

## Aesthetics and Meaning: A Poetic Comparison of Selected Igbo and Alago Proverbs

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**ABSTRACT:** *Proverbs are pivotal in Nigerian society in terms of edifying language and enriching meaning in human communication. However, the neglect or inadequate research on minority literatures have created a wide gap particularly in paremiological studies between the major and minority Nigerian cultures. This paper, therefore is an attempt at inclusiveness; it draws attention to the proverbs of one of Nigeria's 'minority' and less researched culture. It explores the aesthetics, literariness and poetic values of Alago proverbs by comparing it with one of Nigeria's 'major's and vastly researched proverblore - the Igbo proverb. This study observes that Alago proverb is replete with poetic devices such as simile, metaphor, symbolism, personification, alliteration, paradox, etc., Other areas of similarities include thematic preoccupation, functions, use of images and syntactic construction; this affinity in thought pattern, expression and experience is explained by Carl Jung's "Collective unconscious". This ethnographic oriented research adopts the structural approach and incorporates an admixture of methodological techniques such as interviews, participant observation and review of available literature. This study identifies Alago language and literature as viable for further scholarship. This paper will contribute to the reservoir of literature on minority cultures. It will also contribute towards bridging the gap in paremiological studies between the majority and minority cultures in Nigeria.*

**KEYWORDS:** Alago, Igbo, Proverb, Aesthetics, Comparison and Meaning.

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## **Introduction**

This paper looks into the literary significance of proverb in spite of their concise and brisk nature by paying attention to the manner in which the contents of Igbo and Alago proverbs are presented. It pays attention to meaning and other aesthetic qualities of these proverbs. Proverbs content are perceived to be true not because of a logical demonstration or just its appeal to common sense but also by the way in which it says what it has to say (Chika Ose-Agbo 144)

Proverbs serve people well in oral communication as well as in written form; they come to mind impulsively for speakers who are familiar with proverbs as ready-made rhetorical tools however, the frequency of its use varies amongst individuals, people and context. Proverbs are significant in various modes of communication which include friendly chats, sermons, lyrical poetry, novels and political campaign speeches etc. Prominent politicians and accomplished speakers use proverbs as effective rhetoric tools.

Psycholinguists employ proverbs too, to study and evaluate the mental development of children as it relates to cognition and comprehension, communication, indirection, memory and metaphors. (Honeck 8, Honeck and Kibler 394) In the arts and mass media, proverbs are no less significant. They are used in cartoons for satirical purposes, as structures for building advertising slogans, in films and music. Most significantly, proverbs have been used as pedagogical tools for teaching moral values and social skills. They contain educational wisdom and have long been used as didactic tools in child rearing, linguistic and religious instructions in schools and in teaching about general human experience (Mieder *Handbook* 142, Stanciu 158, Boateng 110).

This paper, drawing from the structural perspective explores Igbo and Alago proverbs with the intent of identifying underlying universal structures, recurrent patterns and motifs particularly similar poetic structures. These poetic devices help the proverb convey its message in a way that makes it pleasing, aesthetically attractive and socially relevant to the hearers. They enhance and enrich the flavour of the proverb which makes it a vital spicing ingredient in a conversation. For this study, only selected figures of speech (of thought, association, sound, and balance) are examined.

A figure speech according to *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* is “an expression that depart from the accepted literary sense or from the normal order of word, or in which an emphasis is produced by patterns of sound” (97). It is a word or group of words employed to give a special emphasis to a speech or an idea. This emphasis is usually achieved by the users conscious and deliberate deviation from what the speakers of a language considers as the ordinary or standard sequence of words in other to achieve some special meaning or effect. Figures of speech are a means of expression which gives beauty, striking and clear meaning to what is said or what is written. This it does, by using words in a way that is different from the usual meaning in other to create a particular mental image. These forms of expressions abound in the proverb of either culture, and are used as Jerome Dooga notes ...to explain a point using a familiar concept ...[to] make a point more powerful and emphatic and make the text more colourful and appealing” (85).

