



# **ILORIN:** **HISTORY, CULTURE** **AND** **LESSONS OF PEACEFUL** **CO-EXISTENCE**

**EDITED BY:**  
**A.G.A.S OLADOSU**  
**Z.I. OSENI**  
**M.A. ADEDIMEJI**  
**A.L. AZEEZ**

## The Interface of History, Culture and Language in Isiaka Aliagan's *Oba Mama*: A Stylistic Analysis

Mahfouz A. Adedimeji

### Introduction

Based on the Aristotelian conception of literature as that which imitates life, literature is defined as any piece of literature, a piece of writing [mainly] in prose or verse, fiction or fact, that has the quality of reflecting on any aspect of human life (Bolaji, 1994:255). To Ogunjimi (1994:24), literature is no less than the portrait of man and his environment held on for him to see by the artist, so that he can have profound reflections about his world-view and general existence. The relevance of literature, from the time immemorial beginning from its oral origins, derives from its utilitarian values of creating awareness. The chief functions of literature border on heightening awareness on certain aspects of life, entertaining and giving pleasure and it serves "as a medium of propagating history and culture" (Ellins, 2005 p.5).

Of the three major genres of literature, drama holds a special appeal for many because it actually depicts the "imitation of reality", Aristotle's definition of literature. Its vast potential to entertain, stir emotions and provoke thought has accorded it artistic prominence right from the period of the Greeks when it was used to raise issues in the society to the age of Shakespeare till the modern days. Committed artists have therefore found drama invaluable in imparting education, transmitting information, maintaining social control, instilling consciousness and moving audience towards a particular direction. In other words, drama like other genres of literature helps to refresh and influence the mind, helps the ability to read, brings the reality of life to the fore and educates, enlightens and entertains (Bolaji, 1994 p. 258)

In his *Oba Mama* (2013), Isiaka Aliagan uses literature, drama specifically, to record history, portray culture, express his linguistic creativity with a view to shaping reality vis-à-vis an epoch in the trajectory of Ilorin history. The masterful combination of historical, cultural and linguistic materials in the creation of riveting story makes *Oba Mama* a work of great

value, a worthy pioneer and “historical magnum opus”. Reading through the play, the various functions of drama come to the fore as the reader is educated about leadership crisis at a point in Ilorin history, entertained by the reality of human foibles and stirred by the cultural patterns of a pluralistic society. This paper examines some aspects of historical portraiture, cultural norms, linguistic subtleties underpinning the stylistic tools that make *Oba Mama* compelling as a literary masterpiece.

#### **History of Ilorin and the Place of *Oba Mama***

The main thrust of *Oba Mama* is the artistic creation of an aspect of Ilorin history. Founded in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the internal contradictions within the Yoruba society, Ilorin has emerged from a rustic community to a model plural society, a veritable confluence of historical significance, linguistic versatility and cultural diversity. The play artistically re-enacts the trials of the fifth Emir of Ilorin, Oba Abdulsalami Momoloso, who reigned between 1891 and 1896. Relying on “both oral and written sources of history, fleshed with imaginative and creative condiments” (Aliagan, 2013 p.10), the author presents the history of Oba Mama, the eponymous tragic hero, right from the dream he had on the battlefield regarding his ascension to the throne to the challenges he faced during troubled reign till he ended up consumed by the fire kindled by the intrigues of the warriors/ Baloguns and fuelled by the betrayal of his brother, Alege.

Ilorin was founded, according to one tradition, by Ojo, a hunter from Ilota near the present Oyo between 1170 and 1800 (Oseni, n.d, p.44). Fulani hegemony was subsequently entrenched around 1807 after the death of Afonja and the termination of Oyo's suzerainty over the town. Oba Abdulsalami became the first Emir in 1816 after the death of Shehu Alimi (1740-1842), the Amirul Muminin that emerged in Ilorin with the establishment of Sokoto Caliphate in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century or 1804 to be precise. He was recognised by Gwandu as the Emir for the Yoruba in 1928 and he died 1842.

The second Emir was Oba Shitta (1842 -1860), who was noted for diplomatically curbing the initial Christian missionary incursions into Ilorin. His strategy of checkmating the missionary designs became a legacy that his successor held on tenaciously to until the conquest of Ilorin by the British colonial power in 1897. He was succeeded by Oba Zubair (1860-1868), who

was nicknamed Ayelabowo (i.e. We-meet-money-in-this-world) because of his generosity. He was reckoned as a staunch defender of Islam. After his death, Oba Aliyu (1868 – 1891) became the Emir. He was noted to have declared war on Offa “in retaliation for the disaster suffered by Ilorin cavalry in Jalumi war. His attempt to end the war was not successful, despite the intervention of the Sultan of Sokoto and the British Colonial Authorities in Lagos” (*Emirate Trumpet*, 2006, p.15). Oba Aliyu was succeeded by Oba Momoloso, who reign is the focus of *Oba Mama*.

