

TITLE PAGE

PROVERBIAL LORE IN ANIOCHA ORAL LITERATURE

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CERTIFICATION

Ambrose Adikenkwa Panyo, a postgraduate student in the Department of English and with the Reg. No. PG/Ph.D/81/1279 has satisfactorily completed the requirements for course and research work for the degree of Ph.D. in English. The work entailed in this thesis/dissertation/project report is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other diploma or degree of this or any other University.



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APPROVAL PAGE

THIS THESIS "PROVERBIAL LORE IN ANIOCHA ORAL LITERATURE",
SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ORAL
LITERATURE, HAS BEEN EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE FOLLOWING:



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ABSTRACT

The present study is the result of a research-based attempt to synthesize the canons of oral literary criticism of Aniocha proverbs and those of the conventional with a view to evolving a new kind of criticism which would be accepted as a paradigm for the criticism of African proverbs in general. The researcher having observed that paremiologists have, all along, criticized African proverbs without incorporating the views of the folk on how they use and appreciate their proverbs seeks to fill up this missing link. This he does by recording actual live scenes of proverb use and criticism by the people of Aniocha in Aniocha Local Government Area in Bendel State of Nigeria.

The results of this esoteric evidence of how the people of Aniocha use and appreciate their proverbs and their awareness of some of the literary styles and strategies which they employ when they do so are what the researcher highlights in this study. For instance, he is able to provide contextual data on who uses what proverb, when, how and in the presence of whom. This is an important area in African proverb Scholarship which has hitherto not been given due attention. Secondly, by recording actual live scenes of proverb use by the people of Aniocha, the researcher is able to find out how they use and appreciate their proverbs and some of the critical responses they apply when they do so. For instance, he is able to discover that they use as much as sixteen

taxonomies when they criticize their proverbs. Again, this is another important area in African proverb scholarship which has received little or no attention by paremiologists. Thirdly, by providing evidence of awareness by the people of Aniocha of some of the literary styles and strategies which they employ when they use their proverbs the researcher has tried to settle the near-perennial question as to whether or not African oral literature in general and proverbs in particular have literary merit. For instance, after examining some of the literary qualities of Aniocha proverbs the reader will no longer doubt that African proverbs have literary merit. Thus, having taken this eclectic perspective in the criticism of Aniocha proverbs by incorporating the views of the people with those of the literary scholar the researcher, it seems, has evolved a paradigm for the criticism of African proverbs in general.

PREFACE

"Proverbial Lore in Aniocha Oral Literature" is a research - oriented study of the proverbs of the people of Aniocha in Bendel State. In it the researcher aims to synthesize the canons of oral literary criticism and those of the conventional with the object of evolving a new kind of criticism which would be accepted as a paradigm for the criticism of African proverbs in general.

To achieve his objective, the researcher recorded the four most common situations during which the people of Aniocha use proverbs. These include conversations, tales, songs and dances and prayer. To give a fairly representative sampling of how the people of Aniocha use and appreciate their proverbs the researcher recorded all the 1,649 proverbs in his collection from the six clans which make up Aniocha Local Government Area. The object was to make sure that at least one town out of the six clans in the area is represented in each of the recorded communicative events during which the people of Aniocha use proverbs.

After recording the proverbs the researcher transcribed and classified each one of them in 1,649 index cards. For instance, the information contained in the transcription page include the following: proverb in Igbo and English, the person who used it, how, why and when he used it, audience reaction and whether or not any other proverb was used in reply to the one he used.

Similarly, the information contained in the classification page include the structure, form and figure of speech used in a given proverb, whether it is metaphorical or a proverbial apothegm, its context of classification, whether it is didactic or illuminative, what is its function in its context of use as well as its function in the society, how it is appreciated by the people and how it is appreciated by the researcher. After recording the above information on all the 1,649 proverbs collected, the researcher classified and analysed each one of them under contextual usage, oral literary criticism and analytical exegesis which form chapters four, five and six of the thesis respectively.

Structurally, the thesis could be divided into two; chapters one, two and three in the first part and chapters four, five, six and seven in the second. The first three chapters are titled: "The People of Aniocha," "Oral Literature in Aniocha" and "Literary Background" respectively. In chapter one, an attempt is made to find out who the people of Aniocha are and where they could be located in Nigeria. In Addition, the researcher examines their historical, socio-economic, political and religious life. Lastly, he examines their different dialect groups as well as the importance to which they attach speech and how their proverbs reflect their mores and values. In chapter two, however, he examines some of the subgenres of oral literature used in Aniocha under form, structure,

style and figurative use of language with the object of bringing out their literary qualities. These subgenres include folktales, myths, legends, folk drama, oral poetry, riddles, etc. He also tries to bring out the relationship between these subgenres and Aniocha proverbs with a view to demonstrating that all these (subgenres) belong to one literary corpus. Then, in chapter three he examines the literary background to the present study his aim being to find out what scholars have already done on African proverb scholarship and what is still left undone, the latter reason which justifies the worthwhileness of his study. He discovers and attempts to fill up one important missing link in African proverb Scholarship till date. This is oral literary interpretation and criticism as well as some of the literary styles and strategies which the folk apply when they use their proverbs.

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This important missing link is what the researcher tries to fill up in chapters four, five and six respectively where he discusses the contexts, oral literary criticism and literary qualities of Aniocha proverbs. For instance, in chapter four, he provides contextual data for Aniocha proverbs paying particular attention to such details as who uses what proverb, before whom, when, why and how such a proverb is used, and more importantly, the number of times a given proverb is used within the corpus of the 1,649 proverbs collected. To give a fairly representative

sampling of how all the six clans in Aniocha use and appreciate their proverbs he examines the proverbs used by each of the six clans in the area during some of the communicative events earlier mentioned. In chapter five, however, he examines some of the 15 critical responses which the people of Aniocha use when they appreciate and criticize their proverbs. Some of these are "ee" (yes), "mba" (no), "dalui" (thank you!), "ise" (so be it), "ike agwu!" (wonderful, spectacular), laughter, silence, etc. He discovers that some of these critical responses are contained in most of the proverbs in his collection as earlier affirmed by some of the citizens of Aniocha whom he had interviewed. To demonstrate that Aniocha proverbs like the proverbs of other cultures have literary merit the researcher examines some of the literary qualities of the proverbs in chapter six under such parameters as form, use of figurative language, style and structure.

Finally, in chapter seven, he asserts that his study has helped to synthesize the canons of oral literary criticism and those of the conventional which, he believes, is what is needed to evolve a new kind of criticism which would be accepted as a paradigm for the criticism of African proverbs in general.