

# **INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: EFFECTS OF AFRICAN PROVERBS ON PEACE MAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION.**

***MR AKANO MATHEW KAYODE  
MRS OLADIJI TOLULOPE. O  
MR EGBELEYE SUNDAY ALANI***

DEPT OF GENERAL STUDIES  
THE POLYTECHNIC, IBADAN.

## **Abstract**

Conflicts are natural phenomena which are found in any dynamic society. The African continent is enmeshed in series of social crises and violent conflicts such as inter-ethnic clashes, ethno-religious conflicts, political unrest, insurgency and terrorism, and so on. The paper highlights the role and use of proverbial expressions as a method of indigenous knowledge in the resolution of social conflicts among Africans. Proverbs are integral part of communication and language uttered skillfully by conflict mediators to reconcile warring parties. Drawing on African proverbs that touch on conflict resolution strategies, the paper analyses the linguistic and persuasive effects of proverbs in resolving and managing peace, resolving conflict and ensuring psychological wellbeing of the actors in conflict. This is achieved through a content analysis of randomly selected proverbs across African continent. The paper argues that proverbs are useful in indigenous arbitration, conflict resolution, and in making people to live peacefully with one another. The paper concludes that proverbs are indeed vital in relationship management and possess socializing and enduring values for peaceful co-existence. It avers that anybody with a good understanding of proverbs and their implications for peaceful coexistence would appreciate conflicts as an intricate part of existence and harmonious living.

**Keywords:** Proverbs, Yoruba, indigenous arbitration, conflict resolution.

## **Introduction**

Pre-colonial African society was largely traditional and preliterate but had political, social and economic structures, social control mechanisms, idea of law, sense of justice and fair play, and broad judicial system comprising adjudicative, arbitative and mediative methods of conflict resolution that was not really documented. During colonialism, according to Olaoba (2001), the traditional legal system and the custom on which it was built was highly influenced by colonial imported laws and its institutions had to pass through the tests of validity. The result of the so-called validity tests is that so many traditional institutions for dispute resolution were outlawed, restructured or functionally and operationally reorganized. All the allegations, imputations and insinuations of barbarism and savagery on customary law were meant to discredit and dislodge it, and substitute it with the English types. Today, from a purely numerical view-point, the preponderance of customary law over statute and English law is not in doubt.

One of the fundamental challenges that have confronted man in social history is that of the inevitability of conflict and disagreement in human relations. The reality posed by the challenge of conflict has more often than not, resulted into social problems, especially, when such conflicts are not well and properly managed before degenerating into violent confrontations. In the opinion of Ojelabi (2013), history is replete with records of conflicts

and armed conflicts at various strata of human relations. Whether at the inter-personal, intergroup, intra-group, intra-national or international arenas, conflicts have been found recurring in social relations. Nigeria in recent past has witnessed wanton wave of bloody conflicts, which had taken millions of innocent lives, and other inestimable valuables materials. Millions of people are currently displaced and suddenly turned refugees. Violent conflicts in Nigeria (and anywhere else in the world) have disastrous consequences on social stability, peace, development and harmonious human existence. For these and other related reasons, scholastic concerns have been high in Nigeria (like else where) in understudying the origins, nature, rate, causes and effects of conflicts, as well as understanding the efficient modes of resolving conflict and engendering peace in the society.

In view of the sensitive nature of the issues of conflict, scholastic concerns have been multidisciplinary in approach, vis-à-vis legal, political, economical, diplomatic, sociological, historical and statistical approaches. In all these accounts, the focus has been on conflict resolution methods and peace studies theories while the area of the achievement of justice in such methods and theories are neglected. The conclusions stressed by Ojelabi (2013) in these approaches have for the most part, been on the need for political restructuring, promoting political, economic and corporate governance, respect for and observance of human rights, peace education, promoting dialogue, peace negotiations and agreement, stopping of proliferation of arms and granting of amnesty, etc. The point is that these approaches have not sufficiently proved effective in reducing the upsurge of violence and conflicts on the continent and not to talk of the communities. There is therefore, the need for us to examine the use of proverbs in indigenous methods of arbitration in the administration of justice in Africa, in view of the disastrous consequences, which violent conflicts have had on social stability and human existence in Africa..

