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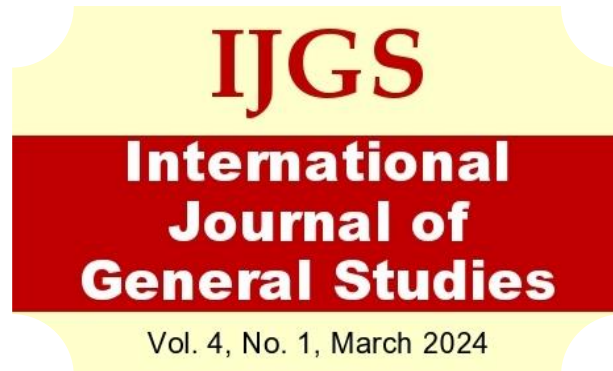International Journal of General Studies
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Themes and Settings: Nigeria's Heritage of Folk Narratives

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The Perceived Impact of Management Styles on the Profitability of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises in Enugu State

By

Anthonia Onyinye Ilodigwe

ABSTRACT

The activities of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) have been a subject of continual interest to researchers as they are major contributors to the growth and development of every country. Thus, this study examined the perceived impact of management styles on the profitability of small and medium-scale enterprises in Enugu State. Management is a key factor for improving the performance, productivity and profitability of any organisation. The objectives of this study are to: examined the perceived impact of transactional management style, assess the perceived impact of transformational management style and ascertain the perceived impact of laissez-faire management style on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State. A survey research was adopted for the study and questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection. Data analysis was done using mean and standard deviation. The study found that transactional management especially rewards have positive impact on the profitability of SMEs in Enugu State. The study also found that transformational management style has positive impact on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State. The study further found that laissez-faire management style does not have impact of SMEs profitability in Enugu State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended amongst others that in order to stay in the competitive business environment, right managers with high capability, creativity and idea be identified at all levels of SMEs in Enugu State.

Keywords: SMEs, Enugu State, management styles, profitability

INTRODUCTION

The aim of every business is to make profit and gain and management is important for achieving the goals and objectives set by every organisation. Management is crucial in a business organisation for several reasons; it is the duty of managers to provide direction, ensure efficient resource

utilisation, promote coordination among different departments, and help in achieving organisational goals. It is worth noting that effective management enhances employee productivity, fosters innovation, and enables an organisation to adapt to changes in the business environment. Additionally, management style plays a key role in decision-making, risk mitigation, and in the maintenance of a positive organisational culture that is essential for the smooth functioning, productivity, profitability and long-term success of a business. Hence, the impact of management style in organisations, especially as it relates to profit-making in SMEs, cannot be overemphasised.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) are set up to achieve certain goals and objectives, with profit-making being usually the main aim. To meet this target, managers of SMEs make use of administrative strategies to oversee the human and material resources of the organisation. Such directorial approaches constitute what is referred to as management styles.

Management styles have been in existence for thousands of years. According to Pindur, Rogers, and Kim (1995), elemental approaches to management go back at least 3000 years before the birth of Christ, a time in which records of business dealings were first recorded by Middle Eastern priests. Also, Monye and Eruteya (2018) opined that management styles became an acceptable practice following the published work on theory Y and theory Z management style. From then, various management styles have played out and are still in use.

Management style is not about managerial procedure; it is, rather, the managerial framework put in place by the manager to stimulate the workforce. According to Kamusiime (2018), management styles are the different styles used by a manager to influence employees so that they will strive willingly toward the achievement of organisational goals. Management styles are the vital factor in the achievement of success of any business enterprise. It is the prime prerequisite for the realization of organisational objectives. According to Prasetya and Kato (2011), the prime purpose of management style is to enhance employees' performance so that the objective of the organisation can be achieved. Lloyd and Aho (2020) defined management style as the ability of a superior to influence the behaviour of subordinates and persuade them to follow a particular course of action in order to achieve set goals in a business enterprise. By implication, management style is a multidimensional construct and an extremely vital criterion that determines organisational profit or loss.

There are numerous SMEs in the world today and Nigeria as a country also has its portion of SMEs. The activities of SMEs in the contribution of national development and growth cannot be overemphasized as they are also great employers of labour. In southeastern Nigeria, there are numerous businesses in the category of SMEs that contribute to the growth of the region. Most of the region's inhabitants are business oriented; this can be attributed to the apprenticeship system ("*Igba boy"*) that is inherent in the business culture of the region. The importance of management in SMEs' profitability and general operations made it important that this study is carried out in Enugu State which is a hub for numerous SMEs in contemporary times.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Management style determines the level of subordinate participation in decision-making and the way a business enterprise is run administratively. Business enterprises' performance and profitability can be greatly affected adversely if they have bad managers or managers who find it difficult to adopt a suitable management style. Thus, research has shown that whether a business enterprise is profitable or not depends on how managers conceive and handle the affairs of the business (Michael, 2010). Thus, management style adopted by managers may determine the level of output given by employees in terms of productivity and, invariably, profitability.

Good management styles are also important for employees in SMEs because when employees are well managed, they provide quality service and make sure organisational goals and objectives are met (Girlando and Eduljee, 2010). Conversely, when employees are not well managed at their work place, the resultant outcome is poor organisational performance. So, it is important to find out which management style works best for SMEs, especially in Enugu State, the environment of this study and research.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The broad objective of this study is to investigate the perceived impact of management styles on the profitability of small and medium scale enterprises in Enugu State. Specifically, the study:

1. Examined the perceived impact of transactional management style on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State.

2. Assessed the perceived impact of transformational management style on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State.

3. Ascertained the perceived impact of laissez-faire management style on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the research objectives, the following research questions were asked.

I. What is the perceived impact of transactional management style on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State?

II. What is the perceived impact of transformational management style on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State?

III. What is the impact of laissez-faire management style on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Management Styles

Management style is a managerial term often used to describe the way managers carry out their activities in an organisation. It is a function of behaviour associated with personality (Herrity, 2021). Management style can be understood as a way to manage an organisation. According to Yanney (2014), management style is the adhesive that binds diverse operations and functions together. It is the philosophy or set of principles by which the manager capitalizes on the abilities of the workforce. Management style is not a procedure on how to do but it is the management framework for doing. A management style is a way of life operating throughout the enterprise and permits an executive to rely on the initiative of the personnel of an entity.

Types of Management Styles

There are several management styles adopted by managers. However, the study focuses on three management styles, as stated in the objectives. These are transactional management style, transformational management style and laissez-faire management style.

Transactional Management Style

Transactional leadership style is the management style by which managers are able to entice subordinates to perform and thereby achieve desired outcomes by promising rewards and benefits for the accomplishment of tasks and administering punishments when tasks are not well accomplished (Yanney, 2014). Sayadi (2016) indicates that transactional management style consists of contingent reward, active management by

exception, and passive management by exception. These authors further show that a transactional manager motivates subordinates by giving rewards for successful services provided. This type of managers clarifies the employees on goals and arranges contingent rewards as inducements toward the achievement of the goals. The transactional management style has been reported to be a market-based exchange process where managers and employees negotiate tasks for different types of rewards (Oyelade, Akpa, Olawore, Adesanya, & James, 2022). The transactional manager forms a mutual agreement with the employee about his or her responsibilities and expectations are kept closely to that agreement. Transactional managers are reward and punishment-oriented (Hoxha, 2019).

Transformational Management Style

Transformational management style occurs when employees are motivated to meet the highly challenging expectations of the organisation. Transformational managers tend to help employees find new ways to meet organisational challenges (Lin, Xian, Li & Huang, 2020). The most frequently used definition of transformational management refers to a manager's behaviour, influential traits, power and situational variables that influence employee performance in a positive direction such as motivating employees to work more than expected and enjoy the work they do (Alsalami, Behery & Abdullah, 2014). Transformational management style is a management philosophy that encourages and inspires employees to innovate and develop new ways to grow and improve the path to an organisation's future success (Khan, Rehmat & Butt, 2020). Using this style of management, managers give trusted employees the independence to make decisions and support new problem-solving approaches. Transformational managers are passionate about their work and the organisation's mission, while also helping all employees succeed. Another key trait of transformational managers is their ability to identify business processes that no longer work and focus on streamlining or changing them as needed. The transformational leadership approach encourages, inspires, and motivates employees to innovate and create the change necessary to shape the future success of the company.

Laissez-faire Management Style

"Laissez-faire" means "leave it be" in French. It is used to describe managers who leave their employees to work on their own. Laissez-faire management could be effective if the manager monitors what is being achieved and communicates this back to the team regularly. Laissez-faire management style is a type of management style in which the manager

hands-off and allows group members to make the decisions. Employees are empowered to determine their own objectives, solve their own problem and make their own decision with little or no interference. Often, this style of management is most effective when individual employees are very experienced and skilled self-starters.

The preference for any of these management styles vary among managers. Some may prefer an autocratic style where they tell employees what to do and how to do it. Others prefer a democratic style where they help their employees to discover solution to problems for themselves. Some believe in laissez-faire management style in which the manager hands off and allows group members to take decision. No matter the kind of management style the manager adopts, the bottom line is that of improving employees' performance and that of the organisation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Both theory X and Y and the principle of scientific management formed the theoretical framework for this study as the theories one way or the other try to explain the way management styles play out in various organisations. Theory X and Y was propounded by American social psychologist Douglas McGregor in his book, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, where he concluded that two different styles of management are guided by their managers' perceptions of team member motivations. According to McGregor (1960), there are two opposing perceptions about how people view human behaviour at work and organisational life. Theory X is based on the reward system that drives organisational performance and is mostly related to transactional management style. On the other hand, theory Y focuses on how managers drive organisational performance using other important factors like creativity, teaching, and even ideas of employees. Theory Y is more focused on the transformational management style and laissez-faire management style.

The principle of administrative management theory was propounded by Henri Fayol, a senior executive and mining engineer. He developed this theory in the 19th century when he examined an organisation through the perspective of the managers and situations they might encounter. The principle of administrative management theory is the general view of what managers will do in a given situation to drive organisational performance and profitability.

METHODOLOGY

The area of the study is Enugu State because the state has seen a remarkable rise in the activities of SMEs and in the level of their

contribution to the economy of the state. The survey research design was used for the study in order to achieve the study's objectives. The population of the study is made up of 250 purposively selected SMEs managers from all the Local Government Areas of Enugu State. The instrument of data collection is a structured questionnaire that comprised of close-ended questions made of 5-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (A), Agreed (A), Undecided (U), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was structured to achieve the research objectives. Pilot test was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire and the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the test yielded 0.83. The instrument was distributed on a face-to-face basis and consent was sought from the respondents. Data collected for this study was processed using SPSS version 25. The nature of data analysis in this research was largely descriptive. Thus, mean rating and standard deviation were used to analyse the data for the study.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Research Question 1: What is the perceived impact of transactional management style on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the impact of transactional management style on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	STD DEVIATION	DECISION
1.	I give money to employees to enhance their work rate	2.429	.411	**REJECT**
2.	Reward is a great tool for driving my organisational performance and profitability	4.300	1.732	**ACCEPT**
3.	Major profit my organisation has achieved are as a result of transactional management	3.937	1.071	**ACCEPT**
4.	Workers give their best to maintain the organisation's profit as long as they are rewarded	4.100	1.517	**ACCEPT**
5.	Punishment drives the goal achievement in my organisation	2.330	.901	**REJECT**

Table 1 shows rejection with mean rating 2.429 and standard deviation of .411 that managers give money to employees to enhance their work rate. The table, on the other hand, shows acceptance with mean rating 4.300 and standard deviation 1.732 that rewards is a great tool for driving SMEs performance and profitability. The table also shows acceptance with mean rating 3.937 and standard deviation of 1.071 that major profits achieved by SMEs are as a result of transactional management. The table further shows acceptance with mean rating 4.100 and standard deviation of 1.517 that as long as workers are rewarded, they give their best to maintain their organisation's profit. Lastly, the table shows rejection with mean rating of

2.330 and standard deviation value of 0.901 that punishment drives the goal achievement and performance of SMEs. The general finding of table 1 shows that transactional management, involving rewards, has positive impact on the profitability of SMEs in Enugu State.

Research Question 2: What is the perceived impact of transformational management style on productivity of SMEs in Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean rating and standard deviation of the impact of transformational management style on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	STD DEVIATION	DECISION
1.	My creativity is a driving force of this organisation's profitability	3.341	1.132	ACCEPT
2.	My ideas help employees accomplish their daily tasks in the organisation	3.837	1.206	ACCEPT
3.	My intellectual power helps my organisation to overcome challenges that hinder profitability	3.529	1.235	ACCEPT
4.	I am an inspiration to employees and their abilities in achieving the organisation's goal	3.779	1.310	ACCEPT
5.	My motivation is an important factor that keeps my organisation in profit	4.466	1.831	ACCEPT

Table 2 shows the mean rating and standard deviation of the perceived impact of transformational management style on the productivity of SMEs in Enugu State. From the data presented in the table, acceptance was shown with mean rating of 3.341 and standard deviation value of 1.132 that manager's creativity is a driving force of the organisation's profitability. The table also shows acceptance with mean rating 3.837 and standard deviation value of 1.206 that managers ideas help employees accomplish their daily tasks in the organisation. The table further shows acceptance with mean rating 3.529 and 1.235 that managers intellectual power helps organisation to overcome challenges that hinders profitability. Furthermore, the table shows acceptance with mean rating 3.779 and standard deviation 1.310 that managers are inspiration to employees and their abilities in achieving organisational goal. The table with mean rating 4.466 and standard deviation value of 1.831 also shows acceptance with mean rating that managers motivation is an important factor that keeps organisation in profit. The general findings of table 2 shows that transformational management style has positive impact on profitability of SMEs in Enugu State.

Research Question 3: What is the perceived impact of laissez-faire management style on productivity of SMEs in Enugu State?

Table 3: Mean rating and standard deviation on the impact of laissez-

faire management style on SMEs in Enugu State

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	STD DEVIATION	DECISION
1.	I give employees room to bring up ideas that help in the organisation's profit accumulation	3.183	1.113	**ACCEPT**
2.	Giving employees the free will to carry out their task the way it suits them increases profit	1.908	.301	**REJECT**
3.	I don't impose my ideas on employees because I believe they have ideas that make the business profitable	2.200	.527	**REJECT**
4.	Everyone is given room to take action that improves the business' profitability	1.891	.416	**REJECT**
5.	The organisation's profit-making drive is not based on only the idea of the management	1.920	.331	**REJECT**

Table 3 shows the mean rating and standard deviation on the perceived impact of laissez-faire management style on SMEs' profitability in Enugu State. From the table, acceptance was shown with mean rating of 3.183 and standard deviation value of 1.113 that employees are given room to bring up ideas that help in SMEs' profit accumulation. The table on the other hand shows rejection with mean rating of 1.908 and standard deviation value of 0.301 that giving employees the free will to carry out their task the way it suits them increases profit. The table also shows rejection with mean rating of 2.200 and standard deviation value of 0.527 that managers don't impose their ideas on employees because they believe employees have the ideas that make SMEs profitable. The table further shows rejection with mean rating 1.891 and standard deviation value of 0.416 that managers give room to everyone to take action that improve SMEs' profitability. Furthermore, the table shows rejection with mean rating 1.920 and standard deviation value of 0.331 that profit-making drive of SMEs is not based on only the idea of the management. The general findings from table 3 shows that laissez-faire management style does not have impact on SMEs' profitability in Enugu State.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that managers of SMEs make use of transactional management style and this, to some extent, impacts on SMEs' profitability. Transactional management style impacts on the profitability of SMEs especially through the use of rewards as workers give their best when rewarded, and this leads to increase in SMEs' profitability. The findings of the study also show that transformational

management style has impact on the profitability of SMEs in Enugu State. Transformational management style impacts on SMEs' profitability through the creativity, ideas, intellectual power, inspiration and motivation of managers. This finding proves that the qualification and capacity of managers are important for organisational growth, development and profitability. The study, on the other hand, concludes that laissez-faire management style has little or no impact on SMEs' profitability in Enugu State. This is as a result of the fact that giving employees the free will to carry out their task the way it suits them does not increase profit. Also, laissez-faire management style is barely used by managers of SMEs as managers impose their ideas on employees because managers believe that employees don't have what it takes to make SMEs profitable. The study further concludes that although profit-making of SMEs is not based on only the idea of managers, everyone in the organisational setting of SMEs is not given room to take action that improve SMEs' profitability. This can be as a result of managers wanting to be fully in control of their organisations, thereby making sure that ideas and activities that may hinder their organisation's profitability are put in check and not carried out.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that:

1. In order to stay in the competitive business environment, the right managers with high capability, creativity and idea should be identified and engaged at all levels of SMEs in Enugu State.

2. Based on the findings of this study, SMEs in Enugu State should adopt transactional and transformational management styles instead of laissez-faire management style. This is important because the profitability of an SME is highly dependent on the management style used by the manager, the organisation's most important administrative asset.

3. SMEs with good leadership capability and high profitability should further improve on their performance by finding out and adopting, as a matter of priority, the specific management style that works best for their own organisation.

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About the Author: Anthonia Onyinye Ilodigwe (oa.ilodigwe@coou.edu.ng) is of the Department of Sociology, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria.

CITING THIS ARTICLE

Towards Holistic Scholarship: A Review of Selected Works on Israelite and Yoruba Wisdom Traditions

By

Iyanda Abel Olatoye & Akponorie Simeon Iruo-Oghene

ABSTRACT

Wisdom exists among the human inhabitants of the earth; it is peculiar to humanity. What makes the concept of wisdom an outstanding one is that it is uniquely ubiquitous and perennial, and every culture produces its own store of wisdom. The similarity in nature and forms of expression of Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions provide a wealth of comparative data. Interestingly, there are numerous parallels between Israelite wisdom tradition and that of the Yoruba people. The people of ancient Israel, like those of the surrounding nations, had developed a wisdom tradition that contains many wise sayings. These sayings were fruits of experience that contain valuable lessons for everyone but were used, especially, to inculcate good judgement into   young people to enable them avoid or overcome many of life's pitfalls. To achieve this objective, young people are instructed on how to live in such a way that they would find personal fulfillment and contribute to the welfare of the community. This traditional emphasis on wisdom offers an illuminative contact point for Israelite and Yoruba cultural affinities. In other words, the Israelite concept of wisdom and its importance in the life of the people is also a unique phenomenon among the Yoruba. As in ancient Israel, Yoruba people see wisdom as precious diadem, and are fully aware of its colossal value. Wisdom is highly esteemed and can never be compared with money or other valuable possessions. For holistic scholarship and deeper understanding of these puzzling, but exciting, affinities between the Yoruba socio-cultural heritage and the way of life in ancient Israel, this paper reviews some existing works on wisdom done by various scholars from both cultures. Exploring these two wisdom traditions, the paper established that there are various issues in the Old Testament through which Africans, particularly the Yoruba people, have regarded the Old Testament as an affirmation of their cultural and religious heritage.

