CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The vibrant and blossoming literary scholarship known today as Oral Literature began with the efforts of some European anthropologists, who embarked on a venture to study the culture of some non-literate people as far back as the fourteenth century. A couple of centuries thereafter, the seminal efforts of those European anthropologists have metamorphosed into a fully fledged literary scholarship that is as wide in scope as the written literature generically, in creative tenacity and critical patronage. Akporobaro (2004) enumerates the works of these scholars from the beginning to the late 20th century.

The scope of oral literature roughly covers similar grounds as those covered by the written counterpart, that is, the scope covers the generic aspects of prose, drama and poetry with the numerous sub-genres. For the purpose of clarity, it may be necessary to expatiate further that oral literature is a reference to the oral version of the subject of literature while a reference to "oral traditions" is conceived in respect of all the oral practices that constitute the various sub-genres of oral literature. Oral traditions cover every aspect of the people's ways of life which are primarily transmitted through the oral means. The scope of oral literature covers such prose sub-genres as the folktales, epics, legends, anecdotes and especially, myths, among others. This is what Akporobaro (2004: 36-37) refers to as "oral-literary forms" which he argues "constitute the most authentic expression of the creative intelligence and world-view" of the people. The oral-literary forms are explained further within the context of this present study.

> What Malinowski has to say for myth is also true of folktales, lyrics, legends and indeed the entire corpus of oral literary forms. Oral literary forms are means for the validation and preservation of culture and tradition.

Despite the ever increasing attention paid to the study of indigenous oral traditions by various scholars however, there still exist forms of creative traditions of significance that are yet to be acknowledged as deserving scholarly attention and scrutiny, especially by African scholars. The most astounding angle to this revelation is that some of these creative exploits are fast becoming extinct because of the incursion and ravaging effect of Western civilisation and foreign religious tenets on the traditional practices and values that provided the bases for such creative tendencies. This is besides the generation of performers and resource persons who are either dead, or too old to be actively engaged.

The original focus of this research work was to investigate the relationship between myth, totems and taboos in indigenous contexts of Nigeria as this relationship affects the mindset of the people on their belief systems and social control efforts and mechanism. But with the impressive influences of cross cultural scholarship as entrenched in the recent works as highlighted by Dasylva 2017 and Anyadike 2018 among others, there was the desire to explore the Sino-Nigerian cultural correspondence. Anyadike (2018: 28) lends credence to the similarities between the worldviews of China and Nigeria thus:

> During my stay in Peking University, Beijing, China, discussions with colleagues and students revealed that traditional societies of Africa and Nigeria in particular, and those of China, have so much in common because of the this-worldly orientation of Chinese beliefs.

It therefore becomes pertinent to interrogate, among other things, the state of some neglected but vital indigenous Nigerian oral traditions. For instance, Babawale (2010: xvii) expresses the concern that the attitude of scholars and the society in general is posing a kind of threat to some vital aspects of oral traditions:

> There are some rural communities in which the essential elements of African Oral Traditions remain intact. But in some of these communities, the integrity of tradition is daily being threatened or challenged by national local crises and globalisation.

Part of the threat identified by Babawale (ibid) derives from the fact that "the print medium loses most of the directness, informality, and aesthetic devices present in the oral traditions" (Babawale, ibid: xviii). In addition, it has been observed that proportionately, fewer scholars now devote themselves to the study of African oral traditions. The current study therefore also intends to investigate and, at the same time, interrogate some of these vibrant oral narrative genres that had existed many centuries in the indigenous societies before the advent of Western literary ventures into the affected indigenous societies.

On the contrary however, the Chinese culture provides a situation that is almost exactly opposite to the Nigerian context. The Chinese situation offers what appears to be an antidote to the declining influence of indigenous oral and traditional values in the emergent cosmopolitan milieu. The Chinese civilization, for instance, has survived into modern times and their oral traditions although still retain religious elements as a way of acknowledging the source, have been noticeably separated from religious practice and the intellectual activity of the elite class (Theodore de Bary, 1967: v). The oral traditions of China, which constitute the gamut of educational exploits known as Epic Literatures, still hold sway against the epochal institutions of foreign religions, like Islam and Christianity, and Western forms of education in the modern day China. For instance, rather than jettison the indigenous myths of Chinese origins, folklorists in the Southern nationalities pattern their "test stories" on the Greek and Jewish traditions with a view to drawing some value parallelism and helping the Chinese nationalities to adhere to the patronage of their local contents, rather than abandon them for foreign ones (Liu Yahu 2005: 225-240).

Mythology, the study of myths, deals with the age-long body of beliefs and practices that depend on a particular indigenous oral society for meaning and for manifestations.

According to Christopher Anyaoku[1], myths may be verbal or non-verbal, graphic or oral, depending on the complexity of the society to which the myth belongs. Mythology can be divided into two bilateral parts - mythopoiesis and mythoclasm which both constitute mythography or myth-making processes. Mythopoiesis is similar to what Mineke Schipper (2004:3) refers to as "idea confirming" while mythoclasm relates to what Schipper (ibid) refers to as the "ideal disconfirming". Mythopoiesis tends to support, confirm or re-affirm existing myths through narratives that tend to establish the veracity or sanctity of such myths. Mythoclasm, on the other hand, tends to debunk or dispute existing myths by creating narratives that refute or contradict the bases of existing myths in an attempt to re-create other negating myths. These two processes end up creating myths in the society.

Totems and taboos are two myth-making processes that fall within the mythopoeisis class of mythography. Totems in the context of this study are animal and plant symbols or objects which are regarded as sacred within a particular society. Oral expressions are created around such symbols which place social, moral or religious restrictions on them. The violation of such restrictions is regarded as taboos around which the society builds myths.

Taboos and totems as myth-making processes in many cultures of the world possess features of narrative fiction like plot, character, conflicts, perspectives, motifs and (narrative) modes. Despite the presence of these features, however, taboos and totems were hardly recognized or treated as creative arts within the societies that created them because of the strong sacramental and sacred values attached to the taboos and totems. Though many indigenous totems and taboos are backed up with causes and effects - two terms which constitute the bases for the kernel of a narrative structure in written literature, yet many people, and even scholars, in related disciplines still fail to recognise the connection between

[1] This was in an oral interview with Christopher Anyaoku, an Associate Professor in the Department of English, University of Lagos and a specialist in mythology in November 20, 2016 at Akoka, Lagos.

the narrative structures and such mythical elements. This is particularly so in the Nigerian context.

This study shares the opinion of Kofoworola (2013: 17) that "the significance of myth is its relationship to archetypes" and that archetypal patterns are very important". Beyond the initial dependence on speech events, Kofoworola (ibid) further observes that mythical motifs and themes may be found not only in verbal mythologies but also in "certain images that recur in the myths of the people" and which are capable of eliciting psychological responses as well as serve cultural functions. These non verbal archetypes correlate to the mythographic totemic elements presented in this study. The psycho-social responses which these totemic archetypes elicit are the mythic narrations expressing the taboos associated with the violation of the totems. This provides the background for a mythic cycle.

Myth- making in perspective: The cocoyam episode[2]

Once upon a time, and in an ancient Yoruba village, a story has it that there was a couple, notorious for their repeated quarrels and fighting. No one could explain what the cause of their fight was. The few things known to the neighbourhood were that the wife would nag and jeer at the husband at any time of the day and night; and in return for these, the husband would pounce on the wife and beat her blue-black. As there was no schedule for their fights, so there were neither rules nor restrictions to the duration and the arms deployed for the fights. Everyone in the neighbourhood knew this couple for their troublesome habits.

One day, the husband announced to the wife that owing to their mounting lack and poverty, they needed to relocate to a farm settlement to start a new farm in a virgin forest. After a period of debate on the issue, it became obvious that the man had his mind made on relocating and the wife had no choice than to move along to the new destination. Suddenly, a

[2] This folk narrative about the cocoyam episode was given by an old woman, Sabinuade Akinbitire, over twenty years ago. The narrative provides a perspective to myth-making in an indigenous society.

wave of apprehension and fear hit the woman realizing that in a lonely farm settlement and without neighbours to intercede, she would be at the mercy of a man that could beat her to death. She dreaded the imagination and decided to seek a solution.

The wife decided to seek the intervention of a village elder to help convince her husband not to relocate. On getting to the old man, she narrated the entire situation and presented her plea, “Baba, I do not know how to hold my mouth from abusing him, and I am sure he would soon kill me if I live with him alone in the farm”. The old man thought about the situation and sent the woman back home, promising to come out with a solution.

The old man sent for the husband and told him that he had some revelations about his decision to relocate to the virgin forest. The husband listened with rapt attention as the sage informed him that his decision to relocate would have very positive consequences only if he and his wife would have a way of controlling their emotions. He informed the husband further that failure by the couple to control their emotions would lead to the untimely death of either or both of them in very mysterious circumstances. To avert this calamity, the sage presented the husband with a tuber of cocoyam which he instructed him and his wife to jointly plant in the front of their hut in their proposed new domain. The couple was to nurture the cocoyam and allow it to grow before relocating to settle in the hut.

The husband and wife were issued a stern warning by the old man never to trample on the cocoyam, neither ever to uproot it nor inflict any injury on its stem. It was also to be seen as the symbol of truce any time either of the couple was provoked. They took the tuber and planted it as instructed. At the beginning of the next planting season, the cocoyam had sprouted and was growing vigorously. The couple erected their hut and eventually relocated to the forest. Each time a quarrel ensued, the wife ran to the cocoyam stand, held the stem and reminded the husband that death was lurking if they fought and injured the cocoyam. The husband would then refrain from beating her but would also tell the wife to desist from

nagging and provoking him. Gradually, the symbol became established as both husband and wife became afraid of the consequences of violating the cocoyam. In order not to provoke the husband, the wife became more tolerant and the husband no longer had reason to beat the woman. They both concentrated on their farming and became successful.

Unknown to both husband and wife, there was no spiritual attachment to the cocoyam that was planted. It was just a product of the imagination of the old man to create a totem of truce and imbue it with the fear of sudden and mysterious death. He created a taboo around the trampling or uprooting the totem which was a likely outcome of a fight or uncontrolled anger by either party. The fear of an impending misfortune on the other hand forced the couple to respect the totem.

Fig. 1.1- Cocoyam planted in the neighbourhood. The cocoyam is a common tuber plant in Nigeria. The fictitious story above was created around this plant. It is a typical example of the working of mythic narratology in the indigenous society.

Source: Field study, 2015.

Let us attempt to establish the concept of a non verbal mythic representation in literature with the land totem as signified in the literary world of Niyi Osundare, a prominent African poet. The reference to "land" by Osundare in many of his poems has been interpreted by many readers, scholars of mythology and critics as mythic. Osundare approaches the subject of land from the Yoruba mythical point of view that claims that the land never dies.

Ilẹ̀ kìí kú
Ilẹ̀ kìí sa
A kìí gbọ 'ku ilẹ

Trans

Land does not die
Land does not fade
We never hear of the death of land

In the *Eye of the Earth* (1986: 48)[3], Osundare explores the indomitability of land in what may seem as his creative motif. This reference to land as "earth" can be analysed as an example of double discursivity where earth can refer both to earth and to human beings who reside on the earth as against those who reside outside the earth (the dead or non-humans). To Osundare, though human beings continue to exploit the land (earth) for their existence, the land cannot die. In a similar logic, though oppressors continue to exploit the land (the people), the land (the earth) cannot be annihilated.

Weeping willows drip mercury tears
in the eye of sobbing terrains
a nuclear sun rises like a funeral ball
reducing man and meadow to dust and dirt.
But our earth will not die

Many Yoruba indigenous groups swear by the earth and are awed by the prospect of defiling it. The sacredness and mythical prowess of the land becomes more sacrosanct among the Igbo where the presumably most powerful deity, *Ala*, is given the onerous duty of protecting the sanctity of land. (Isidore Diala 2005: 93) In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall*

[3] Niyi Osundare., (1986) *Eye of the Earth*. Ibadan: HEBN.

Apart,[4] (1958) Okonkwo has to suffer a suspended penalty for violating the goddess of the land when he mistakenly spills the blood of an innocent person on the land during the burial of Ezeudu (86-87). Land is also mythically attached to the Dragon totem in Chinese mythology (Dharma Keerthi Sri Ranjan and Zhou Chang C. 2010). Such is the force of the land totem and its ability to fire creative instincts across indigenous cultures of the world. This study therefore examines the contributions of two mythographic elements – totems and taboos to the subject of mythology and their ability to motivate social cohesion in the contemporary society.

The study examines mythography from the viewpoint of the mythic narrations behind totems and taboos with a view to unravelling the correlations between the metaphors, signs and symbols of these mythic elements and the narration of both the tangible and the intangible realities; as well as the psycho-social implications of the identified correlations. An initial observation has revealed that a large number of the youth and young adult population of Nigerians do not have the expected understanding of the myth-making processes of their indigenous cultures. This claim is buttressed by the case of the episode narrated below.

A simulated pre-field test

The researcher had led some (ten) undergraduates on a short field trip to a garden on their campus where the gardener had tied a piece of used, worn out bunch of brooms to a stake at the entrance of the garden with a piece of red cloth, (see figure 2). All the undergraduates within the age bracket of eighteen and twenty-seven years, and drawn from different ethnic backgrounds in Nigeria, aptly interpreted the broom in its location as a sign that thieves or intruders are warned to keep off the garden. They all got the message that the owner of the garden tried to send to intruders. But beyond this, they had no clue to the

[4] Chinua Achebe, (1981 {1958}) *Things fall apart*. London: Heinnemann Educational Books Limited.

consequences of any intrusion into the garden which the objects at the entrance to the garden symbolise. Noteworthy, however, is the fact that virtually all the unsuspecting respondents got the interpretation of the symbols wrong. Their responses as interesting as they were, only succeeded in confirming the position of the researcher. Let us examine them.

Five of the ten undergraduates recognized the element as a 'charm' prohibiting unauthorized entry into the garden. Three of the ten correctly identified it as a taboo while the remaining two called it a preventive measure against unauthorized entry into the garden. As for the interpretation of the taboo, the following are their explanations:

Fig. 1.2: The Broom Totem. This was used to conduct a pre-field test on people's understanding of totems and taboos in present day Nigeria.

Source: Pre-field study, 2013

Response of students to the pre-field test on the broom totem

Student one: The object in reference was a charm. The gardener was warning thieves and unauthorized people to stay away from the garden. As for the interpretation of the worn-out broom and the red piece of cloth, the respondent opined that an intruder to the garden would pick up the broom and begin to sweep around the garden until the owner comes round to apprehend the intruder. The response of two other students from the Yoruba ethnic part of Nigeria was not markedly different from the one explained above.

Student two: This student is from the Delta State of Nigeria. The student recognised the object as a "juju" or charm which was correctly interpreted as warding off thieves from the garden. He interpreted the broom as an instrument that would be used by the "gods" vested in the red piece of cloth to afflict intruders. On what would be the impact of the broom? The student responded that the gods may choose to use the broom as a whip on the thieves. Interestingly enough, the other two respondents selected from the South-Eastern part of Nigeria shared a very similar view. They are categorised as Group two, the second group of respondents.

Student Three The student was one of the two randomly selected from the Northern part of the country. He also rightly identified the object as a charm prohibiting thieves or intruders from the garden. He, however, introduced a dimension to the object that is peculiar and culturally relevant to his background. He opined that the worn-out broom sticks would serve as sharp arrows to be shot by the powers behind the red piece of cloth. This represents the third group of respondents.

Student Four: The other student from the Northern part of the country confessed to the fact that the object was a charm that may have a very negative impact on the intruder. According to this student, the implication or penalty of intrusion into the garden may be as high as death,

but he could not personally understand the correlation between the signs of – worn-out broom, red piece of cloth and the punishment awaiting the intruder.

Student Five: This student claimed to have come from Lagos, a cosmopolitan part of Nigeria that may actually not be completely linked to a particular indigenous cultural entity. He is not aware of charms or rituals ever being placed on items and does not know of the implication of such totems, their signs nor the correlations.

Student Six: This is the only student that actually got the correct sign and the interpretation as revealed by the owner of the garden[5]. There is no separation between the worn-out bunch of broom and the red piece of cloth used to tie the broom together. The two objects stand together as a sign and they both signify a warning to thieves to stay away from the garden. The worn-out broom is a sign of abject poverty.

The correct interpretations of the object are:

1. An intruder would eventually wear out like the bunch of broom and die in penury.
2. The intruder would start wearing out from his/her mouth with which he/she eats the stolen produce like the broom which has lost the sharpness of the edges. It is a symbol of abject poverty.
3. An intruder would lose values (in weight, volume and membership like the broom which is decimated in its current state).
4. The intruder would eventually be incapacitated like the broom tied to a stake rather than used to perform its statutory functions.

All the interpretations above are based on certain myth-making processes deriving from some oral traditions of the Yoruba (African) beliefs such as

a. *Ẹnu lọwọ̀ tií gbó*

The broom wears out from the edges

[5] The owner of the garden is one Mr. Jimoh Gidado, an Ekiti man from the Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria, his views on the totem is not significantly different from those of other Yoruba sub-ethnic groups.

b. *Yíyọ lọmọ ọwọ̀ í yọ sọnù/Ọ̀kọ̀ọ̀kan lọmọ ọwọ̀ í yọ sọnù*

The broom-sticks normally get lost one at a time.

c. *Ọwọ̀ tí wọn so sókè àjà ti ṣí wọ́ iṣẹ́*

A broom tied to a stake is incapacitated and becomes useless.

The nature of mythical narratology strikes a semblance of the western prose form. Interestingly too, preliminary investigations have shown that instead of the undue non-secular emphases which many scholars have placed on myth-making as a result of the sacred attachment to totems and taboos that had inhibited the interest of literary scholars in these areas of study, quite a substantial number of taboos and totems have been created deliberately by the indigenous societies for some predominantly secular and social control measures. Therefore, instead of strict sacred explanations, totems and taboos actually served to create impacts that are not too different from such effects that some Western literary forms were created to serve. Taboos, totems and the attendant myths serve to control, regulate or moderate the interaction of men with fellow man and with other occupiers of the cosmic space, human, non-human, plants, animals, geographic and domestic materials within a given environment and to achieve social cohesion. This study does not intend to undermine the seemingly inseparable relationship between religion or the belief-system of Africans or Chinese and their disposition to mythography as contained in their attitudes to taboos and totems, it is also necessary to explain that religion is significant in creating a bias in people that influence their understanding or explanation of the relationship between metaphorical signs and their narrative correlates both in African mythography (Ogundeji 1997: 145-156), or Chinese myths. Few examples will serve our purpose here:

A popular Yoruba interlocution goes thus:

Sage: *A kì í pagún*
A kì í jẹgún
A kì í figún bọrí
Trans.: We don't kill the vulture

	We don't eat the vulture
	We don't use vulture for propitiation
Child:	*Baba, Ọkùnrin tí wọ́n sọ wí pé ó pa igún tí ó sì jẹ ẹ́yẹ ńkọ́?*
Sage:	*Ọkùnrin wo nì yẹn?*
Child:	*Baba tí koríko ti kún bo ilé wọn yẹn*
Sage:	*Ṣé ohun tí ó wá dára ni kí igbó bo ilé èèyàn mọ́lẹ̀? Ara ohun tí wọ́n kì í fi pa igún jẹnìyẹn.*
Trans:	
Child:	Father, what about that man who was said to have killed and eaten the vulture?
Sage:	Which man was that?
Child:	The one whose house has been overgrown by weed?
Sage:	And is that man the best example of the owner of a homestead? It is the reason why the vulture is neither killed nor eaten.

In this short exchange above, *Igun* (the vulture) is a totem among the Yoruba people. It is so considered because oral accounts have it that at a point in time, man (in the Yoruba world view) had the problem of an epidemic attack that defied all the people's curative efforts. The people then consulted Orunmila, the deity responsible for divination and wisdom. Orunmila asked the people to prepare a sumptuous sacrifice to be transported to the celestial realms. (Osa Meji)[6] Having made all the necessary provisions for the sacrifice, there was no one to take the portion to heaven. Birds were contacted who all declined. Eventually, it was the vulture who agreed to take the sacrifice on behalf of the people. The task of transporting the sacrifices was believed to have been responsible for the baldness on the vulture's head.[7] The Yoruba man therefore swore to the Vulture that the race would no longer kill nor eat the vulture and placed a curse, that, calamity shall befall who ever kills or eats the vulture.

In the narrative exchange between the sage and the child therefore, desolation is the calamity that has befallen the deviant man that chose to violate the restrictions placed on the vulture. This is a typical example of the myth-making process in Nigeria because the vulture has become a totem by the Yoruba society and killing or eating the bird attracts a curse – a taboo while the narration itself is a myth.

[6] An Ifa corpus that narrates this myth.

[7] Yoruba folk belief is that the vulture, like many other birds, had feathers on its head until the incident narrated in *Ọ̀sá méjì* corpus.

These brief narrative points to the fact that some certain prejudice may not allow some people to understand or adequately interpret the value of taboos or totems as elements of mythography in African context. The mythic narratology is best envisaged through the correlation between killing/eating the vulture and the desolation that befalls the violator of the taboo.

Mythic narratology is one issue; one other major issue is the myth attached to each fictive or mythic character in the narration. In a chat between the researcher and the initial group of ten undergraduates, it was revealed.

(a) That the seven who confessed to being Christians held on to the view that though their Christian tenet does not permit them to violate the taboo as it prevents them from stealing, deliberate attempt to violate the taboo may expose them to the stipulated outcome of the expected effects of the charms. [8]

(b) The other three, however, gave an insight into the possibility that the charm may or not be effective after all.

The implications of these observations include the presuppositions that religious beliefs and psychological dispositions may play very significant parts in the understanding, interpretation and analysis of myths, mythography and their narration. The study intends to investigate these possibilities further.

In a chat with Professor Jieng Lirang, the Chinese co-director of the Confucius Cultural Centre in Lagos, Nigeria,[9] she remarked that the 56 ethnic minorities in China have various different totems and other myth-making processes. Like the case of the Yoruba, myths are woven around a number of animal totems; Chinese also have some animal, trees and plants that are treated as totems. Of particular interest at this point, however, is the fact that the Chinese totems and the myth-making processes have been modified a long time in

[8] An oral interview conducted with the students in February, 2014.
[9] An oral interview conducted in November, 2015 in Lagos at the Chinese Cultural Centre.

order to suit modern time prejudices. Let us consider the following examples enumerated by Professor Lirang.

Chinese build myths around numbers

1) The number 13 is to the traditional English society what number 4 is to the Chinese. The number 4 is generally disliked by Chinese. The pronunciation is /si/ which sounds the same way as death /si/ in Chinese. For this reason, Chinese avoid it. For instance, Chinese sports men and women will not adorn the Jersey number 4 and people would not check into the room number 4 in a hotel.
2) In a similar vein, the figure 2 is pronounced /er/ in Chinese. It is another figure that the Chinese do not like. In the modern times, the pronunciation of the figure sounds foolish and whoever is associated with the number is seen as a fool or as being foolish.
3) The Chinese, however, prefer the following figures

   6 /liu/ which connotes smoothness

   8 /ba/ which connotes fortune and

   9 /jiu/ which connotes longevity.

Chinese have also totemised the red colour. They decorate their houses, offices and environment with flowers and objects in red. They also prefer to adorn their ceremonial dress in red. The colour is believed to be a harbinger of happiness, excitement and positive emotions. Incidentally, this myth may be a subtle way of making the people patronise the national colour of the modern day China. Similar myth-making process of the Chinese ethnic minorities shall be analysed later. Understanding the totems of Chinese communities, like in Nigeria, would also depend on the understanding of certain premises of the Chinese society that produce the myth-making process.

Man ping Chu (2009:122) comments on the existence and transformation of taboos as a myth-making process in the Chinese and Korean contexts. He writes.

> Every culture has its own taboos. However, in many cases, participants realize the existence of the rules associated with taboos only after they have violated them. Those who do not observe these social "rules" might face serious results … certain verbal and non verbal taboos among Chinese people centuries ago still affect their language and behaviour choices.

The "dragon culture" is another myth-making process that has been embedded in the mythology of oriental countries. Dharma Keerthi, Sri Ranjan D. G. and Zhou Chang C. comment on this culture which surrounds the totemic animal – dragon in several countries:

> The "Dragon" depicted in mythology is a conceptual animal that exists lively in mass consciousness in both East and West in the world. The "Dragon culture" is deeply embedded into Chinese, Korean, Thailand and some other eastern and western cultures and considered as the domain of cultural practices. It is a creating practice in the mass consciousness which sustains as a viable trajectories of social structure; depicted in materially and non-materially from the ancient history.

Mythography

Commenting on the various essays of Brownislaw Malinowski, a popular British modern anthropologist in the 1920s, Robert Redfield (1954: 13) arrived at the conclusion that myths have dialogical qualities. This contention emanates from the observation of the properties and functions of myths in their "immediacy and living reality" among the presumably primitive study cultural groups. One major essay under review by Redfield here is the popular *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (1926: 177-184). The basic thesis of this essay is "the development of the argument of myth as charter" or as a body of ideas – or practices as we shall later find out in the course of this study, that aimed at "legitimating particular forms of social organization and loci of pioneer or interest and the contestation that this inevitably

brings. The explanation of Malinowski on myth (1926:177) in the essay is in agreement with the entire focus of the present study:

> Studied alive, myth as we shall see is not (just) symbolic, but a direct expression of its subject matter; it is not an expression of its subject matter; it is not an expression in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in a satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements.

Acbebe (1975: 35) expresses a view about myth which is not different from the position of Malinowski above when he writes that myths are created by man and that they function to explain the problems and mysteries of life and death. From the accounts of the various scholars that had looked into the subject of myths before him, Isidore Okpewho (1983: 45) identifies some controversies in the attempt to discuss the nature and meaning of the oral narratives considered as myths. After considering a series of approaches to the analysis of myths and the contexts that produce them, Okpewho (1983: 68) explains myth graphically thus.

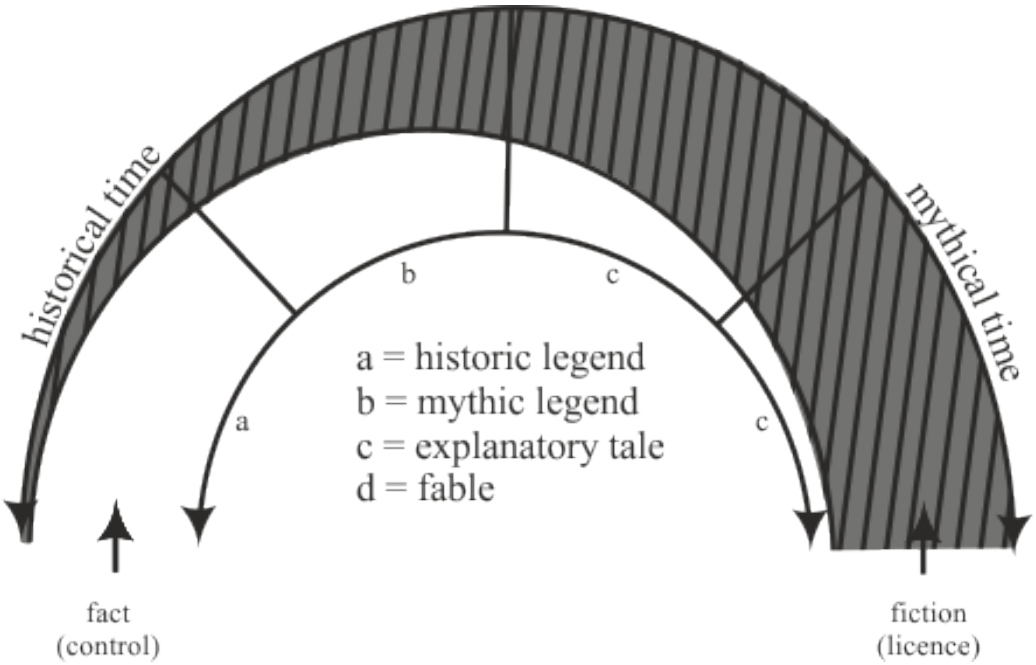

Fig 1.3: Okpewho's model of myths. Source: Okpewho's *Myths in Africa, 1983.*

a = historical legend
b = myths, legend
c = explanatory talk
d = fable

The model above is explained as the qualitative approach to the study of myths. The model operates on the premise that the fact and fictive contents of the narrative possess the potential of running contextually into each other. In the final explanation of the model, each end of the arc becomes reversible depending on the direction of the locale of narration which, in its own, is a product of the creative whim of the narrator. The model also functions as a scale on which the mythical level of a tale can be measured in relation to other tales. In essence, the dialogical quality of myths identified by scholars in the Malinowskian classification is equally implied by Okpewho here.

The popularity of myths as an oral narrative form across traditional cultures of the world is perhaps best captured in the view of Okpewho (1980:5), “no other concept in the entire field of the humanities has attracted as much debate as myth”. The debates centre on several crucial issues ranging from its generic features to its origin, functions and classifications among others. For instance, some scholars like Finnegan (1970) and Draver (1982: 180) have lumped myths and legends together with very little effort to separate the two narratives generically. Also, while Malinowski (1926: 177) conceives myths as being consciously put in place and transmitted with intent, Fasoro (2012: 256) quotes Hountondji (1974) as submitting that in traditional societies, “the various myths were held unconsciously”. The issue of the sacredness or otherwise of myths and their ritualistic tendencies are some other parts of the debate which Okpewho quite succinctly addresses in the essay, *Rethinking Myth* (1980:6-10).

Another reality of the myth in some African contexts is the constant upward movement whereby a legend can be catapulted to a mythic pedestal. The subject can be both

a legend and a myth at the same time depending on the context. For instance, Sango in history among the Yorubas was a legend noted for his awesome courage and furious temperament as a ruler in Oyo kingdom. After his death, he is deified and becomes associated with the mythic god of thunder and retribution. (C. L. Adeoye 1982:27-30)

There is also the ability of myths to transform in its nature and function from a notion concieved as a traditional mythic system to another concept in contemporary narrations. Using African literatures as examples, Okpewho (ibid:216) explains myths and, essentially, the movement of what he refers to as the mythic fancy in narratives with the aid of the model below.

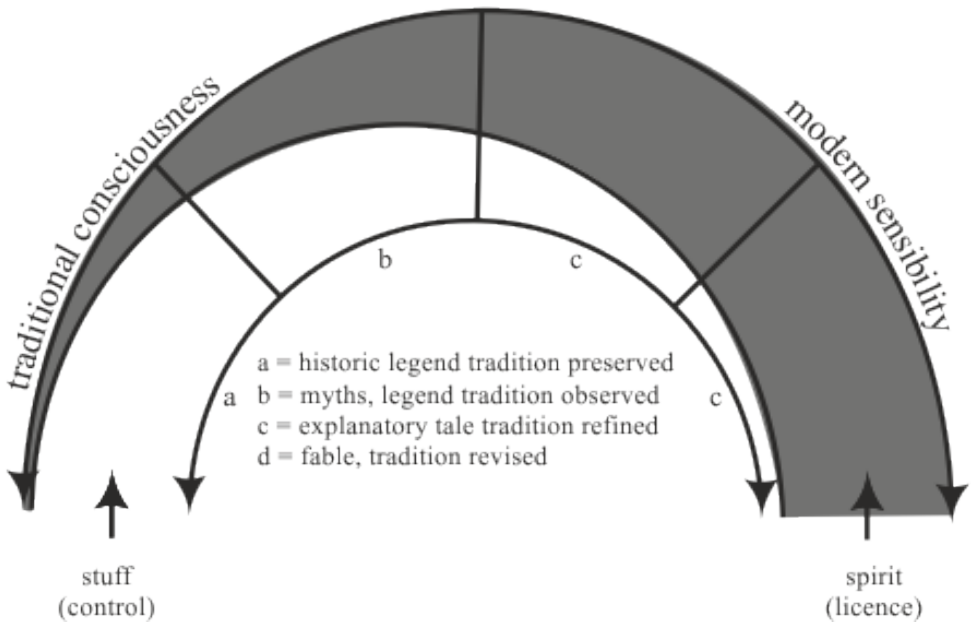

Fig 1.4: Okpewho's model of Mythic fancy. Source: "Rethinking Myth", 1980.

a = historical legend tradition preserved

b = myths, legend tradition observed

c = explanatory talk tradition refined

d = fable tradition revised

The model above is explained as the monitoring of the movement of the mythic fancy between tales in the oral narrative tradition. The model is an explanation of the movement of mythic narration from its traditionally recognized domain of its dependence on gods and religious beliefs to a domain that is free of sacramental beliefs whereby contemporary writers can adapt their understanding of the workings of traditional mythemes to create new narratives that are devoid of religious sacredness but still retain functions that are similar to those of original and traditional myths.

With the plethora of descriptions, explanations and views expressed by scholars on the subject of the oral narrative, myth, the task of defining the form may be as daunting an attempt to resolve all the contentions raised by the numerous scholars which may not be feasible within the target of this study. However, some views cut across the positions of anthropologists, literary critics, psychologists, linguists and experts in other humanities that can conveniently provide this study with the operational framework in handling the subject of myths. One of the views is expressed by Akporobaro (2004:187) in what he refers to as "academic perspectives on myths" where he describes myths as "the expressions, projections and representations of human experience or imaginings". Like many other prose narratives therefore, myths qualify as a production of creative exploits. Akporobaro (ibid: 187-193), considering the views of scholars also comes out with the following ideas about myths.

- Expression and reflection of social and environment of the unconscious mind (Sigmund Freud)
- Myths have philosophical and economic dimensions (Paul Radin)
- Myths are structural and behave like language (Claude Levi-Strauss)
- Myths are developed and transmitted (primarily) orally (Universal Perspective)
- Myths are attempts by man to weave a narrative around a phenomenon that are seemingly inexplicable and offer probable or possible explanation

Apart from all the views captured above, it will also be needful to explain the place of fantasy in myths. Like many other oral narrative forms, such as legends, epics, folktales, fairy tales etc, fantasy is an integral part of myths. This may be a function of the purpose of the myth or the intent of the narrator.

Oral narrative forms

African scholars, across various disciplines have virtually come to a common understanding and conclusion that oral narration assumes a central position in the transmission of, basically, every aspect of the African existence. Beyond the traditionally established domain of the prose genres, oral narratives in Africa have been observed to cover both the dramatic and the poetic genres of written orthodox literature (Yai 1972), Dan Ben-Amos (1975), Ropo Sekoni (1979), Tunde Ogunpolu (1990), Isidore Okpewho (1992) and Ademola Dasylva (1999). The reality of oral narration in most traditional and indigenous cultures of the world has revealed that, like in Africa, people tell their tales (prose) express their emotions (poetry), and perform their acts (drama) principally, and in most cases, solely, through oral narratives.

Dasylva (1999:16) quoting Yai (1972), for instance, describes the following scenario:

> the intermittent booming of guns, the protesting bleating of sacrificial goats, and the long intermittent protesting shrieks of the sacrificial fowl (the adie ìrànà) whose feathers are forcefully plucked all the way to the burial site in a typical Yoruba funeral setting of a great hunter, or chief, are all integral to the funeral song text (or dirge).

Though the actions captured in the booming of guns, bleating of goats and shrieks of fowls are better imagined within the context of a stage performance, the entire dramatic effects of the scene would still have been effectively captured through the expertise of a professional bard via a combination of oral narrative mechanisms. The narration of the

scenario described above is a typical example of the narration of both the content and context of a ritual performance (drama) and the emotional disposition of the mourners (poetry) through the medium of a narrator.

Commenting on the nature of oral narratives in indigenous societies, Akporobaro (2004) explores the folktales of the Isoko society in Delta State of Nigeria. He remarks that folktale provides the forum through which the creative imagination of the people is best and most artistically expressed. He comments further that the folktale in Isoko also provides the needed medium for the "creative representation of the complex realities of life". In a position that overtly corroborates the inter-generic potentiality of oral narratives expressed earlier in this study, Akporobaro (ibid) claims that, in addition to the general moral aesthetic functions of the oral forms, the folktale in Isoko provides a form in which the dark and sinister realities of life are portrayed through the modes of narrative plots, fantasy and characters. In a similar argument, Ruth Finnegan (2012: 346) posits that oral narrations provide opportunities for various kinds of literary effect to be exploited in different contexts, and quoting Herskovits (1958) observes that some African oral narratives are presented as art and dramatisation.

The situation is of no remarkable difference in the minority Chinese cultures. According to Yang Enhong (2004: 20), oral transmission occupies a key creative position as it was the earliest and remains the most vigorous form through the Tibetan (Chinese) tradition. He writes:

> The combination of verse and prose can be considered to be the major and most commonly used form in the Tibetan narrative. It has been widely used in epics, narrative poems, folktales and Tibetan opera up to date.

William Labov (downloaded 2015) also observes that the study of narrative extends over a wide range of human activities, citing such generic contexts such as the novels, short stories, poetic and prose epics, film, folktale among other media. In an essay on the functions of African oral arts, Jelan Hussein (2005:15) asserts, and notably correctly too, that "every

African society south of the Sahara has a long history of transmitting knowledge and human experience through the medium of oral tradition".

Terry Gunnell (2006:7) sheds further light on oral narratives in his essay on the spatial aspects and contexts of narratives. His position gives credence to the pole position of oral narratives in creative works of traditional societies, which states that the boundaries of oral narratives have even shifted in recent times as:

> In the past, oral narrative tended to be regarded as a two-dimensional phenomenon largely confined to the form of the spoken or (later) printed word. Over the last twenty years, however, oral narratives have gradually gained "thickness" in the eyes of folklore scholars who have increasingly demanded that more attention be paid to the social and personal contexts that gave rise to these narratives…it is argued that much can be gained from analysing oral narratives as pieces of theatre or dramatic performances…

The position of Gunnell above is in tandem with the focus of this study which analyses the role and nature of some oral narratives in particular myths, totems and taboos, as mechanisms for social control in the indigenous social contexts. And, in consonance with the conclusion of Dasylva (1999:38), "African critics are beginning to appreciate the need for an alter-native option for theoretical and analytical purposes of the African oral narrative", this study has embarked on the exploration of the narration of myths, taboos and totems in indigenous societies of Nigeria and China as means for social cohesion and control.

Oral narrative interface in myths, taboos and totems

Despite the generic similarities and the repeated collocation of certain art forms like myths and legends, legends and epics, taboos and totems etc, no two art forms actually denote exactly the same contents or characteristics. Each of these forms in their detailed analysis would actually manifest some peculiar codes that distinguish one from the other. Borrowing from the idea of Radcliffe-Brown (1952: 173) each of these forms constitutes a "distinctive

function" on its own. But like most other social phenomena in non-literate societies, these forms cannot be completely mutually exclusive – nor by logical extension – generically exclusive.

The most basic justification for the choice of myths, taboos and totems for this study is the fact that the three are principally acquired, expressed and transmitted orally. In addition, there are established pieces of evidence that each of these three is created by the means or oral narrations in the society where they originated from. Further, previous studies also established that three oral forms in context perform social, educative and creative functions in the society. (Finnegan 1970 and 2012; Okpewho 1983; Akporobaro 2004).

Preliminary observation in this study has revealed that the oral forms – myths, taboos and totems are generically interwoven and overlapping even when they are seen to be distinct and separate in their detailed analysis. While myths have almost matured and have been accorded recognition as a creative oral and written literature over a long period of time, taboos and totems have not been so recognised and patronised, especially in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The nature of oral literature has clearly revealed that unlike the written counterpart, its genres are so intricately interwoven and overlapping. Contents from a panegyric subgenre for instance, can be put into performance as a dirge which gives them the outlook of a poem. They can also form the bulk of the narration of a legend where they become a prose narration. These same elements may also form the basis of a dramatic re-enactment of the life of a mythical character. This alone may be very problematic for scholars who attempt to classify oral literature into strict compartments like poetry, drama or prose.

One of the basic problems of mythology and by extension, mythic narratology, is what Okpewho (1983:ix) identifies as the "ignoring of the creative element" in the selected

oral narratives- taboos and totems. The problem is explained further by the observation of Okpewho, “the definition of ‘myth’ embraced by Finnegan (2012:362) reflects the old sociological prejudice which …, sees it solely as a sacred tale that commands an awed acceptance from its tellers.”

The study is premised on the topicality of human fate, destiny or existence within the society as people are affected by the myth-making process in the society. In this regard, we recognise the Aristotelian position that human fate is unchangeable. We are also cognizant of the Bretchian position that human fate or destiny is in their own hands. A modification of the position of Bretch by the Marxist’s ideology suspects that indigenous myths only tend to promote the hegemonic hold of the society by the status quo. It therefore calls for the subversion of the old myths and their replacement with new myths that will serve the masses effectively (Wole Soyinka, 1976, Benedict Ibitokun, 1995)

The focus of this study is the connectedness observable in the mythic totem and taboos. It has been observed that for every totem or taboo, there is always a handed down narrative. This narrative on the other hand essentially celebrates the mythic. Interestingly too, it has been observed that the process of socialisation in the indigenous society usually involves such narratives which the younger generation internalises. This process ultimately helps to promote social cohesion.

