

Oral Fecundity and Tonal Musicality in *Úfìèd Ánààñ* (Ánààñ Proverbs)

Friday Akpan Okon, Ph.D¹ David Inyang Akpan, Ph.D²

1. Department of English, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria.
2. Department of English, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria.

Abstract

This paper sets out to examine the richness of the oral resources of *Ánààñ* proverbs from the view point of their musicality which is a manifestation of the tonal nature of the *Ánààñ* language itself. The researchers went into the field (Oruk Anam Local Government Area) and gathered proverbs from consultants who were mainly old men. Twelve of these proverbs have been selected for analysis of their tonal elements that imbues them with a jingle-like (musical) quality which leaves a favourable and memorable impression on the minds of the audience. The twelve proverbs were also selected based on the topicality of their meanings, which emphasize different aspects of *Ánààñ* traditional values such as sanitation, importance of kinship relation, need for thriftiness in spending, man's unlimited creativity and man as the master of his physical environment, etc. The finding of this research is that the *Ánààñ* value proverbs highly, and its relevance to almost all situations in *Ánààñ* traditional life cannot be over-emphasised. Therefore, its acquisition by the younger generation is canvassed as an index of insight, understanding and wisdom, which is necessary if the individual is to negotiate the bends and precipices of traditional and modern life. The recommendation of the researchers is for a more coordinated and intensive collection, collation, codification and preservation of *Ánààñ* proverbs for generations yet unborn, in view of its endangerment in the face of the threat of globalization and extinction. In this regard, *Ánààñ* sons and daughters at home and in the diaspora are encouraged to speak their mother-tongue and intensify the use of proverbs in their speeches.

Key Words: *Ánààñ*, oral, fecundity, musicality, proverbs, tone.

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I. INTRODUCTION

We elect to research and write on "Oral Fecundity and Musicality in *Úfìèd Ánààñ* (*Ánààñ* Proverbs)", because proverbs are not only shorter ways or means of communicating meanings, but also that, like songs, their lingering jingles make them memorable. This musicality is evoked when the language is properly rendered especially by the native speaker. Although through translation or transliteration, the originality of the spoken language may lose its enchanting beauty, especially in English, the researchers shall try to forestall a high degree of loss. Proverbs, like other aspects of African "cultural and linguistic phenomen[a]" (Akpan John Esen, 1982:32), are at the brink of extinction, for lack of continuous patronage. Besides the oral fecundity of the *Ánààñ* proverbs, the people's philosophical thought pattern, behaviour, attitude and moral conduct, are all embedded in the proverbs, and an understanding of the people's proverbs implies an almost total apprehension of their culture.

Proverbs are defined in different ways by different people. Prof. Jasper Onuekwusi (2001) says that the "proverb could be regarded as the beginning of a conscious effort to exploit language artistically to achieve a purpose" (p.16). A synthesis of Profs E. N. Obiechina's and Donatus Nwoga's definitions, paraphrases the proverb as a "philosophical and moral exposition shrunk to a few words; [a] terse statement which figuratively gives expression to the point of traditional wisdom relevant to a given situation" (in Onuekwusi, 2001: 16). Therefore, the proverb can be regarded as a panacea or an elixir for a complicated and complex idea or situation whose meaning could not be easily resolved in a straight-forward linguistic code or language. Chinua Achebe defines the proverb from the Igbo traditional perspective as "the palm oil with which words are eaten" (Onuekwusi, 2001:16), while Patrick Ebewo (2005), still from the traditional outlook, sees the proverb as "the salt and pepper of speech in Ika" community (p. 86). *Úfìèd*, as the proverb is popularly known among the *Ánààñ*, is like an alligator pepper, an ever present spice at all traditional ritual circles. It is a catalyst that quickens discussions, but does not form part of it. Proverbs are often used in a discussion because they are the vitamins or the ingredients of the intellect. It is the end-stop of a statement's meaning, or an end-stop statement that encapsulates the philosophy of an ideology. Among the *Ánààñ*, it is believed that the proverb shortens a

discourse, for it contains “the traditional wit of the rural community” (Ebewo, 2005:86). The term proverb as known in English, is tied to the figurative language that reverberates with allusions. It could be easily associated with poetry, because it wears the garb of maxim as form, while its content is meta-poetic.

