

ISSN: 3108-0812



# Journal of Creative Research in English Literature & Culture

## VOLUME-1, ISSUE-4, DECEMBER 2025

**DOWNLOAD NOW**

Contact us



+91-7665235235



[www.jcrelc.com](http://www.jcrelc.com)



[info@jcrelc.com](mailto:info@jcrelc.com)

## Preface

We are delighted to present, with great pleasure, the **Volume-1, Issue-4, December 2025 of the Journal of Creative Research in English Literature & Culture (JCRELC)** — a peer-reviewed international journal devoted to the exploration and advancement of literary and cultural scholarship.

JCRELC is part of the **SPARC Institute of Technical Research** publication series and was envisioned to meet the growing global demand for an academic platform that unites critical thinking, creative inquiry, and interdisciplinary research in the field of **English Literature and Cultural Studies**. The journal aims to serve as a bridge between scholars, educators, and practitioners, providing an inclusive space for diverse voices and perspectives.

The mission of JCRELC is to foster intellectual exchange, innovation, and academic excellence by publishing original and thought-provoking research in areas such as:

### **English Literature:**

Literary theory and criticism, comparative literature, postcolonial studies, modern and contemporary literature, diaspora studies, gender and identity, eco-criticism, digital humanities, narrative and stylistic studies, and creative writing.

### **Cultural Studies:**

Media and popular culture, film and performance studies, cultural theory, identity politics, globalization and culture, heritage and memory studies, translation and intercultural communication, visual arts, and linguistic representation in literature and media.

Each article published in this inaugural issue exemplifies the journal's commitment to promoting meaningful scholarship and fostering dialogue that connects literature and culture with the evolving dynamics of society.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all **Editorial, Reviewer, and Advisory Board Members** who have contributed their expertise, as well as to the **authors** whose valuable research enriches this publication. Our appreciation also goes to the **editorial team of the SPARC Institute of Technical Research** for their consistent guidance and support in bringing JCRELC to life.

We hope that this inaugural issue of JCRELC will serve as a valuable resource for scholars and readers alike, inspiring continued exploration and critical engagement in the vibrant domains of **English Literature and Cultural Studies**.

Mukesh Arora  
(Managing Editor)

Dr. Punit Shukla  
(Chief Editor)

## Fields of Interests

English Literature	
British Literature	American Literature
Postcolonial Literature	Commonwealth Literature
Indian Writing in English	African Literature
Canadian Literature	Caribbean Literature
Australian & New Zealand Literature	World Literatures in Translation
Literary Genres & Forms	
Poetry Studies	Prose and Fiction Studies
Drama and Theatre Studies	Autobiography & Memoir
Short Story & Novella Studies	Children's & Young Adult Literature
Fantasy, Gothic, and Science Fiction	Digital Literature & Hypertext Narratives
Critical Theories & Approaches	
Literary Criticism & Theory	Structuralism & Post-Structuralism
Marxist Criticism	Feminist & Gender Studies
Psychoanalytic Criticism	Postcolonial Criticism
Eco-criticism	Queer Theory
Reader-response Theory	Cultural Materialism
Linguistics & Language Studies	
Applied Linguistics	Sociolinguistics
Psycholinguistics	Historical Linguistics
Discourse Analysis	Translation Studies
Computational Linguistics	Semiotics and Stylistics
Second Language Acquisition	Language Pedagogy
Culture & Interdisciplinary Studies	
Cultural Studies & Popular Culture	Media, Film & Performance Studies
Comparative Literature	Folklore and Mythology
Diaspora & Migration Studies	Identity, Race & Ethnicity Studies
Philosophy & Literature	Religion & Literature
Visual Arts & Literature	Music and Literature
Historical & Contextual Studies	
Medieval & Renaissance Studies	Enlightenment & Romanticism
Victorian Literature	Modernism & Postmodernism
Contemporary Literature	Literature of War & Conflict
Colonial & Postcolonial Histories	Nationalism & Literature
Globalization & Literature	Digital Age Literature
Specialized & Emerging Areas	
Literature & Technology	Environmental Humanities
Disability Studies	Memory & Trauma Studies
Literature & Law	Literature & Medicine
Gender & Sexuality Studies	Urban Studies in Literature
Narrative & Storytelling Studies	Digital Humanities

## **Board Members**

### **Dr. Punit Shukla (Chief Editor)**

Professor, Department of English, Stani Memorial Public School, Jaipur, India

A senior professor with extensive experience in teaching, research, and academic administration (including roles as Registrar and Exam Controller). He holds a Ph.D. on *Raag-Darbari* from Jaipur National University, has supervised multiple Ph.D.s in Diasporic Literature and EFL, authored four books, and holds a patent on language learning through literature.

**Research Areas:** English Language & Literature, Diasporic Studies, Communication Skills, Intercultural Communication.

---

### **Mr. Mukesh Arora (Managing Editor)**

Managing Editor

Holds an M.Tech in Digital Communication and a BE in Electronics & Communication. With 6 years of engineering research experience, he has published and presented numerous papers in India and abroad.

**Expertise:** Photonic Crystal Fiber, Image Processing, Sensors, Wireless Networks.

---

### **Dr. Ashok Singh Rao (Professor & Head)**

Professor of English & Head, Department of Arts, Mody University, Rajasthan, India

A distinguished professor and departmental head with extensive expertise in literary studies and leadership. His scholarly work focuses on feminist studies, ecological criticism, and comparative literature.

**Research Areas:** English Literature, Feminism, Ecocriticism, Gender Studies, ELT, Literary Theory, Comparative Literature.

---

### **Dr. Gabriel Julien (Ph.D.)**

Graduate Research Supervisor & Course Facilitator, Educational Leadership and Management, University of the West Indies, Global Campus

Holds a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Sheffield. He has supervised 22 Ph.D. students, examining 13. His research and advocacy focus on special/inclusive education and street-connected children. Author of 53 articles and several books.

**Research Areas:** Special & Inclusive Education, Street-Connected Children, Educational Advocacy, Self-Concept Development, Qualitative Research, Child & Adolescent Psychology.

---

### **Dr. Mariam Anana (Associate Professor)**

Associate Professor, Department of Languages, Mountain Top University, Ogun State, Nigeria

A senior lecturer with extensive expertise in English literature and applied linguistics. Her research bridges discourse analysis, cultural studies, and innovative language pedagogy.

**Research Areas:** English Literature, Applied Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Cultural & Communication Studies, Language Pedagogy.

---

**Professor Dr. Luisa María Arvide Cambra (Full Professor)**

Full Professor (Catedrática), Arabic Studies / Medieval Literature, University of Almería, Spain  
Director of Research Group HUM113. A pioneer in medieval Arabic literature and science with a 44-year career.  
Author of 17 books and over 100 articles, including seminal Spanish translations of classical Arabic texts.

**Research Areas:** Medieval Arabic Literature, Comparative Literature, Arabic Philology, History of Medicine, Translation Studies.

---

**Professor Mithilesh Kumar Pandey (Professor)**

Professor, Department of English, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India  
Coordinates the Departmental Quality Assurance Cell and holds editorial roles. His research focuses on modern/contemporary literature, gender studies, and Indian English literature. Author of numerous publications, including *"Centring the Margins: Six Recent Indian Women Poets."*

**Research Areas:** Modern British Poetry, Gender Studies, Contemporary Literature, Indian English Literature, Feminist Literary Criticism.

---

**Dr. Zehrabi (Professor)**

Professor, Department of English, Swarnandhra College of Engineering & Technology, Andhra Pradesh, India  
A professor with over two decades of experience, specializing in Diasporic Literature (particularly Rohinton Mistry). Ph.D. from Acharya Nagarjuna University. Author of books and research papers, and editor of academic publications.

**Research Areas:** Diasporic Literature, English Language Teaching, Post-colonial Studies, Multicultural Literature, English for Specific Purposes.

---

**Uerimanga Tjijombo (Lecturer & Researcher)**

Lecturer, English and Applied Linguistics, Namibia University of Science and Technology  
An educator and linguist pursuing a Ph.D., with expertise in instructional technology and multilingual education. His work focuses on integrating ICT into language pedagogy and curriculum development.

**Research Areas:** Applied Linguistics, Instructional Technology, English Language Teaching, Multilingual Education, Curriculum Development.

---

**Dr. Sanjay Arora (Professor)**

Professor, Department of English, Central University of Rajasthan, India  
A professor with over 30 years of experience, holding a Ph.D. on 'The English of Advertising in India'. Has supervised 17 Ph.D. scholars and is an active resource person for international academic bodies. Author of multiple books on advertising and ELT.

**Research Areas:** English Language Teaching, Applied Linguistics, Advertising Discourse, Indian Writing in English, Digital Humanities, Language Pedagogy.



### **Dr. Kaushal Desai (Assistant Professor)**

Assistant Professor of English, Department of Applied Science and Humanities, ITM Vocational University, Vadodara, India

Ph.D. in English with a focus on New Historicism in graphic novels. Active in academic committees and editorial review. Holds a patent (2025) for an AI-powered voice platform for EFL communication skills.

**Research Areas:** Graphic Novels, New Historicism, ICT in ELT, Literary Theory, Artificial Intelligence in Education, Cultural Studies, Environmental Literature.

---

### **Dr. Onkar Nath Upadhyay (Professor & Former Head)**

Professor & Former Head, Department of English and MEL, University of Lucknow, India

With over 30 years of service, he coordinates the Centre of Indian Diaspora and Culture Studies, having supervised 27 Ph.D. scholars. A leading authority on Girmitiya literature and the Indian diaspora.

**Research Areas:** Indian Diaspora Studies, Girmitiya Literature, Postcolonial Studies, Indian Writing in English, Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies.

---

### **Dr. A. Satya Phani Kumari (Associate Professor & Head)**

Associate Professor & Head, Department of English, Anil Neerukonda Institute of Technology, Visakhapatnam, India

With nearly 30 years of experience, her research focuses on ELT, digital humanities, and cognitive strategies. Awarded by NPTEL for online learning excellence. Has 39 journal publications and 11 book chapters.

**Research Areas:** English Language Teaching, Digital Humanities, Cognitive Strategies in Language Learning, AI in Education, Pragmatic Language Practices, Contemporary Literature.

---

### **Dr. Shraddha Mishra (Assistant Professor)**

Assistant Professor, Department of English Communication, ITM Vocational University, Vadodara, India

Holds an M.A. in English Literature. Brings interdisciplinary expertise in teaching communication skills across Engineering, MBA, and Sciences. Experienced in curriculum development, student mentorship, and organizing skill enhancement programs.

**Expertise Areas:** English Literature, Communication Skills, Business Communication, Curriculum Development, Interdisciplinary Teaching, Student Mentorship.

---

### **Dr. Jasbir Singh (Teacher)**

Teacher, Directorate of Education, Govt. Sarvodya Bal Vidyalaya, New Delhi, India

Focuses on integrating educational technology and AI into teaching practices. His research interests include curriculum design and applying psychological principles to enhance learning outcomes.

**Research Areas:** Educational Technology, Artificial Intelligence in Education, Research Methodology, Psychology in Education, Curriculum Design.

### **Dr. Syed Damsaz Ali Andrabi (Historian & Researcher)**

Former College Lecturer, Higher Education Department, Jammu & Kashmir, India

A historian with 18+ years of teaching and 19 years with IGNOU. Ph.D. in Medieval and Modern Indian History.

Author of 33 research papers and serves on editorial boards of 9 international journals.

**Research Areas:** Medieval & Modern Indian History, Kashmiri History, Sufism Studies, Socio-Economic History, Cultural Studies.

---

### **Michael Sachdeva (Co-Founder & CEO)**

Co-Founder & CEO, UNIFOEDU LLP | Director, Motion Kuwait

Holds an M.A. and M.Phil. in English Literature, complemented by a B.Ed. and MBA. Applies literary analysis and critical thinking to educational leadership, international test preparation, and global curriculum development.

**Expertise Areas:** English Literature Studies, Educational Leadership, International Test Preparation, Global Education Systems, Curriculum Development, Literary Pedagogy.

---

### **Dr. Likhan Chandra Doley (Anthropological Researcher)**

Anthropological Researcher, Anthropological Survey of India, Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India

Researcher focused on tribal studies and socio-cultural anthropology at the Sub-Regional Centre, Jagdalpur.

Conducts ethnographic studies on indigenous religions, ethnic identity, and women in tribal societies.

**Research Areas:** Tribal Studies, Disaster Anthropology, Migration & Displacement, Ethnic Identity, Women in Tribal Societies, Indigenous Religion, Socio-Cultural Anthropology.

---

### **Razieh Baktashian (TEFL Educator and Researcher)**

TEFL Educator and Researcher, Department of English, Isfahan University, Iran

Specializes in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, teacher education, and the psychology of language acquisition. Focuses on integrating educational technology with language pedagogy.

**Research Areas:** Teacher Education, Psychology of Education, Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language, Team Leadership, Educational Technology.

---

### **Dr. Abbas Eqbal Mehran (Literary Editor & Researcher)**

Secretary of History, Education of Khuzestan Province, Iran | Literary Editor

Ph.D. in History of Islamic Iran. A poet, writer, and managing editor of academic journals. Author of poetry collections and children's literature, with research in cultural studies and Armenian-Persian literary relations.

**Research Areas:** Literary Editing, Poetry, Cultural Studies, Historical Literature, Armenian-Persian Literary Relations, Translation Studies.

---

### **Prakash Qattari (Assistant Professor)**

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Madhesh University, Nepal

Specializes in English Literature and Translation Studies. Explores the intersections of literature, culture, and society, focusing on how language shapes social structures.

**Research Areas:** English Literature, Translation Studies, Cultural Studies, Sociology, Language and Society.

**Malihe Charkhab (Director of Research)**

Director of Research, Research Institute of Education and Training, Education Department of Khuzestan Province, Iran

Her work focuses on educational theory, philosophy, and comparative systems, with a particular interest in the economics of education and its role in promoting global peace.

**Research Areas:** Educational Theories, Philosophy of Education, Comparative Education, Economics of Education, Education and World Peace.

---

**Kosar Adibankhah (Motor Behavior Specialist)**

Motor Behavior Specialist, Physical Education, Payam Noor University, South Tehran, Iran











Holds a Master's degree in Motor Behavior. Research encompasses sports history, sociology, diplomacy, and the nutritional aspects of physical performance.

**Research Areas:** Motor Behavior, Sports History, Sports Sociology, Sports Diplomacy, Physical Education & Nutrition.



# Table of Contents

## Volume-1, Issue-4, December 2025

S.No	Title	Page No.
1	<p><b>An Examination of Shah Abbas Safavi's Violence based on Dollard and Miller's Frustration-Aggression Theory</b></p> <p><b>Authors:</b> Abbas Eghbalmehran; Saham Naami</p> <p> <b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.65962/jcrelc-dec-2025-1">https://doi.org/10.65962/jcrelc-dec-2025-1</a></p> <p> <b>Digital Identification Number:</b> JCRELC-DEC-2025-1</p>	01-04
2	<p><b>A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Selected Annangs' Proverbial Social Language</b></p> <p><b>Authors:</b> Anana Mariam</p> <p> <b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.65962/jcrelc-dec-2025-2">https://doi.org/10.65962/jcrelc-dec-2025-2</a></p> <p> <b>Digital Identification Number:</b> JCRELC-DEC-2025-2</p>	05-13
3	<p><b>Postcolonial Political Manipulation of the Marginalized: A Critical Analysis of Ogbeche Frank Ogodo's <i>Harvest of Corruption</i></b></p> <p><b>Authors:</b> Isaac Horsu</p> <p> <b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.65962/jcrelc-dec-2025-3">https://doi.org/10.65962/jcrelc-dec-2025-3</a></p> <p> <b>Digital Identification Number:</b> JCRELC-DEC-2025-3</p>	14-18
4	<p><b>Dialectal Variation and Standardization of Kafinoonoo: A Sociolinguistic Survey in the Kafa Zone of Ethiopia</b></p> <p><b>Authors:</b> Tilahun Gebretsadik Adare</p> <p> <b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.65962/jcrelc-dec-2025-4">https://doi.org/10.65962/jcrelc-dec-2025-4</a></p> <p> <b>Digital Identification Number:</b> JCRELC-DEC-2025-4</p>	19-29
5	<p><b>Understanding Positivism and Its Role in Anthropology</b></p> <p><b>Authors:</b> Rambabu Marla</p> <p> <b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.65962/jcrelc-dec-2025-5">https://doi.org/10.65962/jcrelc-dec-2025-5</a></p> <p> <b>Digital Identification Number:</b> JCRELC-DEC-2025-5</p>	30-38

# An Examination of Shah Abbas Safavi's Violence based on Dollard and Miller's Frustration-Aggression Theory

Abbas Eghbalmehran<sup>1\*</sup>; Saham Naami<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of History, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Department of Industrial Psychology, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Ahvaz Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran

\*Corresponding Author Email: abass.em1987@gmail.com

Received:- 01 December 2025/ Revised:- 10 December 2025/ Accepted:- 17 December 2025/ Published: 31-12-2025

Copyright © 2025 Journal of Creative Research in English Literature & Culture

This is an Open-Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution

Non-Commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>) which permits unrestricted

Non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**Abstract**— This study employs John Dollard and colleagues' Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis as a theoretical lens to analyze the pervasive political violence of Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629) of the Safavid Empire. It argues that the Shah's violent behaviors—including the suppression of the Qizilbash, the murder of relatives, brutal punishments at court, and aggression towards foreigners—were not merely acts of a tyrannical personality but can be understood as **aggressive responses to profound structural and personal frustrations**. These frustrations stemmed from internal threats to central authority, external military pressures from the Ottomans and Uzbeks, and personal insecurities rooted in a turbulent youth. Using a historical-analytical method, this interdisciplinary research synthesizes Persian chronicles and European travelogues to trace a **causal link between specific failures/frustrations and subsequent aggressive policies**. The findings suggest that Shah Abbas's reign presents a compelling historical case study of the frustration-aggression dynamic operating at the level of statecraft, where psychological defense mechanisms became institutionalized as tools of governance. This analysis provides a deeper, multi-causal understanding of Safavid political behavior, moving beyond purely political or military explanations to incorporate psychosocial drivers.

