

**YORUBA-ONDO PROVERBS: A LITERARY STUDY OF
THEMES, FUNCTIONS AND POETIC DEVICES**

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DECLARATION

I, Arinola Cecilia Akinmade, do hereby declare candidly and sincerely:

- a) That this thesis is a product of my own initiative and is written by none, but me
- b) That to the best of my knowledge, no part of this has been presented for award of any higher degree, and that
- c) All quotations and references have been justifiably acknowledged and distinguished accordingly by notes and quotations marks.

Signature

Arinola Cecilia Akinmade

January 2005.

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 Yet you gave to show your love to me!
 And the voices of a million angels
 Could not express my gratitude
 All that I am and ever hope to be
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ABSTRACT

It is observable that in many of the works done on Yoruba proverbs, a common thread runs through them. The emphasis in these works has often been on listing and translating or mere listing in the original. In some others, the forms the uses and annotation of some proverbs were examined. However, no systematic research has been carried out on the themes, functions and poetic devices of Yoruba proverbs. Ondo is one of the largest ethnic groups in Yoruba land and shares a good number of the proverbs in the anthology of Yoruba proverbs. In spite of this expected similarity, it is pertinent to observe that Ondo has her own *sui generis*. She has proverbs that are distinct, unique and germane to her but which have neither been systematically collected nor documented and whose themes, functions and poetic devices have not been examined through disciplined and systematic research. It is in the light of this gap that this study was undertaken to collect, document, translate and examine some of the salient features of Ondo proverbs (*owe*) with special emphasis on their themes, functions and poetic devices. According to a Malian proverb “when an old man dies, it is like setting a whole library on fire and burning it down.” Hence, the study is aimed at preserving *owe* which is a very important aspect of the Ondo culture.

Four hundred *owe*, were collected through informants, tape recording, interviews and participation from native speakers of not less than fifty years of age; and from various sources which include chiefs, farmers, market men and women, retired civil servants, primary and secondary school teachers and proprietors, to mention just a few. The data were subsequently collated and subjected to analysis to determine their themes, functions and poetic devices. Later these were subjected to the scrutiny of and critique of some experts in oral literature for validation. For the final write-up, only *owe* on which there is at least eighty percent agreement was used for the study.

The results revealed that because of dialectal variations, Ondo has twenty-seven alphabets while Yoruba has twenty-five. An in depth analysis of the of the four hundred proverbs yielded twenty-one themes such as appearance is deceptive, caution, child-training, destiny, perseverance, to mention just a few; fifteen different functions including praising, ridiculing, education, bearing philosophical insight and twenty-four poetic devices, for example alliteration, ideophone, synecdoche and wellerisms. These findings lend additional support to the view that there seems to be no situation under the sun for which a proverb cannot provide an apposite citation.

Based on these findings, a good number of recommendations were made. Three of the major recommendations are, that more *owe* and other genres of Ondo oral literature should be collected and documented; that the study of oral folklore should be included on the school curricula from primary to tertiary levels in order to preserve this significant aspect of the people's culture and finally that the application of the devices revealed by this study should be explored in Ondo poetry.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

U'en ajo egbe'on odon, ugbe'se kan ghen mu be'e i.
A journey of a thousand years begins with one step.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Proverbs (*Owe*), one of the most important and valuable genres of African oral folklore, are self-evident truths, which provide the essence of every conversation in a concise and unmistakable way. *Owe* are regarded as the poetry and moral philosophy (or art) of the Ondo/Yoruba people, many of which embody traditional observations on the nature of things. Some of these are educational and deal with man's responsibilities. A proverb can explain a situation in a few apt words. Thus, the Ondo/Yoruba proverb – *Owe l'esin oro, bi oro ba a sonu owe ni a fi nwa a*¹ meaning "a proverb is a horse which can carry one swiftly to the discovery of ideas sought".

According to Delano:

This "horse" (*owe*) is being constantly pressed into the service of elders during deliberations in council and at home settling disputes. A relevant proverb throws light on the subject and drives points home².

Owe could come as either plain statement of fact or as a warning depending on the situation. The most significant characteristic of proverbs is that of emphasizing more picturesquely and clearly the point one wishes to make better than ordinary speech.

In performing their major function of introducing ideas or describing a situation graphically, some *owe* evoke certain events in the life of the community from which they have sprung and in which they are utilized. Such incidents comprise wars, famines or pestilence as well as certain social events such as marriage, funeral and naming ceremonies, which characterize the community. Because *owe* are passed down from one generation to the other as truthful sayings tested by usage, information derived from them are likely to be more authentic than that which may be obtained

from other forms of oral literature. Ondo people believe with Finnegan that “proverbs are a rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can draw³.

It is a general belief by scholars that there is hardly any situation under the sun for which a proverb cannot provide an apposite citation. Therefore in view of the importance of proverbs in African culture in general and to the Ondo community in particular, this researcher has set out to refute or concretize the above view, which many scholars have expressed.

The reader may notice our prevalent employment of the term *owe* in the course of this study. This is simply to demonstrate the fact that Ondo people like their Yoruba progenitors do also recognize the genre proverb, as *owe*.

1.2 ONDO PEOPLE

Ondo is one of the largest Yoruba sub-groups, located in the Eastern part of the Yoruba speaking region of the southwestern part of Nigeria. The town is about 300 kilometers northeast of Lagos. It is situated in a forest region of Nigeria.

1.3 ORIGIN

The history of the origin of Ondo kingdom has been very controversial, as there are three different versions that purport to explain the origin of the people. The controversy is due to the fact that there were no written documents at that period. Thus, diverse accounts were given about her origin. Consequent upon the above, much of what is known about the period was legendary. Nevertheless, the researcher shall highlight these versions.

Johnson claimed that the founders of Ondo kingdom were emigrants from Oyo during the reign of Alaaḡin Onigbogi. This account is buttressed by the fact that Gbogi ward was founded in Ondo in commemoration of Oba Onigbogi of Oyo. It is true that

a street called Oke-Gbogi exists in Ondo town up till now but no documentary evidence can be found to support Johnson's claim.

Another version recorded by Egharevba, a Benin historian, traced the origin of the Ondo people to Benin kingdom. He noted that during the reign of Oba Esigie of Benin (AD 1504) Aruaran, the King's brother who threatened the throne of Benin was captured alive. He later committed suicide after an unsuccessful attempt to escape. The rest of his people were banished from Benin City. Iyase Osemwugbe, a loyalist to Aruaran decided to avenge the death of his master and the humiliation meted on Udo troops by the Benin troops. He launched an attack on Benin Kingdom but he was unsuccessful. A few of them managed to escape to the western side of Benin. The Udo troops were pursued until they surrendered. Osemwugbe surrendered and pleaded for mercy. Esigie pardoned them but they were banished. Thus the group came to be referred to as *Emwa n'Udo* (the Udo renegades) in Benin.

Egharevba further claimed that Ondo was the contracted form of *Emwa n'Udo* while Osemawe was the corrupted version of Osemwugbe. The Benin historian supported his claim with the fact that Benin and Ondo people share numerous cultural heritages especially religious and ethical practices. Ondo people rejected the above versions outrightly on the ground that the first ruler of Ondo land was Oba Pupupu whom documented and authenticated history has been identified as one of the twin daughters of Oduduwa of Ile-Ife, who was the father of Yoruba race.

In another version narrated to Olupona by Ondo elders in 1980, it was claimed that one of Oduduwa's wives gave birth to a set of twins in Ile-Ife. This, according to Yoruba beliefs was an abomination: *Ese omo re* – what type of strange children are these? Because the mother of the twins was Oduduwa's favourite wife, her life and those of the set of twins were saved. However, Oduduwa sent them out of the palace with slaves under the guidance of Ija, a hunter. They arrived at "Igbo-Ijamo" (the

forest discovered by Ija) near Ile-Ife and they stayed there for sometime. Thus part of the “oriki” (praise names) of the Ondo people include:

Ara Ita jamo. E ki m’ogun, omo alade igbo, iye mu ago ude m’emun.
A native of Ita Jamo, e ki m’ogun, son of the Prince of the forest who drinks palm-wine from a brass cup.⁴

On the realization that “Igbo Jamo” was unsafe, they continued with their journey until they got to Epe, a place not far from the present Ondo town where Yangede welcomed them. The new comers were in Epe for many years until a hunter was sent to look for a more suitable and permanent place for the dwelling of the people. As the hunter went about in the bush, he sighted some smoke and went towards its direction. He met Ekiri, one of the autochthons of the land. Then the hunter went back to Epe and informed the people that he had discovered a suitable place of abode. In order to find the prospect of the new place, Ifa oracle was consulted and the oracle instructed that the new comers should take along a yam stake (*edo*) as their walking stick. As they move along wherever the stick does not poke the ground, the people should settle. They moved from Epe and proceeded on their journey according to the instructions of Ifa and arrived at the present day police headquarters in Ondo, the stake did not poke the ground. In utter amazement, the people exclaimed “Edo du do!” which means in Ondo dialect “the yam stake could not enter the ground”. Hence the people settled there and the name Ondo was coined from *Edo du do*. In fact up till today, Ondo is still being referred as *Edo do* by some indigenous Ondo people. Further, *Edo* (yam stake) is up to the present day, a very significant component of the cultural inputs in yam farming in Ondo land.

On arrival at Ondo, the new comers met three groups of indigenes spread throughout the land. They are Ifore, Idoko and Oka. Having recognized the royal characteristic of the new comers, these indigenous inhabitants conceded the authority to rule over the territory to the new arrivals without any struggle. Pupupu, Oduduwa’s

twin daughter became the first ruler in Ondo. Gradually, the three original inhabitants imbibed the culture of the new arrivals. However, Idoko still keeps its ward, Oke-Idoko with a similar political structure as that of Ondo.

From the above legend, it could be inferred that Ondo people descended from Oduduwa, the father of the Yoruba people. It cannot be disputed that Osemawe originated from the expression *Ese omo re*. This version of the origin was accepted as the true origin of Ondo. The Egharevba's account should be brushed aside with a wave of the hand as it lacks credibility since no archaeological, cultural, historical, social or political practices can be found to substantiate his claim.

However, Johnson's account may be justified on political ground in view of the fact that a street called Oke-gbogi exists in Ondo town up till today. Nevertheless, this political evidence is not sufficient condition for upholding Johnson's claim. After all, the Oyo and Ondo people are historical and legitimate descendants of Oduduwa. Therefore, it is not a surprise that they share common name (Gbogi).

On the contrary, Olupona's account cannot only be justified on political ground but it sounds, by far more convincing, on the following political, social, cultural, empirical and historical grounds. First, the Oba of Ondo wears a beaded crown, as he is historically a direct descendant of Oduduwa of Ile-Ife. Secondly, *edo* is up to the present day, a very significant component of the cultural inputs in yam farming in Ondo land. Thirdly, the worship and consultation of Ifa divinity is an integral part of Ondo culture up to date. Fourthly, Ifore, Idoko and Oka have consistently retained their identities as traditional localities in Ondo up till today. In view of the above cultural and historical concrete evidences, this researcher considers the Olupona's version not only the most plausible but also the most culturally and empirically sound as well as credible compared to the other two positions.

1.4 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The Ondo kingdom, which is located in the tropical rain forest belt of Nigeria, occupies an area on latitude 7⁰6' in the North and longitude 4⁰50' in the East. The modern Akure and Obokun Local Government Areas form its boundary in the North while Ilaje/Eseodo Local Government Areas form its boundary in the South. In the East, it terminates at Owena River, which is in the Ifedore Local Government Area and in the West, the kingdom stretches as far as the Ooni River. In the Southern part, the land, which borders on the creek area of Ilaje-Eseodo is low-lying but rises gradually towards the North.

Ode Ondo is about 290 metres above sea level. The majority of the people reside in Ode-Ondo, the capital of the kingdom. Ondo is located in the damp tropic within the tropical rain forest and the southeasterly wind blows through the region throughout the better part of the year. The cooler dry continental air from the north abounds during the months of December, January and February of the year.

There are many valuable timbers in the forest such as iroko, mahogany, opepe, afara, obeche, and olofun to mention just a few. The big forest reserve occupies over 1000 square kilometres. Almost 23 x 10⁵ cubic metres of timber are harvested annually. Indeed Ondo people are great farmers. They cultivate food crops such as yams, cassava, maize, cocoyam, rice and beans. Ondo elders believe that no land can be useless to farmers, hence the proverb:

Ale ye san koko, de san koko, a mu gbe 'gbado.

The farmland that is neither suitable for cocoa nor cocoyam farming, will be used to plant corn.

The most important cash crop is cocoa, which covers a massive portion of land. Other cash crops are rubber, coffee, kolanuts and palm produce. These collectively constitute the people's means of economic support. It is not surprising that because of

the importance of cocoa in Ondo culture, our elders coined many proverbs on cocoa.

Below are a few of such proverbs:

- i) Koko so igi d'eniyan.
Cocoa elevates wood to the status of a human being.
- ii) Koko e da luu, onen lu li koko, lu gbese.
Cocoa prevents one from beating him (a cocoa farmer), for whoever beats a cocoa farmer beats debt (incurs a huge debt).
- iii) Aisan buuku s'onen ye nen koko.
A terrible disease besets someone who does not possess cocoa farm.

1.5 POPULATION

Ondo is one of the Yoruba ethnic groups in the southwestern part of Nigeria. The 1991 census of Nigeria revealed that Ondo town had a population of 247, 214 that can be broken down to 123, 434 males and 123, 780 females. This does not include Ile-Oluji, which forms part of this study. Ile-Oluji has a population of 123, 397. This brings the total population of Ondo and Ile-Oluji to 370, 611 people.

1.6 ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Traditionally, Ondo people have always sustained their economy from two major occupations: farming and trading which incidentally correspond to the division of labour between male farmers and female traders. The mainstay of Ondo's economy is agriculture. There are two seasons in the year, the dry season and rainy season. These seasons correspond with the planting and harvesting periods. The Ondo people have two types of farmland. They have small parcels of land, which is usually within a walking distance where yams, corn, cassava, beans and vegetables are planted. This parcel of land is called *oko etili* or *igo*. The other farmland is located far from the town where mainly cash crops are cultivated. As earlier pointed out, the major cash crops are cocoa, kolanut, palm oil and rubber. The people build hamlets in the farm where they can stay for a week or more depending on the quantity and pressure of work to be done.

As the villages and hamlets developed, more people were accommodated and people were able to stay longer on their farms. Some rich farmers built houses with corrugated iron roofs. A chief was usually appointed by the Oba to supervise the farm areas. Such a chief would then become the “Oloja”, the head of the area. Here again, a micro-sociopolitical set up is established to govern the community. Such hamlets are usually named after the founder of the area. With this development of distant farmland, the inhabitants only return to Ode-Ondo during traditional festivals or Christian or Muslim festivals.

The farmers depend on cooperative ventures during which an individual may engage the assistance of his close friends or age grades on the farm. He in turn will offer the same assistance to those who have assisted him. This cooperative effort expressed in the form of labour exchange is referred to as *owe*. A Yoruba proverb expresses this cooperative venture succinctly:

Oni loni nje, eni a be l’owe

Today is the day for the one who has accepted to help on farm work.

Ondo farmers believe that they get a lot of work done through participating in this cooperative enterprise.

After the cultivation of the farmland, a portion of it is usually divided among the farmer’s wives who are not engaged in trading activities on which they will cultivate less labour-intensive crops like pepper, cassava and vegetables. Each wife takes care of the planting and weeding. However, it is not unusual for Ondo women to cultivate cash crops especially on farmlands inherited from their parents. The crops are usually reserved for family consumption. Nevertheless, the wives are the sole marketers of the excess crops from their husbands’ farm while the head of the family sells the cash crops. As earlier mentioned, the second mainstay of Ondo economy is trade, which is carried out by women. Among the articles of trade are *aso oke* (woven material), *iyon* (coral beads) and mats. These articles are sold in the market, “Oja” or

“Ugele”. The practice of women in trade has become religious, social functions and of economic significance.

1.6.1 Ondo Women in Trade

Owing to the importance attached to the role of Ondo women in the economy of the town, the title of a paramount female chief is instituted. The title is known, as earlier mentioned, as “Lobun” which means owner of the market. Most of the villages and hamlets in Ondo governance started as farming settlements or market places. Johnson pointed out that the principal market of the town is always in the centre of the town and in front of the house of the chief ruler. This ruler is without an exception and hence the term “Oloja” (the one who has the market) is used as a generic term or title for all chief rulers of towns, be he a King or a “Bale”.

It appears Ondo is an exception since the market is far from the palace center. Nevertheless, this does not rule out the fact that the market is an institution in Ondo Kingship structure. As earlier pointed out, the mere fact that an important institution is brought under the leadership of a woman, shows that Ondo kingdom recognizes the role of women in the social and economic development of the town. This institution of making a woman the “Lobun” i.e. one that has jurisdiction over the markets, portrays a significant distinction between Ondo and the rest of Yorubaland.

The Lobun does not operate alone. A cabinet of female chiefs supports her. Their duties are (i) maintenance of order in the town’s market places and (ii) performance of the ritual purification of the market when the need arises. Ondo has four types of markets namely: (i) the daily market called *ugele* which is held from morning till evening (ii) the evening market called *ugele ale* and (iii) two periodic markets which are held at four or eight day intervals, to which Odojomu belongs.

The articles of trade have been mentioned earlier on. Lamb and Holmes observed that “until recently, Ijebu-Ode and Ondo were important weaving towns,

today, the craft survives on a much more reduced scale in Ijebu-Ode but has virtually disappeared in Ondo”⁵. This disappearance could be adduced to the fact that Ondo people are great coca farmers owing to its lucrative nature.

Ondo traders are said to have traded with the Portuguese as early as the 16th century. It is recorded that during the Portuguese trading activities on the West African Coast, the sailor bought some “four hundred manilas of yam for the cargo” from the captain of Rio dos Forcados and the Lisa. ⁶

In addition to the above trading activities of Ondo people, they are also engaged in many other occupations though these are restricted to men only and in most cases limited to specific ancestries. Three of the most common occupations, which are drumming, blacksmithing and hunting will be discussed briefly here. They are all guild professions with religious undertones and characteristics.

1.6.2 Hunting

Hunting is a well-established fraternity profession with a leader called “Olori-Ode”, who is chosen by the Oba. The hunters could be called upon at any time by the Oba to solve problems or riddles because it is believed that because of the nature of their profession, they have a bond with mysterious humans and animals. Apart from the domestic animals, animals killed in the bush – *e’angbe* are major sources of food, particularly during festive occasions. Is it any wonder then that a good number of proverbs are coined on animals and bush meat? Five examples of such proverbs will suffice to buttress this point.

- (i) Onen b’efon n’abata do y’obe o da ’o fi omi ghon mo ku i?
He who meets “efon” in the swamp and brings out a knife, does he think that it drank water till death?
- (ii) E e ri oju ekon te ekon m’ale eyin ekon e m’aho e da bata i.
One cannot dare a life leopard but after its death, its skin can be used to make shoes.
- (iii) E e ma l’aja da fi di ekon po.
One cannot the owner of a dog and ask leopard to kill it.

- (iv) E'an gbigbe e e n'iden.
Dry meat doesn't have maggot.
- (v) E e fi d'ejo ma w'igben, o ku olilo ya a lo n'ofan e.
One cannot prevent a snake from swallowing a snail but what will masticate it in its belly is the problem

1.6.3 **Blacksmithing**

Blacksmithing is regarded as sacred, as it is believed to signify Ogun's (god of iron) divine spot. The blacksmiths produce iron implements that are connected with the cult of this divinity.

1.6.4 **Brass making:**

Another very important profession is brassmaking, (*ude*). This profession is peculiar to Ifore, one of the original groups of Ondo settlers. These people were specialists in brass production. It was acknowledged that they had the best guild system in Ondo. No wonder then one of the Ondo praise names (*oriki*) refers to their beginning:

E kim'ogun, omo alade igbo, iye m'agogo ude m'omi.
E kim'ogun, the son of the forest king, who drinks water with a brass cup.

The Ifore people were very proud of their achievements in brass work. In fact archaeological excavations carried out supported this claim. Nevertheless, few references to this antique craft are still found in Ondo ritual context. For example, Ondo people regard it as a taboo for anyone to wear a brass necklace or bangle during the festival of Oramfe. However, modern professions such as carpentry, tailoring, driving and barbing have replaced these traditional guild groups. They all have similar modus of operandi, most especially in their cultic devotion to Ogun, the most popular deity in Ondo kingdom.

1.6.5 Drumming

Drumming is a very significant part of Ondo social and religious life. It is a hereditary occupation in all Yoruba towns, Ondo itself inclusive. Ondo traditions are kept alive through their skill. The drummers are referred to as *aayan*.

1.6.6 Money

Before the introduction of the European currency, the medium of exchange in Ondo was the cowry shells, *oho eyo*. Cowries are still being used in many parts of Ondo today for ritual purposes. The improvised bank of old in Ondo was the pot as there were no banks in those days. The people used to save their cowries (money) by putting them in pots and burying them in secret places especially in banana plantations. In fact, it has been reported that such savings have discovered years after the demise of the owner.

1.6.7 Revenue Collection

There was a well-organized system of revenue collection before the advent of the British. There were two main sources of revenue. The first one was tolls and tributes collected as booties on goods entering the town's gate. According to Aluko-Olokun, the toll-collectors were called Lagbogbo, who were reliable and tough people who could be trusted to enforce payment. They were stationed at the gates that link the capital with the Ondo vassal states.

The second was the quarter levy. This is the amount of money needed to run the affairs of the town, particularly for expenses of several state ceremonies and rituals. The king's council determines these levies whenever needed. These are levied among the wards or quarters and each quarter collected its share with proper records of defaulters. The sum is then handed over to Sagwe, the treasurer. Apart from the above, citizens were also levied mainly to carry out rituals in time of calamities and epidemics, which demanded urgent sacrifice as prescribed by the Ifa oracle.

Furthermore, fines were usually imposed by the king's council on erring subjects as a way of punishing such individuals. The villages and hamlets under Ondo town usually pay tributes (*isakole*) too. These mainly went to the cover of the king and his *eghae* whose duty it was to supervise such villages.

1.7 SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

The system of government in Ondo Kingdom is a rather an interesting one. The focus is centralized on the election of a divine kingship. The king's status is a hereditary one and it rotates among five genealogies namely Arilekolasi, Jisomosun, Aroworayi, Jilo and Fidipote. The king's authority is partly derived through the legendary fore-parent, that is, Oba Pupupu who was the daughter of Oduduwa, the founder of the Yoruba race.

According to Olupona, the three indigenous ethnic groups, namely Ifore, Idoko and Oka people surrendered to the newcomers without any fight. It was also noted "all rights and privileges pertaining to the territory were readily ceded to the newcomers". This surrender was re-enacted by the Oloja of Ifore to the Osemawe of Ondo during which the Oloja made a pledge. In return, the Osemawe conceded to the Oloja of Idoko the control of that portion of the land i.e. Idoko ward.

The Osemawe as a king wears a beaded-crown, which to him, in common with some other Yoruba kings, is the most valued possession because it is a symbol of his link with Oduduwa. According to a Yoruba myth, Oduduwa gave beaded crowns to his children as they departed from Ile-Ife to their various kingdoms. Hence, the possession of these beaded crowns from Oduduwa signifies authority and seniority among the many Yoruba Obas who reign today. The sacred staff of office (*opa oye*) is an innovation put forward by the colonial government. A staff of office was presented to the Osemawe as a symbol of the government's acknowledgement and sanction of his rule.

1.7.1 The Organization of the Town

According to Olupona, the Osemawe governs through the institution of chieftaincy that is organized hierarchically. The first hierarchy is the council of five senior chiefs who are referred to as *Eghae* (the Oba's council). These high chiefs are in order of seniority Lisa, Jomu, Odunwo, Sasere and Adaja and of course, the Osemawe as the overall head. They are usually referred to as *Eghaafa mefa*, because they are six in number; the Osemawe inclusive.

Each of these chiefs has both ritual and social functions to perform on behalf of the Oba. They are paired up for these purposes. The first pair is Lisa and Jomu and Sasere and Adaja is another group. The big umbrella (*abuada oba*) is the most visible indicator of the Oba's presence. These high chiefs wear coral beads on their wrists and ankles. The most important symbol of authority of an *Eghae* is the sacred drum called *Ugbaji*. This drum is symbolic in the sense that during any ritual performed in the house of the chief, the drum will be marked with white and red chalk, after which a prayer is offered, the Oba's as well as the particular chief. The *Eghae* dances to the tune of *ugbaji* during any celebration that signifies the authority and power he possesses.

Eghae is the highest chieftaincy title any Ondo citizen can possibly attain and can only be attained if he has previously taken a less dignifying chieftaincy title. Lisa is the second in command to the Osemawe out of the five *Eghae* chiefs. The position of Jomu is a hereditary one and it is the third in rank to the Oba. The *Eghae* are responsible to the Oba and they, (including the Oba himself) constitute the legislative council, which has the power to either enact or repeal laws. They can be likened to the "Judicial Committee of the House of Lords"⁷

The Ekule, who number seven, are the next grade of chiefs, lower in rank than the *Eghae*. They are grouped in the following order: Odofin, Arogbo, Logbosere,

Odofindi, Sagwe, Sara and Olotu-Omoba. The first four are deputies to the Eghae chiefs. They are responsible to *Eghae* and also perform other functions for the kingdom. These include serving as treasurer and recorder, heading the lower court that takes care of smaller judicial cases and taking charge of palace stewards. Each of these lesser chiefs is assigned specific duties to perform. The details of these duties will not be discussed in this study. It suffices to note however that the activities of the chiefs are well coordinated for effective governance.

The last group of secular chief is Elegbe. These are the lowest chieftaincy titled citizens. They are fifteen in number; they are responsible for the security of the town, and for maintaining law and order.

The “Alaworo” priest chiefs are the next group of leaders in Ondo. These are largely heads of local, pre-Oduduwa groups who are now in a position of “ritual superiority” over the newcomers. The members in this group are Oloja Oke-Idoko; Ekiri of Ifore, Sora and Akunnara. Sora and Akunnara are Oramfe priests. All these titles are hereditary and candidates are elected from the family concerned.

It is noteworthy that women feature prominently in the social and economic development of Ondo kingdom. There are for example, female chiefs referred to as “Opoji”. They are hierarchical too like their male counterparts. The highest female chief is Lobun. It is the most esteemed title in Ondo. This office is surrounded with mysteries and taboos. As earlier mentioned in this chapter, the first Oba in Ondo was a female (Oba Pupupu). Although a decision had been made never to have a female ruler again, women nevertheless are entitled to have a female leader, Lobun, who is also referred as “Oba Obirin” (woman king). Lobun means the owner of the market. This title shows the important place of the market and of trade among Ondo women toward economic development. This aspect will be discussed in greater detail when the economic activities of Ondo people are being discussed.

The Lobun's major responsibility is the installation of a new king. She is also in charge of Ondo markets as well as the priestess *Aje* (god of wealth and prosperity). It is the responsibility of Lobun to open new markets and perform necessary ceremonial rites that pertain to this. As earlier noted, many mysteries and taboos surround the title and this makes it extremely difficult to get a replacement when the seat is vacant. A very significant norm regarding the position is that whenever a Lobun dies, a replacement cannot be made until the reigning Oba dies. The new Lobun is elected for the main purpose of installing the Oba. This development must have accounted for the difficulty encountered in finding a replacement for the position after the demise of the Lobun.

Olupona noted, "Once a Lobun is appointed, it is forbidden for her to engage in any domestic duties. She may not step on an unswept floor early in the morning and she may not eat any food prepared the previous day"⁸. The keeping of her "holiness" is that the town must cater for her throughout the period of her reign. What a privileged position!

Like their male counterparts, the women have a council comprising Lisa-Lobun, Jomu-Lobun, Orangun-Lobun, Sasere-Lobun and Adafin. There are other female chiefs of lower grades. These are Odofin-Lobun, Ogede-Lobun, Sama-Lobun and Awoye-Lobun. The Eghae has the responsibility of selecting Lobun while the high female chiefs elect the other female chiefs. These appointments, however, are subject to approval of the Oba through chief Sasere.

1.8 THE SOCIAL LIFE OF ONDO PEOPLE

It is important to discuss aspects of the social life of the Ondo people in order to provide a comprehensive background and relevant context for a meaningful investigation into the words of wisdom in Ondo culture. Hence in the following paragraphs, we shall provide a brief introduction on social life and subsequently

address issues relating to the kinship system, marriage and funeral ceremonies during which *owe* are freely utilized.

The clannish spirit permeates the heart and core of the social life among the Ondo. Thus the interdependence of relatives, brothers and sisters, members of the nuclear and the extended family is the rule rather than the exception. At the micro level, the people are organized into compound consisting of nuclear and extended families. Each compound has a head that, in most cases, is the oldest man in the compound. Each married woman in the compound prepares food for her husband and children while the unmarried adult males in the compound choose one of the wives of the head to act as his mother.

At the macro level, the compounds are organized into wards or quarters headed by any one among the following political, traditional and administrative groups; the *Eghaafa* (the five most powerful high chiefs/king-makers and the king); the *Ekunle* (the eight chiefs next in seniority to the *Eghaafa*) or a member of the *Elegbe* (Ayadi Company) who make up the traditional police force and charged with the responsibility of maintaining the peace and security of Ondo town.

The other towns and villages outside Ondo kingdom but within the jurisdiction of the Osemawe, are also organized under the supervision of less senior chiefs called *Baale* who pay regular homage to the Oba of Ondoland.

1.8.1 The Kinship System

It is important to explain some key terms that are relevant to the kinship system among the Ondo people. The Ondo people often make a clear-cut distinction between two consanguinal relationships, namely *Omiba*, the paternal relations and *omiye*, the maternal relations. *Omiba* is hardly used by the Ondo people. But it is more common in Ile-Oluji. Nevertheless paternal and maternal kins are equally important in the life of the Ondo people, hence the *owe* Ondo:

E e n'aka'ba da ma nen t' iye”

It is not possible to have paternal kinship without maternal kinship.

Bai is another important term by which a child calls his/her father or any adult male of about his father's age and above. *Bai*, which means “my father”, carries the connotation of respect in Ondo culture. A child refers to his grandfather as *Bamagba*, that is, my older father. *Yei* is the term that refers to “my mother”. *Yemagba* or *Yemlila* means my grandmother.

A senior sibling in the family is designated as *egin*. This title is often joined to the name of the senior sibling, for example *Egin Dupe* that is my senior sister Dupe. *Egin* applies to both male and female senior siblings. This term can equally apply to senior cousins or other unrelated senior males and females. Very often the words *anti* and *buoda* coined from the English words “aunt” and “brother” are used to designate a senior sister or brother. It is not uncommon to find that Ondo people in places beyond Ondo town, e.g. Ibadan, Lagos, Kano, Jos are often referred to and even nick-named *Egin* to distinguish them from other Yoruba.

Perhaps the aspect of social organization of the Ondo people that has received considerable attention and study among researchers is the kinship system. The works of Lloyd (1962, 1968 and 1970) and those of Bender (1970, 1972) as well as Eades (1980) on this subject are quite revealing having substantially added to our knowledge on this subject. However, the positions held by these scholars on the subject are divergent.

Lloyd contends that the Yoruba culture is quite heterogeneous as evidenced by the significant differences between the various ethnic groups. This anthropologist further opined that differences exist between the descent systems of the southern and northern Yoruba kingdoms. While the descent system of the northern kingdoms is agnatic, that is patrilineal, the southern Yoruba kingdoms of Ondo and Ijebu operate the cognatic descent system, in which the descent of an individual can be traced

through his ancestor in “both male and female lines”⁹. This means that while an individual in the northern kingdom can identify with only one descent group, the cognatic system of the south to which Ondo belongs allows one to identify with more than one descent group.

On the other hand, Bender is of the view that the Ondo people have not only very distinct patrilineal descent groups but are also characterised by Patrilineal convictions, beliefs and philosophy.¹⁰ This is because a typical Ondo individual “claims membership in his/her father’s descent group”¹¹. For example, an individual who for whatever reason brings disgrace, dishonour or disrepute on his people or family is often lampooned, criticized and rebuked with the proverb: *Om’owo osi juwe’li ba e*, which means the individual has described the direction to his father’s house with the left hand. This is a very disgraceful and disrespectful act in Ondo culture.

Having evaluated the theoretical and methodological basis of Lloyd’s and Bender’s positions, Eades proposes that the kinship system found among the different Yoruba ethnic groups is a bilateral arrangement. But, the emphasis is on the patrilineal pattern. This researcher associates with the view that the Ondo kinship system is bilateral for four reasons, two of which are enshrined in the words of wisdom of the people. First, the Ondo value, respect and appreciate both their *Omiye* and *Omiba* and indeed, their lineage. Hence they put in place arrangements such as annual or bi-annual meetings (*upade ebi*) to ensure cooperation and unity on matters of mutual interest. Such meetings are of two categories namely *upade ebi otun* which means a meeting of the relations on the right side, that is, one’s father’s relations; and the *upade ebi osi*, which means a meeting of the relations on the left side, that is, one’s mother’s relations. In addition, the recognition of this bilateral arrangement is reflected in the roles and responsibilities, which one’s *ebi* plays during important celebrations such as marriages and funeral ceremonies. The cooperation and

assistance which these meetings render their members often evoke the wise saying: *Ebi ma yon*, which means, “one’s relations are sweet”, that is associating with one’s *ebi* is a sweet, joyous and pleasant experience. This is because one’s burden becomes lighter when one’s relations shoulder it collectively. This saying is corroborated by yet another proverb: *Onen i yeye yon, sugbon u jeun nwon ke?* Which means a large number of people is helpful but how about their feeding?

Secondly, there is a proverb that warns or cautions against the neglect of either one’s maternal or paternal lineage: *E e n’aka’ba da ma nen t’iye*. This means, “one cannot have his father’s hand (lineage) without having his mother’s hand”(lineage) in other words, one does not have a paternal kin without a maternal kin. Thirdly, *Ebi Mode* in Ondo, the origin of the Awosika lineage is traceable to a woman. Hence as Bender rightly pointed out, the occurrence of a female progenitor of Ondo lineages is not a rare event.

Fourthly, the emphasis on patrilineal in Ondo kinship ideology, may be connected with the palace coup d’etat in which the first woman Oba of Ondo land, Oba Pupupu, was replaced with king Airo, the first male Oba of Ondo. Airo means a substitute or a replacement. Although this shift in the Ondo kingship pattern took place several centuries ago, the Lobun stool, a very powerful, highly respected and enviable ruling house, still exists vibrating in the Ondo culture today in spite of the vicissitudes of the long, distant past.

Lobun is still referred to as the “Oba Obirin” (the woman king) in Ondo. The Lobun stool exercises such an enormous ritual power in Ondo culture that the Lobun is seen as a “king” in her own right and that without Lobun, no king of Ondo land can be installed. In addition, “it is a daughter of the Lobun or a woman within the lineage that succeeds her”¹². Her power and significance in Ondo culture is often reflected in a rhetorical question often asked to caution pride or rebuke arrogance in a girl/woman:

We de se Lobun i?

Are you Lobun, the woman king? Or how come, you are arrogating to yourself the importance of king Lobun?

The above kinship-related proverbs, the significance of *upade ebi* in Ondo culture, the *Ebi Mode* example coupled with the power, honour and ritual significance attached to the Lobun institution, collectively recognize, authenticate and support the bilateral nature of Ondo kinship system.

1.8.2 The Lineage and Family Pattern

A very important social unit in Ondo is the lineage group or *edili*. *Edili* is a descent group which is made up of family members who can trace their origin to the founder of the lineage called *Baba nla*, “through a line of male descendants.”¹³ The family lineage occupies a very important position in Ondo culture. It is considered an important basis for the naming of children e.g. Edileola, which means “a wealthy lineage” and for identification purposes e.g. Edili Awosika, Edili Jilo to name just a few.

The lineage consists of family units called *uli*. And *uli* is a family compound unit that is made up of a father, his wife (ves), children and immediate relations. To qualify for the membership, rights and privileges of an *uli*, a child must be born there. Being born in one of the *Ulis* that make up the *edili* qualifies the child to all the rights and privileges of the *edili*.

The oldest member of the *edili* is the *Bab 'agba*, who is the Chief Administrator of the lineage who holds intact and maintains the tie of kinship called “Okun Ebi” or the kinship bond. The genealogical bond between one member of the lineage and another is called *ajobi*. This bond is regarded as a most important link of trust. It is not uncommon for the Ondo people to pray or swear in the name of their *ajobi* either to give validity to a statement, pledge or promise or to assure their audience that there will be no breach of trust. Today, however, this lineage bond

appears to be weakening because of the formation of new social ties outside the lineage. This decline of *ajobi* is vividly captured in the following Ondo proverb:

E i s' alajobi mo, alajogbe o ku i i.
There is no longer a kinship bond, what is left is
co- residence bond.

1.8.3 The Marriage Practices/Ceremonies.

Marriage is a very important turning point in the life of a young man or woman. At marriage, the bride and the groom take independence from their parents to establish a home of their own. It is an opportunity for the bride and the groom to show their neighbours how good ambassadors they are of their respective homes. Though marriage confers independence on the newly married, the cultural norms require that the man and the woman consider themselves as members of their respective families. Marriage is seen as an important bond of friendship and cooperation between the family of the bride and that of the groom.

Ondo people practice an exogamous pattern of marriage. A man or a woman cannot marry within his/her lineage. Inbreeding is frowned at. To avoid this and other problems, the parents of the two parties usually carry out intensive investigations to determine:

- (i) if the bride and groom to be are related;
- (ii) if there is any history of barrenness in either the husband's or wife's lineage;
- (iii) if there is any history of insanity in any of the two lineages;
- (iv) if there is any known hereditary diseases in any of the two lineages, such as epilepsy.

Consent to proceed with the marriage may not be given by either of the two parents unless they are sufficiently satisfied with the outcome of their investigations.

The preparation of the maid for marriage starts with the "Obitun" festival. *Obitun* is an initiation ceremony for girls who had attained the age of puberty. The

purposes are to purge the maid of any evil influences or curse with which she might have been afflicted and to announce to the community that she is now ready for marriage.

The Obitun festival lasts for nine days and it is usually scheduled to coincide with the installation of a chief. During the first day, the maid is confined to the house. But in the evening of each subsequent day, she dances and sings at her home in the company of her friends and co-obituns. But on the ninth day, the Obitun dresses in a three-piece aso oke and beads worn round her neck and waist, dances round the town in the company of her friends. At puberty, the boys perform the less elaborate Aapon rites. The Aapon wears beads and cowry around his neck for seven days.

In addition to the above standard type of marriage, the other type of marriage, which is common among the traditional Ondo people, is the levirate. Two kinds of levirate practices exist. These are the anticipatory levirate and the post humus levirate. The anticipatory levirate involves the act of secretly inheriting the wife of an old man when he is still alive by either one of his mature sons or his brother. Whenever the old man dies, the relationship is regularized.

In the post-humous levirate, the son or brother of a deceased man, based on agreement and choice pairs with the wife or one of the wives of the deceased to live a matrimonial life along with his own legitimate wife (wives). The primary purpose of the levirate institution is to provide support and fellowship for the family of the deceased.

1.9 FUNERAL CEREMONY

The demise of a family member, young or old, is usually greeted with sorrow. Even though Ondo people believe that death is a necessary end and that it will come when it will come, they do not like losing any member of their family. This goes a long way to show the kinship affinity. It is believed that no matter how old a relation

is; he or she has an important role to play in one's life. Hence death, though a natural phenomenon, Ondo people find it difficult to accept its reality.

When a person dies in Ondo, particularly a young person, such death is received with suspicion. The first reaction would be a suspicious cry of *A an ma po o o!* i.e. they have killed him or her. The relatives would like to find out if in fact, the deceased did indeed die a natural death. They would go to Ifa diviner to find out the cause of the death.

It is pertinent to note here that when a young person dies, he or she is buried without any delay. Moreover, when an elderly person dies, the death is announced to all and sundry by dancing round the town. This is called *iyaghayogho* in Ondo language. The eldest son of the deceased brings a goat, which is slaughtered at the place where the corpse is given the last bath. This is called *ibugwe*. The corpse is thereafter dressed and laid-in-state. Later the corpse is put in an expensive coffin and taken to the final resting-place, usually in a room in the house.

Burial ceremony is an expensive event in Ondo culture. The expenses become more outrageous particularly when the deceased is a Chief. The news will have to be broken to the Oba with some gifts after which there would be dancing round the town for nine days, performing rituals.

The maternal relations of the deceased are responsible for the provision of the coffin. The husbands of the daughters of the deceased take charge of the digging of the grave while the eldest daughter brings a goat and thirty wraps of pounded yam, ₦20.00 and a keg of palm wine usually undiluted with water. Each of the husbands of all the married daughters of the deceased bring twenty wraps of pounded yam and a keg of undiluted palm wine each. The male members of the deceased's family group themselves and each group buys a goat and *sanyan* (a type of woven material) or about ten yards of cloth for dressing the deceased.

On the third and seventh day after burial, the family members make supplications for the deceased. There is usually eating and merry making. Traditionally, bean cakes (akara) are served around the neighbourhood. On the last day of celebration, that is the eighth day, the family members dance round the town and subsequently converge at home to continue with the feasting. On the morning of the ninth day, there is a family meeting during which the inventory of all the deceased's property is taken. This is shared at a convenient date among all members of the family.

The widow(s) of the deceased usually keep vigil throughout the night of the seventh day amidst singing and drumming. In the middle of the night, the widows go through a series of rituals, an important one of which includes bathing. It is believed that these rituals will protect them from the spirit of their husband who hovers around them. The widows dress in white and will remain indoors for three months or nine months in the case of high Chief.

1.10 ONDO CIVIL WARS

The excesses of Oba Arilekolasi (1861-1866) laid the foundation for the two phases of Ondo civil wars. According to Olupona, Arilekolasi conceded a lot of power to the palace slaves, to the extent that the latter harassed the people for no just cause. As a result of these excesses Arilekolasi was poisoned. However, he pronounced a curse on Ondo people namely that their lands would remain deserted. He requested one of his slaves to avenge his death. Shortly after the Oba's death, Kulajolu, the slave, left the palace to establish a rival state in Igbodan, from where he waged many wars on Ondo. A good number of Ondo citizens ran away from their homes and took refuge in surrounding villages such as Ajue, Igbado and Erinla, while majority of the people fled to Oke-Opa where they established an interim government. During this chaotic period, the reigning Oba committed suicide at Igbado for fear of being taken

captive by the invaders. This, according to an informant, gave rise to the Ondo proverb: *Ogun e e ko Ondo aio ho*, this means that it is forbidden for Ondo to be taken captive by war. When the next Oba, Ayibikitiwodi (1873-1876) was installed, he sent a delegate under the leadership of Chief Ogedengbe to make a peace treaty with Kulajolu. To pacify him, the Oba conferred on him an Eghae high chieftaincy title, which he accepted. Kulajolu became high Chief Odunwo, the third ranking chief to the Oba in Ondo traditional system. He was however attacked by another popular slave, named Ago who drove him out of Ondo to Erinla where he died.

As a result of the previous years of unrest in Ondo, the throne became very weak and was susceptible to another civil war under the reign of the next Osemawe, Afaidunjoye (the one who came to the throne at an unpleasant time). Ago, the second slave who had earlier on rescued Ondo from Kulajolu, began another disruptive war against Ondo. He took advantage of the weakness of Ondo to launch an attack on them with the help of Ife and Ilesa. His army was camped at Oke-Igbo and attacked only from Aise. The nub of his troop that came from Ife made up the first colonists of Oke-Igbo. That is why, despite the fact that Oke-Igbo is a major town in Ondo State, less than nine kilometres from Ondo, it remains culturally an Ife town, in spite of its geopolitical location, which falls within Ondo.

The Ago versus Ondo battle, which claimed many lives from both sides ended up in a fiasco. Ago fled to Ile-Oluji, nine kilometres away from Ondo. At Ile-Oluji, Ago had a quarrel with Osokun, one of his soldiers. He was ousted out of Ile-Oluji with the help of the Ile-Oluji people and the combined group of dissidents from Ilesa, Oke-Igbo and the forces of Ondo. He was finally captured at Oke-Igbo where he was thrown into the Ooni River.

The above civil wars in Ondo together with Yoruba wars paved way for the British influence on Ondo. As a result of these civil wars, many people fled the town

making the governance of Ondo extremely weak and vulnerable. Consequently the British had little or no resistance gaining access through Ondo into the hinterland to establish trade links and to set up administrative machineries.

1.11 RELIGION

Idowu observed that:

Religion is very much and always with us. It is with us at every moment of life – in our innermost beings and with regard to the great or minor events of life; it is discussed daily in the newspapers, through the radio and television, it is with all of us inevitably whatever may be our individual avowed attitude to it.¹⁴

The above observation is very true of the Ondo people. Religion has been a part of the people from time immemorial. Religion is the heart of life of the people and forms the basis as well as all-guiding principles of the life of the people. As rightly pointed out by Odumuyiwa “with the Yoruba (Ondo), morality is certainly the fruit of religion”¹⁵. Among the Ondo as among other Yoruba communities, man’s character is of supreme value. Hence the saying *Iwa l’ewa omo enia* – character is the beauty of the human being. Ondo people place great emphasis on character. For them, character means honesty, truthfulness, and chastity before marriage, responsibility, generosity, hospitality and the other virtues. Ondo people embrace these virtues whereas they severely condemn stealing, falsehood, hypocrisy and all the other vices. This is because:

The sense of obligation to do, that which is believed to be right, is in fact, the pressure of God upon every human life. God is made known to all men, even though they may not have learned to call Him God, (or may refuse to) and obedience to the behest of their conscience is the essential condition of growth in the knowledge of God¹⁶.

There are three major religious groups in Ondo today: the traditionalists, the Christians and the Muslims.

1.11.1 Traditional Religion

The Ondo people, like other Yoruba ethnic groups, believe in the Supreme Being from whom all creation originates. He is recognized as “Olorun”. He is seen as the Lord of the heavens and as the presiding deity of the Ondo people. He is the author of heaven and earth, the source of all lives and the fountain from which men receive their spirit. But this Supreme Being is a distant deity of vague personality in one sense. But in another sense, he is omnipresent. Sacrifices are seldom offered to him directly. Yet, he is the receiver of all sacrifices.

Ondo people emphasized the unique status of “Olorun”. He is recognized as the head to whom all power and authority belong and all honour is due to him. Olorun or Olodunmare is unique. He is not one among many but His supremacy is total. His ultimate pre-eminence is confirmed because things happen only when he approves and if he does not approve, nothing comes to pass. Hence the Ondo/Yoruba saying: *A dun un se bi ohun t’ Olorun fe, a so ro o se bi ohun ti Olorun o fe* – As easy to carry out as what God desires, and as difficult to carry out as what God does not approve of.

Ondo people, like other Yoruba ethnic groups, have many deities that they regard as messengers of “Olorun”. They believe that since it is not possible to see God owing to the distance between Him and humans, sacrifices could be made through the smaller deities to Him. Among the deities worshipped in Ondo are Ifa, Sango and Ogun, to mention just a few. But the most popular is Ogun. We shall focus attention on Ogun worship as a popular religion in Yorubaland in general and in Ondo, in particular. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to highlight the origin of Ogun in order to enrich our knowledge of this deity.

1.11.2 Origin of Ogun

Many myths and legends exist as to the origin of Ogun. Much of the knowledge of the deity is based on the fact that he was one of the earliest divinities.

He loved hunting and was referred to as “Osin-Imole”, that is, the Chief among the divinities. He cleared the thick impenetrable way with his iron implements for other the divinities when he was coming from heaven to possess the earth. Being a ruthless deity, he lived in seclusion at the top of the hill where he went about hunting. Tired of secluded life, he decided to go for a settled life, which he had rejected earlier on. He came down from the hilltop in a garment of fire and blood but could not find an abode in any community. So he borrowed fronds from the palm-tree and headed for Ire where he was made king. Hence, the name Ogun Onire (Ogun, the Lord of Ire) was given to him.

1.11.3 The Ogun Festival in Ondo

The Ogun festival is celebrated in Ondo between the months of August and September every year. According to Olupona the preparation for the festival commences seventeen days before the actual Ogun day at the appearance of the new moon. At an early morning ceremony in the house of Ayadi, the ritual specialist of Ogun public worship, the *upe* (a traditional trumpet made from a long gourd) is sounded to notify the people of the on-coming festival. The sound of *upe* then becomes a common feature throughout the period of the festival, which lasts seven days. The sound of the *upe* is very significant because it carries messages which are sometimes complimentary and at other times abusive from one youth to the other. During the seventeen-day interval, the worshippers of Ogun assemble in groups to praise the divinity and other past cultural heroes associated with him, such as Jomun Ila.

On a major market day, which is nine days before the festival, the king’s emissary makes the official announcement of the ceremony. Many activities are usually carried out in preparation for the festival, among which is the communal

clearing of paths and the repairing of bridges and other footpaths. Five days to the festival, a few households perform a ceremony called *aleho*.

There are usually three parts to the ceremony – *aisun ogun* (night vigil), *ogun ale* (night ogun) and *ogun owuo* (morning ogun celebration). The procession involves all traditional and modern day professionals and guilds. Every possible professional group in Ondo – such as blacksmiths, medicine men and women, drivers, hunters, tailors, barbers, to mention just a few, participate in this celebration. The only exceptions are probably civil servants and white-collar workers. Most of them are usually dressed in rags, palm-fronds with their faces and bodies smeared with blue dye, white powder and or charcoal. Some, however, use that period to show affluence and nobility by wearing unusually beautiful multicoloured outfits.

