beyond this, however, it is clear that there is a deep-seated rivalry and enmity between Ibadan and Ijaye. Rotimi uses the theme of war to illustrate the climax in an ongoing struggle for power and supremacy in an empire that is internally divided. Among the themes in *Kurunmi* are struggle for power, abuse of power, pride and arrogance, and the consequence of change. The central theme in *Kurunmi* is the struggle for political and economic power. The ambition of Kurunmi to expand his territory is clearly revealed in Ogunmola's address to the Ibadan council of elders and warriors. Ibadan people do not join the war against Ijaye for their love for the Alafin or the new constitutional changes, but to tame Kurunmi's over-ambition and hold the balance of power. The Egba people have enough trouble on their hand to risk any foreign adventure. The threat from Dahomey forces is more than they could contend with. In the words of Somoye:

> We have come to fight and our people at home await our quick return… The single-breasted vandals of Dahomey may attack our fatherland at anytime; we cannot therefore linger here in Ijaye quenching your own fire (p.74).

Ajayi and Smith (1975) explain why the Egba agree to fight at all. Emissaries are sent to the Egba from Ibadan asking them to mediate in the dispute or to ally with Ibadan or remain neutral. The decision of Ibadan to war makes Ijaye appeal to the

Egba for support, leaving the correspondence between Dahomey, Ibadan and Oyo and the possibility of a coalition between them, perhaps with the assistance of the Ijebu. The argument of Are Kurunmi impresses them that the real objective of Ibadan is probably Ab10k6ta and that they have attacked Ijaye first, to clean up the way. Hence, the $gbq people go to war for their political and economic interest.

The participation of the British, directly and indirectly, is through the activities of the missionaries. The British have vested interest in the economic fortunes of the area. They, therefore, throw their weight behind those who could guarantee their economic survival in the area. Apart from the struggle for the control of the trade routes, land and taxable peasants are also basic ingredients of power which forced the combatants to the war front.

Another important theme in *Kurunmi* is abuse of power by the individuals in the drama of bloodshed. It is the intention of Rotimi that we see people like Kurunmi, Ogunmola, and Oluyole as very powerful people whose decisions have great impact either negatively or positively on the lives of their subjects. Kurunmi is not only the hero of the drama, but also the most powerful individual citizen in the whole of the +y- Empire. The play derives its title from Kurunmi's name and, the character of Kurunmi is very neatly portrayed to project heroism and power. Kurunmi is well aware of his powers and he takes every step to consolidate and extend the same. Rotimi props him up by a specially constructed poetic language. The crowd of Ijaye prop him up with their song and obeisance. Kurunmi's awareness of his powers is illustrated in his reference to Ibadan: "Those bush goats of Ibadan have forgotten the horrors of my power they once felt at the battle of Odogido. Ehn… Let them come again for the horror of another lesson…" (p.32). One of his subjects testifies to the fact that Kurunmi has grown too powerful, and that his power even chokes them. Dissatisfied by his unilateral declaration of war, five of his courageous soldiers confront him on behalf of the people of Ijaye, especially the elders; who Kurunmi has totally ignored in his exercise of power: *"Kurunmi: I lead wrongly. Amodu: You have become too powerful my Lord. Fanyaka: You Lord it over everybody, over everything….." (p.39).* Even his enemies acknowledge Kurunmi's power and valour. The level headed Ibikunle cautions the erratic and over enthusiastic Ogunmola: *"You expect so much, my brother. You forget it is Kurunmi himself we fight: the Are Ona*

Kakanfo. Quick victory by arms is not so easy, my brother" (p.85).

As the Are Ona Kakanfo, Kurunmi is expected to secure the entire people of Oyo Empire. It is rather ironic that it is the Chief Security Officer who wages war against the people he is expected to secure. Apart from that, the wife of Lijofi, one of Kurunmi's soldiers, comes to find out about the fortune of her husband. Considering the situation of the woman, pregnant and yet carrying another baby, it is expected of Kurunmi to attend to her politely rather than the harsh way he does. No matter how unimportant a warrior is, at that moment, Kurunmi should have honoured the woman by attending to her politely. Kurunmi's comments leave much to be desired in this regard:

> Woman: Lijofi is one of your best soldiers; he is only a boy –
> Kurunmi: I did not notice him then
> Woman: Why not? Was he not fighting for you? How could you have noticed him?
> Kurunmi: Where elephants were being slaughtered by the thousands, how could a man take notice of the death of a house rat?

Another theme identified in the text is pride. The conflict in the play is conflict of interest among a people belonging to the same ruling class. It is easy to see the influence of pride on the actions of the major characters in the play – Kurunmi, Ogunmola, Ibikunle and even in the chief warriors from Egba. The installation of Adelu as the new Alaafin of +y− hurts Kurunmi's personal pride. He perceives it as an affront. He is adamant to the appeals of Oluyole and Timi Ede who come to persuade him to accept the decision of the majority. He dismisses the two chiefs arrogantly. Apart from the issue of tradition, it is clear that Kurunmi feels too proud to pay homage to Adelu who is his own son's age mate. He says it clearly: "Adelu now expects our old selves to go before him and play the loyal bush-pigs,… a man gets too old for self-disgrace: We are too old to bush-pig" (p.31). Even when Oluyole reminds him that he is chief of Ijaye by the special grace of Alaafin Atiba, Kurunmi proudly tells him off: "I thank Atiba". Kurunmi's character dictates his fate. In the end, it is difficult to believe that the proud, self-conceited, arrogant Kurunmi would realize and uphold that: 'When a one legged man needs help, he must not say that the friend who carries him on his back stinks; even if that helper does stink' (pp.83-84*).* Kurunmi is

the one legged man, and the Egba warriors are the stinking friends.

The theme of pride and arrogance is also evident in the character of Ogunmola. Ogunmola being against Kurunmi is not so much for patriotic reasons but because Kurunmi disgraced him personally. Ogunmola while addressing the Ibadan council of elders and warriors says: "... Cactus is bitter to him who has tasted it. I, Ogunmola, have tasted Kurunmi's cactus of disrespect for his fellow man, and I know how bitter it is to the mouth" (p.46*)*. When Prince Olugbode cautions Ogunmola against bringing personal pains of the past into the issue that concerns the life and death of an entire race, Ogunmola is furious. He is visibly angry as he narrates the way he is humiliated by Kurunmi. For the remaining parts of the play, the memory of his wounded pride dictates his actions and reactions. It also determines his attitude towards all those with whom he relates. He insults and blackmails Ibikunle, his superior officer, for trying to prevent a fight with Kurunmi which jeopardises his only chance for revenge.

Ogunmola calls Ibikunle a coward and to reinforce his message, he sends a dead black cock (a symbol of cowardice) to Ibikunle, both as a challenge and as an affirmation of his opinion about the latter's cowardice. But in the heat of the battle, when the Egba join forces with Ijaye, it is to the same 'coward', Ibikunle that the brave Ogunmola runs for instructions. Ibikunle seizes the opportunity to deliver a lesson or two about discipline to the unpredictable Ogunmola.

Another important theme of the text is inevitability of change. The rebellion of Ijaye, the challenge of Ibadan, the conquest of the Alafin, and the intrusion of Muslims, Christians and the colonialists symbolize and encourage change. Unfortunately, not all the people realize the necessity for change. Kurunmi represents unchanging tradition. Timi of Ede and Oluyole of Ibadan recognize that change is the law of life. If this is the law, men must accept it. Whoever refuses to change will be destroyed by change. Kurunmi is destroyed for refusing and resisting change. It is not only him that is destroyed; thousand of men are destroyed in the process of change. Christianity succeeds in disrupting unity in Yoruba land. Ibadan, representing the ruthlessness of military dictatorship, emerges as the new ruler. This is the tragedy.

Conflict of culture is another theme in the text. It could be regarded as a sub-theme under the theme of change. Christianity has come in conflict with traditional

religion. Reverend and Mrs. Mann have come to convert the Yor6bq people into Christianity, asking them to renounce their father's culture. Most importantly, Rev. Mann's attempt to make Kurunmi turn to Christianity, while he himself would not become a pagan, leads to a most interesting exploitation of the philosophy of the frog. Simply stated, the philosophy is one of give and take (*B6 5 mi n b6 5 [)*. This is a philosophy that Christianity and colonialism cannot understand – the principle of culture exchange.

3.6 The plot of *Our Husband*

The play opens with Lejoka-Brown, a former army major who resigned from the army to take care of his father's cocoa farm, preparing to participate in politics. He is also preparing for the arrival of his wife, Liza, from America. Liza eventually arrives earlier than scheduled. On arrival, Liza discovers that her husband has married two other wives, Mama Rasidat and Sikira. Mama Rashida is handed over to Lejoka-Brown after the death of her husband, an elder brother to Lejoka-Brown. Liza marries Lejoka-Brown at a marriage registry in Congo before she went to USA for further studies. Sikira was married only four months before the action in the play begins; for strategic political reasons. Lisa is already at home, while Brown and Okonkwo, his friend, are waiting for her arrival at the airport.

In the process of interaction between Liza and the two other wives, Mama Rasida and Sikira, at Lejoka-Brown's house, Lejoka-Brown arrives from the airport. Liza rebuffs and accuses him of breach of faith. Every attempt made by Lejoka-Brown to explain his predicament to Liza proved abortive. He explains to Liza that, as a Muslim, he is permitted to marry as many wives as possible. He pleads with Liza not to mar his political career. Liza requests to be treated as a guest and not as a wife in Lejoka-Brown's household. Liza requests also that "freedom", the protective snake to Mr. Lejoka-Brown, be removed from under her bed. Later, there is reconciliation between Liza and the other wives. Liza makes a dress for Sikira. She teaches Sikira and Mama Rasida how to live independently. She also gives them lessons about women liberation.The executive members of the National Liberation Party are meeting under the leadership of Lejoka Brown. They are of the views that Lejoka-Brown is old-fashioned and autocratic. To Lejoka-Brown, politics in Nigeria is like

war. So he insists on using a military approach. Other executive members except Okonkwo his friend decide to walk out on him.

Liza attributes her reason to want to leave Lejoka-Brown to his unfaithfulness. She speaks to other wives about equality between male and female. She emphasizes the need for Nigerian women to form their own political party. She opines that happiness in marriage does not solely depend on money. Sikira puts on the dress sown by Liza to the surprise of their husband, who think it is not decent enough for a married Muslim to wear. Lejoka-Brown lays down three new rules which must be obeyed by Liza. The first rule is that, her dress must cover all areas around, above and below her shoulders. She should no more put on knickers, tight trousers that expose her "geography" (P.58). The second rule he gives to Liza is that she must stop smoking cigarettes; while the third rule states that she should start acting as his wife. There is disagreement between Sikira and her husband. She packs her things in preparation to go back to her father's house with the conviction that, "Our husband has gone mad again" (P.59).

The members assemble for a meeting in the conference room of the National Liberation Party. A delegation of representatives of market women, which includes Sikira and her mother, Madam Ajanaku (the President of the National Union of Nigeria Market Women) is found in the room. The people are all there to hold the meeting of the Emergency Committee of the National Liberation Party. Despite the show of solidarity that is displayed during the press conference that took place in Brown's house, this meeting is a clear indication that there is serious disagreement between Lejoka-Brown and his followers. This might have been as a result of their being insulted by Lejoka-Brown in his house. Osagie condemns Lejoka-Brown's leadership as abjectly myopic, old fashioned, and authoritarian. He concludes with the proverb, when the vine entwines your roof… it is time to cut it" (p.65) Lejoka Brown is the vine, the leader that has to be removed from office. In approval of Osagie's position, Mallam Gasikiya calls on Madam Ajanaku to address the assembly. Madam Ajanaku expresses her regret to have given her daughter to Lejoka Brown as wife. She also explains how he kicked her daughter out like a dog. As a result, Madam Ajanaku promises that the market women would only vote for the party if Lejoka-

Brown is removed as the party's flag bearer. She further requests that a female candidate replace Lejoka-Brown.

Towards the end of the play, the concern of Lejoka-Brown is shown on the intention of Liza to leave him. He pleads with Liza for forgiveness. Lejoka Brown attributes his criticism to the norms of his religion which forbid Liza's mode of dressing. Lejoka-Brown explains to Liza how he came in contact with the two wives– Mama Rasidat and Sikirat. Mama Rasidat got married to him through inheritance while Sikirat is taken so that he could win the election. Liza says she does not marry for anything other than love. Information is received that Lejoka-Brown has been voted out of office. The attempt to fight back by Lejoka-Brown is prevented by Liza.

There is a resolution to the disagreement between Lejoka-Brown and Liza. Okonkwo is embarrassed at the way he meets Liza and Lejoka-Brown when he comes to brief Lejoka-Brown about the new development in the party. When he was informed that Sikira, his former wife, is the new flag bearer of the party, Brown's comment is that "the world is coming to an end".

3.7 Major themes in *Our Husband*

One of the major themes of the text is polygamy. Marriage in traditional Yoruba culture is predominantly polygamous. The circumstances that led to the polygamous life of Lejoka-Brown are given in the play. He meets Elizabeth, a Kenya medical student, helping the Red Cross when he is serving on a UNO peace keeping force in the Congo. Liza takes very good care of him when he is wounded by a Belgian mercenary. Two months later, they get married at a court registry. On arrival from the Congo, Mama Rashida, the oldest widow of Lejoka Brown's late brother, is already betrothed to him. Although Lejoka-Brown never thought it would happen that way. When he comes back from the Congo, goes into politics. As a result, he takes a third wife, Sikira, the daughter of the President of the Nigerian Union of Market Women, so as to secure the votes of the market women. On arrival, Liza objects to Lejoka-Brown marrying other wives, claiming that her marriage to him is contracted in the court of law (p.39). Hence, she is violently in opposition to the polygamous arrangement. In her annoyance, she threatens to file an immediate divorce suit should

her husband fail to abide by the given conditions (pp.41-42).

Another theme is feminism and liberation. When Liza first arrives and sets her eyes on the two women, she takes Sikira for a housemaid and Mama Rashida for a washerwoman. In her view, they are inferior to her in status. However, after a period of interaction with the two women, she understands their situation. She becomes involved in their domestic life. She gives the two of them pieces of advice that eventually liberate them. She advises Mama Rashida on how to maximize her profits in her poultry business. With the new dresses that Liza sowed for her, Sikira gets to understand that she too can dress better than she is used to. Liza makes her understand that she too could participate in politics and be voted for as a political aspirant. Similar to the above theme is that of display of intelligence and wisdom by African women. Through common senses and intelligence, it is noted that Liza is able to reclaim her 'stolen' husband from the other two wives. Hence, it should be noted that the cordial relationship that exists among the wives is not quite a true reflection of the sensitive situation in African polygamous family. Understanding what she needs, Liza is able to liberate the two other women, the experience which makes them prefer to go their own ways rather than stay with Lejoka-Brown. Had Liza struggled physically to take over her husband from these two women, she would have failed, but she uses her senses and through that she reclaims her husband.

Political satire is another theme in the play. In the attempts by critics to examine the play as a political satire, it is noted that, as at the time the play was first presented in Yale in 1966, the army-in-politics syndrome has not yet gained ground in Nigerian politics. However, the first coup d'etat had already brought military rule to Nigeria. Ashaolu and Aseni (1986:38) say:

> A retired army officer seeking elective office was a much later phenomenon in Nigerian politics, consequently; no satirical intention seems to manifest itself in the person of Lejoka Brown who seeks to be elected on the platform of the Nigerian National Liberation Party.

The political activities experienced in the text may be a form of the playwright's prediction of the future of politics in Nigeria. Ashaolu and Asein (1986:36) are of the opinion that Lejoka-Brown's identity in politics, might be the

playwright's projection of possible developments in Nigerian politics, as the former civilian government was toppled in a military coup on Saturday, 15th January, 1966. The focus of the action in the play is Lejoka-Brown, an aspiring politician. Lejoka Brown represents any Nigerian who aspires to hold a political office after winning the election in his constituency. His dreams and proposed methods of realizing them are fit for satire. As a successful farmer after his retirement from the army, Lejoka-Brown ought to be contented with his inherited wealth. However, he is too ambitious and too greedy to remain what he is. According to him:

> Politics is the thing now in Nigeria; mate. You want to be famous? Politics. You want to chop a big slice of the National Cake? Na politics. Once we get elected to the top, wallahi, we shall stuff ourselves with huge mouthfuls of the National chin-chin (P.4).

Another theme in the text is exposition of the greed of African political leaders. For example, the text exposes Lejoka-Brown's selfish motive for going into politics. It also exposes his inordinate ambition for fame, power and financial mismanagement. He presents himself like a politician who would rather take all he can from the nation than render any useful service for the good of the country. The parliaments are filled up with his type all over African continent, particularly Nigeria. The audience would have no problem identifying Lejoka Brown as a satiric character whose ridicule emanates from what he says and does, rather than what others say about him. He sounds the more ridiculous when he later admits that the cocoa business he has engaged in brings in good money. He boasts about his wealth to his friend, Okonkwo. "...If they put you on auction right now – you, your degrees, your coat – everything… I can buy you ten times, and still have plenty money left to buy you all over again ..." (p.6).

It is clear that Lejoka-Brown's move to join politics could be regarded as an investment meant to yield manifold profits later. He regards politics as war, a battle that must be fought and won at all cost:

> It is war! Politics is war. Ooh- I am taking no chances this time... the last time I took things slow and easy and what happened? Chuu! I lost a bye-election to a small crab, baby

monkey" (p.7).

However, when he presents his strategies to the executive committee of the National Liberation Party, he meets stiff opposition from the members, particularly Osagie and Mallam Gaskiya. Also, Lejoka-Brown manipulates events at the World Press Conference. At the conference, there is a brilliant reflection of how politicians present false pictures of problems militating against the solidarity and progress of their political party. It is clear from the meeting of the Executive Committee of the party that the party is now a divided-house.

Another important theme in the text is the need to disgrace corrupt and visionless political leaders out of politics. It is not surprising that Lejoka-Brown begins to have problems. The Nigerian society, as at that time, does not deserve a leader with such corrupt motives. Besides he appears to be too authoritative to be acceptable to his people. Hence, a vote of no confidence is passed on him with Sikira, his former wife, nominated to replace him as the party's candidate at the polls. The ultimate rejection of Lejoka-Brown's candidacy is more deflating than his previous loss of a bye-election, but he is not bothered by the party's decision. Ever before the change of the party's candidate is made known to him, he has already resolved to quit politics. In his conversation with Liza, he opines, "Elizabeth, I'm really very sorry for everything that happened. I'll go `back to the cocoa business, no more monkey politics for me *(P.75).*

With his quitting politics voluntarily, we one may want admire him on his courage and good thinking. The whole event looks ironical when we one realizes that the new candidate sponsored by the party is Sikira, a semi-literate woman, whose only qualification is that she is a daughter to the President of the National Market Woman Union. This is not a viable alternative to Lejoka-Brown's candidacy. However, it gives a true picture of what obtains in African societies.

Another important theme that could be deduced from the text is the theme of post-independence Nigerian society and the problem of transition to African type of democracy. The society in question has just a few years after political independence from the Whites. The reverse of what members of the political class promise the populace is what they give. Although Ola Rotimi tries to be prophetic that the leadership positions do not get to the 'hand' of people like Lejoka-Brown, however,

the pathetic part of the story is that political power ends up mostly in the hands of people like Sikira who do not even understand what it means to be a leader. The play is written close to the time a head of state in Nigeria declared that his country did not have financial problem, but the problem of what to do with money, a careless diplomatic release. The other likes of Lejoka-Brown that are in power loot the treasury. An example is the explanation given by Lejoka-Brown that, "once we get elected to the top, Wallahi, we shall stuff ourselves with huge mouthfuls of the national chin-chin" (p.4) is a pity.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXTS OF PROVERBS IN THE SELECTED PLAYS OF OLA ROTIMI

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the proverbs for analysis are divided into the psychological and socio-cultural contexts in which they are used in the selected plays. In the psychological contexts, there are philosophical, religious and crisis-induced proverbs. In the socio-cultural context, there are ideological proverbs, political proverbs and moral/ ethical proverbs. All the one hundred and fifty-six proverbs selected for analysis are grouped into three. In the first group are politics and crisis-induced proverbs. There are seventy-two proverbs in this group, constituting 48.64% of the whole proverbs selected for analysis. Out of this 48.6%, proverbs about politics are thirty-five, which is 28% of the total proverbs; while crisis induced proverbs are thirty-seven, 29% of the whole proverbs analysed.

The second group of proverbs has to do with philosophical proverbs which are classified into proverbs about fate, tradition and change. Ten proverbs 8% are about fate. Ten proverbs (8%) are also about tradition. Those about quest for divine assistance are seventeen in number, making 13.6% of the whole. Proverbs about change are five, which is 4% of the total proverbs.

The third group has eleven proverbs. They are proverbs about matrimony, gender struggle and human-rights. Proverbs about matrimony are (4.8%), proverbs about feminism are four (3.2%), while only one proverb relates to issue of human rights. A careful study of the three texts selected for analysis shows that Ola Rotimi has carefully studied the life pattern, culture and history of the Yor6bq people. If we put the plays in historic order, it *The gods are not to blame* is set in the pre-colonial Yor6bq culture, *Kurunmi* has its setting during the colonial era, while *Our Husband* is set in the post independent Yor6bq society. Through his treatment of the plays, especially *Our Husband*, Ola Rotimi has proved to be a prophetic and visionary writer. *Our Husband* a play produced in the middle of the sixties still reflects the political realities of Nigeria forty years after it was written. Ola Rotimi was able to see into the past and recapture the events that led to the Ijaye war of the early 18th century.

4.2 Socio-cultural contexts of proverbs in the selected plays

4.2.1 Ideological proverbs

An ideology is a set of ideas that constitutes one's goals, expectations, and actions. An ideology can be thought of as a comprehensive vision, a way of looking at things, common sense and several philosophical tendencies, or a set of ideas proposed by the dominant class of a society to all members of this society. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1974) defines ideology as "a form of social or political philosophy in which practical elements are as prominent as theoretical ones; it is a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and change it". The main purpose behind an ideology is to offer change in society, and adherence to a set of ideals where conformity already exists, through a normative thought process. Ideologies are systems of abstract thought applied to public matters and thus make this concept central to politics. Implicitly every political tendency entails an ideology whether or not it is propounded as an explicit system of thought. It is how society sees things.

The term "ideology" was born in the highly controversial, philosophical and political debates/fights of the French Revolution. It has acquired several other meanings from the early days of the First French Empire to the present. The word ideology was coined by Destutt de Tracy in 1796 (Kennedy 1979, Hart 2002), assembling the parts idea (near to the Lockean sense) and -logy. He used it to refer to one aspect of his "science of ideas". He separated three aspects, namely: ideology, general grammar and logic, considering respectively the subject, the means and the reason of this science (De-Trancy, 1801). He argued that, among these aspects, ideology is the most generic term, because the science of ideas also contains the study of their expression and deduction

Many political parties base their political actions and programmes on an ideology. In social studies, a political ideology is a certain ethical set of ideals, principles, doctrines, myths or symbols of a social movement, institution, class, or large group that explains how society should work, and offers some political and cultural blueprints for a certain social order. A political ideology largely concerns itself with how to allocate power and the extent to which it should be used. Some parties follow a certain ideology very closely, while others take broad inspiration from a group of related ideologies without specifically embracing any one of them.

Political ideologies have two dimensions: goals, which have to do with how society should work (or be arranged); and methods which cover the most appropriate ways to achieve the ideal arrangement.

Power consists of the ability to get your own way, even when others are opposed to your wishes. Power is authority. Politics is an instrument of power. Webbers identified three different sources of authority as charismatic, traditional and rational. Politics in Yor6bq history is traditional and it could be linked with monarchism (the rule of one) and conservatism (power in defence of established order). In *The gods*, the monarchical power of King Odewale is characterized by authoritarianism (authority is exercised regardless of popular consent). King Odewale wants an unquestioning obedience from the people of Kutuje. Most decisions are taken by him. The advice of his chiefs is not taken seriously when decisions of paramount importance are reached. Even the Ifa Priest who should have been a check on the excesses of the king is castigated by the king as lying. All these lead to the crisis which should have been averted.

In *Kurunmi*, the entire Yor6bq state in the 19th century is presented to us. At that time, the Alafin of +y- was the supreme head of the entire Yoruba Empire. The system of government operated then was monarchism based on checks and balances. The power of the Alafin is checked by the authority of members of the Oyomesi, the highest political council in the empire. According to Ogunsola (1977:29):

> The Oyomesi was the highest political council in the old Oyo Empire. Members of the council were Alafin, the Bashorun (Prime Minister), the chief of staff (the Kakanfo), the Oluwo (president of the Ogboni cult), the Ifa chief Priest and the chief Ilari (p.29).

During the period in question, with the size of the whole empire extended beyond the coverage of the entire Yor6bq land, the executive power of the entire empire was in the hand of the Alafin and his representatives. Then, there was the need to protect tradition in order to maintain established customs and institutions. Aare Kurunmi, a conservative leader and the generalissimo of the entire Yoruba warriors at the point in time, was of the opinion that the tradition of the land be protected against the intention of Alafin Atiba. The Alafin wanted his son, prince Adelu, to be crowned

as the next Alafin at his demise. This led to the crisis presented in the play. In the views of Mba (2007:120):

> The conservative belief relied on the accumulated wisdom of the past and institutions and practices that have been tested by time and (the beliefs) that it should be preserved for the benefits of the living and for generations yet unborn.

Other basic tenets of conservation identified by Mba (2007) apart from tradition and religion organization are "human importation, pagination, hierarchy, authority and property".