Basically, history records Oba Momo (1891 -1896) as the rightful successor to Oba Aliyu. Oba Momoloso “... was unanimously chosen by all to the throne of Ilorin. It was said that about 20,000 horsemen and 20,000 footmen escorted him home from the camp to take possession of the throne of his fathers” (Johnson, 1973; Aliagan, 2013). As a Prince, he had “participated in Offa war till he became Emir but stopped the war shortly after his ascension. He was also conciliatory towards the Yorubas and friendly with the British authorities in Lagos. This pacificism angered the Baloguns and he was violently toppled in 1896” (Jimoh, 1994; *Emirate Trumpet*, 2006).

It is the above historical sketch that Aliagan masterfully weaves into the tragedy of *Oba Mama*, a riveting drama of peacefulness, enthronement, opposition, betrayal, loyalty and death.

#### **Aspects of Culture in *Oba Mama***

Culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (see Adedimeji, 2010) It is culture that supplies us our habits of life and the process of self-fulfilment which defines everything man does and how he does it; a method of self realisation of the individual and society and the measure of the development of both (Olarinmoye, 1993 p.15). Most scholars are agreed that the basis of development is culture and any community that aims at progress without its culture is only deceiving itself.

Culture serves at least seven purposes. According to Mazrui serves as lenses of perception, spring of motivation, standard of judgement, basis of stratification, means of communication, definer and influencer of

consumption and production as well as basis of identity (Mazrui, 2000; Adedimeji, 2009 pp.73-76). Ilorin is a rich cultural base with a wide tapestry of diverse tradition coalescing to form a unique one, a sort of a mixed grill. Some aspects of the practices and culture which are mostly rooted in Islamic philosophy of life that find expression in the *Oba Mama* are as follows:

**Admonition:** Based on the Islamic background, giving admonition is an Ilorin cultural practice and this is evident in the prologue. There is the practice of using words to stir, to nourish, to awaken, and to admonish. Admonition as a cultural symbol manifests in the prologue where Mama, "dressed in a heavy alkimba with turban to match" draws from the Islamic cultural repertoire to say:

My dear people, I greet you in the name of the one who created you and me, who sent his noble messenger to us that we may not fall among the lost ones. He created us as human beings; and soon we turned into words; intangible things, that no one can touch. I was once like you, a physical being. Now I have become words which you speak. Soon you will become like me. So it will be... As you listen to my tale, remember that you, as the bearer will expire too, and only my tale and yours will endure. (pp.21-22)

**Reconciliation:** Based on the knowledge of the disposition of Islam to keeping malice and having quarrel, it is part of Ilorin practice to seek reconciliation. This has resulted in the peace and harmony characterising the city. When Kaara, after a serious altercation with Mama on the need to continue war, which Mama considers unnecessary, realizes that he was wrong, he seeks reconciliation and peace with his prince. According to Kaara, in a reconciliatory tone, "One can still learn in old age. A prince is a potential Amir. Woe unto me if I go against the royal house of the Sheu. Come, my dear prince, let us embrace." (p.25)

The same reconciliation or repentance was repeated on page 33 after Mama

has been given the news of his becoming Amir:

...To think that all these years we have been together as soldiers of the Emirate; we have lived like brothers and only yesterday we quarreled. Mama, you must forgive old Kaara. How could I have clashed with the Amir? (p.33)

**Faithfulness:** This is the culture of taking recourse to God, having faith with his decree. When Kaara narrated his dream, which was like a vision of him becoming Emir, with a warning from his late father to "beware of the cow with the black spots", he declines from accepting the suggestion of inviting a third party, Ajia, who "has some knowledge of divination." As a faithful person, he says, "Allah knows best," (p.29) there is no need seeking human help.

**Supplications:** A cultural pattern of Ilorin is prayers and supplications for those one likes or appreciates. Kaara prays, "Your Highness. May your reign be prosperous" (p.33). Sarkin Dongari also prays for the Emir, "May Allah preserve our Amir. We are the flock. You are the shepherd. Long may you be our guide." (p.43) Alege and Sarkin Salama, among others, also offers prayers: "May Allah protect us" "May Allah grant you the wisdom of Anabi Suleiman and the humility of Anabi Ibrahim" (p.43) The Amir also states his intention to go on spiritual seclusion.