The Osemawe is not left out of this festivity. He usually leads the early morning procession. He wears a beaded crown that covers his whole face with white sheet tied on his left shoulder over his *agbada* (flowing gown). Others such the high chiefs, medicine men and other trades men follow the king's procession. Every professional demonstrates his trade. The most esteemed group is the traditional medicine men referred to as *oloogun* (medicine people). They are attired in medicine garments laced with all kinds of frightening herbal substances. This group usually engages young school children to write signposts, which display the name of their pedigree and praise names, some with warnings written in proverbs and the metaphorical magico-medical expertise of the *oloogun*. This serves as a warning to the general public. The following are examples of such signposts:

- i). Eni ti o ba fi oju ana wo oku
He who looks upon today's dead with the same eyes that saw the living.
- ii). Ebor a bo l'aso.
Will have his clothe removed by the spirit.
- iii). Ati pe eni ti oju eni ti ju eni lo.
He who is above one is above one.

- iv). Bi uya lila ba a gbonen sanle.
If one is brought down by big trouble.
- v). Kekee a ka gun oiho onen
Smaller problems come up too.
- vi). Opekete ndagba
As the palm-tree grows up,
- vii). Inu Adama nbaje
The palm wine tapper becomes sad
- viii). Ase i s'amodoun
Many happy returns of this festival
- ix). Ogun ye mo ye
Ogun lives and I live too¹⁷.

When Ayadi ushers Ogun in, he must sacrifice dogs (*aja*) and tortoise (*aghon*) and pour libations at the shrine of Ogun. It is the general belief in Ondo that a dog is Ogun's favourite meat. Thus during Ogun festival, dogs are usually mercilessly immolated. The Ondo people do not in any way regard a dog as a pet as the western people do. Ondo people seldom eat dog meat but they frequently sacrifice dogs to appease Ogun. Hence, their neighbours nicknamed them *Ondo aj'aja* that is, Ondo the dog eater. The sacrifice of dogs is the climax of the ritual and by this, the blood flows into the shrine.

Ogun is the kernel of Ondo's popular religion for many reasons. During Ogun festival, every section of the society is represented. It is only during this festival that children, domestic servants, foreigners, artisans, traditional circumcision doctors, religious and political authorities perform as devotees of Ogun. As the divinity is tied to professionalism, everybody participates. For example, warriors, blacksmiths, traders and even women who hardly participate in other Ondo festivals play very significant roles in these festivities. Certainly, it is a time when women-dominated professions such as traditional medical paediatrics (*alagbo omode* or *olomitutu*) and women's market associations display their wares and advertise their profession.

Furthermore, during this festival, people show their indebtedness to Ogun as the founder of iron and metals, which are essential ingredients for technological development. It should be noted that sacrifices are made to Ogun from time to time, particularly whenever a journey is going to be undertaken. It is not surprising then that the importance and fierceness of Ogun is captured in this proverb:

“Onen yo ri ibi Ogun ti gbe’je de sa eyin jija e fa i”.

Whoever sees Ogun where it is taking blood and does not run, certainly has problem with his heels.

It should also be emphasized that Ogun festival serves as an occasion whereby the memory of deceased ancestors and cultural heroes are commemorated. The worshippers of Ogun proclaim Ogun’s praise-names as follows:

Ogun lakaiye, osin imole

Ogun, the strong one of the earth, Chief among the deities

Ogun alada meji, ofi okan san’ko, o fi Okan ye’na

Ogun, the possessor of two matchets; with one he prepares the farm, and with the other he clears the road.

Ojo Ogun nti ori oke bo

The day Ogun was coming down from the hilltop

Aso ina l’o mu bora, ewu eje l’o wo

He was clothed in fire and bloodstained garment

Ogun onile owo, olona ola

Ogun, the owner of the house of money, the owner of the house of riches

Ogun onile kangunkangun orun

The owner of the innumerable houses of heaven

O pon omi s’ile f’eye we

He has water in the house but takes his bath with blood

Ogun awon l’eyin ju, egbe lehin omo orukan

Ogun whose eyeballs are rare (to behold), protector of orphans

Ogun m’eye l’ogun mi

There are seven Ogun who belong to me

Ogun Alara ni igba’ja

Ogun of Alara takes dogs,

Ogun Onire a gba' gbo
Ogun of Onire habitually takes rams

Ogun ikola a gba' gbin
Ogun of surgery habitually takes snails

Ogun Elemona nii gba esun 'su
Ogun Elemona takes roasted yam

Ogun a ki'run ni iwo agbo
Ogun a ki'run habitually takes ram's horn

Ogun gbená gbená eran awun nii je
Ogun of the artisans eats the flesh of tortoise

Ogun Makinde ti d'ogun l'ehin odi,
Ogun Makinde has become the ogun after the city wall

Nje nibo l'ati pade Ogun?
By the way, where did we meet Ogun?

A pade ogun nibi ija.
We met ogun in the battlefield

A Pade Ogun nibi ita
We met Ogun at the junction

A pade re nibi agbara eje naa
We also met him at the pool of blood

A gbara eje ti i de ni l'orun bi omi ago
The pool of blood that reaches the neck like a cup of water

Orisa t'o ni t'ogun ko to nkan,
Whichever divinity regards ogun as of no consequence

A f'owo je'su re nigba aimoye
Will eat his yams with his hands (without a knife) times without number.

E ma b'ogun fi ija sere
Do not joke about war with ogun

Ara ogu kan go-go-go-
Ogun is anxiously waiting to strike¹⁸.

1.11.4 The Christian Religion

The history of Ondo witnessed a significant turn during the second half of the 19th century because the events that took place had a far-fetching effect on the conversion process. The prolonged Yoruba civil war of the 19th century had serious

impact on Ondo and her people. There was an internal crisis in Ondo, which led to a total breakdown of law and order. This crisis gave Ile-Ife warlords the opportunity to join hands with the town's dissenting forces to bring an end to Ondo's autonomy. The people fled to different places until 1872 when the British government sent captain Goldsworth to put an end to the civil strife, restored peace and also restored Oba Jimékun to the throne and encouraged the people to return home.

The British did all these with the intent of creating trade route by sea and by land through Ondo to the other Yoruba hinterlands, thereby avoiding the danger precipitated by the escalating Yoruba civil war. Ondo was, as far as the Christian religion was concerned, a terra incognita and hence Goldsworth conceived the idea of having a Christian mission in Ondo. So, on March 29, 1875, David Hinderer, Hunsì Wright and William Dada opened a Christian mission post. Rev. Phillip was the missionary in charge of Ondo, preaching in any available open space including the Oba's palace and Chief's compounds.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that conversion was sailing smoothly in Ondo. No, it did meet some resistance especially after the people realized that the Church was having a negative impact on their traditional beliefs and practices. They refused to give land for Church buildings. However, owing to Philip's display of diplomacy, he was able to overcome the obstacle. The first Church was dedicated on 3rd May 1881. Thus Ondo became a relatively strong mission center with schools built to educate the children and converts. No wonder then, Ondo people are highly educated. Today, there is hardly any street in Ondo where one will not find a professor. Ondo people viewed the coming of Christianity as an important turning point in their lives. The forced exile for 30 years had a devastating effect on their morale. With the advent of Christianity, there was social restoration and lasting peace.

It is no wonder then that Ondo people have their own ethnical canticle that expresses the unique experiences, in Ondo history. While the tribal canticle of other Yoruba subgroups are grounded on folk beliefs and traditional experience, Ondo's canticle is based on the conversion experience; an experience defined as a new life under the banners of Christianity:

Bi ola, bi ola oo	Luxuriant, colourful and majestic
Adodo fusi s'eti omi	Like the flower blooming by the river bank
Jesu ma fusi s' Ondo	So did Jesus (Christianity) flourish on Ondo soil.
Ola ma ti b'okan w'aiye oo ee	Greatness is not the preserve of one source
Bi ola, bi ola oo	Luxuriant, colourful and majestic
Adodo fusi s'eti omi	As a flower blossoms by the river bank
Jesu ma fusi s'Ondo	So Jesus has become a pride of Ondo town
Ola ma ti t'oke waiye o ee	Our prosperity has come from above
Aiye wa sese wa gun oo ee	Now our lives are organized. ¹⁹

1.11.5 Islamic Religion

Muslims constitute about 13% of the total population of the Ondo people whereas Christians constitute 73% as revealed by the population census of 1952. Gbadamosi notes that the first record of the presence of Islam in Ondo is contained in Phillips' diary of 26th Nov. 1880.

In comparison with the rise of Christianity in Ondo, the conversion to the Muslim religion was less successful. Muslim traders were probably the most significant contributors to the growth of Islam in Ondo. The Muslims gained easy access through the eastern route to Ondo and they were able to disseminate Islamic ideas and doctrines to the people. It is worthy of note that the Muslim traders' main purpose was business but some of the traders considered themselves as instruments of conversion and as Islamic missionaries in addition to their normal business vocation.

This phenomenon, as revealed in Mukti Ali's observation is not peculiar to Ondo.

Says Ali:

Islam does not preach an exhaustive magical charisma-to borrow Max Weber's term –belonging to the priest alone, as Christianity teaches, but it is by its nature a missionary community. Because of the expansive missionary nature of Islam, every Muslim is a propagandist of the faith²⁰.

The Ondo high Chiefs played important roles in the spread of Islam. It is interesting to note that despite the small numerical strength of the Muslim community in Ondo, Christians and Muslims are equally represented in the Chieftain class because they embraced both religions.

According to Olupona, unlike the Christian religion, the Islamic religion did not clash with the already existing socio-cultural ethics and norms of the traditional religion in Ondo. They were allocated a piece of land where small pox victims were ritually buried. The place was however purified by Alfa Alimi. The year 1888 marked the official beginning of Islam in Ondo. Because this religion did not clash with the traditional religion, it enjoyed the support of the nobles and chiefs of Ondo. This gesture enhanced and encouraged the general tolerance of the people. Olupona pointed out that Chiefs Sasere Ayotilerewa Awosika and Lisa Anjanu Fawehinmi, though not Muslims directed the course of Islam right from its very beginning. These chiefs prepared the basis for the cordial relationship between Islam and the traditional structure in Ondo community.

1.12 THE YORUBA LANGUAGE

The importance of Yoruba language in Nigeria and beyond cannot be over-emphasized. It is one of the major languages in Nigeria and has a population of over seventeen million. It is the lingua franca of the western states of Nigeria. Ologunde in Afolayan noted that three out of the twelve old states of the federation use Yoruba as their mother tongue, two of them have it as their major language while it is the mother

tongue of the third one. Ologunde went further to reveal that about 10.5 million out of a population of fifty five million Nigerians use Yoruba as their mother tongue.

Although the internationality of Yoruba language is not generally recognized, it embraces several African countries and it has a strong influence in the Americas. Furthermore, Yoruba has strong influence among the Creole population of Sierra Leone. The influence of the Yoruba language and Literature is extremely strong in Brazil and Cuba.

Broadcasting in Yoruba language is not only done in Nigeria but also by intercontinental stations such as British Broadcasting Corporation, Voice of America, just to mention a few. Yoruba language is also extensively used for educational purposes. It is used as a medium of instruction in the first three years of primary education in the western states of Nigeria (FGN – National Policy on Education). Additionally, several newspapers are published in Yoruba language such as *Iwe Irohin* and many others. There is a myriad of books published in the language. Such books include the Christian Bible as well as literature textbooks such as Ireke Onibudo.

Furthermore, Yoruba language is studied in many of the nation's colleges of Education and Universities. Abimbola observes that:

Scholars of Yoruba literature are found in many parts of the world, writing in not less than four major languages of the world apart from the Yoruba language itself²¹.

The cultural influence of the British Christian missionaries on Yoruba people and their language cannot be overemphasized. Many religious and philosophical ideas as well as vocabularies were borrowed copiously from the English language. This is seen in every aspect of the Yoruba language.

Yoruba language adopts the Roman alphabets but there are twenty-five alphabets in Yoruba language. It is interesting to note, however, that due to dialectical variations Ondo has twenty-seven alphabets (see Appendix B).

The GH and GW alphabets are unique to Ondo and they are regularly used. This distinguishes the Ondo orthography from Yoruba orthography. It is also necessary to note that although most Ondo words are written like Yoruba words, Ondo people hardly pronounce the letter ‘r’ when they speak. For example “Olorun” is pronounced “Olo’on.”

1.13 ENGLISH LOAN WORDS IN YORUBA

Like other Yoruba ethnic groups, Ondo has borrowed extensively from the English language in the last two decades. This is due to the activities of the Christian missionaries from Britain and America who are mostly speakers of English and whose influence on education among the Ondo has been very significant. The effect of the British rule over Nigeria for almost a century contributed greatly to the influence, which the English language has had and continues to have on Yoruba and all Yoruba ethnic groups, Ondo inclusive.

The association of the Yoruba with the British has influenced the social, cultural and commercial life of the Yoruba people to the extent that the English language has had a significant influence on Yoruba. Says Sapir in Afolayan:

Languages like cultures are rarely sufficient unto themselves. The necessity of intercourse brings the speakers of one language into direct or indirect contact with those of neighbouring or culturally dominating languages. The intercourse may be friendly or hostile. It may move on the humdrum plane of business and trade relations or it may consist of borrowing or interchange of spiritual goods – arts, science, and religion... The simplest kind of influence that one language may exert on another is the ‘borrowing’ of words. When there is cultural borrowing there is always the likelihood that the associated words may be borrowed too²².

Fortunately, the association between the Ondo/Yoruba people and the British can be described as a cordial one touching on the ‘humdrum plane of business and trade relations involving interchange of spiritual goods’.

This exchange of goods together with the trade connection between Britain and Yoruba people has resulted into the borrowing of words from English to Yoruba.

To Afolayan, these loan words reveal some significant features, e.g. “Vowel and consonant harmony and vowel restriction”. Some of these loan words have been categorized into two viz eye-loan and ear-loan. The researcher will now substantiate the above discourse by giving some examples:

English	Eye-loan	Ear-loan
Bible	bi be li	ba i bu
Table	ta bi li	te bu /te buru
Window	wi ndo	fi ndo
Barracks	ba raa ki	bare ke
Paradise	Paradise	Parada isi ²³

Furthermore, there are other loan words that are neither eye-loan nor ear-loan.

A few examples of these will suffice:

gold	- goolu	pan	- paanu
scarf	- sikafu/skafu	wig	- wiigi
gable	- gebu	watch	- woosi
agenda	- ajenda	lawyer	- loya
engineer	- enjinnia	Iron	- aayeni

It is important to note that Ondo, being an ethnic group in Yorubaland also makes extensive use of English loan words in their spoken language. Ajolore noted that the reason for borrowing is similar for many languages. Says he:

These are the two main ones. The more common is the one employed when a language needs to find names for new people, places, objects, ideas, notions and contact. The response to such challenges depends on national language policies. Certain nations prefer to look into their own language resources for solution, but also their names in the donor language. Yoruba can be said to belong to the latter group of languages. Scientific and technological ideas, items of clothing and jewelry, political, cultural and technological concepts and their name impinge on Yoruba daily from English, French, Arabic, Hausa and Russian: The Yoruba people want to know these new things and people; they want to become a part of the larger world that shares a common language in certain disciplines, and so they decide to learn the names of these new

things. And do, a good many new words in the language are adopted in order to fulfil certain needs²⁴

It is no wonder then that Yoruba borrows English words extensively in order to fulfil this desire of becoming a part of the larger world.

1.14 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many researchers in the field of paraomiography have already collected a good number of Yoruba proverbs. For example, Lindfors and Owomoyela collected, translated and annotated 150 Yoruba proverbs and Bamigbose has written about forms of Yoruba proverbs. However, no systematic attempt has been made to collect any *owe* Ondo, let alone examine their subject-matter, functions and poetic devices in a systematic manner as this researcher has done.

Similarly, some efforts have been made to collect, translate and provide the uses of some Yoruba proverbs by paraomiographers and paraomiologists such as Ladipo, Bada, Delano, Ajibola, Akinlade, Kosemanii, to mention just a few. But none of these researchers addressed the themes, functions and poetic devices of Yoruba proverbs the same way as this researcher has done for *owe* Ondo.

Although there have been systematic studies of proverbs in other cultures, for instance, Bello Bada on Hausa Karin Magana and Adeiyongo on Tiv Anzaaka, there has been no researchers on *owe* Ondo. Apart from Taoheed Ajao who documented and translated only twenty-five *owe* Ondo in the 1997 edition of Ekimogun Day Brochure, there has been no in-depth study on *owe* Ondo. Ajao intended to satisfy the need for a cultural get-together. It was not a planned and disciplined research into this aspect of Ondo oral literature. Therefore, there is a lacuna in Ondo folklore. The present study is completely a *terra incognita* as no paraomiographer has ventured into this aspect of Ondo oral art.

Even though researchers appear to have overlooked *owe* Ondo, they are words of wisdom, which must be preserved. As earlier mentioned, many scholars wrote

generally on Yoruba proverbs, however Ondo, though part of Yorubaland, has her own *sui generis*. It is true that Pupupu who was the mother of Ondo people was one of the twin daughters of Oduduwa. Nevertheless, Ondo has a distinctive heritage and proverbs that are peculiar to her. Therefore there is a gap in Ondo oral literature, which needs to be filled.

1.15 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In this study, the main aim of the researcher is to focus on, and examine some salient features of *owe* Ondo with special emphasis on their themes, functions and poetic devices with which *owe* are couched. According to a Malian proverb: “when an old man dies, it is like setting a whole library on fire and burning it down”. This researcher views *owe* as a very important aspect of Ondo culture. Thus, the study is aimed at preserving this aspect of the people’s culture as source materials for paraomiographers, linguists, historians, educationists, psychologists, anthropologists, and also for posterity before the memory is lost. This is to ensure that the library, which our ancestors have built these many years, will not be razed as a result of the neglect of the present generation. Further more, the study is embarked upon in order to provide a tool for improving our thinking and know how, in certain areas of human activities, such as educating the youths on values and norms of the society.

Additionally, it is clear that even though many works have been carried out on Yoruba proverbs, none of these studies has focused on themes, functions and literary qualities of Yoruba proverbs let alone *owe* Ondo. It is in the absence of such systematic studies on *owe* that this study is being carried out to fill the existing lacuna.

1.16 RATIONALE

The question may be asked; why embark on the study of *owe* Ondo? As the researcher has earlier pointed in this chapter, *owe* Ondo have not been systematically compiled and analyzed by any paraomiographer. Nor have their themes, functions and

poetic devices been investigated. The researcher notes with keen interest that the study of proverbs is a valuable aspect of folklore that needs to be adequately investigated.

As Abrahams rightly pointed out:

There have been few studies made of the shorter forms of traditional expressions and those we have are primarily catalogues of collected materials²⁵.

As far as *owe* Ondo is concerned, one can say that it is true that some of *owe* Ondo are under the catalogue of collected Yoruba proverbs such as the efforts of Lindfors and Owomoyela, Ajibola, Akinlade, Kosemani, to mention just a few. However, no scholar has collected, recorded and attempted an in-depth study of *owe* Ondo as this researcher has done. Thus the researcher is setting out to fill the lacuna created by scholars that have worked on Ondo history, culture as well as other areas of research on Ondo.

That the literary study of proverbs is a worthwhile venture cannot be over-emphasized. The studies of the proper structure, that is, the morphology of *owe* Ondo and the poetic qualities with which they are dressed are a very important academic venture. These structures could be attributed to the taste of Ondo people who make use of the proverbs in their daily transactions. It is the intention of this researcher to devote a bulk of the study on the formal aspect of *owe*. However, it is important to note that some of what follows is also applicable to proverbs in Africa and other parts of the world.

1.17 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study will be of great benefit to students, parents and researchers in the field of Ondo oral literature. First and foremost, *owe* are like a library containing the wisdom of elders and if they are not studied, it is like setting the library ablaze. This study will afford the opportunity of preserving *owe* Ondo not only for future generation but also as a fountain of wisdom from which the younger generations will

drink. The study will also provide an opportunity for the researcher to identify any gap between theory and practice in Ondo culture.

Although several studies have been carried out on Yoruba proverbs, none of these have addressed the themes, functions and poetic devices as this study has done. Therefore, this study is pushing back the frontiers of knowledge most especially in the application of *owe* Ondo for daily living in child training by parents, in education by teachers and in policy formulation by government.

1.18 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are many approaches to the study of folklore, particularly African oral literature, variously referred to as “verbal art” “spoken art” “oral art” or “oral literature”. As earlier pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Dundes speaks extensively about the various approaches to the study of folklore.

From Dundes’ position on the diverse approaches to the study of folklore, it is crystal clear that there are as many theories to the study of verbal art as there are academic disciplines comprising many adherents (cf Wolfgang Mieder, 1978). Nevertheless, of the various theorists, Richard Dorson alone identified twelve theories, which are all competing for acceptance. They are, in alphabetical order, as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) Contextual | (7) Historical-Reconstructional |
| (2) Cross-cultural | (8) Ideological |
| (3) Folk-cultural | (9) Mass-cultural |
| (4) Functional | (10) Oral-formulaic |
| (5) Hemispheric | (11) Psychoanalysis |
| (6) Historical-Geographical | (12) Structural ²⁶ . |

To the above theories, the Aesthetic and Polygenesis theories may also be added because we believe that they are of great significance to this study. For avoidance of

unnecessary details and because it is beyond the scope of this study to analyze each of these theories, we shall identify the relevant theories to this work.

Of all the competing theories listed above, the researcher has decided to adopt the following:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (i) Contextual Approach | (ii) Functional Approach |
| (ii) Aesthetics Approach | (iii) Theory of Polygenesis |

These theories are the most appropriate and valuable for the purpose of this study. The contextual approach will be used basically for our analysis of chapter three, the functional approach will be utilized in analyzing chapter four while the aesthetic approach will be very useful in our chapter five. Nevertheless, we make reference to historical-reconstructional approach and ideological approach in chapter one.

We shall now discuss these relevant theories in detail.

1.18.1 Contextual

The contextual approach theory is the umbrella name given to some younger folklorists in the United States. This theory is strongly upheld by folklorists such as Roger Abraham, Dan Ben-Amos, Alan Dundes, Robert Georges, Kenneth Goldstein and Ojo E. Arewa.

These adherents put a lot of interest in the cultural, psychological, sociological and linguistic environment in which a particular text is produced. They protest vigorously the extrapolation of the text from its context in language, behaviour, communication, expression and performance, overlapping terms they constantly employ. Furthermore, these young folklorists maintain that the folklore concept applies to both text and also to an event in time in which a tradition is performed. Therefore it becomes imperative to record the whole performance act as the collector can no longer simply write down or tape-record a text because the text is only a part of each unique event.

Alan Dundes captures this contextual theory picturesquely when he shows the cultural contexts of Nigerian proverbs by presenting some analytical descriptions accompanying each text. Hence he presents the Ondo/Yoruba proverb “The hand of a child cannot reach high shelf, nor can that of elder person enter a calabash”, and then adds the following illuminating interpretation:

Yoruba society emphasizes the principle of mutual responsibility between old and young, parents and children. An uncle may ask a nephew to fetch him water several times. One day the youth asks his uncle for pineapple and is refused. Next day the nephew refuses to do an errand for his uncle. The uncle complains about this conduct to a peer, who quotes him the proverb²⁷

The above explains the contextual meaning of the saying clearly. It shows that seniors and juniors must help each other.

Similar to folklorists such as Ojo E. Arewa and Alan Dundes, this study sets out to examine *owe* Ondo from their thematic cultural contexts followed by commentaries and some cross-cultural comparison where necessary. Chapter three of this thesis will be devoted to this aspect of the theory.

1.18.2 Functional

The role played by folklore in a given culture is the nucleus of the functional approach theory. This theory is clearly articulated by William Bascom, a student of Herskovits. Bascom focuses on the function played by folklore in any given culture in the preservation of social institutions. He, in particular, considers “verbal arts” as creative composition of a functioning society, “dynamic not static, integrated not isolated, central not peripheral components of the culture”. Supporting Bronislaw Malinowski’s viewpoint on Myth in Primitive Psychology Bascom draws attention to the numerous functional roles of folklore. He notes that “proverbs help settle legal decisions, riddles, sharpen wits, myths validate conduct, satirical songs release pent—up hostilities”. Therefore the anthropologist examines both context and the text. Furthermore, the cultural functioning of different folkloric genres can serve as

ethnographic examples. In Africa, fieldworkers have shown the prevalent value of proverb in judicial proceedings. Another function performed by tribal folklore (proverb) is that it validates belief, conduct and ritual.

In view of the important roles of proverbs in Ondo-society, the researcher intends to devote chapter four of this study to the functions of proverbs in Ondo culture.

1.18.3 Aesthetic Theory

The theory of aesthetics is the philosophical investigation into the nature of beauty and perception of beauty, particularly in arts. It is the theory of artistic taste, which was articulated by Theophile Gautier in 1835 as a principle of artistic independence. Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and many other poets embraced the theory in France and also by Buadelkaire, Flauber and the symbolists in England in 1890. Iyasare says that a piece of literature remains so only for its aesthetic value. Details of these will be the concern of the chapter five of this study. In it, we wish to survey *owe* Ondo in order to determine which one satisfies the requirement of the following poetic devices identifiable in literature: alliteration, hyperbole, ideophone, metaphor, onomatopoeia, paradox, anaphora, simile, and wellerism, to mention a few.

1.18.4 Theory of Polygenesis.

Theory of polygenesis (i.e. the independent invention of the same materials in different places), states that human beings the world over tend to respond in similar ways to similar situations in their environment and that the basic psychological factors which governs man such as hatred, love, fear, hunger, birth, life, death, to mention just a few, are the same everywhere. Therefore people may differ in colour but still share the same universal truth and hence formulate folktales, riddles, folksongs, proverbs etc. that may be parallel to those of other communities. Thus, according to polygenesis theorists, proverbs and other folklore materials must have originated

independently in divers places primarily because of man's natural creative impulse and his characteristic way of responding to similar factors. Although the hemispheric and historical-geographical scholars considered this theory obsolete, the theory of polygenesis still explains the internal occurrence of proverb types today.

1.19 APPROACH

At this juncture, it is pertinent to discuss the methodology adopted in this study. The proverbs incorporated in this work, were selected from a vast anthology of *owe* Ondo, which were collected from various sources. This is in line with the position taken by Otite:

Oral tradition should be collected from various sources in a society, such as among the elites, the ordinary local historians, the priests and the rulers, etc. These must be crosschecked and rechecked not only within the society concerned but also between it and the neighbouring society²⁸.

In this study, the researcher collected three hundred and seventy *owe* Ondo spanning several subject matters and functions from native speakers of not less than 50 years old living in Ondo town and its environs. Since the researcher considers the mode of collection suggested by Otite as one of the best which can present critics with authentic understanding of the society under study, the *owe* were collected from various sources. The sources of these *owe* include Chiefs in Ondo land, retired civil servants who are indigenes, primary and secondary school teachers, farmers, market men and women, seasoned educationists, to mention just a few.

The methods of data collection include oral interviews to find out (i) the context and (ii) cultural significance of proverbs collected if any. Then formal interviews were arranged with selected elders particularly chiefs who are not less than sixty years of age. Additionally all the interviews were tape-recorded and subsequently analyzed. This method helps in preventing the inadvertent loss of any of the collected *owe*. Additionally, secondary materials relevant to this study are also

used. These include a search into existing works on *owe* (proverbs), through the use of libraries.

In view of the fact that the English language does not have Ondo equipment, the translations we adopt are contextual. This way, the flavour of the original is not lost. Furthermore, in view of the fact that Ondo/Yoruba is a tonal language, we also give the tonal markings.

1.19.1 Validation Of Data

After data collection and collation of these *owe*, the researcher subjected each of them to analysis to determine the theme, function and its poetic devices. To ensure that the theme, function and poetic devices arrived at were valid, the analysis were subjected to the scrutiny of at least three elders who are native speakers and to the critique of two experts in oral literature for further validation. Only *owe* Ondo on which there is at least 80% agreement between experts on the subject matters, functions and poetic devices were used for the final report preparation.

1.20 LIMITATIONS

Although *owe* Ondo can be identified virtually on every sphere of the life of the Ondo people, the findings of this study are limited to the four hundred *owe* collected. The time and resources available to the researcher are also major constraints to a more extensive study of *owe* Ondo. The fact that a dearth of published work on the themes, poetic devices and functions on *owe* Ondo exist, imposes a lot of constraints on the volume of relevant literature available to the researcher during the course of this work.

1.21 ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter one forms the introduction to the study. In this chapter, we dealt with the background of Ondo people accentuating inter alia the traditions of their origins, their geographical location, their

Weltanschauung and belief system, their social values and governmental organization and their oral literature. The Ondo language and other significant aspects of the ethnography of the people are also examined. We also dealt with the primary purpose of the study, the rationale, significance of the study and the theoretical framework.

In chapter two, we delve into the review of related literature on proverbs. In order to achieve the objective of this study, the terminology and the etymology of some world proverbs are discussed; definitions of proverbs, origins, authorship and antiquity of proverbs, universality and internationality of proverbs, contents, functions and poetic devices are also examined.

Chapter three examines the subject matter of *owe* Ondo to determine if the *owe* wrap virtually the entire spectrum of human experience. The view is often expressed that there is nothing under the sky around which *owe* Ondo cannot provide an apposite citation. This study tested this hypothesis.

Chapter four looks at the functions of *owe* Ondo, which range from the function they perform in conflict resolution, education, praising or rebuking people according to the character they exhibit and giving advice. In this chapter also, we demonstrate how *owe* Ondo function effectively as bearers of philosophical insight.

In chapter five, the researcher considers the poetic and stylistic devices with which *owe* Ondo are couched to make them memorable. These *owe* are surveyed to determine which one satisfies the requirement of the following devices identifiable in literature. The list of the devices includes inter alia alliteration, hyperbole, ideophones, metaphors, onomatopoeia, paradox, anaphora, simile and wellerism.

Chapter six constitutes the concluding chapter. Here some conclusions are made as much as our data could permit and recommendations for further study are also suggested. Before we conclude this study, we tried to find out whether proverbs are regressing or progressing.

NOTES

- ¹ O. Delano, Owe' L'esin Oro (Ibadan: Oxford University Press 1976) p.v.
- ² Ibid. , 1976, p.v.
- ³ Ruth Finnegan, Oral Literature in Africa Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p. 389.
- ⁴ Nihinlolawa Aluko-Olokun, Ondo Kingdom: Its History and Culture Ibadan: Bounty Press Ltd, 1993, p.15.
- ⁵ V.Lamb and J. Holmes, Nigerian Weaving Lagos: Shelf Petroleum Development Company 1980. P 170.
- ⁶ J. K. Olupona, Kingship, Religion and Rituals in a Nigerian Community: A Phenomenological Study of Ondo- Yoruba Festivals, Ibadan; Layday Ltd. 1992, P.56.
- ⁷ N.Aluko-Olokun, Ondo Kingdom:Its History and Culture. Ibadan: Bounty Press Ltd, 1993,p.45.
- ⁸ Ibid. , p.43.
- ⁹ P.C. Lloyd, Yoruba Land Law. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962, p34.
- ¹⁰ D. Bender, "Agnatic or Cognatic: A Re-evaluation of Ondo Descent". MAN 1970, p.73.
- ¹¹ Op. Cit., p.35.
- ¹² Ibid. ,p.37.
- ¹³ Ibid. , p. 38.
- ¹⁴ E.B. Idowu, African Traditional Religion: A Definition (London: SCM Press 1976) p.1.
- ¹⁵ E. A. Odumuyiwa, "Traditional Religion in Nigeria with Particular Reference to Yoruba" in Nigerian Life and Culture: A Book of Readings. Ibadan: Intec Printers Ltd, 1985, p.272
- ¹⁶ Alan Richardson, Christ Apologetics, London: SCM Press 1948, p.125.
- ¹⁷ Op. cit., p. 126.
- ¹⁸ O. Daramola & A. Jeje, Awon Asa ati Orisa Ile Yoruba, Ibadan: Onibon-Oje Press and Book Industries Nig. Ltd 1969, pp 242-3.
- ¹⁹ Op. Cit., p, 173.
- ²⁰ M. Ali, Islam in Indonesia in Religionen Leiden: E.J. Bill, 1975, p.73

- ²¹ Wande Abimbola, "The Study of Yoruba Literature: An Assessment". (An inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Ife. 1977, p.3.
- ²² E. Sapir, "Language" in A. Afolayan ed. Language and Literature, Ibadan: University Press Ltd. 1982, p.119.
- ²³ A Salami, "Vowel and Consonant Harmony and Vowel Restriction in Assimilated English-Loan Words In A. Afolayan ed. Yoruba Language and Literature Ibadan: UPL.1982, pp.118-144.
- ²⁴ O. Ajolore, "Lexical Borrowing in Yoruba" In A. Afolayan ed. Yoruba Language and Literature, Ibadan: UPL. 1982, p.145.
- ²⁵ W.E. Abraham, The Mind of Africa, Chicago University Press, 1964, p.44.
- ²⁶ Ricahrd Dorson, Introduction; Concepts of Folklore and Folklife Studies Bloomington:Indiana University Press 1975, pp. 7-50.
- ²⁷ Alan Dundes, "Proverbs and Ethnography of Speaking Folklore" *American Anthropologist* Vol. 66 1964 p.78.
- ²⁸ O. Otite, On Sources and Writing of History Without Records: The Urhobo People. Ibadan: Heinmann 1982 p.34.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Esin ugwaju oun t'eyin ho sa'e i.
It is the horse in front that the one behind trails.

2.1 PREAMBLE

Proverbs constitute a very significant and important genre of folklore. Hence, the inherent significance of the data which folklore provides appears to have attracted scholars from various disciplines to its study. Consequently, there are a variety of methods to the study of folklore. Dundes captures this point picturesquely when he notes that:

There are many ways of studying folklore. The literary scholar treats folklore as literature as source material for literary master works. The historian regards folklore as data supplying folk attitudes toward historical events and figures. The anthropologist sees folklore as a people's autobiographical description of himself or herself, a description, which helps the inquiring ethnographer to see the culture; he is studying from the inside out rather than from the outside in. The psychologist considers much of folklore to be collective fantasy with important clues for the analysis of both social and individual psychology. The educator thinks of folklore as part of the treasured heritage of national and ethnic groups which can be used to enrich and enliven otherwise routine curricula offerings. And so the members of different disciplines come to the materials of folklore with different interests and with different ideas as to how folklore should be understood and utilized. This variety of approaches to the study of folklore is healthy and it attests to the inherent value of folkloristic data¹.

In this thesis, the researcher sets out to highlight only one genre of Ondo folklore- *owe*, that is, proverbs. Proverbs are a complex phenomenon to study. Taylor, the doyen of paraomiography, testifies to the complexity inherent in the study of proverbs when he says:

In the study of proverbs many questions arouse scholarly attention. A review of what can be done in the investigation of proverbs may awaken interest in further endeavours in the same direction. The study of proverbs deals with the bibliography of proverbs and proverb collections; the assemblage of new materials and the availability of old sources; the origin, history, influence, reliability, and value of collections; the history of individual proverbs with the interpretation and the evaluation of their changing forms; the rise and use of proverbial types and formulae including proverbial phrases, wellerisms;

proverbial comparisons; the translation of proverbs from one language into another; literary conventions in the use of proverbs; etc., etc.².

The literature reviewed for this work is presented in the following sequence:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Preamble | 2. Terminology |
| 3. Etymology | 4. What Constitutes a Proverb? |
| 5. Definitions of Proverb | 6. Sources of Proverbs |
| 7. Authorship of Proverbs | 8. Antiquity of Proverbs |
| 9. Internationality of Proverbs | 10. Universality of Proverbs |
| 11. Translation | 12. Yoruba Oral Literature |
| 13. Obscurity of Proverbs | 14. Functions of Proverbs |
| 15. Value of Proverbs | 16. Role of Proverbs in Literature |
| 17. Proverbs in Teaching | 18. Moral and Religious Value |
| 19. Tribal Law | 20. Poetic Devices |
| 21. Earliest Form of Proverbs | 22. Contradictory Proverbs |
| 23. National Traits. | |

2.2 TERMINOLOGY

Several writers on African Oral Literature such as, Edmonson and Lindfors have recognized the fact that the terminology of many African proverbs is not a phenomenon to determine easily. This is because many African proverbs are not always distinguished by a special term from other types of oral literature. This probably accounts for why some Western Scholars avoid the study of proverbs outside the European languages. In his preface, Taylor correctly notes that:

It has seemed inadvisable to seek examples outside the ordinary European languages, where we have a fairly distinct cultural tradition and clearly marked proverbial types. Oriental, African, Malay, Japanese or Chinese proverbs involve such widely differing cultural spheres and have in general so little connection with European proverbs that I have not hesitated to leave them out³.

The above observation by Archer Taylor exemplified the fact that the differences in terminology from other related categories of oral art are not restricted to African languages.

We shall illustrate Taylor's observation with a few foreign examples after which some African examples will also be used to elucidate this position.

"Mathal" or "Tamthal", an Arabic term, is not only utilized for the word verb, it is also used as a simile to mean likeness, that is "to make like". Champion sees it as a "similitude" or a "parable" that describes human behaviour in "word pictures". In Hebrew however, the word for proverb is *mashal*. This term also embraces parables, allegories, and oracles of blessing and cursing, taunts, poems and even essays.

With regard to Africa, Simmon observes that the Annang word "Nke" or "Ufiet" does not only stand for proverb, it also stands for pun, tongue-twisters, riddles, tone variations and folktales whereas the Fulani expression "mallo" or "tindol" subsumes proverb, maxim as well as a moral story. Among the Kamba, the term "ndimo" refers to proverb. It also means dark saying, metaphorical wording, secret or allusive language. In Njikoka, an ethnic group in Anambra State, the word for proverb is "inu" and it means "bitter". The Ondo word for proverb however, is *owe* which means "to twist" or "twine round", wrap and wisdom.

2.3 ETYMOLOGY

Researchers have made genuine efforts to find the etymologies of what constitutes proverbs in different languages they study. For example, Whiting observes that the Greek word "paroimia" (proverb), which is the acceptable etymology, comes from 'para' and 'oimos' meaning 'way', 'road' respectively. In other words, a paroimia is the type of saying which is often heard along the way, a trite or common expression⁴.

In Latin, the term *proverbum* means proverb and it originates from a combination of *pro*-publicly and *verbum* – a word. Consequently, the word *proverbum* denotes a figuratively expressed saying, used instead of the ordinary word. Champion says that among the Germans, *Sprichwörter* is the German word for proverb, the root of which is ‘*sprach*’ speech and *wort* a word while *whakatauki* is the Maori name for proverb. *Whakatauki* comes from ‘*whata tau* meaning to address in a formal speech and ‘*ki*’ to speak.

In Africa, the researcher has decided to take Jabo and Hausa as examples. The Jabo word for proverb is *da le kpa*, which means “old matters take; to take old matters, apparently means to take an old situation and apply it to the present”. Gidley explains that Hausa *karin magana* consists of a combination of the noun ‘*magana*’ (speech) and the verbal noun ‘*kari*’ with a genitive link-*n*. He further explains that *kari* is a noun which stemmed from the verb *karya* which has many meanings.

In his analytical statement, Bello explains that:

Kari in *magana* can apply to either the ‘process’ or the ‘result’, which is a process of ‘folding’ speech in such a way that the lower layer is hidden beneath the surface layer. The outer layer is the surface meaning of the saying, whereas to which indirect reference is made, the exact... The concealed meaning in a way corresponds to the contents of e.g. a wallet that must be exposed with the result that it becomes clear only when a person has seen beneath the surface⁵.

An examination of Ondo dialect shows that the word for proverb is *owe* which consists of the pronoun ‘*o*’ meaning “you”, ‘he’ or ‘it’ and verb ‘*we*’ meaning ‘tangle’ or ‘twist’. Therefore, *owe* means it tangles or twists. When something tangles, it has to be disentangled in order to see the inner part. Thus, before the true and deep meaning of a saying is unravelled, the knot has to be untied. The opening up of the knot now becomes the true meaning against the superficial meaning of the word. Hence, *owe* helps to unravel the inner meanings and unveils the wisdom that lies concealed or hidden beneath the popular saying and expression of ideas about life experiences.

2.4 WHAT CONSTITUTES A PROVERB?

Speaking on what constitutes a proverb, Nyembezi observes that:

It is difficult in a study of this nature to determine what is a proverb and what is not a proverb. To draw a clear line of demarcation is not possible. Because of that, I have incorporated in this work not only those expressions, which are generally accepted as proverbs⁶.

Finnegan supports the above position:

The close connection of proverbs with other literary forms raises a difficulty. How, particularly in oral culture, can we distinguish proverbs from other forms of oral art, or indeed, from ordinary clichés and idioms, and from such related but different forms as maxims and apophthegms?⁷

As for Whiting there are three areas of proverbial materials. These are proverbs, proverbial phrases and sententious remarks. According to him, proverbs and proverbial phrases are available in every collection with many examples of sententious remarks. Nevertheless, a great number of collectors take pain in differentiating between a proverb and a sententia. In his letter to Wilson, Tilley observes that:

At times, I have even admitted idiomatic phrases that seemed proverbial. I have erred decidedly on the side of inclusiveness⁸.

Similarly, Bishop discovers that it is difficult to choose between riddles and proverbs, and between the proverb and mere proverbial saying. Champion dodges the commonplace or palpable truisms in his collection but he incorporates some idioms because of their beauty. Champion says, a considerable number (of idioms) will be found in African section because the African proverbial speech is often expressed idiomatically.

Most paratomiographers left the native speakers to determine what to them, constitutes a proverb as demonstrated by Plopper who thinks that:

In the last analysis the deciding voice, as to whether a saying is proverbial or not, lies in how it is used and understood by the people⁹.

Competent natives whose assistance he enlisted elucidated Bishop's collections.

2.5 DEFINITIONS OF PROVERB

The term proverb, like most words in English, has been defined in different ways by different paraomniologists. Among the scholars, attempts made on the definitions have proven difficult. Although paraomniologists have, for clarity sake, attempted to limit the meaning of proverb, disagreement still exists with respect to what constitutes acceptable and criticism-free definitions. Yet “an incommunicable quality tells us that this sentence is a proverb and that one is not”¹⁰.

Friedrich Seiler’s cenotaph titled *Deutsche Sprichworterkunde* on German proverbs attempted to provide useful examples of criteria and stylistic devices but was unable to arrive at any consistent definition, which will embrace every proverb. It is safe therefore, to conclude that there are as many definitions of proverb as there are collectors or writers of proverbs. Wilson noted that Tilley could neither find a satisfactory definition of proverb nor could he differentiate between proverbs, proverbial phrases and proverbial similes. What it is therefore depends on the understanding of the elders and what they incorporate in their collections.

The issue of an acceptable definition has been a cause for concern for everyone, the short ones being too restricted to embrace all the aspects and the long ones being too comprehensive to the extent that it loses its meaning. Archer Taylor has noted that the definition of a proverb is so overwhelming that any move to combine all the significant ingredients, giving each the necessary emphasis, is just a tip of the iceberg. Yet, a lot of people can still differentiate a proverb from ordinary statements. Thus, this confirms Taylor’s observation quoted above that “it is an incommunicable quality that enables one to know which statement is proverbial and which one is not”. In the light of the foregoing, it cannot be categorically affirmed that any one definition is proverbial. Owing to the international characteristics, which the proverb possesses, scholars such as Mieder and Dundes posit that there should be an

internationally sound definition of proverb. Therefore, a comprehensive description of it will suffice.

Aristotle, giving the first Greek definition four centuries before the birth of Christ, perceived proverb as: “a remnant from an old philosophy which on account of their brevity or aptness had been preserved from countless destructions or general wreck and ruins”¹¹.

The original English definition comprises only four words. After using it casually for a long time by various writers, “an olde said sawe”, finds its usage in the dictionary. Sir Thomas Moore used this definition as early as 1528¹². Having provided this preliminary overview, we shall now discuss the various definitions of proverb.

The term proverb has been defined variously by writers in terms of its function as a conveyer of traditional wisdom, in other words, proverb is a traditional saying “as a crystallized summary of ancient philosophy or of popular wisdom”¹³ as a wisdom sentence expressed in the indicative based on observation and experience; as wisdom of the streets (Anonymous), as encapsulating traditional wisdom about patterns of social interaction¹⁴.

Authors such as Taylor, Plopper, Kelso and Ferguson, define proverb as a universal phenomenon, representing a general observation about life, as an expression or a representation of some homely truth, while Krappe and Baldick see proverbs as the wisdom of many and the wit of one.

Several definitions however, cash in on the brevity of proverb for example “as a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of truth tersely expressed in it”¹⁵, a short pithy saying in common and recognized use (Oxford English Dictionary-OED), as a popular short saying, with words of advice or warning, as a brief saying that expresses a complete thought. Crenshaw notes that it may occasionally take the form of a

question; a sentence or phrase, which briefly and strictly expresses some, recognized truth or shrewd observation about practical life, and which has been preserved by oral tradition (though it may be preserved and transmitted in written literature as well.

It should be emphasized that disagreement exists as to the brevity of a proverb. In fact, some collectors believe that some are quite long. Says Silverman – Weinreich: “If we say that every proverb is short, we must be able to answer such questions as: ‘How ‘short’ is ‘short’? Short in relation to what?’”¹⁶.

The controversy over the length of the proverb is not new, it started about sixty years ago. Whiting lending his voice against brevity says, “It is usually short but need not be”¹⁷. Roger Abraham speaking from experience about African proverbs says:

The proverbial sayings were not necessarily short and terse, indeed, they were on occasion quite expansive sounding more like stories than like those self-subsistent concentrates which genuine proverbs are¹⁸.

The following *owe* Ondo concretize the above observation of Abraham:

- i) Onen ya bá a ba fò, do gbo, o gbo ghan a’a e; iyi a den ba fò de gbo, o sai gbo ghan a’a e.
He, who is advised and takes to the piece of advice, accepts for his own benefit, and he who is advised but does not take to it, does so at his own detriment.
- ii) Oniee lo s’uli ana e, e ii ki gha an bo, ii odi gi ghon ba a te.
The tortoise went to its in-law’s house; he was asked when he would come back, he said until he is disgraced.
- iii) E m’ale l’ajen igba, du o gba un do fen, i i fen yeye, du o gba un de fen, i i e fen.
One does not know how to sweep the floor of a witch’s house: If you sweep it very clean, she complains that it is too clean; if it is not clean, she complains that it is not clean.

As regards terseness, some researchers believe that the short statement that expresses figuratively traditional wisdom is relevant to a given occasion. Others such as Finnegan and Kelso believe that despite the fact that pithy definition is difficult to come by, brevity or conciseness, sense, piquancy or salt and popularity are the qualities of any given proverb. More importantly, before a saying can attain the status

of a proverb, such a saying must be a popular saying in a relatively fixed form, which is, or has been in oral circulation. This then means that such a saying must be *vox populi*.

Having considered the various stance of some scholars, this researcher finds Bland's and the Oxford English Dictionary's definitions very attractive as they carry a more impressive logical force than any of the works on the subject. These definitions express the functions of proverb:

- a) A short figurative expression or sentence, currently used, commending or reproving the person or thing to which it is applied, and often containing some moral precepts, or rules, for our conduct in life¹⁹.
- b) A short pithy saying in common and recognized use; a concise sentence often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience of observation and familiar to all²⁰.

It is however, interesting to know how Ondo people define *owe* and explain whether there is any difference between *owe* and the English proverb. According to Akinyele in Ajibola:

Proverbs are the poetry and moral science of the Yoruba (Ondo) nation. Many of them contain traditional observations on the nature of things; some educational, deal with man's duties²¹.

Banjo in Delano, notes that Yoruba proverbs are repository of Yoruba philosophy.

The importance of proverbs is epitomized

Owe l'esin oro, bi oro ba sonu, owe ni a fi nwa a.
A proverb is a horse, which can carry you swiftly to the discovery of ideas sought.

Consequently, *owe* may be defined as:

The metaphorical horse in popular and approved saying, which carries one beyond the surface meaning of a saying, to discover the truth of ideas; it is an in-depth, carefully selected provocative thought, which either commends, advises, rebukes or warns a person or thing to which it is applied.

From the foregoing, it will not be out of place to conclude that, *mutatis mutandis*, the definitions of *owe* Ondo and that of the English proverb are very similar. This is because proverbs generally perform similar functions the world over.

The English proverb expresses truth using the English flora and fauna. *Owe Ondo* too, express truth using her own flora and fauna.

2.6 SOURCES OF PROVERBS

There are several views regarding how the tradition of communicating in proverbs started. One view is that proverbs come from many sources, the preponderance of which are anonymous and hence, may never be known because their origins are difficult to trace. A good number of proverbs started as popular but verbal rather than as written sayings. As such, there is no clue as to the date of publication or even the author's signature. When proverbs are seen in written forms, it does not necessarily mean that the authors of such works coined the proverbs, as most of such proverbs do not belong to them. They have been in use among the people from time immemorial and are simply changed from verbal sayings. The works of some scholars such as William Shakespeare, Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka are living witnesses to the foregoing. Some proverbs come into being from mere desire to preserve the society's heritage. Some sayings are based upon stories, fables or myths. Some others however, are based on accepted truth emanating from keen observation of human and natural phenomena. In fact, Long observed that:

Proverbs are not the production of the bookworm or the mid-night oil. Proverbs were before books – they came from, the great books of nature and common sense – from the powers of observation and from experience²².

Lots of Western proverbs emanated from literature, for example, Alexander Pope's "A little learning is a dangerous thing; Shakespeare's All is well that ends well; and Synis Better late than never"²³.

Proverbs also form the origin of new proverbs for the latter are being invented on the model of the former. From time to time, proverbs can be traced to a distinct historical incident particularly during the early times of a nation's history.

The Ondo people also have historical proverbs. The following Ondo proverb drives the point home: *E si use mato ti le saee to, ku ugwaju ghaan ki ale i*. No matter how fast a motorcar speeds, it will greet the ground when it gets to destination i.e. the ground is always ahead of the vehicle.

