

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON**

**GENDERED POWER RELATIONS AS EXPRESSED IN  
SELECTED EWE PROVERBS**

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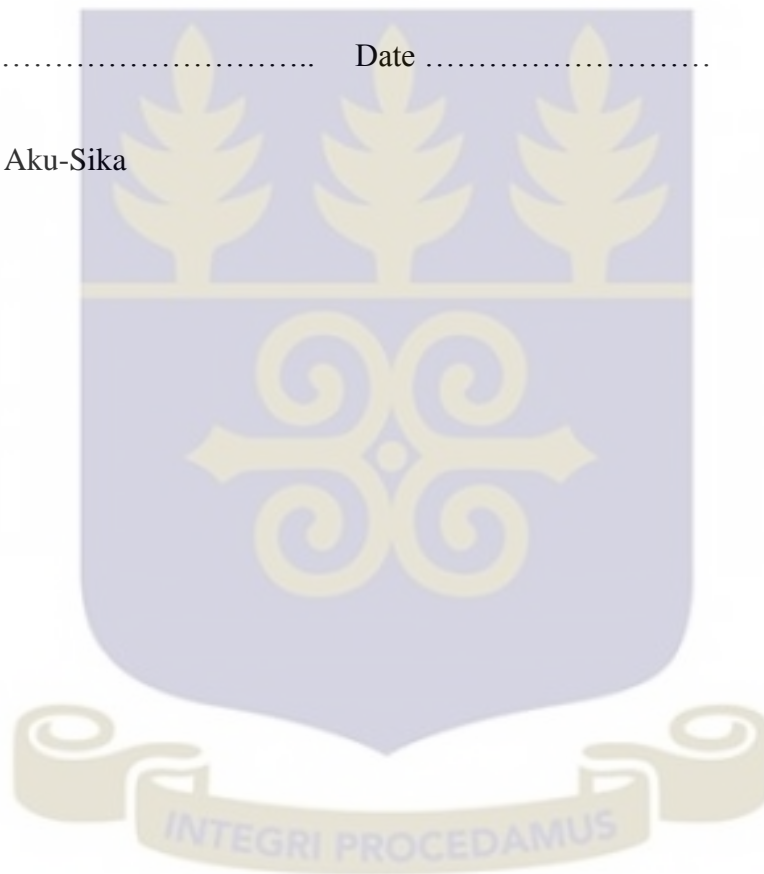


## DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this thesis, with the exception of the cited references, is the result of my own research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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## CERTIFICATION

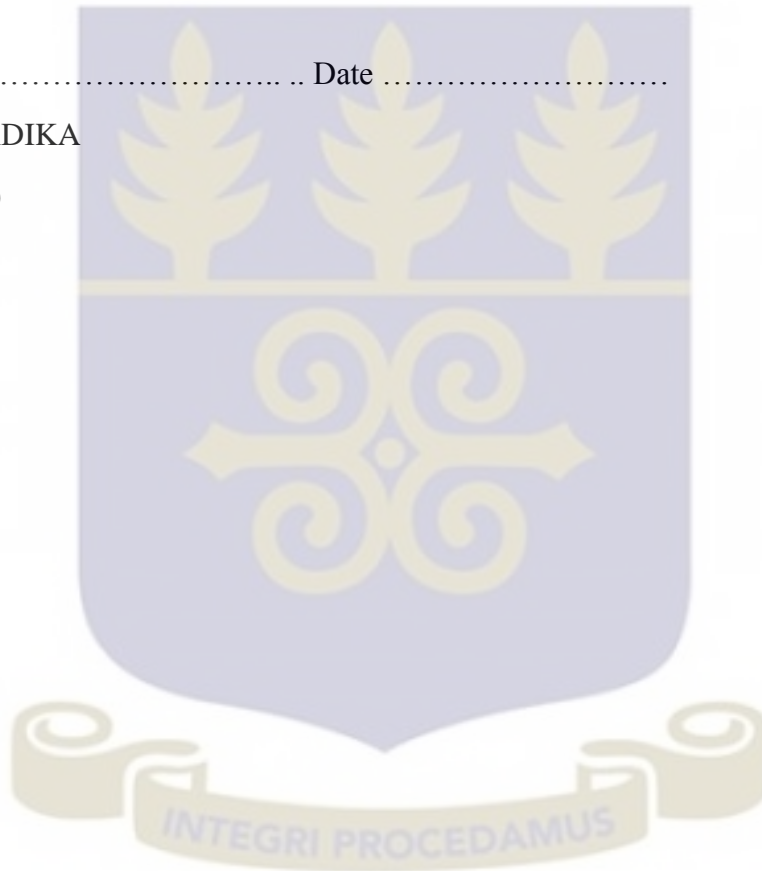
We hereby certify that this thesis was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the University of Ghana.

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## DEDICATION

To Gina, Helen, Gifty, Lena and Sylvia.



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I am grateful to God Almighty for providing everything I needed for the successful completion of this thesis. To my supervisors, Dr. Mawuli Adjei and Dr. Kwame Adika, I say a very big Thank you. I also wish to acknowledge the help of all lecturers and secretaries at the English Department, and the Language Centre. God richly bless you all.



## ABSTRACT

Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as theorized by Fairclough, Van Dijk, and Wodak, this thesis attempts a detailed analysis of proverbs in Ewe which describe, prescribe and circumscribe ways of being male and female. Forty (40) selected proverbs, grouped into four categories, are analysed under three stages in Fairclough's model: the Descriptive, Interpretive and Explanational stages.

The literary and linguistic features of the proverbs and their socio-cultural contexts are discussed under the various stages in order to unravel the nuances embedded in them as regards gendered power relations. Critical Discourse Analysis serves as the analytical framework with other related concepts such as patriarchy, social construction of gender, hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity as a backdrop for discussions.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CD	CRITICAL DISCOURSE
CDA	CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
FCDA	FEMINIST CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
CL	CRITICAL LINGUISTICS
SFG	SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR



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## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW: This Chapter provides an overview of the background of the thesis, the introduction and the statement of the research problem. The background brings out the prominent elements in the cultural and religious landscape of the Ewes which give an insight into the gender ideology of the society. The hypothesis, the scope of the research, objectives, methodology, and significance of the research are also covered in the chapter.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

A study of gendered power relations in Ewe society with a focus on literary and linguistic elements in Ewe proverbs requires a critical look at the Ewe society as a whole as there are interconnected strands of ideas forming the gendered ideologies to be explored in the proverbs. As the case is in most societies, differentiations between the male and female genders serve as one of the fundamental ways of building knowledge systems in the Ewe society. The distinctions put between the male and the female ways of being therefore can be identified in some of the manifestations of literature among the Ewes, a most prominent one being their proverbs.

The Ewes can be found in three West African states: Ghana, Togo and Benin, and are known to have similar religious practices, beliefs, folk literature, and music. In Ewe traditional cosmology, the supreme God is believed to be both male and female. According to Dzobo (2006):

*Mawu* is the female principle of life and *Lisa* is the male principle of death. Whenever the next world is thought of as the source or origin of the (*dzogbe* or *dzofe*, Ewe), then

it is a female principle, i.e. Mawu, the principle of life and so in the creation myth the Moulder of human beings is called Bomeno, i.e. The Mother of Bome. Bome itself stands for that which gives birth or life to, living things a form (p.1)

Hackett (1994) in a study on the Ewe of Benin explains the Ewe cosmology further by stating that *Mawu* is identified with the moon and *Lisa* with the sun. Quoting the proverb, “when Lisa punishes, Mawu forgives”, Hackett further brings out the idea that Mawu which is the female side of the supreme deity is seen as gentle and kind while Lisa, the male side is of an unforgiving and ruthless nature (p.68). If these fundamental ideas be used to project how the society views the male and female, it goes without saying that both genders are seen to be of much worth to the functioning of the society since life, death, the moon and the sun are considered to be of much importance to the society. Abotchie (1997) also documents the roles of the senior-most surviving males of lineages in the Anlo part of Eweland. The male head is usually assisted by a female head who “is generally concerned with the affairs of the female members of the lineage. The status of the female counterpart who is referred to as *mama* is, however, more of an expedient and consultative nature than executive”. Abotchie also refers to what Apter (1963) calls the “proverb law” to explain the system of adjudication in the Ewe society where proverbs are used by the council of elders and the chief to judge cases in the Southern Ewe society. (Abotchie, 1997, p.16)

In the area of music and dance, groups and dances exist in Ewe communities exclusively for the male and the female. Agawu (1995) in his work on drumming and dancing among the Northern Ewes<sup>1</sup>, identifies that just like in other African societies, drumming is the preserve of men among the Northern Ewes he studied. According to him, “it seems unimaginable to the Northern Ewe that a woman would, for example beat a sacred drum like *Aq̄abatram*” (p.91). That particular drum, so terrifying that it sends shivers down the spines of people at a mere mention, is noted to have human skulls gotten from war strapped on it.

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<sup>1</sup> Agawu divides Ewe speakers in Ghana into two: The Southerners (the Anlos and Tongus) and the Northerners (those around Ho, Kpando, Hohoe, Akpafu). This thesis works with his division.

Women are however also noted to excel at recreational dances such as *Gbolo* and *Bɔbɔbɔ*. To Agawu, the pattern of excluding one gender or another from beating of some particular drums “reflects one aspect of the larger societal distribution of power.” (p.91)

Ewe society is also a patrilineal one and the inheritance of property portrays some gendered ideas of the people. In both matrilineal and patrilineal systems of inheritance, female members are noted to not have recognition as part of their husbands’ lineage and so the possibility that a female would inherit her male parent is severely limited (See Gedzi, 2009; Kludze, 1973; Nukunya 1969). Gedzi (2009) who conducted research on the inheritance system of the Ewes and Ashantis, documented the saying *ɲutsua fofonue woɖuna* (a man, inherits the father), and *nyɔnua dadanue woɖuna* (a woman, inherits the mother), as principles used to determine who inherits what in the Anlo society he studied. The reality then is that, women marry and leave their father’s houses without substantial inheritance, to join the families of their husbands where they are again excluded from inheritance. Kludze (1973) and Nukunya (1993) however note that daughters are considered in property distribution but it is only that the distribution is unequally done with the male getting the larger share. Daughters’ claims are therefore seen as privileges and not rights, especially as regards land inheritance. Bukh’s (1979) view below supports that of Kludze and Gedzi even though she does not capture the percentage of land allowed females. She says:

Within the traditional land tenure system, the patrilineal lineage ensured all members of the social group, including women, access to land. Everyone was allocated rights to use the land of the lineage by the male head who presided over the distribution. (p.52)

In the religious sphere, as regards gendered constructs, some priestesses are deemed so influential and powerful, they cannot be challenged by any male in the society and when rites are being performed for them, no man is allowed to be present. There also exist matters relating to war that women do not qualify to deliberate on. In the domestic sphere however,

women are considered the experts in all matters related to cooking, puberty rites of girls and delivery of new members of the society whilst men take on tasks that require strength. The oral literature of the Ewes therefore convey all these ideas either explicitly or subtly in the narratives and sayings as they artistically construct the duties the male and female members of the society are expected to play.

In the three West African states the Ewes are present in, even though there are differences in the dialects of the Ewe language spoken, all of them are noted to have mutually intelligible words and structures. This thesis focuses more on the Ewe spoken by the speakers in Ghana as the researcher is conversant with all the dialects spoken in Ghana: the Anlo and Tongu dialects of the south, and the *Uedome* dialect of the North.

## **1.2 Introduction to the Study**

Proverbs and wise sayings in most cultures, though grounded in anonymity and communal authorship, have often been ascribed to sagacious old people from antiquity (Adjei, Agbozo and Adjei 2015). The reverence with which these old people are held is therefore attached to the proverb. Even though it is not the only medium through which the cultural knowledge and wisdom of the Ewe is artistically expressed, the proverb is focused on in this study because of how prominently it features and is woven intricately into the fabric of the Ewe and the African society as a whole. To Dzobo (1973, p.vii):

The proverbs do not only show the mode of thought and the general principles used to direct personal and social behavior but they also reveal the way Africans look upon the tangled web of human relationship and life, and chart in detail the dangers of life and the perils of the human environment.

Similarly, Yitah (2012, p.10) also asserts:

The belief that proverbs are created by the ancestors who are always right and therefore must not be contradicted also ensures that the sexist ideology and discriminatory rhetoric in these wise sayings are not questioned.

These statements portray certain powers vested in the proverb as it makes pronouncements that the societies they originate from do not question. This research interrogates the genderized Ewe proverbs in order to bring out how gendered power relations are constructed in each individual proverb. Again, according to Diabah and Amfo (2014):

In Ghana, there has been some fairly extensive work done on proverbs, especially in Akan society (cf. Asimeng-Boahene, 2009, 2010, 2013; Boadi, 1972; Christensen, 1958; Oduyoye, 1979; Yankah, 1986, 2012, on Akan proverbs; Awedoba, 2000; Yitah, 2007, 2011, on Kasena proverbs). A few of these studies (Asimeng-Boahene, 2013; Oduyoye, 1979; Yitah, 2007, 2011) have examined the utilization of proverbs in the expression and construction of female identities. (p.2)

The above observation made by Diabah and Amfo (2014), cannot be overemphasized. Even though works such as Alhassan (2007) are not mentioned by Diabah and Amfo, the size of scholarship on gendered proverbs in Ghana pales in comparison to what is available on Nigeria, for instance. The Yoruba proverb in particular has seen works such as Oyewumi (2002) respond to conclusions drawn by various works such as Ogunwale (1998), Owomoyela (1972), Yusuf (1998), which argue that Yoruba proverbs are gendered. Later works such as Asiyanbola (2009), Balogun (2010), and Daniel (2008), also brought about findings which support the scholars who worked on the Yoruba proverbs before them. It becomes clear therefore that the Ghanaian genderized/non-genderized proverb conversations are yet to be extensively engaged in. With regard to the Ewe proverb, no other extensive collection is available aside Dzobo's (1973) collection; and with regards to analyses of gender implications in the proverbs, Agbemabiese's (2016) stands as the only work that looks at the gender constructs in the proverbs.

The folklore of the Ewe reflects their beliefs and knowledge systems, and the proverb in particular which is used in this thesis features prominently in the Ewe society. Again, different situations call for the use of different proverbs and so, people who know how to use proverbs for the right situations are hailed as sages in their communities.

Studies into the nature of proverbs on the African continent and other parts of the world however continue to bring out nuances embedded in proverbs which have been taken for granted. The nuanced nature of the proverbs suggests that there are covert codes that get internalized since they re-inscribe social roles and so have implications for how society gets structured on various levels.

The role of folklore in forming gender constructs has also been the subject of many discourses among scholars in recent decades. While some scholars believe gender roles are innate, others believe society foists it on the individual after birth. Simone de Beauvoir was famed to have said, ‘One is not born a woman but becomes one.’ Formidable schools of thought therefore hold the idea that in patriarchal societies, men put in place structures to keep the feminine gender under the control of the masculine one. Kiyimba (2010), who studies masculine and feminine constructs in the proverbs and folktales of the Baganda, emphasizes the observation that Baganda society pressurizes couples to give birth to boys rather than girls because the society believes the boy superior to the girl. She cites the following words by John Stuart Mill to support her observation:

Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments... They have therefore put everything in place to enslave their minds. The masters of all other slaves rely, for maintaining obedience on fear, either of themselves, or religious fears ... All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will and government by self-control, but submission...(cited in Kiyimba, 2010, p. 39)

J.S Mills’ view about the religious elements in the control of behaviour also validates Dzobo (1973)’s view that the more he studied Ewe proverbs, the more he realized they form a collection of ‘holy sayings of Africa’. Their ‘holy’ nature therefore accounts for how influential they are in the society, owing to the importance attached to religious elements in all societies. Karl Marx put religion’s power succinctly by referring to it as the opium of the

masses. All things religious portray a people's zest for life because they help a people get meanings for all happenings.

Discourses about masculine and feminine constructs in African oral literature have also been engaged in by scholars like Thomas A.Hale, Rangira Bea Gallimore, who came up with in-depth findings about the power wielded by the proverbs and folktales of African societies in portraying and prescribing gender roles of the society. Other works such as Hussein (2009), Daniel (2008), Diabah and Amfo (2014), Asimeng-Boahene (2013), Njagi (2013) delve into how men and women are portrayed in Oromo, Yoruba, Akan, Ki-Embu proverbs respectively.

