

## Translation of Igbo Proverbs and Igbo Worldview

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**ABSTRACT:** In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Igbo society is inhabited by individuals and groups who know little or nothing about Igbo worldview. Majority of these inhabitants who are largely unaware of what the traditional society was like speculate and give various interpretations to what they perceive to be aspects of Igbo philosophy of life. The few surviving elders who would have shed some light on this are hardly listened to by the younger generation who think they are more civilized and who have little or no regard for social values and norms of the traditional society. It is this ugly state of affairs that has made Igbo scholars of note to think of how to search for, clarify and document aspects of the once cherished ways of life of the Igbo people. This work titled the Translation of Igbo Proverbs and Igbo worldview seeks to analyze the translations of some Igbo proverbs with a view to unveiling aspects of Igbo worldview embedded in them. To effectively carry out this study, we did extensive review of existing literature. We also analyzed the translations of Igbo proverbs from *Things Fall Apart* of Chinua Achebe and *The Igbo Proverb* of J. O. J Nwachukwu-Agbada as well as few other proverbs collected from our primary sources. It was discovered that much of Igbo worldview is expressed in the proverbs used by the people. We therefore enjoined scholars to delve more into this kind of study so as to unveil other aspects of Igbo worldview.

**Keywords:** Translation, proverbs, worldview, Igbo society

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Date of Submission: 01-06-2020

Date of Acceptance: 15-06-2020

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### I. INTRODUCTION

One important fact about the Igbo people is that they come from a society with a very long history. [1] who was quoted by [2] states as follows: “men have been living in Igbo nation for at least five thousand years since the dawn of human history”. Isichei continued by stating that “one of the most notable facts of the Igbo history is its length and continuity”. From the foregoing, it is obvious that the Igbo society is inhabited by one of the longest surviving human species on earth. The people have a very long history as well as a very rich culture [3]. The traditional Igbo people were also known to be very religious [4].

It is the irony of life that the Igbo land that once had a very rich cultural heritage is at the verge of losing all it was known for to western civilization. One has to search very deeply to find just fragments of those elements of culture that thrived for centuries. The uniqueness of Igbo people manifested in their extra-ordinary and incomprehensible political, social and religious models. The Europeans had a lot of difficulty decoding the life patterns of the Igbo people. Though a literary work, *Things Fall Apart* vividly highlighted the difficult moments the Europeans had as they struggled to win the ancient people of the east to their side. The Igbo people also demonstrated extra-ordinary intelligence in the way they applied their linguistic resources. The resourceful way the people used proverbs has been highlighted in scholarly works written by notable Igbo scholars [5], [6]. Achebe himself described proverbs as “oil with which words are eaten in Igbo land”. This underscores the utility of proverbs in the traditional Igbo society. It would be very odd for an elder to conclude a speech in any gathering without using one or more proverbs. An elderly man proudly quotes the relevant proverbs to embellish his speech just the same way a lawyer cites the relevant sections of the constitution in the course of arguing his case in court.

Some may be wondering why the proverb is usually highlighted in any discussion involving the Igbo people. This is because the proverb is not only an embodiment of truth but also an effective instrument of education in the traditional Igbo society [7]. Since the proverb embodies what the people perceive as truth, it becomes very imperative that any person wishing to have some idea about Igbo worldview should beam his search light on Igbo proverbs. This is why in this work entitled the Translation of Igbo Proverbs and Igbo worldview, we intend to analyze the translations of a number of Igbo proverbs so as to reveal the truth they embody and possibly highlight aspects of Igbo worldview which they mirror. After this introduction, therefore, we will discuss worldview as a concept. There will be segments on the concept of proverb as well as the proverb and the traditional Igbo society. This will be followed by the analysis of the translation of some Igbo proverbs. There will equally be a segment for the discussion of findings and a conclusion.

### Worldview as a Concept

In a forward he did for Anieke's *Chinua Achebe's Trilogy*, [8] made reference to "events and situations that form the core of uniqueness in the comprehension of Igbo life and culture". The words that are of interest to us in the quotation cited above are "uniqueness and Igbo life and culture". Though the Igbo nation was specifically mentioned, every serious observer will discover that these same words apply perfectly to every other group of people or nation to whom the search light is beamed. In the geographical space called Nigeria for instance, people tend to wonder why the Igbo people, the Yoruba people and the Hausa people exhibit different characteristics with regard to their forms of greeting, dressing patterns, eating habits religious practices and political inclinations. Accurate answers to these questions could only emerge after due consideration of the people's worldview which usually results from their interpretations of events and situations in their environment. This view is shared by [9] who was quoted by Iwuoha in 2019 as having defined worldview as "how people perceive and explain their world or the ways things are or change in their environment". Nwoye also continued by stating that "people's worldview makes them establish theories about life and death, illness and misfortune and the way to solve the problems of human affliction". The above clearly shows that there is motivation for virtually everything that people do in their respective environments. It is also easy to understand, henceforth, why presidents of the European countries would rely on their scientists for guidance on the most effective way to tackle corona virus while some others in Africa would ask their citizens to have recourse to their native doctors and local herbs.

