

PERFORMANCE, FUNCTIONALISM AND FORM IN İZQN ORAL POETRY

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Abstract

Since the publication of Ruth Finnegan's influential *Oral Literature in Africa*, way back in 1970, scholars have been paying earnest attention to oral traditions on the African continent. That seminal book pointed out to Africanist scholars the need to urgently collect and document the oral literatures of their various ethnic groups before they die out. However, it is the verbal arts of the major ethnic groups on the continent that very often benefit from this collection and documentation, as it were. Therefore, this study sought to examine the oral poetry of the Iẓon, a minority ethnic nationality, located in the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study employed unstructured interviews and participant observations to collect the data for the research. The transcribed and translated data was examined through three eclectic theories to the study of folklore: Russian formalism, performance and functionalism.

The study found out that Iẓon oral poetry is a combination of songs and one person's praise chants. Moreover, it revealed that praise chanting is a recent practice amongst the Iẓon that was introduced into Iẓonland by Chief Adolphus Munamuna from the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria. Furthermore, the study established that oral poetry plays important roles amongst the people. Besides, it ascertained that the performance of some sub-categories of the poetry is highly dramatic and theatrical. It also discovered that stylistic techniques such as formula, parallelism, proverb, ideophone, praise title, metaphor, repetition, alliteration, assonance, vowel lengthening, amongst others, give the poetry the quality of "literariness." In addition, the study found out that the poetry, like oral poetry in other ethnic groups, demonstrates the three qualities of change, adaptability and survival.

The study has contributed to existing scholarship on African oral traditions in the sense of collecting, documenting and generating awareness on Iẓon oral poetry, most importantly

pointing out the existence of praise chanting amongst a people who had no such culture and the conditions that gave rise to that practice.

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that all sources which I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references

Armstrong, Imomotimi

Date

Dedication

For Jah, the only true God

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Jehovah, for a love that no word comes close to modifying.

My mother, Woyengi-Inetemona, and father, Undutimi Dengimo, who can make any sacrifice to ensure that all their children are educated.

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Ms Wicks, Manager Student Bureau, responded swiftly to all my inquiries even when I had not come to Rhodes University. She also readily wanted to accommodate me, a postgraduate student, in one of the undergraduate residences when she knew I would not be able to afford a stay in the postgraduate halls of residence. To her, too, I extend warmest thanks.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter gives the background to the study. As such, it examines the context, the goals or aims and the objectives of the study. In addition, it identifies the ethnic group with which the study is concerned, as well as considering some of their relevant socio-religious aspects that will enable an understanding that underpins chapter three of this research. Furthermore, the chapter details with the three interdisciplinary theories to the study that will be used in examining the research data.

The Context of the Study

It is sometimes argued that the advent of modernity into Africa affected its oral traditions. To put it in different terms, some aspects of Africa's indigenous cultures have either died out or are adapting due to the influence of socio-political issues, Christianity and Islam (Kaschula, "The Oppression" 117; Ajuwon, "The Preservation" 66; Akinyemi 30; Kunene et al 12). In fact, Kaschula puts it bluntly: "The natural development of isiXhosa orature and literature, as with all South African indigenous literatures ended with the arrival of European missionaries" ("The Oppression" 117). Furthermore, Ajuwon quotes Fadipe on the way the missionaries of both faiths mounted campaigns against abidance to traditional practices in Yoruba land:

The adherents succeeded in part in creating differences within the hitherto homogeneous society. For instance, during the annual worship of ancestors, the sincere Muslim convert would find himself unable to join the members of the rest of his extended family for collective worship. All the important occasions of family reunion in which the oracle *Ifa* figures would, for that reason, be taboo to the good Muslim. (66)

This was one of the reasons why in October, 2003, in Paris, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) made it a goal to safeguard "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage" (Okpewho, Introduction viii; also see Haring 7-8). It was this goal that influenced the topic, "the Preservation and Survival of African

Oral Literature" for the International Society for Oral Literature in Africa (ISOLA) conference held in Gambia in 2004 (Akinyemi 30).

Oral traditions in Africa have been receiving serious critical attention since the publication of Ruth Finnegan's seminal book, *Oral Literature in Africa*, way back in 1970. For one thing, the book impressed on scholars the urgent need to collect and preserve the "manifestations of the human spirit," as Stith Thompson puts it, of their ancestors (171). For another, African scholars were compelled, as it were, to refute some perceived claims of the book. No wonder, Okpewho points out that "the study of the African epic was born in denial" ("African Oral" 98). All this has led to an abundance of journal articles, monographs and books on African oral traditions (see, for example, Darah, *Battle of Songs*; Cope, *Izibongo: Zulu Praise-Poems*; Opland, *Xhosa Oral*; Kaschula, *The Bones*; Nketia, *Funerary Dirges*; Babalola, *The Content and Form*).

However, much of this literature is focused on the major nationalities on the continent. Ogede even puts it succinctly and perhaps provocatively when he notes that "in the collection and analysis of African oral literary materials generally, it is the larger ethnic groups that have usually dominated the field" (79). Sadly, the conclusions from such studies have been used to make "big generalisations" on all the oral literatures of Africa. This is surely one of the regrets of Finnegan ("Studying the Oral"). Herein lies the significance of this study because it attempts to study Ịzọn oral poetry, a minority ethnic group both in Nigeria and in Africa.

From personal investigation, Ịzọn oral poetry has not been properly or fully studied. As such, the study is borne out of the need to wholly retrieve, document and generate awareness on the existence of an important aspect of the Ịzọn people of Nigeria. This is in sync with the clearly-stated goal of the recently formed World Oral Literature Project on its website that "there is an urgent global initiative to document and disseminate endangered oral literatures before they disappear without record" (*World Oral*).

Having established the context, rationale and significance of the study, it is fitting that the study gives some background to the ethnic group it is concerned. In doing so, the study shall, in the first place, give attention to the terms that are used to identify the people. This is important because it shows the particular *linguistic group* in the nationality that the research is concerned.

Ijọ, Ijaw or Iẓon?

The name “Ijọ” refers to the predominant ethnic nationality in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Adangor 360). They are also called “Iẓon” and “Ijaw”, the anglicised form of “Ijọ”. “Ijọ” is more expansive than “Iẓon” in the sense that it includes those who do not speak the Iẓon language. This is one of the reasons why some Ijọ *ibe mọ* (clans, *ibe* being the singular form) do not identify themselves as “Iẓon”. In fact, they take serious exception to being termed “Iẓon”. Speakers of the Iẓon language make up the majority of the Ijọ community. There are times when politicians play on these two terms, as it were, to achieve their desired political ends. *This research basically concerns the Iẓon, taken as the linguistic group*, not the Ijọ, the larger term. Where the name “Ijọ” is used, it is taken to mean the whole nationality, including the linguistic group.

Since matters of linguistics have been used to set apart a people from a larger ethnic group. It is appropriate to consider the linguistic situation amongst the larger Ijọ group, something which will serve the reader in good stead throughout this thesis. This is important because it is *ibe mọ* (clans) that make up the larger Ijọ group. The *ibe* is the most important unit or structure amongst the Iẓon (this will be explored later). Every *ibe* (clan) comprises a number of communities. Some have six (6), seven (7) and eight (8). Furthermore, each *ibe* speaks its own dialect of the language(s) associated with the ethnic group (Alagoa, *A History* 15; Leis 170). In addition, some clan varieties are not mutually intelligible with others. It is for this reason that Williamson points out that the Ijọ are in “a very complex linguistic situation” (“A Common Language” 107). Moreover, giving attention to the linguistic situation will help the reader to know the *ibe mọ* (clans) that this research is concerned.

The Languages and Dialects of the People

All the languages spoken by the Ijọ belong to the language phylum called NIGER-CONGO, the earliest form of language that was spoken around the basins of River Niger and River Congo (Ndimele et al., “Language” 72). This NIGER-CONGO has many language families, among which are IJOID and BENUE-CONGO - the two spoken by the Ijọ (Ndimele et al., “Language” 72). The IJOID group is divided into Defaka and Ijọ. According to Williamson and Efere, Defaka is spoken in Rivers state; while Ijọ is spoken in Edo, Ondo, Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta states in Nigeria (“Languages” 97). Ijọ is divided into East and West Ijọ. The East Ijọ dialects consist of Okrika, Kalabari, Nkoro and Ibani in Rivers State, and Nembe-Akassa spoken in

Brass and Nembe Local Government Areas in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. On the other hand, West Ijò is divided into Iẓon and Inland Ijò. These are all spoken in Bayelsa State.

Iẓon, which is the biggest language among the Ijò, extends to Ondo, Edo and Delta states. Iẓon has several dialects. In Bayelsa, the only state owned entirely by the Ijò, the Iẓon dialects include East Tarakiri, Bùmò, Basan, Ogboin, Apòì, Oporomò and East Olodiana spoken in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area. Kolokuma and Opokuma dialects are spoken in Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area. In the Yenagoa Local Government Area, Gbaraìn and Ekpetiama are spoken. Tungbo, Kumbowei, Mein, Kabo, West Tarakiri and Oiakiri are spoken in Sagbama Local Government Area. The dialects in Ekeremor Local Government Area include Iduwini, Ekeremòr, West Tarakiri and Oiakiri (See, for example, Williamson and Efere “Languages”, 99-101, for all the dialects of Iẓon and where they are spoken). Inland Ijò comprises three dialects: Biseni, Ọkòrdja (Akita) and Oruma. Biseni and Ọkòrdja are spoken in Yenagoa Local Government Area, while Oruma is spoken in Ogbia Local Government Area. Epie-Atisa and Engenni, of the Edoid group of the BENUE-CONGO language family are spoken by some communities in Bayelsa and Rivers states. Ọgbja of the Central Delta group of the BENUE-CONGO is spoken by the communities in Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Of the dialects of the Iẓon language, Kolokuma is seen by many speakers as the acrolect. It is for this reason why out of all the dialects of Iẓon, it is Kolokuma that is used by the media in Bayelsa State. In fact, the use of Kolokuma by newscasters both on the radio and on television started from when Bayelsa and Rivers states were under the then-Eastern region of Nigeria. It has several primary school textbooks, Iẓon-English dictionary, among other publications. It is also taught as a subject and a course of study in some primary, secondary and tertiary schools in Bayelsa State. In addition, in 1965, the British linguist, Kay Williamson, published *A Grammar of the Kolokuma Dialect of Ijò*, based on her doctoral thesis at Yale. To date, it remains the only standard text that gives a general description of any dialect of the languages spoken by the Ijò ethnic group. Kay Williamson later taught for many years at the Universities of Ibadan and Port Harcourt, in Nigeria, developing and writing many papers on Ijò linguistics (See, for example, Ndimele and Horton 168-176).

The Dialect(s) of Transcription

The poems collected and analysed in this study were transcribed in the Kolokuma and Ogboin dialects of the Iẓon language respectively. Ogboin was used because the oral poet from whom the chants were recorded comes from an Ogboin-speaking community and always transcribes his poems in his dialect. It would have been arrogance on my part, being a kolokuma speaker, to transcribe his poems with him in another dialect other than his, especially when Kolokuma, despite its “status,” has not been made the central dialect by law in Bayelsa State. In fact, many educated persons who speak other dialects of the Iẓon language take exception to statements like “Kolokuma is the best.”

Having established the linguistic situation of the people, the study now turns to the people themselves. However, my approach here is different from some theses in folklore studies where researchers give background information of nationalities that has no link with the main study. What the study shall try to do here is to look at those aspects of the Iẓon that will aid the reader in appreciating their cultural productions that are critically examined from chapter three of this research. The study now turns to the geographical location of the people, the states they inhabit in Nigeria and the different *ibe mọ*. The geographical location is important because the fauna and flora of the environment are reflected in their poetry.

The Geographical Location and the People

As pointed out earlier, the Ijọ, which the Iẓon are part of, are the predominant ethnic nationality in the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Owolabi and Okwechime 11). They are concentrated in six states: Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Delta and Ondo. It is the fourth largest of the over 350 ethnic groups in Nigeria (Ukeje 15; Ukiwo 499; Abdul Mustapha iv). Their geographical location, the Niger Delta:

Is Africa's largest delta covering some 7,000 square kilometres. About one third of this area is made up of wetlands, and contains the largest mangrove forest in the world (5,400-6,000 km)It is the most densely inhabited delta in the world. In addition, it consists of a number of distinct ecological zones such as coastal ridges, barriers, freshwater swamp forests and lowland rain forests. (Nyananyo et al 12; see also Owolabi and Okwechime 10; Ebiede 139)

Because the environment is a delta, rivers and creeks are everywhere. The environment is divided into wet and dry seasons. However, it is its heavy rains that are generally known. In

fact, Nyananyo et al contend that “no month passes without some amount of rainfall” (17). The dry season lasts for three months from December to February, while the wet season starts from March and ends in November (Oyegun 31). Furthermore, as rightly noted by Williamson, “the inland parts of the delta are fertile, as the silt brought down by the Niger in the flood season (roughly, July to October) is deposited on the farmland; but the parts nearer the ocean [Atlantic] and towards the east are tidal, and little vegetation except mangroves flourishes in the salt water” (*A Grammar* 1).

The Ijò are great fishers, canoe carvers and farmers. This is understandable because their rivers, lakes, swamps and creeks are said to contain at least 150 species of fish, making the ecosystem the largest assortment of fish on the African continent and one of the largest in the entire world (Nyananyo et al 19). The environment is equally rich in fauna and flora. Some of the important economic trees are oil palm, raffia palms, mahogany, iroko and the African mango which produces *ogbono* (a substance that is used to thicken soup after grinding). The people grow crops such as cassava, coconut, yam, okra, pepper, sugar cane, maize, plantain, banana, and so on. The type of animals found include a great variety of snakes, tortoises, lizards, alligators, monkeys, grasscutters, porcupines, warhogs, amongst others. As expected, all these find their way into the oral literature of the people: songs, tales, chants, proverbs, riddles, and so on. From chapter three, the reader shall be seeing the brilliant use of images from the flora and fauna of the Niger Delta environment in the poems. Moreover, the Ijò are great traditional dress makers.

The general basic structure of the Ijò ethnic group is *ibe* (clan). As rightly noted by the respected Ijò historian, E. J. Alagoa, an Ijò *ibe* "comprises a group of villages and persons who speak a common dialect of Ijò. They generally also believe in a common ancestor for the subgroup" (*A History* 15; see also Leis 170). However, Williamson and Efere have pointed out that the assumption of all the communities of an *ibe* (clan) speaking the same dialect “is not always the case” (99). In any case, E. J. Alagoa, in 1972, puts the number of clans at forty-three (43) (*A History* v-vii). However, in the far-reaching book, *The Izon of the Niger Delta*, published in 2009 by the Ijaw History Project Committee that is edited by E. J. Alagoa, J. P. Clark and Tekena Tamuno, fifty (50) *ibe mọ* (clans) were identified.

Going by the fifty (50) identified in that book, the Iẓon have thirty-two (32). These are Arogbo, Furupagha, Egbema, Gbaranmatu, Ogbe, Isaba, Diebiri, Apoi East, Olodiana East, Tuomo,

Mein, Seimbiri, Obotebe, Tarakiri West, Kabowei, Iduwini, Ogula, Operemo, Oiakiri, Kumbowei and Kolokuma. Others include Opokuma, Gbarain, Olodiana West, Ekpetiama, Bumo, Basan, Tungbo, Tarakiri (East), Apoi East, Oporoma and Ogboin. Apoi West now speaks Yoruba but still maintains Ịzọn in its rituals (see, for example, Alagoa *A History* 25; Williamson and Efere 99). Of these thirty-two (32) Ịzọn clans, nineteen (19) or thereabout are found in Bayelsa State. These are Apoi East, some part of Mein, Seimbiri, some part of Tarakiri West, some part of Kabowei, some part of Kumbowei, Operemo, Oiakiri, Iduwini, Kolokuma, Opokuma, Gbarain, Bumo, Basan, Oporoma, Tarakiri East, Tungbo, Ekpetiama and Olodiana East (see, for example, Williamson and Efere 99-101). It is these clans that this research is about. Simply put, this research studies the poetry of the Ịzọn in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. In what follows, the study will consider the worldview and religious beliefs and practices of the people which, as expected, are reflected in their poetry.

Worldview, Death, Religious Beliefs and Practices

The cosmology of the people of the Ịzọn is categorised into two orders of existence: *kiri ọkpọ* and *tẹmẹ ọkpọ* (Okaba and Appah 149). *Kiri ọkpọ* is the visible world, the home of human beings, animals and plants. In other words, it is the world of flesh and blood. On the other hand, *tẹmẹ ọkpọ* is the immaterial world in which happenings are beyond the knowledge of the common man. It is the abode of *Woyengi* (God, the supreme creator), ancestors, spirits, deities (see, for example, J. P. Clark's introduction to *The Ozidi Saga* xxxiii). It is believed that knowledge of this order of existence is only accessible to infants, spirit mediums, witches and wizards. It is also believed that events in *tẹmẹ ọkpọ* have a direct bearing on *kiri ọkpọ*. Man is made up of two parts: *mini* (flesh) and *tẹmẹ* (spirit). A human being is created when these two come together and dies when they separate. It is the belief in these two worlds of existence and their constant interaction that informs the worldview and the concept of death of the people of Ịzọn. This cosmos is brought out in their poetry.

The first in the hierarchy of the beings in *tẹmẹ ọkpọ* is God. The Ịzọn, as earlier remarked, believe in the existence of God. To them, He is the creator of the universe (Okaba and Appah 150-151). He is the most powerful being in the universe. God has different names amongst them, some of them depends on the clan. However, the most popular ones are “woyengi” or “Oyin,” meaning “our mother” and “tẹmẹaraṣ,” meaning “she who creates.” As the reader can see from these names, God is seen as a woman. This is because of the matrilineal nature of the

Ịzọn. It is a woman who owns a child amongst the Ịzọn, even though the child bears the name of the father. As rightly noted by Clark, “in the large polygamous family run by every successful man, it is the mother who is for all practical purposes a child’s mainstay” (xxxiv). It is for this reason why the Ịzọn say “*kẹnị yengi bọ bina kị bina; kẹnị dau bọ bina bịnagha*” (kinship by the same mother is *the* kinship; kinship by the same father is not kinship”). Similarly, Main observes this about the Ịzọn conception of God as woman:

Temearu is the god who lives in the sky: she is woman because it is women who bear and produce. Her presence and interest in the world is not as great as that of the spirits. She has no shrine, fetishes or priest. Her assistance in times of great need can be invoked, however, by prayer....(qtd in Okaba and Appah 151)

As such, this belief in God as the most powerful and the matrilineal nature of the Ịzọn should be borne in mind when reading their oral poetry. For example, in the poem on Captain Mala in chapter four, the oral artist makes reference to the importance of kinship shared through the mother in talking about the relationship between the deceased, Captain Mala, and his half-brother, Nestor Binabor. In the religious poems, the church members sing that when one becomes a servant of God, no witchcraft, wizard or sorcerer can do harm to one. The Christians believe that witches and their like have power. However, to them, the power of God is greater because he created everything.

The strong belief in water spirits should also be noted because some poems make reference to those beings. These spirits are called *bini otu* (water people). Of importance is the belief of the people that this human world with its cars, skyscrapers and airplanes are replicated under the water. The only difference is that the ones under the water are the finest in the universe. Be it a river, creek, stream, canal or lake, there are people living under its water. According to the people, this is why some fishing nets are torn when fishing. The kind of life they live in there is better than the life humankind live on land (see, for example, Horton 201-202, on the beliefs of the Ịjọ of Kalabari). Previously, altars were erected and food provided on them for these goddesses. They teach the womenfolk of the community dance patterns, different hairstyles, songs and attire in dreams. Put differently, it is these water spirits that are “associated with contemporary invention and creation” (Horton 201). The women also copy them when these goddesses carry out shows on sandbanks.

Moreover, it is the belief that some of these water spirits have earthly husbands, which make it difficult for such men to have wives in real life. In addition, these water goddesses are more

beneficent than their land counterparts. As such, they are approached for children. Furthermore, they have children who come to be given birth by women on land. As noted by Okaba and Appah, they are also the source of “abundance of fish” (152). They are said to be beautiful: they have long hair and are fair in complexion. For these, they are offered food that are seen as foreign to the people like coconuts, eggs, biscuits, sugar and sweet drinks. There are many tales about persons who the people thought had drowned coming back after days in the water to regale them about amazing events in the abode of the goddesses. All this is reflected in the oral literature of the people such as songs, folktales, proverbs and so on. In chapter three, at least two poems are analysed which are informed by this belief in water spirits. Another point to note about the poetry of the Ịzọn is the concept of death. Let me give some attention to how the Ịzọn view the dead.

The Concept of Death

Death is called *fịi*, a noun. *Fịi* is also a verb, meaning to die. The Ịzọn believe that death is inevitable. To them, it is God that created it and equally has the power to stop it. Even gods and goddesses cannot stop it when God says it is enough for one. Death is feared and deeply felt. Ulli Beier asserts that “in Africa, the idea of death is not associated with horror. The living and the dead are in continuous contact and a large part of the religious life of the African is devoted to establishing a harmonious contact with the dead” (qtd. in Doh 78). This is also true of the Ịzọn. Like the Abanyole of Kenya, they maintain that at the death, “the spirit of the dead person advances to join the spirits of the other departed members of the community” (Alembi 8).

When a man dies, the Ịzọn man says he has gone to *dụwẹị ama bou*, the land of the dead. This *dụwẹị ama bou*, to them, is structured like the living, with children, men and women who do everything the living do (see, for example, Horton 200; Okaba and Appah 156). The difference is that the living (apart from children and some who have some occult powers) do not see them unless one of the dead decides to be seen by the living. One other difference is the belief that a man who has died has been relieved of his problems here on earth because *dụwẹị ama bou* is a place of total bliss. For example, someone who was physically challenged during his days as a being amongst the living becomes a perfect person after death.

To the Ịzọn, the dead play important roles in their lives. In the words of Ifie:

There exists no strict distinction of influence between the living and the living dead; when on earth, the living dead were leaders of their family units. While in the spirit world, they do not cease to interest themselves in the general welfare of their descendants. They remain the custodians and executors of public morality and a strong factor of social cohesion. (qtd. in Okaba and Appah 156)

For all this, the dead are celebrated. It is for this role played by the ancestors and the fact that the deceased has been relieved of his problems that an oral artist like Chief Munamuna will say in his chants, as the reader shall see in chapter four, that *zi bai kpọ kẹnị oge; fẹkoro bai kpọ kẹnị oge...* (the day of birth is a celebration; the day of death is another celebration). However, it is not every death that calls for a celebration. When child or a young person dies, there is no celebration; rather it calls for great mourning. It is a celebration when an old person dies.

Before now, when a person died, all the proper rituals, especially the highly important ritual called *obobo bi* (literally, “asking the ladder”, where the corpse is asked who killed him or her, whether s/he was a witch and how s/he should be buried, amongst others) must be carried out before the deceased was laid to rest (For a study of *obobo bi*, see Leis’ article in 1964 and Anderson’s in 1987). In fact, the Iẓon used to sing a highly specialised and dramatic form of songs during a wake. These songs were the subject of my unpublished MA dissertation at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria (see Armstrong, *Significance and Form*). There is also a strong belief in destiny, reincarnation, witchcraft and sorcery. All this brings to mind John. S. Mbiti’s observation:

Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious systems with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to violate it...Religion is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned. (1)

Therefore, it is important to know this Iẓon view of the dead before approaching their poetry in this research. Often times, this view is reflected in their proverbs in the songs and chants. The study now turns to what the Iẓon are internationally known for and what comes to the mind of the foreigner when the word, Ijọ, Ijaw or Iẓon is seen or heard.

Youth Activism/The Ijọ Struggle or Problem

Internationally, the Ijọ are known for youth activism because of the activities of their youths, such as blowing up of pipelines, kidnapping of expatriate oil workers, confrontations with the Nigerian army, amongst others, and these issues have crept into some of their poems (see, for

example, the section on functionalism in the praise chants of Chief Munamuna in chapter four). The root of this activism is *crude oil*. In 1956, crude oil was discovered in Oloibiri, an Ijò community in present-day Bayelsa State (Ako and Okonmah 57; Owolabi and Okwechime 2). The Nigerian government, through the Petroleum Act of 1969 and the Land Use Act of 1978 took control of crude oil from the Ijò and other minority groups in the Niger Delta (Ebienfa 637). Since then, the Ijò and the other smaller ethnic groups have been the thriving source of Nigeria's economy. As noted by John Ejobowah, "Nigeria extracts about 93.1 metric tonnes of oil annually from its soil to account for 2.9% of world production The entire annual production comes from the Niger Delta and the sea gulf of its shores, which hosts over a dozen oil companies, producing what accounts for 80% of Nigeria's annual revenue"(33). In the same way, Olayiwola Owolabi and Iwebunor Okwechime note:

Oil is, undoubtedly, the major contributor to Nigeria's economic growth and development. At independence in 1960, Nigeria had become self-sufficient in the production of crude oil following the discovery at Oloibiri in the Niger Delta in 1956....Since then, the country's fortunes have depended on the oil industry, which has effectively replaced agriculture in revenue yield. In fiscal terms, oil has also increased the strength of the federal government. In fact, oil revenues currently account for 80 percent of government revenues, 95 percent of export receipts and 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings. (2)

The paradox is that despite the huge money the Nigerian government has made since the exploration and production of oil from their environment, the Ijò are still one of the most underdeveloped nationalities in the world. Even the environment is no longer the same. The activities of multinational companies like Shell, Mobil, Agip, Chevron and Elf have wrought devastating effects on the environment, which have consequently, to some extent, obliterated their hitherto sources of livelihood. As a result of oil pollution, the fish are dying, the water from the rivers, lakes and creeks cannot be drunk, and the farms no longer have good yields. Other effects include the increasing rate of short lifespan and the unimaginable prevalence of diseases. In the words of Taiwo and Aina:

Today's urban development in major Nigerian cities can be traced to the oil wells located in the remote villages of the country where oil continues to gush out day and night. It is the oil of these villages that has in recent times brought skyscrapers, express roads, fly-overs and other physical structures to cities and towns which are far from the gushing wells. But for the territorial waters where the black gold, oil, is mined, there is a sad tale full of sound and fury signifying something - poverty and neglect. To them, the discovery of oil is a curse. It means poverty, hunger and disease. It means undiluted suffering, barefaced deprivation and capitalist exploitation, the magnitude of which can

only be compared with what happens to a cow in the hands of a selfish dairy man who is concerned only with milking the animal dry, caring less about its well-being and disposing of it as the milk well dries. As well as he makes his money the cow can wither and drop dead. (qtd. in Owolabi and Okwechime 16)

The multinationals, like the Nigerian government, do not care because they have the backing of the Nigerian government, which is ever ready to shoot down any youth who will stop their activities, for if they stop, the money the Nigerian government receives from them stops too (Ukeje 19). It is from this perspective that one can understand the anger of the youths. The sources of livelihood for their people throughout their existence have been fishing and farming. Then came oil. The business of exporting this oil in commercial quantities has polluted their ecosystem, meaning their sources of livelihood are gone. If the proceeds from this oil were used to compensate them for the lost ecosystem, it would be understandable. Unfortunately, they do not even see the money that their oil constantly gives to the Nigerian government.

In order to achieve justice, and to take over their resources, Ijò youths and those of other minority nationalities began to form resistant groups (Agbibo and Maiangwa 72). According to Said Adejumobi:

Between 1990 and 1999, no less than twenty-four ethnic based minority rights groups emerged in the Niger Delta region mostly with radical bent. These include the Egbesu boys of Africa (EBA), Chicoco Movement, Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Ijaw Peace Movement (IPM), Isoko National Youth, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). (qtd. in Okunoye 415; see also Nwajiaku 457; Ibaba 565; Anugwom 7-8; Ikelegbe, “Civil Society” 444-449)

The activities of some of these groups became even more radical after the hanging of the Ogoni writer and environmental activist, Ken Saro Wiwa, by the Sani Abacha led Federal government of Nigeria, for fighting against environmental degradation and the famous Kaiama Declaration wherein Ijò youths demanded total control of the resources in the Niger Delta region (Human Rights Watch, *The Niger Delta*; Ukeje 27; Ebienfa 638). The aftermath of these two events and others led to the formation of several militant insurgent movements, especially the highly militant Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) (see, for example, Ibaba 564-565). As a result of the blowing up of oil pipelines by the militant groups and the clashes between the groups and the Nigerian army, which was bringing down the output of crude oil exported from Nigeria, the administration of late Musa Yar'Adua, established the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs and in

2009, the Amnesty Programme. In the words of a one-time coordinator of the programme, Timi Alaibe:

The amnesty was a response by the then president to reduce fundamentally the escalation of violent conflicts that was [sic] taking place. After consultation with stakeholders, it was decided that there was a need to get the militants to lay down their weapons. That was the basis of the amnesty which was meant to stabilize, consolidate and sustain the security conditions in the Niger Delta region, as a requisite for promoting economic development in the area. (qtd. in Agbiboa and Maiangwa 73)

However, despite the intervention of the Amnesty Programme and erstwhile leader Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, an Ijò man (but not Iẓon) from Bayelsa State becoming the president of Nigeria, the region still remains volatile. Let it be added that before the Presidential Amnesty Programme, the Nigerian government had established two palliative developmental agencies: firstly, Oil Mineral Producing Areas Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992, and secondly, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2002 (Osaghae 196; Omotola 73-74). The latter is still in vogue.

Lying at the heart of the problem is ethnicity. The Hausa, the Yoruba and the Igbo are the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. All the others are minorities. To the Ijò, it is these dominant three ethnic groups that have taken control of their resources and those of the other minorities (Owolabi and Okwechime 28). As noted by Osaghae and Suberu, "ethnicity is generally regarded as the most basic and politically salient identity in Nigeria....Nigerians are more likely to define themselves in terms of their ethnic affinities than any other identity" (8). Similarly, Ben Naanen makes the observation that "a critical aspect of the national question is the problem of ethnic domination. A broad section of the Nigerian society seems profoundly dissatisfied with the country's political and administrative structure, and generally, the way it has been governed" (46; see also Agbiboa 10).

This phenomenon, which has been given considerable attention to in the paragraphs above will put the reader in good stead to appreciate some of the praise chants of the Iẓon verbal artist, Chief Munamuna, in chapter four.

However, in the section on religious beliefs, something very important was left out. This researcher did not give attention to the place of Egbesu in the life of the Iẓon man because he wanted the reader to firstly, understand the Iẓon and youth resistance. If the study had given attention to the occult of Egbesu before looking at youth resistance, it will have

affected the structure of the sections as well as the logical coherence of this chapter. In the next section, the study shall explore the occult of Egbesu amongst the Ijọ and its connection with youth resistance.

Egbesu, the Iẓon God of War

Egbesu, god of war, is the most important and powerful god in the pantheon of Ijọ deities. In other words, *Egbesu* is the arch-deity of the Ijọ. It is the mainstay of their war poetry. It should be quickly added that Egbesu does not fight every war. It only fights a war that is just (Anugwom 18; Ebienfa 639). It is for this reason that justice is associated with it.

Writing on the religious life of the Ijọ, E. J. Alagoa, makes this observation: “Of most direct relevance to the life of each *ibe*...was the national god.” (*A History* 19). He goes further to say that in most cases, the national god “is an Egbesu” (19). The quotation points to a plurality of the god, as it were. This is very important. Some Ijọ and Iẓon believe that the *Egbesu* of so-and-so *ibe* is more powerful than the one in so-and-so *ibe*. In any case, when there was a war between an Ijọ *ibe* and another people, somebody who wanted to go to that war from that *ibe* must be permitted by the Chief Priest of *Egbesu*. That means, everybody would now have to go to the community where the *Egbesu* shrine was to be prepared by the priest for a battle. When that warrior had been declared fit to go for the battle by the priest, that person, according to the people, would never be defeated by an enemy. Furthermore, the person who had been chosen by *Egbesu*, amongst other things, was expected to abstain from eating some specific food. Failure to carry out any of the instructions would result in death. It should be stated that *Egbesu* rituals did not prevent warriors from approaching the gods of their different communities and marine spirits, as it were, or going through the ritual bath of personal shrines. Even at that, in a war that involved the whole *ibe*, *Egbesu* had the final say in terms of whether one would go or not.

It is this god that Ijọ youths in the various militant groups draw on to fight the Nigerian army because, to them, they are fighting a just war, meaning *Egbesu*, who fights only when it is just, will protect them. In fact, one of these groups was called “Egbesu Boys of Africa” (see, for example, Anugwom 13). In an important paper on the relationship between *Egbesu* and Ijọ militants, Anugwom avers that he sees *Egbesu* deity as “emboldening, empowering and engendering the struggle of youth as being facilitated by the marginalization of the region within the Nigerian federal government” (6). Anugwom further contends:

It is commonly believed that the deity [Egbesu] has the power to confer invincibility on the warriors. But the reverence of Egbesu and the strong belief in him is not only something common to the youth militias. This deity represents a commonality of faith and fate among the Ijaw people. (15)

Anugwom makes this statement after conducting interviews with some former militants and elders amongst the Ijo (6). Anugwom points out that the inability of the Nigerian military to defeat the Egbesu Boys of Africa when the latter was in vogue was said to be the protection *Egbesu* offered it (14). This is what a respondent told Anugwom about *Egbesu* and its links with Ijo militias:

The Egbesu deity has time and time again assisted the Niger Delta fighters to be more or less invincible in the eyes of the federal government. By making sure that these boys who are defending the livelihood of their fatherland do not lose their lives easily, it has aided the Niger Delta struggle. Do you know that when the Egbesu deity dwell[s] in you, that bullets cannot harm you and also machetes cannot cut through you skin? That is our strength against the heavy arms of the military. (20; see also Ebienfa 643)

In like manner, Omeje comments:

The profile of Ijaw resistance is extraordinarily enhanced by the belief of the general public, including members of the armed forces that most Ijaw militants complement their armed protests with a special talismanic power sourced from the people's formidable Egbesu deity that makes them impervious to bullets. (433)

As said before, for the warrior or the militant to ensure that no harm is done to him in the battleground, he must obey the instructions given to him by the *Egbesu* priest (see Anugwom 14-15, for the account of a former militant).

What has been said here about *Egbesu* will keep the reader in good stead to better appreciate the discussion of Ijo war poetry in chapters three and four. In what follows, the study shall highlight the scope of this research.

The Scope of the Study

The research attempts to study the various forms of Ijo poetry which is basically in the form of songs. In addition, it investigates the praise chants of Chief Munamuna, which Ijo poetry has come to include. Praise-chanting is a recent development amongst the Ijo, introduced by Chief Munamuna who was influenced by Yoruba oral poets when he was living amongst the Yoruba in the southwestern part of Nigeria. As such, even though a recent tradition, any generic study of Ijo poetic forms will include the chants (see the introductions of chapters three and

four for other reasons why the chants are included in this study). In the next section, the goal and objectives of this study will be stated.

The Goal of the Research

The singular aim or goal of the study is to research into and document Ịzọn oral poetry.

Specifically, this study examines the following five objectives:

1. The socio-political, cultural, religious and linguistic life of the Ịzọn, to see how this informs their oral poetry, something that has already been done in part;
2. The sub-forms of their oral poetry with particular attention to culture-specific classifications;
3. The performance of the poetry;
4. The style of the poetry;
5. The role(s) the poetry plays.

These five objectives are linked to the following five research questions.

Research Questions

The study sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. How does the socio-political, cultural and religious life of the Ịzọn bear on their oral poetry?
2. What are the different forms of oral poetry in Ịzọnland?
3. How are these forms of oral poetry performed?
4. What are the stylistic techniques in the poetry?
5. What role(s) does oral poetry play in Ịzọnland?

Research Methodology

The research is qualitative and not quantitative because it was "concerned with identifying the presence or absence of something and with determining its nature or distinguishing features" (Watson-Gegeo 576). This means it was entirely based on fieldwork. The data was collected through unstructured interviews, non-participant observations and focus groups in Kolokuma, Buseni, Ogboin, Bomo, Oyiakiri and Ekpetiama clans in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. In order to

protect anonymity, performances, apart from those of the oral poet, were audio-recorded using a tablet and a cell phone, without using the visual aspects. In addition, the ethical considerations of Rhodes University were all fulfilled before the research was conducted.

Research Methodology: Theoretical framework

The research uses three theories to examine İzon oral poetry: formalism, functionalism and performance. Formalism shall be used to study the stylistic aspects of the poetry; functionalism will be used to examine the roles or functions of the poems and songs, while the actual performances of the poetry are looked at using the performance approach to the study of folklore. In what follows, the study shall detail what these theories are.

Formalism

Formalism (often called Russian formalism) is a theory of literary criticism that emphasises the analysis of the formal features of a literary work.

Formalism was originated in the Russian cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg during the early decades of the twentieth century by members of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOYAZ). Its leading figures were Roman Jakobson, Viktor Shklovsky, Boris Eichenbaum, Jurij Tynjanov, Viktor Zhirmunsky, Osip Brik and Boris Tomashevsky, who, in the words of one of them, Boris Eichenbaum, “attempt[ed] to create an independent science of literature which studies specifically literary material” (103).

Russian formalism, as noted by Erlich, “was in large part a reaction against the dominant intellectual trends” (627; see also DeGeorge 22). The then-existing trend in Russia was that of studying of literary works in the light of other disciplines. In other words, a work of art was appreciated or studied based on the ideas it expressed, its reflection of society, and so on. To the formalists, such critics were never studying literature because the object of literary studies is “literariness.” This is how Roman Jakobson, one of the leading practitioners, puts the business of the formalists and the then-situation in Russian literary criticism:

The object of the science of literature is not literature, but literariness – that is, that which makes a given work a work of literature. Until now literary historians have preferred to act like the policeman who, intending to arrest a certain person, would, at any opportunity, seize any and all persons who chanced into the apartment, as well as those who passed along the street. The literary historians used everything –

anthropology, psychology, politics, philosophy. Instead of a science of literature, they created a conglomeration of homespun disciplines. They seemed to have forgotten that their essays strayed into related disciplines – the history of philosophy, the history of culture, of psychology, etc. – and that these could rightly use literary masterpieces only as defective, secondary documents. (qtd. in Eichenbaum 107, italics added)

What Jakobson means here, as rightly read by the British-Marxist critic and writer, Terry Eagleton, is that literature has:

Its own specific laws, structures and devices, which were to be studied in themselves rather than reduced to something else. The literary work was neither a vehicle for ideas, a reflection of social reality nor the incarnation of some transcendental truth: it was a material fact, whose functioning could be analysed rather as one could examine a machine. It was made of words, not of objects or feelings, and it was a mistake to see it as the expression of an author's mind. (2-3; see also Habib 602)

As argued by Jakobson, all works of literature have something in common: literariness. It is this literariness that distinguishes a literary work from, say, a newspaper article. As such, the responsibility of the critic is to study this literariness in works of literature. What give all literary works this quality of literariness are techniques or devices such as rhythm, meter and rhyme. Others include alliteration, assonance, repetition, parallelism, stanza, and the different figures of speech.

Another formalist, Victor Shklovsky, also developed another equally famous (if not the most famous) concept, “defamiliarization” or “estrangement.” According to Shklovsky, our perceptions of objects and other things in the world can become habitual, making us feel unconscious. Once this happens, such perceptions of the everyday world or reality become “automated,” meaning our sensations become dull, banal and trite. In this situation, perception or practical language no longer “pricks our conscience.” Here is how he puts it:

If we start to examine the general laws of perception, we see that as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic. Thus, for example, all of our habits retreat into the area of the unconsciously automatic; if one remembers the sensations of holding a pen or of speaking in a foreign language for the first time and compares that with his feeling at performing the action for the ten thousandth time, he will agree with us....And life is reckoned as nothing. Habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war.... After we see an object several times, we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it – hence we cannot say anything about it. (11-13)

For Shklovsky, here lies the essence of a work of literature because it is poetic or literary language that defamiliarizes these perceptions that have become stale to us, thereby renewing

“the reader’s lost capacity for fresh sensation” as Abrams puts it succinctly (103). In Shklovsky’s terms:

Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty of and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.* Art removes objects from the automatism of perception. (12-13, italics in original)

When poetic language has been defamiliarized by the techniques or devices, it draws attention to itself (See, for example, Culler 28). In addition, it becomes different from ordinary language or what Shklovsky calls “practical language.” The difference is that ordinary language has become ruptured, as it were. The whole point here is that poetic or literary language violates the structure of ordinary language. It no longer follows its rules. It has become a deviation. It is for this reason that Roman Jakobson made one of the most famous of statements in the history of literary criticism that literature is “an organized violence committed on ordinary language” (qtd. in Eagleton 2). As Eagleton too will say: “under the pressure of literary devices, ordinary language was intensified, condensed, twisted, telescoped, drawn out, turned on its head (3).

In simple terms, Russian formalism applies principles of linguistics to literature. Since linguistics is a science that studies the structures of language, that is, how languages are organised without reference to the cultural rules of a language, so literature in the hands of the formalists becomes concerned with the form of literature and not its content. Usually, form, in the discipline of literary criticism, is seen as that which expresses the content of a work, that is, the container of content (see, for example, Cuddon 327). However, the formalists would hear none of that view. They (the formalists) “freed themselves,” Eichenbaum writes, “from the traditional idea of form as an envelope, a vessel into which one pours a liquid (the content)” (112). He further asserts that form “is no longer an envelope, but a complete thing, something concrete, dynamic, self-contained, and without a correlative of any kind” (112). Once again, Eagleton observes:

Far from seeing form as the expression of content, they stood the relationship on its head: content was merely the ‘motivation’ of form, an occasion or convenience for a particular kind of formal exercise. *Don Quixote* is not ‘about’ the character of that name: the character is just a device for holding together different kinds of narrative technique. *Animal Farm* for the Formalists would not be an allegory of Stalinism; on

the contrary, Stalinism would simply provide a useful opportunity for the construction of an allegory. (3; see also Warner 71)

Formalism did not last long in Russia. The movement was abandoned in the 1930s by the Soviet Union after the Revolution (see, for example, Brown 244). After that, Roman Jakobson, in particular, went to Czechoslovakia to be associated with the Prague Linguistic Circle. Jakobson later went on to hold faculty positions in America.

In summary, Formalism is an approach to the study of literature that examines only the formal devices of a literary work, without making any attempt whatsoever at studying its content. It is an intrinsic theory of literature like structuralism, deconstruction, new criticism, unlike extrinsic approaches, such as feminism, Marxism, psychoanalytical and new historicism. Formalism, as was said before, shall be used to examine the stylistic techniques of the poems. The researcher now considers functionalism in the following paragraphs.

Functionalism

In a far-reaching study, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*, Finnegan points this out: “One question for sociologists of literature has long been: just what role does literature play in society?” (44). She notes that this question points to “aspects neglected” in approaches to the study of folklore such as evolutionism, diffusionism and historical-geographical (44). As a result, Okpewho observes that, according to Malinowski, “what was needed was a scientific view of culture based on a theory of need or function of any cultural entity in its social setting” (*Myth in Africa* 21). This led to the rise of functionalism. In other words, the functionalist school of anthropology came up in a bid to address the weakness(es) of these previous theoretical approaches (Okpewho *Myth in Africa* 21; Finnegan *Oral Poetry* 44).

In its broadest term, functionalism, as Kuklick puts it, “refers to a range of theories in the human sciences, all of which provide explanations of phenomena in terms of the function, or purpose, they purportedly serve” (377). In anthropology, in particular, functionalism refers to the role a cultural institution plays in the functioning of a society. In the words of Oring, functionalism:

Emerges as an attempt to explain the continued presence of sociocultural patterns in a given social system. The basis of the explanation rests upon the demonstration of a

functional contribution made by the particular sociocultural pattern to the individuals who follow it and to the social system of which it is a part. (71)

The functionalist school of anthropology, as averred by Kuklick, “became the predominant analytic mode in anthropology and sociology following fierce disputes during the 1920s and 1930s” (378). The two leading scholars of this school of thought were Bronislaw Malinowski and A. Radcliffe-Brown.

In 1914, Malinowski, a Polish-born British anthropologist travelled to the Trobriand Island and studied their cultural practices, especially the very complex *kula*¹ exchanges amongst the islanders. From his first-hand field experience, Malinowski argues that cultural institutions were not just created. He contends that they were created to serve individual needs. In the words of Bronner, “by pointing out that *Kula* exchanges form a system of mutual interrelationships in an area known for exclusiveness and war, he [Malinowski] posited that a function of an institution, or an organised system of activity, is the part it plays within the interrelated whole in fulfilling human needs” (65). Bronner goes further to say that, to Malinowski, the responsibility of the anthropologist is “to undertake a synchronic depth study of a society to determine the functions of its elements” (65).

Radcliffe-Brown’s brand of functionalism slightly differs from Malinowski’s for it de-emphasises the function of a social institution as satisfying individual needs. Radcliffe-Brown’s brand is often referred to as “structural-functionalism” (Bronner 67; Barnard 61). Radcliffe-Brown sees society as a biological organism. In an important article in 1935, Radcliffe-Brown tells the reader: “The concept of function applied to human societies is based on an analogy between social life and organic life. *The recognition of the analogy and of some of its implications is not new*” (178, italics mine). The second sentence of the quotation which this researcher italicised shows Radcliffe-Brown’s indebtedness to earlier scholars before him. To be specific, his indebtedness is towards Emile Durkheim, Comte and Montesquieu, influential French sociologists who advanced the idea that society is structured like an organism (See, for example, Radcliffe-Brown’s introduction to his collection of classic essays compiled by E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Fred Eggan. All quotations follow the pagination of that edited book).

A biological organism has structures or systems – digestive, reproductive, amongst others - and parts or organs (mouth, oesophagus, anus, amongst others). Radcliffe-Brown argues that “the

connection between the structure of an organism and the life process of that organism” is one of function (12). It follows that for the organism to continue to live, all the different organs or components that make up the systems must perform their respective functions. Radcliffe-Brown puts it this way:

It is the function of the heart to pump blood through the body. The organic structure, as a living structure, depends for its continued existence on the processes that make up the total life processes. If the heart ceases to perform its function the life process comes to an end and the structure as a living structure also comes to an end. (12)

So it is with society. Society is made up of systems or structures (kinship, religion, amongst others), and each system comprises parts which Radcliffe-Brown calls “social institutions” (Barnard 63). As such, like the biological organism, if a society will run smoothly, every institution or part in the systems must perform its function. It is for this that Radcliffe-Brown makes his now famous statement that “the *function* of any recurrent activity...is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity” (180, italics in original). As rightly remarked by Okpewho, “what this means is that everything a society does (e.g. tale-telling, marriage, commerce) has a practical use for its citizens and a specific place within the fabric of social norms” (*Myth in Africa* 21).

The social or cultural institutions function to maintain the continuity of the society, not to serve individual basic needs as argued by Malinowski’s brand of functionalism, because the structure or system of a society remains when individuals have left it or died. Barnard puts it better: “Structural-functionalism tends to be concerned less with individual action or needs, and more with the place of individuals in the social order, or indeed with the construction of the social order itself” (61). He further asserts that Radcliffe-Brown:

Explained rituals in terms of their social functions – their value for the society as a whole, rather than their value for any particular individual member of society. This emphasis on society over the individual was to remain strong in his work and to influence both the theoretical interests and the ethnographic approaches of the next generation. (71)

In different terms, Malinowski believes social institutions exist to satisfy individual human physiological needs, while Radcliffe-Brown argues that social institutions exist to maintain societal cohesion and solidarity, that is, the social order (Porth et al).

Despite the slightly different views of its leading practitioners, one thing is common amongst them: *function*. The functionalist school of anthropology posits that every folkloric activity in society has a role or purpose in society. Finnegan, writing on the approach of functionalism, avers:

Various functions have been stated or assumed. Stories, for instance, are told to educate and socialize children, or, by drawing a moral, to warn people not to break the norms of the society. Other narratives ...are ‘charters’ which serve to uphold the present structure of a society in general, and the position of rulers in particular. Others again are said to fulfil the function of providing a model through which people can verbalize the relationships and constitution of their society. (*Oral Literature* 321)

Furthermore, in a classic and famous article, “Four Functions of Folklore,” Bascom, one of the well-known practitioners of functionalism, maintains that folklore (whether proverbs, songs, riddles or folktales) performs four basic functions or roles in society: education, validation of culture, social control and “escape mechanism” (343-349). As such, functionalism will be used to investigate the roles, especially the educational aspect of some of the poems. In the next section, the study shall investigate performance theory.

Performance theory

Performance theory is an approach to the study of oral traditions that emphasises the contexts of their productions. Deborah Kapchan notes that "the study of performance in folklore gained prominence among ethnographers of speaking in the 1970s, as they sought to give fuller life to verbal and written genres that had traditionally been studied as static texts, severed from their ground of enunciation" (479; see also Bauman and Briggs 59).

Performance theory in the study of folklore developed amongst the writings of some American scholars such as Roger Abrahams, Alan Dundes, Dan Ben-Amos, Robert Georges, William Bascom and Kenneth Goldstein, who sought a context-based approach to the study of folklore based on the ideas of Bronislaw Malinowski, and especially Dell Hymes (See, for example, Okpewho’s insightful introduction to *The Oral Performance in Africa* for a survey of the beginnings of performance theory to its mature phase). For example, Malinowski, from his study of myths, legends and fairy tales amongst the Trobriand Islanders, opines that “the limitation of the study of myth to the mere examination of texts has been fatal to a proper understanding of its nature” (21-22). Malinowski further makes an assertion, which this researcher should be permitted to quote at considerable length here:

The text, of course, is extremely important, but without the context it remains, lifeless. As we have seen, the interest of the story is vastly enhanced and it is given proper character by the manner in which it is told. The whole nature of the performance, the voice and the mimicry, the stimulus and the response of the audience mean as much to the natives as the text; and the sociologist should take his cue from the natives. The performance, again, has to be placed in its proper time-setting – the hour of the day, and the season, with the background of the sprouting gardens awaiting future work, and slightly influenced by the magic of the fairy tales. We must also bear in mind the sociological context of private ownership, the sociable function and the cultural role of amusing fiction. All these elements are equally relevant; all must be studied as well as the text. The stories live, in native life and not on paper, and when a scholar jots them down without being able to evoke the atmosphere in which they flourish he has given us but a mutilated bit of reality. (29-30)

Following Malinowski was Dell Hymes who in a famous paper in 1962 called for the study of the cultural rules governing a peoples' language and not the mere linguistic rules by coming up with the phrase "ethnography of speaking" ("The Ethnography" 16). In a later article, Hymes contends:

Linguists have observed speech but have systematically analysed just those aspects of it that have answered to problems of formal grammar....Social and expressive aspects of speech have been attended to only when they have intruded inescapably into grammar....A more exact or general study of the rules governing the interaction between participants in speech events has been left aside. (42-43)

As a result of the insights from the writings of Malinowski and Dell Hymes, Roger Abrahams, Alan Dundes, Dan Ben-Amos, Robert Georges and Kenneth Goldstein hunted, as it were, for a theory of folklore that was based on performance. For example, the reputable American folklorist, Roger Abrahams, in an article in 1968 made this assertion:

Too long have the anthropologists and psychologists seen folklore as data which merely project ethnographic or psychological detail. Too long have folklorists emphasized the international attributes of folklore as esthetic constructs without a consideration of how the lore reflects the groups in which it exists, persists, and functions. Too long have all investigators been willing to divorce folklore from the people who perform it, or to regard it as peripheral – and therefore meaningless – or debased. Most folklore studies in the past have been used more to justify our vision of ourselves as advanced human beings than to cast light on the life of others. (157)

Similarly, Ben-Amos calls for a redefinition of folklore to capture the place of performance by positing in these terms because existing definitions are wanting in that regard:

Folklore is very much an organic phenomenon in the sense that it is an integral part of culture. Any divorce of tales, songs, or sculptures from their indigenous locale, time, and society inevitably introduces qualitative changes into them. The *social context*, the

cultural attitude, the rhetorical situation, and the individual aptitude are variables that produce distinct differences in the structure, text, and texture of the ultimate verbal, musical, or plastic product. *The audience itself, be it children or adults, men or women, a stable society or an accidental grouping, affects the kind of folklore genre and the manner of presentation.* (“Toward a Definition” 4, italics added)

Thus, Ben-Amos defines folklore as “artistic communication in small groups” (“Toward a Definition” 13). In the same way, in an article entitled “Verbal Art as Performance,” Bauman specifically said:

“WE WILL BE CONCERNED in this paper to develop a conception of verbal art as performance, based upon an understanding of performance as a mode of speaking. In constructing this framework for a performance-centered approach to verbal art, we have started from the position of the folklorist, but have drawn concepts and ideas from a wide range of disciplines, chiefly anthropology, linguistics, and literary criticism. (290, boldface in the original)

Bauman avers that performance “conveyed a dual sense of artistic *action* – the doing of folklore – and artistic *event* – the performance situation, involving performer, art form, audience, and setting – both of which are central to the developing performance approach to folklore” (“Verbal Art” 290, italics in original). Bauman argues that existing theories in the study of verbal art in the disciplines of linguistics, anthropology and literature are “constructed in terms of special usages or patterning of formal features within texts” (“Verbal Art” 291). He further opines that “a performance-centered conception of verbal art calls for an approach through performance itself. In such an approach, the formal manipulation of linguistic features is secondary to the nature of performance, per se, conceived of and defined as a mode of communication” (“Verbal Art” 292).

The arguments of these group of scholars who called for a performance-based approach to the study of oral traditions did not go unchallenged by traditional folklorists (See for example, Ben-Amos’s “The Ceremony of Innocence”; Jones’ “Sloughing Towards Ethnography: the Text/Context Controversy Revisited”; Georges’ “Toward a Resolution of the Text/Context Controversy”). In any case, shortly after Bauman’s paper, Dell Hymes who by then had become the leading champion of performance theory, could say, in a notable later paper, “Breakthrough into Performance,” that “in contemporary folklore the term performance has reference to the realization of known traditional material, but the emphasis is upon the constitution of a social event” (“Breakthrough” 13). Therefore, he goes on to say that his analyses of the oral traditions of speakers of Wasco will be “situated in context, the performance as emergent, as unfolding

or arising within that context. The concern is with performance, not as something mechanical or inferior, as in some linguistic discussion, but with performance as something creative, realized, achieved, even transcendent of the ordinary course of events" ("Breakthrough" 13).

As the reader would have seen by now, performance theory is an approach in the study of verbal arts that places the text in context, not a text that is detached from its context. Put differently, performance directs "attention away from study of the formal patterning and symbolic context of texts to the emergence of verbal art in the social interaction between performers and audiences" (Bauman and Briggs 59). It focuses attention on key components of performances such as performers and audiences. The performance approach also includes the music provided by the percussions or accompaniments. It also takes into consideration such things as the costume and every other equipment used in the performance of a verbal art. Not left out of this, according to Finnegan, are the sobs, wailings, shouts, pauses, amongst others that form the "acoustics" of a performance (see, for example, chapter five of Finnegan's *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts*, which is devoted entirely to the possible components of performance).

Moreover, performance theory, as the reader has seen, is interdisciplinary in the sense that it draws on ideas from anthropology, linguistics, literature and sociology. Performance theory will be used to examine the performance of the poetry. In what follows, the study shall highlight the structure of this study, that is, what the various chapters will examine.

The Structure of Thesis

Chapter 1: Provides the reader with the background to the research. It considers the geographical location, linguistic aspects, religious beliefs and practices of the Ịzọn, which the research is concerned. It also highlights the context, scope, aim, objectives and the theoretical framework of the research.

Chapter 2: A *critical* review of relevant scholarship on oral poetry on the African continent.

Chapter 3: Looks at the types and significance of Ịzọn poetry in detail and introduces the oral poet, Chief Munamuna and the subjects of his chants.

Chapter 4: Divided into two sections. On the one hand, the first part examines the functions or roles of the poetry. On the other hand, the second part explores the performance aspect of the poetry.

Chapter 5: Examines the stylistic techniques of the poetry.

Chapter 6: Reiterates the major points of the research. Furthermore, it looks at the possible gaps in knowledge or scholarship that the research attempts to fill. Moreover, it highlights the challenges or limitations of the study. It concludes by pointing out the areas of İzön oral literature and folklore which need further research.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the context, goals, objectives and scope of the study have been stated. Moreover, it identified the ethnic group with which the study is concerned. Furthermore, it gave attention to relevant aspects of the linguistic and socio-religious life of the nationality that will aid the understanding of the reader of their poetry in chapter three. In addition, it explored in detail the theoretical framework of the study. In the next chapter, the study shall carry out a critical study of relevant scholarship on African oral poetry.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter shall critically review some studies underpinned by the chosen theories of functionalism, formalism and performance on African oral poetry that are relevant to this research and explained in chapter 1. The nature of this study influenced the selection of the studies for this review. The study is concerned with the oral poetry of an ethnic group. As such, for a more beneficial study, this researcher decided to review specific insiders' (apart from Read's article) studies of the oral poetry of their peoples. The study left out general studies undertaken by scholars to represent all the oral literatures of the continent such as Finnegan's *Oral Literature in Africa* and Okpewho's *African Oral Literature*. Furthermore, this review is organised into four sections, namely "the role of the verbal artist in Africa," "studies on generic poetic forms of ethnic groups," "composition and performance of African oral poetry" and "stylistic aspects of African oral poetry".

These sections, apart from "studies on generic poetic forms of ethnic groups" concentrate on the theories chosen for this study: performance, functionalism and formalism. Hence, they all provided insights on how to better apply the chosen approaches. The studies that are subsumed under "studies on generic poetic forms of ethnic groups," are ones in which the scholars look at the manifest poetic forms of their peoples by a way of classification. These studies too made this researcher better equipped to classify the manifest poetic forms of the Ịzọn. It should also be quickly added that the goal of this study is not to confute the claims that others made about their literatures. It is to look at Ịzọn oral poetry in the light of such studies elsewhere on the continent. For all this, one can say, without any strong contrary response from this researcher, that his study is an adaptation of previous specific studies of the oral poetry of other nationalities.

As pointed out in chapter one, scholarship on collecting and safeguarding of African verbal arts has come a long way. The earliest studies started in the mid-19th century with collections by European anthropologists, sociologists and linguists. These researchers were interested in retrieving African oral traditions using the approaches of evolution and diffusion (Okpewho, "The Study of" 22; Finnegan, *Oral Literature* 30). In 1970, Ruth Finnegan published her

ground-breaking *Oral Literature in Africa*. That classic became a seminal work, as it were, to African scholars on the need for them to come into the field, which they eventually did in the 20th century in order to record, transcribe and analyse the oral traditions of their peoples (Akinyemi 29). More attention was also given to the formal elements and contexts or performances of these oral traditions. What follows are reviews of many case studies of which the general link or bearing each of them has with the study has already been stated in the first two paragraphs of this introduction. However, in the first and last paragraphs of every article that is critically reviewed, the relevance of that particular article to this study shall be foregrounded. The first section, which the study now turns to, shall examine early case studies of generic poetic forms of ethnic groups.

Studies of Generic Poetic Forms of Ethnic Groups

The first case study is an article written by Margaret Read in 1937. Read was one of the earliest scholars to carry out a general survey of the oral songs or poetry of an ethnic group. Her study was on the Ngoni people. Read's study is important to the purposes of this researcher because it classifies Ngoni songs under sub-categories, a key aspect that this study is concerned with. Exploring the weaknesses and merits of Read's classification will help the researcher to better classify Iẓon oral poetry.

The Ngoni, according to Read, were driven from the South to Nyasaland (present day Malawi) where the bulk of them settled during the period Chaka was waging his wars. Her argument is that the Ngoni still cling to some of the customs they brought with them from the South despite mixing with the local ethnic groups for 120 years. Foremost among these institutions are the songs and dance. Read sees this as "continuity of culture, and the means by which that continuity is maintained" (205). She insists that leaving the South "proved a means of preserving their heritage of music and song" and that "they have kept some songs which have been lost in the changes that have been taken place in the south during those years" (205).

Read tells the reader that the musician looking at Ngoni songs would categorise them under two groups: the ones sung individually and those sung by groups. She notes that group songs have no percussion accompaniment and that "the absence of all drums in Ngoni music is one of the outstanding characteristics" compared with those of the local ethnic groups (206). Of the individual set, only those sung to *igubu* and *uhlanga* have instrumental accompaniment. Even so, groups sometimes sing *igubu* songs during initiations or marriages. Conversely, individuals

too sometimes sing group songs. To these groups, Read adds her own, making the classification into three categories. Her third group comprises songs dealing with the life cycle of the Ngoni on the one hand, and those which “recall their past” on the other. The first of her third group are lullabies, songs of initiation rites, marriages, mourning and divining. The second sees songs of war, praise, *ingoma* and *inqwala*.

In discussing lullabies, Read posits that songs dealing with women’s work are not many. Her argument is premised on the fact that as time went by, Ngoni women became aristocrats. Therefore, it was attendants that did work for them, including taking care of their babies. Although the housemaids can sing Ngoni lullabies, most of them sing local lullabies to the children. Read seems to say that only two Ngoni lullabies have continued to this day.

Initiation songs are sung at *umsindo*. Read explains *umsindo* as a “girls’ initiation ceremony which took place, not at puberty, but several years later as a preliminary to marriage” (206). *Umsindo* was limited to daughters of important personalities, because only their parents could afford the elaborate feasting and dancing. The songs are sung by older women; men sometimes join the women. The songs, amongst others, touch on historical occurrences and cautions of women against jealousy. There are other occasions at which *umsindo* songs are sung such as funerals. However, *umsindo* songs dealing with sexual intercourse are exclusive to *umsindo* occasions. Read tells us these songs that have sexual content are hardly heard today. Singing of them is not encouraged because passions are aroused.

Marriage is known as *mthimba*. As such, songs of marriage are called *mthimba* songs in Ngoni. Read informs us that the marriage ceremony has a number of rites. Each of these rites has its own songs. This is in addition to the general *mthimba* songs. Not all the songs refer to marriage; some, like *umsindo*, make references to historical events. They are also sung outside marriage ceremonies. The tone is that of sadness in some of the songs. This is to be expected as the girl is now leaving her parents into a new home.

On funeral songs, Read asserts that the Ngoni have no real songs that mourn a deceased. Read tells us that “singing and dancing were not part of the burial rites except at the death of a chief” (220). Nevertheless, it is the practice to dance *ingoma* after the deceased has been buried for some months. One facet of the life of the Ngoni is to go to an *isanusi*, a diviner, when there is some sickness or war. Some *izanusis* are greater than others. They are the ones that the important

chiefs go to in times of war – these divining songs are what Read means when referring to songs of *izanusu*.

Inqwala songs of the second part of Read's third group are sung at a ceremony called *inqwala*. It appears *inqwala* was a ceremony that was held to celebrate the beginning of the harvest season. It also appears every Ngoni scattered amongst other ethnic groups would come home for this ceremony. The reader is told the ceremony lasted a month and the songs were only sung during this period. The ceremony is no longer practiced.

Read says the Ngoni have praise songs for chiefs and other important men. She identifies the praise songs as *izibongo*. She contends that *izibongo* "have no music but which are 'chanted' in a kind of recitative, which only a few people know how to do" (226). Included in the praise songs identified by Read are also *izithokoso* and *izigiyo* which are thanking names and shouts of warriors respectively. It is great men that possess them. The *izibongo* are exclusive to chiefs. Read seems to posit that the words and the turns of phrases in *izibongo* are "standardized". However, sometimes, a master *umbongi* can add a word or phrase from his *isifua*. She further notes that "insulting remarks are sometimes found in praise songs" (226). Moreover, Read points out that sometimes the *izibongo* of a past chief are added on to the one of his successor. She calls this "telescoping."

The Ngoni were a war people. "Throughout their history as a separate people they were a nation under arms, and on the success of their arms depended their existence as conquerors" (233). Therefore, it is only natural for them to have war songs. The war songs of the Ngoni are in two groups: *imigubo* and *imihubo*. *Imigubo* is sung before the Ngoni go to war; while *imhubo* is sung when the Ngoni are back from a war.

The last songs Read considers are *ingoma* songs. *Ingoma*, Read writes, "is danced by the men without weapons, that is without spears and shields, but with knob-kerries, small axes, sticks, or tails of animals in their hands. The women hold spears in their hands upside down, grasping the blade, or long sticks" (237). It is a pattern of dance that is different from any other in Ngoni. Anyone reading this description will conclude they are war songs. However, Read tells us they are not. She argues that the difference is in rhythm and tempo in addition to the fact that the war songs are sung only at wartime.

It was pointed out in the beginning of this chapter that carrying out a general study of an ethnic group's poetic forms is not an easy task, especially when it is the first study or amongst the earliest studies of the oral literature of that nationality. For one thing, there is the matter of classification. Hence Reads must be commended for her effort. Although her study was amongst the earliest of studies, the points she made on *izibongo* are in sync with the statements of contemporary studies of *izibongo*. For example, it has become common knowledge that *imbongi* were attached to chiefs and also criticised them (See, for example, Kaschula, *The Bones* 3, 28-33; Opland, *Xhosa Poetry* 57, 67).

However, some of the statements of Read are not clear. Read says she has "chosen a third form of grouping for the songs" (207). What does she mean by "third?" Before making this statement, she has said that "the musician studying Ngoni music would begin to classify the songs under two heads" (206). She also tells us "the Ngoni themselves in old days divided their dances into two kinds, those for pleasure or pastime, and those for serious purposes such as war and religion" (207). Does Read's "third form" mean she considers the musician and the Ngoni as one and two classifiers, making her the third? This might not be what she means because the Ngoni divide only dances and not songs. Or is her "third form" an addition to the musician's "two heads?" It cannot be what she meant because the songs she examines are those sung by individuals on the one hand and by groups on the other.

In any case, Read's classification is not satisfactory. In her classification she regards *izibongo*, *ingoma*, *inqwala* and war songs as "those which draw together people and recall their past" and lullabies and songs of *umsindo*, *mthinba*, *izanusisi* and mourning as "those which are related to different stages in the life cycle of the Ngoni." *Izanusisi* are diviners. Is divination a life cycle? In fact, one of the songs of *izanusisi* that Read uses for her study has to do with history. It is Read who tells the reader that some *umsindo* and *mthinba* songs are historical. Some of the songs she uses in the study "recall" Ngoni past! Does the singing of *umsindo*, mourning and *mthinba* songs not "draw together people?" Furthermore, Read's singular form of a chanter of *izibongo* is "*umbongi*." In recent studies, the singular form is "*imbongi*" (See, for example, Kaschula, *The Bones* 12). Despite all this, Read is able to use local terminologies for the different poetic forms. This culture-specific terminology in classification is an aspect that my study too shall consider in chapter three. In addition, the marriage songs of the Ngoni, according to Read, use explicit sexual language. This researcher will also look at what the situation is in *Izõn* poetry. Moreover, there is nothing spectacular in the performance of Ngoni

songs. This too is one aspect this researcher will look into in his study of İzön poetry. That is, whether the performance of İzön poetry is dramatic or not. The next paper on generic studies or classification that will be critically reviewed is written by Hagher.

Hagher's paper which was published in 1981 interests me because he points out that oral poetry amongst the Tiv in Nigeria, the subject of his study, has not received much attention from scholars and students of African verbal arts, which is similar to the situation in İzönland. In addition, Hagher is able to classify the poetry of the Tiv into various sub-groups, something this study will do too in chapter 3. Hagher identifies riddles, proverbs, incantations, educational and occupational songs. Others include praise, religious, protest songs and those of social criticism.

The riddle is one form of poetry in which the child is consciously introduced to in Tivland. The riddle, to Hagher, operates on four planes in Tivland: the riddle that has a simple meaning; the one whose meaning, though apparent, is difficult to decipher; the tonal riddle and the one that has "no meaning except approached from Tiv folklore or knowledge of Tiv myth or religion" (41). On proverbs, Hagher informs us they are used by elders when they meet one another and to chastise a young person and in the beginnings of story-telling performances.

In Tivland, the child is introduced to their environment and their culture through songs. There are songs that teach the child the names of the different trees in Tivland. The repetitions and the slow rhythm in the songs are to ensure they are stuck in the memory of the child. Included in the educational songs are the songs in Tiv folktales because they (folktales) are "symbolic processes of preparing members of the community for social living, self-discipline, and to reinforce social solidarity" (47).

The Tiv do not have specific songs that are exclusive to the kind of work they do. Rather, any song can be sung during work: grinding, weeding, pounding, amongst others. Songs of social criticism are sung by dance groups. Moreover, a husband can compose a song which distills what his runaway wife did to him.

On religious songs, Hagher avers that most of them came from Christianity when South African missionaries landed in Tivland. These missionaries of the Afrikaner extraction excluded Tiv customs. It was even Afrikaner songs that were translated into Tiv language. The result, Hagher notes, "was a forced marriage of foreign rhythm with Tiv words in the songs of worship" (51).

However, the coming of missionaries from America brought real religious poetry in Tiv because of their realisation that dance and songs were central aspects of the life of the Tiv. Ityavger Fate, a double amputee, became the greatest religious song composer. Of the songs, some express thankfulness to God, a few are used to preach sermons, while others are attacks on *mbatsav*, which Hagher says is a “psycho-religious concept” in Tivland.

A survey of a minority ethnic group’s forms of oral poetry in one study is not an easy task. It becomes more difficult when there is no (or little) literature on the people’s verbal traditions before one undertakes one’s study. As such, Hagher must be commended for his general exploration.

However, Hagher sees abuses as a form of oral poetry. Can scholars really classify abuses in themselves as poetry? It can be excused when an abuse appears in a chant or song, as it is in *Songs of Lawino*. Even his categorisation of riddles and proverbs on their own as poetry might raise some objections. This researcher has always held that riddles and proverbs are better classified as prose forms. Finnegan, for one, classifies them as prose forms in her generic study of the verbal arts in Africa (*Oral Literature* xi) while Okpewho puts them under “witticisms” (*African Oral Literature* viii). In addition, Hagher’s section on praise songs is not really clear to the reader. Immediately after writing that “it is a matter of great pride for a composer to be invited and special beer is brewed, and goats and cows slaughtered, the patron invites his friends and relatives as the composer sings about the man’s greatness, tracing him through his ancestors’ greatness” (49), Hagher remarks that “the event is not the patron’s day, but the occasion is the composer’s. It is the day for appreciating how beautiful he sings, and not a day for hearing the greatness of the patron” (49). One wonders how one will be able to reconcile these two statements.

Nevertheless, a review of Hagher’s article has given me insight into the different poetic genres that might be in existence amongst the Iẓon and how to better classify them. In addition, this researcher is particularly interested in the situation Hagher describes about Tiv religious songs: the phenomenon that Afrikaner missionaries translated their songs into Tiv language rather than composing real Tiv songs to express the new Christian beliefs. The Iẓon have religious songs too. As such, this researcher shall investigate how the situation panned out in their religious songs. The next case study to be reviewed is an article by Dhlomo.

Dhlomo's article published in 1977 deals with the existing forms of Zulu poetry. This is relevant to my study since it is concerned with identification and classification of Iḡon oral poetry.

Dhlomo notes that the Zulu have a rich store of folk poetry. Dhlomo, firstly, rightly notes the existence of praise poetry. Praises, the reader is told, are not exclusive to humans. There are praises of birds, animals and other things. These praise poems come under the group of semi-narrative and biographic praise poems. Then there is the group Dhlomo calls "nature poems." Nature poems, Dhlomo contends, "are included in, and form part and parcel of, the laudatory poems to persons" (44). Dhlomo also identifies different categories of songs. Some of them are songs of war, hunting, ritual, domestic, agricultural, dance and love. Others include nursery rhymes, lullabies and gnostic sayings.

Dhlomo has pointed out that the Zulu have other forms of poetry apart from *izibongo*. The scholarly attention that has been given to Xhosa and Zulu *izibongo* has really disadvantaged the other existing poetic forms. As a result of this abundant scholarship, one will even argue that the Zulu and the Xhosa have no other forms of poetry. Even Jeff opland's very important study, *Xhosa Oral Poetry*, makes no concrete statement on the existence of other Xhosa traditional poetic forms apart from *izibongo*. No wonder, Vilakazi argues that "primitive poetry, of course, has always been thought of in terms of *izibongo*...this view is wrong, for *izibongo* are but one department of a great field of poetry" (73).

In any case Dhlomo's study leaves much to be desired. He only classifies but does not discuss the poetic forms. What is an agricultural, or a hunting, or a domestic song? Most songs are accompanied with dancing; and there are different categories of them. However, Dhlomo groups all the songs accompanied with dancing as "dance songs." Are love songs or war songs not accompanied with any form of dancing? He assumes his classification is self-explanatory. He does not tell us the difference between nature poems and praise poems. Dhlomo thinks that when a verbal artist praises a butterfly or uses birds, animals and plants to praise somebody, then it is nature poetry. This argument does not hold water. For one thing, Dhlomo himself has categorised some poems as praises of animals and birds. Furthermore, Dhlomo fails to tell us the local Zulu names for the poetic forms. Before Dhlomo wrote his paper, Vilakazi had already published his seminal paper, "The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu" in 1938, and he had seen how Vilakazi's article pointed out the Zulu terms for some of the poetic forms.

It is an article that Dhlomo quotes more than once in the section on Zulu prosody. Vilakazi, in that early article, points out to the reader that praise poetry is known as *izibongo* and that they are composed about persons, rivers, objects and animals. Vilakazi also notes that songs in Zulu are called *amahubo*. Some of these songs highlighted and discussed by Vilakazi are *imidunduzelo* (lullabies), *imilozi* (cries of birds and animals as well as a moving train's sound) and burial songs.

Even Vilakazi's generic classification of traditional Zulu poetic forms is not as extensive as Joseph's. Joseph's, published in 1983, is a profound study of Zulu songs. She identifies and discusses songs of puberty, wedding, divination, praise, drinking and bow. Others include work songs and lullabies. Furthermore, Joseph explores the sub-categories in these forms. For example, she avers that lullabies amongst the Zulu are "utilitarian" (84). Of particular importance in her study is the fact that the performances of some categories are highly dramatic while others are not. This is one aspect that this researcher will attempt to explore in this study to see whether it is all the performances of the sub-categories that are theatrical or not. Joseph also gives a detail account of girls' puberty songs amongst the Zulu. The Iẓon too have a similar category of songs known as *biriwari duma ama* (songs of circumcision). Therefore, I shall look at how they compare with the Zulu's in terms of the rituals that are attendant to the songs. Despite the obvious weaknesses of Dhlomo's study, it has given me some knowledge on how to classify and categories Iẓon poetic forms. In addition, Dhlomo makes mention of a very important role Zulu war songs play before the actual war. He notes that war songs encourage and inspire warriors prior to when the actual war takes place. This is one area this researcher will look at in his study of Iẓon war songs. That is, the roles, if any, they play before the actual war. It is now a review of Samuel Akpabot's paper that the researcher now turns to and what initially influenced his research.

In 1980, a seminar on "Traditional Oral Poetry in Some Nigerian Communities" was held at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. The conference was organised by the Federal Department of Culture in Collaboration with UNESCO and Centre for Nigerian Cultural Studies, Ahmadu Bello University. Some of the papers were published in a book form by the Nigerian Federal Department of Culture in 1981. Akpabot's study is one of the papers that was published.

The Efik and the Ibibio are minority ethnic groups in the South-South geopolitical region of Nigeria. They share more or less the same cultural norms and speak dialects that are mutually intelligible.

From the very beginning, Akpabot establishes the fact that the Efik/Ibibio peoples have a very high sense of morality and justice. To him, it is this ethos that foregrounds their verbal arts. Put differently, poetry amongst the Efik and the Ibibio is “mainly functional” (87). According to Akpabot, unlike the well-established poetic traditions amongst the Hausa and the Yoruba, Efik/Ibibio oral poetry is in the form of songs and invocations during rituals. Akpabot avers that poetry amongst these peoples exist on the planes of ritual and non-ritual ceremonies.

Songs on the ritual plane are concerned with traditional deities which are performed by the various secret masquerade societies. *Ekpe*, *ekpo*, *obon* and *idiong*, according to Akpabot, are some of the societies. These ritual songs have a clearly defined structure. In the performance of a song on this plane during a ritual ceremony, the cantor invokes the presence of the gods in a “singing-speaking voice without any musical accompaniment” (88). Thereafter, he stops and beats a percussion (a gong or a drum). Then he goes back to his recitation and beats the percussion at intervals. After this, he beats the percussion for some time without any recitation. Thereafter, the cantor and his chorus begin to sing with no musical accompaniment. Next, the gods are invoked three times by the cantor while the chorus responds. Finally, the cantor bursts into a popular song and his ensemble joins him. During this time, the cantor recites a praise poem to the god. The recitations by the masquerade ensemble are always performed in praise of ancestral spirits who Akpabot insists are messengers of the Supreme Being, *Abasi*.

Musical accompaniment is very important in the performance of ritual poetry; and it is not just one drum that is used throughout a performance. Different drums are used. The ensemble, Akpabot writes, must be well familiar with the songs associated with the worship of each god. There is no composition in performance. The ensemble sings old songs. The only improvisation allowed the cantor is to lengthen or shorten a sound a word or a phrase.

Songs on the secular plane are geared towards controlling the behaviour of the people. In other words, the essence of the songs is to ensure that people live their lives in sync with the norms of society. The performance of songs on this plane is more relaxed since it has shifted from the constraints of rituals. Some of the songs here are attached to festivals. The beginning of harvesting new yams is an important period amongst most ethnic groups in Nigeria. The

Efik/Ibibio are not an exception. It is the period when the all-women society, *ebre*, celebrates its annual festival. Akpabot tells the reader it is a time when women who are on the fringes of society make men feel about their presence through songs. Through these songs, the women celebrate their virtues and protest imbalances such as patriarchy. During a performance, there are dialogues in the form of questions and answers where the cantor (the leader of the group) asks the chorus (the members) about their acceptance of their condition in society to which the chorus always answers in the negative.