**Song/ Poetry:** Part of the cultural symbols of Ilorin evident in the play is song/poetry. A speech is not considered well-delivered without some poetic accompaniments. There are many songs and poetic renditions in the play. Some other areas are on p.32; pp.40-42; pp.45-46; pp.52-55; pp.71-72; p.83, etc.

**Greetings:** Greeting is considered a core component of social development that those who do not greet others are deemed irresponsible. For instance, Alanamu, repeats "welcome" to the people on p. 35. "Welcome, great people of the Emirate. Welcome to the wedlock of the city" (p.35). On page 38, Alege greets the Amir, "Peace be unto you, Your Highness" and the Amir replies, "Peace be unto you too."

### Language and Style in *Oba Mama*

As Trask (1995:1) puts it, language is arguably the "single most remarkable characteristic that we have, the one that truly sets our species apart", a phenomenon that has often exerted a lot of influence on the whole gamut of human affairs. Language is used chiefly to communicate and the more proficient one is in the use of language, the more successful one is in achieving one's goals. In doing things with words, which is the theory of pragmatics, Mey (2001 p.6) as follows:

Communication in society happens chiefly by means of language. However, the users of language, as social beings, communicate and use language on society's premises; society controls their access to the linguistic and communicative means.

One way through which Isiaka Aliagan strikes a chord in the reader lies in his effective use of the language. Apart from the theme, the totality of the stylistic devices deployed by the author makes the story compelling. Since stylistics "analyses language habits with the purpose of identifying those features that are restricted to certain individuals' use of language in certain kinds of social contexts" Alabi and Adedimeji (2009:216), stylistics is used as a theoretical framework to evaluate the language of Isiaka Aliagan's literary text.

At the levels of phonology, graphology and morphology, syntax or word combination, stylistics allows an assessment of an literary writer's linguistic innovation and creativity. The language of literature allows unusual word combinations and idiosyncratic word order. At the level of semantics too, meaning is the object or goal of linguistic and literary activities and it is either literal or literary. The literal meaning is otherwise known as the denotative, basic, cognitive, logical or conceptual meaning. It is the outward or surface meaning that occurs to the reader/hearer, the basic idea of a word or an expression also known as the dictionary meaning. The literary meaning, on the other hand, is that which pertains to literature, as the term suggests. It is the connotative, figurative or associative meaning, the secondary and/or tertiary layer of meaning (Odebunmi, 2006). Tropes

like metaphor, personification, irony, etc. operate here.

In *Oba Mama*, various stylistic devices at all levels of linguistic analysis such as phonology, morphology, cohesion, lexico-semantic and lexico-syntactic patterns are deployed by the author to project his thematic. The use of these devices is analysed thus: .

### 1. Phonology

Phonology in stylistic usually deals with analysing sound patterns in a piece, or text and its effect on the style of author. Elements under phonology include: alliteration, onomatopoeia and pun.

#### a) Alliteration

This is the repetition of the initial consonant in two or more words. It is a deliberate phonological device with which sounds are foregrounded for emphasis and to aid memorability (Wales, 2001:14). It is otherwise called "initial rhyme" and it serves to create melody, emphasise key words and reinforce rhythmic patterns.. There are 21 marked use of alliteration in the play, with the voiced bilabial glide /w/ sound being predominant.

1. "...Warriors of their precious wears". (p.21)
2. "...we were warriors". (p.22)
3. "Cult of Courage". (p.24)
4. "What could have gone wrong..." (p.23)
5. "Ever since you woke up...you have won..." (p.23)
6. "I swear by my sword" (p.26)
7. "Hoof of his horse" (p.26)
8. "Hands on my head" (p.28)
9. "spiritual seculsion" (p.28)
10. "shepherd staff used by the shehu" (p.40)
11. "I greet you, great Amir." (p.44)
12. "peace is a precondition for progress". (p.58)
13. "for peace and a period for consolidation. (p.58)
14. "we will withdraw the warriors and wait." (p.59)
15. "...work out that way." (p.73)
16. "then we must not waste time". (p.73)
17. "...partake in the plot." (p.75)
18. "...when it comes to contest..." (p.75)
19. "...Blood brothers. (p.75)

20. "...we were approaching the hills..." (p.82)  
 21. "...beautiful woman as a wife." (p.86)

#### b) Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeic words are those lexemes that sound like their suggested meanings, like 'hiss', 'jingle', 'croak', etc. There are six marked instances of this device in the play, identified thus:

- 1 "He whistles" (p.26)
- 2 "chanted the praises" (p.28)
- 3 "Booming of the guns" (p.35)
- 4 "sound of the music" (p.30)
- 5 "Cries of pain" (p.82)
- 6 "They munch corn" (p.84)

#### c) Pun

This is a humorous play on words through which ambiguous words-generating two or more meanings are used with, both meanings is intended.

