



BETWEEN RHETORIC AND REALITY

**THE STATE AND USE OF
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN
POST-COLONIAL AFRICA**

Edited by
**Munyaradzi Mawere &
Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye**

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the spirit of Walter Rodney, the author of an infamous book: "How Europe underdeveloped Africa," who was an Afrocentric scholar whose life was devoted to the total liberation and holistic development of Africa and the African people

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Dispute Resolutions: The Yorùbá Example

Hezekiah Olufemi Adeosun

Introduction

Yorùbá, like every other society has a history behind its knowledge resources which guides its development resource. This is greatly explicated in its oral literature; like proverbs, folktales, Ifá corpus, songs, and festivals. This chapter aims at investigating the Yorùbá indigenous knowledge systems in conflict resolution process. Twenty proverbs are copiously selected for analysis out of the fifty proverbs collected. The proverbs are selected based on the thematic pre-occupation of the study and analysed with the Nativist Model of Postcolonial theory. The model suggests that the people and race that had been colonised by the West, at a time in history, should dig deep into their culture and tradition, and make use of their indigenous languages for their literary discourse. The chapter reveals, among other things, that proverb as an indigenous knowledge system among the Yorùbá serves as a potent tool in resolving disputes. It has worked for the people in the past to curtail disputes and crises, which brought about a peaceful society. The chapter, therefore, recommends that adoption of indigenous knowledge system as proverbs in resolving contemporary issues relating to dispute and conflict will be of immense contribution to bringing sanity to the society. The two major concepts that are central to this chapter are indigenous knowledge and conflict resolution. It is wise to unpack these concepts before we delve into a deeper discussion of them.

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Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Indigenous knowledge, according to Melchias (2001) cited in Eyong (2014:121), refers to “what indigenous people know and do, and what they have known and done for generations – practices that evolved through trial and error and proved flexible enough to cope with change”. Eyong (2014:121-122) explains that this definition draws one’s attention to the colonial racist idea that indigenous knowledge is a monopoly of *trials and error* while modern knowledge is *science* characterised by *experimentation*. Hence, while the former is presumed clogged, concrete, and inaccurate, the latter is painted as intangible, weighty, right, and imbued with universal reasoning.

Indigenous knowledge systems, as is the case with modern knowledge, were also developed by experimentations though these experiments were not documented and the knowledge systems were legitimised and fortified under suitable institutional frameworks, culture and practices. They have been passed on to other generations through oral tradition and have enabled indigenous people to survive, manage their natural resources and the ecosystems surrounding them. Unfortunately, these knowledge systems are fast eroding due to the lasting effects of colonialism, commercialisation, globalisation and modernisation, lack of efficient codification, breakdown of the traditional family structure and function (the institution that helps in the socialization of tacit knowledge).

Mapara (2009:140) describes indigenous knowledge systems as a body of knowledge, or bodies of knowledge of the indigenous people of particular geographical areas that they have survived on for a very long time. They are knowledge forms that have failed to die despite the racial and colonial onslaught that they have suffered at the hands of Western imperialism and arrogance. Altieri (1995:114) also notes that “indigenous knowledge systems are forms of knowledge that have originated locally and naturally”. Mapara (2009:140 citing Altieri 1995:114) explains that these knowledge forms are known by other names, and among them are indigenous ways of knowing (Nyota and Mapara 2008), traditional knowledge, indigenous technical knowledge, rural knowledge as

well as ethno-science (or people’s science). The use of proverbs is an example of ethno-knowledge that has been used to ensure social harmony and peace within the Yoruba communities.

Shizha (2013:2) describes Africa as a salad bowl of indigenous people who were formerly colonised but do not share a common ancestry or a common culture. Shizha posits that “the culture of indigenous Africans is characterised by cultural heterogeneity (cultural diversity) rather than cultural homogeneity (cultural uniformity). Africans do not share a common culture, but have cultures that are particularistic and based on high levels of cultural and linguistic diversity”. Ocholla (2007:2) shares same view with Shizha (2013:2) when he declares that indigenous knowledge is embedded in the culture/tradition/ideology/language and religion of a particular community and is therefore not universal and difficult to globalise. It is mostly rural, commonly practiced among poor communities and is therefore not suitable in multicultural, urban and economically provided communities. From the foregoing, indigenous knowledge system is culture-based that is owned and controlled by a group of people in a community. Warren (1991:1) states that:

Indigenous knowledge is the local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. Indigenous knowledge contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities.