1.1 A Brief Note on Tone in Ánààñ Language

Tone is an important element in most African and Asian languages. It is a common fact that tone is used to make distinctions in these languages. The vital importance of tone in African tone languages is seen in the fact that a good number of these languages frequently make use of just tone to communicate messages, especially in dance music. Also, some African riddles are strictly tonal (Urua, 2007:52). Tone has been defined as contrastive pitch, a phenomenon arising from the vibration of the vocal bands (Essien, 2010:85). A tone language is a language in which both pitch phonemes and segmental phonemes enter into the composition of at least some morphemes (Welmers 1973:80, cited in Okon Essien 2010). Tone is used for communication of messages as explored in dances, poetry, riddles, tongue-twisters, praise names, among other things (Michael 2013). Ánààñ is a tone language with two level tones: the high and the low tone pitches on a syllable, without any gliding, just like in Ibibio (Michael 2018:182; Udoh, 1998). According to Michael (2018), tone in Ánààñ is called “Újò-íkò”. It is, therefore, the combination of these tone pitches in Ánààñ language that imbue it with rhythm, melody and its famed musicality, especially when it pertains to the rendition of Ánààñ proverbs – what the researchers here term as “tonal musicality”.

1.2 Mode of Rendition

Proverbs are more often rendered verbally and could as well be used as statement to intersperse a conversation to provide a firmer and clearer insight to an argument. There is no definite moment for the rendition of Ánààñ Proverbs. They are rendered at any occasion that demands for their usage depending on the topicality and subject matter of the discourse. There is no aspect of human endeavour in Ánààñ land that is not amenable to proverbial usage. In human relations, during sessions of work, in recreational activities, in religious circles, in commerce, at home, and even in the process of instructing, proverbs are the veritable tools or kernels around which discussion revolves. It all depends on who uses it and for what purpose. All these are in an attempt to redress the menace of societal decay and to establish truth. Ruth Finnegan (2012) assents to this point when she observes that:

Proverbs seem to occur everywhere in Africa... the oblique and allusive expression through proverbs... makes it possible to use them in a variety of effective ways... among the Anang Ibibio... proverbs are often skillfully introduced into speeches at... crucial moments and are influential in actual decisions reached (pp. 389, 407 – 408).

Ánààñ proverbs are didactic and ornamentally embellishing in all speech situations. Furthermore, the highly evocative aspect of the Ánààñ proverb is located in its tonality. That makes meaning easily communicated and memorable. The production of the musicality is worth noting that although there is imperfection in the selection of the proverbs to be used in illustrating this essay, however, the selected proverbs are literally translated from the Ánààñ vernacular into the English language. The researchers do not claim exactness in this endeavour. Twelve proverbs have been selected and translated for use in this essay, to illustrate a diverse range of human situations.

1.3 The Ánààñ: A Brief Historical Note

The Ánààñ people are aborigines of South-South Nigeria. Their origins could be traced from Bantu warriors and Zulu hunters in Central Africa. Joseph Udondata (2011: v) is of the view that their migration from the Central African forests took the Ánààñ people to the region of the Cameroons in the 3rd Century BC, and they soon crossed over to settle in Eket and from there spread out to their present locations. Essien U. Udoh (1983:3) asserts that the Ánààñ are one of the aboriginal peoples that settled earlier than most other ethnic groups in the South-South coastal areas of present day Nigeria. Linguistically, Imelda Udoh (1998) is of the view that the Ánààñ share close affinities with their Ibibio and Efik neighbours with whom her language forms a cluster of mutually intelligible languages; and together, they belong to the lower Cross group of languages which is traced to the larger Niger-Congo language family (see also Joseph Greenberg 1963; Okon Essien 1990; Kay Williamson 1989, and Bruce Connell 1994). Presently, the Ánààñ people are spread among eight Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State, namely: Abak, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo, Ika, Ikot Ekpene, Obot Akara, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun. The Ánààñ people are identified by their homogeneity in culture, language and central lineage system. In a nutshell, the word “Ánààñ” refers to both the nation and the language which the inhabitants of that nation speak.

