



# A Pragma-Stylistic Approach to Analysing Proverbs: A Review of Some Selected Proverbs in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*



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## ABSTRACT

African artworks, to be specific, literature has for quite a long time now demonstrated African tradition and culture. One major African literary tool that has maintained its efficacy in the African cultural heritage is the use of proverbs. Proverbs have been diversely used to perform several functions in the African traditional setting. Among such functions are: confirming opinions, warning, showing regrets, doubts, justifications and many more. This paper seeks to examine some selected proverbs from Chinua Achebe's novels – *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Significantly, one can conclude that the style of a writer can go a long way in determining the reception and authenticity of his works. Chinua Achebe has extensively employed proverbs in his works as a tool for setting out or revealing his characters, themes and many others. This study is a pragma-stylistic approach to the analysis of proverbs used by Achebe in the selected novels. The researchers focus primarily on the style, meaning and function of the proverbs used in the selected texts. A critical content analysis method is employed for this study to determine the functions of the proverbs within the context of the novel. This study brings to the fore the very nature of African proverbs, specifically the Igbo of Nigeria and reveals the various functions ascribed to these proverbs. This will provide readers with the necessary knowledge on the very reasons why some proverbs are used and will ignite the research impetus of some researchers to further investigate other approaches to proverbs. This study has contributed immensely to the existing literature on pragma-stylistic studies and the understanding of a pragma-stylistic approach as a theoretical concept with a unique focus on analysing African proverbs.

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## INTRODUCTION

Proverbs have been highly and significantly used in most cultures, more especially, African cultures. Ruth Finnegan makes it clear that proverbs, in many African cultures, make known the expression of abstract ideas and the feeling for language and imagery.<sup>1</sup> This clearly shows that proverbs have consistently existed as a living tradition in most African countries, especially due to their literary relevance. Joseph Hanson Nketia, cited in Finnegan, in his comment on Ghanaian proverbs clearly demonstrates this. He stated that proverbs

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 379-412.

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are very valuable to modern Ghana which does not only reveal thoughts and insights of the past but also serve as a greatly appreciated technique of verbal expressions.<sup>2</sup> From his comment, it can be gleaned that proverbs are linguistically important to every culture due to the vital roles they play.

Again, Kofi Agyekum re-echoes the value or importance of proverbs to African societies, in general, and the Ghanaian society, in particular. In his own words, he says: “proverbs are an indispensable aspect of Ghanaian life and are tied up to the philosophy, experience and cognitive abilities of the people. They are one of the mechanisms for the education and socialization of children.”<sup>3</sup> This obviously demonstrates that proverbs are of high significance in the African traditional society and they are enablers of education and socialization. It is therefore important that researchers pay much attention to the very roles that proverbs play in the context of the African culture. It is the very motivation for this research which seeks to conduct a pragma-stylistic analysis of some proverbs in the selected novels of Chinua Achebe.

## SCHOLARLY VIEWS ON PROVERBS

Proverbs have become the most important element of culture as a way of understanding and explaining differing occurrences and occasions around them. Irrespective of the changing trends of the world, they have maintained their potency and continued to play significant roles in diverse areas of human lives both in literary and non-literary discourses. Many scholarly works have attempted to give an accurate definition of proverbs. For instance, Donatus Ibe Nwoga<sup>4</sup> and Finnegan<sup>5</sup> who share similar views describe proverbs as having the characteristics of terseness and figurative expression which is different from ordinary speech and indicates a pearl of traditional wisdom relevant to a given situation. From this description, it is clear that proverbs are not very long statements and they carry figurative meanings which are aligned to some specific context in which they are used. It again shows that proverbs are not mere or everyday communicative speech but are enshrouded in “philosophical, allusive and metaphorical citations that give credence to traditional truth and wisdom.”<sup>6</sup> This is what African proverbs, specifically, Igbo proverbs are, and in the view of Chinua Achebe, “proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten”.<sup>7</sup> However, it can be clearly noted that these definitions are rather ascribed to proverbs based on the writer’s understanding or what one would say a description that appeals to him. This, Elias Dominguez Barajas, confirms by saying that “determining when an utterance may be understood as a proverb has been elusive because structural variations abound among proverbial utterances”<sup>8</sup>.

Further, research works on African proverbs, generally, have barely looked at the pragma-stylistic nature of these proverbs. In Susan Olajoke Akinkurolere’s article, she discusses ten purposively selected extracts in Chinua Achebe’s novel *Arrow of God* based on the stylistic features and analysed them for the purpose of explicating meaning communicated through the employment of lexical devices in the fictional world of the novel.<sup>9</sup>

Again, Saeed Akanbi Alimi examines some proverbs used in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* and their interpretations. He, therefore, concludes that Achebe succeeds in expressing the romantic vision of Igbo life in realistic form through the use of proverbs and other rhetorical devices.<sup>10</sup>

More so, Ikechukwu Emmanuel Asika brings to the fore the roles, importance and significance of proverbs in written literature. In his work, he concluded that proverbs were used by the writer whose book he studied to strengthen his plot; to create conflict which enhanced his suspense and degree of responsiveness

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Hanson Nketia, *Drum Poetry* (Accra: Voices of Ghana, 1958), 21 cited in Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*, 380.

<sup>3</sup> Kofi Agyekum, “Akan Proverbs and Aphorisms about Marriage,” *Research Review of the Institute of African Studies* 27, no. 2 (2012): 9.

<sup>4</sup> Donatus Ibe Nwoga, “The Igbo World of Achebe’s *Arrow of God*,” *Research in African Literatures* 12, no. 1 (1981): 14-42.

<sup>5</sup> Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*, 379-412.

<sup>6</sup> Jasper Onuekwusi, *Fundamentals of African Oral Literature* (Owerri: Alphabeth Nigeria Publishers, 2011): 17.

<sup>7</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1958): 5.

<sup>8</sup> Elias Dominguez Barajas, *The Functions of Proverbs in Discourse: The Case of a Mexican Transactional Social Network* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2010): 49

<sup>9</sup> Susan Olajoke Akinkurolere, “A Pragma-stylistic Analysis of Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God*,” *Humanity and Social Sciences Review* 3, no. 3 (2014): 363-370.