Consequently, in relation to Ondo people all the discussions on the sources of proverbs are completely in agreement with *owe* Ondo. Ondo proverbs did not appear full-blown out of the concerted effort of the people. Neither are they as a result of a committee commissioned or designated by the people to deliberate on proverbs just as they did with Yoruba language. In most cases, some Ondo people somewhere, sometime voiced a statement for the first time, which later became popular as a proverb. *Owe* Ondo like many proverbs elsewhere and like a baby, has but one origin.

Whiting spells out the point very graphically in the following:

Language, then, we must accept as of popular origin as the first and greatest literacy invention of the people, of the folk working together and working as a whole. Whether or not speech is of “bow-wow” or of “ding-dong” inspiration, neither it nor any of its component parts was the work of a throng sitting about a fire and giving names to the birds or the beasts. Language has a mystery of its own and that mystery is, I believe, very much akin to that which lies behind proverbs²⁴.

2.7 AUTHORSHIP

In view of their peculiar nature, the fact that some proverbs are the art of some individuals who wilfully intend to impress their own wisdom on humanity cannot be overemphasised. Despite the fact that the authors of some proverbs may never be known due to their antiquity, yet there are other famous authors of some proverbs.

Raymond Firth captured it all when he noted that:

At some notable moments of his life, perhaps at a time of stress, of imminent danger to himself or the tribe, or may be even when confronted by death itself, a man of rank, preserving his composure, makes some remarks which displays such aptness, picturesqueness and facility of phrase that it strikes the ear of the bystander and lingers in the memory. This is repeated later in the communal meeting-house, where the details of the whole event are narrated to an eager crowd of listeners.... There, this remark so appeal by its fitness to the occasion and happy turn of phrase that is treasured in the minds of the community, is

told and retold, becomes adopted into common use and is repeated under circumstances which either in literal or figurative fashion appear to resemble those of the original occasion. There are a great number of Maori proverbs, which have undoubtedly arisen in this way, first formulated in an apt saying or message of a chief at sometime of crisis²⁵.

Some scholars have given catalogues of well-known authors of some famous proverbs and proverbial sayings. These include king Solomon who was believed to have written “The Book of Proverbs” as a result of which it is also called Proverbs of Solomon. “To be or not to be” was ascribed to W. Shakespeare while “A good death does honour to whole life” was attributed to Patriarch; that Francis Bacon authored “Knowledge is Power”; that Lincoln first used the following, “Don’t swap horses in the middle of a stream”; that “like a fish out of water” was created by Pope Eugenius and that “there’s many a slip twixt the cup and the lip” was attributed to a Greek slave who, having endured the maltreatment of his master for long prophesied that his master would not taste of the wine that came from the vineyard in which he was working. It was reported that the master, trying to proof that the slave’s curse was useless, proudly made the slave hold the wine cup. But as he was at the verge of drinking the wine, a beast appeared in the yard. The master joined the people to kill the beast. Alas! The slave’s prophesy caught up with him, as he did not return alive²⁶. The numerous proverbs ascribed to Aristotle, Winston Churchill, Socrates and Solomon and others, acknowledged for their wisdom or learning, are a manifestation of the reputation, which they had commanded world-wide. The Ondo people believe that it is difficult to ascribe the authorship of Owe to any individual.

2.8 ANTIQUITY OF PROVERBS

Paraomiographers have delved into what the age of proverbs might be and who it was that first verbalized them. To some paraomiographers, proverbs are ageless as they date to the remotest antiquity, to time immemorial²⁷ while others believe that

they are as old as the hills. In the case of Wilson, proverbs are as old as the time when wisdom and precepts were disseminated by songs and stories²⁸.

The high moral values exhibited by the Egyptians are portrayed by the texts in the Book of the Dead, compilation of which the Egyptians ascribed to Thot. Having been in circulation as far back as 3700 B.C., they make up the moral and religious proverbs of the Egyptians. The Egyptian viziers, Kegumne, Imhotep and Ptahotep of the sixth dynasty, put their wisdom into proverbial form at about 2500 B.C. According to Loeb, proverbs were discovered in South China literature of 7000 BC. Moreover, long before the reign of Confucius (551-479 BC), it was evident that the Chinese proverbs were in existence. As expected, proverbs were used for moral instruction, which Confucius gave to his followers.

One can safely infer from the foregoing that proverbs are the most ancient genres of oral art. They are the oldest writings of striking olden days civilization comprising many illustrations. That a whole book in the Old Testament is devoted to proverbs is extraordinary. Should the antiquity of proverbs be sought from proverbs themselves, it will be revealed that certain words are not only heard in ordinary conversation but that several archaic ones, as well as the grammatical forms which interlard them, will also be discovered.

Additionally, the antiquity of proverbs can also be derived from the significance of the words for proverbs themselves. The Turkish word for proverb, atalar sozu, which means literally ‘grandfathers’ sayings, or ancestral sayings or elders’ words illustrate the above picturesquely. Wilson elucidates the antiquity of proverbs more implicitly in the following.

I have heard my greate grandfather tell his greate grandfather should saie, that it was an olde proverbe, when his greate grandfather was a childs, that it was good winde that blow a man to the wine²⁹.

It is an established fact that proverbs are sayings of antiquity. Hence among the Hausa people, the expression “it is an old saying” is heard. Next, how old could Ondo/Yoruba proverbs be? Like many other people worldwide, Ondo people have been using proverbs since the remotest time. Furthermore, the Ondo/Yoruba proverbs like many others comprise words and phrases that are not common in everyday conversations, archaic expressions as well as grammatical forms. It is pertinent to state here that Ondo/Yoruba also share with the Hausa and Ibo the traditional consensus formulae which reveal clearly the antiquity of proverbs. The following are elucidatory examples:

Gegebi awon baba nla wa ti se nso.	Like our-fore-fathers used to say
Bi awon agba se maa nso	Like elders used to say
Awon agba ni ma a npa a I'owe ni aiye ati jo	It was the elders who used to proverbialize it in those days.
Ogbon awon agba ni	It is the wisdom of the elders.
Owe agba ni	It is the proverb of elders
Oro agba ni	It is the elders' word.

2.9 INTERNATIONALITY OF PROVERBS

The internationality of proverbs has also been reported by paraomniographers. Like some other genres of folklore, such as folksongs or folktale and riddles, proverbs are really international. The similarities of proverbs in different parts of the world reveal that the same nub of wisdom can be found in different cultures. In fact, the same truism is generally seen articulated proverbially but with different flora and fauna in various parts of the globe, black or white.

The rationale behind the same truth being expressed in diverse ways in different countries is due to the fact that the flora and fauna of one country is different from those of others. This then, accounts for each people expressing the same truth

with the flora and fauna available within it. Thus people may vary in many ways, yet share the same universal truth.

MacLaren made this point picturesquely clear when he observes that:

What most strikes one on glancing at a collection of these proverbs is how human the Bantu people are! There is an immense difference between the Bantu in their native state and ourselves in colour, features, food, houses, habits and instructions... but a quite wonder similarity in judgements and conclusions, ideas and opinions on life and death, youth and age and the various instincts, emotions, sentiments, desires and aims by which man is affected or swayed, as well as on the qualities which determine his success or failure in life. They commend the same virtues, urge to the same efforts, stigmatize the same vices, and satirize the same follies that our European proverbs do³⁰.

The cause for the appearance of parallel proverbs around the globe is not far fetched.

This is because truth about life is the same all the world over.

Champion observes that:

Proverbial wisdom is exactly the same all the world over, differing only in the rendering. "Men are all made of the same paste" (Dacian). Fundamentally, psychologically, they are the same, oriental or occidental, pigmented or white. Love, hunger and fear are the basic factors that rule mankind, primitive or cultured; factors uninfluenced by environment or civilization. All the civilization of the ages will not eradicate the primary instincts of mankind. A study of proverbial racial folklore provides overwhelming evidence of this similarity. The same proverbs conveying the same piece of advice recurs again and again in the indigenous aphorisms of all tribes and races³¹.

Bishop reported that he found it difficult to discover equivalents of English proverbs in his Sironga proverbs. He noted, "the same subjects crop up subsequently but the angle of vision is so different that often one cannot link our proverbs to their own a loose paraphrase"³².

The above report by Bishop is strange and must certainly be rare! Houlder discovered a plethora of similarities and parallels between Madagascar and English proverbs:

Many a time has an old friend appear before us in a new dress, and called forth the remark: "Why, this is surely the old English proverb, come to Madagascar". Yet on reflection we could easily see that such could not have been the case, and that with equal justice it might be that the Malagasy proverb had found its way to England³³.

Besides, what is true about other African proverbs is also true of *owe* Ondo. They share in the general truth expressed severally in the proverbs of different folks. We may now illustrate this point with some examples. When an English man says: “Thank you for your present but you are carrying coals to Newcastle”, he means that you have given him something he possesses in abundance. The above proverb is a general truth, which different people express in different proverbs according to their flora and fauna. The Greeks would say: “Owls to Athens”, Europeans during the middle Ages: “indulgences to Rome” and Orientals: “Pepper to Hindustan”. The corresponding statements in Ondo are: (a) *O mu sibi pon omi s’ okun*, that is, he uses a spoon to fetch water into the ocean and (b) *Kee e ko oku se n’oon* – dead humans are in abundance in heaven.

2.10 UNIVERSALITY OF PROVERBS

Proverbializing in Ondo is a universal phenomenon because it is a way of articulating one’s ideas more succinctly than any other way. It is doubtful if there is any society in the world, which does not have its own proverbs. Nevertheless, the uses vary from society to society. While it thrives vigorously in some societies (such as in Spain and Germany where Girdings recorded 30, 000 and 145, 000 respectively), in others, it seems to have passed its golden age and steadily fading³⁴.

There are abundant proofs about the existence of proverbs among the Sumerians from the second millennium B.C. in Asia, Europe, America and Africa. However, according to Kroeber, Whiting, Boas and Thompson, proverbs are said to have been virtually unknown among the Polynesians, the American Indians. Even among the Mayas, Incas and the native of Australia, proverbs seem to be news to them.

Astonishingly, it has been reported by collectors that proverbs do not exist among some people such as the Polynesians, American Indians native Australians and

the inhabitants of Papua and the surrounding islands. Some other researchers such as Junods, Ward and Fisher have affirmed that proverbs are relatively uncommon among specific group of Africans.

It should be noted that paraomiographers are discreet in making statements to the effect that proverbs and proverbial sayings are relatively rare in some parts of the globe. This is because other researchers, who were patient enough, were able to discover a plethora of proverbial materials even among the groups earlier on reported as lacking proverbs.

The inference must be, therefore, that proverbs exist among these groups of people but are probably hardly used to communicate among them hence making it look like they do not exist. But to conclude that proverbs are completely absent among people tantamounts to *argumentum e(x) silentio* and that the people do not converse with each other in their language. According to Kelso:

No race, whether high or low in the scale of civilization, has been without them. Nations renowned for the cultivation of literature have treasured their proverbial inheritance and have polished their adages until they become gems. Non-literate people, the savages or primitive cultures have had their proverbs, which have learned only through direct intercourse with the people³⁵.

Besides, one could not be too sure of a complete absence of proverbs, as it is not impossible that some proverbial sayings escape the attention of some impatient paraomiographers while the patient ones collect quite a number of proverbial materials from the same localities. As for Ondo/Yoruba, many proverbs have been collected and many more are being coined daily.

2.11. TRANSLATION.

Proverb collectors all over the world have examined the problems of translation and have come up with some observations and suggestions for remedying problems such as those of accuracy, correct and incorrect renderings of linguistic reproduction.

Translators such as Whiting advocate literal translation. They insist, as does Rattray that literal translation is consistent with making the subject-matter readable, as it will make the general reader find here and there certain touch of “local colour” in the phraseology. However, the same translators waste no time in identifying the shortcomings that literal translation involves. Others such as Andrezejewski, reveals that free translation distorts the original meaning. This is because they violate the rules of the affected language, giving it a strange and offensive impression, which may be attributed to some faults in the language by some readers.

Furthermore, other translators emphasize idiomatic translation. In fact majority of modern translators try to convey the message, which was in the source language without preserving the structure of the Source Language (SL). The proponents of idiomatic translation are concerned about the relationship between the message and its recipient as well as the standard language of the two. The idiomatic approach of translation gives room for a change in form because they are concerned with maintaining the same message. Thus any attempt to retain the form will make the translator lose the entire message.

Similarly, there are other translators who opt for interlinear translations, which Herskovitz and Tagbwe and Bascom have described as “word-for-word” translation. Andrezejewski identifies some flaws in interlinear translation when he observed that:

Since none of the African languages is even remotely related to English, a close “word-for-word” translation in between the other unrelated languages from any part of the world ... Totally different characteristics of word order, concord, tense system or pronominal reference cannot be transferred bodily from the source language to the target language³⁶.

Furthermore, Okot p’Bitek in his Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol observed that:

There is a grave danger that with the root of language they will borrow other foreign things. Every language has its own stock of common images expressing a certain people’s way of looking at things. Every language has its own set of literary forms, which limit a writer’s manner of expressions³⁷.

In deed Okediji wonders:

Why translate the Yoruba play into English with all the formidable problems of dissimilarity of idiom, Yoruba expressions that have no English parallels, songs that defy translation, proverbs and puns which, witty though they are in the original, seem meaningless or irrelevant in the new vehicle, and slangs and jargons which just won't budge when nurged?³⁸

Other obstacles confronted by the translators have been identified. These include the fact that many past collections of proverbs comprise bare texts. In some cases, the indigenous texts are absent. Smith noted that common proverbs comprise many archaisms; grammatical forms as well as words, which are not heard in ordinary conversation and these render translation unquestionably difficult. Besides, translators have discovered to their chagrin that even when a proverb is rendered very clear in its original form, it is very often an uphill task to render it into English. The reason is attributed to corruption of words or phrases, which according to some scholars, have become arhaic or obsolete. It has also been observed by some translators such as Andrzejewski that:

...between the unrelated languages, the meaning ranges of words usually diverge to a much greater extent than in related ones, so that a word in one language may correspond to several words in another or there may be a partial overlapping. For example names of objects, practice and concepts can be found in the source language, which are completely strange to the culture of the translator or reader³⁹.

Some concepts or words in Ondo can have more than one meaning depending on either the context in which it is used or the way in which it is pronounced. "Ojo" for example is the name of a person; the same word with exact spelling can mean "rain" or, "coward".

Numerous proverbs have serious significance, which only the cognoscente who is familiar with the people, their language as well as the context can resolve. Consequently, the resolution of proverbs with heavy implication poses another difficulty for translators. As Voltaire rightly puts it, "translations increase faults of a work and spoils its beauties".

A good number of anthropologists and linguists such as Rattray, Messenger, Kirk-Greene, Burckhardt and Lindfors resort into employing informants who can communicate in the language of the translators. It is pertinent to observe that as much as this arrangement has much to commend it for, it also has a lot to its discredit. This is because of the areas regarded as culturally taboo, particularly what local informants may consider unmentionable to the researcher or the paraomiographer, are more often than not euphemized, censured, changed or bowdlerized depending on how offensive the words or phrases are⁴⁰. In like manner, whenever the informant experiences shame regarding certain primitive things within the society, he euphemizes.

Furthermore, there is the risk of employing selfish local informants who cannot speak in the language of the translator as such; informants can render the text in a completely different way. To substantiate the above, an incident during the Second World War (1939-1945) will suffice. According to Cotterell, the British Political Warfare Department prepared a pamphlet with the pictures of Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt on either side with the jingle “Victory rests with the Allies”. The jingle was to usher in the allied invasion in North Africa. Mohammed Ali, the Arabic connoisseur assigned to the Department, was required to translate the jingle. He changed it to “buy Mohammed Ali’s green tea”. Millions of copies of the leaflet were dropped over Algeria and Morocco. Fortunately, the ally was victorious. Subsequently, the political Warfare department was visited buy an American Intelligence Officer and inquired:

What’s this stuff you’ve been dropping? Oh, it says, “Victory rests with the Allies”. No, it doesn’t say that. Actually it says “Buy Mohammed Ali’s green tea!”

Hence, the above confirms the Italian saying:

...Tradutori, traditori, which means translators, are traitors.

Whatever the case may be, translation is of paramount importance for the benefit of non-speakers of the language.

2.11.1 Solutions to the Problems of Translation.

Numerous collectors have come up with useful and practical suggestions to solve the above problems. Berry is of the opinion that translations should be supported by native texts, the mission of which would certainly result in the loss of much or even the entire stylistic and artistic quality. The following *owe* Ondo serves as an illustration:

E i di l'okunon se po; iin ghen le se po, po, po –
The sick person is requested to say “Po”; he says he cannot say “Po, po, po”.

What he says he cannot say, he repeated three times, that is “Penny wise, pound foolish”. This English translation does not reflect any of the meanings of the concept in the original text. Gray, having realized that translation of Nyanja proverbs to English lose their meaning as well posited that the content or the underlying story or custom be given. Some other critics however, advocate leaving some difficult words or phrases in their original language, which must be explained in the glossary with a view to simplify the explanations of such words. This procedure is especially true of ideophones and onomatopoeia, the reason being that the approach appears to be the best solution despite the fact that the reader would have to pause and learn the sound system and semantics of the language in question, as he tries to read it in translation. First and foremost, the thoughtful reader sets about progressive understanding of the ideophone or onomatopoeia as the case may be, understanding in the process, the scope of the original verbal art.

According to Ajulo, meaning is the most significant thing to translation and it also has some bearing with culture. Ajulo opines that in a situation:

where two languages of different cultures are involved, there are bound to be problems for the translator. This is because for certain items in the source language which represent items peculiar to particular cultural experiences,

there will definitely be no terms that carry their equivalent meanings in the target language.⁴¹

This is due to the fact that certain items exist in the source language, which are peculiar only to the experiences of a particular culture and no terms can portray the equivalent meanings in the target language.

Several collectors, having examined the stylistic analysis of oral art, especially proverbs, maintain that for any oral art to be useful for stylistic analysis, it must be rendered in the African language together with the English text, a literal interlinear translation as well as a free none-the-less accurate translation. In addition, it has also been argued that without the African words, it might be impossible to determine the accuracy of the translation.

As earlier stated, some collectors prefer word-for-word translation while some others emphasize idiomatic translation. Some however, ignoring the verbatim and extreme idiomatic translation, recommend a middle course. In translating from the local language to English Language, many collectors still feel discontented with the English renderings. They however, prefer to leave the English translations in some enigmatic forms or styles.

Lastly, there is a group of collectors who believe that the simplest solution to the problems faced by translators is to pretend that such problems do not exist; in other words, they would rather repress all details that might mystify the reader and paraphrase or condense the contents of the original text. This is beneficial to the readers because they will not be bogged down with unnecessary introductions, footnotes or explanations. It is nevertheless believed by the proponents of this approach that it is not full proof as they all agreed that this approach is suggestive of the compressed versions of written work of art published under titles as Greek Epic Retold or One Hundred World classics.

It is worth mentioning here that the researcher was faced with some problems of translation. In spite of the fact that she is a native speaker of Ondo language, some of the *owe* Ondo have certain indigenous words and grammatical expressions that are impossible to translate into English. The following *owe* Ondo illustrates this succinctly:

Onen a jo jaga, a jo jaga onen a jo lodon a fa gbu'uu.
Whoever wants to dance "jaga" should dance "jaga", whoever wants to dance "lodon" should drag it "gbu'uu".

It is not possible to translate *jaga*, *lodon* and *gbu'uu* into English.

Therefore, according to Ecclesiasticus (Foreward) and in this case the researcher:

Please be patient in those places where inspite of all my diligent efforts, I may not have translated some phrases very well. What was originally written in Hebrew (Ondo) does not always have exactly the same sense when it is translated into another language. That is true not only in this book, but even of the law itself, the Prophets, and other books. The translations differ quite a bit from the original (Good News Bible)⁴²

For the purpose of this study the guiding principles adopted for translating *owe* Ondo into English are multidimensional. Firstly, we shall quote the *owe* in the original, followed by their interlinear translation. Secondly, we shall adopt what may be termed "close" or free or literal translation. This approach is considered necessary because we want to savour the flavour of the original text. Unfortunately, many researchers have adopted idiomatic translations in the process of which the original meaning is lost.

2.12 YORUBA ORAL LITERATURE

Yoruba people have always had a thriving indigenous verbal literature, a good deal of which is poetry. The scope of Yoruba oral literature is an extensive one. It comprises folktales, myths, legends and chants of different types, to mention just a few. Yoruba oral literature is presented in both poetry and prose forms. For example, the folktales are presented mostly in prose with a few lines of poetry interjected in the midst of a long passage. Similarly, the myths and legends are rendered mainly in prose

form whereas the chants are usually rendered in poetic forms. Yoruba oral poetry is diverse in nature. The following according to Abimbola, are considered the most important: *Ifa, Ijala, Oriki, Iwi, Ofo, Rara, Igbala, Ege, and Aro*.

Among the Yoruba, the most important oral form of poetry is Ifa literary corpus. Says Abimbola:

Ifa can safely be regarded as the generic form for all other types of Yoruba literature whether poetry, prose or drama. This is perhaps why Ifa corpus itself is very extensive in scope⁴³.

It is important to note that Ifa corpus contains 256 chapters, each of which is known as an Odu. In each Odu, there are not less than 600 verses, bringing the total number to one hundred and fifty-three thousand, six hundred verses in all.

Ijala, Oriki and Esa are other forms of Yoruba oral poetry that should be mentioned. Ijala is the praise song in honour of Ogun, the Yoruba god of hunting and war whose symbol is Iron. The hunters are close to nature; hence Ijala embodies, inter alia, a profound appreciation of nature. It deals with the history of the pedigree and the old settlements of Yoruba people.

Oriki is another important Yoruba oral poetry. It is the most popular of Yoruba oral poetry. Olatunji affirms its importance and popularity by noting that *oriki* features in the renditions of all Yoruba chanters whenever they address their audience. He also acknowledges the fact that all the oral poets interviewed pronounce *oriki*, especially *oriki orile* (lineage *oriki*) as the main desideratum in assessing the competence of an artist. Thus, every Yoruba oral poet endeavours to know the *oriki* of important personalities in his locality as well as lineage *oriki*. This is due to the fact that every person, common or noble, has his own collection by which he can be hailed. Stressing the great importance, which Yoruba people attach to *oriki*, Babalola observes:

It is traditionally believed that the correct performance of Oriki in honour of a progenitor gladdens the progenitor in the world of the spirits and induces him to shower blessings on his offspring. The reciting or chanting of the appropriate Oriki in honour of the ancestors of a particular family causes

members of that family who hear the performance to feel very proud of their pedigree and if they are then away from home, they also feel exceedingly homesick⁴⁴.

Awe agrees with Babalola when he says that *oriki* brings a feeling of Camaraderie (unity) with one's pedigree as well as "confidence for the present and courage for the future"⁴⁵.

Furthermore, when a personal *oriki* is performed, it evokes in the people, feelings of pride and well-being. Hence, Yoruba people believe that the name of an individual can affect his life and dictate his fortunes in life. A child's name affects him as the Ondo proverb affirms: *Ouko e o i i* (His name affects him).

Esa is another form of Yoruba oral poetry known also as *Iwi* (*Ewi Egungun*). This is the most important dramatic form of Yoruba Oral Lyric. The priests of Egungun – the Yoruba Ancestor of divinity, perform it. *Esa* also makes extensive use of *oriki* within its own structure and style.

The major prose types of oral literature exist in Yoruba namely; *Alo* and *Itan*. These are related in content but slightly different in performance. These are classified as prose narratives. Various themes ranging from stories of animals particularly tortoise to human stories depicting jealousy and incidents of famine, span Ondo Yoruba prose narratives. It is interesting to note that all stories emanating from *alo* are usually personified. The stories usually satirise the society. Many of the stories show that human society itself is the true object of Ondo Yoruba prose narratives. Exemplified in the theme and style of the Ondo Yoruba prose narratives are a potent satire on human society. Man is encouraged to watch the foolish, proud, covetous, dishonest, petty, credulous and indolent behaviours of animals at the end of which the moral teaching of the story points to man himself. In the final analysis, man realizes that while laughing at the stupid behaviour of the lower animals, he had in effect been laughing at himself.

It must be mentioned that the study of Ondo Yoruba literature dates back to 1852 with the publication of A Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language by Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther. In this book, Crowther included a collection of Yoruba proverbs. In his introductory remarks, Vidal states of the nature of Ondo-Yoruba that:

They are in the main metaphorical. Some objects of sense are selected to which the character intended is attributed and some quality or other incident is predicted on the subject, which is designed to figure the intended predicate... This metaphorical style is ... most highly conducive to the poetic character of proverbs⁴⁶.

Crowther made the following comment on the collection of Ondo/ Yoruba proverbs in his 1852 work:

There is a degree of moral light observable in them peculiarly interesting and gives them, I may add, a real value in connection with the inquiry into the moral government of this universe... but there is something more striking; the high standard of morality observable in the sayings of the (Ondo) Yoruba displaying as it does peculiar values which we commonly regard as being appreciated only in civilized societies. Were we to measure this people by the standard of their proverbial morality, we should come to the conclusion that they had attained no inconsiderable height in the development of social relations having passed out of the savage barbarism in which every individual lives for himself alone into a higher state of being in which the mutual dependence of one member on another is recognized, giving room for the exercise of such virtues as a sort of moral contact for the safeguard of society⁴⁷.

It is important to note that between 1852 and 1960, many important collections and studies of Yoruba literature had appeared. These include Lijadu's Ifa (1897) and Orunmila (1907), Epega's Ifa Amona Awon Baba wa, Beyioku's Orunmilaism: The Basis of Jesusism (1943), Osiga's Awise Ifa, (1947). Many collections of Yoruba Oral Poetry were also made, such as Obasa's Iwe kini ti Awon Akewi (1927), Iwe keji ti Awon Akewi, (1933) and Iwe keta ti Awon Akewi (1945), Ajibola's Owe Yoruba (1947), Akintan's Iwe Itumo Awon Owe ati Ede Gesi, (1930), Allen's Iwe Owe, (1885) Lakeru's Awon Owe Ile wa (1930), Oyelese's Alo O, Apa Kini, Alo Apamo (1948), Vincent's Iwe Alo (1885) to mention just a few major ones.

2.12.1. Classifications of Ondo /Yoruba Literature

Below are the classifications of Yoruba oral literature.

Tales	<i>Itan</i>
Praise-songs	<i>Arofo</i>
Praise-names	<i>Oriki</i>
Plays	<i>Ere</i>
Songs	<i>Orin</i>
Poetry	<i>Ijala, Ewi</i>
Myths	<i>Itan</i>
Legend	<i>Itan</i>
Riddles	<i>Alo</i>
Tongue-Twisters	<i>Oro Akonilenu</i>
Proverbs	<i>Owe</i>

The focus of this research is on the last one, namely proverbs. Many paramiographers have achieved a lot in the area of the collection of proverbs. The work on proverbs is not an exclusively western art. The Africans, nay the Yoruba also share in it. This confirms that proverbs are ubiquitous. A good number of Yoruba proverb collections include the following:

Allen S.A.	-	<u>Iwe Owe</u> (1885)
Eesuola J.	-	<u>Owe Yoruba</u> (1939)
Winfunke B.A.	-	<u>Awon Owe Yoruba</u> (1941)
Bada S.O.	-	<u>Owe Yoruba ati Isedale won</u> (1970)
Lindfors B. and Owomoyela O	-	Yoruba Proverbs: Translation and Annotation (1973)
Ajibola J.O.	-	<u>Owe Yoruba</u> (1973)
Delano I.O.	-	<u>Owe L'esin oro</u> (1976)

- Akinlade K. - Owe ati Itumo (1982)
 Kosemanii S. - Owe ati Asayan oro Yoruba (1987)

However, Ondo being one of the major ethnic groups in Yoruba land has her own *sui generis*. Ondo shares the general Yoruba proverbs but she has proverbs that are unique to her. This may be as a result of her location as well as her flora and fauna. Ondo is located in the rain forest region of Nigeria and her major cash crop is cocoa. She is a major producer of cocoa in Yorubaland.

A search of the literature on Yoruba folklore reveals a dearth of disciplined research on Ondo proverbs. Nevertheless, there are some graduate works from other ethnic groups in the country. For example *Hausa Karin Magana* by Bello Bada, *Tiv Anzaaka* by Akosu Adeiyongo, "Proverbial Lore in Aniocha Oral Literature" by Ambrose Adikamkwu Monye, "Form and Meaning of Idoma-Otukpo Proverbs" by Idris O.O. Amali and "A Sociolinguistic Approach to Igbo Proverbs", by W.W. Agu, to mention just a few. It is in the light of this gap that the present study aims at a systematic study of some of the themes, functions and poetic devices of Ondo proverbs.

2.13 OBSCENITY IN PROVERBS

One apparent feature of proverb is the fact that they embody what many collectors tag "taboos of human life". According to Clemens many most innocent looking proverbs contain allusions to things no one nowadays would wish to mention in public. For example, *Okan job'Ado* which means, "It is more sour than the vagina of Ado".

Consequently, paraomniographers generally exclude everything they regard as 'dirty' from their collections. Thus such collections are substantially reduced. Says Rattray:

Much would have to be omitted or toned down, as savage folklore is often coarse and vulgar according to our notions, and hardly fit "pour les jeunes filles"; (for young girls) but for the student of anthropology such collections cannot be considered to possess much value⁴⁸.

The result of the euphemising, expurgating and bowdlerizing of these “offensive items”, which many paraomniographers, who would not wish to record the so-called indecent proverbs, have restored to, has been recognized. For instance, Berry, in his lamentation observes, “our records are not nearly so representative as they might have been”⁴⁹.

The Ondo, like other Yoruba ethnic groups, do not see sexual proverbs as unmentionable or immodest by merely using sexual symbols. According to Ojoade:

Yoruba using these proverbs is simply looking for the most appropriate vehicle to convey his message, his point, and his ideas in a forceful way; he is merely aiming at directness, frankness and starkness. In a word, he just likes to call a spade a spade, and there are no really dirty words⁵⁰.

To support the above statement the following *owe* Ondo will suffice:

- (i) On’oyun inon, o m’obo to e.
She is pregnant, but she loans out her vagina.
- (ii) Onen o ba’nen lo s’abe koko laa basun, e e kan iso gha
an se ma i.
He who deceives (lures) one in order to have intercourse with
under the cocoyam plant will only do it once (i.e succeed in
tricking one).

It is worthy of note that, although these proverbs may be regarded as obscene, they drive home valuable ethical maxims, which are completely accepted and valued by the folks. In addition, the Ondo people have a lot of ethical or religious proverbs which echo the Christian instructions, which Ondo people accepted and see as having “organized their lives” as earlier discussed under religion in chapter one of this study.

Several scholars have argued that all types of obscene folklore should be collected, not for the sake of the obscenity, but rather because they are, in the words of Dundes and Georges “needed to put into practice the theory that a complete study of folklore must include all genres”⁵¹. The suggestion of Dundes and Georges is reminiscent of Paul’s advice to the Romans:

- (i) Nothing is in itself unclean; only anything is unclean for a man who considers it unclean (Moffat)
- (ii) A voice came to him; Rise Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, No, no, my Lord; I have never eaten anything common or unclean⁵².

In a similar vein, the researcher has included in this study some so-called obscene proverbs because she does not believe that proverbs per se are obscene even though they may address issues and subject matters, which some cultures consider as obscene.

2.14 FUNCTIONS OF PROVERBS

Smith interprets function to mean the latent and unintended effects of particular modes of social action. Accordingly, this researcher seeks to examine the hidden qualities in proverbs, which enable them to function in diverse ways.

2.14.1 Proverbs as Impersonal Vehicle for Personal Communication.

Similar to other genres of folklore, proverbs perform the function of an impersonal medium for personal communication. Proverbs are used to guide and direct the behaviour or thought of a child or an individual. Once the proverb is quoted and the message is passed across, the responsibility is then shifted from the speaker to the anonymous coiner of the proverb. For example:

A ti kekee e ti p'eika uoko i, do ba a dagba tan e i du ka ma.
One trims the branch of an "iroko" tree when it is still tender, when matures it cannot be bent.

The addressee then becomes aware of the fact that the proverb did not originate from the adult speaker but has come from an elder somewhere, sometime ago. Arewa and Dundes make it clear when they say, "it is the "one", "the elders", or the "they" in "They say" who give the order. The adult is simply the instrument through which the proverb is speaking to the addressee".

2.14.2 Proverbs Smooth Difficulties and add Pith to the Speech

Proverbs are discretely introduced into conversations at the decisive moment thus influencing the real decisions finally taken. Kirk-Greene says that:

In social intercourse, it (proverb) smooths out difficulties and adds pith to the well-known accomplishment of the African conversation⁵³.

While elaborating on the vigour, which a proverb can bring into speech, Thompson asserts that the proverb is very useful to preliterate people, because when words cannot be read, they are greatly appreciated when heard. The flow of the words that come out of the mouth gives pleasure in itself apart from the particular theme of the words themselves. The aesthetic value implied here is suggestive of the joy, which many audiences have in hearing a poem verbalized. It takes on a new life, affecting the audience more deeply through sound than it ever has affected-through sight. Merrick commenting on the Hausa use of proverbs in conversation noted that:

They enter into ordinary conversation to an extent of which one does not become aware in the routine of a provincial court, or of the orderly room⁵⁴.

The above observation is not applicable to Hausa proverbs alone. It is also very true of the function performed by *owe* Ondo.

2.14.3 Proverbs for Commenting and Persuading

Proverbs are used for commenting or persuading as the case may be. Again, the indirect and expressive natures of proverbs make it particularly effective for the proverbs to carry out this function. For instance, a speaker may desire to convey a message in such a way that the implication can be denied later, or so that only some among his audience may understand the point. This suggestiveness is evolved to an especially high degree in the Zande Sanza in which a kind of malicious double-talk is used to express a meaning other than the obvious sense.

2.14.4 Proverbs as Stereotyped Sarcasm

The proverb can also be utilized as a stereotyped sarcasm, which is a culturally approved medium of expressing resentment without facing the risk of litigation. This empowers the proverb to function as an alternative for fistfights. Hence instead of engaging his fist to fight his opponent, the speaker punches him with sarcastic proverbs.

2.14.5 Proverb as Vehicle for Ridicule and Mockery

Proverb serves the function of ridicule and mockery effectively. Smith demonstrated the effectiveness of this function on its victims when he observed that, “wit has a utilitarian aim, laughter is never far away, and because of their susceptibility to ridicule, the Ila, like many others, can sometimes be laughed out of a thing more effectively than deterred by argument or force”⁵². Hence Pharisees are ridiculed as those who “spurn the frog but drink the water”. Says Finnegan:

Any kind of satirical or penetrating comment on behaviour may be made in the form of a proverb and used to warn or advise or bring someone to his senses⁵⁵.

2.14.6 Proverbs as Basis for Praise-names

Proverbs and proverbial phrases can be used as the basis of many praise-names and titles, lorries, canoes, handkerchiefs; and the styles of tying and wearing headties are named by proverbs. These kinds of names have the function of expressing publicly but allusively, resentment, defiance and derision, or contrarily, approbation and congratulations. For instance, amidst the Ashanti, a senior wife who is jealous of her junior mate, may call her “goat” or “fowl” komfo b ne; making reference to the famous proverb which means “the bad fetish priest looked after the sick man till the good one arrived”. Mentioning the goat or fowl, she remembers the proverb a hundred times a day. Noss observes that:

In any literary tradition, names may be a device for telling the reader something about the character bearing the name, this being especially true of the African traditions in respect of praise names as well as praise songs⁵⁶.

2.14.7 Proverbs As Games And Entertainment.

Proverbs also constitute part of the games of Africans. Cardinal notes that among the Kassena tribes of Ashanti:

Another form of word-games is for one of the circle to say a word which has apparently no meaning at all but which has been memorized as the key of a proverb⁵⁷.

Scholars such as Junod and Whiting noted that among the Thonga people the recitation of proverbs itself form a game while a number of Thonga riddles are solved with proverbs. The Fante of Ghana recite proverbs for entertainment both at evening gatherings and during ceremonies and celebrations where a panel of Judges is appointed to determine the winner between the contestants. Similarly, the Bantu people use proverbs in regular games like riddles. In addition, we learn that during normal occasions, interpretations of proverbs are exchanged between contestants while players trade in their new proverbs and their interpretations for the ones they knew.

2.14.8 Proverbs as Humour

Lots of intercontinental proverbs contain many humourous features. The humour of Spanish proverbs and Razvamlan's, L'humour dans les proverbes persans" provide captivating examples. Hence, proverbs function as humour. Often times, experts of proverbs do not pay much attention to the words with which such proverbs are adorned by thinking only of the implied meanings. Hence, much of the humour embedded in the proverbs is ignored. Yet, a little more attention paid to the picture painted by the words of the proverbs will unveil the humourous aspect of Africa proverbs. Writing about humour in Igbo proverbs, Nwoga observes that in Igbo culture, the tortoise is funny and sly, the he-goat, lustful and witty, and the madman humorously foolish. Hence, proverbs utilizing these symbols are bound to promote humour. For instance, a man could ask for pardon by calmly ascribing his fault to an

instinct beyond his control, the type of instinct, which makes the he-goat pursue his mother. Since the he-goat has claimed that he pursues his mother because he is being lured to it by something attached to his body, a situation beyond his control but which makes him truly remorseful.

In like manner, a visitor who wants to leave in a hurry can say, like the madman in Igbo culture, that he has a long distance to cover, besides, some intended dancing on the road. This is because madmen can be recognized by their dancing on the road to the tune of a kind of music obviously heard only by them.

Ondo proverbs are interlarded with the humour, which can easily be identified by only the native speakers. We shall discuss some examples in chapter four of this study.

2.14.9 Proverbs for Smoothing Social Frictions

Proverbs are employed for smoothing social conflicts and discontent and calming the individual in his efforts to adjust himself in his new setting and fate. Some scholars underscore the benefits in proverbs' function of indirection to smoothen the rough edges of conversation in a community whose citizens aspire to live together peacefully. Firstly, it prevents both the speaker and the addressee from embarrassment. The significance of the hidden meaning, which usually could be spiteful, is restricted only to those affected or those who can understand. For instance, if the speaker is asking for a favour, then the refusal will not lead to embarrassment. If an addressee's guilt is referred to in proverb, he has an opportunity to accept his fault without losing face.

2.14.10 Proverbs as Bearers of Philosophical Insight

From the information at our disposal, we can conclude that quite a number of African proverbs function as bearers of philosophical insight. The corpus of the proverbs of non-literate people all over the world comprise the basis of their moral

and political philosophy; their Weltanschauung their volkpsychologie. Several paraomigraphers such as Rattray, Brown, Radin, Achebe and Finnegan have confirmed this assertion.

Scholars such as Loeb noted that proverbs were man's first significant attempt at abstract thinking. These specific proverbs show the terseness of the wisdom of the autochthons (dwellers) as well as the shrewdness of their thoughts. Foreign researchers have been so highly impressed by African philosophy (especially when compared with theirs) as to wonder inter alia, that:

A savage or primitive people could possibly have possessed the rude philosophers, theologians, moralists, naturalists and even philologists, which many of the proverbs prove them to have had among them⁵⁸.

The significance of proverbial philosophy is never lost to any researchers or paraomigraphers as expressed by Elmslie who forcefully remarks that:

The proverb does for human life something that science does for the world of nature: It rouses the unseeing eye and the unheeding ear to the marvel of what seems ordinary⁵⁹.

Nevertheless, when we talk about African philosophical proverbs, we do not only mean the developed systematic quest for western thought but also the endeavour by Africans to portray and understand the world in which they live in – the conduct of their gods, the facts of life and death, the philosophy of their gods, the philosophy of their communities, their ways to success and happiness, the vagaries of human features and the laws by which they must live⁶⁰. It has also been stressed that African philosophical proverbs exist as oral philosophy. It follows logically then that one cannot expect logical coherence in its summary. The only rationale that would matter is situational⁶¹.

Nevertheless, it must be observed that not all investigators believe that Africans and other non-literate people possess the ability for abstract thinking. Levy-Bruhl illustrates this group of investigators. No consideration of any evidence from

proverbs was available before Levy-Bruhl made his comments, thereby committing a faux pas. For as earlier mentioned, quite a good number of African proverbs function as bearers of African philosophical insight. Thompson is emphatic in attesting to the fact that the “common function of proverbs in general is that of bearing philosophical insight”⁶².

Now, what is the situation with the Ondo philosophical proverbs? Speaking generally about proverbs, Kirk-Green observes “In the absence of a vigorous written literature they may serve as the guardian and the carrier of a nation’s philosophy and genesis”⁶³.

Chapter four of this study presents some examples of the *owe* Ondo, which are bearers of philosophical insight. However, in order to wet the appetite of our reader(s), few examples will suffice for the purpose of this section. The reader is hereby entreated to “furnish the contribution of his own thought to the solution” of the philosophical problem hidden in *owe* Ondo.

- i) Abee bo n’ow’adete o d’eete
The needle drops from a leper’s hand it becomes a problem.
- ii) Aiye yanen bu en ose
Going through life is not as fast as trekking.
- iii) A bi e e, e e si gwi
He who asks does not make mistake.
- iv) Bi ilekun kan ba a ti, o mu en si.
If one door does not close, another does not open.
- v) Da ba a s’ ada s’ale ni ee megwa ibi pelebe ghen mu l’ale i.
Even if one throws a cutlass on the ground ten times, it will always lie on its flat side.

2.14.11 Proverbs as Vehicle for Education

The educative function of proverbs cannot be over-emphasized. There is scarcely any collector who does not recognize this very important function of the proverb. Berry observes for example, that children in West Africa are taught proverbs

and their educational function cannot be better exemplified than in the Akan proverb, which says “wise child is talked to in proverbs”⁶⁴. As expected, paraomiographers as well as annotators or critics such as Raum, Gray, Loeb, Finnegan, Wilson, Hull, Nyembezi and Essien have all found time to mention the significance of proverbs in education. Speaking about the educative use of proverbs among East Africans, Raum noted that beginning from age fourteen:

When a child flies into a rage, when he lies or steals, when he is recalcitrant or violates the code of etiquette, when he makes an ass out of himself, when he is cowardly, he hears his actions commented upon in the words of a proverb⁶⁵.

As for the functions of *owe* Ondo as vehicles for education, chapter four of this study addresses the topic in detail.

2.15 VALUE OF PROVERBS

The meaning of value according to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English is “the usefulness, helpfulness or importance of something, especially in comparison with other things”⁶⁶. In this section of the work, we concern ourselves with the usefulness of proverb to its users. In this regard, we discover that proverbs have tremendous value to speakers, particularly public orators such as preachers, erudite scholars particularly to linguists and philologists; artists, decorators and educators; tribal lawyers and tribal courts; to anthropologists and psychologist and last but not the least to philosophers and doctors.

Commenting on the value of proverbs to speakers, particularly orators, some paraomiographers have aptly observed that:

Proverbs are somewhat analogous to medical formulae, which being in frequent use were kept ready made up in the chemists’ shops and which often served the farming of special prescriptions⁶⁷.

Ferguson views proverbs as an anthology of tags, which facilitate the communication of thoughts and ideas; exchange or trade without striving to create new ones. Hence, in the same way an English or Russian Dictionary makes a list of words in which

thoughts or ideas can be expressed. In like manner, are proverbs or proverbial expressions and phrases listed, which in themselves represent preformulated thoughts that allow new ideas to be conveyed and exchanged without attempting to formulate new ones. Ferguson affirms that, proverbs are encapsulated ideas ready for prompt application at opportuned occasion.

In his remarks about Africa, Whiting observes that:

The extreme fondness, which the African Negroes have, for proverbs and their habit of larding their ordinary conversation with them has been commented on often. It is unusual for a native to speak about any subject for more than a minute or two without enlivening his remarks by apt quotation of a proverb. This use of proverbs is by no means due alone to a desire on the part of the speaker to adorn his discourse with more or less crystallized figures of speech, for among some Africans the proverb is an argumentative weapon of resu power, and it is seldom that an argument fortified by an apt quotation fails to be conclusive⁶⁸

Finnegan observes that in many African societies the urge for language, for imagery and for the articulation of abstract thoughts through compressed and allusive phraseology comes particularly clearly in proverbs. He further remarks that the figurative feature of proverbs is especially striking; one of the most striking characteristics is their allusive wording, usually in metaphorical structure. Commenting on the value of Ghanaian proverbs, Nketia points out that:

The value of the proverbs to us in modern Ghana does not lie only in what it reveals of the thoughts of the past. For the poet today or indeed for the speaker who is some sort of an artist in the use of words, the proverb is a model of compressed or forceful language. In addition, to drawing on it for its words of wisdom, therefore, he takes interest in its verbal techniques – its selection of words, its use of comparison as a method of statement, and so on. Familiarity with its techniques enables him to create, as it were, his own proverbs. This enables him to avoid hackneyed expressions and gives a certain amount of freshness to his speech⁶⁹.

The value, which people attach to proverbs, is portrayed clearly in their evaluation, of proverbs that is expressed through some definitions. Hence, to the Arab, “a proverb is to speech what salt is to food” or “proverbs are lamps to words”; to the Bosnians, proverbs in conversation are torches in darkness; the Chinese say that

“when one has read the book of proverbs, no effort is needed to speak well” (the Jarawa says so too); to the Hebrew, “what flowers are to gardens, spices to food, gems to a garment and stars to heaven, such are proverbs interwoven in speech”. Furthermore, the Persians see proverbs as the “adornment of speech”; while to the Romans “proverbs are salt-pits from which you may extract salt and sprinkle it where you will”. To the Dutch, proverbs are the daughters of daily experience; the Estonians regard proverbs as “the key of the thought”; the Italians say “proverbs bear age, and he would do well who views himself in them as in a looking-glass”; the Swiss-German says that “in a proverb you buy with your ears a good lesson at the cheapest price”.

The scenario is the same in Africa. According to the Ashantis, “when a fool is told a proverb the meaning of it still has to be explained to him”, the Kongo regard “proverbs as the affairs of the nation”, to the Kenyans, “there is no saying without a double meaning”; to the Ruandan, “a proverb comes not from nothing”. The Igbo say ‘the proverb is palm oil that they use to eat a word’ or ‘proverb is the brother of speech’. “Among the Hausa “this is the beginning of words that are taken and jumbled (that a man may not know their meaning) and such is called *habaichi*-proverb”. As earlier stated, among the Ondo-Yoruba, “*owe* is the vehicle (horse) of conversation; when the conversation drops (droops), *owe* finds (reviews) it. Proverb and conversation follow each other”; as the Ondo-Yoruba remark “a wise man who knows proverbs reconciles difficulties”.

The usefulness of proverbs to preachers had never been questioned. In fact Trench aptly observes that “great preachers to the people, such as have found that their way to the universal heart of their fellow, have been great employers of proverbs”⁷⁰. Because proverbs are utilized as a strategy to “ake-up” audience and are

greatly effective, only old and respected elders are well versed in applying a variety of proverbs, the effect of hearing these from outsiders is exciting.

Spurgeon remarks, “The salt of proverbs is of great service if discreetly used in sermons and addresses. Hence, when a preacher aims at persuading, moulding the thought and moving the will, there is no other effective method than applying proverbs⁷¹.”

Are proverbs of any use to the scholar of languages, linguists or for the philologists? Wilson, the renowned lexicographer notes that one significant explanation for the study of proverbs may be found in its value *inter alia* for philology and for literary studies. Certainly, it proves to be of great benefit to the student or scholar of languages by “illuminating certain exquisite point of grammar in regard to which evidence was non-existent”⁷².

Additionally, we are quite aware that the true proverb is not the elaborately thought expression of an individual, rather it is the popularly accepted statement of old and wide experience. Its literary form does not necessarily have to be polished, suggesting that it sprang from the lower ranks, not the educated. In order to have an idea about the language used by a particular people at a particular period, it is not always proper to depend only on the literature of that time. For the literary language is always at great variance from the spoken language. So proverbs furnish us with the most valuable information for forming a conception of how the people spoke in their daily interaction.

Lots of proverbs contain many words that are not in common use as well as some archaic and grammatical structures. However, a copious number of proverbs have been handed down with little or no change from one generation to another. Lexicographers are compelled to utilize them if they are to produce a complete dictionary of any particular language. Hence, proverbs are valuable to scholars of the

vocabularies of any specific society. Moreover, in the present position of any language, while old proverbs are declining, while hard sounds are being softened, contact with those that came from ancient times and have thrived up till now, will assist in clarifying doubtful points of more than one kind.

Applying the preceding to the Ondo scenario, it is safe to say with collectors such as Rattray, Smith and Plover to mention a few, that in these days of scientific acquisition of language, proverbs should not be ignored. The Ondo proverbial philosophy, like others, is interwoven into the verbal language, which no scholar of such a language can possibly overlook completely. According to Rattray no speaker can use a language, e.g. Ondo, like other African languages, with force and finish unless these proverbial saying have formed a part of his mental picture.

Therefore, in choosing *owe* Ondo, the reader or speaker is acquiring knowledge of the Ondo language as the Ondo people themselves employ it in their daily intercourse and interaction. Lastly, recording the proverbs in their local text renders great assistance to the scholar of the language to appreciate its structure and idioms in a way that the best grammar could not.

2.16 ROLE OF PROVERBS IN LITERATURE

It is not an overstatement to say that proverbs are of tremendous value to literary scholars and writers. Taylor remarks that proverbs are better appreciated of folks at all times than the literate. Hence proverbs are used freely in works, which appeal to the people as well as in writings in which the folk represent the dramatist personae. Proverbs are hardly used in works, which neither appeal to nor characterize the folk. Therefore in works of literature the value of proverbs differ depending on whether or not the writer aims to appeal to the folk or characterize them; or whether the writer deliberately plans to exclude the folk. Thus, while the application of proverb is useful to the first group of writers, it is of no consequence to the second set.