[10] also quoted [11] as having defined a people's worldview as "the complex of their beliefs and attitudes concerning the nature, structure and interactions of beings in the universe with particular reference to man". The disparity in the presentation of the flora and the fauna of the different environments of the universe is very glaring. Man is at the centre of all these. He interacts with all these species in varying degrees at different times. In the course of all these interactions, man garners a lot of experiences that inform his beliefs and attitudes towards these different species with whom he shares the same environment. The totality of all these beliefs that stem from his experiences in his immediate environment and shapes his attitudes towards life constitutes his world view. From all these, it becomes obvious that there can never be uniformity in the way the different peoples of the world perceive their environments. This also explains why it is an uphill task for people to get others to jettison their beliefs and adopt alien ones.

With regard to Igbo worldview, [12] quoted [13] as having said that the Igbo worldview leads to "understanding the Igbo man and his identity, his vision and his mission in the world". This is not far from the truth because once a people's worldview is clearly dissected; it becomes very easy to identify them wherever they are, to understand and fully appreciate them and even to predict them. Therefore, understanding a people's worldview is key to understanding the people in question. The reference to Igbo worldview in this segment of the work is very pertinent since the work itself is centred on the rediscovery of Igbo worldview through the analysis of translations of some Igbo proverbs. In the next segment, we will take a look at the concept of the proverb.

### The Concept of Proverb

Scholars have, over the years, made effort to clarify the concept of proverb. These experts agree that the proverb is an embodiment of truth that is relative to the society that generated it [14], [15]. In a scholarly manner, [3] states as follows:

It is the wisdom and experience of a people, usually of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression. They spring from the people and represent the voice of the people and express the interpretation of their belief, principles of life and conduct.

There is no doubt that no difference exists between the wisdom of the people as used by Kanu and the embodiment of truth used by other scholars to describe the concept of proverbs. According to Kanu, the proverb refers to the experiences of a people usually of several ages while Nwachukwu-Agbada describes it as the "percolation of wise observations through the ages (p.6). The use of "several ages" by Kanu and "through the ages" by Nwachukwu-Agbada implies that the wisdom or truth expressed by the proverbs is the result of several ages of experiences by the people. If it takes several ages to generate the proverbs of a given society, one begins to wonder whether the view expressed by some that new proverbs are still being churned out is true. In his book, *The Igbo Proverb*, Nwachukwu-Agbada opined that new proverbs are still being generated. The question we ask is, is that really possible? Is it not a slight modification of existing proverbs that is being referred to as the creation of new proverbs? Almost every Igbo person understands the meaning of all proverbs used in Igbo land. If a new proverb is created now by an individual, how many more years will it take for it to be popularized among the people? These are some of the issues to be considered when considering the creation of new proverbs whether in Igbo land or elsewhere.

In his contribution which we cited earlier, Kanu stated that “they (that is, proverbs) spring from the people”. This is very true as proverbs originate from and are fully appreciated by the members of the community that gave rise to them. This explains why it may be difficult for foreigners to give adequate interpretation to proverbs from other cultural backgrounds. This equally explains why all the accounts of Igbo culture in general and Igbo proverbs in particular given by foreigners should be revisited and thoroughly reexamined. Kanu finally highlighted the facts mirrored by Igbo proverbs when he said that the proverbs “express the interpretation of their belief, principles of life and conduct”. This particular point is very pertinent as we gradually get into the analysis of the translations of some Igbo proverbs. It is important to take note of all the facts espoused above by Kanu as this will guide us in the proper interpretation of each of the proverbs to be analyzed. The proverb and the traditional Igbo society will be discussed in the next segment.