The need to sound unordinary or to sound symbolic, to display one’s intelligence and rhetoric prowess is at the root of proverb formulation in both cultures. A substantial number of Igbo and Alago proverbs have literal signification even while retaining a transferred meaning in contextual usage. The metaphorical ones are more profoundly connotative and so are easily recognized as elevated or heightened speech usage. But whether literal or metaphorical, proverbs of both cultures could be analysed in figures of speech such simile, metaphor, personification, irony, symbolism, but this study will concern itself with the first four.

## **Simile in Igbo and Alago Proverbs**

Simile is “an explicit comparison between two different things, actions or feelings using 'as' or 'like' (Chris Baldick 237). It is a figure of thought in which one thing is likened to another. Smile is a simple comparison; which states that one thing is like another. This comparison is made between two things which

would not ordinary or normally be regarded as similar to each other. The first proverb of attention here is the Igbo proverb "when the penis is erect, it is as if it will pierce the wall" (IP 1) and the Alago equivalent "The vagina has mouth as though it can talk" (AP 1). Both proverbs can be classified as obscene proverbs because of their use of parts of the human reproductive organs; while the Igbo proverb makes use of the male reproductive organ, the Alago proverb uses the female reproductive organ to express cynicism, humour or even sarcasm concerning a perceived impossibility.

The penis even though it appears very turgid while erect, cannot pierce a wall which also represents strength. The erection of the penis gives the impression of an assumed strength which is negated by the strength of the wall, just as the vagina with an opening like the mouth cannot talk. In the next set of proverbs, both the Igbo and Alago proverbs use the same images;

"If the fire is covered by ash, it is as if it is dead" (IP 2) and "When the fire is covered by smudge it is as if it is dead" (AP 2) to indicating how potential danger can appear harmless. These two proverbs thus present the inherent danger in a seeming safe and unwariness situation

In comparing value and utility, the following proverbs use the female image. The Igbo proverb uses the image of the old woman, while the Alago version uses the image of a harlot. "Looking at the old woman, she seems as though money was not spent on marrying her" (IP 3) and "a harlot is like groundnut by the road side" (AP 3). In this instance, the Igbo proverb compares the old woman- *agadi nwanyi* to wealth or money- *aku*, in this proverb the appearance of the old woman negates or contrast the wealth expended on her/ her marriage while the Alago proverb compares a harlot- *agbaza* to groundnut growing by the road side- *ikweyi k'owe* thus comparing the status of a harlot to that of groundnut growing by the roadside devoid of ownership and available for whoever wishes to eat from it.

Still on simple comparison, the Igbo proverb "if the corpse of a non- relative is being carried across, it is as if it is a bundle of fire wood" (IP 4) mirrors the indifference of people to serious matters especially when they not personally affected. The Alago proverb, "they have only covered the matter like urine" (AP 4) also uses simple comparison to point out a lackadaisical attitude expressed an issues that deserve serious attention.

The Igbo proverb, "when a sparrow is growing it is as if it will out- grow its mother" (IP 5) is a direct sarcasm usually directed at the little endowed who thinks he or she will do better than he or she is destined to do, just like the little bird - *nza* who fed so fat that he decided to engage his chi in a duel. On the other hand, the Alago proverb "a human being should not cry like an animal" (AP 5) is used as a mild rebuke, at other times sarcastic. The proverb is usually directed at a person who is on the edge of over doing whatever he or she is doing; it can also be used to scorn display of hopelessness. Proverbs from either cultures compare compare different and unrelated images, items or even action to enhance aesthetics and meaning in communication while making their respective positions seem impersonal.

### Metaphor and Symbolism in Igbo and Alago Proverb lore.

*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* describes metaphor as

A condensed verbal relation in which an idea, image or symbol may be enhanced in vividness, complexity or breath of implication... The traditional view however, is that metaphor is a figure of speech, or a family of tropes involving two (occasionally four) operative terms, and that it is used for adornment, liveliness, elucidation or agreeable mystification.