Similarly, Ocholla (2007:1) postulates that indigenous knowledge (i.e., local/traditional/folk knowledge, ethno science) is a dynamic archive of the sum total of knowledge, skills and attitudes belonging to and practiced by a community over generations, and is expressed in the form of action, objects and sign language for sharing. Examples of these knowledge systems among the Yoruba of Nigeria are festivals, storytelling, proverbs, folk-songs, dances, traditional medicine, art and craft, community/family trade, etc.

Shizha (2013:4) quoting Flavier, de Jesus, Navarro and Warren (1995:479) assert that "indigenous knowledge is the information base for a society, which facilitates communication and decision-making. Indigenous information systems are dynamic and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems".

What can be inferred from these different definitions is that indigenous knowledge systems have utility value in indigenous society. They are experiential and address diverse and complex aspects of indigenous peoples and their livelihoods. In the process of generating indigenous knowledge systems, indigenous people take into account their cosmos, spirituality, ontological realities, land, socio-cultural environment and historical contexts. Indigenous knowledge systems are transmitted, maintained and retained within specific cultural sites for education and sustainable development (Shizha 2013:4). Indigenous knowledge systems have high credibility because they are familiar to the people and are controlled locally (Adeosun, 2010:8). For this reason, dispute or conflict arising among the indigenous people are effectively resolved through indigenous knowledge systems as proverbs.

Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Conflict means contradiction arising from differences in interest, ideas, ideologies, orientations, perceptions and tendencies. These contradictions exist at all levels of the society: individual, group, institution and nation, as well as in interpersonal and international relations. Conflict, therefore, is an integral part of the society, which could be brought about by myriad of factors. A conflict is a situation when the interest, needs, goals or values of involved parties interfere with one another. Different stakeholders may have different priorities; conflicts may involve team members, departments, projects, organisation and client, boss and subordinate, organisation needs versus personal needs (www.personalityexplorer.com/conflictManage).

There are however divergent views on conflict. To some, conflict connotes negativism, while to others it connotes positivism. For Part and Borge (1921:272) as reported by Michael and

Iwokwagh (2006:246), "conflict is designed to resolve divergent dualism and achieved some kind of unity, even if it be through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties". There are situations where different people with different goals and needs have come to conflict. Such situations often result to intense personal animosity. Michael and Iwokwagh (2006:246) further explains that Lund Berbe (1939:275), Wilson and Kolb (1947:114) both see conflict from a negative perspective. For them, "conflicts are negative totally as dysfunctional or disjunctive process and the breakdown of communication". On the contrary, however, Deutsuch (1973:156) cited in Michael and Iwokwagh (2006:246) argues that "although conflict generally exists where incompatible activities occur, and may result in a win or lose situation, the resolution, transformation and management of conflict may produce a win-win situation". The fact that conflict exists, however, is not necessarily a bad thing. As long as it is resolved effectively, it can lead to personal and professional growth. In many cases, effective conflict resolution can make the difference between positive and negative outcomes. If conflict is not handled effectively, the result can be damaging.

There are many different approaches to respond to conflict situations. Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann (1970) identify five main styles/approaches of dealing with conflict that vary in their degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness. They argue that people typically have a preferred conflict resolution style. However, they also note that different styles are most useful in different situations. Hence, they develop the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) (1970) which helps one to identify which style/approach one tends towards when conflict arises. The five styles which I explain in some detail below are: competitive, collaborative, compromising, accommodating, and avoiding.

Competitive

People who tend towards a competitive style take a firm stand, and know what they want. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things like position, rank, expertise, or persuasive ability. This style can be useful when there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made fast; when the decision is unpopular; or when defending against someone who is trying to

exploit the situation selfishly. However, it can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful when used in less urgent situations.

Collaborative

People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet the needs of all people involved. These people can be highly assertive but unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is useful when one needs to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution; when there have been previous conflicts in the group; or when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.