The Ánààñ people are a proud people characterized by their qualities of frankness, friendliness and honesty. They value the ability to speak well. They have an exceptional and excellent ability in using proverbs, idioms or aphorisms in expressing themselves, which is a highly desirable ability, especially among the elders. Ánààñ people are great farmers, scholars, professionals, artisans and traders. Ánààñ craftsmanship is

unsurpassed especially in the area of raffia production and wood carving, for which their traditional headquarters Ikot Ekpene, is well-known for, all over the world.

II. LITERAL AND AESTHETIC VALUES IN THE SELECTED PROVERBS

Although proverbs can be used for any occasion, there are specialized occasions where proverbs can be more useful, for example, in situations like passing-on of information, delivery of judgement, warning and advising. These notwithstanding, proverbs used in one instance could as well be used in another, depending on the user and the circumstance that warrants the usage. The selected proverbs in this paper are basically chosen on grounds of their tonal effect (that is, their tendency to produce harmonious sounds in the ears). In other words, the selection is guided by the sonic nuances that generate melody while type is embellished in the situational context. Therefore, a literary analysis of the proverbs shall touch among other things, the sonic effect and the philosophical import. Finnegan (2012) corroborates this assertion that: “[in] proverbs, the whole range of human experience can be commented on and analysed; generalizations and principles expressed in a graphic and concise form, and the wider implications of specific situations brought to mind” (416). The proverb, (*Úfìdè*) presented below is concerned with over-indulgence in the bid for perfection.

2.1 Proverb #1

Ájiàjiàngá ákpö ndisè nètè áwó ábí inyá-ànyám áfíd?

Why peeling (*ndisè*) pumpkin stem as if the faeces will be for sale?

This proverb is relatively associated with the pride of sanitation. It alludes to the existence of a high sense of sanitation and decency among the people which is transferred into their meal preparation. The pumpkin stem, especially, the very species known as *ndisè*, does not cluster or crawl on the ground like other pumpkin stems. It climbs whatever stronger stem or tree it finds around itself so as to bear fruit. In *Ànààñ* culture, its succulent stem is usually harvested to prepare a meal, and in the process, it is peeled. The *Ànààñ* wonder/query/ponder **why the peeling of the stem is necessary**, as if after eating and defecating, the excrement will be put up for sale. This goes a long way to demonstrate the sanitary fastidiousness in the people’s culture which is even seen in their over indulgence in smoothing something that is already perfected by nature. The underlying meaning could be applied in an occasion that insinuates fastidiousness (over meticulousness or sensitivity) in something that could be ignored. Thus, by applying the proverb in the demanded circumstance, the speaker offers advice that could hasten a process, if not forestall wastefulness. This type of proverb as observed by Esen (1982:21) provides a curative or therapeutic essence that enables one to absorb the didactic or moral message that lies below the outer coat of sweet sounds and exciting word-images. This is where the exciting point in this proverb lies: in the production of musicality which provides the sweet coating that conveys the message for understanding.

2.2 Proverb #2

In the proverb below, advice is equally offered on the economic importance of saving as a support for the unforeseen future. It is assumed that one’s reserve is his source of rescue:

Élàd sé itó àdèb éfák àdèb

What comes from the wetland is what is used to reclaim the wetland.

This implies that although one must enjoy the fruit of one’s labour, one must preserve or reserve something for the rainy day. This is because it is the resources that one has that one will ultimately use to rehabilitate one’s self. This is a sort of warning to prodigal spenders to be cautious in their spending. The swamp/wetlands referred to here can represent anything, but in this proverb, it is adapted to represent a human being. The major interest in this proverb lies in the use of the word *àdèb*: as both subject and object noun that produces the rhyme.

