

OLUWOLE COKER

VULGAR TYPOLOGIES, SOCIAL EQUILIBRIUM, AND
MORAL ETHICS IN YORUBA PROVERBS

Abstract: Proverbs are essential tools of elucidating and expounding social issues. They express the innate principles and ethics of any given society. Among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria, proverbs occupy a strategic place among other orature forms, as the warehouse of indigenous knowledge. This paper examines the representation of vulgarism in Yoruba culture by analyzing twenty-five purposively selected proverbs sourced mainly from the researcher's collections as a paremiographer and as a member of the Yoruba ethnic and linguistic group, as well as from existing secondary sources. The selected proverbs are chosen because they harp on the act of sex and direct reference to coition or the sexual organs. Hence, vulgar archetypes are examples of didactic aesthetics, moral education and sexuality consciousness among the Yoruba, in a unique way.

Keywords: African, culture, didacticism, education, ethics, morality, obscenity, proverbs, (sex)uality, society, vulgarism, Yoruba

Introduction

Sexuality has been addressed by several scholars of African studies generally and Yoruba studies in particular. There seems to be a consensus as to the fact that, unlike western societies, the Yoruba of Western Nigeria are diplomatic and polite when the issue of human sexuality is concerned. As a society essentially driven by oral tradition in view of the absence of written tradition, several oral forms have been identified as sites for expressions for gender related issues generally. However, there is a robust body of scholarship on the presence of vulgar African proverbs in general, and Yoruba proverbs in particular. Such studies include Olajubu (1972) and Ojoade (1983). While the studies underscore the significance of the vulgar and sexual proverbs in Yoruba culture, they actually did not classify the proverbs along functional paradigms. Recent studies on the subject of vulgarism in Yoruba proverbs have been concerned with the relationship between the sexual

expressions and gender perception among the Yoruba on the one hand, and the linguistic cum discourse significance of the same, on the other (Asiyanbola, 2007; Fakoya, 2007; Oloruntoba-Oju, 2011). Fakoya (2007) further suggests that Yoruba sexual proverbs signpost the disposition of the fact that the Yoruba associate with disseminating sexuality education. Though Yusuf (1996; 1996) acknowledges the presence of these vulgar archetypes, his studies are mainly concerned with sexist perceptions and misogynous tendencies of the sexual expressions. Also, Yusuf and Methangwane (2003) as well as Amuyunzu-Nyamongo M *et al* (2005) make a case for the relationship between vulgar expressions and the penetration of social vices as well as the continued spread of HIV/AIDS in most African indigenous societies. Hence, this study reveals the paradoxical ethical values of this corpus and also demonstrates their continued relevance in contemporary society, thereby filling a critical lacuna identified in existing scholarship.

African proverbs, according to Makinde (1986: 2) , “being accumulated treasure, serve as a way of looking at things differently, as they draw on observations, knowledge, and the wisdom of ancestors who use short, witty phrases that could be transmitted from generation to generation”. With this in mind, an understanding of the centrality of proverbs as purveyors of indigenous epistemology is clear. It is essential to cast another look at these propositions, with a view to locating the presence of vulgarism among the Yoruba, as being quintessential to the socio-epistemological and ethical constructs of the larger issue of sexuality. It should be noted that while proverbs with sexual tones are fairly common, the vulgar types are not common as everyday conversational features. The reason for this lies in the Yoruba perception of sex as sacred and dignifying, which is central to blissful family life and humanistic continuities and genealogical survival. Since the Yoruba hardly approve of everyday use of these types of proverbs, vulgar proverbs therefore become scarce and are only come across when there is a need to drum home strong moral and ethical messages.

Therefore, vulgarism in Yoruba proverbs is necessitated by circumstantial beckoning and expediency. In consonance with Barber’s (1987:3) observation, “Art forms characteristically condense experience and are expressive on different levels. We thus get the opportunity to see refracted the complexity and ambiguity

of real thought in practice, not artificially extrapolated". In effect, vulgarity comes across as a device of reconstructing human experience in Yoruba proverbs, and as a tool for morality and didacticism.