**Keywords**— Shah Abbas I, Safavid Empire, Political Violence, Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, Psycho-history, Qizilbash, Statecraft.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Shah Abbas I stands as a pivotal yet paradoxical figure in Iranian history, renowned for consolidating the Safavid Empire, revitalizing the economy, and patronizing magnificent art and architecture, yet also infamous for his exceptional cruelty and systemic violence. Traditional historiography has often explained his violent actions as necessary measures for state-building or as manifestations of personal despotism. This study proposes an alternative, interdisciplinary explanation by applying the **Frustration-Aggression Theory**, developed by Dollard, Miller, et al. in 1939, to his reign.

The core premise of this theory is that aggression is always a consequence of frustration—the blocking of goal-directed behavior. This research posits that Shah Abbas's rule was characterized by acute and recurring frustrations: the **frustration of effective sovereignty** due to over-mighty Qizilbash tribes, the **frustration of security** from Ottoman and Uzbek incursions, the **frustration of stable succession** rooted in familial betrayal, and the **frustration of economic and religious integration**. We hypothesize that his documented aggressive actions—purges, executions, symbolic terror, and military campaigns—constitute patterned responses to these blocked political and personal goals.

This study seeks to answer: 1) How can specific violent acts of Shah Abbas be mapped onto identifiable political, military, or personal frustrations? 2) To what extent does the frustration-aggression framework provide a plausible, integrative explanation for his reign's violence compared to purely strategic or tyrannical models? By bridging social psychology and history, this analysis aims to illuminate the **psycho-logic of power** in early modern Iran, offering a model for understanding state violence as a complex interplay of structure, strategy, and psychological impulse.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Historical Scholarship on Shah Abbas and Safavid Violence:

Scholarship on Shah Abbas I is extensive. The classic narrative, from Iskandar Beg Munshi's contemporary chronicle *'Alam-ārā-ye Abbāsi* to modern biographers like David Blow and Roger Savory, details his reforms and cruelties, often attributing violence to *Realpolitik* or a harsh but effective state-building ethos. Studies on Safavid violence, such as those by Rudi Matthee and Kathryn Babayan, often focus on its ritual, religious, or theatrical dimensions within the context of Shi'i legitimacy and kingly ideology. A significant gap exists in **systematically examining the psychological drivers** behind this violence, beyond attributing it to "tyranny" or "necessity."

### 2.2 The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis: Core and Evolution:

The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, formulated by Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, and Sears in 1939, posits that "the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration," and conversely, "the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression." This seminal work has been extensively critiqued and refined. Later research moderated its absoluteness, recognizing that frustration creates a *readiness* for aggression, which is then mediated by situational cues, learning history, and cognitive appraisal (Berkowitz, 1989). Furthermore, aggression can be **displaced** onto a substitute target or **channeled** into non-violent but assertive activities. This study adapts this refined model, viewing Shah Abbas's aggression as a **primary, though not exclusive, response** to acute frustrations, shaped by the cultural and political tools available to an absolute monarch.

### 2.3 Psycho-History and Its Application:

The application of psychology to historical figures (psychohistory) is a contested but valuable field, pioneered by Erik Erikson. Its principal challenge is avoiding reductionism and anachronism. This study heeds these cautions by: 1) Grounding analysis in documented behaviors and historically-attested stressors; 2) Using the theory as an interpretive framework for patterns of action, not a clinical diagnosis; 3) Acknowledging the simultaneous role of rational strategy. We argue that frustration-aggression theory is particularly suitable here as it deals with observable stimuli (frustrations) and responses (aggression), avoiding undue speculation about unconscious depths.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a **qualitative historical-analytical method** within an interdisciplinary framework. The primary data consists of textual sources: Persian chronicles (e.g., Iskandar Beg Munshi), Safavid administrative documents, and European travelogues (e.g., by della Valle, Chardin, Tavernier). These sources are subjected to **source criticism** to account for bias (courtly panegyric, foreign astonishment).

The analytical procedure involves:

1. **Identification of Frustration Events:** Cataloging documented events that constitute a blockage of Shah Abbas's political or personal goals (e.g., a Qizilbash rebellion, a military defeat, a succession challenge).
2. **Identification of Aggressive Responses:** Cataloging his subsequent violent actions, noting their timing, target, and form.
3. **Pattern-Mapping and Analysis:** Seeking temporal and logical connections between (1) and (2). We analyze whether aggression follows frustration, if it is proportional or displaced, and how it is justified. We also consciously **consider alternative explanations** (strategic calculation, cultural norm) for each violent act to test the strength of the frustration-aggression link.
4. **Synthesis:** Evaluating the overall utility of the theory in explaining the patterns of violence across his reign.

## IV. ANALYSIS: THE ARCHITECTURE OF FRUSTRATION AND AGGRESSION

This section moves thematically through the major categories of frustration Shah Abbas faced, analyzing how each manifested in aggressive policy and personal behavior.

#### 4.1 The Frustration of Sovereignty: The Qizilbash Problem:

Upon his accession, Shah Abbas's central goal—effective, uncontested rule—was **frustrated** by the decentralized military-political power of the Qizilbash Turkoman tribes, who had often made and unmade earlier Safavid shahs.

- **Aggressive Response:** His solution was a systematic, violent neutering of their power. This was not a single act but a prolonged campaign of aggression: the assassination of powerful generals like Murshid Qoli Khan Ustajlu (who had initially enthroned him), the confiscation of tribal lands (*toyuls*), and their replacement with a directly loyal slave-soldier (*ghulam*) army. The violent purges of Qizilbash leaders were direct aggression against the perceived source of his political frustration.

#### 4.2 The Frustration of Security: External Threats:

The early reign was marked by the **frustration** of territorial losses and humiliation at the hands of the Ottoman Empire and Uzbek Khanates.

- **Aggressive Response:** This fueled external military aggression. Campaigns to reconquer lost territory (e.g., the systematic wars against the Ottomans) displayed organized, state-level aggression. The brutal treatment of Ottoman prisoners and diplomats, as recounted by European observers, can be seen as **displaced aggression**—an inability to immediately defeat the main enemy fully, leading to excessive violence against available surrogates. The reconquest of the Persian Gulf from the Portuguese, while strategic, was also an aggressive assertion of control against a blocking force.

#### 4.3 The Frustration of Kinship and Succession: A Treacherous Family:

Shah Abbas's personal life was defined by the **frustration** of familial trust and security. He witnessed and experienced princely fratricide, was separated from his mother, and lived under constant threat from rival relatives—a profound blockage of any need for familial safety.

- **Aggressive Response:** This trauma fueled pre-emptive aggression within the family. The murder of his eldest son, Safi Mirza, and the blinding of two others were extreme acts of aggression aimed at eliminating the perceived source of future frustration (a coup). This represents a tragic internalization of familial strife, where potential future blockage was met with immediate, devastating aggression.

#### 4.4 The Frustration of Control: Provincial Elites and the Public:

The goal of complete fiscal and administrative control was **frustrated** by semi-autonomous provincial rulers and occasional public disobedience.

- **Aggressive Response:** He met this with spectacular, theatrical violence designed to instill terror. The brutal punishments described in the sources—flaying alive, roasting, public impalement—served as aggressive, over-the-top demonstrations of power meant to crush any future frustration of his will. The confiscation of elite wealth was both a fiscal strategy and an aggressive act of humiliation against a rival center of power.

#### 4.5 Channeled Aggression: The Constructive Outlet:

The theory allows for the channeling of aggressive impulse into non-violent activity. Shah Abbas's immense **frustration with Iran's weakness** appears to have been **channeled** into a furious agenda of construction: rebuilding Isfahan as a grand capital, fostering trade, and patronizing arts. This was assertive, goal-directed activity that transformed aggressive energy into a legacy of cultural flourishing, demonstrating the complexity of the frustration-response dynamic.

### V. DISCUSSION: WEAVING THE THREADS OF CAUSATION

The analysis reveals a recurrent pattern where periods of acute frustration are followed by notable escalations in aggressive violence. The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis provides a compelling **unifying framework** that makes psychological sense of disparate violent acts—from the intimate (killing a son) to the geopolitical (waging war). It helps explain the **excess** of his violence; a purely strategic explanation might justify a purge, but not necessarily its brutal methodology.

However, the theory alone is insufficient. It must be integrated with an understanding of:

- **Strategic Calculation:** Much aggression was also rational policy (e.g., creating the *ghulam* system).
- **Cultural Repertoire:** The forms of violence (flaying, impalement) were part of a shared language of sovereign power in the region.
- **Instrumental Terror:** Violence served to communicate power, not just to vent frustration.

Therefore, we propose a **synthetic model**: Frustration (from structural threats and personal trauma) created a pervasive readiness for aggression in Shah Abbas. This aggressive drive was then expressed through the available **political and cultural tools** of a Safavid monarch, becoming institutionalized as a key method of governance. His violence was both a psychological reaction and a calculated political instrument—the two are inseparable.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis offers a powerful, though partial, key to understanding the violence of Shah Abbas I. By mapping his documented aggressive actions against the backdrop of political, military, and personal frustrations, a coherent psycho-logic emerges. His reign illustrates how the frustrations inherent in state-building—security threats, elite intransigence, dynastic instability—can catalyze aggressive responses that become embedded in the machinery of state.

This interdisciplinary approach moves the historical discussion beyond the dichotomy of “great statesman” versus “bloody tyrant.” It reveals Shah Abbas as a ruler whose brilliant reconstructions and horrific cruelties may have sprung from the same well of intense, frustrated ambition. The value of this framework extends beyond Safavid studies, suggesting that the frustration-aggression dynamic is a valuable lens for analyzing the exercise of power in any pre-modern, personality-driven state. Future research could apply this model to other monarchs (e.g., Ivan the Terrible, Louis XI) or explore the role of collective frustration in precipitating state-level aggression in different historical contexts.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Daryabel, G. T. F. (1972). *Interpersicum* (M. Tafazzli, Trans.). Iran Foundation Publications. (Original work published 1621)
- [2] Hakimi, M. (1981). *Tarikh-e tamaddon-e jahani, dastan-e zendegi-ye ensan* [History of world civilization, the story of human life] (Vol. 7). Franklin Publications.
- [3] Falsafi, N. (1968). *Zendegani-ye Shah 'Abbas-e Avval* [Life of Shah Abbas I] (Vol. 1). University of Tehran.
- [4] Louis Blanc, L. (1936). *Zendegani-ye Shah 'Abbas* [Life of Shah Abbas] (V. Shodan, Trans.). Mythology.
- [5] Parsa Doost, M. (1989). *Shah 'Abbas-e Avval, saltanati darsha baraye amuzesh* [Shah Abbas I, a kingdom with lessons to learn] (Vol. 1). Publishing Joint Stock Company.
- [6] Navaei, A., & Ghafarifar, A. (2007). *Tarikh-e tahavvolat-e siyasi, ejtema'i, eqtesadi va farhangi-e Iran dar dowreh-ye Safaviyeh* [History of political, social, economic and cultural developments in Iran during the Safavid period]. SAMAT.
- [7] Eskandar Monshi. (2003). *Tarikh-e 'alam aray-e 'Abbasi* [History of the Abbasid scholars] (I. Afshar, Ed.; Vol. 3). Amir Kabir.
- [8] Vale Isfahani, M. Y. (2003). *Khalid-e Berin* [Khaled Berin] (M. H. Muhaddis, Ed.). Afshar Endowment Foundation.
- [9] Delavale, P. (2001). *Safarnameh-ye Delavaleh* [Delavale's travelogue] (S. Shafa, Trans.). Scientific and Cultural Publications. (Original work published 1621)
- [10] Rawandi, M. (1975). *Tarikh-e ejtema'i-ye Iran* [Social history of Iran] (Vol. 2). Amir Kabir.
- [11] Bayat, O. B. (1973). *Iraniyan-i Don Juan* [Iranian Don Juan] (M. Rajab Nia, Trans.). Mossadegh. (Original work published 1637)
- [12] Bastani Parizi, M. E. (1999). *Siyasat va iqtisad-e 'asr-e Safavi* [Politics and economy of the Safavid era]. Safi Ali Shah.
- [13] Momeni, A. F. (1973). *Tarikh-e Gilan* [History of Gilan]. Islamic Archives.
- [14] Navai, A. (1978). *Shah 'Abbas* (Vol. 3). Iranian Culture Foundation.
- [15] Chardin, J. (1993). *Safarnameh-ye Chardin* [Chardin's travels] (I. Yaghmaei, Trans.; Vols. 1–5). Toos. (Original work published 1686)
- [16] Navai, A. (1981). *Asnad va mokatebat-e tarikh-e Iran* [Iranian political documents and correspondence]. Iranian Culture Foundation.
- [17] Jamali Carri, G. F. (1969). *Safarnameh-ye Carri* [Carri's travelogue] (A. Nakhjavani & K. Abdol-Ali, Trans.). General Administration of Culture and Art of East Azerbaijan. (Original work published 1694)
- [18] Shariati Fuklayi, H. (2009). *Hokumat-e Shi'i-ye Al-Kia dar Gilan* [The Shiite government of Al-Kia in Gilan]. Shiite Studies.



# A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Selected Annangs' Proverbial Social Language

Anana Mariam

Department of Languages, Mountain Top University, Mowe, Ogun State, Nigeria

\*Corresponding Author Email : meanana@mtu.edu.ng

Received:- 04 December 2025/ Revised:- 16 December 2025/ Accepted:- 23 December 2025/ Published: 31-12-2025

Copyright © 2025 Journal of Creative Research in English Literature & Culture

This is an Open-Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution

Non-Commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>) which permits unrestricted

Non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**Abstract**— Continuous creation, formation, maintenance and sustenance of proverbial social language in today's multifaceted, heterogeneous and monolingual traditional Annang societies are very necessary. This study examines the multimodalities in Annang's proverbial social language or proverbs. The linguistic and non-linguistic elements such as the facial expressions of the speakers and the listeners, the venues, time of delivery, colours of items and other semiotic modes; their influences and relevance are investigated in this study. The study also examines the multifunctional roles of Annang's proverbs. The study adopts a qualitative-descriptive research design and employs George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (1980) Cognitive Theory of Metaphor. Data were purposively collected from the interactions of the author with the Annang people in Akwa-Ibom State and in Lagos State through participatory observation and recorded conversations. One of the major findings is that nouns are the linguistic features that significantly constitute the language choices of Annang proverbs. The study also reveals that multimodal elements including contextual settings, speaker authority, and facial expressions significantly influence the interpretation and effectiveness of these proverbs. The study therefore recommends that Annang proverbial social language should be applied intentionally and appropriately by all Annang people to act as a catalyst in moving people to positive directions in order to minimise avoidable conflicts, destructions and death.

**Keywords**— catalyst, facial expressions, linguistic elements, multimodalities, proverbs, Annang society.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Proverbial social language is very important in maintaining and upholding cultural norms and values of a people. According to Rubikovna & Artakovna (2020), they are pictorial and concise sayings that are presented in various spheres to the people. They are "works of oral creativity of the people (Nikolaevna, et al., 2023: 295) in every traditional society. Social proverbs are about social life of a people (Zhao, 2012) and in this case, about the rich cultural heritage of the Annang people of Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria.

Proverbs or proverbial social language is used interchangeably here. They are the determinants of cultural identities (Usman et al., 2013). According to Adewole (2020) proverbs are essential ingredients of communication in Africa. They are rooted in cultures of a people in all societies, and can help to understand cultures (Rong 2013). Confirming this statement, Silas & Abru (2024) state that "proverbs are products of the people's culture and intrinsically relate to the culture (520) of a people. They are "not just simple sayings but also repositories of cultural wisdom and values" (Nugraha 2023: 122). Also, Bochina, et al. (2021) observes the reality of proverbs having roots in the culture of any society. Proverbs according to Obelkevich (2015) are rooted in language, and language projects people's cultures. Commenting on the functions of language, Rasulov (2021) maintains that language is an intricate part of culture, often serving as a repository of a society's values, beliefs and tradition (20). According to Halliday (2023), language is the principle means of cultural transmission.

This study investigates the verbal and non-verbal modes of Annang proverbs; the facial expressions, venues, time of delivery are all important and interpretative during the interactions through Annang proverbs.



### 1.1 Motivation for the Study:

A lot of people devalue societal norms and values encapsulated in proverbs of a people. Some tend not to even understand how proverbs are used to enable people to live harmoniously with others in the society. Unfortunately, the transferable negative effects of these devaluation and ignorance have caused innumerable direct and indirect problems, discomforts, delays and deaths in a larger society. Also, insufficient research on the linguistic aspect of proverbs has necessitated this research and by so doing, it will provide a research material for would-be scholars who may be interested in research of this type. This motivation was earlier observed by Načisčione (2020) who maintains that the linguistic aspects of proverbs have less been researched so far and therefore need to be investigated.