In both proverbs above, even though the tonal effect cannot be felt in the English translation, in the original vernacular version, the musicality could be heard in words like “Ájiàjiàngá”, “inyá-ànyám”, and “àdèb”. The rhyme in English language differs a lot from those in *Ànààñ*. In *Ànààñ*, emphasis is on word rhyme and not the syllable rhyme. Its rhyme depends on the musical tonality. Esen (1982) observes that in the placing of meaning in *Ibibio* proverbs, the beauty of “*nké*” (proverb) lies in the sonic and delicate turn of phrase, the compact poetic imagery and the rhymes that vibrate horizontally along the whole of the line, or over substantial parts of it” (p. 27). The same applies to *Úfìdè Ànààñ*. Besides, the inherent message of the two proverbs, as in the first that rhetorically questions and the second that surreptitiously advises, the lingering effect is a recipe that transmits the proverb and its meaning to the mind. Unlike poetry whose sense according to Brian Lee (1966) “is always subordinated to feeling and tone” (p. 33), observably, in *Ànààñ* proverbs, sense is not isolated from feeling and tone. Feeling is embedded in tone and content in the context. One thing stands out in *Ànààñ* proverbs: the philosophical import of a proverb must be absorbed in the context of situation.

2.3 Proverb #3

The next proverb exemplifies the intersection of the philosophical import in relation to context:

Njén nsúkàkàrà ásè átíppè nsúkàkàrà; nsèhé úkùm átíppé úkùm

The sucker of a hog plum tree surely reproduces a hog plum; the scion of a silk cotton tree replicates silk cotton.

This particular proverb links with another one rendered: “Ájén ásè àbièt èté ké ndiá-mmà” (meaning “a child actually resembles the father after eating to his fill”). This implies that the generic information of a man can be obtained from the face of his offspring, especially after a good meal, the Ánààñ observe. Therefore, one’s offspring cannot have the genetic traits of another. To a large extent, the Ánààñ were aware of the existence of the DNA before the Europeans scientifically discovered it in 1994. Through the use of this proverb, the Ánààñ showcase their scientific intelligence and imagination; although not empirically tested, it has been imaginatively ascertained. Supportively true in Ánààñ proverb usage, it is said that the offspring of a lion cannot behave like a goat (idéhé ékpè úmàn àfò ábíét ébót). A child could only resemble another when tormented by hunger. Furthermore, the richness of the musical tonality of the words transfixes the proverb in the mind of the hearer. This practice corroborates Sigmund Freud’s (2003) “repetition compulsion” as one of the psychoanalytic methods of restoring the patient from mental delirium by making the patient to receptively repeat his repressed past (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>). While assessing the creative nature of foretelling genetics, the next proverb extols the unlimited creative prowess of man:

2.4 Proverb #4

Ànyöng ànyöng líe nà ébé ébèd àbéd éñö únèn?

How tall is the height that a ladder be placed for a hen to climb?

In other words, no matter the height, a hen requires no ladder to climb. This proverb expresses the competence of man with a fecund mind. The Ánààñ believe in the creative power of imagination and would not succumb to absurdism and nihilism in their struggle for existence; instead, they view problems as existential ones that could always be surmounted. The hen as a bird (representing man) has that natural endowment and the potentials to fly to a reasonable height. This translates into a visual imagination of a people endowed with intelligence to transcend and attain any height they choose to attain. In other words, a man has the potential powers to deconstruct his world. Therefore, Ánààñ philosophy rejects the Kantian notion of predestination and determinism.

2.5 Proverb #5

(a). Ájén-ékà ékpò ùtèrè ànyé ádé àlögö òlàng
The phylum kith of a vulture is the (multi) coloured bird.