The corpus of vulgar proverbs that constitute the data in this study clearly and directly express human sexuality and also evince coital relationships between male and female gender. They are similar to Ojoade's (1983:20) classifications of obscenity especially in the way they assist the Yoruba in "looking for the most appropriate vehicle in conveying a message ... merely aiming at directness, frankness and starkness". In other words, the notion of vulgarism is culture specific, as some ideas are metaphorically more pungent than the others.

The Nature of Proverbs

The place of proverbs in verbal communication is well-researched. Several definitions have clearly established proverbs as an important repository of knowledge which seeks to affirm the truth of existence, while serving a social end (Egblewogbe, 1980; Mieder, 1989 [qtd. in Yusuf, 1997]; Yusuf, 1997). The importance of proverbs as a window of probing existential or universal truths therefore lies in their intrinsic capacity for conveying well-thought ideas and capturing the essence of knowledge dissemination. Among Africans particularly, proverbs occupy a strategic position given the pre-literate nature of indigenous African societies. In particular, among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria, proverbs are regarded as a cherished form through which the worldview, philosophy, and knowledge transfer across generation lie. The use of proverbs among the Yoruba, especially among elders, in everyday discourse ensures the sustenance, understanding and dissemination of traditional values.

It is within this broad construct of proverbs serving as window to indigenous epistemology that this study is located. The fact that there is a need to understand the Yoruba concept of nudity beyond its social tag of immorality is therefore the motivation for this study. The study hinges its argument on the fact that, as a people who value social order and encourage moral ethical conducts, the presence of vulgar typologies in a proverbial corpus is not likely to be an isolated case of cultural contradiction. Hence, in this study, the value of vulgar proverbs and presence of obscene imagery in

proverbs are classified along the utilitarian values of such. This, of course, suggests a paradoxical relationship but nevertheless, the proverbs either as sources of moral and didactic directions, or as a window of understanding sexuality consciousness and sex education, clearly justify their strategic deployments. This is in line with Olatunji's (1984) observation about African proverbs being social charters used to praise what the society considers to be virtues and to condemn bad practices.

“The Naked Truth”

This study seeks to establish the value of vulgar Yoruba proverbs in relation to the achievement of public order and enshrinement of positive ethical regimes in indigenous Yoruba society. The study attempts to foreground the expediency and strategic essence of vulgarism as a paradox for ethical standards and as site for enhancement of social normalcy. This is against the backdrop that previous studies have not focused exclusively on the potential of vulgarism as catalyst for positive value creation. Thus, vulgarism is not indicative of moral perversion or sexual extremity, but a catalyst for deepening sexuality consciousness among the Yoruba.

Contestations and theorizing on the subject of sexualities are diverse and multidimensional. This is understandable given the importance of human sexualities to the global concern on AIDS and HIV/AIDS (Caldwell, J. C. et al, 1989; Yusuf & Methangwane, 2003). While human sexuality is an imperative that cannot be ignored, it is also symbolic along the Freudian perspective. However, the question of a distinct African sexuality has been largely contested. This is against the backdrop of the culturally-bound understanding of the issues by scholars of African studies (Olajubu, 1993). Viewed from the perspective of the emotional or sensual representations, this paper aligns with African scholars that sexuality is domiciled and conditioned in the marriage institution in Africa. Beyond these propositions, many anthropologists have confirmed the existence of queer sexualities in many indigenous African societies and these are well documented (Murray, 2011).

This study however bases its interrogation on the vulgar trope within the position that, in Yoruba culture, sex and sexuality is an appendage of marriage (Lawuyi, 1987; Alaba, 2004). Scholars have also suggested that the gender theorizings lack the capacity

to confer a sexuality epistemology on Africa, denouncing such as borrowed and heavily Western (Oloruntoba-Oju, 2011; Bakare and Yusuf, 2003).