Also in O*ur Husband*, Ola Rotimi uses proverbs to present political power in the modern-day Yor6bq society. Considering politics in the present-day Nigeria, democracy tends to be the favoured style of government. However, the qualification expected of individuals that aspire to most political offices is not well spelt out. As a result, there are many members of the political class who should have been disqualified from aspiring to political position, for their lack of clear-cut agenda, inadequate education and moral stand, but who are still playing major roles in Nigerian national politics. An example of that is seen in Major Rahman Lejoka-Brown, a retired soldier who aspires to gain political power by all means. In his attempt to gain political advantage over his opponents, he uses miscreants to perpetrate violence. Many politicians take bank loans that they spend lavishly during political campaigns. As soon as they win the election, the emerging power spend public fund lavishly to offset debts, maintain their political thugs and embark on other inordinate ambitions. Some of these socio-political excesses are what Ola Rotimi uses proverbs to address in his texts. Some examples of these proverbs are analyzed below:

Proverbs 4-6

> He who pelts another with pebbles asks for rocks in return. **5:** It is not changing into the lion that is hard; it is getting the tail of a lion. **6:** Kolanut lasts long in the mouths of 'them' who value it! (p. 7 *The gods).*

Odewale cites the first proverb in his palace in the presence of the entire Kutuje chiefs, while the second and third proverbs above are cited by the Royal Bard to express the state of mind of the people of Kutuje. The first proverb above performs the illocutionary act of reaping. The three proverbs above show that during the pre-colonial era in the Yor6bq land, conquest at war could be a criterion for choosing a king. Also, spiritual investigation in the form of divination from Ifa is paramount in the process of making a king. The consequence of not taking the right steps in the process of making a king may be disastrous. The speech act performed in the third proverb above is illocutionary behavitive act, commiserating and rejoicing with the king for the victory achieved over Ikolu people and his consequent enthronement. Odewale has recently liberated the people of Kutuje from the Ikolu warriors. He is crowned as their king without the required processes of divination to confirm whether they have made a right choice. It is traditionally required in Yoruba land that rituals be performed before a king is enthroned. It is compulsory to consult Orunmila for approval. The Ifa priest interprets the message Orunmila gives as a riddle. The consequences of serious mistakes are not felt instantly until after a period of time. With the support of Odewale, the Ikolu people have been defeated: "the Ikolu people pelted Kutuje with pebbles and the Kutuje people have paid back to them with rocks". Odewale has changed to a lion (becomes a king). The future will tell, in the opinion of the Royal Bard, whether he, Odewale, gets 'the tail of a lion' (the authority of a king). It would also be decided whether Kola nut (power) lasts long in the mouth of King Odewale, who values it. The people rejoice that their saviour has become a king.

Proverb 7:

Joy has a slender body that breaks too soon
(p. 7 *The gods).*

Eleven years after the victory that led to the making of King Odewale, the gods become annoyed. Pestilence, diseases and death break out in the land. Efforts are made to restore peace to the land but it is to no avail. They later consult Orunmila and Ifa priest who were initially left out in their choice of a king.

According to tradition, the youngest wife of the immediate past king becomes the first wife of the new king. Queen Ojuola is still young, so she does not reject the

proposal made to her to be the wife of their new king. She does not know that an abomination is being committed. Within a period of eleven years, Queen Ojuola has given birth to four children for king Odewale. The gods become jealous, since king Adetusa (the dead king) is also a part of the ancestors in Yoruba world view. It is believed that the dead would not rest in peace as a result of the abomination committed. This leads to the calamities that break out later that cut short the joy of the people. In the view of Odewale, "joy has a slender body that breaks too soon". The peace in the land does not last long. The people are infected with sickness and death. Efforts are made to deliver them through the use of herbal medicine, but all to no avail. The king that was usually praised by the people becomes a subject of mockery and attack. Proverbs are cited to express the new impression of the people about their king during their trial period:

Proverbs: 9 -12

> When the head of a household dies, the home becomes an empty shell. 10: When the chameleon brings forth a child is not that child expected to dance? 11: When rain falls on the leopard, does it wash off its spots? **12**: How long must feverish birds tremble in silence before their keeper? (p.10 *The gods*).

These proverbs are cited by different members of Kutuje land (male and female) to express their disappointment at what has newly come upon King Odewale. This presupposes that the king can no more deliver them as he did in the past. He fights and delivers Kutuje people from Ikolu invaders. However, the king could not deliver them from mere pestilence, diseases and death. King Odewale becomes "the head of the house" in proverb 9; though he is alive, he is declared dead and his house becomes an empty shell. In proverbs 10 and 11, he is the metaphoric "chameleon's child" that is brought forth but refuses to dance. He is the "leopard" that has lost its spots as a result of mere rainfall. The same King Odewale is the implied "keeper of feverish bird" in proverb **12,** which "allows his people to tremble in silence". The semantic implication of these proverbs is that the people are no more enjoying the reign of Odewale as a king for his inability to protect them. The calamities broke out after eleven years of his peaceful reign. The people have enjoyed themselves for those

good years. In response to the outcry of the people, King Odewale soberly says:

Proverbs 13-15:

> My people… Sickness is like rain. Does the rain fall on one roof alone? No… Whoever the rain sees, on him it rains... 14: I do not know and cannot know the sun's hotness that burns and dried up the open land… **15**: Only a madman would go to sleep with his roof on fire (pp.10-11, *The gods*).

In proverbs 13 and 15 above, King Odewale carefully selects words to reply the allegation his own people levied against him. The speech act performed here is that of convincing the people that they are all affected by the crisis in the society. He compares sickness with rainfall; this is a "foregrounded" element that could not be restricted. According to him, members of his own household too are affected. He accuses the people of trying to underrate his ability to proffer solutions to their problems. He tells them he would not have folded his arms and allowed his subjects to suffer the way they did. He cites the example of some of his own children that are also sick. He explains further that sacrifices have been offered to different gods in the land. Some of them are "X=p=nn-", the god of the poxes, "$lz", the god of deviance, "Xzng9" the god of thunder and rainfall (p.11, *The gods*). Despite all these attempts, there was no solution to the problem.

The only option that remains to untie the knot is to send message to Orunmila at Ile-Ife to find out the cause of the problem. Afterwards, a message is sent to Baba Fakunle the priest of "Ifa" to interpret the riddle and advise them. The message of Orunmila and Ifa is that the problems happen because a murderer in the land killed the former king and such a murderer is still flourishing in Kutuje. Except the murderer is found out and made to face the wrath of the gods, the situation will remain the same. King Odewale puts in all his efforts to find out the said traitor that is behind this devilish act. This attempt turns King Odewale a dictator. He loses confidence in his chiefs and members of Kutuje society as a whole for being so wicked to have murdered their king. Every effort of his to investigate the crime reveals more of his past. At the end, King Odewale becomes the wanted culprit. Had the people of Kutuje followed normal procedures by consulting Ifa in their choice of a king, such calamity would have been averted.

During the colonial era, as depicted in *Kurunmi*, Alafin Atiba too fails to follow tradition in his attempts to choose his son Prince Adelu as a successor to the throne after his demise. Hornby (2005) defines tradition as "a belief, custom, or way of doing something that has existed for a long time among a group of people". In other words, it involves cultural continuity. It is transmitted in the form of social attitudes, beliefs, principles and conventions of behaviour. Kurunmi emphasizes the need to allow traditions that involve the first son of the king dying along with his father at his demise to continue (pp15-16). Ola Rotimi allows the interlocutors in his works to use different proverbs to express the same intention for the purpose of emphasis. Kurunmi alone cites all the nine proverbs below, in support of the need to follow tradition in the choice of a new Alafin. The immediate context is Ijaye where Kurunmi is reporting the meeting that the +y- kingdom chiefs had with Alafin Atiba making his intention known to have Prince Adelu rule after his death. However, the historic and macro setting of this work is the entire Yor6bq Kingdom over whom the Alafin is made a ruler. The kingdom consists of the people of +y- township, the Ibadan people, the Egba, the Ijesha, and so on, who are under the domain of the Alafin over whom Kurunmi is also made the Generalissimo (Zzre-=nz-Kakanf0). Some of the proverbs that support the need to follow tradition are cited by Kurunmi, as shown below:

Proverbs 72-74:

> When the garboon viper dies, its children take up its habits, poison and all (p.15, Kurunmi).7**3:** The plantain dies its saplings take its place, broad leaves and all (P.15, Kurunmi). **74:** The fire dies; its ashes bear its memory with a shroud of white fluff. (P.15, *Kurunmi*).

Proverbs 72-74 express the need for continuity of tradition. Kurunmi wants tradition to continue the way "the garbon viper and plantain transfer their strength for survival to their younger ones". This reason is also given for fire, whose memory is borne by its ashes. The illocutionary act performed here is expositive act of affirming the need for tradition to continue. For years, in the history of +y- Empire, the tradition is that when a king dies, his first son and some other leading officials die

with him. Ajayi and Smith (1975) avers that:

> At old Oyo, the kingship rotated in different segments of the ruling lineage. When a monarch died, his eldest son and his leading officials who shared office with him died with him. His other children usually returned into exile to seek adventure and await their turn.

Alafin Atiba does not want tradition to take its cause. He wants his first son, Prince Adelu who has been his companion on throne, to rule after his demise. Kurunmi cites more proverbs to support his views:

Proverbs75 & 77:

> The pride of bees is in the honey comb (P.15, *Kurunmi*).77**:** The pride of the weaver bird shows in the skilful design of its nest (P.15, *Kurunmi*).
> **75:** The pride of monkey is in his knowledge of the secret of treetops. (P.16, *Kurunm*i)

Proverbs 75 and 77 above are all cited to express the need to be proud of tradition. In the views of Kurunmi, tradition makes a people what they are as the pride of bees is in the honeycomb. The pride of the weaverbird shows in his ability to skilfully design its nest, and the pride of monkey is in the knowledge of the secrets on tree tops. Hence, the pragmatic implication of these proverbs is that the pride of a man should be in his tradition. In most Yor6bq societies, there are many royal families in a Kingdom, who always contend for the throne at the demise of a king. The death of a king and those of his major companions at his demise would easily pave the way for other contenders to the throne to take their turn. Hence, Kurunmi sees the intention of king Atiba to have his son reign after him as a slap in the face of tradition. It will not allow the next royal family to present a king or have any say in the issue of the choice of a new king as it is traditionally required. Expressing his concern about the consequence of the loss of tradition, Kurunmi says:

Proverbs 78 &90:

> The day the tall Iroko tree loses its roots is the day the baby ant 'shits' on its head (p.16, *Kurunmi*). **90:** The young palm tree grows

> tall rapidly and it is proud, thinking, hoping that one day it will scratch the face of the sky, have its elders before it touched the sky? (pp.35-36, *Kurunmi*).

The proverbs above explain the consequence of loss of tradition; "the day the people lose their tradition is the day their death begins" (p.16). Kurunmi believes that for life to continue meaningfully in the whole empire, the tradition of the people must be preserved. Failure to do so may cause crisis which will spell doom for the entire empire. Another major cause for concern is that tradition is the pride of the people and it is an instrument of instruction. It is also an instrument of peace and continuity. My people, the pride of man is in his tradition- something to learn from for the peace of his present, something to learn from for the advancement of his tomorrow"(p.16). Any attempt to lose tradition according to Kurunmi, will lead to a major setback to peace, instruction and continuity. The speech act that Kurunmi performs with the proverb above is verdictive act recommending tradition to the people as an instrument of social justice. However, in the opinion of Basorun Oluyole, Timi Ede and others who support Alafin Atiba, tradition must die with man (p.20).

4.2.2 Proverbs about politics

Proverbs also reflect the political situation in post-independence western Nigeria. Proverbs are used to analyze the political experience of the people in three different ways. They are used to comment on the violence/hooliganism experienced in political campaigns and to condemn the political leaders who encourage politics of "national cake sharing". They also comment on the process of political leadership selection/replacement and express clearly the political culture, beliefs and practices of the people. The proverbs below illustrate this:

Proverbs 136, 137 & 139:

> The impact of the human head on hard ground commands tears from the eyes (p. ix *Our husband*). **135**: The chameleon is no food (Agemo o se je, p. ix, *Our husband*). **137**: A tree that seeks a taste of brute humiliation may dare the reality of an elephant in a head long trust (p. ix). **139:** Politics is war (p.7, *Our husband*).

Proverbs in 135-137 are rendered in songs by political miscreants employed by Lejoka Brown to express his political strength. The proverbs also show the effects of proverbial songs during political campaigns in south western Nigeria. The political scenes of western Nigeria from the First Republic to the present dispensation are satirized in the proverbs. During such political campaigns, political thugs jobless artisans and armed robbers sing such political songs in support of their political employers. Lejoka Brown is the invincible political flag bearer of his political party that is being praised in the song below:

Agemo 0 xe jc.	The chameleon is no food.
Agemo 0 xe jc	Indeed, the chameleon is no delicacy.
Cn7 bq for7 s['l2 q foj5 s['k5n.	The impact of the human head on hard ground Commands tears from the eyes!
Lejoka –Brown l'zntcr7ba f5n.	The reality of Lejoka-Brown's presence itself commands instant awe!
Igi t'9 l9 'un y79 f'oj5 di Zjznzk5.	A tree that seeks a taste of brute humiliation,
Q for7 s[, erin q gor7 r2 k'[jq.	May dare the reality of an elephant in a headlong thrust!
Agemo 0 xe 3jc	Indeed the chameleon is no food *(P.ix, Kurunmi).*

A proverbial song is better rendered in the Yoruba language to retain its originality. The song suggests conflict, warfare, death, and so on, to the opponents of Lejoka Brown whom the political miscreants are working for. Throwing a challenge, means readiness to face the eventuality. The proverbial songs express indirect informative act, informing the public about their antics, warning whoever their opponents are to stay clear, and presenting their political candidate to the people as being invincible. The interlocutors are thugs; hence, there is no orderliness in their

interactions. However, they are obedient to their sponsor, who is their political lord. Innocent members of the public are expected to conduct their affairs carefully to avoid being embarrassed. Apart from issues of violence and hooliganism in elections addressed by these proverbs, they also show that it is very costly to contest an election in western Nigeria. Apart from the huge financial commitments to the political party and their political associates, a contestant also needs a lot of money to employ political thugs and miscreants who commit political frauds on his behalf. Examples of these were found during the First and Second Republics in western Nigeria. Many politicians take bank loans to achieve this end. When they win the election, they divert the public fund meant for the general welfare of the people to debt repayment. Lekoja-Brown remains "the chameleon that is no food for his opponents" (p.ix). He is the politician whose impact on the political scene commands respect from the opponents. The violence experienced in the campaign analyzed above shows that, indeed, politics is war in the part of the world being depicted in the play. A Yoruba adage says 'songs precede fights'. These songs presuppose that Lekoja-Brown is desperate to win the election. The implication is that he is prepared to engage in violence and 'crushing' his political opponents should they dare him. No wonder, Lejoka-Brown himself declares "politics as war" in proverb 139 above.

One important characteristic that distinguishes politicians in the south-western Nigeria in the First and Second Republics, even till now, as depicted in the choice of proverbs in *Our Husband,* is politics of national treasury looting. This is done in the name of 'national cake sharing', as shown in the except below:

Proverb 138:

> Man-u-wey go chop-u frog, make he kuku chop di frog u way get egg for belle **(**p.5, *Our husband*)

In the Nigerian political setting, especially the western part of Nigeria being portrayed through this proverb, the elite join politics for the purpose of financial gains, that is, to receive their own portion of the wealth of the nation. There are proverbs in Yoruba, Igbo and other cultures that support this. They believe that, if an individual wants to steal, he/she should steal enough money with which his people

would be happy and defend him. In some cases, they steal an amount that would be enough to plead the case in the law court and still have the remaining to share. A proverb in Yor6bq context corroborates this that: "if one wants to eat a frog, he should eat the one that has eggs". The context here suggests that the reason for contesting an election is to embezzle public funds. The proverb is an indirect informative act expressed in pidgin, suggesting the need to take a large share of the national cake. It is calculating and describing the quality of cakes to be taken. It calculates and describes the best option available to politicians to become rich in Nigeria is to embezzle public fund, that is "take a large share of the national cake". The proverb shows clearly what Lejoka-Brown has behind his mind before he goes into politics. The metaphoric "frog that has egg" is the huge sum of the public fund that political aspirants intend to embezzle. In the history of political leadership in the pre-colonial Nigerian society, leadership roles were about commitment to the plight of the people and concern for the development of the general society. However, with the advent of colonialism, leadership turned to master–servant relationship. Some of the effects of colonialism on African societies are noted in how African leaders take to the leadership style of the colonialists which encourages selfishness, greed, pride and self-glorification/aggrandizement in politics.

The observation of political historians is that, in the history of African traditional/pre-colonial leadership system, leaders lived among their own people. Examples of this are the monarchical styles of leadership in the traditional Nigeria societies, where the 'Obas, Obis, Emirs, live among their people. However, the patterns of leadership inherited from the colonial masters, which are strange to the practice of various African societies have become the order of the day. Since the so-called president, governor, senator, chairman of local government, and the like do not reside among their people, nobody has information about how they live on their domains, except their cohorts who are their accomplices. The "Eurocentric" pattern of leadership makes the leader live in reserved areas, while the led live as servants in their various communities. The worst part of it is that, instead of investing the ill-gotten wealth in their national economy, such is transferred to their foreign accounts. This has led to the nation's bankruptcy, lack of focus and inadequate development. Over the years, public fund assigned for projects worth of billions of naira has been

embezzled. Cases where a former president is 'declared' richer than the entire nation are common in Nigeria and entire Africa. No wonder most tribes in the country accord welcome with warm reception to their kin convicted of financial misappropriation instead of condemning them.

The four proverbs below explain the processes involved in the selection and replacement of political leaders in Western Nigeria:

Proverbs 149-151:

> When the vine entwines your roof, it is time to cut it (p. 66, *Our Husband*). **150:** "Die" cow way no get tail for n yash, na God na him de helep am drive fly Commot (p. 66). **151**: Because una mout' get one teet' inside inside, and una mouth go get wahala tel- e-e-e una take that rotten teet' commot! (p.67). 152**:** Man way carry "Ogbonno" soup for hand and di man way carry "foo-foo" for head, na who go find who go (p. 68, *Our Husband*).

Osagie, the secretary of the National Liberation Party, cites proverb 149 above. He does so to justify the need to replace Lejoka-Brown who, in his views, is 'abjectly myopic, old fashioned and authoritative in his leadership approach'. Proverbs 149-151 are cited by Madam Ajanaku, the president of the National Union of Nigerian Market Women to show an example of 'political' process of removal and replacement of political leaders in Western Nigeria. The proverbs also show that market women are very powerful in Nigerian national politics. This also confirms that political power in South Western Nigeria does not necessarily need high academic qualification.

At the meeting of the executive members of the National Liberation Party and the delegates of the National Union of Market Women, attempts are made to find a replacement for Lejoka-Brown who has just been voted out of office as the flag bearer of the party. Mallam Gaskiya, the former deputy leader, now emerges as the leader of National Liberation Party after the expulsion of Lejoka-Brown. Madam Ajanaku maintains her stand that a woman candidate must replace Lejoka-Brown as the party's flag bearer. According to her, "man way carry Ogbonno soup for hand and di man way carry foo-foo for head, na who go find who go"? Through proverb 152,

she asserts that the party officials would have no option other than to grant the requests of members of Market Women Association. “The man that carries foo-foo” depicts the leaders of National Liberation Party, while “the person that carries Ogbono soup” represents the women led by Madam Ajanaku. The semantic implication of this is that the market women are as indispensable to the political party as Ogbona soup is indispensable to the man that wants to eat “foo-foo”.

In politics, the majority carries the vote. The need to know and respect peoples right is recognized. Opinion leaders are powerful people in politics; failure to dance to their tune can make the party to lose all. Despite Madam Ajanaku’s low level of literacy, she is able to influence and effect a change in the senatorial candidacy of the party. These proverbs explain the situation that surrounds the election of leaders in Western Nigerian political environment. The political party of our reference is facing an internal crisis that involves a major political aspirant. There is need to choose another person that will replace him. Unfortunately, the women, in the name of market women association, have their own candidate who is either accepted by the party leaders or the women decamp to another party. It become’s a thing of concern that, despite the low level of literacy of Madam Ajanaku, the leader of the market women, the party executive members have to dance to her tune. That a woman candidate eventually becomes the flag bearer of the party clearly explains the political situation in the country where, for the need to win an election by all means, mediocre candidates are left at the helm of affairs. The party leadership could have chosen another candidate but for their fear that not securing the vote of the market women may mar their electioneering success.

4.2.3 Moral /Ethical proverbs

Some of the proverbs analyzed perform educative function. They do this by providing guide, codes of conduct and patterns of behaviour with which people can make the society function without problems (Ogunjimi and Na-Allah1991). Some of these proverbs inform and educate the people on the norm, mores and ethics of the African socio-cultural environment. Examples of proverbs that are ethical and those that teach moral lessons are: proverbs 4, 19, 22, 23, 31-33, 40, 53, 69, 80, 86, 92, 100, 119, 122, 124, 125, 128 and 146 (see appendix).

Proverb 53 Ignorance makes the rat call cat to a fight (p.42, *The gods*).

Alaka cites this proverb on his arrival while interacting with Queen Ojuola in relation to the bodyguard's rude opinion about him. He has just been declared a mad man by king Odewale's bodyguards. The proverb teaches us to be very vigilant in whatever we are doing. Had a rat been vigilant it would have known it is swimming in troubled water by inviting a cat to a contest. The palace guards are not aware of the relationship that exists between Odewale and Alaka so they call him a mad man. The proverb teaches vigilance and patience in dealing with others.

Proverbs 69*:* Take the elders away, the town rots (Kurunmi,p.12)

A member of the crowd cites the proverb above to allow an elderly man express his own opinion. This proverb is meant to teach the youths the importance of the experience of the elders in the society. An adage confirms experience as the best teacher. Young ones need to always regard the elders because in them is the knowledge of African beliefs, tradition and education.

Proverb 19: The moon moves slowly but by day break, it crosses the sky (The gods,p.14).

This proverb is cited by King Odewale to appeal to the sense of reason of the citizens of Kutuje who are in a serious crisis. The message of the proverb is that the people should be as patient as the moon. Despite the slow pace at which we watch the moon moves on the sky, on daily basis it travels round the earth. The lesson derivable is that one should be patient.

Proverb: 22

> When you hear our voice brother, you
> better respond to call of duty or you will have yourself
> to blame (p.18, *The gods*).

The proverb above is cited by Town men when they are making preparations to go and cut herbs and leaves for the cure of their sick children. It emphasizes the need to cooperate with the other members of one's community, as a tree does not make a forest.

Proverb 40:

Is it not ignorance that makes the rat attack
the cat (p.27, *The gods)?*

The proverb also teaches carefulness. Baba Fakunle cites the proverb to explain that one needs to be very careful when we are ignorant of reality. Baba Fakunle has just arrived and requested king Odewale to stay away from him since the truth about the murderer they are looking for is "smelling and choking him" (p.27). Attempts made by King Odewale to silence the priest proved abortive, as the priest does not take the money offered him by the king. It also emphasises the need to maintain one's integrity in everything that one does.

Proverb 80:

Does the aged he-goat have to be told that
his present long beard is no more proof of
sexual strength? (p.18, *Kurunmi).*

The proverb calls for caution at both sides. Kurunmi this proverb to tell 'Alafin' that he would do all he can to tackle him. According to Kurunmi "a king, a ruler, who sees the truth but is too weak, too cowardly, to uphold the truth, that ruler has fallen low, lower than the most depraved slave in our bush land" (p.18 Kurunmi). He further insults the emissaries of the Alafin and insists that tradition take its course: "We have tradition whenever an Alafin dies, his first son must also die with him, Atiba died this evening, his first son Adelu died at midnight" (p.19, *Kurunmi*).

things from one generation to another. Tradition is often handed down from generation to generation. In the first set of proverbs analysed, Kurunmi is still reporting to the people of Ijaye the meeting the Oyo chiefs had with Alafin Atiba. That same time, the two elders, Basorun Oluyole and Timi Ede (chiefs), are sent by Alafin Atiba to convince Kurunmi of the need to reason with him and the other chiefs to allow Prince

Adelu to be crowned. Instead of being convinced, he further insults the two elders, insisting that the day Alafin Atiba dies, Adelu his first son must die the same night (p.15). In the process of their discussions, the following proverbs are deployed:

Proverb108:

> When the tortoise is heading for a senseless journey, and you say to him: Brother Tortoise... when will you be wise and come back home the tortoise would say… not until I have been disgraced (p.17, *Kurunmi*).

The proverb above is an illustrative analogy. It warns people to desist from a wrong step. Tortoise is a fable persona in Yoruba folk narrative. It is known for its stubbornness and hyper-activity. This same attribute is transferred to Alafin Atiba . To worsen the situation, Kurunmi sends delegates to the Emir of Ilorin to request for assistance to fight Alafin and the other Oyo towns. He sends the emissaries to tell the Emir of Ilorin that "there is a baby lion rearing a head of war on the horizon of Oyo… Kurunmi will move fast with fire to meet the baby lion, before it grows to be a great lion unbeatable … Tell him that a man with fire on his hands welcomes no delay" (pp.28-29).

The second context that expresses pride and resistance to change is when Kurunmi himself, who is declaring war against Alafin for his request in respect of his son, does not consult with his people before he declares war. In the view of Fayanka one of the warriors:

Proverb 91:

> When a man has placed himself far above his people, he is ready to gamble with their lives (p.37, *Kurunmi).*

However, Kurunmi realizes this fault of his and quickly apologizes to the people; but he still makes it clear to them that the battle must be fought. In his opinion:

Proverb 95:

> When an elder sees a mud skipper, he must not afterward say it was a crocodile*"* (p.42, *Kurunmi*).

Kurunmi uses this to appeal to the senses of reason of Ijaye people knowing that he

has acted wrongly by single-handedly declaring a war. However, he requests for their support for the sake of his leadership position. Kurunmi uses the above proverb as a situation management strategy. Situation management strategy occurs when language users guide the situation of occurrence in a manner favourable to their goals (Osisanwo 2003:2). In the above proverb, situation management is used in suggesting to, bargaining with, and instructing the people about his actions. Criticizing the attitude of Kurunmi generally, Bashorun Oluyole of Ibadan observes Kurunmi trying to be hard on the Alafin of +y– by kicking against another tradition of not supporting the choice of the people. Ibikunle observes that, "a man cannot be so angry with his head that he seized the cap from that head, and don his buttocks with it" (p.46). Another warrior from Ibadan camp considers the attitude of Kurunmi in the direction of ignorance:

Proverb 97:

> I fear that like a baboon, it takes another monkey to see the ugliness of his own buttocks. It takes another monkey to see the ugly buttocks of a fellow monkey (P.47, *Kurunmi).*

In the above proverb Osundina observes that Kurunmi may not consider the consequence of his foolish action to have declared a war against his own people. He may not have viewed it the way it is viewed by other people.