There are also songs of rites. For example, when a girl gets to the age of 15, she is sent to a fattening room for about a month in preparation for marriage. While there, she is attended to by some women of the community who teach her about marital life. During the day of her outing, she goes to the marked square naked, led by the women who sing songs that celebrate her beauty. A masquerade who performs in a ritual setting too is involved here. When the girl is going through this rite, a masquerade, by tradition, goes into the room and comes back to tell the whole community about the progress of the girl. The masquerade's report to the community comes in the form of a singing-speaking voice. If he sees the girl has been faring well, he praises her; if she is not, he gibes her. Whichever way it goes, the masquerade makes comments about the girl's lineage. As expected, his poetry is improvisational. Akpabot posits that it is only a masquerade who can make caustic comments about someone and go unchallenged. Hence, he is the only one who can visit the girl, for no other person dares become caustic to her and her lineage in public.

Children's songs also exist amongst the Efik/Ibibio. We are told the songs the children sing during play time are fixed.

Akpabot's paper leaves much to be desired for the reader. It is obvious he wrote the paper without fieldwork. From his list of works cited, he appears to be the first person to work on Efik/Ibibio oral literature. One expected him to have engaged himself properly in fieldwork before attempting a general study of the poetic forms of his people. His article lacks serious research in terms of reading important books and journal articles that have been published on African oral literature. The result of all this is a meandering paper that lacks clarity, profoundness, in-depth analysis and full of repetitions and contradictory statements.

For example, Akpabot uses just one song as an illustration in the whole study. The other illustration is a short question-and-answer dialogue. Akpabot identifies just songs sung by

masquerade societies in his group of ritual songs. On the non-ritual group, he points to the reader the existence of songs by children, those women sing when they accompany a young girl to the market square on the day of her outing and the ones by the *ebre* society. Are there no funeral songs, marriage songs, occupational and other initiation songs? In another instance, Akpabot remarks:

The difference between a good non-ritual poet and a bad one, lies in the ability to communicate. Non-ritual poetry is spiced with humour, proverbs and even at times nonsense words which excite, educate and amuse an audience. They in turn signify their appreciation by urging the performer on, if they like and understand what he is saying, or disapproval by shouting him down.... (93-95)

Akpabot is making this statement when he has not told us of the existence of a poetic tradition amongst the Efik/Ibibio where a verbal artist goes around and sings or chants before an audience. Reading Akpabot's paper has made me to see failings that I need to avoid in attempting to carry out a generic study of Iẓon poetic forms. In any case, my study will consider if the different forms, especially those of masquerades, that Akpabot points out amongst the Efik/Ibibio exist in Iẓonland.

The foregoing section has been concerned with critical reviews of case studies on generic studies of African verbal arts. In each paper or article that was considered, the link to the study of this researcher was pointed out and how that link will be explored in chapter three of this research. The next section of this chapter is concerned with case studies on the role or function of the verbal artist on the African continent.

The Role of the Verbal Artist in Africa

The first article that will be critically reviewed in this section is, "The Role of the Bard in a Contemporary African Community," written by Archie Mafeje in 1967. That article would go on to become a classic in African oral literature scholarship. Its subject was on the role of the verbal artist amongst the Zulu and the Xhosa. Mafeje's study is important to my Iẓon study here because one aspect of what I am researching on in Iẓon oral poetry is the function or role oral poetry or verbal artists play in Iẓonland.

In that article, Mafeje argues that many previous studies by social anthropologists and linguists on bardic tradition amongst the Bantu-speaking ethnic groups in South Africa had always considered the chief function of the bard as a chanter of the praises of kings. For example,

Grant had written that “attached to the court of the chief was an important official whose profession was the recording of the praise names, victories, and laudable characteristics of his master” (qtd. in Mafeje, “The Role” 193).

Mafeje contends that there are parallels in the role(s) of the bard (*imbongi*) in traditional South African society and that of the bardic institution that originated in Europe during the medieval period. For example, Mafeje writes:

The method of the South African bard, in carrying out his duties, is not unlike that of the European bards. Like them, he celebrates the victories of the nation, he sings songs of praise, chants the laws and customs of the nation, he recites the genealogies of the royal families; and, in addition, he criticizes the chiefs for perverting the laws and the customs of the nation and laments their abuse of power and neglect of their responsibilities and obligations to the people. (“The Role” 195)

The South African bard, Mafeje notes, is from the masses; he is not a member of the aristocracy. His position is also legitimised by the people. Furthermore, he has the license or freedom to criticise the excesses of those in authority be it the chief he serves.

Mafeje’s chief argument is that the bard’s chief role is to “interpret public opinion” and not the singing of the praises of some chief. Mafeje then uses the *izibongo* of Melikhaya Mbutuma, the *imbongi* to Sabata Dalindyabo, Paramount Chief of the Thembu to substantiate his argument.

According to Mafeje, in 1959, Mr de Wet Nel, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, visited Transkei as a representative of the ruling Nationalist Government. However, before that time, in 1951 to be precise, the South African Parliament under the ruling Nationalist Party had enacted the Bantu Authorities Act. The Act established the basis for self-determination of the existing black ethnic groups in South Africa and gave absolute authority to the traditional chiefs over their subjects. These traditional chiefs became, as it were, representatives of the white government in power. Traditional rulers who were uncooperative faced lots of problems (“Bantu”). In fact, some were dethroned and replaced with pro-government chiefs. The people were opposed to this. Mr de Wet Nel had come to discuss how important the Act, especially the traditional authorities, was to the Blacks. He was not wanted by the people. To the people, he did not have their interests at heart.

In 1962, the South African Government announced that Transkei would be granted self-government. During that period, there was a heated conflict between the Paramount Chief of the Thembu and Chief Kaizer Matanzima. Chief Kaizer Matanzima was the self-claimed Paramount Chief of Emigrant Thembuland, a sub-group of the Thembu who cooperated with the whites during the tensions in the 19th century. He had always supported separate development and enjoyed tremendous support of the ruling party. The people saw him as a puppet for the South African Government. As such, when the announcement was made, the people knew that Chief Matanzima would embrace it; and he “accepted the notion of Transkei as an independent state” (Khapoya 35). On the other hand, they knew Paramount Chief Sabata Dalindyebo who was widely popular in their ranks would reject the notion of Bantustan. They themselves were against it. The bard, in a poem, boldly speaks to Chief Sabata, telling him to be courageous and defend the truth and accuses Chief Matanzima for all the happenings in Thembuland.

As noted by Mafeje, the Thembu were one of the ethnic groups in South Africa that resisted “the implementation of the South African Government schemes in the Transkei” (“The Role” 211). In that struggle, the bard became the historian educating the rival parties and the people about the institution of chieftainship in Thembu. He was also the articulator of the Thembus’ criticisms of the South African government’s policies. As a result, he was warned several times by the police to stop “sowing seeds of dissension between the people and the chiefs, or between the people and the Government” (“The Role” 220). In fact, Mafeje reports that the bard appeared in court on one occasion for his comments. The bard also pointed out the failings of his master, Chief Sabata Dalindyebo. Mafeje remarks that on one occasion, the bard reproved his master for drinking excessively at a period that called for every sense of seriousness (see also Kaschula, *The Bones* 133-138, on the role of this same bard in the feud between Chiefs Sabata Dalindyebo and Matanzima). Mafeje notes that what a bard focuses his verbal arts on are determined by the present realities of his society.

However, there are times open hostilities become strong between a people and their ruler(s). In other words, Mafeje asks the role a bard should play when a ruler pursues his interest and forgoes the ideals of his people. Does he champion the cause of the chief he serves and lose the general acceptance he enjoys from his people? Or does he stay on the side of the masses and continue to speak the truth? Mafeje tells us the bards of Chief Matanzima lost their special position with the people for supporting someone that was against their aspirations.

Mafeje's paper has really shown that the bard in South Africa, and Africa in general, played an important function in traditional times. The bard was not only an entertainer, but he was also a historian, educator and the voice of his people on important affairs in his society. Mafeje's paper has indeed become a classic on discourse on the role verbal artists played and still play in Africa. In any case, Mafeje's paper would have been one of the reference points on composition and performance of *izibongo* if he had considered those aspects too. In any case, my study will also examine the role or function the verbal artist plays amongst the *Izon*. Of particular interest to me will be whether the *Izon* verbal artist also criticises those he praises. Given the socio-political complexities the *Izon* face in Nigeria in relation to oil production, as outlined in chapter 1, Mafeje's approach will be an important one for my research. I now turn to another case study, this time, by Yahaya on Hausa oral poetry.

The paper was one of those that were presented at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and subsequently published in 1981. Yahaya's paper is important to me because like Mafeje's own, it looks at the role the Hausa poet plays amongst his people.

In that paper, Yahaya explores how the Hausa oral poet composes songs to entertain and mould public opinion. The Hausa oral poet, Yahaya tells us, sings on numerous occasions. Some of these occasions include coronations of traditional officeholders and marriage and naming ceremonies. Others are activities such as fishing, *salah*, harvesting, recreation and festivals. The oral poet in Hausa is called *maroka*. There is the court *maroka* and the freelance *maroka*. The court *maroka* sings in the palaces of traditional officeholders, while the freelance *maroka* sings for boxers, wrestlers, hunters, farmers, amongst others.

Yahaya argues that "in traditional Hausa setting, the most important office is that of public administration which is headed by the traditional ruler" (140). Because of how important this office is, the king-maker council looks for the most suitable person. The council looks at the descent, character, and education and/or experience of a person before making its choice. When this has been done, the public will have to be enlightened on how the chosen person suits the office. It is here that the praise singer comes in. It is the praise singer that disseminates the information about the chosen traditional ruler to the public. Yahaya lists five foremost attributes identified by Malam Gidado Bello which oral singers use to demonstrate a ruler's suitability to the public. These are descent, military achievement, administrative expertise,

generosity and religiousness/piety. After the person has assumed office, these poets compose songs on their own and sometimes on request about the emir and sing at public occasions.

Yahaya informs us of something that happened in 1963. In that year, the kingmakers appointed Alhaji Ado Bayero as the new emir when he was only 33 years. The new emir had requirements like education, descent and experience, but he was young. How would the public accept him, being so young? Alhaji Mamman Shata had to compose a song about the emir to the people. The song made a huge impact by demonstrating that age should not be a barrier. Other singers praised the generosity - which is institutionalised in Hausa - of the new young emir in the songs they composed. It is from these oral songs that the public would come to know about the kind of emir they have installed.

The poets, Yahaya tells us, do not mould public opinion on only traditional officeholders. They extend it to even political officers, because they too must have certain attributes. Yahaya points out there are lots of songs, for example, in memory of the revered late popular Hausa politician and Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto.

On 15 January 1966, Nigeria had its first coup that toppled a democratic government. Several high-profile Hausa politicians were assassinated (including the respected Sir Ahmadu Bello) in the coup. It was and is still interpreted as an Igbo coup because the officers who carried it out were Igbo-speaking Christians from the southeastern part of Nigeria. The northern part of the country was ready for immediate retaliation. Something was needed to calm the Hausa before an impending civil eruption. It was at that point that Hausa oral poets composed songs to calm nerves that had arisen. Alhaji Musa Dankwairo, for one, in the words of Yahaya, composed “one of the most highly valued Hausa praise-songs ever” (149). Dankwairo, through that song, “helped in making a passionate appeal to people to keep calm and remember God in that most sad situation” (146). The song was composed of Sir Ahmadu Bello and presented him as a martyr who “died in the course of the search for improvement of his subjects as well as in propagation of Islam, a religion which appeals for calmness, reservation and foresight in times of such disaster” (149).

Governments also use oral poets to communicate their programmes to the public. Oral poets have become the channel of enlightening the public on programmes including census, registration for an election, new farming methods, literacy campaigns, amongst others.

In concluding his paper, Yahaya writes that “all government projects which needed public enlightenment found expression in Hausa oral songs, for example the change to new currency (Naira), change from driving on the left to the right, the census, the new Federal capital, the farming techniques, literacy campaign, vaccination campaigns and a host of important public services” (154-155).

Yahaya has been able to show to even the Eurocentric scholar that African oral poets were and are still not singing for the fun of it. His paper demonstrates that verbal arts in Africa are simultaneously utilitarian and entertaining. However, Yahaya makes a general statement (something one frequently sees in oral literature scholarship in Africa) based on what he sees the *maroka* doing in Hausaland. Yahaya asserts that “the government programme of Operation Feed the Nation reaches all the nooks and corners of the country through this method of channeling information” (151). The use of oral poets to enlighten the public about a programme is what Yahaya means by “through this method.” How did Yahaya get to know that it was this means or one of the means that political rulers in other ethnic groups used to educate their peoples about the Operation Feed the Nation programme that was introduced by the Buhari regime in Nigeria? Does the Africa oral poet in every nationality perform the same function? Nevertheless, my study shall explore whether the oral poet in Iṣṣonland performs this specific function or similar ones. In addition, Yahaya notes that the Hausa *maroka* is of two kinds. The one who lives in the palace of the emir to sing his praises and the freelance *maroka*. This researcher is particularly interested in this. As such, he shall look at whether the praise chanter in Iṣṣonland is attached to a paramount chief or he is a verbal artist that chants for anybody. The next case study for review is an article written by Bade Ajuwon. Ajuwon’s study is important to my purposes here because it also examines the functional aspect of the African verbal artist, in this case, the ijala poet of the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria.

Ajuwon argues that ijala poets are “the mouthpiece of the community, the chanters of ijala continue to take it upon themselves to chant the poetry so as to give their people new perspectives on human nature as well as remind them of that which is essential in life” (“The Ijala” 196). To these oral poets, for a society to function properly, man who is the most important figure in society, needs to be pursuing ideals of industriousness, charity, heroic deeds and humility that are honourable. Sadly, oftentimes, men are seeking pleasures of society,

which in themselves are ephemeral. Man wants to make money, build the best house, buy the best car and enjoy fleeting happiness (“The Ijala” 196). By doing so, man relegates service to his fellow beings to the background. “But to the poets, the essence of life lies in the attainment of personal merit, and in the act of living and serving, for which a place of honour is created for one in the community” (“The Ijala” 196).

On industriousness, the oral poets point to their listeners that hard work begets success. Some of their chants are like biographies of the subject chanted about. They are critiques of their subjects, pointing out their failures and successes. The subject’s contributions to his society are identified and praised; his failures or weaknesses are “disrespected.” In one ijala chant, the verbal artist uses metaphor and other figurative devices to highlight the industriousness of the subject, Ogunbile Awelewa. Ogunbile has been given permanence by that ijala chant for pursuing the ideal of industry. The ijala poet is indirectly telling his audience that they should emulate the hard work of Ogunbile who served his community by providing food for them.

In another ijala chant in honour of Iroko, an ijala poet emphasises the need for individuals in society to combine one’s profession with farming. This is in fidelity with the Yoruba views on diversification. Ajuwon tells us it is “the yielding of new perspective on industry, and especially on professional diversification....” (198)

Furthermore, the ijala poet chants about the dangers of being indolent in society. The audience is reminded that indolence is a bad habit that must be shunned. An indolent person does not contribute in any way to the proper functioning of society. When something dishonourable happens in society, in most cases, it is traced to an indolent person; the person who works hard is hardly to blame. A person does not exist alone. He is living because of others. Therefore, anything that happens to him, whether dishonourable or honourable, affects both his descendants and the community (“The Ijala” 200, 204). Reputation is permanent; it does not go to the grave with the deceased. What is the legacy that you are leaving behind? Is it clothes, big houses and the like? No. It is a good name.

Ijala poets evaluate the character of both the living and the dead. Ajuwon observes that “the living individuals in attendance who receive commendation from the poets feel gratified and those castigated for their conduct, leave overwhelmed with disgrace. Also, the descendants of the commended or the castigated deceased who listen to the view of the poets about their ancestors either feel honoured or disgraced as the case may be” (“The Ijala” 201).

The poets also comment about leaders freely, whether head of a village, a professional group or a family head. Virtues such as accessibility, humility, hospitality, strength, wisdom and justice are commended in a leader; on the other hand, his weaknesses are derided. In order for a leader to continue to command the respect and live in the memories of his people even after death, he needs to continually pursue ideals that contribute to the functioning of the Yoruba.

Moreover, the verbal artist praises heroic feats, especially in the battlefield. To them, it is not only the man who kills his opponents or saves his fellow beings from an invading army that should be termed a hero. The man who is killed in the battlefield is also a hero. Even “the discovery of something, fundamental to national interest and growth, is enough to win heroic status for one” (“The Ijala” 206). For example, Adejobi who brought yam to Yorubaland is regarded as a hero in one of the chants. Comments of ijala poets equally extend to sex life. Young girls are encouraged to keep their virginities until marriage. Infidelity too is frowned upon. Men are also told to be wary of women

Ajuwon must be commended for his in-depth study of the ijala oral poet as a champion of the ideals that contribute to the perfect functioning of the Yoruba society. Again, the reader has seen that oral poets in Africa, from time immemorial, have been contributing in different ways to the betterment of their society. Is it the same with Iẓon oral poets and singers? Do Iẓon poets criticise the ills of their society like the ijala poet? Do they point out the weakness(es) of the subjects of their poetry? These are some of the points this study, in chapter 4, shall give attention to. Another paper for review is the one published in 1981 by Donatus Nwoga dealing with the role an oral poet plays amongst the Igbo of Nigeria. The paper is relevant to my study because of its concern with how the Igbo oral poet employs satire to teach people what they will face if they go against the norms of the Igbo society.

Nwoga avers that in traditional societies, there was no formalised system of punishing criminals like the modern prison. However, culprits of very serious crimes were sold as slaves or ostracised or given “judicial or ritual execution” (230). On the other hand, minor crimes “did not appear to attract established reprisals in physical terms” (230). Therefore, it is this gap, Nwoga argues, that satire “appears to have filled” (230).

In traditional societies, the community is communal and homogeneous, not individualistic. Dignity in humans is shared by all the members of the community. The community has standards of living. To put it differently, the community has required behaviour. Each person

is expected to live up to the moral code. When one fails to live one's life in sync with the practices, satire becomes a literary tool. According to Nwoga, there are satires against sexual immorality, indolence, selfish politicians, stealing and husbands who cannot provide for their wives. As such, becoming the subject of ridicule in the community when one commits a minor crime is a great punishment. The culprit is satirised in songs, even in those of children. He has been exposed to the public. Sleepless nights will be his lot. The man will be so ashamed that he will never think of committing a dishonourable act in his entire life again. Going against the standards of the community will not even cross the minds of others again. It is for this reason that Nwoga argues, "satire ...served as a means of social control" (230).

Nwoga maintains every poet or singer, with the exception of adult males - "peace-keepers who are to arbitrate if problems arise from the practice of satiric poetry" – engages in satire (231). Children, teens, young adults, the elderly, women's dance groups and masquerades are all involved in it.

Children sing satirical songs they have learnt at any time. They have also been told the persons in the community that the songs refer to. Teenagers take satiric songs to a higher level. The girls of this period belong to different dance or song groups. These dance groups compose their own satiric songs which they perform in public. The songs, amongst others, deal with their fellow girls who illegally slept with men, those who became pregnant and secretly aborted babies. It is only during such performances that they can also freely criticise through their songs the dishonourable acts committed by the elders in the community.

Nwoga informs us that sexual immorality is the subject that occurs the most in satires. Satires are made about unfaithful wives and promiscuous girls and boys. It might be a song about a girl who had illegal intercourse or became pregnant before her bride price was paid, or the one that ran away from her parents because of a man. Adult groups equally compose songs against young girls. However, their satires are mostly on how their children have been taken over by the new culture. It is not that the people are against modernity, for they have churches and schools in their midst. What they frown upon are the styles of dressing that the youths have copied from modernity that make them look exhibitionist in their eyes. Styles like the mini-skirt or *bongo* are against the moral code in traditional societies.

These are girls who normally should live exemplary lives in the community for the fact that their parents have spent money they did not even have to send them to school. These girls have

become exhibitionists of their bodies in themselves. This may be less acceptable in a traditional society where certain dress codes and values are upheld.

Nwoga even goes on to discuss the elements employed by the singers for the satires to be effective and pungent. These elements include anecdotes, mock-praise, dramatisation or parody, proverbs, ridicule by description or invective. What Nwoga means by dramatisation is when “the singers assume the role of the culprit and act out his regretful pain; or they assume the stance of the boyfriend of the errant girl and reject her on her return” (237).

This researcher agrees with Nwoga that satire played an important role in traditional societies where it originated from. It could even be argued that satire, in contemporary times, would have been much more effective than the prisons we have. Somebody who had been satirised in a song would not think of committing even the least misdemeanor in society again (see the case study in this chapter on Ojaide’s study of satire amongst the Urhobo). On the other hand, prisons only make criminals more emboldened to continue from where they stopped when freed.

One has to take into contention Nwoga’s argument that “every type of poet or singer is engaged” in satire (231). As pointed out earlier, it is one of the mistakes made by scholars of African oral literature to use what they found in their specific studies to make generic statements about the oral literatures of other ethnic groups. Even his claim that “satiric poems and songs are ephemeral, they are occasional and drop out of use soon after the occasion for which they were composed” is weak (243). Amongst the Iẓon, satires were not transitory. Once composed, they became part of the corpus of songs sung by dance or song groups any time there was a need for their performances. Moreover, as children who used to sing such songs grew to their teens, others who have become children naturally take the songs from them. This is one aspect the study will look into in chapter 4. I now turn to a paper written by Getie Galaye in 2001. Galaye’s study is important to me because it looks at how oral poets in Ethiopia reflect topicalities in their poetry. This line of argument shall be pursued in this study too.

In 1998, the third International Conference on Oral Literature in Africa was held at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Different papers on orality in contemporary Africa were presented. The product of the conference is an edited book, *African Oral Literature: Functions in Contemporary Contexts*, by Russell Kaschula. It was at that conference at Cape Town where the International Society for Oral Literature in Africa (ISOLA) was formalised

(Kashula, *African Oral* vii). Gelaye's study, wherein he looks at the relationship between Amharic oral poetry performed and contemporary issues in East Gojjam, Ethiopia, was one of the papers that was presented and subsequently published as a chapter in the book.

Gelaye argues that the Amharic poetry and songs of peasants in East Gojjam reflect the contemporary issues they find themselves dealing with. In other words, their verbal arts are used to express the present realities in Ethiopia. No one puts this better than one of the informants of Gelaye. This researcher shall quote her at some length on this:

After all poetry exists together with our lives. Here in the countryside, regardless of age and sex, everyone composes a variety of poems and songs, or recites and improvises others' poems. We sing songs and recite poems at the agricultural fields, on our journeys, in the bush, on holidays, on weddings and funerals, and when we feel loneliness, destitute, and during impositions and injustices imposed to us by state officials and local authorities. In general, we express our happiness and sadness in our poems and songs. The detail is too much. But we do not know that much whether it is so significant for researchers coming here and traveling in the villages to record singers and poets. It is really surprising. (207)

Gelaye, based on the data he collected during an eight-month fieldwork, classified Amharic poetry into six broad groups: *zafan* (songs), *waqtawi git'im* (contemporary poetry), *ingurguro* (lamentations), *yalaqso git'im* (dirges), *qararto inna fukkara* (war chants and boasting recitals) and *tarikawi git'im* (historical poetry). In the broad group of *zafan*, are songs of work, wedding, praise, children, love and religion. Under the *waqtawi git'im* (contemporary poetry) group are poems dealing with topicalities such as "landlessness, drought, famine, war, migration, gender, political change, rural development, state-peasant relationships, local administration and the like..." (209).

On work songs, Gelaye tells us they are performed by the peasants either in group or singly while working on their farms. For example, there is group singing during activities such as harvesting and threshing that involve cooperation. In contrast, there is solitary singing during weeding, hoeing, plowing and fencing. Farming is no easy task; it is tedious. As such, Gelaye notes that singing helps the farmers to bear the hardship. Moreover, the songs, during farming, are the medium by which they express their aspirations, desolateness and neediness. Some of the songs express appreciation to God for good health, keeping them alive, helping them to have good harvests, amongst others.

Children too sing songs when they are playing and looking after crops, cattle and babies. Gelaye observes that the chief occasion when children sing songs is when they are grazing in places that are far from home. During grazing, several of them come together to sing and dance in order to while away time. Gelaye tells us that the songs of these children deal with issues such as lazy and serious farmers, politics and affairs between husbands and their wives. Gelaye reports that during the Socialist dispensation from 1971 to 1991, the then-National Military Service recruited boys from the age of 18 for military service. He contends that thousands of Youths in Ethiopia died during that period. In the East Gojjam region where Gelaye uses as his case study, it was the members in the top hierarchy of the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) and those of agricultural cooperatives in the region who recruited boys and adults and sent them to war. The recruiting process was not fair as the authorities were nepotistic, corrupt and discriminative.

The injustice during this period and that of the civil war brought grief and sorrow to the peasants whose children were constantly killed. According to Gelaye, it led to the composition of a very popular funerary song by the children.

The civil war that broke out between rebel forces and the Ethiopian government also resulted in poems and songs by children. These poems praised the sons of East Gojjam who took part in the war to fight the rebels. When the Mengistu dispensation eventually collapsed in 1991, children composed songs and poems of happiness since young boys would not be recruited to wars again.

War chants (*qararto*) and boasting recitals (*fukkara*), Gelaye remarks, express the courage, bravery, determination and hard work of the men of the East Gojjam. In them are recollections of their victories over invaders of their surroundings, the civil war and other feats of heroism. By tradition, Gelaye contends, war chants and boasting recitals are performed together. The reader is told war chants and boasting recitals are normally performed before the audience inside a house after there had been feasting and drinking during ceremonies.

During this time, one of the men is chosen to recite war poems. He must recite it well because it is the way he goes about it that will inspire and stimulate others to perform *fukkara*, boasting recitals. At such times, one sees patriotism in the performers. They become athletic, energetic and warlike. However, today, the men no longer wait for such times to perform war chants and boasting recitals. They are performed during farm work and when coming and going from

hunting sessions. The men, in these chants and recitals, also talk about contemporary issues, especially the relationship between peasants and the state. The peasants have now found themselves in disconsolate condition in the hands of the local representatives of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). They are taxed beyond what they can bear. Their pieces of land have been taken over by the local representatives.

Gelaye has brilliantly shown the reader how oral literature, like its written counterpart, is entwined with the environment that produces it. It shows that oral literature does not exist only for entertainment and instruction. It is also used to express the realities at whatever time and period that a people face them. As Kaschula maintains, the thematic content of oral poetry has been broadened in order to reflect the important issues of the day, be they religious, political or social" (*African Oral vix*).

However, Gelaye's treatment of the types of poems and songs amongst the peasants in East Gojjam is not exhaustive. He tells the reader war chants and boasting recitals recall the bravery and heroic feats of the peasants who fought in the civil war and defended their surroundings from enemies. However, he fails to provide any example of such a chant or recital. What the reader has as examples of war chants and boasts are lamentations which he had already classified as one of the six major forms. Gelaye's classification has a group of poems and songs under what he calls "contemporary poetry," poems that treat the realities peasants in East Gojjam had gone through and those they are facing now. Unfortunately, all the poems and songs he uses as examples of the other major five groups fall into the contemporary group. On classification, Gelaye fails from the very beginning of the paper. In generic classificatory paradigms in oral literature, contemporary is not taken as a category. For convenience and other purposes, one may choose to categorise the oral poems and songs of a people into old and contemporary; not when one is grouping oral forms into many categories. Despite some of the failings of Gelaye on classification, in this (my) research, like Gelaye's study, I shall explore the significance of İzön verbal arts in contemporary issues of politics, militancy and environmental degradation. The study will examine if İzön oral poets have made interventions in contemporary issues affecting the İzön ethnic group. The next case study is an article by Jama published in 1991, which, like Gelaye's study, deals with oral poetry and contemporary issues, something my study will explore in chapter 4. Jama's study examines the poetry that was composed by Somali women who took part in the struggle for independence.

Jama observes that women in Somalia constitute more than half of the population. However, the poetry these women have produced on matters of politics, war and nationalism is not popular in Somalia. There are reasons, Jama contends, for this phenomenon. For one thing, it is hard to see female reciters in Somali unlike the existence of male reciters. It is not because women in Somalia are not interested in this occupation. Rather, it is because of the cultural constraints on Somali women. Men have the liberty to move or travel anywhere. Unfortunately, women are restricted. Men take their poetry to other areas through their nomadic lives. Moreover, women always have much work to do at home and never have the spare time to compose poetry. They perform their roles as wives, mothers, daughters, in addition to other duties relating to cattle. Moreover, women lack access to occasions where poetry is recited. Even if a woman composes a poem, it does not go beyond relatives and friends. In addition, male poets do not recite poems composed by females. All this has made recitation to be a male occupation.

Despite these constraints, some women have been composing poems for centuries on politics and other areas. For example, some women in the Somali Youth League during the fight for independence in the 1940s and 1950s composed poems. As such, it is only natural that the poetry of these women would have a nationalistic bent. Jama notes that the women recited their poems in the political rallies and social gatherings during that period. Even at that, the poems did not go far because of the constraints that were pointed out earlier. As such, their poems were not even published. Jama says she recorded the poems in 1987 from the unlettered women who composed them during the period of independence. As such, some of the women could not remember all the poems they composed. One of the oral poets could remember just nine (9) lines of a poem that had twenty (20) lines.

Andrzejewski and Lewis, according to Jama, classified Somali classical poetry into four types that treat serious concerns: *gabay*, *geeraar*, *jiifto* and *buranbur*. Of the four, *buranbur*, a short form, is chanted by women. Jama tells us all the four types have “strict rules of alliteration. Only identical initial consonants or vowels are regarded as alliterative with one another and no substitution by similar sounds is admissible. Furthermore, this strict rule of alliteration is applied throughout the whole poem” (45). There is another form of poetry that is sung. It is “accompanied by music or clapping and chorus” (45). Then in the 1940s, during the time of the struggle, there arose another poetic form, *balwo*, which has one or two lines sometimes.

Jama tells us, *balwo*, which was regularly broadcast by Radio Hargeisa, makes use of elements of both the classical types and the light one.

These women in the Somali Youth League made use of *buranbur* and *balwo* during the struggle. The use of any of these forms depended on a number of factors but the chief one was the occasion. They would use *balwo* when there was no time to compose and rehearse. The dominant themes, amongst others, include encouragement to other women to take part in the struggle, eulogies and victories. At one time, reports Jama, a friend warned Halimo Shiil about the consequences of taking part in the fight for freedom. Shiil responded to the friend in a *buranbur*. It is a short poem that shows the dedication of Shiil to the course. In another *buranbur*, Halimo Godane made a plea to women in Somalia to join the struggle.

In January 1948, as Jama tells the reader, a commission was sent to Mogadishu to decide Southern Somalia's future. The British Government had also granted permission to the Somali Youth League to hold a rally as a demonstration of support of the visit. Unfortunately, on that day, the Italian community came along with arms to break up the rally. The ensuing hostilities left people dead on both sides. Members of the S.Y.L. were put in prison. The incident resulted in poems composed by the women to commemorate that day.

There is also a poem jointly composed by two women, Halimo Godane and Barni Warsame, on the issue of nationalism. The *buranbur* is written in the form of a duet. Some women composed poems in prisons. During the struggle, a good number of S.Y.L. members were arrested and sentenced to prison for taking part in an illegal demonstration in 1952. Those people passed through agonising experiences and composed poems to express talk about their experiences.

In the northern part of Somalia that was under the British Government, Fadumo Abbane, a member of Somali National Society, recited nationalistic poems at gatherings. Most of her poems, Jama tells us, were composed in the male form, *geeraar*. She composed these poems and recited them to audiences of males and females. In the words of Jama, Abbane, "because of her public performances of poetry she suffered from the cultural taboo of punishing women who do not behave according to the 'good conduct' expected of women" (51). Jama avers that women in Somalia are expected to take care of their husbands and children. They are not expected to go beyond the family, as it were. As such, the women who joined in the struggle

suffered. They were criticised; some were divorced. Some who joined the struggle when they were single never got married because men fled from them.

Jama has demonstrated the important role(s) verbal arts in Africa play. It is quite interesting that women who are silenced in a Muslim country like Somalia could use poems to fight for independence. It shows that oral literature, like the written form, is topical. Moreover, Jama points out that the poems were first composed before they were performed in public. The reader is told that when the poets had no time to compose and rehearse the poems, they used *balwo* to improvise poems of one or two or three lines. In traditional times, the Iḥon were a warlike people. As such, my study shall look at whether Iḥon female singers played similar roles during times of war. In addition, this research will explore the relationship between Iḥon poets and the Iḥo struggle. In other words, this researcher shall look at whether Iḥon poets, like their Somali counterparts, have made interventions through poetry in the Iḥo struggle for resource control.

In the foregoing section, the study has critically reviewed case studies on the role or function of the verbal artist on the African continent. In every case study that was critically looked at, this researcher pointed out the particular area of the study that connects it to his study, which he will expand on in chapter 4. The researcher now turns to the next section, which is a review of case studies on performance and composition of African verbal arts.

Composition and Performance of African Oral Poetry

The first article for consideration in this section is written by Jeff Opland on Xhosa oral poetry in 1975. Opland's study is relevant to mine because it employs the ideas of Millman Parry and Albert Lord to examine Xhosa oral poetry. In different terms, Opland looks at the issues of composition and performance in that study, two issues that are crucial aspects of my study.

Opland's article was based on a paper he presented at Ann Arbor, Michigan. He wrote the paper, according to him, as result of the weaknesses in the statements made about Xhosa praise poetry by expatriate scholars – Finnegan, Schapera, amongst others - who had little knowledge of the poetic tradition. When Opland wrote that paper, as earlier stated, he had in mind Parry and Lord's views on oral composition and performance.

Opland argues that in Xhosa poetic tradition, true to Parry and Lord's postulation, there are verbal artists who compose poems during a performance. However, there are also some

memorisers who recite *izibongo* verbatim during performances. Still, some have the ability to compose *izibongo* on the spur of the moment. Furthermore, there exists literate oral poets who write down their chants.

Opland notes that in the rural areas, it is a common sight to see tribesmen chant *izibongo* spontaneously at social gatherings such as weddings, drinking parties and even during wars. What inspires the poet here is nothing more than the occasion. His chants or poems, writes Opland, “would tend to be crude and unpolished, and would normally be uttered in a loud, high-toned voice and at a fast rate...the words are rushed, as many words as possible being squeezed into a breath group: there is generally not the rhythmically cadence of the typical *izibongo* of an *imbongi*...” (“Xhosa Tribal Poet” 187, italics in the original). Opland notes that as the tribesman bursts this out, “there is no musical accompaniment.” It is not exclusive to one sex: male and female all do this. Richard Mfamana, a Xhosa who helped Opland in some of the transcriptions, tells Opland that it is a gift. Opland reports that he requested Mfamana in one of their transcription sessions to compose a poem which he did spontaneously. Opland asked him to repeat the poem after some minutes which Mfamana did again but with some differences in words and turns of phrase from the first one. The gifted tribesman will have to hone his talent or skills to become an *imbongi*. The *imbongi* has an established function of performing chants at ceremonies. His position is legitimised by the people. The tribesman’s bursts of poems are occasional. An *imbongi* knows that chanting is expected of him at formal occasions unlike the tribesman.

The memoriser in Xhosa is the verbal artist who repeats poems from memory in a performance with little alterations. Opland informs the reader the memorised poem might be composed by the memoriser himself, learned from a book in school or “picked up by another memorizer repeating the poem” (“Xhosa Tribal Poet” 190). This happens because the Xhosa have *izibongo* about birds, people, cattle, ancestors and clans which are fixed. As such, women, men and boys recite these short fixed *izibongo* to spur someone doing something (fighting or dancing) at weddings, ritual ceremonies, herding cattle, amongst others. It is also not uncommon for mothers to praise their children in fighting with the *izibongo* of others. Opland notes that *izibongo* that are memorised sometimes have no relatedness to the occasions they are chanted for.

The *imbongi*, by tradition, is connected to a chief. He travels with the chief to occasions and acclaims him. He is also the one that has the freedom to criticise the chief he serves in public by way of expressing public opinion about him. He is the mediator between the chief and his subjects. In times of war, his *izibongo* energises the feelings of Xhosa soldiers to achieve greater heights. During his performances, the *imbongi*, Opland remarks, at important occasions “wore a distinctive outfit consisting of a cloak and hat of animal skins, and he carried two assegais” (“Xhosa Tribal Poet” 193). During a performance, he does not stay on one place; he becomes light-footed, athletic, making gestures here and there. An *imbongi*, according to Opland, is always a male. An *imbongi*, we are told, is never appointed to serve this role by the chief. Rather, “he merely rose to prominence by tacit approval of the community” (“Xhosa Tribal Poet” 193). Today, most of the traditions associated with *imbongi* have changed. Most of them are educated and are engaged in different western-introduced jobs. That means they are *iimbongi* at only the times they are free and are not even connected to chiefs. Some *iimbongi* still wear traditional dress made of animal skin during a performance. Some sit on the hood of their chiefs’ cars as they drive to meetings.

Opland maintains that an *imbongi* does not undergo any special training unlike the *guslar* in Yugoslavia. An *imbongi* is a tribesman; and bursting out chants at occasions is a norm amongst the Xhosa. The only difference is that he has taken his bursts to a higher level and to maintain that level, he needs to pay more attention to his art. However, there are some similarities between the *guslar* and *imbongi*. An *imbongi* composes in performance like the *guslar*. Most *iimbongi*, like the *guslar*, draw on a pool or set of expressions that have become traditional on Xhosa praise poetry in their *izibongo* about chiefs which Lord calls formulaic expressions and themes. However, an *imbongi*’s *izibongo* are less free of this traditional pool when it is on other subjects. For improvisation, an *imbongi* uses chiasmus, parallel repetitions, intonations and linking.

Opland has made illuminating statements about composition and performance of *izibongo* amongst the Xhosa. His paper has pointed out to the reader an existence of a complex poetic tradition. The reader has come to see that the Xhosa have verbal artists who compose in a performance as well as those who recite from memory at occasions. There is also the existence of literate oral poets. These verbal artists chant, write them down and publish the poems or compose on paper straightaway.

Opland's article has once again brought to the fore the imperative of fieldwork. Opland's article, he tells us, is based on fieldwork from 1969 to the time of writing the paper. To stop making unguarded generic statements, scholars of oral literature need to engage themselves in the field rather than sit in air-conditioned offices to make statements about literatures they have no idea of. The conclusions of Opland's paper are surely part of what this researcher analysis in his study of Iẓon poetic tradition. In other words, my study looks at composition and performance in the praise poems of Chief Munamuna, the Iẓon verbal artist, and see whether he composes his poems in performance and also if composition and performance are two different things to him in chapter four. Olajubu is another scholar in African oral literature scholarship that has applied the ideas of Parry and Lord to the poetic traditions of his people.

Olajubu's paper in 1981 contends that scholars have made continual efforts at studying the literariness, content, scope and context of African oral literature. Nevertheless, one issue, to him, has not been settled: composition. Therefore, his paper seeks to examine composition and performance of Yoruba oral poetry.

Olajubu argues that "it is now clear to us that though we may not be able to identify the actual composer(s) of a piece of oral poetry, such piece must have been composed by someone or some people" contrary to the view "that the authorship of Yoruba oral poetry belongs to the community" (74). Two reasons made Olajubu to arrive at this new perspective: close examination of Yoruba oral texts and observation of live performances. Olajubu emphatically states that oral poetry is composed in performance. As such he has qualms about the views expressed by Schapera, Damene and Sanders and Lestrade on Zulu and other Bantu ethnic groups' praise poetry and Babalola on Yoruba ijala praise poetry that the oral poets first compose and then recite at a performance. He opines that the views of Shapera, Damene and Sanders and Lestrade are only "peculiar" to the situation in South Africa. In fact, Olajubu says that it is even hard to accept their findings because they are expatriates without much knowledge of the local languages and who have "misleading assumptions" about the literatures of non-literate peoples. Olajubu asserts that composition and performance are simultaneous; that they are never two different things. Put it in another way, the oral poet or singer is performing as he is composing in the presence of the audience.

Olajubu's opinion is hinged on the influential view expressed in *The Singer of Tales* by Albert Lord. Lord, after his extensive fieldwork in Yugoslavia, makes this statement that changed the study of oral poetry composition:

For the oral poet the moment of composition is the performance. In the case of the literary poem there is a gap in the time between composition and reading or performance; in the case of the oral poem this gap does not exist, because composition and performance are two aspects of the same moment...he is [not] one who merely reproduces what someone else or even he himself has composed....Singer, performer, composer, and poet are one under different aspects *but at the same time*. Singing, performing and composing are facets of the same act. (14, italics in the original)

Olajubu also notes that the verbal artist until now has no means of recording his own pieces or that of others which would have made it possible for him to memorise. He further states that the vicissitudes of performance would only "impose on him the need to impoverish, and in so doing recreate a new poem for each occasion of performance" (77). Moreover, he asserts that the oral poet only uses traditional formulas, proverbs, clichés, turns of phrases, amongst other verbal elements to create new pieces. For all this, Olajubu emphatically rejects the view that the Yoruba oral poet is a reciter. After all these arguments, Olajubu then goes on to highlight the factors, elements and agencies in Yoruba oral poetry composition and performance.

The agencies are the verbal poet or sometimes, an orchestra, and the audience. Perhaps, I should quote Olajubu at some length here on the factors and elements:

The factors include the situation, place, time and circumstances of the composition/performance, the variability in the composition and size of the audience, the instability of the audience, the variability of the situation and circumstances of the show and above all the nature of the structure, content, language and style of the particular genre of oral poetry to be performed. The major elements of oral poems are spontaneity and immediacy, all of which limit to zero the moment between composition and performance. The materials of composition are mainly words, but music and dramatic movements (gestures, miming, etc) come into play. (78)

The Yoruba, Olajubu tells the reader, have different genres of oral poetry and each form is chanted or performed with a special tone with no difference in content. He also remarks that it is self-volition or talent that drives someone to undergo training and not by compulsion. Composition/performance in oral literature is learnt like every human behaviour, Olajubu avers. However, for the Yoruba verbal artist, he learns this through performance. As such, the person who has the interest or talent in a particular oral poetic genre must learn many things about the form through performance. Some of these, amongst others, include formulas, figures

of speech, style of performance, internal structure, themes that recur in that poetic form. In addition, he must learn the *oriki* of different things and the *orile* in the environment he wishes or wants to perform. *Orile* is the “descriptive poems of major lineages” (79). Olajubu contends *oriki* and *orile* are the principal elements of all poetic forms in Yoruba.

Oriki is the descriptive names of animals, birds, individuals, amongst others. Olajubu notes that “every Yoruba thing, idea, or person that has a name has a set of *oriki* with its ‘set’ text” (79). For example, the *oriki* of a person consists of the *oriki* of his parents, ancestors and his own heroic deeds. “*Oriki* is thus the greatest and largest store-house of the verbal materials for the composition of Yoruba oral poetry, therefore its mastery is very essential for the success and reputation of the artists” (79). Learning the *oriki* of different individuals or creating new ones is important in another dimension: prosperity. The person whose *oriki* is chanted or one created for in the performance is induced to give gifts to the oral poet. That means the poet can depend on his art for sustenance. Furthermore, his chants, amongst others, will be judged on his masterful knowledge of the different *oriki* in Yorubaland. Moreover, the verbal artist must learn Yoruba incantations, wise sayings and proverbs.

Olajubu likens composition/performance of Yoruba poetry to the codes, rules, tables and formulas that a student learns in Mathematics. The student will not use all these to solve a problem in Mathematics. Rather, he selects and uses the formula or rule that is appropriate to a given problem. So it is the with the oral poet. He has to select and “reorder” the materials or “verbal items” which he has learnt. His selection must be appropriate to the genre. It is through this that the oral poet creates new poems. What Olajubu is saying is that:

For each stage of performance, and for each theme or even a name or idea mentioned by the oral artist there are sets of possible alternative verbal materials to choose from to describe it and conceptualise it. The art of composing Yoruba oral poetry is therefore that of careful and spontaneous selections and discrimination of verbal materials. (81)

After all this, Olajubu gives an imagined composition/performance of an *esa Engungun* chant where the orchestra has created for entertainment with the intention of getting gifts from the public. Following the structure of the *esa* poetic form, it has a beginning, a middle and an end.

In the beginning, the leader of the ensemble comes to the arena with his dancing chorus boys. He is singing while the boys give the chorus. Mind you the particular music form for *esa* is produced on the *bata* drum. He is now ready to start the performance formally. As such, he

chants to the drummers to stop. He then pays homage and acknowledges the gods, master *esa* chanters, his father and traditional leaders and introduces himself. He does not just mention the names and leave there. He adds short excerpts of their *oriki*.

In the middle, the *oriki* and *orile* of the members of the audience are chanted. It also includes Yoruba legends, myths, folktales, songs, jokes, comments on what is happening in the community and prayers. It is not only the leader but also every member of the *esa* that chants here. What happens here is that as a member chants the *oriki* of somebody in the audience or makes a comment, another member seeks permission using an apt cliché and takes over from him. Sometimes it is a soloist that calls for assistance. The drummers are producing the *oriki* of the members that are chanting and slogans which are popular. The chorus boys on their own keep improvising the refrain. Every member of the orchestra here complements the other.

In the end, the leader of the orchestra offers thanks to the audience and for the gifts they have received. Thereafter, he prays for them and bids them goodbye. Then the ensemble sings the closing song and dances off the arena. Olajubu comments that an *esa* ensemble must know when to end a performance. It is not really good for the members of the audience to start leaving before the orchestra rounds off its show.

Olajubu's paper is a scholarly exposé of composition/performance in Yoruba oral poetry. The beauty is the way he brings up the arguments and claims of scholars and confutes them with evidence, as it were, from Yoruba oral poetry. He rightly argues that a singer can repeat an oral song word-for-word, but it is not possible in oral poetry. This has always been to me one of the distinctions between an oral poem and an oral song.

However, Olajubu should know that the issue of composition in performance is not the same with every ethnic group. The reader has seen before now that there are verbal artists who are reciters in Xhosa and the *imbongi* who composes in performance. Jama has also told the reader, as earlier pointed out, that Somali poets recite during a performance. These views are applied to my research on Iẓon oral poetry. Another article, which gives considerable attention to composition and performance in the study of African oral literature is Tanure Ojaide's work.

Ojaide's article published in 2001 examines *udje* dance songs of the Urhobo people of Nigeria. As already stated, Ojaide's study is important to mine because of the twin issues of composition and performance. Of particular interest to me in that article is the highly dramatic manner in

which the songs are performed. In the words of Ojaide, “*udje* is a unique type of Urhobo dance in which rival quarters or towns perform songs composed from often exaggerated materials about the other side on an appointed day” (44). Ojaide informs the reader *udje* performance developed to an extent that it became an annual event. Since the songs are sung at the occasion of *udje* dance, they are called “*udje* dance songs.”

The Urhobo have an unwritten accepted form of behaviour. In order to maintain oneness, peace, security and success, the community has unwritten rules and norms. These dos and don'ts must be obeyed by all. The community is greater than even the greatest or most powerful individual in it. Traditional Urhobo knew nothing of prisons. As such, culprits of major crimes were sold into slavery or executed. On the other hand, minor crimes were punished by satire. It was this role the songs performed in traditional times. Put differently, violations of the communal moral ethos “called for chastisement in the form of *udje* dance songs” (54). The songs centre on some bad thing about a rival person, quarter or community. What used to happen was that one side would sing about their rivals this year while the other side would respond in songs the other year. Immediately a group's performance ends, the other side begins preparations the next day.

Ojaide identifies two persons who are very important in the composition and performance of *udje*: *ororile* and *obo-ile*. *Ororile* is the poet/composer while *obo-ile* is the cantor/singer. Sometimes one person can be the poet/composer and cantor/singer. The composer/poet of the group “thinks out” a song. The reader is told it may take him several months to come up with a song because it will be based on the scandals or vices that have been committed by members of his rival group. That means the poet/composer sources for materials pertaining to the other side. Thereafter, he brings the song to what Ojaide calls “secret workshop” of his group. The song will then have to be “straightened” up, as it were, by the group. Copying of words and phrases from songs in circulation are frowned at. Only original compositions are accepted. Hence, the group will expunge any word or phrase from the song that occurs elsewhere. After this, the group will go into the bush and sing the songs to women that have been married to their community from other communities. If any song has language close to the ones they hear in their communities, it has to be rephrased. All this, according to Ojaide, is aimed at composing “original poems that bore the stamp of the poet or his quarter” (51).

Ojaide also writes that there are times the youth leader of a community will direct some men to come up with songs. Their songs will then be sung at the “workshop.” From these songs, the

poet/composer can get a metaphor, an image or phrase that will help him to compose a song. Once the song of the poet/composer has been edited and approved, it passes to the next stage of composition.

The stage is when the group or community selects the person that will sing the song during performance. Ojaide remarks that it is “a sweet-voiced person” that is selected (51). That means different persons have to be tried. Another criterion is memory. The person must have a retentive memory because he is the one that will sing all the songs of the group or the quarter on the day of the festival. Then, towards the beginning of the performance, the community performs the songs at night. As this is going on, some persons are directed to station themselves on roadsides. Their role is to report back to the team the observations made about the songs by the people in the community. Ojaide avers that changes can still be made to the songs based on the observations.

Even though the songs are directed to members of a rival troupe or members of a rival group’s community, there are times the poet makes use of what Ojaide calls “*ite*,” mask. Ojaide notes that “while the songs are supposed to be directed at the rival side, many *irorile* sing about themselves or their own people but give them names from the other side. The poets thus wear masks, as it were, to sing about themselves, attributing the behaviour to others” (61).

The composition and performance of *udje* also involve the gods, *Uhaghwa* and *Aridon*. *Aridon* is the god of muse and memory. As such, it is worshipped by the poet/composer. While *Uhaghwa*, the god of performance, is served by the performer. However, the performer/singer also serves *Aridon* in order to have a retentive memory. A rival community can use means to “seize” the voice of the *obo-ile*. Therefore, the “medicine” of *Aridon* has to be prepared for the singer. Ojaide calls this process “a ritual transfer of *Aridon*’s power to the seeker,” the seeker being the performer (52). Ojaide mentions that members of a troupe have *Uhaghwa* “medicine” in order to have an “attractive and flawless performance” (52). The “medicine” is of two types: public and individual. The public one is prepared for all the members of the troupe while each member can also prepare his own individual one. What Ojaide means by being attractive is that the charm will endear the performer/singer to the audience during the performance. The *obo-ire* prepares other charms, too. This is very important on his part because the other group can use charms to stop his voice and lots of persons will come from different communities to hear

the songs of his troupe that day. All this brings out the belief of the Urhobo that the supernatural is responsible for “poetic creation and performance” (52).

Udje, Ojaide informs the reader, is performed in honour of *Ogbaurhie*. As such, the contests or performances in Ughievwe clan are held in Otughievwe where the shrine of *Ogbaurhie* is located. On the day of the actual performance, the singing starts very early in the morning. All the communities that have come for the performance that day will showcase their new songs. Performances occur only on market days. That means, the communities that were not able to perform on the first day, will have to wait till the next market day. The performance of the troupe takes place in three places: the hall of the chiefs, the shrine and the marketplace. The troupe performs in the hall, goes to the shrine and finally performs in the marketplace. During a performance, *obo-ile*, the cantor/singer, together with two junior *ebo-ile*, will be in the middle of the ensemble.

Behind the dancers are the drummers and the women who clap their hands. Sometimes, a member of the audience will be so taken in by the voice of an *obo-ile* or the dancing of a member of the troupe that he will jump out to embrace him. To stop this, some youths form an outer line. Ojaide mentions that two to three troupes can dance simultaneously in the places that I have said the performances take place. As they dance, the spectators will slowly move to the section of the troupe that is most interesting. “It is because of this rivalry that each group prepared charms to outshine its fellow competitors. There were instances...when two groups were dancing and there would be rain to disperse one side to the advantage of the other side where it would still be sunning” (54). He also remarks: “the arrangement of singers dancers, drummers, women clappers, and the audience creates a traditional amphitheater that brings communities together to enjoy moments of intense creativity. The dance movements themselves are vigorous and yet graceful, dexterous, and most exhilarating” (69).

The performers tie expensive wrappers round their waists and leave the other part of their bodies bare. It is not just a single wrapper that is used to tie the waist. The reader is informed many wrappers are used by a performer so that “the hips looked big like a robust woman’s” (68). Those who do not have borrow from friends and relatives. White chalk, camwood and other powder are also rubbed on their bodies. Percussions such as bells and rattles are tied to their waists and feet respectively. Charms the performers wear are clearly seen by the audience. The charms are there to prevent them from getting tired of dancing.

Ojaide has been able to bring a once thriving poetic form among a minority ethnic group to the reader's attention. In one article, he examines, the significance, context, performance and form of *udje* dance songs. He has pointed out that composition is different from performance. Ojaide's study is important to my study not only for the aspect on composition, but also the detailed way he describes the performance of the songs. That is, Ojaide places the verbal arts in context or performance, giving the reader a fuller understanding of the tradition amongst the Urhobo. He gives detail attention to the components of performance. In fact, Ojaide calls *udje* a "festival of songs and dance in a theatrical performance" (49). This is where Ojaide's paper interests this researcher the most. Therefore, this researcher will look at the performance of *Izon* poetry in detail to see if it is highly spectacular like *udje*. The final case study for review in this section is a paper by Babalola on Yoruba *ijala* poetry. It is relevant to my study because it looks at the issue of composition and performance which I shall consider in chapter 4 of this study.

Ijala poetry, Babalola tells the reader, is of two kinds. The first kind comprises female *Ologun* beggars who perform it on any day the Ifa oracle asks them to do so. Any female member of a family that is chosen by the god, Ogun, is obliged to carry a python that has no teeth and goes to beg door-to-door while performing *ijala* chants. She also has a fan in one of her hands and a baby on her back as she goes begging.

The second type consists of hunters who chant *ijala* poetry at occasions such as funerals, weddings, coronations of chiefs, naming ceremonies, amongst others. These are the trained *ijala* artists. On the training of these artists, Babalola posits that "every *ijala* artist begins chanting *ijala* as a pupil under a master *ijala*-chanter" ("*Ijala* Poetry" 4). No pupil is compelled by his father or some other person to become in *ijala* artist. Rather, it is the pupil that has the "natural flair" for *ijala* that becomes an apprentice to an experienced *ijala*-chanter. If a child is forced to learn *ijala*-chanting, then his apprenticeship will end in failure.

Training in *ijala*-chanting, Babalola tells us, comes in stages. In the first stage, the trainee merely listens to his master as he (the master) performs *ijala* chants in his house and at social gatherings. The second phase is when the trainee imitates the chants of his master word-for-word. The trainee does this while alone and at social gatherings. At social gatherings, he repeats the chants of his master simultaneously. In the third phase, the trainee, on the orders of his master, performs *ijala* chants at social gatherings. It is seen as a promotion in the sense that he

now chants and not repeats those of his master simultaneously in public. Sometimes, he is asked by his master to stand in for him. It is implied that some master ijala-chanters are not wont to allowing the student who is now competent and somewhat self-reliant to leave them because of how useful he has become to them. However, some will tell the student to leave as he is considered a master now.

How is an ijala artist able to remember chants and perform in public without stuttering and mistakes? All the ijala artists that Babalola asked this question gave two reasons. The first is that ijala chants stuck in the memory of a pupil after lots and lots of repetitions. As such, it becomes difficult to forget the chants. The second reason is that they use medicinal charms, *isoye*, that aid their memories. These drugs are taken with the artist's meal and sometimes passed into his skin through incisions. Babalola points out that it is a trainee's intelligence and industry that determine the length of his apprenticeship.

Does an ijala artist compose new chants other than performing old anonymous pieces? Babalola points out that an ijala artist composes new pieces under spontaneous inspiration. Let me quote him at some length here:

It is important to say emphatically that the ijala composer does not start making a new ijala piece after a process of logical reasoning and conclusion. It is spontaneously, while he is alone at work on his farm, or while he is on the long walk from his hometown or village along forest paths to his distant farm, that the ijala-chanter bursts into utterances which are the beginning of new ijala compositions. This happens often when an unexpected and surprising event has taken place in the ijala-chanter's society, generating in the artist troubling emotions which seek a vent of one type or another. ("Ijala Poetry" 8)

It is not all the words in the "bursts", according to Babalola, that will form the new pieces of ijala. Rather, intuitively, some of the words and phrases will be rejected and/or substituted with others in composing the new ijala. This intuition or inspiration of composing new ijala pieces comes from Ogun, the "source and author of all ijala chants" ("Ijala Poetry" 8).

This new ijala composition will have to be judged on the basis of two criteria. The first is the wisdom manifest in the piece. The new piece is weighed on how true and untrue are "the observations on Yoruba life," the sense of humour in it, as well as the diction - words that are used by hunters, idiomatic and metaphorical expressions rather than ordinary speech ("Ijala Poetry" 8). The second criterion is the sound of the new ijala piece. The sound of traditional ijala chants are close to "melodious singing" ("Ijala Poetry" 14). As such, the new ijala piece,

when intoned, must sound as if it were sung. The artist can do this by channeling the sound to the nasal cavities which will yield sweet singing. According to Babalola, “breathy tone, guttural tone, metallic vocal quality, and gruffness are regarded as faults in ijala-chanting performances, just as they are in singing” (“Ijala Poetry” 14).

There is also another criterion that is used to judge the ijala-chanter. The master ijala performers use drum music in a performance at important ceremonies. As such, the use of drum music is used to judge a chanter. It is the drummer of the ijala artist that beats the special music of hunters to inspire the artist to begin chanting at a performance. The drummer also produces the *oriki* of the artist on the drum to urge him.

One of the strengths of Babalola’s paper is the brilliant way he describes for the reader what happens in the performance of ijala poetry. He has also shown how ijala-chanters are trained, what helps them to have retentive memories and how new pieces are produced. Moreover, Babalola points out, unlike Olajubu, that composition and performance in ijala poetry occur at different times (see Olajubu’s paper that was reviewed earlier in this same section). This differing view by two insider scholars is important to my study. It shall show which person’s view applies to the situation amongst the Iẓon in chapter 4 of this thesis.

This section has dealt with some relevant case studies on composition and performance in African oral literature scholarship. It pointed out the relevance of each of the studies analysed in relation to this thesis and the perspective from which my study will approach the connection in later chapters, especially chapter 4. The final section is on case studies that deal with the stylistic techniques of African poetry.

The Stylistic Aspects of African Oral Poetry

This section shall begin with another of Babalola’s studies, the foundational book, *The Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala*, published in 1964. However, not the whole of that classic is relevant to my study. The part that is important to this study is chapter 5, which is devoted to the language of ijala poetry, that is, the stylistic devices that recur in the ijala art.

Firstly, Babalola identifies some features he calls “conventional poetic formulas.” The first of these is “signature.” Babalola informs the reader that some ijala chanters usually make

utterances at the beginning of their performances that are distinct to each performer. For example, one ijala chanter usually begins a performance with an exclamation.

Another feature that Babalola highlights are introductory formulas by which he means the utterances that always occur at the beginnings of ijala chants by different oral poets. There are also closing formulas. They are the remarks a verbal artist makes to show that his performance has come to an end or to indicate, in the words of Babalola, “the transition from one theme to another within his own performance, or invites the next chanter to take over from him” (*Content and Form* 59). An ijala artist, in his chant, also makes an acknowledgement to the person that taught him that particular chant.

Asides or lubricants also feature very well in an ijala performance. These are statements ijala performers make to the audience or a member of the audience. The examples used by Babalola in his study are all addresses to the audience, telling them that he (the artist) has not come to the end of his chant; as such, they should still wait to hear from him. There are times at social gatherings where there may be several ijala artists. Each performer is carefully listened to by the other verbal poets. During a performance, if any of them thinks the poet that is chanting at that moment has made an error, he cuts in in ijala voice, using a formula, and corrects him. The poet who has been criticised will not give up. He will tell the critic that his version is the true account.

One of the poetic devices in ijala chants is repetition. Babalola opines that the main purpose why repetition is used might be “to display the chanter’s ability to remember accurately a promised list of names, incidents, or types” (*Content and Form* 66). There are times an artist will list all the birds or animals that he knows that have a particular trait.

Babalola remarks that when this happens, the audience joins the verbal artist in singing the refrain. A chanter may know of only four animals or birds that have that particular feature. In which case, a fellow poet will stand up and list more than the four animals that have that characteristic which the chanter mentioned. It might also be a list of persons who were attacked by a disease or the number of people that tried unsuccessfully to solve a problem before it was eventually taken care of by someone.

Some ijala poets give vivid descriptions of objects and situations which make listeners feel they are “seeing them for the first time” (*Content and Form* 67). Babalola calls this “word-

pictures.” The reader is told that lots of such descriptive passages abound in the oeuvre of ijala chants.

In addition, similes, metaphors, allusions, epigrams, metonymies and parallelisms are constant features of ijala chants. Metaphors, Babalola posits, are of two types: noun metaphors and verb metaphors. Allusions make it complex for people who lack knowledge of Yoruba history and culture to understand the oral poems. For example, one allusion is portrayed as follows: “the butterfly came upon the civet-cat’s excrement and flew up to a great height.” Here is the explanation Babalola gives to this short allusion. It shows what collectors of ijala chants need to do about the allusions and epigrams for the reader to have a better understanding of the poems:

One day, during his wanderings in his lifetime, Ogun reached a town that he had never visited before. At the town gate the tall gatekeeper on duty denied him entry. Ogun was immediately infuriated and he decided to teach the gatekeeper a lesson. So he walked back a little and then executed a magnificent high jump, landing on the shoulders of the standing gatekeeper. There Ogun sat astride the man’s neck and pressed down vigorously on him. The manner in which Ogun almost literally flew up to sit on the gatekeeper’s shoulders resembled the manner in which butterflies, on finding a civet-cat’s faeces, are said to fly up for joy, first of all, before they settle down for a feast. (*Content and Form* 72)

Babalola informs the reader that there are allusions in personal names and the ones in attributive names. Yoruba names, the reader is told, have particular meanings. Some of these names are given in their abbreviated forms, which become difficult for the reader or listener to understand. Babalola posits that it is only by asking the chanter or another person who has knowledge that the reader will know what the abbreviated name stands for and its meaning, so that the reader will then have an understanding. For example, “Lanle” in an ijala chant is the shortened form of “Olamile,” meaning “my honour has increased.” In addition, some ordinary and plain words in Yoruba have been agglutinated to form attributive names in ijala chants. For the reader to understand such agglutinate words, they have to break them into parts. One of them is “otamokunkunkunbiyin,” which is made up of the parts, “ota-omo-kunkunkun-bi-oyin,” meaning “he who stings-another-person-severely and protractedly-like-a bee.” Other poetic devices include oxymorons and hyperboles

The diction of ijala chants also contains words that are used in particular subjects. There are special vocabularies of birds and animals, plants and hunters’ equipment. Heteronyms and phonaesthetic words, as well as elisions abound, too, in the diction of ijala chants. Many long

syllables are shortened in the fast speech of ijala chants. For example, “kii’ has been deleted to “i” in “ire i se’le Ogun” (*Content and Form* 78). There are also regular omissions “of one of any two adjacent vowels belonging to two separate words” (*Content and Form* 78). Babalola notes that it is surprising to see the absence of elisions in ijala poetry at points where there are elisions in normal fast Yoruba speech. Syllables are not only shortened, but also lengthened. Furthermore, one of the features of the diction of ijala chants is that it does not follow the rules governing direct speech in Yoruba.

Of the books and articles on the stylistic aspects of the verbal arts of Africa that this researcher has come across, Babalola’s remains the most detailed and painstaking. However, Babalola’s treatment of repetition in ijala chants is inadequate. He is not sure of the function of repetition in this Yoruba poetic tradition. “It appears that the main purpose of this is to display the chanter’s ability to remember accurately a promised list of names, incidents, or types,” is all we have from Babalola on why verbal artists make use of repetition (*Content and Form* 66). Repetition or parallel repetition has long been seen by students of verbal art as one of the most important and recurring features of oral literature and it is used mostly to develop a song or poem and for emphasis (See, for example, Gray 290; Boas 21; Olrik 133). Nevertheless, Babalola is able to detail such devices as parallelism, vowel lengthening, elision, allusion, metaphor, simile, amongst others. This is where his study interests me the most. As such, my study shall look at these and other devices that are manifest in Iẓon oral poetry. The next case study for review here is one by Ojaide that has already been reviewed under composition and performance. It is reviewed again under this section because Ojaide, in it, gives considerable attention to the style of *udje* dance songs (stylistic techniques were intentionally not mentioned in the review earlier).

According to Ojaide, for the satiric songs to be poignant and impactful, narration, dialogue and description are combined. As such, each song tells a story about somebody. The person is under a microscope, as it were. Their life is scrutinised to bring out their bad aspects. It is for this reason that nouns and descriptive epithets are used in the songs.

There is also copious use of ideophones and onomatopoeia. Some ideophones and onomatopoeia include “*morie morie*” (describes the soft hair of a woman), “*whala whala*” (the awkward movement of a man suffering from hernia, “*phrerere*” (a lady’s plain chest; she has

no breasts), “*horho, horho*” (describes an ugly man’s face) and “*vwooro vwooro*” (awkward movement).

Quotations are manifest in the songs too. The people made these statements when the incidents happened to them. Ojaide tells the reader they are used to emphasise an idea or to “undermine the person” (62).

Some songs are monologues that tell the life experiences of the targets, as well as songs within the songs. Furthermore, Ojaide highlights the figures of speech that contribute to the songs having poetic effects: metaphors, similes, conceits, sarcasms and hyperboles. For example, the thoughts of a poor man are compared to a big river of water. In one of the songs, a man is denied “the night dish” which is a sarcastic reference to a man whose sexual organ has been lost.

There are also topical allusions as well as allusions to the fauna and flora of their environment, the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. It is these plants, birds and animals which the persons are familiar with that they are compared to. Some of them are snakes, parrots, *irokos*, gorillas, fowls, hawks, vultures, monkeys, goats and tortoises.

Proverbs are profusely made use of. Some of them are “the monkey only jumps forward, never backwards,” “when an old person loses a tooth, it doesn’t grow back,” “an unmarried man leaves animals he rears for others when he dies,” “the fortunate one doesn’t know how to complain” and “who drives a car doesn’t getting wet from rainfall” (65). Let me quickly add that even though these same proverbs are not found in *Ịzọn* poetry, it is a poetry that utilises a great deal of proverbs, as the reader will come to see in chapter 5.

Furthermore, Ojaide avers that repetition is the most used literary device in the songs. He goes further to say that it is used for “emphasis and musicality” (66). Other devices are parallelism, chiasmus, axioms and tone variation. The diction, Ojaide tells us, includes English-induced neologisms, code mixing (Urhobo and English), borrowings from the *Ijọ* language and English, idiomatic and colloquial expressions, ellipsis and inversions.

Structurally, a song has three parts. The first part, “*akparo*,” introduces what the song is about in addition to the salutation. The salutation, which is an important aspect of the song, is the greeting of the audience. The cantor has to establish this relationship with the spectators

because they are the ones that will judge the different ensembles. When the cantor raises this first part, the other singers respond. *Ekere*, the chorus, is the second part of the song that is sung by the cantor and other singers. It is “a refrain-type of repetition” (67).

As a poet of some considerable merit, Ojaide brings his knowledge to bear in the examination of the literary aspects of the song-texts. He clearly highlights and discusses the manifest literary devices. He also tells us how these devices reinforce the ideas in the songs. Nevertheless, Ojaide does not tell the reader the meanings of the proverbs which are manifest in the songs. As such, the reader does not know why a particular proverb is used in a particular song. Explaining what a proverb means helps the reader to have a clearer picture of an idea expressed in a song. This is one thing my study shall do in chapter five. Moreover, Ojaide fails to tell us what part of the song “*ekuo*” is. Is “*ekuo*” the concluding part of a song? After he has told us *akparo* and *ekere* are the first and second parts of a song respectively, he goes on to say “there is the *ifua*, the concluding formula, of *udje* dance songs, which generally ends with a memorable aphorism, proverb, axiom, or succinct observation” (67). Is *ifue* the third part of the song? It cannot be because “part of *ifue* also relates to bidding farewell to the audience” (67).

In spite of all this, Ojaide’s article is important to my thesis, especially for noting the English words that have been “Urhobodised” and how the imagery of the songs foreground the environment of the owners of the songs. These are two of the aspects this study will look at in chapter 5 when it shall be concerned with stylistic techniques in *Ịzọn* poetry. The last case study for review in this section is an article by Fasan published in 2015 that is concerned with the form or style of Yoruba songs.

Fasan’s study stems from the fact that most previous studies of Yoruba poetic forms are focused on northwest Yoruba to the neglect of the southeastern part. “The result,” Fasan remarks, “is that many of the oral artistic productions of these ignored communities are in danger of being lost without ever coming within the purview of the literary academy” (108).

On the features per se, Fasan points out that repetition is characteristic of the songs. Repetition is used by the women to emphasise some portions of the songs; and these portions contain the ideas that one should pay attention to. Repetition is also used to reinforce the rhythm, in addition to producing musicality that is curative to the spectator. Fasan claims that repeated segments of a song have a psychological dimension. “Repetition,” Fasan maintains, “in many

instances, is a type of linguistic codification that expresses the attitude of the performer in an attempt to generate a similar attitude or reaction in the listener/viewer, thus creating a particular motif or theme” (116). Fasan argues that there is no separation between composition and performance in Yoruba poetry. As such, the performer relies on certain techniques that will allow for easier composition in performance. One of these techniques, Fasan contends, is repetition.

Moreover, Fasan identifies three types of wordplay in Yoruba poetry although only one type is discussed in his study: tonal, homophonic and back-formation. He describes homophonic wordplay as utilising “one or two phonetically and orthographically identical words with different semantic meanings” (122).

Certain figures of speech are used to create mental pictures for the listener or reader. One of these is metaphor. Two examples of metaphor are “a child is the mirror of life” and “my child is a precious mirror.” When a mirror is not delicately handled, it breaks into pieces. Like the mirror, the child should be delicately handled. This is the import of the first metaphor. In the second one, the child embodies the hope and goals of the parents. In order for the child to actualize their full potential and fulfill the hopes of their parents, they need to be protected and nurtured. Personification too is used in one of the songs. In that song, joy, an abstract noun, is personified.

Fasan’s study falls short of what he sets out to explore. Fasan tells the reader his paper is a “thematic and stylistic study examining the principles underlying child-naming song’s composition and performance” (110). However, Fasan, after setting that aim, only niggardly discusses the form of the songs. Does he mean only rhythm, pun, repetition, parallelism, personification and metaphor are manifest in the songs? Apart from repetition, the other stylistics devices he points out are not fully discussed. There is no examination of the diction or assonance and alliteration that are even evident in the songs he uses for the study. Despite these obvious weaknesses, his detailed study of repetition, especially the functions it performs in oral poetry is commendable. Repetition (and its variants) is one key area that my research attempts to study in detail in Iẓon oral poetry in chapter 5. It will look at the different kinds and functions of repetition like Fasan’s study. It is for this reason that Fasan’s paper becomes important to this study.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with critical reviews of relevant case studies in African oral literature scholarship. The case studies were organised into four main headings: “the role of the verbal artist in Africa,” “composition and performance,” “stylistic aspects of African oral poetry” and “studies on general poetic forms of ethnic groups.” The first three form the underpinning of the theoretical framework of this thesis: functionalism, performance and formalism. Case studies under the last main heading are concerned with identification and classification of the poetry of ethnic groups studied by insiders. These studies were reviewed because a key aspect of this study is concerned with identification and classification. This chapter also noted the particular areas concerning each case study, which is connected or important to my study, though it is recognised that they are not exhaustive. It was equally pointed out that those are the areas the study will address. This chapter therefore forms the theoretical basis on which the rest of the thesis is based. In the next chapter, the study shall look at the different forms of İzon oral poetry. It shall attempt to classify or categorise the poetry with particular attention to culture-specific classification, that is, the İzon names for the different sub-categories.

CHAPTER THREE

FORMS OF İZON ORAL POETRY

Introduction

This chapter examines the various sub-forms of İzon poetry. *Traditionally*, apart from the İzon oral epic, which has been collected and popularised by the İzon poet and playwright, J. P. Clark, under the name, *The Ozidi Saga*, İzon poetry and song are intertwined. There is a relationship between poetry and song, a merging of these genres so to speak. Within other ethnic groups such as the Hausa, Xhosa, Yoruba or the Zulu, this is not the case. It is for this reason that someone would not see an artist in the mould of the Hausa *maroka*, the Yoruba *oriki* chanter or the Xhosa or Zulu *imbongi*. Perhaps, this is the reason why poetry does not have a name in İzon but there is a name for song, *duma*, as it is called in the Kolokuma dialect of the İzon language.

However, there are changes taking place in terms of oral poetry in İzonland. This new situation deals with Chief Adolphus Munamuna (see later section in this chapter) who chants the praises of people in the same way as the *imbongi* of the Bantu-speaking peoples of southern Africa and the Yoruba verbal artist. This is one of the reasons why “traditionally” was emphasised earlier in this introduction. As such, there is no way a general study of İzon poetry will not include the praise chants of the Chief who goes by the name “Oṣẹṣẹ Kẹnì İzon İbe” (The Chief Poet of the İzon Nation) because his chants, even though contemporary, belong to oral poetry. Therefore, the last section of this chapter is devoted to his praise chants. It looks at how, from where and when this new cultural form, as it were, came about in İzonland and the occasions at which they are performed. The chants are given a separate section, and not discussed together with the songs, as they are separate. In addition, just one person chants praises in İzonland. As such, giving them a separate section ensures a proper study of the chants, which will undoubtedly enable the reader to have a fuller understanding of the nature of the chants and see how different or similar they are to the songs. Moreover, based on this study, the reader can have comparative understanding of chanting in İzon and other chanting traditions elsewhere.

One other thing to note in this introduction is Kaschula’s illuminating thought that “oral literature exists only insofar as society allows it to exist” (Introduction xii). The question is,

what bearing does that statement have with Ịzọn poetry, especially the sub-categories in this chapter? My research into Ịzọn orality shows that a sub-group of oral songs or oral poems are a product of an activity in a particular society. It was observed that when an activity is no longer in vogue, perhaps due to some external pressures, in many cases, the songs or poems of that sub-form that used to characterise that activity *go* with it too (*go* in the sense of being no longer performed). In this situation, it could be said that society did not allow it to exist. However, insofar as the activity remains, the songs or the poems remain too, making them to achieve the quality of *contemporaneity*. In this case, “society allows it to exist.” For example, some sub-group of Ịzọn songs such as moonlight songs and songs of circumcision are no longer performed, because the activities in which they were sung have ceased to exist. Other sub-forms are still performed because the activities in which they are sung are still alive, as it were. Such sub-forms have become contemporaneous even though the activities started in early times; and these sub-categories form part of the discussion in this chapter.

A further thing which needs pointing out at some length is something that was said in passing in the beginning of this introduction. It was mentioned that the Ịzọn do not have a name for poetry. One of my respondents, Mr Ịzon-Okpo Orukari, informed me that there was a time he and some other persons invited the Ịzọn novelist and poet, Gabriel Okara, to an Ịzọn show on Radio Nigeria. When Gabriel Okara was asked whether Ịzọn had a word for poetry - something he was practicing at that time – he said he did not know. Mr Orukari told me the show ended without anyone being able to tell the panel the Ịzọn or Ịjọ word for poetry. Mr Orukari has worked with the Ịzọn section of Radio Nigeria for many years. The section is geared towards promoting Ịzọn culture and language. Prominent Ịjọ men and women in the humanities are regularly invited to it.

As such, one wonders why Chief Munamuna calls himself “*Ọbẹbẹ Kẹnị Ịzọn Ibe*” (The Chief Poet of the Ịzọn Nation). To Chief Munamuna, the Ịzọn word for poetry is “*ọbẹbẹ*.” Chief Munamuna is the only Ịzọn man who can make that claim. For example, nowhere in J. P. Clark’s epic drama, *The Ozidi Saga*, will the reader find an Ịzọn word for poetry. It is very obvious Chief Munamuna was the one who gave the word, *ọbẹbẹ*, to poetry; not the Ịzọn or the Ịjọ. In fact, Mr Zibaboyegha, one of the persons on Radio Bayelsa who promoted the praise chants of Chief Munamuna, told me in an interview that it was from Chief Munamuna that he first heard the word, *ọbẹbẹ*, when Chief Munamuna was asked the name of the form of art he was and is still practicing (see the second section of this chapter on how Mr Zibaboyegha and

his colleagues promoted the art of Chief Munamuna). Mr Zibaboyegha further said that Chief Munamuna would not say that it was the Ịzọn that called poetry *ọbẹbẹ*. I have no doubts that Chief Munamuna is capable of giving a local terminology to poetry. For one thing, he is a great champion of Ịzọn culture and practices. As such, he is capable of giving names to things which the Ịzọn have no name for.

However, the Ịzọn have a name for song. It is *duma* in the Kolokuma dialect and *numu* in Mein and some other dialects. This does not mean that poetry is song amongst the Ịzọn or that *duma* or *numu* is both poetry and song. For example, when *duma* precedes the verb, *tuun*, meaning, “to sing,” it becomes “*duma tuun*,” meaning “to sing a song.” It does not mean to chant about someone or to praise someone. Song is not the only form of literature that has a name. The Ịzọn have names for other forms of oral literature, such as folktales, praise names, riddles, proverbs and so on.

Eight (8) sub-categories of songs are discussed in this chapter. Like Read’s study of the songs of the Ngoni that was reviewed in chapter 2, this researcher has used the local terminologies for the sub-categories. These sub-categories are war songs (*sụụ duma ama*), circumcision (*biriwarị duma ama*), wrestling songs (*anda duma ama*), religious songs (*sosị duma ama*), political songs (*gometi duma ama*) and songs of bead-wearing (*ịlatụa duma ama*). Others include songs of associations (*ogbo ama duma ama*) and lullabies (*kalaṣwọụ duma ama*). The songs of any sub-group will not be discussed randomly. Rather, the discussion of the songs of any sub-category will be done thematically, that is, if a theme is highlighted, the different poems that express that theme or subject will be discussed before the discussion will go on to another one. Two sub-forms of songs are not examined in this chapter: funeral and moonlight. My MA dissertation at the University of Ibadan was on the funeral songs of the Ịzọn (Armstrong 2016). As such, exploring them here again would be a repetition. It is the examination of war songs that I now turn to in the next section.