For example, where people have the mentality of depending totally on the wealth or properties of others or wait to inherit their fathers, mothers or relations' riches or properties, they have forgotten, or are ignorant of the proverbial social language "k'ubon efod k'iba owo fen," and as a result of this negative disposition, they wait to share their relations' properties and money; and once they feel cheated they come out to show their grievances through any devilish or demonical acts. Also, there have been cases of quarrels, fights, brutalities, destructions and deaths caused by people who struggle for their fathers' or relations' properties. In addition to this, the recent death of over fifteen (15) people in Kano mosque caused by unresolved sharing of family property motivated me to carry out this work. Should we be interested in other people's sweats rather than laboring for our own? This has been a major societal problem especially in traditional African settings.

In addition, this work is premised on the fact that some Annang proverbial social language that have therapeutic and curative functions should be investigated so as to serve as a resource material for people to attempt to use it to solve their various family and societal problems.

In a nutshell, with the present high level of modernization, civilization and globalization, the author is afraid that the rich cultural heritage of the Annang people might be compromised if not guided jealously. Therefore, there is need to preserve rich cultural heritage of the Annang people; hence, the relevance of this investigation.

The objectives of this study therefore are:

1. To identify the linguistic cues of selected Annang's social proverbial language
2. To explain the semiotic resources of Annang's social proverbial language
3. To suggest ways of preserving Annang's social proverbial language

### 1.2 Proverbial Social Language:

In traditional community gatherings, daily conversations, and even academic discussions, proverbial social language are important in expressions. They are principles of life and guidance to our daily work (Clasberry, 2010). Considering the functions of proverbs, Yalcouye & Abdiulaye (2021) maintain that they are used to serve strategic expressions in everyday life conversation and speech. They are proverbs that convey wisdom, cultural norms and values. They are "signs" and "models of various typical situations and relationship between things or phenomena in real life" (Utebaev & Sarsenbaeva, 2021). They are didactic and helps to impart knowledge, wisdom and advice.

They have various functions such as moral, social, expressive, cognitive, linguistic, cultural identity, rhetorical and conflict resolution functions. Agbenyo (2023) emphasizes the relevance of proverbs in the society. They reinforce social norms and cultural values of a collective experiences and wisdom of a people in a community and assist in maintaining social order and cohesion.

Expressively, proverbial social language allows people to expose their thoughts and emotions clearly thereby adding colours and depths to their expressions, conversations, communications and interactions. AL-Mutalabi (2019) concludes that we use proverbs to strengthen our arguments and expressions.

Cognitively, they assist in encapsulating universal truths and experiences, thereby making it easier for people to understand and remember cultural concepts. They also help in helping people to have cultural identity which is an important aspect of cultural heritage. Considering the cognitive advantage of proverbs, Volodymyrivna (2023) maintains that they reflect the rich historical experience of the people.

Rhetorically, proverbs help in people's speeches, debates, rhetoric and persuasion, thereby enabling them to exhibit authoritative tones and be generally acceptable through their credible arguments. According to Hatipoğlu & Daşkın (2020) proverbs are seen as a strong rhetorical force.

Studies such as those of Lomotey & Csajbok-Twerefou (2021) and Rohsenow (2023) reveal that proverbs are maximally used in conflict resolutions; they mediate into disputes and offer solutions in non-confrontational manners.

Scholars such as Načisčione (2020), Musinovna & Tadjibaevn (2021) and Spellerberg (2022) investigate work on linguistic functions of proverbs. Linguistic function entails the richness of language through its diversity, aesthetics, creativity and linguistic prowess of a culture. Its application of metaphor, rhyme and rhythm are worth investigating.

In addition, scholars such as Sulaymonovna (2023) and Bobuafor (2021) examine the cultural importance of proverbs. Culturally, proverbs help people identify themselves and their roots and transmit traditional belief and history of a community from generation to generation. It is through proverbs that the younger generation learns the culture of the present generation.

### **1.3 Multimodal Discourse Analysis:**

Multimodal Discourse Analysis is a framework in which meaning is created and interpreted in communication using different modes (such as the verbal, non-verbal, visual modes). It focuses on modes of analysis "applied to objects and words inferred from semiotics" (Luca, 2020: 74). According to Kress & Bezemer (2023), multimodality names the field in which semiotics works. It is worth noting that spoken discourse is multimodal (Johnstone & Andrus 2024); Annang social language is mainly spoken therefore, it is highly multimodal.

### **1.4 Annang Society:**

Annang Society comprises great hardworking, very strong and fearless Annang people who speak Annang language. Like other traditional societies, Annang society is well-structured in all ramifications (in terms of social structures, cultural practices, leadership, governance, economy, livelihood, education, modernity and development). The basic unit of the Annang society consists of families which are usually extensive and mostly polygamous. There are also age grades, villages and communities (based on kinship). Every village has a traditional head that oversees the affairs of the village. In most villages, the traditional heads are based on hereditary. There is also a council of elders whose wisdoms are sort by members of the communities. The society is highly patriarchal; women have not and may not be selected as village heads.

In addition, the Annang people speak Annang language (originated from a Niger-Congo language family). The language is very beautifully rendered by the original speakers who utter them with its natural fastness and grossness. Many non-speakers seem to equate it to Chinese language because of its agility and their inability to grasp isolated words during conversations or interactions.

Occupationally, the traditional Annang people are great farmers and marketers. They plant, and sell their yams (edia), pumpkin leaves (nko efere), cassava (iwa) and many others for their survival. Contemporary Annang people are highly educated and those who are not educated endeavour to send their children and wards to schools. So, with Western education, they work at government establishments and organisations as professors, doctors, engineers, lawyers, and at all fields locally and internationally.

More so, despite the presence and belief in Christianity by a lot of Annang people, some still practise traditional religion through worship of idols, ancestral gods and deities, "mme abasi". Some also believe in incantations and ritual ceremonies and sacrifices to the death parents (idiok). They also celebrate traditional marriages (ndo) and festivals such as "Ekpo" and "Ekong" masqueraders; and "abang" done during Christmas period.

To maintain peace and order, the Annang people have organized governance. Cases are also taken to the "Abong obio" who solves their problems. Difficult cases are transferred to the clan heads, who use their wisdoms to solve them. There is local court where people are tried and fines (with items like "ukot nsun" "ebot", "akuk," "Ndiyon" and other items). Besides these, some people also take others to "ukan," a traditional medicine professional who uses supernatural people to torture people to enforce truth on people.

Furthermore, Annang has a well-organized traditional leadership comprising the "obong" and "mbong" who are highly respected as a result of their knowledge and wisdom. There are also various clan organizations known as "nka" (such as "nka isong" for

the elders, “nka-iban obio” for the women in the villages, “Nka iden” for the men and many other. All these groups are for the betterment of individuals, groups, villages and community in Annang society.

### 1.5 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s (1980) Cognitive Theory of Metaphor:

This theory allows a description of metaphoric verbal utterances (Romero & Soria 2005). In line with this, Schmit (2005) explains that the theory provides a basis for describing everyday cognitive structures using linguistic models.

Lakoff and Johnson opine that metaphor is mainly a linguistic device but a functional mechanism of human thought. They observe that the way we think, what we experience and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor (Lakof & Johnson 2008); therefore, we cannot live without metaphor (Rudhel 2020, Csatar 2022). According to Shukurova (2020) metaphor is everyday language.

### 1.6 Statement of Contribution:

This study has contributed to knowledge by investigating the multimodal aspects of proverbial social language in Annang society. The functions of the postures, facial expressions, directions and other non-verbal cues of the Annang proverbs are remarkable and original. It has filled in a gap which no other work (to the knowledge of the author) has explored.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative-descriptive research design. Data were collected through participatory observation and audio recordings of conversations with Annang people in both Akwa-Ibom State and Lagos State. As a native Annang speaker from Abak in Akwa-Ibom, the author engaged in natural conversations where proverbs are typically used, noting the contextual elements including settings, participants, and non-verbal cues.

Seven (7) Annang social proverbial sayings were purposively selected from these interactions for detailed analysis. The selection criteria included frequency of use, cultural significance, and richness in multimodal elements. The analysis follows a multimodal discourse analysis approach, examining both linguistic features and paralinguistic elements including facial expressions, gestures, vocal tones, and situational contexts.

The analytical process involved:

1. Transcribing the proverbs with contextual notes
2. Identifying linguistic features (lexical choices, grammatical structures)
3. Documenting observed non-verbal elements
4. Analyzing metaphorical constructions using Cognitive Metaphor Theory
5. Interpreting the integration of verbal and non-verbal modes in meaning-making

## III. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### Ku’kpon efod k’iba owo nfen:

*Don’t be too expansive in someone else’s pant.*

#### 3.1 Analysis of Proverb 1:

This proverb is simple and straightforward; its short nature enables many to appreciate and understand it easily, basically because “Iba” (pant) is very necessary for every disciplined person and it is common for every category of people. This confirms Villers (2022)’s observation that the two basic qualities of proverbs are simplicity and expressivity. The selection of a simple dress that is affordable for everyone would enable everyone to be easy with the use of the proverb as there would be none who will feel isolated from it as a result of the wealth status.

Its phonological rendition is very comical and humorous and able to provoke laughter thereby making people to long to listen to it repeatedly. At the same time, it performs purgative and curative measures when people laugh, they directly or indirectly purges their emotions.

Metaphorically, being expansive simply means, having negative interest in another person's property, ideas, prosperity, etc. Negative interest will automatically lead to jealousy which is the base of every undeveloped people, family or nation.

Also, another person's pants simply put, is what does not belong to the person who is "covetous."

Symbolically, "buttock" and "pants" are private organ and dress. Therefore, are not expected to be used openly, but when buttocks are unnecessarily big, pants will be shown directly even with the pant. A covetous person cannot be hidden; his or her linguistic, non-linguistic displays will be conspicuous irrespectively of where he or she is or how he or she tries to cover it.

The serious outlook of the face of the speaker means the seriousness and the necessity of this proverb. If it is rendered in a casual interaction with others, it could as well show the lack of seriousness of the messages being communicated. Again, if the elders say it, it displays the level of importance but if said by people jokingly, it also expresses its frivolities.

## **2. Akpede ma' ndionyo mbo ke ufok ito ayakaba udua, nkpakesine afia iba.**

*If I had known that toilet will become a market place, I will have worn a white pant.*

### **3.2 Analysis of Proverb 2:**

Here, "iba" is chosen again because of its commonness and availability for everyone. It is a symbol of privacy and individuality. Therefore, the emphasis here is on the colour of the pant being worn. It is caution for everyone to be prepared at all time. Here, the speaker never knew that the toilet will become the market place, so instead of wearing white to show the world the level of his or her neatness, he or she decided to put on another colour (possibly black or red).

Denotatively, this proverb simply means lack of preparation before one carries out plans. Here, ignorance or lack of regards to the warning embedded in Annang's proverbs has resulted in people's regret and unfulfilled dreams. In the case of failed marriages, unpleasant relations, abandoned projects or other issues that turned out sour, many people normally find it very difficult to manage such situations. So, this work attempts to suggest possible dispositions of people through social proverbial sayings and the need to plan ahead of time in order to avoid regrets of all sorts.

## **3. Asana isang akud afia okpok**

*He that has travelled far has seen a white lizard.*

### **3.3 Analysis of Proverb 3:**

White lizards represent strange situations and experiences that someone encounters in the course of living. The people who have seen white lizards are people who have passed through the vicissitudes of life and tough times. To see a white lizard therefore means to pass through strange experiences. The choice of common nouns here, "asang isang" and "okpok" signifies the intention of the Annangs people to ensure that simple traditional objects are used in the formation of their proverbs. By so doing, they enable each interactant to easily understand them very clearly.

## **4. Akedi beneke Ebom akpa idionoke k' asefuru.**

*He who has never driven Ebom before does not know that it can fly.*

### **3.4 Analysis of Proverb 4:**

Ebom is a special bird that looks and behaves as if it doesn't fly. This social proverb is used when an individual makes light of sorrowful situation experienced by other. An individual that has never experienced loss of a close-relation (like husbands, wives, children, brothers or sisters) or other losses will not know how the people who experienced this normally feel.

This is a call for people to show human feelings to the plights of other members of the society who are in sorrowful moods as a result of unfortunate situations that have befallen other members of the society. Again, the behaviours of those who are fulfilled in life towards those that are still struggling matter a lot in the existence of harmony or pains in the lives of those who are passing through tough times. Therefore, everyone is called to be cautious of what he or she says so as not to hurt the feeling of those who are in pains.

The choice of "Ebom" shows the focus on noun as the linguistic feature of Annang proverb. The whole of this proverb revolves around "Ebom" and not "afehe" (driven) or "asefuru" (can fly) which are verbs nor "akedi" (pronoun) or other lexical features.

## 5. Aduo Usine, atop eti unam aduok

*He that throws away, Usine (shrew rat) has thrown away good meat.*

### 3.5 Analysis of Proverb 5:

People that look only at the outward for their judgments are likely going to give unfair judgments to things. In other words, physical appearance may be deceitful but the contents matter a lot. Again, taking erratic decision based on what others have said about another without verifying is also seen as very dangerous and deadly among the Annang people. It is therefore very necessary for someone to consider the contents rather than the container. This proverb is therefore a caution for those who are easily deceived by the outward to take precaution.

Again, the emphasis here is on “Usine” a noun and no other word classes. Although the verbs “aduo” “atop” and “aduok” are also important here, these would not have been visible if “Usine” was not involved. This confirms the predominant application of nouns in Annang proverbs.

## 6. Awo urukikot akono akan kiet akpena afehe iwot okpok

*He that has been bitten once by a snake must be afraid of the head of a lizard.*

### 3.6 Analysis of Proverb 6:

This is a precautionary proverb for those that have been seriously offended by others to be cautious of similar occurrences. For those who have experienced bad situations in life, this proverb is meant for them never to allow a repetition of such. Once people are careful not to repeat past mistakes, there are tendencies for harmonious experiences to occur. Careful decisions are sacrosanct to the effective interactions and communication with members of Annang society who have been injured emotionally. Here, common objects that are nouns are chosen in the creation and use of this proverb.

## 7. Aniwo idiono ikpat idiok owo ke ntan:

*Who knows the leg marks of a wicked person in the dry sand?*

### 3.7 Analysis of Proverb 7:

Everyone presses feet on the same sand so it is actually difficult to separate one's foot mark from another. It is very different to understand the true nature and character of people because they seem to exhibit the same hospitably or hostile behaviour. To identify them therefore becomes very herculean. For those who trust people the admonition here is that they should be careful with everyone.

Once again, “Ikpat” (legs marks) signal the whole activities that surrounds “idiok owo” (wicked person), hence, the predominant application of nouns in Annang's proverbs shown here. Again, one needs to be careful so as not to fall into the hands of dubious people in the society.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis above revealed that most Annang's proverbs are precautionary proverbs intentionally formed from the commonest local objects around them. They are based on the choice of lexical items that are very common and easily available and identified by everyone. This facilitates quick understanding and gives express access to the Annang users. Observing the formation of proverbs, Villers (2022) maintains that proverbs are intentionally and unintentionally coined. In this study, it is revealed that these proverbs are intentionally created for specific purposes (of enabling people to understand them and for identification purposes).

Also, colour is very important in Annang proverbs. The interpretations of colours depend solely on the objects that they described as well as the contexts of use. Considering the use of colours, Obelkevich (2015) explains that they are used to “mean different things” to different people in different environments. A negative context automatically renders the colour negative and vice versa. In conjunction with this view, Mukhitdinovna (2021) observes that colour has an ancient history and contributes significantly to the characteristics of objects of the picture of the world.

The study also revealed that the time and venues of delivery of Annang proverbs, the person who uses and those who listen to them and the contexts of use are major factors in determining the seriousness or otherwise of this proverbial social language.

Confirming the importance of the status of the proverbs' user, Onwe (2023) maintains that a child understands how to use proverbs better after he might have listened to the adults. It therefore shows that just as it were in Annang society, adults are the custodians of Annang proverbs; but children have to first of all listen to the Adult before they can use it effectively. Again, delivery of proverbs at individual homes has little significance but once people gather either in the village square or at the family compound, the seriousness of the rendition becomes high.

This work equally found out that nouns are significant and predominant features that made up the linguistic choices of Annang proverbs. This is slightly different from Roberts (2018)'s view that the most highly significant features in proverbs are nouns and verbs.

Also, this study showed that facial expressions, position, movements, gestures and the voice of the speakers matter a lot in the interpretations of these proverbs. For examples, elders are expected to sit in their front houses while saying these proverbs, but when they stand, it indicates the abnormal audience whom they address. Salim (2023) observes that the function of nonverbal communication is reflected in emotions, gestures of people. Also, considering the significance of naming (Safyanova, 2013) names generally actualizes practical functions.

Finally the study revealed that, Annang proverbs have multiple interpretations due to its contexts of use. In line with this observation, Yankah (2015) maintains that there are potentials for multiple meanings in proverbs. Confirming the interpretations of proverbs in contexts, Appiah (2021) explains that contexts interact to produce meanings.