Keywords: holistic scholarship, review, works, Israelite, Yoruba

I. INTRODUCTION

Biblical scholars,[1] anthropologists[2] and archaeologists[3] have written profusely on wisdom in the ancient Near East and among the Israelites. Several volumes have also been written on this same issue from the Yoruba perspective. While it is not possible to review all the works on wisdom in Israel and among the Yoruba people, the researcher reviewed the works of some prominent authors, paid attention to their opinions and analysed them for the purpose of this study. The essence of doing this is to reflect extensively on the considerable parallels between the Hebrew wisdom tradition and that of other cultures so as to have a wider range of knowledge, identify the similarities between Israelites' and Yoruba understanding of wisdom and attest to the international connection of Israelite wisdom. It should be noted that Abraham's descendants are commonly referred to as the "Hebrews", "Israel" (or Israelites) and the "Jews". Therefore, in this study, Jewish, Hebrew or Israelite wisdom is mentioned, and considered as the same, regardless of their social, theological or chronological peculiarities. The materials reviewed in this work were grouped into three main classes: the first group is on the origin and development of Israelite wisdom, the second group deals with wisdom among the Yoruba while the third group focuses on the origin of Israelite and Yoruba cultural affinities.

II. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF WISDOM IN ISRAEL

A casual glance at the origin and development of wisdom in ancient Israel reveals that the history and religion of Israel cannot be studied and understood in isolation from the overall context of the ancient Near East.[4] Scholars have written to establish that Israel, in many ways, reflects in her socio-cultural, political and religious life aspects of the cultures in the ancient Near East. The review of works of these scholars becomes imperative because they explored extensively the parallels between the wisdom literatures underlying the culture of Babylonia, Assyria, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Hebrew, as well as the larger Near Eastern background which they share. Some of the literatures were suggested, by these scholars, as having a common tradition. Therefore, looking at the origin and development of wisdom in Israel, two areas are going to be covered, that is, the Eastern background of Israelite Wisdom Literatures as well as Wisdom in Israel.

The Eastern Background of Israelite Wisdom Literature

James L. Crenshaw,[5] in his work titled *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom,* confirmed that the Bible itself recognises Israelite kingship with

her neighbours in the area of wisdom tradition. He said that the Wisdom of Solomon, as Bible claimed, surpasses that of all the peoples of the East and Egypt. Israelite wisdom compares herself to that of Edom and Egypt; however, in case of Edom, little is known but Egyptian influence upon the Bible is remarkably acknowledged. There is general agreement, as Crenshaw posited, that the Israelite author of Proverbs 22:17-24:22 borrowed from an Egyptian source, even more than the actual appropriation of sayings from the Amen-em-opet.[6] He added that the Israelite practice of addressing the pupils as "my son" is derived from Egyptian instruction, in which the father teaches his son all he has learned about life. Commenting on the Mesopotamian influence, Crenshaw opined that the Mesopotamian relationship with Israelite literature differs in kind, if not in degree, and that the literary prototype of Proverbs, Job, and Qoheleth point more to a commonality of ideas than direct literary relationship. In the attempt to explain the historical background of these affinities, Crenshaw reflected on how Israelites came in contact with Egyptian and Mesopotamian Wisdom literature. Scholars, he argued, have assumed the royal court of Solomon and Hezekiah as points of contact where both foreign scribes and Israelite counselors would have worked, with the latter thought to have probably received their training in foreign court. However, the evidence for an institution of wise men at the court, as Crenshaw observed, is by no means conclusive.[7]

In a similar vein, James B. Pritchard[8], in his work *Archaeology and the Old Testament,* confirmed the biblical description of the great Wisdom of King Solomon as excelling "all the wisdom of Egypt". He appreciated the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs and the recovery of the papyri of which the Egyptian wise men wrote their sayings. To him, the aptness of the reference to the Wisdom of Egypt is now documented by a wealth of instructions and precepts that attests to the reputation which Egypt had for this type of literature. Pritchard argued further that the oldest example of Egyptian wisdom is a collection of wise sayings from about fifteen hundred years before the time of Solomon. It bears the name of Ptah-hotep, the vizier of a king of the fifth Dynasty, and was addressed to his son who was to succeed him as the king's chief counselor. Having reached the ideal age of one hundred and ten years, Ptah-hotep looked back on a long and successful life in the king's service and offered his son what he had learned about wisdom and about the rules of good speech. Ptah-hotep reminded his son that "There is no one born wise". Pritchard observed that this document, like many of the proverbs in the Bible, is a guide for success. Besides, in his shrewd observation, Pritchard attested to the fact that the frequent themes of the biblical book of Proverbs also find their analogue in the Babylonian and Assyrian instructions of wisdom. He

concluded, therefore, that in the light of the recent archaeological discoveries, it is no discredit to ancient Israel to assert that the Israelites were indebted to Babylon for certain concepts of law and authority, and that her wise men may well have had their wits sharpened by frequent contact with both Egyptian and Babylonian wisdom.

In line with this submission, Bernhard,[9] in his work *The Living World of the Old Testament,* claimed that the love of wisdom was not a monopoly of any people of antiquity. The wisdom tradition, as he said, is far more ancient than Socrates or anything found in the Old Testament. He argued that wisdom movement was essentially international. Wisdom writings circulated widely and had an influence far beyond the country of their origin. Since Israel was situated at the cultural crossroad of the Fertile Crescent, the wisdom of the East influenced her thought at an early period. Solomon, for instance, is said to have exchanged proverbs and riddles with the Queen of Sheba and Hiram of Tyre (I King 10:1). Bernhard argued that there was a kind of timeless value of and quality to wisdom. Hence, sages appeared to be detached completely from the limitations of time and culture. Sages often reflected on the problems of society just as they were familiar with them. These problems were mostly human problems which could be found in various forms in the societies. Emphasizing the relevance of the ancient Near Eastern cultures in the development of wisdom in ancient Israel, Bernhard disclosed that wisdom literature falls into two groups: Prudential literature, which is illustrated by the Egyptian Teaching of Amen-en-ope, the Babylonian book of proverbs, and the maxims collected in the Old Testament book of Proverbs. Prudential literature consists of practical advice to the young person on how to live a good and successful life. The second group is Reflective Literature which consists of reflective probing into the depth of man's anguish about the meaning of life, often in a skeptical mood. However, both types of wisdom literature, as Bernhard observed, isolate the problem of man from the particularities of history and thereby stand in contrast to most of the literatures of the Old Testament. Modern sages, according to him, insist that the best way to solve the problem of world unity is to concentrate on man whose needs and aspirations are generally the same in all situations, and to rule out the memories, loyalties, and cultural peculiarities that make for human diversity and conflict. Bernhard also claimed that Egyptian wisdom made a deep impression on Israel's thought, from at least the time of King Solomon who established close diplomatic ties with Egypt. He repeated that the close similarities between the wisdom of Amen-em-ope and Proverbs 22: 12 – 23:14 shows that the Israelite writings relied heavily on the Egyptian writings.

Speaking within the same line of thought, that is, on the international connections of Hebrew wisdom, Johnson[10] attested to the considerable parallels between the Hebrew wisdom writings and those of Israel's neighbours, particularly Egypt and Babylon. To him, a wide range of parallels may be seen between Israel's wisdom literature and that of other Near Eastern peoples because Palestine was a corridor for the passage of peoples, with their ideas as well as with their armies. Thus it should not be surprising to discover that statements of general or universal truth that are found in Israel also are found in the literature of her neighbours. It is evident that the Old Testament itself recognises the existence of wisdom outside Israel. Solomon's wisdom is said to have been superior to that of "the people of the East" indeed of "all men" (I Kings 4:30-31; Gen. 41:8; Isaiah 19:11-12; Jeremiah 4:9:7)

Johnson argued that the records of Egyptian wisdom dated back to at least six hundred years before Abraham left Ur of the Chaldea. He claimed that numerous examples of ancient Egyptian wisdom writing have been discovered within the past century, but of special interest to the Old Testament students is "The instruction of Amen-em-ope". The reason why they are interested in this piece of Egyptian wisdom writing is that it bears striking similarities to proverbs 22:17-24:22. Johnson asserted that though it is impossible to determine which writing came first, the Egyptian or the Hebrew, the connection between the two has been observed by a wider range of modern Old Testament scholarship. However, Johnson agreed that while there are unquestionable similarities between Egyptian and Hebrew wisdom, there are also important theological differences.

Contributing to what other scholars have said so far, Beebe,[11] in his work *The Old Testament,* reported that wisdom writers in the Old Testament borrowed extensively from other cultures in the Ancient Near East. He opined that Canaanites, Edomites, and Arabs had traditions of wisdom which were assimilated by the Hebrew (Jer. 49:7; Obad 8; Job 1:1). To Beebe, some of the aphorisms in the book of Proverbs have their origin in the literature of Canaan, as far back as the Late Bronze Age (1500-1200B.C). The style of an ancient Canaanite proverb matches that of the Old Testament. Beebe argued further that the belief among Hebrew sages that wisdom was God's first act of creation was learned from Canaanite wisdom literature. He said that the book of proverbs carries several direct borrowings from the Old Canaanite wisdom. He also said that the Hebrew sages took over the Instruction of Amen-em-ope almost intact. Stressing the relevance and the universal trait of wisdom across different cultures, Beebe asserted that wisdom appealed to people widely spread throughout Near East. It furnished a cultural quality which crossed political line and

religious expression. The polytheists and the monotheists could use the same wisdom sayings, and with only slight adjustments, fit them into their own religious contexts. Though Old Testament Priests and Prophets might have rejected alien form of worship and beliefs, as Beebe observed, the Israelite sage welcomed wisdom from Canaan, Egypt, and Mesopotamia[12].

Wisdom in Ancient Israel

Scholars, as earlier noted, have written on Israelite Wisdom. Mark R. Sneed,[13] in his work *The Social World of the Sages – An introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom Literature*, spoke extensively on Israelite Wisdom. Basically, according to him, wisdom is a skill, gift, orability. In a nutshell, it is intelligence, especially high cognitive ability. Reflecting on the concept of wisdom within the Israelite perspective, Mark identified various types of wisdom. These, according to him, include Amateur Wisdom, Divine Wisdom, Royal Wisdom, Professional or Technical Wisdom, Mantic Wisdom and Literary or Aesthetic Wisdom. The Hebrew word for "wisdom", as Mark argued, is *chokmah* while its adjectival for "wise" is *chakam.* This implies amateur, common, or non-technical wisdom, and can be interpreted to mean "cleverness" or "cunning". Giving scriptural example of this, Mark talked about the woman that saved her city from Joab (2 Sam. 20:15 – 22). Through her wisdom, she convinced Joab that it would be more reasonable to kill one person rather than many in her city. Destroying the whole city would definitely result in killing those who were innocent. Abigail was another woman who displayed this type of wisdom to rescue her life and family from being slaughtered by David whom Nabal, her husband, had insulted (1 Sam. 25). She was able to convince David of the injustice in killing many innocent people as a result of one person's moral laxity. David later pronounced, "Blessed is your discretion", because she had restrained him from shedding the blood of the so called innocent.

Mark also talked about Divine Wisdom which he considered more specialised and fundamental. This is because the source of such wisdom is deities. In Israel, the Lord was very wise and with him are wisdom and strength[14]. The book of proverbs reveals that wisdom can be generated from the study of several aphorisms in the book. However, the book equally portrays God as the ultimate source of wisdom. In other words, wisdom has divine origin traceable to God. Speaking on Royal Wisdom, Mark claimed that kings were considered along with the gods. This explicitly explains the reason why King Solomon asked for an understanding mind to rule the Israelites. He desired wisdom above honour, wealth, or power over his enemies (1Kings 3).[15] Exploring the semantic domain of wisdom, Mark affirmed that words for "wisdom" and

for "being wise", in the Hebrew Bible, are often paired along with noun for "knowledge", "understanding", "instruction" and "advice", and verbs like "to know", "to instruct" "to prescribe" and "to advise". He posited that wisdom is often connected with "instruction". In his observation about the sages in ancient Israel, Mark established that there were professional sages who had undergone special training and education, appearing in group and forming a type of vocational guild. However, according to him, there were also amateur sages who trained themselves or had a unique innate abilities or assumed specific roles in the society. The most basic and archetypal role of sage in ancient Israel, as Mark claimed, would be that of parents. Parents are the quintessential teacher who passed on their life experiences and wisdom to their children to ensure they are productive members of the family and citizens in the entire community.[16] Children were also taught by their parents' skills and general knowledge that would assist them to be successful in their lives and vocations. It is therefore reasonable to say that wisdom begins in the home in ancient Israel. In the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible, the voice of the parent is well pronounced. In the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the vocative "my son" is employed to address the supposed audience. However, most scholars argued that the usage is metaphorical and used as a personal address to a student by his teacher. Elders, in ancient Israel, were also considered as sages. Mark, in his work referred to above, saw the relevance of the ancient Near Eastern culture in this idea. He said that in the Ancient Near East, being old or having grey hair was connected with wisdom. As a person aged in the ancient world, his or her honour and prestige increased correlatively, and they were valued for their wisdom and knowledge that had accrued over the years. Thus, younger people were expected to go to the elders for counsel. Village or city elder was the most basic kind of elders in the ancient world. Considering the wisdom of the elders in ancient Israel, Mark identified three main functions of an elder in the community. Firstly, elders served as peacemakers, adjudicating conflicts among members of the families. They were also chosen by the community based on their honour and value for impartiality and for placing the interest of the community above their own. Besides, their older age, numerous life experiences and accumulated wisdom enabled them to serve effectively. Secondly, elders served as representatives for their village or city in the larger gathering, festivals and in judicial cases that involved various clans. Thirdly, elders served as judges in the city or village in which they lived. Apart from the village or city elders, there were also national or tribal elders who would be from the most prestigious families that represent regions and would meet regularly. Judges, in ancient Israel, were also identified as sages. Though, elders could serve as judges in the society as earlier observed, there were also judges who were governmental officials.

Kings also served as sages in Israel, just like in the ancient Mesopotamia where their kings demonstrated great wisdom and piety in building of temples for gods. In the Hebrew Bible, Solomon is portrayed as a sage and it is no surprise that the authorship of the book of Proverbs is ascribed to him. In the same vein, Hezekiah is said to have instructed his officials to collect the Proverbs of Solomon (Prov. 25:1). Mark noted that both the Kings of Israel and other ancient Near Eastern nations were expected to be paragons of virtue, power and wisdom. Closely connected with the wise king are his courtiers and counselors who could also be referred to as sages. These were also scribes, though not very often. There were also mantic sages and magicians. Daniel and his three friends served as mantic sages for the Babylonians.[17]

In his own submission, Julius[18] referred to wisdom as one of the most interesting and important elements in the development of Judaism. He argued that the wise men or sages take their place beside the priests as teachers of youth in ethics and religion. The interest of these wise men was not in Jewish but in human life, and they have therefore been called humanists. Nothing could be seen more clearly than the fact that they recognized wisdom as universal. Julius disclosed that there are striking parallels to our biblical Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes among the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians as well as among other nations. However, to him, this does not mean that Jewish wisdom was dependent upon any of these, but that wisdom is international; everywhere the fruit of life's experience is expressed in this manner, it is of universal application. Julius claimed that there are three wisdom books, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes. He said that others, like the story of Ahikar, the book of Jesus Ben Sirach or Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon are still extant, but they were not included in the Hebrew canon.

The teaching of the wise men, as Julius observed, dealt with the whole range of life; with personal affairs, including good manners as well as good morals; with family relations, including parents, children, and servants; with social relationship, between friends and enemies, between rich and poor; with professional and business matters; and with public life and its interests. There is a wealth of wisdom, of sober and realistic observation, of sharp epigrammatic characterization, of kindly humour and biting sarcasm, of warm personal exhortation and urgent appeal that makes the book of Proverbs a veritable mine of good counsel for the art of right living. The great motive of wise living is always personal happiness. Julius considered wise men as profoundly religious because their principle of morals and religion is that goodness is rewarded, wickedness is punished. The wise men, as he observed, tried to inculcate the principle of worthy

life by glorifying wisdom as its secret and source. Looking through the various books of wisdom, Julius concluded that the book of Proverbs was the work of orthodox men, who assumed that the righteous and the wicked are rewarded according to their deserts. But the validity of this doctrine was challenged and denied by the authors of Job and Ecclesiastes, who could not reconcile it with the fact of life.[19]

Reflecting on the relevance of Israelite wisdom tradition in a popular context, Tullock[20] opined that Israelites contributed several things to the entire world; even in the modern days, the people are still making invaluable contributions to human society. To him, of all her literatures, the most widely admired and acceptable was the words of her sages and the songs of her singers. Her proverbs and metaphors are reflected in the speech of many lands. The book of Job, which is her greatest literary masterpiece, ponders on the mystery of some of life's deepest and unanswered questions. Her Psalms also reflect the full range of human emotion, from abject misery to ecstatic praise. The explicitness of her love songs challenges both the Jewish and Christian interpreters. Though the teacher of wisdom was said to be seldom mentioned in the Old Testament outside the wisdom literature, Tullock confirmed that they were considered alongside the priest and prophets as found in Jeremiah 18:18. However, interest in wisdom in Israel, as Tullock claimed, was much older than the time of Jeremiah. Wisdom does not know political and international boundaries. Its teachings were of two types: practical wisdom, which was concerned with the problems of everyday living; and secondly, the use of easily remembered literary forms like proverbs, fables and short poetic discourses on human problem, which could be committed to memory.

III. WISDOM AMONG THE YORUBA PEOPLE

Just as in the ancient Israel, the concept of wisdom is one of the most highly cherished phenomena among the Yoruba. The Yoruba people consider wisdom, known as *{gb-n*, as precious diadem one must possess for living a fulfilled or successful life. One Yoruba maxim says: *Cni 9 gb-n abi w5rz n7k6n,*[21] (He who is wise has gold in his belly). In his shrewd observation, Akogun,[22] while identifying the most cherished world-view of the Yoruba, confirmed that money which is worshipped in many cultures occupies bottom position in the Yoruba scale of value system, but wisdom, knowledge and intelligence known collectively as *{gb-n*, **m=* and *)ye* top the scale to be followed closely by valour. According to him, integrity comes third while industry comes fourth. It is after wisdom and the other attributes would have taken their seat would the man with money and material wealth be considered. One Yoruba adage says: *Ow9 la f7 ń ra csin, [gb-n la f7 ń g6n 5n*[23] (We use money to buy a horse but use wisdom

to ride on it).