War Songs (*Sụụ Duma ama*)

War songs, as Agu informs us, can only grow “out of the prevailing circumstances of the time” (8). The Ịzọn have an abundance of war songs, which means they fought wars in traditional times. Wars were waged against other ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, the chances of an *ibe* attacking another Ịzọn *ibe* were minimal. Today, the old type of war is no longer in vogue. What one sees are oil-induced wars. For example, in Delta State in the Niger Delta region of

Nigeria, there have been constant clashes with other minority ethnic groups such as the Urhobo, the Itsekiri, the Isoko, amongst others (see, for example, Ikelegbe, “State, Ethnic Militias” 491; Ibeanu 164;). A major subject of the wars in Delta State is the claims of ownership of the oil-rich city of Warri. In addition, there have been wars against some riverine Yoruba-speaking communities (see, for example, “State, Ethnic Militias” 496; Ibeanu 164, 166). However, it is against the federal government forces that one sees the old war spirit of the Ịzọn (see the sections on Egbesu and youth restiveness in chapter 1). As mentioned in chapter one, there are constant clashes between the Federal government forces and Ịzọn militants. These militants draw their inspiration, power and fearlessness from *Egbesu*, the god of war and justice, like their ancestors who fought in olden times. It was also pointed out in chapter one that before this time, almost every (if not all) *ibe* in Ịzọn had its own *Egbesu* shrine.

Writing on war poetry, Finnegan avers that “the excitement and emotion associated with military exploits are often expressed in poetry beforehand” (203). This is a perfect description of the context of Ịzọn war songs. For as Agu remarks about Igbo war songs during the Nigeria-Biafra war, they (Ịzọn war songs) enable warriors to “carry not only their guns but their hearts with them to the battle” (8). In the review of Read’s article, it was noted that the Ngoni sang war songs before and after the actual war (see specifically page 233 of that study). The phenomenon which Read describes is the same amongst the Ịzọn. These songs were sung before a war, in the actual war and after the battle. Even though “war was a man’s work” to borrow the words of Read, Ịzọn women, like the Ngoni, took part in the singing of war songs before the men went out in order to “inspire men with the lust of battle” (233).

Also, it must be quickly added that war is not the only occasion when war songs are sung. They are sung during times of war boats (a symbol of the Ịzọn war days of old). Most Ịzọn communities have annual festivals. One of the high points of these annual festivals is the day when the young boys of the community in military-like regalia board the big wooden boat or canoe and paddle from one end of the community to the other. At such a time, it is only war songs that are sung; and the boat stops at each compound of the community, mostly at the place where the shrine of the quarter’s god is. The women, both old and young who are on the land, join in singing the songs. There is also an annual yam festival in honour of the *Egbesu* of the *ibe* known as *Egbesu buru fị bai* (literally, the day *Egbesu* eats yam). During such times, the *Egbesu* war boat will stop at every community in the *ibe*. The women also join in singing the songs simultaneously with the boys in the boat (see the section on performance in chapter 4).

Moreover, the songs are sung on the occasion of *ozi* oral performance. *Ozi* can undoubtedly compete with *Egbelegbele*² as the finest dramatic oral performance amongst the Iẓon. Amongst some Iẓon *ibe mọ* before this time, if an Iẓon man killed somebody from a different ethnic group in self-defence or fought in the Nigeria-Biafra war and killed somebody, then he was said to have *kīlẹ*. This means that *ozi* must be performed for him on his death. Even if the person did not tell his first son or other family members until death, the people would still know. In fact, they would know before the day the person died. How? The person's first son or any of his children or his relatives (for those without children) would be possessed anytime an *ozi* performance was held for some other dead person in the community. The person would also be possessed at festivals, especially during the time when the *ọmụ ara* (war boat) would be stopping at different quarters. Furthermore, youths sing these songs when they are farming to while away the time and/or make the work easier. They are also sung when they are going to and coming from their farms. Women, even before now, do not sing a war song outside the contexts that have been mentioned earlier.

As expected, the major theme in Iẓon war songs is fearlessness and courageousness in the face of a battle. Some other themes include historicity and praise of *Egbesu*. One of the most popular war songs amongst the Iẓon is “alagba fie,” a song that expresses the theme of fearlessness and bravery:

Alagba fie o

Ogidi fie o

Tein kpọ sụogha o

Alagba fie o

Ogidi fie o

Tein kpọ na yoo

Let the gun sound

Let the Machete sound

It will not enter when shot

Let the gun sound

Let the Machete sound

Don't give a damn when shot

In Dhlomo's article that was reviewed in the preceding chapter, Dhlomo notes how dancing and singing of war songs in preparation for a war stir the emotions of warriors (52). This is one song that fits into that description both in traditional and contemporary times. This song became an inspiration to Ịzọn youths during the Odi confrontation between Ịzọn youths and the Nigerian army in 1999 (see the section on the role songs play amongst the Ịzọn in chapter 4 for a consideration of that confrontation and the role this song played). This song distills the fearlessness of Ịzọn warriors in the face of any battle. It is a song which brings out the point that was made before now about the belief of the people that anybody who has been selected to go to battle by *Egbesu* cannot be killed by an enemy. Neither a gun nor a machete can penetrate his body. If the warrior has a cut or a bullet enters his body or he dies, then, the warrior failed to obey an instruction that was given to him by the chief priest.

In another song on the theme of fearlessness, the warriors liken any instrument of war in the arsenal of an opposing army to water. That is, the force of a bullet, an arrow or a cut of machete on the body of a warrior is as ineffective as water on the body of someone who has been chosen by *Egbesu*. It is this view that is expressed by the following song:

Kọrị ye kọrị ye bini yo!

Aaan ee ọwọjima²

Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Ikputu kị kọrị kpọ bini yo

Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Alagba subo ya bini yo

Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Aaan ọwọjima ee ọwọjima
Kọrì ye kọrì ye bini yo!
Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima
Ogidi kọrì ya bini yo
Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Whatever is held is water!
Are we alarmed?
Are we alarmed, alarmed?
If it's a stone that's held, it's water
Are we alarmed, alarmed?
If it's a gun that's held, it's water
Are we alarmed, alarmed?
Are we alarmed, alarmed?
Whatever is held is water!
Are we alarmed, alarmed?
Whether it's machete, it's water
Are we alarmed, alarmed?

In another song that expresses the same fearless theme, the warriors say a foreigner is free to kill an Iẓon man. However, when that happens then the war god of the person's ethnic group has asked for a war from *Egbesu*. The person has shot the war boat of *Egbesu*, as the people would say. He must not flee from the war he has caused as expressed herein:

In' aru tein bọ tẹba?
In' aru tein bọ tẹba-a?
Egbesu o, in' aru tein bọ tẹba?
In' aru tein bọ tein

Teinda tịetimi sụu

O in' arụ tein bọ tịba-a

In' arụ tein bọ tịba-a

Wo dau o, in' arụ tein bọ tịba

In' arụ tein bọ tein

Teinda tịetimi sụu

Who shot your boat?

Who shot your boat?

Oh Egbesu, who shot your boat?

Let the one who want to shoot your boat, shoot

Shoot and stand to fight

Oh! who shot your boat?

Who shot your boat?

Oh our father, who shot your boat?

Let the one who want to shoot your boat, shoot

Shoot and stand to fight

Sometimes, an *Egbesu* priest can sing a song to warriors after the ritual bath to embolden them before they set out for a war because before this time, there were numerous narratives about wars. A person who took part in a war might be visited by the god of the enemies he killed when that war was over. This could instill fear in some warriors. They needed to be told that nothing would happen to them even after the war. The after-judgement should be left to *Egbesu*:

Mu da bo ee

Mu da bo ee

Izon ɔwɔɔ ama mu da bo ee

Badaba o yarɪ

Badaba o yarɪ

Opu oru bi ɔgula bɔ emi

Go and come

Go and come

Children of Izon, go and come

Kill and bring it to him

Kill and bring it to him

The judgement is for the great god

Another theme expressed in the war songs is derision. Naturally, it is not everyone who is brave enough to go to war. There are persons like that in Izon too. Some would make lots and lots of noise about their fearlessness before a war. However, when a war happens, they develop cold feet. There is a song that brave warriors sing to taunt such persons. They are weaklings, as it were. This point is expressed in the following excerpt:

Suu abi o

Bo 'ru bou

Suu ɛrɪ ya tɔnmɔ kɪ tɔnmɔ zini bɔ kɪ pɪrɪ dɔy nɪ

Ma la mugha yoo

The spirit of war

Come and drink wine

The war that has been seen is now pointed to others

They can't go again

This theme of mockery or derision is expressed in another song. This is a song that is normally sung at some of the occasions when war songs are sung. For this reason, it will be discussed here as a war song. However, before this song is examined, it is necessary for this researcher to say one or two things about the context. As pointed out in chapter 1, some scholars of African oral literature have maintained that missionaries and their new converts made efforts to stop the continuous fidelity to traditional “pagan” practices in their ethnic groups. For example, Ajuwon quotes Fadipe on the way the missionaries of both faiths – Christianity and Islam - mounted campaigns against abidance to traditional practices in Yoruba land:

The adherents succeeded in part in creating differences within the hitherto homogeneous society. For instance, during the annual worship of ancestors, the sincere Muslim convert would find himself unable to join the members of the rest of his extended family for collective worship. All the important occasions of family reunion in which the oracle *Ifa* figures would, for that reason, be taboo to the good Muslim. (66)

The case in Iẓonland was not different. Iẓon communities comprise different quarters. Before this time, almost all quarters had a shrine for its god or goddess. Some strong personalities also had shrines close to their houses. J. P. Clark has given this a fictional representation in the Ijọ epic, *the Ozidi Saga*. In that play, before Ozidi Senior went with the warriors in the hunt of the human head, he first of all, went into his personal shrine for fortification (Clark 6). However, when the missionaries came, they told the people that there was and is still just one God. As such, they should stop the worship of idols. To them, nobody should have anything to do with gods and goddess (Sorgwe 224). One should not even touch something that had been devoted to a god. The pastors who showed more zeal than the Europeans they succeeded started burning down shrines. It is a practice that has been continued to this day. Little wonder, today, most “civilised” communities in Iẓon have no shrines. Nevertheless, in some of the so-called civilised clans, one will still see the shrine of the *ibe Egbesu*, as one sees shrines in “primitive” interior villages. Ironically (to the traditionalists), the pastors who said people should detach themselves from gods saw no wrong in eating the fish from the lakes of the gods. As such, there is a song that mocks the pastors and other Christians. As remarked earlier, it is included here because it is sung at the occasions when war songs are sung, such as festivals and *Ozi*. Here it is:

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Pastọ mīnīmọ kọrī yo

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Mịnịmọ kọrị yo

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Pastọ mịnịmọ kọrị yo

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Efi kpọ oru kị dụnọu o

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Mịnịmọ kọrị yo

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Ọkpọlọkiyaị oru kị dụnọu o

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Evira kpọ oru kị dụnọu o

Oru seidaba indi seigha

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Oh, pastor, hold your throat

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Hold your throat!

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Oh, pastor, hold your throat!

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Efi lake too belongs to a god

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Hold your throat!

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Okpolokiyai lake belongs to a god!

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Evira lake too belongs to a god

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

In Ịzọn, before this time, lakes were said to be owned by gods. As such, when it was time in the year for the whole community to go fishing in that lake, certain rituals must be performed in honour of the god who was believed to own it. If the people did not kill fish as they wanted that year, they would say the god or spirit of the lake hid the fish from them; and this was attributed to an unknown offence committed by somebody against the god. “Hold your throat” is just a literal translation of the Ịzọn phrase. The point made by the phrase is that the pastor who thinks that a god or worshipping a god is a bad thing, then, he should also not eat fish that is killed from a lake which belongs to a god because the fish too is bad.

It was earlier pointed out that some songs are praises of the war god, Egbesu. Here is one of such songs:

Owei yo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Owei yo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Wo daụ bị owei yo!

Owei yo!

Egbesu owei yo!

Owei yo!

Oru kpọ oru dẹngimo!

Owei yo!

Asaịn kpọ asaịn dẹngimo!

Owei yo!

He's indeed a man, he's indeed a man!

Indeed, a man!

He's indeed a man, he's indeed a man!

Indeed, a man!

Our father is indeed a man!

Indeed, a man!

Egbesu is indeed a man!

Indeed, a man

A god is more than a god!

Indeed, a man!

A god is more than a god!

Indeed, a man!

In this song, Egbesu is seen by warriors as the most powerful of all earthly gods. *Egbesu* has become their father; so, they are protected wherever they are in a battle just as baby or a young child feels protected in the presence of his father or mother. This song has become a popular one in Iẓonland because it has been adapted to other heroic situations. For example, it is sung for wrestling champions, politicians, political parties, amongst other heroes.

It was also pointed out that some songs express the theme of historicity. In Kolokuma *ibe*, there is a popular war song. It is one song that demonstrates the relationship between oral literature and history. In an insightful paper, Uzoigwe has shown how verbal arts in Africa can be used to reconstruct African history (19-40). In addition, commenting on the interface between oral

history and the songs of women in western Maputuland, Impey posits that the songs “provide highly-situated bodies of evidence about the experiences of individuals and groups over time” (44). What follows is the song:

Ise se se nembe fiinmọ mo

Isee nembe fiinmọ

Ise se se nembe fiinmọ mo

Isee nembe fiinmọ

Ise alagba kọrì ya nembe bangìdọ e

Ise nembe fiimọ

Nine, nine, nine drove Nembe away

Nine drove Nembe away

Nine, nine, nine drove Nembe away

Nine drove Nembe away

Nembe fled when nine held a gun

Nine drove Nembe away

This researcher was told by one of his respondents that the people of Kolokuma *ibe* and Nembe *ibe* had a war a very long time ago. Nembe is an Ijọ *ibe* in present-day Bayelsa State. The people speak the Nembe dialect of the Ijọ language. Culturally, they are closer to the Kalabari Ijọ of Rivers State than the Iẓon-speaking clans. Kolokuma people went to the war with nine (9) war boats. Each of the nine war boats represented or symbolised the nine children of the founder of the *ibe*, Aluku. It was those children that founded the nine communities which make up Kolokuma *ibe*. It was a war that was fought on waters. In the ensuing battle, Nembe warriors fled; Kolokuma won the war. Many persons did not give Kolokuma *ibe* a chance because of the difference in population. This is clearly a song that teaches Kolokuma people their history, despite how “fragmented” it is in the song (Harold Scheub 9).

Comparatively, as already been noted, Iẓon war songs are similar to Zulu and Ngoni war songs that were reviewed in the previous chapter in some respects. For example, in traditional times, amongst the Iẓon, women took part in singing of war songs to encourage the men before the actual war (see, for example, Read 233). In addition, As Dhlomo would say of Zulu, the dancing and singing of war songs “was a means of stirring the emotions” (52).

The foregoing paragraphs have been concerned with war songs amongst the Iẓon. It was remarked that the kinds of wars fought in traditional times are no longer in existence today. However, as pointed out, in contemporary times, Iẓon youths have resurrected, as it were, the old warrior spirit, by fighting oil-induced wars, especially with the Nigerian government and that they draw their fearlessness and bravery from their god of war and justice, *Egbesu*. Furthermore, some of the themes of the war songs were considered. These themes include fearlessness and bravery, praise of *Egbesu*, historicity, mockery, amongst others. Moreover, it was noted that war songs are sung at occasions such as wars, festivals and *Ozi*. In addition, the connection between Iẓon war songs and those of the Basotho and the Zulu which Read and Dhlomo studied respectively that the researcher reviewed in the preceding chapter was highlighted. In the next section, the study will examine wrestling songs.

Wrestling Songs (Anda Duma ama)

In an important but little-known article on why wrestling was so popular in the Western world before World War 1, Lindaman rightly notes that wrestling is “a symbol of masculinity and nationalism” (779). Lindaman’s statement is so true of the place of wrestling and wrestlers amongst the Iẓon. Traditionally, wrestling is the number one sport in Iẓonland. It is *the* sport that gives the Iẓon ethnic group a sense of pride in themselves. To the Iẓon, it is a sport that demonstrates male power. Wrestling is esteemed the way it was seen in ancient Nubia. In an insightful article, Carroll avers that “the wrestling tournament was the most significant...social event for the Nuba people” (134). Wrestlers are revered by both sexes. They are regarded as heroes. Even today, great wrestlers are held in high esteem by the Iẓon.

Wrestling is so a key component of the life of the Iẓon that championships are organised every year in the states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. These championships are sponsored by politicians and private individuals. A politician who is seeking a re-election will want to organise one in order to endear himself to the Iẓon electorate. Such a politician might be a governor, a senator, a house of representative member, a local government chairman or a house

of assembly member. Private individuals also promote wrestling championships to make money. There are some wrestling bouts that are sought after by the people. Such opportunities are not always provided in those knock-out championships funded by politicians. There are times when two great popular wrestlers have not had the opportunity to wrestle each other or they had wrestled once, and it ended in a draw or was won by one of them in a questionable circumstance. These are the kinds of bouts, especially the rematch, the people would want to see. As such, private individuals will promote such bouts and sell tickets to intended viewers. When these bouts have been fixed by promoters or organisers of festivals, the atmosphere they create amongst the *Ịzọ* is next to nothing. It is the kind of atmosphere that Lindaman says was created by the rematch between the Russian-born George Hackenschmidt (then-European strongest man) and the American champion, Frank Gotch in 1911 (790). About that rematch, Lindaman argues that “at no time was interest in wrestling more intense” (790).

The desire to see such kinds of bouts is so strong that the people are ready to pay to anywhere they are held. The weeks leading to the bout will be talks and talks on who will eventually win. Even persons who do not know how to raise a hand will be talking about the skills possessed by each of the wrestlers and their chances. Mostly, wrestling bouts are held in the evenings after the scotching heat has come down. In the morning, anywhere you see a gathering of people - whether it is even two – the previous day’s wrestling is at the centre of the talks: why so-and-so won when he was not as skilful as the other, it was the referee that helped so-and-so, the umpire will not be there to help the winner in the rematch, amongst others.

Wrestling championships are also an important aspect of the annual festivals of *Ịzọ* communities. It is hard to think of one where a wrestling bout will not be part of the programme of activities unless the wrestlers in the previous festival were not well-paid. Furthermore, sometimes, they form part of the obsequies of a deceased.

Ịzọ wrestlers are known on the international scene. For example, Baraladei Daniel Igali, the current president of the Nigerian Wrestling Federation, won a gold medal in wrestling for Canada at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. He also won another gold medal at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester. His feats in wrestling for Canada made him to be inducted into Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame in 2017. Other famous *Ịjọ* wrestlers include Jackson Bidei, Amas Daniel, Opukiri Agala, Melvin Bibo, amongst others. *Ịzọ* wrestlers regularly form a major part of the Nigerian wrestling contingents to the All African Games, the

Olympics and the Commonwealth Games. Therefore, it was not an exaggeration when the Governor of the Ijọ state of Bayelsa, Seriake Henry Dickson, made the statement that “this state (Bayelsa) is the headquarters of wrestling in our continent (Africa)” to underscore his reason of building a wrestling gym in the State (Ekpe).

Like war songs, one major theme of wrestling songs is courage and bravery. The essence is to embolden a wrestler and make his opponents run for cover. However, there is no wrestling song amongst the Iẓon which is exclusive to a particular wrestler. They are sung for every wrestler. Here is one song that makes the wrestler to be fearless but his opponent to develop cold feet:

Pamọ bo ee

Olotu pamọ bo ee

Pa-mọ bo ee

Kurọ oweì pamọ bo ee

Andaa oya oo

Bideì oweì yo

Ee

Bideì oweì yo

Korì bo gbein yaìnmọ

Bideì oweì yo

Ee

Bideì oweì lamo

Korì bo gbein yaìnmọ

Ee

Bideì bodọu ama bì oweì lamo

Oweì yo

Bring out
Bring out the great wrestler
Bring out
Bring out the strong one
Wrestling oya oo

Bidei is a great man
Indeed
Bidei is a great man
He breaks the one he holds
Bidei is a great man
Indeed
Bidei is truly a great man
He breaks the one he holds
Indeed
The community that Bidei has come is truly great
Great indeed

This song can be sung by one of the ensembles when their man is battling out with an opponent. Here is another song that emboldens the wrestlers of an ensemble and make their opponents to develop cold feet:

Pamo bo ee!
Kurō owei pamō bo ee
Andaa oya oo

Aan ye padou yoo
Aan ye padou yoo

Ye padou yoo

Ama bi ye padou yoo

Ye padou yoo

Ye padou yoo

Ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Bidei bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Opukiri bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Amasi bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Guru bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Igalì bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Ye padou yoo

Ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Bring out!

Bring out the strong one

Wrestling oya oo

Oh! something has happened

Oh! Something has happened

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community

Something has happened

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Bidei has Come

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Opukiri has come

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Amas has Come

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Guru has come

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Igali has come

Something has happened

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community

Something has happened

This is the typical İzön wrestling song. There is no wrestling championship in İzön where only the two opponents who were the reason it was organised wrestle. Each of the two opponents in a contest has other wrestlers on his side who are known as supporters and the supporters too are great and well-known wrestlers. The two are the “*olotu mō*,” lead wrestlers. *Olotu* also means any great wrestler. As such, in a song, the lead wrestler’s supporters too must be

mentioned. That is why the song is fairly long. There is nothing ambiguous about the song. Indeed, something great has happened in the community because great warriors and heroes, some on revenge missions, are in it. Ironically, this same song is also sung by their opponents with just changes of the names.

The theme of the supernatural is also manifested in wrestling songs. These supernatural spirits help one to fell one's opponent in wrestling. In fact, it will be hard to imagine a sub-group of İzön songs in which the beliefs of the people about their ancestors and other supernatural beings are not expressed in. Let me use this song for analysis here:

Owei kər̥i kə boimi yo

Suʉ fa

Owei kər̥i kə boimi yo

Suʉ fa

Owei kər̥i kə boimi yo

Suʉ fa

Ama bə timi ye timi ye bəɪn bo i suʉoo

I'm here to wrestle a man

Not for a fight

I'm here to wrestle a man

Not for a fight

I'm here to wrestle a man

Not for a fight

Any spirit in the community, run and come possess me

The wrestler is telling the spirits of the community he has come to wrestle and that he is not in their community to make trouble. Rather, he has only come to "hold" a man. The literal translation of the İzön phrase "*owei kər̥i*" is to hold a man in English. The essence of the phrase is to see or know the stronger of two strong men. In this instance, it is in this wrestling that

people can see who the stronger is, for much boasting has been made by the opponents. The wrestler has to tell them this because spirits of ancestors, gods, goddesses and marine spirits of a community, according to the people, are always ready for war and will attack at the slightest opening. They could cause something bad to happen at the wrestling arena. There are many stories dealing with instances when wrestlers were seriously injured which are attributed to the spirits of the community. Therefore, he must calm their nerves. After this, he begs them to possess him in order for him to be able to conquer his opponent. It is also true that before the wrestler even goes to another place for wrestling, he petitions the spirits of his community and his *ibe* to help him come out victorious. This is similar to what happens in Senegal where M'Baye tells us “wrestling involves rituals in which the fighter implores the spirit of a deity as a means of garnering strength against his opponent(s)” (195).

Furthermore, like war songs, there is the theme of mockery in wrestling songs. For example, when someone who has been boasting or making a lot of noise in the months, weeks and days leading up to the actual wrestling day has been felled by his opponent, the ensemble or supporters of his conqueror burst out in a song like this:

Puika tim'o

Ee

Puika timi korodou

Ee

Olotu puika tim'o

Ee

Appah puikatim'o

Ee

puika timi korodou

Ee

He had been boasting

Indeed

He had been boasting but has fallen

Indeed

The champion had been boasting

Indeed

Bidei had been boasting

Indeed

He had been boasting but has fallen

Indeed

There is also the concept of *ibelebe* in wrestling. Unfortunately, it was not satisfactorily explained to me by my respondents. This researcher was informed that in some wrestling bouts, especially when the two lead wrestlers are locked in a fierce one like the one between Ozidi Junior and some of his father's killers in *The Ozidi Saga*, one of the ensembles sing this song:

Ee yo ibelebe

Bei kpọ anda ibelebe

In' ama ogbo kpọ korogha timi zini ama ko koroma

Ibelebe anda

Ee ee ibelebe

Anda-o

Ee ee ibelebee

Oh! *ibelebe*

What kind of wrestling, *ibelebe*

That I'm to fall in another community

when I don't fall in my community

Then this is *ibelebe* wrestling

Ibelebe, indeed, indeed

Oh wrestling!

Ibelebe, indeed, indeed

This researcher was told the word “*ibelebe*” in the parlance of wrestling means a tough battle. It is a time when none of the spectators will have an idea of which of the two opponents will emerge the winner. The whole arena has become really tense. One of the wrestlers is saying, as it were, that the bout has become an “*ibelebe*” wrestling because he might lose with any slight indiscreet step he takes. The thought of falling on the soil of a foreign community when he does not even fall on his own is all over him. To him, it will not be possible.

In addition, there are songs that give the reader an idea of how the Iẓon live their lives. Before this time, there was nothing like a situation where famous wrestlers would belong to professional wrestling clubs and be receiving something from a government at the end of each month. Wrestlers were hunters, lumbermen, farmers and fishermen. Almost every Iẓon community has places in the bush or forest made up of few huts that are very far from the main community. People from the main community will paddle to such places and stay for weeks and months to farm, pick the African bush mango and fish before going back. There are some who have made such places as their main homes. You can only see them in the main community when a relative has died, at festivals or in Christmas. Some call them fishing camps. Life in those places is sweeter than life in the main community because of the fun, according to those who live there. Some of these wrestlers, especially before now, lived in those places. As such, when a wrestling championship was being planned, the organisers would send emissaries to those camps to inform them. Sometimes you would just be sitting or sorting your fishing net when you saw someone who had come from the main community to let you know that you would be wrestling with so-and-so at so-and-so festival. Even today, little-known wrestlers who are not paid by governments stay in such places. It is this meaning that is expressed in the following song:

Bou kọ timime

Bou ee

Bou kọ timime

Bou ee

Anja boı kọ timi fuun gẹ bo ı yarime

Boı kọ timime

Boı ee

I was in the bush

Yes, in the bush

I was in the bush

Yes, in the bush

I was in the bush when a letter was written to me

I was in the bush

Yes, in the bush

This section was devoted to an examination of wrestling songs. It was remarked that, amongst the Ịzon, wrestling is regarded as the main sport because it is the sport which they can call their own. Furthermore, it was noted that wrestling songs are sung at occasions wrestling takes place, such as festivals and burials. In addition, it was stated that wrestling songs, like those of war, express themes such as the supernatural, fearlessness and mockery. To conclude, songs of wrestling seem to be contemporary even though they are traditional because the activity in which they are sung is still performed (see the introduction of this chapter on this point). It is now an exploration of songs of circumcision that the researcher now turns to.

Circumcision Songs (*Biriwarị Duma ama*)

In an article on female genital excision published in 1997, Horowitz and Jackson rightly note that “some consider it [female circumcision] a human rights infringement, others view it as an integral part of cultures in which it remained unchallenged for centuries” (491). Its most radical form, infibulation, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, is practiced in Somalia and Sudan (American Academy 1089). Horowitz and Jackson also remark that 80 percent of women in the three countries of Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea went through female excision (491). Somalia appears to have the highest rate of female circumcision. For instance, the United Nations Organisation puts the figure in that country at 97.9 % (*Understanding 2*). Horowitz

and Jackson inform the reader that “females are usually circumcised between birth and 8 years of age, although occasionally up until the birth of their first child” (492). The International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics, according to Erian and Goh, puts the range at 1 week old to 14 years of age” (85). The World Health Organisation says it is “almost always carried out on minors” (*Understanding* 1).

Even in those cultures where the extreme form of female excision was practiced, the people had a reason despite how absurd the reason was and some of the “victims,” as it were, were happy. In that same study by Horowitz and Jackson, they maintain that there is no particular reason why young girls undergo genital surgery apart from the fact that it “has been regarded as a necessary condition of life” or as almost half of their Nigerian respondents said to them: “it is the custom of our people” (493). From personal observation, if Iẓon women who went through circumcision were to be challenged why they allowed it, the majority of them would echo the thoughts of the Ethiopian woman who asked, “why does everyone say it is so terrible and that I should have problems from it” or the Somali woman who said, “I want my doctor to know that the way I look is *normal* for me” (Horowitz and Jackson 493, italics in the original). Little wonder, WHO says “the victims of the practice are also its strongest proponents” (qtd. in Horowitz and Jackson 494).

Female circumcision was a highly revered practice amongst the Iẓon before it collapsed under pressure from feminists and modern medical institutions. It was not that the people did not realise some of the negative consequences that followed sometimes. Simply put, they knew some of the medical complications that some circumcised women went through. Before this time, it was unthinkable not to carry out genital surgery on a girl who had got to the age of marriage. Oftentimes, a girl was circumcised when she had become pregnant and the pregnancy could no longer be hidden from the view of the public, and the day she would be circumcised would not be made known to her because she would run away from the house because of the pain. As such, it was her mother who would meet her fellow women and tell them that she would want her daughter to be circumcised on so-and-so day. The women would never let anyone know about it. The mother of the girl that would be circumcised would ensure that her daughter did not go anywhere on that day. She would ensure that all her daughter’s appointments were cancelled but the daughter would never know about what her mother had in mind. She could simply say they would leave the house around 5 in the morning of that day to their farm. In the morning of that day, before even the day had broken well, the women

would come to where the girl was sleeping. They would grab her, take her to where she would be circumcised in the compound and bring her back. There was nothing the girl could do. She could move neither her legs nor her hands: the women were too powerful for her!

When a girl had been circumcised, all her female friends would leave their homes to come and stay with her. It could be more than 20 girls. They would stay with her until her wound had been healed. That means their period of stay depended on how fast the wound healed. It could be two weeks or more. During their stay, it was the practice for all of them to go to farm with the mother of the circumcised one on a few days. No woman would ever think of that as an opportunity to complete work on her farms; there would be talks in the community. Feeding several girls for days was and is still no easy task. As such, it was the norm for relatives on the side of the lover and the circumcised one to cook food in big pots and bring to the house of the circumcised one. Of the girls, one was called *iselegberearay* (literally, the one who mixes camwood). She had the responsibility of mixing camwood and rubbing on the body of the circumcised one and the *komotobou* (literally, the pet child) anytime they took their baths. In many instances, she came from the side of the lover. *Komotobou*, the beloved or pet child, was a little girl who was always beside the circumcised one. Sometimes, a lover and his girlfriend had quarrels on whose side *komotobou* should come from when she would be circumcised.

Female circumcision became so strong that a young man who had not impregnated a girl, had her circumcised and paid the necessary fees was not considered *a man* at all. If a girl had not been impregnated by someone and had not been circumcised, her mother too would become the target of insults from other women. In addition, if the younger sister of a girl had become pregnant, then, her elder sister who had not been impregnated by a man must be circumcised first. The younger one would not be circumcised before the older one. Their mother knew what to do in a situation like that. Before the younger one's pregnancy grew to a level where everyone would know, she had already had the older one circumcised. The form practiced in Izon was Type 11 (the removal of the clitoris was partial).

As observed earlier, the practice has finally collapsed after much pressure from feminist organisations. However, why was this custom held in high esteem? One of the reasons goes like this: The Izon are basically farmers and fishermen. Sometimes, a man would leave his children to a fishing camp and stay there for months in order to provide sustenance for his family. He might also be in the camp to attend to his plantain plantations. The camp might be

closer to his plantations. He would want to stay there rather than care for his farm from the main community. Some persons also involved themselves in commercial businesses. They would paddle their goods to faraway places to sell and come back. Sometimes, a husband would be on water for weeks or months. The wife of that husband would be alone in the house, thinking of him; and thinking of a beloved husband whom she had not seen for days would only inflame her sexual passion. How would she curb that? The passion would only continue, maybe to even an unbearable level! Unfortunately, Iẓon men are at their best when it comes to wooing a woman. It must be added quickly that it is not every Iẓon man that is like this. They do not care whether she is married or not. In fact, sleeping with another man's wife and paying the money her husband asked you to pay is a sign of a great man in some Iẓon *ibe mọ*. In those *ibe mọ*, you will see a man boasting to his fellow man at the places where they play draught about the number of such money he has paid. He will jokingly insult his opponent by asking him to count the number of such money he has paid. Perhaps, he would say he only knows how to sleep with women and run away without paying *eretusa* (the name of the money paid for that purpose). In order to ensure that the lady did not have the urge to go out and commit marital infidelity, the people came up with the practice of female circumcision.

There were lots of songs that the people sang during the period a lady was circumcised. Some of the songs deal with the theme of love. Others, as in most Iẓon songs, express the beliefs of the people. Few express the unpleasant experiences of the unfortunate in the hands of the privileged. For example, the following song express the theme of love:

In' agbaṣoweì bẹ̀n bo ì sàì oo ee

In' agbaṣoweì bẹ̀n bo ì sàì oo ee

Timi fa ba Ebìere bụnughà oo ee

Timi fa ba Ebìere bụnughà o

Pabara weleke

Ebìere fa ba Timi bụnughà o

Pabara weleke

Ebìere fa ba Timi bụnughà o

Pabara weleke

My lover, come and carry me
 My lover, come and carry me
 If Timi³ is not around, Ebieri⁴ cannot sleep
 If Timi is not around, Ebieri cannot sleep
Pabara weleke
 If Ebieri is not around, Timi cannot sleep
Pabara weleke
 If Ebieri is not around, Timi cannot sleep
Pabara weleke

It is the girls of the house of circumcision that sing this song during the time they go to the bush to peel off the bark of a tree that is used to treat the injury of the circumcised one's clitoris and labia minora. The point made by the song is that one cannot stay without the other. "Ebieri" and "Timi" have been used by this researcher to represent the two love birds. The two names shall be used throughout this study.

Another theme expressed in the songs is melancholy:

Agbaṣiwei Lagosì ọ mu ya
Ma dein bai kpọ wai bugha
Agbaṣiwei Lagosì ọ mu ya
Ma dein bai kpọ wai bugha
O kẹni fì kị fì kpọ fì lẹta kpọ gẹ nì yaragha
O kẹni dọn kị dọn kpọ dọn lẹta kpọ gẹ nì yaragha
Ị wẹni mu bẹdi ọ koro ya bẹdi sẹ kpọ dọ dọ
Ị finmọ na kị kẹni anga pou ya bisa anga kpọ dọ dọ
Ị yangi opuru flọu tọọ o
 10. *Ị yangi opuru flọu tọọ o*

Opuru flọu tọu kpọ ị mọmọ tịe

Ere 'wọu mọ bo ị barị youwo

Ere 'wou mọ bo ị barị youwo

Ere 'wọu mọ bo ị barị youwo

In' agbaioweị wẹnị mu fadọu

My lover went to Lagos

After two days, he has not come

My lover went to Lagos

After two days, he has not come

Even if he has died, he has not written a death letter to me

Even if he's sick, he has not written a sick letter to me

I went to lay on the bed but it's cold

I shifted to one side, but that side too was cold

My mother-in-law, please cook crayfish¹ soup

10. My mother-in-law, please cook crayfish soup

Cook crayfish soup but it will stand with you

O! weep for me, my fellow girls

O! weep for me, my fellow girls

O! weep for me, my fellow girls

My lover has gone away

In this song, the lover of the girl has gone to a far place, Lagos, in southwestern Nigeria, perhaps to look for money in order to cater for themselves. Before this time, Lagos was the city Ịzọn men left their communities for. They would leave their wives or lovers with their parents. In Lagos, they would venture into sand business (the business of entering water and bringing out sand). This is one job Ịzọn men know how to do very well because the rivers in their

communities have lots and lots of sand beneath them. However, before this time, they would go to Lagos because it required the use of much more sand than their rural communities and that meant much more money. The girl has not heard from her lover for just two days, yet she cannot stay. Is her lover sick or has he died? She does not know because he has not written a letter to her to that effect! She is unable to stay in one place. Everywhere is cold for her. She is fidgety. At such times, the mother-in-law would do everything to calm her daughter-in-law. She would want to cook the daughter-in-law's favourite food, crayfish soup in the song above. Many Iẓon prefer crayfish soup to any other. It is what the Iẓon use to serve their guests. Unfortunately, it is seasonal, meaning you can only cook it during the flood season and when the waters are beginning to recede. The daughter-in-law might be the one to tell her lover's mother what to cook for her, as it is in the song. Sometimes the girl would tell her mother she would not eat after the food had been cooked. At other times, before the food was even ready, the girl had told her mother-in-law that she would not have the appetite to eat as in the song above. It is as if her lover has gone away completely.

The theme of sorrow of the circumcised one is further expressed in this song. The pain the young woman goes through during the genital surgery has already been noted:

In' amaran yaɪndou nɪ in' amaran kɪ dɔnmɔ!

Ine gɪdɛ seɪdɔu nɪ ine gɪdɛ kɪ dɔnmɔ!

Bɪbɪ fɪnɪgha gɪdɛ deri araɪ bo tɔlɔmɔ youwo!

Akparan 'wɔu wo!

I dau o!

Akparan 'wɔu wo, akparan 'wɔu wo!

Ay me! my walking stick is paining me because it's been broken!

Alas, my basket is paining me because it has been damaged!

Oh woman who weaves a basket without opening the mouth, weep for me!

Oh, daughters of the house of circumcision!

Oh, my father!

Oh, daughters of the house of circumcision, daughters of the house of circumcision!

In traditional İzön society, the organs and taboo words were not directly called by their names; euphemisms were used instead. Parents and older ones even up to this time do not discuss the organs in the presence of children even though young ones have known these things more than them. Since these songs were performed in the open, other things had to stand for them. *Amaran*, walking stick, refers to the labia minora; while *gidê*, basket, is clitoris.

It is many songs that express this theme of sorrow, some in different ways. Some songs are on the experiences of what people pass through in the hands of others. For example, in İzönland, when a husband has died, it is the norm for the widow to be given to a man amongst her in-laws as a wife. Sometimes the family of her late husband has not taken a decision on this because there is no capable or free man amongst them. During this period, different men will make advances to her. Perhaps telling her they will marry her and take care of her children. However, they will not marry her; what they want is to have relations with her and dump her. She knows this. However, sometimes she may feel one of them is genuine about his intentions. She eventually gives in and is ditched:

I ba bo teki mịengaa?

I ba bo teki mịengaa?

Duere o!

I ba bo teki mịengaa?

Orukumọ ị nọ tuu kpọ numugha timi

Wo ị lẹlẹmọ bo tuu numudọ nị

Wo ị dịnịmọ na buru indi tẹin bara tẹin o

What will I do again?

What will I do again?

Oh, a poor widow!

What will I do again?

For long, I wasn't known

But now he has tricked me into knowing me

I've been pushed by him to float like a rotten fish

The theme of sadness is expressed in another way. In life, one imagines how life would have been for one if it were so-and-so that gave birth to one. In most cases, the family one was born into is poor. Life is so difficult for her compared to the life her friend enjoys. Such thoughts are not uncommon in İzön rural villages. Oftentimes you sleep in hunger unlike your friend. When you are born into a poor family, you must learn how to behave too. There is nothing for you to brag about:

Bou ki 'zi wəri ya dengitimo

Bou ki 'zi wəri ya dengitimo

Epelepele i zidei ni ma degha o

Uya o uya o

I kiriki bini ama bo i dau komotobou o

If it were *bou* that gave birth to me, I would be prideful

If it were *bou* that gave birth to me, I would be prideful

I won't be prideful because *Epelepele* gave birth to me

Oh what pain, what pain!

I'm my father's favourite in the land of water

Circumcision was a big festive time if the parents or in-laws of the young woman had money and numerous farms. In the case of the young woman in our song, it is a simple one. Ironically, she was the darling of her father in the land of water. *Bou* and *epelepele* are fish in İzön. The former is much more regarded by the latter. They are used in the song to contrast the two families.

Moreover, there is the tone of sadness in the following song:

Mu da ị bo ye mo kị gbaa
Yọu mu odi kiri bọ dein ya mesi o
Mu da bo ye mo kị gbaa
Odi kiri ịn' ama o
Mu da bo ye mo kị gbaa
Yọu mu odi kiri bọ dein ya mesi o

He said he would go and come back
He went to Odi and stayed for thousands of years
He said he would go and come back
Odi is my community
He said he would go and come back
He went to Odi and stayed for thousands of years

This is one song that expresses the shame and sadness the circumcised one feels. Let me explain: There is no community in Ịzọn where one will not see an Ịzọn man from a different community. Such persons would impregnate a young woman of the community and the young woman must be circumcised. It maybe that the man did not have the money to pay the necessary fees and provide money for some of the things needed in the house of circumcision. In a situation like that, he would inform his in-laws that he would go to his community, get some money and come back for the circumcision ritual. When he left the community, he would not be seen again. The mother of the impregnated young woman would have to circumcise her daughter whose lover had run away before the stomach shot out. The whole shame would be on the mother and her daughter. There were also times one would have an understanding with one's mother-in-law that she should use the little money she had or go to anyone who could lend her money and start the circumcision process. He would say he would go to his community to get some money, buy the other remaining things, come back and pay the debt. Immediately he left, he would not be seen in the community again. He had fled.

The theme of the supernatural appears in songs of circumcision, as in war and wrestling songs. It was pointed out in chapter 1 that it is the belief of the Iẓon that a world like this earthly world exists underneath the waters. This world, to them, as remarked in that chapter, is better than ours. It is a lotusland! It is a world where nobody dies, and everything is provided for. It has skyscrapers and vehicles too. Furthermore, it was stated in that chapter that the people will regale you with lots and lots of stories about those in their communities who stayed in water for days and came back. The beings in water would come to be given birth to as young children by those on the land. Whereas, some would stay and continue to live on till old age, others would always die and go back, causing sorrow and pain for their mothers. The child from water, even if s/he had grown up, would sometimes be in water for days to the suffering of the mother. She could come back with goods from the other world. Rituals were carried out to ensure that the girl or boy severed ties with the family in the water. The marine spirits would also lock up in water the life of somebody on land. It is only natural that there would be songs expressing these beliefs. The following is a highly symbolic song that demonstrates these beliefs:

Inẹ 'fẹrẹ kọnmu kạweremi o
Bini bolou iyọrọaraụ ine 'fẹrẹ kọnmu kạweremi o
Efẹrẹ mọ barasin o
Efẹrẹ mọ barasin o
Bini bolou bo tọrụ ịmgbọ mọ ya kị efẹrẹ fẹgha ya

My breakable plate was taken and locked
 The woman of the water took my breakable plate and locked it
 Free the breakable plates
 Free the breakable plates
 Why can't the money in the water be used to buy a breakable plate?

This is a song about the life of somebody that a woman in water has locked up. She is told to release the life of the person. As the people would say, once someone's life has been locked up, s/he will not be able to live a satisfying life until death. Maybe any person he or she marries

dies. The money s/he looks for never gets to his or her hand. Life becomes miserable for the person. For a young child, as noted above, the people will say the baby is dying and coming because the marine spirit has not released the life of the baby entirely to live on earth. In many instances, it is the mother that will look for a solution. No wonder, the mother asks the marine spirit whether she could not use the money she has to buy a child. It maybe that the marine spirit locked up the life of the child because she does not have a child. She wants the child in the marine world. It is the belief of the Iẓon that not everyone marine spirit has a child. From all this, and as clearly shown in the song, this is one song that expresses the dual themes of the supernatural and sadness.

Furthermore, there are also some songs that give the reader an idea of some of the things involved in the ritual of circumcision. Here is one of such songs:

Abị Timi wai boo

Kasa kana subo bo

Abị Timi wai boo

Kasa kana subo bo

Abị Timi wai boo

I ta biri bi naghaa

Abị Timi wai boo

I ta biri bi naghaa

Abị Timi wai boo

Isele tini kpọ fẹ bo

Abị Timi wai boo

Isele tini kpọ fẹ bo

Abị Timi wai boo

Towelị kpọ fẹ bo

Abị Timi wai boo

Towelị kpọ fẹ bo

Abị timi wai boo

Ị ta biri bi naghaa?

Come back, Timi

Bring a basket of *kasa*

Come back, Timi

Bring a basket of *kasa*

Come back, Timi

Did you not hear your wife's circumcision?

Come back, Timi

Did you not hear your wife's circumcision?

Come back, Timi

Buy a tin of camwood too

Come back, Timi

Buy and bring a tin of camwood too

Come back, Timi

Buy and bring towel too

Come back, Timi

Buy a towel too

Come back, Timi

Did you not here your wife's circumcision?

In this song, the lover was not in the community when his lover was circumcised. As such, he is told, as it were, to come back. However, he should not forget to buy the things which are required throughout the period of the circumcision. *Kasa* is something that is got from palm kernel which is used to make fire out of firewood. Camwood is used to rub the circumcised one and the young girl, known as *komotoḅou*. A large piece of towel, too, was one of the required items.

The theme of identity too is expressed in the songs, as in the following:

Timi mọ Ebieren mọ bụnwari kịmị kpọ naa wẹrimo

Otungbolowari dọ

Dọ dọ dọ

Otungbolowari dọ

Muguru-muguru-muguru

Otungbolowari dọ

Bedi

Winkị

Otungbolowari

Yankiri-yankiri

No one knew of Timi and Ebieren's relationship

Quietude was the mosquito net

Quietude, quietude, quietude

Quietude was the mosquito net

Muguru-muguru-muguru

Quietude was the mosquito net

Bed?

Winkị

Mosquito net?

Yankiri-yankiri

Some young men and young women chose to keep their affairs secret in the early stages, especially in traditional Iẓon society where fathers in the mould of Okonkwo reigned supreme. That was why sometimes even when the protruding stomach could no longer be hidden from the public, the people would still not know the identity of the young man. In such cases,

circumcision became the opportunity of knowing the identity of the person who impregnated the lady. Something that had been a secret for months is now public knowledge. As shown in the song, there was silence in the mosquito net, as it were. The onomatopoeic words *muguru-muguru* and *yankiri-yankiri* suggest the kind of sound the bodies of the lovers make in the act. *Winkī* is another onomatopoeic word that refers to the sound iron bedsteads make as one lays on the mattresses on them, especially when making love. Before now, they were the kinds of beds in vogue amongst the Iẓon.

Even though this researcher has not come across a study of a similar ritual on the African continent, that is, a practice in which songs and dance are key components of female genital surgery, in the previous chapter, the study gave attention to Joseph's study of puberty songs amongst the Zulu. Joseph notes that *ukwemula* "is the occasion at which a girl's marriageable status is publicly acclaimed" (64). This is similar to the situation amongst the Iẓon because circumcision showed that a woman had attained the level of maturity in which she could be married by a man. Moreover, Joseph points out that during the period of *ukwemula*, various songs are sung. Like the occasion of female circumcision in Iẓonland, the singers are all females. These include the girl in which the ceremony is performed for, the girls of her age group and adult women (65). However, unlike songs of circumcision amongst the Iẓon, those of the Zulu explicitly contain "obscene sexual references in the texts" (67).

Furthermore, Read, as pointed out in the previous chapter, identifies a sub-category of song known as "*umsindo*." It was noted that, *umsindo*, according to Read, "was the girls' initiation ceremony which took place, not at puberty, but several years later *as a preliminary to marriage*" (209, italics added). Based on this statement, it could be argued that *umsindo* was like female circumcision amongst the Iẓon because circumcision was a prelude to marriage. Like the *umsindo*, the ritual was not carried out when the girl was still young, and there was no way an Iẓon girl could get married without going through the practice. Moreover, Read notes that the singing of songs at *umsindo*, "belonged chiefly to the older women" (209). This is similar to what this researcher said in the beginning of this section that it was older women that sang and at the same time performed the second group of circumcision songs; and that the second group of songs were more serious and important to the ritual (see also chapter 4). Furthermore, some of the themes of *umsindo* songs are warnings to the girl and historical occurrences. As the reader saw in the discussion above, some of the subjects of songs of female circumcision are warnings to the young woman about the ways of men and things that happened

long ago. In addition, like *umsindo*, the ritual of female genital surgery is no longer practiced. However, unlike the language of songs of female circumcision amongst the Ịzọn, the language of *umsindo* songs, like the Zulu puberty songs, contain explicit sexual terms, rather than euphemisms that are used in place of such direct terms.

In summary, female circumcision was a respected and thriving ritual amongst the Ịzọn until it collapsed from external pressure. Many women still recall with fun the time when it thrived. It would be hard to imagine the majority of women who went through genital surgery telling someone that it was a bad practice. Since the ritual is no longer practiced, the songs are no longer performed. As pointed out in the preceding paragraphs, some of the themes expressed in the songs are sorrow and sadness, loneliness, the supernatural and identity. Other songs give an idea of the items needed for the ritual. In the next section, it is songs of associations that will be explored.

Songs of Associations (*Ogbo ama Duma ama*)

Women belong to different associations or groups in Ịzọnland. Very often, it is through these associations that they are able to buy pieces of wrap (waist-covering cloth) and sew blouses which their husbands would not have been able to buy for them. Each member contributes the agreed-upon fee at the end of each month. In the parlance of these associations, every member has a mother and a father. If a member's biological parents are late, she uses two relatives – an old man and an old woman – to represent them. The day any of them dies, the members of her association go to celebrate with her when the wake is being held. Amongst the Ịzọn, as noted in chapter 1, when an old person dies, it is a celebration. These associations do have other objectives too. A few of these associations have their songs. That is, they have songs composed by them which they sing at their outings.

However, here, this researcher is interested in the songs of one of such types of associations, *Dụdụtarị*. As such, I shall begin with the two factors that gave rise to that association: barrenness and witchcraft.

Of all the beliefs in Ịzọnland, witchcraft is undoubtedly the strongest. It mirrors the situation amongst the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria where Okonofua et al note that belief in witchcraft “extends from the illiterate up to the most educated and elite members of society” (211). Witchcraft is so strong that one can easily say the day somebody is termed a “witch”, that is

the day the person stops living a normal life in the community, especially in the rural areas. A mother or grandmother becoming a witch in the eyes of a son or daughter is very simple: only two unfortunate happenings in the extended family are needed. I say two because oftentimes there is little pronounced fuss about the first occurrence in terms of directly pointing accusing fingers at someone. When it repeats itself in another form, the person who is supposedly behind it becomes a reject.

Especially before now, witchcraft was so strong that when someone who was under the suspicion of being a witch died, s/he would go through a ritual called *obobo bi* in order to confirm the suspicion (see chapter 1 for an explanation of the concept of *obobo bi*). If the suspicion was true, the corpse was buried close to the river like children. In a situation where the truth was not ascertained before the burial and the person was truly a witch, then s/he would come back, as it were, to haunt the children and members of the extended family by killing them until the truth was found out and the corpse exhumed – even after many years –, booed and thrown into the river (Anderson 42).

Barrenness too is a major problem amongst the Iẓon. They share the same mentality with some ethnic groups in The Gambia that “becoming a mother and bearing many children is a central aspect of the adult female role” (Hough 257). Therefore, it is by giving birth that one attains respect in the community. As such, a childless woman is not respected in the community. Moreover, she is isolated and stigmatised as in barren women in Tanzanian (Larson and Hollos 166). Most of them do not stay long in the houses of their husbands. They are pushed out by both their husbands and husbands’ relatives since they are “useless,” to borrow the word of Koster-Oyekan (22). Thus, such women move from one man to the other. In many instances, a woman who is barren is termed a witch in Iẓonland. Koster-Oyekan has observed a similar phenomenon amongst the Yoruba. She asserts that “barren women are under suspicion of being a witch” (23; see also Pearce 73).

In fact, the situation these women find themselves is so bad that if they were literate enough, and if they had the money, they would apply for asylum in foreign countries like some others under the suspicion of being witches elsewhere on the African continent (Luongo 182-183). In what follows, this researcher shall examine how the songs of the all-women *Dūdūtari* Association reflect these twin issues of barrenness and witchcraft.

Dudutari Association consists of women of similar experiences; women who are barren and/or have been termed witches in the community. This researcher has refrained from mentioning the particular *ibe* and the community where the Association is in Iẓonland. The researcher came across this women's group when he was doing fieldwork for this study and was instantly struck by the songs they themselves composed and sing at occasions they are invited to. Here is an association of women that sings about their condition without any shame whatsoever. One would have thought such victims of social constructs would isolate themselves in the community and die in the shame that has been brought upon them by society. On the contrary, they are happy singing about their lot before this very society. That such a phenomenon exists in Iẓonland was a surprise to this researcher because, like an early-20th-century European folklorist or anthropologist coming to Africa to see whether the various forms of oral poetry in his Europe also exists on the continent, he was in the field to collect data on traditionally-defined poetic forms, such as lullabies, panegyrics, amongst others. The songs reflect the reality in Iẓonland so well that he decided to give them a place in this doctoral dissertation. In addition, he had to include them because the songs are rarely performed today and the women who sing them are already old with no new person of similar experiences joining them.

But why would women who are barren and/or have been accused of being witches come together, compose songs based on their experiences and sing at occasions they are invited to? According to them, there is no one under the sun that is free of insults. As their leader puts it, "whether you are rich or poor, beautiful or ugly, people will say something about you." To these women, it is only one who does not know how the world operates that will ostracise oneself from the world and slowly die in one's compound as a result of the shame brought upon one. As such, to them, it is even a serious sin for any member of the Association to shed tears because of the insults that society heaps on her. Moreover, they sing the songs to encourage themselves. Put differently, coming together and singing these songs is seen as a demonstration of solidarity. This solidarity is further evidenced by the name they chose to call the Association, *Dudutari*, meaning love one another. In addition, through this means, they are able to cope with the realities of life. In this way, *Dudutari* Association mirrors the all-women *Kanyaleng* group – a group that brings together women who are infertile and/or have issues with child mortality - in Tanzania that sees their association and performances as a "coping mechanism" and an "effective support network" (Hough 258, 261).

It should also be mentioned that women from other communities who share the same experiences with those of the *Dudutari* Association equally approach the group to compose songs about their plight and sing them wherever they are invited to. Here is one of such songs for analysis which is on the theme of witchcraft:

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ Ebiere egber' ama

Ebiere pou oo

Zi sei ki a lẹimọ pou weri bi ma yoo

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ ebiere egber' ama

“Ebiere pou oo”

“Wari bọ tọbọ kẹ dọn kpọ gbana a dẹakumọo”

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ Ebiere eber' ama

Ebiere gbaamo wari bọ kẹmẹ kẹ dọn kpọ a kẹrẹkẹ bangidoo

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ Ebiere eber' ama

“Ebiere pou oo”

Wari bọ yei kẹ dọn kpọ a kẹrẹkẹ banga yo

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ Ebiere eber' ama

Ebiere gbaamọ Tari mu la yọ mọ sẹ ẹ tuun o

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ Ebiere eber' ama

Stories about Ebiere

All these are stories about Ebiere

“Ebiere is a witch!”

It's a bad-birth life that turned her into a witch

Stories about Ebiere

All these are stories about Ebiere

“Ebiere is a witch!”

“Don't tell her when a child is sick in the house”

Stories about Ebiere

All these are stories about Ebiere

Ebiere said she is the one to be killed when someone is sick in the family

Stories about Ebiere

All these are stories about Ebiere

“Ebiere is a witch!”

She is the one to be killed when the husband is sick

Stories about Ebiere

All these are stories about Ebiere

Ebiere said: “Oh! Tari, sing about me anywhere you go”

Stories about Ebieri

All these are stories about Ebieri

“Tari ” has been used in this song to represent the leader of the Association. In the song, the victim whom this researcher has named “Ebieri,” from a different *ibe*, approached Tari and told her to sing about her ordeal anywhere her Association was invited to. The woman of this song went through much pain and sorrow because life was not fair to her. She gave birth to many children. However all but one died in infancy. As such, she was called a witch when she became old by her half-brother in public. As shown in the song, she was not to be told when any member of the extended family fell sick. In addition, each time the husband fell sick, she was the cause. In the end, the people of the community found out that her half-brother who had called her a witch, was the witch in the family.

The next two songs for analyses are on the theme of barrenness:

Ebieri oo yei piri kpotumo

Izon egberi

Ebieri zigha bimein yei piri kpotumo

Izon egberi

Ebieri oo beikpo uya!

Izon egberi

Ama Tari bo i bari youwo

Izon egberi

Izon bo Dudutari ogbo 'tu mo bo i bari you a

Izon egberii

Ebieri was driven out by her husband

It's a true story

Ebieri was driven out because she had no child

It's a true story
 Oh Ebieren, what a suffering!
 It's a true story
 Oh Tari, come and weep with me
 It's a true story
 Come weep with me, members of *Dudutari* association
 It's a true story

Zigha uya ni 'fiemi ya o!
Ebiere o bei kpọ zigha uya ni 'fiemi ye!
B' okpọ zigha otu mọ bein e i nein kị bọlọ waa?
Ebiere o bei kpọ zigha uya ni 'fiemi ye
Ogboinbi bi zigha otu bein e i kịrịkẹ bọlọ wa oo?
Ebiere o bei kpọ zigha uya ni 'fiemi ye!

What a suffering you are going through for being barren!
 Oh Ebieren, what a suffering you are going through for being barren!
 There are many barren women in the world; is yours the first?
 Oh Ebieren, what a suffering you are going through for being barren!
 There are many barren women in *Ogboin*; is yours the first?
 Oh Ebieren, what a suffering you are going through for being barren!

Ogboin has been used to represent the *ibe* in which the incident occurred. Again, for ethical reasons, many things will not be said about the two songs so as to protect the identity of the woman. The two songs refer to the same woman who belong to *Dudutari* Association. She did not give birth at all. All kinds of ugly names were used to call her. She was driven out from the home of the first man she lived in with. Her second and last husband had children from other

women that she cared for when their mothers had no time for them. As such, the husband loved her so much that he did not succumb to the pressure of his people until his demise. Fortunately for her, some of the children she raised up treat her as if she was their biological mother. The first song sings of how she was treated and thrown out from the home of her first husband. She calls on the members of her Association to weep with her. It is a true-life story; not some fiction, as the singers (including her) will tell the reader. The second one also tells of how much she has suffered. In fact, it is double suffering. For one thing, infertility, especially the barren type, as rightly noted by Ponesse and McLeod, is in itself “an agonizing experience” (126). The woman is never happy that she does not have a child to care for, to put in different terms. Add that to the pain and agony caused by insults from the members of the community for being barren. No wonder, the woman and her mates ask whether she is the only barren woman in the world. They answer in the negative. They sing that there are other women who did not give birth even in Ogboin *ibe*. Here is another song that expresses this same theme of barrenness:

Zigha oo

Ebiere ma zigha o

Zigha k' a lẹimọ bala tọbọu sọdọu

A bọlọu yei mọ tọbọu ziwẹrị ya

Ara tọbọu bemi sịksị pasị dọu

Mamụ kara mọ yei mọ tọbọu ziwẹrị ya

Ara tọbọu bemi bo lị kpo gbeindọu

Zigha oo

Zigha o

Ebiere ere zigha o

Zigha k' a lẹimọ bala tọbọu sọdọu

Didn't give birth

Ebiere didn't give birth

It's childlessness that turned her into a child

If she had given birth with her first husband

Her child would now have passed primary six
 If she had given birth with her second husband
 Her child would now have been able to climb a palm tree
 Oh! didn't give birth
 Oh! didn't give birth
 Ebieré didn't give birth
 It's childlessness that turned her into a child

In Iẓonland, some believe that when they see someone's child, they will be able to tell whether the child's mother or father is young or old. Therefore, when you do not have a child which can enable people to know how old you are, or you gave birth at a time you were old enough to be carrying your grandchildren on your back, then, you are young forever, as it were. Even someone that you carried on your back becomes older than you if she has children. For that reason, the song is pointing to the reader that barrenness has turned Ebieré into a child in the eyes of people. If life were fair to her in the home of her first husband, her son would now have completed primary school. Or even if it was in her second home she had given birth, that child would now have been old enough to climb a palm tree to cut down its bunches. This in itself tells the reader one of the occupations of the Iẓon, especially in traditional times: palm fruit cutting. In this song, too, it was somebody from another community who approached the leader of the Association to compose a song and sing about her plight. In another song, the women sing:

Ama Ebieré Woyengi ẓonbara kẹ pama yo

Ama Ebieré Woyengi ẓonbara kẹ pama yo

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ pekei kọ zimo

Ebieré ma buboru kọ zidọu o

Woyengi dọubara kẹ pama yo

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ pekei kọ ziyemo

Ebiere ma buboru kị zimọ mo

Woyengi dọbara kị pama yo

A ma Ebiere woyengi ọnbara kị pama yo

A ma Ebiere woyengi ọnbara kị pama yo

Oh Ebiere, it's the will of God

Oh Ebiere, it's the will of God

Her mates give birth in the morning

But Ebiere gave birth in the evening

It's the way God wanted

Her mates give birth in the morning

But Ebiere gave birth in the evening

It's the way God wanted

Oh Ebiere, it's the will of God

Oh Ebiere, it's the will of God

The subject of this song was infertile for many years. Fortunately, she gave birth; but not when she was young but when she was already becoming old. Many were surprised that she could still give birth at that age. Little wonder, her mates could sing that women normally give birth early. However, in her case, it was late by the time she had a child. In any case, she should not worry because it was the way God wanted. The reader can imagine how much the woman went through during the years she had no child. The next song for analysis is neither on barrenness nor on witchcraft. It is a personal experience of one of the members of the Association. It is one song in their corpus that brings to the fore the Izon belief in water spirits that was given detailed attention to in chapter 1:

Uya youkumọ e

Uya youkumọ e

Zini owei tọbọu ị ma bo ziwẹrị ya

nana 'raụ ma bo na akagha fangitimaa

Ebiere o ụya youkumọ o

Kimị tọbọu ụya youkumọ o

Zini owei tọbọu ị ma bo ziwẹrị ya

nana 'raụ ma bo na akagha fangitimaa

Don't weep for suffering

Don't weep for suffering

When you gave birth to another man's son

wouldn't the woman-owner come take it?

Oh Ebiere, don't weep for suffering

A human being should not weep for suffering

When you gave birth to another man's son

wouldn't the woman-owner come take it?

The subject of this song gave birth to many children, something her ethnic group is wont to do. Sadly, all but two died in infancy. The two that lived on to adulthood were the last pregnancies. The members of her Association tell her to stop weeping and being in sorrow. Why? The children are not her own; they have marine spirits as their mothers. Therefore, it is only natural that they will return to where they came from. It is a way of consoling a lady who is perpetually bereaved. The belief in water spirits is very strong in Iẓonland, as was pointed out in the background to this study (see, for example, Horton 201-202; Okaba and Appah 152). It is the belief that marine spirits have children who come to be given birth by those on land. A marine mother of a child can decide that her son or daughter come to be given birth by a woman

on land and return to her after sometime. In a situation like that, the child comes and goes perpetually, as in the case of the song above.

It must be mentioned that not all the songs of the Association dwell on barrenness and witchcraft. However, even those very few ones deal with the personal experiences of the women, as in the following:

Ama ye mọ seri o Ebiere Pọdakọtị langayo

Ama ye mọ seri o Ebiere Pọdakọtị langayo

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ Englandị kpọ emi

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ Lagosị kpọ ladọu

Ebiere la Korodi ka ara beke mịemị

Amaye mọ seri o Ebiere Pọdakọtị langayo

Ama ye mọ seri o Ebiere Pọdakọtị langayo

Ama ye mọ seri o Ebiere Pọdakọtị langayo

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ Pọdakọtị kpọ emi

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ Ghana beke kpọ emi

Ebiere la Korodi kị akị ara beke mịemị

Ama ye mọ seri o Ebiere Pọdakọtị langayo

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebiere wants to go to Port Harcourt

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebiere wants to go to Port Harcourt

Her mates are in England

Her mates have gone to Lagos too

But Ebiere made *Korodi* her city

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebiere wants to go to Port Harcourt

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebiere wants to go to Port Harcourt

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebiere wants to go to Port Harcourt

Her mates are in Port Harcourt

Her mates are in Ghana too

But Ebiere made *Korodi* her city

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebiere wants to go to Port Harcourt

This is one song that creates humour. The target of the song is a member of their own Association. Before this time, some Iẓon women and men would go to Accra, Ghana, and Lagos, Nigeria, for trading and digging of sand. Port Harcourt, the capital city of Rivers State is more or less their own because it belongs to the Ijọ and other minority ethnic groups in Nigeria. Some older women in the rural areas were, and in the case of Port Harcourt, are still invited over to those places by their children to spend a few weeks after the planting and harvesting seasons. They have also heard of England; how big and beautiful it is. However, Ebiere is always in *Korodi*, the name this researcher has used to replace the actual fishing and farming camp. *Korodi* has become her England, Port Harcourt, Lagos and Ghana. It is only the spirits of the community that will help in a matter like that. As such, they are beseeched to enable her to go to those big and fine places too.

In conclusion, an association such as *Dūdūtari* provides an opportunity for adult Iẓon women who share similar pitiable and sorrowful experiences to come together, compose songs and sing about their plight at occasions they are invited to. The members of this all-women group are not ashamed of singing about their condition, something most persons will not think about doing for even a second. However, singing about their lot in life gives them a sense of belonging in a society that treats them unfairly. Art, to them, is a means to survival, as it were, because they are happy and full of smiles when singing, rather than cry. Furthermore, art is an escape route to them, for the performance of the songs enables them to forget, even if for five

hours, the harsh realities they face in life. At any rate, the songs are gradually becoming a dying art. This is understandable in the light of two inevitable factors. One, the old performers are dying. Two, the advent of formal education and its attendant enlightenment mean that women who would have normally belonged to such an association and continued the tradition, only see it as “stupidity” to be singing about one’s problems. In fact, it would be hard to imagine the non-literate mother of even someone who has gone to high school involved in a practice like this. In the next section, this researcher will look at another sub-category of songs, namely marriage songs, another adapting art.

Marriage Songs (*Dudu Nana Duma ama*)

The Iẓon have no marriage songs that are sung on the actual day of a marriage. However, there is a group of songs which the women sing on the bead-wearing day of the new wife. This point shall be returned to later.

Traditional marriage is one of the two most important occasions (the other being burial) where professional *awigiri* (highlife music) ensembles perform their art. *Awigiri*, in the words of Teilanyo, is “a sub-genre of ‘High-Life’ marked by heavy rhythm and sensational dance steps largely peculiar to the Izon in the Niger Delta” (33). Unfortunately, it is very few grooms who can afford the services of the performers or the ensembles. For those who cannot do that, arrangements are always made to play the records of the artistes on the actual day. It is not every piece of *awigiri* music that is played on a marriage day. In the absence of a professional *awigiri* band, it is the anchor of the records section that chooses the music that is suited to a marriage occasion. Every traditional marriage in Iẓon plays the three most important and popular pieces of *awigiri* music: “Cynthia,” “I love my wife” and “Yei Tari Ere (The One Whom Her Husband Loves).” They were composed by Barrister S. Smooth, Pereama Freetown and King Robert Ebizimor respectively. These are the three major Iẓon highlife artistes.

In every traditional marriage, the climax is when the bride, after her father has poured wine into a glass and given to her, goes to search for the groom amongst the thousands of people. During this time, those in the audience who have wandered to other places come back and find their seats. As she searches for the groom, she praises him. The praise is neither couched in a chant nor a song. The groom is praised in a pure speaking voice throughout. Her voice is loud and clear to everyone in the audience:

Ari i yei ki dou'emi
I yei fa?
Ine Burudani otu
I yei ominì mọ eragha?
Ine ebi yei bi ominì mọ eragha?
Ari i yei ki dou'emi
Dingi anga ki eri mọ emi'a o?
O si ki si nimi mo ni?
O diniokọ mu nimigha o?
Ine ebi yei bi!
Ine butie fa yei bi!
Bei yei pamọ dou eragha
Beingbai bọ opu togoni bi ni i piri ni mi owei bi!
Ine ebi yei bi!
Bei erin bi ine bolou imbẹle dengi erin'a!
Ine bolou imbẹle miẹ pa-mo owei bi
Ine nini tie yei bi!
Ari i yei ki dou'e mee
Ine ogbo 'tu mọ i yei fa
Ominì w' eragha
Ari ọ dou ni eragha ba ari tim'afangi-mo
Burudani otu ominì diniokọ emi a?
I yei fa
Ine ebi yei bi!
Honey?
Daddy?

Ari i yei eridou ee

Ari i yei Timi eridou ee

I'm looking for my husband

Is my husband not here?

My people of *Burudani*

Didn't you see my husband?

Didn't you see my good handsome husband?

It's my husband I'm looking for

Which side is he?

Did he go to farm?

Where did he go to?

My handsome husband!

My tall husband!

This type of husband is not seen

The man who gave me this big celebration today!

My handsome husband!

Today is my happiest day!

The one who made happiness possible for me

My husband with a pointed nose!

It's my husband I'm looking for

Members of my association, is my husband not here?

Didn't you see him?

If I don't find him, I won't stay

People of *Burudani*, where are you?

Is my husband not here?

My handsome husband!
Honey?
Daddy?
I've seen my husband!
I've seen my husband, Timi!

The above is the typical pattern of how a bride praises her groom. *Burudanı* is used in the excerpt above to represent the compound of the bride's father where the occasion is taking place. This is not a fixed pattern. Variability is an important aspect of this. Some brides have the intention of making other women feel jealous. Some women were fighting with others before the men eventually settled on them. As such, a bride says things about the groom that may not be true. She will mention how lovingly he treats her at home, the expensive pieces of cloth he has bought for her, how big his bottom is, like a lady's, how fortunate she is to get married to someone like him, amongst others. Some are so shy that they could give only a short praise. It should be noted that, in İzönland, it is only in few cases whereby the bride and groom were yet to live together in the same place at the time of their marriage. Most of the time, they were already living as husband and wife and had given birth to children as of the time they were getting married. This is a very common phenomenon in İzönland. One sees two old people getting married after years of living together with children who have even grown to become adults. There are many instances in which the bride-price is paid after the death of one of the mates. The bride-price must be paid before the woman is finally buried. In recent times, religious expressions have been telling their members to pay a lady's bride-price before taking her to one's house. It could be said that female circumcision took the place of traditional marriage in İzönland. However, it is worthy of note that even when female circumcision reigned supreme, bride-price was still paid at some point in the life of the two persons living together.

When the bride has moved into her husband's home, the women of her husband's compound wear beads on her. Why is this practiced amongst the İzön? Of the women who have been married into a quarter in an İzön community, there is one who is the most senior. When she dies, the next in line takes over. This position comes with privileges and responsibilities. Seniority in this case is not determined by the number of years one has lived on earth. It starts

counting the day the women of the quarter wear beads on the married woman. That means if you got married this year January and has not gone with your wife for the bead-wearing and somebody got married in December of this same year and took his wife for the bead-wearing, then, his wife is older than yours in the quarter.

During the bead-wearing ceremony, the women of the compound sing songs that are exclusive to that activity. As will be expected, some of the songs praise the quarter in which the woman has been married into. Others are a call to other women of the quarter to join the group that has been formed already for the activity. Some deal with the theme of love amongst the women of the quarter. For example, the song for analysis below is on theme of love:

Tari o Burudani amata mo tari o

Ye ye ye

Tari oo tari oo

Ye ye ye

Tari o bin' ere 'wou mo tari o

Ye ye ye

Tari oo tari oo

Ye ye ye

Love one another, women of *Burudani*

Ye ye ye

O love, o love

Ye ye ye

Love one another, women who got married to *Burudani* men

Ye ye ye

O love, o love

Ye ye ye

In this song, the women urge all the women of the quarter to demonstrate love towards one another. The reader can see that beard-wearing is an occasion when the women of a quarter encourage themselves to have tender affection for one another.

In another song on this same theme of love, the women sing:

Ịla tua yọ kọ wo mọ mu e moo

Ịla tua yọ kọ wo mọ mu e moo

Ebiere tarị nimi kịmị a tubọ sụọọ

Ịla tua yọ kọ wo mọ mu e moo

Timi tarị nimi kịmị a tubo sụọọ

It's to wear beads on somebody we are going to

It's to wear beads on somebody we are going to

Anybody who loves Ebiere should enter the back

It's to wear beads on somebody we are going to

Anybody who loves Timi should enter the back

It is a call to other women of the quarter to join the group that has already been formed. As shown in the song, the group of women are on their way to wear beads on the new wife of the quarter. However, it is not every woman who will join them but those who love the husband and his wife will. Evidently, this is an opportunity for the couple to know who-and-who loves them in the quarter.

As noted earlier, praise of a quarter is one of themes of the songs, as in the following:

Burudanị bọ sụọgha ere ma you kị youwemo

Ere ebi 'e!

Burudanị bọ sụọgha ere ma youmẹ egbẹjimo

Ere ebi 'e!

Burudanị bọ sụogha kịmị a you ki youwemo

Ere ebi 'e!

Burudanị bọ pagha kịmị a youmẹ egbejimo

Ere ebi'e

The woman who doesn't belong to *Burudanị* is crying

Beautiful woman!

The woman who doesn't belong to *Burudanị* ought to have cried

Beautiful woman!

He who doesn't belong to *Burudanị* is crying

Beautiful woman!

He who doesn't come out of *Burudanị* is crying

Beautiful woman!

The “beautiful woman” in the song refers to the new wife of the quarter. The song mocks those women who married men from different quarters other than *Burudanị*. For those who have not got married, the opportunity is still open, the women say. They can become part of the quarter by getting married to their men. It also ridicules men who were born into other quarters. For such men, there is no solution for them.

Another theme expressed in the songs is joy, as in:

La bo tụa kị wo mọ tọnwẹrimoo

La bo tụa kị wo mọ tọnwẹrimoo

B' ịngbaj la bo tụadọu woo

Bolouimbẹlẹ wo bindọu woo

Timi bei uge aa

We thought it wouldn't be worn on

We thought it wouldn't be worn on
But today, it has been worn on
Joy has filled us
Oh! Timi, what a celebration!

As shown in the song, it is not every man that takes his wife home for bead-wearing immediately after the marriage. Sometimes, it can take months, even years for the couple to come home. Perhaps, the man lives in a faraway place and gets married to a woman from there. He may be a man who hardly comes home. Fortunately, today, he has come home with her for the burial of a very close relative, an in-law or a friend. It is an opportunity for the wife to be worn beads by the women of the quarter. At such times, the women sing that song. As plainly expressed in the song, the women had thought it would not be possible for the wife to come for the bead-wearing. As such, they are filled with happiness.

The investigation of marriage songs amongst the Iḡon has shown the reader the difference between them and the marriage songs of the Ngoni that was reviewed in the precious chapter. As the reader has seen, the general tone of Iḡon marriage songs is cheerfulness or happiness on the part of both the newly married woman and the women of the quarter who sing the songs for her. This is in sharp contrast to *mthimba* songs. For example, Read notes that “the general tone is that of sadness at giving up the girl to another family village” (214). Furthermore, some songs “reflect the same feeling of exile from family and friends” (214). In addition, some *mthimba* songs make “historical references” to the sad period of wars in the life of the Ngoni. In contrast, Iḡon marriage songs contain none of these. Rather, the songs make the new wife feel welcomed in her new place. They make her become a part of the new quarter.

Furthermore, Iḡon marriage songs are different from the Zulu's where, as Joseph tells the reader, “the wedding ceremony is conceived of in terms of an elaborate competition of music and dance between the *umthimba* (bridal party) and *ikhetho* (bridegroom's party), in an attempt to assert their solidarity and status as a group, and to gain ascendancy over each other” (69). Simply put, there are no rival singing ensembles amongst the Iḡon. In addition, there are no chants of war cries amongst the bridegroom and his age-mates, as in Zulu marriage songs (Joseph 69).

To conclude this section, it should be reiterated that bead-wearing is an occasion where women of a quarter demonstrate love to the new wife of the quarter. Obviously, the new wife feels a sense of belonging. The women who showed up on that day undoubtedly became her friends in the quarter. For a young woman from a different community, these women have become her mothers, as it were. As such, she will turn to them for counselling. They will let her know the practices of the community she has been married into. The new wife will get to know from them, amongst others, the kind of crops that should be planted in so-and-so place which yield good harvest. Nevertheless, it should be stated that bead-wearing too is a dying practice amongst the Ịzọn. It is not every educated man who lives in an urban area that takes his wife to his village to have beads worn on her. As pointed out, some of the themes of the songs of bead-wearing include love, praise of the community and joy. It is the examination of religious songs that the study now turns to.

Religious Songs (*Sosị Duma ama*)

Under the religious group of songs, this researcher has chosen, like Hagher's study that was reviewed in chapter 2, to discuss only Christian songs that have a traditional bent or flavour (51-54). Christianity was brought to Ịzọnland by the Church Missionary Society of England. In 1864, Bishop Samuel Crowther of the Yoruba extraction who had formerly been a slave, landed in Bonny, an Ịjọ community in present-day Rivers State under the invitation of King William Pepple, and subsequently established the first successful Christian station in Ịjọland (Nwideeduh 322). This researcher said "successful" because according to Nwideeduh, Bishop Samuel Crowther said Rev. J. C. Taylor had tried unsuccessfully in 1861 to establish a mission station in the Ịjọ community of Akassa (323). The bishop also established two other stations in Twọn-Brass and Nembe, Ịjọ communities in present-day Bayelsa State in 1868 (Nwideeduh 322). From those places, Christianity spread to Ịzọn communities with Kaiama, the birthplace of the Ịjọ and Ịzọn war hero, Jasper Isaac Adaka Boro, playing a crucial role. As it was in other ethnic groups, the Christian missions established schools. On the impact of colonial rule in Ịjọland, C. M. Sorgwe makes this observation:

In the church, the Christian converts were taught to despise traditional religion. They were told that the local belief systems were offensive to God. Their belief in the existence of a spirit world and the efficacy of ancestral spirits was derided. True worship, according to the Christian doctrine, was only possible through Jesus Christ. The dead would go to heaven if they believed in Christ but those who refused to accept

him would find themselves in hell fire. In the schools the pupils were taught to abandon all local customs because they were primitive. (224)

As rightly noted by Williamson and Efere, “the first writing in languages of Bayelsa State was by missionaries, and later by church pastors and teachers” (104, italics in the original.) This was not limited to only Bayelsa State; it extends to present-day Rivers, Delta, Edo and Ondo states where languages and dialects in the larger Ijò language group are spoken. No doubt it was in furtherance of the Christian faith in Ijoland that this was done. One of the writings of the Christian Missionary Society was a prayer and hymn book in 1960 in the Kolokuma dialect of the Iẓon language. For many years, the book was a key component in the life of the schools established by the missionaries and the different religious expressions that subsequently came out of the Anglican church in the Iẓon-speaking *ibe mọ*. Similar hymns were published in a few languages of the Ijò family. For example, the one in the Nembe dialect of the Ijò was published in 1957. Pupils would sing the hymns in the morning before classes began properly, when they wanted to go for lunch break, when they were back from it and when school wanted to close for the day. Today, pupils and students sing English hymns and “foreign” songs in their morning devotions. The hymn book is still made use of in some Iẓon white garment churches but not the way as it was. Nevertheless, it is still very much a part of the ritual of the Anglican Church in the rural areas.