Hornby (2005:233) describes change as "to make different, to make something pass from one state or form into another, to replace one thing with something new or different". Change is also described by *Webster Dictionary* as "a new occupation or fresh outlook, the passing from one form, phase, place or state to another". An adage says the only thing that is permanent in life is change. Attempt to prevent change is always very difficult. In most cases, the situation that prevents change from taking its normal course is mostly overtaken by the change when it eventually takes place. Among nations and societies, change that affects the political, economic and religious life of the people has been effected over times. However, the processes that necessitate change are those processes that cannot be manipulated. Where efforts are made to manipulate such processes to prevent the change, the eventual consequence is always the change which may be more drastic than it is expected.

In *Kurunmi*, efforts are made by other Oyo chiefs, such as Timi Ede and Bashorun Oluyole, to make Kurunmi see reasons to support change and allow Prince Adelu to be crowned as the next Alafin. Other chiefs try to persuade Kurunmi to support this bid at least to give room for stability. All efforts made to convince Kurunmi further aggravate his annoyance against them. It is in the process of trying to convince Kurunmi that the following proverbs are employed by Timi and Kurunmi, respectively:

Proverbs 82 & 83:

> The cow defecates and thinks she is soiling the pasture; we shall see whose buttocks get soiled first (p.21, *Kurunmi*). **83:** Kurunmi will never prostrate himself to shoot a deer with a father one morning, and then squat with the son in the evening to shoot a goose (p.21, *Kurunmi)!*

The two chiefs are sent by the Alafin to make Kurunmi see reason why he has to support his request to have his son Adelu be made the next king. The first proverb above is deployed by Timi Ede to both Kurunmi and Basorun Oluyole to express his annoyance that Kurunmi still maintains his stand not to listen to their entreaties to allow Prince Adelu rule after the demise of his father. In Yoruba traditional environment, when a guest visits a family, it is required that the guest is given a warm reception. Firstly, the rituals of greetings have to be observed, after that the guest is seated somewhere with water and other delicacies served to welcome him. In the case of the guests received by Kurunmi (Timi Ede and Basorun Oluyole) who are chiefs and should be accorded a high level of respect and be received warmly by both Kurunmi and his subjects. It is surprising that neither Kurumi nor his subjects welcome the royal guests. The guests are not offered seat at the right time. When they are finally offered seats, it was too late. A Yoruba adage says: “take it easy” is expressed in different forms :”*P213, lqk[9 lqbo”*. Kurunmi addresses his guests standing throughout the period they stay with him. However, before they leave, Kurunmi is made to realize that prince Adelu will be crowned in his absence if he disagrees with the whole process. Kurunmi is expected to do his worst. As a sign of dishonour to Kurunmi, he is not officially informed when the Alafin dies. Likewise he

is not officially involved when the new king is made since he has declared himself a persona non-grata as a result of his stand on the matter.

The Yoruba believe that it is not good to want to have more enemies than friends: "*A k8 7 wq =tq k5n =tq*". The chiefs make Kurunmi understand why he has to follow the path of change but he rejects their advice. He is made to know that other members of the ruling council have all vowed to crown Adelu. It is an act of dishonour to Kurunmi, the Aare-ona-kakanfo, that he is not contacted when the Alafin died. In response to the first proverb above, Kurunmi cites the second proverb to tell the two chiefs that he would not support the attempt to make Adelu a king. The intention of Timi in the first proverb is to discourage Kurunmi from continuing with his plans. Kurunmi, on the other hand, reaffirms his intention not to support the bid. In Kurunmi's opinion, he has served Atiba, Adelu's father, and he is not ready to serve the son as well. As a sign of indignation for father and son, Kurunmi deploys the proverb below:

Proverb 84:

> A cow is about to be shipped to whiteman's land and she is happy. Very happy. Ehn…let the cow go. When she gets to Whiteman's land, what will she become? C-o-r-n-e-d b-e-e-f (p.21, *Kurunmi*)!

Sarcastically, Kurunmi compares the arrangement with the case of a cow that is being shipped to the Whiteman's land and is happy. In the words of Kurunmi, the arrangement will not take Adelu to any good end, just as the journey of the cow to the Whiteman's land will fetch it nothing but doom, becoming corned beef. From that moment, Kurunmi starts the preparation for war in order to prevent Adelu from becoming a king. In case the king is made against tradition, Kurunmi is prepared to make him regret his action. Kurunmi further confirms his readiness for a tragic consequence with the following words:

> The frog is kicked-kpa! It flattens y-a-k-a-t-a! on its back. We shall all die 'gbere' (pp.27-28, *Kurunmi).*

Kurunmi passes these humorous comments to further confirm his aversion for

the enthronement of Adelu. Prior to this, he has just deposited his gun powder's bow at the shrine of Ogun, the god of war. This is a sign that Kurunmi is battle ready to defend his stand in this case. He is prepared to resist Adelu. The proverb is a satire on the attempt of some people to breach tradition which will be met with the appropriate measure. "Y-z-k-z-t-z" is onomatopoeia word describing the expectation of Kurunmi in respect of the tragedy that will befall Adelu and his cohorts at the end.

4.3 Psychological context of proverbs in the selected plays of Ola Rotimi

4.3.1 Philosophical proverbs

Proverbs are also cited to show the effects of some decisions being taken by the leaders (major characters) on the led (minor characters). Political leaders are so concerned about the need to protect their political interests without bothering about its effects on the generality of the people they lead. In the process, war is declared and innocent citizens are killed at will. In some other occasions, the leader just becomes unusually oppressive in order to form a powerful protection around himself at the expense of the common people. Ola Rotimi uses some proverbs to illustrate these developments. The next two proverbs support efforts by leaders to play politics in order to effect change in a system.

As part of the efforts to check the power of Alafin of Oyo, conservative members of the cabinet such as Aare Kurunmi of Ijaye and Afonja of Ilorin challenged the authority of one Alafin or the other in the past. In the process of doing so, war broke out. An example of the experience described above is what characterizes the background of Rotimi's *Kurunmi*. The tradition that surrounded the making of a new Alafin at the demise of the previous one was that the first son of the former Alafin should commits suicide and is buried along with his father. Alafin Atiba does not want to observe this tradition. He wanted his son, Prince Adelu, to succeed him. Aare Kurunmi, who was the military leader of the kingdom, did not want tradition to be breached. Hence, he rejected the request of Alafin Atiba. This led to a crisis that caused the Ijaye/Ibadan war of the middle l8th century as adapted in *Kurunmi* by Ola Rotimi.

There are instances in the play where proverbs are used to treat themes of politics and power play. One takes place when Kurunmi is reporting the meeting that

the entire +y- chiefs had with Alafin Atiba, where the latter made known his intention to allow prince Adelu, his first son, to succeed him. According to Kurunmi:

Proverb 79:

> When the tortoise is heading for a senseless journey, and you say to him: Brother Tortoise, brother tortoise, when will you be wise and come back home? The tortoise will say: brother, not until I have been disgraced (p. 17 *Kurunmi).*

Timi Ede uters this proverb to tell Kurunmi his faults in the presence of Bashorun Oluyole. The proverb is an illocutionary act re-affirming, re-stating, re-emphasising and clarifying that Kurunmi will be disappointed for his stand on the matter. In order to convince Kurunmi on the need to have a change of heart and allow the wish of Alafin Atiba to come to pass, Bashorun Oluyole and Timi of Ede are sent by Alafin Atiba to plead with Kurunmi to see reason in the request he is making. Kurunmi responds to this request of the king with a proverb:

Proverbs 81:

> A king, a ruler, who sees the truth but is too weak, too cowardly, to uphold the truth, that ruler has fallen low, lower than the most depraved slave in our bush land' (p. 18 *Kurunmi*).

Kurunmi uses this proverb to tell 'Alafin' that he would do all he can to tackle him. He further insults the emissaries of Alafin and insists that tradition takes its course. "We have tradition whenever an Alafin dies, his first son must also die with him, Atiba died this evening, his first son Adelu died at midnight" (p.19, *Kurunmi*). Timi Ede responds with another proverb below to show his disappointment with the position of Kurunmi on the matter:

Proverb 82:

> The cow defecates and thinks she is soiling the pasture; we shall see whose buttocks get soiled first. (p. 21, *Kurunmi*).

This proverb warns Kurunmi that he will regret his action one day. The

implication of this is that Kurunmi is declaring a war against the same people over whom he is a military commander. In preparation for the same war, Kurunmi sends delegates to Ilorin to request their support to fight Ibadan and Oyo. In his message to Lakusa he says:

> Tell the Emir of Ilorin that I salute him from my heart. Tell him that there is a baby lion rearing a head of war on the horizon of Oyo. Soon, Kurunmi will move fast with fire to meet that baby lion, lest it grows to be a great lion immutable. (p. 28, *Kurunmi*)

In the opinion of scholars, Kurunmi wanted the support of Ilorin because Afonja of Ilorin, a former generalissimo, was the first +y- chief to rebel against the central government of +y-. Through this singular effort, Ilorin became a province in the empire. According to Ogunsola (1977:79), "a plot to kill Afonja (the provincial Governor of Ilorin by the Alafin) in connection with his claim to the throne was discovered". With the help of the Fulani army, Afonja defeated the Government Force of +y- Empire and declared Ilorin independent in 1817. Unfortunately, Afonja was later killed by the Fulani and Ilorin became a part of the Sokoto Empire.

The success of Afonja encouraged other provinces to break away from the empire. Examples are the $gbq people who were led to independence by Lisabi. Ibadan had already become a new power and was founding an empire in Ekiti (Ogunsola 1977). The successes achieved by other provinces in the empire (such as Ilorin, Egba and Ibadan) encouraged Kurunmi to single-handedly reject the request of Alafin Atiba.

Politics and power play is also displayed in Ibadan camp among the elders and warriors when they weigh Kurunmi's choice to go for war instead of peace. To them, that Kurunmi, who claims to be defending tradition fails to support the enthronement plans of Prince Adelu, is itself a breach of tradition. According to Oluyole:

Proverb 96:

> A man cannot be so hungry with his head, that he seized the cap from the head and dons his buttock with it (p. 46 *Kurunmi*).

In the opinion of Oluyole, caps are put on the head. No matter how aggrieved one feels, one would not don his buttock with cap. It is a taboo for Kurunmi to have

waged war against Alafin; it is tantamount to putting his own cap on his buttock. Alafin appointed him as the empire's warlord; he needs to demonstrate his loyalty to him. In the view of one of the warriors in Ibadan camp, Kurunmi is on the wrong side, but he might not have perceived it from that perspective. Ogunmola observes that Kurunmi needs to be cautioned or he will perpetrate more evil to the entire kingdom.

Proverb 98:

> A man eating egg can't be satisfied with just one (p. 47, *Kurunmi*).

The proverb is cited to confirm the main reason behind Ibadan fighting this war. The people of Ibadan intend to show Kurunmi that power can rotate; he should not make himself an island. They believe that it was Kurunmi that manipulated Egba to freedom:

> So Kurunmi moves farther and took Shaki, then Iseyin and Iwawun. Now Kurunmi is Lord over all lands from Shaki to Awaye. One day, overfed and bloated as we are, Kurunmi will enter Ibadan, tie us all to posts and fill our fresh fat bellies with sweet, day ashes (p. 47, *Kurunmi*).

The love of Ibadan, rather than the love for Alafin Atiba, led to Ibadan warriors' "madness" to fight Kurunmi and the entire Ijaye people. Ibadan people believe that Kurunmi wants to manipulate other Yoruba towns to freedom too. They believe that it is time they pay Kurunmi in his own coin:

Proverb 99:

> We must remember that no matter how high the swallow flies it must at least come down to earth. The same is the present manner of Kurunmi (pp.47-48, *Kurunmi*).

Here, Balogun Ibikunle is of the opinion that the anger of Kurunmi will subside one day and he will realize himself. As a result, he wants to appeal to his fellow Ibadan warriors to handle issues carefully. He reasons that Kurunmi's anger is high and no efforts should be made to allow it to get higher since, Kurunmi is hot tempered. Ibikunle warns his people further that Kurunmi's annoyance should not be further aggravated:

Proverb 100:

A stick already touched by fire is not hard to set ablaze (pp.47-48, *Kurunmi*).

Balogun Ibikunle, feels that any attempt to aggravate the issue will further complicate the crisis. He requests that his people deal softly with Kurunmi who is already aggrieved and prepared to go to any length towards actualizing his intentions. He wants the crisis to be resolved peacefully, since no progress could be achieved through threats and violence:

Proverb 101:

Roaring lion kills no prey (pp.47-48, *Kurunmi*).

Ibikunle appeals to the sense of reason of the entire Ibadan warriors the proverb above, noting that it is only through patience that they can resolve the crisis. However all his entreaties achieve no success, as Ibadan people agree to go ahead to fight the war.

In *The gods*, suspicion and political oppression are also used as instruments of power play. Efforts are made by King Odewale to alleviate the suffering of the people. In the process, Aderopo is sent to consult Orunmila and invite the Ifa priest. The message brought by Aderopo that somebody killed the former king led to suspicion, as captured below:

Proverbs 33:

All lizards lie prostrate! How can a man tell which lizard suffers from belly ache? (p.23: *The gods*).

This is used to by Odewale to express concern over the way his predecessor, King Adetusa, was killed. He has become restless for fear of being killed the same way and for fear of being accused of killing the former king. The semantic implication of the above proverbs is that the former king was killed because he was not very careful. This led to King Odewale's high-handedness and his suspicion of everybody around him.

Proverbs are cited to manage the misunderstanding that ensued while trying to solve the riddles of Orunmila about the murderer earlier mentioned. On arrival, the priest accuses king Odewale as the cursed murderer being sought after (P.28). He also

accuses him of being "a bed sharer" (p.29, *The gods*). The king becomes suspicious of Aderopo and some members of his cabinet insinuating that they have bribed Baba Fakunle to blackmail him. He believes that Aderopo is becoming interested in the throne. The king believes that whatever attempts they make to implicate him will fail:

Proverbs 42 & 43:

> When the evil-plotter beats his drum for the downfall of the innocent, the gods will not let that drum sound, when the evil-plotters beat his drum for the downfall of the innocent, the all powerful will never, never let it (p.30, *The gods*).. **43:** The hyena flirts with the hen, the hen is happy, not knowing that her death has come (p.30, *The gods*).

Through the above proverbs, Odewale expresses his disappointment in the entire people of Kutuje who, according to him, are planning subversions and intrigues against him. He accuses the seer of not being faithful to the ethics of his profession. He also accuses Aderopo of bribing the seer to tell lies against him so that he can become the king. With the absence of the Ifa priest, Aderopo becomes a subject of attack. Odewale believes that Aderopo too should not be trusted. King Odewale uses proverbs to warn Aderopo to be very careful of his steps:

Proverbs 44 & 45:

> If you think you can uproot a tree that has been planted by the gods (p.32: The gods) **45**: If you think you can drum for my downfall and hope that drum will sound, then your head is not good (p.32, *The gods).*

This suspicion of King Odewale turns to his further hatred for Aderopo. He does not expect Aderopo to respond to the allegations but he responds respond. In Yor6bq land when elders are rebuking the younger ones, they are expected to keep quiet. Aderopo does not do this. He is expecting the eventuality as he did not commit the offence he is accused of. The pragmatic implication of this is that Aderopo has damned the consequence of his actions. This leads to the next proverb uttered by King Odewale:

Proverb 46:

> Two rams cannot drink from the same

bucket at the same time (p.34,*The gods*).

Aderopo engages in abusive words with the king. Eventually, the king swears not to see Aderopo again till he dies (p.35). The king is already losing control over his subject as a result of his hot temper. There is already anarchy in the palace. The Yor6bq macro-setting that Ola Rotimi presents in the text is that in which the power of the monarch is total. As a result of the problems, the chiefs are almost rendered useless so as not to offend an oppressive and suspicious ruler. The King is always in doubt of the faithfulness of his chiefs. Hence, he always jumps to conclusions over issues that are still under investigation. Apart from the above, the king is short tempered. Baba Fakunle tells him clearly that 'his hot temper like a disease from birth is the curse that always brings him trouble' *(p. 29, Kurunmi).* The incident that led to the above discoveries is the plague and death that breaks out in the land of Kutuje. This is as a result of the annoyance of the gods over the killing of the former king of the land, king Adetusa. This revelation provokes the annoyance of king Odewale to the extent that he could no more trust anybody in the land. According to him:

Proverbs 31 & 32:

> When the frog in front falls in a pit, others behind take caution (p.23,*The gods).* **32**: When crocodiles eat their own eggs what will they not do to the flesh of frog (p.23, *The gods*)?

King Odewale employs the two proverbs above to express the need to be very careful with the people of Kutuje. To unravel the cause of this mystery and other incidents in the land, messages are sent to both Ile-Ife and Oyo to consult Orunmila and the interpreter of Ifa message, Baba Fakunle, respectively. It is the report of the second journey of Aderopo that fuels the crisis in the text. Aderopo is sent to deliver the message, being the only son and the known heir to the former king. Despite that, Aderopo demonstrates his loyalty to King Odewale. This loyalty of his is almost taken for stupidity and foolishness when he is being very careful to relay the message of Orunmila as a result of the riddle there in. In the view of Aderopo:

Proverb 26:

> The secret of a home should be known first to the head of the home (p. 20,*The gods*).

Aderopo uses this proverb to give the king the opportunity to decide what to do with the message before his chiefs are aware of it.

As Aderopo has presupposed the weight of the message of King Odewale being the known important stranger in the land, he whispers the message to the king who requests that he should speak openly in the presence of all. King Odewale believes that:

Proverb 24:

> A cooking pot for the chameleon is a cooking pot for the lizard (p.19, *The gods*).

King Odewale believes that the case concerns the entire community; hence, it should be handled publicly. The proverb presupposes that everybody should be given the opportunity to hear the solution that Orunmila wants to proffer to the problems. Knowing the implication of the massage he wants to deliver, Aderopo wants to save the king, insisting that the king listens to the message first. However, the king requests Queen Ojuola to speak to Aderopo to deliver the message in public. Queen Ojuola makes it known to Aderopo that:

Proverb 25:

> The horn cannot be too heavy for the head of the cow that must bear them (p.20, *The gods*).

No matter how serious and terrifying the message of Orunmila is, through the above proverb, the queen tells Aderopo not to be afraid to relate the message. Eventually, Aderopo declares that the curse is on a man who killed King Adetusa.

To interpret the riddle of Orunmila, Aderopo is further sent to Oyo to bring the Ifa priest, Baba Fakunle. On arrival, Baba Fakunle identifies King Odewale as the cursed murderer of the former king. The king accuses the chiefs of not being loyal to him, as they are planning to dethrone him and enthrone Aderopo. In the view of Odewale: "when the evil-plotters beat his drum for the downfall of the innocent, the sound is not heard'. He utters another proverb to show his regret to have given his

chiefs such freedom and co-operation that they have enjoyed previously from him. He says "it is my entire fault, I should have known".

The king later summons Aderopo alone so that the two can engage in verbal contest. In the views of the king, Aderopo wants to become a king. Hence, he believes Aderopo is planning for his downfall (p.32). Odewale sees himself as the proverbial tree that is planted by the gods which cannot be uprooted. It is ironic that the same gods that are unhappy about the actions of Odewale are now being made a witness in this case. At the end, Odewale sees Aderopo and himself as, 'Two rams that are trying to drink from the same bucket at the same time (p.34); it is believed that one should be allowed to have its fill of water before the other. Also, he accuses Aderopo of trying to rise earlier than necessary (p.35). Eventually, he pronounces a curse on Aderopo as the climax of his actions and the events in the play. He says: "may my eyes not see Aderopo again till I die" (p.35).

4.3.2 Crisis-induced proverbs

Crisis induced proverbs are classified into proverbs about crisis and warfare. Crisis and warfare are among the major themes that Ola Rotimi uses proverbs to explore in his plays. This resulted from the various wars that preoccupied the entire Yoruba land during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as were adapted by the playwright in *The gods and Kurunmi*. Ogunsola (1971:76-77), avers that there are many reasons for the Yor6bq wars. Prominent among such reasons were the breakdown in the central government of +y- Empire and the need to maintain a balance of power among the major towns. Another factor was the effects of slave trade, which resulted from economic depression. For example, the Ibadan and Ijesa wars were started by the Ibadan slave-raiding expeditions in Ijesa land as well as land disputes between the +y- of Ede and Osogbo, on the one hand, and the Ijesa people on the other. The attempt by Ibadan to annex part of Ekiti led to the "$k8t8 Parap=" wars. The consequences of these and many other wars would have been more serious had the missionaries and British Government not stepped in to stop the wars (Ogunsola 1977, Osae and Odunsi 1973).

Proverbs are employed to illustrate the experiences of the warfare as reflected in Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi*. In *Kurunmi,* the historic Ijaye and Ibadan war is adapted.

The war arises from the attempt of Ijaye, Egba and Ijebu to arrest the growing power of Ibadan, to stop her from achieving her imperialism, which, according to them, threatened the leadership of the Alafin of +y-. The neighbouring towns mentioned above also accused Ibadan of trying to found an empire for herself in Ekiti, while the +y- Empire ruled by Alafin was still in existence. Contrariwise, Ibadan accused Kurunmi of disloyalty by refusing to support the son of Alafin Atiba (Prince Adelu) to succeed his father (Ogunsola 1977:76-77).

However, the reported reason behind Kurunmi's declaration of war against *bzdzn and +y- people is the breach of tradition by Alafin Atiba. The war is declared and the opposing forces need to start preparing their warriors. One of the strategies adopted by Kurunmi is to invite mercenaries from Egba and Ilorin. Kurunmi deplays a proverb to explain the urgency that the message he sends to Ilorin requires. Tell the Emir of Ilorin that "there is a baby lion rearing a head of war on the horizon of +y-. Tell him that I, Kurunmi, will move fast with fire to meet that baby lion, lest it grows to be a great unbeatable" (p.28). He further says:

Proverb 85:

Tell him that a man with fire on his hands welcomes no delay (p.28, *Kurunmi).*

The speech act performed here is, warning, predicting, and guessing. Kurunmi wants the Emir to treat the message with dispatch, so that before Alafin and his warriors get set for the warfare, he would have attacked them. Unfortunately, Kurunmi has already sent messages out for mercenaries that will support his warriors; he has not even told his chief warriors but about his declaration of war. Hence it takes Kurunmi a long period of disagreement before he could convince his people about the need for the war. For the first time, Kurunmi tells Balogun Ogunkoroju in proverb the situation on ground:

Proverb 86:

The bull-frog that rivals the size of the elephant will burst (p.29, *Kurunmi*).

Alafin Adelu that has just been enthroned after the demise of his father is the

metaphoric bull-frog while Kurunmi is the elephant. Kurunmi uses the illocutionary act of warning, advising and promising his opponents. The intention of Kurunmi is to get rid of the newly crowned king before he settles down since he has sounded a note of warning that Adelu should not be crowned against tradition. However, it should be noted that Kurunmi is old enough to know that a king is more powerful than any 'oldest' chief. His declaring Alafin a 'bull-frog' shows that he means to fulfil his earlier promise to wage war. Records have confirmed that some powerful "Bashorun" and "Zzre-=nz-Kakanf0" challenged the authority of some previous Alafin successfully. In some cases, such incapacitated Alafin was made to commit ritual suicide. The same attempt is being made by Kurunmi in this situation. He further says:

Proverb 87:

> A man who does not want strange foot-prints in his backyard must fence it up (p.29, *Kurunmi*).

Kurunmi cites this proverb in the presence of Areago, his deputy war leader, to warn the warriors of the need to start preparing for the war. The speech act performed here is that of warning his opponents. A strategy to prevent strange foot-print in one's compound is to fence it up and put in place different security measures. As part of the preparation for the war, warriors are to be reinforced; food items and farm crops of different types are to be preserved. Apart from that, warriors are to stay away from their wives' beds (p.30). In the view of Kurunmi, victory is not won on a platter of gold:

Proverb 88:

> The meat of an antelope tastes good but while it is cooking what do we eat (p. 30, *Kurunmi)?*

In the opinion expressed in the proverb above, for victory to be theirs, Ijaye people must plan well to put in place necessary weapons such as guns, stones, sticks, bows and arrows (p.30). Kurunmi utters the proverb during a conversation between Ogunkoroju, a chief warrior next in rank to him in Ijaye land, and him. Unfortunately,

the same people that Kurunmi is preparing to fight are a faction of the warriors he has led to war on different occasions which makes this battle more severe than other wars that he had fought. It is a call for sober reflections.

To confirm that the war they are about to embark upon may be very horrible Kurunmi says:

Proverb 104:

> I know that of all battles the battle against one's own blood brother is most horrid and heart breaking (p. 50, *Kurunmi*).

Common sense shows that there is no reason for Ibadan and Ijaye people to engage in any war because they are brothers. Ibikunle also confirms this when trying to persuade Ogunmola and other warriors not to engage in war with Kurunmi. According to him, Ijaye people have kinship relation with Ibadan people. They exchange marriages with them, as their brothers and sisters are living in Ijaye. Apart from that, there are festivals that the two opposing sides have in common (p.50). Also, engaging in battle with one's own blood brother is very risky. In the first instance, all the warring strategies are known by the blood brothers already. On the other hand, the victory expected from such warfare may not be achieved, as the ancestors are against warring with one's own people. Ogunmola would not reason with Basorun Ibikunle, since he wants to use this warfare to avenge himself on Kurunmi because of the evil Kurunmi had, unleashed on his own people.

The war starts as efforts made to forestall it failed. During the first few encounters, Kurunmi's warriors gain the upper hand. However, the victories did not last long as his warriors did not fight to instruction. To rebuke his warriors, Kurunmi use the next proverb:

Proverb 118:

> It is a foolish daughter who thinks she knows so much that she can teach her own mother how to bear children (p.64, *Kurunmi*).

Even when she is a midwife, the daughter has a lot to learn from her mother who has

had years of experience about child delivery. The illocutionary acts performed here are rebuking and reprimanding the warriors to always fight to instruction. The instruction given to Ijaye warriors is that they should never be exited to chase their opponents. However, with the early victory achieved by the warriors, they chase the Ibadan warriors who ambush them. This results in the death of a good number of Ijaye warriors. Experienced warriors know that early retreat during war may be a strategy to deceive the opposing side.