The Ewe proverb even though it has been looked at closely from various perspectives such as the moral and philosophical perspectives, has not been engaged critically as regards the linguistic features that aid the masculine and feminine constructs. This thesis in adding the analysis of the Ewe proverbs to the discourses of gender constructs in African proverbs, would aid deeper understanding of the nature of patriarchy as expressed in oral literature on the continent, as recent studies suggest that patriarchy is not the same in all societies as was previously thought.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Proverbs, known in Ewe as *lododowo*, have been studied as sources of motif for art (Vigbedor, 2011), and as items that spell out the moral codes of the Ewes (Dzobo, 1973). No extensive work has however been done on the linguistic structures and literary devices as used to construct gender roles in the proverbs. This thesis in critically looking at the relations between the male and the female in the Ewe society, seeks to throw light on the gender ideology, and the nuances embedded in constructing gender in the Ewe proverbs. The conclusions arrived at would also add more to conversations on gender relations as

reproduced in African proverbs. According to Hussein (2005), ‘a gender study based on proverbs of a single society does not provide a fuller understanding of the ethnocultural construction of masculinity and femininity in Africa’ (p.63). So far, scholars have critically looked at the Oromo, Akan, Baganda, Xhosa, Kasena, Nyanja, proverbs to mention a few. A closer look at the Ewe constructs would aid the ‘fuller understanding’ of the ethnocultural constructs Hussein calls for.

In ‘critically’ engaging the selected Ewe proverbs in order to look at the workings of all manifestations of gendered power relations in them, both feminine and masculine constructs would be looked at, and the stylistic strategies; both linguistic and literary used in the gendered proverbs would also be analysed closely, thus taking further Agbemabiese’s (2016) which focuses on the literary constructs and how women in particular are portrayed.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

1. To find out how the discursive strategies employed in the Ewe proverbs portray male and female genders.
2. To find out how the gender roles expressed through the discursive strategies reflect the gender ideology of the Ewes.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How are power and ideology expressed implicitly and explicitly in the proverbs?
2. What does the context of the proverbs tell about the ideology of the Ewes in relation to gender?

#### **1.6 The Scope of the Research**

The study focuses on how Ewe proverbs as a form of discourse reflect the ideologies of the Ewe society as regards gender constructs. Halliday (1994) asserts that ‘‘language has the property of not only transmitting the social order but also maintaining and potentially

modifying it'' (cited in Nyako, 2013 p. 14). The literary and linguistic use of language therefore is the principal focus of this study. Other social and political concepts are just brought in to support the observations made from the linguistic and literary analysis and to also explain the social, political and economic contexts of the proverbs. The research also concerns itself with only the male and female genders.

### **1.7 Hypothesis**

Ewe proverbs have embedded in them discursive strategies that emphasize and reinforce societal gender assumptions.

### **1.9 Methodology and Source of Research Data**

The proverbs collected would be put into four categories: Proverbs that relate general attributes of women, proverbs that relate perceived relations between men and women, proverbs that relate attributes of men, and proverbs that relate the relations between men and women in the context of marriage. The most prominent linguistic feature in the proverbs, which is negation, is looked at closely in all four categories in addition to literary features such as parallelism, humour, and imagery. Other linguistic elements such as imperative structures prominent in the groups are also traced and analysed critically putting into consideration the explicit and implicit ideas conveyed. Animal metaphors are also identified and analysed across all the categories with a focus on how they construct masculine and feminine essences that result in gendered power relations. The categories are all put under the descriptive and interpretive stages of Fairclough's phases of analysis. The explanation stage then includes discussions of proverbs from the categories in relation to the cultural context of the proverbs. Fairclough's principle of Manifest Intertextuality is also employed under the Interpretative stage to link texts such as dialogues from some Ewe novels, tales, experiences, and sayings to the proverbs in order to help explain the proverbs. Hussein (2009) draws on Nikolajeva and Scott's view which makes the important point that:

...within a given text and across texts, elements of social events, experiences, and practices are dialectically interwoven with other elements to form a coherent whole of the discursive campaign. When one analyzes a text, one should thus look for interdiscursive nodes, a condition wherein “a text alludes to another text” (Danesi 276). A text may allude to mosaic of multiple other texts in the social textuality from which they were generated. Of course, “the allusion only makes sense if the reader is familiar with the hypotext (the text alluded to).” (Nikolajeva and Scott cited in Hussein,2009, p.100)

Lexical items prominent in the proverbs are discussed and linked to the linguistic and literary devices analysed. Implicature is also employed alongside the linguistic and literary discussions for in-depth analysis of the proverbs. The semantic import of the lexical items would therefore be looked at vis-à-vis their contextual significance. Stylistic features such as metaphor, imagery, parallelism are also analysed to see how they either emphasize or de-emphasize ideological meanings...(Van Dijk, 2006). According to Van Dijk:

If ideologies are acquired, expressed, enacted and reproduced by discourse, this must happen through a number of discursive structures and strategies. For instance, the pronoun ‘we’ is one of these structures, typically used to deictically refer to the ingroup of the current speaker. In theory, and depending on context, any variable structure of discourse may be ideologically ‘marked’. Specific intonation, stress or volume in the expression of a word or phrase may be interpreted as sexist or racist (Van Dijk, 2006, p.124)

The social events, experiences and practices that make the proverbs forces to reckon with, as regards the reinforcement of gender ideologies would be looked at. As regards the translation of the proverbs, word for word translation is put directly beneath proverbs written in Ewe, followed by the semantic translation.

The researcher collected data from one published source and also used what Daniel (2008) and Koller (2004) call the “informed intuition”, after Deignan (1999). What this means is that, these proverbs were intuitively identified from the experience of this analyst in terms of their having been used in her presence or she having used them herself (Daniel 2008). The proverbs with male and female lexemes were therefore selected from Dzobo

(1973). The researcher as a native speaker of the Ewe language also added the proverbs with male and female lexemes she became familiar with over a period of two years to ones published in Dzobo (1973) bringing the proverbs in the data to be used for the analysis to a total of forty (40).

### **1.10 Significance of the Research**

This research will provide further insight into the ways in which the Ewe express the differences they perceive, and the power relations they reinforce between the male and female genders. This will provide viable material for comparative analysis with the perceptions from other African societies. The study would also bring about better understanding of the relationship between the Ewe gender ideology and the language of its proverbs.

### **1.11 Organization of the Thesis**

This study is divided into five (5) chapters. Chapter One (1) introduces the study and includes the Background, Scope of the research, Statement of the research problem, Research questions, Hypothesis, Methodology, Source of research data, and Significance of the research. Chapter two (2) covers a review of literature related to proverbs in general, and studies on genderized proverbs in Africa and the Ewe society.

Chapter three (3) provides an overview of the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis used for the study, and other relevant theories and concepts from which the study draws ideas. Chapter four (4) focuses on linguistic and literary analysis of the proverbs selected. The proverbs would be described, interpreted and explained using Fairclough's three stages of analysis. The most prominent linguistic feature in the proverbs which is negation is looked at closely in all four categories: Proverbs that relate general attributes of women, proverbs that relate perceived relations between men and women, proverbs that

relate attributes of men, and proverbs that relate the relations between men and women in the context of marriage. Other prominent linguistic and literary features are also looked at.

Chapter five (5) brings out the findings from the analysis highlighting each section of the analysis, and also covers recommendations and conclusions drawn from the thesis.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

OVERVIEW: This chapter contains review of literature about gender issues in Africa, those particularly related to the proverb and explored by scholars from various parts of Africa.

#### 2.1 Proverbs and Constructions of Masculine and Feminine Identities in Africa

Conversations about gender have taken varied turns on the African continent in recent decades. While some scholars hold the view that engaging gendered discourses would aid in doing away with gender inequality on the continent, others hold the view that gender as a concept is foreign to Africa and so, only some issues, if not all, should be viewed through non-gendered lenses. The calls for women as the marginalized in the society to be seen and heard have meanwhile become truisms which are re-echoed in many conversations. In their novels, poetry, and works of scholarship, writers like Ama Ata Aidoo, Abena Busia, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Bă, Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, among others, explore issues of gender extensively in a bid to get attention drawn to the injustices they perceive in the relations between the genders in Africa. In her novel, *Changes*, Ama Ata Aidoo illustrates some of the ways the African society short-changes women. When Esi is raped by her husband and complains to her grandmother, the old woman finds it difficult to grasp a novel idea as marital rape. In *Anowa*, when the eponymous character chooses a man thought to be unsuitable for her for marriage, an old woman cautions her with the proverb, “the infant which tries its milk teeth on every bone and stone, grows up with nothing to eat dried meat with” (p.21). By utilising such proverbs in the contexts having to do with women and marriage particularly, Aidoo projects the African traditional beliefs through the issues she raises in her stories. *Anowa* ends up being accused of emasculating her husband when the

couple are unable to bear children. Aidoo illustrates the pervading African idea that childlessness in marriage is always as a result of misdeeds on the part of the woman. By bringing out these issues, writers like Aidoo draw attention to the problems they see women face which they deem grave enough to be addressed by the African society.

Recent studies on African proverbs, have shown that in Africa, proverbs have been used to maintain gendered life in the continent through conveying the African people's understanding of masculinity and femininity. These works have sought to show also that sexist proverbs give their users insights about the wider discourse of gender as it is practiced through other symbolic and material representations and actions (Assimeng-Boahene, 2013; Daniel, 2008; Diabah and Amfo 2014; Hussein 2004; Oha 1998; Yitah 2006). These works all draw the conclusion that, given the idea that proverbs by their nature are considered sacred and not to be questioned in the African society, some of them easily become instruments that shroud objectivity and fairness as regards gender relations. In the proverbs they examined, attributes of women ranged from women being troublemakers, to they being inferior, feather brained, and dangerous. Positive qualities are identified in some cases however, but these do not equal the number of negative attributes identified.

Very few studies have been undertaken as regards the Ewe proverb and the exploration of gender constructs. Agbemabiese's (2016) and Asimeng-Boahene's (2013); two significant works, found the proverbs they studied largely denigrating women. Even though Asimeng-Boahene looks at only one proverb from Ewe, he links its semantic import to those he discusses extensively from Akan and other West African countries, and so, the Ewe gender ideology also gets drawn somewhat though not discussed extensively using other related Ewe proverbs or the particular Ewe contexts. Asimeng-Boahene cites the Ewe proverb, *The hen says, I have a voice to declare daybreak, but I listen to my husband*

(Asimeng-Boahene, 2013, p.128), putting it in tandem with other proverbs from Ga, Oromo, Akan, and using radical feminist theories and Critical Discourse Theory as the backdrop of his research. His comparisons aid in the general conclusions he draws about the sexist nature of the proverbs. Diabah and Amfo (2014), in a work similar to that of Asimeng-Boahene's but using a territory more defined (the Akans), employ Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. The Feminist Critical Discourse framework also aids the researchers analyse the proverbs identifying subtle nuances and biases they see even in the proverbs that appear to put women in positions of power. All other works; Oha, 1998; Hussein, 2005; Njagi, 2013; Mutunda, 2016, which lean on patriarchal and feminist theories, arrive at the same conclusions as Asimeng-Boahene (2013) and Diabah and Amfo (2014) on the use of the proverbs as tools men use to limit the female's possession of power in society. The question of the authorship of proverbs then arises as some scholars argue that proverbs originate not only from a certain section of society but from every aspect of society, be it from women and men and so, men do not necessarily coin proverbs to denigrate women. This thesis leans on Durkeim's view which "demonstrates the collective nature of the proverb; it is the whole society that takes ownership of it. Thus, it is considered the collective view of the community which is reflective of communal thought and takes precedence over individual preferences and opinions"(cited in Diabah and Amfo 2014).

The conclusions supporting the unfair representation of women have however been opposed by writers such as Chinweizu, whose work, *The Anatomy of Female Power*, illustrates what he believes ultimately gives women power over men. In all his arguments, Chinweizu emphasizes the societal constructs that bring out the power he believes women wield. He asserts that, through the workings of the same constructs which are erroneously thought to disfavour the female, the male is made vulnerable inadvertently.

Assimeng-Boahene (2013) further shows how proverbs serve as storylines between the ways they represent the roles, statuses, and identity of women in traditional sub-Saharan Africa, and makes the case that the Ga, Ewe, Akan proverbs he analyzed carried in them societal constructions of gender. The fact that African proverbs have facilitated the transmission of knowledge and conventions which socially construct women's position in the society (Gyekye, 1996), supports arguments like Freire's which state that since women have been repeatedly/intensively told about their worthlessness or unproductiveness, they become convinced of their own worthlessness or unproductivity.

Yitah (2006) documents what she calls proverbial revolt of Kasena women of Ghana. She examined how perceptions of gender and female personhood are invoked, evoked, enacted, rejected, consciously reshaped, or completely transformed and found that women—subvert, contradict, and deconstruct the sexist ideology in Kasena proverbs and create a corpus of counter-proverbs by which they establish their own signifying terms (Yitah, 2006). Evident from this work, are new women who use their voices for subverting the views of patriarchy. Even though the Kasena proverbs are found by Yitah to also perpetuate patriarchy, the women negotiate and subvert these views through their jests. In the Ewe community, ceremonies are organized to routinely display and celebrate behaviors that are conventionally linked to one or the other sex category. These gender roles are thus to be seen in the Ewe proverbs as they perpetuate the gendered ideologies of the Ewe community. Drumming groups are formed to display male chivalry in war, hunting and in the defense of the community while majority of women have drumming groups that specialize in singing dirges or songs of complaint. Burns' (2009) study titled *Female Voices from an Ewe Dance-drumming Community in Ghana: Our Music Has Become a Divine Spirit*, studies the *adekeɖeɖe* (songs of complaints or redress) performed by *Dzibordi* group which is predominantly made up of women.

Hussein (2009) also shows how proverbs have been used to relegate women to a secondary position in the patriarchal systems in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan. His paper particularly looks critically at the complex ways in which proverbs have been used to subjugate women through institutionalizing, rationalizing, formalizing, or naturalizing their secondary positions, and sometimes nullifying their total humanity, bringing out findings that point to the fact that in the African societies looked at, there evidently are structures put in place to subdue the woman.

Concluding that the patriarchal system does harm to some men too, Kiyimba (2010) notes:

Therefore, although the notions of masculinity that emerge from the folktales and proverbs of the Baganda promote male dominance, they also pose enormous challenges for the male members of society, the advantages that the patriarchal system gives them notwithstanding (p.49)

This therefore brings the idea that the male gender also has ideas to contend with, as the ideologies in the patriarchal system go to carve male personalities around attributes of bravery and affluence, and a failure to conform and live up to the standards of the society, makes them failures.

Ogunwale (1998), holding one of the differing views on the question of sexism in African proverbs, came out with conclusions that bring out the view that Yoruba proverbs put males at a disadvantage. Amadiume (1987) and Oyewumi (2002), both coming out strongly with examples from their respective African ethnic groups to illustrate the “ungendered” nature of some African societies, also problematize the radical feminist researchers’ conclusions regarding the subjugation of all women. Oyewumi (2002), even though she appears to not have answers to the question of whether non-genderization actually entails non-subordination and oppression, makes a good case against those who over generalize the subordination of all women. According to Barnes (1990), Yoruba ideology supports both the

assertiveness and the docility of women. Quoting the Yoruba proverb, “Whether the man or the woman kills the snake is immaterial; the essential thing is that it is gone”, (p.67) to support her assertion, it can be realized that the patriarchal hold on certain African societies seems more relaxed than in some. These different views thus set the stage for further and more objective investigations into gender constructs in African proverbs.

## 2.2 Proverbs

Mieder (2004) observes that the definition of proverbs has sparked debates among scholars from many disciplines in recent years. He quotes Whiting’s somewhat all-encompassing definition after he had reviewed the definitions of others:

A proverb is an expression which owing its birth to its people, testifies to its origin in form and phrase. It expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth—that is, a truism, in homely language, often adorned, however, with alliteration and rhyme. It is usually short, but need not be; it is usually true, but need not be. Some proverbs have both a literal and figurative meaning, either of which makes perfect sense; but more often have one of the two. A proverb must be venerable; it must bear the sign of antiquity and since such signs may be counterfeited by a clever literary man, it should be attested in different places at different times. This last requirement we must often waive in dealing with very early literature, where the material at our disposal is incomplete. (Whiting 1932 cited in Mieder, 2004, p.2)

Whiting’s use of the word ‘apparently’ with regards to the subject of truism in proverbs should give much credibility to the definition, since proverbs and folklore in general, over the years have been proven by scholars to have been used for various agenda; either to subjugate a certain group of people in the society, to elevate one group, or to just serve the purposes of the age old traditions of a people. Discourses on the feminine and masculine constructs in a society’s folklore thus, have over the years brought out some of the purposes for which the truism in proverbs and myths especially, had been established by societies.

Finnegan (1982) also defines a proverb as “a saying in more or less fixed form, marked by shortness, sense and salt” (p.383), a definition which thankfully does not side-line African proverbs like her definition of the epic does. Even though her use of the word ‘sense’ is

debatable in the definition, the fact that the societies the proverbs originate from swallow them whole and literally take them as law, supports her assertion. Finnegan (1982) again notes, “...in many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly in proverbs” (p.390).

This thesis chooses proverbs for its analysis of gendered power relations because of how intricately they are woven into the fabric of the Ewe society. With regards to the history of proverbs, Vigbedor (2011, p. 12) writes:

Bacon (2001) classified the collection of proverbs by tracing it as far back as ancient Egypt, about 2500 B.C. The Old Testament of Christian Bible attributed some 900 proverbs to the King Solomon of Israel (10th century B.C) as suggested by Bacon. The Greek Philosopher Aristotle considers proverbs as being the survival of an older wisdom that have been systematically collected and classified. The Hellenistic period also saw proverbs being used by the rhetoricians for the adornment of speeches.

