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Likuba and Annang proverbs: An ethnographic and sociolinguistic study

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SCIENCES DU LANGAGE, LITTÉRATURES ET ARTS

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Résumé. Les proverbes sont des éléments essentiels de la communication dans les communautés africaines. Ce sont les maximes traditionnelles qu'utilisent les gens pour se rapporter aux autres dans les sociétés. Ce sont également des outils puissants qui propulsent des interactions stimulantes, intéressantes, à impact culturel et pleines de sagesse (principalement dans des contextes informels) entre les Africains. Cette étude vise à explorer les catégories et les fonctions des proverbes dans deux communautés africaines (les peuples *Likuba* dans la région de la Cuvette au nord du Congo et *Annang* dans l'État d'Akwaibom au Nigeria). Il s'agit d'une recherche qualitative-descriptive. L'observation participante a été utilisée pour collecter les données. Les théories fonctionnelles et sociologiques de l'analyse des proverbes et du contenu ont été appliquées dans le traitement des données de cette étude. Elle se base sur 24 proverbes dont 12 *Likuba* et 12 autres *Annang*. L'analyse des proverbes *Likuba* prend en compte les intentions des locuteurs dans les salutations quotidiennes. En définitive, il s'avère que les proverbes *Likuba* et *Annang* appartiennent à des diverses catégories. Ils remplissent les fonctions sociales, artistiques et didactiques. Les proverbes *Likuba* sont uniques en raison de leur occurrence en tant que partie intégrante de l'acte de salutation dans la vie sociale. Cette indication ethnographique révèle que l'intention du locuteur va au-delà de l'attention de son interlocuteur à celle l'ensemble de la communauté *Likuba*. Cet article se propose comme une contribution à des travaux antérieurs sur les proverbes en général, et les proverbes *Likuba* et *Annang* en particulier.

Abstract. Proverbs are essential elements of communication in African communities. These are the traditional maxims that people use to relate to others in societies. They are also powerful tools that propel stimulating, interesting, culturally impactful and wisdom-filled interactions (primarily in informal contexts) among Africans. This study aims to explore the categories and functions of proverbs in two African communities (the *Likuba* people in the Cuvette region of northern Congo and the *Annang* in Akwaibom State in Nigeria). This is a qualitative-descriptive research. The participant-observation method was used to collect data. Functional and sociological theories of proverb and content analysis were applied in processing the data under study. It is based on 24 proverbs of which 12 *Likuba* and other 12 *Annang*. The analysis of *Likuba* proverbs takes into account the intentions of the speakers in daily greetings. Ultimately, it turns out that the *Likuba* and *Annang* proverbs pertain to diverse categories. They fulfill social, artistic and didactic functions. *Likuba* proverbs are unique because of their occurrence as an integral part of the act of greeting in social life. This ethnographic indication reveals that the speaker's intention goes beyond the attention of his interlocutor to that of the entire *Likuba* community. So, this article is intended as a contribution to previous work on proverbs in general, and the *Likuba* and *Annang* proverbs in particular.

Mots-clés : Proverbes, *Likuba*, *Annang*, salutation, communication.

Keywords: Proverbs, *Likuba*, *Annang*, salutation, communication.

Introduction

For Syzdikov (2014, p. 318),

The wisdom and the spirit of the people are manifested in its proverbs and sayings, and acquiring proverbs and sayings of one's own nation or other nations, not only contributes to a better knowledge of the language, but also promotes a better understanding of the way of thinking and the nature of the people who speak it. Proverbs and saying are pearls of folk wisdom.

Actually, in many traditional communities around the world, elders use proverbs in many daily social interactions to convince, educate, and socialize younger generations. This suggests that the notion of wisdom in these communities is closely linked to the age and extensive experience of the speakers. Today, scientific works bearing on proverbs in general, and on African proverbs in particular, abound. We note on the one hand, the compilation of African proverbs transcribed with a translation into European languages, and on the other hand, a strong impulse from the authors to concentrate on the proverbs in their contexts of use in traditional communities. We therefore see that this new orientation leads us to believe that proverbs owe their quintessence and their uniqueness to the specific linguistic communities of which they are the prerogative. In the same spirit, this article aims to highlight the psychological and physical circumstances inherent to the context of use of proverbs in the Likuba communities in the Republic of Congo and Annang in Nigeria. It is supported by the idea that the Likuba and Annang proverbs contain convergent traditional aspects beyond their particularities. The authors therefore attempt to answer the following questions:

- What are the different categories of Likuba and Annang proverbs?
- What functions do the Likuba and Annang proverbs fulfill in traditional societies?
- What are the particularities of Likuba and Annang proverbs?