The Egba warriors also deploy proverbs when offering to offer sacrifice to the gods for their supports:

Proverb 119:

> When a child is a failure in life, the mother bears the blame, when the child succeeds the credit naturally goes to the father (p. 74, *Kurunmi*).

This is uttered by Somoye, one of the leading Egba warriors, when sacrificing to "mother earth" as they plan their war strategies. The proverb is used to perfom illocutionary act of reassessing the situation and cautioning the warriors to be more careful in their acts. In Yor6bq land, the mother is given the exclusive roles of training the child. If such a mother does not play her roles well and the child fails, the mother is blamed for the failure. It is believed that the mother complements the father. If such a child succeeds, his father takes the praise. Before the @gbq warriors left Ab10k6ta, there was a disagreement among them. This conflict led to the curse placed on the @gbq warriors by Sokenu, Balogun Ijeun, who did not support the Egba participation in the war. The curse, according to him, is as a result of what he declared deceitful dealings of the warlords who supported Kurunmi instead of being neutral in the conflict. In respect of the situation on ground, the three Baloguns that lead the $gbq warriors to the battle are the mothers who are not willing to experience failure in respect of this help they have rendered.

On arriving Ijaye, the @gbq warriors are received warmly by Kurunmi. He expresses his joy with the next proverb:

Proverb 120:

> One does not know the joy of a dog without

a tail (p. 74, *Kurunmi*).

In the context that the proverb is used, tail represents a useful instrument used to ward off flies (their enemies). A similar Yor6bq proverb says 'a cow that has no tail depends on God to chase flies'. As kinsmen to the Ijaye people, the Egba people come to assist them during their trial time. Unfortunately, at the end, the Egba warriors commit more harm than good to the Ijaye, as their advice contributed to the loss sustained by Ijaye. Kurunmi says this about them;

Proverbs 122, 128a & 128b:

> When a one-legged man needs help, he must not say that the friend who carries him on his back stinks; even if that helper does stink (p.83-84, *Kurunmi*). **128a**: A foster mother is not like the real mother. **128b**: A foster father cannot stand upright like the real father (p. 88 *Kurunmi).* **129:** Ten eyes, twenty eyes countless eyes at the other person are not the same as a single eye of your own (p.88, *Kurunmi*).

Kurunmi employs proverbs 128-129 in response to Ogunkoroju and the bodyguard who feel that the @gbq warrior's roles contributed to the loss they have suffered so far in the conflict. The proverbs warn the two warriors that a helper should not be blamed for the defeat they have suffered. The @gbq warriors arrive when the hope of Ijaye is almost dashed. At the beginning of the warfare, the Ijaye warriors fight to instruction. The arrival of the Egba warriors terrifies the leaders at Ibadan camp. There is a disagreement between Basorun Ogunmola and Balogun Ibikunle as a result of the fear Ogunmola entertains for the involvement of the @gbq warriors. At the end, there is a resolution. Kujenyo, the Ibadan Priest, helps the *bzdzn troops to curse the Ijaye and @gbq warriors to commit war blunder by crossing River Ose, a condition that will guarantee victory for *bzdzn. A sacrifice of twenty-one slaves, three lizards, five goats, seven dogs, eleven tortoises and five pigeons is offered (p.73). This hypnotizes the Ijaye and @gbq warriors to cross River Ose. The @gbq warriors are looking for the fastest approach to tackle the enemies since there is need for them to act fast so that they can go back home to contend with their various enemies – the Dahomeans, the *bzdzn, the Ijebu and so on. In the preparation to tackle the Ibadan warriors, there is

disagreement at the camp of the Ijaye and Egba warriors on whether they should cross Ose River or not. To appease the @gbq warriors, Kurunmi compromises his stand and agrees that they cross River Ose (the only conditions that would retain the @gbq warriors in the battle field). The spell of the Ibadan Priest works on the *jzy4/@gbq warriors; they cross the river and are defeated.

One day, as Kurunmi is counting his losses after one of their encounters with Ibadan camp, a pregnant woman comes to request for her husband's whereabouts. Kurunmi reples her with the proverb below:

Proverb 123:

> Where elephants are being slaughtered by thousands, how could a man take notice of the death of a house rat (p.84, *Kurunmi*)?

The surviving warriors arrive and the woman does not see her husband. Lijofi she comes to ask Kurunmi about the whereabouts of her husband. Since there are many warriors that go to war, Kurunmi declares that he does not recognize or notice many of the warriors since they are in thousands. Lijofi's wife declares that her husband is one of the youngest men that went to fight. The semantic implication of Kurunmi's reaction is that he compares Lijofi with a 'house rat' that is too small to be recognized, while great warriors are compared with 'elephants' that would have been easily recognized because of their position (sizes). Indeed, in a war that claimed thousands of souls, it might not be possible for Kurunmi to know the particular warrior that died. However, Kurunmi is not fair enough to Lijofi's wife to have addressed her in that manner. The woman deserves a better treatment than that. In a situation like that, Kurunmi is expected to be polite in addressing the woman, since the situation the woman faces is sympathetic.

At Ibadan camp, the victory expected does not happen at the right time. Ogunmola expresses his concern about this:

Proverb 124:

> A man called upon to be a hawk must catch chickens (p.85, *Kurunmi).*

Ogunmola, the second in command to the warlord uses Ibadan cites this proverb in the presence of Ibikunle, the Ibadan war lord, to express his concern on why victory

has not been won so far. The implication of this is that warriors gather to fight and win quickly the way a hawk is set to catch its preys. The warriors are expected to fight and win without wasting time. Ibikunle has just showered praises on the *bzdzn warriors in celebration of the bravery they have displayed. However, Ogunmola believes that such a celebration is rather too premature since he sees no reason why victory has not been achieved so far. Understanding the situation of things, Balogun Ibikunle makes him realize that it is Kurunmi, their former warlord, they are fighting. Hence, quick victory may not be as easy as expected. Whatever war strategies they are using are as a result of the lessons they learnt from Kurunmi himself before the crisis that led to the war. In essence, we could deduce that, whatever victory *bzdzn might have claimed so far according to Ibikunle, might have been caused by the inexperience of some *jzy4 warriors and the disagreement between the Egba war chiefs and Kurunmi over the beliefs that victory could be achieved through 'shortcut'.

There are more reactions by Kurunmi in respect of the "not-really-good performances" of his warriors at the battle front. To support the fear he is entertaining, he says:

Proverbs 125- 126:

> A paddle here, a paddle there, yet the canoe stays still (p.87, *Kurunmi*). **125**: A man with fire on his hands moves on (p.87, *Kurunmi).*

The first proverb above is cited by Kurunmi in his compound three different times to express his concern about the unexpected defeat of his people at the battle front. Here he is preparing to fight another battle. The semantic implication of the canoe that Kurunmi is referring to here is his being alive, while the paddle is the effect of the warfare on his warriors, warrior. The effects are in form of loss of warriors, including the death and maiming of some of his soldiers. Kurunmi says further 'my canoe stands still and the fire consumes me'. He declares the war by himself. Efforts are made to persuade him not to allow the war to be fought, but he refuses to be persuaded. Although Kurunmi's recent behaviour sympathetic, his failure to listen advice (that the crisis be resolved through dialogue) is a minus to his side. Kurunmi has to fight on even when the choicest among his warriors are already killed. Kurunmi prays to Ogun, the god of Iron and warfare to grant him victory during the last attempt

he is trying to make. He believes that:

Proverb 127:

> The size of a bush rat is the size of its hole (p.88, *Kurunmi*).

Still in prayer mood, Kurunmi equates his experience with the type of the victory he expects at his last encounter. He sees himself as a great fighter, hence he is requesting for power to capture a great band of slaves.

However,

Proverb 130:

> The hawk yearns for the taste of the snail, but it forgets that the shell of the snail is no food for hawks (p.89, *Kurunm*i).

The *jzy4 warriors uses this proverb in unison in response to the speech made by Kurunmi with respect to of the need to face the task themselves without wavering, since they will receive the praise or blame at the end. The *jzy4 warriors see the Ibadan warriors as the hawks that yearn for the taste of the snail, without knowing that the shell of a snail is no food for hawks. To Ijaye, the Ibadan warriors are still deceiving themselves. They believe *jzy4will still win at the end. This implies that the Ibadan warriors desire to get victory by all means; they do not know that victory is not achieved through strong warriors only but by luck. The *jzy4 warriors later become the ironic hawk, while the Ibadan warriors become the ironic snail.

Kurunmi sees the defeat suffered during an encounter as the spitting of water:

Proverb 131:

> It is the water that spits; the calabash is still unbroken (p.89, *Kurunmi).*

Reports have just been brought that Iwawun, the town that supplies food to Ijaye warriors has been captured by the opposing camp. Being the last hope of Kurunmi, it is a terrible loss that they have sustained. The full report of the loss is still being given and the massive nature of the loss has not been ascertained when the proverb is used. Despite the extent of the loss sustained, Kurunmi declares it as the spitting of water. In Yor6bq culture, when a pregnant mother loses her pregnancy, it is declared the

spitting of water, while the death of the pregnant woman is known as the breaking of the calabash. The death of the baby is painful but it is not as serious as when the mother dies. When the pregnant woman is alive, it is believed that she can still become pregnant again and give birth to another child. A lot of warriors have lost their lives, but the chief warriors are still alive. It is believed that they can plan another attack in the nearest future. The proverb confirms that "when there is life, there is hope".

The news of the defeat of Iwawun "pours cold water in the heart" of Kurunmi and he responds with the next proverb:

Proverb 132:

> It is not the beating of rain-drops that hurts…it is the…the touch of dew…the soft touch (p.90, *Kurunmi).*

Ijaye people still have the hope to perform better than their previous encounters in the war until the news comes that Iwawun has been captured by the opposition troop. Despite that, Kurunmi still believes that their loss so far is spilling of water. However, when he is told that his three sons have been killed and the head of one of them is brought to him, he loses all the hope and strength in him. The beating of rain-drops represents the loss of so many soldiers, while the touch of dew represents the death of his three sons, which is so painful. The death of his sons dampens his morale. In Yor6bq culture, whatever efforts a man is making are all for the sake of his children who will inherit them at his demise. Kurunmi could no more go to the battle front as expected. As a result, Areago has to lead the battle on. Kurunmi expresses the psychological trauma he suffers when it downs on him that the victory he expects may not come in his lifetime:

Proverb 134:

> A cow gave birth to a fire, she wanted to lick it, but it burned her. She wanted to leave it but she could not because it was her own child (p.94, *Kurunmi*).

This is the last proverb Kurunmi uses after he has taken a poison. He expresses his remorse for the warfare initiated by him. He cites it in the presence of some of his aides before he dies. This presupposes that he is the metaphoric cow that gave birth to

a strange thing, "fire". In an attempt to lick/clean the baby, the fire burns him. He attempts to leave the baby, but he cannot because it is his own. The lesson to learn from this experience is simplified in the Biblical proverb that says, 'pride goes before destruction'.

Prior to this experience, Kurunmi has shown remorse for the evil of leading his people to destruction. According to him:

> When a leader of men has led his people to disaster, what remains of his present life is but a shadow of his proud past, and then it is time to be leader no more (p.93, *Kurunmi*).

Had Kurunmi realized this earlier, he would not have led his own people to such a massive destruction of an entire tribe. This war arises from the pride and power play of some leaders who consider their own personal interests more important than the security of their own people. A Christian missionary who later takes side in the crisis becomes a part of the victims of the war. At the end, Rev. Mann, who cannot convince Kurunmi and his people to accept the Christian faith after a long persuasion, has to leave Ijaye. This action is explained with this proverb:

Proverb 133:

> When the owl leaves its nest at noon, danger is near (p.92, *Kurunmi*).

Reverend Mann is the implied "owl that abandons his nest" suddenly. It is not always desired that the Christian missionaries abandon their mission fields except for the benefits of a more rewarding option. The Christian missionaries have been a party to the decisions that later degenerated to warfare. The sudden movement of Rev Mann should not be a surprise. Efforts are made by Reverend Mann to persuade Kurunmi to allow change in tradition, on the advice of their headquarters, but he rejects the offers. The consequence of his rejection of change from their traditional religions to the new Christian faith leads to the tragic consequence the people of Ijaye experience.

4.3.3 Religions related proverbs

It is believed that the Ifa Priest is the intermediary between the gods and the people in Yor6bq cosmology. The Yor6bq divination system enables diviners to invoke the teachings of Orunmila, the Yor6bq deity of wisdom, prophecy and ethics.

$x6, who is seen as being in charge of justice and the transportation of "*cb[*" (sacrifice), is said to lend his authority (*zxc*) to the oracle to clarify issues and provide direction. Ifa divination rites are claimed to provide an avenue of communication to the spirit world. Performing Ifa divination is called "8dqfq" (or d7da ow9). Idafa is performed by a babalqwo or 8yqn7fq (an initiated priest or priestess, respectively). "babalqwo*"* can be translated as "father of the secrets" while "Iyanifa" means "mother that has Ifa (that is its blessing)". The babalqwo or 8yqn7fq provides insights about the current circumstances impacting the life of a person requesting this information and provides any necessary information to aid the individual. "Awo" refers to devotees in "*)*r8sz" worship. It includes "*babalawos*, *iyanifas*, *babalorishas*, *iyalorishas*" and even uninitiated devotees. Divination is the practice of attempting to acquire hidden knowledge and insight into events (past, present, and future) through the direct or indirect contact of human intelligence with the supernatural (Microsoft Encarta 2008).

The people believe that the Ifa priest could unveil the secret behind any human problem. Hence when there is a problem in the family or the entire society, such as those that concern issues of leadership, warfare, marriage, barrenness, sickness, death, and so on, an Ifa priest is contacted for solution. In Yor6bq land, it is believed that justice should not be perverted. There are different occasions when divination is made by characters in the selected plays. For example in *The gods*, divination is made by King Adetusa when his wife gives birth to their first child and they want to find out what the future holds for the child. Odewale also consults Ifa priest at Ijekun Yemoja when he wants to find out more information about himself. The third occasion in the same text is when pestilence breaks out in Kutuje and the people want to unravel the mystery behind it. The Ifa priest is consulted by Ibadan camp to find out whether their warriors will be victorious. According to tradition, it is not expected that a true Ifa priest charges his client extraordinarily for the services he renders. Hence, Baba Fakunle has to be blunt in his address to King Odewale. No matter what the case may be, the truth must be told. Physical blindness does not prevent a priest from performing spiritual investigation. Baba Fakunle's blindness, make him to be more potent in spiritual divination.

There are many proverbs cited in support of the need for divine assistance and

divine solutions to problems that defy natural entreaties. While delivering the message of Orunmila to the people of Kutuje and King Odewale; Aderopo says;

Proverb 23:

> It is said that secret of a home should be made known first to the head of the home (p.19, *The gods*).

The head of the home in the context of this proverb is the king and his chiefs who are the traditional leaders of the entire Kutuje land. The message of the Orunmila should not be kept away from them. Diseases have broken out in Kutuje land. This results to the death of so many children. Women are no more giving birth to their babies alive and the barren are no more becoming pregnant. An emissary is sent to Ife to consult Orunmila to make a divination about the source/cause of the problems they have in the land. On arrival from Ile-Ife, the message brought by Aderopo is too heavy for him to relate. So he requests to deliver it to the king in a private place. The king insists that they should be told whatever Orunmila predicted so that they can act on it.

Proverb 25:

> The horns cannot be too heavy for the head of the cow that must bear them (p.20, *The gods*).

Queen Ojuola utters this proverb to plead with Aderopo to deliver the message of Orunmila in public as the king wants. She believes that no matter how bad the message is, he should not be afraid to deliver it to the people that will make use of it. Aderopo says:

Proverb 27:

> We have left our pot unwatched, and our food burns (p.21, *The gods).*

He has just reported to the King and the chiefs that Orunmila said that King Adetusa, his own father, was killed violently by a murderer who still lives peacefully in their land. They have acted so carelessly in the past that the evil doer is left flourishing in the land.

As a result of this:

Proverb 28:

> Until the rotten tooth is pulled out, the mouth must chew with caution (p.21,*The gods*).

There is a hot debate about whether there could still be such a dangerous person that could have killed the king in their midst. In the opinion of Aderopo, until the culprit is found, everybody must be very careful. The culprit may turn out to be a person that is least expected.

King Odewle advises them:

Proverb 29:

> When trees fall on trees the topmost must be removed first (p.22, *The gods*).

King Odewale wants the people to confirm the time and place where King Adetusa was killed. The more the information he receives about the incident, the more he is brought closer to being involved in it. The trees that need to be sorted out is the murder he committed a long time ago, He knows that he had killed someone sometimes in the past. He tries to confirm the similarities in these cases to clear his conscience. So, Baba Fakunle is invited. On arrival, King Odewale eulogises Baba Fakunle the Ifa Priest with the following proverbs:

Proverbs 35, 36-37:

> Head downward like a bat, and like a bat fully aware of the way the birds fly (p.25-26, *The gods*). **Proverb 36**: Partridge: You see with the face, you see with the whole body (p.26, *The gods*). **Proverb 37:** Chicken eats corn, drinks water, swallows pebbles, yet she complains of having no teeth; if she has teeth would she eat gold (p.26, *The gods).*

Baba Fakunle is being addressed here as the metaphoric bat, partridge and chicken by King Odewale on his arrival to interpret the riddle of Orunmila about the source of the death of King Adetusa. The implication of the three proverbs is that King Odewale is not in doubt of Baba Fakunle's ability to give correct interpretations of Orunmila's riddles. The power of vision of a soothsayer is addressed in the proverbs given above. In the appellation used to describe Baba Fakunle here, there are indications that he is physically blind, however, he is addressed as having the ability to see spiritually.

Bats are the only mammals that can fly with their modified hands and arms, which serve as wings. The swift nature of partridge is compared with Baba Fakunle's ability to unveil a hidden thing, while the ability of the chicken to peck a lot of grains with its beak is stressed here. The proverbs are an informative act issued to present the good qualities of the soothsayer. Baba Fakunle interprets the riddle correctly. However, the king is not satisfied with the interpretation of the priest; so, he resorts to violence. He believes that the soothsayer has not acted according to the ethics of his profession.

While trying to embarrass the priest, King Odewale and one of his chiefs use these proverbs:

Proverbs 38 &41:

> When the elders we esteem so highly can sell their honour for devil's money then let pigs eat shame and men eat dung (p.27,*The gods*). **Proverb 41**: Our elders say he who drums for a sick man is himself a sick man (p.28, *The gods*).

In the first proverb, he rebukes Baba Fakunle for his assumed falsehood about the murderer of the former king. The second proverb is used cited by one of King Odewale's chiefs in order to corroborate King Odewale's statement. In the first proverb above, Odewale believes that it is an act of shame for the respected soothsayer to have dishonoured himself by not saying the truth. The second proverb is also accusing Baba Fakunle of not playing the game according to the rules. Odewale becomes annoyed and orders Baba Fakunle to speak the truth or face the consequences. The soothsayer speaks in annoyance and declares Odewale the murderer of the former king and a bed-sharer. The Ifa priest could be likened to an intermediary between humans and the gods. Whatever interpretation he gives is received hook line and sinker. It is believed that failure to follow the interpretation could spell doom for the people. If justice is perverted in such a case, and nothing is done to make redress, it is believed that the whole people involved may perish. Even if it involves a village or a whole town, they may all die prematurely in the process. Unfortunately, children who know nothing about the case are the direct victims.

As a reply to King Odewale's allegation, Baba Fakunle asks:

Proverb 40:

> Is it not ignorance that makes the rat attack

the cat (p.27, *The gods)?*

Baba Fakunle believes that the two previous proverbs are used to accuse him because the king is ignorant of reality. Baba Fakunle has just arrived and requested King Odewale to stay away from him since the truth about the murderer they are looking for is "smelling and choking him" (p.27). Attempts made by king Odewale to silence the priest proved abortive as the priest does not take the money offered him by the king. There is a fixed sum of money that Ifa priests are supposed to take even when the message is not favourable to their client. That sum of money must be taken no matter the case, at least to offer sacrifice to 'Ex6'. That is why Baba Fakunle has to return nine out of the ten cowries given to him by King Odewale. Baba Fakunle hands him back nine cowries: "All I am taking is one cowry for Esu the messenger of Ifa and Olodumare. No more" (p.28). In the traditional Yor6bq society, it is believed that physical blindness is a sign to know a good soothsayer. Ability to hit the nail on the head, despite his physical challenges, makes him to be adored and his divinations respected.

4.3.3.1 Proverbs about fate and predestination

Predestination has to do with the doctrine that God, a deity, or fate, has established in advance, everything that is going to happen and that nothing can change this. In Christian theology, fate has to do with the teaching that the eternal destiny of a person is predetermined by God's unchangeable decree. However, predestination does not necessarily imply a denial of free will. Most exponents of the doctrine have maintained that it is only the individual's final destiny that is predetermined, not the individual's actions, which remain free. The doctrine customarily takes one of two forms: single predestination or double predestination. In Islam, predestination is referred to as "kismet", fate or destiny (Microsoft Encarta Dictionary (2008).

Kismet is a Turkish adaptation of the Arabic word "*gismah"*, meaning portion, lot, or destiny. Within the context of Islamic religious thought, *kismet* represents the will of Allah that governs the lives of Muslims. Individuals accept *kismet* because it is part of the divine plan. Free will is the power or ability of the human mind to choose a course of action or make a decision without being subject to restraints imposed by antecedent causes, by necessity, or by divine predetermination. Determinism, as a

philosophical doctrine, holds that every event, mental as well as physical, has a cause, and that the cause being given, the event follows invariably. This theory denies the element of chance or contingency. It is opposed to indifferentism, or indeterminism, which maintains that, in phenomena of the human will, preceding events do not definitely determine subsequent ones. Because determinism is generally assumed to be true of all events except volition, the doctrine is of greatest importance when applied to ethics (Microsoft Encarta 2008).

The story of *The gods* revolves around the character of Odewale about whom it is predicted that he would kill his father and marry his mother. Efforts are made to prevent this doom from happening. However, since the cursed child is alive (and not sacrificed as suggested by the gods through Ifa priest) it is believed that the wish of the gods must come to pass. Every effort made to ward off the wish of the gods from coming to pass further helps towards complicating the crisis in the text. The next proverb explains the theme of predestination:

Proverb 2:

> The future is not happy but to resign oneself
> to it is to be crippled fast (p.3, *The gods*).

The narrator cites this proverb when the mimicry of the birth and prediction about the child's future is made. The Ifa priest has just predicted that the child would kill his father and marry his mother. The only option given to prevent the impending doom is killing the child. As a lasting solution, the parents release the child to Ogun priest who gives the baby to Gbonka, the king's special messenger, to take him to the evil forest. This proverb is meant to narrate the ordeal the two parents of Odewale go through when the fate of the child is pronounced. In order to prevent resigning to fate, steps are taken to carry out the wish of the Ifa priest. The child is taken to the evil forest with the belief that when the child is abandoned with nobody to take care of it, it would eventually die and the prediction of the gods about the child's future will not come to pass.

Man proposes but God disposes, as Gbonka is leaving the child in the forest, Ogundele the hunter sees him and requests for the child. Ogundele and Alaka take the child home and nurture him. Unfortunately, nobody tells the chid about his

background. So, Odewale sees the hunter and his wife as his biological parents. One day, Odewale addresses one of the hunter's brothers as his uncle and the man tells Odewale that he is:

Proverb 60:

> The butterfly that thinks himself a bird (p.59, *The gods*).

The mystery that surrounds the predicaments of King Odewale is unveiled through the proverb above. This proverb is used by Odewale's foster uncle at Ijekun Yemoja but reported by Odewale. The implication of this is that Odewale is not whom he calls himself.

In an attempt to avert the tragic consequence that awaits him, Odewale takes a step as revealed in these proverbs:

Proverb 61& 62:

> It is what is in the heart when there is no wine in the head that comes out when there is wine in the head (p.60, *The gods*). **Proverb 62**: A bush does not sway this way or that way, unless there is wind (p.60, *The gods*).

Through these proverbs Odewale revealed his attitude to the new knowledge he has just acquired about himself and the efforts he makes to avert the doom. Part of Odewale's intention is to run away. However, Odewale is told by the Voice:

Proverb 63:

> To run away would be foolish, the snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell (p.60, *The gods*).

The proverb further confirms that the child Odewale is destined for destruction. This implies is that Odewale may make efforts to avert the doom, but it will surely come to pass. It is a show that the gods have decided the case before the present pronouncement. However:

Proverb 64:

> The toad likes water, but not when the water is boiling (p.60, *The gods*).

In order to prevent the evil prediction from coming to pass, Odewale tries to run away against the instruction of the soothsayer. Odewale's 'toad' would have stayed in the water, Ijekun Yemoja, where he would have been better protected but for the news that he would kill his father and then marry his mother. He runs away from the 'boiling' water. The toad likes water, but not when the water is boiling (p.60). He likes to stay in his father's house but not when it is predicted that he would kill the same father of his and marry his own mother.

Before proverbs 95-99 are cited, Alaka has just announced to Odewale, Queen Ojuola and other chiefs present about the death of Odewale's (foster) father, Ogundele. Before the secret of the real identity of Odewale becomes known, Queen Ojuola sympathizes with Odewale for the news and further condemns the Ifa Priest, Baba Fakunle, for his (assumed) false predictions, which Odewale himself tries to confirm. Odewale expresses his joy at the news brought by Alaka that his father is dead. In order to express his joy, he narrates the events that led to his leaving Ijekun-Yemoja where he lived with his 'foster' father. He believes that the gods are liars for predicting wrongly. He tells them how he is insulted by one uncle of his, who regards him as 'the butterfly who thinks he is a bird' (p.59). He also narrates how he consults one Ifa priest who predicts that he has a curse placed on his head. According to him, the priest further makes it clear to him that he cannot run away from the curse. It has been destined that Odewale would kill his father and marry his mother. To run away is foolish, the snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell (p.60). As a result of the news, Odewale asks the people to rejoice with him that his father died peacefully without him being involved in his death. However, he tells the people stories about how he met an old man who accused him of being a thief in his farm:

Proverb 54:

> The elders of my tribe have a proverb: because the farm owner is slow to catch the thief, the thief calls the farm owners thief (p.46, *The gods).*

Odewale utters this proverb during a disagreement that ensued between him and the

'Old man', King Adetusa, who has just encroached into his farm land. Odewale declares the king a thief who is so fast to call the farm owner a thief. He has just declared his real father a thief ignorantly. The disagreement becomes more complicated as a step towards helping Odewale to fulfil the first part of the predictions by the gods.