In his study of Tiv oral poetry, Hagher tells the reader that the proselytising mission of the South African missionaries of Dutch extraction rather than making use of Tiv traditional songs “embarked on copious translations of Afrikaaner [sic] songs into Tiv. The result was a forced marriage of foreign rhythm with Tiv words in the songs of worship” (51). Furthermore, the missionaries prevented Tiv converts from dancing in church. The situation, according to Hagher, was only remedied with the coming of American missionaries who after seeing that “performance was central to Tiv life, and dance and song central to their free spirit,” allowed for the composition of songs that had traditional flavour (51). As such, the “songs, though about aspects of Christianity, acquired poetic depth from traditional imagery” (51-52).

The situation in Tiv could also be said of the Iẓon. The hymn that was published, even though written in the Iẓon language, lacked local imagery. Moreover, it never allowed the people to express themselves in dance and these are people who always sing songs and dance. In the case of the Iẓon, it was the denominations that came out of the Anglican Church that corrected the situation. The songs composed by the denominations show a total awareness of Iẓon

sensibilities. In other words, it is Iẓon nuances that were used to express Christian themes. They are like the popular hymn composed by Ntsikana, the Xhosa convert during the days of the proselytising missions in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, or Shembe, the southern African Zulu composer. On Ntsikana's hymn, Opland observes that it "adopts the form of the traditional Xhosa izibongo for its Christian material.... The hymn is a Xhosa eulogy in praise of God, displaying stylistic traits characteristic of the izibongo" (214-215; see also Kaschula *The Bones* 105-109). It is those songs that this researcher is particularly interested in here. These songs touch on different religious themes: God, Jesus Christ, the heavenly reward, the fleeting nature of material things, death, amongst others. The first theme that will be explored is death. Here are two songs for analysis:

1

I nana yeimọ sẹ kẹnị kpọ tụa mugha o

Woyengi fịrị kumọọ

Ọwọu oii-a-sii kị ziwerị kpọ kẹnị kpọ tụa mugha o

Woyengi fịrị kumọọ

Woyengi fịrị kumọọ inein o

Woyengi fịrị kumọọ

All the things you have, none will you go with

It's only the work of God

Even if you have 100 children, none will you go with

It's only the work of God

Only the work of God is yours

It's only the work of God

2

Bye yo ị mbrau wa!

Tari imomom timi yee

Bye yo i mbrau wa!

Tari imomom mu ee

Oh my sister, goodbye!

May blessings be with you

Oh my sister, goodbye!

May blessings go with you

The first is a song that reminds humanity that none of their pursuits will accompany them to the grave at death. It expresses the statement in the Bible, the sacred authority of Christianity, that all the things man runs after only chase the wind (*New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, Eccles. 1. 14). It was a statement made by King Solomon under inspiration. At death, the song reminds the reader, only one's relationship with one's creator during one's lifetime remains with one. It is that relationship which will determine whether one goes to live in heaven or burn in hell (the teachings of most Christian denominations). The mention of children foregrounds the setting, as it were, of the song. The Izon love giving birth to many children. Some men have more than 20 children. It reminds such persons that life is not about how many children they have. The song has echoes of the finest medieval morality play, *Everyman*.

These are songs that are sung during church funeral services. When a member dies, the members of the church he belonged to during his earthly course come to the sitting room where the deceased lies in state and sing from about 8 in the evening till dawn. Something is noteworthy about these songs. When they are sung at the funeral of an old person, they hardly elicit any soul-searching in the audience. This is because amongst the Izon, as has been noted several times, the death of an old person is a celebration of life. As such, the questions they would have evoked in their minds get choked in the celebration. It is the funeral of a younger person that brings out the atmosphere behind the spirit of these songs, especially the time the members of the church enter a boat and paddle the corpse to be buried. How sombre! It is a time for introspection. A time to think deeply about the meaning of life. Perhaps, just yesterday,

the corpse before you now had been full of life and exchanged greetings with you as you paddled your canoes passed each other.

Another theme manifest in the songs is witchcraft (see also the section on songs of associations in this chapter). In an ethnic group where believe in witchcraft is next to nothing, there must be songs telling church members not to be in dread of them because the God they worship is the most powerful being in the universe as in the following two songs:

1

I bou biri kọ wẹniyemi kpọ

Pou ị bagha ee

I tọrụ biri kọ yọuwemi kpọ

Diri ị bagha ee

I wẹniyemi yọ mọ sẹ

Oru ị bagha ee

Nanaowei tịn bai kị arị kpọ mungimioo

Whether I'm walking in the depths of the forest

Witchcraft will not kill me

Whether I'm paddling far off the sea

Medicine will not kill me

Wherever I'm walking

Satan will not kill me

It's the day God calls me I too will go

2

Mala fakumọ mala fakumọ

Er' emi yee

Mala fakumọ oo
Er' emi yee
Jesu emi yee
Mala fakumọ mala fakumọ
Er' emi yee
Mala fakumọ oo
Er' emi yee
I n' ọwọyọ mọ!
Mala fakumọ mala fakumọ
Eri emi ye

Don't be afraid; don't be afraid
He's there
Don't be afraid
He's there
Jesus is there
Don't be afraid; don't be afraid
He's there
Don't be afraid
He's there
My children!
Don't be; don't be afraid
He's ther

These songs embolden the converts. They are assured that no harm will befall them. They can go wherever they like: whether alone in a forest that has no one or paddling alone in their canoe in a quiet river. They should not be afraid of the witches and wizards in their extended families.

They should not be afraid that witches will make them fall off their canoes by slapping them; and there are lots of stories about that. Neither their witch grandmothers nor their wizards of grandfathers can do something to them: they will only die the day their Creator calls them.

It was pointed out earlier that some songs dwell on the theme of praises of God and Jesus. Here are two of such songs that praise God:

1

Ye ebi moo!

Ị duba moo!

O Nanaowei!

Ye ebi moo!

Ị duba moo!

E Tẹmẹdaụ!

You are good!

You are great!

Oh God!

You are good!

You are great!

Oh God!

2

O mọmọ lei ye faa

O mọmọ lei ye faa

Ogọnọ mọ, kiri mọ, ọkpọ bị mọ

Tẹmẹowei yengi mọ lei kẹnị ye faa

There's no one like Him
There's no one like Him
The heavens, the earth and the world
There's no one like Him

The first song praises God for His greatness. It also gives attention to how benevolent He is.
The second one says there is no one in the heavens or on earth that is like Him.

As expected, the themes of endurance and courage are not left out, as in the following song:

Ine bin'otu o
Ine kịmị 'tu
Ọngọ kụrọmọ
Heavunụ gbẹ bị emi o Woyengi ama bo
La yọ mọ sẹ mịẹ
Wo ị pịrị fịrị mọ sẹ wẹnị o
Heavunụ gbẹ bị emi o Woyengi ama bo

My brothers!
My people!
Be courageous and endure
The reward of heaven is there in God's town
Do what you can
Whatever work He gives you, do it
The reward of heaven is there in God's town

Not only should Christians endure in a world that constantly boxes them, but they should also do whatever work is given to them by God. To them, there is much work: erecting a church

building, maintaining it, visiting other church members to encourage them, ensuring that the church building has constant water for drinking and most of all, going out to make disciples. All this is not in vain, as the song tells the reader. There is the heavenly reward. For this heavenly prize, Christians should look beyond their present unhappy state.

Proselytising is another theme in the songs. The chief goal of religious expressions before now was to make new converts. The denominations that came out of the Anglican Church were very much committed to this. As such they composed proselytising songs, as in:

Bin'owei o ine tu duo ee

Bin'arau o ine tu duo ee

Ari bo Woyengi kuro i mo eridou woo

Ari bo Woyengi kuro i mo eridou woo

Ine tu duo ee

My brother, follow me

My sister, follow me

I've come to see the power of God

I've come to see the power of God

Follow me

The members are saying they have come to see the power of God. As such, others should follow them. Proselytising was done formally and informally. If one person from their families became a believer, they would try as much as they could to make the others become converts like them. The song that follows next is also on this same theme. It urges those in the world, as it were, to come to Jesus and see how good he is:

Jesu imbela bomo

O bo n' o dadi yoo

Jesu imbela bomo

O bo n' o dadi yoo
Jesu imbele bomo
O bo n' o dadi yoo
Jesu imbele bomo
O bo n' o dadi yoo
Dadi yoo

Jesus is too sweet
Come taste him
Jesus is too sweet
Come taste him
Jesus is too sweet
Come taste him
Jesus is too sweet
Come taste him
Oh, taste

From the above, the reader has seen how this researcher's selection of religious songs in this section differ from some of the studies he reviewed in the previous study. For example, Dhlomo discusses songs and prayers to ancestors and gods under his ritual sub-category (46). In addition, Read's classification has no heading like "religious" or "ritual". However, she classifies some songs as "songs of *izanusu*," diviners' songs (221-224). As such, it could be argued that Read sees songs, prayers and incantations to gods, goddesses and ancestors as "religious songs" (see also Joseph's classification of songs of diviners amongst the Zulu (75-77). This is similar to Akpabot's study of Efik/Ibibio oral poetry that was reviewed too in chapter two. As was pointed out, Akpabot notes that oral poetry amongst the Tiv/Ibibio exists on ritual and non-ritual planes. He contends that ritual songs deal "with the adoration of traditional deities and the social control of the community" (88). However, the songs Hagher discussed amongst the Tiv which are subsumed under the term "religious" are of Christian

bent. As pointed out earlier, this researcher's classification follows Hagher's. All this shows that subsuming or classifying songs under "religious" depends on the perspective and the purpose(s) of the researcher.

To sum up, the religious songs composed by the denominations that came out of the Anglican Church were underpinned by traditional nuances. In other words, Christian subjects were expressed in traditional culture. As such, the songs foreground "the African flavour which was introduced to the Western concept of Christianity," to borrow the words of Kaschula (*The Bones* 107). The songs, as pointed out, dwells on themes of witchcraft, endurance and courage, proselytising, and praise of God and Jesus. However, the songs lack the dominant themes in contemporary Christian songs: money and affluence (this is a subject for further research). It shows that the white garment denominations that came out of the Anglican Church were purely interested in disciple making, encouraging the heathen, as it were, to change their ways unlike the panoply of contemporary protestant denominations whose chief goal is to become wealthy. The next section will be concerned with another sub-form, political songs.

Political Songs (*Gometi Duma ama*)

In a very important article on the relations between music and politics on the African continent, Allen rightly maintains that "music functions as a trenchant political site in Africa primarily because it is the most widely appreciated art form on the continent" (1). However, it is not the concern of this study here to put into this group and discuss songs which warring factions to a kingship or community headship sing to oppose each other. Nor is the study to deal with songs which workers sing to indirectly express their suffering or "dissatisfaction with the owner" (Finnegan, *Oral Literature* 268). In addition, the study here is not to explore the songs sung at the meetings of associations of Iẓon youth, women and elders fighting against the injustice(s) they are facing under the Nigerian federal government. Furthermore, the songs that will be discussed here are different from the political songs Perullo studied in her paper published in 2011. In that article, Perullo gave attention to the songs of popular musicians in Kenya and Tanzania. Some of the songs are critiques of the social imbalances of those countries. Others are sung to support and oppose political parties and politicians.

What the study shall be engaging with here are purely songs of political parties composed by their members and not some popular artiste. Songs which Finnegan rightly argues have become "a vehicle for communication, propaganda, political pressure, and political education" of

modern-day political parties (*Oral Literature* 276). The use of songs during political campaigns did not start today. For example, Butterfield notes that campaign songs “have an old and honored...tradition” (410). Butterfield avers that campaign songs existed during the Jefferson administration in the United States (413).

Izọ political songs, like their wrestling songs, are not exclusive to one person. They are sung for every politician. It does not matter the level of political office one is campaigning for to be elected to. Moreover, it has nothing to do with a particular political party. Some of the political parties that were in vogue when some of the songs were composed are no longer in place. Some have changed names while others have merged with some to form new political parties. The songs that were sung during the first, second, third and fourth republics in Nigeria are still sung today.

Public singing of political songs occurs mostly during the period of elections. “Mostly” because political parties gather women and youths to sing for their officeholders when they visit communities to inspect and commission new projects, attend burials and marriages, or come home for Christmas and New Year. In fact, anytime a political officeholder visits another community, his supporters sing for him. It was pointed out earlier that there is no political song that is exclusive to a specific period or person. However, there are some periods in the life of a people when a song has a deeper meaning and plays a deeper role. Let me make this point clearer.

The death of Maximum Dictator, General Shani Abacha, in 1998, presented Nigeria an opportunity to start a new phase in life. For until then, Abacha’s regime was, “a reign of terror” as Enemuo calls it (3). It was a period of “massive corruption, brazen nepotism, and sustained brutality” (Enemuo 3). Elections were on the verge of being conducted. Three political parties were registered: People’s Democratic Party (PDP), All People’s Party (APP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD). That means, Bayelsa, the only state entirely owned by people of Ijọ extraction in Nigeria, would have a democratically elected governor for the very first time. It had been created in 1996 by General Abacha. Who would be the governor? The two frontrunners were Chief Alamieyeseigha of PDP and Francis Doukpolagha of APP.

The people were excited to cast their votes and have their own son as governor. However, it was (and is still) a rural and riverine state where the majority of voters were and are still non-literate. How would they be educated with respect to voting this one and not the other? Songs

became the means by which the political parties communicated to the electorate. In her study of political songs on the African continent, Finnegan has stressed this point thus, “there is still great reliance on oral means of propaganda – speech, mass meetings, and songs – in keeping with the still large non-literate or semi-literate mass electorate for whom the written word is of relatively lesser significance” (*Oral Literature* 285). During that period, members of People’s Democratic Party (PDP), regularly sang this song, which is on the theme of education:

Arụ mọ lei yo

Mẹ arụ mẹ

DSP kị mẹ arụ mẹ kọrịmọ owei yoo

Arụ mọ lei yo

Mẹ arụ mẹ

DSP kị mẹ arụ mẹ kọrịmọ owei yoo

Enter the canoe

This canoe

DSP is the one who pilots the canoe

Enter the canoe

This canoe

DSP is the one who pilots it

Diepreye Solomon Peter Alamiyeseigha was the first executive governor of Bayelsa State. He was fondly called “DSP.” The reader can see how composers of songs for political parties wisely make use of the word “canoe” to represent any political office one is aspiring to. The masses are fishers and farmers. In addition, they are a riverine people who go to farms in their canoes. It will be hard to imagine an Ịzọn family in the rural area that does not have a canoe. Some families have more than two. Furthermore, the masses know full well that it is not everyone who knows how to paddle that can sit on the rear of a canoe that has other people paddling at the same time and pilot it very well. If such persons sit on the rear of a canoe you are in, then, either the canoe veers off direction or all of you fall off it. With this song now, the

voters have got a clearer picture of what an elective office is about. Who will then sit on the rear of this canoe that will make them enter without second thoughts? The song does not leave them looking for an answer. It says it is DSP. Ironically, this same song is used by the rival party. The only difference, as expected, is the change of name from DSP to that of the person contesting against him.

Political songs do not only express the theme of education. They also praise their subjects. When a politician who is seeking a second term in office goes for a campaign in a community and if that same politician did something for the community during his first tenure, then his supporters sing a song listing all what he did. The politician may be seeking a bigger elective position this time around. Such songs are many amongst the Ịzọn. For example, the supporters of Honourable Wisdom Fafi in one of the communities in Kolokuma *ibe* sang this song during the campaigns for the Bayelsa State House of Assembly elections:

Bara polo Fafi kị piriị

Bara polo Fafi kị piri oo

Bara polo Fafi kị piriị

Eri kị bimeingị Rest Housu emi oo

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

It's because of him that there's a Rest House

Honourable Fafi had been a two-time Caretaker Chairman of Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. During that period, he built a rest house for spectators of football matches that are played in the community football field. As such, his supporters are saying that he should be the one the electorate in the community should vote for other than people whom they do not know.

In the discussion on Ịzọn war songs, it was noted that a praise song can be used to praise God, a god, a wrestling champion or a politician. In a situation like that, only the name of the subject

that is praised changes. In politics, oftentimes, such a song is sung after a winner has emerged in a very tough and keenly contested election or a party primary. The winner's supporters will sing from one end of their community to the other:

Seriake oo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Seriake oo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Seriake oo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Seriake oo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Seriake² is a great man!

Indeed, a great man!

Seriake is a great man!

Indeed, a great man!

Seriake is a great man!

Indeed, a great man!

Seriake is a great man!

Indeed, a great man!

However, it is not only a praise song that has this power of adaptability. This is one feature of Iẓon songs; and it really needs to be studied. It is only when one has carried out an historical research that one will be able to ascertain if a song was first, say, a wrestling song, before being a religious song or a religious song before it was adapted by wrestlers.

A further theme manifest in Iẓon political songs is vote-buying. Here is one of such songs:

DSP egberi yo

You ụkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo
DSP egberi yo
You ụkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo
DSP egberi yo
You ụkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo
O ye, o ye, o ye oo
Wo mẹnẹ fụ akpa na kẹmẹ votua ee

DSP's campaign
I came because of it
DSP's campaign
I came because of it
DSP's campaign
I came because of it
Oye, oye, oyeoo
We don't vote someone with a bag of salt

The song is an attack on a rival politician. However, it helps the reader to understand something crucial: buying of the votes of poor citizens. The mention of salt in the song is important to our understanding of how politics is played in Ịzọn rural communities and Nigeria in general, and how far it has come. Until the 2003 elections, it was common things such as salt that politicians used in buying the votes of non-literate Ịzọn men and women. For example, someone who was contesting for the office of a local government chairman would buy bags of salt and give to his or her supporters to distribute to each community in the local government area. Thereafter, the supporters in any of the communities would share the bags of salt the community got to the different quarters making up that community. Unfortunately, some contestants were so poor that they could not afford the common salt the women needed. Some might argue that some did that based on their principles! Such persons must be ready to show the reader any Ịzọn politician or Nigerian politician who is principled when it comes to vote-buying. One

interesting thing about the song is that it also foregrounds the setting of the song, in this case the time. As noted earlier, it was before the 2003 elections that Iẓon politicians were using common stuff such as salt to buy votes. Since that period, the narrative has changed because every voter can afford salt and pepper. Today, politicians use huge sums of money to buy votes in Iẓonland in particular and Nigeria in general (see, for example, Niger Delta Watch 7; Emem; Collier and Vicente 140; Lucky 2014). Put differently, a vote is now cast for the highest bidder.

A further thing to be noted about this song is the fact that it is an adaptation of a religious song. It was not quite long when this quality of adaptability was noted in Iẓon songs. Here is the original religious song from which it was adapted:

Ayiba egberi yo
You ẓkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo
Ayiba egberi yo
You ẓkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo
Ayiba egberi yo
You ẓkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo
O ye, o ye, o ye oo
Sei aki na kẹmẹ tọngha oo

It's God's story
I came because of it
It's God's story
I came because of it
It's God's story
I came because of it
Oye, oye, oyeo
I don't wish someone any bad

This was a popular song during the period the denominations which came out of the Anglican Church were establishing branches in Ịzọn communities. It was sung to the people of the communities that they meant no harm and that it was the Gospel that brought them. When the reader sees a song like that in modern politics, it becomes easier for him or her to conclude that it was appropriated by political parties, for modern political parties are a recent development in Nigeria.

In summary, political songs, especially before now, were the means politicians used in educating or enlightening the electorate. Today, they are used, amongst others, to praise and attack politicians. They also reflect the nature of elections, for example, vote-buying by politicians. One other aspect that should be noted by the reader is that many political songs are adaptations of other sub-group of songs such as wrestling and religious. Political songs are still a thriving art amongst the Ịzọn of Nigeria because the activity – election - in which they are sung is a still a key component of Ịzọn society or as Kaschula would say, “society allows it [them] to exist.” In the next section, the final one, this researcher shall give attention to children’s songs, lullabies.

Lullabies (*Kalaqwoy Duma ama*)

That the lullaby is a universal “manifestation of the human spirit,” to borrow the words of the American folklorist, Thompson Stith, has now become a cliché (171). However, since Brakeley’s conception of a lullaby as “a type of song sung by mothers and nurses the world over to coax their babies to sleep,” different commentators have come out to say whether Brakeley’s definition truly reflects the situation all over the earth (qtd. Masuyama 144). For example, Metzger has argued that in Yiddish culture, the lullaby is “much more than a means of lulling the baby to sleep” (253). Finnegan too has pointed out that in Africa, some lullabies “seem to represent more the mother’s delight in playing with her child than the desire to soothe it” (293). Moreover, Masuyama argues that Brakeley’s “definition does not explain the whole situation” in Japan (144). Contrary to the views of these commentators, Mackinlay, in her study of the lullaby amongst the Aboriginal Yanyuwa people of Australia, supports the view of Brakeley by arguing that “the lullaby is a type of song sung the world over to calm a crying child and gently lull babies into the arms of sleep” (97). In addition, Spitz, in his article on East Slavic lullabies, has observed that a lullaby “is ostensibly designed to force the wakeful child to sleep” (20). Similar comments have been made by Ebeogu of the lullaby in Igboland (99-

100; see also Hawes 141 of the lullaby in the US). In what follows, this researcher shall explore how the lullaby in İzönland compares with the views of these scholars.

In İzön, the lullaby refers to *kalaḡwəy duma* (children's song). It is used to play with, soothe a crying baby and lull it to sleep. However, the lullaby is more often used to play with a baby. In different terms, amongst the İzön, the lullaby is chiefly used to play with the baby. To date, the İzön have a thriving lullabic culture, especially in the rural areas. The industriousness of İzön women accounts for this. For one thing, they are farmers. There is no farm work that a woman does not do in İzönland. Fishing? She fishes much more than the husband. She goes into different kinds of fishing. One can recall Clark's observation in the introduction to *The Ozidi Saga* that "in the large polygamous family run by every successful man, it is the mother who is for all practical purposes a child's mainstay" (xxxiv). Moreover, the İzön woman does the chores in the house. This is one of the reasons why most children revere their mothers more than their fathers in İzönland. For when you see your mother doing all this, having no time for herself, you only feel pity for her. She goes fishing and farming both rain and sun. In all this, she hardly leaves her child at home to be looked after by others.

There are few reasons for this. Firstly, the man she calls her husband cannot properly look after the baby. Secondly, the belief in witchcraft is very strong. What if a witch comes and lures your two little children into "eating witchcraft," as they say in İzön? Furthermore, despite your frequent warnings, the older child will go to the river and swim on the pretext of going to wash plates and she sits her younger sibling who has not known how to walk very well somewhere close to the waterfront; not minding when the waves of a passing speedboat will sweep the baby onto the river. As such, when you are walking on the road to your farm, you see a mother weeding the grasses in her yam or cassava farm while her older child is singing a lullaby to the new member of the family under a shade. Perhaps their mother is tilling the soil with a hoe.

When an İzön woman has got a baby, she looks around at her extended family and the husband's to see if there is a little girl who she can take to her house to care for the baby when she will be carrying out an activity, if she has no child who can serve that purpose. The little girl who serves this purpose is *təbəudejaraḡ*. For example, a mother is pounding *fufu* – fermented and processed cassava the İzön use in eating the different kinds of soup they cook – and you see the woman battling to remove the hands of her crying or smiling baby from the mortar. If she leaves the *fufu* and gives attention to the child, the *fufu* will get bad. If she is

indifferent to the cries of the baby, she will pound the baby's fingers. The baby might also get sick from the cries. Or she is frying *garri* (ground and dried cassava that is made in hot water like maize flour which is used to eat soup). Any little mistake, the child falls into the big frying pan and gets burnt. She needs a little girl in situations like these.

The study is in no way suggesting that it is only nursemaids who sing lullabies to babies. *Izõn* women are not like their Ngoni counterparts "who assumed the role of aristocrats and had a number of attendant women who did all their work for them" and spared no time in singing lullabies for their children (Read 207-208). Mothers play with their babies any time they have no activity at hand. Is it after breastfeeding a child or when the mother, trying to make the baby learn how to walk, make her child toddle to where she is? It should also be noted that it is not only a mother and a babysitter that sing lullabies to a baby. Lullabies are sung by the baby's siblings and an outsider (somebody outside the immediate family circle) as Ebeogu has rightly shown in his study of the lullaby in Igbo society (104). In this case, the lullaby in *Ijoland* is different from the phenomenon amongst the Yanyuwa where the reader is told that "the task of singing lullabies is largely handed over to experience and mature singers" (Mackinlay 102). It must also be pointed out that the *Izõn* do not have a set of lullabies in their lullabic oeuvre that only babysitters sing as in the case of the *Ibibio* of Nigeria's Niger Delta region (Iwokedok 153). Moreover, the situation in *Izõn* is different from Albania where, as Doja observes, "lullabies are only sung to the child once he has begun to walk, understand the words, and may even be able to sing themselves." (133). The *Izõn* sing lullabies to their infants before even they start smiling. To the *Izõn*, as in Hopi culture, "lullabies are the child's introduction to language, literature and life" (Sands and Sekaquaptewa 195).

I have already pointed out that in *Izõnland*, the lullaby is primarily used to play with the baby. This is true of even lullabies in which the lyrics apparently show a lulling or soothing function as in the two below:

1.

Indouda pẹlẹ o

Yeingi indou ebi fịyai o

Tọbọu mịẹ dubamọmọ

Tọbọu mịẹ ebimọmọ

Indouda pẹlẹ o

Yeingi indou ebi fiyaị o

Suck and stop crying

Mother's breastmilk is good food

It makes a baby grow

It makes a baby fine

Suck and stop crying

Mother's breastmilk is good food

2.

Ayapiti o, ayapiti o, ayapiti o

Sisei youkumọ oo

I yeingi boda buru aki

I daụ boda ofoni aki

Kokorokoo

Ayapiti o, ayapiti o, ayapiti o

Sisei youkumọ oo

O newborn, o newborn, o newborn

Please stop crying

Take yam when your mother comes back

Take a fowl when your father comes back

Kokorokoo

O newborn, o newborn, o newborn

Please stop crying

In fact, these two are amongst the lullabies this researcher sings to his daughter on a regular basis to play with her. “*Kokorokoo*” in the song is an onomatopoeic word that describes the sound a fowl makes when it crows.

In spite of the argument that the primary function of the lullaby amongst the Iẓon is to play with the baby, the lullaby still expresses some themes, for example, protest or the motif of the suffering babysitter as in the following:

Tuu tu

Tuu tu

Kala beḷe tuḡ kpḡ yei i piri fughā

Opu beḷe tuḡ kpḡ yei ipiri fughā

Tḡbḡdeḡaraḡ youwemo

Mama boo

Mama boo

Tuu, tu

Tuu, tu

You cooked a small pot, I wasn’t given to eat

You cooked a big pot, I wasn’t given to eat

Nanny is crying

Come, mother

Come, mother

It is apparent that this lullaby, even though sung to the baby, is about the plight of the nursemaid. The reader will obviously conclude that it is an attack on the baby’s mother. Amongst the Iẓon too, some babysitters suffer in their new homes. Some are not given food to eat for any perceived slight indiscretion. On occasion, one sees a babysitter crying and singing

this song as she cares for the crying baby whose mother is not in sight. This mirrors the situation in Yiddish culture where Metzger notes that lullabies “contain... the trepidations and fears, and sometimes the hopelessness and despair” of those who sing them” (253). Bansisa, too, has long noted this about the Bunyoro of western Uganda (110). Even in Igboland, according to Ebeogu, “the lullaby becomes a subconscious avenue for venting her [the babysitter] protest against a system that oppresses her [the babysitter]” (110).

However, in İzönland, the above lullaby can be sung by anyone to the baby. It could be the baby’s older sibling, the mother or a happy babysitter who is trying to elicit warm smiles from the baby with the song. It is never intended as an insult. This is what makes the lullabic culture in İzön very ironic. This phenomenon is not exclusive to the İzön. Some of the lullabies of the Gurage people of Ethiopia collected by Leslau have this characteristic as well (280). Here is another lullaby in which the reader might argue that it is on the plight of the babysitter:

Aboy yo

Tibi kokolo

Ari ma dau fabia

Ari ma yengi fabia

Umbu gboru, gboru

Wosaa

Oh, boy!

With a big head

Is it because I don’t have a father?

Is it because I don’t have a mother?

With a big, big navel

Wosaa

Seemingly, this song is much more of the singer than the baby that is sung to. However, as noted earlier, it is the nature of the İzön lullaby. The little nursemaid or the mother is just

playing with the baby. Also, it is not that the baby really has a big navel. The onomatopoeic word, “*wosaa*”, in the context of the song describes how big the baby’s navel is.

Another theme in İzön lullabies is goading. The İzön, as earlier mentioned, are a polygamous ethnic group. It is not unusual for a man to have up to seven wives, sometimes in the same compound. Barrenness too is a common and major issue amongst the people. Therefore, it is only natural that lullabies of goading exist. A mother may want to sing a lullaby to her baby that will make her barren co-wife jealous:

Təbəu nana kımı təbəu ye fimo

Arau paki dəonmı

The one who has a child eats what belongs to one’s child

How come she is jealous!

A woman who sings this lullaby to goad her co-wife must have a grown-up child who has been taking a very good care of her by buying her such things as bags of rice and pieces of wrap. Oftentimes, such a child lives in an urban area while the mum lives in a rural area. Here is another example of such a lullaby:

‘N’ aboy yo

‘N’ aboygha ‘n’ aboy bi

‘N’ aboy yo

‘N’ aboygha ‘n’ aboy bi

‘N’ aboy yo

It’s my son

My son is not your son

It’s my son

My son is not your son

It's my son

A further theme expressed in Ijo lullabies is hope. This view is also true of the situation amongst the Izon as demonstrated by the following:

Ayapiti o, indou, indou, indou

Ayapiti o, indou

Deinbai laya, ayapiti bo opu kimi 'pa

opu wari kori, opu akolo korimo

Suck, suck and suck, o newborn

Suck, o newborn

Tomorrow, newborn will become a big man,

build a big house and walk with a big staff

In this song, the mother hopes that the child will grow to become a great man in life. The mother's aspirations for the baby do not end there. She hopes that the baby will live on to old age. This is in consonance with the argument of Macfie and Macfie that "lullabies express the feelings of the mother, in particular her feelings of hope, fear, love" (196; see also Honig 33).

Moreover, Izon lullabies reflects the fear of the mother as illustrated by the following:

Sien da boo

Kala tobou famugni kimi bo ari ki famu

Sien da bo o, oo o

Sleep and wake

The one who wants to beat a child should beat me instead

Sleep and wake

The fear the mother expresses in this lullaby is hinged on the reality in Iẓonland where, in some instances, a baby fails to wake up from its sleep; that is, the baby dies in its sleep.

Also, the lullaby in Iẓonland, as in Hopi culture, sometimes bear on the things they value in life. Sands and Sekaquaptewa argue in their study which was earlier referred to that Hopi lullabies “bear a direct relationship to social norms and cultural beliefs” (195). Here is one of such lullabies in the Ijoland:

Bọ ọkpọ ị nana ye ị nana ye

Tọbọu kị ebidein ye

Tọbọu imbelẹ ma ye

Tọbọu imbelẹ akị sili dein

Tọbọu imbelẹ ma ye

Tọbọu imbelẹ akị sili dein

Tọbọu imbelẹ ma ye

Tọbọu imbelẹ akị sili dein

Aan tọbọu imbelẹ ma ye

Whatever thing I have in this world

A child is the best thing

Oh! A child is sweet

A child is sweeter than money

Oh! A child is sweet

A child is sweeter than money

Oh! A child is sweet

A child is sweeter than money

Yes, a child is sweet

This lullaby foregrounds what the Iẓon value the most in life: children. This special importance they place on children is reflected in their oral narratives, oral drama and other poetic forms. They expect everyone to have children, and many for that matter; not just one. As such, if a woman is barren, she is treated in a very unfair manner. They do not even want to hear that someone decides to be childless because of matters relating to religion. As the song shows, they value children more than even money. Today, unfortunately, globalisation and modern politics have affected the way some persons view money. Some people are ready to harm their fellow Iẓon brothers and sisters for money. In fact, there is a narrative in Bayelsa State, an oil-rich state owned by the Ijọ in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, that the state will continue to be underdeveloped despite the huge federal allocation accruing to it each month until the politicians in the state cleanse themselves of the blood in their hands and other evil deeds they carried out because of their pursuit of money. This narrative is hinged on the fact that, traditionally, the Iẓon never killed a man because of money since they did not value it the way it is valued today.

To conclude, the lullaby is still a thriving poetic art amongst the Iẓon that is used chiefly to play with the baby. The industriousness of mothers in Iẓonland accounts for this positive phenomenon. The lullaby is both functional and nonfunctional. It is functional when the intent is to lull a baby to sleep or to make the baby stop crying and start smiling in order to give the mother ample time to continue with what she is doing. It is also functional when the intent is to make the child learn how to walk. It is non-functional when a mother sings it to her baby with no intent other than just to play with the child of her womb. Some of the apparent themes expressed in the lullabies are the motif of the suffering babysitter, fear, goading and hope. However, it should be noted that anybody can sing any lullaby no matter the kind of theme expressed in it. As remarked in the introduction, the study will now turn to the chants of Chief Munamuna in the second part (see the introduction of this chapter why these praise poems are included in this chapter).

The Praise Chants of Chief Adolphus Munamuna

Chief Adolphus Elson Munamuna was born in August 28, 1959, in Otuan, an Iẓon community in Ogboin *ibe* in present-day Bayelsa State. He has an Advanced Diploma in Purchasing and Supply Management from one of the universities in Nigeria, the name of which this researcher

should be permitted not to disclose now. In spite of his field of discipline, Chief Munamuna is very much interested in literature. His cultural productions are on both sides of literature. In 2018, he published a voluminous play in English, *The Royal Stool*. The preface of that play was written by John Pepper Clark. He has also written, in English, a collection of poetry, *Reflections* and two children's fiction, *Keme and the Fish* and *A Forest of Whirlwinds*. Chief Munamuna has other published works aside the literary ones. He is a member of several professional bodies. In 2017, Chief Munamuna was appointed as Special Adviser to the Bayelsa State Governor on Cultural Matters. It is a position he still occupies.

Chief Munamuna is well-read. At least that is what my discussions with him and the names of people he acknowledges in some of his works demonstrate. In the acknowledgement of *The Royal Stool*, he calls Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Ola Rotimi, Sam Ukala, Barclays Ayakoroma, Henry Belgam, amongst others, his “academic gods.” Those are household names in Nigerian drama, some even African drama. In the next section, this study shall demonstrate how Chief Munamuna came to start a practice that is unfamiliar, as it were, to his people.

In my interviews with Chief Munamuna, he told me he started chanting poetry in his late thirties and that it was in 2006 he made his public debut. Moreover, this researcher got to know he had been practicing in private for few years before the debut. Chief Munamuna told me he did not grow up amongst the *Izọn*. It would be highly likely that were he grew up had something to say about a practice that is not associated with his people. So where did he grow up? Lagos. Scholars of African oral literature who know that Lagos is a Yoruba city will have now concluded (and rightly so) that Yoruba poetic forms such as *oriki*, *esa egungun*, *rara*, *ijalas*, amongst others, had something to do with his chants.

Chief Munamuna left Otuan for Lagos when he was only a toddler. It was there he was educated. He got the diploma that was mentioned earlier at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. It was also there he began his working career. Chief Munamuna can speak and write in Yoruba. He became very much immersed, as it were, in Yoruba: its language, people and cultural practices. By this act, Chief Munamuna reminds the reader of the Edo-born “walking archive” of African literature, Abiola Irele, who identified himself with the Yoruba language and culture (114-115). Chief Munamuna tells me: “I saw this [orature] in the Yorubas, they have *ewi*, *oriki*...the way they will praise God in church, the *egungun* people....” He said he sometimes went with the *egungun* cult to their shrine. All this was happening when he did not understand

his own Iẓon language very well. In fact, he said he just did not like Iẓon until the civil war in Nigeria compelled him to do so. Chief Munamuna had to leave Lagos for his home community, Otuan. During the years spanning the war, he came to have a proper Iẓon childhood, as he told me. After the war, he went back to Lagos and lost interest in anything Iẓon again. At some point, he told me, he started getting close to the Iẓon language and the practices of his people. What brought this change? Chief Munamuna tells me:

From the year 1976 when I read the book written by Alex Haley, an Afro-American, who came up with a story of his ancestors. Kunta Kinte story. This man was able to trace his roots back from the United States to Senegal [Gambia] spanning several decades, in fact centuries.... So, I became fascinated and I got more and more interested in my own culture because I saw myself as a foreigner. I was bearing two English names. I had to drop my family name, Munamuna, because then in primary school if they called my name in the assembly, people would just be laughing. It was foreign to them as Yorubas. I am an Iẓon man, Iẓon boy, small boy...I became ashamed. So, I said, "look, I won't bear this name anymore." I started bearing my immediate father's name, Elson. So, I had two English names: Adolphus, Elson.

So the interest in his Iẓon language came from reading Haley's (in)famous novel, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. He said the book stung him in the sense of a shock: how he had been deracinated from his roots. What he read made him to recollect some of the activities he saw and involved in back home in Otuan. Chief Munamuna became fascinated in Iẓon literature, especially the verbal side of it. He started going to the Iẓon community in Ajegunle, a suburb of Lagos, to see Iẓon cultural performances such as dances, drumming and to listen to *awigiri* music (Iẓon highlife).

Chief Munamuna told me he had no idea his informal practicing chant sessions could lead to this level today. Chief Munamuna has always maintained he was influenced by Yoruba verbal practitioners. Therefore, one can argue that influence in oral literature studies has been birthed! It is no longer African writers being influenced by some European and American modernist writers or African writers being influenced by their oral traditions but verbal artists of an African ethnic group influencing someone from another ethnic nationality to become an artist too (see, for example, Irele's insightful article in 1990 and Chinweizu et al 163-238)

Even though Chief Munamuna maintains that he was influenced by Yoruba verbal artists, he contends that chanting is an Iẓon practice. For example, in one of our discussions, Chief Munamuna made a statement: "chanting is a common thing amongst the Iẓon" and that what he saw in Yorubaland only made him to develop what had been in vogue. Chief Munamuna

said chanting was one of the victims of the Iẓon disregard of their language and cultural practices. This researcher could accept what he said about the fact that the Iẓon do not regard their practices: it is a common thing (for more on this point, see the next chapter). However, this researcher would not accept that chanting was a verbal form amongst the Iẓon. For one thing, he grew up in a rural Iẓon *ibe* that is known amongst the Iẓon for the performances of many Iẓon cultural practices before now. In his field research in other *ibe mọ*, he is constantly reminded to go to his *ibe* and get what he wants. “Who here will do it better than your *ibe*?” is what is normally put to this researcher. At least, this researcher saw some of the performances of some of the verbal arts. Moreover, from the nostalgias of old women and men in his fieldwork, this researcher has come to know the oral forms they used to perform. Chanting was not one of them. In what follows, this researcher shall present the statements of some Iẓon statesmen – persons who definitely will know - whether chanting was a practice amongst the Iẓon or not.

Chief Philip Willfant, who knows Chief Munamuna very well, is the spokesperson of Amassoma Council of Chiefs, the host community of Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Chiefs Munamuna and Willfant are from the same *ibe*, Ogboin. Otuan and Amassoma are also neighbouring communities. Chief Munamuna often goes to Amassoma to chant at burial ceremonies and the popular annual festival, *Seigbein*. Mr Willfant told this researcher, for him, what his clansman is doing is a new thing in Iẓon which he came up with. He added that from when he was given birth up to the time he was interviewed, he had not seen or heard somebody do what Chief Munamuna was doing in Iẓonland.

King Joshua Igbugburu X, CON (JP), is a first-class traditional ruler. He is the king of Bomo clan and one of the most revered kings in the Niger Delta. King Igbugburu was crowned during the British colonial era in Nigeria in 1958 at the age of 18. He is a former chairman of Rivers State Traditional Rulers Council. When Bayelsa State was carved out from Rivers State in 1996 by General Sani Abacha, the Nigerian Head of State at the time, he became the pioneer Chairman of Bayelsa State Council of Traditional Rulers. Later on, he became the chairman of a traditional-rulers council that comprised seven states in Nigeria. King Joshua Igbugburu too echoed the words of Chief Willfant. He told this researcher the Iẓon are not like the Yoruba or the Hausa where they chant for their *obas*, *emirs* and other persons.

King Joshua Igbagara OON, AP (JP), a first-class traditional ruler, is the king of Oyiakiri clan. For many years, he was the Chairman of Bayelsa State Council of Traditional Rulers. When this researcher played one of the chants of Chief Munamuna to him, he said, “this chant is not in Iẓonland.” King Igbagara went further to say it was a new thing in Iẓon and that Chief Munamuna borrowed it from another ethnic group. In all the persons this researcher interviewed, a chant of Chief Munamuna was played.

There is a programme known as *Kolokuma ifie* (Kolokuma time) in the Bayelsa State-owned radio station, Glory FM. The programme is aired every Tuesday of the week. It is a one-hour programme that used to start from 9 and end at 10 in the morning. Today, it starts from 9 in the night. The goal of which is the promotion of Iẓon culture. Amongst other things, it promotes anyone whom the anchors see as promoting an Iẓon traditional practice by regularly inviting such persons to the show. Story telling is a permanent feature of the programme. Chief Munamuna had, in one of our interactions, told this researcher he used to go on the show to chant when his friend was alive.

Mr Malomo Zibaboyegha is a recently retired staff member of Glory FM. He left Radio Rivers to Yenagoa when Bayelsa State was created and had its own radio station. He was one of the anchors of *Kolokuma ifie*. Mr Zibaboyegha told this researcher it was Siekpeti Ayaowei, a deceased staff member of Glory FM, who introduced Chief Munamuna to the show. Mr Zibaboyegha told this researcher the anchors got so much interested in the chants that Chief Munamuna was directed to start the programme every time with a five-minute chant. He answered in the negative when this researcher asked him if they had invited someone like Chief Munamuna to the programme before. Mr Zibaboyegha further said the same thing my other interviewees said to me when I asked him if he had seen or come across Chief Munamuna’s verbal art form in Iẓonland. It was right there he told this researcher that Chief Munamuna was telling them then that he did not grow up in Iẓon and that it was Yoruba traditional verbal art forms that influenced him. Moreover, Mr Zibaboyegha informed this researcher that Chief Munamuna would agree with him that they promoted him to a greater extent.

One of the most respected scholars amongst the Ijọ said to me that what Chief Munamuna is doing is “good for the Ijọ culture.” He too sees it as something new. If there were anything like that in Iẓonland, he would have known because of his discipline. This researcher has refrained from disclosing his name here. When we met, he said we should have a general discussion on

the Ijọ and leave the interview for another time. The researcher could not say otherwise. As usual we ended up talking about Ijọ politicians' apathy towards education in Ijoland. That is what one hears when Ijọ scholars and elders who have passion for education have some time to share with a student who goes to know something from them. Unfortunately, we did not meet again until this researcher left Nigeria for Rhodes University.

After the interviews with the statesmen mentioned above, this researcher met Chief Munamuna again. In our interactions, Chief Munamuna mentioned some things in traditional Iẓọn which he called chants. I realised that when Chief Munamuna claimed "chanting is common thing in Iẓọn" he was referring to spoken lamentations and spoken praises of his people. Spoken and song lamentations are common at burials and places where something tragic has occurred. In addition, it is not unusual for a supporter of a wrestler to praise him in a speaking voice. Amongst the Iẓọn, especially in traditional times, when someone killed a mighty fish, or a powerful animal or somebody in self-defence, the person would utter a long and continual shout while being possessed. This shout is the closest in Iẓọn to a chant. It is *oboyai*, a verb. When the Iẓọn man says someone is "*oboyaiyemi*," the progressive tense, he is not saying the person is praising (*pupuyemi*, *pumumẹnẹ*, *tokoniyemi*, depending on the dialect of the Iẓọn language) someone. In traditional Iẓọn society, the talking drum was the chief means of communication. It was what the Iẓọn used (and sometimes still use) to praise an *ibenanaowei* (clan head), *amadaowei* (paramount ruler) and other heroes such as wrestling champions and great hunters. All my interviewees made this same statement.

Chief Munamuna's chants are basically praises. Some of the occasions at which he chants his praises are funerals, festivals, church rituals, political and marriage ceremonies, amongst others. He was once invited by the respected Ijọ historian, E. J. Alagoa, to chant in Yenagoa, the capital of Bayelsa State, in honour of the International Museum Day. The Bayelsa State chapter of the Association of Nigerian Authors has also invited him to chant at a ceremony, as he told me. Furthermore, Chief Munamuna informed me he chanted for the Nigerian Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, when he came to Bayelsa State to commission the Ijaw National Academy and other projects. Chief Munamuna chanted for Soyinka under the direction of the Bayelsa State government to showcase its literature to him. The governor of Bayelsa State, Seriake Dickson, is somebody Chief Munamuna chants for at political gatherings. Chief Munamuna is a literate oral poet. He transcribes his chants but has never written a chant and chanted it later. He was advised by his friend, Siekpeti Ayaowei, to write down his chants for

posterity. Chief Munamuna has got many chants. He willingly gave me all the ones he could find in his house. Chief Munamuna's chants are best critiqued in subsequent chapters when the study shall turn attention to composition/performance and stylistic techniques of Iẓon oral literature and the role the poet plays.

Having pointed out all this about the chants of Chief Munamuna to the reader, the reader may as well want to know how Chief Munamuna compare with other praise singers on the African continent in terms of the studies that were reviewed in the previous chapter. In the following paragraphs, the study shall investigate this, but in terms of the occasions at which Chief Munamuna chants and whether he is attached to somebody whom he praises on a regular basis. It is in the next chapter that the study will attempt to compare the scholarly voices in the previous chapter on composition and role to see how they support or differ from the empirical data on the chants of Chief Munamuna.

Chief Munamuna is different from the traditional *imbongi* but similar to the contemporary *imbongi*. For example, in the review of Opland's study in the previous chapter, it was pointed out that in traditional times, the *imbongi* chanted praises for only the chief he was attached to. Opland contends:

In the past days, the *imbongi* was a man intimately connected with a chief, and invariably formed part of the chief's official entourage. Wherever the chief went, the *imbongi* preceded him, shouting an *izibongo* in his praise. This he would do when the chief entered a meeting place, for example, or a court hearing, or when the chief visited neighboring chiefs. ("Xhosa Tribal Poet" 192; see also Kaschula, *The Bones* 23-26 on the traditional Xhosa *imbongi*)

Opland, as pointed out in the previous chapter, goes further to say that, in the past, "there was an intimate relationship between the *imbongi* and the chieftainship" ("Xhosa Tribal Poet" 193; see also the review of Mafeje's study in the previous chapter on the connection between the South African *imbongi* and chiefs). In this way, Chief Munamuna is different from the traditional *imbongi* in the sense that he is not attached to any chief. In addition, there is no such official role of a praise singer amongst the Iẓon who "acted as the spokesman of the people" or "important mediator between chief and tribesman" (Opland, "Xhosa Tribal Poet" 193). Put differently, Chief Munamuna has no role which rests on "general acceptance by the people" as Mafeje points out about the *imbongi* ("The Role" 196).

Even though Chief Munamuna is different from the traditional *imbongi*, he is similar to the contemporary *imbongi*, as earlier stated. In the review of Opland's study in the previous chapter, it was noted that, there have been changes in the tradition of praise chanting. For example, according to Opland, in contemporary times, it is not every *imbongi* who is attached to a chief. The *imbongi* now chants for not only a chief but also for other personalities. Today, the *imbongi* chants at different occasions, unlike in traditional times. Of particular importance is this statement by Opland that was noted in the previous chapter:

The urban *imbongi*, and to a lesser extent his rural counterpart, both feel that there are today fewer occasions on which they are called upon to sing. Not only have they become part-time singers, but they also have fewer opportunities to practice their skill: there are no more battles, there are fewer traditional ceremonies and feasts. Thus the *imbongi* looks for every opportunity to sing: he may burst into spontaneous poetry during a church service, or, contrary to traditional custom, he may *bonga* at a funeral; he is perhaps most frequently heard today at political gatherings. ("Xhosa Tribal Poet" 193-194)

Kaschula too has corroborated this view of Opland about the changes in the tradition of praise chanting with regards to the Xhosa *imbongi*. For example, he devotes pages 36- 45 of *The Bones of the Ancestors are Shaking* to the socio-economic and political factors that brought about the changes in the tradition of praise singing. Chief Munamuna, like the modern *imbongi*, chants at funerals, church rituals, political ceremonies and so on. It follows that Chief Munamuna and the modern *imbongi* are freelance praise singers.

As a freelance praise singer, Chief Munamuna continues the tradition of the West African itinerant griot. In the review of Babalola's study of *ijala* poetry amongst the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria in chapter 2, it was noted that the *ijala* poet performs his praise chants at different occasions. For example, the *ijala* poet chants praises at "wedding, child naming, housewarming, chieftaincy celebration, funeral feasts, family reunion and others" ("Ijala Poetry" 3). The *ijala* poet, like Chief Munamuna, is not attached to a chief. It was also noted that "ijala-chanting is rarely a full-time occupation for any of the artists" (Babalola, "Ijala poetry" 4). Chief Munamuna too does not depend on chanting for livelihood. In fact, chanting is just a pastime activity to him. This is another similarity he shares with some modern *iimbongi*, who, as seen in the review of Opland's study, "act as *iimbongi* in their spare time only" ("Xhosa Tribal Poet" 193). However, unlike the Yoruba verbal artist, Chief Munamuna is a literate oral poet. Again, in this respect, he shares similarities with the contemporary South-African *imbongi*. For example, it was pointed out in chapter two in the review of Opland's

study that literate *imbongi* who write down their chants exist amongst the Xhosa (“Xhosa Tribal Poet” 203-204; see also the section on the poetry of Monde Mothlabane in Kaschula, *The Bones* 48-64).

Conclusion

This chapter has been preoccupied with investigating the various forms of Iḡon poetry. It was pointed out that Iḡon poetry basically exists in songs. The study further noted that Iḡon poetry has come to include the praise chants of Chief Munamuna, a nascent practice in Iḡonland. Eight sub-forms of songs were examined: religious, war, political, circumcision, bead-wearing or marriage, wrestling, associations and lullabies. As noted in the survey, all the sub-forms are traditional because they have been with the people for a long time. It was further remarked that some sub-forms are no longer performed as a result of a society that keeps evolving. However, some – such as political, wrestling and religious - are still performed. The fact that they are still performed gives such sub-forms the quality of contemporaneity. The songs, as pointed out, reflect the socio-religious life of the Iḡon. Generally, some of the dominant themes in the songs are the supernatural, praises of the subjects, witchcraft and barrenness. Others include suffering, mockery, proselytising, love and education. On the praise chants of the Chief, the study commented that Chief Munamuna was influenced by Yoruba chanters to begin a tradition that is alien to the Iḡon. Put differently, Chief Munamuna imported, as it were, a Yoruba practice into Iḡonland. Moreover, attention was given to the occasions where Chief Munamuna, a literate oral poet in the mould of some Xhosa *imbongi*, chants his praises: funerals, Christian rituals, festivals, coronations and political and marriage ceremonies. In general, the study integrated relevant scholarly voices from the literature review in the previous chapter to see how they support or differ from what is obtained in Iḡon oral poetry. In the next chapter, the study will examine composition and performance in Iḡon oral poetry. In addition, it will explore the role poetry plays in Iḡonland. Like this chapter, relevant scholarly opinions from chapter 2 will always be brought in to see how they compare with the situation amongst the Iḡon.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPOSITION, PERFORMANCE AND FUNCTION IN İZON ORAL POETRY

Introduction

In this chapter, the study shall be looking at İzon oral poetry using the theories of functionalism and performance that were given considerable attention to in chapter 1. In other words, the study shall examine the role oral poetry plays, as well as what goes on during the performance of the spoken art forms. However, before the chapter begins properly, some things need pointing out in the light of the findings in the previous chapter. It was found out in chapter 3 that İzon oral poetry basically exists in songs. However, it was further noted that İzon oral poetry has come to include the praise chants of Chief Munamuna. It then follows that İzon oral poetry is a mixture of songs and chants. However, as pointed out in the introduction of the previous chapter, discussing the songs and the chants of one person together under the same sections or headings will prevent the reader from having a proper or fuller understanding of the nature of chanting in İzonland and may also impinge on the structure of the chapter.

Thus, for the reader to have a proper understanding of what chanting really is amongst the İzon, and to achieve continuity and a better flow, chants and songs will be examined under separate sections even though the sections may have the same titles. Therefore, this chapter, like the previous one, is divided into two broad sections. The first section investigates composition, performance and function of the praise chants of Chief Munamuna; while the last section looks at the same performance and function in the songs. Furthermore, each section comprises two parts. One part in the section on Chief Munamuna discusses composition and performance; whereas the second part looks at the role played by the Chief as a verbal artist. The first part on the songs details what goes on during the performances of some of the sub-forms of songs; on the other hand, the second part explores the functions of the songs. The study here will start with an examination of composition and performance in the praise chants of Chief Munamuna using the ideas of Millman Parry and Albert Lord. In chapter 2, the study reviewed two studies which employ the ideas of Parry and Lord to the situation on the African continent. The two studies were written by Opland and Olajubu on Xhosa and Yoruba oral poetry respectively. As such, in the discussion that follows, these two scholarly voices will be integrated, where appropriate, to see how the situation they describe in their poetry compare with the phenomenon in İzonland.

Composition and Performance in the Praise Chants of Chief Munamuna

Since this section is devoted to examining the poems of Chief Munamuna based on the statements of Parry and Lord about composition and performance in oral literature, then this researcher shall begin by running through what they said. Doing so will hold the reader in good stead to better appreciate what is to come later in the section.

In the year 1960, Albert Lord shook the disciplines of folklore and oral literature with the publication of *The Singer of Tales*. Lord writes the following in that most influential book that changed the study of oral poetry composition:

For the oral poet the moment of composition is the performance. In the case of the literary poem there is a gap in the time between composition and reading or performance; in the case of the oral poem this gap does not exist, because composition and performance are two aspects of the same moment...he is [not] one who merely reproduces what someone else or even he himself has composed....Singer, performer, composer, and poet are one under different aspects *but at the same time*. Singing, performing and composing are facets of the same act. (14, italics in the original)

It should be noted that *The Singer of Tales* is the product of the findings of Lord and his teacher, Milman Parry, in their studies of the Homeric poems and Yugoslav ballads. Lord's argument is that the oral artist composes his poem as of the time he is performing it. To Lord, the process is made easy for the oral poet by what is called formula (see the section under stylistic devices in the chants of Chief Munamuna in the next chapter for a discussion of formula). Therefore, Lord concludes that the oral poet is not a reciter or memoriser.

The far-reaching influence of that book on students of oral traditions is summed up by another influential scholar of verbal arts, Ruth Finnegan: "No-one who has read *The Singer of Tales* – surely one of the classics in the study of oral literature – can fail to be profoundly influenced by its findings and insights" (*Oral Poetry* 69). Finnegan further asserts:

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of this approach [the oral theory developed by Parry and Lord]. It has had a deep influence on Homeric studies; though not all scholars accept the theory *in toto*, few can ignore it, and many works have appeared which, in various ways, apply the approach to analysis of the Homeric epic ... But the influence of this approach reaches far beyond Homeric studies...It is not surprising that his approach has been widely extended, and that many scholars have tried to apply a similar oral-formulaic analysis to texts of all kinds, from Old Testament poetry, Beowulf, or medieval European epic to recent compositions like modern Greek ballads, Gaelic poetry or the formulaic intoned sermons of the Southern States of America. (66, italics in the original)

As rightly pointed out by Opland “perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of Lord’s argument is his contention that the Yugoslavian epic singers do not memorise their tales but create them in the act of performance” (*Xhosa Oral* 153). The application of Parry and Lord’s idea of composition in performance and others to oral poetry studies is not limited to just Europe and America. As pointed out in chapter 2 and even in the introduction of this chapter, Lord’s findings have been applied to oral poetry studies even on the African continent (see Opland 1983, 1975; Olajubu 1981).

Opland, for one, notes that true to the argument of Lord, the Xhosa *imbongi* “has the ability to compose his poetry while he is performing, on the spur of the moment” (“The Xhosa Tribal Poet” 186). Opland’s remarks bear on Mafeje’s observation that an *imbongi*’s “distinctive feature is that he can recite poems without having prepared beforehand” (“A Chief” 91). Opland further adds that if one asks Xhosa *imbongi* to:

produce a poem on a subject about which they do not habitually bonga, they have the ability to do so and their poetry will then be almost entirely original in diction. This ability to improvise freely in poetry is essential to the modern *imbongi* if he is to operate to maximum effect in social situations, if he is to express the opinion of the people or comment on an event in the course of that event.... (*Xhosa Oral* 55)

However, Opland also tells the reader that the *imbongi* who composes his praises during a performance is not the only verbal artist in Xhosa. There are those who memorise chants and recite them during performances (“The Xhosa Tribal Poet” 186). In addition, Opland mentions the existence of literate verbal artists who write down their chants (See also Kaschula, *The Bones* 47). Moreover, Opland contends that every Xhosa man has the ability to “burst into spontaneous poetry” (“The Xhosa Tribal Poet” 187). It is for all this that Opland calls the Xhosa poetic tradition “complex” (*Xhosa Oral* 32).

In the same way, Olajubu, drawing insights from Lord, emphatically argues:

Yoruba oral poetry...is composed in performance. That is, the artist performs his poetry/song as he composes it in the presence of his audience. The two cannot be separated they go on simultaneously. The whole process is extempore and impromptu. There is no room for rehearsals, or prepared/composed poems.... (77)

As such, Olajubu rejects the view which Babalola’s supports that composition and performance happen separately in Yoruba poetry. For example, Babalola has averred:

It is important to say that the ijala composer does not start making a new ijala piece after a process of logical reasoning and conclusion. It is spontaneously, while he is alone at work on his farm, or while he is on the long walk from his home town or village along forest paths to his distant farm, that the ijala-chanter bursts into utterances which are the beginning of new ijala compositions. This happens often when an unexpected and surprising event has taken place in the ijala-chanter's society, generating in the artist troubling emotions which seek a vent of one type or another. Intuitively, the ijala artist rejects one word or phrase and often substitutes another as he composes his new chant. The varied and often violent emotions which, at the overflowing stage, inspire the chant, are subjected to discipline and made to conform to an ideal of shapeliness and harmony of words. (*The Content and Form* 46)

Olajubu concludes his paper that "Yoruba oral poetry is not recited, it is composed and performed simultaneously. Therefore, the Yoruba oral poet is not a mere carrier of oral tradition, he is a verbal creator – a poet/composer" (84).

Chief Munamuna too is like the *imbongi* and the Yoruba oral artist. Put differently, Chief Munamuna composes his chants during performance. To Chief Munamuna, there is no separation between composition and performance; they occur simultaneously. This researcher has stated elsewhere how well-read Chief Munamuna is. He knows a lot of subjects. In one of my sessions with him, he gave me the example of the teaching profession. He told me he did not need to make research if he wants to chant for someone who is a teacher. He said he could chant right before the teacher because he knows about the teaching profession. It then follows that if Chief Munamuna chants about a subject he regularly chants on, the reader will surely see almost all the lines in the previous ones excepting the names of the persons chanted for. However, if you were to ask him to chant on a different subject, he has the ability to do it for you. It was not long ago this researcher quoted Opland on this phenomenon about the Xhosa *imbongi*.

In my discussions with Chief Munamuna, he told me he could chant on any topic on the spur of the moment, even one he has not chanted about. He has always maintained this. Chief Munamuna has always insisted that he does not write down his chants and perform them at a later time even though he is a literate poet. Chief Munamuna told me he regularly chants during church sessions. This is to be expected since he is member of a white-garment church (see chapters 2 and the second section of 3 where the study noted that the modern *imbongi*, according to Opland, chants praises during church sessions). The reader who is familiar with white-garment churches know how they display religious fervour during church services. Possession and spontaneity are words that are associated with them.

This researcher has also seen that Chief Munamuna has the ability to compose during a performance. The first day we met, it was a chant of some minutes that Chief Munamuna welcomed me with. Unfortunately, this researcher was so taken in by it that he forgot to record it. Maybe because he had only gone there to see the man and book appointments with him. It just did not occur to this researcher that he would need it someday. It is a chant that this researcher has never come across in any of his chants. In any case, he is pretty sure it had words and lines that constantly recur in his chants. Moreover, Chief Munamuna chanted a poem about me when I wanted to come back to Rhodes University, Makhanda (Grahamstown), South Africa. Chief Munamuna did not write the poem down and commit it to memory before performing it in my presence. When he wanted to start, he only asked me of the names of my father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

Furthermore, the second time this researcher met Chief Munamuna, he chanted three poems for him: *Bideḡ Olotu*, *Ogboin Ebenanaowei* and *Nanaowei Kule bo* (see Appendix II for both the Iḡon and English translations of the second of these poems). He told me he chanted only half of *Nanaowei Kule bo* because the poem is fairly long and that he had no time. After some days, this researcher saw two of the three poems he chanted for him on paper in his house. He committed the poems to paper not after chanting them for me, but long before the day he chanted the poems before me (it was mentioned in chapter 3 why Chief Munamuna decided to commit his poems to paper). This researcher concluded immediately that he was a reciter and not a memoriser. However, Chief Munamuna told me the opposite. He chants the two poems on a regular basis. As such, they have become stuck in his memory. Therefore, he can produce them the same way any time. Even at that, there is always variability. There are variabilities in the ones he chanted for me and the two on paper. However, how does Chief Munamuna perform his chants where variability is a key component? As the reader can see, the above discussion on composition has been tending towards that question. The study now embarks on answering that question.

In his collection of Zulu praise poems, Trevor Cope gives a classic description of the method of delivery of a chant when he tells us how the *imbongi* performs *izibongo*:

The praiser recites the praises at the top of his voice and as fast as possible. These conventions of praise-poem recitation, which is high in pitch, loud in volume, fast in speech, create an emotional excitement in the audience as well as the in the praiser

himself, whose voice often rises in pitch, volume, and speed as he progresses, and whose movements become more and more exaggerated, for it is also a convention of praise-poem recitation that the praiser never stands still. (28)

Cope's description of chanting is similar to what Nketia observes amongst the Akan of Ghana (23-25). Opland too has also made the same comments about the Xhosa *imbongi* in performance (*Xhosa Oral* 67). Furthermore, Olajubu, as pointed out in chapter 2, notes that during a performance the Yoruba verbal artist "supplements his verbal efforts with dramatic actions, gestures, charming voice, facial expressions, dramatic use of pauses and rhythms and receptivity to the reactions of the audience" (82). This is exactly the way Chief Munamuna chants. He does not stay in one place. He moves from one place to the other. He uses his right hand in a most dramatic manner. How does this researcher mean? Each time he utters a word, phrase or sentence at a stress, he raises the hand. The hand he raises does not stay quiet in that position. It keeps shaking heavily in demonstration. At the end of the word, phrase or sentence, he drops the hand back to its normal position. In other words, at the beginning of every statement, the hand is raised; at the end of every statement, the hand drops. That is, at every breath pause, the hand is dropped. In this way, Chief Munamuna, like the Zulu *imbongi* "suits the actions to the words, the words to the actions" (Cope 29). Chief Munamuna's voice never falls when he is chanting; it is always high and very fast. It is so high that even someone who is far from the place of the performance knows that Chief Munamuna is at it again. When he was chanting for me in a gated private school, people heard his voice and came in.

Cope further observes that "many more breaths are taken in praise-poem recitation than in normal speech, for the method of delivery demands that the lungs be always fully inflated" (30). Chanting uses fast speech in a loud manner that brings pressure on the lungs to contract. In order to keep them inflated, Chief Munamuna takes in regular breaths. A praise singer or chanter will also have to recollect his thoughts and know exactly what to say next. This is so because it is not every time when the words, the phrases or sentences will come naturally to him. Therefore, he takes breaks to recollect his thoughts and think of what to say next. A break does not last more than 5 seconds. Maybe some scholars will say this is not a break but a pause.

The study should also not fail to mention something about the costume of Chief Munamuna. Chief Munamuna does not put on any kind of dress at formal chanting sessions. He uses one piece of wrapper to tie round his waist. Only his feet from the waist down is not covered by the wrapper. Then he puts on a somewhat long traditional dress known as *etibo*, which comes down

close to his knees. Another piece of wrapper is hung down from his left hand. Moreover, Chief Munamuna clasps a walking-stick in his right hand to match the traditional attire. This was the typical dressing of İzön men at important occasions. People know longer dress that way. Men in the rural areas still tie pieces of wrapper around their waists especially when they wake up from bed in the morning. However, nowadays, it is very rare to see at an occasion or in public someone who ties wrapper and hangs another wrapper on his shoulder or his hand. Therefore, Chief Munamuna's dress is distinctive. It stands out when he is invited beforehand to chant in public. This was how he dressed and chanted for this researcher, too, when he told him he would use a video-recorder.

This distinctive dress of Chief Munamuna will surely make one think of the Xhosa or the Zulu *imbongi* who also puts on a distinctive dress. The reader is told that the *imbongi* does not wear an ordinary dress. He is marked out by the kind of attire he puts on during a performance. For example, Cope notes this about the Zulu *imbongi*: "The fact that the praiser is a specialist is reflected in his dress, which in the old days used to be a fantastic costume of furs and feathers and animal-tails, no less fantastic than that of the witchdoctor, who is also a specialist" (28). In addition, Cope makes the point that the *imbongi* puts on that dress only when he is performing the role of an *imbongi*. At other times, he wears "the ordinary dress and carry out the ordinary duties of daily life" (28). Similarly, Opland has said that the Xhosa *imbongi* is marked by "the characteristic garb he wears on festive occasions; he is expected to appear and perform at such ceremonies in the presence of the chief" (*Xhosa Oral* 54). Opland adds that the *imbongi* "wears animal skins and brandishes spears or fighting sticks..." (*Xhosa Oral* 72).

Another chief feature of the performances of Chief Munamuna is the use of a talking drum (*opu eze*). In the previous chapter, it was pointed out that the talking drum was the chief means of communication in traditional İzön society. Amongst others, it was used to communicate with warriors during a war, as well as beating the praise titles of important personalities during ceremonies. Chief Munamuna has a talking drum but he does not beat it himself. Rather, at every occasion, he goes with someone who beats the talking drum for him. The young man beats the drum at regular intervals. During a performance, it is the young man who first goes into action by beating the praise titles of the oral poet. The day Chief Munamuna chanted for this researcher in a very formal way, he heard him telling the young man, just before he started chanting, "*kule bo pẹre, kule bo pẹre*" (give the praise titles, give the praise titles).

This researcher has not read that an *imbongi* uses a drum during a performance. Maybe it should be quickly added that this study is not carrying out a comparative study of the *imbongi* of the Bantu-speaking peoples and a west African griot in Chief Munamuna. The reader who wants to read something like that should grab Kaschula's brilliant essay published in 1999. However, it must be pointed out that the use of a drum is not peculiar to just Chief Munamuna as an oral poet. For example, as pointed out in the chapter on literature review, the pacesetter of Yoruba oral literature scholarship, Adeboye Babalola, has noted that "the best ijala performers make use of drum music whenever they are chanting on an important occasion. It is the special type of drum music called *ilu ode* (hunters' drum music) that is employed, and this is produced on the appropriate set of drums by drummers" ("Ijala Poetry" 15; see also the review on Olajubu's study in chapter 2). In the case of an ijala performance, there is a drum ensemble. In contrast, only one drum is beaten during a performance by Chief Munamuna.

Furthermore, before Chief Munamuna starts to perform, he addresses his audience in a normal speaking voice. The best elegant addresses are those delivered at funerals. For example, all his funeral chants begin with this address; the only change is in the name of the deceased (see Appendix II for the complete poem):

Ama mọ igoni mọ, a nua

Imẹnẹ pịna pịna ama

Adogidigbo

Okinigboghosi gbosi

Ikpanji tẹbẹ asain, bidei kẹ fie...

Bongbai ọbẹbẹ aru sai bo igbeimi

Tubọ kẹ ọbẹbẹ a o...

Ani didubamoweremi yein

Sele Aguozu, Kalabeki taıtubọ

10. *Duweji kiri ka duba*

Amẹnẹ ọbẹbẹ aru

Fani gban bọ beri gbangha

Nama diẹgha, indi diẹgha

Kẹmẹsẹ beri tiẹmọ i pei

A nua

The community and guests, you are welcome

I'm the bright community

The master storyteller

*Okinigbogbosi gbosi*⁴

*Ikpangi tebe asain*⁵; consulted before saying

I came with a boat of oral poems today

Which person's oral poem?

It is for a respected mother

Sele Aguozi, granddaughter of Kalabeki

10. It's in death a person becomes great

It's her boat of oral poems

The one who puts a fence around himself does not fence his ears

No separating of animals, no separating of fish

Lend me your ears, everybody

You are welcome

The address basically performs two functions: introduction of the poet and the subject. In the address above, "Adogidigbo" (the master storyteller), one of the many praise titles of Chief Munamuna, identifies the artist. The subject – the deceased – is Sele Aguozi. The address is also used to solicit the attention of the mourners to what he (the poet) has come to say about the subject. The address contains three sayings which will be the subject of my concern in the next chapter.

This formal address is like the beginning of a Yoruba *esa Egungun* performance. In chapter 2, it was pointed out that an *esa Egungun* performance, according to Olajubu, has three parts. In the beginning, the leader of the ensemble "pays his homage and acknowledgements to

gods...[and] goes on to introduce himself, describing himself as a great dancer and poet/singer of no mean order” (82; see also the review of Babalola’s study in chapter 2).

Much has been said about the performative practices of Chief Munamuna. There is also the technological side in his performances. Technology has indeed brought unimagined benefits to the disciplines of oral literature, cultural anthropology and folklore. Chief Munamuna has gladly made use of one of these benefits during performances. When Chief Munamuna wants to chant, he sets his cell phone on a voice-recording mode and holds it in his right hand. As he is chanting, the phone is recording it. Chief Munamuna first told me of this practice when we had a discussion on documentation in oral literature. In chapter 3, it was mentioned in passing that it was Chief Munamuna’s friend at the Bayelsa State-owned radio station, Glory FM, who gave him the idea of documenting his chants for posterity. In the beginning of this section too, it was stated that Chief Munamuna composes his poems during a performance. It follows that each time he chanted in public, the poem went away, as it were. That means, at best, he could only recall some lines after every chant. Chief Munamuna told me he lost many chants in that way. As such, in order to have the whole chant after a session, he decided to make use of a cell phone. This practice has given him the opportunity to commit his chants to paper.

However, technology, despite its obvious benefits, has been a bad servant to Chief Munamuna on two occasions. Immediately after Chief Munamuna chanted the poem about me, he started going through the different voice recordings on his phone. He told me he was checking the recording of the one he had just chanted for me. Unfortunately, Chief Munamuna did not find the chant on the phone. He was busy lamenting about it that day. This researcher had to send him his own through WhatsApp when he got to South Africa. The second time was when he lost the memory card where he had recorded all his chants.

In conclusion, Chief Munamuna, like the Xhosa *imbongi* and the Yoruba verbal artist, composes his chants during performance. He is an improviser of chants and not a reciter. Some of his chants would seem recitations because the same lines of words recur often. However, what should be noted is the statement Opland makes that “considerable latitude for creativity exists even in the so-called memorized chants of the Xhosa and Zulu *imbongi*” (*Xhosa Oral* 49). Put differently, creativity and variability exist even in the memorised praises of Chief Munamuna. Furthermore, Chief Munamuna performs like other praise chanters in Africa such as the Zulu and Xhosa *imbongi* and the Yoruba artist. The only performative practice that is

peculiar to him is his use of a cell phone to audio-record his chants at the time of chanting them. In the next section, the study will examine the function(s) of Chief Munamuna in his role as *Ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀ Kẹ̀nì Ẹ̀zọ̀n Ibe* (The Chief Poet of the Ẹ̀zọ̀n Nation), as he calls himself.

Ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀ Kẹ̀nì Ẹ̀zọ̀n Ibe: the Verbal Artist and his Society

In chapter 2, considerable attention was given to Mafeje's classic article, "The Role of the Bard in a Contemporary African Community," wherein he argues thus:

The method of the South African bard, in carrying out his duties, is not unlike that of the European bards. Like them, he celebrates the victories of the nation, he sings songs of praise, chants the laws and customs of the nation, he recites the genealogies of the royal families; and, in addition, he criticizes the chiefs for perverting the laws and the customs of the nation and laments their abuse of power and neglect of their responsibilities and obligations to the people. ("The Role" 195)

Moreover, it was pointed out that Mafeje wrote that article to correct the statements of Western collectors of the folklore of the Bantu-speaking ethnic groups in South Africa who had always seen the primary function of the bard as a chanter of the praises of chiefs. Furthermore, the chapter noted that by drawing parallels in the role(s) of the bard in traditional South African society and that of the bardic institution that originated in Europe during the medieval period, Mafeje argues that the *imbongi* was not only an entertainer, but he was also a historian, educator and the voice of his people on important affairs in his society.

Furthermore, it was pointed out in chapter two that Ajuwon has similarly explored the functional aspect of the verbal artist in Africa. Amongst many things, the study noted how Ajuwon contends that the *ijala* poets of Yoruba are "the mouthpiece of the community, the chanters of *ijala* continue to take it upon themselves to chant the poetry so as to give their people new perspectives on human nature as well as remind them of that which is essential in life" ("The Ijala" 196). It was also mentioned that, to the *ijala* verbal artists, for a society to function properly, man, the most important figure in society, needs pursuing the ideals of industriousness, charity, heroic deeds and humility. Unfortunately, man pursues greed, jealousy and avariciousness. "But to the poets, the essence of life lies in the attainment of personal merit, and in the act of living and serving, for which a place of honour is created for one in the community" (Ajuwon, "The Ijala" 196).

Ajuwon and Mafeje, as pointed out in chapter 2, are not the only scholars of African oral traditions who have examined the role(s) of the oral poet on the continent. Other scholars of African oral literature have also explored, in the entirety of their papers, how verbal artists of their ethnic groups have used their chants and songs to play important roles (Gelaye; Jama; Nwoga; Yahaya).

Nwoga, for one, studies how songs used satire in traditional Igbo society to mock and shame those who went against the required behaviour and prevent the further occurrence of such deviant conduct in order to achieve the perfect functioning of society. Similarly, Yahaya in his study details how the Hausa oral poet moulds public opinion in addition to communicating government programmes to the public. Gelaye, as pointed out in that chapter, explores how peasants in East Gojjam use songs and poetry to talk about the harsh realities they face in Ethiopia. Jama's study, as observed in the that same chapter, is preoccupied with the nationalistic bent of the poems Somali women composed during the time Somalia fought for independence.

One of the functions Chief Munamuna performs in his role as an oral poet is education. Like other African verbal artists, he does not only praise people. He has used his chants to teach his ethnic group what they should know and value. Today, the majority of the Ịzọn do not have regard for their language and cultural practices. The Ịzọn man's dislike for his language has become something else. It is disheartening to see that youths in the rural areas have abandoned their language for Pidgin. In Ịzọn urban areas, you will hardly see two Ịzọn persons communicating in the Ịzọn language. It is also English in the office. Most parents in the urban areas do not speak Ịzọn to their children. The level of one's education, to the Ịzọn man, is seen in the way he speaks English. It does not matter whether one graduated with a first class. The person who graduated with a pass degree but knows how to speak English is regarded much more than the one who graduated with a first-class degree but cannot speak English very well. Even meetings of students' associations in rural areas are conducted in English. The situation (the Ịzọn not speaking their language), to Chief Munamuna, is not good for the Ịzọn man in a country that has numerous ethnic groups who promote their languages. According to Lergo, Osa Otite puts the number of ethnic groups in the country at 371 (88). The study now examines a chant Chief Munamuna performed on the importance of speaking the Ịzọn language (see also Appendix II for the poem):

Ini Amapon (Your Language)

Ini amapon

Ini amapon yila

Sei bai a kemẹ zuo

Oya a kemẹ teimo

Amapon kemẹ balamo

Ogbo posi posi

Amaponnaghamo dauogbonimighamo keni aru you

Youtimi amenẹ ama laa

Amapou se ofio-ofio

10. *Igbe pou nimigha me, a yerimo*

Dauogbonimigha ogbo dọmẹnẹ yo, kpe, kpe, kpe

Doutimi amenẹ dau ogbo laa

“Bei ogbo me ebima?”

Yonko

“Bei ogbo me i disema?”

Yonko yonko yonko

Nimigha yi seikaamo

Dauogbonimigha akpa a bira tua sele pamọ amenẹ bobo dau ogbo

ke fe; igalaba

Amapon nagma kemẹ amenẹ dau ogbo nimigha

20. *Amenẹ dau ogbo nimigha kemẹ ama miẹ yi nimigha*

Ama mię yi nimigha kẹmẹ kala awọu ogbowei

Kamu, kamu, kamu, bei kpọ aforu

Beke na owei do..., i bo iviyanmọ

Ini bọbọ ama kẹmẹ bo ofisi i la ya

Kọnọ kpọ beke, ama kpọ beke

Kpasị-kpasị-kpasị o gbẹin alẹmọ

Ani kamu-kamu yọ mẹ

I peipelemọ

Beke na ebi yi deigha

30. *Ini amapọn didubamọ*

Abugọ bau yein tọru a seigha

Bei Nigeria opu ibe ma wo binaotu bo di

Beni biri kẹmẹ andẹ biragha

Ini bọbọ yi mẹ ini bọbọ yi

Dabio nana bọ bira ka kaamọ

Zẹnẹ ibeotu bo amẹnẹ amapọn bo kọri gerein-gerein kurọmọ

Ani duoni nimi opufuntolumọwarị ya amẹnẹ amapọn bo mọ, amẹnẹ

yerin buọ bo mọ tolumọtimi bọlọu kule fẹ

Maamu karamọ kule kpọ fẹmẹnẹ

Embalị bira a gotimi PhD, ani kule bo sẹ a dubadein

40. *Taarụ karamọ kule kpọ fẹmẹnẹ*

Izọn ba tei kẹ pamọ ya o...!