The data to substantiate the investigation were gathered from the native members of Likuba community residing in Brazzaville and from Annang people of Akwaibom State Nigeria in December 2023. The age of informants varies between 20 to 60 years old.

This study adopts two theories, the sociological theory and the functional theory of proverbs. The sociological theory deals with the social and cultural functions of proverbs within a society. There exists no single founder of this theory; rather it can be traceable to an anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski, a polish scholar; Wolfgang Mieder, a German paremiologist; and Alan Dundes an American folklorist. This theory focuses on the role of cultural

artifacts that reflects and shapes social norms and values of a people (Hymes, 1974). Now we turn to the speech communities.

1. The Speech communities

For the French and Belgian missionaries, the Likuba people are a cluster of small tribes including the *Apfuru*, *Abanhos*, *Bayanzis* and *Ubanguians* (Sauter, 1966 cited in Tsono Mowelle, 2018). They belong to one large tribe; they have the same tattoos and speak the same language. They might have come from the Ubangi River four generations before 1889 (Bruel, 1935 cited in Tsono Mowelle, 2018, p. 10). According to Onongo (1986, p. 16-17) cited in Tsono Mowelle, 2018, p. 10), The *Bobangi* people originated from the present Republic of Uganda and migrated to the West. However, as we glean from Tsono Mowelle (ibid), the *Likuba* claim that their patriarch is Ngobila and they came from the former Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. They live in different areas: *mboka* (the city-state) and *nganda* (the fishing camp). The *Likuba* live in Mossaka district in the Cuvette region in northern Congo. These riverside people live on fishing. That is the utmost reason why the images of fish, canoe and water abound in *Likuba* proverbs. *Likuba* people speak *Likuba*, a C17 Bantu language (Guthrie, 1953). The *Likuba* varieties are spoken in villages such as: *Bowulu*, *Mbanza*, *Konda*, *Sengolo* and *Mbombi*. The data to substantiate our investigation was collected from the *Likuba* people residing in Brazzaville. Having traced back the origin of the *Likuba* and their language, in what follows, we turn to the Annang community.

The *Annang* people include eight major tribes in Akwaibom State namely, *Abak*, *Essien Udim*, *Etip Ekpo*, *Ika*, *Ikot Ekpene*, *Obot Akara*, *Oruk Anam* and *Ukanafun*. They live in the Southeastern part of Nigeria. *Annang* is a male dominated society. According to Adahada (2020) as cited in Williams, 2020), it is a patriarchal and the holders of its political offices and power are the male chiefs. It is a society in which men are extraordinarily meant to be powerful. Furthermore, Gay and Susanti (2017) as cited in (Ismail and Santoso, 2018) reveal that power never escapes from the patriarchal culture; a culture that distinguishes the role of women from male. A lot of wives depend on their husbands for basically everything. They cannot talk in the assemblies of men except if granted permission by their husbands to do so. By contrast, educated women are not exempted from the culture of the *Annang* people. Considering the patriarchal nature of *Annang* society and the position of wives in the society, Nana (2020) cited in Toby

and Obarisiagbo (2023) states that due to the patriarchal background of African society women are being treated as articles that are bargained, purchased and which can be dropped or transferred. The *Annang* people from *Ikot Ekpene* made up the sample population of our study. Prior to that, it is worth defining the term ‘proverb’.

2 Proverb defined

In *Likuba* the word ‘proverb’ is referred to as *ekolongo*. It encompasses parable, veiled discourse or folkloric oral genres like myths, tales and riddles. Following Ruth Finnegan (1976) cited in (Enang, 2018), Annang proverbs originate from Annang cultural experiences such as: folklores, belief system, values, attitudes, perception, emotions and entire system of thought and feelings.

...R. Finnegan (1970, p. 383) defines the proverb as: *a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense, and salt and distinguished by popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it.*

In Africa as throughout the world, proverbs have a specific structure which makes them a unique folkloric genre. Mac Coinnigh, M. (2015, p. 112-113) writes:

the phonological, semantic, and syntactic devices that occur frequently in proverbs across languages may be termed proverbial markers (...) in that it (proverb) exhibits stylistic and structural adornment that are not typically found in naturally-occurring language.