Regarding the sources of wisdom among the Yoruba, oral traditions, as Oyeronke[24] opined, constitute the starting point of any investigation into Yoruba thought system. Oyeronke stated that Yoruba oral genres include :*)we* (Proverb), the *Ifq* corpus, *Or7k8* (lineage and individual praise poetry) and **jqlq* (hunter's poetry), etc. Other sources include: Songs, Stories, Riddles and Taboos,[25] etc. In agreement with this, Bamidele,[26] Faycmi,[27] Babatunde,[28] Aderinto[29] and others confirmed the value and the use of proverbs in traditional Yoruba society. For instance, Bamidele in his work, *The History and Tradition of the Yoruba People,* disclosed that among the Yoruba people, proverbs and adages form a significant part of everyday language, and are used extensively in every form of communication[30]. This submission was developed by Fayemi who argued that the Yoruba accord great respect for intelligent and expert use of language, especially the appropriate use of proverbs and, as such, the *zgbz* (elder) is expected to exhibit or display this capacity. Fayemi, however, said that the capacity for exhibiting this expert use of language is not solely based on old age as there are some youths, who are witty in the genre of proverbial communication and intelligent use of language.[31] In the Yoruba thought pattern, displaying sagacity in the use of spoken word is the sign or herald of being cultured. It is equally a distinctive characteristic of conversational prudence and the epitome of intellectual maturity.

Babatunde, in her work, *The Effect of Globalization on the Yoruba Language and Culture*, agreed with Oyeronke on proverb as a source of wisdom in traditional Yoruba community. She argued that, in Yoruba culture, it is a mark of wisdom to interlace one's expression or utterance with proverbs. According to her, proverbs are appreciated as the vehicle for words, and therefore a Yoruba proverb puts it:*)we lcsin =r=, b7 =r= bq s=n6 0we la 9 f8 wq a,* (proverbs are the horses for words, for when words are lost we use proverbs to seek them out).[32] Following others' submissions, Babatunde said that proverbs are highly valued in Yoruba culture and individuals who are skilled in proverbs are highly revered in the Yoruba community because they have ability to get to the heart of a matter through the use of appropriate proverbs. Proverbs, as she claimed, have time and context of application. She concluded that proverbs enrich or enhance human's speech and they are exclusively the preserve of elders. Within this understanding, Aderinto also submitted that the Yoruba people believe in the efficacy of proverbs in message deliver, and to imprint on the minds of their fellow people carefulness, so that people can live a fruitful and problem-free life.[33] He expressed further that the Yoruba people cherished the use of proverbs. Proverbs, according to him, can be

used as weapons to put people on the right track in matters relating to behaviour. Carefulness, as a most sensitive and extremely important virtue among the Yoruba people, is diligently conveyed by the appropriate use of proverbs.

In a more comprehensive way, Akinola,[34] in his work "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs", emphasised the significance of proverb in Yoruba traditional setting. Speaking on the language and harmony of the Yoruba proverbs, Akinola observed that, in the social life of the Yoruba people, proverbs constitute a powerful device for shaping moral beliefs, opinions and consciousness. The poetics of Yoruba proverbs form a major aesthetic aspect of its nature. Thus, an individual Yoruba who is deeply cultured employs proverbs when making speeches in daily activities. These proverbs are always appropriately applied to correlate with the specific subject matter of discourse in the context of use. Yoruba proverbs are very unique, marked out from ordinary maxims and are expressed in figurative mode.[35] Reflecting on the Yoruba proverbs and moral instruction, Akinola added that many Yoruba proverbs explored local, traditional and cultural world view, history as well as the social values of the Yoruba people to press home their decisions on moral directives to the youths. That was why proverbs are described as the poetry and moral science of the Yoruba nation. Many Yoruba proverbs are used to portray traditional observations on the nature of things.[36] They emanate from what the aged people observed from natural phenomena and incidences of the past which could be didactic in orientating the youths.

The content of Yoruba proverbs include social charters, praising what the people cherish and consider as virtue as well as condemning bad practices. Among the acceptable virtues in Yoruba proverbs are respect for elders, humility, hard work, consideration for others, truthfulness and respect for vows, pledges or promises. Idleness and busy bodies are part of the vices condemned in Yoruba proverbs. Elders, among the Yoruba, use proverbs to embellish and support arguments in their conversation. Proverbs could also be used in other oratory events. Elders, according to Akinola, are the people considered to possess this convicting power ability.[37] Proverbs, therefore, are domicile to the aged people because they quote them effortlessly from the reservoir of their acquired knowledge. Among the Yoruba people, proverbs are considered the wealth of knowledge gathered for several years by the elders on the basis of their past experiences and the study of natural phenomena of life.

In his explanation on the use of Yoruba proverbs, Akinola also talked about the relevance of the youths in traditional Yoruba community. He

said that, in spite of the considerable number of Yoruba proverbs that portray the aged people as the repository of wisdom and experience, there are other Yoruba proverbs that reveal the youth as equally wise, strong, creative, caring, intelligent, helpful and very relevant in the progress of their family and the society at large. Nevertheless, some Yoruba proverbs encourage the youths to seek the help of elders. In line with this, wisdom, as observed in the words of Akinola, is always characterized by the judicious use of proverbs among the Yoruba people. There are several proverbs which are meant to glorify the wisdom of the elderly person, calling the youth who might want to take such for granted to order.[38] The Yoruba people consider the elders as the authority figures, custodians of society's history and tradition whose wealth of knowledge is equal to a well-stocked archive and whose demise is tantamount to setting a rich library ablaze. Elders are those who are capable of explaining to younger generation the ancient events that had happened in the past and their implication for the present time through proverbs. Many of these proverbs are directed to the younger people, admonishing them to tap from the wealth of experience of the aged people.

Some Yoruba proverbs also reveal cautions against elder's misdemeanor. The exalted and honourable position of the elders in the Yoruba society is highly cherished. Many Yoruba proverbs describe the uniqueness and enviable virtues of the elders; and therefore warn against misconduct.[39] The reason is that elders are the people on which the moral rectitude as well as the ethical standard of the community is hung. They are expected to guild, help, support and control the youth in adhering strictly to moral values of the Yoruba community. As a guild or individual, an elder is therefore not expected to mislead the innocent youths. In order to sustain their exalted position, elders are expected to be firm, factual and truthful. They must be people of their words, and not be double tongued, liars, deceivers or fraudulent persons.[40]

Adding to what others have said on the Yoruba proverbs, Adejubee[41] in his work, "Portrayal of Womenfolk in Yoruba proverbs", submitted that proverb is considered one of the most prominent forms of folklore. He observed that proverb could be considered the most enduring oral or verbal art whose widespread usage has been popularly recognised through the print and electronic media. Unlike 'tales in moonlight' and 'ground parents' folktales' which are gradually going into extinction, proverb continues to be well used, and judiciously constitutes part of Yoruba daily living. Yoruba proverbs could be seen as the essential foundation, considerable for social and cultural wisdom. In line with what Akinola had said, Adejubee stressed that proverbs, among the Yoruba people, serve as

powerful rhetorical means of shaping ethical beliefs, opinions and consciousness of the people.

In order to press home his point on the relevance of proverbs in communication, Adejubee made some etymological analyses of the word 'proverb'. He established that the word 'proverb' is taken from the Latin word 'proverbium'. 'Pro', as he said, means 'in front of', while 'verbium' means 'word'. This, according to Adejubee, implies that proverb takes the place of ordinary words. The indispensable role of Yoruba proverbs in communication is deeply illustrated. In other words, proverbs are employed in the place of ordinary daily expression so as to reveal deeper meaning. Through proverbs, collective wisdom and worldview are sustained and transmitted from one generation to the other.[42] Proverbs are short pithy sayings with implicit moral truths. They are distillations of the wisdom of the people acquired and accumulated over the years from everyday experiences. Proverbs proffer the essence of a particular conversation in a brief and unmistakable manner, by clarifying vividly the subject matter[43]. So, proverb, according to Adejubee, can be seen as a very rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can be derived.

Fasehun,[44] in her work, "Proverbial Exposition of the Aesthetic Sensibilities of the Yoruba Race", posited that proverbs are variously used for many purposes. According to her, there are different types of proverbs designed for every situation in life. Yoruba people have proverbs that are deliberately attached to almost everything in their physical and cultural environment. Similar to what others have said, Fasehun disclosed that Yoruba proverb is all-embracing and encompassing because it is taken out of various activities in the society, natural objects and phenomena. She agreed with Akinola that there are classes of proverbs that indicate ideas about beliefs in respect of what is good and beautiful in the Yoruba community. However, unlike Akinola, and others, she argued that aesthetics which is central in the proverbial ideology of the Yoruba people means different things to different people. She noted, for example, that to some people, it is the beauty of face and body while, to others, it is what is inside that makes a person beautiful. Nevertheless, irrespective of the way aesthetics had been considered, emphasis is quite laid on the relevance of the Yoruba proverbs.

Fasehun argued that the use of proverb is a worldwide phenomenon that is highly cherished right from the ancient past to the present age. The study of the Yoruba proverb, she said, commenced in 1852 during the year Samuel Ajayi Crowther collected several Yoruba proverbs in his book titled *The Vocabulary of Yoruba Language*.[45] Speaking on the aesthetics of

Yoruba proverbs, Fasehun maintained that a major aesthetic quality of Yoruba proverbs is their poetic language and imagery. These reflect, most often, the characteristics of the Yoruba domestic animals, hunting activities, folklore, beliefs, religions, social institutions, forms of natural life and objects, and many others.[46] Great and invaluable importance is accorded the use of proverbs among the Yoruba people. This is done mainly to sustain, control and most significantly to preserve them for accurate utilisation. Though many of them were not written down, every serious-minded user of Yoruba proverbs is deeply conscious of the standard and adheres strictly to the regulations so as to keep the sanctity of the proverbs from abuse and reckless use.[47] Fasehun added that proverbs are imbued with unassailable truths as many of them cannot be easily faulted. They are usually encapsulated in coded forms and as a result, it is very difficult for those who are not witty to decode. The relevance of Fasehun's work is summed up in her submission that Yoruba proverbs seem to be the exclusive preserve of the elders as younger people are not expected to use them while talking without the initial permission by the elders or by certain apologetic remarks which might come up either before the speech or immediately after the statement.[48] Proverbs, according to Fasehun, help to proffer certain pointedness and clarity of focus to a dialogue. They are romantic, having entertainment value, in terms of spicing up speech or in the area of making them more exciting to listeners. Fasehun concluded that proverbs are the storehouse of the wisdom of the Yoruba people.

Faturoti,[49] in his work "An Insight into Ethical and Behavioural Patterns in Yoruba Proverbs", also opined that proverb is one of the oldest and most striking genres of the Yoruba oral literature. Proverbs, among the Yoruba, are highly valued and considered as the wisdom lore. No wonder why speakers, writers and general users of the Yoruba language use proverbs as significant means of communication in all their quotidian activities.[50] Proverbs, as Faturoti observed, are also employed to articulate their views, to educate, encourage and facilitate their wheel of interaction. One may not be able to participate meaningfully in a critical communal discussion if one is not witty in quoting and understanding the meaning of proverbs relevant to the context of communication in Yoruba society.[51]

Proverbs are incontrovertibly inherent in Yoruba life and this explicitly explains why they are usually accentuated as viable instruments of communication, after being considered to be persuasive and convincing enough.[52] Faturoti stressed that Yoruba people glorify proverbs as the "horses" for words at different level of expression. In other words, if a word is lost, a proverb is used to find it. The "words that are lost" in this

context means "ambiguous or complex expressions" while "horses" (proverbs) are the channels through which communication is made possible. According to Faturoti, proverbs have been described as succinct sayings of folk intelligence, often compressed in form, with deeper meaning and roundly used in giving credence to expression. Proverbs, as a speech act, are meaningful and abridged expressions, laced up with age long lexemes and construction. They are said be pithy sayings of folk wisdom that uses structural variations with colourful manifestations of language.[53] Faturoti further revealed that proverbs x-ray the life and ethical ideas of a given society and in some cases are used to regulate rules of life. They are the guiding oracles that man has discovered for himself in the great business of how to be, to do and to do without. Therefore, proverbs are allowed to dictate the values by which every member of the community should live.

In order to offer formidable impetus to the value and the indispensability of proverbs, as Faturoti observed, the Yoruba people intentionally promote them to the realm of being difficult to violate, and to restrict the users to the specific sphere of societal etiquette. This purpose has been achieved maximally in the pre-literate Yoruba society. However, the contemporaneous society is repugnantly disinclined to proverbs acceptability,[54] practicability and functionality. Faturoti said that proverbs, nowadays, are no longer being employed as the unwritten regulations and tools of social guide like before. He said this is probably because of cultural influence from the Western world. Faturoti could be justified because many people today, particularly the youths, cannot speak or write Yoruba language correctly. In fact, in some schools nowadays, offering Yoruba language as a subject has been made optional.

As a result of this shortcoming, prevailing self-destructive values are corrupting the psyche of the people in an era of social gridlock in dire need of normative wisdom and cultural revival. The values of the ancient times, when people exhibited good character and craved for good name, using proverbial sayings with moral underpinnings as their guide, are no more ascendant in present Yoruba society.[55] In addition to what he earlier said, Faturoti stated that there are several proverbs, among the Yoruba, that are rendered in various dialects across the entire Yoruba linguistic landscape. In other words, every Yoruba tribe has its own set of proverbs that may not be understood by the non-speaker of the dialect.

In his own work titled "Semiotics Representations and Socio-cultural value of Yoruba Proverbs on Parenting and Child Rearing", Ojo[56] argued that Yoruba has rich culture and in the realm of their oral literature, there exist songs, stories, recitation, fables, poetry and proverbs. To him,

proverbs are well rooted in Yoruba culture and almost every Yoruba person who grows up in a village, becomes familiar with proverbs. The proverbial language has a rich collection of words, combination of words, phrases, symbols, pictures, allusions, associations, and comparison. Ojo stressed that proverbs are taken in such a way that every part of the society is wholly portrayed in them. Indeed, proverbs themselves are symbols of communication which are cleverly packed into brief sentences[57]. They could be expressed in anecdotes and stories. Sometimes, they could be carved on words in reference to several materials and could be sung, danced or acted. What is fascinating in Ojo's submission is his argument that many proverbs act as catalysts of knowledge, philosophy, ethics, morals and wisdom. Proverbs, as he claimed, also draw attention to dangers in human relations. What is interesting about proverbs is that they equally appeal to human emotions, even beyond mere reflection.[58] Proverbs are considered along ethical issues and not restricted to the head but also to conscience. They arouse human conscience, giving assurance and help in the course of deciding between good and evil, justice and injustice, right and wrong, etc. Within the Yoruba context, the relevance of proverbs cannot be exaggerated.[59]

Proverbs are deeply valuable and their enormous advantages are unanimously cherished in the traditional Yoruba society. Ojo observed further that proverbs could be used as a means of training and teaching the children as well as creating harmonious relation in different aspects of life. Some of the issues considerable in proverbs include sacredness of life and its preservation, communal cooperation, respect for elders, solidarity, virtues like kindness, bravery, unity, justice, generosity, friendship, hard work, strength, trust, love, fairness, and mutual relationship.[60] Like any other African people, Yoruba people use proverbs as ingredients in language. In recent times, people find it difficult to understand and interpret proverbs because elderly ones in the community are those commonly using proverbs.[61]

Ifq corpus is another remarkable source of wisdom in traditional Yoruba society. Peel,[62] Adegboyega,[63] Farinade,[64] K1mi,[65] Ifal[lq,[66] Ab7nb-lq,[67] Lai,[68] among others, have attributed the corpus of wisdom to *Ifq*. Peel, in his work "Yoruba Religion: Seeing it in History, Seeing it Whole", examined the relevance of *Ifq* in the course of Yoruba wisdom. He considered *Ifq* as occupying a central position in Yoruba religion. According to him, a large family of divination systems that extends across many cultures of Africa and Asia belongs to *Ifq*. *Ifq* in Peel's submission is an extraordinary cultural artifact. Within the basic framework of 16 options is organised a vast corpus of proverbs, myth, moral reflection, sage

philosophy, and theological rationalisation. In line with Peel's argument, one can deduce that *Ifq,* in reference to its divine origin, is the central creative force in Yoruba religion. This is connected with *Olodumare* (God) himself. In Yoruba theology, *Ir5nm[l2* (spiritual forces) are messengers of *Olodumare*, ruling over all the existing phenomena in heaven and the earth. So, the ancient Yoruba *Ifq* doctrine considered the universe as a perfect creation of *Olodumare* (God). There is no exaggeration in saying that *Ifq* corpus could be considered as the text of Yoruba religion which contains cultural wisdom. In other words, it could be deduced that the Yoruba cultural wisdom is contained in *Ifq.*

Adegboyega, in her work title "The Metaphysical and Epistemological Relevance of Ifq Corpus", reflected extensively on the place of *Ifq* Corpus in Yoruba wisdom tradition. She acknowledged the existence of other divinations such as *C1r8nd7nl9g5n* and *Zgb8gbz*; she however observed that *Ifq* is often preferred above any other forms of divination by the Yoruba people. *Ifq*, according to her, is one of the most important deities. She opined that without *Ifq*, the value of the Yoruba gods would diminish. The Yoruba people believed that when God is punishing a man, the only way to ascertain and pacify such is to consult *Ifq* and if a community is to make sacrifice to god, that can also be known by consulting *Ifq*.[69] Thus *Ifq* is considered the only active mouth piece of Yoruba traditional religion.[70] Adegboyega stated further that wisdom, knowledge and understanding made *+r5nm8lz* serve as a link between him and other gods. Besides, his wisdom, knowledge and understanding cover the past, present and the future. *+r5nm8lz* is known to be instrumental to the foundation of the earth, the creation of human beings and their journey into the world.[71] He is identified with the knowledge of all things and therefore described as an inexhaustible repository of knowledge. *+r5nm8lz* is believed to have knowledge and unquestionable answers to the intractable problems of human beings.[72] Consulting *Ifq,* the Yoruba people have access to the meaning and purpose of events in the past, present and future. Knowing everything about human beings, *Ifq* can supply adequate information about them since he was a witness to every human's choice of destiny.[73]

In the similar vein, Fár8nqdé, in his work "Cowrie Shell Divination & Ifa Spiritual Tools", added that it is impossible to separate the subject of *Od6 Ifq* (Ifa signatures) from the Yoruba culture and traditions. He argued that the soul and heart beat of the Yoruba people as a whole resides within the oral corpus of the *Ifq* divination and worship system. The Yoruba science, cosmology, metaphysics, medicine and wisdom, according to Fár8nqdé, are traceable to *Ifq* corpus. *Ifq* is believed to embody the wisdom of life, truth and the revelation of human destiny and destination.[74] Fár8nqdé

posited that *Ifq* is the living body of wisdom which was delivered by *Ol9d6mar4*to *+r5nm8lz* who is the only witness to human destiny in the spiritual realm before birth. *+r5nm8lz* used this wisdom to heal and to resolve all human problems.[75] He stressed further that the *Od6* (signatures) and *csc* (verse (s)) of *Ifq* are road maps that can guide one in details through life towards the things that all human beings cherish such as family, children, health, long life, love, money, freedom from loss, victory over sickness and death.[76]

In her own opinion, K1mi posited that *Ifq* is highly honoured among the Yoruba. This is done not only for its redemptive power but also for the cultural link it provides between man and the other gods. *$x6*, who had been the erratic god, occupies a place in *Ifq* divination rites.[77] By these rites, the Yoruba mind communes with its environment in terms of phenomena like drought, fire, wind, earth and other things. K1mi observed that *Ifq* is also called *+r5nm8lz* and was one of those gods that journeyed from heaven to earth to found the ancient Yoruba city called Il3–if2. In If2, he fathered eight children, practised successfully his profession as seer and solver of all problems.[78] He founded a cult of diviners, gathered a band of disciples and was won to wander from city to city in the course of his profession. But due to the impertinence of his youngest son, *{l-w=,* *+r5nm8lz* was annoyed and the god of wisdom decided to part ways with earthlings and journeyed back to heaven by the much climbed 'palm tree'.[79]

Commenting on the same wisdom of *Ifq*, Ifql[lq, in his work titled "Ifq yesterday, Ifq today, Ifq tomorrow: The ever expanding corpus of wisdom we call Ifq*"*, argued that within *Ifq* is housed all the wisdom and knowledge of the world past, present, and future. However, the work of Ifal[lq was basically on the expansion of this Yoruba oral tradition. While considering the intimate connection of +sun with *Ifq* divination, Ab7nb-lq considered *Ifq* as bag of wisdom but Lai, in his own opinion, referred to it as the deity of wisdom. In whatever way it may have been depicted, *Ifq* corpus remains a notable source of wisdom among the Yoruba people.