(b). Sé ébák útái ké échìd úfök ádè, échíd ìnèmé àkpök ké ànyöng ákòm
As alligator is being butchered inside, the agama lizard on the roof top is not happy

The two proverbs above have one thing in common, even though they are distinct in meaning and application. First and foremost, the issue of affinity or kinship which is paramount in the world today, is at the centre of the discourse. Causes of inter-feud violence and communal wars are sometimes associated with kinship, ethnic or clannish demarcation as found in Somali inter-tribal conflicts. The Ánààñ are careful of the membranous thin line that divides people and the world – phylum or kinship. In the proverbs, the phylum brother of the vulture is any coloured bird while the phylum cousin of the alligator is the agama lizard. Africans pay attention to affinity, family relationships and distribution, and the Ánààñ enact it in their proverbs to emphasise its importance to harmonious existence. Even in the 21st century, the Caucasian is still a Caucasian and the Black, black, and not otherwise. Another distinctive feature of these two proverbs is the cross comparative creativity using the animal world to compare with the human world. This, however, interrogates the fact that man shares an attribute with animals - soul. This corroborates Harold Klemp’s (2004) observation (in his *Animals Are Soul, Too!*) that animals also share love attributes with man. For the Ánààñ, this natural classification provides a basis for them to emphasise the importance of family, kinship (phylum), and to generate proverbs to express it.

2.6 Proverb #6

The Ánààñ man is seen as a proud, aggressive and determined person in his pursuits in life; the next proverb expresses these qualities of determination without being boastful:

Ákére Ákõnkõ álúng Ákõnkõ échìd
Akõnkõ’s desire lives in Akõnkõ’s heart.

Man's resolve to do something is supposed to be interred in his heart. The heart, however, in this context, represents the mind. *Àkòñkò* is a fearsome masquerade whose aggression and determination to carry out an act is concealed within its mind. This could be an act of vengeance especially on the non-initiates who trespass. A determined person in the Ànààñ conception behaves like *Àkòñkò* masquerade which does not boast; it only plunges into action. The masquerade behaves like a tiger, in a way akin to the words usually attributed to the Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, that a tiger "does not proclaim its *tigritude*; instead it pounces on its prey and eats it". This proverb is a form of advice to people for them to avoid boastfulness in any intended act.

2.7 Proverb #7

The next proverb is a variant of the former one in terms of its advisory role. Although man must relax as well as entertain himself in jokes, he must not wallow in it to the detriment of other important matters. Some Ànààñ at times, have a tendency for rigmarole in issues expected to be addressed directly. This proverb is linked to the anxiety associated with the fear of deferment of *Àsúsú* thrift savings, because *Àsúsú* is one of the very important means of saving money to finance personal projects in Ànààñ land. To defer *Àsúsú* among the Ànààñ attracts a penalty or fine. In the circumstance where one scouts for loan to avoid deferment of *Àsúsú*, instead of going straight to making the request for funds from the prospective lender, one indulges in flattery and rigmarole; the Ànààñ warn that such banter is to be discarded in order for one to face reality:

Àtáñ tãñ tãñ ádè ìkò nnèm-inùà; nnö àkpòhò nké kòp ùtíbé ádé àkpáníkò

Banter is frivolous talk; request for assistance to pay *àsúsú* thrift savings is the truth.

The above situation links up with another proverb that frowns against showiness and pomposity as would be shown below.

2.8 Proverb #8

The human being is compared by his quality of association, to the pride of an insect – the grasshopper. The grasshopper that prides itself and gets carried away by this, the Ànààñ observe, always ends up in the gullet of an enterprising hen. By its interpretation, the proverb points out that a showy, boastful and proud person always dies unexpectedly, before his time. Gentleness, meekness and humility are the needed innate qualities for successful living. Hence, the proverb admonishes:

Àtíám tiàm tíám áták-ták ásé ásúkò ké èkpèk ùnèn.