<sup>10</sup> Saeed Akanbi Alimi “A study of the use of proverbs as a literary device in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*,” *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 2, no. 3 (2012): 121-127.

from actions of his characters; to preserve the culture and tradition of his people, and to project their individual uniqueness above others; to distinguish his characters and to reinforce his thematic and moral issues.<sup>11</sup>

Contrariwise, these articles above clearly are different from what this research focuses on. In Alimi's work, the focus is on critical appraisal of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, however, this research rather focuses on the pragma-stylistic analysis of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Even though Akinkulore's work is on Pragma-stylistics, it does not focus on the use of proverbs in the novel. It rather discusses statements made in the text. Again, Asika's work which focuses on proverbs rather discusses the role, importance and significance of proverbs and not in Achebe's novels.

The focus of the scholars who write on proverbs determines their definition of the concept. However, several attempts have been made in defining proverbs. Yisa Yusuf defines a proverb as a concise repeated clever statement of experience, which is employed specifically to achieve a social purpose.<sup>12</sup> Emmanuel Obiechina also posits that the concept proverb serves as a morally and philosophically made statement which is reduced into a few words and serves as memory aids.<sup>13</sup> For Alimi, he defines proverbs as wisely carved belief statements, which are mostly employed by users to aid in saying unpleasant things in an enhanced manner.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Akporobaro thinks of a proverb as a popular concise expression often presented as a piece of moral advice or truth.<sup>15</sup> Agyekum, however, captures the definition of a proverb as a time-tested, belief and witty statement, which often represents and shows an expression of truth or accepted thoughts about practical lines. Agyekum further states that proverbs are transmitted from generation to generation.<sup>16</sup> From the foregoing definitions, it can be gleaned that a proverb is a concise witty statement, which is transmitted from generation to generation often presented in an ameliorated way to express moral advice and truth.

In the African context, proverbs have become an efficient tool that most African writers have employed as a means of justifications of the actions and condemnation of immoral attitudes of characters. Proverbs also provide African writers the opportunity to give an expression to the rich philosophy of their societies. This wealth of philosophical ideologies and wisdom were transmitted orally to them by their forefathers and their continued use of these is an indication of the relationship that exists between the past and the present and its influence on the future.

This enables writers to give a peculiar expression to the unique beliefs and lives of their people. By infusing proverbs in their writings, the African writer is able to exhibit the 'Africanness' of their works, that is giving it a touch of African aesthetic quality which in effect, enables them to develop the plot of their stories well, give perfect descriptions and identity of their characters, and also give shape to their stories. Bernth Lindfors gives credence to this assertion by commenting on Achebe's use of proverbs. He posits that Okonkwo's image as a man who seems to struggle with his *chi* is emphasized by Achebe's use of proverbs.<sup>17</sup> He further gives perfect illustrations not only in *Things Fall Apart* but also other works of Achebe; *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God* and *A Man of the People* and then offers a conclusion that that:

In a *Man of the People*, as in Achebe's other novels; proverbs are used to sound and reiterate major themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict and to focus on the values of the society Achebe is portraying. By studying the proverbs in a novel, we gain insight into the moral issues with which the actions of characters can be measured and evaluated. Proverbs help us to understand and interpret Achebe's novels. It is this last talent that enables him to convince his readers "that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value, and beauty, that they had poetry, and above all,

<sup>11</sup> Ikechukwu Emmanuel Asika, "Telling the African side of the Story: Proverb as a Crucial Element in Uchenna Nwosu's *The Rejected Stone*," *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities* 13, no.1 (2012): 14-33.

<sup>12</sup> Yisa Yusuf, "Gender Bias and Images of Women in English and Yoruba Proverbs," in Mary Kolawole (ed.). *Gender Perspective and Development in Africa* (Lagos: Arrabon Academic Publishers, 1998): 63-81.

<sup>13</sup> Emmanuel Obiechina, *Culture, Tradition and Society in the African Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975): 311-312.

<sup>14</sup> Alimi "A study of the use of proverbs as a literary device in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*," 121-127.

<sup>15</sup> F.B.Akporobaro, *Introduction to African Oral Literature: A literary-descriptive Approach*. (Nigeria: Lighthouse Publishers, 2001): 40-120

<sup>16</sup> Agyekum, "Akan Proverbs and Aphorisms about Marriage," 1-24.

<sup>17</sup> Bernth Lindfors, *Folklore in Nigerian Literature* (New York: African Publishing Company, 1973): 79.

they had dignity.<sup>18</sup>

In this study, he clearly shows the manner in which Achebe uses proverbs to inform readers much about the cultural identity and values of Igbo society. He further illustrates how these wise sayings function as thematic statements which have been used as reminders for readers concerning the major motifs in Achebe's works and the way they help in shaping and achieving an in-depth understanding of his works.

In her study, Ngozi Ohakanma maintains that Achebe through the use of proverbs depicts the communal nature of the Igbo traditional society.<sup>19</sup> This, therefore, shows that Achebe does not only write his works for writing sake but he is geared towards portraying the African culture and values and this he does through the use of proverbs.

To be specific, this article, therefore, focuses on the pragma-stylistic analysis of some selected proverbs in Achebe's novels; *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. The pragma-stylistic approach specifically focuses on the application of the findings and methods that are in relation to pragmatics and style in language. It, however, aims at showing the relationship that exists between the writing and reading of literary works that have been situated in socio-cultural and linguistic contexts.<sup>20</sup> Roger Sell gives credence to the fact that pragma-stylistics is both literary and linguistic, however, emphasis is placed on contextualization.<sup>21</sup> This article therefore will incorporate stylistics with pragmatics by bringing to the fore the stylistic features (figures of speech used) of the selected proverbs in the novels under study and pragmatically, the meanings and functions of these proverbs will be analyzed contextually.

The ensuing sections present the conceptual framework, methodology, synopsis of the novels, analysis and discussion of the selected proverbs based on the pragma-stylistics approach, and the conclusion.

## THE PRAGMA-STYLISTIC APPROACH

There are numerous ways that scholars can employ when conducting linguistic analysis of literary texts. However, this study seeks to use the Pragma-Stylistic approach for the study of some selected proverbs in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*<sup>22</sup> and *Arrow of God*.<sup>23</sup> This approach is developed against the background of pragmatics and stylistics. This then means that the knowledge of both pragmatics and stylistics cannot be overlooked. It is these two which serve as the basis for pragma-stylistic analysis.