Compromising

People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will, at least, partially satisfy everyone. Everyone is expected to give up something, and the compromiser him/herself also expects to relinquish something. Compromise is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground, when equal strength opponents are at a standstill and when there is a deadline looming.

Accommodating

This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative. Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party or when peace is more valuable than winning.

Avoiding

People tending towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely. This style is typified by delegating controversial decisions, accepting default decisions, and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings. It can be appropriate when victory is impossible, when the controversy is trivial, or when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem. However, in many situations this is a weak

and ineffective approach to take (www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR-81.htm).

Once the different styles are understood, one can use them to think about the most appropriate approach or mixture of approaches for the situation one finds oneself. Conflict is often seen as a threat to peace and depicted as if it is totally negative. However, depending on how it is handled, conflict can either be constructive or destructive. Be that as it may, conflict in this chapter is seen in the positive light as Yoruba proverb is used in resolving conflicts.

The Yorùbá People

The Yorùbá have several traditions about how they began life. One of the traditions says that it was at Ilé-Ifẹ, which the Yorùbá regard as the birthplace of their nation, that mankind was first created. Another tradition tells the story of a great ancestor and hero called Odùduwà. He is said to have come from far in the east and settled at Ilé-Ifẹ, and it was from here that his descendant went out to rule the various branches of the Yorùbá. One of his sons, for example, is said to have become the first *Alààfin* of Oyo, as well as being the father of the first *Oba* of Benin, while another was the first *Onísábe* of Sábẹ; his eldest daughter is remembered as the mother of the first *Alákétu* of Kétu (in modern Dahomey), while another daughter gave birth to the *Olówu* of Òwu (Davidson 1981:118-119).

Yorùbá people are found today in the South Western States of Nigeria namely; Ogun, Lagos, Oyo, Oshun, Èkìtì, Ondo, and part of Kwara and Kogi States. According to Falola (2012:20), the massive expansion of the Yorùbá occurred in the context of the Atlantic World, the four continents united by the Atlantic Ocean. The Yorùbá were among the African slaves drawn from Central and West Africa and tragically relocated to the Americas. As the enslaved, they were funnelled to the Atlantic. After the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, secondary migrations occurred as freed slaves returned to West Africa, and thousands migrated within various countries in the Atlantic World. Falola states that the slave trade violently took the Yorùbá to several places in the Americas: Brazil, Cuba, Uruguay, Argentina, Haiti, Venezuela, Trinidad and

Tobago, and the United States. The Yorùbá extended themselves in West Africa and gained tremendous influence in various parts, notably along the coastal areas.

The Yorùbá originally were traditional worshippers. They, however, believe in the existence of an Almighty God, who they term *Olurun* (Lord of Heaven). They acknowledge Him, Maker of heaven and earth, but too exalted to concern Himself directly with men and their affairs, hence they admit the existence of many gods as intermediaries, and these they term *Oríṣas* (Johnson 1976:26). Politically, the government of Yorùbá proper was an absolute monarchy; the king (*Oba*) was more dreaded than even the gods. The office was (and still) hereditary in the same family, but not necessarily from father to son. The word "king" as generally used in this country includes all more or less distinguished chiefs, who stand at the head of a clan, or one who is the ruler of an important district or province, especially those who can trace their descent from the founder, or from one of the great leaders or heroes who settled with him in the country (Johnson 1976:40-41).

Preservation of Peace among the Yoruba

Long before the establishment of British rule in Yoruba land, the people had reached the stage where redress for injuries, suffered directly or indirectly, was out of the hands of the individual and his kindred. Fadipe (1970:223) observes that the Yoruba are interested not only in retributive and reparatory justice but also in what may be called peace-making justice. In peace-making justice the aim is to intervene and arbitrate in quarrels and misunderstandings which impair kinship or social solidarity or are likely to deteriorate into an actual breach of the peace. Peace-making justice is little if at all developed in Western societies. Among the Yoruba, it is considerably well-developed, although its machinery is in private hands rather than in those of the public authorities. In this form of justice more than in others while the apportionment of praise and blame is the desideratum, it sometimes requires to be tempered by the necessity to conciliate according to the prejudices and customs current in Yoruba society (Fadipe 1970:223). Thus conceptions of seniority, or of the superiority of husband to wife, chiefs and

subjects, parents and children or even of man to woman, are often taken into account in adjudicating in disputes of this class. As to the nature of such disputes, they generally involve breaches of codes of conduct, behaviour and usages such as cannot be taken direct cognisance of by the authorities because they do not constitute any material injury to the aggrieved person. The settlement of quarrels of this nature rarely goes before the public authorities unless the parties concerned are themselves members of the administration, or unless curses are invoked and the matter cannot be settled informally (Fadipe 1970:224).