## V. CONCLUSION

Proverbial social languages are "multifunctional and flexible instruments of communication" (Nwabudike, 2020: 529) in every living society. Annang proverbs therefore perform innumerable functions; they are the tools that create, maintain and sustain the rich cultures of the Annang people, and therefore their investigations are germane. The predominantly precautionary proverbs of the Annang people are meant to warn people who care to listen to avoid them so as to enable individual to live long and allow good interpersonal relationship among the Annang people to strive. The choice of lexical features from the Annang traditional society helps to sustain the cultural heritage of the Annang people.

Besides the linguistic features of the common Annangs objects, the multimodality of Annang proverbs reveals that the positioning and the contexts in which these proverbs occur determine their importance or otherwise. Therefore to sustain these long, indispensable instruments that express the cultures, norms and values of Annang people, and act as the identifier of the people's traditions, every Annang is admonished to deliberately use this social language

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Adewole, G. (2020, December 19). The art of conversation: Proverbs in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. *The Republic*. Retrieved May 31, 2024, from <https://republic.com.ng/december-19-january-20/proverbs-things-fall-apart/>
- [2] Agbenyo, E. Y. (2023). *The literary significance of proverbs used in selected West African drama* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Education, Winneba].
- [3] AL-Mutalabi, M. M. (2019). Exploring the significance of proverbs in English language. *Alsuna: Journal of Arabic and English Language*, 2(1), 30–38.
- [4] Appiah, K. A. (2021). Thick translation. In L. Venuti (Ed.), *The translation studies reader* (4th ed., pp. 339–351). Routledge.
- [5] Bobuafor, M. (2021). Cultural values and the pragmatic significance of proverbial sayings in Tafi and Ewe. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 178, 192–207.
- [6] Bochina, T. G., Korshunova, A. A., & Zharkynbekova, S. K. (2021). Proverbs and other stable sayings show a foreigner the traditions and cultures of the Russian people. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 9(3), 101–108.
- [7] Clasberry, E. U. (2010). *African culture through proverbs*. Xlibris Corporation.
- [8] Csátár, P. (2022). Extended conceptual metaphor theory. *Acta Linguistica Academica*, 69(2), 263–270. <https://doi.org/10.1556/2062.2022.00510>
- [9] Ferretti, T. R., Katz, A. N., Schwint, C. A., Patterson, C., & Pradzynski, D. (2020). How discourse constraints influence neurolinguistic mechanisms during the comprehension of proverbs. *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience*, 20, 604–623. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13415-020-00795-4>
- [10] Halliday, M. A. K. (2023). Language in a social perspective 1. In *Mapping the field* (pp. 4–20). Routledge.



- [11] Hatipoğlu, Ç., & Daşkın, N. C. (2020). A proverb in need is a proverb indeed: Proverbs, textbooks and communicative language ability. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v40n1a1796>
- [12] Johnstone, B., & Andrus, J. (2024). *Discourse analysis* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- [13] Kress, G., & Bezemer, J. (2023). Multimodal discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 139–155). Routledge.
- [14] Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). The metaphorical structure of the human conceptual system. *Cognitive Science*, 4(2), 195–208. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15516709cog0402\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15516709cog0402_4)
- [15] Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2008). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- [16] Lomotey, B. A., & Csajbok-Twerefou, I. (2021). A pragmatic and sociolinguistic analysis of proverbs across languages and cultures. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 182, 86–91.
- [17] Luca, I. (2020). A multimodal discourse analysis. *Romanian Journal of English Studies*, 17(1), 74–80. <https://doi.org/10.2478/rjes-2020-0010>
- [18] Mukhitdinovna, K. I. (2021). Reflection of color symbolism in paremiology of English, Uzbek and Karakalpak languages. *International Journal*, 9(1), 40–45.
- [19] Musinovna, S. H., & Tadjibaevn, M. A. (2021). Structural and semantic characteristics of proverbs. *Евразийский Союз Ученых*, 82(1–4), 22–25.
- [20] Načičione, A. (2020). Proverbs in the system of language and their creative use: A cross-cultural view. *Culture Crossroads*, 16(1), 4–15.
- [21] Nikolaevna, M. S., Vital'evich, M. Y., & Sergeevna, K. E. (2023). The role of proverbs and sayings in the development of sanogenic thinking of the individual. *\*US-China Education Review*, 13\*(5), 295–300.
- [22] Nugraha, D. S. (2023). Utilizing cognitive semantics analysis and the contrastive method to explore the expression of fear in Indonesian and English proverbs. *ISRG Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(6), 122–133.
- [23] Nwabudike, C. E. (2020). A sociolinguistic analysis of proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame*. *Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria*, 23(1), 139–147.
- [24] Obelkevich, J. (2015). Proverbs and social history. In W. Mieder (Ed.), *Wise words* (pp. 211–252). Routledge.
- [25] Onwe, A. F. (2023). *Proverbs and worldviews: An analysis of Ikwo proverbs and their worldviews* [Doctoral dissertation, Anglia Ruskin University].
- [26] Rasulov, Z. I. (2023). Comparative study of linguistic phenomena of a national-cultural nature, representing mythological linguistic units in English and Uzbek languages. *Formation of Psychology and Pedagogy as Interdisciplinary Sciences*, 2(20), 19–24.
- [27] Roberts, E. E. (2018). Proverbs as a linguistic device in the teaching-learning process among the Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria. In A. Ndolo (Ed.), *The arts and indigenous knowledge systems in a modernized Africa* (pp. 280–295). Sun Press.
- [28] Rohsenow, J. S. (2023). *ABC dictionary of Chinese proverbs (Yanyu)*. University of Hawaii Press.
- [29] Romero, E., & Soria, B. (2005). Cognitive metaphor theory revisited. *Journal of English Studies*, 5–6, 141–158.
- [30] Rong, H. (2013). Proverbs reveal culture diversity. *\*Cross-Cultural Communication*, 9\*(6), 54–59. <https://doi.org/10.3968/j.ccc.1923670020130906.2885>
- [31] Rudhel, M. M. Y. (2020). Understanding metaphors and their translation from the linguistic and cognitive linguistics perspectives. *Journal of the College of Languages*, 63(1), 15–36.
- [32] Rubikovna, K. S., & Artakovna, K. S. (2020). Study of proverbs and sayings as means of developing the ability to construct a judgmental speech. *International Scientific Review*, 75, 52–55.
- [33] Safyanova, M. A. (2013). The name as a sign: Semiotic functions of the names of things in the context of sayings and proverbs. *Tyumen State University Herald*, 1, 123–130.
- [34] Salim, M. S. (2023). Verbal and non-verbal communication in linguistics. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*, 2(38). [https://doi.org/10.31435/rsglobal\\_ijitss/30092023/8048](https://doi.org/10.31435/rsglobal_ijitss/30092023/8048)
- [35] Schmitt, R. (2005). Systematic metaphor analysis as a method of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 10(2), 358–394. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2005.1854>
- [36] Silas, P. A., & Abru, J. O. (2024). Language and conflict management among the Annang people. *EBSU Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 14(2), 520–531.
- [37] Spellerberg, C. (2022). Proverbial markers and their significance for linguistic proverb definitions: An experimental investigation. *Yearbook of Phraseology*, 13(1), 109–132. <https://doi.org/10.1515/phras-2022-0007>
- [38] Sulaymonovna, T. I. (2023). Proverbs and sayings as communicative phraseological units. *Новости образования: исследование в XXI веке*, 2(16), 855–859.
- [39] Utebaev, T., & Sarsenbaeva, Z. (2021). Linguoculturological analysis of proverbs. *Berlin Studies Transnational Journal of Science and Humanities*, 1(1.5), 141–144.
- [40] Usman, J., Mustafa, L. J., & Agu, M. N. (2013). Proverb as determinant of cultural identity: The imperative of the three regional languages in Nigeria. *IMPACT: International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, 1(3), 47–58.
- [41] Van Leeuwen, T. (2015). Multimodality. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (Vol. 2, pp. 447–465). John Wiley & Sons.

- [42] Villers, D. (2022). What makes a good proverb? On the birth and propagation of proverbs. *Lexis. Journal in English Lexicology*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.6763>
- [43] Volodymyrivna, R. A. (2023). Mirroring of the linguistic picture of the world as the specifics of the national worldview: Proverbs and sayings analysis. *Львівський Філологічний Часопис*, 81, 159–163.
- [44] Yalcouyé, K., Kodio, A., & Abdoulaye, I. (2021). The use of proverbs as communication strategies: A contribution to the sociocultural values of the Songhay and Dogon people. *Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies*, 4(1), 45–60.
- [45] Yankah, K. (2015). Do proverbs contradict? In W. Mieder (Ed.), *Wise words* (pp. 127–142). Routledge.
- [46] Zhao, W. (2012). An analysis of social proverbs from the perspective of cultural semiotics. *Theory & Practice in Language Studies*, 2(10), 2163–2168. <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.2.10.2163-2168>.

# Postcolonial Political Manipulation of the Marginalized: A Critical Analysis of Ogbeche Frank Ogodo's *Harvest of Corruption*

Isaac Horsu

University of Professional Studies, Accra

Department of Communication Studies

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6337-4239>

\*Corresponding Author Email: horsui@yahoo.com

Received:- 05 December 2025/ Revised:- 12 December 2025/ Accepted:- 21 December 2025/ Published: 31-12-2025

Copyright © 2025 Journal of Creative Research in English Literature & Culture

This is an Open-Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>) which permits unrestricted Non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**Abstract**— This study conducts a critical analysis of postcolonial political manipulation in Ogbeche Frank Ogodo's play, *Harvest of Corruption* (2013). Employing postcolonial theory as a framework, the research examines how the play dramatizes the systemic exploitation of marginalized citizens by a corrupt political elite in a post-independence African state. Through a qualitative textual analysis, the study reveals that political corruption permeates all societal institutions, leading to economic devastation, injustice, and the moral degradation of both the powerful and the vulnerable. The analysis demonstrates that characters such as Chief Ade-Amaka, Ochuole, Aloho, and Justice Odili function as metaphors for the entrenched networks of corruption and the profound human cost they exact. The study concludes that Ogodo's work serves as a powerful indictment of the neocolonial patterns of governance that continue to perpetuate oppression and social injustice long after the end of formal colonial rule.

**Keywords**— Postcolonial literature, Political corruption, Neocolonialism, Ogbeche Frank Ogodo, *Harvest of Corruption*, Subaltern, African drama.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Political corruption represents a profound and persistent crisis in post-independence Africa, effectively perpetuating cycles of exploitation that echo the colonial past. This corruption typically stems from weak governance and a systemic disregard for the welfare of the marginalized. Across the continent, a glaring disparity persists where political elites accumulate vast wealth under favorable terms, while technocrats and the general populace grapple with inadequate livelihoods. This dynamic indicates that Africa remains caught in a colonial matrix of power, characterized by sustained control over economics, authority, and knowledge (Quijano, 2007, pp. 168-178). Frantz Fanon (1961) observed that colonialism seeks to impose its logic not only on a colony's present but indelibly on its future, a legacy that postcolonial states must vigorously confront.

In this context, postcolonial literature assumes the vital role of social critique. While theorists like Eagleton (1999) note the risks of cultural overemphasis, the value of such literature lies in its capacity to challenge entrenched power structures (p. 26). African writers, therefore, bear a responsibility to act as societal watchdogs. This study focuses on Ogbeche Frank Ogodo's *Harvest of Corruption* (2013) to investigate the literary depiction of postcolonial political manipulation. The play offers a searing portrayal of a political class that, having inherited the state, continues to employ colonial tactics of control and exploitation against its own citizens.

## II. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

This study addresses the literary representation of how political power in a postcolonial setting is wielded to manipulate and marginalize the populace. Although nations like Nigeria achieved political independence, the subsequent struggle for power has been severely hampered by rampant corruption, stifling authentic development. Ogodó's play is rich with political elements that expose the roots of this decay. While its satirical nature and themes have been noted, a concentrated postcolonial analysis of its portrayal of systemic manipulation remains underexplored. Consequently, this study aims to utilize postcolonial theory and textual analysis to expose the mechanisms and impacts of political manipulation on the marginalized as depicted in *Harvest of Corruption*.

## III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A POSTCOLONIAL LENS:

This analysis is grounded in postcolonial theory, which is fundamentally concerned with resistance to imperial power and the dismantling of colonial-era assumptions (Hume, 2008). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1998) define the post-colonial project as encompassing "various indigenous local and hybrid processes of self-determination" that actively challenge residual imperial cultural knowledge (p. 1). For this study, key concepts from this tradition are essential. The analysis employs the lens of **neocolonialism** to critique the ongoing economic and political exploitation by a domestic elite who mimic colonial structures of governance for personal gain. Furthermore, the condition of the **subaltern**—populations existing outside the structures of hegemonic power—provides a framework for understanding the marginalized characters in the play who are acted upon and silenced by the corrupt system. Through this dual lens, the study examines how Ogodó dramatizes the injustice of a system where the subaltern are the primary casualties.

## IV. METHODOLOGY: A CRITICAL LITERARY ANALYSIS:

This study employs a qualitative critical literary analysis guided by postcolonial theory. The methodology involves a systematic, three-stage process applied to the primary text, *Harvest of Corruption*:

1. **Close Reading:** The play was meticulously examined to identify key passages, dialogues, and narrative elements concerning power, corruption, and marginalization.
2. **Thematic Coding:** The identified textual data was categorized into emergent themes, such as "abuse of political office," "institutional complicity," and "victimization of the vulnerable." These themes were then analyzed through the specific postcolonial concepts of neocolonialism and subalternity.
3. **Interpretive Analysis:** The coded themes and character arcs were interpreted to construct a coherent argument about the play's critique of postcolonial political manipulation. This process aligns with the view of textual analysis as an objective engagement with meaning (Barthes & Marshall, 1977).

## V. SYNOPSIS OF *HARVEST OF CORRUPTION*:

*Harvest of Corruption* follows Aloho, a desperate university graduate in search of employment. Lured by the promise of a job from her former schoolmate, Ochuole—now a corrupt administrative officer—Aloho is introduced to Chief Ade-Amaka, a powerful and morally bankrupt minister. Unwittingly entangled in a drug trafficking syndicate orchestrated by the Chief, Aloho is arrested. Despite warnings from her friend Ogeyi, Aloho's desperation leads her deeper into the corrupt network, resulting in an unwanted pregnancy and her ultimate death. The play unravels a comprehensive web of corruption that implicates politicians, judiciary officials, law enforcement, and businesspeople, painting a portrait of a society where integrity is sacrificed for power and wealth.

## VI. DISCUSSIONS

Ogbeche Frank Ogodó (2013) demonstrates how corruption affects all facets of society, affecting political institutions, security and law enforcement agencies, and taking a terrible toll on the daily lives of people. The main problem throughout the play is corruption. In Jacassa, corruption is evident wherever you look, even in unexpected areas. Chief Ade-Amaka is at the vanguard

of this wickedness, stealing and abusing public office for his pleasure. Chief exhibits wickedness by turning Aloho into a drug peddler without her consent.

### 6.1 Postcolonial Political Manipulation on the Lives of Marginalized Characters in the Play:

In portraying postcolonial political manipulation on the lives of the marginalized characters in *Harvest of Corruption*, the playwright connotatively relates the main character's name, Chief Haladu Ade-Amaka, to three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. This signifies that corruption does not lie with one person or one ethnic group, but it cuts across all facets of society in Nigeria and Africa as a whole (Omeje, 2008, p. 91). The historically unequal and exploitative relationship between the metropole and the hegemonic elites in postcolonial states constitutes the "external social relations of postcoloniality." Chief Ade-Amaka, as a metaphorical character, stands in for the leadership that has been deeply influenced by political corruption in Africa.

Metaphorically, "corruption" makes Chief Haladu Ade-Amaka a moral decadent. Chief is linked to corrupt practices to the extent that he disregards morality completely. Using his political power, he garners great wealth by stealing public funds and peddling drugs. The money at his disposal allows him to co-opt all political and civil institutions: "I did my homework, my Lord. I do not know why that good-for-nothing Custom Officer who has been on my payroll for God knows how long suddenly decides to leave his duty post..." (*Harvest of Corruption*, p. 49). This is emblematic of how many politicians in Africa operate.

Since he obtains his money effortlessly, Chief adopts a wasteful and promiscuous lifestyle, as portrayed in the following conversation:

Chief Ade-Amaka: Aha! As for cash no problem. Please send us two bottles of big stouts. Chilled please and two mortars of ishi – ewu the usual, you know!

Madam Hoha: (Cuts in) Ah! Chief you are not being fair. What about me?

Chief Ade-Amaka: ...Just serve yourself. Whatever you want and add the bills.

Madam Hoha: You join your girl. She is dying to have you already. (Raises her voice) Ochuole take things easy o! I beg you. There he is. He is all yours. Chop am if you like... (*Harvest of Corruption*, pp. 14-15)

Following this, Chief gives out large sums of money when Ochuole feigns annoyance. He practices all kinds of vices, from extramarital affairs to bribery and drug peddling. Political corruption enables Chief Ade-Amaka to abuse his public office, using government employees for private gain—both for sexual pleasure and criminal enterprise. The powers granted to African leaders confer privileges they frequently abuse, leading to constitutional manipulations and rampant unlawful practices. This is what Chief Ade-Amaka, as a metaphorical character, exhibits.