George Yule states that pragmatics is the study of meaning. He further stipulates that pragmatics deals with four different kinds of meaning. These include the study of speaker meaning, contextual meaning, how more gets communicated than is said, and the expression of relative distance.<sup>24</sup> This, therefore, affirms the fact that his concern is on the appropriateness of linguistic choice to the context, and this covers the speaker's intended meaning.<sup>25</sup> However, Peter Grundy opines that pragmaticists are concerned not only in the language used but also in principles of usage, in an attempt to look for 'grammar' that causes how language is used, on the supposition that language would not be as it is if it were not purposely for dialogue or communication.<sup>26</sup>

Again, in Jenny Thomas' view, pragmatics is making meaning in interaction and for him, "meaning is a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance."<sup>27</sup> This means that with pragmatics, one cannot overlook the contextual meaning and the potential meaning of a speech. It is with this background that the selected proverbs will be analyzed.

On the other hand, Stylistics is primarily thought of as the scientific study of style. Consequently,

<sup>18</sup> Lindfors, *Folklore in Nigerian Literature*, 92.

<sup>19</sup> Ngozi Ohakanma, "The Significance of Oral Tradition in African Novels; The Case of Achebe's *Arrow of God*," in Ezechi Onyerionwu et al (ed.) *A Scholar in the Eyes of his Students* (Aba: Conk Limited, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Dunya Muhammed Miqdada I'jam & Zahraa Kareem Ghannam Farhan Al-Mamouri, "A Pragma-Stylistic Study of some Selected Fantasy Novels," *International Journal of English Linguistics* 9, no.1 (2019): 516-528

<sup>21</sup> Roger Sell, *Literary Pragmatics* (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>22</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* .

<sup>23</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1964).

<sup>24</sup> George Yule, *Pragmatics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> George Yule, *The Study of Language*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>26</sup> Peter Grundy, *Doing Pragmatics* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.) (London: Hodder Education Publishers, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Jenny Thomas, *Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics*. (London: Longman, 1995):22.

considering its historical background, it had to do with the style and subsequent meaning of works of literature. This, therefore, means that style is the core idea in stylistics and that its assessment, description and understanding are the very concerns of scholars in this field.

Moreover, according to Ronald Carter, stylistics is “a process of literary text analysis and its primary interpretative procedures used in the reading of a literary text are linguistic procedures.”<sup>28</sup> It can be noted from this definition that in reading literary works, one initially engages with language and that stylistics provides an avenue for the importance of linguistic approaches to literary texts analysis. This gives credence to the fact that textual analysis must conform to both linguistic and literary principles. Likewise, the proponents of this ascribe much reverence to Roman Jakobson’s view that:

If there are some critics who still doubt the competence of linguistics to embrace the field of poetics, I privately believe that the poetic incompetence of some bigoted linguists has been mistaken for an inadequacy of the linguistic science itself. All of us here, however, definitely realize that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unacquainted with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms.<sup>29</sup>

However, one significant explanation of style and stylistics cited by Moses Omoniyi Ayeomoni provides a vivid understanding of the concept: “A branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally distinctive uses of languages with reference to literary language, and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language.”<sup>30</sup> Some scholars also refer to the concept as pragmatic stylistics<sup>31</sup> while others call it pragma-stylistics.<sup>32</sup>

Basically, to define it, Leo Hickey states that: “Pragma-stylistics thus involves the study of all the conditions, linguistic and extralinguistic, which allow the rules and potential of a language to combine with the specific elements of the context to produce a text capable of combining specific internal changes in the hearer’s state of mind or knowledge”<sup>33</sup> Hence, this confirms that the concept is not merely the amalgamation of pragmatic and stylistic approaches but then a diverse means of investigating the relatedness of varying ways using knowledge, ideas and innovations in both fields of study for inferences. It is of no doubt then that Awolaja states that:

... Pragma-stylistics is simply stylistics with a pragmatic focus; that is, a systematic explication of both the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of a work geared to shedding light on the resources used for conveying meaning in the work, including not only the language but the various backgrounds (social, ideological, psychological, etc) that inform it.<sup>34</sup>

This, therefore, buttresses the point that both Hickey and Awolaja have captured the fact that researchers concerned with the field of pragma-stylistics basically point out features of stylistics through the reliance on the very prospects of pragmatics in order to arrive at meaning. Hence, these said features of stylistics come about out of the choice(s) made by speakers and writers from the many available options. This is to say that, such options selected consider certain factors which include expected effect, context and many others as determinants.

Conclusively, the concept pragma-stylistics have passed the test of reliability as regards analysis and

<sup>28</sup> Ronald Carter, *Language and Literature: An Introductory Reader in Stylistics* (London: Allen & Unwin., 1982): 4

<sup>29</sup> Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics”, in Thomas Albert Sebeok (ed.) *Style in Language* (Whitefish: Literary Licensing Publishers, 2012): 377

<sup>30</sup> Moses Omoniyi Ayeomoni, “Lexical analysis of select political discourses of Nigeria’s Military Heads of State” (An Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ibadan: University of Ibadan, 2007)

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Black, *Pragmatic Stylistics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) and Billy Clarke, “The place near the thing where went that time: An inferential approach to Pragmatic Stylistics,” *Topics in Linguistics* 3, (2009): 3-11.

<sup>32</sup> Ayodeyi Awolaja, “A pragmastylistic analysis of Helon Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel* and *Measuring Time*” (An Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University, 2012); Dan Shen, “Stylistics in China in the new century,” *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics* 21, no. 1 (2012): 93-105; Samuel Ayodele Dada, “A pragma-stylistic analysis of John 3:16,” *International Journal of English Linguistics* 2, no.5 (2012): 85-93 and Eromosele John Abuya, “A pragma-stylistic analysis of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Inaugural speech,” *English Language Teaching* 5, no. 11 (2012): 8-15.

<sup>33</sup> Leo Hickey, “Stylistics, Pragmatics and Pragmastylistics”. *Revue Belge de Philologie Et D’Histoire* 71, no.3 (1993):578

<sup>34</sup> Awolaja, “A pragmastylistic analysis of Helon Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel* and *Measuring Time*,” 31

interpretations of linguistic discourses<sup>35</sup> and literary texts.<sup>36</sup> This is the main reason why this paper chooses to use this concept as its conceptual framework for the analysis of the selected proverbs in Achebe's two novels under study.