Thus, the pertinence of the figurative aspects in the structure of *Likuba* and Annang proverbial sayings results in the contrast of literal and idiomatic meanings (cf. section 3).

Proverbs are classified into categories. Umanah and Okwueze (2014) identify social proverbs, proverbs about human relationship, marriage and family life and communal life. Other categories include those which teach wisdom and morality and which advise. This goes without saying that proverbs are related to hard work, counselling and nature. It worth stating that to a certain extent, the categories merge with the proverbs function as is the case in this investigation (cf. section3).

Besides, proverbs serve a great deal of functions. In this connection, Enang (2018) assumes that Annang proverbs perform “a variety of functions,” some of which are communicative, instructional and expressive. However, some others function as enforcer of morality, artistic device,

embodiment of wisdom and enhancer of traditional norms and values. In short, these functions are didactic and aesthetic.

Boadi (1972, p.183) has it that:

a careful observation of language context will reveal that in Akan (in Ghana) society the primary function of proverbs is aesthetic or poetic not didactic. The author's idea holds true when the proverb occurs as a piece of rhetoric. In this framework, Likuba proverbs may be adapted to any situation as code-switching. This, calls for the speaker's creative power which, in turn, requires the knowledge of tradition and linguistic sophistication.

Alluding to *Wolio* proverbs, Mansyur and Suherman (2020, p.275) state that *it is a medium for teaching linguistics knowledge in the form of sentences, language styles and lexicons. In the same vein, Agi- Otte (2021, p.39) observes that Ogba proverbs are frontiers of knowledge generation as they pass on knowledge from one generation to another.*

3. Proverbs and their context of usage

In African tradition proverbs are told in such social gatherings as: family councils, court palavers and traditional wedding and occasionally in daily life social interactions. Annang proverbs, for instance, are applied to :

all manner of situations such as social control, resolution of conflicts, judicial decisions, truth, justice, respect for rights and obligations, law and order, filial piety and respect for one's parents and the common good of the society (Okwueze, 2014, p.7)

In addition Likuba proverbs are associated with the greeting interactions. We shall discuss that point at length in section 3.

In Likuba and Annang communities proverbs are mainly spoken by elderly people who are always admired as envelopes of wisdom. Proverbs rendered in Annang dialects particularly are naturally aesthetic and powerful; they have the potentiality and capacity to sustain listeners throughout the duration of speeches or conversations. As we gather from Anana (2023, p. 191), Annang's *speeches are embellished with innate orations and the renditions of their proverbs (...) always harmonious, interesting and replete with semantic and pragmatic interpretations. An informal discourse in Anang that is devoid of proverbs lacks suspense. Likewise, Enang (2018) views any speech or literary composition that is not punctuated here and there without proverbs as naked.*

Consistent with functional approach, the discussion includes the rule of interaction, norm of interpretation, form, content and function. The texts are rendered in Likuba and Annang with an English version.

3.1. Likuba proverbs in greeting context

J. P. Ngolé (1988, p. 66) mentions: *in most African societies the use of a proverb is context specific. This suggests, there may be certain rules or tendencies about the sort of occasions on which proverbs are most frequent or the classes of people who should use them* (R. Finnegan, 1970, p.404). In Likuba community, people tell proverbs as an integral part of their particular greeting style, called *losako*. Usually, the term used to greet in Likuba as in both Congolese national languages (*Lingala* and *Kituba*) is “*mbote*”. It involves the formal (good morning, good afternoon and good evening); and the informal (hi!).

Apart from the native members of Likuba community, the Moye people, in the central Plateau region in northern Congo, also value the “*losako*” practice. As a verbal interaction, the greeting event is *governed by rules or norms for the use of speech* (Hymes, 1972, p.56).

3.2 Rules of interaction and norms of interpretation

In Likuba community, *losako* is an ancestral tradition. It symbolizes how young people should owe respect to their elders and how they are rewarded with a word of wisdom. Following the community mores, the traditional greeting is administered according to the participants’ order of seniority. This means, whenever the Likuba people meet, young people utter *losako* and the elders reply with a proverb. However, the addressee should pay attention to the parental authority. If the addresser is an uncle for him, after telling a proverb, the addressee should return the salutation to his uncle because the latter deserves respect. In any case, the recipient responds with a proverb. In days gone-by, to some extent, women were discriminated in that purely Likuba take-and-give interaction. They could greet their male elders with *losako*, but men never utter *lasoko* to their female counterparts, whatever their age-groups.