The proverb form therefore is identified as one of the oldest forms of oral literature which has influenced the lives of people.

Documentation of the folklore of Africa South of the Sahara, because of its chequered history of colonialism however, has seen perceptions of its proverbs being recorded thus in works such as Ellis (1890, p.258):

The Ewe-speaking peoples, like most races of West Africa, have a large collection of proverbs, one, at least being provided for almost every circumstance in life; a peculiarity which is common to most peoples who have made but little progress in civilization, and amongst whom these trite aphorisms have great weight.

Later scholars in Paremiology such as Wolfgang Mieder, Jere Whiting, Archer Taylor, and Isidore Okpewho however have long since proven Ellis' view to be false as Mieder, Whiting and Taylor did extensive work on Western proverbs, and Okpewho's work on various forms of African oral literature including the proverb, gave scholarship on African literature a facelift as the erroneous views got removed.

To Dzobo (1973):

In many African societies, when a proverb is cited, it is preceded with a statement like, "So said the elders..." Proverbs contain experience, wisdom and valid counsel that are acknowledged by all. Thus, the collective thought, beliefs and values of the African people can be discerned from their proverbs. (p.xi)

Proverbs in the Ewe society are therefore seen as necessary ingredients without which society cannot operate. In the renowned African writer, Achebe's words, 'Proverbs are the salt with which words are eaten'. The significance of proverbs in the Ewe society can therefore not be overemphasized. Yankah (1982) also observes that "good upbringing involves control over proverbial language-the ability to speak wittily and also decode proverbial communication." (p.334) He quotes the Akan proverb, *Oba nyansafo yebu no be na yenka no asem* (The wise child is addressed in proverbs, not in plain words) to support his point. Dzobo's (1973) again makes the significant point that:

proverbs do not only show the mode of thought and the general principles used to direct personal and social behaviour but they also reveal the way Africans look upon the tangled web of human relationship and life, and chart in detail the dangers of life and the perils of the human environment. (p.vii)

Thus, proverbs are seen not only in the light of their significance in influencing an aspect of a people's life; say the social aspect, but as one of the forces that influence a people's whole outlook on life. Yankah's observation also goes to buttress the fact that African proverbs are forces to reckon with as they serve important purposes in the societies they are drawn from.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth referred to as CDA) which serves as the analytical framework for the study. The chapter also includes discussions of the relationship between discourse, gender, power, and ideology and other socio-political ideas such as social construction of gender, patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, and emphasized femininity.

The relationship between discourse, gender, and power can be gleaned through different media in different societies. In other words, the same ideas can be conveyed in different forms in different societies. The Ewe society is one which uses its proverbs as conduits for constructing images and roles, and thus providing its people with fixated ways of being and doing. The ideologies feed into the proverbs and the proverbs in turn reinforce them in the minds of the people.

#### 3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

According to Wodak and Meyer (2001), the 1970s marked the beginning of a form of discourse and text analysis that recognized the role of language in structuring relations pertaining to power in society. Only at the time the focus was more on the formal aspects of language and the linguistic competence of the speakers which theoretically could be isolated from specific instances of language use. To them, much of the studies paid more attention to variation in language use and structures in communicative interaction, and so, in such a context, “attention to texts, their production and interpretation and their relation to societal impulses and structures, signalled a very different kind of interest.” (Wodak and Meyer 2001, p.5). Later developments however brought scholars such as Fairclough (1989), Kress

and Hodge (1979), Van Dijk (1985), who explained and illustrated principles of what came to be known as Critical Linguistics.

Kress (1990) indicates that:

the term CL was `quite self-consciously adapted from its social-philosophical counterpart, as a label by the group of scholars working at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s...By the 1990s the label CDA came to be used more consistently with this particular approach to linguistic analysis. (p.88)

He goes on to show how CDA by that time was `emerging as a distinct theory of language, a radically different kind of linguistics'. He brings up the criteria that characterize work in the critical discourse analysis paradigm, showing how these differentiate such work from other politically engaged discourse analysis. (Wodak and Meyer 2001). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) took these criteria further and established ten basic principles of a CDA programme.

As McGregor notes “CDA does not provide answers to the problems but does enable one to understand the conditions behind the specific problem – the deep, ideological roots of the issue...the profoundly insidious, invisible power of the written and spoken word” (Daniel 2008, p.2).

According to Van Dijk (2001):

Rather than merely describe discourse structures, Critical Discourse Analysis tries to explain them in terms of properties of social interaction and especially social structure. More specifically, CDA focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society. (p.353)

This thesis' main focus is on how proverbs as discourse structures reinforce gendered power relations in the Ewe society, hence the use of the Critical Discourse theory.

CDA's three dimensions to be used for analysis in this thesis are:

### **3.2.1 Discourse-as-Text**

This dimension deals with viewing the body of selected proverbs with regards to the linguistic features that are embedded in them. This thesis is therefore largely concerned with the stylistic devices that are prominent in the proverbs; metaphors, tense structures, and vocabulary.

### **3.2.2 Discourse-as-Discursive Practice**

The most prominent aspect of this dimension of use to this thesis is the call for intertextual analysis, an aspect which ensures the text is linked to its wider social context. Here, Fairclough's Manifest intertextuality would be drawn upon rather than his constitutive intertextuality or interdiscursivity. The Manifest intertextuality deals more with overtly drawing on other texts from the society the discourse under study originates from whereas the constitutive sees texts as made up of generic conventions.

### **3.2.3 Discourse-as- Social Practice**

Under this dimension, this thesis would look into the representation or reproduction of gendered power relations in the Ewe proverbs selected as CDA spells out the need for unravelling the ideological and power relation echoes in discourse. This follows directly from the analyses of intertextuality because of the stage it allows, set for the discussion of social contexts.

Seen as one of the foremost proponents of the CDA, Norman Fairclough's CDA, having been modified over almost three decades, even though laden with some controversial suggestions such as his view that the Systemic Functional Grammar be used for CDA, makes intertextual analysis in this thesis imperative because of its well-defined boundaries relating to the complexities in the study of discourse. Again, as Fairclough's dimensions of the CDA (Descriptive, Interpretative and Explanatory stages) are not particularly different from those of the general CDA, the latter would be used for the analysis in this thesis. Fairclough's

concept of intertextuality however would serve as a base for the analysis under the dimension of Discourse-as-discursive practice.

Fairclough in his book *Discourse and Social Change* argues that the analysis of texts should not be artificially isolated from the analysis of the institutional and discursive practices within which texts are embedded. Fairclough (1992) goes further to spell out the need to ‘bring together critical discourse analysis of discursive events with ethnographic analysis of social structures and settings in the search for what has been called critical ethnography’ (p.20). The Ewe kinship and marriage systems would therefore serve as the backdrop of the analysis in the thesis as they are systems that define inheritance, a concept that largely influences the social power wielded by both genders.

This thesis even though it uses the CDA, disagrees with its proponents who in their zeal to correct the injustices in society, tend to slither into creating binaries of the oppressed and the oppressor. This view is supported by Hammersley (1997, p. 244) who states:

The ‘reformative’ socio-political motivations of CDA also result in a tendency among CD analysts to adopt a simplistic ‘macro-sociological theory in which there are only two parties – the oppressors and the oppressed – and only one relationship between them: dominance.

Largely because of its ‘reformative’ socio-political ambitions, most CDA analysts tend to be ‘critical’ only as much as it brings out subtle biases that elevate the oppressor. Daniel (2008) quotes Van Dijk (1993) and observes that “‘CDA not only questions unfair discursive social practices but actually takes sides’”. (p.2). Her view however is that, as much as one accepts that inequality in the social order is unacceptable and has to be dismantled, it should be done with objectivity, supporting van Dijk’s caution that CDA should not be about villains and victims.

According to Verdonk (2002):

The epithet ‘critical’ implies revealing how conventional uses of language are imbued with ideological positions of which, more often than not, many people are not aware. They have lost this awareness as a result of constant exposure to dominant norms, value systems, and beliefs which are linguistically mediated in the discourses of powerful political, social, and cultural institutions.... (p.75)

This thesis for its analysis, seeks to also bring out both the explicit and subtle elements that indicate ideological underpinnings from which the proverbs are drawn and to also find out if in spelling out the permissible and prohibited actions of one gender, the proverbs unwittingly point to the strengths or weaknesses possessed by the same or other gender.

### **3.3 Discourse and Gendered Power Relations**

Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Analysis, even though they use different approaches, are both primarily concerned with how language is used for specific purposes in texts. Fairclough (1993) uses the word ‘discourse’ to refer to spoken or written language but extends it to semiotic practice in other semiotic modalities such as photography and non-verbal communication. In referring to language use as discourse, is signalling a wish to investigate it in a social theoretically informed way as a form of social practice.

To Harvey (1996):

...power is partly discourse, and discourse is partly power –they are different but not discrete, they ‘flow into’ each other; discourse can be ‘internalised in power and vice versa; the complex realities of power relations are ‘condensed’ and simplified in discourses. (Harvey 1996, cited in Fairclough 2010, p.4)

From the above definition, it can be deduced that discourse invariably has embedded in it structures that make it possible for power relations to be produced. A study on gender, a concept regarded as the social construction of the maleness and female, would therefore require a deeper understanding of the structures that construct such identities. To Radtke et al (1994), “Gender is inextricably bound to questions of power and through their conjunction, the understanding of both has been deeply transformed” (p.5). Within sociology, Blau (1974) defines power as the ability of persons or groups to impose their will on others despite

resistance through deterrence either in the form of punishment, inasmuch as the former as well as the latter constitute, in effect, a negative sanction. The sociological view even though it caters for most relations concerning power does not however touch on that quality of power which does not explicitly impose its will on others. Boulding's (1989) classification of power into stick (threat power), the carrot (economic power) and the hug (integrative power) thus brings out the integrative power (also the power to create relationships) which is more relatable a concept considering the objectives of this thesis. Foucault (1980) provides an all-encompassing view of the kind of power this thesis is concerned with, in the words:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate through its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (p.288)

Using Harvey's (2005) assertion that masculinity underpins social life and cultural representation to complement Foucault's view on power, it becomes clear that any institution in society which sees to the appropriate ways of behaviour and speech for the male and female therefore becomes a 'vehicle of power'.

### **3.4 Discourse and Ideology**

In the field of Discourse Analysis; ideology as defined by one of the foremost proponents of Critical Discourse Analysis, Teun Van Dijk is a 'system of ideas'. They are also socio- cognitively defined as shared representations of social groups, and more specifically as the `axiomatic principles of such representations (Van Dijk 2006). Freeden (2013) makes the important points that:

...ideologies are not personal beliefs of individual people; they are not necessarily 'negative' (there are racist as well as antiracist ideologies, communist and anticommunist ones); they are not some kind of 'false consciousness' (whatever that is exactly); they are not necessarily dominant, but may also define resistance and opposition; they are not the same as discourses or other social practices that express, reproduce or enact them; and they are not the same as any other socially shared beliefs or belief systems. (p.112)

Therefore as regards the gender constructs of the Ewes as expressed through their proverbs, the ideologies to be found as expressed would represent the beliefs of the people as a whole even as they also underlie personal beliefs.

### **3.5 Discourse and Patriarchy**

This thesis does not only preoccupy itself with a review of definitional issues on patriarchy but also with arguments pertaining to whether patriarchy is the same in all societies since central to the thesis is the question of how the gender ideology of the Ewes is portrayed in their proverbs. The question of how gender ideology is portrayed invariably brings up the need to not be so narrow as to limit analyses in support of scholars who argue that both genders are treated in much the same way in all societies. Walby (1989) rightly opines that 'the concept 'patriarchy', while being vital for feminist analysis, has been criticised for not being able to deal with historical and cross-cultural variation in the forms of women's subordination'.

Beechey (1979) gives a general overview of the concept of patriarchy simplifying its complex nature. On a general level, she sees patriarchy as referring to male domination and female subordination. On specific levels, she sees Marxist feminists being preoccupied with the subordination of women and the organization of various modes of production. Mitchell (1974) also views patriarchy as referring to "kinship systems in which men exchange women, and to the symbolic power which fathers have within these systems, and the consequences of this power for the inferiorized...psychology of women." (p.402).

To Pilcher and Wheelan (2004), patriarchy is the rule by the male head of a social unit. The patriarch is typically a social elder, having legitimate power over others in the social unit including other (especially younger men), all women and children. This definition does not seem to cater for the possibility that the male elder could have limited powers in some circles where some women might have some power over him. The definition however captures the general idea that patriarchy is a system which ensures the subordination of women by men.

For the Radical Feminists, patriarchy is the fundamental division in society and the institution of the family is the main site where men get to exercise the power they get to dominate women. Other Radical Feminists consider the power men have over women's bodies to be paramount when it comes to issues of domination. For the Marxist Feminists however, patriarchy is argued to arise from the workings of the capitalist economic system: it requires and benefits from, women's unpaid labour in the home. The subordination of women to men in society therefore tends to be regarded as a by-product of capital's subordination of labour.

The dual systems theory however synthesizes the views of the Radical Feminists and the Marxists, coming out with an argument that meets the earlier views half way. Seeing that the Marxists over-emphasize class, and Radical Feminists over-emphasize biology, they carve the option of seeing both capitalism and patriarchy as interdependent.

Prominent works criticizing the theory of patriarchy include Carby (1996), which criticizes the notions of patriarchy as espoused by white feminists, Pollert (1996), which accuses patriarchy of reductionist and circularist tendencies, and Kandiyoti (1988), which looks at the bargains and negotiations women make in Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia to lessen the impact of patriarchy on them. Other Scholars in the field of gender in Africa such as Oyewumi (2002), embarking on extensive analyses while putting African

epistemologies vis-à-vis problematic Western ones such as patriarchy and gender, come out with findings which show that theories and concepts such as patriarchy and gender truly have reductionist tendencies of overlooking the negotiations made by the oppressed or the cultural variations in the various systems of ‘oppression’.

Walby (1990) sees patriarchy through the same lens as both Radical Feminists and Marxist Feminists but categorizes women’s experiences under six structures or sites which are household production, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality and culture. Walby bases her definition of Private Patriarchy around the family and the household and opines that it involves individual men exploiting the labour of individual women. Women, she says are “largely limited to the household sphere and have limited participation in public life but face inequality and discrimination within it, for example in paid work” (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, p.95).

Walby’s categorization and arguments are relevant to this thesis because they engender a focus on the patriarchal ideas found in the Ewe proverb without digressions being made to issues of class and systems of production; factors which are not in the scope of the thesis.

### **3.6 Social Construction of Gender**

Social Constructivists believe that gender is foisted on people and not what they essentially are. According to Acker (1992), the study of gender used to be preoccupied with only women and the gender roles that determined their oppression. To her, the newer usage calls for the idea that “rather than being a specialized area within an accepted domain, gender is the patterning of difference and domination through distinctions between women and men that is integral to many societal processes” (565). This thesis works with the newer usage, giving equal attention to the various ways society constructs men as well, and recognizing

that gender roles are explicitly and sometimes subtly put in folk literature, and cultural materials, thereby determining how both men and women behave in societies.

In seeing gender as partly physiologically determined, Rossi (1984) diverts from the mainstream view of gender as solely socially determined in the words, “Gender differentiation is not simply a function of socialization, capitalist production, or patriarchy. It is grounded in a sex dimorphism that serves the fundamental purpose of reproducing the species” (p.161).

This thesis in considering Ewe proverbs which use both biological images such as phallic images and artificial materials such as clothes as determinants of the differences between men and women, seeks to bring out the different gender constructs portrayed by the proverbs. The researcher therefore believes that using Rossi (1984)’s biosocial view of gender constructs therefore would aid a more balanced and all-encompassing analysis.

### **3.7 Connell’s Theory of Hegemonic Masculinity and Emphasized Femininity**

Connell’s explanation of the subordinated roles of women using the theory of Hegemonic Masculinity and Emphasized Femininity explains patriarchal structures in strictly hierarchical terms with women at the bottom. According to Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity is “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p.77).

