



Proverbs as an African world: Views and characteristics-religious, moral and mystical code of conduct in traditional IGBO society

Madukasi¹, Francis Chuks²

^{1,2} Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Department of Religion & Society. Igbariam Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria

Abstract

Proverbs are basically short and considerably regarded statements that comprises of 'solomonic' words, morals, truth, ethics, socio-cultural, political positions and trusted heritage of the Igbo people. As a figurative kind of indigenous communication, proverbs from the perspective of Igbo paradigm posits to act as a mechanism for ethical and moral education of code of conduct in the contemporary indigenous Igbo society. This paper examines the use of African – Igbo proverbs as idiomatic expressions and provides extensively some textual evidence show casing Igbo proverbs as the custodian of ethical and moral power house for the Igbo people. In Igbo settings, it is believed that one who knows how to use proverbs well is highly revered and endowed. The indigenous mystics or what we can call the ritual elders use Igbo proverbs in communicating with the deities and spirits. This paper also show how the Igbo uses proverbs as a way to stress some vital and remarkable points or issues making it the palm oil used in eating yam in any gathering be it religious or secular. This paper equally explores how proverbs reflects the Igbo people's world view through the mediation of its powerful interpretative paradigm emanating and projecting her belief system, moral inclinations, justifications and people's inner self show casing African philosophy.

Keywords: conduct, education, ethics, morals, truth, wisdom.

1. Introduction

Africans have a rich store of indigenous proverbs in which are encapsulated an ancient wisdom, beliefs and accumulated experiences of past generations. Proverbs are nothing but short sayings, full of innuendos which have become part of everyday use for the indigenous Igbo people. The significant of proverbs as primary source of material for ethical code of conduct in the contemporary Igbo society is derived from the high esteem in which proverbs are held as part of the people. According to Metuh (1987:20) ^[39], "proverbs spring spontaneously from the people. They are *vox populi* [the voice of the people] in the profound sense and consequently, should be accepted as true index of what a people regard as true, and are interpretative of their principles of life and conduct". Such proverbs through the mediation of its usage are believed to be sacred and the symbol of authority that commands respect from all the community members for whom and by whom that knows how to use them (Ozah, 2006:71) ^[70]. Proverbs are trustworthy witnesses of the social, political, ethical and religious ideals of the people among whom they originated and circulate (Kelso, 1918:415) ^[44].

Through the symbolism which the proverbs utilizes and the sacred ethos it invokes, the Igbo proverbs possesses the power to influence the spiritual state of its users and it plays a role in the ethical and educational consciousness of the community "by whom or for whom it is performed" (Dunbar-Hall, 2006:59) ^[22]. According to Blench those who are wedded to European notions of language, in particular regular time signatures, and the key system, find these proverbs "hard to interpret and it is thus often ignored in scholarly accounts and other types of anthropological description" (2009:1). Ademola Adegbite posits that such proverbs to the traditional African peoples may be described

as "the vehicle for articulating an abstract idea in concrete form – for communicating thought as matter" (1991:45). It is from this position that he argues that proverbs "is regarded in traditional African societies as the most immediate expression of Eros; a bridge between ideas and phenomena" (Adegbite, 1991:45) ^[5]. It is on this perspective that Rainer Polak affirms that proverbs "has become an integral part of a supra-ethnic, local culture" (2006:163), while others like Gerard Behague (2006) ^[14] believes that usage of proverbs has significantly shaped African religious heritage.

Regrettably, among the Igbomina people in Osun State Nigeria, Igbo song which is used to praise and condemn good and bad behaviours among the people as the case may be is no longer rendered (Agboola, 1987:29) ^[7]. Ayantayo asserts that "it is also a pity that as a result of modernity African youth does not only find it difficult to speak in proverbs but cannot even understand it because they are less concerned about it. Sad enough, when a proverb is said, the youth have their own artificial and superficial meanings and interpretations to it. This development is doing havoc to African culture" (2001:44).

2. Igbo Proverbs as the Voice of the People

Basically, in Igbo traditional society, proverbs add good taste and flavour to speech as sugar does to tea and they lubricate, embellish, objectify societal and ethical values and religious truths and render them suitable or palatable to the ears of the people who care to listen (Nabofa, 1994:61) ^[54]. No wonder Metuh comments that:

The use of proverbs is cultivated as an art and cherished as an index of good oratory and acquaintance with traditional knowledge and ancestral wisdom. The Zulu say that 'without proverbs, the

language would be but a skeleton without flesh, a body without soul'. The Ovambo have it that 'a speech garnished with proverbs, parables and wisdom saying is pleasant to hear'. Proverbs, the Yoruba would say are 'horses for chasing missing words'. The Igbo people say 'proverbs are vegetable for eating words'. Another Igbo proverb claims that 'a child, who knows how to use proverbs, has justified the dowry paid on his mother's head (1987:20).

In this situation, when proverbs of this nature are given the African youth of nowadays would simply misinterpret it and not only that would equally treat such with contempt (Ayantayo, 2001:44) [6]. Nabofa (1994:17) [54] argues that our African proverbs which serve as symbols are impregnated with diverse theological, doctrinal, philosophical and psychological interpretations are not left out and these are symbols that suppose to serve as a medium of communication in traditional society. It is a pity that today most of the African cultural heritage like the Igbo proverbs and its usage are allowed to be influenced and overshadowed by the Western culture and things are designed to suit European taste in Africa (Sofola, 1973:15) [81].

According to Wilson (1987:24) [91] "the era of moon-light stories, use of the pithy says, folktales and mythology are no longer considered to be part of cultural heritage. The world of technology that is the computer age syndrome has over taken everything. In fact, the introduction of certain technological devices such as video machine, mobile phone, fax- machine has eroded the use of indigenous communication systems in Africa. The advent of satellite dish and greater development in internet technology has shifted the bases of African communication from indigenous communication to modern oriented mass media". However, in pursuit of this argument, Ibagere affirms that "civilization, which has brought about modernization, has compelled the Africans, to cannibalize, some of [the traditional modes of communication]. The direction of modernization which has tilted strongly in favour of westernization has dislocated almost all the modes in the urban areas and supplanted them with the modern mass media" (1994:81-82).