### **Concept of African proverbs**

A proverb is a phrase, wise - saying, sentence, statement or expression of the folk which contains above all, wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons and advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation. Proverb is also seen as a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphysical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation. (Olatunji, 1984) Proverbs is equally regarded as the horse which can carry one swiftly to the discovery of ideal. Proverbs as wise - sayings may sometimes give an indication of the moral ideas underlying the peoples' attitudes. The repetition of stories, proverbs and traditional saying, it is said, may be an integral element of culture, corresponding among illiterate people to literature among the literates (Taylor, A., 2003). There may as well be educational or a form of intellectual recreation. It has differently been construed to mean a popular saying among people, which is meant to advice, teach or warn. Proverbs gives us the insight into scientific expression of the Africans and then become very powerful weapons for creative knowledge and critical reasoning. It unites, builds and strengthens the epistemic economy of the Africans and contributed so much to the indigenous methods of arbitration and conflict resolution.

### **Concept of Indigenous arbitration**

Indigenous arbitration had been one of the significant methods of resolving conflict in traditional African societies. It has been adjudged a unique way of producing an arbiter who reached out to special decisions which the parties to the conflict must submit themselves to. Arbitration also produced the venue from where such decisions were arrived at and executed. Thus, there had been arbitral courts, tribunal and proceedings in African society through the ages. The operational model of arbitration had been couched in contentment of the African

authorities, condescending interest of the parties to the conflict (the disputants) and the working schemes of the African customs and norms, which we must understand, gave arbitration an unconditional backing and implementation in the process of conflict resolution.

**Arbitration** can be simply defined as the enabling will and power to decide and determine a course of action quite instrumental to decision making. The level of reaching out to a decisive and prompt action characterized arbitration. This simple definition will enable us to understand Africa's will-power to engage in the absolute control of conflict resolution in their environment. Such a will-power must be understood by us to generate a process leading to development in the society. Arbitration functioned well in traditional African societies. The process of arbitration in Africa deferred markedly from those of the western societies as the differences were unfolded in the previous discussion.

**Indigenous arbitration** method had produced great levels of trust, confidence and mutual understanding in traditional African societies. As the judges, arbiters or arbitrators had lived up to their expectation of being impartial and had interpreted the customs and norms creditably suitable to issues of conflict handled in the arbitral proceedings. The juristic tradition anchored on arbitration had made it possible to yield positive results. The implementation of the arbitral decisions of the arbitrage practically fitted into the dynamics of cultural heritage, which had been bequeathed to the Africans by their forebears. **Indigenous arbitration**, therefore, had a long history of existence in theory and practice in pre-colonial African societies.

It can be summarized upon reasonable considerations of the features of arbitration in pre-colonial African societies that:

- It engaged the attention of the sage and the supernatural in African setting or environment,
- The arbitrators relied heavily on the dictates of the supernatural and tradition,
- The decisions agreed upon must be satisfactory to the parties in conflict and must be so popularly acclaimed to the populace,
- The decisions were flexible and had human face implementation; and
- The arbitral venue was conducive enough to allow for the interplay of the spiritual elements credited to influencing positive decisions.

Obviously, the flexibility thesis and the non-formal approach to the arbitrage usually made the decisions of the arbitrators quite acceptable and worthwhile in the traditional African societies. The decisions reached and concluded by the arbitrators in arbitral proceedings were not done in isolation of the supernatural that monitored, controlled and influenced such decisions. The level of justice with which the decisions were coached was, therefore, beyond man's or human's efforts. They were divinely derived and implemented on the axis of divine order.