Though the various public servants used by Chief are punished by incarceration, Aloho is not lucky, and she pays the ultimate price by losing her life. Her death is a metaphor for the many people who suffer or die for politicians during campaigns and rallies. Chief Ade-Amaka is unrepentant, believing he will always have everyone in his cartel. However, luck eventually eludes him when activism in Jacassa rises to challenge his deeds. He loses his prestige and is sentenced to twenty-five years of incarceration. This outcome resonates with the postcolonial agenda to reclaim control over the economy, authority, and knowledge—the interconnected domains described by Quijano (2007, pp. 168-178). The use of postcolonial theory, therefore, is meant to address these acts of corruption among top officials.

**Ochuole** is an old schoolmate of Aloho and a Chief Administrative Officer attached to the Minister. A conversation between Aloho and Ogeyi reveals that Ochuole was linked to corruption even during her school days:

Aloho: ... I ran into Ochuole at Secretariat (purse). You remember her? That girl who was almost making herself a nuisance on campus.

Ogeyi: Yes! Yes!!!... Ochuole, who won't know her. Yes!

Aloho: She is the one I met and she had offered to introduce me to her Minister and she assured me of a job. She ...

Ogeyi: And she what? (Claps her palms together) Say again, have you forgotten her lifestyle? And why should you get yourself mixed up with Ochuole of all people, why? That girl who has soiled the reputations of all decent girls in this Jabu. Is that the girl you ran into? I won't allow you to associate with her. (*Harvest of Corruption*, p. 18).

From this, it is clear Ochuole is morally perverse. The political corruption in her life does not affect her alone but also anyone she contacts. She indulges in prostitution for money and luxuries and is open to luring innocent girls into drug peddling and prostitution, disregarding the consequences.

Ochuole is also an accomplice in Chief Ade-Amaka's schemes, including signing and collecting state funds for private use. The impact of political corruption on Ochuole leads her to believe she can act with impunity due to the support of the "powers that be." Finally, her wrongs catch up with her, and she is sentenced to ten years of hard labor. In this light, one considers Appiah's (2013) assertion that postcoloniality can become a "condition of pessimism" (p. 353). Ochuole is directly linked to vices that hinder national development.

**Aloho** is a metaphorical character representing upright individuals whose hardship in a corrupt environment leads to moral failure. It is difficult to maintain integrity amid economic hardship and corrupt associates.

Metaphorically, political corruption makes Aloho a victim of circumstance. Years of unemployment lead her to associate with Ochuole and Chief Ade-Amaka. Her desperation for a job clouds her judgment, making her susceptible to their whims. She falls victim to drug peddling unknowingly. Her direct contact with the corrupt Ochuole exemplifies how bad company corrupts good character:

Aloho: ... She assured me that her Oga will employ me. Ogeyi I am going. Right now I want to get a job and I will try to be careful about it, ... I am tired of searching for a job. (*Harvest of Corruption*, pp. 8-9).

Aloho loses her moral standing as a result of this pressure:

Ogeyi: Calm down, Aloho, the world has not ended you can still pick up the pieces...

Aloho: Ogeyi, you may not understand my position. I was even lured into having affairs with Chief. Ever since my detention, I am feeling funny and I am sure I am pregnant...

Ogeyi: Preg... What? ... Aloho! Are you so daft? After all my warning to you... Just under three months in Jabu and you have ruined yourself like this. Aloho why? (*Harvest of Corruption*, p. 59)

The impact on Aloho is so great that she ruins herself in three months, becoming a fornicator, a drug peddler, and pregnant out of wedlock. This is metaphorical of the real-life situation of young women who suffer from corrupt political leadership.

**Justice Odili** is a judge who allows himself to be used by Chief Ade-Amaka. Political corruption affects him so deeply that he loses his sense of judgment. Instead of removing criminals from society, he protects them for bribes:

Chief Ade-Amaka: ... My Lord I have come with a little kola for you. I know that you would like what I have brought for you... Meanwhile, here is a little cash for your fuel (he opens his portfolio and brings out bundle of naira notes and hands them over to Justice Odili who receives it with a show of gratitude). My Lord, more will come so long as you continue to protect me...

Justice Odili: I can't thank you enough. (Smiling broadly). Once again, you are welcome but all..., I can say is that you should be careful... (*Harvest of Corruption*, p. 30).

Justice Odili seems to enjoy his ill-gotten gains to the extent that he resorts to blackmail:

The Judge (Justice Odili): Chief, this is not an easy case but I shall try as usual and you have to be reasonable this time... if this girl squeals, you are in for it.

Chief Ade-Amaka: That's no problem. (Sensing the trap of blackmail but could do nothing about it). I shall come to the house with five hundred thousand naira this evening.

The Judge: That's all right. In fact, I will discuss with her lawyers and the case will be dismissed for want of evidence. The amount should be raised to one million naira, to take care of all the people involved in the case...

Chief Ade-Amaka: (Fuming) You old crook! (But calms himself) I shall bring the money in the evening (highly irritated). (*Harvest of Corruption*, pp. 50-51).



In the end, the Judge disgracefully loses his position and is incarcerated. He represents corrupt judges who deny justice due to bribery, reflecting the disillusionment with leaders who continued colonial-style oppression after independence (Ayittey, 1992).

*Harvest of Corruption* also shows two Customs officers: one on Chief's payroll and one who is not. This represents the dichotomy in African civil service between genuine servants and those placed by political patronage. The officer on the payroll protects Chief's illegal business, illustrating how state agencies are compromised. As Chief laments, "I do not know why that good-for-nothing Custom Officer who has been on my payroll for God knows how long suddenly decides to leave his duty post..." (p. 49).

**Madam Hoha**, the proprietress of Okpara Hotel, is another accomplice. Corruption impacts her so much that she lacks any uprightness. She is described as a "well-fed 'cash madam'" (p.11) and views the young women she exploits as "prey" (p. 12). While pre-colonial African women held powerful political roles, Madam Hoha is a metaphor for women leaders who have failed, prioritizing profit over patriotism by shielding criminals in her hotel for financial gain.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The characters examined from Ogbecbe Frank Ogodo's *Harvest of Corruption* highlight how people suffer the effects of corrupt practices exhibited by the political class in Africa. In the play, the playwright uses well-crafted characters and characterisation to reveal the general social and political patterns prevalent in Africa. The characters are metaphorical as they are symbols or representations of the very real people in the present situations in Africa. In most cases, leadership styles and actions are influenced by postcolonial ideologies and are involved in corrupt practices. The spirit of patriotism has died in them. The nature of the effects of bad leadership is revealed in the characters who suffered in the play while only few important characters represent individuals who seek justice and change from the malfeasance that characterises their society

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Abiodun, A. R. (2014). Organizational conflicts: Causes, effects and remedies. *International Journal of Academic Research in Economics and Management Sciences*, 3(6), 118–137.
- [2] Appiah, K. A. (2013). Is the post- in postmodernism the post- in postcolonial? In T. Olaniran & A. Quayson (Eds.), *African literature: An anthology of criticism and theory* (pp. 654–664). Blackwell Publishing.
- [3] Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (1998). *Key concepts in post-colonial studies*. Psychology Press.
- [4] Barthes, R., & Marshall, D. G. (1977). Textual analysis of a tale by Edgar Poe. *Poe Studies*, 10(1), 1–12.
- [5] Eagleton, T. (1999). Literary history without literature: Reading practices in the ancient world. *SubStance*, 28(1), 57–89.
- [6] Fanon, F. (1961). *The wretched of the earth* (C. Farrington, Trans.). Grove Press.
- [7] Ghosh, S. (2007). *On the origins of Germanic heroic poetry: A case study of the legend of the Burgundians*. Peter Lang.
- [8] Hume, P. (2008). Postcolonial theory and the postcolonial representation of culture in the Americas. In M. Morana, E. Dussel, & C. A. Jáuregui (Eds.), *Coloniality at large: Latin America and the postcolonial debate* (pp. 388–395). Duke University Press.
- [9] Ogbecbe, F. O. (2013). *Harvest of corruption*. Almaz Books.
- [10] Omeje, K. (2008). The war on terror and the crisis of postcoloniality in Africa. *African Journal of International Affairs*, 11(2), 89–114.
- [11] Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and modernity/rationality. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2–3), 168–178.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353>
- [12] Scott, J. C. (1972). *Comparative political corruption*. Prentice-Hall.

# Dialectal Variation and Standardization of Kafinooonoo: A Sociolinguistic Survey in the Kafa Zone of Ethiopia

Tilahun Gebretsadik Adare

MA, PhD candidate, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Bonga University, Bonga, Ethiopia gebtilahun13@gmail.com; Phone +251917255074

Received:- 06 December 2025/ Revised:- 13 December 2025/ Accepted:- 22 December 2025/ Published: 31-12-2025

Copyright © 2025 Journal of Creative Research in English Literature & Culture

This is an Open-Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution

Non-Commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>) which permits unrestricted

Non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**Abstract**— This study scrutinizes the dialectal variation of Kafinooonoo (also referred to as Kafa), an Omotic language spoken in the Kafa Zone of southwestern Ethiopia. Employing a descriptive survey methodological framework from dialect geography, including guided interviews and semantic domain questionnaires with eleven native speakers from geographically varied locations, the research identifies two primary dialect clusters: a north-western group (Gesha, Saylem, Bitta, Chenna, Shisho-Inde, Gewatta) and a central-south-eastern group (Bonga, Gimbo, Decha, Addiyo, Tello, Chetta). The central-south-eastern variety has been established as the standard language for education, media, and government functions. This paper argues that the privileging of this dialect is not a linguistic inevitability but a sociolinguistic consequence of historical, geographical, and political factors. These include the region's history as the heartland of the Kafa Kingdom, the associated social prestige of its speakers, and post-1991 Ethiopian language policy. A lexicon of 52 key variations provides empirical evidence for the dialectal split, contributing to the understanding of language standardization in under-documented Omotic languages. The findings underscore that successful standardization must be grounded in empirical dialectology while acknowledging the socio-political realities that shape linguistic hierarchies.

**Keywords**— Kafinooonoo, Dialectology, Sociolinguistics, Language Standardization, Language Variation, Omotic Languages, Ethiopia.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study:

Language is not a monolithic entity but a dynamic, heterogeneous system intrinsically linked to social identity and power. The systematic study of this variation, dialectology, has evolved from its traditional focus on mapping geographical isoglosses to a more nuanced sociolinguistic understanding that views dialects as legitimate, rule-governed varieties, challenging folk perceptions of them as corrupted or substandard forms of a language [2]. Within this paradigm, the process of standardization—the selection, codification, and acceptance of a particular variety for official functions—is recognized not as a neutral linguistic optimization but as a socio-political exercise in "variant reduction" [6]. This process is often driven by a confluence of historical centrality, political power, and social prestige, leading to the "autonomy" of one dialect and the "heteronomy" of others [7].

The Omotic language family, spoken in south-western Ethiopia, presents a critical but under-explored arena for examining these sociolinguistic dynamics. Among these languages is Kafinooonoo (also referred to as Kafa), the mother tongue of the Kafecho people. Kafinooonoo carries a rich historical legacy as the official language of the Kafa Kingdom's council of ministers prior to its annexation by Emperor Menelik II in 1897 [5].

Despite being the dominant language within the Kafa Zone today, it exhibits significant internal dialectal variation, a feature that remains poorly documented and analytically unexplored. Preliminary observations and scant prior research, such as the foundational lexicographical work of Habtewold [5], suggest a tonal system and point to its Omotic affiliation, yet comprehensive dialectological studies are absent from the scholarly record. This gap is particularly pressing in the context of post-1991 Ethiopia's ethnic federalism, which devolved language policy and empowered regional languages like Kafinooonoo

for use in education, media, and administration. This policy shift necessitates robust standardization; however, without a empirical understanding of its dialectal landscape, such efforts risk being arbitrary, politically contentious, or inefficient.

The existing literature on language standardization, largely derived from European contexts, emphasizes models of monocentric (selection from one dialect) or polycentric (levelling of features from several) development [4]. The applicability of these models to contexts like Kafinoonoo, where a standardized form is emerging organically and institutionally amidst significant dialectal diversity, remains an open empirical question. Furthermore, the factors precipitating the apparent hegemony of the central-south-eastern varieties (centered on Bonga) over the north-western clusters are yet to be systematically investigated and theorized.

Therefore, this study is situated at the intersection of descriptive dialectology and the sociolinguistics of standardization. It seeks to move beyond mere description by interrogating the causes and consequences of dialectal variation and selection in Kafinoonoo. By employing the methodological framework of dialect geography within a contemporary sociolinguistic theoretical lens, this research aims to:

1. Empirically delineate the major dialect divisions within Kafinoonoo.
2. Analyze the historical, geographical, and socio-political factors that have led to the privileging of one dialect cluster as the standard.

In doing so, this paper contributes to the broader theoretical discourse on how standard languages are formed in contexts of post-colonial language revitalization and provides an essential empirical baseline for the sustainable and scientifically-informed standardization of an under-documented Omotic language.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem:**

The sustainability and functional elaboration of the Kafinoonoo language face a multifaceted crisis, impeding its effective standardization and utilization across public and private sectors. The core of this problem resides in a critical deficit of empirical, field-based research specifically dedicated to the language's dialectology and standardization processes. This foundational gap is exacerbated by inconsistent language-in-education policies, which have, at times, hindered the language's integration into preparatory school curricula, thereby stunting its intergenerational transmission and academic prestige.

Furthermore, a discernible lack of institutional commitment from zonal government bodies has resulted in inadequate enforcement of existing linguistic rights and policies, preventing the mandated use of Kafinoonoo in official government functions, legal proceedings, and public administration. This institutional inertia is compounded by a severe underdevelopment of pedagogical and literary resources. There is a conspicuous absence of cultivated materials to enhance core linguistic skills such as writing, reading, speaking, and listening, as well as a systematic grammar. The literary and scholarly landscape is similarly barren, with negligible contributions in the fields of Kafinoonoo literature, folklore, descriptive linguistics, and, most pertinently, dialectology.

Consequently, the speech community lacks a unified orthographic and grammatical convention, leading to inconsistencies that threaten the language's vitality and modernization. Therefore, this study is necessitated by the urgent need to systematically identify and categorize the major dialectal variants of Kafinoonoo. A comprehensive dialectal survey is the essential first step toward a scientifically informed and socially equitable standardization process, which is a prerequisite for the language's sustainable development and official implementation.

## **1.3 Objectives of the study:**

### **1.3.1 The main objective:**

The main objective of this particular study is to identify the major Kafinoonoo dialects spoken among Kafecho and to recommend it for public use in Kafa Zone.

### **1.3.2 Specific objectives:**

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Survey the major dialects of Kafinoonoo across all districts of Kafa Zone.
- Categorize and group similar speech varieties into dialect clusters.

- Provide scientific findings and recommendations related to dialectology to the government of Kafa Zone.

#### 1.4 Significance of the study:

The findings of this research are poised to make substantive contributions across academic, educational, and policy domains. Primarily, the study holds significant academic worth by filling a critical gap in the documentation of Omotic languages, a family often underrepresented in linguistic scholarship. It provides a valuable empirical dataset on Kafinoonoo dialectology, which will serve as a primary resource for linguists, sociolinguists, and anthropologists engaged in the study of language variation, contact, and change. The research also establishes a methodological precedent for dialect surveys in similar, under-documented linguistic contexts.

In the educational and pedagogical realm, this study offers an evidence-based foundation for language planners and curriculum developers. By clearly delineating the major dialect clusters, the findings can inform the creation of standardized orthographies, grammars, and textbooks, thereby facilitating more effective mother-tongue education and literacy programs within the Kafa Zone. At the socio-political and policy level, the research provides crucial insights for government bodies and policymakers. It delivers a scientifically-grounded rationale for standardization decisions, potentially mitigating inter-dialectal tensions by demonstrating the historical and sociolinguistic, rather than purely linguistic, basis for selecting a standard variety. Furthermore, by documenting the lexical and grammatical richness of all dialects, the study advocates for a standardization model that centralizes a norm for formal communication while simultaneously recognizing and preserving the value of non-dominant varieties, thus supporting both national integration and local cultural heritage.

#### 1.5 Scope and delimitations:

This study is explicitly demarcated to investigate the dialectal variation of the Kafinoonoo language with the overarching aim of informing its standardization. The geographical scope is confined to the administrative boundaries of the Kafa Zone in Ethiopia, encompassing all its rural districts and urban administrations to ensure a comprehensive spatial representation of linguistic data. The research is delimited in several key aspects. First, the focus is predominantly on lexical and morpho-phonological variations, as these are often the most salient markers of dialectal difference and were the primary data elicited through the research instrument. While syntactic or pragmatic variations may exist, they fall outside the purview of this initial survey. Second, the study employs a qualitative, descriptive survey methodology rooted in dialect geography. It does not utilize quantitative sociolinguistic methods to measure the frequency of variable forms across different social strata, which represents a fertile area for future research. Third, the temporal scope of the data collection was the 2024-2025 academic year, providing a synchronic snapshot of the dialect situation.