Dienini kaamọ; tu teiaama

Wo waribolou bo kpọ kẹmẹ ba Ịzọn fiegha

Wo awọu bo kpọ ba Ịzọn nagha

Wo kẹmẹ sẹ zẹnẹ pọn bo kẹ kọn bọbọ amapọn mịẹdẹi

Seidein yi mẹ, vẹdẹ-vẹdẹ-vẹdẹ

Zua otu amẹnẹ amapọn gbẹdi kẹ gbẹdi

Adika gọmọgọmọ seiolo nimiwẹri imbasi

Amẹnẹ amapọn gbẹdi kẹmẹ amẹnẹ bọbọ angọ kẹ gbẹdimọ

50. *Na bọ gbaa akẹ nagha bọ pẹrẹ*

Amẹnẹ amapọn gbẹdi kẹmẹ amẹnẹ patu nimigha

Ba bọ biẹnbedẹ

Amẹnẹ patu nimigha bọ kẹmẹ a pagha

Your language

Your language is very important

It saves you the day things are bad

It saves one from suffering

Language makes one happy

Everything has its mate

Lack-of-knowledge-of-one's language and no-knowledge-of-father's

land paddled one canoe

They paddled until they go to their community

There were vortices in all the waterfronts

10. Do you see that they didn't know where to anchor the canoe!

No-knowledge-of-father's land was looking for land – *kpe-kpe-kpe-kpe*⁶

He's looking until he got to his father's land

"Is this land good?"

Yes - *yɔnkɔ*

"Do you like this land?"

Yes, yes, yes – *yɔnkɔ-yɔnkɔ-yɔnkɔ*

Ignorance is very bad

Lack-of-knowledge-of-father's land put hand in his pocket

and brought out money and bought his own father's land; *igalaba!*

The one who doesn't understand his language is one who

doesn't know his father's land

20. The one who doesn't know his father's land does not know
the practices of his people

The one who doesn't know the practices of his people is children's mate

What air! Foul, foul, foul – *kamɔ-kamɔ-kamɔ*

Greetings, the one who understands English! The ladder is on you now

When your own townsman came to the office

English on the left, English on the right

Kpasɪ-kpasɪ-kpasɪ, thrown at him

In that place of foul air!

Hear me well

English is not used to replace something good

30. Respect your language

The monkey's daughter is not ugly before it

Let's look after our people in this big Nigeria

The one who takes his bath never forgets his body

Your own is your own

The cola nut gets mature in the hands of its owner

People of other ethnic groups hold their languages strongly – *gerein-gerein*

For that, they studied their languages and cultures at universities

and got the first praise title

They also bear the second praise title

They struggled to read up to PhD; that's the biggest of all praise titles

40. They also bear the third praise title

Oh, what happened to Ịzọn!

It's so sorrowful; but the reason is!

We no longer speak Ịzọn even in our families

Our children no longer understand Ịzọn

We've all made other languages our own

The worst thing – *vẹdẹ-vẹdẹ-vẹdẹ*

Some people insult their language

It's intentional

The one who insults his language insults himself

50. The one who has heard should tell the one who didn't hear

He who insults his language does not know his roots

Like the buttocks of someone who farts

He that doesn't know his roots is not a Man

From the very beginning, the oral artist tells his listeners or audience how important one's first language or mother tongue is: it makes you happy and is a friend in times of trouble. Were you not happy to hear in a faraway country someone speaking your mother tongue on the phone with someone? Maybe at that particular time, you had a problem! You immediately felt a sense of belonging. *Ogbo posi posi* (literally, everything or everybody has a mate) is a popular saying amongst the Iẓon. In the chant, the one who does not understand his mother tongue is a mate to someone who does not know his father's piece(s) of land. To the oral poet, it is preposterous for a son not to know where his father's land is located. People buying their fathers' pieces of land is not a strange thing. Look how the poet brings out his attitude to something like that in the conversation between the owner of the land who has become the buyer and the seller, the poacher! The poet shouts, "*igalaba*", meaning the world has turned upside down.

The poet tells the reader that a man who does not know his father's land is one who does not know the practices and norms of his people. The Iẓon consider such ones as mates of children because it is only children who are not supposed to know the conventions of their ethnic group by virtue of their age. Thereafter, the poet turns to the Iẓon man who has become more English than the English. He speaks English left and right to the townsman who has, maybe, come to ask a favour of him in the office. He is speaking English to someone who perhaps does not understand it in an office that has an unpleasant odour. By using appropriate proverbs (see the next chapter on the use of proverbs in Iẓon oral poetry), he tells him that nothing is more important than the one you can call your own and that the Iẓon should look one another in a country that has numerous nationalities.

Thereafter, the verbal artist directs his attention to what is obtained amongst other ethnic groups in Nigeria. These ethnic groups respect their languages and cultural practices. As such, some have even read up to the level of a doctorate in their languages. However, the situation in Iẓon is different. How "sorrowful!" Iẓon is not spoken in families; children do not understand it because the Iẓon have made other languages their own. The most serious thing, according to Chief Munamuna, is that the Iẓon even insult their language. Is it not an insult when you tell your child not to speak Iẓon at home or when two persons who are mutually intelligible in Iẓon converse with each other in a different language? He seems to ask. Chief Munamuna tells them without mincing words that they are only insulting themselves. He concludes that a man who does not understand his mother tongue has no knowledge of where he came from. Such a person is never a man.

Chief Munamuna chanted this poem on radio during *Kolokuma Ifie*. In the previous chapter, the study gave some attention to the place of *Kolokuma Ifie* in the chants of Chief Munamuna. That means the message he was passing across got to many persons, especially those in the rural areas. However, how many youths, especially those in the urban areas, heard him? They are much more interested in posting their pictures on Facebook in the night than tune in to a radio station where some passionate men are lamenting the erosion of traditional values. Agreed that he said those who heard him should tell others; but there will be no impact. People know what the verbal artist said is right, but it will not be implemented at home.

It is quite ironic that Chief Munamuna is the one advocating the speaking of Iẓon. Here is a verbal artist that never had time for the Iẓon language and the cultural practices of his people when he was growing up. In the preceding chapter, consideration was given to this phase in the life of Chief Munamuna. Here is someone who dropped “Munamuna” from his name and changed to “Elson Adolphus” when he was in school! In addition, Chief Munamuna and this researcher interact in English. Although, there are times they code-switch to Iẓon. However, true to his message, this researcher has always heard Chief Munamuna communicate with his wife and children in Iẓon. For all this, one can say that Chief Munamuna exhibits a “conflicted or binary neo-colonial personality,” to borrow the words of Kaschula.

The function or theme of education expressed in the chants of Chief Munamuna in his role as oral poet comes in another form. This educational role he plays is related to HIV/AIDS. In recent times, oral literature has either been used or called on to address the issue of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the African continent. For instance, Dauphin-Tinturier has researched on how songs of an old girls’ initiation ritual have been reshaped to teach girls about AIDS in Zambia. Similarly, Fielding-Miller has argued that in order to combat the growing rate of AIDS in Swaziland, campaigns should follow the narrative structure of the Swazi *tinganekwane* (folktales). According to her, Swazis interviewed expressed frustration with the current HIV narrative of one becoming a victim “as the consequence of a failure to adopt certain protective behaviours. An individual fails or refuses to use condoms, engages in multiple concurrent partnerships, or otherwise engages in a risky act.” Swazi folktales have two structures. The one she advocates is the one where characters “fulfill a value and rescue themselves or a fellow character from disaster.” The end product of this narrative structure is rescue unlike the current HIV narrative in which the end product is disaster. She notes that many of the interviewees “expressed a desire of messaging that celebrated rescue.” In like manner, Panford et al have

also called for the use of folk media such as proverbs, folktales, songs and drama to address the issue of HIV/AIDS.

Chief Munamuna, in one of his chants, taught the Iẓon to be wary of the killer disease, AIDS:

HIV/AIDS Q̣uḅeḅe (HIV/AIDS Poem)

Ingiom̄ ba

Gbolo b̄o kiri war̄i

Zūo nagma oge

P̄ina yer̄i ya p̄ina

Dirim̄ yer̄i ya dirim̄

Abūgo ken̄i t̄eṇ gbeingha

Akporobu, k̄or̄i yi k̄or̄i yi b̄eb̄e

Okotoro kiri digi oko...

Arikpokpo emi...

10. *K̄em̄e d̄is̄i yi k̄e k̄em̄e bam̄o*

B̄inaarau, t̄or̄u nimigha owei k̄e bo i pam̄o-a

B̄inaowei, t̄or̄u nimigha ere k̄e i d̄is̄em̄o a

Ani akp̄o bolou k̄e emi yi ama

K̄el̄ek̄el̄e k̄e abūgo asaiṇ

Osuo gbologha, ani condom

Ini bira t̄eṭ̄kum̄o

Beri a na f̄e okuleowei bagha

HIV/AIDS

Ingiom̄ ba oge

20. *K̄on̄o bira kp̄o ingbeke*

Ama bira kpọ ingbeke

Wo ị dọkọrị ya kpasi, dọwejamabou....

Slow-suffering killer

Anyone you touch goes to the underground home

A celebration that has no cure

You see the fair-complexioned one; you like her

You see the dark one; you like her

A monkey does not climb only one tree

Anyone that's held goes to the mouth – *akporobu*⁷

Okotoro, the ground digger!

There's constipation

10. It's what a man likes that kills him

Sister, is it a man-stranger who came along your way?

Brother, is it a woman-stranger you desire?

Such things are part of the world

Carefulness is the god of the monkey

Rain resistant, that's condom

It should never leave your hand

Death that comes by hearing doesn't kill the crippled

HIV/AIDS

Slow-suffering-killer celebration

20. Stick on the left hand

Stick on the right hand

When it finds you, *kpasi*⁸, the land of the dead

This researcher's translation of the name he calls AIDS, "slow-suffering killer", does not really capture the sense of the Iẓon phrase, *ingiṣomṣ ba*. It is a scenario where the victim dies a slow, suffering death. That is, the victim does not die immediately; he or she has no energy to do anything. He or she becomes very thin. After some time, he or she only stays on the bed. Something will have to be provided for the victim in the room to be stooling into. S/he stays in that condition until the day s/he dies. No wonder, the verbal artist uses the oxymoron, *ingiṣomṣ ba oge* (slow-suffering-killer celebration). Yes, it is a killer pleasure. You can see how he uses *ingiṣomṣ ba* to instill fear in people's minds by conjuring up an image of a living dead. A victim of AIDS, to him, is a living dead. In the discussion of songs of circumcision in chapter 3, this researcher made the point that Iẓon men like women a lot. The Iẓon man goes after both dark- and fair-complexioned ones. For this, to the poet, he is like a monkey which never jumps on only one tree. Furthermore, he is the little bird, *okotoro*, that uses its beak to taste everything it sees. He really needs to be careful because of the popular saying that it is what a man likes that kills him. The poet knows that developing feelings for someone of the opposite sex is one of the things in life. However, a man or woman needs to demonstrate wisdom just like the monkey. Before a monkey jumps from one branch of a tree to another, it, first of all, weighs whether the branch is strong enough for its weight. Any miscalculation on its part only results in trouble for it. Therefore, a man or a woman should learn wisdom from the monkey and keeps a condom in the bag or pocket always. There is no cure. Once s/he contracts it, going down to the grave is the next thing.

Moreover, an important theme in the chants of Chief Munamuna is ethnic consciousness. Chief Munamuna has chanted about the Ijọ struggle that was discussed in detail in chapter 1. To reiterate, the Ijọ is one of the ethnic groups in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria that produce crude oil. Unfortunately, the region is one of the most under-developed in the world. How can a region which contributes at least 80 percent of the income of the Nigerian government be in this sordid state (Ejobowah 33)? The peoples who contribute that percentage to the Nigerian government are minority ethnic groups. They are not the Hausa, the Yoruba or the Igbo which are the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. It is a situation of someone coming to your land and taking what belongs to you to develop his place with no regard on how you will be affected by that action: be it pollution and the attendant effects like diseases, poor harvest, contaminated

water and air, amongst others. This ugly situation has led to youth restiveness in the region, as was pointed out. It is a fight between these boys and the federal government forces.

Modern poets and playwrights of the Niger Delta have written about the situation. The cultural productions they have produced have begot what has come to be known as “Literature of the Niger Delta,” a sub-genre of ecocritical literature. A verbal artist who is conscious of where he came from will not allow a situation like that to go on without making interventions. He must make comments about the happenings in his society. On the day the Ijaw House was opened in Bayelsa State, Chief Adolphus Munamuna chanted the poem, *Izon Ibe*, before the *Izon* dignitaries. The poem shall be used here to examine the theme of ethnic consciousness. It is a fairly long poem. As such, it will only be cross-referenced in the discussion that follows (see Appendix II for the *Izon* and English versions).

In the first stanza, especially in line 6, the oral poet says it is a great day for the *Ijo*. Deliberations concerning the *Ijo* struggle will no longer take place in hotels or houses owned by individuals. They will take place right in Ijaw House. It is a gathering of who is who in *Ijo* from all over the world, those who have been working for the betterment of the *Ijo*. After the first stanza, and before he begins fully, the verbal artist praises God, in the second stanza:

Ania mbana a Oyein kulemọ agbẹimi

Akpọtẹmẹowei nua aa

Kurɔnanaowei doo ye ị kulemọ

Ikere Ebimẹowei, I mịe ebi bo andọ fa

Bẹbẹ ya gbaa ya pagha

Tokoni I la, Ayiba, bo mọ I la

20. *Tamaran mọ Ziba mọ, seribẹbẹ agọnọ I laaa*

Ye akẹ dumọ ka tụama?

Akẹ sẹi ka tụaumbai ni kule bo kẹ I pẹrẹ ya, Nanaowei?

Angọ mẹ timigbẹgha kẹ tọn

Imgbele bo kiriti, okoi I pẹrẹmọ

Ini tẹbẹ kpọ kiri kẹ emi, tẹbetou I pẹrẹmọ

For that, it's right to thank God

The Creator of the universe, thank you

The powerful one, I salute you

The benevolent One; Your kindnesses are uncountable

They cannot be expressed by mouth

Let the glory be unto, God, unto You

20. The Creator and the Maker, let the praise be unto you in the heaven

Should I express them in song?

Should I express them in dance, is it in your praise titles I should express them, God?

The body cannot be contained

The knees are on the ground; I bow before You

My head is on the ground, I bow my head for You

Thank you, Benevolent Father

To the poet, it is God who made both the building of the House and the gathering possible. Praising God is one major characteristic of his long public chants. As also pointed out earlier, he chants praises during church services too. He also has, in his collection, two very long poems about God.

In lines 37-44, the oral poet thanks the founding fathers of the Ijọ struggle. To him, their labour has not been in vain. He lists the various organisations which some of them formed that have played major roles in the realisation of the struggle. These are Ijaw Nation Congress (INC), Ijaw Youths Congress (IYC), Ijaw Elders Forum (IEF), Ijaw Ladies Association (ILA), Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), amongst others. Some of these are militant groups. Some have also morphed into others. In lines 56-70, the oral poet talks about the blessings of the Ijọ ethnic group. To him, the nationality is truly blessed by God:

60. *Nama kogha, indi kogha*

Gboro fīyāi pa

Bẹbẹ ka fẹ sẹlẹ egberi

Kiribolou pulo bo zīēi-zīēi-zīēi-zīēi

Beni tu ẹrīgha abadī saraweremi bira ka Ịzọn ibe sẹ saraweremi

Pẹipeinengi, pẹibira pẹibira, bein bein kẹ bein

Pẹrẹ tu ẹrīgha

Pẹrẹ tu yereku-yereku

Pẹrẹ tu tamama-tamama

Pẹrẹ tu zigbẹi-zigbẹi-zigbẹi-zigbẹi

70. *Pẹrẹ ado bein kọ, sarai-sarai-sarai*

Ingo kipele, oya kipele, okupurayi kipele

Abo bei kpọ tari

60. No lack of animals, no lack of fish

What's planted is reaped bountifully

No problem with money for feeding

The oil underground is in abundance – ziei-ziei-ziei-ziei⁹

It covers the Ịzọn nation the way water covers the sea whose source is not known

The whale is always full no matter how you cut it off

The source of the wealth is unknown

The riches are in abundance – yereku-yereku¹⁰

The riches are of different kinds – tamama-tamama¹¹

The riches are plentiful – zigbeì-zigbeì-zigbeì¹²

70. The riches have overflown the basket - sarai-sarai-sarai¹³

They remove poverty, remove suffering, remove hardship

Oh what blessing!

Before these lines, the riches have been compared to the stars of the heavens which cannot be counted. The land is fertile; the oil underneath the land is in abundance. The way crude oil surrounds the Ijò is compared to the manner water covers the ocean. Nobody knows where the oil starts and ends, the way someone in the middle of an ocean does not know where the water starts and ends. There have been many years of exportation of oil from the ethnic group, yet it is still in abundance. It is like the whale that remains the same, as it were, no matter how people have chopped it.

These riches are supposed to remove hunger and suffering. That is why in line 73, the poet says the Ijò ought to have been at home eating their God-given wealth in peace. Unfortunately, it is the opposite one sees in Ijòland. The verbal artist brings out this point by using apt proverbs in lines 74 and 76-79. Then he comes down heavy on some Ijò men and women who have become opportunists. These are Ijò politicians: governors, senators, house of representative and assembly members, ministers, commissioners, local government chairmen, amongst others. They have no time for the masses. To the verbal artist, it is an abomination for a hunter's wife to beg for food:

90. *Adẹ digha kiri deintimi namabaowei ta kẹ agba pamọ fulọ bimẹnẹ egberi mẹ
Nanaoyein founbomo*

90. The story that a hunter will be farming without checking the barn
to the extent that his wife takes a plate and goes out to beg for soup!
God, may it pass us by!

The masses have become the hunter's wife; the opportunists – the Ijò politicians – are the “hunter”. In line 85, the poet says, “a goat does not give birth to a lion,” meaning that all Ijò politicians are the same. Earlier, this researcher quoted Mafeje on this point – criticism – in the

bardic tradition of the Bantu-speaking peoples. Here is what Kaschula says in his study of Xhosa oral poetry:

An important aspect of the tradition is the right to criticise the individual who is the subject of the poetry. The iimbongi's role is then to interpret what is happening around them – their role is that of a political and social commentator. They should be in a position to comment on matters which are of local concern as well as matters of national concern.... (The Bones 28)

Opland puts it this way:

The imbongi comments in his poetry on current affairs, expressing his attitude as one member of the chieftdom to the events and circumstances that affect the chieftdom, criticizing, when he sees fit, behavior that he considers excessive or beyond the norm. In order to act in this way as a spokesman, as a political commentator, he must be the composer of his poems. (Xhosa Oral 51)

In the chant, the reader can see Chief Munamuna criticising those he is praising in the manner of the Xhosa imbongi. After criticising them, he pleads with them not to rest; rather, to take the Ijo struggle to the next level because of the children and posterity:

Torū kē ani yaị diwerị beni famo

Aga emi yọ, yowēị seigha kē gbaamọ

Izon bọlou wenị otu bo sisei ye a tẹkẹmọ

A bei egberi kọrị bo agbẹ kiri a tịẹmọ

Tu a bomẹnẹ awọu bo duoni

Abaan koro ya amẹnẹ taụ ka kiyen tịamọ

Bou a tẹin pẹlẹ kpọ dọ sọumẹnẹ

Igburu kan bira kan bira kanfagha kē tọn

100. *Azuzu, tẹin bira kē tẹin ebimọ*

Wo awọu bo kē wo deinbai

It's the eye that kept looking at his child until he drowned

It's said that a paddle doesn't get bad where there's aga¹⁴

Those who are at the forefront of the Iẓon struggle, please, I beg you
May you take this struggle up to an acceptable level
Because of the children who are coming

When the plantain falls, it brings out suckers
The tree that's been cut down in the forest still grows
No matter how torn the covering cloth is, it's never torn completely
100. It's the branches of the tree that make it beautiful
Our children are our tomorrow

In addition, the oral poet advises the Ijọ to desist from haughty statements such as “who are you?” Did a man create himself? No. A man's present condition can change for the better; even a fallen tree grows again. Moreover, in lines 133-138, the poet urges Ijọ parents to start giving their children positive names unlike the negative ones they have been using to call them.

Again, using proverbs, he motivates those in the audience in lines 139-171 by saying the time for Ijọ has arrived. The time of being indifferent to the struggle has passed. They must unite and work for the common goal. The ones in diaspora too should come home because your own is your own. Do you expect someone from another ethnic group to develop your own for you? Therefore, Ijọ sons and daughters should come together and make the Ijọ name known all over the world. However, in lines 74-78, the verbal artist says there will be difficulties:

Ebiri lolo bira lolo bira angolo sougha
Kime kuro bira kuro bira ama warị kọn-mu bou warị boungha
Aduwọn kẹ kuro ka kpọ kẹmẹ malafakumo
Bẹinmu koroumọno
Inemọ kẹ bumọ asuọ

No matter the anger of the wind, it does nothing to the stubborn grass

No matter how strong the storm is, it doesn't remove the house in
the community to roof the one in the forest
Even if the waves are powerful, don't be afraid
We will be able to cross to the other side
It's through endurance one gets to shore

In spite of the obstacles on the road, the struggle shall end in victory. This reminds the reader of A.C. Jordan's statement of "the African traditional praise-poem...forecasting what is going to happen... (59-60).

As pointed out, ethnic consciousness is a major theme in the chants of Chief Munamuna. This theme is expressed in another poem Chief Munamuna performed in 2018. That was the year this researcher first met Chief Munamuna when he went back to Nigeria for fieldwork. This researcher had told him his intention and they had been interacting for some weeks. He let him know he would be leaving Nigeria in a couple of days. As such, it would be appreciated if he could perform another chant for the researcher again; but it should be very formal this time because the researcher would use a video-recorder. At that point, this researcher had two days or so left to spend in Nigeria. The researcher was surprised to see what he saw the following morning. Chief Munamuna had put on the kind of attire he told this researcher he normally wears during formal performances. His talking drum was beside him. He had been waiting for the researcher and the young man who beats his talking drum. We went to the compound of a very big private school in the area. If this researcher said he did not believe what he saw in his house that morning at first, then what happened next was a real shocker. Chief Munamuna used this researcher's name and purpose of meeting him to compose a poem for him! The whole poem is illustrated below since it is short (see, again, Appendix II for both the Ịzọn and the English versions):

Armstrong Imomotimi Ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀
(Praise Poetry of Armstrong Imomotimi)

Abo erein badei, erein badei ye
Bongbai ke a ba olotu eriunmono
Hinye, imene Adogidigbo
Okumogala, ken agono a timi ken gbein

A yerimo!
Karibu kere-kere, zibu kere-kere
Agbia adein mo beke adein mo benebene ken apagha
Bongbai erein me, imene obẹ̀bẹ̀ olotu ken, Izon ibe
Ani Imomotimi, Undutimi yai

10. *Armstrong yai, Johnson yai*
Omene ke duoni bei obẹ̀bẹ̀ gbolomene
Okere douni obẹ̀bẹ̀ aru saiweremi ke ton
Sai lepo...

A yerimo!
Kemetubo ke wenimene fere se imbal wenikurumo
Izon otu gbaamo
Inemo ke bum asuo
Wo ak teitimi yi bongbai erein me okere bo kokobaiyi a padei ke ton
Izon otu gbaamo

20. *Teimene teimene kokobaiyi*

Imene obẹ̀bẹ̀ olotu ken Izon ibe

I peipelemo

Karibuo kere-kere, zibu kere-kere

Agbia adein mo beke adein mo benebene ken apagha

Imomotimi, umene funimi olotu

Bongbai erein me Izon oya donwari

Didee South Africa duo you bo Izon ibe la

Bitimi bi bo obebere olotu wari gbolo su

Tu tie ama

30. *Obere me o a yila kaa ne o akere taaru karamo kule fedumene*

Ani ke Izon kpo tukpa me abadi bein, ogbo bein, agono ikikai bo pein pa...

Ani ke duoni wo bo benimi

Izon me yila kaamo; Izon me yila kaamo

A yerimo

Wo bei Nigeria opu ibe me

Wo binaotu, beni biri keme ande biragha

Keme amenere boba yi

Agono emi bo kiri indi dangha

Wo boba yi me wo boba yi

40. *Izon me yila kaamo*

Naame...

Amassoma ogbo ke emi pere

Ani wo ba imene imene ke namini me

Ini egberi tein agono

Itikai bain ka kpo ememein ateigha

Emein zi pou ka ofoinmo

Akẹrẹ kue kue sọnọ manga
Amẹnẹ amapọn akẹ kpẹlẹ tei-um bọ akẹn bai tua kẹ taara dein
I peipelemọ

50. *Kurọ zokpozo-zokpozo-zokpozo-zokpozo, adọdọ*
Ala ọkpọ gotoru-goturu
Pẹrẹ apa siiamesi
Epelepele ọwa kẹ pẹrẹmọ
Bongbai erein mẹ Izon ifie ladei kẹ tọn
Ani douni Izon ọwọu bo sẹ kẹni sọmọ
Agbaara a-timi aditimi beni bọdẹi
Wo sẹ kẹnisọmọ, Izon ọwọu bo sẹ kẹnisọmọ
Ani da wo kẹniwẹnimọ ni kẹ Izon ibe kpọ mu ebi a padẹi
Ani douni wo kẹnisọmọ Izon tukpa mẹ abadi bẹin, ogbo
bẹin, agono ikikai bo pẹin pa...

60. *Izon ibe mẹ wo yi, Izon ibe mẹ wo yi*
Zenẹ kemẹ tolomọ wo pẹrẹgha

A yerimọ
Poroporo kpọ ado beinmẹnẹ, kpeere-kpeere kpọ ado beimẹnẹ
Ani douni i bere duo waidei

Imẹnẹ Adolphus Munamuna
Ọbẹbẹ Olotu Kẹni, Izon Ibe
Ogboin tubọ
Gbesi Otuan kẹ ini ama
Otumongalanga indi ka dụwọn dọ

70. *Ogboin tu fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ, kiri fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ, kiri fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ*
Izon otu a do...

Ah! the day has broken, the day has broken

It's today we shall see the champion again

Yes, I'm the great storyteller

The mighty spear who hops from the top of one tree to the other

You see!

There are different faiths; there are different births

The native knife and the English knife are never the same

Today, I, the Chief Oral Poet of the Izon nation

That's Imomotimi, son of Undutimi

10. Son of Armstrong, son of Johnson

It's for him that this oral poem is being chanted

It's for him this canoe of oral poetry is ferried

Fully laden – *lepo*¹⁵...

You see!

Whatever work a man is doing should be done with all seriousness

The Izon say

It's through perseverance one gets to shore

What we had been playing with has turned out to be a

very important thing today

The Izon say

20. The thing that's always taken for a play is real

I'm the Chief Oral Poet of Izon nation

Hear me well

There are different faiths; there are different births

The native knife and the English knife are never the same

Imomotimi, he is a great scholar

Today, because of the plight of the Izon

Has come all the way from South Africa to Izon nation

He came asking of the Chief Oral Poet until he got to his house

Why the search?

30. Because oral poetry is so important to him that he would like to use
it to earn his third praise title

So that the lamp of Izon too will shine across the sea, the mountains
and high above the stars of the heaven

That's why we've gathered

Izon is very important; Izon is very Important

You see!

In this our great country, Nigeria

Our brothers, whoever takes his bath doesn't forget to wash his body

Everyone has his own

No one steps on fish in the river while standing on land

Our own is our own

40. Izon is very important

Naame...!

He's a chief in Amassoma

big sizes, the basket will still be full – *p̣oṛo-p̣oṛo, kpeere-kpeere*

Therefore, I go back from here

I am Adolphus Munamuna

The Chief Poet of the Izon Nation

Son of Ogboin;

Precisely, Otuan is my community

The chameleon that uses fish as chewing stick

70. *Ogboin tu fete-fete, kiri fete-fete, kiri fete-fete*¹⁶

People of Izon, I salute you

The poet again says that the day has arrived. Somebody has come all the way from South Africa to his house because the person wanted to study his chants for a doctorate. To him, something that people do not have regards for has become something important. He brings out this point in lines 16-21. What the poet says in those lines sums up the argument in this entire study as well as reflects the true situation in traditional Iẓon poetry: praise chanting is alien to Iẓon culture. Those lines corroborate the contention that was earlier put forward in chapter 3 that there is no such official position of a praise chanter who “acted as the spokesman of the people” or “important mediator between chief and tribesman” (Opland, “Xhosa Tribal Poet” 193). That is, there is no such thing like “general acceptance by the people” with regard to Chief Munamuna as Mafeje says of the praise singer amongst the Bantu-speaking ethnic groups (“The Role” 196; see also the reviews of Mafeje’s and Opland’s articles in chapter 2). For if his practice were generally accepted by the Iẓon or an age-old tradition, the praise singer would not have made those statements. In those lines lies the fact that many persons who are familiar with what he does only laugh at him. Perhaps, for them, he is a joker who has nothing serious to do. However, as pointed out in chapter 3, few persons amongst the Iẓon appreciate what Chief Munamuna is doing even though it is a new thing because they have seen and/or read about praise chanting in other Nigerian ethnic groups. Therefore, they feel what Chief Munamuna is doing is good for the Iẓon culture (see the second section of chapter 3 on the persons who promoted his art).

The poet continues that it is the first time someone has met him to use his chants for research. In an exaggerative way, the oral poet says this is another means in which the Iẓon people will be known all over the world. He tells anyone who cares to know that Iẓon is important. Stated differently, the Iẓon should have regard for their language and cultural practices. Why? Nigeria has a panoply of ethnic groups and these ethnic groups care for their own. Using relevant proverbs again, he says all Iẓon should come together and look for areas to make the Iẓon nationality great. The time for being onlookers has passed; another man will not make their nationality great for them. The intertextuality between this poem and the one on the Iẓon language is very strong. In fact, it is stronger than “Iẓon Ibe”. Here is a poem that brings together the concerns of the oral poet in both “Iẓon Ibe” and “Ine Amapon (Your Language).” All this shows that the verbal artist is decidedly ethnic conscious.

Another theme manifest in the chants of Chief Munamuna is industriousness. In his study of the functional aspect of ijala chants that reference was earlier made to, Ajuwon avers that an ijala artist tells his society through chants on the importance of being industrious, the need for combining farming with other professions and warns them of the dangers an indolent person poses to society (“The Ijala” 197-198). In all the funeral chants of Chief Munamuna, one theme runs through: hard work. It is when a woman or man works hard that s/he will be able to feed the family and provide for others as well. For example, here is an excerpt of Chief Munamuna’s funeral chant on Sele Agouzi (see Appendix II for the complete poem):

A tọrụ ere araụ kẹ bira kọrọmọ wẹnịmẹnẹ fẹrẹ bo sẹ kẹnị kpọ a pẹlẹ bogha

Dụọ gboro

Opu bira garri tọọ kẹmẹotu ama gbalị

Fọyọyọ

Dọy sẹlẹ bira asuọ

Ebi Lagos beke suọ otu bo, Sẹlẹ kpọ kẹnị ere

Opu ikputu bira gerein, gerein, gerein, amẹnẹ yei

suomọ awọy bo mọ warị mọ kọrịtẹmọ

50. *Oyein amabọy tarị mọ boimi ere bira ma*

Amassoma ogbo ma amẹnẹ bọbọ beke warị kọrịtẹmọ

Sọni, sọni, sọni, kẹmẹ túbọ akpọ ma bodej ya wẹni mọ fịaimi
fẹrẹ bọ sẹ a mọ wẹni siin
Bina tari ere, wari benimo, yerin ebi
Kokomanị yila yein, gere de yi a kẹmẹ tolu mọ ere bo dụwẹi deime, a yerimọ

All the work a woman like her uses her hand to do not one escaped her
 Tilled the soil
 Greatly processed cassava to feed people
 Traded
 The money she looked for entered her hand
 Of those who were successful when they went to Lagos, Sele was one of them
 Like a big rock she stood by her husband and firmly
 held the children and the home

50. As a woman who came with blessings from heaven
 She built a concrete house in Amassoma by herself
 Gradually, gradually, gradually, she did all the work that a human being is
 supposed to do when he comes into the world
 A woman who loved relatives, family unifier, of good behaviour

Amongst the Izon, it is women that mostly provide sustenance for the family. Very often, the man she calls her husband is just there in name. It is in rare cases where one sees an Izon woman looking up to her husband to feed her children. Unfortunately, today, the majority of Izon wives in urban areas have become the opposite. The verbal artist tells the reader how industrious Sele Aguozi was. By so doing, he is encouraging other women to emulate the life of Sele. He is not just praising her; he is sending a message to the audience. She was so industrious that she was able to build a concrete house herself. Concrete houses are built by people who have good jobs. However, there are few women-farmers who achieve that feat in

Izonland. Such women are well-respected by their fellow women and men. They are the reference point in discussions. A great woman-farmer and one who has achieved high feats is called *oweiere* (literally, man-woman). Sele Aguozi was one of such women. Sele Aguozi, as the poet puts below again, was a mother that a child would dream of having and never exchange for another:

Awougbeere, ani ini ere

130. *Warigbalere ke ini ere*

Waridaere ke ini ere

Ikperetuagide, ani ini ere ke ton

Oyein nimi ere

Mama oi a dei kpọ akegha

Sii a dei kpọ akegha

Sponsor of children is your name

130. Provider for the home is your name

Leader of the home is your name

A basket that's used to put stones is your name

Somebody who knew God

Mama wouldn't be exchanged for ten

Wouldn't be exchanged for twenty

When one has a wife, who is as industrious as Sele Aguozi, even one's parents, younger and elder sisters and brothers will not go hungry. One's home is the home of one's nephews and nieces. This point is brought out in the following extract:

Selẹ toru fo i kọri ya oya ba i gbologha ke ton

Ebi fo obori imeli

If you have an in-law like Sele hunger won't come close to you again

A good in-law is a goat that has fat

There are some women who are not happy with their in-laws coming to their homes to eat. Even sharing something to their mothers-in-law is a problem to them. The above excerpt is a critique of such ones. In the chant on Captain Mala too (see Appendix 11), Chief Munamuna tells the audience to be industrious by bringing out the quality of hard work in the subject's life and what it resulted in. Like Sele Aguozu, Captain Mala provided for his family unlike other Iẓon men.

A further theme expressed in the chants of Chief Munamuna in his role as an oral artist is the need to show hospitality. Captain Mala was a man who fought in the Nigerian civil war. He headed places and that led him into contact with other Iẓon men and woman. How did Captain Mala behave? The verbal artist chants:

Imeṇe Iẓon keme Jos a mu Mala pa ya fe ba i bagha ke ton

Suṣeidei, ini igoni se umene igoni

Army ma korobo Lagos ladei kpọ kenị bira

If you as an Iẓon man went to Jos and met Mala, then

death would not kill you

Filled with joy! your visit was his visit

It's the same when he left the Army and moved to Lagos

To the poet, the audience should emulate the hospitable quality of Captain Mala and stop hiding or being indifferent when they see their fellow Iẓon brothers and sisters in other places.

Moreover, one should not forget the Christian theme of the chants of Chief Munamuna. In all his chants, there is no one of considerable length where God is not praised. In fact, as was

pointed out earlier, he has chanted two brilliant poems on God. Chief Munamuna strongly believes in the existence of God. Therefore, he holds the Bible's viewpoint that there is an appointed day when humanity will be judged. As a consequence, man, to the oral poet, should always live his life in harmony with the moral code of the Bible while alive. When he is saying this, he is in essence telling the mourners that since they are still alive, then, this is the time to make a decision about whom to serve between Satan and God. The following is a recurring excerpt in all his funeral chants:

I seri yo ani i mu yọ

Gbaana ebi akẹ agbẹgwa dẹinmọ

110. *Undọ mẹ emi ifie ka ebi yọ seri*

Dọọ mọ, dọọ mo pẹrẹ, Jesu

Ukẹrẹ tonton ọwọu

Where you choose, there you go

Obedience is better than sacrifice

110. Choose the good path while alive

Jesus, the king of peace, peace

He is the holy way

The oral poet says those on the side of Satan are countless unlike the few ones who are friends of God:

Ama bira, ani dau yai-bo; dọọ bọlọu asuọ

Kọnọ ikpangị, imbo, imbo, andọ fa, sei bou pẹrẹ omoni ama

The ones on the right, they're of the father; enter into your rest

Those on the left, millions, countless, are slaves of the

king of the evil forest

One thing about Chief Munamuna is that when he is chanting at the burial of someone who was a Christian, whether nominally or not, he would say the person is going to heaven, as if he was the one God entrusted to pass judgement on mankind:

Kòkòbàiyi Sẹ̀lẹ̀ ebi yerin, yerintimi Oyein a tẹ̀n bẹ̀ la

...Mama dọọ mu

Wo mu heaven ka gbolo...

It's true Sele lived a good life until the day God called her

... Mama, go in peace

We will meet in heaven

In conclusion, Chief Munamuna is a poet that performs important functions in his role as the *Qubẹbẹ Kẹnẹ Iẗon Ibe* like his counterparts on the African continent (see the reviews subsumed under “the role of the poet in Africa” in chapter 2 and in the beginning of this section). One of such functions, as observed in the foregoing paragraphs, is education. He has used his chants to teach the Iẗon to be aware of the deadly consequences of contracting HIV/AIDS, as well as telling them the benefits of speaking the Iẗon language. Moreover, Chief Munamuna shows in his chants that he is one oral poet that is ethnic conscious. For that, he has chanted about the Ijọ struggle. In addition, Chief Munamuna urges his ethnic group to be industrious, hospitable and follow the ways of God. However, the poet's praise of the subjects of his chants does not stop him from criticising what he sees wrong in them. These interventions, as it were, by the verbal artist have shown that he understands what is happening in his society. The study now turns to the second part of the concern of this chapter, that is, examining the performance and functions of Iẗon songs. What will be explored, firstly, is the aspect of performance, as it was in the chants of Chief Munamuna.

The Performance of Iẗon Songs

In the previous chapter, the reader's attention was drawn to *omụ arụ* (war boat) and its place amongst the Iẗon. It was observed that the war boat is the major activity during the annual

Egbesu festival. In fact, it is the activity that kick-starts the festival in honour of that Ịzọn god of war. Moreover, it was mentioned that the war boat is one major constituent of the annual festivals of Ịzọn communities. Furthermore, this researcher noted that the youths in the boat, as expected, sing only war songs. It is at these occasions that one sees the performance of war songs when the war boat is being held. However, before the study goes into details on how the songs are performed, one or two things need stating here.

The Ịzọn are a riverine people. Most communities (if not all) are situated in places that overlook a river. There is some little distance from where the river makes contact with the sides of a community and where the houses start from. The canoes are anchored in the waterfronts of the communities. The major and the most important road where everything takes place in a community is the one that directly overlooks the water. It is a very long, spacious road that equals the length of the community. In most cases, you will have to walk past this major road to get into your canoe and go to farm. Before this time, when the men would want to go to war, the women of the community would sing these songs to inspire them. They would be sung from one end of the major road to the other. The march was, as my respondents said to me, highly rhythmic. My informants informed me that the march of the women behind the warriors would make cowardly husbands to come out and join their mates.

In the war boat, there is always an *opu eze* (talking drum). It plays a very important role (see the first part of this chapter on the importance of the talking drum to Chief Munamuna). In the case of the *Egbesu* war boat, it is usually the finest drummer of the *ibe* that beats it. Almost all Ịzọn communities have a praise title. As such, whichever community in the *ibe* the war boat gets to, the drummer beats the drum poetry of the community. Another drummer who has been arranged by the community before that day, responds in an equally drum language. The war boat then stops for a few minutes at the waterfronts of the roads leading to the shrines of each quarter god in the community. It was mentioned in the preceding chapter that in traditional times, every quarter in the community had its own god. Anywhere it stops, the worshippers of that quarter god come out and entertain the men on the boat by giving them one bottle of gin. The women of the community who always wait at the places the war boat will stop to receive the men, tie pieces of wrapper round their chests and sing every war song simultaneously with the men on the boat.

When all this is going on, they are singing and dancing warlike dances. Some have become possessed by the gods and spirits of their ancestors and held in the war boat by their colleagues. They are not the only ones who are possessed. Those on land too. In chapter 3, attention was given to the idea of possession amongst the Ịzọn. It also pointed out the kind of people that are possessed at such times. The sight of the boat is very arresting. The boys wear, especially before this time, *abuluku*, a black- or dark blue-baggy skirt round their waists. Shreds of white and red clothing are tied round their wrists, heads and for some, ankles. At all times, all the paddles in their hands enter and come out from the water at the same time. Then there is someone who sits behind everyone in the boat and faces the back of the boat. He remains like that until the whole war boat ritual ends that day. He neither sings nor talks with anyone. He never looks at the people in the boat or those on land.

The reader, by now, must have seen how important the major road of a community is, especially in the performance of a spoken art that concerns everyone in the community. Song performance is not done in private. It is done in public. Let me look at the performance of another spoken art, songs of circumcision, on that same major road again.

Songs of female circumcision in Ịzọn are divided into two. One group was sung by the girls of the house of circumcision when they were going to the forest to peel the bark of the two trees they used in treating the circumcised one's wound and coming back. The songs in this group are lighter and mostly on the theme of love, a point noted in the previous chapter. The theme of love is not a major concern in the other group. Songs in this other group express deeper concerns and beliefs in society and they were sung by women (joined by some girls) when they were going to say a thank-you to anybody who cooked something and brought to the house of circumcision.

When it was time for the thank-you visit in the evening (from 8 or so), the procession of women would move out from the house of circumcision to the main road. It was on the main road the procession would start formally. The circumcised one would stand in front of the women. As a result of the wound in the opening of her legs, she would not stand in a position of attention. She would stand in a way the thigh of the left leg would not touch the thigh of the right one. She also used a piece of wrapper to wrap herself from the legs to the chest. The wrapper covered her breasts. She used her right hand to hold the walking stick. Camwood was rubbed all over body. Moreover, beads were worn round her ankles and neck. Standing just in front of her and

the procession would be a little girl known as *komotobou* (literally, the pet child). The little girl held the kerosene lamp that provided light in the house of the daughters of circumcision in one of her hands. It was that lamp that provided light for the procession. Then the grown-up girl, the *iselegberearau* (literally, the girl who mixes camwood), with the big pot that was used to cook the food for them on her head, stood in the middle of the women, at the back of the circumcised one. They walked at a very slow pace because of the circumcised one who would not be able to walk fast since she had a wound between her two legs.

More women would join the procession as they went on. There was no one designated as the lead singer amongst them. They had three to four elderly women who knew how to sing very well. As they were moving, one of them sang a song. When the woman (the lead singer at this time) finished her song, the procession stopped, sang the song that was just finished by the woman. When they were through, they moved on as another woman began singing. Anywhere they stopped to take over the song from the lead singer, the people standing or sitting would say, *o bobomaa*, a greeting meaning “you are welcome.” The procession would respond *ee* (yes). Somebody in the procession could also say this greeting and everybody in it would respond. There were no clapping of hands and beating of percussions. The procession moved slowly. They would move in this way to the house of the person who cooked for them. While there, all of them would keep saying *nua oo* (thank you oo) for some time. On the return to the house of circumcision, they would not stop at any place again, but the songs were continued to be sung.

Songs of circumcision and war, in terms of performance, are the most arresting and dramatic of all the forms of songs that were collected for this research. Wrestling songs, too, to some extent, are spectacular in performance. Their performance takes place before, during and after the actual wrestling. When wrestlers are going to a community for a wrestling competition, the singing and drumming start from the community they will board a boat. It is the singing and drumming that tell people working on their farms that wrestlers are going to a place. It may be two wrestling groups coming to slug it out at the festival of a community. Perhaps, it is one community against the other. The singing and drumming continue even when they have landed in the community. Often, the groups will sing and drum from one end of the main road to the other, telling the indigenes that something will happen in that community that day. The boasts of the champion-wrestlers and their supporters add excitement to the occasion. Some will be crying too as if someone had died. To the wrestler, it is insulting, in fact, an affront on his status

as a champion-wrestler for so-and-so who could not wrestle with so-and-so to have asked him for a wrestling bout. As such, he is going to break all his bones. To him, nothing, including gods and ancestors, will save his opponent from his hand today.

At the arena proper, the singing, the crying, the boasting and the drumming rise to a crescendo on both sides. One often hears a wrestler telling his drummers and singers that the volume is not high enough to enable him to fell his opponent. He will always give signals to them to increase the degree of loudness. Some call the gods, spirits of ancestors and other souls to come infuse their bodies. At such times, the level of animation in the arena is indescribable. When the wrestling competition is over, the two groups will sing and drum to their boats and leave.

The performances of these three sub-categories of *İzön* songs are similar to the spectacular performance of *udje* dance songs which the study reviewed in chapter 2 (Ojaide 54, 68-69). No wonder, Ojaide argues that *udje* is a “festival of songs and dance in a theatrical performance” (49). The other sub-categories are performed the normal way; I mean by clapping hands and beating percussions and drums. For example, when an association is invited to an occasion, the members go there and sing their songs and dance until the ceremony is over. No specific form of dance is used. Drumming is provided by one of the elderly women amongst them. There is no clapping of hand. Political songs follow a similar way. They are sung at campaigns and other political gatherings by supporters of the politician who is contesting for an election. At such times, the masses usually clap their hands to give the songs rhythm. Sometimes, when a politician visits a community, the supporters will gather behind him and sing the songs and clap their hands as they move from one end of the community to the other. The movement is neither a walk nor a run. That is, the pace is faster than a walk but slower than a run. As they are singing, you will hear some in the group saying the people in the community should vote for the contestant in their midst.

The reader has seen from the foregoing paragraphs that it is not all the sub-categories of *İzön* songs that are spectacular in regard to performance. This is similar to the forms of songs amongst the Zulu studied by Joseph that was reviewed in chapter 2. Put differently, not all the sub-categories of Zulu songs are highly dramatic in terms of performance. For example, sub-categories such as puberty songs and wedding songs are very theatrical but others such as diviners’ songs, bow songs, drinking songs, work songs and lullabies are not (Joseph 64-77, 80-85). Similarly, amongst the Tiv, as noted in chapter 2, whereas some sub-categories of songs

are operatic such as religious songs, forms like occupational songs, educational and praise songs are not (Hagher 46-51). Furthermore, in chapter 2, the study noted how spectacular the performance of Efik/Ibibio religious songs is (Akpabot 88-99). However, it was also pointed out that songs on the non-ritual plane are not very arresting in terms of performance (Akpabot 93-94). However, the reader cannot tell whether this situation – some songs spectacular while others unspectacular – is also true of the Ngoni because Read's paper that was reviewed in chapter 2 is not strong on the context of the songs she recorded.

In conclusion, the performances of some sub-forms of songs are highly arresting and dramatic whereas others lack those qualities. For example, it was pointed out that war songs, songs of circumcision and to some extent wrestling songs are the most dramatic of the sub-groups studied in this research. The performances of these sub-categories involve the primary performers, the audience, a boat, shouts, costuming, paddling, drumming, possession and many other components of performance. These sub-forms of songs are as dramatic as Iẓon funeral dirges (See Armstrong 76-84). Some, such as lullabies, songs of associations and political songs are devoid of the theatrical associated with the performances of the ones stated above. It is now the examination of the functions of these songs that the study now turns to.

Roles/Functions of Iẓon Songs

Songs, amongst other things, are used to educate or rally someone to carry out an action. The use of songs in passing across messages to people becomes much more important when the reader considers the fact that the majority of the people of the ethnic group under consideration are neither literate in their own language nor in a foreign tongue. Finnegan has long stated that in Africa “there is still great reliance on oral means of propaganda – speech, mass meetings, and songs – in keeping with the still large non-literate or semi-literate mass electorate for whom the written word is of relatively lesser significance” (*Oral Literature* 285). For example, one of the political songs recorded was and is still used to enlighten the electorate about politics. This researcher has reproduced here both the song and what he said about it in chapter 3:

Arụ mọ lei yo

Mẹ arụ mẹ

DSP kị mẹ arụ mẹ kọrịmọ owei yoo

Arụ mọ lei yo

Mẹ arụ mẹ

DSP kị mẹ arụ mẹ kọrịmọ owei yoo

Enter the canoe

This canoe

DSP is the one who pilots the canoe

Enter the canoe

This canoe

DSP is the one who pilots it

The reader can see how composers of songs for political parties wisely make use of the word “canoe” to represent any political office one is aspiring to. The masses are fishers and farmers. There is no one who does not have a canoe. In addition, the masses know full well that it is not everyone who knows how to paddle that can sit on the rear of a canoe that has other people paddling at the same time and pilot it very well. If such persons sit on the rear of a canoe you are in, then either the canoe veers off direction or all of you fall off it. With this song now, the voters have got a clearer picture of what an elective office is about. Who will then sit on the rear of this canoe that will make them enter without second thoughts? The song does not leave them looking for an answer. It says it is DSP (see the preceding chapter for whom DSP refers to). Unfortunately, this same song is used by the rival party. The only difference, as expected, is the change of name from DSP to that of the person contesting against him.

Here is another song in which the theme of education comes to the fore. In other words, the song is used to educate women in society. It belongs to the sub-category of songs of circumcision:

I ba bo teki mịengaa?

I ba bo teki mịengaa?

Duere o!

I ba bo teki mịengaa?

Orukumọ ị nọ tuu kpọ numugha timi

Wo ị lẹlẹmọ bo tuu numudọ nị

Wo ị dịnịmọ na bụrụ indi tẹin bara tẹin o

What will I do again?

What will I do again?

Oh, a poor widow!

What will I do again?

For long, I wasn't known

But now he has tricked me into knowing me

I've been pushed by him to float like a rotten fish

In the discussion of the context of this song in chapter 3, this researcher made mention of the fact that amongst the Iẓọn, when a man dies, his wife is given to a man in the family of her in-laws as a wife in order to take care of her and the children. It was further pointed out that it is not every time a decision is reached immediately by the in-laws as to who should marry her. They will need to find out if there is any man amongst them who is capable and willing to take her as a wife. It so happens that sometimes, no one is capable or available to become the widow's second husband in the family. In a situation like this, the widow who cannot stay without the thought of a husband, especially when she is the somewhat lazy type who cannot provide for her children, becomes available to the public, as it were. Different men will come woo her especially if she is the pretty type, saying they will settle down with her. Most of these men do not have any good intentions for her; what they want is to have relations with her and go away. This ugly scenario is not exclusive to men outside her late husband's family. There are some men amongst her in-laws whose intentions are to just sleep with her and dump her. Therefore, the women who sing this song are educating their fellow women about the ways of Iẓọn men. Any of them can become a widow suddenly. As such, they need to be wise and

careful. As a result of what men do, and the education they have got from a song like this, there are some women who refused to give in to the marriage demands of men. They never remarried until death. Such women could feed their children without a husband. It is so appropriate that a song like this is sung during the time two persons are getting married.

The above scenario is one of the things that happen to women in society. Fortunately, it is one that some women can control. However, there are some situations they are powerless. Situations such as barrenness and being termed a witch. So, what they do is to sing about their condition and indirectly tell society to stop such insults on them. This brings the reader to another form of education in the songs. The women who have found themselves in these ugly situations are educating society, as it were, even though not stated plainly in the songs, that victimising them is not good. Here is an excerpt for analysis:

Ebiere pou oo

Zi sei ki a lẹimọ pou weri bi ma yoo

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ ebiere egber' ama

“Ebiere is a witch!”

It's a bad-birth life that turned her into a witch

Stories about Ebiere

All these are stories about Ebiere

In the excerpt, the women seem to ask society: “Why is a woman called a witch and victimised for being unfortunate in life?” “Which woman on earth will be happy killing her innocent little babies?” Society is taught by these women to look again and see if there is any connection between a woman who carried her baby for nine months and that same woman killing that same baby for whom she underwent pains during the pregnancy.

Here is another excerpt for examination on this same theme of education:

B' okpọ zigha otu mọ bein e ị nein kị bọlọu waa?

Ebiere o bei kpọ zigha uya nị 'fiemi ye

There are many barren women in the world; is yours the first?

Oh Ebiere, what a suffering of barrenness you are going through!

The women say that the world has lots of barren women. Some of these women are happy in the homes of their husbands. The barrenness of Ebiere is not the first. So, how come Ebiere has been victimised to this extent by her in-laws? Consequently, they call on Ebiere's in-laws and any others who have been victimising women for being barren to desist from this ugly practice.

Some songs are used to teach humanity in general. What follows is one of such songs:

Bou kị 'zi wẹrị ya dengitimo

Bou ki 'zi wẹrị ya dengitimo

Epelepele ị zideị nị ma degha o

Uya o uya o

I kiriki bini ama bo i dau komotọbọu o

If it were *bou* that gave birth to me, I would be prideful

If it were *bou* that gave birth to me, I would be prideful

I won't be prideful because *Epelepele* gave birth to me

Oh what pain, what pain!

I'm my father's favourite in the land of water

This is one song that not only teaches women but also everybody in society about understanding one's status in life. The song teaches that it is what you are that determines what you do and what you do not do. Put differently, in life, everyone is not equal. Whereas some persons came from rich families, others came from poor families. On the one hand, some got married to wealthy husbands, some ended up with men who do not have money on the other

hand. Therefore, the song is teaching society that the person who came from a poor family should not behave like the one from a rich family. You will need to struggle to survive. You cannot fold your hands in one place and expect something to be on your table or achieve something in life unlike the person from a rich background. A woman who got married to a poor man too should not behave like her fellow woman in the home of a rich man. She will have to feed her children. That means she needs to be industrious. All what the song is teaching humanity here is the need for one to realise the fact that one is poor and different from so-and-so and work hard for one's livelihood. *Bou* and *epelepele*, as pointed out in chapter 3, are fishes which are used in the song to contrast the status of two persons in life.

Furthermore, many religious songs perform this same educational role. Naturally, songs of religious expressions will be more forceful than other sub-categories in this particular form of teaching. One of such songs is examined below:

Ị nana yeimọ sẹ kẹnị kpọ tụa mugha o
Woyengi fịrị kumọọ
Ọwọu oii-a-sii kị ziwerị kpọ kẹnị kpọ tụa mugha o
Woyengi fịrị kumọọ
Woyengi fịrị kumọ inein o
Woyengi fịrị kumọọ

All the things you have, none will you go with
 It's only the work of God
 Even if you have 100 children, none will you go with
 It's only the work of God
 Only the work of God is yours
 It's only the work of God

This song is used to teach the Ịzọn that the only thing which is important in the world is cultivating and maintaining a close relationship with God, the Creator (see this form of role in

the chants above). For one thing, it is the only thing which will bring you back to life in heaven after you have died. Every other thing that a man pursues is some fleeting stuff which never saves the soul from perishing. In chapter 3, it was pointed out how the mentioning of 100 children foregrounds the context of the song. The Ịzọn love giving birth to many children. Some men have more than 20 children. Especially before this time, it looked as if giving birth to many children was the most important thing amongst them. Little wonder, even today, a man or woman who decides not to have children is called every sort of name. It reminds such persons that life is not about how many children they have.

When one has cultivated that close bond with his Creator, God, the religious expressions will teach one that one need not be afraid of witches and wizards again because God shall always fight on one's behalf. One needs to know that one is serving the most powerful being in the universe. One should display courage at all times as the following song shows:

Ị bou biri kọ wẹniyemi kpọ

Pou ị bagha ee

Ị tọrụ biri kọ yọuwemi kpọ

Diri ị bagha ee

Ị wẹniyemi yọ mọ sẹ

Oru ị bagha ee

Nanaowei tịin bai kị arị kpọ mungimioo

Whether I'm walking in the depths of the forest

Witchcraft will not kill me

Whether I'm paddling far off the sea

Medicine will not kill me

Wherever I'm walking

Satan will not kill me

It's the day God calls me I too will go

Moreover, in one of the marriage or bead-wearing songs, women are urged to show love to one another. It is not love of an ethnic group, as in the chants of Chief Munamuna or a nation as in some traditional African songs (Okpewho, *African Oral* 138):

Tari o Burudani amata mo tari o

Ye ye ye

Tari oo tari oo

Ye ye ye

Tari o bin' ere 'wo'u mo tari o

Ye ye ye

Tari oo tari oo

Ye ye ye

Love one another, women of *Burudani*

Ye ye ye

O love, o love

Ye ye ye

Love one another, women who got married to *Burudani* men

Ye ye ye

O love, o love

Ye ye ye

Even though love is unarguably a key feature of communal societies, the women expressly encourage their fellow women to show it. It is love that will make a woman to mourn with her fellow woman who has lost a child, a husband, a relative or whose farm has been destroyed by strong winds. It is also love that enables her to join other women to cook on the marriage day of a girl.

It was mentioned in the beginning of this section that it is not every song that performs an educational function. Even if a song lacks this teaching role, it still performs other role(s) in the proper functioning of a society. Such a song still falls under the ambit of the theory of functionalism. As submitted by one of its leading scholars, Radcliffe-Brown, functionalism looks at "the function of any recurrent activity...is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity" (180). Therefore, functionalism looks at not only the teaching side of a song but also its significance. For example, the war and wrestling songs that were collected have little educational value, as it were, but they are significant. For instance, the singing of war songs undoubtedly encourages children and the fearful to aspire to possess the qualities of bravery and fearlessness. Which man would want to be seen as a coward and lose the respect of his people in a society that values heroes? As Okpewho argues, "in traditional African society war provided men with the opportunity to put their manhood to the test and establish for themselves a pride of place in the society" (*African Oral* 151).

When a war song is sung, the warrior feels the battle. He becomes enthusiastic. In the words of Okpewho "many traditional songs of war are imbued with this spirit. There is not the least fear of danger or death; the enemy is treated with scorn..." (152). For example, these three short war songs were popular amongst Iẓọn youths during the Odi war and Kaiama Declaration:

1

Alagba fie o

Ogidi fie o

Tein kpọ sụọgha o

Alagba fie o

Ogidi fie o

Tein kpọ na yoo

Let the gun sound

Let the Machete sound
It will not enter when shot

Let the gun sound
Let the Machete sound
Don't give a damn when shot

2

Korì ye korì ye bini yo!
Aaan ee ọwọjima²
Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima
Ikputu kì korì kpọ bini yo
Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima
Alagba subo ya bini yo
Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima
Aaan ọwọjima ee ọwọjima
Korì ye korì ye bini yo!
Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima
Ogidi korì ya bini yo
Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Whatever is held is water!
Are we alarmed?
Are we alarmed, alarmed?
If it's a stone that's held, it's water

Are we alarmed, alarmed?
If it's a gun that's held, it's water
Are we alarmed, alarmed?
Are we alarmed, alarmed?
Whatever is held is water!
Are we alarmed, alarmed?
Whether it's machete, it's water
Are we alarmed, alarmed?

3

In' aru tein bo tuba?
In' aru tein bo tuba-a?
Egbesu o, in' aru tein bo tuba?
In' aru tein bo tein
Teinda tjetimi suu

O in' aru tein bo tuba-a
In' aru tein bo tuba-a
Wo dau o, in' aru tein bo tuba
In' aru tein bo tein
Teinda tjetimi suu

Who shot your boat?
Who shot your boat?
Oh Egbesu, who shot your boat?

Let the one who want to shoot your boat, shoot

Shoot and stand to fight

Oh! who shot your boat?

Who shot your boat?

Oh our father, who shot your boat?

Let the one who want to shoot your boat, shoot

Shoot and stand to fight

In 1999, the Nigerian army under the command of then-President Olusegun Obasanjo decided to invade Odi, a community in Kolokuma *ibe*. As Okunoye puts it, “the official justification of the operation is that it was intended to lead to the arrest of some militant youths alleged to have killed a number of police and army personnel” (425; see also Omeje 431-432). Up until that time, the situation in the Niger Delta region had been very tense. In the preceding year, Ijọ youths from all over the region had gathered in Kaiama and declared that all resources in the territory of the Ijọ belonged to the Ijọ people. Kaiama in Kolokuma *ibe* is seen as the centre of the Ijọ struggle because it is the birthplace of the Ijọ foremost activist and war hero, Major Jasper Isaac Boro. Let it be quickly added that Major Boro, the founder of the armed militia, Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), was the pioneer of the Ijọ struggle for resource control (see, for example, Ukeje 26-27). He was killed in the Nigerian-Biafran war.

The Nigerian government did not take this kindly. Human Rights Watch notes that “demonstrations in support of the Kaiama Declaration in Kaiama and Yenagoa were met with indiscriminate force, and soldiers and Mobile Police killed tens of people” (*The Destruction*; see also Ukeje 28-29). It was obvious the Nigerian government had been looking for ways to deal with the Ijọ. The Odi incident became the pretext. Ijọ youths, especially from the Iẓon-speaking communities would not sit down and allow the Nigerian army to come destroy their community and go back. There was need to provide resistance no matter how little it would be.

The three songs above became a rallying cry. They instilled fearlessness and bravery amongst Iẓon youths. The functional side of the songs came to the fore. The boys had to go through the

Egbesu ritual bath and confront the soldiers. After a few days of clashes with the federal government troops, Odi fell. The federal soldiers burnt down Odi and left scores of civilians dead. As stated by Omeje, “the rule of engagement of the over 2000 troops that invaded Odi was to shoot inhabitants at sight and at the end of the swift two days operation, some 2,483 civilians were reported killed” (432; see also Bassey).

What exactly made the boys to leave the warfront that enabled the soldiers to go into the community and burn it down? It is always reported that they fled the might of the Nigerian army. Were they not directed by the ruling class in Ijọ to leave and allow Odi to fall to the soldiers because the Nigerian government was hell-bent on using the war as a pretext to cause a major war in the region, kill thousands of people in Ijoland and export their oil with no hitches whatsoever as it did to the Igbo ethnic group in the Nigerian-Biafran war? Ask a youth who took part in the confrontation. The soldiers left some graffiti on Odi. This researcher has listed five here:

We will kill all Ijaws

Bayelsa will be silent forever

Worship only God not Egbesu

Egbesu, why you run

Our power pass Egbesu, next time even the trees will not be spared (Nigeria).

Wrestling songs also perform similar roles played by war songs. In the section on war songs in the previous chapter, it was pointed out that traditionally, wrestling is the chief sport in Iẓonland. It was further stated that it is *the* sport that gives the Iẓon ethnic group a sense of pride in themselves. To the Iẓon, wrestling is like a war because it is a sport that demonstrates male power. The word for man in the Iẓon language is *oweì*. It is a word that has the sense of *power, strength* and *capability*. Great wrestlers are heroes just like warriors. As such, wrestlers, especially in traditional times, were highly regarded. People looked forward to becoming wrestlers. As a consequence, the singing of wrestling songs, especially at the arena, encourages a child to become a wrestler. In a song like the following where the names of all the great wrestlers who have come to town are mentioned, the child would want his name to be mentioned too in future:

Pamo bo ee!

Kurọ owei pamọ bo ee

Andaa oya oo

Aan ye padọy yoo

Aan ye padọy yoo

Ye padọy yoo

Ama bẹ ye padọy yoo

Ye padọy yoo

Ye padọy yoo

Ama bẹ ye padọy yo

Ye padọy yoo

Bidejẹ bo da ama bẹ ye padọy yo

Ye padọy yoo

Opukiri bo da ama bẹ ye padọy yo

Ye padọy yoo

Amasẹ bo da ama bẹ ye padọy yo

Ye padọy yoo

Guru bo da ama bẹ ye padọy yo

Ye padọy yoo

Igalẹ bo da ama bẹ ye padọy yo

Ye padọy yoo

Ye padọy yoo

Ama bẹ ye padọy yo

Ye padou yoo

Bring out!

Bring out the strong one

Wrestling oya ee

Oh! something has happened

Oh! Something has happened

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community

Something has happened

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Bidei has Come

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Opukiri has come

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Amas has Come

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Guru has come

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Igali has come

Something has happened

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community

Something has happened

The names mentioned in the song are great wrestlers amongst the Ijo. When it is sung, it is only natural for a man who is not a wrestler to think of becoming one like them. When the supporters of a wrestler sing and beat the drum, he cannot contain himself again. He jumps from where he is to the arena. The singing and drumming have infused his spirit, mind and soul with strength. It rallies him to action. At that particular point, he does not mind asking for a wrestling bout with the *olotu*, (champion-wrestler) of the other group.

To conclude this section, the study, in the foregoing paragraphs, has highlighted and discussed some of the functions of Izo songs using appropriate excerpts. As pointed out, the songs, amongst others, educate the largely non-literate people on what an elective office is, instruct widows about the ways of men as well as advise the one who is not from a rich background to understand his place in life and be hardworking. Furthermore, they urge society to stop victimising women because of barrenness and witchcraft. Some songs also encourage women to demonstrate love towards one another in society. Some sub-groups such as war and wrestling, even though they may not play any educational role, are still significant to the people. They encourage males to achieve the qualities of bravery and fearlessness. That is, they inspire men to attain heroic status in a society where heroes are well-respected.

Conclusion

This chapter has been preoccupied with examining Izo oral poetry through the lenses of functionalism and performance. The chapter was divided into two broad sections because of the fact that Izo poetry is a mixture of songs and one person's praise chants. As such, the first part explored the praise chants while the second part examined the songs. It was pointed out that Chief Munamuna, the praise chanter, is a poet who plays a very vital role as a verbal artist amongst the Izo. He has used his chants to teach the Izo to be wary of the fatal consequences of contracting HIV/AIDS, to pursue hospitality, be industrious, as well as telling them the benefits of speaking the Izo language. Furthermore, it was observed that Chief Munamuna is an artist who is ethnic conscious. However, it was noted that despite the poet's praise of the subjects of his chants, he does not refrain from criticising what he sees wrong in them. On

composition and performance, it was remarked that Chief Munamuna, like the Xhosa *imbongi* and the Yoruba verbal artist, composes his chants during performance. He is an improviser of chants and not a reciter. For the songs, the vital functions they perform amongst the Iẓon were highlighted and discussed. It was pointed out that the songs, amongst others, educate the electorate on matters of politics and widows about the ways of men. They further urge society to be hardworking and show love to one another in addition to inspiring males in society to attain heroic status. Furthermore, it was remarked that the performances of some sub-forms such as war, wrestling and circumcision are highly arresting and dramatic while others lack those qualities. Moreover, it was pointed out that performers, the audience, a boat, shouts, costuming, paddling, drumming, possession, amongst others, are some of the components of performances in some sub-categories of songs. In the next chapter, the study will examine Iẓon oral poetry using the theory of formalism. To put it differently, the stylistic devices of Iẓon oral poetry will be explored in chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

STYLISTIC TECHNIQUES IN İZÖN ORAL POETRY

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine İzön oral poetry from the perspective of formalism, a theory that was given detailed attention to in chapter 1. The chapter, like every other one excepting chapter 1, is divided into two broad sections. The first part looks at the stylistic techniques in the songs, while the second studies the same stylistic devices in the chants. This means that the reader may see a particular device, say, metaphor, having two headings if it is a stylistic device that occurs in both the chants and the songs. When that happens, it should not be seen as a repetition because one heading gives examples from the songs, while the second heading highlights the examples of that same device in the chants. It is because of the nature of the research and for the purposes of the researcher here that examples manifesting a particular device from both the chants and songs are not brought under one heading for analysis. This needed pointing out before the chapter begins proper. Generally, some of the stylistic devices in the songs and the chants are repetition, formula, metaphor, parallelism, simile, paradox, irony and personification. Others include allusion, euphemism, ideophone, alliteration, rhyme, elision, vowel lengthening, proverb, praise title, amongst others. The study now turns to an examination of these devices in the songs.

Stylistic Techniques in İzön Songs

The study examines fourteen (14) devices in the songs. They include repetition, parallelism, metaphor, simile, symbolism, euphemism, allusion, ideophone and alliteration. Others are assonance, rhythm, rhyme, elision and vowel lengthening. In addition, the diction of the songs will be looked at. The first stylistic device for analysis here is repetition.

Repetition

As early as 1925, Franz Boas makes the very important statement that "the investigation of primitive narrative as well as of poetry proves that repetition, particularly rhythmic repetition, is a fundamental trait" (329). For Abrahams and Foss, "repetition is the primary organising principle of folk art in general" (qtd. in Gray 297). Gray himself maintains that "repetition is prevalent in folk and primitive literatures because these are both literatures and repetition is a

direct consequence of their oral narrative" (290). Furthermore, Finnegan submits that "sometimes it [repetition] is even the yardstick by which oral can definitely be distinguished from written literature" (*Oral Poetry* 128). Repetition, for Okpewho:

Is no doubt one of the most fundamental characteristic features of oral literature. It has both aesthetic and a utilitarian value: in other words, it is a device that not only gives a touch of beauty or attractiveness to a piece of oral expression (whether song or narrative or other kind of statement) but also serves certain practical purposes in the overall organisation of the oral performance. (*African Oral* 71)

Repetition in these songs is taken to mean verbal repetition and not the repetition of ideas, themes, motifs and incidents. Repetition comes in various forms in the performance of *Ịzọn* songs. In one form, the cantor sings the first line of the song three times before the chorus sings the refrain, as in the following two war songs:

1

In' arụ tein bọ tụa?

In' arụ tein bọ tụa-a?

Egbesu o, in' arụ tein bọ tụa?

In' arụ tein bọ tein

Teinda tịetimi sụ

Who shot your boat?

Who shot your boat?

Oh Egbesu, who shot your boat?

Let the one who want to shoot your boat, shoot

Shoot and stand to fight

2

Mu da bo ee

Mu da bo ee

Izọn ọwọy ama mu da bo ee
Badaba o yari
Badaba o yari
Opu oru bi ụgula bọ emi

Go and come
Go and come
Children of Izọn, go and come
Kill and bring it to him
Kill and bring it to him
The judgement is for the great god

The reader will also notice that the first line of the refrain in the second song is repeated twice by the chorus before the second line.

The songs also have what Olatunji calls “full repetition,” which is the “repetition of a sentence structure as well as of all the lexical items occurring in it” (17). An example is:

In’ arụ tein bọ tūba?
In’ arụ tein bọ tūba-a?

Who shot your boat?
Who shot your boat?

Generally, repetition is used for its aesthetic appeal, as in the above two songs. However, it is also used to achieve fullness in the songs. A perfect example of repetition that has the sense of fullness is the following song of circumcision:

Abi Timi wai boo

Kasa kana subo bo

Abi Timi wai boo

Kasa kana subo bo

Abi Timi wai boo

I ta biri bi naghaa

Abi Timi wai boo

I ta biri bi naghaa

Abi Timi wai boo

Isele tini kpọ fẹ bo

Abi Timi wai boo

Isele tini kpọ fẹ bo

Abi Timi wai boo

Towelị kpọ fẹ bo

Abi Timi wai boo

Towelị kpọ fẹ bo

Come back, Timi

Did you not here your wife's circumcision?

Come back, Timi

Bring a basket of *kasa*¹⁷

Come back, Timi

Bring a basket of *kasa*

Come back, Timi

Did you not hear your wife's circumcision?

Come back, Timi

Did you not hear your wife's circumcision?

Come back, Timi
 Buy a tin of camwood too
 Come back, Timi
 Buy and bring a tin of camwood too
 Come back, Timi
 Buy and bring towel too
 Come back, Timi
 Buy a towel too
 Come back, Timi
 Did you not here your wife's circumcision?

In this song, the cantor introduces a new idea in her lines that is important in each stanza. Any idea she introduces becomes the refrain to the chorus. After the chorus sings the refrain, the cantor introduces another idea which becomes the refrain to the chorus again. The reader will see that it is the refrains that mark off the ideas in each of the stanzas (see Okpewho, *African Oral* 74 on this form of repetition in African songs). Repetition is also used to list the names of wrestlers that have come for a wrestling competition, as in the following excerpt:

Bideḡ bo da ama bi ye padou yo
Ye padou yoo
Opukiri bo da ama bi ye padou yo
Ye padou yoo
Amasi bo da ama bi ye padou yo
Ye padou yoo
Guru bo da ama bi ye padou yo
Ye padou yoo
Igalḡ bo da ama bi ye padou yo
Ye padou yoo

Something has happened in the community Bideḡ has come
 Something has happened
 Something has happened in the community Opukiri has come
 Something has happened
 Something has happened in the community Amasi has come
 Something has happened
 Something has happened in the community Guru has come
 Something has happened
 Something has happened in the community Igalḡ has come
 Something has happened

This form of repetition is partial in the sense that “the sentence structure is repeated, but not all the lexical items are repeated” (Olatunji 19). In the song above, only the names of the wrestlers change in the five lines.

A cantor can also use repetition to list all equipment that warriors use in a battle which she knows. In any case, the most frequent form of repetition is the repetition of a whole song. A song is sung repeatedly until the performers deem it enough to take up another one. There is no form of the songs this researcher recorded that does not demonstrate this quality. As shown above, repetition is an important device in Iḡon songs. This is similar to the situation in Yoruba as revealed in chapter 2 in the review on Fasan’s study (see also Fasan 116). Moreover, in the review of Ojaide’s study of *udje* dance songs amongst the Urhobo, the study pointed out that “repetition is the most frequent device used in the songs” (66). All this bears on the contention made by Abrahams and Foss which was earlier quoted that “repetition is the primary organising principle of folk art in general” (qtd. in Gray 297). In the section that follows, another stylistic device, parallelism, shall be examined.

Parallelism

Parallelism, in the words of Bamgbose, is “a juxtaposition of sentences having a similar structure, a matching of at least two lexical items in each structure, a comparison between the juxtaposed sentences, and a central idea expressed through complementary statements in the sentences” (qtd. in Olatunji 26; for literature on parallelism in African chants, see the discussion on parallelism in the chants of Chief Munamuna in the second section of this chapter). Parallelism, a type of repetition, is a major structural device in oral poetry. It adds variation and scope to songs, tales, among others. Moreover, as rightly argued by Ojaide, it gives songs “musicality” (66). Parallelism could be lexical (change in position of words) or semantic (contrast in the words). In some songs, there is a contrast of two lines that show a balance, which is a perfect example of what Paredes calls “balanced binary form” (219). Here is an example:

Ara ogbo ‘tu mọ pekei kọ zimo

Ebiere ma buboru kọ zidọu o

Her mates give birth in the morning

But Ebiere gave birth in the evening

The two lines have the same structure, while “*pekei*” (“morning”) and “*buboru*” (“evening”), and “Ebiere” and “*ara ogbotu-mo*” (“her mates”) are contrasted. The idea expressed in the semantic parallelism is that Ebiere gave birth at old age or late in life unlike her fellow women who give birth early or at a young age.

Here is another example from a lullaby:

Kala bẹlẹ tọọ kpọ yei ị pịrị fughā

Opu bẹlẹ tọọ kpọ yei ịpịrị fughā

You cooked a small pot, I wasn’t given to eat

You cooked a big pot, I wasn't given to eat

In the above excerpt, the parallelism is not only in the two lines that are juxtaposed but also in the first line because it has the sense of hunger in the midst of food. Another form of parallelism is linking. According to Finnegan, linking or chain parallelism occurs when "a phrase at the end of a line is taken up and repeated in the first half of the next line" (*Oral Poetry* 101). However, Finnegan's conception of linking makes room for only "final linking" but excludes what Cope calls "initial linking." Parallelism by linking, to Cope, occurs when "the following line is linked to the first line by repetition of either the first word (initial linking) or the last word (final linking)" (41). Parallelism by initial linking is illustrated in this song of circumcision:

O kẹnì fì kì fì kpọ fì lẹta kpọ gẹ nì yaragha

O kẹnì dọn kì dọn kpọ dọn lẹta kpọ gẹ nì yaragha

Even if he has died, he has not written a death letter to me

Even if he's sick, he has not written a sick letter to me

It also occurs in these lines from a song of association:

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ Pọdakọtì kpọ emi

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ Ghana beke kpọ emi

Her mates are in Port Harcourt

Her mates are in Ghana too

Parallelism by final linking is illustrated in these two lines from another song of circumcision:

Ì yangì opuru flọy tọọ o

Opuru flou tou kpọ i momo tiẹ

My mother-in-law, please cook crayfish soup

Cook crayfish soup but it will stand with you

This brings the investigation of parallelism in the songs to an end. The next devices manifest in the songs that will be examined are metaphor and simile.

Metaphor and Simile

Metaphor occurs when an entity is applied to an entirely different one without the use of such words as "like" and "as". Here are some metaphoric lines from one war song:

Kọrị ye kọrị ye bini yo!

Aaan ee ọwọjima²

Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Ikputu kị kọrị kpọ bini yo

Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Alagba subo ya bini yo

Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Aaan ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Kọrị ye kọrị ye bini yo!

Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Ogidi kọrị ya bini yo

Ọwọjima ee ọwọjima

Whatever is held is water!

Are we alarmed?

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

If it's a stone that's held, it's water

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

If it's a gun that's held, it's water

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

Whatever is held is water!

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

Whether it's machete, it's water

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

In the excerpt, the subjects or what the famous English literary critic, I. A. Richards, calls “tenor” are “*ikputu*” (“stone”), “*alagba*” (“gun”) and “*ogidi*” (“machete”); while the vehicle or metaphorical term for the subjects is “*bin*” (“water”). The implied meaning here is that all the bullets, machetes and stones that the enemies will use will be like water on the bodies of Izo warriors. In the discussion on war songs in chapter 3, it was pointed out that before a warrior goes to war, he will have to go through the *Egbesu* ritual bath. After the bath, the priest will test his body with guns and machetes before he is sent out.