### **African indigenous Mechanisms for Conflict Management**

Before the advent of slave trade and colonialism, African societies had well-established mechanisms for conflict management, peace-making; peace education, peace building, conflict monitoring and conflict prevention. These institutions and methods were effective and highly respected and their decisions binding on all the parties concerned. The methods were relatively informal and thus, less intimidating. Those who used them were also more at ease in a familiar environment. The role of the chiefs, elders, family heads, and others was not only to resolve conflicts but also to anticipate and prevent conflicts. Africans were also very conscious of the fact that conflict could occur when two or more parties pursued incompatible interests or goals through actions that the parties tried to undo or damage each other (Olaoba 2002). The parties could be individuals, groups or villages or towns; and the parties' interests could differ over and ranging from access to resources, the control of political or traditional

power, their identity to values or ideology. What was more peculiar to the Africans, however, was the place of the **family** in conflict detection, prevention and control (Ademowo, 2016). Among all human societies, the family has been the oldest social institution. The identity of an individual is linked to that of his or her family and these families are formed by the acceptance of marriage alliances. Within the **family**, in most traditional and modern societies, there was (is) a strict hierarchy of authority, according to which the males ruled and held responsibility for the females (Sofola 1977). Brothers ruled their sisters and sons, even their mothers when they came of age or succeeded to the inheritance. **Women**, in most cases, did not enjoy any ultimate authority or responsibility for the household. The husband was the **head** of the family and it was clear that this headship was not a joint headship. When a woman was the head of a family or social group in a ruling family or where she was permitted to become a chief, it was largely a question of political-religious symbolism (as the case of the **Regent** which is still in operation in some parts of Ekiti and Ondo State, Nigeria), in which – by a legal function, a woman was treated as a man.

**Families** constituted the various communities in Africa, for instance, most of the communities were divided into quarters (*Adugbo* in Oyo, *Ogbon* in Ekiti, *Itun* in Ijebu and *Idimi* among the Ondo). Each of the quarters was supervised by an important chief appointed by the *Oba* and these quarters' chiefs represented their people on the council meeting. In addition to the quarter chiefs, there were some traditional chiefs such as the *Balogun* (Warlord) and the *Otun* and *Osi Balogun* (right and left wing assistants to the Warlord). Each quarter was divided into **compounds or Agbo-Ile** whose heads were referred to as **Baale** (father of the house). The **Baale** was usually the oldest male member of the extended family; he was accorded much respect because of his wisdom, age and experience (Ayo 2002). The **Baale** settled disputes within his households, represented his family on the council of the quarter chiefs. The village or settlement usually represented a convergence of loyalties that made for a strong sense of community. Families and neighbors came together for work and recreation, as well as to resolve disputes between and among each other. The neighborhood court played an invaluable role in this case, most especially in reconciling disputants, in settling quarrels and in imposing sanctions (Ademowo & Adekunle 2013).

**Emphasis** was placed on reconciliation and restoration of social harmony than on punishment of the conflicting parties. The administration of justice was also an open affair where all adults freely participated. There were no **in-camera** trials as court sessions and judicial processes were held in the open with the parties in conflict being freely cross-examined. **Truth** was the object of the **delivery of justice**. They were also respected (and aged) men or women, often called '*Agba*' (**elders**) or group of elders (Fayemi 2009). The **proverbial and symbolic** communicative resources at the disposal of the mediators are other benchmark of indigenous conflict management because conflict resolution and harmonization of thoughts required expertise in the people's oral tradition, good reputation, experience and a measure of objectivity on the part of the reconcilers (Ademowo & Balogun 2014; Fayemi 2009).