Therefore, one is guided by the culture-specific principles which place sexualities in Yoruba culture within the marriage institution, and the fact that, sex, though fundamental, is culturally defined among the Yoruba. This however does not imply that the Yoruba culture is bereft of cultural spaces and productions where the female gender and their male folk engage in sexual discourses or erotic poetry, given the examples of Oke-Ibadan festival (Salawu, 2011) and other cultural sites of erotic and sexual representations like nuptial poetry and popular music. In fact, according to Ajibade (2005: 104):

Repressed emotional feelings that border on the sexual is reserved until the time of marriage, during which the women have the poetic license to express their sexual desires and emotional feelings. They can mention the sexual organs of both male and female without any restriction. They can also talk about sexual intercourse without any form of social sanction.

The above not only clearly shows that not only are vulgar expressions well represented in Yoruba orature, they are accorded a special place within the worldview. After all, the marriage institution which is the domain of sex places emphases on the same as legitimate and indispensable. It therefore means that sex, and by extension, vulgarism, does not derive its legitimacy from marriage, but from the intrinsic nature of human beings which craves and derives maximum pleasure in sex.

In the light of the foregoing, the next section is devoted to the analyses of twenty-five purposively selected proverbs which instantiate vulgar typologies, exhibiting obscenities and sexual imageries. These proverbs are analyzed based on their categorizations at ensuring moral sanity and social equilibrium on the one hand, and sex/sexuality consciousness and education, on the other.

Analyses

This research is based on an analysis of twenty-five purposively-selected sexually explicit Yoruba proverbs and sayings. The proverbs are drawn from primary and secondary sources. The

primary sources of the proverbs are the researchers' own collections of Yoruba proverbs and familiarity as an adept user of proverbs while the secondary sources are from existing collections such as Owomoyela (1973), Ojoade (1983), and Sheba (2009). The proverbs are translated from Yoruba to English and a contextual analysis of the proverbs is undertaken. The study situates the analysis on the theoretical presumption that hitherto the relationship between vulgar proverbs and sexuality discourse among the Yoruba have been largely confined to extended metaphors within the cosmology, while the attention seems not to have been on the utility value of vulgar archetypes of didactic and sexuality education and consciousness types.

Didactic Corpus

It is indubitable that the presence of sex-related constructions is strategic though the mention of sex, especially the vulgar types, elicits offensive reactions from the public. Actually, in everyday discourse, such are not expected as they are seen to violate the law of decency and decorum. However, when such are employed, they seek to correct social vices and serve moral ends. After all, sex is an important anvil which ensures existential continuity on the one hand, and is an important avenue for self-actualization and pleasure, on the other. To support this further is the fact that in Africa, "sex is a worldly activity like work or eating and drinking" (Caldwell et al., 1989: 203).

- 1) *Eni to tori obo kan ku, igba o gun orii re*
(Whoever kills himself because of one vagina, two hundred would trample on his grave)
- 2) *Bi obo ba baje, ti olobo lo n da*
(When the vagina is spoilt, it becomes the problem of the owner)
- 3) *Oju oloko ni obo ti niyi, apoti loninkan n fi ti e se*
(It is the penis that values the vagina, to the woman, it is a mere seat)
- 4) *Omode fi ikanju sun oorun, obodi opo seyin*
(A young child rushes sex, the vagina ends up wasting)

- 5) *Asese-dobo majesin, o n ye ori oko wo lona oko*
(When a man first fucks, he goes to examine the tip of his penis on the way to a farm)

In the examples above, several didactic lessons are expressed. While (1) advocates the need for caution in human aspiration, the importance of moral chastity is advocated in (2). Proverb (3) expresses the ephemeral nature of life as it communizes the female private organ, while the moral codes of patience and existential emptiness are emphasized in (4) and (5). These show that the use of these vulgar expressions does not in any way point to any indecent or foul use of language; rather they are deployed with a view to putting across moral messages. Of course, to cite Lawuyi (1987: 227):

To the Yoruba – that is speaking of the generality – sexual urge and need is as natural as any of the other living requirements such as food and breathing. Sexual relation between men and women is not tabooed.