Unfortunately, the crisis is not resolved. It escalates into a serious physical combat and a test of magical strength between the two and it leads to exchange of powerful words like the one below:

Proverb 55b:

> No termite ever boast of devouring rock (p.48, *The gods*).

The old man uses this incantatory proverb to render ineffective the previous pronouncements of Odewale on him. Since termites cannot devour rock, so he wants Odewale to be unable to cause harm to him. He has made Odewale a metaphoric "termite", while he is "the rock". In the process of this physical combats, Odewale kills his real father, fulfilling the first part of the prediction made against him.

Alaka arrives the same period that Odewale is narrating his past experience to the people of Kutuje. Alaka tries to keep Odewale's secret through the proverb below:

Proverb 65:

> Secrets of the owl must not be known in daylight (p.62, *The Gods).*

Alaka wants to make it known to Odewale secretly that his so-called parents, the hunter in Ijekun Yemoja and his wife, Ogundele and Mobike, are not his real parents. He wants it to be a secret between the two of them. However, the pride in Odewale would not allow him to listen to Alaka. Odewale believes that the new revelation of Alaka is just to undermine his integrity openly. Odewale's new status and the power attached make him to distrust his old friend.

Alaka tells Odewale about the death of his foster father Ogundele. Odewale is happy about this since his father's death would prove the priests to be liars. Alaka tells Odewale that the hunter is not his real father. He tells Odewale it was from the bush that he was picked. Gbonka is invited to confirm the story of Odewale's origin.

Gbonka also confirms that it was not a gang of armed robbers that killed King Adetusa but a man, on the way to Ede, where three paths meet. Queen Ojuola goes into her room to commit suicide. Odewale too goes inside to meet his wife and mother. He meets his mother in the pool of her own blood. There he plucks out the two eyes of his as he promised to do to whoever the culprit is and leads the four children his mother had for him into exile. The communicative acts performed with the text are an indirect informative act to confirm the incident and warn the readers.

Odewale works hard to prevent this doom from happening. Odewale is the "snail that tries to run away from his shell". All the efforts made by him to prevent the wish of the gods from coming to pass help the gods further. Gbonka tells two lies: that he kills the cused baby and that King Adetusa was killed by armed robbers. The two lies help further to complicate the crisis in the play. The same Gbonka also hands Odewale over to the hunter and it is in his presence that Odewale single-handed kills King Adetusa.

At the end, Odewale realises himself as an instrument being used by the gods to achieve their purpose. The judgement he pronounces initially on the eventual murderer of king Adetusa is used on himself. It is confirmed that Odewale is also the metaphoric wood-insect:

Proverb 67:

> When the wood-insect gathers sticks on its own head it carries them (p.72, *The Gods).*

This proverbial incantation is used by King Odewale when he is embarking on the exile he pronounces on anyone found out to have killed King Adetusa. Before that time he has plucked out his two eyes. He leads his four children out of the palace and requests nobody to follow them when he realizes that the gods have used him. Although the gods have played roles in this misfortune of Odewale, his own flaws contributed, in no small measure towards this misfortune. Odewale is the metaphoric "wood-insect" here and he has pronounced some judgments on himself, the consequence of which he is suffering.

4.3.4 Proverbs relating to matrimony, gender struggle and human rights

Marriage is a socially recognized and approved union between individuals

who are committed to one another with the expectation of a stable and lasting intimate relationship. It begins with a ceremony known as wedding, which formally unites the marriage partners. A marital relationship usually involves some kind of contract, either written or specified by tradition, which defines the partners' rights and obligations to each other, to any children they may have, and to their relatives. In addition to being a personal relationship between two people, marriage is one of society's most important and basic institutions. Marriage and family serve as tools for ensuring social reproduction. Social reproduction includes providing food, clothing, and shelter for family members; raising and socializing children; and caring for the sick and elderly. In families and societies in which wealth, property, or a hereditary title is to be passed on from one generation to the next, inheritance and the production of legitimate heirs are prime concerns in marriage.

However, in contemporary industrialized societies, marriage functions less as a social institution and more as a source of intimacy for the individuals involved. Marriage is commonly defined as a partnership between two members of the opposite sex known as husband and wife. Scholars who study human culture and society disagree on whether or not marriage can be universally defined. The usual roles and responsibilities of the husband and wife include living together, having sexual relations only with one another, sharing economic resources, and being recognized as the parents of their children. Despite the above, unconventional forms of marriage that do not include these elements exist. For example, scholars have studied several cultural groups in Africa and India in which husbands and wives do not live together. Instead, each spouse remains in his or her original home, and the husband is a "visitor" with sexual rights. Committed relationships between homosexuals (individuals with a sexual orientation toward people of the same sex) also challenge conventional definitions of marriage. In the United States and in other Western societies, both law and long-standing tradition dictate that marriages are monogamous, that is, an individual is married to only one other person. This form of marriage exists in all cultures and is the commonest form, even in places where other arrangements are recognized. People in monogamous cultures may not have more than one marriage partner at a time. But, if a marriage ends owing to the death of a partner or divorce (legal termination of marriage), remarriage is acceptable. Thus,

people in monogamous cultures may have more than one spouse during their lifetimes. Some cultures recognize polygamy—that is, marriage to more than one wife or husband at a time. The marriage of one man to two or more women at the same time is called "polygyny". Polyandry refers to the marriage of one woman to two or more men (Skolnick 2008).

Proverbs are employed to show the need to be careful in handling marital issues and political interest respectively. This is done in *Our Husband* in an attempt to handle Liza's arrival carefully, to prevent her from taking negative actions against Lejoka-Brown's success during political elections.

Proverb:143

> A paddler doesn't say a crocodile has an ugly lump on its snout, until he has safely crossed the river (p.29, *Our husband*).

The proverb is used by Okonkwo at the Lagos International Airport, where both Lejoka-Brown and Okonkwo are awaiting for the arrival of Liza from USA. Their concern is about the need to plan how to "cage" Liza so that she would not constitute a hindrance to their political victory in the election that is about to take place. The proverb expresses the need to be very careful and learn to persevere. In a monogamous marriage, which Brown contracted with Liza, a man is not expected to marry another woman. In a polygamous marriage, which is the style in Yoruba tradition, the man can decide to marry as many wives as possible. Lejoka-Brown is a traditional Yor6bq Muslim, while Liza is a Kenyan-American Catholic, a sect that disapproves of polygamy.

A paddler who is on the sea, a lagoon or a large river such as the rivers Niger and Ogun would not bother himself about the ugly lump on the snout of a crocodile. He would want to concentrate to prevent his canoe from capsizing. He would prefer to safely cross the river before he remembers the ugly lump on the snout of the crocodile. In the text, Lejoka Brown is the proverbial paddler, while Liza is the proverbial crocodile that must be carefully avoided in order to prevent her from attacking him. "The ugly lump on the crocodile snout" is the anticipated reaction of Liza when she hears that Lejoka-Brown has had two other wives before her arrival. At this point, they must be very careful in their steps in confirmation of the proverb

that says:

Proverb 142:

Better late than never (p.28, *Our Husband*).

What makes Liza's case different in this situation is that her marriage to Lejoka Brown takes place in a court registry. As a result, her marriage with Brown is expected to be monogamous (one man, one wife). Unfortunately, as a Yor6bq Muslim, the situation that Lejoka Brown faces in respect of Mama Rashida, the inherited wife of his late elder brother is dicey. She is married to him as requested by custom. Rejecting Mama Rashida is disobeying his parents, which is not acceptable to Yoruba and Islamic cultures he is a part of. His marriage to Sikira, the daughter of the president of the Market Women Union, is to gain political advantage over his opponents. All are done in preparation for the arrival of Liza, who will become the wife of a "senator/ minister" if he eventually wins the election.

Proverb 144:

It is an egg (…) handle it with care lest it breaks (p.29, *Our husband*).

In respect of the egg treatment, an egg is fragile. It could be broken at a slight mistake. Hence, Okonkwo advises Lejoka Brown to treat Liza like an egg that is delicate that could be broken if not well handled. The crocodile and the egg are used as metaphors to portray Liza who needs to be treated carefully until she would understands the circumstances that surround the actions that Lejoka-Brown has taken.There are two "rivers" to be crossed, the metaphoric river of persuading Liza to stay despite the polygamous situation she meets on arrival. The second river concerns how to prevent Liza being antagonistic to the political will and career of Lejoka-Brown. The opponents may take advantage of his domestic /marriage situation to outwit him. Hence, there is the need to be careful with the crocodile, and the egg to win the two victories.

Already, Lejoka-Brown who used to be a fearless retired soldier, is now afraid of what would be the result of this problem. Hence, he becomes the monkey that is in trouble in the next proverb:

Proverb 145:

> Trouble catch monkey. Monkey chops pepper (p.34, *Our Husband*).

Monkeys are known in our society for feeding on banana, pawpaw and other juicy fruits. However, a monkey that is in a tight situation will feed on anything available that can sustain it. The same is the situation of Lejoka Brown in this context.

Feminism is a theory used to identify with women struggle. It is a collective term for system of beliefs and theories. It pays special attention to women's rights and women's position in culture and society. The term tends to be used for the women's rights movement, which began in the late 18th century and continues to campaign for complete political, social, and economic equality between women and men. Feminists are united by the idea that women's position in society is unequal to men's, and that society is structured in such a way as to benefit men to the political, social, and economic detriment of women.

Feminists have used different theories to explain these inequalities. They have advocated different ways of redressing inequalities, and there are marked geographic and historical variations in the nature of women struggle. Historically, feminist thought and activity can be divided into two waves. The first wave, which began in about 1800 and lasted until the 1930s, was largely concerned with gaining equal rights between women and men. The second wave, which began in the late 1960s, has continued to fight for equality but has also developed a range of theories and approaches that stress the difference between women and men and that draws attention to the specific needs of women (Microsoft Encarta 2008).

Some proverbs that express differences between male and female sexes are analysed below:

Proverb 148:

> It is too much indulgence that makes the she-goat grow a long beard like her husband, the he-goat (P. 58,*Our husband*).

Lejoka Brown deploys this proverb to tame Liza, who is (unexpected of Brown) becoming an agent of liberation and a freedom fighter for his other wives. Lejoka Brown is trying to make a decision that will redeem his polygamous home from the doom and collapse that Liza is advocating. Another purpose of this is to

show us the conflict that results from the fusion of (imported) American culture with Yor6bq/ Islamic culture. The setting is the home of Lejoka-Brown, a typical polygamous family that is being tempted by the liberation crusade of Liza. At a time before the arrival of Liza from America, the home was under the control of Lejoka Brown with his two other wives totally obedience to his authority. At the arrival of Liza, efforts are made by Liza to make the other women become conscious of their rights. In the home of Lejoka-Brown, the husband decides all actions to be taken. The wife must not question the authority of the husband. These rules are adhered to by the two other wives before the arrival of Liza. However, in the Afro American Catholic background where Liza originated from, feminism and women liberation are advocated. Their acceptance of doctrine of equality between husband and wife is part of the condition for marriage. The proverb is a direct speech (laconic and clear). It is believed that when a woman is given a chance she will take over control from the husband.

Proverb 147:

> Two bulls can't drink from the same bucket at the same time. They will lock horns (p.44, *Our husband)*

In the traditional Yoruba society, it is believed that only adult male members of the society can have beard. It is a taboo for a woman to grow beard. If eventually a woman grows beard, she is regarded as a witch. It is in the spirit of these cultural beliefs that the people succumb to the views that "it is indulgence that makes a she-goat grow beard". The metaphoric she-goat in this proverb is Liza, a wife, who is believed to have been over indulged by her husband, who is the proverbial he-goat. The indulgence of the she-goat led to her locking horns with her husband. However, a bucket is too small to contain the head of two bulls at the same time. Literally, the Yor6bq people believe that the husband is the head of the family, hence, the wife should submit to him. The day a wife questions the authority of her husband, it is believed that her "Okro's is becoming taller than its harvester". She needs be cautioned.

However, there are proverbs about human rights. Civil rights and civil liberties are political and social concepts referring to guarantees of freedom, justice, and

equality that a state may make to its citizens. Although the terms have no precise meaning in law and are sometimes used interchangeably; distinctions may be made. Civil rights is used to imply that the state has a positive role in ensuring all citizens equal protection under the law and equal opportunity to exercise the privileges of citizenship to participate fully in national life, regardless of race, religion, sex, or other characteristics unrelated to the worth of the individual. *Civil liberty is* used to refer to guarantees of freedom of speech, press, or religion; to due process of law; and to other limitations on the power of the state to restrain or dictate the actions of individuals. The two concepts of equality and liberty are overlapping and interacting. Equality implies the ordering of liberty within society so that the freedom of one person does not infringe on the rights of others, just as liberty implies the right to act in ways permitted to others (Dorsen and Liberman 2008). Proverbs are used to express infringement to fundamental human rights and efforts to restore it. Among such proverbs is:

Proverb 140:

> When a bald-headed man goes into the shop of a barber, his reason is not a haircut; it is another problem (p. 17, *Our husband).*

Mustapha cites the proverb above in the presence of two of the wives of Lejoka-Brown; Mama Rashida and Sikira, to explain his reason to have encroached into their privacy. That is why a 'bald-headed man goes to a barber's shop'. The macro setting portrayed is the early days of Nigerian independence in Lagos. The micro setting is inside major Lejoka-Brown's compound.

Mustapha is a Muslim and a neighbour to the Browns. His family house has just been demolished. He earlier borrowed a gun from Lejoka-Brown with the view to attacking the government agents who came to demolish his father's house. This also shows the effects of the helplessness of the property owners, after their properties are demolished. The proverb is cited when he returns the gun. He moves to Agege farm to start life anew. Mama Rashida is an illiterate poultry farmer / house wife. She is the eldest wife of Lejoka-Brown. She is a Muslim who is not expected to expose herself to the public. She was formally the wife of Lejoka-Brown's elder brother that died. She is betrothed to Lejoka-Brown as a wife. Sikira is the daughter of Madam Ajanaku

who is married to Lejoka Brown for political purposes.

The message is pathetic and it expresses experience of an ordinary citizen with the government. The speech act that is performed by the proverb is that of constative information, reporting a regretted action. Mustapha reports that he could not single-handedly prevent the government agents from demolishing his father's house and has come to return the gun he borrowed to defend himself. Ordinarily, it is wrong to carry a gun along to exchange greetings with a neighbour in the Yor6bq society. Any attempt to do so would be received with suspicion. In a Yoruba polygamous home (especially Islamic) whenever a guest is around for any reason, the husband / head of the family is requested for. In the absence of the head of the family, the most senior wife addresses the guest. Any negative contribution by any of the other wives would be met with a serious disapproval. Suppose Mustapha is a stranger that was holding a gun; he would have been taken for an armed robber.

The proverb is expressed in an indirect speech form; it is used to explain the reason for his actions and the steps he has taken eventually. Mustapha has not come to molest or rape the women. His visit is to return their husband's gun and inform them about his planned journey to Agege farm. A bald-headed man has no hair on his head; hence, he would not have had any reason to visit a barber for haircut. He would have gone there to solve other problems. The visit of Mustapha is to tell Lejoka-Brown his plight as well as to return his gun. Unfortunately, when the government agents arrived, he could not attack them because they were accompanied by twenty-three police officers who have a gun each. Eventually, he has to resign to fate and receive the three thousand pounds paid to him as compensation and decide to move to his father's farmland at Agege.

Proverb 141:

> What the eyes see (in Lagos) the mouth cannot describe (p.17, *Our husband).*

Mustapha utters the proverb to explain to the two wives of Lejoka-Brown his reasons for visiting them and to send a message through them to their husband. The proverb expresses to express Mustapha's surprise and disappointment at the government officers who should protect him in the real sense. That his family house is demolished is part of human experience that cannot be described. The government is expected to

show concern and affection for the people that they govern. When there is need for any form of demolition, it should be done in love and with care.

CHAPTER FIVE

FUNCTIONS OF PROVERBS AND PROVERBS AS A CHARACTERISATION DEVICE IN THE SELECTED TEXTS

5.1 Functions of proverbs

5.1.1 Communicative functions of proverbs:

In the selected plays of Ola Rotimi, proverbs are used to perform the following categories of functions: emotive, supportive, directive and reflective functions.

5.1.1.1 Emotive function of proverb:

A proverb performs emotive function if it is used to sensitise the audience into action. In this case, strong and instinctive feelings such as joy or anger are expressed through proverbs. In the plays of Ola Rotimi, many proverbs are used to express the emotion of the major and minor characters. They do this when there is a crisis and they expect other characters to respond to their needs. For example, proverbs 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are used by the citizens of Kutuje to express their concern and feelings about the inability of King Odewale to proffer solutions to their problems. Four of these are expressed in rhetorical questions.

Proverb 9:

> When a chameleon brings forth is it not that child expected to dance? **10:** When rain falls on the leopard, does it wash off its spot? **11:** How long does a feverish bird trample in silence before its keeper (pp.9-10, *The gods*)?.

In response to the above questions, King Odewale expresses his emotion by asking his people rhetorical questions in proverbs: “Sickness is like rain, does rain fall on one roof alone?” He pacifies his people with other proverbs to make them see reasons why they should not complain. He expresses all the efforts he has made to find solutions to the problems of the people.

Proverbs are also used to express emotive function when king Odewale discovers that all accusing eyes are on him as the murderer of the former king, King Odewale believes that he is being ill-treated by his subject because he is not a member of Kutuje's tribe. He captures his emotion about the situation he is facing through those proverbs.

Proverbs 56, 58 & 59:

> The monkey and the gorilla may claim oneness but the monkey is monkey and the gorilla is gorilla **57**: The mangrove trees dwell in the river but does that make it a crocodile? **58:** Can a coakroach be innocent in the gathering of fowls? At the end, he concludes with **proverb 59**: 'We are close friends. Like her goat and Cocoyam (p53,*The gods*).

At the end, he concludes with proverb 59: "we are close friends…like he-goat and cocoyam". Those proverbs are persuasive. Leaders in traditional societies use language emotionally to appeal to the sense of reason of their followers to support them and make them do their bidding. King Odewale appeals to the sense of emotion of the people of Kutuje to confirm that he is being badly treated because he is not an indigene "a son of the soil".

5.1.1.2 Supportive functions of proverbs:

The supportive use of proverbs conveys the message of fellow feelings. In this case, the speaker becomes sensitive to the feelings of those with whom he is communicating when proverbs are used to elicit the support of other people. The imagery of simple and common people is created with the purpose of identification. Examples of this are found in the attitude of Kurunmi's people to his request that his people support him despite his mistakes, when he opts for war without consulting them. In Yor6bq culture, it is believed that older people are always right. When older members of the society offend their followers or younger ones, it is the followers or the younger ones that are expected to apologise or plead with them. This is in accordance with a proverb that says "Old age is used to take advantage over the younger ones". Also, "experience cannot be purchased in the market*"* and *"*experience is the best teacher*"*. The warriors and youths of Ijaye know that Kurunmi

has placed himself above them. To Kurunmi, the decision to fight supersedes issue of the survival of Ijaye race. So he does not weigh the consequence of his actions. So they have to take it easy with him. In the opinion of Fanyaka, in proverb 99, "when a man has placed himself far above his people, he is ready to gamble with their lives" (p.37*)*. Kurunmi indeed gambles with the lives of the people. They all know they would not win the battle but they have to support their leader even in the midst of costly mistakes that could lead to their destruction.

To appreciate the support given him by his people despite his mistakes, Kurumi says:

Proverbs 92 -94:

> When a rat laughs at a cat, there is a hole nearby (p.25) **93:** He who despises smallness, let him step on a niddle (p.41). **94:** The cow steps on her calves, that does not mean she hate them (p.41,*Kurunmi*).

At the end, the disagreement is resolved in favour of Kurunmi and his people to go to war against Oyo and Ibadan. Kurumi knows he has not done the right thing. He understands why his subjects are complaining. No wonder two of his subordinates have the following sentences to qualify him:

Amodu: You have become too powerful my lord.

Fanyaka: You are even chief Priest to all the gods,
look at them, Sango, ogun, Oya,
Orunmila...are now your personal property (P.39).

Although Kurunmi is disappointed at the rebellious behaviour of his subjects, he eventually uses wisdom and experience to quell the crisis citing proverbs 101 and 102.

5.1.1.3 Directive functions of proverbs

Authoritative, assertive and demanding leaders use language to perform directive functions. In directive use of proverbs, the message of the speaker is a commandment or law. However, the authority or assertion is not issued directly. It is done with clear explanation, at times; he uses multiple proverbs to express clearly his

intention. For example Kurunmi insists that tradition must be followed in the choice of the person that succeeds Alafin Atiba. This is against the wishes of the Alafin who wants his son to succeed him. Kurunmi uses so many proverbs to support his opinion to say confidently that he is not going to support the Alafin who is the traditional head of the entire Oyo Empire. Proverbs 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77 and 78 are used to express his assertion. In the proverbs, he compares tradition with gaboon vipers, plantains, bees and weaver birds that transfer their habits to their young ones. He also expresses the need to be proud of one's own tradition:

Proverbs 75a & 75b:

> The pride of monkey is in the knowledge of the secret of the tree top and the pride of man is in his tradition.**75b**: The day the tall iroko tree loses its root, is the day baby cut shits on its head p.16, *Kurunmi).*

According to Kurunmi the day a people loses their tradition is the day their death begins.

Madam Ajanaku also uses proverbs to perform directive function in *Our husband* when the need arises to choose another person to replace Lejoka-Brown. She speaks on behalf of the market women union that the choice of a woman is paramount in the replacement. In proverbs 150-152, she asserts in pidgin:

Proverb 150:

> Eh. Agbanikaka man says "Di cow wey no get tail for n yash, na god nahim de helep am drive fly commot (p66,*Our husband*).

Madam Ajanaku tells the party leadership first that the total number of market women union counts in the number of the members of their party. She then insists that their choice of candidate be taken by the party officials to replace Lejoka Brown:

Proverb 152:

> Man wey carry ogbono Soup-pot for hand, and di man wey carry foo-foo for head, na who go fin who go (p.68, *Our husband*)?

Madam Ajanaku further expresses herself in the language of the market women

(Pidgin) to drive her point home. At the end party leaders have no choice other than to accept the choice of a woman candidate.

5.1.1.4 Reflective function of proverbs:

Reflective function of language is performed when every bit of words used is carefully thought out and weighed before it is expressed. In this case, the user of proverb has an objective that is carefully thought about before the message is carefully dispatched. For example in *Our husband* members of People Liberation Party give a good thought about the behaviour of their leader, Raheem Lejoka-Brown before they decide to remove him. According to Osagie, the deputy leader of the party, in proverb **149**, "when the vine entwines your roof... it is time to cut it*"* (p.66). The party members could no more bear with the autocratic tendencies and lack of respect for other leaders of the party that have become endemic in Brown's behaviour. So they impeach him.

Also, Odewale reflects on the impending evil that was predicted that would happen to him. As a child that loves his parents and would not want to shed blood nor share the same bed with his father, he has to take a step. Odewale reflects on the message of Ifa priest in Ijekun Yemoja where he lives with Ogundele and flees, as revealed in proverb 64: "The toad likes water but not when the water is boiling" (p60). The boiling water is the predictions that he would kill his father and marry his mother.

5.1.2 Speech Acts functions performed by selected proverbs

Scholars have attested to proverb's ability to perform pragmatic functions. Norrick (1985) examines speech acts functions of proverbs. He describes the perlocutionary acts that speakers perform with proverbs, associating the acts with utterances of proverbs generally and those with standard bound to particular proverbs. Whitting (1994) defines proverbs from the perspectives of the speech acts they performed such as give facts, observe, warn, admonish and guide.

In the texts selected for this study, proverbs are used to perform various speech acts. Among then are advisory speech acts advising different characters in the texts, as we seen in proverbs 121, 122 and 138. In proverb 121, Somoye is advising the ṣgbọ warriors that 'A man with grass on his buttock must not forget himself when

he goes to put out a neighbour's fire" (p. 74). The grass in his buttock 'is flammable, so when he is assisting others, he should not forget that he too is at risk of being burnt if care is not taken. Somoye is admonishing the entire Egba warriors, in the process of assisting Ijaye, not to forget the Dahomey war they left behind at home. The proverb is flora in nature. Kurunmi also advises the people of Ijaye in proverb **122** that they should not accuse the ṣgbọ warriors of incompetence, after all, "when a one-legged man needs help, he must not say that the friend who carries him on the back stinks even if that helper does stink" (pp. 83-84). In this proverb, the ṣgbọ warriors are the assumed stinking people. Kurunmi requests that his people should, at least, appreciate their efforts for agreeing to support them at all to fight their battle.

Another speech act function that proverbs perform in the texts is concessive function: **acknowledging,** admitting and promising. Balogun Ogunkoroju uses proverbs as an instrument of acknowledgement in the process of supplication to the gods. When the warriors of Ijaye are preparing for an attack, prayers are offered to the gods of the land: Sango and Ogun, the gods of war. They are owners of … secrets of warfare and defence. In his prayers, Ogunkoroju cites proverbs 107, 108 and 109: "Secrets of the mouth are best known to the chewing stick. Secrets of the palm wine are best known to the fly; secrets hidden in the footpath are felt by the sole of the feet" (p.59). He wishes in his prayers that as the situation of the mouth are known by the chewing stick, condition of palm-wine by flies, and that of foot path by the sole of the feet, likewise the gods (Ogun and Sango) who know the secret of warfare and defence should reveal the situation of the next fight to Ijaye warriors.

King Odewale acknowledges that he has not been active recently, especially in proffering solutions to the crisis that is in the land of Kutuje. He admits and confirms the truth in the sickness that has taken over the entire Kutuje society. He then expresses his concern over the development in proverb **13**.

> **Odewale**: My people, children of our fathers. 'Sickness is like rain. Does the rain fall on one roof alone? No, does it fall on one body and not on another, No, whoever the rain sees; on him it rains (p. 10, *The gods*).