3.3. Performance particulars

The conversations took place at Mossaka II Beach, a private touristic site located on the banks of Djiri River in the northern part of Brazzaville. There is a restaurant that offers specialties of the Likuba culinary art. Thus, the Likuba (people) go there on weekends to share their ethnic food and thereby to strengthen their ethnic ties. Usually, these meetings are also the opportunities for them to display the richness of their tradition through the performance oral genres. Thus, *losako* becomes the opening formula to the

related communicative events. For the sake of this research, the analysis is based on 12 conversations.

3.3.1. Conversation

Moyu (the younger): *Losako!* (Hi!)

Bongowa (the elder): (Proverb) *Bonanga bato.*

Literal meaning: Wealth (is) people.

Idiomatic meaning: Having a lot of people is a wealth

✓ Content and function

The term ‘wealth’ covers financial resources and social prestige. ‘people’ refer to the extended family. When a family member faces trouble he/she receives material and moral support from his/her bilateral kindred. If it is a criminal offense, for which the culprit is liable to pay a fine, for instance, these parents provide some financial contribution for him/her. Thus, the social prestige of a given family is measured by its size.

This proverb is told to instruct the addressee on interpersonal relations and social solidarity. Both are the foundations of human society. It is a social proverb.

The choice of this proverb depends on the speaker. Its content has nothing to do with the addressee’s agenda. It serves to inculcate the social cultural values of the Likuba people.

3.3.2 Conversation

Pea : *Losako!* Hello!

Bobeka: (Proverb) *Bokoto ba sanduku na mwenē olakisa te.*

Literal meaning: Never show a woman the bottom of your suitcase.

Idiomatic meaning: Never reveal your top secret to a woman.

✓ Content and function

If you have a top secret, never tell it to your wife, otherwise she will betray you as Samson’s wife did to her husband in the bible. Usually women do the opposite of what their husbands expect from them. If you inadvertently tell her a secret, when you quarrel her, she will reveal it in public. Then, you become a shameful laughingstock in the neighborhood. Therefore, fully trusting the wife can prove prejudicial for the husband in the couple’s life.

Embedded in the proverb is wisdom.

3.3.3 Conversation

A: *Losako!* Hello!

B: (Proverb) *mokɔn ŋgɔ misu tɛ*

Literal meaning: The back has no eyes

Idiomatic meaning: You don't always know when people plot your murder.

✓ Content and function

Your enemies may conspire to kill you, while you are ignorant if there is no one to keep you informed. Embedded in this proverb is an appeal to self-control in daily round life interpersonal relations, since we do not always know he that can harm. The proverb is a piece of advice told to preserve the addressee from the dramatic and tragic tricks of life such as fights with friends, poisoning or drowning. It fills an instructional function.

3.3.4 Conversation

A: *Losako!* Hello!

B: (Proverb) *Ekora mban̄go ekiwa na ye mi.*

Literal meaning: The runner uses his own breathe.

Idiomatic meaning: excessive ambition costs dear.

✓ Content and function

Nowadays, when some young people fail in their studies, feeling on the verge of despair, go to sign machiavellian covenants with sorcerers so as to become rich. Usually, they are endowed with some mystic charms which function as knives with two backs. Unfortunately, these magic powers not only earn them money to buy material goods, but also demand human sacrifices later. As a result, most of those superstitious young men end up either by madness or accidental death. The proverb censures idleness and, instead, calls for a critical spirit in the decision- taking. The proverb teaches ancestral wisdom.

3.3.5 Conversation

A: *Losako!* Hello!

B: (Proverb) *Boyoko bo mwen̄ge tuwi ole ko.*

Literal meaning: Whatever the lack of food, the pike cannot eat excrement.

Idiomatic meaning: don't live beyond your capacity.

✓ **Content and function**

Living beyond one's means is a pretention that can lead to criminal offenses like robbing, stopping and shooting. An honest citizen should live according to his financial resources. A resourceless person, for instance, may assuredly plan to buy a bike rather than a comfortable car. Otherwise, he would merely build castles in Spain.

This proverb teaches ethics and morals. Both values converge in the making of a harmonious and peaceful society.

3.3.6 Conversation

A: *Losako!* Hello!

B: (Proverb) *onkēkē aya moloki*.

Literal meaning: The saint ends up becoming a sorcerer.