In addition to the above, the Yoruba also employ vulgar proverbs to deepen the need to appreciate nature or broadly speaking, understand human biological constitution in a very clear and explicit way. Below are examples:

- 6) *Ibi ti oko eni bam o, ni a n do aya eni*
(One fucks one's wife within the capacity of his penis)
- 7) *Won fun e ni obo do, o ni ko nirun, se obo ni o fe do ni abi irun?*
(You are given a vagina, you are complaining that it is not hairy, do you want to fuck vagina or hair?)
- 8) *Omode ti o n gunmu ti inu e dun, o gbagbe pe nnkan ti o maa le ohun kuro ni ile baba ohun ni ohunrawo le*
(A child is excited that she has started growing breasts, she forgets that that is the beginning of her eventual sentence from her father's life)
- 9) *Adunmadeeke, oyin popotan, oun ti baba n je ti ko gbodo fun omo je.*
(Sweet experience not felt in the cheeks, something the father cannot share with the son)

- 10) *Aje kan ko le gboju titi, ko yo ido idi e je*
 (No matter how wicked a witch is, she cannot descend on
 her own clitoris)

The above proverbs indicate a myriad of issues that are intrinsically not related to the act of sex. Rather, they are extended metaphors with underlining meanings which are germane for the continued sustenance of the society. For instance, the essence of human physiognomy, and anatomical imperatives are enshrined in (6), (7), (8), and (10) with direct references to the reality of puberty in (7) and (8), while (10) explains in a vulgar way, the structure of the female urino-genital system which makes it impossible for the clitoris to be dismembered. This, in a way, contradicts the claim of Olajubu (1972:1) that,

To the Yoruba, sex has a sacred function. It is regarded as a solemn act that should be performed with all modesty and secrecy. The sexual organs are not things to joke about or mention loosely. It is *isokuso* ("indecent talk") to mention them casually or with the intention of arousing immoral sexual feelings. Children, in particular, are strictly forbidden from playing with or talking about sex or playing with or talking about the sex organs. Such talk would be regarded as *isokuso*, and such act *isekuse* (indecent act).

In other words, the use of these proverbs explicates the reality of human physiology. Also, proverbs (6), (8), and (9) orchestrate the importance of marriage as a revered institution while (9) particularly explains the importance of sex on the one hand, and the disposition of the Yoruba to immorality or incest tendencies on the other. The fact is that these proverbs function in extra-literary ways to underscore basic fundamental issues in the society.

Vulgarity is also used among the Yoruba to paint scenarios in a vivid way that the message would not be lost on the listener. While the direct reference to the act of coition may be overbearing, the discernment of the crux of the matter is always a given. The following examples can be considered:

- 11) *Ma do mi, ma do iyale mi, obo eni laa fowo mu*
 (In a polygamous home, there can never be an agreement
 on sexual abstinence among rivals)

- 12) *Bi oloko nla ba n ban i sun, gbingbin laa gbin*
(When a man with a big penis is fucking one, it is better to groan)
- 13) *Loju odoko, bii ko si wa lewe*
(To the adulterous, she wants to remain ever young)
- 14) *Atanni do ki i tan ni do ju eekan soso lo*
(You can only trick someone to have sex once)
- 15) *Asewo ti o baa maa kole, obo e a jin*
(If a prostitute wants to build a house through prostitution, her vagina would be deep)

From the above, it could be deduced that vulgar proverbs add value to life and contribute immensely to the restoration of order and maintenance of social equilibrium. Though they may sound sarcastic, they express self-evident truths about human life. The need for alertness as to one's situation is metaphorically conveyed in proverb (14). Also, the fact that prostitution is considered an immoral self-destructive engagement comes across clearly in proverbs (13) and (15). Proverb (11) shows the unpredictability or unreliable nature of humans through the use of the polygamy allusion depicting the need for anyone not to be over-dependent on human assurances. Proverbs (12) and (15) foreground the need for tolerance and enduring spirit as human tribulations do not last forever.