Finally, while the study identifies factors influencing standardization, it does not prescribe a detailed implementation plan for language policy. Its primary contribution is to lay the necessary descriptive groundwork upon which such future implementation efforts can be securely built.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Language Variation and Standardization:

Linguistic variation is a fundamental characteristic of all spoken languages, manifesting in the frequency and distribution of variable forms [8]. While early generative grammar often relegated such variation to the realm of "performance" [3], contemporary sociolinguistics posits that probabilistic patterns are integral to linguistic competence and are central to understanding language change [1]. The process of language standardization is fundamentally one of "variant reduction" [6]. A standard language is rarely a pure, monolithic entity derived from a single dialect (monocentric selection). More commonly, it is a composite variety shaped by dialect levelling, koinéization, and the recombination of features from multiple sources (polycentric selection; [4]). This process is driven not only by top-down, institutional intervention but also by bottom-up "acts of identity" [7], where speakers adjust their speech to align with or distinguish themselves from perceived social norms. The concepts of "focusing"—the stabilization of a uniform variety—and "projection"—the identity-motivated linguistic choices of speakers—are pivotal in this context. This study adopts the position that all language varieties, including the standard, are dialects, and that the dominance of one variety over others is a socio-political outcome, not a reflection of intrinsic linguistic superiority.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework: The Haugen-Deumert Model and Complementary Lenses:

To analytically frame the interplay between dialectal variation and the standardization of Kafinoo, this study employs an integrated theoretical framework centered on the Haugen-Deumert model of standardization, supplemented by concepts of linguistic autonomy/heteronomy and acts of identity.

### 2.2.1 The Haugen-Deumert Model of Standardization:

Einar Haugen's seminal model conceptualizes standardization as a systematic socio-political process involving four interconnected stages [6]:

- A. **Selection:** The political choice of a particular variety as the basis for the standard, often based on prestige, power, and historical centrality rather than linguistic criteria.
- B. **Codification:** The formal fixation of the selected variety through the development of orthography, grammar, and dictionary.  
**Implementation:** The promotion and diffusion of the codified standard through education, government, and media institutions.
- C. **Elaboration:** The functional expansion of the standard to handle modern domains like science, technology, and law.

Ana Deumert's work critically refines this model, emphasizing that standards are often **polycentric constructs** shaped by dialect leveling and the recombination of features from multiple varieties [4]. She highlights the role of **ideology and conflict** in standardization, viewing it as a site of struggle between different interest groups rather than a consensual process. Furthermore, Deumert stresses the **agency** of linguists, writers, and political movements and the **historical contingency** of standardization outcomes.

When synthesized, the Haugen-Deumert Model provides a powerful lens for analyzing Kafinoo: **Selection** is understood as the political legitimization of Cluster B's historical prestige; **Codification** is an ongoing, potentially contentious process; **Implementation** is enabled by post-1991 language policy; and **Elaboration** faces challenges of lexical modernization.

### 2.2.2 Autonomy, Heteronomy, and the Spatialization of Linguistic Power:

To theorize the relationship between the identified dialect clusters, we employ the concepts of autonomy and heteronomy [7]. An autonomous variety serves as its own frame of reference and is perceived as a standardized, independent language. A heteronomous variety is viewed in relation to and is often subordinate to an autonomous one. This framework allows us to analyze the Kafa Zone as a linguistic market where different dialects possess unequal symbolic capital. The historical-political centrality of Cluster B endowed it with a primordial autonomy, transforming its geographical space into a locus of institutional power. The current standardization represents the institutional ratification of this long-standing autonomization process, with Cluster A historically heteronomous to Cluster B.

### 2.2.3 Acts of Identity in Post-Imperial Ethno-Linguistic Revitalization:

Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's theory of "acts of identity" complements this framework by explaining the micro-level dynamics of acceptance [7]. Speakers constantly adjust their linguistic behavior to align with perceived social groups. In the context of post-1991 Ethiopian ethnic federalism, where Kafinoo identity became crucial for political recognition, the adoption of Cluster B can be interpreted as a collective "act of identity." This represents a projection of unified Kafecho identity that strategically draws upon the variety with the greatest accumulated historical and cultural capital.

## 2.3 Synthesis:

This integrated framework posits that the standardization of Kafinoo results from a historical process (Cluster B's autonomous status) being activated within a new political opportunity structure (ethnic federalism) and driven by both institutional selection and communal acts of identity. It provides a robust analytical lens through which empirical data on dialect variation can be interpreted as dynamic reflections of power, history, and identity rather than static geographical facts.



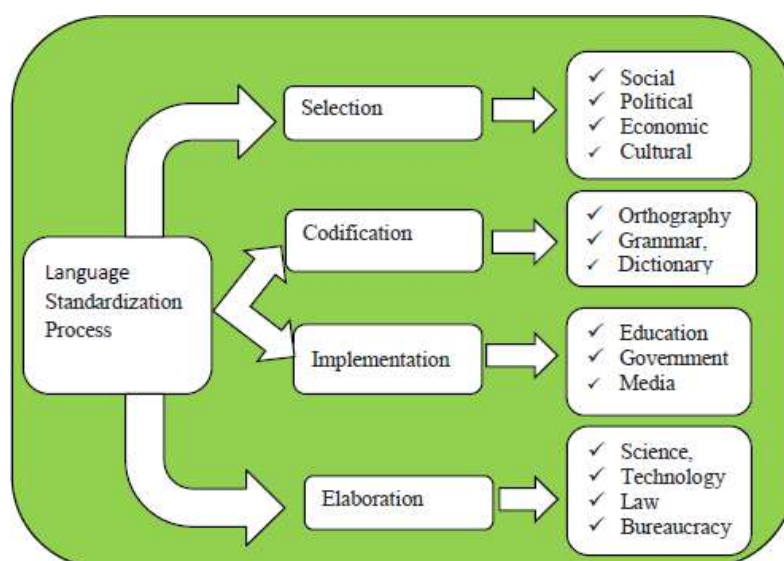


FIGURE 1: A Conceptual framework adapted from Haugen-Deumert's Model [4]

### III. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive survey design with a qualitative approach, utilizing traditional methods of dialect geography adapted to the local context of the Kafa Zone.

#### 3.1 Data Collection:

Data on dialect variation were collected through guided interviews using a detailed questionnaire based on semantic domains. The questionnaire was designed to elicit a comparable set of linguistic data across different regions and included approximately 120 items covering body parts, kinship terms, fauna, flora, natural phenomena, material culture, common activities, and abstract concepts. This instrument was designed to identify systematic phonological, lexical, and morphological variations across the speech communities.

#### 3.2 Informants and Sampling:

Eleven native speakers of Kafinoonoo were purposively selected as informants to represent the twelve rural districts and two urban administrations of the Kafa Zone (see Appendix B for full demographic details). The sample was balanced for age (range: 28-65 years) and sex (6 male, 5 female). All informants were lifelong residents of their respective districts, recognized as proficient native speakers within their communities, and had minimal prolonged exposure to other dialect areas. They were identified through local administrative offices and community referrals.

#### 3.3 Data Analysis:

The collected data were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative comparative methods to identify systematic patterns of lexical, phonological, and morphological variation. The analysis proceeded through three stages: (1) initial transcription and organization of responses by geographical location; (2) identification of variant forms for each semantic item across locations; (3) grouping of locations showing consistent patterns of shared variants, leading to the identification of the two dialect clusters. A comparative table was constructed to juxtapose the forms from these clusters, with 52 items selected as key differentiators based on their consistency across speakers within each cluster and their salience as markers of dialect identity.

### IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 The Two Dialect Clusters of Kafinoonoo:

The analysis reveals a clear bifurcation in Kafinoonoo, forming two distinct dialect clusters with geographical coherence:

1. **Cluster A (Northwestern):** Comprising the varieties of Gesha, Saylem, Bitta, Chenna, Shisho-Inde, and Gewatta districts. This cluster shows linguistic affinities with neighbouring zones such as Sheka and Bench Sheko.



2. **Cluster B (Central-Southeastern):** Comprising the varieties of Bonga, Gimbo, Decha, Addiyo, Tello, and Chetta districts. This cluster forms the basis for the standardized form of Kafinooonoo used in official domains.

#### 4.2 Lexical and Morphological Variations:

Appendix C provides a comprehensive list of 52 lexical pairs illustrating the systematic divergence between the two clusters. Notable examples include:

- 'Meat': [Meeno] (Cluster B) vs. [Qongo] (Cluster A)
- 'Forest': [Kubbo] (Cluster B) vs. [Shubbo] (Cluster A)
- 'Big': [Oogeto] (Cluster B) vs. [Oogato] (Cluster A)
- 'Are you fine?': [Wodaabeetine] (Cluster B) vs. [Woditime?] (Cluster A)
- 'Small': [Gilshecho] (Cluster B) vs. [Gilshacho] (Cluster A)

These variations demonstrate consistent differences in lexicon and morphology, with additional phonological distinctions including patterns of palatalization and vowel variation.

#### 4.3 Discussion:

##### 4.3.1 Historical Geography and the Political Economy of Standardization:

The hegemony of Cluster B is fundamentally rooted in historical political economy. The territory of Cluster B constituted the nucleus of the Kafa Kingdom, housing successive royal capitals (Andiracha, Shosha, Bonge Shambeto). This historical centrality transformed the region into a crucible of administrative, judicial, and cultural power, where the dialect naturally accrued symbolic capital as the medium of bureaucracy, royal decrees, and high culture—paralleling the development of standard languages in European nation-states.

This phenomenon illustrates the **spatial semiotics** of language, where geographical space becomes imbued with social meaning. The dialects of Cluster B became indexically linked to authority and tradition. Consequently, when the post-1991 Ethiopian federal system created an institutional need for a standard Kafinooonoo, Cluster B was already "pre-equipped" with the historical prestige necessary for **selection** in Haugen's model. Its standardization thus represents **path dependency**, where historical contingencies lock in a particular linguistic trajectory.

##### 4.3.2 Social Stratification and the Elaboration of a Prestige Code:

The data reveals that standardization is not merely geographical but also social. Lexical items such as [Bitoo] (royal beverage) and [Maccilaatoo] (curtain)—exclusive to or strongly associated with Cluster B—provide empirical evidence for the **elaboration of function** in Haugen's model. These terms represent a specialized, courtly lexicon that signified social distinction. Cluster B was thus not just a regional variant but a sociolect associated with the aristocracy and state mechanisms.

This association imbued Cluster B with a covert prestige that outlasted the Kafa Kingdom itself. The current institutionalization of Cluster B represents the contemporary manifestation of this historical social stratification, where the linguistic capital of the ancient elite is converted into the cultural and educational capital of the modern state—a process central to the **implementation** stage of standardization.

##### 4.3.3 Autonomy, Heteronomy, and Post-Imperial Language Revival:

The relationship between Clusters A and B exemplifies linguistic **autonomy and heteronomy**. Cluster B achieved autonomy as the focal point for internal and external recognition, cemented by its historical-political role. Cluster A remained historically heteronomous, its identity defined in relation to the central variety.

The 1897 annexation introduced a new heteronomy to Amharic (evidenced by loanwords like [daabboo] for 'bread'). Paradoxically, post-1991 ethnic federalism prompted a re-autonomization of Kafinooonoo from Amharic while internally re-imposing Cluster B's autonomy over Cluster A. This demonstrates that language revitalization in post-imperial contexts can re-inscribe internal hegemonies even while challenging external ones—a complex dynamic of **acts of identity** at the community level.

#### 4.3.4 Towards a Polycentric Future? Theoretical and Practical Implications:

While the current standard exhibits **monocentric selection** from Cluster B, the significant systematic variation in Cluster A challenges the long-term viability of a purely exclusionary model. The Kafinonoo case suggests that for languages with robust internal diversity, a **moderately polycentric standardization**—as anticipated in Deumert's refinement of Haugen's model—may be most sustainable.

This would involve firmly establishing the Cluster B variety for official, educational, and media functions (**implementation** and **elaboration**) while simultaneously recognizing the legitimacy of Cluster A variants in local contexts, literature, and oral heritage. Such an approach aligns with contemporary sociolinguistic wisdom that views standardization as the management rather than eradication of variation. Future corpus planning efforts (dictionary and grammar creation) could adopt a descriptive approach noting common regional variants, acknowledging the language's diversity without undermining the functional efficiency of a standard.

### V. CONCLUSION

This study has delineated the primary dialectal division within Kafinonoo and provided a robust sociolinguistic explanation for the dominance of the central-southeastern cluster (Cluster B). The findings demonstrate that its standardization is not a linguistic accident but the result of a complex interplay of historical geography, social hierarchy, and political developments—processes well explained by the integrated Haugen-Deumert model complemented by theories of autonomy/heteronomy and acts of identity.

The lexicon of 52 variations presented serves as a valuable empirical resource for further historical linguistic and comparative Omotic studies. The case of Kafinonoo underscores that standard languages are socio-political constructs, born from the focusing of a specific regional and social variety that has accrued significant political and cultural capital.

Future research should expand on this foundational survey in several directions: quantitative studies measuring variable frequency across social strata; perceptual dialectology investigating speaker attitudes toward Clusters A and B; detailed grammatical description of both varieties; and longitudinal studies of how standardization policies affect actual language use in education and media. Such research will ensure that the standardization of Kafinonoo proceeds in a manner that is both linguistically informed and socially inclusive, honoring the language's rich diversity while providing it with the unified standard necessary for its future vitality.

### DECLARATIONS

#### 5.1 Data Availability:

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study (including transcribed interview recordings, sociolinguistic questionnaire responses, and dialectal wordlists) are not publicly available due to the need to protect participant confidentiality and privacy, as per the terms of the ethical approval and informed consent. Anonymized data supporting the findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

#### 5.2 Ethical Approval:

The research protocol, including all procedures involving human participants, was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC) of the University of Bonga (Protocol Ref: CSSH/27/14/2025, Date: 28 November 2025). The study was conducted in accordance with the committee's ethical guidelines and regulations, as well as the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

#### 5.3 Consent to Participate:

Informed written consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. No participants under the age of 18 participated in this sociolinguistic survey.

#### 5.4 Consent to Publish:

Informed written consent for publication of the research findings was obtained from all participants. The consent forms explicitly stated that anonymized data derived from their participation could be published in scholarly articles.

### 5.5 Competing Interests:

The author declares that there are no competing interests.

### 5.6 Trial Registration:

Not applicable. This study is not a clinical trial.

## FUNDING

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors including Bonga University.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Bybee, J., & Hopper, P. (Eds.). (2001). *Frequency and the emergence of linguistic structure*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- [2] Chambers, J. K., & Trudgill, P. (1999). *Dialectology* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- [3] Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. MIT Press.
- [4] Deumert, A. (2003). *Language standardization and language change: The dynamics of Cape Dutch*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- [5] Habtewold, H. (1983). *Kafinoonoo-Amharic-dictionary*. Lazarist School.
- [6] Haugen, E. (1972). The ecology of language. In A. S. Dil (Ed.), *The ecology of language: Essays by Einar Haugen* (pp. 325–339). Stanford University Press.
- [7] Le Page, R. B., & Tabouret-Keller, A. (1985). *Acts of identity: Creole-based approaches to language and ethnicity*. Cambridge University Press.
- [8] Sankoff, G. (1980). *The social life of language*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- [9] Gebretsadik, T. (2015). *Bekkaasho*. Tikur Abay Printing Press.
- [10] Gebretsadik, T. (2019). *Kafinoonoo linguistics*. Tikur Abay Printing Press.
- [11] Gebretsadik, T., & Woldemariam, W. (2022). *Kafinoonoo orature*. Tikur Abay Printing Press.

## APPENDIX A RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS (SEMANTIC DOMAIN QUESTIONNAIRE)

A guided interview with semantic domains made between eleven native speakers of Kafinonoo language as dialect indication:

What do the people you belong to call the following morphemes in your locality?

### Semantic Domain Containing

- 1) Body parts of a man
- 2) Animal name: both tame and wild
- 3) Natural world and Geographical terms like: soil, water, river, valley, climate, forest, tree
- 4) Material name, concrete objects, etc.
- 5) Abstract concepts like: like, hate, truth, falsehoods, justice, love, etc.

The semantic domain we have used for the guided interview contains 27 pages. For the sake of minimizing the amount of this paper we only attached the more general domains here

## APPENDIX B INFORMANT DEMOGRAPHICS

No	Name	Age	Sex	Place of interview	Informants' Profile
1	Worqu W/Mariam	56	M	Bonga	He was born in Kafa Zone <b>Gimbo</b> district especially in <b>Carabba</b> and knows the language and the culture well. His educational status is BA in sociology. He is working in Kafa zone culture, tourism and government communications affair department as culture expert. He wrote a book titled, " <b>Gippee</b> and <b>Magaaye</b> " that is about kafecho proverb.
2	Figiru Belay	27	M	Bonga	He was born in Kafa Zone <b>Gewatta</b> district especially in <b>senbete</b> and knows the language well. His educational status is BA in sociology. He is working in south nation, nationalities and people's media /FM 97.4/ Bonga branch as language editor and news writer.
3	Tadase Alamirew	45	M	Bonga	He was born in Kafa Zone <b>Tello</b> district especially in <b>Gurguppa</b> and knows the language and the culture well. His educational status is BA in management. He is working in Kafa zone culture, tourism and government communications affair department as planner.
4	Banchyr ga Tesfaye	33	F	Bonga	Was born in <b>Chena</b> , especially in <b>Shisho-Inde</b> village and has lived in Gesha for many years and knows about Chenna language area dialects.
5	Ama nuel ademe		M	Bonga	Was born in Gesha, especially Wodo village and whose L1 belongs to the Gesha dialect.
6	Girma Gizaw	27	M	Bonga	Was born in <b>Bitta</b> , especially in <b>Bitta-Gennet</b> village and has lived in Bitta for many years and knows about Bitta language dialects
7	Almaz Gemta	35	F	Bonga	Was born in <b>Saylem</b> , especially in <b>Yadota</b> village and has lived in Saylem for many years and speaks the language well.
8	Ayalew Haile	43	M	Bonga	Was born in <b>Decha</b> , especially in <b>Awasho</b> village and has lived in Decha for many years and knows about both language dialects.