### The Proverb and the Traditional Igbo Society

There is no doubt that the use of proverbs is highly cherished in the traditional Igbo Society [7], [8], [9]. Proverbs are certainly found in other languages of the world but there is something unique about the way proverbs are used in Igbo language. Sometimes it seems as if proverb use is celebrated while the user is revered. This is because the proverb encapsulates truth which the traditional society cherishes and every good user of the proverb is not only seen as one who possesses special linguistic competence but also as a custodian of societal norms and values [4], [5]. It was Chinua Achebe who drew the attention of the literary world to the importance of the proverb in Igbo society. In his book, *Things Fall Apart*, he states that “Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten”. In his article entitled “Igbo Proverbs as Embodiments of Igbo –African Philosophy”, [4] states that:

The centrality of proverbs in Igbo-African oral tradition is manifested in the frequency of its use by the Igbos in their conversations, speech, instructions, judgement, drama, arguments, storytelling, in fun making and name them, and this is based on the fact that the Igbo regards proverbs as an essential vehicle through which a message can be adequately transmitted

All the authors highlighted above stressed the fact that the proverb is a very unique linguistic tool in the traditional Igbo society. The proverb features prominently in all facets of life in Igbo land. Parents use proverbs at home to instruct and admonish their children; elders use proverbs to educate the younger ones wherever they come in contact, adults use proverbs to advance their arguments in social gatherings. There is no activity in Igbo land where the use of proverbs is prohibited. When it is said that “ilu adighi na uka mgbede”, “there is no proverb in the evening service”, people should note that “uka” (church) is not part of Igbo life. It is a creation of the colonial masters. Proverbs are featured in the traditional religious practices of the Igbo people. When Kanu said that “the Igbo regards proverbs as an essential vehicle through which a message can be adequately transmitted”, it should be noted that the Igbo people are not attracted to every message. What attracts them in the proverb is that established age-long truth which the proverb encapsulates. In Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, the people of Umuofia doubted the authenticity of the message brought by the missionaries from Europe, which did not accord with their cherished traditional values and norms. Besides, the truth embodied in Igbo proverbs is so dear to the Igbo people and so sacrosanct that no Igbo man in those days would want to trade it with anything not even with the message of the Christian churches. That could be why the people insisted that “there is no proverb in the evening service.” Having highlighted the relevance of the proverb in the traditional Igbo society, we will in the next segment undertake the presentation and possible translation of some Igbo proverbs.

### Presentation and Translation of Some Igbo Proverbs

In this segment, we have the translations of sixty Igbo proverbs. Where the translations are taken from other works, the source will be indicated. TFA in this work means *Things Fall Apart* written by Chinua Achebe while TIP means *The Igbo Proverb* written by J.O.J Nwachukwu-Agbada.

Igbo Proverb	Translation into English
1. Obi anaghi ezu agadi nwanyi ike mgbe obuna aturu ilu kwuo maka okpukpu kporo nku	An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb. (TFA. P. 15)
2. E ji otu aka kuo nwata ihe, e ji aka nke ozo guguo ya	If one hand is used in beating a child, the other one is used in

- cuddling him. (TIP, p. 142)
3. Awo adighi agba oso ehie na efu  
A toad does not run in the day time  
for nothing. (TFA, p. 15)
4. Nwata kwocha aka ya osoro  
ogaranya rie ihe  
If a child washed his hands, he  
could eat with kings. (TFA, p. 6)
5. Egbe bere ugo bere nke si na ibe ya  
ebena nku kwa ya  
Let the kite perch and let the eagle  
perch too, if one says no to the  
Other, let his wings break (TFA, p. 14)
6. Onye fee eze, eze eruo ya aka  
A man who pays respect to the great  
Paves the way for his own greatness  
(TFA, p. 14)
7. Anya ka eji ama oka chara acha.  
You can tell a ripe corn by its look  
(TFA, p. 16)
8. Onye nwere ara anaghi anu akpu  
He who has breasts does not suck  
a nodule (TIP, p. 143)
9. Onye kwe, chi ya ekwe  
If a man says yes, his chi says yes  
also (TFA, p. 19)
10. Nwa shishi gabu oke okuko, anama  
ya ozugbo oputara na akwa ya  
A chick that will grow into a cock  
can be spotted the very day it  
hatches (TFA, p. 46)
11. Imi bewe, anya ebewe  
If the nostrils cry, the eyes cry too  
(TIP, p. 144)
12. Nne ewu nata agbara, umu ya ana  
ele ya anya na onu  
When mother-cow is chewing  
grass, its young ones watch its  
mouth (TFA, p. 49)
13. Nkita siri na ya dara gi, gi dara ya,  
Obuya bu igwuri egwu  
The dog said if I fall down for you  
and you fall down for me, it is  
play (TFA, p. 51)
14. Nwata nne ya kwo na azu amaghi na  
uzo di anya  
A baby on its mother's back does  
not know that the way is long  
(TFA, p. 71)
15. Ofu mkpuru aka ruta mmanu, ya ezuo ibe ya.  
If one finger brought oil, it soiled  
the others (TFA, p. 87)