3. Moral Implications of Igbo Proverbs

Proverbs are highly regarded in the thinking and communication process of Africans as a whole and generally, the social functions of proverbs in African cultures have been well documented in folklore scholarship (Oladele, 2010:22) [71]. Invariably, no matter how deculturalized an African person is regarding the use of African indigenous communication systems as it pertains to proverbs, research has shown that Africans has not totally lost the moral, religious, and socio-political "strength and values inherent in them" (Sofola, 1973:62) [81]. Mocquereau affirms that (1896:106) [47] "it is enough to know that in its primitive purity it rose to such heights".

In this way, Ohadike (2007:98) [68] posits that use of proverbs could be a source of light. He argues that through the mediation of proverb usage, musicians like the "reggae artists believed that the world would be changed if people saw the light and this therefore made them to sing songs that praised uprightness and condemned the evil path. They ridiculed politicians who fooled the people. They despised

leaders who stuffed their bellies while the masses starved". It is on this note that Scholes (1970:268) [82] points out that "the critic who dares not to attack what is bad is, but a half-hearted supporter of good". Izibili (2009:14) [38] asserts that through the use of proverbs "these rewards and awards served as encouragement to those who emulates good things and shorn evil entirely". Nabofa (1994:6) [54] argues that the use of proverbs as symbolic form of communication "inwardly reminds and urges the Africans, especially the cruel, savage, and dishonest elements to lead a pure and chaste life in order to avoid the wrath of the gods and goddess".

4. Igbo Proverbs as Social Control through *Ikolo* Music: An Indigenous Instrument

Here, it has been observed that proverbs as a method of communication are used as an agent of social control among the Igbo race, no wonder Omoregbe (1993:62-63) [61] argues that they "provide guides for human conduct indicating certain things or certain ways of behaviour, which should be avoided and other things or ways of behaviour which should be adopted". In this way, they are "reminding people of their responsibility to conform to the wishes of their society" (Adejumo, 2013:44) [4]. Bloch (1987:278) [12] argues that because of the calendrical nature of the Igbos, the use of proverbs therefore becomes the social order and part of temporal and astrological order where this theme of social order is repeated again and again. Falola (2003:35) [31] asserts that such form of communication is "serving as cultural agents to present African to Westerners while becoming a powerful tool to articulate the ideas of Pan Africanism that united blacks in different countries, also it received a wide affirmation as a socialist ideology based on long-established African values". Udo (2008:6) [88] argues that "as character makes for good social relations, it is laid upon every members of community to act in such a way as to promote always the good of the whole body", and "thereby partly creates the image of orderly antithesis" (Bloch, 1987:287) [12]. Ekeke (2013:12) [26] argues that through the use of proverbs ethics in African Igbo traditional society is what a person does in accordance with the established norms which contribute to the welfare of the whole community. Opoku (1978:168) [69] affirms that at the same time, such misdeeds, however, can bring calamity to his immediate family, extended family, his lineage and the entire community, and to avoid the shame that his misdeeds would bring to the entire community, every African [Igbo person] try as much as possible to live good life.

Ogbu (2010:19) [42] affirms that from the injunctions, messages and textual proverbs exuding from the sacred sound like the *Ikolo*, tries "to recover social credibility and wholesome impact on local community" like the Igbo and in this way it solves "the social and psychological well-being of individuals" (MacGaffey, 1994:243) [48], and by this method also, the *Ikolo* "tells it as it is by asserting its social relevance in the community" (Adejumo, 2013:46) [4]. McAdams (1988:217) [51] posits that it is through such sacred sound like that of the *Ikolo* as an indigenous musical instrument that "personal and societal solutions enable individuals and societies to take ontological, epistemological, and ethical stands in the face of ambiguity". Young (2003:29) [93] argues that "it can also be used more metaphorically, as a way of describing how the individual or group can be transformed by changing their

sense of their own place in society". Okafor (1994:189) affirms that Igbo people turn proverbs "into metaphors for conveying their feelings and emotions and for giving oral spectrum description".

Turner (1968:21)^[86] posits that such proverb "is regarded as a magnificent instrument for expressing, maintaining, and periodically used in cleansing a secular order of society without strong political centralization and all too full of social conflict". It is in this wise that Popkin & Stroll (1981:1)^[73] defines ethics as "a code or set of principle by which men live". Through this means, the proverbs of Igbo ethics becomes a "social justice, peace, and strivings for harmonious coexistence" (Daniel, 2010:24)^[21]. Askew (2006:15)^[10] idiomatically describes such ethical proverbs as "a silence that echoes loudly", "which has become a primordial reservoir of moral obligations" (Ekeh, 1975:100)^[28]. Pinkerton (2011:191)^[77] asserts that "its unique transcendence is paradoxically grounded in an earthly embodiment, and..., somehow corporeal". It therefore entails that the concept of ethics in traditional African Igbo society "is in living to avoid shame in any family or community (Ekeke, 2013:13)^[26].