Puzzling, but exciting, in Yoruba wisdom tradition is the ascription of wisdom to the elderly people. Wisdom is highly considered as sacrosanct in recognising elderly people in Yoruba worldview. In line with this, Adeboye,[80] in her work titled "The Changing Conception of Elderhood in Ibadan, 1830 – 2000", stressed that old people were expected to possess wisdom, tact and maturity accumulated through experiences over the years. These were collectively called *[gb-nzgbz* (elderly wisdom). The respect enjoyed by the elders and social recognition they had, as Adeboye noted, did not imply that the youths were considered irrelevant. At the

level of discourse, the Yoruba idea was that there should be mutual respect and cooperation between the elders and the youths. However, in reality, the philosophy behind these ideas was seldom followed. Within the lineage, elders acted largely as if they had a monopoly of wisdom. Thus, their views were rarely to be challenged, and dissenting opinions from the youths were condescendingly treated as impulsive behaviours or as outright affront and disrespect, which sometimes attracted heavy punishment depending on how 'young' the 'offender' was, and on his past 'record of offence'.

Adeboye's submission is not tenable as it cannot be defended successfully. One can ask, at what point in the cultural history of the Yoruba was that moral approach noticed. Are the youths not prone to exuberance? Should such laxity be allowed without caution? The Yoruba philosophy, as laid down in their proverbial sayings, holds the two views: *Cnu zgbz lob8 ti n gb9* (It is in the mouth of the elders that the matured kolanut tastes better) and *{m[d3 gb-n zgbz gb-n la fi dq il3 if2* (The collective wisdom of the aged and young led to the founding of If2). It is generally believed among the Yoruba that: *{m[d3 gb-d= m[[w- w2 k7 9 t9 l4 bq zgbz jcun* (a child must know how to wash his hand (well- behaved) before he can eat (be privileged) with the elder).

Speaking on the role of elders in relation to wisdom, Manu[81] viewed elders as representing the tradition and the wisdom of the past. He however made a distinction between "elder" and "older" person. According to him, older person has simply lived a longer life than most of the people, but is not considered as one who deserves high praise and respect because his life has not been positive example for the community. He said older person could be a thief or drunkard, an evil person or somebody who never married and had children. An elder, on the other hand, is someone who is given the highest status generally in African culture because he or she has lived a life of purpose, and there is nothing more respected than living a purposeful life. Manu concluded that an elder is given the highest status because he represents the closest link to the wisdom of the spirit world.

Manu's conclusion was developed by Aderemi[82] who disclosed that, among the Yoruba, the old people are noted as the repositories of experience, memories, authority and wisdom, and thus, among them, it is said that: *zgbz k0 s7 n'7l65, 8l5 bzj1, baql3 il3 k6, il3 di ahoro,* (without the elderly people, community and villages will collapse). In his own contribution, *{lqy7nkq*[83] added that, traditionally, the older persons are those playing leadership roles in the society and were seen as repositories of wisdom. He said that the elderly people in Nigerian society carry out traditional roles of guardians of the ancestral values, chief custodians of

society's treasures and upholders of history, customs, folklores, cultural values, and wisdom. {lqy7nkq argued further that older persons settle dispute and conflicts arising from members of the family, based on their position, skill, knowledge, wisdom, vision and experience acquired along the journey to old age.

IV. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF HEBREW AND YORUBA CULTURAL AFFINITIES

It would be romantic to expect that Yoruba wisdom tradition would remain static in a dynamic world. Nonetheless, correct education and appreciation of Yoruba world-view, which is composed of the people's cosmological beliefs and practices, religions and philosophy are basic and crucial to understanding of Africa and Africans, their history and cultural contact, particularly to the cultural, religious, economic, military, and political life of ancient Israel. In his work, *Africa and the Africans in the Old Testament*, Adamo[84] argued that though the Hebrew Bible is primarily the record of, and a witness to the vertical and horizontal revelation of God within the history and experience of a peculiar people (Israel), it cannot but recognize God's involvement with other nations, which have contact with these "chosen people". This is because Israel had to struggle for her survival among the people in ancient Near East. She had to fight against the Amorites, Canaanites and several other peoples, even on getting to the promise land the struggle did not end. She came in contact with traders, soldiers, priests and prophets of powerful nations such as the Philistines, the Phoenicians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians and others. The religions of these nations, as Adamo observed, also became "a never-ending threat to the faith of Israel". Adamo argued further that as Israel came in contact with these foreign nations, she was forced to acknowledge the reality of their presence, and to redefine her own identity in the light of God's plan. Although some of these nations sometimes played a secondary role in shaping the political, religious and economic history of ancient Israel, as Adamo confirmed, others played a major role. Therefore, in order to understand properly the Old Testament, it is important to understand the life and thought of the people who have played major or minor roles in Israel's destiny.[85] Indeed, Adamo could be justified because in many ways, the African and Jewish cultures are very much alike. In his systematic commentary on Genesis 1-11, Modupe Oduyoye[86] spoke on the affinities between the African socio-cultural heritage and the way of life in ancient Israel. Revealing the secret behind these affinities, Getui et al.[87] disclosed that the indebtedness of the Hebrew to Africa is acknowledged throughout the Old Testament, from the perspective of religion, economic, politics, military, history, aesthetics, ethnics, and kingship. They argued that Egypt

is depicted as the country of refuge and bounty for Abraham and his descendants. Joseph, the son of Jacob, became the instrument for the rescue of his family from starvation. Eventually, the descendants of Abraham settled in Egypt, and the drama unfolds in the book of Pentateuch.

V. CONCLUSION

The works reviewed so far have revealed various scholarly opinions on Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions. Based on their submissions, it is discovered that the origin of Israelite wisdom could be traced to the ancient Near East, and that it could therefore not be studied in isolation from this background. Other scholars whose works were reviewed concentrated on wisdom or wisdom literature in ancient Israel. The third group of scholars focused on the nature, the sources and the values of Yoruba wisdom tradition as well as the indebtedness of Hebrew to Africa in relation to wisdom. Therefore, nudged by these scholars, it could be inferred that there are various issues in the Old Testament through which Africans, particularly the Yoruba people, have regarded the Old Testament as an affirmation of their cultural and religious heritage. Thus, having read or heard the biblical story, Yoruba converts have discerned the continuity and affinity between the biblical ways of life and their own.

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About the Authors: Dr Iyanda Abel Olatoye (iyandaolat@gmail.com) is of the Department of Religious Studies, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria; Dr Akponorie Simeon Iruo-Oghene (akponoriesimeon@gmail.com) is of Archbishop Vining College of Theology, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria.

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Public Sector Innovation and Service Delivery in Nigeria: A Paradigm Shift from Traditional Public Administration to New Public Management

By

Chibuzo Charles Nwosu & M.O. Ananti

ABSTRACT

Innovation in the public sector refers to the significant improvement in public administration and organisational services. It is also the implementation of new improved processes, methods and services by a public sector organisation, which is aimed at improving public sector operations and service delivery. The goal of this paper is to examine the role of New Public Management (NPM) as a framework or paradigm through which government can modernise and re-engineer the public sector. The paper examined the role of innovation in service delivery and how public service delivery can be improved through NPM reforms in Nigeria. The paper stated the importance of public sectors in Nigeria developing sound bureaucratic principles that would be the foundation upon which the NPM principles can be progressively embraced and nurtured. The methodology adopted for this work, in terms of data collection, was secondary source of data collection. The data collected were analysed using qualitative method of descriptive analysis. In the findings, it was concluded that in providing and improving technical, managerial, administrative, and service delivery, as well as leadership skills, it is important to foster quality assurance, efficiency, effectiveness, accessibility and sustainability of services in various sectors and contexts of the public service, as these are core aspects of NPM.

Keywords: innovation, service delivery, public sector, NPM

INTRODUCTION

The standard of service delivery in the public sector plays an outstanding role in the economy of many countries in today's global competitive environment. Over the past decade, fundamental changes have been transforming societies all over the world. There has been a significant shift

in the field of Public Administration. This change compels bureaucrats to tidy up organisational aspects in a way that enhances progress. Many developing countries, including Nigeria, are now realizing the need for innovation to provide customer-focused, cost effective and updated methods in improving the public sector service performance. Innovation in the public sector as observed by Awosika (2015) has become increasingly popular around the world as a strategy for improving governance and scaling up quality service. As a result, the shift towards a practice of treating the citizen as a customer has led to a real change in the relationship between the citizen and the public sector. The replacement of the term 'citizen' with the term 'customer' to describe the users of public services exemplify the movement towards characterizing the public sector as an institution that renders quality services to the people. Delivering quality services in all sectors of the public is considered an essential strategy for success and survival. The idea behind NPM is to introduce market-oriented strategies and management methods that will make the public service more responsive.

Improving the public sector has been an essential purpose embedded in the reform movement since the 1970s. This is because there has been a historical tendency for expenses in the public sector to rise faster than those in the rest of the economy (Mulgan & Albury, 2003). Hence, the need for innovation in public service delivery has long been stressed. Now, the public sectors are often under as much pressure to cut cost, reduce waste, and improve efficiency as the private sector. Innovation in the public sector is now recognized as a vital factor in meeting the challenges of globalization and demographic changes while, at the same time, sustaining a high level of service to the citizens (Donahue 2005). This is due to the public sector's potential and tendency to open new doors, reformulate old problems, break policy deadlocks, bring new actors together and formulate and implement new ideas (Sorensen & Torfing, 2012). Public sector agencies, therefore, adopt innovations in response to the constant economic, political, social and technological changes in an increasingly globalized and networked world marked by complex problems, tight budgets, and rising expectations from the citizenry.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Innovation

Innovation in administration refers to changes in the structure and processes of the organisation in the administrative systems, in the knowledge used in carrying out managerial functions and in the management skills that enable an organisation to function and succeed

using its resources.

Osborne and Brown (2011) defined innovation in public service as the introduction of new elements in the public service in the form of new knowledge, new organisations and new forms of management. Thus, innovation represents a discontinuity with the past. According to other authors, innovation means discontinuous change. Vries, Tummers, & Bekkers (2016) stressed that there is no precise or generally acceptable definition; instead, innovation is a discontinuity in relation to the past. Such discontinuity may be in the process, adoption of new technologies, creation of new products and services, and the introduction of new concepts. The objective is to increase efficiency and effectiveness while also increasing citizen satisfaction.

When innovation translates into new ways of operation in public administration, there is a talk of paradigm shift and the appearance of a new model of public management. Such new models have an internal logic that translates into new concepts, new ways of operation, new management instrument, new objectives and new values. Therefore, when examining the models it becomes necessary to identify the disruptions and innovations that followed.

Public Sector and Service Delivery

Since the formation of civil society where men entered into an agreement on the basis of social contract with the government, the question of service delivery has become so pivotal. The social contract arrangement was first envisioned by Thomas Hobbes in his book, *Leviathan*, where he warned that any society in its raw state of nature, that is, without any form of governmental authority, would result into a state of anarchy where the lives of men were brutish, nasty, and short. Hobbes (1994), therefore, suggested a social contract pact where men surrendered their rights under a sovereign authority with the ultimate goal of preserving their lives against violent death. On its part, the government would bear the responsibility of preserving the lives and properties of the citizens against physical or imagined threats.

Under the social contract doctrine, as propounded by Hobbes and modified by latter philosophers, the government has the enormous responsibility of maintaining law and order and providing public amenities. To discharge this task effectively and efficiently, public service emerged as the main machinery of government. Public service, therefore, operates as the structure through which the government responds to the needs of the general public. In other words, public service carries the responsibility of

formulating and executing policies and programmes that enhance the standard of living of the citizenry and deliver other welfare services to the general public. Since the term "public", according to Jones (1970), refers to the citizens of a particular geographic location at any given time, public service evokes the thought of government involvement in service delivery that is devoid of profit motives. Ogunna (2004) reiterates that the desire to satisfy the public through the implementation of public policies, enforcement of laws, and realization of public welfare is the culmination of effective public service delivery. Public service delivery becomes so paramount because it represents the fundamental structure of nation-building; it serves a tangible link between government and the citizens, and it also promotes the values of nations to the citizens and finally serves as a bond between the state and citizens.

Since effective service delivery remains the overall outcome of public services, measuring the service providers' level of performance, to keep them in the line of duty, is very essential. On this note, Al-Ghazali (2008:5) identified the following checklist for measuring the capabilities of the public service for effective service delivery:

- Public service should be able to demonstrate effective delivery of goods and services at a low cost and in a timely manner.
- Public service should be able to demonstrate equitable distribution of the services to the people in a fairer and transparent manner.
- Citizens should have the convictions that state institutions and public service respect the fundamental rights of the citizens and demonstrate respect for the laws of the land.
- Public service should be wary of physical force and coercion and should only use legitimate power to command submission.
- The environment should secure citizens to enable them carry out their daily routines without fear or hindrance.
- Finally, there should be equal treatment and dispensation of justice for all citizens without any bias.

Using the above yardstick, the extent to which the public service performs or meets the benchmark of effective service delivery to citizens varies from country to country. This is why virtually all countries of the world continue to constantly reform their public services with a view to ensuring that the delivery of goods and social services is done in an effective and efficient manner.

New Public Management

New Public Management (NPM) is an approach in running public service organisations at both sub-national and national levels. The term was first introduced by academics in the UK and Australia to describe approaches that were developed during the 1980s as part of an effort to make the public service more "business like" and to improve its efficiency by using private sector management models. As with the private sector, the New Public Management focuses on customer service; NPM reforms often focus on the centrality of citizens who were the recipient of the services or customers to the public sector. NPM reformers experimented with using decentralized service delivery models, to give local agencies more freedom in how they delivered programmes or services (Olowu, 2002). In some cases, NPM reforms emphasised the use of e-government to consolidate a programme or service to a central location in order to reduce costs.

Some governments tried using quasi-market structures, so that the public sector would have to compete against the private sector (notably in the UK, in health care). Key themes in NPM were financial control, value for money, increasing efficiency, identifying and setting targets and continuance monitoring of performance, and handing over power to the senior management executive. Performance was assessed with audits, benchmarks and performance evaluations. Some NPM reforms involved private-sector companies in delivering what were formerly public services (Agboola, 2016). NPM advocated the removal of collective agreements in favour of individual rewards/packages at senior levels combined with "short term contracts"; and introduction of private sector-style corporate governance, including using a Board of Directors approach to strategic guidance for public organisations. While NPM approaches have been used in many countries around the world, NPM is particularly associated with the most industrialised OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) nations, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, France, Spain, Canada and the United States of America. NPM advocacies focus on using approaches from the private sector, corporate or business world, which can be successfully applied in the public sector and in a public administration context. NPM approaches have been used to reform the public sector, its policies and programs. NPM advocates claim that it is a more efficient and effective means of attaining the same outcome (Olowu, 2002).

In NPM, citizens are viewed as "customers" and public servants are viewed as public managers. NPM tries to realign the relationship between public service managers and their political superiors by making a parallel relationship between the two. Under NPM, public

managers have incentive-based motivation such as pay-for-performance, and clear performance targets are often set, which are assessed by using performance evaluations. As well, managers in an NPM paradigm may have greater discretion and freedom as to how they go about achieving the goals set for them (Agboola, 2015). This NPM approach is contrasted with the traditional public administration model in which institutional decision-making, policy-making and public service delivery is guided by regulations, legislation and administrative procedures. NPM reforms use approaches such as disaggregation, customer satisfaction initiatives, customer service efforts, applying an entrepreneurial spirit to public service, and introducing innovations. The NPM system allows the expert manager to have a greater discretion. Public managers under the New Public Management reforms can provide a range of choices from which customers can choose, including the right to opt out of the service delivery system completely (Oladoyin, 2010).

NPM AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There is an argument that the concept of NPM has inspired the initiation of many reforms to improve public service delivery (Polidano, 1999). The underlying essence of NPM can be explained by the new trend in public administration to imbibe some important private-sector insights and values like efficiency, effectiveness, flexibility, responsiveness, competition, result oriented management, more explicit and measureable performance standards, and accountability. Absorbing these values into the public sector is in order since New Public Management (NPM) is a conceptual framework that originated as a solution to the perceived inefficiencies of traditional bureaucratic system of public administration. The framework is geared towards improving service effectiveness by borrowing private sector management practices.