1. "My world and words" (p.22)
2. "I will let you go in peace...you'll go home in pieces". (p.71)
3. "The word is older than the world." (p.22)

#### 2. Graphology

Graphology is the use of special graphemes for foregrounding to drive home (through unusual graphemes) some vital points to the readers. According to Leech (1969 p.39), it is wider than orthography because "refers to the whole writing system: punctuation and paragraphing as well as spacing." Among the graphological devices are italics, capitalization, quotation marks, and the hyphen. The elements used by the author are italics, semi-colons, quotation marks and ellipsis period. Examples of italics, quotation marks and ellipsis periods in the play are given thus:

##### a) Italics

Italics is used for foreign words in the text. It indicates loan words and

expressions from Arabic and Hausa. There are eleven instances of italicisation in the text.

1. fatwa (p.24)
2. subuanallah ina lilahi wahina ilaei rajihun. (p.30)
- 3.Allahu Akbar! (p.31)
- 4.Amin (p.31)
- 5.Alwah (p.36)
- 6.Sarkin musulumi, Allah e kara imani (p.43)
- 7.Auzubillah (p.44)
8. Janazah (p.52)
- 10.Wothiqtat (p.60)
- 11.Dongraris (p.73)

Though there are other Arabic/ Hausa terms used in the text, the italicized ones are accounted for.

#### b) Quotations Marks

There are just three instances of it in the text. This device is used to indicate that the statement is a reported one, a statement which has been said by another person. The quotations are drawn outside of the text. These are:

1. "They are yours now. Look after them well..." (p.29).
2. "Kill your mother and bring her severed head to me, then I shall agree to your request" (p.86)
3. "For a woman's love, you shed your mother's blood. You are not fit to live let alone marry" (p.86).

#### c).Ellipsis Period

There are eight occurrences of this device in the text. It is used to indicate break in words, for exclamation, for a pause or hesitation or to allow interjection.

1. "Hmm..." (p.26)
2. "Perharps....." (p.29)
3. "Ah...ah." (p.50)
4. "Ah...ah" (p.51)
5. "Ah..." (p.67)
6. "Then..." (P.78)

7. "They said ...They said...."

(p.80)

8. "Huu...ha...hee..."

(p.82)

### 3. Morphology

Morphology is the level of language analysis which deals with the internal arrangement of words and their inflections (Adedimeji and Alabi 2003 p.30) or a branch of linguistics which preoccupies itself with "the internal patterning of words" (Wales, 2001 p. 260) The words formation processes used in the text chiefly are compounding and affixation.

#### a) Compounding

According to Leech (1969 p. 43), the "most common processes of word-formation are affixation (the addition of a prefix or suffix to an item already in the language), and compounding (the joining together of two or more items to make a single, though compound one)". Hyphenated compound will be considered as a stylistic element in the text, the examples of which are:

1. Hyper-ecstatic (p.21)
2. Commander-in-chief (p.24)
3. Double-speak. (p.27)
4. Balogun-elect (p.56)
5. Counter-productive (p.61)
6. Self-defence (p.62)
7. Magaji-elect (p.67)

Compounding is used to avoid lengthy words and unnecessary sentences. These are only seven instances in the text.

#### b) Affixation

There are several examples of affixes in the text but derivational suffixes are more foregrounded. There are thirty-five instances of this and they are listed thus:

1. Argument—argu (e) \*ment (p.21)
2. Winners—win\*ner\*s (p.21)
3. Bitterness—bitter\*ness (p.21)
4. Courageous---courage\*ous (p.23)
5. Sorrowful---sorrow\*full (p.23)
6. Senseless---sense\*less (p.23)
7. Impotence---impoten (t)\*ence (p.23)