*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines it as "a figure of speech in which a name or quality is attributed to something which it is not literally applicable" (182). It is a word or phrase used in an imaginative way to describe somebody or something else, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful and lucid. Metaphor unlike the simile is a direct comparison; it implies that one thing is like another by stating that one thing is in fact another. This way, a metaphor has a symbolic significance in its elliptical function. Symbolism according to Webster is simply

a representation by symbols. This representation is usually done with the intent to express an idea perfectly or convincingly, by the writer or speaker and to create in the mind of the reader or listener the exact equivalent.

For this reason, symbolism is at the base of every proverb since each proverb bears a deeper meaning than what is presented and described by proverb terms and images. It is probably for this fact, that every proverb is regarded as a symbolic statement. (David Cram 64-67). The realization of proverb symbolism is often enhanced by the nature of over-riding metaphor in a proverb... metaphors are evinced in the use of descriptions for objects, events, actions or situations which are often associated with some other things. (The Igbo Proverb 170).

This is the reason every proverb has a metaphorical or symbolic application - since every proverb, whether metaphorical or not is applied to situational contexts other than those exhibited in the proverb situation. "Wealth is in the leg" (AP 6) and "wealth is in thorns" (IP 6) are meant to apply to situation outside them. Both proverbs though from different backgrounds apply in situations where one anticipates success. The Alago proverb compares wealth to the leg- which means success or wealth cannot come without movement, while the Igbo proverb refers to wealth as being in thorn, which implies that to succeed one has to apply hard work, tact as well as wisdom so as not to get hurt in pursuance of wealth.

In both cultures certain metaphors are used to express death. For instance, the proverbs "death is a debt" (IP 7) and "death is rainfall" (AP 7) refer to the universality and certainty of death. While the Alago proverb puts it as rain that falls on everyone; the righteous and the unrighteous, the rich and poor and old and young. The Igbo proverb refers to death as a debt which must be paid by all and sundry, irrespective of social status, gender or age.

Other proverbs which refer to death, include "death is a thief" (IP 8) and "death is sleep" (AP 8). These proverbs use the images of a thief and sleep to express the impromptu and extemporaneous nature of death. These images or symbols give a vivid mental picture or representation of death in both cultures; death is regarded as uninvited, unwanted, imposing and inevitable. In either culture, most proverb situations are meant to apply to situations outside them. Although, it is possible to compare specific lexical items in the proverbs to some other object, event, or situation in either culture, the metaphor in a proverb receives a metaphorical interpretation. This metaphorical exegesis evokes its symbolic characteristics since such an interpretation will reveal the other thing (meaning) which the proverb situation signifies (The Igbo Proverb 170).

In both cultures, the use of these metaphorical proverbs has nothing or little to do with their literal or surface meaning. For instances, "the whetting stone eats the knife, the knife eats the whetting stone" (IP 9), "the right hand washes the left hand, the left hand washes the right hand" (AP 9) and (IP 10) and "the teeth and the tongue still co-habits in the mouth" (AP 10) in contextual application have nothing to do with the literal meaning of the lexical items but refers to the effect of mutuality on those engaged in a two-way relationship.

"The chicken chaser is bound to fall down, while the chicken jogs along" (IP 11), "the hydrosol that kills his master must follow him into the grave" (AP 11) "the hunter pursues his prey into the farmer's hand" (AP 12) and "he who runs after one who has not offended him will strike his hands on a bunch of thorns" (IP 12) are used to juxtapose the set-backs suffered by an evil doer and the advantage the righteous enjoys over him. In each of this usage, the transfer of meaning is at the connotative level and not related to the proverb terms. In contextual usage what is compared is the proverb situation and human experience. Igbo and Alago Proverbs use metaphor and symbolism to express succinct ideas or situations.

### **Personification in Selected Igbo and Alago Proverbial Expressions**

Personification according to *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* is a figure of thought in which animals, abstract ideas, inanimate things are referred to as if they were humans. (190). It is a poetic device in which non-human things or ideas are endowed with human feelings and abilities. Personification can be

said to be an extension of the metaphor, but while metaphor compares two unrelated things by implying that one is another, personification invests non-human things with human attributes with the intention of vivifying them. Most of the proverbs in which animals, plant or lifeless objects are characters demand some form of personification as a way of enhancing the dramatic impact of such proverbs.