Many African writers, notably Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Ola Rotimi make copious use of proverbs in their works in order to appeal to or characterize the folk.

2.17 PROVERBS IN TEACHING

During the 10th century, proverbs were employed for teaching Latin in England. For a period of time, particularly in the 19th century and after, students were expected to improve both their intellect and their writing by copying proverbs in their notebooks. The most famous proverbs still make up the background of every English-speaking student. Hull remarks that of all genres of oral literature, proverbs incorporate the greatest educational effect.

Finnegan's researches confirm the above findings of Hull. Really, Finnegan remarks that African proverbs are utilized not only formally but also internationally as a means to achieve the same objectives as the modern day formal education, in which according to Raum, the value of proverbs is highlighted during initiation ceremonies. The inclination to teach with proverbs seems to be prevalent in African societies. Finnegan notes that "In many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs"³.

Therefore, whenever parents, grandparents, district leaders and the like want to educate the youth, they employ mnemotechnic devices such as, inter alia, proverbs that will catch and retain the interest and attention of their pupils.

2.18 MORAL AND RELIGIOUS VALUE

That proverbs have had a subtle yet persuasive influence on popular opinions cannot be disputed. As if one recalls how one's decisions to do this or that, and vice versa, have been guided by proverbs and how one's normal expression is controlled by some proverbial wisdom, one may conclude that proverb has a subtle and powerful

effect on one's life. Taylor observes that in times of trouble and perplexity, people turn to proverbs for resolutions and they found them very useful.

As we have earlier pointed out in this chapter, it is no gainsaying that the missionary finds some aspects of the proverb useful for his work. In fact, many a missionary use proverbs as explanatory materials for religious matters connected with the Christian faith. Corroborating the foregoing, Bergsma notes that:

In recent times proverbs have been used by missionaries to evoke situational responses. A list of proverbs was made by a mission agency, which could be used by evangelists as explanatory material for "doctrinal" matters relating to the Christian faith... Such use of traditional utterances in preaching is now common, and their unexpected usage within a sermon creates an immediate rapport with the audience, especially in the 'bush' areas⁷⁴.

In this study therefore, the researcher is aware that as far as the Ondo are concerned, Bishop Ajayi Crowther made a list of Yoruba proverbs in his Yoruba Dictionary. Consequently, it will not be out of place to conclude that no wisdom under the sky, which is not dealt with in one-way or another by proverbs. Therefore, most of the sermons, which pastors strive to elucidate and pass on to their congregation, can be encapsulated into a proverb or a number of them. Norman Douglas pondered:

What is all wisdom save a collection of platitudes? Take fifty of our current proverbial sayings – they are so trite, so threadbare, that we can hardly bring our lips to utter them. Nonetheless, they embody concentrated wisdom of the race, and the man who orders his life according to their teaching cannot go far wrong⁷⁵.

2.19 TRIBAL LAW

Like many other races, Africans are legally inclined. Herzog remarks that "Since almost any act has legalistic aspect, there is hardly a discussion of any consequence (whether or not actually in court) in which proverbs are not employed by Africans"⁷⁶.

Whenever the adages of a society have been bequeathed from father to son through many generations, they certainly represent the unwritten law of the people. Apart from consciously or unconsciously moulding the lives of the folk, it also creates

unmistakable authority for their beliefs. African proverbs are always received with admiration and finality. They actually have the finality from which there is no petition.

It is not surprising then, why some collectors go to the extent of suggesting that proverbs constitute African “tribal law”. In the words of a local informant to a collector, “some of the proverbs here recorded might even help the present day judges of our land in trying their cases”⁷⁷.

Many a paraomiographer and critics, who report that an accused person will even go out of his way to look for a lawyer who is versed in proverbs and their application, have emphasized the value of proverbs in the operation of African trials. Like lawyers in the Western world make reference to previous cases and decisions to prove the innocence of their clients to a judge and jury, so also Africans cite appropriate proverbs.

The foregoing shows the importance of proverbs to the users. Furthermore, these proverbs, which symbolize the reservoir of wisdom of the people are arrayed with authority, and still employed today. It is evident that people still believe the same things, in much the same way and possessing much of the same experiences that they had had ages ago. The authenticity of this is largely due to the fact that ancient proverbs have a particular force for a conservative and reverence for the people who feel attached to the ancient traditions. It cannot be denied that the users respect the authority of proverbs.

The above picture is also true of Ondo people who have respect for old age and thus follow virtually the wisdom of the old as well as of the past.

2.20 POETIC DEVICES

Poetic or stylistic devices are some prevalent phenomena which paraomiographers always come across in almost all proverbs and proverbial sayings in

their collections. Stylistic devices mean those ingredients which are added to verbal art to make it unequalled and fascinating, colourful and memorable, so as to sustain the interest of the spectators and achieve the greatest effectiveness as a work of art.

As regards why proverbs or proverb coiners utilize stylistic devices, all paraomiographers seem to agree. For instance memorability has been provided as one reason why proverbs are stylistically composed. MacLaren says that “The proverb should be striking in form, so as to be easily remembered... It should strike the intelligence by the truth as much as the ear by its sound”⁷⁸.

Ogbalu observes that “perhaps (the) most important source of interest in proverbs at the literal level is that which contributes most to their memorability”⁷⁹. It is assumed that all proverbs and proverbial saying must be impressive and lend themselves to easy memorability for proverbs are mostly spoken rather than written.

On what do proverbs depend in order to make it effective and easily remembered? All paraomiographers as well as observers agree that for proverbs to be effective, they must depend on diverse devices or some tricks of the trade. These incorporate, inter alia, alliteration (e.g. “Caught in the clash of counter claims”) metaphor (e.g. Don’t cry over spilled milk), and hyperbole (e.g. Fling him into the Nile and he will come up with a fish in his mouth), to mention just a few.

Ruth Finnegan notes proverb “depend for their impact on the aptness with which they are applied in a particular circumstance especially on the style and form of words in which they are adorned”⁸⁰. Says Nwoga:

The pattern of sounds and clauses sheer linguistic beauty is characteristic of most proverbs, and this is perhaps why one comes across many proverbs in traditional songs. It is also this more than the content that accounts for the ease with which proverbs are memorized and often used to enliven and beautify oratory⁸¹.

The significance of the application of stylistic devices has been well noted. Thompson rightly observes, “The commonplace truism, given on eloquent form hits

us almost as a fresh insight⁸². Several scholars such as Sachs, Sackett, Thompson and Nwoga are convinced that, as far as application of stylistic devices is concerned, proverb serves much the same function as a poem, that is, uplifting the ordinary in such a forceful manner that it is seen in a new and clearer light. Thompson notes that:

To polish commonplaces and give them a new lustre; to express in a few words the obvious principles of conduct, and to give to clear thoughts an even clearer expression, to illuminate dimmer expressions and bring their faint rays to a focus; to delve beneath the surface of consciousness to new veins of precious ore, to name and discover and bring to light latent unnamed experience, and finally to embody the central truths of life in the breadth and terseness of memorable phrases – all these are opportunities of the aphorist, and to take advantage of these opportunities, he must be a thinker, an accurate observer, a profound moralist, a psychologist, and an artist as well⁸³.

Therefore, it can be concluded that proverb sounds like a poem as it has an identical emotional quality, provokes similar reaction, produces that gratifying “Aha” of recognition which accompanies a moment of insight. That certain poetic devices are peculiar to certain people is one common feature usually found by paraomiographers. It may be necessary however, to research into this area to confirm or refute this observation.

For instance Sumarian proverbs are specifically known for the use of parallelism while Hebrew proverbs of the Old Testament canon have the characteristic features of Hebrew poetic devices. The most noticeable of which is parallelism. According to some collectors such as Plopper and Kelso, Chinese proverbs and proverbial sayings are noted for their antithetical couplets. Arabic proverbs employ hyperbole as well as colourful pictorial forms of expressions. An apt example of the above is the proverb “Throw him into the river and he will rise with a fish in his mouth”. In the case of classical Greek, the proverbs are mostly metrical in structure, which is usually anapaestic, iambic, trochaic and dactylic; traditional Latin proverbs and proverbial sayings are typically pithy and terse. The following Latin proverb illustrates such examples:

Praemonitus, praemunitus
Forewarned, forearmed.

Several people employ alliteration, pun as well as rhyme in garnishing their proverbs, such as the following Scottish proverb – ‘Many a mickle makes a muckle’⁸⁴ – many small thing make one big thing.

For exigencies of space, a few examples which paraomiographers have discovered also share the same experience with both Orientals as well as Occidentals will be cited from Africa. According to Vidal proverbs in couplet form, found among the Chinese are also detected among the Yoruba. Ellis and Mockler-Ferryman are other collectors who also perceived this phenomenon among the Yoruba people.

Due to the metaphorical nature of proverbs, virtually all cultures adorn their proverbs in metaphorical language, Africa inclusive. Sackett rightly pointed out that “in any collection of proverbial maxims by far the greater portion of them is metaphorical in nature”⁸⁵. Nwoga’s work reveals that Igbo proverbs are repetitive and constructive in nature. In view of Nyembezi’s documentation it can be said that not all African proverbs use elaborate styles. For instance the Zulu proverb can be a simple statement comprising a few words.

Considering the artistic development in Africa in relation to Europe of the Middle Ages, Whiting observes that concerning alliteration, balance, rhythm, rhyme and even musical settings, many Africans had gone as far as the Europeans while in the Middle Ages, the growth of the European proverb stopped.

Like proverbs the world over, *owe* Ondo exhibits diverse poetic and stylistic devices, which we shall have the opportunity to discuss in chapter five which has been solely devoted to that purpose.

2.21 EARLIEST FORM OF PROVERBS

We shall now consider an aspect of paraomiography, which touches on the earliest form of proverb, which the first proverbial sayings of any community might

have adopted. A lot of proverb collectors have reported that the local proverbs are predominantly figurative and as such it is logical to believe these statements. It is possible that the initial proverbial sayings of any given nation might have taken this form.

Some paraomiographers claim that some non-literate folks have no proverbs at all, while some others have few and simple proverbs and proverbial sayings. Based on the foregoing, they tentatively recommend the form the earliest proverbial material must have taken. We have learnt that a lot of the proverbs are figurative, with the simile taken from common objects flourishing in local and personal allusions. It has been opined that these proverbs, built on indigenous and familiar life would forestate the abstract sayings as well as the more philosophical proverbs.

In Africa, both categories appear to be combined inextricably. However, the case is different in the South Seas, where several of the Melanesians have no proverbs at all, while others have inadequate supply. The speech of these people is of parables and metaphors, a good number of which have become proverbial relating to individuals living or but recently dead. As regards to Solomon Islanders, all their proverbs are hinged on comparisons none of which is antiquated in language or in allusion.

The Tongans or Friendly Islanders also apply proverbial statements, a lot of which are metaphorical and allusive, and a few aphoristic.

Whiting believes that it is not out of the ordinary to conclude that among the above-mentioned islanders, one might perceive the commencement of proverbial literature. This is so particularly as it is possible that amidst these folks, this phenomenon is fairly new and, under normal circumstances, would develop as proverbs have developed among other natives. If in fact the proverbs involved are not a fossilization or fixation of condition of things hundreds of years ago, then, this

would imply that the earliest proverbs were easy, having been based directly on physical or material experiences, while the more complicated ones would not have surfaced until a particular intellectual development had taken place.

2.22 CONTRADICTIONARY PROVERBS

That life is a bundle of contradictions has been confirmed by the report of collectors on the sweeping occurrence of what might be termed “contradictory proverbs”. As a popular saying goes: “circumstances alter cases”, proverbs allude to different situations and circumstances. However, these situations and circumstances do alter, and do vary from time to time. It means therefore that at any given time, two proverbs may appear coherently to contradict each other. Yet, each proverb may be true, because a person may look at a problem from more than one angle. For vivid illustration of the above, the following apparently contradictory proverbs will suffice:

- (i) Too many cooks spoil the broth and
- (ii) Many hands make light work

Undoubtedly, if analyzed differently, certainly the two proverbs contradict each other. But does each proverb express the truth? Certainly, each proverb is expressing what may be termed “one side of the coin”.

Does “Too many cooks spoil the broth” not make sense to a Managing Director whose enterprise is chaotic because too many people try to do the same thing at the same time? On the other hand, is “Many hands make light work” not true even when the same Managing Director gets a task done more quickly because more people carried out the task? Therefore, that contradictory proverbs exist is not an overstatement. But each one can be employed only as or when it applies to a particular circumstance.

That African collections are filled with contradictory proverbs can be seen from the illustrations given by Finnegan. The researcher believes that this may also be

true of *owe* Ondo even though the researcher has not been able to find any in her present collection. The research in this area continues.

2.23 NATIONAL TRAITS

With almost unanimous agreement, paraomiographers, anthropologists, commentators, investigators and other social scientists who utilize proverbs as data for their studies acknowledge ab initio that proverbs preserve national traits and cultural legacy of any given people, their traditions, their believes and other Weltanschauung. The above is also true of *owe* Ondo. The people are noted for their pride, hospitality and education. To drive home the point on pride, the following *owe* speak for themselves:

- i) Igbe'a ga oun e s'ugwaju upa'uun i.
Pride goes before a fall.
- ii) Eyin oun om'ajie to yie i
The chick follows behind its mother.
- iii) E su se mato se le sa'e to, ku ugwaju ghaan kan'le i
No matter how fast a car speeds, the ground is always ahead of it.
- iv) Ninon dede eiye yo pan'ko, oga oun apaio je ni nen i.
Out of all the birds with red beak, the "aparo" is above all of them.

The foregoing then, is a conducted tour of the entire world, starting from the classical period to the present time, namely Greek, China, Bosnia, Polynesia to mention just a few.

Although the review appears to be brief, it is comprehensive enough in its brevity.

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CHAPTER THREE

THEMES IN *OWE ONDO*

- (a) There is no conceivable situation in life for which the proverbial wisdom of the Chinese cannot furnish some apposite citation¹.
- (b) Since proverbs can refer to practically any situation, it would be impossible to give any comprehensive account of the content of African proverbs².

The observations of Kelso in epigraph (a) and Finnegan in epigraph (b) regarding Chinese proverbs and African proverbs respectively are also very true of *owe Ondo*. Frankly speaking, there is no facet of life or any subject under the heavens for which at least one *owe Ondo* cannot supply strikingly apposite citation.

Judging from the list of proverbs employed in this research, it is not an overstatement for the researcher to observe that apparently, *Ondo* has an appropriate *owe* for any circumstance, on any theme and anywhere. Concretizing the above observation, Elmslie observes that:

The last general characteristic of proverbs... is their inexhaustible variety. The world is their province. Religion and ethics, politics, commerce, agriculture, handicraft, riches and poverty, diligence and idleness, hope and contentment, unrest and despair, laughter and tears, pride and humility, love and hatred; what is there you can name that we cannot set you a proverb to match it? Proverbs enter the palace unsummoned, take stock of His Majesty, and then inform the world what they think of his doings. They sit with My Lord Justice on the bench, and he shall hear further of the matter if he judges with respect of persons. But lo and behold! They also keep company with highwaymen and thieves, and the tricks of most trades are to them no secret. Proverbs are at home with man of every degree; they dine at the rich man's table, they beg with Lazarus by the gate; and shrewdly do they analyze the world from both points of view. Chiefly, however, they have dwelt in a myriad normal home, where neither riches nor poverty is given, but where a hard day's work, a sufficient meal, and a warm fire in the evening have loosened tongues and opened hearts. Whereupon these unconscionable guests proceed to criticize the family. They interfere between husband and wife, parents and children, and teach all of them manners with an unsparing frankness. They play with the children, counsel their parents, and dream dreams with the old. Again, proverbs are both country-dwellers and town-dwellers. Have they not observed the ways of wind and water, sunshine and silvery star light, seen the trees grown green and the seeds spring into life, the flowers bloom and the harvest in gathered? Yet also they have spent the whole year in the city, walking its streets early and later, strolling through the markets and bargaining in the

shops. Ubiquitous proverbs! There is nothing beyond their reach, nothing hidden from their eyes³.

This long quotation becomes necessary if only to authenticate Finnegan's observation that "it would be impossible to give any comprehensive account of the content of African proverbs"⁴. Even though Elmslie's writing focuses on Jewish proverbs, his observation is true of proverbs all over the world – African proverbs, and in the case of this work, *owe* Ondo specifically.

Therefore the samples utilized in this chapter are but a tip of the iceberg. Although thousands of Yoruba proverbs (many of which are also Ondo proverbs) have been collected, *owe* Ondo have not been collected and documented as this researcher is doing. However, from the researcher's fieldwork, it has been discovered that several proverbs, which have not been included in this work, are still circulating and employed in daily conversation of Ondo speakers let alone the new ones that are being coined daily. Archer Taylor, the renowned paraomniographer wondered how nearly complete are the collections of proverbs.

From now on, our procedure for discussion is to present the theme of the *owe* in their original texts followed by their interlinear translations. Secondly, in order to retain the original flavour, which in many cases may be lost in the process of rendition, translations are rendered as literally as possible and the idiomatic meaning given. Finally, a detailed annotation of the *owe* are presented. Additionally, some illustrative accounts which are germane to the contextual usage of the *owe* are provided. Subsequently, we comment briefly on the poetic qualities employed in the *owe* and finally conclude with remarks where necessary. It should however be noted that the poetic devices will be discussed in detail in our chapter five.

This means that all the significant points about the *owe* will be accentuated. This approach is prevalent among anthropological folklorists such as Raymond Firth, George Herzog and C.G. Blooah, Ojo Arewa and Alan Dundes.

While presenting the principle behind this type of approach, Raymond Firth observes that:

The essential thing about a proverb is its meaning – and by this is to be understood not merely a bald and literal translation into the accustomed tongue, nor even a free version of what the words are intended to convey. The meaning of a proverb is made clear only when side-by-side with the translation is given a full account of the accompanying social situation – the reason for its use, its effects, and its significance in speech⁵.

By the above observation, Firth means that the scholar needs to explain thoroughly the ethnographic context in which a specific proverb is used in order to arrive at the understanding of the proverb. In addition to Firth's observation, Arewa and Dundes opine that for the question of the relevant social aspects of the proverb:

One needs to ask not only for proverbs and what counts as a proverb, but also information as to the other components of the situations in which proverbs are used. What are the rules governing who can use proverbs, or particular proverbs, and to whom? Upon what occasions? In what places? With what other person present or absent? Using what channels (e.g. speech, drumming, etc)? Do restrictions or prescriptions as to the use of proverbs or a proverb have to do with particular topics? With the specific relationship between speaker and addressee? What exactly are the contributing contextual factors, which make the use of proverbs or a particular proverb, possible or not possible, appropriate or inappropriate?⁶

Nevertheless, only a few relevant points made by either Firth and/or Arewa and Dundes will be used for the purpose of this study. The details of poetic and stylistic devices employed in any of the *owe* will be given in chapter five which has been specially designed to handle that.

3.1 APPEARANCE IS DECEPTIVE

(Deceiving, deceitful, misleading, false, delusive and insincere).

Oiho buuk' e ka koolo bi s'upekun da le da ma.
Head bad does not curve like cutlass for one to know it.

Literally speaking, this means that a bad head (unlucky head) does not curve like a cutlass for easy identification. In other words, this means that appearance is deceptive.

The fact that appearance is deceptive is an important theme in Ondo culture cannot be over-emphasized. Indeed people believe that one cannot know an individual

deeply by merely looking at him. The people believe with king Duncan in Shakespeare's Macbeth that "there is no art to find the mind's construction in the face"⁷. This *owe* is used to warn against judging people by appearance. The following story aptly illustrates the *owe*:

There was once a king who had an exceptionally beautiful daughter. The princess was very proud to the extent that none of the princes and young men around was good enough to be her husband. A python heard about the princess' arrogance and decided to deceive her and teach her some lessons since she could not reason, "all that glitters is not gold".

The python changed to an extremely handsome man, whose beauty had no comparison. He introduced himself as a prince from a foreign land. The princess was very happy and immediately fell in love with him. The wedding was consummated after a short courtship. The king also, was very delighted with the young son-in-law. He gave his daughter and her husband slaves and other riches as the newly wed travelled to the groom's home.

After travelling some distance, the princess inquired:

"My Lord, when shall we get home?"

The groom did not answer.

Princess: I am tired I need some rest.

Groom: Keep quiet!!

The groom gave her a stern warning that she must not ask him any other question else she would regret being inquisitive. At last, they got to the entrance of a huge dark hole.

"Get in there" he thundered. The princess was terrified. But she had to obey. She crawled into the dark circular hole. The prince followed.

At the stroke of the night, her husband, the prince, changed to a huge python. The princess collapsed on seeing her husband but she did not die. She suffered a great deal and tried on several occasions to escape but to no avail. She then remembered what her mother had told her when she was finding one excuse or another to reject her many suitors that “appearance is deceiving”(Ondo folktale).

The following proverbs are similar to the *owe*:

- i). Dede lodongboo e dinon d’ale i, e ma iyi ‘non lo ninen.
All lizards lie prostrate; nobody knows which one has bellyache.
- ii). Ouli b’aja m’ale, aho fee fee da i uku osika.
The roof covers the building; light skin prevents one from knowing the intentions of a wicked man.
- iii). Onie mi, sugbon ugba eyin e da ma.
The tortoise breathes but the shell on its back prevents one from noticing it.
- iv). The cowl does not make the monk. (Latin)
- v). All are not thieves that dogs bark at. (English)

There is a striking poetic device in this *owe*, which is simile.

3.2 CAUTION

(Carefulness, wariness, heed, heedfulness, care, watchfulness, admonition, warning,).

Onen e n’oogun adoado ee gb’ ayinyan win.
Person who not have medicine “adoado” not carry cockroach swallow.

This means literally that, he who does not have an antidote for a disease called “adoado” should not swallow a cockroach. In other words, one should avoid any thing or act that will have adverse effect on him/her.

Caution is also an important theme in *owe* Ondo. The above proverb is used to warn people to avoid doing things that will have serious repercussion or effect on them. This *owe*, which could also be categorized as a medical proverb, appears to deduce that a cockroach can carry some terrible diseases which can only be cured by somebody who is knowledgeable about the diseases. The following story exemplifies the *owe*:

A white man visited Ondo long ago, during the *Oramfe* festival. The white man requested to see *Oramfe* but he was told that nobody could see him because seeing him face to face could be deadly. He was further informed that even *Oramfe*'s worshippers dared not see him face to face. He would have to turn his back to the shrine before offering the necessary sacrifices.

The inquisitive white man insisted on seeing him (*Oramfe*). *Oramfe* was consulted but he warned that the white man must be prepared to face the consequences of his curiosity. The man, defying all caution, still insisted on seeing the deity. The man was led to the shrine and *Oramfe* was unveiled to him. Alas! The white man never saw the deity because he lost his sight instantly.

The following are other proverbs similar to the *owe*:

- i) Dafi di li t'onen ma j'ewuuku mimi toi ti hoo hii e n'oungan jo e i.
If one's relative is cautioned not to eat raw "ewuuku" (Caterpillar), it is to avoid the inconveniences it will cause at night.
- ii) Di ulu be e don panen panen, a ka jo ni melo melo.
If a drum is sounding "kill him, kill him" one should dance to it with caution.
- iii) D'iaye ba a s'oko s'oja, o le la a ba ia l'onen.
If one throws a stone into the market it may hit his relative.
- iv) Omo ye n' iye e e gb'e gbo eyin
A child without a mother does not (should not) have a sore on its back.

The stylistic device employed in this *owe* is "He who ..." construction.

As earlier stated, this *owe* is a medical proverb because it presents cockroaches as disease carriers. Cockroaches can be found anywhere particularly in very dirty environments such as pit latrines and they carry germs from these places. Hence anybody who swallows it must be ready to cure some serious diseases.

3.3 CHILD-TRAINING

(Discipline, upbringing, education)

A ti kekee e ti p'eitan u'oko i, do ba d'agba tan e i du ka ma
From childhood one it is trimmed branches an "iroko" if it matures completely it cannot be bent again.

Literally, it means that one trims the branches of an “iroko” tree when it is still very tender, for if they mature, trimming them becomes very difficult. In other words, the training of a child commences when the child is still very young and impressionable; otherwise his training becomes late and an uphill task.

Ondo people believe in and cherish the all round education of the child. Hence, child training is given the right of place in Ondo society. It is believed that the home is the first teacher of the child and that training should commence when the child is still very tender and can be directed in the right and conventional way for the realization of a set goal.

The above *owe*, which is similar to the Hebrew proverb “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it”⁸ eminently accentuates the need for training the child when he is still very young, receptive and impressionable. Just as it is easier to bend an immature branch of an “iroko” tree than when it matures, so it is with the training of a child. The child is here compared to the very pliable and flexible branch of the “iroko”, which if left untrimmed in time becomes stiff and inflexible. Similarly, when the child matures, it becomes difficult if not impossible to train him. The above *owe* can be illustrated with the following story:

One day, a mother was cooking. Her three year-old child was watching her as she tasted the soup to determine its palatability. The little boy went to his mother and told her that he too wanted to taste for salt. His mother refused to give him a chance. The child started crying. Then his mother called him, dipped the spoon into the hot soup and pressed it on his palm. He cried and promised never to taste soup from the hot pot again. The mother might appear wicked but she had communicated an important message to the child.

The following are other versions of the same *owe*:

- i) Di omaiton ba a pa agiga oisa de baa mu iga e ya gh'ojua ton pa yo jeen.
If a child kills the grasshopper of "orisa", if its hind-leg is not used to tear his face he will kill a bigger one.
- ii) Eja gbigbe ee du ka
A dry fish cannot be bent; (else it breaks).
- iii) Da ba m'omo kekee je Loyen, do ba a pe a d'agba si uun.
If a child is crowned as hoyen (chieftaincy title) as he grows old he gets used to it.
- iv) Ila ee go ju lue, do ba i go ju lue, a te ba a ge un, ai wa p'eka.
The okro plant cannot grow taller than the owner, if it does, he will bend it and cut it and it bring forth branches.
- v) Oju ya a b'onen t'ale e e m'owuo kutu s'ipen.
The eye that will be useful to its owner does not start discharging in the morning.

The instruction in Ecclesiastes (12:1-7) also carries the same purport:

Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say "I find no pleasure in them" – before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong man stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few and those looking through windows grow dim, when the doors to the streets are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs faint; when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer stirred. The man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

Remember him – before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from and the spirit returns to God who gave it⁹.

Under a similar circumstance, Robert Herrick would urge:

Gather ye Rosebuds while ye may, Old time is still a-flying and this same flower that smiles today. Tomorrow will be dying... Then be not coy, but use your time, and while ye may, go marry: for having lost but once your pine, ye may forever tarry¹⁰.

This *owe* is metaphorically used. Here the child is compared to the iroko tree, which is flexible when young and can easily be bent, so also is the child, when he is young and impressionable. A child who is left to do what he likes when young may become hardened in his indisciplined behaviour with the result that it will be almost

impossible for him to change his ways when he attains adulthood as pointed out in *owe* no 4 in this section.

- i). Usually, it is the first half of this *owe* that is used, the other half being left either as understood by the audience or for the addressee to complete, a task which is usually done.
- ii). It is important to remark here that there are other *owe* Ondo addressing other aspects of child-training but because of the importance attached to training the child while still tender, the researcher decided to limit her discussion to early child-training.

3.4 CHOICE

(Option, alternative, selection, variety, preference, say, dilemma, choosing, discrimination, opting).

Onen a jo jaga a jo jaga, onen y'aa jo lodon a fa gbuuu.
 Person that will dance "jaga" will dance "jaga", person that will dance "lodon"
 will drag it "gbuuu".

It literally means he who wishes to dance 'jaga' should dance 'jaga' he who wishes to dance "lodon" should drag it. In other words, there is no room for sitting on the fence; i.e what is worth doing at all is worth doing well.

It is the belief of the Ondo folks that what is worth doing at all, is worth doing well. They do not condone lukewarmness or the habit of sitting on the fence. The above *owe* cautions against lukewarmness, against sitting on the fence, advises that one should be decisive in one's choice and it also encourages an individual to do whatever he has chosen to do well.

The poem entitled The Fence by Lenrie Peters clearly illustrates the *owe*:

There where the dim past and future mingle their nebulous
 hopes and aspirations there I lie.

There where truth and untruth struggle in endless and bloody
 combat there I lie.

There where time moves forwards and backwards with
not one moment's pause for sighing, there I lie.

There where the body ages relentlessly
and only the feeble mind can wonder back
there I lie in open-souled amazement.

There where all the opposites arrive to
plague the inner senses, but do not fuse,
I hold my head; and then contrive
to stop the constant motion.
my head goes round and round,
but I have not been drinking;
I feel the buoyant waves; I stagger.

It seems the world has changed her garment.
But it is I who have not crossed the fence.
So there I lie.

There where the need for good
and "the doing good" conflict.
there I lie¹¹.

- (i) Onen y'a a j'opolo. a je yo eeghen.
Whoever wants to eat toad, should eat a very fat one with eggs.
- (ii) Iy'o wu mi e wue, oun e m'omaiye meji jeun ototo i.
Differences in likes and dislikes make two brothers eat separately.
- (iii) You cannot serve God and mammon (Hebrew).
- (iv) A door must either be shut or open.

The alliterative "J" in this *owe* is remarkable. The letter "J" appears five times making this *owe* very musical and "Jaga" is repeated twice.

3.5 COOPERATION

(Helpfulness, unity, teamwork)

Ajeje, owo kan gb'eun f'ioho.
Ajeje, hand one to carry load to the head.

The above *owe* literally means that one hand cannot carry a load to the head. That is to say, unity is strength.

In Ondo culture, the folk's attitude to cooperative effort is exemplified in their proverbial expressions. The above *owe* can be used to counsel people to always seek

assistance in doing a task which an individual cannot carry out single-handedly. Just as it is a lot easier for two hands to lift a load to the head successfully, so it is with any venture that needs joint effort for it to succeed. The following story illustrates the above *owe*.

There once lived an old man who had many sons. The sons were always quarrelling at the slightest opportunity. The old man became tired of settling quarrels. One day, he assembled all his sons in a dirty spot. Then, he gave each of them a stick of broom and apportioned places for each one to sweep. Each of them tried hard to do the work efficiently but the floor still remained unclean. So he told the youngest of them all to collect the broomsticks from his brothers. The boy carried out his father's instruction grudgingly. His father asked him to tie the broomsticks together and sweep the floor. He swept the entire floor clean with the bunch of brooms even within a short time. All the brothers exclaimed "ah! ah!! ah!!!

Then their father said to them "that is why you need to stop quarrelling and live together in peace, "for united we stand, divided we fall". From then on, the old man's children lived peacefully together, worked together in harmony and their father was happy.

The second illustration concerns Scilurus, king of the Scythians who left behind him eighty sons. When he was dying, he asked for a bundle of spear-shafts and bade his sons to take it and break it in pieces, tied closely together as the shafts were. When they gave up the task, he himself drew all spears out one by one and easily broke them in two, thus revealing that the harmony and concord of his sons was a strong and invincible thing. But that their disunion would make them weak and unstable (Plutarch *Moralia* Sec. 511C).

The following *owe* carry the same purport:

- (i) Agbajo, owo oun e mu s'oya i
One beats the chest with a closed fist.

- (ii) A da nukan 'en ejo oun e pa i.
One kills a snake that walks alone.
- (iii) Di oton gwe osi, do osi gwe oton oun owe mu fen i.
The right washing the left and the left washing the right make both hands clean.
- (iv) Ijo je o we yon i.
Eating together makes the exercise enjoyable.

3.6 DESTINY

(Fate, pre-destination, lot, star, fortune, doom)

Omi yi iay' a mon ee san gb'onen ee.
Water that person will drink does not flow past one.

Literally, this means that the water that one is destined to drink will never flow past one. That is to say, whatever one is destined to become or achieve in life must come to pass.

Ondo people have strong faith in destiny. They believe that no human being, no matter how powerful and influential he may be, can stop one from attaining a position one has been destined to attain. One's progress may be slow or even stalled for some time as a result of injustice, oppression or denial of rights. But progress will surely come at the opportuned time.

The above *owe* is used to console, say, an individual who has been unjustly denied his rights, e.g. his promotion. It is used to renew one's determination to face the future with courage, hope and optimism. By the instrumentality of this *owe*, the individual is assured that no difficulty created by any human being is big enough to prevent him from getting to a position that he has been destined to occupy. Two illustrations will suffice here:

Firstly, General Oladipo Diya's story captures this theme picturesquely. During the Abacha administration, Oladipo Diya, the second in command, was roped into a coup, tried and sentenced to death but as fate would have it, the dictator (Abacha) who planned to eliminate Diya, died before the day the latter was to be

executed! But there must have been a deus ex machina at work! General Diya eventually became a free and living man. He was not fated to die by firing squad or even at that time!

Secondly, the biblical story of Haman and Mordecai in the Book of Esther (Chapters 4 – 7) presents another lucid illustration to the proverb.

Queen Esther, who knew Haman's plan to annihilate all the Jews, invited Haman and the king exclusively for a banquet. On Haman's way back from the banquet, he was elated and in high spirit until he saw Mordecai, a Jew, sitting at the palace gate. Mordecai as usual, did not bow to him or pay him any form of obeisance. Haman was furious. On getting home, he got together his wife and his friends. He bragged to them about his wealth, how many sons he had, and how the king had promoted him to an office of great prestige. "What is more", Haman went on, "Queen Esther gave a banquet for no one but the king and me, and we are invited back tomorrow. But none of this means a thing to me as long I see that Jew Mordecai, sitting at the entrance of the palace".

So Haman's wife, Zeresh and his friends suggested that he should set up a 22 metre high gallows and ask the King to hang Mordecai on it, the following morning. This suggestion was welcomed and the gallows was built. Unknown to Haman, the queen was Mordecai's cousin and all this while Mordecai had kept her posted of Haman's plans and had sought her intervention on behalf of the entire Jewish race. The banquets to which she had invited Haman and the King were all part of her plan to save the Jews.

However, the will of God prevailed. The night before the second banquet, the King could not sleep so he ordered that the historic records of the kingdom be brought and read to him. In the course of reading, the King discovered that Mordecai had not been honoured for foiling the assassination plot against the King. He then decided to

honour him. King Xerxes inquired of Haman (who had come to request the King to hang Mordecai on the gallows) what could be done to a man the king wishes to honour. Haman, thinking that the King could not honour any other person apart from him, replied that the man should be dressed in the king's royal robe, mounted on the King's royal steed and led through the city by one of the king's most noble princes. The prince was to proclaim before him "This is what happens to those the king wishes to honour". The King liked the idea and ordered Haman to do just what he had suggested to Mordecai. Haman carried out the king's directive and went home totally embarrassed and humiliated. He told his wife and friends what had happened and they said to him. "You are beginning to lose power to Mordecai. He is a Jew and you cannot overcome him. He will certainly defeat you".

As they were still talking, the palace eunuchs came to fetch Haman to the banquet. As they were drinking, the king asked the queen to make her request known to him: She requested that her life and the lives of her people be spared from the hand of their enemy who had planned to eliminate them. The king demanded to know who was behind the plot. The queen said it was Haman.

Enraged, the king stormed out into the garden while Haman stayed behind to plead for his life. As he fell in despair on the couch where Queen Esther was reclining, the king came back in, and seeing Haman on the queen's couch, he roared in consternation and concluded that Haman was trying to assault the queen. Immediately, the king's servants covered Haman's face, signaling his doom! One of the eunuchs informed the king of Haman's plan to hang Mordecai on a 22 – metre gallows he had built. The King ordered that Haman should be hanged on the gallows and he was hanged on the gallows he had erected for Mordecai. The above illustration confirms the Ondo proverb:

- i). Ukoto yi ota gwo s'ale oiho a'a e ghon mu di un i.
The gallows that the enemy has dug, he seals it with his own head.

- ii). E'un yi ota di s'ale, oiho a'a e ghon gbe le i.
The load that the enemy has prepared, he carried it on his own head.

Other congenial *owe* are:

- iii). De ba a 'en dede ose oise ka gh'onen pe, ale le.
If one does not complete all the steps that oisa (God) has predestined one to take, night will not come.
- iv).
Oiho y'aa sun n'abata, da ka gha paanon le ghon oiho, a jo n'oju 'so.
He who has been doomed to sleep in the mud, even if he is put under corrugated iron roof, it will leak at the points of the nails.
- v). Da ka gun iyan si inon ewe, da se obe s'eipo epa, onen a yo, a yo.
Even if pounded yam is put on a leaf and the stew is cooked in a groundnut husk, he who is destined to eat to his fill will surely be filled.
- vi). Aiye ya'nen bu'en'se.
Going through life is not as fast as trekking.
- vii). Ota lu ulu ibaje oba Oluwa ko je ko don.
The enemy is beating the drum of destruction but the Almighty God did not allow it to sound.

The phrase *omi y'iaye a mon* is a metaphor, figuratively used to mean, "What one has been destined to become/achieve/experience". Just as somebody who goes to a stream to have a drink of water, as the water flows, the quantity of water that is meant to quench his thirst will flow into his cup. So it is with destiny. The musicality of this *owe* is greatly pleasing to the ear.

The theme "destiny" can also be applied negatively. This depends on the situation at the time of application. For example see *owe* number two under similar proverbs.

3.7 DILEMMA

(Difficulty, plight, case, confounding problem, fix, quandary, predicament, strait).

O so si ko du ka, o wo si ko du see
It fruits in not be plucked, it falls in not be picked up.

This literally means that it fruits where it cannot be plucked; it falls where it cannot be picked up, showing that the problem is enigmatic, defying solution.

This *owe* is used to describe a confounding and intractable problem. It is used in a situation when something defies solution in spite of rational strategies, particularly when two people are quarrelling and every attempt to settle the quarrel has failed. For elucidation, two folktales will suffice:

First is the story of the Father, Son and the Maiden in which:

The father hid his son in the bush and told him that he would die if he slept with a maiden who came to him and promised to restore him to life if he died; he slept with her. When he died, she went to a hunter who puts a lizard on a funeral fire, saying that if the lizard burned the youth would stay dead, but that he could live if someone rescued the lizard from the flames. The mother and father tried and failed, but the maiden rescued the lizard and the youth came to life. The hunter said if the youth killed the lizard, his mother would die. What would a true Nupe lad do? (Nupe folktale).

A second illustration is the story of a man, his wife and his Mother:

The mother of a man was so incapacitated that she could not feed herself. So the son's wife undertook to feed her. One day, however, when she was being fed, the mother bit the feeder's hand and would not release it. The man was in a dilemma as to what action he was to take in order to release his wife's hand from his mother's jaws. So he asked a judge who in turn asked the people, both old and young who constitute a kind of jury. The old people said: "cut off the young woman's hand. The young people said: "break the old lady's jaws". What would you suggest?

The following proverbs carry the same message:

- i). E m'ale l'ajen i gba, du o gba un dofen i i o fen yeye, du o gba un de fen i i e fen.
One does not know how to sweep the floor of a witch's house; if you sweep it clean, she complains that it is too clean; if it is not clean, she complains it is not clean.
- ii). He who rides on a tiger can never dismount (Chinese)
- iii). A precipice ahead, wolves behind (Latin)
- iv). Two pieces of meat confuse the mind of the fly (Hausa).

There are alliterative "s" and "k" in *so*, *si*, *ko*, *ka*. In addition to the above, there is parallelism in the above *owe*. *Ko du ka* is parallel to *ko du se e*.

3.8 EXCESSES

(Overindulgence, dissipation, immoderateness, intemperance, extravagance, restraint)

Aja dede e j' iwin sugbon iy'o ba a gbe te e le imon o wo s'ase ju i.
Dogs all is eat excreta but the one that carry its own on nose do it over.

Literally, it means all dogs eat excreta but any of them that smear its nose with it has done it to excess. In other words, one should not over do things. There should be some restraint.

The theme of excesses is an important subject matter that is prevalent in *owe* Ondo. The people abhor excessiveness in anything, particularly in behaviour. Hence they have many *owe* that caution against such behaviour. The proverb can be used to (i) draw the attention of an individual to the need to do things in moderation, (ii) exercise some restraint and (iii) draw a line at some point in time. This *owe* is self-explanatory.

The following proverbs are similar in application to the above *owe*:

- i). Die e je ma n'aja o siwin ku i.
One eats a little of a dog that died as a result of rabies.
- ii). Ayo e pa eniyan i, use e panen.
Excessive mirth kills but poverty does not kill.
- iii). Too much pudding will choke a dog.
- iv). Mirth without measure is madness (Ferguson)
- v). If in excess ever nectar is poison (Ferguson)
- vi). E le fi toi fi a fe i b'oma da b'obien se maju.
One cannot say because one is desperate for a child and lie on a woman over night.

Ondo people believe that one of the functions of a dog is to clear faeces.

3.9 EXPERIENCE

(Knowledge, know-how, practice, involvement, event, incident, happening, encounter, occurrence, adventure).

D' omaiton baa n'aso b'agba, o da n' akisa b' agba i?
If child has cloth like adult he can have rags like adult.

Literally speaking this means, if a child has as many clothes as an adult, can he have as many rags as the adult? This implies that experience is the best teacher, so if anyone wants good advice he/she should consult an elder.

It is the belief of the people that the experiences one has acquired over the years are very important and valuable. The *owe* therefore can be used for counselling people to consult elders on informed opinions before they take a decision on important matters because elders have greater experience and greater wisdom. It can also be used to chastise young people who may want to compete with adults who are more highly placed and more experienced than they are in order to let them know their limit. The *owe* is used to tell a young person that even though he is as affluent as the adult he does not have as much experience as the elderly one. This *owe* is self-explanatory.

The following are similar proverbs:

- i). O pe yi koko ti h'oi' jo.
Cocoyam (leaf) has been dancing for a long time.
- ii). Uun yi agbalagba ri n'oiho joko, omoiton le ri un n'oiho uduo.
What an elder sees while sitting down, a child can never see it while standing up.
- iii). Experience is a precious gift, only given a man when his hair is gone (Turkish Proverb).
- iv). The tongue of experience has most truth (Arabic Proverb).

Notice the simile employed in this *owe* as can be seen in "as much as". The *owe* is also rhetorical in construction.

3.10 FORESIGHT

(Anticipation, forethought, far-sightedness, vision, care, readiness and preparedness).

Ogun agbo tele e e pa'o yo ba a gban.
War hear before hand does not kill cripple who is wise.

Literally, it means the war that has been heard about before hand does not kill a wise cripple, which is the same as, to be forewarned, is to be forearmed.

This *owe* is used to recommend the virtue of far-sightedness or readiness. If a wise cripple has foreknowledge of an impending war, he will be able to set out in time to where he would find safety long before the commencement of the war.

To explicate the *owe* two illustrations will suffice:

Firstly a little bird has told me, said the works manager, ‘that the factory inspector is visiting us on Thursday, which gives us a chance to make sure the guards and lifting gear are all O.K. before he arrives. They’re very hot on these safety regulations, and I hate being taken by surprise’¹².

Secondly the *owe* reminds the researcher of the Ondo folktale about two friends named “Beje beje” and “Owuuwuu” who were roasting yams for their breakfast. While they were roasting the yams, somebody came to inform them that some slave traders were coming to their village. The informant told them that the traders would arrive the village in the afternoon of that day. The two friends decided to eat their yams before the invasion. *Bejebeje* started slicing his yam and eating but *Owuuwuu* was waiting for his tuber of yam to be properly roasted before he would eat it. While *Bejebeje* had eaten to his fill, *Owuuwuu* was still waiting. Eventually the raiders drew close to the village. *Bejebeje* had gone into hiding. Listen to their conversation:

Owuuwuu: *Bejebeje*, please wait for me.

Bejebeje: I am sorry I cannot wait for you. I have gone. Wait till your yam has *wu* (roasted) O.

Owuuwuu did not go far before the slave raiders caught up with him and he was taken away while his friend was saved (Ondo folktale).

The following are similar to the proverb:

- i). Igi so so o y’a a gnonen ‘ju, a to ke iye e ti ho i.
The pointed stick that will pierce one in the eye, is avoided while it is still far off.

- ii). O n'oyun inon, o m'obo to e
She is pregnant but loans out her vagina (with what will the baby be delivered?).

The striking poetic device in this *owe* is personification.

Owe number two can be regarded as “obscene” by some observers!

3.11 GENEROSITY

(Hospitality, open-handedness, charity, kindness, benevolence, goodness)

Onen p' aoko s' oja oun oja p' aoko si.
Person send gift to market he market send gift to.

He who sends a gift to the market, he it is that a market sends a gift to. This means that anyone who gives will receive.

Ondo people are known for their generosity. Indeed other Yoruba ethnic groups bear testimony to the hospitable nature of Ondo people to the extent that a man from Oyo who benefited from the benevolence of Ondo composed a song. The song goes thus:

Okele kan eran igbin kan aiye mbe l'Ondo fa.
One ball of pounded yam and a piece of snail, there is life (enjoyment) in Ondo.

The following excerpt from the Bible about the rich man and Lazarus provides a graphic illustration of the *owe*:

There was once a rich man who dressed in the most expensive clothes and lived in great luxury every day. There was also a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who used to be brought to the rich man's door, hoping to eat the bits of food that fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the feast in heaven. The rich man died and was buried, and in Hades, where he was in great pain, he looked up and saw Abraham, far away, with Lazarus at his side. So he called out, 'Father Abraham! Take pity on me, and send Lazarus to dip his finger in some water and cool my tongue, because I am in great pain in this fire!' But Abraham said, 'Remember, my son, that in your life time you were given all the good things, while Lazarus got all the bad things. But now he is enjoying himself here, while you are in pain'¹³.

Another pre-eminent illustration of the *owe* is the story told by Mother Teresa about the poor family she visited:

The parents had eight children, and they had not eaten for several days. Mother Teresa could see the deep pain of hunger on their faces when she arrived with some food. When she gave it to the mother, the woman divided it in two and went out, carrying half of it with her. When she returned, Mother asked her where she had gone. The woman replied, “To my neighbours – they are hungry also”¹⁴.

The following proverbs carry the same purport with the above *owe*:

- i). Onen ba a d’omi s’ugwaju a te ’le titu.
He who throws water in front will step on wet ground.
- ii). Se s’ale oun e je Seike i.
He who leaves a good legacy behind will be fondly remembered for his generosity.
- iii). E s’uun o gh’owo e do to i mu to e
There is nothing he possesses that is enough for him to give out (that is, he is so generous that he can give anything he has out.
- iv). U s’oju alejo e ti je ‘gbese i, sugbon eyin e eson i.
One loans money in the presence of a guest (visitor) to entertain him but the payment will be made after his departure.

The poetic device used in this *owe* is repetition. The words *aoko* (gifts) and *oja* (market) are each repeated twice and proverb number three above underscores the extent to which Ondo people show their open-handedness.

3.12 GRATITUDE

(Gratefulness, thankfulness, thanks, appreciation, acknowledgement, indebtedness)

Aja e e gbagbe l’oiye owuo.
Dog not forget donor morning.

That is, a dog does not forget its morning benefactor. In other words, it is good to show appreciation for any good deed done to one.

Among the virtues that Ondo folk cherish and encourage is gratitude. Hence it is not surprising that this is reflected in their proverbs. It is the people’s belief that anyone who fails to show appreciation for a good deed done to him is like “a thief that carts away one’s belongings”. This *owe* is therefore used to comment on somebody who is grateful to his benefactor. The biblical story of the healing of the ten lepers presents a picturesque illustration of the *owe*:

When Jesus was going into a village, ten lepers who shouted from a distance that Jesus should help them met him. Jesus then directed them to the priest for examination. As they were going, they were cleansed. However, one of them saw that he had been healed, went back to Jesus, praising and thanking God. To show his appreciation to Jesus, he threw himself at His feet. Jesus then observed, “There were ten men who were healed; where are the other nine? Why is this foreigner the only one who came back to give thanks to God”¹⁵.

- i). When you drink from the stream, remember the spring (Chinese proverb).
- ii). Yen mi di i se mu en si un
Praise (appreciate) me so that I can do more.
- iii). Ai 'o 'non jenle oun a fi e ope du i.
One has not thought deeply that is why we say we have no reason to express gratitude.

Ondo people also have *owe* that rebuke half-hearted goodness. For example:

O s'oiye tan o l'oso ti.
He carried out a half-hearted goodness.

There are also *owe* Ondo that rebuke ingratitude.

3.13 LAZINESS

(Sluggishness, indolence, idleness, slothful, dronish).

D'owo ma f' oko iro, d'eyin ma de en be e m'ale, do de en fi ghaan j'iyam,
nig'ogun d'ola i?
If hand not like farm hoe, if back no bend for ground, and say that pounded
yam he will eat when “ogun” festival remains tomorrow?

Literally, this means that if a man does not use his hand to till the soil and bend his back, and says he will eat pounded yam on the eve of ogun festival, he must be joking!

In other words, this is simply saying that if a man does not work, he must not eat.

Ondo people are known for their hardwork and industry. Their predominant occupations are farming and education. The people hate idleness and indolence. Hence many *owe* are coined to rebuke, ridicule or advise those who may have the

tendency to be lazy. The above *owe* is similar to biblical rule of law: “If any would not work, neither should he eat”¹⁶. It is used to castigate a lazy man who wants to eat when he has not sown. The *owe* shows that the reward of work is eating while the reward of laziness is hunger.

The following extract from Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart provides a graphic exemplification to the *owe*:

‘Every year’, he said sadly, ‘before I put any crop in the earth, I sacrifice a cock to Ani, the owner of the land. It is the law of our fathers. I also kill a cock at the shrine of Ifejioku, the god of yams. I clear the bush and set fire to it when it is dry. I sow the yams when the first rain has fallen, and stake them when the young tendrils appear, I weed...’