APPENDIX C  
LEXICON OF 52 DIALECTAL VARIATIONS (CLUSTER A VS. CLUSTER B)

No.	Cluster B (Central-Southeastern Varieties)	Cluster A (Northwestern Varieties)	English Gloss / Semantic Domain
	<i>Districts: Bonga, Gimbo, Decha, Addiyo, Tello, Chetta</i>	<i>Districts: Gewatta, Gesha, Saylem, Bitta, Chenna</i>	
1	Shuggiyee shalligoo	Aa'iroo	A cow's feeling of being in heat (Animal husbandry)
2	Shakko / Shakke / Kooki	Shuukoo / shuukee / waarijjo	Ape (Fauna)
3	Qoccee ichoo	Qoccee gamo	Storage pit for <i>Kocho</i> (enset food) (Material culture/Food)
4	Gaxoo	Goco	Edge, border (of land/territory) (Spatial relations)
5	Gutino	Gunetoo / guretoo	Knee (Body part)
6	<b>Oogeto</b>	<b>Oogato</b>	<b>Big</b> (Adjective)
7	<b>Giishecho</b>	<b>Giishacho</b>	<b>Small</b> (Adjective)
8	Maa'ii hammite	Maaqqii hammite	"He/she ate and went" (Verb phrase)
9	<b>Meeno</b>	<b>Qongo</b>	<b>Meat</b> (Food)
10	Maqo	Qumbaro	Stalk of maize/corn (Agriculture/Flora)
11	Daakko / Shiroo	Dilaaloo	Pap, soft food (esp. for infants) (Food)
12	Gurimoo	Guremoo	Yolk (of an egg) (Food)
13	Getaa	Getee	Said (past tense verb)
14	Accecho	Accacho	Wise, intelligent (Adjective)
15	Afaafinecho	Afaafinacho	Fast, quick (Adjective)
16	Amo, amoone?	Amasho, amashoone?	What? What is it? (Interrogative)
17	Angeshoo	Angashoo	[Meaning requires verification]
18	Ariyaano / tuushoo	Ariitaano / tuushoo	Foolish, simple-minded (Adjective)
19	Bariyoo	Bareho	Bull (Fauna)
20	Beeggetine	Beqqatine	She saw (Verb)
21	Biiyete	Bijjete	Illness, sickness (Noun)
22	Ciicheyaano	Ciinneetaano	Unseen (Adjective)
23	Ciichoo, gawaatoo, tungo	Qappho	To finish, to complete (Verb)
24	Diggaabeetine?	Diggeetine?	Are you fine? (Greeting/Phrase)
25	Galleto, naadoo	Galato	To thank (Verb)
26	<b>Kubbo</b>	<b>Shubbo</b>	<b>Forest</b> (Nature)
27	Maamo	Maanjo	Calf (young cattle) (Fauna)
28	Miimo	Miinjo	Cattle (collective) (Fauna)
29	Qaraannoo	Baanoo	[Meaning requires verification]
30	Qollecho	Qollacho	Beggar (Noun)
31	Toociyoo, gawaatoo	Toocciyoo	To conclude, to end (Verb)
32	Waayeyaanoone	Waayetaanoone	Not yet heard (Verb phrase)
33	<b>Wodaabeetine?</b>	<b>Wodiitine?</b>	<b>Are you fine?</b> (Greeting/Phrase)
34	Diggaabeetine?	Diggaatine?	Are you fine? (Greeting/Phrase)
35	Wodaabeetaane	Wodiitaane	I am fine. (Response)
36	Wollo	Maatoo	Leaf of the enset plant (Flora/Agriculture)
37	Wottee-wotte'ii	Wotaa-wottaqqii	Repeatedly (Adverb)
38	Worefoo	Worafoo	[Meaning requires verification]
39	Yibbaatoo	Dittoo	Speech, talk (Noun)

40	Koteechii	Kotaachii	Just sitting, idle (Verb phrase)
41	Cookoo	Bunno	To shout, to yell (Verb)
42	Aabiichenane?	Aaboochane?	Where is it? (Interrogative phrase)
43	Cuyee kexo	Qoppi kexo	Prison (Institution)
44	<b>Maccilaatoo</b>	— (Not attested)	<b>Curtain</b> (Material culture/Household)
45	Duppeto	Duppato	Ignored, thrown away (Verb/Adjective)
46	Eechi kisho	Eechi qeco	To open a beehive to extract honey (Activity)
47	Eretto / Erettiyoo	Eratto / Erattiyoo	To lend / to borrow (Verb)
48	Hawulle / Cewulle qellechi	Shawulle qellechi	"...with uncombed hair..." (Descriptive phrase)
49	Qayani	Qayalli	Don't do it! (Prohibitive)
50	Aalleb!	Aallab!	Go away! (Expression of dismissal/quarrel)
51	Ta imaa qajjite	Ta imee qajjite	He/she doesn't accept my gift (Verb phrase)
52	Ne gedaa beebea!	Ne gedee beebea!	Save it for future use! (Admonition/Phrase)



# Understanding Positivism and Its Role in Anthropology

Rambabu Marla

Research Associate (Cultural)

Anthropological Survey of India

Ministry of Culture, Government of India

EN-7-9, Sector V, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-700091.

\*Corresponding Author Email: [researcheransi@gmail.com](mailto:researcheransi@gmail.com)

Received:- 08 December 2025/ Revised:- 15 December 2025/ Accepted:- 24 December 2025/ Published: 31-12-2025

Copyright © 2025 Journal of Creative Research in English Literature & Culture

This is an Open-Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution

Non-Commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>) which permits unrestricted

Non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**Abstract**—Positivism is a scientific approach asserting that true knowledge derives solely from observable, measurable phenomena interpreted within specific social and cultural contexts. The discourse of the approach was initiated by Auguste Comte, who believed society operates as a laboratory with discoverable behavioral laws, this was further advanced by Emile Durkheim's conceptualization of social facts such as customs, laws, traditions as objective realities shaping human action. Early anthropologists, Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas employed positivist methods, collecting detailed information through extensive fieldwork to understand socio-cultural influences on individual behavior. However, critics argue positivism overlooks deeper meanings and human agency by overemphasizing quantifiable data. For instance, counting Diwali lamps in a housing colony reveals ritual frequency but fails to capture their symbolic significance of lighting diyas invokes prosperity, ancestor veneration, and cosmic renewal embedded in Hindu cosmology. This limitation exemplifies positivism's reductionist tendency to prioritize measurable phenomena over layered cultural meanings. Clifford Geertz countered with "thick description," advocating close analysis of cultural narratives and shared meanings. Contemporary anthropology integrates positivist methods (surveys, statistics) with interpretive approaches (interviews, ethnography) to explore empirical studies across simple to complex societies, balancing scientific rigidity with cultural sensitivity to address real world social challenges.

**Keywords**—Anthropology, Positivism, Interpretive, Thick Description, Empirical Studies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Positivism is an approach that asserts the most reliable way to understand the world through facts that can be seen, measured, and tested (Comte, 1853; Merton, 1968). The term "positivism" derives from the Latin word *positivus*, meaning "certain" (Mill, 1865). This origin reflects the philosophy's emphasis on knowledge based upon concrete, observable facts and empirical evidence. It holds that knowledge comes from sensory experience through observation, listening, or controlled experimentation rather than from opinions, beliefs, or conjectures (Durkheim, 1895). This philosophy forms a cornerstone for scientific inquiry in anthropology, cultural studies and other studies by prioritizing objective evidence as the foundation for understanding social phenomena (Baert, 1998). It promotes a systematic and disciplined method of research focused on verifiable data, which helps achieve clarity and reliability in the study of human societies and cultures (Halfpenny, 2001).

The philosophical approach of positivism was introduced by Auguste Comte in the 19th century and laid the foundation for a scientific way of understanding knowledge and social interactions, emphasizing observation, logic, and empirical evidence to study human behavior at the individual and societal levels. He believed we should study society and people the same way natural scientists study nature, by finding laws and rules that always work (Comte, 1842). In his view, society is similar to a science laboratory for social scientists to examine social and cultural discourses while analyzing the individual emotions and their interactions through the rules and regulations framed by the human societies. Positivists try to collect substantial data and use numbers to comprehend and codify these rules. They want their research to be clear, exact, and based on facts, not personal feelings. This helps in making better decisions and solving social problems scientifically. This approach is important in social

sciences subjects such as sociology and anthropology which facilitate in creating strong, trusted knowledge about human life (Eriksen & Nielsen, 2021).

### 1.1 Background:

Since its conception, positivism has strongly influenced anthropological research worldwide, including India. Indian anthropological and other social studies have used positivist principles by emphasizing systematic fieldwork, empirical data collection, and classification of social groups and cultural practices. Early Indian anthropologists approached their research with scientific methods to document tribal societies, castes, kinship systems, rituals, and social structures by employing both qualitative and quantitative surveys. Positivism's focus on observable facts allowed Indian researchers to organize vast social and cultural diversities into comprehensible categories, revealing general laws and patterns governing social behaviour. However, fieldwork also showed the complexity of cultural meanings and individual experiences that positivism alone could not explain, motivating more interpretive, qualitative methods alongside scientific rigor. Over the years, the discourses and theoretical orientations in Indian anthropology expanded to embrace mixed methods, integrating positivist data collection with interviews, narratives, and participant observation to understand the socio-cultural aspects of several societies. This blend helps capture both measurable social patterns and the rich symbolic life of communities. The legacy of positivism remains visible in rigorous empirical documentation of demographic, ecological, and social parameters in Indian field studies, providing a foundation for further theoretical and applied research in cultural anthropology. This continuing evolution reflects the dynamic interactions between scientific methodology and cultural sensitivity in understanding diverse human societies.

Throughout the history of Indian anthropology, several eminent scholars have made noteworthy contributions to the development of the discipline, especially through their detailed fieldwork and research on tribes, caste, social structures and others. Scholars such as G.S. Ghurye (1961) focused on caste and race in India, providing foundational insights into social stratification. Irawati Karve's work on kinship and social organization in India (1950s–1960s) especially *Kinship Organization in India* (1953) helped to shape the understanding of tribal and rural communities. Louis Dumont's structuralist approach, especially in his work *"Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications"* (1966), emphasized the caste hierarchy's role in Indian society. Surajit Sinha's research explored tribe-caste and state formation in central India (1960s–1970s) i.e., *"Tribe-Caste and Tribe-Peasant Continuum in Central India"* (1965, *Man in India*) and *"State Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India"* (1962), viewing tribes and castes as part of a larger, evolving Indian civilization. Leela Dube, with her focus on gender and kinship, explored issues of women's status and family structure in tribal and caste groups (1970s–1980s). Researchers such as L.P. Vidyarthi's, *"The Maler: A Study in Nature-Man-Spirit Complex"* (1963) and *"Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar"* (1966) documented tribal traditions, rituals, and folklore (1960s–1980s), emphasizing the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems. Furthermore, all of these scholars emphasized the role of theoretical dimensions particularly the role of fieldwork methods and its approaches provides deeper understanding of any society. In this connection, this research also draws an attention how positivist approach facilitates in understanding the tribal and other communities see, interpret and assess their socio-cultural worldviews.

### 1.2 Objectives:

This paper mainly aims to study positivism, a way of thinking that deeply influences anthropology and cultural studies. It emphasizes how positivism started, how it has been used to study people and societies across the world, and the discussions and criticisms it has faced over time. The goal is to show how positivism's focus on observing and measuring facts scientifically remains strong for contemporary research, but also how it works together with methods that interpret meanings and experiences in social science and other interdisciplinary studies.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Clifford Geertz critiqued positivism for its tendency toward reductionism and its insufficient attention to symbolic meaning and human agency. In his influential work, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), Geertz emphasized the method of "thick description," advocating for an interpretive anthropology that seeks to uncover the deeper symbolic significance of cultural practices, thereby highlighting the necessity of exploring subjective dimensions alongside empirical data. This marked a shift from a purely positivist focus on observable facts to incorporating the meanings and contexts behind human actions.

Earlier anthropological scholarship, such as Ruth Benedict's *"Patterns of Culture"* (1934), demonstrated the diversity and coherence of cultural configurations, suggesting that cultures are shaped by shared values and patterns that cannot be fully

grasped through objective measurement alone. Building on these ideas, Samuel Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations" (1996) engaged with broader paradigms of cultural conflict and interaction on a global scale, thus expanding the interpretive dialogue that originally emerged from positivist perspectives. Kwame Anthony Appiah's in his writings, "Ethics in a World of Strangers" (2006) further contributed to this discourse by arguing for a synthesis of local cultural understanding with global interconnectedness, reflecting ongoing anthropological efforts to balance empirical rigor with cultural sensitivity. Prof Vinay Kumar Srivastava's "Essays in Social Anthropology" (1990) similarly highlights anthropology's dual role in applying fixed methodologies while attending to nuanced and dynamic cultural experiences. Subsequent scholars have also advanced these lines of thought which are noted by W.H. Sewell Jr. "The Concept(s) of Culture" in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (edited by Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, University of Chicago Press, 1999, pp. 35-61) as pointed that culture's evolving and contested nature; Anthony Giddens (2009), in *Sociology*, underscored the increasing reflexivity within social science research; Stephen P. Turner's *The Social Theory of Practices* (1994) explored the tacit knowledge and traditions fundamental to human behavior, challenging simplistic positivist assumptions. Likewise, James Clifford and George E. Marcus, in *Writing Culture* (1986), critiqued the objectivity claimed by positivism and called for reflexive ethnography that acknowledges the anthropologist's role in the construction of knowledge. Positivism's legacy in the social sciences is evident in the establishment of rigorous scientific discipline characterized by clear, objective observation and strict methodological demands (Meridian University, 2023). This emphasis on empirical evidence propelled fields such as psychology and sociology from speculative endeavors to science based disciplines (Park, 2020), thereby improving our understanding of human behavior and societal functioning through facts (Britannica, 2025). However, critics argue that positivism falls short in capturing the totality of social life, particularly the subjective elements related to feelings, meanings, and culture, which often elude quantification and measurement (Junjie, 2022). Furthermore, the positivist tendency to reduce individuals to mere data points neglects the complexity of human beliefs and contexts (Maretha, 2023). The claim of scientific neutrality within positivism has also been questioned in social research settings (Research Methodology.net, 2012). Addressing these shortcomings, post-positivism emerges as a more flexible approach that retains the strengths of factual measurement while recognizing social complexity. It integrates quantitative and qualitative methods to foster a deeper understanding of society (ScienceDirect, 2023; Academia.edu, 2014), thereby enriching anthropology's capacity to merge empirical precision with cultural interpretation and meaning.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The paper has developed based on a systematic literature review to understand the role of positivism in anthropology and its growth. During systematic review, the books, articles, and other material written by philosophers and anthropologists on the subject of positivism. The study reviews and explains what other researchers have already found about how positivism has helped and sometimes limited the study of human societies and cultures. The research works by searching many trusted academic sources using set rules. Only the research that talks directly about positivism and its effects on anthropology was included. After collecting the right sources, the study reads them carefully to find main thoughts, arguments, and important results about positivism's ways of studying things. These ideas were then sorted into groups or themes to organize the information clearly. The study also compares different opinions and thoughts from various experts to see how positivism has changed over time. It originally focused only on facts that can be observed clearly, but later included ways to understand the feelings and meanings behind human culture too. The whole summary of review process follows clear scientific rules so that it is honest, careful, and can be checked by others. By bringing together all this past knowledge and ideas, the study gives a full and balanced picture of positivism's role in anthropology showing both its strong points and its problems clearly.

### IV. RESULTS

The focus of positivism on observable facts has made research findings dependable and easier to compare across different studies. However, positivism primarily deals with what can be directly seen and measured, often neglecting deeper cultural meanings, symbols, and the individual's role in creating meaning. Because of these limitations, positivism does not fully capture the richness of human cultural experience and personal agency. This recognition has prompted anthropology to broaden its methods, incorporating interpretive and qualitative approaches that explore beyond what is visible, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the complex and layered nature of human societies.

The following points summarize the key features based on the analysis:

#### **4.1 Theoretical framework and methodological principles:**

The rigorous methodology of positivism defines the studying social phenomena by focusing only on clear, observable, and common features, using exact scientific terms instead of vague ideas. It builds on the ideas of Comte, who classified sciences systematically, and Durkheim, who insisted social facts be treated as real, objective things that influence people's behaviour as discussed earlier. Positivism lays a strong foundation for anthropology by providing a scientific way to collect and analyze data, helping researchers find general patterns in societies while maintaining objectivity and precision throughout their studies.