The NPM framework is centred on result-based management, which involves setting clear objectives and goals, measuring performance against these targets and using this information to continuously improve operations. NPM also stresses on the importance of decentralization and devolution of decision making authority, giving managers and front line workers more autonomy and accountability in their actions. Market-based mechanism such as contracting out services to private providers, introducing competition between public sector agencies and charging users fees for services are also integral to the NPM framework. These mechanisms introduce market-like incentives into the public sector and encourage greater efficiency and innovation.

Additionally, NPM emphasizes the importance of customer service and citizen engagement, with public sector organisations expected to focus on meeting the needs and preferences of the citizens and involving them in the design and delivery of public services.

In essence, NPM represents a significant shift from the traditional approaches in public administration to a more decentralized approach. While some have criticized NPM for its reliance on market-based mechanism or its possible negative impact on public sector values, others credit it for driving innovation and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public service in many countries.

Edwin (2011) has listed NPM's main elements from which much of the agencification ideas can be discerned. According to him, the key NPM reform elements include:

- *Hands-on professional management* in the public sector. This means allowing the managers to manage. The typical justification for this is that accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility for action.

- *Explicit standards and measures of performance*. This requires goals to be defined and performance targets to be set. This sets out the basis for judging performance.

- Greater emphasis on *output controls*. It reflects the need to stress on results rather than administrative procedures.

- A shift to *disaggregation* of units in the public sector. This involves the breaking up of large entities into "corporatized" units that are task focused.

- A shift to greater *competition* in the public sector. This involves the move to term contracts and public tendering procedures.

- A stress on greater *discipline* and economy in public sector resource use (cutting direct costs, raising labour discipline, limiting compliance costs to business).

- Stress on *private-sector styles of management practice*, moving away from traditional public service to more flexible pay, hiring, rules, etc (Edwin and Gbaragaye, 2011).

It is within the ambit of NPM theory that any effective reform of the Nigeria public service can be situated.

THE NEED FOR PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS IN NIGERIA

Public sector reform is about strengthening the way that the public

sector is managed. The public sector may be over-extended in attempting to do much with too few resources. It may be poorly organized; its decision-making processes may be irrational; staff may be mismanaged; accountability may be weak; public programmes may be poorly designed and public services poorly delivered. Public sector reform is the attempt to rectify these problems. Public sector reform has become a priority on the political agenda of governments in Nigeria since the 1940s. Nowadays, the reform of public administration can be considered as a stable and autonomous public policy and object of a distinct stream of study or research. Uncertainty increases the risk of failure of an organisation's response and makes it difficult to compute the costs and probabilities associated with alternative decisions. To underpin the need, there is a growing shortage of public resources, which calls for a rethink on public service delivery, the ways organisations function, and the degree of efficiency of the whole system. The organisations are preoccupied with the lack of material and financial resources and with the need to ensure the availability of those resources (Adejuwon, 2012). Adamolekun (2005) opined that the challenges of public sector reform are accompanied with pressure from citizens, as regarding the quality of services provided, in conjunction with the widespread perception of inefficiency and backwardness of the public sector as a whole.

Several empirical studies have shown the effects, expected or not, of the public management reforms. In many cases the reforms have produced unintended consequences that had a negative impact on maintenance of what is basic by government and the public sector and also in many cases, changes to regulations, structures, and processes have not led to the expected results. Ihietan (2013) pointed out that public administrations have often imported tools and ideas for reform from the private sector (for example performance–related pay) while failing to bear in mind the national context or to consider the limits and weaknesses of those tools. Many countries continue to struggle to achieve the fundamental changes needed to respond to the unexpected effect of modernizations and new initiatives; such paradoxes seem to be a feature of consequences of action particularly in domains of strong beliefs and ambiguous experiences.

In a crisis situation, government needs to modernise the public sector and to focus on the relevance of public value so that people can explore and appreciate the current status of government reform. After almost four decades of reform in Nigeria, the role of the public sector has changed significantly in the fourth civilian dispensation. The expectations

for government action have not decreased, but in fact have increased in the 4th civil rule. Meanwhile, the nature of public policy problems or challenges faced by governments is still undergoing profound change. There is a growing need to understand the dynamic of the public sector in general; the modernisation of governments requires an understanding of the nature and dynamics of public administrations as a whole and how they work within the global society. The Obasanjo administration's Bureau for Public Service Reforms (BPSR), a reform process which demonstrates that public management reforms are a priority and that they offer an important opportunity for rethinking how to make changes effective and how to manage reforms. Agboola (2016) notes that the priority of public sector reforms is also emphasized in the BPSR reforms.

The four imperatives for public sector reforms are as follows:

1. *Enhancing transparency through initiatives of service compact*; that is, it enhances transparency which is regarded as a highly prized value that is generally discussed as a tool for increasing government accountability. Also, it serves as a desirable principle for reducing corruption in the public sector, and as a means for putting pressure on government performance.

2. *Improving leadership status* to meet the need for strengthening leadership and enhancing managerial responsibility in order to create a qualified cohort of civil servants capable of ensuring coherence, coordination and continuity within the public sector. Reforms relating to leadership emphasize several concepts, such as the definition of the key skills of future leaders and development of human resources departments for the recruitment of public leaders.

3. *Measuring performance* based on effective use of information on performance remains one of the most debated issues in the public sector today. The public sector in Nigeria is facing unprecedented pressure to improve the quality of their services while at the same time lowering their costs. The importance of strengthening the systems used to measure and assess performance has plainly increased in recent years.

4. *Combating corruption* remains a challenge for poorly operating states, such as Nigeria. Corrupt public servants have siphoned a great deal of the nation's wealth, leaving little for the country's poorest citizens. Reforming public institutions and government policies is necessary but poverty-alleviation measures need to be put in place to deal with the current high level of poverty. Policy-makers can arrive at plausible solutions only after

understanding corruption's effect on the quest for efficient and equitable management of the country's economic resources.

Innovation and Public Service Delivery

Innovation in the public sector is a powerful engine and a key instrument for the reform and revitalization of both fully state-owned bodies and quasi-governmental organisations and agencies (Eran, Aviv, Nitza & Ayalla, 2008). Innovation has become the engine of growth, and the gateway to economic transformation and poverty reduction. Innovation is the driving force behind modern economic growth. It deals with governance, political issues and other human problems which are very difficult to solve (Okibo & Shikanda, 2013). Innovation has the potential of opening new doors, reformulating old problems, breaking policy deadlocks, bringing new actors together and formulating and implementing new ideas (Sorensen & Torfing, 2012).

Public sector innovation is about new ideas that work at creating public value (Mulgan, 2007). Innovation in the public sector does not always result in new public services but may be linked to institutional renewal, new forms of governance, process innovation, digitization and organisational improvements (Cunningham & Karakasidou, 2009). As observed by Sorensen & Torfing (2012), innovation has the potential of opening new doors, reformulating old problems, breaking policy deadlocks, bringing new actors together and formulating and implementing new ideas. No wonder, Awosika (2015) remarked that innovation is at the heart of the public server's efforts to improve performance and productivity and develop new capabilities, business, and markets, and also contribute to enhancing the standard of living as well as creating new opportunities.

Innovation in the public sector has become an important domain in response to a substantial criticism of governments due to their inability to produce high-quality public services, or develop efficient and effective ways of achieving desired social outcomes. Unlike the private sector, where innovation is at the base of the competitive advantage of firms and represents a necessary condition for survival and longer-term sustainability, governments do not face the same pressure to innovate. Still, they have to meet demands for improved performance and societal impacts (Awosika, 2015). Innovation can contribute to improve the public services quality and effectiveness as well as to enhance government capacity in solving problems. In the views of Hargadon & Sutton (2000), innovation is considered important to public sector organisations because of its role in maintaining competitiveness in a globalised economy;

enhancing the organisation's ability to adapt to changing technological, social, economic, and political environments; reducing costs and increasing productivity, thereby improving profits and strengthening the organisation; and inculcating an organisational culture of creativity. It is relevant to public sector management because it seeks to attract high-quality creative staff, thereby breathing new life into slowing or stagnant markets or other operational areas; innovation could also facilitate entry into new markets.

Assessment of Innovative Ideas in the Nigerian Public Service

Recent innovations in the area of public service delivery has seen a shift from the traditional model of government being the sole provider to a more pragmatic approach such as public-private partnerships and alternative service delivery (Olumide, 2015). In the area of public service delivery, the old approach was to have public agencies serve as the sole producer and provider. However, this practice has given way to innovative ideas such as Public-Private-Partnership (PPP), outsourcing, performance measurement and so much more (Olumide, 2015). Regarding improving performance through innovations in the Nigeria civil service, the Federal Civil Service Commission introduced innovation in Appointments, Promotion, and Discipline. Also, through innovation in the public service, governments have been adopting Alternative Service Delivery (ASD) like agencification, concessions, public-private partnership, etc., in delivery services to the people. Alternative Service Delivery is a creative and unique procedure that involves changes in the style of existing public sector organisations or the design of new forms of organisation and is sometimes referred to as "restructuring" and "organisational innovation." The development of ASD arrangements as observed by Olumide (2015) has been closely linked with the advent of New Public Management (NPM) movement which advocates for innovative approaches to service delivery.

Similarly, another potential form of achieving higher efficiency is to utilize the advantages of the private sector entities to develop alternative service delivery arrangements. This was the situation in Nigeria when the government could no longer finance most capital projects, and even public corporations were performing at a loss. The general trend was to privatize these entities, thereby ending their being managed by the public service. However, issues bothering on equity and access had to be resolved to guide against the exclusion of certain strata of the society like the lower-class. Therefore, beyond the privatization process, other mechanisms were sought in order to effectively deliver public goods and services (Olumide, 2015).

The introduction of e-government is another major innovation in Nigeria. This refers to the use of information technology application to perform government functions with maximum efficiency and at minimum cost. It enables governments to deliver information and, in some cases, services to citizens, businesses, and government agencies. The goals of e-government are: better service delivery to citizens, improved services for business, transparency and empowerment of the citizens through information and efficient government purchasing.

Notable benefits of the implementation of innovation in the Nigerian public service include:

- the introduction of a national health insurance scheme and public expenditure management;

- procurement reform and the passage of a Fiscal Responsibility Act to ensure prudent management of resources;

- promoting the effectiveness of the civil service through organisational restructuring;

- waste curtailment through monetization of fringe benefits;

- establishment of service charters and institutionalization of compliance enforcement; and

- the setting up of the Bureau of Public Sector Reforms (BPSR) as the institutional framework for sustaining the reform (Agagu 2008; Adegoroye 2006; Babura, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

This paper's methodological approach is based on qualitative analysis of the discussed concepts; the paper explored the necessity of innovation in public sector quality services and why there is need for a paradigm shift from the traditional bureaucratic system of administration to a new public management system. This paper reviewed related literature, textbooks, and a range of relevant data from previous studies on new public management role in public service delivery in Nigeria Public Service. The paper adopted analytical research in arriving at findings.

FINDINGS

The findings of the paper revealed that the adoption of New Public Management (NPM) has improved public service in the delivery of social service to the citizens. Providing timely and well-argued policy advice to public decision-makers is generally regarded as a core responsibility of the public service. It also revealed that NPM is viewed as a more efficient means of attaining the same product or service; however, within the NPM

framework, citizens are viewed as customers and public servants or administrators hold the title of public managers. NPM also reduced corruption in the public service through the implementation of e-government and SERVICOM initiatives to the citizens. The findings also revealed that NPM emphasized accountability and transparency as a pivot of good governance. This is strengthened by access to reliable and accurate information on activities in the realm of public service, especially on fiscal and financial matters and macroeconomics framework. It also eliminates monopolistic tendencies and allows market forces to determine prices of goods and services.

CONCLUSION

The major driving force behind adoption of New Public Management was the fact that the socio-economic situation of Nigeria was on the precipice. NPM model involves a major realignment of state relations with the market, and governance programmes entail a deliberate redirection of aid policies to promote a particular model of the state-society relations. Good governance and NPM are regarded as mutually supportive reforms, with greater political and social accountability contributing to the realization of more efficient government. The new public management favours loosening the structures of the traditional model to allow for more creativity and flexibility in order to achieve new efficiencies and better customer service. It would give lower level managers more flexibility to use their own information and judgment to make decisions (that is, let good managers manage). It would encourage managers to take risks and be more entrepreneurial, and it would achieve accountability by measuring outputs rather than by monitoring processes.

The paper, however, discovered that public service delivery in Nigeria has remained largely ineffective due to ineffective implementation of innovative ideas. Innovative ideas were designed to make the public service delivery efficient. However, the good intentions of innovation have been largely unrealized as the provision of services is still ineffective and inefficient as a result of excessive adherence to rules and red tape in the Nigerian public service. The paper concluded that, in spite of this, NPM reforms had led to the emergence of a truly professionalised Nigerian public service in the fourth democratic governance. The new public management approaches can be useful to governments and ought to be seriously considered. It should, however, be noted that NPM is not a blanket solution to all of the challenges of public administration in modern governments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an urgent need for developing countries, such as Nigeria, to adopt public service performance management programmes such as the new public management to enhance efficiency and good governance, engender economic growth, sustainable development and competent public service that delivers effective social services to the citizens. The study recommends as follows:

- Organisational restructuring and renewal, including strengthening of capacity to enable the public service be more responsive to the needs and preferences of citizens.

- Strengthening of linkages between government agencies, including strengthening the capacity of line departments, to enable them interact with one another and with central agencies.

- Addressing management problems related to employee performance management, wage and non-wage incentives, irrational job classification systems and ineffective payroll and personnel systems.

- Public sector organisations in Nigeria should have well-shared vision and mission rather than being organized through the hierarchy and established procedures.

- The government should set up innovation implementation committees that will work out modalities for effective implementation of innovative ideas, with performance evaluation units established to evaluate, based on set targets, the level of success and failure in service delivery.

- Government should also set up feedback mechanism to report implementation effectiveness or flaws.

- For innovation to thrive in Nigeria there is need for continuous training of the public servants, and development-oriented training of technocrats and updating of their technical expertise remains paramount.

- Government should provide the necessary infrastructure that will aid the successful implementation of innovation in Nigeria's public service.

- Public Private Partnership should be encouraged by the government to increase efficiency in the area of public service delivery. This will reduce impediments associated with bureaucracy to the barest minimum.

- Bureaucratic control of critical service-delivery processes should

be greatly reduced in order to create conducive environment that allows public service providers to generate and implement innovation within their organisations.

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About the Authors: Chibuzo Charles Nwosu (cc.nwosu@coou.edu.ng) and M. O. Ananti are of the Department of Public Administration, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria.

CITING THIS ARTICLE

Themes and Settings in Nigeria's Heritage of Folk Narrative

By

Bukar Usman

Abstract

This paper, explores Nigeria's heritage of folk narrative as elicited from the outcome of the pan-Nigerian folktale-collection research sponsored by the Dr Bukar Usman Foundation in 2013. The nation-wide research lasted for three years and its outcomes have been collated, edited and published in five voluminous books by the author of this paper. The paper, part of the author's *A Selection of Nigerian Folktales: Themes and Settings*, is his introductory insight into the nature of themes and settings found in thousands of folktales collected from folktale traditions across Nigeria. The paper is in six parts. In part one, he provides a historical survey of folk literature in Nigeria. In part two, the author states and analyses the significance and defining traits of the folktale genre. The author's motivations for embarking on the research as well as his research methodology are discussed in part three. The cultural and narrative similarities found in the about 4,000 tales collected from communities across Nigeria are highlighted in part four. Part five discusses issues connected with the classification of the collected tales; it throws light into the author's decision to classify the 700 tales of his *A Selection of Nigerian Folktales: Themes and Settings* into 18 classes. The author's concluding remarks constitute part six. It should be noted that all references to specific folktales, unless otherwise stated, are pointing to folktales published in *A Selection of Nigerian Folktales: Themes and Settings*, the first published book of the five books that emerged from the author's momentous nationwide folktales research effort.

Keywords: folk narratives, folktales, themes, settings, Nigeria, folktale classification

1. Introduction

Almost every human society, from the most unsophisticated to the most urbane, has a heritage of folk narrative. It may be a living, dying or dead heritage but folk literature has always been a vital aspect of the oral tradition of most societies. Cultural expression among literate people is

largely written or electronically transmitted whereas oral tradition is the most dominant form of cultural transmission among non-literate people. The Nigerian society is partly literate and partly non-literate, and this mixed reality is reflected in the quality, quantity and demographic spread of its folk narratives. To what extent these factors have affected the thematic concerns of the country's oral narratives may not have been nationally surveyed, but various collections have shown that Nigeria has a vast and remarkably rich folk narrative tradition.

Although moonlight tales, told mostly to the young by older family members, come to the mind of many when folk narratives are mentioned, folk literature covers a much-wider area of cultural expression. It includes tales of cosmic, *historical*, mythic and ritualistic value, and children are not the target audience of these types of tales. This category of tales belongs to adults and is the philosophical and religious foundation of the ethnic or sub-ethnic group. Elders, not children, are the traditional audience and guardians of these tales of primary social and customary importance. The values the moonlight tales espouse are rooted in the tenets enshrined in these elders' tales which, unlike the common folk tales, are communally respected as non-fictional facts. These non-fictional tales are not included in this anthology. Being tales of "history," they will be documented in Book 4 of this series (Treasury of Nigerian Tales). The tales in the present collection, representing the age-old narration of Nigeria's common folks, constitute Book 2, which is devoted to the everyday tales of the people.

Nigeria's folklore (traditional knowledge, beliefs and practices) has largely survived by word-of-mouth transmission. But certain aspects of our lore have been documented by cultural anthropologists, missionaries, who pioneered Western education in the country, and other scholars and authors. The motivation, for the foreign enquirers, was their desire to access the core of our people's values through a researched exploration of our folkloric expressions, particularly our rituals, mythologies and folktales. Accessing and understanding the latter, in particular, became the key to their understanding of the moral values of the people they had colonized. Bridging the cultural divide was a major challenge for the foreigners, who tackled the matter primarily by observing, learning (via interpretation), and documenting the local languages and some aspects of the people's way of life.[1] Those of them who could speak the local languages played pioneering roles in linguistic and other forms of cultural documentation.

Available records show that the missionaries, who were more interested in the social circumstances of the people, paid more attention to folklore,

education (including practical language studies), and health than colonial government anthropologists who emphasized issues of political institutions, geography, mineral resources, trade and linguistics. Because of the earlier-stated reason, their interest in the folktales of our local communities gained prominence over the attention, if any, given to other aspects of our folklore, such as traditional art, music, dance, rituals, architecture, and medicine.