In the following proverbs "if the shrew-rat is a medicine man let him cure his mouth" (IP 13) and "the fly serves the sore before feeding on it" (AP 13) both the shrew rat and the fly are vested with human attributes; the shrew rat as a medicine man who is challenged to cure itself and the fly as capable of serving the sore before feeding on it.

In the next set of proverbs, the stone; an inanimate object possesses the human attributes of feeling and fighting. "If an egg breaks a palm kernel, the stone is ashamed" (IP 14) and "when two stones are fighting, the earthenware should not intervene" (AP 14). In both proverbs the inanimate characters the egg, the earthenware and the stone are vested with human characteristics; the stone feels ashamed, while the earthenware which is made capable of action is asked not to intervene in the fight of stones as if they are human.

In "if a ball of foo-foo is afraid, it asks the vegetables in the soup to accompany it" (IP 15) and "the palatable soup causes the death of food" (AP 15) the ball of foo-foo is said to be susceptible to fear and if it is afraid, asks the vegetables to escort it on its journey into the human stomach. On the other hand, the palatable soup is perceived as active and capable of causing the death of the food.

In western classification, proverbs in which animate or inanimate objects are quoted belong to "wellerism" but there are some proverbs in which non-human objects are given life and reality without necessary 'quoting' what they say. For instance, "if the ant stings the buttocks, next time they get wiser" (IP 16) and "buttocks claim oneness but when there is a bend, they separate" (AP 16). In the preceding proverbs, the buttocks- a part of the body not associated with speech or activity learns a lesson, complains and separates. In these proverbs, buttocks are metonymic of the entire human being.

The following proverbs have non-human characters that are vested with human qualities, abilities and attributes, "the granary has fallen and chickens are laughing" (AP 17), "if you want the dog to laugh, give it a piece of hot yam" (IP 17) and

"When a fowl perches on a hanging rafter, the fowl dances and the rafter dances too" (IP 18).

In proverbs 17 and 18 above, both the chicken and the dog are endowed with ability to laugh, while the fowl and rafter are capable of dancing. Proverbs in which animals or other things are bestowed with human characteristics and abilities abound in both cultures and are not limited to the examples above. By bequeathing human attributes to these animate and inanimate proverbial characters proverb coiners in either culture vivifies what each of these proverbs are intended for; to paint a clear mental picture using familiar images and activities (actions).

### **Parallelism in Selected Igbo and Alago Proverbs**

According to Baldick, parallelism is the arrangement of similarly constructed clauses, sentences or verse lined in a pairing or other sequence suggesting some correspondence between them (183). Simply put parallelism is the state of being in agreement, similarity or remembrance. More technically, it is the juxtaposition of two or more identical or equivalent syntactic constructions especially those expressing the same sentiment with slight modification.

For both Igbo and Alago proverbs, their memorability is observed in parallel-structured proverbs. The intent of parallelism is to maintain balance especially for proverbs with more than one clause. JO.J Nwachukwu-Agbada, points out three basic functions of parallelism in proverb constructions which in his opinion invest them with a poetic character according to him,

The first, the 'aesthetic' function, consists of organizing the proverbs on the basis of symmetry. The second, the 'semantic' function, suggest analogies and comparison by the juxtaposition of element in parallel construction. The third function is a kind of 'syntactic crystallization', a uniting of the elements of the proverb into a cohesive, concise whole. Because of this property the proverb effectively communicates its content and is easily remembered. (The Igbo Proverb 140)

From Nwachukwu- Agbada's submission above, the role of parallelism in Igbo and Alago proverbs is at three levels, first it enhances beauty by creating a kind of rhythm in what is said, it widens the scope of meaning of what is said and finally the two-part construction makes what is said a whole cohesive unit. Proverb coiners in either culture, use parallelism to enhance the beauty of what is said, how it is said while still retaining the desired meaning. The following are examples of selected parallel structured proverbs from either culture,

"Ife kwulu, ife akwudebe ya" (IP 19)

If something stands, something stands beside it

"Oma bibi k'iyu, oma k'ikini" (AP 18)

If you blame the rat, you blame the locust beans

In IP 19 and AP 18, there is a reversal of the initial part to achieve a balanced structure which is one of the essences of parallelism in either culture.