### **The structure of traditional African societies**

The structure of traditional African societies was basically **communalistic**. Given the communal and solidarity nature of traditional African societies, everyone was seen as a potential contributor to **peace making** and keeping in the community. Whether young or old, male or female, rich or poor, everyone was expected to be the keeper and protector of the interests of others, and by extension, their own too (Gbadegesin 1998). In the submission of Fayemi (2009), no one can be considered educated or qualified to take part in communal discussion unless he is able to quote the **proverbs** relevant to each situation. He or she must be a good listener, among other qualities. **Age** is also a factor, because to the African

knowledge and experience are embedded in age hierarchy in African society, which are vital for social control (Delano 1979; Fadipe 1970). So, when in conflict, an elderly person is expected to be capable of bringing about the much needed peace, as embed in the **proverb**: *agba kii wa loja, ki ori omo tuntun o wo* (the elderly must endeavor to never allow issues to go beyond control). The implication of this is that an arbitrator was not necessarily the sole agent of conflict arbitration in traditional African societies. It should be noted that the communal structure of traditional African societies did not foreclose the insurgence of conflicts. Conflict is an unavoidable feature of social relations. In traditional African Societies, conflicts were usually managed such that they did not degenerate into violence and armed conflicts. The early intervention of the arbitrator in reconciling the disputing factions usually saved conflict situation from escalating into violent situations. Whenever there were disputes between individuals and different parties, primacy was given to restoring the **relationships** and to reach a compromise on how to improve future relationships.

**Reconciliation** of conflicts was usually regarded as a **social responsibility** of the elders and this accounted for the Yoruba proverbially saying that *agba ki wa loja kori omo tuntun wo* (an elder cannot be in the market place and allow the reign of chaos). A person who watched while tension mounted between children, adults, groups and any warring parties was not seen as **socially responsive** i.e *the ways Nigerian elders look on as religious and ethnic chaos is currently eating deep into the peace of the country*. This social responsibility was voluntarily done, and institutionalized in different ways.

Within this context, the individual is so amenable to social control in the form of public opinion in a town than he is much less so in a large town than in a small one (Fadipe 1970). Thus, Fadipe reveals that: it is a norm that two fighting must be separated for the sake of peace and humanity. After the combatants have been separated and efforts have been made to pacify them, either of them who remains aggressive and uncompromising will find him/her in a very awkward situation. It is the stubbornness and spiteful temper of the social non-conformist which are specifically disapproved of even if other facts of the case are in his favour (Fadipe 1970).

Thus, like every other traditional societies, the traditional African communities have conscious desire to maintain solidarity of the group, and an unconscious acceptance of whatever is customary, indigenous and the norm. It is thus a truism that an **average African** man or woman throws his/her weight into the enforcement of traditional codes expressed and encoded in proverbial wisdom and anybody that flout the social norm faces the social correction and sanction (Fadipe 1970).

In another way round, in **Yorubaland**, when there was conflict between or among the co-wives in a household, the elderly male or female members intervened, and if they did not succeed, the matter would be taken to the *Olori ebi* (head of the compound), where the reconciliatory attempt of the *Olori ebi* (head of the compound) failed, the matter would then be referred to a higher authority, which is the office of the *Baale* (head of clan). These were the judicial institutions in traditional Yoruba society that were primarily responsible for the arbitration and reconciliation of conflicts. These institutions were composed of the *agba* (**elders**) that we refer to as arbitrators (Fayemi, 2009) that have the final say. We think for any successful recommendation of the African model of conflict resolution as an alternative to the means of conflict resolution in contemporary world, it is instructive to have an appropriate understanding of the elements of which **proverb** is of paramount importance, principles and workings of the eldership institution of conflict resolution in African thought. The indigenous method of arbitration was primarily for reconciliation of disputes and armed conflicts with the use of **proverbs** in relation to the settlement of the matter. Although, it did not have the force

of law, but derived its authority from **religious base**, the use of **proverbs**, communal **norms** and **values** and **social acceptability**. What then are **proverbs**, and what is their place in conflict management in traditional African society?

**Proverbs** are the simple truths of life that contain the moral values of a society (Taylor 2003). Aside the aesthetic and figurative value judgment pervasive in **proverbs**; it also presents a graphic statement that expresses a **truth of experience**. Its beauty and some delight is that what it says is readily perceived and accepted as an **incontrovertible truth**. The truth presented in the **proverbs** is not logical, a priori, or intuitive truth: it is often an empirical **fact** based upon and derived from the **people's experience of life**, human relationship, and interaction with the world of nature (Yisa 1997).