Donaldson (1993) citing the works of Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, Chapman, Cockburn, Connell, Lichterman, Messner, and Rutherford, concludes that hegemonic masculinity in all the works ‘involves a specific strategy for the subordination of women’. Hegemonic masculinity, therefore according to the theories is the dominant form of masculinity in a particular culture and below this dominant masculinity are subordinated

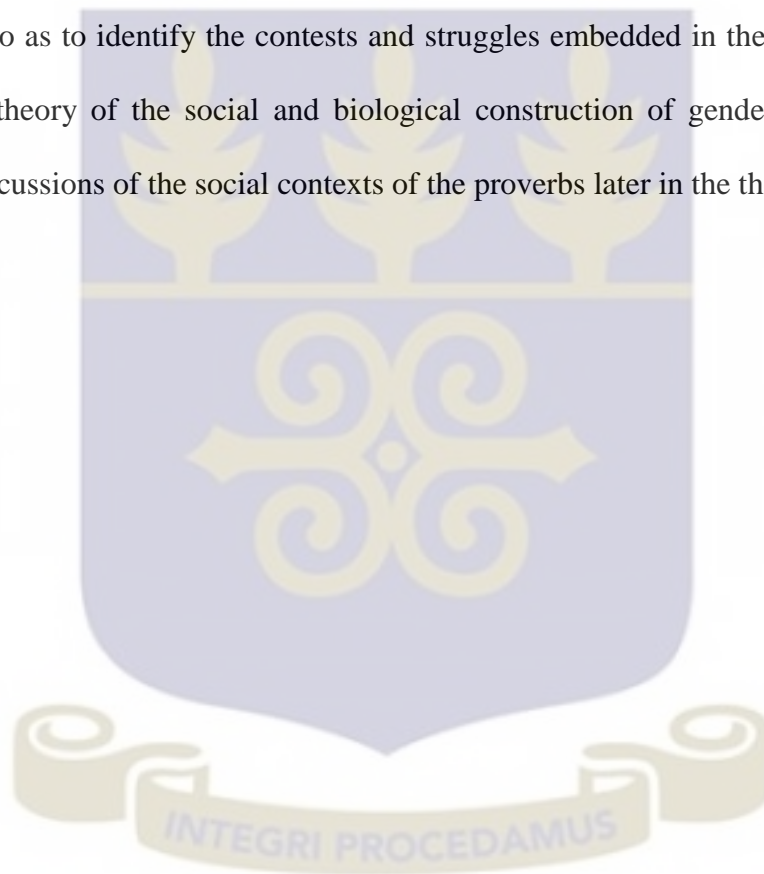
masculinities which are found to not measure up to the standard- the dominant form of masculinity. The notions of hegemonic masculinity are also found to be deeply rooted in patriarchal societies and presented in ways that make the subordinates (women) aid the propagation of the ideas.

An important observation made by Wetherell and Edley (1999) which this thesis finds practical to work with, is that it is not automatic that all women are subordinate to all men. To them, “hegemony is not automatic, however, but involves contest and constant struggle” (p. 336). The observation that not all women will be subordinate to all men, therefore, creates a gap in works which generalize the subordination of all women in all contexts. This thesis further dwells on the idea that even as speakers sometimes challenge or resist traditional notions of masculinity and femininity in certain contexts, the ‘sexist’ texts themselves sometimes imply certain powers inherent in the oppressed. An instance would be the Ewe proverb which says a woman can be very wealthy but cannot play the big drum. This proverb has embedded in it the idea that a woman is capable of being wealthy and could even be wealthier than a man.

Hegemonic femininity on the other hand is seen by Schippers (2007) to consist of “the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p.94). This definition does not also make allowance for the fact that not all women would be subordinate to all men. The theory of Hegemonic Masculinity and emphasized femininity therefore, is fundamentally only concerned with the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

Conclusion: From the discussion of the concepts above, trajectories identified which are most feasible for the study would serve as a backdrop for the analyses of the discourse under study.

Both Walby's theory of Patriarchy and Connell's Hegemonic Masculinity over emphasize the domination of the female by the male. Wetherell and Edley's view of hegemonic masculinity, which brings out the idea that not all women are subordinated by all men, provides a balanced view among all the arguments about patriarchy as it does not focus only on the binary relationship of the subordinated and the dominant. This makes for an extensive and critical analysis of the gendered power relations. There is also the realization that discourses which portray powers vested in both the dominant group and the subordinated can also be studied further so as to identify the contests and struggles embedded in the words used. The ideas from the theory of the social and biological construction of gender also serve as a backdrop for discussions of the social contexts of the proverbs later in the thesis.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The analysis in this chapter of selected proverbs with male and female lexemes pays critical attention to the subtle and explicit ways the Ewe construct gender and power relations in their proverbs through the roles prescribed and the images portrayed of both genders.

#### 4.2 Description and Interpretation: Analysis of Textual, Linguistic Features, Intertextuality, and Cultural Contexts of Ewe proverbs

At the descriptive stage, linguistic and literary devices and styles would be identified and discussed in order to find out the masculine and feminine constructs as expressed which go to construct the gender relations in the proverbs. The linguistic and literary analyses fall under Fairclough's Descriptive stage whilst intertextuality and contextual information fall under the Interpretive stage. For the analysis of the affirmation and negation, NEG as used in the translated sentences, stands for negation, while AFF represents words that indicate affirmation.

Further drawing on Norrick's (1985) conclusions that: Proverbs are semantically general and evaluative, this thesis puts a focus on "describing the ideational meaning of proverbs as texts, abstracting away from their interactional significance." (p.30), and considers Grice's maxim of manner broken by the Ewe proverbs since they leave room for ambiguities in interpretation. The subtle and explicit constructs of the male and female gender would therefore be extracted from the various implications put forward by the proverbs.

#### 4.2.1 The Use of Affirmation, Negation, Parallel Structure and Repetition in Proverbs that Relate Attributes of Women

- *Nyɔnu zazee fe asime nyo wu adzagba to*

Woman-smart's-palms-AFF (better than) rubies

(The palms of a smart woman are far better than precious rubies)

This proverb portrays the female as one who is very benevolent, and so affirms a positive quality of the female. In Ewe, a person's palms are said to be 'good' when he/she is rich and is very kind. Women are therefore portrayed as being endowed with treasures that far outweigh a valuable stone like the ruby. Implicated by the comparison of the woman's palms to rubies in the proverb is also the suggestion that women can outshine even the brightest of stones if they so will it. Again, the adjective 'zã' (smart) in Ewe, when used with a female lexeme in Ewe, connotes expertise in the kitchen mainly, and so when a woman is said to be smart, it is her capabilities in the domestic sphere that are called to mind. This proverb therefore even as it affirms the woman's kindness, subtly constructs her identity as one who is to be preoccupied with matters relating to the domestic sphere, especially cooking.

With regard to negation, Agbedor (1994) identifies two morphemes *me* and *o* as ones used for negation in Ewe. He also categorizes Ewe negation into the sentence negation and the constituent negation as he identifies from his study the attachment of the negative morphemes to a copula in the constituent negation but not to the morphemes in the sentence negation. Ameka (2008) also gives a prescriptive rule about the alternation between *-na* and *-a*. He observes that the full form *-na* occurs if there is no complement following the verb and *-a* is used if there is a complement. The identification from the two works thus guides the study of negation in the proverbs. For the purposes of analysis for this thesis, the positions of the morphemes would be traced first, the sentences then translated in the order in which they

appear in the proverbs directly from Ewe, and the semantic translation thereafter documented after the word to word translation.

The first proverb with negative morphemes to be considered is:

- *Nyɔnu ka (si) atufu gã mefoa agblɔvu<sup>2</sup> o*

Woman-wear-big-atufu-NEG-beat-big drum-NEG

(A woman can wear a big ‘atufu’ but cannot beat the big drum).

First of all, the proverb establishes differences between the male and the female. If the structure is to be divided into two without employing negation, it would read:

- *Nyɔnu kaa si atufu. Nɔtsu foaa agblɔvu*

With the structure above, we see only an explicit gender differentiation: *A woman wears atufu. A man plays agblɔvu.* Implicit in the proverb however is a male lexeme. When negation is employed, we realize that there is an added emphasis to the differentiation made which expresses the idea that, the society does not permit the woman to beat the big drum even if she has the ability. Negation, therefore emphasizes the attributes expressed in the proverb, beyond gender differentiations made.

According to Dzobo (1973), “the atufu is a part of the woman’s garment which bulges out from the back of her hip. It was once fashionable and used as a symbol of wealth” (p.162).

Even though it is not mentioned explicitly in the proverb, it can be deduced that the Ewe society does not frown on the acquisition of wealth by women. The more subtle message however is that the woman is free to acquire wealth but should use it for fashionable items to adorn herself and not items that would unsettle the status quo. When one considers the societal idea that women adorn themselves in order to be more attractive to men, it can be

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<sup>2</sup> The *agblɔvu* according to Dzobo (1973) is a drum associated with the activities of chiefs and it is used for announcement of very important happenings like installation of chiefs and their passing.

realized that investing in this piece of clothing, which exaggerates a women's backsides and hips is largely to meet the physical requirements of femininity the society upholds. The preference of the society as regards the ideal physique of the woman is therefore also spelt out subtly through the proverb. Another question Dzobo's explanation of the *atufu* raises is why the woman's wealth is associated with only a type of clothing that accentuates her body. The proverb therefore even though it goes to buttress the idea that women have areas which they also control (the area of fashion for instance) and so should not bother themselves with the areas that are the reserves for men, also carries undertones of instructions about how women are to spend their wealth in order not to upset societal expectations as regards relations to men. Agawu's view that 'it seems unimaginable to the Northern Ewe that a woman would, for example beat a sacred drum like 'Aq̄abatram', echoes through the proverb as it appears the creator of the proverb also deems it impossible for a woman to play the *agblɔvu*, a drum which is also associated with the masculine gender.

- *Nyɔnu kpɔ hotsui medoa agblɔvu o*

Woman-see-wealth- NEG-call for-PROG- big drum-NEG

(A wealthy woman cannot call for the big drum to be beaten)

This proverb also considers the affairs of the big drum solely a man's business, and so, however rich or influential a woman gets in the society, she should not be found in the masculine role. *Hotsui* (Cowry) was the medium of exchange before the advent of paper as currency, and so *Hotsuitɔ* (A rich man or woman) was used in the generic term that referred to the wealthy and influential in society. To date, some people still refer to the rich as *hotsuitwo* (owners of cowries). This proverb therefore shows that wealth in the Ewe society is not gendered. However, limits are placed on how a woman spends her money in the Ewe society as she is told she cannot call some shots however rich she is.

- *Koklonɔ mekua atɔ o*

The-hen-NEG-crow-NEG

(The hen does not crow)

The proverb above also negates the ability of the hen to perform an act that is seen to be the preserve of men. Here, the fact that the hen has the same voice the rooster also has is taken for granted through negation. The act of crowing therefore can be deduced to be seen by the society as a very masculine act which the female would not be able to perform. A proverb which makes for better appreciation of this proverb says:

- *Koklonɔ be egbe le ye nu yea ku atɔ gake yesrɔ nue ye se nɛ le*

The-hen-says-she-has-the-voice-to-crow-but-she-defers-to-her-husband

(The hen says she has the voice to crow but she defers to her husband).

This proverb problematizes the assumption in the one discussed before it as the hen challenges the proclamation that she does not have the ability to crow. There is therefore the hen's own affirmation of her ability to crow as she acknowledges that she has the voice but she does not use it. The first proverb, therefore, by negation has constructed the hen as incapable of crowing and the second by affirmation, portrays a hen who wants society to know that she has all that it takes to crow. In its literal sense, the proverb is used to show how submissive women should be so that even if they have what it takes to do what men do, they rather should respectfully let the men perform such tasks.

- *Nyɔnu meɖɔa avaɖiɖɔ o*

Woman-NEG-pass-penis-urine-NEG

(A woman does not pass urine using the penis)

This proverb tells how women should not perform manly roles. The noun '*avaɖiɖɔ*' here is used metaphorically to represent all the manly things a woman is not to do. Here, the visible physical differences between men and woman are brought to bear so as to construct the appropriate social behaviours in the Ewe society. Considering the biosocial views of scholars

like Rossi (1984), this proverb as it brings out the biological imagery to support the social construction of the genders, supports the idea that men and women since they are biologically different, would perform some actions differently. The proverb under study however zeroes in on this, and through negation conveys an idea that portrays a phallogocentric view as the urine passed through the penis is held as an exclusive act the female should not attempt.

In the proverb below, the negative markers which are attached to a habitual marker, speak of a situation that occurs regularly. This structure supports Ameka's (2008) conclusion that:

*Verb + Habitual structure means roughly 'situation happens (every time).'*

- *Dɔwuvi megbea nɔ wu o*

Hunger-killing-a-child-NEG-kills-the-mother-too

(If a child is hungry, the mother is hungry too)

From the proverb, it can be deduced that the mother has an important role to play in keeping a child well fed. The Yoruba proverb *Mother is gold, father is glass* emphasizes this view as women are seen to be more empathetic when it comes to providing the needs of their children. The proverb can also be explained in various ways when Ewe traditional views are drawn on. In the Ewe culture, when an elderly person and a child are eating, even if the food is very small, the elderly person is supposed to leave the table earlier so the child is left with a considerable amount of the food before he/she goes to wash the plates. If the society expects all elderly people who are not even related to the child to do this, one only imagines what is expected of a woman who has given birth to a child biologically. A mother cannot be satisfied whilst her children are hungry. Such a woman would be seen as very wicked and unfeeling. If a child is hungry, therefore, it goes to say that the mother would be more hungry because when she gets food, she would have to put her children before her. In effect, the

proverb brings out the idea that it is rare to find a hungry child and a mother who is satiated. By implication, the proverb also conveys the idea that a man can however be satisfied when his children are hungry. This again shows a stronger bond between mothers and children rather than fathers and children since the proverb appears to excuse the man's satiety even when his children are hungry.

- *Nyɔnu de mebiãna o*

A-woman's-palm-fruits-NEG-turn-red

(A woman's palm fruits do not redden)

This proverb also uses the habitual suffix -na, which gives the proverb a generic form. Ofori (2008) explains the Ewe agricultural term *biã* as connoting a high degree of redness and not just the state of ripening. Thus, from the critical view point, this proverb goes to mean that there are various degrees of the reddening of the palm and that of the woman is portrayed as one which can just not reach the level of the man's. The proverb therefore gives the idea that men are the experts when it comes to producing palm fruits. Gender roles, since they are designated, ensure that both genders are comfortable in the professions they are socialized to pursue, with diligence. Achebe puts the Igbo's view about gender expertise in crop cultivation, succinctly in *Things Fall Apart*:

*His mother and sisters worked hard enough, but they grew women's crops, like cocoyams, beans, and cassava. Yam, the king of crops, was a man's crop. (p.18)*

Invariably, the Ewe construct goes beyond just the cultivation of the crops to how they are cultivated and how well the crops turn out since the woman's palm fruit is to go beyond just ripening to reddening in order for the highest standard of expertise to be shown. The proverb below however emphasizes the expertise a woman is supposed to acquire.

- *Nyɔnuvi si nɔa dada gbɔ le dzodofe medzɔa lã o*

Girl-who-stays-with-the-mother-in-the-kitchen-NEG (does not)-become-an animal

(Girl-who-stays-with-the-mother-in-the-kitchen-NEG (does not)-become-foolish)

This proverb by attaching the negative morphemes to the adjective *dzɔ lã* (foolish) expresses the idea that wisdom for the girl child is to be found in the kitchen. The idea that the woman's place is in the kitchen, is a common one that runs through the lore of most African countries.

The Somali proverb which says:

*your woman should be in the kitchen or in the grave*

sends the message of the woman's place being the kitchen and nowhere else, more ominously. In the case of the Ewe one, a more subtle approach is used as there is a reward attached to the directive: acquiring wisdom. Negation in the proverb thereby adds to the subtlety as it gives a positive front to the proverb since the verb is a negative one used with the negative markers. In Amma Darko's *Faceless*, we come across a female character Kabria, who complains she "returned home tired from work only to go and continue in the kitchen..."(p.57) while her husband routinely comes back, "removing his shoes and socks and tie and shirt and sat down behind his ready laid table."(57) Thus the proverb discussed, which does not include boys and men as people to also be trained in the kitchen, constructs such relations in the home as is illustrated by Darko in her novel.

- *Koklonɔ meyia asito dzodzro o. Ne menye azi kakam wole o la, ekem d̄ee mele belem na viawo o*

The-hen-NEG (does-not)-go-to-the-market side-for-nothing. If-NEG-scattering-its-eggs, then-it-is-NEG-treating-her-chicks-well-NEG

(The hen does not go to the market for nothing, if it is not that it is scattering its eggs, then it is because she is mistreating her chicks)

This proverb points to the hen's destructive abilities. By negating the verbs, we get the possible causes of the first statement. The proverbs, therefore, using the simple present tense with the negative morphemes portray genericity by expressing the creators' ideology of undertaking to make the statements as timeless as possible and therefore achieving the effect of making them look universally applicable to the situations they speak of. Just like in English, the Ewe habitual tenses can be seen from the perfective view point too and so we get the idea that the events have once taken place and would always take place, should the conditions mentioned be satisfied. Smith (1991) observes that:

Regarding the generic, or habitual, use of the present, termed derived stative,' as `the combination of present tense and Perfective viewpoint leads to a habitual reading in many languages (Smith 1991 cited in Cowper 1988, p. 134).

This means that the simple present tense and the perfective are used in constructions that wish to convey ideas of continuity of actions which had once occurred. The negated states would also therefore either be maintained indefinitely or the affirmations expressed would never be negated.