16. Agaghim ebi na ikpere mmiri were aso na akwo aka I cannot live on the bank of a river and wash my hands with spittle (TFA, p. 117)
17. Agaghim ano na mmiri ncha abam na anya I cannot be in the river and allow soap to get into my eyes (Our translation)
18. Oko koo mmadu, mmadu ibe ya ako ya mana Oko koo anu ohia, ochie ahu ya na osisi An animal rubs its aching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsmen to scratch him (TFA, p. 117)
19. O nadi mma ka kporokpoto gbaa na ihu ehi (TIP, p.160) It is good for interested parties to be witnesses to events involving them (Modified )
20. Nti ju inu ihe, mgbe aga egbupu isi, egburu ma ya If the ear refuses to take instructions, when the head is cut off, the ear goes with it. [9]
21. Ijiji juru ige ndumodu na eso ozu aba n' ime ili The fly that refuses to heed to advice follows the corpse into the grave [5]
22. Nwata rie awo oju anu If a child eats a toad, he refuses to eat meat in the future. (Our translation)
23. Nwata muta iri elu, nne ya amuta ibe akwa If a child learns to climb, his mother learns to cry (TIP, p.111)
24. Nwata dokaa ute ya O ga ehi ura n'ala nkiti If a child tears his mat, he will sleep on bare floor(TIP, p. 111)
25. Nkume tegoro osisi, ujo ejide ite If a stone climbs up a tree, fear grips the earthen-ware pot (TIP, p. 110)
26. Umunna bu oria ukwu (TIP, p. 126) Umunna is a terminal disease (Our translation)

27. Umunna bu ike Kinsmen are strength (TIP,p.126)
28. Igwe bu ike Multitude is strength (TIP, p. 126)
29. Igwurube chikota ukwu ha agbawa ite If locusts put their legs together, they break a pot. (TIP, p. 126)
30. Ekpegbuo nwa ogalanya, ebufee ya n'ama nna ya If a rich man is found guilty, he is led past his domain (TIP, p. 136)
31. Nze zere ibe ochie If an nze aspirant respects nze title holders, he will achieve his ambition (TIP, p. 136)
32. O bu ibu anaghi ebu ala The load carrier does not carry the earth. (TIP, p. 137)
33. Otu onye abughi nnam oha One person is not a public (TIP, p.137)
34. Okuko ulo anaghi aha mmanu A home fowl does not give out fat when cooked. (TIP, p. 137)
35. Ogbenye anaghi ata anya ehi A poor man does not eat a cow's eye (TIP, p. 137)
36. Ewu nwa ogbenye bu ehi ya A poor man's goat is his cow. (TIP, p.138)
37. Nwanyi olu oma na-eri di (TIP, P. 138) The gentle-voiced wife enjoys her marriage. ( Modified from TIP version)
38. Echi di ime Tomorrow is pregnant. (TIP, p. 138)
39. Ogwumagala si na ya agaghi eji maka na oku na-agba hapu ukwu- ije nna ya kuziri ya (TIP, p. 139) The chameleon says it will not because fire is burning, abandon the steps taught him by his father. (TIP, P. 139)

40. Aka ekpe kwo aka nri, aka nri akwo  
aka ekpe. if the left hand washes the right hand,  
the right hand washes the left hand  
(TIP, p. 141)
41. Oke atala akpa nwa dibia ma nwa dibia  
ahula oke onu n' oku. The rat should not eat the medicine  
man's bag but the medicine man  
should not burn the rat's mouth.  
(TIP, p. 141)
42. Ora nwe eze; eze enwelu ora The public owns the king; the king  
owns the public (TIP, P. 141)
43. Gidigidi bu ugwu eze (TIP, p. 159) The king derives his honour from the  
multitude of supporters behind him  
(Our translation)
44. Anaghi alu ogu n' usekwu n' ihi na ma  
eku agbajighi oku awa Fights are not encouraged in the  
kitchen because if the soup ladle  
does not get broken, the earthen  
bowl is smashed (TIP, p. 146)
45. Ogu egbe adighi mma n' ulo It is not good to engage in fighting  
involving the use of guns at home  
(Our translation)
46. Aka ajaja na ebute onu mmanu mmanu A mouth covered with oil due to  
good food results from a hand  
that is soiled due to hard work
47. Otu osisi adighi eme oke ohia. A tree does not make a forest.
48. Onye amuma anaghi adi ugwu  
n' ala nna ya A prophet is not recognized in  
his home country.
49. Obitechara ukpakala ka ohuru n' eji  
isi ya agoro ala ofo He who insists on collecting all the  
pods from the oil-bean tree will  
land on the ground with his head  
as sacrifice to the gods
50. Mberede keji ama dike The great man is known from his  
reactions to sudden events.