|                                     |        |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| 8. Punishment---punish*ment         | (p.23) |
| 9. Lamentation---lament*at*ion      | (p.23) |
| 10. Advancement—advance*ment        | (p.23) |
| 11. Intransigence—intransigen(t)*ce | (p.23) |
| 12. Absolutely—absolute*ly          | (p.23) |
| 13. Perfectly—perfect*ly            | (p.26) |
| 14. Quickly—quick*ly                | (p.26) |
| 15. Subversive—subver(t)*sive       | (p.26) |
| 16. Arrogance—arrogan(t)*ce         | (p.26) |
| 17. Fearless—fear*less              | (p.27) |
| 18. Bluntness—blunt*ness            | (p.27) |
| 19. Believable—believe*able         | (p.27) |
| 20. Royalty—royal*ty                | (p.29) |
| 21. Miraculous—mirac(le)*ous        | (p.31) |
| 22. Betrayal—betray*al              | (p.36) |
| 23. Installation—install*at*ion     | (p.36) |
| 24. Successful—success*ful          | (p.40) |
| 25. Happiness—happy*ness            | (p.49) |
| 26. Stoppage—stop*age               | (p.58) |
| 27. Obstinacy—obstina(te)*cy        | (p.62) |
| 28. Darkness—dark*ness              | (p.64) |
| 29. Restlessness—rest*less*ness     | (p.71) |
| 30. Forcefully—force*ful*ly         | (p.73) |
| 31. Sentimentally—sentiment*al*ly   | (p.74) |
| 32. Greatness—great*ness            | (p.76) |
| 33. Harmonious—harmony*ious         | (p.81) |
| 34. Suddenly—sudden*ly              | (p.82) |
| 35. Beautiful—beauty*ful            | (p.86) |

#### 4. Cohesion

This is the grammatical and lexical linking within a sentence or a text which holds it together and gives it meaning. Cohesion is mainly either grammatical (relating to structural content) or lexical (relating to language content). The five general categories of cohesive devices, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976) are lexical cohesion, reference, ellipsis, substitution and conjunction. Elements of cohesion used in the text include: lexical cohesion, reference, and conjunction.

##### a) Lexical cohesion

### Repetition

The author employed the use of repetition in songs all through the text. Examples are in pages 21, 32, 34, 37, 41, 46, 53, 71 and 72. There are nine instances of songs in the text.

Other examples include:

1. "I was born in the great land,...in this great land built by my ancestors." (p.22)
2. "As you listen to my tale, remember that you, as the bearer...and only my tale and yours will endure." (p.22). The repetition of 'you' and 'my tale' are used to create connection between the speaker and his suppose audience (readers).
3. "I intend to introduce some tricks; some deceit indeed; to trick the enemy into a trap." (p.26)

### Hyponymy

This is the relationship of inclusion by which elements are a subcategory of a more general class.

There are only two instances. Examples:

1. "Swords, cutlasses, axes, spears and clubs." (p.21). These are hyponyms of weapon, which is the hypernym.
2. "Hunters, market women, artisans and priests." (p.35). These are hyponyms for the hypernym, "workers".

### Meronymy

This is the relationship of being part of a whole. There is just one example of this in the text, "chest, wrists and arms" (p.21) all of which are parts of the human body.

### Collocation

This is the co-occurrence of lexical items in a text. There are twelve examples of marked collocation in *Oba Mama*:

1. "winners, losers" (p.21)
2. "strong and courageous" (p.22)
3. "foes and infidels" (p.22)
4. "sage and the seer" (p.33)
5. "sing and dance" (p.36)
6. "princes and rulers" (p.43)
7. "sword or bullet" (p.51)
8. "Drumming and singing" (p.56)
9. "peace and unity" (p.60)

10. "power and authority"(p.76)
11. "Dignity and honour"(p.78)
12. "fear and distress"(p.81)

#### b)Reference

This is the relationship that holds between an expression and what that expression stands for on particular occasions of its utterance. In other words, reference, according to Palmer (1981 Rptd. 2002: 29), deals with the relationship between the linguistic elements, words, sentences, etc, and the non-linguistic worlds of experience. Endophoric reference or endophora refers to textual reference as opposed to contextual reference, which is known as exophoric reference. Endophonic reference, an important means of achieving cohesion, may be subdivided into anaphoric and cataphoric references (Alabi, 2003 p. 224). Anaphoric reference refers to back to what had been previously identified while cataphoric reference is a forward reference in which something is introduced in the abstract form before it is identified.

#### Anaphoric Reference

##### Examples:

"Two camps of warriors storm the stage... They are dressed in full battle regalia."(p.21)

"The two camps confront each other... They charge at each other."(p.21)

"Mama, what is happening to you?...you have worn a pensive look."(p.23)

"Be brave, Mama... you must tame your emotion."(p.23)

"Oba Mama, dressed in a heavy alkimba... He addresses an unseen audience."(p.21)

"That would sound too cheap to them"(p.27)—The pronoun refer to the idea already stated by another character.

"He was dressed in a white flowing gown."(p.28)—The pronoun refers backward to 'the Shehu' already introduced earlier in the discourse.