The conceptualisation of Pragma-stylistics, among other things, is appropriate for the analysis due to the fact that it will help in bringing out the very meaning of the proverbs and their respective functions. Not only will it assist in this manner but it will also enable the researcher to look at the writer's literary styles that he employs in transmitting his messages in the proverbs.

## METHODOLOGY

The method employed in this paper is a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach to research has been defined by Garry Shank as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning."<sup>37</sup> Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln are of the view that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them."<sup>38</sup> For Shank, the qualitative approach to research must be planned and ordered, based on experience and researchers trying to appreciate how others make meaning out of their experiences. This paper seeks to agree with Denzin and Lincoln in that it focuses on analyzing proverbs which are part of the natural setting of Africans (naturalistic) and bringing to the fore the various meanings and functions of these proverbs (interpretive).

The data for this research has been collected from the primary texts: *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Twenty (20) selected proverbs, ten (10) from each will be used for the analysis. The researcher selected twenty (20) proverbs even though there were a lot of proverbs that could be looked at. The reason for this selection is to provide enough space for in-depth analyses of the proverbs, instead of cursory analyses of many of them. The analysis is based on the content and context in which these proverbs have been used to bring about the various meanings and functions of the proverbs.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVELS

The meaning of proverbs can be derived only when they have been used and, as a result, the contextual meaning is very vital. This has been re-echoed by Joseph Brookman-Amissah that there is no proverb when the situation for the proverb is absent.<sup>39</sup> The two texts under study are from the Igbo background and the Igbos are a group of people who live mainly in the southeastern part of Nigeria. Achebe in his texts brings to light the culture, customs, social structure, and even the religious background of his people through the use of proverbs. This discussion will primarily focus on the speakers of the proverbs within the context of the novel, the contextual meanings and functions of the proverbs, and finally the literariness of the proverbs.

*Things Fall Apart* is an account of Okonkwo, the main character's life. He is the leader of the Igbo community of Umuofia. It tells the story of various events of his life and climaxes at his expulsion from the village for fortuitously killing a clansman; a sixteen-year-old son of Ezeulu, describes the seven years of his exile, and finally to his return. The novel gives an account of a specific problem of Africa that is the advent of Christianity and, particularly, the interference of white missionaries and colonial dominance in the Igbo community around the 1890s. Okonkwo carves a name for himself through hard work and he is known to have taken two prominent titles out of the four of his kinsmen. Traditionally well-thought-out, and interspersed with Igbo proverbs, it gives a clear description of the concurrent degeneration of its major character, and of his village.

*Arrow of God*, the third novel of Chinua Achebe, is set in the towns of the Igbo community in colonial Nigeria. The story revolves around the principal character, Ezeulu, who is the chief priest of the six Igbo

<sup>35</sup> Dada, "A pragma-stylistic analysis of John 3:16," 85-93; Joseph Omoniyi Friday-Otun, "A pragma-stylistic analysis of Proverbs 26, verse 4 & 5," *Ilorin Journal of Language and Literature* 1, no.6 (2004):37-51.

<sup>36</sup> Awolaja, "A pragmastylistic analysis of Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and *Measuring Time*," 12 ; Yan-yan Kong, "Application of speech act theory in dramatic analysis," *Journal of Sichuan College of Education* 25, no.8 (2009):70-72.

<sup>37</sup> Garry Shank, *Qualitative Research: A Personal Skills Approach* (New Jersey:M. Prentice Hall, 2002): 5

<sup>38</sup> Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba. "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences" in Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (ed.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publication Inc. 2000):3

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Brookman-Amissah, "Some observations on the proverbs of the Akan-speaking peoples of Ghana", *Afrika und Übersee: Sprachen, Kulturen* 55, no. 4 (1971): 262-267.

communities in Umuaro. At the opening of the story, Umuaro is in battle with a neighboring community, which in effect draws the attention of T. K. Winterbottom, the colonial overseer. After the arrival of a Christian missionary in Umuaro, Ezeulu is given a position by Winterbottom but surprisingly, he refuses to take up this offer. He is then arrested and jailed for refusing to serve in the colonial administration. While in jail, Ezeulu is pleaded to call a special feast in honour of Ulu so that the villagers can gather in the new yam but he refuses, believing his actions to be the will of Ulu. Consequently, the yams rot and the villages are struck with famine. The villagers, in their sorry states and loss of faith, then convert to Christianity.

## 20 SELECTED PROVERBS FROM THE TWO NOVELS

	<i>Things Fall Apart</i>	<i>Arrow of God</i>
1	He who brings kola brings life.	It is praiseworthy to be brave and fearless, my son, but sometimes it is better to be a coward.
2	Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten.	We have not come with wisdom but foolishness because a man does not go to his in-law with wisdom.
3	If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings.	Wisdom is like a goatskin bag; every man carries his own
4	When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk.	If the lizard of the homestead should neglect to do the things for which its kind is known, it will be mistaken for the lizard in the farmland.
5	Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other let his wings break.	When an adult is in the house the she-goat is not left to suffer the pains of parturition on its tether.
6	A man who pays respect to the great paves way for his greatness.	A toad does not run in the day unless something is chasing it.
7	A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing.	When a man of cunning dies a man of cunning buries him
8	An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb.	A fly that has no one to advise it follows the corpse to the grave.
9	The lizard that jumps from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did.	When a handshake goes beyond the elbow, we know it has turned to another thing.
10	Eneke, the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching.	A man who knows that his anus is small does not swallow an udala seed.

### Pragma-stylistic Analysis of Some Selected Proverbs from *Things Fall Apart*.

#### 1. *He who brings kola brings life.*<sup>40</sup>

This statement is made by Okoye when he visits Unoka to collect his cowries. Upon arrival, Unoka goes to his inner room and returns with a wooden disc containing a kola nut, some alligator pepper and a lump of white chalk. In the West African context and the Igbo culture to be specific, the kola nut is regarded as an important fruit. Among the Igbo's before any form of discussion begins, there must be an offering or sharing of kola nut and this shows that in their ideal social setting, kola nut presentation comes first. According to Thomas George Basden, there is no completeness in Igbo welcome if the kola nut is not shared.<sup>41</sup> This popular statement among the Igbos indicates that one does not wish to engage in long conversations when the kola nut has not been eaten. This shows that the essence of kola in Igbo society has been portrayed. Legend has it that

<sup>40</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas George Basden, *Niger Ibos* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1966).

when the founding fathers of the Igbo race visited the Almighty; the first thing God gave them was kola-nut. Hence since God is the giver of life, the Igbo people believe that whosoever brings kola to his or her friend, has brought life. This is the origin of the proverb “he who brings kola, brings life.”