Idiomatic meaning: If you accuse others of witchcraft today, know that you will also be accused one day in turn. The proverb is associated with wisdom.

✓ **Content and function**

We accused our parents of witchcraft. Now they have passed away and we assume their elderly duties within our families. If a person becomes sick, people will think we are the evil-doers. Actually, when a person becomes sick we should help and take him to the healer than charging people with sorcery, and especially the elders.

The proverb is intended for the unwise young people who usually accuse the elders in cases of illness (without proof). Such allegations may lead to violence and result in tragedy. This proverb teaches ancestral wisdom.

3.3.7 Conversation

A: *Losako!* Hello!

B: (Proverb) *Kyēkē na mopi*.

Literal meaning: Thank a person for whatever he gives you.

Idiomatic meaning: Be grateful towards anyone for whatever he shares with you.

✓ **Content and function**

Suppose that you are walking down the road near a bus station. You are broke and suddenly it starts raining. A kind passer-by gives you 1, 50 CFA

(less than half U.S \$ 1) and you can take a bus to go home. In that context, though the bus fees are not much money, they have been of a great help for you so as to get home safe. This proverb teaches morals.

3.3.8 Conversation

A: *Losako!* Hello!

B: (Proverb) *Kwasa api po mayele*.

Literal meaning: The scramble gives the rat intelligence.

Idiomatic meaning: A warned person must become very careful.

✓ Content and function

When evil-doers are conspiring against a person and by chance the prospective victim pays attention to them whispering, he has to be careful and take some self-defense measures or simply run away. Because, if he deems his life really worth, there is no other better way to preserve it than escaping from any danger. Thus, the proverb preserves against danger. It is intended for the whole community.

3.3.9 Conversation

A: *Losako!* Hello!

B: (Proverb) *Loli mosolo te, mosolo na mabele*.

Literal meaning: The beard does not earn money; it's the chests that earn money.

Idiomatic meaning: The women are the source of wealth.

✓ Content and function

The proverb includes two images. *Loli* (the beard) and *mabele* (the chests) refer to the female and male genders. In Likuba and Congolese traditions during the wedding ceremony, the happy bride earns wealth to her family. Apart from her own costumes, her family receives drinks, diverse gifts and the bride price. The rate of the bride price has increased from 6,000CFA francs in the past to 50.000CFA Francs (U.S \$ 1, 00) officially nowadays (A. Ngalouo-Antso, 2019). Usually, the groom's family receives some drink, foodstuffs and a goat from their in-laws. Let it be mentioned in passing that, the African tradition contrasts with the Indian. In Indian the bride is she that pays the bride price to her groom.

Thus, families with many daughters enjoy a social privilege in the Likuba community. The proverb instructs and please.

3.3.10. Conversation

A: *Losako!* Hello!

B: (Proverb) *Ngubu emwene bwato obosa te*

Literal meaning: The female hippopotamus never breaks the canoe.

Idiomatic meaning: women never speak in public.

✓ Content and function

Women never speak in public during the performance of such social events as family councils and court palavers in Likuba and Congolese tradition. They are nervous and likely to lose control and offend. This usually causes the debate to reach a deadlock. However, women can make some suggestions when men conclude behind the house or in the wood near the village. The proverb is an instruction for women to avoid to interfere with the duties reserved for absolutely for men by virtue of ancestral tradition

3.3.11. Conversation

A: *Losako!* Hello!

B: (Proverb) *Kema meya owumba te.*

Literal meaning: The monkey never jumps over the fire because of its long tail.

Idiomatic meaning: better be wise than fiery.

The proverb teaches wisdom.

✓ Content and function

If and gangster breaks into your house and threatens to kill if you don't give him some money, it is wiser to give him the ransom, thereby sparing your family members' and your own lives. Never fight with a stronger enemy when there are fragile people around under your care. The proverb is intended to the whole Likuba community.

3.3.12 Conversation

A: *Losako!* Hello!

B: (Proverb) *Nsoso asekoli mosoli lokwa lokole mbwa .*

Literal meaning: The rooster wakes up the fisherman, but it is the dog that eats the fish bones. Idiomatic meaning: ingratitude is a default in social life.

✓ Content and function

Fisherman should get up early to go to the river. The rooster's crowing helps him wake up in time and allows him to better prepare for fishing. But after having a good catch, back to the village, he completely forgets the rooster. Surprisingly enough, it is the opportunist dog that eats the fish bones: This is ingratitude. Instead of being grateful to the person who helped you, you completely forget him/her. The lesson to be learned from this proverb is that ingratitude is a default in social life. Having studied Likuba proverbs, we shift now to Annang proverbs.