A showy grasshopper always ends up in the gullet of a hen

In the two proverbs (7 and 8) above, flexibility in voice is embedded in tonality that appeals through sound, because lyricism can be achieved through sound effect. Okpewho (1990) observes this in D.C. Simmons' analysis of riddles, a cousin of proverbs, how "tonal counterpoint is a deliberate feature in Efik-Ibibio riddle... mainly for purpose of entertainment" (p. 90). Ànààñ language is highly tonal and its tonality is more prominent and rewarding when tonal flexibility is used to deliver a message. The message, however, becomes appealing with diaphonic sounds. Okpewho (2004) has compared tone flexibility in relation to ideophones, and says that they "produce a stronger dramatic impact than any word available in language could have done" (p. 92). He holds the view that "ideophones are not like normal words to which meanings are readily assigned. They are simply sounds used in conveying a vivid impression" (p. 92). This real image is constructed in these phrasal verbs "Àtáñ tãñ tãñ" and "Àtíám tiàm tíám": which are onomatopoeic structure/constructs that constitute what Ebewo (2005) calls "the salt and pepper of speech" (p.86). The presence of ideophonic words in Ànààñ is to vivify the sense and complete the thought by creating an image and making the image real to the five senses. The chiasmus style of reduplicating words or syllables creates allusive phraseology. Finnegan (2012) observes that "the figurative quality of proverbs is especially striking; one of their most noticeable characteristics is the allusive wording usually in metaphorical form" (p. 90). For a proverb to be formidable, terse and sensuous, it must be figuratively compacted in metaphor. In the proverb below, determination and perseverance are expressed:

2.9 Proverb #9

Ídéhé ìkà Ìbèndè ádé ìkà Ìbèndè, ádè íbén ítíát nyöng.

Going to *Ìbèndè*, does not mean going to *Ìbèndè*, but bringing back a rock.

The above proverb implies that in life, there are huddles that man must expect to cross especially when a man pursues a certain course in life. Distraction, obstacles and uncountable hurdles may result in failure. That is why it is assumed that the path to success is thorny. This proverb acts as an advice to prospective ambitious people to be cautious in their pursuit of a goal, because it is not the beginning that determines the end. The pursuit of a course is likened to travelling to a rocky city and returning with the rock as evidence of having visited the place or city. *Ìbèndè*, in this context represents a stony or rocky city (*Ìbèndè*). The proverb intimates that peddling news of having travelled to *Ìbèndè* does not authenticate having gone to *Ìbèndè*, but to return with

a stone/rock testifies to the visit. *Ìb̀̀nd̀̀* is an assumptive hilly settlement or a place where there is abundant rock or stone. To boast of taking a journey to *Ìb̀̀nd̀̀* without returning with an evidence of a rock is an empty boast since there is no evidence to authenticate such expedition. Therefore, the pursuit of a course in life is compared to traveling to *Ìb̀̀nd̀̀*, a rocky town with winding routes that are full of obstacles. The successful return from *Ìb̀̀nd̀̀* is associated with ultimate achievement of a targeted goal. The proverb is a form of advice for people to foresee impediments and obstacles on the road to success. Being unsuccessful implies returning from *Ìb̀̀nd̀̀* without the required evidence – a rock. The impact of the message in this proverb seems to overwhelm the sound impact. However, the proverb emphasizes determination, perseverance and obduracy in approaching a targeted goal. Okpewho (2004) observes that the aesthetic value of repetition in a piece of oral performance [especially] if the repetition is from a phrase, a line or a sentence, is fundamentally delightful to the audience (p. 71). The fact that a word or a phrase is repeated attunes the senses to suspect that something fundamentally important is emphasized. Helen Chukwuma (2002) acknowledges the fact that repetition is an oral form of emphasis applied to enhance “importance, enormity and seriousness of a fact complemented by the tone of articulation” (p. 155). In this proverb, the tone of articulation rests on the repetition of the noun and the verb in the structure, thus reinforcing emphasis on importance and also re-invoking the musicality for harmony.

2.10 Proverb #10

The next proverb links us with man’s showiness, pomposity and over confidence:

Nkáp ntá àfùrè èkpàt íchìp, ñwã-ñwá àdí sé ñwópó-ñkòhò.