‘Hold your peace!’ screamed the priestess, her voice terrible as it echoed through the dark void. ‘You have offended neither the gods nor your fathers. And when a man is at peace with his gods and ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arms. You, Unoka, are known in all the clan for the weakness of your machet and your hoe. When your neighbours go out with their axe to cut down virgin forests, you sow your yams on exhausted farms that take no labour to clear. They cross seven rivers to make their farms; you stay at home and offer sacrifices to a reluctant soil. Go home and work like a man¹⁷.’

The story of The Little Red Hen provides another apt illustration to the *owe*:

One day the Little Red Hen was scratching in the barnyard when she came across some grains of wheat. Instead of eating them immediately, she decided to put them to use, and she called her friends among the other farm animals to assist her. She shared her plans, which all agreed sounded good. Then she asked:

“Now, who will help me plant the wheat?”

“Not I”, said the dog, running quickly back to his comfortable basket behind the master’s house. “Not I”, said the pig, grunting and rolling over on his back in the mud. “Not I”, said the cow, wandering back to the field to chew sweet grass. “Very well, then”, said the Little Red Hen, “I’ll do it myself”. And she did.

With her chicks beside her, she laboured and planted the wheat and tendered it, as it grew taller and taller. Finally, the wheat was ready for harvest. Once again, the Little Red Hen called her friends together. “Now, who will help me harvest the wheat?” she asked.

“Not I”, said the dog.

“Not I”, said the pig.

“Not I”, said the cow.

“Very well, then”, said the Little Red Hen, “I’ll do it myself”

And she did.

With her chicks beside her, she worked day-by-day, cutting the wheat and bringing it back to the farmyard, until all was harvested. Now the wheat was ready to be ground into flour. Again the Little Red Hen called friends together.

“Now, who will help me carry the wheat to the mill?” she asked.

“Not I”, said the dog.

“Not I”, said the pig.

“Not I”, said the cow.

“Very well, then”, said the Little Red Hen, “I’ll do it myself”. And she did.

With her chicks beside her, she bundled the wheat and hauled it to the mill. She returned with a heavy sack of finely ground flour, perfect for making good quality bread.

“Now”, she asked her friends, “who will help me to bake the bread?”

“Not I”, said the dog.

“Not I”, said the pig.

“Not I”, said the cow.

“Very well, then”, said the Little Red Hen, “I’ll do it myself”. And she did.

With her chicks beside her, she mixed the flour and kneaded the dough and greased the pans and put it all into the oven to bake. Soon the aroma of fresh-baked bread drifted to all corners of the farmyard. The other animals came to the window to better inhale the delicious smell.

“Now, said the Little Red Hen, as she removed the loaves from the oven, who will help me eat the bread?”

“I will!” barked the dog.

“I will!” grunted the pig.

“I will!” lowed the cow.

The Little Red Hen flapped her wings and looked at them severely. She said:

“I planted the wheat, I harvested the wheat, I ground the wheat, I mixed the flour and baked the bread. And now I am going to eat the bread – myself”. And she did.

Source: Deborah L. Klein of Jacksonville, Florida, U.S.A.

The following proverbs are analogous to the *owe*:

- i). Da mu’a s’use da ma s’apama eyin
One should work hard so that one will not regret in future.
- ii). Owo ye s’use e le jeun
The hand that does not work must not eat.
- iii). Oj’ ole igbad’e gbo i
Corn matures in the presence of a lazy man.
- iv). O ko’s e m’upe, e m’upe buuku e m’upe i ye.
A lazy man cannot discern a good call from a bad one.

- v). Ole b'owuo ku.
A lazy man wastes his morning but struggles when it is too late.
- vi). Apoti ole ee wowo
A lazy man's box is never heavy.
- vii). Ole du la ghun
One cannot work hard for the purpose of enriching a lazy man because he will eventually mismanage and waste the wealth.
- viii). L'uoka gb'uoka, owo ole do fifo.
The owner of the ring collects his ring the lazy man regrets.
- ix). Onen gb'oju l'ogun, m'a'a e ghon 'si ta.
He who depends on heritage will suffer or will inherit poverty.
- x). A gba tan e gb'ole i, da ba a d'aso ghon'le a pa ghan a'o.
One renders total assistance to a lazy man, you buy clothe for him, you also dye it.

The words “*owo*” and “*eyin*” are examples of synecdoche.

This *owe* is a statement of fact and it confirms the universality of proverbs (that is), the Hebrews also have the same attitude towards a lazy man:

I walked through the fields and vineyards of a lazy, stupid man. They were full of thorn bushes and overgrown with weeds. The stonewall round them had fallen down. I looked at this, thought about it, and learned a lesson from it: Have a nap and sleep if you want to. Fold your hands and rest awhile, but while you are asleep, poverty will attack you like an armed robber¹⁸.

3.14 PATIENCE

(Imperturbability, calmness, endurance, suffering, Composure, forbearance).

Li suu e fon wa'a keneun i.
The patient, it is squeeze milk of lion.

That is only the patient one can milk a lion. This *owe* is simply saying that he who is patient can perform an impossible task.

Patience is another significant theme in *owe* Ondo. The lion is such a very ferocious animal that nobody can dare. Ondo people see the milking of a lion as an impossible task. Therefore whoever is able to do this must have performed an impossible task. He must have taken his time to ensure that the lion is extremely calm. This *owe* could therefore be used to compliment an individual who has displayed an

unusual patience and whose patience has yielded some fruitful results and also to advise an individual to take things easy.

Two illustrations will suffice here:

Firstly, the biblical story of Jacob readily leaps to mind. Jacob promised to work for Laban, his uncle for seven years in order to have Rachel for his wife. At the end of the period, Laban deceived Jacob by taking Leah to him at night in place of Rachel. The following morning, Jacob discovered the trick his uncle played on him. He then went to ask why he has been deceived into marrying Leah. Laban explained that it was against their custom to give a younger daughter out in marriage when the elder one has not married. Laban then suggested to Jacob to work for another seven years in order to have Rachel. Jacob agreed. At the expiration of the seven years, Laban gave Rachel to Jacob in marriage. Jacob waited patiently for fourteen years in order to achieve his heart's desire. His patience paid off.

Secondly, the following Ondo philosophical proverb captures the essence of this theme of patience picturesquely:

Asipagale, o ku s'oma, Afuwagale oku si sonson, Asepeletu, o wo mon ye ba e je i.

Asipagale died as a youth, Afuwagale died a pre-mature death but Asepeletu lived to a ripe age and inherited his father's chieftancy title.

A story is told of Orunmila who had three sons – Asipagale, Afuwagale and Asepeletu. In order to avenge a grudge he holds against Orunmila, his enemy decided to abduct the wives of Orunmila's sons and abused them sexually. The first one, Asipagale resisted, but he was over-powered, killed at a tender age, his wife abducted and violated. The second son, Afuwagale also said over his dead body would he allow his wife to be violated. He too was overpowered. His wife was abducted and abused. He too was killed at a tender age. The third one Asepeletu, heard about this plan. He did not resist. His wife was abducted and used but his life was spared. When the people wanted to fill the vacant seat of his father, everybody chose him because to

them, he was very patient and enduring. Having been made the chief in place of his father, he was able to avenge the death of his brothers and the abuse of their wives.

The underlisted proverbs bear the same connotations with the above *owe*:

- i). A pa jeun e e j'ibaje
He who eats late does not eat spoilt food.
- ii). Suu o n'oyo e soo i mu
To be patient for a fixed period of time is not difficult.
- iii). Suu e le s'okuta jina
His patience can cook a stone till it becomes tender.
- iv). Ibi oka ba a ha, ibe, uunjije ti wa bo un i.
Where the python is, that is where its food will come to it.
- v). Patience is a virtue (English).

The poetic device employed in this *owe* is hyperbole. The word patience in the *owe* is over-exaggerated.

3.15 PERSEVERANCE

(Persistence, determination, resolution, doggedness, steadfastness etc.).

Onen yo ba a te' ju m'ojuto a p'eja
Person who stare eye on gutter will kill fish.

Literally, it means he who stares persistently at a gutter will kill (catch) fish. That is to say, he who perseveres to the end will be rewarded (achieve his goal).

The theme of perseverance is recurrent in *owe* Ondo. Ondo people are very industrious. They do not believe that any assignment is too difficult to carry out or too hard to be successfully accomplished. Hence, perseverance is highly valued and encouraged in the society. The proverb invites people's attention to the importance of doggedness. It is used to advise and encourage people to persist in whatever they set out to do, no matter how difficult it may seem, until the set goal is achieved and the effort is rewarded. For illustration, the story of Ruth in the Bible leaps to mind.

Ruth, a Moabite was married to one of Naomi's sons. Unfortunately, Ruth lost her husband shortly after the death of her father-in-law. Naomi decided to return

home after she had lost all she had (i.e. her husband and sons) in order to start a new life in Israel. Ruth and Orpah decided to go with Naomi but the latter refused. However, after much persuasion, Orpah went back to her parents but Ruth was persistent in her decision. Ruth then vowed her allegiance to Naomi, promising never to leave her, but would go wherever she goes, live wherever she lives and worship Naomi's God.

Ruth followed through on her resolution to remain with Naomi and God blessed her for the love and care she showed to Naomi and for persistent faithfulness. God gave her a new husband and a son. As a result of her steadfastness, God knitted Ruth, a Moabite from an abominable and despised race into the genealogy of his son, Jesus Christ. Her persistence was highly rewarded.

The Following proverbs also portray the same message:

- i). Onen yo ba a m'oiho ti use fopen oun e yen i.
Whoever perseveres to the end will be praised (rewarded).
- ii). Ubee eese l'use, onen yo gbe jake oun o se l'use i.
A good beginning is of no value unless one perseveres to the end.
- iii). A fei oun obien fe uun obe i.
A woman perseveres to get soup ingredients.
- iv). A tai m'oni ei to a tai m'ana.
Perseverance of today is not as much as perseverance from yesterday.
- v). A yangbe aja e yon, sugbon kaa je d'aja i gbaa e?
A roasted dog is tasty but what will one eat while the dog is still roasting?
- vi). Persistence surpasses a charm (Tiv).

The word *ojuto* in the first proverb is metaphorically used to represent a river. As long as a fisherman persistently lets down his net into the river and waits patiently, it is certain that he will catch some fish (es). In the same way, if an individual perseveres at whatever he sets out to do, he will most likely achieve this goal as long as he does not give up. The comparison in the proverb makes the proverb very illuminating.

3.15 PRIDE

(Arrogance, vanity, self-exaltation, self-opinionatedness, haughtiness, self-importance, dignity, self, self-esteem).

Igbe 'a ga o we s'ugwaju ipa' uun.
Lifting body up go front of destruction.

Literally, it is lifting oneself up that goes before destruction, that is, pride goes before a fall.

Pride is one of the unique characteristics in human nature. It is expressed in numerous circumstances and situations. It is expressed in connection with things of great beauty or great achievement, for example the achievements of Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Laureate and that of Bishop Tutu of South Africa who won the Peace Award. These are a thing of pride and joy, not only to the recipients but also to their countries. Besides, individual nations such as the USSR was proud for launching the Sputnik in 1957 while the USA is proud because she landed the first man on the moon. Apart from these positive prides in achievements, there are also instances of pride, which leads to a fall. This type of pride is lucidly exemplified in the above *owe*. The proverb can be used to either warn or ridicule an individual depending on the situation.

A pre-eminent illustration is the story of King Nebuchadnezzar which elucidates the *owe* very vividly. One day, King Nebuchadnezzar was walking about on the balcony of his palace in Babylon. He saw the greatness of Babylon. He said, "Look how great Babylon is! I will build it as my capital city to display my power and might, my glory and majesty".

Before he finished sharing the glory of God with Him, a voice said to him from heaven:

King Nebuchadnezzar, listen to what I say! You will be driven away from human society, live with animals, and eat grass like an ox for seven years. Then you will acknowledge that the Supreme God has power over human kingdoms and that He can give them to anyone He chooses (Dan. 4:30-32).

Immediately the king was driven out of human society and he ate grass like an ox. Nebuchadnezzar fell from grace to grass and he was completely humiliated and humbled until the seven-year duration was accomplished. He then realized that there is somebody Supreme whose glory he had attempted to share. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the great God and praised Him.

The poetic device employed in this *owe* is personification. The personification is seen in the fact that *igbeaga* (pride) is given human attribute of movement.

3.17 PRIORITY

(Right of way, precedence, seniority, rank, superiority, preeminence, supremacy, the lead, first place, urgency)

O m'ete s' ale pa la palapa.
He put leprosy on ground to be killing ringworm.

That is he leaves (ignores) leprosy and concentrates on curing ringworm. This means that one should not misplace one's priority.

Leprosy is a more serious and deadly disease than ringworm. It brings great discomfort to, maims and casts a social stigma on its victim. It can also kill. Hence its prevention and treatment are very serious matter. Realizing this therefore, it will be very unreasonable to leave the more serious and terrible disease and be treating or curing a lighter one. Thus the above *owe* is used to warn against misplacing one's priority. It urges one to give immediate attention to what is of primary importance. The *owe* can also be cited to ridicule an individual who focuses on something trivial while he neglects something that is very important.

The story of Koseemani, who went to borrow *ewu etu* from Loyen for the purpose of using it for an important occasion, comes to mind. When Koseemani arrived at Loyen's house, Koseemani met him eating. He was invited to table and he consented. As they were eating, Bode came to borrow the same *ewu etu* from Loyen.

The following conversation ensued:

Bode: Good morning, Loyen.

Loyen: Good morning, how are you?

Bode: I am fine, thank you.

Loyen: *E e r'ewu oson* (one does not see a big rat in the afternoon). I hope all is well? Why have you come this time of the day? It is very unusual of you.

Bode: Our elders say, "if there is no reason, a woman is never named Kumolu". I have come to borrow your *ewu etu* for tomorrow's occasion. I hope you still have it.

Loyen: Yes. I'll let you have it immediately. Just let me finish my meal.

Koseemani: Actually that is why I have come.

Loyen: You? That cannot be true. You should continue with your food. If you really want it, you should have asked for it but you left the important for the less important.

Loyen went in and gave the *ewu etu* to Bode. Koseemani regretted that he misplaced his priority, as he was not able to participate in the occasion.

The following proverbs are similar in application:

- i). D'una ba a j'onen j'omonen, ta a nen e ko ko gban non i.
If fire is burning you and your child at the same time, you will first shake the flames off yourself.
- ii). Omonen e e s'udi bebe e da mu leke si t'omo'nen muen.
One will prefer to put beads on one's child's buttocks instead of somebody else.
- iii). Uun yi iaye ba a ba wa oun ghen ko'ju si i.
One faces his mission squarely to a logical conclusion i.e. first thing first.

The poetic device used in this *owe* is assonance as can be seen in the "e" sound in *E e ete ale*.

Etu is a special type of *aso oke*, which must be included in a bride's price in Ondo culture. It is believed that *etu* is a sign of peace and plenty.

3.18 PROVIDENCE

(Divine intervention, fate, destiny, God's will, fortune, luck).

Do ba a ku die d'omo l'odo ku ojo a o.
If it remain small for child of the water (crab) to die, rain will fall.

This literally means that, if it remains a little for the crab to die, rain will fall. In other words, there is divine intervention in human life.

The attitude of Ondo people to providence is discernible in many *owe*. The people believe that there is a superior being somewhere who intervenes in the circumstances of man. The above quoted *owe* is used to illustrate the divine intervention in a situation when almost all hope is lost. When all human resources, hope, wisdom and energy end, providence takes over, God's will prevails. This *owe* encourages people not to give up.

A pre-eminent illustration of the above *owe* is the story of the late General Sani Abacha, who, in spite of his tyrannical rule, wanted to become the life president of Nigeria. He was the only person who possessed the "KEY" that could open the door to the government of Nigeria! All the different types of "CAPS" in Nigeria fit only Abacha's head. There was tension, terrorism, fear, hunger, oppression and repression and in fact, everybody had lost hope and was just expecting the worst to happen. Nobody ever thought that General Abacha could ever die, not even he himself and his followers. But alas! On the 8th of July, 1998, there was divine intervention! *Deus ex machina* played its part! God removed Abacha neatly from the Nigerian scene at a time nobody expected. Corroborating the Chinese proverb, which says that :

Destiny has four feet, eight hands and sixteen eyes; how then
shall the evildoer with two of each hope to escape?

Two different poetic devices are discernible in the above *owe*. First, there is the alliterative "d" in *Do, die, d'omo* and also "k" in *ku* and *ku, ku*, too, gives us an example of pun.

3.19 RESPONSIBILITY

(Accountability, duty, obligation, burden, onus, charge, care, trust, power, answerability).

Aja e e j, ogungun ya gbe ko ghon o 'on
Dog does not eat bone that is hung on its neck.

Literally speaking, this means that a dog does not eat the bone, which is hung on its neck. In other words, it is one's responsibility to take care of whatever he is entrusted with.

Dogs are lovers of bones. It is therefore believed that when the bone is tied on its neck, it will not be able to eat it. If any other dog attempts to get the bone, the dog on whose neck the bone has been tied will fight the other dog in order to protect the bone. This *owe* is used to underscore the importance of carrying out one's responsibility very well. It has become the responsibility of the dog to take care of the bone hung on its neck.

The metaphoric use of *ogungun* (bone) as employed in this *owe* is captivating. Bone is used to represent responsibility.

3.20 SELFISHNESS

(Self-centeredness, self-serving, meanness, miserliness).

Kaka d'eku ma je sese, a mu si gwa danon.
Instead of rat not eat "sese" it will drive pour it away.

Literally, this means that, rather than prevent the rat from eating *sese*; it will prefer to scatter it. In other words rather than allow somebody else to benefit from something, a self-centered person will prefer to destroy it or throw it away.

Selfishness is another popular subject matter in *owe* Ondo. The people do not condone any selfish behaviour. Therefore, they have proverbs, which warn and rebuke self-centeredness. The above *owe* is used to rebuke an individual who is selfish.

A good example is the case of some traders who would do anything in order to prevent another trader from selling the same type of wares for the avoidance of

competition. Such people can organize thieves to burgle their neighbour's shop or even organize to eliminate him.

The following proverbs carry the same purport:

- i). O nukan je nukan pawo ma.
Eater alone clearer alone.
- ii). He is the slave of the greatest slave, who serves nothing but himself.
- iii). He is unworthy to live who lives only for himself.
- iv). Who eats his cock alone must saddle his horse alone.

3.21 SELF- RELIANCE

(Self-help, self-dependence, self-confidence).

Onen ma nen a'e do fi ghon n'onen, uya a a je pa i.
Person not has himself say he has person, suffering will him eat completely.

Literally this means that, he who does not have himself but claims he has somebody (support) suffer will kill him. That is to say, he who does not help himself but relies on others will suffer.

Self-reliance is a valuable philosophy advocated cross-culturally. The National Policy on Education also emphasizes this virtue. A primary goal of Nigeria is to build "a united, strong and self-reliant nation"²⁰. Self-reliance is commonplace in *owe* Ondo. It is a popular belief that an individual should be able to work hard enough to fend for himself rather than rely on other people. The *owe* which is similar to the English proverb "Heaven helps those who help themselves" underscores the need for self-reliance and hence admonishes one to depend on what one can achieve on one's own through hard-work instead of depending on somebody else.

The following proverbs are similar to the *owe* in all its ramifications:

- i). To i ti da ma a te o we da n'owo a'a 'nen i.
One has one's own hand in order to avoid shame or disgrace.
- ii). Agboju l'ogun m'aa e ghun 'ya je.
He who depends on heritage will suffer.

- iii). Atelewo 'nen ee tan nen je.
One's palm does not deceive one.
- iv). To i da ma juya o we da ya ma juya 'fa i.
One struggles in order not to suffer.
- v). Uka owo onen o sayo i.
One's finger is satisfaction.
- vi) Atelewo l'ogbo oun logbo 'e pan la i.
It is the cat's palm that it leaks.

NOTES

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- ¹⁰ Robert Herrick 1948.
- ¹¹ Senanu, K.E. and T. Vincent, A Selection of African Poetry, London Britain: Longman Group Ltd, 1980, Pp. 112-113.
- ¹² R. Ridout and C. Witting, English Proverbs Explained, London: Pan Book, 1977, P. 63. 222.
- ¹³ Op. cit.,p.27.
- ¹⁴ Jeff Smith, A. Daily Approach to Prayer: The Word Among Us, (Borenhamwood: Clarendon House, 1999) P. 44.
- ¹⁵ Op. cit., p. 909.
- ¹⁶ Op. cit., p.175.
- ¹⁷ Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1998 P.13.
- ¹⁸ Deborah Klein The Little Hen, Jacksonville, Florida: U.S.A.
- ¹⁹ Op. cit., p.490.

²⁰ The Holy Bible (GNV) Glasgow Great Britain: Calendonian International Book Manufacturing Ltd. 1997, Daniel 4:30-32 p. 658.

²¹ Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education Lagos: NERDC, 1999, p.12.

CHAPTER FOUR

FUNCTIONS OF *OWE ONDO*

Folklore cannot be simply dismissed either as childish amusement or as flagrant falsehood. Its social functions are important and most relevant to social research in Africa. African folklore plays a significant role in traditional systems of education: It enforces conformity to special norms; it validates social institutions and religious rituals; and it provides a psychological release from the restrictions imposed by society. These four functions can be considered as aspects of broader functions, that is, maintaining the continuity of culture¹.

Of the various forms of folklore employed by the people, proverbs are by far the most frequently used in all manner of situations – education of the young, judicial decisions, resolution of conflicts, clarification of loaded statements, giving points and adding colour to ordinary and important conversations².

The above quoted epigraphs from Bascom and Arewa all encompass the main functions of folklore in general and proverbs in particular. Several collectors of “verbal art” materials hold firmly on to the aesthetic ideology of art for art’s sake and hence maintain that aesthetic dogma is of primary importance and that such works should be treated accordingly. On the other hand, another school of thought devotes its attention exclusively to their social functions and ignores their aesthetic value. Evidently, the two schools of thought are narrow-minded. Nevertheless one should not lose sight of the fact that one of the most important functions of proverbs is that of giving pleasure and illumination to those who use or listen to them, that is the aesthetic function which we have discussed extensively in chapter five of this study. In addition to appreciating oral literature as literature, it is important to pay attention to the social functions the various genres perform in their respective cultures. Based on this premise, this chapter is devoted to the various functions of *owe Ondo*.

In the investigation of the functions of Ondo proverbs, we shall limit our samples to fifteen main headings viz: advising, cooperation, education, warning, conformity to social norms, ridiculing, rebuking, praising, bearing philosophical

insight, conflict resolution, legal function, encouraging, consoling, confirmation of certain statements and reciprocity.

4.1 EDUCATION

In order to understand this sub-section very well, it is very important to know what education means. Education, like many other terms has various definitions. However, for the purpose of this work, we shall adopt Akinpelu's concept of education. Education is life-long and embraces the entire process of living. It occurs when someone (X) is fostering or seeking to foster in another person (Y) some disposition (D) using a method (M). X can be the society, the teacher or whoever is educating, including oneself. Y is the learner who may be a child, a youth, an adult or oneself. D is the disposition or what is being learned, for example beliefs, habits, knowledge, skills, attitudes and so on, considered really desirable for the learner to have both for himself and his society; M represents method(s) that are satisfactory, that pay due regard to the interest, the willingness and the personal integrity of the learner, and that involve his active participation.³

Is it any wonder then that Akinpelu describes an educated man as:

One who combines expertise in some specific economic skills with soundness of character and wisdom in judgement. He is one who is equipped to handle successfully the problems of living in his immediate and extended family; who is well-versed in the folk-lore and genealogies of his ancestors; who has some skill to handle some minor health problems and knows where to obtain advice and help in major ones; who stands well with the ancestral spirits of his family and knows how to observe their worship; who has the ability to discharge his social and political duties; who is wise and shrewd in judgement; who expresses himself not in too many words but rather in proverbs and analogies leaving his hearers to unravel his thoughts, who is self-controlled even under provocation, dignified in sorrow and restrained in success; and finally and most importantly, who is of excellent character. He is in no sense an educated man if he has all other qualities and dispositions but lacks good character. Good character is of the utmost importance; a man without it, however otherwise distinguished, is only a carved wooden doll, as the Yoruba people say.⁴

The above description shows the importance of educating a child or a young adult in Ondo/Yoruba society. Therefore, education of people is one of the most

striking functions of *owe* Ondo and the people use folklore, particularly *owe* to impart several dispositions into children and youths for the purpose of making them educated men and women of the society.

In this sub-section of the work, we shall investigate a host of *owe* Ondo which, in addition to addressing the youth, also teach adults how to nurture the youth for purposeful living. *Owe* Ondo, like many other proverbs, are generally cited in a variety of situations, in only some of which there seem to be any deliberate didactic purpose. According to Finnegan each of the “latent educational function is performed of transmitting a certain view of the world, a way of interpreting and analysing people and experience, and recognition of certain situations.”⁵ Commenting on the pedagogic value of proverbs, Essien notes that:

.... the built-in power in proverbs give them a didactic tendency. It would not be surprising that in an authoritative culture as that of Nigeria there would be a tendency to use them as tools of relatively formal education especially among the illiterate adults.⁶

The following corpus of *owe* are apt examples of such training. For the timely correction of a child in order to prevent him from developing unacceptable habits and grow up with them and thereby bringing shame to himself and his family, the following *owe* is quoted:

A ti kekee e ti p’eitán uoko i, do ba a dagba tan, e i du ka ma.
From small one it is trimmed branches of “iroko” if mature
finish cannot be bent again.

This means that one trims the branches of an “iroko” tree when it is still tender for if it matures, it cannot be bent again. The above *owe*, which is a metaphor, refers to the early training of the child, a practice that is likened to the trimming of the tender branch of an “iroko” tree. This activity is ideal at a tender age, as pruning the branches of an iroko at maturity is a very difficult if not an impossible task.

The next *owe*, similar to the Hebrew proverb “Train your child the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverb 22:6), shows Ondo people’s attitude to corporal punishment:

D’omaiton ba a p’agiga oisa, de ba mu iga ya ghon ’ju, a pa yo jeen.

If child kill grasshopper of oisa if the leg is not used to tear his face he will kill bigger one.

This means that if a child kills the grasshopper of *oisa* (deity), if the hind leg is not used to tear his face, he will kill a bigger one.

This *owe* underscores the need to punish a child when necessary so that he would follow the right way. For if not punished he will commit a more serious offence in future. The musicality of this *owe* as produced by the sounds *omaiton*, *agiga* and *oisa* cannot be over-emphasised.

The following *owe* similarly emphasizes the importance of training a child and thus advises parents to train their children so that they will have peace and harmony:

Ko omo e do le mu usimi ko e.
Teach your child to give you rest

In other words, train your child so that he can give you peace of mind.

In the above *owe* the reason for training a child is to achieve peace of mind.

Emphasizing the importance of educating the youth, Ondo people further believe that:

Omo yi e ko oun a a gbe uli yi a ko ta i.
Child not taught will sell house built

Meaning that it is the unschooled (unbuilt) child that will sell the house that has been built. The above philosophical *owe* emphasizes the need for parents to train their children on the importance of good behaviour.

The next *owe* shows the importance of self-reliance:

Omo yo ba a gb’owo oke oun gbe i.
Child that carry hand up it is we carry

This means that it is a child that lifts up his hands that one carries.

Similar to the above, the following *owe*, paralleled to the English proverb “Heaven helps those who help themselves,” can be used to teach a child the importance of self-reliance.

Uka’wo onen o s’ayo i.
One’s finger is his satisfaction.

The above *owe* can be used to teach the value of self-reliance. Here is a call to both parents and teachers not to spoon-feed the child. The child should be allowed to learn how to be responsible. The following *owe* also carry the same purport:

Atele’wo logbo oun logb’e pan la i.
Palm of cat it is it leaks.

In other words, the cat leaks its own palm.

Atele’wo’nen e e tan ’nen je.
Palm of person does not deceive one.

This means that one’s palm cannot deceive one.

These *owe* are quite consistent with the main thrust of contemporary constructivist learning theory which emphasizes that learning should not only be child-centred, but the child should be assisted to accept responsibility for his learning. The teacher’s role should be that of a facilitator, a classroom manager and a provider of resources.

Leadership by example is the focus of the next *owe*:

Esin ugwaju oun t’ eyin ho sa’e i.
Horse in front it is the back one look to run

Literally, it means that it is the horse in front that the one trailing behind use for moderating its speed.

The above *owe* can be aptly employed to teach a child to follow the example of his elder sibling who is hard working and of good behaviour.

The lesson taught by the following *owe* is that a child should avoid excessive behaviour:

Den a'a e n'awo yo gba e.
Fry yourself in the pot that contain you

Literally, this means fry yourself in a pot that will conveniently contain you.

4.2. COOPERATION.

Ondo people believe in cooperative effort for the achievement of a set goal. Hence they have proverbs to buttress this belief. The following *owe* is often used to teach cooperation:

Di oton gwe osi, di osi gwe oton, oun owo mu fen i.
If right wash left, left wash right hand make hand clean

Literally speaking, this means that if the right hand washes the left hand and the left hand washes the right, both hands become clean.

This *owe* can be used to elucidate the significance of cooperation. Just as the two hands wash each other to become clean, so it is, with cooperative effort. When there is cooperation, a set goal can be more easily achieved. The above *owe* is an apt example of chiasmus. This poetic device will be discussed in detail in chapter five of this thesis. A congener of the *owe* is:

Ajeje owo kan gb'eun fo' iho.
Ajeje, hand one carry load to head.

This means that it is impossible for one hand to lift a load to the head.

This *owe* advises that cooperative effort between the two hands is necessary in order to be able to lift a load to the head. This *owe* can be used to enjoin children or (any group of people for that matter) to work together as a team or as a family in order to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in a set goal.

4.3 RECIPROCITY.

The lesson exemplified in the following *owe* is reciprocity. The *owe* shows how unwise it is for an adult to feel too big to render assistance to a child:

Owo omoiton t'apepe, t'agba w' akeegbe.
Hand child not reach shelf and that of big person not enter gourd.

This means that the hand of a child cannot reach the high shelf and that of an adult cannot enter a gourd. The message in this proverb is about reciprocity.

There are the alliterative ‘t’ in “t’apepe” and “t’agba” and also a repetitive “ko” which is repeated twice.

The following *owe* is often applied to teach children that certain endeavours need the expert advice of an elder or adult for them to succeed:

D’omoiton ba a n’aso bi s’agba, e le n’akisa bi s’agba.
If a child has clothes like big person he cannot have rags like big person.

This means that if a youth has as many clothes as the adult, he cannot have as many rags as the adult.

The above *owe* warns youths to behave and be humble because no matter how rich they may be, they cannot have as much experience and wisdom as an adult. Hence, they should always respect and take advantage of the experience of the adult and consult him for good counseling when the need arises.

From the foregoing, it can safely be inferred that among the Ondo people, when any person, young or old, man or woman, servant or master, ruler or the ruled behaves badly, he hears his actions criticized appropriately in words of *owe* (proverbs) which are meant to train him. However, good behaviour is commended using an appropriate *owe*.

4.4 BEARING PHILOSOPHICAL INSIGHT.

In considering the functions of *owe* Ondo, we can easily differentiate between the function performed by all proverbs and their specific uses. In this section of chapter four, we restrict ourselves to one of the functions of *owe* Ondo which is that of bearing philosophical insight. Talking about philosophy here, we do not imply the developed systematic search for western consciousness, as was the trend in the days of Aristotle. But the attempt of the African, nay Ondo man:

to describe and understand the world in which he lives, the behaviour of his gods, the facts of life and death, the ethics of his society, the ways to success and happiness, the vagaries of human nature and the laws by which he must live⁷.

Many scholars such as Oesterley and Robinson have testified to the fact that the most commonly recognized function of proverbs is that of bearing philosophical insight. Supporting the above statement, Paul Radin is of the opinion that proverbs are excellent examples of philosophical statements. R.S. Rattray, an anthropologist, wonders as he reviews Ashanti proverbs how:

a 'savage' or primitive people could possibly have possessed the rude philosophers, theologians, moralists, naturalists and even it will be seen, philologists which many of these proverbs prove them to have had among them⁸.

Ruth Finnegan reiterated in her writing on the functions of proverbs among Africans that they:

represent a people's philosophy. In proverbs the whole range of human experience can be commented on and analyzed, generalizations and principles expressed in a graphic and concise form and the wider implications of specific situations brought to mind⁹.

In line with Finnegan's observation, in *owe* Ondo the whole gamut of human experience is appraised and analyzed; generalizations and ideas presented in strong and brief manner, and the wider meanings of particular situations are laid bare. That proverbs exist in Ondo culture is a clear proof that Ondo people, like other Africans, have for a very long time been observing nature and the 'rules' and laws of human behaviour.

For, in common with other Africans, the Ondo proverb-coiners have from time immemorial, abstracted from uncountable events, happenings and situations in the course of which certain generalizations have been made about them. *Owe* Ondo are highly philosophical by nature. Therefore, we shall allow the *owe* to speak for themselves without any interpretation or annotation by the researcher for according to Thompson: "The proverb, while functioning as the bearer of philosophical insight is

usually created in much the same way as the poem. And hearer must bring his own experience to bear rather than follow out a logical argument”¹⁰.

Now the examples of Ondo philosophical proverbs:

- (i) Bi 'lekun kan ti, omuen si.
If one door does not close, another does not open.
- (ii) Abee bo n'ow' adete o d'eete.
The needle drops from the leper's hand he is worried.
- (iii) Aiye k'ooto.
The world hates truth.
- (iv) Aiye ya'nen bu'en se.
Going through life is not as fast as trekking.
- (v) D'a ka gun'yan si n'ewe da s'obe si epipo epa, onen a a yo a yo.
Even if one pounds yam and scoops it on a leaf and one cooks soup in a groundnut shell, he who will be filled will surely be filled.
- (vi) D'uya lila ba a gb 'onen san'le, kekee a ka gun oiho onen.
If a big misfortune (problem) befalls one, smaller ones will be climbing on one's head.
- (vii) D'omaiton ba a n'aso bi s'agba, e le n'akisa bi s'agba.
If a child has as many clothes as an elder, he cannot have as many rags as the elder.
- (viii) D'ale i p'osika uun gaangaana ti baje.
Before the ground kills a wicked person, many valuable/good things would have been destroyed.

That is before a wicked person receives his judgement he would have caused a lot of damages.

- (ix) De ba a to i ti epo j'usu a to i ti usu j'epo.
If one does not eat oil because of yam one will eat yam because of oil.
- (x) Di e'u ba a pe n'uli a d'oma.
If a slave lives long in a home, he will become a child.
- (xi) E si use mato se sa'e to, ku ugwaju gha an k' ale i.
No matter how fast a vehicle goes (speeds) the ground will always be ahead of it.
- (xii) E si i jo Maku se i a ku.
It is inevitable that Maku (Don't die) will surely die.

This means that Maku's death is a necessary end; which will surely come when it will come.

- (xiii) E le buu buu do ma ku onokan m'onen, onen ya a ku oun e ma i.
No matter how terrible or unpleasant one's circumstance may be one will always have at least one sympathizer or supporter.
- (xiv) E si u un yo fi d'onen ma t'ola a fi uku.
Nothing prevents one from staying alive till tomorrow except death.
- (xv) Ekutele bi, ole po, olubaje ku o aiye.
Rats deliver; thieves increase, and evildoers do not leave the world.
- (xvi) Eun agba oun ob'en ti gbo i.
Kolanut matures in the mouth of an elder.
- (xvii) E ma uun sisun ye sun de to uli.
One does not know the type of sleep that will take one to his grave.
- (xviii) E e gi ghan afoju fi oja ti tu.
Nobody informs a blind man that the market has closed.
- (xix) Eja yo ju eja o gb'eja win.
The fish that is greater (bigger) than the (other) fish, it is that swallows the fish.
- (xx) Inon e e s'ugba da le si ho.
The stomach is not like calabash for one to be able to open and see within.

In William Shakespeare's words 'there is no art to find the mind's construction in the face'¹¹.

- (xxi) Kata kiti e d'ola, da s'use bi si eu e daun uun kuun.
Aggression does not turn to riches, working like a slave will achieve nothing.
- (xxii) Kaka d'ewe agban ro se en le koko ko si i.
Instead of the coconut tree's leaf getting softer, it is becoming tougher.
- (xxiii) Maluu ye nen'uun, Olo'on e le esisi ghun i.
The cow that has no tail, God drives flies away for it.
- (xxiv) Oiho buuku e ka koolo bi s'upekun da le ma.
An unlucky (ill-fated person) head does not bend like a cutlass so that one can identify it.
- (xxv) Oisa, du e ba a le gbe mi, yin mi non bu o se da mi.
"Oisa" (Deity), if you cannot defend me, leave me as you have created me.

- (xxvi) O w'onen da je 'an pe n' eun sugbon ofifa je.
One would have loved to eat meat for a longer time but for "ofifa" that pulls it down the throat.
- (xxvii) Omi l'eniyani; e ma ba a san pade; de ba a san pade n'oke a le san pade n'odo.
Human beings are (like) stream, we do not know when and where we can flow meet (flow into each other).
- (xxviii) O so si ko du ka, o wo, si ko du se e.
It fruits where it cannot be plucked; it falls where it cannot be picked up.
- (xxix) Onen yo ba a fi di aiye san, e e s'oun nukan a a je.
He who wishes well for the world will not live in it alone.
- (xxx) Ow' epo oun oma iaye b'onen lai, e s'onen b'onen la 'wo eje.
People will help you leak an oily hand but not a blood stained hand.
- (xxxi) O'on jipa eniyani, omo iaye jipa ga'i.
Heaven eats a lot of people; human beings eat a lot of gari.
- (xxxii) Tika toiye e si ye gbe ninen.
Both wickedness and benevolence will not go unrewarded.
- (xxxiii) Uun yi iaye ba a gbe o we fu i.
Whatever one sows, is what germinates.
- (xxxiv) B'oiho ba a pe n'ale a d' i'e.
If the "head" (one) lives long enough, it will become good.
- (xxxvi) Uun yi iaye ba a gbe oun ghen ka i; e le gbe' gbado da ka koko.
It is whatever one sows he reaps; one cannot plant corn and harvest cocoa.

4.5 CONFORMITY TO SOCIAL NORMS.

The Random House Dictionary defines norms as "a designated standard of average performance of people of a given race, background" etc. Ondo people have an established standard of behaviour, which every member of her society is expected to cherish and comply with. *Owe* Ondo is an effective means of exercising this social control. They are applied severally to validate, justify and moderate the activities as well as apply social pressure on her members. Therefore, the *owe* herein employed

will be centred on conformity to the generally accepted behaviour of the Ondo society.

For example, the following:

E e m'oiho Ade gwole.
We not carry head crown drag on ground.

This means that nobody disrespects a crowned head.

The above *owe* underscores the respect, Ondo people have for their *Oba*. They hold him in high esteem and this is shown physically when the people greet their *Oba*, the men prostrate flat while the women greet on their knees and bow down with their forehead touching the floor and shout *ka a bi ye si, o keji oisa*. That is *kaabiyesi* (who dares ask him any question?) the second in command to God. Every Ondo citizen is expected to conform to this norm. This *owe* can also be used to call an individual who disrespects an elder to order. His attention is quickly drawn to the fact that the elderly man/ woman is synonymous to the “crowned head” who must be respected. This *owe* is a perfect example of synecdoche, the crown representing the whole i.e the king.

The next *owe*:

Omo'nen le sengwa sengwa da mu s'aya.
Child one not beautiful, beautiful to her take marry.

can be applied to show that there are certain things that are abominable which, no matter how enticing, you must stir clear off. Ondo people see marrying one's child or incest as an abomination. This *owe* is repetitive (by the repetition of *sengwa, sengwa*) and also assonantal “en” which makes the *owe* very melodious to the ear.

The following *owe* can be used to draw a person's attention to the need to conform with Ondo behavioural standard:

Li t'onen e e h'oi osan da m'aipan.
One's relation cannot be on the top of a cherry tree and one eats an unripe one.

The above *owe* is usually applied to put pressure on someone in an influential position to use his position for the benefit of his relation and community.

The next *owe*, similar to “As you sow, so you shall reap”, shows that Ondo people do not believe that there is any “sacred cow” anywhere. They do not support any cover up of evil acts. If you deserve to be punished, you have it in good measure and if you deserve to be rewarded you equally have it in good measure:

Uun yi wo ba a gbe oun wa ka i, we le gbe ila du o ka koko.
What you plant, it is you will pluck, you cannot plant okro and you pluck cocoa.

That is to say, it is whatever you sow, that you will reap; you cannot sow okro and reap cocoa.

Like people in other civilized societies the world over, it is the general belief of the Ondo people that a person is responsible for his own action. Hence, if a person behaves in an unacceptable manner, he is reminded by the application of the above *owe* that he should be prepared to face the consequences of his violation of the social norm.

4.6 WARNING

Another function that *owe* Ondo, like many others, perform is to warn people against certain things e.g. utterances, lack of foresight, etc. For instance,

Eghen oun e i, do ba a ti ja fo e du se e.
Egg voice is if it fall brake cannot be gathered together

In other words utterances are eggs; if they drop (once spoken) and break they cannot be put together again, meaning that one should be discreet in the use of the tongue.

This *owe* is used to warn against flippant use of the tongue. It cautions on being careful about what comes out of one’s mouth. This *owe* is metaphorically used. Words are compared with eggs, which if broken, can never be put together again. So it is with one’s utterances. The next *owe* is similar to the above:

Ohun pele, o yo obi n’ apo; ohun lile yo uda n’ako.
Voice gentle remove kola from pocket; hard voice remove sword from sheath.

This means that a gentle voice brings kola from the pocket while a harsh voice brings out a sword from its sheath.

This is a warning on the use of the tongue, which needs no further explanation.

The following *owe* warns against lack of foresight:

Igi soso o iy'a gonen'ju a to ke iye e ti hoi.
Stick pointed that will pierce one's eye from far we look it.

That is to say a pointed stick that can pierce one's eye is seen from a far.

This *owe* warns against lack of foresight. If one sees an impending danger, one should take the necessary action at the nick of time.

The sub-joined *owe* warns on the type of relationship one should have.

Aguntan yo ba a ba aja ren a j' iwin.
Sheep that walk dog with will eat escreta

In other words the sheep that associates with a dog will eventually feed on faeces.

This *owe* is self-explanatory.

The next *owe* warns people against doing things that can have adverse effect on them:

Onen ye n'oogun adoado e e gb'ayian win.
Person not have medicine "adoado" does not carry cockroach
swallow

This *owe* literally means that, whoever does not have an antidote for adoado (a terrible disease) must not swallow a cockroach.

Cockroaches are found in very dirty places particularly pit latrines, and they are capable of transmitting diseases. Hence one should avoid getting in contact with them. The above *owe* also teaches hygiene.

The message of the next *owe* is clear on the repercussion of lack of straight forwardness (dishonesty) in one's dealings.

Uli yi a ba a mu iton ma, eri e gwo un i.
House that we carry spit build dew it is break it down.

This means that a house built with spittum will collapse when dews drop on it.

4.7 PRAISING.

Some *owe* Ondo are utilized to praise people for their achievements. The following example will suffice here:

Bi eegun iaye ba a jo iye n'ugha a'a ya 'nen.
If masquerade person dance well in the palace body will happy.

This means that if one's masquerade dances well in a palace gathering one's head will swell (one's ego will be boosted).

The above *owe* can be used for praising a child whose behaviour or achievements have made one proud of him or her. The *owe* can be illustrated as follows:

Toluwalope has just graduated from the medical school. She won the two esteemed academic prizes in the Faculty. To show their gratitude to God, her parents organized a thanksgiving service for her. Her parents and well-wishers presented gifts to her.

Mrs. Akinkunmi inquired from Mrs. Olubayode why Tolu's parents were celebrating. The following conversation ensued:

Mrs. Olubayode: They are thanking God for the excellent performance of their daughter who graduated from the medical school in flying colours. You know, the girl won the two esteemed academic prizes in the medical school.

Mrs. Akinkunmi: No wonder! They need to celebrate. Their daughter has made them proud. I now know why our elders say, "Bi eegun iaye ba a jo iye a'a ya 'nen". I thank God for her parents. It is worth celebrating!

4.8 ADVISING.

A large number of *owe* Ondo are used to give advice to people. For example the first sibling of the family can be advised to be of good behaviour, hard working and dedicated to duty. This is because others will emulate him. The following *owe* can be aptly employed:

A ko sig'onen "ato" e mu pa i.
First firewood that one gets it is for foundation

Literally, this means that the first firewood one fetches is usually used as *ato* (i.e the foundation or the base).

The next *owe* could be used to advise students to start preparing early for an important event, for example, a forthcoming promotion examination:

Ogun a gbo tele e e p'aro yo ba a gbon.
War hear before hand not kill cripple that is wise

This means that a wise cripple never gets killed in a war about which he has been forewarned.

This *owe* is similar to the English proverb: "forewarned is forearmed". The above *owe* can also be used to advise someone to prepare for the future. For example, a lecturer who informs his students in advance about a test that would come up soon, might apply this *owe* to urge the students to start preparing ahead of time for the test.

The next *owe* can also be used to give advice:

A'a e e wowo di l'otu e m a le gbe un.
Body not too heavy for owner not to carry it.

That is to say that no matter how heavy the body may be the owner will still be able to carry it.

The above *owe* can be used to advise an individual to be alive to his responsibilities. As it is his responsibility to carry his body, so also it is for him to carry out any other responsibilities assigned to him.

The subjoined *owe* also serves an advisory function. It advises on the need for commitment, dedication to duty or persistence:

Onen yo ba a te oju m'ojuto a p'eja.
Person that stir at gutter for a long time will kill fish

Literally it means that, he who stares persistently at the gutter will surely catch fish.

4.9 CONFLICT RESOLUTION.

Owe Ondo are exceptionally powerful tools for resolving conflicts and disputes. The following *owe* for instance, is appropriate for resolving a conflict between two parties one of whom is not ready to listen to the elder who is trying to resolve the conflict. The elder can apply this *owe* (to draw the attention of the parties to the need to put an end to it, pointing out to the fact that “to err is human, but to forgive is divine”).

E e do da ma ja, sugbon aja i gb’uha o so o i.
We don’t live together and not fight, but fight not settle is difficult.

This means that people cannot live together without quarrelling but reconciliation/settlement should be given a chance.

The following *owe* is similar to the above:

Iwan at’eyin ja, sugbon e s’onen e mu ghen wen pa i e.
Tongue and teeth fight but no person know when they settle, meaning that the tongue and the teeth do fight, but no one knows when they settle their conflict.

It emphasizes the importance of closeness of individuals to one another even when conflict exists between them. The *owe* underscores the inevitability of conflicts but settlement must follow. The words “tongue” and “teeth” are metaphorically used to indicate that despite the closeness of the tongue and the teeth, occasional quarrels do occur between them but their misunderstanding does not last.

The next *owe* is yet another one which can be gainfully employed in resolving conflicts:

Ugbogbo yi a mu gbe l’oan, eyin seko e e gbe si.
Club that we take support fighting man, back of his house will carry it put

This means that, the club used in supporting a quarrelling man is usually left behind his house.

This *owe* discourages taking sides in any conflict as the person being supported will be held responsible for whatever happens as a result of the conflict. The *owe* also

warns whoever is quarrelling that he alone will suffer the consequences of his action if he does not agree to have the conflict resolved. It underscores the need for justice/fairness in conflict resolution.

4.10 REBUKING.

Ondo people do not hesitate to rebuke anyone who has an unacceptable behaviour such as the tendency towards laziness or lukewarmness. The people are hard working and they are great achievers. The culture and tradition of the people support encourage and cherish hardwork but detest laziness. Hence, they use *owe* to rebuke and chastise lazy tendencies and indolence among the people whenever it is necessary to do so. The following are a few striking examples:

Ole b'owuo ku.

A lazy man wastes his morning but struggles when it is too late.

Apoti ole e e wowo.

A lazy man's box is never heavy.

Oj'ole igbad'egbo i.

Corn matures in the eye (presence) of a lazy man.

The following *owe* can be used to rebuke an elder who behaves in an anti-social and undignifying way:

Agbalagba e e je ke mu yi wa.

Elder don't eat what has brought this.

This means that an elder does not do things that will bring disgrace to him.

For example if an elder goes to a party and he overeats to the extent of throwing up, his fellow elders will rebuke him by applying the *owe* to show that he is a disgrace to his fellow elders and to himself and that his behaviour is very unacceptable.

The next *owe* rebukes excessive behaviour:

Omo a i j'obe i iye d'obe b'aya.

Child that never eat soup before that pour soup on his chest.

This means that a child, who has never eaten soup before, soils his chest with soup.

For example if a person is appointed to a position of responsibility but messes up the place through acts of corruption and ineptitude, the *owe* can be aptly applied to show that some ‘holy things have been given unto the dogs’ (Matt.7: 6).

The following *owe* can also be used to rebuke an ingrate:

Ara tu l’okunon, o gb’opa gbe.
Body cool for sick man his staff he forget.

In other words, an invalid, who feels better, he forgets his staff.

The *owe*, similar not only in meaning but also in application to the English proverb “Vows made in storm are forgotten in calm” is used in a situation in which somebody who is in dire need of help promises to do this or that if only he could get out of the difficulty surrounding him. But after getting out of the trouble, he could not even remember to say thank you to his benefactor.

4.11 CONSOLING.

Another function of *owe* Ondo is that of consoling and bringing a word of comfort to people most especially during the time of distress. For example, if somebody who is involved in an accident in which many people died but he or she survived with a fracture, and yet, still complains about his plight to his friend, the friend can apply the following *owe* to console him.