Conclusion: From the data, it can be realized that a great number of proverbs caution women by the use of negation. We do not however see any proverb which uses negation to warn the male of dangers in certain actions. The Ewe society as can be deduced is one which thrives on public displays, such as the beating of drums. The exclusion of women from such activities goes a long way to define the personalities of the female. A female who is extroverted and strong enough to beat the drums would therefore be inhibited by such proverbs. Again, the expertise conveyed through the proverbs show each gender's elevation over the other. In the first proverb discussed, the male gender's expertise at playing the

*agblɔvu* is used to convey the idea that the female does not have much say in the sphere of playing drums. In the domestic sphere however, the female is portrayed as an expert in cooking and closer to the offspring produced since she is more caring. This trait of understanding or caring for children better, endears most mothers rather than fathers to their children. Again, negation is used in proverbs that convey the idea that the attributes mentioned do not suit the gender roles expected by the Ewe society. Where the gender roles correlate with the attributes mentioned, affirmation is used.

### Parallelism and Repetition

Parallelism as defined by Okpewho (1992) is the use of identical words that are transposed within the same or adjacent statements. Gaultney (2005) also defines parallelism as stating two or more ideas that are equally important in grammatically parallel form. Words, phrases and clauses in sentences which have the identical structures and stand out because of the sameness of form are therefore a result of parallelism. Parallelism therefore as an important part of oral literature, especially of proverbs, not only draws attention to the words being used but also places emphasis on the meanings through the rhythm and symmetry of form. Out of the proverbs collected for this thesis, only one exhibits parallelism. Other proverbs without male and female lexemes which are however not used for the analysis of gendered power relations however contain parallel structures. One example is *mi yi zã, mi gbɔ zã* (we went in the night, we returned in the night). Since the proverbs collected cannot be said to be exhaustive of all proverbs with male and female lexemes due to the limited time used for the collection, the researcher can only cautiously express the conclusion that the Ewe language does not lend itself easily to foregrounding both the semantic import of the proverbs and the sound effects using parallelism unlike the Akan language which easily combines the semantic with the sound and so, has many instances of parallelism in its gendered corpora.

The proverb below would therefore be analysed considering its parallel structure:

- *Koklonɔ meya asito dzodzro o: Ne menyɛ azi kakam wole o la, ekem dɛe mele belem na viawo o*

(The hen goes to the market for either of two reasons: if it is not that it is scattering its eggs, then it is that it is not caring for its chicks)

This proverb gives two reasons for which the hen gets sold at the market. The first structure, which is the main clause, ends with a colon. The second part which is the subordinate, contains ‘that’ clauses which explain the resultant effect mentioned in the main clause. In expressing the hen’s weakness and punishment through parallelism, her susceptibility to be dominated as a result of her misdemeanour is also expressed. This type of parallelism is termed the Synthetic parallelism. Gaultney (2005) explains the structure thus:

*themes in B may explain, emphasize, or embellish A, or B may show the results of action described in A*

The structure aids in making clear the reasons why the hen was punished. Thus if the female does not do anything wrong, punishments would not be meted out to her.

As regards repetition in the proverb, the proverb below has the repetition of the present continuous form of the verb *fo* (to beat):

- *Mɔtotie be ye foa vi foa nɔa*

(It is the tree by the road side who says it beats the child, beats the mother).

This proverb by repeating the verb ‘beats’, achieves a rhythmic effect of conveying succinctly the idea that the woman and the child can first of all, both be disciplined, and

secondly, they can be disciplined using the same object. Again, the *Mɔtoti* (the tree by the way side) is given an anthropomorphic quality. The tree by the wayside cannot by itself beat a mother and a child. Another African proverb which has the motif of disciplining wives: *the stick used in beating a co-wife should be put away*, helps in understanding the Ewe one better. Subtly embedded in the proverb therefore is the idea that a man has the prerogative to discipline his wife by beating her as he does his children. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo beats his wife Ojiugo during the community's week of peace because she comes back late from a friend's where she had gone to plait her hair. The repetition in the Ewe proverb therefore emphasizes the same treatment given to women and children. Another proverb:

- *Nyɔnuvi si nɔa dada gbɔ le dzodofe medzɔa lã o*

(The girl who stays with her mother in the kitchen does not become foolish),

has the present continuous form of the verbs in this proverb repeated (*nɔa and dzɔa*), giving the proverb a rhythmic quality. This proverb is used to caution girls to not stay away from the kitchen as it is the place they acquire the wisdom required for them to sustain their marriages.

Again, the repetition of the clause *someone should come* in the following proverb portrays the urgency the proverb seeks to convey with the idea that when there are matters that require urgency, it is men that should be called and not women.

- *Ne wo be ame ne va ame ne va hã, nyɔnue va na? (When they say someone should come, someone should come, is it a woman who comes?)*

The proverb below also repeats the verb *to find* in the expression *not easy to find and not easy to find again*:

- *Akpɔkplɔ be srɔ la, nu vevie wo nye, menya kpɔna ganya kpɔna o, eyata afisi yeto ko*

*la, yetsɔa yesrɔ kpana de megbe*

(The frog says a wife is an important thing, it is not easy to find, and not easy to find again that is why he straps her to his back wherever he goes).

The repetition goes to emphasize the importance the frog places on the institution of marriage as he expresses how difficult it is to find a wife. In expressing the difficulty of finding a wife comes the idea that marriage among the Ewes involves a lot of investment and so should not be taken lightly. Men are expected to send various items to the family of the woman in order for the marriage to take place. Women are not required to make any payments. Seen from the frog's male perspective therefore is the realization that even though the marriage costs cripple the male financially, ironically it is the 'crippled' in the relationship that still straps the uncrippled to its back to ensure the 'treasure' does not get stolen. Strapping the expensive object he paid for on his back ensures that it does not escape or leave his grasp. Embedded in the proverb therefore is an endorsement of the curtailing of the freedom of women since the society affirms a perpetual masculine gaze on them. Masculine standards of the society are also expressed in the proverb since the society believes that the woman should be under the protective shield of the husband. Juxtaposing the frog's view of marriage with those from the perspectives of hens in previous proverbs discussed, it can be realized that the male perspective re-inforces the female perspectives. If a man is able to take many wives and is able to cater for all of them, he is highly respected. This is the case in most African societies. It is said of Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, "He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife..." (p.7).

A man's rise to eminence in Africa generations past was not complete if he did not acquire multiple wives. Okonkwo's father had only a wife and no doubt was considered a failure in

their Igbo society. The pressure to acquire wealth in order to acquire among other things, many wives is therefore considered a normal desire in the African setting. On the part of the woman, if she does not get any man to do her the honour of paying heavily for her hand in marriage, she is not considered woman enough.

#### 4.2.2 Negation in Proverbs that Relate Perceived General Relations between Men and Women

- *Atawui medzea nyonu o*

Trouser NEG (does not) -look good-woman-NEG

(A woman does not look good in a man's trousers)

In this proverb, the man's clothing is used metaphorically to represent manly capabilities. Again, the quality of the clothing looking good on the woman is taken away by the negation of the verb. This proverb can also be linked to the one which says women should not pass urine like men; alluding to the difficulty women would have when attending to certain calls of nature while wearing an attire that makes it easy for men to attend the same call. In Ama Ata Aidoo's short story, "Heavy Moments", we come across a female protagonist, Akuba, who finds herself struggling with the zipper on her trousers as she feels the urge to urinate before her test flight. Her struggle reiterates the fact that her society does not imagine her gender in the role she finds herself in and so does not even make provision for such a possibility. Her struggles also symbolize the negotiations females in male-oriented circles make in order to adjust to the systems convenient for men. Adjei (2005) summarizes the situation thus:

Thus the trousers and its zipper represent gender conflict as far as career options are concerned. The pressure that the urine exerts on Ekuba, and her struggles with the zipper constitute, in practical terms, how a woman in a male domain is confronted with obstacles. (p.156)

The idea therefore is not that women are only being cautioned not to wear men's clothing because such clothes would not look good on them but the proverb drives at convenience and functionality as well with the negated constructions used. The simple present also suggests the timelessness accorded the idea. In contemporary times when women wear men's trousers comfortably, the import of the proverb cannot therefore be treated literally but metaphorically.

- *Nyɔnu mefoa tɔ wo si na o*

Woman-NEG-(does not)-beat-the-river-for-one-to-fish

(A woman does not tell one where to fish)

An anecdote regarding this proverb has it that there was a time when the dam in the Tongu area of Eweland had overflowed and fish could be caught in most smaller water bodies. Since men were the experts when it came to fishing, they knew whether the new water bodies had fish just by looking at them. Women however called out for people to come fish whenever they found any water body. The proverb therefore came about to warn people not to heed any advice regarding fishing from any woman. This stresses the idea that fishing is a reserve for men. Overa (2003) puts it succinctly when he expresses the observation that the woman's preoccupation is with the fish brought to the shore and not with the ones not harvested. Again, as the selling of fish is reserved for women and fishing for men, Nukunya (1969) observes that "... A male fish trader would simply not be a "proper man". He would not fulfil his role as provider of fish for women's pots and markets - society's source of life, welfare, and future wealth" (p.155).

The proverb therefore in using negation cautions women against engaging in fishing, a profession restricted to the male gender. Again, from the proverb, it can be deduced the idea that women are not prohibited from going near the sea or river but are cautioned to not

engage in fishing activities. The construction of the roles of the man and woman therefore can be clearly seen through negation. Again, the Ewe society is shown as one which does not entirely rule out the possibility that some women might attempt the masculine activity of fishing. According to Overa (2003) in his analysis of gender ideologies regarding fishing in one Ewe community and two towns in the Ga and Fante areas:

Men often perceive women who enter such roles as (literally) out of place, and female canoe owners must therefore find ways of behaving that the fishermen can accept within the male power arena. Odotei (1991) describes how women achieve this by combining an often tough and aggressive role of leadership - which includes shouting and rough talk to the extent that their voices change towards a more masculine tone - with more feminine strategies like giving the men good food for the fishing trip or nice clothes for the annual festival, through flattering and cajoling, and by showing a “motherly” concern towards crew members and their families. (p. 52)

From the above quote, it can be realized that the female canoe owner uses her expertise acquired from the domestic sphere (provision of clothes, showing motherly concern) to gain influence over her male colleagues in a profession reserved for men.

- *Nyɔnu meɖea gbe abe ʃutsu ene o*

Woman NEG (does not) - command voice-like-man- NEG

(a woman does not give commands like a man)

Here again, the biological make-up of the woman is played on as it is evident that the female’s voice does not break at puberty. The creator of the proverb therefore draws on this fact to drive home the idea that since women’s voices do not undergo any changes, they cannot give commands, and by extension cannot have domineering personalities, as the commanding voice is associated with influence.

The silencing of women’s voices have been the subject of discourses in gender studies for decades as scholars explored popular sayings such as ‘women are to be seen and not heard’. In most African societies and even in other parts of the world, this principle of the

woman not being heard but seen features greatly in most literature. Voice is synonymous with power, influence and self-assertion. For a group of people to be said to gain their own voices therefore, they must have found ways of stopping other people from talking and telling their stories on their behalf. (See Busia, 1990; Kolawole, 1997; Niandou 1994 Pedelty and Kuercker 2014).

The theory of self-abnegation takes further the silencing of women's voices as it suggests that women are socialized to abnegate their personalities and their voices in order to be seen as worthy to be called female. A proverb in Ewe which also illustrates this concept is *Koklonɔ be gbe le yenu yea ku atɔ gake yesrɔ nue ye se ne le* (The hen says she has the voice to crow but she defers to the husband). The hen herself is the one who takes away her own voice in this proverb, thereby proclaiming herself voiceless even though she has the voice to crow.

Conclusion: From the proverbs, we realize that as negation is being used for the female constructs, male attributes are subtly affirmed. Conversely, as negation is being used for male constructs, female attributes are being affirmed. Premium is also put on the convenience of the male gender when professions that are reserved for the gender are used to construct the female gender roles.

#### **4.2.3 Negation and Affirmation in Proverbs that Relate Attributes of Men and Women and their Prescribed Roles in the Context of Marriage**

- *Koklonɔ be ye le azi dɔm eyata ye me kpɔ vovo na atɔkuku o*

Hen-says-it-is-because-of-laying-eggs-that-is-why-it-NEG-(does not)-get-time-to-crow-NEG

(The hen says it is because she is laying eggs that she does not get the time to crow)

In the proverb above, the laying of eggs connotes a very important part of femininity which the hen revels in. She does not seem to bother that she does not get to crow because of the role of laying eggs (giving birth). A subversive tone however rings through the proverb as the hen argues that it is because she is laden with a heavier task that she does not crow. The hen therefore turns a situation which could have been to her disadvantage into one that extols the virtues of being a woman who can perform both masculine and feminine roles if she so desires, by portraying the act of crowing as not worth giving up her very feminine duties for. Amos Tutuola captures this attitude of the female in his novel *The Palmwine-Drinkard* as we encounter the wife of the Palm-wine drunkard who changes roles with her husband when need be. On their sojourn through the various lands their adventures are set in, she carries their heavy loads when her husband faints, makes quick and wise decisions that enable them escape tragedies, and even fights with strange creatures. Ogun-dipe-Leslie is of the view that Tutuola's depiction of the Yoruba woman is:

one of the best and most correct images of the Yoruba woman of all classes: a courageous, resourceful woman who dares situations with her husband, who works at anything and willingly changes roles with him, where the need arises (p.30)

This is an attitude emphasized by the hen in the proverbs discussed. From the Ewe proverb discussed is the subtle message echoing the idea that women can perform all masculine tasks if they so desire. Comparing the acts of the Palm-wine Drinkard's wife to that of the subversive idea of the proverbial hen in the Ewe proverb, we find similar qualities since the females portrayed believe themselves capable of doing what the male can do. Were the hens not preoccupied with daunting feminine roles that limit them, they would also do the masculine things men do. This subversive attitude expressed by the negation of the verb 'to

crow’, therefore gives the idea that given the opportunity to crow, the hen believes herself very capable. This proverb is similar to the one below:

- *Koklonɔ be gbe le yenu yeagblɔ be ηuke gake yesrɔ nue yesene le*

Hen-says-voice-she-AFF-(has)-to-crow-signalling-daybreak-but-husband-  
she-hears-it-from

The negation is however absent and replaced with an affirmation of the crowing capabilities of the rooster. Both proverbs discussed, with their subversive undertones, portray some tension between the masculine and feminine genders and roles as regards crowing and reproduction, considering the opportunities the female’s biological make-up as the layer of eggs takes from her and the ones it provides the male.

The proverb below is also similar to the negated ones discussed earlier and has the same structure:

- *Koklonɔ be aziɔɔɔɔ kpea ye ta yemekua atɔ o*

Hen-says-the-burden-of-laying-eggs-causes-her-NEG (not)-to-crow  
(The hen says the burden of laying eggs causes her not to crow)

All three proverbs therefore portray a female who believes herself capable of a masculine task but is limited by the feminine role of producing children. This proverb however, unlike the first, does not seem to come from a female who revels in her femininity but rather sees it as a hindrance to her pursuance of a task she believes herself capable of. The proverb below also has subversive undertones as it portrays feminine wiles as a way of escaping a marriage she no longer wants.

- *Asi ma ɔo ame fe nɔnɔ fe hiheti gɔme nuku mewɔna o*

Hand-NEG-stay-in-marriage’s-hihe tree-crops-NEG-(do not)-do-well

(A woman who wants to divorce her husband would look for any excuse).

In the proverb, the woman chooses to use the excuse that the crops on her farm are not doing well, when she knows very well that the tree under which she planted them does not make for the growth of crops. According to Dzobo (1973):

Hihe is a common tree found especially on the grassland, and because of its hardness, it is not felled by farmers but is set fire to, to die. If it is alive, or if it is not completely dead, any crops planted under it will not do well...wives deliberately do not kill the hihe tree well and so the crops that are planted underneath it do not do well, and then they complain that their husbands have given them poor portions of the farm. They may use this as an excuse to go away from their husbands. (p.114)

Negation is used to portray female negotiations by mode of manipulating things from the environment in order to make cases against their husbands for unfair treatment. If the society had not made allowances for their grievances to be heard in marriages, such a proverb would not have been created. Women therefore appear to have power to ask for divorce when they are in marriages that are not favourable to them. In an interview recorded in James (1990), Ogundice-Leslie expresses the view that even though contemporary women are less fatalistic about women's conditions, those women who are illiterates and who still hold on to traditional ideas about marriage are rather the ones who have 'less mystique about marriage, the institution and the husband'. She observes:

They will divorce in a flash over things like money for food, clothes, sex etc. There is a higher divorce rate at the rural and the low income levels, and more changing of partners, because for them, marriage is a pragmatic arrangement, and I think their attitude is much healthier. (p.69)

The Ewe proverb discussed justifies her observation as the woman portrayed in the proverb seems so desperate for a divorce that she appears willing to clutch the lightest straw at her disposal just to do away with her husband.