In the Nigerian context, where due attention has not been paid to the social relevance of the mythic elements; where the creative and psychological values of totems and taboos have not been adequately harnessed; and where sentiments borne out of religious biases continue to impune against the ultimate benefits of the hindsight inherent in mythography, the much desired social cohesion may continue to be elusive. Against the established practices of China, a relatively similar socio-cultural milieu, the study seeks to establish that mythography, which incorporates mythic narratology, can provide a vital link for mutual

benefits and in creating the desired social control for the contemporary needs and the future of Nigeria.

1.3 Purpose of the study

Mythical elements, which include but are not limited to taboos and totems, continue to enjoy significant recognition and patronage among scholars across the globe. These elements, some of which are sourced through the indigenous religions of, Buddhism, and Taoism have been incorporated into the lives of Chinese across the various ethnic nationalities for socio-political coherence. The case is not the same in Nigeria. The comparative basis of this study is therefore chiefly, to critically look into how Nigeria could borrow a leaf from China. From this perspective, this study shall, among other issues, attempt to:

1) Investigate some selected taboos, totems and myths in both Nigerian and Chinese indigenous psycho-social contexts;
2) Review the nature, mode and functions of the oral narratives that help to justify or establish the mythic essence of such narratives.
3) Provide the basis for the interrelatedness of the three mythographic oral narrative sub-genres – taboos, totems and myths;
4) Investigate the aesthetic and pragmatic properties of mythic elements within their psycho-social contexts; and
5) Examine the possibility, through a robust review of existing literature, for taboos, totems and myths as worthwhile fields of academic research in oral literature scholarship.

1.4 Significance of the study

It is expected that this study shall, among other means, serve to achieve the following.

1. Establish the psycho-social relevance of mythical elements in some indigenous cultures of the world;
2. Critically examine the cultural correspondence between Nigerian and Chinese oral literary practices.
3. Relate the high relevance of the mythical elements in the Chinese psycho-social contexts to the Nigerian situation for comparative pragmatic advantages;
4. Against the ethnic, especially, epic literature tradition in China that has survived for centuries, bring out the narration of taboos and totems in Nigeria for greater societal patronage, social cohesion and creative exploitation;
5. Provide a point of reference for stimulating and facilitating further research into the different variables in this study and related topics;
6. Serve as a modest contribution to the strengthening of the fledgling Sino-Nigeria relations in the area of academic exchanges.

1.5 Scope of the study

The scope of this study covers selected indigenous cultures from Nigeria and China. In this age of globalization, the concept of cultural relativism which was brought into literary studies in the 1960s becomes quite apposite (Schipper, 2004: 14-15). Attempting a comparative study of mythography in Nigeria and China is premised upon the fact that

> Text, genres, or movements can be compared, or ideas studied about specific literatures that have connections with more than one culture. The ranging relationships and the differing points of view involved in this can be complex, but their existence cannot be denied without doing injustice to the insights into the literatures in question. (Schipper, ibid. 15)

Apart from the present-day economic ties, Nigeria and China have a lot in common in terms of oral traditions and cultural practices. Both countries are multicultural and very rich in oral practices. While Nigeria consists of about 371 indigenous culturally distinct groups[10], China the most populous country in the world is made up of 56 minority cultures[11]. The basis for the comparison is that while China has been able to convert its rich cultural values to a vehicle for nation building and developmental drives, the cultural diversity in Nigeria remains largely a recurrent agent for divisive factors and retrogression.

For the study, verbal and non-verbal taboos and basically, totemic relationships of Yoruba indigenous groups have been selected and analysed. The taboos and totems selected are those that are community based and related to behaviour, actions and habits. The Yoruba speaking groups cut across Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, Kwara and Kogi states. References are however made to related mythic elements in other cultural entities like Igbo, Isoko, Urhobo, Isan, Itshekiri and Hausa in order to give it a national spread.

Taboos and totems of China were obtained from written sources on the very popular Gesar Epic Literature. Items from across the 56 minority nationalities are available to be selected from the epic literature, a source that has been vastly translated making it easy for analysis and comparison in the study. The Han ethnic group dynasty however appears the most representative of the modern-day Chinese nation and it is selected for this reason. Mongolia and Tibet are two other ethnic groups that retain elements of their indigeneity and cultural sovereignty. They have been purposively selected for comparison with the Nigerian contexts on the grounds of shared features.

[10] This figure is the one adopted by this present study as there are other variations.

[11] The number of ethnic nationalities in China is more authentic and confirmed in reliable sources in Chinese literature.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

Considering the very vast landscape of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the simple fact that it is the most populous nation in the world, attempting to carry out a research cutting across the entirety of the country would appear rather impossible for any individual, especially with the huge amount of money and the time required to make such a study. Comparing myth-making in Nigeria and China makes it a lot more daunting and unrealistic. To overcome this limitation, three major ethnic nationalities in Nigeria - Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba; and three ethnic nationalities in China – Han, Tibet and Mongolia were considered representative enough to cover the grounds for effective comparison of mythography in the two nations. Though there are differences and peculiarities in the details of myth-making in each cultural entity, the selected ethnic groups have shared features in the target variables without significantly reducing the quality of the research. This is possible because in Nigeria, Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba have for long been used to subsume other ethnic minorities. It is the same for China where the Han Dynasty has almost subsumed other civilizations that preceeded it. Mongolia and Tibet are the only ethnic minorities that have preserved a great deal of their own cultural identities which in any case are not significantly different from those of the Han and other ethnic nationalities in China with reference to the focus of this study.

The inability of the researcher to physically visit China during the study owing to the non-availability of research grants and funding was a serious limitation. The flow of information through Information and Communications Technology (ICT) helped greatly in this respect. The research could access data extensively through the internet and the Chinese Television Stations running round the clock through the Digital and Cable Television channels in Nigeria. Opportunities provided by the Skype and Video calls were also maximized to reduce the impact of this limitation.

The inability of the researcher to speak Chinese became a limitation. But research materials were available in different forms including PhD dissertations and reports of related research works by eminent scholars that have been translated into English language and critiqued. Documentaries also exist on Chinese museums, archives, temples and other sites that facilitated the study. The Confucious Centre for Chinese Cultural Studies in the University of Lagos, Nigeria, also became very helpful to overcome some logistic challenges.

In the Nigerian context, it was not also possible for the researcher to go round all the thirty-six states, but the researcher was able to connect with cultural custodians through direct contact where possible and through telephone calls where necessary.

The researcher could also not speak Hausa and Igbo fluently. We relied on the translation provided by research assistants and translating dictionaries as well as other textbooks to overcome this.

It is the desire of the researcher to continue with this research at the Post-Doctoral level by visiting some notable places in both China and Nigeria when funds are available.

1.7 Methodology

The design of this work is analytical and descriptive. Totems from Nigerian and Chinese indigenous cultural contexts were selected and analysed. In all, 35 totemic items apiece were selected from Nigeria and China, making 70. Also, 35 tangible/intangible taboos have been selected from each cultural context making 70, thus giving a total of 140 elements of mythography. A narrative of the story behind each element is presented to describe the process of myth-making. The ensuing myths are classified and analysed for the purpose of deducing their social roles.

In Nigeria, data were collected through forty oral interviews and from forty cultural documentations as well as through means of oral traditions like songs, folktales, legends,

epics, proverbs, incantations, panegyrics and archival sources, particularly the University of Ibadan Anthropology and Archeology Museum.

In the Chinese context, twenty oral interviews were conducted in English with some Chinese nationals as well as experts in Confucianism; data were also obtained from the Gesar Epic, existing ethnic literatures and other translated materials on Chinese history, epics, arts, archeology and oral practices. The Confucius Centre, some Chinese scholars, lecturers and nationals in the Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos provided very useful support in identifying, translating, classifying and analysing some data.

Data obtained were compared on the basis of cultural relativity. Inferences were made and the levels of social involvement in each context determined.

1.8 Theoretical framework

Building a theoretical framework for this study is taking off on a view expressed by Toyin Jegede (2002:16) that "the study of oral literature has attracted a number of criticisms" over the years, citing among others such theories like evolutionism, diffusionism, psychoanalysis, functionalism and semiotics. In addition, apart from sharing Jegede's opinion which re-echoes that of Isidore Okpewho (1980) that each of the theories tried to explore the limitations of the ones before it, the claim by Bola Sotunsa (2005:23-24), based on the idea of Okepewho (1983) that indigenous theories of African oral literature are still evolving becomes apposite here. Apart from the established theories mentioned above, the "alter-Native" theory which recognizes "some home-grown ideas, concepts, theories which are typically African" (Dasylva, 1999:39) became tantalizingly requisite in situating the narration of totems within the realm of oral narratives like the anecdotes, fables and folktales. There was also the urge to borrow from the efforts of Aguoru (2011:8-16) on the theory of comparitivism as this may be required in comparing the Nigerian and Chinese contexts.

Though the specifics of the application of each of the theories to the variables in the study remain an issue for conceptual consideration and from complementary and multicultural perspectives, the approach stems from the fact that all the theories themselves are not completely mutually exclusive of one another in terms of their tenets, workings and views. Also, studies have shown that any particular theory of literature may not be practically effective in analysing any work of art in isolation (Okpewho 1980, Jegede 2002). In this regard, concepts from a couple of theories may be referred to in providing necessary conceptual framework for our analysis. However, this study shall be relying basically on Semiotics and Psychoanalysis for the theoretical framework.

Psychoanalysis

Elizabeth Wright (1984:113) observes that the "relationship of psychoanalytic theory to literary criticism has undergone many vicissitudes as developments in both domains have brought about changes in critical practice". She writes further as she traces the origin of this relationship:

> From 1912 to 1937, the chief organ for the publication of writings concerned with the relation of psychoanalysis to the arts and all aspects of culture was a periodical called Imago… one of its founding editors was Otto Rank a psychoanalyst with wide interests in myths and fairy tales. Freud's essay; 'The Uncanny', first appeared in the 1919 issue of this journal and is a good example of an attempt first to apply psychoanalysis to a general aesthetic problem and then to a literary text in the light of that investigation.

The relevance of psychoanalysis to the study of myths, taboos and totems is rooted in the fact that all the initial efforts to study these narrative forms took off from attributing them to functions of human behaviour. The study shall be influenced by the "structural model" in which Freud sees the component parts of the psyche as three groups of functions: the 'id', the 'ego' and the 'superego'. Of further relevance shall be the theory of creativity evolved by

Ernst Kris (1952) who Wright (1984:117) describes as an American psychoanalyst and a former member of the Freud's circle in Vienna.

The creativity theory was improved upon by Norman Holland (1968) considering the relationship between the reader (audience) and the text (written or oral as the case may be). Albeit with some slight variations in the details of the working of the texts, psychoanalysts, all agree on the fact that the literary text is a function of the thinking or mind of the author and also has an effective means of impacting on the mind of the reader/audience. While the initial attempts by psychoanalysts saw the composition of art as a function of the 'id' or unconscious component of the human psyche, the later works of Kris, Holland and Marie Bonaparte have come to attribute the literary process to the 'ego' and 'super-ego' components of the psyche.

The structural model sees the ego component as being responsible for the regulation of the instinctive drives of the id. Psychoanalytical criticism is based on the ego-psychology as opposed to the id-psychology. It should be noted that critics in this school see the critical judging functions provided by the superego component as an offshoot of the 'ego' (Wright 10-11). In what ways do these affect creativity? In the first instance, the conception of creative works is presumed to have taken place at the sub-conscious part of the psyche which is referred to as the latent (unacceptable, dangerous, unorganized) dream of the author. The author settles down to recapture the dream experience in the best way that suite him at the ego realm of the psyche. These are the conscious efforts of the author in choosing characters, themes, language and other aesthetic components of the text. All these happen through the processes that the psychoanalysts call 'condensation' and 'displacement' of dreams. The final creative process which takes place at the superego is responsible for the super conscious behaviour of the author. Here the author thinks like a critic. According to the psychoanalytical critics, the author is conscious of the implications of the text on both the

reader and the general public. Through this process the intent dream thoughts are refined into the manifest dreams.

The creative theory according to Wright (1984: 120-130) also explains the attitude of the audience to the text. The functions of the ego and the superego in the creative processes explained above are also responsible for the selection or choice of text by the reader. Readers consciously select the story to read, the film to watch or the music to listen to as a response to the inner drives which he critically reviews in order to satisfy one innate tendency or the other. The positions of psychoanalysis shall be helpful in this study in investigating the motivations for the creation and narration of myths, taboos and totems in the selected indigenous communities.

Semiotics/Semiology

As earlier observed under the discussion of Formalism, Semiotics is one of the critical theories that originated from Formalism. At a stage in the Formalist theory, Linguists and Structuralists like Roman Jacobson and Ferdinand de Saussure introduced language as a factor in the Formalist criticism. At a later part of Formalism, structure was introduced and the motif of analysis premised on the dichotomy of organised structure and unorganised came to replace the initial dichotomy of form and content. The theory postulates that the structure of a literary text has both a formal and semantic aspect (Fokkhema and Kunne-Ibsch (1986:25). This leads us to the Semiotic theory.

In a chronological descriptive analysis of the engagements of semioticians from Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes, Levi Strauss, Julia Kristeva etc over a period spanning decades, Daniel Chandler (2004:2) explains semiotics as

> A search or ‘deep structures’ underlying the ‘surface features of phenomena. However, contemporary social semiotics has moved beyond the structuralist concern with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system, seeking to explore the use of signs

> in specific social situations. Modern semiotic theory is also sometimes allied with a Marxist approach which stresses the role of ideology.

Totems are generally conceived as signs which could be primarily spoken (phono) or eventually written (logo) and they basically constitute what semioticians refer to as signifiers. The semiotic theory becomes very useful for this present study in the analysis of the various elements of totems selected in the Nigerian and Chinese contexts. The social contexts of signs – the signifier and signified shall also be quite helpful in the analysis of what constitutes taboos as well as the ideology behind the myths arising from both totems and taboos. All these are implied from contemporary workings of Semiotics explicated by Teresa de Lauretis (1984:167):

> Semiosis, a term borrowed from Charles Sanders Peirce, is expanded by Eco (Umberto) to designate the process by which a culture produces signs and/or attributes meaning to signs. Although for Eco, meaning production or semiosis is a social activity, he allows that subjective factors are involved in each individual act of semiosis. The notion then might be pertinent to the two main emphases of current, or poststructuralist, semiotic theory. One is a semiotics focused on the subjective aspects of signification and strongly influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis, where meaning is construed as a subject-effect (the subject being an effect of the signifier). The other is a semiotics concerned to stress the social aspect of signification, its practical, aesthetic or ideological use in 'interpersonal communication; there, meaning is construed as semantic value through culturally shared codes.

This thesis explores the oral narration of selected Nigerian and Chinese totems and taboos as myth-making processes among other issues. It shall examine and attempt to establish the creative propensity and viability of these oral traditions imbued with highly stylised literary properties which some critics have failed to recognize in existing Western literature, so far. The study intends to fill-in the gap created by scholars' failure to see taboos and totems as creative exploits like the anecdotes or the satirical forms which are created by indigenous societies both for aesthetic and pragmatic social functions. While many studies had looked at the subjects of taboo, totem and myth as separate entities, or at most, somewhat

related; and as unconnected with literary art, this study intends to explore the oral narration of the three as providing an interwoven and inter-connected relationship within the three oral forms in selected indigenous Nigerian and Chinese cultural contexts functioning as products of human imagination targeted at designated social functions. In spite of cultural correspondence between the indigenous belief systems of Nigeria and China; and in spite of the close diplomatic and trade ties between the two nations which portend some hitherto unharnessed mutual socio-cultural benefits; this study intends to interrogate the viability of a comparative study of the approaches of the two societies to social cohesion through the instruments of mythic narratology.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research explores the avenue of the rich, vast and dynamic views of scholars, creative writers, critics and theorists expressed in related literature to the key issues in the study. And for the purpose of emphasis, the issues are mythography or myth-making process in indigenous cultures with a target focus on the elements of mythography – totems and taboos, narrated with the aim of entrenching social order in the concerned social contexts. In carrying out this review, the issues are categorised under sub-topics to ensure some measure of coherence. The chapter is therefore sub-divided into the following:

- Myth-making processes as functional psychosocial tool
- Aetiology of myths
- Mythic Narratology: Oral Narrative modes
- Myths as Metaphor
- Semiotics: Signs, Symbols and Myth-making
- Myth-making: Secular and non-secular dispositions

2.2 Myth-making processes as function of psychosocial tool

The opinion expressed below would be quite apt in providing a general background to the study of myth-making processes

> Mythological archetypal and psychological criticisms are all closely related. This is because Freud based many of his theories and expanded them into a more cross-cultural philosophy. Critics who examine texts from a mythological/archetypal standpoint are looking for symbols. Jung defined an archetype as "a figure … that repeats itself in the course of history wherever creative fantasy is full manifested.

Nadia Sels (2011:56) writing on the topic "myth, mind and metaphor" opines that all theories are a kind of mythology. He based his opinion on the assumption that every science results finally in a kind of mythology. Quoting the words of Sigmund Freud in 1932 which were cited by Albert Einstein (2001:13, 17), Sels argues that the relationship between mythology and psychoanalysis is not only because of the relevance of the myths of Oedipus and Narcissism to the works of Freud but more importantly because

> Like literature and art, mythology was one of the first cultural fields to be explored by applied psychoanalysis. But what sets mythology apart from other fields is the fact that it in many ways resembles psychoanalysis itself: both disciplines deal with stories and both have to do with interpreting language. When Lionel Trilling claimed that psychoanalysis was "a science of tropes of metaphor and its variants" he was comparing psychoanalysis to the science of Criambattista Vico, the founding father of the modern study of myth (57)

Carl Gustav Jung is quoted as making the initial call for a concerted study of mythology as a means of unraveling the mystery of neurosis and psychosis (Ralph Manheim and Richard Francis Carrington Hull, 1974:279).

The study agrees completely with the view of Okpewho (1980:5) that the subject of "myth" has attracted so much more debate than many other fields of humanities. This view underscores the fact that one single study may not be able to handle the entirety of the aspects of the subject of mythology. For this reason, this study has chosen for investigation. These are totems and taboo. From the earliest attempts to view mythology as a field of study, prominent scholars had continued to investigate both totemism and taboo as related myth-making processes. Examples of these works include, Andrew Lang (1912), Sigmund Freud (1919), Bronislaw Malinowski (1926), Claude Levi-Strauss (1962), Meyer Fortes (1966), Radcliffe Brown (1929 and 1952), Rodney Needham (1991) among others.

This study is relying on some of the common basic positions of the above cited works as they relate to myth-making processes as functions of psycho-social tools. These positions

derive from the conviction that both taboos and totems possess mythical elements which can be useful in providing some rather hidden understandings about the workings of human behaviour in the society. Let us quickly examine the totem of exogamy which provides the basis for the works of Frazer (1910) and which later forms the crux of Freud's (1919) study of the Aborigines in Australia. Freud provides a brief narrative background to this.

> The aborigines of Australia are looked upon as a peculiar race which shows neither physical nor linguistic relationship with its nearest neighbours, the Melanesian, Polynesian and Malayan races … (6)

In the narrative above, it is seen, how myth-making through the totemism of Exogamy has served to impose a high degree of restriction on the sexual impulses of the aborigines. It should be noted that they all go about naked which gives rise to the possibility of sexual profligacy or recklessness within the group. There may be the tendency for rivalry which may lead to enmity, strive and even murder. This may eventually lead to the complete extermination of the entire clan. Placing a death penalty on errant members of the group that break the taboo of incestuous sex maintains a psycho-social balance that keeps the group intact and progressing peacefully.

Okpewho (1983:22) discusses an aspect of the psycho-social functions of myths in reference to Malinowski's functionalist position on mythology. He sums up the result of Malinowski's field-work in the Trobriand Islands thus:

> There he examines the system of economic exchanges (kula) between the islanders and the tales and rites which support these exchanges. His analysis leads him to conclude that the rules reflect "the great mythical generations"; and they serve as sanction or chaser for proper conduct because they preserve the ways in which the society has always behaved since time immemorial.

Redfield (1954:181) quotes Malinowski as alluding to the social relevance of myths among the Trobriands in this claim that

> When a party arrives at a distant village they will be told not only the legendary tales, but above all the mythological charter of that community, its magical proficiencies, its occupational character, its rank and place in totemic organisation should there arise land quarrels, encroachment in magical matters, fishing rights, or other privileges the testimony of myth would be referred to.

He observed further that though the myths of many pre literate societies were told in 'mere' stories, the myths actually contained more than the content of the stories and that "what really matters about such a story is its social function" (182)

The functional dimensions to mythology were also given an attention by Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux (2011:193). This is summed up in this opening paragraph to her essay Myth and the Unconscious: Speaking the Unspoken thus:

> Story telling was once a time worn tradition in Aboriginal communities across Canada. It is said that at one time the mental, emotional, and spiritual lives of Aboriginal peoples all across the Americas were deeply steeped in the lore of mythology, and that these stories guided their physical lives as well.

Wesley-Esquimaux (ibid) explains further that myths become an effective tool in ensuring mental health and wellness among the Aborigines as the myths were carefully "crafted" for emotional release and introspection (196). Based on her review of a number of essays and researches, she observed that since the myths of the Anishnaabek (one of the Aboriginal groups studied) address virtually all aspects of their endeavours, myths made it possible for the people to have a better control of their emotions (197). Her reference to Anna Freud in the essay The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense (1936) is of particular importance to this study. She writes:

> myths supply abundant materials for introjections and likewise (…) suggest an easy and culturally acceptable method of projection of hostile impulses. Along the same line, Kluckholn suggested that, "[their] rituals provide ways of sublimation of aggression and other socially disapproved tendencies, in part, simply through giving people something to do … Exploring myth from a psychoanalytic viewpoint has merit for Aboriginal

> mythology and culture, because perhaps it can provide much deeper answers to sociocultural problems in contemporary Aboriginal culture, and contribute to the healing necessary from historic and mythologized trauma.

The concluding part of the above quotation tallies largely with both the immediate and long term foci of this study of mythography and mythic elements as means of control in the Nigerian society as it has done in the Chinese and some other indigenous cultures of the world. This is succinctly and aptly put in the words of Wesley-Esquimaux (2011:213) that

> I personally see value in further study and reflection on Psychoanalytic theory, and its applicability in interpreting myth and culture not only for Aboriginal people, but for all of humanity in general.

Akporobaro (2004:187) having carefully examined a number of mythical narratives, comes to the conclusion that "those who created myths were thought to have observed nature and interpreted the behaviour of beings in a parallel manner". This position further accentuates the nature of myths as performing psychosocial functions in societies from the pre-literate to the contemporary era. It should be clarified in agreement with the observation of Akporobaro (ibid) that the contexts may vary: the details of the mythical narratology may also vary, but in most cases, the essence or purpose of the myths remains intact.

Fasoro (2012) identifies proverbs, a popular oral sub-genre as a narrative type of myth- making process. He argues that myths and proverbs "were designed to teach young minds why they should emulate certain actions and characters." (225). Fasoro is of the conviction that mythical elements in narratives have the ability to "prick the conscience" of the audience and by that means impact positively on the people's psyche. This position also re-echoes the psychosocial implications of myths. Ojo Ilufoye (2013) also argues, and correctly too, along this line that the Yoruba use taboo (*eèwọ̀*) as means of maintaining discipline and regulate the behaviour of people in the society. In the view of Alao and Olupayimo (2016), myths serve to provide psychological boundaries and checks which are

required for peaceful co-existence in the society. They identified such mythical items as charms, curses, totems and taboos as capable of performing psychosocial functions. The details of the use of these elements shall be discussed under a separate sub-heading in this study.

Masaka and Chemhuru (2011) are of the opinion that myths do not only regulate the interactions among men in the society but also between man and the eco system. A similar study was also made by Aniah, Aasoglenang and Bonye (2014) identifying the management of natural resources in developing countries as having to depend on the indigenous belief systems of the people for conservation. In a similar vein, Odoi (2014) considers taboos as scientific restrictions to make people in an indigenous community observe healthy living habits. Oguntunji (2014) also views myths as capable of affecting the production and consumption of certain animals in some indigenous societies.

2.3 Aetiology of myths

It is almost an established fact that any attempt to define some genre of literature or any aspect of the humanities often brings more posers than answers. If the observation of Okpewho (1980:5) that no other concept in the entire field of the humanities has attracted as much debate as 'myth' is anything to go by, then defining myth may be seen as more difficult. However, it becomes imperative for one to attempt a rather functional definition of myth for the purpose of this study. Matthew Whiting (2006:332) observes that "myth" has a variety of different definitions'. He quotes the Oxford Dictionary of the Social Sciences.

> "Myth" – generally refers to stories that contribute to the elaboration of a cosmological system and to a cohesive social identity … Myth is frequently opposed to history – to events that can be dated or located in a chronological relationship to the present.

Whiting compares this with the definition of myth in the Dictionary of Anthropology.

> Myth is commonly used as a term for purely fictitious narratives that often involve supernatural persons, actions, or events, but it also embodies popular ideas about the natural world and historical events in a given culture. Indeed, it implies that the group telling the myth believes it is true.

After a careful assessment of a number of tales from indigenous societies, Okpewho (1980:18) arrives at the conclusion that the dichotomies of history/fact and fiction/fancy play significant roles in the determination of the nature of the mythic element. He then defines myth as

> That quality of fancy which informs the creative or configurative power of the human mind in varying degrees of intensity; in that sense we are free to call any narrative of the oral tradition – so long as it lays emphasis on fanciful play – a myth. Such an understanding enables us to account for several generations of the concept of myth, first as oral narrative and now as fanciful idea.

Okpewho's definition is a product of his criticism of earlier definitions by anthropologists like Bascom and Malinowski who approached the study of myths from views which are considered to be excessively functionalistic. The views expressed here tally with the view of Finnegan (2012:327ff) as both scholars picked holes in the classificatory options of Western anthropologists and historians who only paid partial attention to the functions of myths at the expense of the aesthetic values. Okpewho (1980:21) therefore comes out with the suggestion of the qualitative approach to the study of myths, with which this study agrees also, that it is capable of taking care of the short-coming identified to some extent. The qualitative definition of myths takes into cognizance both the internal qualities of the tales and their functions within the society.

From the foregoing, it can be summarized that myths are narratives created by a group of people which reflect elements from within the cosmic realities of the group and serving social, creative and psychological functions among other purposes. Further attempts are still made at defining myths as the needs arise later in this study.

Origin of myths

Determining the origin of myths is another exercise that poses great difficulty. Just as there are many diverse opinions about the subject of myths, so are the sources on the origin of the narrative genre. One of the most comprehensive accounts on the origin of myths is given by Karen Armstrong (2005) in her work, *A Short History of Myths*. She traced the practice of myths to a group called the Neanderthals dating back to as long as 600,000 BCE. She recounts that the "Neanderthals were buried with tools, weapons, and bones of sacrificed animals. Her accounts also have it that the race was "meaning seeking creatures". They imagined another world beyond the present one and they created stories to explain and interpret their existence.

The next set of people who practiced myths according to Armstrong was of the Paleslithic age between 20,000 and 8,000 BC. Their mythical stories are said to be so powerful that some are said to have survived up till the present times. They include the flood myth and those of Hercules. The next myth-making stage identified by Armstrong is the Neolithic people between 8000 and 4000 BCE where the focus of myths shifted from the sky to the earth. These account for the creation myths, of places, kingdoms, races and tribes. The next was the Early Civilizations of (4000-800 BCE) which gave birth to the appearance of first cities in Mesopotamia and Egypt and later in China, India, and Crete. The flood myth emerged during this period with different peoples giving diverse definitions of the occurrence, details and purposes of the flood. Armstrong also identifies the purposes of the flood. Armstrong also identifies the Axial Age (800-200 BCE) during which four key religious and philosophical systems emerged. They were

- Confucianism and Taoism in China
- Hinduism and Buddhism in India
- Judaism in Israel
- Rationalism in Greece

The Post-Axial age is between 200 BCE and 1500 AD and finally the Great Western Transformation period (1500-2000 AD) when all other major world religions like Christianity, Islam, Philosophy and Sciences have also become prominent factors in shapening the nature of myths.

Levi-Strauss (1955:430) hints at the origin of myths in his essay, The Structural Study of Myths, where he observes that "a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place in time: before the world was created, or during its first stages – anyway, long ago". This position gives credence to the analysis of Armstrong on the origin of myths.

This study intends to rely on the background provided by Karen Armstrong (2005) on the origin of myths generally, but efforts shall be made at a later part of the study to investigate the details of the origin of the two main mythical elements of concern to the study – taboos and totems.

Types of myth

From the observations made on the varieties and contentions emanating from the definitions and origin of the mythical narratives, it should be expected that the classification of myths would be by no mean less tasking. Ruth Finnegan (1970 [2012:364]) provides a background that suggests the difficult nature of the attempts made to identify or classify myths. She observes that though some Europeans and even non-Europeans classify myths as folktales because of some notable generic similarities between the two narrative sub-genres, Finnegan (ibid) opines that delimiting myths may be problematic as she further claims that mythology is used in some parts of the world loosely to cover virtually all kinds of traditional prose narratives, which may include ordinary animal tales as well as stories about human beings (396) She however cautions:

> In spite of such overlap between the appearance of these characters, it is convenient to discuss the various types of stories by differentiating them roughly in terms of their main characters

> … That it is not possible to regard these general types as clear-cut categories will be clear both from the way the characters overlap and from the general remarks in the previous chapter on the difficulties of producing clear typologies on the case of such flexible and variable material (379-380)

Despite the note of caution on the typology of myths however, Finnegan (ibid) still identifies that myths share some features such as etiological tales, tales about origin of death, origins of animals' characteristics, actions of deities and cosmological speculations (404).

The note of caution canvassed by Finnegan (ibid) is also re-echoed by Raymond Hubler (2013:2) as he differentiates between myth and other fantastic narratives like fables and folktales warning that these narratives should not be mistaken for one another because of the shared features. He made what could be termed a rather loose and broad categorization of myths into three types, namely:

- Myths of beginning
- Nature myths and
- Hero/Heroine myths

An attempt shall be made later to explain each of these three types as they also coincide with the classifications made by some other scholars discussed in this chapter. Various other attempts examined showed no particular significant departure from some of the views examined below:

> Burket (1985:120) sees myth as a complex of traditional tales in which significant human situations are united in fantastic combinations to form a polyvalent semiotic system which is used in multifarious ways to illuminate reality.

Burket (ibid) categorised myths into three broad types

- Divine myths, which he claims are stories about gods
- Legends, which he explains are rooted in historical facts, and
- Folktales, which in his opinion are created primarily to entertain.

Closely related to Burket's classification is that of Melandra (1982[2016]) which identifies four main types of myths, namely: creation myths, myths of gods and goddesses , trickster myths and myths of death, the underworld and resurrection

Akporobaro (2004:184ff) attempts to expand the typology of myths in his discussion of the narrative type to include the following: origin myths, creation myths, flood myths, heroic myths, entertaining myths and myths about gods/deities etc.

What appears to be the most encompassing classification of myths is a collection of essays based on the works of Geoffrey George Frazer, a religious anthropologist and mythologist of the early 1900s (Published on www.cyberspacei.com/jesusi/inlight/religion/myth on 14th September, 2001.) The writers who also cited Geoffrey Kirk (1970) and Robert Frazer (1990) identify the following types of tales as having common features with myths: fables, fairy tales, folktales, sages and epics, legends, parables and aetiologic tales. The source eventually comes out with twelve distinct types of myths which comprise the following:

1. **Myths of Origin**. This is referred to as cosmogony myths. Cosmogony is said to be preferred to creation as cosmogony is perceived to be more neutral in the reference to the origin of the universe whereas creation myths imply that someone has formed something out of nothing. The position of the origin myths across different cultures of the world is that the world is formed as a new thing out of an existing older thing. Though this account does not dispute creation myths, it argues that creation myths derived from, or are related to the myths of origin.
2. **The myths of eschatology and destruction.** These deal with the "end" as opposed to the origin. These myths presuppose the origin of death and consequently, the end of the universe. Such myths are built upon the premise that death was not supposed to be

part of the initial universe but came as a result of the excesses of humans, who were the latest addition to the cosmos.

3. **Messianic and millenarian myths.** This refers to the hope of a new world arising from time to time in many civilizations. Though people often read religious undertones to this type of myths, the basic elements of such beliefs are claimed to be indigenous.

4. **Myths of Culture heroes and stereological myths.** These are myths formed about a hero in a non literate tradition about someone who is not part of the creation of the society but who appears to contribute something highly significant to the people.

5. **Myths of time and eternity.** These are myths formed around time and age, especially the ages of the world and the universe.

6. **Myths of providence and destiny.** These myths link the activities of human beings to some extra - terrestrial forces.

7. **Myths of rebirth, regeneration and renewal.** Virtually all traditional cultures generally view the world nature and man in terms of a cyclic routine.

8. **Myths of memory and forgetting.** Some people are of the belief that they remember some events that had occurred before they were born or that they remember issues happening in places where they are not present. This is claimed to be absent in some ordinary human beings.

9. **Myths of high beings and celestial gods.** Some supreme celestial deities are present in many mythologies that possess varying qualities and attributes.

10. **Myths concerning founders of religions and other religious figures.** This source explains that though the founders of most religions of the world are believed to have actually existed, their existences are usually shrouded in mysteries with lots of legendary tales and mythological tales woven around them.

11. **Myths of kings and ascetics.** The kings in many traditional cultures are seen as dual beings – human and supernatural.

12. **Myths of transformation.** In addition to the various tales about the origin of peculiar rocks, properties of animals, plants and such etiologic tales, many myths also speak of cosmic changes brought about at the end of primordial times.

Though the typologies enumerated above are considered comprehensive enough to have covered enough scope of the subject of myth within the purview of this study, it should be noted that they are by no means exhaustive. They are only assumed to have embraced the major types identified which have not been mentioned here.

Functions of myth

The aspect of the functionality of myths can be conveniently adjudged to be the aspect that attracts the greatest interest to the genre. Though scholars across various schools of thoughts and theorizing have approached the functions of myths from varying perspectives, one common denominator is their universal belief that myths play a role from one culture to the other. Wesley-Esquimaux (2011:196) suggests that the foundation for the functionality of myths is laid in the people's belief that their myths are not fictitious but rather express a quantum of their reality. Wesley-Esquimaux (ibid) quotes A.I. Hallowell in providing the basis for this argument:

> After all, what people choose to talk about is always important for our understanding of them, and the narratives they choose to transmit from generation to generation and listen to over and over again can hardly be considered unimportant in a fully rounded study of their culture. When, in addition, we discover that all their narratives, or certain classes of them may be viewed as true stories, their significance for actual behaviour becomes apparent. For people act on the basis of what they believe to be true, not on what they think is mere fiction.

Okpewho (1983:21) in an answer to his own question, "What is function", quotes the definition of Branislaw Malinowski that the function of "anthropological facts" (or myths in

this case) is “the part which they play within the integral system of culture” and “the manner in which they are related to each other within the system”. Okpewho (ibid) goes further to quote the definition provided by Radcliffe-Brown in addition that “the function of any recurrent activity … is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity”.

The works of earliest mythologists have for obvious reasons, therefore been dedicated to the functions of myths and mythical narratives in various indigenous cultures of the world. Notable examples include Totems and Taboo (1919) by Sigmund Freud and Malinowski’s Myth in Primitive Psychology (1926). The works of this duo influence the essays of Joseph Campbell (1972:6-10) titled “Four Functions of Myth” where Campbell identifies the following functions:

1. to evoke in the individual a sense of grateful, affirmative awe before existence;
2. to present an image of the cosmos that will explain everything that you come into contact with in the universe.
3. to validate and maintain a certain sociological system on which the particular unit depends for its existence;
4. and to perform psychological functions helping to sustain the individual through the stages of life.

Smith (2013:12) adds a contemporary touch to these functions in his review of other works of Campbell to argue that scientific revolutions are “working positively towards the fulfillment of the metaphysical and cosmological functions of myth. Bascom (1965:9) in what looks like deriving the purpose of myth from its definition quotes Malinowski as saying

> Liliu are myths which are regarded not merely as true but as venerable and sacred. They are told during the preparation for rituals, which are performed at different times throughout the year. Their main function is to serve as a justification of the rituals with which they are associated.

The social function of myth across various cultures and times is further explored by some other scholars. Halpé (1961:137) observes that the social function of myth is "to bind together social groups as wholes or, in other words, to establish a social consensus. Powell (2009:3) also observes that in the modern times, "myths describe patterns of behaviour that serve as models for members of a society especially in times of crisis". He writes further

> Myth provide us with absolutes in the place of ephemeral values and with a comforting perception of the world that is necessary to make the insecurity and terror of existence bearable (ibid)

Fraser (1990) reviews the accounts of Marcel Mauss in *The Gift* (1925) as contributing immensely to the debate on the social functions of myth. He comes out with these four basic functions of myth.

1. **Explanation** – The most obvious function of myths is the explanation of acts, whether natural or cultural.
2. **Justification or Validation.** Myths justify some ritual and cultic customs. They are used to justify claims to privileges and to validate beliefs in the society.
3. **Description.** In the traditional, preindustrial societies, myths serve as the source of instruction and they are capable of describing things the people are never expected to see.
4. **Healing, renewal and inspirational.** This account gives instances of the use of magical incantations, a poetic aspect of myths to perform healing and renewal functions. Also, mythology in the more modern societies is claimed to have exerted aesthetic influence on the people.

Okpewho (1983:25) suggests that all the social functions can be reduced to just two, namely;

1. That of adaptation of the society to its environment, and
2. That of permanently maintaining the social structure.

Apart from the all encompassing summary above, Okpewho (1983:36ff) gives a lucid analysis of Levi-Strauss' "Structural Study of Myth" where Levi-Strauss contends that myths behave like language. Apart from the general understanding which one may have that myths, being narrative tales are capable of performing general linguistic functions like all other genres of literature, Levi-Strauss actually applied the transformational theory of grammar to the study of myths. Using the Oedipus myth as a case study, he theorized that myths can be read "both horizontally (syntagmatically) and vertically (paradigmatically). The short-comings and challenges identified by Okpewho on this experiment, though germane, are not within the purview of this study. What is of importance to us here is the fact that like language, myths may not be limited to a monolithic interpretation.

Myths are also believed to be capable of performing the function of time. Unlike science and technology, myths are timeless and they are believed to have the ability to cover the failure of science and technology as well as to fill the gaps that science and technology leave in human existence and understanding (Mauss, 1925, Levi-Strauss,1991 Akporobaro 2004)

From the view of Malinowski in *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (1926) comes the idea of the myth as a political charter. Robert Redfield (1954:177) writes:

> This essay is famous for developing the argument of myth as "charter" but it can be seen, I think, that Malinowski escapes the narrowly functionalist interpretations that are often placed on his ideas. Among other things he emphasizes the immediacy and "living reality" of myth as well as its discursive and (hence dialogical) qualities.

As a charter, myth is supposed to behave like the political manifesto or the constitution that directs the course of the people's political activities.

In what looks like a broad cultural perspective of myths, Bu-Buaki Jabbi (1980:132) observes:

> Myths and ritual complexes within living cultures tend, in their own right, to be intrinsic systems of ideas and general world-views of modes of perception and sensibility. A more or less cohesive set of propositions about reality and life, about man's place in the world and in time, may often be deduced from them.

The view expressed by Jabbi above captures more or less the comprehensive scope of myth in the human existence.

Apart from the specific functions of myth reviewed above, it has also been observed that myth perform other general functions as performed by other genres of literature, such as the didactic and aesthetic functions. Though other functions may in some cases be subsumed under the ones identified, where it becomes imperative to discuss such functions in isolation that shall be done when specific types of myths are being analysed later in the study.

2.4 Mythic narratology: oral narrative modes

The introduction to this section of the study shall open on a note of agreement with the view of Finnegan (2012:308) that so much has been written about the prose genre in Africa (and by extension, many indigenous cultures of the world) that a fresh essay may be tantamount to mere repetition of what people already know. We therefore would want to adopt the suggested option by Finnegan that what is expedient is for one to give a brief summary of what people already know and pointing to identified gaps rather than repeating what people already know. Finnegan has also brought it to the fore that efforts were made to identify the nature or type of traditional narratives by classifying them under origin or motifs with scholars coming to the conclusion that the genre can come under the broad taxonomy known as folktales (357). In a similar argument, scholars reviewed the positions of George Frazer, J.G. Jung, Bascom and Fraser and queried the essence of "multiplying categories of narrative" when it is possible to work with a very general traditional tale (jesusi.htm, 2016). These scholars may recognise similarities and analogies between two categories of traditional

narratives. There still exist some useful distinctions between the different categories. They however caution that the classifications made under traditional narrative forms should not be too rigid in order to accommodate the inherent similarities. This study would like to adopt the categories of the typology identified by this group while yet observing the contributory details of other sources about each type so identified.