Uku yo ba a fè i pa ‘nen do baa s’onen ni fila da ka du pe.
Death that want to kill person, if it remove person hat, person should thank.

It means that if a disaster that intended to claim one’s life, merely decaps one, one should be grateful to God.

This is to console the victim and at the same time to rebuke him for not being grateful to God for sparing his life. Death in the above *owe* is personified. The human attribute of “removing cap” is given to it.

The next *owe* consoles a person who, for instance, is arrested because his son commits an offence but the son is at large. If the father complains that he knew

nothing about the offence and that in fact, he does not know his son's whereabouts, the following *owe* can be hurled at him:

Esuu onen o we m' owo onen y' epo i.
Yam of person it is put hand person in oil.

Literally, this means that, it is one's *esuu* (yellow yam) that causes one to dip one's hand into oil.

This is to show that the behaviour of his son has put him in the situation in which he finds himself. *Esuu* in this *owe* signifies the bad behaviour of a relation while *epo* signifies problem.

The next *owe* consoles an individual whose house is burnt. It is intended to let him know that when the house is rebuilt, it will be more beautiful:

Uli oba yo jo, egwa ghon bu si un i.
House king that burn beauty it put on it.

In other words, the oba's palace that is burnt beautifies it (the palace).

This *owe* is an example of oxymoron where "burnt" (*jo*) and "beauty" (*egwa*) are contradicting each other.

4.12 ENCOURAGING

There are a number of *owe* which are used to encourage people. For example the promotion of a hard working and dedicated staff of an institution, which has been delayed but finally comes through, provides a suitable occasion for applying the following *owe*:

Omi yi iay'a a mon e e san gb'onen e.
Water that human will drink not flow pass person.

This means that the water one is destined to drink never flows past him or her.

The *owe* emphasizes the fact that no matter how human beings may try to repress one's progress, it will come when it will come as long as God has destined it. It also draws attention to the fact that God's timing is always perfect. Another example is:

Li suu e fon wa'a keneun i.
Patient one it squeeze milk of lion.

Literally, this means that it is only the patient person that can milk a lion.

The following *owe* can find application in a situation where a person has been working but it seems the result is not forthcoming and contemplates on giving up the struggle.

Onen yo ba a m'oiho ti d'open oun a a yen i.
Person that put head on work it is we praise.

In other words, he who perseveres to the end will be praised.

The above *owe* encourages perseverance and steadfastness.

The next *owe* underscores the fact that perseverance has its own reward:

Do ba a ku die d'omo l'odo ku oj'a ro.
If it remain small for child of water to die rain will fall.

That is to say, if it remains a little for a crab to die, the rain will fall.

The above *owe* shows that Ondo people believe in divine intervention. The following *owe* can also be used to give encouragement to people:

Onen ye ba ku oun e n'igi obi i.
Person not die it is that has tree of kolanut.

This means that, when there is life there is hope.

Esin e e da onen da ma ton gun.
Horse not throw person not to ride it again.

That is to say, the fact that the horse throws down the rider does not stop the rider from getting up and climbing it again.

De ba a ren dede ose oisa kan gh'onen pe ale le.
If we don't walk all the legs that oisa count for person correct night will not come.

That is to say that, if one does not complete the journey one has been destined by "oisa" night will not fall (darkness will not come).

4.13 RIDICULING.

Some *owe* Ondo can be used to ridicule people whose behaviour is either, for example, stupid, anti-social or lazy. For example, if an elderly person joins young people in perpetrating anti-social or shameful behaviour, the following *owe* can be hurled at him:

O s'agbalagba e se la gba la gba.
He is elder; he is doing "la gba la gba"

This means that he is an elderly person and yet behaves *lagbalagba* (shamefully).

The above *owe* exhibits the poetic device called paranomasia otherwise known as pun.

There is a play upon the word "lagbalagba". A similar proverb is:

O d'agba e d'anon.
He is old but his stomach is not old.

This means that he is old but lacks wisdom.

The following ridicules a lazy person who relies on others to survive:

L'uoka gb'uoka oju ole do fifo.
Owner of ring collect his ring the eye of the lazy man become empty.

Literally, this means that the owner of the ring gets back his ring a lazy man (who has borrowed it) is put to shame.

This metaphorical *owe* paints the picture of any lazy person who lives by borrowing from others. For example, Mr. A has just borrowed a paddle to ferry passengers from one bank of the river to another. A few moment before take off, the lender who also wants to ferry passengers across the river suddenly discovered that he had lent out his only paddle. Consequently, he has rushed to the bank of the river shouting Mr. A. my paddle! My paddle, please! Give me my paddle! One can only imagine the embarrassment faced by Mr. A. the borrower and his stranded passengers!

The sub-joined *owe*, which is on all fours with the Biblical (Mat. 7:3) saying, "why then do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the log in your own eye?" ridicules hypocritical behaviour of people:

Upako l'upako oun e ri, onen l'onen e ri t'onen i.
 Back of the head of another person we see it is somebody else
 that see our own.

This means that we see the *upako* of somebody else, but another person sees our's

The *upako* is repetitive.

The next *owe* ridicules lying or insincerity:

Okobo e e b'omo si tosi.
 Impotent man has no children in nearby place.

Literally saying, an impotent man never has children in the neighbourhood.

This means that a liar always tries to present an instance that is very difficult to verify just like the impotent man would claim that his children are not in the neighbourhood and it is difficult to prove that he has no children, so, it is with expert liars.

The next *owe* can be applied to ridicule a person's stupid behaviour:

Lagoigo b'usu se o mu demde ko'na mon un.
 Stupid man put yam on the fire uses pawpaw plant to cook it.

This means that *Lagoigo* (stupid man) puts yam on the fire using pawpaw as the firewood.

The *owe* is self-explanatory.

The next *owe* also ridicules unacceptable behaviour, this time, stupid behaviour!

Gongosu edidare, bu ose go to na wo se go to.
 Gongosu edidare your stupidity is as long as your height.

4.14 JUDICIAL FUNCTION.

The universality of the application of proverbs in traditional legal system cannot be over-emphasized. Loeb showed copiously how proverbs in Indonesia function in arguing out legal matters. Says he:

The real law of Western Indonesia existed in former times, and still does to a considerable extent, in the form of proverbs, the patrilineal Batake of Sumatra defend the rights of women by stating, "a woman is no Karabau, that she can be bought: the neighbouring Minangkabau, who are matrilineal, defend their system by stating that "a rooster can lay no eggs". Hence the father has no rights over his children, who belong to the mother's brother ¹².

Herzog and Bloah, writing about the legal function of proverbs between the Jabo of Liberia in Africa, affirm that: “The Africans are very legalistically minded. Since almost any act has legalistic aspects, there is hardly a discussion of consequence (whether or not actually in court) in which proverbs are not employed”¹³.

Prof. Ojoade has copiously evidenced legal proverbs in Africa in his widely cited article entitled “Proverbial Evidences of African Legal Customs”.

In Ondo, as earlier pointed out in chapter one of this work, *Eghae* forms the legislative council. In the following *owe* therefore, we note the judicial function played at the Oba’s court. Ondo people believe that taking one another to court is just too bad because the relationship between the two parties will become permanently strained. Hence they employ the following *owe* to discourage people from going into any legal tussle if there is an alternative conflict resolution strategy:

E e ti kootu bo wa’li wa s’omo’ye.
Nobody comes back from court to become brothers.

The next *owe*:

Di l’ejo ba a ma ejo n’ebi e ni i pe n’oiho ukonle.
If one acknowledges one’s guilt in court one will not remain on his knees for long.

This *owe* can be applied to counsel an individual to own up to his guilt so that his case may not be prolonged. For if you own up to your guilt, you have tried to put things right and so may be pardoned or judged with leniency.

The sub-joined *owe* shows the attitude of Ondo people to aiding and abetting crime:

E e se onen yo gbe epo n’ok’aja nukan o s’ole, onen yo gba ale na a ole.
It is not only the person who lifts palm oil from the shelf that is a thief, but those who assist him in putting it down are also thieves.

This *owe* is the same in sense and application as the English proverb: “The receiver is as bad as the thief”¹⁴. The above *owe* is applied to show that Ondo people hate aiding and abetting crimes and that whatever punishment is meted to the carrier should be meted to the helper/receiver.

In Ondo culture stealing is criminal. It may be possible for the thief to steal several times without being caught but it is believed that one-day, nemesis will catch up with him. The law will have its hold on him. The following *owe* testifies to this fact:

Ojo gbogbo ni t'ole, ojo kan ose ti l'uun i.
Day every is for thief, day one it is for the owner.

This means that every day is for the thief but one day is for the owner.

The message of the next *owe* needs no explanation:

Ole yo ji kakaki oba, o ku boon ti a fon.
Thief steal trumpet of king, it remains where he will blow it.

Literally the *owe* means the thief who steals the king's trumpet will find it difficult to blow it anywhere without being discovered.

The sub-joined *owe* emphasizes that a criminal must bear the consequences of his action:

Onen ba a je gbi o we ku gbi i.
Person who eats *gbi* will die *gbi*.

That is to say that he who eats *gbi* (piggishly) he will die *gbi*.

Notice the two poetic devices employed in the above *owe* which add beauty to it. They are repetition and parallelism.

4.15 CONFIRMATION OF CERTAIN STATEMENTS.

Ondo people frequently utilize *owe* to confirm certain factual statement even though they may appear to be otherwise. For example, a parent spends a lot of money on the education of his children but other relatives compare him with his friend who does not educate his children. Rather he spends his money building houses. The parent being criticized can apply this *owe* to let people know that he is investing his money on the education of his children:

Ajie l'aagun, iwu e da ma i.
Chicken sweats but feather not allow one to know.

This means that fowl sweats but its feathers prevent one from noticing it.

The following too, is similar in sense and application:

Nina oho e'di yeye omo s'opin.
Spending money not allow the mother of children to try.

In other words, a mother's expenses prevent one from knowing that she is persevering.

The sub-joined *owe* finds application in the following instance:

A stark illiterate who knows the value of education, trains his children and some of them become doctors, lawyers, and engineers, name it. If he now introduces them as his children and then somebody exclaims and asks: "you mean these are your children"? An observer can employ the following *owe* to confirm that it is possible for an illiterate parent to have highly educated children:

Inon ukoko didun oun eko fifun ti jade i.
Inside pot black white corn paste it is come out.

This means that the white corn paste comes out of the black pot.

This *owe* establishes the fact that being an illiterate parent does not mean that he cannot be a parent to highly educated children. Hence illiterate people should not be looked down upon.

4.16 AS A GAME.

That proverbs perform the function of entertainment in many African countries cannot be gainsaid. According to Junod, the recitation of proverbs is treated as games between the Thonga of South Africa. Among the Ashanti of Ghana, for example, there exists in Kassena, a form of word game which, "is for one of the circles to say a word which has apparently no meaning at all but which has been memorized as the key to a proverb". So also among the Fante, proverbs are recited for entertainment not only during evening gatherings but also during important occasions.

Coming home to Nigeria, proverbs are also used as entertainment in Tiv land for example. In Hausaland proverbs also serve the same purpose. Says Major A.J.N.

Tremearne:

We took it in turns to go round the sentries at night, and I found an excellent plan to keep the men awake in giving them a Hausa proverb to pass on round the cordon until it came back to me... The Hausas, who made up a good proportion of the force, are extremely fond of proverbs, and they quite entered into the spirit of this kind of thing, especially as some of the sayings were very appropriate ¹⁵.

As far as the data so far collected by the researcher are concerned, the *owe* collected for this work have not provided any indication that *owe* Ondo perform any entertainment function. However, this is not to say that they do not exist in Ondo culture, as making such claim will amount to *argumentum ex silentio*. Further research may show that *owe* perform this function. The foregoing are just a few of the various functions of *owe* Ondo.

NOTES

- ¹ W.R.Bascom, "Folklore Research in Africa" Journal of American Folklore Lxxvii (303), 1965 P.469.
- ² E.O. Arewa, "Proverb Usage in Natural Context and Literary Criticism" Journal of American Folklore Lxxvii (330), 1970 P.431.
- ³ J.A. Akinpelu, An Introduction to Philosophy of Education, London and Basingstroke: Macmillan Publishres, 1981 p.185.
- ⁴ Ibid., pp.178-179.
- ⁵ Ruth Finnegan, Oral Literature in Africa, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970 p.414.
- ⁶ Patrick P. Essien, "The Use of Annang Proverbs As Tool of Education in Nigeria" PhD Thesis, St Louis University, 1978 p.116.
- ⁷ John M. Thompson, "The Form and Function of Proverbs in Ancient Israel", PhD Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1965 p.23.
- ⁸ R.S. Rattray, Ashanti Proverbs: The Primitive Ethics of a Savage People, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1916 pp.11-12.
- ⁹ Op. cit. , p.416.
- ¹⁰ Op. cit., p.31.
- ¹¹ William Shakespeare, Macbeth, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Modern, 1986 p. 25.
- ¹² E. Loeb, "The Function of Proverbs in the Intellectual Development of Primitive Peoples", The Scientific Monthly, Lxiv, February 1952 p.322.
- ¹³ G. Herzog & Blooah, Jabo Proverbs from Liberia, London: Humphrey Milford, 1936 P.102.
- ¹⁴ R. Ridout & C. Witting, English Proverbs Explained, London: Pan Book, 1977 p.580.
- ¹⁵ A.J.N. Tremearne, Hausa Superstitions and Customs: An Introduction to Folklore and Folk, London 1913 pp.85-86.

CHAPTER FIVE

POETIC DEVICES IN *OWE ONDO*

The power of proverb over the minds of men is closely akin to that of the poem, and that it frequently possesses this power by virtue of its use of poetic devices.¹

In the above epigraph, Thompson's observation highlights clearly the power, which proverb possesses over the minds of people, which is similar to that of the poem. Proverb often possesses this power by virtue of its use of poetic devices and other stylistic features. These devices, when employed, contribute immensely not only to the memorability but also to the soothing appeal most proverbs give their listeners.

In this chapter, we shall focus our attention on the examination of the poetic devices with which *owe* Ondo are couched to make them striking, persuasive, memorable, exciting and enjoyable to any hearers and particularly in this case the Ondo hearers in such a way that they feel that no other appropriate or apt words could better express the ideas they convey. As Thompson picturesquely observes:

It is impossible to state exactly what it is that happens in the human mind when it perceives the "truth" of a poem or of a "poetic proverb", but that it happens, few will deny. It is as though, within the depths of human consciousness, we perceived the proverb's content to be true, not because of local demonstration or even just its appeal to "common sense" but by the way in which it says what it has to say².

For clarification of Thompson's point, the following *owe* will suffice. Certainly the wisdom articulated in:

Baba jo'na we bi e uagban.

The old man is burnt, you are inquiring about the state of his beard.

is more spicy (pungent), more forceful and more apt than saying "You are asking for the obvious or you are asking a stupid question; what will burn first?" Similarly the *owe*:

Iwin ajie h'ale.

Chicken faeces are on the ground.

is a more powerful way of warning that somebody who may likely reveal a secret is around. How about the rhetorical:

Ole yo ji kakaki oba, ki been ti a fe i fon?
The thief who steals the king's trumpet where will he blow it?

Is it not a more picturesque way of saying that 'nemesis will catch up with him'?

Finally, the *owe*:

Di maimasigidi ba a fe i te, a fi da gbe un s'ojo.
If a statue made of mud wants to get destroyed, it will request that he should be put in the rain.

Could there be any better, more piquant, more powerful way of saying, "He is asking for a disgrace?"

In this section we shall endeavour to examine only about twenty- four out of the many examples of poetic and stylistic devices which one always comes across in *owe* Ondo. We have arranged these alphabetically rather than by affinity or similarity in their utilization. Nevertheless, we cross-compared similar devices in order to fill that lapse.

The approach we shall adopt here is as follows: firstly, we shall define the particular poetic device where it is absolutely mandatory; secondly, we shall give the sample in the vernacular; then the literal translation shall follow. Thereafter, we shall show the elements, where it is necessary, in the text that constitutes the device(s) used.

The following are the items we considered: allegory, alliteration, anaphora, assonance, blazon-populaire, chiasmus, climax, dialogue, euphemism, hyperbole, ideophone, innuendo, metaphor, numerical proverbs, onomatopoeia, paradox, parallelism, paranomasia, personification, repetition, rhetorical question, simile, synecdoche and wellerism.

5.1 ALLEGORY.

An allegory, which is extended metaphor, is usually used to illustrate an important reality. Allegory is found in Ondo proverbs:

Onen o sun s'oja de ko un, ghoon d'ooni a bi baiwo iwin e ni'be.
 He who defecates in the market without removing (clearing) it will surely
 meet the dry faeces on the next market day.

The above *owe* are allegorical because they portray general truth. They mean that one will reap whatever one sows.

5.2 ALLITERATION.

Oni opines that alliteration occurs in a situation “when two or more words which lie close enough in a line of poetry or prose begin with the same letter, usually consonant”³. To Unogu, alliteration “is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words in a sentence”. For example, “Father Francis fried four fresh fish for four fathers from France” and Wifka and Winifred will wed next Wednesday”⁴. In a similar vein, Abrams defines alliteration as “the repetition of speech in a sequence of nearby words”. “The term alliteration”, he continues, “is usually applied only to consonants and especially when the recurrent sounds are in a conspicuous position at the beginning of a stressed syllable within a word”⁵. Barnet presents a more salient definition of an alliteration when he states that “alliteration is an initial rhyme or a repetition of initial sounds in two or more words as the repetitions of ‘b’ in ‘Bring me my bowl of burning gold’ and ‘a’ in ‘All the awful augries’”⁶. They went further to say that “In Macbeth’s phrase, ‘after life’s fitful fever’ which are not in initial positions, are perfect examples of alliteration.

From the above therefore, it is important to note that before an alliteration can be affirmed, there must be either (i) a consonantal sound (consonantal alliteration), vowel sound (vowel alliteration) and these must begin two or more words (ii) the two or more words must be close together and must be found on the same line and (iii) the consonantal or vowel sounds must begin or be located in medial positions of the words. Talking about the importance of the use of alliteration in any piece of written or spoken literature, Oni points out that:

Alliteration gives some melody or musicality to the ear when we listen to a poem... because you hear the same sound over and over as we usually have in most important thoughts in a passage...With this attention, such words or thoughts tend to receive greater emphasis than all other words or thoughts that go with them. For example, when Macbeth says he wants a “solely sway and masterdom”, we know his emphasis is absolutely laid on becoming the most powerful, the one and only ruler of Scotland. We get this from the attention, which ‘solely sway’ attracts because of the alliterative ‘s’. It is as if Macbeth is saying, “Watch those two words: I have used them deliberately to show that they carry everything I want to say, everything I want in this life”⁷.

At this point, it is necessary to remind our readers that in Ondo dialect, as earlier stated in chapter two of this work, there exists a combination of labio-velar plosive such as *gb*, *gh* and *gw* which are frequently employed as alliteration.

5.2.1 Types of Alliteration.

Judging from the definitions of alliteration presented above, two main categories of alliteration can be identified. They are consonantal alliteration and vowel alliteration. Consonantal alliteration is the type in which consonants especially at the beginning of the words are reiterated while vowel alliteration refers predominantly to the repetition of the vowel sound at the beginning of the words.

In this sub-section of the work, we shall consider a total of twelve specimens of each of the two types of alliteration and also indicate where the two categories feature.

5.2.2 Consonantal Alliteration.

O so si ko du ka, o wo si ko du se e.

It fruits where it cannot be plucked, and falls where it cannot be picked up.

The above *owe* presents a good example of alliteration. The *owe* means that the situation in question is enigmatic. It defies solution. The alliterative “s”, “k” and “d” can be observed at the initial letter of each of the words *so*, *si*, *si*, *se e*, *ko*, *ka* and *du*, *du*. The musicality produced by this *owe* cannot escape notice.

Dede lodongboo e d'inon d'ale i e ma iyi inon lo.

All lizards lie prostrate; nobody knows which of them has bellyache.

The above *owe* means that appearance is deceptive. The alliterative “d” in *dede*, *d’idon* and *d’ale* cannot but arrest the attention of the listener of this *owe*.

E m’ale l’ajen igba, du o gba do fen i i o fen yeye du o gba de fen i i e fen.
No one knows how to sweep the floor of a witch’s house; if one sweeps it very clean, she complains that it is too clean, if it is not clean, she complains that it is not clean.

This *owe* is also an example of repetition as we have in *fen* whose initial consonant is repeated four times. The consonant ‘d’ is also repeated four times as follows: *du*, *do*, *du* and *de*.

The following *owe* also exhibits alliteration:

To i ti da ma a te o we da n’owo a’a ’nen i.
One perseveres in order not to get disgraced.

In this *owe* the alliterative “t” appears three times while the “d” appears two times.

Ko se ko se ko d’oluse se.
He does not perform and would not allow others to perform.

In the above *owe*, the repetitive alliterative consonants “k” and “s” can be observed in *ko*, *ko*, *ko*, and *se*, *se* and *se*.

E e m’omi da ma gh’ale mon.
One does not drink water without giving the ground some to drink.

Notice the alliterative “m” in *m’omi*, *ma* and *mon*.

Kata ki ten d’ola, da s’use bi se’u e daun uun kuun.
Agitative worries do not make one rich, to work like a slave yields nothing.

Here the consonant letter “k” is repeated three times and the “k” in *kata*, *kiten*, and *kuun* is very close to each other.

Oijo o’an ba a ti b’oju ghen b’imon i.
Whenever the eye is in trouble, the nose is also in trouble.

That is whatever affects one part of the body, affects the other. The consonant “b” is repeated thrice as can be seen in *ba a*, *b’oju*, *b’imon*.

A ta i m’oni e i ta t’ai m’ana.
Working from morning till evening today is not as long as working from yesterday till today.

The repetition of “t” three times and “m” two times makes the above *owe* an example of alliteration.

Omo a je Asamu kekee ghen ti seun samu samu i.
A child who will be intelligent will show evidence of being smart right from the youth.

The repetition of the consonant “s” in *seun*, *samu* and *samu* makes this *owe* another good example of alliteration.

Obe y’onen yon e yon a s’oneun kuhu.
Whether one’s mother’s soup is tasty or not one enjoys it.

The alliteration is observable in the repetition of the consonant “y” which appears three times in *y’onen*, *yon* and *yon* and the musicality in the sound produced by the *owe* is remarkable.

Gb’ola ma gbi, o gb’eiya gbi do do.
One who lifts wealth without breathing heavily (but) lifts an ant panting heavily.

The above *owe* is an example of labio-velar plosive combination which Ondo people regard as a consonant. The alliterative effect of “gb” provides a very deep and onomatopoeic sound which renders the above *owe* musical to the hearer.

5. 2. 3 Vowel Alliteration.

L’oho i i oun agidi agba, iwofa i i oun a r’eyin gba kumon, onen o fe ila’ja i i oun a le bis’uen.
The wealthy man says he is stubborn, the poor says his back is ready for the club while the peacemaker says he is as hard as a piece of iron.

The above *owe* presents a harvest of poetic devices. Firstly, there exists the repetition of the vowels “i” in the words *ii*, *iwofa*, *ii*, *i* and *ii* and also *a* in *agidi*, *agba*, *a* and *ale*. Similarly we have “o” in *oho*, *oun*, “o” and *oun*. These are admirable examples of vowel alliteration. Secondly, this *owe* is an example of Wellerism, which we shall discuss in more detail later on in this chapter. And thirdly there is an evidence of a climax in this *owe*. This also will be visited later. All these poetic devices combine to make this *owe* melodious not only to its readers but also to its hearers.

Oho obi, obi oho.
 Money is cola cola is money.

The alliterative vowel in this *owe* is conspicuously displayed in the repetition of “o” at the beginning of every word that forms the above *owe*. The proverb is also a good example of chiasmus, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Oun pele o yo obi n’apo oun lile o yo uda n’ako.
 A gentle voice approach removes (brings out) cola from the pocket while a harsh voice approach brings out a sword from its sheath.

This means that one should apply wisdom in whatever one says. The vowel alliteration in this *owe* is “o” with which five of the words begin.

E e ri oju ekon te ekon m’ale, eyin ekon e mu aho e da bata i.
 Nobody dares confront a leopard but after its death, its skin can be used for (making) shoes.

Here, the alliterative vowel is “e” and it is repeated seven times in the *owe* as can be seen in *E e... ekon...ekon...eyin... ekon...e...e*.

Ajie be l’okun, a’a ro okun, a’a ro ajie.
 The chicken perches on a rope, no peace for the rope (and) no peace for the chicken.

In this *owe*, the alliterative vowel is “a” which is repeated at the beginning of *ajie*, *a’a*, *a’a* and *ajie*.

E e ma i gun ma i se di iyan ewua ma n’ema
 One does not know how to pound or how to cook without water yams having lumps.

This means that nobody is perfect. Note that the alliterative vowel in this *owe* is “i” in *igun*, *ise* and *iyana*. This *owe* is often used to comment on a person who is very difficult to please.

Agba ko si ulu baje, baile uli ku uli d’aho’o.
 If there is no elder in the town the town is in disarray, if the father of the home dies, the home becomes deserted.

This stresses the importance of an elder in the home, if an elder is not around to direct or advise things go wrong. There is repetition of ‘u’ in *ulu*; *uli* and *uli*, which makes the above, *owe* a perfect example of vowel alliteration.

Owo epo oun omo iaye b'onen la i, e s' onen e b' onen la 'wo eje.
 People will help you leak an oily hand, but nobody will help you leak a blood-stained hand.

The above *owe* is similar in sense and application to the Hebrew proverb: 'Wealth brings many friends, but the poor man are left friendless'.

The alliterative vowels in this *owe* are "o" and "e", as can be seen in *owo, omo, onen, onen* and *owo, epo, e* and *e*.

Omo yi a bi n' uli ogbon, do lo s' uli omaa la a ya, e e f' uwa osiwin.
 A child delivered in the home of wisdom and brought up by knowledge does not behave like a mad man (i.e does not misbehave).

The above *owe* is similar in content and application to the Hebrew proverb: 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it'.

Notice the repetition of "o" three times in this *owe* as can be seen in *omo, ogbon* and *omaa*, which forms a perfect example of vowel alliteration.

Eete yi a pa d'ai mu eru s'omo e e se eete j'okan.
 A decision taken to turn a slave into a child is not a one-day decision.

The alliterative vowel here is "e", which is repeated three times as seen in *E ete, e* and *e ete*.

Onen mon omi onen, o mon "Jesa, onen o mon omi' Luwa, ugba omi ghon
 mon n'uli Doko i.
 He who drinks water from the lagoon drinks Ilesa water but he who drinks from the Atlantic drinks from two hundred sources of water in Idoko's house.

The alliterative vowels "o" and "o" can be noticed in *Onen, omi, o onen, o, omi* and *omi*.

Ubee e e se l' use onen yo m'oiho ti d'open o wo se l' use i.
 To begin an assignment is not as important as completing it.

This *owe* teaches perseverance. The alliterative vowel in the *owe* is "u" which can be seen clearly at the beginning of the letters *ubee, use* and *use*.

5.3 ANAPHORA.

The Chambers Dictionary defines anaphora as “the rhetorical device of beginning successive sentences, lines etc with the same word or phrase⁸. As Baldick correctly observes, anaphora is:

A rhetorical figure of repetition in the same word or phrase is repeated in (and usually at the beginning of) successive lines, clause, clauses, or sentences. Found very often in both verse and prose, it was a device favoured by Dickens and used frequently in the free verse of Walt Whitman.

These lines by Emily Dickenson illustrate the device:

Mine-by the Right of the White Election!
 Mine-by the Royal Seal!
 Mine – by the Sign in the Scarlet prison
 Bars-cannot conceal!⁹

Anaphora also is prevalent in *owe* Ondo. For example:

Mo pe n’ale
 Mo pe n’owuo
 Mo pe n’oson, oro omo l’omo e yen, oro omo ‘nen ke a to titi gha a wo ’le lo e i.
 I call him at night
 I call him in the morning
 I can him in the afternoon, that is somebody else’s child, but one corrects his child ceaselessly.

5.4 ASSONANCE

Assonance is a repetition of vowel sounds. It is a partial rhyme in which the stressed vowel sounds are alike while the consonant sounds may be different. This is very common in *owe* Ondo. The following are examples of assonance:

- (i) O m’ete s’ale pa lapalapa
 He abandons leprosy he is curing ringworm.
- (ii) Ba mi na omo mi e fi non l’omo.
 Assist me in caning my child does not come from the heart of he mother of the child.
- (iii) A’a e e wowo yeye di lotu e ma le gbe un
 No matter how heavy the body may seem, the owner will be able to lift it.
- (iv) A lagba’a ma mero, baba ole.
 A powerful but thoughtless person is the father of laziness.

- (v) Ayan gbe aja ma yon, sugbon kaa je d'aja i gba a e?
A roasted dog is tasty but what does one eat while the dog is still
roasting?

In the above *owe* the repetition of “a”, “o” and “e” vowels make the *owe* good examples of assonance and the musicality of the sound of the vowels to the hearers is overwhelming.

5.5 BLAZON POPULAIRE.

Archer Taylor describes Blazon Populaire as a French term, which points to unique descriptive words, phrases or proverbial sayings which are peculiar to neighbouring villages, other races or nations¹⁰. More often than not, a group of people selects one distinctive trait, which seems to be peculiar to or prevalent to another group of people to form the basis of such proverbs or sayings. For example, Nathaniel in John 1:46 wondered whether “anything good can come from Nazareth” when Philip told him about Jesus. In addition to the above, in Paul’s letter to Titus, it is said that the “Cretans are always liars, wicked beasts and lazy gluttons.

Blazon-populaire is very common in Nigeria. They are either about certain occupations, traits or even praise names of their neighbours or other ethnic groups. The Hausa, for instance say of the Buzu: “Buzu, young brother of a dog you shout if pursued, you shout when pursuing”. The other Yoruba ethnic groups call the Ondo people: *Ondo, egin, omo a m'ila p'ekoro ikun* (Ondo, *egin*, children (people) who make (tribal) marks on their bellies for beauty). Every Ondo citizen is referred to as *Egin*. In addition, other Yoruba ethnic groups refer to Ondo as *a j'aja* – “the dog eaters”. In Ilesa too, every other Yoruba ethnic group refer to them as *Omo olobi* (children of cola nut owners). The Ekiti people are referred to as *Omo oniyan ana* (literally, it means, “children of the pounded yam which was prepared yesterday i.e people who eat the left over pounded yam” which was prepared the previous day).

Apart from all the above examples Ondo also has a number of blazon populaire. The following are good examples from Ondo:

Omo Gambai ba a bi okun ghen ran i.
The child a Gambari delivers weaves ropes.

This *owe* is often used to either rebuke or praise people depending on the situation. It is also used to praise an individual who has performed well and whose parents are known for excellence. It is used to rebuke a person when the person behaves badly and such trait of misbehaviour is traced to his family.

E suun e mu s'omo 'Gbomina do ma s'eun gbo gina.
An Igbomina child will always behave true to type.

This *owe* is often used to make a derogatory remark about a person whose behaviour is not acceptable.

Gambai pa Fulani e n'ejo inon.
A Gambari man kills a Fulani man, there is no case in it(problem).

The *owe* is similar to the Yoruba proverb:

Eran Oba lo je'su Oba.
It is the Oba's animal that eats his yams.

Igbira omo ta o.
Igbira the child of *ta o*.

The Igbira people's greetings include *ta o*, so the people are referred to as the children of *ta o*.

A gbe 'Gbia le keke i i een d'oun te penpen.
An Igbira is given a ride on a bicycle; he complains that he is not allowed to press the horn (penpen).

This *owe* which is also a beautiful example of onomatopoeia is often used to rebuke ingratitude.

5.6 CHIASMUS.

According Baldick, chiasmus is a figure of speech by which the order of the terms in the first of two parallel clauses is reversed in the second. This may involve a repetition of the same words or just a reversed parallel between two corresponding

pairs of ideas as this line from May Leapor's 'Essay on Woman' (1751): Despised, if ugly, if she's fair betrayed... It is named after the Greek letter *chi* (X), indicating a criss-cross arrangement of the terms¹¹. *Owe* Ondo has quite a number of this poetic device:

Di oton gwe osi, di osi gwe oton oun owo mu fen i.
If the right washes the left and the left washes the right the hands will become clean.

The above *owe* is often used to warn against over-reaction and solicits cooperation.

The following are further examples of chiasmus:

- (i) De ba a toi ti epo j'usu, a toi ti usu j'epo.
If one does not eat oil because of yam one will eat yam because of oil.
- (ii) Ai tete m'ole, ole mu l'oko.
If one is not fast enough to catch a thief, the thief will catch the farm owner.
- (iii) Oho obi, obi oho.
Money is cola cola is money.
- (iv) Gb'oyan gho'omo, gb'oyan, d'omo ba sa a ti yan, o bu se.
Give breast to the child, give the child to the breast; what is important is that the child suckles.
- (v) Uk'e de Dede, Dede de 'ku.
Death is trapping *Dede*, *Dede* is trapping death.

The reversal order in the above *owe* is very glaring. They are also striking examples of chiasmus.

5.7 CLIMAX

Climax is the arrangement of ideas, events, and items in ascending order, starting from the least to the most. For example: *Veni vidi vici* – I came, I saw, I conquered. I may justly say with the hood-nosed fellow of Rome: I came, saw, and conquered. *Owe* Ondo too, are very rich in the use of climax.

The following are a few examples:

- (i) Ekutele bi, ole po, olubaje ku o aiye.
The rat delivers, thieves multiply and evildoers remain on earth forever.

- (ii) A gbe iyawo e yege, o bi tan e i da ma gh'inon, o yo uso, uun ye san, e esan, ubaje t'uli 'baje jade!
A new bride is discovered to be unchaste, in an attempt to massage her stomach after delivery, she polluted the air. What is bad will always remain bad, rubbish produces rubbish!
- (iii) L'oho i i oun agidi agba, iwofa i i oun a r'eyin gba kumon, onen o fe i la'ja i i oun a le bi suen.
The wealthy man says he is stubborn, the slave (poor) says his back is ready to receive the club while the peacemaker says he is as difficult (hard) as a piece of iron.

5.8 DIALOGUE

A dialogue is a literary device either in prose or verse, which refers to a conversation between two people. It is a main aspect of play and it is an important part of prose fictions and of some narrative poetry.

A lot of dialogues exist in *owe* Ondo. The following are some examples in *owe* Ondo:

- (i) Onie lo s'uli ana e, e i ki ghaan bo i i o di ghon ba a te.
The tortoise is going to his in-law's house.
He is asked when he will come back.
He replies; "I will return when I am disgraced".

This *owe* is often used to warn against excessive behaviour.

- (ii) E i omo e ma gbon i i de ba a ti ku, ke e p'onen, e de s'ego i?
We say your child lacks wisdom.
You reply: If he does not die.
What kills one? Isn't it foolishness?

The above conversations present beautiful examples of dialogue in *owe* Ondo.

5.9 EUPHEMISM

Euphemism occurs when one uses a mild expression instead of stating hard facts, which might cause pain or offences. Or when one says an unpleasant thing in a pleasant way. Euphemism is frequently used in *owe* Ondo. Below are a few examples:

- (i) Osun baja na'a e.
The month is spoilt in her body.

That is, the woman has had a miscarriage.

- (ii) Satide yo n'abe Sande.
Saturday is showing under Sunday.

That is, underwear is projecting under the main dress.

- (iii) Oba ti w' aja.
The king has entered into the ceiling. (That is, to say the king has died).
- (iv) O ta ale ni' pa.
He kicked the ground. (That means he died).

5.10 HYPERBOLE

This is overstatement or a deliberate exaggeration. It is frequent in *owe* Ondo.

- (i) D'iaye ba a ro ti ifon, a yon a'a k'ogungun.
If one thinks of the irritation, which is experienced from crawl-crawl, one will scratch the body to the bones.

The above *owe* warns against over-reaction. Below are more examples of hyperbole:

- (ii) Li suu e fon wara keneun i.
It is only the patient person that can milk a lion.
- (iii) Gb'ola ma gbin, o gb'eiya gbin do do.
One who carries wealth without feeling the weight (panting) but lifts an ant, panting heavily.
- (iv) Iyo gwo ofen e ku, iyo yoi ho i i ona o'on ghen ti wa i.
He who dug "ofen" (gallows) did not die but he who peeped into it exclaimed that he was being brought back from his way to heaven.

5.11 IDEOPHONE.

Fortune defines ideophone as a figure of speech, which attempts to vividly recreate or represent an event in sound or gesture¹². According to Samarin next to nouns and verbs, ideophones constitute a major part of the total lexicon of African languages¹³. Kunene graphically illustrates ideophone:

The speaker- turned – actor – represents to, or recreates or dramatizes for, his audience, by means either of ideophone alone (i.e. linguistically) or of ideophone and gesture (i.e. linguistically and imitation simultaneously) or by gesture alone, the event or situation which he wishes to observe...(Thus) the ideophone is a dramatization of actions or states...¹⁴.

As in many other African languages, ideophones occur frequently in *owe* Ondo. As a matter of fact, there occurs also, what can be referred to, as ideophonic-onomatopoeia or onomatopoeic ideophone in *owe* Ondo. This serves the purposes of

an emphasis – metric and rhythmic. The following examples, alphabetically arranged will suffice:

A gbe 'Gbia le keke i i een d'oun te penpen.

An Igbira man is given a ride on a bicycle he complains that he has not been allowed to press the horn (*penpen*).

The above *owe* which rebukes ingratitude is an example of what Ruth Finnegan describes as onomatopoeic ideophone. It is onomatopoeic because *penpen* echoes the sound made by the horn of a bicycle while it is ideophone because the idea described is more than the echo of the sound of the horn, facial expression and even hand gesture are employed to drive home the effect and musicality of the *owe*.

Bata omoiton i i kia kia, bata agbalagba i i keepe keepe.

The shoes of a youth sound *kia kia* (quick quick) but the shoes of an elder sound “*kee pe, kee pe* (live long, live long).

The above onomatopoeic words *kia kia* and *ke e pe ke e pe* represent the sounds made by a youth's shoes and elder's slippers respectively. It should be noted that young men and women are fond of wearing high-hilled shoes, which produce the sound *kia kia* while the elderly ones usually wear slippers, which drag on the floor and the flaps on the soles of their legs producing the sound *ke e pe*. This *owe* is also an example of an ideophone because of the gesture employed while demonstrating the sounds.

B'eten gbo yenken inon baje.

If the ear does not hear rubbish one never gets angry.

The ideophonic word *yenken* in the above *owe*, represents something unpleasant. The speaker normally accompanies it with gestures in order to make the description more vivid.

Omo ya a je Asamu, kekee ghen ti seun samu samu i.

An intelligent child will demonstrate it from childhood.

Samu samu here portrays wisdom and the speaker either gestures with his hands or by facial expression, which makes the *owe* ideophonic.

Di ulu be e don panen panen, a ka jo ghen melo melo.

If a drum beat sounds kill him, kill him, one dances it *melo melo* (with ease).

This is a common *owe* Ondo which cautions against danger. *Panen panen* is the unusual sound of a traditional drum that signals danger, whereas *melo melo* cautions against such danger. This *owe* is an example of onomatopoeic ideophone. The speaker usually demonstrates with his hand or even facial expression.

Apart from the *owe* being an example of onomatopoeic ideophone, it also an example of repetition where *panen panen* and *melo melo* are repeated.

Onen a a jo jaga, a jo jaga, onen a jo lodon, a fa gbu u.
He who will dance *jaga* will dance jaga and he who will dance *lodon* will drag (prolong) it.

This is another example of onomatopoeic ideophone. The *gbu u* is the sound made when something heavy is being dragged on the ground. Hence whereas it is onomatopoeia, the dramatization of the action that goes with it also makes it ideophonic.

5.12 INNUENDO

Innuendo is an indirect imitation about a person or thing particularly of a derogatory nature. The following are examples of innuendo in *owe* Ondo:

- i). O d'eyin do iye agbe' wua.
It will dawn on the water yam farmer later.
- ii). Dede lodongboo e dinon d'ale i e ma yi inon oon.
All lizards lie prostrate but no one knows which of them has stomachache (bellyache).
- iii). O d'ale d'abuke imo fi uke s'omo.
It is at night that the hunchback will realize that the hunch is not a child.
- iv). Abuke n'oyun ki b'aan pon si.
A hunchback is pregnant, where will she tie the child (i.e to what back will she tie it).

5.13 METAPHOR

This is regarded as the most important and widespread figure of speech commonly used in poetry and everyday conversation. It is an imaginary comparison of one thing, or idea or action rather than direct statement. The comparison between

the two unrelated things is subtle, compressed less obvious and somewhat illogical. In other words, it is a compressed simile because, unlike simile, a metaphor does not make use of words such as “like”, “as” and “than”.

According to The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics a metaphor is:

A condensed verbal relation in which an idea, image or symbol may, by images, or symbols, be enhanced in vividness, complexity, or breadth of implication... metaphor marks off the poetic mode of vision and utterance from logical evidence, maintain that all language is metaphor. The traditional view, however, is that metaphor is a figure of speech, or a family of tropes involving two (occasionally four) operative terms, and that it is used for adornment, liveliness, elucidation or agreeable mystification¹⁵.

Additionally, Emeaba defines a metaphor as:

A figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is applied to an object which in the usual sense, it is not applicable. It is an implied poetic comparison of two apparently unlike things to suggest a resemblance. It is an implied ANALOGY in which one object is imaginatively identified with another and the qualities of the first ascribed to the second¹⁶.

Metaphors occur frequently in *owe* Ondo.

Efifi uwa e i, da ka da ugba apee bo a ru jade.
Character is smoke, even if it is covered with two hundred baskets, it will ooze out.

In the above *owe* character is identified with smoke. Just as it is not possible to conceal smoke, so it is impossible to hide one's character.

Eghen l'oun, do ba a ti ja bo e du se e.
Words (utterances) are eggs; once they fall and break (are spoken) cannot be put together again.

Here, utterance has been compared to eggs. Just as a broken egg cannot be put together, so also can spoken words not be retracted once uttered. Hence utterance (the spoken word) and the egg that is broken are identified with each other because they both share the same qualities of delicacy and none of them can be put together again. Once the egg breaks, it cannot be put together again. Similarly, once words are spoken they linger on and on and spread like wild fire.

Omi l'eniyan, de ba a san pade n'oke a san pade n'odo.

Human beings are water, if we don't flow into each other upstream, we will flow into each other downstream.

In the above *owe*, human beings are likened to water. But we know that human beings are unlike water. The coiner of the *owe* had observed that the movement of human beings from one place to the other, is like people meeting again at one point or the other after they have parted for some time just as “water flows” into each other. This *owe* warns people who have the tendency of maltreating or discriminating against others or who have the tendency to injure or bruise relationships.

Onen yi a ba fo do gbo, oho a ya uun i.

He who takes to advice is loaned some money.

Obedience and money are compared. The point of the metaphor is that just as money is useful to those who have it, so also is a piece of good advice useful to those who are receptive to it.

5.14 NUMERICAL PROVERBS.

We sometimes come across numerical proverbs:

- i). Okenen sun, okeji abibe, oketa aje i je tan a mu l' esun wo.
One excretes, the second “abibe”, the third eats but cannot exhaust it is then handed over to the devil.

The above *owe* is similar in sense and application to “once bitten twice shy”.

- ii) Onok'an je awa de.
One person cannot say we have come.
- iii) Okan soso o so o iyin ni' gbado i.
Only one is difficult to shed in a corncob.
- iv) Okan soso ma toogun bo ba ti je.
Only one medicine is adequate as long as it is potent.
- v) Wangun wangun e se yin.
Good set of teeth is not by number.
- vi) A'okan gban, o gbongban soso o
A' eji gban, o gban ogban omoluwabi
A' eta gban, iten o somugo i;
Ke e p'onen bi s'ego?
He who learns from first experience bases his knowledge inadequately

He who learns from the second experience is the wise one, but he who learns on the third experience is not only careless but also stupid and what kills one other than stupidity?

5.15 ONOMATOPOEIA

Onomatopoeia, a figure of speech often found in poetry and sometimes in prose, is the use of words, which echoes the natural sound, made by a thing or an animal in real life. It is important to note that the sounds or words used must represent the actual sound similar to those sounds associated with the thing or object. As Oni rightly observes, “in such a situation, it is possible to know the meaning or sense of a word from the way the word sounds”¹⁷. The foregoing therefore, accounts for why onomatopoeia is also referred to as echoic verse. Onomatopoeia normally incorporates elements of other poetic devices such as alliteration, assonance, and rhythm and also reduplication of words. A popular Latin example of onomatopoeia must here be cited:

At tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit.
(The trumpet in terrible tones taratantara blarred)
[Ennius, Annals Book ii, frag 143].

This poetic device often occurs in *owe* Ondo. A few examples will suffice here:

O s’agbalagba e se lagbalagba.
An elderly person who behaves *lagbalagba* (That is, in an unacceptable way).

The *lagbalagba* in the above *owe* echoes the sound made when an elderly person dances with his big garment flowing (sluggishly) this way and that way.

E ti k’ose kan s’omi, akee pohoho iho.
One has hardly put a leg in water when the frog begins to croak (*pohoho iho*).

The sound *pohoho iho* represents the croaking of a frog. It is also a good example of onomatopoeia.

5.16 PARADOX

Paradox is a statement which at first sight appears to be contradictory, but on further examination is found to contain an important truth that stands out all the more

by reason of the unexpected form of expression e.g. “only the man who has known fear can be truly brave”. According to Baldick:

Paradox is a statement or expression so surprisingly self-contradictory as to provoke us into seeking another sense or context in which it would be truly (although some paradoxes cannot be resolved into truths, remaining flatly self-contradictory e.g. Everything I say is a lie). Wordsworth’s line “The child is the father of the Man” and Shakespeare’s “the truest poetry is the most feigning” are notable literary examples. Ancient theorists of rhetoric described paradox as a figure of speech, but 20th century critics have given it a higher importance as a mode of understanding by which poetry challenges our habits of thought. Paradox was cultivated especially by poets of the 17th century, often in the verbally compressed form of oxymoron...¹⁸

Owe Ondo has a host of them. The following examples are self-explanatory:

- i) Uli oba yo jo egwa ghon bu si un i.
The palace of the oba (king) that is burnt beautifies it.
- ii) Inon ukoko didun oun eko fifun ti jade i.
White corn paste comes out of the black pot.
- iii) Eghen e da akiko i.
It is the egg that becomes a cock.
- iv) A t’oan se bo’an je.
He who tries to make something good ends up spoiling it.
That is, complicating it.
- v) Alagbaa ma mero, baba ole.
Powerful but thoughtless man is the father of laziness.
- vi) Oiho buuku ye mu omoiton pen utan e’an.
It is bad head (ill-luck) that causes a young man to possess the thigh of an animal.

In Ondo tradition, when an animal is slaughtered in the family, the thigh is usually given to the eldest in the family but where all the elders have died; the young man is given the thigh of the animal. Hence the proverb above is employed to point to the fact that the misfortune through the death of the elderly man has put the young man in the position in which he can have the thigh of an animal. Therefore, he is saddled with the responsibilities of an elder. Looking at the other *owe* too, the obvious contradictions and the shock of the unmistakable absurdity push the reader into a closer examination of the statements. For instance in the first *owe* which says

“the palace of the oba which burns beautifies it, the “burning” and “beautify” contradict each other. But on a closer scrutiny, the statement is factual. For when the burnt house is rebuilt, it comes out in a more beautiful design.

5.17 PARALLELISM.

According to Baldick, parallelism is “the arrangement of similarly constructed clauses, sentences, verse lines in a pairing or other sequence suggesting some correspondence between them”¹⁸. Examples of parallelism are common in *owe* Ondo:

- i) Kaka d’eku ma je sese, a mu sigwa danon.
Instead of the rat not eating “sese” it will prefer to waste it.
- ii) Onen ran’nen use oun e be’u e i, e e be’u onen y’a a je ghan.
One fears whoever sends him/her on an errand but not the person to whom the message is to be delivered.
- iii) D’ ina ba’a tan n’oiho, eje tan n’ekikan.
As long as there are still lice on the head, there will continue to be blood on the nails.
- iv) O ye omo ye s’okun, o ye yie ye re
The child who is crying understands and the mother pacifying him also understands.
- v) O s’ise h’ouun, onen a a je hi’boji
The labourer is in the sun; the beneficiary is under the shade.
- vi) D’omoiton ba a n’aso bi s’agba e le n’akisa bi s’agba.
Even if a child has as many types of attire as an adult, he can never have as many rags as the adult.
- vii) E e do da ma ja, sugbon aja i agbuha o’so o i.
People cannot live together without having misunderstandings but refusal to settle is the problem.
- viii) Onen yo ba a da ke ta’a e bo da ke.
He who keeps quiet over his problems, his problems will also be quiet.
- ix) Onen ya fi do fe iaye ’ju o m’ata seun, onen ya fi do yon iay’eyin o mu egun s’owo.
The person, who is asked to blow dust from one’s eye, puts pepper in the mouth while he who is asked to scratch one’s back puts thorn in his hand.
- x) Omo ya ba a ko n’ulie de gba, ode e ti ko uun i.
Outsiders usually discipline a child who refuses to accept training at home.

5.18 PARANOMASIA/PUN

Paronomasia otherwise known as pun is a literary device, which employs a word whose meaning conveys two different senses simultaneously. Pun is usually employed for humorous effect; but sometimes, it can sharply point to surprising, nevertheless, genuine semblances. Below are some examples from *owe* Ondo:

- i) Uun yi e fè lo si Sokoto, a ri un n'apo sokoto.
What we are going to look for in Sokoto is found in the pocket of our "sokoto" (trousers).