I have consumed a bagful of kernel, talk less of a mere handful.

It is a show of prowess, strength and boastfulness about one’s success in life. The boast in this proverb measures the exploits of the speaker in his consumptive ability in eating a bagful of palm kernels, not to mention a mere handful. The man that consumes a bagful of palm kernel can crack and consume a handful without the fear of being struck with illness, bellyache, or of sustaining pain in his jaws. It is a way of self-reassurance and self-confidence while facing challenges. The competitor is somewhat boastful in his competence to surmount significant challenges, talk less of an infinitesimal type or minor one. Over-confidence could turn out to be very fatal in life. Boasting can make an individual to be afraid of his opponent’s strength. But more often, it reduces one to the level of shame when the mission of the boast is not accomplished. Therefore, the proverb implies that the best approach to life is that of moderation and soberness; one has to be modest and gentle and not showy even when one’s mission is accomplished. Invariably, pride is not an admirable quality because it goes before a fall. Goal pursuance does not necessitate boastfulness. The wisdom of the elders says that: “Ásé ádè nkò émúmùm nkùkù èwúñ úbòk èwúñ úkót, ké éwó ké ájén ányíé” (It is only when the locust is maimed that you can confidently claim it is meant for the child). In other words, **it is only when one is finally successful that he should claim to be an achiever.** In this proverb, the second part of the *Ánààñ* vernacular provides the sustainable musicality as in the words *ñwã-ñwá* and *ñwópó-ñkòhò* respectively. The next proverb emphasizes the need to seek the consent of the elders of any traditional community if progress is to be achieved in any endeavor:

2.11 Proverb #11

Ísídéhé ètè-ílùñ ìlìñòkè àbòbòm ájén-ílùñ ábén ábòbò.

If the village head does not have an inkling of a masquerade play, his subject cannot display it.

There is nothing in the community that could be done without the consent of the head. The Chief security officer of a community is the head of that community. Therefore, this proverb is highlighting the importance of the leader as the “owner” of the community. The proverb justifies the fore-knowledge of the head in any coup or war or clash, stating that the leader must know about it and give his blessing, or be hinted before it is carried out, else it cannot be successful.

2.12 Proverb #12

Àmì ndé únèn, úkwò ásàñá ànyòñ, ùkwù ásàñá ísòñ.

I am the hen, pursued by a flying hawk and a crawling fox

Man does not live in a vacuum; he shares the same environment with others. There is bound to be conflict, jealousy and hatred. This proverb has to do with persistent persecution by suspected enemies. The persecuted now sees himself as a potential prey at the hands of his persecutors. The *Ánààñ* have this proverb for protracted animosities; that hawk flying above and that fox crawling below, are interested in the potential prey – the hen. The prospective victim pursued by both predators is a target for elimination. Implicitly, the proverb advises one to be careful in life and not to trust everyone since one does not know who one’s real enemies are. This kind of thinking has contributed to man’s absurd understanding of life. Application of a little carefulness in life can ease the unbearable aspects of human existence.

III. CONCLUSION

The richness of oral tradition could be found in its versatility. The Ánáàñ proverb expresses oral fecundity in its versatile application in various situations, since the proverb, observably lubricates discussions. Apart from its musicality located in the tone, Ánáàñ proverbs reconstruct instructions and meanings in discourse to the rubrics. Such is seen in an eloquent user who positions the proverb as a metaphoric tableau. However, proverbs can be used occasionally in delicate discussions to euphemize meanings, thus underscoring its usage as an elixir in a complicated discourse. The proverb is an invaluable preserved African language instrument that preserves the original African core linguistic values. The Ánáàñ proverbs carry the philosophical imprint of the Ánáàñ people and remain the oldest symbol of identity of the Ánáàñ. Therefore, there is need to carry out more extensive fieldwork in order to garner more samples, for documentation, study, and preservation for generations yet unborn.

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