The next proverb is conveyed using the male frog's perspective:

- *Akpɔkplɔ be srɔ la, nu vevie wo nye, menya kpɔna ganya kpɔna o, eyata afisi yeto ko la, yetsɔa yesrɔ kpana dɛ megbe*

Frog-says -one's-wife-is-important-NEG-see-and-NEG-see-NEG, that-is-why-everywhere-he goes, he-straps-her-to-his-back

(The frog says one's wife is important, it is not easy to get that is why he straps her to his back everywhere he goes)

First of all, it can be deduced from the last two proverbs discussed that, the expression of strapping his wife to his back connotes some trepidation the frog feels about losing his wife which we can attribute to his knowledge about the possibility that his wife can get a divorce. Again, the proverb negates two verbs in the same clause and so changes them from the negated state to the affirmative. The expression *menya kpɔna ganya kpɔna o* translates into English as 'difficult to find'. However, in Ewe, it is a clause that contains the negation of two verbs. The structure directly sends across the message that men are to be very protective of their wives to a fault. Further, the choice of words that convey the quality of the frog being very caring when looked at critically, connotes an infantile quality given to the frog's wife. It is babies who are normally strapped to the back in the Ewe society. Again, for an adult to be said to be carried on the back, suggests a certain immobility. The crippled and the lame are the ones transported in this manner. The female's dependence on the male is therefore implied here as the term "kpana" carries a larger social, cultural, physiological/biological import than its surface meaning.

- *Nyɔnu kpɔ ho me bua srɔ o.*

Woman-sees-wealth-NEG-respect- her-husband-NEG

(A wealthy woman does not respect her husband)

This proverb by negating the verb ‘respect’ and using the simple present as well portrays a woman’s wealth as recipe for a disastrous marriage. The perfective tense which comes through with the use of ‘does not’ also gives the impression that the creator had seen wealthy women disrespect their husbands and so, it is a phenomenon that he/she looks forward to seeing; this situation therefore necessitating the caution. Greene’s statement: “generations ago, Anlo-Ewe men were very provoked by women’s investments of their earnings in houses, since this is clearly a female strategy to achieve a greater degree of independence” (Greene 1997 cited in Overa 2003, p.56) puts the proverb under discussion in context as the attitude of the male in Greene’s observation echoes that in the proverb. The proverb therefore subtly endorses the financial dependence of women on men in the marriage context. The phrasing of the proverb makes the perception non-negotiable; a simple present tense that portrays genericity as well as conditionality that expresses an absolute principle. There is therefore no space for women to negotiate this finality of judgment. If the proverb were to add the quantifier ‘some’, there could be an allowance for exceptions, making provision for a wealthy woman who would balance her acquisition of wealth with being subservient. Again, the proverb as it hints at a prescription of financial dependency on the part of women, by implication, makes it imperative for men to be wealthier than their wives in order to be respected.

- *To doko mesea lɔxoɑ fe dalɪ o*

Son-in-law-poor-NEG-hear-the-secrets-of-the-mother-in-law

(the poor son-in-law does not hear the secrets of his mother-in-law)

In the Ewe society, like in most African societies, the marriage between a man and a woman is said to be the marriage of two families. The parents-in-law and all members of both families therefore feature greatly in the affairs of the man and the woman. The proverb above

therefore reiterates the fact that the mother-in-law should be one individual the son-in-law should endeavour to always impress. The proverb also suggests that the privilege of the son-in-law hearing his mother-in-law's secrets, hinges on him being well-to-do.

- *Lɔxo dɔgavee fe vi menya dena o*

Mother-in-law-who-spends-multiple-suitors'-money-daughter-NEG-marry-NEG

(it is difficult to marry the daughter of the mother-in-law who spends the money of multiple suitors).

In this proverb is the negation of the ability to marry a woman whose mother spends money from two suitors. Contextually, the number two represents not the exact number but even more. This proverb therefore cautions young men to be wary of mothers-in-law who are not loyal. Similar proverbs below show the mother-in-law as a force to reckon with and an individual males have to contend with:

- *Koli(klo) gɔglɔ meɔɔa lɔxo fe kpɔnu dzɔna o*

Knee-crooked-NEG-reach-mother-in-law's-gate-straighten-NEG

(A deformed knee does not become straight on getting to the entrance of the mother-in-law's house)

- *Du fufu le amegaxi dzrom hafi wo be lɔxo fe gbɔ tso ka*

Running- is-fox-wants-before-they-said-his mother-in-law-goat-cut-rope

Amegaxi already feels like running and they say his mother-in-law's goat has cut its rope loose

(The fox already feels like running and they say his mother-in-law's goat is

missing)

In the latter proverb, by the absence of negation is the affirmation of the mother-in-law's power over her son-in-law. For the mother-in-law, a son-in-law is supposed to do anything. The import of the proverb is therefore that, under normal circumstances the fox would go extraordinary miles when the mother-in-law is in need, but in this particular instance, he already feels like carrying out the act he is required to undertake. One is left to imagine the careless abandon he would attach to the exercise.

- *Ame lɔxo lɔame fe agbelifufu eku mevɔna le eme o*

Mother-in-law-who-loves-you's-pounded-cassava,-lumps-NEG-(never)-  
finish-inside-NEG

(In the loving mother-in-law's pounded yam, there are always lumps)

Interestingly, the same structure used for the mother-in-law's pounded yam proverb is repeated with the rival's. The rival's pounded yam, according to the Ewe, is also always not free of lumps. These statements go to show the recognition of the walls put up between the in-laws and their rivals in the same household and also constructs the relations between women in a polygamous household. The proverb suggests that the daughter-in-law would always find faults with the mother-in-law even if the mother-in-law loves her, just as her rivals would also find them in hers. The proverb translates:

- *Atsusi fe agbelifufu, ku mevɔna le eme o*

Rival's-pounded-yam, lumps-never-finish-in-it

(A rival's pounded yam is never free of lumps)

The import of the proverb is made clearer when one understands the effort that goes into the pounding of yam in the Ewe society. Pestles, some of them very heavy are used to hit the cooked yam in the mortar multiple times. The work involved in hitting the yam multiple times makes the whole experience a time consuming and laborious one. Even as the rival is portrayed as a bad person, constructs are also conveyed subtly as women are conditioned to think their rivals would always wish them evil. Women are therefore subtly pitted against each other in marriages driving them to outdo each other in pleasing their husbands. In D.T Niane's epic *Sundiata*, we see one of the most powerful rivalries between Sundiata's mother, Sogolon Djata and Dankaran Toumani's mother Sassouma Bereté. Sassouma Bereté tries on several occasions to kill Sundiata in order for her son to inherit the throne of Mali. She remarkably succeeds in getting Sundiata and his mother exiled from their kingdom. A similar story of powerful rivalry is that of Chaka the Zulu. Chaka's mother, Nandi is thrown into exile by the instigation of her rivals as her illegitimate son, Chaka is seen as a threat to the inheritance of the legitimate sons. The illustrations from these two epics, show an African society that sees rivalry as a normal phenomenon. Rivalry in the Ewe proverb is again portrayed in the words:

- *Wome dɔa nyǎǎ xoxo dɛ atsu fe ga fiaa ηuvavae o*

You-do-NEG (not)-send-old-girl-to-marry-and-then-teach-her-how-to-be-jealous-NEG

(You not send a grown-up girl to her marital home, and then

teach her how to be jealous)

Considering the fact that the Ewe society is a polygamous one, this proverb in negating the verb 'teach', shows how unnecessary it is for a girl who is considered grown-up or old

enough for marriage, to be taught how to behave in her matrimonial home, since she most likely was brought up in a polygamous home herself. The nature of the polygamous practice is therefore reinforced in the proverb by the use of the simple present and also gives the idea that the polygamous system would be a never-ending one and a tradition to be reckoned with. The following proverbs also affirm the marriage institution's importance in the Ewe society:

- *Atsufee dea bubu nyɔnu ɲu*

Marriage accords respect woman

(It is marriage that accords women respect)

- *Koklo be atsue nye bubu na asi, eyata yenza ye srɔ yome*

(The hen says that the husband is an honour to the wife, that is why she always follows her husband)

By implication, the proverb gives the directive that the focus of the woman should be on the kitchen since her goal is to win a husband who would add honour to her name.

Conclusion: Negation in the proverbs explicitly conveys the relationship between females in polygamous marriages while subtly constructing the influence men have over women in such arrangements that encourage the rivalries. All the proverbs with negative morphemes fall under the Sentence negation and not the Constituent negation as the morphemes are not attached to copulas but to main verbs. Copulas are used in grammar and logic to describe that part of a proposition which connects a subject and a predicate (*Oxford English Dictionary* cited in Nelsen 2006). The attachment of the negative morphemes to only main verbs in the proverbs ensures the instructional purposes ring through clearly.

#### **4.2.4 The Use of Negation, Imperatives, Phallic Images, Humour in Proverbs that Relate Some Attributes of Men**

The following proverbs, taking the imperative form by telling how men behave or should behave in certain circumstances, subtly construct the images of men in the proverbs.

- *Tso dɔe ηutsu dɔna*

(It is a real man who would always be found at a place where food is being served).

The proverb implies that men must always be battle-ready; be prepared for any eventuality anytime and anywhere. This quality is esteemed especially during times of war when men do not get the luxury of sitting to eat in a relaxed manner. This connotes a certain brashness in men which is contrasted with feminine propriety. Women therefore are to be prim and proper, as they should always seek for decorum in the society. Men, in this proverb, are therefore excused since their activities require brashness. Taken further, the proverb implies that while women are given to elaborate haggling over issues, men are not disposed to that kind of trait. Again, given that a lax attitude on the part of men during war can cost lives, theirs is to be a life of constant vigilance. Men therefore are not to have the luxury to engage in frivolous activities such as gossiping. Again, considering the cultural milieu of the Ewe where *tso dɔ* (to be fortunate to meet people having a meal) has connotations such as *ezɔ nyuie* (you have walked well) or *ekli afɔ nyui* (you hit the right foot on a stone) giving ideas that a person is lucky enough to meet them getting ready to eat, this proverb as it constructs the personality of the male as one who does not have the time to cook and so should be calculating enough to be at the right place at the right time, also goes to encourage the male to do this since it is manly. Literally contrasting this proverb with the one that says *a girl who stays in the kitchen with the mother does not become foolish* however, it can be established that the proverb *Tso dɔe ηutsu dɔna* cannot be applicable to the female since it is the female who is to help in preparing the meals the man would be fortunate to meet.

- *Wome tsɔa ηukpe mia adela le ame lɔxo gbɔ o*

(you do not swallow uncooked meat at your mother-in-law's because you are shy)

This proverb also cautions men not to go to the extreme when seeking to appear meek in the presence of their mother-in-laws. By literal implication, the proverb suggests that there is the possibility a man would swallow items that are not even to be swallowed if his mother-in-law so desires. This is of course not used in the literal sense but the metaphor conveys the idea that men can go to any length just to please their mother-in-laws. From this proverb therefore is the idea that men are not the dominating forces in all circles of the society. Even though women are the ones supposed to be always meek, when the man reaches the mother-in-law, he has no choice but to defer to her.

In the preface of Appiah, Appiah and Agyemang-Duah (2008), Kwame Anthony Appiah expresses the view that:

proverbs contain the philosophy, humour, symbolism, and religion of the peoples who use them. They are imbued with a deep knowledge of the surrounding world, physical, spiritual, and of social realities. (p.xiii)

The humour that rings through the proverbs and the images that stand as symbols for certain ideals therefore serve as conduits for conveying the societal constructs explicitly or subtly. The proverb *nyɔnu meɖɔa ava ɖuɖɔ o* (A woman does not urinate using the phallus), by portraying an idealized image of the phallus represents a very vital part of the idea that the use of the phallus makes men the influential beings they are in the society. According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the phallus is “an image or a model of the penis, especially one representing the power of men to make women pregnant, or a penis”. The phallic potency alluded thus conveys the idea that men are the givers of life and women nurture the seeds they produce. The distinction being made however, on a closer look does not appear to make a simple statement which just provides a distinction between the male and the female. The use of negation gives the statement a tinge of emphasizing the incapability of the woman rather than her capabilities. By using the habitual form of the simple present tense, the proverb states the belief that women can never obtain the status of men, are

essentially different from men and so all the positive attributes that go with the symbol of the phallus cannot be applied to them. The distinctions made between the genders, in and of themselves are not biased. Negation however is used to emphasize the incapacities subtly expressed. Contextually, the proverb is used when a woman attempts an act that is a reserve for men. Such a woman is therefore cautioned using the proverb so as to keep her from whatever manly venture she attempted. Conversely, the following proverb portrays the vulnerability of the phallus in relation to the female:

- *Nusi tso ava na sɔ la, ele sɔnɔ fe dɔme*

(the object that cut the horse's phallus is in the mare's stomach).

This proverb as it creates an image of the cutting of the phallus in the mind, and the pain associated with it being cut, sends the message it intends tersely: The feminine gender possesses the power to cause pain to the masculine. The female therefore is considered as having some influence over what causes the male pain and unhappiness. Ayi Kwei Armah takes this image to dizzying heights in *Why are we so blest* as he illustrates the emasculation of the character Modin who goes through the painful process because of his girlfriend Aimee. Aimee goes further to lick and swallow Modin's blood after his penis is cut. This vampire attribute rings through in the Ewe proverb, *nyɔnuwo (gbolowo) amevu dɛla woe* (women are blood suckers). The sucking of the blood represents a draining of life from the male and so, men are to be cautious when dealing with women.

Some of the proverbs tell humorous stories of their own even in the very limited number of words they contain, painting vivid scenarios in the minds of the listener or reader. The proverb:

- *Dadi be ne menye ye lɔxo fe tsyɔfee yeva o la, afi hã maɔɔ ye atu aɔɔ ye kɔme o.*

(The cat says if it was not for the fact that he is at his mother-in-law's funeral, the mouse would not so much as dance as close to him and even stump his feet in front of him).

This proverb even as it tells of the painful situation the cat finds himself in, humorously, goes to show how much power the mother-in-law has over her son-in-law. Mother-in-laws in various African societies are associated with similar attributes. The Moroccan proverb below quoted by Belfatmi (2013) uses hyperbole and humour to convey the image of the mother-in-law succinctly:

*What the devil can do in one year, the mother in law can do in one hour (p.19)*

Thus the devil, who is considered so vicious a personality in most religions and cultures, is even considered slower at doing evil when compared to the mother-in-law. The perception of mother-in-laws as over-bearing can therefore not be over-emphasized.

Conclusion: In summary, the imagery conveyed through the conditional phrase used by the cat (if it was not for the mother-in-law's funeral), though humorous, brings out a vivid portrayal of the mother-in-law as she is perceived in the Ewe society and many other African societies: over-indulgent, and difficult to please. In the first proverb, the phallic image is not romanticized as is in the earlier which says *the woman does not pass urine using the penis*. The male is however portrayed as vulnerable since what causes him some pain exists within the female.

#### **4.2.5 Proverbs which employ Gendered Animal Metaphors**

Metaphors are analogies which allow us to map one experience in the terminology of another experience and thus to acquire an understanding of complex topics or new situations. (Moser, 2000) Unarguably therefore, metaphors capture a society's way of thinking and doing as they explain their world through the relations they perceive among the elements around them. The Symbolic cultural approach would therefore be used in interpreting the

proverbs that employ animal metaphors since it is the culture of a people which would be reflected in the proverbs. In the Ewe society, various animals are attributed various qualities. The billy goat is seen to be promiscuous, the cat and fox as cunning and sly, the frog calm and dutiful, the rooster a coward and domineering, the hen calm and respectful of its husband, etc. In Ewe proverbs therefore, the characteristics of these animals are employed in contexts where they seem similar to ones observed in human society.