According to Nzewi *et al.* (2001:93)^[56] the concept of encoding ethical lingual text on a music instrument derives from instituting authority voicing in a worldview that processes openly disseminated information for particular, cognitive audience. They argue that the essence is in its imperative transcendental attributes, which empower it to coerce conformity in issues of societal engineering and human management (Nzewi *et al.* 2001:93)^[56]. Igbo proverbs provides "a symbolic system that supported the authority of elders and initiates in the homestead" (Chidester, 1992:11)^[6]. It is on this positions that Nabofa (1994:19)^[54] connected/interpreted this proverbial ethical values to the notion that wisdom belongs to the elders and describes the Igbo proverbs as "the voice of the elders which invariably is the voice of wisdom", that "reminds an initiate of his responsibilities and obligations to his fellow members" (Nabofa, 1994:14)^[54]. Ohadike (2007:95)^[68] affirms that such proverbs are "used to expose and denounce the evils of society". Kinsky *et al.* 2000:248^[45] affirms that such use of Igbo proverbs "are mediated by cultural forces resulting in more or less pronounced adherence to such values" "which deems necessary to save humanity from the catastrophic death-wish it has given into in its very desire for the infinite" (Maes-Jelinek, 1990:55)^[50].

Even in the entertainment industry, Wilson (1998:41) echoes that entertainers use Igbo proverbs "inform of satire, criticism, moralization, praise, symbolism, didacticism, suggestion and labeling to communicate with individuals, groups and society at large...Also, gossips about the rich and proud are presented in the lucid details in music". Mython (1983:86)^[53] posit that such proverbs "can teach, can reinforce the norms of the society and can often provide reassurance of order and continuity in confused and troubled times". Gaudeloupe (2009:55) argues that this understanding about the unjust world, which includes everyone, is still being promoted by the use of popular Igbo proverbs.

This actually makes it to function more as an agent of ethical, moral, social control and mediation (Nti, 1990:11). No wonder Nzewi *et al.* (2001:92)^[56] asserts that in terms of proverbs "the African worldview is richly suffused with spirituality". They argues that societal control and

conformity were more effectively transacted as well as enforced as supra-human processes in which proverb is central (Nzewi *et al.* 2001:92)^[56]. Through such means, Igbo proverbs may be used to enhance the learning of oral traditions and it plays a significant role in maintaining social solidarity (Haviland, 2002:361). In Igbo culture, tradition and hegemonic paradigm, indigenous proverbs serves "as a medium of inculcating moral truths to the people" (Akintola, 1992:2) and it serves "as a medium of teaching men morality through symbolism" (Akintola, 1992:2).

As an agent of social control in the contemporary indigenous Igbo societies proverbs are to be used freely to express the feelings of the people" (Nti, 1990:11). It is primarily regarded as a "cultural and social thing which acts as a source of authority" (Pals, 2009:113) while it acts as "the only guarantor of social order" (Ventakesh, 2006:202) through which stingy, corrupt and bad behaved members of the community are abused and criticized freely for partaking in what Ventakesh (2006:202) again describes as "backroom diplomacy" – evil deeds during the celebration period. While, honest and generous, members of the community are praised or elated (Nti, 1990:11) with such proverbial statements "it does not exclude the large area of partnership and overlap that turns out to be extremely fruitful of a morally attuned society" (Sanneh, 1999:105).

Iyorchia Ayu (1986:16) asserts that through the proverbial sound that emanates from the pounding sound of the *Ikolo*, the sound is now seen as "the voice through himself and for himself; and despite the odds, must be prepared to stage the festival of the oppressed", while preservation and inscription of such a distinctive voice would signify the site of their own cultural differences and identity (Gikandi, 1990:14-15). He argues that the voice of such sacred sound like the *Ikolo* in radically contrasting ways, is an instrument of struggle and a depository of African values in a world in which tribe like the Igbo's and their traditions were denigrated and their selfhoods repressed, and in terms of narrative, the recovery of voice becomes one way through which unspoken and repressed experiences can be represented (Gikandi, 1990:15). No wonder Melville Herskovits (1934:77) "in any event, the African relishes innuendo and circumlocution too well to be satired with bald, direct statement. However, everyone who is present already knows whose reference is being made".

In this vein, Wilson (1987:93)^[91] opines that "itinerant musical entertainment groups sing satirical songs, and generally criticize wrong doings of individuals in the society. Names of those being satirized or praised may be mentioned or descriptions of their physical or personality attributes, where they live, or what they do may form part of such songs".

Also, for the proverbial sound from the *Ikolo* to serve as an agent of social control and culture indicator, De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach (1977:124) holds that "the communication act as a means by which social control is exerted, roles are allocated, coordination of efforts is achieved, expectations are made manifest, and the entire social process is carried on. In their opinion, without such exchanges of influence human society would simply collapse". According to Stokes (1997:2) through proverbial sound, music and dance [sic] fundamental aspects of [sic] social organization are reorganized, social time is ritually articulated, and an entire cosmological system is grasped. Also, the *Ikolo* as a musical form like other sacred drums according to Tuohy, through

its proverbial sound act as a “symbolic expression of order and musical performances as active means of organizing people drawing upon widespread beliefs that music can stir as well as depict emotions, can create as well as represent community. Going beyond the image or text, music adds a performative dimension—an active means by which to experience the nation, by which to feel and act national” (2006:227).

The Igbo communities has the *Ikolo* as a sacred talking drum which “speaks the language of the communities” (Oziogu, 2011:1). According to Nti (1990:16) [58] “they own and use them”, to express their feelings, circumstances, situations and events of life among the people of the community and “they also enjoy an array of entertainment genres that exude a sense of the religious in their execution” (Stone, 1994:389) [84]. Adedeji (2013:1) asserts that the contemporary Igbo person takes delight in the use of Igbo proverbs in music playing of the *Ikolo* drum because of “its beats and instrumentation, among others”. Stone (1994:393) [84] argues that communities in the entire Igbo land “admire the human voice” of sacred drum like the *Ikolo* and that “they call the sounds of the instrument voices” which speak the “voice of the mother”, “voice of the child”, “voice of the chief ...”. They say that such voices can also possess certain magical or superhuman capabilities”. This is why Ayu (1986:20) asserts that they construct popular beliefs about society, which at the end act as a material force in class struggle. Ayu (1986:22) again argues that “the music draws on the life experience of the sufferer’s, including their everyday language. It is this experience and language which provides the themes determines the rhythm, the tempo and the tone. It draws into communion those who identify with its message and modalities. And conversely, it invites hostility from those who see in it subversion to their interests”.