Fables

The word fable derives from the Latin word *fabula* which means an untrue story or a fictitious story. According to some sources, the word *fabula* in Latin almost loosely meant the same thing as the Greek word, *mythos*. H. Holman (1970:217) writes about the fable.

> The characters are most frequently animals but they need not be so restricted since people and inanimate objects as well are sometimes the central figures. The subject matter of fable has to do with supernatural and unusual incidents and often draws its origin from folklore sources.

From the above account, the almost one-to-one correlation between fables and myths are not too far-fetched. It should be noted however that though myths and fables personify animals or natural objects as characters, fables usually conclude on a moral note while myths do not usually possess this didactic tendency. This position is reinforced by the argument of Finnegan; 2012:364-65 about the classification of oral prose narratives thus:

> A further point about too much dependence on typologies here is this under-emphasizes one of the most striking characteristics of much oral literature – its flexibility and unfixed quality. This applies particularly in the case of prose … There is no one correct version or form. What on one occasion looks like, say, a "dilemma tale" or a moralizing parable (…) may on another, though otherwise similar subject-matter, look like an aetiological explanation or just a humorous joke. Form, plot or character may all equally, therefore provide only a shifting and impermanent foundation for classification, and any attempt at making typologies on this basis can only result in misconceptions about the nature of the stories as actually told.

Though animal characters are a significant determinant of fables, it should also be noted that the presence of animals as characters is not exclusive to fables. Other major types of indigenous prose narratives also patronize animal characters albeit with some distinct features other than the didactic. Examples of such narratives include folktales, aetiological tales, anecdotes, proverbs or parables and others.

Folktales

The folktale is regarded as a form of traditional story which is usually told for the main purpose of entertaining its audience. Though the folktale is not limited to Africa, it is most commonly practiced across the entire continent of Africa. Akporobaro (2004:111) comments that the folktale is "one of the commonest and easily the most popular form of oral literary expression in many African societies". The folktale is a prose form that has some other sub-narrative forms categorized under it. As observed by Finnegan (2012), the classification of tales under folktales can also not be done under any strict categorization. If one considers the categorization under characterization, this would run into the boundaries of the fables, aetiological tales, totems and others. Also, if the typology is based on motifs, one may not be able to have a closed-system classification. These paradigms run into one another until the context of the tale is actually determined.

The overlapping nature of the form, context and purpose of stories that constitute folktales has engendered a problem on the definition of the genre. For instance, looking at the nature of folktale, an American folklorist, Stith Thompson classifies myths as a type of folktale. His classification is based on the admissibility of some sacred narratives into the genre of folktales. G.S. Kirk, a British classicist however argues that though myths and folktales do overlap, they are distinct narrative types. The distinction made by Kirk (1970) borders on the purpose of folktale for simple social situations while myths have underlying purposes that surpass the simple story-telling for ordinary fears and desires.

As the definitions of folktales by scholars vary, so also do the examples, nature, characters and scope of folktales differ according to the various scholars (Dasylva, 1999, 11-15). One criterion that defines folktale and which differentiates the genre from other narratives is that it covers all stories that are generally told by the people. This definition further compounds the problem of the multiplicity of the nature of folktale. Akporobaro (2004:113) observes in line with the multifarious interests and nature of folktales.

> Because of the great variety of interests which folktales present, they may be classified in different ways: They may be classified in terms of their themes, or character types, their comic, humorous or tragic qualities, their supernatural (fairly or occult) nature, or in terms of their concern with morality and other social values. Generally, there is no one satisfactory way of classifying folktales.

In spite of the varieties of the types, nature and classification of folktales however, it is noteworthy that some common and peculiar stylistic features still run through the varieties of this genre across the different indigenous societies that practice it. These features determine the pattern of its narration and impose a system that in most cultures gives folktales a definite structure. These features include among others:

a. an opening formula

b. a surrealistic setting

c. episodic narration

d. use of idiophones

e. infusion of songs

f. closing or concluding codes.

Though the details of the stylistic features of the folktale may also vary slightly from one cultural context to the other, their imports, functions and implications are virtually the same across the cultural divides (Bascom, 1965, Fraser 1970, Akporobaro 2004 and Finnegan 2012).

The opening formula

The narration of the folktale is observed to have commenced with a particular opening formula in most indigenous traditions. In the contexts of Nigerian cultures, the tale is introduced with a statement that serves more-or-less like calling the attention of the audience to the tale. There is a dramatic exchange between the narrator and the audience which sets the stage for the narration. Here are some examples across some major ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Yoruba

Narrator - *Ààlọ́ oo*

Trans. - Story

Audience - *Ẹ̀àlọ̀*

Trans. - Story (Though this response is seen as mere tonal manipulation on the word story, it appears to have some semantic implications which means an attempt to pacify, impress or cajole).

Igbo

Narrator - *Chakpii*

Trans. - Story

Audience - *Woo*

Trans - Kill it

Narrator - *Ndi be anyi, O nwere akuko*

Trans. - My people, I have a tale

Audience - *Kooro anyi*

Trans. - Narrate it to us

Hausa

Narrator - *Gat ana, Gatananku*

Trans.	-	Story, story for you
Audience	-	*Ta zo mu jita*
Trans.	-	Let us hear it.

Izon/Ijaw

Narrator	-	*Egberi o*
Trans.	-	Story o
Audience	-	*Iyo / a a eh*
Trans.	-	Good/Great

Though the statements made in this opening formula may be different in meaning, they all point to the same function across the ethnic groups. The opening formula is then followed by an introduction to the main characters in the story. Since the characters are usually allegorical, stock or typical in nature, mere mentioning the characters already suggests the themes of the folktale. For example, mentioning a trickster character like the tortoise among the Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups in Nigeria already implies a number of options in the trickster tale tradition.

Surrealistic setting

Our investigations also revealed that folktales have a peculiar form of setting. The settings of tales are highly imaginative and rather fantastic in nature. Events in the narration of folktales take place in diverse kinds of surrealistic settings such as inside a tree, inside a hole in the earth, inside rocks, in the sky, inside rivers, lakes or the sea, etc. In an oral interview with Mallam Abdulwaheed Shuaib,[12] a Hausa Folklorist (June, 2016), he claims that though Hausa folktales can be based in imaginative settings, what makes them realistic to an extent is the fact that the setting usually correlates with the natural habitat of the major

[12] Mallam Abdulwaheed Shuaib, an expert in Hausa Cultural Studies, is a Chief Lecturer in the Department of Hausa, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo.

character in the tale. Mallam Shuaib (ibid) identifies the following folktale characters and their correlating settings.

Table 2.1 –Characterisation and settings in Nigerian folktale narratives

Character	Translation	Setting
Zomo	Hare	A hole inside the earth in a rock, in a tree, etc
Gezo	Spider	In the sky, on a tree, inside a cave, etc.
Zaki	Lion	Inside a rock, inside a cave, etc.
Dila	Fox	Inside water, on top of trees, inside rocks, holes, etc.

Source: Field Study, 2016

The accounts of the setting of Hausa tales given by Mallam Shuaib in the table above correspond with the ones given by Ilufoye Ojo, a Yoruba folklorist on the settings of the folktales in Yoruba (Oral Interview June, 2016)[13] and by Chinelo Onuegbu (Oral Interview June, 2016)[14] on folktales from Igbo culture. The main trickster character in Yoruba and Igbo is the tortoise called Ijapa among the Yoruba and Mbe or Mbekwu among the Igbos. The tortoise is known to be able to cope well, in water, on the land and inside holes. This habitation is amply explored in the numerous folktales built around the trickster tortoise character in many indigenous cultures of Southern Nigeria. These natural habitats are artistically extended by the imaginative manipulations of the narrator to include other settings like the sky, on top of trees and in the voids. These backgrounds of the surrealistic settings have been transferred into the narration of Amos Tutuola's novels like *The Palmwine Drinkard* and Fagunwa and Soyinka's *Forest of a Thousand Daemons* (1984) with settings of

[13] An oral interviewed conducted with Mallam Shuaib Abdulwaheed, a Chief Lecturer in Hausa, Department of Hausa, Adeyemi Collefe of Eeducation.

[14] Dr. Chinelo Onuegbu, an expert in Igbo cultures and cultural studies, Department of Igbo, Adeyemi College of Edcation, Ondo

events in the sky, inside a burning fire, in celestial abodes, inside and on top of trees, inside the bowel of trees etc.

Use of idiophones

Several scholars have employed the use of the term idiophones in different ways. Badoma (2006:204) traces the origin of the word to Doke (1935) and goes ahead to define the term thus.

> Doke (1935) is often credited with the term "idiophone" which is defined as: "A vivid representation of an idea in sound … a word, often onomatopoeic, which describes a predicate, qualitative or adverb in respect to manner, colour, sound, smell, action state or intensity"

Folktales across various indigenous cultures employ the use of idiophones as an aesthetic device to supplement the linguistic needs of the narration. Though Ekere (1990:301-302) cites a number of works to argue that idiophones cannot be defined in a specifically acceptable manner, he agrees with the view that one can still attempt a workable definition of the term. Narrators of folktales generate words whose sounds combine meanings and ideas. This device adds to the dramatic intensity of the folktales and in some cases contributes a sense of humour to the narration. An example is in:

"The birds, at once, took off, *frooom*, from the scene" where the word *frooom* is an idiophone suggesting the manner and the idea of flight/departure of the birds from the environment.

Idiophone is used in virtually all folktale narrations across different cultures of the world. Badomo (2006:204) cites the example of the imitation of the cock's crow in the following contexts as instances of idiophones.

Table 2.2 – Use of idiophones in folktales

Name	Culture	Source
Konkoliirikoo	Daagare	African
Kokrokoo	Akan	Ghana/African
Cookoo	English	European
Cock-a-doodle-do	American	American
gok4-gok1-gok3-gok6	Cantonese	Asia.

Source: Badomo, 2006.

Infusion of Songs

Songs play very significant roles in the narration of folktales. This is to be expected if one considers the affinity of oral practices generally to songs. In most traditional cultures of the world, much patronage is given to lyrical forms such as the ballads, lullabies, odes, dirges, war songs, religious songs, work songs, etc. This tradition has also found its way into the narrative exploits of the people. In the context of the folktale narration, a song can be introduced by either the narrator or the audience (Akporobaro, 2004:116). The songs may be introduced as part of the trick to make the narration less prosaic and perhaps to avoid boredom and monotony (Finnegan, 2012:412).

Songs can occur as part of the opening formula of the tale. Finnegan (2012:413) quotes Ellis (1890:269) as observing that among the Ewe of West Africa, a narrator is usually accompanied by a drum, and a few beats are first played to call attention and then the narrator announces his subject. And in some cases, Finnegan continues:

> Yet the singing can at times become the main element of the story – 'So much so that in many tales the narrative is to it no more than a frame is to a picture' (Torrend, 1921:3)

Among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, some folktales are actually known and referred to by their lyrical components. A good example is the popular story known as "*Babaláwo mo wà bẹbẹ*" "Herbalist, I have come to plead" The entire narration can be summarized in the song which most young ones usually prefer to its prose form. The song goes thus.

Lílé	***Ègbè***
Babaláwo, mo wá bẹ̀bẹ̀	*Alugbirin*
Babaláwo, mo wá bẹ̀bẹ̀	*Alugbirin*
Oògùn tó ṣe fún mi lẹẹ̀kàn	*Alugbirin*
Tóní n má mà fọ́wọ́ kẹnu	*Alugbirin*
Tóní n má mà fẹ́ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ kẹnu	*Alugbirin*
Gbòǹgbò lóyọ̀ mí gẹẹ̀rẹ̀	*Alugbirin*
Mo fọwọ́ kan bẹ̀ mo fi kẹnu	*Alugbirin*
Mo bojú wokùn ó ri gbẹndu	*Alugbirin*
Babaláwo, mowá bẹ̀bẹ̀	*Alugbirin*

Trans.

Solo	***Chorus***
Herbalist, I have come to plead	- *Alugbirin*
Herbalist, I have come to plead	- *Alugbirin*
The charm you prepared for me last time	- *Alugbirin*
That you warned I should not lick my fingers	- *Alugbirin*
That you warned I should not lick my toes	- *Alugbirin*
It was a stump that upset me at the slope	- *Alugbirin*
I touched the breath and touched my mouth	- *Alugbirin*
I saw my belly it was gbendu	- *Alugbirin*
Herbalist, I have come to plead	- Alugbirin

Today, the lyric is sung as an independent folksong isolated from the narration. That is the extent to which a song can be significant in the context of a folktale. Many folksongs exist like that in many parts of Africa today that serve to replace the entire narrations of which they were initially part thereof. Despite the various dimensions to the musical interludes. Finnegan (2012:415) concludes that "it is safe to say that singing is an element that is worth looking for in tales of all kinds".

Songs perform several functions in the narration of folktales

Apart from the basic understanding that music serves to provide a form of entertainment to people, the musical interludes during the narration of folktales also serve some skill and aesthetic functions. This is a means of providing for the participation of the audience in the narration. Where the musical accompaniment serves as a prelude to the narration, it is used to bring the audience together and, in some cases, the audience usually dominates the musical display. In the course of the narration, songs serve the structural purpose of demarcating the boundaries of the episodes in the narration. At this point, the narrator introduces the song; acts as a solo leader while the audience acts the response in chorus.

Episodic narration

It has been observed earlier in this study that the narration of most tales in the oral tradition is organised on motifs. These motifs, whether didactic, entertainment or aetiological, are usually broken into a number of episodes. One of the aesthetic features of these tales is that these episodes are sometimes rather loose, distorted and do not have a very strict sequence of occurrence. The popular Yoruba etiological tale of how the tortoise developed a hunch-back can be divided into the following episodes

a. There was a famine on earth

b. Tortoise attended a feast with birds

c. Tortoise cheated the birds

d. The return of tortoise to the earth

e. Tortoise tries to mend his shell

f. The conclusion

The structure of the tale is so loose that the six original episodes can be broken down into another additional six making twelve or even eighteen in all. The number of episodes

and the manner of their narration may then depend on factors such as the expertise of the narrator, the time available for the performance, the audience and the purpose of the narration, among others. It is possible to have one, two or more episodes removed from the entire narration without causing a major disruption to the motif and the overall enjoyment of the story.

Closing formula

Akporobaro (116-117) has the following to say on the closing of folktale narration.

> In many societies, the folktale is usually ended in terms of a concluding coda, a formulaic statement similar to that with which the story is opened. In effect, the conclusion of the folktale is largely a matter of a convention.

It has also been observed that the closing of folktales may differ from society to society and from one narrative performance to the other. Yet, the pattern of closing them is similar across cultures. In some instances, etiological or explanatory statements are made. In some other cases, moral questions are asked and answered. The conclusion of folktales in some cultures assumes a dramatic dimension whereby the narrator exploits his leadership role to claim superiority over the audience and this sparks off an exchange of banter. It is also not out of place to have songs and musical accompaniment playing to round off a successful narration.

Sagas/Epics/Legends

Sagas, epics and legends are narratives that have a common subject_heroism. Apart from this issue of a common subject, these narratives also belong to the traditional and ancient societies. Apart from the common subjects and circumstances which run through Sagas, Epics and Legends, one other common denominator of these is the oral nature of the narration. These three, no matter however related, still have some defining differences in the

details of their manifestations. The three narrative genres are hereby discussed side by side with a view to highlighting the distinguishing traits of each against the other.

Some sources have it that the word 'saga' may be used in a loose sense to refer to form of narrative that re-enacts a historical event. This form of reference may however not be suitable for our purpose in this context. This is because the definition may lead to other unwieldy contexts which are out of the purview of our scope. A dimension to the definition of the word saga is that which traces it to the Old Norse and simply interprets it as "what is said" (www.Jesusi.com 2016). By this account, the saga is restricted to a specific time and space in history. The original saga dated back to the 10th century in Iceland. Though the narration of sagas and epics shares the common feature of making reference to a particular time, the reference in the saga is more specific and historical while that of the epic is less specific or rather a-historic. Another difference between sagas and epics lies in the fact that epic narratives are mostly composed in poetry while the saga is mostly composed like the other non-poetic narratives. Apart from these, the boundaries between sagas and epics could be as seamless as to make some scholars use the two terms interchangeably (Okpewho, 1990:39).

Okpewho (Ibid: 34) corroborates some of the claims made concerning epics above by the following argument.

> An oral epic is fundamentally a tale about the fantastic deeds of a man or men endowed with something more than human might and operating in something larger than the human context and it is of significance in portraying some stage of the cultural or political development of a people. It is usually narrated or performed to the background of music by an unlettered singer working alone or with some assistance from a group of accompanists.

Shedding further light on the subject of epics, Toohey (2016) identifies seven main features in the narration of the genre.

- the hero is outstanding

- the setting is large
- action is made of deeds of great valour, actions requiring superhuman courage.
- supernatural forces – gods, angels, demons are involved
- it is written in very special style
- narrator tries to be objective and omniscient

Some examples of the epic narratives include the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the ancient times. There were the Nibelungelied epics of the Medieval Europe and the Serbo-Croatian epics in the1930s. From Asia were the Indian Mahabharata and the Tibetan Gesar epic. From Africa, we have the Mwindo Epics, the Ozzidi epics and the Kambili epics among others (Okpewho, 1990 and Jesusi 2016). It is apposite to distinguish traditional epics from literary epics to avoid some confusion that may arise from their being muddled up. Traditional epics, which are also referred to as folk epics, or primary epics are the written versions of the originally oral poems about a tribal or national hero. Literary epics are the poems composed and written by individuals in the imitation of the traditional version (Abrams, 1981: 97).

Another closely related narrative sub-genre to epics and sagas is the class known as legends. Holman (1976:288) describes a legend as a narrative tradition handed from the past which is distinguished from myths because it has more historical truth than myths. Like epics and sagas, legends also involve the lore of the people and they also narrate some aspects of a racial or national spirit. Though the narration of legends also patronizes heroic subjects, attempts are always made to separate heroic feats (those performed by human characters) from mythical feats (performed by gods or supernatural beings). Some scholars however sound notes of caution that the rather thin line of separation between what constitute legends and myths cannot be stretched too far as they often get intertwined (www.jesusi, 2016).

Aetiologic tales

The word aetiology has its root in the Greek word "aitia". The word is used to refer to the description or assignment of causes. Etiologic tales have very close semblances with myths to the extent that some scholars regard them as a particular type of myth rather than a separate category (www.jesusi, ibid). These tales explain the origin of a custom, state of affairs, natural feature, origin of a particular mountain, rock or river. In many etiologic tales of Africa, the stories narrate some of the attributes of animal characters such as why the fowl scatters with its legs; why the back of tortoise is rough; why the leopard has spots on its skin; why hyenas prey on fowls among so many other numerous tales. Some scholars refer to these tales as the why-stories (see Finnegan, 1970, Okpewho, 1980 and Akporobaro 2004).

Isidore Okpewho (1983: 45) identifies the ability of myth to transform its nature and function from a notion conceived as a traditional mythic system to a modern concept in contemporary narrations using the African literature as examples, Okpewho (ibid: 216) explains myth and essentially, the movement of what he refers to as the mythic fancy in narratives.

Totems

Claude Levi-Strauss (1955) translated with introduction by Rodney Needham (1991) is of the opinion that totem, like literature and like oral narratives or any of the sub-genres such as myth, legend or taboo, is equally very difficult to be given an absolute definition (pp. 1-3). Reviewing the works of J.G. Frazer (1910) Goldenweiser (1910) Van-Gennep (1919); Needham (1991:5) observes:

> Totemism eludes all efforts at absolute definition. It consists at most in a contingent arrangement of nonspecific elements. It is a combination of particulars which may be empirically observable in a certain number of cases without these resulting

> in any special properties; it is not an organic synthesis, an object in social nature.

Despite the fact that it is not practicable to have a definition of totem that is absolutely acceptable, the researcher is in total agreement with the position of Needham (ibid) that W.H.R. Rivers (1914) writing on totemism is one of the most famous on the subject. His definition of totemism is also very practical and illuminating.

The definition of totemism by Rivers is based on the working of three elements – a social element, a psychological element and a ritual element. The social link identifies the connection of an animal, plant or inanimate object with a group of people in a society or clan. The psychological element expresses the belief in a kinship relationship between members of the clan or society and the animal, plant or thing which the human group is claimed to have descended from. And the ritual element is based on the respect for the animal, plant or thing manifesting in a prohibition on eating or using the totemised plant, animal or object except on certain grounds.

The position of Andrew Lang (1912: 268-382), also sheds some useful light on the subject of totemism for this study. Lang raises a number of speculative questions in the opening paragraph of his essay thus:

> Is there any human institution which can be safely called "Totemism"? Is there any possibility of defining or even describing Totemism? Is it legitimate – is it even possible, with due regard for "methodology" and logic – to seek for the "normal" form of Totemism, and to trace it through many protean changes, produced by various causes, social and speculative?

Meyer Fortes (1966:5-22) also raises the issue of the problem of defining and analysing totemism. He relies on the observation of Delafosse (1912: 1920) on the nature and criticism of totemism saying:

> Let it suffice that in the societies, I am concerned with, many observers have reported beliefs and practices in which relations of a special kind between persons and designated groups of

> persons, on the one hand, and natural species of animals and plants or artificial objects, on the other are postulated; and, be it added, that some of these observers have been properly skeptical about the appropriateness of calling these associations totemism

All the contentions and postulations about totemism notwithstanding, each of the views reviewed and presented in works on totemism up to date have only come to confirm the existence of a set of exogamous relationships, beliefs and practices that this study can conveniently refer to as totemism. This situation is also convincing enough to provide the study with the needed background to investigate the oral narration of these prescribed relationships, beliefs and practices in relation to the totemised objects, animals or plants with the aim of exploring their creative values within their social contexts.

Taboos

The English word 'taboo' is derived from Tongan *Tabu* which came to notice towards the end of the eighteenth century. Its English use dates back to 1777 when James Cook, the British explorer visited Tonga. While observing the cultural practices of the Tongans, he writes

> Not one of them would sit down, or eat a bit of anything … On expressing my surprise at this, they were all taboo, as they said; which word has a very comprehensive meaning; but, in general, signifies that a thing is forbidden - Cook & King 1821

Taboo means an attitude that is prohibited within a given socio-cultural environment. In other words, it can be said that taboos are culture bound. It is also noteworthy to state that what constitutes a taboo in one society may be the behavioural attitude or way of life of another society. A. Keith and B. Kate citing Radcliffe-Brown(1939) wrote:

> In the languages of Polynesia the word means simply 'to forbid', and can be applied to any sort of prohibition. A rule of etiquette, an order issued by a chief, an injunction to children not to meddle with the

> possessions of their elders, may all be expressed by the use of the word - *tabu*

The term 'taboo' does not have a single definition. There are different opinions as to what constitute taboo. Ogunwole (2005:44) citing Thorpe (1967:13) opines that taboos are channels through which elders train up their little children and youths the best way to behave at home, outside and in the society. Taboos serve as a regulator through which the behaviours of the people are gauged in the society. It serves as a means through which vices are condemned while virtues that can better uplift the society are given prominence within a socio-cultural landscape.

Afe (2013:97) adds another dimension to the definition of the term when he states that taboo is a sacred term for a set of cultural or religious prohibitions instituted by traditional religious authorities as instruments of social control for protecting the sanctity of their shrines, worship of the gods and the well-being of their communities. In traditional African societies, taboo is an integral part of their religious life. Deities are often associated with one taboo or the other. The devotees of each deity follow this strict compliance in order not to incur the wrath of the gods. Violators of taboos bring disaster not only on themselves alone but on the whole community, as the case may be, on the persons around them. In this context, everyone, therefore, becomes his/her neighbour's keeper.

Webster (quoted by Odejobi: 2013) in a similar trend describes taboo as a system of prohibitions with regard to certain persons, things, acts or situations. The objects, attitudes and behaviours are assumed to carry within them danger that can affect anyone that violates the principles and etiquette of the society. Thus, everyone in the society is on the lookout for anyone who violates such rules and regulations. Violators of taboo are often held in contempt in any society because they are seen as 'individuals' who want to cut the ties that bind the peaceful co-existence of the society. Sacrifices are offered to the gods by the violators of taboo with the assistance of a designated Priest.

Osei (2006) posits that "taboos represent the main source of guiding principles regulating and directing the behaviour of individuals and community towards the Supreme Being and especially the gods and the ancestors in African traditional societies". The dos and don'ts of any society are embedded in their taboos. It is the prohibition against any form of behaviour that contradicts the cultural norms of the society. Violation of a taboo is often accompanied with punishment from a supernatural deity. Taboo therefore becomes a yardstick through which the behaviours of humans are measured.

Among the Yoruba, taboo is an important means through which good behaviours are imbibed by the people. The Yoruba culture is deeply rooted in laws and regulations which the people are expected to obey. To respond appropriately to these societal principles and ways of life, people must learn and imbibe societal values that will enhance peaceful co-existence in the society. In Yoruba land for example, each family compound has a taboo that must be strictly adhered to. In terms of food, each family compound normally has a type of food that must not be eaten and specific animals that must not be eaten or killed. Thus, taboo in Yoruba land can be said to be compound or family specific.

While commenting on the origin of taboos in Yoruba land, Ogunwole (2005:44) posits that the origin of taboos can be traced to *Ìròsùn Méjì*, one of the major components of Ifá corpus. Ifá is believed to be an embodiment of knowledge and wisdom and it serves as an intermediary between humans and the supernatural being (Olódùmarè).

Ìròsùn Méjì traces the origin of taboo to a mature man who after the death of his father decided to take his mother for a wife. People viewed this act as an abomination because no one has ever done it before. In the process, Ifá was consulted. Despite all the warning, the man began acting as a husband to his mother. They later gave birth to six children.

Also, there was a sacred bush owned by the god of taboo (*Òrìṣà Eèwọ̀*) in the town. It was forbidden for anybody to cultivate the land. This man decided to flout this order. He planted yam and maize on the prohibited land. The god got angry and decided to punish the man. In an attempt to punish him, the god of taboo decided to hide himself in the river and began to live there like a fish. One day, the man and his wife decided to prepare yam for their breakfast. Their eldest son was sent to the river to fetch water. On getting there, he sank into the river. The other children were also sent to the river and they all perished there. In a bid to know what happened to her children, the mother too jumped into the river and also died. The man got angry and went to the river, the god of taboo appeared to him and he too sank into the river and died there. Thus, the whole family perished because of the sin of one man. The matter was duly reported to the king of the town. The king told them how the god of taboo promised to ask the man why he decided to take his own mother as his wife. The destruction of the whole family is as a result of what the man did.

However, Idowu (1962:146) offers a different view on the origin of taboos in Yoruba land. He posits:

> What have been named *tabu* took their origin from the fact that people discerned that there were certain things which were normally approved or disapproved by the Deity. So the Yoruba call tabu *Ewo* – "Things forbidden", "Things not done". In the thought of the people, the *tabu* have collectively taken on a special significance by assuming a quasi-personal character in consequence of which it has been given the name *A-ki-se e* – "It-is-not-done", "It-is-tabu";

He further argues that the Yoruba, for example, see morality generally as a fruit of religion. There is no separation between the two in the sense that the idea of right or wrong is often associated with one form of deity or the other such that if one violates the instructions of one deity, he/she must be ready to face the consequences. Thus, it is often "believed that each divinity punishes ritual or moral offences which are committed within his, province,

that each aggrieved ancestor reprimands his own for dereliction of filial duties" (Idowu 1962: 149). Thus, the Yoruba would say *ó j'eèwọ̀* whenever one breaks a taboo. The idea of committing a crime in Yoruba society is often seen in its totality as a sin. The motive of controlling crime and nurturing virtues in Yoruba land resides in narration of stories which in reality are myths. For example, the mythical story of how Orisa-nla forbids himself and his worshippers from drinking palm wine is stated below:

> The orthodox treason is in the myth which has it that Orisanla once became drunk with palm-wine and so forfeited his honour of creating the solid earth as well as his seniority over all the other divinities. We have seen, however, that according to the basic belief of the Yoruba, Orisa-nla in actual fact did not forfeit any of His divine attributes. In the theology of Yoruba, we learn also that Orisa-nla is concerned with man's character since he represents the norm of ethical and ritual purity. The real reason why he forbids wine is an intoxicant which is capable of spoiling man's personality. (Idowu 1962:151)

Idowu (1962:157) lists the main components of good character in Yoruba society as (a) Chastity before marriage on the part of the woman is essential; (b) Hospitality is of great value; (c) Yoruba ethics are strongly opposed to selfishness; (d) Kindness involving generosity is accounted a great virtue and greatly to be cultivated; (f) Truth and rectitude are placed very high among the essential virtues; (g) Yoruba ethics forbids stealing; (h) Covenant-breaking and falsehood are condemned; (i) Hypocrisy is unmanly and reprovable; (j) It is the responsibility of the Yoruba man to give protection to the woman as the weaker sex; (k) Honour and due respect to old age is the duty of every Yoruba person. Anyone who falls short of these virtues has committed an offence, *ó ti j'eèwọ̀* "to eat tabu", and such an individual must be punished. These virtues are supported with wise sayings and stories from *Odù Ifá*.[15] For example, in *Odù*, there is an *Èjì Ogbè*[16] that tells a story to condemn covenant-

[15] Ifá corpus, the narrative that follows a cast of the oracle or the divination instrument.
[16] Presumed to be the head of all casts; extremely benevolent to the extent that it must be appeased anytime it suffaces.

breaking and falsehood. Some divinities accused Orunmila falsely before Olodumare. To prove his innocence, he turned upon them with the following imprecation:

Òfófó ní í pẹrú
Èpè ní í polè
Ilẹ̀ dí dà ní í pọ̀rẹ́
Alájọbí ní í pàye kan tó sebi
Àsẹ́ d'ọwọ́ ilẹ̀ a jọmu
A dí á fún ọ̀kànlénú irúnmole
Ní jọ́ tí wọn ń jàá r'ọ̀dọ̀ Olódùmarè
A jọ gb'órí ilẹ̀
A jeku
A jọ gb'órí ilẹ̀
A jẹ ja

Trans

Gossiping kills the slave
Curses kill a thief
Betrayal destroys friends
Kinship destroys treacherous relations
Authority now belongs to our oath-taking
That consulted for the four hundred and one deities
On the day they took their quarrel to Olodumare
On the surface of the earth we ate rat
On the surface of the earth we consumed fish

Before the advent of colonialism in Igbo land, the society had its own way of preserving and maintaining social order. Onyeozili and Ebbe (2012:33) state that the concept of crime was not applied in pre-colonial Igbo society. Instead, there were two types of offences: abominations (public offences), otherwise called *aru*, or something the Earth abhors, and delicts called *mmehie* (private offenses). The punishments for these offences include dedicating such offenders to a god. This transforms such individuals into *osu* (outcasts). In some cases, the offender may be sent on an exile depending on the gravity of the offence. After which sacrifices are offered to the gods for the cleansing of the whole village.

Ogunwole (2005:16) categorises Yoruba taboos into the following: Taboos for cleanliness; Taboos to avoid danger; Taboos for respecting elders/adults; Taboos for pregnant women; Taboos for self-control. It is important to note that the taboos subsumed under these

classifications are meant to maintain social and self-control of people in the society. The bottom line of the use of these taboos is to teach morals and make individuals align with the set standards that the society has laid down for its members.

Keith and Kate (2006) also categorise taboos based on their origins. They posit that fatal taboos are "like a radioactive fuel rod, which has dire effects on anyone who comes into direct contact with it unless they know how to protect themselves". They see taboos prohibiting filthiness as taboos that have notions of cleanness as the motivating factor. For example, many communities see any contact with a menstruating woman as a taboo believing that it pollutes men in particular. In some religious worship centres, menstruating women are barred from places of worship until they finish their menstruation.

2.5 Myths as metaphor

Like myths, metaphors also operate on conceptualization. Before delving further into the relationship between myths and metaphors, it becomes quite apposite to discuss the concept of metaphors. Faremi (2014:1) rightly observes that the study of metaphors dated back to classical rhetoricians like Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. It has also been observed that over the years, researchers have deployed the concepts of metaphor in diverse fields of academic discourse such as politics, religion, culture, medicine, business and a host of others, besides its traditional domain of literary studies. The concern in this study is the application of metaphor in mythography, an aspect of oral narration.

Holman (1976:313) describes metaphor as "an implied analogy" which

> imaginatively identifies one object with another and ascribes to the first one or more of the qualities of the second or invests the first with emotional or imaginative qualities associated with the second.

Holman (ibid: 315) posits further:

> The whole nature of our language is highly metaphorical. Most of our modern speech, which now seems prosaic enough, was once largely metaphorical. Our ABSTRACT TERMS are borrowed from physical objects. Natural objects and actions have passed over into abstractions because of some inherent metaphorical significance. (Emphasis contained in the original)

Buttressing this argument, he cites the example of the word "transgression" which is interpreted today to mean a misdemeanor, a mistake or an error which was originally used and literally meant "to cross a line". The metaphorical significance of the word has now been lost (or dead) while the initial meaning has now become a mere abstraction and a figure of speech. Through this process, he argued, many words which are now used as abstractions were conceived against the tropes of physical or natural objects.

The argument above is amplified by the position of Lakkoff (1992:115).

> We have seen that metaphor pervades our normal conceptual system. Because so many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (the emotions, ideas, time, etc). We need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts that we understand in clearer terms (spatial orientations, objects, etc.). This need leads to metaphorical definition in our conceptual system. We have tried with examples to give some indication of just how extensive a role metaphor plays in the way we function.

The pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday language and existence is further elucidated upon by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:453-4) in the argument that though most people consider metaphor as a device of poetic imagination and rhetorical flourish – one that is derived through extraordinary rather than ordinary linguistic means, it has been found that metaphors actually pervade people's everyday life. It is further contested that rather than view metaphor as a typical feature of language alone – that which explores only words rather than thought or

action, metaphor actually constitutes part of human thought or action and the way man ordinarily conceives reality is metaphorical in nature.

In his essay, *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor* (1992:202-251), Lakoff contests the classical definition of metaphor as "a novel or poetic linguistic expression where one or more words for a concept are used outside of its normal conventional meanings to express a similar concept" (202). In what appears like a furtherance of the argument against limiting metaphors to language or poetic domains alone, he brings up the idea of cross domain mappings with the conclusion that metaphors are general mappings across conceptual domains. It is further posited that rather than applying to only language or poetry, it also applies to the way people conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another.

The above issues raised about metaphor are fundamental in the analogy that we intend to draw in this study on the workings, conceptualization of meanings and understanding between metaphor and mythography. One of the two initial areas of comparison between metaphor and myth is in the area of thought and action. Like metaphor, myths are usually conceived as a product of expression especially in extraordinary situations and they are not viewed as characteristics of normal thought systems which govern the day to day patterns of human behaviour. Moreover, just as metaphor is considered to be limited to the domain of language use in poetry; so also do people generally view myth as limited to the anthropological domain of primitive people especially as it concerns the prescription of their lore. Both metaphor and myth actually cover much wider domains of human existence than are currently ascribed to them. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 453 ff)

Another area of comparison between metaphor and myth is in the systematic analysis of both concepts. "Metaphor and myths act in parts and they are both structured in a complex pattern where ideas (or meanings) are objects, linguistic expressions are the containers, the ideas are put into words and sent along" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 458-459). Part of this

systematicity according to Lakoff (ibid) is the identification of three basic domains of conceptual structure – the physical, the cultural and the intellectual (or psychological in the case of myths) which usually interact and cannot be sharply distinguished (461). The cultural affiliation of both metaphor and myth presupposes the possibility of contradiction in an attempt to give the same idea or object a universal interpretation across cultural boundaries. In this regard Lakoff (ibid 467) is of the opinion that

> Individuals like groups, will vary in their priorities and in the way they define what is GOOD or VIRTUOUS to them. In this sense, they are like sub-groups of one. Relative to what is important for them, their individual value systems are coherent with the major orientational metaphors of their mainstream culture.

Clair (2002:1), working on intercultural communication, sees cognitive anthropology as one of the branches of cognitive sciences which attempt an inter-disciplinary investigation into the implications of cognitive models of language. From the list of the cross disciplinary scholars involved, he identifies the emergence of a new tradition that focused on how concepts are organised through language (Gardner, 1987).

Tropes and correlates in myths

Like metaphor, a trope is a figure of speech used in rhetoric involving a change of sense. It is a sense of comparison where a word is used to connote a sense other than its normal or literal one. In literary terms, there is a tenor which refers to the idea or concept such as death, ill luck, old age, wisdom, long life and others. There is also the vehicle which is the physical or natural phenomena used to describe or represent the tenor. A combination of these two constitutes the metaphor or trope. (Holman, 1972) In this regard, this study presupposes a symbiotic relationship between a mythical element that is the trope and the psychological effect or cultural interpretation with which it correlates.

Totemism, one of the myth-making indigenous narratives, is seen in terms of analogous correlations. Levi-Strauss (1991:9) observes that totemism "has been applied to a bewildering variety of relationships between human beings and natural species or phenomena". This observation is based on the definition of totemism by Rivers (1914) by the coalescence of three elements the social element, the psychological element and the ritual element.

In these totemic relationships, the names of the referred animal or object are usually shared by the members of the clan in the system. As it is the case with dead metaphors where the trope could have been forgotten while the correlates yet retain the features of the trope, so also members of the totemic system forget the origin of the names they share while they still have deep affinity with the name. Freud (1919:51) holds that

> The origin of these names had been forgotten. In that case they would seek to acquire more information by pondering over their names, and with their conviction of the importance of names they necessarily came to all the ideas that are contained in the totemic system. For primitive men as for savages of today and even for our children, a name is not indifferent and conventional as it seems to us, but is something important and essential.

The totemic system, especially the association of groups, towns and nationalities with the names of animals, natural phenomena and the likes is very common all over indigenous cultures of the world. While the totemic analogies in most cases are mythical, the origin and the bases for some associations are rather arbitrary. But in some instances they are historical even while still mythical. In many of these systems, there are always some mythical narrations behind the totems. The details of some specific totemic narrations shall form the discussion of a later part of this study.

Taboos constitute the other forms of mythography that are of concern to this study. Taboos are also metaphorical in nature. Among the aborigines of Australia, incest is the trope. The clans put a restriction on intra clan sex. Whoever violates this restriction commits

a taboo. The myth is that both the male and the female offenders must die. The coming together of a man and a man in a forbidden sexual intercourse is the vehicle. The myth is that there hangs an omen on the entire clan if the cleansing rite is not performed. According to Freud (1919), the offenders are actually hunted down in a chase that may last for days, weeks or for as long as it takes them to be caught and killed. This, in essence, means that even people who are not aware of the origin of both the taboos and the immediate circumstance of its violation may be involved in the eventual administration of the prescribed penalty. This is one aspect of taboo's likeness to metaphor where the initial trope does not necessarily matter in triggering off the vehicle.

In the Chinese society, "filial piety" de Barry (1967:169) referred to as the "basis of virtue and the source of all instruction", constitutes a trope. The idea which emanated from the oral instruction between Confucius and his disciple, Tseng Tzu, is seen as the pre-requisite to all other human responsibility, including state and national assignments. The vehicle for this trope is observed in the obligation to love and care for one's parents, to give them a proper burial and to reprimand them gently but firmly if they misbehave. To ensure a strict compliance, the Chinese could not become a ruler until the death of his father. And if he is noted to have failed in the filial piety, it casts a serious doubt on his entire character and the consequence may be that he is denied any serious societal responsibility.

The portentous myths are another trope used in the indigenous Han's Chinese group to censor the throne. The vehicle for the portents is creatures of Heaven and Earth which display unusual changes. Taken together, these are seen as warnings to men who perpetrate evils. The myth is that some natural vagaries portend calamities if men fail to desist from their evil ways after the Heaven had sent ominous portents to the earth. According to de Bary (1967:170-171) in an attempt to be fortunate, rulers prayed to the Heavens to send them warnings and portents. This becomes metaphorical too in the sense that the rulers tend to do

good at all times to please the Heavens as they are prepared to face the wrath of the indomitable Heavenly forces.

Olupayimo (2016) is of the opinion that among the Yoruba, *àalè* (restrictions) are placed on items both human and inanimate to prevent intruders from infringing upon such items. Though the correlations between the restrictions and the actual psychological or ritualistic effects of the restrictions vary and are arbitrary, members of the group are conscious of the presence or possibility of aversive implications of such restrictions. And so metaphorically, even in the absence of a tangible restriction, intruders are still apprehensive and in most cases, restrained from encroaching. He also identifies various forms of these metaphorical vehicles such as *èpè* (curse), *àalè* (restrictive charm) *mágùn* (impotency charm) and others. The details of the workings of taboos as a myth-making process shall also constitute part of the discussion at a later part of the study.