In all, proverbs 1-15 exemplify the appreciation of human complexities and situations and also express the value of vulgar proverbs in helping to shape morality and drawing attention to acts of social pervasion. The obscene sexual contents and references are a strategy of literary foregrounding by attempting to paradoxically uncovering underlying truths in the proverbs.

Sex Education and Sexuality Consciousness

Sexuality among the Yoruba is an important factor of self-awareness, and identity formation and self-realization. In several Yoruba art forms, the knowledge of self is made clear through a reference not just to gender stereotypes, but also that which is associated with feminine attributes and masculinity. Several vulgar proverbs therefore serve as sites for the expression of the impera-

tives of sexuality consciousness and sex education. The following examples are illustrative:

- 16) *Bi oko ba ri obo, a po t i enu e*
(When the vagina sights the penis, it emits whatever is in its mouth)
- 17) *A ki i loyun sinu, ka fi obo tore*
(One does not give out one's vagina during pregnancy)
- 18) *Toko-tobo lo n sise oko Ido*
(Both the vagina and the penis should work together for success on Ido's farm). (Asiyanbola, 2007: 76)
- 19) *Obo ni ohun gbogbo loun le fi jeri oko, sugbon bi ti obo ko*
(Vagina says it can vouch for the penis in everything but not when it comes to the matter of Vagina) (Sheba, 2009, quoted by Oloruntoba-Oju, 2009: 20)
- 20) "*Ko moju, ko mora, bi oloko nla*"
(He is as shameless as a man with a big penis)

In the above, proverbs (16) and (17) are sources of sex education graciously passed across to express certain truths in relation to female gynaecology on the importance of the vagina as the outlet for sex and child bearing towards ensuring procreation. Also, proverb (16) captures the idea of foreplay or sensation and, of course, forms of sensation or ejaculation during sex. The need for cooperation is advocated, between both genders for social harmony in (18), affirming the binary theory of complementarity among the Yoruba (Ilesanmi, 2004). The personification present in (19) is a way of eulogizing maleness or male-power. An interesting dimension to sexuality consciousness or sex education is the way proverb (20) expresses the myth surrounding the size of male genitalia as a window towards lampooning male promiscuity.

The point deducible from the above is that, beyond their so-called offensive nature and obscene contents, vulgar proverbs are indeed creative pathways of enshrining sex education and sexual consciousness. The references to biological processes and truisms attest to the extra-literary value of the proverbs, especially as a source of sexuality education complementing formal pedagogical situations. Therefore, once the context of use is appropriate, then

the vulgar proverbs can be better appreciated. As Fakoya (2007: 5) rightly observes:

It may seem as if proverbs which contain mentions of sex organs are not permitted in much Yorùbá discourse. No, this is not true by any means. Adults are generally adept at using such expressions – but not without corresponding situational constraints.

There are also several expressions among witty sayings among the Yoruba which possess vulgar attributes. For instance, a man regarded as “*ogbori obo jeje*” (one who vouches during intercourse), is not a deliberate vulgar expression, but rather a call to discipline and self-control. Also, a female counterpart regarded as “*olobo ko mo o ko*” (one whose vagina does not know how to say no), also shows the disposition towards promiscuity. To consider someone *olobo werepe* (someone with itchy vagina) or *oloko doro* (someone with odd penis) in everyday discourse among the Yoruba clearly indicate the fact that, the society abhors indecent sexual conduct. Even in modern day Yoruba society, there are numerous admonitions such as:

- 21) *kinikan lo n gbeyin ma domi niso*
(Continue fucking me must result in something)
- 22) *omo to bam o owo gba, a mo oko do*
(If a girl knows how to collect money, she should be prepared for sex)
- 23) *asunkaka ki I gba ofe*
(When someone agrees to sex, it is usually not for free)
- 24) *isiro loko dido*
(Adultery carries a cost)
- 25) *melo la fe do ninu obo, ti a o ni ki ile ma mo*
(No matter how long you last while fucking the vagina remains inexhaustible)

In effect, the use of these expressions remains relevant in sounding moral caveats and ensuring discipline and ethical conducts, especially among the youth generation. Hence, the value of vulgar proverbs and obscene expressions lies in the way they can be seen as representing naked truth among the attitude of the Yoruba. This

clearly indicates that the proverbial sayings exude capacity to foreground the need to stamp out sexual immorality.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the deployment of vulgar expressions in Yoruba proverbs is an age-long strategy of maintaining social equilibrium and enforcing morality. The sampled vulgar proverbs, though may come across as vulgar on the surface level of meaning, they are indicative of a deeper level of signification directed at guiding the society and creating moral templates from everyday experience that people can easily relate to. They therefore do not represent any obscene extremity among the Yoruba people. Rather, they are employed with a view to expounding the importance the Yoruba accord sex, human genitalia, the coital act of sex and lovemaking as ingredients of sustaining life and regeneration. This implies that Yoruba sexuality does not exist primarily for idyllic fantasies but it is geared towards ensuring continuity and sanity, especially through procreation. This is in agreement with the view expressed by Chege (1993: 186) that sex is,

the channel through which individual and community life was renewed and also the conduit for mystical good and ill. It was always a highly charged act, believed to pollute as well as capable of cleansing pollution. The same act thus contained both potential goodness and danger, depending on the circumstances.

In other words, this study is inclined towards the didactic and functional potentials of the isolated vulgar proverbs. This study draws its significance from the fact that the selected proverbs are direct renditions of sexual imagery, provoking coital experiences explicitly along the way. Unlike previous attention by scholars like Dare (2005) to downplay the presence and pronounced imagery of sex and sexual relations, the study extends the submissions of Olajubu (1973) by not just itemizing vulgar proverbs, but also by foregrounding vulgarism as a vehicle for promoting social equilibrium and ethical principles.

This study offers an inspiring perspective to African sexuality discourse by contending that the presence of vulgar typologies indicates the notions of sexuality among the Yoruba people as being an imperative that should exist in the subconscious, and ulti-

mately guiding the associated principles of sexual relationships. Furthermore, there is also a subtle element of pedagogical significance given the relevance of this corpus to sex and sexuality education. This departs from earlier studies of Yoruba proverbs that are holistic considerations of sexualities mainly within the larger picture of gender relations and social constructions of assumed ethical dictates.

The presence of vulgar typologies in Yoruba sexual proverbs enables a balanced and panoramic understanding of issues of sex, especially in marriage, which interestingly is polygamous among the Yoruba. As pointed out by Ojoade (1983: 12):

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 words.

The foregoing is akin to what Osofisan (2009: 1) refers to as "full disclosure and unrestrained loquacity in post-military Nigerian literature". To differ from Salawu's (2011: 39) declaration that, "in the Yoruba culture, and presumably in most other cultures of Africa, open discussion of sex and its sensation by women is an anathema". Vulgarism thus is seen to function in the interplay of ethical conduct, peaceful co-existence and moral obligations among partners. This explains why "queer sexualities" like homosexuality, lesbianism, gay culture and incest are hardly represented in Yoruba sexual metaphors. (Oloruntoba-Oju, 2011). Thus, the question of sexuality in Yoruba culture, as espoused in the cultural productions, is a product of social-cultural definition, which is domiciled in indigenous approach to the question of morality and ethical conducts. Hence, vulgar typologies exist, not to indicate any inclination to indecency, but to demonstrate that sexually explicit expressions can also serve multifarious ends. This is clearly evident in the universality of their propositions at metaphorical and epistemological levels.