For simile, an explicit comparison between two entirely different entities, this line from another song of circumcision is a good example:

Wo i dinimọ na buru indi tein bara tein o

I've been pushed by him to float like a rotten fish

In this simile, the treatment of the widow by a man who succeeded in tricking her to sleep with him is compared to rotten fish that floats on water. Maybe this researcher should reproduce here what he said in chapter 3 about the context of the song in which this excerpt is taken from. Amongst the Izo, when a man dies, his wife is given to a man in the family of her in-laws as a wife in order to take care of her and the children. The researcher also pointed out that it is not every time a decision is reached immediately by the in-laws as to who should marry her. They

will need to find out if there is any man amongst them who is capable and willing to take her as a wife. It so happens that sometimes, no one is capable or available to become the widow's second husband in the family. In a situation like this, the widow who cannot stay without the thought of a husband, especially when she is the somewhat lazy type who is not able to provide for her children, becomes available to the public, as it were. Different men will come woo her especially if she is the pretty type, saying they will settle down with her. Most of these men do not have any good intentions for her; what they want is to have relations with her and go away. When a man eventually succeeds, then the widow is replaced. The researcher now turns to symbolism, another manifest stylistic technique.

Symbolism

A symbol, as Abrams points out, "is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself" (311). A symbol can be universal, local or private. In most cases, each culture has its own associations for an object or event which exists in several places. It follows that we should have some cultural competence of a people for us to understand and better appreciate such objects and events and the oral cultural productions they appear in. The following is an excerpt from a song of circumcision for analysis:

Bou ki 'zi wẹrị ya dengitimo

Epelepele ị zideị nị ma degha o

If it were *bou* that gave birth to me, I would be prideful

I won't be prideful because *Epelepele* gave birth to me

As was remarked in chapter 3, "*bou*" is a good-looking fish and is preferred to "*epelepele*," a fish full of bones. As such, people prefer the former. However, in this context, the two fish symbolise two different families two people were born into. "*Bou*" and "*epelepele*" symbolise rich and poor families or backgrounds respectively. On the one hand, some got married to wealthy husbands, some ended up with men who do not have money on the other hand. Therefore, the excerpt is teaching society that the person who came from a poor family should not behave like the one from a rich family. You will need to struggle to survive. You cannot

fold your hands in one place and expect something to be on your table or achieve something in life unlike the person from a rich background. A woman who got married to a poor man too should not behave like her fellow woman in the home of a rich man. She will have to feed her children. That means she needs to be industrious. All what the excerpt is teaching humanity here is the need for one to realise the fact that one is poor and different from so-and-so and work hard for one's livelihood. The study now turns to a discussion of euphemism, allusion and hyperbole under one heading.

Euphemism, Allusion and Hyperbole

In traditional Iẓon society, the organs or taboo words were not directly called by their names. Euphemisms were used instead. Euphemism occurs in this excerpt from a song of circumcision:

In' amaran yaĩndou nĩ in' amaran kị dọnmọ!

Ine gịde seidou nĩ ine gịde kị dọnmọ!

Ay me! my walking stick is paining me because it's been broken!

Alas, my basket is paining me because it has been damaged!

“*Amaran*” (“walking stick”) and “*gide*” (“basket”) are euphemisms for labia minora and clitoris respectively. Till date, parents and older ones do not discuss the organs in the presence of young ones in their early teens even though these young ones have known more than them. Since songs of circumcision were performed in the open, euphemisms had to be used. As pointed out in chapter 3, this contrasts with the situation amongst the Zulu and the Ngoni where direct sexual references are made in their puberty and *umsindo* songs (Joseph 67; Read 209). Allusion also occurs in the songs. For example, here is one war song that shows a historical allusion:

Ise se se nembe fiĩnmọ mo

Isee nembe fiĩnmọ

Nine, nine, nine drove Nembe away

Nine drove Nembe away

This song is an allusion to a war that happened a long time ago between the people of Kolokuma and Nembe *ibe mọ* (clans). As pointed out in chapter 3, Kolokuma *ibe* (clan) went to the war with nine (9) war boats, each representing or symbolising the nine children of the founder of the *ibe*, Aluku. It was those children that founded the nine communities which make up Kolokuma *ibe*. It was a war that was fought on waters. In the ensuing battle, Nembe warriors fled; Kolokuma won the war. As such, it is the people of Kolokuma that sing this war song.

For hyperbole, wrestling songs are a very good example. Wrestling is a competition that is known for boasting. As such, quite often, a wrestler exaggerates his strength. This is not just limited to only the wrestler; his supporters too will exaggerate his level of power as in this excerpt:

Bidei owei lamo

Kọri bo gbein yaṣinmọ

Bidei is truly a great man

He breaks the one he holds

This is purely an exaggeration because there is no way an umpire will allow someone to break his opponent amongst the *Ịzọn*. The spectators, the umpire and the competitors too are conscious of any harm that might be done to the opponents. Wrestling is purely a sport; not some violent activity where someone is killed or severely injured. That is why the people enjoy it. As such, there is no way the umpire will allow a competitor to seriously harm his opponent. This brings the discussion of these three devices to a close. Apart from euphemism, allusion and hyperbole, there is also the use of ideophones in the songs, which the study shall now turn to.

Ideophone

In the review on Ojaide's paper in chapter 2, it was noted that *udje* dance songs are characterised by ideophones (62). *Ịzọn* songs are not an exception. Ideophones are words

whose sounds convey pictures and impressions to our minds. In an article published in 1992, Mphande notes that “one of the unique features of African languages is the widespread use of what has come to be known as ‘ideophones’” (117). Iẓon, similar to other African languages, has a lot of ideophones. The ideophones in songs make a performance lively and dramatic. In the section on literary background in her *Oral Literature in Africa*, Finnegan says this about ideophones:

Ideophones are sometimes onomatopoeic, but the acoustic impression often conveys aspects which, in English culture at least, are not normally associated with sound at all – such as manner, colour, taste, smell, silence, action, condition, texture, gait, posture, or intensity....They are specifically introduced to heighten the narrative or add an element of drama. They also come in continually where there is need for a particularly lively style or vivid description and are used with considerable rhetorical effect to express emotion and excitement. (66)

Finnegan’s position is very important for my purposes here because she makes the point that ideophones - or “phonaesthetic words,” as Babalola calls them - do not include just onomatopoeic words alone (Babalola, *Content and Form* 76). In other words, “the majority of ideophones have nothing to do with imitative sounds” (Mphande 122). Here are some ideophones from a song of circumcision:

<i>Muguru-muguru-muguru</i> –	the voice of people in a hidden place talking in low tones
<i>Wĩnkĩ</i> -	the sound iron bedsteads make as one lays on the mattresses on them, especially when making love.
<i>Yankiri-yankiri</i> -	suggests the kind of sound the mosquito net makes when the lovers are in the act.

These ideophones add drama to a performance. They also add vividness to the description of what goes on between the lovers in the mosquito net. An ideophone can also be used to create humour. For example, “*weleke*” in one of the songs of circumcision is used to achieve a humorous effect. “*Weleke*” is an ideophone which describes an open space. As such, when singing the song that contains it, any time the girls of the house of circumcision say the word, they spread their legs, bend the heads towards the spread legs and use their hands to touch their thighs. Some hold their skirts or pieces of wrapper and push out their waists. Alliteration is

another stylistic technique in the songs. As such, the study shall examine how it occurs in the next section.

Alliteration

It should be stated that alliteration is not a defining feature of Ịzọn oral poetry unlike Somali classical oral poetry (*Oral Poetry* 94). That is, the use of alliteration is not systemic. As such, poets and singers are not constrained to follow a particular patterning of it. Nevertheless, alliteration is one of the major stylistic devices in the songs under consideration. Alliterative sounds produce musical effect in the songs, thereby sounding pleasant to the ear. They also create rhythm in the songs that are devoid of meter and formal rhyme (in the sense of English poetry) as well as reinforce the meanings. For example, the /s/ sound recurs in:

Oru seidaba indi seigha

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

In this line, the alliteration reinforces the meaning of the excerpt: when worship of a god is bad, then eating the fish in a lake that belongs to a god is bad too.

The /b/ speech sound appears in the following line taken from a wrestling:

Bidei bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Something has happened in the community Bidei has Come

The same /b/ sound recurs in this excerpt from a political song:

You ukere bemeini yo

I came because of it

The same sound also appears in this line from a song of circumcision:

Bini bolou bo toru imgbọ mọ ya kị efere fegha ya

Why can't the money in the water be used to buy a breakable plate?

The speech sounds /k/ and /kp/ recur in the following lines from some songs of circumcision:

O kẹnị fị kị fị kpọ fị lẹta kpọ gẹ nị yaragha

Even if he has died, he has not written a death letter to me

Here is another line where the /k/ sound alliterates:

Kasa kana subo bo

Bring a basket of *kasa*

In addition, the /m/ sound occurs in this reduplicated ideophone which is used to achieve comic effect:

Muguru-muguru-muguru

Muguru-muguru-muguru

A similar figure of sound, assonance, appears in the songs too; it is the subject of the next section.

Assonance

Assonance is the main stylistic device in Iẓon oral poetry. Different forms of it are used to add musicality, especially euphony to the songs. Note the various occurrences of the /o/ sound, as in “pot”, in the following line:

Ọgọnọ mọ, kiri mọ, ọkpọ bị mọ

The heavens, the earth and the world

The same /o/ sound recurs in this line from a religious song:

I tọrọ biri kọ yọwemi kọ

Whether I'm paddling far off the sea

Furthermore, it is brilliantly made use of in this line taken from a song of circumcision:

O kẹnị dọn kị dọn kọ dọn lẹta kọ gẹ nị yaragha

Even if he's sick, he has not written a sick letter to me

Another sound that recurs in lines is /o/, as in "row". Here is an excerpt from a wrestling song:

Wo dau bi owei yo!

Owei yo owei yo!

Our father is indeed a man!

He's indeed a man, he's indeed a man!

The /a/ sound, as in "pat," recurs in this line taken from a war song:

Badaba o yari

Kill and bring it to him

Another example where this same /a/ sound manifests assonance is this line from a circumcision song:

Nana 'raụ ma bo na akagha fangitima

Wouldn't the woman-owner come take it?

Furthermore, the same sound recurs in this line from a lullaby:

Ari ma dau fa bia

Is it because I don't have a father?

Here is an assonance demonstrated by the /e/ sound, as in "play":

Ine ebi yei bi!

My handsome husband!

Note the recurrence of the /i/ sound, as in "beat":

Ogidi fie o

Let the Machete sound

Assonance is not the only manifest device in the songs. One other stylistic technique is rhyme. What follows is an examination of how that device occurs in the songs.

Rhyme

In *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*, Finnegan supports the view that end assonance or vowel endings of lines are true rhyme. She goes on to argue that "full end-
assonance or rhyme...is a relatively common pattern in some areas (95). As such, she refutes the claim made by Greenway that rhyme hardly exists in "primitive literature" (qtd. in Finnegan, *Oral Poetry* 95). However, despite confuting the argument of Greenway, Finnegan contends that, in African verbal traditions, "it is probably among oral literatures in close contact with writing that full vowel and consonant rhyme is most significant" (96). As such, Finnegan posits that "forms of African prosody which cannot be thus traced to ultimate Arabic influence, the picture is much less clear...it seems that rhyme and regular metre are uncommon or non-existent" (*Oral Literature* 76). Contrary to Finnegan's view, in what follows, this study shall demonstrate that rhyme in the form of end-
assonance is characteristic of the songs of the Ịẓọn even though their language was never in contact with any written language. Lines of Ịẓọn songs normally end in /o/, as in "goat," /a/, as in "bat," and /e/, as in "ray." This is never accidental or a "result of linguistic structure" as opponents of rhyme in traditional literature would have us believe (Finnegan, *Oral Poetry* 95). However, this is a "calculated poetic contrivance" to achieve musicality (Finnegan, *Oral Poetry* 95). Here is a war song for analysis:

Korì ye korì ye bini yo!

Aaan ee ọwọima²

Ọwọima ee ọwọima

Ikputu kì korì kpọ bini yo

Ọwọima ee ọwọima

Alagba subo ya bini yo

Ọwọima ee ọwọima

Aaan ọwọima ee ọwọima

Korì ye korì ye bini yo!

Ọwọima ee ọwọima

Ogidi korì ya bini yo

Ọwọima ee ọwọima

Whatever is held is water!

Are we alarmed?

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

If it's a stone that's held, it's water

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

If it's a gun that's held, it's water

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

Whatever is held is water!

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

Whether it's machete, it's water

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

In this song, all the lines of the lead singer end in /o/ assonance while those of the chorus end in /a/. In common speech, the lead singer would not end his or her lines with /yo/. For example, s/he would say “*kori ye kori ye bini*”. In another song, this time from wrestling, the /o/ end assonance occurs in all the successive lines:

Ye padou yoo

Ama bi ye padou yoo

Ye padou yoo

Bidei bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Opukiri bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Amasi bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Guru bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Igalì bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Ye padou yoo

Ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Bidei has come
 Something has happened
 Something has happened in the community Opukiri has come
 Something has happened
 Something has happened in the community Amasi has come
 Something has happened
 Something has happened in the community Guru has come
 Something has happened
 Something has happened in the community Igalı has come
 Something has happened
 Something has happened
 Something has happened in the community
 Something has happened

In support of this argument that assonance occurs in Iẓon songs, the following examples provide further evidence:

In' agbaiwei bein bo i sai oo ee
In' agbaiwei bein bo i sai oo ee
Timi fa ba Ebire bunuḡha oo ee
Timi fa ba Ebire bunuḡha o
Pabara weleke
Ebire fa ba Timi bunuḡha o
Pabara weleke
Ebire fa ba Timi bunuḡha o
Pabara weleke

My lover, come and carry me
 My lover, come and carry me
 If Timi is not around, Ebieri cannot sleep
 If Timi is not around, Ebieri cannot sleep
Pabara weleke
 If Ebieri is not around, Timi cannot sleep
Pabara weleke
 If Ebieri is not around, Timi cannot sleep
Pabara weleke

Here is a “deliberate art” used to achieve poetic effect. The first three lines end in vowel lengthening /ee/. The other lines end in /o/ and /e/ without any lengthening of vowel. The skill here is this: Any time “*pabara weleke*” follows a line, that preceding line is ended by an /e/ vowel lengthening. This preceding line may be repeated six times with variations but there must be the /e/ end assonance lengthening. However, when “*pabara weleke*” alternates with another line successively, it will always end in /e/ without lengthening of the vowel. The other lines it alternates with must also end in /o/ without any form of vowel lengthening. The study now turns to rhythm in the next section.

Rhythm

Rhythm is so important in oral literature that Finnegan avers that “in discussing prosody it is impossible to get away from the notion of ‘rhythm’ (*Oral Poetry* 90). Writing specifically on rhythm in African literature, Finnegan opines:

The fundamental importance of rhythm in vocal as in other African music is widely accepted, but there is little agreement as to its exact structure. One helpful distinction is between songs in 'free' and those in relatively 'strict' rhythm. In the former songs (or portions of songs) the singing is not co-ordinated with any bodily rhythmic activity such as work or dancing. The very common songs to time, however, have a beat that is articulated with dancing, rhythmic movement, percussion by instruments, or hand-clapping, all of which contribute to the form and attractiveness of the song. These rhythms are worked out in many different ways in various types of song, but one commonly recurring musical feature seems to be the simultaneous use of more than one metre at a time, as a way of heightening the rhythmic tension. (*Oral Literature* 258)

The songs that were collected fall into both strict and free rhythm. For example, in war songs, the rhythm is patterned systematically as in work songs. Put differently, in the performance of war songs, it is the paddles, drumming and handclaps that determine the rhythm of the songs. In other words, it is the rhythm of the paddling and drumming that “provides the framework of the songs” to borrow the words of Finnegan (*Oral Literature* 229). As such, each pause in the songs coincides with the strokes of the paddles in the water and the handclaps by women on the land. Hence, the singing is always accompanied by what Finnegan calls “rhythmic effort”: clapping, strokes of paddles and drumming. Lullabies are also in this category. The singing of them to a baby closely follows some bodily movement of the singer. Perhaps, the beats of the song are dictated by the rhythm provided by the steps of the baby as the mother makes him or her toddle to where she is. These songs are like Iẓon funerary dirges that follow a highly sustained form of rhythm provided by a drum, a very complex pattern of hitting two metals against each other and bodily movement (See Armstrong 66).

All the other songs collected are in the free mode even though the singing of some of them are accompanied with beating of percussions. Stated differently, the other songs are not contrived in a way that follows some rhythm provided by some handclapping or some music provided by some percussion. That means there are no constraints on singers unlike the performance of war songs. In the following section, the diction of the songs will be looked at.

Diction

Generally, the language employed in the songs collected is straightforward unlike songs of *duweī igbela* (funerary poetry) that are highly sophisticated and symbolic (See Armstrong 71). The words used occur in ordinary conversation or common speech. The diction is not restricted or archaic or has a special register. As such, they are easily accessible to anyone who understands the language. However, one song of circumcision is not easily accessible to outsiders because of how symbolic it is:

Inẹ ‘fẹrẹ kọnmu kạweremi o

Bini bolou iyọrọraụ ine ‘fẹrẹ kọnmu kạweremi o

Ẹfẹrẹ mọ barasin o

Ẹfẹrẹ mọ barasin o

Bini bolou bo tọrụ ịmgbọ mọ ya kị ẹfẹrẹ fẹgha ya

My breakable plate was taken and locked
 The woman of the water took my breakable plate and locked it
 Free the breakable plates
 Free the breakable plates
 Why can't the money in the water be used to buy a breakable plate?

As noted in chapter 3, this is a song that expresses the beliefs of the Iẓon about water spirits. It is a song about the life of somebody that a woman in water has locked up. She is told to release the life of the person. As the people would say, once someone's life has been locked up, s/he will not be able to live a normal or satisfying life until death. Maybe any person he or she marries dies. The money s/he looks for never gets to his or her hand. Life becomes miserable for the person. For a young child, as noted above, the people will say the baby is dying and coming because the marine spirit has not released the life of the baby entirely to live on earth. In many instances, it is the mother that will look for a solution. No wonder, the mother asks the marine spirit whether she could not use the money she has to buy a child. It maybe that the marine spirit locked up the life of the child because she does not have a child. She wants the child in the marine world. It is the belief of the Iẓon that not every marine spirit has a child.

Furthermore, the lexical items that are used, especially those of the fauna and flora, foreground the setting of the songs like *udje* dance songs of the Urhobo which this researcher reviewed in chapter 2. These include “water”, “canoe”, “fish”, “crayfish soup”, “palm tree”, “woman-of-the-water” “paddling”, amongst others.

The diction of the songs also includes English words that have been Iẓonised. This means the lack of exact Iẓon parallels do not stop the composers from saying what they want to say. Such words that have no Iẓon parallels have to be domesticated, as it were. These domesticated words enrich the Iẓon language. In his study of *udje* dance songs of the Urhobo, Ojaide calls English words that have been Urhobodised “neologisms” which help the Urhobo language to grow (68). However, this study will refrain from calling the Iẓonised words “neologisms”. Some of these words are “towelì” (towel), “sìkìsì” (six), “pasì” (pass), “Englandì” (England), “bedì” (bed), “lẹta” (letter), “pòdacourtì” (Port Harcourt, “courtì” for court), “heavunù”

(heaven), “Jesu” (Jesus), “rest housu” (rest house), “aboï” (boy), “lagosi” (Lagos), amongst others. In some lines, English is interspersed with the Iẓon language, such as “bye yo imbrau wa” (“Oh my sister, goodbye”), “Pastor minimọ kọri yo” (“Oh, pastor, hold your throat!”). In a marriage ceremony when the woman is looking for the husband to give him the glass of wine in her hand, she adds some English words to the Iẓon such as “daddy”, “honey”, “honey, where are you?”, amongst others, in order to create humour. The section that follows discusses another stylistic technique, elision.

Elision

Elision of adjacent vowels like Yoruba ijala chanting is one other obvious feature in the language of the songs (Babalola, *Content and Form* 78). This characteristic is similar to rapid speech in Iẓon. Let me use some lines here for analysis:

‘N’ aboï yo

It’s my son

In the Iẓon language, the possessive pronouns, “my” and “your” are indicated by “ine”. They are only contrasted by tone. Thus, in the line above, “i” and “e” have been elided. This has also affected the pronunciation: the “n” is pronounced together with the adjacent “a” in “aboï”. However, in the following line, the “i” in “ine” remains but the “e” has been elided:

In’ aru tein bọ tẹba?

Who shot your boat?

In fact, some of the singers elided both the “i” and “e” in “ine”. However, when “e” starts a word that follows “ine”, it is the “e” of the following word that is elided, not the “e” in “ine” as in:

Inẹ fẹrẹ kọnmu kaïweremi o

My breakable plate was taken and locked

However, when “ine” is followed by a consonant, no elision occurs as in:

Ine gide seidoṇ nṇ ine gide kṇ dṇmo!

Alas, my basket is paining me because it has been damaged!

In addition, in the following line, the personal pronoun, “i” has been elided:

Bou kṇ ‘zi wṇṇ ya dengitimo

If it were *bou* that gave birth to me, I would be prideful

There are many instances in the songs where the personal pronoun “i” which follows a word that ends in “i” in normal speech is elided. In normal slow speech, the sentence would have read: “bou kṇ i zi wṇṇ ya dengitimo”.

Some elisions in the songs are normal even in slow speech. Let me take a line from a song for analysis here:

B’ ɔkpɔ zigha otu mɔ bein e inein kṇ bɔlɔ waa?

There are many barren women in the world; is yours the first?

In Iẓon, the demonstrative adjective, “this”, which qualifies a singular noun is “bei”. However, when “bei” is followed by “ɔkpɔ” (world), many speakers elide the “e” and “i”. As such, instead of the normal “bei ɔkpɔ” (this world), it is “b’ ɔkpɔ” (this world). It could be argued that even in common, slow speech, speakers of Iẓon often elide one of adjacent vowels in two separate words, especially when the vowels have the same identity. Many of such examples abound in the songs. The next section examines a feature that may be termed the opposite of elision, vowel lengthening.

Vowel Lengthening

Many sentences in the songs are terminated with vowel lengthening which is the opposite of everyday conversation. One of the importance of vowel elongation is that it gives a singer ample time to recall the next line that will follow. It also adds beauty and a sublime touch of musicality to the songs. Here is a political song where all the endings of the sentences are lengthened:

Bara polo Fafi kị piri

Bara polo Fafi kị piri oo

Bara polo Fafi kị piri

Eri kị bimengi Rest Housu emi oo

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

It's because of him that there's a Rest House

In ordinary conversation, the above lines would be:

Bara polo Fafi ki piri

Bara polo Fafi ki piri

Bara polo Fafi ki piri

Eri ke bimengi Rest Housu emi

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

It's because of him that there's a Rest House

Here is another illustration of vowel elongation:

Abi Timi wai boo

Kasa kana subo bo

Abi Timi wai boo

Kasa kana subo bo

Abị Timi wai boo

I ta biri bi naghaa

Abị Timi wai boo

I ta biri bi naghaa

Abị Timi wai boo

Isele tini kpọ fẹ bo

Abị Timi wai boo

Isele tini kpo fẹ bo

Abị Timi wai boo

Towelị kpọ fẹ bo

Abị Timi wai boo

Towelị kpọ fẹ bo

Come back, Timi

Bring a basket of *kasa*

Come back, Timi

Bring a basket of *kasa*

Come back, Timi

Did you not hear your wife's circumcision?

Come back, Timi

Did you not hear your wife's circumcision?

Come back, Timi

Buy a tin of camwood too

Come back, Timi

Buy and bring a tin of camwood too

Come back, Timi

Buy and bring towel too

Come back, Timi

Buy a towel too

In this song of circumcision, the vowels that end all the first lines of the lead singer are elongated. Also elongated are all the vowels that end the first lines of the chorus.

In conclusion, in this first part, the study has used relevant illustrations to investigate the literary devices that are manifest in Izon songs. In summary, parallelism, repetition, symbolism, elision, vowel lengthening, alliteration, rhyme and metaphor are some of the devices which appear in the songs. As pointed out, assonance is the dominant stylistic technique amongst the songs. From all this, the reader can see that Izon songs are replete with poetic devices like those of the Urhobo, Zulu, Ngoni and Yoruba that were reviewed in chapter 2 (see the reviews of the studies of Fasan, Read, Joseph and Ojaide in chapter 2). In the next part of this chapter, the study will turn attention to the stylistic techniques in the chants.

Style in the Chants of Chief Munamuna

Sixteen (16) devices in the praise chants are highlighted and discussed in this section. They are formula, parallelism, ideophone, simile, metaphor, oxymoron, paradox, irony, personification and hyperbole. Others are allusion, proverb, praise title, alliteration, assonance and vowel lengthening. In addition, attention is given to the diction of the chants. The first stylistic device that will be examined is formula.

Formula

In the preceding chapter, some attention was given to Parry and Lord's idea of composition in performance (see, for example, Lord, *The Singer* 14). It was argued that, like the *gusler* in Yugoslavia, Chief Munamuna is not a memoriser or reciter, rather, he composes his poems in performance. It was further pointed out that the ability to compose in performance by the oral poet, as averred by Parry and Lord, is made possible by "formulas" and "formulaic expressions" and "themes". Therefore, here, the study shall demonstrate how formulas are characteristic of Chief Munamuna's poems.

However, in that chapter, the concept of formula was not explained. Parry, according to Lord, defines formula as “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea” (*The Singer* 30). These formulas, Lord contends, are consciously and unconsciously learnt by the future singer as he listens when others sing and discuss the themes (*The Singer* 21). To Parry and Lord, it is these formulas that aid the poet to compose rapidly. Here is how Lord puts it:

How does the oral poet meet the need of the requirements of rapid composition without the aid of writing and without memorizing a fixed form? His tradition comes to the rescue. Other singers have met the same need, and over many generations there have been developed many phrases which express in the several rhythmic patterns the ideas most common in the poetry. These are the formulas of which Parry wrote...in this second stage of his apprenticeship the younger singer must learn enough of these formulas to sing his song. He learns them by repeated use of them in singing...until the resulting formula which he has heard from others becomes a part of his poetic thought. He must have enough of these formulas to facilitate composition. (*The Singer* 22)

Unlike the oral poet, Lord argues that the literate poet does not need formulas and formulaic expressions to compose his poems. It then follows that a textual analysis of formula density in a poem will tell the reader whether it was composed by a literate poet or a verbal artist. As put by Magoun, one of the major proponents of the oral-formulaic theory:

The recurrence in a given poem of an appreciable number of formulas or formulaic phrases brands the latter as oral, just as a lack of such repetitions marks a poem as composed in a lettered tradition. Oral poetry, it may be safely said, is composed entirely of formulas, large and small, while lettered poetry is never formulaic, though lettered poets occasionally consciously repeat themselves or quote verbatim from other poets in order to produce a specific rhetorical or literary effect. (447)

It would seem that formulas are the “oft-repeated phrases” in an oral poem or in the poems of a people’s poetic tradition. However, this is hardly the case. In the words of Haymes, “scholarship since Parry has consistently confused the two concepts [‘oral formula’ and ‘repeated phrase’] without sufficient regard for the consequences” (992). Therefore, Haymes points out that Parry’s definition of formula that was quoted moments ago includes not only repetition but also usefulness (393). Haymes argues that it was Magoun’s conception of what an oral formula is that “codified the notion that any repetition could be considered” a formula (392). Magoun had, in an article in 1953, defined formula as “a word-group of any size or importance which appears elsewhere in *Beowulf* or other Anglo-Saxon poems unchanged or virtually unchanged” (449).

It then follows that for a word or phrase to be regarded as a formula it must be repeated and be useful to the verbal artist. Simply put, repetition alone does not make a word or a phrase a formula. Lord, in a later essay, and in response to Benson's article published in 1966 which countered the conclusions of Magoun's 1953 paper, makes this point clearer:

One cannot have formulas outside of oral traditional verse, because it is the function of formulas to make composition easier under the necessities of rapid composition in performance, and if that necessity no longer exists, one no longer has formulas. If one discovers repeated phrases in texts known not to be oral traditional texts, then they should be called repeated phrases rather than formulas. I do not believe that this is quibbling about terms, because the distinction is functional. ("Formula" 204; see also Lord "Perspectives" 491-493)

It is for all this which led Opland to point out, and rightly so, that "to undertake a detailed cross-cultural comparison of Yugoslavian oral epic and Xhosa izibongo with regard to the formula as defined by Parry and Lord, therefore, one must take three aspects into consideration: meter, usefulness, and repetition." (*Xhosa Oral* 159). Therefore, the study needs to point out early enough that the chants of Chief Munamuna lack meter. That is, Parry's "regularly employed" is examined "under no metrical conditions." Furthermore, this study, like Opland's, is aware that the poems of Chief Munamuna are eulogies and praises and not epics that Parry and Lord studied to draw their conclusions (*Xhosa Oral* 156). In addition, Chief Munamuna did not learn formulas from others; he created the formulas unlike the epic tradition in Yugoslavia. For one thing, praise chanting, as has been said many times in this study, is alien to his ethnic group, the Iẓon. For another, Chief Munamuna is the only person who chants poetry like the *imbongi* of the Bantu-speaking peoples of southern Africa and the Yoruba verbal artist.

In what follows, the study shall use two chants to examine the extent to which Chief Munamuna uses phrases that are "regularly employed" in his corpus and how they are useful to his compositions. Also, let it be quickly added that this researcher's study of formulas in the chants of Chief Munamuna has in mind Parry's view of formula beyond one word or the phrase (See, for example, Lord "Formula" 481). The first poem is a eulogy. The poem was chanted for Captain Mala when he died. In line with the oral-formulaic theory, this researcher has used solid underlining to indicate phrases that occur exactly or verbatim in the corpus of funerary chants by Chief Munamuna and broken underlining to show those that could be pointed out as "formulaic" It is a fairly long poem. As such, it will not be shown here. Both the Iẓon and the English texts are in Appendix I where all the chants used in this study are listed.

In the poem, 33 lines are not repeated elsewhere in Chief Munamuna's funerary corpus or the oeuvre of his praises. This is understandable. Most of the lines refer directly to events in Captain Mala's life. Some refer to his family members. For example, lines 210-215 refer to Mala's brother, Chief Nestor Binabor, who was the Speaker of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly at the time of the burial. On the other hand, lines 222-225 refer to the members of the committee who successfully organised the burial ceremony. This researcher has not seen line 143 employed elsewhere in the corpus of Munamuna. However, I am sure it has been used somewhere because it is a proverb about a powerful person or a dignitary; and Chief Munamuna has chanted many for some big names. Of the lines that are marked, the first 15 are not chanted but said in a normal speaking voice. The lines refer to the "opening" of the poem. The "opening" introduces the oral poet as the chanter, the subject chanted for, as well as an appeal to the audience to listen to what he (the chanter) has to offer (see also the previous chapter for the function this opening performs in the chants of Chief Munamuna). Lines 241-249 are the "closing" of the poem. The closing refers to Chief Munamuna himself. That is how he closes his poems in public performances, not only during burials. One should also note the frequent occurrence of "*a yerimo!*" (you see!). It appears 6 times in this poem. It refers to "stall," a formula that gives "the performer time to think of what to say next" (Rosenberg, "Oral Sermons" 76; see also Rosenberg, "The Formulaic Quality" 13-14).

The second poem is the one Chief Munamuna chanted for me using me as the social context. The poem is not as long as the first one; as such, it will be reproduced here (see both the Izon and English versions in Appendix 1):

Abo erein badei. erein badei ye

Bongbai ke a ba olotu eriunmono

Hinye, imene Adogidigbo

Okumoagala, keni agono a timi keni gbein

A yerimo!

Karibuo kere-kere, zibuo kere-kere

Agbia adein mo beke adein mo benebene keni apagha

Bongbai erein me, imene oubebe olotu keni, Izon ibe

Ani Imomotimi, Undutimi yai

10. Armstrong yai, Johnson yai

Omene ke duoni bei oubebe gbolomene

Okere douni oubebe aru saiweremi ke ton

Sai lepo...

A verimo!

Kemetubo ke wenimenefere se imbal wenikuromo

Izon otu gbaamo

Inemo ke bumo asuo

Wo aketitimi yi bongbai erein me okere bo kokobaiyi a padei ke ton

Izon otu gbaamo

20. Teimene teimene kokobaiyi

Imene oubebe olotu keni Izon ibe

I peipelemo

Karibuo kere-kere, zibuo kere-kere

Agbia adein mo beke adein mo benebene keni apagha

Imomotimi, unene funimi olotu

Bongbai erein me Izon oya donweri

Didee South Africa duo you bo Izon ibe la

Bitimi bi bo obebe olotu warị gbolo su

Tu tie ama

30. Obebe me o a yila kaa ne o aketaru karamo kule fedomenene

Ani ke Izon kpo tukpa me abadi bein, ogbo bein, agono ikikai bo pein pa...

Ani ke duoni wo bo benimi

Izon me yila kaamo; Izon me yila kaamo

Ayerimo

Wo bei Nigeria opu ibe me

Wo binaotu, beni biri keme ande biragha

Keme amene bobo yi

Agono emi bo kiri indi dangha

Wo bobo yi me wo bobo yi

40. Izon me yila kaamo

Naame...

Amassoma ogbo ke emi pere

Ani wo ba imene imene ke namini

Ini egberi tein agono

Itikaj bain ka kpọ ememein atigha

Emein zi pou ka ofoinmo

Akere kue kue sono manga

Amen amapon ake kpele tei-um bo aken bai tua ke taara dein

Ipepelemo

50. Kuro zokpozo-zokpozo-zokpozo-zokpozo, adodo

Ala okpo gotoru-gotoru

Pere apa siamesi

Epelepele owa ke peremo

Bongbai erein me Izon ifie ladei ke ton

Ani douni Izon owou bo se keni suomo

Agbaara a-timi aditimi beni bodei

Wo se kenisoumo, Izon owou bo se kenisoumo

Ani da wo keniwenimo ni ke Izon ibe kpo mu ebi a padei

Ani douni wo kenisuomo Izon tukpa me abadi bein. ogbo

bein. agono ikikai bo pein pa...

60. Izon ibe me wo yi, Izon ibe me wo yi

Zene keme tolomo wo peregha

A verimo

Poroporo kpo ado beinmene. kpeere-kpeere kpo ado beinmene

Ani douni i bere duo waidei

Imene Adolphus Munamuna

Oubebe Olotu Keni, Izon Ibe

Ogboin tubo

Gbesi Otuan ke ini ama

Otumongalanga indi ka duwon do

70. Ogboin tu fete-fete, kiri fete-fete, kiri fete-fete

Izon otu a do...

Ah! the day has broken, the day has broken

It's today we shall see the champion again

Yes, I'm the great storyteller

The mighty spear who hops from the top of one tree to the other

You see!

There are different faiths; there are different births

The native knife and the English knife are never the same

Today, I, the Chief Oral Poet of the Izon nation

That's Imomotimi, son of Undutimi

10. Son of Armstrong, son of Johnson

It's for him that this oral poem is being chanted

It's for him this canoe of oral poetry is ferried

Fully laden – *lepo*...

You see!

Whatever work a man is doing should be done with all seriousness

The Izon say

It's through perseverance one gets to shore

What we had been playing with has turned out to be a

very important thing today

The Izon say

20. The thing that's always taken for a play is real

I'm the Chief Oral Poet of Izon nation

Hear me well

There are different faiths; there are different births

The native knife and the English knife are never the same

Imomotimi, he is a great scholar

Today, because of the plight of the Izon

Has come all the way from South Africa to Izon nation

He came asking of the Chief Oral Poet until he got to his house

Why the search?

30. Because oral poetry is so important to him that he would like to use

So that the lamp of Izon too will shine across the sea, the mountains
and high above the stars of the heaven

Izon is very important; Izon is very Important

In this our great country, Nigeria

Everyone has his own

Our own is our own

Naame...!

Your matter hangs on a tree

The manatee floats on the shore of its birth

The one who doesn't take his language seriously, just three days from the *Aken* day!

50. Power is in different quantum forms - *zokpozozokpozozokpozozokpozozokpozoh heart!*

The life of nobility is of different forms

Riches are of different forms

Epelepele becomes rich at old age

Today, it's the turn of Izon

For that, let all the children of Izon come together

The season we stand aside to look is over has passed

Let us come together, let all children of Izon come together

So that all of us will work together in order that Izon nation will become great

For that, let's come together and make the lamp of Izon to shine across the

sea, the land and high above the stars of the heaven mountains

60. Izon nation is our own; Izon nation is our own

Another person will not develop it for us

You see!

Whether it is in small sizes, the basket will still be full; whether it is in

big sizes, the basket will still be full – *pọrọ-pọrọ, kpeere-kpeere*

Therefore, I go back from here

I am Adolphus Munamuna

The Chief Poet of the Izon Nation

Son of Ogboin;

Precisely, Otuan is my community

The chameleon that uses fish as chewing stick

70. *Ogboin tu fete-fete, kiri fete-fete, kiri fete-fete*

People of Izon, I salute you

The poem has 70 lines. 15 lines are not marked. They refer to this researcher - who he is, the purpose for which he met him, and what, in the opinion of the poet, this researcher hopes to achieve with his chants – and what many persons in İzönland feel about his art. All the other lines are employed elsewhere in the verbal artist's corpus. Line 2 is classified as a probable formula. This researcher has not seen it employed exactly in the other poems he has of Chief Munamuna. However, this researcher is sure he has used it. It maybe that this researcher does not have the poem or poems where it appears in or his eyes have not gone to where it is used in the poems he has. In this poem, too, the “stall” formula, “a yerimö!” (“You see!”) occurs four times.

The analyses of these two poems have shown that a very high number of phrases that occur in the texts are found in other chants by Chief Munamuna. That means formula density is of a very high proportion in the poems. They are useful and necessary to him in composing funeral praises and non-funeral subjects during performances. They make him compose chants rapidly with ease; an indication that the formulas are functional. In the next section, the study shall show how parallelism is manifested in the praise chants.

Parallelism

Some scholars of verbal arts have argued that parallelism and its variants are characteristic of African oral poetry. For example, in an obscure but illuminating article, Fortune uses two oral poems in Shona verbal forms to study parallelism, chiasmus and linking (67-74). Furthermore, Damane and Sanders, in the section on poetic qualities in their study of Sotho oral poetry, find linking and parallelism as common characteristics (54-55). In addition, Lestrade finds them as the major structural devices in Bantu oral traditions (307-308). Moreover, Kunene devotes an entire chapter in his study of the *dithoko* of the Basotho to parallelism and its sub-forms (68-101). Also, Kaschula identifies parallelism as an important tool in the hands of the *imbongi* and the west African griot in his comparative cross-regional study of the two verbal artists (“Imbongi and Griot” 73). Opland too has observed the existence of parallelism and its different forms in Xhosa oral poetry (“Xhosa Tribal Poet” 195-196; *Xhosa Oral* 166-167). In what follows, the study shall use some examples to demonstrate how parallelism and its forms recur in the chants of Chief Munamuna which he uses to achieve balance, develop ideas and build up his chants.

The following two lines are structurally the same and express the same idea. However, the idea is exemplified or expressed using different images. This example of perfect parallelism is used to develop the theme of incapability of the lifeless corpse of Sele Aguozi:

Bira kpọn kpọ bogha

Buọ kpọn kpọ bogha

Draw the hand, she won't come back

Draw the leg, she won't come back

The semantic parallelism, what Kunene calls “repetition of syntactic slots,” in the lines below is used to achieve balance. In the preceding lines, the poet had said in a prayer that no bad thing should come to Ogboin *ibe* (clan) in the reign of King Oweipa Jones-Ere:

Tọrụ kpọ na

Bou kpọ na

Let the river hear

Let the forest hear

Here is a proverb, meaning there is no discrimination, which recurs often in the chants of the Chief that shows parallelism:

Nama diẹgha, indi diẹgha

No separating of animals, no separating of fish

In the parallel line above, divided by a breath pause, the high (animal) and the low (fish) are contrasted or juxtaposed. Parallelism also occurs below where the artist uses different images to express the same idea in a line divided by a breath pause:

Imẹnẹ okulọ, amẹnẹ ufan

You are the front, she is the rear

The line above is taken from the marriage poem of Tokoni and Ekiye. The metaphor for the matrimonial relationship used here is a canoe. Tokoni, the woman, will sit in the back while Ekiye, the husband, sits on the front seat to paddle the canoe.

Here is another one:

Kala kpọ sẹlẹgha

Okosu kpọ sẹlẹgha

It doesn't reject the young

It doesn't reject the old

In the above parallelism, the legs and the hands are contrasted. Here is another instance of parallelism. It is used to build up the idea that every living thing has an end:

Nama kpọ amẹnẹ wari

Ofoṇi kpọ amẹnẹ wari

Beni bolou ma imi indi kpọ amẹnẹ wari

Amẹnẹ fẹrẹ wẹṇṣiṇ bọ wari

The animal goes to its home

The bird goes to its home

The fish in the river goes to its home

Whoever finishes his work goes home

In fact, this is the chief means by which Chief Munamuna builds his chants. That is, he will say something. Then he develops the idea by using the following lines to express the preceding

idea. All the lines have parallel structures. However, each of the lines has a different “character.” Apart from this “character,” all the words are the same, as in:

A sụọdẹi wari pịna kẹ pịna

Daụ kpọ sụọdẹi wari

Yai kpọ sụọdẹi wari

Ebi tẹmẹ kpọ sụọdẹi wari

There’s light in the home she’s dwelt

A home that the Father has dwelt

A home that the Son has dwelt

A home that the Holy Spirit has dwelt

The reference here is to a good wife who is difficult to get. In the poem where the excerpt is taken from, the good woman refers to Tokoni.

Also, notice how the poet uses parallel sentences to build the idea of approval and acceptance by “exemplification” or “substantiation,” to borrow the terms of Fortune, the communities making up Ogboin clan (represented by the names of their founders) of the Kingship of Oweipa Jones-Ere in the following excerpt (See Fortune 68-69, on development, exemplification or substantiation in cross-linking):

Ama sẹ pẹlẹ ikein kẹ tu lamọ

Akama sụọ pẹlẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

Ikpai sụọ pẹlẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

Oboro sụọ pẹlẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

It is the cloth cut by the whole community that goes around the waist

Akama joined to cut it for you

Ikpai joined to cut it for you

Oboro joined to cut it for you

In another two lines, the poet uses parallelism to make his point about coming and going in life:

Kenị otu bomenę; kenị otu waịmenę

Some people are coming; some people are going

The following is an example of parallelism by initial linking, what Kunene calls “vertical-line repetition pattern,” which is used to highlight some of the traits of a strong man:

Kurọ kemę kporoka-kporoka

Kurọ kemę kakalụ-kakalụ

Kurọ kemę gedeba-gedeba-gedeba

The strongman with fast pace – *kporoka-kporoka*¹⁸

The strong man with terrible looks - *kakalụ-kakalụ*¹⁹

The strongman with giant strides – *gedeba-gedeba-gedeba*²⁰

The lines below are an instance of initial linking too, where the “undo” of the first line starts the second to build it up:

Undo kę yi tọlọmọwei

Undo emi bọ ekiyemọyi mi

It’s life which makes good

The one who has life has hope

There is also another initial linking that the poet uses to bring out the qualities of Sele Aguozi:

Warigbaljere kẹ ini ẹrẹ

Waridaere kẹ ini ẹrẹ

Provider for the home is your name

Leader of the home is your name

As pointed out earlier, the oral artist uses parallelism to develop his ideas and build the chants. In addition, this literary technique gives the chants balance. The next stylistic technique which will be examined is ideophone.

Ideophone

Ideophones are used by the verbal poet to add drama and vividness to his performance. The ideophones used by the poet include not only those associated with sound but also those associated with manner, size, amazement, joy, action, appearance, gait, amongst others. It is also worth pointing out that most of the ideophones that appear in the poems of the Chief are reduplicated. Some of these are:

yẹn-yẹn-yẹn-yẹn - Connotes how splendid the audience look in their attires.

gedeba-gedeba-gedeba – How a powerful man walks.

Kporoka-kporoka - How quickly someone walks, especially in the forest.

gbogbola-gbogbola – Expresses the posture of the fairy on the ground when he was felled by the King.

kakalu-kakalu - How terribly looking the face of a strongman is.

wonona-wonona-wonona – The brightness of light, in the sense of success in the clan.

digbaa – The manner in which something, especially something huge and heavy, falls on water.

<i>gbẹẹnẹ-gbẹẹnẹ-gbẹẹnẹ -</i>	Connotes how light blinks.
<i>batan-batan-batan –</i>	The manner in which something is stuck on the ground. If your feet are in that manner, there is no way you can unfix them.
<i>Yọgọ-yọgọ-tọkọ-tọkọ -</i>	Describes the joy and happiness of someone for whom something good has happened to.
<i>gbogbosi-gbosi -</i>	How big and vast someone’s power is.
<i>zokpozọ-zokpozọ-zokpozọ-kpozọ –</i>	How big and vast someone’s power is.
<i>gbogosa-gbogosa -</i>	How big and long something is.
<i>wasara-wasara -</i>	How big and long something is on the ground.
<i>Yonko-yonko-yonko</i>	The nodding of the head to say a “yes” or approval.
<i>kamu-kamu-kamu -</i>	A place that has stale air.
<i>gerein-gerein -</i>	How tight someone holds something.
<i>kokorokoo -</i>	The sound of a cock crowing.
<i>pọsịọ-pọsịọ-pọsịọ-pọsịọ</i>	Describes success.
<i>zieị-zieị-zieị-zieị -</i>	Something in abundance.
<i>Sarai-sarai-sarai -</i>	Something in abundance
<i>zigbei-zigbei-zigbei-zigbei -</i>	Something in abundance

The study now takes another manifest device, simile, in the chants for analysis

Simile

Similes are employed by the artist to create mental pictures – images – in the minds of the audience. Here is one simile taken from “Ịzọn Ibe”:

Olulu gbiri-gbiri-gbiri-gbiri

Ingọ bira pou, buọ pou

Like the millipede – *gbiri-gbiri-gbiri-gbiri*²¹

The riches fall on the hand, fall on the leg

In the lines above, the poet compares the riches in Iẓonland to lines of millipedes. When millipedes appear in a place in their numbers, no one is able to count them. To the poet, this is how abundant the wealth of the Iẓon is.

Here is another simile from that same poem:

Kon bọ kon bọ bẹbẹ

Abẹi nama, pẹi bọ pẹi bọ amẹnẹ wari

Anyone who takes it is after himself

Like the big animal; anyone who cuts it takes it home

The riches of the Iẓon nation are compared to the way people go about a big dead animal. Everyone goes to cut it for himself. Nobody has time to cut it for another person. The poet is making reference to Iẓon politicians: governors and parliamentarians who have some access to the riches of the Iẓon, as it were. However, rather than use the riches to improve the lot of their ethnic group, they know only themselves. That is, these politicians cut the “big animal” for themselves only, as it were. Another poetic device for comparison employed by the Chief is metaphor.

Metaphor

The most recurring figure of speech in the chants of Chief Munamuna is metaphor. One example is:

Ebi fo obori imẹlị

Obori imẹlị la bọ fokpa

A good in-law is a goat that has fat

Anyone who gets the fat of a goat *fokpa*²²!

Here, a good in-law is compared to a goat that has fat. A goat that has fat all over its body is very tasty unlike the one that does not have any fat. The one who is fortunate to have such a goat is happy. So it is with someone who has a good in-law. The poet here refers to Captain Mala as the goat that had fat because of how he was to his wife's people. This is one metaphor that constantly recurs in the poems of the artist. Sometimes, it appears in different forms, as in:

Ebi igoni òmèlì indi

Ìzón ibe ma boo

A good visitor is a fish that has oil

Come to Izon nation

In another example of metaphor, the poet compares Sele Aguozi to a basket:

Ìkpèrètùagìdè, ani ini èrè kẹ tòn

A basket that's used to put stones is your name

In Izonland, before this time, many homes (if not all) had a big basket for putting dry fish at home. A home could have more than four baskets for fishing purposes. However, the biggest of them all was always at home. The basket could stay for many years because there was no need of replacing it since it would not be taken out for fishing. It would wear out because of how old it had stayed but the owner would not mind. This kind of basket is called “*ìkpèrè tụa gìdè*.” A woman who was married at a young age, moved in with her husband to his place, had children, grandchildren and maybe great-grandchildren and lived on until old age before death is compared to this kind of basket.

Here is another metaphor for illustration:

A yẹrìmọ

Pakumọ kẹ gba kpọ pamẹnẹ

Pa kẹ gba kpọ pamẹnẹ

Oke-ama-otu gbẹ sa

Ani dūweṣi ama

Kala kpọ sẹlẹgha

Okosu kpọ sẹlẹgha

Ị la bai ị kpọ yọu kẹ yọudeṣi

You see!

Even if you say don't happen, it still happens

If you say happen, it happens

It's the debt we pay rats

That's the land of the dead

It doesn't reject the young

Nor does it reject the old

When it is your turn, you go on the journey

Here, death is compared to the debt that humans owe rats. Every debt owed someone is settled at some time in life. However, to the poet, the one humans owe rats is never settled in the sense that there is no time rats stop coming to a house. Each time they come, they eat and go back. It is like the debt we also owe death. It never stops coming. There is no day death, like the rat, will say: "I am no longer coming; it is enough."

Furthermore, metaphor is illustrated in the excerpt below:

"Ini ta owei zideṣi"

"Abo bei kpọ wari ọdọu"

"My wife has given birth to a male child"

“Oh, what a family rock!”

In the lines above, a male child – baby Mala - is compared to a rock. Like a rock, the male child does not move into another family or community. He will always remain a member of the family and the community he was born into unlike the girl child that will someday move into another family. He stays in one place like the rock. For the birth of a girl, the Iẓon would say: “*Ini ta ama zidei*” (“My wife has given birth to a community”), meaning, she would go to another place and make a community out of it.

The following is another one taken from “Iẓon Ibe”:

Peipeinengi, peibira peibira, bein bein ke bein

The whale is always full no matter how you cut it off

In the above excerpt, the poet compares the riches of the Iẓon, especially crude oil, to the whale. No matter how one has cut out or chopped off the whale, it looks as if it is getting bigger and bigger. So it is with the crude oil in Iẓonland. It is still in abundance despite the fact that the Nigerian government has been exporting it in commercial quantities since the late 1950s.

The last metaphor that will be examined here is taken from the poem, “HIV/AIDS”:

Okotoro kiri digi okoo

Arikpokpo emi

Okotoro, the ground digger!

There’s constipation

Here, a man or woman who sleeps with different persons is compared to the small bird, *okotoro*, that uses its beak to taste anything it sees. The bird is normally advised by another little bird that constipation awaits it for eating everything. Constipation also awaits the person who sleeps around every time. However, his or her form of constipation comes in the form of contracting AIDS, the result being death.

As the reader has seen thus far, metaphor is by far the most prominent poetic technique in the praise chants. The next section that follows combines and examines oxymoron, paradox and irony.

Oxymoron, Paradox and Irony

Oxymoron, which the English critic, Cuddon, describes as a figure of speech that “combines incongruous and apparently contradictory words and meanings for a special effect” also occurs in the chants of Chief Munamuna (627). Here is one from HIV/AIDS:

Ingiomọ ba
Slow-suffering killer

In this line, the poet says AIDS brings pleasure and death at the same time.

For paradox, here is an example of a seemingly paradoxical statement:

Fẹkoro bai kpọ kẹni oge...
The day of death is another celebration

On looking at this statement, it seems absurd and contradictory. It can only make sense when it has been interpreted to the one who may not be culturally competent. As pointed out in chapter 1, amongst the Iẓon, the death of an old man is always a celebration because of their religious beliefs. As such, for those who can afford it, there is always heavy drinking and eating. For one thing, the person who has died will protect the living in the family. Furthermore, if the person was suffering or physically challenged in life before, his death has relieved him and set him free from all this.

Irony is one other poetic quality of the chants. Here is one example that illustrates the use of irony in chants:

Anda bi bọ yẹrị ya biẹndịse
The one asking for a wrestle bout suddenly desires to poop
when he sees you

It is an irony that the one who has been going around asking for a wrestling bout from people goes into hiding on seeing King Oweipa Jones-Ere. Another example is:

Nimigha yi seikaamọ

Daṣogbonimigha akpa a bira tūa sẹlẹ pamọ amẹnẹ bọbọ daṣ ogbo

kẹ fẹ; ịgalaba

Amapon nagma kemẹ amẹnẹ daṣ ogbo nimigha

Amẹnẹ daṣ ogbo nimigha kemẹ ama miẹ yi nimigha

Ignorance is very bad

Lack-of-knowledge-of-father's land put hand in his pocket

and brought out money and bought his own father's land; *ịgalaba!*

The one who doesn't understand his language is one who

doesn't know his father's land

The one who doesn't know his father's land does not know

the practices of his people

It is supremely ironic that one's father's land was sold to one by an entirely different person. The next poetic device to be examined is personification.

Personification

This is a device in which human attributes are ascribed to inanimate things. For example, the poet says:

Fẹ sọọ warị seimọ

Death is a destroyer of any house it visits

Death here has been endowed with a human attribute: visitor. In another example, the poet says:

Agbọlọ tọn bira seigha

*Agbọlọ*²² does not dance the way it's expected

Here, “dance”, a human trait, is ascribed to “*agbọlọ*” (a type of mollusk). Furthermore, the poet attributes what humans do – bidding someone farewell - to a bird in the excerpt below:

Kẹnị bai, kẹnị bai ofoni bai a tẹin pẹrẹgha

The bird never says a good-bye to the tree

In another one, “wind” is given the quality of anger:

Ebiri lolo bira lolo bira angolo sougha

No matter the anger of the wind, it does nothing to the stubborn grass

Personification further occurs in the following excerpt from HIV/AIDS, in which, according to the poet, the disease carries a stick on both hands looking for someone to hit with:

HIV/AIDS

Ingiomọ ba oge

Kọnọ bira kpọ ingbeke

Ama bira kpọ ingbeke

Wo ị dọkọrị ya kpasi, dụwẹjamabou

HIV/AIDS

Slow-suffering-killer celebration

Stick on the left hand

Stick on the right hand

When it finds you, *kpasi*, the land of the dead

Moreover, the chants of Chief Munamuna exhibit hyperbole, which is the subject in the next section.

Hyperbole

Praise poetry is known for its exaggeration. For example, the poet says this about the reign of Oweipa Jones-Ere on the throne of Ogboin clan:

A yerimọ!

Oweipa Jones-Ere Ogboin ikasi me pipẹ ya

60. *Ibe sẹ dọ...*

Gboro fiyai pa

Nama kogha; indi kogha

Ogboin awọu-bo dọu yi bira asuọ

Ofuro ere bo zi ogbo gbẹin

Ere zi, owei zi Ogboin ma tua

Wa kẹ wa

Ogboin ibe sẹ wa wa kẹ wa

Beke koro yọ, ebi koro yọ

Ibe me tari ladei

70. *Ogboin awọu bo sẹ bọlọu bọ*

Kemese wa wa kẹ wa

Wonona, wonona, wonona

Di yọ, di yọ, pina kẹ pina

Ibe sẹ dọ...

Ibe sẹ dọ...

Ibe se dọ, dọ, dọ...

You see!

When Oweipa Jones Ere sat on the throne

60. Peace reigns in all the clan

What is planted is reaped bountifully

No lack of meat; no lack of fish

The children of Ogboin get what they look for

The pregnant women put to bed safely

Give birth to male and female into Ogboin clan

Growth to growth

The whole of Ogboin clan continues to grow

Where there is modernity, there is development

The clan is blessed

70. Children of Ogboin prosper

Everyone continues to grow

Brightness, brightness, brightness – *wonona-wonona-wonona*

Wherever you look, there is light

The is peace in all the clan

There is peace in all the clan

Peace, peace, peace in all the clan

This whole excerpt is purely a hyperbole. King Oweipa has been on the throne for years. As such, it is pure fiction to claim that no baby has died in all the communities making up the clan. Furthermore, one of those communities is the host community of the Bayelsa-State owned Niger Delta University, where there have been clashes between cultists. In addition, from

personal experience, elections in the State have also seen confrontations of rival political parties in those communities. Many times, these have led to deaths of people.

In addition, the poet says this of the King:

Bira bira umber kori guda

You bend the wild pig with bare hands

It is purely an exaggeration to say that the King Oweipa Jones-Ere held a live wild bush pig or warthog with his hands, let alone bending it. The study now turns to a discussion of allusion in the chants of the Chief.

Allusion

Allusion, in the words of Abrams, is a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage” (9). Okpewho, for one, notes that allusions are characteristic of praise songs (*Africa Oral* 100). Here is a good example of an allusion:

Adegbe bari ke indi

Adegbe yields much more fish when it's not broached the following year

Adegbe is a popular lake in the poet's Ogboin clan. Each year, a day is set aside for fishing in it. However, the Iẓon man will say that when fishing has occurred in a lake or pond, it should be left for one complete year before another fishing should take place in it again. It is believed that by leaving it for one year, the fish will have become bigger and in abundance. There are some persons who leave their ponds for two to three years before bailing them. Maybe it should be added that before this time, almost every Iẓon man had a pond in the bush he dug by himself or paid people to dig for him. Immediately after the flood season, and when the water in the pond had receded well enough, a man would take his family members and friends to bail it. Thereafter, he prepared it for another flood season. It is different from today's artificial agricultural ponds that are dug in the homes of people.

The poet chanted the praise poem where this line is taken from on one of the political campaigns of his boss, Seriake Dickson, the governor of Bayelsa State. At that time, Governor Dickson had completed his first tenure of four years in office and was campaigning for a second term of four years in office again. As such, he was saying that the electorate should give Governor Dickson a second term because things would be better than before since he had already known many things as a result of the experience he had got in his first tenure.

There is also a biblical allusion:

Ama bira, ani dau yai bo, dọọ bọlọu asuọ

Kọnọ ikpangị, imbo, imbo, andọ fa, sei bou pere omoni ama

The ones on the right, they are of the Father; enter into your rest

On the left, millions, countless, are slaves of the king of the evil forest

This allusion refers to the view expressed in the Bible which says that in the last days, after God has judged all humans based on what they did while alive, those who are found worthy shall be on his right, while those unworthy shall be on his left to be ruled by Satan in hell. In the next section, how proverbs are made use of in the praise chants will be investigated.

Proverb

A most interesting aspect of Chief Munamuna's chants is the copious use of proverbs. In what follows, the study shall list some and explain how they bear on the message(s) he passes across to his audience. One that normally recurs in the chants is:

Ama sẹ pẹlẹ ikein kẹ tu lamọ

“It's the cloth cut by the whole community that goes around the waist”

This proverb, amongst the Izon, expresses acceptance or approval of someone or something by everyone involved. Let me bring in two excerpts from two poems where this proverb occurs. The first is from the poem on King Oweipa Jones-Ere:

Ama sẹ pẹlẹ ikein kẹ tu lamọ

Akama sụọ pẹlẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

Ikpai sụọ pẹlẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

Oboro sụọ pẹlẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

Ogboin sẹ pẹlẹ ị kẹrẹ pẹrẹmọ

It is the cloth cut by the whole community that goes around the waist

Akama joined to cut it for you

Ikpai joined to cut it for you

Oboro joined to cut it for you

All Ogboin cut it for you

Akama, Ikpai and Oboro, children of Ogboin, the founder of Ogboin clan, are the founders of the communities making up Ogboin clan. As such, the poet means that King Jones-Ere's kingship has the approval of all the communities in the clan. The second excerpt is from the poem on his boss, Governor Seriake Dickson of Bayelsa State:

Ama sẹ pẹlẹ ikein kẹ tu lamọ

Yenagoa sụọ pẹlẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

Ogbia, Nembe, Brass, sụọ pẹlẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

Kolokuma/Opokuma, Sagbama, Ekeremo sụọ pẹlẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

Southern Ijaw sụọ pẹlẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

Bayelsa sẹ pẹlẹ ịkẹrẹ pẹrẹmọ

It's the covering-cloth cut by the whole community that

goes around the waist

Yenagoa joined to cut it for you

Ogbia, Nembe, Brass joined to cut it for you

Kolokuma/Opokuma, Sagbama, Ekeremo joined to cut it for you

Southern Ijaw joined to cut for you

All Bayelsa cut it for you

Bayelsa State consists of eight local government areas: Kolokuma/Opokuma, Sagbama, Ekeremor, Brass, Nembe, Yenagoa, Ogbia and Southern Ijaw. To the poet, the mandate of Chief Seriake Dickson as the governor of the State was given to him by all the eight local government areas.

Another proverb that often occurs is:

Epelepele becomes rich at old age

Epelepele becomes rich at old age

This proverb appears in the poems the oral poet chanted about this researcher, Captain Mala and Sele Aguozi. Let me examine the bearing it has on all the three chants. *Epelepele* is a kind of fish that has lots of bones. The bones are so many that people do not like eating it when it is still small. However, when it is big or mature, people can eat it without doing much harm to their mouths, throats and all that because the bones will have become fewer and/or big enough in a way that could be eaten cautiously, as it were. Put differently, the Iẓon like eating it when it is mature, which means that it had been in water for long time. How does this apply to Sele Aguozi?

Sele Aguozi had a daughter who got married to the first executive governor of Bayelsa State, Chief DSP Alamieyeseigha. Sele Aguozi was already an old woman when her son-in-law became the governor. That means Sele Aguozi became rich at old age just like the *epelepele* fish. This same proverb is connected to Captain Mala too because he had nothing when he was young. It was when he was no longer a young man that he became rich, as it were. By that time, he had already started heading places during the Nigerian-Biafran war while fighting on the side of the Nigerian government. Moreover, Captain Mala's half-brother, Chief Nestor Binabor, at the time Mala died, was the speaker of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly, the third most powerful person in the State. For all this, it could be said that Captain Mala became rich at old age. In what follows, the connection that exists between this same proverb and the chant on this researcher is examined.

The poem about this researcher is basically on the need for the Iẓon to value their cultural practices and their language. To the poet, the Iẓon should start studying their customs and language in universities like other ethnic groups in the country such as the Hausa, the Yoruba and the Igbo. Doing this, the poet asserts, will make the Iẓon nation known by the world. Since it is now the Iẓon are beginning to do that in their history, as exemplified by my research on Iẓon cultural forms (not this researcher's view but the poet's), then, it could be said that "epelepele becomes rich at old age."

Here is another proverb for examination:

Buran tẹbẹ kpekimo kpekimo ka imẹlị mọ

It's the combination of fat that makes the head of *buran* fish oily

Buran is a specie of the family of catfish. The Iẓon believe that the fat in the head of that fish comes as a result of the bits of fat taken from other parts. The essence of the proverb is that it is the combination of little things that make something big or make something to have success. This proverb appears in at least two of Chief Munamuna's chants. It occurs in his marriage chant. The poet is telling the parents of the groom and bride that they should not get tired of giving pieces of advice to the new couple. To him, one or two pieces of advice is not enough. As such, for the marriage to be successful, then, lots of advice from them is needed. Another chant in which the proverb appears is "Iẓon Ibe." To the poet, the Iẓon struggle should not be left to one person. According to him, for the struggle to be successful, everyone must contribute their quota in one way or the other.

In another proverb, the poet says:

Oweipa, ofoni tẹbẹ kana sibegha, benebene

Oweipa, the fowl's head doesn't carry a basket, never, never

Here, the poet is saying that the fowl has never been known to carry a basket, that is, trouble, on its head. As such, he prays that no evil should come the way of King Oweipa Jones-Ere. This same proverb is repeated in the poem on his boss, Governor Seriake Dickson. A further stylistic technique employed by the poet is praise title.

Praise Title (*Kule*)

For some time now, this study has been making references to praise titles in the chants of Chief Munamuna both directly and indirectly. Amongst the Izon, almost every clan, every community and every adult male, apart from some of those that were born a few decades ago, has a praise title. These praise titles are beaten on the talking drum at important occasions to welcome the bearers. At formal gatherings, before deliberations begin, everyone introduces his praise title. Oftentimes, the praise title of the clan is the name of the founder of that clan. It is the same with the community. A father's praise title can be used to address his male children. Upon the death of his father, a man can decide to give himself his late father's praise title. Some persons have more than two. Perhaps, he has added to his own his grandfather's and father's praise titles. In intra-community competitions or children's fights, the audience use the praise titles of the competitors' or fighters' quarters to cheer or praise them. It is so with activities involving different clans. It is similar to the situation amongst the Xhosa where, according to Kropf, *isiduko*, "a name of the ancestor or stock from which a clan or tribe is descended, [is] used as an exclamation by members of that clan or tribe" (qtd in Opland, *Xhosa Oral* 43; also see Kunene 46, on the use of clan names in praise of warriors of those clans).

It should be noted that praise titles are not got from acts of heroism alone like the Basotho (see, for example, Kunene 14). A man can decide to give himself a praise title based on his perception of the world or his experiences in life. That means, praise names are *earned* and *chosen* for oneself. In addition, men address a man more often by his praise name than his personal name. Furthermore, praise titles have responses, especially those borne by individuals. When, at a gathering, you call the praise title of a man, the response of the man will tell you what it means. For example, one of the praise titles of the respondents of this researcher is "*furou ogugu*" (literally, stomach's pit). Any time you call him that name, he will respond by saying that it is never full no matter how one fills it and that he has been filling it since the day he was given birth to.

Praise names are regularly employed by Chief Munamuna in his poems to greet important personalities, and at the same time draw their attention to his chants. Let me examine few examples here. The first example is taken from the poem on Sele Aguozi:

Okpodu kere-kere-kere-kere

Sei bai kẹ biri erewọu bẹni

Okpodu kere-kere-kere-kere

It is the evil day that brings the compound women together

The first line of the excerpt above is the praise name of the quarter of the father of Sele Aguozi. The second line is the response that people from the quarter give when the praise title is said. The point is that, as a communal people, even an enemy will appear at the home of someone whom fate had dealt badly with to pay his condolences or better still, it is when something tragic happens that makes all the women of the quarter to gather. The next one is taken from “Captain Mala Tomi Abadi”:

Bietẹ arụ fọn ma?

Does one person propel a canoe?

The excerpt is the praise name of the quarter of Bietebe, which means “one”, where Captain Mala came from. When the praise title is said to them, they will answer “*fongha e*”, meaning, never. The sense is unity in the quarter. To them, everyone should join hands when there is a matter at hand; one person cannot carry a matter all by himself, the way a single person cannot propel a canoe from land to water.

It was mentioned earlier that during a performance, Chief Munamuna calls out the praise names of some dignitaries present to attract their attention. Here is one example from “Captain Mala Tomi Abadi”:

Agengẹn

Olotu 1 of Anerewari, kẹni yein bọ

Ani aka karadeji osi

Opu alaowei, Nestor Bɪnabọ

The firefly

Olotu 1 of Anerewari, of the same mother

That's the snail that's got teeth

High Chief Nestor Binabo

In the excerpt, “the firefly” is the praise title of High Chief Nestor Binabor, Mala’s half-brother. When said to him, he will say that like the firefly in the night, he will shine through even in the darkest night. The third line is a general praise title for anyone who has achieved some feat. Its use is not without reason here, because at that time Chief Nestor Binabor was the speaker of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly, the third most powerful person in the State. In the following section, alliteration, one of the prominent devices, will be the subject for analysis.

Alliteration

Alliteration is represented in the chants of Chief Munamuna. It provides a musical element to the chants which enables them to sound pleasant to the audience. For example, see how alliteration – the repetition of the /k/ and /kp/ sounds - is brilliantly contrived by the poet in the following lines to add drama and music to the chant while bringing out the qualities of a strongman. The lines are very good examples of assonance too:

Kurọ kẹmẹ kporoka kporoka

Kurọ kẹmẹ kakalụ kakalụ

Kurọ kẹmẹ gedeba gedeba gedeba

The strongman with fast pace – *kporoka-kporoka*

The strong man with terrible looks - *kakalụ-kakalụ*

The strongman with giant strides – *gedeba-gedeba-gedeba*

The /k/ sound is also deliberately made use of here:

Akọ kẹin, kuru kẹin, aban taụ bo kipele; worobu

Death fells the iroko, fells the mahogany, destroys the plantain suckers, *worubu*

The same /k/ sound is repeated here again:

Ị kaụn bọ kiri kọrị

He who plans evil against you will not succeed

The /k/ sound repeated in the following line is not a deliberate act but natural in the language:

Kiri kẹ kụrọ imibai

Whether it is on the earth the power is

Here is another example of how alliteration (and assonance and ideophone) are contrived to give euphony and drama - the manner in which the strongman fell the white ferry. Note the repetition of the /gb/ sound:

Gbogbola... gbogbola, pịna osuwei gbẹingbo... gbogbola...

You who completely knocked down the white fairy – *gbogbola...*

Sometimes, in order to give the chants euphony and emphasise a point, the artist can repeat a sound at a stress for even up to five times, as in the following where the repetitions of “gele” bring repetitions of the /g/ and /l/ sounds:

Afọrụ gele gele gele gele mugele

The wind *gele-gele-gele-gele-mugele*²⁴

Moreover, assonance is another poetic device used in the songs. The discussion now turns to it in the next section.

Assonance

The chants, as pointed out, are characterised by assonance. The reader must have seen that from the excerpts used under alliteration. Here is a brilliant use of assonance where the /o/ sound, as in “oat” appears in all the words apart from “kọrị ya”:

Bou osuowei kọrị ya kporobu

When you held the forest fairy – *kporobu!*

In another line, the /o/ sound, as in “pot” is repeated apart from the last word:

Bụọ kpọn kpọ bogha

D

Draw the leg, she won’t come back

The same /o/ sound occurs several times in the following line:

Kiri a bọ yi agọnọ kpọ a bọmọ

Whatever is an offense in the heavens is also an offense on earth

See the repetition of the /a/ sound, as in “pat” and the /e/ sound, as in “bet” in the following excerpt. The “e” in “toriye” is pronounced differently, as in “pay”:

Aba ba fẹ kẹ toriye kpọ bamo

It is the death which kills the *aba* fish that also kills the catfish

Here is another instance where the /a/ sound recurs in three words:

Nama kpọ amẹnẹ wari

The animal goes to its home

In addition, the /e/ sound, as in “let” recurs several times in the line below:

Sẹlẹ fẹdẹi nẹ wo sẹ bo bẹnidei mẹ, a yerimọ

We’re gathered here because Sele is dead, you see!

Moreover, the same /e/ sound appears several times in this line:

Kẹmẹ gba kẹmẹ pẹrẹgha

Nobody tells the other

A further device manifest in the chants which shall be explored in what follows is vowel lengthening.

Vowel Lengthening

Vowel lengthening is something common in African oral traditions (see, for example, Babalola 80-81). However, it appears it is not a common feature of the praises of the Bantu-speaking ethnic groups of southern Africa (Cope 64). In the chants of Chief Munamuna, a vowel could be elongated within a line or at the end of it. Here is an example for analysis:

Zi bai kpọ kẹnị oge

Fẹkoro bai kpọ kẹnị oge...

The day of birth is a celebration

The day of death is another celebration

In the above excerpt, the last syllable of the second line is elongated. This is really a deliberate act on the part of the poet. The word in which the elongated syllable is part of in the predicate part of the sentence or line refers to the subject “fẹkoro bai kpọ” (“the day of death”) which is contrasted against “zi bai kpọ” (“the day of birth”). However, the lines have identical predicates because, to the poet, they are all days of happiness. Now, to bring out this meaning of happiness in death in order to shock or jade the audience, as it were, he elongates the last syllable of the second appearance of “oge.”

In the line below, it is the first syllable that is elongated:

Do... ye ị kulemọ!

I salute you!

While in the following line, syllables are elongated at the starting and in the middle:

Gbogbola... gbogbola, p̄ina osuwei gb̄eṅbo... gbogbola...

You who completely knocked down the white fairy – *gbogbola*...

The last feature of the praise poems to be examined here is diction.

Diction

The language employed in the chants of Chief Munamuna is straightforward, not complex. That means the message of the traditional poet is clear despite the use of many proverbs. Contextual readings of the proverbs reveal their meanings easily to the reader. One aspect of the diction is the use of images that highlight the fauna and flora of the Iẓon. References are made to plants and animals in the form of comparisons and proverbs that reveal the riverine setting of the chants. Featured in the songs are warthog, canoe, fairy, and different species of fish such as *epelepele*, *imb̄ol̄i* (a very tiny white wish), *aba* (a very big fish that has a smooth body with no scales; it is regarded as the tastiest and most expensive in Iẓonland), *tilapia*, *b̄uran* (a specie of catfish). Others include cassava, iroko, mahogany, plantain sucker, chameleon, lizard, rat, firefly, *apiye* (a thin but very longish plant that grows in the forest. It's what Iẓon women cut to weave mats and fish traps. It's also what teachers and parents use to flog disobedient students and children), fowl, antelope, paddle, honey, mangrove, palm tree, swamp, bat, lobster, eagle, monkey, manatee, *okotoro* (a type of small bird), *akp̄ol̄okp̄ol̄o* (a type of small bird), *agb̄ol̄o* (a type of mollusc). The references to these features of the Niger Delta environment add liveliness to the oral poems. However, unlike the songs, the chants of Chief Munamuna do not have Iẓonised words, something understandable because of his level of education and the contemporaneity of the songs.

In conclusion, in this second part of the chapter, the study has pointed out and discussed what gives the chants of Chief Munamuna the quality of literariness, something that Russian formalists say differentiates a work of literature from, say, a newspaper article or other forms of writing (see the section on Russian Formalism in chapter 1). Some of these poetic techniques, as pointed out, are formula, parallelism, metaphor, ideophone, alliteration, amongst others. Some of these techniques, as remarked, provide balance, musical element, drama and liveliness to the chants.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the study has been concerned with examining İzön oral poetry using the approach of Russian formalism. Put differently, the stylistic techniques of İzön oral poetry were examined in this chapter. The chapter was divided into two broad sections because of the nature of İzön poetry - a combination of chants and songs - and to a lesser extent, the purposes of this researcher. Thus, the first section investigated the poetic elements in the songs while the second part examined the stylistic techniques manifest in the chants. Some of the stylistic techniques occur in both the chants and the songs. Generally, the stylistic techniques in İzön oral poetry, that is, both songs and chants combined, include repetition, parallelism, elision, alliteration, assonance, rhyme, rhythm and vowel lengthening. Others are formula, proverb, ideophone, praise name, personification, simile, paradox, oxymoron, irony, allusion and metaphor. Of these, repetition, formula, assonance, alliteration and metaphor are the most prominent poetic devices. Moreover, the discussion showed that the imagery in İzön poetry foregrounds the flora and fauna of the İzön ethnic group. In the next chapter – the concluding one – the study shall reiterate the major points of what have been said so far in this thesis. It shall further look at the possible gaps in knowledge or scholarship that this research has attempted to fill. In addition, the chapter will point out the areas of İzön oral literature and folklore which need further research

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter concludes the research. As such, it restates the goals or aims and objectives of the research. Furthermore, it reiterates the findings of the research as showed in chapters 3, 4 and 5. In addition, it looks at the challenges and contributions of the study. It concludes by considering possible areas for further research in the study of Ịzọn oral literature and folklore.

Goals, Objectives and Major Points of the Study

This study was done in order to document Ịzọn poetry for posterity as well as generate awareness for researchers of oral literature, folklore and anthropology. In a bid to achieving those goals, the study examined five objectives. Those objectives were: (1) the connections between Ịzọn oral poetry and the socio-cultural and religious aspects of the people; (2) the different sub-categories of oral poetry that are in existence or used to exist amongst the Ịzọn; (3) the performance of Ịzọn oral poetry; (4) the stylistic techniques manifest in the poetry; and (5) the role oral poetry plays in Ịzọnland. In examining those five objectives, the study combined three different interdisciplinary theories: performance, formalism and functionalism.

The study found out that Ịzọn oral poetry is a mixture of songs and praise chants. Eight sub-categories of songs were identified and discussed. These were war songs (*sụu дума ама*), wrestling songs (*anda дума ама*), circumcision songs (*biriwari дума ама*), songs of marriage or bead wearing (*angawari ọnifakpo ịla tụa дума ама*), songs of association (*ogbo дума ама*), religious (*sosi дума ама*), political songs (*gometi дума ама*) and lullabies (*kalaqwoy дума ама*). The chants considered were those of Chief Munamuna who happens to be the only praise chanter amongst the Ịzọn.

Oral poetry in Ịzọnland, whether in the form of chants or songs, plays important functions. That is what comes out from this study of Ịzọn oral poetry. For example, Chief Munamuna is an ethnic conscious literate praise-chanter who constantly gives attention to contemporary issues that concern his Ịzọn people. For example, he has chanted about the Ịjọ struggle, a struggle which, perhaps, is no longer news to the international community. In addition, Chief Munamuna, in his role as an oral artist, encourages the Ịzọn to speak their Ịzọn language at a

time when African languages are on the threshold of being swallowed up by the so-called “global languages.” Chief Munamuna’s topical interventions extend to even HIV/AIDS in which he warns his ethnic group about the dangers of contracting that pandemic. Moreover, Chief Munamuna, like his fellow oral artists on the African continent, does not refrain from pointing out the ills bedevilling those he praises. With regard to performance, Ịzọn poetry is both spectacular and unspectacular. Whereas the performances of war songs, wrestling songs and songs of circumcision are histrionic and rhythmic, others such as lullabies, songs of associations and political songs are devoid of the theatrical. In the case of Chief Munamuna, he composes his poems during performances true to the ideas of Millman Parry and Albert Lord. That is, performance and composition do not occur separately but at the same time. This means that Chief Munamuna is an improviser of chants and not a reciter. The performances of Chief Munamuna are highly dramatic. Furthermore, Ịzọn poetry manifests a great deal of stylistic devices. It is these techniques that make the poetry achieve the quality of “literariness.” These include parallelism, formula, repetition, rhythm, symbolism, rhyme, allusion, ideophone and elision. Others are vowel lengthening, symbolism, simile, metaphor, alliteration and assonance, irony, personification, paradox, oxymoron, amongst others. In terms of language, the poetry has a lot of Ịzọnised English words. The diction of the poetry is simple and consists of images which highlight the flora and fauna of the geographical location of the people. In the next section, the significance of these findings on Ịzọn poetry, especially the chants of Chief Munamuna, shall be looked at.