51. Anaghi aso mgbagbu hapu iga ogu  
Fear of death cannot prevent people from engaging in wars.
52. Otu onye rie agwo, ya agworo ya n'afu  
If one person alone eats a snake, it curls up in his stomach (TIP, p. 148)
53. Anu gbaa oso n'ike, a gbaa ya egbe n'ike  
If a game runs suddenly, it is shot suddenly (TIP, P. 148)
54. Agbisi gbaa ike, mgbe ozo ya amuru ako  
If the ant stings the buttocks, next time they get wiser (TIP, P. 148)
55. Amamihe bu ugwu ugwu, onweghi onye nke ya juru eju.  
Knowledge is half-full for everyone, no one has his own filled to the brim.(TIP, P. 153)
56. Amaramihe n' Aba amaghi ihe n'Abba.  
The wise man in Aba does not know much in Abba (TIP, P. 155)
57. Uto ka mma n'ote aka  
Friendship is most pleasant from a distance. (TIP,P. 173)
58. Nwata lelia nna ya ike akpo ya nku  
If a child looks down on his father, his buttocks dry up (TIP, P. 178)
59. Azu bu eze na mmiri  
A fish is a king in water (TIP, P. 156)
60. Onye nwere ndidi n'eri azu mkpoo  
A patient dog eats the fattest bone

#### **Analysis of the Translations of the Igbo Proverbs**

In a study of this nature, it will be very difficult to accommodate all the proverbs used in the traditional Igbo society. We are therefore going to analyze the translations of the sixty proverbs included in this work. Some of the proverbs were taken from *Things Fall Apart*, but we provided the source texts, that is, the Igbo versions. The ones from *The Igbo Proverb* came with both the source texts and the target texts, though we modified three of them so as to communicate the desired message. There are few others we collected from our primary sources, having interviewed two elderly men who are above seventy five years of age in our community. In the course of this analysis, so much was revealed about the general principles of life of Igbo people, the justice system, education of children, harmony in marriage, peaceful coexistence, attitude to authority and leadership, importance of the umunna, love of humanity, attitude to wealth, attitude to stubborn people, attitude to wars, attitude to work, attitude to knowledge, recognition of social stratification and inviolability of the inherited social values and norms. Each of the proverbs analyzed has some information to give about the people's belief in and attitude to one of the areas highlighted above.



The proverbs in nos 1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 15, 25, 32, 34, 38, 48 and 60 highlight the people's general principles of life. In our previous article entitled "Igbo Worldview and the Translation of Igbo Names", we indicated that the Igbo people believe in predestination. Proverb No.3-"A toad does not run in the day time for nothing" reinforces this belief. It is true that ordinarily whenever a toad is running in the day time, something must be after its life, possibly a snake but this proverb also highlights the general belief the people have that nothing happens for nothing. It is engrained in the people's consciousness that there is a cause for every effect. Death does not just happen in Igbo land. Something must have given cause to it. Apart from proverb No3, all the other eleven proverbs in this group have some information about the people's perception of life generally.

We have two proverbs that give us some information about the justice system in the traditional Igbo society. Proverb Nos 19 and 30 did just that. From these proverbs we learnt that the traditional Igbo society had a judicial system where everybody was equal before the law. It was also a system that gave fair hearing to everybody. When proverb 19 states that "it is good for all interested parties to be witnesses to every event or judicial hearing, it means that the system abhors trial in absentia. The accuser and the accused must be present at the hearing. Proverb 30 also states that "if a rich man is found guilty, he is led past his father's domain". If the rich man could be found guilty, it shows that the law in the society in question is no respecter of persons. It should be noted that in the traditional Igbo society, there were no prisons. People found guilty of any crime were usually led round the community half-naked with large number of people taunting them and singing songs that tell onlookers and passers-by what the accused did.