"Nwata mu ba iri elu, nne ya amu ba ibe akwa" (IP 20)

If a child learns to climb a tree, his mother learns to cry

"Ogbo onya lo, o gbo okupe lo" (AP 19)

(If) You don't own a horse; you don't own a horse peg

The following proverbs like others in this category have two equal parts, although in contrast which makes what is said meaningful; an indication that Igbo and Alago proverb coiners use similar techniques to put across their thought or whatever it is they want to say.

Some parallel Igbo and Alago proverbs are so binary structured that they have two halves of exact identity. For example,

"Aka ekpe kwo aka nri, aka nri akwo aka ekpe" (IP 10)

The left hand washes the right hand; the right hand washes the left hand

"Abwo ore no abwo oshe, abwo oshe no abwo ore" (AP 9)

The right hand washes the left hand; the left hand washes the right

"Ahughi ka emere, e mee ka ahuru" (IP 21)

If we don't see what to do, we do what we see

Abwore kwo otu, abwoshe kwo otu" (AP 20)

The right hand is attached to the chest; the left hand is attached to the chest.

"Igu na- eri mma, mma na-eri igu" (IP 22)

The whetting-stone eats the knife; the knife eats the whetting-stone

"Oba kho oleha agyo olodu lo, oba kho olodu agyo oleha lo" (AP 21)

The dance of the poor does not satisfy the rich the dance of the rich does not satisfy the poor.

In the preceding proverbs, there is a recurrence of the nouns and verb in the two halves of the proverbs. In IP 10 and AP 9 the left hand, the right hand and wash are repeated in contrasting order. The same pattern is repeated in IP 21 with 'we' 'do' and 'see' 'left hand', 'right hand and chest' in AP 9, 'whetting stone', 'knife and eats' in IP 22 and 'the rich', 'the poor', 'dance and satisfy' in AP 21

Whether in chiasmi or ordinary parallel structured proverbs, there is a recurrence of certain verbal items which occurred in the initial clause or contrast between one or more lexical items in the initial clause and other words in the subsequent clauses as seen in the last three sets of proverbs above.

In conversational application, the listener is somehow conscious of the repeated utterances, even when the second clause in the proverb stands as a contract of the initial clause or a reversal of the second of two syntactically parallel phrases, or clauses.

In these proverbs, one finds a synaesthetic and ideasthetic harmony in the repetition of certain verbal in the initial clause and subsequent form in opposition to create rhythm and music- this in its self, points to shared characteristics or pattern which is the focus of this research.

Parallelism in Igbo and Alago proverb is equally employed to suggest analogies and comparison by placing side by side two contrasting clauses as seen in

"Onu rie,imi ebewe" (IP 23)

The mouth eats, the nose cries

"Okunu ro oza, iweyi ya yi iyi" (AP 22)

The mouth eats; the shame goes to the eyes

Or a reversal of the initial part in the subsequent one as shown in

"Gaba bu onwu; loba bu ndu" (IP 24)

Go is death, come back is life

"Owoni ato oloho, kyo oloho ti yo" (AP 23)

(If) you are sent a message, resend yourself. (Rephrase the message)

Whether by reversal, contrast or repetition parallelism gives rhythm and adds poetic value to Igbo and Alago proverbs. Generally, and with Igbo and Alago proverbs, parallel structured utterances, including chiasmi, achieve their poetic status through features such as lexical matching, contrasting and repetition. These selected proverbs do not only point to a synta- aesthetic and semantic parity in Igbo and Alago proverbs but also buttresses their shared perception of life, binary and values.