The pun in the above *owe* is *Sokoto* which conveys two meanings. "Sokoto" is the name of a city in Nigeria while *sokoto* means "trousers" in Yoruba.

- ii). Usu yi Tandì gbe tandi o yin je i.
The yam planted by Tandì has been eaten by tandi.

The pun here is "tandi".

- iii). E i i di l'eyin jade, abuke jade; e i e s'eyin gannaku bi si te e i.
Somebody with a back (i.e. backing or support) is requested to come out, a hunchback came out. It is not his type of "back" that is required.

The pun here is "back" which conveys double meaning- "backing" or "support" and the physical "back" which the hunchback interprets it to be.

- iv) Toi ti da ma a j'uya oun e da ya Majuya fa i.
In order not to suffer, one offers "Majuya" (don't suffer) a catapult.

Here, the pun is on "j'uya" which means, "suffer" and "struggle".

- v) Toi ti da ma a s'use oun e da s'use i.
In order not to be poor we work.

The *owe* underscores the benefit in labour that is, that there is a reward for hard work. If one works, one will not be poor. The pun is therefore based on the double sense of "s'use"- "poverty" and "work".

- vi) Use o s'oogun use i.
Work is the antidote of poverty.

The word *use* is played upon. *Use* means work and *use* means poverty.

5.19 PERSONIFICATION.

Personification is a poetic device whereby non-human things or abstract ideas are endowed with human feelings and attributes. Poets sometimes give human characteristics to inanimate objects or even abstract ideas in poetry. Such words as death, love, like, beauty are often personified in poetry. It is a kind of anthropomorphism and examples of this device thrive in *owe* Ondo:

Omi e e ghan ghan d'ale ma i mon.
Water cannot be so scarce that the ground will not have some to drink.

In this *owe*, the ground has been endowed with human characteristic. The ground is seen to be drinking water, which is a characteristic of human beings. This makes the above *owe* an example of personification.

Di maimasigidi ba a fe i te, a fi da gbe un s'ojo.
If a mud-statue wants to be disgraced, it will request that it should be put in the rain.

Obviously everybody knows that statues cannot talk. The fact that “talking” i.e. “requesting” is attributed to *maimasigidi* (statue) makes this *owe* a good example of personification.

Uk'e ma onen o san do ma po.
Death does not differentiate between good and bad people; it kills whomever it wishes.

This means that death is a necessary end to both good people and bad people, to the rich and the poor alike. Here, death, an abstract thing, has been referred to as if it were a human being and hence capable of “killing” and “differentiating between good and bad people”.

Ogii o n'eti.
Walls have ears.

Often used to warn against (and draw attention to the presence of) a tale-bearer, the *owe* presents the “wall” as having ears to hear conversations.

Sokoto ti ns'ise aran, oko ni ngbe.
The trousers that work for wealth lives on the farm.

The above *owe* gives human attributes of “working” and ”living” to trousers, which is an inanimate thing. Hence it is an example of personification.

Uku yo ba a fè i p’onen, do ba a s’onen ni fila, da ka dupe.
If the death that had intended to kill one, merely decaps one, one should be grateful.

This means that if the misfortune that would have claimed one’s life, leaves one temporarily incapacitated, one should be grateful to God. Here, death is given the attribute of a human being that is “killing” and ”decapping”.

Inon e e b’akon.
Beads never get angry.

Here, this *owe* speaks of the beads as if it were a human being who can never get angry. This is another good example of personification.

5.20 REPETITION/REDUPLICATION

Repetition/Reduplication is the act of reproducing a word, idea, phrase or even a whole sentence more than once. Repetition occurs frequently in *owe* Ondo:

Eja yo ju eja o gb’ eja win i.
The (big) fish that is greater than the (small) fishswallows the (small) fish.

Note the repetition of the word ‘eja’ (fish) which is reduplicated three times in the *owe*.

E e ri oju ekon te ekon m’ale, eyin ekon e mu aho e da bata i.
No one dares a live tiger but one can use its skin to make shoes after its death.

Notice the word *ekon* (tiger), which is echoed three times.

Onen ba a je gbi a ku gbi.
Whoever eats piggishly will die piggishly.

The repeated word is *gbi*.

E i di l’okuon se po, i i ghen le se po po po n’ e emeta.
The sick man is requested to say “po”, but he says he cannot say (repeat) *po po po* three times.

In the above *owe*, the repetition of *po* occurs four times.

Mo pe n'ale,
 Mo pe n'owuo
 Mo pe n'oson, ofo omo lomo e yen, ofo omo'nen ke a to titi gha a wo'le e i.
 I call him at night,
 I call him in the morning, and
 I call him in the afternoon, that is somebody else's child but one continues to advise one's child till one goes to the grave.

The above *owe* produces a harvest of repetitions as can be seen in *mo pe*, repeated three times, *omo* echoed three times and *ofo* re-echoed twice.

5.21. RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

A rhetorical question is a question that does not, necessarily need any answer which may be Yes or No. The Yes or No answer is implied in the manner in which the question is asked. Rhetorical Questions are prevalent in *owe* Ondo. The following are a few examples:

- i) E lu e fei ka n'eyin 'Depele?
How many will one count in Depele's teeth?
- ii) Ajen ke n'ana omo ku ni oni, e se se i ma fi ajen ana o p'omo je i?
A witch cried yesterday, a child died today, who does not know that it was yesterday's witch that killed the child for food?
- iii) Ke le mu yan imon aja do le gba a e?
How can one dry up a dog's nose?
- iv) E si esisi aan, gbe be si l'ojuju?
Who will flies support other than the man with open sore?
- v) We de se Lobun i, iye se ahayo oba i?
Are you Lobun, the oba's favourite wife?
- vi) E de n'aja s'uli da ka m'owo ko 'win i?
Does one have a dog at home and still pack faeces with his hand?
- vii) A sun e non 'di, e lo y'onen a a fe udi ghan?
One defecates without cleaning up, how many people will one expose the anus to?

5.22 SIMILE.

A simile is an unambiguous comparison between two different things, actions or even feelings with the use of "as" and "like". In Ondo language, a simile is noticeable by "bi" ("like" or "as"). This poetic device occurs quite often in *owe* Ondo.

D'omoiton ba a n'aso bi s'agba, e le n'akisa bi s'agba.

If a child has as many types of attire as an adult, he cannot have as many rags as the adult.

The two things compared in the above *owe* are “adult’s clothes” and “child’s clothes”.

Here, the *owe* is referring to experience. A child can never be as experienced as an adult.

Onen yi a s'oiye ko de dupe, bi si gi l'osa gb'eun onen lo e i.

He who does not show appreciation for the good done to him is like a thief who has made away with one's goods.

In the above *owe* the two things compared are an “ingrate” and a “thief”.

Bi s'owe, bi s'owe e lu ulu ogidigbo, ologbon e jo, omaran e mon i.

Like proverb, like proverb, one beats the drum of “ogidigbo”, only the wise can dance it and only the adept can know (interpret) it.

The two things that are compared in the above are “*owe*” and “*ogidigbo* drum” the similarity between the two lies in the fact that the two of them require wisdom and knowledge to be able to interpret them.

Oiho buuk 'e ka koolo bi s'upekun da le ma.

An unlucky head does not curve like a cutlass for easy identification.

The two things compared in this *owe* are the “unlucky head” and the “curve cutlass”.

This means that it is not possible to identify an unlucky head in the midst of a crowd (i.e. appearance is deceiving).

5.23 SYNECDOCHE

Synecdoche is a poetic device in which a part of a thing is made to represent the whole or the whole is put for a part, e.g. sail for ship. Nigeria has won, (that is the Nigerian Super Eagles Football team); we were afraid as the “legs” moved closer (Here “legs” represent the whole body). Synecdoche is prevalent in *owe* Ondo, too.

Below are some examples:

Uka owo onen o s'ayo i.

It is one's finger that satisfies one.

Uka owo here is representing self-effort.

Owo e ton uun se i.
It is hand that takes care of things.

The *owo* is representing a person or even a group of people.

D'owo ma f'oko iro, d'eyin ma deen be e m'ale do deen fi gha an j'iyam
g'ogun d'ola i?
The hand does not want to hoe and the back does not want to bend yet they say
they will eat pounded yam on the eve of ogun festival. (This is impossible!)

The *owo* and *eyin* are representing the whole body. This means that if a person does
not want to bend down and work, it is not possible for him to eat.

5.24 WELLERISMS

Wellerisms are also known as Quotation Proverbs. Brunvand defines
Wellersims as a special category of proverbs in which there exists “a saying in the
form of a quotation followed by a phrase ascribing the quotation to someone who had
done something humorous and appropriate”¹⁹. Wellerisms, being an old tradition in
proverb scholarship, are prevalent in Greek, Latin, German, Scandinavian and early
English Literature. In fact, in Germany, it is variously called *Beispielspruchwort*,
apologisches sprichwort and *sagwort*. The term refers to Sam Weller’s frequent
usage of such sayings in Charles Dickens’ Pickwick Papers (1836-7). It is not an
overstatement, however, if one concludes that wellerisms are much older than Sam
Weller, a nineteenth century character. The following are striking Western examples:

“Neat but gaudy” said the Devil, as he painted his tail blue.

“Every man to his taste” said the farmer when he kissed the cow.

“All’s well that ends well” said the monkey when the lawnmower ran over his
tail.

Contrary to Taylor’s observation that cases of Wellerisms are not prevalent in
other regions of the world, it is interesting to observe that examples of Wellerisms
abound in Africa. The following are some specimens of Wellerisms in *owe* Ondo:

Mama ’gba i i, “o s’obe ti ku o aiye o ku a jo ’gi non”.
Grandma says, “excellent cooks have left the world, it is those who burn
firewood for the fun of it that remain”.

This means that those who do things well are no more but those who do shoddy jobs are prevalent.

- i) Ugben i i t'aka t'ose ghon hi'non aighon.
The snail says, "Both my hands and legs are inside the shell.
- ii) Aghon i i, "onen yi yeye ma yon; sugbon u jeun won ke?"
The tortoise says, "Many people are good but how about their feeding?"
- iii) Oho i i di ghen daun s'ofo da ka ho ghen eun.
Money says, "If I have not contributed to the conversation, you will be waiting.

5.25. HE---WHO

In addition to the poetic devices discussed above, *owe* Ondo consist of other stylistic devices such as "He --- who" and "If --- then" constructions. These are noticeable during translation. Two examples will suffice for our purpose.

- i) Onen yo ba a fe i ba esun jeun, a nen sibi gbogboo.
He who would eat with the devil must have a very long spoon.
- ii) Onen o sun ti gbagbe sugbon onen yo ko un e le gbagbe lai lai.
He who defecates might forget but he who cleans it can never forget the unpleasant experience.

Finally, judging from the examination of the poetic devices in *owe* Ondo, one could safely state that these devices are inexhaustive. The foregoing represent just fragments of the several literary qualities of *owe* Ondo. In this collection, the most prevalent device is metaphor with which most proverbs are couched.

NOTES

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- ² Ibid., p. 17.
- ³D. Oni, ABC of Literature, Ilesha; A. O. Oni Enterprises, 1982, p.16.
- ⁴A. M. Unogu, An Appreciation of Literary Works, Vol.17, Jos: Carik Communications, 1995, p.124.
- ⁵M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1981, p.7.
- ⁶S. M. Barnet, A Dictionary of Literary Dramatic and Cinematic Terms, 2nd ed. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971, p.120-121.
- ⁷Op. cit., p.19.
- ⁸Sandra Anderson et al, The Chambers Dictionary, Great Britain: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, 1998, p.53.
- ⁹C. Baldick, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p10.
- ¹⁰.Archer Taylor, The Proverb Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1931, p.98.
- ¹¹ Op. cit. ,
- ¹² G. Fortune, Ideophone in Shona, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962, p.6.
- ¹³W. J. Samarin, "Perspectives on African Ideophones", African Studies XXIV, 1965, P.121.
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- ¹⁵ Alex Preminger (ed.), The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd. 1975, p.490.
- ¹⁶.Emeaba, p.118.
- ¹⁷Op. cit., p.223.
- ¹⁸Op. cit., pp. 159-160.
- ¹⁹ J. H. Brunvand, The Study of American Folklore, New York: W.W.Norton and Co INC. 1978, P.54.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Uun yo ba ti n'ubee e le sai n'open a fi ola Olo'on.

Whatever has a beginning must surely have an end except the grace of God.

6.1 SUMMARY

The primary focus of this inquiry was to investigate *owe* Ondo, with a view to determining their themes, identifying and explaining their functions as well as exploring and documenting their literary qualities. To achieve these objectives, three hundred and seventy *owe* were collected from various sources, translated and analysed on the basis of themes, functions and poetic devices. The thesis paid particular attention to areas such as (1) themes (2) the different functions performed by *owe* Ondo and also their values to Ondo folks and (3) the literary qualities with which they are articulated in order to make them memorable.

In this study, we discussed extensively the historical, geographical background and location of the Ondo people, their *Weltanschauung*, their social values and organizations. This is for the purpose of giving a broad overview of the people whose *owe* are under study and also, to achieve a better understanding of their flora and fauna, which play significant roles in the coinage of their *owe*. In addition, we considered the Ondo/Yoruba language together with various categories of Ondo/Yoruba oral literature with a view to indicating the literary milieu in which *owe* flourishes. Furthermore, we touched on the limitations of the study and the approach used for the collection of the data.

In the pursuit of the objectives of this study, we reviewed the available literature in the field and discovered that a number of paraomiographers had collected some Yoruba proverbs, many of which had been recorded and translated. For example, Delano collected and translated 504 Yoruba proverbs and Ajibola collected

and translated 854 Yoruba proverbs. Lindfors and Owomoyela went a step further by collecting, translating and annotating one hundred and fifty Yoruba proverbs. Taoheed Ajao collected and translated twenty- five *owe* Ondo, which were published in the 1997 Ekimogun Day Brochure, an annual documentation of the Ekimogun Day activities. This documentation is more of a free lance and superficial glimpse than a disciplined and an indepth research into *owe* Ondo. Apart from the above, it has been discovered that no serious effort has been made to collect *owe* Ondo, let alone carrying out an indepth study of their themes, functions and the literary qualities as has been done in the present work. Besides building on the relevant previous works, this study has also pushed back and extended the frontiers of previous researches on Yoruba proverbs. Therefore this work is a major and original contribution to knowledge in Yoruba folklore in general and in Ondo proverbs in particular. In order to enhance the quality of the work, materials from other paraomiographers who dealt with both African and other international proverbs, were used. For as Kremenliev rightly observed: “proverbs are endowed with a repertoire of wisdom, which belongs to humanity as a whole”¹.

In the course of this study, we observed that the term used for proverb in various world languages subsumes other forms of oral literature. Regarding the definition, it was observed that there are as many definitions as there are paraomiographers in the field. We also found that a series of human experiences constitute the themes of world proverbs, not only in Africa but also the entire world. We also noted that generally speaking, proverbs all over the world, carry out the same functions and possess almost similar values. However, it appears the popularity and admiration which proverbs in general have, and which especially The Book Of Proverbs of the Old Testament used to enjoy, have diminished.

As for the subject matters treated in this study, it is discovered that there is no topic under the sky for which Ondo people cannot provide an apposite *owe*. Therefore, it was compulsory for the researcher to select striking topics, which are prevalent to the people. Such topics include appearance, caution, childtraining, choice, cooperation, destiny, dilemma, excesses, experience, foresight, generosity, gratitude, laziness, patience, perseverance, pride, priority, providence, responsibility, selfishness and self-reliance.

The functions and values of *owe* Ondo were given sufficient treatment in the work. The categories explored in this study include education, bearing of philosophical insight, conformity to social norms, warning, praising, advising, conflict resolution, rebuking, consoling, encouraging, ridiculing, judicial function and confirmation of certain statements.

The poetic and stylistic devices, with which these *owe* are adorned, were also treated extensively treated in this work. The list of the devices comprise, inter alia, allegory, alliteration, anaphora, personification, hyperbole, climax, ideophone, simile, paranomasia, rhetoric question, metaphor, assonance, innuendo, synecdoche, blazon-populaire, repetition, parallelism, onomatopoeia, euphemism, paradox, numerical proverbs, dialogue, chiasmus and Wellerisms.

In the next stage, we dealt with the conclusions reached from all available data. In the study, we have permitted our data to guide us in arriving at a number of conclusions and affirmations. In our final step, we collated all the conclusions arrived at from all the facts available to us for the purpose of this research. It is quite apparent that a lot of lacuna needs to be filled. Owing to the limited confines of the work, it has not been possible to touch on all areas of Ondo folklore. In view of the above hiatus, we proffered suggestions and recommendations for further research.

6.2 GROWTH AND DECLINE OF PROVERBS.

Right from their origin to the present time, proverbs have experienced a lot of mutations. For at various times in their history, proverbs have been received at certain times and rejected at another, only to be accepted again. Hence, people's dispositions form a comment on the history of characters, morals, and educational and technological developments.

Evidences abound that proverbs thrived in nearly all-ancient civilizations, such as China, Egypt, Greece, India, Rome Japan, and Sumeria. Certainly, renowned philosophers of classical times did not underrate proverbs, because Aristotle's works and those of Plato were freely strewn with proverbs and proverbial sayings. Indeed, proverbs and wise sayings were the "seed-pot" of Greek philosophy.

Writers cited proverbs incessantly as accepted wisdom during the medieval period. During the sixteenth as well as the greater part of the seventeenth centuries, proverbs constituted basic ornament in the equipment of any writer, speaker or orator of fashion. Corroborating the above, Wilson notes:

The proverb was an important figure in rhetorical training and the many collections of proverbs published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provided materials for dramatists and pamphleteers, politicians, orators and preachers².

By the dawn of Queen Elizabeth's reign (1558-1603), William Shakespeare's period (1556-1616) Sir Francis Bacon (1516 – 1626), Christopher Marlowe (1564-93), Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86), Robert Greene (1558-92), Edmund Spenser (1552-99), Sir Walter Raleigh (1554-1618) and Ben Johnson (1572-1637), almost every body varying from scholars, courtiers and writers to the Queen herself, spoke and wrote in proverbs; some even attempted to coin them. Proverbs were very common then because writing was still under the influence of the orators who used them on account of the "sweet relished phrases" which were fascinating to the eyes and ears of the people of that period³.

The 16th century witnessed the turning of the channel into a torrent, then into a flood. This was the period the Adagia of Erasmus (1500) was published. The Adagia publications really exemplified the views and beliefs of classical philosophers and were whole-heartedly imbibed by an audience, which was hungry not only for knowledge but also for originality. Furthermore in France, the eighteenth century also witnessed the growth of “proverbe dramatique”; a genre, which was started by Madame De Maintenon in the seventeenth century, but was fully developed in the 19th century by Alfred Musset.

However, despite the popularity of proverbs and aphoristic sayings, proverbs began to decline in to “vulgar saying”. According to Wilson by 1707, derogatory remarks on proverbs began. Taylor contends that although proverbs truly had great value in popular education in Europe during the middle Ages, the time of real growth of proverbs and proverbial sayings was apparently at an end.

Nevertheless, despite the so many disparaging remarks about proverbs, that genre of folklore still thrived and continued to play a very important role in the literature of the eighteenth century England and also, in contemporary American society. By 1723, the American statesman, painter, scientist and writer, Benjamin Franklin (1706-90), drew attention to himself by using proverbs freely. Therefore, it is not an over statement to say that the 18th century has gone down in history as a period of mixed blessings for proverbs as they were popularly accepted though at the same time suffered a diminishing fame, only to pick up again during the 19th century. Despite the antagonistic posture of some individuals to proverbs in the 18th century, the following century witnessed writers such as Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), Charles Dickens (1812-1928), James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1852), and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1830) using proverbs in their works. Additionally, William Carew Haslitt in his desire to preserve English verbal art published English Proverbs and

Proverbial Phrases in 1882. Worthy of note also are the publications of Apperson, Ronald Rideout and Clifford Witting and F.P. Wilson. Furthermore, in contemporary Europe and America, as else where, proverbs are employed in day-to-day conversations, writings, speeches and debates. Remarking about the status of folklore especially proverbs in villages in the western world, Dorson says that:

In spite of the accelerated pace of modern living which seems to strike at our roots and very identity, the folklorist marvels at the tenacity of tradition. Veer off the main highway for a little distance and the civilisation of socket ships and automation suddenly melts away...the old folklore still continues with undiminished vitality⁴.

The fact that country folks the world over are reluctant to change is not doubtful but that technology has, in itself, had a remarkable impact on not only the collection of oral folklore but also on its preservation. This has been made possible by the use of tape-recorders and other electronic media. Apart from the above, proverbs are also kept alive because as some are branded old-fashioned and obsolete “wholly new ones from modern democratic and industrial times are finding a place too”.⁵ Wilson notes that once in a while, new proverbs are being coined with the aim of meeting the need for a “pithy aphoristic saying for some new developments and fresh discoveries that occur from time to time. Consequently one now hears “there is no such thing as a free lunch” and even from computers there is “gabbage in gabbage out”⁶.

Coming to Africa, the problems facing the growth of proverb are more general than individualistic. This is because while old folks are making efforts to preserve and use proverbs, the young ones regard them as a relic of the barbarism from which the continent is still emerging. As a matter of fact, proverbs are hardly employed by young natives of Ondo. In fact in a situation whereby these young people know some of the proverbs, their appropriate application poses a big problem. Ojo Arewa & Dundes substantiated the above point when they gave an account of a youth from the

Eastern part of Nigeria who was a student at the University of California, who admitted “I know proverbs but I don’t know how to apply them”⁷. This is because according to him, his western oriented education in Nigeria had cut him off the use of proverbs. Furthermore, apart from Egypt that had developed an alphabetical system very early and was able to keep some records of proverbs, the other parts of Africa remained for a very long time an oral-aural society. Therefore, it is not unlikely that a good number of the proverbs of some ages might have been lost, allowing only the famous and more general ones to thrive. In fact, where some of such proverbs have been collected, finding someone who knows their meanings and the context of their application still pose serious problems.

Additionally, in most African societies, collections from oral folklore only started in the later part of the 19th century. According to Andrzejewski, “interest in the subject languished until 1950’s and 1960’s” and a good number of which were collected by non-indigenes. Culturally too, certain African societies have restrictions as to the class of people who could use proverbs. Hence, a youth may be interested in proverbs but the societal restrictions may debar him from employing them as a means of communication especially with elders. A good example is that in Yoruba culture, it is believed that proverbs are words of wisdom of the elders. Thus, a young person wishing to communicate in proverbs will first of all take permission from elders by saying *Toto se be owe* (i.e with due respect).

Nevertheless, there has been a general agreement that there is nowhere in the world in which proverbs are more prevalent and play a more significant and active role than among the black Africans. Supporting the above view, Ida Ward notes, “for all its urgent urbanization, in Africa the blood of the proverbs still flows strongly in the veins of man’s daily life”⁸.

Furthermore, the introduction of cheap recorders and other electronic media have injected a renewed interest in the study of proverbs. In addition to the above, local radio stations employ folklore materials including proverbs to enrich their programmes. A few years ago, the Federal Radio Corporation in Nigeria would cite at least a proverb before its 7 o'clock network news noting, "The words of our elders are words of wisdom. The wise man hears and becomes wiser..." Indeed, Ondo State-Broadcasting Corporation still spends some five minutes on quotation and explanation of indigenous folklore materials, including proverbs from the various communities. In fact, several collectors have observed that the radio is now being used as a powerful medium for transmitting forms of oral folklore including proverbs. The British Broadcasting Corporation too is doing a good job by creating an avenue whereby its Corporation's Network on African programme quotes proverbs from Africa.

The awareness that proverbs constitute a genre of oral literature worthy of scholarly research is gaining ground. As Andrzejewski rightly puts it, African oral literature is "taking its place alongside other literatures of the world"⁹. It is no wonder then that a good number of indigenous scholars such as J.H. Nketia, Olowo Ojoade, Ojo Arewa, D.I. Nwoga, L.S. Nyembezi, Bello Bada to mention just a few, have collected proverbs of various communities in Africa. Furthermore, native writers like Chinua Achebe, Ola Rotimi (of blessed memory), Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Laureate, Efua Sutherland and many other African writers have strewn their works with proverbs of the various peoples of Africa in their creative writings.

A logical question that may arise at this juncture is: Are *owe* Ondo declining or progressing? *Owe* Ondo share similar status with the proverbs of other communities. From our literature review so far, we note that apart from the twenty-five proverbs listed by Taoheed Ajao in the 1997 Ekimogun Day brochure, nobody has collected and analysed *owe* Ondo. In view of the fact that *owe* Ondo had not even been

compiled makes it extremely difficult to determine whether there has been growth or decline of proverbs in Ondo community.

Even though one cannot categorically determine the decline of *owe* Ondo, one can confidently say that new ones are being coined daily on the model of the old ones (see Amali, Idris, 1984). The following are a few of the examples:

Ose ya ju mato a'a ghen m'abo si i.
The leg is faster than the car usually has some effects on the body.

That is excessive behaviour always has negative effect on the individual.

E s' use mato ti a se sa'e to, ku ugwaju gha an kan'le i.
No matter how fast a car speeds, the ground is always ahead of it.

Oyibo ma seun, ogii tanna, oyibo pa titi a'o, mato e se ye en
n'oju titi.
Thanks to the white man, walls emit light; the white man dyes the
road and vehicles are plying the roads smoothly.

Oyibo yo se peeni oun nen o s' iesa i.
It is the same white man who makes a pen that also makes an eraser.

Nevertheless, the attitude of Ondo youths towards proverbs can be expressed succinctly in Bergsma's words that "...many youngsters have not learned the use of proverbs because they have been to school or away from home for extended periods and have thus lost touch with archaic usages"¹⁰. This is where again, this study has made a very useful contribution of creating the awareness of Ondo indigenous scholars to the need to fill the lacuna this study would probably leave behind as the proverbs of any community cannot be exhaustive. Now let us consider what is accountable for the epileptic growth and decline of proverbs. To Andrzejewski:

The state of a society's oral literature seems to be related to the state of its technology. With oral literature flourishing in technologically simple societies but surviving in a very attenuated form in technologically advanced societies...¹¹.

Based on the above observation, the extensive adoption of the print technology and the appearance of electronic technology have gradually taken over the spoken words.

Similarly, Coffin and Cohen noted that:

Folklore cannot survive in a set form. Folklore continually changes, varying and developing, because it is shaped by the memories, creative talent and immediate needs of human beings in particular situations. This process, the process of oral variation is the lifeblood of folklore. When it is halted by printing or recording, folklore enters a state of suspended animation. It comes alive again only when it flows back into oral circulation¹².

On the other hand, Bascom thinks that there is a decline in the use of folklore because it has lost some of its traditional functions such as education. The above observation is certainly correct because the mass media appear to have replaced these functions.

The preceding has represented the different views of different people at different times in the history of proverbs. Certainly proverbs no longer enjoy the popularity once accorded to them. For according to Kirk-Greene in the Western World “the person who insists on producing a proverb to fit (or rather, to misfit) every occasion is often considered both a bore and a boor. Bascom notes, “Although writing and industrialization have undermined the social significance of folklore in more urban United States than in most literate societies, they have never destroyed verbal art or other segments of folklore. Lending credence to the above, Ruth Finnegan believes that:

It might be that such literature is dying out with the impact of literate, wealthier and reputedly more ‘progressive’ cultures. This is not necessarily so at all. Some genres, it is true are receding; but others – political songs, new versions of dance songs, new religious lyrics are increasing in importance. Oral literature, in fact, plays its part in developing, not just traditional but modern Africa¹³.

From the aforementioned, it can be inferred that even though there are indications that proverbs are regressing, there are also signs of development. In as much as the African communities continue to take on new experiences, new proverbs will also continue to be coined based on such experiences.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the results of our inquiry we can identify many interesting areas for future research in Ondo oral literature, particularly *owe*. Actually, that paraomiology is a fertile area for possible research cannot be denied. Renowned proverb scholars such as Archer Taylor, Richard Jente and B.J. Whiting have mapped out major areas in which the researcher can carry out interesting studies. Archer Taylor encouraged research in proverbs over three decades ago, yet not much, apart from a few collections of proverbs have been accomplished in this area. However, as an *owe* Ondo rightly encourages *S'oon ti pe i, e ti danon* meaning, “it has only tilted but has not poured away”.

Researches into various areas of African oral folklore are being undertaken by Nigerian Scholars. Nevertheless, only a few studies have been published on proverbs. Furthermore, approaches to the study of proverbs are many- a good number of works on Yoruba proverbs are mere collections, translations and a few on annotations.

This study has revealed to us that there has been no research on Ondo oral literature particularly in the area of *owe*. The only available forms of publications are collections of Yoruba proverbs, some of which were translated. Only a few have been annotated. But there have not been any researches on *owe* Ondo. Proverbs being the most valuable form of aphorism in Africa form an intergral part of African society. They are endowed with more profound meaning than is expressed literally – meaning which can only be understood through the analysis of the social circumstances to which they are relevant. Therefore it is recommended that more *owe* Ondo should be collected and studied in all their ramifications. As far as this work is concerned, there are so far no published books on *owe* Ondo let alone their stylistic or literary qualities. Research on the literary qualities is a *desideratum*. For according to Nwoga:

... it is the success of these devices in folklore, especially proverbs, that has contributed to their use in poetry... Therefore a formal study still needs to be done of the use and prevalence of these devices in proverbs¹⁴.

Thus, despite the social and literary qualities which proverbs possess, *owe* Ondo are not yet given the necessary recognition they deserve.

Owe are not the only category of Ondo folklore. All other forms should also be collected with equal enthusiasm. The other genres that should be collected include myths, legends, folktales, jokes, riddles, poems-songs (e.g. wedding songs), praise poems or praise songs, verbal formulae, incantations and tongue-twisters, to mention a few. The rationale behind the apathetic attitude towards the collection of these other categories of folklore could be due to the fact that all these other forms are not readily available or because their meanings evaporate in the process of translating them.

To be collected also are other short stereotyped phrases and expressions such as expressions after yawning or sneezing and the like; semi-religious formulae, when thunder strikes, when a person cites a new moon and the like. Also to be collected are *owe* Ondo which allude, inter alia, to history, law, medicine and weather. This will shed more light on Ondo history, legal systems, medicine and their concepts about weather.

Concerning the category of people who should be used to collect the folkloristic data, our suggestion here is that a mixed group comprising literate and nonliterate natives, particularly students should collect the data. N.Y.S.C. members, too, who are sent to all the nooks and corners of the country, could be of great help. Why suggest natives or local informants? This is because nobody can really understand another whose language he does not speak. The suggestion of different groups will bring about a lot of variants. This will enable the researcher or the collector to compare the different interpretations before recording them. Old people, being the repositories of *owe* Ondo should be the main informants. These people die

progressively owing to their advanced age. The proverbs should be collected before they disappear and the technological wind blows the *owe* out of their minds.

Another area of great importance for literary study is the etymologies and terminologies of proverbs from the various ethnic groups in the country. The compilation of proverbs from each of these groups is of great importance. This also could be extended to other African countries. These however will be a lifetime endeavour but it will be worth the while, as this will encourage comparative studies within the various cultures and the various ethnic groups. After collecting a good number, there should be comparative studies of these proverbs.

Computerization of world proverbs is a *desideratum*. This step will certainly afford researchers more opportunities to collect proverbs in all their ramifications. Proverbs mirror the collective attitudes and ideas of a people and their values. Indeed, they are a reflector of a people's life and culture. Therefore, it is suggested that a survey with the purpose of using proverbs to understand a people's attitudes, ideas and their *Weltanschauung* be explored.

According to Berry, studies of proverbs in the area of literary qualities are almost non-existent. During the last half-century, many scholars have carried out researches in this area. In the 1940s, Doke made such an appeal, Jack Berry did the same in the 1960s and also in the 1970s, Ruth Finnegan and Nwoga also encouraged scholars to at least try and show what features of their language make them (i.e. the proverbs) so striking as a literary form. Lending her voice to the above, Ruth Finnegan observes that: "It is clear that some sort of heightened speech in one form or another is commonly used in proverbs; and this serves to set them apart from ordinary speech"¹⁵.

We are totally in support of this eminent scholar and therefore, it is suggested that a formal study should be carried out on the use and prevalence of these devices in proverbs, particularly *owe* Ondo which is more or less a virgin land.

In view of the valuable role proverbs are playing in our society and their elucidative stance, we suggest that preachers should strive to obtain books on proverbs of the groups among whom they sojourn. This will enhance the quality of their sermons and bring the message down to the understanding of the people and endear the preachers to their hearts.

To believe that any ethnic group has no proverbs will be an *argumentum ex silentio*. Indeed, collectors report the absence of proverbs in some parts of the world, the researcher does not share that view. This belief should be picked up as a challenge by Nigerian paraomniographers to either corroborate or dispel the argument by going to the field to hunt for proverbs. A University with a Department of Folklore in conjunction with the Nigerian Folklore Society will be very useful here. Therefore, we are suggesting that a department of Folklore or Oral Literature should be established in some of our Universities.

In addition, oral literature should be included in the academic curricula of our nation's institutions of learning. This should be from primary school through the tertiary levels. More courses on oral literature should be introduced in our Universities. Proverbs should be used to teach moral values of the society. This will minimize, if not arrest completely, the "decline" of proverbs. This move will also increase and encourage the coinage of modern proverbs on the model of the old. Apart from the above, knowledge of proverbs will enhance our culture and communal values of life. It is important therefore that Nigerian teachers from primary to secondary school should be engaged in the collection of proverbs for teaching and learning purposes.

Our Nigerian national radio and television have an important role to play in encouraging the use of proverbs in our societies. If the young ones know and appreciate the value of proverbs, they will be enthusiastic in learning and applying them. Some cultures used to read out, discuss some moral proverbs, annotate and give their situational use. We observe with great concern the stoppage of this laudable educational programme. We suggest that Radio Nigeria should revive this moral programme they used to relay.

Finally, as an *owe* Ondo succinctly puts it:

Oho e daun s'ofe e ho ghen eun.

When money does not contribute to a conversation we simply look at its mouth.

The above *owe* captures succinctly what the researcher intends to say in this section. Without the necessary funds and commitment, it may be impossible to implement or execute any of the recommendations made above. Therefore, we strongly recommend that both the Local, State and Federal Governments should make available adequate funds to researchers who are willing to embark on the study of Nigerian oral folklore in all its ramifications.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS.

The main thrust of this thesis was to investigate *owe* Ondo with special emphasis on the themes, functions and their literary qualities. In this part of the work, we considered how our data have substantiated, complemented, amended or rejected the assumptions of some scholars regarding the study of proverbs and other genres of folklore.

The one-time professor of African Languages in the School of African and Asian Studies, University of London, Jack Berry, observes that Wellerisms or quotation proverbs are well known but are probably not common in Africa. Archer Taylor notes that Wellerisms are very popular in Germany and Scandinavia. But he

knows “very little about it in other regions”, Africa inclusive¹⁶. Dundes thinks, “as for the Wellerisms or quotation proverbs, one might assume that it is not universal”¹⁷. Perhaps the researchers took this position due to the limited information available to them at the time the assessment was made. However the present study has provided a convincing evidence to show the occurrence of wellerisms in owe Ondo. These examples clearly show that the position taken by Berry, Taylor and Dundes on the occurrence of wellerism in African literature is open to challenge.

During the course of this study, it was discovered that some Western Scholars in their early studies, concluded that Africans had no art worthy of that name. Some other Western scholars portrayed African languages as “primitive” while some others claimed that the recorded African literature was shrouded in “dark mysticism” and the like. Further more, these scholars freely employed words like “illiterate”, “simple” and “unintelligent”. In other words, they saw Africans as people who were backward intellectually, artistically and technologically. This assessment was probably as a result of the inadequate and scanty information made available to these scholars on African Literature. They based their views on the “indifferent translations of abbreviated versions of the less valued items of oral literature told by indifferent narrators”¹⁸.

Scholarship on Africa however, has advanced beyond that period as the results of the various studies of the last two centuries have shown that Africans are by no means less intelligent than the other races of the world and that Africa is very rich in literary works. African oral literature is now regarded as scholarly work thereby establishing a niche for itself among world literatures¹⁹.

Therefore we can conclude, from the foregoing, that being illiterate or being technologically backward does not make a group of people devoid of elaborate artistic forms. Indeed such a group still has their literature, complex symbolism, artistry and

philosophical thoughts. Kunene lends credence to the above view in his observation on African literature when he states that:

We have reached a stage in our study of African literature, when it is no longer polite in academic circles, to raise an eyebrow when mention is made of the existence of literatures – and other arts – in the non-literate Africa of pre-missionary and pre-colonial days. This is of course, partly due to the enlightened view held in our day, that verbal art is verbal art whether it be written or oral. What to call this art becomes a technicality, and our enlightenment-nay, our liberation – leads us, in turn to liberate the term “literature” from its erstwhile over-literal definition, and by common consensus “literature comes to be used for all verbal art²⁰.”

Indeed the above facts enable us to reject those foreign beliefs regarding the position of African oral literature as baseless and empirically indefensible. Therefore, we can confidently conclude that Africa (including Ondo) has literature that can favourably compete with its counterparts the world over. Western scholars have testified to the fact that African literature possesses aesthetic qualities and in fact the data at our disposal corroborate this opinion. In common with the proverbs of other races, African proverbs are known for their philosophical nature and are usually dressed with poetic devices such as personifications, metaphors, ideophones, similes, hyperbole, to mention just a few.

Based upon the data available to us from this work, we can confidently affirm that *owe* Ondo share the same qualifications with proverbs of other races of the world especially those of other African countries. Really, *owe* Ondo thrive on several poetic and stylistic devices as was clearly shown in chapter five of this thesis.

At this juncture, it is important to note that unlike European Wellerisms where personal names are given, in many African communities, Wellerisms are usually prefaced thus: “Grandmother says ...”, “As our elders say ...”. According to our data, we have discovered that *owe* Ondo have some Wellerisms. However the speakers are mainly animals such as tortoise, snail and the like. With regard to the number of Wellerisms in African proverbs, a large number exists. Researchers only

need to be more patient. According to Ojoade, “a little more diligent search would have unearthed a plethora of Wellerisms”²¹.

That *owe* Ondo have literary qualities cannot be over-emphasised. In common with their African counterparts, they have literary relevance for not only Ondo people themselves or Nigeria as a country but also for the African continent. Wilson for example, claims that his interest:

is mainly literary. A knowledge of proverbs may help us to establish a text: it may help us to interpret its meaning; it may help us to discover with what tone a passage is to be read or spoken.²²

Similarly Finnegan after examining African proverbs remarks:

Proverbs have been a rich source of imagery and apt expressions on which more elaborate forms could draw. The feeling for language, for expression of abstract ideas and insinuating statements came out clearly from the use of proverbs especially with people who have close connections with oral culture and traditions²³.

The literary importance of *owe* Ondo, in common with many other African proverbs, is further accentuated by its close link with other forms of Ondo/Yoruba oral literature such as poems, riddles, folktales, myths, legends to mention just a few.

The relevance discussed above transcends Africa. In other words, since *owe* Ondo are relevant for illustrating other genres of Ondo/Yoruba literature, they are also bound to elucidate the literatures of other African countries as well as other world literatures. These discoveries in both *owe* Ondo and other African proverbs are required to shed light on other literatures of the world. Thus any researcher who examines the problems of proverbs and other categories of folklore without making reference to the African literature (and of course *owe* Ondo) is neglecting an important aspect of his research. This is because *owe* Ondo constitutes a significant component of world literatures.

With regard to the major functions which most proverbs of the nations of the world, particularly African proverbs perform, the data available to us from this study

show that *owe* Ondo perform exactly the same functions. Thus we believe, with Essien, that when confronted with a problem, a proverb does not just provide or seek a new answer, a new approach but simply turns to the wisdom of the past for a solution or, as in most instances, for comfort.²⁴ Some other scholars, such as Abraham have gone further to observe that:

Proverbs are traditional answers to recurrent ethical problems; they provide an argument for a course of action, which conforms to community values; they arise in the midst of a conversation and are used by speakers to give a “name” to ethical problems confronting them and to suggest ways in which it has been solved in the past²⁵.

The above observations on the main functions of proverb have been corroborated by our data emanating from *owe* Ondo.

Another essential issue in African paraomology to which the survey of *owe* Ondo has contributed tremendously is the controversy among western scholars regarding the presence or absence of proverbs bearing philosophical insight in African languages. Similar to other scholars earlier cited in chapter one, scholars like Bruhl in spite of all the affirmations, still prefer to deny Africans the potential of philosophical concept. As Paul Radin rightly pointed out:

Only a cursory perusal of these proverbs is necessary to convince even the most skeptical that we are not dealing here with any vague group activity or folk-way ... but the personal envisaging of life by those individuals who in any group are concerned with and interested in formulating their attitude toward God, towards man and toward society the philosophers, the sages and the moralists²⁶.

Indeed some scholars who have carried out thorough investigations of some African proverbs and proverbial sayings have arrived at positive conclusion about African capability to philosophize. Says Rattray:

These few words the present writer has felt duty bound to say, lest the reader, astonished at the words of wisdom which are now to follow, refuse to credit that a “savage” or “primitive” people could possibly have possessed the rude philosophers, theologians, moralists, naturalists and even, it will be seen, philologists, which many of those proverbs prove them to have had among them²⁷.

Eminent scholars such as Ruth Finnegan and John Mark Thompson have made similar statements. Thompson for example, reproved such arguments as “outdated”, inappropriate” and “preconceptive”. He went further to corroborate his view by citing some Akan and Bantu examples of proverbs bearing philosophical insights and wondered, “how else can one understand such examples as these from Akan? Or can one deny philosophical import to the following Bantu examples”²⁸.

How has the study of *owe* Ondo contributed to the above discussion?

Our data have shown that Ondo people are great philosophers. To substantiate this claim we shall cite some *owe* Ondo bearing philosophical insights:

Om'en ghanghan d'ale ma 'i mon.
No matter how scarce water may be, the ground will surely
have some to drink .

B'ilekun kan ti omuen si.
If one door does not close another one does not open.

E si'use mato se sa'e to ku ugwaju ghaan k'ale i.
No matter how fast a car goes, the ground is still ahead of it.

E si'jo yi Maku se i a ku [Maku is the name of a person, meaning "Don't die"]
It is certain that Maku will die.

E si'uun yo fi d' iaye ma t'ola a fi uku.
Nothing prevents one from seeing tomorrow except death.

This section of the study will be incomplete if we do not mention the relevance of Ondo-Yoruba (or African) oral literature for sociological analysis. Doke, one of the two scholars working principally on literary materials maintains that:

In addition to the philosophical and literary interests of aphorism, it is not so important for our study as that of its literary form, some reference must be made to it²⁹.

In a similar vein, Elliot notes that even though his primary interest in his book is literary yet:

... in trying to understand some of the various forms early satire takes -and the beliefs out of which the forms arise – I have gained what help I could from non-literary disciplines, chiefly anthropology and psychology³⁰.

The above quotations become necessary in order to accentuate the importance of bringing in other disciplines in the discussion of African oral literature – disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, linguistics, psychology and history, to mention just a few. These form the basic sources for illustrating proverbs. From the data at our disposal, we can say unequivocally that African oral literature has a link to and relevance for sociological analysis.

We would like to conclude that for a society to be fully understood and fairly assessed, the study of its folklore is imperative. This is because ignoring the folklore of any given community in any research is to neglect an important aspect of the work as this is closely and sentimentally attached to the life of the people. That was the serious mistake Levy- Bruhl made when he concluded that non-literate societies have no philosophical thoughts.

Therefore, our conclusion is that Ondo/Yoruba oral literature must be taken into account in order to ensure a balanced and accurate assessment of the Ondo/Yoruba society. How about the fact that the use of the *owe* examined in this thesis are intimately and sentimentally connected with the Ondo way of life and thought; and the fact that a good number of those who are non-literate utilize proverbs as a major means of communication, teaching and learning? Certainly, it is undisputable that *owe* Ondo shed light on the nature of the Ondo society. It is therefore imperative to collect and analyse *owe* Ondo with the aim of understanding the people's life, attitudes, their *Weltanschauung* as well as their *volkspsychologie*.

6.5 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

As long as oral literature or proverbs continue to grow and develop, the conduct of research into themes, functions and poetic devices will continue to be a fruitful and rewarding endeavour. The present study should be seen to have made some modest contributions to the study of folklore in general and proverbs in

particular. Specifically, the contributions of this research can be summarized along the following dimension, namely, originality, general education, lexicography, growth and development of poetry.

Besides the new proverbs collected, the study delved into the determination of themes, functions and poetic devices of *owe* Ondo, an aspect of Ondo oral literature, which to the knowledge of this researcher has not been explored by previous researchers. Furthermore, it stimulates and promotes further research into Ondo folklore, which is more or less a terra incognita, an unexplored area in Ondo oral literature, thereby filling an existing lacuna and putting Ondo oral art among world literatures. It also points out the overlaps of Ondo and Yoruba proverbs. In addition, the proverbs investigated in this work can be used for general education and the teaching of values. Moreover, this study should be very useful for lexicographers who would make use of the indigenous and archaic Ondo words in their writing. Similarly this research would be useful to the anthropologists who may want to delve into the anthropology of the Ondo people.

Finally, this study is a disciplined response to the call made by Nwoga and Finnegan for an indepth study of literary devices embedded in proverbs. Uncovering and documenting such devices as these scholars have rightly pointed out will contribute significantly to their use in poetry. Hence, the present study can be seen as a positive contribution toward the growth and development of poetry in Yoruba oral literature in general and Ondo folklore in particular.

NOTES

- ¹B. Kremenliev, "Proverbs of the Bulgarian People", J.A.F. Lxv, Jan. March 1952, p.255.
- ²F.P. Wilson, "The Proverbial Wisdom of Shakespeare", In M. Mieder and A. Dundes, New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1981, p.176.
- ³J. E. Heseltine, "Introduction" In G. W. Smith (ed), The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936, p.xiv.
- ⁴Richard M. Dorson, American Folklore, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977, p.278.
- ⁵R. Ridout & C. Witting, English Proverbs Explained, London: Pan Books, 1967, p.14.
- ⁶E. Ojo Arewa and A. Dundes, "Proverbs and Ethnography of Speaking Folklore", American Anthropologist, Vol. 66, 1964, p.70.
- ⁷.Ibid. , p.70.
- ⁸See Kirk-Greene, 1966, p.xi.
- ⁹B. W. Andrzejewski, "Reflections on African Oral Literature", African Languages, 1975, p.45.
- ¹⁰H. M. Bergsma, "Tiv Proverbs as a Means of Social Control" Africa XI (2), April 1970, pp.151.
- ¹¹.Op. cit., p.25.
- ¹² T. P. Coffin and H. Cohen (ed.) Folklore in America, New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday & Co. Inc. 1966, p.xiv.
- ¹³Ruth Finnegan, Oral Literature in Africa, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p.520.
- ¹⁴.Donatus I.Nwoga, "Appraisal of Igbo Proverbs and Idioms" In Ogbalu and Emenanjo (ed) Igbo Language and Culture, Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1975, p.192.
- ¹⁵.Op.cit., p.403.
- ¹⁶.Archer Taylor, The Proverb and an Index to Proverbs, Cambridge Mass: Havard University Press, 1931, pp.208-9.
- ¹⁷.A. Dundes, "Ways of Studying Folkore" In T.P.Coffin, 1968, p.113.
- ¹⁸.Op. cit., p.47.
- ¹⁹.Op. cit., p.17.

- ²⁰. D. P. Kunene, Heroic Poetry of the Basotho, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p.xi.
- ²¹. Olowo Ojoade, "Some Ilaje Wellerisms" Folklore Vol.xci 1979, p.63.
- ²². F. P. Wilson, "The Proverbial Wisdom of Shakespeare", 1981
- ²³. Op. cit, p.390.
- ²⁴. P. P. Essien, "The Use of Annang Proverbs As Tool of Education in Nigeria", PhD Thesis, St. Louis University, 1978, p.22.
- ²⁵. R. D. Abraham "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore", Journal of American Folklore, 1968, p. Lxxxi.
- ²⁶. Paul Radin, Primitive Man as Philosopher, New York: n.p. 1927, p.169.
- ²⁷. R. S. Rattray, Hausa Folklore, Customs and Proverbs, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2 Vols.1913, pp11-12.
- ²⁸. J. M. Thompson, "The Form and Functions of Proverbs in Ancient Israel", PhD.Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1965,p.24.
- ²⁹. C. M. Doke, "Bantu Wisdom-Lore", African Studies, VI, 1947, p.iii.
- ³⁰. R. C. Elliot, The Power of Satire, Magic, Ritual and Art, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960, p.viii.

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APPENDIX A

1. A'a e e wowo yeye di lo tu e ma le gbe un.
No matter how heavy the body may be the owner will be able to carry it.
2. A'a tu l'okunon o gb'opa gbe.
An invalid is now well he forgets his stick.
3. Abee bo n'ow'adete o d e ete.
The needle drops from the hand of a leper it becomes "e e te".
4. A bie e e si gwi.
He who asks does not make mistakes.
5. Abuke n'oyun ki ba an pon si?
A hunchback is pregnant, where will she carry the child? (i.e to what back will she strap it?)
6. A da nukan 'en ejo oun e pa i.
One kills a snake that walks alone.
7. A du un se bi ohun t'Olorun fe, a soro ise bi ohun ti Olorun o fe.
As easy to carry out as what God desires and as difficult to carry out as what God does not approve of.
8. A fa i gbe d'ogba, o ko l'oko s'use ebi.
He who does not farm yet has a barn has caused the farm owner to suffer famine.
9. A fe i oun obien fe uun obe i.
A woman continues to look for soup ingredients until she finds them.
10. Agba e gba i.
The elder always gives in.
11. Agbajo owo oun e mu s'oya i.
One strikes the chest with a closed fist.
12. Agba ko si ulu baje, baile uli ku uli d'ahoro.
There are no elders, the town is in disarray, the father (head of the family) dies, and the house becomes deserted.
13. Agbalagba bo s'ujo e bo s'ein, we gbe sisun ko.
An elder starts dancing without smiling (and) you are congratulating him.
14. Agbalagb' e e je ke mu yi wa?
An elder does not eat what – has – brought – this.
That is, to eat so much that he causes observers to exclaim, "Why on earth do you have to go this far?"