Moreover, scholars agreed that traditional **proverbs** are the prismatic verbal expression of the essence of folk culture (Oladeji 1998; Nicolaisen 1994). This perception of **proverbs** is related to Ademowo (2016) definition of **proverbs** as “short, traditional statements used to further some social end. Adeyemi (2014) also noted that **proverbs** remain a very powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, philosophy, social morality and values and the sensibility of the people. In essence, the values of proverbs do not lie only in what they reveal of the thoughts of the people; they are also models of compressed or forceful language that make people behave according to norms and mores of the land. Other than their powerful verbal expression, proverbs have proved to be of great relevance/benefit to modern man (Ademowo 2014; Oladeji 1998; Makamani 2012).

This is due to the fact that users with gifts of creativity who are familiar with its techniques may create new ones to avoid hackneyed expression.

## **African proverbial usage for indigenous arbitration and conflict resolution**

### **Yoruba Proverbs**

The proverb according to (Olatunji, 1984) that “*òwe ni esin òrò, bí òrò bá sonù, òwe la fi ní wá a*” – proverb is the horse which carries a subject under discussion along, and when such a subject goes astray, it is proverb that we use in tracking it” is that which many Yorùbá assent to. Proverbial and wise-sayings are media wherein the philosophical and theological thought patterns of the Yorùbá are revealed and expressed. We have many of such which portray the need of being just in one's dealing with others and to persevere in observing the social norms all for the sake of harmony and tranquility in the society.

**Proverbs** like, “*eni da eérú ni eérú tò*” – ashes blow in the direction of him who pours it; and “*eni gbin èèbù ikà orí ara rè ni yóò fi wu* – he who plants the seed of destruction, it is with his head that he would reap the harvest: surely go to portray the Yorùbá concept of justice.

The proverbial and symbolic communicative resources at the disposal of the mediator were other canons of indigenous conflict detection, prevention and control among the Yoruba. In other words, conflict resolution and harmonization of thoughts in Yoruba culture require expertise in the people's oral tradition, good reputation, experience and a measure of objectivity on the part of the reconcilers. As an illustration, Ojelabi, (2013) outlined some of the proverbs used by the Yoruba in the process of conflict detection, prevention and control. They are:

i) *Anikan dajo o o seun, anikan dajo o seyan. Igbati o ogbo t'enu enikeji, emi l'o da 'jo se?* (It is a shameful act to either adjudicate or arbitrate on a case on the basis of the statement of only one party. Why should the verdict be given when the other disputant is denied?)

ii) *Bia banja, bi i k'a kuko* (Our being in conflict does not warrant wishing each other's death)

iii) *Ore kinya ore, ajose ni n diku* (There is no permanent hostility in friendship; only that there is limitation in affective association)

- iv) *Are maja kan kosi, a ja mare kan kosi* (No associates without dispute, no disputants without the possibility of reconciliation)
- v) *Bi a o ba gbagbe oro ana, a ko ni r'e ni ba sere* (Inability to forget the grievances of the past is the cornerstone of lonesomeness)
- vi) *Se mi n bi o l'ogun ore* (Seeking cause(s) of discord is the key to reconciliation)
- vii) *Inu bibi o da nnkan. Suuru baba iwa; agba t'oni suuru, ohun gbogbo l'oni* (Indignation does not result in anything good. Patience is the best of character. A patient elder has everything)

### **Tanzania**

- If you refuse the elder's advice, you will walk the whole day.* (Meaning: a person will keep going round a vicious circle instead of making progress if he refuses the leadership of elders)
- A boat cannot go forward if each rows his own way.* (There will be stagnancy if there is disagreement in the camp)
- Unity is strength, division is weakness.* (There is power in unity to achieve than in division)
- Many hands make light work.* (Cooperation and joint efforts makes things work than being alone).

### **South African**

- A clever king is the brother of peace.* (Wisdom is the foundation of peace making)
- A man who pays respect to the great, paves his own way for greatness.* (Giving respect to elders brings promotion).