### **Use of Alliteration in Igbo and Alago Proverb lore**

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound- usually initial consonants of words or of stress syllable in any sequel of neighbouring word (Baldick 6). It is the repetition of consonants at the beginning of two or more words immediately succeeding each other or at a short interval. In the words of Meyer H Abrams, it is the repetition of a speech sound in a sequence of nearby words. The term is usually applied only to consonants, and only when the recurrent sound begins a word or a stressed syllable within a word (7).

Alliteration in proverbs of both cultures does not only give some melody or musicality to the ear but also draws more attention to the proverbs and thereby making them more memorable. At this point, it is important to mention that the Igbo and Alago languages like many West African languages where labial velar plosive combinations such as gb, kp, gy, bw, kh, gw are articulated as single consonant, proverb coiners in both cultures employ them for alliterative effect, this observation in itself highlights a syntactic affinity between both cultures. Alliteration is quite prominent when a consonant phoneme is reiterated at least twice in a line or in surrounding lines. Below are examples of alliterated sounds in selected Igbo and Alago proverbs.

"Okuku sakaria usa, nkata ekpudo ya" (IP 24)

"O shosha ka kyi she wewa" (AP 23)

The alliterated sound is *s* in *sakari* and in *usa*; *sh* in *shosha* and *she*. These sibilants do not only add melody, it also makes these proverbs more appealing and striking.

The alliterative occurrence of similar indigenous sounds in Igbo and Alago proverbs is another aspect of the structural similarity amongst both cultures. The following Igbo proverb "Ekweghi ekwe na ekwe n'ute ekwere" (IP 25) and the Alago proverb "Abwore kwo'tu, abwoshe kwo'tu" (AP 20), share the same /kw/ sound which is a source of alliteration in both proverbs. Other examples of alliteration in Igbo and Alago proverbs include but not limited to the following,

"Oturukpokpo turu n'akpu, tuo n'oji, puta n'okpete onu akpukpo ya" (IP 26)

"Ikirikpo kpi ikpo ba nonu akeh na ka ghi punu lo" (AP 24)

In IP 26 and AP 24 the alliterated sound is *kp*.

In the following proverbs the alliterated sounds are *gw*, *kw*, *kp* and *gy*.

"Ihe gworo-agwo gwo ni'ite" (IP 27)

"Ogwu k'ole pini bya ogwu k'ese ga gyoko la" (AP 25)

"Otu onye rie agwo, ya agworo ya n'afo" (IP 28)

In "Ozani y'ikweyi khe eyi ni pini y'ikweyi kho onu" (AP 26)

"Ikpo kigye gagye oya vigyi gye" (AP 27)

"Anu gba oso n'ike, agba ya egbe n'ike" (IP 29)

"Adok'ole gbafo, ogboga wa'tabo" (AP 28).

There is a rich and nuanced deployment of this literary device in Igbo and Alago proverbs. Alliteration plays a significant role in enhancing the aesthetic appeal, memorability, and communicative effectiveness of proverbs in both cultures. Furthermore, the similarities in the use of alliteration in Igbo and Alago proverbs as seen in the selected proverbs above highlight the unique cultural and linguistic contexts of each group.

### **Assonance in Igbo and Alago Proverbs**

Assonance is the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in the stressed syllable (and sometimes in the following unstressed syllables) of neighbouring words (Baldwick 20). It is a partial rhyme in which the stressed vowel sounds are alike while the consonant sounds may be different. It is the effect created when two syllables in words that are close together have the same vowel sound but different consonant sound. Whereas alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds, assonance is the reiteration of identical or similar vowel sound (The Igbo Proverb 175). This segment of the paper focuses on how proverb coiners and even proverbs users from both cultures use this reiteration of successive vowel sounds to create effect and musically.

Therefore, assonance as a poetic characteristic of proverbs of these distant cultures clearly points to the mythological relationship amongst both cultures; what Jung identified as the collective unconsciousness. The following are examples of assonated proverbs utterance from both cultures;

"Onye na oku na-azo nti oke" (IP 30)

"Owomi oshawu kha agbaza oyo onya wa atonu" (AP29)

"Nti di abuo ma ha anaghi anu ihe abuo otu mgbe" (IP 31)

"Iwoni foh ose ahanu ni iweyi wo a kha nu la" (AP 30)

Prominently repeated vowel sounds in first and second proverbs include /o/ and /o/ whereas /i/, /a/, /e/ and /u/ are assonated in the third and fourth.