There are five proverbs in this selection that give us information about the people's view on the way children should be raised. It is a system that insists that adults should be models for the children to emulate. This is highlighted by proverb No 12 which states that "when mother-cow is chewing grass, its young ones watch its mouth". It is also a system that insists on strict discipline but the discipline should be instilled through love. Proverb 2 gives the hint as follows "cuddling the child after beating him". There is also something very significant about child upbringing that this study has thrown up. Proverb 14 states that "a baby on its mother's back does not know that the way is long". Apart from the literal meaning of this proverb, it can also be inferred from it that once a baby or a child is properly taken care of by its mother or the system, the child would not mind how long it takes for him to go through any form of training proposed for him. If this is true, it therefore means that the parents that refuse to provide the necessary care and the government that abdicates its responsibilities to its citizens are to blame for the delinquent behavior exhibited by the young ones in this generation. Proverbs 4 and 58 can also be examined for additional information on the education of children in the traditional Igbo society.

There is a proverb that gives some indication about the people's view on how harmony could be achieved and sustained in marriage. Proverb No 37 states that "the gentle-voiced wife enjoys her marriage". This statement seems to be stating that the woman holds the key to a successful marriage and that key lies in the way she uses her voice while relating with her husband at any point in time. Couples that have experienced marital turmoil would admit that this is not far from the truth.

Proverbs 5, 13, 18, 40, 41 and 57 show that the people cherish peaceful coexistence and cooperative attitude. With these proverbs, they highlighted how this could be achieved. In proverb 5, what we have is "let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too, if one says no to the other, let his wings break". This proverb shows that the people's worldview is such that supports people living together in harmony. According to them, the only person or persons that should have problem is that person or those persons that say that the others should not live with them. The people also recognize that there could be misunderstanding when people live together. If such occasions arise, they have a proverb that provides solution. Proverb 13 states "if I fall down for you and you fall down for me, it is play". One falling down for the other as this proverb states implies that each of the two people or two groups in dispute must be prepared to make some compromises for peace to reign. Taking a hard line stance during disputes means that peace will continue to elude the people in question. Most of the other proverbs stress the need for reciprocity in human relations at all levels. They also did not fail to highlight that permanent friendship could be achieved by keeping some distance. Proverb 57 made it clear as follows; "Friendship is most pleasant from a distance".

The attitude of the people towards authority and leadership was also clearly expressed with the proverbs. A thorough examination of proverbs 6, 31, 33, 42, 43 and 47 will reveal the people's perception of leadership and authority and their attitude to them. They believe that it is he who respects the leader that can attain to the position of leadership. Proverbs 6 and 31 highlight this very well. Proverb 6 states that "a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness while proverb 31 states that "if an nze aspirant respects nze title holders, he will achieve his ambition". The people's respect goes more to that leader who knows that each member of the community has something to contribute towards the development of the society because no one person knows it all. Proverb 33 states that "one person cannot constitute a public" while proverb 47 states that "a tree does not make a forest." It is also amazing that even at that time; the people believed in and

practiced true democracy, hence, proverb 43 states that “the leader derives his honour from the multitude of supporters behind him.”

Igbo proverbs also highlight the importance of the Umunna, association of kinsmen with a common progenitor. The people believe that every Igbo man should belong to the Umunna for life because that is where he derives his strength. Proverbs 26, 27, 28 and 29 clearly highlight this perception. In proverb 26, Umunna is described as “a terminal disease” which means that it is an association that every member should cope with for life in spite of its seeming shortcomings. Proverb 27 also states that the Umunna is strength. Proverb 29 highlight the importance of being together whether at the level of the Umunna or at the community level as no difficulty can overwhelm those who act in unison.

This study also revealed the Igbo people’s love of humanity. Proverb 11 made this very clear. Proverb 11 states that “if the nostrils cry, the eyes cry too”. This implies that once any member of the community is affected in one negative way or the other, the other members are touched too. The nostrils and the eyes are different parts of the body and everyone knows that once any organ of the body has any problem, the sensation of the pain generated is felt by every nerve in all the other organs. In the traditional Igbo society, every member of the community is seen as an integral part of the system and once he has any problem, all the other members feel exactly the way the affected person feels.