Buttressing this further, MacGaffey (2000:246) asserts that indigenous African – Igbo proverbs through its proverbial and mystical interpretations are commonly thought of as “the voices of the dead” that completely “manifest itself in the body of the community and the individual medium-priest” (Murphy, 2012:90) [52] in which socially despised individuals are also singled out and ridiculed in the songs and lyrics (Ray, 1976:81) [80]. Wilson (1987:93) [91] asserts that these African – Igbo proverbial statements “are potent sources of information and the latent gossip”. Jacobson (1969:334) [41] argues that they are “an unconsummated symbol which evokes connotation and various articulations, yet is not really defined”. Omu (1978:4) [66] affirms that when such proverbs are expertly used proverbially, “they are capable of conveying specific meaning. African – Igbo proverbs are most often one of the most fascinating agencies of communication in Africa”. He argues that “the Yorubas of South Western geo-political zone of Nigeria have an impressive array of talking drums sets and probably possess the richest heritage of drums the prominent of which is *dundun*-said to be able to imitate all the tones and gibes in Yoruba speech, hence can be used to communicate, insults, praises, admonition and even proverbs which are understood by the initiated” (Omu, 1978:4) [66].

Carson (1996:230) [18] posits that “they are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages”, which is “believed to be so powerfully charged and considered unsafe for anyone to obstruct it” (Abiodun, 1994:311) [3]. Carson (1996:230) [18] argues that

they are true levelers which give to all who will faithfully use them, the society and the spiritual presence, of the best and greatest of our race. Parrinder (1969:67) [72] asserts that anyone who listens to African prayers must have been impressed by the sonorous rehearsals of divine qualities.

The use of African – Igbo proverbs provides the language with which the people’s thinking is expressed”. In this wise, African theology should be understood in the context of African life and culture (Appiah, 1995:119) [11]. Buttressing this further, Uwah (2010:89) [89] posits that ideologically God is pre-eminently a force in Africa, spiritual, but totally immanent and that everything revolves around him as the supreme force. Onwubiko (1991:31) [64] argues that one’s entire action is reflective of one’s religious concepts and practices as seen in the ordering of society. This is because social morality is dependent on religion. African – Igbo proverbs according to (Olupona, 2000: xxxv) [67], “relates to the social, historical, religious, and communal ideas and feelings of the people”. No matter how archaic, barbaric, or rudimentary indigenous communication systems Igbo proverbs might be to thinking of the critics, “it still and will continue to represent traditional and ancient communication systems” (Emenegu, 1966:328) [27], because it “speak, and act for events of the men” (Stone, 1994:389) [84]. Agbogun (2011:1) [1] asserts that proverbially “it is beaten to warn passersby that funeral procession is using the route”. It is on this position that Omari (1994:135) [62] posits that proverbs as an embodiment of ideological corpus of the Igbo communities encompasses —“its myths, belief system, worldview, cosmology, values, rituals, and ethics—as well as the physical locality where deities are enshrined and the ceremonies are held”. African – Igbo proverbs as “a valuable source of historical information” (Finn, 2000:66) [30] has been described as an “object-based epistemology” (Conn, 1998:4) [19], “a formation of a classical canon” (Belting, 1987:72) [13], “invested with a meaning deeper than as signifiers of status” (Conn, 1998:14) [19] through which its principle of historical enterprise powerfully convey historical meanings than words (Conn, 1998:154) [19], that is used to understand their world (Conn, 1998:4) [19]. Guneratne (2003:7) [33] argues African – Igbo proverbs through the mediation of its powerful interpretations are “imbued with historical specificities and ideological orientations in its claims to represent the highest aspirations of a post-colonial world in the throes of resisting neocolonialism”. This is why Ruschenberger the founding father of the American Museums Academy and his colleagues in 1872 remained convinced that such natural proverbs are the best approximation of what Conn (1998:44) [19] refers to “the book of nature”, which its sound constituted “the pages” (Conn, 1998:44) [19].

To study and understand the African - Igbo proverbs proverbially and mystically in the culture of Igbo people, “one must use its language as a mediator” (Nettle, 1983:144) [59] and in doing so an understanding of their interpretations rest on at least some understanding of Igbo culture, past and present. No wonder Belting (1987:92) [13] affirms Igbo proverbs “form as a historical source bearing witness to history and itself standing within a history of forms while transcending its historicity”. It is on this position that Melville Herskovits argues that:

The African past must be included under the rubric “traditions of the past,” whether these traditions are held overtly or not, becomes apparent when the religious habits

of Negroes in the Caribbean and South America are anchored to both ends of the scale whose central portion they comprise—to Africa, the aboriginal home of all these varieties of religious experience, on the one hand, and to the United States, on the other, where the greatest degree of acculturation to European norms has taken place (1941:224).