Folktales were so overtly emphasized by the colonial educationists that even the neglected aspects of our indigenous folklore were indirectly acknowledged through the tales they promoted. For instance, the core of the community programme drawn for schools ran by the missionaries in colonial north-eastern Nigeria included a folktale-based "curriculum with specific objectives." In actualization of that novel educational approach, Babur-Bura folktales were collected and classified under sub-headings such as Health Folklore, Agriculture and Livestock Folklore, Crafts Folklore, and Home and Social Life Folklore.[2] Among many Nigerian groups, there were similar research interests in related aspects of our folklore, one of the most notable being Kay Williamson's studies in the language and proverbs of Ijaw people of south-southern Nigeria[3] and Susan Wenger's participant-observer lifelong promotion of south-western Nigeria's Yoruba groves and divination practices.[4] Divination tales, which shall be collected in Book 4 of the Treasury of Nigerian Tales series, usually come out of such practices.[5] Fortunately, these foreign researchers left written records of their findings.

Hence, the first exercise in researching and publishing aspects of Nigerian folklore were undertaken by foreigners, although few of these foreigners, markedly Wenger and Williamson, ended up, by their passionate involvement, being deemed authentic indigenes. Some notable publications by these European authors wholly or partly devoted to folktales include *African Stories*[6], *In Sunny Nigeria*[7], *Hausa Tales and Traditions*[8], and *Education of Primitive People*[9] There was hardly any missionary group that did not publish some folktales in their magazines and special publications.

Before and after Nigeria's independence in 1960, a number of Nigerians who had acquired Western or Arabic education took ownership of this cultural documentation and gave it indigenous flavour in their fictional works. These works were published in English and in the indigenous languages. Such indigenous works from the northern part of the country would include Abubakar Imam's books, the most notable of which was *Magana Jari Ce*. In southern Nigeria, Pita Nwana's 1935 fantasy novel, *Omenuko*, made enduring impact in the Igbo-speaking parts of the country.

These publications drew significant inspiration from motifs closely associated with folk narratives. In pre-independent South Western Nigeria, the effective writer, D.O Fagunwa, showed "an extensive use of proverbs, riddles, traditional jokes and other lore central to Yoruba belief."[10] That writers from Northern Nigeria made an early but modest mark in novel-writing in an indigenous language is attested to by the following:

> In various parts of the country, novels developed around 1930. Centered upon fantastic, magical characters of humans and fairies, Hausa novels, called "non-realistic novels," were based on folktales. The "mysterious" characters transmuted into other beings; fairies, animals, and humans all conversed among one another.[11]

On Muhammadu Bello's fantasy novel *Gandoki*, Bade Ajuwon comments, "One is led to say that the book is a reduction of Hausa oral tradition to written literature."[12]

Amos Tutuola was a notable Nigerian writer who drew fundamental inspiration from the folktale genre but communicated his tale in a unique brand of the English language. His *The Palm Wine Drinkard* was among the first books that introduced Nigeria's folk narratives to English readers. In structure and motif, Tutuola's stories were inspirationally pulled from the traditional repertory of Yoruba folk narratives. Tutuola's English-language style did not attract followership but his bold recreation of indigenous oral narratives inspired writers from other parts of Nigeria. An example of a similar narrative from south-eastern Nigeria was Uche Okeke's *Tales of Land of Death*.

Because the folktale in its more complex form shares striking resemblance with the short story, a number of Nigerian writers easily turned to the modern short story as a narrative option in the 1960s and 1970s. Their stories were published in *Okike*, *Black Orpheus*, *West Africa*, *The Nigeria Magazine*, and a few other magazines. Some of those whose short stories were featured in those periodicals later published individual books of short stories. One of such short story writers was Cyprian Ekwensi whose *Lokotown and Other Stories* was published in 1966, four years after the publication of Chinua Achebe's *Sacrificial Egg and Other Stories*.

All of these and subsequent literary developments in Nigeria were preceded by, and indeed had their roots in, the oral tale. The oral tale is the precursor of the modern short story and, indeed, of the novel. For many people around the world, their first understanding of what life is all about began with their introduction to the morals of the oral tale. For many generations of Nigerians, the moonlight folktales they had relished as children became the bedrock of their social, psychological and ethical

development.

Across Nigeria, in different families, folktale narration was a regular nightly experience. Unfortunately, the practice is dying out in the villages and is almost non-existent in the cities. Even if we must lose the tale-telling sessions to the exigencies of urbane life, it is the overall goal of this anthology to capture in print, for the present and future generations, a translation of various folktales collected from different parts of Nigeria. This editor and his team of resource persons embarked upon the project because of their passionate awareness of the importance of folk narratives in personal and societal development.

2. Significance and Defining Traits

It is difficult to value something without first understanding its defining traits and significance. The oral nature of the folktale and the anonymity of its author or authors are its most basic defining traits. All the tales of this anthology were orally transmitted from generation to generation. Following the invention of printing, folktales have been collected and published in different countries. Even in print, the authors of those generational folktales remain anonymous. A folktale belongs to its communal origin even where its elements have been changed by different narrators who introduced one form of embellishment or the other as the story is retold from generation to generation. This is why it is difficult to ascribe the authorship of a folktale to one individual. An individual, however, may write a tale, as Aesop did, but that would be a literary tale, not a folktale. A folktale, strictly speaking, belongs to the community.

This brings us to the question: why folktales? What is the significance of the folktale? In the past, it would have been unnecessary to ask this question. From their early childhood to their teenage years, children in Nigeria were accustomed to listening to folktales every night and just grew up knowing that folktales were important building blocks in their lives.

Things have now changed. Television, the internet (especially Facebook and YouTube), mobile phones, and computer games are now alternative and easier-to-access forms of entertainment. In those days, one would need to have members of a story-telling audience gather in one place and a willing story-teller to hear and enjoy a story. In these days of electronic gadgets and the web, today's teenager, for instance, can with the tip of the finger personally access various forms of entertainment and miscellaneous data, including indecent and unhealthy information and images.

And this typical teenager's younger siblings, who are not yet above ten years, also exercise their own reckless independence. With the remote

control, they can easily comb through their family's satellite television, watching immoral or violent programmes from channel to channel. They know little or nothing about the symbolic heroes of their indigenous folktales but are very familiar with electronic characters like Tom and Jerry, Ben 10, and Spider Man. Unless parents and guardians have a way of administering parental control and also ensuring that sound moral training accompanies their children's electronic attractions, their children are likely to grow up morally and culturally imbalanced.

Folktales play a fundamental part in this moral and cultural balancing exercise. Below, we will look at four basic functions of the folktale in terms of the benefits an audience could derive from listening to an oral tale or reading/listening to a documented one. These benefits are applicable in developing societies, such as ours, as well as in highly industrialized ones. There are many benefits of the folktale but we will look at four key advantages below.

a. Promotes a Sense of Community: Traditionally, folk stories are orally transmitted from generation to generation within a group or groups of people. This could be people within a clan, tribe, nation or people of a common background within a plural urban setting. It is within such groups that folktales are orally narrated or read out from a printed text for the common enjoyment of the audience. Apart from the stories, other group activities, such as exchange of riddles and jokes, quizzes, and pleasantries, take place. A lot of laughter accompanies story-telling sessions and the cordial environment, sometimes, is made more exciting by the provision and sharing of light refreshment. All of these generate a feeling of camaraderie, oneness, unity, love, and group loyalty and dedication.

This story-hearing engagement within a mass of people of shared cultural interest gives every involved individual a sense of togetherness and social relevance. Such a story-telling engagement fosters a sense of community in children and lays a sound moral foundation on which they could grow to become responsible citizens. This benefit conforms with the integrative role of this mass but oral media, according to the individual differences theory which

proposes that individuals respond differently to the mass media according to their psychological needs, and that individuals consume the mass media to satisfy those needs. The need may be for information (e.g. providing statistics about players and teams), integrative (offering a sense of belonging to a group of similarly interested people), affective (e.g. by providing excitement), or escapist (helping to release pent-up emotions).[13]

There is need to revive in our homes the traditional story-telling sessions

as a basic way of countering two of the most negative disadvantages of our so-called globalized but highly individualistic society, namely, acute selfishness and inequality. Excessive individualism, with the selfishness, greed and other social vices it breeds, is ruining societies today. Collective story-telling sessions engender rapport among members of the audience and other social groups with whom transmitted folktales are later shared. Furthermore, sharing folktales, and the cultural education conveyed thereby, reinforces the precept that every member of the community is connected and bonded to another. Such sense of identification with a communal group is naturally extended beyond the scope of the story-session group to the wider society.

b. Imparts Positive Common Values: Folktales, whether orally delivered to a group audience by a story-teller or individually accessed through printed or audio/visual means, impart positive social values as well as the particular beliefs of a given ethnic group, nationality or culture. The values being referred to here go beyond the morals sometimes drawn at the end of a folktale. What we have in mind here are the recognizable values and beliefs built into the fabric of the tale. These values are embedded in the tale through its various elements and a single tale might contain more than one of such values or customary beliefs. For instance, universal values such as respect for elders as well as culturally-oriented beliefs, such as the belief in many communities that the youngest sibling is usually the smartest, can be re-echoed in the same folktale.

Positive values clearly identifiable from the theme, plot, characterization and cultural components of folktales can be broadly grouped into family values, social values, religious values, economic values, educational values and aesthetic values. The specific traits emphasized would depend on the cultural preferences of the story-teller and those of his listeners.

The above reference to "religious values" does not necessarily point to the major world religions but rather refers to the indigenous gods, myths and rituals of a given group or story-listening audience. Understanding these cultural aspects and their symbolic significance is necessary for a culturally-relevant appreciation or interpretation of a folktale. For instance, a non-Babur/Bura listener may fail to interpret an appropriate crocodile character in a given tale as being the spiritual or symbolic double of the Biu Chief just as an uninformed non-Yoruba listener may miss the symbolic representation of Ogun as the Yoruba god of iron. So, there are more to folktales than the fairies, animals, and strange creatures that characterize them.

Tales contain societal values and cultural beliefs, and it is important to

underscore this by citing verifiable examples from the stories published here. In "The Goat with Three Tails" (Story No. 32), we see the interesting scenario where the killing of a goat by the chief priest of a shrine attracted the death penalty and led to his instant execution. The story highlights the cultural as well as the universal value of fair trial. Most readers would recognize the universal dimension but may miss the cultural.

Let us distinguish the cultural value from the universal. An abnormally-born wild goat ("the goat with three tails") was brought by hunters in critical fulfillment of the chief priest's sacrificial requirement for the healing of the community's terminally-afflicted king. But the goat, speaking for itself, had requested that it should be spared and offered its captors a forest herb which it swore would heal the king. At the shrine where the goat was to be sacrificed, the goat's captors pleaded with the chief priest to administer *first* the recommended herb: if the herb revived the king, the goat would be freed; if not, it would be sacrificed. That was the agreement the captors, acting on behalf of the community, had reached with the goat. But the chief priest refused to give the captured animal the benefit of doubt and, against all entreaties by its captors, killed and sacrificed the goat with three tails. And immediately the king's health became worse. Pressurized by the goat's captors and the elders of the community, the chief priest reluctantly administered the goat's recommended herb on the king. He instantly became well. Infuriated by the avoidable slaughter of the benevolent goat, the villagers killed the chief priest.

The cultural precept executed here is what might be called the life-for-life, death-for-death principle. At the back of the story-teller's mind is the traditional understanding of the nature and power of spiritual covenants. The captors had covenanted with the goat that administering the magic drug while sparing the goat's life would revive the king's own life. The chief priest invited criticism upon himself when he refused to respect this covenant. But the more covenant-minded villagers knew that slaughtering that goat was ominous. Had the obstinate chief priest been kept alive, the stability of the king's health might not have been guaranteed since a vital aspect of the covenant (sparing the goat's life) had been violated. The chief priest's head had to roll after the head of the mysterious goat. This is a crucial cultural dimension of the value imparted by this story, and it is different from the universal fair-trial precept which this story also communicates.

"Lala and Lele" (No. 38), "The Ikuoku Leaf" (No. 85), "The Man who Became a Chimpanzee" (No. 146), and "The Fat-Lips Woman" (No. 688) are some of the stories of this collection that illustrate both universal and

unique cultural values.

Whether universal or culturally localized, the values the listener or reader of a folktale, such as "The Goat with Three Tails," derives are often common, communal, and socially stabilizing. But there are also uncommon individual virtues which can be drawn from folktales. While collectivism is emphasized, personal traits of courage, creativity, and compassion, among others, are also portrayed and encouraged. Similarly, dimensions of wickedness hatched in the hidden heart of the individual are flatly condemned by the manner story resolutions are appropriately plotted to disfavour the unjust. In tale nos. 106, 110, and 213, among several others, evil is punished. Tale no. 213 fittingly ends with the Babur/Bura proverb: "Let a man dig the hole of wickedness shallow because he may fall into it himself."

c. Teaches Ethical and Practical Lessons: It is a universally-assumed fact that folktales teach ethical lessons, but not all tales are narrated for the primary purpose of communicating a moral. Although life's lessons can be gleaned from many tales, only the fable (tales that feature mostly animals and illustrate a moral, such as "The Lion and the Playful Mouse" [No. 381] and "The Hyena and the Monkey" [No. 402]) is essentially crafted to communicate morals. Others may simply aim to entertain or amaze the listener or reader; but even here, a meditative audience can draw practical lessons which may illustrate some realities of life.

In many fables and other moralizing tales, the morals are stated at the end of the story and cannot be divorced from the story. Nowadays, story-tellers would simply tell their tale and expect the listeners or readers to draw the morals. In such cases, different morals can be drawn by different audiences. Indeed, there are stories that are told with the objective of posing a moral question at the end of the tale. A good example is "The Three Slaves" (tale no. 610) where a complex web of relationships between Gumsa, the central character, and four women dictated the really hard-to-answer question: "Among the four wives, who will be the wife after Dala's heart? You think that you are clever, then who of the four shall be first of all?" We implore you to read this story and you will be amazed by how difficult answering this question, arising from a folk narrative, can be. The artistic complexity of the story itself indicates that not all folktales are simple straightforward narrations aimed at children. There are folktales for adults, and "The Three Slaves" is a good example of such tales.

d. Entertains the Audience: Both the audience listening to the oral narration and the private reader of a folktale derive immense pleasure from

the story. Although stock characters often feature in folktales, this does not detract from their entertainment value. What a character symbolises is already known to the audience familiar with the cultural interpretation attached to that character. Because of this cultural meaning imposed on it, a mere mention of a popular character, especially animal character, at the beginning of a story creates some excitement and suspense among the audience.

Characters may mean different things in different cultural backgrounds. Every animal featured in a folktale has certain characteristics attributed to it by the local environment. For instance, in north-eastern Nigeria, the hyena is a symbol of greed, meanness and clumsiness. Among the Fulani, the rabbit is a symbol of cleverness, selfishness, and depravity. The tortoise, among all Nigerian groups, is a popular trickster and is noted for its cunnying, dubiousness, creativity, and breach of mutual agreements. Since the behaviour of such characters are fixed, the story-teller would usually rely on plot and surprise resolutions, among other devices, to enhance the effect of his tale.

The story-tellers or oral narrators were usually older members of the family or the extended family: grandparents, parents, older siblings, uncles, aunties or any other person competent enough to narrate to the younger generation the imagination and wisdom of the ethnic group as embedded in the folktales. The story-telling sessions took place at night and the setting could be indoor or outdoor, the latter being the obvious choice in the dry season. In traditional environments, the indoor setting was usually inside a hut big enough to accommodate the group of young listeners from different families. The outdoor setting could be in the open in front of one of the closely-spaced huts within a fenced or an unfenced compound.

In those days, right from the start of the tale, every narrator tried his or her best to carry the audience along. There were no dull moments. The children expected fresh entertainment and were hardly disappointed as they were fed with different kinds of stories each night. Even where the story had earlier been narrated, there was no loss of excitement, particularly where the current narrator was some one adept at refreshing a well-worn story by creatively stretching its plot to accommodate new characters, new conflicts, fresh suspense and surprising resolution. Every new narrator, by his or her own method of oral delivery as well as gesticulations, usually told the same story differently. There were narrators who occasionally engaged some members of the audience by asking them to guess a character's next move out of a tight situation, and there were those who incorporated new choruses to cheer up their audience and

enliven their tale. These were some of the reasons oral performances were so wonderful in those days when folktale narration was a regular nightly programme of families in many communities across Nigeria.

Uche Ogbalu captures a typical experience among the Igbo, but this is also true of folktale story-telling sessions among other Nigerian ethnic groups:

> a careful observation of the folktale performing sessions show that neither the performer nor his audience is ready to move out of the scene. None shows sign of getting tired of either telling the story or listening to the story. The folktale narrator is able to hold his audience for hours…without the audience getting tired. Folktales are introduced to a traditional Igbo child from infancy. This means that the traditional Igbo child starts appreciating folktales from infancy to adulthood… In performance, the audience participation is assured. The audience sings the chorus, claps hands and even corrects the performer whenever he deviates from the normal routine of the story. That is why one can rightly assert that folktales are communally owned.[14]

One of the reasons the audience's attention was retained over a long time during an oral performance was the fact that the same story was hardly re-told to the same audience. Each narrator often tried to tell a story he believed an earlier narrator might not have relayed to the given audience. This writer, as a child growing up in Biu, in north-eastern Nigeria, was a regular member of a folktale audience, and had some times wondered how the narrators' resource of folktales seemed so inexhaustible. There were not just many stories but an interesting diversity of them. The *makumtha*, as the folktale is called in Babur/Bura, remains an educational and entertaining evening programme, although story-telling sessions are no longer regular events in most families.

During group story-telling sessions, which are still held in some communities, much of the entertainment value comes from the dramatic aspects of the session. One is referring to the narrator's vocal and body orchestrations, to those junctures in the story when the narrator and the audience jointly sing choral songs, and to the segments of riddles, quizzes and jokes that usually accompany such oral performances. In some communities, the folktale is further advanced into outright drama, especially in a situation where a standing performing troupe is in existence. Themes covered by such dramatic performances may be stretched to include some current realities, thereby making the show satiric and more entertaining. As Peek and Yankah have observed, folktales, in traditional communities, are inseparably linked to other forms of folk performances:

> The sheer diversity of folklore forms is striking. Puppet theatres still perform among the Tiv and Ogoni of Nigeria and in Mali. Masquerades continue to develop and adapt new characters in the rural areas and to find revitalized expressions among urban populations. Synthetic raffia, enamel paints, plastic parts, whatever: all can be used. The increasing use of Theatre for Development has revitalized traditional drama forms, from masquerades to folktalke sessions…Narratives filled with the exploits of tricksters and heroes entertain and advise their audiences.[15]

Outside the traditional environment of a given folktale, school or youth groups can still take the printed folktale and bring it to life through exciting oral narration or guided dramatization. But most readers of a good folktale will find that merely reading the folktale is itself entertaining.