2.6 Semiotics: Myth-making with signs and symbols

Chandler (1994) has attributed the development of semiotics to Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure beginning from around the close of the nineteenth century. In the preface to his work, *Semiotics for Beginners* (2015), Chandler observes that it is more effective to view semiotics as concerned with the following disciplines rather than just define it as the study of signs which may be too loose in capturing the total essence of the subject of semiotics:

- definition of signs (metaphysics)
- identification and classification of signs (epistemology)
- the origin and evolution of signs (etymology)
- the relations among signs within systems of signs (structuralism)
- the positional rendering of sign constellations (syntagmatics)
- the potential rendering of sign constellations (paradigmatics)
- with the meaning of signs (semantics)

- and with the interpretation of signs (pragmatics)

(p. 2 of 3)

Further in his introduction to the text, Chandler (ibid 2 of 14) introduces the argument that semiotics provides the access for "crossing the boundaries of academic disciplines". Justifying this position, references were made to the works of Claude Levi-Strauss who assigns sign-systems to myth, kinship and totemism which are basic concepts in this study. Chandler's explanation also includes Lacan's psychological interpretation of sign-systems and the contemporary social semiotics which has moved beyond the structure of signs to the exploration of the application of sign in specific social situations to achieve specific social functions or purposes.

The definition of semiotics by Jegede (1999:201) as the "science of sign systems" as a study of systems of linguistic or non-linguistic communication becomes very apt in capturing the relationship between signs, symbols and myth-making processes. This study would also wish to borrow Ferdinand de Saussure's (1915) typification of sign as iconic, indexical and symbolic – a position which primarily sees semiotics from the position involving an interplay of three entities, "sign", "object" and "interpretant".

All the elements of mythography – myths, taboos and totems depend on signs, physical or verbal and the essence of the mythical signs is to communicate. This correlates with Eco Umberto's theory of semiotics which has a casual conception of semiotics as everything that has the potentiality to be taken for something else. In myth-making, this study agrees with the position of Jegede (1999:202) that "a sign function communicates ideas through a message when two functions enter into a mutual correlation. The information content and its corollary redundancy account for meaning". Meaning - making and myth-making are like the two sides of the same coin where the coin is the sign.

The relationship between myth- making and semiotic system is further explored by Abdurrahman Gulbeyaz (2014) relying on the position of Roland Barthes (1972):

> I count myself among those who opine that the mythology of a given society is to be seen and dealt with as a semiotic system, which I will try to do below in connection with two mythical circumstances which appear to display non-accidental parallelisms. In this attempt, I will implicitly refer, among others, to Barthes theory of Myths and Mythology, according to which, in analogy with the linguistic sign, "in myth, we find again the tri-dimensional pattern (…) the signifier, the signified and the sign. (37) (parenthesis contained in the original)

Terrence Hawkes (2003) explains Saussure's position on the linguistic sign from the perspective of relationship. He observes:

> The linguistic (or non-linguistic) sign can be characterized in terms of relationship which pertains between its dual aspects of 'concepts' and of 'sound image' – or, to use the terms which Saussure's work has made famous – signified and signifier. The Structural relationship between the concept of a 'tree' (the Signified) and sound-image made by the word tree (i.e. the (signifier) thus constitutes a linguistic sign, and, language is made of these: it is a system of signs that express ideas. (24) (Parenthetical emphasis mine)

Along this dimension of cross-disciplinary nature of semiotics, Hawkes (ibid) attributes the science that studies the life of signs to social psychology and calls it "semiology" (111) And like Gulbeyaz's review of Barthes earlier cited, Hawkes (ibid 113) quotes the communicative principles of semiotics as suggested by Roman Jacobson thus:

> Every message is made of signs; correspondingly; the science of signs termed semiotic deals with those general principles which underlie the structure of all signs whatever, and with the character of their utilization within messages, as well as with the specifics of the messages using those kinds of signs … The study of sign systems derives from an initial and very ancient perception that a sign has two aspects: an immediately perceptible *signans* and an inferable, apprehensible *signatum*.

Though this study has to agree, in toto, with the observations of Halkes and the preceding theorists that the relationship between the signifier and the signified may be altogether arbitrary. It may however be apposite to concur that where a signifier is weighted with a definite signified, it becomes a sign (Saussure, 1915: 113). The issue of the relationship between the signifier and the signified receives ample attention from Roland Barthes in his essay "Myth Today" (Mythologies, 109-159). He argues that "the relationship between the two terms is not of equality but of equivalence". The relationship, according to Barthes (ibid), does not exist in the fact that one term sequentially or structurally leads to the other but in the correlation that unites the two terms.

Myth-making has been given a prominent focus in Barthes' interpretation of sign in semiotics. As a matter of fact, he almost solely relies on the subject of myth in his semiotic analysis of meaning or sign in both verbal and non-linguistic communication. Barthes definition of myth deviates from the sole concept of classical mythology to include the concept of myth as "the complex system of images and beliefs which a society constructs in order to sustain and authenticate its sense of its own beign; i.e. the very fabric of its system of meaning" – (Hawkes ibid:118). To Barthes, sign (or meaning) is a product of the signifier and the signified in their associative sum total. The relationship between the signifier and the meaning here presupposes the assumption that myth predates or precedes the language or image that signifies meaning. The analogy can be seen in this simple mythic narration.

> Seeing a big grey rat in the afternoon by a Yoruba person
> is considered a very bad omen.
> Signifier - a big grey rat in the afternoon
> Signified - an unusual sight
> Meaning - a very bad omen
> Associative total - a myth already existed in the mind/culture
> of the person. The time of seeing the rat and the manner of appearance
> of the rat, i.e., it was not running away from a hunter or any danger.
> Mythical implication - The belief had existed among the Yoruba before the
> signification narrated above. This myth provides the associative
> that enabled the formation of the sign or interpretation of the meaning of a
> bad omen.

Chandler (2015) in his essay, *Denotation, Connotation and Myth,* extends the frontiers of the semiotic contexts of the sign and meaning with his argument on the two types of the signified.

> In semiotics, denotation and connotation are terms describing the relationship between the signifier and the signified, and an analytic distinction is made between two types of signified; a denotative signified and a connotative signified. Meaning includes both denotation and connotation … denotation tends to be described as the definitional, 'literal', 'obvious' or 'commonsense' meaning of a sign … The term connotation is used to refer to the socio-cultural and 'personal' associations (ideological, emotional etc) of the sign. These are typically related to the interpreter's class, age, gender, and ethnicity and so on. Signs are more polysemic … (p. 1 of 10)

Though Barthes actually opened up the mythical dimension to semiotics through some emphatic postulations such as that signs and codes are generated by myth; and that myth transforms history to nature, this position is not entirely limited to the Barthean semioticians. Lakoff and Johnson, (1980:185-186) are also of the opinion that myths are like extended metaphors and that myths help in cultural interpretations of human experiences.

Another dimension to the relationship between sign and myths that Chandler (ibid) attributes to the polysemic nature of sign is what Hawkes (2004:120) (correctly) refers to as the second and third order levels of signification. Apart from the fact that a sign is capable of generating more than one meaning, which in the mythical discourse is believed to be culture dependent, it is also posited by semioticians that meaning is also not just relative but could consist of complex systems where language (vocal/sign symbols) could form the first of such systems. A number of some other systems which Hawkes (ibid) refers to as the 'second-order signifying systems' now come in which may super impose upon the "first order" of language system.

Of a significant note to this study too is that fact that semiotics recognises that there is no absoluteness about a sign and what it could connote. As much as this position could be

benevolent to the background of meanings and their multiplication in mythography, it could also be a source of major confusion to the interpretation of mythical elements in the analysis of data collected for this study. This significance is underscored by Adeoti (2016: vii)

> However dense the tissue of symbols employed in representing the interrelations of man and nature, semiotics, as a principle of organizing literary experience, assists in the process of decoding the message encapsulated in artistic composition.

This study shall also be relying on the three major categorisations of semiotic modalities that define the forms that signs take to communicate as identified by Olaosun (2016:10). He identifies the verbal signs, the visual signs and the multi-modal signs. Olaosun (ibid: 10-11) explains the verbal signs as the spoken or written linguistic signs. The visual signs are other semiotic signs than the spoken or written while the multi-modal signs are those that combine either the verbal and visual signs on one hand or the signs that combine other codes such as colour and shape, images and colour or multiple images for a single communicative code. Olaosun (ibid., 2) comments further on the relationship between signs, symbols and their social functions, citing Lawuyi (1994):

> Symbols perform communicative functions at two levels: societal and individual. At the societal level, they act as socialisation tools, serve as major social control agents and perform a social integrative function. For the individual, they are critical resources that enable individuals to improve, maintain or restore their well-being and personal welfare. Man adapts and responds to series of environmental influence and change and the various strategies of adaptation and response patterns, which are all semiotic acts, bring about growth and development.

2.7 Secular and non-secular myth-making

The issue of secularity and non-secularity in mythography has been a topical, contentious and rather intricate one. As much as this study does not intend to plunge into the controversies generated by the relationship between myths or mythical elements and religious beliefs, it may be significant to examine the relatedness of the belief systems in both secular and non-secular communicative codes as functions of social control mechanism. Our approach to this issue shall be to examine the positions of anthropologists, ethnographic literature, sociologists, linguists and other related experts generally on the subject before a comparative analysis of the situations in the Nigerian and Chinese contexts.

The controversies surrounding the secularity or otherwise of myths have been in place since the subject of myths came into academic discourse. In his introductory chapter to Totem and Taboo, the two principal mythical elements in this study, Sigmund Freud (1919 [2015:6]), comments on the Aborigines of Australia where the study took place thus "It is quite doubtful whether they evince any traces of religion in the form of worship of higher beings". And just almost immediately, Freud adds that "Among the Australians, the system of Totemism takes the place of all religious and social institutions". While commenting on Totem and Taboo and bi-theistic nature of myths, Meyer Fortes (1966 [2015:10-11]) observes that "some are plainly secular or profane, in the Durkheimian sense, others have ritual value".

Commenting further, Fortes (ibid) makes reference to the Tallens' totemistic taboos to back up the argument on the nature of mythical elements where two types of taboos are identified. The difference between the two, according to Fortes, lies in the reason for deference to the taboos. One is taboos based on deference for moral reason while the other are those based on deference for ritual purpose.

Levi-Strauss' essay on Totemism (trans. Rodney Needhan, 1991) has introduced us to the inventor of the term Totemism as a theoretical topic, M.D. Lennan, who had published his

Forthnightly Review articles under the title "The Worship of Animals and Plants" in the 1860s. This title provides the basis for the assumption that Totemism like other mythical elements are tied to the strings of rituals. This assumption has been condemned by Levi-Strauss (ibid., 13), quoting Tylor (1899):

> What I venture to protest against is the manner in which totems have been placed almost at the foundation of religion. Totemism, taken up as it was as a side – issue out of the history of law, and considered with insufficient reference to the immense framework of early religion, has been exaggerated out of proportion to its real theological magnitude.

The position of Sigmund Freud (1919 [2015]) is not particularly different from the one expressed by Levi-Strauss above. Quoting J.G. Frazer, Freud (ibid: 51 of 91) writes:

> Totemism is a religious as well as a social system. On its religious side it consists of the relations of mutual respect and consideration between a person and his totem and on its social side it composed of obligations of members of the clan towards each other and towards other tribes.

The argument on the secularity of myths in the Chinese mythology is mirrored by I.D. Collier (2001:8):

> Figures from conflicting time periods, different religions, and opposing philosophies appear and interact in Chinese myths. In many Chinese tales, there is no clear separation between the mythical and the real … Myths contain strong influences from Chinese folk religion, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.

In all these, according to Collier (ibid: 84), there is a process of gradual integration between myths of secular and non-secular properties. Since all forms of myths are belief systems that must be deferred to by the people within the society or group, there is the possibility that the attitude or psyche of the people tends towards holding both secular and non-secular myths with equal deference. Martin Palmer and Zhao Xiaomin (1997:2) opine:

> When we speak of Chinese mythology we need to be clear that it represents streams flowing together, running parallel, merging or diverging from many places and from many different models of reality.

All the four epochs that contributed to the Chinese mythology – folk religion, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism have an admixture of secular and non-secular implications as they have very similar influences on the lives of the Chinese.

In Nigeria, as it is the case in most indigenous cultures of Africa, myths and sacred beliefs are so mutually inclusive to the extent that most non-African analysts are generally misled that most African myths are predominantly non-secular. This was the contention of many early scholars of African Oral literature such as Ruth Finnegan (1970) and M.J.C Echeruo (1973). Other scholars who expressed this sentiment include Anthony Graham-White, Richard Schechner and H. B. Menargh among others (Olugbamigbe, 2006:48 ff). Isidore Diala (2005 [2010]) delves extensively into the argument of secularity or otherwise of African myths as ignited by Finnegan, Echeruo and some other writers on Nigerian (Igbo) ritual-dramas against orthodox secular dramatic practices. The summary of his position is that though rituals or mythical elements are still found extensively in the non-secular art of Africans today, these mythical elements play social and mostly secular roles. Quoting Onuora Enekwe, Diala (ibid: 88 ff) argues that "a ritual becomes entertainment once it is outside its original context or when the belief that sustains it has lost its potency (89).

A typical example of the interplay of the secular and non-secular situations in African myths is contained in Jeyifo's (1984) x-ray of the Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre. In this essay, Jeyifo (ibid) recounts the melting of the ritualistic tradition of *egúngún* cult with the imported dramatic practices of some returnee African slaves which gave birth to the "*Alárìnjó*" popular theatre in the Western coasts of Africa.

The position of this study on the secular and non-secular implications of myths is that mythical elements in secular situations could be adopted, adapted or recreated from the rich sacred backgrounds of Nigerian belief systems for the purpose of social control as it is the case in the Chinese society. It has become natural for people in a society to defer to the sacred

mythical narratives in the group. If this attitude is adopted in respect of law, order and constituted authorities, the society would become more peaceful and a better place to live in. This dream can be achieved through the exploration and recreation of the rich myths of the land for social cohesion.

CHAPTER THREE

Totems in Nigeria and China

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis of the totems and the totemic relationships in ethnic nationalities across Nigeria and China. The chapter opens with an examination of the natures of the ethnic groups in both countries with a view to establishing the multicultural pattern of the ethnic nationalities. There is also an attempt to analyse the cultural correspondence and historical similarities in the formation of the modern day Nigeria and China as confederation nation-states. A comparative analysis of the states of affairs in the two countries is also done in the chapter to provide the basis for the conclusion in the later part of the study.

The types, purpose and narrations of totems among ethnic groups in Nigeria are analysed in the first instance and then followed by those in China before a comparative analysis of totems in the two national contexts is carried out.

3.2 Ethnicity and totemism

It becomes essential to explain the connectedness between ethnicity and totemism in order to clear the air on what may appear as a kind of distraction before we delve into the configurations of the ethnic groups in Nigeria and China. From the initial explanation of totemism earlier in this study, some facts have emerged that suggest the existence of close ties between ethnicity and totemism. In the first instance, totemism is conceived in terms of a group association or affiliation rather than individual association with a totemic item. A descendant of the Peruvian Inkas, Garcilaso de La Vegas, is reported to have written in the history of his people in the seventeenth century that his people used the totemic relationship to differentiate themselves from other people (Brill, 2015: 51). In the indigenous setting, the

ethnic group is usually the smallest unit that can be significant for the totemic relationship. And, in the opinion of Brill (ibid) the attempt to differentiate each group from the other was responsible for the identification of a name that was derived from the association of the group with a natural object in the environment.

One other significant link between totemism and ethnicity apart from the creation of group identity is the need to create and maintain social order. Every emerging human group is faced with the need to create and sustain an order that would guarantee peaceful relationship pattern within the group and to ensure its members are protected against internal and external aggression. Here also the group carefully observes a natural object within the environment and designs the group defence mechanism physically, psychologically or ritually after the objects totemic properties. Meyer Fortes (2015: 7) summarises Radcliffe-Brown's position thus.

> totemism stands for a variety of institutions in which selected portions of nature serve as material objects by reference to which segments of a society express their respective unity and individuality, on the one hand, and their interdependence in a wider structure on the other in terms of ritual attitudes, observances and myths.

Searching for social cohesion from a multicultural, multi-ethnic background is another relevant issue that makes it significant to analyse the implications of translating to a nation-state. The enormity of divergence can only be better understood when one considers the extent of differences that are coming together in the merger. For this reason, this study is providing an in-depth analysis of the ethnic group configurations of the indigenous societies of Nigeria and China.

3.3 Indigenous nationalities and internal cohesion in Nigeria and China

It is obvious from historical facts and the present realities about the country known today as Nigeria that an attempt to classify the socio-political entity, Nigeria, may plunge one

into an abyss of contentious claims and counter-claims if care is not taken. One of the most basic issues is whether the country qualifies on the basis of all efforts and political schisms as a nation or just a conglomeration of nations that have been coerced into a quasi mentality of nationhood. William Idowu (2008: 232-233) cites this contention with the argument that the word "nation" 'has come to attract different meanings'. He then quotes Gyekye's (1997:79) definition of a nation linking it to ethnicity'. He defines the word nation as

> A group or community of people who do not only share a common culture, language, history and possibility a territory but believe that they hail from a common ancestral background are therefore closely related by kinship ties … viewed from this perspective, it becomes clear that ethnicity is the most important crucible of a nation. (Idowu, ibid: 233)

While there may not be so much contention about the fact that the Nigerian state comprises various ethnic groups, there seems to be no convergence on the nature, number and at times, the delineation of the ethnic groups in Nigeria. Godfrey Ekhator (2012:41) claims, and correctly too, that "Nigeria is divided by ethnic cleavages into majority and minority ethnic groups". In an argument that lends credence to our claim in this research that there are different estimates on the number of ethnic groups in Nigeria, Ekhator (ibid: 42) writes:

> Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country, with cultural difference between its component ethnic groups. Some estimates put the number of ethnic groups at over 374, but the veteran sociologist, Onigu Otite provides an authoritative list of 446 ethnic groups in Nigeria.

While Akindele and Adegbite (1999) put the estimate at simply "over 400", an online source www.nairaland.com (2013) puts the number at 371 classifying all cultural entities in Nigeria effectively into the number.

Though there still exist a number of other estimations, projections and assertions about the total number of ethnic groups in Nigeria, this study may not be plunged into the argument about the precise number. A major finding that has been made about this issue of the exact number of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria is that all the various accounts reviewed

have been able to accommodate all the major groupings. The contentions have arisen from the attempt by the different accounts to classify the various groups, which are practically intricately interwoven. A practical example is that classification made by nairland.com 2013 (ibid) which groups the Ijumu, Okun, Kabba/Bunu and Yagba, differently. The visit of this researcher to the area revealed that from Obajana, an area very close to Lokoja in Kogi State, through Kabba, Ayere (boundary with Akoko in Ondo State), to Ijumu, to Yagba East, Yagba West, Mopa/Muro up to Egbe (boundary with Kwara state) are all known as Okun who, according to some oral sources, have a common ascendancy.[17] But for the reason of political delineation and some other reasons, another source could have divided Okun into three or four different groups namely – Ijumu, Kabba/Bunu, Yagba and Okun – all of which are sub-groups of the larger Yoruba nation. This and other related reasons are responsible for the variation in the number of existing or identified ethnic groups in Nigeria. (Gbenga Fasiku, 2008: 82-109).

Contributing to the concepts of ethnicity and nationalism in Nigeria, Toyin Falola (2000:259) traces the use of the terms – 'tribalism, ethnicity and nationalism', observing that tribalism, which was the original perception of Africans by the West, was racist and pejorative while ethnicity and nationalism connote the conscious acceptance of common cultural, historical and linguistic traits among others. All these form the group identity. Falola (ibid: 260:274) goes further to provide a comprehensive account of the historical, political and social contexts that informed the present ethnic groupings that exist in Nigeria. The flexibility or otherwise of the factors that define ethnic groups in Nigeria (like in all other nations can be summed up in the words of Ade Ajayi (1993) as recorded by Falola (ibid: 261-262)

[17] An oral interview conducted with Madam Durotinu Adejumo of Okunmo-Ogale in Ijumu Local Government Area of Kogi State on 25th June, 2016 during the Emidin (New Yam Festival).

> It has to be emphasized that the myths do not support the notion of tribes as units of exclusivity. On the contrary, the myths of origin and the traditions of migrations indicate the level of interaction not merely with immediate neighbours, but also sometimes with peoples at considerable distance … yet the myths are replete with stories of welcoming strangers and sometimes recruiting rulers from outside the exclusive zone, as well as successions, migrations, conquest and integration of groups … - a clear evidence of continuity and change, or history at work.

Ekhator (2012: 46-47) traces the historical evolution of ethnicity in Nigeria back to between the years 1898-1906 which started on the broad based dichotomy between the Northern and Southern protectorates. With the amalgamation of the North and South in 1914, the existing two regions were further divided to create the Eastern region. Though the attempts by the Colonial masters to delineate Nigeria along ethnic lines did not fall perfectly along cultural, linguistic and religious divides, it only succeeded in creating in the people the consciousness for smaller group affinity. Even after independence in 1960, with the creation of states and local governments which were attempts to shift the attention of Nigerians to the centre, ethnic loyalty at the expense of national unity became more pronounced. Ekhator (ibid: 47) asserts:

> It is, therefore, glaring that the creation of a new region was not to enhance the unity of Nigeria, but out of ethno-political rivalries. Such was the case in July 1967 when Gowon hurriedly created new states to curb Ojukwu's secessionist effort.

Even with the creation of thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) as the confederating units of the Nigerian state today, it is still obvious that Nigeria is divided along ethnic dimension. Each ethnic group is permanently suspicious of the other ones. Political affiliations and calculations are made based on ethnic sentiments. The socio-political realities of Nigeria today reveal the formation of ethnic militant groups to add a forceful touch to their sectional agitations. These militia groups include among others, the Egbesu-Ijaw boys in the Ijaw ethnic group, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign

State of Biafra (MASSOB) among the Igbo ethnic group, the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) among the Yoruba. The umbrella body for both violent and non violent agitations in the northern part of Nigeria is the Arewa Youth Congress (AYC). Details of the implications of these ethnic manifestations within the context of this study shall be discussed later in the study.

Ethnic nationalities in China

With the extremely lengthy years of the existence of China, being one of the earliest civilizations in the world, an attempt to trace the history of the peoples' may not be a particularly easy one. Yet it becomes imperative in this study to take a cursory look at the history of China because our focus on the ethnic nationalities in China is also serially linked with the history of the peoples. Wolfram Ebenhard (2004:11) claims that in recent times, views of scholars on the history of China have attracted some radical contentions and that ethnological, anthropological and sociological studies have shown more realistic results about China and her neighbours. Ebenhard (ibid) explains further:

> We know now that in the early times there was no "Chinese Race", there was not even "Chinese", just as there were no "French" and no "Swiss" two thousand years ago. The "Chinese" resulted from the amalgamation of many separate peoples of different races in an enormously complicated and long-drawn-out process, as with all other high civilizations of the world.

Virtually all the earliest attempts to trace the history of China tried to link it with the growth of one dynasty or the other. Most sources from within China attributed the successive civilizations in China to the efforts of the ruler of the period. Modern-day historians have contested the details and veracity of some of the claims made about the history of China (Ebenhard, 2004). These counter claims are said to be based on recent archeological facts. Despite the contentions that surround the history of China, there still exist some basic facts from some of these sources that can be of relevance to this study.

Kathleen Kuiper (2011:19) describes China as “a multinational country, with a population composed of ethnic and linguistic groups”. Kuiper (ibid) also identifies the Han as the largest ethnic group in China. Apart from Han, fifty-five other ethnic nationalities are also identified. These ethnic nationalities exist in what looks like autonomous settings. The most basic of the distinctive traits of the loose ethnic configuration is linguistic. Kuiper (ibid) asserts, “For this reason, the general basis for classifying the country’s population is largely linguistic rather than ethnic”.

Despite the domination of the Chinese population by the Han however, the issues of the centrality, primacy and supremacy of the ethnic nationalities in the history of the modern state of China continue to generate heated debates among Chinese ethnographers and historians. Though this study does not intend to dabble into these volatile debates, some points raised by Stephen Harell and Li Yongxian (2003:362) are of significant value to the focus of this work as they relate to interethnic relationship and cooperation in China. Of historical relevance in the essay of Harell and Yongxian is their contribution to the growth of the Chinese nation is that “The Peoples Republic of China (PRC)” is ‘a unified country of diverse nationalities’, (Harell and Yongxian ibid: 362). This account also claims that the history of China could be traced to three major sources – the Western explorers and missionaries on one hand; the Han-centric Chinese scholars on the other hand; and the Yi-centric with other minor ethnic groups. These three sources eventually merged. While the Eurocentric and the Han-centric accounts gave rise to the five stages of history popularised by Lewis Henry Morgan and re-interpreted by Engels and some other Marxist scholars, the Yi saw their past “in terms of genealogical than historical (Harell and Yongxian (ibid: 365).

Unlike many nations with history that can be captured in real or factual terms, it would amount to a great deal of wasted efforts and time trying to pin-point the history of China in terms of dates. Many historiographers agreed on the fact that the history of China is intricately

woven around the atrocities of successive dynasties and emperors from as far back as 1600 BC (Ebenhard 2004: 3). Collier (400: 14) makes a very crucial point in the observation that there is difficulty in trying to separate Chinese myths and Chinese history. Her claim is based on the reality that Chinese myths predated the invention of writing and myths had been a source of transmission of history for thousands of years. Pointing to the seemingly impossible attempt to capture exact dates in the history of China, Collier (ibid) explains further:

> To make the task of separating myth from history even more difficult, many history books were burned in 213 B.C by Qinshiangdi (Chin shi Wong dee), the emperor of the Qin (Chin) dynasty. In order to proclaim himself the first emperor of China, he ordered a massive burning of books concerning History, literature, and music.

With the coming of Confucian scholars later, they attempted to reconstruct the history of China by changing some existing myths, discarding some existing information to entrench their own philosophy. This further buttresses the domination of Chinese history by myths.

From this conglomeration of various ethnic nationalities and from the milieu of multitudes of traditions evolved the very dynamic nation-state referred to today as the People's Republic of China. The ethnic nationalities comprise the administrative constituents of the nation and they include the following:

3.4 Comparative analysis of ethnicity in Nigeria and China

Historical accounts (written and oral) indicated that the rise of ethnic groups in both China and Nigeria had been fuelled by inter-ethnic wars, strifes, conquests and in some cases through mutual consent for a merger by a migrating group and a receiving one (Falola, 2000, Ebenhard 2004). Another point of similarity between the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria and China is that all the indigenous nationalities came together under the colonization of Britain albeit at different points in history. The two states came under the epochal and domineering

influence of Westernization and the indigenous cultures of the ethnic groups had to endure the overriding competition with the imposed values of the West.

The organisation of partisan politics in the post-independence states of China and Nigeria revealed a hierarchical arrangement in the rating of ethnic nationalities in the two countries. Ethnic groups were addressed as either major or minor ethnic nationalities based mainly on the size of the main cultural group that constitutes the group. In China, the Han and the Yi groups are favoured as majority ethnic nationalities as a result of their number and history of dominance over the others. Mongolia and Tibets did not enjoy this same recognition, despite their large population because they did not have the history of conquest over the other ethnic groups (Harell and Li, 2003)

In Nigeria, three groups are repeatedly referred to as the major ethnic groups – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Until very recently, the categorization assumed a dimension that all other ethnic groups which are now regarded as minority nationalities were brazenly subsumed under the three. Recent classification has however recognized other ethnic groups in Nigeria such as the Ijaw, Nupe, Tiv, Idoma, Igala, Urhobo, Gwari, Ebira and the others as minority groups. (See Fasiku, 2008 and Ekhator, 2012).

Despite these initial historical similarities however, the independent states of the People's Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Nigeria manifest markedly significant multi-ethnic orientations and dispositions. Some of these differences are enumerated below.

a. The party state of China "preaches multinationalism and allows for limited expression of ethnonational autonomy" (Harell and Li Yongxian, ibid: 362). The Nigerian state advocates a strong centred Federal constitution where the confederating states have little or no respect for cultural identity but politically motivated contingencies. While the ethnic nationalities in China are encouraged to develop their cultural values as a

way of developing indigenous national Chinese affiliation, the Nigerian nation tends to weaken the growth of indigenous cultural traits as a way of weakening the units to the advantage of the centre.

b. In the past 50 years, China has evolved the development of educated, sophisticated and bicultural minority elite (Ralph A Litzinger, 2000). These minority elite had been deployed into the areas of administration, cultural scholarship and given the mandate for nation-building. This was to reduce the over-bearing influence of the majority groups that had dominated China over thousands of years thereby bringing about reduction in the gap between the majority and minority ethnic groups. In Nigeria, what we have observed is a system of perpetuation whereby a particular ethnic group can continue to hold on to political, military and economic powers over and above some others. Though lip service has been paid to matters of cultural integration, there seems to be no tangible result of mutual cultural integration between and among ethnic groups in Nigeria. Inter ethnic rivalry and clamour for the breakup of Nigeria along ethnic divides has never been more prominent than they are at this point in the history of Nigeria.

c. Issues and ideas about the history of ethnicity in China have been revisited and transformed into festivals, rituals and other cultural activities. They have become a tool for changing ethnic identity and ethnic pride into economic and policy reforms. In Nigeria, what looks like a semblance of this revisionist ideas was kindled as the Festivals for Black and African Arts and Culture (FESTAC) which held in Lagos in 1977. This gave birth to a pocket of National Festivals which held in some Nigerian cities for a while. The idea ended as a source of mere entertainment and another source of financial waste because it lacked any meaningful policy for development and continuity.

d. The perception of indigenous cultural identity in Nigeria and China was viewed from the negative and denigrative point by the West. The reaction of China to the issue of nationalism and cultural identity was significantly different from that of Nigeria. From the opinion of Shu Chunyan (2013: 16 ff), China responded decisively to attempts by the Japanese and other Western agents to relegate the culture and identity of indigenous Chinese traditions. In Nigeria, there emerged an iconoclastic elite group, usually religious or educational elite, that tried to foster the ideals of western cultural supremacy on the indigenous values of the people whom the elite group refers to as "local" or primitive".

3.5 Form and functions of totems in Nigeria and China

Our review of relevant literature to the subject of totems earlier in this study has opened a widely varied vista of conceptions about the subject which helped in no small measure to guide and direct our focus on the approach to totems. From the various definitions, classifications and analysis of totems reviewed, there arose the need for this study to investigate the various forms of totems, their nature and the nature of relationships between the totems and their adherents which would in turn assist to determine the functions that totems perform in the society that has them.

From the over one thousand totemised items gathered in this research, it was discovered that the class of animal totems has the greatest percentage of over 70%. This translates to the fact that of all the natural objects that are taken as totems in all cultures across the globe, animals are the most totemised. Next to the class of animals is the class of plant totems. This class takes about 10% of the total population of totems examined. The plant totems are however more prevalent in African cultures than in Asia, the Americas and the Oceania. Some geographical areas have also been totemised by some indigenous cultures. They include rivers, mountains, forests or groves, lakes and caves. This accounts for over

10% of the total items. The last significant group which is very few is the class of human totems. Some human beings have been totemised by some cultures and the details of their nature significance shall be analysed in turn. This form of totems is classified under the subject of totems namely – animal totems, plant totems, human totems and other natural subjects.

3.5.1 Animal totems

Most indigenous cultures of the world have one animal totem or the other. Having co-habited in their environment with different species of animals, people have different understandings, perceptions and conceptions of the species of the animals within their environment. The perceptions and conceptions of these animals led to varying influences by the animals on the people. They tend to relate with the animals by assimilating some of the tendencies of the animals through some modes of psychological association or affiliation. By this nature of association, the people in a particular society share, revert to or recreate the features, characteristics or virtues of the selected animal. Such animals thereby become the society's or people's totems. This totemic tradition has been in existence from the pre-historic era and has been prevalent in most traditions of the world. An example of the most commonly totemised animal is the Lion. Judaism, one of the ancient religions of the world referred to the supreme deity, God, as the "Lion of the Judah".

Many cultures of Africa, Europe, Americas and Asia share this symbolic affiliation with the Lion. One popular confirmation of this affiliation is the number of African national football teams that adopt Lion as the appellation or nickname for their national sides. They include the Terenga Lions of Senegal, the Indomitable Lions of Cameroun, the Atlas Lions of Morrocco and the Aegis Lions of Niger. It is a known fact that football is about the most popular sport in Africa, going by the population of people that follow and subscribe to the game on the continent.

Among the Zulu of South Africa, the Amazulu people refer to their ruler, and especially, their most reverent epic figure, Emperor Shaka as Lion. Like the Jewish tradition, many other dynasties and kingdoms of the world share one attribute or the other of the Lion thereby relating their ruler, founder or hero to the Lion. Similarly in one of the communities visited in Nigeria, Arigidi-Akoko in Ondo State, the title of the ruler of the kingdom is Zaki, a Hausa word for Lion.

The Lion is totemised for its strength, dignity and dominance. Communities see these attributes of the Lion as capable of instilling fear in the minds of intending assailants as well as inducing courage in the mind of their people in the event of threat or impending danger. People have the belief that toying with the Lion portends danger of fatal attack or even death.

In China too, the mountain Lion is the specie of Lions commonly found in the environment in the Chinese folk and epic tradition. The Mountain Lion is totemised for virtues like leadership, loyalty, courage, taking responsibility and foresight.

Another totemised animal that is common to both China and Nigeria is the Buffalo, also referred to by some people as the bush cow. In China, Buffalo is totemised for its great strength and it is regarded as a symbol of sacredness, abundance and gratitude. Our sources did not indicate whether it is forbidden to kill or eat the Buffalo in China. A typical example of a community in Nigeria where the Buffalo is considered a very sacred being is Ile Oluji, the headquarters of the Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo Local Government area of Ondo State. According to Chief Ojo Buraimoh, Buffalo is neither killed nor eaten in the town nor by the indigenes. The myth that connects the people of the community to the animal shall be narrated under another section of this study.

Perhaps the most centralized and the most popular animal totem across all the ethnic nationalities that make up China is the DRAGON. The Dragon does not only cut across cultural boundaries in China, its mythical conceptions also cut across the whole continent of

Asia and to some Western countries. Darma Keerthi, Sri Rajan and Zhou Chang (2010: 65) are of the opinion that:

> The "Dragon", depicted in mythology, is a conceptual animal that exists lively in mass consciousness in both East and West in the world. The "Dragon" culture" is deeply embedded into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thailand and some other eastern and western as the domain of cultural practices.

The sources of the totemic relationship between the Chinese and the Dragon date back to the pre-historic times and the details actually vary and are diversified according to cultural, historical and religions backgrounds of the accounts that narrate them. Efforts shall be made to highlight some of the major accounts under the appropriate portion of this study.

Though biologists (zoologists) and anthropologists claimed that fossils of the Dragon species lie in many museums and sites across the world, it is generally believed that the animal has gone into extinction. There are, however, attempts by people in the East such as China, Japan, Korea and other parts of the world to recreate the image of the animal. From the recreated image of the Dragon, one can draw a line of similarity between the Dragon and some animals that are of totemic reference in some other parts of the world. The animals belong to the reptile class of animals – they lay eggs, they are amphibious and are of immense speed. People in the communities also ascribe some magical powers to them like the Chinese ascribe to the Dragon.

Scientists have tried to establish that the Komodo dragon is actually a descendant of the mythic oriental dragon and that they share DNA properties. These are buttressed in the areas of strength and mobility, except for the fact that the former is devoid of wings. (www.natgeowild.com/komododragon). Another member of this class of reptile is the Iguana of the Caribbean Islands. And closely related to the Iguana is the type known as the Alligator in English. Three major tribes in the Delta State of Nigeria – Urhobo, Isoko and Itshekiri

have maintained a very strong totemic affiliation with the alligator. They do not kill the animal and must not eat its meat.

According to Madam Alice Unuefe[18], if an Urhobo indigene mistakenly eats from a pot that has been used to cook the alligator meat before, the Urhobo person must appease the spirits of the deities of the Urhobo race or face serious afflictions. Also, an Urhobo, Isoko or Itshekiri person is bound by tradition to pay the price for a bound alligator and set it free or the price for a dead alligator and set it free or the price for a dead alligator and give it a befitting burial. Failure to honour the alligator in either of the situations above puts the offender in a dire consequence. Like the dragon is seen as a symbol of peace, good luck and protection, the alligator is seen in its totemic cultural environment in Nigeria as a symbol of protection, good luck and divine guidance.

In China, the turtle is another animal totem. It is regarded as a symbol of the mother earth and totemised as a nurturer and protector and for its being very shy. In the Yoruba speaking parts of Nigeria, the tortoise is the totem for the trickster character of the popular folktale sub-genre of the folklore. The Yoruba folktale has imbued the tortoise with all measures of abilities and capabilities more than any other animal in the eco system thereby enabling the tortoise to perform any form of tricks as could be imagined by a story-teller.

Another animal totem in the class of the cross-cultural totems is the eagle. The eagle is another animal whose fame cuts across virtually every indigenous culture of the world. So also is the mythic dimension to the nature and habits of the eagle. In the Chinese context, the eagle is seen as a totem of divine spirit, sacrifice, connection to creator, renewal, healing and freedom. There are some parallel totemic beliefs between the Chinese and the Yoruba of Nigeria about the subject of the Eagle. First is the issue of renewal. A Yoruba saying goes thus:

[18] Madam Unuefe hails from the Kokori area of Delta State but resides in Igburowo, Odigbo Local Government Area of Ondo State where she granted this interview on July, 7, 2017.

Àwòdì re ìbarà
Ẹyẹ lọọ re ìyẹ́
Wọ́n ṣe bí ẹyẹ tikú

Trans

The eagle goes to Iba (a mountain roost)
The bird goes to renew its wings
They think the bird is dead

Another aspect of parallel totemic belief about the Eagle is the area of connection to creator, sacrifice and divine sacrifice. Like the Chinese, Yoruba also believe that the eagle because of its prowess in attaining very high attitude goes to commune with deities.

The snake is another class of animals that dominate the totemic belief of different indigenous cultures of the world. Snakes, by virtue of their very wide species, are spread across all the continents of the world. Their varied species make them adaptable to virtually all sorts of climatic conditions. For this reason, there is hardly any community in the world that does not have one species of snake or the other. As the species vary, so do the habits of these snakes thereby giving men varied impressions. Many cultures of the world also give the snakes various cultural interpretations.

Some of the most ancient accounts of the cultural dispositions to the snake include the one in the Jewish creation story (Genesis 3: 1).[19]

> Now "The serpent (snake) was more subtil than any Beast of the field which the LORD GOD had made.

From this account, the snake is considered as a very crafty creature that is not only capable of deceiving but also has the ability to cause fatal injury to man. The totemic relationship between man and the snake is enmity. The story in Genesis 3 (ibid: 14-15) confirms this.

> And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because Thou has done This, thou are cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and

[19] The New King James Version (NKJV).

> between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head,
> and thou shalt bruise his heel.[20]

Just as the specie of snake in the Biblical account above is not specified, the epic account of the Chinese snake totem is not specified. The Chinese have totemised the snake as a symbol of "Transmutation". The snake in China is totemised for such values like impulsiveness, shrewdness, rebirth, transformation, initiation and wisdom.

The 100 pacer snake is believed to be the ancestors of the Paiwan people. It became a totem of the people and many stories were woven around the emergence of this totem. One of the most popular is that which states that, one day, while the people of Paiwan went out of their community, they came back and found a group of intruders dead in their community. The intruders were said to have been bitten by the venomous 100 pacer snake. As a way of paying the benevolent snake back, they made it a totem. To celebrate the snake, Paiwan usually form a circle that recreates the shape of the snake during every wedding in the community. They also carve the shape of the snake during every wedding in the community.

[20] Ibid

Fig. 3.1: Python known as *eke* is a totem among some Igbo speaking communities in Nigeria. Among the Yoruba it is known as *Ọká* or *Erè* tabooed among some mascurade families.
Source: www.nationalgeographic.com

Fig. 3.2: The 100 pacer snake is a totem among the Paiwan people of China. It has a semblance of the Nigerian python and they both have community related totemic correlation**.**
Source: **www.snakesoftaiwan.com**

They also carve the shape of the snake as part of the crown of their ruler. They also use beads to design the colours and shape of the snake on their clothes and other adornments.

Though it has been observed that the Chinese totemic belief does not specify the particular snake type, a pictorial representation of the account in a piece titled Animal Totems and their meanings (www.china.com) has a picture of the large specie of snake in the class of the Python. This brings us to a parallel cross-cultural observation of totemic belief about the python from the Chinese background to a number of communities in Nigeria. The first among the Nigerian contexts is that of the Python (*eke*) in the Oku, Ihiala and Orlu Igbo cultural communities. Some accounts of the totemic relationships between the snake and indigenes of the communities are contained in the oral interviews with Ignetus Okeke[21], Victor Igwe[22] and Elizabeth Okoroafor[23]. The details shall be presented at the appropriate section in the study.

Oral accounts from the panegyrics of a particular Yoruba community known as the Lánịọ́ká, Alákà and Àpà also link the people to the snake totem. They are generally praised thus.