The people also had their perceptions about how the natural resources of the community should be used. Their view is that these resources should be used for the benefit of all and that no one person should accumulate them for himself alone as such actions would have very dare consequences for the offender. Proverbs 8, 16, 17, 49 and 52 give us some clues to all these perceptions. Proverb 8 states that “He who has breasts does not suck a nodule” while proverb 16 states that “I cannot live on the bank of the river and wash my hands with spittle”. The “breasts” and the “river” in the proverbs symbolize wealth or natural resources. Individuals and communities that have them should maximize their use for the individual and collective benefits instead of suffering in the midst of plenty. Proverb 49 and 52 warn about the consequences of an individual misappropriating the public wealth. Proverb 49 states that “He who insists on collecting all the pods from the oil-bean tree will land on the ground with his head as sacrifice to the gods” while proverb 52 states that “If one person alone eats a snake, it curls up in his stomach”. Landing on the ground with one’s head implies death and the pods of the oil-bean tree refer to wealth that is collectively owned. Any individual who misappropriates such wealth will have his life taken by the gods as sacrifice. In Igbo culture, once a snake is killed by any member of a family, the meat cannot be enjoyed by the family members alone let alone by an individual. Custom demands that part of the meat should be given to near-by families. If any person dares to eat the whole meat alone, it is believed that the snake will curl up in the stomach of that individual. The snake in this proverb symbolizes wealth that is publicly owned. Any person who dares to misappropriate such wealth will suffer greatly. The suffering the person will undergo is what is referred to as the “snake curling up in his stomach”.

It is also important to observe the attitude of the people towards stubborn people. The people are aware of the consequences of going against the laws of the land. Therefore, their reaction to such people is to warn them of the disastrous end that awaits them if they fail to change. Proverbs 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 54 give us all the information we need to have on this. Proverb 20 states “If the ear refuses to hear, when the head is cut off, the ear goes with it” while proverb 21 states that “the fly that refuses to heed to advice follows the corpse into the grave”. In the people’s court, in the traditional Igbo society, there was neither bribery nor corruption of any kind that might lead to the perversion of justice. That was why any erring or stubborn person was warned in advance.

Proverbs 35 and 36 indicate that social stratification was fully recognized. Proverb 35 states as follows “A poor man does not eat a cow’s eye”. This proverb indicates that the people recognize two classes of people—the poor or lower class and the rich or upper class. The second proverb also shows that the people recognize the need for each group to respect the members and property of the other group. When the proverb states that “A poor man’s goat is his cow”, what is being said in effect is that the rich man should accord some respect to whatever the poor man calls his own and vice versa.

The proverbs also highlight the people’s perception of and attitude to wars. Proverbs 44, 45, 50, 51 and 53 give all the information one needs to have on this point. The people’s perception is that the fear of death should not prevent people from engaging in wars when necessary. They however stress that fighting involving the use of guns should be avoided at home. Proverb 51 explicitly states that “Death cannot prevent people from engaging in wars” while proverb 45 states that “it is not good to engage in fighting involving the use of guns at home”.

It is equally important to note that in the traditional Igbo society, the people believed that there is dignity in labour. Every legitimate task accomplished for the purpose of getting some money for the upkeep of the family is dignifying. Proverb 46 clearly states that “A mouth covered with oil from good food results from a hand that is soiled due to hard work”. The Igbo man does not mind whether his hands or even his entire body is soiled in the course of working to earn a living.

In the traditional Igbo society, the people had a very astonishing perception of knowledge. Even as at that time, the people had come to the realization that no human being can claim to know all there is to know in this world. The proverbs also highlight that the people knew about the concept of specialization in knowledge as Mr A could be an expert in one domain while Mr B could be an expert in another area. Proverbs 55, 56 and 59 have all the information we need with regard to the people's perception of and attitude to knowledge. Proverb 55 states "knowledge is half-full for everyone, no one has his own filled to the brim" while proverb 56 states that "the wise man in Aba does not know much in Abba." If the wise man in Aba does not know much in Abba, it is an indication that there is specialization in knowledge. By stating that "a fish is a king in water", proverb 59 also reinforces the belief of the people in the specialization of knowledge. The fish could be a king in water but not on the dry land.

In what seems to be an injunction to the younger generations to keep to the rules bequeathed to them by their progenitors, proverb 39 highlighted the inviolability of the inherited societal norms and values in the following words: "The chameleon says that it will not because fire is burning abandon the steps taught him by his father". With this proverb, the forefathers were being prophetic. It is as if they knew that the Europeans would come like forest fire in the harmattan to burn down all that the Igbo people were known for.