### **Senegalese**

- Haste and hurry can only bear children with many regrets along the way.* (Like a popular saying, slow and steady wins the race)
- When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you.* (it takes a close accomplice for an outsider to hurt you.)

### **Cameroonian**

- If love is a sickness, patience is the remedy.* (Patience is the solution to every problem)
- The heart of the wise man lies quiet like limpid water.* (Being non aggressive about things depicts wisdom).

### **Guinean**

- Knowledge without wisdom is like water in the sand.* (Having much experience without wisdom is useless)
- Around a flowery tree, there are many insects.* ( People flock around successful personality)

### **Ethiopian**

- The elephant does not limp while walking on thorns.* (An adult should be able to persevere in awkward situations)
- The fool speaks, the wise man listens* (a man should not be a talkative)

### **Sudanese**

- He is like a drum which makes a lot of noise, but is hollow inside-* People that brags and shouts during conflicts are seen as being weak.
- If you damage the character of another, you damage your own-* A team should protect one another, one should not say its not my business.

***A person with too much ambition cannot sleep in peace-*** A man should not handle too many things at the same time or have too many goals to achieve.

***We should put out the fire while it is still small-*** Like a common saying that a stitch in time saves nine, so small or upcoming conflicts should be settled early.

### **Kenyan**

***A cow falls down even if it has four legs-*** Accepting the idea that everyone makes mistakes.

***Only someone else can scratch your back-*** That means we need each other interchangeably in life

***He who refuses to obey cannot command-*** Young people should obey elders as one day leadership will fall into their hands.

***One who relates with a corrupt person likewise gets corrupted-*** The friendship a man keeps eventually influences him.

### **Senegalese**

***The chameleon changes color to match the earth, the earth doesn't change color to match the chameleon-*** This can be used to counsel wives to adapt to the dictates of their husband.

***He who does not know one thing, knows another-*** Everyone has something to offer one way or the other.

### **Ghananian**

***The elders of the village are the boundaries-*** Elders are like the constitution that governs the village, the dos and don'ts are in their hands.

***When a fish rots, the head stinks first-*** Bad leadership starts from the head.

### **Zimbabwean**

***A king's child is a slave elsewhere-*** A prince or a noble somewhere can be a nobody elsewhere.

***One falsehood spoils a thousand truths-*** A lie can make one lose confidence in someone whether or not he is saying the truth.

### **Malawian**

***The words of the elders become sweet someday-*** There coming a time when all the things that an elder has said will be relevant and useful to direct or deliver.

***A tree does not move unless there is wind-*** There is no reaction without a cause, something must have happened to warrant certain reactions.

### **Mozambican**

***No tattoo is made without blood-*** There is no gain without pain, anything we want to achieve in life will cost us to sacrifice something precious.

### **Congolese**

***A tree cannot stand without roots-*** Everyone has a source, a root, family background without which there is no identification.



*Ashes fly back into the face of him who throws them-* Exactly what you do to others you will get back, whether good or evil.

#### **SierraLeona**

**An okra tree does not grow taller than its master.** The aforementioned proverb depicts the fact that a man can never be greater than his family no matter how highly placed he might be in the society. He must listen to the voice of his people especially the elders and whenever he faces some difficulties in life, his family has the final say to put an end to it.

**If you run after two hares you will catch neither.**

#### **Shona**

*Gonda chako pfuma yenhaka inoparadza ukama Gudo guru peta muswe kuti vadiki vakutye.* (If you occupy a powerful position in society, you should humble yourself so as to earn respect of your subjects)

#### **Urhobo**

To Ignore the Gravity of an Offence and Embrace Peace

In the below context, a man may threaten to kill his friend for sleeping with his new wife. If the case is presented before a group of elders, one of them may react using the proverbial utterance: *Ede n'ugregren r'orodeko, akasa mr'ukpokpo vwo ghwie-e. (If one considers the length of a snake, there shall be no stick to crush it).*

This proverb shows that if the gravity of the offence a person committed is so great, one can hardly state the severity of the penalties to be meted out to him. In essence, the gravity of an offence committed by a man should not be used to mete punishment on him.