Ọmọ A'gbólú ọká sẹbí
Òjòlá fì gígùn sọlà
Gbálẹ̀ gbálẹ̀, gbáràwé
Ẹ má mà gbáràwé mọ́
Ẹjẹ́ kólúọká ó ríbi yan

Trans

Son of the one that makes a mighty viper his kin
The python that turns its length to wealth
You who sweep and pack fallen leaves
Please, do not pack leaves again
Allow the great snakes to have room for passage

The historical confirmation of the lines of these panegyrics was done at different times by a prominent Yoruba chanter and folklorist, Alabi Ogundepo and Sulaimon Raji a

[21] Ignatius Okeke (Mazi) is a 72- year-old man from Anambra State. He is a retired Civil Servant residing in Ondo, Ondo West Local Government of Ondo State.

[22] Victor Igwe is a native of Ihiala town in Anambra State and a student of Igbo L1 in Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo.

[23] Ms Elizabeth Okoroafor is a Chief Lecturer in Linguistics and Igbo Language, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo. She hails from Mbaino Local Government Area of Imo State.

scholar, respectively[24]. According to Ogundepo and Raji, descendants of these Yoruba communities wherever they settle do not kill snakes nor eat snake meat for reasons that would be narrated later.

The Tiger is another animal totem of cross-cultural significance. Like the Lion, both Chinese and Nigerian cultural references indicate that the tiger is held in high esteem for its great strength, speed and stealthiness which are attributes desired by warriors. For these reasons, indigenous hunters, military men and members of a community affiliate with the tiger. While this totemic relationship is common in the epic literature of most nationalities in China (Xie Tianzhen, 2007), the panegyrics of most Akoko and Akure people in Ondo State and those of some Ekiti communities in Ekiti State are usually interspersed with the cliché

Ọmọ Ọwá, Ọmọ Ẹkùn

Child of the ruler, child of the Tiger

This reference links the royal lineages of these communities, groups or clans to the Tiger.

Another animal totem that is common to ethnic cultural groups in China and Nigeria is the peacock. This is a bird that is admired by different people across the world for its beautiful feathers which the bird flaunts to attract the female or when it is excited. Ma Thiechuan 2015: 12) observes, "in Chinese culture, peacock is an auspicious animal, for the extremely bright feathers they have". In Nigeria also, the Ofa Community in Kwara State has adopted the peacock as its totem. According to Shehu Tijani Alarape[25], the peacock known as Ọ̀kín in the local Yoruba language has been associated to the people and the land. The people are praised thus:

[24] Dr. S. M. Raji is a Chief Lecturer in Linguistics and Yoruba Language, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo. He hails from Oje in Ibadan, Oyo State.

[25] An interview granted in Ofa, Ofa Local Government Area of Kwara State in 2017.

Fig. 3.3: The peacock is totemised in China and is a community totem in Ofa Kwara State in Nigeria for the beauty of its feathers.
Source: www.nationalgeographic.com

Fig. 3.4: Peacock (*Ọ̀kín*)'s Image adorns the palace of the *Ọlọ́fa* of *Ofa*, Kwara State, Nigeria
Source: Palace of the Olofa of Ofa, field study, 2015.

Ìyẹ̀rú Ọ̀kín
Ọlọ́fà Mojọ̀
Abísu jóókọ

Trans

Fluffy tail of the peacock
Owners of Ofa Mojọ̀
The ones that share name with (a specie of) yam

The general attitude of the Yoruba to the uncommon beauty of the peacock is contained in this proverbial assertion:

Ẹyẹ bí Ọ̀kín kò sí nígbó

There is no other bird like the peacock in the bush.

Finally, in the class of cross-cultural animal totems between China and Nigeria, the owl deserves to be mentioned. The owl is totemised in Chinese and Nigerian indigenous cultures as a messenger. It is known that the owl is a bird of prey that is nocturnal. People commonly refer to it as a bird of the night. Incidentally, Chinese and Nigerians attach an ominous sign to its appearance during the day. This is aptly captured in the writing of Sharon Chancellor (2016):

> Anytime an animal physically or visually presents itself to you in some unusual way, a way that stands out to you and truly grabs your attention of it, the spirit of that animal is bringing you a message … Anytime you dream of an animal, the spirit of that particular animal is bringing you a message.

The details of the totems and the messages they bring constitute the kernel of the discussion of mythic narratology and this shall be espoused further under that sub-heading later in the study.

For the reason of different geographical contiguities, it is expected that no two peoples from two different nations should have all their animal totems as perfectly correlating in terms of names, symbols and totemic functions (Tiechuan, 2015:12). That accounts for our classification of another group of animal totems that are based on specific national, ethnic or commonly totemic relationship. This type of animal totems seems to have waned in China

where there have been deliberate attempts to incorporate all ethnic affiliations into national orientations. Ethnic based totems however still exist largely in the Nigerian contexts. They are analysed below.

3.5.2 Historical and community based totems in Nigeria

Each of the following animal totems is linked with the history of their communities. The totem either has to do with the founding of the town or lineage or it relates to the existence or death of the founder. Each totem is highlighted below with a brief analysis of the communities that totemised them.

Dog. The Dog is not reared, killed nor its meat eaten by the indigenes of *Ara*, a community near Ejigbo in Osun State. This is confirmed in an oral interview with Chief John Adeleke of Oyewole compound in Ara[26]. So also, the dog is neither killed nor eaten by the Oluoje lineage of Ibadan in Oyo State of Nigeria. This totemic relationship was confirmed by Dr. Raji Suleiman,[27] an oral literature scholar who belongs to the Oluoje lineage. In two different narrations, the sources link their relationships to the dog totem with oral historical facts that have to do with the ancestors of the communities.

The Rhesus Monkey.The people of Owo in Ondo State are forbidden from killing or eating the meat of the monkey. A line of the praise chants of the Ọwọ people has this.

Ọmọ Ọlọ́wọ̀
Ma re jẹran ẹdun

Descendants of Ọwọ
Who do not eat the meat of monkey

Mr. Festus Alaba Omomeji[28]confirms this relationship to the researcher narrating the historical background in an oral interview, which is provided in Chapter Four.

[26] Oral interview with Chief John Adeleke of Oyewole compound, Ara, near Ejigbo, Osun State on 26th June, 2016.

[27]Dr. S. M. Raji is a Chief Lecturer in Linguistics and Yoruba Language, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo. He hails from Oje in Ibadan, Oyo State.

[28] Oral interview with Mr. Alaba Omomeji of 32, Oke-Ogun Street, Owo on 24th June, 2015.

The rhesus monkey is also the community totem of the Ipe town in Akoko South East Local Government area of Ondo State. Mr. Olude Olowogbeja[29] links the totemic relationship of the people with the monkey to a historical account that is given in Chapter Four.

[29] Oral interview with Mr. Olude Olowogbeja of Ipe Akoko, Akoko South East LGA of Ondo State on 25th June, 2015

Fig. 3.5: The Monkey is totemised in China and it is a community totem in Owo and Ipesi-Akoko in Odo State of Nigeria. Lagwa Okwata community of Mbaise forbids the killing, hurting or eating of the monkey (*Enwe*). So also is the monkey forbidden among the Iwe e eri enwe clan in Imo State.

Source: www.monkeyworlds.com

The Giant rat (*Òkété*). The giant rat, as common as it is across Yoruba towns and communities must not be eaten by indigenes of many towns, sub-ethnic groups, clans and lineages in the cultural group. Though the stories behind the totemic relationship with the giant rat differ from one lineage to the other, they all are linked to historical factors. Some of the specific instances include.

a. **Ondo**. All the Ondo speaking sub-ethnic group which covers about six local government areas of Ondo State do not eat the giant rat which is called *Òkété* in the environment. Pa Akintade, a retired Head teacher and an octogenarian indigene of Ondo[30] recounts the myths behind this to the researcher in an oral interview.

b. **Idanre**. Though the Idanre people speak a sub-dialect of the Ondo dialect and share common geographical boundaries, names and cultural similarities with the Ondo people, the mythic explanation of their relationship with the Okete is outrightly different. The Idanre version of the totem was narrated by Mr Abaringa and cross-validated with Pa Akinnisoye[31] in two separate interviews with the researcher.

c. **Ikoyi**. The Ikoyi community belongs to the popular Olukoyi lineage in Yoruba oral history[32]. Though the lineage has been dispersed across many other communities in Yoruba land, the Ikoyi lineage still has contiguity with the Ikoyi town, in Isokan Local Government area of Osun State. The totemic relationship was narrated by Prince Adewale Ifakunle[33] of the Osun Ministry of Culture and Tourism who is also a descendant of the Ikoyi lineage.

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[30] An oral interview with Pa Joshua Akintade on October, 2nd, 2017 at Lovaboy community, Ondo.

[31] An oral interview with Chief Akinnisoye, the Abarinja of Isalu, Ode-Idanre, No. 8, Oke-Odunwo Street, Idanre, Ondo State.

[32] Olukoyi is the Yoruba race saddled with the protection of the Alaafin of Oyo and the Yoruba race. The lineage known for its mercenary activities and merchandise.

[33] Oral interview with Prince Adewale Ifakunle, an indigene of Ikoyi town in Isokan LGA of Osun State on the 20th of June, 2015.

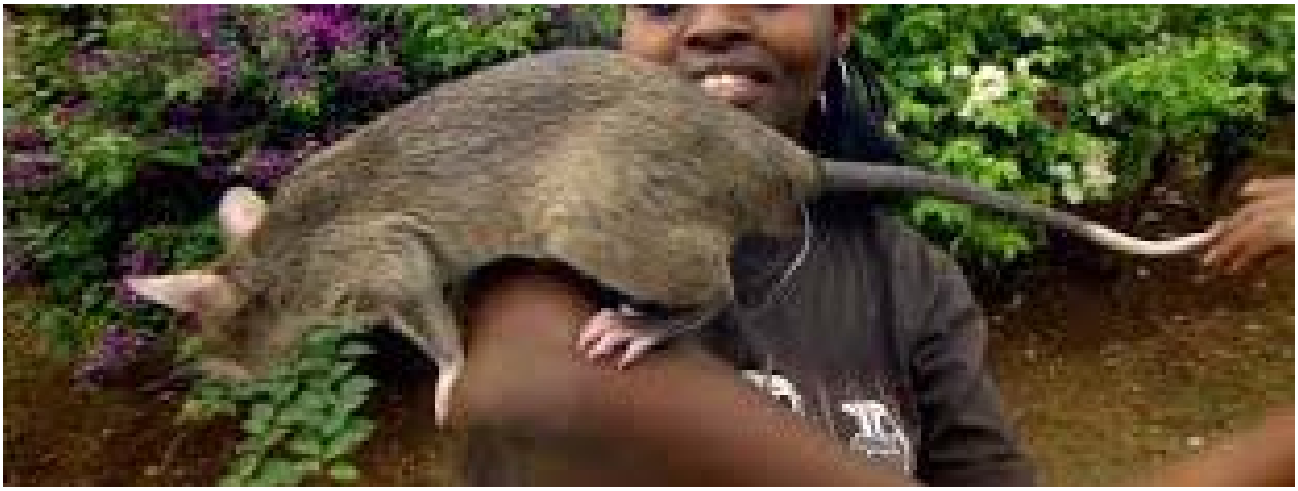

Fig. 3.6: The Giant rat called *òkété* in Yoruba is a totem tabooed in many Yoruba communities like Ondo, Idanre, Oke-Itase in Ile-Ife, and among the Olukoyi. It is called *Ewi* in Igbo after which Nnewi in Anambra State is named. It is also the totem of the Nnewi community.

Source: www.krugerpark.co.za

d. **Oke-Itase, Ile-Ife**. The people of Oke – Itase are an aboriginal group who settle in Ile-Ife, the culturally acclaimed source of the Yoruba race[34]. The giant rat also called *Òkété* is a totem of the community.

The totemic relationship between the Oke-Itase people and the giant rat derives from an Ifa corpus narrated by Chief Awotunde, the Asiwaju Ijo Orunmila[35] in an oral interview with the researcher.

Other animal totems are attached to some other Yoruba towns include the following.

Odídẹrẹ́ (the Parrot) in Iwo. The people of Iwo in Osun State are often referred to in relation to the parrot. Three princes of the Oluwo ruling house provided the totemic background of the parrot in separate oral interviews with the researcher.

Ẹyẹ Àkọ̀ (Stork) in Modakeke, Ọsun State. The people of Modakeke in Osun State are also praised in line with the *Àkọ̀* bird thus.

Àkọ̀ ráyè
Ẹyẹ gbèmí n ò ṣebi
Àkọ̀ gbèmí n ò ṣèkà

Land where the *Àkọ̀* thrives
This bird, support me, I am not into evil
Àkọ̀, support me, I am not wicked.

The narration of the totem was done by Chief Dr. Adisa Ogunfowokan, Director of Natural History Museum of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile – Ife[36].

Ẹyẹ ẹ̀gà (palm-bird) among the Oluoje lineage[37]. The praise names of the Oluoje lineage also reveal their totemic relationship with the palm bird commonly referred to as *ẹ̀gà* among the Yoruba. Some lines of the Oluoje panegyrics go thus:

Òjé kìí jẹ̀gà
Ẹ bá mi mú òròrẹ́ bọ̀ nínú oko

[34] Yoruba myths and oral sources claim that Ile-Ife is the source of the entire Yoruba ethnic group. The historical sources also link all Yoruba sub-ethnic groups to this single genealogy.

[35] Interview conducted on the 27th June, 2015 at Ile-Ife in Osun State, Nigeria.

[36] Interview conducted on the 26th June, 2015 at OAU, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.

[37].Dr. Sulaimon Raji also granted this interview on the 26th of June, 2015 at Delesolu compound, Oje, Ibadan.

Ọmọ aparun jẹ́gẹ́dẹ́ etí Yẹmẹtu
Ẹlà ni mo kò, n ò gbọdọ̀ jẹran ẹ̀gà

Trans

Oje does not eat *ẹ̀gà*
You may bring me a smaller bird from the farm
Owner of the small bamboo grove near Yemetu
I relate to *Ẹla*, I must not eat the flesh of *ẹ̀gà*

The details of the totemic narration as provided by Dr. S. M. Raji of the Yoruba Department in Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo[38] shall be provided later in the research.

Adiye (Fowl) in Ode-Aye. The people of Ode-Aye in Okitipupa Local Government Area of Ondo State are forbidden from eating chicken obtained from the local fowl. The historical foundation behind this totemic relationship was narrated by the King of the town, Oba Akinmusayo Akinlade in an oral interview that took place in the King's palace.

In Ikere-Ekiti, in Ekiti State, horses must not be ridden and the horsemeat must not be eaten. The story behind the totemic relationship between the indigenes of Ikere-Ekiti and the horse was narrated by Omofele Abayomi[39] in an oral interview.

Plant totems

As earlier observed in this study, animal totems enjoy a great deal of dominance over plant totems in most indigenous cultures of the world; this however does not deny plant totems their place in the society. It has been observed that while animals are very active in their relationship with humans; and while most animals dictate the degrees of their relationship with man, the plants are less active or completely passive in most cases. Humans dictate their relationship with the plants in their environment. In most indigenous cultures where the people are supposedly animistic and totemistic, their relationship with the plants is more definite. This situation seems to have redefined the rise of plant totems in China,

[38] Dr. S. M. Raji is a notable chanter, an oral literature scholar and a Chief Lecturer in Yoruba Studies.

[39] Oral interview conducted with Chief Omofela Abayomi at No. 13, Odo-Oja Street, Ikere Ekiti on July 2nd, 2015.

placing them along the totemic pedestal of some other ancient and less de-naturalised cultures of the world.

While we were able to identify a number of animal totems that share similar totemic relationships between Nigeria and China, the situation is not so with plant totems. This is understandable considering the vast geographical gap between the two countries resulting in significant climatic variation between them. Though some plant varieties thrive in both Nigeria and China, such plants do not have the same symbolic representation in the peoples' cultures. Some examples of plants that grow in both Nigeria and China include bamboo, pine, ginger and palm tree. Apart from ginger that attracts medicinal value in both cultures, the others have different cultural connotations. The plant totems are now analysed in turn.

Pine. The Pine (song) in China is referred to as evergreen. The pine does not wither like most other trees. It is regarded as a symbol of longevity and nobility. Owing to its ability to withstand the harsh winter, it is regarded as a symbol of noble endurance. The pine is also popularly used in Chinese decorative art as an auspicious motif.

The tree that has this endurance ability in Nigeria is the palm tree. Most cultures in Nigeria see the palm tree as an economic tree of great value. Chief Hubert Ogunde;[40] a popular dramatist and Yoruba folk singer once composed these lines in praise of the palm tree comparing it to the benefits of a faithful and committed lover:

Ẹgungun a wọ́wé
Ìrókò a wọ́wé
À ti wọ́wé ọlọ́pẹ, o dọ̀run
Olóore l'ọ̀pe o

Trans

The baobab will wither
Iroko too withers
The palm tree withers only when dead
The palm tree is a benefactor

[40] Exerpt from Ayanmo's (Destiny) audio track.

Figure 3.7: The Pine is totemised in China for its longevity and adaptability to all weathers and harsh conditions. It is a symbol of long life.

Figure 3.8: The Palm tree is a valuable economic tree that has a correlating totemic reference in Nigeria to that of the Pine in China as a symbol of longevity and endurance. Incidentally, despite the fact that the palm tree can thrive in China, the plant does not attract the cultural recognition that Nigerians accord it. In the same vein, though many Nigerians plant the pine as an ornamental plant, no culture in Nigeria seems to pay attention to its symbolic relationship.

Source: Field study, 2017

Bamboo. The bamboo is pronounced *Zhu* in Chinese. The pronunciation is a homophone for *Zhu* which means 'to congratulate' in Chinese language. The writing and pronunciation of Chinese words are known to be highly influential on the rich culture of symbolic association. The association of good luck to the sound of the bamboo creates a bond between the people and the plant on the one hand. It is also a symbol of longevity and vitality owing to its nature of growth and ability to remain green all year round. The bamboo also represents strength, flexibility, durability and resilience.

Plum blossom. This is another ornamental plant in China. It is known as *meihua* in Chinese. It is the first flower to bloom each year as it appears when the weather is very cold. While other flowers wither in the winter, the plum blossom yields its beautiful petals. It is the symbol of renewal, perseverance and purity. The five petals of the flower are also significant to the Chinese as they are symbolic of the number five which is sacred and auspicious figure in Chinese.

Chrysanthemum is known as *jihua* in Chinese. It is a flower of the autumn and symbolic for its health-giving properties. It is a symbol of longevity. As far back as the 206 BC, during the Han Dynasty, people drank Chrysanthemum wine on the ninth day of the ninth luna month in order to prolong their lives. This practice still continues nowadays as Chinese still drink Chrysanthemum tea for its health properties.

Peony. This is known as *mudan* or the king of flowers in Chinese. It is a symbol of royalty and virtue. Among the Yoruba in Nigeria, the plant that is accorded this symbol of royalty is known as *akòko*. Yoruba proverb has it that

> *A kìí fi ewékéwé joyè léhìn akòko*
>
> We do not use another leaf to perform chieftaincy behind the *akòko*[41]

[41] Newboldia Leavis (Bignonia ceae)

A Dictionary of the Yoruba language[42] has as part of its entries on the plant:

> The tree is so sacred that it is never used for fire or touched with the axe.

This is backed up with this saying

> *Ó se po, a kìí fi ẹdùn kan akòko*
>
> Henceforth, the *akoko* tree must never be touched with the axe.

In many communities in Yorubaland, the *akóko* tree is usually planted to mark historical sites and locations such as burial sites of rulers, worship sites and others of cultural importance. The leave of the *akóko* tree are usually placed on the head of a new chief to mark the conferment of the title and authority on the recipient. Without this plant, the leaves of any other plant cannot be used. Apart from these, the sap of the *akóko* tree is also useful for medicinal purposes.

Ìrókò[43] is one of the many trees that are used for lumbering business in the rain forests zone of Nigeria. It is a highly totemised tree in the Yoruba-speaking part of Nigeria. It is believed to be habouring different kinds of spirits which could be either benevolent or malevolent. Many Yoruba proverbs are woven around the people's belief and their relationship to the tree. Some of these proverbs include

> *Àti kékeré lati í pẹ̀ka ìrókò*
> *Tó bá dàgbà tán, Á gbẹbọ lọ́wọ́ ẹni*

Trans

> The *iroko* should be tamed when it is young
> If it is fully grown, it demands sacrifices from one.

Literally, it means cutting the branches of an Iroko tree can only be done when it is too young to harbour the spirits. Cutting any part of the tree cannot be done without offering the spirits some appeasement. This is a proverb used to admonish someone to be pro-active. Another one goes thus.

---

[42] *A Dictionary of the Yoruba language* (2012 ; 1913) Ibadan: University Press Plc.

[43] *Chlorophora excelsa*. It grows widely in the Rain forests of South West Nigeria, where it is known for its economic value.

A gbé ọmọ kékeré bú ìrókò
Ó ń bojú wẹ̀hìn
Ṣé ọjọ́ kan ni olúwéré ń bínú ni?

Trans

A curse is placed on a child with the iroko
He (the child) looks back [to see the effect)
Does the spirit of Oluwere react immediately?

Yoruba generally believe that the spirit of the tree known as Olúwéré has the ability to punish any offender. People also place sacrifices of varied purposes under or near the tree to attract good luck or to avert impending calamities. This view is also backed up by Ifá corpus and some other Yoruba folktales according to Aare Gàniyù Afọlábí in an oral interview. An example is *Ogberínú*, an Ifa verse chanted thus:

Ogbè l'ọ́tùnún, Ìròsùn losì,
Àile jàsán sun awo
Ní í mu awo pe b'ọ̀rókò

Trans

Ogbè at the right, Ìròsùn on the left
It is the avoidance of sleeping without food
That makes herbalists gather to appease *Irókò*

The popular *Olúrómbí* folktale among the Yoruba is another narrative that points to the mythification of the *Irókò* tree. In this narrative, a female trader is said to have approached the *Irókò* tree on her way to the market for good fortunes at the market. She made a vow to sacrifice her only son, *Olúrómbí,* to the tree if she becomes successful. She received the favour of *Olúwéré* and good fortunes in the market but failed to surrender her son as vowed. The son was forcefully retrieved from her by the Spirit. The rest of the narrative is contained in this folk song:

Oníkálukú jẹ́jẹ̀é ewúré, ewúré, ewúré
Ọpọ ènìyàn jẹ́jẹ̀é àgùntàn, àgùntàn, bọ̀lọ̀jọ̀
Olúrómbí jẹ́jẹ̀é ọmọ rẹ, ọmọ rẹ̀ apọ́n bí epo
Olúrómbí o o, janin, janín, Ìrókò janin, janin

Trans

Everyone vowed a goat, a good goat
Many people vowed a sheep, a robust sheep
But *Olúrómbí* vowed her child, a good looking child
Ha! *Olúrómbí, Ìrókò* is tough and sturbborn

Human totems

Available data in this study also indicate that human totems exist in both Nigerian and Chinese indigenous cultures. In each of the two major categories of human totems in China, there are elements of religion and they include the following:

a. Eight Immortals (baxian)

Some legendary beings are said to have lived at some different times in the history of China. They were also claimed to have attained immortality through their great endowments in the understanding of nature's secrets. They are Zhongh Quan, Zhang Guolao, Lu Dongbòn, Cao Guójiu, Li Tieguai, Han Xiangzi, Lan Caihe and He Xiangu. According to the Chinese epic tradition, each of the eight immortal beings represents a different condition in life. The conditions are poverty, wealth, aristocracy, plebianism, age, youth, masculinity and feminity. Taken together, they symbolise prosperity and longevity. Nowadays, they have become popular motifs in Chinese art.

b. Three Star Gods

The totems of the three star gods in China are often taken together. Individually they are the god of fortune (Fuxing), the god of prosperity (Luxing) and the god of longevity (Shouxing). The god of fortune is depicted by the icon of a man carrying a young boy; the icon of prosperity is a man carrying a scepter while the god of longevity is depicted as a man carrying a tall staff and a peach.

In Nigeria, some cultures too have deified some legendary figures that were said to have lived in some of their communities before they became immortalized owing to some supernatural circumstances. Among the Yoruba, deities such as Ṣàngó, Ògún, Ọya and Ọ̀ránmíyàn are said to be living legends and rulers of the Oyo Empire before they ceased to exist as mortals and later acquiring immortality (Bolaji Idowu, 1962, C.L. Adeoye 1979).

Blood as a totem

Like in most other cultures of the world, Chinese and Nigerian indigenous cultures place very high premium on blood, especially the blood of human beings. Human blood is highly totemised. It is seen as a symbol of life. As much as possible, people avoid the shedding of innocent blood and a lot of people are also afraid of sighting or coming into direct contact with human blood.

Blood is considered as the strongest form of bond between two individual beings. Among the Yoruba, exchanging very tiny drops of blood by two people in an oath is seen as the best and most dependable assurance that the two parties can rely on for the sanctity of the oath. Among the Ibo ethnic groups too, any form of bloodletting is viewed as a sacrilege against *ala*, the goddess of the land. An appeasement must be made for other people in the community to avert the repercussion of the crime.

Most cultures of the world forbid eating any animal that dies with the whole content of its blood intact. This cuts across religious and cultural divides as most of the modern religions and the traditional religions examined in this study prescribe that the blood of animals must be drained before they can be prepared for food.[44]

Apart from these immortal beings which have been totemised as symbols for such issues as retribution (Ṣàngó), creativity and justice (Ògún) fertility and prosperity (Oya and Osun), some special forms of human beings are also totemised among Yoruba and Ibo cultural extracts. Such people include dwarfs, albinos, hunchbacks, and twins (including all multiple births). Yoruba call these categories "*ẹni òrísa*", that is, people or properties of deities. Yoruba attach some forms of good luck to the birth of these forms of beings.

While many people tend to believe in the patriarchal tendency of the Yoruba culture, the position of Yoruba traditional belief actually accords women some totemic recognitions

[44] The Christian religion forbids eating an animal that dies with its blood, so also is Islam. See Leviticus 11 in the Holy Bible.

that put the woman in a vintage position. According to Chief ‘Suṣi Awogbola, a traditional practitioner, the pregnant woman is said to be carrying a load of the gods inside her and so she is forbidden to die as a pregnant woman. In addition, a woman in her menstrual period is said to be laden with powers that can neutralize very potent medicines, as such, they should not come into contact with any useful, potent or powerful medicines.

Others

There are still some categories of totems both in China and Nigeria that cannot be classified under the previous forms analysed. Though we do not intend to discuss a lot of these totemic items which we simply intend to group as the others, it is necessary to mention some of them since we also recognize them as totems in some societies where they exist. Many of the totems in this group could easily have been analysed under the name geographically related totems. They include rivers, mountains, hills, rocks, forests and grooves. Others are man-made figures like carved wood, bronze and gold images. There are still some religious related totems such as shrines and temples, worship items, divination materials and relics of dead heroes, or religious leaders.

It is a common fact that many cultures in Nigeria totemise rivers that flow through their communities. Apart from providing the mainstay for the economic and commercial activities of the communities, many communities have turned rivers, lakes and other waterways in their neighbourhood to their symbols of identity. For instance, twenty out of the thirty-six states of Nigeria either have their names after a river or use the river as part of their states’ slogans. In some cases, festivals are held periodically at the river banks to mark the social, historical or religious links between the communities and the rivers. Examples include, the popular Ọ̀ṣun Òṣogbo festival held every first weekend of the month of August; the Argungu fishing festival in Kebbi State; boat regatta held in several riverine areas of the Niger Delta, to mention just a few.

Deities have been attached to the presence of many of these rivers in Nigeria to provide a robust basis for role playing and dramatic enactment of the people's interaction with the perceived presence of the other beings in the waters. They include Olókun (owner of the seas) in the seas and lagoons that line the coastal parts of the country. Yemọja is the deity in charge of all waterways. Yemọja simply means the mother of all fish fingerlings with the symbolic image of the mermaid. Ọya is the deity in charge of the Niger River. In Ondo South Senatorial Distict, there is a stream known as Omińlá (Large Brook). It takes its source from a community known as Ìlúńlá in Ondo West Local Government; it flows through communities in Odigbo Local Government Area and becomes part of the estuaries in Okitipupa Local Government and Ilaje Local Government Area of the State. In most of the communities where the brook is identified as Omińlá, fishing is forbidden in the river. The deity "Yèyé ènà" is worshipped in seven communities and the fish are regarded as relations to the people in the communities. They are neither killed nor eaten.[45]

Grooves and forests are the other type of non-human and non-animal totems identified in the course of gathering data for this study. Totemised forests or sacred grooves abound in virtually all indigenous societies of Nigeria. This perhaps informed what gave rise to the concept of Evil Forests in the literary works of Chinua Achebe where some special categories of people in the society are buried. In many parts of the indigenous Yoruba society, such grooves are referred to as *Igbó orò* or cult grooves. Ordinary men or non-initiates are forbidden from accessing these forests while some of them are little enclaves like the Ìfọ̀ré grooves in Ondo communities. They may be full fledged virgin and impregnable forests like the Okija shrine[46] or Oranmiyan groove[47].

[45] The communities include Ilunla in Ondo West LGA, Igburowo, Oro, Ajue, Asewele Oja, Asewele Korede and Odigbo in Odigbo LGA of Ondo State.

[46] Okija shrine is in Okija town situated along the Onitsha-Owerri expressway in Anambra State.

[47] Oranmiyan groove is a sacred site in Ile-Ife, the historical source of the Yoruba race.

In China too, totemising natural and geographical elements is a common practice. In the middle of March every year known as the *Guyu* in Chinese Calendar, a festival known as the Tianheng Festival holds before the fish harvest to offer prayers for the safety of fishermen and for a good harvest. Hungjuan Zhao (2017:298) quoting from the Tiangheng Compilation Committee provides further information:

> Tiangheng sea festival is the largest ceremony of offering sacrifices to the sea in the northern part of China, which has lasted for more than 500 years. This festival is a marine culture carnival with Chinese characteristics, which is people want to get rid of the pressure of hard work and life dilemmas to pray to the sea gods for harvest and happiness in the emotion.

Like the rivers, lakes and seas which form the mainstay of the existence of humans in their various environments, mountains also constitute a significant part of the geosphere. Hills and mountains symbolise a lot of issues in human environment. Oral sources have it that the presence of mountains was one of the most significant factors for human settlement in the old days. Just in line with the Biblical statement that, "As mountains surround Jerusalem" (Psalms 125:2) so also did men feel that mountains provided the much needed security for the people that live around them. Mountains provide shields as invaders always had problems climbing the hills. Dwellers around mountains also used the high peaks as security key posts to sight enemies. The volatile climatic activities around the mountains are also known to be responsible for good rainfall and the necessary vegetation for abundant crop production.

For the reasons above, dwellers around the mountains become spiritually attached to the hills and mountains. Several festivals and rituals are performed in honour of the totemised mountains. In Yoruba part of Nigeria for instance, these festivals and rituals take place in virtually all towns that have imposing mountains. The Orósùn festival holds every year in

Idanre Hills[48]. Other notable examples include the Olúmọ Rock which has become a veritable tourist site in Abeokuta, Ogun State and the Òkè-Bàdàn festival in Oyo State that has since assumed the status of a satirical festival.

Mountains are also totemised in China. T. H. Barret (2009: 157), reviewing a number of ethnographic and bibliographic entries on the place of mountains in Chinese religion came to the assertion that, "Mountains, in China as elsewhere, are usually taken as symbols of immutability". Folk beliefs in China and subsequently all the major religions like Confucianism, Daoism, Budhism, Taoism and the likes all choose mountain centres for their worship and special gatherings. This view is further amplified by Kazuyuki Yano (2017: 1):

> Today, this notion of sacredness is generally accepted and understood together with concepts from Chinese philosophies, such as Confucianism, Taoism and Budhism, which have evolved over a long time.

Kazuyuki (ibid) affirms that though mountains entail different beliefs for different people, there is this consensus among indigenous and even contemporary worshippers that mountains are the abodes of various gods.

Juan Wu's (2017:19) Mythical narratives of Yellow Emperor encapsulates both the totemisation of the mountains "Cen" and "Zhong" as well as the "Dan" River and the "Cheng" Pool. Wu also makes reference to this Chinese folk saying to buttress her argument on the attitude of the people to mountains and rivers (Wu: Ibid, 20).

> Your status is determined by how tolerant your heart is like rivers and ponds that accept wasters, like mountain lakes that hide sickness and like the beautiful jade that hide flaws.

[48] The Idanre Hills is a popular tourist centre in Idanre, headquarters of Idanre Local Government Area of Ondo state which was said to have provided the people with protection against invasion at a time in their history.

For its high relevance to the central theme of social cohesion in this study, it is pertinent to discuss "parents" as totems in indigenous cultures of Nigeria and China. This view is so succinctly expressed by Myron L. Cohen (1992:5).

> People owed their parents obedience, respect and gratitude for having been given life and sustenance; and they had the responsibility to support them in their old age. Such obligations were expressions of filiality (Xiao), a fundamental ethical concept of Confucianism. Xiao was to be manifested even after the parents' death through sacrifices and obedience in front of tablets or scrolls bearing their names.

This age long practice of high esteem for the parents gave ground to the myth of the ancestral spirits known to have given birth to the egungun or egwugwu cults in Southwestern and Southeastern parts of Nigeria respectively.[49]

The discussion of functions of totems in Nigeria and China has been carried under some sub-titles to facilitate such a broad-based discussion without giving room for the distractions that could have arisen in an attempt to focus on individual totems. From the available data, we have identified the following types – animals, plants, human, natural/geographical and others that cannot be so easily compartmentalized. Animal totems have the largest occurrences of all these types.

The discussion also covers the classifications albeit not in very distinct term. Implied in the analysis of the totems gathered are the following. Some totems are universal in nature as their types and what they symbolize cut across cultural boundaries while others do not. Many of the totems have historical values and can thus be classified as historical totems. Many of the totems can be classified as attributive because symbols derive from the attributes of the totemic items. Some totems derive their symbols from the beliefs of the people and can thus be classified as religious totems. The other class of totems is what we refer to as creative

[49] Masquerades are called *egwugwu* by Igbo while the Yoruba call them *egúngún*, they are regarded as ancestral spirits which are highly referred by people in the indigenous cultures having them.

totems because they emanated from the artistic and creative exploits of the society. Totems across these five classifications exist in the indigenous societies of Nigeria and China.

The totems analysed in this aspect of the study are also seen to have performed one social function or the other as their significance is understood across the segment of the society – nation, clan, township or group - that created the them. It is necessary to emphasize that many of the totems in Nigeria and China have relatively similar or correspondent values. That is, there exist some similarities in the totemic relationships of animal totems across Nigeria and China. This is however not the same for all the totems as any one particular animal can be given entirely different totemic relationship from Nigeria to China.

3.6 Totemism and mythic narratology

Attention has already been drawn to the complex nature of totemism in the introductory part of this study. For the purpose of emphasis, it is pertinent to re-echo this complexity of a working of the mechanism of the system which Levi-Straus (1962:131) describes as a "system of social solidarities between man and nature". For the system to be properly understood, the characters and the modes of their interactions have to be narrated within a context that is mutually understood by everyone. This brings us to the assertion that there is always a narration behind every totemic system. Like literature, the totemic narration is also driven by mythic characters and space that resemble the fictive space created by writers. Still borrowing from the words of Levi-Straus (ibid), the narration of the totemic system

> Has been worked out in many different ways, and much more elaborately in some than in others, but everywhere it possesses this character.

Against this background, some of the oral narrations behind the major totemic systems gathered in this study shall be presented.

3.6.1 The Chinese dragon

The dragon is about the most totemised animal in the whole of the oriental world. The concept of the dragon covers virtually every aspect of the lives of the people of China – their work, ethics, philosophy, war, art, religion, politics and inter-personal relationship. The China Now Legacy Project (2009) describes the dragon as "ranked first among mythical beasts. Expectedly, numerous tales have been built around the totemic system of the dragon. This study will like to recount some of the tales reviewed by Sri Ranjan and Zhou Chang, (2010:65-80) on the Chinese Dragon Concept.

According to this account, the dragon depicted in mythology is a conceptual animal which though acclaimed to have gone into extinction still exists in the people's consciousness. The dragon is thus a fabulous animal. It is a large, winged and scaly serpent with a crested head and enormous claws. It is a monster that is usually represented as a large retile with a big lion's claw, capable of flying and breathing fire. The dragon as a conjecture of a beast that has all the unassailable mass, strength, skills and magical capabilities that can ever be imagined.

Figure 3.9: The Dragon is the most totemised animal in China

Source: www.livescience.com

Fig. 3.10: The Alligator is believed to be a desendant of the dragon in China; it is totemised among the Urhobo and Isoko Communities in Delta State, Nigeria

Source: www.nationalgeographic.com

The Chinese historical account by Sri Ranjan and Zhou Chang (ibid) has it further that Chinese are believed to have two anestors – Nuwa and Fuxi. These two had dual features of body, a combination of the human or dragon body. The Yellow Emperor who founded the Xia Dynasty in the 21st century BC was a descendant of the Dragon. It is also believed that the first Han Emperor, "Lin Bang" was the legendary son of the Dragon. It is also narrated that some of the Chinese Emperors were born with the dragon birthmarks which conferred on them the prowess of this all-conquering totemic animal.

Generally speaking, one may be tempted to agree with the opinion of Freud (1919) that totemism originated with the art of giving animal names to human beings and the practice of venerating such animals. He is of the opinion that the children and followers of a man who is addressed by the name of an animal would naturally adopt the nature of such an animal. The animal is most likely to earn the respect of the relations of the leader and eventually, the animal becomes venerated and totemised. This is the situation with most of the clans, communities and groups that adopt lion, tiger, elephant, eagle, hawk and some other animals with some special attributes as their totems. Though the details and circumstances of the group and their totem systems may differ, they are all formed around the common theme of the desirable values of the totem.

3.6.2 Mythic narrative of "Jade" and Yellow Emperor

Jin Zhiling (2004) narrates the combination of totem complexes by Chinese from the folk narration of the belief in "Yin" and "Yang" animals.

> Among Chinese totem animals and legendary animals, the Tiger, the ox, the goat, the bear, the boar, the toad and the cock were of the sky and the Yang group; the dragon, the snake, the turtle, the fish and the frog were Yin group and symbols of earth and water. The dragon with his head on earth but mating in heaven was a totem of both worlds.

According to Juan Wu, (2017: 19-20) a comparative mythologist who also focuses on the Chinese Jade mythology, magic treasures are common feature in Chinese mythological narrations relating to ancient heroes or kings. Unlike many indigenous cultures that adopt gold, the material for treasure in Chinese is jade and not gold. The Yellow Emperor is claimed to be the hero of the jade myth in China. The jade worship is believed to have originated with the Chinese National ancestor, the Yellow Emperor who is viewed as the beginning of Chinese civilization in the national memory. The Yellow Emperor is said to have planted the jade seeds in a range of mountains from where the Dan River took its source, flew into the Cheng Pools and produced white springs which became the jade cream. A particular tree which grew around this mountain is known as the Dan Tree. This tree produces the jade seeds that produced the jade material called "*Jin Yu Jade*" (beautiful jade). The Yellow Emperor was claimed to have fed on the jade cream which is believed to have endowed him with the wisdom and strength that characterized the successive Chinese civilizations and dynasties. Wu (ibid, 20) comments further on jade myth.

> Therefore, jade explicitly become the secular bonds between man and god and the holy media to realize "the integrity of man and god". Certainly, jades also turn to be the literary theme of many poets and writers throughout the ages. Many works evoke similar holy articles to construct their space of imagination and fantasy.

Jade, also known as "nephrite" in contemporary times, was regarded as the most precious stone in ancient China (Mark Cartwright 2017). Though this precious stone comes in various colours, Chinese myths stuck to the green colour which has been attached to the green jade plant that was purportedly planted by the great Emperor. Some sources therefore still accord the jade plant and the green jade colour the significance attached to the jade stone as a symbol of purity and moral integrity.

Fig. 3.11: The Green Jade Stone

Fig. 3.12: The Green Jade Plant

Source: www.chinahighlight.com

The plant that has a correlational cultural reference to the Jade in Nigeria is Kolanut. Interestingly, the plant Kolanut has its reference across the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and by extension across all other cultural entities in the country. A common saying in Nigeria is that the "Kolanut is planted by the Yoruba, sold by the Hausa and eaten by the Ibo". This gives the plant a national relevance. It is an economic plant that is accorded high cultural significance among different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. A common Yoruba proverb says, "Ibi rere làá r'óbì l'átẹ", that is, the Kolanut can only be found on a distinguished place in the stall. The seeds are often used to open every social gathering among the Ibos in a popular tradition known as "Breaking the Kola". Dye made from the seeds is used to produce the best local outfit among traditional dress makers in many parts of Nigeria. The Yoruba are of the opinion that the Kolanut possesses mythical/spiritual powers to avert or divert evils. Thus, they say "Obì ní í bikú, Obì ní í bi àrùn". That is a Kolanut diverts both death and ailments. The Ibo popular saying also is that "who brings Kola brings life" while the Hausa also have a saying that "a little Kolanut is much valuable than a big stone". All these attest to the cross - cultural value of the Kola in Nigeria.