3.4 Annang Proverbs in context

The additional 12 Annang proverbs were randomly collected from participant observation of daily causal spoken conversations of the Annang people (of which the author is one). The Purposive sampling technique was used to gather data. Data were first extracted, presented and content analysis done. Annang proverbs have no specified formula rather they are used to fit in different contexts of use.

3.4.1. *Anek unek idionoke ke edemimo ada ukang*

Translation: He who dances does not know that his back is bending.

✓ Content and function

People dance when they are happy; when there are celebrated, and they are invited to dance. Dances symbolize a rosy side of life, pleasantries and the like. There are tendencies that when people dance and they are in high spirit they forget exactly the essence of their dancing.

This proverb has no relationship with dances as a physical or literal concept but a great warning for people who think they are islands and cannot receive any instructions from others. Normally, it is uttered by an individual whose advice (he or she knows that is very important) is neglected or rejected by the person he or she advises. This therefore acts as a reminder for the person who is advised to think twice and accept the advice in questions.

3.4.2. *Ese yemaweiven ebot umemeya*

Translation: People normally look for a black goat in the afternoon

✓ Content and function

A traditional Annang community is always dark in the night since there is no electricity. Also, a black goat is dark. The idea behind this proverb is that engaging in fruitless, senseless and near impossible works is a complete waste of time. This proverb is therefore an admonition for people to do the right thing at the right time. For example a woman that is looking for a husband should not wait until she is old, because at that time, she may not find anyone to marry.

3.4.3. Ayire wo aka iwot

Translation: He who pursues someone wants to kill him or her.

✓ **Content and function**

This is a proverb used as prevention for evil pursuers. It is meant for the Annang people to be cautious of people that are against them. It is a common belief in Annang communities that there are bad people that are always working assiduously to ensure that they exterminate others. Here, one is being reminded not to forget the endless activities of evil people all around them. They (Annang people) also believe that once someone has started thinking evil against another person, that evil fellow must ensure that he or she kills the person he is nursing ill-feeling against. Therefore, no matter how long evil has been nursed, the end result is the death of the person being pursued.

3.4.4. Anamidonkp afehe ke ini awo nmeibeneke aye

Translation: Evil is a powerful weapons that pursues whoever involves in it.

✓ **Content and function**

The Annang people believe that there is no evil that will not reproduce another evil. So, if anyone commits any form of atrocities, running away is just a mere waste of time. Such an individual is just advice to know that the reward for evil doing is getting evil.

This proverb serves as a check for the Annang people to desist from evil.

3.4.5. Dep dep ayoho aban

Translation: A drop of rain fills the pot.

✓ **Content and function**

This is an admonition proverb to the people of Annang not to despise a little beginning. In fact, if anyone just gets wealthy overnight, many Annang people would have thought that such a person is involved in a dubious act. This proverb is uttered to encourage people not to give up in their little beginning because they believe that persistency is the key to success.

3.4.6. Ayen Uhe abeit Uhe

Translation: The son of Une (a local animal) is like Une

✓ **Content and function**

This proverb is used to show bad replicated examples in people's lifestyles. A bad biological father for example cannot produce a good son. The same is seen in a wicked leader who is seen as unable to produce good followers. In other words, a bad person cannot train up some one that is good. This proverb is used in a situation when someone has laboured a lot to ensure that an individual he or she laboured for becomes great, but at the end of the day, the reverse is the case. It is used connotatively at all situations.

3.4.7. Akama afud ayekpa keafude

Translation: He who carries a cutlass, will die by that cutlass.

✓ **Content and function**

The Annang people believe that no wickedness can go unpunished. Anyone who plans to poison another people for example, will die by poison. This is a preventive proverb to discourage people from wickedness.

3.4.8. Owonkara-nkara, Abasi nkara-nkara

Translation: A wicked man must meet a wicked God.

✓ **Content and function**

Annang people disassociate themselves from wickedness and as such many of their proverbs are against it. This proverb is used both denotatively and connotatively. Literarily, it means if anyone is crafty, then craftiness will be his reward given to him by his God. The implied meaning is that any negative thing done attracts negativism. The proverb warns against

wickedness as opposed to the qualities required for solidarity and social cohesion.