*Era re ero mre re-e , k'oye oghene ma'ro-o - Whatever eyes did not experience was not created by God.*

With this proverb, disputants especially the offended party is advised to forgive the offender because no matter how serious the offence might be, it must have happened in the past which was also resolved. In essence, the offence is not the first of its kind since there is nothing new on earth.

#### **Ugandan**

*With force, one obtains nothing-* Humility and gentility achieves more than being forceful and harsh on people.

*He who fears the sun will not become a chief* (someone who doesn't want ridicule cannot lead in the contemporary world because to lead, there will be insults and ridicules from your subjects).

#### **Conclusion**

In most recent history, it was used in reference to the civil wars in Somalia, Burundi and the struggle between Arap Moi of Kenya and his rivals. In all these situations, the proverb was consistently used to protest against the suffering of innocent people like child soldiers (Burundi) and defenseless civilians.

Elsewhere in Africa, while addressing members of the Kenya Africa Union in 1952 the late Jomo Kenyatta used a proverb to avert a potential blood bath. Kenyatta warned, " If any of you here think that force is good, I do not agree with you: remember the old saying, '*He who hits with a rungu returns, but he who beats with justice never comes back.*' ". As said earlier, Kenyatta resorted to the use of a proverb to manage a crisis situation that could easily have

culminated in a bloodbath. The proverb used by Kenyatta revolves around the oppositional model of argument in which parallelism, drawn by the contrast between ‘returning’ as a symbol of unfinished business and ‘never coming back’ as symbolic of finished business is aimed at persuading through logos.

This paper has demonstrated that African proverbs are a vital component of the indigenous knowledge systems of Africans that can be used to resolve conflict at both the micro – and macro – levels of society. It has been shown that African proverbs use discursive strategies to persuade people to conform to established conventions. The discursive strategies used range from metaphors, intertextuality, symbolism and argumentation to thematisation. It has further been revealed that proverbs incorporate the Aristotelian three proofs (ethos, pathos, logos) to persuade, and, as a manifestation of collective wisdom, a proverb can only be challenged by citing another proverb

From the above illustration of some of the proverbs used in the process of reconciliation by the elders, we can see that proverbs are signposts in Africa conflict management system. Through judicious application of proverbs by the elders in the arbitative process, they calmed the nerves of the disputants; understood the cause of the conflict; encouraged disputants to nurture the culture of tolerance of other people’s beliefs; illumine the minds of disputants in seeing and seeking non-violent alternatives when in disagreement with others; helped conflicting parties in the cultivation of attitudes that would restore the relationship. And finally, proverbs usually served as lubricating oil in searching for and ensuring that justice and fairness prevailed in the process of conflict arbitration. Proverbs (i –ix) given above are indicative of these functions of conflict management among the Africans, and how the elders explored wittingly the communicative essence of proverbs in managing conflicts in their social milieu. It is very clear now that the Africans have a wide range of proverbs that can be useful in supporting the arbitration and conflict management procedure. Proverbs, if well apply, will promote such values as human cooperation, diversity and warning; this is in support of the fact that if the proverbial implications is studied, particular in indigenous languages, showing their logical structure and implications for conflict management, it would greatly enhance conflict management (Ademowo 2014).

It is African’s inability to come to terms with these intricate linguistic-cultural elements that has made it impossible for authentic African contribution to effective conflict management. There is an urgent need for a rejuvenation of the linguistic-cultural elements that would enhance peaceful coexistence. This would inadvertently underscore the argument that African have linguistic-moral and rational capacity worthy of making its world humane and worthy of living. Hence we agree with the position that knowledge comes with virtue, and man would behave in a peace loving ways, and conflict appreciation manner, if they have the knowledge of what harmonious living entails, most especially through the use of the proverbs and the proverbial expressions (Oladipo 2009).