He lets them know that members of his own household are also affected in the crisis.

At the end of the play, Kurunmi admits and acknowledges that he has not acted very well in the crisis that has led to the destruction of the entire Ijaye people. He accepts the fact that he did not take the right steps. However, the deed has been done; he cannot stop the crisis. He expresses this in his expression below.

> Kurunmi: when a leader of men has led his people to disaster, and what remains of his present life is but a shadow of his proud past… (p. 93, *Kurunmi*).

Kurunmi acknowledges that he has led his own people to disaster. He admits the verdict of death, as he commits suicide, and requests his guards to burry him inside River Ose where his honour would lie. He eventually expresses his regret for his inability to prevent the warfare in a long narrative proverb.

Proverb 134:

> 'A cow gave birth to a fire, she wanted to lick it, but it burned her, she wanted to leave it but she could not because it was her own (p.94,*Kurunmi*).

Here, Kurunmi acknowledges the facts that he is the 'owner of the 'fire' that engulfs the entire Ijaye land. The metaphoric fire in the proverb is his insistence that the war be fought. However, it is too late to repent of his misdeed, as he has taken a poison for the purpose of suicide before he expresses this.

Lejoka Brown uses proverbs to perform speech act of **admitting** the facts when he acknowledges the fact that 'politics is war' in proverb 147. Warfare is a matter of do or die. It is either you kill your opponent or he kills you. Likewise in Nigerian politics that Lejoka Brown is depicting in this proverb, politics is taken so seriously. When you defeat your opponent you take over all, leaving nothing for him to benefit from. It is a situation of a winner takes all and a looser wallows in debt.

Dessentive speech act of **dissagreeing** are also performed with proverbs. This is shown when minor characters disagree with the major characters in respect to issues that concern their welfare. In *The gods,* the citizens express their dissatisfaction with King Odewale's failure to proffer solutions to the problem they are facing.

Proverbs 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 confirm this:

Proverbs 8, 9 10 & 11:

> What use are greetings to a dying body (p.9) **9:** When the head of a household dies, the house becomes an empty shell (p.9) **10**: When a chameleon brings forth a child is it not that child expected to dance (p.9) **11:** When rain falls on the leopard, does it wash off its spot? (p.10) **12:** How long does feverish bird trample in silence before their keeper? (p.10, *The gods*)

King Odewale, is the metaphoric head of the household, chameleon and leopard. The people of Kutuje are the metaphoric dying body and the household members who are direct victims of the insensitivity of King Odewale.

Odewale uses proverbs to perform speech acts of **advising** Prince Aderopo. He observes that Aderopo has started developing interest in becoming a king and uses proverbs to advise him to take it easy. Proverbs 44, 45, 46 and 47 are used for this:

Proverb 44 & 45:

> Odewale: I said if you think that you can uproot a tree that has been planted by the gods… hmm… my brother …. (p. 32). **45:** If you think you can drum for my downfall and hope that drum will sound; then, your head is not correct (p.32 *The gods*,)

"Uprooting tree planted by the gods" and "drumming" are metaphors used to represent overthrowing his government. He warns Aderopo not to try it. He further advises Aderopo to wait for his turn to rule in proverbs **46** and **47**.

> **Odewale**: Two rams cannot drink from the same bucket at the same time they will lock horns.
> **Odewale**: Take your time, child, if you rise too early, the dew of life will soak you. (pp. 34-35 *The gods*,).

Odewale and Aderopo are the supposed "two rams" in the proverb above. A bucket is too small in size to contain the heads of two rams. Any attempt by the two rams to drink water at the same time will lead to a crisis. Hence, since Odewale is not ready to leave the throne for Aderopo, he advises and warns Aderopo to wait for his turn. Proverbs are also used to perform other requistive acts such as imploring and portraying. Voice implores Odewale not to take the steps he is about to take (running away) but he refuses to comply.

> **Odewale**: me kill my own father and marry my own mother!
>
> **Voices**: It has been willed.
>
> **Odewale**: What must I do then not to carry out this will of the gods?
>
> **Voice**: Nothing to run away would be foolish. *The snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell*. Just stay where you are….' (p. 60 *The Gods*,).

The closeness of Odewale to his problem is compared with "snail and its shell" in proverb **63** above. It is only at death that the shell of a snail is removed. Likewise, the curse on Odewale could only be averted by death. Every step taken by him to avert it leads to further crisis.

Predictive act could also be performed by proverbs.

This could be done whprophesying, forecasting or **predicting**. For examples, in *The gods*, proverbs are used to perform predictive acts. On two occasions it was predicted that Odewale will kill his father and marry his mother (at birth in Kutuje and as an adult at Ijekun-Yemoja). Efforts are made to avert the prediction on two different occasions. At last occasion, the Ifa priest warns Odewale not to attempt to run away in proverb **63**.

> **Voice**: Nothing: To run away would be foolish. The snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell.'(P.60, *The gods*)

The curse has become a snail shell in Odewale's back. Only death can cast off the shell. This proverb carries the central message of *The Gods*.

Proverbs are also used in the selected texts to perform informative acts such as advising, notifying testifying and reporting. For example, Odewale uses the acts of informing and advising when he is responding to the various allegations of the people of Kutuje in proverbs **18, 19** and **20.**

> **Odewale**: The ruin of a land and its people begins in their homes. Second woman: Your highness… I have tried, in my own house, I have boiled some herb, drank them yet sickness remain.
> **Odewale**: To get fully cured one needs patience.' The moon moves slowly but by day break it crosses the sky.'.
> **Fourth Woman:** I don't know how to give it to them so that they can drink it all.
> **Odewale**: By trying often the monkey learns to jump form tree to tree without falling.' Keep trying *(The gods)*.

The proverbs above are cited by king Odewale in sequence. He would not want his people to be ruined. Odewale would not want the ruin of the people of Kutuje to come to pass. So, he informs the people to take herbal drugs. He also wants his people to entertain patience, the way the "moon slows" and "crosses" the sky. He emphasises the need to give medicine to their children regularly so that they can be used to it.

5.1.3 Socio-political functions

The proverbs in the texts also perform various socio-political functions. They disseminate information about the tradition of the people. They project the depth of the wisdom of the people. They are also applied to political speeches and propaganda. Proverbs 34, 143 and 147 attest to this. In proverb **34** towns' people comment about the good gesture of King Odewale to the entire Kutuje people:

> Town's people: The world is bad. One does not know whom to trust. The good ruler who

> stands for the people becomes a victim too soon and bad rulers like bad sauce, stay longer (p.24,*The gods)*

The proverb above shows the realities of human situation in various societies. Despite all the efforts of king Odewale to make life better for his people the people did not commend his efforts. Also, in proverb **135** and **136**, proverbial songs are rendered to achieve political purposes:

Proverb: 135

> The chameleon is no food. (p.ix) **136**: The impact of the human head on hard ground commands tears from the eyes (p.ix).
> While in proverb **139,** Brown declares politics to be war. "Politics is war"(p.7,*Our husband*).

The proverbs in the selected texts are also cited by political thugs to warn their political opponents to stay away or be ready to face the consequences.

The proverbs are equally used as instrument of propagation of Yor6bq moral and ethical recommendation. They are culture bound. They contain certain components which may be restricted to Nigeria, and specifically Yoruba culture. They also show the socio-cultural realities of the society in which they are used. Proverb 22 and 23 express the power in unity as many Yoruba proverbs do:

Proverb 22:

> When you hear our voice brother, your better respond to call of duty or you will have yourself to blame (p.18) **23**: It is said that the secrets of a home should be known first to the head of the home (p.19,*The gods*)

Communal living is the style in the traditional society. Every member of the society is his/her brothers' keeper. The success or failure of one member of the society is that of all. When there is a form of challenge that faces all, physical, psychological or spiritual, it is the duty of all to face the challenge together, as the case of efforts towards combating crisis in the proverbs above.

Proverbs further attest to the knowledge and wisdom of the users. The proverbs used in the selected texts give substance to speeches. They show the level of maturity of the users. They serve as guide to life's problems. Examples of these are

found in proverbs 39, 40, 78, 76, 100 101 and 102. For example proverb **40**: (Ignorance makes the rat call the call to a fight (p. 42) attests to the facts that we have to remain vigilant in what we do. If the rat had been vigilant, he would have known that the cat is a beast while a rat is a prey to be consumed by the beast. In essence, it is lack of knowledge by palace guards that makes them call him a mad person. Another example is:

Proverb 79:

> When the tortoise is heading for a senseless journey and you say to him, Brother Tortoise, when will you be wise and come back home, the tortoise will say until I have been disgraced (pp. 17, 18 & 25,*Kurunmi*).

This proverb is cited three times by Kurunmi to sound a note of warning to Alafin Atiba's associates to warn the king that the steps he is about to take in planning to install Prince Adelu as the next Alafin of Oyo would end in their disgrace. The proverb is teaches vigilance and caution. It also teaches that pride comes before downfall.

5.1.4. Innovative/ Linguistic functions of proverbs

Innovation is simply the influence of the new linguistic cultural and social ecology on the use of English in Nigeria. It is indicative of acculturation of English in the new socio-cultural and linguistic contexts. The existence of non-English contexts and the need to use contextually appropriate words justify the occurrence of innovations in language use (Kachru 1982, Igboanusi 2002). Also, Bokamba (1982) cited in Igboanusi (2002), has noted that lexical items in African English may be created in four principal ways: by semantic extension, semantics shift, semantic transfer and coinage. Also, Bamiro (1994) opines that lexico-semantic variations in Nigerian English could be classified as: loan shift, semantic under differentiation, lexico-semantic duplication and redundancy. Others are ellipsis, convention, clipping acronyms, translation equivalents, analogical creation and coinage. Cram (1994:93) avers that "proverbs should be viewed as a lexical element with a quotation status". The proverb is a lexical element in the sense that it is a sign which is learned and re-used as a single unit with a frozen internal and external structure. The sociolinguistic influence of the Yor6bq culture on the innovative use of proverbs in the selected

plays of Ola Rotimi is our concern here. In the texts, through proverbs, new words, phrases and expressions are imported into the English language. These are achieved through coinages, borrowing, loan words, semantic extension, shift, collocates extension and introduction of Pidgin.

5.1.4.1 Coinages

Coinages are newly created words resulting from the prevailing socio-linguistic factors in a culture. Most of the examples in our data appear in the form of compound (English words) which merely paraphrases the Yor6bq concepts. This is very common in Ola Rotimi's use of proverbs in the selected plays. The coined words or expressions are italicised in each example given below:

Proverbs:

42 When the *evil-plotter beats his drum* for the downfall of the innocent, the gods will not let that drum sound (*The god* p. 30). The "evil plotters" here is used in the sense of the wicked. "Beats his drum" means tries to demonstrate his wickedness.

50: An eagle does not go to the *market place* unless there is something there *(The gods*, p. 37). Market place is used in the sense of a market.

54: Because the *farm-owner is* slow to catch the thief, the thief calls the *farm-owner* thief. "Farm owner" is used in the sense of the owner of an item that could be stolen.

72: When the *Gaboon viper* dies, its children take up its habits poison and all (*Kurunmi* p. 15). A "*Gaboon viper"* is a highly venomous snake characterized by a pair of long, hollow fangs, usually with reserve fangs beside them, in the front of the upper jaw.

77: The pride of the *weaver-bird* shows in its skilful design of its nest.

Kurunmi, p. 16). The weaver birds are species of the chimney swift known for its ability to nest and roost inside tall chimneys.

86: The *bull-frog that* rivals the size of the elephant will burst (*Kurunmi* p. 29). It is a type of burrowing frogs with short, powerful legs that are well built for digging.

87: A man who does not want *strange foot-print* in his backyard must fence it up (*Kurunm*i p. 29). "Strange foot-print" is used in the sense of passers-bye.

107: Secrets of the mouth are first known to *chewing stick* (*Kurunmi* p.59). Chewing stick refers to a fibrous piece of wood used in cleaning the teeth.

122: When a *one-legged man* needs help he must not say that the friend who helps him stinks, even if that helper does stink (*Kurunm*i pp. 83-84).
(One -legged man is a person whose one leg has been amputated.

140: When a *bald-headed man* goes into the shop of a barber, his reason is not a hair cut (*Our Husband* p. 17). "Bald headed" is used to mean bald, that is, a man having no hair on the head.

67: When the *wood-insect* gathers sticks, on its own head if carries them (Kurunmi p. 74). This is a type of insect that builds dry woods around itself.

127: The size of a *bush-rat is* the size its holes (*Kurunmi* p. 88). This refers to a rat.

132: It is not the beating of *rain-drops that* hurts….it is the….the touch of dew….the soft touch (*Kurunmi*, p.90). Rain-drop refers to rainfall.

5.1.4.2 Borrowing

Scholars have studied various aspects of borrowing as a process of lexical innovation in Nigeria English (Jowitt 1991, Igboanusi 1998 and 2002). Ola Rotimi uses a good number of loan words borrowed from his Yoruba background in the proverbs he uses. We explain each of the borrowing below:

106: ‘*B6 5 mi’* give me-e-e ‘*:m b6 5 [’* I give you. Give and take is the philosophy of life (pp.55-56, *Kurunmi).* The above sentences italicised illustrates the Yoruba philosophy of frog which says that this life has to do with give and take. It is what you give that you are expected to receive from others. This is law of comparative succession.

113: The parrot is lord of the sea. The king-fisher lord of the lagoon *Ogun*…. lord of battle, it is to you we call and before you we stand (*Kurunmi* p.60). *Ogun* is one of the deities worshipped in Yoruba land; he is declared the *lord of iron* and is worshipped by every individual whose business has to do with iron ore. The power which a parrot has on the sea and that which king-fisher has on lagoon are transferred to Ogun when it comes to battle ‘absolute power’. The frog is kicked - *kpa* is flattens *y-z-k-z-t-z* (*Kurunmi*, p. 27). “Kpa’ is the sound produced when a frog or something succulent is kicked. The word *y-z-k-z-t-z* is an adverb describing the sound produced when the frog hits the floor when it is kicked. The two items are onomatopoeic.

5.1.4.3 Loan blend

Loan blend combines items from English and Nigerian languages together to form new meanings. Here, the item from the source language and its partial equivalent from the target language are placed side-by-side to form a normal group. The English items help the reader to understand the meaning of the item from a Nigerian language. Examples are:

152: Man wey carry *Ogbono* soup for head and man wey carry *foofoo* for head, na who go fin who go (p. 68, *Our Husband)? Ogbono* soup is brownish viscous gravy customarily eaten with foofoo_in the eastern part of Nigeria. Foofoo is a whitish form of baked cassava starch.

78: The day the tall *iroko tree* loses the roots is the day the baby ant shits on its head: (*Kurunmi*, p.16). The italicised item is a type of tree popularly used for construction in Yor6bq land.

5.1.4.4 Semantic extension/shift

Many Nigerian writers in the English language adopt the oral style to the written tradition. In their works are found the use of proverbs and other Nigerian lexical colouration which they use to achieve their purpose to reflect 'Nigerianism' in their use of the English language. The language is often twisted and fashioned to suit the Nigerian experience. In most cases, this peculiar and very effective linguistic style creates no readership and semantic problems for the Nigerian readers. However, for European readers whose language has been used, there may be semantic difficulties arising from inadequate knowledge of Nigerian cultures and world views. An understanding of the culture which gave rise to such usages will certainly enhance their interpretations.

This section focuses on how the use of language in social context can be a tool for promoting a people's literature and how it can impede understanding for a group of readers. Scholars like Bamiro (1994) cited in Igboanusi (1998 & 2002) have studied the presence of lexical innovation in Nigerian English through several processes. The concern of the present research work is to identify the use of semantic expansion, collocation extension, colloquialism and translation equivalents as lexico-semantic innovation processes which create semantic difficulties of interpretation for the foreign readers of Nigerian literature. Semantic extension occurs when English words are made to acquire extended meanings. Ola Rotimi reflects Nigerian contexts in his structure of proverbs so that such items can acquire extended meanings in his plays. Semantic extension is therefore a good source of translation of features of Nigerian English in Nigerian drama.

Examples are given below:

Proverbs:

2: The future is not *happy*, but to resign oneself to it is to be crippled fast (*The gods,* p.3).

The predictions about the future are not a good but man has to continue to struggle to earn living until the evil days come.

9: When *the head of the household dies*, the house becomes an empty shell *(The gods p.*9).

In Yoruba culture, the head of the house being referred to here is attached to responsibility. It includes rulers of cities chiefs/*Bale* of villages, extended family heads and husbands).

16: It is *sickness* that man can cure, not *death* (*The gods*, p. 12).

This came up in support of the Yor6bq people beliefs about predestination. According to them when it is the time predestined for someone to die, there is no effort made to revive the sick person that would succeed. This is responsible for people's failure to take necessary medication when they fall sick. They believe that even if the medications are given the sick person will still die if it has been ordained. This also confirms their belief in predestination.

42: When the evil-plotter *beats his drum for the* downfall of the innocent, the gods will not let that drums sound (*The gods*,p.30).

When the wicked ones work towards the downfall of the innocent ones, God, being the defender of the innocent, will always deliver them.

44: I sad if you think that you can *uproot a tree that has been planted by* the gods (…) (p.32,*The gods*).

This has to do with trying to change what God has ordained. The Yoruba people believe in God's divine protection against the enemy. They also believe that God is able to defend the weak against the attack of the strong).

47: If you *rise* too early the *dew of life* will *soak* you. The Gods, P.35).

Rising here is used in the context of trying to take over what culturally belongs to one when it is not the right time. The dew of life, on the other hand, could be regarded as circumstances influenced by the action taken by other contenders to cultural heritage, such as trying to become a chief, a king; or an inheritance. In essence, an individual needs to be patient in the process or he will not achieve it in his life time.

69: Take the *Elders* away and the town rots (*Kurunmi*, p. 12).

In Yoruba culture, elders are, kings, chiefs, heads of family, any form of a leader, warriors, and so on. They are the protectors of the people and custodians of the wisdom of the people. It is believed that when their counsel and wisdom are disregarded, problems are bound to arise

79: When the tortoise is heading for a senseless journey and you say to him*: Brother Tortoise*, when will you be wise and come back home? The tortoise will say: *Brother* not until I have been disgraced. (*Kurunmi*, pp. 18&25). Brother is used in Yor6bq context to include one's friends, relatives and acquaintance. Ironically, your enemy or a person with whom you are contending for position could be called a brother.

118: It is a foolish *daughter* who thinks she knows so much that she can teach her own mother how to bear children (p.64, *Kurunmi*).
Daughter and mother in the context of usage refer to Ijaye warriors and their war captains. In Yor6bq context, a daughter refers to one's own biological daughter, cousins, and nieces, including children of friends, relations and colleagues. While mothers are all elderly women that could be mothers to individuals.

119: When a *child* is a failure in life, the mother bears the blame (*Kurunmi* p.74).
In Yoruba context, when a child is successful, the father takes the glory, but when the same child is a failure, his mother takes the blame.

5.1.4.5 Collocation extension

Collocation extension is a well-motivated device for lexical creation which has enabled Nigerian writers to transfer some Nigerian language habits to English. This has posed semantic problems to the foreign readers of Nigerian literature. Collocation extension is similar to semantic extension because they are created through the same process of translation. They both result in new or extended meaning. However, while meanings of individual items are extended under semantic extension, meanings result from the association of different collocates under collocation extension. Examples

are:

Proverbs:

7: But joy has a *slender body that* breaks too soon. (*The gods*, p.8).
The sentence is equivalent to Joy is not sustained for a long time

32: When crocodiles *eat their own eggs, what* will they not do to the flesh of a frog (p.23,*The gods*)? Their own eggs in the context given above are 'the eggs laid by them.

33: All lizards *lie prostrate:* how can a man tell which lizard suffers from belly ache, (p.23, *The gods*) "Lie prostrate" in the British English means to crawl, while "belly ache" means stomach pains.

50: An eagle does not go to the market place unless there is *something* there *(The gods*, p. 37). Something in the context means the corpse of a dead animal that the eagle could feed on.

57: The mangrove tree *dwells* in the river but does that make it a crocodile *(The gods*, p. 51)? In British English, the mangrove trees grow in the river.

74: The *fire dies;* its ashes bear its memory with a shroud of white fluff. (*Kurunmi*, p.15). In British English 'fire is extinguished.

88: The meat of an antelope *tastes good, but* while it is *cooking* what do we eat. The meat of an antelope is tasty, but while it is still being cooked before it is ready for eating, what do we eat?

131: It is the water that *spills*; the calabash is still *unbroken (Kurunmi* p. 89).
This is used in the sense of a pregnant woman that is delivered of a still birth but the mother lives. In the above context, when a baby dies, especially during birth, the Yoruba believe that it is water that spills. But when the mother of the baby dies, the calabash has broken. It is believed that if the mother is alive she can give birth to more children.

5.1.4.6 Elements of Pidgin

Pidgin is now a commonly used language in most parts of Nigeria, especially in ethnically mixed states in the southern part of the country, Lagos and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Nigerian Pidgin serves as both language of trade and lingua franca in most cities where it is popularly used. The functions of Nigerian Pidgin have today been elaborated to include news broadcast, presentation, and literary works such as prose, drama and poetry. It is used in public places such as markets, drinking bars, university campuses and public transportation among others (Jibril 1995 & Igboanusi 2002). The simplified structure and adaptability to local usage of Nigeria Pidgin makes it possible for both literate and non-literate Nigerians to use it.

Literary scholars like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi, and Ola Rotimi, among others, use Nigerian Pidgin in their writings. Nigerian Pidgin is often used by them to depict characters or to indicate social class and moral standing of characters in society. For example, Ola Rotimi reflects one of the cosmopolitan societies mentioned above in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again.* Reflecting Lagos in this work, he depicts characters in the play and some other ones based on their level of literacy, for instance some speeches of the major character in *Our Husband*, Major Rahman Lejoka-Brown, is written in Nigeria Pidgin. Also, Madam Ajanaku, the president of National Union of Nigerian Market Women, expresses herself in Nigerian Pidgin. Rahman Lejoka-Brown and Okonkwo use Nigeria Pidgin based on their context, mood and choice. The following examples illustrate the use of Pidgin proverbs by Ola Rotimi:

Proverbs:

138: Man- u wey go chop- u frog, make he kuku chop- u the frog- u way go get egg (*Our Husband* p.7). A man that wants to feed on frog should select a juicy one.

145: Trouble catch monkey, monkey chop pepper(*Our Husband* p.34). A troubled monkey (person) is not a chooser. He feeds on whatever is available.

150: Die cow wey no get tail for n yash na God na him de helep am drive fly commot (*Our Husband* p.66). A cow that has no tail relies on God to drive away flies. The tail is seen as a major instrument of driving away flies.

152: Man wey carry Ogbono soup-pot for hand, and di man way carry foo-foo for

head, na who go fin who go (*Our Husband* p.68). A man that wants to eat (foo-foo) pounded cassava must get someone with soup.

151: "Because una mout get one bad teet" inside. And una mout' go get wahala tel-e-e una take that rotten teet' commot"! (p.67). You need to be careful of your utterances lest it puts you into trouble.

5.2 Proverb as a characterization device in the selected plays of Ola Rotimi

African oral narratives have characters that reflect the nature of the inhabitants of the African universe. The characters that occupy the African universe range from supernatural beings, spirits and the ancestors, to man, animals, plants and even insects (Ogunjimi and Na'Allah 1991:87). The major characters around which folktales, myths, legends and proverbs are told are usually the heroes. In oral narrations, there are flat and round characters. They are found everywhere and tend to do everything. The flat characters sometimes can be regarded as passive characters, whose roles, though important, could be replaced by other characters when the need arises. All these characters perform the various functions defined by the culture of the people.

Proverbs are eemployed to reflect the status of different characters in *The Gods*, *Kurunmi* and *Our Husband* to depict people in the Yor6bq culture which Ola Rotimi represents. Proverbs are the repository of the collective wisdom of the tribe. Tribal etiquette dictates that proverbs are transmitted by the older members of the society who have acquired experience and wisdom in the culture of their people. The quality of experience an elderly person has acquired reflects in the way he cites proverbs.

However, whenever an elderly person is citing a proverb among other peers of his, he acknowledges the older ones in the prefaces he adds to his proverbs, such as: "*zwon zgbz / Yor6bq a mq a pa 0we kan p3*" (the elders or "Yoruba people" used to cite a proverb that), or phrases like *"$yin zgbz c for7j8 m7, t9 bq dzb7 0we"* (elders please forgive me, if it sounds like a proverb). In some cases, the person that cites the proverb acknowledges the progenitors or the tribe. Examples are: the "Yoruba man says" (p.5, *Our husband*), "In the proverbial wisdom of our forebears" (p.66, *Our Husband*), "It is said" (p.19, *The gods), "*Our elders say"

(p28, The gods). There are cases where some proverbs are sourced from another culture. Such a culture is acknowledged. An example is, "Agbanikaka man says" (p.66, *Our husband*). In some cases, the person that cites the proverb might have become an authority. In such a case, except another elderly person is there, he does not acknowledge anybody; he uses the proverb directly. A king may not need to acknowledge anybody being the custodian of the people's culture. A warlord also needs not acknowledge person when addressing his warriors because of the military prowess in him. In *Kurunmi* proverbs are cited freely by warlords without acknowledgement. In *The gods,* King Odewale does not give any acknowledgement.