3. Research Origins, Objectives and Methodology

The folktale, though a useful tool of character formation, moral transformation, cultural authenticity, communal harmony, and educational entertainment, is endangered today. In spite of the beneficial nature of Nigeria's oral narratives and the creative spin-offs noted above, little is being done by governments, communities, schools and parents to preserve and promote our rich heritage of folk narratives. Inter-generational transmission of these tales via nightly story-telling sessions is a rarity these days. Very few children are today regaled with tales by moonlight, and this is the traditional mode of the folktale's intergenerational transmission! A lot of parents and guardians, overwhelmed by the challenges and pressures of today's urbanized world, have little or no time to be with their children, let alone tell them stories. Young people, too, have their own distractions and alternative forms of entertainment.

This situation is worsened by the fact that many of the original languages of these tales, the indigenous languages, are either endangered or disappearing. Many youths no longer speak their mother tongue. In many homes in Nigeria, English or pidgin English is the language of communication because of the failure of parents to teach their children their mother tongue. And since, among Nigerian groups, folktales are rendered in the mother tongue, it follows that language endangerment or disappearance corresponds to the endangerment or disappearance of an ethnic group's folktales and other aspects of its folklore. This writer has examined this matter in greater detail elsewhere.[16]

It should be enough to observe here that these issues of urbanization, nationwide failure in the intergenerational transmission of folktales, and the reduction in the use of the indigenous languages (the original and

generational narrative vehicle of the tales) have made it necessary to collect and preserve Nigerian folktales for the present and future generations. To do this would entail extensive nationwide research in the collection and documentation of Nigerian folk narratives. This was the task the Dr Bukar Usman Foundation (DBUF),[17] presided over by this editor, chose to undertake in 2013. For the original inspiration for this and related compilations, we need to go back to 2005, the year *The Bride without Scars and Other Stories*, this editor's first book of modified folk stories, was published in English. Two English-language story books and 14 Hausa-language story books (now collected under the title, *Taskar Tatsuniyoyi*) were later published.

It was while working on these books that one became fully aware of the nation's enormous folklore resources and decided to begin the exploration by unearthing our rich but neglected folktales. The folktales field is a very wide one and the deeper one went the more one realized that the tradition has extensive dimensions. This editor began his exploration in Biu in 2004/2005 and was hoping to collect only a few tales for his first short-story books. The field proved richer than he had imagined. He collected over 1,000 stories within two years from Biu alone! Over 800 of such Biu stories were collected in the 1920s by the pioneer missionary, Dr. Albert Helser. Amazingly, as further investigations reveal, the Biu findings exemplify the abundance of folktales in many communities across Nigeria. This editor was further stimulated by his close association with the Nigerian Folklore Society and the Linguistic Association of Nigeria. The need for a nationwide exploration beckoned, and the Dr Bukar Usman Foundation considered it worthwhile to sponsor the project.

This led to the inauguration, in early 2013, of the Nigerian Narrative Project (NNP or simply the Project in this report). The Foundation spelt out the following as its objectives for inaugurating the Project:

- To collect and preserve in writing the folktales of various Nigerian ethnic groups as the age-old tradition of transmitting and preserving such tales from generation to generation through oral narration is fast disappearing.

- To publish in English, without prejudice to possible indigenous-language publications, the outcome of this research, in order to make it available to a wider audience.

- To develop some aspects of the research findings into entertaining and informative story books targeted at the youths with the aim of enhancing their appreciation of folk narratives as a worthwhile

cultural heritage.

- To promote across Nigeria an awareness of the shared cultural values the nation's folktales represent and to, thereby, promote cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect.

- To employ the moral probity espoused by the tales as a tool for the moral regeneration of the larger society.

- To utilize the outcome of the research in any other way that will enhance the realisation of the above objectives.

To carry out the tale-collection exercise in different parts of the country, the Foundation commissioned field teams led by informed co-ordinators who reported directly to Dr Bukar Usman, the Editor and President of the Dr Bukar Usman Foundation. Each team was asked to gather authentic folktales directly from the local folks. According to the guidelines, the tales should preferably be captured in the indigenous language of the narrator before being transcribed into English. Where practicable, every tale was expected to be captured during story-telling sessions, and such sessions were to be audio-recorded or videoed. In translating a story in an indigenous language into English, the translator was expected to reflect as much as possible the spirit and letter of the tale, its original idiom of expression, structure, and theme, and resist the temptation to over-summarize the story.

Ten teams of researchers led by academic and cultural experts conducted tale-capture, tale-collection, and tale-translation exercises in various parts of Nigeria. Many tales were orally recorded. The field officers who worked under the coordinators utilized knowledgeable resource persons who were culturally conversant with the local communities. These local resource persons were responsible for organizing story-telling sessions which the field officers electronically captured. These local facilitators were also helpful in transcribing and translating the stories from the indigenous language into English. The outcomes of the field research were sent to the coordinator who compiled and sent them to the President of the Dr Bukar Usman Foundation, the Project's initiator and Editor. This was the recommended procedure.

Compliance in this regard varied from team to team. Some teams found it quite easy to adhere to the guidelines while others met on-the-field realities which made strict adherence to this methodology very challenging. Recording and collecting tales from the North-East was particularly difficult because of the activities of insurgents in the area. However, through informal means, and utilizing some documented sources

as well, we were able to collect tales from some communities, and a number of tales from the troubled North-East are included in this anthology.

Nigeria is a very vast country and while each team was encouraged to spread their tale-collection exercise to as many diverse communities as possible, logistic and other handicaps made it practically impossible for the Project to cover every ethnic or linguistic group. With over 350 ethnic groups and about 500 languages,[16] Nigeria is remarkably ethnically and linguistically diverse. Suffice it to say that tales were collected from all states of the federation and the federal capital territory, Abuja.

All in all, the Project's dedicated teams operated creditably thereby fulfilling the Foundation's dream of organizing an open, purely culture-driven, nationwide exercise that gave as many ethnic/linguistic groups as possible the opportunity of contributing their oral narratives. Some of the teams listed above went beyond their assigned areas to ensure that the oral narratives of many minority groups were captured. None of the teams concentrated their effort in the urban areas; all dutifully conducted research also in the rural or semi-urban areas.

The researchers were required to spread the tale-collecting exercise into the communities in the remote areas because it would enhance their understanding of the cultural and traditional context of the tales. Some teams incorporated such cultural backgrounds in their report. It has been acknowledged that such cultural knowledge deepens the interpretation of a folk narrative and makes it meaningful to everyone, especially those who may not have been acquainted with the traditional values of the tale's anonymous authors.

4. Cultural and Narrative Similarities

After months of field work in their designated areas, the research teams altogether turned in about 4,000 tales collected from communities across Nigeria and translated into English. Going through these stories was a wonderful experience. One could not but wonder why such cultural wealth was allowed to lie dormant for so long. While it must be acknowledged that some individuals and groups have collected and published Nigerian folk narratives in the past, most of the collections were based on the folktales of a particular group. The few volumes that included tales from different groups in the country were too slim to accommodate tales from most areas of the nation. Yet, judging from the outcome of this exercise, a sufficiently large pan-Nigerian collection is an educational, cultural, and social necessity.

a. Common Narrative Attributes: One of the most unmistakable observations on reading these stories is the similarity of some of the tales across the ethnic groups. Linguistic differences, apart from their reflection in the naming of the characters and the wording of the songs, do not appear to be significant in terms of the nature and structure of the tales. Although this may sound surprising, especially in our ethnically diverse environment, many tales and episodes are common to many ethnic and linguistic groups. This and other common narrative attributes indicate that Nigeria has a unifying force in its folk narratives, a positive cultural bond Nigerians have failed to adequately acknowledge or celebrate.

Many tales, as the reader himself would discover, can be cited to prove that certain episodes are common to more than one cultural group. An exciting example is "Why the Pig is always Digging" (tale no. 115), a tale collected from north-central Nigeria but is very similar to "Tortoise and Pig" (tale no. 130) from the south-eastern area. There are many tales that share such similarities across geographical and cultural boundaries. As to why such tales from different social contexts share similar episodes, two American anthropologists who had conducted research in West Africa offered this illuminating explanation:

> Our hypothesis is that this is to be explained by several factors: a relatively common historical experience, association with other clans (ethnic groups) through marriage, the incorporation of ingenious and appealing exploits attributed to another clan (ethnic group) into a new mythological system, and above all the play of the imagination on the traditional thematic resources…[18] (*Brackets mine*)

Common motifs are also noticeable across the collection. Some of the prominent ones include the cruel stepmother, the clever younger brother, the helpful ancestor, mermaid spirit, among others which will be listed, with examples, later in this write-up. These are motifs that spring from the cultural beliefs of the people or motifs adapted to suit such beliefs.

Apart from common episodes and motifs, there is also similarity of character symbols. In most places in Nigeria, the main character of a typical folktale is the tortoise, and almost all the time the tortoise plays the role of a trickster. This is why the section on trickster tales is one of the longest in this collection; every segment of the country is represented here. Another common character found everywhere folk tales are narrated in Nigeria is the old woman, a symbol of benevolence who usually steps in to save embattled underdogs just when they are about to be drowned by the waters of antagonism or cruelty.

There are some cultural and geographic variations, though. Among the

Fulani, the tortoise is displaced by other animal characters such as rabbit and squirrel. And the section of this collection devoted to fisherman tales is dominated by stories from the south-southern part of Nigeria because of the preponderance of creeks and rivers in the area.

In noting the above common features, warns the seasoned dramatist and literary critic, Ben Tomoloju, one should not deny the various cultural groups their own native creativity:

> a note of caution has to be sounded against comparative imputations that undermine the distinction of cultural expression. Even as migrations, borrowings and cross-cultural influences are major factors in cultural mobility, there are arguments for the distinction in the creativity of autocthonous communities.
>
> For instance, Ulli Beier notes that 'similar ideas will occur to human beings in different places and at different times independent of each other.' He illustrates this with the building of pyramids by the Azteks of Mexico who could not have had any contact with Ancient Egypt.
>
> As such, comparatism should not be so free-wheeling as to obliterate authenticity and originality…[19]

b. Common Cultural Attributes: Cultural diversity is a well-celebrated feature of the Nigerian society. Cultural similarities, while acknowledged, are not given the prominence they deserve. Some of the outcomes of the folk narratives project are close relationships in communal behavior noted by the researchers. Some of the observed common or similar cultural features noticed in these areas are: nature and style of traditional religious beliefs, family structure, social organization in rural communities, ritualistic practices, patterns of wealth acquisition and distribution, hero worship, and herbal medicine.

We need not discuss all of these in this brief narration but we would further examine the issue of nature and style of traditional religious beliefs because of its broad narrative implications, as could be elicited from many tales. We would restrict our discussion to the relationship between the dead and the living, for this is our area of immediate concern as it will enhance the reader's understanding of many of the tales published here. This is a concept of fundamental cultural and artistic importance the non-Nigerian or non-African reader of this collection will find helpful as background information.

Among devotees of traditional religion in different parts of Nigeria, the living members of the community are not isolated human beings. In

spiritual terms, they are believed to be linked to past and future members of their families, clans and the community in general. In other words, the dead, the living, and the unborn are believed to be in spiritual communion. The dead dwell in the world of the clan's earlier dead and this world is ruled by ancestors. From this spirit world, the ancestors oversee the activities of the living, intervening now and then, mostly for good, in their lives. Within the context of African traditional religious worship, who are ancestors and what benefits do they serve?

Ancestors…serve as mediators by providing access to spiritual guidance and power. Death is not a sufficient condition for becoming an ancestor. Only those who lived a full measure of life, cultivated moral values, and achieved social distinction attain this status. Ancestors are thought to reprimand those who neglect or breach the moral order by troubling the errant descendants with sickness or misfortune until restitution is made. When serious illness strikes, therefore, it is assumed that the ultimate cause is interpersonal and social conflict; serious illness is thus a moral dilemma as much as a biological crisis.[20]

From the devotee's viewpoint, ancestral worship is the way the living acknowledges this special relationship. There is an aspect of this relationship which is not mentioned in the above quotation: some ancestors or some other dead member of a given clan may re-emerge in the world of the living through reincarnation. This is the traditional belief of some ethnic groups in Nigeria. Reincarnation is not essentially punitive and children believed to be "re-born" souls of ancestors are accorded special respect in many traditional settings.

However, some of these children present special difficulties by the manner in which they die young and re-enter into their mother's womb repeatedly. The Igbo call such a spirit-child *ogbanje* while the Yoruba call the spirit-child *abiku*, but belief in this phenomenon is not restricted to these two ethnic groups. Why does the *abiku* come and go? Traditional religious priests have many explanations but all are shrouded in mystery. One of the proffered reasons is that the *ogbanje* is visited upon a family when the ancestors want to punish the parents of this spirit-child for some moral foul they have committed or for habitually failing to appease the ancestors.

Another set of heart-breaking children are the abnormally-born ones. They are believed to be a clear warning from the gods, particularly when they are born very deformed. These ones do not die young but grow up to become assertive individuals in spite of their handicap. In some parts of Nigeria, particularly among some communities in the South South, twins were once considered abnormally born children and their birth was seen as

an evil omen. Attitudes towards twins have since changed and many families today cherish them as special blessings.

Unlike twins, deformed or abnormally-born children are believed to possess supernatural powers which they can use against their enemies. They are typically seen as enfants terribles, and conflicts involving this group of characters are spread across many sections of this collection, especially the Enfant-Terrible subdivision. Tale nos. 87 and 104 are examples of stories featuring abnormally-born characters.

5. Classification of the Collected Tales

As earlier noted, about 4000 tales were collected across Nigeria. Most of the tales were narrated in the languages of their communal origin before being translated into English to make them accessible to all Nigerians and to the larger worldwide audience. The collected tales are not only many but diverse. To document them along the line of their cultural orientation as well as enhance the reader's appreciation of their narrative import, we opted for a broad-based method of categorizing the tales. First, the collected tales (to be documented for record purposes) were sorted into two genres: Fictional Tales and *Historical* Tales.

Historical tales, as their communal owners believe, consist of myths, clan or settlement chronicles, tales related to rituals and traditional religious practices, narrations about epochal historical events, origin and cosmic tales, creation tales, tales about legendary heroes and heroines, tales that explain the origin and nature of the world, tales about the exploits of the gods and about the Creator Himself. This category of tales is deemed to be factual even when the presumed facts seem too unfounded or too exaggerated to be considered true outside the cultural context of the tales.

The other wide-ranging genre is the Fictional Tales class. This broad group refers to the common tales narrated by the common folks about the ordinary everyday experiences of the people. The range of themes or motifs covered by these tales include moral questions, human foibles, inter-personal relationships, kings and subjects, encounters with spirit beings, and journeys to the land of the dead, among many others. This category makes up the bulk of the tales gathered during the tale-collection exercise. The non-factual stories of this genre feature a variety of characters – human beings, animals, spirits, objects or a combination of one or more of these character types. These tales of anonymous authorship are, in terms of narrative form, mostly fairy tales, fables, ghost and mystery tales, and other story types. It is from the fictional tales class that the 700 tales of the anthology, *A Selection of Nigerian Folktales: Themes*

and Settings were taken.

A Selection of Nigerian Folktales: Themes and Settings, being Book 2, contains 700 tales which are grouped using parameters different from those used in classifying the tales slated for Book 3. The emphasis here is primarily themes and secondarily settings. Accordingly, the tales of this anthology are grouped into 18 categories based on culturally-defined convergence of themes and, to a lesser extent, settings. Why is theme of premier importance here? Theme is a major cultural component of Nigerian oral fiction. In fact, the non-literate person in the community and a typical folktale narrator do not believe that a story without a theme is worth telling.

So intrinsically is a folk story connected to theme that every story, not just a fable, is expected to have or inspire some moral at the end of the tale. A tale may not be entertaining and its narrator may not be a good oral performer but, if it teaches a great lesson, the audience may overlook the shortcomings of its narration merely because of the powerful impact of its theme. In the various cultural environments where the tale-collecting research took place, tales are culturally distinguished by their themes. This is why we have placed primary emphasis on themes in categorizing these tales. Moreover, a theme-based categorization gives greater latitude for broad-based grouping of the collected tales.

Theme, as applied in deriving the 18 categories, is defined in a narrative sense and, at times, is loosely interchangeable with motif (recurring elements), except in areas where the meaning of the latter is evidently more encompassing. In its usage in categorizing sets of related tales, a thematic concept (covering tales that make various moral statements) is loosely implied. Theme, in this loose sense, could sometimes be as much about *what* each set of stories is broadly about as about *who* (in a generic sense) a set of categorized tales is about. Theme as used in the 18 categories does not imply the thematic statement expressly stated in the concluding part of few of the stories, especially the fables. Theme has a conceptually broad application in the naming of these categories, and this is why tales under the same category can make different thematic statements.

Setting, as it relates to the categorization of the tales, is a somewhat subordinate parameter and not all the elements that make it an important literary component are implied. The main elements of consideration in grouping the tales were the elements of culture and geography, with the latter overwhelmingly determining the selection of the set of tales placed under "Palace Tales." Setting is also a contributory factor in the naming of

the "Fisherman" and "Hunter" tales categories as the overriding physical setting in which the stories develop is the river (in the case of Fisherman tales) and the forest (in the case of Hunter tales).

In the sense of the overall social environment, there is a covert influence of setting in the naming of all the categories, and to help readers familiar with the Nigerian social landscape further appreciate the social context of each tale, we have indicated under every tale the geographic area of the country where it was orally collected. For this purpose, we adopted the country's six well-known geographic divisions which, in alphabetical order, are as follows: North Central, North East, North West, South East, South South, and South West.

The stories in the afore-mentioned collection are featured according to the above alphabetical order. In other words, tales from the North Central come before tales from the North East, and so on. The above are purely geographic areas, not the politically charged geo-political zones under which Nigerian politicians negotiate federal largesse.

We avoided using the states of the federation as units of social context in identifying the tales because a state is a political division that may not strictly represent a *unique* socio-cultural context. For instance, the milieu of each of the states in the South East can, generally speaking and for purposes of fictional setting, be interchanged with that of any other state in the zone. The same can be said of the states of the South West and, to some extent, of the states in each of the other geographic areas. Moreover, states are not fixed or permanent geographic entities as their continued existence, maps and numerical number are subject to unpredictable political events, such as boundary adjustments, creation of new local government areas, creation of new states or adoption of entirely different political units or labels (after all, we used to have provinces and later regions). None of these changeable political situations is likely to affect the relevance of the above six areas as easily identifiable geographic areas and as unmovable indicators of which part of the country any given tale is coming from.