Stylistically, the kola nut has been compared to life. The speaker makes it clear that the giver of kola nut, gives life. This metaphorical representation shows the very essence of kola nut in the lives of the Igbos in that it is valued over every other thing. Every human values his or her life over any other thing and will go the extra mile to protect it in the face of danger. In effect, it can be explained that from the comparison made in the statement kola nut is something that the Igbos revere much and, as stated, no conversation can start if the kola nut has not been presented and eaten.

Again, there is a use of symbolism in the proverb. Bawa Kammampoale and Suuk Laar define symbolism “as an artistic and poetic movement or style using symbolic images and indirect allusions to express mystical ideas, emotions and states of mind”.<sup>42</sup> From this definition, it can be clearly stated that kola nut has been used as a symbolic image and cultural allusion to represent hospitality and honour. In the Igbo community, kola nuts are used during solemn ceremonies, to emphasize the essence of hospitality among the Igbo people. This is why Okoye does not immediately talk about his debt of “two hundred cowries” owed by Unoka but rather receives kola nut from Unoka, shares memories of past events and discusses other issues before talking about the debt. The presentation of the kola nut therefore symbolically represents hospitality.

### 2. *Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten.*<sup>43</sup>

This statement is made by Okoye, Unoka’s neighbour. Okoye basically being a peaceful neighbour goes through a long-winded stylistic discourse as a way of demanding politely that his loan of 200 cowries be paid back by Unoka. Basically, the richness and unparalleled relevance of proverbs are seen in the stylistic and symbolic nature of proverbs as a way of communicating inexpressible thoughts and wishes in a way the addressee can share. It is in the first chapter that the import of the proverbial sayings is clearly portrayed. This in effect shows the imminence of proverbs in almost every aspect of the Igbo culture and traditions. As a way of expressing thoughts euphemistically to maintain peace and friendship, the use of proverbs highlights the Igbo community as a peace-loving community – having mutual respect for each other. Apparently, Okoye’s careful selection of words to politely demand that his debt be paid is effectively nourished with this proverb. Therefore, Okoye himself indicates the importance of proverbs by saying: “among the Igbo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly and *proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten*”. Okoye expresses the importance of proverbs among people of the Igbo community as an art of conversation obviously expressed by very highly knowledgeable men. However, he follows rightly with a stylistic and symbolic presentation of the same thought of the importance of proverbs.

One core and indispensable ingredient in a typical Nigerian traditional meal is palm oil. It is acknowledged as such not only because of its relatively cheaper price, but its rich and nutritional value. From the proverb, it could be noticed that Okoye seemingly employs the metaphor to stress the point that as the fragrance of palm oil is felt in almost all Igbo dishes, so is the Igbo language pregnant with proverbial sayings in the day-to-day discourse of the Igbos. This is evident from the text as characters, specifically both young and old males employ proverbs in their speeches. The significance of this particular proverb is to highlight or bring to life the value and richness of the Igbo language and the African traditional language at large. Hence, the metaphor of words as food is highly appropriate, given the almost exclusively agricultural nature of Igbo society. They award the same value they place on food, the sustenance of life to words, and the sustenance of interaction and community.

### 3. *If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings.*<sup>44</sup>

The cultural importance of proverbs can inevitably not be undermined. Proverbs as a form of advice are given to the youth or to men who were pursuing certain adventures or endeavors as a way of communicating in thought-provoking ways what truly the youth have to value. Some proverbs undoubtedly portray the underlying

<sup>42</sup> Bawa Kammampoal and Suuk Laar, “The Kola Nut: Its Symbolic Significance in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*”, *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature* 7, no.8 (2019):29.

<sup>43</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 6.



values that a community upholds such as hard work, humility, respect and diligence. Contextually, the proverb is made clear and orderly within the context of use. The proverb portrays the fact that those who work hard could dine with elders and kings despite their age. From the context, one sees that in the Igbo society age is respected but achievements are held in high esteem. From the narrative, Okonkwo's self-esteem and respect were founded on his success from his hard work—a wealthy farmer who had two barns full of yam and owned three wives whom he fully could take responsibility for. Obviously, Okonkwo had become well celebrated at a very younger age compared to his mates and even his father because of his hard work. Such virtue is praised by the Igbo community and rewarded with inclusion in the council of elders in the clan. Such revered virtues serve the import of the stylistic expression in a proverb. Where a child symbolizes any youth or young man like Okonkwo who is diligent to reason and take ordinary responsibility for himself that he may be called to be a part of the wise council of a clan or people of high standing.

4. *When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk.*<sup>45</sup>

From the narrative, the moonlight was admired by both children and adults. The appearance of the moon was a period which was marked with a scene of peaceful and mutual co-existence among neighbours in the Igbo tradition. It was a time where people gather in their respective compounds or large field to observe traditional games such as riddles and the narration of other mythical stories. This, in fact, is an all-inclusive period for all persons in the Igbo community, and since it was marked with joy, fellow feelings and unity, all individuals including the physically challenged were motivated to participate in such an event. This particular proverb greatly highlights the unifying bond that existed among the African traditional society before the adventures and intrusion of the West. During this nighttime, each and everyone finds something fun to engage in. This proverb highlights the silent wishes any man may harbour about joining in the engagements of the night. As an old man of such reputation, it is hard to stoop so low to join in the lowly activities of the youth. The proverb indirectly shows the level of respect society places on men of age and for that matter men of high reputation as Okonkwo. Such an unlikelihood for adults to partake in such undertakings is stylistically expressed in the novel. Significantly, this proverb has a very important role which is showing the status, wealth, and title of the characters. It equally explains which values are important to the characters.