The overall proposition obviously is towards an epistemology of African sexuality which is outside the purview of this paper. However, given the evidences gleaned from the selected proverbs, it is indubitable that the Yoruba, like most cultures of the world, parade an understanding of human sexuality. In essence, the sensi-

tive nature of verbal expressions link sexuality and instantiate that there is a culturally-bound configuration of sensualities, eroticism, and effusions of coition-related metaphors. It is indeed worthwhile to situate the imperatives of a domesticated sexuality construct within the overall thematic issue of African sexualities which is fast gaining attention in critical discourse. Thus, an understanding of the notion of vulgarity in African verbal culture, exemplified in this study with Yoruba proverbs, offers viable insight on the all-important subject of sexuality in Africa. In particular is its relevance to the engagement of such issues as HIV/AIDS, Rape, Female Genital Mutilation, and the like. Hence, the claim by Dare (2005: 90) that “not only is sex a subject severely restricted in public discourse, lexical choices in direct reference to sex and sexual organs are allowed to feature only in periphrastic and euphemistic terms”, hardly represents an objective assessment of the disposition of the Yoruba in this connection. This is very much unlike Alaba (2004: 9) who acknowledges the legitimacy of vulgar typologies by declaring that “occasionally, of course, such as in certain festival chants and songs and in proverbs or aphorisms what is called obscene language is employed for literary/aesthetic effects”.

The study contends that vulgarity in Yoruba verbal culture exists to serve various purposes, some of which have been enumerated. Hence, attempts at expunging the so-called obscene or vulgar stereotypes would amount to undermining an inclusive or holistic study of folklore. Such exclusions, which could take forms of euphemism or total expunging, results in a folklore study that makes, as Berry (1961: 2) puts it, “our records not nearly so representative as they might have been”.

Acknowledgements:

The manuscript of this paper was completed during my Residency for the 2014 AHP/ACLS Postdoctoral Fellowship at the West African Research Centre, Dakar, Senegal. I express my appreciation to both the Centre and the American Council for Learned Societies for the Fellowship Award. I also thank Drs. Adeyemi Adegoju and Adeniyi Osunbade for their insightful comments.

References:

- Amuyunzu-Nyamongo, M. et al. *Qualitative Evidence on Adolescents' Views on Sexual and Reproductive Health in Sub-Saharan Africa, Occasional Report*. 16. New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2005.
- Ajibade, Olusola. "Is There No Man with Penis in this Land? Eroticism and Performance in Yoruba Nuptial Songs". *Africa Study Monographs*, 26.2 (2005). 99-113.
- Alaba, Adegboyega. "Understanding Sexuality in the Yoruba Culture" *Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series*. Lagos: Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre, 2004.
- Asiyanbola, Akinola. "A Syntactic and Semiotic Analysis of Some Yoruba Sexist Proverbs in English Translation: Need for Gender Balance". *Nebula*, 4.3 (2007). 70-83.
- Barber, Karin. "Popular Arts in Africa". *African Studies Review*, 30.3 (1987). 1-78.
- Berry, *Spoken Art in West Africa*. London: School of Oriented and African Studies, University of London, 1961.
- Caldwell, J.C., Caldwell P., and Quiggin. "The Social Context of AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa". *Population and Development Review*, 15 (1989). 185-234.
- Chege, J. *The Politics of Gender and Fertility Regulation in Kenya: A Case Study of the Igembe*. Diss. Lancaster University, 1993.
- Dare, Samson "Sexual Discourse in Niyi Osundare's Poetry: A Sociolinguistic Reading". *African Study Monographs*, 26.2 (2005). 89-97.
- Egblewogbe, Eustace Yawo. "The Structure and Functions of Proverbs in African Societies". *Social Education*, 44 (1980). 516-518.
- Haram, L. "Prostitutes" or Modern Women? Negotiating Respectability in Northern Tanzania". *Rethinking Sexualities in Africa*, edited by S. Arnfred. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2004. 211-232.
- Helle-Valle, Jo. "Understanding Sexuality in Africa: Diversity and Contextualised Dividuality". *Rethinking Sexualities in Africa*, edited by S. Arnfred. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2004. 195-210.
- Ilesanmi, T.M. *Yoruba Orature and Literature: A Cultural Analysis*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2004.
- Fakoya, Adeleke. "Sexually-grounded Proverbs and Discourse Relevance: Insights from Yorùbá". *California Linguistic Notes*, 32.2 (2007). 1-29.
- Lawuyi, Olatunde. "Ethnic Identity and Sex: Stereotyping as Adaptive Strategy among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria". *Anthropos*, 82.1-3 (1987). 226-232.
- Makinde, Olu. "Cultural Resources for Integrated Counseling in Nigeria". Paper presented at a Conference in University of Ilorin, Nigeria, 1986.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. *Love: Proverbs of the Heart*. Shelburne, Vermont: The New England Press, 1989.
- Murray, S.O. *Homosexualities*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Ojoade, J. "African Sexual Proverbs. Some Yoruba Examples". *Folklore*, 94.2 (1983). 201-213.
- Olatunji, Olatunde. *Features of Yoruba Oral Poetry*. Ibadan, UPL, 1984.