The foregoing African proverbs and their implications reiterate that proverbs not only sensitise people to conform to desired norms but also teach a method of expressing life which is aesthetically and pragmatically flavored. If more researches, documentation and expressive uses are carried out on proverbs, a good level of peace management skills would be developed across Africa. We agree with Adeyemi (2014) that, proverbs enabled people to conform to desired rules, mores and traditions as well as teach method of expression of the realities of life with aesthetic flavor, and that language and not weapon (a metaphoric strand like we have in

proverbs) is central to effective communication and dialogue which is veritable instrument of mediation and conflict management anywhere in the world. Conclusively, we agree with Olubunmi (2010: 16) that the use of proverbs exhumes the values of good conduct, respect for elders and the young, warning and advice, cordiality and cooperation which are vital for peaceful co-existence. It is therefore imperative that the Africans look inward, and explore how these proverbs will be inculcated into daily usages and imported into peace education curriculum across levels.

## References

- Ademowo A.J & Adekunle, D. 2013. 'Law in Traditional Yoruba Philosophy: A Critical Appraisal' *Caribbean Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 2, No. 1
- Ademowo A.J, Balogun N.O 2014. 'Proverbs, Values and the Development Question in Contemporary Africa: A Case Study of Yoruba Proverbs'. *Omniscience: A Multi disciplinary Journal*, 4(2)
- Ademowo A.J 2016. *Conflict Management in Traditional Africa Society: Engaging the future in the present: Issues in Culture and Philosophy*, Ibadan, Hope Publication.
- Adeyemi, A, Salawudeen, M., 2014. 'The Place of Proverbs in Peace Education in Nigeria: Implications for Social Studies Curriculum'. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 4(2): 23-43.
- Ayo B. 2002. *Public Administration and the Conduct of Community Affairs Among the Yoruba in Nigeria*. California: ICS Press
- Delano O.I., 1979. *Owe L'esin Oro: Yoruba Proverbs, their Meaning and Usage*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Fadipe N.A., 1970. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press.
- Fayemi, Ademola., 2009. "Agba (elder) as arbitrator: A Yoruba socio political model for conflict resolution" - A review of Lawrence O. Bamikole. *Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution* Vol. 1(3), pp. 060-067, August
- Gbadegesin, S., 1998 "Individuality, Community and the Moral Order", in P. H. Coetzee, A.P.J. Roux. *The African Philosophy Reader* (London: Routledge)
- Ojelabi, I.K., 2013. Assessment of Indigenous method of Arbitration and Administration of Justice in Ibadanland, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Makamani, R. 2012. 'African Proverbs and Conflict Management: A study of Selected Shona, Yoruba and Swahili Proverbial Expressions'. *African Journal of Rhetoric: Rhetoric, Political Agency and Africa*.
- Nicolaisen WFH (1994). *The Proverbial Scot. Proverbial ii*
- Oladeji, N. 1998. 'Proverbs as Language Sign-Posts in Yoruba Pragmatic Ethics'. *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy*.
- Oladipo, O.T., 2009. *Thinking about Philosophy*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Hope Publications.
- Olaoba, O.B. 2001. *The Significance of Cross-examination in Yoruba Traditional Jurisprudence* Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Ltd.
- Olaoba, O.B. 2002. *An Introduction to African Legal Culture*, Ibadan, Hope Publications.
- Olatunji, O.O. 1984. *Features of Yoruba Oral Poetry* Ibadan: University Press Ltd.
- Olubunmi A.I. 2010. An Ethno-Methodology of Selected Yoruba Proverbs'. *International Journal of Arts and Science*.
- Sofola J.A. 1973. *African Culture and the African Personality: What makes an African Person African*. Ibadan: African Resources Publishers Co
- Taylor, A., 2003. 'The Proverb, Proverbs and their Lessons' in Wolfgang Meider (ed) *Supplement Series of Proverbium*. Vol 13. Vermont, US: the University of Vermont.

Yisa, K.Y. 1997. "Yoruba Proverbial Insight into Female Sexuality and Genital Mutilation" In *ELA: Journal of African Studies, Critical Sphere*.