5. *Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other let his wings break.*<sup>46</sup>

Nwakibie uses this proverb while performing traditional rites to show his appreciation for Okonkwo's visit and also to show that men need to be accommodating towards one another. The implication of this proverb is that it is both a pledge and a promise. Ideally, Okonkwo is one of the conventional characters whose reverence and insight into the values and customs of the Igbo tribe is paramount. As a wise man, he understands the technicalities involved in winning the favour of a wealthy and great man. Such expression of culture and gallantry can be seen in Okonkwo than any other character presented in the novel. His adventure to "lay the foundations of a prosperous life" is marked by his prowess in mobilizing the right resources. This is shown explicitly in the proverb. The proverb bears the idea of how the Igbo tribe viewed support, cooperation and tolerance. Support in the sense that, the branch upon which the two elements, a kite and an eagle, are to perch on would hold them up simultaneously. The cooperation is dependent on the two entities - kite and eagle (Okonkwo and Nwakibie, respectively, so to speak) to accommodate each other. The breaking of one's wing emphasizes the consequences of struggle and disunity which are destruction and loss. Remarkably, the use of this proverb emphasizes Nwakibie's positivity and his understanding of the importance of teamwork in a vocation or enterprise. This stylistic discourse informs the reader about the absence of unhealthy competition, cooperative and inter-dependent atmosphere that characterizes an Igbo community.

6. *A man who pays respect to the great paves way for his greatness.*<sup>47</sup>

The circumstance under which the proverb is made serves to communicate similar thoughts that Okonkwo wishes to express. Okonkwo goes to Nwakibie with some kola and wine. Although, such an act may be

<sup>45</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 14.

ordinary; the significance of such an unexpressed action is all contained in the proverb by Okonkwo. He gives Nwakibie some wine and kola nut and proceeds to say this proverb emphasizing his act and portraying some of the core values of the Igbo community which are respect, peace and solidarity. Okonkwo signifies inexpressibly that he comes in peace by presenting kola to his host; however, the richness of his thought is communicated in such elegance through the proverb. He again, signifies that it is for his own greatness that he has come to Nkwakibie who is greater by far with his wealth and success. Apparently, Nkwakibie as the host can decipher directly the motive of Okonkwo's visit. This proverb, in its literariness, emphasizes the core traditional values the society expects from certain individuals towards the people they deferentially honour. Making these values practicable will in no time make them 'greater' than their revered person(s).

7. *A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing.*<sup>48</sup>

This proverb is clearly indicating that there is a reason for an action. This is a truth or rationale that shapes the lives of the people of Igbo. Ogbefi Idigo, one of the men present while Okonkwo visited Nwakibie, says in a conversation that Obieku, the palm wine tapper has stopped his trade. He proceeds to say this proverb to express the fact that there must be a reason behind Obieku's decision. This led to series of speculations about what the reason could be. This highlights the empirical nature of the Igbo tribe in approaching issues and finding reasons behind certain happening in their community. There is a use of allusion in this proverb, specifically, scientific allusion. Toads are generally inconspicuous amphibians that usually hide under stones and roots of trees. Since their skin serves as a secondary respiratory organ, they usually prefer a cool and humid environment. By this scientific belief, if a toad is seen in the morning or afternoon, coming out from its cool and humid habitat, then, there must be an external or unusual force against it. This proverb alludes to the scientific belief that 'every object will remain in a state of motion unless an external force acts on it.'

8. *An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned.*<sup>49</sup>

This proverb means people may feel uneasy when someone mentions something that affects them personally. This is especially if it is something related to their bad past, they will find it uncomfortable to hear. Before the expression of the proverb, Okonkwo was having conversations with the other village men in Nwakibie's, (Okonkwo's benefactor as well as a well-known man in Umoufia) compound when Nwakibie says a joke about someone's past that makes Okonkwo feel uncomfortable as he remembers his own father, Unoka a very lazy man who liked borrowing the cowries of others without paying them back. The phrase, dry bones, is a symbolic concept of a dead-like period. Dry bones indicate that those to whom the bones belonged had been dead for a very long time. Moreover, 'old age' is a period that is the likeliest stage preceding death thus juxtaposing these concepts makes readers understand the proverb better. Since old age nears death, death sounds uncomfortable to all persons in their old age. This proverb is a symbolic reference to all unfortunate events that make one feel uncomfortable in a present situation.

9. *The lizard that jumps from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did.*<sup>50</sup>

Okonkwo expresses his own core value which is hard work when he visits Nwakibie for assistance. He recognizes how hard it is for men to trust other men with their resources because of the laziness of some youth in Okonkwo's days. However, it is obvious that Okonkwo's true nature is given expression in the proverb as a person of high self-esteem. He tells Nwabikie he is not a lazy man and follows it up with a proverb to clarify that he is not simply boasting but he is a person of great self-confidence and deems it fitting to express it himself if no one in the clan would testify of it. Figuratively, Okonkwo represents the lizard whose great feats may go unnoticed. The proverb makes use of personification. The lizard has been given human attributes. Its ability to speak, that is, praising itself is significant in that it indicates that when one's achievement – jumping from a high iroko tree – is not recognized by any, then it is prudent for one to blow his own trumpet.

<sup>48</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 15.

<sup>49</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 16.

10. *Eneke, the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching.*<sup>51</sup>

Contextually, Nwakibie utters this proverb to explain his resolve not to give out seed yams to many young men who hate work and have become 'soft'. The proverb remarkably expresses how definite and unbending his resolve is concerning the matter. Okonkwo is among the few who benefitted from Nwakibie because of his diligence and zeal for work. This proverb serves to explain that Nwakibie must have given seedlings to so many youths in the past which yielded nothing and now he has learnt to be stingy. The pragmatic import is that all youths should develop zeal towards working hard; it also implies that it is man that has made his fellow man wicked. Tantamount to the case of survival, a bird would do anything in its capacity to fly out of the reach of cruel hunters. Significantly, the importance of the proverb cannot be downplayed especially because it adds reality and an impressionable quality to what is being expressed. This is a metaphorical statement made by Nwakibie. Here, he compares himself to the bird, Eneke. Eneke is a bird who is swift and can make practical adjustments by suspending in the skies when there is no tree to perch on. It is this characteristic feature that is, being adaptive with regard to giving his yam seedlings to anybody who comes to him for help.