In "Okuko sakaria usa, nkata ekpudo ya" (IP 24)

"Abuna patashi sho agbaya" (AP 31)

"E zie m ozi zie ogaraya, e zie m ya; asi m were aju bute ya, e sere m isi m" (IP 32)

"Opwiyi bi kyo anya moji moji, o ya yo okute nu a tonu lo" (AP 32)

"Ogwu z'ebe enya gyo otu" (AP 33)

"Olole ya t'okwatu, olese ya kpebe" (AP 34)

"Aba yi ishi aso ikweyi ba to ora la" (AP 35)

The profuseness of cases of repeated assonated sounds such as /o/, /u/, /a/ i /o/, /i/ /a/ give a clue to how similar its use is in Igbo and Alago Paremiology. This paper highlights the strategic use of assonance in Igbo and Alago proverbs and its significant role in creating rhythmic and musical effects. It also enhances the aesthetic appeal, emotional resonance, and mnemonic potential of these proverbs.

This paper explores the web of meaning and aesthetics in Igbo and Alago proverbs, revealing the richness and depth of these traditional expressions. It finds that the Igbo and Alago proverbs employ a range of

aesthetic devices, including simile, metaphor, symbolism, parallelism alliteration, assonance and more to convey complex meanings and evoke powerful and relatable emotions.

The paper therefore concludes that Igbo and Alago proverbs do not only share structural and aesthetic affinity, there is a similarity in their perception of what is ideal, right or wrong; in their value system, moral and ethical code which demonstrates or points to a shared humanity. This position of this paper corroborates MacLaren's position on the Bantu and European proverbs that, It is therefore not surprising to observe the similarity in "judgments and conclusion, ideal, opinions on life and death, youth and age and the various instincts, emotions, sentiment, desires and aims by which man is affected or swayed as well as on the qualities which determine his success or failure in life...commend the same virtue, urge the same efforts, stigmatize the same vices and satirize the same follies that [other] proverbs do (332).

The paper maintains that proverbial wisdom and aesthetics is almost the same in either culture in terms of structure, meaning and application, differing only in the rendering, which can be accounted for by their difference in flora and fauna. Ultimately, this paper demonstrates that Igbo and Alago proverbs are more than mere sayings or expressions - they are rich cultural texts that embody the values, aesthetics and worldview of their respective societies.

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## **Appendix**

### Alago proverbs

1. Ishi gbo okunu na kho ela
2. Omiya wu k'ola, ogye mo kw osha lo
3. Agbaya wo ikpeyi k'owe
4. Ayo oyi byo ela la
5. Oyi ka asuse na kha kyo egba kho ebe lo
6. Odu yo ikpo la
7. Ikwu wo owuso
8. Ikwu wo ola
9. Abwo ore no abwo oshe, abwo oshe no abwo ore
10. Ahanu kpo igbenu b'okunu dudu aba fiyiwa
11. Otiyite n'ebe da adak'eho
12. Owoni api manu ya adole nu angmo, a ya ga ekwu dudu la
13. Iyi wo ipyi, a ro ipyi la
14. Ikikpo kpo ikikpo ba nonu akeh na kha ghi punu lo
15. Oho lo onye bi ikwu ngma ona
16. Ikyi epu be epu owoni owo eyi aya kho epa
17. Owuya gbo, ogwu yeye
18. Owoni oma akyiiyu, oma akhi ikini
19. Ogbo onya lo, o gbo okupe lo
20. Abwo ore kwu otu; abwo oshe kwu out
21. Okunu r'oza, iweyi yayi iyi
22. Oba kho oleha a sho olodu, oba kho olodu a sho oleha
23. It is the house chicken that brought the bush hen home
24. What is on the buffalo's head is what is on the antelope's head.
25. When the owner of the house is in trouble the guest should help.