The Significance of the Study to Scholarship

This research has contributed to existing scholarship on African oral literature. This contribution becomes more pronounced considering the fact that the study was concerned with the oral traditions of a minority ethnic group when scholarship on African verbal arts is very often preoccupied with those of the major ethnic groups on the African continent. In addition, the research was not just concerned with investigating the different categories of Ịzọn poetry; rather, it looked into how the poetry has adapted, embraced change and continued to survive. The result is that the reader now has a proper picture of what Ịzọn poetry is. This proper perspective was also made possible by the interdisciplinary nature of the study, a study that combined three eclectic theories that draw ideas from literature, anthropology, folklore, linguistics, ethnography, amongst others.

The study of the praise chants of Chief Munamuna, perhaps, is the major significance of this study. This is someone who brought a foreign literary tradition – praise chanting - to his people and has successfully perfected the practice. Of particular importance is how Chief Munamuna achieved this level of success in the transplantation. There must be something amongst his people which aided the success of this transplantation. What is meant is that there are certain things in the oral poet's Ịzọn culture that blended well with the foreign practice that made it easier for the implantation. The point being pursued here is that cultural practices such as talking drums, praise titles, proverbs and folktales amongst the Ịzọn became the invaluable tools in the hand of the oral artist in his quest for a smooth and successful implantation. These are practices of his people that Chief Munamuna has a masterly knowledge of. It is these four elements that Chief Munamuna weaves, spins and mixes during any performance section. Here then lies the originality of his praise chants. It then follows that at any performance, there is an interplay between Ịzọn orature and a foreign practice, by foreign, this writer means the art of praise chanting; and by Ịzọn orature, he means Ịzọn talking drums, proverbs, folktales, proverbs and praise titles.

It is the contention of this researcher that without those four practices amongst the Ịzọn, Chief Munamuna would not have been able to successfully transplant this practice. This phenomenon has not been reported by any scholar in oral literature scholarship anywhere. It is known to exist in only written literature. An oral artist like this should have been the basis of doctoral theses, journal articles and book chapters long ago like his written counterparts elsewhere. By now, his many praise chants should have been collected and published. Unfortunately, as demonstrated in a chant he performed for this researcher during the course of this research, he had not been the subject of scholarship until this researcher met him (see the poem and the discussion that follows in chapter 4). As such, folklore scholars had no opportunity of knowing whether the Ịzọn had a praise chanter or not. In fact, praise chanting in Nigeria is normally associated with the Yoruba and the Hausa. Besides, this researcher has never read that a literate praise chanter exists in Nigeria. For this particular reason, Chief Munamuna stands out amongst his fellow verbal artists in Nigeria. He needs the attention that literary scholars normally give to modern African writers of some standing. As already stated, this study of the originality of the chants of Chief Munamuna may be the most important contribution this study has made to scholarship. In the next section, the researcher shall examine the challenges, if any, that he might have faced in the course of carrying out this study.

Challenges/Limitations/Research Problems

To some extent, the researcher did not face any serious challenge, in research terms, in the course of this study. Before going out for data collection, the researcher had envisaged the problem of respondents not willing to sing songs dealing with the dead as he found out when he studied İzön funeral dirges for his MA project (see Armstrong 20-22). Fortunately for the researcher, his respondents were willing to sing everything for him. Another problem the researcher would have had was not being in possession of the invaluable comments of respondents that a researcher needs throughout the course of his or her study of a people's oral tradition.

No matter the interviews and the fieldnotes that a researcher has in his possession, there will be a time during the writing phase when the researcher will be badly in need of additional statements from his respondents. It may be to clarify a point on some aspects of the data or something on the culture of the owners of the data. This becomes a problem to the researcher when where the researcher is writing the research is far from where he collected the data. This was no problem for this researcher because of technology. Throughout the course of writing this research, the researcher was in regular touch with some of his respondents through voice- and video-calls on WhatsApp. His two research assistants in Nigeria always made it possible for him to ask his respondents all the questions he had and the clarifications he needed. Some sang to him again on the video-calls the songs he had collected from them. For the praise-chanter, Chief Munamuna, the researcher did not need assistance from his research assistants because he had a cell phone that had a WhatsApp(ing) function.

Conclusion

İzön oral poetry is alive even though some forms are no longer practiced. Some of the poetry is adapting to a written society that keeps evolving. It follows that İzön oral poetry will not go into extinction. It will always survive despite pressures from this "global world." The poetry may appear or survive in forms that are different from traditional times. For example, the thought of praise chanting amongst the İzön in modern times would have been the least imaginable thing. Here is a practice that was not even in existence in traditional times. All this demonstrates the three qualities of change, adaptability and survival of oral literature. Nobody can tell the level at which Chief Munamuna will take his chants to. For example, he has started training people, a point this researcher refrained from pursuing in this study. Finally, despite

the form Iẓon poetry will take or be in the future, one thing is certain: it will play important role(s) amongst the people. This study does not in any way conclude scholarship on Iẓon oral literature. In fact, it rather pointed out areas to this researcher, in the course of the study, that need further research.

Areas for Further Research

Iẓon oral literature has not been studied as much as those of other Nigerian ethnic groups, say, the Yoruba, the Hausa, the Igbo, the Urhobo. In fact, a notable voice on Nigerian oral literature scholarship, G. G. Darah, once said to this researcher that Ijọ oral literature is the least studied in Nigeria. It is the Iẓon epic, *Ozidi Saga*, collected by J. P. Clark and discussed by Isidore Okpewho in some of his writings that is known by scholars of African oral traditions (see, for example, “Rethinking Epic” 226-228; “The Performer” 160-187; *Myth in Africa* 77-79; “African Oral Epics” 102-103, 109; “The Art of the Ozidi Saga” 1-23). For example, Iẓon oral drama has not been properly studied. This researcher knows that Robin Horton has written a brilliant article on masquerade drama amongst the Kalabari Ijọ (“The Kalabari ‘Ekeine Society’ 1963). However, the study deals with just one aspect of Ijọ drama. As such, there is an urgent need to study what may perhaps be the finest Iẓon dramatic performance that is no longer performed, *Ozi*, which was given some attention to in chapters 3 and 4. Moreover, the popular-but-no-longer-in-vogue *Egbelegbele* cultural dance and dramatic performance is something to be studied. The various festivals (some no longer performed) are areas of research too.

Furthermore, the several forms of oral narratives such as folktales, riddles, proverbs, myths, legends, oratories, amongst others, are areas for further research. The researcher is aware that Okpewho has done a structuralist reading of an Iẓon creation myth that he collected in Ekpetiama *ibe* (“Poetry and Pattern”). However, there are many differing creation myths amongst the Iẓon and all need collecting and studying. This researcher is also aware of the study done on proverbs by the Ijọ historian, E. J. Alagoa, in 1968 (“The Use of Oral”). However, Alagoa’s study, true to his discipline, is concerned with history in his selected proverbs, that is, how historical realities are reflected in proverbs. In addition, the proverbs are those of Nembe Ijọ and not Iẓon.

An aspect of Iẓon popular culture that is yet to be *fully* researched for which this researcher is interested in pursuing for a future postdoctoral study is *awigiri* music. The word “fully” is

italicised because the Ijò linguist, Teilanyo, has looked at the Niger Delta or the Ijò issue in the songs of one of the singers of that form of music, Barrister S. Smooth (“The Place”). *Awigiri*, in the words of Teilanyo, is “a sub-genre of ‘High-Life’ marked by heavy rhythm and sensational dance steps largely peculiar to the Izon in the Niger Delta” (33). *Awigiri* is the music every Izon man is attached to despite the pull of the various forms of other popular music in existence today. The singers of this form of music are heavily paid to play at important ceremonies such as burials, marriages and anniversaries. As was said in chapter 3, those who cannot afford the services of the different ensembles play recordings of their songs at such occasions. Furthermore, almost all (if not all) the Izon have such recordings in different forms in their homes that they play on a regular basis. It is played and danced to by male and female and young and old. Amongst other areas, this researcher, if the study is ever done, shall look at its history and what makes it to be so enduring despite pressures from other forms of music.

Notes

1. “In its simplest sense,” according to the BBC, “Kula is an ocean-based trading network involving ancient shell valuables: ‘*mwali*,’ bands of shells to fit around the arms, which travel anti-clockwise around the island ring, and ‘*soulava*,’ a shell necklace, which travel in opposite direction, clockwise around the ring. Each individual shell trader has a respective kula trading partner on their nearest neighbouring island in either direction, acting ultimately as one link in a chain of trade that encompasses the five main Milne Bay districts and dozens of islands stretching across this corner of the Solomon Sea.”

2. Seriake Dickson is the present governor of Bayelsa State. It was pointed out that it is in a keenly and hotly contested primary or election that fits the sense of this song. It is not for no reason that it used the name of Seriake. One of the mostly hotly contested elections in Nigeria was the gubernatorial election between Seriake Dickson of PDP and Timipre Silva of the All Progressive Congress (APC) in December 2015. Dickson was seeking a second term in office while Silva too had been a governor of the State. The previous year, the opposition party, the APC, had taken over power from the then-ruling party, the PDP, at the federal level; and Bayelsa State is the home state of the loser, Goodluck Jonathan. It was former president Jonathan and some party statesmen that had used their federal power to disqualify Governor Timipre Silva from the PDP governorship primary in the State in 2012 and eventually produced Seriake Dickson as the governor. Timipre Silva had always said he too would use federal might to take power from the PDP and Dickson and humiliate former president Jonathan. The atmosphere in the State was fearful. The day eventually came! The election was declared inconclusive by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) after it cancelled the poll in one of the local government areas of the State as a result of killings and massive rigging. On January 9, 2016, INEC conducted the election in the local government and thereafter declared the incumbent, Dickson, the winner. This song was sung by the supporters of Seriake Dickson in Bayelsa State throughout that period.

3. An ideophone that describes the pouring of big water on the ground.

4. A word that Chief Munamuna uses to mean something big or in large quantities.

5. Meaning, the oracle, according to the poet. The poet tells me that before he chants a poem, he first of all consults. For example, if he is invited to chant about someone he does not know,

then, he will have to carry out some background research on the person. This is what he means by “consulted before saying.” A literal translation of the Iẓon phrase “*ikpangi tebe asain*” will read “the oracle as the chief cornerstone.”

6. The sound made by a gong as the town crier beats it.

7. An ideophone which describes the sound that is made when someone puts something in his mouth and bites it strongly.

8. An ideophone used in describing how fast and sudden something hits someone. It has the sense of flogging. The use of the word “stick” before “*kpasi*” brings out the sense of flogging.

9 – 13. See under “Ideophone” in chapter 5.

14. Something that is used to carve and/or smoothen a paddle.

15. A boat that is fully laden with something.

16. The praise title of the verbal artist’s clan. During its season, the wild mango tree (the popular African bush mango tree) has an uncountable number of fruits and leaves underneath it every time. It is for this reason the Ogboin *ibe* say that the *ibe* will always have people in abundance like the mango tree in its season. It is the practice in Iẓonland to use the praise title of one’s *ibe* or community to address one. In inter-clan and inter-community competitions, the audience use the praise titles of the competitors’ clans or communities to cheer or praise them. This practice is similar to the situation amongst the Xhosa where, according to Kropf, *isiduko*, “a name of the ancestor or stock from which a clan or tribe is descended, [is] used as an exclamation by members of that clan or tribe” (qtd in Opland, *Xhosa Oral* 43; also see Kunene 46, on the use of clan names in praise of warriors of those clans).

17. A dry pulp of palm fruits. Before this time, it was what the Iẓon used in generating fire on their firewood when they wanted to cook.

18-20. See under “Ideophone” in chapter 5.

21. Describes the slow-walking pace of millipedes in their numbers.

22. A word that describes happiness in the context in which it is used.

23. A mollusc. It is very tiny and smaller than a snail. Males (teens and children) search for them, remove the soft bodies and use knives to cut out the mouths of the shells. When this has been done, the shell is held by two fingers (the thumb finger and the middle finger) and played out. It goes out and turns brilliantly for some time before stopping. For a competition, it is played out into a flat opening in the ground. Another person too plays his out into the same opening. They go out of their hands and begin to fight each other, as it were, and turn simultaneously until one goes out of the opening. The owner of the one that remains wins. Sometimes, it does not turn in a way you like (the meaning the poet has in mind). Before this time, it was the number one game for male teens and children amongst the İzön.

24. The manner in which the wind or breeze moves.

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**APPENDIX 1: THE PRAISE CHANTS OF CHIEF MUNAMUNA USED IN THE
STUDY**

Ogboin Ibenanaawei Tokoni Ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀

(The Praise Poetry of the King of Ogboin Kingdom/Clan)

HRM Oweipa Jones-Èrẹ̀ 111

Ogboin Ibenanaawei

Ongbọ indi; kùrọ indi

Pẹ̀rẹ̀ agbẹ̀

Kùrọ̀ agbẹ̀

Ala agbẹ̀

Ndagbudu kẹ̀mẹ̀

Do... ye ị kulemọ̀!

Ama sẹ̀ pẹ̀lẹ̀ ikein kẹ̀ tu lamọ̀

10. *Akama sùọ̀ pẹ̀lẹ̀ ị̀ pẹ̀rẹ̀mọ̀*

Ìkpai sùọ̀ pẹ̀lẹ̀ ị̀ pẹ̀rẹ̀mọ̀

Oboro sùọ̀ pẹ̀lẹ̀ ị̀ pẹ̀rẹ̀mọ̀

Ogboin sẹ̀ pẹ̀lẹ̀ ị̀ kẹ̀rẹ̀ pẹ̀rẹ̀mọ̀

Tọ̀rọ̀ kpọ̀ iniyẹn

Bou kpọ̀ iniyẹn

Ini furo mẹ̀ apiye furo...

Ibenanaawei, dọ̀ timi ye fẹ̀

Afọ̀rọ̀ kpọ̀ ị̀ gbolokumọ̀

Ebiri kpọ̀ ị̀ gbolokumọ̀

20. *Opu odede, ani ibenana tun, ini tẹbẹ akorokumo*

Pẹrẹ ibọlọ, ani ebada ibọlọ ini kọn ateikumo

Agbodo bira undo

Oweipa Jones-Erẹ, Ogboin ibenanaowei

Kurọtimi undo bai la o...!

\

Ebiri lolo bira lolo bira angolo sougħa

Kime kuro bira kuro bira, ama wari konomu bou wari boungħa

Oweipa, ofoni tẹbẹ kana sibegħa, benebene

Agbolobia wenı pa bo zuogħa

Ebi agbara, sei agbara

30. *Ipain ke tẹbẹ bilemo bowei peremo*

Ebi ise le san bo amenẹ angọ ke siri

Kiri abo yi agono kpo abomo

Ani duoni foun gbein bo tẹbẹ

A yerimo!

I bo ke abo, i pelebo yi kiri

Gbein-gbeinsei-gbeinsei, tu korigha

Oweipa tu koriun agbaraka kiri mo batan, batan, batan

I tari bo oge

I kaun bo kiri kori

40. *I gbedi bo ke boze*

Gbeene, gbeene, gbeene, pere tein

Ogboin ikikai tonono...

Nanaowei, sisei ye i tẹkẹmọ
Oweipa Jones-Ere Ogboin ikasị doweremi ifie-mẹ
Dọọ ibe mọ timi
Sei bo sẹ Ogboin ibe pẹlẹbọ
Biri pẹlẹmọ fẹ muoo
Kagha fẹ muoo
Dọn muoo, muo, muo, muo...

50. *Tọrụ kpọ na*
Bou kpọ na
Ụkpan mọ moun mọ Ogboin ibe pẹlẹbọ
Ise mọ oya mọ Ogboin ibe pẹlẹbọ
Mu kẹmẹ lagha abadi yọ digbaa
Mu ayerigha kẹ gba
Gbogbosi, gbogbosi
Akọ asuọ; kuru asuọ
- A yerimọ!*
Oweipa Jones-Ere Ogboin ikasị mẹ pipe ya

60. *Ibe sẹ dọ...*
Gboro fiyai pa
Nama kogha; indi kogha
Ogboin awọu bo dọu yi bira asuọ
Ofuro ere bo zi ogbo gbẹin
Ere zi, owei zi Ogboin ma tụa
Wa kẹ wa

- Ogboin ibe sẹ wa wa kẹ wa*
Beke koro yọ, ebi koro yọ
Ibe mẹ tarị ladẹi
70. *Ogboin awọy bo sẹ bọlọy bọ*
Kẹmẹsẹ wa wa kẹ wa
Wonona, wonona, wonona
Di yọ, di yọ, pịna kẹ pịna
Ibe sẹ dọ...
Ibe sẹ dọ...
Ibe sẹ dọ, dọ, dọ...
- Ibe duba kẹ pẹrẹ agbẹ*
Oweipa Jones-Ẹrẹ
Ebi ẹrẹ kẹmẹ agbẹ
80. *Ye oweiyọ pakaamọ*
Gbẹin tẹbẹ fẹ tẹbẹ dẹin
Pẹrẹ agba
Kurọ agbẹ
Ala agbe
Agbobu tọrụ bẹin
- A yerimọ!*
Ọkpọ lolo arụ pẹigha
Kurọ kẹmẹ lolo owei kpọ lumọ
Ngbu kọtọbọ, waan bira buọ bi
90. *Ibenanaawei lolo ama zige, zige, zige*

Anda bi bọ yẹrẹ ya biẹndiṣẹ
Bira bira Ẹmbẹ kọrẹ guda
Bou osuwei kọrẹ ya kporobu
Gboglobola gboglobola, pina osuwei gbẹingbo... gboglobola

Kurọ kẹmẹ kporoka kporoka
Kurọ kẹmẹ kakalẹ kakalẹ
Kurọ kẹmẹ gedeba gedeba gedeba
Owei la owei akọ

Ndagbudu gbudu, gbudu, gbudu, gbudu

100 *Opu indi tọrẹ bẹin*

Oyein kẹ ẹ pẹrẹmọ
Tamaraṇ miẹ ebi seimọm bọ fa benebene, benebene

Opukiri, doo ye ẹ kulemọ
Abadi beni irigha
Ogboin sẹ dau
Kurọtimi Ẹndọ bai la o...!

Ogboin awọ bo, a nua

Amananaotu

Pẹrẹ bo mọ

110. *Ala bo mọ*

Kẹmẹ ebi yai ama
Disin ya yẹn, yẹn, yẹn, yẹn
Oyein gbanamọ a pẹrẹ!

A yerimọ!

Ibe kiri anda olotu kẹrẹ-kẹrẹ

Imẹnẹ Adolphus Mụnamuna

Ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ Olotu Kẹ̀nị, Ịzọ̀n Ibe

Ogboin túbọ

Gbẹ̀şị Otuan kẹ ịni ama

120. *Otumongalanga indi ka dụwọ̀n dọ*

Ogboin tu fẹ̀tẹ̀fẹ̀tẹ̀, kiri fẹ̀tẹ̀fẹ̀tẹ̀, kiri fẹ̀tẹ̀fẹ̀tẹ̀

Ịzọ̀n otu, a do...

His Royal Majesty, Oweipa Jones-Ere 111

King of Ogboin Clan

The big fish; the powerful fish

Worthy of kingship

Worthy of power

Worthy of nobility

A man of valour

I salute you!

It is the cloth cut by the whole community that goes round the waist

10. Akama joined to cut it for you

Ikpai joined to cut it for you

Oboro joined to cut it for you

All Ogboin cut it for you

The river is yours

The forest is yours

Your stomach is the stomach of *apiye*

Your majesty, live peacefully to eat

The wind should not touch you

The storm should not touch you

20. The big crown, that's the cap of kingship should not fall off your head

The bead of kingship, that's the bead of rulership, should not fall off your neck

May the staff of authority remain in your hand for long

Oweipa Jones-Ere, King of Ogboin clan

May you live long

No matter how fierce the storm may be, it is not a threat to the stubborn grass

No matter the fierceness of the wind, it does not remove the house in the
community to roof the hut in the forest

Oweipa, the fowl's head doesn't carry a basket, never, never

The wasp never protects the one that strays off from protection

Good sacrifice, bad sacrifice

30. It's *ipain* that bows for the flood

The one who grinds good camwood first rubs it on one's body

Whatever is an offense in the heavens is also an offense on earth

So the ashes will rush back to the person who throws them

You see!

You shall pass before danger will strike

Ggbẹin-gbẹinsei-gbẹinsei tu kọrigha

The necromancy to unravel the secrets of Oweipa is glued to the

ground - *batan, batan, batan*

He who loves you rejoices

He who plans evil against you will not succeed

40. He that insults you will be ashamed

You are the blinking rich tree – *gbẹẹnẹ-gbẹẹnẹ-gbẹẹnẹ*

The star of Ogboin beams - *tononon*

Oh God, I pray to you

In the reign of Oweipa Jones-Ere on the throne of Ogboin

May there be peace in the clan

May all evil bypass Ogboin clan

Let sudden death go away

Let death before ripe age go away

Let disease go away, go, go, go

50. Let the river hear

Let the forest hear

Let famine and hunger bypass Ogboin clan

Let turmoil and suffering bypass Ogboin

Let them go *digbaa!* into the ocean that no body goes to

Go and say you didn't see him

Gbogbosi, gbogbosi

Go and enter the iroko; enter the mahogany

You see!

When Oweipa Jones Ere sat on the throne

- 60 Peace reigns in all the clan
 What is planted is reaped bountifully
 No lack of meat; no lack of fish
 The children of Ogboin get what they look for
 The pregnant women put to bed safely
 Give birth to male and female into Ogboin clan
 Growth to growth
 The whole of Ogboin clan continues to grow
 Where there is modernity, there is development
 The clan is blessed
70. Children of Ogboin prosper
 Everyone continues to grow
 Brightness, brightness, brightness – *wonona-wonona-wonona*
 Wherever you look, there is light
 The is peace in all the clan
 There is peace in all the clan
 Peace, peace, peace in all the clan
- It's when a clan is big that it's fitting of riches
 Oweipa Jones-Ere
 A good name fits one
80. You are indeed a man
 The planter is greater than the consumer
 Worthy of riches
 Worthy of power
 Worthy of nobility

He whose chest has crossed the sea

You see!

The ranting of the tilapia doesn't break the canoe

The anger of the strong man sends a man to look for cover

They fold in a corner and ask the antelope for leg

90. The king's anger makes a clan tremble

The one asking for a wrestle bout suddenly desires to poop when he sees you

You bend the wild pig with bare hands

When you held the forest fairy – *kporobu!*

Gboghola-gboghola, you fell the the white fairy, *gboghola!*

The strongman with fast pace – *kporoka-kporoka*

The strong man with terrible looks - *kakalu-kakalu*

The strongman with giant strides – *gedeba-gedeba-gedeba*

You are more than a man

A man of valour, valour, valour, valour, valour

100. The big fish that crosses the ocean

It's God that gave it to you

No one destroys the blessing of God, never, never

Opukiri⁹, I salute you

The water in the sea never dries

The father of all Ogboin

May you live long!

I salute you, children of Ogboin

Paramount rulers

Chiefs

110. Nobles

Beautiful people

Arrayed in their finery when you look - *yẹẹn-yẹẹn-yẹẹn-yẹẹn*,

May God bless you all!

You see!

The wrestling of a clan sees different champions

I'm Adolphus Munamuna

The Chief Poet of Izon Nation

OgbSon of Ogboin

Gbẹṣi Otuan kPrecisely, Otuan is my community

120. The chameleon that uses fish as chewing stick

Ogboin tu *fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ, kiri fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ, kiri fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ*

People of Iẗon, I salute you

Late Madam Sele Aguozi Tokoni Qubẹbẹ

(The Praise Poetry of Late Madam Sele Aguozi)

Ama mọ igoni mọ, a nua

Imẹnẹ pịna pịna ama

Adogidigbo

Okinigboghosi gbosi

Ikpangi tẹbẹ asai, bidei kẹ fie...

Bongbai qubẹbẹ aru sai bo igbeimi

Tubọ kẹ ọ̀ubẹ̀bẹ a o...

Ani didubamọweremi yein

Sele Aguozi, Kalabeki taṭubọ

10. *Duweji kiri ka duba*

Amẹnẹ ọ̀ubẹ̀bẹ aru

Fani gban bọ beri gbangha

Nama diẹgha, indi diẹgha

Kemese beri tiemo i pei

A nua

Zi bai kpọ kenj oge

Fekoro bai kpọ kenj Oge...

Sẹlẹ Izon ma bo bai mẹ, ayapete

“Nge, nge, nge, i kpọ Izon ma bodei”

20. *Ani kẹ amẹnẹ bẹbẹ duo pamọ*

Indotua-ere, Kememiyei bau

Ani a zi yein mẹ; biye se torutoru

Zi ere mẹ bolouimbẹlẹ

Efeke-ama ma Aguozi, Kalabeki yai

Ani a zi dau mẹ

Biye-mẹ imbẹlẹ, imbẹlẹ

Yogo, yogo, toko, toko, toko

“Nua akẹ Oyein kule”

“Ini ta ama zidei”

30. *“Zi ere nua, mbau ma do...”*

Kurotimi kemę pa

A yerimọ

Sẹlẹ Izon ma bo bai mẹ

Daọ warị mọ, yein warị mọ

Polo mọ, biri mọ, wuru koro, fiyaị koro

Kitikitikiti: fẹ mọ, bou mọ

Ama sẹ bolouimbẹlẹ; ani miẹmịẹ bira mẹ

Zi bai kpọ kẹnị oge

Fẹkoro bai kpọ kẹnị oge...

40. *Sẹlẹ yerintimi bo ere la*

Kokomanị yila, gere de ebi yei nana

Owei zi, ere zi Ogboin ma tua

A toru ere arau kẹ bira koromọ wenimẹnẹ fẹrẹ bo sẹ kẹnị kpọ a pẹlẹ bogha

Duọ gboro

Opu bira garri tuọ kemẹotu ama gbalị

Fouyọu

Dou sẹlẹ bira asuọ

Ebi Lagos beke suọ otu bo, Sẹlẹ kpọ kẹnị ere

Opu ikputu bira gerein, gerein, gerein, amẹnẹ yei

suomọ awou bo mọ warị mọ koritiemọ

50. *Oyein amabou tari mọ boimi ere bira ma*

Amassoma ogbo ma amẹnẹ bobọ beke warị koritiemọ

Sonì, sonì, sonì, kẹmẹ túbọ akpọ ma bodejì ya wẹnì mọ fìàìmi
fẹrẹ bọ sẹ a mọ wẹnìsiin
Bìna tarì ere, warì bẹnìmọ, yerin ebi
Kọkọmanì yila yein, gere de yi a kẹmẹ tolumọ ere bo dúwẹjì deime, a yẹrìmọ

Ala akpọ gotọru-gotọru
Pẹrẹ apa siiamesi
Epelepele ọwa kẹ pẹrẹmọ

Kọkọbàiyi Sẹlẹ ebi yerin, yerintimi Oyein a tẹin bájì la
Gbogbola...

60. *Bira kpọn kpọ bogha*
Buọ kpọn kpọ bogha
Fẹ sọọ warì seimọ
Undo kẹ yi tọlọmọoweì
Undo emi bọ ekiyemọyi mì

Okumọagala ọbẹbẹ mẹ ologha
Anga koromọweremi dúwẹjì mẹ sịen fa
Igburu kan bira, kan bira, kan fa kẹ tọn
Sẹlẹ, ị koromọweremi anga-bo
Akẹrẹ ini ebi, akẹrẹ ini timi, akẹrẹ ini ọndọ

70. *A yẹrìmọ!*
Ani akpọbolou kẹ imi yi ama
Kẹnì otu bomẹnẹ; kẹnì otu waìmẹnẹ

Ini erein ladejama zuo yi fa
Akpobolou dunu, imbi bo ka luu-tou
Aforu gele gele gele gele mugele
Ama bira, ani dau yai bo, dọ bọlọ asu
Kono ikpangi, imbo, imbo, ando fa, sei bou pere omoni ama

Fẹ dein ki bo fa; gbolo bọ kẹ angonamo
Kere, kere, kere, aru bilemo ose

80. *Ako kein, kuru kein, aban tau bo kipele; worobu*

Fẹ bọ, fẹ bọ gidimu, bo tuu gbaa bọ fa
Aforu gele, gele, gele, gele mugele
I seri yọ ani i mu yọ
Gbaana ebi akẹ agbegwa deinmo
Undo me emi ifie ka ebi yọ seri
Dọ mọ, dọ mọ pere, Jesu
Ukere tonton owu

A yerimo!

Aba ba fẹ kẹ toriyo kpọ bamo

90. *Fẹ ako kein, kuru kein*

Diamoyi kẹ akẹ wo sẹ peremene me i nimigha?

I dein kemẹ zibe agono

Abo... Oyein teinpon kilẹ bọ fa

Nama kpọ amene wari

Ofonu kpọ amene wari

Benibolou ma imi indi kpọ amẹnẹ wari

Amẹnẹ fẹrẹ wẹnisiin bọ wari

Sẹlẹ amẹnẹ aru kara ofoinmọ tekene...

Amẹnẹ fẹrẹ wẹnisiindei nẹ wari

100. *Opu igburu, yila yein*

Ere la ere akọ

Sẹlẹ, Aguozi bau

Yein kẹ yein ee...

Okpọdu kẹrẹ-kẹrẹ-kẹrẹ-kẹrẹ

Sei bai kẹ biri ere wọu bẹni

Sẹlẹ fẹdẹi nẹ wo sẹ bo bẹnidei mẹ, a yerimọ

Ama dūba kẹ pẹrẹ agbẹ

Efẹkẹ-ama, pẹrẹ mẹ ya agbẹmọ

Ama mẹ tari ladei

110. *Kẹmẹ ebi ama*

Ere ebi; asiya ebi

Di yọ di yọ pina kẹ pina

Nama kogha, indi kogha

Bẹbẹ kẹ fẹ sẹlẹ ebgeri!

Abo ebi dọu bọ Efẹkẹ-ama ma bo...

Indotua-ere ebi dọu nẹ, Efẹkẹ-ama ma bo Aguozi nana wẹri pẹrẹ

zi bira mẹ, a yerimọ!

Sẹlẹ tein

Ebi ẹrẹ kẹmẹ agbẹ

120. *Ye ere apa kamọ*
Pẹrẹ agbẹ
Ala agbẹ
Gbein tẹbẹ fẹ tẹbẹ dẹin
- Sẹlẹ tọrụ fo ị kọrị ya ọya ba ị gbologha kẹ ọn*
Ebi fo obori ịmẹlị
Obori ịmẹlị la bọ fokpa
Dun bọ mẹlụ, mẹlụ, mẹlụ, mẹlụ
Ebi awọy bo yein
Awougbeere, ani ini ẹrẹ
130. *Warigbaliere kẹ ini ẹrẹ*
Waridaere kẹ ini ẹrẹ
Ikperetuagide, ani ini ẹrẹ kẹ ọn
Oyein nimi ere
Mama oi a dei kpọ akẹgha
Sii a dei kpọ akẹgha
Ini ebi, Oyein kẹ ị pẹrẹmọ
Tamaraan miẹ ebi seimọum bọ fa
Benebene, benebene
Odokori, kuro agbẹ
140. *O yein, dọọ mu*
Dọọ mu ini dau kirikonu ma sọ
Awọy bo di
Warị di
Egbegi wuru boukumọ

Mama dọọ mu
Wo mu heaven ka gbolo...

A yerimọ
Pakumọ kẹ gba kpọ pamẹnẹ
Pa kẹ gba kpọ pamẹnẹ

150. *Oke-ama-otu gbẹ sa*

Ani dụwẹi ama
Kala kpọ sẹlẹgha
Okosu kpọ sẹlẹgha
Wo sẹ kẹ fẹwẹrẹmi sa
I la bai i kpọ yọu kẹ yọudẹi

Da karimẹnẹ yọ mẹ
Ebi timi kọn
Okosu beni biri, ọndọ akolo kọrị
Ani kẹ tẹkẹ ọ a kiri kọ otubo sẹ pẹrẹmẹnẹ, Nanaowei

160. *Ini yaj Jesu ere ma*

Amịno... pa wo pẹrẹ

Yein fẹ otu bo, a dile
Akpọ ma papa ye kẹ pamọ
Ani duoni kẹmẹse angọ kūrọmọ
Oyein kẹ iyọn a pẹrẹ

Ama mọ igoni mọ, a nua

Nawerì bo otu

Bìnawarì mò, ikiyeotu bọ mò

A sẹ youkọriotu ama

170. *Oyein gbanamọ a pẹrẹ*

Kẹmẹ ebi yai ama

Disiin ya yẹẹn, yẹn, yẹn, yẹn

Zi bai kpọ kẹnì oge

Fẹkoro bai kpọ kẹnì oge...

A yerimọ

Sẹlẹ fẹ ya oge ka pamọ

Nanaoyin do...

Ibe kiri anda olotu kẹrẹ-kẹrẹ

Imẹnẹ Adolphus Munamuna

180. *Ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀ Olotu Kẹ̀nì, Ịzọ̀n Ibe*

Ogoin túbọ

Gbesi, Otuan kẹ ini ama

Otumongalanga, indi ka dụwọ̀n dọ

Ogboin tu fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ, kiri fẹtẹ-fete, kiri fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ

Ịzọ̀n otu, a do...

The community and guests, you are welcome

I'm the bright community

The master story teller

Okinigboghosi gbosi

Ikpangi tebe asain; consulted before saying

I came with a boat of oral poems today

Which person's oral poem?

It is for a respected mother

Sele Aguozi, granddaughter of Kalabeki

10. It's in death a person becomes great

It's her boat of oral poems

The one who puts a fence around himself does not fence his ears

No separating of animals, no separating of fish

Lend me your ears, everybody

You are welcome

The day of birth is a celebration

The day of death is another celebration

The day Sele came to Izonland, she came as a newborn

"Nge, nge, nge, I too have come to Izonland"

20. That's what came out of her mouth

Indoutua-ere, daughter of Kẹmẹmịyẹi

That's the woman that gave birth to her; full of happiness

The woman who gave birth was happy

Aguozi of Efeke quarter, son of Kalebeki

Was the man who gave birth to her

Full of happiness, happiness

Yogo-yogo-toko-toko-toko

“Give thanks to God”

“My wife has given birth to a community”

30. “Thank you, the woman who has given birth; welcome, my daughter”

“May you live to become a somebody”

You see!

The day Sele came into Izonland

The father’s house, the mother’s house

There were plenty of drinks and food in the neighbourhood and quarters

Kitikitikiti: drinking and eating

The whole community was joyous; that’s the practice

The day of birth is a celebration

The day of death is another celebration

40. Sele lived on to become a woman

Got married to a responsible, trustworthy and handsome husband

Gave birth to male and female into Ogboin clan

All the work a woman like her uses her hand to do not one escaped her

Tilled the soil

Greatly processed cassava to feed people

Traded

The money she looked for entered her hand

Of those who were successful when they went to Lagos, Sele was one of them

Like a big rock she stood by her husband and firmly

held the children and the home

50. As a woman who came with blessings from heaven

She built a block house in Amassoma by herself

Gradually, gradually, gradually, she did all the work that a human being is supposed to do when he comes into the world

A woman who loved relatives, family unifier, of good behaviour

A responsible mother, a woman who taught someone something reasonable has now turned a corpse, you see!

Nobility is of different forms

Riches are of different kinds

Epelepele becomes wealthy at old age

It's true Sele lived a good life until the day God called her

Gboghola...!

60. Draw the hand, she won't come back

Draw the leg, she won't come back

Death is a destroyer of any house it visits

It's life which makes good

The one who has life has hope

The poems of Okumọ-agala are never untrue

The corpse that laid eggs does not sleep off

No matter how torn the waist-covering cloth is, it never tears off completely

Sele, the eggs you laid

They are your pride, they are your hope, they are your life

70. You see!

All these are part of life

Some people are coming; some people are going

Nothing saves you when your day comes

The one who fishes in the lake of the world pours down his looping shack

The wind *gele, gele, gele, mugele*

The ones on the right, they are of the Father; enter into your rest

On the left, millions, countless, are slaves of the king of the evil forest

No one says he will die in so-and-so day; only the one

it touches knows its feeling

Cold, cold, cold, the boat-sinking stone balls

80. Death fells the iroko, fells the mahogany, destroys the
plantain suckers; *worubu*

Whoever dies is silent, no one returns to tell a tale - *gidimu*

Aforu *gele, gele, gele, gele mugele*

Where you choose, there you go

Obedience is better than sacrifice

Choose the good path while alive

Jesus, the king of peace, peace

He is the holy way

You see!

It is the death which kills *toriye* that also kills the catfish

90. Death fells the iroko, fells the mahogany

Don't you know that it's giving us an omen?

Anyone who is more than you is above you

Abo oo! no one rejects the call of God

The animal goes to its home

The bird goes to its roost

Even the fish in the river goes to its home

Whoever finishes his work goes home

Sele carved and floated her canoe - *tekene*

She has finished her work and gone home

100. Mighty cloth, responsible mother

More than woman

Sele, daughter of Aguozi

She is indeed a mother

Okpodu *kere-kere-kere-kere*

It is the evil day that brings the compound women together

We're gathered here because Sele is dead, you see!

When a community is big, it is fitting of riches

Efeke-ama, you are fitting of your wealth

The quarter is blessed

110. A quarter of good people

Beautiful women; handsome men

Wherever you look, there is brightness

Never in want of animals; never in want of and fish

Money for feeding!

Abo! whoever wants success should come to the quarter of Efeke

Indoutua-ere wanted success and came to the quarter of Ifeke, got married to
Aguozi and gave birth to wealth, you see!

Rich tree

A good name befits someone

120. You are truly a woman

Worthy of riches

Worthy of nobility

The provider is greater than the eater

If you have an in-law like Sele hunger won't come close to you again

A good in-law is a goat that has fat

Anyone who gets the fat of a goat *fokpa*

The one who is jealous *melu, melu, melu, melu*

The mother of good children

Sponsor of children is your name

130. Provider for the home is your name

Leader of the home is your name

A basket that's used to put stones is your name

Somebody who knew God

Mama wouldn't be exchanged for ten

Wouldn't be exchanged for twenty

It's God who gave you your blessings

No one destroys the blessing of God

Never, never

Odokori, worthy of power

140. Oh mother, go in peace

Go in peace to enter your father's ground

Look after the children

Look after the home

Do not drink a drink you don't know of

Mama, go in peace

We will meet in heaven

You see!

Even if you say don't happen, it still happens

If you say happen, it happens

150. It's the debt we pay rats

That's the land of the dead

It doesn't reject the young

Nor does it reject the old

We all owe the debt

When it is your turn, you go on the journey

But the prayer is that

We live to see good

Bathe the water of old age; hold life's walking stick

That's our prayer for all those still left on earth, God

160. In the name of Jesus, your son

Amen; let it happen to us the way we've prayed

Sorry, children of the dead
It's what happens in the world that happened
For that, be strong everybody
May God give you the fortitude to bear

The community and the guests welcome
Those who heard and came
Relatives and friends
You all are sympathisers

170. May God bless you
Beautiful people
Arrayed in their finery when you look - *yeen, yeen, yeen, yeen,*

The day of birth is a celebration
The day of death is another celebration

You see!
When Sele died, it turned into a celebration
Thank you, God

The wrestling of a nation sees many champions
I'm Adolphus Munamuna

180. The Chief Poet of Izon Nation
Son of Ogboin
Precisely, Otuan is my community
The chameleon that uses fish as chewing stick

Ogbain tu fete-fete, kiri fete-fete, kiri fete-fete

I salute you, people of Izon

Late Captain Mala Tomi Abadi Tokoni Qubębe

(The Praise Poetry of Late Captain Mala)

Ama mo igoni mo, a nua

Imene pina pina ama

Adogidigbo

Okinigboghosi gbosi

Ikpangi tebe asain, bidei ke fie...

Bongbai oubebe aru sai bo igbeimi

Tubo ke oubebe a o...

Ani didubamoweremi dau

Alaowei Mala, Tomi yai, Abadi tautubo

10. *Duwei kiri ka duba*

Umene oubebe aru

Fani gban bo beri gbangha

Nama diegha, indi diegha

Kemese beri tiemo i pei

A nua

Zi bai kpo keni oge

Fekoro bai kpo keni Oge...

Mala Izon ma bo bai-me, ayapete

“Nge, nge, nge, i kpo Izon ma bodei”

20. Ani ke umene bebe duo pamo

Ebitonkumo, Bietebi-ama ma Apudu bau

Ani u zi vein me; biye se torutoru

Zi ere me bolouimbele

Efeke-ama ma Tomi, Abadi yai

Ani u zi dau me

Biye me imbele, imbele

Yogo, yogo, toko, toko, toko

“Nua ake Oyein kule”

“Ini ta owei zidei”

30. “Abo bei kpo wari udou”

“Zi ere nua; i yai do...”

“Kurotimi keme pa”

A yerimo

Mala Izon ma bo bai me

Dau wari mo, vein wari mo

Polo mo, biri mo wuru koro, fiyai koro

Kitikitikiti: fe mo bou mo

Ama se bolouimbele: ani miemie bira me

Zi bai kpo keni oge

40. Fekoro bai kpo keni oge...

Mala Bietebi-ama ka sọpa, yerintimi bo owei la, ere nana ifie la

Tubo ke u mo kori ma o...?

Adobu kẹkẹ-kẹkẹ

Sei bọ kẹ kuro

Ogboebi-ama, keme ebi ama

Asiya ebi, ere ebi

Ogboebi-ama erewou bau

Koloni Owonaru bau, Dadugobo tautubo

Mala akere nanamo

50. *Gerede, yila yein*

Owei zi, ere zi Ogboin ma tua

Mala owei la keme

Fun mẹ ọ kpọ ọ la yọ gomọ

Amassoma ogbo ma fungowari a mu

Okunbiri a mu

Ọ ba Oweinbiri, Angiama asọ

Modern school go pa alaa timi opu sọ bo Nigeria ibe mo pamọ

Ani ka Mala owei apa bira ma yi esingha bira ma adọdọ kpọ zigezha

bira ma Nigeria sọdọ aru ma a buọ

Teintimi Nigeria wai bo kẹniasọ

60. *Bei sọdọ fẹrẹ mẹ ọ kọmu Sapele la, Warri la, Jos la*

Mala Jos a biin kuraị ama ba

Yo ama da, imbi kpo gbologha

Doo sii bo wari suomo

Army fẹrẹ bọdẹi mẹ

U ba kuraị ama akẹ Inland Revenue a wenị

Ebi Lagos beke suo otu bo Mala kpo keni owei

A yerimo

Owei ke ere asisa ke gbaa

Ne e ere ke owei kuro

70. *Ere fa ma owei kpo fa; owei fa ma ere kpo fa*

Ani douni Mala umene ta mo zozo naweri ebi akpo yerin, amene

awou gbe opufunwari a pamo

Imenę Izon kemę Jos a mu Mala pa ya fę ba ị bagha kę ton

Suoseideị, ini igoni sę umene igoni

Army ma korobo Lagos ladeị kpọ keni bira

Bina tari, wari benimo, bebe tokorigha

Yerin ebi, gerede keme

Soni, soni, soni, keme tubo akpo ma bodei ya wenimo

fiaimi fere bo se u mo wenisiin

Ala akpo gotoru, gotoru

Pere apa siamesi

80. *Epelepele uwa ke peremo*

Kokobaiyi Mala ebi yerin yerintimi Oyein u tein bai la

Gbogbola...

Bira kpon kpo bogha

Buo kpon kpo bogha

Fe suo wari seimo

Undo ke yi tolomoowe

Undo emi bo ekiyemoyi mi

Okumo-agala oubebe me ologha

Anga koromoweremi duwei me sien fa

90. Igburu kan bira kan bira, kan fa ke ton

Mala, i koromoweremi anga bo

Akere ini ebi, akere ini timi, akere ini undo

A yerimo

Ani akpobolou ke imi yi ama

Keniotu bomene; keniotu waimene

Ini erein ladeiama zuo yi fa

Akpobolou duno, imbi bo ka luu-tou

Aforu gele gele gele gele mugele

Ama bira, ani dau yai-bo; doo bolou asuo

100. Kono ikpangi, imbo, imbo, ando fa, sei bou pere omoni ama

Fe dein ki bo fa, gbolo bo ke angonamo

Kere-kere-kere, aru bilemo ose

Ako kein, kuru kein, aban tau bo kipele - worobu

Fe bo, fe bo gidimu, bo tuu gbaa bo fa

Aforu gele, gele, gele, gele mugele

I seri yo ani i mu yo

Gbaana ebi ake agbegwa deinmo

Undo me emi ifie ka ebi yo seri

Doo mo, doo mo pere, Jesu

110. Ukere tonton owou

A verimo

Aba ba fe ke toriyo kpo bamo

Fe ako kein, kuru kein

Diamoyi ke ake wo se peremene me i nimigha?

I dein keme zibe agono

Abo... oyein teinpon kile bo fa

Nama kpo amene wari

Ofon kpo amene wari

Beni bolou ma imi indi kpo amene wari

120. Amene fere wenisiin bo wari

Mala umene aru kara ofoinmo tekene...

Umene fere wenisiindei ne wari

Ngbo indi, kuro indi

Abadi korodei me, a verimo

Kuro keme kporoka, kporoka

Kuro keme kakalu, kakalu

Kuro keme gedeba, gedeba, gedeba, gedeba

Owei la owei ako

Mala Abadi

130. Dau ke dau e...

Mala Tomi Abadi

Ebi ere keme agbe

Ye owei a pakamo

Kuro agbe

Pere agbe

Ala agbe

Agbobu toru bein

Mala toru fo i mo kori ya oya ba i gbologha ke ton

Ebi fo obori imeli

140. *Obori imeli la bo fokpa*

Dun bo melu, melu, melu, melu

Esin bo koro ofoni ama ebun a mugha

Tebe fedei agogu seeyo ka piimo

Alo yeri ya oru kpo yeri

Weni bo la a yein

Oweitebe, abo bei kpo keme

Yei i momo beiunmunuan

Ukere ebi awou bo dau me, a yerimo

Awou gbeeowei

150. *Warigbaliowei ke ini ere*

Waridaowei ke ini ere

Oyein nimi owei

Papa oyi a dei kpo akegha

Sii a dei kpo akegha

Ini ebi, Oyein ke i peremo

Tamaran mie ebi seimoum bo fa

Benebene, benebene

Abadi fẹkẹrẹ-fẹkẹrẹ-fẹkẹrẹ

Ogidi ba kiri kpọn

160. Owei akparan

Bo duwei deidei me. a yerimo

O... dau, doo mu

Doo mu ini dau kiri-konu ma suo

Awou bo di

Wari di

Egbegi wuru boukumo

O... dau, doo mu

Wo mu heaven ka gbolo...

A yerimo

170. Pakumo ke gba kpo pamene

Pa ke gba kpo pamene

Oke-ama-otu gbe sa

Ani duwei ama

Kala kpo selegha

Okosu kpo selegha

I la bai i kpo you ke youdei

Da karimene yo me

Ebi timi kon

Okosu beni biri, undo akolo kori

180. Ani ke teke o a kiri ko otu bo se peremene, Nanaowei

Ini yai Jesu ere ma

Amino..., pa wo pere

Mala duere mo awou bo mo, a dile

Akpo ma papa ya ke pamo

Ani duoni kemese ango kuromo

Oyein ke iyon a pere

Opuru ke gbaamo bina nana kpo yi ebi, bira za yo padei

Yein ogbogbo yilakamo

Toru bo gbanwere finibo block warị ketekpa

190. Yali, yali; lo keren, keren, keren

Bebe ka fe-un fiyai!

Bou biri ka tuwaun wuru!

Keme gba keme peregha

Yi bo dosi ke dosimi

Pere bo mo ala bo mo

Keme ingbe bo mo

Abo Mala, bei kpo tokoni

Yein wari ebi me i lamo

Ahiin Bietebi!

200. *Bietẹ aru fon ma?*

Bietẹbi-ama, pere me ya agbemo

Ama me tari ladei

Wonona, wonona, wonona

Di yo, di yo, pina ke pina

Keme ebi ama

Asiya ebi, ere ebi

Nama kogha, indi kogha

Bebe ka fe sele egberi

Ebi dou bo Bietẹbi-ama ma bo

210. *Oforu, oforu digimo, oforu digimo*

Igbara-gbara bẹbẹ duun

Agengẹn

Olotu 1 of Anerewari, kẹnị yein bọ

Ani aka karadejị osi

Opu alaowei, Nestor Bịnabọ

Nda gbudu, gbudu, gbudu, gbudu

Opu indi toru bein, do, do, do

I mịẹ ebi bo ne ye ị kulemọ

Bira korikorikumo

220. *Ini aru okulo mọ*

Oyein gbanamo a pere

Ba tẹbẹ ma timi sọnị, sọnị, sọnị, sọnị bei ebi fẹrẹ wẹnịpamọ otu bo

Ikasị tẹbẹowei, Remember Ogbe mọ ụmẹnẹ kẹmẹ bo mọ

Ani ba didụbamọweremi dau, Capt. Amba Ambaowei Wisdom

Zene keme ke zene keme tebe senmo

Bira mu ke bira bo

A yila kamo, a gerede kamo

Oyein gbanamo a pere

A do...

230. Ama mo igoni mo, a nua

Naweri bo otu

Binawari mo, ikiyeotu bo mo

A se youkoriaotu ama

Oyein gbanamo a pere

Keme ebi yai ama

Disiin a yeen, yeen, yeen, yeen

Zi bai kpo keni oge

Fekoro bai kpo keni oge...

A yerimo

240. Mala fe va oge ka pamo

Nanaoyin do...

Ibe kiri anda olotu kere-kere

Imene Adolphus Munamuna

Oubebe Olotu Keni, Izon Ibe

Ogoin tubo

Gbesi, Otuan ke ini ama

Otumongalanga indi ka duwon do

Ogboin tu fete-fete, kiri fete-fete, kiri fete-fete

Izon otu, a do...

The community and guests, you are welcome

I'm the bright community

The master storyteller

Okinigboghosi gbosi

Ikpangi tebe asain; consulted before saying

I came with a boat of oral poems today

Which person's oral poem?

It is for a respected mother

Honourable Mala, son of Tomi, grandchild of Abadi

10. It's in death a person becomes great

It's her boat of oral poems

The one who puts a fence around himself does not fence his ears

No separating of animals; no separating of fish

Lend me your ears, everybody

You are welcome

The day of birth is a celebration

The day of death is another celebration

The day Mala came to Izonland, he came as a newborn

"Nge, nge, nge, I too have come to Izonland"

20. That's what came out of his mouth

Ebitonkumo, daughter of Apudu in the quarter of Bietebi

That's the woman that gave birth to him; full of happiness

The woman who gave birth was happy

Tomi of Efeke quarter, son of Abadi

That's the man who gave birth to him

Full of happiness, happiness

Yogo, yogo, toko, toko, took

"Give thanks to God"

"My wife has given birth to a male child"

30. "Oh, what a family rock!"

"Thank you, the woman who has given birth; welcome, my son"

"May you live to become a somebody"

You see!

The day Mala came into Izonland

The father's house and the mother's house

There were plenty of food and drinks in the neighbourhood and quarter

Kitikitikiti: drinking and eating

The whole community was joyous; that's the practice

The day of birth is a celebration

40. The day of death is another celebration

Mala grew up in Bietebi quarter, lived on to become

a man and the time of getting married

Whom did he choose?

Adobu keke-keke

It's the ugly man that has power

Ogboebi, the quarter of beautiful people

Handsome men, beautiful women

A daughter from the quarter of Ogboebi

Koloni, daughter of Owonaru, grandchild of Dadugobo

It's she Mala got married to

50. Trustworthy, responsible mother

Gave birth to male and female into Ogboin clan

Mala, an accomplished man!

In education, he too studied the level he could

He went to school in Amassoma

He went to Okunbiri

He also went to Oweinbiri and Angiama

Hardly had he finished from school when the big war broke out in Nigeria

It's when without fear Mala showed he's a man, without

a quaking of the heart, Mala entered the war boat of Nigeria

He was shooting until Nigeria became one again

60. This war took him to Sapele, Warri and Jos

Mala stayed for many years in Jos

He headed places; untouched by any bullet

He got home in peace from farm

After the work in the Army passed

He worked for many years at Inland Revenue

Of those who were successful when they went to Lagos, Mala was one of them

You see!

It's said that a man is the umbrella of a woman

But it's a woman that's man's strength

70. Without a man there's no man, without a man there's no woman
For that, Mala worked together with his wife to live a good life
and funded their children in university

If you as an Izon man went to Jos and met Mala, then
death would not kill you

Filled with joy! your visit was his visit

It's the same when he left the Army and moved to Lagos

Loved relatives, unified the family, outspoken

Of good behaviour and a trustworthy man

Gradually, gradually, gradually, he did all the work that a
human being is supposed to do when he comes into the world

Nobility is of different forms

Riches are of different kinds

80. *Epelepele* becomes wealthy at old age

Truly, Mala lived a good life until the day God called him

Gboglobola...!

Draw the hand, he won't come back

Draw the leg, he won't come back

Death is a destroyer of any house it visits

It's life which makes good
The one who has life has hope

The oral poems of Okumo-agala are never untrue
The corpse that laid eggs does not sleep off

90. No matter how torn the waist-covering cloth is, it never
tears off completely
Mala, the eggs you laid
They are your pride, they are your hope, they are your life

You see!
All these are part of life
Some people are coming; some people are going
Nothing saves you when your day comes
The one who fishes in the lake of the world, pours down
his looping shack
The wind *gele, gele, gele, mugele*
The ones on the right, they're of the father; enter into your rest
100. Those on the left, millions, countless, are slaves of the
king of the evil forest

No one says he will die on so-and-so day; only the one
it touches knows its feeling
Cold, cold, cold, the boat-sinking stone ball
Death fells the iroko, fells the mahogany, destroys the
plantain suckers - *worobu*

Whoever dies is silent, no one returns to tell a tale - *gidimu*

Aforu *gele, gele, gele, gele mugele*

Where you choose, there you go

Obedience is better than sacrifice

Choose the good path while alive

Jesus, the king of peace, peace

110. He is the holy way

You see!

It is the death which kills *aba* that also kills the catfish

Death fells the iroko, fells the mahogany

Don't you know that it's giving us an omen?

Anyone who is more than you is above you

Yes, no one rejects the call of God

The animal goes to its home

The bird goes to its roost

Even the fish in the river goes to its home

120. Whoever finishes his work goes home

Mala carved and floated his canoe – *tekene*...

He has finished his work and gone home

Mighty fish, powerful fish

Has gone to sea, you see!

The strongman with fast pace – *kporoka-kporoka*

The strongman with terrible looks – *kakalu-kakalu*

The strongman with giant strides – *gedeba-gedeba-gedeba*

More than a man

Mala Abadi

130. You are really a father

Mala Tomi Abadi

A good name befits someone

You are indeed a man

Worthy of power

Worthy of wealth

Worthy of nobility

The man whose chest has crossed the sea

If you have somebody like Mala as your in-law poverty

will not come close to you again

A good in-law is a goat that has fat

140. Anyone who gets the fat of a goat is joyous -*fokpa*

The one who is jealous, *melu, melu, melu, melu*

The fearful birds do not fly to the mystical land

It's in public the mature lizard nods its head

When you see the thin cloth, you've seen the deity

All attention on him when he comes to a place

A somebody; oh what a man!

I will go with you!

He's the father of the good children, you see!

Sponsor of children

150. Provider for the home is your name

Leader of the home is your name

A man who knew God

Father wouldn't be exchanged for ten

Wouldn't be exchanged for twenty

Your blessing, it's God who gave to you

No one destroys the blessing of God

Never, never

Abadi fekere-fekere-fekere

Use the machete to scrape the ground

160. The strong man

Has turned a corpse, you see

Oh father, go in peace

Go in peace to enter your father's ground

Look after the children

Look after the home

Do not drink a drink you don't know of

Father, go in peace

We shall meet in heaven

You see!

170. Even if you say don't happen, it still happens

If you say happen, it happens

It's the debt we pay rats
That's the land of the dead
It doesn't reject the young
Nor does it reject the old
When it is your turn, you go on the journey

But the prayer is that
We live to see good
Bathe the water of old age; hold life's walking stick
180. That's the prayer for all those still left on earth, God
In the name of Jesus, your son
Amen, let it happen to us the way we've prayed

The widow of Mala and the children, take heart
It's what happens in the world that happened
Therefore, hold yourselves everybody
May God give you fortitude

The lobster says it is good to have relatives
for it has got a place to warm its hands
How important are the bones of a mother!
When the eyes were closed and opened there was a block house
190. Clean, clean; neatly painted!
Food to eat with the mouth!
Drink which is drunk into the body!
Nobody tells the other

Everything is in abundance
Chiefs and nobles
The big men
Oh Mala, what a respect!
You got the good from the mother's side
Ahiin Bietebi

200. Does one person propel a canoe?
Bietebi quarter, your wealth fits you
The compound is blessed
Brightness, brightness, brightness – *wonona, wonona, wonona*
Wherever you look there is light
A quarter of beautiful people
Handsome men, beautiful women
No lack of animals; no lack of fish
Money for feeding!
Anyone looking for good fortune, come to Bietebi quarter

210. *Oforu, oforu digimo, oforu digimo,*
Igbara-gbara bebe duun
The firefly
Olotu 1 of Anerewari, of the same mother
That's the snail that's got teeth
High Chief Nestor Binabo
A man of valour
The big fish that has crossed the river, greetings, greetings, greetings
For your good deeds, I salute you

- Don't relent
220. And your entourage
May God bless you
And the people that worked meticulously for the success
of this burial ceremony
Chairman of the Committee, Remember Ogbe and his members
And the highly respected father, Capt. Amba Ambaowei Wisdom
It's someone else who shaves off someone else's hair
It's when the hand goes that another hand can return
How important you are! how trustworthy are you!
May God replenish you
You are welcome
230. The community and the guests, you are welcome
Those who heard and came
Relatives and friends
You all are sympathisers
May God bless you all
Beautiful people
Arrayed in their finery when you look - *yeen, yeen, yeen, yeen*
- The day of birth is a celebration
The day of death is another celebration
- You see!
240. When Mala died, it turned out to be a celebration

Thank you, God

The wrestling of a nation sees many champions

I'm Adolphus Munamuna

The Chief Oral Poet of Izon Nation

Son of Ogboin

Precisely, Otuan is my community

The chameleon that uses fish as chewing stick

Ogboin tu *fete-fete kiri fete-fete kiri fete-fete*

I salute you, people of Izon

Tokoni Mọ Ekiye Mọ Zọzọnnna Oge Tokoni Ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀

(The Praise Poetry of the Marriage Ceremony Between Tokoni and Ekiye)

Ama mọ igoni mọ, a nua

Imenẹ pina pina ama

Adogidigbo

Okinigboghosi gbosi

Ikpanḡ tẹbẹ asain, bideḡ kẹ fie...

Ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀ gbolowei ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀ aru saḡ bo igbeimi

Tubọ kẹ ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀ a o...

Ani kemẹ ebi yaḡ ama

Bongbaḡ kpọ ala, deinbaḡ kpọ ala

10. *Fetimi undọ*

Tokoni mọ Ekiye mọ zọzọnnana oge ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀ aru

Fanḡ gbaan bọ beri gbaangha

Nama dięgha, indi dięgha

Kẹmẹsẹ beri tiẹmọ ị pei

A nua

Tiri mẹ a do...

Yi amẹnẹ oge oge

Bongbai mẹ oge kẹ koroimi

Tokoni mọ Ekiye mọ zọzonana oge kẹ koroimi

20. *Fẹ mọ bou mọ*

Tei mọ dẹrị mọ

Oge kala yi fa

Duba ya beinumonọ ibobọ zaụimi ka djamoyi peremenẹ mẹ ị nimigha?

Yi bọ dọsị kẹ dọsimi

Puwobu, puwobu

Yokobu, yokobu

Nẹn, nẹn, nẹn, nẹn

Taa ma yei mọ

Bongbai mẹ amẹnẹ erein

30. *Wo sẹ kẹ bolouimbẹlẹ a perẹmọ*

Mbana Oyein kule

Ere kpọ, owei kpọ

Kala kpọ, okosu kpọ

Kẹmẹsẹ powẹi, powẹi, powẹi, powẹi

A yerimọ

- Tara yila oge ama oge ibe ma bira fẹnẹimi*
- Zi bai oge, ụmẹnẹ bọlọu yi*
- Zọzọnana oge, ani maamu*
- Taarụ karamọ yi mẹ*
40. *Tukunomọ erein, seị warị sụọ*
- Fẹkoro bai oge*
- Bo taara oge bo se yila oge ama*
- Diiya gbẹsị zọzọnana oge oge ibe ma bira fẹnẹ soko, soko, soko, soko*
- Tu teiama ụmẹnẹ undọ kẹ tuamẹnẹ*
- “Zitua...”, Nanaoyein gbaamọ, “zitua”*
- Ani ka akpọ mẹ sọupamẹnẹ*
- Yi amẹnẹ oge oge*
- Ani akpọ bolou kẹ imi yi ama*
- Oloyọ fagha egberi mẹ kọkọbaiyi*
- 50 *Zọzọnana oge akpọ ma yilakamọ*
- Jehovah gbaamọ*
- Maa kẹmẹ: ere mọ, owei mọ*
- Amene dau mọ yein mọ abirasin gbolomọ bo kẹnịsụomọdejiama*
- Bo maa kẹmẹ mene bo kẹnịapadeji*
- Amẹnẹ kẹnị ọngbọ*
- Amẹnẹ kẹnị ịsọnmọ, pupu yọ fa*
- Ịsọnmọ sọriun asen fa mẹ, a yerimọ*
- Nanaoyein kikaideji igba*
- Kẹmẹ tubọ kipelekumọ*
60. *Okumoagala kẹ tọrụ a boimi*

Oṣẹbẹ Olotu Kẹni, Izon Ibe

Tiri mẹ, a do...

Yi amẹnẹ imbẹlẹ imbẹlẹ

Hiinye...

Fọ kpọ emi

Igina kpọ emi

Tabayi kpọ emi

Yi bọ sẹ kẹ karaimi, kpẹun

Zozonana oge, imbẹlẹ, imbẹlẹ, imbẹlẹ, imbẹlẹ

70. *Sei yai pa*

Ebi yai suọ

Mẹli mẹli koro

Abadi ofoni tekene...

Kokobaiyi, kemẹ zozo taridejama

Amẹnẹ nanaweremi yila yi kẹ diẹ zozo peremẹnẹ

Ani ka Tokoni dau mọ yein mọ

Ba Ekiye dau mọ yein mọ

Bei ebi erein ma

Wo kemese toruyo ma

80. *Isiyan kpongha bira ma*

Amẹnẹ yila fofolo mọ

Amẹnẹ yila ekikai mọ

Diẹ worodo... zozo peredei

Hiin mę hiin

Webe mę webe

Te bira, ama bira

Ani miyẹn miyẹn bira mę

Bei imbelę egberi kę duoni wo sę bo benimi

Tokoni mọ Ekiye mọ zọzonana oge kę koroimi

90. *Imbelę egberi kẹmẹ balamọ*

Bẹbẹ bira ebi bọ ama tọrụ ka tọrụ pọmọ

Zei, zei, zei, amẹnẹ kẹmẹ nana otu

Bịnawarị mę, a do...

Tari, ani umẹnẹ

Ukere ọwọupẹlẹowei

Ekiye Tokoni erị ya

Angọ mę timigbẹgha

“I bọwerị ya ye imọmọ angatimi okosutimiamọ”

Tokoni kpọ amẹnẹ anga

100. *Kpẹş Ekiye erị ya*

Suọseidej kę tọn

Abo bei kpọ kẹmẹ

Ye imọmọ bẹinumunua

A yerimọ

Owei tubọ ere nana ladejama

Dọọ amẹnẹ ere nana

Ila agbei yọ kẹ ıla dọ yọ
Ere túbọ kpọ yei nana ladejama
Dọ... amẹnẹ yei nana la yi fa

110. *Okosuotu gbaamọ*
Maa yinimi otu baara biri ka bọ oweinmọ
Ofiomẹnẹ
Kalaawọu isonmụ tuamẹnẹ
“Sisei ada tein bo ị pẹrẹ ya”
Wari kọn kẹrẹn kẹrẹn wẹni
Ani ifie bo fadẹi
Bongbai erein mẹ, ogugo gbogbola...
Atọnẹi mẹ agba tuadei pina yee
Ibe sẹ kẹ ẹrịdẹi

120. *Tokoni mọ Ekiye mọ ta mọ yei mọ*
Amẹnẹ zozonana oge kẹ koroimi
Oge, oge, oge...

Ama sẹ pẹlẹ ekein kẹ tu lamọ
Soperegha wari sẹ pẹlẹ a pẹremọ
Igbainwari sẹ pẹlẹ a pẹremọ
Binawari sẹ kpọ pẹlẹ a pẹremọ
Biri mọ, ama mọ
Kemesẹ pẹlẹ a kẹrẹ pẹremọ

Tokoni mọ Ekiye mọ agbemọ

130. *Agonọ kẹ duo bomọ*

Daṣu mọ, yaị mọ, ebi tẹmẹ mọ

Tari mẹ Oyein kẹ a pẹrẹmọ

Tamaran miyẹn ebi seimọm bọ fagha

Benebene, benebene

Biri bina yigha, kẹniyein bọ bina kẹ bina kẹ gba

Ebi ekiye kẹniyein bọ bina dẹin

Maa ta mọ yei mọ

Amẹnẹ ikiyeotu

Amẹnẹ binaotu

140. *Kẹni bọ daṣu*

Kẹni bọ yein

Kẹni mene, kẹni ongbọ, kẹni isonmọ

Epelipugha; kẹni ongbọ

Nanaoyein kikaidei igba

Kẹmẹ tubọ kipelekumọ

Owei kẹ ere asisa kẹ gbaa

Neyen ere kẹ owei kuro

Owei fagha ma ere fagha

Ere fagha ma owei fagha

150. *Maa bira zozọ sori kẹ paamọ*

Zimọ pẹrẹ

Yeibiri mẹ anda kẹ anda buọ

Owei mẹ owei

Tẹbẹ emi yo tungbo pa famungha

Deigha maa ta mọ yei mọ
Zimọ zozo pẹrẹ
Zozona wari anga
Ani mẹ yila yi
Kenị ingbisa tẹbẹ ya oku akẹgha

160. *Maa footu bo, i bo aviyanmọ*
Wo sẹ kẹ ẹriweremi
Kẹmẹ gba kẹmẹ pẹrẹgha
Ebi fo obori imẹli
Obori imẹli la bọ fokpa
Dun bọ mẹlu, mẹlu, mẹlu, mẹlu
Oyein kẹ a pẹrẹ ebi
Amẹnẹ kọkọmani yila, gerede ebi footu ama
Amẹnẹ awọu ebi, amẹnẹ ebi
Amẹnẹ awọu tari, amẹnẹ tari
170. *Amẹnẹ awọu bolouimbẹlẹ, amẹnẹ bolouimbẹlẹ*
Kẹmẹ túbọ tọn yi pagha
Nimisindej, ani Oyein kẹ ẹrẹ

A yerimọ
Aga emi yọ yowẹi seigha
Ani duoni ebi tolumọ yi akẹ bo aya maa ta mọ yei mọ
bo pereunyo mẹ a deinkumọ
Buran tẹbẹ kpekimọ kpekimọ ka imẹlimọ

Tẹin bẹbẹ kẹlẹgha Oyein mẹ gbanamọ a pẹrẹ

A sẹ kurotimi amẹnẹ awọu ebi fẹ

Ebi ere yila igburu

180. *Ini ata gbooko*

A tẹnẹ kẹ gbolo kpọ ofurobiri

Ise na agọnei, “ingẹ, ingẹ, ingẹ”

Ebi igoni imẹlẹ indi; ayapẹtẹ

Ebi beke awọu bo zi ogbo gbein

Ere zi, owei zi Izon ma tụa

Tonton fun gbaamọ

Ebi ere yila yi

A nana bọ ebi yila yi kẹ ẹriakẹmọ

Ani bira bọ ebi yei, sẹlẹ kọn fẹgha

190. *Tẹbẹ ka emi*

Akpọtemẹowei, ukẹrẹ taridiẹowei

Kuro akegha, Dieperẹyẹ kpọ kẹmẹ ẹrẹ

Bina arau, Oyein kẹ ị pẹrẹmọ

Ama dọọ timi ini ebi fẹ

A yerimọ

Akpọ imbelẹmọ yi bo

Zua kurukuru

Zua alomọ angọ

Pina yai pina

200. *Ebi ere wari agbe*

Amene wana, wana, wana

Amene wonona, wonona, wonona

Amene yeen, yeen, yeen, yeen

A kumo ere; ponimba me tonono

Bebe gbologha, ebi tabayi dein

Meli, meli, meli, meli

Kori wen agbe; yerin ebi

Yei biri nimi ere

Kuwen, kuwen, kuwen

210. *Akere yei tari ere*

A suodei wari pina ke pina

Dau kpo suodei wari

Yai kpo suodei wari

Ebi teme kpo suodei wari

Bina owei dodo timi

Ini ta me Oyein ke sele i peremo

Ogbo me i neyen

Fetimi undo

Soni soni ozougha bira ma

220. *Zene keme bomo amene okolo ma suogha bira ma*

Imene okulo, amene ufan

Zozo angatimi undo bai lao...

Tẹ́ìn bira kẹ́ tẹ́ìn ebimọ
Maa ta mọ́ yẹi mọ́ a nẹ́ agbẹ́kaamọ
A yila kaamọ
A gerede kaamọ
Pẹ́rẹ́ agbẹ́
Ala agbẹ́
Ọ́rọ́ka kpoka...

230. *Èrẹ́bẹ́bẹ́ atẹ́idẹ́i*

Ọ̀wọ̀u biri ị́gị́na bo sẹ́ tufiẹmọ
Nanaoyein kíkaiẹ́i ị́gba
Kẹ́mẹ́ túbọ́ kipelekumọ
Tọ́nmọ́ kpọ́ tọ́nmọ́kumọ
Benebene, benebene

Tokoni mọ́ Ekiye mọ́
Tarị́ a la, ị́mọ́ọ́lọ́ a tan
Kẹ́mẹ́ túbọ́ kẹ́nị́ baị, kẹ́nị́ baị, andẹ́ seimọ́ tabayi pẹ́rẹ́gha bira ma

A yẹ́rị́ bọ́ fọ́ bile kẹ́ tua

240. *Ebi awọ̀u, ebi okobo, ebi ụ̀ndọ́*

Oyein amẹ́nẹ́ ọ̀wọ̀u bo finì a pẹ́rẹ́ gbololo...
Amẹ́nẹ́ warị́ mẹ́ tarị́ ladẹ́i
Amẹ́nẹ́ warị́ mẹ́ alawarị́
Amẹ́nẹ́ warị́ mẹ́ pẹ́rẹ́warị́
Daan ụ̀ndọ́ kpọ́ emi
Dọ́ọ́ mọ́ kpọ́ emi
Ị́mbẹ́lẹ́ akpọ́

Bẹbẹ ka fẹ sẹlẹ egberi
Fẹtimi undo, boomo awou perẹ

250. *Gbaa ya gbaa bira pa*
Ani kẹ tẹkẹmẹnẹ, Nanaowei
Ini yai Jesu ẹrẹ ma
Amino..., pa wo perẹ

Maa ta mọ yei mọ, a do..., ye a kulemọ
Opu ala okpo otu bo
Footu bo mọ
Binawari mọ
Ekiyeotu bo mọ
Naweri bo otu

260. *Kẹmẹ ebi yai ama*
Oyein gbanamọ a perẹ
Abo wo akẹ bere tiemoweri
Deinbai kpọ zene erein, anua

Ibe kiri anda olotu kẹrẹ-kẹrẹ
Imẹnẹ Adolphus Munamuna
Ọbẹbẹ Olotu Kẹni, Izon Ibe
Ogboin tubọ
Gbesi, Otuan kẹ ini ama
Otumongalanga indi ka duwon do

270. *Ogboin tu fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ, kiri fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ, kiri fẹtẹ-fẹtẹ*

Izọn otu, a do...

The community and guests, you are welcome

I'm the bright community

The master storyteller

Okinigbogbosi gbosi

Ikpangị tebe asain; consulted before saying

It's the oral poet that's come with a boat of oral poems

Which person's oral poems?

It's for a beautiful people

It should last today, it should last tomorrow

10. Eat to old age

It's Tokoni and Ekiye's marriage ceremony's boat of oral poems

The one who surrounds himself with a fence doesn't fence his ears

No separating of animals, no separating of fish

Lend me your ears, everybody

You are welcome

I salute you, the audience

Everything has its own ceremony

Today, a great ceremony has occurred

It is the marriage ceremony between Tokoni and Ekiye that's happening

20. It's all eating and drinking

All play and laughter

There is no small ceremony

Do you not know that the palm tree that will bear fruit

shows signs when it's still small?

Something big has happened

Puwobu, puwobu

Yokobu, yokobu

Neen, neen, neen, neen

The husband and the wife

Today is your day

30. We are all happy for you

Give thanks to God

Male and female

Young and old

Everybody is joyous, joyous, joyous, joyous

You see!

Three important ceremonies stand out in the world of ceremonies

Birth ceremony, it's the first one

Marriage ceremony, that's the second

The third one is

40. The last day, the closing dance

That's the ceremony of death

All these three ceremonies are important

When you look, marriage ceremony, to be precise stands

out in the world of ceremonies – *soko-soko-soko-soko*

Why? It brings life

Multiply", God said, "multiply"

“So that the world would grow”

Everything has its own ceremony

Such things are in the world

The story that has no deception is true

50. Marriage ceremony is very important in the world

Jehovah said

Two persons: woman and man

When they’ve left their fathers and mothers and come together

The flesh of these two persons becomes one

They’re one body

They’re one spirit; no place to be separated from

You see that a spirit has no soap to wash it!

The twine that God has tied

Let no one cut it

60. It is Okumoagala that is here

The number 1 poet of Izon nation

I salute you, the audience

Everything has its own joy

Yes is yes

There is salt

There is pepper

There is honey too

Everything is complete - *kpeun!*

Marriage ceremony is happiness, happiness, happiness, happiness

70. The evil thing, go away

The good thing, come in

Meli meli koro

The bird of the sea *tekene...*

It's true that when people love each other

It's their valuables they share with each other

That's why Tokoni's father and mother

And Ekiye's father and mother

On this beautiful day

In the presence of everybody

80. Without holding their nerves

Their cherished flower

Their cherished star

Have shared for each other *worodo*

Yes is yes

Yes is yes

Which hand? The right hand

That's the practice

We are all gathered here because of this beautiful event

It's the marriage ceremony between Tokoni and Ekiye

that's happening

90. A good story makes one happy

The one vindicated rubs chalk in the right eye

Happiness for the relatives – *zei-zei-zei*

Brethren, greetings

Love, that's it

It's the pacesetter

When Ekiye saw Tokoni

The body couldn't contain itself

"If you would agree, I should have loved to live with you till old age?"

Tokoni, too, had her own

100. When she suddenly saw Ekiye

She couldn't contain herself

"Oh, what a man!"

"I will die with you at all cost"

You see!

When a young man has come of age to marry

Let him marry his woman

The bangle is worn on where it's right for it

When a young girl too has come of age to marry

There's nothing more than she getting married to her husband

110. Our elders say

It's in the middle of the dry season two wise men go to bail out a pond
Whistling

Children were the ones running errands

"Please, go and call so-and-so for me"

Walking *keeren-keeren* in the back of the house

Those days are gone

Today, the door has been opened – *gbogbola*...

The moon has come out shone

The whole world has seen it

120. Tokoni and Ekiye are wife and husband

It is their marriage ceremony that's happening

Ceremony, ceremony, ceremony

It is the cloth cut by the whole community that covers the waist

The whole of Soperegha family cut it for you

The whole of Igbain family cut it for you

All kinsmen cut it for you

The quarter and the community

Everybody cut it for you

Tokoni and Ekiye are a good fit

130. It is from heaven

From the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

It is God that gave you the blessing

There is no one to destroy the good God has done

Never, never

They say relationship by quarter is nothing, but the one

by the same mother is the real relationship

But a good friend is better than relationship by the same mother

Husband and wife

You are friends

You are brother and sister

140. The same father

The same mother

One flesh, one body, one spirit

No separation; one body

The twine that God has tied

Let no one cut it

They say a man is a woman's umbrella

But it's a woman that's a man's strength

If there is no man, there is no woman

If there is no woman, there is no man

150. It's when two hands wash each other that they're clean

Yield for each other

Marriage is a wrestling technique

A man is a man

Where a head is the tail will not come out and say something

For a husband and wife, there is no change

Yield for each other

Understand each other in the marriage

That's very important

Only one finger cannot be used to kill a louse

160. The two in-laws, I've come for you

We all see it

Nobody tells the other

A good in-law is a fat of goat

The one who has the fat of goat is joyful - *fokpa*

The one who's jealous *melu, melu, melu, melu*

It's God that's favoured you

You are responsible, trustworthy and good in-laws

When your children are successful you are successful

When your children have love, you have love

170. When your children are happy, you are happy

Whatever someone plans, it will not materialise

"Know all," that's God's name

You see!

The paddle does not get bad where there's *aga*

For that reason, don't be tired in giving the new couples advice

It's the combination of all fats that make the head of the *buran* fish oily

May the God who never rejects prayers bless you

May all of you live long to enjoy your children

A good woman is a piece of valuable wrap

180. My daughter in-law *gbooko*

Even if you touch the thy, it's pregnancy

In nine months' time, "nge, nge, nge"

A good visitor is a fish that has fat; a newborn

May you give birth to children that will live

Give birth to male and female into Izonland

The Holy Book says

A good wife is a good thing

The one who has married her has found a good thing

Similarly, a good husband can't be bought by money

190. It's luck

The Creator, He is the one that bestows blessings

It's not taken by power; "Diepereye" is someone's name

Sister, it's God that gave to you

Stay in peace to enjoy your blessing

You see!