### **Pragma-stylistic Analysis of Some Selected Proverbs from *Arrow of God***

1. *It is praiseworthy to be brave and fearless, my son, but sometimes it is better to be a coward.*<sup>52</sup>

Ezeulu in a conversation with his son Obika (on the day that Obika had nearly killed Ibe, his brother-in-law), utters this proverb. Here, Ezeulu admonishes Obika who is known for having a "fiery anger" that there are two sides to being brave and that one ought to know when being brave is beneficial and when it can be deadly. He tells Obika that people normally "stand in the compound of a coward to point at the ruins where a brave man used to live". This is to tell Obika to be discerning about which situations demand him to be bold and which ones do not. On this day, Obika in anger had beaten his brother-in-law, Ibe, to a stupor and carried him to Umuaro when the latter had beaten his (Obika) sister, Akueke who happens to be Ibe's wife. Even though Ezeulu likes the fact that Obika is brave and strong, he cautions him to be careful and stop acting like a brute. This is in line with Akporobaro's definition of proverbs as "a popular concise expression often presented as a moral advice or truth".<sup>53</sup> In essence, he is telling Obika not only to be brave but also to be wise and not to over-react.

This proverb makes use of diatyposis. A diatyposis can be explained as a rhetorical device which offers writers the privilege to use statements or words to set a guideline for the way that one ought to live. It serves as a prescription of rules; a form of speech by which the speaker prescribes certain profitable doctrines or precepts to another person. In like manner, the proverb has been used contextually to offer Obika some rules for life and to serve as a guideline for perfect living.

2. *We have not come with wisdom but with foolishness because a man does not go to his in-law's house with wisdom.*<sup>54</sup>

This statement is made by an elder from Ibe's family when Obika had beaten Ibe, tied him up and carried him to Umuaro to exact revenge for his sister, Akueke. In the African culture, proverbs are used to put grave statements in subtle ways to prevent people from taking offence. It is a way of hedging words so as not to hurt others. Customarily, Ezeulu is not just Ibe's in-law but the in-law of the whole family. They are therefore expected by custom to show the highest form of respect to Ezeulu and just as the elders are always right, the in-laws are also always right and even though Obika is wrong to have acted in the extreme, the families of Ibe cannot stretch the issue but to tone down the graveness of Obika's offence. The statement is therefore ironical in that it carries the burden of Obika's offence nonetheless and that they have already made their point that Obika was wrong. They accept Obika is right in defending his sister but he was wrong to have carried the man after almost killing him from Umuogwugwu. With this, the family is justified to be angry because

<sup>51</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 16.

<sup>52</sup> Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Akporobaro., *Introduction to African Oral Literature: A literary-descriptive Approach*. 70.

<sup>54</sup> Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 12.

Obika's action is an insult to them and Ezeulu himself knows this fact. They, therefore, did not come with foolishness as they say but they came with so much wisdom and that is what makes the statement ironical. They do concede and accept to be the guilty party even though they are not but cannot really blame Obika for defending his sister. However, carrying the man to his father's house was an insult. They were in a way implying that they were not holding any grudges because they are one family and members of one family are not expected to quarrel.

3. *Wisdom is like a goatskin bag; everyone carries his own.*<sup>55</sup>

This statement is made by Nwaka during the meeting of the elders of Umuaro to deliberate how prudent it was to fight the people of Okperi and reclaim their land. Nwaka utters this proverb to disagree with Ezeulu who opines that there is no reason to fight with the people of Okperi and further reclaim their land. Nwaka in his own opinion believes that Ezeulu's narration of the issue is different from that of Nwaka who believes that the people of Okperi were not the real custodians of the land, but mere wanderers driven out from Umuofia. The statement makes use of a simile by comparing 'wisdom' to a goatskin. In a typical Igbo village, each and everyone carries a goatskin bag whenever they are leaving the house. In essence, this is one thing that almost everyone owns within the community. Nwaka uses this proverb to mean that "wisdom" is not peculiar to one person and that everyone has got the mind to process issues. This presupposes that everyone has got opinions and Nwaka says this at the elders' meeting to caution Ezeulu not to override everyone's opinion with his own knowledge and information about the history of Umuaro.

4. *If the lizard of the homestead should neglect to do the things for which its kind is known for, it will be mistaken for the lizard in the farmland.*<sup>56</sup>

This proverb is made by the oldest man from Akukilia's village during the assembly of the elders of Umuaro at the Nkwo marketplace. The proverb is directed to the man who is sent to deliver a message to the people of Okperi to choose between peace and fight over the Ulu farmlands. There is a use of a metaphor in the proverb in which the elder from Akukalia's village compares the elders of the tribe to a household lizard and the children or the youth to a lizard in the farmland. With this metaphor, he asserts the duties of an elder and implies that, if the elders who are supposed to caution and groom relatively young bloods like Akukalia should ignore their duties as elders, they lose the essence of their age. He is in a way saying that what makes the aged an elder is the accumulated wisdom that they have gathered over the years which should come to bear in their decisions (what they are known for) and without that, they are no more elders but are as ordinary as the young folk. The elder uses this proverb to address the elders because he does not want to sound insulting, just as Alimi defines proverbs as "wisely carved belief statements, which are mostly employed by users to aid in saying unpleasant things in an enhanced manner."<sup>57</sup> He believes it will be irrational for Umuaro to go into war with Okperi and therefore speaks to the conscience of the elders to see to it that the kingdom is not plunged into an unnecessary war.

5. *When an adult is in the house the she-goat is not left to suffer the pains of parturition on its tether.*<sup>58</sup>

Achebe uses proverbs to shape Ezeulu as a man who is keen on his culture. As the Chief priest, he is not just the spiritual leader but in the absence of a King, Ezeulu also serves as the traditional head. This was one of the reasons why Winterbottom wanted him to be officially enstooled as a chief. With this sort of characterization, Ezeulu's language marks him out as a wise traditional leader. Ezeulu utters this proverb of caution at the meeting of the elders of Umuaro as all the elders but Ezeulu selects a delegation to the land of Okperi. Ezeulu speaks to the elders who know the traditions and customs very well but choose to neglect them. At this particular meeting, he asserts his position by summarizing his speech and also emphasizing his stance on not condoning wrongdoing even if it means going against his community. He uses this metaphor to illustrate an uncomfortable situation which he as an elder must prevent. He therefore by this proverb echoes that as an elder he cannot sit unconcerned and watch things take a wrong turn. This again indicates that the adult or the

<sup>55</sup> Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 16.

<sup>56</sup> Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 17.

