

Preservation of Near-Extinct African Culture: The Case of Yoruba Proverbs

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Abstract : Proverb is an important aspect of most indigenous culture in Africa including that of the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria. As revealed by recent studies, Yoruba proverbs as an important cultural heritage are threatened and near extinct. This fear of proverb extinct in Yoruba cultural growth has been observed and expressed at different fora by many researchers and professionals including Art historians, culture patrons, social critics' and teachers among others. Investigation revealed that the intangible nature of proverb is largely responsible for its continuous disappearance in the language structure and creative speeches which give the unique identity to the Yoruba people. Some of the factors that are responsible for culture extinct include: absence of moonlight stories by the elderly, the nuclear family system, and total assimilation of western culture, the concept of modernity and urban nature of Yoruba towns among others. Therefore, to preserve this creative heritage (proverb), there is need for a conscious shift of the traditional role of proverbs in speech development to its use as tool for artistic creations and expressions in visual form. The study was carried out between June, 2013 and February, 2015 in three Yoruba towns; Ilorin, Ede and Ogbomoso selected from Kwara, Osun and Oyo states respectively. The data used in this study were collected through oral and structured interviews. Fifteen interviewees were purposively selected in each of the study areas. It also employs the use of electronic and printed media to generate relevant literature on the subject matter. The study revealed that many Yoruba proverbs are preserved or hidden in text books, monograph, home videos, films and pastoral messages. However, this has not stopped the problem of lack of understanding of its usage, meaning and reasons for its extinction that may hinder its preservation for the incoming generations. This study concludes that indigenous culture can be revived and preserved for future generations when there is a conscious attempt to integrate or convert their traditional roles for present day realities and relevance in our social and educational needs.

Keywords : culture, assimilation, extinct, heritage, preservation

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