15. A gbatan e gbole i, da ba a d'aso gh'ole a pa ghan a'o.
One renders total assistance to a lazy man, you buy clothe for him, you also dye it.
16. A gbe Igbia le keke i i een d'oun te penpen.
An Igbira is given a ride on a bicycle; he complains that he is not allowed to press the horn (penpen).
17. A gbe iyawo, e e yege, o bi tan e i da ma gh'inon, o yo uso, uun ye san e e san, ubaje t'uli' baje jade.
A new bride is discovered to be unchaste, in an attempt to massage her stomach after delivery, she polluted the air! What is bad will always remain bad rubbish emits rubbish!
18. Agbe n'oogun bi si larinka.
A farmer does not have medicine like somebody who goes about.
19. Agboju l'ogun m'a a e ghun 'ya je.
He who depends on heritage will suffer.
20. Aghon i i "onen yi yeye ma yon; i i sugbon u jeun won ke?"
The tortoise says, "Many people are good but how about their feeding?"
21. Aghon n'oogun e le mu ghi ian udie.
The tortoise has medicine but cannot use it to cure himself.
22. Aguntan yo ba a b'aja 'en a j'iwin
The sheep that walks with a dog will eat faeces (i.e. Show me your friend and I will tell you who are).
23. Ai ronon jenle oun a fi e ope du i.
We have not thought deeply that is why we say we have no reason to express gratitude.
24. Aisan buuk' o s'onen ye nen koko.
A terrible disease befalls somebody who does not own a cocoa farm.
25. Ai tete m'ole, ole mu l'oko.
The farm owner does not catch a thief in time; the thief catches the owner of the farm.
26. Aiye k'oo to.
The world hates truth.
27. Aiye ya nen bu en'se
Going through life is not as fast as trekking.
28. Aja e e gbagbe l'oiye owuo.
A dog does not forget its morning benefactor.

29. Aja e e j'ogungun y'a mu ko ghon o'on.
A dog does not eat the bone that is hung on its neck.
30. Aja dede e j'iwin sugbon iyo ba a gbe te e le 'mon o wo s'aseju i.
All dogs eat excreta but any of them that smears its nose with it, has done it to excess.
31. Aja yo ba a sen'na e e gbo fee ode.
A dog that will get lost does not listen to tits owners' whistle.
32. Aj'e e jobi, o s'eiho.
A dog does not eat koianut. (It is an abomination for a dog to eat kolanut).
33. Ajeje owo ken gb'eun f'oiho.
One hand does not carry a load to the head.
34. Ajen een j'eun onen p'onen je.
A does not eat from one and then kill one afterwards.
35. Ajen ke n'ana, oma ku n'oni, e se se ima fi ajen ana o p'oma je i.
A witch cried yesterday, a child died today, who does not know that it is the witch of yesterday that killed the child?
36. Ajie ba l'okun, ara ro oku ara ro ajie.
The chicken perches on a rope, there is no peace for the rope (and) there is no peace for the chicken.
37. Ajie la a gun, iwu e da ma i.
The fowl is sweats but the feather prevents one from knowing (noticing it).
38. Ajie o sun de to a'a e uya gha i.
A fowl that deficates but does not urinate, the disgrace is borne by it alone.
39. A ko si g'onen, ato e mu pa i.
The first firewood one cuts is usually used for "ato" (base on which other firewoods will be placed or arranged).
40. Alagba a ma me'o, baba ole.
He who is powerful but not thoughtful, (is) the father of laziness.
41. Ale e ti ma b'owuo kutu a a san'en i.
One will know whether the morning will be a beautiful one from the night. (Morning shows the day).
42. Ale ye san koko, de san koko a mu gbe 'gbado.
The soil that is neither good for planting cocoa nor cocoyam is used for planting corn.
43. A' okan gban, o gb'ogban sosoo
A' eji gban, o gb'ogban omoluwabi
A' eta gban, iyen o s'omugo i
Ke e p'onen bi s'ego?

He who learns from the first experience bases his knowledge on inadequate experience

He who learns from the second experience is the wise one but he who learns on the third experience is not only careless but also stupid and what kills one other than stupidity?

44. A pe jeun e e j'ibaje.
He who eats late does not eat a spoilt portion.
45. Apo oluku onen ti eyi ekutele be un n'egbe' un ona.
This is still one's friend's pocket, yet a rat has perforated it in one thousand places.
46. Apoti ole e e wowo.
A lazy man's box is never heavy.
47. Apon son usu o bu gh'aguntan e, teni nteni.
A bachelor roasts yam and gives some to his sheep, your property is your property.
48. Asa e e gb' uomajie n'oju yie.
The hawk does not carry a chick in the presence of its mother.
49. Asipagale o ku so ma, Afuwagale o ku sonson, Asepeletu o wo m'oye ba e je i.
Asipagale died in his youth, Afuwagale died an untimely death, but Asepeletu lived to a ripe age and inherited his father's chieftaincy title.
50. A sun e non'di, e lo y'onen a a fe udi ghan?
One defecates without cleaning up, how many people will one expose the anus to?
51. A tai m'oni, e i to a tai m'ana.
Working from morning till evening today is not like working from yesterday till today.
52. Atelewo logbo oun logb'e pan la i.
It is the cat's palm that it leaks.
53. Atelewo nen e e tan nen je.
One's palm does not deceive one.
54. A ti je ohosa yon sugbn ati mon omi si un o so o i.
Eating "ohosa" (wall nut) is not difficult but drinking water after eating it is the problem.
55. A ti keke e e ti p'eitan uoko i, do ba a dagban tan e i du ka ma.
It is at a tender age that one trim the branches of an iroko tree when it matures one cannot bend it.
56. A toan se boan je.
He who tries to make good a bad situation ends up spoiling (complicating) it.

57. Ayangbe aja e yon, sugbon ka a je d'aja i gba a e?
A roasted dog is delicious as you eat it but what will one eat while the dog is being roasted?
58. Ayo e pa eniyan i, use e e p'onen
Excessive mirth kills but poverty does not kill.
59. Baba j'ona we bi e e uagban
The old man is being burnt, you are asking about his beard! (What part of it will be burnt first?).
60. Bata omoiton ii kia kia, bata agbalagba ii keepe keepe.
The shoes of a youth sound "kia kia" (quick quick) but the shoes of an elder sounds "keepe, keepe" (live long, live long).
61. Bi eegun iaye ba a jo iye, nugha oiho a ya nen.
If ones masquerade dances well in the palace, one's head swells (one will be happy or proud).
62. B'eten gbo yen ken inen bajе
If the ear does not hear "yenken" (rubbish) the stomach will not be unhappy the heart does not grief.
63. B'ilekun ken ti omuen si.
If one door does not close, another one does not open.
64. Bi s'owe bi s'owe e lu'lu ogidiigbo ologban e jo un, oma'an e mon i.
Like proverb, like proverb one beats the drum of "ogidiigbo" only the wise dances to it, only the adept understand it.
65. B'oiho ba a pe n'ale a da i e.
If head remains on the ground for a long time, it becomes good (i.e when there is life, there is hope).
66. B'oi kan san, a'an ugba onen.
If one head is good (successful) it spreads to two hundred people.
67. Da ba a'an nen use eu, a mu t'oma je un.
If someone sends you on (with) a slavish message, you deliver the message like a free born (wisely).
68. Da ba a fa gbuu, gbuu a f'agbo.
If one pulls "gbuu"(problem), "gbuu" will pull the forest.
69. Da ba a m'omo keke je Loyen, do ba a pe a d'agba si uun.
If a child is crowned as Loyen (chieftaincy title) as he grows old he gets used to it.
70. Da ba a m'owo' ton na oma'nen, a m'owo osi fa ma a'a.
If one beats his child with the right hand, one draws the child close to you with the left.

71. Da ba a s'ada s'ale ne e megwa, ibi pelebe ghen mu l'ale i.
If one throws a cutlass on the ground ten times, it will always be on its flat side.
72. Da fi di li t'onen ma je ewuuku mimi, toi ti hoo hii e n'oungan jo e i.
If one's relative is cautioned not to eat raw catarpillar, it is in order to avoid the inconveniences it will cause at night.
73. D'agbalagba ba a subu, e ni ho boon subu si, a ho ib'ale ti yo un wa;
d'omaiton ba subu a h'ugwaju.
When an elder falls, he will not look at the spot he falls on, he will look at the place where the ground started slipping him, when a younger man falls, he looks ahead.
74. Da ka gun iyan s' inon ewe da s' obe s' eipo epa, onen ya a yo a yo.
Even if pounded yam is put on a leaf and the stew is cooked in groundnut husk, he who is destined to eat to his fill will surely be filled.
75. D'ale iposika uun gaan ganna ti baje.
Before the ground kills a wicked person, (before a wicked person dies) many valuable (good) things would have been destroyed.
76. Da mu'a s'use da ma s'apama eyin.
One should work hard to avoid future regret.
77. De ba a n'udi, obien e je Kumolu.
If there is no reason, a woman does not bear (is not named) kumolu.
78. Dede lodongboo e dinon d'ale i e ma iyi inon e on ninen.
All lizards lie prostrate on their chests but nobody knows which one has stomach ache).
79. De ba a 'en dede ose oisa ka ghon nen pe ale le.
If one does not complete all the steps that orisa (God or Deity) has predestined one to take, night will not come.
80. De ba a to i ti epo j'usu a toi usu j'epo.
If one does not eat palm oil for the sake of yam, one will eat yam for the sake of palm oil.
81. Den a' a e n'awo o gba e.
Fry yourself in a pot that conveniently contains you.
82. De be e son usu n'una a ka mu iyakan f'obe.
While we roast yam on the fire, one should also start looking for a knife.
83. Di agbalagba be e sa n'inon ugbe de mi hele, soon nen uun ye le un i.
If an elder is running in the bush and he is panting, something must be chasing (after) him.

84. Di ewe ba a ti pe ni a' a ose a d'ose.
If a leaf remains for a long time with the local soap (ose oyo), it will become soap.
85. Die e je ma n'aja yo s'iwin ku i.
One eats a little out of a dog that died as a result of insanity (a rabied dog).
86. Di eiya ba a 'en m'onen de gb'onon a fi onen 'gi.
If an ant walks on one and one does not brush it ojj, it assumes that one is wood.
87. Di e'u ba a pe n'uli a d'oma.
If a slave remains/lives in a home for a longtime, he will become a child.
88. Di iaye ba a bi'i, e da i oma n'eyin ajie i?
If one does not have a child, at least one sees chicks behind a fowl.
89. Di iaye ba a ro t'ifon, a yon a'a k'ogungun.
If one thinks of the irritation which crawcraw gives him, he will scratch his body to the bones.
90. D' iaye ba s'oko s'oja o le ba ia l'onen.
If one throws a stone into the market, it could hit ones' relation.
91. Di iaye ba a jo iba, a jo iye.
If one does not look like the father, he will look like the mother.
92. Di ina ba a tan n'oiho, eje ni i tan n'ekikan
If lice are still on the head, the fingernails will continue to be blood stained.
93. Di iyelomo be e b'omo e fo, oma e n'iye a m'eti ma ogii.
If a mother is advising her child, an orphan pays attention.
94. Di l'ejo ba a ma ejo n'ebi, e ni i pe n'oiho ukonle.
If someone acknowledges his guilt, he will not be on his knees for a long time.
95. Di maimasigidi ba a fe i te ii da gbe un s'ojo.
If a mud statue wants to get destroyed, it will request that they put him in the rain.
96. Di oton gwe osi, di osi gwe oton, oun ow'e mu fen i.
When the right washes the left and the left washes the right, both hands become clean.
97. Di ulu de be e don panen panen, a ka jo ghen melo melo.
If a drum is sounding "panen" "panen" one will be dancing it easy easy (with caution).
98. D'una ba a j'onen j'oma nen, ta a nen a koko gban non i.
If fire burns one and one's child at the same time, one brush off the fire on his body first.

99. Di us'onen ba a fifun yeye, a meun s'ekoko je.
When your yam is very white (good), you eat it covering it with your hand.
100. Do ba a ku die d'oma lodo ku, ojo a'o.
If it remains a little for the crab to die, rain will fall i.e. there is divine intervention in human life.
101. D'omi lila be e gbe 'koko, kekee ka gbe iawe
When a big river is carrying a log, a small river will be carrying dead, dry fallen leaf.
102. D'omaiton ba a n'aso bi s'agba, o da n'akisa bi s'agba i?
If a child has as many clothes as an adult, he cannot have as many rags as the adult?
103. D'omaiton ba a pa agiga oisa de ba a mu iga e ya gh'oju a ton pa yo jeen.
If a child kills the grasshopper of "oisa", (deity) if the hind-leg is not used to tear his face, he will kill a bigger one.
104. D'owo ma f'oko iro, d'eyin ma be e m'ale, do deen fi ghaan j'iyen nig, ogun d'ola i?
If a man does not bend his back and till the soil and says he will pound yam on the eve of ogun festival, he must be joking!
105. D'uya lila ba a gb'onen san'le, kekee a ka gun oih'onen.
If a big misfortune throws one on the ground, small ones will be climbing ones head.
106. E e se aso dede e sa so uun.
It is not all clothes that one spreads in the sun.
107. E e s'ebi onen yo ku, aboi o jan ghon' wo i.
It is not the fault of the person who died the illness over-powered him.
108. E e s' onen o gbe'po n'okaja nukan o s' ole, onen o gba ale na a ole.
It is not only the person who removes oil from the shelf that is a thief, the person who helps him to put it down is also a thief (This is the same as the English proverb "The receiver is as bad as the thief".
109. Eete yi a pa d'ai mu e'u s'omo e e se eete j'okan.
A decision taken to turn a slave into a child is not a one-day decision.
110. E fe ufen'di koko.
One is looking for the whitish part of the cocoyam.
111. Efifi uwa e i, da ka da ugba apee bo a'u jade.
Behaviour/character is smoke even if it is covered with two hundred baskets; it will ooze out (ie it will still find its way out through the basket).
112. E gbe'su ghan onen o yin.
He is showing yam to the person who harvested it.

113. E i s'alajobi ma, alajogbe o ku i.
There is no more kinship bond, what exists is co-residence bond (ie there are no more kinship relationships but co-residence relationships).
114. E le buu buu do ma ku onokan m'onen, onen ya a ku oun e ma i.
No matter how terrible one's circumstance may be, one will always have at least one sympathizer or support, which it will be is the question.
115. Ekutele bi, ole po, olubaje ku aiye.
Rat delivers; thieves increase, and destroyers do not leave the world.
116. E lu e fe i ka n'eyin 'Depele?
How many will one count in Depele's teeth?
117. Epo yi ewen o, oju l'okunon ewen deen 'o si i.
The oil that they pouring is being poured into the eye of a sick man.
118. E si esinsin an gbe be si l'egbo?
Whom will flies take sides with if not a person with a sore?
119. E si 'jo ya d'aso da ma a'le mu gwo.
Anytime one buys a piece of cloth one can always find an occasion for its use.
120. E si 'jo yi Maku se i a ku.
It is sure that Maku will die.
121. E s'onen e gb'oma ejo si e.
Nobody plays with a baby snake.
122. E suun e mu s'omo Igbomina do ma seun gbogina.
An Igbomina child will always behave true to type.
123. Esuu onen e m'owo onen y'epo i.
It is one's "esuu" that makes one to dip one's hand into oil.
124. E s'onen ye fi o'i un m'ayin, olukaluku e fi oi uun tiko i.
Nobody says his pap is bad but everybody says his is good (i.e everybody cherishes what belongs to him).
125. E s'onen ye m'owo megwe gwa jeun.
Nobody eats with ten fingers ie learn to save for the rainy day.
126. E su un o fi d' iaye ma t'ola afi uku.
Nothing prevents one from staying alive till tomorrow except death.
127. E su se mato se sae to, ku u gwaju ghan kan'le.
No matter how fast a car goes, it will greet the ground (road) 'e ku u gwaju'(ie the ground is always ahead of it).

143. E e n'aka iba da ma nen t'iyē.
It is not possible to have a paternal kinship without a maternal kinship.
144. E e ti kootu bo wa'li wa s'oma'ye.
Nobody comes back from court to become brothers.
145. E e wa'li aigbo a wa non.
It is impossible to go to an old person's house freely.
146. E gb'uomajie n'owo uku ii e d'oun lo s'etitan la a je.
One is trying to prevent a chick from death (yet) it complains of not being allowed to go and scatter rubbish.
147. Eghen e d'akiko i.
It is the egg that becomes a cock.
148. Eghen oun e i, do ba a ti fō e du se e.
Words are eggs, if they drop and break, they cannot be gathered together again.
149. E i omo e ma gbon, i i de ba a ti ku, kee ponēn, e de s'ego i?
We say your child lacks wisdom. You reply: if he does not die." What kills one? Isn't foolishness?
150. E i d'aja ku oiho iwin, i i e sa a ton je?
We say a dog should leave faeces, it replies, "who will eat it again".
151. E i di i'eyin jade, abuke jade, e i e e s'eyin gannaku bi si te e i.
Somebody with a back (i.e. support) is requested to come out, a hunchback came out. It is said that this oun type of back is not required.
152. E i di l'okuon se po, ii ghen le se po, po, po.
The sick person is requested to say "po", he says he cannot say "po, po, po".
153. Eja gbigbe e e du ka
A dry fish cannot be bent (else, it breaks).
154. Eja yo ju eja o gb'eja win.
The fish that is bigger than (another) fish is the one that swallows that fish.
155. E m'ale l'ajen i gba, du o gba do fen, ii o fen yeye, du o gba un de fen, ii e fen.
One doesn't know how to sweep the floor of a witch. If you sweep it and it is very clean, she complains, that it is too clean, if it is not clean, she complains that it is not clean.
156. E ma uun sisun ye sun de to uli.
One does not know the type of sleep one would sleep that one would urinate in the house (on the bed i.e die).

157. Eon yo ba a y'uli ewusa do bo da ki ghon'okun.
The palm kernel that goes to the house of "ewusa"(rabbit) and comes back unharmed must be praised.
158. E pan Magbe, Magbe pan oke.
One is backing Magbe; Magbe is backing a straw sack (i.e one is supporting Magbe, Magbe is supporting another person).
159. Esin e e da onen da ma ton gun.
The fact that the horse throws down the rider does not stop the rider from getting up and dimbing it again.
160. Esin ugwaju oun t'eyin ho sa'a i.
It is the horse in front that the one behind trails.
161. E ti'i uu yi i, se mu d'eu ba l'oan i.
One has never seen this before, one uses it to scare the person involved (in the problem).
162. E ti kon 'se kan s'omi, akee po hoho iho.
One has not put one leg in water the frog starts to croak.
163. Eu n'omo li oson gangan.
A slave has a servant in the afternoon.
164. Eun a ba a nen oun e mu b'omanen fo i.
It is the mouth that one has that he uses in talking (advising) to his child.
165. Eun agbalagba ob'en ti gbo i.
Kolanut matures in the mouth of an elder.
166. Eun yi ota di s'ale, oiho a'a e ghaan gbe le i.
The load that the enemy has prepared, he will carry it on his own head.
167. Eyin oun om'ajie to yie i.
The chick follows behind its mother.
168. Eyin yi aja mu b'oma e sie oun ghen mu ge je i.
The teeth with which a dog plays with its child (puppy) it is the same teeth with which it bites it (puppy).
169. Fife yi a fe olili ajie, ibi pipaje ghon ma i.
The love one has for a chicken does not go beyond killing (it) for table.
170. Gambari pa Fulani, e n'ejo inon.
Gambari kills Fulani; there is no case (problem).
171. Gb'ola ma gbi, o gb'eiya gbi do do.
One who lifts wealth without panting (but) who lifts an ant panting heavily?

172. Gb'oyan gh'omo, gb'omo gh'oyan, d'omo ba sa a ti yan o bu se.
Give breast to the child, give the child to the breast; what is important is that the child suckles.
173. Gongosu, edidae, bu o se go to wo se go to i.
Gongosu edidae, you are as stupid as your height is.
174. Hiho okun e to t'osa, oju yo ti ri okun e le r'osa do be'u.
The eyes that have witnessed the roaring of the sea cannot fear the splattering of the lagoon.
175. Ibi kee oun e b'agba i.
An elder is found in a respectable place.
176. Ibi kere e b'amon i.
One meets a pot in a conspicuous place (that is one meets an elder in a respectable place).
177. Ibi oka ba a ha, ibe uunjije ti wa bo uun i.
Where the python is, that is where its food will come to it.
178. Iboon san Mode oun Mode de i.
It is the place that prospers Mode that he stays.
179. Igbe'a ga e s'ugwaju upa uun i.
Pride goes before a fall.
180. Igbia omo ta o
Igbia, the child of "ta o".
181. Igi soso o y'a g'onen ju a to ke iye e ti ho i.
A pointed stick that can pierce one's eyes, one sees it from afar.
182. Ijo je o we yon i.
Eating together makes the exercise enjoyable.
183. Ila e e go ju lue, do ba i go ju lue, a te ba a ge un ai ka peka.
The okro plant cannot grow taller than the owner, if it does, he will bend it and cut it and it will bring forth branches.
184. Inon agbalagba e ti b'egunguen i.
One finds rubbish in an elders' stomach.
185. Inon e e bi akon.
The royal beads do not show anger (i.e. never get angry).
186. Inon e e s'ugba da le si un ho.
The stomach is not calabash for one to be able to open it and see.
187. Inon ukoko didun oun eko fifun ti ja de i.
It is from a black pot that white pap comes out.

188. Iwa l'ewa omo enia.
Character is the beauty of the human being.
189. Iwan at' eyin ja, sugbon e e mu ghen e e pai e.
The tongue and the teeth do fight but nobody knows when they settle their quarrel.
190. Iwin ajie ma h'ale.
Chicken drops are on the ground.
191. Iyi we ba sun we ti ghin ghon 'yun, we ton bi e e omuen.
The woman you are having on affair with, you have not been able to impregnate her, you are asking for another.
192. Iy'o wu mi e wu e, oun omaye meji u jeun ototo i.
Differences between likes and dislikes make two brothers eat separately.
193. Iyo gwo ofen e ku, iyo yo i ho ii ona o'on ghen ti wa i.
He who dug the "afen (gallows) did not die (but) he who peeped at it exclaimed that he has just been brought back from his way to heaven.
194. Kaka d'eku maje sese, a mu si gwa danon.
Instead of the rat not eating "sese", it will prefer to waste it.
195. Kaka d'ewe agban o seen le koko si i.
Instead of the coconut tree's leaf becoming softer, it is becoming tougher.
196. Kaka di laobo te amu uun owo p'opo.
Rather than allow himself to be disgraced, a trader will prefer to sell his wares at a give-away price.
197. Kata ki t'en d'ola, da suse bi se eu ko daun kan kan.
Agitative worries do not make one rich, to work like a slave yields nothing.
198. Ke e ko oku se no'on?
Dead humans are in abundance in heaven.
199. Ke le mu yan imon aja do le gbaa e?
What can one do to dry the nose of a dog?
200. Ko se, ko se, ko d'oluose se.
He does not perform and he does not allow those who will work to do the work.
201. Koko e da lu u; onen o lu li koko lughese.
Cocoa does allow one to beat him for whoever beats a cocoa farmer invites problem on himself.
202. Koko so'gi d'eniyan.
Cocoa transforms a tree into a human being (i.e Cocoa changes the status of a poor man to that of a rich man).

203. Ko omo e du o le nen usimi.
Train your child so that you can have peace of mind.
204. K'omo je, k'omo je, ki yeye e d'inon d'eni.
Allow the child to eat while its mother lie flat on her empty stomach.
205. Lagoigo b'usu se, o mu idemde ko'na mon un.
Lagago (a fool) puts yam on the fire using paw paw as firewood.
206. L'egun e fen ma l'uyan i.
It is the person who has a thorn in his foot who goes to the person who will assist (help) him to remove it.
207. Li suu e fon wa'a keneun i.
It is only the patient person that can milk a lion.
208. Li suu e j'oba n'ausa i.
It is only a patient one who can be crowned as king in hausaland.
209. L'oho i i oun agidi agba, iwofa i i oun a r'eyin gba kumon, onen o fe
i la'ja i i oun a le bi s'uen.
The wealthy man says he is stubborn, the poor (slave) says his back is ready to receive the club while the peace-maker says he is as hard (tough) as a piece of iron.
210. L'ouka gb'uoka, owo ole do fifo.
The owner of the ring collects his ring, the lazy man regrets.
211. Li t'onen e e h'oiho osan da mon aipan.
One's relation cannot be on the top of an orange tree and eats an unripe one.
212. Malu ye n'uun, Olo'on e lesisi ghun i.
The cow that has no tail, God drives flies away for him.
213. Mama gba ii: "o s'obe ti ku o aiye, o ku a jo gi non".
Grandma says, "excellent cooks have left the world, it is those who burn firewood for the fun of it that remain".
214. Mo pe n'ale
Mo pe n'owuo
Mo pe n'oson, oro omo l'omo e yen, oro omo'nen ke a to ti ti ghaa wo'le lo e i.
I call him at night.
I call him in the morning.
I call him in the afternoon, that is somebody else's child, but one corrects his child ceaselessly.
215. Ni gbo ni gben, okan d'on'le ju ninen.
Between *gbo* and *gben* one will certainly have greater impact than the other.
216. Nina oho e di yeye omo s opin.
A mother's expenses prevent one from knowing that she is persevering.

217. Ninon de de eiye yo pan'ko, oga oun apa'o je ni nen i.
Out of all the birds with red beak, "aparo" is above all of them (in other words) "aparo" is the greatest.
218. O b'onen je fe'yi si.
He bites one and blows air on it.
219. O d'agba e d'anon.
He is old but lacks wisdom.
220. O d'ale d'abuke imo fi uke s'omo
It is at night that the hunchback will realize that the hunch is not a child.
221. O d'eyin do iye agbe'wua.
It will dawn on the water yam farmer latter.
222. O d'oiho akayin, ikaa n'ogungun.
It came to the turn of the man without teeth bean cake becomes bony.
223. O d'ugwaju o d'ejo, o d'eyin o d' aso.
Should in case problem erupts in future.
224. O fusi bi s'aagba gbo.
He is as popular as a bush tortoise.
225. Ogede didun e du busan, omo buuk' e du lu pa.
It is not easy to eat an unripe plantain just as it is not easy to kill a bad (an intractable) child.
226. Ogun agbo tele e e pa a'o yo ba a gban.
To be forewarned is to be forearmed.
227. O gbona ju apaara.
He is hotter than thunder.
228. O gun igi ko j'ewe.
He has climbed a tree beyond its leaves.
229. Ogii o n'eti.
Wall has ears.
230. Oho ii di ghen daun s'ofò da ka ho ghen eun.
Money says if I have not contributed to the conversation, you will have to wait.
231. Oho obi, obi oho.
Money is cola cola is money.
232. Oiho bu uk'e ka koolo bi s'upekun da le ma.
An unlucky head does not bend like a cutlass for it to be identified.

233. Oiho buuku ye mu omoiton pen utan e'an.
Ill-luck makes a young fellow entitled to the share of the thigh of an animal.
234. Oiho y'a a sun n'abata, da ka gba paanon le ghon oiho, a jo n'oju' so.
The head that is destined to sleep in the mud, even if you put him under corrugated roof, it will leak at the points of the nails.
235. Oijo o'an ba a ti b'uju ghen b'imon i.
Whenever the eye is in trouble, the nose is also in trouble.
236. Oisa, du e ba a le gbe mi, yin mi non bu o se da mi.
Oisa, if you cannot defend me, leave me as you have created me.
237. Oisa o s'iyān, a s'obe si.
The oisa who provides pounded yam will also provide soup for it.
238. Oise ma bi ghaan iyan gun.
The mutter never knew that there would be yam for it to pound.
239. Ojo e e p'onen lo s'oko Saloo ne e meji.
Rain cannot beat one to the extent of going to Saloo's farm twice.
240. Oju e mu b'oma nen fo i.
One speaks to ones' child with the eye.
241. Oju e ti m'iyān a a y'onen i.
One knows the pounded yam that will satisfy one by merely seeing it.
242. Oju ole igbad' e gbo i.
Corn matures in the presence of a lazy man.
243. Oju ya a b'onen t'ale e e m'owuo kutu s'ipen.
The eyes that will last do not start discharging from morning.
244. O kan j'ob'Ado.
It more sour than the virgina of Ado.
245. Okenen sun, okeji abibe, oketa aje i jetan, a mu le esun 'wo.
One excretes, the second "abibe", the third eats but cannot finish it, he hands it over to the devil.
246. Okobo e e b'omo e si to si.
An impotent man never has children in the neighbourhood.
247. Oko o s'uli oho i, men a fe koko 'a.
The farm is the home of money I am going to buy cocoa.
248. Ole e sa lo 'li.
A thief cannot run away from his home.
249. Ole yo ji kakaki oba, ki been ti a fon?
The thief who steals the kings' trumpet, where will he blow it?

250. O le ju s'odi.
He is lazier than the air from the anus i.e polluted air.
251. O m'ete s'ale e pa lapalapa.
He abandons leprosy he is curing ringworm.
252. Omi die e ela si i.
One slices okro in a little quantity of water.
253. Omi e e ghanghan d'ale ma i mon.
Water cannot be so scarce to extent that the ground will not have some to drink.
254. Omi e e san b'oju h'eyin.
A river does not flow backwards.
255. Omi l'eniyan, de ba a san pade n'oke a san pade n'odo.
Human beings are water (stream) we do not know when and where we can flow into each other.
256. Omi yi iay'a a mon e e san gb'onen e e.
The water one is destined to drink will not flow past one.
257. O m'owo osi juwe uli ba e.
He describes the direction to his fathers' house with the left hand.
258. O mu sibi pon omi s'okun.
One uses a spoon to fetch water into the ocean.
259. Onie mi sugbon ugba eyin e da ma.
The tortoise breathes but the shell prevents one from noticing it.
260. Oni l'oni nje, eni a be l'owe.
Today is the day for the one who has accepted to help on farm work.
261. Onie lo s'ul'ana e, e i ki ghan a bo, ii o di gi ghon ba a te.
Tortoise went to its in-laws house; he was asked when he would return, he said not until he is disgraced.
262. On'oyun s'inon si non, o m'obo to e
She is pregnant and she loans out her vagina.
263. O nukan je nukan pawo ma.
Eater alone, clearer alone.
264. O pe a'a e ni Folo'onso, o mu gbongo ghun ope, o f'oghon tan o yin owo non.
He calls himself Folorunso (someone God protects), he climbs the palm tree with gbongo (a very feeble rope), on getting to the top he frees his hands.
265. O pe yi koko ti h'oi 'jo.
Cocoyam (leaf) has been dancing for a long time.

266. O s'agbalagba e se la gba lagba.
He is an elder and yet behaves "lagbalagba" (shamefully).
267. Osise h'ouun, onen a a je hi b'oji.
The labourer is in the sun, the beneficiary is under the shade.
268. Osiwin sun, o mo muen o di.
A madman deficates, something else fills it up.
269. Osika n'amen.
A wicked person has no mark (for one to identify him).
270. Osika gbagbe ajobi, adaniloru gbagbe ola.
The wicked forgets ajobi (kinship relationship) "adaniloru" forgets tomorrow.
271. O s'oiye tan o l'oso ti.
He carried out a half-hearted goodness.
272. O so p'ale o si'eigho 'wo'di.
You polluted on the ground, you committed abomination against the anus.
273. O so si ko du ka, o w o si ko du se e.
It fruits where it cannot be plucked; it falls where it cannot be picked up.
274. Osun baje ni a'a e.
The month is spoilt in her body (ie she miscarried).
275. O t'ale nipa.
He kicked the ground.
276. Ouli b'aja m'ale, aho fee fe e da 'i uku osika.
The roof covers the house; light skin prevents one from knowing the intentions of a wicked man.
277. Ouko Saoho e yon n'eun adimon i.
It is the name of Saoho that is sweet in the mouth of "adimon" i (i.e. give a dog a bad name and hang it).
278. Oun iye o yo obi n'apo, oun buuku yo uda n'ako.
A soft voice brings out kolanut from the pocket while a harsh voice brings out a sword from its sheath.
279. Owe l'esin oro, bi oro ba sonu, owe ni a fi nwa a.
A proverb is a horse, which can carry you swiftly to the discovery of ideas sought.
280. O w'onen da j'ean pe n'eun sugbon ofifa je.
One would have loved to eat meat for a longer time but for "ofifa" that pulls it down.

281. O ye omo ye s'okun, o ye yie ye re.
The crying child understands why and his mother too understands why she is pacifying him.
282. Oyibo ma seun ogii tanna, oyibo pa titi aro, mato se yeen n'uju titi.
The white man has (performed wonders) tried; the wall emits lights (fire), the white man dyed (tarred) the roads (and) cars are plentiful on the roads.
283. Oyibo yo se peeni, oun nen o s'ieasa i.
It is the same white man who makes pen that also makes eraser.
284. Oba ti w' aja.
The king has entered the ceiling ie the king has died.
285. Obe y'onen yon e yon a s'oneun kuhu
Whether one's mother's soup is tasty or not one enjoys it (it will make a difference).
286. Ofo yi ologban ba a fo, eun omugo e ti gbo un i.
The speech uttered by a Wiseman, it is usually heard from the mouth of a foolish man.
287. O g'okon je i i di tinon gbe inon di t'ode gb'ode.
Let bygone be bygone.
288. Ojo gbogbo ni t'ole, ojo kan ni ti luun.
Everyday is for the thief; one day is for the owner.
289. Ojo uku eiye e gbo aima ifo.
The day a bird has been destined to die does not mean that it does not know how to fly.
290. Okan soso o soo iyin ni' gbado i.
Only one is difficult to shed in a corncob.
291. Okan soso ma to ogun, do ba ti je.
Only one medicine is adequate as long as it is potent.
292. O ko'se m'upe, e m'upe buuku e m'upe iye.
A lazy man cannot discern a good call from a bad one.
293. Ola da ti b'okan wa iye i?
Greatness is not the preserve of one source.
294. Ole b'owuo ku.
A lazy man wastes his morning but stuggles when it is too late.
295. Ole du la ghun.
One cannot work for the purpose of enriching a lazy man because he will eventually mismanage and waste the wealth.

296. Omo a je A samu kekee ghen ti seun samu samu i.
A child who will be like A samu will be (behave)
“samu” “samu” (intelligently) from his childhood i.e
As morning shows the day, boyhood shows manhood.
297. Omo be e, osi be e.
Many children, multiple poverty.
298. Omode gbon agba gbon, oun a mu d’ile’ fe i.
The Ife land is built from the wisdom of both young and old.
299. Omo Gambari ba a bi, okun ghen ’an i.
A Gambari child will always weave ropes.
300. Omo igi oun e mu igi na i, omo ope oun e mu ope lu i.
It is a child of stick that one beats with a stick.
301. Omo i jobe i d’obe b’aya.
A child who has never eaten soup before is the one who eats to the
extent of soiling his shirt (with that soup).
302. Omo’le e m’owo si jiwe uli ba e
It is only a bastard who points to his father’s house with the left (hand).
303. Omo nen e su di be be e da mu ileke si t’oma non mu en.
When your child’s buttocks is perfectly suitable for beads, you don’t
put beads on the buttocks of somebody elses’ child.
304. Omo o s’owo d’oho wa’li oun bae ati yie a yen i.
It is the child who comes home with laurels (honour) that both
parents will praise (cherish).
305. Omo ya ba a ko n’ulie de gba, ode e ti ko un i.
A child who refuses to accept training (discipline) from his home, he
will be taught a lesson from outside.
306. Omo ye n’iye e e gbegb’ eyin.
A motherless child should not have sore on the back.
307. Omo yi a ba bi iye e e ren n’ounganjo.
A child that comes from a good home does not roam the streets at night.
308. Omo yi a ba a bi ni uli oghon, do lo s’uli oma a la ya, e e fu wa osiwin.
A child delivered in the home of wisdom and brought up by
knowledge, does not behave like a mad person (i.e does not
misbehave).
309. Omo yi e ko oun a a gbe uli yi a ko ta i.
It is the unbuilt (trained) child that will sell the house that has been built.
310. Omo yo ba a gb’owo s’oke oun e gbe i.
It is the child who lifts up his arms that one carries.

311. Omo yo fi di y'oun ma sun, oun na a ni m'uju b'oun.
The child who says his mother should not sleep, he too will not see sleep.
312. Onen y'a a j'opolo, a je yo eeghen.
He who wants to eat toads should eat those with eggs (Anything worth doing is worth doing well).
313. Onen ba a d' omi s'ugwaju a te ale titu.
He who throws water in front will surely walk on wet ground (One good turn deserves another).
314. Onen ba a fe i ba esun jeun a nen sibi gbogboo.
He who would eat with the devil must have a long spon.
315. Onen a ba fo do gbo, oho a ya uun i.
Whoever is verbally corrected and hears (listens) is being loaned some money.
316. Onen a ba ni aba oun e pe ni Baba i.
It is the person we meet in the village that is called "Father".
317. Onen b'efon n'abata do y'obe, o da ro fi omi ghon mon ku si be i?
He who met "efon" in the swamp and draw his knife, does he think that it drank water till death?
318. Onen a jo jaga, ajo jaga, onen ya a jo lodon, a fa gbuu.
Whoever wants to dance "jaga" will dance "jaga", whoever wants to dance "lodon" will drag it (What is worth doing is worth doing well).
319. Onen a se oiye ko de dupe, bi si gi l'osa gb'onen eun lo e i.
He who does not say thank you for the good deed done to him is like a thief who has made away with one's property.
320. Onen ba a suko ta a e bo suko.
He who keeps quiet, his welfare will not be catered for.
321. Onen e bo e mo b'uyan mu.
Somebody that is being fed does not know that there is famine.
322. Onen e n'oogun adoado e e gb'ayinyan win.
He who does not have the antidote for "adoado" should not swallow a cockroach.
323. Onen jen s'ukoto, o ko awon yo k'ogban.
He who falls into a pit serves as a lesson to others ie experience is the best teacher.
324. Onen ma nen a'e do fi ghon n'onen, uya a a je pa i.
He who does not help himself but relies on others will suffer.

325. Onen mon o mi onen, o mon “Jesa, Onen o mon omi “Luwa, ugba omi ghon mon n’uli ‘Doko i.
He who drinks water from “oni”, drinks water from Ilesa (but) he who drinks water from “Luwa” drinks water from two hundred sources of water in Idoko’s house.
326. Onen pa aoko s’oja oun oja pa aoko si i.
He who sends gift to the market, he will also receives a gift from the market.
327. Onen o’an nen ’se oun e be ’u e i, e e be’u onen a je ghan.
It is the person who sends one a message that one fears, not the one to whom it is to be delivered.
328. Onen o gbaunjo o ma fi’ghan fan’ wo.
He who makes his mouth round knows that he will whistle.
329. Onen o sun s’oja de ko un, ghoon d’ooni a bi baa fo iwin ni’ be.
He who deficates in the market without clearing it, will meet the dried faces on the next market day.
330. Onen o sun s’oj’ona ni gheen lo a b’esisi ni gheen be e pada wa.
He who deficates on the road when going, meets flies on that spot on his return.
331. Onen o sun ti gbagbe sugbon onen yo ko un e le gbagbe lailai.
He who deficates, may forget but he who clears it never forgets (the experience).
332. Onen s’oiye, o se ghan a e, onen sika, ose ghan a e.
He who does a good deed does it for himself; he who does evil does it (also) for himself.
333. Onen ya ba a ba fo do gbo, o gbo ghan a e, iy’e den gbo o sai gbo ghan a e.
Whoever is advised and takes to it does so for his own benefit and whoever refuses, does so to his own detriment.
334. Onen ya fi do fe iaye ’ju, o m’ata seun, onen a fi do yon iay’eyin o mu egun s’owo.
The person, who is asked to blow dust from one’s eyes, puts pepper in the mouth; he who is asked to scratch one on the back puts thorns in the hand.
335. Onen ya’ju s’oba, oun oba te pa i.
It is the person that offends the king that the king punishes.
336. Onen ye ba a gban m’aji oun aiwe gbo i.
He who does not engage in double-dealing is the one who is shaken by fasting.
337. Onen ye ba a ku, o we ni ’gon bi i.
It is the person who does not die that can possess the kolanut tree ie if there is life there is hope.

338. Onen yo ba a fi d'aiye san e e s'oun nukan a a je.
He who wishes well for the world will not live in it alone.
339. Onen yo ba a je gbi, a ku gbi.
He who eats piggishly will die piggishly.
340. Onen yo ba a te oju m'ojuto, a p'eja.
He who stares persistently at a running gulter will catch fish.
341. Onen yo ba a ku iye, owo a'a e ghaan mu fa i.
He who will die a happy death must bring it about with his own hand (behavior).
342. Onen yo ba a m'oiho ti use f'open oun e yen i.
Whoever perseveres to the end will be praised.
343. Onen yo ban'nen lo s'abe koko la a ba sun, e e kan iso ghan a se mai.
He who tricks one under cocoyam plant in order to have sexual intercourse with, will do it only once ie once bitten, twice shy.
344. Onen yo b ia 'lie s odi uya ghen mbo i.
He who keeps malice with his relation usually ends up suffering.
345. On'okan e je a wa de.
One person cannot say we have come.
346. O'on ji pa niyan, om'aiye ji pa gai.
Heaven eats a lot of people; human beings eat a lot of "garri".
347. Ota lu ulu 'baje, oba Oluwa ni ko je ko don.
The enemy is drumming the drum of destruction but the Almighty God would not allow it to sound.
348. Ow'a too je e gun i.
It is the hand of the beggar that stretches long (stretches out) i.e The receivers' hand must be longer than the givers.
349. Ow'epo oun omaiye b'onen lai e s'onen e b'onen l'aw'eje.
People will help you lick an oily hand but nobody will help you lick a hand stained with blood.
350. Owo e tun un se i.
It is the hand that repairs things.
351. Owo omode t'apepe, t'agba o w'akee gbe.
The hand of a child cannot reach the high shelf and that of an adult cannot enter a gourd.
352. Owo ye s'use e le jeun.
The hand that does not work must not eat.

353. O yangai s'omi gbe seii.
One who put gari in water and then puts it in the dew.
354. Satide yo n'abe Sande.
Saturday is showing under Sunday.
355. Se ale e je Seike i.
He who leaves a good legacy behind will be fondly remembered.
356. Se pe ghan i, e e pe go.
We assemble together in order to be wise and not be foolish i.e Two heads are better than one.
357. Se si jo en i, e m'oi l'oho.
We are walking together, nobody knows who is to be rich.
358. Sokoto ti nsise aran oko ghen gbe i.
The trousers that work for (the purchase of the expensive) "aran" woolly – (cloth) lives on the farm.
359. Soon ti pe i, e ti danon.
It is has only tilted but it has not poured away.
360. Suu e le s'okuta jina.
His patience can cook a stone till it becomes tender.
361. Su uu o n'oyo e s oo i mu
To be patient for a fixed number of days is not difficult.
362. S'use ghen e'anko je oun at' e'anko o d'ogbai.
He who works for animal to eat is equal to the animal.
363. Tete jeun di ke bai ke yei ma bo un.
Eat fast (quickly) so that "ke bai" "ke yei" will not meet it (make hay while the sun shines).
364. Tika toiye e si ye gbe ni nen.
Both wickedness and virtue will not go unrewarded.
365. To i ti da ma juya o we da ya majuya, 'fa i.
In order not to suffer, one suffers.
366. To i ti da ma a te o we da n'owo a'a onen i.
One perseveres in order not to be disgraced.
367. To i ti da ma a s'use oun e da s'use i.
In order not to become poor, that is why we work.
368. To i ti ooni oun e e da sun s'oja i.
One avoids defecating in the market because of the next market day.

369. Ubee e e se l' use, onen yo m'oiho ti d'open o wo se l' use i.
To begin an assignment is not as important as completing it.
370. Ubi e' an jo, lede meiki b' esi.
Resemblance is that of the animal, the pig's jaw resembles that of the bush pig.
371. U'en ajo egbe' un odon, ugbe' se kan ghen mu be' e i.
A journey of a thousand years begins with a step.
372. U fe ku fe e fe uun yo non i.
One looks for a lost thing by all means.
373. Ugben ii t' aka t' ose ghon ghinon aighon.
The snail says all his limbs are inside the shell.
374. Ugbogbo y' a mu gbe l' oan, eyin seko e e gbe si i.
The baton used in supporting a quarrelling man is usually left behind his house.
375. Uka owo onen o s' ayo i.
It is one's finger that satisfies one.
376. Uka yo ba a to si imun oun e mu roho ' mun i.
One uses the appropriate finger to clean the nostril ie put square peg in a square hole.
377. Uk' e de Dede, Dede d' eku.
Death is trapping Dede; Dede is trapping death.
378. Ukele a ko bu ee oun obe.
The first morsel does not complain of lack of soup.
379. Ukoto yi ota gwo s' ale oiho a' a e ghon mu di un i.
The gallows that the enemy has built, he seals it with his own head.
380. Uku e m' onen san, do ma po.
Death does not discriminate he kills whomever he wishes.
381. Uku yo ba fe i p' onen do ba s' onen ni fila da ka dupe.
The death that had wanted to kill one if it only removes one's cap one should be grateful.
382. Uli oba yo jo egwa ghon bu si un i.
The house of the king that is burnt adds beauty to it.
383. Uli yi a ba mu iton ma, eri e gwo un i.
The dew will demolish a house that is built with spittum.
384. U un e fe lo si Sokoto, a' i n' apo sokoto.
What we are going to look for in Sokoto is found in the pocket of our trousers.

385. U s'aju alejo e ti je 'gbese i, sugbon eyin e e son i.
One loans money in the presence of a visitor (guest) to entertain him but the payment will be made after his departure.
386. Usu yi Tandi gbe tandi o yin je i.
The yam planted by Tandi has been eaten by tandi.
387. Uun ya ba mu dede a'a s'use ghun o we pe n'owo'nen i.
Whatever one uses the whole body to work for is what lasts long in one's hand.
388. Uun ye ba a ti n'eun e e gban j'onen.
Whatever has no mouth can never be wiser than one.
389. Uun yi agbalagba ri n'oiho 'joko, omaiton le ri n'oiho uduo.
What an elder sees while sitting down, a child can never see it while standing up.
390. Uun yi iaye ba a gbe, oun e fu i.
It is whatever you plant that germinates.
391. Uun y'iaye ba a gbe oun ghen ka i, e le gbe 'gbado da ka koko.
It is whatever one sow he reaps; you can't plant corn and harvest cocoa.
392. Uun yi iaye ba a mu pitan, aiye ghen b'onen i.
Experience is the best teacher (whatever will become history, it meet one on earth).
393. Uun yi iaye ba a ba wa oun ghen ko'ju si i.
One faces his mission squarely to a logical conclusion.
394. Uun yo ba ti n'ubee e le s'ai n'open afi ola Olo'on.
Whatever has a beginning must surely have an end except the grace of God.
395. Uwo kan e le gb'eku gb'ejo.
One hole cannot accommodate a rat and a snake at the same time.
396. We de se Lobun i, iye se ahayo oba?
Are you Lobun, the favorite wife of the oba?
397. Wongun wongun e e s'eyin.
Good set of teeth is not by number.
398. Yen mi di se mu en si.
Praise me so that I can do more.
399. Yin non, e fe uun ye un.
Leave him; he is looking (searching) for something that smells.
400. Yin non ode a d'aghan bo.
Leave him alone, the outside (society) will teach him a lesson.

APPENDIX B

Roman	Yoruba	Ondo
A	A	A
B	B	B
C	D	D
D	E	E
E	E	E
F	F	F
G	G	G
H	GB	GB
I	H	GH
		GW
J	I	H
K	J	I
L	K	J
M	L	K
N	M	L
O	N	M
P	O	N
Q	O	O
R	P	O
S	R	P
T	S	R
U	S	S
V	T	S
W	U	T
X	W	U
Y	Y	W
Z		Y

ENGLISH, YORUBA AND ONDO ALPHABETS

SOURCE: Yoruba LI For Secondary School, Book One

By S.Y.Adewoyin.

APPENDIX C

NAMES AND OCCUPATIONS OF SOME OF THE INFORMANTS

NAME	OCCUPATION	AGE
Baba Genti	Farmer	102
High Chief Bayo Akinola	Lisa of Ondo Kingdom Retired Civil Servant now an Accomplished Businessman.	70
Madam O. Solape	Trader	65
Mr. O. Fagbesotu	Farmer	68
Mr. V. Ogungbeni	Civil Servant	53
Mr. O. Ogunye	Retired Civil Servant	74
Pa Joseph Akinmade	Church Catechist	93
Madam Felicia Akinmade	Farmer	87
Prince John Adeuga	Carpenter	63
Mrs. M. Olasanoye	Retired Banker	73
Mrs. Olanrewaju Akinruli	Trader	68
Mr. Christopher Omoniyi	Electrician	58
Chief O Akinlosotu	Civil Servant	60
Professor J. O. Ojoade	University Teacher	67
Professor C.T.O. Akinmade	University Teacher	58
Chief (Prof.) Ebun Olawoye	Odofin of Ondo Kingdom A retired University Teacher, now an accomplished Businessman.	72
Chief Dejo Akinfe	Yegbata of Ondo Kingdom A retired Banker, now an accomplished Businessman	71