Also in Yor6bq culture, the number of proverbs an individual can cite determines the level of his/her wisdom. As a result, age and experience are attached to proverb use. As an individual advances in age new proverbs are added to the ones he already knows. As a result, knowledge of proverbs is attached to wisdom and oratory power of members of the society. Because proverbs are beloved of the people, a speech becomes baseless when proverbs are not included in the presentation. The formulaic preface and conclusion are speaker's means of making sure that the audience does not miss his clever use of proverbs. To the Yoruba *"0we l2xin =r=, =r= l2xin 0we, b7 =r= bq son6, 0we la fi 7 wq a"* (Proverbs are horses which words ride to their destinations, when the word gets lost, we use proverbs to locate it). The people assigned the role of locating words with proverbs are the elders in the society. The elders include kings, chiefs, village leaders, family heads, and other older members of the societies, who are placed in the position of leadership. In the three texts of Ola Rotimi analysed, it was found out that leaders and older members of the society, such as kings, chiefs, warlords, opinion-leaders, political leaders, village heads, family heads, and so on, use proverbs more than the minor characters, women, servants and other members of the society. No wonder, King Odewale cites about fifty-seven percent of the proverbs in *The gods,* while Kurunmi cites about fifty-four percent of the proverbs in *Kurunmi.*

One major factor that distinguishes the major characters in *The gods* and *Kurunmi*, Odewale and Kurunmi, respectively from minor characters, is that the two of them use proverbs more than other minor characters. However, their choices of proverbs help to show the flaws in them. For instance, Odewale is hot tempered and

every effort made to cool his temper further provokes his annoyance from the beginning to the end of the play. For instance, despite all the efforts of Aderopo in support of the administration of King Odewale, he is not appreciated by the king. Instead, he is accused of trying to overthrow his government in proverb 45: if you think you can drum for my downfall and hope that drum will sound, your head is not correct. He is treated as a round and dynamic character in our analysis as a result of the various traits he displays to (Baker, 2000). Kurunmi too would not change his belief. Even when some of his steps contradict the course he is defending, he is static in his beliefs to the end. In the last comments of Kurunmi at the end of the play, a proverb is uttered to show that an end has come to him. According to him, "a cow gave birth to a fire she wanted to lick it, but it burned her. She wanted to leave it but she could not because it was her own...her own child" (p.94). This proverb above shows that the disaster that has befallen Ijaye gives Kurunmi some concern but he fails to repent till the worst has happened to him. While trying to defend tradition, he wastes the lives of all the strong men in Ijaye including those of his own three sons, and eventually commits suicide. He wastes a whole generation to defend an ideology he believes in. Hence, we analyse him as a round and dynamic character.

The case of the major character of *Our Husband*, a comedy, is different from the above. Major Rahman Lejoka-Brown, averts a tragic end. He uses proverbs to confirm the need to change and adjust his prior beliefs and practices. He abandons his political ideology and entire political party to be committed to his marriage. He is analysed as a round and dynamic character.

5.2.1 *The gods are not to blame*

The table below reflects the number of times each character uses proverbs and the number of proverbs used by every character in Ola Rotimi's an *The gods.*

Table 5.1.2: Proverbs as a Characterization Device in *The Gods*

	Characters	No. of proverbs	% of proverb
1	Odewale	38	56.7%
2	Narrator	02	3%
3	1st Citizen	1	1.5%
4	2nd Citizen	2	3%
5	3rd Citizen	1	1.5%
6	5th Citizen	1	1.5%
7	Town men	1	1.5%
8	Town Crier	1	1.5%
9	Aderopo	03	4.5%
10	Queen Ojuola	01	1.5%
11	Baba Fakunle	02	3%
12	Royal Bard	04	6%
13	Alaka	03	4.5%
14	Old Man	05	7.5%
15	Voice	01	1.5%
16	Second Chief	01	1.5%

The context of *The gods* is a typical Yor6bq traditional society before the coming of the Europeans. At the opening of the play, King Odewale is already presiding over the affairs of Kutuje land as a new king, the position he occupies for more than eleven years before disaster ensues in the entire kingdom. King Odewale cites thirty eight proverbs (making 56.7% of all the proverbs used in the play). Closer to king Odewale is King Adetusa, in the flash back, who cites only five proverbs (7.5%). Among them are three incantatory proverbs. Also, the Royal Bard cites proverbs four times (6% of the whole proverbs). Alaka and Aderopo cite three proverbs each. Other characters (including Queen Ojuola) cite one or two proverbs. The only proverb cited by Queen Ojuola is in support of the views of King Odewale when Aderopo refuses to deliver the message of Orunmila in public.

5.2.1.1 Odewale as a round and dynamic character

A round character manifests the natural excellence that is expressed in a distinct field, with various traits shown and distinct aspect of intelligence observed in each of these realms. For example, at the physical realm, he should be agile, graceful, swift and beautiful. The brilliance of his intelligence should not only be on logical competence, but also on imaginative powers and aesthetic sensibility. He must be tactical and clever (we suppose) to a strategic depth. Ethically, he should be evidently courageous and resolute as well as clear-sighted about the rights of individuals to realize their potential. In essence, he should not only be strong willed, but also committed to presumably sound values. Odewale manifests the qualities of a round character in the following ways:

1.He struggles to effect changes in the effects of the predictions of the gods about him. He would not want to kill his father and marry his mother. So he struggles with fate (Proverb 3).

2. On arrival at Kutuje, he takes much interest in the affairs of the people by proffering solutions to Kutuje's problems. He pays the people of Ikolu with rocks instead of pebbles; that is, he pays them in their own coins (Proverb 4).

3. He makes frantic efforts to proffer medical solutions to the health needs of his people. Proverbs 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 & 20 attest to this.

Proverbs 13, 14 15, 16, 18, 19 & 20:

> Sickness is like rain, does the rain fall on one roof alone? No. Whosoever the rain sees on him it rains. (p.10) **14**: I do not know and cannot know the sun's hotness that burns and dries up the open land (p.10) **15**: Only a mad man would go to sleep with his roof on fire (p.11). **16:** It is sickness that man can cure not death (p.12) **17**: The ruin of a land and its people begins at their homes (p.13) **18**: To get full cure, one needs patience **19**: The moon moves slowly but by day break, its crosses the sky (p.14) **20**: The monkey learns to jump from tree to tree without falling (p.14)

4 He wants to operate an open-door policy in his administration; so, he tells Aderopo to deliver Ifa's message in public (Proverb 24): A cooking pot for the chameleon is a cooking pot for the lizard (p.19).

5 He suspects his chiefs and Aderopo of fowl play; hence, he becomes more careful in his administration (proverbs 30, 31, 32 & 33).

Proverbs 30, 31, 32 &33:

> The faces may be smiling, for who knows what is behind those eyes (p.23) **31:** When the frog in the front falls in a pit, others behind take caution (p.23) **32:** When crocodiles eat their own eggs, what will they not do to the flesh of a frog? (p.23) **33**: All lizards lie prostrate; how can a man tell which lizard suffers from belly ache?

6. He receives Baba Fakunle, the soothsayer, with a warm welcome when the latter is invited to reveal the murderer of the former king (Proverb 35, 36, 27: 38).
7. Despite his sense of humour on the arrival of the priest, he changes his attitude immediately the priest points accusing fingers at him as the sought murderer (Proverb 37).
8. He entertains caution in his attitude towards their search for the murder; since all fingers point at him (Proverb 43): The hyena flirts with the hen, the hen is happy, not knowing that her death has come (p.30).
9. Suspecting attempts to overthrow his government, Odewale engages Prince Aderopo in a serious argument and "tongue lashing" that leads to the latter's banishment (proverbs 44, 45, 46 and 47).

Proverb 44:

> I said if you think that you can uproot the tree that was planted by the gods (p.32). **45**: If you think you can drum for my downfall and hope that drum will sound, your head is not good (p.32). **46**: Two rams cannot drink from the same bucket at the same time! They will lock horns (p.34).**47:** If you rise too early, the dew of life will soak you (p.35).

10. Odewale handles with a sense of seriousness and humours the support given to him by Ojuola, his wife, despite the disagreement he has with her son, Aderopo.

Proverb 52:

> Why, the tortoise is not tall, but it is taller than the snail, the snail is taller than the frog, the frog is taller than the lizard, the lizard is taller than the fly, the fly is taller than the ant; the ant is taller than the ground on which it walks (p.38).

In the above narrative proverbial expression, Odewale appreciates the depth of love he has for Queen Ojuola. The love is in levels and stages.

11. Odewale confirms that he receives training in traditional education through which he can defend himself anywhere. During his incantatory contest with the old man, the training he has received in the art makes him to outdo the old man when he engages him in a fight.

Proverbs:

> **55a:** (Remain rooted) A tree stump never shifts (p.47). **55b:** No termite ever boost of devouring rock (p.48). **55c**: Venom of viper does nothing to the back of a tortoise (p.48). **55d:** The plant that rivals the Opa tree is killed by Opa. (p.48). **55e**: The tree that over-reaches the Oriri seeks its own death (p.48). **55f:** The plant that entwines its branch with the branch of Omoluwere will he strangle by Omoluwere (p.48).

12. He shows his concern and regret for not being a member of Kutuje's tribe (proverbs 56, 57, 58 and 59):

Proverbs:

> **56:** The Monkey and the Gorilla may claim oneness but the Monkey is Monkey and the Gorilla is Gorilla (p.51) **57**: The mangrove trees dwell in the river but does that make it a Crocodile? (p.51) **58:** Can a cockroach be innocent in the gathering of fowls? (p.59) **59:** We are close friends…like he-goat and cocoyam (p.53).

Odewale is disappointed that he could be the next target of Kutuje's evil machination. To him, the former king must have been murdered by the people themselves. Being a so-called stranger, he is so suspicious of what they might be planning against him. He is also suspicious that the people might have bribed the soothsayer to implicate him.

13. Odewale explains why he has to abandon his (foster) parents and flee (proverbs 62, 63 and 64):

Proverb 60:

> The butterfly thinks himself a bird. (p.59) **61**: It is what is in the heart when there is no wine in the head that comes out when there is wine in the head (p.60) **64:** The toad likes water but not when the water is boiling. (p.60).

He expresses the steps he took when he knew the truth about himself. He leads all the four children raised for him by his mother on exile and finally expresses regret for his action.

Proverb 67:

> When the wood-insect gathers sticks,
> on its own head it carries them.
> (p.72)

There are so many traits that show King Odewale as a dynamic character in the text. A dynamic character is the one who undergoes an important change in the course of the story. These are not changes in circumstances but changes in some sense within the character in question, change in insight or understanding (of circumstances, for instance) or change in commitment in values. The change (or lack of change) at stake in this distinction is a change in the character (nature) of the character (functional figure). The protagonist undergoes a radical change in his/her self-identification. However, whether this change is good, depends on whether we judge it to represent a 'fall' or an achievement. When a drastic change in one's circumstances (whether good fortune or bad) might motivate a change in one's outlook in life, if, but only if, it results in this sort of change, we are confronted with a dynamic character (Baker 2000).

1. As a son of Ogundele, he abandons his comfort and flees from Ijekun to prevent him from killing his father and marrying his mother (Prov. 62, 63, &64 see the appendix).
2. As a warrior, he fights vigorously and defends himself and his property when his domain is encroached upon by the old man (Prov. 55a-f) As a defender, Odewale meets Kutuje people in a serious crisis and defends them against their enemies. **Proverb 4:** He who pelts another with pebbles asks for rocks in return (p.7).
3. As a king, he seeks spiritual and medical solutions to the health need of his subjects (proverb 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). He operates an open-door policy (Proverb 24). He expresses restraint and caution at the behaviour of his chiefs and Aderopo (Prov. 29, 30, 31, 32, 33). He receives Baba Fakunle, the (Soothsayer) warmly (Prov. 35, 36, 37 & 38). More knowledge about who he is makes him to restrain himself.
4. As a prosecutor, he prosecutes himself: He pronounces judgement on the murderer plucks his own two eyes and goes on exile with his four children (Proverb 67)

5.2.1.2 Other characters as flat and static characters in *The gods*

A flat character easily changes his mind. He is chronologically indecisive. He has a simple set of traits when he is faced with decision. He ties himself in knots thinking of a host of pros and cons and ends up procrastinating his way into decision (Baker 2000). A static character does not undergo important change in the course of the story. He remains essentially the same at the end as he was at the beginning. He also remains cheerful, humble, easy-going or, on the other hand, outgoing fellow or/ bitter, resentful, cynical, suspicious and selfish person (Baker 2000).

Other characters in the text, such as Old man, Aderopo, Royal Bard, Citizens (one, two and three), Ojuola are portrayed as flat and static characters. Old man features in one scene in the whole play. It is during his encounter with Odewale over a piece of land. All his use of proverbs is incantatory. However, they are done to prove the stronger between him and Odewale. At the end, Odewale proves to be stronger than the old man despite the traditional position occupied by Old man as a king,

which would have empowered him in all areas (Proverbs 55a-f).

Aderopo is depicted in the text as the only prince of Kutuje land. He should have taken over the throne at the demise of his father but for the circumstances that surround his father's death and the invasion of Kutuje land by the people of Ikolu. The use of proverb by Aderopo takes places in the process of delivering the message of Orunmila to the king and the chiefs in the palace. During this occasion, Aderopo cites three proverbs to let the king know that the message brought from Ifa priests is in 'riddle' and that it indirectly affects the king. So, he wishes to deliver the message to the king privately (proverb 23). In the process of delivering the message of Orunmila to the king and his subjects, the Oracle warns us that 'we have left our pot unwashed and our food now burns' (proverb 27). He warn his people that nobody should be trusted in the midst of the crisis. 'Until the rotten tooth is pulled out, the mouth must chew with caution' (Proverb 28).

The duty of the Royal Bard is to sing the praise of the king and tell the story of the palace. He is made to use proverbs on two different occasions. The wisdom of the palace is kept in the knowledge of the Royal Bard. During the coronation of King Odewale, he uses a proverb to show that King Odewale deserves the throne. **Proverb 5**5: It is not changing into the lion that is hard; it is getting the tail of a lion (p.7). He also uses a proverb as a prayer for King Odewale to last on the throne for his efforts.**Proverb 6:** Kola nut lasts long in the mouth of those who value it (p.7). The Royal Bard also cites three proverbs (one after the other): to eulogise the king and tell the world that nobody can provoke the king to anger (Proverb 49) and to show that nobody can rule better than their king. According to him, the heat of the fire proves the meat that has fat (Proverb 50). Another reason is to show that the king does not go to the market except there is a reason (Prov. 51). To tease Queen Ojuola that the marriage between her and King Odewale is ordained by the gods, he asserts that the couples are two parts of the same calabash split equal by the gods (Proverb 52).

Alaka is a companion of Odewale's right from childhood. It was in the presence of Alaka that Odewale was picked from the forest. On the request of Odewale, Alaka looks for him when the two purported parents of his died. Alaka employs proverbs three times to prove his points. He confirms that it is the ignorance of the Royal Bodyguards, of where he comes from and how close he is to the king that

makes them call him a mad man; "Ignorance makes the rat call the cat to a fight" (proverb 53). Another proverb is used to tell king Odewale the truth about whom he (the king) is; that is, hunter Ogundele and Mobike, his wife are not Odewale's biological parents. Alaka tries to explain in a proverb that "the secret of the owl must not be known in day time (p. 62" (proverb 65). He also cites a proverb to prove to Gbonka that despite the facts that he saw him last a long time ago, he still recognizes him. However, old age does not allow Gbonka to recognize Alaka (proverb 72) "Old age indeed does cruel things to the mind" (p. 66).

Citizens (1, 2 and 3) deploys proverbs to protest and express dissatisfaction with the trend of events in the entire Kutuje land, as their children are affected by pestilence and death. They show to King Odewale that his greetings have no more relevance to their lives; proverb 8 "What use are greetings to a dying body"? (p. 8). They tell Odewale that his presence among them is no more meaningful when he cannot protect them; proverb **9** "When the head of the household dies, the house becomes an empty shell" (p. 9). They accuse King Odewale that he is no more active, since he can no longer defend them; proverb **10** "When a chameleon brings forth a child is it not that child expected to dance" (p.9). Citizens inform King Odewale that he is no more a powerful king that they used to know (proverb 11) "When rain falls on the leopard, does it wash off its spot" (p. 10). They request him to act in his usual way of protecting them proverb **12** "How long does feverish bird trample in silence before their keeper" (p. 10).

Town crier also cites proverbs when sensitizing all members of the society to come out and join others to look for herbs and leaves as medicine to cure their children of their ailments. In proverb **21,** he explains the relevance of all herbs and leaves in medicine: "All herbs are medicine, all medicine are herbs" (p.17). Town's men also utter a proverb in unison to express the importance of their joint venture, the need to go out in unity to look for herbs and leaves to cure their sick children proverb **22** when you hear our voice brother you better respond to the call of duty or you will have yourself to be blamed *"B7 c bq gb- gbee gbee gbee, b1 0 bq dqh6n, 2h8nk6nl3 y7n ni w[n 9 gbe s7"* (pp. 11-18)

Queen Ojuola employs only one proverb throughout the text in support of King Odewale when Aderopo refuses to deliver the message of Orunmila in public.

However, the king insists that the message must be delivered in public. So Ojuola pleads with Aderopo, in proverb 25, to deliver the message no matter how bad it is, "since the horns cannot be too heavy for the head of the cow that must bear them" (p. 20).

Narrator also cites two proverbs at the beginning of the text to give an insight into the crisis that is looming in the text. In proverb 1, he expresses the difficult situation that mankind finds himself in this world: *"The struggles of man begins at birth"* (p. 1). He cites the second proverb to tell the audience that efforts are made by the family to prevent the impending doom from coming to pass but all to no avail: *"The future is not happy but to resign oneself to it to be crippled fast" (p.3*).

5.2.2 *Kurunmi*

The chart below reflects proverbs as a characterization device in *Kurunmi*

Table 5.1.3: Proverb as a characterization device in *Kurunmi*

	Characters	No of proverbs	% of proverbs
1	Kurunmi	36	53.7%
2	Abogunrin	1	1.5
3	Crowd	2	3.0
4	Asunrara	1	1.5
5	Timi (Ede)	1	1.5
6	Rev. Mann	1	1.5
7	Fayanka	1	1.5
8	Ibikunle	5	7.6
9	Osundina	1	1.5
10	Ogunmola	3	4.5
11	Seriki Jegede	1	1.5
12	Balogun Ogunkoroju	7	10.6
13	Areagoro	2	3.0
14	Somoye	3	4.5
15	Warriors	1	1.5
	Total	67	100%

The chart shows that Kurunmi alone cites thirty-six proverbs (54.6%) of all the proverbs in the text. Kurunmi is presented as the generalissimo of the warriors of the entire +y– kingdom. As a result, he is the warlord of the entire Yoruba race. His opinion is taken seriously whenever the meeting of council of elders holds in the kingdom. It is believed the wisdom and tactics of warfare is kept with him. Apart from that, Kurunmi is the Lord of the entire Ijaye land; all the people of Ijaye land are Kurunmi's subjects. No wonder, he single-handedly declares war against the whole +y– kingdom (pp.*26-27*).

Another set of people who use proverbs frequently in the text are warlords who use them to express their experiences. They cite different proverbs for different discourses and expressions. Many times, multiple proverbs are cited to express a point

of view. Balogun Ogunkoroju as the second-in-command to Kurunmi cites seven proverbs, (10.6%). Ibikunle cites five proverbs (7.6%), while Ogunmola and Shomoye cite three proverbs each (4.5%). Ibikunle and Ogunmola are the warlords to Ibadan camp, while Somoye is the leader of the Egba camp. The distribution of the proverbs in Kurunmi shows that warlords who are also community leaders deploy proverbs more than any other character in the text. It is clear that proverbs are reserved for the elders. However, the strength of each elder's experience, power and authority determines the quality of proverbs he uses to embellish his conversations.

5.2.2.1 Kurunmi as a round and dynamic character

There are evidences to prove that Kurunmi does not prepare for the war he leads his people to fight but relies on the name and status he has acquired over the years as the chief warrior of the entire Yoruba race.

1. Kurunmi insists that the tradition should be followed despite the desire of King Atiba to have his son (Adelu) succeed him

Proverbs:

> **74:** The fire dies; its ashes bear its memory with a shroud of white fluff. (p.15) **75a:** The pride of monkey is in the knowledge of the secret of tree top (p.15) **75b**: The pride of man is in his tradition (p.16) **76:** (Why) the pride of bees is in the honeycomb. (p.16) **77:** The pride of the weaver bird is in the skilful design of its nest. (p.16) **78**: The day the Iroko tree losses its root is the day the baby ant shits on its head. (p.16)

2. Kurunmi affirms the consequent disgrace that Alafin Atiba will experience for the inordinate ambition he is nurturing (Proverbs 78-80)).

Proverbs:

> **78:** The day the Iroko tree loss its root is the day the baby ant shits its head. (p.16) **79**:When the tortoise is heading for a senseless journey, and you say to him; brother tortoise when will you be wise and come back home; the tortoise will say brother, not until I have been disgraced. (pp.17, 18 & 25) **80:** Does the aged he-goat have to be told that his present long beard is no more proof of sexual strength? (p.18)

3. Kurunmi does not agree to serve king Atiba (father) and Adelu, as confirmed by proverbs 83 and 84. To fulfil his promise, he builds up a military force and sends delegates to Ilorin and Abeokuta to seek machineries for a battle against Alafin Atiba and his supporters (Proverbs 85-87).

> **Proverbs 85**: A man with fire on his hands welcomes no delay. (p.28) **86**: The bull-frog that rivals the size of an elephant will burst. (p.29) **87**: A man who does not want a strange foot- print in his backyard must fence it up. (p.30)

4. Rev. Mann makes efforts to convert Kurunmi and the entire Ijaye people to Christianity but fails; this show that tradition continues to prevail against modernism, in proverb 106. His subjects question his reasons to have declared war without informing them. In his response, Kurunmi discovers that there must be reasons behind his people's challenging his decision as captured in proverbs 92, 93 and 94.

Proverbs 92:

> When a rat laughs at a cat, there is a hole nearby (p. 38) **93:** He who despises smallness let him step on a needle (p.41) **94**: The cow…..the cow steps on her calves- that do not mean she hates them (p.41)

5. Kurunmi wants the Ijaye people to accept whatever he decides without question even when they know it is wrong, according to proverb **95**: When an elder sees a mud-skipper, he must not afterward says it was a crocodile (p.42). Contradicting himself, Kurunmi who does not want a change in tradition, suggests "give and-take" as the best policy (Proverb 106).

6. Kurunmi seeks spiritual assistance to win the battle, in proverb 107, 108,109, and 116. Kurunmi rebukes a warrior for not fighting to instruction in proverb 118. He asserts that their allied forces should not be blamed for their loss, in proverb 128a and b. Despite the defeat his troop sustained, Kurunmi insists that the battle should continue, in proverb 125 and 126. Kurunmi admits that weakness in the path of his

troop led to their loss in the battle, instead of accusing his allied forces, in proverb 122, 128 and 129. He believes the fight should continue even after he has lost his three sons. He, however, breaks down after a thoughtful moment about the defeat in proverb 130 and 131. Committing suicide for fear of being captured at the end, Kurunmi expresses regret for his actions, in proverbs 133 and 134.

5.2.2.2 Others as flat and static characters

Other warlords, apart from Kurunmi, display different levels of flatness and roundness different from other minor characters**.** Balogun Ogunkoroju is the second in command to Kurunmi. He cannot decide on his own but follows the decision of Kurunmi dogmatically. He believes so much in Kurunmi that he thinks he knows him for a good leader based on his past experience. For example, he says, in proverb 70: I know nothing about the mother of the Gorilla, but I can tell you of the father of the ape, Ogunkoroju affirms that Kurunmi is born a leader. He further re-affirms his belief that the war should be won by their side hence offers prayers, in proverb 114, 115, 116, 117 and 118.

Basorun Ogunmola is portrayed as one of the chief warriors for Ibadan camp who thinks the war should be fought based on his personal humiliation by Kurunmi. Ogunmola expresses his dissatisfaction with Kurunmi's act of lording it over everybody in the entire +y− Empire. He expresses his dissatisfaction with how Kurunmi is using his power and position to take over the whole land in the entire empire, especially the one at the Upper Ogun. He further complains that, instead of defending the kingdom, Kurunmi is working towards further disintegrating it. He declares in Proverb 106 that Kurunmi has become, "A man eating eggs (that) cannot be satisfied with just one" (p. 47), as he (Kurunmi) moves further to take Shaki, Iseyin and Iwawun. Ogunmola disagrees with Ibikunle on whether to embark on the war. He accuses Ibikunle of trying to turn him (Ogunmola) "a scape goat" in the matter. Basorun Ogunmola sees Balogun Ibikunle as the one who wants to bring him evil in respect of his feelings about Kurunmi, in proverb 110: "he who plots with another to bring me to harm, that person is the baby who cries to stop its mother's sleep…It …will suffer the anguish of not sleeping" (p. 49). Ogunmola expresses his satisfaction with the victory achieved so far and expects that the battle be won speedily. He is happy that the allied force from Egba has been broken. He expects a quick victory not

minding that it is the head of the entire Yor6bq warriors that they are fighting. Ogunmola expresses his source of annoyance with Kurunmi and the need to take vengeance (proverb 104) "Cactus is bitter to him who has tasted it" (p. 46).

Balogun Ibikunle is one of the elders and chief warriors of the Ibadan camp. He is very considerate and wants the two sides of the coins to be considered before the war is declared. He respects Kurunmi as a leader and senior warrior in the kingdom. He wants members of his Ibadan camp to reason with him and not fight Kurunmi. He wants Ogunmola to exercise caution while trying to fight Kurunmi, as he knows that the people of Ijaye, +y- and Ibadan are the same. In proverb 96 he says, "A man cannot be angry with his own head that he seizes the cap from that head and don his buttocks with It". Other examples are found in proverbs 99, 100 and 101. Ibikunle re-affirms his stand that Ibadan should not go to war with Kurunmi. Ibikunle insists that they do not start the war since all the people they are going to fight are their people, as captured in proverb 105;: "I know that of all battles, the battle against one's own blood brother is the most horrid and heart breaking" (p. 50).

Somoye is a leader of the Egba allied force to Ijaye. He brings his warriors to fight against the warning given to the Egba warriors by Sokenu. Realizing the need to be very careful and fight on time, Somoye says, in a proverb 119, "when a child is a failure, the mother bears the blame" (p. 74). He wants the Egba warriors to realize that they have to fight with wisdom. He insists that their quick return home is very important, since they also have the Dahomey battle awaiting them at home. He asserts that: "A man with grass on his buttock must not forget himself when he goes to put out a neighbours fire" (p. 74) (Proverb 121). Referring to Rev. Mann, an Anglican Church priest who left Ijaye in the battle as all hopes of victory of Ijaye is in doubt, Somoye avers that "when the owl leaves its nest at moon, danger is near" (p. 92 proverb 133).

Timi is one of the leading +y- chiefs that Alafin sends to Kurunmi to make Kurunmi see reason why his son, Prince Adelu must succeed him. Efforts made to convince Kurunmi fails. So he notes that 82: "the cow defecates and thinks he is solving the pasture, we shall see whose buttocks get soiled first" (p.21 proverb 82). This further proves to Kurunmi that he will end up being disgraced as he refuses to yield to all petitions and appeals.