"General, Sarkin Salama is here...He has some news for the prince."(p.30)

"The Kingmakers resolved that vacuum should not be allowed. They instructed us to bring Prince Mama."(p.30)

"The Amir... He passed away in his sleep last night."(p.30)

"Allah is most praise worthy. He works in a miraculous way."(p.31)  
"The Amir greets all of you. He understands and appreciates the honour you accord him."(p.31)

"They will not expect any hindrance from you..."(p.34)—The underlined pronoun refers back to the 'war lords' already mentioned by the character.

"I shall take up this war...let my life go with it."(p.78).

Moreso, the pronoun "we" is generally used in the text more than other pronoun to indicate communal living and patriotism devoid of authoritative rule.

#### *Cataphoric Reference*

Examples of this are:

"You do not understand, General."(p.23)

"I dare you, oldman."(p.24)

"You speak to a warrior, General."(p.24)

"There must be an alternative to warfare as punishment for...these people."(p.23)

"...knowing your initial uncompromising stance over this matter?"(p.27)

"You, my people, have made my joy complete."(p.45)

"How am I sure of your sincerity in this game?"(p.75)

"I shall take up this war myself."(p.78)

The underlined pronouns refer forward to the underlined words after them.

#### *c) Conjunction*

This is a word that connect two or more words, groups or clauses. Conjunction is predominantly used in the text as the following examples illustrate:

"The scene opens with ecstatic drumming and chanting of war songs."(p.21)

"Trumpet and drumming herald his emergence on stage."(p.21)

"Kaara sharpens his sword and glistens it."(p.23)

"Afterall, there is no way a child can eat a sumptuous meal without messing his hands."(p.25)

"I shall send an emissary to the Ibadan mercenaries and the colonial

intercessors."(p.27)

"He placed his hands on my head and chanted the praises."(p.28)

"What brings the royalty to the domain of fore and blood."(p.29)

"It has cost and us men and materials."(p.33)

"General Kaara slept but never woke up again."(p.51)

"His house has been decorated and fully equipped."(p.51)

"It can only lead to ruin and damnation."(p.60)

"We are warriors and shall remain warriors."(p.61)

"But I warn you,' anyone who disobeys me ceases to be a member of my cabinet."(p.61)

"Alanamu was deposed and banished..."(p.86)

## 5. Lexico-Semantic Patterns

Figurative language is used to stir emotions and "move" being a major reoccupation of literature. The figures of speech and lexico-semantic features used include the following, all of which are defined in varying detail in Wales (2001); Alabi (2003) and Adedimeji (2010).

### i) Simile

This is device or figure of speech by which a direct comparison is made between two seemingly dissimilar things through the use of 'like' and 'as'.

Examples of simile in the text include:

"Can't you see the impotence of our efforts like the thunder spark in the harmattan."(p.23)

"Come and test the fury of the youth that erupts like a mad sea."(p.25)

"Your words are as heavy as lead."(p.26)

"That I died like a fowl trying to escape."(p.84)

### ii. Personification

This is a device by which human qualities are given to animals, objects and concepts.

The two examples of this feature in the text are:

"Mad sea" (p.25)

"Slap on our tradition" (p.67)

### iii. Euphemism

This is an expression consciously used for its pleasant connotations in order to express issues that are considered vulgar serious, or repulsive. Examples

of this category are:

"The Amir, has gone the way of the righteous. He passed away in his sleep." (p.30)

"A big tree has fallen in the forest." (p.30)

The above statements indicate the death of the Amir.

#### iv. Metaphor

This is a figure of speech in which a comparison is implied between two things that appear dissimilar. Unlike simile, metaphor is an indirect comparison. Examples of this include:

"The indestructible lion" (p.50)

"The elephant shall rise no more." (p.50)

In the two examples given, the General is compared to an indestructible lion and elephant to show how powerful he is, whereas in the following examples, the rebellious warriors are compared to wolves and cannibals respectively:

"The wolves outside really mean to starve us." (p.84)

"The cannibals will devour us if we dare step out." (p.84)

#### v. Hyperbole

This is a deliberate exaggeration or intentional over-statement. Examples of hyperbole in the text are:

"Our hearts are torn by sorrow." (p.50)

"Leaking mouth." (p.24)

#### vi. Allusion

This is a brief reference to historical events, a character, a place or a work of literature, which the writer assumes that the reader is familiar with. Allusions may be Quranic, biblical, classical or literary. There is Qu'ranic allusion in "May Allah grant you the wisdom of Anabi Ibrahim" (p.43)

### 6. Lexico-syntactic Patterns

Lexico-syntactic patterns used in the text are: anaphora, polyptoton, anatanaclasis.