Fig. 3.13: The Kolanut plant

Fig. 3.14: Kolanut seeds. The Kolanut has a high cultural reference among Nigerians like the Jade has in China.

Source: www.informationng.com

3.6.3 Mythic narration of the Tiangheng marine belief

This is an account of the narration of the Tiangheng marine belief system by Hungjuan Zhao (2017:298-304). In Tianghen marine belief system, the main god of worship is the Dragon King. This belief has influenced Bhuddism's folklore custom of praying to the Dragon king for rain at some points as he is believed to have the function of managing water. Another deity worshipped during the festival is the God of Wealth also known as the Lord God. Zhao's account has it those two popular gods that the Tiangheng people worshipped are derived from their legends.

The most popular legend is about Sun Xiangu, a very clever, warm hearted and helpful girl. The sun girl died before she could marry. After her death, she is said to have appeared to a boat owner in his dream warning him of an impending shipwreck. She asked the man to follow her and led the boat man to avoid the disaster. The man therefore changed his normal route on his way to fishing the next day, following the way the girl had told him in his dream. It was surprising to hear that a hurricane occurred on the usual route that he had avoided and he got saved with his entire crew. The boat man had gone to the village of the sun girl and found truly that a girl lived in the village who had the surname 'sun'. The villagers thought the girl must have been a goddess that is benevolent to fishermen. From that moment, they called the girl Sun Xiangu, which means the goddess whose surname is Sun.

The fox deity is another popular belief in China. The people believe that fox is a blessing animal. The fox faith is very popular among the agricultural communities of Northern China. This belief is said to have generated a variety of myths and legends. This legend in the Tiangheng area has a variant which sees the fourth Lord as a fox. The fox often helped fishermen to avoid disaster and to bring good luck to the local people. Though the eradication of superstitious practices in the 20th century has reduced the patronage of some of these belief systems, the people still worship this fox deity during the Tianheng sea sacrifice

festival and the memory of its ability to ensure peace and safety still remains in the people's sub-consciousness.

3.6.4 The Buffalo totem in Ile-Oluji, Nigeria

The people of Ile Oluji are known as Oijẹfọn, that is, the ones who do not eat the buffalo. Chief Braimoh Ojo of No. 27, Lota-aye Road, Ile-Oluji, gave the narration of the totem in an oral interview with the researcher on the 26th of June, 2015. The people of Ile-Oluji owe the buffalo a lot of appreciation. The warriors of Ile Oluji were lost in the jungle for several days on their way back from the battle-field. On this same spot, all their food items and water were exhausted. Some of them died as a result of hunger and thirst. When all hope had been lost, the warriors noticed a Buffalo (Ẹfọn) running towards a dry stream. The captain of the warriors authorized them not to kill the Buffalo but to follow the animal. As the warriors were following the animal, it was noticed that the Buffalo was digging roots of some trees which became their source of water. Eventually, their strength was revived and they could trace their way back home from the jungle. The warriors narrated the assistance rendered to them by the Buffalo and right from this memorial time, it is forbidden for an indigene of Ile-Oluji to kill or eat Buffalo, their great benefactor.

Figure 3.15: The Buffalo is a totemised animal in China and a community totem in Ile-Oluji, Ondo State, Nigeria.

Source: www.nationalgeographic.com

3.6.5 Parrot (Odídẹrẹ́) totem in Ìwó community

According to the oral interview granted by Prince Asifatu Akanbi Tadese, the Mogaji Tadese of Ìwó on 17th July, 2015, the journey to present day Ìwó town started from Ọba Lọràn compound in Ile-Ife. Their great ancestors were advised to settle down wherever they find Odídẹrẹ́. After several years of sojourn, the elders decided to consult the Ifá oracle. Ifá oracle affirmed that the people should stay wherever there is a forest junction (Igbó Oríta). Not long after settling at the forest junction, the people moved from this settlement in their quest for a better living. On their journey, they got to a certain place where there were great numbers of birds. Among these birds, Parrots had the highest number. This was when the people had the realization that this was where they had been advised to stay when they started their journey in Ile Ife. Right from this time, Odídẹrẹ́ has been seen as a friend and a source of help. Any indigene of Ìwó land must not kill, eat, harm or use it for any sacrificial purpose. Odídẹrẹ́ has also been made a domestic animal. It is capable of saying the truth at all times and also helps to deliver messages of visitors when his master is not around. Odídẹrẹ́ has also become part of the praise poetry of the Ìwó people – Ìwó Odídẹrẹ́.

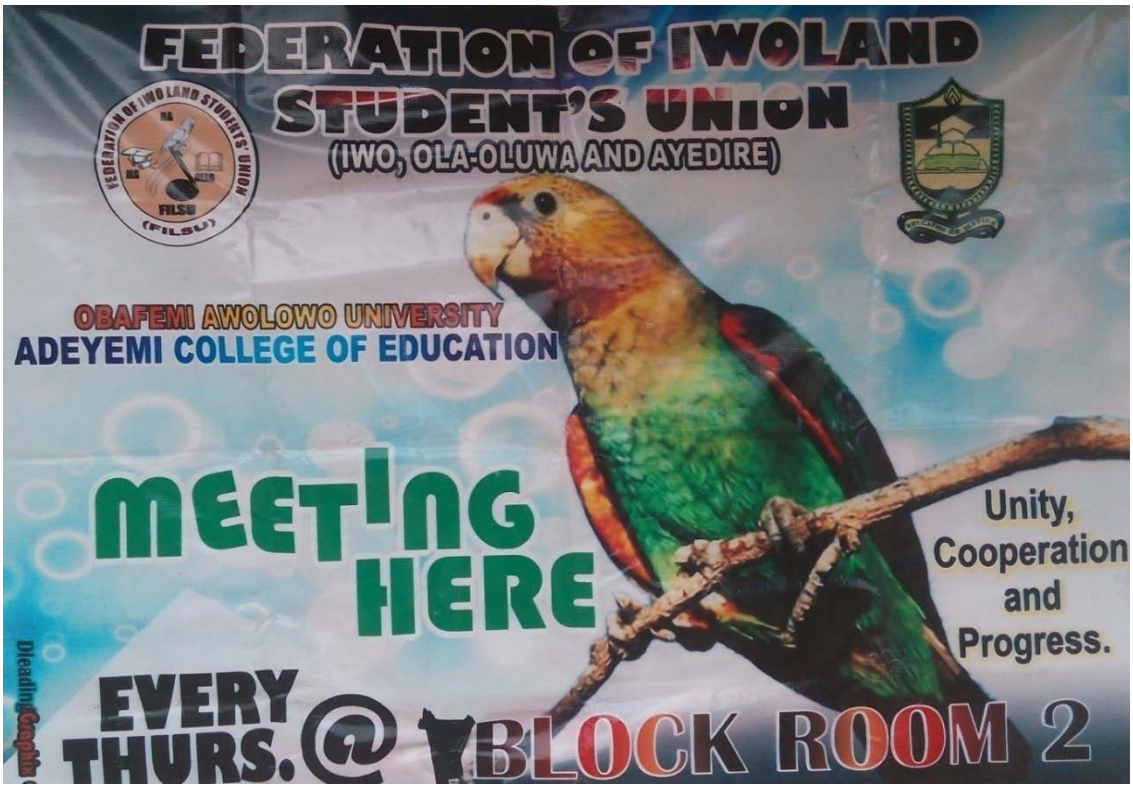

Fig. 3.16: The Parot is a totem among the Iwo people of Osun state. They share the symbol of the bird as seen in the banner above. It is a totemised bird in China.
Source: Field study, 2017

3.6.6 Stork (Ẹyẹ Akọ̀) totem in Modakeke

Chief (Dr.) Adisa Ogunfolakan, Director, Natural History Museum, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria in an interview granted on 20th June, 2015 stated that the origin of Modakeke is synonymous with the fall of old Ọyọ empire. The Yoruba kingdom was thrown into confusion and there was dispersal of inhabitants of the old Ọyọ Empire. This set of people spread their tentacles across Yoruba land. A particular set of this war displaced people returned to Ile-Ife. The reigning Ọọni of Ifẹ (Ọba Akinmoyero) assigned the present day Modakeke to this war torn settlers. Being that they were armies, they helped the people of Ife to conquer their enemies and even extended their territory.

The place given to the Modakeke was home to a bird specie named Akọ̀ (Stork). Hence, the origin of the appellation AKỌ̀RÁYÈ (The Stork found a space). It was also customary for the Storks at the location to sing 'kẹ́, kẹ̀, kẹ́' meaning people should keep quiet. Till today, the people of Modakeke must not eat or kill Ẹyẹ Akọ̀ (Stork).

3.6.7 Horse totem in Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria

In an oral interview granted by Chief Omofela Abayomi of No. 13 Odo Ọja Street, Ikere Ekiti on 2nd July, 2015, the Horse totem was traced to Ajolagun, a great warrior in Old Ikere Ekiti. Ajolagun was powerful to the extent that during his life time, he was the sole leader of the warriors of the Ikere Ekiti. The custom of warriors in Yoruba land was to ride a horse to the war front, but this was not so with Ajolagun, the warrior. Instead, he danced to the war front and he did not lose any battle till his death. When Ajolagun was about to die, he told the people of Ikere Ekiti that nobody should ever ride a horse into the town if only they want the town to be in peace. He also told them to call on him if they are in any problem and after this; he turned himself into a mountain. Till today in the ancient town, nobody dare ride a Horse into Ikere Ekiti and if anybody does this, such a person will lose his/her sight. Also, the people of Ikere Ekiti do pay homage to the ancient mountain and they celebrate a festival

called "*Olósùńta tòrun Ikere*" in the seventh month of the year. This is done in honour and to worship the great warrior, Ajolagun.

3.7 Metaphorical correlates in Nigerian and Chinese totems

It should be mentioned that all the totemic systems identified in this study meet the idea of totemism expressed by Levi-Strauss (1991) as the systems relate to a wide range of relationships between human beings and natural species. Our data, as would be shown below, also corroborate the definition of totems by Rivers (1914) as the coalescence of the social, psychological and the ritual elements. Each of the totemic elements gathered in the study operates on the basis of a culturally defined analogous correlation with another concept that is equally socially, psychologically or ritually entrenched. The correlations are presented in a table below to avoid needless repetitions as some of these relationships and symbols have been part of our earlier analysis.

Table 3.3 – Some selected totems and their metaphorical correlations

Totems	Metaphorical correlations
Lion	Strength, Nobility, Dignity, Paternity, Courage, Bravery, Dominance
Eagle	Speed, Strength, Renewal
Dragon	Creation, Protection, Wealth
Buffalo	Strength, Resilience, Direction, Protection
Python	Protection, Patience
Dog	Loyalty, Friendliness
Alligator	Progeneity
Tortoise	Longevity, Tact, Continuity
Peacock	Beauty, Radiance
Blood	Life, Sacredness, Commitment, Virtue
Fire	Purity, Purification
Water (Rivers)	Source, Purification, Renewal, Progenity, Motherhood
Mountains	Wealth, Protection
Forests	Sacredness, Rebirth, Virgnity
Gold/Jade	Royalty, Wealth, Purity
Monkey	Unity, Direction

Source: Field study, 2017

The nature of totemic relationships and their metaphorical correlations can be very complex and sometimes complicated. The process of signification in the totemic tropes are based on what Ogundeji (1997:153) refers to as natural associations where it is explained further that meaning can be made through an in-depth knowledge of the intrinsic qualities of the totemic symbols. Ogundeji (ibid: 154) opines that meanings can also be deduced from "contiguous links" of the items. This complexity is explained further.

> The contiguity may however be syntagmatic or paradigmatic. The syntagmatic contiguous meaning is derived from the linear arrangement of the elements in an *àrokò*[50], while the paradigmatic one is derived from the other elements with which the signifier is connected but which are not included in the aroko. Such signified elements or objects can be said to be in a vertical relationship with the signifier.

Each totem symbolizes a concept within the community and the concept determines the disposition of members of the community to the totem. This association often becomes psychological as a bond is created between the people and the totem which in turn makes the people see the totem from a peculiar perspective, and markedly different from other people from outside the totemic system.

[50] A message sent through non-verbal means popular among Yoruba in the old days.

CHAPTER FOUR

Taboos in Nigeria and China

4.1 Introduction: Tabooism and taboos

This chapter deals with the analysis of the various types of taboos in Nigeria and China. The chapter also presents the narrations behind some of the taboos. The psycho-social implications of the taboos are also analysed in the chapter.

To facilitate our analysis of the various taboos collated in this chapter, it becomes necessary to provide some further insights into the subject of taboos to complement the initial discussion of the subject in the second chapter of this study. Taboos have been conceived by various scholars to mean a number of things. Fortes (2015:7 [1966]) quotes Levi-Strauss as describing taboos as "totemic codes". To a large number of people, taboos are "restrictions" placed on behaviour and attitudes. To the Tallensi, taboos refer to moral or ritual injunctions. Freud (1966) has described taboo as a polynessian word which captures the Hebrew's idea of sacredness which could also mean the forbidden, the dangerous, the unclean, or the uncanny. To some other people, taboo is based on the law of avoidance or prohibitions. Our references to taboos in this analysis can capture or entail any of the ideas expressed above.

From the foregoing, tabooism therefore involves the practice of placing restrictions on the behaviour of people. Tabooism like totemism is also a practice of the society since the codes or laws of governing the workings of tabooism should be established and understood by members of the taboo community before they can be binding on individual members of the society. Tabooism is one of the very effective means deviced by indigenous society to regulate, control or inhibit the behaviour or habits of the people in order to minimize or eradicate unacceptable tendencies within the group. The operation of tabooism is largely hinged on the creation of fear and apprehension in the mind of the individual concerning the violation of taboos. Apart from restrictions on totemic objects, tabooism can be woven

around the day-to-day activities of people such as food and feeding habits, sex and sexuality, relationship between rulers and subjects, expressions, death and the dead among others.

4.2 Typology and taxonomy

4.2.1 Taboos on food and feeding

There are taboos placed on food, feeding and feeding habits in Nigeria and China. These taboos are observed before, during or after feeding.

China

- Young children should not eat chicken feet as it is believed they might not be able to write well when they start school. They may also be prone to getting in fights like roosters.
- Leaving food on one's plate, particularly grains of rice, will result in marriage to a spouse without hair on Chinese New Year Day or you may wash away your luck.
- Eating fish during Chinese New Year is a must, though diners have to make sure they do not eat all the fish. Having leftovers can ensure there is a surplus every year.
- Chop sticks should not be left standing straight up in bowl of rice. This act is said to bring bad luck.
- It is a taboo to try to turn a fish over and debone it yourself, since the separation of the fish skeleton from the lower half of the flesh will usually be performed by the host or a waiter. It brings bad luck and a fishing boat will capsize if you do so.
- The spout of the teapot is not facing anyone. It should be directed to where nobody is sitting.
- It is a taboo for a guest to take the last piece of food on the plate, as it will seem as if one is greedy.

- It is a taboo to finish everything on your plate in China. If you do, the Chinese will assume you did not receive enough food and are still hungry.
- Do not hang the cooking pot upside down or reversed. This signifies there is nothing to cook and indicates the opposite of abundance.
- While eating, you should close your mouth to chew food well before you swallow it.
- Knives are traditionally seen as violent in China, and breakers of harmony, so are not provided at the table.
- It is forbidden for one to tap on one's bowl with the chop sticks. Beggars tap on their bowls, so this is not polite.
- It is a taboo to use only one chop stick (*kuaizi*).

Nigeria

- A pregnant woman must not eat in a soup-cooking pot so that her child's buttocks will not be black.
- One should not eat while standing up.
- One should avoid talking while eating.
- One should not drink water while lying down.
- In Ọwọ, you must not sing while pounding.

4.2.2 Taboos on language and expressions

Taboos on expression exist in both Nigeria and China.

Nigeria

- It is a taboo in Yoruba land to say *ènìyàn ti kú* rather Yoruba will say "*ènìyàn ti tẹ́rí gbaṣọ*".
- It is a taboo to ask for a needle (*abẹ́rẹ́*) in the morning or evening from a street hawker or petty trader, rather, one should ask for (*Ọkini*).

- It is a taboo to ask whether a project/business was successful or not. Rather, one should ask whether the outcome was a fish or crab (*ẹja n b'ákàn*).
- It is a taboo to say that there is not salt at home (*kò sí iyọ̀ nílé*). Rather, we are to say there is no sea at home (*kò sí ọsà nílé*).
- It is a taboo to ask for or state the number of children a woman has (*a kì ka ọmọ f'ọ́lọ́mọ*). You are simply to say she has children.
- It is a taboo to say that fat or hefty person is heavy (*ènìyàn wúwo*).
- It is a taboo to refer to human genitals in Yoruba land and even in most African cultures. Human genitals are referred to as *abẹ́, ojú ara, furọ̀* and *ìdí*. Whenever these expressions are stated, people with mutual intelligibility already know the speaker is referring to human private parts.
- In Yoruba land, it is a taboo to simply announce the death of a king. Rather, the Yorubas use expressions like *Ọba ti wájà; ó re wàlẹ̀ àsà; Erín wó; Ó rìn ìrìn àjò à rè mábọ̀*.

China

- It is a taboo for a woman to say I am going to toilet. Rather, she will ask for rest room or powder room.
- It is a taboo to announce the death of someone anyhow. Rather, expressions like "went to his reward", "passed away" or "departed" are used.
- "*Shan*", in Chinese, means "to break up". It is forbidden among Chinese performers because their professional survival depends on a continuous succession of contracts.

4.2.3 Taboos on relationships

- Sexual relationships constitute the highest form of relationship among indigenous cultures around the world.

4.2.4 Taboos on death

- The name of the dead is avoided so also are his properties avoided until they are formally shared for beneficiaries. This is a taboo in China and in some parts of Nigeria.

4.2.5 Taboos on animals

- Many animals are forbidden from being killed or eaten. These taboos derive from the totemic relationships with the animals.

4.2.6 Taboos on nature

- Some elements of nature are tabooed in Nigeria and China. These are also elements of totemic relationships as have been discussed in chapter three and narrated further later in this chapter.

4.2.7 Other taboos

There are some other taboos that are of varying manifestations as would be analysed below. In Nigeria, the following taboos were identified.

- No drawing of water from the well at night as one could easily slip and fall into the well.
- No sitting on the edge or top of a well.
- No standing at a crossroads junction.
- No plaiting or shaving of hair along the passage and around cooking area.
- No leaving of melon shells uncleared over night.
- We must not throw salt into fire
- A Mortar should not be left in the sun so that lightning will not strike the person dead.
- One must not fall down in the bathroom, so that the person will not die.
- A pregnant woman must not eat in a soup cooking pot so that her child's buttocks will not be black.

- A child must not urinate into a mortar. The child who does this will lose his/her father or mother.

4.3 Mythic narratology in selected Nigerian and Chinese taboos

The analysis of mythic narratology in this study is influenced by William Labov's concepts of oral narratives (2001, 2004 and 2006) which among other issues see oral narratives as 'a way of recounting the past events', 'establishment of temporal juncture between two or more referent events' or an orientation that identifies participants in action, the time, place and behaviour. Though Labov's concepts failed to identify mythography as one of the constituents of these narrative processes, his focus on narratives as "a folk theory of causality" puts the narration of taboos squarely within the ambit of oral narratives. Though some taboos are verbal in that they are verbally articulated, some are non-verbal in that they are not expressed overtly; yet, there is a narration behind every taboo.

Though the stories behind many taboos have since ceased to be narrated by the societies that created them, these oral narrations were the initial reasons why the taboos became binding socio-cultural forces on the adherents. These stories are what Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu (2014:102) refers to as the "encyclopaedia engraved in the chambers of the mind to be passed from generation to generation". The taboos are narrated in different oral forms in Africa such as panegyrics, proverbs, legends, myths, divination materials, folktales and others. Some are also narrated as mere tales for specific reasons of revealing the taboos. In China, most mythic narratives have been reduced to writing owing to the long tradition of writing. These myths are the narratives behind the zodiac signs in the Chinese calendar. Each month in the Chinese Calendar is actually precipitated on their relationships with the animal whose narrative determines the people's expectation for the month.

The Rat: A taboo in Nigeria and China

Several mythic narratives underline the taboo of the big rat in the indigenous cultures of many Nigerian societies. The giant grey rat is tabooed among indigenous ethnic sub groups in the Yoruba nation of the Southwestern Nigeria such as Ondo, Idanre, Owu, Oluoje and the Onikoyi. This same animal is a taboo, forbidden among the Tivs of the middle belt region of Nigeria. Incidentally, each community has a peculiar tale backing up the myth that makes the same totemic animal a taboo in the community. Here are the narrations.

Oral interviews with randomly selected people of Idanre in Ondo State of Nigeria presented the researcher with this oral narrative on how it became a taboo to eat the big rat (*òkété*) in the town.

> Idanre and Benin are said to be brothers according to history. The two brothers who are said to have migrated from the throne of the Yoruba progenitor, Oduduwa. And, as was the tradition then, every migrating prince from Ile-Ife eventually became the ruler of their receiving community. The elder brother became the Oba of Benin while the younger one became the Owa of Idanre. The elder brother went to Benin with their mother and died there. There was a dispute between the two brothers on where their dead mother was to be buried. Since the mother died in Benin, she was buried there. This angered the younger brother who sought the assistance of a man who turned into a big rat and dug a tunnel from Idanre to Benin through which the corpse of the mother was brought to the younger brother in Idanre. The man that assisted the Idanre King eventually died as a big rat.

According to our source, the Idanre King decreed that the big rat should not be eaten by anyone in the town. This decision could be as a mark of respect to the animal that had been benevolent to the king. The consequence of violating this taboo, according to our source is that the violator's mouth shall become white or grey like the colour of the big rat.

This same big rat (*òkété*) is a taboo among the people of Ikoyi. The Olukoyis are the traditional guards (*ẹ̀sọ́*) of the old Ọyọ Empire. They are trained warriors and like the security guards of the present day leaders, they were brave enough and prepared to lay down their

lives in the event of a risk to their principal. In an oral interview with Prince Adewale Ifakunle on the 26th of June, 2015, the following account of how *òkété* became a taboo among the Olukoyis was narrated.

> The progenitor of the Ikoyis who was also the first Olukoyi was a warrior who embarked on machinery warfares. This is why a section of the praise names of the Olukoyi is "*Àrọ̀nì" kò gbélé, Oníkòyí kò sinmi ogun*". That is, "Aroni does not stay at home, Olukoyi does not stop warfare". On one of his frequent expeditions, the great Olukoyi did not return home. His followers all embarked on a search for this great warrior but never found him either dead or alive. At a point during the search for Olukoyi, the search party saw a large rat (*òkété*) emerging from a hole nearby. The herbalists among them prevented the people from killing the rat and eating it as he said the rat was connected with their missing father. From that day, the big rat became a taboo for all descendants of the Ikoyi lineage. The repercussion for violating this taboo is that the violator would lose all his protective powers and become vulnerable to attacks and his fortunes will begin to dwindle.

This same giant rat (*òkété*) is a taboo among the Oke-Itase people in Ile-Ife, Osun state of Nigeria. According to the Yoruba divination practice, Orunmila who is the Yoruba deity for divination is said to be the progenitor of the people of Oke-Itase. In an oral interview with Chief Awotunde Aworeni, who is the leader of the Orunmila worshippers in Oke-Itase on the 27th June, 2015, another mythic narration of the Okete taboo was narrated.

> Orunmila was the source of the divination oracle among the people of Oke-Itase from where the practice of Ifa oracle spread to other parts of the world. Orunmila was said to be in a dilemma over a particular issue, he made an agreement with the giant rat who eventually gave Orunmila the way out of his problem through a sacrifice that involved the meat of the giant rat. Orunmila therefore proclaimed that none of his descendants should kill or eat the giant rat. If the people of Oke Itase should require the giant rat for any sacrifice, the rat should be purchased for a price and not hunted. The punishment for violating this taboo is that any portion made with the *òkété* rat would lose its efficacy or potency and the violator would suffer ridicule and shame.

Oriji (2007: 204) traces the origin of Nnewi, a popular commercial town in Anambra State to the significant role played by a rabbit during the invasion of the town. He quotes the documentation of the oral account of an unnamed local historian as the source of this narration.

> A (native) doctor was summoned to prepare a charm which at night, transformed itself into a rabbit (*Ewi*) that covered the entire fringes of Nnewi with its footprints. When at last, the individual invaders drew, they saw these footprints and concluded that (nobody lived in the area). Henceforth, they retreated and the invasion fizzled out. Thus, Nnewi became safe and, in commemoration of this (event), the town was given the name, Nnewi by its inhabitants.

Of a particular interest is the correlation between the role played by the rabbit in Nnewi, Anambra State and the fowl in Ode-Aye, Ondo State, both in Nigeria. Two different totemic animals have performed very similar activities and the two communities have virtually the same narrations.

In the Chinese context, rats are generally hated for their destructive tendencies. The rats have an ambivalent representation in its cultural representation. Interestingly, the rat has a very significant and iconic position in the context of Chinese mythic symbolism. According to Man ping Chu (2009:12) a literary scholar in a Chinese University, the place of the rat in Chinese mythography can be best captured in the following words:

> The rat is the first creature in the old Chinese zodiac associated with monkey. When people hear a rat scrabbling around for food at night, it is said to be “counting money”. The term “money rat” is a disparaging way of referring to a miser. In some old legends, rats can turn into demons, male demons usually in contrast with the fix that turns into a female demon. Chinese are however divided on whether it is complimentary to say to someone’s face that he or she looks like a rat.

The Dog: Tabooed in Nigeria and China

The dog is another animal taboo whose image in the mythography of both Nigeria and China has caught the interest of this research. This is so because the dog also has a dual representation in the mythic narration of indigenous cultures of both nations. In Nigeria, the dog is a popularized delicacy of the Ondo people in Ondo State and the Calabar people of Cross River State. The Kaje people of Southern Kaduna in Kaduna State are also known to enjoy the dog meat delicacy in Nigeria. Yet, many indigenous ethnic groups in Nigeria are forbidden a taste of the dog meat. Here are some of the oral narrations of the mythic dimensions to the dog taboo.

The first mythic narration was obtained from Chief John Adeleke, from the Oyewole Compound in Ara, Osun State of Nigeria on the 28th June, 2015. It recounts the tabooing of the dog in Ara.

> So long ago, one of the princes of the Alaafin, the paramount ruler of the Yoruba nation was very ill. The Council of Kings in the company of the King of Ara went to visit the Alaafin to pay homage to the ruler. They went in company of the King of Ara's dog. Unusually, the dog had killed a giant rat (òkété) on the way in the day time which is considered a taboo. On getting to Oyo, it was revealed that a giant Rat would be needed as part of a sacrifice to cure the Alaafin's prince. The visiting Kings promptly gave the quarry killed by the King of Ara's Dog to the Alaafin for the sacrifice. The rat was used and the prince became well. The Alaafin decided to celebrate his son's recovery with a huge party. The dog was forgotten and neglected. During the party, the dog, out of frustration, spoke like a human being to express its disappointment and ran out of the party. All the kings were surprised and tried to capture the dog. During the chase, the dog met a farmer whom it begged to be covered with the empty basket held by the farmer. The farmer obliged the dog. When the dog was uncovered, it had turned into a rock. The news spread across the area. The people decided to deify the rock and to slaughter a while cow annually to worship it. From that day, it had become a taboo for any indigene of Ara to kill, eat or even rear a dog, especially, people from the royal household.

The narration of the dog taboo among the Oluoje's people of Ibadan, in Oyo State borders on the image of the dog's loyalty. From an oral account rendered by Dr. Sulaimon Raji on Tuesday, 8th August, 2017, the narration below was recorded.

> Olu-oje, the progenitor of the Oje community, in Ibadan was a warrior and a professional fighter. On an escapade, he had escaped from a fierce battle and attempted to return home. Unfortunately, he died on his way home from the war front. Meanwhile, his dog had stood by his corpse. The dog attracted the attention of searchers to the corpse of its master. Getting there, there was no dress to convey the remains of Olu-oje back home. They therefore killed the dog, skinned it and used its hide to cover the nakedness of the Olu-oje and he was then buried. The dog was therefore pronounced a hero to the entire lineage as it helped to cover the nakedness of their progenitor. Though the lore of the Olu-oje does not prohibit the eating of dogs but it is a taboo to treat dogs with contempt by the people. Whoever violates this taboo shall suffer nakedness and public ridicule.

For its relevance to the myth-making process of Chinese indigenous traditions, the dog also has a place in the Chinese zodiac. It is the eleventh creature in this mythic representation. According to Chu (2009:130):

> To the Chinese, if a dog runs toward you, it is a good sign: Richness will be yours. But the dog is seen in a very different light in South and West China, especially among the minority people who live there. In their folktales it is the dog that brings (*sii*) rice to mankind. In the Eastern Province, Guangdong, the story of a faithful dog which saved its master's life from fire is very popular. Another related story tells how a dog guarded its master's belonging until it died in Taiwan. However, in what appears like the ambient nature of the dog's image in China, "Brother black dog" is a term for "a man who runs after every woman he sees".

The Chinese neither kill dog nor eat its meat because of the close relationship between the owner and the dog. Killing the dog is like killing a very faithful friend.

Narratives of Snake taboos in Nigeria and China

The snake is an animal specie that is very common in all neighbourhoods around the world. Snakes are found in all forms of human settlements, urban, rural, arid, semi-arid, forest and aquatic. Snakes also abound across Nigeria and China in their shapes, sizes and colours. The black cobra species, which incidentally is about the most poisonous and temperamental of all the species (Nat Geo Wild)[51] is also the most widely tabooed of snakes, according to the data available for this study. From Igbo communities in Nigeria, across some Yoruba sub-ethnic groups to ethnic minority groups in China, the snake is a taboo for varying reasons captured in popular mythic narratives in the affected cultures. Some of these narratives are analysed below.

[51] www.dstv.natgeowild./cobra has documentaries on the nature of the cobra as one of the deadliest predators in the world.

Figure 4.1: The cobra is totemised across Nigerian and Chinese cultures. It is a taboo for families of blacksmith in some Ondo state communities, Nigeria, to eat the snake.

Figure 4.2: Another specie of the cobra. This snake is totemised for its aggression and deadly venom.

Source: www.reptilegardens.com

Eke (Python) in Igbo Land

Mazi Ignatus Okeke, from Mbaitoli community in Imo State of Nigeria gave this oral account of the Eke as a taboo in Orlu, Oku and some other indigenous communities in Igbo land. The interview was granted on the 22nd June, 2015 at Odosida street, Ondo.

> The python known as Eke in Igbo language is regarded as a guiding spirit in some Igbo communities. It is a very common sight in most of these communities and whenever it appears, it is considered as god-sent. The Eke is an expected guest in all significant celebrations such as wedding, naming, chieftaincy and burial ceremonies. The celebrants have to entertain the snake and honour its appearance. In another circumstance, the python can appear in the homestead of someone who has gone into the forbidden evil forest to fetch firewood unknowingly. It would remain in a conspicuous place in the offender's compound until the wood is returned to the grove. If any member of the clan should kill a python inadvertently, he or she shall perform the full burial rites of a human being for the snake. If the killing is done deliberately, it is considered a heinous sacrilege and atonement must be made adequately to avert the punishment. Where a violator refuses to perform the necessary rites, the individual and indeed, all the family members are at the risk of dying mysteriously one after the other.

John Oriji (2007: 2002)[52] records that

> Njaba is home to the sacred python (Eke), which is believed to represent the founding father of the community. Pythons are deeply reversed in the community, and they move about freely. Nobody molests or kills them, and their appearance is often regarded as ominous.

The black Cobra (*Àgbẹ̀dẹ dúdú*) in Ondo, Idanre and Ile-Oluji.

> Oral accounts narrated by three different people from the three Ondo dialect speaking communities have it that a long time ago, women were forbidden from sitting on the blacksmith's stool and from handling blacksmithing tools in the Ondo speaking communities. There was however a particular woman, a beloved wife of a successful blacksmith who ignored this taboo and sat by her husband in the smith's workshop and even handled all

[52] Oriji claims that this information was obtained from a certain field work in 1975, 1981-82 on Nvosi origins. This claim has also been confirmed by our sources in the course of this research.

> the tools considered sacred. She ignored all the admonitions of blacksmiths in the neighbourhood who saw her action as a contempt against their male dominated profession. One day, the woman turned into the highly loathed cobra. She was killed. From that day, the cobra has been named "*Àgbẹ̀dẹ dúdú*", the blacksmith by people of Ondo, Idanre and Ile-Oluji. The snake is killed but all family members of blacksmiths are forbidden from eating the cobra. Since she was the wife of their progenitor, she is considered a mother or relation of people who practise the craft.

The Lanioka Egungun race

> The Lànịọ́ká descendants are a race of professional masqueraders. They were of the stock of the early travelling threatre performers who combined theatrical practices with magic. In one of their performances, the leader of the troupe changed into a python and all attempts to turn him back into a human being as was the normal practice failed. Since his accolades could not turn him back to his original human form, he crawled into the bush. From there and then, it was pronounced a taboo for any one of the descendants of the Alápà or Lánịọ́ká to kill or eat the python since doing so would amount to killing or eating their progenitor.

The Snake taboo in China

According to Chu (2009:129):

> The snake is the sixth creature in the Chinese Zodiac. It is regarded as clever but wicked and treacherous. Snakes were objects of worship in certain religions in ancient China. Dreams about snakes are interpreted in various ways. It is lucky to dream that a snake is chasing you. In Taiwan, dreaming about a snake means you are going to lose wealth. Some aborigines have identified the snake symbolically with the penis.

The Monkey taboo in Nigeria and China

The monkey is another class of animal that has been widely tabooed in many indigenous cultures of Nigeria and China. Various mythic narratives confer the status of taboos on different species of the monkey among the peoples of these ethnic nationalities. Some of the narrations are presented below.

In an oral interview with Mr. Alaba Omomeji at Oke Ogun Street, Ọwọ on the 24th June, 2015, the account of the "edun", a specie of the monkey was obtained as it relates to the Ọlọwọ, ruler of the Ọwọ people in Ondo State.

> The ruler of the Ọwọ people was one of the children of Ọkanbi, the only son of Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba nation in Ile-Ife. He was involved in a conflict with his siblings and he overcame them all with a sword known as "*ada*" in Ọwọ dialect. He left Ile-Ife with a crown and the sword. Some of the Ife chiefs known as "*Àwòròlórò*" (Chief priests) followed the *Ọlọ́wọ̀* on the trip. The party got to a place known as "*Òkìtì Àpáta*" and could not advance. They were plagued by a strange illness that killed many of them. They were also ravaged by starvation. In their despair, they saw this monkey that they wanted to kill for food. They could not kill the monkey; instead, each of them sustained injuries and got three marks on the same spots on their left arm. They consulted the oracle; they were instructed to follow the monkey that wherever the animal rested its tail on the ground should be their destination. The monkey guided them to *Òkè-Ìmàdẹ̀* where it rested its tail. Though they met an initial group of settlers, they settled at that point and the Olowo was crowned king. It was therefore made a taboo for any indigene of Ọwọ to kill or eat *ẹdun*. Any prince or princess who eats monkey will suffer strange ailments, sore throat and other forms of misfortune.

Monkey taboo in Ipe Akoko

Mr. Olude Oluwagbeja narrated how it became a taboo for people of Ipe in Akoko South-East Local Government of Ondo State. In an oral interview granted at Ipe Akoko, Ondo State on the 25th of June, 2015, Mr. Oluwagbeja who also claimed that the Akoko people generally migrated from Ile-Ife like most other Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria said:

> When the people of Ipe got to their present day settlement, they were frequently attacked and lost many of their people and belongings to these incessant wars. A large colony of monkeys grew up in the mountains and forest around the Ipe people. When the invaders came next, they were distracted by the monkeys and gave the Ipe warriors an edge over their attackers. After several attempts to attack Ipe were frustrated by the monkeys, the invaders left Ipe alone and the town began to thrive. It was therefore declared a taboo for any Ipe indigene to

> kill or eat the monkey. Anyone who violates this taboo shall die of goitre.

The Monkey in Chinese context

According to Man-Ping Chu (2009:130), the monkey also plays a significant part in the Chinese oral tradition. The account is explained further:

> The monkey is the ninth in the Chinese zodiac. The monkey plays a leading role in Chinese legend. Gods in Chinese mythology sometimes appeared in the guise of monkeys. A picture showing a monkey mounted on a horse is called "*ma-shang feng hou*"; a homonymic reading of this title gives the meaning - May you be straight away (ma-shang) elevated to the rank of count (feng-hou).

Taboo on death

The inevitability of death continues to make it a highly mystified natural occurrence by all indigenous traditions of the word. Different issues and situations that surround death are encoded in myths across cultures. For instance, it is a taboo among the Hausa of Nigeria to give the impression that someone is going to die even when the person's illness is observed to have defied all solutions. When the Hausa person asks "*Yaya jiki*?" Meaning "How is the body?" Regardless of the situation, one still has to answer, "*Jiki da sauki*", meaning "Body is well" about the dying man.

In a similar vein, the number "4" and 4 - related numbers are generally regarded as traditional taboos. According to Fuyu Chen (2010:123):

> In Mandarin Chinese and most dialects, "4" is pronounced as "si" (fourth tone), very much close to other "si" (third tone) which means death/to die. Numbers with "4" are generally considered unfavourable, the worst of which is "14". In Chinese"14" is usually pronounced as "yaosi", euphony of "dying/to die".

For this reason, the 4-related numbers are tabooed and avoided so that they would not make reference to death or dying. In most Nigerian and Chinese cultures and languages, euphemisms are created to avoid reference to death. In China, it is a taboo to mention the

name of the dead or to even refer to the incidence of someone's death. Instead, the Chinese would just use the phrase "Take care of yourself". Whenever that is used, it means someone just died.

In Yoruba language, it is seldom heard that someone dies. Euphemisms such as "pa ipo da" meaning "changes position", "*fi ayé sílè*", meaning "leaves the world", "*re ibi àgbà ń rè*" meaning goes to where the elders go", "*jẹ́ ìpè ẹlẹ́dà*" meaning "answer the creator's call", "*fi ilẹ̀ bora bí aṣọ*" meaning "uses the earth to cover self like cloth" or "*sẹ aláìsí*" meaning "becomes nonexistent" and a host of others are used to avoid saying that someone is dead.

When a king dies in Yoruba land, the most popular way of saying it is "*Ọbá wàjà*" that means the king has entered into the ceiling. In communities that are very indigenous, there are rituals that must be performed which will make the death of a king known to the ones who understand the signs. The death of a King is usually denied until such rituals have been performed. In an oral interview, Mr. Taofiq Sa'adu[53] gave a mythic narration from the *Ifá* corpus *Ọ̀wọ́nrí Aṣẹ́yìn* which narrates the announcement of the demise of any Aseyin of Isẹyin in Oyo State. The *Odù Ọ̀wọ́nrí Asẹ́yìn* is chanted thus.

Ọwọ́nrín Aṣẹ́yiṅ
Kogókogó lohùn agogo
Dùgbẹ̀dùgbẹ̀ lohùn tàjà
A kìí fàjà kéde ìlú
Ifá ló dorí agogo
O dorí Asẹyin mọ́ge
Ọmọ Asẹ́ tíí mumi kíkan
Ọjọ tí wọ́n lọ lè gbókú baba ẹ bọ
Oni pàkun de
Awo Aseyin, Oni pakun de o
Oni ẹ palé de
Ẹ pana de
Orò ḿbọ̀

Trans

Ọwọ́nrín Aṣẹ́yiṅ
High is the sound of the gong
Deep is the sound of the gourd

[53] Taofiq Sa'adu is a chanter, a cultural practitioner and lecturer of Yoruba language in Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo.

Announcement are never made with the gourd
Ifá says it is the duty of the gong
So it was in the case of Aṣẹ́yiṅ mọ́ge
Son of the sieve that drinks the sour water
The day they went to retrieve his father's corpse
He said, shut the door
Cult of Aṣẹ́yiṅ, he said people should shut the door
He said clear the house
Clear the roads
The cult approaches

The mythic narration follows in its translated form by the researcher

A babalawo in Iseyin once planned to embark on a divination trip. He warned his wife not to go out of the compound for the entire duration of his trip. A few days after the man had departed his wife out of sheer disregard for the husband's wife left the house to gather some wood in the bush. While the woman was chopping the wood, a gorilla appeared and raped the woman. The woman succeeded in trapping the gorilla and escaped home. She became pregnant from the act with the gorilla and it was predicted that the child would be a great personality. The child eventually came and the woman's husband had died shortly thereafter. The child from the rape grew up and true to divination, he became the king of Iseyin. But the kingdom began to witness one calamity after the other and the matter was brought to an *Ifá* priest who recommended that the man should appease his dead father on his grave. Appeasements were done repeatedly on the grave of the man presumed to be his real father and the situation did not improve. He then approached his mother to tell him who his real father was. It was revealed to the king that a gorilla got the mother pregnant. They went to the bush to search for the remains of the gorilla so that they could bury it properly. While bringing the King's father to town, a declaration was made that women and all non-initiates to the *orò* cult should remain indoors. This was for the secret of the king's paternity not to be known to all. From that point, the death of an Aseyin is never announced. Rather, an *orò* is declared for ritual performance.