Fadipe posits further that it is the duty of every Yoruba to mediate physically between two persons engaged in a fight by separating them unless the disparity in size of the combatants and him/herself renders it out of question. The actual settlement of such a dispute very rarely, in pre-colonial days, got to the notice of the authorities unless some serious physical injuries had been inflicted. If the person who separated the combatants was old enough and had the time for it, the two might state their cases to him or her and get it settled. If more serious, the matter was settled in the compound, if both disputants were of the same compound. If they belonged to two different compounds in the same ward of the town, and the two heads of the compounds were not on hostile terms, steps were taken to have the case heard and settled between the two heads. Owing to the partial decentralisation of the judicial machinery among the Yoruba, the administration of public justice may be said to begin at home (according to the nature of the case and the relationship of the parties involved) and to end with the highest state authorities as the highest tribunal as well as the highest court of appeal. Generally speaking, the justice that had to be administered in pre-colonial days was in accordance not with any written code of laws but with a body of customs, usages (such as proverbs), and codes of manners. The only sense in which 'law' can be used in connection with the administration of justice among the Yoruba is that of a usage that has long been established and sanctioned by custom (Fadipe 1970:224).

Theoretical Framework for this study

The framework adopted for this study is the nativist model of postcolonial theory. The postcolonial theory is an area of cultural and critical theory that has been used in the study of literary texts. It focuses largely on the way in which literature by the colonisers distorts the experience and realities of the colonised, and inscribes the inferiority of the colonised while at the same time promoting the superiority of the coloniser. The postcolonial theory is also about the colonised and formerly colonised announcing their presence and identity as well as reclaiming their past that was lost or distorted because of being othered by colonialism (Mapara 2009:141).

However, the focus of the nativist model of postcolonial theory, according to Adeyemi (2003:114), is "to re-invent and reconstitute the traditions that the Colonial Master had tried to destroy. Nativism is an astute celebration of cultural and political nationalism, a 'look back' of the periphery to its 'traditional civilisation' as a way of subverting the Centre's cultural, textual and epistemological dominance". The nativist model of postcolonial theory calls for going back to the root, to identify the original culture and use it to champion a definite identity for the African society. Nativism recommends the African literature as a prosaic experience germane to the peculiar African situation. It advocates the inscription of traditional African communalism in the delineation of characterisation, features of orality such as proverbs, folktales, riddles, songs, poetry-incantations and other stylistic devices such as repetition, irony, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, etc. (Adeyemi, 2003:117-118). With one's understanding of the nativist model which is the bedrock this study rests on, the next section shall be the analysis of selected proverbs which focus on conflict resolution.

Methodology and Presentation of Data

The proverbs used as data for this study were gathered from the author's home town, Ife, Ogun State, Nigeria. The method adopted in data gathering was participant observation. The author, being a

Yorùbá native speaker and one of the elders in his family compound has participated in series of dispute resolution activities. This has given him an ample opportunity in gathering his data over a period of time. The twenty proverbs selected for this study out of the fifty proverbs gathered are as follow:

(1) *Agbè ní í jẹ ẹgbin omi, àgbàlagbà ní í jẹ ìyà ọràn*

A gourd absorbs dirt in the water, an elder suffers the guilt of a case)

(2) *Agbejo ẹnìkàn dá, àgbà òsìkà ní.*

(One who listens only to a side of two disputants is a wicked elder).

(3) *Àísí ẹnìkẹta lẹni méjì n ja àjàkú.*

(Absence of a third party makes two people fight endlessly).

(4) *A kẹ í tó ní bá gbé, kẹ á má tó ní bá sọ.*

(What qualifies one to live with others, makes one qualify to advise one another).