Schipper (1992) argues that African proverbs can be divided into two categories; the clear, direct proverbs and then the metaphorical ones (cited in Kobia 2016, p.220). The collection of proverbs for this study so far discussed, supports this argument as the proverbs either give direct instructions or mirror concepts. This chapter focuses on the proverbs which use behaviours peculiar to certain animals to drive home their messages. Out of the proverbs collected, eleven of them use the chicken metaphor, and others use the frog, the cat, the goat, the leopard, the crocodile and the alligator. Albarella et al (2006) suggest that humans and the animals they domesticate live in a symbiotic relationship of mutualism, as each species benefits from the other. Thus, intentional human intervention sometimes results in the reproduction of another species and from selection operating in environments largely structured by humans. Their observation therefore points to a close relationship between domesticates and humans and so further suggests a close observation of the activities of the latter by the former. The table below shows the record of the number of livestock kept in the Ewe communities as recorded by Agbodeka (1997, p.67):

Poultry	Goat	Sheep	Cattle	Swine
279,875	70,698	68,380	45,725	8,930

The Ewe society's recurrent use of the hen and the rooster in illustrating marital relationships, can only be attributed to the fact that many households own poultry and so their narratives

and sayings would naturally feature the creatures that are closest to them. A proverb like *The hen does not go to the market for nothing, if it is not that it is scattering its eggs, then it is because she is mistreating her chick*, expresses the creator's close observation of the reasons why the old hen gets sent to the market to be sold. The proverb below:

- *Koklotsu kuŋɔ ɔɛkae nɔa kpo me*

(The selfish rooster stays in the coup alone),

also suggests that the creator must have accorded the lone rooster the attribute of being selfish after observing him being deserted by others. According to Olateju (2005):

The contextual situation or condition under which animal metaphors are used is of paramount importance. From a psychological point of view, the usage and understanding of an animal metaphor involves some perception of attitudes, experiences or dispositions of both the speaker and the addressee (p.370)

Kobia (2016) also stresses the fact that domestic animals like dogs, goats and chicken have been used to refer to human characteristics and behaviour because they have been close to humankind since time immemorial. The mention of the crowing of the cock to signify the approach of important events in the Ewe novel *'Adelã Megblã wo kata o'* (The hunter does not tell all his tales) tells how much the actions of the Ewe have been influenced by the animals in their environment. In the novel, the crowing of the cock prompts townsfolk to go submit items for divination in order to find a hunter who had not returned home from a hunting expedition (p25). Again, the ideophone below, which uses mannerisms of the chicken is 'calculated to evoke fear, followed by a startling personification of fearlessness' (Anyidoho 1997):

*Koklodzeɖekadzi....Koklo dze ɖe ka dzi; eka mekpɔ vovo o, koklo hã mekpɔ vovo o*  
(p.14)

(Chicken perches on rope; rope is not at rest, chicken too is not at rest)

This shows how significant the image of the chicken is, in the Ewe society as it is used in such important contexts of evoking fear.

Many societies have proverbs which have animal metaphors. Works such as, Kobia 2016, Olateju 2005, Rodriguez 2009, have delved into the animal metaphors in the Swahili, Yoruba Spanish and English languages respectively. The peculiar ways the Ewes use their animal metaphors would therefore be looked at closely in the study. Comparisons would also be made to those from other societies where there are striking similarities. The Ewe proverb, ‘the hen says it is because she is laying eggs that she does not have time to crow like the rooster’, has the same animal metaphor as is in the Western expression ‘the hen says she lays the eggs, the rooster only does the crowing’. Both proverbs have the same structure, in that, they employ the simple present, use the hen metaphor as noun phrases at the same positions in the sentences, and convey the words through the voice of the hen by using the construction ‘the hen says’. Again, both proverbs put a premium on the laying of eggs as an important duty that the female performs.

- *Koklonɔ be ηutsu manɔ ame ηu la fue*

(The hen says life is difficult when one does not have a rooster for support).

This proverb clearly shows the view of the Ewe society regarding who the most important person in a family is. The male is seen as indispensable in the family setting and if a woman does not have a husband, society regards her as a misfit and with the condescending attitude members of the society are socially conditioned to have towards the unmarried, so much pressure is mounted on her to get married. Some women would therefore prefer to be in any

kind of marriage than be unmarried. Considering the bigger Ghanaian context as regards the perceptions of the unmarried, Ama Ata Aidoo's novel *Changes* documents the experiences of the character Esi, who after she divorces her first husband, feels enormous societal pressure to be cared for by a man that, she settles to be the second wife of another woman's husband. In the Ewe novel *Fia Tsatsala*, we find characters who consider it an insult to be called unmarried and childless. The character *Yawa* asks *Amenyo*, another character who alludes to her unmarried state and the need for her to marry:

*Te yi megbe le gbɔnye. Adzum le ame dome vɔ hafi ava dɛma?* (Leave me alone.

Would you insult me as unmarried publicly before you come marry me? (p.15)

Again in the novel, the character *Amenyo* tells two other female characters that marriage is the crown they should seek to justify their claims of being beautiful. He says:

*...adi srɔ aɔɛ woànye atsyɔ na miafe tugbedzedze si mietsɔ le adegbe fomee yesiayi*

*la* (p.15)

(Look for a husband so you will add to the beauty which you boast of).

Comparing such a view to that which is expressed in the following proverb:

- *Koklo be atsue nye bubu na asi, eyata yenɔa ye srɔ yome*

(The hen says that the husband is an honour to the wife, that is why she always follows her husband)

We realize that a woman's honour depends on her ability to acquire a husband. The concept of followership and leadership is emphasized as the male is considered the leader. Aside the fact that the man is expected to provide the woman's needs, there is honour due her just by having a man by her side. Again, it is the male who goes for the hand of the female in marriage, and not the other way round. Even though this is a privileged position, it also puts undue pressure on the male to be well-to-do. The poor man *Amenyo* laments about not being able to get married in *Fia Tsatsala* in the words:

*Klo be ne menye go sesēe le dzime na ye o la anye ne ye hã yedze yedufu gome xoxo, eye ne ua dī be 'taṅtidi' la, ye hã yeakae dē nu ale. Kosi meḍo lae wɛe be mi nyɔnu trewo hã miegbe be yewomaḍem o. Nye koḍoḍo va zu go sesēe le megbe nam, mede yeduge do kpoe. Mesesē o. Nye koḍoḍo ava vɔ xoxo (p.16)*

(The tortoise says if it is not for the hard shell at its back, he would also have started dancing and so if the drum beats 'taṅtidi' he would also try his best. The poverty I am in is what makes women refuse to marry me. My poverty has become the hard shell behind me which is not allowing me to dance. My poverty shall surely leave me)

From the text above, we realize that the financial requirements for marriage in the Ewe society, puts pressure on the men as they are expected to raise money to go ask for the hand of women in marriage. Related to the text are all the proverbs that also talk about the fact that the poor son-in-law cannot have his mother-in-law in confidence.

Aside the financial standards set by the society, another proverb which uses an animal metaphor to convey some views of the male in the Ewe society is:

- *Gbɔtsue be vovototo mele yesrɔ kple yenɔ dome o*

(The billy goat says there is no difference between its mother and its wife).

Since the billy goat is associated with sexual prowess, the male in the Ewe society is metaphorically constructed in the proverb above as being insatiable when it comes to sexual escapades. The proverb therefore significantly gives the male gender the laxity to flex its sexual muscle without any restrictions while it deters women from doing same. Freud's penis-envy theory better explains this proverb as it suggests the billy goat's comparison of his wife and mother stems from a realization that they both do not have penises, and cannot do the things he is justified to do sexually. Again, the phallus connotes a certain prowess in various African societies. The loss of one's manhood is therefore considered a tragedy.

Okpewho expresses this in his novel *The Last Duty*, using the character Toje who wreaks havoc on people in the society in his quest to regain his manhood. The lengths Toje goes to regain his potency tells how very important a man's potency is regarded in Africa. Okpewho juxtaposes Toje's crippled but potent nephew with him, making his tragedy more poignant as his nephew succeeds in satisfying Aku (the woman Toje desires) sexually. In lamenting his woe, Toje dwells on the fact that even the smallest of male animals gets an erection while he does not. He muses:

For how would it sound in people's ears, that chief Toje Onovwakpo of Urukpe is an impotent man? How would the news be taken-that the big rubber magnate, whose name and enterprise alone are sufficient to guarantee Urukpe its reputation as a major rubber producing town in the Black Gold State, is devoid of manhood? Surely that would be a big blot on the name of this town... Perish the thought! And if it takes my manipulating a forlorn woman into adultery- though she knows she stands doubly to gain by the act- I am convinced that no sacrifice is too big so long as the disaster is averted (p.133)

Thoughts such as this, heighten his sense of his inadequacies and drive him to attack his crippled but potent nephew. Toje therefore does not consider the fact that the wrongs he would be engaging in to regain his manhood outweigh the pluses. He even believes he is doing his society a favour by regaining his manhood since he knows it is considered a very important aspect of a man's being and any sin would be forgiven him in its pursuit.

- *Du fufu Amegaxi dzrom hafi wo be lɔxoɑ fe gbɔ tso ka*

(The leopard was already gearing up to run when they told him his mother-in-law's goat was missing)

With this proverb, one of the fastest animals is used to convey the idea that a person who already feels like doing something he/she loves would do it to the extreme when the chore is now for a person they would have to impress. Here, human figures are mentioned vis-a-vis

the animal figures. In the proverb, the idea that the mother-in-law is a figure the male in the society have to impress, cannot be overemphasized. The proverb leaves to our imagination how fast the fox would run in such a situation. Similar to this proverb on the reverence given to the mother-in-law using animal metaphors is:

- *Dadi be ne menye ye lɔxo fe tsyɔfee yeva o la, afi hã maɔu ye atu afo ye kɔme o*

(The cat says if it was not for the fact that he was at his mother-in-law's funeral, the mouse would not so much as dance as close to him and even stump his feet in front of him)

This proverb also requires a familiarity with the nature of the cat for one to grasp what the proverb drives at. The cat is seen as very wild in all matters pertaining to pursuing mice. An Ewe folktale has it that it is because it catches mice that the cat and man became very good friends. The cat's very essence is therefore tied to his ability to catch mice and so whatever limits him from performing this duty should be considered a venture worth limiting him. Mother-in-laws in the Ewe society are accorded the highest respect and clearly, the cat is inhibited in his actions because of the decorum he has to exhibit in such circumstances. An Akan proverb has it *that it is the day you are in tatters that you meet your mother-in-law on the way to the farm*. This shows that, should one be in the know that they are meeting their mother-in-law, the best foot should be put forward in every sense of the word. African men therefore put up their best behaviour in the presence of their mothers-in-law, implying the latter as very powerful figures in the Ewe society who act as checks on masculinity in their domain.

- *Akpɔkplɔ be srɔ la, nu vevie wo nye, menya kpɔna ganya kpɔna o, eyata afisi yeto ko la, yetsoa yesrɔ kpana de megbe*

(The frog says a wife is an important asset. It is not easy to find and find again, that is why he straps his to his back everywhere he goes)

This proverb, by relating the observation of a frog strapping the female on its back, portrays the burden of the male as the ones charged with the responsibility of pursuing their mates and providing for them. Another proverb which holds up animal actions to mirror human ones is:

- *Nyɔnue wɔ nu gle kple lo wo do go*

(It is the deed of the woman that makes the crocodile and the alligator meet)

The crocodile and the alligator are considered fierce enemies, according to Ewe lore. The proverb also conveys the idea that it is rare for them to meet. If a woman therefore succeeds in letting them meet each other in combat, then the woman really has enormous power. This is one proverb that portrays women as powerful and with the ability to influence the actions of men.

Conclusion: The animals used in the proverbs truly mirror the situations the proverbs set out to emphasize and comment on. The goat is associated with virility as it indiscriminately mounts she-goats, the cat exhibits both a calm demeanour and wildness in different circumstances when it pursues mice and when it does not, the hen caters for her chicks but mistreats them in equal measure at certain parts of her life, and the fox is portrayed as easily excitable.

#### 4.3 Explanation of Contexts

According to Burns (2009), “Like many cultures, the Ewe associate masculinity with physical strength- the expression *dzɔ atsu* (to be tall, strong, stout,) uses the masculine affix *tsu...*”(p.68) Using the expression *dzɔ nyɔnu* however has a different semantic import that

does not include being stout or very energetic. To wit, even if a woman is to be described as very tall and well-built, she is described with the same word *dzɔ atsu*. This clearly gives the limits of the Ewe conception of how energetic a woman could possibly be since there is no feminine form of the word which connotes the possession of such virility. This basic genderization of terms thus sets the context for the proverbs discussed which emphasize the woman being incapable of enduring strenuous physical tasks. Pointing out that the Ewe believe wisdom comes from patience, tranquility, and humility, a state of mind described as *fa* (cool), Dzobo refers to the proverb, *Ne te dume fa la, eyae na te do na* (the yam whose mound is cool is the one that grows). This proverb can be used for women who, even though they are to be quiet and unassuming, are the ones who hold their families together. Again, the Ewe proverb *Kumatɔwo be ye wo mewɔa adã o gake ame ta le yewo hã si* (The Kumas say even though are calm and collected, they also have human heads) gives an interesting insight into how powerful the unassuming are also thought to be in the Ewe society. Again the proverb,

*Ame lɔxo lɔ ame gake fe le anyi*

(Your mother-in-law would not tell you she does not like you but would signal her daughter not to marry you if she wills)

suggests that the female even though is not outspoken uses ways that can equally get her the desired effects of being outspoken and even more. Through this proverb is the idea that the Ewe society considers the laid-back attitude (which is mostly attributed to women) not as a sign of weakness but sometimes with a deeper form of wisdom that the literal meaning of the proverbs do not convey.

The lexical items in the following proverbs which suggest attributes of men and women are considered by this thesis in determining how the gendered ideology of the Ewes plays out in their proverbs. A proverb like:

- *Nyɔnu meɖɔa avaɖuɖɔ o*

(The woman does not urinate using the phallus)

if it is to be explained contextually, would factor in what *avaɖuɖɔ* stands for as it connotes all acts pertaining to being very masculine. The proverb also brings up the Ewe view that women stoop and men stand while passing urine due to the nature of their organs. The different positions both genders are to take while performing a simple act as passing urine had thus become a subject that helps construct the genders.

Further, in the Ewe society, it is the men who bring items to the families of the women they wish to marry in order to facilitate marriage ceremonies. Even after the marriages, gifts are given to the relations of the woman and these show how well the man is taking care of the woman. If a man is not well-to-do however, the proverb below is used to caution him to upgrade his status financially:

- *To doko mesea lɔxoɔ fe dali o* (the poor son-in-law does not hear the secrets of his mother -in-law),

The proverb is therefore used to caution him about the negative effects his poverty can have on him. It therefore becomes imperative for a prospective son-in-law to be of good standing financially. This idea also portrays women as money conscious and demanding since the Ewe society does not put similar demands on the female to be wealthy.

The power of the mother-in-law also further portrays the woes of the childless women in the Ewe society. Indeed, the proverb, *Vi vɔ nyo wu ko tsi tsi* (Having an evil child is better than childlessness), shows that the Ewe woman would prefer most forms of hardships caused

by troublesome children to childlessness. Giving birth to a son is ultimately considered the biggest blessing, but a daughter also gives her mother the opportunity to be revered by her sons-in-law. Since it is a polygamous society, men go in for other women when one wife is unable to give them children. Every woman therefore strives to have children. Even with all the power we see the mother-in-law wield, the Ewe society as a polygamous one, curtails this power by giving room to her husband to marry as many wives as he wants, and pitting her against her rivals. The proverbs:

- *Atsusi fe agbelifufu, ku mevɔna le eme o* (the cassava fufu of the rival always contains lumps)
- *Wo me dɔa nyaga xoxo dɛ atsufe ga fiaa ɲu vavae o*  
(You do not send a grown-up girl into marriage and then teach her how to be jealous)

show the kind of relationship to be expected from rivals married to the same man. Powerful rivalries rear their head in Ewe polygamous homes where the rivals and their mothers always find fault with each other and always try to outdo each other to the delight of the men folk.

The encouraged docility of the female cannot be missed in the proverbs too. The proverbs:

- *Nyɔnu kpɔga meflea agblɔvu o* (A wealthy woman can still not buy the big drum)
- *Nyɔnu ka (si) atufu ga mefoa agblɔvu o* (A woman who wears a big atufu cannot play the big drum)
- *Nyɔnu meɔea gbe abe nutsu ene o* (A woman does not give commands like a man).
- *Atawui medzea nyɔnu o* (A woman cannot look good in man's trousers)

go to show that the woman is supposed to be laid-back, not contend with the man, and just be an observer in the world of men.

The portrayal of the alpha male with regards to social events and milieu also makes for interesting observation. The man is expected to command and be feared. The proverb, *the woman does not command like a man*, mentioned earlier, supports this view. Men are the ones supposed to be heard, and the woman is to just be seen but not heard.

Men are also expected to engage in acts that show their manliness. The proverb:

- *Menye avatsitsi ta, woagbe ava de o* (it is not because of death that you refuse to go to war)

shows that all males whether they want to or not, are expected to go to war and show courage. Thus males who have the natural inclination to engage in activities other than the ones prescribed by the society would naturally be seen as misfits and cowards and referred to in derogatory terms such as *nyɔnugbɔme* (someone who loves the company of women). Chinua Achebe expresses this idea in *Things Fall Apart* through Okonkwo's great fear of being called an *agbala* (meaning woman or a man with no title), a name one of his playmates uses for his father who had taken no titles. In the Ewe society however, even the male who does not show his strength and courage publicly, shows it in bragging about his discreet way of meeting society's expectations: *Kumatɔwo be yewomewɔa ada o gake ameta le yewo si* (Though the Kumas speak softly, they also have human skulls). Thus, even the soft spoken Kumas engage in the prescribed male violence in showing their prowess by possessing human heads because villages in possession of many human heads are famed and feared.