Indeed, it has been widely acknowledged that cultural differences are "often geographic (and that) …aspects of the general culture of an area (or a people)…may well be quite independent of political or linguistic boundaries."[21] (Brackets mine) Folktales are very mobile and have been proved to be no respecters of linguistic boundaries. Story lines move across ethnic and linguistic boundaries and variations of the same tale are retold in many languages and climes so that at the end of the day the only thing we can be certain of is where a story is coming from (its geographic

source), its linguistic and ethnic origins having being blurred by its spread across different cultures over the years. And it will not be improbable to suggest that the originators of few of these tales might be long dead speakers of those Nigerian languages that have disappeared. Should this be true, how would one ever trace the linguistic origin of such folktales?

This is not to say that certain elements of the tale cannot give reasonable clues as to its original source. That is possible but in situations where cultural symbols are interchanged with the transplanting of a tale from one culture to another, the results of such enquiries will at best be academic and inevitably controversial. Even within the same cultural context, it is sometimes difficult to establish which tale is the first to be narrated and which is a variation of it. For instance, which of these similar tales from south-western Nigeria is the original tale: "Tortoise and Buje" (No. 581) and "The Story of Tortoise and Kerebuje" (No. 583)? A similar challenge can be posed regarding "The Lion and the Playful Mouse" (No. 381) and "The Lion and the Mouse" (413), two tales that demonstrate that no one is too strong to need help and no one is too weak to give help.

These similarities arise partly because of the nature of folk narration. Since folktales are anonymously authored, each narrator usually introduces his or her own elements within the story. However, as earlier noted, a variation from the original tale is ideally usually created without changing the story's symbolic characterization and overall cultural idiom. When variations cross cultural boundaries, even this rule can be dispensed with. For instance, "The Boy and the Tiger" (tale No. 21) is well known in many cultural traditions of the world. Its first version dates back to 5th century BC when the Greek fable writer, Aesop, wrote the original tale titled "The Boy Who Cried Wolf," a story many oral traditions of the world have copied and changed to suit their indigenous cultural references. From this original Aesop tale was derived the English expression, "to cry wolf" (meaning, to give false alarm). The tale has been adapted into songs and films within and outside Europe, one of the best known being the 1973 film, "The Boy Who Cried Werewolf." Anyone familiar with the original Aesop story will know that this book's Tale No. 21 is a nigerianized version.

Tales can migrate from culture to culture across international, linguistic, and ethnic boundaries and, as they travel, their components are culturally transformed to make them meaningful to new sets of listeners, readers or viewers. Having said this, it should be noted that Aesop's "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" is a literary fable, not a folk narrative, even though many of his fables were inspired by diverse folk narratives of his time. Typically, folktales are of anonymous authorship.

The Aesop narrative variation discussed above is international in nature, but within a nation substantial variations also take place. Sometimes, it may be a variation centred on a given motif. In 2006, the collection of literary narratives, *The Stick of Fortune*[22] was published by Klamidas. It was this editor's second book of short stories. "The Stick of Fortune," the title story is woven around the motif of compensatory wealth generation. The story is rooted in Biu folk literature and this editor was not aware such a motif existed elsewhere. In the course of editing this anthology, however, one has discovered that this motif is not peculiar to Biu.

The boomerang tale, "The Dog's Last Compensation" (No. 5), collected from north-central Nigeria, uses the same motif but this is where the similarities end. "The Stick of Fortune" has only human characters while "The Dog's Last Compensation" has both human and animal characters. The most important distinction lies in the dissimilar dispositions of the protagonists: whereas the main character of "The Stick of Fortune" solely relied on the goodwill of others to increase his wealth, the Dog of "The Dog's Last Compensation" manipulated his own compensation to his own peril.

Parallel motifs are common among these tales. In almost all the geographic areas are found tales that parallel tales from other areas of the country in the key components of plot, characterization and theme. Some common motifs, with two examples per motif, include the jealous elder brother ("The Jealous Elder Brother" [No. 44] and "A Jealous Elder Brother" [No. 473]), the evil junior/senior wife ("The Evil Junior Wife" [Nos. 45] and "The Jealous Senior Wife" [No. 48]), the arrogant beauty ("The Cat without Scars" [No. 50] and "The Girl without Scars" [No. 419]), the talking/singing object ("The Hunter and the Speaking Corn" [No. 256] and "The Singing Lily" [No. 468]). Others are the motifs of journey to the spirit world ("Dancing Competition in the Spirit World" [No. 75] and "The Girl without Ears" [No. 244]), nameless princess ("The King and His Two Daughters" [No. 56] and "Tortoise and the King's Nameless Daughters" [No. 59]), and magical transformation ("The Farmer's Dancing Dead Son" [No. 97] and "Kegbim, the Witch Girl" [No. 103]).

So pervasive is the spread of similar tales across the geographic areas that we decided that Book 2, being a wide-ranging collection as well as the first of the three selections of the Treasury of Nigerian Tales series, should fly the pan-Nigerian flag and serve simply as a showpiece of tales from Nigeria's diverse geographic areas.

In listing the 18 categories under which the fictional tales were grouped, we need to note that the categorization is not absolute, and that a few tales

may seem to fall into two or more categories. This is where identifying the leading character(s) or the central conflict of the tale can help in determining the most appropriate category for such borderline tales. Selected fictional tales which are not placed in Categories 1-17 automatically fall into Category 18 (the Miscellaneous Tales class). Even then, one may still perceive some core elements of one or more of the 17 categories in some stories featured in the miscellaneous group. Although some stories can fit into one or more categories, we have ordered each featured tale into one category.

In all, there are 18 categories. Each category of tales makes up a Section of selected tales. Each sectional set of tales is preceded by a brief introductory write-up dubbed "Thematic Snapshot." This is a three-paragraph informative teaser intended to provoke interest in the type of tales grouped under that section. It is not a preview in the strict sense as no specific tale is analysed. Each "Thematic Snapshot" simply clarifies the meaning and focus of a given category or section. Below, arranged in alphabetical order (with the exception of Miscellaneous Tales), are the 18 categories and the number of tales placed under each category:

	Category Name	Selected Tales	No. of Tales
I	Boomerang Tales	Tale Nos. 1-49	49
II	Contest Tales	Tale Nos. 50-95	46
III	Enfant-Terrible Tales	Tale Nos. 96-110	15
IV	Explanatory Tales	Tale Nos. 111-167	57
V	Fisherman Tales	Tale Nos. 168-181	14
VI	Fortune Tales	Tale Nos. 182-201	20
VII	Friendship	Tale Nos. 202-238	37
VIII	Heroic Tales	Tale Nos. 239-254	16
IX	Hunter Tales	Tale Nos. 255-285	31
X	Magical Tales	Tale Nos. 286-328	43
XI	Marital Tales	Tale Nos. 329-380	52
XII	Moralizing Tales	Tale Nos. 381-481	101
XIII	Old Woman Tales	Tale Nos. 482-498	17
XIV	Orphan Tales	Tale Nos. 499-516	18
XV	Palace Tales	Tale Nos. 517-541	25
XVI	Trickster Tales	Tale Nos. 542-585	44
XVII	War Tales	Tale Nos. 586-596	11
XVIII	Miscellaneous Tales	Tale Nos. 597-700	104
		Total No. of Tales:	**700**

Discounting the Miscellaneous Tales category (which is a mixture of diverse tales), the three most dominant thematic categories are the Moralizing, Explanatory, and Marital categories, in that order. Moralizing tales' premier position adds further credence to the point earlier made, that theme, particularly moral themes, are of prime importance to oral narrators of these tales.

Explanatory tales' second position reflects the fact that all over the world, across cultures, nature and the social environment have always been clothed with mystery and wonder. In earlier times, people tried to explain these mysteries in terms of stories. Such stories as "How the Cockroach Got Its Antenna" (No. 111), "Why the Moon is Partly Dark" (No. 137), "How Burial Started" (No. 138), and "Why the Hen Scatters Her Food Before Eating" (No. 162), are important, in spite of their far-fetched explanations, because they have the tendency of making the narrator's young listeners to ask further questions, in their private moments, and to seek more credible answers.

That marital tales are next in numerical terms points to the strong family values of the communal environment as well as to the social pressures that debase those values. The place of the family as the smallest unit of social organization as well as its critical relevance as the foundational school of communal ethics is somewhat acknowledged by the impressive number of marital tales collected across the country.

Someone may ask, why only 18 categories? Well, we could have placed these tales in more or less number of categories, as there is nothing rigid about this categorization. It is merely a convenient way of presenting the tales to the reader, but it is by no means a random grouping as our categorization was informed by the types of tales we gathered during the nationwide tale-collection exercise and by the manner these tales are viewed in their cultural settings.

It is necessary to note, at this point, that presenting these tales to the reader in an orderly form is a primary purpose of this collection. This is not a morphological study and, as such, does not require technical classification along the line envisioned by the Aarne-Thompson (AT) index[23] of 1928 and its supposedly internationalized update, the Aarne-Thompson-Uther classification (ATU) index[24] of 2004. And we may also observe that even with Hans-Jörg Uther's admission of some international tales left out in the AT index, folk narratives from African traditions, including narratives from Nigeria and most of black Africa, were not included in that taxonomical exercise.

In spite of its consideration of tales from some foreign traditions in arriving at the numbers ascribed to tale types and motif types, the ATU taxonomy and the earlier AT model remain basically the same – an analytical tool which may be sufficient for Western oral tradition but very inadequate for Nigeria's folk literature and the oral literatures of other African tradtions. As Ashliman has pointed out, "The Aarne–Thompson system catalogues some 2500 basic plots from which, for countless generations, European and Near Eastern storytellers have built their tales."[25] Stith Thompson's own 1955 *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, while generally liberal, had similar shortcomings. Uther's 2004 attempt at internationalizing the AT taxonomy did not result into a universally acceptable classification number system.

We did not set out to embark on a systemic numbering of these tales in the manner envisaged by the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index. Our aim in *A Selection of Nigerian Folktales: Themes and Settings* is to present in English diverse fictional narratives of Nigeria. And this we have done. Scholars interested in folkloristic morphology will find in these narratives some raw materials for such structural studies.

6. Conclusion

In closing, it is good to note that the fact that folktales are transmitted from generation to generation by oral tradition does not mean the art of creating folk stories ended with our forebears. It appears that in non-literate societies, every generation not only transmits to the next generation its heritage of tales but also tells its own fresh tales which, generations later, would seem as old as any other. There are modern folk tales and some of them can be identified by certain features which give away their period of composition. Two of the most outstanding of such features are character and place names.

Even in this collection, modern folktales abound. Tales such as "The Hyena, the He-goat and the Squirrel" (No.19), "Derek and Erik" (No. 449), "Janet, the Stubborn Girl" (No. 462), "The Singing Lily" (468), "Hyena and Spider's Business" (No. 621), and "Musa and Monster" (No. 625) can roughly be dated within the last 50 to 100 years. They are by no means pre-historic tales as we can rightly guess the relatively modern epoch when their first anonymous authors narrated the tales. Let us enquire into their probable dates of first narration. "Derek and Erik" (No. 449), "Janet, the Stubborn Girl" (No. 462) and "Musa and the Monster" (No. 625) are tales narrated after the advent of Christianity and Islam. The names of the characters (Derek, Erik, Janet and Musa) give us adequate clues, just as the "Islamic school" mentioned in "The Hyena, the He-goat

and the Squirrel" (No.19) tells us that this is not a tale told at a period of pre-Islamic experience in Nigeria.

But there are other indicators beyond character and place names. The approximate date of some of the stories can be known through the characters' occupations and the kind of money used in business transactions. These two can give several clues as the age-old vocations (such as hunting and fishing) are not really many and the history of modern vocations and hobbies is well-documented. Equally properly documented is the history of money. And so we can use available records to trace with a high level of accuracy the period of the first narration of some of these modern folktales.

Let us, for example, use the occupation clue to trace the period one of the tales in this collection, "The Singing Lily" (468) was first narrated. "The Singing Lily" gives us an occupational clue in the second sentence of the tale: "Their parents loved gardening." As an activity of "growing and maintaining the garden"[26] (the garden defined as "a planned space, usually outdoors, set aside for the display, cultivation, and enjoyment of plants and other forms of nature"[27]) gardening has recorded history. Within Africa, the first gardens were reputed to have been built by the Egyptians who were conquered by the Romans in 30 BC.[28] There is no evidence that indicates that gardening, in the sense implied in "The Singing Lily," was a traditional practice of any of Nigeria's ethnic groups or that the Egyptians, Africa's earliest gardeners, introduced that concept into Nigeria before the entire area now known as Nigeria was colonized between 1861 (when Lagos was annexed) and 1898 (when the North was secured for the British).[29]

As for the "Lily" flower of this tale's title, available records show that it is not indigenous to Nigeria. According to a credible source, "There are between 80 to 100 species of lilies (Liliaceae), and most are native to the Northern Hemisphere in Asia, Europe and North America."[30] Since the Europeans who colonized Nigeria were the British, it could be said that the British most likely introduced the Lily flower into Nigeria. So, if we take into consideration the more inclusive date of 1898, the new folktale, "The Singing Lily," cannot be more than 117 years. If we make room for the years it took the Nigerian Lily to spread across the communities to the point of being a folk reference, the date of the first narration of the "The Singing Lily" is probably less than 100 years – maybe under 50 years.

Such a historically-derived method of dating can be applied using the currency indication in a tale. And we can illustrate this with the tale, "Hyena and Spider's Business" (No. 621). Here is the opening paragraph

of the tale:

> One day, a greedy spider bought a knife and a basket. Each of the two items cost him six pence. He needed manure and went to his neighbour's house to see if he could give him some. His neighbour asked him to go to the backyard and fetch as much as he wanted. When he went there, he brought out his knife, slaughtered a goat, threw it inside his basket and left.

Mention is made of a specific currency and amount in the second sentence; there we learn that the spider's newly-bought items cost him "six pence" each. "Six pence" ceased to be a legal tender in Nigeria on January 1, 1973, when the currency units, naira and kobo, were introduced to replace pounds, shillings and pence. Since folk narrators like to communicate to their audience using conversational language and the most current forms of expression, we can say that an oral narrator creating this story after 1973 was likely to have used "kobo," not "pence," in indicating the cost of the spider's items. This is a story orally narrated and translated into English in 2014; yet, the narrator used "pence" rather than "kobo," unconsciously indicating that the tale was first narrated before the introduction of naira and kobo and was simply orally transmitted to the hearing of the 2014 re-teller. So, we can establish that the earliest narration of "Hyena and Spider's Business" was in 1972 or a few years earlier.

All these enquiries about the date or period of a tale's first narration are important in that they show that regardless of the general decline in the practice of narrating folktales to children, new folktales are still being created in Nigeria. These modern folktales may not be many, and hopes of having them transmitted to future generations via the oral tradition may seem slim. However, with tales hitherto only orally transmitted now being documented in books such as *A Selection of Nigerian Folktales: Themes and Settings*, there is hope that no matter how the wind of modernity blows, our folktales may continue to be as enduring and timeless as the moon. There is need to adopt them into modern communication systems such as animations (cartoons) and film/television documentaries.

Endnotes

1. Examples of such published studies are Heinrich Barth, *Collections of Vocabularies of Central African Languages*, Gotha, 1862 (Reprinted by Frank Cass, London, 1971); Helser, Albert D., *Education of Primitive People*, Negro Universities Press, New York, 1930; Meek, C K, *Tribal Studies in Northern Nigeria*, London, 1931; and Helser, A.D, *African*

Stories, Revell, New York, 1930

2. See these Albert D. Helser's publications: *Education of Primitive People*, Negro Universities Press, New York, 1930; *In Sunny Nigeria*, Revell, New York; 1926; and *African Stories*, Fleming H Revell Company, New York, 1930.

3. Freemann, R. A., and Kay Williamson. 1967. *Ịjọ proverbs*. Research Notes (Ibadan) 1:1-11.

4. See *The Guardian* of March 26, 2009, for biographical information on Suzanne Wenger.

5. Herskovits, Melville J and Frances S, *Dahomean Narratives: A Cross Cultural Analysis*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1958, gave a detailed practical clarification of this point.

6. Helser, A.D, *African Stories*, Revell, New York, 1930

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8. Skinner, Neil, *Hausa Tales and Traditions*, Frank Cass, London, 1969

9. Education of Primitive People, Negro Universities Press, New York, 1930

10. Bade Ajuwon, "Oral and Written literature in Nigeria," *Nigerian History and Culture*, Richard Olaniyan, editor. (Hong Kong: Longman Group Ltd, 1985), pp.306-318, 326.

11. Ibid

12. Ibid

13. Oxford Reference, Oxford University Press, London, 2006

14. Ogbalu, Uche Janet, "Appreciation of Igbo Folktales and Songs Versus Realism," *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 2011

15. Peek, Philip M and Yankah, Kwesi (eds.), 2004, *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, London, Routledge

16. See Usman, Bukar, *Language Disappearance and Cultural Diversity in Biu Emirate*, Klamidas, Abuja, 2014,

17. Dr. Bukar Usman Foundation is a registered Non-Governmental Organisation in Nigeria (for more information visit www.bukarusman.com)

18. Herskovits, Melville J and Frances S, op. cit

19. Tomoloju, Ben, "Bukar Usman's Literary Voyage in Print," *The Guardian*, January 3, 2014

20. www.britannica.com/topic/ancestor-worship

21. Thompson, Stith, "Folk Literature," *Encyclopædia Britannica.* Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015.

22. Usman, Bukar, *The Stick of Fortune*, Klamidas, Abuja, 2006

23. Developed by the folklorist, Antti Aarne, and published as *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* in 1910, and translated and revised by Stith Thompson in 1928 and 1961

24. In the 2004 publication, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography*, Hans-Jörg Uther updated the Aarne-Thompson index which thereafter became known as the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index.

25. Ashliman, D. L. 1987. *A Guide to Folktales in the English Language: Based on the Aarne–Thompson Classification System.* New York, Greenwood Press.

26. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden

27. Ibid.

28. http://www.localhistories.org/gardening.html

29. Usman, Bukar, *A History of Biu*, Klamidas, Abuja, 2015, p. 239-240

30. http://www.gardenguides.com/79947-history-lily-flower.html

About the Author: Dr Bukar Usman is the President of the Nigerian Folklore Society.
Email: bukarusman@gmail.com

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