5. Igbo Proverbs and Some Interpretative Paradigm

Many Igbo proverbs attest to some ethical and moral attributes of society and God like God's mercy, his goodness, his justice and uprightness. An Igbo proverb says that: an enemy may beat the drum of someone's down fall, but God will not let it sound. This means that as you plan for somebody so God plans for you. Another Igbo proverb says '*nmodu ka nwayi*' = sit like a woman. Interpretatively, this proverb tries to inculcate that ethical and moral value system on how a woman should behave when sitting down. As a point of emphasis, it is a known fact that in human history today, an average African person is to some extent a castrated, deschooled and deculturalized "social animal" living in a no-man's land and imbibing cultural and socio-religious values that are not African (Sofola, 1973: xiv & 16-17) ^[81]. According to Loomba (1998:139) ^[46] "this deculturation was the cause of rising insanity of Africans". This recent change or development is brought about by several factors which includes: colonization, assimilation of foreign religions like: Christianity and Islam, Western education, urban development, technology, modern man's communication and socio-political ideologies which suddenly swept into main stream of international relations and world politics (Metuh, 2002:238). As it has to do with education many Africans especially Nigerians try as much as possible to imitate white-man's way of spoken English Language and by this way, they are trying to elevate themselves as critical and classical acquirers of foreign education not knowing that they are carriers of "confusion and cultural self-annihilation" of "time-honoured and time-tested values of their heritage" (Sofola, 1973:17&xi) ^[81]. Buttrressing this point further, Sofola again asserts that:

In Nigeria we have a group of people, mostly women, known as the "been-to's" [i.e. those who have been to "civilized" world or the U.K.]. Theatrical elements with confirmed inferiority, this group is characterized by exaggerated, bizarre forms of cosmetic make-ups; impeccable British accent often projected sometimes to distort their native tonal language thereby making them look confused and most unintelligible; their catlike gyrating exhibitiv manner of walking and such like things. These were the women who invaded the British nursing institutions for their training with pay while on training. Usually possessed of a bare minimum of education generally not exceeding the standard six grade, this group has swallowed British mannerism with unmitigated assimilation. Their low education did not allow them to have a critical, analytical assessment of the new culture which they only see fleetingly and from afar because they do not actually have opportunity for full and intimate participation in the foreign culture of Britain (1973:17).

Again, Sofola observes that

Nowadays, some Nigerians are extending this cultural suicide to the next generation. They would send their children of tender age to the Nursery Schools where they are taught values of an alien culture, told the folk tales of a foreign land and even play the games and sing the songs of foreign land. In fact, some Nigerians would rather send their children to the preferred nursery schools in London or elsewhere so that they could be brought up by those whom the parents call, civilized people. And yet the children are expected to come back and live in an 'alien' land of Nigeria (1973: xi-xii).

Buttrressing this assertion further, Asante, illustratively affirms that

...in the past it was easy to locate the discourse about African communication, ...in the public sphere of other places and with the intellectual projects of Europeans and Asians, [which] means that African scholars abandoned their own historical experiences in order to imitate what had occurred elsewhere...Disconnected and hooked from community, people floated from place to place without the benefit of the profundity that comes from inner cultural resources (2004:5).

However, having a good understanding of the concept of our proverbs equally gives protection or immunity as the case may be, against the self-contradictory, false dramatization and deceitful decoration of doctrines of "cultural nationalism" (Patten, 1999:1) ^[76]. Abiola Irele (1982:20) ^[36] illustrates the methods in which the well-known concept of 'culture' as 'tradition' has frequently been thwarted and fraudulently manipulated by Africans for selfish purposes. He further comments that:

This kind of manipulation has attained a remarkable level of cynicism in the politics of some African states, popular attention is diverted to the wearing of leopard skins over the safari suit, the wholesale adoption of indigenous names, the animation of traditional dancing, while the serious business of holding on the power and amassing fabulous wealth goes on elsewhere. In such a situation an attitude of robust scepticism seems to be perfectly in order. When the notion of tradition isn't being invoked in order to confuse deliberately, it obeys a selective principle. Those who make the appeal to tradition are perfectly willing to enjoy the satisfactions of modern civilization; sometimes even, the appeal to tradition is made to ensure their unhindered access to its material benefits. This throws a sharp light upon the superficial understanding of tradition and culture that is being fostered among us by the organization of festivals and the like which do nothing, in their banality, other than rob our indigenous artistic cultures of their poetry and dignity (Irele, 1982:20) ^[36].

Insufficient research and lack of adequate knowledge of the language coupled in some cases with racial bias, resulted in a number of wild speculations and misrepresentations by certain missionary writers and ethnographers of the Igbo traditional belief and practice relating to such sacred drums

Contributed also to this negative attitude (Ejizu, 2002:114)^[25]. Sofola (1973: xii)^[81] argues that some were either ignorant of the rich values of their African past or were Made in their education to look down upon them or shun the values entirely. Ohadike (2007:13)^[68] affirms that “one of the aims of assimilation is to achieve political and cultural control by mounting a vicious attack on the victim’s consciousness and self-esteem. When put in motion, the victim begins to hate the customs of his people, their language, music and religion”. People that are knowledgeable in the use of these proverbs seem to “reflects the life of common folk, mainly living in rural areas than urban ones” (Po, 2007:1)^[79].

Conclusion

However, if at this level we enquire what the role of proverbs are in indigenous Igbo Traditional Religion among the Igbo of Nigeria, the answer would be summed up as follows that: African – Igbo proverbs mystically provide the channel through which the indigenous people of Igbo are in constant ecstatic/religious communion with their deities especially the elders. In Igbo paradigm, the use of Igbo proverbs serves as mediators between the human and spirit worlds. In the power and meaning ascribed to them through their interpretative paradigm have much to reveal about the religious imagination of mankind. One only needs to listen. Nonetheless, as modern foreign languages and media of communication should not be discarded for African indigenous language/proverbs and systems of communication, therefore, the highly rich potentials of African indigenous communication system/media the African – Igbo proverbs should be jealously guarded, studied and used alongside modern media of communication systems for a more pro-active and effective communication either for secular or religious reasons across the various ethnicities of Africa despite their psychographic and demographic differences. To my own thinking, this kind of non-challant attitude towards the use of indigenous Igbo proverbs calls for complete or total reorientation, reengineering, and reorganization back to the revitalization to the use of our traditional language and mass media and design a good road map whereby they would be used side by side with the so called Western language. Also, government should introduce and incorporate into the primary and secondary school curriculum the study of African indigenous languages and communication systems to enable the young generation see the importance of such local media systems that are filled with proverbs when played. In summation, one can tersely express the significance of the synergy between indigenous language and communication in Africa through the mediation of the use of proverbs projecting and characterising African world - views and characteristics-religious, moral and mystical code of conduct in traditional Igbo society.