#### i. Anaphora

This is the deliberate repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences, verses or paragraphs. This is used in 21 instances thus:

1. "The two camps confront each other. The drumming becomes frenzied." (p.21)
2. "Some are killed, some run away." (p.21)
3. "So it will be. So it had been from the beginning of the world. So it will continue to be." (p.22)
4. "We were warriors. We were priests." (p.22)
5. "I fought battles like other princes. I fought with other warriors." (p.22)
6. "Can't you see the impotence of our efforts... can't you see that it is absolutely senseless..." (p.23)
7. "I am the head of this army. I hold the flag of the Amir." (p.25)
8. "I have the blood... I shall not be covered..." (p.25)
9. "Your feelings are deep... Your look is still forlorn." (p.26)
10. "They know General Kaara... They know I am a fearless warrior. They know me for my bluntness." (p.27)
11. "We shall have to be more careful. We shall move closer..." (p.39)
12. "Pray for successful reign. Pray against calamity..." (p.40)
13. "We shall frown at all acts of banditry. We shall defend the legacies of the shehu." (p.45)
14. "We must organize the Janazah... We must compensate Kaara's family." (p.52)
15. "He has brought a message of peace. He has demanded for stoppage of all wars." (p.58)
16. "Let us value what we have. Let us keep what is ours." (p.58)
17. "Why do they hate me so? Why do they hate the idea of peace...? Why do they like the smell of blood...? Why do they

treasure a life of fear...? Why am I perceived as the aggressor in this case?." (p.81)

18. "I thank you very much ... I know being a warrior yourself, ...I expect that you will commission more wars of conquest." (p.33)
19. "I have some doubts though, I cannot tell if they are truly justified." (p.38)
20. "They laid ambush for us .They killed everybody." (p.82)
21. "It is my burden, let me carry it. It is my destiny..." (p.84)

#### ii. Anatanacsis

This is the repetition of a word whose meaning changes in the second instance: Change is used in this sense as follows:

"My world and words had to change too. Change became my nemesis."(p.22)

"Change with the world or you will be swept off by the tide of change."(p.59)

#### iii. Polyptoton

This is a stylistic scheme in which words derived from the same roots are repeated within the same structure. The occurrences of this pattern are eight, which are given thus:

1. "Change, change"(p.22)
2. "Warfare, war"(p.23)
3. "Worry, worries"(p.26)
4. "Private, privacy"(p.26)
5. "Royalty, royal"(p.29)
6. "Death, die"(p.51)
7. "Happy, happiness"(p.60)
8. "Treacherous, treachery"(p.70-71)

#### iv. Parenthesis

This is an explanatory or qualifying word, phrase or sentence inserted into an expression. The four instances of this device in the text are as follows:

1. "History, no matter how ancient, is ever living."  
(p.22)
2. "He created us as human beings, and soon, we turned into words; intangible things, that no one can touch."  
(p.22)
3. "All of them, particularly Kaara, are thirsty for war."  
(p.39)
4. "Your Highness, please accept this token of present from us—the lass and all that she carries."  
(p.60)

### Summary and Findings

In Isiaka Aliagan's *Oba Mama*, history and culture are woven with the fabric of creative language to produce an important work of art. The history re-enacted is the reign of the fifth Emir of Ilorin, his travails and ultimate tragedy while the culture projected is that of Ilorin with its deep roots in Islamic tradition. Aspects of this culture include admonition, reconciliation, faithfulness, supplications, songs and poetry as well as greetings.

Attention is paid to the analysis of language, language being the medium of expressing history and means of transmitting culture using the stylistic framework. A holistic stylistic analysis of *Oba Mama* shows that instances of marked phonological devices are 30, graphological devices are 34, morphological devices are 42, cohesive devices are 62 while lexico-semantic and lexico-syntactic patterns have 16 and 36 occurrences respectively. Cohesion is the dominant stylistic device used by the author. It manifests in lexical cohesion (repetition, hyponymy, meronymy and collocation), Reference and Conjunction. Repetition has the highest number of entries.

Phonological devices are used to provide tone, rhythm and musical colour. Graphological devices are used as a fore-grounding effect. Arabic words are written in italics to distinguish them from the English words. Compounding and affixation are also creatively used by the author to avoid lengthy words and to also create new words. The author also makes use of lexico-semantic devices to add more colour to the text and to enhance clarity. The use of comparison is more foregrounded. It also showcases the African culture of using figurative expression in their

speech. Finally, lexico-syntactic pattern such as anaphora, antanaclasis, polyptoton and parenthesis are used as repetition which is generally for emphasis. It helps to produce a permanent effect on the readers and it also aids memorability.