3.4.9. Akpedia nkap ye idicho-oweo kama ayan ekpa

Translation: If you eat with a wicked person, use a long spoon.

✓ **Content and function**

The long spoon here symbolises the carefulness and wisdom that an individual needs to apply when he or she deals with wicked people. Wicked people are terrible people therefore, they should not be taken for granted but cautions should be applied in interacting and communication with them.

3.4.10. Eimidemesediana Kubok

Translation: The millipede that crawls on one's body is always removed by the hands

✓ **Content and function**

The Annang people believe that filial relationship cannot be broken irrespective of whatever comes out of it. A bad son for example, should not be rejected by the father irrespective of what he has done, because he is better than the good friend. This proverb is always used to indicate the importance of blood relationship. Again, anyone who thinks that he can disassociate himself or herself from bad relations is wasting his or her time because the blood links them together. So, they are advised to trade with them (bad relations) gently.

3.4.11. Atono afid mbenusun asefere nsqnsq; ade adiyene isifereke

Translation: He who shits by the roadside will forget it quickly; but he who mistakenly matches it on his or her feet will not forget it.

✓ **Content and function**

This proverb means that there are certain terribly bad situations that someone deliberately or imperceptibly causes but these leave indelible marks and unforgotten regrets in the life of another person entirely. This proverb is always used when something negatively happens. It is always uttered by people with revengeful spirits. The person that feels the pains will be the one who will remind the offender of what he did before; a negative reminder that

he has not forgotten the previous offences that he or she committed. In one word, the proverb reinforces ethics and moral probity.

3.4.12 *Edimakpan iwang ikpana urua*

Translation: Rain prevents people from going to farm not market.

✓ Content and function

This proverb has multiple interpretations. Here, we shall give only three: (i) literarily here, market is seen as the source where people could easily get foodstuff and other things to buy. Plants will take time to germinate, grow and be mature for harvesting in the farm. Therefore, where people easily get their sources of survival should not be neglected irrespective of what goes on. (ii) Connotatively, rain here symbolizes obstacles that prevent only weak minds from achieving their goals; but not those that are resolute and determined. (iii) Again, people's attitudes determine how they handle their problems; their dispositions can lead to either an end to their problems or they being demoralized and defeated by their problems. Thus, the proverb teaches wisdom.

4. Results

The Likuba and Annang proverbs under study fall into three categories: the social proverbs, the proverbs related to safety and security, and the revengeful proverbs. As stated earlier, the discussion includes also the proverb teller's intent in the rendition.

As a matter of fact, 6 Likuba proverbs (3.1.3.2; 3.1.3.6; 3.1.3.7; 3.1.3.8; 3.1.3.9, 3.1.3.12) and 9 Annang proverbs (3.2.1; 3.2.2; 3.2.3; 3.2.4; 3.2.5; 3.2.6; 3.2.7 3.2.10; 3.2.11; 3.2.12) are classified as social proverbs. The Likuba social proverbs inculcate the social cultural values, teach ethics and morals, and therefore, reinforce the ethnic ties. Likewise, the Annang social proverbs socialize and some of them, for instance, warn against arrogance and idleness.

Besides, 4 Likuba proverbs (3.1.3.4; 3.1.3.5; 3.1.3.10; 3.1.3.11) and 1 Annang proverb are related to safety and security. They warn and preserve against such life dangers as: accidents, poisoning and death. Ultimately, the utterance (3.2.9) exemplifies the category of the Annang revengeful proverbs. The embedded in the proverb is the preventive measure from evil doing. Having discussed the categories and the functions of Likuba and Annang proverbs, now we embark upon the proverbs tellers' intent.

As already mentioned, the Likuba greeting context is a random encounter of the proverb teller and his interlocutor. Usually, he chooses the proverb spontaneously. As we gather from the analysis, the proverb content has not thing to do either with the addressee's agenda or his intent. As for the speaker, his intent goes beyond his addressee to the whole Likuba community.

However, unlike their Likuba counterparts, the Annang proverbs tellers pay attention to the context including the embedded ethnographic, linguistic and paralinguistic features and the function.

Conclusion

The present investigation of proverbs in context elucidates the common traditional aspects of Likuba and Annang cultures. However, the occurrences of Likuba proverbs in a greeting context as well as their spontaneous use underlie the uniqueness of Likuba culture. Finally, this paper is proposed as a contribution to the research projects on African proverbs in general, and in the Likuba and Annang communities in particular.

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