(5) *Àífí ẹsọ ké ìbòòsí ní kò jẹ káráyẹ bá ní jó o.*

(Inability to raise an alarm with ease makes no one dance along).

(6) *A kẹ í rojọ níwò ká jàrẹ.*

(One does not accuse others of eyeing one and wins a case).

(7) *À n jà bí í ká kú kọ.*

(Fighting each other does not mean one wants the other dead).

(8) *Aşòhùn ẹbìnkùlẹ n ba ara rẹ nínú jẹ, ohun tó wu ní làá sọ nínú ilẹ ẹni.*

(An eavesdropper poisons his mind, one is at liberty to say whatever one likes in one's house).

(9) *Bí a bá kẹlọ fólẹ, ká kẹlọ fóníşu ẹbá ọnà.*

(If a thief is warned, owner of tuber of yams at the road side should equally be warned).

(10) *Bí a bá yọ ipin lójú, a fí í han ojú kẹ ojú lẹ mọ pé òun n şe ọbùn.*

(If dirt is removed from an eye, one shows the dirt to the eye for it to know that it is dirty).

(11) *Bí a kò bá torí işu jẹ ẹpo, à ó torí ẹpo jẹ işu.*

(If palmoil is not eaten because of yam, yam must be eaten because of palmoil).

(12) *Bí a ní kẹ á jẹ èkuru kó tán láwò, a kẹ í tún gbọn ọwọ rẹ sí àwò.*

(If one desires to eat all the grains in the plate, one does not return the remnants in one's hand to the plate).

(13) *Bí igí bá dúró, tí ènìyàn dúró bí a bá ní kẹ́ á bẹ́ igí, a ó bẹ́ ènìyàn mọ́ ọ̀n.*

(If a tree stands closely by a human being, and one attempts to cut the tree, the human being may be affected).

(14) *Bí ènìyàn bá n yọ́ ilẹ̀ dà, ohun búburú a máa yọ́ ọ́ ẹ.*

(If one betrays, evil things are bound to befall the betrayer).

(15) *Bí ènìyàn búburú bá n kọ́já tí a dijú, tí tí ènìyàn rere yóò fí kọ́já, a kò ní mọ́.* (If one closes one's eyes for a bad person to pass by, one may not know when a good person will pass by).

(16) *Bí etí kò gbọ́ yínkìn, inú kẹ́ í bàjẹ.*

(If ears do not hear bad thing, one's mind is not poisoned).

(17) *Bí ẹlẹ́jọ́ bá mọ́ ẹjọ́ rẹ́ lẹ́bì, kẹ́ í pẹ́ ní ikúnkẹ.*

(If one realises that one is guilty of an offence, one does not need to stay long on one's knees begging).

(18) *Bí ilé kò bá kan ilé kẹ́ í jó àjóràn.*

(If residential houses are not constructed close to one another, disaster will be curtailed in case of fire outbreak).

(19) *Àròkàn-àròkàn ní í fa ẹkún àsunídákẹ.*

(A prolonged brooding breeds unending sobbing).

(20) *Bí a kò bá gbàgbé ọ́rọ́ ànà, a kò ní í rẹ̀nì bá ẹrẹ.*

(If one does not forget the incident of previous day, one may not likely see anyone to play with)

Analysis of the selected Proverbs in conflict resolution among the Yoruba

The first proverb, "*Agbè ní í jẹ́ ẹgbín omi, àgbàlagbà ní í jẹ́ iyà ọ̀ràn*". (A gourd absorbs dirt in the water, an elder suffers the guilt of a case) explains a scenario where one of the disputants is older than the other or in a case of husband and wife. The mediator, having tried to broker peace between the disputants and discovered that the younger is guilty, he may ask the younger to apologise and conclude the settlement with the proverb by appealing to the elder to forgive the younger. An elder is compared with a gourd which absorbs both clean and dirty water of all sorts, hence elders among the Yoruba are expected to show maturity and patience in all matters. However, if it is the older that is guilty a proverb as "*àgbàlagbà kẹ́ í ẹ́ lán gbálán gbá*" (An older person is not expected to