#### **4.2 Application in anthropology and beyond studies:**

Positivism has had a profound impact on the methodologies and practices of anthropology and other cultural studies by promoting a strong commitment to empirical data collection and analysis. It provides a scientific basis for classifying cultural phenomena, which allows for clearer presentation of results and enhances the reliability of research findings. This emphasis on objectivity has informed ethnographic fieldwork, encouraging anthropologists to root their interpretations in measurable evidence and observable social facts as discussed earlier. For example, the systematic study of kinship systems, social structures, and cultural evolution often employs a positivist lens, seeking to identify patterns and general principles across diverse human societies. Several classic fieldwork studies in anthropology exemplify the positivist tradition through their emphasis on systematic, replicable data collection and empirical rigor. Bronislaw Malinowski's "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" (1922) research in the Trobriand Islands is well known for pioneering participant observation while also maintaining detailed records that reflect positivist values of objectivity and thoroughness. Franz Boas's "Physical Characteristics of the Indians of the North Pacific Coast" (1891, American Anthropologist) extensive studies among Native American tribes employed statistical analysis and collected measurable data on physical characteristics, language, and culture, actively challenging pseudoscientific racial hierarchies. E.E. Evans-Pritchard's "The Nuer (1940)" structural-functional approach with the Nuer involved mapping social organization and seeking generalizable rules underlying group life. Julian Steward's "Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution (1955)", represent another positivist tradition, as he systematically linked environmental variables and observable cultural adaptation using both qualitative and quantitative data.

#### **4.3 Critiques and limitations:**

Despite its many contributions, positivism has faced substantial and lasting critiques. One of the primary criticisms is that positivism tends to reduce complex human experiences which are rich in meaning and symbolism down to data that can be measured or counted, sometimes neglecting emotions, subjectivity, and the interpretive aspects of culture. Critics argue that society is not simply a collection of fixed "things," but rather a dynamic and evolving process shaped by human action and creativity. This has led to the rise of interpretive or anti-positivist approaches, such as hermeneutics and symbolic anthropology, which place greater emphasis on understanding the meanings and symbols that people attach to their world. Clifford Geertz's influential idea of "thick description" highlights this turn toward deeper interpretation of cultural life. Other critiques focus on the claim of value neutrality in positivism, suggesting that it can strengthen the status quo instead of challenging societal norms, and that its search for universal laws may overlook cultural relativism and the unique historical context of different groups and societies. These discussions have encouraged social scientists to consider a wider range of perspectives and research practices when studying human cultures.

#### **4.4 Synthesis and modern relevance:**

The contemporary significance of positivism lies less in its exclusivity and more in its integration with diverse theoretical perspectives. Rather than being the only way to study society and culture, positivism is now often combined with interpretive approaches, such as hermeneutics, to create a more comprehensive research framework. This blended or pluralistic methodology encourages researchers to maintain scientific precision in collecting and analyzing data, while also delving deeply into the meanings and contexts that shape human experience. By doing so, scholars can balance the need for objective measurement with the equally important task of understanding cultural nuance. Thus, while a purely positivist perspective is less dominant in contemporary anthropology, its foundational principles systematic observation, objectivity, and methodological clarity remain essential. Future research developments in anthropology likely continue refining these tools, joining empirical rigor with cultural sensitivity to more fully address the complexities of human societies in an interconnected world.

## V. DISCUSSION

Positivism has significantly influenced anthropological and cultural studies in India, particularly through the integration of scientific methods with rich cultural inquiry. Traditionally, Indian anthropology emphasized rigorous fieldwork, systematically collecting quantitative data such as household surveys, kinship patterns, and social organization. Early scholars Nirmal Kumar Bose and Surajit Sinha combined these positivist methods with qualitative approaches by deeply engaging with tribal rituals, oral histories, and social values, thus exemplifying how empirical data collection can enrich cultural interpretation. Contemporary anthropological research in India often adopts pluralistic methodologies to understand the socio-cultural dimensions. This approach reflects a move beyond positivism alone by acknowledging that societies are dynamic and shaped by human agency, beliefs, and meanings that cannot always be measured with numbers. The evolving anthropological practice in India now balances empirical rigor with reflexivity and cultural sensitivity, reflecting global trends in integrating positivist and interpretive traditions. This allows researchers to develop nuanced understandings of social change, identity, and community resilience amid rapid modernization and globalization. Thus, Indian anthropology exemplifies the adaptation of positivism within complex cultural realities, continuing to develop indigenous models that link data-driven discipline with interpretive depth. This dynamic engagement ensures anthropology remains relevant to both academic inquiry and practical policy applications, effectively addressing the diverse social and cultural landscapes of India. The tables below present information supporting the analysis of positivism's role in anthropology and other cultural studies. The data offer a clearer view of key concepts, notable contributors, and approaches relevant to the paper's discussion.

**TABLE 1**  
**KEY PHILOSOPHERS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO POSITIVISM IN ANTHROPOLOGY**

Sl.No	Philosophers/ Thinker	Key Work (Year)	Contribution	Period	Key Concept
1.	Auguste Comte, (1798–1857)	System of Positive Polity (1853)	Founder of Positivism, established positivist philosophy as a way to apply scientific methods to social sciences	Early 19th Century	Positivism, Law of Three Stages (theological, metaphysical, scientific phases of knowledge)
2.	Emile Durkheim, (1858–1917)	Rules of Sociological Method (1895)	Developed scientific sociology; formalized study of social facts as external realities shaping society	Late 19th - Early 20th Century	Social Facts, Objectivity in Sociology (treating social phenomena as things)
3.	Clifford Geertz, (1926–2006)	The Interpretation of Cultures (1973)	Critiqued positivism's reductionism; emphasized cultural interpretation and meaning	Mid 20th Century	Thick Description, Symbolic Anthropology (looking beyond data to context and meaning)
4.	Alfred Gouldner, (1920–1980)	The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology (1970)	Critiqued positivism from reflexive sociology perspective; emphasized incorporating researcher's values	Mid 20th Century	Reflexivity, Engagement of research values (challenging neutrality claims)

Table 1 shows important thinkers who shaped positivism in anthropology, from Comte's founding ideas to Geertz's emphasis on cultural meanings.

These foundational differences between positivist and interpretive approaches underpin the methodological evolution in anthropology. Table 2 systematically compares their core features focus, methods, researcher roles, cultural conceptions, and practical applications demonstrating why contemporary pluralistic research integrates both paradigms for comprehensive cultural analysis (Durkheim, 1895; Geertz, 1973).



**TABLE 2**  
**COMPARATIVE FEATURES OF POSITIVIST AND INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES IN ANTHROPOLOGY**

Feature	Positivist Approach <i>Reference: Durkheim, E. (1895). The Rules of Sociological Method</i>	Interpretive Approach <i>Reference: Geertz, C. (1973). The Interpretation of Cultures</i>
Focus	Emphasizes observable, measurable, and verifiable social facts and phenomena	Emphasizes meanings, symbols, and subjective experiences of cultural actors
Research Methods	Uses quantitative techniques such as surveys, experiments, and statistical analysis for generalizability and replicability	Uses qualitative methods including participant observation, interviews, and ethnography for rich detail and cultural insight
Role of Researcher	Considered an objective, detached observer to minimize bias	Acknowledges researcher's active engagement and reflexivity in shaping research outcomes
View of Culture	Considers culture as external social facts and patterns that can be objectively analyzed	Sees culture as an internal, lived experience rich with symbolic meanings and values
Example Use	Census data collection, demographic and economic surveys focusing on patterns across populations	Analysis of rituals, storytelling, art, and performances to interpret cultural significance

Table 2 illustrates the complementary strengths of positivist objectivity and interpretive depth, essential for modern anthropological fieldwork addressing both measurable patterns and cultural meanings.

**TABLE 3**  
**INSTITUTES/ORGANIZATIONS**

SI No	Institute/Organization Name	Location	Key Research Area(s)	Example Studies
1.	Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology	Germany	Pluralistic, combining quantitative and qualitative	Social structures, migration
2.	Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History	USA	Objectivity with community-centered ethnography	Indigenous cultures, museum anthropology
3.	Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI)	Kolkata	Cultural anthropology, tribal and caste cultures, Biological anthropology, Visual documentation	Physical and cultural anthropology, linguistics, ecology, psychology, museum studies
4.	Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS)/National Museum of Mankind/Museum of Man and Culture	Bhopal	Cultural heritage, Ethnographic documentation	Documentation of folk traditions and rituals and exhibition of their artifacts, etc.
5.	Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)	New Delhi	Social sciences interdisciplinary research	Studies on rural livelihoods and social dynamics
6.	Centre for Folk Culture Studies, GOI	New Delhi	Folk culture, Oral traditions	Fieldwork on Indian folklore and oral history
7.	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)	Mumbai	Applied anthropology, Social policy	Studies on tribal health and education programs
8.	National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD)	New Delhi	Community development, Gender studies	Research on women's empowerment and child welfare
9.	Indian Institute of Dalit Studies	New Delhi	Social justice, Dalit studies	Field studies on caste based inequalities
10.	American Anthropological Association (AAA)	USA	Global fieldwork standards, ethical research	Studies on socio-cultural/ biological anthropology



**TABLE 4**  
**UNIVERSITIES/DEPARTMENTS**

Sl No	Universities/Departments	Location	Key Research Area(s)	Example Studies
1.	Anthropology Department, University of Chicago	USA	Balanced positivist/interpretive methods	Urban anthropology, symbolic culture
2.	Anthropology Department, Columbia University, USA	New York, USA	Sociocultural anthropology, Archaeology, Political economy, STS	Ethnography on colonialism, gender, nationalism
3.	Department of Anthropology, University of Alabama, USA	Alabama, USA	Biocultural medical, Human biology, Psychological, Applied anthropology	Archaeology of Americas, Museum anthropology
4.	University of California, Berkeley	Berkeley, USA	Pacific Rim ethnography	Asian connections and tribal fieldwork
5.	Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad, Telangana	Hyderabad	Social and cultural anthropology, Tribal studies	Research on tribal communities, socio-cultural changes
6.	Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, West Bengal	Kolkata	Physiological, Psychological, Symbolic anthropology; Tribal studies	Growth studies, Eastern/Central India communities
7.	Department of Anthropology, University of Madras, Tamil Nadu	Chennai	Social-cultural anthropology, Research methods	Ethnographic studies, Tribal applications
8.	Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi	New Delhi	Social and cultural anthropology, Urban studies	Research on urban migration and cultural change
9.	Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology	Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh	Tribal studies, Indigenous knowledge systems, Cultural anthropology	Ethnographic research on tribal communities, Gondi language preservation, Forest rights documentation

Table 3 & Table 4 highlights a range of major institutions/Organizations and Universities/Departments worldwide and in India are central to the advancement of anthropological research with fieldwork as priority, each contributing diverse perspectives and methodologies aligned with the themes discussed throughout this paper. For instance, the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Germany is renowned for its pluralistic research style, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze dynamic social structures and patterns of migration. In the United States, the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History leads with a commitment to objectivity, community centered ethnography, and the preservation of indigenous cultures through museum based anthropology. Similarly, the University of Chicago Anthropology Department employs a balanced methodology, bridging positivist and interpretive traditions in studies of urban settings and symbolic cultural practices. In India, the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) stands out for its systematic documentation of communities, caste and tribal cultures, visual anthropology, and interdisciplinary research that encompasses folklore, bio-chemistry, linguistics, ecology, and psychology. The National Museum of Mankind in Bhopal plays an important role by preserving and documenting folk traditions and rituals, while the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in New Delhi facilitates interdisciplinary studies on rural livelihoods and social dynamics. Institutions such as the Centre for Folk Culture Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), and National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development further enrich the field by focusing on oral traditions, social policy, community development, and gender studies. The Indian Institute of Dalit Studies is also instrumental in addressing social justice and caste based inequalities through targeted field research. Further, American Anthropological Association (AAA) establishes global fieldwork standards through its ethical guidelines and

supports comprehensive studies in socio-cultural and biological anthropology, influencing international research practices. Collectively, these institutions and the Universities/Departments are exemplifying the integration of scientific rigor with cultural sensitivity and demonstrate the broad applicability of both positivist and interpretive approaches in understanding the complexities of human societies.

**TABLE 5**  
**COMMON CHALLENGES IN POSITIVIST ANTHROPOLOGY AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS**

Challenge	Description	Proposed Solution
Neglect of Symbolic Meaning	Positivism focuses mainly on facts and often ignores the deeper cultural symbols and meanings behind behaviors.	Include interpretive methods that study symbols and meanings to better understand culture.
Researcher Bias and Lack of Reflexivity	Positivism tries to be objective but may miss how the researcher's own presence and views influence the research.	Use reflexive practices where researchers reflect on their influence and collaborate with the community studied.
Cultural Variability and Particularities	Positivism can struggle to capture unique cultural differences and specific local contexts.	Use more focused, qualitative research methods that explore cultural details and context deeply.
Balancing Objectivity and Engagement	There is a challenge balancing scientific neutrality with empathy towards the people being studied.	Adopt mixed methods combining measurable data with empathetic engagement, allowing for a fuller understanding.

The above table highlights key problems with positivism, such as ignoring deep cultural meanings and the researcher's influence and recommends using pluralistic research methods to comprehensively address complexities in anthropology. It suggests incorporating approaches that focus on understanding symbolic meanings and reflexivity in research.

## VI. CONCLUSION & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This synthesis sets the stage for positivism's evolving role in modern research. As discussed, Positivism's insistence on clear, measurable, and verifiable facts has greatly enhanced the reliability and comparability of social science research, particularly in documenting diverse human cultures and societies. However, the complexities of human experience, rich in symbolic meaning and personal agency, require that positivism be integrated with interpretive and reflexive methodologies for a more comprehensive understanding. Looking forward, future research should embrace a pluralistic methodology that blends the empirical rigor of positivism with the cultural sensitivity of interpretive approaches. This integration will allow anthropologists to gather precise data while also appreciating the meanings and contexts that shape human life. Furthermore, anthropological research must continue evolving to address contemporary global challenges such as migration, climate change, the growing influence of artificial intelligence on human societies and cultural transformations, which demand both quantitative assessment and qualitative insight.

To meet these demands, institutions engaged in positivist anthropological research are increasingly adopting this balanced approach, combining statistical analysis with ethnographic documentation to better serve both academic inquiry and practical policy needs. By refining these tools and methodologies, anthropology can contribute meaningfully to our understanding of human culture in its many forms, remaining relevant and impactful in an interconnected world.

## AUTHORS DECLARATION

The opinions, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this research paper are solely those of the author and do not, in any manner reflect the official views or constitute an endorsement by the Anthropological Survey of India.

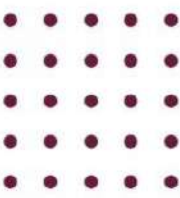
## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

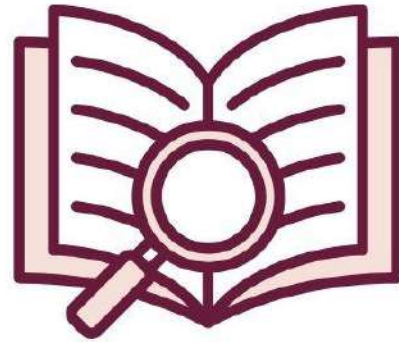
## REFERENCES

- [1] A. Comte, *The Positive Philosophy*, vol. 1-6. Paris, France: Bachelier, 1830-1842.
- [2] E. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Glencoe, IL, USA: Free Press, 1895.
- [3] J. S. Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism*. London, U.K.: Trubner, 1865.

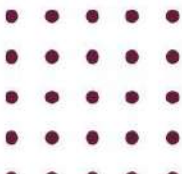
- 
- [4] R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York, NY, USA: Free Press, 1968.
- [5] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York, NY, USA: Basic Books, 1973.
- [6] B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London, U.K.: Routledge, 1922.
- [7] F. Boas, "Physical characteristics of the Indians of the North Pacific coast," *American Anthropologist*, vol. 4, pp. 25-32, 1891.
- [8] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*. Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press, 1940.
- [9] J. H. Steward, *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution*. Urbana, IL, USA: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1955.
- [10] G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*, 5th ed. Bombay, India: Popular Prakashan, 1961.
- [11] I. Karve, *Kinship Organization in India*. Poona, India: Deccan College, 1953.
- [12] L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. Chicago, IL, USA: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966.
- [13] S. Sinha, "State formation and Rajput myth in tribal central India," *Man India*, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 1-22, 1962.
- [14] S. Sinha, "Tribe-caste and tribe-peasant continua in central India," *Man India*, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 289-306, 1965.
- [15] L. P. Vidyarthi, *The Maler: A Study in Nature-Man-Spirit Complex*. Calcutta, India: Bookland, 1963.
- [16] L. P. Vidyarthi, *Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar*. Calcutta, India: Bookland, 1966.
- [17] R. Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*. Boston, MA, USA: Houghton Mifflin, 1934.
- [18] S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York, NY, USA: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- [19] K. A. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York, NY, USA: W. W. Norton, 2006.
- [20] V. K. Srivastava, *Essays in Social Anthropology*. Delhi, India: Indian Pub., 1990.
- [21] J. Clifford and G. E. Marcus, Eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, CA, USA: Univ. of California Press, 1986.
- [22] W. H. Sewell, Jr., "The concept of culture," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, V. E. Bonnell and L. Hunt, Eds. Chicago, IL, USA: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999, pp. 35-61.
- [23] A. Giddens, *Sociology*, 6th ed. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2009.
- [24] S. P. Turner, *The Social Theory of Practices: Tradition, Tacit Knowledge, and Presuppositions*. Chicago, IL, USA: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1994.
- [25] A. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*. New York, NY, USA: Basic Books, 1970.



# ENGLISH LITERATURE & CULTURE JOURNAL



Published By  
SPARC Institute of Technical  
Research



Contact us



+91-7665235235



[www.jcrelc.com](http://www.jcrelc.com)



[info@jcrelc.com](mailto:info@jcrelc.com)