- Olajubu Oludare. "References to Sex in Yoruba Oral Literature". *The Journal of American Folklore*, 85.336 (1972). 152-166.
- Olayinka, Bolaji Olukemi. "Proverbs: Issues of Yoruba Femininity from a Feminist Hermeneutical Perspective". *Embracing the Baobab Tree: The African Proverb in the 21st Century*, edited by Willem Saayman. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1997. 214-224.
- Oloruntoba-Oju, Taiwo. "A Name My Mother did not Call Me: Queer Contestations in African Sexualities". ECAS 4, Uppsala, Sweden, June 14-18, 2011. Accessed July 13, 2014 from <http://www.nai.uu.se/ecas-4/.../Taiwo%20Oloruntoba-Oju%2020Fullpaper.pdf>
- Osofisan, Femi. "Wounded Eros and Scintillated Cupid: Sensuality and the Future of Nigerian Literature in the Post-military Era". *African Literature and Development in the Twenty-first century: Proceedings of Ezenwa-Ohaeto International Memorial Conference*. Owerri: Living Flames Resources, 2009.
- Owomoyela, Oyekan. "The Sociology of Sex and Crudity in Yoruba Proverbs". *Proverbium*, 20 (1972). 751-758.
- Owomoyela, Oyekan. *A Ki i. Yoruba Proscriptive and Prescriptive Proverbs*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1988.
- Owomoyela, Oyekan. *Yoruba Proverbs*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.
- Salawu, Abiodun. "Breaking the Culture of Mute Sensation: Female Expression of Power in Sexual Contest with Men in Yoruba Newspapers". *Journal of Social Science*, 23.1 (2011). 39-51.
- Sheba, Olaide. *Yoruba Proverbs with Feminine Lexis*. Ibadan: Spectrum, 2009.
- Yusuf, Yisa. "English and Yoruba Proverbs and the Spiritual Denigration of Women" *Research in Yoruba Language and Literature*, 8 (1996). 1-8.
- Yusuf, Yisa. "The Sexist Correlation of Women with the Non-Human in English and Yoruba Proverbs". *De Proverbio*, 3.1, (1997).
- Yusuf, Yisa. "Rape-Related English and Yoruba Proverbs." *Women and Language*, 21.2 (1998). 39-42.
- Yusuf, Yisa, and Methangwane, Joyce. "Proverbs and HIV / AIDS". *Proverbium*, 20 (2003). 407-422.

Oluwole Coker
 Department of English
 Obafemi Awolowo University
 Ile-Ife,
 Nigeria
 E-mail: wole4u@gmail.com, ocoker@oauife.edu.ng