73 and 84 age taboo in China.

Fuyu (2012:124) records that in China, a taboo is woven around the ages of 73 and 84 years and that this taboo is captured in a common saying thus:

> At the age of 73 or 84, even if king of Hell does not summon, one would go there on his own initiative.

There is the fear of death for the aged ones that they may likely die at either of these two ages.

According to Chen (1997:23)

> The origin of "73 and 84" taboo can be dated back to the Spring and Autumn period about 3,000 years ago. Records show (that) the two sages Confucius and Mencius passed away at the ages of 73 and 84 respectively. Even the saints could not escape the Law of Nature. Therefore many people believe 73 and 84 are the destined years for them to leave this world, which has become a heavy psychological burden.

4.3.1 Psycho-analysis of selected totems and taboos

It is arguable that the greatest foundation of totems and taboos lies in their psychological attachment. Our findings in this study are not significantly different from the observation of Sigmund Freud (1919 [2015]: 25).

> A Maori woman ate a certain fruit and then learned that it came from a place on which there was a taboo. She cried out that the Spirit of the chief who she had thus offended would surely kill her. This incident occurred in the afternoon, and on the next day at twelve o'clock she was dead. The tinder box of a Maori chief once cost several persons their lives. The chief had lost it, and those who found it should light their pipes. When they learned whose property the tinder box was, they all died of fright.

From each of the two narrations of the Maori tribes in the quotation above, it is observed that the realization of the fact that the people had violated a taboo actually caused their death.

While the psychological implication in the case of the Maori woman was overt, it became explicit in the second narrative where it is given as "fright".

The psychological implication of myths is further enunciated by Malinowski (1954 [1926]: 179) in the essay, "Myth in Primitive Psychology" where the issue of death comes under scrutiny. On why the subject of death has to attract so much mythification even when it is such a reality even among the so called primitive people, it is explained thus,

> but the idea of death is fraught with horror, with a desire to remove its threat, with the vague hope that it may be, not explained, but rather explained away, made unreal, and actually denied. Myth warranting the belief in immortality, in eternal youth, in a life beyond the grave, is not an intellectual reaction upon a puzzle, but an explicit act of faith born from the innermost instinctive and emotional reaction to the formidable and haunting idea.

Liu Tseng-Kuei (2009: 882) asserts that taboos originated from fear, and from the fear of disastrous occurrences which make people behave in a manner that would save them from the effects of calamity. Though most cultures of the world have these tendencies to escape from disaster and prescribe patterns of behaviour that would guarantee their safety, the behavioural patterns vary from culture to culture. Among the Qin and Han dynasties in China, Liu (ibid.) explains further:

> the word here translated as "taboo" (jinjin) is very close to the word, "j'ihui." If we look at the dictionary, "shua wen", the three characters, "jin", "ji" and "hui", do not differ all that much. All mean "being careful about good and bad fortune.

Wang Chong's (1974) view of taboo is that it tends to make people avoid the inauspicious and that "belief is what underpins taboos, because that is what gets people to obey them" (Liu, ibid: 883). The position of Nadia Sels (2011: 57) further elucidates the correlation between mythology and psychoanalysis:

> Myths, in other words, are the psyche's symbolic renderings of its own working and can be translated as such by the analyst. When in 1900 Freud gives his analysis of the Oedipus – myth in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, he specifies why this projection

> takes place: myth gives vent to the repressed longings and fears of humankind. We revel in Oedipus's crimes, because they represent our own unconscious desires, and we feel relief when he is punished, because this alleviates our own feelings of guilt.

The psychological import of taboos is also given ample expression by Man Ping Chu (2009) where he opines among other issues:

> Chinese people yearn to reach or be close to a state of "being blessed" and to stay away from "evil" or "bad luck" as much as possible, they create taboo situations.

The position of Man is that the fear to avoid punishment or ill luck and the desire to receive good luck both dominate the people's attitude to totems and taboo. The belief of people across various cultures of the world is the dominant motif in their myth-making processes. Let us now try to analyse some of the totems and taboos of Nigeria and China with a view to ascertaining the extent to which mythography is a product of the people's psyche.

4.3.2 The Dragon is an awesome animal

Though the dragon is by now extinct, the image of the animal totem created in China and across the entire world is the one that elicits fear in the mind of men. Dharma Keerthi and Zhou Chang (2010: 67) have the portrayal below of the Chinese dragon:

> According to the products of innate and the endowments of the legend in China and the suburb adjoining territories, the Dragon is a fabulous animal usually representing a monstrous winged and scaly serpent or saurian with a crested head and enormous claws and a monster, represented usually as a gigantic reptile having a big Lion's claws breathing fire.

The dragon is credited with the abilities to fly, swim and run. Apart from the aura of not being assailable, the beast is also not avoidable. Also, apart from its massive body which leaves nobody any chance in a contest, the dragon is also claimed to possess some magical powers. All these attributes simply leave a person with a feeling of awe. The relationship of the Chinese to the draw is obviously driven by this great fear of the animal. Different tales are created around the totem in an effort to court its favour and befriend it from afar. The

relationship becomes mythical as Chinese began to draw up the image of the animal with the belief that its appearance is capable of protecting them, their boats, houses and temples. A typical example of this mythical and psychological interplay gave rise to the annual Dragon-Boat Festival in many Chinese communities on the “Miluo” River. (F. Chow; 1968: 389 ff). The awesome nature of the dragon has led to the creation of a taboo situation around the totem. Desecrating the image or concept of the dragon has therefore become a taboo. Observing the taboo is in turn driven by the psychology of avoidance that is, avoiding the consequences of disrespecting the mythical figure of the dragon.

4.3.3 Animal totems of the Cat family are intimidating

Totemised animals in the cat family include lion, tiger, leopard and the fox. The sizes and the enormous strength as well as the great speed of the large cats make them highly intimidating to human beings. These cats inhabited the forests and the grasslands of both China and Nigeria in the old days and they constituted a great source of danger to the primitive men whose simple tools served little or no useful means of attack or defence against these powerful and skillful predators. The people became incessantly exposed to the risk of being attacked by this class of animals to the extent that the fear of the predators became part of their conscious and unconscious belief system. The animals became totemised as a way of ensuring that they escape the vicious attack of the cats. One of the best ways of doing this in the imagination of the people is pretending to be a member of the cats’ clan. This gives the people the psychological feeling of avoiding the risk of being killed by the predators in the first instance. Also, they have the belief that they are also imbued with the strength of the cats in confronting their human adversaries.

4.3.4 Natural occurrences and phenomena are menacing

The early man could not understand or explain a number of the natural occurrences such as rainfall, flooding, lightning, thunder, volcano and the presence of mountains, hills, caves, valleys, forests, rivers, lakes and oceans. His early interactions with some of these elements of nature must have resulted in series of danger resulting in severe injury, incapacitation and outright death. The implication of this was for him to be frightened whenever he is confronted with such occurrences or elements. Myths were perhaps created through the totemisation of some of the elements while a taboo situation is also created to control the interaction of men with these elements. For instance, it requires very expensive rituals and propitiations before someone killed by lightning, who drowned in a river or lake, committed suicide by hanging, or was killed by a falling tree could be buried. Apart from the high financial demand, the victims are also buried at the point of the accident and denied the cultural luxury of being buried like a normal person.

In oral interviews with Yoruba and Igbo cultural specialists, apart from the sacrifices, the bodies of the dead victims had to be surrendered to the "irate" totems as appeasements to avert further deaths from similar circumstances within the society. This further corroborates our theory of psychological attachments to the observance of taboos and totems as elements of mythography in indigenous societies.

4.3.5 Some totems are based on fantasy

The jade belief is the greatest material for Chinese treasures. The "Jade Age" according to Wu (2017) has been experienced by Chinese Civilization for about 7,000 – 8,000 years and this outlasts the Gold civilization which has lasted for just about 3,000 years. Wu (ibid: 20) concludes that Jades have become the major source of inspiration for creativity in China and a major source for constructing their space of imagination and fantasy. The Jade mythology grew out of the admiration of the people of the Yellow Emperor Dynasty for a

range of geographic elements such as contained in the Classic of Mountains and Seas, the map of Rivers, and the Encyclopedia of Nature. Wu (ibid) quotes Beinstein, (2008: 1-6) as saying:

> Seen from the description of "beautiful jades shine magic lights", the difference between the west and east mythologies – gold worship and jade worship – results from the difference of the lightening minerals. The luster and color of gold obsessed the Greek and Roman writers, in the same way beautiful jades, jades cream and jade flowers obsessed those Chinese Writers.

The expanse of water that makes the ocean with its myriads of natural resources is another myth creating phenomenon in both Nigeria and China. Communities that live around the oceans have not only totemised the seas but also some of the resources – plant, animal and natural elements that exist in the sea. It is obvious from our interactions with informants in this study that the indigenous communities could not fathom the spread, depth and content of the oceans. They are left with their imagination about the existence of the oceans. Myths abound in coastal communities around Nigeria and China that link the formation of waves and storms on the seas to the activities of some gods and goddess. These deities are worshipped in the belief that they can assist them have favourable voyages on the seas, grant them good harvests on fishing expeditions and avert the many risks that confront travellers on the sea or residents along the coastal lines.

4.3.6 Some myths are inspired by admiration and affection

Quite a number of animal totems in both Nigeria and China have assumed their mythical statuses because of the attraction of the people to their beautiful or remarkable physical features. The peacock is globally recognized as a very attractive bird because of its array of beautiful feathers. The people of Offa in Kwara State have chosen the peacock, known as Ọ̀kiń in the local language as their totem. In an oral interview with Shehu Tijani

Alarape, a *Baálẹ̀*[54] within the community, the origin of this practice was when a particular Olofa (King) indulged in the killing of the bird and used its feathers to decorate his palace. The assemblage of the feathers became so beautiful that the killing of the peacock was outlawed to preserve its population. The people became emotionally attached to the bird because of its heavy presence in the palace set up. Today a very large effigy of the peacock is placed in the front of the palace of Olofa and the people are praised as "*Ìyẹ̀rú Ọ̀kín*" (the beautiful tail fathers of the peacock). Incidentally, this totem confirms Radcliffe Brown's position on totemic relationship being dependent on "the hunting of wild animals and collection of wild plants (1952:126).

Another bird that is held in very high regard among the Yoruba people because of its beautiful plumage is the parrot. It is a bird of very rare species that has been domesticated by people from different indigenous communities of the world. The parrot, known as Odídẹ́rẹ́ in Yoruba language is the totem of the Ìwó community in Osun State of Nigeria. According to an oral source obtained from Prince Asifatu Akanbi, the Mogaji Tadese of Ìwó on the 17th of July, 2015, the migrating founders of Ìwó got fascinated by the presence of a large colony of parrots at a spot. They decided to settle at the spot and adopt the parrot as their totem. Part of their lineage praise chants links them to the parrot. Ìwó Odídẹ́rẹ́ (Iwo that belongs to the parrot). Being part of the same clan, the parrot is forbidden to be killed, eaten or used as sacrifice by the people of Ìwó.

Other animal totems in China that have assumed this status because of affection, admiration and their physical attraction include antelope, grouse, skunk, and swan, among others.

[54] Oral interview conducted on the 6th of July, 2015.

4.3.7 Some totemic relationships are borne out of sympathy, gratitude and reward for loyalty

The relationships between man and some totemic animals in Nigeria and China have forged some sort of close affinity and bonding between the two. Animals such as dogs, horses, cats, falcons and pigeons have been in such close contact that the animals have been considered inseparable allies of men who kept them as pets. The descendants of Olúòjé in Ìbàdàn, Oyo State made the dog their community totem in appreciation of what a dog did to cover the nakedness of the dead body of their progenitor. So also, in Ara, Osun State of Nigeria, a taboo is placed on the killing, eating and rearing of dog to make up for their initial insensitivity to a dog that rendered assistance to them. Their relationship to this totem was borne out of a feeling of guilt and remorse. The myth surrounding the horse totem among the people of Ikere-Ekiti in Nigeria is linked to the gratitude of Ajolagun, an Ikere warrior who used a magical horse to dance through a war front and conquered the enemies, to his faithful horse who contributed to his victory. Also in our earlier narration of the *adìyẹ* (fowl) totem and taboo in Òde-Aye, Ondo State, the people have forbidden the killing and eating of chicken in the community to compensate the local fowls for the role they played in saving the people from a band of enemy warriors pursuing them during warfare.

The subject of death is the scariest and most tabooed.

It is arguable that death is the ultimate form of ill luck that the indigenous peoples of most cultures of the world could conceive. Virtually every indigenous culture tends to avoid the subject of death as much as possible. Taboos are created around most things that are connected with death. From our findings it is obvious that people are generally frightened by the idea of death and often terrorized by the thought, mention or reminder of it. Even while Nigerian and Chinese cultures create metaphors, images and euphemisms that would make

them avoid the mention of death, they still abhor whatever would make them have an indirect link to the subject.

In Chinese, many words sound like death; such words are avoided as much as practicable. Examples include:

i. The number "4" which is pronounced [si] same as death.

ii. The number 13 which is pronounced [si:] meaning to die

iii. The number 14 which is pronounced [si:] meaning I am dying

The rendering of some words in Chinese speech would also connote disaster or accident which could be mistaken for death. Such actions, which are avoided, include:

i. "giving a clock" pronounced as "song zhong" which is the same "song zhong" meaning "bidding farewell to a dying person in the deathbed;"

ii. "cutting a pear in two halves" /feng li/ sounds exactly like separation /feng li/ in Chinese".

iii. "turning over a fish is a forbidden action on a boat because the term /fan/ - meaning 'turning over' can attract an accident of 'turning over' the boat."

The fan called /shan/ in Chinese and the umbrella called /san/ in Chinese are avoided because they both sound like /san/ which is the same sound for "separation" or "scattered" in Chinese.

The Edith Cowan University publication on Norms and Practices in China (2016) cautions:

> Death is generally not openly talked about in China, so to avoid accidentally offending anyone, do not say phrases such as "my mobile phone is dead" or "my watch just died". Rather rephrase by saying "my mobile battery is not charged" or "my watch is not working".

In a related essay, Fuyu Chen (2012: 126) writes.

> In China, traditionally, death is a very strict taboo even between acquaintances. When someone has passed away, it should not be mentioned again unless between biological

> relatives. The outsiders, including the close friends of the family, are merely expected to express their concern through sentences like "Take care of yourself!" It is the best way to show respect for and to leave the deceased in peace, which is well seen in the sentence "Do not name the dead." Even in annual mourning, people would usually keep themselves in silent grief.

That was the extent to which the subject of death had inspired fear in the subconciousness of the people in the indigenous society of the people of China. Though globalization and the influence of western civilization have had some impact on this belief system, the taboo on death still remains sacrosanct in the Chinese culture.

In Nigeria, the situation is not also different as most cultures in Nigeria have created taboo situations around death, the dead and all that pertains to death. Adebola Adebileje (2012: 97) observes in confirmation of many oral sources:

> It is a taboo to announce that someone who is still living has died … Death is revered and feared among the Yoruba. So, it is not to be spoken to forestall its occurrence especially at night. Rather than being the carrier of the bad news of death, a person is meant to say that "his/her head has been covered with clothe in Yoruba culture, so as to lessen the impact of shock on the family members of the deceased.

Yoruba culture forbids the mentioning of the name of the dead person. While the central Yoruba refer to the dead as "*olóògbé*", many of the sub-Yoruba dialects refer to the dead as "*aláìsì*" meaning the one that is no more. Most Nigerian cultures also prescribe avoiding the properties of the dead – farm, clothing and others. Among the Ibo of eastern Nigeria, palm fronds are tied round the farmland of the deceased to prevent the spirit of the dead from visiting the land. All our sources on death taboo in Nigeria and China point to the fact that apart from the deep fear for death, there is also the belief system in life after death and that in death, man transits into greater spiritual power.

Sexual taboos are sacred and psychological

After the subject of death, perhaps the word that takes the next prominence of taboo situations is sex. In all indigenous cultures of the world, sex is regarded as a very sacred issue and it is given very serious consciousness in terms of its practice, discussion and conception. In both Chinese and Nigerian contexts, sex is viewed with no less seriousness. Long Yuan's (2016) thesis centres on the issue of sexually taboo words in Chinese and English languages. The thesis examines some of the reasons behind the creation of taboo situation around sexual language. Yuan (2016:30) quotes the position of Pinker (2007) thus.

> Although sex itself is supposed to be pleasurable and enjoyable, it conceals high stakes behind the surface, which are manifested through "exploitation, disease, illegitimacy, incest, jealousy, spousal abuse, cuckoldry, desertion, feuding, child abuse and rape". And these dark sides of sex have been around us for such a long time, they have left a scar on our emotions and etiquette … Language derived from or associated with this taboo topic is therefore contaminated by these negative aspects of sex.

In the view of Yuan (ibid), despite the essentiality of sex for procreation and the sustenance of human species, sex still remains a source of major taboo words. In this context, sexually taboo words include any use of language associated with "sex, sexual behaviours, sexuality, sexual organs, and effluvia from sexual organs.

From the Nigerian and Chinese perspectives of sex and sexuality, some words are regarded as obscenities or in very plain terms dirty words. The idea of dirtiness is clearly explained by Ariel C. Arango (1989: 9):

> We know now that dirty words are "dirty" because they name without hypocrisy, euphemism, or modesty what should never be mentioned in public: the true and lewd sexuality. Furthermore, these words often carry a hallucinatory force. They arouse the picture of the sexual organ or scene in a most vivid way and they also arouse strong licentious feelings.

Oral sources from Nigeria are of the opinion that sexual taboos in Nigerian cultures are borne out of these issues of dirtiness and obscenities. Most traditional cultures of Nigeria treat body effluvia from the woman as dirty. They are not to be touched, seen, mentioned nor mingled with. The most central of the fluid is the menstral blood which is classified in Chinese as well as all Nigerian languages. In Chinese language, the euphemism for "*yue jing*" or monthly menstruation is "*da yi ma*" which literally means "big aunty". Whereas in Yoruba of South-West Nigeria it is called "*ǹkan oṣoosù*", or "*ǹnkan obìrin*", "monthly thing" or "women's thing". According to Christie Omego, (2014: 146) while "*inu nso*" means to menstruate, women prefer to use the euphemistic alternative, "*inwe onye ọbia*" which literally means "to have a visitor".

Another sexual issue that attracts taboo situation is the genital organ – male or female. They are considered highly provocative, erotic and capable of arousing sexual desire at the slightest mention or imagination. And for this reason, Yuan (2016: 39) explains further.

> Their symbolic values can be traced to the origins of mankind, to the episode when, after committing the sin of "eating the apple". Adam and Eve were forced to use leaves to cover their genital organs. Since then, genital organs have become the most private parts of human beings and it is not surprising that some of the words used to name them are considered highly taboo.

In Chinese, the orthophemistic terms for the male genital organ are "*ying jing*". The euphemism mostly preferred for this organ in Chinese is "*yang ju*". The formal expression for the female genital is "*nv xing sheng zhi gi guan*" which literally translates to "female reproductive organ". The more preferable expression for this organ however is "*xia mian*" which literally means "down there". (Yuan, ibid: 42).

Virtually every culture in Nigeria opts for the euphemistic version of the female genital organ. A popular proverb among the Okun ethnic group in Kogi State of Nigeria says "*Ojú róbò ẹ pábé*" meaning the "eyes saw a vagina but calls it under". Among the Igbo of

South East Nigeria, the female genital organ is called "*otu*" meaning "vagina", but the people prefer pre-fixing "*Ihe*" before man or woman to have "*Ihe Nwoke*", for "a man's thing" or "*Ihe Nwayi*" for "a woman's thing".

A particularly interesting but insightful illustration is in this instance given by Mallam Aliyu Uba, a Hausa man from Kano State in Nigeria.

> "Zákárì" in Hausa is the name of a man with the tune falling. "Zákàrí" in Hausa with the tune rising means a man's penis. Despite the rather bluntness of Hausa speakers in saying things the way they are, women try not to call either of the two words so as not to be mistakenly seen as being vulgar. So if they need to address a man "Zákárì, they look for an appellation or completely refuse to call the man's name.

Some other sexually taboo words in China and Nigeria are presented in the tables below:

Table 4.1: Sexual Taboo Words in China.

S/N	Words	Formal words in Chinese	Euphemism	Literal meaning
1.	Buttocks/Anus	Tun bu	Hou mian	Behind
2.	Male Prostitution	Ji nan	Mai	To sell
3.	Female Prostitution	Ji nv	Mai	To sell
4.	To fuck	Cao	Zuo ai Shang chuang Yu shui zhi huan	To make love To go to bed Pleasure between fish and water

Source [Long Yuan 2016]

Table 4.2 - Sexual Taboo Words in (Yoruba) Nigeria.

S/N	Concept	Formal meaning	Euphemism	Literal meaning
1.	Vagina	Òbò	Abẹ́	Under
2.	Fornicate	Ṣàgbèrè	Ya ojúlé	Visit houses
3.	To fuck	Dó	Básùn	Sleep with
4.	To be pregnant	Lóyún	Fẹ́rakù	Lost body

Source: Field study, 2016

Table 4.3: Sexual Taboo Words in (Igbo) Nigeria

S/N	Concept	Formal meaning	Euphemism	Literal meaning
1.	Flirting	Àkwùna	Igba ama	Seen outside
2.	Pregnancy	Ime	Iriju afo	To be filled
3.	To have sex	Ira out	Ira iju	To sleep with
4.	Illicit affair	Ikwa iko	Ime he ápàrì	To do a stupid thing

Source: Christie Omegu (2014)

Table 4.4: - Sexual Taboo in (Hausa) Nigeria

S/N	Concept	Formal meaning	Euphemism	Literal meaning
1.	Vagina	Dúrì	Farji (gàba)	Private (front) part
2.	Penis	Bùrá	Zákàri (gàba)	Private (front) part
3.	To fuck	Ci	Tarawa	Intercourse
4.	Pregnancy	Ciki	Júná bíyú	Double-bodied

Source: Mallam Shuaib AbdulWaheed, field study, 2016

4.4 Mythography and social cohesion

The coming together of human beings from different backgrounds to form a gathering of some relatively permanent cohabitation naturally portends conflicts. From the simplest to the most complex configurations of the human society, the presence of conflicting interests is always at the background. This accounts for why Marxist critics have come to the conclusion that conflicts are a constant feature of the human society (Eagleton, 1985). To minimize the disastrous impacts of unattended conflicts, each society puts in place measures to reduce the occurrence of conflicts by addressing issues that can engender clash of interests in the society. As simple as some indigenous society appears to be, in terms of their structures and organization, the complexity and effectiveness of their conflict control mechanism would be quite amazing. Sigmund Freud (2015) expressed surprise that the so called “primitive”

Aborigines of Australia would place effective restrictions on intra clan sex with their seeming absence of civilization. Freud (6) writes:

> The Aborigines of Australia are looked upon as a peculiar race which shows neither physical nor linguistic relationship with its nearest neighbors, …. They do not build houses or permanent huts; they do not cultivate the soil or keep any domestic animals except dogs; they do not know the art of pottery. They live exclusively on the flesh of all sorts of animal which they dig. Kings and chieftains are unknown among them …. It is quite doubtful whether they evince any traces of religion in the form of worship of higher beings … We surely would not expect that these poor naked cannibals should be moral in their sex life according to our ideas, or that they should have imposed a high degree of restriction upon their sexual impulses.
>
> (Ellipses are mine)

The unexpected but highly effective check has however been possible through the imposition of taboo. More sophisticated modern societies have their social control mechanisms in their Constitutions, Charters and Treaties. These documents are more often than not, written, and replicated in the literatures of the societies. The indigenous societies however depend on their myth-making processes for social control within the groups. The myths are expressed and transmitted through oral means in their narratives, music, songs, proverbs, and other loric means. Some of the measures put in place in the indigenous contexts of Nigeria and China are analysed below.

4.4.1 The Dragon myth controls communal existence.

The Dragon has been observed as the most central totem and taboo animal in China. The Dragon myth functions in multi-dimensional ways within the society from the traditional to the modern setup. Sri Ranjan and Zhou Chang (2010: 78) conclude their essay on "The Chinese Dragon Concept" on the note following:

> Chinese functional, traditional and dramatically diversifies comes (sic) alive grasping the modernity, portraying the validity of them for the rapid development of the country and to reach the unique goal. The Chinese Dragon,

> stretching its hands throughout all the regions controls and leads the social system varying from tradition to modernity. The belief and the behaviour of the Dragon has been leading the masses to live as a spiritual force in their mind and in the functional activities of the social system.
>
> (Parenthesis mime)

One of the influences of the Dragon myths on social cohesion in the Chinese society is in this pattern of existence highlighted by Sri Ranjan and Zhou Chang (69)

> The Chinese villagers and inhabitants engaged in a long history of on-going relationships with neighbouring villages. They had built up a huge network of social relations and understandings, believed and bound to the social relational cult brings (sic) by the historical evidences. These cults help to make social and collective consciousness in the community.

Members of the same totem clan see themselves as one. A taboo situation is formed around them that they should not hurt one another. The myth arising from this belief is that an injury by a member of the clan to another is an injury to their totem. An offender who violates this myth is expected to suffer a repercussion from the totem – which in this case is the mighty, dreaded and inevitable dragon.

4.4.2 Mythography helps in avoiding danger

The whirlwind is a totem in many Nigerian cultures. It is a sandy, spiral and very violent gathering of the wind which normally occurs in the dry lands of Nigeria. Just as the English name for this natural occurrence is whirlwind, most of the Nigerian indigenous names for the concept is a purely descriptive nominalization of the concept. Among the Ondo of South-West Nigeria, it is called "*oyi rèrè*" meaning the "spiral wind"; among the "*Okun*", Yoruba speaking part of Kogi State, it is known as "akuku agba" meaning "violent gathering wind". This kind of wind is known across Nigeria to portend the danger of causing blindness. In most part of Northern Nigeria where this kind of wind formation is very common, a taboo situation is formed around it. The formation is known as *gúgúwà* in Hausa language. The

gathering of sand in a whirlwind may be quite interesting to a young child who is ignorant of its destructive capability. The taboo situation is that "the *gúgúwà* must not be covered with a calabash". Else, "a ghost will appear under the calabash and blind the child". While blindness is a very common ailment in the neighbourhood, it becomes a terrifying situation that forces the children into obeying the taboo thereby forcing the children into avoiding the dangers portended by the whirlwind.

In this same way, taboo situations were created in many Nigerian and Chinese indigenous contexts to assist the people in avoiding danger or dangerous situations. The creation of animal totem complexes is one veritable means of doing this. Most of the cat family animal totems – lion, tiger, leopard, lynx, jaguar, and others like fox, wolf, bear etc. are extremely dangerous animals. Leaving humans to their natural likeness of some of these animals may expose them to the danger of being killed or mauled by these massive predators. So, creating taboos or mythic relationship with some of these animals generates a kind of kinship bond between the people and the animal totems which reduces the tendency of predation between the duo. Humans do not look for the totem as food and so the risk of hunting and being hunted on the two sides is reduced. The danger of human being at the obvious risk of being killed in the contest is either totally avoided or significantly reduced. Chu (2009: 128) notes.

> The tiger is the third sign in the Chinese Zodiac. The tiger is symbol of courage and bravery. Nevertheless, the tiger was so much feared that its very name was a taboo, and the people referred to it as "da chong", meaning "big insect" or King of the mountains.

Myths serve to preserve nature.

In the current dispensation, societies make laws proscribing acts that can lead to the depletion of some plants and animal species. Societies in the old days employed the use of

totems and taboos with the necessary myths backing up such belief as a means for these preservations.

Ojó Ojúróngbé[55], a traditional musician and folklorist in Ondo, South West Nigeria, narrates this short story in one of his songs.

Igbó elékútè
Ẹ ẹ kó
Ẹ ẹ gbé 'ná si
Ọmọ Lái gbọ'àn
Ó mú 'gbó elékútè
Ó kọ́, ó gbé ná si
Uná jó 'gbó 'malẹ̀
Ó jéìghò malẹ̀
Ọ̀kàn lé nú malè é jà i o.

Trans.

The elekute grove
It is neither cultivated
Nor is fire set on it
But a recalcitrant child
Entered into the elekute grove
Cultivated it and set it on fire
Fire consumed the forest of the spirits
And destroyed the unseen spirits
Yet, the only spirit spared will fight back.

An analysis of the narrative above by Chief Akinrinmisi Ogunnika in an oral interview indicates that the "*elekute*" is a metaphor for the sacred grove which every indigenous society in Yoruba land keeps where objects and plants considered sacred are preserved. The grove is a totem and it is a taboo to cultivate it or set a fire on it. The narration is a warning to any imaginary member of the society who may be daring enough to want to challenge the belief that such a person shall face the wrath of unseen gods of the land.

The above taboo situation is close to what Liu (2009:890) observes in Han's preservation culture in the early Chinese civilization. He cites "an interesting example of the Han's Wall inscription of 5 AD". Part of the contents reads thus:

[55] Ojo Ojurongbe was a traditional musician who sang in Ondo dialect and was very popular in the 1970s and 80s.

> In the first month of spring, it is forbidden to cut down trees and harvest nests, to kill harmless young insects, birds, and animals or pregnant birds or animals, to gather eggs … rivers and marshes may not be drained nor nets and dams be used in ponds; the hills and forests must not be burned.

All these aim at preserving some of these natural elements so that nature will not be depleted.

Taboos serve to protect endangered species.

The activities of humans in relation to the environment are observed to be responsible for the extinction or near extinction of some plants and animal species. These species are referred to in contemporary times as the endangered species. Just as there are series of legislation and practical steps taken to preserve these species in modern times, the society in the old days had beliefs and practices which aimed at controlling the activities of humans that can further jeopardize the existence of such species.

The vulture is a bird that is not as common as other birds around many towns. They are found mostly around the arid and semi-arid regions of the world. Incidentally, the vulture is a common totem to both Nigerian and Chinese indigenous societies. Taboos are also built around the killing and eating of this animal. An oral source on a local Radio programme[56] claims that the taboo on the killing of the vulture is to preserve its species. The account has it that the vulture is prone to be exterminated because of its existence only in the desert where animal species that can serve as food are quite limited. And that if its killing is not forbidden; the bird will be haunted down and killed in very large quantity, whereas the animal serves a very significant logistic purpose in the desert. The source has it that vultures serve as a natural signal in the desert by following moving human beings and animals on land. In the event that a traveller got lost or becames weak and incapacitated, vultures, swam around such a person wanting to devour the dead body. The swarming of the vultures around a portion of the desert or forest may be the pointer to the search party.

[56] "Eèwọ̀ ile wa" taboos of our land on Orange 94.5 fm, Akure holding on Saturdays between 9 and 10 am monitored on February 4, 2017.

In addition the vulture serves as a natural means of disposing dead bodies in deserts. Corpses of dead humans and animals in the desert may become a source of diseases and epidemics if not properly disposed of. This job of disposing of corpses is what the vulture does. While killing the vultures may rob the people of this great service that the bird provides is one of the reasons why a taboo is woven around its killing. Another reason is that feeding on corpses and carcasses of animals may make it dangerous for human beings to consume the vulture. Forbidding eating of the animal may also be a disease control measure by the people. The evidence of this taboo may be more apparent in the contemporary medical practices where diseases like the Lassa fever, Ebola Virus, and Monkey Pox have been traced to consumption of animals like the rat, bat and monkey.

It is forbidden to kill some animals and their kids by the hunter at the same time. It is also a taboo for a hunter to kill an animal at the point of delivering its young. A. O. Owoseni and I. O. Olatoye (2014: 109) observe, "Any attempt to fell a tree where the decorous bird (*ẹyẹ ẹgà*) lays its eggs is to visit doom upon the society". *Ẹyẹ ẹgà* (Palm bird) is one of the totems used in this study; it is one of the exotic birds in Yoruba land. To control a further depletion of its population, it is necessary to control the destruction of its eggs. It is believed that felling a tree that has on it nests and eggs of the bird would bring on calamities in the society. To avert calamities, people obey the taboo.

4.4.5 Most taboos serve as control against domestic accidents

The most common types of accidents in the human society are domestic accidents. This is expected as most of the human activities take place, are initiated or finalised at the home front. Domestic accidents common in the home include falls, collision, burns, cuts, snake bites, collapse of building and so very many others that cannot be easily exhausted here. It is therefore not surprising to observe that home or domestic related taboos are the highest in the complex of taboos in Nigerian and Chinese indigenous contexts. Some of these

taboos are highlighted in tabular form below to indicate the taboo, the associated myth and the social implication of each item.

Table 4.5 - Taboos associated with knives.

Taboo	The knife must not be used at the New Year festival in China.
Myth	Offenders shall suffer ill luck throughout the year.
Social Implication	Since there is too much wine in service, avoiding the knife would reduce the risk of cuts.
Taboo	People should not use the kitchen knife to put food into their mouth in Nigeria.
Myth	Offenders would develop ugly and excessive teeth formation.
Social Implication	The mouth is so soft and sensitive and could be cut easily. This taboo controls the risk of cuts.
Taboo	The knife is not held at "daggers drawn" while walking round the homestead.
Myth	The knife drawer would suffer severe knife cut.
Social Implication	An on-comer may run into the knife and be stabbed.

Source: Field study, 2017

Table 4.6 - Taboos associated with movement

Taboo	It is a taboo to stand at the T-junction.
Myth	One could be struck down by the gods of the junction.
Social Implication	One would simply obstruct passers-by.
Taboo	It is a taboo to run (instead of walk) into a house.
Myth	Calamities may follow one into the homestead.
Social Implication	Colliding with a feeble old man, little child or a pregnant woman may cause death or disaster.

Source: Field study, 2017

Table 4.7 - Taboos associated with pregnancy

Taboo	A man must not have sex with a woman that is pregnant for another man.
Myth	The offending man shall be wretched.
Social Implication	The dangerous escapade may be injurious to the unborn child. There is the danger of sexually transmitted disease for the mother and child.
Taboo	It is a taboo for a pregnant woman to sleep lying face upward.
Myth	The baby will be blinded by the sun.
Social Implication	One may jump on the stomach or step on it and cause a fatal injury on other or child.
Taboo	It is a taboo for the pregnant woman to stand at the door post.
Myth	The baby would delay at the delivery point (i.e. the mother would suffer

	prolonged labour)
Social Implication	An on-comer may hit the protruding stomach or the mother at the door leading to an accident.

Source: Field study, 2017

Table 4.8 - Taboos associated with food

Taboo	It is a taboo to allow two chopsticks to stand in a bowl of rice.
Myth	One is sending a death message to co-participants at the meal as in standing incense sticks to the dead.
Social Implication	It is capable of creating fear and loss of appetite in the people or vomiting.
Taboo	It is a taboo to give a piece of food or meat to someone else with the edge of a knife.
Myth	One is placing a curse on the recipient or placing him on a severe oath.
Social Implication	Retrieving the food may cause a cut on the hand of the recipient.
Taboo	Some cultures forbid the eating of certain animals.
Myths	To avoid the wrath of some deities.
Social Implications	Such animals have dirty habits (pigs) and some are too familiar (dogs and horses) and some are hated (such as snakes). All these can lead to nausea and vomiting.

Source: Field study, 2017

Table 4.9 - Taboos on rains

Taboo	One must not stand at the door post when it is raining.
Myth	One would incur the wrath of the god of thunder.
Social Implication	Lightning is a common natural phenomenon and this may strike someone who is standing on its path when it is raining.
Taboo	One should not use hand to collect rain drop for drinking directly from the roof.
Myth	One would be struck by the god of thunder.
Social Implication	Worms, sand and other dangerous elements could fall with the water and be consumed.

Source: Field study, 2017

Table 4.10 - Taboos against accidents involving babies

Taboo	A child must not fall from the mother’s back
Myth	Seven successive spouses of the child would die when grown up.
Social Implication	The child that is likely to fall headlong from the back may die or suffer severe head injury.
Taboo	The head of a neonate must not be exposed in the market place.
Myth	The child will be bewitched.
Social Implication	The head of the neonate is still soft and prone to risks of being ruptured or scotched by excessive heat.

Source: Field study, 2017

Table 4.11 - Taboos against risky plays

Taboo	A child must not climb the pawpaw tree.
Myth	He may be afflicted with smallpox.
Social Implication	The pawpaw tree is not strong enough to withstand the weight of a human being. The climber may fall and die or be injured.
Taboo	One must not use a cutlass to strike the bare ground for fun.
Myth	The earth goddess would be angered and afflict the offender with smallpox.
Social Implication	One could be cut by the cutlass.

Source: Field study, 2017

Table 4.12 - Taboos preserving household utensils

Taboo	The wooden mortar should not be left outside.
Myth	The offender could be struck by thunder.
Social implication	Weather vagaries can destroy the mortar and it is not easy to replace it.
Taboo	The wooden pestle must not be left outside.
Myths	It can attract the wrath of the gods.
Social implication	Burglars can use it to break in and it can also be used as a weapon by attackers.

Source: Field study, 2017

4.4.6 Taboos controlling undesirable behaviour

Ordinarily, humans are supposed to be highly rational and reasonable in his behaviour. This is as a result of the series of rules, regulations and restrictions out in place to check human excesses. It is expected also that with the very level of human intellectual acumen, they should naturally be able to make behavioural choices that would minimize negative reactions from the society. The reality however is that for many reasons, human behaviour are often precipitated by such negative emotions as greed, lust, anger, selfishness and the likes. It therefore becomes necessary for every society to make adequate plans for checkmating the anti-social behaviour of humans. Some taboo situations put in place to control the behaviour of human beings in the society are analysed below.

As observed earlier, the sexual behaviour of man is about the most sensitive activity in the human society. Restricting sexual behaviour has always been on the front burner in the scheme of indigenous mythical controls. Virtually every society and cultural group in the

world has a succinct way of controlling the sexual behaviour of its citizenry to minimise the conflicts engendered by errant sexual desires and behaviour.

Most cultures in Nigeria make it a taboo to have sex in the bush. Apart from all the oral sources affirming this taboo situation, David Ako Odoi (2014: 73) confirms that the taboo situation also extends to many indigenous societies in Africa. Citing the Mafi-Eve context in Ghana, Odoi (ibid) writes.

> The explanation given to this taboo is that it offends the land. The earth is considered a god. Sexually related diseases, which no medicine can cure, are visited on an offender.

In the above quotation the taboo and the mythical dimensions have been established. The social implication is also included in this position of Odoi (ibid).

> Scientifically, however, this can cause several undesirable situations. There are dangerous insects, scorpions and snakes and micro-organisms which could hurt people engaged in the act.

Granted the spontaneity of the emotions that can culminate in the sexual act if not adequately checked, a lot of damage could be done if very strict measures were not put in place to control its occurrence in every human society. For this reason, most cultures among the Igbo in Eastern Nigeria and the Ondo of South-West Nigeria also place fines of very exorbitant financial implication as sacrifice for propitiation against the goddess of the land in the event of offenders caught having sex in the bush.

Taboos are also created to prevent or avert the incidence of rape in indigenous societies. The event of rape is also of very high possibility in most traditional societies because of the high level of interpersonal relationships among the people. The traumatic impact of rape can be very devastating on the victims and the backlash effects on the indigenous society can spark-off debilitating conflicts within the people. According to some of our oral sources, snatching and rape of wives have caused intra and inter-communal crises of the dimension of wars in many communities. Odoi (ibid) also affirms that the taboo on sex

in the bush is "also meant to prevent the risks of rape". The punishment for rape in many indigenous societies ranges from heavy fines to excision and it could also attract a capital punishment.

Incest is another sexual behaviour that is regarded aberrant by many indigenous cultures in both Nigeria and China. Having sex with one's children, parents, siblings and the spouses of these relations is tabooed in many human societies. Apart from the ones identified, some societies have a list of other relations that form a clan or caste of incestuous ones with whom sexual relationship is prohibited. Odoi (2014:738) observes:

> One of such taboos is incest … The explanation given by Mama Wosekpo Nyikplorkpo and which was confirmed by Alfred Agbozo is that a sexual act within the family is an abomination because blood mixing offends the ancestors and the gods.

The position of Odoi (ibid) also establishes the myth attached to incest. The social implications of the taboo among others include the need to control the desire of men and women towards members of the family and close relations who as a matter of responsibility and regulations must come into close contacts with other members of the clan.

Among the Ondo of South-West Nigeria, the rites for cleansing in the event of an incestuous sexual relationship also involves a range of sacrifices which include many domestic animals – male and female. The two offenders were also shaven clean and made to dance round the immediate neighborhood naked. This very disgraceful dance according to one of our oral sources was a subtle way of imposing an exile verdict on the offenders.[57]

[57] Chief Ogunnika William, a 75 year old resident of Ondo town.