References

1. Agbogun J. Traditional Musical Instruments: Igbo Ogene Anuka Gong Bell, 5th, 2011. Available From: www.the-nigeria.com/2011/11/traditional-musical-instruments-igbo.html. Accessed: 23 September 2011.
2. Adedeji F. History of Nigerian Gospel Music. 1-3. Available From: [nigeriangospelchurch.org/History of Nigerian Gospel Music.pdf](http://nigeriangospelchurch.org/History%20of%20Nigerian%20Gospel%20Music.pdf). Accessed: 12, 2013.
3. Abiodun R. Ase: Verbalizing And Visualizing Creative Power Through Art. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 1994; 24(4):309-322. Available From: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1581339>. Accessed: 9 July 2010.
4. Adejumo A. Satire as Protest in an Indigenous Festival: A Case of Efe. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*. 2013; 2(7):43-50. Available From: [www.ijhssi.org/papers/v2\(7\)/Version-3/H0273043050.pdf](http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v2(7)/Version-3/H0273043050.pdf). Accessed: 12 December.
5. Adegbite A. The Concept of Sound in Traditional African Religious Music. *Journal of Black Studies, African Aesthetics in Nigeria and the Diaspora*, 1991; 22(1):45-54. Available From: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784496>. Accessed: 2 June 2013.
6. Ayantayo JK. The Ethical Dimensions of African Indigenous Communication Systems: Analysis. In BABATUNDE, F. (ed), *Topical Issues in communication arts and science*, Lagos, Bakinfol Publications, 2001, 27-45.
7. Agboola OE. ‘Osin Igbo Ni Ilu Ora’, Unpublished NCE Project, Osiele, Abeokuta: Federal, College of Education, 1987.
8. Asante MK. Afrocentricity and Communication in Africa In Okigbo, C.C. and Eribo, F (ed), *Development and Communication In Africa*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher Inc, 2004, 3-13.
9. Akintola A. *The Reformed Ogboni Fraternity: Its Origin and Interpretation of Its Doctrines and Symbolism*. Ibadan: Valour Publishing Ventures Ltd., 1992.
10. Askew KM. Sung And Unsung: Musical Reflections on Tanzania Post socialisms. *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*. 2006; 76(1):15-43. Available From: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/afr/summary/v076/76.1askew.html>. Accessed: 13 March 2014.
11. Appiah KA. The Post-Colonial and the Post Modern cited in Bill, A, Griffiths, G. and Triffin, H. *The Post Colonial studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 119-124.
12. Bloch M. The Ritual of the Royal Bath In Madagascar: The Dissolution of Death, Birth And Fertility into Authority cited in *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (ed) by David Cannadine & Simon Price, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 271-297.
13. Belting H. *The End of the History of Arts*. Translated by Christopher. S. Wood. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.
14. Behague G. Regional and National Trends in Afro-Brazilian Religious Musics: A Case of Cultural Pluralism. *Latin American Music Review*, 2006, 27:1. Spring/Summer. 91 103. Available From: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/lat/summary/v027/27.1behague09.html>. Accessed: 10 November 2012.
15. Blench R. The Traditional music of the Jos Plateau in Central Nigeria: an overview, 2005, 1-10. Available from: [www.rogerblench.info/Ethnomusicology/Papers/Africa/Nigeria/General/Plateau music Hamburg papers.pdf](http://www.rogerblench.info/Ethnomusicology/Papers/Africa/Nigeria/General/Plateau%20music%20Hamburg%20papers.pdf) Accessed: 21 September 2012.
16. Chidester D. *Religions of South Africa*. London: Routledge, 1992.

17. Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996.
18. Carson B. Think Big: Unleashing Your Potential for Excellence. U.S.A: First Zondervan, 1996.
19. Conn S. Museums and American Intellectual life, 1876-1926. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.
20. Clarke RT. The Drum Language of the Tumba People. *American Journal of Sociology*, 1934; 40(1):34-48. Available From: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2768451>. Accessed: 27 October 2014.
21. Daniel K. The Position of African Traditional Religion in Conflict Prevention *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. 2010; 2(2):23-28. Available From: www.academicjournals.org/Article/article1379416346_kasomo.pdf. Accessed: 6 January 2014.
22. Dunbar-Hall P. Culture, Tourism, and Cultural Tourism: Boundaries and Frontiers in Performances of Balinese Music and Dance, cited in *Ethnomusicology A Contemporary*, 2006.
23. Reader(ed) by Jennifer C Post, New York, Routledge. 2006, 55-65.
24. De Fleur LM, Ball-Rokeach S. *Theories of Mass Communication (Third Edition)*, Longmans, New York and London, 1977.
25. Ejizu CI. Continuity And Discontinuity In Igbo Traditional Religion cited in *The Gods In Retreat: Continuity and Change in African Religion* (ed) by Emefie Ikenga Metuh, Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 2002, 111-131.
26. Ekeke EC. African Traditional Religion: A Conceptual And Philosophical Analysis. 1- 18. *Lumina*, 2013; 22:2. ISSN 2094-1188. Available From: [lumina.hnu.edu.ph/articles/\(s\)ekekeOct11.pdf](http://lumina.hnu.edu.ph/articles/(s)ekekeOct11.pdf). Accessed: 2 January 2014.
27. Emenegu MB. Style and Meaning In Oral Literature, *Language*. 1966; 42:2. (April-June, 1966); 323-345. Available From: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/411695>. Accessed: 4 March 2014.
28. Ekeh PP. Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 1975; 17(1):91-112. Available From: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00104175%28197501%2917%3A1%3C91%3ACATTP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-%23>. Accessed: 12 March 2014.
29. Eze J. Anambra Anthem and Obiano's Invincible Monuments, 2015, 1. Available From: eagle-square.blogspot.com/2015/02/anambra-and-obianos-invincible.html?pref=fb. Accessed: 16 February 2015.
30. Finn BS. Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926 by Steven Conn (Reviewed). *The Public Historian*, 2000; 22:1. (Winter, 2000), 65-68. Available From: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3379333> Accessed: 9 December 2013.
31. Falola T. *The Power of African Cultures*. New York: University of Rochester Press, 2003.
32. Gikandi S. Narration In *The Post-Colonial Moment: Merie Hodge's Crick Crack Monkey* cited in *Past The Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism And Post-Modernism* (edited) Ian Adam & Helen Tiffin. Canada: University of Calgary Press, 1990, 13-22.
33. Guneratne AR. Introduction: Rethinking Third Cinema cited in Guneratne, R. and Dissanayeke, W. *Rethinking Third Cinema*. New York and London: Routledge, 2003, 1-28.
34. Haviland W. *Cultural Anthropology*. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth, 2002.
35. Herskovits MJ. Freudian Mechanisms in Primitive Negro Psychology, in E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Raymond Firth, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Isaac Schapera (Eds). *Essays presented to C. G. Seligman*. London: Kegan Paul, Trubner, 1934, 75-84.
36. Irele FA. In Praise of Alienation, Inaugural Lecture, University of Ibadan: Ibadan, 1982, 1-28.
37. Ibagere E. Taxonomy of African Traditional Modes of Communication In Tosanwumi, J. and Ekwuazu, H (eds.), *Mass Communication: A Basic Text*, Ibadan: Caltop Publishers, 1994, 90-98.
38. Izibili MA. African Traditional Approach To The Problems of Evil In The World. *Studies in Tribes Tribals*. 2009; 7(1):11-15. Available From: www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/T/T&T-07-0-000-09-Web/T&T-07-1-000-09-Abst-PDF/T&T-07-01-011-09-156-Izibili-M-A/T&T-07-1-011-09-156-Izibili-M. Accessed: 20 December 2013.
39. Metuh. *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*. Onitsha: IMICO Publishers Ltd, 1987.
40. Movements for the Revival of African Traditional Religion and Culture cited in *The Gods in Retreat: Continuity and Change in African Religion* (ed) by Emefie Ikenga Metuh, Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 2002, 235-245.
41. Jacobson HB. *A Dictionary of Mass Communications*. New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1969.
42. Ogbu UK. *The Collected Essays of Ogbu Uke Kalu: African Pentecostalism: Global Discourses, Migration, Exchange And Connections.*, (Edited) by Wilhelmina J. Kalu, Nimi Wariboko, & Toyin Falola, Eritrea: African World Press Inc, 2010, 1.
43. *The Collected Essays of Ogbu Uke Kalu: Christian Missions In Africa: Success, Ferment And Trauma.* (Edited) by Wilhelmina J Kalu, Nimi Wariboko, & Toyin Falola, Eritrea: African World Press Inc, 2010, 2.
44. Kelso JA. Proverbs in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, (ed.) by Clark T. & J), 1918, 1.
45. Kinsky C, Kapoor U, Blue J, Kapoor S. Religion and Communication: A Study of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. In *Intercultural Communication Studies*. 2000; X(2):235-253. Available From: www.uri.edu/iaics/content/2000v/10n2/15 Catherine Knosky, Usher Kapoor, Janet Blue & Suraj Kapoor. Pdf. Accessed: 28 September 2013.
46. Loomba A. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism: The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge, 1998.
47. Mocquereau DA. *The Art of Gregorian Music* cited in *The Value of Sacred Music: An Anthology of Essential Writings, 1801-1918*. [Compiled] by Jonathan L. Friedmann (2009). USA: McFarland & Company, Inc, Publishers. 1896, 105-121.
48. Macgaffey W. Kimbanguism and the Question of Syncretism in Zaire cited in *Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression* (ed) by Thomas D. Blakely, Walter E. A, 1994.
49. Van Beek. *Dennis L. Thomson*. London: Heinemann, 1994, 241-256.
50. Maes-Jelinek H. Numinous Proportions: Wilson Harris's Alternative To All "Posts" cited in *Past the*

- Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism And Post-Modernism (edited) Ian Adam & Helen Tiffin. Canada: University of Calgary. Press, 1990, 47-64.
51. Mcadams DP. Power, Intimacy, and the Life Story: Personological Inquiries into Identity. New York & London: The Guilford Press, 1988.
 52. Murphy JM. Chango Ta Veni / Chango Has Come: Spiritual Embodiment In The Afro-Cuban Ceremony, Bembe. Black Music Research Journal. 2012; 32(1):68-94.
Available From: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/black_music_research_journal/v032/32.1.murphy.pdf. Accessed: 1 November 2013.
 53. Mython AS. Mass Communication in Africa. London: Edward Arnold, 1983.
 54. Nabofa MY. Symbolism in African Traditional Religion, Ibadan: Paperback Publishers Ltd, 1994.
 55. Religious Communication: A study in African Traditional Religion, Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1994.
 56. Nzewi M, Anyahuru I, Ohiauraumunna T. Beyond Song Texts-The Lingual Fundamentals of African Drum, Research in African Literature. 2001; 32(2):89-104. Available From: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/at/summary/V032/32.2.nzewi.html>. Accessed: 10 November 2012.
 57. National Teachers' Institute. NCE/DLS Course Book on Cultural & Creative Arts Cycle 2, Kaduna, Nigeria, 1990.
 58. National Teachers' Institute, NCE/DLS Course Book on Primary Education Studies Cycle 2, Kaduna, Nigeria, 1990.
 59. Nettle B. The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and concepts. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983.
 60. Ogudoro S. Traditional Igbo Music-Drum and Flutes, 2012. Available From: enyi-oha-one-naiji.blogspot.com/2012/02/traditional-igbo-music-drums-and-flutes.html Accessed: 6 January 2014.
 61. Omoregbe JI. Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study, Lagos: Joja Educational Press Ltd, 1993.
 62. Omari MS. Candomble: A Socio-Political Examination of Religion and Art in Brazil cited in Religion In Africa: Experience And Expression (ed) by Thomas D. Blakely, Walter EA, Van Beek, Dennis L. Thomson, London: Heinemann, 1994, 135-159.
 63. Okafor RC. Nigerian Organology and Classification of African Musical Instruments cited in Nigerian People's and Culture for Higher Education. (eds) by R. C. Okafor & L. N. Emeka Enugu: New Generation Ventures Limited. 1998, 173-192.
 64. Onwubiko AO. The Christian Mission and Culture in Africa, African Thought, Religion and Culture. Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1991, 1.
 65. Oziogu AI. Traditional Musical Instruments in Nigeria. 1-2. *Vanguard* [online], 18 April, 2011. Available From:<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/04/traditional-music-instruments-in-nigeria/>. Accessed: 18 April 2011.
 66. Omu F. Press and Politics in Nigeria 1880-1937. London: Longman, 1978.
 67. Olupona JK. Introduction cited in African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona., New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000, xv-xxxvi.
 68. Ohadike D. Sacred Drums of Liberation: Religions and Music of Resistance in Africa and the Diaspora. Eritrea: Africa World Press Inc, 2007.
 69. Opoku KA. West African Traditional Religion. Jurong: FEP International, 1978.
 70. Ozah MA. The Iwali Child Queen Dance of Ogoja Nigeria. The World of Music, Music and Childhood: Creativity, Socialization, and Representation. 2006; 48(1):67-82. Available From: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41699679>. Accessed: 27 October 2014.
 71. Oladele AA. Proverbial Oppression of Women in Yoruba African Culture: A Philosophical Overview. Thought and Practices: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK) New Series, 2010; 2(1):21-36. Available From: <http://ajol.info/index.php/tp/index>. Accessed: 12 November 2015.
 72. Parrinder G. Religion in Africa. London: Penguin Books, 1969.
 73. Popkin RH, Stroll A. Philosophy Made Simple, Made Simple (eds), Book Series. London: Heinemann, 1981.
 74. Polak R. A Musical Instrument Travels Around the World: Jenbe Playing In Bamako, West Africa, And Beyond cited in Ethnomusicology A Contemporary Reader (ed), 2006.
 75. Jennifer C. Post, New York: Routledge, 2006, 161-185.
 76. Patten A. The Autonomy Argument for Liberal Nationalism. Nation and Nationalism. 1999; 5(1):1-17. Available From: www.princeton.edu/~apatten/n%26narticle.pdf. Accessed: 23 May 2014.
 77. Pinkerton S. Ralph Ellison Righteous Riffs: Jazz, Democracy, and the Sacred. African American Review, (Spring/Summer, 2011). 2011; 44(1-2):185-206. Available From: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/afa/summary/v044/44.1-2.pinkerton.html>. Accessed: 1 January 2013.
 78. Pals DL. Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
 79. Po MS. Introduction cited in Filipino Martial Arts: Traditional Musical Instruments of the Philippines, 2007. Available From: www.fmainformative.info/FMAdigest/pdf-issues/special-edition/2007/Special-Edition-Traditional-Musical-Instruments.pdf. Accessed: 23 September 2012.
 80. Ray BC. African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, And Community (ed) by John P. Reeder, Jr & John F. Wilson, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1976.
 81. Sofola JA. African culture and the African Personality, Ibadan: African Resources Publishers Co, 1973.
 82. Scholes PA. The Oxford Companion to Music. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
 83. Sanneh L. Church and State Relations: Western Norms, Muslim Practice, And The African Experience: A Comparative Account of Origin And Practice cited in Proselytization And Communal Self-Determination in Africa (ed) Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, New York: Orbis Books, 1999, 77-108.
 84. Stone RM. Bringing the Extraordinary Into the Ordinary: Music Performance Among The Kpelle of Liberia cited in Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression (ed) by Thomas D. Blakely, Walter E. A.

- Van Beek, & Dennis L. Thomson, London: Heinemann, 1994, 389-397.
85. Stokes M. Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music' cited in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (ed) by Martin Stokes. Oxford: Providence Berg Publishers, 1997, 1-27.
 86. Turner VM. *The Drums of Affliction*, London, Clarendon Press, Oxford Press, 1968.
 87. Touhy S. The Sonic Dimensions of Nationalism in Modern China: Musical Representation and Transformation, cited in *Ethnomusicology A Contemporary Reader* (Ed) Jennifer. C. Post, New York: Routledge, 2006, 225-241.
 88. Udo BEO. *Religion and Society: Socio-Ethical, Religious and Cultural Life of Ibibio People*. Aba: Okman, 2008.
 89. Uwah IE. *The Representation of African Traditional Religion and Culture in Nigeria Popular Films*, 2010. Available From: www.politicsandreligionjournal.com/images/pdfFiles/supski/godina5-broj1/innocentebereuwah4.pdf Accessed: 23 September 2012. 81-102.
 90. Venkatesh SA. *Off the Books: Underground Economy of the Urban Poor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.
 91. Wilson D. *Traditional Media in Modern African Development, Module on Development Communication*. 1987; 2:23-31.
 92. *Taxonomy of Traditional Media in Africa*. In *Perspectives on Indigenous Communication in Africa: Theory and Application*. In Ansu-Kyeremeh, 1998. Available From: www.nou.edu.ng/noun/NOUN-OCL/pdf/pdf2/MAC116.pdf Accessed: 3 October 2012.
 93. Young RJC. *Post-Colonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.