Osundina is one of Kurunmi's warriors who felt disappointed that Kurunmi could single-headedly declare war without consulting with his own people. He expresses fear in proverb 97, that Kurunmi should be handled gently despite all his mistakes: "Like baboon, Kurunmi cannot see the ugliness of his own buttocks; it is another monkey that sees the ugly buttocks of the fellow monkey" (p. 47). Kurunmi is breaking tradition, yet accusing Alafin of the same offence. Fayanka also corroborates Osundina's view in proverb 91, "when a man has placed himself above his people, he is ready to gamble with their lives" (p. 37). This is a prediction that comes to pass at the end. The attempt of Kurunmi results to gambling. At the end, he wastes the lives of many able-bodied men in Ijaye.

Areagoro prays along with Ogunkoroju for the warriors of Ijaye in of Ogun shrine. He recognises Ogun as their lord; proverb 113 - the parrot is the head of the sea, the king fisher is the head of the Lagoon (p.60). He also expresses the mind of Kurunmi their lord, who wants to fight the battle by all means in proverb 114: "what the stomach desires to eat should not cause stomach ache" (p. 60). As the people of Ijaye desire to go to war, he prays the gods to support them.

Seriki Jegede is one of the elders of Ibadan warriors. He intervenes in the disagreement between Ibikunle and Ogunmola. He becomes worried about the two leaders who would not want to see eye to eye on the case at hand. No wonder, other towns' people call Ibadan people "men of muscle and little sense" (p. 49) in proverb 103.

Rev Mann is the Christian missionary priest sent to the church in Ijaye before the war begins. All efforts to Christianise the Ijaye people are not accepted by Kurunmi who believes that, "give and take is the philosophy of life". He wants the Reverend to embrace his people's tradition first. In the frustration of Rev Mann over the warfare, he expresses says proverb 89: "I move daily, knowing no whither, I return daily knowing no where from" (p. 33). He leaves Ijaye land few days later for Ibadan.

Ijaye warriors jointly express their regret and frustration over the battle they are losing in proverb 130: "The hawk yearns fort the taste of the snail, but it forgets that the meat of the snail is no food for hawks" (p. 87). The proverb is meant to address Kurunmi who goes to war with Alafin and Ibadan people. He has forgotten

that a house that is divided against itself will not stand. The crowd acknowledge the respect accorded the elders by Yor6bq tradition in proverb 71: "take elders away, and the town rots". 'Asunrqrz' eulogises Kurunmi in his usual practice, bursts into traditional poetry which expresses praise for their lord. He ends up with the view in proverb 78, that "it is respected children (as they are to Kurunmi) that would want to eat with elders but fear would not permit them" (p. 15).

5.2.3 Our Husband

In the table below, we present Ola Rotimi's use of proverbs as characterization device in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again.

Table 5.1.4: Proverbs as characterization devise in Our Husband

	Character	No of proverb	Percentage
1	Political Thugs	3	13.6%
2	Lejoka Brown	10	45.5%
3	Mustapha	2	9.1%
4	Okonkwo	2	9.1%
5	Liza	1	4.5%
6	Osaige	1	4.5%
7	Madam Ajanakun	3	13.6%

The text is set in the post-independence Nigerian society in Lagos, the former Federal Capital of Nigeria. The text represents cultural complexity of the Nigerian society which is shown in the coming together of people of different ethnic groups (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba and others). Lejoka-Brown is a Yor6bq man, while Okonkwo, Osaige and Madam Ajanaku have Igbo background. However Madam Ajanaku is married to a Yor6bq man. Malam Gasikia is a Hausa man, while Liza is a Kenyan. The level of literacy of many of these characters is very low. This results in their use of varieties of English, such as pidgin and other sub-standard languages in their conversations.

5.2.3.1 Lejoka-Brown as a dynamic and round character

Lejoka-Brown retired from the military to take care of his father's cocoa farm. His lust for wealth makes him aspire to embezzle public fund whenever he wins an election. This makes him join politics with a view that "politics is war" (proverb 139), you have to fight hard to win. We are not told that he is fulfilled as a military officer, farmer and politician. As a controvercial polygamist, Lejoka-Brown does not tell Liza, his legally married wife, that he has two other wives. He believes he can handle the situation easily until the lady finds out the secret plans of Brown herself. So Lejoka Brown declares in proverb 142 that he would explain to Liza how it all happened, "it is better late than never". He is not strong enough to face the crisis that results from his marrying two other wives. He has much trouble to contend with, as recorded in proverb 145. Despite his faults to have engaged in "marital illegality", he tries to use force to tame Liza, in proverbs 147 and 148.

After Lejoka-Brown's removal as the flag bearer of his party, he reconciles with his wife, in proverb 154: I had everybody facing down like lizards so they would n't know whom I was angry at (p.69). Brown realizes that other political party members are just pretending to like him; they do not like him. They show solidarity to him in his presence, but behind him, they meet to defame him. Being consoled by his wife, Liza, Brown realizes that he is just being deceived by the party members. Consequently, he decided, not to challenge the decision to replace him nor go back to politics when he is impeached replaced. He explains to Liza his reason for marrying Mama Rasida, in proverb **155:** He who helps the widow or a poor person is like one who walks in the path of Allah." Brown sees his marriage to as a help to the woman as dictated by Islam. Though illegally, Brown re-affirms his ability to use gun after several years of his retirement from the military. He uses gun to defend his father's household from demolition in proverb 156. He is the maskman that knows what to do at the right time.

5.2.3.2 Others as flat and static characters in *Our Husbands*

Madam Ajanaku is the president of the National Union of Nigerian Market Women. She exemplifies clearly the influence of some powerful women in Nigerian politics, particularly that of the entire Yor6bq society. She used to be a mother-in-law

to Lejoka-Brown, as the latter married a daughter of hers to achieve political influence. The knowledge that the marriage between Lejoka-Brown and her daughter is failing makes her to decide to press home that the senatorial seat meant for Lejoka-Brown be reserved for her daughter. She utters three proverbs consecutively in the text to support her intentions. She expresses her concerns over the unhealthy relationship that exists between Brown and her daughter, Sikira through whom she thought she would benefit from politics. Now that Brown has sent out her daughter from her matrimonial home, Madam Ajanaku believes that "a cow that does not have tail, it is God that helps it to drive flies away". Hence, (proverb 150) she expresses thestand of her union members about the party.

Madam Ajanaku requests that the leaders of the Liberation Party remove Lejoka-Brown for divorcing her daughter. She declares Lejoka-Brown as the bad teeth that must be removed before the political party can progress, in proverb 159. Lejoka-Brown is voted out of office on the request of Madam Ajanaku. In the process efforts are made to get another flag bearer of the party. Madam Ajanaku makes a request for a woman candidate. Being in control of all market women, who form the bulk of the membership of the party, the leadership of the party grants her request as they have no choice. The meaning of the proverb **150** below confirms this: "Man way carry *Ogbono soup-pot for hand and di man wey carry foofoo for head, na who go fin who go"* (p. 68) Eventually, Sikira, Madam Ajanaku's daughter, former wife of Brown, 'became the party's flag bearer and a replacement to Lejoka-Brown.

Political Thugs sing proverbial songs to eulogise Lejoka-Brown**.** They eulogize his strength as the flag bearer of the Liberation Party. Political thugs are employed for this purpose in the politics in western Nigeria in the First, Second and Third Republics. The proverbial songs rendered by the thugs express the need for their political opponents to stay clear of their way, since chameleon is no food for man, Lejoka-Brown has had an impact on the society and has become an 'elephant' of the entire society that should not be confronted by opponents, as confirmed in proverbs 143, 144 and 145.

Mustapha is an example of the helpless members of the society. He goes to Lejoka-Brown's house to return a gun he gots from him to protect his family property that is to be demolished by law enforcement agents. The wives of Brown are surprised

to see a man enter their house "harem" suddenly without previous notice. So Mustapha uses proverb 140: *"When a bald-headed man goes into the shop of a barber, his reason is not a haircut it is another problem"* (p.17). Mustapha also expresses his dissatisfaction with the way his family house was demolished by the government agents. He informs Brown's wives that three thousand pounds was the total sum paid as compensation for the demolition. He measures the worth of the compensation with the cost of building another house and concludes in proverb 141 that, "what the eyes see in Lagos, the mouth can't describe" (p.17). He may not be able to build another house with such a little sum of money without getting some other money to support it. So he moves to his father's farm land in Agege to live.

Okonkwo is a friend and adviser to Lejoka-Brown. He has come to offer one of his pieces of advice that Brown should allow the election to be over before engaging Liza in a fight. This is to make sure he does not lose his chance of winning the election. He expresses this in proverb **151** that: "a paddler doesn't say a crocodile has an ugly lump on its snout, until he has safely crossed the river" (p. 29). Okonkwo also declares further the need to handle Liza's arrival with care, in Proverb 152: "It is an, egg, major, and you must handle it with care, lest it breaks" (p. 29).

Osagie is one of the leaders of Liberation Party. While of initiating the plans of Lejoka-Brown's removal as their party's flag bearer, he says: "When the vine entwines your roof, it is time to cut it" (p. 66, proverb 149). So Brown is removed with a consensus vote of all party leaders.

Liza is the wife that Brown marries in Congo. She is a Kenyan who has acquired a postgraduate degree in an American university. She makes all efforts to make Brown restore her monogamous marriage. She educates Mama Rashida to be a better poultry farmer. She also educates Sikira to be a liberated woman. The training gives Sikira the confidence to occupy the position her mother lobbied for. All these Liza does without being suspected of ejecting the two women to possess what belongs to her. She would not want to share her husband with any other person. Likewise, she would not want Brown to turn their disagreement to a noise. In her reason "she hates washing her dirty underwear in public" (Proverb 146).

CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

The study has examined the context and functions of proverbs in selected plays of Ola Rotimi. The contexts of proverbs in the selected plays are discussed in relation to Saville-Troike's (1982) components of ethnography of communication. Proverbs are used in the situational, socio-cultural and psychological contexts. The situational context is the physical context of proverbs from which the socio-cultural and psychological contexts are derived.

We found that the socio-cultural context of proverbs depicted in the selected plays of Ola Rotimi is essentially African. The pre-colonial era is depicted in *The gods*, the colonial era is portrayed in *Kurunmi*, while the post-colonial era manifests clearly in *Our Husband*. We discovered that events in the three plays exhibit thematic and stylistic similarities. The proverbs in the socio-cultural contexts address issues that are political, ethnic and ideological in nature. While the ideological proverbs point to issues that concern predestination and unequal relations that are reflected in the Yor6bq social structure and gender perspectives, moral and ethnic proverbs, on the other hand, describe minor characters' submission to the influence and manipulations of the major characters on social, physical and emotional condition. Philosophical, crisis-induced and religious proverbs are used at the psychological context, with philosophical and crisis-induced proverbs pointing out the major characters' submission to fate in the face of challenges.

Our findings also revealed that the proverbs in the selected plays perform communicative, speech act, socio-cultural and innovative functions. The communicative functions of proverbs performed in the plays are emotive, supportive, directive and reflective. The proverbs perform emotive functions to sensitise the audience to action. The supportive function elicits the support of other people, while the directive function applies to the leaders or major characters that use proverbs to assert their authority over the minor characters. The reflective function of shows that the proverb users, especially the major characters in the texts, think about, and weigh the effects of their proverbs on their audience before using them. For example,

Kurunmi weighs the consequence of punishing his subordinates for insulting him against peaceful resolution when he cites proverb 95 to appease them for his mistakes.

Proverbs are deployed in the different contexts of the plays to perform various speech acts, such as acknowledging, promising, denying, criticising and advising. For example, proverbs are used as an instrument of acknowledgement of the power of the gods to support the warriors. Through acknowledgement, Kurunmi deduces the facts that he has led his people to destruction through warfare. Proverbs are equally used to perform speech act function of denying. The minor characters disagree with and deny their major characters the cooperation needed on issues that affect their welfare.

Proverbs are also deployed to perform some innovative and linguistic functions that are characteristic of English as a second language. Examples of such in the selected texts are coinages, borrowings, loan blends, semantic extensions/shifts, collocation extensions/ shifts and use of Pidgin English. Coinages resulting from the prevailing sociolinguistic factors in the society are abundant. Examples are compound words, such as "evil-plotters, market place, farm owner, gaboon viper, and so on". A good number of loan words are borrowed from Yor6bq

Finally, proverbs are used as a characterization device in the selected texts. The major characters use more proverbs than the minor ones. Proverbs typify four different types of characters: flat, round, static and dynamic. The major characters are round and dynamic in their use of proverbs, while the minor characters are flat and static.

6.2 Conclusion

Many African writers use proverbs for so many reasons: to situate their texts, categorise and describe their created characters and refine their messages. Ola Rotimi, in particular, uses proverbs to project his themes and critique his characters.

Proverbs add profound meanings to Ola Rotimi's texts and define their socio-cultural settings. It is believed that this study has contributed to the increasing works on proverb analysis in general and a socio-linguistic analysis of proverbs in the plays of Ola Rotimi in particular.

The study is not all exhaustive study in African drama texts. Therefore, future studies could investigate the use of proverbs in some other Nigerian drama texts.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF PROVERBS CITED IN THE SELECTED TEXTS:

Text 1: *The Gods are not to Blame*

1. The struggles of man begin at birth (p.1).
2. The future is not happy, but to resign oneself to it is to be crippled fast (p.3).
3. The world is struggle (p.6).
4. He who pelts another with pebbles asks for rocks in return (p.7).
5. It is not changing into the lion that is hard; it is getting the tail of a lion (p.7).
6. Kola nut lasts long in the mouth of those who value it (p.7).
7. But joy has a slender body that breaks too soon (p.8).
8. What use are greetings to a dying body (p.9).
9. When the head of a household dies, the house becomes an empty shell (p.9).
10. When a chameleon brings forth a child is it not that child expected to dance (p.9).
11. When rain falls on the leopard, does it wash off its spot (p.10)?
12. How long does feverish bird trample in silence before their keeper (p.10)?
13. Sickness is like rain, does the rain fall on one roof alone? No. Whosoever the rain sees on him it rains (p.10).
14. I do not know and cannot know the sun's hotness that burns and dries up the open land (p.10).
15. Only a mad man would go to sleep with his roof on fire (p.11).
16. It is sickness that man can cure not death (p.12).
17. The ruin of a land and its people begins at their homes (p.13).
18. To get full cure, one needs patience.
19. The moon moves slowly but by day break, its crosses the sky (p.14).
20. The monkey learns to jump from tree to tree without falling (p.14).
21. All herbs are medicine; all medicines are herbs (p.17).
22. When you hear our voice brother, your better respond to call of duty or you will have yourself to blame (p.18).
23. It is said that the secrets of a home should be known first to the head of the home (p.19).

24. A cooking pot for the chameleon is a cooking pot for the lizard (p.19).
25. The horn cannot be too heavy for the head of the cow that must bear them (p.20).
26. The secret of a home should be known first by the head of the home (p.20).
27. We have left our pot unwatched, and our food now burns (p.21).
28. Until the rotten tooth is pulled out, the mouth must chew with caution (p.21).
29. When trees fall on trees, first the topmost must be removed (p.22).
30. The faces may be smiling, for who knows what is behind those eyes (p.23).
31. When the frog in the front falls in a pit, others behind take caution (p.23).
32. When crocodiles eat their own eggs, what will they not do to the flesh of a frog (p.23)?
33. All lizards lie prostrate; how can a man tell which lizard suffers from bellyache (p.23)?
34. The good ruler who stands for the people becomes a victim too soon (p.24).
35. Head downwards like a bat, and like a bat fully aware of the way the birds fly (p. 25).
36. A partridge; you see with the face you see with the whole body (p.26)
37. A chicken eats corn, drinks water, swallows pebbles yet she complains of having no teeth, if she had teeth, would she eat gold (p.26)?
38. When the elders we esteems so highly can sell their honour for devil money, then let pigs eat shame and men eat dung (p.27).
39. Let pigs eat shame and men eat dung (p.27).
40. Is it not ignorance that makes the rat attack the cat (p.28)?
41. Our elders say he who drums for a sick man is himself a sick man (p.28).
42. When the evil –plotter beats his drum for the downfall of the innocents the gods will not let that drum sound (p.30).
43. The hyena flirts with the hen, the hen is happy, not knowing that her death has come (p.30).
44. I said if you think that you can uproot the tree that was planted by the gods (p.32).
45. If you think you can drum for my downfall and hope that drum will sound, your head is not good (p.32).

46. Two rams cannot drink from the same bucket at the same time! They will lock horns (p.34).
47. If you rise too early, the dew of life will soak you (p.35).
48. The lion's liver is vain wish for dogs (p.37).
59. Meat that has fat will prove it by heat of fire (p.37).
50. An eagle does not go to the market-place unless there is something there (p.37).
51. (You and your husband are) two parts of the same calabash split equal (p.28).
52. Why, the tortoise is not tall ,but it is taller than the snail, the snail is taller than the frog, the frog is taller than the lizard, the lizard is taller than the fly, the fly is taller than the ant; the ant is taller than the ground on which it walks (p.38).
53. Ignorance makes the rat call the cat to a fight (p.42).
54. The elders of my tribe have a proverb; because the farm-owner is slow to catch the thief, the thief calls the farm-owner thief (p.46).
55a. (Remain rooted) A tree stump never shifts (p.47).
55b. No termite ever boost of devouring rock (p.48).
55c. Venom of viper does nothing to the back of a tortoise (p.48).
55d. The plant that rivals the Opa tree is killed by Opa (p.48).
55e. The tree that over-reaches the Oriri seeks its own death (p.48).
55f. The plant that entwines its branch with the branch of Omoluwere will he strangle by Omoluwere (p.48).
56. The Monkey and the Gorilla may claim oneness but the Monkey is Monkey and the Gorilla is Gorilla (p.51).
57. The mangrove trees dwell in the river but does that make it a Crocodile (p.51)?
58. Can a cockroach be innocent in the gathering of fowls (p.59)?
59. We are close friends… like he-goat and cocoyam (p.53).
60. The butterfly thinks himself a bird (p.59).
61. It is what is in the heart when there is no wine in the head that comes out when there is wine in the head (p.60).
62. A bush does not sway this way or that way, unless there is wind (p.60).

63. The snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell (p.60).
64. The toad likes water but not when the water is boiling (p.60).
65. The secrets of the owl must not be known in the daylight (p.62).
66. Old age indeed does cruel things to the mind (p.66).
67. When the wood-insect gathers sticks, on its own head it carries them (p.72).

Text 2: *Kurunmi*

68. Termites dwell underground. (p.)
69. Take the elders away and the town rots. (p.12)
70. I know nothing about the mother of the Gorilla, but I can tell you of the father of the Ape (p.13).
71. The child would eat with an elder, but fear would n't let him, so instead of eating child stiffens (bomode ba nbagba jeun titiri ni ntiri) (pp.15-16).
72. When the gaboon viper dies, its children takeover its habits, poison and all (p.15).
73. The plantain dies, its saplings take its place broad leaves and all (p.15).
74. The fire dies, its ashes bear its memory with a shroud of white fluff (p.15).
75a. The pride of monkey is in the knowledge of the secret of tree top (p.15).
75b. The pride of man is in his tradition (p.16).
76. (Why) the pride of bees is in the honeycomb (p.16).
77. The pride of the weaver bird is in the skilful design of its nest (p.16).
78. The day the Iroko tree losses its root is the day the baby ant shits its head (p.16).
79. When the tortoise is heading for a senseless journey, and you say to him; brother tortoise when you will be wise and come back home; the tortoise will say brother not until I have been disgraced (pp.17, 18 & 25).
80. Does the aged he-goat have to be told that his present long beard is no more proof of sexual strength (p.18)?
81. The king who sees the truth but is too weak too cowardly to uphold the truth, that ruler has fallen low, lower than the most depraved slave in our bush land (p.18).
82. The cow defecates and thinks she is soiling the pasture, we shall see whose

buttocks get soiled first (p.21).

83. (Kurunmi will never) prostrate himself to shoot a deer with a father one morning and then squat with the son in the evening to shoot a goose (p.21).
84. A cow… a cow is about to be shipped to a white man's land and she is happy, very happy, Ehn … let the cow go, when she gets to the white man's land ,what will she become C-o-r-n-e-d b-e-e-f (p.22)?
85. A man with fire on his hands welcomes no delay (p.28).
86. The bull-frog that rivals the size of an elephant will burst (p.29).
87. A man who does not want a strange foot- print in his backyard must fence it up (p.30).
88. The meat of an antelope tastes good, but while it is cooking what do we eat.
89. I move daily, knowing no whither, I return daily, knowing no where from (p.33).
90. The young palm tree grows tall rapidly, and it is proud, thinking, hoping that one day it will scratch the face of the sky. Have its elders before it touched the sky (p.35)?
91. When a man has placed himself for above his people, he is ready to gamble with their lives (p.37).
92. When a rat laughs at a cat, there is a hole nearby (p. 38).
93. He who despises smallness let him step on a needle (p.41).
94. The cow…..the cow steps on her calves- that do not mean she hates them (p.41).
95. When an elder sees a mud-skipper, he must not afterward says it was a crocodile (p.42).
96. A man can not be so angry with his own head that he seizes the cap from that head and dons his buttocks with it (p.46).
97. (I fear that) like a baboon, Kurunmi cannot see the ugliness of his own buttocks. It is another Monkey….(that) see the ugly buttock of the fellow Monkey (p.47).
98. A man eating eggs cannot be satisfied with just one (p.47).
99. No matter how high the swallow flies it must at least come down to the earth (p.47).

100. A stick already touched by fire is not hard to set ablaze (p.48).
101. A roaring lion kills no pray (p.48).

102. (He who plots with another to bring me to harm that person is) the baby who cries to stop his mother's sleep; he too will suffer the anguish of not sleeping (p.49).
103. Men of muscle and little sense (p.49).
104. Cactus is bitter to him who has tasted it (p.46).
105. I know that of all battles, the battle against one's own blood is worst horrid and heart breaking (p.50).
106. Give and take that, my friend is the best philosophy of life (p.55).
107. Secret of the mouth is best known to the chewing stick (p.59).
108. Secrets of the palm wine are best known to the fly (p.59).
109. Secrets hidden in the footpath are felt by the sole of the feet (p.59).
110. Because of the deaf the cloud blackens before it rains (p.59).
111. Because of the blind, thunder rumbles (p.60).
112. Sharp though a knife, it cannot cut its handle (p.60).
113. The parrot is lord of the sea, the king fisher lord of the lagoon (p.60).
114. What the stomach desires to eat should not cause stomach ache. (p.60).
115. It is hard to seize a man in his own home.
116. It is hard to kill a man among his own people (p.62).
117. A horse never fails to run homeward (p.62).
118. It is a foolish daughter that thinks that she knows so much that she can teach her own mother how to bear children (p.64).
119. When a child is a failure, the mother bears the blame (p.74).
120. One does not know the joy of a dog without a tail (p.74).
121. A man with grass on his buttock must not forget himself when he goes to put out a neighbour's fire (p.74).
122. When a one-legged man needs help, he must not say that the friend who carries him on the back stinks; even if that helper does stink (p.83-84).
123. Where Elephants are being slaughtered by the thousand, how can a man take

notice of the death of a house rat (p.84)?

124. A man called upon to be a hawk must catch chickens (p.85).
125. A man with fire on his hands moves on (p.87).
126. A paddle here, a paddle there yet the canoe stays still (p.87).
127. The size of a bush-rat is the size of its hole (p.88).
128a. A foster mother is not like the real mother (p.88).
128b. A foster father cannot stand upright like the real father (p.88).
129. Ten eyes, twenty eyes, countless eyes of other person are not the same as a single eye of your own (p.88).
130. The hawk yearns for the taste of the snail but it forgets…that the shell of the snail is no food for the Hawks (p.89).
131. It is the water that spilt. The calabash is still unbroken (p.89).
132. It is not the beating of rain-drops that hurts… it is the….the touch of dew...the soft touch of dew (p.90).
133. When the owl leaves its nest at noon, danger is near (p.92).
134. A cow gave birth to a fire she wanted to lick it but it burned her. She wanted to leave it but she could not because it was her own (p.94).

Text: 3 *Our Husband Has Gone mad Again*

135 The chameleon is no food (p.ix).
136. The impact of the human head on hard ground commands tears from the eyes (p.ix).
137 A tree that seeks a taste of the brute humiliation may dare the reality of an elephant in a head long thrust (p.ix).
138. Yoruba man say: "man-u way go chop-u frog, make he kuku chop-u di frog-u way get-i egg-i for belle! Abi no be so (p.5)?
139. It is war! Politics is war (p.7).
140. When a bald-headed man goes into the shop of a barber, his reason is not a haircut; it is another problem (p.17).
141. What the eyes see (in this Lagos) the mouth can't describe (p.17).
142. Better late than never (p.28).
143. A paddler does not say a crocodile has an ugly lump on its snout, until he has

safely crossed the river (p.29).

144. It is an egg, Major, and you must handle it with care, lest it breaks (p.29).
145. Trouble catch monkey. Monkey chops pepper (p.34).
146. I hate washing my dirty under wear in public (p.39).
147. Two bulls can't drink from the same bucket at the same time: they will lock horns (p.44)!
148. Wife, it is too much indulgence that makes the she-goat grows a long beard like her husband, the he-goat (p.58).
149. In the proverbial wisdom of our forebears, when the vine entwines your roof… it is time to cut it (p.66).
150. Ehn…. Agbanikaka man say: di cow wey no get tail for nyash, na god nahim de helep am drive fly commot (p.66).
151. Because una mout get one bad teet" inside, and una mout' go get wahala tel-e-e una take that rotten teet' commot (p.67)!
152. Man wey carry ogbono soup- pot for hand, and di man wey carry foo-foo for head, na who go fin who go (p.68)?
153. Always behaving like a pond that stands proudly aloof from a river, as though water were n't common to both of them (p.69).
154. I had everybody facing down like lizards so they would n't know whom I was angry at (p.69).
155. He who helps the widow or a poor person is like one who walks in the path of Allah.
156. A marksman is no marks man, unless he knows what to do (p.74).