<sup>57</sup> Alimi "A study of the use of proverbs as a literary device in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*," 122.

<sup>58</sup> Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 18.

elderly has a task to perform in order to prevent the generation born and unborn from suffering a pain that could have been subverted.

6. *A toad does not run in the day unless something is chasing it.*<sup>59</sup>

When Akukalia leads the messengers to Okperi, he uses this proverb to signify the importance and the urgency of his visit when asked about his mission. This utterance by Akukalia summarizes his mission in that even though his mother is from Okperi he seldom goes there and his unusual and unannounced visit must tell that something is at stake. He metaphorically compares himself to a toad and the situation that has necessitated his visit. This presupposes that something like a bushfire or a hunter may be the cause of the toad running in the daytime. Indeed, the situation that brings him to his mother's people is not a good one. He is being chased by the threat of litigations and war. Again, one's usage of proverb proves one's worth as regards the level of intelligence. Akukalia, therefore, uses this proverb to subtly infer that he is worthy to have been sent by the elders of Umuaro and even before they get to the town, he tells his colleagues that once they get to Okperi, they should leave everything to him.

7. *When a man of cunning dies, a man of cunning buries him.*<sup>60</sup>

Akukalia makes this utterance to his other companions as they journey to the land of Okperi. Akukalia's proverb is an answer to one of his companions who asks a question (If the land was indeed theirs, why did they let us farm it and cut thatch from it from generation to generation?). This question was for Akukalia to ask the elders and people of Okperi. Akukalia uses this proverb to reiterate the fact that since he knows the deceitful ways of the Okperi's, he is the best person to handle them.

Stylistically, this is parallelism. The repetition of 'a man of cunning' gives the indication that Akukalia understands best the Okperi people because he partly hails from there. He tells them an Okperi man should never be trusted and that one must always do the reverse of what he is told to do by an Okperi man. By implication, he means to say that they are tricksters and he being part of them, he knows how to deal with them squarely.

8. *The fly that has no one to advice it follows the corpse into the grave.*<sup>61</sup>

Ezeulu makes this proverb during the gathering of the elders in Umuaro as they are informed about the death of their chief messenger, Akukalia. This proverb by Ezeulu was immediately preceded by the myth of the great wrestler who died as a result of challenging his personal god. Contextually, Ezeulu believes that Akukalia's death was as a result of the poor decision taken by the elders of Umuaro to reclaim the farmland at Okperi. Ezeulu compares Akukalia to a fly who lacks direction or advice from the elderly. He says this because he believes that the elders drove Akukalia to that tragic end by sending him on that journey in the first place. He believes, therefore, that the elders failed to do the needful as elders. He makes this point even clearer when he says that Akukalia challenged his chi. Akukalia prided himself on having a temper and being strong and for what happens to him in end, Ezeulu believes is both the fault of the elders and Akukalia himself. Ezeulu speaks directly to Ogbuefi, who according to Ezeulu is the eldest who should have stopped them from sending Akukalia from embarking on that journey. It is therefore because people like Ogbuefi refused to do the needful that is why Akukalia travelled to meet his death.

9. *When a handshake goes beyond the elbow, we know it has turned to another thing.*<sup>62</sup>

This proverb is uttered by Ezeulu to his son, Oduche when he (Oduche) decides to go and carry loads of his teacher from Okperi. Ezeulu, meanwhile has a different assignment for Oduche: to be sent to Wintabottom in order to educate Oduche of the secrets of the white man's magic. This proverb is symbolic because Ezeulu is not talking about "handshake" but he is referring to his decision to send Oduche to learn the ways of the Whiteman. By this, Ezeulu is saying that he did not send Oduche to school for the boy to come back and rebel against his rules and regulations in the house. Just as a handshake symbolises the extension of one's

<sup>59</sup> Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 21.

<sup>60</sup> Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 20.

<sup>61</sup> Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 27.

<sup>62</sup> Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 13.

friendship to another, his son, Oduche's presence in the new religion was an extension of his friendship to the Whites, specifically Winterbottom. And as a handshake that goes beyond the elbow has probably turned into a wrestling match, hence, Ezeulu does not want Oduche's new religion to interrupt and conflict with his own set of rules.

10. *A man who knows his anus is small does not swallow an udala seed.*<sup>63</sup>

Ezeulu, during the festival of the pumpkin, recounts when he was first asked to become the priest of Ezeulu by carrying Ulu to the village. As an objection, he uttered this proverb. The situation of a man with a small anus swallowing an udala seed is metaphorical. Ezeulu compares himself to a man with a small anus. He saw himself as someone who was not strong enough to carry the power or to serve the deity. There is also symbolism in the proverb. The Udala seed which cannot be digested upon swallowing is used to symbolize "Ulu", the deity who is consuming and potent deity. Ezeulu did not think that he was up to the task hence comparing himself to 'a man with small anus swallowing an udala seed.' He recounts how each of the four days for which he had carried Ulu had all posed a problem. These problems give his proverb substance in the sense that they prove Ulu to be a seed (udala) that cannot be digested by any man, and this is what makes him powerful.

In summary, the discussion of these twenty (20) proverbs from both texts has revealed how the Nigerian culture, specifically, the Igbo tradition revere their proverbial sayings. It is worthy of note that the proverbs studied gave various significance as regards their functions, meanings and the use of some literary devices. Among such significance include; the exhibition of hospitality, diligence and hardwork amongst the youth, joy, fellow feelings and unity, cooperative and interdependent atmosphere, respect, warnings against mishappenings and a sign of camaraderie.

## CONCLUSION

This study looked at the pragma-stylistic analysis of some selected proverbs in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Ten (10) proverbs were selected from each text and analyzed based on their contextual meanings and functions as well as their literariness. From the discussion, it was discovered that proverbs are not just used as ornamental elements of language, but rather for other purposes. Among such functions that were discovered during the discussion include: they were used as a form of encouragement, warning or cautioning characters, and most importantly, portraying the rich cultural values of the Igbos particularly. This study has therefore brought to the fore the very dynamic nature of proverbs and added to the existing literature on the study of proverbs and pragma-stylistics theory. It is therefore recommended that since this study only concentrated on twenty (20) proverbs from both texts, other researchers could further look at the other proverbs which were not discussed and again look at the meanings of these proverbs not only within the context of the novels but, equally, in the real Igbo culture.

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<sup>63</sup> Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 70.

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