act childishly) will suffice. The second proverb "*Agbejọ́ ẹ̀nikan dá, àgbà ọ̀síkà ní*" (one who listens only to a side of two disputants is a wicked elder) is used to condemn injustice on the part of a mediator who listens to a side and cares not to listen to other side before passing a judgment. That mediator is regarded as a wicked person who is not qualified to be called an elder, because he does not maintain balance between the two fighters. The third proverb, "*Àìsì ẹ̀nikẹ́ta lẹ̀nì mẹ́jì n ja àjàkú*" (Absence of a third party makes two people fight endlessly) confirms the need and role of a mediator in dispute resolution. A mediator is expected to be a wise and a respectable person who is respected by the two conflicting groups. He or she should be seen as an umpire who does not take side with any group, he/she should be objective in his/her judgment. As soon as the two sides discover that the judgment is without prejudice, it is likely the quarrel ends there immediately. For instance, if a husband and a wife quarrel with each other for a long time, people around them tend to ask a question that 'does that mean there is no elderly person in their family that can help resolve the matter? Such a scenario brings the proverb "*àìsì ẹ̀nikẹ́ta lẹ̀nì mẹ́jì n ja àjàkú*" (absence of a third party makes two people fight endlessly). Going further, the fourth proverb "*a kẹ́ í tó ní bá gbé, kẹ́ á má tó ní bá sọ́rọ́*" (What qualifies one to live with others, makes one qualify to advise one another) also corroborates role of a mediator as explained in the third proverb. If the two conflicting groups refuse to sheath their swords, and all efforts by the mediator proved fruitless, then the mediator may say the proverb to, perhaps, appeal to their senses. Having said the proverb, the two warring groups may think otherwise and decide to respect and honour the mediator.

The proverb, "*àìfí ẹ́sọ́ kẹ́ ibòòsì ní kò jẹ́ káráyé bá ní jó ọ*" (Inability to raise an alarm with ease makes no one dance along) in the fifth proverb, tells the significance of patience and calmness while presenting a vital issue to others concerned. It is possible one has a genuine case or message to present but the medium or time of presenting it may be faulty, hence the proverb. In Yoruba society, a man is seen as the head of his family while the woman, as his wife, is expected to be under the man's authority. However, if the man is fond of a habit that is detrimental to himself or the family, it is

expected that the woman applies wisdom, calmness and patience in explaining to the man the dangers inherent in his actions. With that the man may listen to her and change for the better. On the other hand, if the woman handles the matter forcefully, the man may translate it to be that the woman is attempting to control him which may lead to conflict in the home. When such case arises and someone interferes in order to resolve the matter, he may make the man realise that the woman has not done anything wrong, only that her presentation was not good enough to the man. She ought to have presented her point with love and wisdom.

The sixth proverb "*a kè í rojò wíwò ká jàré*" (One does not accuse others of eyeing one and wins a case) is better understood in a milieu of two rival women, perhaps, of the same husband or among children. According to Yoruba culture, marrying more than one wife by a man, which is otherwise known as polygyny, is acceptable. Thus, if there is a misunderstanding between the rival wives and in the process of settling the matter by elders in the compound, a rival woman accuses other woman of eyeing her, the proverb would be said condemning the accuser of having no point. The elders may even add that she should also eye her since both of them have eyes to look at any direction they wish. Conflict is seen to be inevitable in every society, therefore, when there is conflict among the Yoruba, it is meant to correct some anomalies so as to continue living harmoniously. Therefore, when there is a misunderstanding between two people and they continue having malice against each other, the proverb number 7 "*à n jà bí í ká kú kọ*" (Fighting each other does not mean one wants the other dead) is used by the mediator to persuade the two disputants. Proverb number 8 "*aşòhùn ẹbinkùlẹ n ba ara rẹ nínú jẹ, obun tó wu ni làá sọ nínú ilẹ ẹni*" (an eavesdropper poisons his mind, one is at liberty to say whatever one likes in one's house) frowns at the attitude whereby one accuses the other of over-hearing the accused saying some ugly things against one. Since it was not alleged that the accused came directly to one to say such, to the Yoruba, such an allegation is baseless and unfounded. Therefore, that should not be enough to warrant a dispute.