### Conclusion

Ilorin remains a melting pot of various cultures and traditions that have fused together to create a dynamic and harmonious community that constitutes a model for pluralism and peaceful co-existence. In drawing attention to the history of Ilorin especially the reign of Oba Momoloso, Isiaka Aliagan implies that there is no alternative to peace and there is no sacrifice that is too much to pay for it. Oba Momoloso wanted peace and worked for peace but the war-mongering segments of the community mobilised all conceivable and available resources against him, including his brother, who betrayed the trust reposed in him by the Oba. The Emir paid the supreme sacrifice as part of his effort to lay a foundation for intra-community and inter-community harmony. What Ilorin enjoys today can therefore be attributed to the sacrifice of its leaders, including the tragic hero of *Oba Mama*.

This paper has attempted a study of *Oba Mama*, a deeply-engaging historical play of Isiaka Aliagan. It is found that apart from documenting and preserving history, the play successfully infuses cultural and linguistic habits of Ilorin which ultimately gives it a distinctive aura of indigenous play. Through the careful choice of language and the deployment of several stylistic devices, the play accentuates the oratory of Ilorin and establishes Aliagan as a conscious writer who combines his backgrounds in history, culture and language to create a unique literary work that will compel the attention of perspective readers and the critical public.

## REFERENCES

- Adedimeji, M. A. 2009. Globalization and the survival of the Nigerian cultural and linguistic heritage: The American paradigm". In *The sociolinguistics of English and Nigerian Languages*. Dele Adeyanju (ed.) Muenchen, Germany: Lincom Europa. 69 – 87.
- Adedimeji, M. A. 2010. "A Stylo-pragmatic study of proverbs in selected Nigerian novels in English". Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, University of Ilorin.
- Adedimeji, M. A. and T. A. Alabi. 2003. Basic elements of English grammar. In Obafemi, O. and S.T. Babatunde (Eds.) *Studies and discourse in English language*. Ilorin: Haytee Press. pp.28 – 59.
- Alabi, V.A. 2003. Metalanguage in Stylistics: A hundred terminologies. In Obafemi, O. and S.T. Babatunde (Eds.) *Studies and discourse in English language*. Ilorin: Haytee Press. pp. 216 – 243.
- Alabi, V.A. and M. A. Adedimeji. 2009. The nexus between Stylistics and the language of poetry: An analysis of selected poems". In *Reinventing the English language in Nigeria in the context of globalization and decolonization: Refreed proceedings of the 23rd annual conference of the Nigeria English Studies Association (NESA)*. Adegbite, Wale and Billy Olajide.(eds.) Lagos: Olivetree Publishing Venture for NESA. pp. 216 - 222.
- Aliagan, Isiaka. 2013. *Oba Mama*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Bolaji, E. B. 1994. Literature and literary appreciation. In Bolaji, E.B. and V.A. Alabi (Eds.) *The principles and the practice of communication*. Ilorin: Department of English, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin. pp. 255-279.
- Crystal, David and D. Davy 1969. *Investigating English style*. New York: Longman Group Ltd.
- Ellins, Justin. 2005. *Fundamentals of literary appreciation*. Benin City: Tundey Asmark Nig. Ent.
- Emirate Trumpet. 2005. Special Royal Edition. Vo.1.
- Jimoh, L. A. K. 1994. *Ilorin: The journey so far*. Ilorin: Atoto Press.

- Halliday, M. A. K. and R. Hasan (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Mey, J. L. 2001. *Pragmatics: An introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell.
- Leech, Geoffrey. 1969. *A linguistic guide to English poetry*. Harlow: Longman.
- Mazrui, A. A. 2000. *The African renaissance: A triple legacy of skills, values and gender*. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilisation (CBAAC).
- Odebunmi, Akin. 2006. *Meaning in English: An introduction*. Ogbomoso: Critical Sphere.
- Ogunjimi, Bayo. 1994. What is literature? In Obafemi, Olu (Ed.) *New introduction to literature*. Ibadan: Y-Books. pp. 5-25.
- Olarinmoye, E.A. 1993. Cultural norms and a woman's status in marriage. *African Notes*. 16 (1&2):15-22.
- Oseni, Z. I. (2006). Arabic and Islamic scholarship in Ilorin. In Jimoh, S. A. (Ed.) *Ilorin: centre of learning*. Ilorin: University of Ilorin Press for Jimson Publishers. pp.44-74.
- Palmer, F. R. 1981. *Semantics*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2002 rpt). Cambridge: CUP.
- Trask, R. L. 1995. *Language: The basics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Turner, G.W. 1973. *Stylistics*. Middlesex: Penguin.
- Wales, K. 2001. *A dictionary of stylistics*. (2nd ed.) London: Longman.