Laziness and lazy attitudes also attract taboos

Virtually, every indigenous culture of the world eschews laziness. It is a known fact that laziness can be the underlying cause of social vices such as theft, burglary and poverty in the society. Taboo situations are created to prevent laziness within the society. Some of these are analysed below.

Table 4.13 - Selected taboos preventing laziness

Taboo	It is a taboo to play "*ayò*" a local game in the morning or late at night.
Myth	The violators would suffer blindness.
Social Implication	Playing the game early in the morning would promote laziness. Playing late into the night would also amount to indolence.
Taboo	It is a taboo to eat the new yam before the New Yam Festival.
Myth	Violators shall suffer mumps.
Social Implication	Eating premature yam is a sign of laziness that can lead to poor harvest.
Taboo	It is a taboo to pour salt into fire.
Myth	The offender shall suffer skin rashes.
Social Implication	The taboo prevents wastefulness.

Source: Field study, 2017

4.4.7 Taboos promoting human health

Good health is perhaps one of the most cherished endowments of indigenous peoples across the world. Even when the people could not establish the relationship between unhygienic behaviour and ill health, efforts were still made in pursuit of the ideal of cleanliness. Prescriptions and restrictions were made to ensure that people live a healthy life. Taboos were created to prevent dirty habits, unhygienic acts and other habits that can jeopardize the health and comfort of others in the society. Some of these taboos are analysed below.

Table 4.14 - Selected taboos promoting human health

Taboo	It is a taboo to spit on the bare floor.
Myth	The offender would suffer sore-throat if someone else steps on the spittle.
Social Implication	Spittle and phlegm can be quite nauseating and can spread contagious diseases like tuberculosis if other people come to contact with them.
Taboo	It is a taboo to step on other people's cut nails.
Myth	The two parties shall be permanently separated in a fight.
Social Implication	Leaving cut nails on the floor is untidy.
Taboo	A man must not step on the broken shells of melon.
Myth	The man shall suffer impotence.
Social Implication	Melon shells can be a source of dirt which can fly around the entire neighbourhood. It is necessary to clear them immediately.
Taboo	It is a taboo to pass excreta on the footpath.
Myth	The offender shall have boil on the buttocks.
Social Implication	Excreta on the road are a public nuisance and could cause health hazards.
Taboo	A pregnant woman must not go out in the mid-day heat.
Myth	She would beget a mysterious/bewitched child.
Social Implication	The mid-day heat can cause a pregnant woman or faint to be dehydrated or cause heat stroke. It is healthy to avoid it.
Taboo	Fetching water at noon by a pregnant woman is a taboo among the Hausa and the Yoruba.
Myth	Evil spirits would replace the foetus.
Social Implication	The woman may collapse into the river or well.
Taboo	It is a taboo to draw the well at night.
Myth	One would draw a python from the well.
Social Implication	One may accidentally fall into the well without neighbours knowing about it.

Source: Field study, 2017

4.4.7 Taboos control crimes

Crimes have always been a prominent feature in every human society since the creation of human beings. So also have been the various attempts to control the occurrence of crimes. Adedayo Emmanuel Afe has the following opinion about the taboos in crime control:

> The control of crimes in any society has been an uphill task from time immemorial. Therefore, different people in an attempt to curtail them have adopted different strategies to contend with crimes depending on their nature and extent … Hence, traditional taboos formed one of the mechanisms used to achieve peace and tranquility among the people of Ondo province and other African societies.

Let us examine some examples of crime control through the instrument of taboos.

Table 4.15 - Selected taboos to control crime

Taboo	It was a taboo for women to fight in the market.
Myth	Offenders have offended the gods and would suffer commercial losses.
Social Implication	Fighting would cause a major breach of the peace of the market resulting in other crimes like looting and wanton destruction of wares. This taboo helps to check the temperament of women in the market
Taboo	It was a taboo to steal in the market.
Myth	Offenders shall be taken over by the spirit of kleptomania.
Social Implication	It is to safeguard the wares of market women.
Taboo	It is a taboo for a man to take the life of another person.
Myth	It is a crime against the creator and the spirit of the dead would always haunt the killer till it is avenged.
Social Implication	This is to protect the value of human life.
Taboo	Suicide is a taboo in all cultures in Nigeria.
Myth	It is a desecration of the land and an offence against the land. Relations of the dead shall pay heavily for propitiation.
Social Implication	It is to prevent crime against oneself.

Source: Field study, 2017

4.4.8 Taboos help to promote cultural affiliation.

It has been observed that some taboos have succeeded in creating cultural bonds within some members of the same totemic clans to the extent that cultural identities have been formulated around the totems to which members of the clan all ascribe even after a long period of separation. Examples of these forms of cultural bonding include:

a. The python clan known as the Idemili clan which spreads across communities spanning the five states of the Eastern Nigeria. Members of each of the communities identify the python as the god of their river which must neither be killed nor eaten. Though the communities are independent settlements, members still have a sense of belonging to the other communities in the clan.

b. The "*ẹdun*" mythical clan which bonds all the twins in Yoruba-speaking parts of South West Nigeria together. Twins in Yoruba land are praised as "*ẹdun gbálájá orí igi*", that is "the sprawling monkey on the tree branch". It is a taboo for all twins to eat the monkey meat as they are supposed to be related.

c. The dragon myth clan across South-East Asia covering China, Japan and Korea is another example of this taboo link. Zhao (2017:301) comments on the belief of the Dragon king among the coastal people of China.

In addition, the beliefs of coastal people promote the cohesion of the community which can be manifested through ritual ceremonies. These ritual ceremonies are functional to connect all people together, promote and develop the sharing of similar cultural heritage in the community, and help them find common things in thoughts, emotions, and behaviours which are contributing to social cohesion.

It is pertinent to note that while it is possible to observe some very high level of semblance or even sameness in a number of the totemic relationships and taboo situations analysed in this chapter, there are still some relationships and situations that reflect some very sharp disparities in the details of others. As earlier observed, this is a further reflection of social and cultural relativism existing between the separate cultural entities in Nigeria and China. A good example is the taboo on spitting on the ground in Nigeria which is a behaviour that is not considered a serious issue in China. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, it is a taboo to spit on the open floor and it is believed that the offender would suffer severe throat pain. Ordinarily, spitting on the floor is considered an unhygienic behaviour which can cause nausea or expose people to contagious diseases. In China, the act attracts no taboo.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Conclusion

The final chapter of this research is dedicated to the summary of the issues discussed in each of the preceding chapters in the first instance. A summary of the major findings in the study then follows in an attempt to enhance a clearer understanding of the logicality of the thesis as well as to highlight the originality of the contributions of mythography and mythic narratology to the field of Oral literature and to knowledge generally which was the aim of the research ab initio. The chapter also draws a general conclusion on the study. The latter part of the chapter makes a suggestion for further study on the nature of taboos and totems as elements of mythography and mythic narrations in the hope of encouraging the interest of future researchers in the relevant fields of discourse.

The first chapter provides a general background to the study. A layout of the major issues such as the statement of the problem, aim and objectives, scope and the methodology is done in this chapter. The conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study as well as general introduction to the variables such as mythology, taboo, totem and the thesis statement are contained in the first chapter.

Chapter two of the work is dedicated to the review of related literature. Existing literature were reviewed under some sub-topics such as myth-making processes as functional psychosocial tool; aetiology, origin, types and functions of myths: mythic narratology; oral narrative modes; oral narrative modes; myths as metaphors: tropes and correlates; semiotics: signs symbols and myth-making and finally; myth-making: secular and non-secular dispositions.

Chapter three opens with an analysis of the composition of the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria and China and a comparative analysis of ethnicity in both countries. The form and

functions of totems in Nigeria and China are later presented in the chapter. The mythic narration of the identified totems were presented and analysed in the latter part of the chapter.

The fourth chapter deals with the analyses of the types and classifications of taboos. The psycho-social implications of the taboos in Nigeria and China were analysed after the mythic narrations of the taboos have been carried out.

5.2 Summary of findings

Myth as a belief system as expressed by quite a large number of scholars (Freud, Jung, Lung, Levi-Strauss etc) or myth as a creative exploit as argued by another group of scholars that include Wright, Malinowski and Okpewho and from the various dimensions that mythology has been approached, is viewed predominantly as a product of oral rendition. This is in agreement with the opinion of Levi-Strauss (1945:430) that "a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place in time; before the world was created". From this premise therefore, it is quite reasonable to argue that myths predate literature. The primacy of myth over literature is hinged on the popular opinion of scholars that speech predates writing. The essence of this argument is that it is obvious that literature, being a latter venture into the spheres of things in many indigenous societies, would yet continue to discover more issues, practices and realities about such indigenous societies that were basically orally transmitted. One of the oral traditions of the indigenous societies that continue to enjoy research patronage and literary exploitation is mythology.

5.2.1 The interconnectedness of totems and taboos

The subject of mythology has been approached from the viewpoint of Sigmund Freud (1919) which explored two mythographic elements "totems and taboos in the myth-making process of the indigenous aborigines of Australia". The focus of this study is to establish the relationship between totems and taboos as myth-making processes in the indigenous contexts

of Nigeria and China. Beyond the predominantly sexual behavioural concern of Freud, the study has to engage the study of mythology by Jung (1969{1956) which introduces the dimensions of archetypes and archetypal images. Jung provides the basis for symbolism and how it affects the unconscious behaviour of man. The contributions of Northrop Frye (1957) and Bruce Lincoln (Aparna Halpe, 2010:10) all lend credence to the findings in this study that there exists a web of relationship between totems and taboos in the myth-making processes of indigenous cultures.

In all the indigenous cultures of Nigerian ethnic groups and those of the Chinese ethnic nationalities involved in this study, totems comprising animals, plants, geographical sites, human beings and other creatures have been made and designated purposively by the people within specific cultural contexts. A taboo, usually a story transmitted orally from generation to generation of the people within the cultural context, has been woven around each totem to explain it and to create an aura of reverence around the totem as well as to provide penalties for wishful or deliberate violation of the taboo. It has also been established that each culture created a belief system around the totem and the taboo narrated about the totem which the people are made to internalise over a period of time. This belief system is repeatedly narrated within the indigenous society to the extent that it becomes part of the people's unconsciousness. The origin, basis and veracity of some of these narratives are not meant to be queried by the people. This provides the confirmation for the interconnectedness of the mythographic elements – totems and taboos as myth-making processes.

5.2.2 Myth-making and social cohesion

Stemming from the study of the Aborigines of Australia by Radcliffe-Brown and Durkheim, Worsely (2017{1955}) compared the views of the earlier researchers on the function of totem, one of the mythographic elements within the cultural contexts. Worsely

(ibid; 858-860) comes to the conclusion that “Totemism” has two aspects – expressing “relations between Man and Nature, and the relations between man and man”.

Human beings tend to express, entrench and defend their freedom. To enhance a peaceful co-existence and social cohesion, the society tries to put a check by placing restrictions on the relationship between man and the natural environment on one hand and between man and man {all human beings} in the society on the other hand. Some of these control measures are contained in the expression of the dangers inherent in behavioural tendencies that are without control. The dangers are expressed in the taboos of the society. The dangers may be tangible or not; some are actually existent while some may be non-existent; some may be personal or domestic while some may assume the dimension of massive social catastrophe.

Taboos are not just created. Science has also corroborated and justified some of these belief systems constituting the taboos. An example is the myth that prohibits standing at the door post when it is raining. The effect of lightning is a natural phenomenon explained by science which is also understood in myth-making as a penalty by the gods for striking down violators of the taboo. Myths are created around some practices to control the behaviour of human beings for health and hygienic reasons. It is generally assumed that people dread forces that they cannot control. A good example of such forces is thunder or lightning.

This study submits in agreement with a large number of scholars that include but are not limited to (Freud 1919, Malinowski 1926, Jung 1928 & 1956, Worsely 1955, Frye 1957, Durkheim and Mauss, 1963, Okpewho 1980 & 1983, Man Ping Chu 2009, Halpe 2010, Sels 2011, Kofoworola 2013, Afe 2013, Ma Tiechuan 2015, Yuan 2016 and Zhao 2017) who have expressed varied views on myth-making as a means of controlling the behaviour, attitude and belief of people as a means of ensuring social control within various indigenous cultures of the world.

5.2.3 Indigenous belief systems and foreign religions

Every religion in the world is built around a belief system. One of the most succinct systems in world religions is myth-making. Coincidentally, myth-making processes in religions also explore the elements of totems and taboos. Some elements of worship are regarded as sacred thereby sharing the status of totems. Restrictions are placed on these elements to protect their sanctity. Also, dos and don’ts are formulated by religions to control the behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of their adherents. Penalties are also specified for errant worshippers some of which are meted out by fellow worshippers while some are divinely administered by the Supreme Being. Kur Wing Chan (1997) opines that taboos are usually related to religion.

In line with the conclusion of Liang Yongjia (2016, 10-11), it has been observed that a migrating foreign religion is always in conflict with the indigenous belief systems of a recipient culture. After an exhaustive review of the impact of religion especially non-Chinese beliefs on the culture of China over a long period of time, Chinese came to the conclusion that the concerns of foreign religions never adequately address Chinese issues. He then recommends that Chinese folk belief study “should raise questions out of the historical traditions of China”. In Nigeria, Christianity and Islam are the two foreign religions contending with the indigenous belief systems in the society.

Since China became open to the rest of the world in the post-Mao era, several efforts have been made to regulate the effects of religion on the development of China. One of these regulatory measures has been to intensify academic and literary patronage of indigenous beliefs of the people. This is in contrast to the Nigerian context where the elite look down on the folk beliefs of the indigenous cultures and refer to them in such pejorative and denigrative terms like paganism, barbaric, idolatory, heathen, unbelievers and the likes. The over concentration of Nigerian elite on Christianity and Islam has caused the people to neglect the

social values inherent in the indigenous belief systems which include the literary, educational and social control properties of the myth-making processes.

From the findings made in this study, it is apparent that Nigeria and China have a lot in common in terms of cultural relativity and socio-political contiguity. Nigeria and China are both multi-cultural. Apart from being former colonies of the West, Nigeria and China have their historical pasts of cultural conquests by rampaging internal forces as well as the forces of external Western imperialists. Many of the constituent ethnic nationalities that make up the modern day China lay claim to distinct ascendancies and historical pasts just as it is the case with the ethnic groups in Nigeria. Efforts at nation building and the need to create a central political authority whose states shall override the interest of the confederating nationalities are on-going in both Nigeria and China.

There are however some lessons to learn from the approach of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the handling of their cultural values in charting the course for national development. Chunyan Shu's (2013) observation points to this cultural approach in the comment below.

> Many China-watchers in recent years have observed an increasingly assertive Chinese emphasis on the nation's particular history and culture, both at home and abroad.

Sri Ranjan and Chang (2010: 78) cite the example of China's adoption of the Dragon culture in her drive for national development and social cohesion thereby recommending thus:

> Researching and recognition of the folklore, in the "primitive and the mass societies" as an educational tool for transmission of cultural conventions, social integrative quality and the institutional aspects of value… Their functional, traditional and dramatic diversities comes {sic} alive grasping the modernity, portraying the validity of them for the rapid development of the country to reach the unique goal.

The study also agrees with the observations of Chen (2012:123) on the dominant position of China in world economy and politics. Globalization has changed China

drastically, while in turn, based on its huge population and increasing economic share in the world market, China has increasingly greater influence on the rest of the world.

The study considers the position of Stevan Harrell and Li Yongxiang (2003: 366) quite relevant on the transformation of China into a super economic power. They opine that:

> These revisionist ideas about history have become, at least as much as festivals, rituals, and other cultural activities, a sign and a vehicle of the transformed ethnic identity and ethnic pride that have grown in the wake of economic and policy reforms.

It is obvious that China has been able to sustain her economic growth partly owing to the high level of peace and social stability enjoyed by the nation. Despite being the world's most populated country, crime level has been very low in China. China has also been highly effective in unifying her extremely diversified cultural backgrounds into a seamless single Chinese national identity.

With Nigeria having so much cultural similarities in their world views on totems, taboos and myth-making; with Nigeria being one of China's largest trade partners; with Nigeria having so much problem in achieving effective social cohesion where China has achieved much success and with Nigeria and China enjoying cordial bilateral relationship, this study concludes that Nigeria can adopt the Chinese cultural approach as a viable option for social control and national development.

5.3 The thesis statement and contribution to knowledge

It is hoped that this research has contributed, however modestly, to the field of oral literature scholarship by expanding the horizon of myth-making processes – totems and taboos as oral creative sub-genres that explore the belief systems of indigenous societies as mechanisms for achieving social cohesion. It is also hoped that the doctoral research has contributed to the scanty source of comparative works between two culturally related and

politically aligning nations – Nigeria and China with a view to expanding the value base of such further comparative studies.

It is the contribution of this researcher that the discussion of the variables such as mythography, world-views, narratology and the comparison between Nigeria and China in this research would have opened up a whole lot of other aspects that can trigger worthwhile further research. In the first instance, with the wide geographical distance between Nigeria and China notwithstanding, if so much has been found to be in common between the myth-making processes of the two nations, it is apparent that many indigenous societies across the globe would have a lot to offer on the subject. The interests of translators, linguists and semioticians would also be a welcome outcome of this research so that there can be deeper and wider analyses of some of the totemic and taboo elements involved in this study. The relationship between science and myth-making is another area that could be explored as an outcome of this study. With the divergence and convergence of the positions of myths and science, such questions could arise as to whether myths are outrightly a-scientific or contribute significantly to scientific development. Definitely, engaging some of these prospective research works would further enrich the field of mythology and help in the transition of indigenous societies into desirable modern cultural entities.

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Appendix I

List of Interviews with dates

1. Dog Totem in Ara near Ejigbo in Osun State. Oral interview with Chief John Adeleke of Oyewole compound, Ara, Osun State on 28th June, 2015 at Ara, Osun State.
2. Dog Totem among the Oluoje clan in Ibadan, Oyo State. Oral interview with Dr. Sulaimon Raji on the 28th of June, 2015 at Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo.
3. Totem of the Giant Rat (*Òkété*) among the people of Oke-Itase community in Ile-Ife, Osun State. Oral interview granted by Chief Awotunde in Ile-Ife, Osun State.
4. Totem of the Giant Rat (*Òkété*) among the Olukoyi descendants. An oral interview conducted with Prince Adekunle Ifakunle in Ikoyi town, Isokan local government area of Osun State on the 29th of June, 2015.
5. Totem of the Giant Rat (*Òkété*) among the people of Idanre. Oral interview with Chief Akinnisoye, the Abarinja of Isalu-Ode, Idanre, No. 8 Oke-Odunwo Street, Idanre, Ondo State on 28th June, 2015.
6. Totem of *Ọ̀kín* (Peacock)in Offa, Kwara State. An oral interview with Shehu Tijani Alarape (84 year old), Palace Chief resident within the Palace of the Olofa on 6th July, 2015.
7. Totem of the *Odídẹrẹ́* (Parrot) in Iwo, Osun State. Oral interview with Chief Prince Asifatu Akabi Tadese, the Moderi of Iwo in the Palace of the Oluwo of Iwo on July, 17th 2015.

8. Totem of *Adìyẹ* (fowl) in Òde-Aye, Ondo State. Oral interview with Ọba Akinmusayo Akinlade, The Hale of Ode-Aye in the King's Palace, Oroki Junction, Akinfosile Road on the 27th of July, 2015.

9. Totem of *Ẹ̀gà* (Weaver bird) among the Olú-Òjé of Oluoje compound in Ibadan, Oyo State. Oral interview with Dr. Sulaimon Raji on the 26th June, 2015 at Olu-oje compound, Ibadan.

10. Totem of *Akọ* (Stork) in Modakeke, Osun State. Oral interview with Dr. Adisa Ogunfolakan, Director of Natural History Museum, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife on 26th June, 2015 at O.A.U, Ile-Ife.

11. Totem of *Eke* (Python) in Oku and Orlu Igbo communities. Oral interview with Mazi Ignetius Okeke on the 22nd June, 2015, conducted at Odosida, Ondo in Ondo State.

12. Totem of *Àgbẹ̀dẹ dúdú* (Cobra) among the Idanre people of Ondo State. Oral interview with Chief Akinnisoye, the Abarinja of Isalu, Ode-Idanre on the 28th June, 2015 at Ododе-Idanre, Ondo State.

13. Totem of *Alegba* (Alligator) among the Urhobo of Delta State. Oral interview with Madam Alice Unuefe, an Urhobo woman in Igburowo town in Odigbo local government of Ondo State on July 12th, 2015.

14. Totem of *Ẹdun* (Monkey) in Ọwọ, Ondo state. Oral interview with Mr. Omomeji Alaba of 32 Oke-Ogun Street, Owo, Deputy Director, Owomade Development Association on 24th June, 2015 at Owo in Ondo State.

15. Totem of *Ẹdun* (Monkey) in Ipe-Akoko, Ondo State. Oral interview with Mr. Olude Olowogbeja of Ipe Akoko, Akoko South East local government, Ondo State on 25th June, 2015 at Ipe Akoko, Ondo State.

16. The dog is neither reared nor eaten by the Opomulero lineage, neither do they eat Efọ *òdú*, a variety of vegetable. An oral interview carried out with Chief D. L. Ayanyemi

of No. 1 Omilode Street, Ifetedo, Osun State and Prince Lagundoye Ologbenla of Omu-Aran, Kwara state in August, 2005 at Ifetedo, Osun State.

17. Totem of *Ẹsin* (Horse) in Ikere Ekiti. An oral interview with Chief Omofela Abayomi at No. 13 Odo-Oja Street, Ikere, Ekiti State on July 2nd 2015.

18. Totem of *Ẹfọ̀n* (Buffalo) in Ile-Oluji, Ondo state. An oral interview with Chief Ojo Buraimoh, the Babegha of Ile-Oluji Kingdom at No. 27 Lota-Aye Road, Ile-Oluji.

19. Prof. Jirang Lirang, and Co-Director Confucius Centre, University of Lagos, Nigeria.

20. Mrs. Victoria Arowolo, Secretary and Custodian of Archieves, Cofucius Centre, University of Lagos, Nigeria.

21. Prof. Christopher Anyaoku, Department of English, (a mythologist), University of Lagos, Nigeria. Oral interview conducted at the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

22. Prof. Chima Ayandike, Department of English, Visiting Prof., Peking University Beijing, China. Oral interview conducted at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

23. Charles Akwen, Scholar of English/Chinese tradition, University of Lagos, Nigeria. Oral interview conducted at the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

24. Dr. Omon Osiki, Department of History, University of Lagos, a Scholar in Comparative Chinese Studies. Oral interview conducted at the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

25. Dr. Adekunle S., Department of Computer Science and Visiting Scholar, University of Lokwai, China. Oral interview conducted via telephone.

Appendix II

Table 3.1: Ethnic groups in Nigeria and states where they are found

S/No	Ethnic Groups of Nigeria	States Where they are found
1.	Abayon	Cross River
2.	Abua (Odual)	Rivers
3.	Achipa (Achipawa)	Kebbi
4.	Adim	Cross River
5.	Adun	Cross River
6.	Affade	Yobe
7.	Afizere	Plateau
8.	Afo	-Plateau
9	Agbo	Cross River
10	Akaju-Ndem (Akajuk)	Cross River
11	Akweya-Yachi	Benue
12	Alago (Arago)	Plateau
13	Amo	Plateau
14	Anaguta	Plateau
15	Anang	Akwalbom
16	Andoni	Akwalbom, Rivers
17	Angas	Bauchi, Jigawa, Plateau
18	Ankwei	Plateau
19	Anyima -	Cross River
20	Attakar (ataka)	Kaduna
21	Auyoka (Auyokawa)	Jigawa
22	Awori	Lagos, Ogun
23	Ayu	Kaduna
24	Babur	Adamawa, Bomo, Taraba, Yobe
25	Bachama	Adamawa
26	Bachere	Cross River
27	Bada	Plateau
28	Bade	Yobe
29	Bahumono	Cross River
30	Bakulung -	Taraba
31	Bali	Taraba
32	Bambora (Bambarawa)	Bauchi
33	Bambuko -	Taraba

34	Banda (Bandawa)	Taraba
35	Banka (Bankalawa)	Bauchi
36	Banso (Panso)	Adamawa
37	Bara (Barawa)	Bauchi
38	Barke	Bauchi
39	Baruba (Barba)	Niger
40	Bashiri (Bashirawa)	Plateau
41	Bassa	Kaduna, Kogi, Niger, Plateau
42	Batta	Adamawa
43	Baushi	Niger
44	Baya	Adamawa
45	Bekwarra	Cross River
46	Bele (Buli, Belewa)	Bauchi
47	Betso (Bete)	Taraba
48	Bette	Cross River
49	Bilei	Adamawa
50	Bille	Adamawa
51	Bina (Binawa)	Kaduna
52	Bini	Edo
53	Birom	Plateau
54	Bobua	Taraba
55	Boki (Nki)	Cross River
56	Bkkos	Plateau
57	Boko (Bussawa, Bargawa)	Niger
58	Bole (Bolewa)	Bauchi, Yobe
59	Burma (Burmawa)	Plateau
60	Buru	Yobe
61	Buta (Butawa)	Bauchi
62	Bwall	Plateau
63	Bwatiye	Adamawa
64	Bwazza	Adamawa
65	Challa	Plateau
66	Chama (ChamawaFitilai)	Bauchi
67	Chamba	Taraba
68	Chamo	Bauchi
69	Chibok (Chibbak)	Yobe
70	Chinine	Borno
71	Chip	Plateau
72	Chokobo	Plateau
73	Chukkol	Taraba
74	Daba	Adamawa
75	Botlere	Adamawa

76	Boma (Bomawa, Burmano)	Bauchi
77	Bomboro	Bauchi
78	Buduma	Borno, Niger
79	Buji	Plateau
80	Buli	Bauchi
81	Bunu	Kogi
82	Bura	Adamawa
83	Burak	Bauchi
84	Dadiya	Bauchi
85	Daka	Adamawa
86	Dakarkari	Niger, Kebbi
87	Danda (Dandawa)	Kebbi
88	Dangsa	Taraba
89	Daza (Dere, Derewa)	Bauchi
90	Degema	Rivers
91	Deno (Denawa)	Bauchi
92	Dghwede	Bomo
93	Diba	Taraba
94	Doemak (Dumuk)	Plateau
95	Ouguri	Bauchi
96	Duka (Dukawa)	Kebbi
97	Duma (Dumawa)	Bauchi
98	Ebana (Ebani)	Rivers
99	Ebirra (lgbirra)	Edo, Kogi, Ondo
100	Ebu	Edo, Kogi
101	Efik	Cross River
102	Egbema	Rivers
103	Egede (lgedde)	Benue
104	Eggon	Plateau
105	Egun (Gu)	Lagos,Ogun
106	Ejagham	Cross River
107	Ekajuk	Cross River
108	Eket	AkwaIbom
109	Ekoi	Cross River
110	Engenni (Ngene)	Rivers
111	Epie	Rivers
112	Esan (Ishan)	Edo

113	Etche	Rivers
114	Etolu (Etilo)	Benue
115	Etsako	Edo
116	Etung	Cross River
117	Etuno	Edo
118	Palli	Adamawa
119	Pulani (Pulbe)	Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa , Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi , Niger, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe etc.
120	Fyam (Fyem)	Plateau
121	Fyer(Fer)	Plateau
122	Ga'anda	Adamawa
123	Gade	Niger
124	Galambi	Bauchi
125	Gamergu-Mulgwa	Borno
126	Qanawuri	Plateau
127	Gavako	Borno
128	Gbedde	Kogi
129	Gengle	Taraba
130	Geji	Bauchi
131	Gera (Gere, Gerawa)	Bauchi
132	Geruma (Gerumawa)	Plateau, Bauchi
133	Gingwak	Bauchi
134	Gira	Adamawa
135	Gizigz	Adamawa
136	Goernai	Plateau
137	Gokana (Kana)	Rivers
138	Gombi	Adamawa
139	Gornun (Gmun)	Taraba
140	Gonia	Taraba
141	Gubi (Gubawa)	Bauchi
142	Gude	Adamawa
143	Gudu	Adamawa
144	Gure	Kaduna

145	Gurmana	Niger
146	Gururntum	Bauchi
147	Gusu	Plateau
148	Gwa (Gurawa)	Adamawa
149	Gwamba	Adamawa
150	Gwandara	Kaduna, Niger, Plateau
151	Gwari (Gbari)	Kaduna, Niger, Abuja, Plateau
152	Gwom	Taraba
153	Gwoza (Waha)	Borno
154	Gyem	Bauchi
155	Hausa	Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa, Kaduna,Kano,Kastina, Kebbi, Niger,Taraba, Sokoto, Zamfar, etc.
156	Higi (Hig)	Borno, Adamawa
157	Holma	Adamawa
158	Hona	Adamawa
159	Ibeno	Akwalbom
160	Ibibio	Akwalbom
161	Ichen	Adamawa
162	Idoma	Benue, Taraba
163	Igalla	Kogi
164	Igbo	Abia, Anambra, Benue, Delta, Ebonyi,Enugu, Imo, Rivers
165	Ijunnu	Kogi
166	Ikorn	Cross River
167	Irigwe	Plateau
168	Isoko	Delta
169	lsekiri (Itsekiri)	Delta
170	lyala (lyalla)	Cross River
171	Izon (Ijaw)	Bayelsa, Delta, Ondo, Rivers
172	Jaba	Kaduna
173	Jahuna (Jahunawa)	Taraba
174	Jaku	Bauchi
175	Jara (JaarJarawaJarawa	Dutse) –Bauchi
176	Jere (Jare, Jera, Jera, Jerawa)	Bauchi, Plateau
177	Jero	Taraba
178	Jibu	Adamawa
179	Jidda-Abu	Plateau
180	Jimbin (Jimbinawa)	Bauchi
181	Jirai	Adamawa
182	Jonjo (Jenjo)	Taraba
183	Jukun	Bauchi, Benue,Taraba, Plateau

184	Kaba(Kabawa)	Taraba
185	Kadara	Taraba
186	Kafanchan	Kaduna
187	Kagoro -	Kaduna
188	Kaje (Kache)	Kaduna
189	Kajuru (Kajurawa)	Kaduna
190	Kaka	Adamawa
191	Kamaku (Karnukawa)	Kaduna, Kebbi, Niger
192	Kambari	Kebbi, Niger
193	Kambu	Adamawa
194	Kamo	Bauchi
195	Kanakuru (Dera)	Borno Adamawa,
196	Kanembu	Borno
197	Kanikon	Kaduna
198	Kantana	Plateau
199	Kanuri	Kaduna, Adamawa, Borno, Kano,Niger, Jigawa, Plateau, Taraba, Yobe
200	Karekare (Karaikarai)	Bauchi, Yobe
201	Karimjo	Taraba
202	Kariya	Bauchi
203	Katab (Kataf)	Kaduna
204	Kenern (Koenoem)	Plateau
205	Kenton	Taraba
206	Kiballo (Kiwollo)	Kaduna
207	Kilba	Adamawa
208	Kirfi (Kirfawa)	Bauchi
209	Koma	Taraba
210	Kona	Taraba
211	Koro (Kwaro)	Kaduna, Niger
212	Kubi (Kubawa)	Bauchi
213	Kudachano (Kudawa)	Bauchi
214	Kugama	Taraba
215	Kulere (Kaler)	Plateau
216	Kunini	Taraba
217	Kurama	Jigawa, Kaduna, Niger, Plateau
218	Kurdul	Adamawa
219	Kushi	Bauchi
220	Kuteb	Taraba
221	Kutin	Taraba
222	Kwalla	Plateau
223	Kwami (Kwom)	Bauchi
224	Kwanchi	Taraba
225	Kwanka (Kwankwa)	Bauchi, Plateau
226	Kwato	Plateau
227	Kyenga (Kengawa)	Sokoto
228	Laaru (Larawa)	Niger
229	Lakka	Adamawa

230	Lala	Adamawa
231	Lama	Taraba
232	Lamja	Taraba
233	Lau	Taraba
234	Ubbo	Adamawa
235	Limono	Bauchi, Plateau
236	Lopa (Lupa, Lopawa)	Niger
237	Longuda (Lunguda)	Adamawa, Bauchi
238	Mabo	Plateau
239	Mada	Kaduna, Plateau
240	Mama	Plateau
241	Mambilla	Adamawa
242	Manchok	Kaduna
243	Mandara (Wandala)	Borno
244	Manga (Mangawa)	Yobe
245	Margi (Marghi)	Adamawa, Borno
246	Matakarn	Adamawa
247	Mbembe	Cross River, Enugu
248	Mbol	Adamawa
249	Mbube	Cross River
250	Mbula	Adamawa
251	Mbum	Taraba
252	Memyang (Meryan)	Plateau
253	Miango	Plateau
254	Miligili (Migili)	Plateau
255	Miya (Miyawa)	Bauchi
256	Mobber	Borno
257	Montol	Plateau
258	Moruwa (Moro'a, Morwa)	Kaduna
259	Muchaila	Adamawa
260	Mumuye	Taraba
261	Mundang	Adamawa
262	Munga (Mupang)	Plateau
263	Mushere	Plateau
264	Mwahavul (Mwaghavul)	Plateau
265	Ndoro	Taraba
266	Ngamo	Bauchi, Yobe
267	Ngizim	Yobe
268	Ngweshe (Ndhang.Ngoshe-Ndhang)	Adamawa, Borno
269	Ningi (Ningawa)	Bauchi
270	Ninzam (Ninzo)	Kaduna, Plateau
271	Njayi	Adamawa
272	Nkim	Cross River
273	Nkum	Cross River
274	Nokere (Nakere)	Plateau
275	Nunku	Kaduna, Plateau
276	Nupe	Niger

277	Nyandang	Taraba
278	Ododop	Cross River
279	Ogori	Kwara
280	Okobo (Okkobor)	Akwa lbom
281	Okpamheri	Edo
282	Olulumo	Cross River
283	Oron	Akwa lbom
284	Owan	Edo
285	Owe	Kwara
286	Oworo	Kwara
287	Pa'a (Pa'awaAfawa)	Bauchi
288	Pai	Plateau
289	Panyam	Taraba
290	Pero	Bauchi
291	Pire	Adamawa
292	Pkanzom	Taraba
293	Poll	Taraba
294	PolchiHabe	Bauchi
295	Pongo (Pongu)	Niger
296	Potopo	Taraba
297	Pyapun (Piapung)	Plateau
298	Qua	Cross River
299	Rebina (Rebinawa)	Bauchi
300	Reshe	Kebbi, Niger
301	Rindire (Rendre)	Plateau
302	Rishuwa	Kaduna
303	Ron	Plateau
304	Rubu	Niger
305	Rukuba	Plateau
306	Rumada	Kaduna
307	Rumaya	Kaduna
308	Sakbe	Taraba
309	Sanga	Bauchi
310	Sate	Taraba
311	Saya (SayawaZa'ar)	Bauchi
312	Segidi (Sigidawa)	Bauchi
313	Shanga (Shangawa)	Sokoto
314	Shangawa (Shangau)	Plateau
315	Shan-Shan	Plateau
316	Shira (Shirawa)	Kano
317	Shomo	Taraba
318	Shuwa	Adamawa, Borno
319	Sikdi	Plateau
320	Siri (Sirawa)	Bauchi
321	Srubu (Surubu)	Kaduna
322	Sukur	Adamawa
323	Sura	Plateau

324	Tangale	Bauchi
325	Tarok	Plateau, Taraba
326	Teme	Adamawa
327	Tera (Terawa)	Bauchi, Bomo
328	Teshena (Teshenawa)	Kano
329	Tigon	Adamawa
330	Tikar	Taraba
331	Tiv	Benue, Plateau, Taraba and Nasarawa
332	Tula	Bauchi
333	Tur	Adamawa
334	Ufia	Benue
335	Ukelle	Cross River
336	Ukwani (Kwale)	Delta
337	Uncinda	Kaduna, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto
338	Uneme (Ineme)	Edo
339	Ura (Ula)	Niger
340	Urhobo	Delta
341	Utonkong	Benue
342	Uyanga	Cross River
343	Vemgo	Adamawa
344	Verre	Adamawa
345	Vommi	Taraba
346	Wagga	Adamawa
347	Waja	Bauchi
348	Waka	Taraba
349	Warja (Warja)	Jigawa
350	Warji	Bauchi
351	Wula	Adamawa
352	Wurbo	Adamawa
353	Wurkun	Taraba
354	Yache	Cross River
355	Yagba	Kwara
356	Yakurr (Yako)	Cross River
357	Yalla	Benue
358	Yandang	Taraba
359	Yergan (Yergum)	Plateau
360	Yoruba	(Kwara, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, Kogi)
361	Yott	Taraba
362	Yumu	Niger
363	Yungur	Adamawa
364	Yuom	Plateau
365	Zabara	Niger
366	Zaranda	Bauchi
367	Zarma (Zarmawa)	Kebbi
368	Zayam (Zeam)	Bauchi
369	Zul (Zulawa)	Bauchi

Source: www.nairaland.com 2013

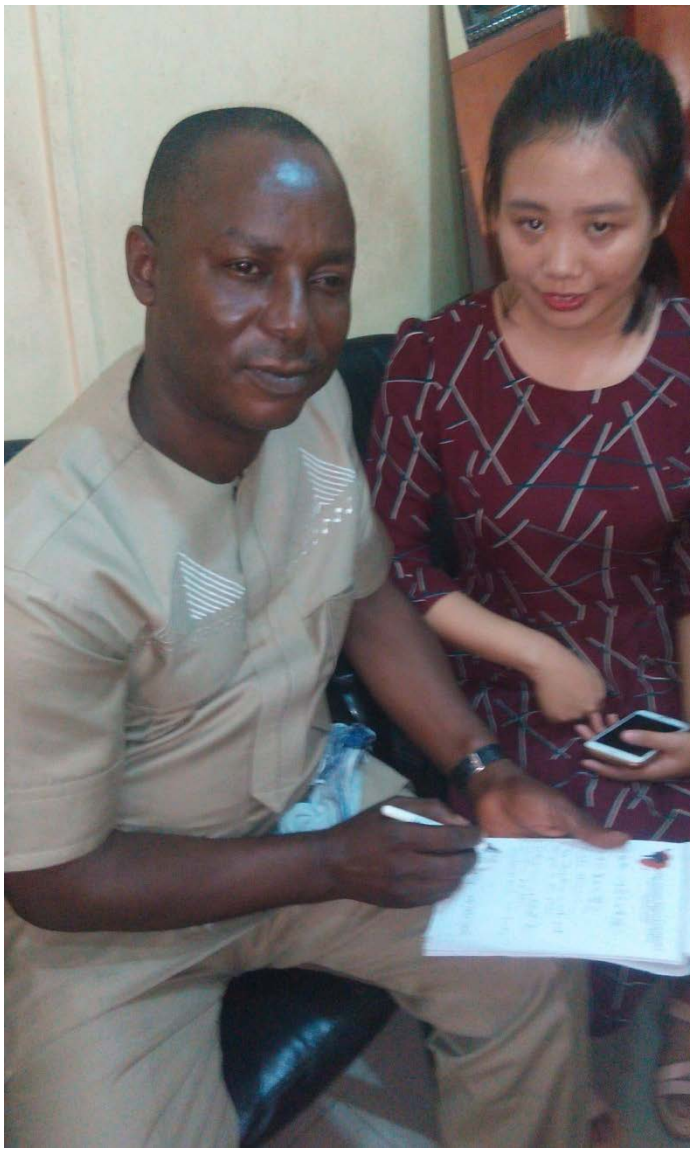
Table 3.2 – The 56 ethnic nationalities of China

S/No	Tribes
1.	Han
2.	Miao
3.	Mongolian
4.	Yao
5.	Li
6.	Lisu
7.	Wa
8.	Du
9.	Daur
10.	Maonan
11.	Nu
12.	De'ang
13.	Bonan
14.	Tatar
15.	Zhuang
16.	Uygur
17.	Tibetan
18.	Korean
19.	Kazakh
20.	Gelao
21.	Shui
22.	Xibe
23.	Jingpo
24.	Tajik
25.	Ewenki
26.	Uzbek
27.	Menba
28.	Hezhen
29.	Manchu
30.	Yi
31.	Bouyei
32.	Bai
33.	Dai
34.	Lahu
35.	Naxi
36.	Mulam
37.	Salar
38.	Pumi
39.	Jing
40.	Russian
41.	Oroqin

42.	Gaoshan
43.	Hui
44.	Tujia
45.	Dong
46.	Hani
47.	She
48.	Dongxiang
49.	Qiang
50.	Kirgiz
51.	Bulang
52.	Achang
53.	Jino
54.	Yugur
55.	Drung
56.	Lhoda

Apendix III

The Researcher at the Cofucius Institute (Chinese Cultural Centre), University of Lagos.



Researcher with Oblia Peńǵ, a Chinese Scholar at the Confucius Centre, University of Lagos, Nigeria