The ninth proverb "*bí a bá kílọ fólẹ, ká kílọ fúnìşu ẹbá ọnà*" (If a thief is warned, owner of tuber of yams at the road side should

equally be warned) attempts to maintain balance in peace-making process between two people or groups. Though, the gravity of offence of the former might be so enormous, however, the latter also shares from the blame. This is done to ensure that each party realises where his fault lies and to prevent future occurrence. The same interpretation goes for proverb number 10 which says "*bí a bá jọ ipin lójú, a fí í han ojú kí ojú lẹ mọ pé òun n şe ọbùn*." (If a dirt is removed from an eye, one shows the dirt to the eye for it to know that it is dirty). The proverb simply declares that, as a mediator, one should not be partial in one's judgment. Each disputant should be told where he or she has erred. When a conflict resolution process seems to be unrealised, and the two warring groups become adamant by shifting ground on certain issues, the mediator's integrity is brought to test by saying the proverb in number 11 "*bí a kò bá torí işu jẹ epo, à ó torí epo jẹ işu*" (If palmoil is not eaten because of yam, yam must be eaten because of palmoil) which translates that if both of them do not respect each other, they should, at least, consider his age or status and listen to him. With this statement, the two disputants may change their earlier hard posture and allow peace to reign. Proverb 12 "*bí a ní kí á jẹ èkuru kó tán láwò, a kè í tún gbọn ọwọ rẹ sí àwò*" (If one desires to eat all the grains in the plate, one does not return the remnants in one's hand to the plate) is said by a mediator when two disputants keep on insisting or repeating a matter over and over again without giving the mediator chance to resolve the issue. "Ekuru" (grain) in this context is a burning issue needed to be resolved.

Proverb 13 "*bí igí bá dúró, tí ènìyàn dúró bí a bá ní kí á bẹ igí, a ó bẹ ènìyàn mọ ọn*" (If a tree stands closely by a human being, and one attempts to cut the tree, the human being may be affected) calls for caution and tolerance in the face of provocation so that regret will not be the end result of the crisis. The Yoruba people abhor the act of betrayal and that is why when they are into a relationship, they commit everything within their reach into that relationship. At times, in order to concretise the relationship, they enter into a covenant or swear an oath among themselves. The repercussion of betrayal, according to the Yoruba belief, is great and severe. If for example two people are entering into a business, they swear an oath that none of them will betray the other. This type of agreement

brings sincerity, faithfulness and commitment. Hence, the proverb in number 14, "*bí ènìyàn bá n yọ ilẹ̀ dà, ohun búburú a máa yọ ọ̀ sẹ̀*" (If one betrays, evil things are bound to befall the betrayer). Act of betrayal brings about discord, enmity and conflict. Therefore, to avoid these, the proverb is said to warn the participants in the relationship.

Moreover, the fifteenth proverb "*bí ènìyàn búburú bá n kọ́já tí a díjù, tí tí ènìyàn rere yóò fí kọ́já, a kò ní mọ̀*" (If one closes one's eyes for a bad person to pass by, one may not know when a good person will pass by) means that in as much as quarrel among people is inevitable, yet one should have a sense of forgiveness to create a room for better relationship. For someone who does something painful to one today may do something pleasant to one the following day. That is why the Yoruba say this proverb when they are mediating in a conflict. Proverbs 16 and 18 "*bí etí kò gbọ̀ yínkìn, inú kè í bàjẹ̀*" (If ears do not hear bad thing, one's mind is not poisoned) and "*bí ilé kò bá kan ilé kè í jó àjóràn*" (If residential houses are not constructed close to one another, disaster will be curtailed in case of fire outbreak) have some similarities with proverb number 8 earlier discussed, warning that one should not listen to hear-say. There are some people that are interested in creating conflict or quarrel between two people that are friends or couple. They move from one person to the other saying that 'Mr. A said this while Mr. B was away'. This kind of move causes conflict between two people and is capable of breaking a home or a relationship. Thus, in the process of resolving conflict between two people, a mediator may say these proverbs to quench the fire of discord already created by mere hear-say. The proverb in number 17 "*bí ẹ̀lẹ́jọ̀ bá mọ̀ ẹ́jọ̀ rẹ̀ lẹ́bì, kè í pẹ̀ ní ikúnlẹ̀*". If one realises that one is guilty of an offence, one does not need to stay long on one's knees begging) quickly settles a minor quarrel between two disputants who may likely be a couple or friends. In this instance, one of the disputants early realises that he is guilty of the offence and urges the mediator to assist him or her in begging the other party. Having realised this, the mediator will join the guilty person in apologising to the other person by saying the proverb. Proverbs number 19 and 20 "*àròkàn-àròkàn ní í fa ẹ̀kún àsunídáke*" (a prolonged brooding breeds unending sobbing) and "*bí a kò bá gbàgbé ọ̀rọ̀ ànà, a kò ní í rẹ̀nì bá ẹ̀rẹ̀*" (If one does not