## **II. DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS**

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the Igbo proverbs reflect Igbo worldview in its entirety and highlight all aspects of Igbo social values and norms. If it is possible to aggregate all the proverbs of Igbo culture, one would holistically view the body of rules that informed the behavior of the average Igbo man over the years. In *The Igbo Proverb*, Nwachukwu-Agbada cited Ambrose Monye as having said in 1986 that "proverb referents, if properly understood, can shed a meaning on the life and customs of a people, provided enough relevant proverbs are collectively considered". In his contribution in the same book, [9] seems to agree with Monye when he said that "We need not discourage even a contextual, didactic reading of Igbo proverbs, common place as it looks. But we suggest that such or similar examinations should be able to engage large samples of Igbo proverbs in addition to the other verbal forms before assertions on the Igbo worldview could become valid". Given all that has been revealed in all the proverbs we analyzed in this work, is it still appropriate to opine like the two authors cited earlier that a large sample of Igbo proverbs are still necessary before making assertions on Igbo worldview? It is our contention in this work that what the constitution represents in modern societies of our time is exactly what the body of proverbs represents in the traditional Igbo society. Every proverb, therefore, is a sub-section of an act in the unwritten constitution of the Igbo traditional society. Like the constitution, the body of Igbo proverbs has sections that specify the general philosophy of life of the people as we discussed in the first paragraph of our analysis in this study. There are also sub-sections that highlight penalties for offences committed by members of the society. For instance, proverb 52 states that "If one person alone eats a snake, it curls up in his stomach". The opinion expressed by Nwachukwu-Agbada and Monye could be true in other cultures but not in Igbo culture where every proverb has a definite message whether it is contextualized or not.

Monye also made reference to "relevant proverbs" that could contribute to the understanding of Igbo worldview. It is significant to note that every proverb of Igbo culture has something to contribute towards the full understanding of Igbo worldview. All the sixty proverbs x-rayed in this work made very useful contributions towards the understanding we now have about Igbo worldview. There are many others that we could not include in this work due to time and space. If those ones are collected and analyzed, further insight will also be provided about Igbo worldview. Consequently, no proverb should be seen as irrelevant if we are to have a comprehensive view of Igbo worldview.

It is also important to note that the realization that every individual is an integral part of the community as we observed earlier in this work, may have informed the people's attitude to child upbringing where every adult that came in contact with an erring child made effort to correct him irrespective of where the child came from or who his parents were.

From all that this work has revealed, it is obvious that every proverb in Igbo land is laden with much meaning. In view of this, it is doubtful if any foreigner can ever understand Igbo culture to the extent of being able to adequately interpret these proverbs. Consequently, it is our candid opinion that every work done by foreigners on Igbo culture should be revisited with a view to ascertaining the veracity of claims by these writers on every aspect of Igbo life. Even Igbo people who are not properly grounded in the people's culture especially those who have been influenced in one way or the other by western cultures or who are biased in one way or the other due to the western religion they profess cannot be neutral enough to give impartial interpretation of Igbo proverbs in particular and other aspects of Igbo culture in general. In our earlier article entitled *Igbo Worldview and the Translation of Igbo Names*, we highlighted an author who claimed that the traditional Igbo people revered the earth as the Supreme Being. When we investigated further, we found out that this author is a priest of one of the orthodox churches and given his position, he could not author a book that presents a different

narrative from what his church through their missionaries has been presenting to the world over the years. For this reason, it is only an unencumbered writer with a deep knowledge of Igbo cultural heritage that can present a more reliable narrative about Igbo people and their culture. This is the only way we can sift from this entire quagmire the undiluted cultural values and norms of the Igbo people of old for a more accurate perception of their worldview as well as the full understanding of the *raison-d-etre* of their actions. Perhaps, it might be pertinent to highlight at this point that every true Igbo person reflects in his words and actions all the values embodied in the proverbs discussed in this work.

### III. CONCLUSION

In this study entitled *Translation of Igbo Proverbs and Igbo Worldview*, we analyzed the translations of sixty Igbo proverbs with a view to unveiling aspects of Igbo worldview embedded in them. From our analysis of these proverbs, it is obvious that all Igbo proverbs are laden with deep meanings which can only be adequately interpreted by one who has a thorough knowledge of Igbo cultural heritage. It was also discovered that all the proverbs mirror aspects of Igbo worldview. Most of the proverbs reflect the people's general understanding of life while others clearly demonstrate their perception of and attitude to the education of children, justice system, harmony in marriage, peaceful coexistence, leadership and authority, love of humanity, wealth and natural resources, stubborn people, wars, work, knowledge and social stratification. It was therefore concluded that a full appreciation of Igbo proverbs will surely lead to a proper understanding of a typical Igbo man. The need for more studies of this nature was underscored so as to reveal and properly document other aspects of Igbo worldview

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