The things that make life enjoyable

Some are dark

Others are yellow

The ones that are white are white

200. A good wife fits a home

She radiates – *wana-wana-wana*

She illuminates – *wonona-wonona-wonona*

She glows – *yẹẹn-yẹẹn-yẹẹn-yẹẹn*

She is the only woman; with a long neck- *tonono*

It's not put in the mouth, yet it's sweeter than honey

Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet

Suitable for walking around with; of good character

A woman who loves her husband's family

Kuwen-kuwen-kuwen

210. She's the one whom the husband loves
There's light in the home she's dwelt
A home that the Father has dwelt
A home that the Son has dwelt
A home that the Holy Spirit has dwelt

Brother, live in peace
It's God that chose your wife for you
The land is yours
Eat till old age
Slowly, without haste
220. Don't allow anyone to come into your voice
You are the front, she is the rear
Live as husband and wife till the end of your lives
It is the tree's branch that makes it good
How husband and wife fit you!
How important you are!
How responsible you are!
Worthy of riches;
Worthy of nobility
Ring- *kpoka*...
230. You're now free from talks
All the pepper on the road should give way
The twine that God has tied
Let no one cut it
Don't even point at it

Never, never

Tokoni and Ekiye

May you be blessed, may blessings come upon you

No one frowns while licking honey

Whoever sees you should be happy

240. Good children, good money, good life

May God open your ways for you, *gbogbolo*...

Your home is blessed

Your home is royalty

Your home is prosperity

It's of long life

It's of peace

Happy life

There will be no problem regarding money for feeding

Eat till old age; then leave for the children

250. It should happen the way it is said

It is the prayer, O God

In the name of Jesus, your son

Amen, may it happen for us

Husband and wife, I salute you

The big nobles

The in-laws

The relations

The Friends

Those who heard and came

260. Beautiful people

May God bless you

You made us to be here

Tomorrow is another day, thank you

The wrestling of a clan sees many champions

I'm Adolphus Munamuna

The number 1 poet of the Izon nation

Son of Ogboin

Precisely, Otuan is my community

The chameleon that uses fish as chewing stick

270. Ogboin tu *fete-fete, kiri fete-fete, kiri fete-fete*

People of Izon, I salute you

Ini Amapon (Your Language)

Ini amapon

Ini amapon yila

Sei bai a keme zuo

Oya a keme teimo

Amapon keme balamo

Ogbo posi posi

Amaponnaghamo daogbonimighamo keni aru you

Yọ̀tími amẹ̀nẹ̀ ama laa

Amapọ̀u sẹ̀ ofio-ofio

10. *Igbe pọ̀u nimigha mẹ, a yẹrímọ*

Dauogbonimigha ogbo dọ̀mẹnẹ̀ yo, kpe, kpe, kpe

Dọ̀tími amẹ̀nẹ̀ dau ogbo laa

“Bei ogbo mẹ ebima?”

Yọ̀nkọ

“Bei ogbo mẹ ị dįsẹma?”

Yọ̀nkọ yọ̀nkọ yọ̀nkọ

Nimigha yi seikaamọ

Dauogbonimigha akpa a bira tũa sẹlẹ pamọ amẹnẹ̀ bọbọ dau ogbo

kẹ fẹ; ịgalaba

Amapọ̀n naghá kẹmẹ amẹnẹ̀ dau ogbo nimigha

20. *Amẹnẹ̀ dau ogbo nimigha kẹmẹ ama miẹ yi nimigha*

Ama miẹ yi nimigha kẹmẹ kala awọ̀u ogbowei

Kamụ, kamụ, kamụ, bei kpọ afọrụ

Beke na owei do ..., ị bo iviyanmọ

Ini bọbọ ama kẹmẹ bo ofisi i la ya

Kọnọ kpọ beke, ama kpọ beke

Kpasị-kpasị-kpasị o gbẹin alẹmọ

Ani kamụ-kamụ yọ mẹ

Ị peipelemọ

Beke na ebi yi deigha

30. *Ini amapọn didubamọ*

Abugọ bay yein toru a seigha

Bei Nigeria opu ibe ma wo binaotu bo di

Beni biri kemẹ ande biragha

Ini bobo yi me ini bobo yi

Dabio nana bo bira ka kaamọ

Zene ibeotu bo amenẹ amapọn bo kori gerein-gerein kuromọ

Ani duoni nimi opufuntolumowari ya amenẹ amapọn bo mo, amenẹ

yerin buo bo mo tolumotimi bolou kule fe

Maamu karamọ kule kpọ femene

Embali bira a gotimi PhD, ani kule bo se a dubadein

40. *Taarū karamọ kule kpọ femene*

Izon ba tei ke pamọ ya o...!

Dienini kaamọ; tu teiaama

Wo waribolou bo kpọ kemẹ ba Izon fiegha

Wo awou bo kpọ ba Izon nagha

Wo kemẹ se zene pon bo ke kon bobo amapọn midede

Seidein yi me, vede-vede-vede

Zua otu amenẹ amapọn gbēdi ke gbēdi

Adika gomogomo seiolo nimiweri imbasi

Amenẹ amapọn gbēdi kemẹ amenẹ bobo angọ ke gbēdimọ

50. *Na bo gbaa ake nagha bo pere*

Amenẹ amapọn gbēdi kemẹ amenẹ patu nimigha

Ba bo bienbede

Amẹnẹ patu nimigha bọ kẹmẹ a pagha

Your language

Your language is very important

It saves you the day things are bad

It saves one from suffering

Language makes one happy

Everything has its mate

Lack-of-knowledge-of-one's language and no-knowledge-of-father's

land paddled one canoe

They paddled until they go to their community

There were vortices in all the waterfont

10. Do you see that they didn't know where to anchor the canoe!

No-knowledge-of-father's land was looking for land – *kpe-kpe-kpe-kpe*

He's looking until he got to his father's land

"Is this land good?"

Yes - *yonko*

"Do you like this land?"

Yes, yes, yes – *yonko-yonko-yonko*

Ignorance is very bad

Lack-of-knowledge-of-father's land put hand in his pocket

and brought out money and bought his own father's land; *igalaba!*

The one who doesn't understand his language is one who

doesn't know his father's land

20. The one who doesn't know his father's land does not know
the practices of his people

The one who doesn't know the practices of his people is children's mate

What air! Foul, foul, foul – *kamu-kamu-kamu*

Greetings, the one who understands English! The ladder is on you now

When your own townsman came to the office

English on the left, English on the right

Kpasi-kpasi-kpasi, thrown at him

In that place of foul air!

Hear me well

English is not used to replace something good

30. Respect your language

The monkey's daughter is not ugly before it

Let's look after our people in this big Nigeria

The one who takes his bath never forgets his body

Your own is your own

The cola nut gets mature in the hands of its owner

People of other ethnic groups hold their languages strongly – *gerein-gerein*

For that, they studied their languages and cultures at universities
and got the first praise title

They also bear the second praise title

They struggled to read up to PhD; that's the biggest of all praise titles

40. They also bear the third praise title

Oh, what happened to Izon!

It's so sorrowful; but the reason is!

We no longer speak Izon even in our families

Our children no longer understand Izon

We've all made other languages our own

The worst thing – *vede-vede-vede*

Some people insult their language

It's intentional

The one who insults his language insults himself

50. The one who has heard should tell the one who didn't hear

He who insults his language does not know his roots

Like the buttocks of someone who farts

He that doesn't know his roots is not a Man

Bayelsa Ibedawe Tokoni Qubẹbẹ

(The Praise Poetry of the Governor of Bayelsa State)

Ini ebi Izon otu

Andẹ mọ nini mọ akẹ kẹnị kuomọun yọ mẹ

Adegbe barị kẹ indi

Dada obebe – yanki

I bo ivianmọ

Bayelsa ibedaawei

Governor Henry Seriake

Dickson yai

- Nanaye yai*
10. *Oruazę yai*
- Obu yai*
- Obu ani dau tẹbẹ-mẹ*
- Obu wari pẹrẹtẹbẹ*
- Abọkọ bẹbẹ kẹni-kẹni-kẹni, kuro agbẹ!*
- Haan Abọkọ!*
- Haan Kolobiri!*
- Kẹmẹ emi?*
- Tei pa ya wo teiunfa?*
- Pori badẹi oge kẹ toru bẹinmọ*
20. *Obu, Fẹdeinkigha yai, Lẹ yai*
- Lẹ, akẹtẹ tuo-tuo bẹlepeẹi*
- Orua ama ogbo ma Agbẹafo nanawẹri pẹrẹ zidei mẹ, a yerimo*
- Tu a pa yi bọlọu dẹin*
- Aba toriyo zigha*
- Pẹrẹ pa wari pẹrẹ fa*
- Oyi ya pẹrẹ ya oii a kule*
- Sii ya pẹrẹ ya sii a kule*
- Gidigidikporikpo*
- Indagbudu, gbudu, gbudu*
30. *Opu indi toru bẹin*
- Ala agbẹ*
- Pẹrẹ agbẹ*
- Kuro agbẹ*

Gbein tẹbẹ fẹ tẹbẹ dẹin

Kurọ kemẹ kporoka-kporoka

Kurọ kemẹ kakalu-kakalu

Kurọ kemẹ gedeba-gedeba

Anda bi bọ ẹrẹ ya biyendisẹ

Bira bira umbẹ kọriguda

40. *Bou osuwei kọri ya, kporobu*

Gbogbola, gbogbola, pina osuwei gbeingbo..., gbogbola...

A yerimọ!

Okpọ lolo aru peigha

Kurọ kemẹ lolo owei kpo lumọ

Ongbo kotoḡo, waan bira-a buo bi

Ibedaawei lolo ama zige zige zige zige

Dickson yai, sisei lolokumọ

Zenẹ kemẹ nimigha

Ogbo mẹ iniye

50. *Asua*

Peinama boro-boro

Owei kemẹ aworo

Dari kpo sei kpo

Gbigbiri-gbigbiri-gbigbiri

Tein kpo suogha, ki kpo suogha

Sweet and bitter

Talk na do

Oloko daṣ of Kolobiri

Do... ye i kulemọ

60. *Ama sẹ pẹlẹ ikein kẹ tu lamọ*

Yenagoa sọọ pẹlẹ i pẹrẹmọ

Ogbia, Nembe, Brass, sọọ pẹlẹ i pẹrẹmọ

Kolokuma/Opokuma, Sagbama, Ekeremo sọọ pẹlẹ i pẹrẹmọ

Southern Ijaw sọọ pẹlẹ i pẹrẹmọ

Bayelsa sẹ pẹlẹ ikẹrẹ pẹrẹmọ

Tọru kpọ iniye

Bou kpọ iniye

Ini furo mẹ apiye furo oo

Ibedaowei dọọ timi ye fẹ

70. *A yẹrimọ!*

Kẹmẹ túbọ yi gbadejị ama gbaa bira kẹ mịẹmọ

Bẹbẹ tọkọrigha

Atonẹi paa ya ibe sẹ kẹ ẹrịmọ

Okosuotu gbaamọ

Ofonì awọu zì ebi ya, adọ kpọ bẹbẹ gbolomọ

Kọkọbaiyi

I wẹnịmẹnẹ ebi fẹrẹ bo kẹ i gbamẹnẹ

Seriake, ofoni tẹbẹ kana sibegha

Undo kẹ tẹkẹmẹnẹ

80. *I bọ kẹ abọ ị pẹlẹ bọ yi kiri*

I bọdẹi kẹ tẹin koroo

Agonọ a bọ yi, kiri kpọ a bọmọ

Ebi isele san bọ amẹnẹ angọ kẹ siri

Ani duoni fọun gbẹin bọ tẹbẹ

Aforu kpọ ị gbolokumọ

Ebiri kpọ ị gbolokumọ

Egberi ini bẹbẹ ya fakumọ

Kutiẹmọ yọ beni irigha

Abadi gbogbosi-gbosi

90. *Ala beni ogbudu korogha*

Kẹni bai kẹni bai owurau pu aboroboro kọrigha

Pinadei oge ba dirimogha

Odoko apele bọlọ bọlọ bọlọ bọlọ

Tari kekereowei of Aleibiri

Ebikonbowei of Ekeremor

Ibe Agura of Tarakiri Kingdom

Ibe Tokoniowei of Kumbowei Kingdom

Ibe Finiowei of Southern Ijaw

Twon Ibe Tolomọ

100. *Edi 1 of Ogbia Kingdom*

Ogbo-ogbo Olotu 1 of Oguwan

Adaka Boro 2nd of Kolokumọ/Opokuma

Ọfuruma-pepe, owei akparan

Governor Henry Seriake Dickson

Bayelsa Ibedaawei

Kurọtimi undobai la oo

Governor paliwei

Iniye seri ake

Ọngbo indi, kurọ indi

110. *Indagbudu keme*

Nigeria sọdọu aru ma buo sai

Teintimi yo ama da

Imbi kpọ gbologha

Dọọ si bo wari suomọ olotu me

Ukerẹ owei akparan

Kala i kulemọ, Nembe

Kala i kulemọ, Nembe

Ama dọkọ dọkọ bie kpọ

Angala duba bara, duba bara aru karagha, Nembe

120. *Opu ye kala ye, kala ye opu ye, Nembe...*

The burning spear

Torunanaawei

Rear Admiral Gboribiogha John Jonah

Kulepon me iniye

A yerimo!

Tomi indi pere indi

Ibozo-sonoma amenet itu ka weni

Duba ya beinumono ibobo, zauimi ka diamoyi peremenet

Izon ebi dou owei

130. *Opu ikputu bira a gerein gerein gerein wo ibedaowei kpekimoweri*

Izon awou bo se pere periyaiteti

Bongbai me, atoneti me agbatuadee, pina yee

I weni fere bo ke i gbaamenet

Ala eri ya pere kpo eri

Tun me agbe keme ke tun terimo

Bayelsa ma Izon yerin fere ofou doweremi pere me tari i la

Ani pere bo mo, ala bo mo, Izon keme ongbet bo ne

ikpekpe naweri bo tiri ma paimi keme bo se ke imo kulemo

A nua

Oyein gbanamo a pere

140. *Keme ebi yai ama, disiin ya yeen, yeen, yeen-yeen*

A yerimo, Izon warit beni ya oge ka pamot

Nanaowei do...

Ibe kiri anda olotu kerekere

Ini ebi Izon otu, i bere duo waideti

Imenet Adolphus Munamuna

Ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀ Pẹ̀rẹ̀, Ẹ̀zọ̀n Ibe

Ogboin túbọ̀

Gbẹ̀si, Otuan kẹ̀ ịnì ama

Otumọ̀ngalanga indi ka dọ̀wọ̀n dọ̀

150. *Ogbointu fẹ̀tẹ̀fẹ̀tẹ̀, kiri fẹ̀tẹ̀fẹ̀tẹ̀, kiri fẹ̀tẹ̀fẹ̀tẹ̀*

Ẹ̀zọ̀n otu a do...

My good people of Izon

To take my leave!

Adegbe yields much more fish when it's not broached the following year

The grandfather's ladder - *yanki*

The ladder is on you now

The Governor of Bayelsa State

Governor Henry Dickson

Son of Dickson

Son of Nanaye

10. Son of Oruaze

Son of Obu

Obu, he is the primogenitor

The bedrock of the riches of the family of Obu

Aboko bebe keni-keni-keni, befitting of power

Haan Aboko!

Haan Kolobiri!

Is there someone?

Are we not going to play when there is a play?

- It's the eagle that's turned white that crosses a river
20. Obu, son of Fedeinkigha, son of Lẹ
Lẹ, akẹtẹ tuọ-tuọ bẹlẹpẹl
 Got married to Agbeafo in our community and gave
 birth to wealth, you see?
 What happens after is bigger than the beginning's
Aba does not give birth to a catfish
 Money does not dry up in a home that has seen money
 If you give 10, he is entitled to the 10 praise titles
 If you give 20, he's entitled to the 20 praise titles
 Gidigidikporikpo
 A man of valour
30. The big fish that crosses the river
 Worthy of nobility
 Worthy of riches
 Worthy of power
 The provider is greater than the eater
- The strongman with fast pace – *kporoka-kporoka*
 The strongman with terrible looks – *kakalẹ-kakalẹ*
 The strongman with giant strides – *gedeba-gedeba*
 The one asking for a wrestling bout suddenly has the urge
 to poop when he sees you
 You subdued the wild pig with bare hands
40. *Kporobu*, when you held the forest fairy
 You who completely knocked down the white fairy – *gbogbola...*

You see!

The ranting of *okpo* does not break the canoe

The anger of the strong man sends men to look for cover

They fold in a corner and ask the antelope for leg

The roar of the strongman sends tremor into the Community

Son of Dickson, please don't violent

We know no other person

The land is yours

50. *Asua*

Pẹ̣n̄nama boro-boro

Owei kẹmẹ aworo

Dari kpọ sei kpọ

Gbigbiri-gbigbiri-gbigbiri

Immune-to-bullets; immune-to-cuts

Sweet-and-bitter

Talk-and-do

Kolobiri's father of law

I salute you

60. It's the covering-cloth cut by the whole community that

goes round the waist

Yenagoa joined to cut it for you

Ogbia, Nembe, Brass joined to cut it for you

Kolokuma/Opokuma, Sagbama, Ekeremo joined to cut it for you

Southern Ijaw joined to cut for you
All Bayelsa cut it for you
The sea is yours
The forest is yours
Your stomach is the stomach of *apiye*
Governor, live in peace to eat

70. You see!

When a man says something he does as said
He never reneges
When the moon comes out, it's the whole state that sees it
Our elders say
When the birth of the hen is good the hawk too has a taste
It's true
It's the good work you do that speaks for you

Seriake, the fowl's head never carries a basket
It's life we pray for

80. It shall only fall when you've passed

You shall pass before the tree will fall
What's an offense in the heaven is also an offense on earth
The one that grinds good camwood first rubs it on one's self
For that, the ashes will rush back to he that pours them

May the wind not touch you
May the storm not touch you

May testimony never finishes in your mouth

Water never dries up in a place where water has

The sea *gbogbosi-gbosi*

90. Mud does not fall in sea water

Never a day has cobwebs covered the rays of the sun

The eagle that's turned white never turns black again

The wings of the kite only goes forward

The Custodian of Blessing of Aleibiri

The Bringer of Good of Ekeremor

The Clan Star of Tarikiri Kingdom

The Clan Beautifier of Kumbowei Kingdom

The Clan Opener of Southern Ijaw

The Developer of Twon Clan

100. The Edi 1 of Ogbia Kingdom

The Ogbo-Ogbo Olotu 1 of Oguwan

Adaka Boro 2nd of Kolokuma/Opokuma

The Great White Shark, the strong one

Governor Henry Seriake Dickson

The Governor of Bayelsa State

May you live long

The Deputy Governor

Take your own

The big fish, the powerful fish

110. A man of valour

A warrior in the battle ship of Nigeria

A man who headed places for shooting

No bullet pierced you

The champion that came home safely

He is the strong one

I salute you, Nembe

I salute you, Nembe

The land of the strong-hearted/valour

No matter how big the mangrove is, it's not used to carve a canoe, Nembe

120. The big thing is small, the small thing is big, Nembe...

The burining spear

The owner of the sea

Rear Admiral Gboribiogha John Jonah

The greeting is yours

You see!

The sole fish is a rich fish

Dolphin-seven, they move in group

The palm tree that will bear fruit shows signs when it's still small

He who struggles for the good of the Izon

130. Like a rock, you stand by our Governor

All children of Izon celebrate

Today, the moon has come out fully and is shining

It's your work that speaks for you

When you see the white cloth, you've seen the king

It's the person the cap fits that wears it

The Bayelsa State Commissioner of Culture, may you be blessed

I'm greeting the chiefs, the nobles and all other Izon dignitaries that heard
the call and came to this event

You are welcome

May God bless you

140. Beautiful people, arrayed in all their finery when you

look – *yeen-yeen-yeen-yeen*

You see! the gathering of the Izon turned out to be a celebration

Thank you, God

The wrestling of a clan sees different champions

My good people of Izon, I go from here

I'm Adolphus Munamuna

The Chief Oral Poet of the Izon Nation

Son of Ogboin

Otuan is my community, precisely

The chameleon that uses fish as chewing stick

150. *Ogboin tu fete-fete, kiri fete-fete, kiri fete-fete*

Izon people, I salute you

Izon Ibe Qubebe

(The Praise Poetry of the Izon Nation/Ethnic Group)

Kokoroko oo

Tẹindei ofoni ba bẹbẹ deigha

Erein badei yo oo

Izon ibe

Erein badei

Bei erein me opu erein

Izon pere bo mo ala bo mo

Ani keme ama ne Izon oya donweri dein kpọ erein kpọ a wenimene keme bo

Ere kpọ owei kpọ, kala kpọ, okosu kpọ

10. *Toboro duo bo, tamun duo bo; ọuraupu mo, ọurausuo mo*

Izon ebi ke duoni wo se bo benimi

Sọ kpọ fa, donọ kpọ fa, ise kpọ fa

Izon wari se doro

Ania mbana a Oyein kulemo agbeimi

Akpoteṣeṣe owei nua aa

Kuronana owei doo ye i kulemo

Ikerẹ Ebimio owei, I mi ebi bo ando fa

Bẹbẹ ya gbaa ya pagha

Tokoni I la, Ayiba, bo mo I la

20. *Tamaran mo Ziba mo, seribẹbẹ agoro I laaa*

Ye ake dumo ka tuma?

Ake sei ka tuma bai ni kule bo ke I pere ya, Nana owei?

Ango mę timigbęgha kę tön
Imgbele bo kiriti, okoi I pęřęmọ
Ini tẹbẹ kpọ kiri kę emi, tẹbẹtou I pęřęmọ
Ebimiędaų doo

Okosuotu gbaamọ
Yinimi kẹmẹ ofan arų mę ogbo a gbanagha
Ani duoni yinimi otu kẹni sọmọ ibe da arų kọřimọdeįama

30. Ebi aforų ibe ma sọdeį
Kẹmẹ awọų bo bolouimbẹlẹ
Kẹmẹsẹ dọų yi bira asųọ
Ibe sẹ wa wa kę wa
Wo ibedaotu bo, anua
A bira kọřikọřikųmọ
Oyein gbanamọ a pęřę

Daų tẹbẹ bo kulemọ agbẹįmi
Duwẹi kiri ka duba, abo a dọọ timi
Fẹ bọ kirifagha; a wẹni fẹřę mę afenafa

40. A gboro tẹin mę, sọpa, fọfọlọtaba, ebi bein yaį tua
Izon sẹ kę timi fẹmẹnẹ

INAPRO, INC, IEF, Ijaw Ladies Association, Mosend, IYC, MEND, SEA, NDPV
Izon awọų bo sẹ kę i mọ kulemọ

A yẹřimọ!
A koromọ omgbosu kę tọrų bẹinmọ
Bẹinmukoro ya, ebi mọ kę bomọ

- Daan ụndọ kpọ emi, dọomọ kpọ emi*
- Pọsịọ-pọsịọ-pọsịọ-pọsịọ*
- Taara buọ a tiẹ ịgbagị bẹlẹ tougha*
50. *Ibe duba kẹ pẹrẹ agbẹ*
- Kiyen nimigha ande, ani abadi oun bo*
- Agọnọ ịkikai-bo, ipele ipele zeee*
- Ala okpọ gotorụ gotorụ*
- Pẹrẹ apa siamesi*
- Oyein diye kẹmẹ pẹrẹ yi kẹ kẹmẹ lamọ*
- Ịzọn ibe mẹ tarị ladei*
- Wo ogbo mẹ pẹrẹ ogbo*
- Di yọ di yọ pina kẹ pina*
- Ere ebi, asiya ebi*
60. *Nama kogha, indi kogha*
- Gboro fiyai pa*
- Bẹbẹ ka fẹ sẹlẹ egberi*
- Kiribolou pulo bo ziei, ziei, ziei, ziei*
- Beni tu erigha abadi saraweremi bira ka Ịzọn ibe sẹ saraweremi*
- Pẹipẹinengi, pẹibira pẹibira, bein bein kẹ bein*
- Pẹrẹ tu erigha*
- Pẹrẹ tu yereku, yereku*
- Pẹrẹ tu tamama, tamama*
- Pẹrẹ tu zigbẹi, zigbẹi, zigbẹi, zigbẹi*
70. *Pẹrẹ ado bein kọ, sarai, sarai, sarai*
- Ingo kipele, oya kipele, okupurayi kipele*

Abo bei kpọ tari

*Disin ya Ịzọn awọu bo sẹ dọọ warị ka timi sẹn fẹmọ kẹ agbẹimi
Beni bolou emi bọ fula bọumọ andẹ sọrigha*

Mọ kẹ ị mọ tọnwẹrị-a

Agbọlọ tọn bira seigha

Nẹyẹn kẹmẹ apa, bidẹ apa

Daba beni tiri tẹingha

Kọn bọ kọn bọ bẹbẹ

80. *Abẹi nama, pẹi bọ pẹi bọ amẹnẹ warị*

Tein bada finfa

Obiri didisei ongbo korogha

Akporobu, kọrị yi kọrị yi bẹbẹ

Obori kọnọwei zigha

Pogi nama ofoni ebe aka tụagha

Obunọ a sịen sei bọ, akparakpa ka sịen kpọ kẹni kpeikpei obori andẹ

Bẹbẹ duba bira duba bira ogoun kọn pẹigha

Bẹbẹ sa bẹbẹ ka gbemọ

Ịzọn Ibe

90. *Adẹ digha kiri dẹintimi namabaowei ta kẹ agba pamọ fulọ bimẹnẹ egberi mẹ*

Nanaoyein founbomọ

Tọrụ kẹ ani yai diwẹrị beni famọ

Aga emi yọ, yowẹi seigha kẹ gbaamọ

Ịzọn bọlọu wẹni otu bo sisei ye a tẹkẹmọ

A bei egberi kọrị bo agbẹ kiri a tiẹmọ

Tu a bomẹnẹ awọu bo duoni

Abaan koro ya amẹnẹ tau ka kiyen tuamọ

Bou a tẹin pẹlẹ kpọ dọ sọumẹnẹ

Igburu kan bira kan bira kanfagha kẹ tọn

100. *Azuzu, tẹin bira kẹ tẹin ebimọ*

Wo awọu bo kẹ wo deinbai

Izọn ibe mẹ kẹmẹ kogha

Funimi otu bein, yinimi otu bein

Tọrẹ kẹrẹ kẹrẹ yi tolumọweremi kẹmẹ bo mọ

Abo Oyein kẹ wo pẹrẹmọ

Ourau pu aboroboro kọriḡha

Tamaran miẹ ebi seimọum bọ fa

Benebene, benebene

Gbeḡngbeḡnsei gbeḡnsei tu ẹriḡha

110. *Izọn ibe tu kọriḡun agbaraka kiri mọ batan, batan, batan*

I tari bọ oge

I kaun bọ kirikọri

I gbẹdi bọ kẹ bọze

Olulu gbiri-gbiri-gbiri-gbiri

Ingọ bira pou, buọ pou

Gbeḡnẹ gbeḡnẹ gbeḡnẹ, pẹrẹ tẹin

Izọn ikikai tọnọṇọ

Ahaan Izọn!

Ahiin Izọn!

120. *Izọn kẹmẹ emi?*

Miẹ yi pa wo miẹunfa?

Imenẹ Adogidigbo, sii koriweri diye mọ anda

Otumongalanga Keni

Agonọ a timi kenị gbẹin

Karibụọ kẹrẹ-kẹrẹ, zibụọ kẹrẹ-kẹrẹ

Agbị adein mọ beke adein mọ benebene kenị a pagha

“I kpọ ba tubọ kẹ ya oo”

Bọbọ ozu miẹgha

Borodei tein kpọ wai sọu, fofolo taba, ebi bein yai tuamẹnẹ bira mẹ i nimigha?

130. *Kemese angọ kuroṃo*

Undo mẹ emi sẹ ikiemoyi emi

Izon owei ikiepẹlekagha

Akpobolokeimi amẹnẹ tubọ tein

Oyaiḱpetekumọ amẹnẹ tubọ tein

Inifieladei

Keniwenimọ

Adibala kpọ kemẹ ẹrẹ

A yerimọ!

Baara toru bubọ, bowei toru bubọ

140. *Tein beni luwee*

Oru beni bọ fadei

Aya beni bodei

Yi amẹnẹ ifie ifie

Izon ifie ladei

Bomu nana kẹmẹ ke bomu a tẹbẹ tųamọ
Wari gidẹ wari kẹ finimọmọ
Kenị bai, kenị bai ofoni bye a tẹin pẹregha
Izon kẹmẹ ọngbẹ bo kẹ tẹinmẹnẹ
Tọrụ asa emi otu, beke ebe emi yai

150. *Beni biri kẹmẹ andẹ biragha*
Kẹmẹsẹ ama ikiye
Agọnọ emi bọ kiri indi dangha

Wo bọbọ yi mẹ wo bọbọ yi
Bọ tẹbẹ kẹmẹ okoti badejama
Okoti poudẹi kẹ gbaamọ
Buran tẹbẹ kpekimo kpekimo ka imẹli mọ
Imbolị kpokpo kẹ fūlo
Ebi tẹin bọ kẹ burumọ
Tẹintẹin bo, tẹin bo, tẹintẹin bo, tẹin bo

160. *Ebi igoni imẹli indi*
Izon ibe ma boo

Okosuotu gbaamọ
Kẹmẹ arụ karatimi arụ fain anga poudẹjama kara bọ kẹ bọzemọ
Ani duoni kẹmẹsẹ angọ yanrị
Agbaara ya timi a ditimi beni bọdẹi

Agọnọ arụ sai bọ fa
Tọrụ tọrụ ya imba di ya, imba bọrọ kẹ bọrọdẹi

Akpọlọkpọlọ mu na tọrọ ka ịgịna dọ bira mę ị nimigha

Bira ni akinde

170. *Ama tẹtẹ kiri tẹgha*

Ịzọn ibe mę wo ye

Zenę kemę tọlọmọ wo pẹgha

Kemę emi arọ bile korogha

Ebiri lolo bira lolo bira angolo sougħa

Kime kųrọ bira kųrọ bira ama warị kọn-mu bou warị bọungħa

Aduwọn kę kųrọ ka kpọ kemę malafakumọ

Bẹinmu koroumọnọ

Inemọ kę bụmọ asụọ

Nanaowei sisei, wo a tẹkẹ naa

180. *Ebi afọrọ ibe ma sụọ*

Amọ beni Ịzọn ibe pẹlẹbọ

Iseri beni ebi mọ kę wẹnị

Iseri beni ebi a bo wo pẹrę

Pẹrę pa warị pẹrę fa

Defeyi a yi fẹdẹ bẹbẹ ba kiri ya yi fęgha

Pịnadejị oge ba dirimọgha

Beke koro yọ ebi koro yọ

Ị kpọ ị la yọ mie, ị kpọ ị la yọ mịę

Ibe kiri anda olotu kẹrẹkẹrẹ

190. *Wo sẹ kẹnị sụomọ Izon ibe tukpa biyamọ*
Abadi bẹin, ogbo bẹin, agọno ikikai bo pẹin paa
Izon ebe mẹ wo ye
Zenẹ kemẹ tolomọ wo pẹgha
Pọpọpọ kpọ ado beinmẹnẹ
Kpeere kpeere kpọ ado beinmẹnẹ
A do...

Kokoroko oo

The fowl that's crowed does not change its voice again

The day has broken

Izon nation

The day has broken

This day is a great day

Izon rulers and statesmen

These are people who are working night and day because of the plight of the Izon

Man and woman; young and old

10. From east, from north; from sunrise and sunset

We've all gathered here for the good of Izon

No fighting, no quarrelling, no violence

There is peace in Izon House

For that, it's right to thank God

The Creator of the universe, thank you

The powerful one, I salute you

The benevolent One; Your kindnesses are uncountable

- They cannot be expressed by mouth
Let the glory be unto, God, unto You
20. The Creator and the Maker, let the praise be unto you in the heaven
Should I express them in song?
Should I express them in dance, is it in your praise titles I should express them, God?
The body cannot be contained
The knees are on the ground; I bow before You
My head is on the ground, I bow my head for You
Thank you, Benevolent Father
- Our elders say
The boat piloted by a wise man never runs aground
For that, when wise people gather to pilot the boat of rulership of a nation
- 30 Good breeze comes into it
The people are happy
Everybody gets what he wants
The whole nation continues to prosper
Greetings, rulers of our nation
May your hands never get tired
May God bless you
- It's right to thank our founding fathers
It's in death a man becomes great; live in peace
The one who has died does not remain in death; your labour is not in vain
- 40 The tree you planted germinated, blossomed and bore good fruit
The whole Ison is eating from it

INAPRO, INC, IEF, Ijaw Ladies Association, Mosend, IYC, Ijaw Ladies Association,
MEND, SEA, NDPV

I salute you, all children of Izon

You see!

The raffia palm fruit you planted has crossed the river

It crossed and came with good

There's long life, there's peace

Posio-posio-posio-posio

A pot on a three-leg-cooking stand does not fall

50 When a nation is big, it's fitting for riches

Innumerable, that's the sands of the sea

The stars in the heaven are uncountable

The life of nobility is multifaceted

Riches are of different kinds

It's what God gave to a man that gets to him

Izon nation has been blessed

Our land is a rich land

There's brightness wherever you look

Beautiful women, handsome men

60. No lack of animals, no lack of fish

What's planted is reaped bountifully

No problem with money for feeding

The oil underground is in abundance – *ziei, ziei, ziei, ziei*

It covers the Izon nation the way water covers the sea whose source is not known

The whale is always full no matter how you cut it off

- The source of the wealth is unknown
- The riches are in abundance - *yereku, yereku*
- The riches are of different kinds – *tamama, tamama*
- The riches are plentiful – *zigbei, zigbei, zigbei*
70. The riches have overflown the basket - *sarai, sarai, sarai*
- They remove poverty, remove suffering, remove hardship
- Oh what blessing!
- We ought to be sleeping at home in peace and be eating
- The one inside the water does not use saliva to wash his body
- So I thought
- Agbọlọ does not dance the way it's expected
- But different people, different clothes
- The river in the swamp does not flow out
- Anyone who takes it is after himself
80. Like the big animal; anyone who cuts it takes it home
- Everyone shoots the bird dead and runs away
- The dog keeps looking but nothing falls down
- Whatever thing is held, goes to the mouth – *akporobu*
- A goat does not give birth to a lion
- The bath is an animal, the birds don't have teeth
- The one who sleeps roughly on a raffia mat will also sleep roughly on a mat of straw
- No matter how big a mouth is, it's not broken by a axe
- The debt of the mouth is paid by mouth
- Izon nation
90. The story that a hunter will be farming without checking the barn
- to the extent that his wife takes a plate and goes out to beg for soup!

God, may it pass us by!

It's the eye that kept looking at his child until he drowned

It's said that a paddle doesn't get bad where there's *aga*

Those who are at the forefront of the Izon struggle, please, I beg you

May you take this struggle up to an acceptable level

Because of the children who are coming

When the plantain falls, it brings out suckers

The tree that's been cut down in the forest still grows

No matter how torn the covering cloth is, it's never torn completely

100. It's the branches of the tree that make it beautiful

Our children are our tomorrow

Izon nation doesn't lack people

Educated people are many; wise ones are many

The ones who learnt craftsmanship

It's God that gave it to us

The webs of the spider do not prevent the rays of the sun

No man destroys the good God has done

Never, never, never

The source is not known

110. The necromancy to know the source of the riches of

the Izon is glued to the ground - *batan, batan, batan*

It's celebration for the one who loves you

The one who plans evil against you will not succeed

The one who heaps insults on you goes ashamed
Like the millipede – *gbiri-gbiri-gbiri-gbiri*
The riches fall on the hand, fall on the leg
Like the shining rich tree – *gbeene-gbeene-gbeene*
The star of the Izon nation shines radiantly - *tononoo*

Ahaan Iẓon!

Ahiin Iẓon!

120. Are there people in Izon?

Would we not do when there's something to be done?

I'm the master storyteller, the one who wrestles with 15 while holding 20

The Chameleon 1

From one tree to the other

Faiths are different; gifts are different

The native knife and the foreign knife can never be the same

“Who are you”

No one created himself

Don't you know that even a rotten tree can germinate, blossom

and bear good fruits a again

130. Be strong, everyone

When there's life, there's hope

The Izon man does not think deeply

“Life-is-still-ahead” is a name he gave his child

“Don't-mourn-for-suffering” is a name he gave his child

“My-turn-has-come”

“Come-together”

“Be-proud-of-your-own”, is someone else’s name

You see!

The flood season and the dry season

140. The water flows out - *luweee*

The old water has ended

New water has come

Everything has its time

The time for Izon has arrived

It’s the owner of *bomu* that does the head of *bomu*

The riches of the home are spread in the home

The bird never says a good-bye to the tree

It’s Izon dignitaries I’m calling

Those who are far off the sea; the ones in foreign countries

150. The one who takes his bath never forgets his body

Everyone should remember home

The one above does not match the fish in the ground

Our own is our own

When a he-goat is killed by only one man

Then it’s said that the he-goat has become a witch

It’s the combination of fat that makes the head of *buran* fish oily

It’s when *imboli* is picked one-by-one that it makes a pot of soup

It’s the one who calls for good that prophesizes

Call them, call them, call them

160 A good visitor is a fish that has oil

Come to Izon nation

Our elders say

When the canoe a man has been carving bends to one side,

it's the carver that bears the shame

For that, everyone should shake his body

The time of standing with legs and hands akimbo has passed

The boat in the air has nobody to take people in

When you keep looking a breath eyes, the breath will only get rotten

Do you not know that it is in the river that the *akpolokpolo* bird chews pepper

Wear the *akinde*

170. Even if a community runs away, the earth still remains

Izon nation belongs to us

Another person will not develop it for us

The canoe that has somebody does not get capsized

No matter the anger of the wind, it does nothing to the stubborn grass

No matter how strong the storm is, it doesn't remove the house in

the community to roof the one in the forest

Even if the waves are powerful, don't be afraid

We will be able to cross to the other side

It's through endurance one gets to shore

God, please, hear our prayer

180. Let good breeze come into the nation

Let low tide pass Izon nation by

Full tide moves with good

Let full tide bring us good

Wealth does not finish in a house that has wealth

The one who has eaten on a table no longer eats on ground

The eagle that's turned white no longer turns black

Where there is civilization, there's development

Do your part; I do my part

The wrestling of a clan sees different champions

190. Let's come together and brighten the lamp of Izon nation

Shine accross the sea, across the land and over the stars of the heaven

Izon nation is our own

Another man will not develop it for us

Whether small, they fill the basket

Whether big, they fill the basket

I salute you

HIV/AIDS Qubeqe (HIV/AIDS Poem)

Ingiomọ ba

Gbolo bọ kiri wari

Zuṓ nagha oge

Pına yeri ya pına

Dirimə yəri ya dirimə

Abugo keni tein gbeingha

Akporobu, kọrị yi kọrị yi bẹbẹ

Okotoro kiri digi oko...

Arikpokpo emi...

10. *Kẹmẹ dīşī yi kẹ kẹmẹ bamọ*

Bīnaarau, tọrụ nimigha owei kẹ bo ị pamọ-a

Bīnaowei, tọrụ nimigha ere kẹ ị dīşēmọ a

Ani akpọ bolou kẹ emi yi ama

Kẹlẹkẹlẹ kẹ abụgọ asajin

Osuo gbologha, ani condom

Ini bira tẹikumọ

Beri a na fẹ okuleowei bagha

HIV/AIDS

Ingiomọ ba oge

20. *Kọnọ bira kpọ ingbeke*

Ama bira kpọ ingbeke

Wo ị dọukọrị ya kpasi, dụwẹiamabou....

Slow-suffering killer

Anyone you touch goes to the underground home

A celebration that has no cure

You see the fair-complexioned one; you like her

You see the dark one; you like her

A monkey does not climb only one tree

Anyone that's held goes to the mouth - *akporobu*

Okotoro, the ground digger!

There's constipation

10. It's what a man likes that kills him

Sister, is it a man-stranger who came along your way?

Brother, is it a woman-stranger you desire?

Such things are part of the world

Carefulness is the god of the monkey

Rain resistant, that's condom

It should never leave your hand

Death that comes by hearing doesn't kill the crippled

HIV/AIDS

Slow-suffering-killer celebration

20. Stick on the left hand

Stick on the right hand

When it finds you, *kpasi*, the land of the dead

Armstrong Imomotimi Qubẹbẹ

(Praise Poetry of Armstrong Imomotimi)

Abo erein badei. erein badei ye

Bongbai ke a ba olotu eriunmono

Hinye, imene Adogidigbo

Okumoagala, keni agono a timi keni gbein

A verimo!

Karibuo kere-kere, zibuo kere-kere

Agbia adein mo beke adein mo benebene keni apagha

Bongbai erein me, imene oubebe olotu keni, Izon ibe

Ani Imomotimi, Undutimi yai

10. Armstrong yai, Johnson yai

Omene ke duoni bei oubebe gbolomene

Okere douni oubebe aru saiweremi ke ton

Sai lepo...

A yerimo!

Kemetubọ kẹ wẹnimẹnẹ fẹrẹ sẹ imbalẹ wẹnikurọmọ

Izon otu gbaamo

Inemo ke bumo asuo

Wo akẹ teitimi yi bongbai erein mẹ okẹrẹ bo kọkọbaiyi a padẹj kẹ tọn

Izon otu gbaamo

20. Teimẹnẹ teimẹnẹ kọkọbaiyi

Imene oubebe olotu keni Izon ibe

I peipelemo

Karibuo kere-kere, zibuo kere-kere

Agbia adein mo beke adein mo benebene keni apagha

Imomotimi, umẹnẹ funimi olotu

Bongbai erein me Izon oya donweri

Didee South Africa duo yọu bo Izon ibe la

Bitimi bi bo ọubẹbẹ olotu warị gbolo sọọ

Tu tie ama

30. *Ọ̀bẹ̀bẹ̀ mẹ́ o a yila kaa nẹ́ o akẹ́ taarú karamọ́ kule fẹ́dọ́mẹ́nẹ́*
Ani kẹ́ Izon kpo tukpa me abadi bein, ogbo bein, agono ikikai bo pein pa...
Ani kẹ́ duoni wo bo bẹ́nìmì
Izon me yila kaamo; Izon me yila kaamo

A verimo
Wo bei Nigeria opu ibe me
Wo binaotu, beni biri keme ande biragha
Keme amene bobo yi
Agono emi bo kiri indi dangha
Wo bobo yi me wo bobo yi
40. *Izon me yila kaamo*
Naame...
Amassoma ogbo kẹ́ emi perẹ́
Ani wo ba ịmẹnẹ́ ịmẹnẹ́ kẹ́ namịnịmẹ́
Ini egberi tẹ́in agọ́nọ́
Ịtịkai bاین ka kpọ́ ememein atẹ́igha
Emein zi pọ́u ka ofoinmọ́
Akẹ́rẹ́ kue kue sọ́nọ́ manga
Amẹ́nẹ́ amapọ́n akẹ́ kpẹ́ẹ́lẹ́ tei-um bọ́ akẹ́n bai tụa kẹ́ taara dein
Lpeipelemo
50. *Kuro zokpozo-zokpozo-zokpozo-zokpozo, adodo*
Ala okpo gotoru-gotoru
Pere apa siiamesi
Epelepele owa ke peremo
Bongbai erein me Izon ifie ladei ke ton

Ani douni Izon owou bo se keni suomo

Agbaara a-timi aditimi beni bodei

Wo se kenisoumo, Izon owou bo se kenisuomo

Ani da wo keniwenimo ni ke Izon ibe kpo mu ebi a padei

Ani douni wo kenisuomo Izon tukpa me abadi bein, ogbo

bein, agono ikikai bo pein pa...

60. Izon ibe me wo yi, Izon ibe me wo yi

Zene keme tolomo wo peregha

A yerimo

Poroporo kpo ado beinmene, kpeere-kpeere kpo ado beinmene

Ani douni i bere duo waidei

Imene Adolphus Munamuna

Oubebe Olotu Keni, Izon Ibe

Ogboin tubo

Gbesi Otuan ke ini ama

Otumongalanga indi ka duwon do

70. Ogboin tu fete-fete, kiri fete-fete, kiri fete-fete

Izon otu a do...

Ah! the day has broken, the day has broken

It's today we shall see the champion again

Yes, I'm the great storyteller

The mighty spear who hops from the top of one tree to the other

You see!

There are different faiths; there are different births

The native knife and the English knife are never the same

Today, I, the Chief Oral Poet of the Izon nation

That's Imomotimi, son of Undutimi

10. Son of Armstrong, son of Johnson

It's for him that this oral poem is being chanted

It's for him this canoe of oral poetry is ferried

Fully laden – *lepo*...

You see!

Whatever work a man is doing should be done with all seriousness

The Izon say

It's through perseverance one gets to shore

What we had been playing with has turned out to be a
very important thing today

The Izon say

20. The thing that's always taken for a play is real

I'm the Chief Oral Poet of Izon nation

Hear me well

There are different faiths; there are different births

The native knife and the English knife are never the same

Imomotimi, he is a great scholar

Today, because of the plight of the Izon

Has come all the way from South Africa to Izon nation

He came asking of the Chief Oral Poet until he got to his house

Why the search?

30. Because oral poetry is so important to him that he would like to use
it to earn his third praise title

So that the lamp of Izon too will shine across the sea, the mountains
and high above the stars of the heaven

That's why we've gathered

Izon is very important; Izon is very Important

You see!

In this our great country, Nigeria

Our brothers, whoever takes his bath doesn't forget to wash his body

Everyone has his own

No one steps on fish in the river while standing on land

Our own is our own

40. Izon is very important

Naame...!

He's a chief in Amassoma

Everytime, we hear of you

Your matter hangs on a tree

No matter how the rash on the body runs, it cannot escape the reach
of the finger

The manatee floats on the shore of its birth

The *akere kue-kue* birth lays seven eggs

The one who doesn't take his language seriously, just three days
from the *Aken* day!

Hear me well!

50. Power is in different quantum forms - *zokpozo-zokpozo-zokpozo-zokpozo*,
oh heart!

The life of nobility is of different forms

Riches are of different forms

Epelepele becomes rich at old age

Today, it's the turn of Izon

For that, let all the children of Izon come together

The season we stand aside to look is over has passed

Let us come together, let all children of Izon come together

So that all of us will work together in order that Izon nation will become great

For that, let's come together and make the lamp of Izon to shine across the

sea, the land and high above the stars of the heaven mountains

60. Izon nation is our own; Izon nation is our own

Another person will not develop it for us

You see!

Whether it is in small sizes, the basket will still be full; whether it is in

big sizes, the basket will still be full – *pọrọ-pọrọ, kpeere-kpeere*

Therefore, I go back from here

I am Adolphus Munamuna

The Chief Poet of the Izon Nation

Son of Ogboin;

Precisely, Otuan is my community

The chameleon that uses fish as chewing stick

70. *Ogboin tu fete-fete, kiri fete-fete, kiri fete-fete*

People of Izon, I salute you

APPENDIX 11: SONGS

1. Suu Duma Ama (War Songs)

1

Alagba fie o

Ogidi fie o

Tein kpọ sụọgha o

Let the gun sound

Let the Machete sound

It will not enter when shot

Alagba fie o

Ogidi fie o

Tein kpọ na yoo

Let the gun sound

Let the Machete sound

Don't give a damn when shot

2

Kọrị ye kọrị ye bini yo!

Aaan ee ọwọima²

Ọwọima ee ọwọima

Ikputu kị kọrị kpọ bini yo

Ọwọima ee ọwọima

Alagba subo ya bini yo

Ọwọima ee ọwọima

Aaan ɔwɔɪma ee ɔwɔɪma

Kɔɪ ye kɔɪ ye bini yo!

Ɔwɔɪma ee ɔwɔɪma

Ogidi kɔɪ ya bini yo

Ɔwɔɪma ee ɔwɔɪma

Whatever is held is water!

Are we alarmed?

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

If it's a stone that's held, it's water

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

If it's a gun that's held, it's water

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

Whatever is held is water!

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

Whether it's machete, it's water

Are we alarmed, alarmed?

3

Owei yo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Owei yo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Wo dau bi owei yo!

Owei yo!

Egbesu owei yo!

Owei yo!

Oru kpọ oru dẹngimo!

Owei yo!

Asain kpọ asain dẹngimo!

Owei yo!

He's indeed a man, he's indeed a man!

Indeed, a man!

He's indeed a man, he's indeed a man!

Indeed, a man!

Our father is indeed a man!

Indeed, a man!

Egbesu is indeed a man!

Indeed, a man

A god is more than a god!

Indeed, a man!

A god is more than a god!

Indeed, a man!

4

In' aru tein bọ tūba?

In' aru tein bọ tūba-a?

Egbesu o, in' aru tein bọ tūba?

In' aru tein bọ tein

Teinda tịetimi sụ

Oh! who shot your boat?

Who shot your boat?

Oh our father, who shot your boat?

Let the one who want to shoot your boat, shoot

But shoot and stand to fight

5

Mu da bo ee

Mu da bo ee

Izon ọwọu ama mu da bo ee

Badaba o yari

Badaba o yari

Opu oru bi ugula bo emi

Go and come

Go and come

Children of Izon, go and come

Kill and bring it to him

Kill and bring it to him

The judgement is for the great god

6

Suu abi o

Bo 'ru bou

Suu eri ya tonmọ kị tonmọ zini bo kị piri dọu ni

Ma la mugha yoo

The spirit of war

Come and drink wine

The war that has been seen is now pointed to others

They can't go again

7

Ise se se nembe fiinmọ mo

Isee nembe fiinmọ

Ise se se nembe fiinmọ mo

Isee nembe fiinmọ

Ise alagba kọrì ya nembe bangìdọ e

Ise nembe fiinmọ

Nine, nine, nine drove Nembe away

Nine drove Nembe away

Nine, nine, nine drove Nembe away

Nine drove Nembe away

Nembe fled when nine held a gun

Nine drove Nembe away

8

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Pastọ mìnìmọ kọrì yọ

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Mịnịmọ kọrị yo

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Pastọ mịnịmọ kọrị yo

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Efi kpọ oru kị dụnọu o

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Mịnịmọ kọrị yo

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Ọkpọlọkiyai oru kị dụnọu o

Oru seidaba indi seigha

Evira kpọ oru kị dụnọu o

Oru seidaba indi seigha

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Oh, pastor, hold your throat!

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Hold your throat!

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Oh, pastor, hold your throat!

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Efi lake too belongs to a god

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Hold your throat!

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Okpolokiyai lake belongs to a god!

When a god is not good, why is the fish good?

Evira lake too belongs to a god

When a god is not good, why is the fish good

2. Anda Duma Ama (Wretling Songs)

1

Pamo bo ee!

Kurọ owei pamọ bo ee

Andaa oya oo

Aan ye padọy yoo

Aan ye padọy yoo

Ye padọy yoo

Ama bi ye padọy yoo

Ye padọy yoo

Ye padọy yoo

Ama bi ye padọy yo

Ye padọy yoo

Bidej bo da ama bi ye padọy yo

Ye padọy yoo

Opukiri bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Amasi bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Guru bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Igalì bo da ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Ye padou yoo

Ama bi ye padou yo

Ye padou yoo

Bring out!

Bring out the strong one

Wrestling oya oo

Oh! something has happened

Oh! Something has happened

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community

Something has happened

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community

Something has happened

Something has happened in the community Bidei has Come

Something has happened
Something has happened in the community Opukiri has come
Something has happened
Something has happened in the community Amas has Come
Something has happened
Something has happened in the community Guru has come
Something has happened
Something has happened in the community Igali has come
Something has happened
Something has happened
Something has happened in the community
Something has happened

2

Pamọ bo ee
Olotu pamọ bo ee
Pa-mọ bo ee
Kurọ owei pamọ bo ee
Andaa oya oo

Bidei owei yo
Ee
Bidei owei yo
Kori bo gbein yainmọ
Bidei owei yo
Ee

Bidei owei lamo

Kori bo gbein yainmo

Bidei bodeu ama bi owei lamo

Owei yo

Bring out

Bring out the great wrestler

Bring out

Bring out the strong one

Wrestling oya oo

Bidei is a great man

Indeed

Bidei is a great man

He breaks the one he holds

Bidei is a great man

Indeed

Bidei is truly a great man

He breaks the one he holds

The community that Bidei has come is truly great

Great indeed

3

Ee yo ibelebe

Bei kpọ anda ibelebe

In' ama ogbo kpọ korogha timi zini ama ko koroma

Ibelebe anda

Ee ee ibelebe

Anda-o

Ee ee ibelebee

Oh! ibelebe

What kind of wrestling, *ibelebe*

That I'm to fall in another community

when I don't fall in my community

Then this is *ibelebe* wrestling

Ibelebe, indeed, indeed

Oh wrestling!

Ibelebe, indeed, indeed

4

Puika tim'o

Ee

Puika timi korodọ

Ee

Olotu puika tim'o

Ee

Appah puikatim'o

Ee

Puika timi korodọ

Ee

He had been boasting

Indeed

He had been boasting but has fallen

Indeed

The champion had been boasting

Indeed

Bidei had been boasting

Indeed

He had been boasting but has fallen

Indeed

5

Owei kọrị kọ boimi yo

Suu fa

Owei kọrị kọ boimi yo

Suu fa

Owei kọrị kọ boimi yo

Suu fa

Ama bọ timi ye timi ye bاین bo i suooo

I'm here to wrestle a man

Not for a fight

I'm here to wrestle a man

Not for a fight

I'm here to wrestle a man

Not for a fight

Any spirit in the community, run and come possess me

6

Bou kọ timime

Bou ee

Bou kọ timime

Bou ee

Ania bou kọ timi fuun gẹ bo ị yarime

Bou kọ timime

Bou ee

I was in the bush

Yes, in the bush

I was in the bush

Yes, in the bush

I was in the bush when a letter was written to me

I was in the bush

Yes, in the bush

3. Biriwari Duma-ama (Circumcision songs)

1

In' agbaịoweị beịn bo ị saị oo ee

In' agbaịoweị beịn bo ị saị oo ee

Timi fa ba Ebieren bụnụgha oo ee

Timi fa ba Ebieren bụnụgha o

Pabara weleke

Ebiere fa ba Timi bụnughā o

Pabara weleke

Ebiere fa ba Timi bụnughā o

Pabara weleke

My lover, come and carry me

My lover, come and carry me

If Timi is not around, Ebiere cannot sleep

If Timi is not around, Ebiere cannot sleep

Pabara weleke

If Ebiere is not around, Timi cannot sleep

Pabara weleke

If Ebiere is not around, Timi cannot sleep

Pabara weleke

2

Agbaịoweì Lagosì ọ mu ya

Ma dein bai kpọ wai bugha

Agbaịoweì Lagosì ọ mu ya

Ma dein bai kpọ wai bugha

O keni fị kị fị kpọ fị leta kpọ gẹ nị yaragha

O keni dọn kị dọn kpọ dọn leta kpọ gẹ nị yaragha

I wenị mu bedị ọ koro ya bedị sẹ kpọ dọ dọ

I finmọ na kị keni anga pou ya bisa anga kpọ dọ dọ

I yangi opuru flọu tọọ o

10. *I yangi opuru flou tu o*
Opu ru flou tou kpo i momo tje
Ere 'wou mo bo i bari youwo
Ere 'wou mo bo i bari youwo
Ere 'wou mo bo i bari youwo
In' agbaiwei wen mu fadou

My lover went to Lagos
 After two days, he has not come
 My lover went to Lagos
 After two days, he has not come
 Even if he has died, he has not written a death letter to me
 Even if he's sick, he has not written a sick letter to me
 I went to lay on the bed but it's cold
 I shifted to one side, but that side too was cold
 My mother-in-law, please cook crayfish¹ soup
 10. My mother-in-law, please cook crayfish soup
 Cook crayfish soup but it will stand with you
 O! weep for me, my fellow girls
 O! weep for me, my fellow girls
 O! weep for me, my fellow girls
 My lover has gone away

3

In' amaran ya indou ni in' amaran ki donmo!
Ine gide seidou ni ine gide ki donmo!

Bibi finigha gide deri arau bo tolomo youwo!

Akparan 'wou wo!

I dau o!

Akparan 'wou wo, akparan 'wou wo!

Ay me! my walking stick is paining me because it's been broken!

Alas, my basket is paining me because it has been damaged!

Oh woman who weaves a basket without opening the mouth, weep for me!

Oh, daughters of the house of circumcision!

Oh, my father!

Oh, daughters of the house of circumcision, daughters of the house of
circumcision!

4

I ba bo teki mienгаа?

I ba bo teki mienгаа?

Duere o!

I ba bo teki mienгаа?

Orukumọ i nọ tuu kpọ numugha timi

Wo i lelemọ bo tuu numudọ nị

Wo i dinimọ na buryi indi tẹn bara tẹn o

What will I do again?

What will I do again?

Oh, a poor widow!

What will I do again?

For long, I wasn't known
But now he has tricked me into knowing me
I've been pushed by him to float like a rotten fish

5

Bou kị 'zi wẹrị ya dengitimo
Bou ki 'zi wẹrị ya dengitimo
Epelepele ị zideị nị ma degha o
Ụya o ụya o
I kiriki bini ama bo i dau komotọbọu o

If it were *bou* that gave birth to me, I would be prideful
If it were *bou* that gave birth to me, I would be prideful
I won't be prideful because *Epelepele* gave birth to me
Oh what pain, what pain!
I'm my father's favourite in the land of water

6

Mu da ị bo ye mo kị gbaa
Yọu mu odi kiri bọ dein ya mesi o
Mu da bo ye mo kị gbaa
Odi kiri ịn' ama o
Mu da bo ye mo kị gbaa
Yọu mu odi kiri bọ dein ya mesi o

He said he would go and come back
He went to Odi and stayed for thousands of years
He said he would go and come back
Odi is my community
He said he would go and come back
He went to Odi and stayed for thousands of years

7

Inẹ 'fẹrẹ kọnmu kaiweremi o
Bini bolou iyọrọaraū ine 'fẹrẹ kọnmu kaiweremi o
Efẹrẹ mọ barasin o
Efẹrẹ mọ barasin o
Bini bolou bo tọrū imgbọ mọ ya kẹ efẹrẹ fẹgha ya

My breakable plate was taken and locked
The woman of the water took my breakable plate and locked it
Free the breakable plates
Free the breakable plates
Why can't the money in the water be used to buy a breakable plate?

8

Abi Timi wai boo
Kasa kana subo bo
Abi Timi wai boo
Kasa kana subo bo
Abi Timi wai boo
I ta biri bi naghaa

Abị Timi wai boo

I ta biri bi naghaa

Abị Timi wai boo

Isele tini kpọ fẹ bo

Abị Timi wai boo

Isele tini kpo fẹ bo

Abị Timi wai boo

Towelị kpọ fẹ bo

Abị Timi wai boo

Towelị kpọ fẹ bo

Abị timi wai boo

I ta biri bi naghaa?

Come back, Timi

Bring a basket of *kasa*

Come back, Timi

Bring a basket of *kasa*

Come back, Timi

Did you not hear your wife's circumcision?

Come back, Timi

Did you not hear your wife's circumcision?

Come back, Timi

Buy a tin of camwood too

Come back, Timi

Buy and bring a tin of camwood too

Come back, Timi

Buy and bring towel too

Come back, Timi

Buy a towel too

Come back, Timi

Did you not here your wife's circumcision?

9

Timi mọ Ebieren mọ bụnwari kịmị kpọ naa wẹrimo

Otungbolowari dọ

Dọ dọ dọ

Otungbolowari dọ

Muguru-muguru-muguru

Otungbolowari dọ

Bẹdị

Winkị

Otungbolowari

Yankiri-yankiri

No one knew of Timi and Ebieren's relationship

Quietude was the mosquito net

Quietude, quietude, quietude

Quietude was the mosquito net

Muguru-muguru-muguru

Quietude was the mosquito net

Bed?

Winkị

Mosquito net?

yankiri-yankiri

4. Angawarị anja Ila Tua Duma Ama (Marriage/Bead-wearing Songs)

1

Arị ị yei kị dọu'emi

Ị yei fa?

Ine Burudanị otu

Ị yei ọmịnị mọ ẹragha?

Ine ebi yei bi ọmịnị mọ ẹragha?

Arị ị yei kị dọu'emi

Dingị anga kị eri mọ emi'a o?

O si kị si nimi mo nị?

O dịnịọkọ mu nimigha o?

Ine ebi yei bi!

Ine butịẹ fa yei bi!

Bei yei pamọ dọu ẹragha

Beingbai bọ opu togoni bi nị ị pịrị ni mi owe bi!

Ine ebi yei bi!

Bei erin bi ịne bolou ịmbẹlẹ dẹngị erin'a!

Ine bolou ịmbẹlẹ mịẹ pa-mo owe bi

Ine nini tịẹ yei bi!

Arị ị yei kị dọu'e mee

Ine ogbo 'tu mọ ị yei fa

Ọmịnị w' ẹragha

Arị ụ dọu nị ẹragha ba arị tim 'afangị-mo

Burudani otu omi ni dinioko emi a?

I yei fa

Ine ebi yei bi!

Honey?

Daddy?

Ari i yei eridou ee

Ari i yei Timi eridou ee

I'm looking for my husband

Is my husband not here?

My people of *Burudani*

Didn't you see my husband?

Didn't you see my good handsome husband?

It's my husband I'm looking for

Which side is he?

Did he go to farm?

Where did he go to?

My handsome husband!

My tall husband!

This type of husband is not seen

The man who gave me this big celebration today!

My handsome husband!

Today is my happiest day!

The one who made happiness possible for me

My husband with a pointed nose!

It's my husband I'm looking for

Members of my association, is my husband not here?

Didn't you see him?

If I don't find him, I won't stay

People of *Burudani*, where are you?

Is my husband not here?

My handsome husband!

Honey?

Daddy?

I've seen my husband!

I've seen my husband, Timi!

2

Tari o Burudani amata mo tari o

Ye ye ye

Tari oo tari oo

Ye ye ye

Tari o bin' ere 'wo'u mo tari o

Ye ye ye

Tari oo tari oo

Ye ye ye

Love one another, women of *Burudani*

Ye ye ye

O love, o love

Ye ye ye

Love one another, women who got married to *Burudani* men

Ye ye ye

O love, o love

Ye ye ye

3

Ìla tũa yọ kọ wo mọ mu e moo

Ìla tũa yọ kọ wo mọ mu e moo

Ebiere tarị nìmì kìmì a tubọ sùọọ

Ìla tũa yọ kọ wo mọ mu e moo

Timi tarị nìmì kìmì a tubo sùọọ

It's to wear beads on somebody we are going to

It's to wear beads on somebody we are going to

Anybody who loves Ebiere should enter the back

It's to wear beads on somebody we are going to

Anybody who loves Timi should enter the back

4

Burudanị bọ sùọgha ere ma you kị youwemo

Ere ebi 'e!

Burudanị bọ sùọgha ere ma youmẹ ẹgbẹjimo

Ere ebi 'e!

Burudanị bọ sùọgha kìmì a you kị youwemo

Ere ebi 'e!

Burudanị bọ pagha kìmì a youmẹ ẹgbẹjimo

Ere ebi'e

The woman who doesn't belong to *Burudani* is crying

Beautiful woman!

The woman who doesn't belong to *Burudani* ought to have cried

Beautiful woman!

He who doesn't belong to *Burudani* is crying

Beautiful woman!

He who doesn't come out of *Burudani* is crying

Beautiful woman!

5

La bo tɔa kɪ wo mɔ tɔnwɛrɪmoo

La bo tɔa kɪ wo mɔ tɔnwɛrɪmoo

B' ɪngbaɪ la bo tɔadɔu woo

Bolouɪmbɛlɛ wo bindɔu woo

Timi bei uge aa

We thought it wouldn't be worn on

We thought it wouldn't be worn on

But today, it has been worn on

Joy has filled us

Oh! Timi, what a celebration!

5. Ogbo Duma Ama (Songs of Association)

1

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ Ebiere egber' ama

Ebiere pou oo

Zi sei ki a lẹmọ pou weri bi ma yoo

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ ebiere egber' ama

“Ebiere pou oo”

“Wari bọ tọbọ kẹ dọn kpọ gbana a dẹakumọo”

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ Ebiere eber' ama

Ebiere gbaamo wari bọ kẹmẹ kẹ dọn kpọ a kẹrẹkẹ bangidoo

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ Ebiere eber' ama

“Ebiere pou oo”

Wari bọ yei kẹ dọn kpọ a kẹrẹkẹ banga yo

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ Ebiere eber' ama

Ebiere gbaamọ Tari mu la yọ mọ sẹ ẹ tuun o

Ebiere egberi ama o

Bei mọ sẹ Ebier eber' ama

Stories about Ebier

All these are stories about Ebier

“Ebier is a witch!”

It's a bad-birth life that turned her into a witch

Stories about Ebier

All these are stories about Ebier

“Ebier is a witch!”

“Don't tell her when a child is sick in the house”

Stories about Ebier

All these are stories about Ebier

Ebier said she is the one to be killed when someone is sick in the family

Stories about Ebier

All these are stories about Ebier

“Ebier is a witch!”

She is the one to be killed when the husband is sick

Stories about Ebier

All these are stories about Ebier

Ebier said: “Oh! Tari, sing about me anywhere you go”

Stories about Ebier

All these are stories about Ebiera

2

Ebiera oo yei piri kpotumo

Izon egberi

Ebiera zigha bimein yei piri kpotumo

Izon egberi

Ebiera oo beikpo uya!

Izon egberi

Ama Tari bo i bari youwo

Izon egberi

Izon bo Dudutari ogbo 'tu mo bo i bari you a

Izon egberii

Ebiera was driven out by her husband

It's a true story

Ebiera was driven out because she had no child

It's a true story

Oh Ebiera, what a suffering!

It's a true story

Oh Tari, come and weep with me

It's a true story

Come weep with me, members of *Dudutari* association

It's a true story

3

Zigha uya ni 'fiemi ya o!
Ebiere o bei kpọ zigha uya ni 'fiemi ye!
B' ọkpọ zigha otu mọ bein e i nein kị bọlọ waa?
Ebiereo bei kpọ zigha uya ni 'fiemi ye
Ogboinbi bị zigha otu bein e i kịrịkẹ bọlọ wa oo?
Ebiere o bei kpọ zigha uya ni 'fiemi ye!

What a suffering you are going through for being barren!
 Oh Ebiere, what a suffering you are going through for being barren!
 There are many barren women in the world; is yours the first?
 Oh Ebiere, what a suffering you are going through for being barren!
 There are many barren women in *Ogboin*; is yours the first?
 Oh Ebiere, what a suffering you are going through for being barren!

4

Zigha oo
Ebiere ma zigha o
Zigha k' a lẹimọ bala tọbọu sọdọu
A bọlọ yei mọ tọbọu ziweri ya
Ara tọbọu bemi sịksị pasị dọuu
Mamụ kara mọ yei mọ tọbọu ziweri ya
Ara tọbọu bemi bo lị kpọ gbeindọu
Zigha oo
Zigha o
Ebiere ere zigha o
Zigha k' a lẹimọ bala tọbọu sọdọu

Didn't give birth
 Ebieré didn't give birth
 It's childlessness that turned her into a child
 If she had given birth with her first husband
 Her child would now have passed primary six
 If she had given birth with her second husband
 Her child would now have been able to climb a palm tree
 Oh! didn't give birth
 Oh! didn't give birth
 Ebieré didn't give birth
 It's childlessness that turned her into a child

5

Ama Ebieré Woyengì ̀tonbara kị pama yo

Ama Ebieré Woyengì ̀tonbara kị pama yo

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ pekei kọ zimo

Ebieré ma buboru kọ zidọu o

Woyengì dọ̀bara kị pama yo

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ pekei kọ ziyemo

Ebieré ma buboru kị zimọ mo

Woyengì dọ̀bara kị pama yo

A ma Ebieré woyengì ̀tonbara kị pama yo

A ma Ebieré woyengì ̀tonbara kị pama yo

Oh Ebiere, it's the will of God

Oh Ebiere, it's the will of God

Her mates give birth in the morning

But Ebiere gave birth in the evening

It's the way God wanted

Her mates give birth in the morning

But Ebiere gave birth in the evening

It's the way God wanted

Oh Ebiere, it's the will of God

Oh Ebiere, it's the will of God

6

Uya youkumọ e

Uya youkumọ e

Zini owei tọbọu ị ma bo ziwẹrị ya

nana 'raụ ma bo na akagha fangitimaa

Ebiere o ụya youkumọ o

Kịmị tọbọu ụya youkumọ o

Zini owei tọbọu ị ma bo ziwẹrị ya

nana 'raụ ma bo na akagha fangitimaa

Don't weep for suffering

Don't weep for suffering

When you gave birth to another man's son
wouldn't the woman-owner come take it?
Oh Ebieren, don't weep for suffering
A human being should not weep for suffering
When you gave birth to another man's son
wouldn't the woman-owner come take it?

7

Ama ye mọ seri o Ebieren Pọdakọtị langayo
Ama ye mọ seri o Ebieren Pọdakọtị langayo

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ Englandị kpọ emi
Ara ogbo 'tu mọ Lagosị kpọ ladọu
Ebieren la Korodi ka ara beke mịemị

Amaye mọ seri o Ebieren Pọdakọtị langayo

Ama ye mọ seri o Ebieren Pọdakọtị langayo
Ama ye mọ seri o Ebieren Pọdakọtị langayo

Ara ogbo 'tu mọ Pọdakọtị kpọ emi
Ara ogbo 'tu mọ Ghana beke kpọ emi
Ebieren la Korodi kị akị ara beke mịemị

Ama ye mọ seri o Ebieren Pọdakọtị langayo

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebieren wants to go to Port Harcourt
Rise, spirits of the land! Ebieren wants to go to Port Harcourt

Her mates are in England

Her mates have gone to Lagos too

But Ebieri made *Korodi* her city

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebieri wants to go to Port Harcourt

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebieri wants to go to Port Harcourt

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebieri wants to go to Port Harcourt

Her mates are in Port Harcourt

Her mates are in Ghana too

But Ebieri made *Korodi* her city

Rise, spirits of the land! Ebieri wants to go to Port Harcourt

6 Sọsị Duma Ama (Religious Songs)

1

I nana yeimọ sẹ kẹnị kpọ tụa mugha o

Woyengi fịrị kumọọ

Owọu oii-a-sii kị ziwẹrị kpọ kẹnị kpọ tụa mugha o

Woyengi fịrị kumọọ

Woyengi fịrị kumọ inein o

Woyengi fịrị kumọọ

All the things you have, none will you go with

It's only the work of God

Even if you have 100 children, none will you go with

It's only the work of God
Only the work of God is yours
It's only the work of God

2

Bye yo ị mbrau wa!
Tari ịmọmọ timi yee
Bye yo ị mbrau wa!
Tari ịmọmọ mu ee

Oh my sister, goodbye!
May blessings be with you
Oh my sister, goodbye!
May blessings go with you

3

I bou biri kọ wẹniyemi kpọ
Pou ị bagha ee
I tọrụ biri kọ yọuwemi kpọ
Diri ị bagha ee
I wẹniyemi yọ mọ sẹ
Oru ị bagha ee
Nanaowei tịn bai kị arị kpọ mungimioo

Whether I'm walking in the depths of the forest
Witchcraft will not kill me

Whether I'm paddling far off the sea
Medicine will not kill me
Wherever I'm walking
Satan will not kill me
It's the day God calls me I too will go

4

Mala fakumọ mala fakumọ
Er' emi yee
Mala fakumọ oo
Er' emi yee
Jesu emi yee
Mala fakumọ mala fakumọ
Er' emi yee
Mala fakumọ oo
Er' emi yee
I n' owọyọ mọ!
Mala fakumọ mala fakumọ
Eri emi ye

Don't be afraid; don't be afraid
He's there
Don't be afraid
He's there
Jesus is there
Don't be afraid; don't be afraid

He's there
Don't be afraid
He's there
My children!
Don't be; don't be afraid
He's there

5

Ye ebi moo!
I duba moo!
O Nanaowei!
Ye ebi moo!
I duba moo!
E Tẹmẹdau!

You are good!
You are great!
Oh God!
You are good!
You are great!
Oh God!

6

O mọmọ lei ye faa
O mọmọ lei ye faa

Ogbono mọ, kiri mọ, okpo bi mọ
Tẹmẹowei yengi mọ lei kẹni ye faa

There's no one like Him
There's no one like Him
The heavens, the earth and the world
There's no one like Him

7

Ine bin'otu o
Ine kịmị'tu
Ongọ kuroṃọ
Heavunụ gbẹ bi emi o Woyengi ama bo
La yọ mọ sẹ mịẹ
Wo i piri firi mọ sẹ wẹni o
Heavunụ gbẹ bi emi o Woyengi ama bo

My brothers!
My people!
Be courageous and endure
The reward of heaven is there in God's town
Do what you can
Whatever work He gives you, do it
The reward of heaven is there in God's town

8

Bin'owei o ine tu duo ee
Bin'arau o ine tu duo ee
Ari bo Woyengi kuro i mo eridou woo
Ari bo Woyengi kuro i mo eridou woo
Ine tu duo ee

My brother, follow me
My sister, follow me
I've come to see the power of God
I've come to see the power of God
Follow me

9

Jesu imbele bomo
O bo n' o dadi yoo
Jesu imbele bomo
O bo n' o dadi yoo
Jesu imbele bomo
O bo n' o dadi yoo
Jesu imbele bomo
O bo n' o dadi yoo
Dadi yoo

Jesus is too sweet
Come taste him
Jesus is too sweet

Come taste him
Jesus is too sweet
Come taste him
Jesus is too sweet
Come taste him
Oh, taste

6. Gometi Duma Ama (Political Songs)

1

Arū mō lei yo
Mē arū mē
DSP kī mē arū mē kōrīmō owei yoo
Arū mō lei yo
Mē arū mē
DSP kī mē arū mē kōrīmō owei yoo

Enter the canoe
This canoe
DSP is the one who pilots the canoe
Enter the canoe
This canoe
DSP is the one who pilots it

2

Bara polo Fafī kī pīrīī
Bara polo Fafī kī pīrī oo

Bara polo Fafi kị piri!

Eri kị bimeṅgi Rest Housu emi oo

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

Fafi is the one who should be clapped for

It's because of him that there's a Rest House

3

Seriake oo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Seriake oo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Seriake oo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Seriake oo owei yo!

Owei yo!

Seriake is a great man!

Indeed, a great man!

Seriake is a great man!

Indeed, a great man!

Seriake is a great man!

Indeed, a great man!

Seriake is a great man!

Indeed, a great man!

4

DSP egberi yo

You ụkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo

DSP egberi yo

You ụkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo

DSP egberi yo

You ụkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo

O ye, o ye, o ye oo

Wo mẹnẹ fụ akpa na kẹmẹ votua ee

DSP's campaign

I came because of it

DSP's campaign

I came because of it

DSP's campaign

I came because of it

Oye, oye, oyeoo

We don't vote someone with a bag of salt

5

Ayiba egberi yo

You ụkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo

Ayiba egberi yo

You ụkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo

Ayiba egberi yo

You ụkẹrẹ bẹmẹin boimi yo

O ye, o ye, o ye oo

Sei aki na kẹmẹ tọngha oo

It's God's story

I came because of it

It's God's story

I came because of it

It's God's story

I came because of it

Oye, oye, oyeo

I don't wish someone any bad

7. Kala'wou Duma Ama (Lullabies)

1

Indouda pẹlẹ o

Yeingi indou ebi fịyai o

Tọbọu mịẹ dúbamọmọ

Tọbọu mịẹ ebimọmọ

Indouda pẹlẹ o

Yeingi indou ebi fịyai o

Suck and stop crying

Mother's breastmilk is good food

It makes a baby grow

It makes a baby fine

Suck and stop crying

Mother's breastmilk is good food

2.

Ayapiti o, ayapiti o, ayapiti o

Sisei youkumoo oo

I yeingi boda buru aki

I dau boda ofoni aki

Kokorokoo

Ayapiti o, ayapiti o, ayapiti o

Sisei youkumoo oo

O newborn, o newborn, o newborn

Please stop crying

Take yam when your mother comes back

Take a fowl when your father comes back

Kokorokoo

O newborn, o newborn, o newborn

Please stop crying

3

Tuu tu

Tuu tu

Kala bele tuo kpọ yei ipiri fughu

Opu bele tuo kpọ yei ipiri fughu

Tobodejara youwemo

Mama boo

Mama boo

Tuu, tu

Tuu, tu

You cooked a small pot, I wasn't given to eat

You cooked a big pot, I wasn't given to eat

Nanny is crying

Come, mother

Come, mother

4

Aboy yo

Tibi kokolo

Ari ma dau fabia

Ari ma yengi fabia

Umbu gboru, gboru

Wosaa

Oh, boy!

With a big head

Is it because I don't have a father?

Is it because I don't have a mother?

With a big, big navel

Wosaa

5

Tòbòu nana kìmì tòbòu ye fìmo

Araù paki dọọnmì

The one who has a child eats what belongs to one's child

How come she is jealous!

6

'N' abọy yo

'N' abọygha 'n' aboy bi

'N' aboy yo

'N' abọygha 'n' aboy bi

'N' abọy yo

It's my son

My son is not your son

It's my son

My son is not your son

It's my son

7

Ayapìtì o, indou, indou, indou

Ayapìtì o, indou

Deinbaì laya, ayapìtì bo opu kìmì 'pa

opu warì kọrì, opu akolo kọrìmo

Suck, suck and suck, o newborn

Suck, o newborn

Tomorrow, newborn will become a big man,
build a big house and walk with a big staff

8

Sịen da boo

Kala tọbọu famugni kịmị bo arị kị famu

Sịen da bo o, oo o

Sleep and wake

The one who wants to beat a child should beat me instead

Sleep and wake

9

Bọ ọkpọ ị nana ye ị nana ye

Tọbọu kị ebidein ye

Tọbọu imbelẹ ma ye

Tọbọu imbelẹ akị sịlị dein

Tọbọu imbelẹ ma ye

Tọbọu imbelẹ akị sịlị dein

Tọbọu imbelẹ ma ye

Tọbọu imbelẹ akị sịlị dein

Aan tọbọu imbelẹ ma ye

Whatever thing I have in this world

A child is the best thing

Oh! A child is sweet

A child is sweeter than money

Oh! A child is sweet

A child is sweeter than money

Oh! A child is sweet

A child is sweeter than money

Yes, a child is sweet