forget the incident of previous day, one may not likely see anyone to play with) have same connotations. The two proverbs foreground forgiveness as a crucial tool in conflict resolution among the Yoruba. The major concept in conflict resolution is "give and take". This concept cannot be achieved without a spirit of "give and take" on the part of the two disputants. As human beings, there is a tendency one begins to think of pains the other party has inflicted on one in the course of crisis. However, for peace to be brokered, one needs to forget what has happened in the past and forgive each other. This is where the mediator's role is felt. He/She should be able to appeal, persuade and bring his/her wealth of experience to bear in resolving the matter.

Discussion and Recommendations

Having examined roles of proverbs in dispute resolution among the Yorùbá of Nigeria, it is expedient, therefore, to make some recommendations to the individuals, groups, associations and government at all levels. Use of proverbs is mostly restricted to indigenous people living in rural or semi-urban areas in Nigeria. Globalisation and Westernisation which have corrupted the African culture through their progressive technological changes in communication, political and economic power, knowledge and skills, as well as cultural values systems and practices, have negatively affected use of indigenous language (where its indigenous knowledge systems are embedded) among the Yorùbá elites. In view of the foregoing, this chapter adapts the following recommendations from Awóbúlúyì (2014). They are: 1. Government should promote indigenous Nigerian languages for official use in education at all levels, in government and the judiciary at all levels, in law enforcement, commerce and industry, as well as in mass communication; 2. Parents should be enlightened and encouraged to communicate with their children at home in their indigenous languages. Many Western educated Yorùbá parents today seem to consider it a mark of sophistication for them to speak English where they should speak Yorùbá, their native language. They speak only English to their children at home, and wish only English to be also spoken and taught to them at school

from the Kindergarten level to the University level; 3. Governments in Yorùbá spoken States should endeavour to restore Yorùbá to its natural status as the host language in all their schools, and make it compulsory for all pupils and students from kindergarten to university level within the Yorùbá community. At present, the time allotted to English on the school timetable is about five times the one grudgingly granted to Yorùbá; and 4. Yorùbá needs also to be declared the official language for all institutions and establishments, both public and private, throughout the Yorùbá community. Yorùbá should be the only medium of written and spoken communication among workers at work, and among the criteria for eligibility for appointment into any institution or establishment within that community should be a high degree of competence in the written and spoken forms of the language. If this is done by the various governments in the Yorùbá spoken states, parents/guardians and their wards will begin for a change to see the study of Yorùbá in schools and colleges as a form of training that assures economic reward and upward mobility. Furthermore, the language will, like English today, gain value and prestige, and there will be no further cause for anyone to denigrate it.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the Yoruba indigenous knowledge system as exemplified in their proverbs in conflict resolution. Twenty proverbs selected based on their thematic relevance were analysed using nativist model of postcolonial theory. Yoruba use proverbs to remind people of what the society's moral and value codes require of them, hence, the proverbs used in this study postulate the high level of intelligence and wisdom of the Yoruba in resolving conflicts among themselves. Yoruba, in one of their proverbs, believe that "bí ọ̀dẹ̀ ò dùn, bí ìgbẹ̀ ní ìghòrò n rí" (if one's home is not pleasant, town (society) will only look like a bush). This means that charity begins at home. In the Yorùbá opinion, if quarrel at family or compound level is not checked, it may develop into a serious crisis in the society. Thus, at every strata of the Yoruba society are levels of peace-making process, starting from the head of a family to the head of the community. This chapter has also

recommended that indigenous language which accommodates the indigenous knowledge systems should be encouraged and taught at all level of formal education, which will thereby enhance the knowledge of our youth in applying proverbs in their daily lives.

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