The proverbs that warn young men about the manipulations of women also show a prescribed masculinity that instructs the young man on his priorities. The proverb, *Ahia madia abe agble ene o* (A girlfriend is not tended to like a farm) tells the order in which a young man's

priorities have to fall. His farm comes first, and his relations with prospective female partners come later. Dzobo (1973) puts it in the words:

*A girlfriend is not to be minded like a farm because she may have other boyfriends and so will not give you the single-minded devotion that you will give her. (p.146)*

Supporting this view is the proverb:

- *Nyɔnuwo (gbolowo) la ame vudelawoe*

which Dzobo translates as “women (harlots) are blood suckers.”(p.123) Young men are thus told to have some fear for the opposite sex because of their tendency to exploit them.

The proverb:

- *Tugbedzedze la telɔe, asie nɔa ɛɲu*

(Beauty is like the tender climber of a yam, it needs constant minding)

also goes to show that the man is required to spend a lot of money on a woman and if he does not do this, women would not stay with him. Again, with the proverb, *Lɔxo dugavee fe vi menya dena o* (It is difficult to marry daughter of the mother-in-law who spends the money of multiple suitors), comes another warning about the female mother-in-law who can outwit prospective sons-in-law. Women therefore have taken the role of tricksters who can exploit the unwary man. The mother-in-law's attribute of spending money from multiple suitors, can be compared to the Ananse character explored by Efua Sutherland in her *The Marriage of Anansewaa*. George Kweku Ananse comes up with a plan to give out his daughter to the highest bidder after he had taken money from four suitors and found himself in a web of confusion regarding who would be the best husband to his daughter. He therefore convinces his daughter to play dead, lays her in state, and while the four suitors come to pay their respects, deciphers who is the most deserving of his daughter and whose household she would be happy in. The idea of money being extorted from multiple suitors thus explored, is an illustration of a motif which can be found in various African narratives and proverbs.

Further, in Mariama Bă's *So Long a letter*, we get an illustration of a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. Ramatoulaye says:

*His mother would stop by again and again while on her outings, always flanked by different friends, just to show off her son's social success but particularly so that they might see, at close quarters, her supremacy in this beautiful house in which she did not live....(p.31)*

The word 'supremacy' used in the text underscores the myriads of 'decrees' she must have given Ramatoulaye to make her use a word suggesting the mother-in-law considers herself monarch of all she surveys. Her mother-in-law visits them, not with the intention of helping them out of the problems they face but just to show off to her friends the status they have acquired in their society.

Conclusion: Evident from the proverbs discussed is the fact that the Ewe proverbs carry ideas which condition males and females to think in particular ways. In this section, we realize that while docility is encouraged for the female, bravery is given the nod in the case of the male. Docility, even though it does not negate a woman's influence in certain spheres, is a quality that does not make for public displays of the possession of power. The male's vulnerability is however also portrayed in the proverbs which paint images of a demure posture of the male in the presence of his mother-in-law thereby tipping the power scale in the favour of the mother-in-law in such circumstances.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW: In this chapter, findings had from the data used for the analysis are looked at. This thesis in revealing the explicit and implicit underpinnings of power relations in the Ewe proverbs, translates, interprets, explains and describes the proverbs considering prominent stylistic properties.

#### 5.1 Descriptive Stage and Interpretive Stages

Under the descriptive framework, the analysis brought out various ways through which gendered power relations are conveyed in the proverbs selected.

##### 5.1.1 Negation and Affirmation

Negation in the proverbs analysed under all four (4) categories: Proverbs that relate general attributes of women, proverbs that relate perceived relations between men and women, proverbs that relate attributes of men, and proverbs that relate the relations between men and women in the context of marriage, were found to be sentential negation (sentences that negate main verbs and not copulas). Some proverbs were also found to affirm positive attributes of both the male and the female genders. Some proverbs which negated the ability of a female to engage in a male oriented activity were found to inadvertently affirm a different ability which the proverb appeared not to focus on. An instance is the proverb which gives the idea that a woman can be very wealthy but cannot call for the big drum to be played. This proverb affirms the woman's ability to own wealth.

The study of the negated structures also brought the findings that not all women are subordinated by all men. The mother-in-law's relation to her sons-in-law is portrayed as a dominant-dominated one through the limitations placed on the sons-in-law which were expressed through negation. Again, some proverbs that seem to affirm the qualities of women on the literal level, actually construct roles that do not favour their gender. Negation was also found to emphasize the gender differentiations made in the proverbs, bringing out the permissible acts for the male gender against the acts the females are cautioned not to engage in.

### **5.1.2 Phallic Images and Humour**

Two proverbs which mentioned the phallus were looked at. The images were found to bring out the idea that the phallus represents manly capabilities and attributes which women should not aspire to. Again, the female's propensity to betray the male was also carried across by the second proverb which invokes images of the phallus being cut by an object in a mare's stomach. As regards humour, one proverb which mentions the cat's immobility at his mother-in-law's funeral, was carried across through the image of helplessness depicted. Even though humorous, the proverb was also found to have embedded in it, the society's constructs of how a male is supposed to behave when at gatherings his mother-in-law would be present at.

### **5.1.3 Imperative Structures**

The imperative structures looked at also brought out ideas about the use of subtle instruction by the proverbs to tell what a male and female are supposed to be. The proverbs looked at, though they had only male lexemes, conversely tell what women are not supposed to do.

#### **5.1.4 Parallelism and Repetition**

Repetition, this thesis finds out, is used to highlight certain parts of the proverbs to make them notable. For the instructions about the constructs to stick in the minds of the members of the society therefore, particular words are repeated so as to achieve this effect.

Parallel structures, which also give a sense of rhythm to the words for easy recollection, are also used. The particular proverb identified, in giving two reasons why the hen gets sold, uses two clauses with the same structure. Parallelism as used in the proverb also portrays the female's susceptibility to being dominated as the creator of the proverb serves as judge, jury and executioner in spelling out the charges against the hen and only explaining on his/her terms what she did wrong. The hen's predicament, thus put in such a stylistic manner without her side of the story accounted for, illustrates some of the injustices meted out to the female gender.

#### **5.1.5 Metaphors**

Animal metaphors were the most prominent literary forms found in the proverbs. The animals used were all found to share similarities with the human figures they were compared to or whose situations they were put in. Some of the metaphors also included both the animal characters and human ones thus, making the situations more realistic.

#### **5.2 Social Practice**

The thesis took a close look at the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic situation of the Ewe communities, putting them vis-à-vis the situations portrayed in the proverbs gathered. The Ewe fishing and agricultural practices, kinship and inheritance system, cosmology, were all found to be gendered and their genderized nature was thus reflected in the proverbs analyzed.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The linguistic features discussed under the Descriptive, Interpretive stages, and social practice all come together in aiding a better understanding of Ewe ideology as regards gender constructs. Comparatively, since none of the negative morphemes used for restraint were used to caution the male gender, this thesis comes to the conclusion that the language of the Ewe proverb with male and female lexemes as analysed in the work, supports a patriarchal ideology which uses subtle discursive strategies to ensure that women's traditional roles of being submissive to men are maintained. The subversive undertones discovered in some of the proverbs however, bring out the 'struggle and contestation' easily overlooked in the proverbs as the female voices in the proverbs try to inscribe their capabilities in the language of the proverbs.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

This thesis recommends that a similar study be done with proverbs as used in dialogues between the male and the female. Due to time constraints, the current study could not delve into this aspect. This would give more insight into how the male and the female in the Ewe society perceive the import of the gendered proverbs. Again, parallelism as a literary device which is dominant in most other African proverbs especially the Akan, does not feature prominently in the data collected. The thesis recommends that Ewe linguists do an intensive study in such area by using a larger corpus in order to explain the absence of the parallel structures better.

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## APPENDIX

### Proverbs used for Data Analysis

1. *Nyɔnu ka (si) atufu gǎ mefoa agblɔvu o*

(A woman can wear a big *atufu* but cannot beat the big drum)

2. *Nyɔnu zazee fe asime nyo wu adzagba tɔ*

(The palms of a smart woman are far more attractive than precious rubies)

3. *Nyɔnu kpɔ hotsui medoa agblɔvu o*

(A wealthy woman cannot call for the big drum to be beaten)

4. *Koklonɔ mekua atɔ o*

(The hen does not crow)

5. *Nyɔnu medɔa avadufɔ o*

(A woman does not pass urine using the penis)

6. *Dɔwuvi megbea nɔ wu o*

(If a child is hungry, the mother is hungry too)

7. *Nyɔnu de mebiāna o*

(A woman's palm fruits do not redden)

8. *Nyɔnuvi si nɔa dada gbɔ le dzodofe medɔa lǎ o*

(The girl who stays with her mother in the kitchen does not become foolish)

9. *Koklonɔ meya asito dzodzro o. Ne menye azi kakam wole o la, ekem ɔee mele belem na viawo o*

(The hen does not go to the market for nothing, if it is not that it is scattering its eggs, then it is because she is mistreating her chicks)

10. *Atawui medzea nyɔnu o*

(A woman does not look good in a man's trousers)

11. *Nyɔnu mefoa tɔ wo si na o*

(A woman does not tell one where to fish)

12. *Nyɔnu megea gbe abe ɥutsu ene o*

(a woman does not give commands like a man)

13. *Koklonɔ be ye le azi dɔm eyata ye me kpɔ vovo na atɔkuku o*

(the hen says it is because she is laying eggs that she does not get the time to crow)

14. *Koklonɔ be gbe le yenu yeagblɔ be ɥuke gake yesrɔ nue yesene le*

The hen says she has the voice to crow to announce daybreak but she defers to her husband)

15. *Koklonɔ be aziɔɔɔɔɔe kpea ye ta yemekua atɔ o*

(The hen says the burden of laying eggs causes her not to crow)

16. *Nyɔnu kpɔ ho me bua srɔ o.*

(A wealthy woman does not respect her husband)

17. *To ɔoko mesea lɔxoɔ fe dalɔ o*

(The poor son-in-law does not hear the secrets of his mother-in-law)

18. *Lɔxo ɔugavee fe vi menya dena o*

(It is difficult to marry the daughter of the mother-in-law who spends the money of multiple suitors).

19. *Koli(klo) gɔglɔ meɔoa lɔxoɑ fe kpɔnu dzɔna o*

(A deformed knee does not become straight on getting to the entrance of the mother-in-law's house)

20. *Du fufu le amegaxi dzrom hafi wo be lɔxoɑ fe gbɔ tso ka*

(The leopard was already gearing up to run when they said his mother-in-law's goat was missing)

21. *Ame lɔxo lɔame fe agbelifufu eku mevɔna le eme o*

(In the loving mother-in-law's pounded yam, there are always lumps)

22. *Atsusi fe agbelifufu, ku mevɔna le eme o*

(A rival's pounded yam is never free of lumps)

23. *Wome ɔoa nyǎǎ xoxo ɔe atsu fe ga fiaa ηuvavae o*

(You not send a grown-up girl to her marital home, and then teach her how to be jealous)

24. *Atsufee dea bubu nyɔnu ηu*

(It is marriage that accords women respect)

25. *Koklo be atsue nye bubu na asi, eyata yenɔa ye srɔ yome*

(The hen says that the husband is an honour to the wife, that is why she always follows her husband)

26. *Tso ɔoe ηutsu ɔuna*

(It is a real man who is always be found at a place where food is being served).

27. *Wome tsɔa ŋukpe mia adela le ame lɔxo gbɔ o*

(you do not swallow uncooked meat at your mother-in-law's because you are shy)

28. *Nusi tso ava na sɔ la, ele sɔnɔ fe dɔme*

(the object that cut the horse's penis is in the mare's stomach).

29. *Dadi be ne menye ye lɔxo fe tsyɔfee yeva o la, afi hã maɔu ye atu aɔ ye kɔme o.*

(The cat says if it was not for the fact that he is at his mother-in-law's funeral, the mouse would not so much as dance as close to him and even stump his feet in front of him).

30. *Koklonɔ meya asito dzodzro o: Ne menye azi kakam wole o la, ekem ɔee mele belem na viawo o*

(The hen goes to the market for either of two reasons: if it is not that it is scattering its eggs, then it is that it is not caring for its chicks)

31. *Mɔtotie be ye foa vi foa nɔa*

(It is the tree by the road side who says it beats the child, and beats the mother too).

32. *Nyɔnuvi si nɔa dada gbɔ le dzodofe medzɔa lã o*

(The girl who stays with her mother in the kitchen does not become foolish)

33. *Ne wo be ame ne va ame ne va hã, nyɔnue va na?*

(When they say someone should come, someone should come, is it a woman who comes?)

34. *Akpɔkplɔ be srɔ la, nu vevie wo nye, menya kpɔna ganya kpɔna o, eyata afisi yeto ko la, yetsɔa yesrɔ kpana ɔe megbe*

(The frog says a wife is an important thing, it is not easy to find, and not easy to find again)

that is why he straps his to the back wherever he goes).

35. *Koklotsu kuḥɔ ɔɛkae nɔa kpo me*

(The selfish rooster stays in the coup alone)

36. *Koklonɔ be ηutsu manɔ ame ηu la fue*

(The hen says life is most difficult when one does not have a rooster for support).

37. *Koklo be atsue nye bubu na asi, eyata yenɔa ye srɔ yome*

(The hen says that the husband is an honour to the wife, that is why she always follows her husband)

38. *Gbɔtsue be vovototo mele yesrɔ kple yenɔ dome o*

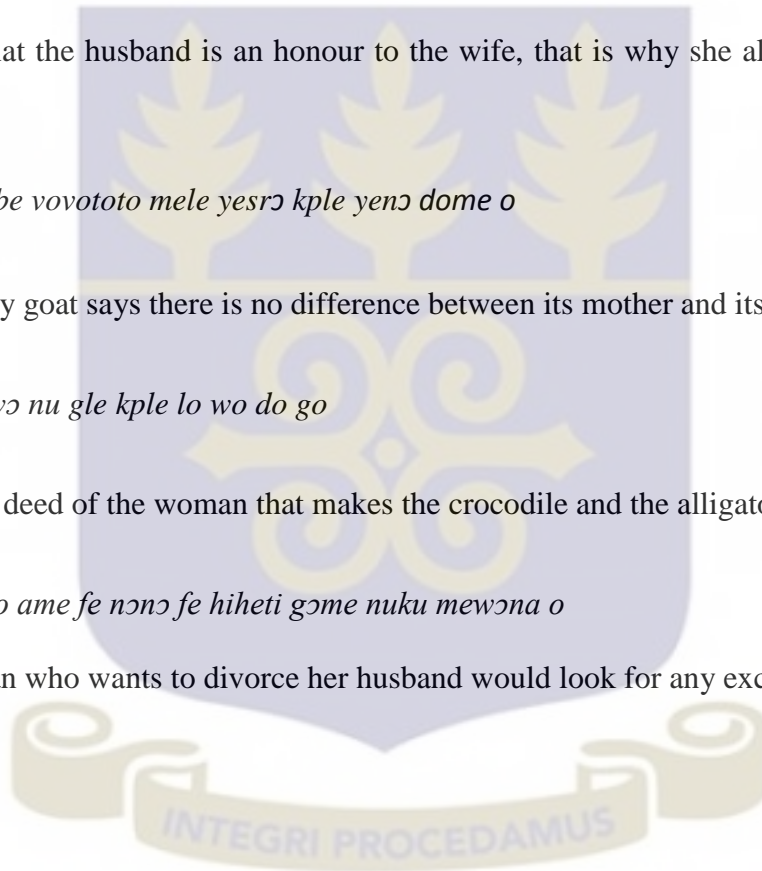
(The billy goat says there is no difference between its mother and its wife).

39. *Nyɔnue wɔ nu gle kple lo wo do go*

(It is the deed of the woman that makes the crocodile and the alligator meet)

40. *Asi ma ɔɔ ame fe nɔnɔ fe hiheti gɔme nuku mewɔna o*

(A woman who wants to divorce her husband would look for any excuse).



## Definition of Key Terms

Folklore: consists of legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs, fairy tales, stories, tall tales, and customs included in the traditions of a culture, subculture, or group. It also includes the set of practices through which those expressive genres are shared.

Family: husband and wife formally married and living together, with or without children.

Female: The term female applies to both women and girls in this thesis.

Femininity: possession of qualities traditionally attributed to women.

Gender: describes the characteristics that a society or culture delineates as masculine or feminine.

Gendered institutions: The term "gendered institutions" means that gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life (Acker 1992).

Gender ideology: cultural beliefs and the worldview about women and men in society.

Gender relations: the way men and women regard each other or behave towards each other and with regards to social obligations.

Lexeme: a fundamental unit of vocabulary of a language that may exist in a number of different meanings.

Man: a male person.

Masculinity: possession of the qualities traditionally associated with men.

Matriarchy: this is a system of government in which women are at the helm of affairs. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, it is a system of society or government ruled by a woman or women.

Oral literature: non material component of folklore, that is, folklore expressed in words such as proverbs, folksongs, folktales, riddles, and similar categories.

Patriarchy: a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line.

Power: This thesis defines power as influence of one entity over another.

Sex: the natural, physical and biological differences between men and women.

Woman: a female person.

